



Employers Need Young People With These Skills

WHAT EMPLOYERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CIVIC & WORKFORCE SKILLS

THE SKILLS GAP IS A CIVICS GAP

Durable skills such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and adaptability are the human-centered competencies that AI cannot replace and that employers consistently identify as the widest gap in their talent pipeline. Your hiring managers report it. Your training budgets reflect it. Your team's performance suffers from it.

The persistent skills gap isn't about technical qualifications. It's about the durable skills that make someone effective at work: communicating clearly across different perspectives, collaborating effectively when viewpoints diverge, resolving conflict constructively, applying critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and adapting to changing circumstances.

Here's what most companies miss: These are civic skills.

THE CORE COMPETENCIES: DEFINED FOR BUSINESS

Critical Thinking

- Business application: Strategic analysis, data-driven decision-making, risk assessment, evaluating vendor proposals, identifying market opportunities

Effective Communication

- Business application: Client presentations, internal reporting, cross-functional collaboration, stakeholder management, customer service

Collaboration

- Business application: Cross-functional teams, project management, matrix organizations, vendor partnerships, client relationships

Problem-Solving

- Business application: Operational efficiency, process improvement, customer issue resolution, product development, crisis management

THE CORE COMPETENCIES: DEFINED FOR BUSINESS

Perspective Taking

- Business application: Customer empathy, design thinking, market research, inclusive product development, cross-cultural teams, conflict resolution

Negotiations and Compromise

- Business application: Contract negotiations, vendor management, labor relations, merger integration, client agreements, resource allocation

Civil Disagreement

- Business application: Productive debate in strategy sessions, diverse team collaboration, constructive feedback, navigating organizational change, resolving workplace conflicts

THE BUSINESS CASE IN PRACTICE

When Students Lead Community Projects:

They learn project management, stakeholder communication, team leadership, problem-solving under constraints, and accountability for outcomes. All transferable to your business environment.

When Students Serve on Youth Advisory Boards

They practice negotiation, agenda-setting, meeting facilitation, working with adults, policy analysis, and persuasive communication. All essential for management and leadership roles.

When Students Engage in Service-Learning:

They develop critical thinking by applying concepts to real problems, perspective-taking by working with diverse communities, and adaptability by navigating ambiguity. All critical for innovation and customer focus.

When Students Practice Civil Dialogue:

They master productive disagreement, learn to communicate across differences, and practice finding common ground. All necessary for high-performing diverse teams.

HOW EMPLOYERS CAN ENGAGE

Recognition

- Publicly endorse the connection between civic and workforce skills
 - Update job descriptions to list these competencies, Revise hiring practices to assess collaboration and problem-solving

Partnership

- Create internship programs developing civic and workforce skills simultaneously
 - Provide mentorship connecting students with professionals, Partner with schools on project-based challenges, Serve on advisory boards aligning education with industry needs

Investment

- Fund youth civic leadership programs building workforce competencies
 - Support service-learning initiatives creating community impact and career readiness

THE ROI YOU NEED

- Investing in civic and workforce skills integration delivers immediate returns through stronger candidates, reduced training costs, better hiring outcomes, and enhanced employer brand. Long-term, you gain a sustainable talent pipeline, competitive differentiation, innovation capacity, and organizational resilience.
- Perhaps replace the previous bullet with the following which references specific data: Investing in civic and workforce skills integration delivers immediate returns through stronger candidates, reduced training costs, better hiring outcomes, and enhanced employer brand. The demand is unambiguous: an America Succeeds analysis of more than 82 million job postings found that eight of the ten most-requested skills are durable skills - sought nearly four times more often than the top technical skills. (America Succeeds & Emsi Burning Glass, The High Demand for Durable Skills, 2022) Long-term, you gain a sustainable talent pipeline, competitive differentiation, innovation capacity, and organizational resilience.
- The skills gap exists because we've separated civics from workforce preparation instead of recognizing they're identical competencies. Forward-thinking employers are already partnering with schools, using skills-based hiring, and building competitive advantage through superior human capital development. The students developing these integrated skills today will be your high-performers tomorrow.