

WORKFORCE STRATEGY CONSULTANTS

WORKFORCE WEDNESDAY

Providing Workforce Solutions for MN Employers



Welcome!

We will begin shortly

Workforce Strategy Consultants

Assist employers in increasing the number of applicants and new hires

Enhance Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) within their workplace

Offer employer tools to assist them in reviewing and enhancing their current training programs

Enhance Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) within their workplace

Develop programs that help employers be recognized as an employer of choice in their industry

Jessica Miller

Director of Workforce Strategy

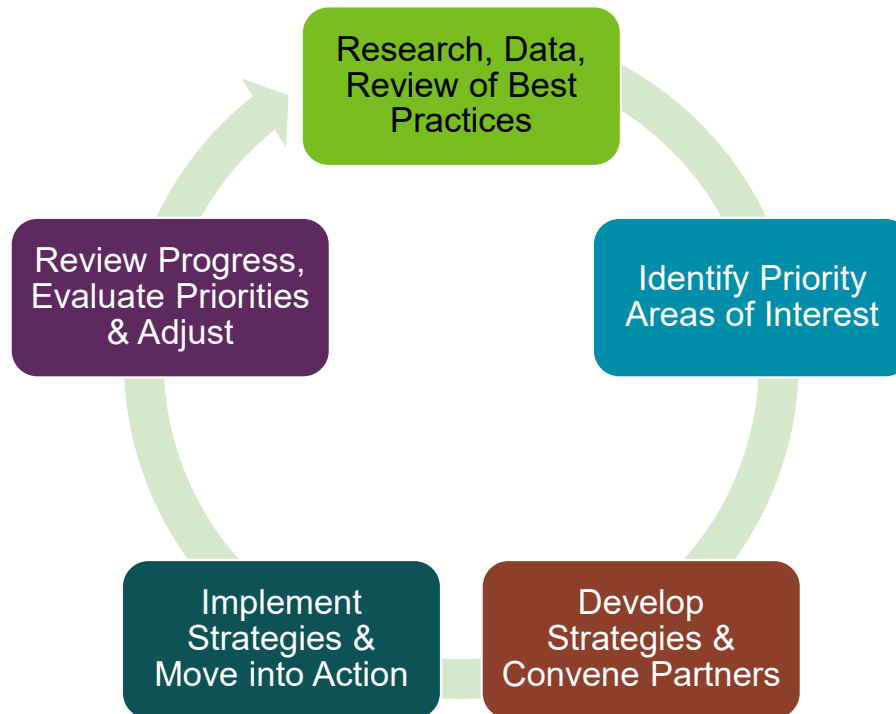
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What WSC Does

Mission

Develop innovative workforce solutions by aligning resources, facilitating collaboration, and leveraging expertise in target industry sectors to drive economic equity and growth.



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2026 Workforce Wednesday Remaining Schedule

October 7

Developing Successful Career Pathways through Youth Skills Training & Youth Apprenticeships

November 4

Minnesota's Indigenous Workforce

December 2

2026 Review with 2027 Preview

Register: CareerForce.MN.gov/WorkforceWednesday

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**Future-Ready Talent: Building Your Bench Through Mentorship,
Sponsorship & Succession Planning**

September 2, 2026

Agenda

Today's flow: a short foundation, a practical panel conversation, then open Q&A

1

Welcome & learning objectives

What participants should leave with

2

Why this matters now

Retention, changing work, knowledge transfer, and critical-role readiness

3

Mentorship, sponsorship & succession planning

Shared language for the panel discussion

4

Panel discussion

Employer and partner perspectives on what this looks like in practice

5

Unplugged Q&A

Audience questions and practical follow-up discussion

Why This Topic Matters Now

Future-ready employers cannot rely only on external hiring

Change & Disruption

Traditional succession processes were built for stability; today's work requires agility and adaptability.

Knowledge Risk

Retirements and turnover can move critical know-how, customer history, and informal processes out the door.

Internal Mobility

Employees are more likely to stay when they see growth, learning, and advancement opportunities.

Talent Visibility

Potential can be hidden unless leaders intentionally mentor, advocate, and create stretch experiences.

The workforce question shifts from “Who can we hire?” to “Who are we intentionally developing now?”

Mentorship, Sponsorship & Succession Planning

These terms are connected, but they are not the same

Mentorship

Helps people grow

Guidance, support, and knowledge-sharing that helps employees grow, navigate the organization, and clarify what is next.

Sponsorship

Helps people get seen

Intentional advocacy that helps employees gain visibility, access opportunities, and be considered when decisions are made.

Succession Planning

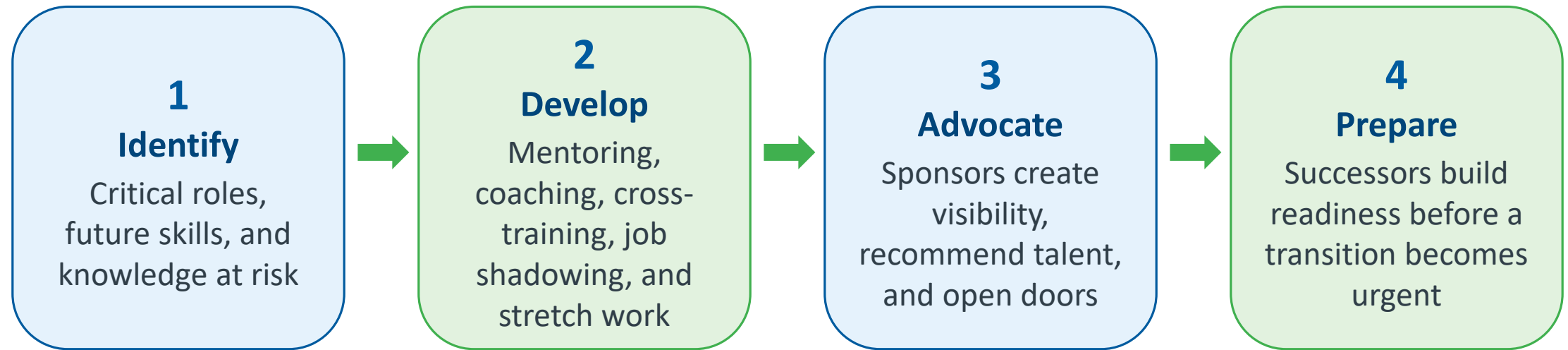
Helps organizations prepare

A future-oriented process to identify critical roles, transfer knowledge, and prepare people for future leadership or key responsibilities.

**Mentorship builds capability. Sponsorship creates opportunity.
Succession planning connects both to business continuity.**

From Programs to Pipeline

The strongest approach is not one isolated program. It is a connected internal talent pipeline.



Succession planning is preparation, not pre-selection. Start before the vacancy happens.

What Effective Efforts Have in Common

Whether the work is formal or informal, strong approaches tend to share a few design choices

Start with the business need

critical roles, hard-to-fill skills, turnover risk, or growth plans

Choose the right mentorship model

buddy, peer, senior-to-junior, reverse, flash mentoring, or mentoring circles

Make development visible

development plans, stretch work, internal mobility, and feedback rhythms

Define sponsorship behaviors

who advocates, where names are raised, and how opportunities are shared

Build knowledge transfer into work

job shadowing, cross-training, documentation, and communities of practice

Measure and adjust

participation, readiness, retention, promotions, and lessons learned

Questions to Carry Into the Panel

As you listen, consider where your organization already has pieces of this work — and where there may be gaps

- 1 **What roles, relationships, or knowledge would be hardest to replace tomorrow?**
- 2 **Who has potential but may not yet be visible in formal leadership conversations?**
- 3 **How are employees gaining skills, confidence, and stretch experiences before a vacancy happens?**
- 4 **How are managers and leaders encouraged to advocate for talent beyond their own team?**
- 5 **What is one small step you could take to strengthen your internal talent pipeline?**

Panel Discussion: Real-World Insights



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Three Things You Can Do This Month

Small, practical steps to start building your bench before the need becomes urgent

1

Map one critical role

Identify one role, process, or relationship that would create risk if the person left tomorrow. What knowledge needs to be captured or shared?

2

Create one intentional connection

Pilot a mentor, buddy, peer circle, reverse mentoring, or job-shadowing relationship tied to a specific business need.

3

Name one stretch opportunity

Ask leaders to identify one employee ready for visibility, cross-training, project work, or sponsorship into a future opportunity.

Start small. Make it visible. Revisit what you learn.

Key Takeaways

What to remember — and what to bring back to your organization

- ✓ **Build before the vacancy**
Future-ready talent pipelines start before a role is open or a leader exits.
- ✓ **Mentorship grows capability**
Employees build confidence, skills, connection, and organizational know-how.
- ✓ **Sponsorship creates opportunity**
Leaders use influence to open doors and make talent visible when decisions are made.
- ✓ **Succession planning protects continuity**
Critical knowledge, relationships, and leadership capacity are intentionally transferred.
- ✓ **One step is enough to begin**
Start with one business need, one role, or one development relationship and build from there.

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Developing Successful Career Pathways through Youth Skills Training & Youth Apprenticeships

Wednesday, October 7, 2026

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Unplugged Q&A: 12:00 – 12:30 PM

Thanks for Joining Us!

Find Your Workforce Strategy Consultant

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MINNESOTA WORKFORCE STRATEGY CONSULTANTS

MISSION

Develop innovative workforce solutions by aligning resources, facilitating collaboration, and leveraging expertise in targeted industry sectors to drive economic equity and growth.

THE VALUE WE BRING

- > Provide tools and resources to support businesses in developing strategic workforce strategies
- > Connect stakeholders to economic development and workforce development resources
- > Focus on workforce diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives
- > Enhance Minnesota's economic prosperity through workforce and economic development partnerships
- > Work in partnership with our stakeholders to provide workforce training development solutions to meet your talent needs



WORKFORCE STRATEGY CONSULTANTS



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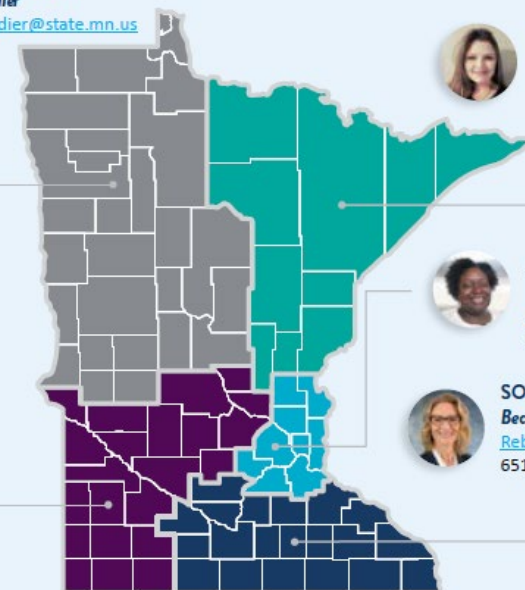


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UNPLUGGED – Q AND A

