

Career Development

GLOSSARY

Baldrige quality criteria

Criteria, administered by the National Institute of Standards and Technology, that an organization may use to improve overall performance in leadership, strategic planning, customer and market focus, information and analysis, human resource focus, process management, and business results.

Career and technical education (CTE)

Programs to help students obtain knowledge and skills leading to a first job or post-secondary technical education.

Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) Fund

An initiative that will make funds available to train providers to develop competency-based curricula with measurable outcomes.

Economic development job training (EDJT)

Customized training to meet specific business needs; supported by Michigan Department of Economic Development grants.

Education advisory group (EAG)

A body comprising local school and college officials and business people that advises the local workforce development board on local education needs.

Michigan Technical Excellence Program (M-TEP)

An industry-led initiative to recognize high-quality technical-education programs having high levels of placement and employer satisfaction.

BACKGROUND

In the past decade Michigan government has taken several major steps to address businesses' need for a skilled workforce and residents' need for good jobs.

- In 1993 the Governor's Workforce Commission was created, which, among its other tasks, assessed the extent to which federal, state, and local programs were meeting the state's workforce needs.
- In 1994 the Michigan Jobs Commission was created, and many economic- and job-development programs from various state agencies were consolidated into the new agency.
- In 1996 workforce development boards (WDBs) were established around the state to administer career-development programs in their service areas.
- In 1999 the governor split the Jobs Commission into the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) and the Michigan Department of Career Development (MDCD). The MEDC assumed the commission's economic-development functions, and the MDCD was assigned responsibility for workforce development, the subject of this piece.
- In 2002 the Workforce Commission was replaced with a 53-member Workforce Investment Board (27 members from business groups and the balance from the legislature, local government, youth programs, education, and unions) and charged with reviewing the state's workforce-investment system, designating local workforce-investment areas, developing formulae to distribute federal and state workforce funds, and developing a statewide employment-statistics system.

The MDCD's mission is "to develop and continuously improve a system to produce a workforce with the skills needed to maintain and enhance the Michigan economy."

The department first consisted of three agencies: Office of Workforce Development, Michigan Rehabilitation Services, and Employment Service Agency. A later executive order shifted the offices of Career and Technical Education Services, Postsecondary Services, and Adult Education into the MDCD. The department now employs 1,100 and oversees the distribution and use of \$200 million in education funds, \$500 million in federal funds, and \$35 million from the state General Fund.

State government's career-related activities are grouped in this one department, which has wide authority and is responsible for

- helping Michiganians choose careers and providing education and training to equip them for those careers;
- helping schools give students a solid foundation in core subjects of reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies;
- informing Michiganians about the workplace and how to acquire academic and career skills through career academies, technical-education centers and programs,

cooperative education, apprenticeships, internships, school-based enterprises, and community colleges;

- facilitating student and worker certification that is based on competency and skill standards endorsed by employers;
- providing labor-exchange and placement services that help workers find jobs and employers find skilled workers; and
- assessing student progress toward obtaining good jobs or further technical education.

Much of the work of the department is carried out through the network of 25 locally appointed, part-time, workforce development boards. They receive state and federal funds through the MDCD, which they use to run the 102 local “one-stop centers” (Michigan Works! agencies) and the Building Strategic Partnerships for Career Development initiative (a local and statewide strategic-planning process). The WDBs must provide certain services and programs in their service areas, but they develop their own as well—examples are computer training and permanent and temporary job placement.

Michigan Works!

“One-stop” training/job-placement centers run by the workforce development boards in their service areas.

Workforce development boards (WDBs)

Part-time, private-sector entities that plan and oversee workforce development activities in the state’s 25 workforce regions.

www.TalentFreeway.org

An on-line service that helps (1) Michigan residents find training and jobs and (2) employers find workers.

Local education advisory groups (EAGs), to which members are appointed by local WDBs, partner with the boards. They primarily approve plans and recommend strategies for career-education programs—secondary, career and technical, and adult—in the WDB service region.

Together, these bodies—the MDCD, WDBs, and EAGs—oversee Michigan’s career development system of worker training, learning, and placement. The system is divided into three sub-systems.

- *Career preparation* focuses on schools and colleges, to ensure that Michigan students obtain needed academic, technical, and work-behavior skills.
- *Workforce development* targets workers in transition; the Michigan Works! agencies offer adult education, job training (through the federal Job Training Partnership Act and the 1998 Workforce Investment Act), trade-adjustment programs, vocational rehabilitation, Work First public-assistance programs, and job-finding services.
- *Worker enhancement* is a skills and credentialing system geared toward upgrading skills that workers need for current or future jobs. It includes employer-based training and customized training funded by state Economic Development Job Training (EDJT) grants.

In its first year of operation (FY 1999–2000), the MDCD launched a number of new initiatives.

- *Operation Fast Break* is an eight-week, accelerated-learning program that helps students enter career-track work or college and integrates math, reading, computer technology, and employability-skills instruction.
- *Partnership for Adult Learning* comprises private- and public-sector adult-learning programs for which funds are allocated to the WDBs by the MDCD on a formula based on the number of service-area residents (1) without a high school diploma, (2) with limited English proficiency, or (3) receiving public assistance.
- The *Competency-Based Curriculum Fund* is a three-year, \$30 million program providing financial incentives to public and private schools and education agencies to create business-education partnerships.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

- *WorkKeys* is a workplace skills-assessment method used nationwide by employers, students, workers, and educators. A *WorkKeys* assessment can determine whether a person has the fundamental academic and work skills needed to qualify for career-entry work or training.

The MDCCD has set five goals, with accompanying objectives, and developed a five-year strategic plan to further them.

- *Goal 1: Develop an integrated career-development system through industry-education partnerships at the state, regional, and local levels.* The objectives are to
 - provide technical assistance and resources to WDBs and educational organizations to enable them to conduct strategic planning in their region;
 - direct state and federal discretionary funds to WDBs to help them and their partners to implement their goals and objectives; and
 - explore ways to increase worker-training opportunities, including on-line courses, particularly those in small businesses and critical industries.
- *Goal 2: Develop an effective, integrated, career decision-making and preparation system for youth and adults.* The objectives are to
 - increase the number of pupils participating in Career Pathways schools and programs and develop program standards that ensure high quality;
 - expand Operation Fast Break;
 - implement the Career Education Consumer Report system, to provide information on education and training programs, including their enrollment and success rates;
 - integrate separate Web-based services into a single Career Guidance System (CGS) for those seeking information about careers, education, and jobs;
 - conduct a career-guidance campaign offering incentives to young people to enter fields deemed critical to the Michigan economy;
 - improve the Michigan Talent Bank (the state's Internet-based employment-service system, which holds nearly a half-million resumes and lists more than 22,000 job openings, accessible through www.TalentFreeway.org), making it

easier for people to use it to create resumes, post job orders, and conduct job and worker searches;

- help students with disabilities enter and succeed in high-demand training areas; and
 - explore teacher-certification alternatives and ways to improve teacher training to make it more experience-based, competency-based, computer-assisted, and relevant to career development.
- *Goal 3: Develop an industry-led skill-credentialing and quality-management system that will provide employers with a steady supply of well-prepared workers.* The objectives are to
 - implement the Michigan Technical Excellence Program (M-TEP) to recognize technical-education programs that enjoy high placement levels and employer satisfaction;
 - encourage the use of *WorkKeys*; and
 - implement the Competency-Based Curriculum Fund.
- *Goal 4: Inform and educate the public about Michigan's career-development system and how to access and use it effectively.* The objectives are to
 - Focus public attention on the career-development system, services, and opportunities it offers to employers and job seekers;
 - provide students and their parents with the information critical to successful career planning; and
 - improve internal MDCCD communications and staff orientation.
- *Goal 5: Develop the MDCCD into a high-performance agency by building Baldrige quality criteria into internal and external operations.*

DISCUSSION

Until recent years, the state's job-creation, -training, and -placement system was very fragmented. The myriad programs were run by many agencies at the state and local levels. The reorganization of the past decade was an effort to build a comprehensive, coherent system based on local control and employer leadership.

All state job-development programs have been pulled into one department (the MDCCD), programming control has been turned over to local business people, educators, and

others, and the federal and state revenue streams are directed into agencies and programs that have specific service missions.

Supporters of the new configuration say that Michigan is unique among the states in the level of local control it confers; the system works slightly differently, but similarly, in every region. They also believe that one of the system's greatest strengths is that it is "employer-driven."

Critics contend that while the new system has consolidated many programs, it also has usurped, duplicated, or made more cumbersome some programming. They point to the MDCCD's involvement in education programming as an example.

Critics also believe that the department is too focused on getting people into jobs and not enough on helping them keep the jobs and advance. Even after former welfare recipients enter the program, they say, it is difficult for a new worker to put together enough education and training to advance out of the relatively small number of entry-level jobs available. Many former welfare recipients, they add, are in this predicament because they do not speak

English well if at all, but the program does not allow English-as-a-second-language classes to count, as other skill-building classes do, toward participation in work-and-learn programs.

See also Higher Education Funding; Welfare Reform; TANF Reauthorization.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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