



Frequently Asked Questions

What is Skills2Compete Maryland?

Skills2Compete Maryland (S2C Maryland) is a new workforce development campaign aimed at increasing post-secondary success to strengthen the skills of Maryland's workforce. S2C Maryland is a focused, statewide initiative that will increase the number of Marylanders who achieve at least two years of post-secondary education or training to meet the demands of Maryland's employers.

A major advocacy effort is needed to increase post-secondary participation and completion rates, improve earnings for our citizens, and communicate to business that the State is preparing a world class workforce with the skills to improve Maryland's competitiveness.

S2C Maryland is part of the national Skills2Compete initiative, a non-partisan campaign to ensure the State's workforce has the skills needed to meet business demand, foster innovation, and grow shared prosperity. Sponsored by the National Skills Coalition, Skills2Compete encourages America to address U.S. competitiveness in a way that includes the vast majority of America's future workers, that is, jobs in the middle of the skilled labor market which require some training past high school, but not a four-year degree. In collaboration with the national Skills2Compete campaign, Maryland, along with several other states, will craft its own similar effort, unique to the state's need for a skilled workforce.

Why Promote a Skills Strategy When People Need Jobs?

A highly skilled workforce is critical to attracting and expanding businesses and creating jobs. With high unemployment throughout the nation, this is precisely the time to ensure Maryland is training the middle-skill and high-skill workforce that will be critical to economic recovery and long-term economic success. The challenge is that many Marylanders lack the necessary basic education, skills and/or credentials to succeed in the workforce. Despite a strong record of providing post-secondary training, the State

continues to experience shortages of middle- and high-skilled workers critical to long-term economic recovery.

For thousands of recently laid off workers, the jobs they lost are gone – some possibly forever. When they return to the workforce, it will most likely be to new jobs in new, emerging or growing industries, and requiring new skills to succeed. A high school diploma is simply not enough to succeed. Recent studies have identified the continued growth of Maryland's middle- and high-skill jobs requiring some sort of post-secondary certification, credential or degree (such as apprenticeship, industry certification, or associates degree); however, there are not enough trained Marylanders to fill them. A strategy is needed to align Maryland's workforce system to better prepare students and workers with the skills to compete for jobs in the new economy, including infrastructure building, BRAC, healthcare, information technology, science and security, and jobs related to the "green economy."

What Is the Vision for S2C Maryland?

Every working Marylander should have access to the equivalent of at least two years of education or training past high school - leading to a career or technical credential, industry certification, or one's first two years of college — to be pursued at whatever point and pace makes sense for individual workers and industries.

What Are the Principles of the New Skills Vision?

- A high school education is no longer adequate for most jobs in today's economy, or to provide the skills needed by businesses to innovate and grow.
- Maryland's workforce must have access to quality, skilled jobs in the middle of the labor market.
- Maryland must be able to compete nationally and globally with a strong workforce preparation system for its citizens - recent high school graduates, current workers, workers displaced by economic change, and those currently not connected to the labor market.

What Are the Goals of S2C Maryland?

- Increase Maryland's economic competitiveness;
- Increase the number of Marylanders who attain post-secondary credentials;
- Produce more skilled workers to meet the growth of middle/high skill jobs;
- Grow the middle class by providing opportunities for more Marylanders to gain skills, increase earnings and advance in the workplace;
- Support the President's goal of increased community college graduation rates and increased post-secondary participation to improve the nation's competitiveness.

What Is the Role of State Agencies Participating in the S2C Maryland Strategy?

Skills2Compete Maryland is led by Lieutenant Governor Brown, at the direction of Governor O'Malley. State agencies, partners and stakeholders involved in Skills2Compete Maryland will:

- Support the Governor's vision by encouraging and promoting programs and activities that lead to increasing the skill level of Marylanders through the attainment of a post-secondary credential, apprenticeship program or degree.
- Assist customers in navigating the the appropriate resources and services that provide pathways to skills attainment, e.g., One-Stop Career Centers, community colleges, private career schools, and funding sources such as Pell Grants.
- Communicate to businesses that the State is preparing a world class workforce with the skills to improve Maryland's competitiveness.

Why the Emphasis on Middle Skills Jobs?

Middle-skill jobs are jobs in the middle of the skilled labor market which require some training beyond high school, but not a four-year degree. Substantial demand remains for individuals to fill jobs in the middle of the labor market, with many of these jobs paying quite high wages. Nearly half of the jobs in the labor market today remain in the middle-skill

occupational categories (such as construction, transportation, manufacturing, clerical, and healthcare).

- Middle-skill jobs represent a significant share of the region's labor market and will continue to do so in the future.
- Middle-skill jobs provide unique opportunities to low wage earners and the unemployed. Specifically, individuals can acquire the skills and knowledge required for advancement or a new career in a relatively short period of time.
- Middle-skill jobs pay significantly higher wages than low-skill jobs.

Do Other States Have Skills2Compete Initiatives?

Yes, several other states have joined the national campaign by adopting a statewide strategy to address the unique skills challenges in their states.

These states have launched or are working to launch skills campaigns:

- California EDGE Campaign
- Campaign for a Working Connecticut
- Iowa Works Campaign
- North Carolina Alliance for Workforce Competitiveness (coming soon)
- Ohio Workforce Coalition
- Rhode Island Workforce Alliance
- Skills2Compete-Illinois Campaign
- Skills2Compete-Michigan Campaign
- Skills2Compete-Mississippi Campaign (coming soon)
- Skills2Compete-New Mexico Campaign (coming soon)
- Skills2Compete-Oregon Campaign
- Skills2Compete-Rhode Island Campaign
- Skills2Compete-Washington Campaign
- Skills2Compete-Wisconsin Campaign
- Vermont Coalition for Workforce Solutions

For more information on other states' Skills2Compete initiatives, visit

<http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/states/>