



**The School-to-Employment Pipeline is no longer
working as originally designed.**

The Fix is easier (and a lot more fun) than you might imagine.

ACTE Postsecondary CTE Summit | Arlington, VA | September 2026

It's Tough Out There.

- Stop-Outs: 43M Americans have some college experience but no credential
- Declining Enrolment linked to questionable perceived ROI
- New Accountability Frameworks forcing structural change:
Outcome-based, not Enrolment-based or Activity-based



Forcing a Structural Shift

Workforce Pell introduces, for the first time at scale, a federal financial incentive tied to verified individual placement outcomes. The career development function is now being asked to deliver something it was never built to deliver, at a scale it was never resourced for, against a verification standard it has never operated under.

Brandon Tigges, CEO, Job Machine



Phased Approach

JULY 1, 2026

**Workforce Pell
takes effect**

2029-2030 AWARD YEAR

**Standard
tightens**



WINDOW 1 — Any-employment placement

70% of completers must be employed within 180 days of completion. Any employer. Any occupation. Verified against state wage records.

WINDOW 2 — In-field placement

70% must be employed in the specific occupation the program trained them for, identified by SOC code or a comparable high-demand occupation.

Institutions building for Window 1 need to build for Window 2 at the same time. The four-component framework that produces verified any-employment placement is the same framework that produces verified in-field placement. Designing only for the lower bar means rebuilding three years later.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Workforce Pell Grant Final Rule, May 2026; 34 CFR §690.94.



The Stuck Paradigm

- For years, the response has been to treat each of these as its own problem:
 - *retention initiatives,*
 - *advising redesigns,*
 - *recruitment campaigns, and*
 - *employer outreach.*
- Each one is reasonable. **None of them, on their own, has moved the numbers the way institutions need.**



The Opportunity

- (Truly) position Colleges at the center of regional Talent Ecosystems
- Extend on-ramps deep into the community
- Recruit, Enroll and Advise differently. (Whose needs are we serving?)
- Invest in relationships with Employers, and
- Reroute the Demand Signal upstream to Entry, not Completion



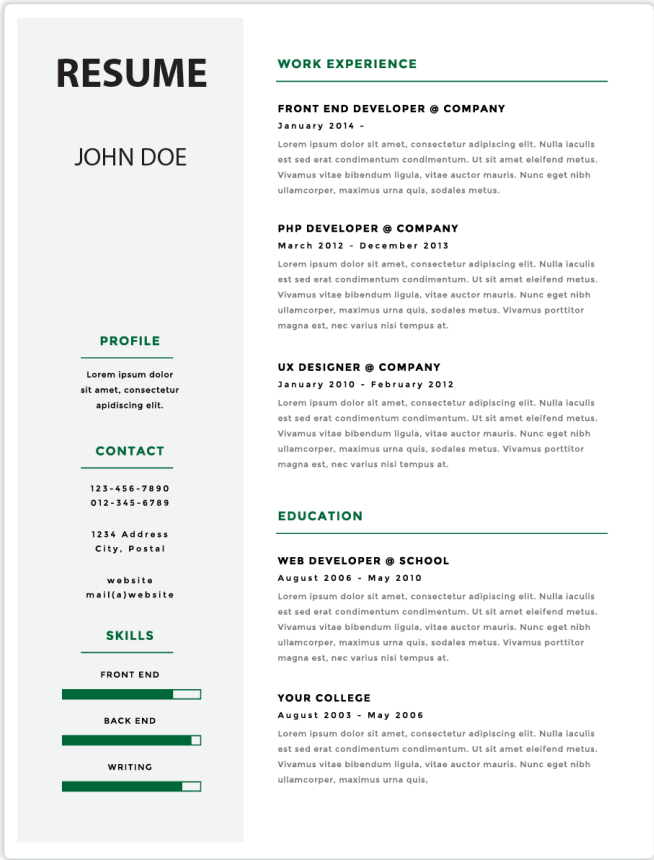
In the Beginning...



**“I’m tired of Hiring the Resume
and Firing the Person”**

Sam Baio, CEO, West49

What if...?



VS



The Resume

Who they are as a person

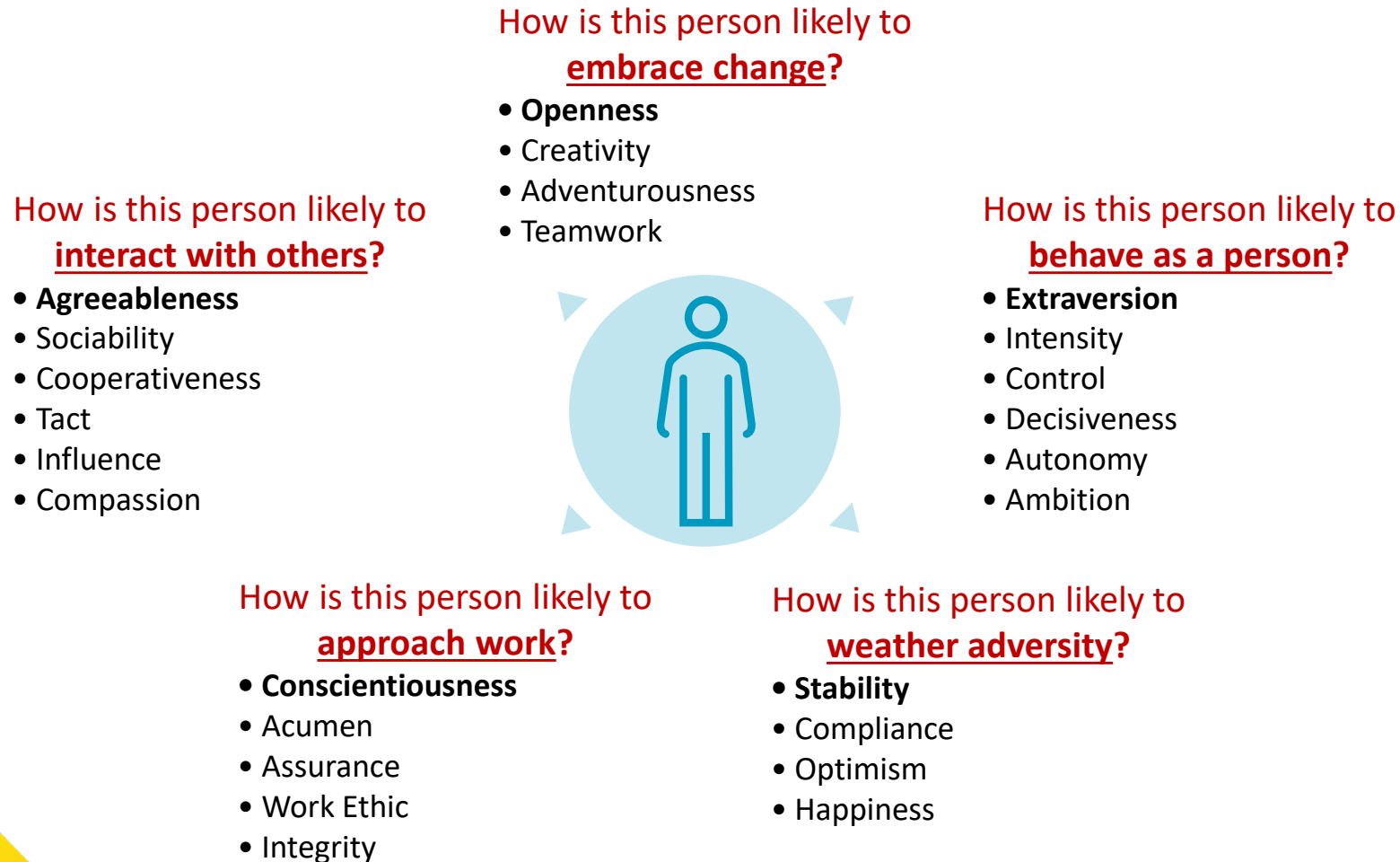


Measuring what Matters Most

WHAT they KNOW		Average correlation with on-the-job success
Résumé	Education	.11
	Training	.13
	Previous Experience	.18
	Interests	.10
The Person	Interview	.14
	References	.26
	Behavioral Traits and Attitudes	.38
	Critical Thinking and Reasoning	.53



The Big Five... and the Telling Twenty



Deep Insight into the Person's Fit

Amy Lewis
Assessment Date: January 9, 2020
Role: Business Development Manager
Company: Fit First Technologies Careers

Job Fit Quick View

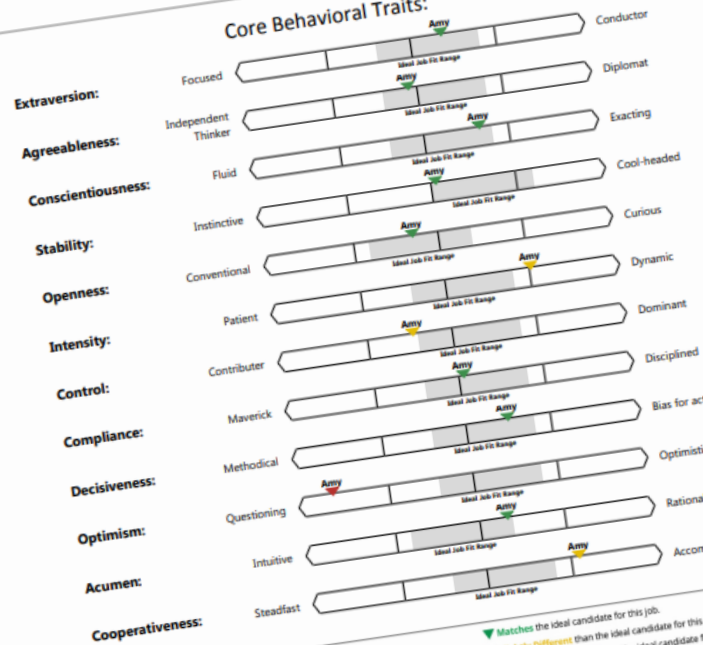
FitScore®

92

Critical
Thinking &
Reasoning

73

Core Behavioral Traits:



Amy Lewis

Assessment Date: January 9, 2020
Role: Business Development Manager
Company: Fit First Technologies Careers

Core Behavioral Traits that are most critical to success in this role:

EXTRAVERSION

Degree to which one requires social interaction and authority.



Ideal Candidate:

- Prefers to work in a group setting in which they have the opportunity to interact with others, but is able to work alone with limited contact for short periods of time.

This Candidate:

- Is an **exact match** to the ideal candidate range for this job.

Suggested interview questions specific to Amy's outcome for this trait:

- Think of a time when you were part of a group that had to accomplish a task and the group could not agree on how to do it. What did you do?
- How do you approach projects where you have to work alone, versus those requiring you to work in a group?
- Tell me about a time you worked in a group and were required to follow group consensus.
- What would you do if you were given a large task and the option to work on it alone and complete it in two weeks, or work with a group and complete it in one week?

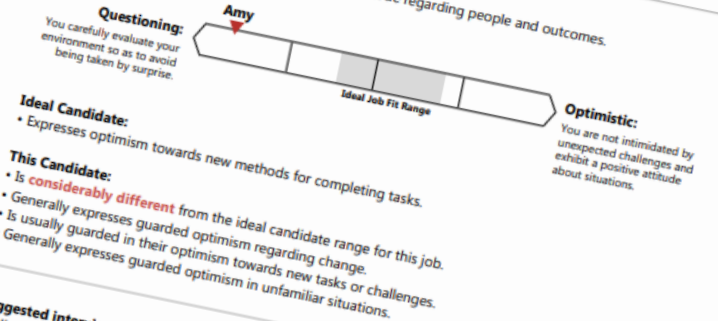
Your Notes:

Amy Lewis

Assessment Date: January 9, 2020
Role: Business Development Manager
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OPTIMISM

Tendency to have a positive attitude regarding people and outcomes.



Ideal Candidate:

- Expresses optimism towards new methods for completing tasks.
- This Candidate:**
- Is **considerably different** from the ideal candidate range for this job.
 - Generally expresses guarded optimism regarding change.
 - Is usually guarded in their optimism towards new tasks or challenges.
 - Generally expresses guarded optimism in unfamiliar situations.

Suggested interview questions specific to Amy's outcome for this trait:

- Tell me about a time you were skeptical of something your organization was trying to implement. Why were you skeptical?
- How have you reacted when a new co-worker was given the lead on a project you were a part of?
- Tell me about a time you were doubtful about a new change in the workplace. Why did you doubt the change?
- Tell me about a time you gave someone the benefit of the doubt, even though you did not know them very well.

Your Notes:



**Suddenly, we found ourselves hiring great people...
In surprising packages.**

VP Manufacturing

Another Angel in our Journey...



“Instead of using the science to screen hundreds of people for fit in an open job... could you make it screen hundreds of opportunities for an individual?”

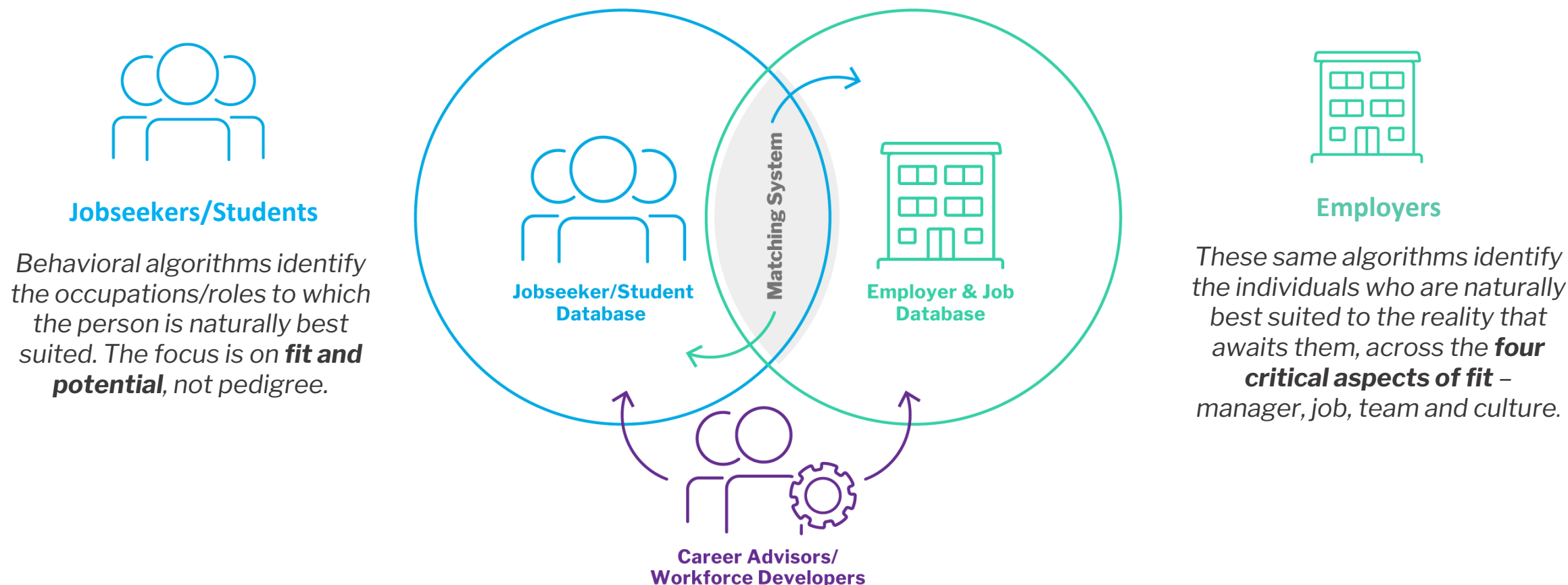
Patricia Garrett



CENTRAL OKLAHOMA
WORKFORCE INNOVATION BOARD

Jobtimize®

An Intensely **Person-Centric** Employment Ecosystem



Aptitude is evenly distributed in the population; **Opportunity** is not.

Then something interesting happened in Vegas



A SERVICE OF



- 100% Completion rates
- 100% Placement
- Discovered they were able to deliver the curriculum in 14 weeks instead of one year



Checking Alignment in CTE

- **295** Students in the Study
- **14%** are a strong fit for the jobs at the end of their stream (Marketing, Sales, Service Industry, Entrepreneurship/Self-Employment Pathways)
- Manufacturing & Product Development, Business & Finance, and Health Science & Medical had the highest average FitScores, suggesting particularly strong trait alignment among matched students in those sectors.



Building a Workforce out of Thin Air

- Industry Association started a **Group Sponsorship**
- Started with a single Trade. Now sitting at **15 Trades**, across multiple Industries.
- Now **>600** Apprentices, **>300** Employers... *momentum is accelerating*
- Satisfaction rates (Employers and Apprentices) **>90%**
- **24%** of hires come from populations that face barriers
- Attrition has consistently been **<3%**





Screening in, instead of screening out...
Leaning in, instead of leaning out.

Stephen Sell, Ontario Electrical League

Three principles; five elements

Key principles:

1. “How Might We?”
2. There is only now.
3. Attack the Problem, not the Symptom

Core elements:

1. Tend to the Roots
2. Realign Demand Signaling
3. Focus on the Individual, not the Gap
4. Clarify Purpose and Roles
5. Build your Collaborative





MID-SENIOR LEVELS

EXPERIENCE AND
PERFORMANCE TRUMP
CREDENTIALS

ENTRY LEVEL

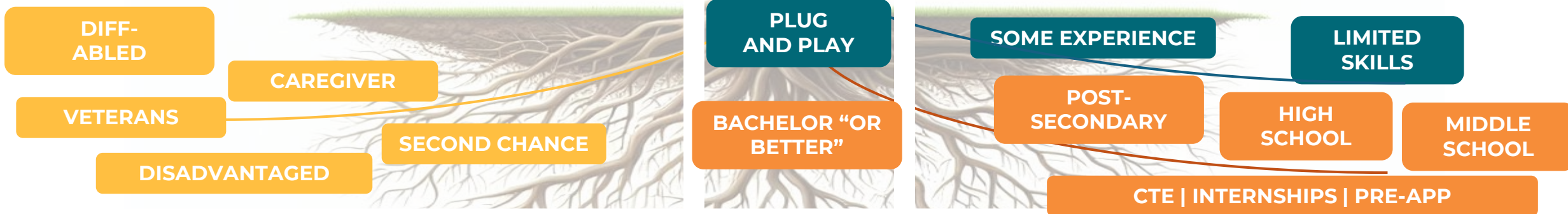
MOST ACCESSIBLE
REQUIRE ONLY APTITUDE AND SKILLS

GOLDEN RATIO 1:2:7

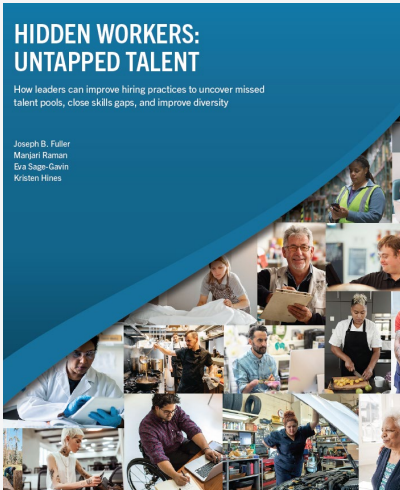
For every **1** job that truly
requires a Masters or
more;

only **2** Professional jobs
truly require a
Bachelor's degree;

but 7 only require a
Certification or
credential of
2 years or less



Bringing Visibility and Credibility



27 Million Hidden Workers:

- Caregivers
- Veterans
- Diff-abled
- Less-advantaged, less-credentialed
- Formerly incarcerated
- Others...

And yet, these same groups outperform their peers across six key criteria:

- Attitude and work ethic
- Productivity
- Quality of Work
- Engagement
- Attendance
- Innovation

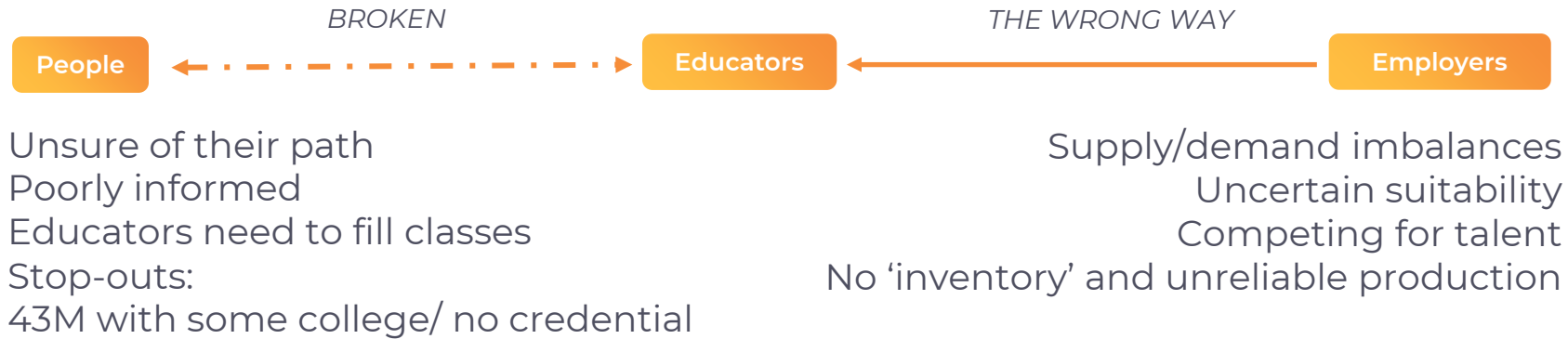


U.S. Chamber of Commerce

7.5-10 Million Unfilled Job Openings at any given point in time in the US Economy

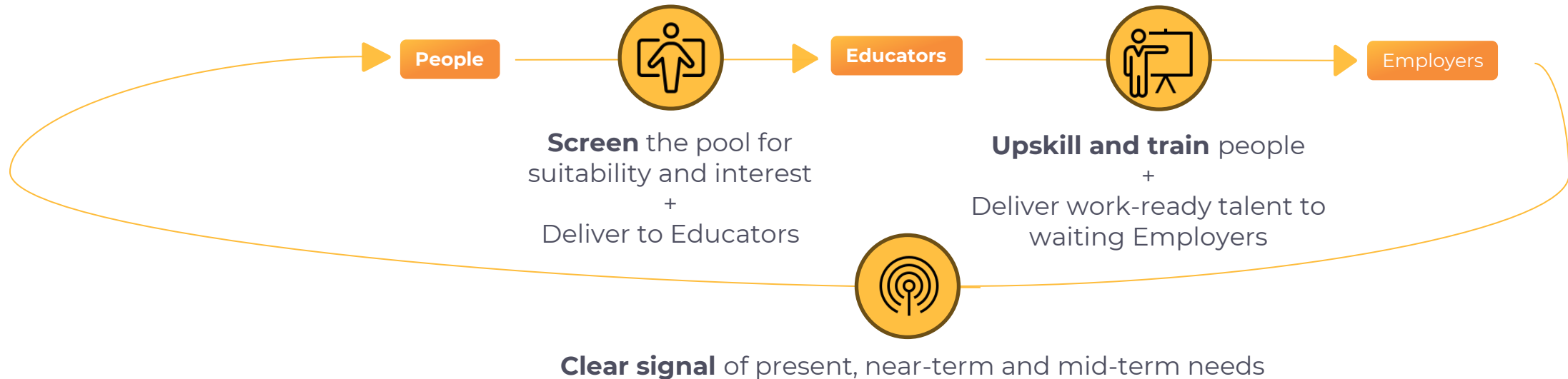
Helping to Realign Demand Signaling

CURRENT:



MORE EFFICIENT:

Leads to higher completion rates, better employment outcomes, and higher production capacity

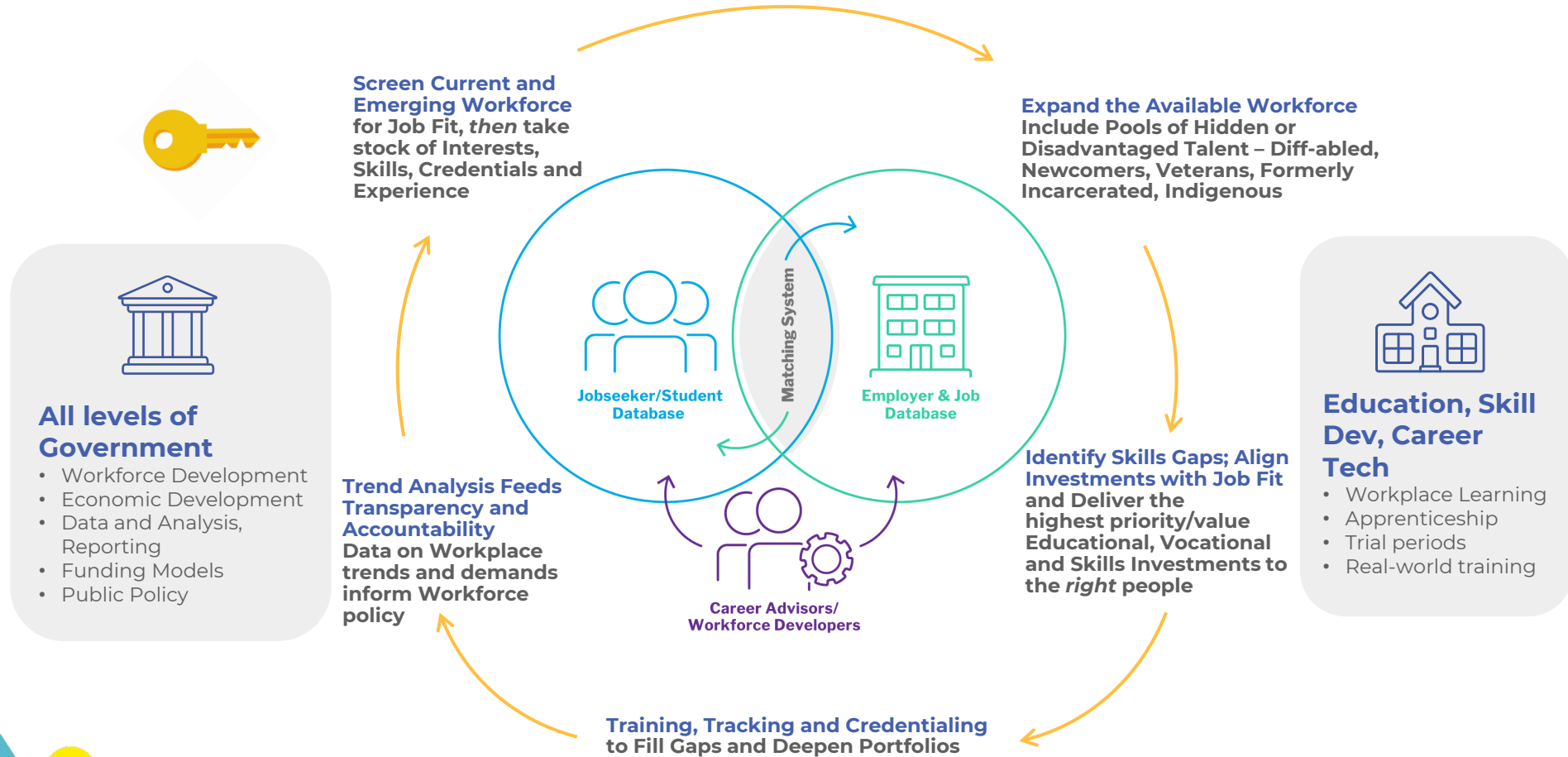


Focus on the individual, not the gap

Compatibility

Trainability

Profitability

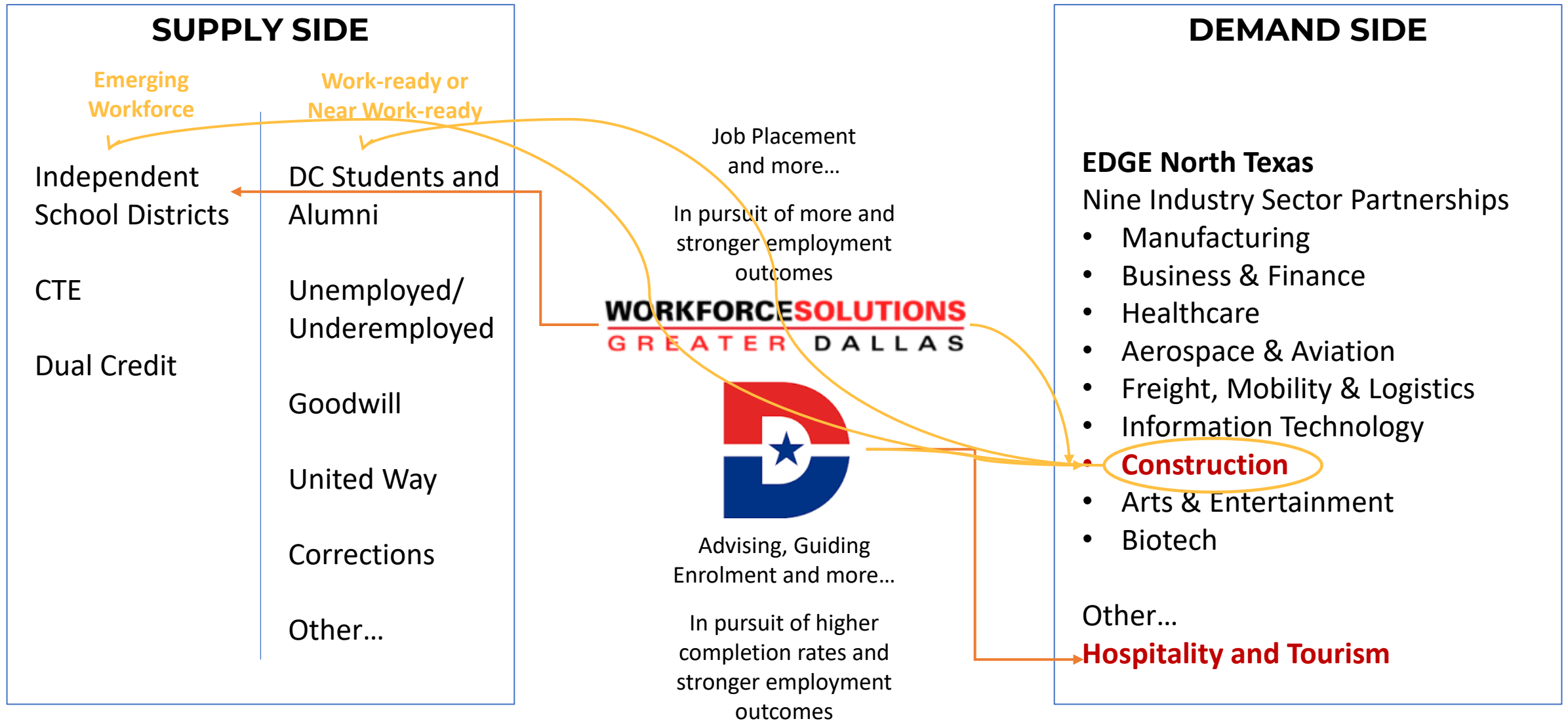




FIT is the missing signal in Workforce Systems, where talent pipelines are optimized for *movement*, not for *match*.

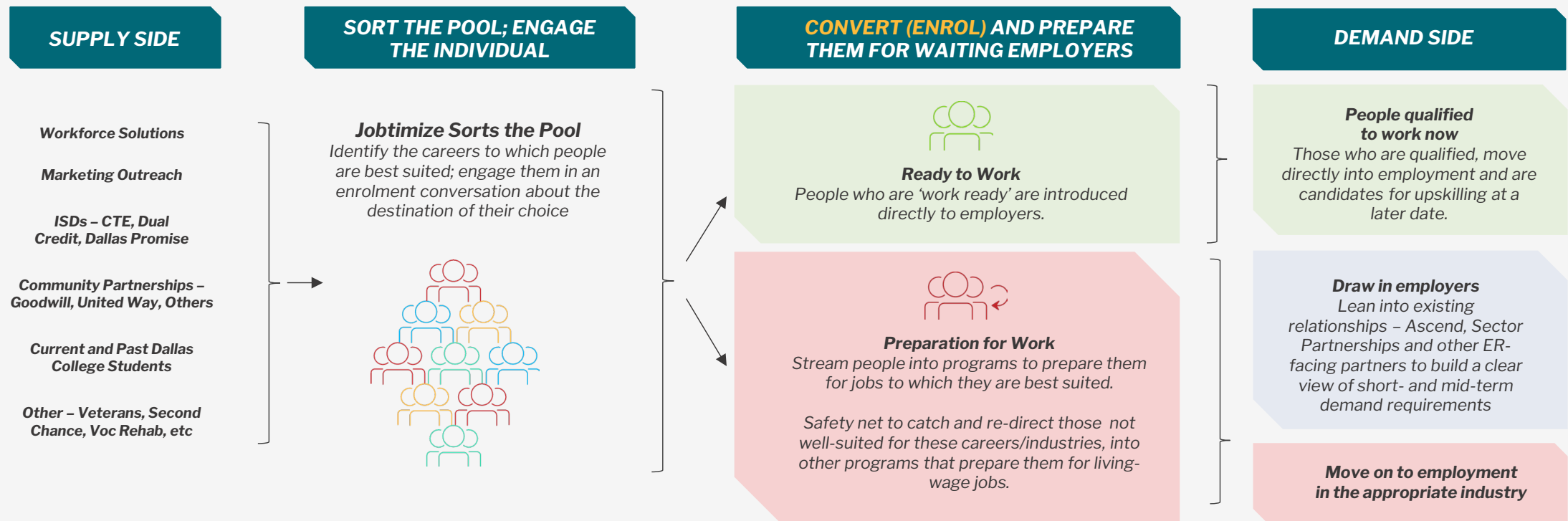
Tiffany Nicholson, Economic Mobility Center

Making the Ecosystem... an actual Ecosystem



North Texas Talent Hub, hosted by Dallas College

Busting Barriers Across the Community, to Foster a Thriving, Shared Talent Ecosystem





**How can we be the Uber
that takes you from where you are,
to where you want to be?**



Thank you!

Any Questions?

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