New open-source data tool maps workforce training gaps and opportunities in the U.S.

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CAMBRIDGE, Mass – The workforce training sector in the United States is large but fragmented, making it difficult to understand it as a whole. Practitioners and researchers alike have struggled to understand the sector as a system that includes different types of providers and to identify where these providers are located and available to serve workers’ and employers’ needs and aspirations.

In response, the Project on Workforce at Harvard University created the Workforce Almanac – a first-of-its-kind, open-source directory and interactive portal of nearly 17,000 workforce training providers across the United States. It offers the most comprehensive view to date of U.S. workforce training providers, including provider names, location, and types.

"Nearly 70 million workers in the United States are skilled through routes other than a bachelor's degree and potentially rely on the infrastructure of short-term, post-high school workforce training opportunities that the Workforce Almanac is mapping," says Peter Blair, faculty co-chair of the Project on Workforce and advisor of the Workforce Almanac. The infrastructure for these alternative workforce training opportunities exists, but it is hidden in plain sight because of the sector’s fragmentation.

The more integrated approach to the geography and types of workforce training providers afforded by the Workforce Almanac yields valuable insights for stakeholders, including policymakers, philanthropies, training providers, employers, and workforce intermediaries. It shows, for instance, that of the nearly 17,000 short-term workforce training providers in the United States, at least two-thirds operate outside the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) system, which explicitly targets workforce development. It also sheds light on the variability in the makeup of workforce training providers serving communities in different states. Some states, such as Massachusetts, rely heavily on apprenticeship sponsors, while others, such as Maine, Wyoming, and Alaska, rely on WIOA-eligible providers. The Workforce Almanac directory also shows that there is a wide range in the number of workforce training providers serving the labor force across states, from 6 per 100,000 workers in Connecticut to 32 per 100,000 workers in Maine.

"There is a significant mismatch between job openings and job seekers in this country. Emerging technologies require new skills, and a more integrated approach to workforce training is required to better prepare the U.S. workforce now and in the future," notes David Deming, the Workforce...
Almanac Principal Investigator and the Isabelle and Scott Black Professor of Political Economy at Harvard Kennedy School.

The cost for diverse communities that cannot access effective workforce training options is high, especially in the context of training and occupational segregation and evident skills gaps. People need a broader view of training pathways that are more approachable, swift, and closer aligned to workplace needs.

The Workforce Almanac is an effort to better understand this broad and important system and offer open-access data for practitioners and researchers to use in ways that increase quality and equity in workforce training pathways.

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More information on the Workforce Almanac:
http://www.workforcealmanac.com/

The WorkRise Network, Strada Education Foundation, and Walmart have helped fund the Workforce Almanac, a research product from the Project on Workforce at Harvard.

About the Project on Workforce
The Project on Workforce is an interdisciplinary, collaborative project between the Harvard Kennedy School’s Malcolm Wiener Center for Social Policy, the Harvard Business School’s Managing the Future of Work Project, and the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The Project produces and catalyzes basic and applied research at the intersection of education and labor markets for leaders in business, education, and policy. The Project’s research aims to help shape a postsecondary system of the future that creates more and better pathways to economic mobility and forges smoother transitions between education and careers.

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