

ACEC

EXPANDING THE TALENT PIPELINE

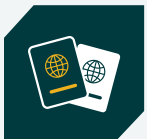
America's engineering industry needs more engineers in the talent pipeline to support a growing economy. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics the engineering workforce is currently at full employment and is not growing enough to meet the demand for infrastructure development. Analysis from the ACEC Research Institute (ACEC RI) finds that we will need more than 82,000 engineers and other professionals to deliver the projects funded under IIJA, the CHIPS and Science Act, and the IRA. Surveys of ACEC members show that over half of engineering firms are turning down work specifically due to workforce shortages.

ACEC supports a comprehensive approach to this challenge, including long-term strategies to promote STEM education investments at the local, state, and federal levels, and other programs that inspire young people to pursue engineering careers. In the near term, ACEC advocates for better alignment of the nation's immigration policies with a pro-growth economic policy and expansion of tax provisions that allow employers to provide educational assistance to their employees.

KEY POINTS



The American Society for Engineering Education reports that in 2019 over half of engineering master's degrees awarded by U.S. universities were earned by international students, and National Science Foundation data shows that 60 percent of engineering doctoral degrees awarded by U.S. universities were earned by international students in 2021.



H-1B visas have been capped at 85,000 visas annually since 2004, a policy that has failed to keep pace with the needs of a growing economy. In fiscal year 2024 there were nearly 759,000 registrations for the H-1B visa lottery.



There are 140,000 employment-based green cards available each fiscal year but hundreds of thousands have gone unused over the past 20 years because they were not processed by the end of the applicable fiscal year.



Congress should extend the Employer Participation in Repayment Act, which allows employers to provide student loan repayment assistance without it being a taxable benefit for employees. In addition, the Section 127 benefit for student loan repayment and educational expenses, currently capped at \$5,250, should be indexed for inflation.

REQUEST

- 1 Increase the number of H-1B visas.
- 2 Recapture unused green cards from past fiscal years.
- 3 Enhance the ability of employers to assist employees with educational expenses and student loan repayment.