



# A Hub of Economic Activity and Innovation

The workforce is diverse, well-educated and equipped with in-demand skills

## What strategies are working?

### YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS AND ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS HELP YOUNG PEOPLE PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE.

- STEP-UP, a job training program for high school students, has done a lot for the community. Young people are exposed to the job market and their work experience helps them feel valued. Students realize they can succeed. STEP-UP enables businesses to bring people of color into their workplaces. The experience of employees working alongside these students helps break down hidden biases.
- Alternative high school programs offer invaluable service to young people.
- Work and learn programs enable students to continue their education, gain exposure to the world of work and earn income.
- South High School's manufacturing academy is innovative and replicable.

### TRAINING PROGRAMS HELP ADULTS RETURN TO THE WORKFORCE.

- Unlike employment systems that are delivered only at workforce centers, the Minneapolis Employment and Training Program is delivering services where people live. This neighborhood-based program has phenomenal staff who are willing to listen to new ideas and test new approaches.
- Community-based vocational training programs, such as the Summit Academy, are filling a void by helping adults get training in less than a year and quickly placing workers in jobs.
- Thanks to educational programs and workforce placement, people are establishing their education pedigrees, earning skills and finding jobs.

### COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROGRAMS BENEFIT STUDENTS AND THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY.

- The Minneapolis Community and Technical College is providing a workforce for industry. Community college is the glue that brings education and industry together in a systematic way.
- The Power of YOU tuition program is making it possible for students to attend college.
- The Minneapolis Community and Technical College is collaborating with the K-12 school system to encourage high school graduates to transition to "grades 13 and 14."

### THE COMMUNITY WORKS TOGETHER TO SOLVE PROBLEMS AND ADDRESS NEEDS.

- The pathways initiative, which is embedded in schools and social service agencies, is helping students build college readiness so they can seamlessly move forward to community college.
- The Workforce Council system is providing input and working to address issues.
- Community-based organizations are providing customized programs to help kids and young parents without homes continue their education.
- The City is obtaining federal grants to help fund training programs.
- Community organizations are partnering to reduce duplication and prioritize resources.
- Minneapolis' diverse business and industrial base is keeping our area vibrant and economically healthy.

## What strategies are not working?

### INFLEXIBLE THINKING HAMPERS OUR ABILITY TO CHANGE AND IMPROVE.

- The standardized approach to K-12 education is an outdated model that doesn't reflect today's needs. A rigid K-12 system makes innovation and flexibility difficult.
- There's a lot of finger pointing but no foundational change. We keep doing the same thing and expecting a

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different outcome.

- Higher education is stuck in its thinking. Instead of reaching out, these institutions simply work with the students who appear at their door. They aren't doing enough to prepare students who are struggling because of homelessness, mental health issues or poverty.
- The University of Minnesota walked away from a population of students when it pulled the plug from the General College.

## **DESPITE OUR EFFORTS, WE ARE STILL FALLING SHORT.**

- Despite the fact that our services are working, we still have the worst achievement gap between whites and non-whites in the country.
- We can't place all the kids who want to participate in the STEP-UP job training program.
- Adult Basic Education is too focused on getting a General Educational Development (GED) certificate. We aren't offering remedial courses to post-GED recipients so they can continue their education.
- We aren't getting people ready for training. Educational institutions aren't addressing the totality of students' needs. We aren't mitigating social and emotional problems that are barriers to success.
- Businesses say they want a more diverse workforce, but they can't find people to apply because they don't know how to reach diverse populations. We aren't connecting students to businesses.

## **WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION TO MAKE BETTER DECISIONS.**

- We don't have consistent and reliable statistics on how many people need help or where the need is greatest. We are unsure whether we should focus on the people who only need a small amount of help to succeed or whether we should go after the population that needs long-term comprehensive services to climb out of generational poverty or overcome difficult issues.

## **COSTS AND INFLEXIBLE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS HAMPER STUDENTS' ABILITY TO SUCCEED.**

- Fast-track training programs don't work for candidates who need more time and remedial help before they can test into a program. We don't give them enough time to qualify to participate.
- The pacing requirements of the Power of YOU program prohibit some students from participating.
- Funding is limited. There aren't enough resources.
- The financial aid system for higher education isn't working. Some students burn up the money before they can finish their education. Other students leave with a debt load that's so huge, it's unethical.
- Adults can't afford not to earn money while learning.

## Working in partnership, what strategies could we pursue?

### **EXPAND THE TRADITIONAL K-12 EDUCATIONAL MODEL.**

- Rethink the K-12 grade-to-grade promotion model and move to a system that moves students from one competency to the next. Shift to an approach that concentrates on building and enhancing skills over the course of an entire career. Encourage people to continuously add new skills and credentials.
- Change our education system from today's standardized K-12 approach to a diverse and decentralized delivery model that addresses today's needs. Use successful storefront and alternative schools as models for meeting students where they're at educationally, socially and emotionally.
- Incorporate more experiential learning. That type of learning makes sense to students because it connects their learning to a job.
- Expand resources that link education and workforce placement. Bring the manufacturing academy to other schools.

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- Focus on moving students to grades 13 and 14. Help students transition seamlessly from high school to work or high school to college.
- Find ways to tap into retirees' knowledge so they can go into schools and teach. They can offer real life experience if we find a new model for addressing certification requirements.
- Extend career and college resource centers so they don't end at high school. This should be a lifelong resource for people.
- Have a career navigator in every high school who can connect students to workforce development opportunities, offer curriculum advice and connect kids to jobs.
- Be courageous in examining our assumptions and approaches. We have to be more flexible.

## **ADDRESS STUDENTS' SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS.**

- Empower organizations to help students address social and emotional issues, not just educational needs. Educational institutions must help students overcome barriers to success, such as chemical dependency, homelessness, mental health issues and violence in the home.

## **OFFER MORE OPTIONS FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION.**

- Provide all students with a free education for grades 13 and 14.
- Do more to make remedial courses available to post-GED students so they can continue their education at a community college.
- Ease the funding time limits for workforce programs so students have more time to meet testing requirements.

## **EXPAND THE STEP-UP PROGRAM.**

- Keep telling businesses about the benefits of hiring STEP-UP participants. Make it clear that the program isn't too much work and will help companies diversify their workforces and fill future vacancies.
- Create an adult version of STEP-UP so adults can earn while they learn.
- Offer job shadow opportunities to adults.

## **STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND THE EDUCATION COMMUNITY.**

- Connect the business and education communities so businesses can hire a more diverse workforce.
- Ensure that educational institutions are training people for the jobs that businesses seek to fill.
- Grow partnerships between business and educational institutions to create new resources.

## **LOOK FOR MODELS TO EMULATE.**

- Look for innovative programs and emulate their successes. Look at Tennessee, which makes a community college education free to all Tennessee residents.
- Learn more about StriveTogether, Cincinnati's cradle-to-career approach to education.
- Use Hennepin County as a model for working with the Minneapolis Community and Technical College to train people for County jobs.

## **IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION AND INTERPRETATION.**

- Take a more consistent and standardized approach to gathering and interpreting data so we can identify problems and track progress. A good tracking system can drive action.
- Take a hard look at how we value data. Right now we measure four year graduation rates. What about the students who took longer? What if the real value is attaining credit?

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*Note: Participants were asked to focus on this aspect of the conversation: Our racially diverse populations are educated with in-demand skills.*

This conversation had representatives from Community Planning and Economic Development Department, Mayor's Office, City Coordinator's Office, American Indian OIC, Greater Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce, HIRED, MCTC, SMCPros and Wells Fargo.