MT Workforce Initiatives Tour

Participant Perspectives, Common Themes & Recommendations

Below is a summary of participant perspectives and "common themes" that emerged from the Spring 2025 MUS Workforce Initiatives Tour:

Greatest Strengths of Current Workforce Initiatives that Should Be Continued:

- Strong commitment from 2-year college leadership (Deans, CEO's, Directors) to serve local workforce development needs through MUS state-wide workforce initiatives.

- Faculty & staff professionals across the system committed to making a difference!

- Innovative pilot program "success stories" and "models of excellence" that can be shared and/or emulated across the system.
    - Year 2 Career: Innovative training programs with micro-credential pathways customized for industry employer partners.
    - Future at Work: Innovative models of High School partnerships for short term training and credential attainment.
    - Sprint Degrees: Innovative models for accelerated degree completion programs.
    - Accelerate MT: Innovative collaborative funding models that helped subsidize high demand non-credit short term training program development & delivery.

- The SHEEO Non-credit Mobility Academy & Validated Skills Training (VST) Task Force and EDL Data Collaborative development of potential non-credit glossary & taxonomy, data metrics, and target audience marketing & PR collateral.

- Successful implementation of an MUS system-wide LMS with the Instructure Canvas platform & pilot implementation of the Credentials Platform for badging and micro-credentials.

Greatest Limitations of Current Workforce Initiatives Needing to Be Addressed/Improved:

- There is a perceived need to define a set of "Priority Goals & Strategic Directions for MUS Workforce Initiatives" to guide future system-wide commitments and efforts.

- There is a perceived need for a sustainable funding model to support professional administrative leadership & staffing for workforce training and development programs and initiatives at the system level – and at each MUS institution.

- There is a perceived need for a common platform/system for recording, tracking, assessing and reporting non-credit program offerings and related enrollment, fiscal and workforce impact outcomes – or – a common policy framework for campuses to follow if a common platform is not utilized.

- There is a perceived need for a sustainable funding model to support the on-going development, delivery and continuous improvement of non-credit workforce development training courses, programs, micro-credentials, stackable credentials, non-credit to credit bridges, credit for prior learning (CPL) recognition, and degree completion pathways to support fulfillment of local and statewide workforce development needs.

- There is a perceived need for improved communication, coordination, and collaboration between MUS workforce initiatives, campuses and related stakeholders, and other state and employer-based initiatives, organizations and stakeholders involved in Montana workforce development efforts (i.e. DLI, SWIB, SNAP E & T, Governor's Office, Economic Development, Commerce, OPI, etc.)

- The following reflects other perspectives expressed by participants as suggestions / recommendations for how OCHE approaches future MUS Workforce Initiatives:

  - Some previous workforce initiatives have been too rigid or constraining in ways that prevented the college from tailoring the opportunity to the college's unique local priority goals, needs, interests and/or opportunities.
  - Some previous workforce initiatives have provided colleges with general funding incentives to support the campus's participation in the initiative, however, these resources may not have been invested in supporting the actual offices / staff / operations held responsible for fulfilling the initiative's participant outcomes.
  - Many participants expressed concern for "Initiative Fatigue" experienced by their respective campus stakeholders with limited staff already at full-capacity of workload of their current roles, and continually being asked to take on responsibilities for additional "new initiatives" without having resources to backfill or add additional capacity for the increased workload.
  - Another source of "Initiative Fatigue" expressed by participants were concerns about some campuses being expected to participate in an initiative when they wanted to focus their limited resources on other priorities and/or feeling that an MUS initiative required all campuses to be involved regardless of local needs and priorities.