

May 7, 2026

---

# Billions Invested, Black Workers Must Benefit: A Case Study of Place-Based Industrial Policy in Arizona and North Carolina

**Dr. Gabrielle Smith Finnie**

*Senior Policy Analyst, Workforce Policy*



# Executive Summary

---

Place-based industrial policymaking seeks to bolster the economy by providing fiscal investments to specific regions, enhancing infrastructure, and spurring growth in high-demand industries including skilled trades, advanced manufacturing, and technology. Place-based industrial policies are a key component of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) (2021), Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) or Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) (2021), Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors (CHIPS) and Science Act (2022), and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) (2022).<sup>1</sup>

Collectively, the 117th Congress allocated over \$80 billion for place-based industrial policies between 2021 – 2022.<sup>2</sup> With federal funding flowing into place-based initiatives in high-growth industries, there is an opportunity to create real economic mobility for Black workers in emerging industries such as energy, advanced manufacturing, and technology. Past federal place-based industrial policy investments have done collateral damage like eliminating labor protections, minimum wage standards, and demolishing Black communities widening economic disparities.<sup>3</sup> Black communities have yet to receive the full benefits of federal and place-based policy funding.

While the disbursement of funding is set to continue over the next decade, it is important to examine how these investments are impacting Black workers and the infrastructure of Black communities. This brief, the third in the [Centering Black Workers in Emerging Industries](#) series, is an early state assessment of implementation, risks, and challenges of place-based industrial policy funding. Additionally, this report examines the inclusion of Black workers and communities into place-based workforce development in emerging industries. We conducted interviews and site visits in Central North Carolina and Arizona. Upon analyzing the interviews, we compiled a list of key themes:

## 1 Delayed Investments Amid Continual Change and Uncertainty

Constant shifts in political leadership, changing regulations, evolving industries, and ongoing proposal revisions create significant concerns of instability and uncertainty, and have slowed the dissemination of funding. Despite funding for ARPA, IIJA/BIL, CHIPS and Science, and IRA being authorized between 2021 and 2022, these investments are being distributed gradually throughout the decade, delaying immediate impact. The Trump administration has scrutinized funding for many of the programs established in these bills, often resulting in stalled distribution and slowed workforce efforts. The numerous policy and procedural changes made by the Administration has hindered job creation, job growth in high-demand industries, and the development, and implementation of place-based industrial policy initiatives.<sup>4</sup> The slow dissemination of funding has also impacted the development of new educational standards, courses, and certificate programs. To maximize the impact, place-based industrial policy investments must be fully distributed and include targeted investments for Black communities.

## 2 Critical Programmatic Areas

To close the skills gap and meet the demand of the job market in skilled trades, advanced manufacturing, and technology, short-term credentials and youth programming are expanding rapidly in Phoenix and Central North Carolina. These critical programmatic areas are key to supporting long-term economic growth and building the current and future workforce. Along with the rapid growth and development of workforce development initiatives, interviewees highlighted limited portability of short-term credentials, and the need for earnings transparency and evaluation metrics for program quality and participant outcomes. Stakeholders in both regions are working to improve program quality

by developing standards to support credential portability and career mobility. Investing in critical programmatic areas, such as short-term credentials and youth programming, creates more opportunities for Black communities to benefit from historic workforce development investments.

### **3 Limited Collaboration Between Stakeholders and Fragmented Efforts Across Multiple Initiatives**

As multiple industrial policy initiatives are being developed simultaneously, there is limited collaboration among higher education institutions, employers, and workforce development programs. Despite having a common goal of preparing workers for the evolving workforce, stakeholders are operating in silos and lack universal standards. Currently, separate initiatives are being launched, generating duplicative efforts and inefficient engagement and recruitment strategies. The lack of collaboration and universal standards leaves workers inadequately prepared for diverse roles. Initiatives in both Central North Carolina and Phoenix lack engagement with Black community organizations, businesses, and workers. Without targeted outreach, Black workers and learners remain unaware about these new jobs and workforce development initiatives. For place-based industrial initiatives to be accessible and economically beneficial to Black communities, collaboration must intentionally break down silos and increase accountability for the economic value of new credentials in the job market.

### **4 Inadequate Data Systems**

Data infrastructure and collection requirements vary widely across initiatives and regions, limiting the ability to track progress or evaluate educational and workforce outcomes effectively. Currently, non-degree credentials programs are not mandated to collect program-level enrollment, retention, or post-completion wage data. Similarly, employer-led training programs may collect program data, but these data are not publicly available or accessible. As states continue to receive significant federal investments, the administration should require data reporting and provide fiscal support to enhance data infrastructure. Without adequate data systems and disaggregated program-level data by race, it is difficult to examine the educational and economic outcomes of Black workers and learners. All employers receiving federal funding should be required to disclose employee demographics to increase transparency and enable more adequate assessment of whether their hiring decisions and employment demographics reflect their surrounding community.

### **5 Disparities Driven by Anti-DEI Policies**

The elimination of several diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives by the Trump administration is affecting Black workers' access to careers and jobs related to industrial policy. Education, workforce, and industry stakeholders mentioned that the elimination of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives has inhibited intentional outreach and engagement with Black workers and businesses. There is an urgent need for targeted investments like money, intentional outreach strategies, and accountability safeguards to ensure Black workers and learners can access to quality jobs, competitive wages, and meaningful training opportunities.

## Introduction

---

With more than \$80 billion of federal funding flowing into place-based initiatives in high-growth industries, the United States has an opportunity to create real economic mobility for Black workers in emerging industries such as energy, advanced manufacturing, technology, and semiconductor production. This third brief in the [Centering Black Workers in Emerging Industries](#) series highlights the importance of dedicated funding for regional initiatives that aim to connect Black workers with new, in-demand job opportunities. The brief also provides recommendations for prioritizing Black workers in the design and implementation of place-based policies.

## What is Place-Based Industrial Policy?

---

Place-based industrial policy aims to strengthen regional economies by providing targeted fiscal investments to enhance infrastructure, and foster expansion in high-demand industries such as skilled trades, advanced manufacturing, and technology.<sup>5</sup> Historic place-based federal investments include the 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act, commonly known as the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act. Passed during the Eisenhower administration, the bipartisan legislation fundamentally reshaped the nation's existing transportation infrastructure and created thousands of jobs with the construction of major highways across the country.<sup>6</sup> The highway system also reinforced segregation by demolishing Black neighborhoods and further isolating Black communities from developing downtown centers.<sup>7</sup> In efforts to intentionally address past disinvestment in low-income communities, the Obama administration's Choice Neighborhoods and the Promise Neighborhoods initiatives disbursed funding to revitalize high-poverty communities by creating jobs, improving economic security and public safety, and expanding access to educational opportunities and quality affordable housing.<sup>8</sup>

Place-based industrial policies are an integral part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) (2021), Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) or Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) (2021), Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors (CHIPS) and Science Act (2022), and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) (2022).<sup>9</sup> Collectively, the 117th Congress allocated over \$80 billion for place-based industrial policies between 2021 – 2022.<sup>10</sup> The CHIPS and Science Act authorized \$60 billion of place-based policy funding to create jobs, expand workforce development programs, and diversify the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) industries, providing Black workers with more opportunities.

*These place-based investments aim to expand the industrial workforce in key sectors, establish regional hubs to advance technological innovation technology, and finance local supply chains.*



American Rescue Plan Act (2021)

**\$2 BILLION**



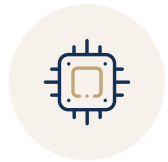
Inflation Reduction Act (2022)

**\$4 BILLION**



Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) or Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) (2021)

**\$18 BILLION**



Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors (chips) and Science Act (2022)

**\$60 BILLION**

*Place-based industrial policies can promote economic mobility and address regional inequality.<sup>12</sup>*

Federal investments' lack of inclusion and targeted initiatives for Black workers and communities contribute to the economic and environmental conditions that currently impact Black workers and communities. When implemented with equity at the helm, place-based industrial policies can improve regional infrastructure, provide workforce development opportunities, and build local economies for communities.<sup>13</sup> These investments can be especially beneficial for economically excluded communities with higher unemployment rates, poor infrastructure, and social inequality due to divestment, environmental racism, and economic injustice.<sup>14</sup> Industrial policies often lead to expanded access to broadband, better transportation, improved highways, and new jobs opportunities. Initiatives such as the Build Back Regional Challenge<sup>15</sup>, the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program<sup>16</sup>, and the Department of Transportation's Reconnecting Communities grant program<sup>17</sup> are all recent support programs for local communities in the Investing in America agenda. Other examples include the MEGA Project grant program<sup>18</sup>, clean energy tax incentives, and the Indigenous Communities program<sup>19</sup>, all of which are aimed at improving infrastructure, expanding access to transportation, and reducing energy costs for local communities and residents.

## Methodology

---

To begin the project, we conducted a scan of publicly available datasets and evidence to evaluate the impact of new place-based initiatives. This scan helped inform our site selection criteria, methodological approaches, and interview protocol. A media scan of local press highlighted the impact of the employer-led or short-term educational initiatives at local colleges, universities, and employers, but the outcome data was not publicly available. Qualitative inquiry is useful to fill quantitative data gaps and elevate the complexities and lived experiences numerical data does not adequately capture.<sup>20</sup> Engaging directly with employers, community organizations, workforce training programs, and workers in regions that received place-based industrial policy funding was integral to understanding how these investments translate into tangible benefits for residents, particularly Black workers. We conducted 15 interviews with personnel from non-degree credential programs, higher education, and workforce development. We also interviewed a Black adult learner who earned a nanomanufacturing certificate.

We analyzed the interviews to examine themes, noted our observations, and created considerations for other states. The qualitative analysis helped to deepen our understanding, gain background insights, clarify the aims of emerging initiatives, and learn how stakeholders were progressing amid uncertainty due to the political climate.

## Site selection

---

We selected potential site visit locations based on the following criteria:

- Received funding through the American Rescue Plan Act and/or President Biden's Investing in America Agenda
- Right-to-work state
- Has a National Black Workers Center
- Unemployment Rate
- Black Unemployment Rate
- Educational Attainment Rate
- Hubs for current or emerging jobs in high-growth and in-demand industries



# PHOENIX, ARIZONA

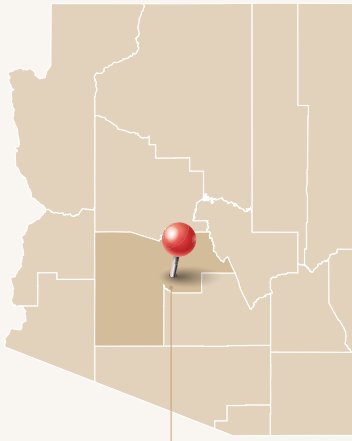


Black Population	AZ: <b>7.8%</b>
Educational Attainment Rate: Bachelor's Degree or Higher	<b>36%</b>
Overall Unemployment Rate <sup>21</sup>	AZ: <b>4.3%</b> Phoenix Metro Area, AZ: <b>3.8%</b> <sup>22</sup> Maricopa County: <b>3.7%</b> <sup>23</sup>
Unemployment Rate <sup>7</sup>	AZ: Black Unemployment Rate: <b>5.7%</b> White Unemployment Rate: <b>3.0%</b> Hispanic Unemployment Rate: <b>5.3%</b>
Right To Work State	<b>Yes</b>
National Black Workers Center	<b>No</b>

# CENTRAL NORTH CAROLINA



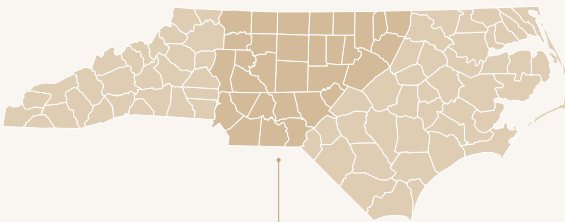
Black Population	NC: <b>26.3%</b>
Educational Attainment Rate: Bachelor's Degree or Higher	<b>58%</b>
Overall Unemployment Rate	NC: <b>3.8%</b> Durham Area: <b>3.8%</b> <sup>24</sup> Raleigh Area: <b>3.6%</b> <sup>25</sup> Winston Area: <b>4.2%</b> <sup>26</sup>
Unemployment Rate <sup>27</sup>	NC: Black Unemployment Rate: <b>6.0%</b> White Unemployment Rate: <b>2.9%</b> Hispanic Unemployment Rate: <b>3.4%</b>
Right To Work State	<b>Yes</b>
National Black Workers Center	<b>No</b>



Phoenix, Arizona

### ■ *Phoenix*

Phoenix, Arizona has multiple streams of funding from the American Rescue Plan Act and Investing in America Agenda. Arizona is also a right-to-work state and is home to a “semiconductor and advanced manufacturing boom.”<sup>28</sup> While Phoenix does not have a high population of Black people, Phoenix is considered a global hub for microchip development, testing, manufacturing, and packaging. Phoenix is set to receive nearly \$10 billion from place-based industrial programs, by far the highest concentration in the country.<sup>29</sup> Among substantial allocations of funding, the U.S. Department of Commerce awarded Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) up to \$6.6 billion in direct funding under the CHIPS and Science Act.<sup>30</sup> This funding will support TSMC’s investment of more than \$65 billion to build cutting-edge fabrication plants in Phoenix, Arizona, which will manufacture the world’s most advanced semiconductors. These investments aim to bring some of the most advanced technologies to the United States, creating thousands of manufacturing and construction jobs in this decade. This investment in Arizona represents a significant step in strengthening U.S. economic and national security by incentivizing a reliable domestic supply of the chips that will underpin the future economy.



Central North Carolina

### ■ *Central North Carolina*

North Carolina is a right-to-work state and has a Black population of nearly 30 percent. In Central North Carolina, the Research Triangle and the Piedmont Triad, comprising cities like Raleigh, Durham, Greensboro, and Winston-Salem, has become a hub for advanced manufacturing, particularly in clean technology and sustainable energy solutions.<sup>31</sup> Nearly \$1 billion from the Department of Commerce will support the launch of the first-of-its-kind CHIPS Manufacturing USA Institute.<sup>32</sup> Cities in Central North Carolina like Raleigh also has a significant amount of funding from the American Rescue Plan Act and the Investing in America Agenda. The fiscal support from the CHIPS and Science Act presented multiple project locations to conduct site visits, such as employers, organizations with industrial policy-related workforce development initiatives, and colleges and universities.

Although significant place-based funding was allocated in industrial policy legislation, the Trump administration has threatened to eliminate substantial federal investments and paused the distribution of authorized funding. When we conducted the site visits and interviews in 2025, many initiatives were still in planning or development stages. Although money had been allocated, the distribution of funding was stalled after the presidential transition and newly outlined procedures which impacted the development, implementation, and continuation of both educational and employer-led workforce development initiatives. In both locations, stakeholders held differing commentary and experiences on whether the full disbursement of funding for place-based initiatives had been received. Both site visits were completed in the wake of constant change and uncertainty of the initial development and future implementation of place-based funding and workforce development initiatives.

## Key Themes

---

We explored various topics, including the disbursement of funding, workforce development initiatives, data reporting, non-degree credential programs, and engagement with Black workers, communities, businesses, and community-based organizations, during our interviews. Upon analyzing the interviews, we compiled a list of key themes: delayed investments amid continual change, critical programmatic areas, limited collaboration between stakeholders, inadequate data systems, and disparities created by political dynamics.

### Delayed Investments Amid Continual Change & Uncertainty

Education, workforce, industry, and government stakeholders from each location expressed concerns about the delays in disseminating funding. Several workforce development and research and development initiatives were at risk of being paused or discontinued. For example, CHIPS and Science Act funding allocated for SMART Institute, headquartered in Durham, North Carolina, was canceled.<sup>33</sup> SMART Institute was leading efforts to reclaim America's leadership in semiconductor manufacturing through the power of digital twin technology.<sup>34</sup> SMART Institute had workforce development initiatives including free and low cost educational and training courses to upskill workers.

Similarly, an Advanced Packaging Piloting facility that was set to be built at Arizona State University's Research Park is unlikely to move forward due to the elimination of federal funding.<sup>35</sup> This facility was supposed to focus on advancing chip production and training workers for emerging jobs in the semiconductor industry. Despite public announcements of new initiatives to attract and prepare workers for new careers, there is an increasing rate of workers being prepared for roles that do not exist because of construction delays to fabrication plants and the termination of funding to support the creation of new jobs. As the constant change continues, education, workforce, and industry stakeholders are being innovative and adaptable to continue to sustain and expand industrial policy workforce development initiatives.

Amid the stalled projects and eliminated federal place-based funding, North Carolina and Arizona maximized their existing federal investments from ARPA, IIJA/BIL, CHIPS and Science Act, and IRA, along with private and state fiscal support. State resources and federal funding have supported the creation of new initiatives toward the state's job goals in industries such as advanced manufacturing and cybersecurity. In Arizona, the Future48 Workforce Accelerators are partnerships between the community colleges and leading STEM industry employers which offer customized training for emerging jobs in advanced manufacturing, semiconductors, battery manufacturing, aerospace and defense industries.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, a new \$100 billion investment from TSMC will aid the construction of more fabrication plants in Arizona to support job creation.<sup>37</sup>

In North Carolina, at least \$1.7 billion has been cancelled or delayed.<sup>38</sup> At least 2,000 jobs that were projected have been eliminated.<sup>39</sup> To bridge the emerging skills gaps for jobs in renewable energy and advanced manufacturing sectors, AdvanceNC was created. AdvanceNC convenes community colleges, workforce development boards, and universities across 21 counties to increase instructional capacity, expand experiential learning opportunities, and reduce equipment costs.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, to incentivize private investment, the North Carolina Department of Commerce's Job Development Investment Grant (JDIG) program provides cash grants directly to companies that have created jobs and invested in the state.<sup>41</sup> Industry leaders like Toyota and Epsilon Advanced Materials, Inc are also helping advance the state's workforce goals by collaborating with AdvanceNC, building training programs at community colleges, and making direct investments in educational programs.<sup>42</sup>

## Critical Programmatic Areas

Phoenix and Central North Carolina had both similarities and differences in how stakeholders were maximizing their fiscal investments to build their local economy, prepare workers for evolving industrial policy-related careers, and engage Black workers and communities. Both communities have a diverse portfolio of place-based funding. Phoenix has a larger portfolio of workforce development funding, which aligns with the scale and diversity of its initiatives. In Arizona, a significant amount of funding from the CHIPS and Science Act and the Inflation Reduction Act was allocated to employers, while less funding was distributed to education and workforce development entities. Two key programmatic areas emerged: short-term credential programs and youth training.

### ■ *Short-Term Credential Programs*

To quickly upskill workers in high-growth careers related to industrial policy, both states were developing more short-term training programs lasting 15 weeks or less. Both Phoenix and Central North Carolina are developing and currently have a variety of short-term non-degree credential programs. Some short-term non-degree programs can help workers accelerate skill development and secure employment; however, because of the lack of universal standards or guidance about skill transferability, workers' career mobility is limited. When semiconductor-accelerated short-term programs were announced in Phoenix, they garnered national attention from news outlets. On the ground, education stakeholders noted that some accelerated training programs have low rates of job placement. A Black worker who earned a nanomanufacturing certificate mentioned the lack of pay transparency after completion. Although he did not reveal how much he was earning, he stressed it was much lower than expected but remained hopeful about his career trajectory and increased earnings as he advances in his career. Advocates in both communities encouraged the development of more assessment requirements to evaluate the economic outcomes from short-term non-degree training programs. Stakeholders in Phoenix and Central North Carolina prioritized career mobility and collaborated with employers and education providers to create new guidance and standards for value, transferability, and portability.

### ■ *Youth Training*

As the STEM workforce ecosystem continues to evolve, there is increased urgency to engage youth in meeting the demand for jobs projected to emerge in the near future. In Phoenix and Central North Carolina, workforce development and education stakeholders amplified the need to increase youth exposure to build the future workforce. Interviewees mentioned several youth experiential programs for elementary, middle, and high school students that aim to meet the widening skills gap for future industrial policy-related careers. With continued funding, job opportunities will continue to increase. Engaging local youth is crucial for retaining talent and fostering local economic growth.

## Limited Collaboration Between Stakeholders

Every interviewee in Phoenix spoke about the impact of Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) and how integral TSMC's foundries are to provide workers with good jobs in in-demand careers. During our meeting with education stakeholders, they highlighted several training programs at higher education institutions specifically targeted to prepare populations such as veterans and women for jobs at new fabrication plants. Interviewees also discussed the development of new non-degree credentials, degree programs, and employer-led courses from education stakeholders aimed at preparing workers for industrial policy-related careers. These future initiatives show a commitment to preparing the workforce for emerging jobs, addressing the upcoming skills gap, and expanding employment pathways.

Similar to our interviews in Phoenix about emerging workforce development initiatives, leaders in Central North Carolina also discussed emerging employer-led efforts to support the upskilling of their workforce. Collaboration between higher education institutions, the state government, and employers was more evident in North Carolina. Consortia built on collaboration, like PowerAmerica in Raleigh, focus on providing workforce development opportunities to help workers gain new skills. PowerAmerica has worked with leading higher education institutions to help develop innovative power electronics products and systems and equip workers to excel in the semiconductor industry.<sup>43</sup> PowerAmerica provides fiscal support to upgrade laboratories and educational opportunities and resources for students.<sup>44</sup> Morgan State University, a Historically Black College and University, is one of their academic members. PowerAmerica is also part of Manufacturing USA, a federal initiative to convene industry-led, private-public partnerships focused on manufacturing innovation and engaging U.S. universities.

Despite Central North Carolina having less funding to build fabrication plants, employers there were more involved in creating workforce development courses and developing partnerships with local higher education institutions. Workforce development professionals in Central North Carolina emphasized the partnerships between employers, four-year institutions, community colleges, industry leaders, and entrepreneurs. Furthermore, community colleges and four-year universities share resources such as clean room space and offer training and educational courses accessible to students from both types of institutions. These collaborative strategies are vital to the success of new initiatives and maximizing the impact of place-based industrial policy funding.



## Inadequate Data Systems

We asked interviewees how data shapes and underscored the development and implementation of place-based workforce development initiatives. Education stakeholders in Phoenix emphasized the need for publicly available data on enrollment, retention, and outcomes, particularly for short-term, accelerated non-degree credential programs. However, the current federal and state data infrastructure is a major barrier which impacts the availability of publicly accessible data. As a statewide priority, North Carolina is bolstering their data infrastructure. Publicly accessible data dashboards provide insight into statewide economic trends. Data has underscored the state's development of new initiatives, outreach strategies, post-secondary education course development, and progress toward their goals of decreasing the unemployment rate and increasing the credential attainment rate in each city.

It is important to know the short- and long-term effects of these new workforce development and learning initiatives for Black workers and learners. Currently, non-degree credentials programs are not mandated to collect program-level enrollment, retention, or post-completion wage data. Similarly, employer-led training programs may collect program data, but these data are not publicly available or accessible. Certain states are working to improve their data infrastructure to assess whether educational and training programs are advancing learners' economic mobility post-course completion. As states continue to receive significant federal investments, the administration should require data reporting and provide fiscal support to enhance data infrastructure. Without adequate data systems and disaggregated program-level data by race, it is difficult to examine the educational and economic outcomes of Black workers and learners. All employers receiving federal funding should be subject to data requirements and be required disclose demographic data of their employees to increase transparency and enable a more adequate assessment of whether their hiring decisions and employment demographics reflect the surrounding community.

## Disparities Driven by Anti-DEI Policies

New policies, executive orders, and regulatory changes from the Trump administration delayed the disbursement of place-based funding and canceled some projects altogether. The Trump administration terminated approximately 400 grants from IIJA/BIL and IRA which aimed to reduce air and water pollution, protect communities from extreme weather events, and create good jobs. Specific initiatives like the Environmental and Climate Justice grants, the enforcement of Justice40 components, and requirements to create Community Benefits Plans (CBPs) that intended to provide support for disadvantaged communities and create new jobs were suspended and eliminated.<sup>45</sup> Originally supported by the CHIPS and Science Act, multiple research and development projects from the National Science Foundation were terminated. The administration cancelled \$7.8 billion allocated to the National Center for the Advancement of Semiconductor Technology Center (Natcast), which focused on increasing advanced manufacturing research and workforce development was eliminated.<sup>46</sup> The loss of these initiatives narrows opportunities for Black workers and communities to reap the benefits from these significant investments.

In Phoenix and Central North Carolina, stakeholders elevated their concerns about the availability of funding and the long-term impact of terminating diversity, equity, and inclusion components that aimed to expand access to good, in-demand jobs that offer livable wages. Representatives from the Greater Durham Black Chamber of Commerce spoke at length about the lack of inclusion, limited information about new initiatives, and Black employers not being recipients of grants included in place-based funding. A major manufacturing employer in North Carolina discontinued its affinity groups and equitable recruitment strategies, which previously helped ensure a diverse workforce. Education stakeholders in Phoenix highlighted the challenges of increasing Black enrollment in industrial policy-related non-degree and degree programs.

As a result, a Black student in Phoenix detailed the lack of diversity in his workforce development training program. Additionally, Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC), a semiconductor industry leader, is facing a class action lawsuit from former employees in Phoenix which alleges bias and discrimination against Americans in hiring and unsafe working conditions.<sup>47</sup> These situations put current and future job opportunities for Black workers in high-growth industries, such as manufacturing, clean energy, and technology in cities in Arizona and North Carolina, at risk. There is an urgent need for targeted investments like money, intentional outreach strategies, and accountability safeguards to ensure Black workers and learners can access to quality jobs, competitive wages, and meaningful training opportunities.

## Conclusion

---

Using these themes as a foundation, we draw upon the messaging principles and recommendations outlined in “[Shifting the Narrative on Industrial Policy: Opportunities for Genuine Economic Mobility and Good Jobs for Black Communities](#)” and “[Five Principles to Support Black Workers and Learners in Pathways to Non-Degree Credentials](#).” These considerations should be implemented in all place-based industrial policy initiatives.

- **Distribute All Funding:** Distributing all funding authorized in industrial policy legislation expands opportunities so Black workers and learners can access and benefit from these initiatives. Transforming place-based industrial policy initiatives into engines of economic mobility and impact for Black workers requires intentionality to ensure Black communities are recipients of this funding and have accessible pathways to take advantage of new good jobs, training programs, and long-term economic growth.
- **Develop Collaborative, Intentional, and Innovative Strategies to Engage Black Workers, Businesses, and Communities:** In this political climate, it is imperative to develop innovative strategies that aim to engage Black workers, businesses, and community-based organizations to ensure that place-based initiatives, such as funding and workforce development opportunities, are reaching Black communities. Without targeted outreach and engagement with Black communities, fewer Black workers are likely to enroll in workforce development programs or find employment in industrial policy-related fields.
- **Advance Data Systems:** Advancing data systems and developing robust data requirements are critical to assess the disproportionate economic outcomes that are only likely to increase due to federal policies that widen enrollment and economic disparities.

The insights and observations gained from visiting Phoenix and Central North Carolina provide key considerations for designing and implementing place-based industrial policy initiatives. Distributing all funding, improving collaboration, conducting targeted outreach for Black workers, advancing data systems, and developing robust data requirements are key considerations to ensure Black workers and learners benefit from place-based initiatives.



**Dr. Gabrielle Smith Finnie**

Senior Policy Analyst,  
Workforce Policy

## About the Author

---

Gabrielle Smith Finnie, Ph.D. is the senior policy analyst of Workforce Policy at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. Prior to joining the Joint Center, she was a research intern at the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) and graduate assistant in the higher education PhD program at Old Dominion University. In both roles, Dr. Smith Finnie has worked to reimagine higher education and advocate for evidence-based and equity-driven practices to ensure student success in higher education and economic mobility post degree attainment.

Dr. Smith Finnie holds a master's degree in higher education administration from Florida International University and a bachelor's degree in communications from the University of Delaware. She also recently defended her Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) dissertation study which explored the impact and intersection of race and justice-involvement, examined Black individuals' ideologies of freedom, and their experiences in higher education and navigating society post-justice-involvement.

Outside of her scholastic and professional pursuits, Dr. Smith Finnie is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. She is also an avid vinyl collector and is always looking for the best albums to add to her collection.



## Acknowledgements

The statements made and views expressed are solely the responsibility of the author, Dr. Gabrielle Smith Finnie. We thank Ali R. Bustamante and others for their input and review of the issue brief. A special thanks to all participating organizations, my colleagues Dedrick Asante-Muhammad, Monica Mitchell, Sophia Kerby, Steven Hawkins and Dr. Kayla Elliott, and external consultants MUME Collective and Fenton for their valuable support and thoughtful review. Additional thanks to editors Victoria Johnson and Kennedy Fortner, and Vlad Archin, who designed the issue brief.



**Subscribe to our newsletter** to get the latest groundbreaking research, policy solutions, and insights driven by leading experts at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, America's Black think tank.

### Media Contact

[press@jointcenter.org](mailto:press@jointcenter.org) | 202.789.3500 EXT 105

© Copyright 2026

All rights reserved.

### Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

633 Pennsylvania Ave., NW

Washington, DC 20004

[info@jointcenter.org](mailto:info@jointcenter.org) | [jointcenter.org](http://jointcenter.org)

 [@JointCenter](https://twitter.com/JointCenter)

 [linkedin.com/company/jointcenter](https://www.linkedin.com/company/jointcenter)

 [facebook.com/JointCenter1970](https://www.facebook.com/JointCenter1970)

 [@JointCenter](https://www.instagram.com/JointCenter)

 [youtube.com/@jointcenterYT](https://www.youtube.com/@jointcenterYT)

# Endnotes

---

- <sup>1</sup> Mark Muro et al., “[Breaking down an \\$80 billion surge in place-based industrial policy](#),” (Brookings Institution, December 15, 2022).
- <sup>2</sup> Gordon Hanson et al., “[The U.S. Place-Based Policy Supply Chain](#),” (National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc., February 2025).
- <sup>3</sup> Gabrielle Smith Finnie, “[Shifting the Narrative on Industrial Policy: Opportunities for Genuine Economic Mobility and Good Jobs for Black Communities](#),” (Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, July 30, 2025).
- <sup>4</sup> Ryan Mulholland and Kennedy Andara, “[One Year After ‘Liberation Day,’ American Workers Are Feeling the Negative Effects of the Trump Administration’s Tariffs](#),” (Center for American Progress, March 17, 2026).
- <sup>5</sup> “[Place-based industrial policy: Lessons for place transformation](#),” (OECD Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) Papers, June 27, 2025).
- <sup>6</sup> “[National Interstate and Defense Highways Act \(1956\)](#),” (National Archives, February 8, 2022).
- <sup>7</sup> Jay A. Fernandez, “[Racism by Design: The Building of Interstate 81](#),” (ACLU, August 10, 2023).
- <sup>8</sup> Tracey Ross and Erik Stegman, “[A Renewed Promise: How Promise Zones Can Help Reshape the Federal Place-based Agenda](#),” (Center for American Progress, May 2014).
- <sup>9</sup> Mark Muro et al., “[Breaking down an \\$80 billion surge in place-based industrial policy](#),” (Brookings Institution, December 15, 2022).
- <sup>10</sup> Gordon Hanson et al., “[The U.S. Place-Based Policy Supply Chain](#),” (National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc., February 2025).
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup> Bradley L. Hardy, Trevon D. Logan, and John Parman, “[The Historical Role of Race and Policy for Regional Inequality](#),” (The Hamilton Project, September 2018).
- <sup>13</sup> “[The Economics of Investing in America](#),” (The White House, March 7, 2023).
- <sup>14</sup> Chye-Ching Huang and Roderick Taylor, “[Any Federal Infrastructure Package Should Boost Investment in Low-Income Communities](#),” (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, June 28, 2019).
- <sup>15</sup> “[\\$1B Build Back Better Regional Challenge](#),” (U.S. Economic Development Administration).
- <sup>16</sup> “[Broadband Equity, Access, And Deployment \(BEAD\) Program](#),” (National Telecommunications and Information Administration).
- <sup>17</sup> “[Reconnecting Communities Pilot \(RCP\) Grant Program](#),” (U.S. Department of Transportation).
- <sup>18</sup> “[Mega Grant Program](#),” (U.S. Department of Transportation).
- <sup>19</sup> “[Supporting Economic Development in Indigenous Communities](#),” (U.S. Economic Development Administration).
- <sup>20</sup> Tiffany N. Ford and Annelies Goger, “[The Value of Qualitative Data for Advancing Equity in Policy](#),” (Brookings, October 14, 2021).
- <sup>21</sup> “[Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#),” (Bureau of Labor Statistics, August 2025).
- <sup>22</sup> “[Phoenix Area Economic Summary](#),” (Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 20, 2026).
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> “[Durham, NC, Area Economic Summary](#),” (Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 20, 2026).
- <sup>25</sup> “[Raleigh, NC, Area Economic Summary](#),” (Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 20, 2026).
- <sup>26</sup> “[Winston, NC, Area Economic Summary](#),” (Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 20, 2026).
- <sup>27</sup> “[State Unemployment by Race and Ethnicity](#),” (Economic Policy Institute, August 2025).
- <sup>28</sup> “[Advanced Manufacturing and Semiconductor Workforce](#),” (Arizona Governor’s Office of Strategic Initiatives).
- <sup>29</sup> Glencora Haskins and Joseph Parilla, “[Sizing and seizing Washington’s \\$40 billion down payment on place-based industrial policy](#),” (Brookings Institution, December 3, 2024).
- <sup>30</sup> “[TSMC Arizona and U.S. Department of Commerce Announce up to US\\$6.6 Billion in Proposed CHIPS Act Direct Funding, the Company Plans Third Leading-Edge Fab in Phoenix](#),” (TSMC, April 8, 2024).

31. Ryan Fitzgerald, “Raleigh Economy: Top Industries, Employers, & Business Opportunities,” (Raleigh Realty, June 27, 2025).
32. “CHIPS for America Announces New Proposed \$285 Million Award for CHIPS Manufacturing USA Institute for Digital Twins, Headquartered in North Carolina,” (Manufacturing USA, November 19, 2024).
33. Thomas Santaniello, “Federal government terminates \$285 million contract for Durham-based CHIPS manufacturing institute,” (WRAL News, December 16, 2025).
34. “SMART USA Institute Overview,” (SMART USA, 2026).
35. Amy Elden, “Commerce Dept. cancels grant earmarked for semiconductor facility at ASU,” (Phoenix Business Journal, August 29, 2025).
36. “State of Arizona Budget Summary Fiscal Year 2027,” (January 2026), & “Future48 Workforce Accelerators,” (Arizona Governor’s Office of Strategic Initiatives).
37. “Another Historic Investment Secured Under President Trump,” (The White House, March 3, 2025).
38. Alex Campbell, “Investing in our colleges is investing in North Carolinians,” (NC Budget and Tax Center, December 8, 2025).
39. Ibid.
40. Alex Campbell, “Investing in our colleges is investing in North Carolinians,” (NC Budget and Tax Center, December 8, 2025).
41. “Job Development Investment Grant (JDIG),” (North Carolina Department of Commerce, May 10, 2023).
42. Alex Campbell, “Investing in our colleges is investing in North Carolinians,” (NC Budget and Tax Center, December 8, 2025).
43. “About,” (PowerAmerica, 2025).
44. “Education and Workforce Development,” (PowerAmerica, 2025).
45. Ibid & Travis Annatoyn et al., “Funding Pauses and Uncertainty Under the IRA and IIJA: Practical Considerations for Recipients,” (Arnold & Porter, February 27, 2025).
46. Sara Samora, “Commerce Department cuts \$7.4B CHIPS funding from Natcast,” (Manufacturing Dive, August 27, 2025).
47. Anne Ryman, “Former TSMC Employees Speak Out About Discrimination, Hostile Work Environment at Phoenix Chip Plant,” (ABC15 Arizona, August 22, 2025).