Skillful, a non-profit initiative of the Markle Foundation, is dedicated to enabling all American workers – particularly those without a four-year college degree – to secure good jobs in a changing economy.

Skillful is developing skills-based training and employment strategies in collaboration with state governments, local employers, educators, and workforce development organizations. Skillful advocates for a comprehensive workforce system approach to meet the unique challenges of rural communities. Through partnerships with local organizations we are able to provide better pathways to good jobs. Skillful works with these partners to help local employers recognize talent in their backyard, and to help workers recognize the skills they have, the training they may need, and the opportunities within their reach.

Skillful Rural Playbook

Skills-Based Workforce Strategies

Skillful, a non-profit initiative of the Markle Foundation, is dedicated to enabling all American workers – particularly those without a four-year college degree – to secure good jobs in a changing economy.
In today’s economy, people without four-year degrees are particularly vulnerable to job loss and difficulty in finding employment. In rural Colorado, close to 70% of the workforce do not have a college degree.\(^1\)

Rural Colorado faces specific challenges such as rapidly aging populations, limited broadband, youth out-migration, rapidly transitioning local economies, declining industries, and limited state-funded workforce resources. However, its communities also exhibit many strengths ranging from tight-knit communities, invested and engaged citizens, to opportunity and enterprise zones, private investment, and new industries emerging in the region.

Skillful, in partnership with the Telluride Foundation, recognizes the opportunity to leverage the many strengths of rural communities to connect and retrain rural Coloradoans so they can enter local emerging industries and obtain sustainable employment.

**Purpose and Goals**

- Skillful and the Telluride Foundation joined forces to support workers in the West End rural area of Southwest Colorado who were being displaced due to the closure of the local power plant and coal mine. This had the potential to reduce the region's median income from $55,363 to $39,000 and reduce 75% of the tax base.

- The initiative was designed as a practical approach to meet urgent and real needs in a community. Nimble than a long strategic planning process, this initiative complemented the efforts of local and regional economic development and workforce program activities with the core goal of connecting job seekers - and incumbent workers employed in declining industries - to local, emerging industries and businesses.

- The core strategy for this initiative was the placement of a local orchestrator who acted, amongst other roles, as a lead career coach, community connector, and project manager who advocated for and trained local stakeholders in the use of skills-based practices to connect local job seekers to emerging opportunities.

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**Skillful West End Initiative Overview**

**Most Promising Strategies**

The initiative demonstrated success through a comprehensive community-based approach that incorporated the adoption and use of skills-based practices to assist displaced workers and create economic opportunity for the local area. Eight promising human-centered, community-focused, and skills-based strategies emerged from the initiative. This playbook presents these eight strategies in detail along with a list of resources.

**Initiative Outcomes and Impact**

- **This initiative became a valuable, locally-driven resource for job seekers in the West End of Montrose County.** Job seekers were provided coaching and support towards obtaining employment which included cover letter and resume writing assistance, participation in mock interviews, and general mentoring support. This provided job seekers in the West End with skills-based coaching services emphasizing an understanding of their skills and the transferability of those skills to emerging opportunities.

- The initiative served all job seekers including displaced power plant and coal mine workers who needed assistance in finding work.

- Skillful West End's resume writing assistance had a **100% success rate** in securing interview opportunities for the job seekers who received assistance.

- **55% of the job seekers** served were placed in positions for which they had applied.

- Local businesses benefited from assistance in adopting skills-based practices for their talent management lifecycle. This included writing skills-based job postings by determining what competencies an employee needs to thrive and reducing bias in the interviewing and selection process.

- **18 businesses** in the West End engaged with the initiative to learn about and adopt skills-based hiring practices through Skillful’s services.

- Job postings for nearly every area business were shared through the Skillful West End’s Facebook page, making it easier to connect job seekers with hiring employers.

- Skillful West End played an essential role in establishing and leading a steering committee that produced a more robust high school apprenticeship program in the region. This initiative resulted in the area high schools placing **26% of all high school students** (grades 9-12) as apprentices at local companies.
## Most Promising Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promising Strategy #1:</th>
<th>Promising Strategy #2:</th>
<th>Promising Strategy #3:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empower a Local Orchestrator</strong></td>
<td><strong>Understand the Declining Industry</strong></td>
<td><strong>Understand the Displaced Workers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering an individual in this role provides value through the establishment of a point person who understands the community, can assist in connecting displaced workers across multiple service providing agencies, and uses a human connection to assess skills for the purpose of reskilling and job placement.</td>
<td>Benefits provided by the organization combined with community-based resources may provide added opportunities for the displaced workers. A comprehensive understanding of the timing of layoffs, training incentives, and the transferability of displaced workers’ skills can result in a faster and less disruptive transition to new opportunities.</td>
<td>Have an in-depth understanding of the displaced workers’ situations, personas, and skills. This understanding can help identify transferable skills, career goals, benefits offered, and how to provide individual assistance to the displaced worker.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Promising Strategy #4:</th>
<th>Promising Strategy #5:</th>
<th>Promising Strategy #6:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work in and Supplement the Local Infrastructure</strong></td>
<td><strong>Develop a Community Basis of Action</strong></td>
<td><strong>Skills-Based Career Coaching</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The local infrastructure provides various beneficial services that may be difficult to navigate without in-depth knowledge. Understanding the labor market opportunities, area employers, local and regional programs, and area economic needs can open opportunities for the displaced workers.</td>
<td>By identifying and building partnerships with local stakeholders, workforce and economic development efforts, needs and opportunities will emerge. To mitigate the potential exodus of displaced workers and other tax base contributors, funding resources, employers’ seeking talent and public sector opportunities in the local community should be leveraged.</td>
<td>The role of career coaches is increasingly important as technology transforms the economy, upends sectors, and reshapes jobs. In this modern labor market, coaches need to apply skills-based thinking in their work.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Promising Strategy #7:</th>
<th>Promising Strategy #8:</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Encourage Skills-Based Practices for Employers</strong></td>
<td><strong>Enact Program Marketing and Communication Strategy</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Employers are the pull mechanism in the labor system. In order for job seekers to have access to jobs and career pathways, employers must be open to providing employment opportunities to individuals with transferrable skills.</td>
<td>Marketing and communication strategies can help to inform job seekers about opportunities and services available. This could include social media as well as local resources which can expand the reach of the initiative to others in the community.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
On February 7th, 2019 Carla met with former coal mine employee, Tanya Narramore, to assist her with writing a resume and searching for available jobs that fit her skill set. Tanya was particularly interested in working for Montrose County R&B in Nucla. Carla assisted Tanya with the on-line application process, which included refining and uploading her resume.

Tanya was later contacted by one of the County employees who informed her that she would need to get a Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) to qualify for the job. Tanya met with Carla again. Carla arranged through the Montrose County Workforce for Tanya to receive CDL training in Grand Junction. This was paid for through the WIOA program.

Tanya completed the CDL training (3 weeks), received her CDL and she and Carla updated her resume and re-applied for the position, as well as another position with San Miguel County R&B.

Tanya was interviewed by both counties. She was awarded the position with Montrose County R&B in Nucla and began employment with them on April 15th.

Skillful West End initiative Helps Keep Local Talent Local in Rural Colorado

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Plan of Action: Empowering an Individual

This role provides significant value through the establishment of a point person who:

- Understands the community and provides a human connection to workforce development in the area.
- Assists in connecting displaced workers and job seekers to service providing agencies.
- Assesses skills for the purpose of reskilling workers and job placement.

Serving the Region

The individual in the orchestrator role serves the region and acts as a hub to identify the broad array of resources available in the area and assists displaced workers and other job seekers to navigate and negotiate those resources.

Roles and Responsibilities

By building trust and relationships with local agencies, job seekers, training providers, the closing organization, and local employers the orchestrator has the following roles and responsibilities:

- Uses in-depth knowledge about the local area, labor market, and employment opportunities to serve displaced workers and other job seekers.
- Applies skills-based practices and tools to the local workforce environment.
- Acts as a regional ambassador to understand and coordinate between displaced workers, local workforce system, the closing organization, and other employers in the area.
- Builds relationships and fosters local knowledge via participation on community committees, boards, and presentations to community organizations.
- Advocates for displaced workers within the regional workforce and economic development agencies.
- Describes the initiative’s work and goals to the local and regional stakeholders.
- Establishes partnerships and coordinates efforts that can supplement existing resources.
- Acts as a connector by directing employers to statewide resources and workforce centers for the purpose of posting jobs.
- Identifies resources that can assist populations with special needs that are beyond the scope of local area service providers.

Promising Strategy #1: Empower a Local Orchestrator

Carla & Tanya

Skillful West End initiative Helps Keep Local Talent Local in Rural Colorado

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Throughout the Skillful West End initiative, many challenges related to the closing of the power plant and coal mine emerged. The most relevant challenges concerned the industry and environment in which the closing organization operated. Understanding these conditions shaped the strategies and approaches enacted during the initiative.

- The jobs and skill sets needed to work in power plants and coal mines are largely set, with most of the required reskilling and upskilling provided by the employer. As this industry sector diminished, the lack of equivalent jobs became the biggest challenge.

- The displaced workers were hesitant to act until the closure of the power plant and coal mine was imminent. Many did not take advantage of training opportunities offered through the benefits provided through the transition plan of the closing business nor apply to other jobs until it was necessary.

- Job fairs and workforce development services hosted by state or regional agencies were provided two hours away from the community that was most impacted by the closure of power plant and coal mine. The events and services provided did not necessarily focus on opportunities in these local communities.

- Local job opportunities were not likely to match the average wage at the closing power plant and coal mine.

- In addition to the already limited local job opportunities available, the displaced workers generally lacked the transferable skills required for the very limited remote work opportunities.

- Local training facilities and opportunities for reskilling or upskilling did not exist. The regional training centers provided little opportunity due to a lack of eLearning programs and the distance from the West End to the nearest campuses.

### Promising Strategy #2: Understand the Declining Industry

#### Plan of Action: Help Through Employment Transitions

The closing organization may provide benefits and services to the displaced workers that are designed to help them through the transition. Understanding those benefits can help identify the inevitable gaps in services thus informing a local plan of action to assist the displaced workers with finding opportunities in the community. Combining the benefits provided by the closing organization with community-based resources will result in a better transition for the displaced workers.

#### Need to Learn

- The programs and benefits that the closing organization has enacted
- The key stakeholders within the closing organization and their level of local knowledge
- Clarity and scope of the benefits presented to the soon to be displaced employees
- The position types and number of impacted employees
- The gaps between the resources and services provided by the closing organization and the resources and services that are needed by the displaced worker
- Regional and local labor market data, information, and trends

#### Promising Strategies and Actions

- Navigate and nurture a relationship between the local orchestrator and the closing organization’s project manager to encourage collaboration and avoid an impression that supplemental resources and services are encroaching on an existing transition plan.
- Consider that there may be a delayed sense of urgency from employees depending on the nature of the closing, personal considerations, and other local environmental factors.
- Encourage the closing organization to identify the skills of current employees and how those skills could transfer to other internal and external opportunities or positions.
- Advocate that the closing organization provide impacted employees a list of their position-based skills acquired throughout their employment to assist them when applying for other opportunities.
Plan of Action: Understand the Worker Situation and Mentality
Developing an in-depth understanding of the displaced worker’s situation can help to identify transferable skills, career goals, transition benefits offered, and how to provide individual assistance to the displaced worker. Meeting with and understanding the displaced worker’s plans as early as possible can introduce them to services and resources and reduce time to finding new job opportunities.

Need to Learn
- The personas and action plans – if any – of the displaced worker
- The benefits and transition packages offered to the displaced worker and if those resources are fully understood and/or are being utilized
- Any training or reskilling benefits that have been used in the past and deadlines to use training and reskilling benefits
- The displaced worker’s willingness to consider and explore opportunities outside their immediate expertise but aligned with their skills

Promising Strategies and Actions
- Convince the displaced worker to decide about their future as early as possible - even when they are still receiving salary and benefits.
- Work with jobseekers on job preparation and applications while providing guidance, resources, and support.
- Understand what type of job the displaced worker would like to have, including the considerations of full-time/part-time, temporary, seasonal, distance, transportation availability, and drug testing requirements.
- Build awareness about local learning opportunities while determining if the displaced worker has flexibility to take classes or training outside of the local area or via remote learning.
- Send tailored notifications of positions available that might fit the displaced worker’s skills.

Potential Orientation of Displaced Workers

▲ Wait and See: They know the layoff is coming, but no specific date has been set as to when a decision needs to be made so the employee will wait and see without taking action.

▲ Reactionary: They know their local job will end so they are going to take immediate action and apply to any job opportunity in the company or another position that is similar, even if in another geographic area.

▲ End of Career: They are close enough to retirement and will continue working until forced to leave.

▲ Planner/Opportunist: They knew that their local job would be eliminated and took advantage of the educational opportunities offered. They are proactive action-takers and will apply for positions in the company or in other companies.

▲ Deep Local Roots: They know that they need a plan soon but do not intend on leaving the local area. They likely grew up and have family locally. They rely on spouse’s income until other local employment is available.

▲ Wing It: They may be able to start their own business locally and remain in the area. They will act when needed or when opportunities arise.

▲ Invested: They are committed to the company and may only need a little more time to get to retirement via pension. They are open to reskilling and upskilling and will apply to the best job available to continue their career with the company.
Plan of Action: Guide Local Relationships and Connections

- The local infrastructure provides various beneficial services that may be difficult to navigate without in-depth knowledge. Understanding the labor market opportunities, area employers, local and regional programs, and area economic needs can open opportunities for the displaced workers.
- Driving relationships and connections between the local foundations, economic development organizations, lenders and nonprofits can help to establish new industry and help displaced workers start their own business or purchase existing businesses. Working to keep the local infrastructure aware of each other’s work and initiatives and encouraging each entity to contribute to the development of the area establishes a higher likelihood of success.

Need to Learn

- Plans that state agencies and regional service providers have for reskilling or upskilling displaced workers
- General knowledge about programs, funding, and tools that are available to the jobseeker or displaced worker
- Programs offered through the regional workforce centers and how they might be complemented by the initiative
- Local or online post-secondary reskilling opportunities with traditional and non-traditional training providers
- Coverage and access to broadband internet to understand if remote work is an option for displaced workers
- Hiring practices and processes for medium to large employers and best practices of how the displaced worker can navigate those processes
- Options for alternative transportation in the area
- Labor market in the area including hiring organizations, benefits offered, compensation, and in demand skills

Resources and Partners to Consider

- Broadband Internet Providers
- State Government Entities
- Regional Workforce Centers
- Economic Development Organizations
- Loan Funding and Financial Resource Agencies
- Local Employers in Area
- Transportation Agencies
- Business Groups (Chambers of Commerce)
Promising Strategy #4: Work in and Supplement the Local Infrastructure (cont.)

Promising Strategies and Actions

Build and nurture a remote work and learning environment
- If broadband is available and accessible, look for remote working opportunities that fit the skills of the displaced worker.
- For sporadic broadband, develop or utilize a co-working space to act as a hub, access point and office space for remote workers.
- Expand outreach to regional employers and court the larger companies to embrace remote workers.
- Encourage online reskilling and upskilling to prepare displaced workers for remote work opportunities.

Engage and build awareness with area employers
- Advocate for flexible hiring processes and skills-based practices in recruitment, hiring, selection and onboarding.
- Determine how to translate the displaced worker’s resume and application to highlight transferability of skills.
- Identify employers with local or regional transportation options and inform displaced workers of those opportunities.
- Contact employers in the region about future employment needs, advocate for advantageous timing of position postings that coincides with layoff dates so that the displaced workers can be part of the applicant pool.

Encourage new business development to fill local needs
- Promote start-up opportunities and leverage loan agencies and financial resources to grow existing businesses and establish startups that fill a local industry gap.
- Identity financial advisory resources that are willing to reach out and work with displaced workers who are looking to establish their own business.

Partner with state agencies and regional workforce centers to leverage and engage existing programs that assist displaced workers and job seekers
- Explore open positions in state/regional governments that need to be filled.
- Assist state initiatives and regional workforce centers so they understand that their best intentions may not be exactly what is needed for the displaced worker at the hyper-local level.
- Work in partnership with existing initiatives and encourage cooperation between services provided to displaced workers.
- Build awareness of existing programs and WIOA funding to allow displaced workers to benefit from those resources.
- Advocate for hyper-local expansion of programs and services to meet the needs of the impacted locality and displaced workers who are place bound.
Plan of Action: Identify and Build Community Stakeholder Relationships

State government and regional service providers may not have a comprehensive understanding of the local area or may not have a physical presence easily accessible to the local population. By identifying and building partnerships with a range of community stakeholders, local industry needs, and opportunities emerge.

Area employers want to know what active role they can play in helping displaced workers who want to remain in the area. Training these employers about skills-based practices can result in more job opportunities. Funding resources, employers seeking talent, and public sector opportunities in the local community can mitigate the potential exodus of displaced workers and other tax base contributors.

Resources and Partners

- Town libraries act as community gathering places and as a hub for job resources and internet access
- Philanthropic foundations establish grant funding for community and economic development
- Community economic development corporations and chambers of commerce work to establish new business opportunities within the region through training and support
- K-12 school districts are impacted by displaced workers families leaving and can offer a supply of talent for the community in the form of apprentices and skilled graduates

K12’s Role in Community Action

The K-12 system is an essential partner for successful skills-based practice implementation in a local community. The graduates are the future workforce for emerging businesses and industries. The following strategies were successfully implemented during the Skillful West End initiative as a holistic workforce development approach.

- Partner with the career coach in the school district(s) to identify and discuss the pathways available to students upon graduation, including nontraditional learning programs, apprenticeships, and skills development.
- Provide resume writing, interview skills, and career exploration courses.
- Advocate for and implement work-based learning and apprenticeships, which can result in a pipeline of talent for local employers.
- Organize a steering committee of key partners from both schools and community to establish and guide work-based learning programs
- Identify a lead organization to assist with recruiting businesses
- Identify target occupational areas or career clusters to establish and build work-based learning curriculum
- Identify resources to purchase equipment that can help the local school train students in the occupational areas
- Bring local and regional employers into the schools to present on the importance of skills building and what to expect during the hiring and recruitment process.
- Identify if there is a shortage of substitute teachers, which may be a part time job opportunity for displaced workers.
Promising Strategy #5: Develop a Community Basis of Action (cont.)

Promising Strategies and Activities

Community Engagement and Partnership Building
◇ Co-locate in a shared space with other workforce infrastructure programs to create strong partnerships between the local orchestrator and other workforce and economic development stakeholders.
◇ Partner with the local libraries to promote the initiative and help identify displaced workers and other job seekers so that more people are aware of available resources.
◇ Build partnership with the local economic development cooperative to identify new business opportunities needed in the community so that efforts of the local orchestrator complement economic development activities.
◇ Communicate frequently with all local stakeholders so that individuals needing job search services are directed to the local orchestrator as a community-based resource.
◇ Reach out to philanthropic and grant making organizations to explore funding opportunities that may benefit the displaced worker and other job seekers through local investment of new businesses or expansion of existing businesses.

Employer Engagement and Skills Based Practice Adoption
◇ Engage area employers for the purpose of identifying employment opportunities for displaced workers.
◇ Consider public sector jobs - county level and town level - for the displaced worker who is place-bound.
◇ Work with employers on succession or hiring plans, as well as directing them to funding available to help increase pay to employees or grow their business.
◇ Help employers with future needs by identifying clusters of desired transferable skills, enhancing skills-based retention practice, and sharing the value of upskilling to grow their employees' skills.
◇ Solicit employers to participate in paid apprenticeship programs with regional school districts and work-based learning opportunities for displaced workers and adult jobseekers.
◇ Identify funding sources that can provide for a portion of the apprentice wage to leverage buy-in.

Job Seeker Engagement and Coaching Service
◇ Host career fairs focusing on the transferrable skills of the displaced workers.
◇ Advocate for the displaced worker and speak to local employers about potential jobseekers.
◇ Direct displaced workers interested in starting their own business to economic development resources including loan funding that can be utilized for business start-ups at a reasonable interest rate.
Promising Strategy #6: Skills-Based Career Coaching

Plan of Action: Train Local Career Coaches in Skills-Based Practices

In the modern labor market the role of the career coach is increasingly important as technology transforms the economy, upends industry sectors, and reshapes jobs. Coaches who use skills-based practices can more effectively help transition job seekers by identifying their skills relative to emerging opportunities. A career coach benefits local job seekers by providing assistance with resume writing and job applications. Empowering and training local career coaches to have a skills-based mindset and use skills-based tools provides displaced workers and other job seekers an invaluable resource to help them find their best job opportunity.

Promising Strategies and Activities

- Encourage and advocate that local workforce center, nonprofit, and education institution coaches engage with the Skillful Coaching Community of Practice (CCoP). This helps rural coaches overcome the physical disconnect from a network of coaches via state level events, network building, and sharing and learning from each other while they explore new resources and skills-based methods for helping clients. Participation in the CCoP will support and strengthening coaches’ skills to meet the challenges posed by a dramatically changing economy.

- Explore state and regional remote working options, then work directly with the displaced workers to identify which of the remote opportunities are aligned with their skills and the resources needed to work remotely.

- Identify and work with union leadership and other professional associations that provide displaced workers training and resources. Advocate that the unions and professional associations have a career coaching mentality with their members who are impacted by the closure of the organization.

- Identify a data solution that works for your region and map out an individual opportunity model that includes training and jobs options and reframes the discussion from one of getting a job to embarking on a career path.

- Direct displaced workers to local and regional training opportunities based on their needs. Resources should include traditional and alternative programs such as work based learning and employer-based training.

- Understand future needs of area employers. Identify clusters of skills needed and employer retention and succession plans. Knowledge about employers hiring and retention strategies can inform coaching activities.

- Encourage local employer human resource professionals to incorporate coaching practices into their day to day job. Facilitate the career conversations that employers are having with displaced workers and current employees.

- Work to ensure coaching initiatives and programmatic workforce solutions do not cannibalize each other but rather work together and supplement each other’s work. A coordinated approach, sharing resources, will provide clarity of services available for the displaced workers.
Promising Strategy #7: Encourage Skills-Based Practices for Local Employers

Plan of Action

Employers are the pull mechanism in the labor system. Employers need to hire skilled talent, reduce time to hire, and increase retention of top employees. Fostering broad employer interest and adoption of skills-based practices through local training, advocacy, leveraging existing infrastructure, and deploying skills-based tools is an essential part of a holistic approach to skills-based workforce development.

Promising Strategies and Activities

◇ Identify local facilitators who can be trained to offer Skillful® Talent Series training and can act as a consultant and trainer to help local employers adopt skills-based practices. The Skillful Talent Series compliments and helps the organization achieve the goals they are working towards by providing techniques that help the employer identify and articulate the skills needed in a role, recognize skills acquired from non-conventional career paths, fill skill gaps, open the door for more skilled employees, implement career development paths, and reduce turnover rates.

◇ Build partnerships and engage with local employers to identify needed skills and understand their hiring and onboard processes so that displaced workers and job seekers have a resource to help them navigate those complex and overwhelming processes.

◇ Leverage digital tools like Skillful Job Posting Generator, which helps employers write skills-based job postings that include standard competencies aligned to positions and job types.

◇ Encourage employers to transition from traditional hiring practices, which rely heavily on proxies for skills (i.e. the candidate’s degrees, their past job titles, and the interviewer’s subjective evaluation) to skills-based hiring practices, which focus on the skills needed to do a job well.

◇ Supplement local and regional business service representatives work to implement skills-based practices when accessing untapped labor pools, employer information services, employer support services, and workforce recruitment assistance.

Skillful has developed a set of proven tools and practices through its work with employers and employer associations, post-secondary education institutions and local community organizations that serve job seekers and incumbent workers. The Skillful Talent Series helps and supports organizations adopt and implement skills-based practices in the hiring processes listed on the next page.
Promising Strategy #7:
Encourage Skills-Based Practices for Local Employers (cont.)

A Pedigree-Based Job Posting
- Uses Credentials *(e.g. degrees, work experience)* to assume skill level.
- List of Qualifications on the job posting that lack specificity and prioritization.
- Has Unintentional Bias in job posting that discourages qualified applicants from applying.

A Skills-Based Job Posting
- Uses Competencies to attract and hire candidates that can do the job.
- Distinguishes Qualifications between required and preferred competencies.
- Reduces Bias by using inclusive language on the job posting and description.

Pedigree-Based Screening
- Uses Credentials *(e.g. degrees, work experience)* to screen out candidates.
- Has Unintentional Bias during manual and automated resume review.

Skills-Based Screening
- Uses Competencies required for the job to screen in candidates.
- Reduces Bias by incorporating pre-screening assessments and other techniques.

Traditional Interviewing
- Evaluates Fit with questions focus on evaluating culture and personality fit in the company.
- Produces Subjective Hiring which lacks methods to assess specific competencies and relies on subjective hiring decisions.

Skills-Based Interviewing
- Evaluates Competencies with questions which focus on evaluating a candidate’s competencies to better predict performance.
- Uses Skill Assessments such as work assignments and other assessments to validate applicants’ skill sets.

Pedigree-Based Selection
- Uses Credentials such as work experience to compare candidates’ potential performance.
- Relies on Unclear Process that use selection guidelines that may lack clarity and alignment for hiring decisions.
- Applies Unintentional Bias which, across the hiring team, result in compounding effect.

Skills-Based Selection
- Uses Competencies to directly and easily compare candidates’ ability to perform on the job.
- Applies a Structured Process that uses clearly defined and agreed upon selection guidelines to compare candidates.
- Improves Inclusivity through methods to reduce the impact of compounding bias.

Traditional Onboarding
- Administrative Focus on administrative and legal forms and benefits.
- Sink or Swim Unorganized Process and discussion that may result in unintentional bias.
- Inconstantly Applied Success of onboarding depends on specific position and hiring managers.

Skills-Based Onboarding
- Develops Competencies to focus on developing skills needed for a new hire to perform successfully in their new position.
- Supportive Environment ensures the onboarding is responding to individual needs of new employees.
- Inclusive by applying practices consistently to new hires across the organization.
Plan of Action: Inform Displaced Workers of Opportunities Available
Marketing and communication strategies can help inform the displaced workers of the range of opportunities and services available to them. Ensuring marketing and communication strategies include local resources can expand the reach of the initiative beyond the displaced workers to other job seekers and can notify employers about the initiative.

Marketing and Communication Outlets
- Local Newspapers
- Local Radio
- Community Websites
- Community Businesses
- Town Council
- Chamber of Commerce
- Community Bulletin
- Social Media

Promising Strategies
- Distribute custom business cards to libraries, economic development groups, and information boards in public community locations (i.e. Post Office).
- Create a local initiative-based page on Facebook and other social media outlets and invite all local friends to ‘like’ the page and share.
- Introduce the initiative at town council meetings, community meetings, chamber of commerce, and businesses to generate word of mouth awareness across a wide variety of stakeholders.
- Advertise the initiative in all local newspapers and publications and follow up with a continual advertisement on a regular basis.
- Hang flyers to describe the initiative and available resources on local job boards, in post offices, libraries, stores, and other public locations.
- Spread success stories from people or businesses who can identify tangible benefits resulting from the initiative.
COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the workforce ecosystem. The effects of the pandemic are being felt by the now unemployed and underemployed workers, employers who are struggling to stay in business, and stressed resources at the local, regional, and state agencies that provide much needed services. The crisis is accelerating trends in the transformation of work and is further fueling the displacement of workers and widening the economic divide. These conditions elevate the importance of the human connection, skills-based practices, and an equity approach to local workforce development activities. This addendum provides additional considerations for the post-pandemic environment.

Considerations for the Local Orchestrator
◇ The local orchestrator can play an important role in responding to a crisis. Their depth of knowledge about available local resources and their understanding of the needs of the local employers and job seekers position them to be an essential part of crisis response and post-crisis recovery activities.
◇ Using their broad connections and expanding their understanding of current labor market data, the local orchestrator can act as an expert to identify local concerns about the implementation of recovery programs, inform regional agencies about the local needs, and help overwhelmed agencies with crisis response activities.

Considerations for the Career Coach
◇ The career coach becomes more critical in response to the increased rate of unemployment. As more displaced workers are in the job market, the career coach must adjust and refocus their activities in response to the limited job opportunities available. The immediate focus is on helping displaced workers apply for unemployment benefits. A slow long-term recovery projected for some occupations and industries, coupled with more employers offering remote opportunities because of the pandemic means the coach should reframe the interim support provided to the displaced workers.
◇ The coach can reframe and focus on navigating to local training providers, while at the same time helping the job seeker find an income stream and wrap around services. In crisis there is opportunity to refocus the job seeker toward a gateway job that, when coupled with training programs and wrap around services, can lead to quality career progression opportunities.

Considerations for Area Employers
◇ A skills-based approach to talent management is shaped on the premise that employers need to change the way they look at talent. With so many workers displaced, employers have an opportunity to hire great candidates based on skills transferability rather than the traditional degree and experience requirements.
◇ The skills-based approach to talent management helps employers think through the differences in skills needed (pre- and post-pandemic) and how employees can gain skills based on changes to the organization in response to the crisis.
◇ Finally, as small and medium size businesses plan for productive reopening and project a slow post-pandemic growth period it will be essential to make the best possible hiring decisions despite the potentially large number of candidates. A skills-based approach to hiring and onboarding will result in a better workforce in the organization.
Skillful and Partner Resources

SKILLFUL Coaching Community of Practice (CCoP)
skillful.com/coaches/register/skillful-coaching-community-of-practice

Providing a virtual support network for career coaches to build their coaching skills through webinars and peer-led calls, share resources and content with their peers, and discuss how to best serve job seekers.

SKILLFUL Job Posting Generator
generator.skillful.com

A free, online tool that automates the creation of skills-based job postings for any role and provides a non-biased approach to writing job postings that is competency and skills driven.

SKILLFUL® Talent Series
skillful.com/employers

Helps employers understand and adopt skills-based practices in recruiting, hiring, onboarding and retention. Skillful also offers a facilitator guide, training, and additional support to enable workforce and economic development organizations to deliver the series themselves to their local business community.

How-To Guides and Templates
skillful.com/employers

Skillful offers resources such as how-to guides and templates that encompass all elements of talent management, from how to write more effective job postings to tips for improving interviewing techniques and the assessment of candidates’ skills. Employers can reference models for structured onboarding and for supporting employee career development and advancement.
External Resources

Rural Economic Development Initiative
cdola.colorado.gov/rural-economic-development-initiative
The Colorado Department of Local Affairs administers this program to help rural communities comprehensively diversify their local economy. There is information about local government planning grants, infrastructure grants that support economic diversification, and grants to support the growth and development of rural entrepreneurial eco-systems.

Startup Colorado
startupcolorado.org
Startup Colorado supports initiatives that benefit the long-term resources and success of Colorado’s rural entrepreneurs. In addition to providing support for rural entrepreneurs, there is information about programs, events, and funding sources.

Center on Rural Innovation (CORI)
ruralinnovation.us
CORI uses progressive public, private, and philanthropic partnerships and strategies to achieve sustainable economic success in rural America. Economic data, opportunity mapping tools, and innovation toolkits are available.

Aspen Institute’s Community Strategies Group
www.aspeninstitute.org/programs/community-strategies-group
The Community Strategies Group convenes, equips and inspires local leaders to build more prosperous regions. Their website includes economic and community development reports and resources with a focus on rural America.