

SHARE:

[Join Our Email List](#)



MUS Connector

*A Newsletter made by Workforce Development Stakeholders
for Workforce Development Stakeholders*



September 2025 Edition

Welcome to the September 2025 Edition of the MUS Connector!

September is Workforce Development Month, a time to recognize, celebrate, and elevate the systems, partnerships, and people who make economic mobility possible.

Across our network, we see daily evidence that this work matters. Whether it's through advocacy, employer partnerships, or frontline innovation, MUS and our members and partners are advancing bold solutions that put people on pathways to opportunities that are accessible with lasting impact.

This month's edition of the MUS Connector spotlights how we advocate, collaborate, and mobilize to build stronger workforce ecosystems because every job gained, barrier removed, and policy moved is a victory worth sharing.

Let's honor the work and keep moving forward, together.

In This Month's Edition:

1. [The MUS Policy Perspective](#)
2. [Midwest Urban Strategies Launches Multi-State Reentry Initiative](#)
3. [The Power of Collaboration: Workforce Works!!](#)
4. [Workforce Development Month: My Grandfather's Story](#)
5. [The Workforce Behind the Workforce: How Early Childhood Education Workforce Impacts All Industries](#)
6. [Member Spotlight: The Visionz Group](#)
7. [Investing in People: Strengthening the Workforce for a Stronger Future](#)
8. [Workforce Development Month: Turning Challenges into Opportunity](#)
9. [Whole-Person, Whole-Family: A Comprehensive Approach to Reentry](#)
10. [Workforce Development Month: A Time to Reset and Re-ignite!](#)



The MUS Policy Perspective

Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Appropriations Update



Do you need Good News?!

Earlier this summer, the Trump Administration released its FY 2026 Budget proposal. Workforce development advocates and stakeholders remain particularly alarmed at the inclusion of the Make America Skilled Again Block Grant proposal. It is important to remember that the Administration's budget is non-binding and purely ideological. Very rarely, if ever, is a Presidential budget request (regardless of the President), taken too seriously on Capitol Hill.

The MASA block grant proposal would essentially eliminate the local workforce delivery system by collapsing eleven Department of Labor workforce programs and sending the combined grant directly to states. The budget proposal also included a \$1.6 billion cut to those combined programs... [Read More](#)

Submit your Workforce Development Success Stories [HERE](#)

Workforce
Development
Boards are the
backbone of the
public
workforce
system.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Chris Andresen serves as a Partner with the Dutko GR team. He works extensively with MUS and other workforce development clients to identify policy opportunities and threats and advises on legislative and executive strategies.

Chris Andresen
Partner, Dutko Government Relations



Midwest Urban Strategies Launches Multi-State Reentry Initiative Centered on Whole-Person Support and Community Reintegration

Midwest Urban Strategies (MUS), a consortium of Midwest workforce development boards that manage public workforce systems, is proud to announce the launch of *Pathway Home 6 (MUS-PH6)*, a \$4 million Department of Labor-funded initiative designed to support 400 individuals currently incarcerated in the Bloomington and Gary regions in Indiana, the Kansas City, Missouri region, and the Canton, Ohio region as they prepare to return to their communities. Implemented locally by four MUS member boards: Center of Workforce Innovations (IN), Full Employment Council (MO), Stark Tuscarawas Workforce Development Board (OH), and South-Central Region 8 Workforce Development Board (IN).

“This initiative allows us to meet returning citizens where they are, remove barriers, and connect them to the skills, resources, and careers that lead to lasting stability and success in our communities,” said Clyde McQueen, President and CEO of the Full Employment Council/Kansas City and Vicinity Workforce Development Board in Kansas City, MO. McQueen also serves as chairman of the board of Midwest Urban Strategies.

Through a regional network of correctional institutions, workforce development boards, and community partners, Midwest Urban Strategies' Pathway Home 6 Initiative provides a coordinated pathway from incarceration to employment. Beginning 30 to 270 days pre-release and continuing for at least 12 months post-release, participants engage in evidence-based, trauma-informed services that prepare them for the workforce. [Read More](#)

The Power of Collaboration in Workforce Development: Workforce Works!!

As we celebrate Workforce Development Month, it's natural to showcase the wins: the new hires, the earned credentials, the stories of perseverance that make us



proud. This evidence of success is notable, but it must be remembered in the context of how we got there. Behind each of those proud moments is a network of partners (employers, service providers, and training programs) and a shared commitment across these networks to walk alongside people as they navigate their own complex path toward success. We call it the ABCs of workforce development: Any Job (A), Better Job (B), and Career (C).

Workforce development, when done well, exists in a system of intentionally organized partners coordinating together to connect people to economic opportunity. At Midwest Urban Strategies, we strive to bring useful solutions to this dual customer approach. One of those solutions that MUS provides its members is a labor market information (LMI) tool, Lightcast, to assist with planning responsive programs and campaigns designed to solve for current, pressing workforce development needs. We encourage our members to validate this LMI with real time data from local employers to create an accurate picture of the labor market demands and opportunities in each local area. That information is combined to influence training investments, service partners, and resource allocations.

Local workforce development boards act as the architect and connector, bringing together American Job Center staff, community-based organizations, social service agencies, supportive service providers, employers, and other partners to create a seamless experience for the people they serve. It's work that often happens out of sight, yet it is the foundation that makes visible success possible. [Read More](#)



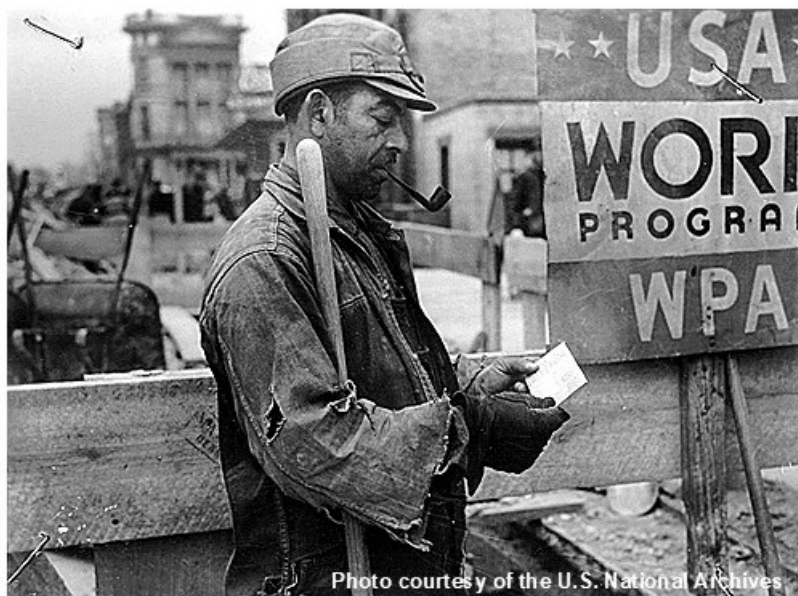
ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Tracey leads our consortium of urban workforce boards, leveraging millions in investments to drive strategic partnerships, economic and business growth, elevating transformational workforce innovation across the country.

Tracey Carey – MUS Executive Director

"Small acts,
when multiplied
by millions of
people, can
transform the
world."

-Howard Zinn-



Workforce Development Month: My Grandfather's Story

September is Workforce Development Month which is a time to celebrate the workers who keep America moving.

At a time when workforce development is changing at the speed of light or should I say *AI*; it's worth looking back. We all learned about work somewhere, most often from our families. Every generation has its own stories to tell, shaped by the economy, politics, and the challenges of their era. I invite you to share your own workforce "origin story."

I'll start with mine.

My Grandfather's Story

I remember as a child hearing my grandfather talk about work. He was born in 1914 in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, and was only 15 years old when the Great Depression hit; an event that would define his views on stability, gratitude, and perseverance. Everyone he knew worked hard because they had to. Life was hard, jobs were scarce, and every opportunity mattered. [Read More](#)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kellie Landaker is our Director of Membership and unofficial Wellbeing Warrior! She envisions a world where everyone deserves equitable treatment, freedom from trauma and violence, fair wages, and a fair shot at wellbeing. Kellie brings that lens to our membership and to our work.

Kellie Landaker— Membership Director

"We must lay hold of the fact that economic laws are not made by nature. They are made by human beings."

-FDR-



The Workforce Behind the Workforce:

How the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Workforce Impacts All Industries

Across all industries, from construction and manufacturing to technology and financial services, parents, especially mothers, rely on accessible child care to remain

employed, making ECE providers the “workforce behind the workforce.”

Child care availability depends on the supply of qualified early educators. Limited ECE classrooms force many women to reduce their hours, turn down job opportunities, or leave the workforce altogether. This creates a self-perpetuating cycle: A lack of ECE professionals leads to fewer child care options, shrinking the available labor pool. When child care is unavailable or unreliable, it limits women’s economic mobility and reduces women’s workforce participation across all industries, exacerbating labor shortages and slowing a community’s economic growth. The issue is particularly pressing for [single mothers](#), who head 80% of one-parent households and may not have access to family or friend caregivers.

Did you know that the most [recently available data show](#) that 51 percent of families nationwide live in a child care desert, where there are three times as many children under five as available child care slots? [Read More](#)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marjorie D. Cohen, Senior Subject Matter Expert for Early Childhood and Registered Apprenticeship, is driving toward the day that all childcare is high-quality and accessible, and ECE providers are compensated commensurate with their immense worth to society.

Marjorie D. Cohen, MPP
Senior Subject Matter Expert

“Children are the world’s most valuable resource and its best hope for the future.”

-JFK-

Member Spotlight: Visionz Group

Organization Name:
Visionz Group, LLC

Executive Leader Name/Title:
Christopher Rivers Founder and CEO

Website:
www.visionzgroup.com

Tell us about your organization's mission and the communities you serve:

Visionz Group equips youth and adults with life skills, workforce readiness training, and personal development strategies that build confidence, break down barriers, and prepare them for lasting personal and professional success.



Opening Doors and Creating Pathways to Success

Visionz Group, LLC is a Detroit-based organization dedicated to empowering youth and adults to achieve lasting personal and professional growth. Founded by Christopher Rivers, the organization provides life skills training, workforce readiness, and personal development strategies designed to help individuals not only succeed in the moment but sustain that success throughout their lives. Their work spans Detroit and Southeastern Michigan, with a growing impact in Dallas County Juvenile Detention in Texas, and extends to Grambling State University, where they host annual Leadership Development Conferences for students.

Through workshops, mentoring, case management, and direct career placement, Visionz equips at-risk, justice-involved, and underserved individuals with the tools to thrive. Their partnerships with employers create hiring pipelines that ensure participants are not only connected to jobs but also supported with coaching and retention strategies for long-term success. [Read More](#)

Check out our New Member Spotlight on Our Website: [HERE](#)

ABOUT VISIONZ GROUP, LLC



Visionz Group provides youth and adults with life skills, workforce readiness training, and personal development through innovative courses, mentoring, and employer partnerships—empowering underserved communities to overcome barriers, seize opportunities, and build lasting personal and professional success.

Investing in People: Strengthening the Workforce for a Stronger Future

September is Workforce Development Month, a time to recognize the transformative power of upskilling, career pathways, and partnerships that connect people to meaningful work. For those of us in the field, this month more than a celebration, it's



a reminder that the work we do changes lives and strengthens communities every day.

We are living in a time of rapid change, in technology, in the economy, and in the way people learn and work. These shifts can be challenging, but they also open the door to innovation. Across the

country, workforce programs, training providers, and employers are finding new ways to come together, adapt, and meet the evolving needs of both workers and industry.

At the heart of this work is collaboration. [Read More](#)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Sandy is the Vice President of Workforce Development at Skilltrade, driving innovative training solutions and partnerships to empower underserved communities with access to high-demand healthcare careers

Sandy Mead – VP of Workforce Development, Skilltrade

"The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you."

-B.B. King-

Workforce Development Month: Turning Challenges into Opportunity

Every September, Workforce Development Month reminds us of a powerful mission: helping people build the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to succeed in today's workforce, while ensuring that employers have access to the talent they need to grow and compete.



At its core, workforce development does two things. It empowers individuals to pursue meaningful careers and supports businesses by creating a pipeline of skilled, job-ready talent. It's about preparing people for work and preparing work for people and making sure both can thrive together.

Facing a New World of Work

Today's workforce development landscape is changing fast. Policy shifts, economic uncertainty, and global disruption have all made long-term planning more difficult. Programs often rely on public funding, which can change based on elections, budgets, and shifting priorities. When support becomes unpredictable, so does the stability of services that help people find work.

Economically, many places are still adjusting to new realities. [Read More](#)

"In the
middle of
every
difficulty
lies
opportunity."
-Albert Einstein-

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Eric Shepherd, leader of the Foundation for Talent Transformation, helps individuals develop self-awareness, resilience, and life skills through expert guidance, free assessments, and AI-enabled assistants.

Eric Shepherd
Executive Director, Foundation for Talent Transformation



Whole-Person, Whole-Family: A Comprehensive Approach to Reentry

Reentry doesn't happen in isolation. When a system-impacted individual walks through the doors of a program, they carry the hopes, challenges, and needs of an entire network, especially their family. The success of any reentry effort is closely tied to how well we support not just the participant, but also their loved ones who stand beside them.

In many ways, families are the collateral consequences of incarceration. While the term "collateral consequences" typically refers to the indirect penalties imposed on the person who was incarcerated, researchers, advocates, and reentry practitioners also use it to describe the ripple effects on that person's loved ones. They often bear the emotional burden, financial strain, and social stigma long after the sentence has been served. Families serve as the first line of support, offering encouragement, housing, childcare, and stability during a participant's transition, in some case, even while facing their own challenges. Overlooking the needs of the family can unintentionally weaken the very progress our programs strive to achieve.

A whole-person, whole-family approach recognizes that when we invest in the family unit, we increase the chances of long-term success. [Read More](#)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Shonique Banks is a seasoned workforce strategist and leadership coach with 25+ years of experience supporting talent, guiding transformation, and empowering leaders across public, nonprofit, and philanthropic sectors to lead with impact.

Shonique Banks, MASCL
Partner, Strategic Impact Group

"In every conceivable manner, the family is link to our past, bridge to our future."

-Alex Haley-

DARRELL "Coach D" ANDREWS MIDWEST Urban Strategies
A Workforce Innovation Laboratory

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT MONTH MOTIVATION CHALLENGE!

In partnership with MUS, join us for a 5-week virtual challenge designed to empower team motivation during workforce development month!

Darrell "Coach D" Andrews
The "Workforce Development" Motivator!

Workforce Development Month: A Time to Reset and Re-ignite!

Each September, we recognize Workforce Development Month—a time to reflect on the critical role workforce development plays in transforming lives, families, and communities. For me, this month is not just a professional observance. It is personal.

Back in the 1970s, my mother's life took a new direction when she enrolled in a workforce development program. At that time, she was struggling to find her footing and provide for her children. Workforce development gave her more than job skills—it gave her confidence, dignity, and hope. That experience completely changed the trajectory of my life. The opportunities she received opened doors for me as her son, instilling in me a passion to one day help others the way she had been helped. Today, that passion fuels my work as Coach D, The Workforce Development Motivator.

For over two decades, I've been privileged to serve as a leader in the workforce development motivation space. During my days as a contractor, I created two programs that set a strong foundation for my career. Our HYPE (Helping Youth Pursue Excellence) program produced a staggering 90% graduation rate, empowering young people to complete school and pursue brighter futures. At the same time, our BASIC (Building and Sustaining Internal Change) program for adults helped 75% of participants secure employment, with just as many retaining their jobs for two years or more. These results were not accidental—they came from

extensive follow-up systems, team development strategies, and innovative employer motivation processes.

Those early successes continue to drive my passion for helping workforce organizations achieve transformational results today. [Read More](#)

"Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth."

-Muhammad Ali-

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Darrell "Coach D" Andrews is a nationally acclaimed innovator in workforce development, a motivational leader, and author. With his team, he empowers staff, leaders, and clients through transformative coaching, training, that drive results and ignite purpose.

Darrel "Coach D" Andrews
President & CEO, Darrell Andrews, LLC & Associates



Community Spotlight Advertisements

Every edition of the MUS Connector brings together the voices driving workforce transformation. From local boards and employers to training providers, nonprofits, and national partners — this is where strategies are shared, solutions are elevated, and collaboration takes center stage.

The Community Spotlight section is your space to shine. This section is a platform to showcase your work, your impact, celebrate what's working, and connect with others leading the way in workforce innovation.

Skilltrade
Transforming Healthcare Education
Pilot Programs with Externships

\$500 Scholarships
*Pilot Programs Only

Industry Recognized Credential
Online Career Training: CCMA

Matching Skilled Certified Clinical Medical Assistants to Top Employers

Plan your Regions Pilot Today!

FOR MORE DETAILS
Sandy Mead
734-718-2515 • smead@skilltrade.com

If you're launching a new program, scaling a solution, or tackling real-world challenges with creativity and grit, this is the place to tell that story.

It's an open door to collaborators, funders, and future partners who are building a better workforce system with you.

It's Workforce Development Month, let's have some fun showing the world who we are and what we do to power the public workforce system!

Please Note: For your convenience, all advertisements are clickable links.

Learn more about our Authors by clicking on their headshots.

**Explore and Connect
Today!**

734-331-8604

Access Ad Rates [HERE](#)



Shine a Spotlight on Your Work
Looking to build workforce partnerships?
Don't wait for them to find you—
let them know you're here.

Your audience
is here!
Make sure
they see you.

Reserve your ad space today!

Advertise in the MUS Connector and put your work
in front of Workforce Development Stakeholders

Next month's newsletter theme will
focus on:

**Building Partnerships for
Community and Economic
Development**

Questions about article submission?
We are happy to help!

734-331-8604



**FOUNDATION FOR
Talent
TRANSFORMATION**

**Empower Your Clients for
Workforce Success with
Free Assessments**

Help your clients develop self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and communication skills to thrive in today's workforce



MUS IS LOOKING FOR NEW MEMBERS!

Interested Candidates
Please Email:

Kellie Landaker
Membership Director
kellie@midwesturbanstrategies.com



We Invite Article Submissions

Authors Please
Email Melanie:
[HERE](#)

**GET INVOLVED!
GET PUBLISHED!**

MUS Connector published the
1st of every month to 2000+
Readers and counting!

melanie@midwesturbanstrategies.com

SPECIAL EVENT INVITATION

**For MUS Members and MUS
Connector Readers!**

**In Honor of Workforce
Development Month!
Coach D's is hosting another
Workforce Development 5-week
Motivation Challenge!**

New Dates:

September 15-October 13, 2025

**This experience offers a
meaningful reset, a chance to
recharge, and an opportunity to
reconnect with your why.**

**Save 20% on your registration fee when
using MUS Registration Link Below:**

[REGISTER HERE](#)



**We're still
here—offering
guidance,
technical
assistance,
and
connection.**

Let's keep moving forward together.

Even as federal funding sunsets, our commitment to YOU doesn't.
The Early Childhood Workforce Connector will continue
supporting our Apprenticeship Partners, now and always.

**High quality early childhood care changes lives
and it begins with quality training.**




**EARLY CHILDHOOD
WORKFORCE
CONNECTOR**
info@
ECWConnector.org

**Let's Stay
Connected.**

Coach D's 5-Week Motivation Challenge

**Over five weeks, Coach D will guide
participants through powerful themes:**

- Emotional intelligence
- Teamwork & morale
- Leading through change
- Coaching with impact
- Self-motivation & mindset

USE DISCOUNT CODE:

MUSChallenge

[Register Here](#)



EVENTS ■ WEBINARS ■ ANNOUNCEMENTS

CLASSIFIED SECTION:

EVENT: MUS Learning Lab: What's the Measure? September 10, 2025 at 3:00 PM (CT) Join CAEL, Midwest Urban Strategies, and Campground's Program Manager Collective for a dynamic conversation on how to define and communicate the real impact of workforce development programs. Explore strategies, share insights, and gain tools to elevate your metrics and storytelling. Suggested attendees:

Workforce leaders, nonprofit professionals, and impact-driven program managers. Celebrate Workforce Development Month by rethinking what success really looks like. Register: [Here](#)

EVENT: 5-Week Motivation Challenge with Coach D, September 15-October 13, 2025, This virtual challenge is designed to reignite passion, strengthen morale, and equip workforce professionals with tools for emotional intelligence, coaching, and leadership. Midwest Urban Strategies is proud to partner in this experience. MUS Connector readers receive a special discount, when registering, select "check availability," the 20% discount is automatically applied when you use the MUS link to register. Save your spot and register: [Here](#)

ANNOUNCEMENT: Skilltrade seeks partners to launch new Clinical Medical Assistant Career Training Pilot Programs across the country. Contact Sandy Mead to collaborate and learn more: [Here](#)

ANNOUNCEMENT: The Foundation for Talent Transformation introduces its Well-being Framework in a comparative study of global models. More About Well-being Framework: [Here](#)

ANNOUNCEMENT: Learning Labs are open to all, especially our readers. These online, expert-led sessions bring together professionals from various fields to explore key topics such as labor market statistics, early childhood education, workforce development programs, apprenticeships, and more. The best part? Learning Lab topics are selected by you—our readers and members—ensuring they remain timely and relevant. Sign up to receive an invitation to all MUS Learning Lab: [Here](#)

ANNOUNCEMENT: The MUS Connector would like to feature your success stories! Share your impact and inspire others. Submit your story: [Here](#)

ANNOUNCEMENT: MUS Wants to Hear About Your Workplace Well-Being Initiatives! We are gathering insights on how our partners support well-being in the workplace. Do you offer initiatives that help employees thrive? Share your strategies and inspire others. Submit your workplace well-being initiatives: [Here](#)

**Through the MUS Connector, we navigate challenges,
celebrate progress, and build resilience together.**

**If this issue resonated with you,
please share it with others who would benefit!**

Subscribe to MUS Connector



Share This Email



Share This Email

Midwest Urban Strategies | 890 Elm Grove Road 110-2 | Milwaukee, WI 53122 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!