

Prepared for
C.S. Mott Foundation and Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation

Strengths and Potential Within the Michigan Works! Network

Addressing Barriers to Employment,
Middle-Skill Jobs, and the 60% by
2030 Talent Agenda





Public Policy Associates, Incorporated is a public policy research, development, and evaluation firm headquartered in Lansing, Michigan. We serve clients in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors at the national, state, and local levels by conducting research, analysis, and evaluation that supports informed strategic decision-making.

119 Pere Marquette Drive, Suite 1C, Lansing, MI 48912-1231,
(517) 485-4477, Fax 485-4488, www.publicpolicy.com

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Executive Summary

The Michigan Works! agencies (MW!s) are on the frontline of Michigan's talent development system. Working with partners in education, human services, and economic development, they serve businesses looking to hire and upskill staff and job seekers looking to gain employment or advance in their careers. To advance workforce development outcomes in the state, it is critical to understand how these agencies work independently and in unison and how the Michigan Works! (MW!) network can be leveraged to address new future challenges.

In light of recent changes in MW! boundaries, leadership transitions, and a call from the newly elected Whitmer Administration for increased postsecondary educational attainment, the C.S. Mott and Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundations funded a comprehensive scan of the MW! network. The research was conducted by Public Policy Associates, Inc. (PPA).

Overview of the Scan

The scope of the MW! network scan encompassed a point in time between roughly December 2019 and February 2020. Through a review of existing information (e.g., annual reports and program materials) and interviews, PPA gathered perspectives on the strengths of the MW!s, how they connect people to middle-skill jobs, how they are helping to implement Governor Whitmer's talent agenda, and where additional approaches or resources would enable them to maximize employment outcomes. PPA spoke to over 160 MW! staff, contractors, and partners at 15 of the 16 agencies.

Network Insights

- **Network strengths.** Strengths of the network as a whole include serving as a community convener, addressing businesses' training and employment needs, nurturing a culture of continuous improvement, and leveraging local innovations for statewide benefit.
- **Addressing Barriers.** Child care and transportation are the most common barriers encountered by the network as it delivers services. The network has made progress on these issues through the use of data, community partnerships, and new strategies, but these continue to be major challenges to overcome.

- **Middle-skill jobs.** The MW!s use resources like the Business Solutions Professionals, career and technical education programs, youth career events, and the Going Pro Talent Fund to foster employer relationships and promote employment in middle-skill jobs.
- **Talent agenda.** The MW!s see the state's talent agenda and 60x30 goal as important. In support, they have been conducting training pilots with employers, finding opportunities to increase the speed of credentialing with partners, and using multi-faceted outreach strategies. The MW!s see potential in Michigan Reconnect to facilitate employment, but also suggest increased employer engagement, resource flexibility, time with customers, and technology to further the talent agenda.
- **Opportunities.** The network saw opportunities to enhance its effectiveness through new approaches to data and measurement, additional job seeker training opportunities, increased staffing, and the ability to work more with in-school youth. The MW!s also pointed to expanding the types of funding streams, streamlined processes, and expanded awareness of their functions as potentially helpful.

Recommendations to Further Network Impact

The potential to leverage the network's strengths for making transformative change to the state's talent-delivery system is great. The experience within the network in developing and implementing innovative solutions creates an ideal environment for testing new ideas and gathering data on the effectiveness of new approaches. PPA offers several recommendations for capitalizing on the strengths of the network and promoting innovation:

- Establish more permanent resources that offer MW!s the flexibility to develop innovative programs and services
- Engage employers to meet middle-skill job demand
- Develop statewide solutions to address the transportation and child care needs of job seekers
- Broaden and deepen collaborative partnerships with agencies that serve common customers
- Expand on workforce programs that increase equitable access to job training and employment

Introduction

The Michigan Works! Network

The Michigan Works! agencies (MW!s) are charged with administering workforce development funds and programs at the regional and local levels, and to ensure services are delivered through the American Job Centers (service centers). The agencies are funded through a combination of funding streams ranging from federal and state dollars to local philanthropic grants.

The network consists of 16 agencies defined on a county or multi-county basis, with the exception of the Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation, which is city based. The diversity within the network is wide-ranging, with different agency types (e.g., nonprofit, government), staff sizes, revenue scales and source mixes, and other distinguishing characteristics. This diversity reflects the local context of their areas, which also vary in terms of demographics and economic characteristics.

The network shares a longstanding commitment to an in-demand workforce focus—with employers as the core customer. In 2018, the MW!s served 36,000 employers and 800,000 job seekers statewide.¹

The MW!s are members of the Michigan Works! Association (MWA), which was established in 1987 to provide advocacy, learning and professional development opportunities, and other services to the MW!s.²

In recent years, the network has undergone changes that have

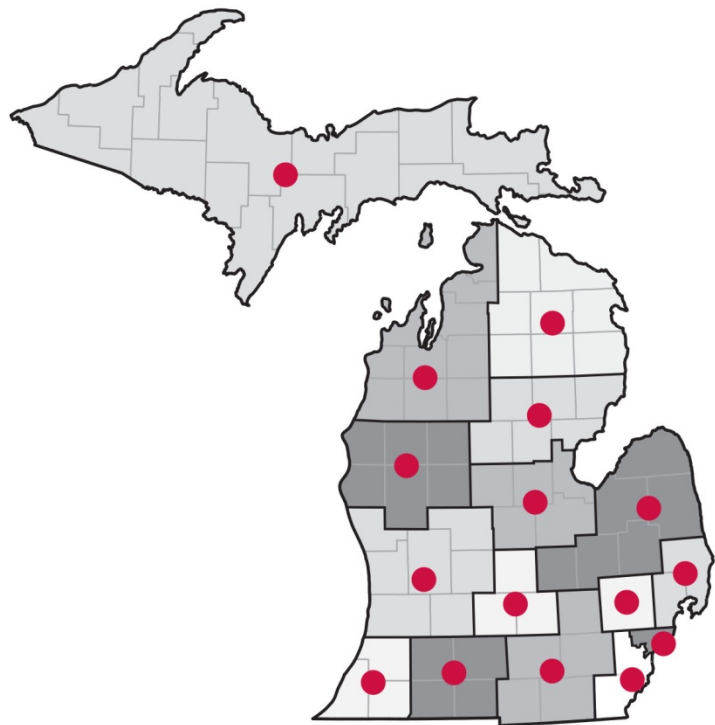


Figure 1: Michigan Works! Areas
(Source: Michigan Works! Association)

¹ Michigan Works! Association, “A History of Innovation,” 2018, <http://online.anyflip.com/mtrn/ppmv/mobile/index.html>

² Ibid.

reshaped boundaries, altered operations, and influenced services. The Michigan workforce development areas were consolidated in 2016, reducing the number of agencies from 25 to the current 16 as shown in Figure 1. The MW!s also experienced leadership transitions over the last several years due to retirements, the reorganizations, and other reasons. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act became law in 2014, altering some aspects of the agencies' approaches. In addition, prior to the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, Michigan had moved from the high unemployment of the Great Recession into very low unemployment (3.6% in February 2020).³ Together with a call for increased postsecondary educational attainment under the administration of Governor Gretchen Whitmer,⁴ these conditions indicated that the time was right to take a closer look at how the MW!s as a network were responding to common economic needs and challenges.

Network Scan Overview

Goals

Public Policy Associates, Inc.'s (PPA's) scan, undertaken with support from the C.S. Mott and Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundations, had three goals:

1. Establish a point-in-time understanding of how MW!s have assisted populations with multiple barriers to employment, connected job seekers to middle-skill jobs, and advanced Governor Whitmer's education agenda, which seeks to increase the portion of the Michigan population holding industry-recognized postsecondary credentials to 60% by 2030.⁵
2. Identify positive work taking place in the system.
3. Provide insights into where additional supports could aid in innovation and effectiveness.

It is critical to increase Michigan's educational attainment in order to have workers ready to meet the needs of current and future employers. In 2020, 70% of jobs in Michigan require a postsecondary education,⁶ whereas 49% of Michiganders age 25-64

³ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Economy at a Glance: Michigan," December 2019-May 2020, <https://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.mi.htm>.

⁴ Michigan, State of the State, Governor Gretchen Whitmer, "Fact Sheet," February 2019, https://www.michigan.gov/documents/whitmer/SOTS19_Fact_Sheet_646128_7.pdf.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Michigan College Access Network (home page), <https://micollegeaccess.org/>.

currently have a credential or college degree, and educational attainment varies widely by location.⁷ Middle-skill jobs—those that require a postsecondary credential but less than a four-year degree—comprise about 50% of the jobs in the labor market.⁸ The MW!s and others within the workforce development system are positioned to support fulfillment of middle-skill positions. However, many available workers are not ready for those jobs and have barriers to getting training and employment, such as a lack of transportation or child care and weak literacy and numeracy skills. For the MW!s, these populations can be hard to serve, but gains are crucial to fostering a more educated, more work-ready population that will enable greater economic prosperity within the state.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided the scan were:

- How are the MW! agencies seeking to improve outcomes for the hardest-to-serve populations in their areas? How are they measuring progress and reinforcing positive results?
- How are the MW! agencies addressing the need for mid-skill jobs? What sectors are they targeting? What successes have they had, and what populations have benefited from those jobs?
- How are the MW! agencies responding to the current Administration’s talent agenda? In what areas of that agenda is the network excelling now, and how can it better contribute to the agenda going forward?
- What promising approaches are present in the network?
- What are the strengths across the MW! agencies? What additional capabilities and capacity may be required, and how can those needs be met? What innovations and adaptations are required in planning, service delivery, and outcomes measurement?

Methodology

PPA launched the scan with discussions with the funders, Workforce Development Agency staff at the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth, the Michigan Community College Association leadership, and the MWA executive director. To

⁷ Lumina Foundation, “A Stronger Nation: Michigan’s Progress Toward the Goal,” <https://luminafoundation.org/stronger-nation/report/2020/#state/MI>.

⁸ National Skills Coalition, “Demand remains strong for middle skills,” February 6, 2017, <https://nationalskillscoalition.org/news/blog/demand-remains-strong-for-middle-skills>.

conduct the scan, PPA interviewed staff from MW!s and contractors, MW!s board members, and partners of the MW!s in 15 of the 16 regions.⁹ PPA also reviewed publicly available annual reports and regional Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) plans, as well as program materials provided by the MW!s. The scan did not include detailed examination of MW!s performance data or evaluation of any programs.

In total, PPA researchers spoke with 166 individuals through individual or group interviews during on-site visits or remote conversations. The site visits were completed by the end of February 2020, before the pandemic made its way to Michigan. The Networks Northwest MW! interviews took place in June 2020, as the site visit there could not take place as scheduled. PPA coded interview notes using Nvivo and analyzed other information in Excel.

Report Organization

The results of the scan are presented according to the topic areas listed below.

- MW! network strengths
- MW!s response to hard-to-serve populations
- MW!s efforts to connect individuals with middle-skill jobs
- MW!s efforts to respond to the talent agenda
- MW!s stated needs

At the end of each section, short vignettes are provided to offer examples of promising approaches used by specific MW!s in each of the topic areas.

The report concludes with a summary of findings and recommendations from PPA for consideration based on the implications of the findings.

⁹ The Upper Peninsula MW! site visit was postponed due to the statewide shut down, and the site was ultimately unable to participate in remote interviews.

Identifying Network Strengths

The Michigan Works! agencies (MW!s) aim to provide high-quality service to both businesses and job seekers. Due to their diversity, the MW!s can have similar and different strengths. These strengths may result from organizational emphasis, leadership and staffing, partnerships, financial resources, or other factors. A strength in one agency does not indicate a deficiency in another, but serves as an insight into how an agency views itself and how it responds to the needs of its community. The MW!s reported their strengths as part of the interviews, and Public Policy Associates, Inc. looked across the network to categorize the strengths overall.

Michigan Works! Agencies Staff Are Skilled and Experienced Community Conveners

Among the many strengths that MW!s reported bringing to their communities, perhaps the most frequently discussed was the ability to bring together diverse community partners to address a shared problem or work toward a shared goal.

This strength is built on the partnerships each MW! has forged with different community-based organizations, state agencies, employers, philanthropies, economic development entities, and civic leaders. Each MW!s has a workforce

“We are a relationship builder, convener, and a partner.”

development board that brings together employers, educators, service providers, and community leaders to collaboratively determine the strategic direction for workforce development activities in their region. Through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the federal government calls for alignment and coordination of its investments in skills development, and so requires partnership between public agencies that administer those programs. In Michigan, this means partnership between the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (and its related agencies), the Department of Education, and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). These are manifested through the partnerships at the regional level with DHHS program staff, adult education providers, and others who are also working to aid individuals to gain and succeed in employment. In addition, MW!s business services staff maintain close connections with employers and industry associations. The depth and breadth of these relationships allow the MW!s to identify and bring together community partners efficiently for collective action.

MW!s Possess a Culture of Teamwork and Share a Focus on Continuous Improvement

Many MW!s staff indicated there was a strong foundation of communication and collaboration within their MW!s, and that their leadership was supportive of creativity and addressing challenges in new ways. This culture of teamwork supports achievement of objectives across the agencies. For example, business services staff serve as a bridge between businesses looking to hire and the career development staff who work with job seekers.

Staff members at all levels discussed engaging in professional development opportunities offered through the Michigan Works! Association (MWA) and other organizations such as the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals. This allows Michigan's workforce professionals to stay abreast of promising new approaches to serve customers and efficiently steward resources. Some examples of where MW! staff were applying this learning included a move away from traditional case management toward career coaching, the implementation of human-centered design approaches, and thinking creatively about apprenticeships and apprenticeship-readiness programs. MW!s directors also meet regularly to discuss new opportunities, address needs, and share learning across the network. The MWA annual conference provides further opportunities for workforce development professionals to share their promising approaches and learn from others.

MW!s Maintain Ongoing Engagement with Employers

One area of expertise that was noted by each of the MW!s participating in the scan was their strong connectivity to local business communities.

WIOA requires each workforce board to be composed of at least 50% private industry representation to ensure the local business community has a voice in the development of local workforce strategy and policies. In addition to fulfilling this requirement, MW!s directors and business services staff expressed dedication to engaging with and understanding local employers' needs, communicating with career services staff and education providers about those needs, helping their local network generate talent to meet those needs, and following up with employers regularly. Every MW!s has a business services team, and many of those team members have received Business Solutions Professional certification training through the MWA. This training provides

team members the tools to understand the resources that are available to develop solutions for employers and to support collaboration between MW!s, partners, and employers in designing those solutions.

This deep commitment to listening to business needs and responding with training and skilled employees has, over time, allowed MW!s to reach across a variety of sectors and support the success of businesses both large and small. It was noted by interviewees that two of the primary benefits of maintaining relationships with local employers is that those relationships allow the MW!s and their education partners to better tailor skills training to meet needs and to connect job seekers with concrete employment opportunities. These connections to industry were also reported to have facilitated opportunities for some of the hard-to-serve populations, such as ex-offenders, where ensuring an appropriate match between an employer, the position, and the employee is crucial to success.

Individual Agency Strengths Fortify the Network as a Whole

While all of the MW!s in the network administer the same key federal and state workforce programs (e.g., WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth; Wagner-Peyser; Trade Adjustment Assistance), they each have unique attributes that have evolved as a result of their geographies, differing industries, mixes of higher education providers, populations served, organizational structures, and community partnerships.

In pursuit of successful customer outcomes, MW!s tailor their service offerings to suit the needs of both their local employers and job seekers, while also operating within their community context and organizational structure. As a result, some of the MW!s excel at fundraising, some at contract management, some at braiding and blending funding streams, and some at extensive youth programming. The network leverages these strengths through strong lines of communication between the MW! agency directors, MWA, and the Workforce Development Agency (WDA), as well as the sharing of promising approaches between MW!s. Looking at data in new ways and sharing that approach was another way individual agency strengths were reported to benefit the network as a whole. At times, a program will be conceived and piloted in one MW! agency and then scaled or implemented in other regions through special grants or initiative supports from the WDA. As a statewide network, this provides the opportunity to be responsive to local needs while also leveraging the creativity and innovation of other regions to enhance services more broadly.

Promising Practices: Network Strengths

Capital Area Michigan Works!: Community Asset Mapping

CAMW identified a challenge in tracking all of the tools and resources offered by partner organizations in the community. To rectify this issue, they enlisted their partners in developing a community asset map. The asset map is a Google Sheet to which all of CAMW's community partners have access, and which the partners update on a regular basis. Likewise, CAMW has established a Salesforce account to keep track of employer interactions, and has made this resource available to local economic development groups. They are using this account to keep track of job openings, employer contacts, and more. In addition to facilitating workflow, these resources have made for a smoother reporting process.

Michigan Works! Region 7B: Cross-Training

MW! Region 7B was in need of training solutions to ensure that its staff were equipped to fill in for one another in case of absences or workload issues. To address this issue, they developed process maps and instructions for virtually all staff functions. All instruction materials are in electronic, online form to facilitate easy access. The materials are organized by task, not staff position, underscoring the idea of shared responsibility across staff. They are now used with all new hires and are updated on a regular basis.

Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation: Contracting Innovation

DESC identified a need to incentivize collaboration with external contractors, who can provide access to a variety of resources that are outside the purview of the MWA. To accomplish this, they arranged for contractors to receive credit for any of the cases that they touch, rather than being obligated to see every case through to the end. Under this arrangement, contractors can receive credits for each step of the process. As a result, it appears that contractors may be more likely to work with the MWA on shared customers.

West Michigan Works!: Networking for Innovation

It can be difficult to disseminate innovative practices when workforce agencies, education providers, and employers do not communicate. West MW! sought to identify and respond to gaps in knowledge around regional workforce issues by establishing a network of practitioners from the MWA as well as area employers, K-12 and postsecondary education institutions, local government, nonprofits, and other stakeholders. The network shares the latest research and data to help inform evidence-based practice and innovation. As a result, all participating agencies are better informed about how to optimize their work to serve their common clientele.

Improving Outcomes for Individuals with Multiple Barriers to Employment

Addressing individuals' barriers to employment is a key strategy for increasing workforce participation and for increasing the supply of talent available in the pipeline. Federal workforce programs are often focused on funding activities related directly to employment, such as job search, job training, and job placement. There are fewer resources that are targeted at other supports that job seekers might need to succeed in employment, such as mental health services, transportation, child care, basic skills, or work readiness. These barriers often impede labor force participation and limit upward economic mobility.

In addition, eligibility criteria for federally funded workforce programs can exclude certain populations from receiving the skill-building supports that could move them toward economic stability. Data captured by the United Way indicate that just over 61% of all jobs in Michigan pay less than \$20 per hour¹⁰ and 43% of people in Michigan are living at or just above the federal poverty level. It was reported, however, that Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed (ALICE) job seekers are not often income-constrained enough to be eligible for the federal workforce programs.

Table 1: Barriers to Employment, as Defined by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act¹¹

Displaced homemakers	Older individuals	English language learners
Low-income individuals	Ex-offenders	Individuals who have low levels of literacy
American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians	Individuals experiencing homelessness	Individuals facing substantial cultural barriers
Individuals with disabilities	Youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system	Eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers
Individuals within two years of exhausting lifetime eligibility for public benefits	Single parents (including single pregnant women)	Long-term unemployed

¹⁰ Michigan Association of United Ways, "The ALICE Project," 2020, <https://www.uwmich.org/alice>.

¹¹ Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, 128 STAT. 1434 PUBLIC LAW 113–128—JULY 22, 2014, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-113publ128/pdf/PLAW-113publ128.pdf>.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) defines a number of barriers to employment (Table 1) including several that are specifically hard-to-serve populations, e.g., ex-offenders, long-term unemployed, and individuals who have low levels of literacy. However, many of the Michigan Works! agencies (MW!s) indicated that their hardest-to-serve customers have multiple, compounding barriers that need to be mitigated if those individuals are to be successful in training and employment. MW!s address these challenges through the provision of supportive services, program design, case management and career coaching, partnering with community organizations and state agencies, and engaging with employers and training providers. In discussing their approaches with the MW!s, it became clear that robust partnerships, a great deal of flexibility, and creative thinking are needed to address these barriers and move individuals into sustained employment. MW!s staff noted that focusing resources and supports on the hardest-to-serve customers helps to improve their employment prospects while meeting business demand for capable employees.

“People living in poverty or even in the ALICE population are suffering from anxiety and depression and stress, so they can have a real difficulty in focusing. Simple things to you or me can be overwhelming to them.”

Transportation and Child Care Are the Most Common Barriers Encountered

MW!s in all parts of the state cited access to transportation and access to affordable child care as the most common barriers their job seekers encounter.

Other common barriers to successfully completing training and employment included:

- Housing
- Mental health
- Limited numbers of training providers
- Low educational attainment
- Limited broadband and cell phone coverage
- Lack of self-efficacy (e.g., skills to cope with change and adversity)
- Substance abuse
- Historic inequities related to systemic racism and other forms of prejudice

Transportation and Child Care are the Most Difficult Barriers to Resolve

Each of the MW!s indicated that, among the barriers their customers encounter, child care and transportation were the most challenging to address effectively.

Affordable child care is a necessity for the success of job seekers who are in training and for those entering the workforce. Although affordable child care is in short supply throughout Michigan, the shortage is more acute in some areas than others.¹²

Customers of MW!s that serve rural counties seem to more often encounter a shortage of providers and a lack of child care slots, while affordability of care appears to be more often an issue in the more densely populated areas.

There are limited federal funds provided through WIOA and other federal skills training programs to support the dependent care needs of job seekers while in training or seeking employment. MW!s reported that, in most instances, they collaborate with other organizations that have programs or resources available for child care assistance such as Michigan's Great Start Early Learners and Care program. In addition to the sometimes prohibitive cost of care, the business hours of day care providers were cited as a barrier to third-shift workers in nearly all of the workforce regions.

Lack of access to reliable transportation can be a barrier to program enrollment as well as to education and employment. Public transportation is only available in certain areas of the state and at certain times of the day. The cost of owning an automobile, including the affordability of automotive insurance, was also noted by interviewees as a significant transportation barrier in both urban and rural areas. In rural areas that do have some form of public transportation, it was reported that services are not always available at predictable times and transportation systems will often stop at county lines (this becomes a barrier when training and employment are outside of the county in which an individual might reside). As with child care, public transportation is often unavailable at the times needed by those who work in third-shift positions or with

"It is hard to connect people that rely on public transportation with jobs that pay well."

¹² Nathan Burroughs and Colleen Graber, "How Michigan's Child Care Assistance Program Compares" (Lansing, MI: Public Policy Associates, Inc., March 2020); see also: Center for American Progress, <https://www.childcaredeserts.org/>.

companies not located in close proximity to public transportation. The types of jobs accessible via public transportation were also raised as an issue for some regions, as high-wage jobs in these regions are not frequently located on bus routes.

Resources to address job-seeker transportation needs are scarce. Federal programs provide some supportive service funding that can be used to address transportation, though it was reported that these funds are often insufficient to meet the need and are only accessible while an individual is enrolled in a program such as WIOA or the Partnership, Accountability, Training, and Hope (PATH) program. This limits the MW!s' ability to maintain those supports, however critical they might be, beyond the federal program period.

Effective Approaches to Addressing Barriers

As noted previously, the most common way that MW!s currently address challenging barriers for job seekers is to work with partners that already have funding or programmatic responses in place to address those needs. Another common approach is to create and implement discrete, innovative programs through the use of private funding or grant dollars.

MW!s staff and community partners described several current programs and approaches that they considered effective for addressing some of these barriers:

- **Increasing access to training options.** By developing partnerships with training providers to bring in-demand training into a central location—e.g., an American Job Center—some MW!s have been able to provide access for individuals with low incomes that might not be able to travel far for those opportunities.
- **Supporting employee success and retention.** A partnership with employers and DHHS, the Business Resource Network¹³ utilizes DHHS success coaches to help employees address needs that may otherwise prevent them from maintaining their employment.

¹³ The Business Resource Network is a program designed to support the success of job seekers and the needs of employers by leveraging existing resources to meet individuals' social, emotional, and economic needs and improve workplace engagement.

- **Resolving justice-related barriers.** MW!s in different regions discussed promoting local Amnesty Days or Expungement Clinics available through the local justice system as effective means of correcting outstanding tickets or warrants.
- **Re-entry success.** Working with returning citizens and the Michigan Department of Corrections, several MW! regions help support a successful community transition by providing skills training through programs such as the Offender Success Program¹⁴ and the Vocational Village¹⁵ model.
- **Creating more equitable access.** One of the areas MW!s reported as an effective means of promoting equity in workforce development services was by leveraging apprenticeships through programs such as the Child Care Apprenticeship program¹⁶ and Going Pro Pharmacy Tech Training.¹⁷ Other ways in which MW!s reported addressing issues of equity included:
 - Colocation of services such as adult education, PATH, and Michigan Rehabilitation Services at MW!s office locations.
 - Use of assistive technology.
 - Increasing MW! presence in communities and improving access to services such as through Neighborhood Employment Hubs.¹⁸
 - Locating workforce centers strategically to maximize access and coverage of the region.
 - Customizing training programs' length and content to be more intensive than usual.

¹⁴ Michigan Department of Corrections, "Offender Success," 2020, <https://www.michigan.gov/corrections/0,4551,7-119-33218---,00.html>.

¹⁵ Michigan Department of Corrections, "Vocational Village," 2020, https://www.michigan.gov/corrections/0,4551,7-119-33218_75514---,00.html.

¹⁶ Southwest Child Care Resources, "Apprenticeship Program Description," 2020, <https://www.ccr4kids.org/apprenticeship-information>.

¹⁷ Workforce Intelligence Network, "WIN Board Members, Henry Ford College and SEMCA Michigan Works! Honored By State Leaders, Workforce Experts at State Capital," Workforce Intelligence Network, 2019, <https://winintelligence.org/win-board-members-henry-ford-college-and-semca-michigan-works-honored-by-state-leaders-workforce-experts-at-state-capitol/>.

¹⁸ Michigan Works! Southwest, "Employment Hubs," 2020, <https://www.michiganworkssouthwest.org/other-services/employment-hubs/>.

Use of Data to Address Barriers to Employment

The use of data to drive decision-making is common throughout the network. MW!s reported using data to understand the scope and nature of the barriers experienced by their customers, identify gaps in resources, and create new approaches to addressing those barriers.

MW!s track and gather data from multiple information systems. Michigan's One-Stop Management Information System (OSMIS) is the primary data source for information for MW!s and includes information about eligibilities, activities, and services as well as data gathered directly from customers regarding needs and barriers. Some of the MW!s reported additional data collection through the Business Resource Network, gathering information at events, using ALICE population data from the United Way, and conducting their own local or regional studies. Agencies also share data with partner organizations and implement new tools such as Goal4 It™¹⁹, a communication tool that allows for better transparency and accountability around goals between career services staff and participants.

Data, however, are of little value unless they are put to use. The MW!s reported that data are frequently disaggregated to understand needs and barriers among hard-to-serve populations and inform the use of resources to meet those needs. Data are also used to identify labor market and employment trends and to examine whether resources need realignment or to understand what resources and skill sets are needed to meet employer needs. Workforce board representatives also noted using data to track outcomes related to their local strategic plans.

Promising Practices: Addressing Barriers

Michigan Works! West Central: Transportation Assistance for Clients

Many clients of MW! West Central do not have cars of their own, and the MW!'s service area also lacks adequate public transit. To address this issue, West Central worked with a temporary employment agency to engage a driver to take clients to work during the first 30 days of their jobs while they save money to buy a car of their own. In addition, clients can enroll concurrently in the Partnership, Accountability, Training, and Hope (PATH) program, which provides resources to assist in car purchase and ownership.

¹⁹ Mathematica. "Goal4 It!™," 2020, <https://www.mathematica.org/features/goal4-it>.

Great Lakes Bay Michigan Works!: Holistic Case Management

Great Lakes Bay MW! observed that many of its clients were struggling to obtain and retain employment due to a complex array of barriers, many of which were self-reinforcing. Starting in fall 2019, the MW! agency adopted a holistic case management model to better assist these hard-to-serve customers. Under this approach, case managers work proactively with customers to address barriers to employment so that they can more easily enter or reenter the workforce. This approach requires more intensive case management but is expected to pay long-term dividends. As an agency representative noted, “We expect to take an initial hit on performance metrics, but long term, we think it will be more beneficial.”

Northeast Consortium: MI Bridges Navigators

For many customers of the workforce system, the job-search process is complicated by the need to seek out and qualify for various forms of public assistance. For individuals struggling with lost income, it can be difficult to identify and access the array of programs and resources that are available. Northeast Consortium helped to address this issue by training all of its case managers as MI Bridges Navigators. This skill set helps the case managers to facilitate customer access to both workforce programs and public assistance and helps to make the job-search process easier for hard-to-serve customers.

Southwest Michigan Works!: Neighborhood Employment Hubs

Many customers of the workforce system lack transportation and would benefit from job resources that are closer to home. Southwest MW! decided to bring its services to them by establishing neighborhood employment hubs. In partnership with community-based organizations and a local jail, they visit churches and other community gathering places to provide an array of job services. These include skill development, preparation for job fairs and interviews, stipends for certain career training programs, and more. The program is in its fourth year and has served 1,400 job seekers—double its original target.

Oakland County Michigan Works!: Increasing Access to Job Training

Oakland County MW! noted that many of the county's working poor were ineligible for its job-training services despite the fact that their wages had not kept pace with inflation. As a result, the agency opened WIOA eligibility to include the ALICE population. Rather than only serving individuals under the federal poverty level or on food or cash assistance, they now serve customers who are above poverty level but are still unable to make ends meet. As a result, these individuals are able to access training resources to help them qualify for jobs that pay a living wage.

Fostering Middle-Skill Job Connections__

Middle-skill jobs are positions that require some postsecondary education and training, but do not require a bachelor's degree or above. In-demand jobs in Michigan fitting this description include lab technicians, police officers, machinists, welders, plumbers, and electricians. For employers, hiring for these positions can be challenging, and that circumstance impacts overall economic growth.²⁰ Connecting individuals with these jobs puts them on a path to greater prosperity. Middle-skill jobs can pay quite well, up into the \$50,000 to \$100,000 range.²¹

The Michigan Works! agencies (MW!s) take different approaches to aiding with higher-wage middle-skill job training and placement, but all are concerned with filling these roles for employers to some degree, as warranted by local demand. The MW!s' efforts around middle-skill employment take both the long view (e.g., steps to fill the pipeline over time) and a focus on immediate needs (e.g., steps to quickly get people in open jobs).

Using Business Services to Bridge the Gap to Middle-Skill Jobs

The business service teams and Business Solutions Professionals (BSPs)²² at the agencies build and maintain relationships with local business to ensure that MW!s understand and can meet the talent needs of their local community.

In addition to having a cadre of BSPs and other staff to deploy to help employers, there are multiple programs and tools in the MW! toolkits, including pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, and the Going PRO Talent Fund. Many of the

"Going PRO [Talent Fund] is effective because it's hitting the training provider, us, the employee, [and] the employer."

²⁰ Harvard Business School, "Research: Middle Skills," n.d., <https://www.hbs.edu/competitiveness/research/Pages/middle-skills.aspx>.

²¹ Kathleen Achtenberg, "Building Marketable Skills" (Lansing, MI: Michigan Economic Development Corporation, 2015), <https://www.michiganbusiness.org/news/2015/12/building-marketable-skills/>.

²² Michigan's Business Solutions Professionals are trained and certified through the Michigan Works! Association and participate in application-focused instruction and complete a capstone project.

MW!s spoke in particular about the value of the Going Pro Talent Fund in establishing and showing the value of a relationship between employers and MW!s. The Going PRO Talent Fund aims to improve employee retention by improving the skills of incumbent workers. The MW!s saw this program as filling a previous gap in their efforts to work more closely with employers, which then has supported greater connectivity for other MW! services. However, they also noted that the awards available have fallen short of the increasingly high interest by employers.

Most MW!s also facilitate and promote internships, short-term trainings, and other means of preparing job seekers for middle-skill jobs available with local employers. For instance, working in close collaboration with employers (e.g., manufacturing or retail

“Families [sometimes] need some immediate help before go from low-level to middle-skill jobs.”

pharmacy) and education partners, MW!s have contributed to establishing customized training programs that move quickly and successfully to prepare job seekers for available jobs. These programs often include contextualized learning, employability skill development, and work-based experience, in addition to industry-recognized certifications. In addition to furthering the middle-skills job imperative, these efforts often aim to address barriers to employment, as discussed above.

Connecting Youth with Middle-Skill Jobs

In addition to facilitating interest and preparation for positions through business services, it is common for the MW!s to serve as a linkage between employer and education provider and/or job seeker, but they also have acted as a connector between students at the secondary level and employers. For high school students, this service highlights opportunities for employment and careers requiring less than a four-year college degree, while also helping address the needs of business in their communities.

One activity that many MW!s mentioned was MiCareerQuest. This is a large-scale event held in partnership with employers and educators at the regional level annually. It targets middle and/or high school students looking to learn more about in-demand occupations and associated training requirements. The event began with West Michigan Works! in 2015 and has since expanded to other regions of the state.

The MW!s have also partnered with career and technical education (CTE) providers at the secondary level to increase the pipeline. Several MW!s noted that they had played a

role in helping to fill CTE seats; connecting students with apprenticeship programs; and examining the alignment among regional needs, program offerings, and expenditures.

Promising Practices: Middle-Skill Jobs

GST Michigan Works!: Apprentice Readiness

GST MW! was in need of more rigorous training to help local job seekers qualify for jobs in the building trades. The agency received a grant from the State of Michigan to train career and technical education instructors on the use of the Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3), a pre-apprenticeship training curriculum that was developed by the building trades. Students who pass the MC3 can be awarded various different industry-recognized credentials and are guaranteed an interview with a union. The program is helping the agency grow talent for careers in this lucrative field.

Michigan Works! Berrien, Cass, Van Buren: Extended CNA Training

With the growth of Michigan's health care industry, demand for entry-level employees has exceeded the supply. Meanwhile, many residents are unable to fill such positions due to lack of skills, lack of transportation, or both. MW! Berrien, Cass, Van Buren created an extended Certified Nursing Assistant training program for customers who struggle with these barriers. They partnered with the Michigan Career Technical Institute to offer training at the workforce center so that customers do not have to find transportation to a different site. The program boasts a graduation rate of 90%, with 84% of participants finding employment within 90 days of graduation.

Southeast Michigan Community Alliance: Pharmacy Tech Training

Southeast Michigan is facing a burgeoning demand for pharmacy technicians—a well-paid career with a shortage of qualified candidates. SEMCA has partnered with Henry Ford College to help meet this demand by offering an intensive pharmacy tech program with a 12-week pre-apprenticeship followed by an eight-week internship at a local CVS pharmacy. The training program was customized for CVS so that the company could hire graduates immediately upon graduation. After originally planning for only 11 enrollees, the program enrolled 33 due to high demand. The program resulted in CVS hiring 25 program graduates.

Advancing the Governor's Talent Agenda_____

In February 2019, Michigan set a goal of having 60% of the state's residents hold postsecondary credentials of value to employers by 2030.²³ It is well established that such credentials (certificates or degrees) represent higher earnings and more stable employment. More credentialing also satisfies a need for a skilled workforce for businesses, as discussed in the previous section on middle-skill jobs.

To achieve this goal, Michigan must educate more of its population and see them through to credential completion. This involves transitioning youth to programs beyond high school as well as helping adults to start or return to further education—e.g., through programs like Michigan Reconnect.²⁴ In pursuing this goal, there is the potential to reduce inequities by race and gender and to improve family economic situations, which would benefit Michigan overall.

The MW! agencies (MW!s) saw themselves as playing a role in forwarding the governor's talent agenda, namely through connecting job seekers to resources that support success, working with employers to identify skills for in-demand occupations, connecting employers with training providers to create curricula that support the development of industry-recognized credentials, and matching job seekers with employers.

Agencies Are Using Outreach, Programs, and Partnering to Build Talent

Advancing educational attainment in pursuit of employment is core to the business of the MW!s. As a result, there are many programs currently in place to support further education and advancement for job seekers. Some examples of the different approaches that MW!s are taking in collaboration with their partners include:

²³ Michigan, State of the State, Governor Gretchen Whitmer, "Fact Sheet," February 2019, https://www.michigan.gov/documents/whitmer/SOTS19_Fact_Sheet_646128_7.pdf.

²⁴ Michigan Reconnect was signed into law in April 2020 (Senate Bill 268, House Bills 5576 and 5580) and is designed to provide tuition grants and scholarships to adults over age 25 seeking to earn an associate's degree or other qualified credential (recipients cannot have previously earned an associate's or bachelor's degree). For more information, see: <https://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2019-2020/billanalysis/Senate/pdf/2019-SFA-0268-S.pdf>.

- Working with community colleges and employers to build stackable credentials.
- Creating stronger linkages between credit and non-credit programs at community colleges.
- Targeting populations that are difficult to engage with outreach and engagement events.
- Reaching parents and youth through events such as MiCareerQuest and Talent Tours and educating them about the benefits of the skilled trades.
- Leveraging apprenticeships and other earn-and-learn models.
- Promoting the Jobs for Michigan Graduates program.

From the MW! viewpoint, engaging with employers and developing paths to industry-recognized credentials is seen as paramount to the success of the 60x30 goal.

The Network Is Taking Multiple Actions Toward the 60x30 Goal

As MW!s anticipated an increased focus on obtaining credentials, they have been examining local data and applying their understanding of program design to ensure that successful employment is the likely outcome for participants. Some MW!s are braiding funding and coordinating activities to leverage their ability to contribute to achieving the goal. Some have explored options for additional funding to increase broadband and remote access to training.

In addition, there have been efforts to reframe the meaning of college for job seekers, build tighter partnerships with other organizations, and institute new local goal-setting and milestones in connection with 60x30. Furthermore, pilot programs with employers and providing more supports to students as they undertake their education and training programs have also been under discussion.

"There are a lot of programs designed to get credentials for folks. I think the way that MW! can really help is getting employers to recognize the value of that credential. This helps create a predictable model for what credentials people will need."

Given their experience working with a range of adults, the MW!s are sensitive to the fact that helping hard-to-serve individuals complete training has particular challenges.

For this reason, several interviewees noted that strategies like faster training windows, more remote access, prior learning credit, and opportunities to “test out” or otherwise move along the process are valuable.

Michigan Reconnect is Seen as Having Great Potential if the Goal is Employment

MW!s understand the importance of making sure that employers keep their talent talented and that job seekers are ready with the right knowledge and skills. Many MW!s indicated that they are well positioned to maximize the potential of the Reconnect program,²⁵ which was under development at the time this research was conducted. The MW!s anticipate leveraging their collective experience, expertise, and reach to support the program in the following ways: building awareness of the program; disseminating information; utilizing their current toolkit to help job seekers plan and map out careers; convening partners; facilitating access to the program; and leveraging dollars to maximize state funding. Interviewees also noted that the MW! unified data system could be an asset for a program like Reconnect to help track program implementation and outcomes.

“It’s not about going to school. It’s about going to work.”

Nonetheless, the MW!s had some concerns about how this program will be implemented, based on past experiences and what they knew about the program at the time of the interviews. Foremost among these was whether the agencies would be allowed to have a meaningful role in helping connect individuals with programs and whether Reconnect would emphasize credential obtainment for employment purposes, with a focus on good wages resulting from the new credentials. Others highlighted the importance of looking holistically at the program in order to help people to be successful. On this note, some raised the issue of additional support services that will be needed for adult learners, how the program will work with single parents and those working multiple jobs, and how to keep people on track if their programs will take more than two years to complete and Reconnect funds are expended.

²⁵ Michigan’s Reconnect program is based on a similar program design implemented in Tennessee and aims to provide a tuition-free pathway to in-demand industry certifications or associate’s degree programs for Michigan adults ages 25 and over.

Network Suggestions for How to Achieve More Credentialing

Interviewees offered many suggestions for how to achieve the educational attainment goal. Looking across comments, several themes emerged:

- **Resources and flexibility in use.** The MW!s work with job seekers with a wide variety of needs, and the need to address barriers that impede success in education and training and employment was discussed by many of the MW!s as part of increasing overall credential obtainment. With this came comments about the need for greater resources for tackling common barriers, but also increased flexibility in the use of funds and program requirements. Opportunities named included pilots with hard-to-serve populations, including those with low literacy levels or who are English language learners; greater ability to work with in-school youth; allowing high school completion under the Partnership, Accountability, Training, and Hope program requirements; scaling up pre-apprenticeship and remediation programs; increasing broadband and computer access for job seekers; reducing eligibility requirements (i.e., documentation) to enter programs; and giving more support to the Business Resource Network program, which helps to retain employees that might otherwise quit or be let go due to insufficient transportation, child care problems, or other challenges.

“The local level really has their finger on the pulse . . . we understand our communities’, businesses’, job seekers’ needs . . . allow us the flexibility to support communities that we’re in day in and day out.”

- **Business engagement.** Although the MW!s have many strong employer partnerships, they saw room for improvement in the level of engagement by employers if the state is to achieve its goal. Incumbent worker training was mentioned as a tool to help employers and employees, as was greater business leadership in developing the talent pipeline.
- **Organizational capacity and tools.** The MW!s structures vary considerably in type, size, and organization. To facilitate more business engagement and provide more support to job seekers, the MW!s and their partners saw the need for more time with customers and increased services, which then would necessitate more frontline and business services staff and staff training. The MW!s also noted that they could amplify their efforts with an increased ability to pursue grants and market their services, as well as improved data tracking (e.g., customized Salesforce software),

data access (e.g., state wage records), and automation (e.g., employment verification).

- **Cross-system coordination.** Some MW!s and their partners spoke to the importance of helping individuals transition between the services of community organizations and those of the MW!s. Others noted the need to improve the training options in their areas in order to meet increased demand for credentialing.

Promising Practices: Increased Credentialing

Networks Northwest: Creative Apprenticeships

Most apprenticeship programs are for manufacturing or the trades, but these industries are not strongly represented in northern Michigan. Networks Northwest found a need for apprenticeships in nontraditional fields like beekeeping, winemaking, or the culinary field. They work to customize their apprenticeship offerings to the needs of employers in their service area to ensure that even unusual positions can be filled by local job seekers.

Michigan Works! Southeast: Partnership with Jackson College

MW! Southeast identified a need for more postsecondary training opportunities in its service area. To help address this gap, they used adult education and Michigan Works! funding to partner with Jackson College in providing job seekers with career exploration exercises to identify a career path, then pursue entry-level credentials and work toward pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship programs. The agency also provides the job seekers with information on relevant job openings in the area. This partnership provides an important pathway to help local residents achieve rewarding careers.

Macomb St. Clair Michigan Works!: Veterans Boot Camp

Macomb St. Clair MW! needed programming to help local veterans transition from military service to civilian work. To accomplish this, they established a Veterans Boot Camp that offers a suite of services tailored to veterans. It allows help with developing skill-based resumes, doing successful job interviews, and creating an online and social media presence, as well as identifying careers that leverage skills learned in the military. The program also provides peer support and engages outside partners to provide other services that veterans might need. Veterans Boot Camp is now five years old, and its success was recently recognized at a statewide MW! conference.

Needs to Enhance the Network_____

A strong set of Michigan Works! agencies (MW!s) serves to build bridges between workers and employers; fosters cohesion between career preparation and employment needs; identifies and responds to new and ongoing workforce challenges; and supports federal, state, and regional talent and economic development priorities. There is a deep well of creative solutions within the network, and the staff of the MW!s reported continuously examining operational and service-delivery approaches to determine if there are improvements that can be made or if new approaches are needed. The MW!s interviewees saw opportunities to add to the existing assets of the agencies and further strengthen the network through additional investments in data, new service strategies, operational changes, outreach, and increased collaboration. These ideas pertain to state, federal, or local spheres, or partner relationships, or some combination thereof.

The Network Seeks to Do More Through Coordination, Investment, and Increased Career Preparation Opportunities

Data and Measurement

Several new approaches to using data and measurement were discussed during the interviews. Some of the ideas included:

- Improved access to state wage data to pull reports on the number that are working and what they are earning to better automate documentation and verification of employment.
- New approaches to measuring success in order to better align performance standards with the goal of helping those that are hardest to serve, e.g., make the standard measurable skills gain rather than credential attainment.
- Improved funding stability and upgrades for data management systems.

"Success is measured differently with different people."

Programs and Service Strategies

While additional funding is always a need, several specific program and service needs were common to most MW! areas:

- Pre-apprenticeship training
- Earn-and-learn opportunities such as apprenticeships, incumbent worker training, and on-the-job training
- Business services and career services staffing
- Remediation and career exploration
- Staff professional development

Interviewees also shared ideas about areas where new services and programs could be developed to better meet the needs of the customers, including:

- Creating a computer-literacy resource for customers.
- Examining where eligibility requirements could be eased in order to increase access to services.
- Creating opportunities to serve more in-school youth.
- Beginning career planning and development at the high school level.
- Having staff dedicated to ensuring employee retention.
- Modernizing the network's resume-building tools and allow for the differentiation of resumes so they better grab attention.
- Creating more flexible supportive services for new employees.

Operational Changes

From an organizational perspective, interviewees shared ideas about how operations could benefit from new approaches and how those changes can impact both customer experience and outcomes. Ideas include:

- Using shared data systems, or data trusts, to improve the ability to smoothly transition individuals from community organization services to MW! services.
- Creating a public marketing campaign that describes what MW! agencies offer, and how they serve job seekers, employers, and their communities.
- Exploring ways to increase the flexibility in how funds are utilized.

- Examining different organizational structures that allow for grants to be pursued.
- Streamlining data systems, data-entry requirements, and paperwork to allow staff to spend more time helping customers succeed.
- Increasing colocation of agencies and service providers.
- Exploring ways to increase the physical presence of MW! in the communities that are underserved or hardest to serve.
- Developing and offering a one-day business services training.

Collaboration

As noted earlier, collaboration is a core component of the MW! network, and staff shared ideas about steps that could be taken to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of their collective efforts. These include:

- Building a stronger linkage between secondary, postsecondary, and MI Talent Connect by requiring the posting of a resume as part of graduation requirements.
- Improving the collaboration and coordination of resources and benefits programs between state agencies responsible for administering those programs.
- Increasing MW! involvement in state policy development and MW! frontline staff in management decisions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In conducting a scan of the Michigan Works! network, it was evident that the agencies share a dedication to producing strong workforce outcomes but deploy a variety of strategies to accomplish that goal. While all the agencies work within the parameters of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA), which serves as the major source of funding for youth, adult, and dislocated worker programs, each agency is unique in its own way. This diversity—when examined in the whole—brings richness to the Michigan system for workforce development and provides opportunities for Michigan Works! agencies (MW!s) to learn from one another. A point-in-time reflection offers the opportunity to highlight the network’s strengths and consider how those strengths could be built upon to continually improve Michigan’s overall workforce development outcomes. Despite the rapid economic shifts brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, this research offers lessons that can inform workforce development activities in any economic climate.

Summary of Learning about the Network

The network possesses many strengths including collaboration, building partnerships, teamwork, and a focus on continuous improvement. One of the key strengths the MW! network brings to Michigan’s talent development ecosystem is their connectivity to the business community and utilizing those relationships to bridge the gap between local employment demand and a skilled workforce. The MW!s nurture partnerships with community colleges, other training providers, and businesses to create supported pathways that include industry-recognized credentials. Some of the areas that the MW!s identified where additional capabilities or capacities would be required included new approaches to the use of data and data management, increasing opportunities to enhance collaborations, and creating opportunities to innovate.

Across the network, there are many examples of innovative solutions that have been implemented to improve outcomes for those who have multiple barriers to employment or have otherwise traditionally been the hardest to serve. These include creative approaches to apprenticeship programs, increasing access to services, working with employers to increase employee retention, creating new partnerships with training providers and community organizations, streamlined administrative practices, and programs designed to meet the needs of specific populations of job seekers. The MW!s use data to measure their progress, to better understand needs, and to target and refine

the services they offer. Nonetheless, there are persistent resource gaps that impede the ability of some individuals to successfully move into sustainable employment.

A Changing Context

The MW!s have been through ups and downs due to economic shifts that require changes in service strategies and priorities, such as times of higher or lower unemployment. During the recent COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing economic shutdown, the MW!s have continued to serve customers remotely and have created opportunities for job seekers to participate in workshops and other activities virtually. The MW!s also worked in close partnership with the Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency to help individuals file for and receive unemployment during the unprecedented surge of filers created by the statewide shutdown.

In April 2020, Governor Whitmer announced the launch of Futures for Frontliners, a program similar to Reconnect in providing tuition-free pathways to college or certificate programs, but targeted to workers necessary for responding to the COVID-19 crisis.²⁶ The state's Workshare Program that allows the receipt of unemployment benefits for those working reduced hours was also expanded at this time. It is anticipated that the MW! network will have a key role to play in how these programs intersect with other initiatives, building awareness, recruiting participants, and providing education and training services to those individuals.

Although the character of the recovery from this crisis is yet unclear, the MW!s anticipate both a shift in the composition of local industry and changes to how workforce services are delivered. These times undoubtedly will require creative approaches and intensive interventions to support recovery and, ideally, progress on deeper systemic issues that have long been challenging for workforce development.

Recommendations

Based on the information gathered through the scan, Public Policy Associates, Inc. identified several opportunities for building upon the network's strengths and fostering innovation.

²⁶ State of Michigan, "Governor Whitmer Announces 'Futures for Frontliners,' a G.I. Bill Program for Essential Workers," 2020, https://www.michigan.gov/whitmer/0,9309,7-387-90499_90640-527530--,00.html.

Establish more permanent resources that offer MW!s the flexibility to develop innovative programs and services. There is not much leeway to pursue innovation with the federal dollars currently administered by MW!s. At the same time, new approaches to address the needs of employers and job seekers are needed as the nature of need, work, and industry evolve. Past innovations were reported to have most often come from pursuing federal or state waivers to implement a certain process or project or securing private grant funding to implement demonstration and pilot programs, but these resources are not consistent or available in all regions. Having some flexibility within existing resources and access to additional resources across the network are necessary to creating innovative solutions and unlocking the potential of the businesses and people the MW!s serve.

Engage employers to meet middle-skill job demand. Employer engagement is critical for Michigan to address the growing shortage of middle-skill workers. MW!s interact with job seekers at all skill levels and also obtain input directly from employers on what skills are needed of their current and future workforce. MW!s collaborate with education providers to create training programs that meet those employers' needs and support the creation of industry-recognized credentials. These connections to the education and business communities are essential for developing talent, increasing the number of individuals earning credentials, and moving people into middle-skill jobs. Enhancing or expanding programs that employers value highly and that place individuals on a path to middle-skill employment, such as internships, apprenticeships, incumbent worker training, and on-the-job training, would increase employer engagement with MW!s services and the number of job seekers upskilling for better wages and more sustainable employment.

Develop statewide solutions to address the transportation and child care needs of job seekers. To increase labor force participation and educational attainment while addressing future talent needs, improving job seeker access to affordable, timely transportation and child care is a necessity. Creating better integration and coordination between skills training and support services is one approach that has helped address these barriers in some regions, but these particular challenges are pervasive and more expansive than the current piecemeal approach can address. Research, new partnerships, and new resources are necessary to better understand the scale of need to be addressed and the resources that are required to effectively resolve these barriers. There is an opportunity to leverage MW!s' experience, expertise, and relationships with customers and partner organizations to have broad discussions about how to tackle these issues. Including diverse voices and representation from a variety of stakeholders would allow the workforce system as a whole to identify opportunities

to make progress on developing sustainable solutions that can be applied across communities.





Broaden and deepen collaborative partnerships. While partnership with other federal skills-training programs is required under WIOA, the extent to which those different programs are integrated at the local level varies from region to region. All of the regions noted opportunities to further coordinate and integrate program services, as many organizations share common customers. The extent to which these programs interact and create seamless opportunities for customers was reported to impact customer engagement as well as success. Building out the collaborative aspect of the network to deepen partnerships with postsecondary institutions, adult education providers, and economic development agencies would build momentum toward addressing common interests, and each of these partners can bring different experiences, expertise, and resources to bear upon the shared challenges.






Expand on workforce programs that increase equity. By disaggregating data they collect to better understand the needs of their communities, the MW!s have developed several promising approaches for engaging and serving populations that have traditionally experienced inequity in education and employment opportunities. The network also has mechanisms in place to increase access to education and to support individuals in moving beyond entry-level employment into middle-skill jobs, but additional resources and avenues are required to help reduce social disparities overall. The resources available through WIOA and other federal skills-training programs are insufficient to scale these approaches and to develop new initiatives. For instance, efforts to establish apprenticeships in new industries and the Going Pro Talent Fund do not have the reach to move the needle on key indicators of equity (unemployment, educational level, wages, and assets). The Governor's recent declaration of racism as a public health crisis²⁷ opens the door to looking at workforce issues in a new light, as does increased recognition of the consequences of long-term biases within systems. Comprehensive training on implicit bias, diversity, equity, and inclusion will be required across the network for both MW! and partner agency staff to create more equitable employment outcomes. The network should be helped to train its staff to use an equity lens, gather and share disaggregated data, refine service approaches to be responsive to different customer groups, and work with employers and system partners in expanding access and success in training and employment.






²⁷ State of Michigan, "Governor Whitmer Signs Executive Directive Recognizing and Addressing Racism as a Public Health Crisis, Create the Black Leadership Advisory Council," 2020, <https://www.michigan.gov/whitmer/0,9309,7-387-90499-535762--,00.html>.

Appendix A: Further Information about the Michigan Works! Agencies

The following table presents basic information about all of the Michigan Works! agencies. In addition, the table lists those activities and characteristics interviewees said made their agency unique and were their points of pride. The Upper Peninsula Michigan Works! did not participate in interviews.

Michigan Works! Agency	What Makes Your MW! Unique?	What Are You Most Proud Of?
 <p>Capital Area Michigan Works! Counties: Clinton, Eaton, Ingham CEO: Carrie Rosingana Contact information: 517-492-5500, croasingana@camw.net</p>	<p>Close alignment with economic development, easy accessibility to a variety of partners (shared location and history of cooperation)</p>	<p>Customized recruiting strategies, work in the community to build awareness of services, Information Technology Council, partnership with Peckham</p>
 <p>Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation, a Michigan Works! Agency Counties: Wayne (City of Detroit only) Interim President and CEO: Terri Weems Contact information: 313-876-0674, tweems@detempsol.org</p>	<p>Nonprofit status, focused on the city level, implementing human-centered design</p>	<p>New data system (GStars), employer engagement level achieved in collaboration with Mayor's Office, Jobs for Michigan Graduates, sector partnership training model</p>
 <p>Great Lakes Bay Michigan Works! Counties: Bay, Gratiot, Isabella, Midland, Saginaw CEO: Christopher Rishko Contact information: 989-754-1144, chris@michiganworks.com</p>	<p>Fiduciary is county government, rural and urban mix, range of services available</p>	<p>MiCareerQuest event, employer relationships/assisting employers with hiring needs</p>
 <p>GST Michigan Works! Counties: Genesee, Huron, Lapeer, Sanilac, Shiawassee, Tuscola CEO: Jody Kerbyson Contact Information: 989-635-3561, jbilliau@gstmiworks.org</p>	<p>Customer-service driven, relationships with employers and unions, Business Solutions Professional-trained and Global Career Development Professional-trained staff, cross-training of staff</p>	<p>Digital marketing approach used with employers, apprenticeship readiness training/Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3) training, the Business Resource Network's progress, MiCareerQuest</p>

Michigan Works! Agency	What Makes Your MW! Unique?	What Are You Most Proud Of?
 <p>MACOMB/ST. CLAIR</p>	Fiduciary is county government, business services are grouped by industry and geography, oversee operations directly and contract out service delivery	Senior community services program, the Business Resource Network setup process
 <p>Berrien • Cass • Van Buren</p>	Nonprofit status, funding portfolio diversification, direct service delivery	Participation in addressing transportation and housing needs, offender success, the Business Resource Network
 <p>NORTHEAST CONSORTIUM</p>	Highly rural area, resourcefulness of staff	Talent Tours, business services, MiCareerQuest, Going Pro Talent Fund trainees getting promotions
 <p>REGION 7B</p>	High amount of one-on-one attention given to customers, level of staff cross-training and teamwork, large role in supporting adult education, career navigators in the schools	Apprenticeships, short-term training programs, employer partnerships, partnerships with the community colleges
 <p>SOUTHEAST</p>	Staff community and institutional knowledge, county variation/variety of partners, staff cross-training	Services for ex-offenders like the expungement fair, relationships with economic developers, summer youth program

Michigan Works! Agency	What Makes Your MW! Unique?	What Are You Most Proud Of?
 <p>Michigan Works! Southwest Counties: Branch, Calhoun, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph Director: Ben Damerow Contact information: 269-349-1533, Damerow@upjohn.org</p>	<p>Connected to a research organization, diversity of funding services, equity training for staff, participation in Goal4It! program, pilot for adult education within PATH</p>	<p>Neighborhood Employment Hubs, engagement in community initiatives, use of data, apprenticeships, Going Pro Talent Fund results</p>
 <p>Michigan Works! West Central Counties: Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola Executive Director: Shelly Keene Contact information: 231-796-0049, skeene@michworkswc.org</p>	<p>Rural area, smaller range of partners available, prevalence of entry-level/low-wage jobs</p>	<p>MiCareerQuest, the Business Resource Networks, assisting customers day-to-day, braiding funds, Going Pro Talent Fund</p>
 <p>Northwest Michigan Works! Counties: Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, Wexford CEO: Matt McCauley Contact information: 231-929-5000, matt.mccauley@networksnorthwest.org</p>	<p>Very rural area/lack of infrastructure, part of Networks Northwest, adaptability to meet individual needs, tribal partnerships, collaborative work with stakeholders</p>	<p>Career fairs, unique apprenticeships, the Business Resource Network, being engaged with partner organizations</p>
 <p>Oakland County Michigan Works! Counties: Oakland Director: Jennifer Llewellyn Contact information: 248-858-5520, llewellynj@oakgov.com</p>	<p>Single-county area, part of the county government economic development department, well-integrated partnerships</p>	<p>Customer service, expanded WIOA eligibility for the ALICE population, apprenticeship programs, business services</p>
 <p>Southeast Michigan Community Alliance Michigan Works! Counties: Monroe, Wayne (not including City of Detroit) CEO: Gregory Pitoniak Contact information: 734-229-3500, gregory.pitoniak@semca.org</p>	<p>Works across area boundaries, focus on continuous improvement, diverse cultures, fiduciary for Workforce Intelligence Network (WIN)</p>	<p>Talent Tours, apprenticeship programs, employer engagement, Jobs for Michigan Graduates, data use and sharing</p>

Michigan Works! Agency

What Makes Your MW! Unique?

What Are You Most Proud Of?



Upper Peninsula Michigan Works!
Counties: Alger, Baraga, Chippewa,
Delta, Dickinson, Gogebic, Houghton,
Iron, Keweenaw, Luce, Mackinac,
Marquette, Menominee, Ontonagon,
Schoolcraft
CEO: William Raymond
Contact information: 906-789-9732,
wraymond@isupward.org



West Michigan Works!
Counties: Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent,
Montcalm, Muskegon, Ottawa
CEO: Jacob Maas
Contact information: 616-336-4100,
jmaas@westmiworks.org

Large board, five industry councils,
provide services directly, full-time
apprenticeship coordinator position, uses
"solutions driven" terminology

Working with employers on racially
equitable hiring, blending of funding
streams, job analysis efforts (to validate
skill needs), partner coordination with
employers