

**Issues and Recommendations to be Discussed by the Emerging Worker Committee
DRAFT 5-20-04**

Emerging Workforce

The Committee is using the term “emerging workforce” to mean all individuals who are between the ages of 14-21, as “youth” is defined by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. Even though this excludes other possible emerging workers, such as new immigrants, people moving from welfare to work, or incumbent workers upgrading their skills, it helps to provide a focus for the discussion since each emerging workforce population has unique needs.

A. Issues that must be addressed

The following overarching issues are negatively affecting Minnesota’s ability to develop its emerging workforce. These issues have been identified through multiple discussions with stakeholders including businesses, community-based organizations, Department of Education, educators, Department of Employment and Economic Development, labor leaders, MnSCU, University of Minnesota, and Youth Council Chairs.

1. **Extreme decreases in state level funding for Youth Programs and secondary career and technical education have left some of the programs almost non-existent.** Appendix A depicts the sharp decline in state funds for career and technical education over the past 25 years. Today, funding is permissible via a local levy. However, these levies only brought 12.6 million dollars into the system for the 2002 – 03 school year, which is 10.1 million dollars less than the amount of funding for career and technical education in 1980 – 81. In addition, Appendix B indicates decreases in funding for Youth Programs.
2. **Minnesota has increased its emphasis on core academic skills at the expense of workplace skills.** Everyone agrees core academic skills are necessary. However, the increased emphasis on core academic skills, has led to a decrease in emphasis on workplace skills provided through career and technical education programs. This is evident through the lack of funding and state-level standards for career and technical education. Both core academic skills and workplace skills are necessary to succeed in further educational attainment and the workforce.
3. **Currently, Minnesota ranks 49th in the school counselor-to-student ratio.** School counselors are expected to perform the following functions: guidance curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, and systems support. If Minnesota does not have enough school counselors to support its students, students receive far less service than students in high-ranking states.
4. **Exit and entrance requirements for educational systems are not aligned.** This alignment is necessary to ensure a smooth transition between educational institutions or between educational institutions and the world of work. According to Richard Blais of Project Lead the Way, 42% of 2-year college students and 24% of 4-year college students in the U.S. require at least one remedial course.

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Additional issues were also discussed with the Committee. However, many of those issues deal with coordination at the state and local levels among economic development, education, and workforce development entities. Even though those additional issues do not require administrative, legislative, and/or gubernatorial intervention, they are still important for furthering career exploration and skill attainment opportunities for Minnesota's emerging workforce and may require administrative changes among state and local agencies. The Committee will present those issues, in addition to possible solutions, to their respective agencies.

B. Impacts on Minnesota's Emerging Workforce

Each of the issues listed above negatively affects Minnesota's emerging workforce. Some of the negative impacts are compounded because the issues are inextricably linked. For example, cuts in funding and the high number of students per counselor negatively impact students' ability to explore a wide range of careers.

1. **Elementary and secondary aged students oftentimes do not realize the need for a strong educational base or career exploration experiences and are not fully utilizing the resources available for career exploration.** Career exploration is important for Minnesota's emerging workforce because it helps emerging workers prepare for a career that matches the individual's interests and abilities. Also, by exploring careers that match emerging workers' interests and abilities, emerging workers will have more information regarding the type of education, training, and skills they must attain in order to meet their career goals. Career exploration also helps emerging workers gain an understanding of the world of work. Without an understanding of why people work and what will be expected of them later in life, emerging workers do not necessarily make a strong link between their current class schedule and their future employment. Career and technical education can help students identify this connection. "It is widely held that career and technical education (CTE) can help enhance at-risk students' engagement in high school and reduce dropout...for some time there has been statistical evidence that CTE can play a role in reducing dropout."ⁱ

2. **Emerging workers are entering the workforce without the skills they need to be successful, and the need for remediation for students at the post-secondary level has increased.** 78 percent of emerging workers enter the workforce without a two or four year degree.ⁱⁱ If students have only received training in the core academic areas during their elementary and secondary educational experiences, they must learn many of the workplace skills from another source. The increased need for remediation could be due to numerous reasons including the following: elementary and secondary-aged students may not be gaining the skills they need to be successful in the working world or at the next educational level; entrance and exit requirements from secondary to post-secondary educational institutions may not be aligned; the influx of new immigrants to Minnesota may put more pressure on the post-secondary educational institutions to provide remedial skills classes due to cultural differences in educational attainment; and, the average age of students enrolling at the MnSCU campuses has increased leading to more lag time between educational institutions for

students. Remediation not only takes time away from emerging workers ability to fully participate in the workforce more quickly, it also increases spending on training for skills emerging workers should already have.

C. Solutions for Governor Pawlenty

1. Utilize the ISEEK Board for ensuring consistent, systematic intervention for providing career information to all of Minnesota’s emerging workers, and use the Youth Councils for implementing a local strategy for providing career exploration to meet local needs. Minnesota has many of the tools and information necessary for career exploration, such as Minnesota Career Information System (MCIS), ISEEK, and Minnesota Careers. Challenges emerge, however, when discussing how to continue to support and update those tools and how to provide the tools and information to all emerging workers in a consistent way. The ISEEK Board provides Minnesota with a unique venue for strengthening Minnesota’s ability to provide Minnesotans with the career exploration and mobility skills necessary for succeeding in the workforce. The ISEEK Board, which includes economic development, education, and workforce development leaders, provides a unique joint powers structure bringing together multiple state-level partners interested in developing students’ career exploration skills. The Department of Education, MnSCU, and the University of Minnesota are all represented on this board, and the board could help these entities provide this information in a consistent and systematic way.

At the same time, the Youth Councils must be supported to bring together their local economic development, education, and workforce development partners, including apprenticeship programs, businesses, Community Transition Interagency Committees, local school districts, MnSCU campuses, WorkForce Centers, etc. to ensure there is a local implementation strategy in place for providing career exploration experiences and information to all emerging workers in their region. To support the ISEEK Board, the Youth Councils, and their partners to provide career exploration materials and skills, Governor Pawlenty should:

- a. **Work with the Minnesota State Legislature to increase the funding available for independent school districts to hire more counselors, so Minnesota can lessen the gap between the maximum recommended ratio of students to counselors (250:1) and Minnesota’s ratio (806:1)ⁱⁱⁱ.** Without increased funding, hiring more counselors would be impossible and would be an unfunded mandate. Students need the services counselors provide to understand their educational options and to make smooth transitions from one educational institution to another and from educational institutions to the world of work.
- b. **Create an expectation for independent school districts to expand the career guidance role beyond counselors and incorporate aspects of career exploration into the classroom more frequently.** Because Minnesota is so far behind other states on the number of counselors available to provide necessary services, it may take time before funding can increase to meet demands. Teachers should be given the

opportunity to further integrate career exploration into their curriculum. For teachers to provide these services most effectively, the State Board of Teaching must require secondary education teachers and counselors to have exposure to career information and exploration materials prior to initial licensure. In addition, the Board of Teaching must also require teachers to have career experiences outside of the field of teaching, such as experiential work with an outside business for licensure renewal. For example, 3M's TWIST (Teachers Working in Science and Technology) program provides science and technology teachers with hands on laboratory experience where teachers can work side-by-side with company scientists on challenging research projects.^{iv}

- c. **Require the Minnesota Department of Education to integrate career exploration into the graduation standards.** By incorporating career exploration into the standards, emerging workers, their parents, and local educators will be more likely to realize the importance of career exploration. Also, careers will be linked to outcome expectations for students. School districts should not view this as a need for an additional required course, but rather an opportunity to integrate career exploration opportunities into their current curriculum.
- d. **Require each Workforce Service Area to have an operational Youth Council that focuses on creating connections between economic development, education, and workforce development for the emerging workforce within their region.** Under the current Workforce Investment Act, each Workforce Service Area must have an operational Youth Council. However at the federal level, there have been discussions on eliminating mandatory Youth Council language from Workforce Investment Act reauthorization.
- e. **Ensure the Department of Education and the WorkForce Center System are working together at the state level to define what their goals and roles are for providing career exploration opportunities for emerging workers at the local level.** WorkForce Centers could assist school counselors with learning about the tools available for career exploration, have liaisons for each school, and/or help to create more connections between the business community and the schools. The WorkForce Center System's focus is not mainly on the emerging worker; however, youth programs offered through the WorkForce Center System can help provide a link between the entities. If the role of the WorkForce Center System in providing career exploration opportunities for emerging workers was better defined at the state level, coordination and collaboration between local entities would come more easily.

2. Expand secondary educational programs that are oriented to specific occupational areas, have high standards for middle and high school students, utilize regional/statewide articulation agreements among educational institutions, and connect businesses to education. Programs such as Project Lead the Way and Auto-YES are two examples of initiatives underway in Minnesota already achieving national merit for increasing the success of emerging workers. Other successful Minnesota programs include the STEP Program in Anoka and Northeast Minnesota's regional

cooperative. Programs such as this should be available to learners of all abilities because these programs hone both core academic and technical skills, both of which are vital to improving the success rate of Minnesota's emerging workers. To help facilitate this, Governor Pawlenty should:

- a. **Insist that the Department of Education and post-secondary educational institutions work together to develop regional/statewide articulation agreements.** By having more of a regional or statewide approach for developing articulation agreements, students will have an easier time transitioning between educational institutions. In addition, this will also help to align exit and entrance requirements among educational institutions, and educators will be able to spend less time on paperwork and more time educating students.
- b. **Supplement current local levies with state funding for career and technical education programs to increase consistency and availability of career and technical education programs across the state.** There must be a balance between local control of career and technical education and statewide consistency. Currently the Department of Education provides guidance for local areas; however, local areas have discretion over the types and amount of career and technical education that should be available within their area. Because career and technical education is a key component of developing Minnesota's workforce, there must be some consistency and assurance of availability across the state.
- c. **Provide incentives for independent school districts and local MnSCU campuses to align with current industry standards and increase collaboration among educational institutions and businesses.** The Department of Education and MnSCU must be aware of current and future industry needs, which are projected by the Department of Employment and Economic Development Research Office, and should reward school districts and local campuses for trying to meet Minnesota's needs. Programs such as Auto-YES and Project Lead the Way focus on specific industries and help students transition from one educational institution to another or into the world of work. However, programs such as this do not have the necessary funding base to be supported long-term and statewide.

3. Encourage state agencies and educational institutions to work together to develop a broad set of measures to quantify the value of the interaction between economic development, education, and workforce development for emerging workers and the state of Minnesota. The Department of Employment and Economic Development has begun work on system measures for the workforce development arena. However, this work should be expanded to include economic development and education as well.

ⁱ Wonacott, Michael E. Dropouts and Career and Technical Education. ERIC - Myths and Realities. Number 23: 2002.

ⁱⁱ Stone

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Education, National Centre for Education Statistics 2003 (2001 data year)

^{iv} http://www.3m.com/about3M/community/edu_twist_121097.jhtml

Governor's Workforce Development Council Sustaining & Enhancing the Workforce Committee

DISCUSSION DOCUMENT FOR 5/14/04

BACKGROUND ON COMMITTEE FOCUS

(2001 original focus) This committee is focused on meeting employers' needs to reduce worker shortages in the critical skill areas. The committee looks at strategies including: improving and expanding customized training, and developing other vehicles for incumbent worker training. The committee works to align post-secondary education offerings with employers' need, especially in the critical skill areas. Focusing questions: *Where can we make a dent in the current skilled labor shortage? What steps are we taking to make it easier for incumbent workers to attain new skills and advance their earning potential?*

In Spring 2001, the Committee completed a focused planning effort, affirmed its focus, and further defined its mission: to satisfy employers' needs for skilled workers.

Additional proposed committee focus:

In pursuit of this mission, and to best inform the full GWDC of employers' needs for skilled workers, the Committee should regularly review labor market data and scan the economic horizon to identify: a) opportunities to align public resources with emerging trends or promising practices; and, b) priority areas (sectors, industry clusters) in which public investment in skill training and development would meet employers needs for skilled workers and yield significant economic growth for Minnesota.

AGENDA FOR 5/14/04 (and 6/11/04) MEETING(S)

- 1) Review this document toward agreement on content in each of the recommendation areas.
- 2) Discuss and reach agreement on a vehicle for each recommendation (specific program or at least agency through which funding would be delivered)
- 3) Discuss and suggest funding amounts and potential sources for each recommendation.

For the last several months, the SEWF Committee has "scanned the horizon" for emerging economic development efforts that have future workforce development implications for which the workforce development system could begin planning now. In particular, the committee has explored statewide sector-specific economic development and workforce needs (e.g., health care); and, regionally-defined trends and workforce needs (e.g., RED Group projects). Based on those discussions, the committee proposes the following recommendations to the GWDC for inclusion in the 2004 Preeminence Minnesota Portfolio Report and Recommendations to Governor Pawlenty

Statewide sector-specific recommendations

1. [INSERT IF 2004 LEGISLATIVE SESSION DOESN'T PROVIDE] The Committee's previous work on health care workforce needs revealed a consistent need for additional resources to train health care professionals, specifically in nursing and related health support occupations. The Committee recommends that the 2005-07 state budget include additional resources to the MN State Colleges and Universities system for nursing education [language and amount consistent with SF1760].
 - ◆ Use existing MJSP health care and human services program as allowed and intended

- ◆ Support continued convening among MJSP grantees, H-1B grantees, and others engaged in health care workforce training efforts to ensure non-duplication of effort.

2. [make room for specific Bioscience Council recommendations available 6/04]

Several projects emerging from the McKnight Initiative Foundations (MIFs) draw on emerging fields and economic development trends. Collectively, they point to specific industry clusters that add-up to statewide industry and/or occupational priorities. Some also mirror long-term trends found in current research (e.g., “Job Outlook to 2010”).

3. Support for manufacturing technologies emerges in several MIF regions as a priority area. Continued support for a statewide focus to advance/change manufacturing processes (as distinct from simply shoring up older technologies that are expensive relative to foreign competitors) emerges as a statewide priority.
- ◆ Support continued work throughout the state to convert existing manufacturing operations, where appropriate, to “lean manufacturing” technology.
 - ◆ Support “Centers of Excellence” in Applied Engineering and Manufacturing among MN higher education institutions with articulation to high school curricula and programs. The goal of these “Centers” is to increase access to higher education programs in this industry and disseminate knowledge about industry growth and trends to others in the field. Use MN as a laboratory to test national skills standards in manufacturing. Include composites industry work being done by Southern MN Initiative Foundation. [note: additional benefit to this approach is transferability of “lean” technology to other fields]

Recommendations in support of regionally-identified priorities

The SEWF Committee has discussed/reviewed several locally initiated efforts (e.g., MIF/RED Group, Stearns-Benton regional planning, etc.). With additional background and rationale, the committee could advance one or more of these specific efforts. However, to promote any one or several of these initiatives does little to advance a structural shift in the way state and federal funds are used in support of local/regionally identified priorities. Making a structural shift in state budgeting and funding will help all regions move forward.

4. The Committee recommends that the biennial budget allow for X% of funds from selected programs be reserved each biennium in support of regionally-identified priorities. Although funding for projects would need to conform to existing program requirements, a portion of program resources would be made available to respond to regionally-identified industry/occupational priorities possibly including:

- ◆ MN Job Skills Partnership Program
- ◆ Small Business Development Programs
- ◆ Rural Challenge Grant Program
- ◆ Minnesota Investment Fund
- ◆ others to be identified

Funding reserved for this purpose would be released, in accordance with required program guidance, after evidence that the identified priorities have been arrived at through a community/regional planning process that engages key stakeholders including, but not limited to, Local Workforce Councils, local MN State Colleges and Universities campus leadership, Initiative Foundation and Economic Development Commission leadership, or others. [Connect to regional economic profile demonstration]

Short-term recommendations

Following are actions recommended to be taken within the next twelve months to strengthen the WorkForce Center system.

1. Governance

The parameters for decision making authority over workforce area management and individual WorkForce Center operations must be set in order to provide clarity within the state/local partnership. As noted in the background, Minnesota embarked on its WorkForce Center system development with program partnerships as a central element of the system design. Since their inception, the WorkForce Center partnerships have expanded and been significantly strengthened through MDES' reinforcement of the importance of the state-local partnership and through local leadership efforts to support partnerships with the state. However, the emphasis on equal partnerships has come, at times, at the expense of clarity about decision making regarding workforce area management and individual WorkForce Center operations, and the dynamics of the local-state relationship come into play each time a major decision is made either at the local level or state level⁷.

- a) **Local Workforce Councils have substantial decision making authority over the physical siting and operations of local WorkForce Centers.** Local Workforce Councils and MDES had significant disagreement on two WorkForce Center siting decisions this past year.⁸ As WorkForce Centers' leases are reviewed, the conflicting views of the State Agency and Local Workforce Councils will continue to emerge. The Issues Team is currently developing a protocol regarding the decision making authority over the siting of WorkForce Centers. Upon completion, this protocol may clarify the parameters of decision making authority over the location of WorkForce Centers. If not, other WorkForce Center system leaders should take an active role to ensure that these issues are addressed in the coming year.

- b) **Chairs of Local Workforce Councils should work with state and local partners to designate a person who works at the WorkForce Center who is responsible for coordinating system issues and ensuring system issues are addressed either by the One-Stop Operating Consortium or the Local Workforce Council.** As the WorkForce Center system continues to evolve, the need for system management grows. The WorkForce Center system must function as a system made up of individual programs and locations. System management requires different attention than program management. The person who is responsible for playing this role will work with WorkForce Center system issues only and will not have authority over other partners' staff or financial resources.

⁷ For example, there is still confusion between the Department of Economic Security and the Local Workforce Councils regarding the authority and responsibility to determine where a WorkForce Center should be located. The MDES Issues Team is currently addressing this.

⁸ Austin and International Falls

- c) **Local Workforce Council Chairs and Local Elected Officials should review Council composition and Council staffing arrangements to ensure Council members represent the community that the Council serves and the staffing arrangement promotes system integration.** The relationship between the WorkForce Center staff and Local Workforce Council plays a role in determining how the staff function as a single unit. If some, but not all, of the partners either staff the Council or are members of the Council, then some partners are viewed as having more authority with the Local Workforce Council than others, which drives a wedge in the partnership. In order for the WorkForce Center partners to function as a single unit, they must functionally have equal relationships with the Local Workforce Council. In order to promote a unified staff partnership, the Local Workforce Councils should:
- i) Review Council membership to ensure members represent the community that the Council serves;
 - ii) Ensure WorkForce Center partners either staff the Council as a unit or the Council has an independent staff person to staff the Council; and,
 - iii) Ensure all WorkForce Center partners either sit on the Council or the Council does not have WorkForce Center partner voting members.⁹

2. Infrastructure / staffing patterns

The State Agencies, along with local partners, should review the staff management structure for the WorkForce Centers. Staffing levels and program resources are insufficient to meet local needs around WorkForce Centers. The MDES Sustainability Study identified WorkForce Center staffing as the primary cost of maintaining local operations. In addition, recent criticisms of the WorkForce Center system¹⁰ identify staffing patterns as well as staff support and training issues as key areas needing attention. To ensure consistency in the customer experience across all WorkForce Centers, there are several staffing issues that require attention.

- a) **Build on the award-winning South Central Training Team model to establish a statewide staff training and support function for all WorkForce Center staff.** This model focuses on system skill development of all WorkForce Center staff instead of only developing staffs' skills in their individual programs, which is essential for system development.
- b) **The state agency shall strengthen its ability to serve as a single point of contact to broker WorkForce Center infrastructure/support needs.** In the fall of 2002, the Commissioners of MDES and DTED, Earl Wilson and Rebecca Yanisch, reconvened the Issues Team, which reviews WorkForce Center system issues. The Issues Team is a good venue for field staff to alert the state agency to system infrastructure/support needs. As the merger of MDES and DTED move forward, there may be other opportunities to strengthen this function.

⁹ The GWDC recognizes that this may require state legislative action. For more information, see Minnesota § 268.666.

¹⁰ "Job-help centers may need work, August 22, 2001, Star Tribune"

- c) **Begin succession planning now to determine how to staff field operations in the future.** Retirement of staff from MDES provides opportunities to maximize service delivery across program categories in order to use more of the federal monies for direct services for employers and jobseekers. Analysis shows that half of MDES' current employees are at least 51 years old. With average state employee retirement age at 59, projections suggest that MDES will experience significant retirement losses within the next four years. As one example, a more detailed analysis of MDES staff shows that nearly one-third of current MMA members (regional managers, supervisors) are retirement eligible now based on the Rule of 90. However, we do not propose simply reducing overall staffing levels and, it should be understood that this recommendation does not promote state savings toward current state shortfalls. Rather, we suggest succession planning that will allow appropriate cross-program and/or cross-agency spending of federal dollars toward a more integrated and efficient system. There are two options to consider with this opportunity:
- i) Transform field staffing patterns to better integrate service delivery to employer and jobseeker customers, including cross-program staffing and supervision. Also, we could further explore the cross-agency supervision model written into Iowa's state legislation that allows civil service staff from one agency to supervise staff from another agency.
 - ii) As staff retire from management positions in the field, do not hire new program-specific staff to fill those positions and gradually transform field staffing patterns to better integrate service delivery perhaps by shifting federal funds currently used to support local MDES management staff to support additional cross-program local staff.

3. Performance measurement

- a) **Build on current efforts to strengthen data collection and reporting so that more of the WorkForce Center "story" is told.** The Resource Area Feedback and Measurement System Workgroup is proposing a means of counting the number of unregistered customers using Resource Areas. Also, the Minnesota One-Stop Operating System, for systemwide data collection of registered customers, has been tested in a number of WorkForce Centers. A system such as this is vitally important for partnership and system building.
- b) **Local Councils are encouraged to develop specific outcome areas focused on employer customers.** Systemwide measures are currently being developed by the Office of Policy, Planning, and Measures at MDES, and Local Workforce Councils are encouraged to work with the Office of Policy, Planning, and Measures to develop these measures.

- c) **WorkForce Centers should be reviewed by Local Workforce Councils based on the newly expanded credentialing process for WorkForce Centers.** Within the last year, the GWDC has worked with WorkForce Center Staff, Local Workforce Councils, MDES, Minnesota Workforce Council Association, and other key stakeholders to expand on the original five principles and fourteen implementation elements that were use to charter the Centers. While developing the framework and standards, the GWDC worked with over eighty individuals through workgroups and fourteen of the sixteen Local Workforce Councils or a committee of the Local WorkForce Councils. As the WorkForce Center system evolves, the credentialing process will evolve as well.

The WorkForce Center credentialing process is important for the development of the WorkForce Center system because the process:

- Adds value for customers by ensuring quality and consistency in the customer experience.
- Ensures local stakeholders have influence over service delivery operations in their area.
- Builds confidence in the system for important external audiences, e.g., state legislature.

While developing the credentialing process four areas were deemed most valuable within the WorkForce Center system: customers, leadership, staff, and business processes. Based on these four areas, the objectives for the WorkForce Centers are:

- i) Customers: Current and potential customers feel comfortable receiving services through the WorkForce Center system, have options on how to receive services, and the services they receive are high quality and meet their workforce development needs.
- ii) Leadership: Leadership ensures the quality of the WorkForce Center system by promoting system integration, supporting business planning and development, and communicating with system partners and entities external to the WorkForce Center system.
- iii) Staff: Staff have the ability, tools, and training to provide high quality workforce services in order to meet business and jobseeker customer needs.
- iv) Business Processes: Business processes are in place to help guide staff to provide high quality workforce services and to promote the mission and values of the WorkForce Center system.

In order to accomplish these four objectives, the WorkForce Centers are expected to work towards meeting and exceeding the following standards:

1. Customers

- 1.1 WorkForce Centers (WFCs) are welcoming to all customers.
- 1.2 WFCs identify customers' needs and strive to meet those needs.
- 1.3 WFCs educate current and potential customers about the services offered at the WFC and how to use those services in furtherance of their personal or company goals.
- 1.4 WFCs provide a variety of service strategies for jobseeker and employer customers with no right or wrong point of entry to the system.

2. Leadership

- 2.1 The One-Stop Operating Consortium models and ensures system integration through communication.
- 2.2 One-Stop Operating Consortium models and ensures system integration through planning.

3. Staff

- 3.1 Staff must have and use adequate information, training, tools, and resources in order to create a high quality customer experience and to respond to customers' needs.
- 3.2 Local WFC managers periodically update their training and skills regarding system related issues, relay system information to WFC staff, and gather feedback from staff on managers' performance.

4. Business Processes

- 4.1 WFC facilities are managed to integrate services, maximize efficiencies, and support a common "look and feel" across the WFC system.

Long-term strategic directions

This WorkForce Center strategic plan is one of several pieces that represent significant shifts in the state's role relative to local decision making and service delivery. There are many ideas that fall outside the specific purview of the WorkForce Center system but which significantly impact its operations and effectiveness. Below are the long-term recommendations originally described in the 2002 WorkForce Center strategic plan. The GWDC has done significant work to articulate our long-term goals and challenges. For a more comprehensive look, see the Preeminence Minnesota 2003 Portfolio Report.

- a) Local Workforce Councils in concert with other local and regional stakeholders could conduct regional scans to identify their own local industry priorities and then strategically direct training dollars in their area. Much attention has been given to state-level "clustering" of industries and/or identification of "priority" areas for economic growth. While this may be problematic for some if done at a state level, it is certainly within the range of local economic development vision to identify growth industries or sectors regionally based on broad labor market area needs. Other states have explored giving local workforce leadership the ability to exercise their discretion in directing training funds in their area to achieve maximum impact.
- b) The state and localities should identify funding (consider higher education and tax credit options) that would "match" federal sources to create a larger and more widely available pool of training funds that could be "deposited" into Individual Training Accounts through WorkForce Centers. Developing a funding source for this purpose would "level the playing field" among jobseeking customers so that all have adequate training resources at their disposal, regardless of eligibility for specific federal or state programs, demonstrating Minnesota's commitment to individual choice.
- c) A vital service to support both employers and job seekers is the use various assessments, including skills-based job assessments, interest-based evaluations, and individual evaluations to help workers identify transferable skills and build career ladders. There are multiple tools available, e.g., Work Keys for doing this work, some of which have been adopted by different state and local agencies and institutions. At a minimum, the GWDC and the new state agency should develop a "tool box" of such tools that will be supported statewide for use by job seekers and employers through state or local agencies.
- d) Minnesota must continue to coordinate resources meeting workforce literacy needs. It is critical that public funding available for Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language be closely coordinated with workforce development efforts across the state and in all Minnesota school districts.