

Adapt & Advance:

A Workforce System Built to Thrive



**MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION
OF WORKFORCE BOARDS**

**MAWB SUMMER CONFERENCE
August 13 - 15, 2025
INN ON LAKE SUPERIOR, DULUTH**

Wednesday, August 13

5:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Welcome Reception

Northern Lights Ballroom Atrium

Appetizers provided. Cash bar.

Thursday, August 14

7:45 - 8:45 a.m.

Breakfast Buffet

Northern Lights Ballroom Atrium

8:45 - 9:10 a.m.

Welcome



Anoka County Commissioner Scott Schulte |
Chair, Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards

Commissioner Matt Varilek |
Minnesota Department of
Employment & Economic
Development



9:10 - 9:55 a.m.

Federal Legislative Update

Chris Andresen, Senior Vice President | Dutko Government Relations

Chris will share progress on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) reauthorization and other pertinent federal legislation that affects workforce development and local boards. He will provide updates on recent policy changes, discuss potential impacts on our programs, and outline strategies to adapt to these developments effectively.

Chris Andresen serves as a Senior Vice President with Dutko GR. He works extensively with clients to identify policy opportunities and threats to create detailed funding, legislative and executive strategies. His broad experience includes working with companies, universities, non-profits, and trade associations in the following sectors: workforce development, consumer products, manufacturing, retail, renewable energy, criminal justice, mental health, technology, and higher education.



9:55 – 10:30 a.m.

State Legislative Update

Cate Duin, Executive Director | Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards

Cate will share details on the 2025 Minnesota Legislative Session, the political environment, and workforce development outcomes including budget and policy items that have since been signed into law. She will highlight key discussions on workforce development among legislators and how those conversations are likely to continue next session.



Cate Duin is the Executive Director for the Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards (MAWB) and the Housing, Workforce, and Economic Development Policy Analyst for the Association of Minnesota Counties. Cate provides government relations services and policy analysis for Minnesota’s 16 local workforce boards and 87 counties. She brings ten years of experience in government, higher education, and nonprofit sectors to her work, with a focus on relationship building and data-driven analysis. Cate holds a master’s degree in political science from McGill University (Montreal, Quebec) and a bachelor’s degree from Luther College.

10:30 – 11:15 a.m.

A Deeper Dive: Resourcing Our Workforce System *Taking Stock of Challenges, Opportunities, and Equipping for Conversations to Come*

Cate Duin, Executive Director | Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards

Marc Majors, Deputy Commissioner | Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development

Cate & Deputy Commissioner Marc Majors will discuss resources for the public workforce system in greater depth given this year’s funding developments at federal and state levels. They will outline current funding mechanisms as well as trends in funding overtime from federal WIOA appropriations, State General Fund and State Workforce Development Fund. Providing deeper analysis, this session will include information to empower and equip members with information for conversations to come.

Marc Majors was named DEED’s Deputy Commissioner of Workforce Development in March 2022, where he oversees Employment and Training programs, and Careerforce. Before being named Deputy Commissioner, Majors was DEED’s Director of Employment and Training Programs, which runs grantmaking for workforce development. He also held responsibility for the agency’s Workforce Innovative and Opportunity Act–Title I programs, Trade Adjustment Assistance programs, State-funded Workforce Development Grants, and a new public/private initiative with Xcel Energy. Majors holds a Juris Doctorate from Vermont Law School, a Master of Public Administration from New York University, and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of San Francisco.



11:15 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Breakout 1: Workforce Partnership Models Panel

Eagle Harbor Room (3rd Floor)

Sarah Hansen, Director of Customized Training | St. Cloud Technical & Community College

Jacob Kaduk, Client Services Manager | Career Solutions

Hannah Grunzke, Youth Career Counselor | Duluth Workforce Development

Jason Malmquist, Futures Program Manager | Life House

Katie Hardyman, Director of Workforce Education | Minnesota State College – Southeast

Moderator: Jinny Rietmann, Executive Director | Workforce Development Inc.

Join us to learn more about how local workforce development areas, community colleges, and community-based organizations are partnering to build comprehensive career pathways and work readiness programs that meet the needs of employers we serve. Learn about best practices in collaborative program developing, braided funding, and building stronger community initiatives.

Sarah Hansen joined St. Cloud Technical & Community College in August of 2023 and serves as the Director of Customized Training where she provides leadership and support to the customized training team to design and deliver workforce and continuing education. This team works directly with employers, workforce development organizations, and the community to design and deliver training to upskill, reskill, and new skill the St. Cloud area's workforce. Before SCTCC, Sarah accumulated over a decade of experience in marketing, business development, and organizational strategy for businesses and nonprofits in the community.



Jacob Kaduk has been with Career Solutions for over seven years, beginning as an Adult Career Planner before transitioning to the youth team and later advancing to Client Services Manager. In his current role, he oversees both adult and youth programs while remaining actively involved in our MYP CareerOne program.

Hannah Grunzke has spent her career in Duluth helping individuals overcome barriers to employment, education and independent living. She currently serves as a Youth Career Counselor with Duluth Workforce Development's YES Duluth program. With a passion for collaboration, equity and advocacy, Hannah currently implements a direct cash pilot project with and for unhoused youth in Duluth, in partnership with the Life House youth organization.



Jason Malmquist oversees the education and employment programs, including a transitional employment program that allows youth to work on education credentials and a housing stipend pilot in partnership with YES Duluth to help young people overcome systemic barriers. With a background as a licensed English and ESL instructor, Jason is passionate about creating pathways that meet youth where they are and build on their strengths.

Katie Hardyman has served as the Director of Workforce Education at Minnesota State College in Red Wing for nearly 15 years. In this role, she partners with business and industry to upskill current employees and build pipelines for future workforce needs through targeted training and consulting services. She is deeply committed to serving her local communities and is especially passionate about supporting students from underrepresented populations, including those who are incarcerated.



Jinny Rietmann is the Executive Director of Workforce Development, Inc. (WDI) and the Southeast Minnesota Workforce Development Board. With over 20 years of experience in the workforce development field, she brings extensive expertise in program design, strategic nonprofit leadership, and the implementation of innovative best practices. Under her leadership, WDI operates across a 10-county region in Southeast Minnesota, with dedicated offices in each county.

11:15 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Breakout 2: Turning Data into Action – Practical Tools for Workforce Boards

Northern Lights Ballroom

Todd Nielsen, Director | Colorado Urban Workforce Alliance

Traci Marques, Executive Director | Pikes Peak Workforce Center (Colorado Springs)

Chris Berthiaume, Director | Denver Economic and Opportunity's Technology Employment in Colorado Partnership

In today's rapidly changing job market, **data-driven decision-making** is crucial for success. This session will equip you with **actionable tools and strategies** to harness data and improve your programs.

Our presenters will offer practical examples and insights into how **data and research are being put into practice** in Colorado, and how they have supported the methodology around the country.

You'll gain valuable insights into:

- **Presenting data effectively across audiences** using real world examples for sectors, business, and other audiences.
- **Real-world applications**, including how the Colorado Urban Workforce Alliance, Pikes Peak Workforce Development Board, Technology Employment Colorado Partnership (TECP) and others use data and research evidence to strengthen partnerships and drive results.
- **Identify users** that become the go-to people in your board for successful partnerships and outcomes.

By the end of this session, you'll walk away with practical, easy-to-use strategies for how you can **make data work for you**—turning insights into action that drives real impact in your workforce development efforts. Let's talk about how to make your programs even better with the right data.

Born and raised in Denver, Colorado. **Todd Nielsen** has more than 25 years of experience working within Workforce Programs and Data. He has served as the Director of the Colorado Urban Workforce Alliance for the last two years and has been with Denver Economic Development & Opportunity for 19 years. During his tenure he has supported industry and sectors to partner with workforce programs to support training and career pathways. Todd has an extensive background in data, including being a former state Local Area Economist for 43 of Colorado's 63 Counties in the Labor Market Information section of the Department of Labor & Employment. In a previous life, he was a weatherman in Hastings, NE, and was one of the first to cover the largest hailstone to hit in the US.



Traci Marques is the Executive Director/CEO of Pikes Peak Workforce Center and has been with the organization since July 2012. She is the Region 4 Liaison for the National Association of Workforce Boards and serves on the board of The Resource Exchange. Traci launched and co-chaired the Military, Veterans & Spouses Coalition, which united over 25 community organizations to help service members, veterans, and military spouses secure meaningful employment. For these efforts, she has been recognized for excellence by the Colorado Department of Labor & Employment for her contributions to improving and modernizing veterans' services.



Chris Berthiaume is the Director for Denver Economic and Opportunity's (DEDO) Technology Employment in Colorado Partnership (TECP), a statewide effort to enhance and expand Colorado's tech talent pipeline in the Cybersecurity, Aerospace, and advanced manufacturing sectors. TECP has just kicked off their 10th year, having brought over \$20M to Colorado's public workforce system and invested in the training of nearly 2,000 Coloradans. An experienced workforce development professional, Chris has spent the past 20 years building successful talent pipeline programs in California and Colorado that focus on increasing access to quality training and high-demand/high-wage jobs for all communities.



12:00 – 12:55 p.m.

Lunch

12:55 – 1:00 p.m.

3rd Place Promising Practice Presentation

1:00 – 1:45 p.m.

The “Best Kept Secret” No More: Building a Communications Toolkit for Minnesota’s Workforce Boards

Allan Martinez Venegas, Senior Project Manager | Amplify DMC

How do you communicate complex, vital services in a clear and compelling way, especially when every audience needs something different? This session shares the MAWB Communications Toolkit project, a statewide initiative to equip Minnesota’s 16 workforce boards with a customizable toolkit for outreach to job seekers, employers, legislators, and partners. Learn how a human-centered design process uncovered shared messaging needs, how we’re using brand archetypes to strengthen storytelling, and what tools are being built to elevate visibility, clarity, and local impact.



Allan Martinez Venegas is a Senior Project Manager at [AmplifyDMC](#), where he leads strategic initiatives with nonprofit and public sector organizations across Minnesota. In partnership with the Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards (MAWB), Allan has guided the development of a statewide communications toolkit using a human-centered design approach. His work focuses on helping mission-driven organizations clarify their message, engage diverse audiences, and drive systems-level change. Beyond his implementation work, Allan is a human-centered design and social innovation instructor at institutions like IDEO, the University of Turin, and Macalester College.

1:45 – 1:50 p.m.

2nd Place Promising Practice Presentation

1:50 – 2:40 p.m.

Future of the Minnesota Workforce System

Katie McClelland, Director | Governor’s Workforce Development Board
Elena Foshay, Director | Duluth Workforce Development

In the midst of significant changes in our communities, decreased availability of resources, and significant federal policy proposals being considered, many of our areas are having discussions and making hard decisions about how we deliver services. To inform discussions about the future of the workforce system, we will break out by regions to discuss and identify priorities to ensure the best service delivery for jobseekers and strong support for our local employers.

Before becoming Director of the Governor’s Workforce Development Board, **Katie McClelland** led workforce development policy for the U.S. Congress Education & Labor Committee and the Health, Education, Labor and Pension (HELP) Committee. Her leadership skills, relationships and experience overseeing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act program – the federal workforce program DEED administers across the state – are an asset to the workforce development system. Katie, a Minnesota native, was most recently the Minnesota Technology Association (MnTech) Director of Public Policy & Research, where she led policy and research initiatives to ensure Minnesota has a thriving tech ecosystem.



As Director of the City of Duluth’s Workforce Development Department, **Elena Foshay** leads development and implementation of workforce strategy, employer services, and programs for jobseekers. Her roots are in youth development and social work, with more than 20 years of experience designing and implementing workforce development programs. She holds a Master’s in Social Work and a Master’s in Community Economic Development, both from the University of California – Berkeley.

2:40 – 3:20 p.m.

Task Force on Workforce Development System Reform Overview & Priorities

Facilitated by Taskforce Members & GWDB staff

This year, the Legislature passed legislation that created a Task Force on Workforce Development System Reform. The Task Force will examine current workforce development programs, their funding streams, metrics and to propose improvements to practices, programs, funding and laws related to state workforce development efforts. Katie will give information on process and goals for the Task Force, before attendees work together to provide feedback to be shared back with them.

3:20 – 3:35 p.m.

Break

3:35 – 3:40 p.m.

1st Place Promising Practice Presentation

3:40 – 4:25 p.m.

State of the Economy & Labor Force

Cameron Macht, Regional Analysis & Outreach Manager | Department of Employment & Economic Development

This session will explore major trends and surprising shifts over the past year and highlight real-time indicators that can provide insights into the state's economic trajectory. We'll examine emerging trends to uncover which industries and occupations are growing or shrinking, with a focused look at Minnesota's "Drive for 5" sectors - including the specific jobs they encompass and how these changes vary across regions. The session will also provide information about our exposure to Artificial Intelligence, the evolving role of immigration in the workforce, and key labor force and unemployment dynamics that every employer and workforce leader should understand to navigate today's economy.

Cameron Macht is the Regional Analysis & Outreach Manager in the Labor Market Information office of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), managing a team of 5 regional analysts that serve economic and workforce development professionals across the state.



4:25 – 4:45 p.m.

Association Business Meeting

4:45 p.m.

Adjourn for the day & Promising Practice Award Winners Available for Questions

6:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Dinner and Networking Event

Glensheen Mansion

Tour upon arrival. Dinner provided. Cash bar.



Friday, August 15

8:00 – 9:00 a.m.

Breakfast Buffet

Northern Lights Ballroom Atrium

9:00 – 10:00 a.m.

The Future of Work in AI-Powered Era: Preparing for a Transformative Workplace

Dr. Joanne Wang, Executive Director of Strategic Partnerships; Associate Professor of Practice, Engineering Science, and Management; and Assistant Dean | Vanderbilt School of Engineering

The Future of Work in an AI-Powered Era will explore how artificial intelligence (AI) and automation are transforming industries and reshaping the workplace. This interactive session covers key topics such as AI fundamentals, the evolving job landscape, and the critical human skills needed to thrive in a technology-driven environment. Participants will learn how AI can enhance their productivity, from automation tools to data analysis, while discovering strategies for reskilling and adapting to change. With a focus on collaboration, ethics, and workplace transformation, this session helps individuals and teams build a strategic mindset to embrace AI integration and unlock new opportunities. By the end of the session, participants will leave with actionable insights to future-proof their careers and contribute to a more innovative, AI-enhanced workplace. Perfect for professionals across all sectors, this session equips you with the knowledge and tools to thrive in the evolving world of work.



Dr. Joanne Wang currently holds the dual roles of Executive Director of Strategic Partnerships and Assistant Dean at School of Engineering. She is Associate Professor of the Practice in Engineering Management and Science. In her capacity, Joanne spearheads the development and execution of the school's strategic initiatives, focusing on building strong relationships with industry leaders, government agencies, and community partners.

She plays an instrumental role in fostering partnerships while also leading efforts in workforce development, innovative lifelong learning, and industry-sponsored research initiatives. Her leadership is characterized by a forward-thinking approach to integrating emerging technologies and strategic planning within academic and business environments. Joanne's extensive background in marketing, public relations, and business planning further strengthens her ability to bridge academia with real-world industry needs. An active member of the American Society for Engineering Management, Joanne is committed to advancing the future of engineering education and strategic industry collaborations.

10:00 – 10:15 a.m.

Break

10:15 – 11:15 a.m.

The State of New Americans in the Minnesota Workforce

Sonji Davis, Program Manager | MN Department of Employment & Economic Development Office of New Americans

Abdiwahab Mohamed, Assistant Commissioner of Immigrant & Refugee Affairs | MN Department of Employment & Economic Development

This session will offer an overview of data about immigrants and refugees in Minnesota, highlighting their essential contributions to communities across the state. The session will also provide information about recent federal changes related to immigration and the potential impacts of those changes. The session will address how ONA and its valued partners are working to develop and implement statewide strategies to increase access to programs and services and improve economic mobility for immigrants and refugees while also addressing Minnesota's workforce needs. By the end of the session, participants will have a clearer understanding of the impact of recent federal changes, the valuable opportunities that foreign-born populations bring to Minnesota's workforce, and ONA's key strategic initiatives: the International Credential Evaluation Pilot (ICEP) and the MAWB Regional Planning Grant Modification. Participants will leave the session with a renewed sense of the critical role they play in preparing immigrants and refugees for Minnesota's workforce.

Sonji Davis is an accomplished Programs Manager skilled in administration of workforce development system policies, cross-sector partnerships with employers, educational institutions, community-based organizations, and local, state, and federal partners. She comes to the Program Manager position with the Office of New Americans from DEED's Governor's Workforce Development Board as the Workforce Policy Coordinator. Her previous positions include Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs Coordinator, Area Manager for Rice and Steele Counties, and Career Planner with Workforce Development Inc. serving the Southeast Minnesota Region.



Abdiwahab Mohamed serves as Assistant Commissioner of Immigrant & Refugee Affairs at DEED and leads the Office of New Americans, which implements strategies to support New American integration, reducing barriers to economic success, and enhancing civic participation. He also convenes an interdepartmental coordinating council for state agencies to work together to deliver state programs and services effectively and efficiently to Minnesota's immigrant and refugee populations by connecting these populations to state resources and runs programming to reducing barriers to their belonging including language access, legal services, workforce, and entrepreneurship assistance.

Abdiwahab previously served as a trade manager within Minnesota Trade office where he helped Minnesota businesses venture into and export to international markets. He says his role helps him reflect on his first days as an immigrant in Minnesota and his efforts to join the workforce while navigating several barriers like credentialing, transportation, and cultural barriers. He uses his personal experience to help integrate new Americans into the economy. To him, this role is just as personal as it is a civic duty.

11:15 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Minnesota Registered Apprenticeship

Erin Larsen, Director of Apprenticeship | MN Department of Labor & Industry

Marie Larson, Industry Relations Manager | City of Minneapolis Employment & Training

Do you find yourself asking, “Why am I hearing so much about registered apprenticeship right now?” At the federal level, Executive Orders, TEGLs, and WIOA reauthorization all emphasize the importance of registered apprenticeship. During this session, we’ll uncover answers and we’ll pose a few new questions for your consideration!

Erin Larsen with MN DLI, and Marie Larson, Co-Chair of MAWB’s Registered Apprenticeship Community of Practice, will share our state’s perspective and initiatives. We’ll spotlight a new, statewide Community of Practice which supports local and regional efforts to expand registered apprenticeship. You’ll receive answers to key questions:

- What are the benefits of registered apprenticeship for jobseekers and employers: Why are these important, and *why now*?
- What is Minnesota’s Department of Labor and Industry (MN DLI) doing to help expand apprenticeship in MN?
- Where can/where should DEED and DLI (and MOHE) be working together at the state level to pave the way for more apprenticeships?
- What new work has MAWB begun to support the growth and acceleration of apprenticeship in Minnesota? And...what is the role of local boards in apprenticeship?
- How do we all work together to move registered apprenticeship forward – for employers, for workers, and for our collective economic prosperity?

Erin Larsen is the Director of the Division of Apprenticeship at the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry. In this role, she leads initiatives to support existing registered apprenticeship programs and to develop new programs in emerging industries. Before joining DLI, Erin led Career and Technical Education efforts at the Minnesota and South Dakota Departments of Education. She holds a master’s degree from the University of South Dakota and a bachelor’s degree from Augustana University.



Marie Larson serves as Industry Relations Manager for the City of Minneapolis Employment & Training, a division of Community Planning and Economic Development. She works extensively with Minneapolis metro region employers and industry partners to develop workforce strategies, programs, and talent solutions. From 2010 - 12, she managed for a large-scale federal project in the City of Minneapolis and Ramsey County, called RENEW Pathways Out of Poverty, which garnered recognition as one of three top-performing programs nationally, and received an IEDC Silver Award for Innovation in Economic Development.

12:00 p.m.

Thank You & Adjourn