

WORKFORCE SUMMIT

September 20, 2023 | Great Northern Building Theater | 180 E. Fifth Street | St. Paul, Minnesota

Speaker Biographies



DEED Commissioner
Matt Varilek

Matt Varilek became the DEED Commissioner on June 20, 2023. Since late 2016, he served as President of the Little Falls-based Initiative Foundation, which supports economic and community development in the 14 counties and two sovereign tribal nations of Central Minnesota. Previously, he was Chief Operating Officer for the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), regional administrator for U.S. SBA Region VIII, and a candidate for Congress in South Dakota. He also served as an Economic Development Director and Speechwriter for the offices of U.S. Senators Tom Daschle and Tim Johnson, and Director of Policy and Research for Natsource LLC, an energy brokerage based in New York. Commissioner Varilek earned a B.A. from Carleton College, a M.Phil. in Economic Development from the University of Glasgow, and a M.Phil. in Environment and Development from the University of Cambridge. He lives in rural Benton County near Rice with his wife and three children.



**DEED Deputy
Commissioner**
Marc Majors

Marc Majors was named DEED's Deputy Commissioner of Workforce Development in March 2022. In this role, Majors oversees Employment and Training programs, Careerforce, and the Governor's Workforce Development Board. Before being named Deputy Commissioner, Majors was DEED's Director of Employment and Training Programs – the group at DEED that runs grantmaking for workforce development. Additionally, he held responsibility for the agency's Workforce Innovative and Opportunity Act-Title I programs, Trade Adjustment Assistance programs, State-funded Workforce Development Grants, and a new publicprivate initiative with Xcel Energy.

Majors has been a key leader in advocating for and securing over \$130M in net new workforce dollars for Minnesota's workforce development system through federal and state sources. He also helped pioneer a new community review process that has engaged over 75 outside reviewers of DEED grant applications. These innovations and others have led to \$18M more in workforce grants going to equity centered nonprofits.

Majors holds a Juris Doctorate from Vermont Law School, a Master of Public Administration from New York University, and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of San Francisco. In 2021, Majors was named by Twin Cities Business Magazine as one of the notable BIPOC executives of the year.



***DEED Assistant
Commissioner
Abdiwahab
Mohamed***

Abdiwahab Mohamed is the Assistant Commissioner of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs at DEED. As the assistant commissioner, Mohamed manages DEED's Office of New Americans, and coordinates with 17 other states agencies to include and integrate New Americans into the workforce, as well as reduce barriers to economic development.

Prior to taking on the role of Assistant Commissioner, Mohamed was a manager with the Minnesota Trade Office before becoming a senior grants and performance specialist. He has been with DEED for more than six years. Prior to his time at DEED, Mohamed was a grants manager at a private organization.



***GWDB Director
Katie McClelland***

Before becoming Director of the Governor's Workforce Development Board, **Katie McClelland** led workforce development policy for the U.S. Congress Education & Labor Committee and the Health, Education, Labor and Pension (HELP) Committee. Her leadership skills, relationships and experience overseeing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act program – the federal workforce program DEED administers across the state – are an asset to the workforce development system.

Katie, a Minnesota native, was most recently the Minnesota Technology Association (MnTech) Director of Public Policy & Research, where she led policy and research initiatives to ensure Minnesota has a thriving tech ecosystem.

Katie's selection for this role comes as Governor Walz and Lieutenant Governor Flanagan continue their support for [One Minnesota budget priorities](#) tied to growing Minnesota's workforce and talent acquisition, including the *Drive for 5 Workforce Fund*, which will prepare the workforce to enter five of the most critical occupational categories in the state with high-growth jobs and family sustaining wages: **technology, caring professions, education, manufacturing, and trades.**



***GWDB Chair
Laura Beeth***

Laura Beeth is a visionary leader with 25+ years of experience holding system executive positions in Talent Acquisition, Talent Management, and Workforce Development at Fairview Health Services. Laura is the Fairview Human Resources Executive responsible for Healthcare Anchor Mission Employment Commitments, such as outside in/local hiring and inside up/career pathways. Laura was part of a small national team who developed the Healthcare Anchor Network (HAN) Workforce Impact Commitment, Fairview is one of the first signers of this extensive employment commitment.

In 2014 Laura was appointed board chair of the Governor's Workforce Development Board. Laura previously served as a business representative on the Governor's Workforce Development Council from 2004-2014. In addition, Laura is the state chair of the Minnesota State Healthcare Education-Industry Partnership Council/HealthForce Minnesota, Past Chair of the Minneapolis Workforce Investment Board, and Past Elected Chair and Officer of the National Governor's Association of State Workforce Board Chairs. This year, the Minnesota Hospital Association Awarded Laura and her team the 2023 State Workforce Partnership and Pipeline Team Award.

Laura has a strong background in the areas of health care, career, and human resources and is involved in many professional organizations, including the National Governor's Association of State Board Chairs, Minneapolis Workforce Investment Board, and HealthForce, Minnesota's Healthcare Workforce Center of Excellence. She served on the White House Career Pathway Task Force is a regular speaker and content expert for numerous publications focused on healthcare workforce best practices.



***NGA Senior Policy
Analyst Jack Porter***

Jack Porter serves as a senior policy analyst on the Workforce Development and Economic Policy Program of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, where he supports governors' staff by providing technical assistance related to workforce and economic development policy. Before joining NGA, Jack was an advocacy associate at the National College Attainment Network, a nonprofit with more than 400 members that support traditionally underserved students across the United States. He was primarily responsible for providing technical assistance to state and federal policy grantees.

Jack holds a master's of education in higher education policy from the University of Texas at Arlington and a bachelor of science in American Studies from Springfield College. Jack originally hails from Connecticut.



***NGA Policy Analyst
Sophia Yager***

Sophia Yager serves as a policy analyst for the Workforce Development and Economic Policy program in the National Governors Association’s Center for Best Practices where she supports Governors and state policymakers with technical assistance on workforce development and economic policy.

Prior to joining NGA, Sophia was the Membership Engagement Director at the Vermont Chamber of Commerce where she led stakeholder engagement efforts on economic development and workforce policy issues. Sophia previously served in the office of Vermont Governor Phil Scott as Deputy Director of the Vermont State Workforce Development Board. In this role, she oversaw the coordination of Vermont’s workforce development system and strategic planning in alignment with the Governor’s priorities and the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Sophia originally hails from Vermont where she received a bachelor’s degree in political science from the University of Vermont.



***NGA Policy Analyst
Jordan Morang***

Jordan Morang serves as a policy analyst on the Workforce Development and Economic Policy Program of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, where he supports governors’ staff by providing technical assistance related to workforce and economic development policy.

Prior to joining NGA, Jordan has worked in a variety of roles at the local level in Florida, Indiana, and Maine. Each role has focused on improving the economic and social wellbeing of the community through workforce and economic development initiatives. Projects include the North Greenwood Community Redevelopment Area for the City of Clearwater, Florida, the Bloomington Urban Enterprise Zone and the COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund for the City of Bloomington, Indiana.

Jordan holds a master’s of public affairs degree from Indiana University and a bachelor’s of arts degree in political science and communication from the University of Florida.



***Polaris Semiconductor
President and CEO
Surya Iyer***

Surya Iyer 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.

Surya attended the Advanced Management Program at Wharton, was a fellow at Stanford, and earned degrees from Washington University in St. Louis and the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT-Kanpor).



***Greater MSP
VP of Business Investment
Amanda Taylor***

Amanda Taylor is Vice President of Business Investment at the GREATER MSP Partnership. Amanda leads the team driving business attraction, expansion, and retention in the Minneapolis Saint Paul region, positioning the region for economic growth in the next economy. Amanda previously led the Research and Intelligence platform at GREATER MSP, providing intelligence and analytical expertise to inform strategy across the enterprise. Amanda brings 17 years of experience in economic development and corporate site selection to the organization. Prior to joining GREATER MSP, Amanda was a Senior Consultant with McCallum Sweeney Consulting in Greenville, South Carolina, providing site selection, incentives negotiation, and workforce services to corporate clients including Michelin, Northrop Grumman, and Lucid Motors. In 2023 she is a recipient of the Economic Development 40 Under 40 award by Development Counsellors International (DCI) and Jorgenson Consulting, recognized as a rising star under 40 years old in the economic development industry.



Jeanna Fortney is the Director of the Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards, the state association that represents Minnesota's 16 local workforce boards. Jeanna has a long career in workforce development, including leading career pathways programming for Washington DC's state workforce board, providing technical assistance to states, and managing youth and adult employment and training programs on the local level. Jeanna has a Bachelor's degree in Sociology from American University and a Master's in Social Work from George Mason University.

***MAWB Director
Jeanna Fortney***