



THE WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS GROUP

What is The Workforce Solutions Group?

The Workforce Solutions Group is a coalition led by the Women's Union, the Massachusetts Workforce Board Association, the Massachusetts Communities Action Network and the Massachusetts AFL-CIO that is dedicated to improving the Massachusetts workforce development system. Our unique strength is that we bring together a broad range of employers, unions, education and training providers, community colleges, immigrant advocates, workforce investment boards and interfaith organizations. These diverse groups are united by their common interest in having a strong and effective workforce development system.

What is the goal of The Workforce Solutions Group?

Our goal is to use the combined strength of our constituencies to build public and political support for workforce development reform that increases workers' skills, advances families to self-sufficiency and promotes job creation and economic growth. In pursuit of this goal, we are carrying out a regionally-based, statewide campaign that aligns grassroots organizing and coalition building with coordinated media, research, marketing and advocacy strategies.

What challenges is The Workforce Solutions Group seeking to address?

There is a profound mismatch in labor supply and demand. Two in five employers say there are too few qualified applicants to fill job openings and that training resources are insufficient to prepare workers to meet employer needs. There are 166,000 unemployed workers in Massachusetts at the same time there are 72,000 job vacancies. Under these conditions, new businesses cannot succeed in Massachusetts, existing businesses will expand elsewhere or relocate altogether, and a lack of workers will thwart efforts to recruit businesses to our state. If our greatest economic asset is the quality of our workforce, fixing this crisis requires a substantial investment in the skills of the workers remaining.

What policies is The Workforce Solutions Group advocating for?

The findings of eight regional forums that brought together workers, employers, unions, educators and advocates led to the creation of the Workforce Solutions Act, a proposal sponsored by 101 legislators to train 15,000 workers, fill 10,000 job vacancies, reduce the Adult Basic Education waiting list by 80 percent and bring accountability and performance standards to the workforce development system. Many of the elements of this Act have been included in the House Economic Stimulus Bill (H-4429) and Senate Commonwealth Investment Plan (S-2264) which are currently being reconciled in conference committee. Our current focus is on ensuring that the House proposals of \$11 million for the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund job training program and \$3 million for the Educational Rewards Program, which will help 2,000 low-income working adults go to state or community college, will join \$3 million for Adult Basic Education, \$2 million for career centers, \$3 million for School-to Career Connecting Activities and a Workforce Accountability Taskforce in the final Economic Stimulus Bill.

How is The Workforce Solutions Group funded?

The Workforce Solutions Group is the statewide public policy and advocacy grantee of SkillWorks. We have five years of funding from this group of eight local and national foundations.

How can I get involved?

Our ability to improve the system is dependant on our ability to engage everyone who cares about workforce development; we want to hear your ideas. If you are interested in working for change, or just want to share your perspective, please contact our project manager Dan Kobayashi at (617) 536-5651 x160 or dkobayashi@thewomensunion.org.