

# 2025 STATE PRIORITIES AND PLATFORM

**IT IS THE MISSION OF THE MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF WORKFORCE BOARDS TO PROVIDE MINNESOTA WITH A SKILLED AND COMPETITIVE WORKFORCE THROUGH ENGAGED AND PROACTIVE LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS, WORKFORCE BOARDS, AND STAFF.**

Minnesota's workforce development system continues to be a national model for excellence and innovation in employment and training programs. The sixteen local, employer-led Workforce Development Boards (WDBs), in conjunction with local elected officials, are responsible for:

- Setting workforce development policy and priorities in their communities;
- Engaging employers to determine strategies and organizing the efforts of the broader workforce system to address employer needs; and
- Serving as the accountability agents for local employment and training programs.

Local boards have a long-standing and demonstrated track record of developing cutting-edge new programs and strategies while continuously improving services offered through Minnesota's CareerForce system and achieving outstanding performance results.

## **Key Legislative Priorities in 2025**

**1. MAWB advocates for ensuring the Workforce Development Fund remains focused on prioritizing support for the State Dislocated Worker Program to ensure consistent service delivery.**

The State's Dislocated Worker Program provides crucial services and resources for Minnesotans facing layoffs and supports Minnesota employers with worker retention through training. Last year, eligibility was expanded to include more groups including low-income Minnesotans. This program is funded by the remaining balance in the Workforce Development Fund after appropriations. This is key to our ability to serve residents in our communities – and, over time, the portion of the fund's receipts allocated to the Dislocated Worker program has been eroding. MAWB advocates for ensuring that funding for these foundational programs is sustained, retaining the core purpose of the fund and ensuring more Minnesotans will benefit from services.

## **2. MAWB advocates for making the FY24–25 supplemental funding increase to the Minnesota Youth Program permanent and ongoing.**

MAWB recognizes the unemployment rate for youth is consistently higher than that of other age groups, and our high school student-to-counselor ratio remains unacceptably high. MAWB advocates for a sustained increase in formula funding for the statewide Minnesota Youth Program which provides career counseling and on-the-job training opportunities for youth ages 14–24 in all 87 counties. MAWB encourages efforts to increase employer engagement in youth career exploration, mentoring, and hands-on training. Our state needs to invest in our youth to meet our present and future workforce demands. The Minnesota Youth Program’s outcomes show it is an invaluable and much-needed investment in the future of Minnesota.

## **2025 MAWB State Legislative Platform**

### **WORKFORCE POLICY ISSUES**

Local workforce development boards provide leadership and facilitate employer engagement, ensuring public funds go toward meeting locally-defined workforce needs and priorities. Local boards also serve a critically important role deploying state and federal resources to deliver programs and services on the ground, and providing oversight to ensure quality, coordinated service delivery.

- MAWB advocates that any and all funds directed to organizations and other entities for workforce development or training efforts be coordinated by and through Workforce Development Boards, and aligned with local and regional plans, to swiftly and strategically meet the unique needs of businesses in each of the local labor sheds.
- MAWB encourages allowing maximum flexibility in the use of state funds to encourage innovation and allow local boards to design programs that meet the needs of employers and jobseekers in their areas.
- MAWB encourages the Legislature to align investments and eliminate silos across the workforce development system, regardless of funding committee or state agency structures. The workforce system, unified under the brand CareerForce, must be fully aligned to meet the needs of career seekers and employers who benefit from a coordinated approach to service delivery.
- MAWB recognizes the need to reduce disparities in our state as paramount. MAWB supports initiatives that directly and successfully address this issue and increases equity in employment.
- MAWB supports legislative and policy measures that further empower and streamline the Governor’s Workforce Development Board.
- MAWB advocates for allowing the provision of training stipends and/or incentives for participants enrolled in training programs to support successful program completion.

## **WORKFORCE FUNDING ISSUES**

Our state faces significant workforce challenges from changing demographics to significant equity gaps. The simple reality is that federal funding for our workforce system continues to decrease and current investments must be targeted and sustained in a way that will make a real impact for Minnesota's jobseekers and employers.

- MAWB advocates for formula funding for local workforce development boards to address local workforce challenges, including serving youth and adults with high barriers to employment and providing intensive services to employers in need of talent attraction and retention assistance.
- MAWB recognizes that in today's economy, employers need our assistance like never before to ensure they can attract, hire, and retain qualified talent. Funding to expand our services to employers, such as skills-based hiring, sector partnerships, incumbent worker training, and talent attraction and retention strategies is needed to expand this work.
- MAWB encourages legislative leadership to provide the Jobs and Economic Development finance divisions with funding targets that allow for substantial general fund investments in employment and training programs.
- MAWB also advocates to maintain full funding for Minnesota's proven workforce investments, including Pathways to Prosperity, RC3, Youth and Adult Support Services, Getting to Work, and Youthbuild.
- MAWB supports state investments in the Minnesota Family Investment Program and other safety-net programs, particularly those that maximize federal match opportunities.

## **OTHER ISSUES OF ASSOCIATION INTEREST**

- MAWB is supportive of initiatives which ensure working low- and moderate- income people have access to stable and affordable housing, particularly near areas of employment growth.
- MAWB supports the availability of a wide range of secondary and post-secondary options, including investments in Career and Technical Education programs, work-based learning, and integration with partners like Adult Basic Education, with a priority on assistance for those pursuing high skilled occupations in demand.
- MAWB supports further development of apprenticeship opportunities and encourages the use of WDBs as the intermediary for apprenticeship programs across the state.
- MAWB is supportive of full funding for childcare programs that assist families in remaining employed and policies that continue to address the childcare shortage crisis.
- MAWB supports efforts to fully invest in Minnesota's critical pre-K, K-12, and post-secondary education programs that encourage completion and that prepare youth and adults for competitive employment and life-long learning. More robust career pathway opportunities and career readiness state learning standards for all grades should be considered. MAWB also supports increased funding for career counseling in the K12 system as well as utilizing CareerForceMN.com as a career counseling tool.

- MAWB is supportive of any investments to improve our infrastructure, including transportation and clean energy, which have a strong workforce development component built in. MAWB also supports expanded broadband initiatives and other digital equity initiatives to close the digital divide in all parts of the state. To remain competitive, Minnesota must be forward thinking in these areas.
- MAWB supports efforts to address new tax liability issues for state-funded short-term work experience programs.