

Governor's Workforce Development Board Chair & Vice Chair Quarterly Report

3rd Quarter, July - September 2024

GWDB Chair & Vice Chair Activities

New GWDB Chair: Surya Iyer, President & COO, Polar Semiconductor

Surya joined Polar Semiconductor in 2008 as Technology Development Manager. Since 2011, he has worked for the Fab Operations organization in various capacities. Prior to Polar, Surya held several management and engineering positions at Cypress Semiconductor Corp in Bloomington, MN, and Applied Materials, Inc in Santa Clara, CA.

He has 20 patents related to semiconductor processing and equipment design and over 25 peer-reviewed publications. Surya currently serves on the Governing Council for SEMI/FOA (a semiconductor industry association) and is an adjunct Professor of Engineering at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, MN.

New GWDB Vice Chair: DeLinda Washington, Senior Vice President and Chief People Officer, HealthPartners

DeLinda Washington is senior vice president and chief people officer at HealthPartners. In this role, she is responsible for leading human resources across the organization and strengthening our Head + Heart, Together culture. DeLinda has more than 28 years of experience in human resources with a record of success in providing leadership, vision and management to industry leaders.

Prior to joining HealthPartners, DeLinda served various human resources leadership roles at Kaiser Permanente. Under her leadership, Kaiser Permanente Mid-Atlantic was recognized as a best place to work and received national distinction in Multicultural Health Care by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA). DeLinda has also held numerous human resources leadership roles at PepsiCo/Frito-Lay, Fannie Mae and Honeywell, and she serves as a board member for the non-profit, Urban Alliance.

GWDB Staff Activities

- **New Staff:**
 - **Nolan Thomas:** As part of the Minnesota Governor's Workforce Development Board, Nolan coordinates efforts between the Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD) program and broader initiatives focused on reentry and workforce training for justice-involved individuals. He also provides ongoing support for other strategic initiatives within GWDB, contributing to the alignment of state and federal resources to create employment pathways in high-demand industries. By fostering strategic partnerships and leveraging innovative training programs, Nolan supports equitable workforce development and economic growth in Minnesota.

- **Patti Balacek:** As the Workforce Development Systems Coordinator, Patti will play an integral role in convening leaders from state agencies with Workforce Development services to identify strategies to align Workforce Development programs across the state public Workforce Development system. This work aims to improve the state's job vacancy rate, increase the diversity of the labor force, and ensure the system is responsive to our continuously changing economy and workforce needs.
- **NGA SNAP E&T Policy Academy:** In May 2024 the State of Minnesota successfully submitted an application to the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices to participate in their Policy Academy to Strengthen SNAP Employment and Training Programs. Initially, the group recognized two goals to be addressed:
 1. Identify opportunities for legislative changes to allow for better alignment and increased collaboration.
 2. Ensuring participants are connected to "best fit" workforce services via streamlined processes. Increasing options for SNAP E&T participants through enhanced partnerships and knowledge sharing.

Over the third quarter of 2024 the project cohort recommended changing the first goal to focus on increasing access to SNAP E&T for students rather than identifying Legislative Changes. While keeping the second goal as it is. The projects cohort is led by Alicia Smith, Deputy Director of Economic Assistance and Employment Supports at the Department of Human Services. She is joined by leaders representing DCYF, DEED, and the GWDB.

- **Powering Climate and Infrastructure Careers Grant:** The Family and Workers Fund put out the Powering Climate and Infrastructure Careers Challenge RFP to fund awardees that are leading the way in building uplifting career pathways, training, and job opportunities for all related to the series of federal funding opportunities. The GWDB was awarded the [Powering Climate & Infrastructure Careers for All](#) grant in August with an Occupational Analysis and Statewide Workforce Plan.
 - This plan will enable the creation of a statewide strategic workforce plan to meet the upcoming state and federal infrastructure and clean energy investments, prioritizing closing demographic gaps in key sectors and occupations. It will support local and regional workforce planning to meet the expected workforce needs through labor market analysis and convenings with diverse workforce stakeholders.
 - Carry out statewide and local convenings focusing on workforce needs and planning, including the closing of demographic gaps and incorporating Good Jobs principles into all areas of workforce training and job placement and retention strategies.
 - Identify gaps in workforce training and supportive services across the state and direct resources to partners serving underrepresented populations.
 - Expand partnerships with community-based organizations, labor unions, and other organizations that support strengthening worker voice.
 - Inform future state policy to incorporate project best practices.

- **Quarterly WIOA Program Admin Meeting:** The GWDB now convenes WIOA Program Administrators on a quarterly basis. This group is made up of agency leadership and program administrators who are aligned with WIOA Titles: Dislocated Worker, Adult, and Youth; Wagner Peyser, Vocational Rehabilitation, State Services for the Blind, and Adult Education. These Titles and other state partners – Perkins V Career Technical Education, Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program Employment & Training (SNAP E&T), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) -- submit content for the for the four-year WIOA Combined State Plan, approved by the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education in July 2024.
- **MN Assistive Technology Council Fall Meeting:** The Minnesota Assistive Technology Council aligned with the System of Technology to Achieve Results (STAR) program, located within the Minnesota Department of Administration, held their quarterly meeting. STAR's mission is to help all Minnesotans with disabilities gain access to and acquire the assistive technology they need to live, learn, work and play. STAR is federally funded by the Department of Human Services' Administration for Community Living and requires that a staff representative of the State Workforce Board serve on the Council.

GWDB Committee Activities

In Fall 2024, the **GWDB's Drive for Five Subcommittees and Standing Committees** were tasked with convening members for "Critical Conversations" centered around five key questions:

1. What problems or challenges have you seen or experienced that affect employment of economic development in Minnesota?
2. What are factors (including circumstances, policies, laws, regulations, etc.) that are harming successful outcomes or creating problems?
3. What solutions (including regulations, policies, programs, etc.) could help address these challenges?
4. What would be the minimum version of your proposed solutions that could still have a meaningful impact? What are the most critical parts of your proposal?
5. What partnerships (including with public sector, private sector or non-profit organizations) could help make your idea successful?

Responses from the subcommittees and committees were informative and insightful. Some of the subcommittees focusing on priority industry sectors have paused due to member and staff transitions. The **Manufacturing and Trades Subcommittees** met and stated affordable housing and childcare are recurring challenges for workers, as well as lack of pregnancy benefits and access to transportation.

In general, answers to questions were specific to the **Disability Equity, Future of Work, Racial Equity and Youth Programs** Standing Committees. Connections with workforce partners, education/training, and employers are seen as important and could be strengthened through partnerships. Transportation and childcare were recurring concerns, as well as funding.