

# Youth Workforce Readiness Act of 2021

## Senator Tina Smith (D-Minn.) and Senator Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.)

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Communities across America face significant challenges in ensuring youth develop the skills necessary to enter the workforce. Many young people express concern about whether they have the skills necessary to secure a job in the future. This lack of adequate workforce readiness also leads to negative economic effects for employers, who often cite challenges in finding well-prepared talent as a significant obstacle to growth.

Essential workforce readiness skills include critical thinking, decision-making, communication and collaboration. Research shows it is important for youth to develop these skills during their critical years of adolescence. Strong public investment in programs that enable youth to develop these skills during this important period of development can help ensure every young person is prepared to succeed, no matter what type of future career they choose.

The *Youth Workforce Readiness Act of 2021* supports high-quality programs that enable youth to build essential knowledge and skills, and to connect these skills to critical real-life work experiences and learning opportunities. It establishes a competitive grant program for national, youth-serving, out-of-school time organizations, while promoting greater coordination with local workforce boards and experts in youth policy. These investments will increase access to experiences that will help prepare young people for the workforce and help build their economic potential.

The *Youth Workforce Readiness Act of 2021* will support programs that provide youth:

- Essential-skill development by embedding social-emotional through formal and informal learning experiences;
- Career exploration through community-based business partnerships, including discovery opportunities, career assessments and planning into a variety of career paths;
- Employability skills including interviewing, resume writing, financial literacy and credential/certification opportunities that help youth find their first job;
- Work-based learning opportunities to practice and apply skills in hands-on work environments through local community business partnerships.