

Rework America Alliance Small and Medium-sized Business Engagement:

Lessons Learned and Vision for the Future

AT A GLANCE

The Rework America Alliance (RAA) focuses on improving economic advancement for workers who have gained skills through experience but lack a bachelor's degree. This report details how the RAA furthers skills-based practice adoption amongst small and medium-sized businesses. Key lessons learned, future plans, and recommendations are also shared.

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Executive summary

This report explores the Rework America Alliance's (RAA) approach to influencing small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) to adopt skills-based practices. It highlights the critical role of SMBs in the U.S. employment landscape and the potential for skills-based practices to boost the economy and create equal access to quality job opportunities.

The report also summarizes key lessons from the RAA's experiences and offers the following recommendations for those seeking to replicate its work:

- **Prioritize outreach and engagement with SMBs:** Actively reach out to SMBs to educate them about the benefits of skills-based hiring and provide resources and support to implement these practices.
- **Build partnerships with industry associations and chambers of commerce:** Collaborate with these organizations to amplify the message of skills-based hiring and provide tailored resources and support to their member businesses.
- **Develop clear and compelling narratives:** Craft stories that highlight the business case for skills-based hiring and the positive impact it can have on the bottom line.
- **Offer practical tools and resources:** Provide SMBs with easy-to-use tools and resources to help them identify and assess skills, develop skills-based job descriptions, and implement effective training and development programs.
- **Support regional and local initiatives:** Work with regional and local partners to develop and implement targeted strategies to promote skills-based hiring in specific industries and communities.

01. Introduction

The Rework America Alliance (RAA), an initiative of Jobs for the Future (JFF), is a nationwide partnership of nonprofits, private sector employers, labor unions, civil rights groups, educators, and others. Its focus is helping workers who have built skills through experience but don't have a bachelor's degree move into [quality jobs](#), including Black and Latine workers, who face some of the most challenging barriers to economic mobility.

In order to achieve its goals, the RAA drives employers to adopt skills-based talent management practices and expands access to skills-based and human-centered [career navigation](#). While the RAA believes that both prongs of this approach are required to affect system change, the two are separated here to focus on a deeper exploration of what is needed to drive widespread adoption of comprehensive skills-based talent management strategies by small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs).

Collectively, SMBs represent approximately 46% of the United States' employment landscape.¹ To move the United States to a more powerful, skills-first economy and support the growth of small businesses in communities across the country, this segment of employers must be supported in accelerating their adoption of skills-based talent practices. The skills-based movement is not only a powerful lever in expanding access to quality jobs for all U.S. workers, widespread adoption of skills-based practices can also be an economy booster, by helping employers more easily connect to diverse pools of talent.

This report explains the RAA's approach to influencing SMBs' adoption of skills-based practices, summarizes key lessons from those experiences, offers recommendations to those in the field seeking to replicate the RAA's work, and outlines future RAA goals for driving employers to hire and promote workers who have built skills through experience into quality jobs.

02. History

Millions of people in low-wage roles throughout the United States cannot access quality jobs that provide financial stability and opportunities for upward mobility. This problem is particularly acute for the 62% of U.S. workers age 25 or over who do not hold a bachelor's degree.² This artificial barrier disproportionately impacts Black and Latine workers, with 75% and 79%, respectively, lacking a four-year degree.³

To address these barriers, the Markle Foundation established Skillful, the RAA's precursor, catalyzing the skills-based movement. The effort was launched in Colorado in 2015 and expanded to Indiana in 2018. The two states served as a testing ground and validated the need for skills-based solutions for career coaches and employers. To bring the lessons that had been learned to other parts of the country, the Skillful State Network was formed. That nonpartisan collaboration between governors and senior workforce leaders made a commitment to expanding economic mobility through a skills-based approach; it would later become the Rework America State Network (State Network).

In 2020, recognizing the opportunity to build a cross-sector movement and influence lasting change across a wide array of stakeholders, Markle launched the RAA, a nationwide partnership of nonprofits, private sector employers, labor unions, civil rights groups, and educators. The Skillful initiative was fully embedded into the RAA. The RAA network—the partnership of stakeholders that advise RAA staff members in the strategies they pursue— and the State Network have been instrumental in creating a more inclusive and skills-based labor market by developing resources for employers and career navigators, as well as shaping deployment strategies that positively affect workers who face systemic barriers. A summary of the RAA's employer-facing resources—with direct links to each tool—is included in Table 1.

Table 1.

	Programs		Tools			
	Activator	Accelerator	Skillful Talent Series	The Skillitizer	Skills-based sourcing and hiring playbook	Skills-based Hiring Toolkits
Audience	Change leaders, Business advisors, and Workforce Specialists	HR professionals, Hiring managers, Recruiters	Senior business leaders; anyone who advises business, HR teams	Hiring managers and human resources leaders	Senior business leaders; anyone who advises business, HR teams	Anyone who advises business, HR teams
Outputs	Individuals learn how to engage employers in implementing skills-based hiring and talent management practices	Small to mid-sized business learn to lead change at their organization by adopting skills-based hiring and talent mgmt. practices	Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) certified for professional development credit.	Generates customizable skills-based job descriptions	Updated skills-based talent management strategy.	Each toolkit includes a skills-based job posting, interview questions, and onboarding plans.
Unique Attributes	3 instructor-led online sessions	Multiple delivery options; 1:1 coaching sessions	5 modules cover the key pillars of skills-based hiring: recruiting, hiring, onboarding, and training and advancement.	Auto-populates fields with descriptions of skills and tasks the job is likely to involve.	Step-by-step guide to implementing more equitable and effective approaches to employee recruiting, hiring, and advancement.	11 in demand jobs; built alongside industry experts.
Similar Attributes	Access to additional resources including self-paced training, videos, online tools, and case studies		Provides much of the foundational material for both programs.	N/A	Summarizes foundational material for both programs.	N/A



03. Approach

By April 2021, the RAA had deployed resources and provided technical assistance to five worker-serving organizations in five cities. In 2022, another five cities were added to its portfolio. Two core principles guided that work. One was to approach sites as thought partners. These sites helped build and test products and refine strategies within the context of organizations doing the work on the ground. The other was to work toward transitioning leadership to the local organizations so they could eventually lead community adoption of skills-based practices throughout their networks. Those guiding principles remain core to the RAA approach today.

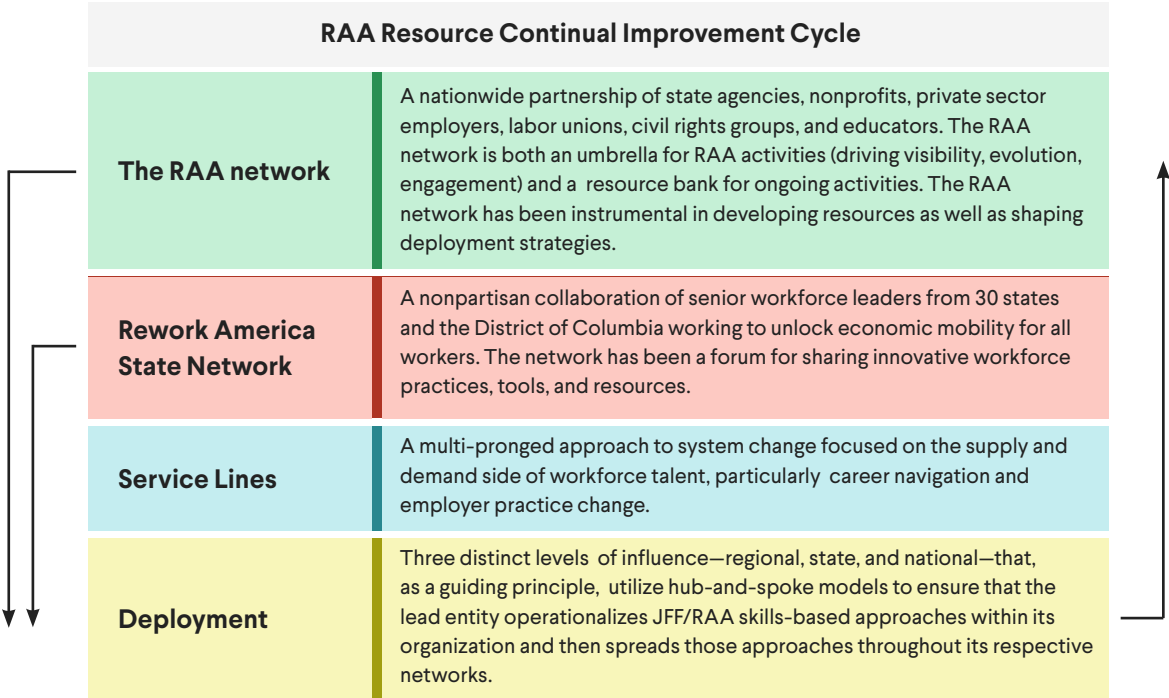
Although this effort was successful and provided valuable lessons about the efficacy of the RAA approach, the scope of change was limited to individual partner organizations and their network partners in their regions. The RAA revised its strategies in late 2022 to drive broader adoption of skills-first talent management and human-centered career navigation practices. This shifted the focus of the RAA's work from delivering strategies to a limited number of local organizations to engaging with intermediary organizations that have national reach. This revised approach has allowed the RAA to work with several national partners to co-design a customizable strategy that will have a broader reach and support the adoption of skills-based practices. Its work with national partners has already allowed for the implementation of a systems-change approach that enables career navigation and employer strategies to be implemented in tandem by national organizations and their regional and local affiliates.

Co-designing strategies with partners has led to high levels of trust in those partnerships, increased adoption of skills-based practices, and the development of meaningful feedback loops that foster innovation. Some partners utilize all of the RAA's available resources in a coordinated fashion, while others choose to apply specific ones to achieve goals that are meaningful for their organization. Other partners adapt the resources and techniques to better meet their unique operational contexts and the needs of their constituents. These partners' innovations and new approaches are then incorporated into the RAA's strategies to continually refine best practices that can be shared broadly. This type of evolution also accelerates the goals of the RAA.



Herein lies one of the RAA's greatest values: While there are multiple networks in the skills-based space, the RAA network is unique in that it incorporates resource design and creation with deployment strategies, feedback loops, and continuous improvement cycles to collectively achieve positive results. These partners collaborate with the RAA to shape programming and share resources with the field. RAA staff members ensure that feedback from partners on the ground is communicated throughout the network, which then synthesizes that feedback to improve programmatic impact. Figure 1 summarizes how the RAA moves resources into the field, starting with the RAA network:

Figure 1



04. Impact

How the RAA Model Tracks and Amplifies Employer Change

The RAA Learning and Impact Framework is designed to help organizations understand how their work creates fair employment opportunities for workers without a bachelor's degree, including Black and Latine jobseekers. It is structured around three components of change that set conditions that lead to desired outcomes for workers: the sourcing of resources and capabilities, the delivery of RAA resources and strategies, and practice change. By evaluating and learning about the effectiveness, outcomes, and impact of these interconnected components of change, the RAA can ensure that its work is leading toward a skill-based workforce development ecosystem that improves the ability of workers who have built skills through experience but don't have a bachelor's degree move into quality jobs.

Figure 2: Learning Framework





Sourcing of Resources and Capabilities

This component of change focuses on developing, curating, and refining the resources and strategies that support and promote human-centered and skills-based career navigation and skills-based talent management practices. The RAA strives to understand how these practical, implementation-ready resources help companies transition to skills-based hiring practices with minimal disruption to their operations.



Practice Change

This component of change focuses on how and to what extent the RAA's partners are embedding its resources and strategies into organizational practices and how those partners are engaging with employers to facilitate their adoption of skills-based practices. Furthermore, the RAA strives to understand which skill-based practices resonate most with employers and how they review and revise HR practices and talent management processes.



RAA by the Numbers

Activators are individuals capable of guiding and helping employers to adopt skills-based practices. From 2021 through 2023, the RAA has trained over 300 of them across the country. This network of Activators has engaged with an estimated 4,000 employers. As mentioned above, the RAA learned through its earlier work that deeper engagement with national and regional employer intermediary organizations yields better scale and sustainability compared with working directly with employers. Since January 2024, the RAA has trained 112 Activators at 67 local community-based organizations. Working through their national umbrellas, they have reached an estimated 2,045 employers, mostly SMBs. This scaling strategy resulted in a higher number of employers engaged within 2024 than the average number over the previous three years.

Our team of researchers and analysts from JFF and the RAA explored the outcomes and impact in more detail through a thematic analysis methodology. The findings are presented below.



Delivery of Alliance Resources and Strategies

This component of change emphasizes learning about the effectiveness of distributing RAA resources through partnerships with worker- and employer-facing organizations and the Rework America State Network. The RAA strives to understand the extent to which the RAA's relationships with partners are beneficial and contribute to their shared goal of implementing skills-based workforce strategies.



Impact on Workers

The impact that RAA wants to see is better outcomes for workers who have built skills through experience but don't have a bachelor's degree. The RAA strives to learn how worker-facing organizations, employer-focused organizations, and states are improving the career navigation experiences and employment outcomes of workers. When possible, it explores the job placements, wage growth, and career advancement that workers have experienced as a result of skills-based practices.

05. Findings and Lessons Learned

The Research, Evaluation, & Analytics team at JFF is leading a qualitative study to understand how RAA partners use RAA tools and resources in their work with employers and what improvements, if any, are needed to better support their work. In the first phase of this study (Summer-Fall 2024), we conducted interviews with leaders from seven organizations: four currently funded national partners and three regional partners previously funded by the RAA. We also conducted five focus groups with staff members from local affiliates of the national partners, many of whom had recently undergone RAA training.⁴

In this phase of the study, we worked to answer the following core questions that correspond to the impact model's components of change: the sourcing of resources and capabilities, the delivery of RAA resources and strategies, and practice change.

1. Why and how are organizations engaging with the RAA?
2. How are organizations using the RAA's employer framework for skills-based talent management, plus other RAA tools and resources, and what results are they seeing?
3. Are there opportunities or strategies to strengthen the RAA overall, its materials, and/or the partnerships between RAA and other organizations in order to better drive employer engagement and action?

Transcripts from the interviews and focus groups were coded for thematic analysis, and early findings were reviewed by both research team and program staff members. The findings presented here synthesize what we learned about the use of RAA resources in the field and highlight lessons learned that can inform future work by the RAA and the field to grow the adoption of skills-based talent management practices.

Why Organizations Partner With the RAA

While everyone we spoke with had a unique perspective on why their organization was partnering with the RAA, there were consistent themes tied to organizational priorities. Given the mix of partners and the organizational roles that were represented in the study, most of the identified reasons for partnering with the RAA were related to jobseekers and employers. These priorities were often on the same skills-based practice continuum, with the balance shifted to one side or the other based on the orientation of the organization (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Skills-Based Practices Continuum



Six priorities stood out as particularly relevant to collaborating with the RAA:

- **Enhancing opportunities for Black and Latine communities**, including increasing access to job training and employment for those without traditional degrees
- **Driving economic advancement** to foster upward mobility for populations that have been underserved by public and private institutions, by creating pathways for economic advancement and addressing barriers to employment
- **Removing barriers to employment** by actively working to dismantle obstacles preventing access to opportunities for those without degrees, including promoting the credibility of alternative training programs and pathways
- **Creating opportunities to connect learners and employers** in the local/regional labor market to facilitate skills-based hiring
- **Engaging employers in skills-based practices** by partnering around meaningful changes in talent management strategies to benefit both jobseekers and employers
- **Scaling effective practices** by developing strategies to efficiently instigate skills-based hiring shifts across multiple employers in a sector/region

Study respondents also identified internal organizational priorities that were related to their RAA partnership, including:

- **Strengthening capacity-building efforts** by equipping staff members and affiliates with tools and resources to effectively address talent challenges in their communities.
- **Expanding partnerships** with other organizations focused on skills-based hiring, talent management, and support practices.

- **Committing to continuous improvement** through regular program assessments that inform strategic priorities and help align efforts with both jobseeker and employer needs within communities.
- **Improving data tracking and evaluation** for measuring and monitoring the success of RAA initiatives. This helps partners evaluate program effectiveness and supports continuous improvement efforts.

How Organizations Are Using RAA Tools and Resources

All of the RAA partner organizations in the study had completed Activator training and were using or starting to use Activator resources in their work. All of the partners were also using the Skillitizer tool. Another commonly used RAA resource was the Skillful Talent Series. A few partners, including National Urban League (NUL) and its affiliates, had completed the Accelerator program training and were starting to use Accelerator resources. Figure 4 below details which types of training and tools were being used by each partner at the time of the study. The national partners were the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE), the NUL, Rural LISC (Local Initiatives Support Corporation), and UnidosUS; the three regional partners were the Indiana (IN) Chamber of Commerce, Goodwill Easter Seals Minnesota (GESMN), and the Orlando Economic Partnership (OEP).

Figure 4: RAA Employer Resource Usage by Partner

	ACCE and affiliates	GESMN	IN Chamber	NUL and affiliates	OEP	Rural LISC and affiliates	UnidosUS and affiliates
Activator	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Accelerator	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
Skillful Talent Series	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Skillitizer	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Everyone we spoke with indicated that RAA resources and training were valuable to their work. One of the key benefits of RAA partnership is the professional development available to staff members in partner organizations and at affiliates to help them better understand the labor market and enhance their ability to promote skills-based talent management with employers and/or jobseekers. How RAA resources were being used varied significantly depending on the length of time the individual had been engaged and/or how long the organization had been partnering with the RAA. Many of the local affiliate staff members we spoke with in focus groups had only recently completed training and were still determining how to bring the resources to bear in their work. The organizations that had been engaged with the RAA over a longer period, including regional partners who were no longer receiving RAA funding at the time, were deeper into putting RAA resources into practice and had adapted RAA materials to meet the needs of their communities.

How Partners Work With Employers, and the Results They See

Representatives from RAA partners, including workforce development organizations, said that they appreciate the practical resources and workshops that equip them with strategies to support employers in adopting skills-based hiring practices. RAA partners have taken advantage of the flexibility and broad applicability of RAA resources to customize their approaches for working with employers in their regions. The following are among their approaches:

- Leading monthly three-hour, in-person sessions for employers that combine elements from Activator or Accelerator training, and/or the Skillful Talent Series
- Facilitating a series of eight 90-minute online sessions for employers that combines elements from the Activator and Accelerator training programs to cover topics across the hiring and talent development life cycle
- Providing support to individual employers for updating job descriptions using the Skillitizer resource, as well as introducing other skills-based hiring practices
- Updating the language they use when speaking with employers, to keep the conversation focused on skill needs rather than credentials or altruism

Organizations that have worked with employers that use the RAA resources reported that employers seemed to understand the value of skills-based talent management but often lacked the capacity (in terms of time and/or internal support) to implement significant change. The most common action employers had taken was to update job descriptions to focus on skills requirements rather than academic credentials. A couple of partners noted that some employers were beginning to change their interview practices, and they expressed hope that it is just the start of a broader employer shift to skills-based talent management and hiring practices. RAA partners know that this will take time; as one leader reflected: “Employers in crisis mode aren’t receptive to change. They have to be out of crisis mode to really begin to consider making lasting changes.”

Some RAA partners, recognizing their own role as an employer, have started to make the shift toward skills-based talent management within their own organizations. As is the case at other employers, these changes are primarily in the form of updated job descriptions and hiring practices. These partners reported that shifting to skills-based advancement practices would take more time and resources and a firmer commitment from leadership. Other partners shared that their organizations were quite small (five or fewer people) and that job openings or promotions were rare, so there had been little opportunity to implement the talent management practices they were encouraging other employers to adopt.



How Partners Work With Jobseekers, and the Results They See

Many of the affiliate partners work predominantly with jobseekers and reported that they have used RAA materials to help individuals recognize and document their skills, as well as to develop the confidence needed to respond to job postings they might not have previously believed were a match. Through one-on-one coaching sessions and group job-search workshops focused on resume development, as well as mock interviews and other job search activities, partners are using RAA materials to prepare jobseekers for the current labor market.

Jobseekers benefit from easy-to-use tools like Skill My Resume, co-created with Lightcast, which quickly generates resumes and helps people engage with employers. Ongoing coaching, community practice sessions, and regular check-ins help affiliates tailor their approaches and offer more relevant opportunities to jobseekers. Overall, the program fosters a collaborative environment that empowers both jobseekers and affiliates to better navigate the skills-based job market.

Opportunities to Strengthen RAA Resources and Related Supports

This first phase of the study generated numerous recommendations from partners about how RAA resources and support services could be strengthened. The requests related to RAA resources highlighted the need for updated materials, including translations into Spanish and other languages; materials targeted for specific industries; shared marketing and communications materials; and more case studies or other evidence demonstrating that skills-based talent management practices work with different types of employers.

As for RAA support services, partners requested the creation of a community of practice where practitioners could come together to share and learn from one another; alternate training structures to meet the needs of diverse learner populations and those juggling multiple roles; and the creation of a repository where practitioners could share presentation decks and talking points aimed at employers and jobseekers. These recommendations have been shared with RAA leadership, and work is already underway to address some of the most common requests.



06. Recommendations to the Field

While the skills-based movement is growing across the country, more work is needed to increase adoption of skills-based talent management practices—especially among small and medium-sized employers. The following recommendations are intended for RAA partners and other organizations working to improve local, regional, and national labor markets:

1. Start internally, then tell your story.

Commit to making a shift toward skills-based talent management practices in your organization, and document your progress. Don't be afraid to note the challenges and what you are doing to overcome them. Write up your own experience in a case study or create a [short video](#) and share it with the employers you work with—and with the broader RAA network. Promoting skills-based practices through industry marketing, and sharing success stories at conferences and via trade associations, can boost adoption and help to normalize the approach.

2. Grow your approach.

The Accelerator program is intended to build on the Activator training and other RAA resources to drive deeper engagement with employers. More partners and staff members need to learn how to facilitate the Accelerator program with employers, and they need support to begin adapting what they've learned to fit their own contexts and employer engagement strategies.

3. Develop employer ambassadors in your community.

Turn early-adopter employers into ambassadors for the work, even if they have only updated their job postings thus far. Employers often need the reassurance that another business has tried a strategy and found it successful; when they can connect with someone in their own community who has seen success with the approach, that can give it credibility. Implement a mentorship system where experienced employers can guide newcomers in adopting skills-based hiring practices. Partnering with local chambers of commerce or other intermediaries that work closely with groups of employers can be critical for moving these ideas forward.

4. Provide training and hands-on support for employers.

To drive the adoption of skills-based practices, it's crucial to provide employers with both training and hands-on support. Many employers may be hesitant to embrace this approach due to uncertainty around crafting job descriptions or assessing candidates' skills effectively. Offering practical assistance, such as expert guidance on creating job postings, can help employers feel more confident in making the shift. Additionally, providing certifications for HR professionals and others who master skills-based practices can incentivize adoption and foster wider use. The RAA's free learning management system is an essential tool for aligning skills with job opportunities, but greater employer engagement is needed. Offering user-friendly guides, success stories, and personalized training through webinars or one-on-one sessions will encourage employers to fully leverage the system's capabilities.

5. Foster employer-job seeker relationships that center skills.

Building stronger relationships with employers can help them see the value in looking beyond traditional resumes. Organize career fairs or hiring events focused on skills-based hiring, allowing candidates and employers to meet in a more informal setting. During these events, host workshops to educate employers on how to assess skills, and jobseekers on how to present skills effectively.

6. Spotlight measurement and impact.

To drive further adoption of skills-based practices, employers need to see measurable results from such practices. Demonstrating success through data can help employers feel more confident in their decision to embrace this approach.

7. Build infrastructure for ongoing support.

To effectively promote skills-based hiring among SMBs, organizations should develop comprehensive support systems that combine practical implementation tools—like skills assessment templates, job description generators, and interview question banks—with strategic partnerships through industry associations and chambers of commerce, which serve as crucial components of broader regional and local initiatives. These partnerships enable the creation of sector-specific working groups, community-based pilot programs, and connections with educational institutions, while establishing ongoing sustainability through implementation coaching, peer learning communities, regular check-ins, and impact measurement tools that help employers continuously refine their skills-based approaches to address evolving workforce needs and maximize long-term benefits.

07. RAA Future Plans

Over the next three years, the RAA will grow and evolve by capitalizing on prior successes, current momentum, and the resources and opportunities available at JFF. This growth and evolution will occur through three drivers: the expansion of the RAA's reach through multiple avenues, the enhancement of the RAA portfolio of resources to maintain relevance, and growing the RAA network and its engagement. Below, we further explain how each driver will impact the RAA's overall approach to SMB engagement. We also provide a brief overview of how each driver will address the challenges surfaced in the "Findings and Lessons Learned" section.

1. Expand the RAA's reach through multiple avenues.

Employer-facing delivery partners need guidance on how best to advocate for and implement skills-based hiring and promotion practices with the employers they serve. The RAA will use its workforce expertise and partnerships to provide ongoing technical assistance, learn alongside its partners through continuous improvement cycles, and deploy resources to employer-facing partners through the RAA and State Network.

To ensure that the initiative continues to scale and increase its impact on workers, we aim to add at least three additional national intermediary organizations, multiple regional intermediaries, and public workforce partners over the next three years. The result we seek is to help employer-facing delivery partners reach more employers with the resources they need to implement skills-based talent management practices.

2. Enhance the RAA's portfolio of resources to maintain relevance.

Many employers will not hire or promote workers for quality jobs unless they have a bachelor's degree. A portion of these jobs don't necessarily require the skills derived from a bachelor's degree, but employers often don't recognize the skills that workers inside and outside their organizations have built. The RAA will capitalize on the collective expertise of the RAA network to develop and source effective resources that can be used to increase the adoption of skills-based talent management practices. These will include, but are not limited to, translating materials into Spanish; creating and cultivating case studies or other evidence

demonstrating that skills-based talent management practices work across multiple sectors; and building out effective approaches to ensure that the full talent management cycle is infused with skills-based practices, not just the earlier phases of hiring and onboarding.

3. Grow the RAA network and its engagement.

SMB leaders need the right technologies to enable efficient, coordinated talent practices that will support the shift to skills-based talent practices. By harnessing the RAA network's and JFFLabs' capabilities, the RAA will explore the potential of digital verifiable credentials, digital wallets, learning employment records, and other emerging data ecosystems to serve as tools for establishing more efficient, coordinated talent practices. We will also explore multiple potential roles for generative AI in forwarding a skills-based labor market.

Where gaps exist, we will expand our network's collective knowledge by identifying and working with new experts, thereby improving the guidance and resources we deliver to our partners in the field. These lessons, coupled with potential new resources, will be packaged and deployed to field partners to test adoption approaches and improve on resource content.

The result we seek overall is to help our employer-facing delivery partners access the most relevant and needed resources quickly and efficiently.

08. Call to Action

The RAA continues to increase engagement and expand its network. If your organization is aligned to the work described above—either as a delivery partner, a contributor through the network, or both—and would like to join the RAA's movement, reach out to RAA@JFF.org.

Endnotes

- 1 “Small Business Data Center,” U.S. Chamber of Commerce, accessed December 17, 2024, <https://www.uschamber.com/small-business/small-business-data-center>.
- 2 Lauren Weber, “62% of Americans Lack a College Degree. Can They Solve the Labor Shortage?” The Wall Street Journal, February 16, 2024, <https://www.wsj.com/lifestyle/careers/employers-open-more-doors-to-workers-without-degrees-but-few-are-getting-in-732f1098>.
- 3 Joe Lischwe, Alex Noether, Maria Gordian, Andrea D'Arcy, and Jon Barfield, *Eliminate a Degree of Difficulty: Hire for Skills, Not School* (Boston, MA: Bain & Company, February 2023), <https://www.bain.com/insights/eliminate-a-degree-of-difficulty-hire-for-skills-not-school/>; Lauren Mora, “Hispanic Enrollment Reaches New High at Four-Year Colleges in the U.S., but Affordability Remains an Obstacle,” Pew Research Center, October 7, 2022, [https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/10/07/hispanic-enrollment-reaches-new-high-at-four-year-colleges-in-the-u-s-but-affordability-remains-an-obstacle/#:~:text=Financial%20considerations%20are%20a%20key,among%20White%20Americans%20\(22%25\)](https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/10/07/hispanic-enrollment-reaches-new-high-at-four-year-colleges-in-the-u-s-but-affordability-remains-an-obstacle/#:~:text=Financial%20considerations%20are%20a%20key,among%20White%20Americans%20(22%25)).
- 4 Two focus groups were conducted with NUL affiliates. Affiliate training sessions were conducted between May and June 2024.



Building a Future
That Works
For Everyone