

Community Workforce Providers Recommendations for Emergency Legislative Action *Minnesota Employment Services Consortium (MESC) and WorkforceNext (WFN)*

The nonprofit employment service providers in Minnesota

Overview

Simultaneously with the COVID-19 health crisis, our state's low-income workers, and those who have lost jobs through widespread industry shutdowns, face a shattered economy. Employment service providers have shut down most or all face-to-face contact and group activities and are striving to maintain contact remotely with thousands of current participants. Many participants face basic needs emergencies, while others see their pathways to employment shut down. As in all past economic crises in our state and nation, underserved communities (people of color, with disabilities and indigenous) are those most likely to be affected by the job market fallout. We support the general recommendations of the greater nonprofit community www.gtcuw.org/COVID19letter and offer the following recommendations specific to workforce needs.

Immediate legislative action is needed to support this massive impact on workforce services and the people who need them throughout our state.

Key Recommendations

1. **Increase flexibility** of existing state workforce funding grants and contracts to include revision of strategies, eligibility assessments, goals, and/or timelines;
2. **Provide immediate capacity building funding**—both program and operations—for flexible workforce services adapted to the new environment to include solutions for the displacement of low-income Minnesota workers.
 - Job readiness – employment preparation; individualized coaching
 - Job search and career coaching – adapted focus on new growth areas/essential jobs
 - Expanded supportive services funding for active participants in a more challenging environment
 - Short-term training pathways – focused on most current viable areas and using use distance learning technology for trainings
 - Paid work experience/supportive employment for workers with higher barriers
3. **Provide technology capacity funding** to existing grants to address major equity challenges for low-income people and communities of color, which already have the lowest levels of digital access. Specifically to provide participants access to affordable computers and internet access for distance training and other employment services.
4. **Ensure family wrap-around supports** to help individuals and families overcome financial hardships due to lost wages.
5. **Provide bilingual and bicultural support** for underserved individuals experiencing lost wages due to COVID-19, including those unable to access public assistance

Flexible funds will ensure the infrastructure and services of Workforce Service Providers stay strong so we're ready to help people get back on their feet after this unprecedented workforce disruption.

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