

No Worker Left Behind Policy Innovations

Why Michigan is Making NWLB Its Ongoing Workforce Policy

No Worker Left Behind (NWLB) began as an initiative to double the number of workers trained for in-demand jobs to 100,000 in three years. That three year period ends July 31, 2010. But Governor Granholm has decided to make the program Michigan's ongoing workforce policy.

Why? First, because Michiganders have responded to the initiative with unbridled enthusiasm –over 100,000 workers entered training in less than 26 months, and many more are on waiting lists to get into the program. Second, because NWLB is simply a great improvement – it's the workforce policy Michigan and the nation need for the 21st Century Information Economy.

Here are a few things which, when put together, make NWLB such a strong policy initiative, representing a dramatic change of direction from the past decade of national workforce policy.

- NWLB is creating a **better educated workforce**. The majority of economists agree that higher education correlates with higher income and higher employment. Studies show that states with the highest educated workforces have the strongest economies. NWLB is training a higher volume of people for better credentials than ever before in Michigan's history. NWLB is setting up Michigan and its citizens up for success.
- NWLB means many more and a much higher percentage of participants are in **longer term training**, rather than in either short-term training or solely job search assistance.
 - NWLB moves **from workforce maintenance to workforce transformation**; it represents a fundamental shift from “quick fixes” that won't help dislocated workers much to investing in increasing educational attainment that carries market-useful credentials.
 - With NWLB, Michigan is **leading the nation in shifting our focus to** where President Obama and Congress are heading – **upskilling and lifelong learning**.
- NWLB creates **universal, statewide eligibility requirements and benefits levels** for WIA participants. In almost all other states, many aspects of WIA policy are left to local workforce boards, leading to a patchwork of inconsistent policies.
- NWLB creates an **umbrella that covers all federally and state funded job training**. This has multiple, powerful, mutually reinforcing effects:
 - It creates a **strong brand identity** for job training and lifelong learning.
 - It drives citizens to the program.
 - It allows us to understand better how different federal funding streams and programs work and compare to each other.
 - It allows us to market the program not just to workers, but to **employers** – we will train workers for any new jobs you create in our state.
- NWLB maximizes the availability of **income support during training** by systematizing the eligibility of participants for UI payments.
- NWLB creates a **more strategic, demand driven workforce system** capable of focusing on growing sectors and employers by developing a universal job training “currency” and a stronger state hand to leverage workforce dollars for specific opportunities.
- NWLB requires and represents a **greatly enhanced partnership** between the state and its workforce partners, especially the Michigan Works agencies and community colleges.
 - In order to achieve universal eligibility criteria, benefits and so forth, we had to get and maintain **ownership** from our partners.