



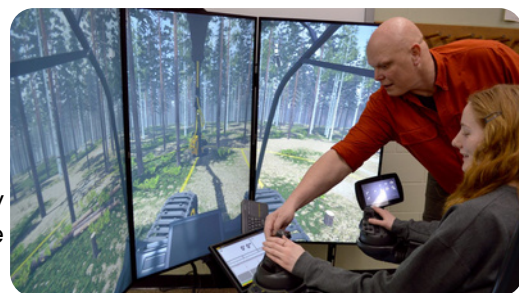
# 2023

## FRA'S POSITION ON IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY TO LABOR IN THE FOREST PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

**The Forest Resources Association (FRA)** represents the interests of over 330 organizations and businesses in the forest products industry. Our members include forest landowners, suppliers, consuming mills, associated businesses, and state forestry associations. FRA promotes the interests of its members in the economic, efficient, and sustainable use of forest resources to meet the needs of the wood fiber supply chain through private enterprise. FRA members are represented in 49 states and 384 congressional districts.

### **FRA supports legislation establishing regional workforce training programs for individuals interested in careers in the forest products industry to support rural forest-based economies.**

The forest products industry, including loggers and haulers, primary and secondary manufacturers, pulp and paper mills, paper packing plants, and paper facilities, is one of the largest manufacturing sectors in the U.S., sustaining nearly 926,000 families and contributing \$353 billion annually to the U.S. economy. The sustainability and competitive viability of the forest products industry relies on an intact, healthy wood supply chain, including labor. Since 2018, the U.S. logging and hauling sectors, which are solely responsible for harvesting and moving logs from the forest to manufacturing facilities, have seen a 2% reduction in logging businesses and an 8% reduction in the workforce. The disparity between reductions in the size of the workforce and business closures suggests remaining logging businesses are operating with fewer employees.



Mill labor shortages are limiting modernization and/or growth investments in existing and new manufacturing facilities. For example, the existing labor pool in the logging sector is aging rapidly. Less than 25% of logging business owners are under 40, 55 is the average age of owner/operators, and approximately 30% of owner/operators are planning to leave the business within five years.

Targeted workforce education and training programs have been effective recruitment tools in computer programming, utility vegetation management, and automotive industries. Regional forest industry training hubs would allow participants to stay in or near their communities, which reduces the cost to participate and affords program developers increased flexibility in adapting training curricula to meet regional needs through ties to local forest product employers. The forest products industry struggles to find a trained and skilled workforce at all levels as an estimated 40-60 percent of young adults are leaving rural forest-based economies for employment opportunities.

### **Key Components of Workforce Pathway Program**



#### **EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES**

- Expand existing high school forestry education curriculum by employing mobile educational units with timber harvesting simulators, sawmills, kilns, and commonly used power/hand tools
- Implement 40-hour applied skills camp to complement the applied high school curriculum
- Provide immersive field training for high school teachers to complement the applied high school curriculum



#### **WORKFORCE DIVERSIFICATION**

- Diversification of the forestry industry workforce through increased awareness of career paths, the breadth of career and entrepreneurial opportunities in forestry and wood products industries



#### **TRAINING PROGRAMS**

- Provide affordable, residential, short duration (240 hour), industry-certified post-high school immersive training in Forest Operations and Mill Technologies
- Creation of regional immersive training hubs aligned with industries, technical colleges, and universities to provide career pathways in forestry and wood products industries