

Taking Action to Connect Learning and Work

The National Network bridges the “skills gap” by better connecting the worlds of learning and work. We’ve brought together a cross section of business and industry groups to communicate to educators and working learners the skills employers are looking for, as well as to encourage industries and employers to adjust their hiring and business practices to focus on the competencies and skills workers have and are developing in today’s evolving economy.

We are working on three priorities in 2015:

- 1) Identifying **competencies and promoting credentials** that lead to work

We developed our Common Employability Skills framework to describe the foundational skills all job candidates need for workplace success. Building on that, we are turning our attention to identifying industry-recognized competencies and credentials that have real value for students, workers and employers. An understanding of skills needed to succeed in the workplace and clear paths to gain valid credentials will lead students and workers to career success.

- 2) Creating more **work-and-learn opportunities** across the economy

On-the-job experiences harness the power of learning through work. Using models such as internships, apprenticeships, mentoring and job shadowing, employers can improve their workforce, while workers build the skills they need to prepare for a successful career. We’re developing a range of tools so employers know which models are right for them and how to implement and expand these real-world, hands-on experiences in their operations.

- 3) Encouraging more employers to use **competency-based hiring** practices

Employers will overlook qualified talent if they continue to recruit, screen and hire solely based on degrees or years of experience. Instead, businesses can better adapt to how working learners are pursuing and preparing for jobs by valuing the knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviors they bring to bear. The key is to persuade employers to use competency-based human resources practices to tap more qualified young people and working learners for in-demand jobs.