

Commission to End Poverty By 2020  
**Group 1: Achieving Economic Self-Sufficiency**  
Discussion Summary of 6/3 Meeting  
*(prepared by Stacy Becker)*

### **Common Themes**

1. **See people as assets** to society, not problems to be solved. Seek the potential in people, and support them in achieving it.
2. Look to **collaborative efforts** that address poverty through broad-based participation of individuals, organizations and institutions throughout Minnesota—private, non-profit and public.
3. Allow for **“customization”** in service delivery, and disaggregate populations in policy-making. The circumstances of poverty vary with individuals and communities; the same solutions will not work for everyone.
4. Acknowledge the importance of **support systems**—people need ongoing support from the community and their peers to overcome the challenges they face.
5. Recognize that our **economy has changed** and base policies on these economic realities.
6. Give people and institutions the **incentives to do the “right” thing**—encouraging responsibility and empowerment, and building the community and personal relationships necessary for individuals in poverty to succeed. In reverse, make sure that our policies don’t create unintended problems by encouraging the wrong behaviors.
7. **Target resources** to those most in need—make sure that the methodology of programs understands how the delivery of services works in reality.
8. **Build on what’s working**, as well as those things we’ve invested in that make a real difference in people’s lives.

### **Key Components of Any Plan to End Poverty**

1. For a select group of people, **intensive, ongoing support/services** will be needed. We need a different type of case-management that allows for effective counseling and support.
2. The **development of human capital** is critical to attracting and retaining high wage jobs in Minnesota (i.e., jobs locate where the human capital is).
3. We must aim to educate students past high school, to **include post-secondary education** of some sort.
4. There will continue to be a group of workers for whom work won’t pay (and in jobs vital to our economy), so **income support systems** will be indispensable to eliminating poverty.

## Possible Ideas

### Education—Human Capital

1. View early education as important to ending poverty, and make sure that more low-income children have access to it.
2. Reconsider the teacher licensing requirements for early childhood education, perhaps creating a different version of licensure. Can there be “community” experts?”
3. Support/create allowances and scholarships for early childhood education, and provide mentors.
4. Build community and peer support for early childhood education.
5. Home visits should be expanded—but perhaps should not be limited to public health nurses.
6. Locate ECFE in communities where people are—don’t create a transportation barrier, help build community support, and help improve awareness of the program. Encourage schools to provide space—either in underutilized buildings or by levying for space.
7. Challenge civic and community organizations to reach out beyond their usual networks to help those in need get plugged into early education.
8. Help moms get education too—make it easily accessible and socially acceptable.
9. Ensure that early childhood education is culturally relevant, such as language preservation.
10. Create community-sponsored and based early childhood education opportunities.
11. Students must be connected to the possibility of future jobs, perhaps through school-based internships, or people who identify and match students with employers.
12. Create vocational tracks and make vocational education respectable; don’t assume that these students don’t need skills support.
13. Provide a post-technical year of business skills to assist in building self-employment and entrepreneurs.
14. Create an aggressive job corps/summer youth jobs program.
15. School must be practical and engaging.
16. Provide free technical education—make it easier to acquire a trade.
17. Teach practical life skills.
18. Guarantee two years of post-secondary education, perhaps with an expectation of some years of service given back to the community in exchange.
19. Birth gifts (\$1,000?) for all children, or a match (e.g. Fame program)—families and students need hope of a future without poverty.

20. Match students with employers in areas where there are worker shortages.

#### Jobs and Job Training

1. Give businesses the incentives to help employees build skills if the employee doesn't work out immediately.
2. Invest in social skills development (e.g., Jeremiah program).
3. View job training as an investment rather than a revolving door it is now. Rethink accountability of job training not in terms of whether the person was placed in a job, but working with the person until they succeed in employment.
4. Move past the idea that all work must be employee-employer based. For example, use technology to connect workers' skills to work—wherever they might live.
5. Make it easier to be self-employed.
6. Don't penalize employers if they hire someone with a pre-existing health condition.
7. Create a Minnesota "WPA" program.
8. Support/create incubators.

#### Income Support

1. Make sure there are incentives to work—get rid of "cliffs" in eligibility requirements.
2. Decrease caseloads so social workers can actually practice their skills rather than push paper.
3. Improve processing time of disability system.
4. All safety net programs should treat people with dignity.
5. Provide financial counseling/planning to help people make ends meet—perhaps through extension services or drop-in centers, or through programs like HUD's Opportunity Center.
6. There should be a single application for income support.
7. Don't legislate around exceptions (i.e., people who abuse system).

#### Reduce Cost of Necessities

1. Create a "barter" system for childcare in which community members can exchange childcare services that are not taxed—"Craig's" list of child care.
2. Health care—need a system that you shouldn't have to into poverty to access
3. Encourage people to become landlords

#### Miscellaneous/general

1. Develop local poverty management plans