

Ramsey County Workforce Investment Board

What is the WIB?

The Ramsey County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) exists to serve the business and job seeker customers in Ramsey County through innovative partnerships within the community. Members serve on the board to oversee the area's workforce development initiatives and to define opportunities for improvement within the system.

The Ramsey County WIB is one of many WIBs across the country directed by the federal government, through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998, to unify and further develop the workforce system, which includes employment training, literacy and vocational rehabilitation programs. Services focus on those who have been dislocated from their job, those who need rehabilitative services in order to gain employment, and low-income youth, adults and families. These services are found within the Minnesota WorkForce Centers, of which Ramsey County has two. The centers also have services for the "Universal Customer," encompassing anyone who comes to the WorkForce Center to use the job seeking resources available.

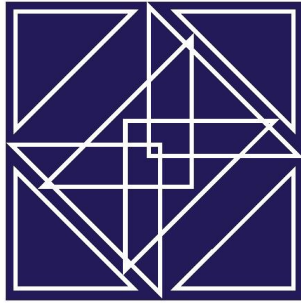
Who is on the WIB?

The WIB is comprised of community leaders in business, community-based organizations, education, labor, economic development, local elected officials and workforce system staff. The board has 33 members representing Ramsey County and the City of Saint Paul.

How does the WIB work?

The WIB is charged with overseeing the public workforce programs detailed above, as well as surveying the local area to define workforce needs and building community partnerships to fill these needs. The WIB meets on a bi-monthly basis, with the four working committees meeting on the opposite months. Members select a committee on which to serve; the hands-on work of the board is accomplished in these committees. The following are examples of projects in which the WIB engages, and on which the committee work is focused.

For information on opportunities available with the WIB, please contact:
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Metropolitan Manufacturing Sector Initiative (MMSI)

This initiative focuses on helping the local sheet metal fabrication manufacturers in the East Metro find the skilled workforce they need. While America talks about the loss of manufacturing jobs, the sheet metal fabricators in the Twin Cities are moving forward and in need of employees who have the skills and knowledge to be successful in their shops. Their difficulty is that there are people who will work, but the level of skill to be productive in these shops requires one to have additional training beyond a high school diploma.

Between labor market and anecdotal information received, the WIB identified the need, gathered the employers, schools, adult basic educators and the workforce centers together to create a solution. The solution identified was the implementation of a short-term training course for jobseekers and entry-level workers employed in manufacturing to bring their skills and education up to the level needed to work and progress in metal manufacturing. The program includes a cohort of incumbent workers and job seekers in a “Manufacturing 101” classroom training that prepares them for the next phase, on the job training, at companies involved in the project. The final phase of their education is advanced training in a specific field of manufacturing, such as welding and CNC machining, which the individual chooses.

Building Lives

Building Lives was developed and implemented by our County partner, Workforce Solutions. It is a program that helps adjudicated and at-risk youth by providing them with a caring adult mentor who guides them through successful completion of their educational, social and employment goals. Workforce Solutions obtained a federal grant to help them develop and implement the program. It was a highly successful program, though it was a pilot program and the funding ended. The WIB feels it is prudent and necessary to obtain funding to continue Building Lives. This program spends an average of \$4,000 per youth served, and though this figure may seem elevated compared to traditional youth program spending of \$1,500 per youth, the clients served by Building Lives experience a higher level of need and their alternative, incarceration, is much more expensive.

In 2007 the WIB went to the legislature to secure sustainable funding for the program in Ramsey County. The bill went through the House and Senate but was line-itemed by the Governor. As 2008 is a bonding year, the Youth Council is focusing current efforts on obtaining bridge funding to keep the program going through private funds and is gearing up to go back to the legislature in 2009.

Visit www.rcwib.org for more information on the WIB.