

Midwest Spotlight Survey Results

Below are the unedited answers to our Midwest Spotlight Workforce Survey which ran in the January issue of Site Selection.

Illinois

Therese McMahon, Deputy Director, Illinois Office of Employment & Training

What is your state's biggest challenge in workforce development?

Illinois joins the rest of the nation in addressing the challenge of reducing the gap between the education level of workers and the skills needed for employers to fill critical job openings.

How is your state addressing the workforce development challenge?

Illinois is reducing the skills gap by building capacity for economic development organizations, chambers of commerce and industry associations to prioritize workforce training and retention, recognizing employers as the end customer in this effort. We actively engage employers in building talent pipeline partnerships and promoting accelerated and customized work based training solutions that respond better and faster to their workforce needs. Illinois Pathways was launched in February 2012 to support Illinois' goal of increasing the percentage of residents with high-quality degrees and credentials to 60% by the year 2025.

What is your state's "ace in the hole" or most strategic advantage with respect to workforce development?

Illinois has received national attention for its industry cluster – based workforce training model, which is one of the most advanced models of its kind in the country. As we are directly aligned and housed in the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), our workforce system works closely with industry and business associations who market our workforce services and funding directly to their members. DCEO recently released a RFA seeking workforce training projects that connect talent strategies with business strategies. This is a logical next step as we expand the implementation of Illinois Pathways to adult learners and job seekers. Illinois Pathways is more than an education and workforce initiative – it is an economic development program to support the growth of human capital in the State of Illinois.

What plans are in place to improve your state's workforce/talent development resources in 2015?

Illinois plans to implement the major strategies promoted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) initiative. These TPM strategies provide the next steps in linking economic and workforce development and building STEM-related talent pipelines through the Illinois Pathways initiative.

Examples of Illinois' Earn and Learn Work Based Training Projects:

- Wheatland Tube, a Chicago employer, that manufactures galvanized steel tubing needed to upgrade the skills of their workers to avoid costly delays in production. Partnering with St. Augustine College, Wheatland Tube was able to cross-train 50 employees in Industrial Maintenance, Electrical Maintenance, and Advance Electrical Maintenance. A \$500,000 investment of DCEO workforce funds made this training possible.
- Manufacturing employers in the Decatur, Illinois area were able to train and hire 20 unemployed individuals by providing them with earn and learn opportunities in welding, CDL, and production assembly. Starting wages for these jobs ranged from \$12 to \$18 dollars an hour. The Local Workforce Investment Board- Workforce Solutions received a \$288,500 grant from DCEO workforce funds to make these hires possible.
- Spartan Light Metals, located in Sparta, Illinois, retained 20 workers by upgrading their skills to fill jobs such as production workers, fabricator and assembly workers. The \$50,000 dollar investment of DCEO workforce funds also helped Spartan increase their production capacity and they now plan to hire 36 new employees.

Indiana

Steve Braun, Commissioner of Workforce Development

What is Indiana's biggest challenge when it comes to workforce development?

The most challenging issue Indiana's workforce development system faces is transforming our training and education programs and systems into a more employer-informed approach. Also of import is developing a centralized comprehensive mechanism to react to the changing needs of the job market

so Hoosier employers have the human capital resources necessary to address future needs.

How is your state working to overcome that challenge?

As we remain cognizant of the fact that Indiana's workforce development system must be employer-centric, our state has worked to develop several tools to address these needs. During the 2014 legislative session of the Indiana General Assembly, in my role as a legislator at that time, I authored a bill to expand and improve Indiana's Network of Knowledge (INK), an enhanced database which utilizes data from our partners in higher education, existing workforce and economic data within the Indiana Department of Workforce Development, as well as K-12 education data from the Indiana Department of Education to analyze in real-time Hoosier employer human capital needs. The INK database also contains features which enable us to utilize predictive analytics to monitor economic trends which could affect the job market. We truly see our mission within Indiana's workforce development system as a three-pronged approach. We must first identify the current and future skill needs of Hoosier employers utilizing analytical data available. Then, we must take into account current employer skill requirements and direct programs and resources to address their needs. Finally, we must assess the future needs of Hoosier businesses and align resources and programs appropriately.

What is your state's ace in the hole, or most strategic advantage, with respect to workforce development?

Indiana's greatest advantage is Governor Mike Pence's commitment to enhancing the employer-centric focus of our workforce development system. He understands the importance of the collective skill sets of Hoosiers, whether they are already in the labor force or currently enrolled in our K-12 education system. Furthermore, he recognizes the fact that Indiana's approach to improving our workforce development system must be data driven to ensure all statewide partners are held accountable to relevant outcomes.

What plans are in place to improve your state's workforce/talent development resources in 2015?

In 2015 Indiana will continue to prioritize programs to equip Hoosier youth with the resources, motivation and mentoring they need to obtain their high school diploma or equivalency and transition into the labor force or a post-

high school education setting. We will further develop career and technical education pathways, and also focus on helping Hoosier employers cultivate apprenticeships and job-shadowing opportunities to expand employer-driven educational experiences. Moving forward, we definitely intend to keep our focus rooted in fostering a system which remains employer-centric. We view our labor force as the supply for the demands of Hoosier employers and we intend to proceed accordingly.

Iowa

Debi Durham, Director, Iowa Economic Development Authority

What is your state's biggest challenge when it comes to workforce development?

Iowa has a low unemployment rate overall, 4.5% as of October 2014, meaning that we are basically at full employment levels. As a result, there are pockets around the state where our growing companies are having a difficult time filling their open positions.

How is your state working to overcome that challenge?

Iowa has very flexible job training programs that can be customized to what businesses need – working directly through our robust community college system, businesses can design a program to train new employees or up-skill existing workers to meet the demands of a changing marketplace. We are also putting more emphasis on apprenticeship programs – not only in the traditional sense, but also in occupations like IT and computer programming. Finally, we are working to grow our population. One program we are focusing on is Home Base Iowa, a recruitment effort centered on transitioning military personnel.

What is your state's ace in the hole, or most strategic advantage, with respect to workforce development?

Iowans are hard workers and very productive – the value of which can't be underestimated. We often hear stories from our companies about the quality and quantity of work that comes from their facilities in Iowa, out-producing others around the country and around the world. Iowa is not a low-wage state. Companies locating in Iowa are looking for employees that add value – and that's what they get!

What plans are in place to improve your state's workforce/talent development resources in 2015?

Home Base Iowa's first year achieved great results with 633 veterans hired by Iowa companies. In 2015, results are expected to be even greater in attracting veterans and their families to Iowa. Another program anticipated to yield additional qualified employees is the STEM Internship program. Coupled with the Iowa Student Internship program, they are a great way for Iowa companies to attract highly qualified employees as well as retaining Iowa students.

Kansas

Michael Copeland, Deputy Secretary of Workforce Services at the Kansas Department of Commerce

What is your state's biggest challenge when it comes to workforce development?

Businesses all across the country are increasingly looking to hire employees who have technical skills and industry recognized credentials. Manufacturing and other sectors have tremendous potential for growth, but it is essential to ensure that the workforce is equipped with the technical skills to support this growth.

How is your state working to overcome that challenge?

Kansas has introduced a number of initiatives to help workers gain technical skills. A Career and Technical Education Initiative allows high school students to take post-secondary technical education classes at no cost. Another initiative, Workforce Aligned with Industry Demand, allows employers to help design training courses at local colleges. A number of other programs are also tailored to support workers who want to learn technical skills or obtain credentials valued by employers.

What is your state's ace in the hole, or most strategic advantage, with respect to workforce development?

Kansans are known for their work ethic, but our state also boasts superb educational institutions. Kansas high school students consistently earn scores above the national average on college entrance exams, and then take advantage of our outstanding colleges and universities. We are fortunate that our educational system also has strong partnerships with businesses and state agencies. Our state's economy is diversified and relies upon a number of sectors,

including advanced manufacturing, agriculture, alternative energy, bioscience, distribution and food processing. The ability of our educational institutions to cooperate with and meet the needs of all of our industries has given us a workforce with a broad range of skills.

What plans are in place to improve your state's workforce/talent development resources in 2015?

We will keep making sure that we remain responsive to the needs of industry. This includes continued collaboration with businesses and educational institutions in our state to ensure that Kansas workers are prepared to help companies thrive. Several of our initiatives are expanding to include new areas and industries.

Michigan

Christine Quinn, Director, Michigan Workforce Development Agency

What is your state's biggest challenge when it comes to workforce development?

Ensuring our residents have the skills (certificates, credentials, degrees) that employers need now, in order to continue to grow and diversify our economy. There are many occupational jobs available that don't require a 4 year degree – the middle skill jobs. However, the perception of parents and youth is that a 4-year degree is the best/only approach to successfully enter the workforce. Collectively, all key partners need to change this perception by working together. Employers need to work directly with educators in order to ensure just-in-time training is available for jobseekers to fill current and future vacancies and the education system needs to move from an academic focus to an occupational focus.

How is your state working to overcome that challenge?

Michigan's Industry Cluster Strategy (MICA), assisting in the development of industry-based partnerships to promote the economic health of regional businesses and workers. The MICA Team engages local employers to address talent shortages and provide information on in-demand skills and jobs, training program requirements and candidate assessment factors to help job seekers transition from training to long-term employment. Employers work directly with the workforce and education systems to jointly address talent shortages.

Statewide Training and Certification of Business Solutions Professionals. The Business Solutions Professional (BSP) Program focuses on meeting the needs of the business by working with partners to ensure the business receives maximum gain from available resources and services. BSP design solutions integrate workforce development, economic development, education, and local/ state government assets to address the company's pressing issues. Practitioners are located around the state and work in Michigan Works agencies, economic development agencies, 2- and 4-year colleges, business development groups, unions, local /state government, Michigan State University Extension, community partners and business, and the State of Michigan, Workforce Development Agency. Business Solutions Professionals have spearheaded successful efforts to attract new businesses, halt the decline of businesses, and facilitate strategic partnerships throughout the state.

We have established Talent Tours throughout the state - Talent Tours introduce youth, parents, and teachers to available career paths in their Region by offering a behind the scenes look into in demand businesses and industries. Talent Tours help students understand employer education and training requirements necessary to secure employment. Impacts include relationship building, establishing a talent pipeline, talent retention and the opportunity to see real life application of coursework.

We have created regional Talent District Career Councils (TDCCs), made up of educational representatives that are appointed by the local Workforce Development Boards that serve in an advisory capacity to the boards on educational issues. The TDCCs will replace the Youth Councils, which are eliminated under WIOA.

What is your state's ace in the hole, or most strategic advantage, with respect to workforce development?

Michigan's key workforce strategy is the operation of a Demand-Driven system, which has been unanimously adopted by the state and all 24 local service delivery areas – Michigan Works! Agencies. A truly demand-driven workforce development system:

- Identifies the employer as the primary customer;

- Recognizes that the extent to which we meet employers' needs and ultimately grow our economy depends upon the extent to which we provide the best assistance possible to job seekers;
- Bases decisions about what training is provided on specific needs expressed by employers;
- This is in contrast to a supply-driven system where training decisions are made based upon schools having certain programs already available, job seekers walking in the door and saying they want training in a particular occupation, lists of allowable activities, and assumed needs;
- Designs training programs and other services with input from employers and staff resulting in programs and services that are responsive, swift, and creative solutions leading to industry recognized credentials;
- Starts and stops programs and services as demand changes:

This is in contrast to a supply-driven system that delivers essentially the same services year after year.

- Provides training and services that vary considerably from one community to another;
- Does not hamper staff with internal demands to meet program performance or to place program participants into employment. Instead, staff is focused on assisting companies with finding the best/right employees. Positive performance outcomes will follow.
- Results in the creation and expansion of jobs which results in increased employment, retention, and wages.

Through the utilization of a Demand-Driven approach, Michigan is in its second of year of operating the Skilled Trades Training Fund (STTF). The STTF, which is supported by state general funds, provides competitive awards for employer responsive-training that enhances talent, productivity, and employment retention, while increasing the quality and competitiveness of Michigan's businesses. The STTF ensures Michigan's employers have access to the talent they need to compete and grow, and individuals have the skills they need for in-demand jobs. Collaboration between the Michigan Works! Agencies (MWAs), economic development, and educational partners are essential to achieve

demand-driven training that addresses talent shortages hampering the growth of Michigan's priority industries.

STTF leverages state, federal, employer, and community based funding to meet employer demand. During its first year, the STTF awarded 169 grants, benefiting 291 companies throughout the State. Over 11,000 workers were trained and \$44 million dollars were leveraged.

What plans are in place to improve your state's workforce/talent development resources in 2015?

- ✓ Michigan is seeking increased funding from the State Legislature for year three of the STTF;
- ✓ We are cross training state and local staff and supporting positions based on function not program to mitigate funding influxes;
- ✓ As a system, we are moving towards a non-profit board structure in order to secure non-federal funds.

Minnesota

**Jeremy Hanson Willis, Deputy Commissioner of Workforce Development,
Department of Employment and Economic Development**

What is your state's biggest challenge when it comes to workforce development?

One of the biggest challenges facing Minnesota's workforce development are employment barriers for people of color and people with disabilities. Although Minnesota has one of the highest labor force participation rates in the country, employment is much lower for these populations. In order for our economy to reach its fullest potential, we need to remove barriers to employment for these groups.

How is your state working to overcome that challenge?

There has been much effort in the past few years to draw attention to and address employment disparities, especially for people of color. New organizations and collaborations have been created to focus and align public and private sector strategies to better train and employ minorities and immigrants. New state initiatives, such as the FastTRAC career pathways program have begun to show results. While the unemployment rate for black Minnesotans has fallen to 10

percent, down from 15 percent a year ago, much work lies ahead to keep making progress on this front.

What is your state's ace in the hole, or most strategic advantage, with respect to workforce development?

Minnesota's greatest strategic advantage is the strength of our workforce and the collaborative nature of our many workforce development partners. Minnesota routinely ranks high among states with above-average levels of educational attainment, trained workers, and strong work ethic. Our high-quality primary and secondary education system, combined with the many competitive colleges and universities, together churn out a workforce ready to meet the demands of Minnesota's growing economy. Employers to start or move to Minnesota often remark that a key factor in their decision to grow in Minnesota is the quality of our workforce.

What plans are in place to improve your state's workforce/talent development resources in 2015?

Minnesota's workforce system is working on many fronts to improve and better meet the needs of our growing economy, especially under the auspices of the new federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. In particular, we are working with employers and post-secondary education institutions to provide more current and accessible labor market information to drive better decisions about how to align job training programs with the needs of Minnesota business. Another priority is to re-invent and reconfigure our 48 workforce centers to better meet the needs of our job-seekers and employers with improved technology and expanded outreach.

Missouri

Julie Gibson, Director, Division of Workforce Development

What is your state's biggest challenge when it comes to workforce development?

Like many states, we have been faced with dwindling dedicated resources. This is coupled with the "skills gap"-- an issue employers throughout the nation continue to face by not being able to connect with workers that possess the skill set companies need, which often are technical skills.

How is your state working to overcome that challenge?

Collaboration is the key to tackling these challenges. Missouri has successfully implemented the Certified Work Ready Communities initiative. CWRC is a voluntary initiative led by community leaders that links workforce development to education and aligns economic development needs of communities. Through this program, job seekers can earn a work-related skills credential, providing objective documentation of an individual's skills that is accepted by employers nationwide. Sponsored by ACT, the goal is matching appropriate applicants to jobs based on actual skill levels. And as for talent development, Missouri is championing the pilot project ReBootU, which is geared towards filling the workforce demand in the information technology field. By partnering with local community colleges and the tech gurus at Launchcode, job seekers are fast-tracked to complete an IT certificate and connect with area employers.

What is your state's ace in the hole, or most strategic advantage, with respect to workforce development?

The state's newly revamped workforce training program – Missouri Works Training. Signed into law a year ago by Governor Jay Nixon, Missouri Works Training improves on the existing workforce programs by streamlining paperwork and combining resources to maximize impact. The strategic advantage of the program is the sheer flexibility. It can be used for large attraction and expansion projects but also serves as a robust incumbent worker training program. In addition, companies have a choice in terms of using the MWT Team of experts to deliver training or to use their own trainers and have those costs offset. It is a comprehensive approach to workforce development and one that has allowed many of Missouri companies and industries to become stronger and more competitive.

What plans are in place to improve your state's workforce/talent development resources in 2015?

Continued rollout and emphasis on the implementation of Missouri Works Training as well as spreading CWRC to more counties. There are currently 7 certified Missouri counties with 43 out of 114 counties participating or working towards certification. In addition, we anticipate on enhancing our ReBootU program as well as expanding many of our youth workforce programs so that our emerging workers are prepared to take on next-generation jobs.

Nebraska

John Albin, Acting Commissioner of Labor

What is your state's biggest challenge when it comes to workforce development?

Overcoming business owners' and business leaders' assumption that due to our low unemployment rate the state doesn't have enough skilled workers to meet their staffing needs. This assumption can result in business decisions that are not based on the facts. Our skilled and dedicated workforce can often meet the demand for high-wage skilled jobs.

How is your state working to overcome that challenge?

We have piloted worker availability studies to provide business owners and business leaders with a more comprehensive look at all factors impacting employment, including data beyond just the employment rate. For example, Nebraska has a more educated workforce compared to other states. And while we have discovered worker shortages, these tend to be isolated to particular industries and not across the board.

What is your state's ace in the hole, or most strategic advantage, with respect to workforce development?

Nebraska's high workforce participation rate is indicative of its strong work ethic in both population centers and rural areas crisscrossing the state. We also have discovered that employers prefer to hire from the ranks of the employed. This means that a workforce participation rate of 72% and an unemployment rate of 3.4% actually means that the pool of available talent is much larger than the unemployment rate alone would indicate.

What plans are in place to improve your state's workforce/talent development resources in 2015?

Career Academies—strong partnerships between high schools and institutions offering post-secondary education emphasizing high-skill trades and business—are popping up statewide to address critical shortages in technical occupations. The Nebraska Departments of Economic Development and Labor also regularly consult with Industry Councils comprised of top-level industry executives who advise state officials on workforce and other industry-specific needs so that we can effectively and efficiently respond when such specific workforce challenges

arise. Finally, we continue to provide timely data about our State's workforce to better inform and encourage business decisions resulting in the growth and development of our economy.

North Dakota

Wayde Sick, Director, Workforce Development Division

What is your state's biggest challenge when it comes to workforce development?

North Dakota's greatest challenge in workforce development is the lack of a workforce. According to the Job Service North Dakota, the state has consistently had over 20,000 unfilled positions for most of 2014. 20,000 unfilled jobs doesn't sound like a large number, but when North Dakota has led the nation with the lowest unemployment rate for a number of years, it becomes a challenge. Simply put, North Dakota does not have the population to support the state's economic growth.

How is your state working to overcome that challenge?

The state is using a number of tactics to overcome the challenge. North Dakota has invested in its eleven public universities and colleges, five tribal colleges and career and technical education at both the secondary and post-secondary level. The state is also in the process of a public/private partnership to actively recruit out of state job seekers to North Dakota. The North Dakota Economic Development Foundation has launched the Find the Good Life in North Dakota Initiative. The initiative is an effort to reach out of state not only to showcase the vast occupational opportunities, but also the quality of life North Dakotan's live.

What is your state's ace in the hole, or most strategic advantage, with respect to workforce development?

The most strategic advantage the state has is our size. Since we are small, we are mobile and willing to work together to solve our challenges. Everyone in North Dakota is aware of the workforce shortage and are willing to work together.

What plans are in place to improve your state's workforce/talent development resources in 2015?

North Dakota's state legislature begins its session in January 2015. There are a number of exciting proposals that the legislature will need to review and decide upon. Just a few is the continuation of the Find the Good Life in North Dakota

initiative, educator internships, student loan repayments and more options for distance and e-learning at our colleges. It will be an interesting session with a lot of discussion involving workforce development.

Ohio

Dawn Larzelere, Director, Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation

What is your state's biggest challenge when it comes to workforce development?

The biggest challenge facing Ohio in terms of workforce is the development of a unified system that allows businesses to find the workers they need to succeed and grow and helps workers access the skills training and resources they need to compete for in-demand jobs. As Ohio continues its economic comeback, the state must be keenly aware of the workforce needs of our employers both now and into the future. Our programs and policies must be aligned to that need so that our supply of talented workers meets the demand of Ohio's employers for individuals, families, and businesses to continue to grow and prosper.

How is your state working to overcome that challenge?

Tackling the challenge of matching qualified workers to employers looking to hire starts with understanding what Ohio businesses are looking for in today's workforce. That was the impetus behind Ohio's In-Demand Occupations Reports—a dynamic database of the state's most urgent job needs, developed using state labor statistics, online job posting trends, and direct employer feedback. This data is embedded into OhioMeansJobs.com, the state's one-stop career counseling and employer services center, helping to guide students and individuals along a career path toward promising occupations in Ohio.

With employers playing a key role in identifying workforce needs, it is essential that they remain not only a part of the discussion, but also a key driver in aligning education and training opportunities. Ohio is committed to the formation and advancement of Industry Workforce Alliances—sector partnerships bringing together regional employers, education and training providers, and community leaders to identify and address skill gaps at a local, industry-specific level. When business and education work together, we can better address the demands of Ohio's ever-changing economy.

What is your state's ace in the hole, or most strategic advantage, with respect to workforce development?

Ohio's greatest strength is and always has been its people. Supported by the passion and drive of our citizens, there is nothing we cannot accomplish, no challenge we cannot overcome. But it is the state's role to ensure they have access to the tools and resources necessary to succeed. That's why Governor John Kasich created the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation—an office committed to aligning the state's workforce delivery system to the needs of Ohio employers.

Having dedicated staff focused 100% on the state's various workforce programs allows Ohio to stay ahead of the curve, providing innovative solutions to the state's workforce challenges. A big part of this work is knowing what works, and what doesn't, and that evaluation of state's workforce programs is taking place through the Workforce Success Measures project. Working with stakeholders and The Ohio State University, Ohio has committed to the creation of a common set of performance metrics, allowing policy makers to continually monitor progress across multiple programs, creating better transparency and greater accountability. The ability to identify both shortcomings as well as best practices will allow policy makers throughout the state to make informed decisions on improving workforce services. Simply put, what gets measured gets better.

What plans are in place to improve your state's workforce/talent development resources in 2015?

Ohio has taken a “no wrong door” approach to addressing workforce development needs. While OhioMeansJobs.com serves as a central hub for both individuals and businesses to access workforce services, the state is committed to ensuring that opportunities are available to all, no matter where they access those opportunities.

To further that mission, the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation is working to increase collaboration through Ohio's Unified State Workforce Plan. In the past, the state's three largest workforce programs (Workforce Investment Act, Carl D. Perkins Act and Adult and Basic Literacy Education) filed individual plans with the federal government, fostering a misaligned approach to serving Ohioans. But under the Unified State Plan, these programs are guided by one system—one collaborative strategy—that is responsive to the needs of employers and individuals and is closely aligned with K-12 career exploration and career technical programs. The unified state plan, which contains a series of reforms to better align our workforce system, will be filed with the federal government by

the end of 2014. We will work with local providers, state policy leaders and workforce development officials to move forward these reforms throughout 2015.

We are also working closely with JobsOhio, the state's private economic development partner, to develop a customized workforce program to provide companies looking to grow or locate in Ohio with direct access to the skilled employees they need to open quickly and run efficiently. While we are still working through the details JobsOhio will be launching this program in 2015.

South Dakota

Marcia Hultman, Cabinet Secretary, South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation

What is your state's biggest challenge when it comes to workforce development?

Every state has workforce challenges. South Dakota has more jobs now than ever before. We are among 14 states that have now regained jobs lost during the recession and thousands more.

Two of the biggest challenges are:

- There is a serious skills gap between job seekers and available jobs.
- We don't have all the bodies we need in South Dakota to address all of our needs.

How is your state working to overcome that challenge?

Governor Dennis Daugaard announced South Dakota Workforce Initiatives (SDWINS) in 2011. <http://www.southdakotawins.com/>

This is an effort that brings together state government, education, business, communities, and others.

Earlier this summer, the Governor and the SDWINS Cabinet visited six communities and hosted day long Workforce Summits.

<http://www.southdakotawins.com/workforcesummits/>

The purpose was to provide a forum to discuss current programs, learn about demographics and workforce trends, and determine what strategies to move forward. Over 1,00 people provided input.

The final report is online at [http://www.southdakotawins.com/images/data/files/summits_final_report\(1\).pdf](http://www.southdakotawins.com/images/data/files/summits_final_report(1).pdf) and contains an extensive summary of what was learned and strategies to pursue.

During Workforce Summit follow-up meetings, Governor Dugaard announced the opportunity for communities to apply for the Community Matching Incentive Program.

<http://www.southdakotawins.com/resources/communitymatchingprogram/>. This grant encourages cross-sector collaboration in developing workforce development plans.

What is your state's ace in the hole, or most strategic advantage, with respect to workforce development?

South Dakota has the ability to partner with business, communities, education, and government. It's how we do business here. Governor Dugaard is taking a hands-on approach and making workforce a front and center piece to his administration

What plans are in place to improve your state's workforce/talent development resources in 2015?

- The advent of WIOA will help to strengthen our current partnerships.
- The Workforce Summits and Community Matching program have provided a lot of momentum for communities to take action.
- The Department of Labor and Regulation has been tasked by the Governor to implement common language and real time data into its SDWORKS management information system.
- The key components of an effective workforce system for South Dakota include:
 - ✓ Explore and Educate: tools, information, and opportunities to guide job seekers to available jobs
 - ✓ Recruit and Retain: enhanced mechanisms that connect people to employers and provide support to fill jobs, and keep them filled, with people who have the required skills and competencies

- ✓ Common Language, Data, and a Unified Agenda: the elements that tie the system together

Wisconsin

Reggie Newson, Secretary, Department of Workforce Development

What is your state's biggest challenge when it comes to workforce development?

Wisconsin is facing a significant skills gap that is only expected to grow unless it is addressed through an aggressive, innovative and collaborative approach. I hear time and again from business leaders across the state that the growing need for skilled employees is a real concern, making it critical for Wisconsin to prioritize the training and retention of Wisconsin's skilled workers, who are known the world over for their loyalty, commitment to quality and top-notch work ethic. We also need non-traditional approaches that will attract talent from outside the state who can fill Wisconsin employers' labor market needs, especially as Baby Boomers retire and leave the workforce.

How is your state working to overcome that challenge?

Wisconsin's current state budget includes over \$135 million in investments to develop Wisconsin's talent, including more than \$50 million for worker training through Governor Scott Walker's Wisconsin Fast Forward and Blueprint for Prosperity initiatives. The Wisconsin Fast Forward program makes strategic investments in customized skills training for employers based on industry demand. Wisconsin Fast Forward-Blueprint for Prosperity targets additional funds to: address technical college student wait lists in high-demand fields; support innovative school-to-work collaborations to provide high school pupils with industry-recognized certifications in high-demand fields; and enhance employment opportunities for persons with disabilities through customized skills training with job placement commitments. These important initiatives reflect thoughtful collaborations with the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, Wisconsin Technical College System, our regional workforce development boards, businesses, and other key partners.

What is your state's ace in the hole, or most strategic advantage, with respect to workforce development?

I believe that Wisconsin's leadership in advancing innovative talent development strategies under Governor Scott Walker's vision places Wisconsin above other

states. The newly implemented Wisconsin Fast Forward worker training program garners attention across the country for its collaborative and nimble response to employers' needs for skilled workers. Proven Registered Apprenticeship and Youth Apprenticeship programs serve as national models among state workforce agencies. In addition, our Vocational Rehabilitation program boasts some of the strongest performance measures in the country as it helps thousands of workers with disabilities reach their employment goals every year. And, we have a world-class educational system, from our K-12 system to our Wisconsin Technical College System and our University of Wisconsin System, all of which work diligently to help prepare our state's future generation of workers. Finally, Wisconsin will launch a new labor market information system next year that will dramatically improve our ability to anticipate, identify and meet labor market needs in the 21st century economy.

What plans are in place to improve your state's workforce/talent development resources in 2015?

As we advance Governor Scott Walker's comprehensive agenda to develop Wisconsin's workforce in the current budget cycle, we also are contemplating additional talent development investments and reforms that we believe will further cement Wisconsin's place as a national innovator and leader in equipping workers with the skills that our job creators need be competitive in the global economy. This includes further collaborations with key partners such as the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), Wisconsin's education system, employers, and many other stakeholders. Additionally, while DWD strengthens its partnership with the University of Wisconsin System, WEDC is working in tandem with our esteemed university system on the development of classroom-based initiatives throughout the state to spur the commercialization of ideas and research. As always, we continue to work tirelessly to encourage the best and brightest students to stay in Wisconsin after they graduate, as well as support the recruitment of talent to our great state.