# 2026 Request for Information—Building an Evidence Network for Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Workforce Systems

| Key Dates | |
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| **RFI Release** | September 4, 2026 |
| **Information Due** | October 6, 2026 (12:00 PM ET) |
| **Notification** | Week of October 26, 2026 |

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# Contents

About AIR ..... 1
What is the purpose of this RFI? ..... 1
What do we hope to learn? ..... 1
What are the RFI focus areas? ..... 2
What is the nature of this request? ..... 3
Who should respond to this RFI? ..... 3
Submission Guidelines ..... 4
Information Requested and Review Criteria ..... 5
Next Steps ..... 7
Contact Information and Support ..... 7

## About AIR

AIR is a nonpartisan, not-for-profit organization that conducts behavioral and social science research and delivers technical assistance to help solve urgent challenges in the United States and around the world. AIR's mission is to generate evidence and apply data-driven solutions that expand opportunities and improve lives for all. Learn more at AIR.org.

## What is the purpose of this RFI?

The American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) seeks information about promising artificial intelligence (AI) enabled approaches to advance work-readiness, worker resiliency, and worker prosperity. This request for information (RFI) is intended to inform a subsequent request for proposals (RFP) for future research or related partnerships with AIR teams that advance learning on how AI can be leveraged to enhance workforce opportunity. AIR welcomes RFI responses from a variety of entities including practitioner organizations, workforce intermediaries, postsecondary and training providers, employers, community-based organizations, technology providers, and other non-governmental stakeholders working in the workforce development field.

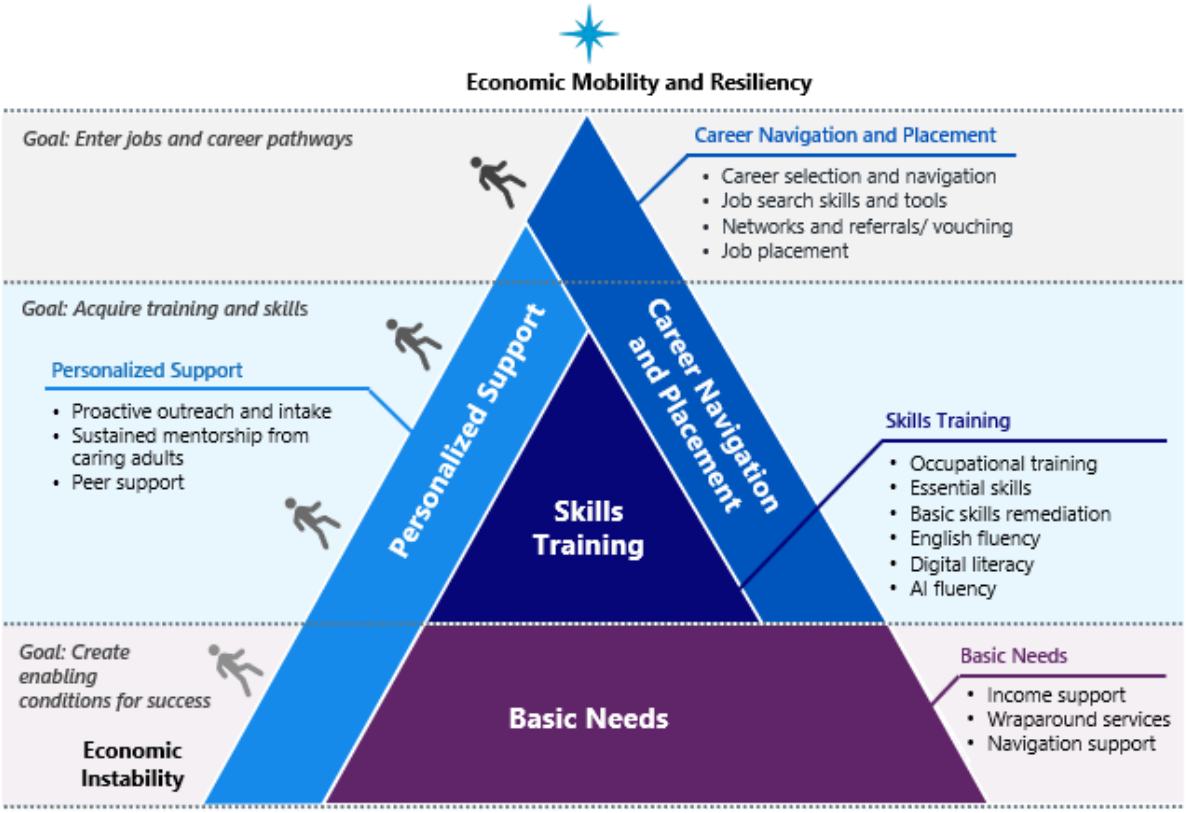
Generative AI is radically changing how people prepare for, enter, and thrive in careers. AI is not the first technological advancement to transform work, but the pace of change is unprecedented. We are interested in better understanding how AI can be leveraged to advance economic opportunity at different levels and through varied mechanisms. We welcome submissions discussing AI-enabled ideas for workforce development at a range of stages—from early concepts to prototypes, and pilots to deployed solutions—especially those grounded in real-world needs and feasible to evaluate.

## What do we hope to learn?

Through this RFI, we hope to learn more about the critical questions that the research field should be asking to explore how and the extent to which AI can advance work-readiness, worker resiliency, and worker prosperity. We are looking for responses from organizations and programs that shape workforce opportunity and economic resiliency, including education and training providers, employers, workforce intermediaries, and organizations that support navigation to benefit systems, basic needs, and wraparound supports. AIR is interested in understanding the types of AI adoption or innovative adaptation in response to AI can: improve individual worker choices, enhance system performance, deepen cross-system collaboration, and strengthen policy conditions that influence access, funding, accountability, and responsible AI use.

AIR's economic and mobility resilience framework provides broader context for these focus areas by highlighting the supports learners and workers may need to prepare for, enter, and advance in quality jobs (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Critical Components for Supporting Economic Mobility and Resiliency**




Source: Adapted from Amin, Goger, and Yancey, 2025.

## What are the RFI focus areas?

AIR welcomes responses about human-centered, AI-enabled approaches that support one or more of the following focus areas:

### A. Skill Training and Development

- Accelerate work-readiness and career navigation for youth through career exposure, occupational training, work-based learning, and basic and essential skills training.
- Upskill and reskill adult workers (both those employed in jobs and those displaced.

### B. Career Navigation and Job Placement

- Accelerate job entry and job (re)placement by optimizing provision of labor market information, job search assistance, and connection to/placement in jobs and employers.

### C. Basic Needs

- Optimize how people access and/or navigate benefit systems that create conditions for worker and learner success: support to access the basic resources and wraparound supports that people need to take full advantage of career-connected learning and work opportunities.

### D. Personalized Support

- Deepen outreach and engagement in opportunity systems, sustained mentorship and peer support for career entry, development, and transitions.

## What is the nature of this request?

This RFI is an information gathering request and an early step in shaping AIR's future work on AI and workforce development, including a possible subsequent RFP designed to advance partner organization and field learning around AI adoption. There are no awards associated with this request, and submitting a response does not guarantee future funding or an invitation to submit a proposal. Responses will help AIR better understand promising AI-enabled approaches, partnership opportunities, learning needs, and potential areas for future investment in research and evidence-building.

AIR may follow up with selected respondents to learn more, explore partnership concepts, or invite a subset of respondents to submit full proposals through a subsequent invitation-only RFP. Invitations may be based on the relevance of the workforce challenge, clarity of the AI use case, implementation readiness, learning potential, feasibility of generating useful evidence, responsible AI considerations, and potential contributions to the field. If invited to submit a full proposal, organizations may receive reviewer feedback or follow-up questions from the RFI stage and may be asked to address that feedback in their RFP response.

## Who should respond to this RFI?

AIR welcomes RFI responses from a variety of entities including community-based organizations, workforce intermediaries, post-secondary and training providers, employers, public agencies, technology providers, and other stakeholders working in the workforce development field. Respondents may supply information about approaches at different stages of AI adoption, including concept, prototype, pilot, or operational deployment. Respondents do not need a fully developed proposal for research, testing or evaluation or an existing relationship with AIR.

***Respondents should embody the following characteristics:***

- **Focus on meaningful problems:** AIR seeks organizations that are committed to intentional design and adaptation of AI with the goal of improving worker outcomes and economic

resiliency. Respondents should have an established track record of supporting career readiness and job entry among youth and/or supporting employed or unemployed adult workers in upskilling, reskilling, and lifelong learning. Respondents should focus on preparing or linking people to quality jobs and demonstrate a strong institutional commitment to AI adoption, AI adaptation, and continuous learning.

- **Be eager to explore new ways learning what works:** Respondents should identify clear learning questions of interest to them, as well as the degree to which they plan on integrating learner and worker voice in shaping what the project learns and how it learns and the ways in which they plan to explore how AI adoption shapes customer journeys and experiences, as well as the contextual conditions that drive variation in outcomes.
- **Be committed to evidence to action for the field:** Respondent teams should generate timely interim and final deliverables that accelerate real-time learning not just for their own organizations, but also for the field. AIR is especially interested in lessons applicable to systems that serve people at scale, such as community colleges and workforce training programs. Teams should clarify how they will identify and cultivate audiences for their work from the beginning and the push strategies they will deploy. Projects that can complement organizational lessons with explorations of implications for cross-system and policy-level change are especially encouraged.

## Submission Guidelines

- **Deadline:** October 6, 2026, at 12:00 p.m. ET. Submissions received after the deadline or through other methods will not be reviewed.
- **Submission platform:** All responses must be submitted via Submittable here.
  *Please review the Submittable Safelist Instructions to ensure notifications are not blocked or quarantined by your email system.*
- **Review process:** Responses will be reviewed by a review committee composed of external experts as well as internal AIR staff.
- **Notification:** The week of October 26, 2026, respondents will be notified whether the selection committee has selected their project to advance to the RFP phase, making it eligible for future funding or partnership opportunities.

# Information Requested and Review Criteria

Responses should be concise and should address all the prompts below. AIR is most interested in practical ideas, emerging lessons, and potential partnership opportunities not polished grant proposals.

**Review criteria:** AIR will assess responses based on relevance to the focus areas (skill training and development, career navigation and job placement, basic needs and personalized support); clarity and specificity of the workforce challenge and AI use case; potential to improve workforce outcomes or expand opportunity for specific workers, learners, or populations; feasibility of generating useful evidence or learning; attention to responsible AI considerations; and potential for a meaningful research or partnership opportunity with AIR.

## Information Requested (With Word Limits):

1. Project Title
   - Provide a concise title for your project.
2. Contact Information
   - Include name, title, organization, email, and phone number.
3. Organizational Background **(Word Limit: 200)**
   - Briefly describe your organization, mission, and relevant expertise in AI and workforce development.
4. Overview of the AI-Enabled Workforce Innovation **(Word Limit: 300)**
   - Provide a concise summary of the idea, technology, or innovation and associated research concept.
   - Indicate which focus area(s) your response corresponds with (see Focus Areas section).
5. The Workforce Challenge It Addresses **(Word Limit: 200)**
   - Explain the workforce problem, why it matters, and who is most affected.
6. Key Learning Questions **(Word Limit: 200)**
   - Describe the learning questions that are important to answer related to your AI-enabled workforce innovation. Explain their relevance to your organization and to the field.

**CRITERIA**

Does the respondent possess expertise in AI and workforce development? Does the innovation or concept align with the stated focus areas of this RFI?

7. Population(s) of Focus **(Word Limit: 100)**
   - Identify the populations of communities impacted. Describe the populations (types and size) that are being/will be served by your innovation between 2027-2028.

**CRITERIA**

Does the respondent describe how the AI approach will affect a specific population of focus, and does it demonstrate potential to improve workforce outcomes, expand access, or reduce gaps in opportunity, service quality, or advancement?

8. Technical Approach, Models, or Data Sources **(Word Limit: 300)**
   - Describe the AI methods, models, tools, potential data sources, and data inputs involved.
9. Maturity Level **(Select One)**
   - Indicate the stage of development:
     - Concept
     - Prototype
     - Pilot
     - Deployed solution
10. Early Results or Evidence (If Applicable) **(Word Limit: 200)**
    - Share any preliminary findings, proof-of-concept, or validation data.

**CRITERIA**

Does the response clearly describe the AI methods, models, or data sources involved, and do these technical components appear appropriate, feasible, and well-suited to the stated workforce challenge or population of focus?

Does the response offer early evidence or insights that strengthen the case for feasibility and impact?

**11.** Responsible AI and Safeguards **(Word Limit: 200)**

- Outline how you will address fairness, bias, transparency, privacy, and governance.

**CRITERIA**

Does the response provide a well-reasoned approach to fairness, bias, transparency, privacy, and governance, and account for the unique needs and concerns of the population of focus?

**12.** Opportunities for Partnership with AIR **(Word Limit: 150)**

- Suggest potential collaboration models (e.g., joint research, pilot testing, evaluation, policy translation) with AIR teams.

**CRITERIA**

Does the response propose thoughtful and feasible collaboration models—such as joint research, pilot testing, evaluation, or policy translation—and demonstrate strong potential for alignment with AIR's mission and areas of focus?

## Next Steps

AIR may contact respondents for follow-up discussions during the review process. A selection committee will review RFI responses and recommend submissions to advance to an RFP. Selection will be based on those projects that offer the most promising opportunities for meaningful research or evaluation to build evidence on AI uses with potential to improve workforce outcomes or expand opportunities for specific workers, learners, or populations. Respondents with compelling ideas may also be considered for future funding or partnership opportunities outside the RFP process. All respondents will be notified the week of October 26, 2026. This RFI is for information-gathering purposes only and does not constitute a solicitation for proposals or commit AIR to fund any projects at this stage.

## Contact Information and Support

For questions, email us at AiResearch@air.org.

## About the American Institutes for Research®

Established in 1946, the American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) is a nonpartisan, not-for-profit institution that conducts behavioral and social science research and delivers technical assistance both domestically and internationally in the areas of health, education, and the workforce. With headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, AIR has offices across the U.S. and abroad. For more information, visit AIR.ORG.

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