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## Workforce Alliance campaigns for middle-skill job training

Pete Daly

A new study released today by The Workforce Alliance and its Skills2Compete-Michigan campaign states that Michigan will need to invest more in preparing workers for "middle-skill" jobs — those requiring more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year college degree.

"Economic downtime in Michigan must be used to invest in training time," said Andrea Ray, of The Workforce Alliance. "If Michigan seeks real economic recovery and long-term prosperity, we must ensure our workforce has the necessary education and training to meet the labor demands of the future. The recession provides a time frame for businesses and the state to be opportunistic: evaluate labor and skill needs and train and prepare for the jobs that are expected to grow."

Andy Levin, deputy director of the Michigan Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth, said the report, "Michigan's Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs," points to the need for continuing the state's No Worker Left Behind program, which helps workers acquire skills that will be necessary for the most plentiful jobs as the Michigan economy diversifies.

The report suggests that there is not enough done to support training and education for middle-skill jobs, which "currently make up the largest segment of jobs in the U.S. economy, and will continue to do so for years to come."

The Workplace Alliance used data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics to calculate that out of the 4,142,750 jobs in Michigan in 2008, 29.7 percent were high-skill, 51 percent were middle-skill, and 19.3 percent were low-skill.

High-skill jobs are defined as management, business/financial, professional and professional-related. Middle-skill jobs include police officers, fire fighters, medical technicians and therapists, air traffic controllers, electricians, mechanics, sales and sales-related jobs, office and administrative support, construction, installation and repair, factory production, transportation and material handling. Low-skill are the service jobs, plus farming, fishing, and forestry.

The Workforce Alliance is a national coalition of community-based training organizations, community colleges, unions, business leaders, local officials, and technical assistance/research organizations.

