


Today, more than half the nation's states are exploring or implementing sector strategies, a workforce training model that aligns businesses' need for skilled workers with workers' need for good jobs.



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evidence shows.

Sector strategies are among the few workforce interventions that improve employment opportunities for workers and increase wages once on the job, statistical

This is likely why an estimated 1,000 sector partnerships are in place across the country, including in Arizona.

Sector strategies are partnerships among employers, government, education, economic development, labor, community organizations and other stakeholders. They focus on the workforce needs of an industry within a regional labor market.

On the state level, this approach is welcomed by governors, who are increasingly focused on the needs of critical industries and workers.

As the national economy slowly recovers, sector strategies can address current skill gaps and forecast new ones. Sector strategies also provide a way to engage directly with industries and better align state programs and resources to serve employers and workers.

Over the past two years, Arizona's Sector Strategy Initiative has been led by the newly-formed Governor's Council on Workforce Policy, housed in the Arizona Commerce Authority.

This council focuses on training local areas on the sector partnership approach. Unlike other states, Arizona did not have funds to provide startup

Arizona used the sector strategies approach in a recent joint application by the Commerce Authority and state Department of Economic Security to the U.S. Department of Labor Workforce Innovation Fund.

Arizona created a Sector Strategy Committee as part of its Governor's Council on Workforce Policy. That effort included the creation of a 65-member coalition including business groups, community organizations, workforce boards, economic development agencies and tribes.

As a result, stakeholders can more accurately identify specific regional needs for workers. Using this data in metro Phoenix, Maricopa Workforce Connections has targeted several “in demand” occupations. They include advanced manufacturing, biosciences, green technologies, health care, information technology, solar, transportation, warehousing and logistics.

At a recent meeting at the Niagara Bottling's Phoenix plant, education, industry and government officials discussed training needs and strategies to deliver better outcomes for everyone involved.

The event, hosted by Kelsie McClen-
don, Niagara's senior human resources
manager, was attended by training
representatives from the SouthWest
Skill Center at Estrella Mountain Com-
munity College along with officials
from local employment staffing agen-
cies, the Arizona Department of Eco-
nomic Security and Maricopa Work-
force Connections.

One outcome of this collaborative effort was specific employee training, which could be taught at the SouthWest Skill Center.

The first group of Niagara Bottling employees will begin an evening course in "Math for Electronics" in mid-September.

The ability for students to enroll in a single course within an industrial skill-based program will provide highly specialized, specific short-term training in a wide variety of industrial skill



areas.

I think this approach could be effective in other areas, including in the water/wastewater industries.

Advanced sector strategies will increasingly create career pathways to meet industry's workforce needs, both today and tomorrow. For workers, sector strategies will establish clear paths to good jobs and careers.

Mark Haines is the industrial skills program manager at SouthWest Skill Center at Estrella Mountain Community College.