

# What's working in other cities to skill up employees

We talked to cities that narrowed their gaps between jobs and workforce skills. Here's how they did it. (And yes, we could do it, too.)

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Dallas has a shortage in its pipeline of skilled workers.

Wade Griffith

The short answer to what it takes to grow Albuquerque's private sector?  
Albuquerque's private sector.

That seems to be the resounding answer when talking to stakeholders in cities outside New Mexico that have addressed their own jobs and skills

gaps: The private sector has to have skin in the game when it comes to developing a skilled workforce. And this is an important lesson for New Mexico, which relies heavily on federal dollars for its economy — don't expect the government to solve this problem on its own.

For this installment of Business First's series looking at New Mexico's jobs gap — the gap between the jobs employers have to offer and the skills of the state's workforce — we looked at other cities that have narrowed their gaps between worker skills and the jobs available. While they all have their unique set of challenges, one thing was common: the private sector's involvement.

"In order to create programs to put people to work, businesses have to be engaged," said [Jessie Leslie](#), national network director for the National Skills Coalition.

"The private sector is a critical, critical partner in this. We can do things [others] can't," said [Susan Hoff](#), chief strategy, impact and operations officer at United Way of Metropolitan Dallas.

"We believe our job is to provide a skilled workforce," said [Samantha Sengel](#), vice president of advancement and enrollment strategy at Central New Mexico Community College.

In the cities we looked at, a common denominator is industry advisory boards that help third parties like community colleges and nonprofits develop training programs to meet immediate workforce needs.

## **Everything's bigger in Texas, including jobs gaps (and solutions)**

Dallas battles a workforce pipeline shortage.

[Susan Hoff](#), chief strategy, impact and operations officer at United Way of Metropolitan Dallas, said the city was facing 40,000 middle-skill jobs

opening. Middle-skill jobs are defined as jobs that require more than a high school diploma, but often not a four-year degree; they usually require a certificate or additional post-high school training. But these middle-skill jobs pay a living wage and have a defined career ladder. Examples include laboratory technicians, certified production technicians, supply chain specialists and computer-user support specialists.

In Texas, nearly six in 10 jobs require more than a high school diploma and less than a college degree, but only 42 percent of Texans have been educated to the middle-skill level. Many are also employed but remain in poverty, according to Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas.