

The Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards (MAWB) supports critical investments in the workforce system which allow for data-driven, effective local solutions to meet workforce needs.

Minnesota's current employment landscape still grapples with a statewide worker shortage and racial disparities, both of which were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. With a historically low unemployment rate, there are currently more than two job vacancies for every jobseeker looking for work. This worker shortage is taking a toll on Minnesota employers as they struggle to fill positions and retain talent. Minnesota's workforce system is addressing these challenges but need increased funding and tools to meet the moment.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Reauthorization

MAWB advocates for the reauthorization of the nation's signature federal workforce law, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, while modifying the program to ensure effectiveness and broad service delivery to meet the needs of a rapidly evolving economy.

- ▶ While the WIOA sets the foundation for an operational, nationwide workforce development system, several modifications to the law should be considered by policymakers to broaden the positive impacts, including:
 - Increased investment to provide more workers with access to skills training, educational opportunities, career counseling, and support services, aligned with high demand occupations.
 - Dedicated funding for business services to effectively serve employers in a demand-driven workforce system.
 - Replace the Infrastructure Funding Agreement cost-share requirement with a more equitable way to finance American Job Centers.
 - Provide maximum flexibility to local workforce boards to develop strategies and programs that meet the need of local communities and economies, such as removing funding caps and percentage restrictions.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Investment

MAWB Advocates to fund WIOA at least to previously authorized levels.

- ▶ The House has proposed cuts to the WIOA Adult program and elimination of the WIOA Youth Program. Reducing WIOA funding will hinder access to career services for millions of people, end employment and training opportunities for nearly a half-million more and extinguish skilled talent pipelines employers depend upon.
 - The WIOA Youth program serves between 2,300 and 2,600 young people, ages 16-24, annually in the state.
 - The WIOA Adult program serves 1,500 and 1,800 low-income adults annually in Minnesota.
 - Both programs boast high performance measures, including helping participants earn credentials, gain skills, increase wages, and obtain and retain employment.

Impact:

A strengthened and fully funded WIOA program will increase labor force participation, ensure equitable access to resources, develop skills employers need for today and tomorrow, and lift more people out of poverty.