



2025 SHRM August In-District Advocacy Campaign: Strengthening the Education-to-Employment (E²) Pipeline

The Issue: Talent pipelines in the U.S. — from classrooms to careers — are **broken, leaky, and busted**. Too many graduates lack the skills needed to succeed in today's workforce, while millions of capable people remain sidelined due to outdated systems, misaligned training and curriculum, and limited access to opportunities. This disconnect threatens workforce participation, innovation, and economic growth.

SHRM POV: SHRM's E² Initiative is focused on fixing the fractured education-to-employment pipeline through awareness, advocacy, and action. No single sector can solve this alone. Employers, educators, policymakers, and communities must collaborate to bridge the skills gap, expand access to career pathways, and ensure workforce readiness. Public policy should especially support small and midsize employers to keep pace with evolving talent demands.

SHRM Policy Solutions:

- **Career and Technical Education:** Support bills such as the Connecting Small Businesses with Career and Technical Education Graduates Act of 2025 (H.R. 1642), which invests in and incentivizes employer partnerships with secondary schools to develop CTE programs aligned with real-world needs.
- **Hands-On Learning:** Expand Perkins Act funding to support experiential, skills-based education. Back legislation such as the Youth Workforce Readiness Act of 2025 (H.R.2910), which promotes skills development, work-based learning, and job readiness.
- **WIOA Reauthorization:** Urge your members of Congress to prioritize strengthening and reauthorizing WIOA, including national service programs like AmeriCorps that support skill development and workforce readiness.

SHRM Research:

- **Workforce Readiness:** Only 67% of recent graduates said they feel ready for work, versus 76% of students and 70% of HR professionals.
- **Top Hiring Challenges:**
 - Lack of experience (40%), technical skills (37%), and power skills (30%) are the top challenges cited by employers.
 - 1 in 4 organizations report that full-time regular positions they've hired for in the last 12 months have required new skills.
- **Apprenticeships:**
 - 78% of employers that offer apprenticeships said they help address talent shortages.
 - Larger employers are more likely to offer formal apprenticeship programs.
- According to [SHRM Foundation](#) research, many workers from overlooked talent pools are already in the workforce but are often excluded from traditional recruitment methods:
 - 1 in 3 adults in the U.S. has a criminal record.
 - 25% of U.S. adults live with a disability.
 - There are 18 million veterans and 1 million military spouses and caregivers in the U.S.
 - 12% of youth ages 16 to 24 are not in school or working.



- The population of people ages 60 and older grew 34% from 2008 to 2018.

Meeting Soundbite: “America’s education-to-employment pipeline is leaking talent at every stage. Too many graduates aren’t job-ready, and too many skilled individuals are overlooked. SHRM’s calling for smart, bipartisan solutions—to close the skills gap, prepare all workers for the future of work, to keep America competitive.”