



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IN UKRAINE:

Evidence-Based Approaches for Recovery and Resilience

How IREX delivers measurable impact in a complex, conflict environment

Ukraine's recovery will require a workforce that can adapt, reskill, and meet the demands of a rapidly evolving economy. Drawing on decades of experience in Ukraine and globally, IREX designs and delivers workforce development solutions that connect people to real economic opportunities, strengthen systems, and drive measurable employment outcomes. From supporting youth, veterans, and internally displaced people (IDP) to advancing accessible, responsive labor market systems, IREX applies proven approaches from different contexts to help Ukraine rebuild a resilient, future-ready workforce.

The Challenge in Ukraine



Structural labor shortages driven by war-related demographic shifts: Military service, displacement (internal and external), and migration have reduced the available workforce, leaving many sectors, particularly male-dominated industries with unfilled jobs despite ongoing economic activity. At the same time, labor participation is uneven, with some groups constrained from entering or re-entering the workforce.



Unequal labor participation across gender, age, and experience groups: School disruptions and security concerns keep many women out of the workforce as primary caregivers, while many youth, who were permitted to leave the country, have migrated abroad. Some men remain economically inactive to avoid conscription. As a result, workforce recovery depends on increasing productivity, reskilling active workers for in-demand roles, and expanding inclusion of underutilized groups such as older workers and inexperienced youth.



Skills mismatch between available workers and in demand jobs: IREX labor market intelligence snapshots show persistent gaps between the skills jobseekers possess and those required in sectors with unfilled positions, including reconstruction, manufacturing, logistics, and technology. While jobs exist, many workers lack sector specific technical skills, transferable competencies, or awareness of viable pathways into these roles, limiting productivity and slowing workforce recovery.









Limited access to labor market guidance and navigation support: Many jobseekers lack timely, practical information on in-demand sectors, required skills, and viable pathways, into available jobs. Without access to career counseling, labor market intelligence, and job search and workplace readiness support, workers struggle to translate existing capabilities into employment or to identify realistic retraining options aligned with current market needs. Nearly half of youth not engaged in workforce programs report they simply do not know where to find opportunities, while others cannot afford available services.

Traditional training programs often fail because they are not linked to real labor market demand and other local context, do not provide sustained support, and do not address the full range of barriers facing jobseekers in a conflict-affected environment.

IREX Approach

IREX applies an integrated, evidence-based model to workforce development that where participants acquire future-ready skills while recovering within a trusted community of peers:

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|  <p>Market-relevant skills development: Labor market analysis and associated training and career guidance aligned with employer needs and high-growth sectors such as reconstruction and technology.</p> |  <p>Career navigation and job search support: Practical tools for CV development, interviewing, and identifying employment opportunities.</p> |  <p>Sustained engagement and mentorship: Ongoing and customized support to job seekers through coaching, consultations, and multi-touch services.</p> |
|  <p>Wrap around services: Integration of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) tailored for youth, veterans, IDPs, and other vulnerable populations.</p> |  <p>Community partnerships: Combining forces with trusted providers and entry points such as youth centers, other community-based organizations, and humanitarian aid distribution points.</p> |  <p>Systems strengthening: Engagement with employers to provide resources needed to hire the right people, and partnerships with government and education institutions to improve long-term workforce systems.</p> |

Through this approach, IREX has engaged over **24,000 youth** in workforce readiness and supported more than **2,000 veterans** with employment services in Ukraine.

Evidence of What Works



1. Practical, job-focused training leads to employment outcomes

- **Intervention:** Career counseling, job search training, and skills development linked to employment pathways
- **Evidence:** 70% of participants in IREX-supported workforce programs reported positive career outcomes, including new employment or better job alignment, and 35% reported receiving and accepting job offers within three months of training.
- **Why it matters for Ukraine:** Scalable, employment-focused programming can accelerate workforce reintegration and reduce unemployment during recovery.



2. Applied skills and soft skills drive job quality

- **Intervention:** Emphasis on transferable skills such as communication, self-presentation, and career planning
- **Evidence:** Participants applied skills at high rates (95%) and experienced better outcomes, with higher job quality (4.0 vs. 3.3) and satisfaction (81% vs. 71%) than non-participants. After training, participants most commonly applied workforce readiness skills including soft skills (47%), resume development (46%), and interview preparation (38%), alongside labor market analysis and job search navigation (36% each).
- **Why it matters for Ukraine:** Beyond job placement, improving job quality supports long-term economic stability and productivity.



3. Sustained support increases employment success

- **Intervention:** Multi-session engagement (consultations, mentoring, and training series)
- **Evidence:** Participants receiving a series of services were more likely to secure employment (35% vs. 23% for one-time support), though this effect was observed only among previously unemployed participants. Nearly half of participants (45%) also reported that training had a significant or very significant impact on outcomes in their current job.
- **Why it matters for Ukraine:** Continued engagement is critical in a volatile labor market where job searches take longer and require adaptability.

Cross-cutting Evidence:

Nearly half of participants reported having a disability (**48.2%**), and nearly one-quarter were internally displaced (**23.9%**), underscoring the program's reach among populations most affected by Ukraine's labor market disruptions.

Global Proof Points



Context

Skills gaps persisted despite training investments, driven by weak labor market data and limited coordination across actors in a transitioning economy



Intervention

IREX and partners built digital workforce dashboards and convened Workforce Councils to use real-time data to guide training and hiring decisions



Results

Training programs became more closely aligned with market demand, and stakeholders used shared data to prioritize skills development and workforce investments



Relevance to Ukraine

Shows how data-driven workforce systems can accelerate matching of workers to jobs—critical for Ukraine's fast-moving recovery and reconstruction economy

Taken together, this evidence demonstrates that workforce recovery in Ukraine is less about job creation alone and more about enabling people and systems to adapt through targeted reskilling, sustained guidance, employer engagement, and stronger labor market institutions. These findings point to clear, scalable opportunities where donor investment can accelerate workforce participation, productivity, and recovery.

Opportunities for Donor Investment

- **Scaling labor market access and career navigation services:** Expand access to career counseling, labor market intelligence, and job matching support across regions to help workers identify viable pathways into in demand sectors and accelerate re entry into employment
- **Targeted workforce pathways for underutilized populations:** Support tailored workforce programs for veterans, IDPs, youth, women, and older workers that combine reskilling, productivity focused training, and sustained guidance to increase labor force participation and job quality
- **Strengthening workforce systems and employer capacity:** Build the capacity of education providers, local governments, and intermediaries to deliver market relevant training, while supporting employers, including small businesses and self employed entrepreneurs—to absorb, train, and retain workers through mentoring, advisory services, and linkages to public workforce and recovery programs
- **Private sector engagement and job creation in recovery sectors:** Incentivize employer partnerships, apprenticeships, and workforce integration into recovery and reconstruction sectors including by connecting self employed workers and entrepreneurs to relevant state funded employment, training, and recovery initiatives

TO LEARN MORE:

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