

Understanding HRTPs 101

Key Concepts and Resources

About this document

This document provides an overview of High Road Training Partnerships (HRTPs) along with descriptions and links to more detailed information to gain a better understanding of HRTPs. The resources below describe what HRTPs are, what the “High Road” means, what the H RTP framework is, how it works, and provide examples of HRTPs.

What are High Road Training Partnerships?

HRTPs offer a holistic comprehensive approach to workforce development, addressing industry challenges and fostering partnerships that collaborate on practical solutions through training and other strategic interventions that lead to systemic change. HRTPs aim to create economically resilient communities by focusing on equity, job quality, and climate resilience. Workers, labor and other worker organizations, and employers are recognized as industry experts and work alongside community-based organizations and training institutions to provide workforce development solutions with pathways to quality jobs for all Californians, especially those from the most disadvantaged communities.

The California Labor and Workforce Development Agency and the California Workforce Development Board adopted High Road Training Partnerships as a way to model partnership strategies for the state in 2017. In 2024, the Los Angeles County Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) launched a regional H RTP strategy to implement these models throughout all of Los Angeles County.

What is High Road vs Low Road?

HRTPs are built on the principles of the “High Road,” an economic development strategy that creates mutual benefits for businesses and workers by promoting shared prosperity, environmental sustainability, and inclusive decision-making.¹ A High Road employer thrives by delivering quality products and services through innovative strategies and investments in its workforce.² This approach fosters career-track jobs where workers have agency, voice, and access to predictable, fair, and clearly defined pathways to economic stability.³ Additionally, HRTPs equip workers with opportunities for skills development and career advancement.⁴ In contrast, “Low Road” employers compete primarily on cost, driving down prices to increase market share at the expense of their workforce. This model often leads to labor exploitation and externalized production costs that negatively impact workers, communities, and the environment.⁵



¹ High Road itself was introduced as an economic development strategy in the 1990s by Joel Rogers, a political scholar at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and has gained traction among scholars and practitioners. See Joel Rogers, “What does ‘High Road’ mean?,” University of Wisconsin-Madison COWS, 1990, <https://emeraldcities.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/1990-What-does-22highroad22-mean.pdf>

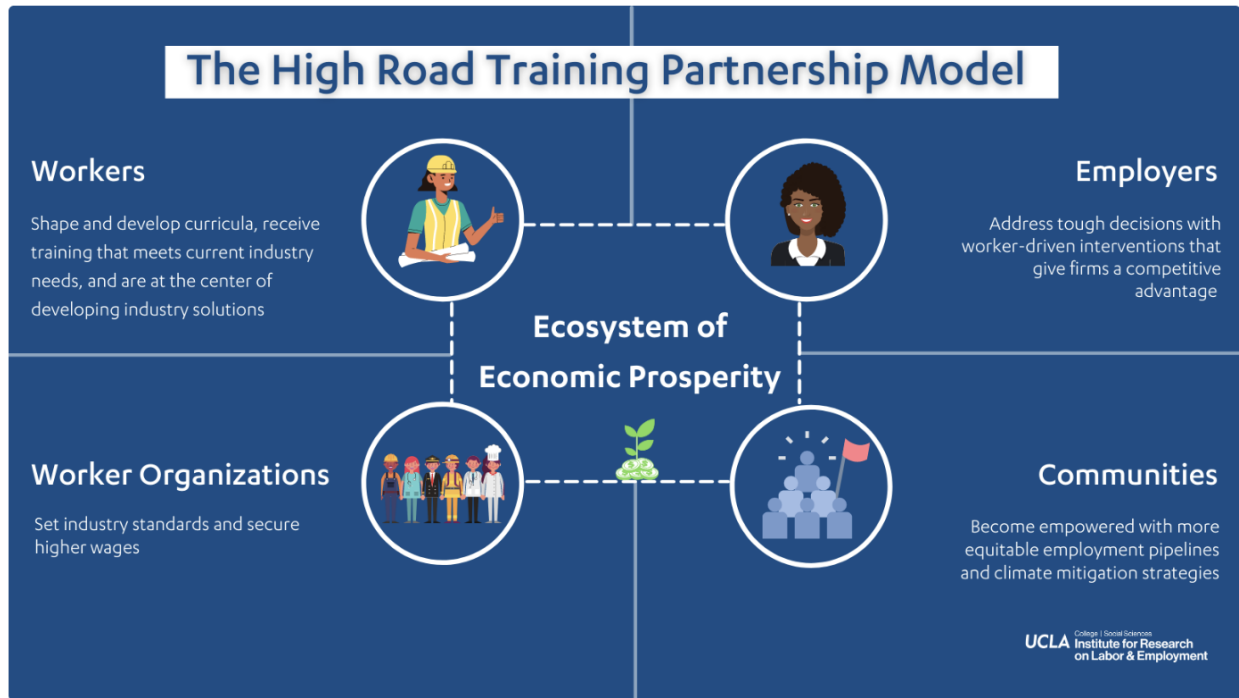
² The high-road approach was first implemented as a sectoral strategy with the creation of the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WRTP). Industry leaders in the greater Milwaukee area established WRTP to address the region’s industrial decline and aging workforce. Over the following decade, sectoral and regional partnerships expanded nationwide, including WRTP and initiatives in California, Washington, Pennsylvania, Michigan, New York, and Massachusetts. For more information, see the AFL-CIO High Road Partnerships Report.

³ “Taking the High Road,” UC Berkeley Labor Center, May 1, 2020, Accessed February 26, 2025, <http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/taking-the-high-road/>

⁴ Laura Dresser, Robyn Richards, Joel Rogers, and Danielle Salus, High Performance Partnerships: Winning Solutions for Employers & Workers (Madison, WI: State of Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, 1999), 11-4.

⁵ Joel Rogers, “What does ‘high road’ mean?,” University of Wisconsin-Madison COWS, 1990, <https://emeraldcities.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/1990-What-does-22highroad22-mean.pdf>

The High Road vs. Low Road Graphic (pictured on page 1) provides a visual overview of the differences between a High Road approach. The High Road Training Partnership Model (pictured below) shows the ecosystem of economic prosperity the High Road model proposes.



Watch the [1 minute video](https://youtu.be/L0JuA65_fds) to learn more about HRTPs in Practice: https://youtu.be/L0JuA65_fds



What is the High Road Training Partnership framework and where can I learn more?

By focusing on equity, economic resilience, climate resilience, and job quality, HRTPs aim to create economically resilient communities. Systems change is a crucial aspect of HRTPs, as it addresses the root causes of inequities and inefficiencies within workforce development, transforming existing structures and policies to ensure that workforce efforts lead to greater economic opportunity, reduce disparities, and support the creation of a more resilient, equitable labor market for all.

The [High Road to Economic Prosperity Evaluation Report](#) describes the H RTP framework, its core components and principles.

The core components of an H RTP model include:

- **Strong Partnerships.** A strong partnership involves a collective of industry leaders—including employers, workers, and labor representatives, along with representatives from dedicated convening organizations—who are committed to sustained involvement in collaborative problem-solving. For more information: [The High Road to Economic Prosperity](#), p.26; [Partnership as a Priority](#).
- **Worker-Centered.** Worker centered means guided by workers' expertise and voice and dedicated to actively strengthening worker power. For more information: [The High Road to Economic Prosperity](#), p.28; [Worker Voice](#).
- **Industry-Driven.** Industry-driven means being guided by current industry need and future demand. For more information: [The High Road to Economic Prosperity](#), p.29; [Industry-Led Problem Solving](#).
- **Training Solutions.** Training in H RTPs is a comprehensive solution that addresses both immediate workforce needs and long-term systemic changes to improve job quality, equity, and climate resilience. H RTPs develop customized programs that align with industry demands, helping participants secure quality jobs while employers fill vacancies. These programs also include support services, recognizing that training alone is insufficient for success. For more information: [The High Road to Economic Prosperity](#), p.30; [Training Solutions](#).

H RTPs support the accomplishment of the following goals:

- **Equity.** In the context of High Road, equity means that all workers would have access to quality jobs, structural opportunities for upward mobility, wealth-generating opportunities, and safe and healthy workplaces—regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or ability—and productivity gains would be widely distributed to workers. Firms remain competitive in a High Road economy that generates profitability, growth, and stability. For more information: [The California High Road: A Road Map to Equity](#).
- **Economic Resilience.** In the context of High Road, a resilient workforce is one that can adapt to evolving industry needs and future challenges, fostering a robust local economy. Strengthening economic resilience through H RTPs means anticipating industry shifts, advancing a skills-based economy, addressing disparities, enhancing collaboration, and mitigating disruptions.

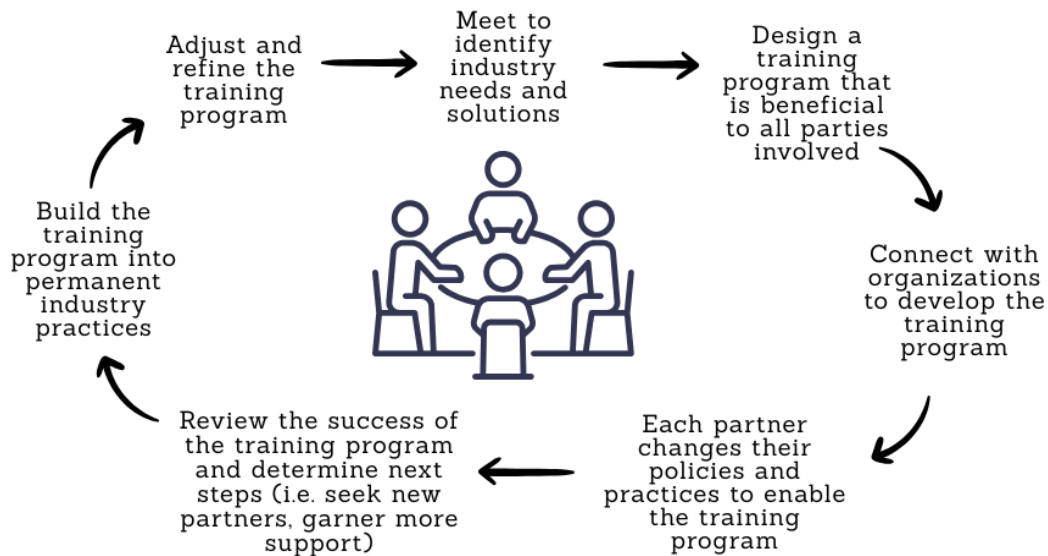
- **Climate Resilience.** In the context of High Road, to achieve economically and environmentally resilient communities, we must reduce greenhouse gas emissions, address the vulnerabilities of disadvantaged communities, and connect climate-change reduction to High Road workforce practices. For more information: [The California High Road: A Road Map to Climate Resilience](#).
- **Job Quality.** Quality jobs provide family-sustaining wages, health benefits, a pension, worker advancement opportunities, and collective worker input and are stable, predictable, safe and free of discrimination. Quality jobs have the potential to transform workers' lives and create resilient, thriving firms and communities and a more just and equitable economy. For more information: [The California High Road: A Road Map to Job Quality](#).

HRTPs work to create greater economic opportunities for all by transforming systems and leveraging the core components and principles to achieve this.

- **Systems Change.** Systems change in HRTPs involves addressing the root causes of social problems by intentionally altering policies, practices, and structures that shape the labor market. This process aims to create equitable systems and practices, leveraging training programs for systemic improvements while prioritizing equity, job quality, climate resilience. Ultimately, HRTPs work to foster more inclusive, equitable labor markets. For more information: [The High Road to Economic Prosperity](#).

How do High Road Training Partnerships Work?

Once a partnership is formed, the groups work together to identify industry problems and implement win-win solutions, with training programs being a key focus. The training programs are continually reviewed and refined to address the evolving needs of the industry.



Where can I find examples of HRTPs?

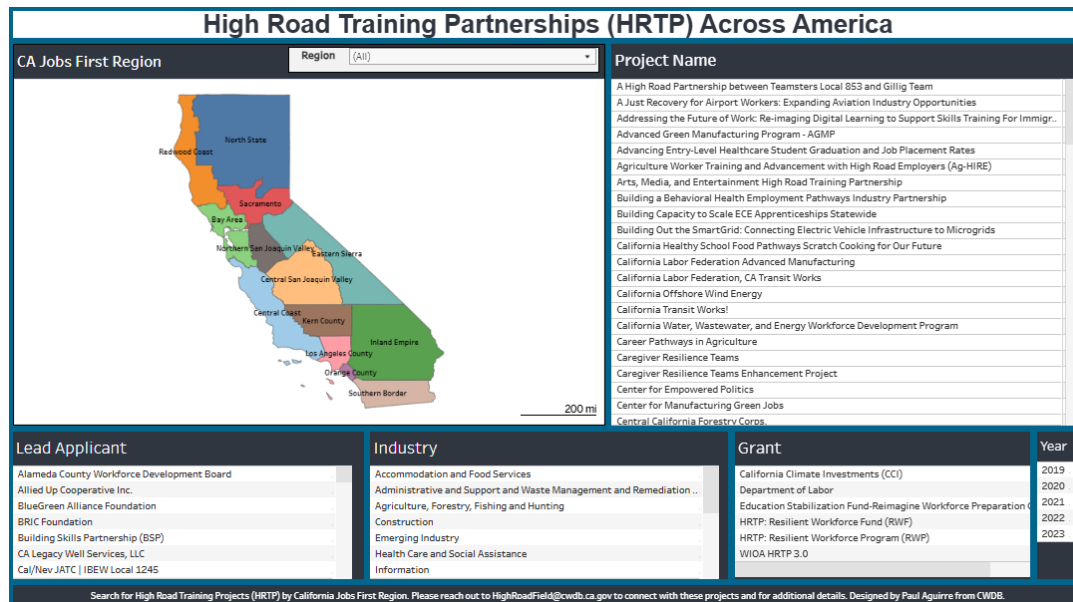
The [High Road to Economic Prosperity Report](#) summarizes an evaluation completed by the UCLA Labor Center that provides a macroanalysis of the successes and challenges that California's first eight demonstration HRTPs experienced during the initial eighteen-month period of the HRTTP initiative.

The California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) [page on HRTPs](#) contains descriptions of almost 100 HRTTP projects under the "HRTTP Projects" tab. The following project overviews are a few examples of HRTTP partnership models and highlight expected impact and transformation within their industry:

- [High Road to Distribution and Logistics - West Oakland Job Resource Center](#): Building partnerships and systems to move Oakland residents with systemic barriers to employment into family-supporting jobs in the Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics sector.
- [High Road to Healthcare - Shirley Ware Education Center](#): Supporting employers, unions, and non-clinical support staff to meet the growing demand in allied health occupations due to population growth, an aging population, and federal healthcare reform.
- [High Road to Public Transit - Joint Workforce Invest](#): Managing a statewide consortium of transit agencies, labor unions, and community colleges that promotes High Road Training Partnerships to address critical issues in public transit through partnership between Santa Clara Transportation Authority and Amalgamated Transit Union Local 265.

- [High Road to Water - Water Utilities Career Pathways Project](#): Offering low-income job seekers access to high-quality jobs and addressing the workforce skill gap by creating training programs through a partnership between Jewish Vocational Service and BAYWORK.

The [High Road Across California Interactive Map](#) (pictured below) provides an overview of all HRTPs funded by CWDB between 2017 and 2023. The map provides information on lead applicants, industry of focus, and the grant type for each of the High Road grantees.



Common Terms and Definitions

- **"High Road"**: Guided by policies that jointly uphold and advance the social values of shared prosperity, environmental sustainability, and shared decision making.
- **Industry leaders**: Employers, workers, and labor representatives who make up the HRTTP partnerships. Each contributes specialized knowledge and expertise that inform industry solutions.
- **Partnership**: A collective of industry leaders—including employers, workers, and labor representatives, along with representatives from dedicated convening organizations—who are committed to long-term, sustained involvement in collaborative problem-solving.
- **Shared prosperity**: A state in which all humans participate in and benefit from activities that produce improvements in their well-being, including those related to economic opportunities, environmental sustainability, and shared decision-making.

- **Worker Power:** Worker power refers to the ability of workers—individually and collectively—to influence decisions that affect their jobs, industries, and working conditions.
- **Worker Voice:** Worker voice ensures that workers’ perspectives, experiences, and needs are valued and incorporated into the design and implementation of H RTP programs.