

Education and Workforce Development

Education and Workforce Development Issue I (EWI)

Educating and retaining workforce: Facets of this issue include; understanding the demographic and skill make-up of the people in the region's major employment sectors. Other key components of this issue include lifelong learning aspects: how to keep young workers in the region, how to attract & retain talent, and how to best utilize an older workforce. Collaboration between private/public/non-profit sectors is of paramount importance for recommendations and actions to be successful under this theme.

Education and Workforce Development Issue I Goal

Educated workforce: Our region provides affordable and multiple educational opportunities to effectively employ the current and future workforce, and to improve our knowledge of how to live a sustainable life as individuals and as a community at large.

Recommendation EW1

Lifelong learning: Prioritize and promote lifelong learning for all residents of the region.

Action Step EW1A

Workforce training: Create a WPA-like (aka transitional jobs) workforce training effort.

Action Step EW1B

Early childhood education: Prioritize early childhood education and maintain consistent educational pathway options.

Action Step EW1C

Education resource center: Consider developing a one-stop shop and education center site where people can learn about resources and how they can be a part of the solution.

Recommendation EW2

Educational system improvements: Improve the educational system to provide a well-qualified future workforce.

Action Step EW2A

Experiential learning: Foster advanced placement opportunities, promote entrepreneurial skills, and involve students in hands-on work experience, on-the-job training and paid internships. Expand upon the "Bridges Academy" initiative administered by the Brainerd Lakes Chamber of Commerce.

Action Step EW2F

Various types of degrees: Create areas of excellence but allow for a broad range of learning opportunities (liberal arts as well as engineering). Allow for flexibility of learning when needed.

Action Step EW2B

Assessment: Create a technical assessment of interests and skills.

Action Step EW2G

Teacher engagement and accountability: Teachers often have excellent ideas of how to improve performance, allow for 180-degree evaluations that come from colleagues, students and parents. Let performance be evaluated, not length of employment. Set higher standards and give higher pay for exceptional performance. Keep practices and ideas that are working.

Action Step EW2C

Connect students and employers: Promote the skills that employers are looking for and where the jobs opportunities are to high school and college-aged students.

Action Step EW2H

Home schooling: Expand upon and grow homeschooling and social networks of homeschooling locations.

Action Step EW2D

Critical thinking skills: Teach critical thinking skills.

Action Step EW2I

Charter schools: Expand charter school options as an additional option to delivery of education.

Action Step EW2E

4-year degrees: Seek to have four-year college degrees delivered from within the region.

Recommendation EW3

Non-college pathways: Promote options in addition to college for pursuing education, job advancement, and higher pay. This may include additional workplace training, achieving advanced certifications and licenses, or seeking other non-traditional pathways to climb the ladder of success.

Action Step EW3A

Senior workforce: Retool and engage the senior workforce. Access retired talent as educators. Encourage seniors to maintain competency with emerging technologies.

Capitalize on experienced professionals to mentor others. Encourage employers to recruit across the experience spectrum. Create distance at-home learning opportunities while allowing experienced workers to “test out” of training modules.

Recommendation EW4

Role of business in workforce development: The business sector should be proactive in preparing the region’s future workforce.

Action Step EW4A

Hire locally: Encourage employers to hire locally.

Action Step EW4B

Welcome teachers: Create open doors to teachers in the workplace.

Action Step EW4C

Engineering and agricultural careers: Develop more educational opportunities for engineering and agriculture careers.

Action Step EW4I

Training and technical assistance for businesses and entrepreneurs: Expand business training and technical assistance. Offer workshops and other technical assistance to educate prospective and current entrepreneurs on how to locate and apply for loans for new or expanding businesses. Assist in educating people in finding capital.

Action Step EW4D

STEM: Focus on Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) training.

Action Step EW4E

Focus economic effort: Concentrate on a specific economic cluster for the region such as creating a hub for agriculture or a green job training center.

Action Step EW4F

Employer/student correlation study: Complete a study on which employers are hiring and correlate the findings with information on students taking classes, going to college, or graduating from high school in the state. Consider instituting programs where employers pay for relevant certifications.

Action Step EW4G

Employer/worker correlation study: A survey should be sent out to all employers in the region to find out where job opportunities may be as a result of people retiring, future business expansion, etc. and this information should be shared with citizens seeking employment.

Action Step EW4H

Educational pathways: Develop an educational pathway for varied stages of business development with associated resources.

Recommendation EW5

Affordable workforce education: Reform our education and workforce development systems by making education affordable for all learners.

Action Step EW5A

Build on current efforts: Build on existing education and workforce development collaborations such as the Public Work Force Development System, MnSCU, and Adult Basic Education.

Action Step EW5B

Agricultural workforce: Emphasize and promote agricultural education along with gardening.

Action Step EW5C

Training: Combine the concepts of on-the-job training (training at the work site) and lateral training (career path – next level of training). Institute additional apprenticeships that will enhance job creation and enhance skills.

Action Step EW5D

Skills assessment: Conduct an assessment of the demographic and skills makeup/aptitudes in the region's major employment sectors, including incumbent workforce sectors and the unemployed and underemployed workforce. Use this information to identify gaps and gain a better understanding of what education is needed to fill these gaps. Assess and improve soft skills.

Action Step EW5E

Skills assessment connected to education: Inventory existing skills, compare these to needed skills in key industries, and address the gaps. Focus on evaluating skill sets of high growth industries to determine which incumbent workforce sectors may be transitioned into higher growth industries. Develop core educational disciplines at basic levels to provide greater flexibility for workers throughout their career.

Action Step EW5F

Distance learning: Promote community-based distance learning via global interconnectivity. For example, integrate home-based learners at the community level for social activity along with an advanced online learning experience.

Action Step EW5G

Work-at-home: Provide more work-at-home employment opportunities. This can be accomplished through the expansion of telework and home-based services and businesses.

Action Step EW5H

Affordable, accessible training: Provide affordable and accessible training in promising fields. For example, online courses are more accessible for people without transportation options.

Recommendation EW6

Coordination of economic development efforts: Businesses and government should work closely with local economic development and community development agencies to attract new employers and small businesses to the area.

Action Step EW6A

Livable wage jobs: Focus efforts on attracting employers that will provide a variety of jobs that pay livable wages.

Action Step EW6B

Minimum wage jobs: Discuss minimum wage standards and area jobs in our community with state government and public office.