

# Providing Meaningful Work for All Americans: An Agenda for 2020

## Academy Election 2020 Project

### Working Group: Connect Individuals to Meaningful Work

## Background

Today, connecting individuals to meaningful work has societal urgency; it is the means by which we can address growing unemployment, disconnection from the current and future economy, and growing income disparities. Work has both instrumental and intrinsic values and it is important to both individuals and families. The Covid-19 pandemic has caused rapid changes to the world of work and has caused many individuals and communities to experience a sense of dislocation, income inequity and loss, even as the income and wealth of others continues to grow. Although there is no easy fix for the challenges the Covid-19 pandemic has caused, the Administration in 2021 can take steps to stabilize and improve the situation in the short- and long- term.

## Recommendations for 2021

- 1. Make workforce development and opportunity a key part of any infrastructure plans and strategies** by leveraging infrastructure strategies, plans, and funds to create demand and to focus on future needs and sustainability.
- 2. Use collaborative governance models to ensure that workforce development programs can satisfy demand** that is centered on individuals and families rather than the agencies or levels of government that provide the services and recognizes that many employment decisions are made locally.
- 3. Improve connections between job seekers and employers by streamlining the employment pipeline** by coordinating the many existing and developing new educational programs to create a continuous ladder of workforce development from high school to graduate school, or from high school through increasingly demanding technical credentials.
- 4. Expand national service programs**, like the Peace Corps and the Cooperation for National and Community Service, by increasing the number of available positions; enhancing the compensation and benefits; and enhancing cross-sector collaboration in coordinating and delivering these programs.
- 5. Develop a longer-term strategy to enhance social equity and meaningful work** and coordinate social safety net programs with the implementation of long-term workforce development actions.

## Additional Resources

These resources provide additional information and recommendations in the line with the Election 2020 paper, Providing Meaningful Work for All Americans: An Agenda for 2020.

[The Academy: Election 2020: Providing Meaningful Work for All Americans](#)

[The Academy: Round Table on Connecting Individuals to Meaningful Work](#)

[GAO: Employment and Training Programs: Department of Labor Should Assess Efforts to Coordinate Services Across Programs](#)

[GAO: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act: States and Local Areas Report Progress in Meeting Youth Program Requirements](#)

### The Challenge: Connect Individuals to Meaningful Work

Humans have an innate quest for meaning. Our jobs and our work are a principal means for fulfilling that need—they have both instrumental and intrinsic value. Instrumentally, work provides the means by which we make a living and support our families. Work also has important implications for one's personal identity, with much of our self-esteem deriving from it. When the work is perceived as meaningful, people have a sense of fulfillment and purpose that not only strengthens their psychological welfare, but also contributes to other aspects of life and to an individual's overall life purpose.





---

## Working Group

David Gragan, Chair, Chief Learning Officer, DC Office of Contracting and Procurement

Rich Callahan, Professor, School of Management and Chair, Department of Public and Nonprofit Administration, University of San Francisco

Teresa Gerton, President and Chief Executive Officer, National Academy of Public Administration

Mark Pisano, Professor of Practice of Public Administration, University of Southern California

Joyce Wilson, Former Chief Executive Office, Workforce Solutions Upper Rio Grande

John Vanyur, Owner, John M. Vanyur Consulting Services

## Academy Staff

Joseph P. Mitchell, III, Director of Strategic Initiatives and International Programs, National Academy of Public Administration.

James Higgins, Research Associate for Grand Challenges in Public Administration, National Academy of Public Administration.