

Jobs, Talent, and People: Addressing Workforce Shortages

The Growing Michigan Together Council (GMTC) was established by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer as an effort to address the state's stagnating population. The GMTC has four workgroups charged with crafting recommendations that address four key areas relevant to population growth: Jobs, Talent, and People; Infrastructure and Places; Higher Education; and Pre-K–12 Education. Workgroups will craft and propose recommendations for full council approval. Recommendations should help make Michigan more prosperous and increase the state's population by 2050.

Michigan had the weakest population growth of all U.S. states between 2000 and 2020. For more than five decades, our stagnant population has lost the state several seats within the United States House of Representatives and will continue to diminish our influence over time if our population does not grow. If Michigan's population growth is not addressed, the state will begin to lose population, resulting in lower tax revenue and a lower quality of life for Michigan residents. The Jobs, Talent, and People workgroup is tasked with crafting recommendations that address workforce shortages. Addressing workforce shortages will be a vital component for maintaining the jobs that we currently have and attracting future employers. Preliminary recommendations were gathered from the survey distributed to workgroup members and refined below.

Education

- Prioritize STEM programming in underserved communities to improve representation in STEM careers.
- Restore hands-on training to the Pre-K–12 system graduation requirements (e.g., wood or metal shop classes).
- Ensure regular communication and alignment between employers, adult education, and workforce development agencies.
- Integrate small-business development programming into the PreK-12 system.

Job Training

- Eliminate out-of-state tuition rate.
- Incorporate general adult education into training programs and physical and emotional healthcare and pay beyond a simple job skill set.
- Create a publicly funded recruitment program that provides a stipend for target populations to relocate to Michigan for postsecondary education.
- Develop free or significantly reduced undergraduate and job training programs for in-state and immigrant students.

- Align programs with the needs of industries with known workforce shortages and new and emerging industries.
- Increase higher-education state investments.

Support Services

- Implement 100 percent refundable child care tax credit.
- Provide universal childcare coverage.
- In the short-term, address child care system challenges associated with funding and policy changes resulting from the expiration of additional COVID-19 pandemic supports.
- Incentivize private investment in child care, transportation, and other family services integral to employers' access to a reliable workforce.
- Develop transportation programming.
- Provide annual Medicaid coverage determinations for adults and multiyear coverage determinations for children.
- Redirect Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) dollars to core safety net purposes.
- Enhance the Unemployment Insurance Agency system to provide longer/more flexible benefits.

Immigrant Attraction

- Create a focused advertising/branding campaign related to what Michigan has to offer for immigrants.
- Support licensing/credentialing translation—ensure individuals holding an international license or credential can receive a commensurate Michigan certification.
- Ensure driver's license/state ID is available to everyone, including undocumented persons.
- Enhance naturalization/legal services support.
- Support universities in the strategic use of H-1B visas, specifically looking at scaling programs at universities.
- Provide free or reduced-cost English as a second language programs.
- Invest in high-performing international talent attraction programs to maximize scale.
- Provide first-time homebuyer programs through private lending institutions.