

Rework America Alliance: Helping Workers Move into Good Jobs

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Unprecedented is probably not a strong enough word to describe the current economic conditions in the country. Since March, tens of millions of workers have lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the most recent unemployment claims weekly report, over 30 million workers remained on a continued unemployment claim either through traditional unemployment insurance or the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation program. The impacts of the crisis have disproportionately hurt communities of color and women. An economic challenge of this nature has not been seen in a generation, and, at the same time, it highlights generational, persistent racial disadvantage and disparities.

John W. Gardner—the secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare in the Lyndon B. Johnson administration—said, “We are continually faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as insoluble problems.” The crisis today presents a chance to fundamentally improve the systems, programs, and policies that support economic opportunity.

We see the current situation as a call to action—and an unparalleled opportunity to advance more effective and equitable systems to connect people to opportunity. Seizing this opportunity will require building new partnerships improving training systems, and prototyping new models of action. **As such, we are excited to announce that the Atlanta Fed’s Center for Workforce and Economic Opportunity is partnering with the Markle Foundation and many other organizations to launch the [Rework America Alliance](#)**, an innovative, nationwide initiative to help workers emerge from this crisis stronger. The alliance aims to help millions of workers move into good jobs, regardless of formal education, by accelerating the development of a new system of worker training aligned to good jobs that employers need to fill.

Equality is at the core of this project. Access to a quality job and opportunities to grow in a career are one critical step in advancing racial equity. [Nine out of 10 respondents to the Black Census Project view wages as too low to sustain a family](#). As Atlanta Fed president and CEO Raphael Bostic has said, [we have a moral and economic imperative to address the effects of racism and these racial disparities](#). The center is excited to partner with public interest organizations, civil rights groups, major companies, and nonprofit organizations that hold these same values.

President Bostic adds, “I’m excited that the Atlanta Fed and its Center for Workforce and Economic Opportunity are joining the Rework America Alliance as a partner. Together, we can create big structural

solutions that can generate greater worker power. Reducing the inequities in the labor market, which have been exacerbated as a result of the pandemic crisis, will require new systemic ideas that can expand choices and opportunities for the many individuals who have been left behind. I look forward to the insights we learn from working in communities that will guide us in building new systems that serve *all* workers better.”

You can find an open letter from Markle Foundation CEO Zoë Baird on the Rework America Alliance site.

Over the coming months, the Rework America Alliance will build a framework for up-to-date and specific information on trends in the labor market and job opportunities; it will create a platform to better understand job opportunities of today and tomorrow. The alliance will work with national organizations to develop suggested training that gets people into those high-quality opportunities. It will work to validate these ideas with employers and help empower coaches with the tools and information that point workers toward these good jobs and training programs. Finally, the alliance will work in communities to create leadership coalitions that adopt the ideas and test what works and where more is needed. The aim is to learn and develop ideas that map onto larger systems changes that allow people to connect to jobs that will provide for their families and build assets. Equity and inclusivity are at the center of this work. The alliance plans to provide these resources this year.

The alliance will provide information on good jobs that employers are looking to fill, demonstrate how jobs that people have held make them strong candidates for good jobs in other sectors, and help workers identify and connect their actual skills and expertise to new opportunities. Coaches will support workers to identify effective training that will build on the skills a worker already has and that are aligned to those skills needed for a specific job.

It has been the Center for Workforce and Economic Opportunity’s goal since our launch to partner in an initiative that aims to address these challenges comprehensively. The center has supported communities to align leadership on workforce development and opportunity. We have provided better data on the labor market through our work on [Opportunity Occupations](#) and the [Unemployment Claims Monitor](#) and through other research and policy analysis. We have brought together leading voices and experts to share ideas through the [Investing in America’s Workforce initiative](#) and articles in [Workforce Currents](#). We are excited to join new and existing partners to build comprehensive models for reengaging workers in this crisis.

This work will not be easy—we know we will learn both from successes and setbacks. We are excited that a project like this has the potential to touch millions of workers through the systems that support them and test those in local communities. Longer term, these engagements will inform our research and the work we do. We hope you will join the journey with us.

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