

REGIONAL PLAN

Local Elected Officials and Local Workforce Development Boards within each Regional Workforce Development Area must participate in a planning process to address the following-

1. Describe the region's economic conditions including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations and also the employment needs of employers in these sectors and occupations. Attach a copy of an analysis addressing these factors. It is acceptable and recommended to use the [regional analysis](#) and other information if desired that is available from DEED's Labor Market Information Division.

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

Central Minnesota is home to over 700,000 people and almost 18,000 businesses. The demographics of the region continue to change but the region continues to grow and was the second fastest growing region of the state.

Region 3 includes the following counties in central Minnesota; Benton, Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Kandiyohi, Meeker, McLeod, Mille Lacs, Renville, Pine, Sherburne, Stearns, and Wright. It includes three Economic Development Regions (EDRs); 6E, 7E, and 7W.

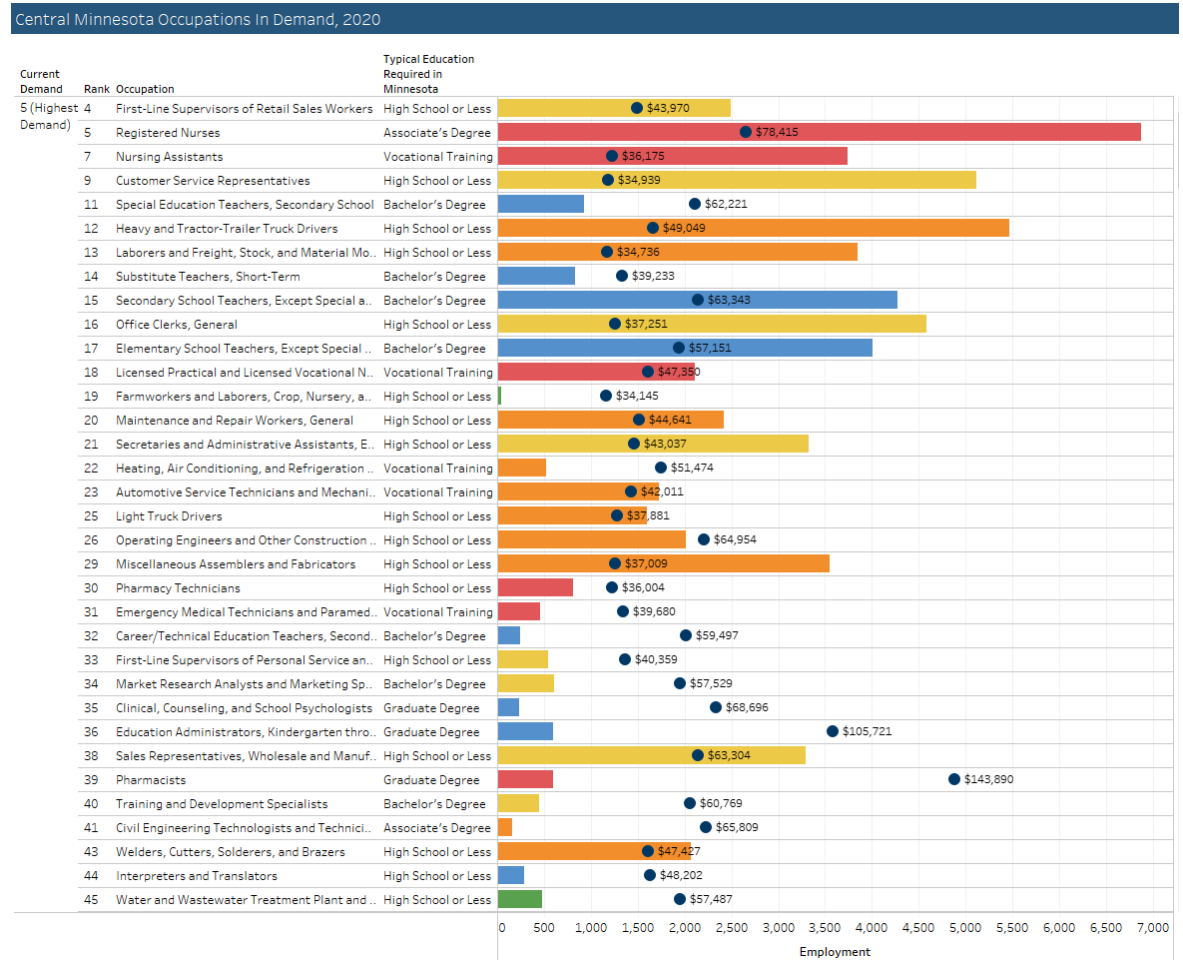
Based on data from the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) labor market data, Central Minnesota's economy had the second fastest growth in the state (Twin Cities was fastest), growing +5.5% from 2014-2019; but in the most recent year it was at +0.5%, a tenth of a point slower than statewide growth. Despite slowing employment growth, the broad economy of the region is positioned well thanks to a faster than statewide labor force growth from 2004-2020 (+9.9%).

Sectors that outpaced statewide growth in the most recent year (2018-2019) include management of companies and enterprises, agriculture, mining, other services, wholesale trade, professional scientific and technical services. The largest number of jobs added in the past year was in the construction sector (+766 jobs), followed by other services (+449).

Emerging industries in the region that have substantial growth in the past couple years include private households, internet service providers and web search portals and data processing services, performing arts, spectator sports, and related industries, and waste management and remediation services.

Another important indicator of regional economic synergism are industries with high location quotients. In Central Minnesota subsectors with high relative concentration of employment include; Furniture and Related Product Manufacturing, Animal Production and Aquaculture, Paper Manufacturing, Transportation Equipment Manufacturing, Nonmetallic Mineral Product Manufacturing, Support Activities for Agriculture and Forestry, and Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction.

The most in-demand occupations are included in the chart below. The wage has been filtered to \$33,192, the minimum cost to live for a single person with no children. The educational requirements for the most in-demand occupations are also included in the chart, a reflection of the types of formal training required. The length of the bar represents employment and the wages indicated are the median annual wage. For higher paying occupations without formal educational requirements, skills or credentialing are likely required to gain employment.



The economic conditions in Central Minnesota are strong despite recent layoffs and company closures. Please refer to the entire Central Minnesota Regional Profile attached for additional detail (Attachment A).

2. What is the regional strategy to coordinate efforts to address existing and in-demand industry sector and occupations workforce needs? Describe the methodology for outreach to these industry sectors and how they will be connected with the workforce system in the region.

The Region 3 Leadership and Planning Board (R3LPB) membership includes: CMJTS Joint Powers Board (JPB) Chair and Vice Chair, CMJTS Local WorkForce Development Board (LWDB) Chair and

Vice Chair, CMJTS Chief Executive Officer, Career Solutions (CS) Joint Powers Board Chair and Vice Chair, CS LWDA Chair and Vice Chair, CS Executive Director. Support staff from both CMJTS and CS attend, as non-voting members. Other key guests attend, as requested.

The LWDA boards have industry sector representation as members. LWDA staff participate in local industry sector associations or groups when available. Industry experts are brought in for presentations to both the LWDA boards and the R3LPB for guidance in workforce strategies.

The R3LPB has identified the following sectors as in-demand based on DEED labor market information as well as employer (stakeholder) input.

- Manufacturing
- Healthcare
- Construction/Transportation
- Natural Resources and Energy (Agriculture)
- Professional and Business Services (Information Technology)

Identifying in-demand occupations and employment projections through use of data about employment by location, labor supply and demand, earnings, unemployment, and demographics of the labor force helps employment specialists/career counselors, and their jobseekers find relevant training opportunities to fill skills gaps, address skills shortages in the current economy, and anticipate employer need for trained workers in the listed fields.

A roster of sector partnership members will be developed and updated consisting of individuals who will represent the business partners, specific organizations representing targeted populations, and those providing pathway-specific services. Specific organizations representing targeted populations include Adult Basic Education, Minnesota State Colleges, Functional Industries, RISE, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and others, as appropriate. This partnership will be business driven and create solutions that integrate education, workforce, and economic development resources across systems that provide businesses, individuals, and communities the opportunity to grow the state's economy.

The following are sector initiatives identified by the R3LPB being facilitated by or occurring in the region:

Manufacturing - Central Minnesota Manufacturers Association (CMMA) is a successful membership-based organization which exists to enhance Region 3's interrelated industries and to gain and hold a competitive advantage in today's global marketplace. CMMA hosts monthly membership meetings, special events, and social gatherings. CMMA has 156 members with over 50% from manufacturing firms. CMMA consists of a healthy mix of new and sustaining members including a strong cross section of manufacturers, servicers, suppliers, and supporters. It has contributed more than \$80,000 in grants, sponsorships, and scholarships since its inception. This support and investment in communities includes college scholarships, high school robotics, STEM education, events and expos, student field trips, youth apprenticeships, partnership with Wright Technical College, Tour of Manufacturing and more. The R3LPB will continue to provide staff

support, demographic statistics, labor market information, and organizational development assistance. CMMA members hold a seat on the respective Local Workforce Development Boards, as well as CMJTS and CS staff either holding committee memberships on CMMA or active participation at large membership meetings. This group is actively involved in the sector-led EPIC activities (large scale, hands-on career exploration event for high school sophomores), development of a Career Pathway website, actively promoting youth apprenticeship throughout central Minnesota, and hosting a Jamboree informational event on youth engagement in manufacturing occupations.

Healthcare - The Central Minnesota Healthcare Taskforce has changed its name to the Central Minnesota Healthcare Coalition and is led by a group of members versus a stand-alone employer led sector group. The coalition met and completed a strategic plan, moving forward with the help of a consultant. The strategic plan focused on three specific issues that continually rose to the top of the healthcare summits: training and education, recruitment, and retention. Coalition members signed up for one of the three subcommittees to tackle each issue. This group has been temporarily put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic that is affecting healthcare providers.

Additional healthcare initiatives to promote healthcare include:

- SCRUBS camps
- Partnerships and collaborations to promote and offer certified nursing assistant training in local high schools
- Healthcare partners lead “hands-on activities” at both EPIC and IGNITE events
- CareerONE summer youth camp – healthcare track option

Business Services programming for all in-demand sectors – Incumbent worker programming policy gives preference for projects submitted from high-demand industries.

The WorkWright radio program is a collaboration between CMJTS and KRWC to highlight CareerForce partners and programs and a local employer every Monday morning. This has been a successful model to promote sector initiatives and help with recruitment efforts of employers. The goal is to replicate this program throughout Central Minnesota.

Human Resource Networking groups are facilitated throughout the region and provide a platform to share industry challenges with their peers. Rule number one of these groups – leave competition at the door.

Sector-specific hiring events – These events focus on a targeted industry and promotional efforts to identify individuals looking for sector careers is made.

Educational initiatives – Occurring throughout the region, these initiatives promote that youth and young adults focus on a career or industry sector early in their high school career. Tiger Pathway in Hutchinson is a great model. Local employers provide equipment and input on curriculum to help youth identify and attain career skills prior to high school graduation. This allows youth to explore careers prior to paying for a college education that might not align with

their skills and interests. CareerONE offered by CS is summer programming that provides eligible youth with career exploration in specific sectors. Central Minnesota high schools are promoting sector knowledge by hosting the DEED LMI expert at high school registrations and conferences to ensure that parents and students know the in-demand careers to help guide their planning.

Region 3 works directly with employers, private and public training providers, and union labor organizations to provide work-based training opportunities that meet the needs of business. The regional goal is to continue work-based training initiatives through activities like on-the-job training (OJT), registered apprenticeship, work experience and transitional jobs, workforce protégé, and incumbent worker training program (IWTP). Work-based training methods are a proven and effective strategy that meet employers' workforce needs. The R3LPB surveyed employers and created an employer database to better match their needs with work-based training methods. The information collected is used to connect educators and service providers to young people, career changers, and other job seekers in Region 3 who want to meet with employers to learn more about occupations in their specific area of career interest. The goal is to update this information, complete additional surveys, and create an online directory that will be on both the LWDA websites. This will promote sector engagement.

Wagner-Peyser works closely with representatives from the Region 3 Leadership and Planning Board (R3LPB) to assist with regional sector workforce needs. Coordinated efforts with our On-Site Hiring events culminated in hosting hiring events for the untapped workforce populations with disabilities, criminal backgrounds, and new immigrants. The On-Site Hiring events are held monthly and are focused on industry sector needs and demands.

The DEED workforce strategy consultant supports regional initiatives and will share partner information and services as appropriate.

The Career Solutions executive director attends quarterly meetings of the St. Cloud Area Executive Director/CEO networking group. Participation in this group allows community CEOs to engage in pertinent conversations specific to their management role. Topics relevant to workforce development include discussing current industry challenges, problem solving, and obtaining access to industry experts who have implemented best practices.

With the continued evolution of the COVID-19 crisis, the regional strategy is to ensure all partners in the workforce development system remain flexible and responsive to the needs of the local businesses in the region. As resources and tools are available, information is shared to all contacts/networks and partners.

3. Describe how the local boards will direct regional workforce system alignment through shared policies and practices. In this description include any cooperative service arrangements being planned for the region and how they will promote consistency within the regional workforce development area and with state policy.

A Region 3 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): was created between LWDA 5 and LWDA 17. Both parties entered into this agreement with the understanding that the LWDA boards would “maintain their local identities” and collaborate as the Region 3 Leadership & Planning Board (R3LPB), serving the 13-county region of Meeker, McLeod, Renville, Kandiyohi, Wright, Sherburne, Stearns, Benton, Mille Lacs, Isanti, Chisago, Pine, and Kanabec counties.

Furthermore, the MOU creates a R3LPB designed to provide oversight of the regional planning process and its sector strategies, review labor market and economic data, select sectors for the region based on this data, explore opportunities to share resources and seek additional funding sources to better serve Region 3 employer and jobseeker needs, organize and create a regional vision that is employer-driven and proactive in creating solutions to meet their needs and collaborate with CareerForce partners to establish a quality customer service delivery system responsive to both jobseekers and employers. The MOU also lays out a methodology, duration, and modification determinations, dispute resolution and other necessary provisions. The MOU is signed by all elected voting members of the R3LPB to solidify the partnership.

Furthermore, there are cooperative agreements signed between the two LWDA— for LWDA 5 to provide accounting and HR services to LWDA 17. In addition, cooperative agreements are in place for collaborative/regional grants that have been awarded, such as the Rural Career Counseling Coordinator grant (RC3) – which provides the opportunity to expand current agreements. CS and CMJTS will consider and determine the need, format, and content of additional cooperative service agreements as needed to promote consistency within the region and align with state policy.

Expanding and enhancing partnerships and collaboration: The R3LPB encourages both the CS and CMJTS LWDBs to collaborate on competitive grants that serve Region 3 in the best interests of both jobseekers and employers.

Each CareerForce location in Region 3 holds staff meetings regularly to identify and implement regional services including career, training, and/or follow-up services for jobseekers. These meetings allow for discussions leading to program alignment of goals. Staff meetings include co-located CareerForce partners (e.g., Career Solutions, CMJTS, Job Service, Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Basic Education, Public Assistance, Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), and State Services for the Blind). A minimum of one meeting is scheduled annually.

The one-stop operator (OSO) consortium, a collaboration of CareerForce partners, meets on a quarterly basis to review the regional plan goals and ensure activities are being completed and reported to the R3LPB and LWDBs. Shared training and updates occur among all the partners. Additional professional training opportunities are shared as well as best practices amongst programs. One such training opportunity is the eLearning modules developed by the National Institute on Disability. These modules are shared with all one-stop partners. The topics are:

- Serving Individuals with Disabilities
- Working Across Partners

- Providing Inclusive Business Services

As an OSO partner, Wagner-Peyser takes guidance in policy alignment from the R3LPB and LWDA's 5 and 17.

Regarding Business Services, each partner within CareerForce locations including CMJTS, CS, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Wagner-Peyser, Veteran Services, have varying roles for staff participating in reaching out to employers. All Region 3 business service staff meet on a semi-annual basis to ensure a coordinated effort and message to the business community. Aligning a consistent message and approach are important. Some key concepts agreed upon include:

- Viewing businesses as customers
- Taking steps to understand their needs
- Understanding that businesses make decisions based on their needs, not programming available
- Asking what the business seeks from relationships, as opposed to the service provider's goals
- Employer Navigator services are promoted

To ensure system alignment, in addition to alignment of policy and practices, common goals are identified based on R3LPB directives, one-stop-operator conversations, and community stakeholder input. Specific strategies are developed collaboratively, and partners participate jointly with initiatives occurring in the region that align with the identified goals, some of which are included in the cooperative agreements. Most of these initiatives include not only CareerForce partners, but also community members, education organizations, and employers.

Addressing the need for skilled workers in the region:

Hiring Events and resources: Creative approaches to assist employers with hiring during the pandemic have been identified such as virtual and drive through job fairs. Educational events have also been offered to ensure employers have the tools needed during the pandemic; DOL and MDH presentations.

Incumbent worker training – Is provided to upskill employers' current workforce and assist businesses with layoff aversion. Both LWDA's in the region offer this resource to businesses. Both CMJTS and CS staff give presentations to professional employer groups and make direct contacts for the purpose of offering incumbent worker (IW) and other resources to businesses. CMJTS has become the 'go to' resource on how to deliver incumbent worker training to businesses. In support of regional goals, the workforce strategy consultant refers local businesses to both LWDA's and to state resources to help increase the skills of their current workforce.

Expanding and Enhancing Career Exploration:

Ensuring the future workforce has knowledge of careers and LMI is vital to the local economy. Initiatives supported by the local boards for career exploration to students in Region 3:

IGNITE Your Future – A Hutchinson’s IGNITE Your Future event, includes partnerships with CMJTS, Ridgewater College, the Hutchinson and Litchfield Chambers of Commerce, and several key businesses to organize this community collaborative hands-on career exploration event. Held at Ridgewater College, there were 13 schools, 1,200 students, 100 businesses, and 75 volunteers in attendance. This is now an annual event with potential expansion to the Willmar Campus.

Exploring Potential Interests and Careers (EPIC) – A large-scale hands-on career exploration event at St. Cloud Technical and Community College. EPIC is an annual hands-on career exploration event supported through a community-wide collaboration. Career Solutions and CMJTS are partners and heavily involved with planning and executing this annual event. The goal is to create a high-quality career exploration annual event that effectively bridges education and industry for high school students in Central Minnesota, contributing to the fulfillment of the economic and workforce needs of the greater Central MN region. This unique event format allows students hands-on, interactive experiences that simulate the activities of a variety of careers achieved through a multitude of educational accomplishments. EPIC is supported by a community-wide collaborative of business, education, non-profit and government organizations.

Topics covered with the students:

- Education and or training requirements for jobs in this industry
- Work available with the participating employers, including hours, schedule, vacation, promotion, culture, etc.
- Financial expectations – salary opportunities, growth potential, economic outlook, etc.

Six career fields that are represented:

- Engineering, Manufacturing, Technology
- Health Science Technology
- Human Services
- Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resource
- Business, Management, and Administration
- Communications & Information Systems

Student attendance in 2020: 3,500 10th graders from 29 schools within a 45-miles radius of St. Cloud. Next Event: February 2022.

Hands-on Career Exploration Event in Region 7E - Expansion goal is to develop and offer an event similar to EPIC and IGNITE for EDR 7E. The GPS Workforce committee co-chairs have had several meetings with local chambers and businesses on starting their own hands-on career exploration event in 2020-21 school year. A survey was created and sent out to all school districts to confirm the support of this type of event.

Construct Tomorrow – Shares hands-on construction trades experiences with high school students. Sponsored by the construction trades unions, construction employers, and local

partners, this career exploration event promoting apprenticeship trades education, has been held in Hinckley in partnership with CMJTS and the Mille Lacs Band and in St. Cloud since 2016.

CareerONE– Career Solutions CareerONE is a unique summer youth employability skills training opportunity which provides youth ages 14–17 identified as at-risk, with a realistic and positive work readiness skills training in a safe, nurturing, and learning-rich environment. It also helps prevent participants from regressing academically during the summer months. Youth participate in a variety of classroom activities including teamwork, contextual academic enrichment, career exploration, work readiness skills, workplace safety, financial literacy, reflections and journaling, and work projects for community-based organizations and agencies.

CareerONE has three 40-hour Career Tracks (about 4 hours per day over 10 days):

Healthcare

1.5 college credits for CPR/first aid
1.5 college credits for CNA prep course
Health terminology class
Mock accident scenes and how to react

Construction/Manufacturing

Safety Awareness class that will give students OSHA 10 and 2 college credits.
Build raised planter boxes to donate to community
Design cell phone holders on computer and print using 3D laser printer

Business Technology (new track)

2 college credits for Excel class – 20 hours
Other 20 hours are not confirmed yet but will be geared towards sales/marketing of business and products.

SCRUBS Camps – Hands-on healthcare career education exploration. St. Cloud Scrubs Camp is a collaborative effort between the business and industries of the St. Cloud region, St. Cloud Technical & Community College, and St. Cloud State University. This is an engaging, interactive and fun day camp open to any student entering grades 7th–12th in the fall. Students spend three days exploring a variety of healthcare careers like nursing, laboratory science, social work, alternative therapies, and many others. Students experience these careers through field trips and hands-on activities facilitated by healthcare professionals and college faculty. Students are provided a t-shirt, daily lunches and snacks. Career Solutions and DEED partners assist with labor market activities. A day long SCRUBS camp occurs in Cambridge at Anoka Ramsey Community College. All one-stop partners will promote the training opportunity.

Career Pathway Infographics - A Rural Career Counseling Coordinator (RC3) initiative started in 2018 has been the creation of career pathway infographics. Through collaboration of all the RC3 staff, 16 career pathways have been created as well as some for occupations in-demand. These are being shared with local schools and employers. Additional sharing of the career pathway

infographics, through social media, information on websites, and WIOA partner networks is planned. These infographics are updated annually, and additional occupations in-demand created. In 2019, the infographics were updated to reflect statewide data for a more expanded use across the state. Moving forward the goal is to have the infographics translated into other languages.

Innovative Approaches to Career Readiness – An initiative and spring event hosted by the Workforce Committee of GPS 45:93 (regional economic development collaborative in Region 7E) has focused on connecting schools and employers with opportunities for partnership that will increase innovation and opportunities for career and technical education to meet employer needs. It also works to highlight labor market and training information for parents and students. Co-chaired by CMJTS staff and the regional workforce strategy consultant, the GPS 45:93 Workforce Committee will continue to promote connections between schools, employers, students, and parents to highlight labor market information, increase opportunities for career and technical education innovation, and career exploration in Region 7E.

Launch Your Future Today (LYFT) - is a rural career and technical education (CTE) pathway initiative with the purpose of rebuilding CTE in west central Minnesota. The goal of LYFT Pathways is for every secondary student in the region to gain marketable skills through meaningful CTE courses and opportunities which lead to further education and careers that match our region's labor market needs. Through this initiative, CMJTS staff assist school-identified students with vocational exploration and advise them on the steps required to enter careers of interest. They also help the students build workplace skills and coordinate work-based learning opportunities, internships, job shadowing, informational interviews, etc., to give them first-hand knowledge of local jobs, employers, and industries. Through this initiative, RC3 staff were asked to participate in the annual Career and Technical Education conference to ensure a rural perspective is at the planning table.

College tours and career fairs - are being promoted across the region. Both LWDA 5 and 17 have active participation with the Perkins consortiums across Region 3.

CEO in the Classroom – Entrepreneurship education seeks to prepare people, especially youth, to be responsible, enterprising individuals who become entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers and contribute to economic development and sustainable communities. The CEO program is much more than a textbook course. Rather, students are immersed in real life learning experiences with the opportunity to take risks, manage the results, and learn from the outcomes. Partners assist in providing additional programming and credentials when available (example – National Retail Federation Customer Service and Sales credential), assistance with business tours, mock interviews, and development of new CEO programs. Currently, the following school districts offer CEO programs: Willmar High School, Wright Technical Center, and a Western Stearns County Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities (CEO) Program, which started in 2019 school year for combined Albany, Sauk Center, and Melrose schools.

Ensuring those in need receive the information about services:

Collaborate with partners to develop outreach, informational materials, engagement, and dissemination strategies for the following groups:

- Farmers who are struggling – receiving information about dislocated worker programs
- Small businesses impacted by COVID-19
- Populations experiencing economic disparities

With the COVID-19 pandemic, workforce development staff and partners have had to be innovative in the ways to provide services to individuals. Use of electronic communication such as WebEx and Zoom are being used.

4. Describe how the regional approaches used will ensure that it includes diverse representation, specifically among populations experiencing the greatest barriers to employment or communities facing the greatest levels of economic disparities?

R3LPB, CMJTS, and CS staff engage with organizations representing targeted populations, through continued use of surveys, data collecting, conducting focus groups, and program outreach. This will ensure greater awareness of resources available to diverse populations, specifically among people experiencing barriers to education and employment opportunities in Planning Region 3. Committees will be developed as a result, and stakeholder engagement will occur through sector-led activities planned through collaboration with partners.

Through targeted outreach and engagement, increased knowledge of staff, and specific programming, those populations experiencing disparities will enroll in and increase outcomes in service programs.

Recruitment efforts are being made to increase diversity and representation of individuals experiencing disparities on boards, committees, and staff.

Initiatives to Engage those with Disabilities

The goal of the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) was to increase access to the CareerForce System and programs for persons with disabilities. The best practices for case management identified through the DEI participation have since been adopted as part of case management for all programs, including the use of integrated resource teams, guideposts for success in youth goal planning, and customized employment. These best practices were shared with other Rural Career Counseling Coordinators (RC3). The sharing of knowledge and resources with the broader system will create an effective referral process, ensure a close relationship between all partners, and increase services to more jobseekers. DEI staff from CMJTS were selected to be part of an e-Learning taskforce with the National Disability Institute to make disability services information and resources available to all staff in American Job Centers. This training will be shared with all Region 3 partners. The goal is to have greater awareness and promote inclusiveness in the CareerForce System.

Regional Employment Networks include Functional Industries, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, RISE, Options, and CMJTS. Employment Networks help ticket holders (those 18–64 years of age) receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) become self-sufficient. Communication and referrals between Employment Networks will be ongoing. All partners provide or offer unique services and refer ticket holders to the appropriate service agency. The CMJTS Ticket Team, comprised of six employment specialists, will complete the benefits analysis coaching training through Minnesota Department of Human Services. This curriculum focuses on assisting those individuals receiving SSI or SSDI navigate employment options and the impact on benefits. Regional employers will be educated about available ticket to work incentives. An Ability Resource Fair, a career fair serving individuals with diverse abilities and providing resources, will be held in 2022.

SOAR Services: CMJTS will provide SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) services as a subcontractor through Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council. SOAR is a national program designed to increase access to the disability income benefit programs administered by the Social Security Administration (SSA) for eligible adults and children who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness and have a serious mental illness, medical impairment, and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder. These advocacy services will be available to individuals in Region 3.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS): In partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), CMJTS provides Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to youth with disabilities, ages 14–21, who are potentially eligible for VRS services. Career You provides an opportunity for these youth to explore career and training options, gain work skills, and learn how to be successful after high school, including post-secondary education and/or competitive employment. Through Career You, youth are provided services one-on-one or through large group activities which are centered on job search/exploration, post-secondary education counseling, work-based learning, budgeting, work-readiness training, self-advocacy instruction, and community learning projects. CareerQuest is a program, funded by the Minnesota Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, designed to help high school students prepare for life after graduation. It is a chance for youth to explore career and training options, gain work skills, and learn how to be successful after high school. CareerQuest is for students who have any type of disability and want to prepare for a bright future. Career Planners work on MCIS career assessments with students and complete Skills Verification Assessments, Skills Sort, Post-Secondary Educational Choices and Financial Aid options, as well as a cost-of-living estimator that reflects life after high school.

Initiatives to Engage those with Criminal Backgrounds

The Leaving Incarceration Finding Employment (LIFE) Project, incorporating the 360° Career Success Skills modules, is tailored to address a person’s criminal background and help avoid recidivism. Currently, CMJTS is facilitating the LIFE Project in the McLeod and Wright County jails and plans to expand these services to additional counties in the future. To expand opportunities for individuals with criminal backgrounds, a collaboration with SW PIC, Central Lakes College, Adult Basic Education, and the Renville County Jail will be partnering to provide the LIFE project curriculum with hands-on, industry-specific skills (e.g. welding training), to ensure those being

released have concrete skills for their résumé as well as transition skills. This is a pilot project that if successful, will be replicated across the region.

Initiatives to Engage People of Color

The Immigrant Employment Connection Group (IECG) is a collaboration of St. Cloud community businesses and organizations. The group's focus is to better the St. Cloud community by working with the Somali population and address workforce development issues which improve the health and wellbeing of jobseekers and their families. To make the greatest impact, the group's focus is on individuals within the Somali community who possess minimal skills and have multiple barriers to employment, including cultural and language barriers and transportation issues. The IECG is working with employers to help them overcome real or perceived hiring barriers. They are also helping jobseekers to obtain employment. The IECG is creating meaningful connections between employers and jobseekers in Region 3. Committee members include service providers, local employer representation, education, and representation from the immigrant population. This group had achieved the initial goals of job fairs and educational events. It is re-establishing new goals moving forward.

The Ridgewater College Multi-Cultural Outreach Coordinator, Jehana Khan Schwandt, serves as a liaison between workforce development, the college, and the community in Economic Development Region 6E. The goal is to engage populations experiencing inequities in education and employment, develop multi-cultural events and marketing/recruitment strategies to inform multi-cultural populations of resources available. Meetings began in January 2017 and continue quarterly. Jehana Khan Schwandt is an active member of the CMJTS Youth Advisory Committee of the LWDA 5 Board.

Initiatives to Engage At-Risk Youth and Young Adults

Partner for Student Success (PFSS) unites central Minnesota parents, businesses, community organizations, and public-school districts to support student success. The PFSS Board of Directors consists of 21 members from 19 partner organizations, and PFSS committees and working groups consist of more than 70 organizations from across the greater St. Cloud area. PFSS has a cradle-to-career approach, including a pre-K and elementary as well as college and career-ready work groups. The CS executive director sits on the college and career-readiness steering committee and co-chairs the experiential learning planning group. Participation at this level creates opportunities for Region 3 to expand education and employment services to youth and young adults. PFSS engages, aligns, and coordinates community resources to set goals, define priorities, and close gaps; creates awareness and urgency around PFSS and student success within the community; advocates for financial support and resources around student success; and monitors and measures progress against the community goals and priorities.

Grants received by each LWDA will provide programming to targeted populations:

Pathways to Prosperity grants:

CMJTS P2P the ability to partner with Adult Basic Education providers and local colleges to give 38 low-income individuals the training necessary to enter careers as either certified nursing assistants or commercial drivers. The Pathways to Prosperity Program will serve adults who are

living at or below 200% of the federal poverty guideline. No less than one-third will be People of Color and no less than one-fourth of the cohort will be made up of people who have one or more disabilities.

Career Solutions P2P is designed to provide workforce development and training opportunities to economically disadvantaged adults that will help them develop increased career awareness; acquire basic skills education; participate in skills-training programs; and place into employment in high growth, high demand industries with long-term employment opportunities. Career Solutions P2P job seekers in 2019 were able to explore careers in manufacturing, work on completing a GED and résumé writing, and learn in-demand welding/ manufacturing skills. Career Solutions will continue this program.

Job Service and CMJTS have a long-standing history of coordinating services through pathway programs for low-income and New American recipients of public assistance. Recent pathway programs include pre-manufacturing and forklift training, hospitality training for non-English speaking recipients, and CNA training. These pathway programs have been very beneficial to the recipients and have provided access to support services and postsecondary credentials for those enrolled.

Women's Economic Security Act (WESA) grant – CMJTS' Women-on-the-Move project will focus on serving women ages 16 and over, particularly women of color. The project will help 50 women identify better-paying jobs in traditionally male-dominated professions (e.g., manufacturing-related careers, commercial driving), where their talents and interests will be put to good use. The Women-on-the-Move project will then help these women obtain the training necessary to enter these fields. Career coaching and mentorship will be provided by women already successful in nontraditional arenas and it is expected that at least half of the women served will also be enrolled in additional employment and training programs to help them achieve success.

Support Services Grant – CMJTS' Colorful Tomorrow project will provide employment preparation assistance, financial literacy instruction, career training, paid internships, and entrepreneurial skills exploration activities to 25 additional residents of Central Minnesota, particularly those receiving public assistance. All Colorful Tomorrow participants will be People of Color and CMJTS will focus recruitment in the Willmar and Southeast St. Cloud areas.

Immigrant and Refugee Community Workforce Development and Business Partnerships

LEARN & EARN Program - Career Solutions has been doing extensive work with the immigrant population in Central Minnesota. In 2016, Career Solutions started collaborating with the Coleman Company in Sauk Rapids. A program was started for young adults aging out of high school (ages 18–24) who have been in the country for 1–5 years and have a desire to continue their education. In partnership with the Coleman Company and Adult Basic Education, the LEARN & EARN program was created. Participants spend 4 hours working and 4 hours in training for 7 weeks. Outcomes of the program are improved math and reading scores, work experience and employment. Almost all participants since 2016 continued their education in the fall by attending Adult Basic Education. Through new grant funding, this summer, Career Solutions will be using

the LEARN & EARN program model for the construction industry. Currently, two employers have agreed to help develop the training curriculum and provide work experiences for participants. LWDA 5 hopes to replicate this program.

Community Outreach - The immigrant population has several barriers to obtaining employment. One of the largest barriers for them is transportation. Because of this barrier, Career Solutions staff take their services into the community. Career Solutions provides services in multiple locations throughout the community. Sites include La Cruz Community, Community Outpost, Quarryview Education Center and the Islamic Center. CMJTS provides services at the Iftiin Somali Youth Center.

Iftiin Somali Youth Organization

The IFTIIN Somali Youth Organization creates a safe and engaging space for youth within the community. The organization provides resources and services to lead the youth to success. Preparing the students academically, socially, mentally and physically to be active citizens and pursue higher education. CMJTS youth staff can meet with youth onsite for services.

LaCruz

La Cruz is an apartment complex and townhomes on the Southside of St. Cloud that houses a large Somali population. La Cruz has a community center within the apartments and townhomes where residents are able to visit with onsite Career Solutions bilingual staff who provide services. Career Solutions staff assist residents with completing job applications, résumés and mock interviews. Career Solutions staff are dedicated to meeting with residents at this location.

Community Outpost

The Community Outpost, also known as the COP House, is located in the southside of St. Cloud as well. The St. Cloud Police Department has partnered with human service providers such as CentraCare and Stearns County. Some of the services offered onsite include WIC, public health nurses and a registered nurse from CentraCare are available for triage. Career Solutions bilingual staff connect with community members who are already there to assist with job searching skills, job applications and interviews. The Community Outpost is open to all community members in the Southside neighborhood.

Quarryview Education Center

Career Solutions also provides services to immigrants at Quarryview. Job seekers can get assistance with résumés, cover letters, résumé review, job applications, employer research, interviewing techniques/ practice, job search websites and community resources and services. Career Solutions staff are available at Quarryview from 9:30–12:30 am on Wednesdays.

Islamic Center

The Islamic Center of St. Cloud hosts hundreds of students and parents for education and community awareness programs. Career Solutions presents youth programs to the Islamic Center, including Youth at Work and CareerONE. Students are recruited to participate in the programs in the summer and fall. Career Solutions, in partnership with Islamic Center, conducted a number of

summer youth programs involving career exploration and work-based experiences. In 2019, there were 12 outstanding Islamic Center students that completed work experience hours at the Islamic Center to mentor another 50 students. In the fall of 2019, the Islamic Center was also a work experience site for a cohort of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) youth who were new to the country.

Immigrant Business Services: Cultural Training, Cultural Accommodations & Communication Solutions

Career Solutions is also able to assist businesses with immigrant services. Cargill expanded their production facility in Big Lake. They were struggling to fill 40 new food handler positions. The company's HR manager reached out to Career Solutions to receive help with filling those positions with immigrant populations, and in less than three weeks Cargill was able to fill 40 positions. Once the immigrant employees started working at Cargill, management encountered issues with communication and cultural gaps. Career Solutions bilingual staff created cultural training for supervisors and management to make them aware of the culture of their new employees, and provided training for employees, so they also understand the company's culture, responsibilities, and expectations.

Cintas in St. Cloud reached out to Career Solutions seeking help regarding communication barriers with their immigrant population. Career Solutions staff members responded to Cintas' request and resolved their issues related to cultural misunderstandings and provided suggestions to ease communication barriers.

BWS Cleaning Services reached out to Career Solutions seeking assistance with cultural competency training since a large number of their employees are East African. Career Solutions staff provided two hours of cultural competency training to the executive management of the company. After the initial training, BWS requested line managers receive the same training as they felt the training was helpful. Since then, Career Solutions has provided continuous cultural competency counsel to BWS.

Spee-Dee Delivery Service was experiencing some communication barriers. A group of employees thought they were handling packages containing pork and alcohol and were ready to walk off the job. Mediation services were provided to their employees by Career Solutions, explaining that this was misinformation. In working with both parties, recommendations for policies and procedures to be translated into Somali were given to human resources to resolve issues going forward.

Ensuring stakeholder engagement reflects programming and policies:

- Hold focus groups – spring of 2022
- Surveys to program participants sent and feedback incorporated, when appropriate
- Provide training to staff and partners on populations experiencing disparities, disabilities, offenders, new Americans, older workers, veterans

Region 3 will be replicating the Inclusive Workforce Employer (I-WE) Designation being implemented by Rural Minnesota CEP. Committee is being established and a timeline for development and implementation has been established.

Stage 1: Develop Region 3's I-WE Program – March/April 2021

- Establish Committee
- Establish MOU
- Create process

Stage 2: Regional I-WE Informational Presentations – Spring 2021

Stage 3: Run Pilot Program with 3-5 Businesses – Summer 2021

Stage 4: Press Release & Social Media Campaign – Fall 2021

Stage 5: Grow Initiative – Ongoing

The four main principles of the project are:

- i. Express a commitment to an inclusive workplace in their stated values, mission or policies.
- ii. Assess how diversity, equity and inclusion inform their work and culture.
- iii. Provide diversity, equity and inclusion education for staff and leadership.
- iv. Allocate resources to support and sustain an inclusive and equitable workplace.

5. Describe how performance negotiations will be managed among the local workforce development areas within the region.

Each LWDA will negotiate performance measures.

The CMJTS LWDB expects local service providers to, at minimum, meet the performance standards negotiated with the governor and local Chief Elected Officers (or JPB), as they apply to each program. Historically, LWDA 5 has met or exceeded all performance standards under WIA/WIOA and it is anticipated this will continue.

As required by WIOA, a more collaborative and robust service delivery system has been implemented. This includes common performance measures for core partners.

The CMJTS LWDB will review performance on a quarterly basis, as well as a more in-depth performance evaluation at the close of each program year. Staff will provide board members with a dashboard of key performance indicators, allowing board members to identify and manage potential issues throughout the program year. Specific program performance will be shared with CMJTS LWDB committees on a more regular basis for example, youth program performance will be reported to the Youth Committee at each meeting held every other month, and adult and dislocated worker program performance dashboards will be reported to the Workforce Development Committee monthly. The CMJTS Business Service Coordinators complete and submit a detailed report on employer engagement each month to the board. The board also receives monthly an updated on-the-job training and incumbent worker activity report for review.

The CS LWDB will review performance on a quarterly basis, as well as a more in-depth performance evaluation at the close of each program year. Staff will provide board members with a dashboard of key performance indicators, allowing board members to identify and manage potential issues throughout the program year. Specific program performance will be shared with CS LWDB committees on a more regular basis for example, youth program performance will be reported to the Youth Committee at each meeting held every other month, and adult and dislocated worker program performance dashboards will be reported to the Program Committee on a quarterly basis.

6. Describe how the region's workforce development efforts will be coordinated with economic development services and providers.

LWDA 5 and 17 staff are active participants at the table in the economic development organizations across central Minnesota as outlined below:

Region 7W:

Central Minnesota Quad Counties CEDS Steering Committee for Region 7W. This is a continuation of the work of the EDR 7W CEDS, which is a necessary document that allows the region to apply for federal grants for emergency disaster and federal economic development funding. Key players—economic development professionals for the four counties and cities in EDR 7W—are the primary conveners and advocates for this initiative. Partners include community/economic development coordinators, county administrators, county commissioners for 7W, workforce development professionals, private industry, school officials, and required partners under CEDS. The project is ongoing, with Joint Powers Board meetings being facilitated by CMJTS until further decisions on the future of this mission is determined. Once determined, a new board will be established under the rules of the CEDS guidelines. CMJTS will continue to facilitate updates to the CEDS to maintain compliance and ensure that community needs are met.

Wright County Economic Development Partnership (WCEDP). The WCEDP mission is to create a healthy and diverse environment for existing, expanding, and new businesses, which in turn creates employment opportunities and enhances the overall economic vitality of the region. Local area businesses are the primary conveners and advocates for this initiative and the WCEDP Board Chair oversees the project. Wright County cities, municipalities, and infrastructure providers deliver funding through membership dues. Wright County also provides operational funding on an annual basis. Additional partners include community/economic development coordinators, county commissioners for EDR 7W, small business development centers, workforce development professionals, private industry, educators, and city officials. The WCEDP is the primary point of contact for existing, start-up, expanding, and relocating businesses. The Partnership provides technical and financial assistance to businesses and communities within Wright County. The WCEDP provides monthly development and capacity-building seminars on various topics. Past topics include Regional Economic Outlook by the Federal Reserve Bank, Marketing Your Website by U of M Extension, Legislative Updates, A Site Selector's View of Wright County, and more. The

WCEDP also administers a revolving loan fund to provide business development assistance. The involved CMJTS workforce development coordinator is a seven-term board member and two-time board chair. Meetings are held monthly and work with this group will continue. The Wright County Economic Development Partnership works to identify and assist Wright County businesses with their Workforce needs to create a long-term vibrant community through education, training, marketing, and collaboration.

Wright County companies continue to thrive in a strong economy, but a severe worker shortage overshadows their growth and profitability and hampers their desire to expand. Growth will come to those companies that understand their employee needs, partner with existing Career Force programs, utilize educational institutions at the High School and Post-Secondary levels and have leveraged the appropriate combination of automation, productivity strategies, effective leadership, team development and strategic planning. The group has created a web based interactive career exploration and workforce pathways tool to assist students, parents, and teachers in making informed decisions about education, training, and local labor market opportunities.

The Greater St. Cloud Development Corporation (GSDC) is a private collaboration of approximately 250 regional business and community leaders within Benton, Sherburne, and Stearns counties in central Minnesota. The charge of the GSDC is to spearhead the economic development efforts of the greater St. Cloud region by identifying and unifying opportunities to engage community leaders, foster business growth, expand and nurture the area's talent base, and support the communities that make up the greater St. Cloud region.

Region 7E:

CEDS Committee for EDR 7E. Part of the work of the East Central Regional Development Commission (ECRDC) is to develop a CEDS plan, which serves as “an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen regional economies.” The CEDS Committee is made up of a broad cross-section of public and private interests, and provides input, direction, implementation, and monitoring of the CEDS. The LWDB is an advocate for the CEDS as it impacts workforce development and the labor market. As a partner, the LWDB provides staff support and project guidance. A CMJTS staff representative has been part of this committee since 2009. The five-year CEDS plan was adopted in 2017 and is updated annually. Several projects funded by the EDA through this work in recent years include campus upgrades at Pine Technical & Community College, infrastructure for the Sandstone Medical Campus, Pine Technical and Community College Business Incubator, ECRDC Business Park Marketing, and Polaris Research and Development Facility, Wyoming, MN.

GPS 45:93 is a nonprofit, regional economic development consortium in EDR 7E dedicated to growing and attracting businesses with high-paying jobs to East Central Minnesota. It takes its name from the point of latitude and longitude at which the four original counties in the partnership meet – the point of opportunity. The Mission Statement of GPS 45:93 is: Collaborate to strengthen the regional economy by providing a regional approach to workforce development, business attraction, retention and expansion - acting as a conduit for members and the region to access resources and educational opportunities.

GPS 45:93 membership includes economic/community development and workforce development professionals, cities, counties, businesses, banks, chambers, utilities, K-12 and higher education, the Mille Lacs Band, and community organizations concerned about the economy and workforce. The partnership believes “when one wins-all win.” The group meets monthly and is hosted at member locations throughout the region. The organization has a Board of Directors composed of representatives from the following: a member of the governing body for each participating city and county, post-secondary and K-12 education entities, DEED, and others which may include staff from each participating city and county, Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures, chambers of commerce, economic development entities, the Central Minnesota WDB, financial institutions, private industry, utilities, and community-based organizations. Non-voting members include elected officials from the Minnesota Legislature, U.S. Congress, and the Initiative Foundation in Little Falls. A number of current and former LWDA 5 board members and CMJTS staff are key members of the GPS group and the Regional Workforce Strategy Consultant also attends.

GPS has several key committees that meet regularly to help accomplish its goals.

The Workforce Committee that meets monthly and is co-chaired by the representative CMJTS staff member and the regional workforce strategy consultant. This committee supports and promotes regional workforce resources such as those offered through CareerForce and its partners, as well as projects and initiatives such as Construct Tomorrow. For the past two years the Workforce Committee has hosted events entitled “Innovative Approaches to Career Readiness”. During 2019, the committee awarded small grants with funding from Initiative Foundation to three local high schools as seed funds for their innovative career readiness projects.

The Broadband Committee actively pursues opportunities to improve the reach of high-speed broadband across our rural area. The committee has worked on several opportunities with Blandin and GPS and its members participate in and have held offices with the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition.

GPS holds a membership in the Community Venture Network which provides an opportunity for member communities to hear presentations from and be connected directly with small to medium-sized businesses looking to locate or relocate in rural communities. This is one tool GPS uses for business expansion in the region. GPS and its Marketing Committee works to promote the region as a whole and finds ways to showcase each community. The committee has hosted several Familiarization Tour (FAM Tour) events to showcase the region for business recruitment with site selectors.

Economic Development Region 6E:

The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) is the RDC for EDR 6E. It administers state and federal programs, coordinates multi-jurisdictional activities, and provides technical assistance to government, businesses, and local organizations to maintain or enhance the quality of life in Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, and Renville Counties. CMJTS has represented workforce development on the board of commissioners, advocating for and providing input for workforce development issues. Each of the four counties are represented by a county commissioner, a city representative, and a township representative. In addition, cities with populations over 10,000 are entitled a member, and two school board representatives are required. Other special interest members are chosen to meet the needs of the federal EDA requirements for Economic Development Commissions. The MMDC currently has 21 commission board member seats and meets five times a year.

Willmar Lakes Area Vision 2040. Strategy #2 Workgroup: Economic Diversity. This group conducts strategic planning for the future of the Willmar Lakes Area (Willmar and Kandiyohi County). The overall plan outlines four goals and 21 strategies which align with strategic plans that are underway, while others are new and address the region's future as a center of excellence. Strategic Goal Two is to strengthen the region's occupational diversity through a strategic mix of workforce training, economic measurement, enhanced career options, and support for entrepreneurs. This sub-committee developed a promotional video of manufacturing companies in Kandiyohi County and conducted a tour of businesses for Willmar High School teachers and students. Willmar has a high percentage of Latino- and Somali-owned businesses in its downtown area. For its next project, the committee is exploring ways to help small minority-owned businesses thrive and grow. CMJTS holds a seat in this subcommittee, representing workforce development. Key members include city and county elected officials and staff, Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission, the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce, Ridgewater College, and the MinnWest Technology Campus.

Regarding economic development services and providers, each partner within CareerForce locations have varying roles for staff participating in reaching out and partnering with economic development.

7. Describe any regional coordination of administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate. Also, please describe regional coordination of transportation and other supportive services.

Each local area has well established cooperative agreements in place with multiple partners/stakeholders and those will continue.

Regionally the Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) is the main source of cost arrangements for all partners in CareerForce. Additional cost sharing agreements or cooperative agreements have been created when applicable. Career Solutions currently contracts with CMJTS to provide accounting and fiscal services. Short-term human resource service contracts have been drafted. A

contract with Vocational Rehabilitation Services to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) is in place for both LWDA 5 and 17.

Wagner-Peyser has not had an additional coordination of cost arrangements outside of the cost sharing agreement through the Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) requirements. Eligibility based programs provide the transportation and support services to our customers. If Wagner-Peyser customers are co-enrolled in Title 1 eligibility-based programs, they would have access to transportation and support services.

Communication between all partners when clients are co-enrolled ensures there are no duplication of support services, but rather a blending and braiding of program funds to best serve the client.

CareerForce staff participate on local committees regarding transportation, housing, and childcare to help be part of the solution. The committees address issues in a collaborative effort.



CENTRAL MINNESOTA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REGIONS 6E, 7E, and 7W

Covering the following counties:

Benton, Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Kandiyohi,
McLeod, Meeker, Mille Lacs, Pine,
Renville, Sherburne, Stearns, and Wright

2020 REGIONAL PROFILE

Updated July 28, 2020

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DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION CHANGE

The Central Minnesota planning region includes a total of 13 counties, covering three separate Economic Development Regions (EDRs) and two Workforce Development Boards (WDBs). Central Minnesota was home to just under 725,000 people in 2019, comprising 13 percent of the state’s total population. The region welcomed a 5.8 percent increase in population over the past 9 years, primarily due to rapid gains in EDR 7W. That made Central Minnesota the second fastest growing region of the state, accounting for almost 12 percent of the state’s population growth from 2010 to 2019. In comparison, Minnesota saw a 6.3 percent gain statewide (Table 1).

Ten of the 13 counties in the region gained population from 2010 to 2019, with the other 3 seeing decreases. Wright and Sherburne were the 3rd and 5th fastest growing counties in the state, respectively. In contrast, Renville was the second fastest declining county in the state, and is now the smallest county in the region.

	2010 Population	2019 Estimates	2010-2019 Change	
			Number	Percent
Central Minnesota	684,001	723,809	39,808	5.8%
Region 6E	117,920	116,862	-1,058	-0.9%
Kandiyohi Co.	42,239	43,199	960	2.3%
McLeod Co.	36,651	35,893	-758	-2.1%
Meeker Co.	23,300	23,222	-78	-0.3%
Renville Co.	15,730	14,548	-1,182	-7.5%
Region 7E	163,789	169,368	5,579	3.4%
Chisago Co.	53,887	56,579	2,692	5.0%
Isanti Co.	37,816	40,596	2,780	7.4%
Kanabec Co.	16,239	16,337	98	0.6%
Mille Lacs Co.	26,097	26,277	180	0.7%
Pine Co.	29,750	29,579	-171	-0.6%
Region 7W	402,292	437,579	35,287	8.8%
Benton Co.	38,451	40,889	2,438	6.3%
Sherburne Co.	88,499	97,238	8,739	9.9%
Stearns Co.	150,642	161,075	10,433	6.9%
Wright Co.	124,700	138,377	13,677	11.0%
Minnesota	5,303,925	5,611,179	335,707	6.3%

Source: [U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates](#)

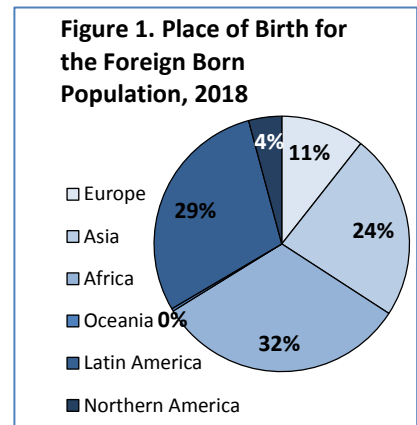
COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE

With a young and fast-growing population, Central Minnesota experienced a natural increase – more births than deaths – of 33,581 people so far this decade. In addition, the region gained residents from in-migration, with 6,461 more people moving into the region than moving out. However, this was marked by domestic out-migration (meaning more people moved out of the region to other parts of the state or other states than moved in), but the region did experience positive in-migration of more than 8,967 additional residents from international sources (Table 2).

	Total Change	Natural Increase	Vital Events		Net Migration		
			Births	Deaths	Total	Inter-national	Domestic
Central	39,829	33,581	81,066	47,485	6,461	8,967	-2,506
Minnesota	335,705	250,488	637,356	386,868	88,161	114,414	-26,253

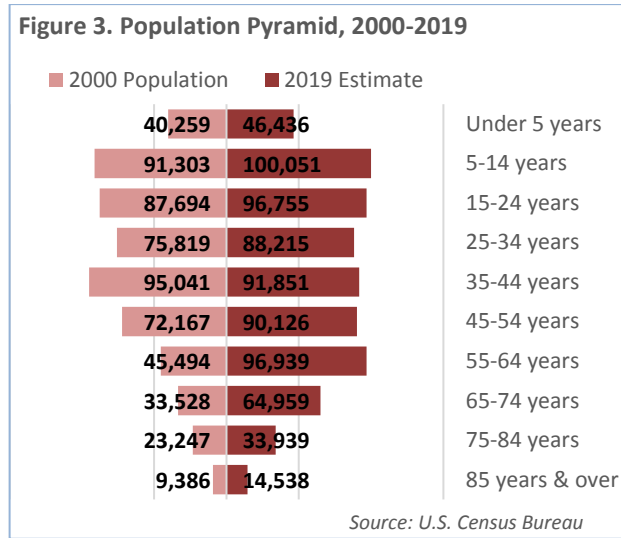
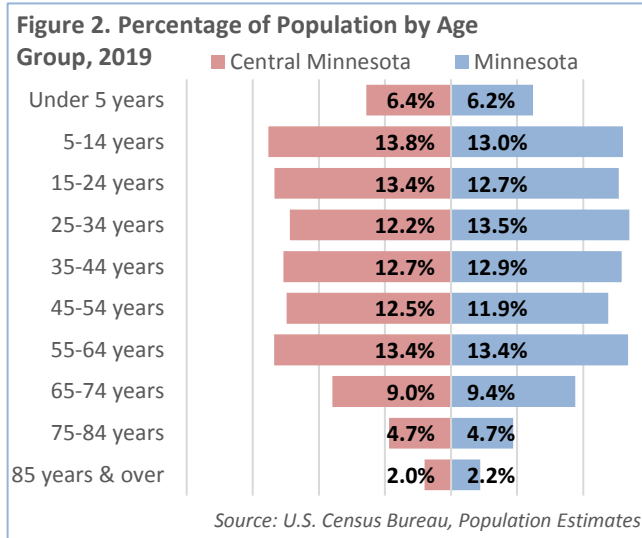
Source: [U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program](#)

Central Minnesota is now home to 27,017 foreign born residents, or about 3.8 percent of the total population. The number of immigrants in the region increased by 50.9 percent since 2010, nearly doubling the statewide growth rate of 25.8 percent. Almost one-third (7,913 people) of these immigrants were from Latin America, while the second largest number of foreign-born residents were from Africa, accounting for over three in every ten immigrants. The fastest growing wave of new immigrants to Central Minnesota came from Africa, rising by 6,277 people from 2010 to 2018, a 264 percent jump. About one-quarter of immigrants were from Asia, after increasing over 25 percent since 2010, and about 10 percent were from Europe and 4 percent were from Canada (Figure 1).



POPULATION BY AGE GROUP

Central Minnesota has a slightly younger population than the rest of the state, with 33.6 percent of the population under 25 years of age, compared to 31.9 percent statewide. Central Minnesota also has a similar percentage of people aged 55 years and older, but a slightly smaller share of people between 25 and 54 years of age, often considered the “prime working years” (Figure 2).

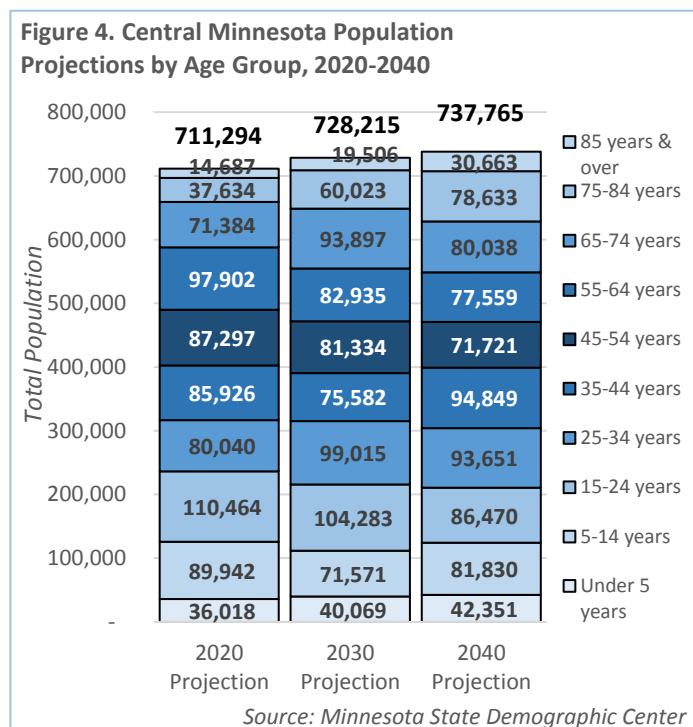


While the number of younger residents was rising rapidly as young, married couple families moved into the region, the number of residents aged 45 years and over was also expanding quickly because of size of the Baby Boom generation – people born between 1946 and 1964. The only age group to experience a decline in the last 18 years was the 35 to 44 year age group, right in the middle of “prime working” age and a direct result of the void Baby Boomers are leaving behind (Figure 3).

POPULATION PROJECTIONS BY AGE GROUP

The entire region is projected to continue growing through 2040. According to population projections from the [Minnesota State Demographic Center](#), Central Minnesota is expected to gain 26,471 net new residents from 2020 to 2040, a 3.7 percent increase (Figure 4). In comparison, the state of Minnesota is projected to grow 8.8 percent.

Central Minnesota is projected to add over 65,000 people aged 65 years and over, a 53 percent increase. The region is also expected to gain people in the 25 to 44 year old age group, as well as a corresponding increase in children under 5 years of age. In contrast, Central Minnesota is expected to lose school-aged children and young adults from 5 to 24 years of age, as well as people from 45 to 64 years of age – as the Baby Boom generation moves through the population pyramid.



POPULATION BY RACE

Central Minnesota’s population is less diverse than the state’s, but is becoming more diverse over time. In 2018, 92.4 percent of the region’s residents reported white alone as their race, compared to 83.3 percent of residents statewide. The region had smaller percentages of every other race than the state, and at 3.6 percent, Central Minnesota also had a lower percentage of people reporting Hispanic or Latino origin than the state (Table 3).

Three of the 13 counties in the region had more than 94 percent of the population reporting white alone as their race, whereas Stearns and Kandiyohi County reported the most diverse populations, thanks to large Black and Hispanic populations, respectively. Mille Lacs and Pine were also more diverse due to larger American Indian populations.

Table 3. Race and Hispanic Origin, 2018	Central Minnesota			Minnesota	
	Number	Percent	Change from 2000-2018	Percent	Change from 2000-2018
Total	703,419	100.0%	+22.6%	100.0%	12.4%
White	650,033	92.4%	+17.6%	83.3%	4.7%
Black or African American	18,487	2.6%	+474.7%	6.2%	99.3%
American Indian & Alaska Native	4,541	0.6%	+24.6%	1.1%	7.3%
Asian & Other Pac. Islander	8,902	1.3%	+97.3%	4.8%	83.8%
Some Other Race	8,305	1.2%	+72.1%	1.8%	48.7%
Two or More Races	13,151	1.9%	+172.4%	2.9%	90.7%
Hispanic or Latino origin	25,183	3.6%	+122.6%	5.3%	104.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey

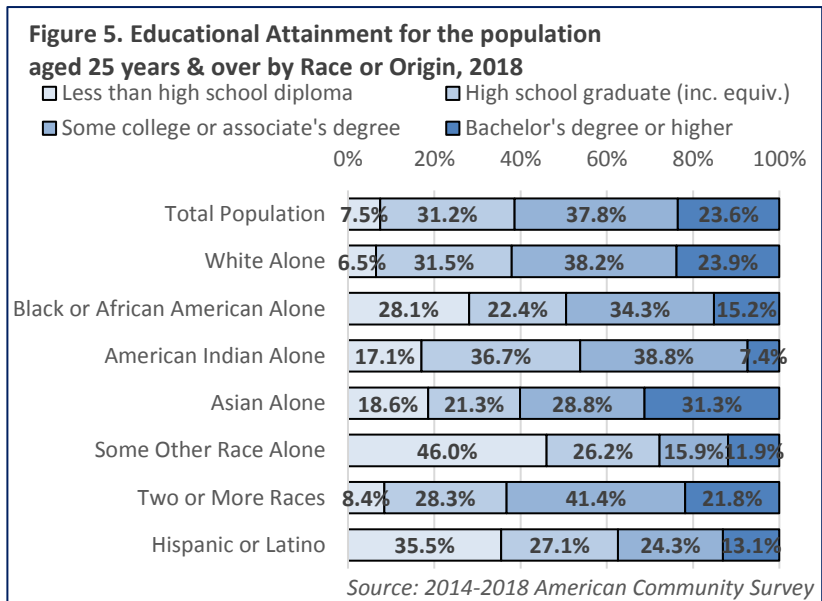
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

With 34.6 percent of adults aged 18 years and over having a college degree, Central Minnesota has lower educational attainment than the state, where 43.7 percent of adults have an associate, bachelor’s, or advanced degree. However, 12.9 percent of adults in Central Minnesota have an associate degree, which outpaces the state. Another 26.4 percent have some college experience, but no degree, compared to 23.4 percent statewide. Data show that Central Minnesota has a younger population that is focused on advancing their education.

Table 4. Educational Attainment for the Adult Population, 2018	Central Minnesota		Minnesota
	Number	Percent	Percent
Total, 18 years & over	529,235	100.0%	100.0%
Less than high school	42,539	8.0%	7.6%
High school graduate (incl. equiv.)	164,101	31.0%	25.3%
Some college, no degree	139,633	26.4%	23.4%
Associate’s degree	68,194	12.9%	10.8%
Bachelor’s degree	82,733	15.6%	22.1%
Advanced degree	32,035	6.1%	10.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014-2018 American Community Survey

Educational attainment varies widely by race and ethnicity in Central Minnesota. Over 35 percent of Hispanic or Latino residents or people of Some Other Race had less than a high school diploma, compared to just 6.5 percent of white residents. However, over 22 percent of Black or African Americans, American Indians, and people of Two or More Races have attended some college or earned an associate’s degree, and 31 percent of Asian residents had a bachelor’s degree or higher, which was higher than the white population, where about 24 percent had bachelor’s degrees or higher (Figure 5).



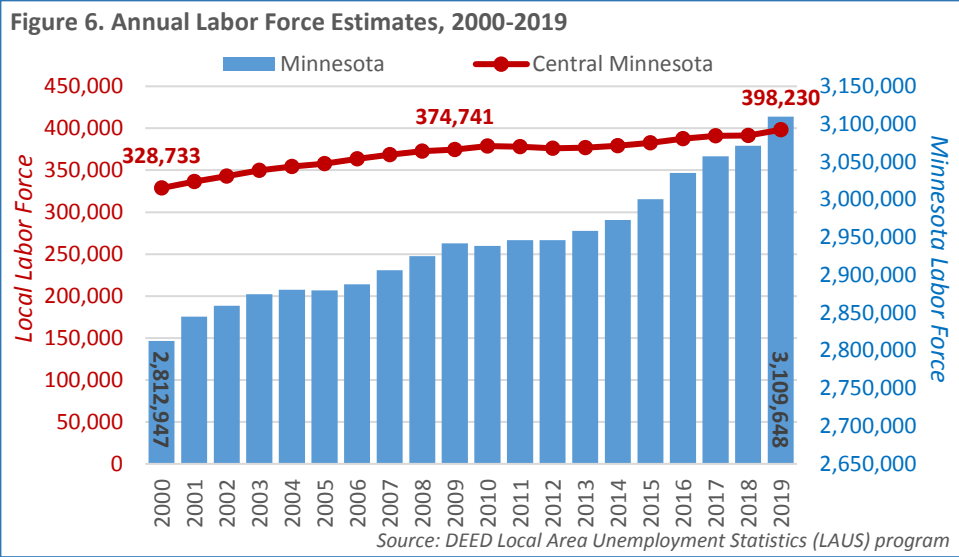
Source: 2014-2018 American Community Survey

LABOR FORCE

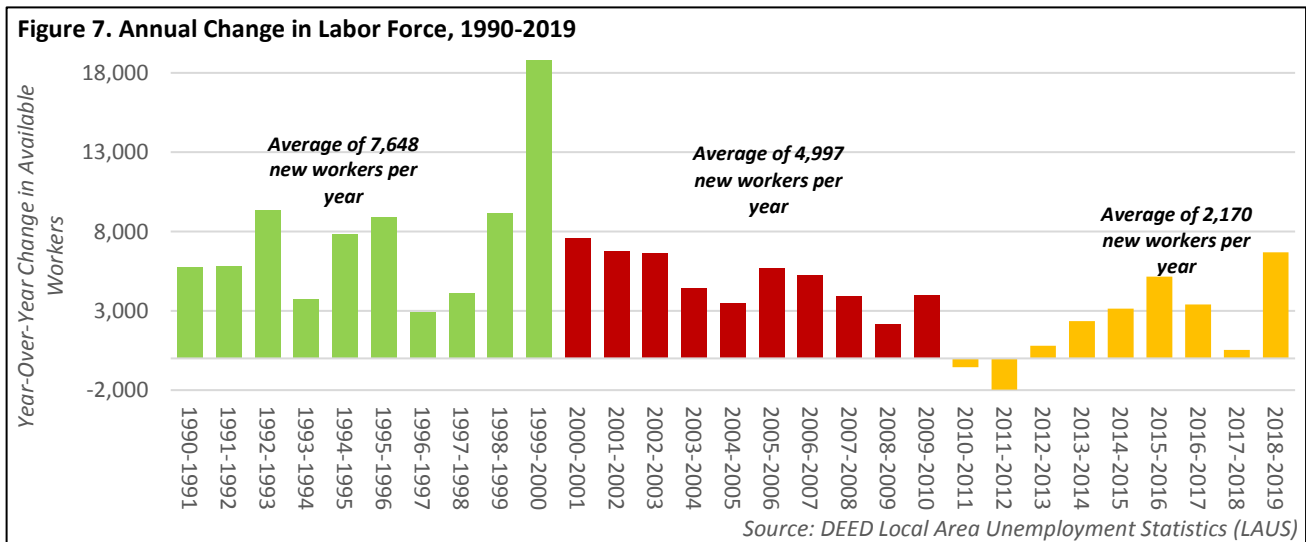
LABOR FORCE CHANGE

According to data from DEED’s [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#) program, Central Minnesota had an annual average labor force count of just over 398,230 workers in 2019. The regional labor force has increased rapidly since 2004, adding 44,058 new workers over the past 15 years. As such, the labor force in Central Minnesota actually reached a new peak in 2019, and is still seeing growth (Figure 6).

Central Minnesota added 24,531 workers from 2004 to 2010, then added just 19,527 workers from 2010 to 2019. Despite recent gains, the labor market in Central Minnesota continues to tighten, with fewer unemployed workers available. There were just over 13,000 unemployed workers in 2019, down from a high of more than 30,000 unemployed workers in both 2009 and 2010. These labor force constraints will have a substantial impact on the regional economy.



Averaging a net gain of 7,648 additional labor force participants per year between 1990 and 2000, employers in Central Minnesota were able to tap into a large and growing pool of talented workers. Although the regional labor force and economy continue to grow, the rate of labor force growth is slowing down considerably, demonstrated by Central Minnesota adding an average of only 2,170 workers per year from 2010 to 2019 (Figure 7). Increasingly tight labor markets and a growing scarcity of workers is now recognized as one of the most significant barriers to future economic growth in Central Minnesota. In the face of these constraints, it has become evident that a more diverse workforce in terms of age, gender, race, ethnicity, disability status, and immigration has been and will continue to be a vital source of the workers that employers need to succeed.



LABOR FORCE PROJECTIONS

If Central Minnesota's population changes at the projected rates shown in Figure 4 above, the region would be expected to see a slight decrease in the labor force over the next decade from applying current labor force participation rates to future population projections by age group. This departure from a growing labor force to a shrinking one is unprecedented in the region.

Aside from an overall decrease, the labor force will also see a significant shift over time, with gains in the number of workers aged 65 years and over against large declines in the number of workers aged 45 to 64 years. However, the region is still expected to see gains in the number of 20 to 44 year olds (see Table 5). In step with workforce declines, the shift in aging will lead to an even tighter labor market in the future with employers needing to respond to the changing labor force availability.

Table 5. Central Minnesota Labor Force Projections, 2020-2030

	2020 Labor Force Projection	2030 Labor Force Projection	2020-2030 Change	
			Numeric	Percent
16 to 19 years	24,438	20,825	-3,614	-14.8%
20 to 24 years	48,705	50,221	1,515	3.1%
25 to 44 years	146,272	153,878	7,607	5.2%
45 to 54 years	77,289	72,010	-5,279	-6.8%
55 to 64 years	70,373	59,614	-10,758	-15.3%
65 to 74 years	18,037	23,725	5,688	31.5%
75 years & over	3,245	4,933	1,688	52.0%
Total Labor Force	388,360	385,206	-3,153	-0.8%

Source: calculated from [Minnesota State Demographic Center population projections](#) and [2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates](#).

EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS

With 70 percent of the population aged 16 years and over in the labor force, Central Minnesota had slightly higher labor force participation rates than the state's 69.7 percent. The region had slightly higher participation rates than the state in several age groups, with the overall rate trending higher because a higher percentage of Central Minnesota's labor force was younger (Table 6).

In contrast, the region had lower participation rates than the state for every race group except white, Asian or Other Pacific Islanders, and two or more races; and also had large unemployment rate disparities for minority groups similar to the state. The highest rates were reported for American Indians and Black or African Americans. Central Minnesota also had nearly 20,000 workers with disabilities in the workforce, despite lower participation rates and higher unemployment rates than the general population.

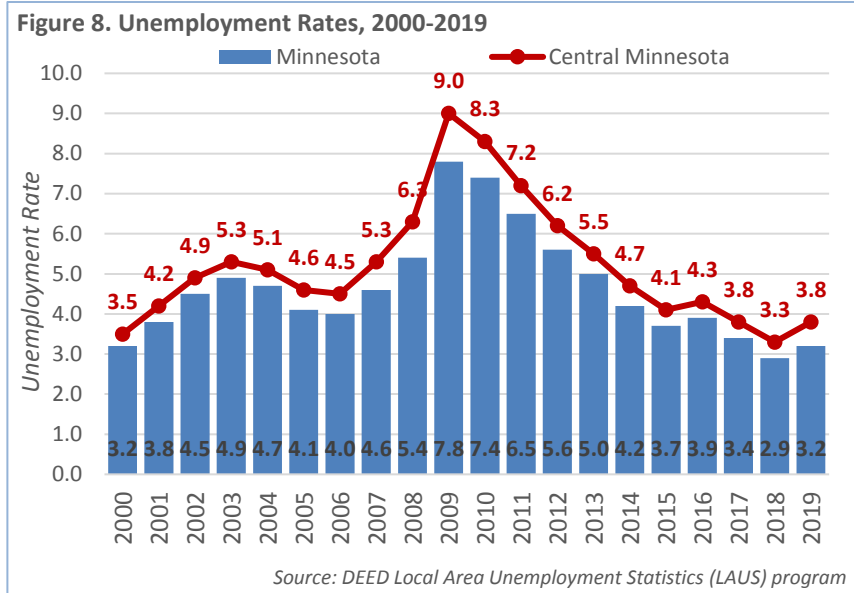
Table 6. Central Minnesota Employment Characteristics, 2018

Age Group	Central Minnesota			Minnesota	
	Labor Force	Labor Force Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate	Labor Force Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate
Total Labor Force	384,148	70.0%	3.9%	69.7%	3.9%
16 to 19 years	22,084	56.8%	10.2%	52.9%	11.7%
20 to 24 years	40,271	85.9%	6.5%	84.4%	6.4%
25 to 44 years	154,541	88.1%	3.8%	88.6%	3.5%
45 to 54 years	84,596	88.5%	2.6%	87.3%	2.8%
55 to 64 years	65,352	71.9%	2.7%	72.6%	3.0%
65 to 74 years	14,571	25.3%	1.7%	27.6%	2.4%
75 years & over	2,721	6.2%	2.1%	6.3%	2.6%
Employment Characteristics by Gender					
Male	203,134	73.1%	4.4%	73.5%	4.3%
Female	181,008	66.7%	3.2%	66.0%	3.4%
Employment Characteristics by Race & Hispanic Origin					
White alone	360,556	70.1%	3.6%	69.5%	3.3%
Black or African American	8,052	64.4%	12.2%	70.7%	9.9%
American Indian & Alaska Native	1,657	50.4%	12.8%	58.5%	12.8%
Asian or Other Pacific Islanders	5,213	75.3%	8.1%	71.3%	4.7%
Some Other Race	3,667	71.3%	5.4%	77.2%	6.2%
Two or More Races	5,098	73.0%	8.5%	73.1%	7.6%
Hispanic or Latino	11,667	73.4%	6.8%	76.3%	6.5%
Employment Characteristics by Disability					
With Any Disability	20,350	54.2%	8.5%	52.5%	9.0%
Employment Characteristics by Educational Attainment					
Population 25 to 64 years	304,393	84.1%	3.3%	84.2%	3.2%
Less than H.S. Diploma	14,645	68.6%	4.3%	65.4%	4.5%
H.S. Diploma or Equivalent	79,924	79.2%	2.8%	78.6%	2.6%
Some College or Assoc. Degree	128,011	86.1%	2.7%	85.2%	3.2%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	81,893	90.2%	1.8%	89.8%	1.9%

Source: 2014-2018 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

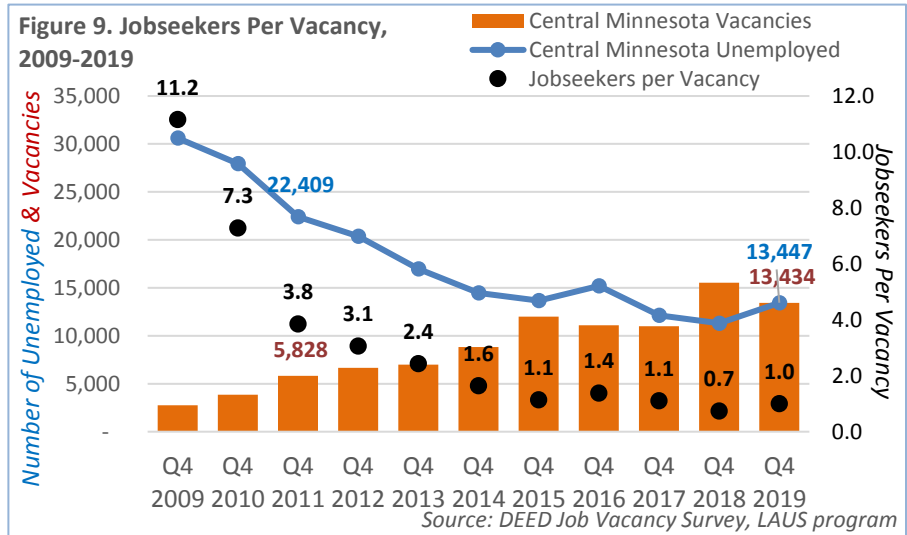
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Central Minnesota has consistently reported slightly higher unemployment rates than Minnesota, regardless of the state of the economy. According to [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#), the region’s unemployment rate hovered at least a half percent above the state rate from 2005 to 2008, before rising as high as 9.0 percent in 2009, then dropping back to prerecession levels in 2014. At 3.3 percent in 2019, unemployment rates were near historic lows in the region (Figure 8). The highest rates of unemployment in the region were consistently found in Kanabec, Mille Lacs, and Pine County.



JOBSEEKERS PER VACANCY

As the number of available workers has declined, the region’s labor market has tightened. One clear demonstration of this is the ratio of unemployed jobseekers per vacancy, which dipped to 0.7-to-1 in the fourth quarter of 2018. According to 2019 Job Vacancy Survey results, there were 14,434 openings reported by employers compared to 13,447 unemployed jobseekers in the region. The ratio climbed as high as 11.2-to-1 during the recession, but has dropped steadily since then, to historically low levels in 2019 (Figure 9).



COMMUTE SHED AND LABOR SHED

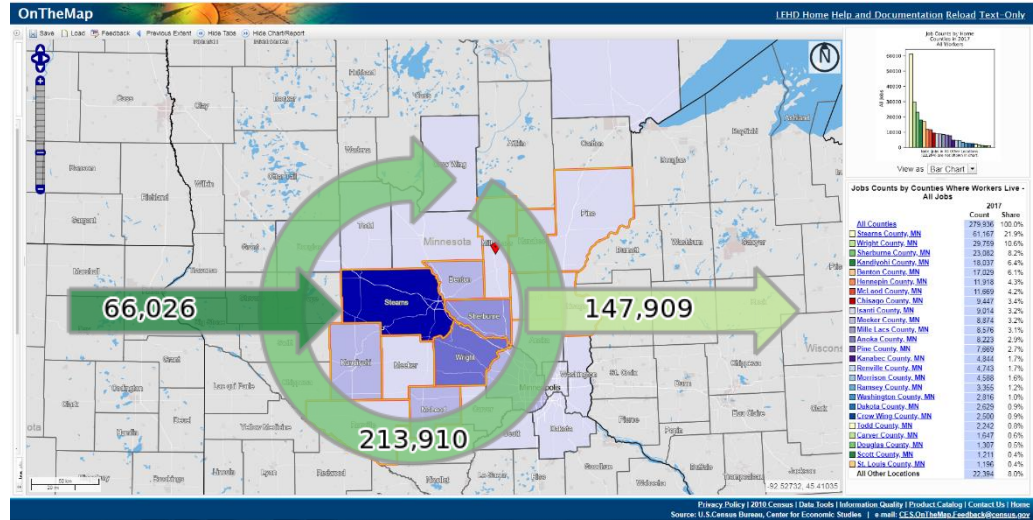
According to commuting data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Central Minnesota has the most mobile workers in the state. Just over 40 percent of the region’s working residents drive outside the region for work, primarily to the Twin Cities metro area. Central Minnesota is a net exporter of labor, having more workers than available jobs. In sum, 213,910 workers both lived and worked in Central Minnesota in 2017, while 147,909 workers who lived in the region drove to surrounding counties for work (Table 7 and Figure 10).

	2017	
	Count	Share
Employed in the Selection Area	279,936	100.0%
Employed in the Selection Area but Living Outside	66,026	23.6%
Employed and Living in the Selection Area	213,910	76.4%
Living in the Selection Area	361,819	100.0%
Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside	147,909	40.9%
Living and Employed in the Selection Area	213,910	59.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap

Stearns County is the largest employment center in the region, followed closely by Hennepin County as employers in the region both lose and draw workers from the Twin Cities metro area. Other counties drawing large amounts of workers include Wright, Sherburne, and Kandiyohi County. Hennepin, Anoka, and Ramsey Counties attract over a quarter of workers in the Central Minnesota region (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Central Minnesota Labor and Commute Shed, 2017



attract over a quarter of workers in the Central Minnesota region (Figure 10).

INCOMES, WAGES AND OCCUPATIONS

HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

Household incomes in Central Minnesota were slightly higher than the rest of the state. The median household income was \$68,399 in 2018, compared to \$68,411 in Minnesota. About 36.3 percent of the households in the region had incomes below \$50,000 in 2018, the same as the state. Another 34.6 percent earned between \$50,000 and \$100,000, and 10.5 percent earned over \$150,000 per year (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Household Income

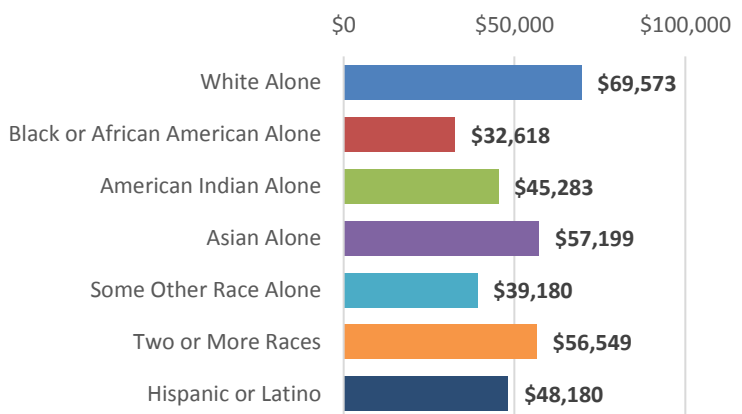
- Less than \$25,000
- \$25,000-\$49,999
- \$50,000-\$74,999
- \$75,000-\$99,999
- \$100,000-\$149,999
- \$150,000 or more

	Less than \$25,000	\$25,000-\$49,999	\$50,000-\$74,999	\$75,000-\$99,999	\$100,000-\$149,999	\$150,000 or more
Central Minnesota	15.5%	20.8%	19.3%	15.4%	18.6%	10.5%
Minnesota	16.1%	20.3%	18.0%	14.0%	17.2%	14.3%

Source: 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Median household income varied by race or origin in the region. Whites accounted for 95 percent of households reporting incomes in 2018, and had the highest median income level. Black or African American households reported the lowest incomes in Central Minnesota, with a median of \$32,618, which is less than half of the white alone median household income (Figure 12). Median incomes were also about \$25,000 lower for American Indian and Hispanic or Latino households than for whites, while households of Asians and two or more races were the only groups with incomes that were similar to whites.

Figure 12. Median Household Income by Race, 2018



Source: 2014-2018 American Community Survey

COST OF LIVING

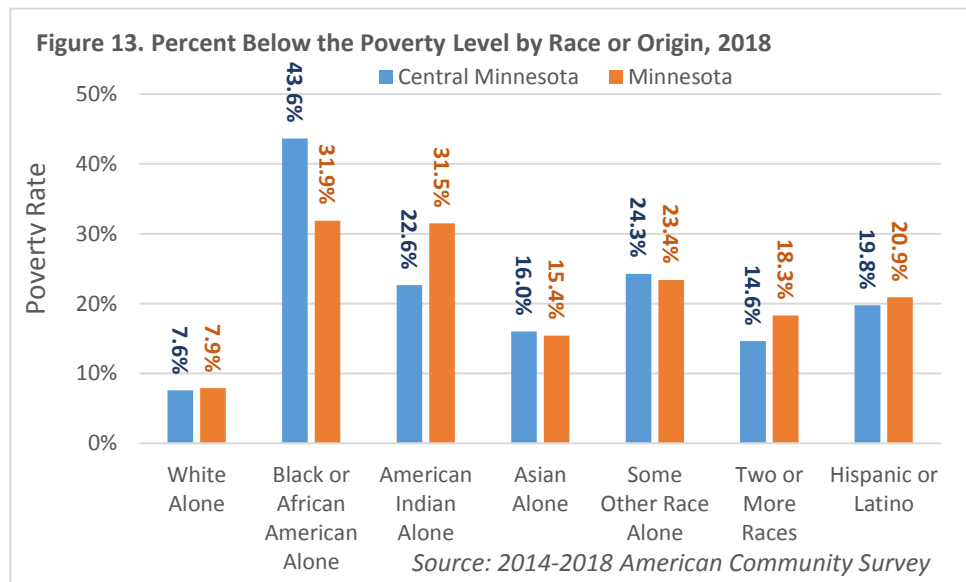
According to DEED’s [Cost of Living tool](#), the basic needs budget for an average Minnesota family (which consists of 2 adults and 1 child, with 1 full-time and 1 part-time worker) is \$56,772 in 2018. The cost of living for a similar family in Central Minnesota was \$54,468 – which was the second highest in the state, behind only the Twin Cities metro area. Because of all the commuting, the region has higher transportation costs than the state, and also had very similar housing costs. The highest monthly costs were for transportation, food, and housing, but child care costs rise rapidly in the region as well. In order to meet the basic needs cost of living for the region, the two workers in the family scenario described would need to earn \$17.46 per hour working a combined 60 hours per week (Table 8).

DEED’s Cost of Living tool provides different estimates for household compositions including single people, partnered couples, and up to 4 children. For a single person living alone and working full-time, the estimated yearly cost in Central Minnesota would be \$31,800, which would require an hourly wage of \$15.29 to meet the basic needs standard of living (Table 8).

Table 8. Central Minnesota Cost of Living, 2019										
Family Composition	Number of Workers	Yearly Cost of Living	Hourly Wage Required	Monthly Costs						
				Child Care	Food	Health Care	Housing	Transportation	Other	Taxes
Central Minnesota										
Single, 0 children	1 FT	\$31,800	\$15.29	\$0	\$327	\$159	\$769	\$722	\$307	\$366
Single, 1 child	1 FT	\$48,804	\$23.46	\$706	\$485	\$369	\$987	\$727	\$413	\$380
2 parents, 1 child	1 FT, 1 PT	\$54,468	\$17.46	\$353	\$749	\$609	\$987	\$841	\$487	\$513
2 parents, 2 children	2 FT	\$79,200	\$19.04	\$1,220	\$979	\$619	\$1,392	\$886	\$665	\$839
State of Minnesota										
Single, 0 children	1 FT	\$31,392	\$15.09	\$0	\$336	\$157	\$798	\$653	\$318	\$354
2 parents, 1 child	1 FT, 1 PT	\$56,772	\$18.20	\$516	\$769	\$593	\$1,033	\$755	\$505	\$560

Source: DEED Cost of Living tool

Overall, Central Minnesota’s poverty rate was 9 percent, which was just below the statewide rate of 10.5 percent. Like incomes, poverty levels varied widely by race and origin. It was estimated that over 43 percent of the region’s Black or African American population was below the poverty level in 2018, compared to just 7.6 percent of the white population. Likewise, poverty levels hovered around 20 percent for



Source: 2014-2018 American Community Survey

American Indians, people of some other race, and people of Hispanic or Latino origin. Only 16 percent of Asian residents and 14.6 percent of people of two or more races were below the poverty level in 2018. Blacks, American Indians, and people of Some Other Race had higher poverty rates than the state (Figure 13).

WAGES AND OCCUPATIONS

According to DEED's [Occupational Employment Statistics](#) program, the median hourly wage for all occupations in Central Minnesota was \$19.28 in the first quarter of 2020, which was the 3rd highest wage level of the six planning regions in the state. Central Minnesota's median wage was \$2.21 below the state's median hourly wage, equaling roughly 90 percent of the statewide wage rate, and \$4.02 below the median hourly wage in the 7-County Twin Cities metro area, which would amount to \$8,300 less per year for a full-time worker. The highest median wage in Central Minnesota for all occupations was found in EDR 7E (Table 9).

	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Regional Employment
Central Minnesota	\$19.28	278,730
EDR 6E - Southwest Central	\$18.41	49,370
EDR 7E - East Central	\$19.81	46,480
EDR 7W - Central	\$19.46	182,890
Twin Cities Metro Area	\$23.30	1,805,980
Northeast Minnesota	\$19.03	144,320
Northwest Minnesota	\$18.38	223,440
Southeast Minnesota	\$19.89	242,490
Southwest Minnesota	\$18.38	176,420
State of Minnesota	\$21.49	2,880,650

Source: [DEED Occupational Employment Statistics](#)

Based on location quotient, Central Minnesota stands out for having higher concentrations of production, education, training and library; farming, construction and extraction, installation and maintenance, healthcare support, and transportation and material moving workers than the state. The largest occupations in the region include office and administrative support, production, and sales related positions (Table 10).

Occupational Group	Central Minnesota				State of Minnesota		
	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Regional Employment	Share of Total Employment	Location Quotient	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Statewide Employment	Share of Total Employment
Total, All Occupations	\$19.28	278,730	100.0%	1.0	\$21.49	2,880,650	100%
Management	\$44.73	13,580	4.9%	0.8	\$52.70	170,650	5.9%
Business & Financial Operations	\$29.88	10,100	3.6%	0.6	\$33.87	171,550	6.0%
Computer & Mathematical	\$32.34	4,440	1.6%	0.5	\$42.71	97,960	3.4%
Architecture & Engineering	\$34.33	4,310	1.5%	0.8	\$38.00	55,520	1.9%
Life, Physical & Social Science	\$30.92	1,780	0.6%	0.7	\$34.35	27,070	0.9%
Community & Social Service	\$24.21	5,240	1.9%	0.9	\$23.34	57,200	2.0%
Legal	\$29.18	1,030	0.4%	0.5	\$37.35	20,050	0.7%
Education, Training & Library	\$23.30	24,130	8.7%	1.5	\$24.38	165,310	5.7%
Arts, Design, Entertainment & Media	\$19.66	2,850	1.0%	0.8	\$24.52	38,540	1.3%
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	\$32.26	17,850	6.4%	1.0	\$36.07	190,800	6.6%
Healthcare Support	\$14.59	16,500	5.9%	1.0	\$14.81	163,160	5.7%
Protective Service	\$24.36	4,630	1.7%	1.1	\$22.45	45,030	1.6%
Food Preparation & Serving Related	\$11.98	11,230	4.0%	0.5	\$12.43	244,300	8.5%
Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maint.	\$14.96	7,800	2.8%	1.0	\$15.23	83,860	2.9%
Personal Care & Service	\$12.84	6,030	2.2%	0.9	\$13.65	70,290	2.4%
Sales & Related	\$14.40	29,230	10.5%	1.1	\$15.37	277,000	9.6%
Office & Administrative Support	\$18.92	33,340	12.0%	0.9	\$20.03	363,800	12.6%
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	\$17.24	430	0.2%	1.1	\$17.72	4,060	0.1%
Construction & Extraction	\$27.54	14,340	5.1%	1.4	\$28.97	104,900	3.6%
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	\$23.16	11,990	4.3%	1.2	\$24.31	100,060	3.5%
Production	\$18.60	30,790	11.0%	1.5	\$19.03	212,650	7.4%
Transportation & Material Moving	\$18.12	27,120	9.7%	1.3	\$18.06	216,890	7.5%

Source: [DEED Occupational Employment Statistics, Qtr. 1 2020](#)

Not surprisingly, the lowest-paying jobs are concentrated in food prep and serving, building, grounds cleaning and maintenance, sales and related, personal care and service, and healthcare support, which tend to have lower experience and educational requirements. For the most part, the gap in pay between Central Minnesota and the state is also much lower in these jobs.

In contrast, the highest paying jobs are found in management, legal, architecture and engineering, computer and mathematical, healthcare practitioners, business and financial operations, and life, physical, and social science occupations, which all need higher levels of education and experience, including many that require postsecondary training. The pay gaps between the region and state are much bigger in these occupations.

JOB VACANCY SURVEY

Employers in Central Minnesota reported 14,029 job vacancies in the fourth quarter of 2019, which was the third highest number ever reported in the region, and an increase of almost 600 additional openings compared to the prior year. The median hourly wage offer was \$16.04 across all occupations but ranged from a low of \$12.79 per hour for personal care and service workers, to more than \$30 per hour for management and computer and mathematical occupations. Reflecting changing demand for occupations and for the workers to fill the openings, the inflation adjusted median wage offer increased about \$1.53 compared to 2019, a 20 percent increase.

The largest number of vacancies were in food prep and serving related occupations, followed by sales and related, building and grounds maintenance, and personal care services. Almost half of the vacancies in the region were in these four occupational groups. Overall, 47 percent of the openings were part-time, just 27 percent required postsecondary education, and 37 percent required a year or more of experience (Table 11). In sum, educational requirements in the region had been stable or declining over the past 5 years, while previous work experience requirements were rising, largely the result of an expanding economy and tightening labor market.

Table 11. Central Minnesota Job Vacancy Survey Results, Qtr. 4 2019

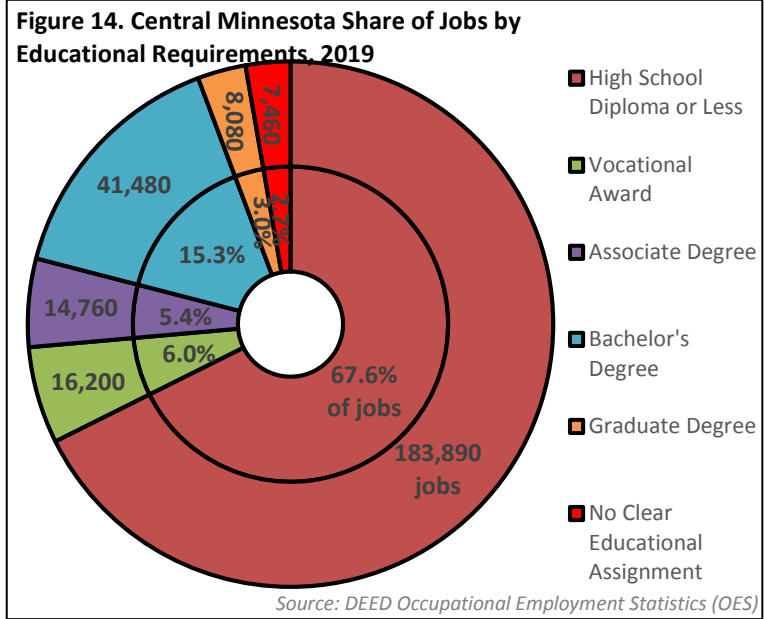
	Number of Total Vacancies	Percent Part-time	Percent Temporary or Seasonal	Requiring Post-Secondary Education	Requiring 1 or More Years of Work Experience	Requiring Certificate or License	Median Hourly Wage Offer
Total, All Occupations	14,029	47%	18%	27%	37%	38%	\$16.04
Management	246	5%	4%	59%	98%	43%	\$30.28
Business & Financial Operations	295	0%	0%	76%	34%	5%	\$28.88
Computer & Mathematical	142	2%	0%	91%	96%	9%	\$39.28
Architecture & Engineering	109	3%	0%	90%	86%	38%	\$28.04
Life, Physical & Social Sciences	33	0%	20%	90%	84%	87%	\$29.69
Community & Social Service	338	32%	5%	46%	62%	65%	\$17.78
Education, Training & Library	541	58%	77%	83%	89%	95%	\$15.86
Arts, Design, Entertainment & Media	76	59%	18%	35%	33%	72%	\$17.78
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	840	39%	2%	87%	43%	98%	\$24.20
Healthcare Support	726	69%	2%	21%	11%	72%	\$14.15
Protective Service	60	71%	24%	13%	41%	75%	\$12.79
Food Preparation & Serving Related	2,054	66%	7%	1%	27%	20%	\$13.08
Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maint.	1,495	91%	81%	0%	15%	5%	\$26.44
Personal Care & Service	1,352	66%	7%	3%	7%	51%	\$12.78
Sales & Related	1,849	37%	13%	12%	32%	5%	\$14.71
Office & Administrative Support	906	50%	11%	17%	47%	15%	\$15.79
Construction & Extraction	675	6%	9%	83%	96%	95%	\$29.56
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	610	10%	1%	43%	58%	51%	\$19.17
Production	794	8%	0%	22%	33%	5%	\$14.99
Transportation & Material Moving	763	45%	25%	4%	35%	78%	\$17.28

Source: DEED Job Vacancy Survey, Qtr. 4 2018

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Similar to Job Vacancy Survey results, data from DEED’s Occupational Employment Statistics program shows that only about 30 percent of jobs in the region require postsecondary education for entry. The other two-thirds can be started with a high school diploma or less and some amount of on-the-job training (Figure 14).

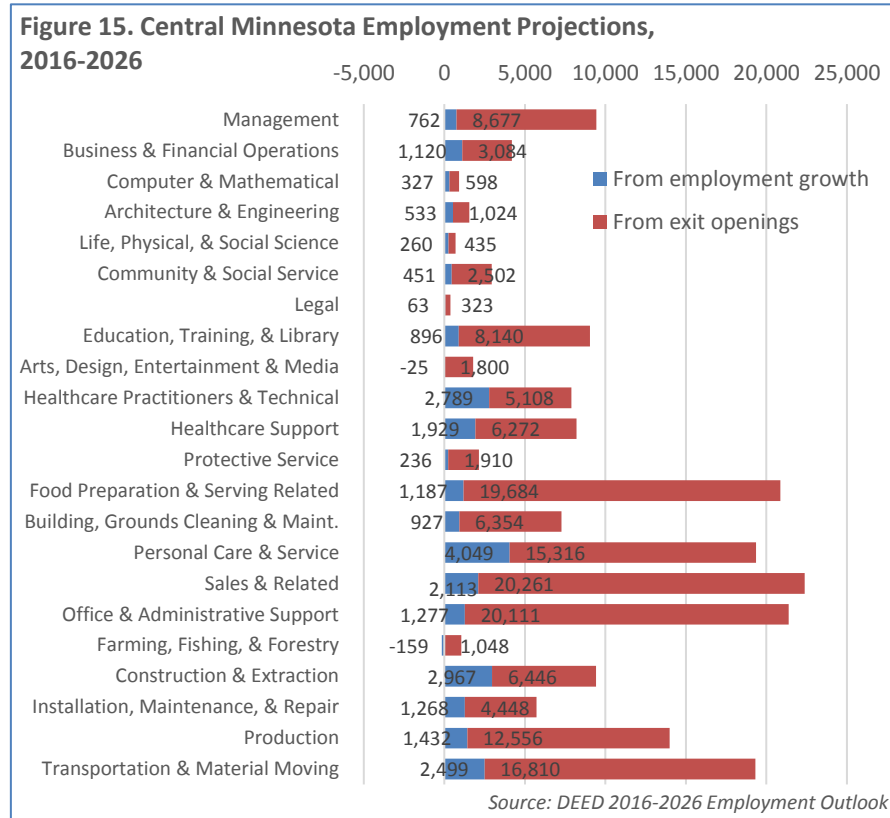
Certain careers – such as dentists, lawyers, and teachers – require a college education, while other jobs – including cost estimators, sales representatives, and correctional officers – do not. College is an excellent way to move up career ladders and open windows of opportunity to fields that would otherwise be closed, such as nursing or engineering. Many of these occupations offer high wages and are in high demand in the marketplace. While education is typically a worthwhile investment, college can be expensive – with average annual expenses ranging between \$14,500 and almost \$50,000 per year in Minnesota. For those who go to college, choice of major matters – different programs lead to jobs that earn different amounts of money.



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EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS

Overall, the 13-county Central Minnesota planning area is projected to grow 8.6 percent from 2016 to 2026, a gain of 26,629 new jobs. That is the fastest of the 6 planning regions in the state. In addition, the region is also expected to need 157,485 replacement openings to fill jobs left vacant by retirements and other career changers. Personal care and service, construction and extraction, transportation and material moving, sales and related, and healthcare support and practitioners are expected to see the most new growth, but every occupational group will show some future demand either through new jobs or replacement openings (Figure 15).



OCCUPATIONS IN DEMAND

According to DEED's [Occupations in Demand](#) tool, there are over 200 occupations showing relatively high demand in the region, with training and education requirements ranging from short-term on-the-job training to postsecondary education to advanced degrees. These occupations are spread across different sectors but are also concentrated in the region's major industries. For example, nursing assistants, personal care aides, home health aides, licensed practical and registered nurses, slaughterers and meat packers, industrial engineers, carpenters, and truck drivers are all in high demand (Table 12).

Less than High School	High School or Equivalent	Some College or Assoc. Degree	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Retail Salespersons (\$25,362)	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers (\$48,425)	Registered Nurses (\$77,526)	Elementary School Teachers (\$57,806)
Personal Care Aides (\$26,819)	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers (\$41,149)	Nursing Assistants (\$35,265)	Secondary School Teachers (\$58,086)
Combined Food Prep & Serving Workers (\$23,801)	Teacher Assistants (\$30,937)	Licensed Practical Nurses (\$46,876)	Software Developers, Applications (\$85,496)
Cashiers (\$24,482)	Carpenters (\$50,024)	Automotive Service Techs. & Mechanics (\$39,870)	Accountants & Auditors (\$60,319)
Stock Clerks & Order Fillers (\$25,685)	First-Line Supervisors of Food Prep Workers (\$36,181)	Heating, Air Cond, (HVAC) & Refrig. Mechanics (\$51,059)	Human Resources Specialists (\$56,611)
Janitors & Cleaners (\$29,692)	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, & Brazers (\$46,676)	Machinists (\$49,847)	Construction Managers (\$78,625)
Laborers & Freight, Stock, & Material Movers (\$34,830)	Secretaries & Administrative Assistants (\$39,370)	Hairdressers, Hairstylists, & Cosmetologists (\$30,265)	Industrial Engineers (\$82,415)
Home Health Aides (\$28,942)	Team Assemblers (\$34,098)	Police & Sheriff's Patrol Officers (\$63,297)	Market Research Analysts & Marketing Specs. (\$52,743)
Cooks, Restaurant (\$27,711)	Office Clerks, General (\$36,597)	Electricians (\$68,811)	Nurse Practitioners (\$107,387)
Maids & Housekeeping Cleaners (\$26,215)	Maintenance & Repair Workers (\$43,720)	Radiologic (X-Ray) Technologists (\$62,286)	Financial Managers (\$90,684)

Source: DEED Occupations in Demand

ECONOMY

INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT

According to DEED's [Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages \(QCEW\) program](#), Central Minnesota was home to 18,183 business establishments providing an average of 278,111 covered jobs through 2019, with a total payroll of over \$12 billion. That was 9.5 percent of total employment in the state of Minnesota. Average annual wages were \$44,831 in the region, which was about \$15,000 lower than the state's average annual wage. Central Minnesota has led Greater Minnesota in job growth during the recovery since the recession, but in the past year has seen slower than average growth (Table 13).

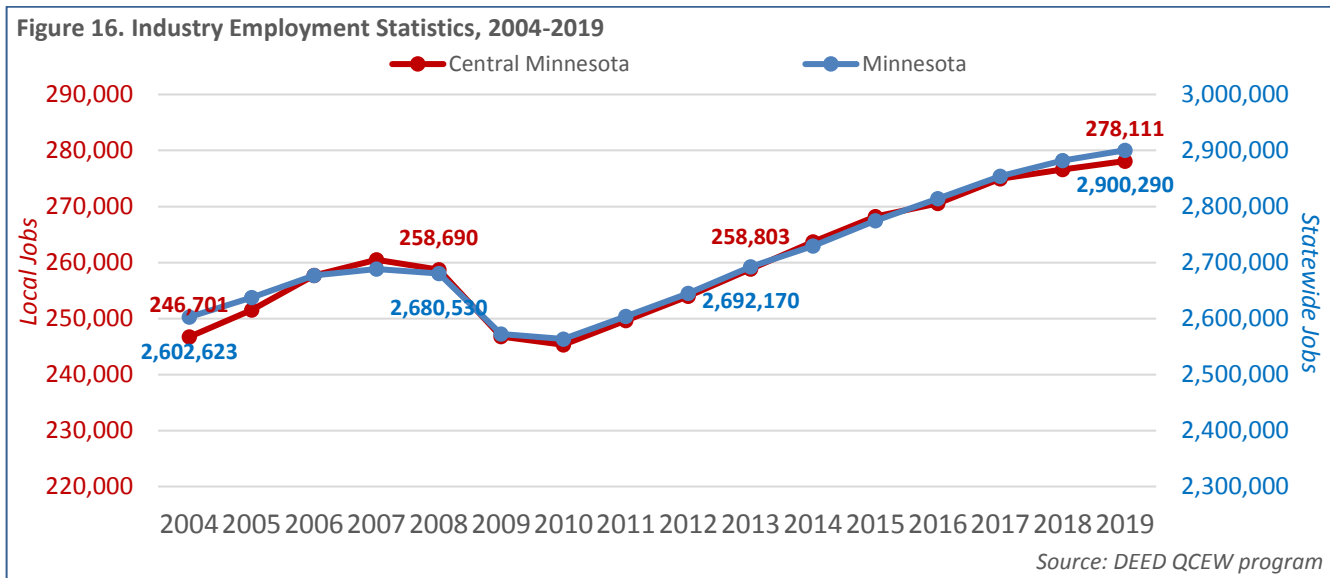
Geography	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Total Payroll	Average Annual Wage	2014-2019		2018-2019	
					Change in Jobs	Percent Change	Change in Jobs	Percent Change
Central Minnesota	18,183	278,111	\$12,468,039,532	\$44,831	14,413	5.5%	1,485	0.5%
Region 6E	3,572	53,286	\$2,278,598,234	\$42,762	955	1.8%	-688	-1.3%
Region 7E	3,739	48,716	\$1,974,836,376	\$40,538	2,150	4.6%	351	0.7%
Region 7W	10,872	176,108	\$8,214,604,922	\$46,645	11,306	6.9%	1,822	1.0%
Minnesota	178,242	2,900,290	\$172,936,995,226	\$59,627	170,677	6.3%	18,383	0.6%

Source: DEED Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages (QCEW)

With 176,108 jobs at 10,872 business establishments, EDR 7W accounts for about 63 percent of total employment in the Central Minnesota planning region. EDR 7W also accounted for 78 percent of the region's

job growth during the recovery from 2014 to 2019, adding 11,306 net new jobs, a 6.9 percent increase. In contrast, EDR 7E had the smallest number of jobs, with 48,716 jobs at 3,739 establishments, but saw an increase of 2,150 jobs in the past five years. EDR 6E had 3,572 business establishments providing 53,286 jobs, after gaining 955 net new jobs from 2014 to 2019, a 1.8 percent increase (Table 13).

Central Minnesota has seen employment ups and downs over the past decade, but ended 2019 with 31,410 more jobs than it had in 2004. The region entered the recession at the same time as the state in early 2008, suffering severe declines in 2009 and 2010. Since then, Central Minnesota has recovered at a similar pace to the state, which gained jobs at a 5.5 percent clip from 2014 to 2019, compared to a 6.3 percent increase in the region. Central Minnesota reached a prerecession peak of 260,488 jobs in 2007, then hit a low of 245,310 jobs in 2010, before recovering to a new record of 278,111 jobs in 2019 (Figure 16).



With 49,129 jobs at 1,797 firms, health care and social assistance is the largest employing industry in Central Minnesota, accounting for 17.7 percent of total jobs in the region. In addition, Central Minnesota is still adding health care and social assistance jobs, gaining 1,214 net new jobs over the past five years. At \$46,313 in 2019, average annual wages were about \$1,500 higher in health care than the total of all industries.

The next largest industry in Central Minnesota was manufacturing, with 41,961 jobs at 1,180 firms, after adding 1,401 jobs from 2014 to 2019. Central Minnesota has large concentrations of food manufacturing and fabricated metal product manufacturing, as well as significant amounts of machinery manufacturing and transportation equipment manufacturing. Retail trade is the third largest industry, with 36,558 jobs at 2,283 establishments, and the related accommodation and food services industry also provides 23,927 jobs in the region, combining to provide about 22 percent of total jobs in the region. However, both industries have relatively low wages.

Other important industries in Central Minnesota include educational services, construction, public administration, transportation and warehousing, wholesale trade, and administrative support and waste management services. Fifteen of the 20 main industries in the region added jobs since 2014, and the huge loss in arts, entertainment, and recreation was due to a classification switch into accommodation and food services. In contrast, 8 of the 20 industries lost jobs in the past year (see Table 14).

Table 14. Industry Employment Statistics, 2019

Central Minnesota	2019 Annual Data				2014-2019		2018-2019	
	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Total Payroll (\$1,000s)	Avg. Annual Wage	Change in Jobs	Percent Change	Change in Jobs	Percent Change
NAICS Industry Title								
Total, All Industries	18,183	278,111	\$12,468,040	\$44,831	14,413	5.5%	1,485	0.5%
Health Care & Social Assistance	1,797	49,129	\$2,275,333	\$46,313	1,214	2.5%	-1,029	-2.1%
Manufacturing	1,180	41,961	\$2,305,541	\$54,945	1,401	3.5%	-463	-1.1%
Retail Trade	2,283	36,558	\$1,046,943	\$28,638	1,696	4.9%	-199	-0.5%
Educational Services	355	24,182	\$1,099,740	\$45,478	831	3.6%	-37	-0.2%
Accommodation & Food Services	1,248	23,927	\$426,796	\$17,837	1,974	9.0%	-107	-0.4%
Construction	2,779	18,830	\$1,192,767	\$63,344	3,517	23.0%	766	4.2%
Public Administration	473	13,363	\$687,845	\$51,474	885	7.1%	242	1.8%
Transportation & Warehousing	858	9,981	\$469,792	\$47,069	950	10.5%	155	1.6%
Wholesale Trade	654	9,652	\$575,775	\$59,653	41	0.4%	53	0.6%
Admin. Support & Waste Mgmt. Svcs.	805	9,595	\$353,338	\$36,825	-361	-3.6%	-35	-0.4%
Other Services	2,086	8,695	\$235,039	\$27,032	836	10.6%	449	5.4%
Finance & Insurance	838	7,128	\$452,156	\$63,434	553	8.4%	47	0.7%
Professional & Technical Services	1,083	6,494	\$415,731	\$64,018	985	17.9%	0	0.0%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & Hunt	463	4,731	\$182,845	\$38,648	472	11.1%	352	8.0%
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	361	3,295	\$49,149	\$14,916	-1,372	-29.4%	8	0.2%
Information	221	3,119	\$152,027	\$48,742	-236	-7.0%	23	0.7%
Management of Companies	68	3,002	\$222,833	\$74,228	1,514	101.7%	1,438	91.9%
Utilities	64	2,230	\$242,043	\$108,539	-365	-14.1%	-71	-3.1%
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	541	1,896	\$61,352	\$32,358	-186	-8.9%	-132	-6.5%
Mining	26	337	\$20,996	\$62,304	62	22.5%	24	7.7%

Source: DEED Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages (QCEW) program

INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT

According to DEED's Quarterly Employment Demographics (QED) program, the workforce in the region was aging over the past 10 years. Nearly one-quarter (22.1%) of workers in the region were 55 years or older, compared to 21.5 percent statewide and just 15.7 percent in the region one decade earlier. In contrast, the percentage of teenaged workers was falling, and while wages were going up for younger workers, the number of hours worked was going down (Table 15).

As noted above, wages were climbing across the board for all workers due to rising demand and a tight labor market. While wages were still lowest for the youngest and oldest workers who tend to fill lower-skilled, less-than-fulltime jobs in industries like retail trade and accommodation and food services, these two age groups enjoyed the fastest percentage increase in wages from 2008 to 2018. Wages were highest for workers between 45 and 64 years of age, and males worked more hours than females, though the gap was narrowing.

Central Minnesota	Percentage of Workers		Percent of Workers, Minnesota		Median Hourly Wage		Median Hours Worked (Per Qtr.)	
	2018	2008	2018	2008	2018	2008	2018	2008
Total, all ages	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	\$17.66	\$13.88	401	400
19 years & under	8.7%	10.0%	6.1%	7.5%	\$10.49	\$7.50	122	124
20 to 24 years	10.9%	12.6%	10.3%	11.6%	\$14.10	\$10.64	278	277
25 to 44 years	39.6%	40.4%	42.9%	42.7%	\$19.96	\$15.99	456	459
45 to 54 years	18.7%	21.4%	19.1%	22.5%	\$21.66	\$17.11	480	480
55 to 64 years	16.8%	12.1%	16.7%	12.6%	\$20.30	\$16.10	473	455
65 years & over	5.3%	3.6%	4.8%	3.1%	\$15.15	\$11.42	214	194
Male	48.3%	47.5%	49.1%	49.0%	\$19.86	\$15.87	468	469
Female	51.7%	52.5%	50.9%	51.0%	\$16.54	\$12.65	357	348

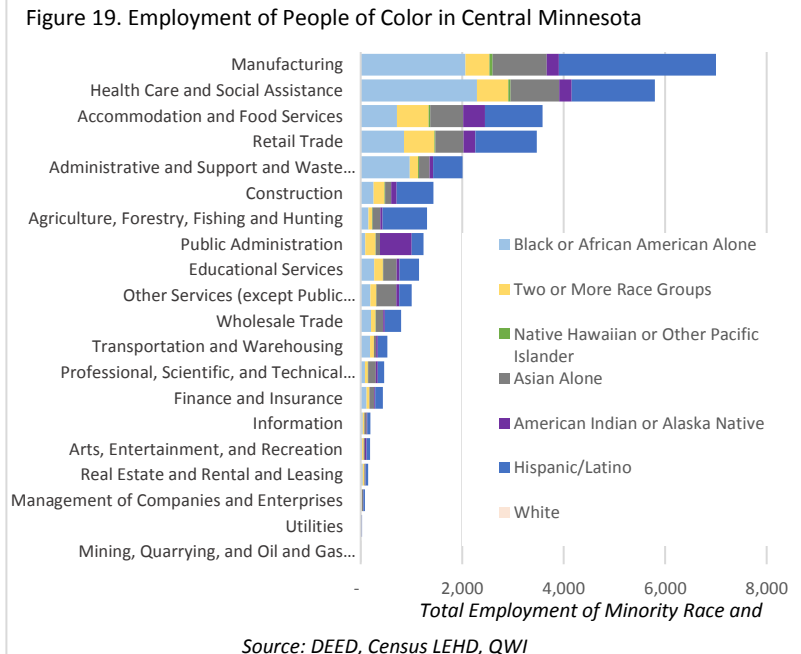
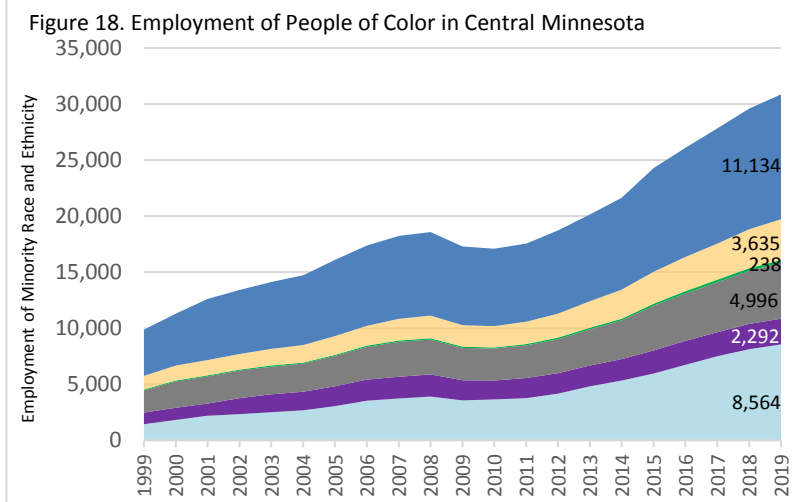
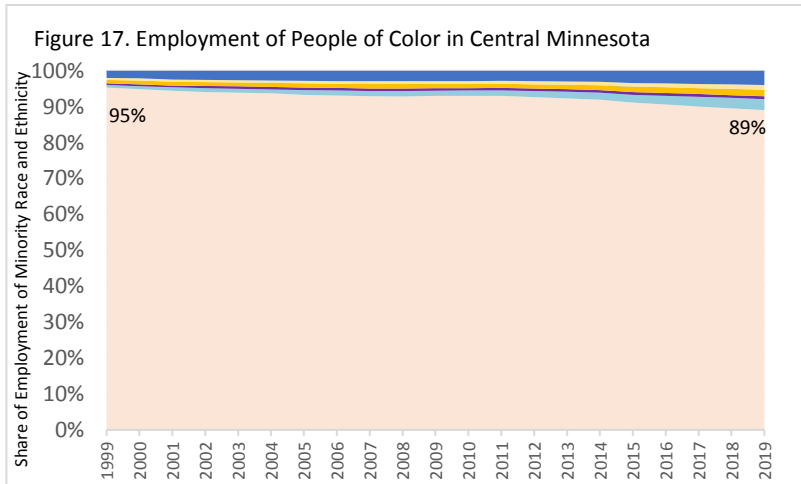
Source: DEED Quarterly Employment Demographics

EMPLOYMENT DIVERSITY

People of color account for 11.2% of the total population in Central Minnesota and hold roughly the same share of jobs, compared to the state overall where they amount to 20.6% of the population but only hold 14.9% of jobs. According data from the Quarterly Workforce Indicator program people of color held 30,859 jobs compared to 251,243 jobs held by White Workers. The number of jobs has increased roughly threefold since 2000 when People of color held just 5% of jobs (See Figure 17).

People of color have filled an additional 19,551 jobs since 2000 compared to 47,620 by White workers, amounting to 41% of all new jobs. Hispanic/Latino workers hold the largest number of jobs of the racial and ethnic minority groups with 11,134 jobs in 2019, a third of all minority held jobs. The next largest number of jobs held by a minority group was Black or African American, holding 8,564 jobs in 2019. The number of jobs held by this race has increased by 6,739 since 2000, amounting to a 369% increase (See Figure 18).

The agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting sector and administrative support and waste management sector have the highest share of non-White employment at 24% and 20%, respectively. Accommodation and food services and manufacturing also have 15% of jobs held by non-white workers. The largest numbers of non-White workers are employed by manufacturing (6,999 jobs) and healthcare and social assistance (5,796 jobs).



INDUSTRY PROJECTIONS

As noted above, Central Minnesota is projected to grow 8.6 percent from 2016 to 2026, a gain of 26,629 new jobs, which would make it the fastest growing region in the state. The largest and third fastest growing industry is expected to be health care and social assistance, which may account for one-third (35.1%) of total projected growth in the region by 2026. The region is also expected to see significant employment growth in construction, manufacturing, public administration, and retail trade. Construction and professional and technical services were projected to be the fastest growing. In contrast, agriculture, information, and mining are all expected to suffer job cuts in the next decade (Table 16).

Industry	Estimated Employment 2016	Projected Employment 2026	Percent Change 2016-2026	Numeric Change 2016-2026
Total, All Industries	310,433	337,062	+8.6%	+26,629
Health Care & Social Assistance	47,461	56,807	+19.7%	+9,346
Manufacturing	41,361	43,677	+5.6%	+2,316
Retail Trade	35,825	37,842	+5.6%	+2,017
Educational Services	25,717	26,325	+2.4%	+608
Accommodation & Food Services	21,568	22,458	+4.1%	+890
Construction	16,522	20,503	+24.1%	+3,981
Public Administration	18,239	20,261	+11.1%	+2,022
Other Services	11,569	12,024	+3.9%	+455
Transportation & Warehousing	10,210	11,568	+13.3%	+1,358
Wholesale Trade	10,237	11,189	+9.3%	+952
Administrative & Waste Services	9,834	10,892	+10.8%	+1,058
Professional & Technical Services	6,961	8,372	+20.3%	+1,411
Finance & Insurance	7,341	7,521	+2.5%	+180
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	5,562	5,683	+2.2%	+121
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & Hunt	4,475	4,189	-6.4%	-286
Information	2,855	2,673	-6.4%	-182
Utilities	2,234	2,342	+4.8%	+108
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	1,965	1,981	+0.8%	+16
Management of Companies	1,681	1,763	+4.9%	+82
Mining	336	267	-20.5%	-69

Source: DEED 2016-2026 Employment Outlook

NONEMPLOYER ESTABLISHMENTS

Central Minnesota was home to 49,410 self-employed businesses or “nonemployers” in 2018, which are defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as “businesses without paid employees that are subject to federal income tax, originating from tax return information of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).” Unlike covered employment, Central Minnesota saw a steady decline in nonemployers over the past decade, responding

to economic changes. In sum, the region lost 1,137 nonemployers from 2007 to 2018, a -2.2 percent decrease. However, Region 7W did see an increase due to population and economic growth. In sum, these non-employers generated sales receipts of over \$2.3 billion in 2017 (Table 17).

	2018		2007-2018	
	Number of Firms	Receipts (\$1,000s)	Change in Firms	Percent Change
Central Minnesota	49,410	\$2,353,779	-1,137	-2.2%
Region 6E	8,283	\$401,021	-408	-4.7%
Region 7E	10,770	\$490,711	-1,934	-15.2%
Region 7W	30,357	\$1,462,047	1,205	4.1%
Minnesota	416,487	\$19,994,802	29,503	7.6%

Source: U.S. Census, Nonemployer Statistics program

CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

Like other parts of Greater Minnesota, agriculture is also a key industry in Central Minnesota, including 13,540 farms producing just under \$3 billion in the market value of products sold in 2017 according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Several of the highest ranked agriculture counties in the state are in Central Minnesota, including Stearns (#1), Renville (#3), and Kandiyohi (#8). Like the state, the number of farms in the region declined over the past 5 years, but Central Minnesota still accounts for 20 percent of the farms in the state (Table 18).

	Number of Farms	Market Value of Products Sold	State Rank
Central Minnesota	13,540	\$2,939,547,000	3
Region 6E	4,154	\$1,484,036,000	5
Region 7E	3,780	\$214,252,000	11
Region 7W	5,606	\$1,241,259,000	7
Minnesota	68,822	\$18,395,390,000	

Source: 2017 Census of Agriculture

Upon request, this information can be made available in alternate formats for people with disabilities by contacting

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