



Why Bridging the Talent Gap

The Graduate! Network catalyzes communities and systems around the interests of *individual aspirations and goals* in the collective movement toward full education and economic equity. **Bridging The Talent Gap** is our proven approach to activate employers – and the nearly \$1 *Trillion* they invest in education and training each year – in support of this essential agenda.

What is **Bridging The Talent Gap**?

Bridging the Talent Gap is a nationally proven, local strategy that engages employers in local BTTG survey campaigns that can be flexed and adapted based on a community's specific priorities, goals and requirements as they relate to a rightly skilled and educated workforce.

Bridging the Talent Gap has been deployed in a vast range of jurisdictions throughout the country, inclusive of states, cities of all sizes, regions, and rural communities.

BTTG employer survey campaigns start with two short (10 minute) surveys - one focused on [employers](#) and the other deployed with selected [employees](#) who work for these employers. The employer survey collects information on hiring practices and preference, as well as support for education and training. The employee survey focuses on educational aspirations and perceptions. Data is correlated and presented through a [portal](#) that allows for comparisons to overall national norms, by sector, by employer size, and a host of other factors.

Most significantly, it provides a [roadmap](#) by which a community can increase post-secondary investments and outcomes. Specifically, survey data provides a clear line of sight into practices and policies that facilitate greater employer investment in low wage workers. Further, as a practical matter, it identifies front line workers who have educational ambitions, allowing for more efficient and better targeted support to better serve people in achieving their goals.

How is **Bridging The Talent Gap** implemented?

The Graduate! Network collaborates with civic leaders invested in talent equity to engage employers, deploy the surveys, and design systemic programmatic and policy interventions that – when executed – will transform futures for individuals and build toward a more equitable society. Participating communities have found that BTTG activities build local engagement, momentum and catalyze action to deliver impactful results for Comebacker-focused efforts.

Bridging the Talent Gap is widely adaptable; however, it is best deployed as part of a broader talent development initiative that has capacity to activate around findings. It has been shown to add value to several stages of programmatic evolution: to gain actionable intelligence in the planning stages of an emerging initiative, to inform next steps in a more mature effort, or to restart/reenergize an initiative in transition.

How will **Bridging The Talent Gap** advance my goals?

Bridging The Talent Gap is a model that, when fully implemented, provides more equitable opportunity for adult residents – particularly those who have been historically left behind – to

achieve their education and career aspirations, and thereby contribute to the overall vibrancy and economic health of the region.

Practitioners who are engaged in working toward a rightly skilled workforce – including workforce boards, unions, industry associations, chambers of commerce and others – are equipped with an ideal convening tool that fully engages employers as key to a more equitable society, identifies lower-wage workers who are eager to continue their learning to support the movement from intention to action, provides data and stories that are generally of interest to the media, provides a framework to measure impact over time, and generates actionable intelligence that empowers work with a range of key stakeholder groups.

Elected officials and **civic leaders** entrusted with advancing the public good get practicable intelligence; when acted upon, this intelligence can elevate the interests of their most economically vulnerable constituents as well as establish sustainable systems that generate compounded economic gains tied to better educational outcomes, higher earnings, and increased job quality.

Employers and human resource professionals receive customized data that informs internal talent development solutions, paves the way for stronger education partnerships where desired, allows for the benchmarking of talent development practices against their industry and other local employers, and provides insights into how they might more efficiently and effectively compete for top talent when hiring.

Educators gain intelligence around hiring practices as they relate to educational outcomes that can be leveraged to refine and improve their education and training offerings. Further, increased understanding of employer perceptions can open the door to more customized solutions in service to individual companies or sectors.

Funders gain deeper insights into where high-impact investments can be made, can see progress over time, and can identify policy levers they are uniquely positioned to influence that will result in more equitable education and economic outcomes.

What intelligence do the **Bridging The Talent Gap** surveys provide?

The **BTTG Employer Survey** provides valuable feedback in the following areas:

- Identify skill shortages across sectors
- Identify best practices for talent acquisition, retention, and development
- Identify opportunities for education partnerships

The survey takes about 15 minutes to complete and is accessible by computer or mobile device. The responses will be kept confidential to the general public, but those employers who express interest in your community goals for a more educated workforce will be shared with the lead organization. In general, responses will be combined, analyzed, and shared in aggregate form at a later date. You can explore a sample employer survey [here](#) and sample results here.

The **BTTG Employee Survey** provides information about the interest and opinions of incumbent workers regarding the education, training and career development support provided to them by their employer as well as their education and career goals. Responses on this short, 10-minute survey provide valuable anonymous feedback and insight to specific employers. No identifiable information will be reported or shared with the employer except when an employee expresses interest in learning more about their employer's education benefits program.

Responses from all participants will be combined, analyzed, and the findings reported only in their aggregate form to participating employers. This survey will include an option for employees to self-identify if they are interested in talking to a local career development/training advisor, however, this is not a requirement and respondents may choose to skip this question. You can explore a sample employee survey [here](#) and sample results here.

Who is the most appropriate **Bridging The Talent Gap** sponsor in my community?

Every community is different. The Graduate! Network has found that organizations or partnerships of organizations that have the following strengths are ideal:

- Credibility with employers around talent and talent development;
- Proven success in advancing public policy initiatives, including access to elected officials;
- Influence over higher education practices;
- Media savvy; and
- Experience in survey deployment.

A well-known champion is also a strong asset to optimize success.

Where they exist, we have found that established Industry Partnership conveners are well situated to sponsor a Bridging The Talent Gap program, as those groups have the attributes, relationships, and focus that align with successful deployments, as well as the connections to activate around findings.

How much does it cost to bring **Bridging The Talent Gap** to my community?

The price of the survey and support from The Graduate! Network is modest and based on community size and scope of the data collection effort. The significant costs of Bridging The Talent Gap are in the project management and post data collection activities, which are typically done through local providers. The TGN team provides technical assistance, guidance and support to local leadership and their designated staff at every step of the process.

We designed Bridging The Talent Gap to be an *investment* that, if fully implemented and activated, will net wide-ranging community returns that fully cover and, over time, far exceed any hard costs. We also believe it will amplify the outcomes for any community wishing to advance a racial equity and economic mobility agenda.

We are intrigued. How might we get more information about bringing **Bridging The Talent Gap** to our community?

If you'd like more information about The Graduate! Network's Bridging The Talent Gap initiative, please fill out our interest form here: <https://bit.ly/3uo5mHA>. You can also learn more about Bridging the Talent Gap at: bridgingthetalentgap.org.

THE GRADUATE! NETWORK.

Founded in 2005, The Graduate! Network is a non-profit organization that helps communities build and grow programs that specifically serve adults with some college credit who have not yet earned a degree, also referred to as Comebackers. Today there are over 30 communities across the network

Our Vision: Every adult who aspires to earn a college degree has access to the resources and supports they need to start and complete their degree.

Our Mission: We believe everyone should have an equitable chance to achieve the education and career they desire. The Graduate! Network collaborates with a range of stakeholders to build, nurture, and assess structures and systems that support adults to attend and complete their degrees.

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