

The title "STATE OF THE WORKFORCE" is written in a large, white, bold, sans-serif font against a dark blue background. A yellow dotted line is positioned below the title.

# STATE OF THE WORKFORCE

Spring 2026



## AI and the Precipice of Amazing Productivity Potential

The American and global workforces *could be* on the verge of what will be transformational productivity. Delivering this unparalleled potential of rapid growth, evolution and complexity – today and into the future – is the development, refinement, regeneration and integration of artificial intelligence.

Seen or unseen, AI is now so integrated with countless aspects of our personal and professional lives that extracting it from our daily routines is not an option. Yet, as a March 5, 2026 report from Anthropic makes clear, AI's immense theoretical power still far outpaces its real-world integration and everyday use.

In certain environments, AI systems demonstrate extraordinary capabilities, reasoning across complex domains, generating human-like language and solving problems previously determined to require deep expertise. But outside those settings, progress slows. The result is a widening gap between AI's theoretical potential, its practical application, and the skills and expertise required for broad adoption.

Navigating this gap between theory and reality is consuming the narrative, as it is part hyperbole, part fact, part unknown and part concern. It is the latter that has the attention of workers, unions, employers and policy makers as it relates to workforce readiness and the capacity to create and maintain global competitiveness in the era of AI.

## Managing Change Responsibly

Change often brings fear. Regardless of the reason and explanation, when we experience change, particularly at the warp speed we are experiencing with AI, it is natural to be skeptical, hesitant and concerned.

This is why NOVAworks continues to normalize AI in preparing workers for the realities they will encounter with potential employers. Strategically incorporating AI in job searches, providing access to workshops, resources and guest speakers, one-on-one career coaching with AI integration, advanced training opportunities, along with preparing young adults for an AI-driven future round out a comprehensive portfolio of services and supports for job seekers. In total, this portfolio of services sets workers – including those re-tooling or searching for the first time – up for success in meeting the demands and expectations of AI-ready jobs.

**Demand for  
AI literacy skills  
has increased by** **70%** **in the past  
two years.**

## Peer-Based Learning

By emphasizing learning by doing for workers and leading by example, NOVAworks demonstrates that hands-on, real-world activities and experiences are the most effective tools for integrating AI into everyday use. For example, **NOVAworks facilitates knowledge sharing** among job candidates through a forum in which individuals share with other career seekers the results of projects they have created to assist in their own job search. This peer-based learning and exploration is creating greater capacities, comfort and understanding with workers in how to tailor AI to fit their individual needs.



## An AI-Ready Workforce

By reinforcing AI as a tool that supports navigation to a destination rather than AI being the destination, **NOVAworks continues to empower workers** to question and be discerning of AI-produced content as to not lose authenticity in their own work. At a time when it is possible to have AI create resumes that are then submitted to potential employers that use AI to evaluate applications and resumes, job seekers are at risk of getting lost in an unending AI loop. To combat this, the NOVAworks team coaches career-seekers to reinforce the need for developing and leveraging networks of individuals – real people – that they can connect with during their job searches.

***“AI companies must be forces for strengthening, not straining our workforce, energy infrastructure, and public resources.”***

– Mark Kelly, United States Senator for Arizona

NOVAworks’ worker-centered strategy aligns with the U.S. Department of Labor’s AI Literacy Framework, which outlines core competencies and effective approaches for building AI fluency across the workforce.

Recent findings from Microsoft reinforce the urgency behind these efforts: **“66% of global leaders said they wouldn’t hire someone without AI literacy skills.”**



We are equipping **career seekers** with the knowledge and confidence to understand, evaluate, and responsibly use AI in the workplace. At the same time, we actively partner with **employers** to navigate how AI is reshaping hiring, job requirements, and skill expectations. This includes providing practical guidance on integrating AI into recruitment and workforce development strategies. This dual focus helps ensure that both workers and employers can adapt to rapidly evolving expectations.

**Both workers and employers are on the cusp of unprecedented potential** to expand their capabilities and redefine how work gets done. NOVAworks is helping translate that potential into action by preparing workers with practical AI skills and supporting employers in building thoughtful, human-centered approaches to AI adoption.

