**National Commission on Innovation and Competitiveness Frontiers**

**Working Group on** **Developing, Supporting, and Expanding the Modern Innovation Workforce**

***Session 3 Discussion Guide***

Wednesday, March 6th, 2024

1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

**Agenda**

* 1:00-1:10 – Welcome & Recap
* 1:10-1:50 – Discussion
* 1:50-2:00 – Conclusion & Next Steps

**Background & Context**

The ‘Future of Work: Developing, Supporting, and Expanding the Modern Innovation Workforce’ charter identifies five broad issue areas for the Commission and its Working Groups to explore:

1. Revitalizing U.S. education and training systems to foster a high-skilled future workforce.
2. Leveraging telework capabilities, digitalization, and emerging technologies to augment conventional work.
3. Navigating workforce challenges and opportunities created by increased automation.
4. Adapting to rapid labor force shifts and new models of work organization.
5. Expanding efforts to increase diversity and inclusion in the innovation workforce.

When this Working Group met in October 2023, discussion focused on navigating the workforce challenges and opportunities of automation. Specifically, the group identified four key themes:

* **Clarifying the role of AI and automation** in the workforce to increase public knowledge and maximize societal impacts.
* **Providing foundational skills to students and workers** to fully prepare for and capitalize on AI deployments.
* **Supporting employees throughout the shift to automation**, including providing skill building opportunities.
* **Reforming university culture and processes** to emphasize speed and increase alignment with industry.

**Discussion: Building a Stronger Tech Talent Pipeline by Increasing the Aperture for Talent Development, Acquisition, and Retention**

**GOAL: Build on past discussions and begin driving toward concrete policy recommendations.**

**TOPICAL FOCUS: Widening the aperture for talent**

*The questions below are intended to guide discussion and provide food for thought. Not all questions need to be directly addressed during the Working Group session. Moderators and Working Group participants will collaboratively shape discussion around priority issues.*

The U.S. is facing an acute shortage of talent, especially among high-skilled and technical workers. Positions that lack a sufficient supply of qualified talent range from researchers to cybersecurity professionals to fiber optic technicians and everywhere in between. This shortage is projected to grow in the coming years and decades. To prevent this looming crisis, the U.S. needs to tap into segments of the workforce that are struggling to enter the innovation economy but have strong potential.

How can policymakers and other stakeholders widen the aperture for (1) talent development at all ages, (2) acquisition of domestic and foreign talent, and (3) retention of critical workers in order to secure a stronger tech talent pipeline?

**Leveraging High-Skilled International Talent**

* What changes should be made to the U.S. immigration system to support and invest in building a competitive, high-skilled workforce of the future?
  + How can the U.S. better retain international students, who are increasingly returning to their home countries?
  + Are special policies and exceptions required for particular critical industries facing acute talent shortages?

**Sourcing Talent from Undertapped Communities**

* What steps can be taken to widen the aperture for talent development, acquisition, and retention along characteristics including socioeconomic status, location, and race?
  + How can engagement with underutilized communities be improved to better understand cross-cutting and community-specific grassroots needs?
  + Are there existing organizations or initiatives that have proven successful in widening the talent aperture? What learnings can be gained and applied elsewhere?
* How can policymakers support existing or novel partnerships between government, academia, and industry to utilize a greater diversity of talent?
* How can investments in support systems and benefits (e.g., healthcare, childcare) help expand the innovation workforce across geographies and demographies?

**Conclusion & Next Steps**

* This Working Group will meet again June 5th, from 1:00-2:00, to build on the ideas generated in this session and explore new topics. A short summary will be sent to Working Group participants in the coming weeks.