

# **Service Sector Workers' Skills**

## **Findings from PIAAC and Implications for Educators**

**PIAAC Conference**

**December 7, 2018**



**We start with  
people.**



# Why this project?

- Get **hard data** on **foundational skills gaps in key service sectors**
- Identify notable employer interventions and partnerships to **support upskilling**
- Determine effective **policy levers** to bring **successful approaches to scale**



# **PIAAC data analysis: Workers with low basic skills**

- **Ages 16 – 64**
- **Employed**
- **Work in retail, accommodations and food services, or health and social work**
- **Work in non-high skill occupations**
- **Performed at Level 2 or below on literacy and numeracy and at Level 1 or below for PS-TRE**



# Overview of findings

## LOW SKILLS ARE PREVALENT AMONG SERVICE WORKERS



*\*Note: Number does not include the 20% of individuals who did not take the digital portion of the test.*



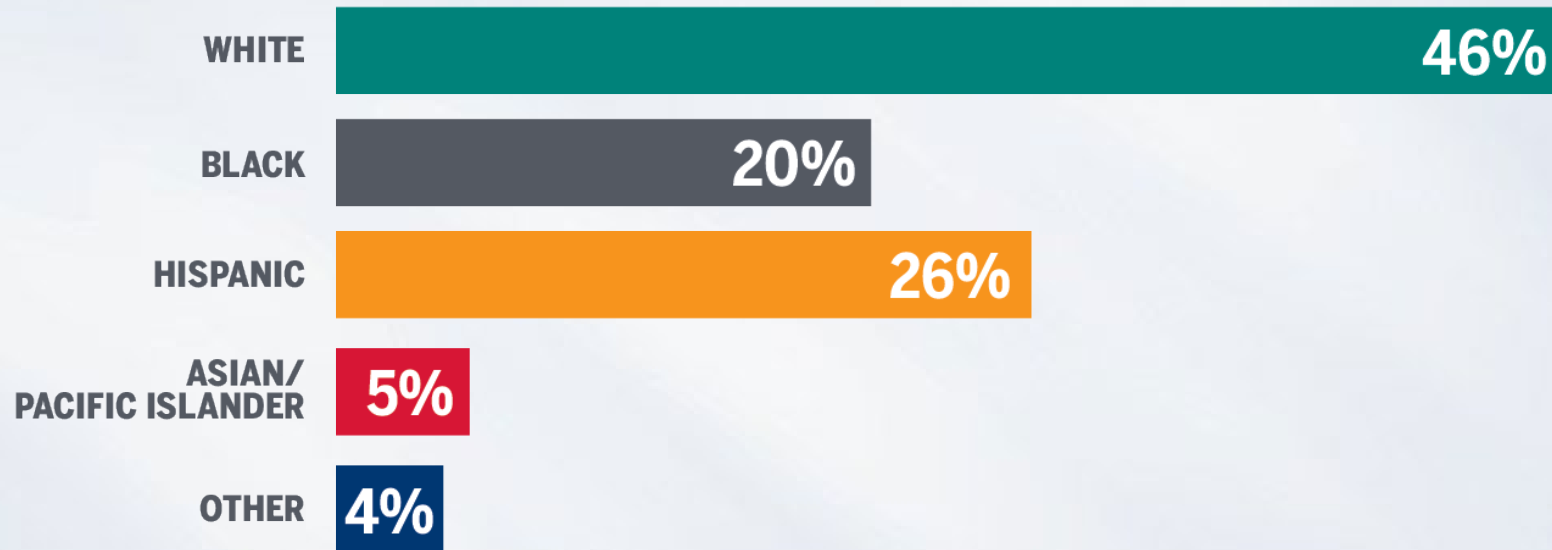
# Age

	Overall service sector	Retail	Accommodation & food service	Health & social work
Ages 16-24	24%	23%	39%	13%
Ages 25-34	23%	22%	27%	20%
Ages 35-44	18%	17%	13%	25%
Ages 45-54	19%	16%	15%	28%
Ages 55-64	15%	22%	6%	14%
Total (may not sum to 100 due to rounding)	100%	100%	100%	100%



# Race/ethnicity

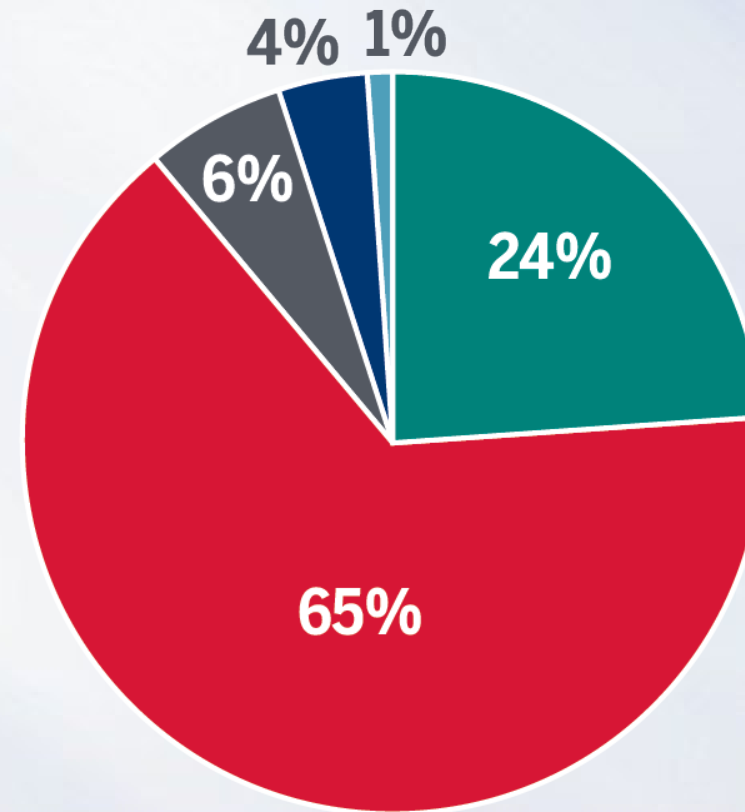
## A PLURALITY OF WORKERS WITH LOW SKILLS ARE WHITE



# Educational attainment

**MOST LOW-SKILLED  
WORKERS HAVE AT LEAST  
A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA  
OR EQUIVALENT**

- LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL
- HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR EQUIVALENT
- ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE
- BACHELOR'S DEGREE
- GRADUATE DEGREE





# Job tenure

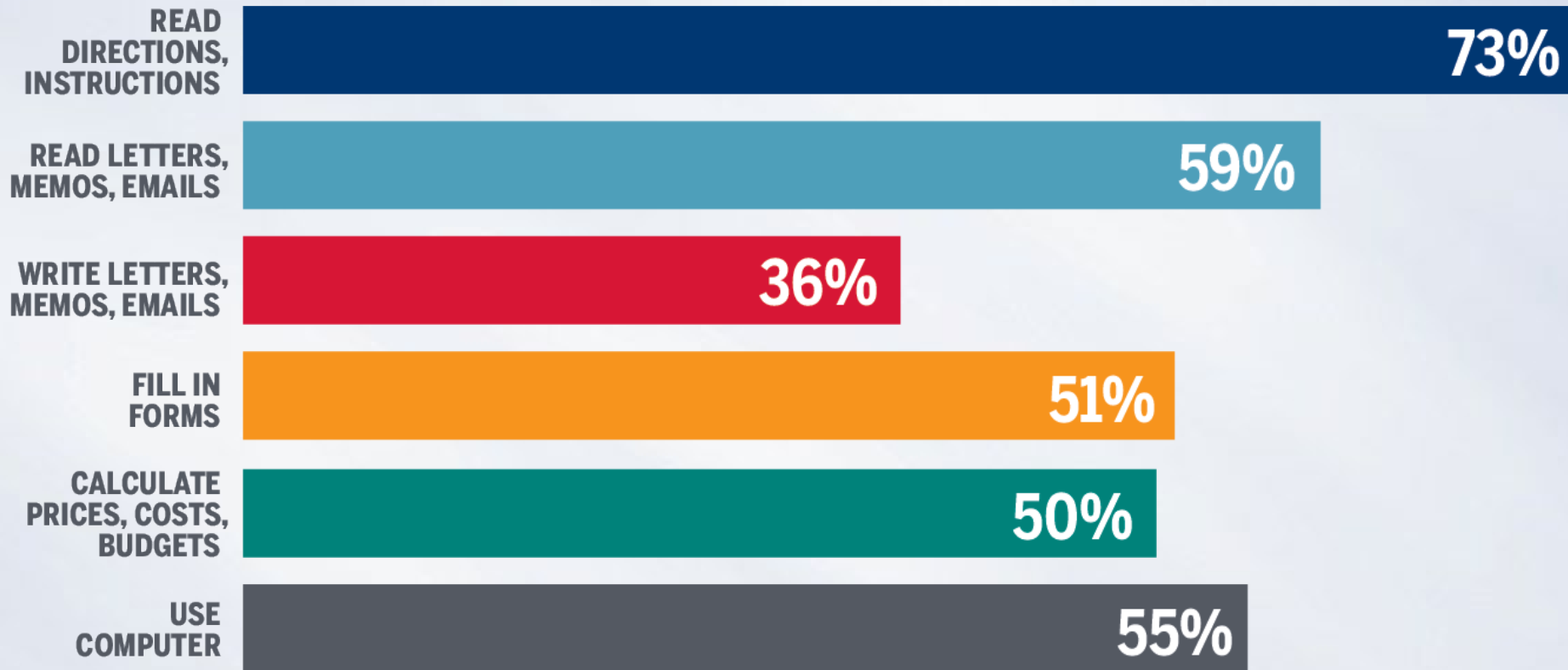
**MOST LOW-SKILLED WORKERS HAVE BEEN WITH THEIR EMPLOYER FOR AT LEAST 3 YEARS**



- LESS THAN 3 YEARS AT CURRENT EMPLOYER
- BETWEEN 3-5 YEARS AT CURRENT EMPLOYER
- AT LEAST 6 YEARS AT CURRENT EMPLOYER

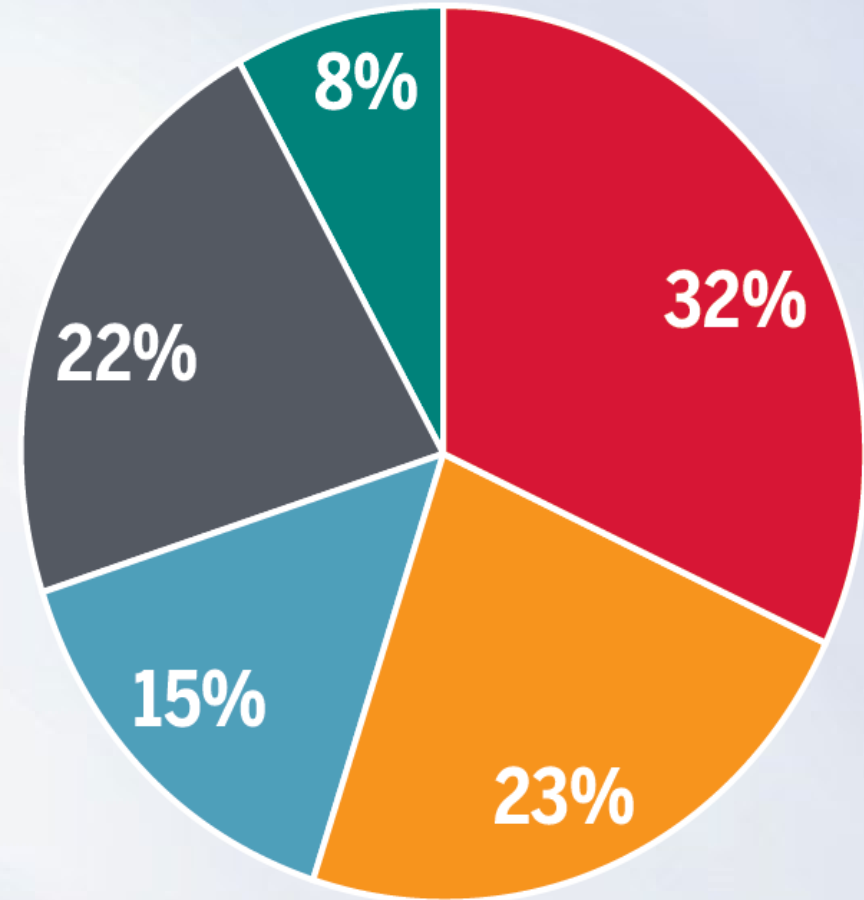


# DESPITE THEIR SKILL GAPS, MANY WORKERS REGULARLY NEED TO USE READING, WRITING, AND MATH ON THE JOB



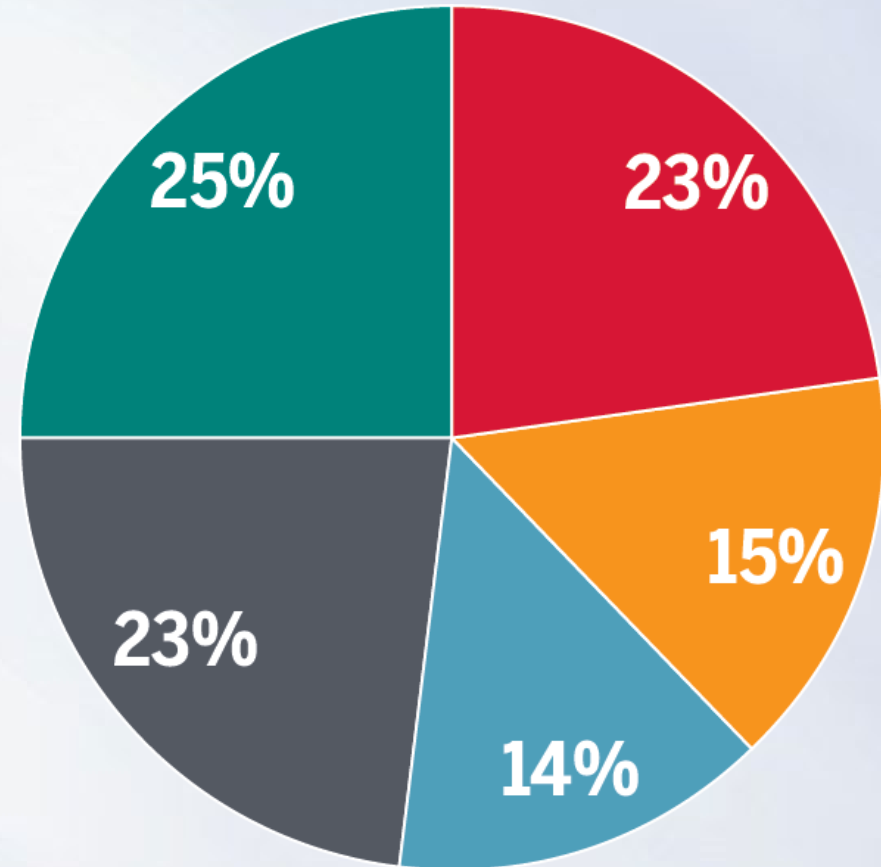
# A MAJORITY OF WORKERS ARE CONTINUING TO LEARN NEW THINGS ON THE JOB

- LEARN NEW THINGS EVERY DAY
- LEARN NEW THINGS ONCE A WEEK
- LEARN NEW THINGS AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH
- LEARN NEW THINGS LESS THAN ONCE A MONTH
- NEVER LEARN NEW THINGS



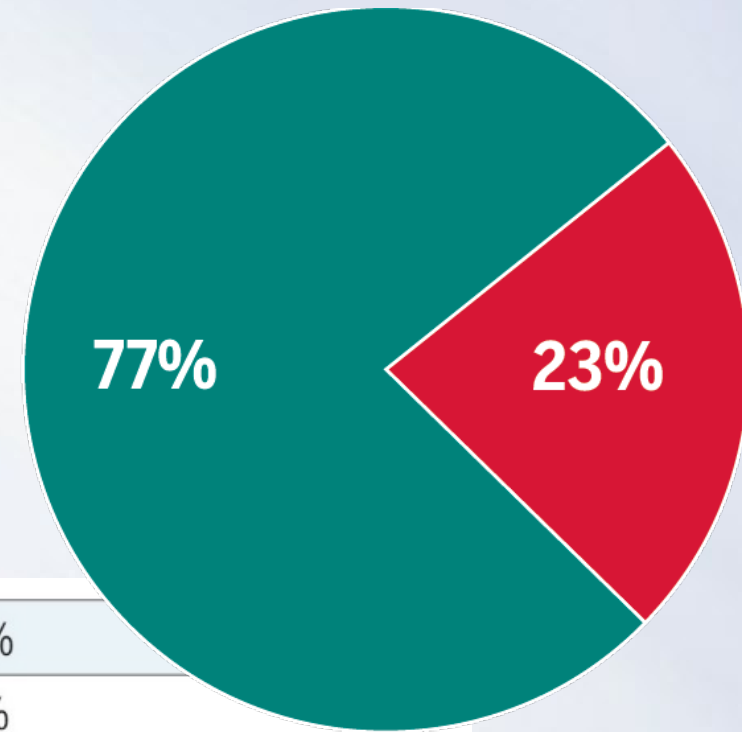
# MORE THAN 1 IN 3 WORKERS ARE REGULARLY TEACHING PEOPLE ON THE JOB

- TEACH PEOPLE EVERY DAY
- TEACH PEOPLE AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK
- TEACH PEOPLE AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH
- TEACH PEOPLE LESS THAN ONCE A MONTH
- NEVER TEACH PEOPLE



# NEARLY 1 IN 4 LOW-SKILLED WORKERS ARE SUPERVISORS

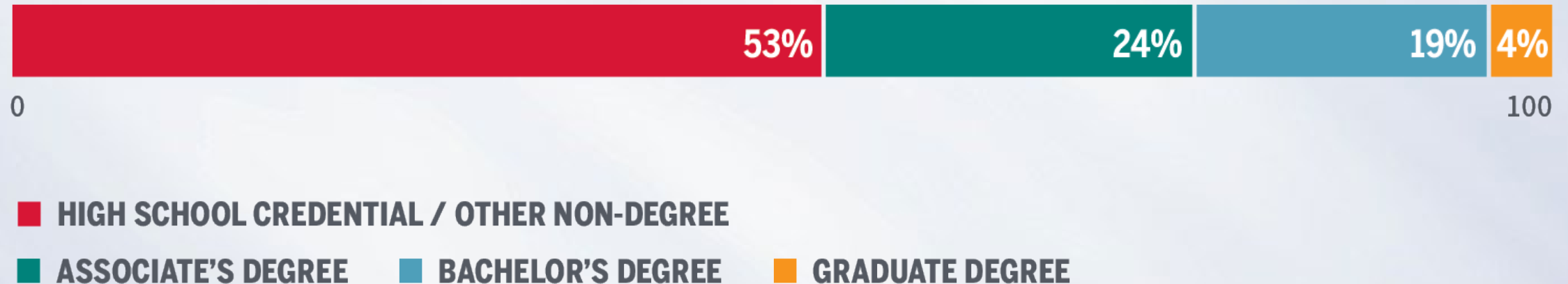
■ NOT SUPERVISING  
■ SUPERVISING



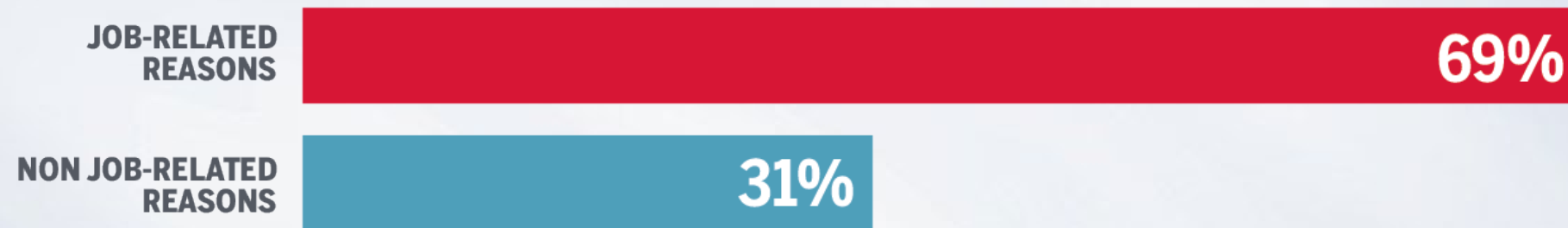
Supervising 1 to 5 people	50%
Supervising 6 to 10 people	31%
Supervising 11 to 24 people	12%
Supervising 25 to 99 people	4%
Supervising 100 or more people	2%



# AMONG WORKERS PURSUING FORMAL EDUCATION, A LARGE MAJORITY IS FOCUSED ON BASIC-SKILLS OR MIDDLE-SKILLS CREDENTIALS



## MOST WORKERS PURSUING DEGREES DID SO FOR JOB-RELATED REASONS, BUT NOT NECESSARILY THEIR CURRENT JOB





**What does this mean for educators?**



# In the classroom

- **Learners are workers** and workers are learners
- Learners often pursue education because of their career goals
- Individuals' skill gaps are an **invisible drag on their productivity**



# For researchers

- **Not enough is known** about how skill gaps and the costs of individual coping mechanisms affect workers' career advancement
- Are low skills keeping people **stuck**, or are lower-skilled workers more **loyal**? Both?



# For policy advocates

- **Integrated Education and Training (IET)** and other models can upskill adult learners for high-demand occupations
- **Employer-based upskilling** programs can be taken to scale through public policy
- NSC offers numerous free state and federal **policy resources** to use in your community



# We end with people:

***A non-reader was a highly skilled employee in his department, but was unable to be promoted until he came to adult education.***

***He learned the accommodations necessary to write memos, place orders, and read messages and instructions.***

***Eventually, he learned to read and received his promotion to supervisor.***

-- Adult educator



*Photo for illustration purposes;  
does not represent a specific individual.*

# Contact National Skills Coalition

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