

CONVERGENCE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Meeting the AI Workforce Challenge

Extending the AI Action Plan and
America's Talent Strategy through
Public-Private-Philanthropic Collaboration

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PUBLISHED

OCTOBER 2025



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Executive Summary

The AI transition is already reshaping the U.S. labor market. Since 2023, more than 27,000 layoffs have been directly attributed to AI adoption, with entry-level corporate roles and even programming jobs seeing historic declines. Younger workers face intensified competition for fewer openings, while leading AI developers forecast systems capable of surpassing human performance on most tasks within a few years. Early adopters of AI are already seeing fivefold increases in worker productivity and some businesses have restructured their operations to rely more on AI rather than on human labor. Agentic AI will accelerate the pace of the transition and, together with robotics, physical tasks will also be replaced by non-humans.

The **AI Action Plan** released in July 2025 outlines a serious federal commitment to this challenge, including AI-focused education initiatives, rapid retraining programs, and interagency coordination. **America's Talent Strategy**, released in August 2025, outlines a plan to increase economic opportunity for the labor force, including industry-driven strategies, worker mobility, and integrated systems. These measures establish a strong foundation, but the scale and pace of disruption demand further investment. Some gaps require additional federal initiatives, while others depend on coordinated efforts among state governments, industry, philanthropy, and local communities—including youth who are uniquely invested in long-term outcomes of today's choices.

This brief proposes a **two-track strategy, with youth co-design and co-governance embedded in implementation**:

A. Federal Actions to Deepen and Extend the AI Action Plan and America's Talent Strategy

1. Advance federal scenario planning and policy innovation to enable evidence-based, agile labor policy, including targeted social protections.
2. Expand AI literacy and human development skills across all stages of education and training.
3. Support and Catalyze Cross-Sector Workforce Leadership for a smooth transition to the AI economy, so that federal strategy becomes a multiplier for local impact.

B. Cross-Sector Actions to Complement Federal Leadership

1. Establish Youth-Inclusive Local AI Workforce Zones co-governed with youth advisory councils to accelerate workforce adaptation, leveraging youth as AI adoption drivers, while also supporting lifelong learning for displaced workers.

2. Mobilize Sustained Philanthropic Investment in Education and Human Flourishing to ensure the benefits of the AI transition are widely shared and support both economic competitiveness and a more equitable and long-term flourishing of individuals and societies.
3. Strengthen Labor Market Intelligence for the AI Era to empower dynamic, evidence-based workforce planning, particularly for high-displacement sectors.

The recommended actions in this brief are based on an analysis of recently-released plans of the federal government, an extensive literature review of over 40 talent, AI, education, and workforce publications, and input from 13 experts across the education, technology, and workforce development fields. Together, these actions aim to ensure the U.S. workforce is not only shielded from AI-driven disruption but positioned to thrive in the opportunities it creates.

Context: A Transition Already Underway

In July 2025 alone, private employers in the United States cut more than 10,000 jobs, citing the adoption of generative AI as a primary factor. AI is listed among the top five causes of job losses this year, with more than 27,000 layoffs directly tied to AI adoption since 2023. These shifts are happening alongside broader macroeconomic forces. AI is no longer a footnote but a central force in employment decisions.

This trend is particularly acute for younger workers. A recent *Wall Street Journal* analysis found that employers are redesigning entry-level corporate roles, replacing junior analysts with AI tools or prompt engineering interns, and offering fewer opportunities for recent graduates. One of the clearest pieces of evidence for this comes from a recent study by Erik Brynjolfsson and his colleagues at Stanford University. Analyzing high-frequency payroll data from millions of U.S. workers, the researchers found that since the widespread adoption of generative AI, workers aged 22-25 in the most AI-exposed occupations have experienced a 13 percent relative decline in employment. Crucially, this decline was unique to early-career professionals; employment for more experienced workers in the very same roles remained stable or even continued to grow. This suggests AI is disproportionately impacting the first rung of the career ladder, with adjustments happening through hiring rather than compensation. Handshake, a career platform geared toward Gen Z workers, reported a 15% decline in entry-level corporate job postings over the past year, alongside a 30% surge in applications per listing, signaling a sharp rise in competition for recent graduates. Even fields once viewed as “future-proof” are not immune: in March 2025, *The Washington Post* reported that more than a quarter of all programming jobs have vanished in the past two years—the sharpest decline in the industry’s history. This change in labor market demand and loss of jobs will have significant repercussions on Americans and the stability and security of societies if left unaddressed.

Yet despite growing evidence, a gulf remains between many economists and technologists over what lies ahead, as noted in the Americans for Responsible Innovation (ARI)’s April 2025 report. Economists often draw on historical precedent: most major technological shifts, from the steam engine to the internet, ultimately expanded employment and raised living standards – and required decades for widespread adoption. But leading technologists are telling a different story for AI. In early 2025, Anthropic’s CEO predicted that AI could surpass humans on nearly all tasks by 2027. Other developers at

DeepMind and OpenAI are working on agents designed to perform advanced coding, research, and project management autonomously. Looking ahead, AI and robotics are expected to take on not only cognitive work but also physical tasks in manufacturing, logistics, and healthcare, thus eliminating even more jobs.

This disconnect reflects differences in how each group interprets the pace and nature of AI, and the transformations that come along with it. Economists typically treat AI as a General Purpose Technology (GPT), expecting slow diffusion, limited task substitution, and eventual compensation through new job categories. But as ARI's report argues (and early-adopter firms that have already transformed their business operations with GPT demonstrate), AI may be better understood as a *Dynamic* GPT, one that evolves rapidly (pace), spreads across both cognitive and physical domains (pervasiveness), and adapts fluidly to new tasks (plasticity). This plasticity is especially important: AI may automate not just existing roles, but also the new work that it creates.

Economists often overlook what technologists both foresee and fuel: because of AI's rapid evolution and adoption, coupled with the unbound potential of agentic AI, which is dynamic, can act autonomously toward goals and operate with a degree of independence, as a technology, it is not analogous to historic precedents.

In short, AI's labor market impact is unfolding faster, more widely, and more flexibly than prior technologies. Even if predictions of full automation by 2027 prove too aggressive, the risk of significant job displacement in the next 5 to 10 years is no longer hypothetical. What comes next—for jobs, supported transitions, such as income supports for workers, and to continue to cultivate stable, secure, and prosperous societies—depends on the dynamics, collaboration, and coordination we cultivate, the frameworks we adopt, and the urgency with which we act. If we take the technologists' forecasts seriously, the AI transition demands a commensurate response: not only to mitigate harm and threats to social stability, but to shape a future of work that is adaptive, human-centered, and broadly shared. This will require keeping U.S. labor policy agile enough to match the pace of AI development and adoption—ensuring workers can adapt as quickly as technology evolves, and that America maintains its global lead. This challenge transcends mere labor policy; it is a matter of national competitiveness, security, and stability. Without strategic investments in human capital development, and if the American workforce cannot adapt at the pace of technological change—and also effectively compete to retain the world's top AI talent—then the nation risks ceding its technological, economic, and geopolitical leadership to global rivals. This could create a vacuum that threatens our long-term security.

Meeting the Moment: Education and Workforce Development

Historically, moments of economic upheaval have catalyzed major federal investments in human capital, from the GI Bill after World War II to workforce retraining during the early computer era. These efforts were complemented by action from other sectors: universities expanding access, unions and employers investing in on-the-job training, and philanthropies piloting new education models. The lesson is clear: when government action is matched by public, private, and philanthropic initiative, the result is durable, economy-wide resilience. It is even more effective when this action is coordinated and inclusive of the populations it seeks to serve.

Today's challenge is different in both scale and speed, and it requires an even more urgent response. However, the principle remains the same. National preparedness depends not only on advancing AI technologies, but also on both equipping people to thrive alongside them and providing social protections to provide soft landings for the American people.

The U.S. government has already taken meaningful steps:

- The [AI Action Plan](#), released under the Trump administration in July 2025, outlines a serious and forward-looking vision for American leadership in artificial intelligence. It includes expanded investments in STEM education, targeted workforce development programs, and improved interagency coordination on AI-related initiatives.
- [America's Talent Strategy](#), released by the Departments of Labor, Commerce, and Education under the Trump Administration in August 2025, outlines a plan built on five pillars designed to create a more demand-driven, responsive labor market.

These commitments lay an important foundation. But how far do they go toward meeting the scale of the disruption ahead? And what kinds of human skills (such as agency—e.g. the capacity to make purposeful, autonomous decisions in an AI-saturated environment, analytical thinking, problem solving, ethical reasoning, and discernment), support systems, and institutional partnerships will be needed to build a workforce—and society— that is protected from disruption and empowered by it?

In the sections that follow, we examine the federal government's current education and workforce strategy through the lens of the AI Action Plan and America's Talent Strategy and propose ways to build on their foundation through broader cross-sector collaboration. This collaboration must also address a significant gap in current plans and modernize America's social protection systems to safeguard social stability for workers and communities impacted by the AI transformation.

What the Federal Government Is Doing—and Doing Well

The AI Action Plan

The *AI Action Plan* recognizes that federal leadership must extend beyond frontier model development to include a robust agenda on workforce, education, and infrastructure. Several priorities stand out as especially relevant for the AI labor transition.

1. Centering American Workers in the AI Transition

The plan affirms a “worker-first AI agenda” (p. 4), acknowledging both the productivity benefits and the disruption AI may bring. It calls for a serious workforce response, and meaningful steps have already been taken. Two executive orders issued in April 2025, *Advancing Artificial Intelligence Education for American Youth* (EO 14277)¹ and *Preparing Americans for High-Paying Skilled Trade Jobs of the Future* (EO 14278)², underscore a clear commitment to AI-focused education and workforce development (p. 5).

The plan outlines a series of tactical actions:

- Making AI skill development a core objective of federal education and workforce programs (DOL, ED, DOC, NSF) (p. 5)
- Clarifying that AI training programs may qualify for tax-free employer education benefits under IRS Section 132 (p. 6)
- Establishing a dedicated AI Workforce Research Hub to study labor market effects and support scenario planning (p. 6)
- Funding rapid retraining for dislocated workers and issuing guidance for identifying AI-related displacement risks (p. 6)
- Piloting new state-level models for reskilling and workforce system adaptation, using existing legislative authorities—including those established under the CHIPS and Science Act (p. 6)
- Prioritizing equity of access, including for rural and underserved communities, to ensure that training opportunities reach all regions and populations affected by the transition (p. 6)

¹ The White House. “Advancing Artificial Intelligence Education for American Youth,” April 23, 2025. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/04/advancing-artificial-intelligence-education-for-american-youth/>.

² The White House. “Preparing Americans for High-Paying Skilled Trade Jobs of the Future,” April 23, 2025. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/04/preparing-americans-for-high-paying-skilled-trade-jobs-of-the-future/>.

2. Investing in STEM and Career Pathways

The plan calls for expanded integration of AI literacy and technical skills into existing STEM efforts (p. 9), with a particular focus on:

- Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- Apprenticeship programs
- High school engagement through early-exposure pipelines

It also recommends aligning K-12, community college, and workforce curricula with priority AI infrastructure occupations, from electricians to advanced HVAC technicians, ensuring these roles are recognized as core to the national AI agenda (p. 9–10).

3. Building Government Capacity to Learn and Lead

The plan calls for a whole-of-government modernization effort to prepare federal agencies to adopt AI responsibly and effectively (p. 7–8):

- Formalizing the Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer Council (CAIOC) to coordinate adoption (p. 7)
- Launching a talent exchange program for rapid deployment of AI experts across agencies (p. 7)
- Creating an AI procurement toolbox to streamline agency access to safe, customizable frontier tools (p. 7–8)
- Mandating that federal employees who could benefit from LLMs gain access and training (p. 8)

America's Talent Strategy

America's Talent Strategy outlines the Trump administration's blueprint for preparing the U.S. workforce to seize the opportunities of an AI-driven economy and a reindustrialized America. Developed jointly by the Departments of Labor (DOL), Commerce (DOC), and Education (ED), it frames workforce policy around five strategic pillars that align closely with the needs of the AI labor transition.

1. Centering Workforce Development on Industry Demand

The strategy emphasizes demand-driven approaches that expand proven work-based learning models such as Registered Apprenticeships and align education programs directly with employer needs in priority industries (p. 11). It outlines actions including:

- Expanding Registered Apprenticeships, targeting more than one million active participants, and simplifying employer adoption (p. 11)
- Aligning K-12, postsecondary, and workforce training to create seamless career pathways into high-growth, high-wage fields (p. 11)
- Prioritizing workforce pipelines in priority industries, including semiconductors, shipbuilding, aerospace, biopharmaceuticals, AI/data centers, and energy (p. 11)

2. Promoting Worker Mobility and AI-Readiness

To expand labor force participation, the strategy focuses on connecting workers with in-demand skills and personalized support (p. 12), by:

- Deploying AI-powered career navigation tools and competency-based assessments to match workers to jobs (p. 12)
- Launching a national *Credentials of Value* scorecard to improve

transparency on training program quality and labor market outcomes (p. 12)

- Implementing Workforce Pell Grants for short-term, high-quality training programs aligned to immediate job opportunities (p. 12)
- Advancing licensing reciprocity to reduce barriers to geographic mobility (p. 12)
- Prioritizing AI literacy as a foundational workforce skill across industries (p. 13)

3. Streamlining and Integrating Workforce Systems

The plan calls for modernizing and unifying the workforce system to improve access and responsiveness (p. 12) by:

- Implementing the “Make America Skilled Again” (MASA) proposal to consolidate and align federal workforce programs (p. 12)
- Creating unified online portals and harmonizing eligibility and reporting requirements across agencies (p. 12)
- Modernizing workforce data systems to integrate education, employment, and wage outcomes (p. 12)

4. Building Accountability and Measurable Outcomes

The strategy commits to performance-based funding and public transparency (p. 13) by:

- Linking program funding to job placement, earnings growth, and return on investment (p. 13)
- Publishing public dashboards to compare performance across workforce programs (p. 13)
- Redirecting resources from underperforming programs and eliminating those with poor outcomes (p. 13)

5. Fostering Flexibility and Innovation for the AI Era

Recognizing the pace of technological change, the plan seeks to enhance adaptability and rapid response (p. 13) by:

- Using waiver and demonstration authorities to pilot rapid retraining for AI-related displacement (p. 13)
- Establishing an AI Workforce Research Hub to monitor AI’s labor market effects and inform scenario planning (p. 13)
- Launching regional AI learning networks to connect employers, educators, and workforce systems (p. 13)
- Publishing a national AI literacy framework and embedding AI skills into apprenticeships, CTE, and workforce training (p. 13)

These initiatives reflect a serious and multifaceted federal commitment to preparing the American workforce for the age of AI. The challenge now is to build on this foundation through sustained investment, effective implementation, and coordinated action across sectors.

Unlocking Impact: The Case for Cross-Sector Collaboration With Youth

The federal government has laid an important foundation through the AI Action Plan but it cannot meet the scale and pace of the AI transition alone. The most effective workforce responses in U.S. history combined public investment with private innovation and philanthropic experimentation. The same will be true in the AI era.

Government can set national priorities, fund large-scale initiatives, and provide regulatory stability. But rapid skill-building, local experimentation, and targeted support for high-risk communities often emerge more effectively from partnerships that bring together federal, state, and local governments, industry, philanthropy, civil society, and individual stakeholders. Moreover, cross-sector collaboration functions as a speed multiplier, facilitating rapid experimentation and adaptive implementation that keeps pace with AI adoption.

Central to these efforts is the active engagement of the workforce, particularly young people. Youth are not only future workers—they are digital natives whose lived experience with emerging technologies positions them to contribute fresh perspectives, challenging legacy assumptions, and co-design systems that resonate with their peers. Their involvement ensures that solutions are relevant, inclusive, and future-proof.

As the next generation of leaders, entrepreneurs, and decision-makers, young people are uniquely invested in the long-term outcomes of today's choices. To maintain U.S. leadership in the AI-driven economy, we need a comprehensive workforce strategy—one that draws on the strengths of every sector and channels the energy, creativity, and potential of the next generation. Such a strategy will help safeguard economic resilience, social cohesion, and national competitiveness as AI continues to reshape the labor market, redefine educational priorities, and transform the structure of society.

Building on the AI Action Plan and America's Talent Strategy

Together, the AI Action Plan and America's Talent Strategy demonstrate serious federal commitment to preparing the U.S. workforce for the age of AI and a reindustrialized economy, but the scale and pace of the transition require a broader, more integrated response. Some gaps can only be addressed through new federal initiatives; others call for coordinated action across states, industry, philanthropy, and local communities. Central to this cross-sector collaboration must be the involvement of young people, who are on the forefront of the AI transition's economic disruption. As the first to face these issues, their perspectives are crucial for anchoring our national strategy in practical realities. Engaging them directly in co-designing training and policy is therefore a strategic imperative—not only to develop effective solutions but also to safeguard social stability.

The recommendations below are organised into **two complementary tracks**:

- (A) Additional federal actions that extend and deepen the AI Action Plan and America's Talent Strategy.
- (B) Cross-sector actions that complement federal leadership and ensure adaptation happens quickly, inclusively, and at the local level.

Recommendations

A. Federal Actions to Deepen and Extend the AI Action Plan and America's Talent Strategy

These proposals build directly on existing AI Action Plan priorities such as workforce scenario planning, AI literacy, and interagency coordination. They extend America's Talent Strategy pillars on demand-driven strategies, worker mobility, integrated systems, accountability, and flexibility and innovation.

1. Advance Federal Scenario Planning and Policy Innovation

Connection to AI Action Plan and America's Talent Strategy: Expands the AI Action Plan's commitment to an AI Workforce Research Hub and interagency coordination and aligns with ATS's "Integrated Systems" and "Demand-Driven Strategies" pillars by embedding foresight and stress-testing into DOL, ED, and DOC decision-making.

- **Action A:** Build foresight capacity to anticipate AI trajectories and stress-test policy options by investing in robust, real-time labor market data infrastructure at the federal and state levels.
- **Implementation A:** Incentivize multi-sector collaboration, including states, employers, and philanthropy, to collect, analyze, and jointly share and utilize data—including with state and local high school and community college systems—on emerging AI-related occupations, skills gaps, and regional workforce trends.
- **Outcome A:** Enable evidence-based, region-specific interventions, particularly in high-displacement sectors.
- **Action B:** Advance **fiscal reform and labor policy for social protection.**
- **Implementation B:** Pilot new tools that cushion workers during rapid transitions, such as income supports linked to retraining, tax incentives for employers that proactively reskill and retain workers to prevent displacement, and support for firms that provide training and pathways back into work for displaced employees. Community-based service programs can also offer both income and skills during transitions.
- **Outcome B:** Keep U.S. labor policy agile in the face of rapid AI-driven change and match the pace of technology adoption and facilitate a stable enabling environment to maintain America's lead.

2. Expand AI Literacy and Human Development Skills Across Lifespans

Connection to AI Action Plan and America's Talent Strategy: Deepens EO 14277's focus on AI education for youth and supports ATS's Flexibility & Innovation pillar by embedding human development skills into national AI

literacy standards alongside technical competencies.

- **Action:** Integrate AI literacy, analytical thinking, problem solving, ethical reasoning, discernment, and agency into K-12, community college, and adult learning curricula.
- **Implementation:** Expand the Federal AI Literacy Fund to support teacher training and interdisciplinary curriculum development.
- **Outcome:** Create a workforce capable of working alongside AI while preserving human strengths.

3. Support and Catalyze Cross-Sector Workforce Leadership

Connection to AI Action Plan and America's Talent Strategy: Extends federal leadership beyond direct programs (AI Action Plan) and complements ATS's Demand-Driven Strategies and Worker Mobility pillars by empowering states, employers, philanthropy, and youth networks to drive localized innovation.

- **Action:** Create funding streams, matching grants, and policy incentives for state governments, employers, philanthropic organizations, and regional and local youth networks to co-design AI workforce strategies tailored to local needs.
- **Implementation:** Establish a National AI Workforce Partnership Program to connect federal priorities with on-the-ground innovation in education, reskilling, and equity initiatives.
- **Outcome:** Ensure the AI workforce transition is both top-down and bottom-up, making federal strategy a multiplier for local impact.

B. Cross-Sector Actions to Complement Federal Leadership

These actions leverage federal priorities but rely on state, industry, philanthropic, and community leadership for execution and adaptation to local conditions.

1. Establish Youth-Inclusive Local AI Workforce Zones

Connection to AI Action Plan and America's Talent Strategy: Builds on the AI Action Plan's state-level reskilling pilots and ATS's Demand-Driven Strategies by establishing local hubs that integrate modular training, work-based learning (such as apprenticeships), and wraparound services like mentoring and counseling. Unlike traditional reskilling pilots focused solely on rapid upskilling, Workforce Zones offer a holistic ecosystem tailored to local needs. What sets them apart is their youth-led governance, ensuring that young people help shape training design and delivery. This approach not only enhances relevance and effectiveness but also transforms the Zones into engines of adaptation and innovation for the AI workforce transition.

- **Action:** Create youth-inclusive regional AI Workforce Zones, co-governed with youth advisory councils, as hubs for training innovation and youth engagement.
- **Implementation:** Use federal incentives to catalyze co-designed initiatives with local governments, education providers, and firms. Incorporate governance structures, such as youth-led councils, that integrate the experience, expertise, and perspectives of young people living and working in the region.
- **Outcome:** Accelerate workforce adaptation, leveraging youth as AI adoption drivers, while also supporting lifelong learning for displaced workers.

2. Mobilize Sustained Philanthropic Investment in Education and Human Flourishing

Connection to AI Action Plan and America's Talent Strategy: Extends equity and access goals in both plans by adding a dedicated philanthropy mobilization strategy. It can directly cover last-dollar tuition, seed community-led AI Skills Centers and interdisciplinary scholarships (ethics, democracy, AI transitions), and coordinate place-based co-investment via Local AI Workforce Zones to ensure equitable access and lifelong learning. These are high-flexibility, long-horizon roles that public programs and employer incentives rarely deliver at scale, making philanthropy the catalyst that converts federal priorities into inclusive outcomes.

- **Action:** Support accessible higher education and lifelong learning pathways, including community-led AI Skills Centers, community colleges, universities, and interdisciplinary scholarships focused on ethics, democracy, and AI transitions.
- **Implementation:** Encourage philanthropic leaders to invest directly in covering the cost of higher education for students. This counts as high-return on investment giving that advances three goals simultaneously: (1) workforce preparation and career readiness, (2) liberal education for human flourishing, and (3) preparation for democratic engagement and citizenship. In parallel, coordinate investments through philanthropic alliances and place-based initiatives (e.g., regional AI Workforce Zones mentioned above) to ensure equitable access to AI-related opportunities.
- **Outcome:** Ensure that the benefits of the AI transition are widely shared, supporting both economic competitiveness and the long-term flourishing of individuals and societies.

3. Strengthen Labor Market Intelligence for the AI Era

Connection to AI Action Plan and America's Talent Strategy: Complements AI Action Plan's workforce research hub and ATS's Accountability and Integrated Systems pillars by ensuring multi-sector real-time labor market intelligence sharing.

- **Action:** Invest in robust, real-time labor market data systems at both the federal and state levels, with specific focus on AI-related workforce dynamics.
- **Implementation:** Establish incentives and technical frameworks for cross-sector data sharing—linking education providers, employers, training programs, and regional workforce boards—to capture timely insights on AI-related occupations, emerging skill gaps, and geographic trends. These systems should be interoperable with existing federal and state labor data infrastructures, such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics and state labor data infrastructures.
- **Outcome:** Empower dynamic, evidence-based workforce planning, particularly for high-displacement sectors, by providing actionable insights that inform training investments, policy decisions, and regional economic strategies. This will ensure that the U.S. workforce remains resilient and competitive in the face of rapid AI-driven transformation.

The recommended actions in this brief are based on an analysis of recently-released plans of the federal government, an extensive literature review of over 40 talent, AI, education, and workforce publications, and input from 13 experts across the education, technology, and workforce development fields.

Together, these actions aim to ensure the U.S. workforce is not only shielded from AI-driven disruption but positioned to thrive in the opportunities it creates.

Acknowledgements

These recommendations draw on extensive qualitative interviews and discussions with leaders from the education and edtech sectors, as well as youth and employer organizations. We are grateful to the practitioners, policymakers, and innovators who generously shared their time, experience, and candid perspectives on the opportunities and risks of the AI workforce transition. Their insights shaped both the substance and the structure of the proposals in this brief.

In particular, we would like to thank Jorge Barragan, Doug Becker, Efrem Bycer, Justin Bullock, Svenia Busson, Deric Cheng, Adam Jones, Danielle Kutasov, Alejandro Maza, Joseph Mayer Matalon, Tanvi Nautiyal, John Soroushian, J. Walter Sterling, Lindsay Strouse, Steven Tom, Saheb Gulati, Elizabeth Vance, and Professor Yong Zhao for their invaluable contributions.

While the views expressed in this report are our own, they would not have been possible without the contributions of these individuals and the organizations they represent. Their work on the front lines of education, training, technology, and workforce strategy continues to inform how the United States can prepare for an AI-driven economy in ways that are resilient, equitable, and forward-looking.