



U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Education & Workforce

Hearing

Building an AI-Ready America: Strengthening Employer-Led Training

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Chairman Owens, Ranking Member Adams and members of the subcommittee, it is my pleasure to speak with you this morning on behalf of Accenture. My name is Mary Kate Morley Ryan. I lead workforce transformation, technology, and reinvention initiatives alongside our clients, helping organizations prepare their people for the changing nature of work.

I am also responsible for our workforce-of-the-future research conducted in collaboration with partners including Harvard and the World Economic Forum. This work examines the impact of artificial intelligence (AI), particularly generative AI (GenAI), on jobs and skills, as well as the role of apprenticeships, work-based learning, and workforce development systems in preparing workers for emerging opportunities.

Accenture is a talent and innovation-led company with 784,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries. We are at the center of AI adoption, partnering with America's technology leaders to bring tech, data and AI to companies across all sectors of the economy—from manufacturing and life sciences to financial services and consumer goods—and government at all levels.

As one of the largest employers in the world operating across every sector, we are in a unique position in the market not just to identify trends in the use of AI and GenAI, but to be a leader in developing AI skills and creating talent.

Jobs across all industries increasingly require a level of AI fluency. To stem the current skill demand-supply gap, employers and policymakers alike must now turn their attention to developing a pipeline of talent that is AI-ready, digitally fluent and agile.

How can employers prepare their own people for the jobs of the future?

Businesses are at the forefront of reinventing work as they adopt AI across their enterprises. In the process, they are redefining the skills and competencies that will be required for the future AI-powered workforce.

1. AI is driving augmentation and skills need to keep pace.

Companies need new ways of working, new kinds of skills and new roles built for advanced AI. Often, skills have followed the progress of technology. More than 60 percent of job titles did not exist in 1940.¹ Much like preceding technologies,

¹ David Autor, *The Labor Market Impacts of Technological Change: From Unbridled Enthusiasm to Qualified Optimism to Vast Uncertainty*, National Bureau of Economic Research (2022), available at <https://www.nber.org/papers/w30074>.

success with advanced AI requires an equal amount of attention on people and training as it does on technology.

Today's challenge is speed. AI is moving faster than past waves, changing work tasks faster than new skills are being developed. Technology cycles are accelerating at such a pace that by 2030, nearly 40 percent of workers' core skills will need to be transformed or replaced to keep up.² This has reduced the half-life of skills to less than five years, demanding a shift from static job roles to dynamic, skills-based strategies.

When thinking about people development, organizations need to have an underlying clarity on the skills needed and be able to update skills at the speed AI changes work tasks.

That's why our approach to AI skills at Accenture is underpinned by a model that continuously adapts as AI changes. This equips every employee to thrive when working with AI.

Using skills data, organizations need to tailor learning recommendations and offer staffing opportunities that align with individual interests and client priorities. Our ability to identify emerging skills early allows our people to build in-demand capabilities and advance their careers while helping our clients reinvent. As new skills emerge, we work to integrate them into our skills architecture, enabling our people to signal their aspirations and track their growth through learning, staffing and networking opportunities.

The-Carnegie Mellon University ACE-AI research partnership focuses on building AI systems that continuously identify emerging skill gaps within specific roles and automatically generate targeted training pathways to address them. This research explores how AI can translate business objectives and operational constraints into structured learning programs, create domain-contextualized content tailored to industries and individual learners, deploy adaptive AI tutors that iteratively diagnose and close knowledge gaps, and analyze learning data to measure return on investment. Such capabilities would allow employers and workforce systems to determine what training interventions are effective and scalable, what should be discontinued, and what should be improved.

2. Employers must invest in a constant learning loop.

Advanced AI is reshaping tasks across industries, augmenting roles, redefining workflows, and creating demand for new combinations of technical, industry, and human skills. In this environment, one-time training is insufficient. Employers

² World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report (2025), available at https://reports.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs_Report_2025.pdf.

must create continuous, scalable learning models that evolve as technology evolves.

Globally, Accenture invests approximately \$1 billion annually in learning and development to ensure our people continuously build the skills needed in a rapidly evolving, AI-driven economy. With our digital learning platform, we delivered approximately 47 million training hours in our last fiscal year. We continually invest in strengthening the industry, technology, functional, data and AI skills of our people. We're also training our full workforce on agentic AI skills as part of a collaboration with Stanford Institute for Human-Centered AI.

We continue to invest significantly in our workforce with a focus on advanced AI, technology, and industry-specific capabilities. Our comprehensive learning agenda is designed to prepare our people for the next wave of AI-driven transformation and is anchored in:

- AI and data fluency;
- Deep industry and functional expertise;
- Reinvention and delivery methodologies; and
- Leadership development.

Our core talent competency—training and upskilling at scale—has enabled us to equip over 550,000 Accenture people with GenAI fundamentals. Additionally, Accenture now has nearly 80,000 AI and data professionals, with employees logging 8 million training hours in the first quarter of 2026, much of it focused on advanced AI skills.

We have built strong partnerships with leading academic institutions, including MIT, Stanford, and Carnegie Mellon, to establish curriculum and learning pathways to tackle deeply specialized skills. These collaborations allow us to align advanced academic research with real-world enterprise application, ensuring that training reflects both cutting-edge innovation and practical workforce needs.

For example, in partnership with the Stanford Institute for Human-Centered AI, we launched the Foundation Model Scholars program to develop expertise in the underlying architecture and deployment of large language models. Through these partnerships, we are helping bridge the gap between research, education, and applied AI implementation, demonstrating how employers and academic institutions can work together to prepare talent for the next generation of AI-enabled roles.

3. Apprenticeships are pivotal to building recruiting pipelines.

Traditional apprenticeships have focused on trades, but apprenticeships have tremendous potential to prepare people to use emerging tech like AI, including in strategic areas like manufacturing.

As AI reshapes job tasks across industries, apprenticeships provide a practical mechanism to integrate emerging technical skills directly into the workplace. As an earn-and-learn pathway, they allow individuals to build in-demand digital capabilities while earning wages and gaining real-world experience. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, individuals who complete Registered Apprenticeship programs earn an average starting salary of approximately \$80,000 annually, demonstrating the strong earnings outcomes associated with these models.³

Apprenticeships also allow access to broader pools of talent—e.g., youth, those without four-year college degrees, those from underserved or forgotten communities—and have the advantage of getting people and skills into the workforce quickly through an earn-as-you-learn approach.

Since 2016, Accenture has hired, trained, coached and provided career opportunities for untapped talent through our Apprenticeship Program in the U.S. and Canada. More than 2,500 apprentices across 40 cities have participated in the program since its inception, an overwhelming majority continuing into full-time roles after completing the program. In partnership with community colleges, nonprofits organizations, and technology training organizations, our apprenticeship program has allowed us to widen talent pools beyond our typical sources (four-year colleges).

We are also helping other employers create professional apprenticeship programs based on the best practices we have established in our own successful model. We have launched 11 local Apprentice Networks across the U.S. convening over 200 employers that are committed to professional apprenticeships and published a national professional apprenticeship playbook to help companies jumpstart their own programs.

4. Employers must embed AI literacy and outcomes into the core system.

AI and data skills should be treated as foundational across adult, youth, and dislocated worker programs, with performance metrics focused on earnings gains, skills acquisition, and placement in in-demand AI-exposed roles.

³ U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, *Registered Apprenticeship Program Facts and Figures*, <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/#by-the-numbers-1534>.

To operationalize this shift, workforce programs should embed practical AI competencies directly into existing career pathways rather than treating them as stand-alone technology courses. This includes equipping participants with the ability to apply AI tools within specific occupations, such as healthcare, advanced manufacturing, finance, and public services, while reinforcing core capabilities like data interpretation, digital collaboration, and responsible AI practices. Programs should also incorporate rapid feedback loops with employers to ensure curricula evolves as tools and job tasks change. Measuring outcomes should go beyond credential attainment to include verified skill proficiency, wage progression, and successful transitions into AI-augmented roles. Embedding AI literacy in this applied, occupation-centered way ensures that workers are prepared not just to use technology, but to adapt as technology continues to reshape work.

Our LearnVantage platform provides an example of this model in practice. Announced in 2023 as an AI-powered learning and skilling platform, LearnVantage is designed to deliver personalized, role-based training in cloud, data, and AI skills to enterprises, governments, and individuals⁴. Rather than offering static coursework, the platform curates content aligned to in-demand skills and industry needs, integrates applied learning pathways, and supports continuous skill updates as technologies evolve. This approach reflects the type of agile, employer-informed infrastructure that workforce systems could leverage or replicate to ensure beneficiaries build skills that are immediately relevant in AI-exposed roles.

What can policymakers do to support skilling efforts?

Government - at the federal, state and local level - must work together with industry to provide job pathways for the untapped talent across the U.S., including those without traditional four-year degrees, and support education and skilling programs for American students and workers so that they can thrive in the AI economy of the future.

The most effective policy actions will be those that align workforce policy with employer demand, accelerate access to training, and ensure workers can continuously build skills throughout their careers.

1. Incentivize employers to train employees on much-needed AI skills.

Public policy can reinforce employer leadership in training through targeted incentives that expand access to education and upskilling opportunities for workers. Policies that support employer-sponsored training, career advancement,

⁴ Accenture press release, "Accenture Launches LearnVantage to Help Organizations Reskill and Upskill Talent for Technology and AI" (2023).

and portable skill development can help ensure workers continue building capabilities as technology evolves. Initiatives, for example, that would expand the tax exclusion for employers to cover educational training programs.

Incentives that encourage employer investment in continuous AI and digital training can help accelerate skill development at scale while ensuring alignment with labor market demand. GenAI could affect up to 40 percent of working hours across industries - primarily by transforming tasks within current roles rather than eliminating entire occupations - underscoring the need for ongoing reskilling rather than one-time training interventions.⁵ Policies that make it easier for companies, particularly small and mid-sized employers, to invest in upskilling, including through expanded tax incentives or flexible workforce funding mechanisms, can help ensure workers continuously build portable, in-demand skills as technology evolves.

2. Modernize the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)* to scale apprenticeships and employer-driven training at the speed of AI.

As AI reshapes skills across industries, the workforce development system must operate with greater speed, flexibility, and alignment to employer demand. Apprenticeships and other work-based learning models are particularly well suited to preparing workers for AI-augmented roles because they integrate applied skill development directly into the workplace. However, employers frequently encounter administrative and funding barriers when attempting to leverage public workforce dollars to support apprenticeship programs and other employer-led training initiatives.

Modernizing the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)* should prioritize reducing administrative friction and improving responsiveness. This includes streamlining access to training funds; improving coordination between state workforce agencies and employers; reducing delays associated with program approval and reimbursement; and modernizing processes related to the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).

Congress should also clarify in WIOA the use of Individual Training Accounts and incumbent worker training funds for apprenticeship and work-based models, enable provisional eligibility for high-demand programs, and provide clearer authority to support short-cycle, employer-validated credentials aligned with real-time labor market needs.

⁵ Accenture, *A New Era of Generative AI for Everyone* (2023), <https://www.accenture.com/content/dam/accenture/final/accenture-com/document/Accenture-A-New-Era-of-Generative-AI-for-Everyone.pdf>.

Additionally, strengthening sector partnerships among employers, community colleges, and workforce boards can ensure apprenticeship curricula and other training pathways reflect evolving industry requirements. Clearer guidance, predictable funding pathways, and performance accountability measures focused on verified skills acquisition, wage progression, and retention, rather than completion alone, would encourage more employers, including small and mid-sized firms, to participate.

By modernizing WIOA to operate at the speed of technological change and align more closely with employer demand, Congress can expand access to high-quality earn-and-learn pathways and ensure workforce investments translate into measurable economic opportunity in an AI-enabled economy. Ultimately, this will ensure that emerging technologists and knowledge workers become AI-ready through applied practice, not passive consumption.

3. Support incumbent worker AI upskilling.

AI is reshaping existing jobs as much as it is creating new ones. The central workforce challenge is not only preparing new entrants but helping current workers adapt to AI-augmented responsibilities.

Federal workforce policy could better support training for workers already on the job through expanded use of incumbent worker training, apprenticeships, and reskilling strategies. Incumbent worker upskilling is often the fastest and most cost-effective way to preserve employment, increase productivity, and prevent displacement. However, incumbent workers often face barriers in accessing public workforce funding due to many programs prioritizing unemployed individuals and administrative complexity, combined with inconsistent implementation across states, limits reliable access for those who are already employed.

Supporting incumbent worker upskilling also aligns workforce policy with economic competitiveness. As AI adoption accelerates, firms that are able to retrain and redeploy talent internally are better positioned to innovate and grow, while workers benefit from career advancement rather than displacement.

4. Strengthen employer–education partnerships to scale applied AI training.

As AI adoption accelerates, workforce programs must align closely with labor market demand to ensure investments translate into real opportunities for American workers. Effective employer–education partnerships help ensure that curriculum reflects current tools, workflows, and skill requirements rather than outdated occupational standards. In rapidly evolving fields such as AI,

collaboration between employers, community colleges, universities, and workforce boards is essential to keep training programs relevant and responsive. This pace of change requires structured, ongoing engagement between industry and training providers to continuously update course content, validate competencies, and create clear pathways into in-demand roles.

Federal workforce policy can support this alignment by strengthening sector partnership models under WIOA, encouraging employer participation in curriculum design, and aligning funding with programs that demonstrate strong placement and wage outcomes in AI-exposed occupations. By reinforcing durable partnerships between employers and education providers, lawmakers can help build a workforce system that is responsive to technological change and positioned to support long-term economic competitiveness.

5. Support development of digital skills passports.

To strengthen accountability and portability, policymakers could encourage development of interoperable digital skills passports that allow workers to document competencies, experience, and continuous upskilling over time.

At Accenture, we are developing such a digital passport framework to track skills progression and create incentives for maintaining an upward trajectory in knowledge and capability. A standardized, employer-validated skills passport could help workers demonstrate AI readiness across roles and industries while providing policymakers and employers with measurable indicators of workforce capability growth. Encouraging organizations to ensure their workforce maintains a positive trajectory in skill development would help safeguard national competitiveness in an AI-driven economy.

Conclusion

Employers are moving quickly to integrate AI into their business operations, but technology adoption must be matched by equal urgency in workforce development. The challenge before us is not simply to prepare the next generation of workers, but to equip today's workers with the skills to adapt, advance, and thrive as AI reshapes tasks across every sector of the economy.

Congress also has an opportunity to modernize workforce policy in a way that aligns with employer demand, supports continuous learning, and ensures incumbent workers are not left behind. By updating WIOA for speed and agility, strengthening employer-education partnerships, and incentivizing investment in AI and data skills, policymakers can help ensure that AI-driven productivity translates into broad-based economic mobility.

I look forward to answering your questions today.