WORKFORCE

NGA grant to help reskill Alabama workers displaced by pandemic

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MONTGOMERY, Alabama — The **National Governors Association** (NGA) has awarded Alabama a $100,000 Workforce Innovation Network and Workforce Innovation Fund grant to develop innovative policies for reskilling Alabamians who have been displaced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The NGA grant will be used to support Alabama's Skills-Based Recovery Initiative, which will provide integrated education, workforce, and human services for displaced Alabama workers, allowing them to retrain and reenter the workforce in an occupation leading to a family-sustaining wage.

"I am grateful to the National Governors Association for awarding us this $100,000 grant because it will assist our broad-based efforts to help those Alabama workers who have been economically impacted by COVID-19," Governor Kay Ivey said.

"It's our goal to provide displaced workers with all the resources they need to get back on track and build a better future."

Governor Kay Ivey said the National Governors Association grant will help Alabama de to assist workers displaced by the COVID-19 pandemic. (Image: Governor's Office/Hal

CREATING PATHWAYS

Alabama's Skills-Based Recovery Initiative is a key element of the state's COVID-19 workforce recovery efforts. Between March 21, 2020 and January 30, 2021, just over 950,000 Alabamians filed an initial unemployment claim, signaling a critical need for assistance.

The Alabama Skills-Based Recovery Initiative will also offer technical assistance to employers for developing and deploying skills-based job descriptions using the Alabama Skills-Based Job Description Generator, a tool under development that will allow companies to create customized job descriptions for their firms.

It will also include a statewide gap analysis for each education and training provider in Alabama's public workforce system to determine whether the providers are offering adequate programs for the in-demand jobs in the region.

"While some industries have proven resilient during the COVID-19 pandemic, many individuals employed in retail or hospitality jobs before the crisis have not been able to engage in the training or upskilling they need to get into a new position," said Greg Canfield, Secretary of the Alabama Department of Commerce.

"This NGA grant will make a difference as we attempt to create pathways for these people."

Secretary Canfield serves on an inter-agency Workforce Recovery Task Force that stemmed from Alabama's participation in other NGA programs. He is joined by Jimmy Baker, Chancellor of the Alabama Community College System; Fitzgerald Washington, Secretary of the Alabama Department of Labor; Nancy Buckner, Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Human Resources; and Nick Moore, Director of the Governor's Office of Education and Workforce Transformation.

This group will serve as Alabama's state team for the NGA grant, with Moore serving as team lead.

"This initiative will help Alabama's workforce emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic stronger than ever," Governor Ivey said.

Governor Ivey's administration is committed to elevating workforce development in Alabama. Before the pandemic, she launched Success Plus, a strategic plan that aims to add 500,000 credentialed Alabamians to the workforce by 2025.

WORKFORCE INNOVATION

The NGA, founded in 1908, serves as the voice of the leaders of 55 states, territories, and commonwealths, helping governors identify priority issues

and deal with matters of public policy and governance at the state, national and global levels.

The NGA announced today that Alabama is one of nine states selected for the inaugural cohort of the Workforce Innovation Network, which is designed to help states build capacity for near-term innovation and longer-term strategies to prepare their workforces for a post-COVID-19 economy.

“Even as Governors work to defeat COVID-19 in their states and territories by making vaccines available to millions, they recognize that the effects of the pandemic on their workforces are far-reaching and, in some cases, may be permanent,” said Timothy Blute, director of the NGA Center.

“The effects of the pandemic have been disparate across sectors of society and the workforce, necessitating partnerships among governmental leaders, business and civic communities.”

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