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MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

GOVERNOR'S EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE



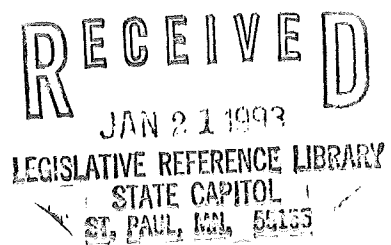
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— See Executive Order #92-1 —



MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
GOVERNOR'S EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE



OCTOBER 1992

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SPECIAL THANKS
TO ALL OF THE MANAGERS, SUPERVISORS
AND EMPLOYEES
WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE SUCCESS
OF THE GOVERNOR'S EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE,
AND SINCERE APPRECIATION TO
THE STATE'S FOUR MINORITY COUNCILS AND THE UNIONS
FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the summer of 1992, the Department of Transportation hired 300 students and adults throughout the State of Minnesota as part of the *Governor's Employment Initiative*. This program targeted employment for students and economically disadvantaged individuals. Positions paid on average \$9.00 an hour and included general laborer, clerk 1 and student worker para-professional. The program officially began on June 8, 1992 and lasted until September 8, 1992.

To reach the targeted population, Mn/DOT enlisted the help of the State's four minority councils: the Asian Pacific Council (APC), the Council on Black Minnesotans (CBM), the Indian Affairs Council (IAC) and the Spanish Speaking Affairs Council (SSAC). The councils and their community outreach groups were responsible for recruiting, interviewing and screening applicants. To qualify, students had to be at least 14 years old for clerical positions and 18 years old for laborer positions. Non-students had to be either members of families in which everyone is unemployed, be unemployed heads of households, or have family incomes less than 125 % of the lower living standard published by the U.S. Department of Labor. Those individuals who met the requirements and were judged to be good candidates were referred to Mn/DOT. Each council screened hundreds of applications to fill their 75 allotted positions. Under the program each council could hire two clerical workers to assist with the extra workload generated by the program.

The unions were important contributors to the development of the program. They negotiated pay levels and union status for employees and acted as employee advocates. They also provided recommendations which were useful in the development of program policy.

Total funding allocated for the program was \$1.7 million, which included salary costs, training, and a few additional expenses such as safety equipment and supplies. Safety boots, a requirement for laborers, were provided through private donations by Red Wing Shoe Company and monetary donations by US West and the St. Paul Companies. Donations were necessary because the union contract

does not provide for the purchase of safety boots for temporary employees.

The goal of the program was to provide a combination of benefits to the participants, including: employment, development of skills, experience, on-the-job training, classroom training, and the opportunity to meet future employers, either within or outside the state system. During the last week of the program, Mn/DOT sponsored a Career Fair, which brought together state agencies, local technical and community colleges, and council and union representatives, to provide summer program participants information and advice on career and educational opportunities.

Evaluations completed by supervisors and summer program participants concluded that the program had been successful and had benefitted the participants and Mn/DOT.

As many as 25 program participants have been retained in various temporary jobs within Mn/DOT. While all of these jobs are temporary, some of them are Rule 10 positions, which are minimum one-year appointments. Moreover, Mn/DOT supervisors are still asking for program referrals to fill other vacancies as they occur. In addition, two program participants were recently sent to a local computer company that was seeking a data entry/shipping clerk.

The program accomplished its objectives and was of value to Mn/DOT and to Minnesota. The program should be repeated at the same scale through a Mn/DOT and corporate partnership. If this cannot be done, the program should be repeated at Mn/DOT on a smaller scale, being made up of a portion of the temporary jobs the department usually fills over the course of a year.

INTRODUCTION

In the early days of his administration, Governor Arne H. Carlson met with his agency heads to discuss his objectives. High on his list of priorities was a greater emphasis on work force diversity in state government. When Commissioner James Denn first arrived at the Department of Transportation, he too talked about diversity. In fact, he identified seven goals of his administration, including one which specifically addressed diversity. That goal involved expanding the labor pool of qualified people to join Mn/DOT at all levels, providing a culture that is free from all forms of harassment and that recognizes, values and celebrates diversity. It was a pairing of these common objectives that provided Mn/DOT the basis to aggressively implement Governor Carlson's idea for a summer jobs program.

On May 15, 1992 Governor Arne H. Carlson announced new state construction contract hiring goals, which would create a minimum of 500 positions for targeted minority communities. The Governor directed the Department of Human Rights to expedite new interim hiring goals based on 1980 census data. These new hiring goals would be tracked and enforced by the Transportation and Human Rights departments. Governor Carlson had already met with Commissioner Denn, community representatives, and private and public sector officials to discuss other solutions to the problem of unemployment among minorities and youth.

One solution was the creation of a summer jobs program which would provide experience and income to those in need. Consequently, on May 20th, Commissioner James Denn announced the Transportation Department's intention to provide statewide 300 positions for students and other qualified individuals. This program, called the *Governor's Employment Initiative*, would enable Mn/DOT to diversify its population while offering job opportunities to students and the economically disadvantaged segments of the population. It would additionally give Mn/DOT the opportunity to expand its work force to include persons with diverse knowledge and skills.

In light of the financial constraints under which Mn/DOT had been operating, the *Governor's Employment Initiative* was viewed as a short term solution. As this program was being developed, Commissioner Denn was working on a different, longer term initiative called "*Seeds*," an outreach program intended for minority and economically disadvantaged youth. (See Appendix A.) Commissioner Denn viewed *Seeds* as a valuable means of achieving steady, planned, long term growth in the numbers of qualified minority employees at Mn/DOT.

While the Governor's Employment Initiative was limited in what it could do to effect permanent employment, the fact remains that more than 300 people found a respite from unemployment and an opportunity to be self reliant. Many people, knowing full well that this was a three-month job, saw it as an opportunity to get training, experience, employment contacts and a chance for a better life. The state also set an example that could be emulated by private industry. It demonstrated compassion and responsibility for actively attending to and investing in our collective future.

PROGRAM PLANNING AND NEGOTIATIONS

Minority Council Involvement

The first step in creating a summer program was to effectively reach the targeted populations. To help in this effort, Mn/DOT enlisted the aid of the State's four minority councils: the Asian Pacific Council (APC), the Council on Black Minnesotans (CBM), the Indian Affairs Council (IAC) and the Spanish Speaking Affairs Council (SSAC). Working with the councils aided in reaching certain communities; it also allowed Mn/DOT to consolidate and expedite recruitment efforts to meet an extremely short lead time for hiring. The councils were initially responsible for recruiting and screening all applicants for the program. However, their role in the program grew into a partnership that assisted both Mn/DOT and the program participants. They did supplemental recruiting, provided employee counseling, and acted in an advisory capacity to the Program Coordinator.

Eligibility Requirements

Before the actual recruiting began, it was necessary to develop criteria which would provide the basis for applicant screening. While it is legal to target groups of people for hiring, it is generally illegal to exclude groups of people for hiring. Therefore, it was appropriate that the program include all groups, regardless of race. To deal with the issue of legally targeting specific groups, the following criteria were agreed upon, and determined to comply with federal and state equal opportunity and affirmative action laws and regulations. These guidelines were reviewed with the executive directors of the four minority councils -- Dr. Albert V. De Leon (APC), Lester Collins (CBM), Roger Head (IAC), and Eduardo Wolle (SSAC). Anyone meeting one of these requirements was welcome to apply.

Eligibility Requirements (Must meet one of the following criteria.)

- Members of families in which everyone is unemployed.
- Unemployed heads of households.
- Students ages 14 and over for clerical jobs, ages 18 and over for laborer and student worker jobs. (Financial criteria were not applied to student hires. They were only required to be enrolled in an accredited academic institution.)
- Members of families whose income is less than 125% of the lower living standard published by the U.S. Department of Labor.

Using these criteria, Mn/DOT hired a wide variety of people. Following is a profile based on race and gender.

PROFILE BY RACE						
Race	APC	CBM	IAC	SSAC	Total	%
Asian	58				58	19
Black		68			68	23
Caucasian	14	9	3	18	44	15
Hispanic		1		53	54	18
Indian			76		76	25
Total	72	78	79	71	300	100

Union Involvement

PROFILE BY GENDER						
Gender	APC	CBM	IAC	SSAC	Total	%
Female	21	17	30	20	88	29
Male	51	61	49	51	212	71
Total	72	78	79	71	300	100

Mn/DOT, like most other state agencies, is experiencing financial difficulties, and some areas of the department had decided not to fill many of the seasonal positions that are usually filled. This is important because Mn/DOT could not move forward with developing this program to hire new people and not recall its seasonal workers. Working very closely with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Council 6, Mn/DOT agreed to recall all seasonal laborers before filling the 300 positions created for the program. This was a very important step in creating a partnership between Mn/DOT and the unions that would last for the duration of the program.

The unions made many valuable contributions. They participated in discussions about pay levels and union status for the summer employees. Ultimately pay levels were based on the contract and employees were included in the union. Some of the bargaining units developed amended (fast track) grievance procedures with Mn/DOT's labor relations manager, to ensure prompt attention and resolution of grievances. Other bargaining units chose to use existing grievance procedures. Also, before the commencement of the program, the AFSCME Council 6 was instrumental in developing a set of recommendations that they felt would benefit both the summer workers and Mn/DOT's regular employees (see Appendix B). These recommendations were very important to the program. Following are some of the recommendations:

Safety Boots

- Summer laborers would be integrated into the work force and work must be meaningful.
- Training, on some level, would be given in the areas of safety, sexual harassment, and drug and alcohol abuse.
- Special grievance procedures would be enacted when disputes arouse.
- Four union representatives would be placed on special assignment to assist the program participants.

Another major issue was safety boots. Safety Directive 92-1 requires certain Mn/DOT employees to wear protective footwear which is purchased by the employee and reimbursed by Mn/DOT. However, only permanent/probationary employees qualify for the reimbursement. Approximately 200 temporary laborers in the summer program would have been required to purchase their own safety boots. Yet many of these employees would not be able to afford boots, which cost on average \$80.00 a pair.

Mn/DOT decided that donation of the approximate 200 safety boots would be the best solution. Besides providing the workers with the safety boots at no cost, it demonstrated that public/private partnerships can work. Red Wing Shoe Company initiated the contributions by donating approximately 90 pairs of safety boots and U.S. West Foundation and the St. Paul Companies followed by offering to pay for the additional boots. To expedite the purchasing process, the Non-Profit Assistance Fund - Minneapolis Foundation loaned \$7,000 to Mn/DOT, allowing immediate purchase of the boots. The cost of the additional boots was split between U.S. West Foundation and the St. Paul companies, and the loan was repaid. The total cost for all the safety boots, those bought and donated, was approximately \$16,000.

Budget

The program was scheduled to begin on June 8 and to last to September 8 -- approximately three months. Funding allocated to the program totaled \$1.7 million. The program did not affect maintenance or equipment budgets. These were points of concern for the unions and many employees. Costs included salary, training and safety equipment and supplies. The vast majority of the budget paid salaries; however, some of the districts requested assistance to cover unanticipated expenses. For example, the Metro Division which accepted one-third of the total placements, requested \$100,000 to lease vans, and a ¾ ton truck, to purchase paint, gloves, weed whips and other tools and equipment to adequately supply the summer employees. In addition, \$20,000 was budgeted for training.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The program's short term objectives were to provide meaningful, necessary work and reasonable compensation. Other objectives which were intended to have further reaching impact were:

- On-the-job training and skills development in an office or maintenance environment.
- Classroom training on commonly used software packages.
- Extended employment (where resources allow) for those individuals who showed promise and accomplishment.
- Exposure to Mn/DOT with its varied functions, responsibilities and employment opportunities.
- Employment in the public or private sector, by offering forums that would present options.
- Strengthening the alliance with the State's minority councils and their constituent groups, to broaden Mn/DOT's base of future applicants.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Positions Offered

Mn/DOT offered three position types, at the following pay rates:

POSITION	PAY
Clerk 1	\$9.17
General Laborer 1	\$9.45
Student Worker Para-Profess./Tech	\$8.75
Student Worker Para-Profess./Other	\$8.75

The 300 positions were distributed equally throughout the State, with approximately 100 each allocated to the Central Office (St. Paul area), the Metropolitan Division and the seven Greater Minnesota districts. See chart below.

AREA DISTRIBUTION						
	APC	CBM	IAC	SSAC	Total	%
Central Office	22	23	23	17	85	28
Metro Division	20	37	21	26	104	35
Greater MN Dist.	28	16	33	26	103	34
Council Support Staff	2	2	2	2	8	3
Total	72	78	79	71	300	100

Classification distributions were based on needs expressed in a supervisory needs evaluation. Of the classifications offered, the clerical positions had the least restrictive requirements. Outside of the specific financial requirements, applicants needed be at least 14 years old. Duties included filing, typing, answering the telephone and other standard clerical activities. The laborer position made up two-thirds of the placements. This position required applicants to be at least 18 years old with some positions requiring a driver license. Laborers performed roadside and building maintenance work. The student worker positions were the most selective. They needed skills in areas such as engineering, computers, accounting and research. Some supervisors requested specific computer languages and hardware experience. Many of these requests were filled with little problem. Below is the final classification distribution.

CLASSIFICATION DISTRIBUTION						
	APC	CBM	IAC	SSAC	Total	%
Clerical	12	18	17	18	65	22
Laborer	45	56	50	52	203	67
SWPP	15	4	12	1	32	11
Total	72	78	79	71	300	100

Hiring Process

Increasing Mn/DOT's work force by 300 individuals could normally take several months. However, the summer program did not have the luxury of time. To get a sense of the time constraints under which this program began, a chronology of the program is outlined below:

- May 8** Governor Carlson asked Commissioner Denn to identify summer employment opportunities within Mn/DOT.
- May 11** Meetings held with minority councils and constituent groups.
- May 20-26** Applications were accepted by the minority councils and their designated groups.
- May 27-31** Each council narrowed down their selections to 75. These selections were made based on agreed upon economic criteria, age restrictions and job requirements.
- June 1** Applications were delivered to Mn/DOT's Office of Human Resources.
- June 1-5** Mn/DOT teams further screened applications and matched them with specific vacancies.
- June 8** New employees attended orientation and began work.
- June 22-26** Second round of placements and hiring.

The program was publicized through the councils and via news releases. Applications were accepted at locations throughout the Twin Cities, in Mankato, Rochester and Duluth (see Appendix C). The response was very positive. For the 300 positions, the councils and their representative community groups, accepted over 1,800 applications. Each council was then left with the task of screening candidates. Following is the approximate number of applications received per council:

COUNCIL	APPLICATIONS RECEIVED
Asian Pacific Council	450
Council on Black Minnesotans	500
Indian Affairs Council	607
Spanish Speaking Affairs Council	300

Placements

There was some difficulty in filling the out-state positions. The councils were aware of the available positions in Duluth, Bemidji, Brainerd, St. Cloud, Detroit Lakes, Morris, Rochester, Mankato and Willmar. However, not all of the councils had established networks in these areas. Therefore, recruiting in these areas was more complicated. At the end of the first recruitment/placement phase (June 1-5), positions remained open throughout the districts and a few in the Central Office. By the end of the second recruitment/placement phase (June 22-26), vacancies still remained in the districts. This resulted from the difficulty in balancing the number of positions allocated to each council with placement factors such as location, skills, age and driving status. At this point, due to time constraints and the desire to fill all positions as quickly as possible, the districts were allowed to recruit directly from their communities, using local minority outreach groups when possible in order to maintain the objectives and spirit of the program.

A certain amount of employee turnover occurred throughout the program. The reasons varied widely. Some of the employees left because they were able to find permanent employment; one young person had child-care problems and could not continue to work; one young man left because his community collected money to send him to school; others left because they did not match very well with the jobs; and others left for unknown reasons. In order to provide as many opportunities as possible, the Program Coordinator continued to fill vacancies as often as they occurred until late into the program. Consequently, as many as 340 people participated at one time or another.

Orientation

To facilitate the implementation of the summer program, an orientation was held for supervisors. There were representatives from Central Office, the Metro Division, and three unions, AFSCME, MMA, and MGEC. The objective was to provide a program overview, to discuss support resources that were available, to demonstrate management and union support and to answer questions. Similar presentations were conducted in each district by the district staff and coordinators.

An employee orientation was presented on June 8th. One session for Central Office employees was held at the State Office Building; the Metro employees met at the Earle Brown Center. The employees were divided into clerical, laborer, and student worker paraprofessional groups. Human resource information was presented. Topics included sexual harassment, work force diversity, agency policies, employee safety and right-to-know information. At the end of the orientation, employees were introduced to their office managers and supervisors. Program coordinators in the districts did similar orientation for their employees.

Transportation

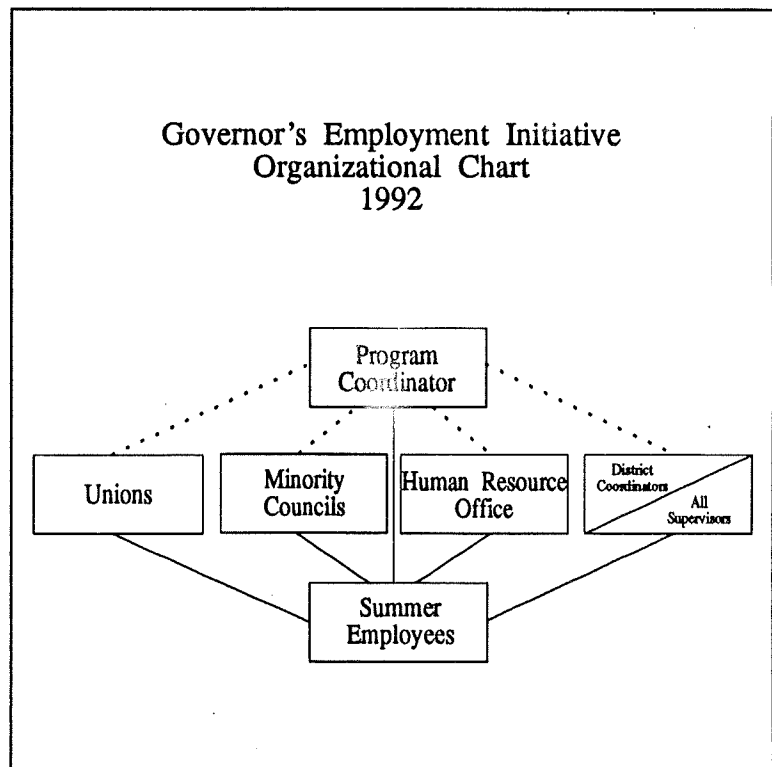
Transportation was a concern during the first few weeks of the program. There were employees for whom getting to the work site was a problem. Initially the Program Coordinator rented a car from Central Motor Pool and assigned two drivers to transport some of the employees to the Golden Valley headquarters, Materials Lab, and Fort Snelling. Some of Mn/DOT's supervisors and employees even volunteered to pool employees from the Central Office to other work sites in the metro area. This spirit of cooperation was very helpful to the program and exemplary of Mn/DOT employees working to achieve a common objective.

The Program Coordinator was concerned about giving the appearance of special treatment for the summer employees and therefore announced a plan to charge the equivalent of bus fare for the shuttle service and to deposit "fares" into the trunk highway fund. However, upon realizing how few people would need this service after the initial few weeks, the service was discontinued.

The Metro Division leased vans to transport employees to work sites. Employees were responsible for getting to the headquarters building and were picked up there. This is not an unusual practice. Mn/DOT workers typically report to a site using their own vehicle and then are taken to a work site in a Mn/DOT vehicle.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

The program structure consisted of a network of managers, supervisors (including district coordinators), and human resource professionals. Each person or group had well defined responsibilities but demonstrated flexibility as circumstances and experiences dictated. In addition to Mn/DOT resources, the program structure was enhanced by the participation of the minority councils and unions.



Program Coordinator

The Human Resource office, originally charged with the task of organizing the program and hiring the employees, turned coordinating responsibilities over to a Program Coordinator. This was an unclassified position appointed from May 26 -September 23, 1992. Responsibilities included:

- Planning and developing long term and short range objectives.
- Providing coordination and policy information to district program coordinators.
- Acting as a liaison with the Governor's & Commissioner's Office, the minority councils, community organizations, legislative and state agencies.
- Working with labor relations issues (union and management).
- Media relations.
- Dealing with sensitive issues (community groups, councils, affirmative action).
- Budgeting and financial management.
- Marketing the program within Mn/DOT.
- Developing recognition and incentive programs.
- Coordinating additional recruiting and placements as employee turnover occurred.
- Coaching/counseling program employees.
- Developing tools to evaluate overall program effectiveness.
- Establishing/reinforcing an organizational tone and positive attitude regarding the program.

District Coordinators

On a weekly basis, the labor relations manager, the affirmative action manager, and the Program Coordinator participated in a telephone conference call with the district coordinators. District coordinators were individuals who were selected to organize district hiring and to deal with other issues involving the summer program. The conference calls provided a timely means of sharing program policies and information. The topics covered included recruiting, placement, orientation, drivers license requirements, safety, training, grievance resolution and participant retention.

Metropolitan Division

The Metro Division operated extremely efficiently, particularly when considering they placed one-third of the entire program. They demonstrated commitment and outstanding cooperation on numerous occasions. For example, after the initial placements were made, the Program Coordinator was informed that 10 priority placements had not been forwarded to Mn/DOT. Even though the Metro had all of the

placements they had requested, they willingly accepted the additional employees.

Moreover, the Metro Division was frequently relied upon because of its meticulous record-keeping whenever information was needed for the councils, or in preparing interim reports.

Minority Councils

The councils played several significant roles in the summer program. They were the primary recruiting, selecting and referring agents for the program. In addition, they acted as liaison between Mn/DOT and the many community organizations also involved with receiving applications. The councils also acted as advocates for the summer employees; whenever problems arose, council representatives stepped in to work with the Program Coordinator and the employees as necessary. This role was very beneficial to Mn/DOT. This communication link with the Program Coordinator, the union stewards and the employees served the following purposes:

- In the program's early stages, to fill vacancies as turnover occurred.
- To satisfy the councils' concerns about the well being of their referrals.
- To assist in the resolution of problems at manageable stages.

Unions

Council 6 took an extra step in efforts to ensure program success. They appointed four union stewards to work directly with each of the minority councils and the employees recommended by the councils. This relationship provided a useful support system that gave employees another resource and assistance with problems. The unions also served to allay concerns of the traditional or permanent employees, who questioned the impact of this summer program on their own status and future.

Human Resource Office

Mn/DOT's Human Resource (HR) office was crucial in hiring and initial placing of the summer employees as well as in the development of the program. They were involved with initial meetings and planning with the minority councils and the unions. They surveyed the department to determine work force needs and advised top management on the number of positions, the types of positions and the costs for maintaining a program of this magnitude. They managed the complicated logistics of placing 300 people in positions throughout the

State, coordinating with the Department of Employee Relations, Job Services and the unions.

The HR office developed the organizational structure of the program, organized the orientation programs and, whenever needed, advised the program coordinator on human resource related matters. More than ten HR staff members were involved in the *Governor's Employment Initiative* in some capacity.

The Affirmative Action Manager was a key player in advising the Program Coordinator and HR staff on many issues. She provided advice and information regarding compliance with current affirmative action and equal opportunity laws and procedures.

The Labor Relations Manager was an important advisor to the Program Coordinator, to supervisors and to district coordinators. He worked with AFSCME Council 6 to develop an accelerated grievance procedure. He was an important provider of information during the weekly program coordinator conference calls, and he was part of the team that worked with the unions when the program was being planned.

Mentors

In discussing the resources available to program employees, it is appropriate to mention mentoring. The mentoring program was discussed during program orientation, and a memo was mailed to each supervisor letting them know how they could initiate this program in their area. Guidelines for choosing mentors or a "buddy" were also sent.

In some areas, especially Mankato, the "buddy" system was implemented. The employees felt that the mentoring assisted them in learning the job as well as in other situations where they needed informal information.

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

One of the goals of the program was to put employees in a position to find employment after the program ended. Various efforts were undertaken to help the employees expand their experiences, skills and knowledge while at Mn/DOT. Classroom and on-the-job training are detailed below.

Classroom Training

WordPerfect

Six Wordperfect training classes were taught by the Systems and Administration Service's Office Automation Section. Some employees were expected to use WordPerfect on the job and found it particularly helpful. Two classes were also held at the St. Paul Technical Institute to meet the high level of interest in this training.

Paradox

Six summer employees participated in an Introduction to Paradox class which was taught at Mn/DOT by an instructor from the St. Paul Technical Institute. The class topics included planning and defining table structures; creating, editing and modifying tables; and creating forms and reports. The employees who were interested in working with databases found this class useful.

Keyboarding

Two basic keyboarding classes were held at the St. Paul Technical Institute. Employees with no previous experience with keyboarding or with computers benefitted from this class. They were taught all the basics to help them develop new marketable skills.

On-the-Job Training

On the job training accounted for the largest percentage of training and perhaps the greatest impact on the experiences and skill development of the summer employees. This "training" included things as basic as work expectations: that employees would come to work everyday or call to notify supervisors when they were ill. It also included hands on experience with fork lifts and various hand tools

Employee Development

and, of course, office equipment, such as facsimile machines, copiers, typewriters and personal computers.

Some employees were trained on 4-wheel-drive tractors used for ditch-digging and landscaping. Others were taught to use a fork lift, maintenance of roadway elements (such as guardrail and pavement), and implementation of the proper work zone safety techniques. A few pursued and acquired their commercial driver's license (CDL), a document required for eligibility in certain classifications.

Career Seminar

Career Seminars were presented by Carol Sheehan, Office of Human Resources, one in the Central Office and two in the Metro. These seminars presented techniques on how to identify and apply for positions in state service, how to prepare for and take state exams, how to conduct a job search, and tips for interviewing. All sessions were well attended and the employees found the sessions beneficial. A special handout was provided which contained many sources and telephone numbers to contact for more information.

Commercial Drivers License Information Session

Darrel Leach, Contract Administration, did presentations on how to obtain a CDL and endorsements, one held in the Central Office and two in the Metro. This was useful information because a CDL is required for many Mn/DOT positions. The CDL presentation provided clear information on the importance and marketability of this credential.

Career Fair

About 110 employees from the Central Office and the Metro attended a career fair at the Kelly Inn in St. Paul. An important part of the program was to make as much information as possible available about long term opportunities. For this reason four state agencies, seven technical and community colleges, minority council representatives, and union representatives were brought together to discuss possible career and educational alternatives.

The fair included time for networking at booths as well as presentations by each of the state agencies. The Department of Employee Relations made a presentation on the "Nuts and Bolts" of state hiring. The Department of Jobs and Training explained how they could be used as a free public employment service. Representatives from the Departments of Corrections and Human Services discussed career opportunities in their agencies.

Supervisor Focus Group

PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

In analyzing program support and the program itself, a key component was the role and cooperation of the first line supervisor. To examine the supervisor's perspective on the program, three supervisor focus groups were held, two in the Central Office and one in the Metro. These sessions discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the *Governor's Employment Initiative*. A modified SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) format was utilized, simply focusing on strengths and weaknesses.

About thirty supervisors participated in the meetings; other supervisors were asked to complete evaluation forms. The supervisors' perspectives are important because they were the people working directly with the summer employees. The meeting format divided supervisors into small groups to discuss the strengths and weaknesses and then one member reported back to the large group. Facilitators were used to assist the smaller groups during their discussions.

Strengths

Supervisors felt the program benefitted both Mn/DOT and the summer employees. It was an excellent way to accomplish tasks that would not have normally been accomplished due to time and staffing constraints. The summer employees gave fresh and different perspective on how some jobs could be done. They also provided Mn/DOT the opportunity to work with different cultures and ideas.

The summer employees gained valuable experience and training while employed at Mn/DOT. It was a great chance for them to learn how the civil service system works and a chance to take a closer look at the many jobs within this system.

Supervisors' Written Evaluations

Weaknesses

Many of the supervisors felt that the process for reviewing and screening applications could be improved to ensure that applicants were hired in the appropriate category (clerical, student worker, laborer). This could have made it easier to determine work assignments according to skill levels. The supervisor orientation was also perceived as very negative, that is, supervisors were given worse case scenarios, which led them to believe that program participants would be poor workers, creating pessimism toward the program in the beginning.

Other comments and questions during discussion of weaknesses focused on the perception that some program participants were not economically disadvantaged, insufficient impact on the unemployment situation, and insufficient numbers of permanent jobs to allow for retention of large numbers of program participants. There were also feelings that the wages paid to those under 18 were too high.

The supervisors who were unable or chose not to attend a focus group were mailed "Supervisor Evaluation Forms" (see Appendix D). The questionnaire covered the same basic questions discussed at the focus group meetings. Responses and recommendations were very similar.

Strengths

Some of the strengths included Mn/DOT becoming aware of the talent available, allowing young people to gain experience in the work place and giving Mn/DOT more exposure to cultural diversity.

Weaknesses

The weaknesses supervisors were concerned about included issues such as the time period being too short to fully train employees, an excessive wage for the level of skill or the age of some of the employees, and the lack of lead time in developing the program. Better planning for future years would be beneficial.

Employees' Follow-up Forms

Each employee was asked to fill out an employee follow-up form to get their feedback. The return rate was 40%. The questions on the form (see Appendix E) included:

- a) Was the type of work what they had expected?
- b) What could have been done to make learning the job easier?
- c) What they enjoyed most about the job?
- d) What they did not enjoy about the job?

Overall, the responses from the employees were excellent. Most felt that Mn/DOT was a great place to work and that many opportunities had been available to them. The employees also filled out a skill list sheet (see Appendix F) that identifies their office skills, computer skills, laborer related skills, and any other skills they wanted to list. This information should be entered into a database that can be used when future Mn/DOT jobs are available.

ISSUES

There are several issues which developed during the summer. The issues came from meetings with the unions, supervisory focus groups, employees and task force groups. Some of these issues reach beyond Mn/DOT's scope, but others are issues that Mn/DOT can address. Following are issue summaries and alternatives:

Employee Concerns

Some permanent employees had the perception that program employees were in some way a risk to their jobs. Some also felt that preferential treatment was given in areas such as transportation, training, work safety boots, and equipment.

A program this size draws considerable attention to the participants. Fact sheets to the employees, focus groups with employees and open communication before and during such a program can help reduce fears.

Transportation

It was difficult for some employees to get to and from their work sites. Some did not have vehicles or live near public transportation. In some cases where there was public transportation, it would take in excess of 1½ hours to reach a work site. In other cases, some Mn/DOT work sites do not have public transportation nearby.

Better screening (more time) would allow Mn/DOT to place employees at work sites which have public transportation nearby or at work sites closer to their homes.

Supervisor Orientation

Many of the supervisors attending the orientation session perceived some presentations as too negative. Supervisors were told of employee limitations as opposed to employee potential.

This kind of program can only be as successful as people believe it will be, and negative expectations carry over to the attitudes of the employees. Mn/DOT must approach this kind of effort positively. (The success of this program should provide the basis for a much more positive approach in the future.)

Supervisors also thought that the orientation was too long and that there was too wide a range of orientation for one group.

The orientation format could be improved by dividing it into two sessions and streamlining the presentations.

Pay Level

Many discussions revolved around the issue of pay levels, particularly for many of the younger employees. They asked, is it realistic to pay 14 year-olds \$9 per hour? Will they be willing to work at McDonalds next summer?

Mn/DOT should explore the possibility of creating a job classification for high school students at a lower pay rate. For example, it would be a greater public service to employ 600 young people at \$4.50 per hour than 300 at \$9.00 per hour.

Did We Reach The People?

The name of the program changed a few times. In the beginning it was called an urban youth program, a minority program, an economically disadvantaged program and finally the *Governor's Employment Initiative*. The program's criteria focused on the economically disadvantaged. However, many employees expressed concern that the program gave jobs to some who were not economically disadvantaged.

It is difficult to determine how well the minority councils screened financial requirements. This area could be improved by clarification of criteria and having a trained human resources professional work more closely with the referral agencies to ensure that target groups are hired.

Rain Days

Supervisors normally find alternative work for employees when inclement weather prevents normal outdoor duties. The unions question whether the same effort was made for the summer program employees before they were sent home.

This was an issue at least once this summer. Whether rain days can be saved for training or some other indoor activity, is a decision that supervisors must make. However, some additional opportunity for program planning might identify meaningful alternatives which would allow employees to work every day of the program.

Discipline

Some supervisors did not take the time to correct inappropriate behavior. They felt because they were dealing with a temporary employee, such corrective actions would be wasted.

It is unfair to the employee who is not coached, counseled and, if necessary, disciplined, if he or she is to learn what is expected in an employment setting. It should be stressed during program orientation and in supervisor training that temporary employees will benefit when policies, rules, and basic work expectations are enforced.

Work Incentive Barriers

Employees from families who were receiving some public assistance were adversely affected by earning money for the summer. Depending upon specific circumstances, rents might increase substantially, food stamp amounts might decrease, AFDC might be eliminated completely or reduced based on earnings.

This issue is outside of Mn/DOT's authority to resolve. However, other agencies with appropriate authority should be aware that these issues arose, and possibly some corrective measures could be implemented. For example, aid decreases should be equal or proportionate to earning increases. The timing of aid adjustments should be related to the timing of employment, so that gaps are not created which would inhibit one's ability to manage food and shelter payments. Red tape should be eliminated so as not to be a disincentive to employment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After considering the benefits and the drawbacks of a Mn/DOT summer jobs program, it is our recommendation that a program of this type was valuable and should be repeated. The primary benefit to participants can be summarized as opportunity -- opportunity to earn an equitable wage, opportunity to acquire new skills, opportunity to be exposed to an organization like Mn/DOT, with its employment possibilities. The primary benefit to Mn/DOT can also be summarized as opportunity -- opportunity to employ a segment of the work force that has not been part of the mainstream, opportunity to expose young minds to employment options in the transportation industry, and opportunity to diversify its work force to include a broader variety of people and talents.

The fact that state government will continue to operate within a climate of limited financial resources cannot be ignored. However, this situation should not be a barrier to the continuation of the Mn/DOT summer jobs program if alternative funding can be found. Earlier in this report, reference was made to the public/private partnership formed to acquire safety boots. It is recommended that further efforts be made to expand the involvement of the corporate community by exploring means by which additional financial support can be obtained to duplicate or exceed the scope of the *Governor's 1992 Employment Initiative*.

An alternative to a full scale program is one where the scope could be adjusted to include fewer participants who would work for Mn/DOT for a longer period of time. This would reduce costs, while giving longer term employment and training to those who are hired. Either approach would complement the *Seeds* program mentioned in the introduction, and allow Mn/DOT to build on the positive momentum of the *Governor's Employment Initiative*.

The overall administration of the program would also improve with the following modifications:

- The program should take place year round, targeting students during the summer months, and adults all year. For adults, strict adherence to eligibility requirements should be enforced to ensure that targeted groups are employed.
- A full-time project manager would be necessary if a full scale program is implemented. The project manager would be responsible for the design, development and implementation of the program. For a lesser scale program, a part-time coordinator could manage the same responsibilities with support from the HR office.
- To facilitate the integration of program participants into the work force, supervisors should be involved in the screening process (example: select from 2 or 3 interviews). This would ensure that the supervisors feel empowered and committed to making the program work.
- Participants could be given rotation assignments. This would allow participants the opportunity to develop and explore a variety of skills in different parts of the department, similar to the graduate engineer rotation program.
- An interest shared among Mn/DOT, AFSCME Council 6, and the minority councils is the development the Highway Maintenance Worker Trainee Program. This program would provide on-the-job training for applicants who have traditionally performed poorly on the maintenance worker exam because they lack relevant experiences. Mn/DOT should aggressively move to implement the program.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Seeds

Seeds is an outreach program intended for minority and economically disadvantaged youth in the inner city neighborhoods of Minneapolis/St. Paul and communities in greater Minnesota with concentrations of minorities. *Seeds* is a partnership with the schools. Its objective is to bring young people into the organization in various student worker jobs, provide them with training, mentoring and long term employment while they are in school, and offer the strong possibility of full-time work after they complete their education.

APPENDIX B

AFSCME'S RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Union believes the summer laborers should be integrated into the work force. Jobs should be meaningful work.
2. The number of work sites to integrate these employees into are twenty-one (21) work areas.
3. We believe there should be four (4) work days of training (which should include safety, sexual harassment, drug and alcohol, types of work given by Mn/DOT supervisors and maintenance employees, Traffic Control, Appendix "B").
4. All safety equipment shall be given to new employees.
5. The Union will appoint four (4) stewards on special assignment for the protected groups as a contact for problems.
6. These employees will be put into the Union right away.
7. Rather than the Union Contract Grievance Procedure Article, the Union, the State, and the hiring groups shall comprise a panel to settle all disputes. No arbitration or contract grievance procedure shall be used. The "Panel" shall consist of one Mn/DOT management representative, one Union representative, and one member of the community organization. This is not precedent setting, nor shall it be construed as a permanent waiver of our Contract Grievance Procedure.
8. All contract issues shall be discussed and settled with the Union and Mn/DOT management.
9. Reporting and ending times? FLSA
10. All laborers currently on the layoff/recall list shall be recalled prior to the start of the program.
11. All representatives of affected bargaining units shall have a meeting with the department prior to the implementation of the program.
12. There shall be a meeting with supervisors, the Union representatives, and intermittents in all affected work areas prior to the implementation date of the program to discuss issues.

APPENDIX B (cont.)

13. These laborers will be assigned all unskilled duties of the work sites they are assigned, per the Dave Ekern Study. Any Class 33 and above equipment shall not be operated by these employees.
14. It is our understanding this is a one-time summer program. If the State desires to continue this program beyond this summer or extend this program in any way, it shall meet and confer with the Union prior to implementation/continuation.

APPENDIX C

APPLICATIONS FOR SUMMER JOBS WERE ACCEPTED AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS:

Twin Cities:

Minneapolis Urban League
South Area:
409 E. 38th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55409

North Area:
2000 Plymouth Ave. N.
Minneapolis, MN 55411

St. Paul Urban League
401 Selby Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55102

Council on Black Minnesotans
Suite 426, Wright Building
2233 University Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55114

CLUES
2020 Snelling
Minneapolis, MN 55404

Centro Cultural Chicano
2201 Nicollet Avenue S.
Minneapolis, MN 55404

Asian-Pacific Council
Suite 100 Meridian Bank Building
205 Aurora Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55103

Anishinabe
Council of Job Developers, Inc.
3010 Bloomington Avenue S.
Minneapolis, MN 55407

American Indian Special Project
St. Paul Adult Community
Education Center
494 Sibley Avenue, 4th Floor
St. Paul, MN 55101

CLUES
220 S. Robert Street
St. Paul, MN 55107

Neighborhood House
179 E. Robie Street
St. Paul, MN 55107

Duluth:

Sunlee Beede
Refugee Center
1730 E. Superior
Duluth, MN 55812

Rochester:

Ponnareay Peng
617 7th Street S.W.
Rochester, MN 55902

Mankato:

Dr. Soon-Ki Lee
Intercultural Center
Mankato State University
Mankato, MN 56001

APPENDIX D

**SUPERVISOR EVALUATION FORM
SUMMER JOB PROGRAM**

PLEASE LIST ABOUT FIVE STRENGTHS OF THE SUMMER PROGRAM:

PLEASE LIST ABOUT FIVE WEAKNESSES OF THE SUMMER PROGRAM:

**DO YOU HAVE ANY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ANY OF THE WEAKNESSES YOU
HAVE LISTED?**

NAME: _____ **(OPTIONAL)**

PLEASE RETURN TO KAY FRIEZ, CENTRAL OFFICE ROOM 308

APPENDIX E

SUMMER EMPLOYEE FOLLOW-UP FORM

INSTRUCTIONS: EMPLOYEES PLEASE FILL OUT THIS FOLLOW-UP FORM AND SEND TO KAY FRIEZ, CENTRAL OFFICE ROOM 308 (VIA INTEROFFICE MAIL). THIS INFORMATION WILL NOT BE SEEN BY YOUR SUPERVISORS UNLESS YOU FEEL LIKE SHARING IT WITH THEM. PLEASE FILL IN AS MUCH INFORMATION AS YOU CAN. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT WE GET YOUR FEEDBACK ON THIS PROGRAM. THANK YOU!

1. Was the type of work what you had expected?

___ YES ___ NO

2. What was different about the job from what you had expected?

3. Was the work (check one):

___ Difficult ___ Too Easy ___ Just Right

4. Were you given adequate instruction on how to perform the work?

___ YES ___ NO

5. Was the learning pace (check one):

___ Too Fast ___ Too Slow ___ Just Right

6. What could have been done differently to make learning the job easier?

APPENDIX E (cont.)

7. What did you enjoy most about the job?

8. What did you not enjoy about the job?

9. Do you feel your supervisor provided clear work direction?

___ YES ___ NO

COMMENTS _____

NAME _____ OFFICE _____

Laborer: ___ Clerical: ___ SWPP: ___

SUMMER EMPLOYEE SKILL LIST

This information will be entered into a database that will be used when future Mn/DOT jobs are available. Be as complete and descriptive as you can about your skills. Write N/A if something does not apply to you.

Send this form and the Summer Employee Follow-up form to KAY FRIEZ, CENTRAL OFFICE ROOM 308 (via interoffice mail).

YOUR NAME: _____

LIST YOUR OFFICE SKILLS (example: typing, answering phones, ...):

LIST YOUR LABORER RELATED SKILLS (example: equipment or machinery you can operate, ...):

LIST COMPUTER PACKAGES OR LANGUAGES THAT YOU KNOW (example: WordPerfect, Lotus, Paradox, Basic, Cobol, ...):

LIST ANY OTHER SKILLS YOU WOULD LIKE US TO KNOW ABOUT:

THANK YOU!