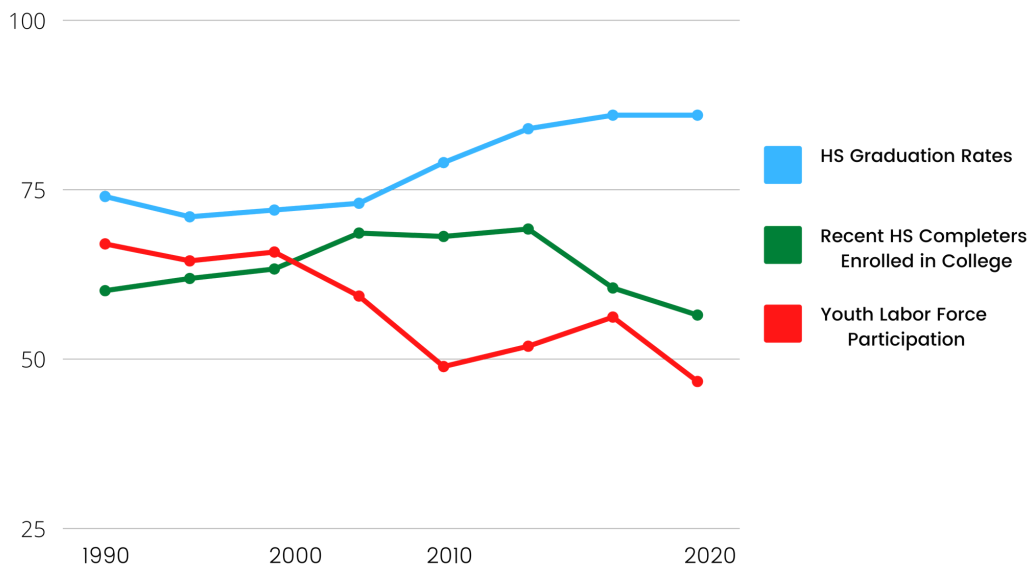


How Can We Encourage Districts to Invest Forward?

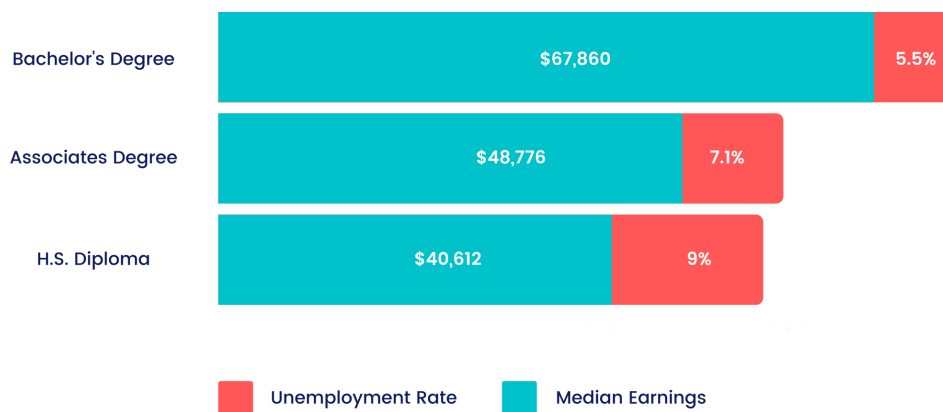
Guidance for the Business and Workforce Community

For most students, attaining a credential with labor market value is the best shot at long-term financial stability. Unfortunately, despite the fact that 99% of jobs created since 2008 require some postsecondary education or training, approximately one million students annually graduated from high school prior to the pandemic and did not immediately enroll in college or career training programs. The pandemic has turned that leaky faucet between systems into a gushing stream, especially for students of color and from low-income families.

What Happens to Students after Graduation?



Postsecondary Education Provides Higher Wages and Greater Security



The opportunity to improve postsecondary pathways presented by the American Rescue Plan (ARP) is one we cannot afford to waste. Leaders must make strategic investments to ensure that their funds have maximum impact. Districts and states need guidance to invest in the highest-leverage strategies to increase students' economic opportunity and support. As business leaders, we encourage you to offer your input and support in the following ways:



Advocate for significant pathways investment. Districts and states are allowed to spend their resources to support students' paths to postsecondary and careers, but they are not required to do so. The stimulus needs to be used to invest in long-term solutions that can serve as a down payment on economic opportunity and mobility for students. A significant investment would be 30 percent of the funds directed to these strategies, while a more modest investment would be 10 percent.



Promote key ideas about pathways access and success. It will be incumbent upon business and community leaders to encourage strategies that deliver a return on investment. The Invest Forward website has over 20 shovel-ready investment ideas to help students build college and career momentum early in high school and acquire the knowledge, skills, and relationships necessary for career success.



Partner with districts to strengthen career preparation opportunities. Business and industry have a critical role to play in the shape of students' career pathways, in terms of the courses, skills, and credentials that provide the most value. Once districts and states commit to expand investment to support career exploration and development, they will need experts from the field to guide the design and execution of those approaches. Additionally, they will need business partners to offer work-based learning opportunities so that students can get real-world experience while preparing for their next steps beyond high school.

A targeted focus on increasing students' preparation for and access to postsecondary education and training can make the difference between a community that is an engine of economic mobility and one that is stagnant.