

TAPPING AMERICA'S POTENTIAL

About Tapping America's Potential

America's greatest asset is its capacity for discovery and innovation. It is the center of our economic vitality. Yet the world is changing around us. As the global, knowledge-based economy presents new challenges and new international competitors, it is imperative that we develop and adopt policies that maintain our competitive edge and economic strength.

Recognizing the leading role that the business community can play in such an endeavor, the nation's most prominent business-led advocacy organizations joined forces to form Tapping America's Potential (TAP). Since 2005, the organizations have pooled their resources and know-how to meet the ambitious TAP goal: *double the number of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) graduates with bachelor's degrees by 2015.*

To achieve this goal, TAP recommends concerted action in a number of public policy areas:

1. Build public support for making STEM improvement a national priority.
2. Motivate U.S. students and adults to study and enter STEM careers, with a special effort geared to those in currently underrepresented groups.
3. Upgrade K-12 math and science teaching to foster higher student achievement.
4. Reform visa and immigration policies to enable the U.S. to attract and retain the best and brightest STEM students from around the world to study for advanced degrees and stay to work in the United States.
5. Boost and sustain funding for basic research, especially in the physical sciences and engineering.

To learn more about TAP's recommendations or read, "Tapping America's Potential: The Education for Innovation Initiative," the coalition's hallmark report that outlines its agenda and stresses the need for swift action, see: <http://www.tap2015.org/about/index.html>.

What TAP Does

TAP is dedicated to maintaining momentum to ensure that policymakers at all levels of government adopt and implement an innovation agenda that will grow our future labor force effectively, thereby guaranteeing that America's economy stays strong. Through its user-friendly Web site, www.tap2015.org, TAP offers state-specific information and international education and workforce comparisons to strengthen its message and agenda.

TAP members have launched an initiative to educate federal government leaders about these issues and to urge them to take immediate action. They have begun meeting with members of Congress and various executive branch leaders. They have commissioned a public opinion survey, comparing voters' and opinion leaders' views on the importance of an innovation agenda.

The next stage of TAP's advocacy work will be outreach to state and local officials, where most education policy and funding decisions are made, as well as to educators, parents and students, who are on the frontlines everyday helping to ensure that America and its workforce are well-prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century. As the work becomes more decentralized, it will become all the more important for new businesses and organizations to join the coalition, especially those with ties to particular states and communities.

What You Can Do

Many of TAP's approaches can be replicated easily, from building a coalition of business leaders in your community around a streamlined set of principles to ensuring that your business community is speaking with one voice to letting your state and local policymakers know that investment in the future workforce is your top priority.

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One state's business community has already adopted the TAP agenda as its own. In June 2006, over sixty organizations and individuals in Ohio – representing the education and business communities – formed Tapping Ohio's Potential (TOP), a statewide coalition aiming to double STEM college graduates. TOP focuses exclusively on state-level policy and is a chief advocate for the adoption of Ohio Core, the newly proposed set of college- and work-ready graduation requirements for all high schools, as a critical enabler of excellence in math and science education.

TAP Members

AeA, Business Roundtable, Business-Higher Education Forum, Council on Competitiveness, Information Technology Association of America, Information Technology Industry Council, Minority Business RoundTable, National Association of Manufacturers, National Defense Industrial Association, National Venture Capital Association, Semiconductor Industry Association, Software & Information Industry Association, TechNet, Technology CEO Council, Telecommunications Industry Association, U.S. Chamber of Commerce

To join the TAP network and keep up to date with its activities, go to: <http://www.tap2015.org>.