



# Minnesota Workforce Council Association 2012 State Legislative Platform

*It is the mission of the Minnesota Workforce Council Association to provide Minnesota with a skilled and competitive workforce through engaged and proactive local elected officials, workforce investment boards, and staff.*

## **Policy Issues**

### *Workforce and Employment*

- MWCA recommends strengthening the governance and oversight responsibilities of the private sector-led local workforce councils and the role of local elected officials as envisioned in the Workforce Investment Act, allowing them to:
  - Make decisions on how best to spend funding and achieve requirements within broad guidelines established by state and federal agencies.
  - Determine Workforce Service Area boundaries and select physical site locations of WorkForce Centers.
  - Create a local workforce service area plan that is not a program compliance document, but a comprehensive strategy to maximize resources and eliminate duplication of services.
  - Use their authority to set the direction for workforce development in Minnesota and to convene and engage partners from economic development and education in these efforts.
  - Continue and strengthen existing partnerships with the Minnesota Family Investment/Diversionary Work, veterans services, Unemployment Insurance, education, and other related programs with whom we share common clients.
- MWCA opposes changes to the Workforce Development System prior to reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act at the Federal level; doing otherwise could lead to increased discrepancies between state and federal law.
- MWCA encourages employment and training initiatives that assist in supporting, retaining and expanding Minnesota's business community.
- MWCA opposes excessive use of discretionary and unsolicited grants, diverting funds which could instead be invested in the existing workforce system to enhance services to jobseekers and employers.

### *Minnesota Family Investment Program*

Training in occupations in demand is a key strategy to get people back to work and leads to long-term self sufficiency.

- MWCA supports the elimination of the 30% education cap to counties in months where the state as a whole does not exceed the cap.

## **Funding Issues**

### *Workforce Development Fund for Dislocated Worker Programs*

- MWCA seeks support from the legislature in securing additional resources for Dislocated Worker programs, which provide support and retraining services to individuals who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own.
- MWCA encourages the legislature to ensure that this dedicated fund remains true to its intended purposes, and should consider reverting back to its original name (Dislocated Worker Fund).

### *Job Creation and Economic Development*

MWCA believes any job creation plan should: take effect quickly; target unemployed workers; anticipate and address future workforce needs; promote regional competitiveness; and be fiscally responsible. Many unemployed workers would benefit from increased access to short-term opportunities allowing them to utilize or improve their current skills while searching for a permanent job.

- If unemployment numbers rise significantly again, MWCA supports the implementation of an Emergency Jobs program, providing a wage subsidy to employers who make available opportunities to unemployed workers

by creating new private and public jobs which pay competitive wages and incorporates a plan to upgrade the worker's current skills.

### *Workforce and Employment*

- MWCA advocates for the restoration of general funds for the Minnesota Youth Program. MWCA is requesting an appropriation of \$10 million annually to address unemployment, provide work experience and academic enrichment activities to economically disadvantaged and at-risk youth state wide.
- MWCA encourages directing Job Skills Partnership Board, Workforce Development Funds, and direct appropriations to local workforce councils, enabling them to partner with local businesses economic developers and education/training providers to deliver on-the-job training, short-term specific job training and soft skills training for job seekers and incumbent workers.
- MWCA recommends the creation of appropriations which can be used to provide employment and career guidance services to the general population.
- MWCA supports allocations which would promote partnerships between Adult Basic Education, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, and employment and training providers at the local level.

### *Minnesota Family Investment Program*

- MWCA recommends, in an effort to help Counties meet Federal participation requirements, providing funding to employment service providers:
  - eligibility determination and basic employment services for welfare recipients who are participating in required work activities;
  - to continue to implement work experience, supported work, and volunteer work activities;
  - to successfully meet the intention of the Family Stabilization Services program, which is designed to provide more extensive service to families who are not making progress in MFIP due to significant barriers to employment.

### **Other Issues of Association Interest**

- MWCA advocates for workforce development efforts that address racial disparities in employment and achievement, and that help prepare and integrate immigrants, aging workers, ex-offenders, the homeless, veterans and people with disabilities into the workforce.
- MWCA supports collaborative efforts to address affordable health insurance coverage for laid off and underemployed workers.
- MWCA is supportive of restoring funding for childcare programs that help to encourage families to remain productively employed..
- MWCA recommends providing funding to enhance the local capacity to train individuals to become nurses, health care workers and other high demand occupations identified in local areas.
- MWCA supports amending the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to provide sufficient funding to implement the program state-wide and to maximize federal match opportunities.
- MWCA supports efforts to fully invest in Minnesota's critical pre-K, K-12 and Post-Secondary education programs to prepare youth for competitive employment and life-long learning. A special effort should be made to support education in the Science, Technology, Education and Math (STEM) areas.

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Staff Contact:  
Anne Olson, Director

Office (651) 789-4323  
Cell (651) 303-4858  
aolson@mncounties.org