

Workforce Readiness: How Arizona CTE Is Leading with Durable Skills

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Luncheon & Welcome

Prescott Resort & Conference Center

Arizona's workforce future depends on more than technical skill — it depends on durable skills that show up on day one and last a lifetime. This opening keynote offers a hopeful, action-oriented look at what workforce readiness really means today. Grounded in current hiring data, the session challenges the idea that young people are unprepared and instead invites educators, employers, and leaders to work together with greater clarity, purpose, and shared responsibility.



Arizona's Shared Effort: Toward Common Durable Skills



LeAnn Lindsey
Director, EdTech &
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Mark Paulsen
Director of Education
AEF

What Employers Value: Conference Panel



Scott Holman
Amkor Technology
Arizona



Dr. Jeremy Babendure
SciTech Institute



Patti Pastor
Flagstaff Unified
School District



Erika Simon
Northern Arizona
Healthcare



Dr. LeeAnn Lindsey is the Director of EdTech and Innovation at the Arizona Institute for Education and the Economy at Northern Arizona University, where she helps lead statewide efforts to shape the future of school in Arizona. She led the collaborative development of the State 48 Graduate Profile and Arizona's Guidance for Using Generative AI in Schools, aligning education, workforce, and innovation priorities across the state. A lifelong educator with more than three decades of experience, she has worked across classroom, system, and policy levels to advance innovative teaching and learning models. She also remains an active educator, teaching computer literacy and educational technology at Glendale Community College and the University of Illinois.

Mark Paulsen is the Director of Education at the Arizona Educational Foundation, where he helps schools strengthen career-connected learning by blending strong instruction with real workforce skill development. An Arizona native, Mark has spent almost two decades in public education as a 4th–8th grade science teacher, building classrooms where curiosity, problem solving, and real-world relevance drive student learning. In addition to his work as a classroom educator, Mark served as a STEM Specialist, partnering with school and district teams to design and implement STEM strategic plans. In that role, he supported schools in mapping clear goals, strengthening instructional practices, and creating learning experiences that connect academic standards to high-demand careers and community needs. Mark is a National Board Certified Teacher in Early Adolescence Science and holds degrees in Elementary Education and Teacher Leadership. Today, he works closely with educators, district leaders, and industry partners across Arizona to expand career literacy, strengthen STEM pathways, and equip students with the skills they need to thrive in college, career, and life.



Dr. Jeremy Babendure is the Executive Director of the SciTech Institute and Associate Professor in the ASU School for Earth and Space Exploration where he oversees signature programs including the annual Arizona SciTech Festival and the Chief Science Officers. The festival involved 800+ collaborators, 50+ signature events and draws 200,000+ attendees. The Chief Science Officers Initiative, transforming student voice in the conversation about STEM and education, now includes 1800+ students in 10 US states and 4 countries. Finally, Babendure is the state lead for the Arizona STEM Ecosystem including Arizona's STEM stakeholders in an international community of practice of 120+ STEM Ecosystems.

Scott Holman is the Vice President of Human Resources and General Administration for Amkor Technology Arizona. With over 35 years of experience, he has held executive roles at TSMC Arizona, where he led all Human Resources and General Affair functions, and at Micron as the Global Human Resources Director. Scott also spent 22 years at Intel in various operational roles, but primarily in Human Resources. Known for his strong track record in developing global organizations, he excels in strategic planning, workforce planning, and organizational effectiveness. Scott is adept at building and developing global teams and is recognized for his ability to develop employees, optimize talent, and foster high morale and engagement. Scott is a Veteran of the United States Air Force and holds a master's degree in management, with an emphasis in Human Resources Development from Webster University.



Erika Simon is a Registered Nurse at Northern Arizona Healthcare (NAH) currently serving as the Professional Practice Program Manager, where she has the opportunity to create programs expanding practice for nursing professionals. With 17 years of experience spanning critical care, trauma, & education, Erika holds multiple instructor credentials, including American Heart Association & Advanced Trauma Care, and is a certified critical care nurse (CCRN). Her leadership experience extends beyond Arizona to the American Association of Critical Care Nurses (AACN), where she has served on multiple committees and is serving a 3-year term on the AACN Certification Corporation Board of Directors. Erika has led NAH's current work with the ARS-36 1803 Workforce Grant which has secured more than \$5 million in funding to enhance nursing transition to practice programs to address the nursing workforce crisis in Arizona. She balances her professional life with community involvement and volunteering, but especially enjoys her time as an "All That Dance Company" staff member and competitive dance team coach. Erika is honored to have started her career path as a high school participant in the Skills USA program at Flagstaff High School.

Patti Pastor is a leader in Career and Technical Education (CTE) with over 20 years of experience bridging the gap between the classroom and the workforce. As the Career Exploration Coordinator and Instructor for the Flagstaff Unified School District, she develops innovative, career-connected learning frameworks that empower students to navigate their career paths as well as their post-secondary futures with purpose. Patti's strategic approach is deeply informed by her 20-year tenure as a small business owner. This perspective allows her to build high-impact partnerships with local industries and align regional education priorities with real-world economic needs to serve students. A dedicated advocate for CTE, Patti has been a member of ACTEAZ since 2007 and currently serves as Secretary. Her influence on Arizona's educational landscape includes serving as a founding member of the Northern Arizona Healthcare Workforce Planning Committee and a long-standing partner of the Center for the Future of Arizona (CFA) as well as other organizations and educational institutions within her community. Patti holds an M.Ed. in Career and Technical Education from Northern Arizona University and remains a passionate champion for creating equitable, workforce-driven pathways for the next generation. Personally, she is married to an amazing life partner and has two grown successful daughters, 2 grandsons who keep her on her toes, and a fine labrador, that is her hiking buddy.

