

Regional and Local Plans

7/1/2021 – 6/30/2024

RWDA: Regional Workforce Development Area #5
South Central and Southwest Minnesota

LWDA: Local Workforce Development Area #7 – South Central

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 Workforce Development Area #5 (RWDA #5) or the Southwest Minnesota planning region consists of the 23-county area of South Central and Southwest Minnesota. The region includes three Economic Development Regions (Regions 6W, 8 and 9), two local workforce development areas (South Central and Southwest) and one metropolitan statistical area (greater Mankato/North Mankato area).

The RWDA #5 economy was analyzed by a thorough review of labor market information through our MN DEED Regional Labor Market Analysts and engaging board members, local employers and community partners in a dialogue about workforce development needs. This approach gives us a good understanding of the region by combining what statistics reveal with the real-time knowledge of local employers and community partners. The MN DEED Regional Profile for the 23-county labor market area is attached (**Attachment 1**). Sources of data and analysis are notated on the attached profile. Below is a summary of the data.

The COVID-19 pandemic and related federal and state executive orders have drastically and quickly changed the economic and workforce development needs of the region. The lasting impact of the pandemic is yet to be fully understood. To better address the current needs of employers, we gathered input through six group meetings held with employers and stakeholders in the region and 30-minute in-depth interviews with 11 employers. They overwhelmingly identified finding viable/qualified applicants as their number one concern. As data and the expressed needs of employers become more available, workforce development strategies will be responsive and adapted as needed. Although the regional analysis was provided by MN DEED in November 2020, most of the data is pre-pandemic so we will rely heavily on dialogues with our regional employers and data updates from our Regional Analysts.

Existing and Emerging In-Demand Industry Sectors: The labor market in RWDA #5 is supported by a diverse industry base. The top five industry sectors as of 2019 are: Health Care & Social Assistance, Manufacturing, Retail Trade, Educational Services, and Accommodation & Food Services (see table 14, Attachment 1). Health Care & Social Assistance is now the largest industry sector in RWDA #5. Up until 2018, manufacturing had been the largest industry sector in the region and is still the largest industry sector in economic development regions 8 and 9 within RWDA #5. Retail trade and accommodation/food service have been severely

impacted by the pandemic and we anticipate that employment numbers in these sectors will significantly decrease in 2020 and we will be assisting individuals impacted in these sectors to transfer their skills to other demand industries.

Industry sectors with the largest projected growth from 2016 to 2026 includes: Agriculture, Health Care & Social Assistance, Transportation & Warehousing, and Construction (see Table 16, Attachment 1).

Based on location quotient, RWDA #5 stands out for having a high concentration of farming (3.7 location quotient), production, installation/maintenance/repair, education and transportation & material moving occupations (see Table 10, Attachment 1).

Upon review of the labor market information and input from employers and stakeholders, RWDA #5 will focus on five key existing and emerging industries sectors:

- **Agriculture**
- **Construction**
- **Health Care and Social Assistance**
- **Manufacturing**
- **Transportation and Warehousing**

Although industries like Retail Trade and Accommodation & Food Services provide a number of employment opportunities in the region, they are often the first job for individuals; these jobs are frequently low skilled and/or low wage jobs; and were significantly impacted by COVID.

Agriculture: RWDA #5 has 6.1 percent of the total employment in the state of Minnesota; however, RWDA #5 accounts for 26.6 percent of the farms in the state (see Table 18, Attachment 1). Industry projections reveal that agriculture will be the fastest growing industry in the region from 2016 to 2026 adding over 1,400 jobs (see Table 16, Attachment 1). In addition, agriculture has one of the highest share of non-white employment (20%) in the region. Occupations in demand include farmworkers-crops, farmworkers-animals, agriculture food science technicians and farm equipment mechanics.

Construction: Although new employment growth under Construction is only expected to be a little over 400 jobs, the industry is expected to need almost 3,600 replacement openings to fill jobs left by retirement and other career changers. Of the key industries in the region, construction provides higher paying job opportunities with an average annual wage of \$54,544. Occupations in demand include carpenters, cement masons, laborers, and operating engineers. Support occupations like Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning are also in demand. Employers and labor unions work closely with partners to connect with local high schools to develop a pipeline of workers for this industry.

Health Care & Social Assistance: After gaining more than 1,000 jobs in the past 5 years, the largest industry sector in RWDA #5 is Health Care & Social Assistance with 31,577 jobs. This industry is projected to continue growing from 2016 to 2026 by adding another 1,192 jobs, a 3.9% increase. Occupations in demand include EMTs, Home Health Aides, LPNs, Mental Health Counselors, Nursing Assistants, Personal Care Aides, Physician Assistants and Registered Nurses. Long-term care facilities indicate that CNAs are difficult to hire at this time – even for one facility that raised wages to \$18+ per hour. Hospitals/clinics indicate they are looking for all levels of nurses: PCA, CNA, LPN, RN as well as health unit coordinators and technicians. Large providers who have historically provided higher wages and better benefits (hospitals & clinics) are starting to revise their minimum qualifications, eliminating required experience and certifications, in order to attract more workforce. Prior to COVID there was a great demand for health care workers, and now with the pandemic it has only increased this demand in the region, especially as individuals have concerns with safety within the industry.

Manufacturing: With 31,338 jobs at 588 firms, manufacturing is a close second to health care as the leading industries in the region. Like construction, manufacturing provides higher wage employment opportunities with an average annual wage of \$52,795. Occupations in demand include industrial machinery mechanics, industrial engineers & technicians, machinists, electrical testers, painters and welders. Employers indicate they are significantly impacted by retirements. Many employers indicate they are giving ex-offenders second chances and developing partnerships with local high schools. In addition, manufacturing hires the highest share of non-white employment at 33%.

Transportation & Warehousing: The Southwest region has a higher level of transportation & warehousing employment with a location quotient of 1.2%. Transportation has one of the largest job vacancies in the region with 1,087 job vacancies (see Table 11, Attachment 1). Transportation & warehousing has experienced a 5.3% increase in jobs and is projected to grow by 11.8% from 2016-2026 or 847 jobs. Occupations in demand include laborers & freight stock movers, stock clerks and tractor-trailer truck drivers. In addition, supporting occupations in demand include automotive service technicians & mechanics and diesel mechanics.

Occupations in Demand: There are well over 200 occupations showing relatively high demand in RWDA #5. These occupations are spread across different sectors but are concentrated in the region's major industries including manufacturing, health care, transportation, and other related industries (see Table 12, Attachment 1). A complete list of occupations in demand in RWDA #5 is provided as **Attachment 2**.

Other labor market information of note for the region includes:

Declining Population: Nineteen of the 23 counties in RWDA #5 lost

population from 2010-2019. Only four counties experienced growth during this time period: Blue Earth, LeSueur, Nicollet and Nobles counties (see Table 1, Attachment 1). Although births exceeded deaths in the region, out-migration outpaced in-migration. The number of immigrants in the region increased by 31.1% since 2010, outpacing the statewide growth of 25.8%.

Population by Race: Although the region is less diverse than the state, it is becoming more diverse over time. RWDA #5 had a higher percentage of people reporting Hispanic/Latino origin than the state and Nobles County, reporting 25% of residents with Hispanic origin, has the highest rate in the state. Redwood, Lyon and Watonwan counties are also relatively diverse.

Labor Force Change: The labor force in Southwest Minnesota reached its peak in 2009 and has since declined creating a tight labor market. 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 the region. 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 workers as white, native-born workforce continues to age, these younger workers of different races/countries will comprise the fastest growing segment of the labor force. One impact we anticipate with the pandemic is a decrease in labor force participation rates as individuals leave the labor force due to safety concerns or being needed at home to care for school-age children.

Jobseekers per Vacancy: A clear demonstration of the tight labor market prior to the COVID pandemic is the ratio of unemployed job seekers per job vacancy which stood at .8 to 1 in RWDA #5 at the end of 2019 (see Figure 9, Attachment 1). The pandemic had a significant impact on this ratio the second quarter of 2020 where the Job Seeker to Job Vacancy ratio jumped to 2.1 to 1. As unemployment rates decrease in third and fourth quarters of 2020 we anticipate that this ratio will decrease as well.

Unemployment Rates: With our diverse industry base, RWDA #5 has experienced relatively low unemployment rates. The annual unemployment rate for 2019 was 3.5% (see Figure 8, Attachment 1). The COVID pandemic and executive orders had its greatest impact on employment in RWDA #5 April through June of 2020 where unemployment rates ranged from 6.5% to a high of 7.0%. Since that time unemployment rates in the region have steadily declined with unemployment rates being back to rates similar to prior to the pandemic at 3.3% in November of 2020. Unfortunately, part of this decline is attributed to a decrease in labor force participation rates as individuals leave the labor force due to safety concerns and being needed at home to care for school age children.

Employment Characteristics: Although unemployment rates have been relatively low in RWDA #5, not all populations are benefiting from low unemployment rates. Populations experiencing employment disparities were

highest among young people, minorities and individuals with disabilities. Unemployment rates in 2018 for these populations include (see Table 6, Attachment 1):

- Youth ages 16 to 19 (11%)
- Youth ages 20 to 24 (4.9%)
- Black or African American (15.9%)
- American Indian & Alaskan Native (5.1%)
- Asian or Pacific Islander (6.5%)
- Hispanic or Latino (7.1%)
- Individual with disabilities (8.8%)

Household Incomes: Household incomes are lower in RWDA #5 than the state as a whole. Median household income in RWDA #5 was \$56,796 in 2018, compared to \$68,411 statewide. Almost 45% of households in the region had incomes below \$50,000. Income disparities by race and ethnicity also exist. African American households reported the lowest incomes in the region at \$25,766, American Indians at \$39,787, Asians at \$42,957 and Hispanic/Latino at \$41,920 (Figure 12, Attachment 1).

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.

RWDA #5 will focus on five key industry sectors: **agriculture, construction, health care/social assistance, manufacturing, and transportation/warehousing.**

RWDA #5 has developed two goals that directly address in-demand industry sectors and occupations workforce needs.

- Increase employer engagement that expands the talent pipeline through sector-based partnerships, career pathways, career awareness opportunities and work-based learning/training activities.
- Address the shortage of skilled workers through sector-based career pathway approaches.

Regional strategies to coordinate efforts to address workforce needs in in-demand industry sectors and occupations is through a four-prong approach:

1. Development of employer-led industry sector partnerships for in-demand industry sectors.
2. Development and implementation of sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors.
3. Strengthen career pathway approaches for key industry sectors and occupations in the region.
4. Employer engagement through boards, committees, career awareness, work-based learning and employer events.

Development of employer-led industry sector partnerships for in-demand industry sectors: In partnership with our MN DEED Workforce Strategy Consultant we have begun two employer-led industry sector partnerships for our two largest employment industries: *Health Care/Social Assistance and Manufacturing*. These two partnerships will continue to complete strategic planning and the development and implementation of action plans. Strategic planning has revealed that their key issues revolve around recruiting talent, retaining talent, and training. Strategies these two partnerships are especially interested in pursuing include innovative recruitment strategies (for communities of color, disability, offender-status and age), connections with local high schools to expose students to in-demand careers and developing a pipeline of workers, providing work-based learning opportunities and knowledge/access to workforce development resources in the region. These strategies include developing career awareness events on-line, like our Tour of Manufacturing model, during the COVID pandemic environment.

Development and implementation of sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors: In partnership with local employers representing key industries, a number of sector initiatives are being implemented to support expanding the talent pipeline for the industry. Initiatives include:

- The development of industry-specific infographics and newsletters that provides “customer friendly” labor market information for our key industries including: *agriculture, construction, health care/social assistance, manufacturing and transportation*. The infographics and newsletters are specifically targeted to high school students and their parents to assist in making informed career choices. With Minnesota having the third worst student-to-school counselor ratio in the nation, this information as well as career advising services in general is greatly needed and welcomed by our school and community partners.
- The development of industry-specific career exploration events for high school students spotlighting key industries and in-demand occupations in the region including:
 - Construct Tomorrow: a one-day, hands-on event that allows high school students to explore the multiple trade occupations in the *construction industry*.
 - Construction Trades Boot Camp: a two-week summer event that allows high school students to explore more in-depth occupations in the *trades/construction industry*.
 - SCRUBS Camp: a 3-day hands-on summer event for high school students to explore in-demand occupations in the *health care industry*.
 - Tour of Manufacturing: a one-day event that allows high school students to tour local manufacturers to expose them to the demand occupations in the *manufacturing industry*. This tour can be provided either in-person or on-line depending on where we are at in regards to the pandemic in the fall.

- We are exploring a similar tour for the Health Care Industry on-line due to the pandemic.
- Conducting industry-specific roundtables. Roundtables are conducted to convene employers from a specific key industries to identify and address issues specific to the industry. Roundtables have been held with the *health care industry, manufacturing industry and transportation industry*. An example of addressing a specific issue to an industry is working with employers to explore ways to address the lack of behind-the-wheel CDL training in the local area.

Career pathway approaches for key industry sectors and occupations in the region: In partnership with area employers, Adult Basic Education, post-secondary and CareerForce partners we have developed a regional approach to adult career pathways for the *construction, health care, manufacturing and transportation* industries. Career pathway development is constructed based on employer input on industry and occupational skill needs and on the input from targeted populations including race/ethnicity, disability, gender and age. Partners develop strategies to address the unique needs of targeted populations and provide the additional supports necessary to ensure individuals can be successful in their education/training pathway and employment.

Consistent with the mission in the state plan, our career pathway approach aligns local, state, and federal resources, policies and services to meet the workforce needs of business and industry and improves access to employment, education, and training services for Minnesota's current and future workforce.

The region, through Greater Twin Cities United Way grants, is also developing career pathways for high school students in the *health care, IT, and manufacturing* industries. Pilot schools in the region were identified based on the diversity of their student population. Students earn dual high school and college credits as well as industry credentials, gain marketable skills, participate in job shadowing and we are currently piloting internship opportunities. In addition, we are implementing a Career Pathway Pilot Program for youth. This program promotes racial, disability, and gender equity through the provision of career pathway services (focusing on work experiences for youth with local employers) for these populations.

Employer engagement through boards, committees, career awareness, work-based learning opportunities and employer events: Finally, we receive industry-specific input from employers through their involvement on our workforce development boards, participation on committees and by engaging them in career awareness and work-based learning activities. This engagement is instrumental to ensuring our strategies and initiatives meet the skill needs of our local industry employers. We engage employers through four Career Expos in the region, Career Institutes, Breaking Traditions, College Experience Day, and Pathway Exploration Events. We are facilitating partnerships between workforce development, employers and local high

schools to provide work experience, internship and job shadowing opportunities. In 2020, we launched virtual employer tours and job shadowing activities for students to engage with as part of their virtual classroom instruction in partnership with local school districts. In addition, through employer events we are showcasing innovative recruitment strategies, best practices and the sharing of resources available for local employers.

Our **outreach methodology** to contact employers from key industry sectors includes:

- Partnering with our regional MN DEED Workforce Strategy Consultant to provide direct connections with individual employers and groups of industry employers.
- We have specific staff (Work & Learn Coordinators/Workforce Development Coordinators) that are paid through agreements with our local Service Cooperatives to provide outreach and connections between local employers and local school districts.
- We conduct outreach to local employers through social media and newsletters.
- Connecting with employers that have been engaged with the CareerForce system through WIOA and Wagner Peyser staff.
- One on one contact with area employers to develop work-based learning opportunities.
- Collaborating with Chambers of Commerce, economic development and other local partners to provide referrals and assist in outreach to area employers.
- Utilizing business representatives on our workforce boards to provide outreach to industry and community groups they are involved in.
- In partnership with our MN DEED Workforce Strategy Consultant and Job Service staff, utilizing MN DEED's gov delivery email blasts to employers from specific industries.

Employers are connected to the workforce system through all of the activities identified above. Whether serving on a sector-based partnership, committee, attending a roundtable, or participating in a sector initiative, we provide information on how to connect with the workforce system and the services that are available.

These strategies are aligned with Goal #2 in the state plan to: build employer-led industry-sector partnerships that expand the talent pipeline to be inclusive of race, disability, gender, and age to meet industry demands for a skilled workforce.

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.

The South Central WorkForce Council and Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding to establish our regional partnership and cooperative service arrangements.

RWDA #5 has adopted MN DEED's vision statement as our regional vision: *a healthy economy, where every Minnesotan has meaningful employment and a family-sustaining wage, and employers are able to fill jobs in demand.*

Our regional goals to achieve this mission were established by engaging local stakeholders and includes:

- **Address the shortage of skilled workers through sector-based career pathway approaches.**
- **Increase program outcomes for individuals experiencing employment disparities through culturally competent services.**
- **Enrich and grow partnerships with local school districts to increase career awareness and career counseling opportunities for students and parents.**
- **Increase employer engagement that expands the talent pipeline through sector-based partnerships, career pathways, career awareness opportunities and work-based learning and training activities.**
- **Align administrative processes between South Central and Southwest workforce boards.**

Areas of cooperative alignment and consistency within the region include:

- Development of thirteen regional workforce development area policies. The two local workforce boards have jointly developed required local WIOA policies in alignment with required state policies.
- Engaging stakeholders in the development and updates of the Regional Plan.
- Connecting with and informing local legislators on local and regional workforce development issues.
- Jointly direct the Rural Career Counseling Coordinators and their work with local school districts to increase career awareness and career counseling opportunities for students and parents. An example of this is the development and utilization of the "Know Before You Go" labor market infographics.
- Jointly provide professional development and sharing of best practices.
- Jointly respond to grant opportunities that advance our regional goals including the alignment of sector-based career pathways. Subcontracts are developed for each grant to ensure alignment and consistency across the region.

- Track program outcomes for individuals experiencing employment disparities and develop strategies to increase outcomes.
- Conduct regional monitoring to ensure consistency in program implementation, policies, and practices.
- Explore and implement joint marketing for the CareerForce system including use of social media.

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?

The 23 counties of South Central and Southwest Minnesota have lower high school graduation rates (see chart), especially within our largest population of color (Hispanic/ Latinos).

Poverty rates are also higher in our rural region. The Southwest Region has Opportunity Zones in 15 of our 23 counties (65%) due to poverty rates. With the lowest wages in the state, there is a great need for additional support for job seekers to not only learn about high paying, in-

% of Total Population	SW MN	Metro	MN
Individuals with less than high school	9.0%	6.6%	7.0%
Hispanic or Latinos with less than high	43.9%	33.3%	Not Known
Poverty Rate	12.3%	9.4%	10.5%
Median Hourly Wage	\$18.33	\$23.30	\$21.49
Job Vacancy Rate Q4'19	4.9%	4.4%	4.6%
2020 DEED Regional Profiles			

demand and nontraditional careers, but to become employed in them. The region is home to the 2nd and 6th most diverse counties in the state (Nobles and Watonwan), both of which have the highest percentage of the states' Hispanic/Latino population (27% and 23%). *Employers* are challenged to hire employees with the skills needed as shown by our region's high Job Vacancy rate. Tight labor markets and a scarcity of workers are now recognized as the region's most significant barrier to future economic growth. It is evident that a more diverse workforce is a vital source of workers that employers need to succeed, and it is imperative that we equip these populations with the necessary skills to gain employment in high-pay, in-demand occupations.

The South Central Workforce Council, the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council and its partners have 35 years of successfully serving communities of color. Providing fair and equitable treatment and addressing the employment disparities that exist in our region is critical to whom we are and what we do. It is embedded in our mission, vision, core values, strategic goals and outcomes. Last year, our network served 3,369 people with individualized services, facilitated 333 On-the-Job Training/Work Experience opportunities and assisted with 543 industry recognized credentials being earned. The regional partnership has years of successful outcomes for all populations and has received the #1 Promising Practices Award from the

Minnesota Association of Workforce Development Boards for the past three out of four years. In the chart below, we demonstrate our experience in working with communities of color and the impact of our programs.

Program Outcomes		WIOA Adult				WIOA Youth				Pathways to Prosperity			
		FY19	FY19	FY20	FY20	FY19	FY19	FY20	FY20	FY19	FY19	FY20	FY20
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Served	BIPOC	85	48%	52	45%	214	45%	129	44%	77	59%	198	84%
	Disabilities	21	12%	16	14%	203	42%	117	53%	22	17%	20	9%
Outcomes	Successful Exits	84	78%	37	79%	205	80%	155	75%	103	82%	91	82%
	Total Exits	108		47		256		207		125		111	

The board, board committees and staff have representation from the African American, Somali, Hispanic, Latino, Asian, Upper and Lower Sioux Communities, Vocational Rehabilitation, and MRCl. We have representation from communities of color at twice the percentage (20%) than the population as a whole in our region but are always working towards increasing representation. To address this need, the board assigned a committee to implement strategies for targeted recruitment, diversity training, building a pipeline and most recently added to the bylaws a “seat” on the SW MN workforce board dedicated to representing minority owned businesses. This is in addition to the requirements outlined in WIOA law. When there is an opening, we work hard to recruit for the position to ensure we reflect the communities we serve.

The regional partnership engages black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) first to ensure that our board and staff reflect the communities we serve. We partner with Integration Collaboratives, Community Connectors/Advocates, Lower and Upper Sioux Communities, Greater Mankato Diversity Council, Milanesian Council of Women, MET (Migrant services), PACER Center, Minnesota Council of Churches, Vocational Rehabilitation, MRCl, school districts, Adult Basic Education, PACER Center, and others. We also engage with leaders of the African and Karen immigrants, as well as the Hispanic, Latino, Hmong, and Micronesian communities that live in different cities throughout the region. We do this often to gain a greater understanding of their cultures and need for services; incorporate their feedback into the workforce development plan, organizational policies, and program practices. We also solicit direct, regular feedback from our program participants. To analyze our success, we regularly review the feedback and data by monitoring program outcomes by different communities.

We deliver services in a **cultural competent** way through: 1) a commitment from senior leadership and the board; 2) reflecting the priority to do so in our mission, structure, policies, and procedures; 3) ensuring all program participants feel valued, programming that is person-centered and builds on their strengths, and translation or interpretation services being available; 4)

having a diverse board and staff; 5) engaging ethnic communities in the planning and implementation of services; 6) training the board and staff in the cultures and traditions of participants; and 7) through personal performance measures that include skills related cultural competency.

Overall, our regional approach to ensure that it includes diverse representation, specifically among populations experiencing the greatest barriers to employment or communities facing the greatest levels of economic disparities include:

- Reviewing labor market information and demographics, the leadership team will focus on assuring that, to the extent possible, the populations experiencing barriers to employment are engaged in both the regional and local workforce development area meetings, discussions, goal setting, strategy development and implementation strategies.
- Engaging stakeholders and individuals from diverse backgrounds and populations, as well as those experiencing barriers to employment is critical in establishing the goals and strategies that will lead to success.
- Assuring that the diverse demographic make-up of the RWDA #5 area is strategically involved in the identification of issues and solutions, goal setting and strategy development broadening the scope of success and advancement of workforce development in the region.
- Include partners in the engagement of individuals, decision makers representing specific populations and other key stakeholders including, but not limited to: individuals with disabilities; tribal communities; communities of color; K-12; higher education; individuals involved and/or representing the criminal justice system; and representatives specifically focused on addressing employment and education disparities.
- Provide career exploration, advising services and work-based learning opportunities with local employers to help students make informed career choices. A study from DEED has shown that “white and Asian students are more likely to major in high earning fields such as engineering, IT, and business, while black students are more represented in low-paying fields such as personal and culinary services. Choice of major strongly determines the payoffs from higher education.” These services are essential to successfully addressing employment disparities.
- Partner with the Rochester Diversity Council to administer Intercultural Development Inventory to staff and board members and provide customized Equity Training based on our region’s inventories.

The Boards and staff will make a concerted effort in designing and implementing programming that will directly engage diverse populations and groups experiencing specific barriers to employment. Both organizations practice and are compliant with equal opportunity hiring practices and will assure that appropriate outreach for employment opportunities is shared and

targeted to special populations.

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

WIOA performance measures are negotiated on a bi-annual basis between LWDA's and MN DEED in accordance with MN DEED Performance Standard Policy and DOL TEGLs. Our local areas will work cooperatively with MN DEED to implement the performance negotiation process. The Executive Directors of South Central and Southwest workforce boards will negotiate on behalf of their respective local areas. The RWDA #5 leadership team and local boards will be responsible for the review and oversight of the negotiations.

Performance standard negotiations for Program Years 2020 and 2021 were completed in September of 2020 with confirmation of final standards for each LWDA in October 2020. Regional policies and strategies have been established to aid in meeting or exceeding standards for federal WIOA programs as well as guide our state funded programs (i.e. State Dislocated, Career Pathways, etc.). Regional economic conditions and participant characteristics will be factored in to adjust the statistical model of performance.

WIOA Law outlines the following primary indicators:

WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs

1. Initial Employment Indicator: The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.
2. Subsequent Employment Retention: The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program.
3. Initial Earnings: The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.
4. The indicators of effectiveness in serving employers: There is no specific metric established at this time – awaiting final WIOA regulations.
5. Credential Attainment: The percentage of program participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent (subject to clause 4 (iii)), during participate in or within one year after exit from the program. This includes the attainment of: a high school diploma or equivalence; pathway license, industry certification, or apprenticeship certificate; pathway certificate and diploma; or pathway associate degree attainment.
6. Skill Gain: The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a

recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skills gains toward such a credential or employment.

WIOA YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT PROGRAMS

1. Entered Employment, Education or Training: The percentage of program participants who are in education or training services, or in unsubsidized employment during second quarter after exit.
2. Retention: The percentage of program participants who are in education or training services, or in unsubsidized employment during fourth quarter after exit.
3. Initial Earnings: The median earnings of participants in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit.
4. Credential Attainment: The percentage of participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, secondary school diploma or equivalent during participation or within one year after program exit.
5. Progress Toward Goals: The percentage of participants who during a program year are in education that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable gains toward those goals.
7. The indicators of effectiveness in serving employers. There is no specific metric established at this time – awaiting final WIOA regulations.

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

Coordination of programs and services with regional economic development providers is currently happening through:

- Economic Development Representatives serve on the Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB);
- Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) staff serve on Regional Economic Development Boards and local EDA's;
- Staff are members of the Southwest Minnesota Economic Development Professionals Collaborative;
- LWDA staff regularly inform DEED economic development representative of economic development opportunities and/or concerns in the region;
- DEED economic development representative reaches out to LWDA staff for input and assistance as needed.

- LWDA staff provide input into the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The SC workforce board is the review board for the Region 9 CEDS.
- Regional Economic Development Boards and local EDA's provide input into the Regional and Local Workforce Development Plans.
- Economic development representatives partner with LWDB on regional and local workforce development and career exploration events.

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.

The LWDA's in Region 5 work closely together and have a number of joint costs arrangements, especially in the administration of joint grants and initiatives. They include:

- Jointly supervise and direct Regional Career Counseling Coordinators in South Central and Southwest Minnesota. Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council (SWPIC) is the fiscal agent for this funding and subcontracts with South Central. As fiscal agent, SWPIC is responsible for fiscal and data management on behalf of the region.
- Jointly staff and pay for the development of infographics for the region. Staff from LWDA's #6 and #7 work jointly to promote infographics on social media and are working on providing these infographics in other languages. Currently infographics are available in English and Spanish.
- Pooling resources to provide joint professional development opportunities for staff, especially focused on equity training. As a region, we have contracted with the Rochester Diversity Council to conduct an IDI assessment and based on assessment results will provide a series of trainings customized for our region.
- We have successfully responded to grant opportunities as a region. For each grant we identify which local workforce development area will be the fiscal agent. The fiscal agent is then responsible for accounting and data management on behalf of both local areas.
- As part of grant management, when one local area is overspending or underspending we shift funds between the local areas to meet the needs of the region.
- As part of grant management we jointly conduct local monitoring of the grants as well as participate in state monitoring jointly.
- Under this new regional plan we will be exploring the pooling of funds to provide joint marketing for the region and specific initiatives such as career pathways.

We have developed a regional support service policy to coordinate and

provide consistency in the provision of support services in the region including transportation. In addition, transportation, child care and housing are issues identified during regional workforce development planning sessions. These issues will take a coordinated effort in our local areas and regions. We will continue to work closely with regional partners including economic development, chambers, community partners, etc. to address these regional workforce development issues.

LOCAL PLAN- STRATEGIC OPERATIONS

Strategic Operations: *The core elements of strategic operations focuses on operating policies and procedures related to the one-stop system and physical locations of service delivery.*

1. Describe how local area boards will work with each other, core title providers and available acomprehensive and make recommendations on recognizing affiliate and standalone partner sites.

The South Central WorkForce Council, in consultation with our core partners, has designated three CareerForce locations in the 9-county area of South Central MN. The centers are located in: **Fairmont, Mankato and New Ulm.**

Core Partners at the CareerForce locations include:

- MN DEED Business Community Development
- MN DEED Job Service –Wagner Peyser Services & WIOA Provider
- MN DEED REA
- MN DEED State Services for the Blind
- MN DEED Veterans Employment Services
- MN DEED Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- MN DEED Workforce Strategy Consultant
- MN Valley Action Council –WIOA Provider

During Program Year 2019, through these three CareerForce locations, 1,922 documented job seekers physically visited our three CareerForce locations to utilize our career labs and/or attend workshops. Data also shows these 1,922 job seekers accounted for 5,744 computer sessions during the year. This number does not include the large number of job seekers who come in to receive services and/or information but did not register on the client registration system. During this same time period, 524 employers submitted 15,195 job orders for 19,104 job openings.

CareerForce locations and staff at these locations are vital to ease of access to services and developing relationships with local employers and job seekers. The COVID pandemic has spotlighted once again that there are certain populations we serve that can self-serve and there are other populations that need the one-on-one, in-person assistance and really struggle with remote services.

In addition to the three CareerForce locations noted above, we are fortunate in South Central that MN Valley Action Council has “stand-alone” offices located in: Blue Earth, Gaylord, LeCenter, St. James, St. Peter, and Waseca. These offices provide access to computers and staff to assist individuals with their job search in their respective counties (WIOA Adult/DW resources are not utilized to pay for infrastructure at these sites).

2. Describe the strategies to ensure proper connectivity and coordination among the physical sites within the local workforce development area.

There are numerous strategies in our workforce development area that ensures coordination and connectivity among the physical sites within our local workforce development area including:

- The South Central Operations Committee. The Operations Committee meets monthly and is made up of the core partners of CareerForce locations. The managers ensure that communication, services, and processes are consistent in the three physical locations. The managers develop a cost allocation plan/IFA to identify how each partner will contribute to the infrastructure costs of each CareerForce location.
- In addition to the SC Operations Committee, a consortium of core partners has been designated to provide One-Stop Operator services through a Request for Proposal process. A One-Stop Operator agreement will be entered into that delineates the responsibilities and duties of the One-Stop Operator, including connectivity and coordination among the physical sites. One-Stop Operator responsibilities include:
 - ✓ Provide leadership for local CareerForce locations on-site operations, space configuration, customer flow and integration of services.
 - ✓ Maintain appropriate and updated publicly posted ADA posters, ensure building accessibility meets requirements and develop/address safety plans/requirements with the support of the South Central WorkForce Council.
 - ✓ Address building/facility needs, including recommending solutions related to growth and space utilization.
 - ✓ Promote CareerForce program services, internally and externally, in partnership with the South Central WorkForce.
 - ✓ Participate in partner meetings.
 - ✓ Participate in CareerForce location certification process.
 - ✓ Report operational updates and outcomes to the South Central WorkForce Council as requested.
 - ✓ Support and develop networks between workforce, economic development, education and community groups.
 - ✓ Create and maintain a welcoming and professional CareerForce environment.
 - ✓ Facilitate an inclusive services and operating environment.
 - ✓ Ensure career lab area and reception staff are trained and provide quality customer services to job seekers and employers.
 - ✓ Participate in the evaluation of customer needs and satisfaction to continually refine and improve service strategies.
 - ✓ Participate in the development and sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) and infrastructure funding agreements (for example, cost allocation plans, office closing policies, dress codes, holiday scheduling, etc.).
 - ✓ Be knowledgeable of the mission and performance standards of all partners (including South Central Workforce Council) and facilitate/participate in cross-training among staff.
 - ✓ Comply with all WIOA and MN DEED regulations and policies governing the operations of a one-stop center.
- Representation of the core partners on the South Central WorkForce Council. Core partners have the opportunity to provide input and participate in the decision-making process of the SC WorkForce Council in designating the physical sites of CareerForce locations in the local area as well as participate in discussions on policy and guidelines that impact the coordination and connectivity of CareerForce locations.

- Reception and Resource Area Certification Program: This training program ensures that each physical location has consistent and quality customer service.
- Creative Job Search/Resume Writing and Statewide CareerForce Workshops: MN DEED in partnership with local areas has developed consistent curriculum for workshops to ensure these workshops provide consistent quality and information throughout CareerForce locations and the workforce development system.
- South Central Training Team and Continuous Improvement Team are local teams made up of representatives from each of the core partners. These teams significantly impact connectivity and coordination through joint training sessions of core partners and continuous improvement strategies.
- Technology. Coordination and connectivity also occurs through technology, including shared data systems, access to technology for customers and communication through websites and email networks.

3. Describe the strategies to ensure proper connectivity and coordination among the service providers within the local workforce development area.

South Central WDA #7 has developed strong networks and partnerships with local service providers. Our partnerships include not only MN DEED and MN Valley Action Council that provide WIOA Title I services, but also includes other MN DEED divisions (i.e. VRS, Vets), Adult Basic Education, South Central College, MRCI, MET, Life-Work Planning Center (Family Resiliency Program), and Mankato Diversity Council. In addition, for career pathways, youth and other specialized programs we include other organizations in the area including local high schools, local county human services, MN Council of Churches, Region 9 Development Commission, and South Central Service Cooperative. These organizations are included on committees and communications. Strategies to ensure connectivity and coordination among the service providers and organizations within our workforce development area include:

- As in the connectivity of the physical sites, the SC Operations Committee and One-Stop Operator services are key to connectivity and coordination among the service providers. Managers of our local partners are charged with the day-to-day operations of CareerForce locations, safety plans, review outcomes and customer feedback, implement continuous improvement strategies, develop cost allocation plan/IFA to identify how each partner will contribute to the staffing of reception and resource room, and other shared costs of the partners. A memorandum of understanding has been developed to define roles and responsibilities of the required WIOA partners.
- Managers and/or staff of each of the partners participate on SC WorkForce Council committees including the SC Career Pathways partnership, SNAP E&T partnership and Youth Council. Participation on these committees ensures partner input into planning, implementation and coordination of services for the local workforce development area.
- Each CareerForce location conducts staff meetings to ensure communication across the partners in the individual CareerForce locations.
- Professional development through the South Central Training Team. The

training team is made of staff from each of the partners and addresses professional development needs that are shared across the partnership. In addition, the team focuses on building relationships, sharing of program information across the partnership and sharing of best practices.

- The South Central Continuous Improvement Team. This team is made of staff from each of the partners and focuses on the continuous improvement of services at the three CareerForce locations. The team conducts customer surveys to obtain feedback from CareerForce customers, conducts quality assessments of services, and implements continuous improvement strategies. In addition, the team has developed a web-page to improve communication across the partnership.
- Resource days have been implemented annually where partners from all agencies gather together (pre and post COVID) to share information on their programs, how to access services, and to discuss how to develop better connections across partners. During the pandemic we will explore providing a virtual resource day.
- An email communication network has been set-up to send information, announcements, job leads, training opportunities, minutes, events, newsletters, etc. out to all staff of each the partners and service providers.

4. Describe other strategies that will be used to maximize services and access to services, such as non-traditional hours or using partner facilities.

Strategies developed by the South Central WorkForce Council to maximize services and access to services include:

- Local CareerForce locations post information on local library hours for access to computers outside of CareerForce hours.
- MN Valley Action Council has offices in each of the six counties that do not have a CareerForce location. Each of these offices provide computers and staff to help individuals with their job search and access to MinnesotaWorks. This is especially beneficial for customers who face transportation and/or technology barriers.
- Engaging and aligning resources with area partners. We engage community partners through committees, training and resource sharing days. Referral forms and release of information forms have been developed for ease of referrals across the partners and co-enrollment when appropriate.
- The South Central Workforce Council. As the administrative entity, the South Central Workforce Council aligns resources and the expertise of each of the partners to maximize resources and services in our workforce development area.
- Providing services on a temporary basis at satellite locations for special populations or projects. This is often set-up for large mass lay-offs/business closings.
- Technology. The use of technology helps us to maintain contact with job seekers and provide case management services. We quickly learned through the COVID pandemic how to expand remote services through technology. Even after the pandemic, we will continue to provide options for services through technology and support efforts at MN DEED to develop on-line services for individuals, especially for those customers with limited barriers

that are able to self-serve. Remote services provide an opportunity for customers to engage with services and workshops at hours that are most convenient for them.

- Hybrid training options are provided through our education partners to increase access to training services. Often, these on-line learning options are important for customers that do not have consistent access to transportation or are looking for training available during hours that are convenient for them.
- During the COVID pandemic, we have implemented curb-side services and curb-side job fairs to safely maximize access to services and staff.
- Ensure customers have access to technology through partnerships with PCs for People, partnerships with local libraries and South Central College that provides “parking lot” Wi-Fi access, and access to technology training through local community education and Adult Basic Education programs.

5. Describe the strategic approaches to ensure all elements of Career Services are available at service locations or online, including services for youth and individuals with barriers to employment or service access.

WIOA career services are defined in TEGL 3-15 as:

Basic Career Services – available to all individuals seeking services

- Eligibility determination;
- Outreach, intake and orientation;
- Initial assessment of skill levels and supportive service needs;
- Labor exchange services including: job search, job placement and provision of in-demand industry and occupation information and nontraditional employment opportunities;
- Referrals to other programs and services;
- Provision of workforce and labor market information;
- Provision of performance and program cost information on eligible training providers;
- Provision of information on how the local area is performing on local performance measures;
- Provision of information on the availability of supportive services or assistance and appropriate referrals;
- Assistance in establishing eligibility for programs of financial aid assistance for training and education programs not provided under WIOA; and
- Provision of information and assistance regarding filing claims under UI programs.

Individualized Career Services – available when appropriate to obtain or retain employment.

- Comprehensive and specialized assessment;
- Individualized employment plan;
- Group or individualized counseling;
- Career planning/case management;

- Short-term pre-vocational services;
- Internships and work experiences;
- Workforce preparation activities;
- Financial literacy services;
- Out-of-area job search;
- English language acquisition and integrated education/training programs; and
- Follow-up Services.

The South Central WorkForce Council conducts a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to identify providers for WIOA Adult and DW services. The RFP requires that responders provide all of the above career services at all local CareerForce locations. MN DEED –Job Service has been selected to provide Basic Career Services. They are uniquely positioned to be able to align WIOA and Wagner Peyser funding and services to ensure these services are available at all sites and for all populations. Individualized Career Services will be provided by both MN DEED –Job Service and MN Valley Action Council depending on whether employment strategies are work-based (MN DEED –Job Service) or classroom-based (MVAC). The South Central WorkForce Council staff monitor sites on an annual basis to ensure quality services are available at service locations and for individuals with barriers to employment. In addition, the Memorandum of Understanding also delineates across the partnership and WIOA titles the providers of career services.

A separate RFP is conducted for WIOA Youth services. The RFP requires that all service elements are available for youth. MN Valley Action Council has been selected to provide WIOA Youth services through the RFP process. Again, WorkForce Council staff monitor sites on an annual basis to ensure services are available at service locations and for individuals with barriers to employment.

The South Central WorkForce Council reviews service levels and outcomes for individuals with barriers to employment on an annual basis. Services are provided through a number of strategic approaches including: one-on-one, on-line and CareerForce workshops. Under our Regional and local plan we will be focusing on serving individuals experiencing employment disparities and will review processes and services to ensure that all elements of Career Services are readily accessible to all populations including youth and individuals with barriers to employment or service access.

Finally, through the pandemic, we have developed processes to provide remote access to services that has increased our capacity for delivering on-line services and increased access to services for youth and individuals with barriers to employment that have access to technology.

6. Describe strategies that will be used to leverage technology for services and ensure compliance with accessibility standards.

South Central continues to explore and expand the use of technology for services in order to provide services that meets the diverse needs of our customers and to expand access to services to job seekers and employers. One positive outcome of

the COVID pandemic is that it has accelerated the process and learning curve on providing remote services through technology.

Current strategies include:

- Assessing job seekers' access to technology and digital literacy skills. Programs like PCs for People, referrals and/or support services are utilized to provide access to technology when needed. Referrals are made to Adult Basic Education when appropriate to help individuals with limited computer skills. Adult Basic Education utilizes North Star Digital Literacy curriculum to assess and teach basic computer skills.
- The provision of Creative Job Search, Resume Writing, New Leaf and standardized workshops on-line.
- Access to MinnesotaWorks and the CareerForce platform on-line.
- Access to Unemployment Insurance on-line and/or by telephone.
- The delivery and completion of applications and screening tools, through technology.
- Utilization of email, texting, and social media for enhanced communication with customers.
- This past year we have developed on-line curriculum for our work with local high schools including the development of videos that feature local employers on career exploration and job search.
- We developed a virtual "Tour of Manufacturing" that features videos of local manufacturing employers and includes activities that can be used in high school classrooms. We plan on developing a virtual "Tour of Health Care" in the coming year that will feature local health care employers and health care careers.
- Career Pathway bridge curriculum is a hybrid of face-to-face and on-line learning in support of digital literacy.
- We developed the "Get Started Program" which is a virtual, four-week program focused on preparing youth for the world of work. "Get Started" provides youth and young adults (ages 16-24) training in communication skills, budgeting, health/wellness, and community exploration, which are fundamentals in being successful in life and employment. Youth learn about the importance of effective workplace communication, how to budget their money, the impacts of health and wellness on employment, and locating community resources that are available.
- Our high schools, ABE, and post-secondary partners continue to increase opportunities for on-line learning. These opportunities were also accelerated and increased due to the COVID pandemic. There are now many hybrid learning opportunities available through our education partners.
- Continue to support MN DEED in the development of on-line services including job search tools, workshops, and mobile phone applications.

We ensure compliance with accessibility standards by:

- Requiring accessibility compliance in all our contracts/subcontract agreements.
- Providing accessibility in each of our CareerForce locations through assistive technology such as: Jaws, Zoomtext, Nexttalk, Pocket Talker, UbiDuo, TTY, and Language Line.
- Providing (funding) interpreters when necessary when meeting with individuals with limited English skills. We are in the process of developing a regional language access plan in partnership with Southwest MN Private Industry

Council and MN DEED Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity.

- Partnering closely with MN DEED Vocational Rehabilitation Services and State Services for the Blind to utilize their expertise in ensuring accessibility compliance and access to services for individuals with disabilities.
- Conduct annual on-site accessibility/ADA compliance reviews in partnership with MN DEED Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity to assure that our CareerForce locations and offices are in compliance with accessibility requirements.

7. Describe how supportive services, such as transportation and other needs, will be coordinated to better serve individuals with specific barriers to training, education and employment.

The provision of supportive services is a key tool in addressing barriers and supporting customer success and retention in training/education and employment. Transportation is by far the greatest support service need in our rural WDA with limited public transportation.

All individuals enrolled in WIOA programs are assigned a case manager/navigator who is knowledgeable on community resources available and coordinates the provision of support services. Potential support service needs are discussed and identified during the assessment process. Other support service needs are identified as barriers occur during service provision. Case managers/navigators work closely with other partners to coordinate the provision of support services including human services, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and community organizations such as MN Valley Action Council, Lutheran Social Services and Salvation Army. Strong partnerships in the local area allow staff to identify the expertise and resources of partners and allow them to align services, resources, and avoid duplication.

Individuals experiencing food and/or housing insecurity are referred to appropriate resources in the area including housing programs (i.e. Section 8) and local food shelves. Support services are provided for these needs on a limited and emergency basis.

Access to technology is even a greater need under the COVID pandemic as education/training programs moved to a hybrid approach and CareerForce services are provided remotely. Individuals who lack access to technology are referred to PCs to People. In addition, computers and access to Wi-Fi are provided through local libraries; however, in rural areas their hours and staff support are limited. When necessary and on a limited basis, we will utilize resources to support the acquisition of technology when necessary to complete a training/employment plan. A regional policy has been developed for the purchase of computers/technology for customers.

A regional policy has been developed for the provision of support services in our WDA.

The South Central WorkForce Council supports the development of directories of resources to provide information on a broad array of services provided in our local area and is available on-line or copies are also available in our CareerForce resource areas for all customers. These directories can be found at: www.workforcecouncil.org.

8. Describe how local area boards will ensure state policies on infrastructure funding requirements are adhered to and the process for addressing any discrepancies or disagreements.

The South Central WorkForce Council facilitates the development of the Memorandum of Understanding and Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFAs) for required partners of our CareerForce locations utilizing state policies as a guidance to fairly distribute infrastructure costs. Local IFAs are developed to identify a fair and equitable method to disburse shared costs at CareerForce locations for co-located partners/programs. Shared costs include items such as staffing of the career labs and reception, and infrastructure costs such as space, telephone and data lines. Costs are allocated based on staffing levels of each partner and customer data through the Customer Registration System and Workforce One.

Required partners that are not co-located at CareerForce locations are also contacted for their contribution to the IFAs. These partners may contribute to the IFA through cash, in-kind or third party contributions.

Once the IFAs are completed, all required partners sign the final document.

Historically, we have not had any major disagreements in adopting the IFAs due to the fair and equitable method of disbursing costs. If disagreements do occur with local partners it would be brought to the Executive Committee of the South Central Workforce Council for local resolution. If the dispute cannot be resolved locally it would be brought to the Governor/MN DEED designee for resolution or adoption of state funding mechanism.

9. Describe how local area boards, who contract out for provider services, will ensure that providers fully participate in infrastructure funding requirements and the alignment of service delivery within the local workforce development area.

Every four years the South Central WorkForce Council conducts a Request for Proposal (RFP) process for the delivery of youth, adult and dislocated worker services. Within the RFP packages it indicates that all successful responders must deliver services at each of the area's CareerForce locations and that adult and dislocated worker funds will not be used to support the infrastructure costs of any other facilities. In addition, the RFP indicates successful proposers are required to meet all rules, regulations and policies developed by the U.S. Department of Labor, MN Department of Employment and Economic

Development and the South Central WorkForce Council, including state policies on infrastructure funding. Once providers are identified through the RFP process, a subcontract for services is developed that indicates that the service provider will adhere to the Local Plan and all rules, regulations and policies of the U.S. Department of Labor, MN DEED and the South Central WorkForce Council.

Alignment of service delivery is required under our service delivery structure. The SC WorkForce Council RFP is conducted based on specific services versus a program-based RFP model. The SC WorkForce Council awards contracts based on the expertise of proposers to deliver basic career services, individualized career services, work-based training and/or classroom training. Woven within our service delivery structure is the need to align service delivery. For example, one provider may conduct intake and eligibility and then that provider must work closely with the provider delivering classroom training services.

10. Describe how the Memorandum of Understanding will be developed when necessary and used to ensure commitment of resources from service providers and required partners.

The South Central WorkForce Council, with the agreement of the Joint Powers Board, will develop and enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with required partners every three years. Provisions of the agreement will include:

- Services and how they will be coordinated and delivered through the local workforce development system;
- How the cost of services and operating costs will be funded;
- Methods of referral between required partners;
- Methods to ensure the needs of youth and individuals with barriers to employment are addressed; and
- The duration of the memorandum of understanding.

The local Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFAs) are an addendum to the Memorandum of Understanding which delineates each required partners/programs' commitment of resources.

The South Central WorkForce Council in agreement with the South Central WDA Joint Powers Board entered into a memorandum of understanding with core CareerForce partners and required programs/service providers in June 2020. The memorandum of understanding is in effect until June 30 2023, at which time it will be reviewed and amended as necessary. In addition, Infrastructure Funding Agreements were completed in 2020/2021. The IFAs are also in place through June 30, 2023 with reconciliation occurring each year of the agreement.

11. A. Describe the local area board's strategic vision and how it aligns with the state priorities under WIOA.

As a partner in Regional Workforce Development Area #5, the South Central WorkForce Council and region has adopted the state's vision statement:

The vision of Regional Workforce Development Area #5 is a healthy economy where every Minnesotan has meaningful employment and a family-sustaining wage, and employers are able to fill jobs in demand.

This vision aligns with the state's priorities and expresses our intent to "leave no populations behind", ensuring all individuals have the resources and services they need to make informed career choices, obtain the skills necessary to compete for demand occupations with family sustaining wages, based on sector-based career pathway approaches that meets employers' needs for a skilled workforce.

This vision will be accomplished through our employer-led boards and sector-based career pathway partnerships.

- B. Describe the local area board's goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including youth and individuals with structural barriers to employment.

In order to accomplish the vision above and in response to regional priorities identified by local stakeholders, RWDA #5 has identified five goals:

- 1. Address the shortage of skilled workers through sector-based career pathway approaches.**
- 2. Increase program outcomes for individuals experiencing employment disparities through culturally competent services. (Populations experiencing disparities in the region include communities of color, individuals with disabilities, ex-offenders, and youth)**
- 3. Enrich and grow partnerships with local school districts to increase career awareness and career counseling opportunities for students and parents.**
- 4. Increase employer engagement that expands the talent pipeline through sector-based partnerships, career pathways, career awareness opportunities and work-based learning activities.**
- 5. Align administrative processes between South Central and Southwest workforce boards.**

In order to compete for high growth, high demand jobs that pay a livable wage, our target populations need to acquire the skills and industry-recognized credentials required by employers in key industries. RWDA #5's vision and goals will address the needs of our target populations by providing pathways to skill training that leads to stackable credits, credentials, and the skills necessary to compete for employment in high-demand industries that lead to self-supporting wages, meeting the needs of employers for a skilled workforce.

In addition to addressing the priority issues identified by our regional stakeholders, these goals also align with the goals of the state to: 1) reduce educational, skills training and employment disparities based on race, disability, gender or disconnected youth, and 2) build employer-led industry-sector partnerships that

expand the talent pipeline to be inclusive of race, disability, gender, and age to meet industry demands for a skilled workforce.

- C. Describe how these goals relate to the performance accountability measures based on the primary indicators in order to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency.

The performance accountability measures under WIOA measures our effectiveness in serving job seekers and employers. Measures include: employment, retention, earnings gain, credentials, skill gains and effectiveness in serving employers. Our goals align well with these performance accountability measures.

Our effectiveness in addressing Goals 1, 2, 3, and 4 listed in B. above is measured by how many individuals attain the skills and credentials necessary to be placed and retained in employment, resulting in earnings gain through employment in demand occupations that lead to self-sustaining wages. Achievement of these goals effectively serves employers in that they provide a skilled workforce for employers providing demand occupations in key industries.

Our goal to increase program outcomes for individuals experiencing employment disparities relies upon employment, retention and earnings gain performance outcomes in order to measure our attainment of this goal. In addition, in order to achieve employment and increased earnings gains, individuals need to obtain credentials and skill gains in order to compete and obtain employment in demand occupations that lead to family-sustaining wages.

Goal 5 aligns resources and services in the region in order to address our goals and achieve performance success.

- D. Describe the strategy to work with the entities that carry out the core programs to align resources available to the local workforce development area, to achieve the strategic vision and goals of the local area board.

The South Central WorkForce Council places a high priority on our role to convene and develop strong relationships with local workforce development area partners and to aligning the expertise and resources of these partners to achieve our strategic vision and goals.

The establishment of CareerForce locations in itself is a strategic alignment of the core programs of WIOA to meet the workforce development needs of area employers and job seekers. The co-location of WIOA programs, the relationships developed across partners, the development of the Memorandum of Understanding and cost allocation plans all contribute to the alignment and collaboration of core programs. Having WIOA Title I providers, Wagner Peyser, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Veterans Employment Services, Services for the Blind, UI/REA services in a one-stop location allow us to collaborate, avoid duplication and meet the unique needs of targeted populations.

A primary strategy to align the resources of the core programs to achieve our strategic vision and goals is through our career pathway approach. Our career pathway approach aligns the resources and expertise of workforce development partners in order to streamline employment and training services and to provide the additional supports necessary for individuals with barriers to employment to be successful. The SC Career Pathways Partnership includes representatives of CareerForce partners, Adult Basic Education, South Central College, Human Services and community partners that work tirelessly to identify the expertise of each partner and align resources and services to meet the needs of individuals we serve.

One of the benefits of having MN DEED as a WIOA Title I provider in our area, and a contributing factor as a successful responder to the WorkForce Council's RFP, is their ability to align the resources of WIOA, Wagner Peyser, UI/REA and Rehabilitation Services that are co-located at our CareerForce locations.

Finally, the South Central WorkForce Council and its committees also provides an opportunity for strategic alignment of the core programs to achieve our vision and goals. Employers, core CareerForce partners, Adult Basic Education, Minnesota State, labor, human services, economic development and community organizations are all represented on the Council. These partners participate in the development and implementation of action plans to achieve our mission and goals, identifying roles and responsibilities of each of the partners in implementing strategies, and achieving our goals.

12. Describe how the local workforce development system will work with entities carrying out core programs to align and support services with programs of study authorized under Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act

The South Central WorkForce Council has a long-standing partnership with the South Central Service Cooperative and secondary/post-secondary Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education partners, programs and initiatives in our local area. WorkForce Council staff serve on the South Central Carl Perkins Consortium. The Consortium establishes a structure and governance to:

- Align regional education and workforce plans (including World's Best Workforce and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act).
- Align strategies to cultivate awareness for need for academic and technical skills to ensure college and career success.
- Pilot strategies for career awareness, exploration and advisement for all students.
- Provide professional development that help teachers connect learning to college and careers.
- Further develop regional programs of study and guided pathway programs.

Staff participation on the Consortium provides an opportunity to participate in the development of the Carl Perkins plan. As the workforce partner, we contribute labor market information to help inform on key industries and demand occupations in the region as well as align our workforce goals with Carl Perkins

priorities and goals. The goals of the Carl Perkins plan are as follows and align well with our workforce mission and goals:

Goal 1: Program of Study Design and Implementation

Goal 2: Effectively Utilize Employer, Community, and Education Partnerships

Goal 3: Improve Services to Special Populations

Goal 4: Provide a Continuum of Service Provision for Enabling Student Transitions

Goal 5: Sustain the Consortium of Secondary and Post-secondary Institutions

Staff of the South Central Service Cooperative serve on the SC Career Pathways Committee and Youth Council. The local Carl Perkins plan is brought to the Youth Council and Workforce Council for review. In addition, we partner on numerous career fairs and industry days/initiatives in the region to provide youth exposure to key industries and demand occupations. We develop youth directories in partnership with the South Central Service Cooperative, identifying resources available in the local area. In addition, we coordinate Outreach to School activities (HECAP/PICE) with the South Central Service Cooperative.

The focus for our partnership with Carl Perkins in the coming year is to align resources to provide more career exploration, career awareness, career counseling and work-based learning opportunities for youth.

The South Central WorkForce Council, in partnership with the South Central Service Cooperative, South Central College, six area high schools, and community organizations received a Greater Twin Cities United Way Grant to build out and implement grades 9-14+ career academies/career pathway programs in the high wage, high demand industries of health care, information technology and manufacturing. The six pilot high schools were selected based on their percentage of diversity and percentage of students that qualify for free or reduced lunch. These career academies will offer high students sequential classes, work based learning opportunities, and supports that result in dual high school/post-secondary credits, credentials, and internships. This grant has provided us an excellent opportunity to further identify and align the expertise and resources of the partners to develop career paths for high school students in demand industries in the region.

Finally, the South Central Service Cooperative contracts with the Council and our WIOA youth provider, MN Valley Action Council, to facilitate connections between local school districts and area employers to provide work-based learning opportunities for students.

13. A. Describe how the local area board, working with the entities carrying out core programs, will expand access to employment opportunities for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with structural barriers to employment.

The SC WorkForce Council, in the alignment of resources and expertise in our local area, recognize the expertise of MN DEED –Job Service and their connection to local employers and employment opportunities through Wagner Peyser labor exchange services, Workforce Strategy Consultant, MinnesotaWorks and the CareerForce platform. As a result, the South Central WorkForce Council

contracts with MN DEED to provide job search and placement services, as well as work-based training opportunities such as on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, and work experience/NEG employment. These work-based training opportunities lead to expanded employment opportunities for the individuals we serve; they especially assist in getting a “foot in the door” for individuals with structural barriers to employment.

The Council also aligns with WIOA Title I providers, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Services for the Blind, Veteran Employment Services, MN Valley Action Council Youth Programs, and MRCI that connects with local employers to provide work-based learning and employment opportunities for targeted populations including: individuals with disabilities, veterans, BIPOC populations, youth, high school drop-outs, teen parents and low income populations.

Relationships developed with local employers on our board, committees, sector partnerships and industry initiatives expands our access to employers and employment opportunities. These relationships helps us to identify the skill needs of employers and employment opportunities in the area. As we work with eligible individuals with barriers to employment, we are able to direct them and assist with obtaining the skills they need to compete for these employment opportunities.

A coalition of staff from partners including: WorkForce Council, MN DEED, SC Service Cooperative and MN Valley Action Council meet regularly to coordinate outreach activities to area employers for work-based learning activities and employment for youth.

- B. Describe how the local area board, working with the entities carrying out core programs, will expand access to supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with structural barriers to employment.

Within our broad partnership, workforce development support service funding is one of the most stable and consistent source of support services that supports training and employment retention and success. However, whenever other community resources are available to address barriers, referrals are made to expand access to supportive services. Other entities that we partner with for expanded access to supportive services for individuals with barriers to employment include: Vocational Rehabilitation Services, MN Family Investment Program, Diversionary Work Program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Child Care Assistance Program, Medical Assistance, MN Sure, Salvation Army, Lutheran Social Services, MN Council of Churches, VINE, MN Valley Action Council, SMILES, PCs for People, Section 8, area thrift stores, county human service emergency funds, churches and food shelves.

Transportation continues to be the greatest need and the focus for utilizing WIOA support services as public transportation is limited and there are limited other resources that provide transportation assistance. We utilize many of the programs listed above for individuals with food and housing insecurities.

The SC WorkForce Council and partners will continue to expand partnerships with area community organizations to increase access to support services in the local area.

- C. Describe how the local area board will facilitate the development of career pathways, co-enrollments (as appropriate) and activities that lead to industry recognized post-secondary credentials that are portable and stackable.

The South Central WorkForce Council has been convening local partners for over ten years in the development of career pathways for our local area. Under WIOA, we have expanded career pathways to a regional approach working closely with the Southwest MN WDA in the continuation and expansion of our career pathway programming. We currently have developed career pathways for the agriculture, construction, health care, manufacturing and transportation industries.

In general, our career pathway approach includes:

- Alignment with the skill needs of key industries and employers in region;
- Aligning the expertise and resources of employers, ABE, post-secondary education, community and workforce partners;
- Career counseling, career navigation and support services;
- On-Ramp programming that includes contextualized basic skills instruction, career exploration, and certifications.
- Bridge programming that includes contextualized basic skills instruction, exposure to industry-specific careers, an introduction to basic occupational skills and results in an industry-recognized stackable credential/certification;
- Enhanced academic instruction that integrates post-secondary career and technical education with ABE instructional support and reinforcement of skill concepts that results in stackable credits and credentials along a career pathway;
- Work-based learning opportunities including: clinicals, internships and apprenticeships;
- Working with post-secondary education to provide credit for prior learning;
- Placement and retention services; and
- Career laddering opportunities.

Technical skills training under career pathways is credit-based training allowing individuals to apply for and utilize financial aid. Whenever feasible, the majority of individuals are co-enrolled in workforce development programs to provide tuition and support service assistance. These programs include: WIOA Adult, WIOA Youth, State or Federal Dislocated Worker programs, or Vocational Rehabilitation Services. The Career Navigator is responsible for identifying and aligning resources to maximize career and training services.

We have worked with South Central College to develop portable and stackable credentials. Individuals in the health care pathway earn a Nursing Assistant certification which is required credits and credential for a number of health care pathways. Under manufacturing, individuals earn a MSSC certification after their first

semester which is required certification and credits for the machining, mechatronics and welding pathways.

14. A. Describe how the local area board will facilitate engagement of employers, including small employers, and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations, in workforce development programs.

The South Central WorkForce Council facilitates engagement of employers in a number of ways. Most of the employers in our local area are small employers, consequently engagement is primarily with small employers. Due to our focus on key industries and demand occupations, our engagement with employers are in-demand industry sectors and occupations. Engagement of employers in workforce development programs includes:

- One of our regional goals is to: *Increase employer engagement that expands the talent pipeline through sector-based partnerships, career pathways, career awareness opportunities and work-based learning activities.* Through this goal we focus on continued expansion of our engagement with local employers from key industries.
- The South Central WorkForce Council is comprised of a majority of business representatives. Businesses represented on the Council are from the key industries of: business/professional services, construction, health care, and manufacturing. This board is engaged in a public-private partnership in the administration and oversight of workforce development programs. The board identifies the key industries, demand occupations, skill needs, sets policy, and provides direction and oversight of the investment of public dollars in workforce development.
- Employers participate in our regional planning sessions providing input on workforce issues and opportunities and identifying workforce priorities for the region.
- The MN DEED Workforce Strategy Consultant, in partnership with the WorkForce Council, has developed industry-led sector partnerships, focusing on employers from the key industries of health care and manufacturing. Roundtables/workshops are held in the region with employers to promote hiring of diverse populations, individuals with disabilities, ex-offenders and youth.
- Our Workforce Strategy Consultant, Rehabilitation Services Employment Specialists, Wagner Peyser and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives provide outreach to employers and assist with their hiring and retention needs.
- Employers participate in planning and development of career pathways, inform the partnership on skill needs, provide career exploration activities including guest speaker in classroom and industry tours, provide work-based learning opportunities through clinicals and internships/apprenticeships, provide employment and career laddering opportunities.
- Employers are engaged in career exploration and awareness events including health care events, Tour of Manufacturing, Construct Tomorrow, Construction Boot Camp, Scrubs Camp, career expos, employer panels, and job shadowing opportunities.
- Employers provide work-based training for adults and dislocated workers through on-the-job training, internships, apprenticeships and transitional jobs

(work experience). In addition, employers provide work experience and internships for youth.

- Employers participate in a number of job fairs held throughout the year that provides employment opportunities for job seekers.
- Providers also engage with employers through local Chambers of Commerce and SMAHRA.

Complete attachment G - **Local Workforce Development Area Key Industries in Regional Economy**

- B. Describe how the local area board will support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local workforce development area.

The services of our local workforce development system are all centered upon meeting the skill needs of businesses in our local area. Utilizing labor market information, input from employers on our local board, and other employer engagement noted above, we identify the skill needs and skill gaps of local employers. Through our career services we assess the interests/skills of job seekers and identify and address where skill gaps exist. Career counseling focuses on matching the skills and interests of job seekers with the key industries and demand occupations in the region. Job search assistance/curriculum is based on feedback from employers. Training is focused on meeting the skill needs of local employers by targeting training on demand occupations. The WorkForce Council sets a goal for WIOA Title I providers on the percentage of training provided in demand occupations and reviews outcomes on an annual basis.

Our post-secondary providers develop education/training programs based on the skills identified by employers. Career pathways are developed based on the key industries in the local area and the bridge/integrated curriculum is developed based on input of skill needs from employers. The focus of our Workforce Strategy Consultant is to meet the human resource needs of businesses in the local area. Salary Survey and other labor market information is provided to businesses. CareerForce staff facilitate workshops and seminars for business on common topics of interest. This includes access and hiring of populations that are experience employment disparities.

Based on input from area employers we have developed opportunities, activities and events to engage employers and connect them to the available and emerging labor force. This includes career awareness events, jobs fairs, and work-based learning opportunities.

Finally, businesses have indicated the need for incumbent worker training. The Workforce Council will be supporting incumbent worker training through direct resources or referrals to other opportunities such as MJSP grants.

- C. Describe how the local area board will better coordinate programs and services with regional economic development providers.

The South Central WorkForce continues to meet with state, regional and local economic development professionals to identify ways to coordinate programs and services. Coordination with economic development providers includes:

- The South Central WorkForce Council is the review board for the Region 9 Comprehensive Economic Development Survey (CEDS) that is completed each year for submission to the federal Economic Development Administration.
- The Executive Director of the South Central WorkForce Council and local MN DEED staff serves on the Economic Development Committee of the Region 9 Development Commission.
- The South Central WorkForce Council has an economic development representative on the board who informs the board on economic development activities in the region.
- The MN DEED local Business Development Specialist convenes local economic development professionals and invites WorkForce Council staff to engage in dialogue with local professionals. As specific projects are identified, economic development professionals work with CareerForce staff on identifying and addressing workforce needs of the business.
- Local, county and regional economic development professionals participated in our regional planning meetings to help identify needs and strategies for the region.
- The South Central WorkForce Council pays for CareerForce membership on local chambers of commerce to aid in coordination of activities between the chambers and workforce development professionals.
- CareerForce staff participate in local economic development meetings and initiatives.

- D. Describe how the local area board will strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs by offering services to laid-off workers and possible lay-off preventative services for businesses, such as incumbent worker training that up-skills the workers and meets the needs of employers (can include but not be limited to, on-the-job training, apprenticeships, etc.).

A key strategy to strengthening linkages between local workforce services and unemployment insurance is through coordination with Reemployment Assistance (REA). Job Service staff attend REA sessions to ensure attendees are aware of the broad range of services available at CareerForce locations and on dislocated worker services specifically. Attendees that express an interest in dislocated worker services are connected to the appropriate staff for intake.

The COVID pandemic has highlighted the importance of the relationship and linkages between Unemployment Insurance and local workforce development services and dislocated worker program. As the pandemic progressed, we experienced closings of local retail establishments and the closing of businesses in the hospitality industry through executive orders. Many individuals who had never been on UI before were entering the system for the first time. These individuals had questions and often contacted our CareerForce

locations for answers/assistance. Staff provided remote support and referred individuals to UI, preferably on-line or through the phone.

Unfortunately during the pandemic our offices are not open for REA sessions and we are supporting MN DEED efforts to provide direct outreach through email and telephone to connect with individuals on Unemployment Insurance and refer them to CareerForce services (including Dislocated Worker services).

Local MN DEED staff, with their connection to local employers, is a key link in providing employers information on lay-off prevention strategies and dislocated worker services. Staff provide information to local businesses on potential lay-off prevention strategies such as shared work and training services including incumbent worker training, on-the-job training, transitional jobs/work experience and apprenticeship. When lay-offs are unavoidable, we reach out to these businesses and their employees to provide information on dislocated worker services available to impacted workers or refer to Rapid Response if the lay-off is significant.

Dislocated worker services provided by our WIOA Title I providers include the full complement of services, including career services, upskilling and training through classroom training and work-based training (including on-the-job training, work experience and apprenticeships). Individuals are supported through career counselors, the provision of supportive services and referrals to other resources in the area.

15. Describe how the local area board will coordinate workforce investment activities with economic development activities, including the promotion of entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services.

Our local CareerForce locations provide services for individuals interested in entrepreneurship through our continued partnership with local agencies providing entrepreneurial services including: SBDC, MSU-Mankato, South Central College, Riverbend Center for Entrepreneurial Facilitation/Ignite, Greater Mankato Growth, Waseca BEST, Southern MN Initiative Foundation, Region 9 Development Commission and local financial institutions. Individuals interested in entrepreneurship are referred to these local partners for services depending on their need and location. Workforce partners provide the full-compliment of program services as appropriate in collaboration with entrepreneurial services including supporting training plans and support services.

CLIMB (Converting Layoffs Into Minnesota Businesses), allows providers to offer entrepreneurial training, business consulting, and technical assistance to dislocated workers who wish to start their own business without impacting performance results. MN DEED Job Service provides guidance and outreach materials for delivery of these services and supports entrepreneurial skills training.

16. A. Describe how the local area board will ensure continuous improvement of eligible providers of services through the system.

The South Central WorkForce Council has established two partnership teams that address continuous improvement and staff development needs of our core partners: the South Central Training Team and the SC Continuous Improvement Team.

The South Central Training Team is made up of staff from the core partners to address the training needs of partnership agencies including: ABE, Job Service, Life-Work Planning Center, Minnesota Valley Action Council, MRCL, Rehabilitation Services, and Services for the Blind. The team assesses the training needs of our CareerForce partners and provides training that addresses the needs that are common across the partnership. Training days are held twice a year for all partnership staff. These training days are noteworthy in that the agendas are driven by the staff of our CareerForce partnership, addresses partnership development and continuous improvement through training.

The SC Continuous Improvement Team, again made up of representatives of our CareerForce partnership, deals with quality issues. The team conducts assessments of the system, obtains feedback from our customers and staff, and develops and implements continuous improvement plans that address quality issues.

The SC WorkForce Council conducts an annual review of program results. The Council not only reviews results of WIOA Title I programs, but also the results of the CareerForce partners. MN DEED and SC WorkForce Council staff conduct on-site monitoring of WIOA and MFIP service providers on an annual basis. These monitoring reviews provide an opportunity to identify and address areas of continuous improvement.

Focus groups have been conducted with participants of our career pathway programs and youth programs to obtain feedback and input on how to improve programming. New strategies and processes were put into place based on this feedback.

In addition to these activities, the SC WorkForce Council also participates in "Mystery Shoppers" where unidentified staff from other Workforce Development Areas visit our career labs and rate the level of services. The Continuous Improvement Team and Operations Committee review the results of these visits and identify improvement areas.

Through our regional partnership with Southwest MN PIC and even broader with the Southern MN Professional Development Network, we address training needs we have in common across the four local WDAs in Southern Minnesota as well as share best practices in service delivery.

Rural youth providers meet to discuss implementation of youth programs and to share best practices.

Finally, each partnering agency provides staff development specific to their agency needs. This includes participating in local, state (MN DEED, MN DHS, and

MAWB) and national training opportunities. Through MAWB Job Seeker Services Committee, best practices are shared across the 16 local WDAs.

- B. Describe how the local area board will ensure that eligible providers meet the employment needs of local employers, workers and job seekers.

The South Central WorkForce Council, along with our Providers, identify the needs of employers, workers and job seekers through the regional forums, labor market information, engaging local businesses, stakeholders and the broader community.

Employers

Employers indicate that a skilled workforce is the number one factor that predicates business success and competitive advantage. Skills needed that are consistent across industries include:

- Basic work readiness skills (including attendance, timeliness, work ethic, etc.)
- Teamwork and interpersonal skills
- Problem-solving/critical thinking skills
- Basic math and reading skills
- Communication skills (oral and written)
- Computer skills
- Technical/occupational skills

Our local employers report that they are having difficulty finding skilled labor. Although we have experienced higher unemployment during the pandemic and some skills of laid off workers are transferable, such as the customer service skills of retail and hospitality workers, these individuals will need training/upskilling to meet the skill needs of the industries that continue to look for skilled labor.

The second most common theme from employers is the need to develop a talent pipeline of workers. Strategies to develop pipelines focus largely on developing connections with local high schools and post-secondary education providers. The South Central Workforce provides numerous opportunities/events to facilitate these connections including career events and work-based learning opportunities.

Retention of employees is a key issue for employers. They are looking at ways to support their current workforce and provide training/career laddering opportunities. Employers also indicate that they are seeing a greater need for providing resources for employees. Types of resources identified include: child care, mental health services, housing and transportation.

The needs for a skilled workforce in the health care industry that existed prior to the pandemic has exponentially increased with the pandemic. There is great demand for CNAs/PCAs, LPN and RNs, and technicians. As indicated above, we have a laid off workforce with customer service skills, these skills will transfer effectively to the health care industry, however, workers will need training to obtain the credentials and certifications required to work in this industry.

Many employers within key industries indicate there needs to be greater awareness of career opportunities within their industry. This is especially prevalent within

manufacturing and construction industry occupations. With the decline of the family farm and industrial arts/technology programs at local school districts, youth are not exposed to these career opportunities as they once were. Marketing and career exploration opportunities are needed that expose youth and job seekers to career opportunities within these industries and that combat old stereo-types, especially in the manufacturing industry. The South Central WorkForce Council and providers will support career events and the development of career information. Labor market infographics on key industries in the region have been developed to support providers in providing career information for youth and job seekers. Annual career events have been established to provide exposure to these key industries, including Tour of Manufacturing, Construct Tomorrow and Construction Boot Camp.

As businesses look ahead to the aging of our workforce and the retirements of baby boomers, employers need succession planning strategies and knowledge transfer plans. Employers are looking at mentorship programs where older, long-term employees mentor younger workers. They also indicate that knowledge can transfer both ways, as younger employees have had more exposure to innovation in computer/technology and can assist older workers with technology changes. A related issue for employers is dealing for the first time with four generations in the workforce. Each generation is motivated differently and responds to differing styles of supervision and incentives.

The needs of employers are met by providing qualified job applicants with the basic, work readiness and occupational/technical skills required for employment. This begins by identifying the demand occupations in the region and providing job seekers with the information they need to make informed career choices. Assessments identify any deficits a job seeker may have in meeting the skill requirements of employers. Sector-based career pathways provide job seekers with the basic and technical skills needed to meet employer demand for a skilled workforce through partnerships with Adult Basic Education and post-secondary institutions in the region. Strategies such as employment counseling, work experience/transitional jobs and employability/skill classes address work readiness/employability skill issues.

Employer needs are also addressed by MN DEED staff who meet with area employers to identify and address employment-related issues. Business seminars are held to address broad issues such as succession planning, generational issues, labor laws, and hiring of populations experiencing employment disparities (i.e. BIPOC, individuals with disabilities, ex-offenders and youth). Job fairs and career fairs are organized to provide employers with an opportunity to connect with large number of job seekers and the emerging workforce. Employers are also featured in our CareerForce locations, providing them an opportunity to meet with job seekers utilizing our resource rooms. During the pandemic curbside job fairs are held to continue to provide job seekers with information from employers on job opportunities in the area.

Finally, employer needs are identified and addressed by their involvement in workforce development through their participation on boards and committees; by providing tours, job shadowing, and guest speakers in the classroom; and by providing work-based opportunities through work experience, internships/clinicals, and apprenticeships. Employer involvement with workforce and education

professionals is instrumental in developing training and strategies that meet their skills needs.

Workers

Trends all indicate that our incumbent workforce will need to be life-long learners. Studies reveal that our workforce will not only change jobs at least eleven times in their life-time, but they will also need to change careers. It is estimated that many of the jobs of tomorrow have not yet been created. As technology, mechanization, and information continually changes, our workforce will continue to need training and upgrading of skills. We are experiencing a “churning” of the workforce where we see loss of jobs due to downsizing, technology and mechanization at that same time where high skilled jobs go unfilled. Many of the jobs lost are the entry-level, lower skilled jobs. All of these trends point to a need for access to training opportunities that provide the skills workers will need to compete and succeed in today’s and tomorrow’s workforce.

Workers need training that accommodates their schedules such as on-line, nights and week-ends. They also need company-specific training through incumbent worker training, customized training and on-the-job training opportunities.

Workers need career advancement/career laddering opportunities. They need opportunities to increase their skills so they can move up the career ladder and obtain higher skilled/higher wage jobs. As the aging population leaves the workforce, there will be a need for employees to fill higher level positions. Employers prefer to recruit within for qualified employees that already know the business. As a result, this will provide openings for new entry level workers. Workers need training opportunities that will prepare them for these advancement opportunities.

Training and career laddering opportunities are also important for populations experiencing employment and wage disparities. Frequently, especially through public assistance programs, these populations are placed into low skilled/low wage jobs based on their need for immediate employment and income. These jobs do not always lead to family-sustaining wages. These under-employed workers need access to training and career-laddering opportunities to move up the ladder to higher skilled/higher wage jobs.

Employers indicate that they are seeing more and more that workers need access to resources and services to help them meet their child care, housing, transportation and mental health needs.

Workforce strategies that address worker needs include incumbent worker training, customized training opportunities, evening and on-line training, and worker/employer professional development opportunities.

Job Seekers

There are a variety of individuals looking for work. Whether it is a youth entering the workforce for the first time, a low skilled unemployed individual, a highly skilled dislocated worker or someone currently employed looking for better employment opportunities, they have similar yet specialized needs.

Job seekers need work readiness and basic skills to succeed in the workplace. All occupations, across all industries require basic skills including work readiness skills, basic math and reading, computer, communication, interpersonal, and critical thinking skills. Minnesota State campuses report that an increasing percentage of students are requiring remediation in basic skills prior to enrolling in specific occupational training programs. In order to ensure job seekers have these skills, providers assess basic and work readiness skills at enrollment. Individuals with low basic skills are referred to Adult Basic Education and/or Career Pathway programs to increase basic skills prior to training/employment. Work readiness/employability skills are addressed through employment counseling, work experience and employability/skill classes.

As the labor market continues to change, job seekers need access to good labor market information to make informed career choices. Job seekers are provided labor market information on demand occupations, future employment trends, wages, career pathway and laddering opportunities. Interest and aptitude assessments are provided to help them identify their interests/strengths and how skill sets transfer across job opportunities. Career counselors assist job seekers to connect their interest and strengths to demand occupations in the region.

Job seekers also need basic job search assistance. They need to know how to find the jobs that are available and tap the hidden job market. Employer recruitment methods continue to change. Some employers do not list their job openings. Many require online applications and situational assessments to screen their applicants. Almost all job openings require either an application or resume. Frequently, we work with dislocated workers who have not job searched for many years and require assistance in conducting a successful job search. Special populations, like older workers and ex-offenders need specialized job search assistance to overcome barriers to finding employment. As a result, Creative Job Search and Resume Writing classes are provided at each CareerForce location and on-line. In our career labs, job seekers have access to computers, telephones, copiers to conduct their job search. One-on-one assistance is also available in our career labs for individuals who need additional assistance with researching job opportunities, posting resumes, and completing on-line applications.

Job seekers need support services and wrap-around services that supports them in their employment plan. Job seekers have many needs that can include: food insecurity, housing, child care, mental health services, digital access and transportation. Job seekers need information on how to access the various programs and services in the community that can assist with these needs.²

Job seekers need employment opportunities that pay a livable wage. They need jobs that will provide income sufficient to meet their basic needs. The Jobs Now Coalition Cost of Living in Minnesota Wage Calculator indicates that a family of four with two workers needs to earn a minimum of \$15.39 per hour, working 60 hours per week in order to meet basic expenses in our local area. The hourly wage needed to meet basic needs for a single person with one child would be \$19.38. Career counselors provide job seekers information on demand occupations in the region and wages through labor market information in order for them to make informed career choices. As our infographics labor market campaign indicates “majors matter” and

job seekers need to “know before they go” into training programs or employment the wage opportunities of their career choices.

Job seekers need the technical skills and credentials required for demand occupations in the region. Consequently, job seekers will need computer and occupational skill training that is affordable, flexible and provides the skills necessary to compete for higher wage job opportunities. Training institutions provide a wide range of training opportunities in a variety of formats. This includes short-term customized training, work-based training, as well as one, two and four year certification/degree programs. The South Central Workforce Council and providers support and encourage job seekers to participate in training to obtain the skills and credentials necessary to compete for higher wage job opportunities.

The Georgetown study and labor market information reveal that Minnesota jobs that pay livable wages require education and/or credentials beyond a high school diploma. Job seekers accessing services who lack a post-secondary credential are provided career counseling that stresses the importance of post-secondary training and credentials in preparing them for high skilled job opportunities in demand occupations. Tuition assistance and support services are provided to help job seekers obtain the post-secondary training and credentials required for employment in demand occupations that pay self-sustaining wages.

Finally, employers are seeking job candidates that have experience in the industry. In addition, some job seekers have barriers that make it difficult for them to get their “foot in the door” with local employers. Consequently, when appropriate, work-based learning opportunities are provided including: work experience/transitional jobs, on-the-job training, internships and apprenticeships.

- C. Describe how the local area board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including in remote areas, through the use of technology and other means.

The South Central WorkForce Council and its providers continues to explore the use of technology and other means to facilitate access to services, especially for rural areas of our WDA. The use of technology helps us to maintain contact with job seekers, provide case management services and provides easy access to services for those individuals who are able to self-serve. A positive outcome of the pandemic, is the accelerated development and use of technology to continue services while our CareerForce locations are closed to the public. Assistive technology provides better access to services for individuals with disabilities. Strategies to facilitate access to services through technology and other means include:

- Assessing job seekers’ access to technology and digital literacy skills.
Programs like PCs for People, referrals and/or support services are utilized to provide access to technology when needed. Referrals are made to Adult Basic Education when appropriate to help individuals with limited computer skills. Adult Basic Education utilizes North Star Digital Literacy curriculum to assess and teach basic computer skills.

- The provision of Creative Job Search, Resume Writing, New Leaf and other workshops on-line.
- Access to MinnesotaWorks and the CareerForce platform on-line.
- Access to Unemployment Insurance on-line and/or by telephone.
- The delivery and completion of applications and screening tools through technology.
- Utilization of email, texting, and social media for enhanced communication with participants, limiting the number of times an individual has to travel to our offices.
- This past year we have developed on-line curriculum for our work with local high schools including the development of videos that feature local employers on career exploration and job search.
- We developed a virtual “Tour of Manufacturing” that features videos of local manufacturing employers and includes activities that can be used in high school classrooms. We plan on developing a virtual “Tour of Health Care” in the coming year that will feature local health care employers and health care careers.
- We developed the “Get Started Program” which is a virtual, four-week program focused on preparing youth for the world of work. “Get Started” provides youth and young adults (ages 16-24) training in communication skills, budgeting, health/wellness, and community exploration, which are fundamentals in being successful in life and employment. Youth learn about the importance of effective workplace communication, how to budget their money, the impacts of health and wellness on employment, and location community resources that are available.
- Our high schools, ABE, and post-secondary partners continue to increase opportunities for on-line learning. These opportunities were also accelerated and increased due to the COVID pandemic. There are now many hybrid learning opportunities available through our education partners.
- Continue to support MN DEED in the development of on-line services including job search tools, workshops, and mobile phone applications.

D. Describe how entities within the one-stop delivery system will comply with section 188, if applicable, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology and materials for individuals with disabilities including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities.

All core partners of our CareerForce locations comply with section 188 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology and materials for individuals with disabilities including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities.

All three CareerForce locations have been certified by MN DEED Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity to be accessible. In addition, the local EO officer, ADA Coordinator and MN DEED completes annual ADA compliance reviews.

The local centers are equipped with the required accessible equipment, software and technology to meet the requirements of ADA and are regularly monitored by MN DEED for compliance.

Materials utilized in providing services includes language indicating that it is available in other formats. Websites are developed screen reader compatible.

All contracts/subcontracts includes language requiring ADA compliance.

Core partners and local EEO officer participate in MN DEED training provided by the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity.

Our Vocational Rehabilitation Services partner provides local ADA Coordination, expertise and is available for technical assistance.

- E. Describe the roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners, (you may attach your MOU and IFAs to this plan to answer this question if you wish).

A copy of the Memorandum of Understanding with one-stop partners is attached which delineates the roles of each of the required partners of our CareerForce locations. The IFAs which identify the resource contributions of the required one-stop partners & programs has been submitted to MN DEED, however, we are currently awaiting further guidance from the Department of Labor before finalizing.

17. Describe and assess the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local workforce development area.

The full complement of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities as required under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act are available through our CareerForce locations in WDA #7. Providers of services were selected through a Request for Proposal process. Services will be provided through a partnership between MN DEED –Job Service and MN Valley Action Council, focusing on the strengths of each organization.

Services available include:

Basic Career Services

Basic Career Services is provided by MN DEED –Job Service. Job Service is uniquely positioned and qualified to provide these services as the Wagner Peyser provider and as the provider of front-line services at each of the CareerForce locations. Basic Career Services are available to all individuals seeking services and includes:

- Eligibility determination;
- Outreach, intake and orientation;
- Initial assessment of skill levels and supportive service needs;
- Labor exchange services including: job search, job placement and provision of in-demand industry and occupation information and nontraditional employment opportunities;

- Referrals to other programs and services;
- Provision of workforce and labor market information;
- Provision of performance and program cost information on eligible training providers;
- Provision of information on how the local area is performing on local performance measures;
- Provision of information on the availability of supportive services or assistance and appropriate referrals;
- Assistance in establishing eligibility for programs of financial aid assistance for training and education programs not provided under WIOA; and
- Provision of information and assistance regarding filing claims under UI programs.

Individualized Career Services

Individualized Career Services are provided by MN DEED –Job Service for individuals receiving staff-assisted job search and work-based training and by MN Valley Action Council for individuals on a classroom-training pathway. Individualized Career Services include:

- Comprehensive and specialized assessment;
- Individualized employment plan;
- Group or individualized counseling;
- Career planning/case management;
- Short-term pre-vocational services;
- Internships and work experiences;
- Workforce preparation activities;
- Financial literacy services;
- Out-of-area job search;
- English language acquisition and integrated education/training programs; and
- Follow-up services.

The focus of career services is to provide individuals with the information they need to make informed career decisions, identify a career goal, assess their interests and aptitudes, and to develop a career plan that identifies the steps, resources and services necessary to achieve their goal for meaningful employment in a demand occupation that pays a family-sustaining wage. One-on-one career counseling services focused on career pathways is critical to providing career and case management/navigator services and support services are especially vital for individuals experiencing barriers to employment and employment disparities.

An assessment of career services reveals that we have experienced providers that provide quality career services. However, our capacity to provide this level of intensive, one-on-one services is limited to funding available. It will be important to continue to support development of technology to provide these services for individuals that can self-serve so we can focus limited resources on individuals who require more intensive services.

In addition, with our focus on serving populations experiencing employment disparities it will be important to engage other community resources to understand and address the unique needs of special populations.

Training Services:

Work-based training services are provided by MN DEED –Job Service to align with their strong connection with area employers. MN Valley Action Council provides classroom-training services aligning with their expertise to provide intensive case management services.

Training services include:

- Occupational skills training;
- On-the-job training;
- Incumbent worker training;
- Cooperative education programs;
- Private sector training;
- Skill upgrading and retraining;
- Entrepreneurial training;
- Transitional jobs (work experience);
- Job readiness training;
- Adult education and literacy; and
- Customized training.

The focus of training services is to provide individuals with the skills they need for a career pathway in high demand industries and occupations that lead to a family-sustaining wage. Training is provided through work-based and/or post-secondary training that results in industry recognized, stackable credentials that leads to meaningful employment.

An assessment of training services reveals that we have developed strong partnerships for the development of career pathways. The health care and manufacturing pathways are well-developed. We need to continue to expand career pathway opportunities, increase employer engagement for work-based learning opportunities, continue secondary and post-secondary education alignment, increase community engagement for targeted populations, and continue to develop outreach strategies. Although communities of color are served well above their incidence in the population and have comparable employment results, we do see that this target population has lower average wage rates. In order to increase wages, we need to provide comprehensive counseling to promote the benefits of skill training in order to compete for demand occupations that pay livable wages.

18. Describe and assess the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the local workforce development area, including youth with disabilities, which description and assessment shall include an identification of successful models of such youth workforce development activities.

The full complement of youth workforce investment activities required under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act are available in the 9-county area of WDA #7. The youth provider of services was selected through a Request for Proposal process. Services will be provided by MN Valley Action Council based on their vast experience and success in providing youth services.

Youth workforce investment activities include:

- Objective assessment;
- Development of service strategies;

- Activities leading to a secondary school diploma;
- Preparation for post-secondary education and training;
- Linkages between academic instruction and occupational education that leads to a credential;
- Preparation for unsubsidized employment;
- Effective connections to employers in demand occupations;
- Program elements include: tutoring, alternative school services, paid and unpaid work experience, occupational skill training, education concurrently with workforce preparation activities, leadership development, supportive services, mentoring, comprehensive career guidance, follow-up services, financial literacy, entrepreneurial skill training, labor market information on demand occupations, and transition to post-secondary education and training.

The focus of youth workforce investment activities is to ensure that youth have the basic skills, work readiness skills and occupational skills necessary to be successful in post-secondary education and training, and ultimately to obtain meaningful employment in demand occupations that pay livable wages along a career pathway.

Successful models include:

- Minnesota Disability Employment Initiative (MN DEI) which was a three year Department of Labor Grant awarded to Minnesota to provide services to youth with disabilities. South Central was one of three Workforce Development Areas that were chosen to be implementation sites. The key strategic approaches implemented in this project included: Guideposts for Success, Integrated Resource Teams and Partnerships & Collaboration. The Guideposts for Success represent key educational and career interventions that make a positive difference in the lives of youth with disabilities. Integrated Resource Teams were instrumental in coordinating services and resources with multiple agencies and resulted in greater communication and coordination between agencies. The initiative strengthened partnerships with agencies that provide services and resources for youth with disabilities.
- Youth at Work project titled “Dream It. Believe It. Achieve It.” targets services to youth from communities of color. In addition to providing youth workforce investment activities, this program engages youth and their families, provides cultural awareness to the community, positive role models and leadership opportunities to inspire youth and specialized services for those with disabilities. Because we recognize the strong family connection in communities of color, parents are invited to participate in the initial meetings for program enrollment as well as the group activities. To increase cultural awareness in the community, worksite supervisors participate in cultural awareness training. The program provides positive role models from communities of color that have overcome adversity to demonstrate that it is possible to achieve their dreams. In addition, the YWCA Mankato provides leadership opportunities, such as SURGE!, which is a leadership program for young girls grades 9-12 or the Annual Women’s Leadership Conference. Youth with disabilities that are not ready for competitive employment participate in specialized programming to build their employability skills.
- Youth Intervention Program targets services to youth that have been or are currently in out-of-home placement (i.e. foster care, group homes). Youth receive

career and life skills curriculum to explore and identify positive education, career and life goals.

- The TANF Youth Project provides work experiences for teen parents receiving Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) benefits or youth in MFIP households. Youth can work an average of 29 hours per week for 12 weeks while meeting their MFIP work participation requirements.
- Outreach to Schools/Partners In Career Exploration program recruits first year graduate students in the Student Counseling Program at Minnesota State University-Mankato to provide career exploration and career counseling assistance to high school students in local school districts including: LeSueur-Henderson High School, Sibley East High School, St. Clair High School and United South Central High School.

Skills for Success presentations are provided to local high schools on a variety of topics including: career assessments, career planning & exploration, labor market information, job search, work readiness skills, navigating business culture, post-secondary planning and financial literacy. In response to the pandemic, Skills for Success was offered virtually and featured three videos on skills, interviewing and maintaining employment. Each video offered advice from four local employers representing healthcare, manufacturing, construction and agriculture industries. The videos offered flexibility to schools to accommodate distance, hybrid and in-person learning models.

Career Pathways for in-demand occupations are introduced through work experience opportunities, career exploration events, and career pathway programming. The work experience component has a significant impact in preparing youth for the workforce and introducing career pathways for in-demand occupations. Worksites are recruited based on youth's interests and career goals. Staff work with youth to investigate careers and labor market information. Each year the South Central WorkForce Council develops a demand occupation list from a rich set of labor market information including current demand and outlook coupled with real-time input from local employers and job counselors. Employers that provide work experiences in high growth and in-demand occupations are targeted. When possible, youth are placed in private sector worksites where there is greater opportunity to get hired after the work experience.

We have worked with area high schools to provide academic credit for youth employment activities which assists youth in obtaining the credits they need to graduate on time.

Youth attend the following career exploration events: career expos, Scrubs Camp, Tour of Manufacturing, Construct Tomorrow and the SC Construction Boot Camp. Due to the pandemic, career exploration events were offered in a virtual format this past school year.

Finally, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, in collaboration with local educational agencies, are responsible for providing statewide access to Pre-Employment Transition Services for all students with disabilities who are between the ages of 14 through 21. Pre-Employment Transition Services are intended to prepare students for life after high school by planning for postsecondary education or training, employment, and independent living. Services are individualized and can include activities in 5 areas including: Job exploration counseling, Work-based learning experiences, Counseling on

opportunities for enrollment in postsecondary education programs, Workplace readiness training, and Instruction in self-advocacy. VRS has 2 staff assigned to each school in the state of Minnesota.

19. Describe how the local area board will coordinate education and workforce investment activities carried out under this title with relevant secondary and post-secondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services.

Our primary strategy to coordinate education and workforce investment activities in order to align strategies, enhance services and avoid duplication is through the activities of our Rural Career Counseling Coordinator. Our Regional Workforce Development Area has been awarded funding for a Rural Career Counseling Coordinator position. This position is responsible for strengthening connections between workforce, education, area businesses, job seekers, and other stakeholders; aligning regional resources; implementing sector strategies; and promoting career pathway opportunities within the region. Building on current initiatives (including career pathways, career education, and out-reach to schools), one of the key responsibilities will be to enhance alignment and assure non-duplication of services. This was achieved by conducting an asset map and analysis of existing services and identifying where gaps exist. Upon completion of the asset mapping process, the results were shared with the Regional Leadership Board and the local workforce development boards. Based on the results, the boards and staff developed recommendations and strategies for future steps to align resources, fill gaps and implement identified strategies. The Rural Career Counseling Coordinator will work closely with stakeholders throughout the region to ensure overall coordination, as well as share best practices and bring them to scale.

Another important strategy is providing career exploration events for key industries, working closely with area partners, including education. These events provide broad exposure for large numbers of students in key industries. Events include:

- Career Expos in Fairmont, Mankato and New Ulm;
- Health Care career exploration events and Scrubs Camp;
- Construct Tomorrow and Construction Boot Camp - career exploration events on trade occupations; and
- Tour of Manufacturing.

Our partnership with local secondary schools and South Central Service Cooperative help us to coordinate and align resources to increase career awareness, career counseling and work-based learning opportunities in the area.

Our outreach to schools program entitled “Partners in Career Exploration” places graduate students in the Student Counseling program at MSU-Mankato at area high schools one day a week with a focus on providing one-on-one career counseling to high school juniors and seniors. The graduate students receive training from CareerForce partners and our labor market analyst who provides information on key industries and demand occupations in the local area.

The South Central Career Pathway Partnership is a key strategy in working with post-secondary to coordinate strategies, enhance services and avoid duplication. Through

our Career Pathway Memorandum of Understanding we have delineated the roles and responsibilities of each of the partners. This partnership meets on a quarterly basis and includes partners from Adult Basic Education, South Central College, employers, CareerForce and community partners. Partnership meetings are focused on discussions to align the expertise and resources of partners, coordinate services and implement continuous improvement of services based on customer and partner feedback. Employers inform us of the skill needs for specific occupations and then the partnership works to ensure there is a pathway to training and employment opportunities that includes stackable credentials and allows various entry and exit points along the pathway.

20. Describe how the local area board will coordinate education and workforce investment activities carried out under this title with public transportation and other appropriate supportive services.

The provision of supportive services is critical to the success of individuals we serve. In a rural workforce development area, transportation is by far the greatest need of our customers, in addition to tools, clothing, and emergency medical and financial assistance. Public transportation is limited in our workforce development area and what public transportation that does exist does not meet the needs of individuals who have jobs that require shift work. During our regional planning sessions with stakeholders, transportation was identified as a great need as well as child care. Once again, current child care services does not meet the needs of individuals who have shift work plus there is limited availability for infant care.

This past summer, public transportation services were even more limited due to COVID restrictions. As a result, MN Valley Action Council provided transportation for youth participants in a work experience through the use of Head Start vehicles.

The South Central WorkForce Council informs and supports local and regional efforts to address transportation needs through organizations such as the Region 9 Development Commission, the Highway 14 partnership, and other local initiatives in small rural communities to transport workers. CareerForce staff and employers have and will continue to participate with these organizations and initiatives to inform on the transportation needs of the workforce.

The workforce system has limited support service dollars and identifies and aligns with other community resources whenever possible to stretch funding as far as possible.

21. Describe the plans and strategies for, and assurances concerning, maximizing coordination of service provided by the state employment service under Wagner-Peyser Act, and services provided in the local workforce development area through the one-stop delivery system, to improve service delivery and avoid duplication of services.

One of the advantages of subcontracting with MN DEED to provide WIOA Title I career services is that it provides a natural connection between CareerForce program services such as WIOA Title I, REA, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Veteran Services and Wagner-Peyser services.

Some of these connections are more difficult under a COVID environment as REA sessions are currently not being provided for UI applicants and some partners are providing services remotely. We continue to coordinate services through technology utilizing email, remote meetings, and phone. MN DEED has provided information on CareerForce services (including Dislocated Worker services) through email to UI applicants and plans to make one-on-one contact by phone to ensure UI recipients are aware of the services available through CareerForce locations.

Strategies to coordinate services through the one-stop delivery system, improve service delivery and avoid duplication of services include:

- Wagner Peyser is a required core partner under WIOA and is co-located at all three CareerForce locations in the local workforce development area and participates in the coordination of services, the Memorandum of Understanding and Infrastructure Funding Agreements.
- Wagner Peyser staff coordinates closely with CareerForce co-located partners to provide basic career services to universal customers. When appropriate referrals are made to eligibility-based programs/services of co-located partners (i.e. WIOA Adult, DW, Vocational Rehabilitation services, Veterans Services, etc.).
- Wagner Peyser staff work closely with REA staff to provide reemployment services and REA sessions at CareerForce locations. REA sessions are typically offered to UI program applicants that are at risk of exhausting their UI benefits. Wagner Peyser staff provide an overview of CareerForce services (either 1 on 1 or in group sessions), how to register on MinnesotaWorks and referrals to other program services including Dislocated Worker services.
- Wagner Peyser staff assist the REA customer with creating an initial registration and enrolling in the Creative Job Search workshop. Creative Job Search is typically the first job finding/job placement service that is offered to UI applicants. The workshop consists of training on how to find a job that includes career planning, preparing for the job hunt, skills identification, resumes and cover letters, applications and references, social media, interviewing skills, and more. During the pandemic, services and workshops are provided on-line or remotely.
- Wagner Peyser staff will follow up with REA participants who are not enrolled in a program to ensure that they have a complete registration and resume in MinnesotaWorks, and that they are taking advantage of job placement services.
- Wagner Peyser staff are frequently the staff who connect with local employers to list job opportunities on MinnesotaWorks. Wagner Peyser staff keep CareerForce partner staff informed of job opportunities in the area.
- Wagner Peyser staff are typically the point person from CareerForce for job fairs in the area and provide information to all CareerForce staff on events occurring in the local area.
- Wagner Peyser staff participate in CareerForce staff meetings to communicate and coordinate across programs.
- Wagner Peyser managers are members on our workforce boards and part of the One-Stop Operator consortium to participate in the coordination of services at CareerForce locations.

22. Describe how the local area board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out under this title in the local workforce development area with the provision of adult education and literacy activities under title II, including a description of how the local area board will

carry out, consistent with subparagraphs (A) and (B)(i) of section 107(d)(11) and section 232, the review of local applications submitted under title II.

The South Central WorkForce Council has a long, vast history of working in partnership with our local Adult Basic Education partners. We have four Adult Basic Education consortia in our local area including: Area Adult Learning Cooperative, Faribault County Adult Basic Education, Mankato Area Adult Basic Education and Southwest Adult Basic Education.

Adult Basic Education is a key partner in our local workforce development area. Examples of coordination between workforce investment activities and Adult Basic Education include:

- The development of career pathways for agriculture, construction, health care, manufacturing and transportation pathways. Through career pathways we align the resources and expertise of local partners to develop sector-based pathways for key industries. Adult Basic Education provides concurrent basic skills instruction and instructional support for adult learners with low basic skills. This is aligned with CareerForce career navigation services, aligning titles under WIOA to provide tuition assistance and support services, as well as South Central College's career and technical education.
- Referrals are made between WIOA programs and Adult Basic Education for adult literacy instruction, GED/high school diploma, and English Language Learner instruction.
- CareerForce partners utilize Adult Basic Education's College Prep course for low-skilled adult learners that are entering programs of study outside of our developed career pathway programs.
- CareerForce partners utilize Adult Basic Education for individuals with limited digital literacy skills to participate in North Star Digital Literacy assessment and classes.
- Referral forms and data-sharing agreement forms have been developed to better serve common customers.
- Adult Basic Education has a representative on the South Central WorkForce Council and staff also participate on the SC Career Pathway Partnership and Youth Council as well as other task forces for special initiatives and events.
- Adult Basic Education is invited to our local workforce development area training days to promote a better understanding of programs and services across partners.

Adult Basic Education is included in our current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) of core partners as well as a MOU for the Career Pathway Partnership. These MOUs delineates the roles and responsibilities of participating partners. Adult Basic Education also participates in our Infrastructure Funding Agreements to identify their contribution to our CareerForce locations.

Every Adult Basic Education consortia in the state provides a program narrative to the MN Department of Education every five years for approval of their service model and programming. The narrative includes provisions for local ABE programs to provide evidence that programming aligns with the local and regional WIOA plan, including evidence of common referral, co-location, program collaboration, alignment of assessment processes, and helping select and design key occupational pathways. In

compliance with WIOA legislation, these applications/narratives are submitted by Adult Basic Education to the local workforce development board for review.

23. Describe the replicated cooperative agreements (as defined in section 107(d)(11)) between the local area board or other local entities described in section 101(a)(11)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 721(a)(11)(B)) and the local office of a designated state agency or designated state unit administering programs carried out under title I of such Act (29 U.S.C. 720 et seq.) (other than section 112 or part C of that title (29 U.S.C. 732, 741) and subject to section 121(f)) in accordance with section 101(a)(11) of such Act (29 U.S.C. 721(a)(11)) with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts at cooperation, collaboration, and coordination.

The South Central Workforce Council, Vocational Rehabilitation Services and core partners under WIOA enter into a cooperative Memorandum of Understanding. The Memorandum of Understanding delineates the roles and responsibilities of the core partners and how services will be coordinated and delivered; how costs will be shared across the core partners; methods of referral between the core partners; and methods to ensure the needs of youth and individuals with barriers to employment are addressed. The Memorandum of Understanding was signed by core partners in June 2020.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services collaborates with core partners to enhance services to individuals with disabilities and for individuals with other barriers to employment. Vocational Rehabilitation Services are co-located with core partners in all three CareerForce locations in the local area. CareerForce staff provide an orientation to the full array of services available through core partners to assist job seekers in making an informed decision on choice of service provider.

All core partner staff participate in training days to ensure they understand the services offered by the various partners, the eligibility criteria for each program and to address common training needs.

Examples of collaboration with Vocational Rehabilitation Services includes:

- A Vocational Rehabilitation Services representative serves on the South Central WorkForce Council.
- Vocational Rehabilitation Services staff serve on the South Central Career Pathways Partnership, the Operations Committee, and the Youth Council.
- Vocational Rehabilitation Services staff serve on the SC Training Team and the SC Continuous Improvement Team.
- Referral forms and data sharing forms have been developed to assist in collaboration of services with shared customers.
- Strong coordination and collaboration was developed under the Youth DEI grant. Although this grant focused on youth programming, the collaborations that were developed continues under all programs.
- Vocational Rehabilitation Services staff played a lead role in the development of resources and training for non-traditional employment.
- WIOA Youth Providers are working in collaboration with Vocational Rehabilitation Services in the delivery of Pre-ETS services.

- Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manager services as the ADA Coordinator for the local WDA and assists with ADA compliance reviews and provides expertise for the local area.

24. Describe and identify the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds described in section 107(d)(12)(B)(i).

As allowed under the WIOA law under section 107(d)(12)(B)(ii), the South Central Workforce Development Area Joint Powers Board has designated Minnesota Valley Action Council, Inc. as the local grant subrecipient for the disbursement of grant funds. This designation has been recently approved by all nine local county board of commissioners through the approval of the workforce development area Joint Powers Agreement. In addition, roles and responsibilities are delineated in the recently approved agreement between the Joint Powers Board, the South Central WorkForce Council and Minnesota Valley Action Council. These agreements are in place through June 30, 2024 in alignment with the four year planning process.

Minnesota Valley Action Council has over 30 years of experience in receiving and disbursing state and federal resources. Under the most recent audit, MN Valley Action Council continues to have no issues or questioned costs.

25. Describe the competitive process to be used to award the sub-grants and contracts in the local workforce development area for activities carried out under this title.

The South Central WorkForce Council conducts a formal Request for Proposal (RFP) process to identify the service deliverers of WIOA Youth, WIOA Adult, WIOA Dislocated Worker and State Dislocated Worker/MYP programs. The process begins by the development of an RFP Task Force. The Task Force includes SC WorkForce Council members and staff. All Task Force members are required to sign a Conflict of Interest/Nondisclosure Statement prior to their participation. The RFP Task Force evaluates current service delivery and identifies changes to be made to the system and/or services to efficiently and effectively deliver services to our customers.

A Request for Proposal package is developed and published requesting potential providers to detail how they will fulfill the requirements for services and expected outcomes. Publishing of the RFP includes a notice in three legal newspapers, a notice on our website, letters sent to area organizations/agencies, other identified providers of workforce development programs, MN DEED website and notification to those that request to be on our RFP list.

The Task Force reviews and evaluates the responses. Evaluation criteria includes:

- ◆ Identification of Need
- ◆ Services (including: Career Services, Training Services and Career Pathway Navigator services)
- ◆ Commitment to Partnership/WorkForce Center System
- ◆ Performance Outcomes
- ◆ Budget/Costs –including cost/price analysis
- ◆ Operational Capability

Based on evaluation results the RFP Task Force develops a recommendation that is submitted to the South Central WorkForce Council and Joint Powers Board for approval.

26. Describe how the local levels of performance negotiated with the Governor and chief elected official will be used to measure the performance of the local workforce development area and to be used by the local area board for measuring the performance of the local fiscal agent, eligible providers under subtitle B and the One-stop delivery system.

Negotiated performance standards are one key way in which the South Central WorkForce Council measures the performance of the local workforce development area, providers and the one-stop delivery system.

On a quarterly basis, performance progress is reviewed with providers. South Central WorkForce Council staff reviews the rosters behind the results with service providers to ensure that services and outcomes have been correctly coded on Workforce One.

The South Central WorkForce Council reviews final results on an annual basis of services providers and CareerForce partners. If deficiencies exist, the board works with service providers to identify strategies to increase performance.

The fiscal agent performance is reviewed through a monthly review of the general ledgers, a quarterly fund review with service providers, on-site monitoring by MN DEED and an end of the year review of financial statements and audit.

In addition to performance measures, the board also conducts a thorough review, on an annual basis, of demographics, services, trends, training occupations and outcomes of service providers, as well as on-site monitoring visits where case files are reviewed for compliance and quality of services.

27. Describe the actions the local area board will take toward becoming or remaining a high-performing board, consistent with the factors developed by the state board.

The Governor’s Workforce Development Board (GWDB) has established four criteria for high-performing workforce development boards:

1. Embrace and communicate the vision for workforce development.
2. Support and lead employer-led quality sector partnerships.
3. Prioritize solutions for racial and economic disparities in education and employment.
4. Achieve outcomes and results through alignment with system partners and leveraging of federal, state and philanthropic resources.

The structural and operational actions of the South Central WorkForce Council to be a high-performing board based on the criteria above includes:

Embrace and Communicate the Vision for Workforce Development

Our regional partnership and SC Workforce Council has adopted the State vision statement as our regional and local vision statement aligning with the state, region and economic development. As a region and local board we have established five regional goals to drive the vision (see response to 11.B.). Starting in 2020, we have aligned our workforce board agendas with our regional goals – focusing on a goal on each agenda.

Our goals drive our committee/partnership structure and priorities. Vision and goals are communicated with key stakeholders, especially through committee and partnership meetings. These committees/partnerships are charged with implementing action plans developed for each of our goals. Committees and partnerships include:

- SC Career Pathway Partnership: This committee includes multiple stakeholders including employers, CareerForce partners, education partners, and community partners and works to address Goal 1 –addressing shortage of skilled workforce through career pathway approach; and Goal 2 –increasing outcomes for individuals experiencing employment disparities.
- Youth Council: This committee includes multiple youth stakeholders including employers, labor unions, CareerForce partners, education partners, and community stakeholders and works on addressing Goal 3 – partnerships with local school districts to increase career awareness.
- Employer-led Sector-Partnerships: Our Health Care Sector Partnership and Manufacturing Sector Partnership are instrumental in addressing Goal 4 –to increase employer engagement.
- Regional Workgroup: This partnership is focused on Goal 5 –to align administrative processes.

Build Support and Lead Employer-led High Quality Sector Partnerships

The South Central WorkForce Council has established two employer-led sector partnerships based on LMI that identifies these industries as the two largest industries in the region: Health Care and Manufacturing. These sector partnerships are facilitated by our MN DEED Workforce Strategy Consultant and identifies key workforce issues for the specific industry and strategies/solutions to address the issues. This input from employers not only leads our workforce development strategies for these specific sectors, but also informs the board in the development of our regional/local plan and goals/strategies.

Key strategies identified by these industry sectors include: developing a skilled workforce, developing connections with local high schools, and attracting talent pipeline to key industries in the region. These strategies have been incorporated into the strategies and goals for the region. The WorkForce Council and Regional Leadership Team assess our progress on these goals and continue to expand our partnerships with local employers.

Prioritize Solutions for Racial and Economic Disparities in Education & Employment

The South Central WorkForce Council in partnership with Southwest MN has established a regional goal and action plan for increasing program outcomes for individuals experiencing employment disparities. Strategies include:

- Increasing diverse representation on boards, committees and staff.
- Increase partnerships with organizations serving diverse populations.
- Targeted marketing to populations experiencing disparities.
- Conduct focus groups/discussions with ethnic communities
- Identify & implement service strategies specific to unique needs of targeted populations, utilizing career pathway programming for demand occupations.
- Create a welcoming environment and services at CareerForce locations.
- Develop a professional development plan and offer training on cultural competency for staff, board members and employers.
- Measure and evaluate service levels and outcomes for populations experiencing employment disparities.

Achieve Outcomes and Results through Alignment with System Partners and Leveraging of Federal, State and Philanthropic Resources

The South Central WorkForce Council utilizes data to inform our strategic plan including labor market information on the local/regional area and real-time knowledge of employers and stakeholders. The plan and our service delivery structure aligns the expertise and resources of system/area partners. The WorkForce Council leverages additional resources as needed to help us implement and achieve our goals. This may include leveraging partner resources/alignment of existing resources and seeking grants that align with our goals. This is especially evidence through our one-stop delivery system and through our career pathway approach where the expertise and resources of multiple partners are aligned to meet the workforce development needs of job seekers and employers. Indicators of achievement are established for the partners, progress is monitored through our committee structure on a quarterly basis and annual results are reviewed by the board in order to establish continuous improvement strategies.

In addition to the GWBD criteria for high-performing boards, the South Central WorkForce Council will address the six strategies identified in the State Plan:

1. **Business Engagement** – The South Central WorkForce Council will continue to increase business engagement on our board and committees, through regional stakeholder meetings, sector-based employer partnerships, sector-based career pathways, and increased business involvement in career exploration and work-based learning activities.
2. **Community Engagement** – The local workforce board currently engages the community through the workforce board, the Career Pathway Partnership, the Youth Council, and numerous task forces to plan specific activities and events. The South Central WorkForce Council will continue to increase community engagement by engaging partners that represent populations that experience employment disparities.
3. **Customer-Centered Design** – The local workforce board has always had a customer-focused approach. Through feedback from our customers and partners, an examination of customer outcomes, and a review of best practices, the South Central WorkForce Council will continue to develop strategies, program and policy alignment, resources and measurement systems to continue to address the needs of our customers.
4. **Funding and Resource Needs** – The local workforce board has worked hard to develop the relationships that allow us to align funding and resources through our one-stop delivery system and career pathway approach. These relationships along with asset maps and gaps analysis assist us in identifying resources in the region and enable us to align resources to avoid duplication and target resources to where the greatest impact can be made.
5. **Policy and System Alignment** – The South Central WorkForce Council, in partnership with the Southwest MN Workforce Development Board, develops and aligns regional policies that meet the needs of our region, federal regulations and State policy requirements.
6. **System Management** – The South Central WorkForce Council utilizes a continuous improvement approach to system management including planning, implementation, evaluation/feedback, and identifying improvement strategies. Throughout the years, the local board has engaged one-stop and career pathway partners to improve processes and outcomes. As we focus on populations experiencing employment disparities we will continue to engage customers and partners to improve processes and outcomes that meet the unique needs of targeted populations and employers.

28. Describe how training services under chapter 3 of subtitle B will be provided in accordance with section 134(c)(3)(G), including, if contracts for training services will be used, how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of individual training accounts under that chapter and how the local area board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs, regardless of how the training services are to be provided.

The provision of training services begins with a comprehensive assessment. Career counselors assist the customer in aligning their interests, aptitudes and values with occupations in-demand in the region. As the occupational goal is identified, an Occupational Research Packet is completed by the customer to research and provide an understanding of the occupation, its wages, and the demand in the region. Career counselors provide access to information on training providers in the area and their outcomes in order to allow the customer to make an informed choice on the selection of training programs. Staff provide assistance when needed for the completion of the FASA to identify financial aid resources that are available. A budget is completed and an Individual Training Account is developed to identify to the customer the amount of resources available for the training and to inform the training provider in order to avoid duplication of resources. At this point in time we are not utilizing contracts for training services.

29. Describe the process used by the local area board to provide opportunity for public comment; and input into the development of the local plan, prior to submission of the plan.

A public notice of the Regional and Local Plan was published in March in the legal notices section of three local newspapers (Fairmont, Mankato and New Ulm) and posted on the South Central WorkForce Council and MN DEED websites. The notice indicates that the plan is available for review and comment on our website for 30 days and provides information on how to provide input or comment. Opportunities for review and comment are also provided to our core partners, stakeholders and other interested parties through board meetings and committee meetings.

Through their representation on the South Central WorkForce Council, representatives of business and organized labor participate in the development of our regional and local unified plan. The SC WorkForce Council includes representatives of the following industries: construction, manufacturing, health care and social assistance, and business and professional services. In addition, we have two active labor representatives from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and Carpenters Union who represent the trades industry and are involved in the review process.

Any input/comments received on the plan are documented for the record.

30. Describe how the one-stop centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under this Act and programs carried out by one-stop partners.

As a rural WDA with limited resources and staff, we rely heavily on MN DEED for advances in utilizing technology for intake and case management information system. We do not have the resources or staff expertise to develop information systems outside of Workforce One. In addition, we believe true integration of data systems across one-stop partners is also an advancement that needs to happen at the state level.

With that said, the South Central WorkForce Council supports the continued development and utilization of technology to increase access and efficiency as follows:

- Provides the resources to fund a MIS position with MN Valley Action Council to provide Workforce One administrator services that centralizes training and support for users of Workforce One in the local area.
- Supports the utilization of electronic participant records/files. This development began with our MFIP/DWP programs and is expanding this program year as we support our service providers in utilizing electronic participant files for WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs.
- One-stop partners (including WIOA providers) have transitioned to the utilization of email, texting, and social media for enhanced communication with customers.
- With the onset of the COVID pandemic and transition to remote services, one-stop partners have transitioned to the delivery and completion of applications and screening tools through technology.
- The development of data-sharing agreements between one-stop partners and programs. A specific data-sharing agreement has been developed with the key partners of our career pathway programs so data can be easily shared between the different systems for ABE, Minnesota State and CareerForce partners.
- The development of a career pathway application that integrates the data needs of the ABE and workforce data systems.
- South Central WorkForce Council and one-stop partner staff have been active participants on statewide efforts at MN DEED to advance and integrate the utilization of technology. This includes statewide Workforce One committees, task forces to develop a common intake forms, case management tools, statewide workshops, and mobile-phone applications.

31. Describe how the workforce needs of your area have been impacted as result of the COVID-19 pandemic. What specific industry sectors and what specific populations (by race/ethnicity, age, and educational attainment) have been most affected and how?

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on our local WDA as it has in the state. The pandemic has impacted industry sectors as well specific populations. These impacts are a result of industry closings/restrictions due to Executive Orders and business closings which resulted in significant increases in unemployment.

Industry impacts during the first three quarters of 2020 as reported by MN DEED Labor Market Information include:

- All industries lost jobs with the exception of agriculture, construction, wholesale trade and finance (see Table 1 below).
- Industries with the greatest number of job losses include: Accommodation & Food Service (Hospitality), Education, Health Care, Retail Trade, and Manufacturing. Hospitality industries were significantly impacted by Executive Orders that required temporary closings as well as restrictions once these facilities were able to open. In addition, “stay at home” recommendations and

health concerns have dramatically reduced traffic at hospitality and retail businesses.

- All counties lost jobs in our 9-county area with the exception of Sibley County (see Table 2 below)

Table 2. South Central County Job Trends (Q1 to Q3, 2020)

Industry Sector	2020			Q1 - Q2		Q2 - Q3	
	Qtr. 1	Qtr. 2	Qtr. 3	Numeric Change	Percent Change	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Blue Earth County	39,979	35,088	36,456	(4,891)	-12.2%	1,368	3.9%
Brown County	13,579	12,648	13,183	(931)	-6.9%	535	4.2%
Faribault County	4,310	4,080	4,457	(230)	-5.3%	377	9.2%
Le Sueur County	8,412	7,817	8,627	(595)	-7.1%	810	10.4%
Martin County	8,233	7,692	7,996	(541)	-6.6%	304	4.0%
Nicollet County	15,140	13,622	13,976	(1,518)	-10.0%	354	2.6%
Sibley County	3,800	3,829	4,284	29	0.8%	455	11.9%
Waseca County	5,783	5,600	5,887	(183)	-3.2%	287	5.1%
Watonwan County	4,332	4,198	4,250	(134)	-3.1%	52	1.2%

Source: DEED Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Table 1. South Central Job Trends (Q1 to Q3, 2020)

Industry Sector	2020			Q1 - Q2		Q2 - Q3	
	Qtr. 1	Qtr. 2	Qtr. 3	Numeric Change	Percent Change	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Total, All Industries	103,571	94,577	99,119	(8,994)	-8.7%	4,542	4.8%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	3,170	3,259	3,313	89	2.8%	54	1.7%
Mining	178	143	132	(35)	-19.7%	(11)	-7.7%
Construction	4,086	4,902	5,307	816	20.0%	405	8.3%
Manufacturing	18,162	16,881	18,135	(1,281)	-7.1%	1,254	7.4%
Utilities	478	477	472	(1)	-0.2%	(5)	-1.0%
Wholesale Trade	3,875	3,921	3,908	46	1.2%	(13)	-0.3%
Retail Trade	11,591	10,305	11,276	(1,286)	-11.1%	971	9.4%
Transportation & Warehousing	4,572	4,386	4,345	(186)	-4.1%	(41)	-0.9%
Information	1,811	1,633	1,612	(178)	-9.8%	(21)	-1.3%
Finance & Insurance	2,988	3,014	3,040	26	0.9%	26	0.9%
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	1,008	837	923	(171)	-17.0%	86	10.3%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	2,322	2,226	2,237	(96)	-4.1%	11	0.5%
Management of Companies & Enterprises	862	763	776	(99)	-11.5%	13	1.7%
Admin. Support & Waste Mgmt. & Remediation	1,950	1,920	2,062	(30)	-1.5%	142	7.4%
Educational Services	10,128	8,787	7,110	(1,341)	-13.2%	(1,677)	-19.1%
Health Care & Social Assistance	18,773	17,451	17,750	(1,322)	-7.0%	299	1.7%
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	1,041	713	1,008	(328)	-31.5%	295	41.4%
Accommodation & Food Services	7,895	5,223	6,991	(2,672)	-33.8%	1,768	33.9%

Other Services (except Public Administration)	3,173	2,354	2,847	(819)	-25.8%	493	20.9%
Public Administration	5,503	5,377	5,867	(126)	-2.3%	490	9.1%
Source: DEED Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages							

Unemployment application numbers reveal the dramatic impact the COVID pandemic has had on workers in the region:

- Since the start of the pandemic (March 15, 2020) through February 2021 there have been 47,798 applications for unemployment insurance from the 9-county area of WDA #7.
- The peak number of continued unemployment claimants in 2020 was 14,602.
- Although the disparities in unemployment of diverse populations are not as dramatic in South Central as in the state or metro area, we do see disparities with Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino populations. Black/African Americans represent 1.7% of the labor force and 4.6% of unemployment applications in the area. Hispanic/Latino ethnicity represents 5% of the labor force and 6.9% of unemployment applications.

Unemployment rates increased significantly in the Spring of 2020 and have been declining:

- Prior to the pandemic our annual unemployment rate for 2019 was 3.4%. During the spring of 2020 it shot up to 7.0% at its highest. The annual unemployment rate for 2020 was 5.1% - so we have yet to return to pre-pandemic rates.
- Also concerning is the number of individuals who may have left the labor force due to health concerns and/or having to stay home with school-age children. We had a labor shortage prior to the pandemic, so this exacerbates our shortage of skilled labor. Initial statistics reveal we have lost approximately 6,300 individuals from our current labor force.
- With increased unemployment, our job vacancy ratio has increased showing there is available labor in the region. Prior to the pandemic the job vacancy rate at its low was .6 job seekers available for every job vacancy. Our current job vacancy rate is 2.1 job seekers for each job vacancy.

Although there is available labor in the region through unemployment, the skills of available labor are not aligned with the industries seeking labor. As reported by the Center on Rural Policy, we are seeing labor shortages in the following industries: health care/social assistance, agriculture, transportation, and computer. We are seeing labor surpluses in the following occupations: Food Preparation, Construction, Office & Administration, and Retail Sales.

Finally, the impact of this pandemic is different than previous recessions. Many of the individuals that have been laid off have never been on unemployment before, they are not familiar with the UI process or the other programs and services available for them through the core one-stop partners.

32. What is the board's strategy to coordinate efforts to address workforce needs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic? Describe the methodology for outreach to industry sectors and populations most affected.

Key to coordinating efforts to address workforce needs as a result of the pandemic is providing outreach to dislocated workers. We cannot meet industry needs if we do not have a connection to the available labor force.

The South Central WorkForce Council supports strategies to provide outreach to impacted workers through:

- MN DEED efforts through REA and Wagner Peyser to make direct contact with individuals on unemployment to direct them to basic career services available at CareerForce locations and connections to Dislocated Worker Services.
- MN DEED efforts through Rapid Response to make direct connections with impacted workers for specific lay-off events to provide information on Dislocated Worker services.
- As smaller lay-offs occur such as the closing of local retail establishments, Dislocated Worker staff reach out to impacted workers to provide information on dislocated worker services.
- Curb-side or drive-by events where we provide information on CareerForce and Dislocated Worker services.
- Partnering with local Food events to include information on services available through CareerForce locations.
- Connections with local partners and community organizations to make referrals to CareerForce services.
- Continued outreach through media campaigns, including social media.

The South Central WorkForce Council supports strategies to upskill our workforce with a focus on transferability of skills. As indicated in the previous questions, two of the industries that have had the greatest number of lay-offs is the hospitality and retail trade industries. The customer service/customer focused skills of these industries transfers well to the health care industry; however, individuals will need training to upskill for the health care industry. Through our career pathways approach, there are training opportunities to upskill these individuals through very short-term training like CNA, TMA, PCA as well as longer term training available for LPNs, Medical Assistants, and technicians. Other strategies for upskilling include work-based approaches such as on-the-job training, internships, and work experience.

We have conducted outreach to employers through our sector partnerships, through our MN DEED Workforce Strategy Consultant, and through our boards and committees. Area employers indicate their primary workforce needs focus around their need for a skilled workforce and continuing connections with area high schools (even during hybrid learning) to develop a talent pipeline. We find some employers are still in a hiring mode – such as health care with an expanded demand for workers and food manufacturing, while other employers are focused on the retaining and training of their incumbent workers.

Strategies to address the workforce needs of employers include:

- Set regional goals to: *address the shortage of skilled workers through sector-based career pathway approaches; increase employer engagement that expands the talent pipeline; and enrich and grow partnerships with local school districts to increase career awareness opportunities.*
- Training and upskilling of the available labor force to align skills with jobs in demand. This includes convening employers and training providers to ensure training opportunities align with the needs of employers and continuation of work on developing career pathway approaches for key regional industries.
- Maintaining and expanding connections with local high schools to develop virtual options to engage with classrooms, develop virtual options for industry exposure and career awareness opportunities (such as virtual tours, videos, employer panels), and safe methods of in-person, work-based learning opportunities for students.
- Provide incumbent worker training opportunities to upskill and retain the current workforce.
- Continued outreach to employers through our CareerForce partners, engagement with local chambers of commerce, media campaigns, and MN DEED gov delivery system.

33. State the Local Board's vision for utilizing the area's workforce development system to address employment disparities based on race/ethnicity, age, or educational attainment in your area. Please also include the following in this statement: strategies to address disparities; strategies to address diversity and inclusion among your workforce system's staff; strategies to ensure inclusion in the operation and service of the workforce system in your area.

The South Central WorkForce Council in partnership with the Southwest MN Workforce Development Board has established a regional goal to: *increase program outcomes for individuals experiencing employment disparities (race/ethnicity, disability, educational attainment, offenders, older workers, and youth) through culturally competent services.*

Strategies to address disparities include:

- Measure and evaluate service levels and outcomes of individuals experiencing employment disparities and implement continuous improvement strategies. This includes measuring progress on a quarterly basis and review of annual outcomes by the Regional Leadership Team and the South Central and Southwest MN workforce boards.
- Continue to develop strategies to increase wage outcomes for populations experiencing disparities, including career counseling and guidance to direct individuals into training that provides the skills required for demand occupations that pay family-sustaining wages.

- Target marketing to individuals experiencing employment disparities. This includes engagement with diverse communities and organizations that serve populations experiencing disparities.
- Facilitate discussions with ethnic communities in the planning and implementation of services to identify culturally specific needs.
- Conduct focus groups with individuals from diverse populations to gain a better understanding of their values, interests, barriers, service needs, and how to conduct effective outreach to diverse populations.
- Implement service strategies specific to the unique needs of targeted populations.
- Increase representation of individuals experiencing employment disparities on boards, committees and staff. Conduct specific outreach to diverse communities when recruiting new board members, committee members and staff.
- Develop a professional development plan and offer training on cultural competency and targeted populations for staff, board members, and area employers.
- Evaluate and implement ideas to create a more welcoming environment and services in our CareerForce locations.

LOCAL PLAN- PROGRAM OPERATIONS

1. A. How does the local workforce development area ensure staff comply with the policies and procedures for Rapid Response as communicated on DEED's website?

The South Central WorkForce Council supports and complies with the Rapid Response policies developed by the MN Department of Employment & Economic Development. To ensure our providers comply with MN DEED policy, all subcontracts with local service providers state: *SUBGRANTEE agrees to administer the program in accordance with the Act, as amended, State and Federal laws, regulations and guidelines promulgated thereunder, including the MN Department of Employment and Economic Development's WIAO Title I and Related Activities Manual.*

In practice, the local WDA Rapid Response Liaison and service provider staff (MN DEED –Job Service) have years of experience in partnering with MN DEED to respond to dislocation events. The WDA recognizes that the primary responsibility for initial Rapid Response lies with the MN Dept. of Employment & Economic Development. Rapid Response is the primary contact with the business. Good communication between Rapid Response and local partners is key to responding to the needs of area businesses and laid off workers. The earlier Rapid Response can identify and engage the local provider the better success we have making connections with impacted workers.

- B. How does the local workforce development area inform the state Rapid Response team within 24 hours about an actual or potential dislocation event when there is possibility of a mass layoff (50 or more dislocations)?

The South Central WorkForce Council and its provider, MN DEED –Job Service, have built excellent relationships with the State Rapid Response team. Throughout the years, we have had many opportunities to work with Rapid Response partners in responding to local dislocation events. Our local WDA contacts the State Rapid Response Team within 24 hours, either by telephone or email, whenever we are aware of an actual or potential mass lay-off of 50 or more. As a local provider, MN DEED –Job Service works closely with their colleagues in Rapid Response to respond to actual and potential lay-offs.

- C. Describe how the local area board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the local workforce development area with statewide rapid response activities.

The local WDA provides any information they have received to the State Rapid Response Team regarding a mass lay-off. This could be in the form of media announcements or relaying information received from the company itself or from affected workers who come to CareerForce locations for assistance with Unemployment. Rapid Response makes the official contact with the company to confirm the lay-off information, identify if they might qualify for TAA, obtain a lay-off list and determine if they will cooperate in setting up outreach/informational

meetings with affected workers. If there is no competition for a project (which is usually the case), local staff works closely with Rapid Response to set up the meetings and obtain information (surveys) from the affected workers. On occasion we have had poor turn-outs at the informational meetings, in which case local staff provides outreach to affected workers to obtain survey information. In either case, surveys are sent to State Rapid Response to tabulate and generate a report. Based on survey results, occupations of affected workers, local economy, type of lay-off, etc., a determination is made whether a special project will be sought or referral to formula programs. As history has shown us, every mass lay-off is different with differing circumstances. It is through good communication and working relationships between the local WDA and the State Rapid Response Team that results in the most effective coordination of processes, procedures and roles to meet the needs of workers affected by their unique lay-off event.

D. Complete **Attachment B – Local Workforce Development Area Contacts.**

2. A. How does the local workforce development area inform the state Trade Act staff of companies that are potentially TAA certifiable?

Local businesses and/or workers often contact CareerForce locations when they know a potential or actual lay-off may occur. As staff talk with the business or laid off workers, they are trained to inquire as to the reason for the lay-off and whether foreign trade competition may have had an impact. If there is the slightest connection to foreign trade competition, CareerForce staff informs State Trade Act staff either by phone or email of a potential TAA affected lay-off.

- B. How does the local workforce development area cooperate with the state Trade Act staff where the layoff involves a company that the DOL trade-certified?

Once the Department of Labor TAA certifies a company, State Trade Act staff sets up a meeting with all the workers affected. It is at this time that the local WDA is contacted and provides assistance in setting up a site for the meeting and provides contact information of affected workers if necessary. The State Trade Act staff sends a mailing to all affected workers that invites them to an informational meeting and includes the Trade Act application. As staff meet with the workers they encourage them to attend the TAA orientation. Individuals are referred to their local CareerForce location to be enrolled in a Dislocated Worker Program (if they are not already enrolled) to establish an Employment Plan with their counselor. The Counselor then assists with the completion of the TAA application and it is submitted to State Trade Act staff for approval. Once the training plan/application is approved by Trade Act staff, the individual, the post-secondary institution and the CareerForce staff are notified. Trade Act staff are responsible for entering Trade Act activities into Workforce One. Local staff continues to provide case management and support services if necessary. The

process is much the same for OJTs, with the exception that Trade Act staff work closely with local staff to provide good customer service to employers in the completion of the paperwork. Local and State Trade Act staff continue to communicate as necessary throughout program delivery and program exit.

- C. Is the local workforce development area willing to participate in TAA Counselor Training and TAA Participant Training when a trade-certification occurs?

Yes X

3. A. The local workforce development area has developed and implemented local Supportive Service policies that are consistently applied for all participants.

Yes X

- B. Describe the steps taken to ensure consistent compliance with the policy.

The South Central WorkForce Council, in partnership with the Southwest MN Workforce Development Board, has developed a regional support service policy to establish procedures for addressing the provision of support services, including coordination, any limits on the amount, and duration of support services.

WIOA Title I service providers are provided a copy of the State and local support service policies. Initial needs for support services are identified during the assessment process and included as part of the employment plan. Other needs may be identified during the course of service delivery and are notated in the case notes/plan. All payments are based on customer needs and must support their employment and training goals. Payments are made through a voucher process with signatory requirement. Payments are paid primarily to vendors, and are only provided directly to participants on a limited basis when vendor payment is not practical. Any payment outside the perimeters of the support service policy would require management approval and signature. Fiscal staff are required to flag any vouchers that do not meet policy requirements.

All support services are documented on the Workforce One participant record and payments documented through our fiscal system.

4. How is the local board planning to prioritize WIOA Adult program services to recipients of public assistance, individuals who are basic skills deficient, or those identified as being low-income as outlined in TEGL 7-20?

The South Central WorkForce Council, in partnership with the Southwest MN Workforce Development, has developed a regional Statutory Priority for Adult Funds. This policy indicates our priority of service includes:

1st Priority - Veterans and eligible spouses (covered persons) who are:

- Low income, or
- Recipients of public assistance, or
- Who are basic skills deficient

2nd Priority - Individuals (non-covered persons) who are:

- Low income, or
- Recipients of public assistance, or
- Who are basic skills deficient

3rd Priority - Veterans and eligible spouses who are:

- Not low income, or
- Not recipients of public assistance, and
- Are not basic skills deficient

4th Priority – Individuals (non-covered persons) who do not meet the above priorities, but meet one or more of the following criteria, established by the WIOA Region 5 Regional Plan:

- Individual with a disability
- Older worker (55+ years of age)
- Ex-offender
- Young adults (age 18-24)
- High school dropout
- Individuals from communities of color

5th Priority – All other eligible individuals who do not meet any of the Priority of Service categories above. The vast majority of individuals enrolled in the WIOA Adult program should meet the criteria for Priority of Service Categories 1, 2, 3, and 4.

SECTION D: SYSTEM OPERATIONS AND ATTACHMENTS

1. The local workforce development area has processes in place to assure non-duplicative services and to avoid duplicate administrative costs.

Yes X

2. A. The local workforce development area and their partners are aware of the responsibilities of the Equal Opportunity Officer, including attending DEED sponsored EO Training?

Yes X

- B. The local workforce development area is aware and conducts annually a physical and program accessibility review?

Yes X

4. Does the local workforce development area have in place an agreed upon WIOA Discrimination complaint process per the regulations?

Yes X

5. A. Does the local workforce development area have in place an agreed upon WIOA Program Complaint Policy per the regulations?

Yes X

6. How do you identify current or former Military Service Members coming into your CareerForce Center?

The Minnesota Veterans Questionnaire is used to identify Veterans. We ask all customers that come to the CareerForce locations if they ever served in the U.S. Military. If the answer is yes, we ask them to complete the Veterans Questionnaire. Non-JVSG (Jobs for Veterans State Grants) staff do the initial assessment/review of the questionnaire, and make appropriate referrals based on the responses on the questionnaire.

On-site signage helps the customers to self-identify themselves as U.S. Military members.

7. How do you inform current or former Military Service Members coming into your CareerForce Center about “Veteran Priority of Service?”

Signage at the CareerForce locations advises Veterans and other eligible persons of Veterans Priority of Service (POS). Information on Priority of Service is also provided during various program orientations, from staff, and during workshops. LVER staff train and update local staff and management on the provisions of POS and PL107-288.

8. If your CareerForce Center has a presence on the internet (outside of the CareerForce Center site) how do you promote Public Law 107-288, “Veterans Priority of Service” to veterans on that website?

In addition to local CareerForce locations, Veterans Priority of Service is indicated and promoted on the Minnesota DEED main website at <http://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/veteran-services/>. Minnesota State’s Career Wise (www.careerwise.minnstate.edu) with input and assistance from JVSG staff continues to be a partner in promoting and enhancing career opportunities for Veterans by offering dedicated links to Veterans and other link sources for translating military skills to civilian skills. Minnesota’s civil service career website (<http://mn.gov/mmb/careers>) in collaboration with JVSG staff continues to develop links and other efforts to reach and assist Veterans.

9. How do you identify current or former Military Service Members with “significant barriers to employment?”

The Minnesota Veterans Questionnaire, a DOL approved standard process, is used to identify Veterans with a significant barrier to employment (SBE). The questionnaire identifies DOL designated SBE’s per VPL 03-14, including change 2.

10. When a current or former Military Service Member with a significant barrier to employment is identified, how do you refer them to an appropriate intensive service provider when there is no Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist in your CareerForce Centers?

This local area has identified partner staff (in each CareerForce location) to provide services (including intensive services) to SBE Veterans in the absence of a DVOP. These staff have had training on serving Veterans via the NVTI Webinar “Helping Veterans to Meaningful Careers”, and from LVER staff one on one, and during staff and partner meetings.

CareerForce staff conducts an initial assessment with current or former Military Service Member with a significant barrier to employment and then refers them to the designated intensive service provider when the DVOP is not available.

11. How are DVOP and/or Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) staff integrated into the overall service delivery strategy in your CareerForce Centers?

Local DVOP and/or LVER staff attends staff and partner meetings and orientations, participate on CareerForce work teams, collaborate with CareerForce partners on various events and LVER staff provide training to partner staff and management regarding the JVSG program.

12. Are all WIOA-funded partners complying with the guidance provided in the TEGE regarding Selective Service?

Yes X

13. What is your strategy to ensure that job-ready job seekers enrolled in your programs (including non-program universal customers) are registering in MinnesotaWorks.net and are making their resumes viewable to employers?

CareerForce staff serving universal customers utilizing our resource rooms encourages job seekers to register on MinnesotaWorks and stresses the importance of posting their resume so it is viewable to employers. All core partners working with individuals enrolled in programs emphasize the importance of a viewable resume from the initial meeting. After the job seeker is enrolled, the job counselor can check MinnesotaWorks resume status by using the MAD system. If an enrolled job seeker is not in Minnesota Works (viewable) the job counselor contacts the individual to discuss and offer their assistance in developing and posting a quality resume in the system. All customers attending Creative Job Search and Resume Workshops are encouraged to post their resume on MinnesotaWorks. All UI claimants attending REA sessions are required to register on MinnesotaWorks and to post their resume.

Staff from all of the CareerForce core partners have received instruction on MinnesotaWorks and customer assistance is provided for any job seekers (universal or program) needing assistance developing their resume or posting it on MinnesotaWorks.

Another strategy to ensure job seekers are registering and making their resumes viewable to employers is to increase the number of job orders on MinnesotaWorks. MN DEED Job Service staff promote employers listing their job openings on Minnesota Works and will assist with posting jobs when necessary.

14. **Conflict of Interest and Integrity:** Local area boards must make decisions in keeping with several laws and regulations. Indicate below that your local area board is aware of DOL Training and Employment Guidance Letter 35-10 and Minnesota OGM 08-01 and its relevant federal laws and regulations.

Yes X

15. The local workforce development area's conflict of interest policies are in compliance with the above two references?

Yes X

16. A. The local workforce development area is aware of the referenced statute on Government Records.

Yes X

B. The local workforce development area is aware of the requirement to retain documentation for six years.

Yes X

17. **Handling and Protection of Personally Identifiable Information:** The local workforce development area is complying with the guidance provided in TEGl 39-11.

Yes X

18. **Human Trafficking:** The local workforce development area is aware of TEGl 09-12 and will follow the procedures for working with trafficked persons.

Yes X

19. **Gender Identification:** The local workforce development area is aware of TEGl 37-14 and will follow the procedures for developing a similar policy including key terminology, and have in place regarding working with customers who may be lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. Local workforce development areas will also participate in any related training.

Yes X

20. **Uniform Guidance:** The local workforce development area is aware of TEGl 15-14 regarding Uniform Guidance.

Yes X

21. A. Briefly describe the local area board's policy and timetable for filling vacancies, replacing/reappointing individuals whose terms have come to an end.

The South Central WorkForce Council policy for filling vacancies is as follows:
(a) Council members vacating their position notify the Council Chair or WorkForce Council Executive Director in writing.

- (b) The full WorkForce Council and Joint Powers Board are notified by the WorkForce Council Executive Director at the WFC/Joint Powers Board meeting(s).
- (c) When the vacated position is from the private sector, business organizations are contacted and asked to nominate a business owner, executive or manager for the vacant position. Priority will be given to nominees from counties who are not currently represented on the Council. Nominations are submitted to the WorkForce Council Executive Director, who in turn submits them to the Joint Powers Board.
- (d) Nominees are solicited who have optimum local policy making authority, policy and decision making responsibilities. We also conduct outreach to recruit diverse members.
- (e) The Joint Powers Board reviews the nominees and appoints one for each vacancy.
- (f) Selecting public sector members is handled in the same fashion, except that letters are sent requesting nominations from organizations appropriate to the position. For education, contact is made to Adult Basic Education and post-secondary schools. For labor, contact is made with State and local labor unions. For economic development, contact is made with economic development organizations. For Rehabilitation Services, contact is made with agencies serving individuals with disabilities, such as Vocational Rehabilitation Services. For Job Service, the Field Operations Area Manager is contacted. For community based organizations, we contact local community based organizations. For Human Services, the regional human services directors are asked to nominate a representative.

The South Central WorkForce Council timetable for replacing or reappointing Council members is as follows:

1. In May, Council members whose terms are expiring on June 30th are contacted to inquire whether they are willing to serve an additional 3-year term.
2. For Council members who are seeking reappointment, the Joint Powers Board reappoints and the SC WorkForce Council confirms the re-appointment at their respective meetings in June.

When vacancies occur, WorkForce Council staff in June and July make contact with chambers of commerce, DEED Workforce Strategy Consultant, and other appropriate organizations (for non-private sector representatives) to let them know the Joint Powers Board is seeking nominations to serve on the South Central WorkForce Council. Staff meet with nominees in August and individuals are appointed and confirmed during the Joint Powers Board and SC WorkForce Council meetings in September.

B. Is your local area board currently in compliance with WIOA?

Yes X No

If No, what steps will be taken to bring your local area board into compliance?

C. Complete **Attachment C – Local Area Board Membership List**.

D. Complete **Attachment D – Local Area Board Committee List**.

22. If applicable, complete **Attachment E - Local Workforce Development Area Sub-Grantee List**.

25. If applicable, complete **Attachment F - Local Workforce Development Area Non-CFC Program Service Delivery Location List**.

CERTIFICATIONS

By signing and submitting this plan, the local area board is certifying on behalf of itself and the subgrantee, where applicable:

- A. That this ***Regional and Local Workforce Development Area Plan*** was prepared and is in accordance with all applicable titles of the WIOA Act of 2014, Title V of the Older Americans Act, applicable Minnesota state statutes and that it is consistent with Minnesota's current and future state plans;
- B. that it has provided at least a thirty day period for public comment and input into the development of plan by members of the local area board and the public (including persons with disabilities) and has provided information regarding the plan and the planning process, including the plan and supporting documentation, in alternative formats when requested and that any comments representing disagreement with the plan are included with the local plan forwarded to DEED (as the Governor's representative) Section 118(c); Section 108 (d)
- C. that the public (including individuals with disabilities) have access to all of the local area board's and its components' meetings and information regarding the local area board's and its components' activities;
- D. that fiscal control and fund accounting procedures necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid through the allotments funded through the contract/master agreement issued by DEED have been established;
- E. that it is, and will maintain a certifiable local area board;
- F. that it will comply with the confidentiality requirements of WIA Section 136 (f)(3) and WIOA Section 116 (i)(3)
- G. that it will ensure that no funds under its discretion are used to assist, promote, or deter union organizing;
- H. that this plan was developed in consultation with the local area board;

- I. that it acknowledges the specific performance standards for each of its programs and will strive to meet them;
- J. that the local area board members will not act in a manner that would create a conflict of interest as identified in 20 CFR 667.200(a)(4), including voting on any matter regarding the provision of service by that member or the entity that s/he represents and any matter that would provide a financial benefit to that member or to his or her immediate family;
- K. that local area board and staff are aware of local CareerForce Center services, and are working with and referring to the CareerForce Center services as appropriate;
- L. that all staff are provided the opportunity to participate in appropriate staff training;
- M. that, if applicable, the local area board must maintain the currency of its information in the System Award Management until submission of the final financial report or receive the final payment, whichever is later;
- N. that sponsored (in whole or in part) conferences are charged to the grantee as appropriate and allowable; and
- O. that funds are not used for the purpose of defraying costs of a conference unless it is directly and programmatically related to the purpose of the award.
- P. that the local area board and its sub-grantees must also adhere to the same certifications and assurances that DEED must assure.

SIGNATURE PAGE

Local Workforce Development
Area Name

Workforce Development Area #7 – South Central

Local Area Board Name

South Central WorkForce Council

Name and Contact Information for the Local Area Board Chair:

Name Deb Barnes, Chair WorkForce Council

Title Executive Director/Administrator

Organization Lakeview Health Services/Oak Terrace

Address 1 1306 S. Ramsey

Address 2

City, State, ZIP Code Blue Earth, MN 56013

Phone (507) 526-5876

E-mail Deb.barnes@lakeviewmethodist.com

Name and Contact Information for the Local Elected Official(s):

Name John Roper

Title County Commissioner

Organization Faribault County Board of Commissioners

Address 1 18 Elm Boulevard

Address 2

City, State, ZIP Code Blue Earth, MN 56013

Phone (507) 526-2710

E-mail djroper@bevcomm.net

We, the undersigned, attest that this submittal is the Local Plan for our Workforce Development Board and Local Workforce Development Area and hereby certify that this Local Plan has been prepared as required, and is in accordance with all applicable state and federal laws, rules and regulations.

Local Area Board Chair

Local Elected Official


Name Deborah Barnes

Name John Roper

Title Local Area Board Chair

Title Joint Powers Board Chair


Signature


Signature

Date March 10, 2021

Date March 15, 2021

Attachment A

REGIONAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Regional Workforce Development Area

Regional Workforce Development Area #5

Local Workforce Development Area

Local Workforce Development Area #7 – South Central

MEMBER	ORGANZIATION
Deborah Barnes	Lakeview Health Services/Oak Terrace
Val Bentsdahl	Jones Metal Products, Inc.
Commissioner John Roper	Faribault County Board of Commissioners
Commissioner De Malterer	Waseca County Board of Commissioners
Len Bakken	HyLlfe Windom Pork Plant
Carla Goedtke	Investors Choice Financial Services
Commissioner Ron Antony	Yellow Medicine County Board of Commissioners
Commissioner Joe Fox	Swift County Board of Commissioners

Attachment B**LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREA CONTACTS**

ROLE	Contact Name	Phone	Email	Reports to (name only)
Rapid Response Liaison for Mass Layoffs	Heather Gleason	(507) 345-2418	hgleason@workforcecouncil.org	Deb Barnes, Chair
Equal Opportunity Officer	Heather Gleason	(507) 345-2418	hgleason@workforcecouncil.org	Deb Barnes, Chair
Program Complaint Officer	Heather Gleason	(507) 345-2418	hgleason@workforcecouncil.org	Deb Barnes, Chair
Records Management/Records Retention Coordinator	Lynn Sorenson	(507) 345-2413	lynn@mnvac.org	Amanda Mackie, MVAC
ADA Coordinator	Christine Olson	(507) 389-6954	Christine.olson@state.mn.us	Jay Hancock, MN DEED
Data Practices Coordinator	Lynn Sorenson	(507) 345-2413	lynn@mnvac.org	Amanda Mackie, MVAC
English as Second Language (ESL) Coordinator	Nate Warden	(507) 665-4626	Nwarden@isd2397.org	Dr. Marlene Johnson

CareerForce Center in Fairmont

ROLE	Contact Name	Phone	Email	Reports to (name only)
Site Representative	Connie Hines	(507) 618-5611	Connie.hines@state.mn.us	Reggie Worlds, MN DEED
Job Service Manager	Connie Hines	(507) 618-5611	Connie.hines@state.mn.us	Reggie Worlds, MN DEED
Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manager	Karla Tauer	(507) 479-0568	Karla.tauer@state.mn.us	Jay Hancock, MN DEED
State Services for the Blind Manager	Lindsey Hanson	(651) 539-2340	Lindsey.hanson@state.mn.us	Jon Benson, MN DEED

Local Workforce Development Area Director	Heather Gleason	(507) 345-2418	hgleason@workforcecouncil.org	Deb Barnes, Chair
Adult Basic Education (ABE)	Marty Olsen	(507) 372-1239	Marty.olsen@isd518.net	ISD 518
	Sue Vogelsang	(507) 526-3172	svogelsang@beas.blueearth.k12.mn.us	ISD 2860
Carl Perkins Post-Secondary Manager	Glenn Morris	(507) 389-5106	gmorris@mncsc.org	Les Martisko, SC Service Coop.
Adult	Connie Hines	(507) 618-5611	Connie.hines@state.mn.us	Reggie Worlds, MN DEED
Dislocated Worker	Connie Hines	(507) 618-5611	Connie.hines@state.mn.us	Reggie Worlds, MN DEED
Youth	Margy Hendrickson	(507) 345-2405	margy@mnvac.org	Amanda Mackie, MVAC

CareerForce Center in Mankato

ROLE	Contact Name	Phone	Email	Reports to (name only)
Site Representative	Reggie Worlds	(507) 344-2600	Reggie.worlds@state.mn.us	Mike Lang, MN DEED
Job Service Manager	Reggie Worlds	(507) 344-2600	Reggie.worlds@state.mn.us	Mike Lang, MN DEED
Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manager	Christine Olson	(507) 389-6954	Christine.olson@state.mn.us	Jay Hancock, MN DEED
State Services for the Blind Manager	Lindsey Hanson	(651) 539-2340	Lindsey.hanson@state.mn.us	Jon Benson, MN DEED
Local Workforce Development Area Director	Heather Gleason	(507) 345-2418	hgleason@workforcecouncil.org	Deb Barnes, Chair

Adult Basic Education (ABE)	Nate Warden Karen Wolters	(507) 665-4626 (507) 207-3054	nwarden@isd2397.org Kwolte1@isd77.k12.mn.us	Dr. Marlene Johnson Audra Boyer, ISD #77
Carl Perkins Post-Secondary Manager	Glenn Morris	(507) 389-5106	gmorris@mncsc.org	Les Martisko, SC Service Coop.
Adult	Reggie Worlds	(507) 344-2600	Reggie.worlds@state.mn.us	Mike Lang, MN DEED
Dislocated Worker	Reggie Worlds	(507) 344-2600	Reggie.worlds@state.mn.us	Mike Lang, MN DEED
Youth	Margy Hendrickson	(507) 345-2405	margy@mnvac.org	Amanda Mackie, MVAC

CareerForce Center in New Ulm

ROLE	Contact Name	Phone	Email	Reports to (name only)
Site Representative	Sarah Swantz	(507) 354-3138	sswantz@mnvac.org	Margy Hendrickson, MVAC
Job Service Manager	Reggie Worlds	(507) 344-2600	Reggie.worlds@state.mn.us	Mike Lang, MN DEED
Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manager	Christine Olson	(507) 389-6954	Christine.olson@state.mn.us	Jay Hancock, MN DEED
State Services for the Blind Manager	Lindsey Hanson	(651) 539-2340	Lindsey.hanson@state.mn.us	Jon Benson, MN DEED
Local Workforce Development Area Director	Heather Gleason	(507) 345-2418	hgleason@workforcecouncil.org	Deb Barnes, Chair
Adult Basic Education (ABE)	Karen Wolters	(507) 207-3054	Kwolte1@isd77.k12.mn.us	Audra Boyer, ISD #77

Carl Perkins Post-Secondary Manager	Glenn Morris	(507) 389-5106	gmorris@mncsc.org	Les Martisko, SC Service Coop.
Adult	Reggie Worlds	(507) 344-2600	Reggie.worlds@state.mn.us	Mike Lang, MN DEED
Dislocated Worker	Reggie Worlds	(507) 344-2600	Reggie.worlds@state.mn.us	Mike Lang, MN DEED
Youth	Margy Hendrickson	(507) 345-2405	margy@mnhvac.org	Amanda Mackie, MVAC

Attachment C

LOCAL AREA BOARD MEMBERSHIP LIST

Regional Workforce Development Area

Regional Workforce Development Area #5

Local Workforce Development Area

Local Workforce Development Area #7 – South Central

MEMBER	POSITION/ORGANZIATION	TERM ENDS
REPRESENTATIVES OF BUSINESS IN LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREA		
Deb Barnes - Chair 1306 S. Ramsey Blue Earth, MN 56013 Deb.Barnes@lakeviewmethodist.com (507) 526-5876	Executive Director-Lakeview Health Services Administrator –Oak Terrace	June 2021
Val Bentsdahl – Vice Chair 3201 Third Avenue Mankato, MN 56001 vbentsdahl@jonesmetalinc.com (507) 205-9694	Human Resource Manager Jones Metal, Inc.	June 2023
Brent Christopherson 1725 Roe Crest Drive North Mankato, MN 56003 bchristopherson@taylorcorp.com (507) 386-5814	Talent Acquisition Manager Taylor Corporation	June 2021
William FitzSimmons 405 Eighth Avenue NW Waseca, MN 56093 wtf@hickorytech.net (507) 835-1094	Owner WTF Tax Services	Charter Member
Ryan Kapsner 320 Mallard Lane Mankato, MN 56001 rkapsner@associatedfinishing.com (507) 385-2763	Controller/Human Resources Associated Finishing, Inc.	June 2022

<p>Norma Martin 304 Main Street N Winnebago, MN 56098 Norma.martin@everidge.com (507) 893-3888</p>	<p>Human Resource Generalist Everidge, Inc./Crown Tonka</p>	<p>June 2021</p>
<p>Lorna Mendez 330 Poplar Street Mankato, MN 56001 lmendez@tectaaamerica.com (507) 722-2624</p>	<p>Recruitment & Organizational Development Manager Schwickert's Tecta America</p>	<p>June 2021</p>
<p>Jennifer Pfeffer 3530 Lexington Avenue North Shoreview, MN 55126 jenniferpfeffer@ecumen.org (507) 327-9411</p>	<p>Sr. Regional Director of Operations Ecumen</p>	<p>June 2021</p>
<p>Leslie Stoltenberg 2075 Howard Drive West North Mankato, MN 56003 Leslie.stoltenberg@mail.nidec.com (507) 389-4177</p>	<p>Plant Operations Manager Nidec/Kato Engineering</p>	<p>June 2022</p>
<p>Tim Wenzel 1209 S. State Street Waseca, MN 56093 Tim.wenzel@winegarinc.com (507) 835-3495</p>	<p>President Winegar, Inc.</p>	<p>June 2022</p>
<p>Rena Wolf 1025 Marsh Street/P O Box 8673 Mankato, MN 56002-8673 Wolf.renae@mayo.edu (507) 594-7007</p>	<p>Nursing Placement Coordinator Mayo Clinic Health System</p>	<p>June 2022</p>
<p>LABOR & COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS</p> <p>Shane Meier (Labor – Apprenticeships) 709 S. Front Street, Suite 6 Mankato, MN 56001 shane@ibewlocal343.org (507) 345-2133</p>	<p>Business Representative IBEW Local 343</p>	<p>June 2022</p>

Attachment C

<p>Jon Nowak (Labor – Apprenticeships) 409 2nd Avenue Pemberton, MN 560078 jnowak@ncsrcc.org (651) 341-4436</p> <p>Amanda Mackie (CBO – Youth Employment) 706 N. Victory Drive Mankato, MN 56001 amanda@mnvac.org (507) 345-2400</p> <p>Ariana Boelter (CBO – Youth Employment) 212 15th Avenue NE –Suite 1015 Waseca, MN 56093 boelter@metinc.org (507) 310-8384</p>	<p>Business Representative North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters</p> <p>Executive Director MN Valley Action Council</p> <p>MN State Specialist MET, Inc.</p>	<p>June 2022</p> <p>June 2021</p> <p>June 2023</p>
<p>EDUCATION & TRAINING</p> <p>Nathan Warden 706 Turril Street LeSueur, MN 56058 nwarden@isd2397.org (507) 665-4626</p> <p>Post-Secondary Position: Vacancy</p>	<p>Adult Basic Education Coordinator Area Adult Learning Cooperative</p>	<p>June 2023</p>
<p>GOVERNMENT</p> <p>Linsey Preuss 100 Downtown Plaza Fairmont, MN 56031 lpreuss@fairmont.org (507) 238-9461</p> <p>Reggie Worlds 12 Civic Center Plaza, Suite 1600A Mankato, MN 56001 Reggie.worlds@state.mn.us (507) 344-2600</p>	<p>Economic Development Coordinator City of Fairmont</p> <p>Area Manager MN DEED – Job Service</p>	<p>June 2022</p> <p>June 2023</p>

<p>Christine Olson 12 Civic Center Plaza, Suite 1600C Mankato, MN 56001 Christine.olson@state.mn.us (507) 344-2630</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Area Manager MN DEED – Vocational Rehabilitation Services</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">June 2023</p>
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CONTACT INFORMATION

NAME	ADDRESS/PHONE/EMAIL
<p>CHAIR Deb Barnes, Lakeview Methodist Health Services</p>	<p>1306 S. Ramsey Blue Earth, MN 56013 Deb.Barnes@lakeviewmethodist.com (507) 526-5876</p>
<p>VICE CHAIR Val Bentsdahl, Jones Metal</p>	<p>3201 Third Avenue Mankato, MN 56001 vbentsdahl@jonesmetalinc.com (507) 205-9694</p>
<p>SECRETARY - None</p>	



Attachment D

LOCAL AREA BOARD SUBCOMMITTEE LIST

Regional Workforce Development Area

Regional Workforce Development Area #5

Local Workforce Development Area

Local Workforce Development Area #7 –South Central

Committee Name	Objective/Purpose
Executive Committee	This committee provides leadership for the Council and is comprised of the Council Chair, Vice Chair and other members as deemed appropriate by the Council. The Executive Committee has responsibility for personnel and budget issues; and when necessary acts on behalf of the Council.
Operations Committee	This committee consists of the core partners of the CareerForce locations. This committee is responsible for on-going program review, local marketing and day-to-day operations of the CareerForce locations. This committee develops cost allocation plans (IFAs) for the one-stop centers as well as the Memorandum of Understanding between the required partners.
Youth Council	The Youth Council is made up of area youth partners (including education, CareerForce, employers/unions and community partners) and is responsible for developing and implementing strategies to prepare our emerging workforce, assist youth in transitioning and coordinate youth resources.
SC Career Pathway Partnership	The SC Career Pathway Partnership is made up of representatives from employers, Adult Basic Education, South Central College, Workforce Center partners, human service and community partners. This partnership is responsible for aligning resources and expertise to develop career pathways with multiple entry and exit points that lead to stackable credentials for demand industries in the region; addressing the workforce skill shortage in the local area.
RFP Task Forces	These Task Forces develop and implement a Request for Proposal process to select service providers for WIOA Youth and WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and State Dislocated Worker Programs. The task force consists of representatives from the WorkForce Council, Workforce Council staff, the Joint Powers Board and Youth Council. The task forces are responsible for

Attachment D

	<p>implementing the RFP process and for providing recommendations to the Joint Powers Board and SC WorkForce Council.</p> <p>In addition, we convene an RFP Task for the selection of the One-Stop Operator for local workforce development area.</p>
Sector Partnerships	<p>The South Central WorkForce Council has established two sector partnerships for the two largest key industries in the region: health care and manufacturing.</p> <p>These sector partnerships identify workforce issues and solutions for their specific industry and are facilitated by the MN DEED Workforce Strategy Consultant.</p>

Attachment F

LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREA NON-CFC PROGRAM SERVICE DELIVERY LOCATION LIST

Regional Workforce Development Area

Regional Workforce Development Area #5

Local Workforce Development Area

Local Workforce Development Area #7 – South Central

Name and Location (City)	Program Service Delivered
MN Valley Action Council – Blue Earth	WIOA Adult, WIOA DW, State DW, WIOA Youth, MYP, SCSEP
MN Valley Action Council – Gaylord	WIOA Adult, WIOA DW, State DW, WIOA Youth, MYP MFIP/DWP/SNAP
MN Valley Action Council – LeCenter	WIOA Adult, WIOA DW, State DW, WIOA Youth, MYP, SCSEP MFIP/DWP/SNAP
MN Valley Action Council – Mankato	WIOA Youth, MYP
MN Valley Action Council – St. James	WIOA Adult, WIOA DW, State DW, WIOA Youth, MYP, SCSEP
MN Valley Action Council – St. Peter	WIOA Adult, WIOA Youth
MN Valley Action Council - Waseca	WIOA Adult, WIOA DW, State DW, WIOA Youth, MYP, SCSEP MFIP/DWP/SNAP

Attachment G

LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREA KEY INDUSTRIES IN REGIONAL ECONOMY

Based on your most recent analysis of regional economies, provide a list of the key industries in your regional economy.

The South Central WorkForce Council, in partnership with the Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board, and the Regional Workforce Development Area #5 Regional Leadership Team have identified the following key industries for **Regional Workforce Development Area #5**:

- **Agriculture**
- **Construction**
- **Manufacturing**
- **Health Care & Social Assistance**
- **Transportation & Warehousing**

These key industries were selected based on the analysis provided in our Regional Workforce Development Area #5 Regional Plan (see also Table 14 below on SW MN Industry Employment Statistics).

NAICS Industry Title	2019 Annual Data			Avg. Annual Wage	2014-2019		2018-2019	
	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Total Payroll (\$1,000s)		Change in Jobs	Percent Change	Change in Jobs	Percent Change
Total, All Industries	12,311	176,514	\$7,587,985	\$42,988	+2,003	+1.1%	-540	-0.3%
Health Care & Social Assistance	1,366	31,577	\$1,351,699	\$42,806	+1,192	+3.9%	+236	+0.8%
Manufacturing	588	31,338	\$1,654,492	\$52,795	-28	-0.1%	+205	+0.7%
Retail Trade	1,505	19,193	\$486,267	\$25,336	-1,045	-5.2%	-689	-3.5%
Educational Services	238	16,104	\$698,681	\$43,386	+764	+5.0%	-174	-1.1%
Accommodation & Food Services	852	12,228	\$171,420	\$14,019	-442	-3.5%	+112	+0.9%
Public Administration	569	10,070	\$451,458	\$44,832	+533	+5.6%	+35	+0.3%
Construction	1,538	8,266	\$450,864	\$54,544	+481	+6.2%	+89	+1.1%
Wholesale Trade	642	7,714	\$476,352	\$61,752	-36	-0.5%	-286	-3.6%
Transportation & Warehousing	768	7,268	\$286,039	\$39,356	+1,217	+20.1%	+88	+1.2%
Finance & Insurance	698	5,887	\$378,744	\$64,336	-50	-0.8%	-109	-1.8%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & Hunt	662	5,382	\$235,672	\$43,789	+362	+7.2%	+48	+0.9%
Other Services	1,034	5,030	\$143,847	\$28,598	+60	+1.2%	+96	+1.9%
Admin. Support & Waste Mgmt. Svcs.	385	4,033	\$152,483	\$37,809	-65	-1.6%	+95	+2.4%
Professional & Technical Services	593	3,806	\$227,732	\$59,835	-250	-6.2%	-170	-4.3%
Information	212	2,496	\$122,502	\$49,079	-412	-14.2%	-129	-4.9%
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	237	2,013	\$34,693	\$17,234	+60	+3.1%	+46	+2.3%
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	277	1,427	\$39,971	\$28,010	+185	+14.9%	-3	-0.2%
Management of Companies	45	1,414	\$115,325	\$81,559	-385	-21.4%	+6	+0.4%
Utilities	80	948	\$88,156	\$92,991	-68	-6.7%	-16	-1.7%
Mining	25	319	\$21,590	\$67,681	-67	-17.4%	-18	-5.3%

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



SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REGIONS 6W, 8, and 9

Covers counties:

Big Stone, Blue Earth, Brown, Chippewa,
Cottonwood, Faribault, Jackson,
Lac qui Parle, Le Sueur, Lincoln, Lyon,
Martin, Murray, Nicollet, Nobles,
Pipestone, Redwood, Rock, Sibley, Swift,
Waseca, Watonwan, and Yellow Medicine

2020 REGIONAL PROFILE

Updated November 2020



Luke Greiner
Central & Southwest
St. Cloud WorkForce Center
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Mark Schultz
Southeast & South Central
Winona WorkForce Center
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DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION CHANGE

The Southwest Minnesota planning region includes a total of 23 counties, covering three Economic Development Regions (EDRs) and two Workforce Development Boards (WDBs). In sum, Southwest Minnesota was home to 391,510 people in 2018, about 7% of the state’s total population. The region saw a 1% decline in population over the past 9 years, primarily due to larger losses in Region 6W and Region 8, which overwhelmed the small increase in Region 9. In comparison, the state of Minnesota saw a 6.3% gain. See Table 1.

Only 4 of the 23 counties in the region gained population from 2010 to 2019, with the other 19 seeing declines. The largest counties in the region are Blue Earth and Nicollet County, which make up the Mankato/North Mankato Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). With 67,653 people, Blue Earth is the 13th largest county out of 87 in the state, and Nicollet has 34,274 people after gaining almost 1,550 people. Other large counties in the region include Le Sueur with 28,887 people, Lyon with 25,474 people, Brown with 25,008 people, and Nobles with 21,629 people; while Big Stone and Lincoln are the smallest counties in the region.

Table 1. Population Change 2010-2019

	2010	2019	2010-2019 Change	
	Population	Estimates	Number	Percent
Southwest Minnesota	395,643	391,510	-4,133	-1.0%
Region 6W	45,190	42,389	-2,801	-6.2%
Big Stone Co.	5,269	4,991	-278	-5.3%
Chippewa Co.	12,441	11,800	-641	-5.2%
Lac qui Parle Co.	7,259	6,623	-636	-8.8%
Swift Co.	9,783	9,266	-517	-5.3%
Yellow Medicine Co.	10,438	9,709	-729	-7.0%
Region 8	119,151	115,589	-3,562	-3.0%
Cottonwood Co.	11,687	11,196	-491	-4.2%
Jackson Co.	10,266	9,846	-420	-4.1%
Lincoln Co.	5,896	5,639	-257	-4.4%
Lyon Co.	25,857	25,474	-383	-1.5%
Murray Co.	8,725	8,194	-531	-6.1%
Nobles Co.	21,378	21,629	251	1.2%
Pipestone Co.	9,596	9,126	-470	-4.9%
Redwood Co.	16,059	15,170	-889	-5.5%
Rock Co.	9,687	9,315	-372	-3.8%
Region 9	231,302	233,532	2,230	1.0%
Blue Earth Co.	64,013	67,653	3,640	5.7%
Brown Co.	25,893	25,008	-885	-3.4%
Faribault Co.	14,553	13,653	-900	-6.2%
Le Sueur Co.	27,703	28,887	1,184	4.3%
Martin Co.	20,840	19,683	-1,157	-5.6%
Nicollet Co.	32,727	34,274	1,547	4.7%
Sibley Co.	15,226	14,865	-361	-2.4%
Waseca Co.	19,136	18,612	-524	-2.7%
Watonswan Co.	11,211	10,897	-314	-2.8%
State of Minnesota	5,303,925	5,639,632	335,707	6.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program

COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE

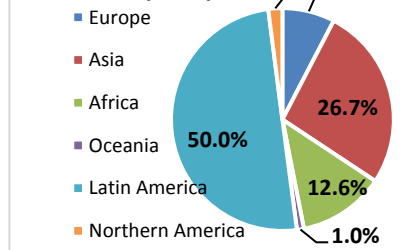
Southwest Minnesota has experienced a natural increase – more births than deaths – of about 7,800 people so far this decade. However, the region lost population because of out-migration, with about 12,000 more people moving out of the region than moving in. Though there was domestic out-migration of nearly 17,200 people, the region did enjoy positive in-migration of nearly 5,200 additional residents from international sources (see Table 2). Southwest Minnesota is now home to 18,928 foreign born residents, or about 4.8% of the total regional population. The number of immigrants in the region increased by 31.1% since 2010, outpacing the statewide growth rate of 25.8%. About half of these immigrants (9,473 people) were from Latin America, while the second largest number were from Asia (see Figure 1). The fastest growing wave of new immigrants came from Africa, rising by just over 1,000 people from 2010 to 2018.

Table 2. Components of Population Change, 2010-2019

	Total Change	Natural Increase	Vital Events		Net Migration		
			Births	Deaths	Total	Inter-national	Domestic
Southwest	-4,133	+7,822	43,450	35,628	-11,996	+5,187	-17,183
Minnesota	+335,707	+250,488	637,356	386,868	+88,161	+114,414	-26,253

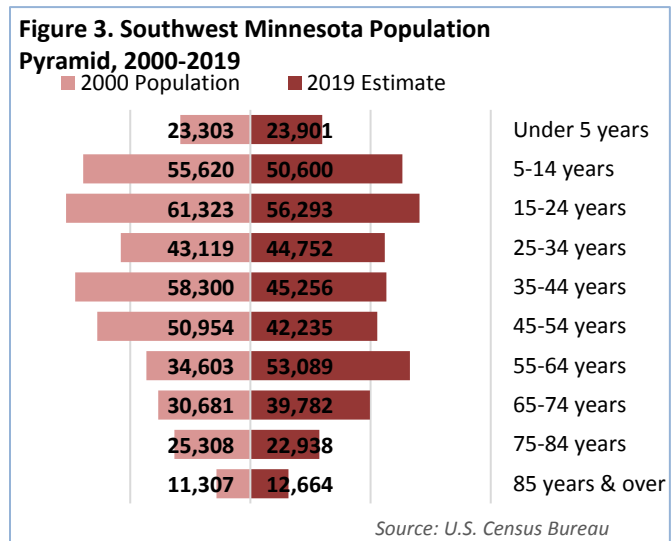
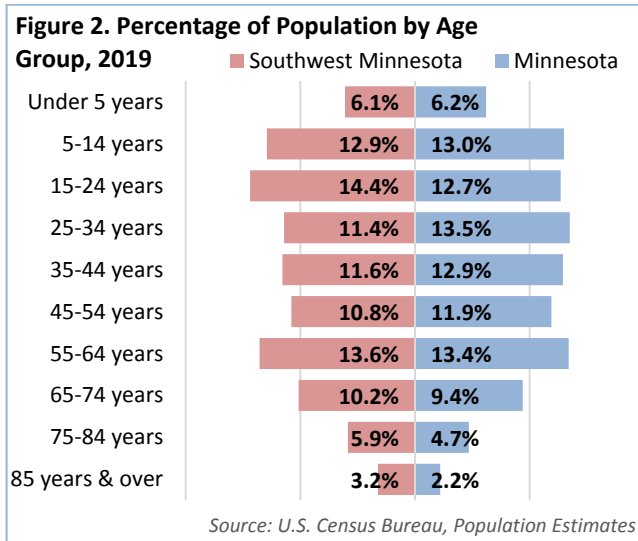
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program

Figure 1. Place of Birth for the Foreign Born Population in Southwest (2018)



POPULATION BY AGE GROUP

Southwest Minnesota has an older population than the rest of the state, with 32.9% of residents aged 55 years and over, compared to 29.7% statewide. Consequently, Southwest Minnesota had a lower percentage of people in the 25- to 54-year-old age group, typically considered the “prime working years,” as well as a smaller percent of school-aged children. However, having several postsecondary institutions in the region led to a higher percentage of people aged 15 to 24 (see Figure 2).

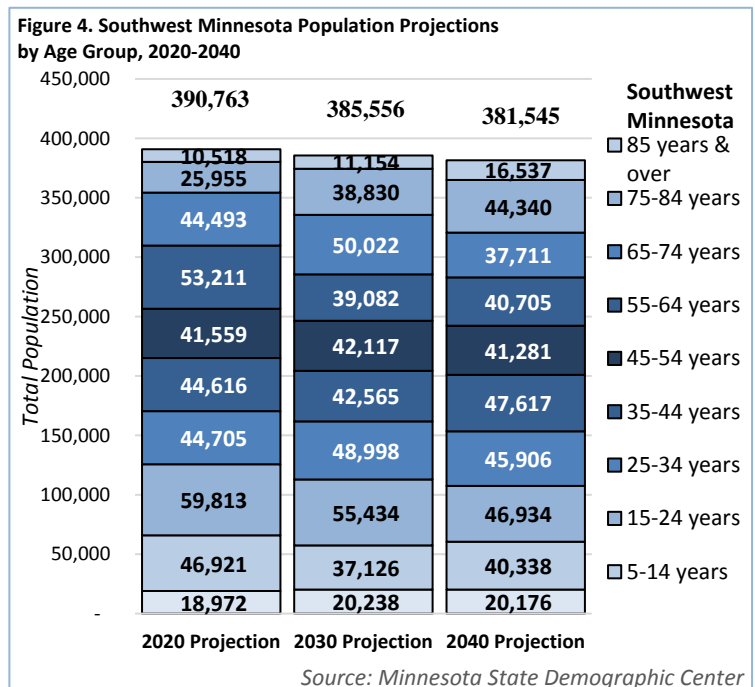


A large portion of the region’s population is a part of the Baby Boom generation, people born between 1946 and 1964, which is creating a significant shift in the population over time. While the number of younger and middle-aged residents was declining, the number of residents aged 55 years and over was rapidly increasing. This included a huge jump in the number of people from 55 to 74 years of age, but a more measured change in people aged 75 years and over (see Figure 3).

POPULATION PROJECTIONS BY AGE GROUP

Southwest Minnesota is projected to experience more population decline in the next 20 years. According to population projections from the [State Demographic Center](#), the region is expected to lose 9,218 residents from 2020 to 2040, a -2.4% decline (see Figure 4). In comparison, the state of Minnesota is projected to grow 8.8%.

Southwest Minnesota is expected to add just over 24,400 people aged 75 years and over, a 67% jump. The region is also projected to see a small gain in the 25- to 44-year-old age group, as well as a corresponding bump in children under 5. In contrast, the region is expected to lose school-aged children and young adults, as well as people from 45 to 74 years as the current Baby Boom generation moves through the population pyramid.



POPULATION BY RACE

Southwest Minnesota’s population is less diverse than the state’s, but is becoming more diverse over time. In 2018, about 92.2% of the region’s residents reported white alone as their race, compared to 83.3% of residents statewide. The region had much smaller percentages of Black or

Table 3. Race and Hispanic Origin, 2018	Southwest Minnesota			Minnesota	
	Number	Percent	Change from 2000-2018	Percent	Change from 2000-2018
Total	392,017	100.0%	-0.6%	100.0%	+12.4%
White	361,345	92.2%	-3.9%	83.3%	+4.7%
Black or African American	7,353	1.9%	+172.0%	6.2%	+99.3%
American Indian & Alaska Native	2,629	0.7%	+32.5%	1.1%	+7.3%
Asian & Other Pac. Islander	7,272	1.9%	+68.8%	4.8%	+83.8%
Some Other Race	7,513	1.9%	+18.1%	1.8%	+48.7%
Two or More Races	5,905	1.5%	+76.6%	2.9%	+90.7%
Hispanic or Latino	26,058	6.6%	+109.3%	5.3%	+104.2%

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

African American residents, Asian or Other Pacific Islanders, and people of Two or More Races. However at 6.6%, Southwest Minnesota had a higher percentage of people reporting Hispanic or Latino origin than the state, and a similar percentage of people of Some Other Race, and American Indian. The region’s white population was declining whereas the population of all other race groups was increasing rapidly (see Table 3).

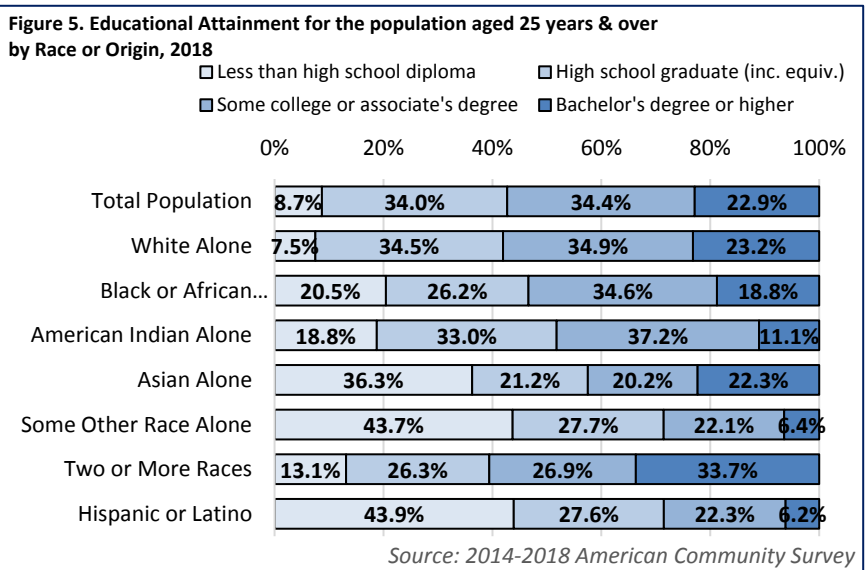
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

With 32.6% of adults aged 18 years and over having a college degree, Southwest Minnesota has lower educational attainment than the state, where 43.6% of adults have an associate, bachelor’s, or advanced degree. In contrast, Southwest has a slightly higher percentage of people with some college but no degree, and a much higher percentage of people with a high school diploma or less (see Table 4).

Table 4. Educational Attainment for the Adult Population, 2018	Southwest Minnesota		Minnesota
	Number	Percent	Percent
Total Population, 18 years & over	302,865	100.0%	100.0%
Less than high school	27,198	9.0%	7.6%
High school graduate (incl. equiv.)	99,236	32.8%	25.3%
Some college, no degree	77,805	25.7%	23.4%
Associate’s degree	35,245	11.6%	10.8%
Bachelor’s degree	46,540	15.4%	22.1%
Advanced degree	16,841	5.6%	10.7%

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

Educational attainment varies significantly by race and ethnicity in Southwest Minnesota. Nearly 45% of Hispanic or Latino residents or people of Some Other Race had less than a high school diploma, compared to just 7.5% of white residents. However, over 30% of Black or African Americans and American Indians have attended some college or earned an associate’s degree, and 22.3% of Asian residents had a bachelor’s degree or higher, which was in line with the white population (see Figure 5).



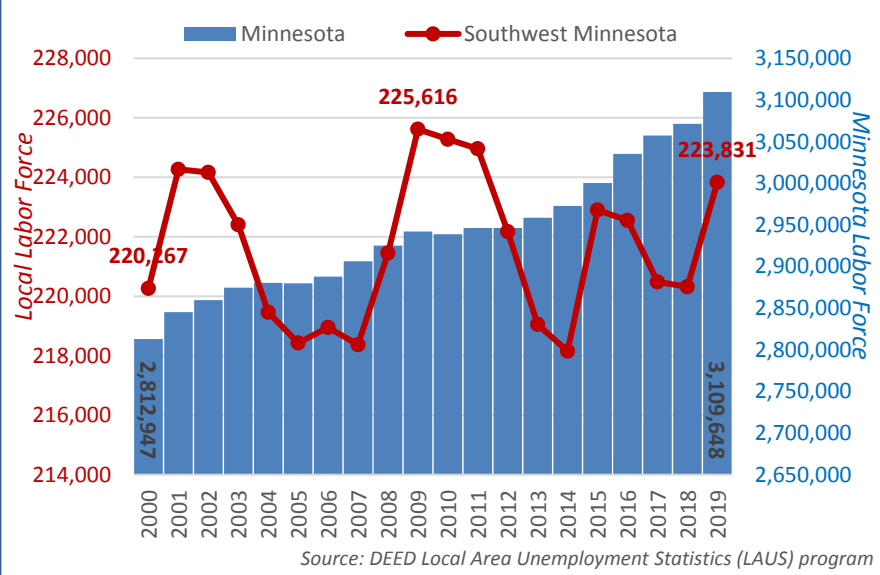
LABOR FORCE

LABOR FORCE CHANGE

According to data from DEED’s [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#) program, Southwest Minnesota had an annual average labor force of just under 224,000 workers in 2019. The regional labor force has fluctuated up and down since 2000, but ended with a higher number of workers in 2019 than it had in 2000. As such, the labor force in Southwest Minnesota actually reached a peak in 2009, and has since declined (see Figure 6).

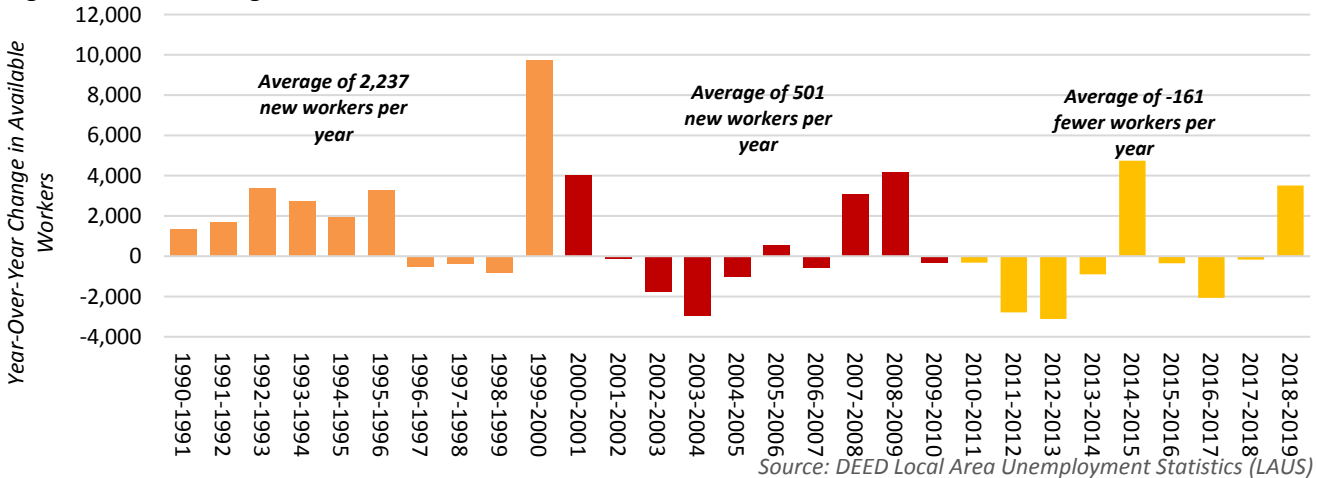
Southwest Minnesota lost about 2,000 workers from 2000 to 2007, then added over 7,000 workers during the Great Recession as people flooded into the labor market to earn extra income. As the economy recovered, people began dropping out again until 2014, then the region has seen more ups and downs. There were just over 7,790 unemployed workers in 2019, down from a high of more than 15,000 unemployed workers in both 2009 and 2010. These labor force constraints will have a substantial impact on the regional economy.

Figure 6. Annual Labor Force Estimates, 2000-2019



Averaging a net gain of 2,237 additional labor force participants per year between 1990 and 2000, employers in Southwest Minnesota were able to tap into a large and growing pool of talented workers. With recent declines, the region actually averaged a loss of 161 fewer workers per year between 2010 to 2019. See 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 Southwest 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. As the white, native-born workforce continues to age, younger workers of different races or from different countries will comprise the fastest growing segment of the labor force.

Figure 7. Annual Change in Labor Force, 1990-2019 - Southwest Minnesota



LABOR FORCE PROJECTIONS

If Southwest Minnesota's population changes at the projected rates shown in Figure 4 above, the region would be expected to see a decline in the labor force over the next decade. Applying current labor force participation rates to future population projections by age group creates labor force projections for the region, which show a steady 3.8% drop in workforce numbers. See Table 5.

In addition to the overall decline, the labor force will also see a significant shift over time, with large gains in the number of workers aged 65 years and over against huge declines in the number of workers aged 55 to 64 years. The region is also expected to lose teenaged workers and entry-level workers in the next decade. However, the region is expected to see gains in the number of 25 to 54 year olds. Due to the growth, the 25 to 54 year old age group will make up about 55.2% of the total workforce in 2030, up from 54 percent in 2020.

Either way, these long-term declines will likely lead to a tight labor market in the future, with employers needing to respond to the changing labor force availability in the region.

EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS

With 68% of the working age population aged 16 years and over in the labor force, Southwest Minnesota had slightly lower labor force participation rates than the state's 69.7% rate. However, the region actually had higher labor force participation rates than the state in all but two age groups, but the overall rate was lower because a higher percentage of the region's labor force was older. See Table 6.

In contrast, the region had lower participation rates than the state for almost every race group; and also had large unemployment rate disparities for minorities. Almost 16% of Black or African American workers were unemployed, compared to 3% percent of white workers. The region also had 10,540 workers with disabilities in the labor force, with higher participation rates in the region. Unemployment rates were highest for youth, minorities, and workers with disabilities.

Table 5. Southwest Minnesota Labor Force Projections

	2020 Labor Force Projection	2030 Labor Force Projection	2020-2030 Change	
			Numeric	Percent
16 to 19 years	12,167	10,692	-1,475	-12.1%
20 to 24 years	28,017	27,043	-974	-3.5%
25 to 44 years	79,149	81,135	1,987	2.5%
45 to 54 years	35,924	36,407	482	1.3%
55 to 64 years	40,720	29,908	-10,812	-26.6%
65 to 74 years	14,331	16,112	1,781	12.4%
75 years & over	2,600	3,563	963	37.0%
Total Labor Force	212,908	204,860	-8,049	-3.8%

Source: calculated from MN State Demographic Center projections, and 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

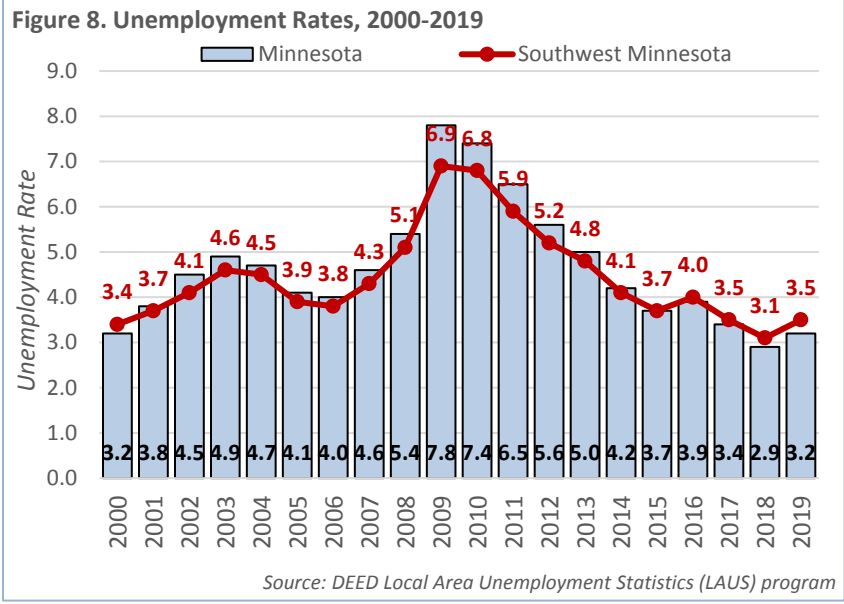
Table 6. Southwest Minnesota Employment Characteristics, 2018

Age Group	Southwest Minnesota			Minnesota	
	Labor Force	Labor Force Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate	Labor Force Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate
Total Labor Force	212,679	68.0%	3.4%	69.7%	3.9%
16 to 19 years	12,426	57.2%	11.0%	52.9%	11.7%
20 to 24 years	25,609	84.3%	4.9%	84.4%	6.4%
25 to 44 years	78,800	88.6%	3.0%	88.6%	3.5%
45 to 54 years	40,434	86.4%	2.4%	87.3%	2.8%
55 to 64 years	41,278	76.5%	2.4%	72.6%	3.0%
65 to 74 years	1,1657	32.2%	1.6%	27.6%	2.4%
75 years & over	2,487	7.1%	1.7%	6.3%	2.6%
Employment Characteristics by Gender					
Male	112,918	72.6%	3.7%	73.5%	4.3%
Female	99,765	63.4%	2.9%	66.0%	3.4%
Employment Characteristics by Race & Hispanic Origin					
White alone	198,532	67.9%	3.0%	69.5%	3.3%
Black or African American	3,608	67.6%	15.9%	70.7%	9.9%
American Indian & Alaska Native	1,111	59.1%	5.1%	58.5%	12.8%
Asian or Other Pacific Islanders	3,621	65.9%	6.5%	71.3%	4.7%
Some Other Race	3,666	73.9%	5.7%	77.2%	6.2%
Two or More Races	2,155	75.3%	7.5%	73.1%	7.6%
Hispanic or Latino	12,330	74.5%	7.1%	76.3%	6.5%
Employment Characteristics by Disability					
With Any Disability	10,540	53.9%	8.8%	52.5%	9.0%
Employment Characteristics by Educational Attainment					
Population 25 to 64 years	160,519	84.6%	2.5%	84.2%	3.2%
Less than H.S. Diploma	9,106	67.7%	3.3%	65.4%	4.5%
H.S. Diploma or Equivalent	46,092	80.8%	2.0%	78.6%	2.6%
Some College or Assoc. Degree	63,304	87.4%	2.1%	85.2%	3.2%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	41,985	89.9%	1.2%	89.8%	1.9%

Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

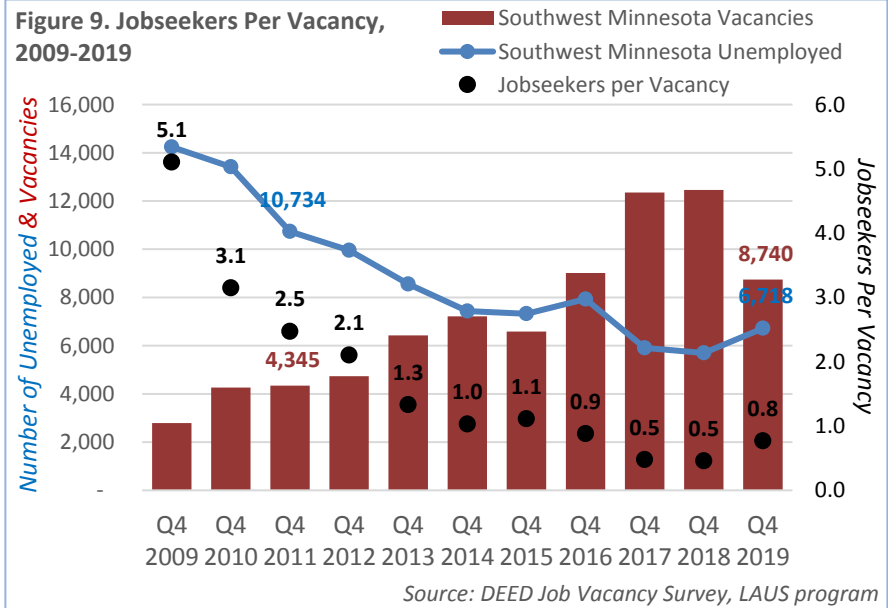
Up until 2016, Southwest Minnesota had consistently reported slightly lower unemployment rates than Minnesota and the nation, regardless of the state of the economy. According to [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#), the region’s unemployment rate hovered just below the state rate from 2002 to 2008, before rising to almost 7% in 2009 and 2010, then dropping back to prerecession levels in 2014 and 2015, when it matched the state rate. Since then, Southwest Minnesota’s unemployment rate has been just above the state rate, with a 2019 annual rate of 3.5%. See Figure 8.



JOBSEEKERS PER VACANCY

As the number of available workers has declined and the economy continues to recover, the region’s labor market has tightened. One clear demonstration of this is the ratio of unemployed jobseekers per vacancy, which now stands at 0.8-to-1 in Southwest Minnesota.

According to recent job vacancy survey results, there were 8,740 openings reported by employers compared to 6,718 unemployed jobseekers in the region. The ratio climbed as high as 5.1 during the recession in 2009. See Figure 9.



COMMUTE SHED AND LABOR SHED

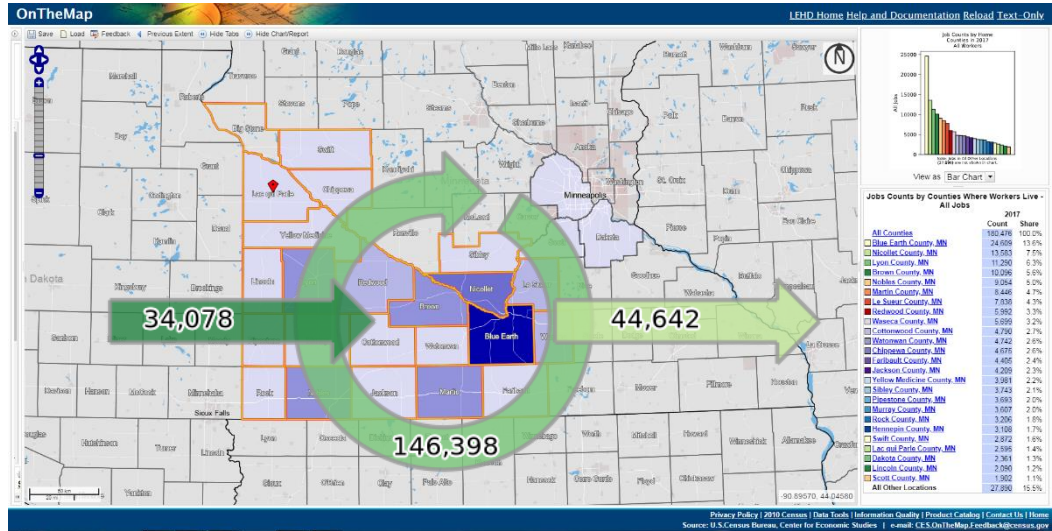
According to commuting data from the [U.S. Census Bureau](#), the vast majority – about 81 percent – of workers who live in the region also work within the region. However, Southwest Minnesota is a net exporter of labor, having more workers than available jobs. In sum, 146,398 workers both lived and worked in Southwest Minnesota in 2017, while another 34,078 workers drove into the region for work, compared to 44,642 workers who lived in the region but drove to surrounding counties for work. See Table 7 and Figure 10.

	2017	
	Count	Share
Employed in the Selection Area	180,476	100.0%
Employed in the Selection Area but Living Outside	34,078	18.9%
Employed and Living in the Selection Area	146,398	81.1%
<hr/>		
Living in the Selection Area	191,040	100.0%
Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside	44,642	23.4%
Living and Employed in the Selection Area	146,398	76.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap

Home to Mankato, Blue Earth County is the largest regional employment center, and was the biggest draw for workers, followed by Lyon, Nicollet, Brown, Nobles, Martin, Le Sueur, Waseca, and Redwood County. Employers in the region both lose and draw workers from the Twin Cities metro area, as well as

Figure 10. Southwest Minnesota Labor and Commute Shed, 2017

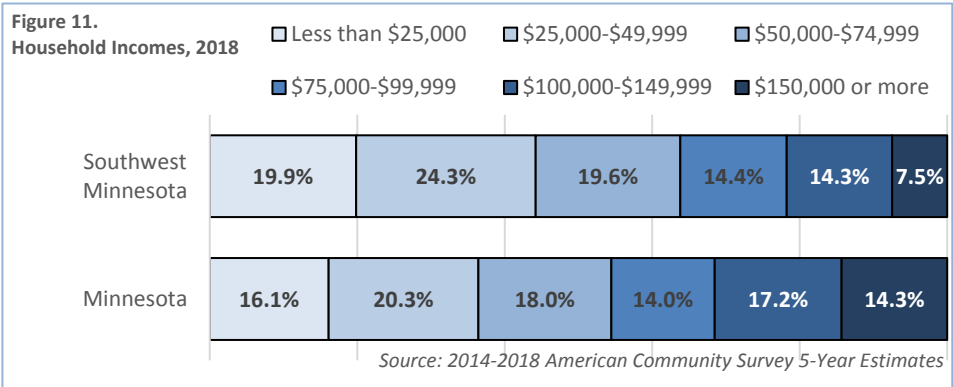


Minnehaha County in South Dakota, which includes Sioux Falls. More workers commute out of the region than commute in. See Figure 10.

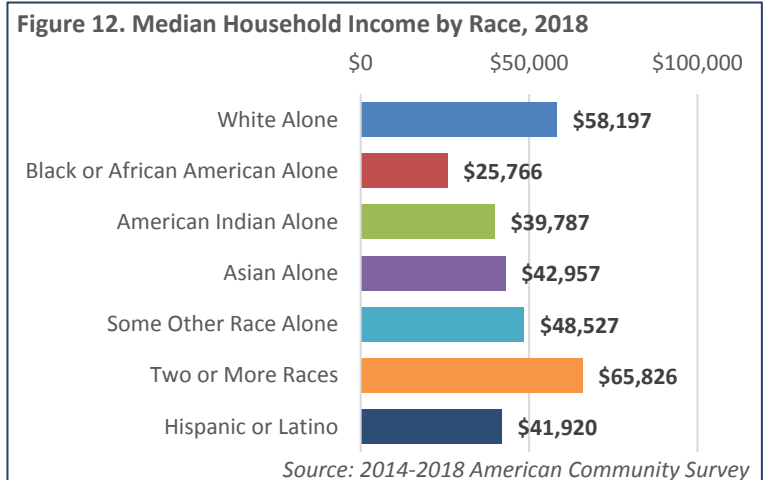
INCOMES, WAGES AND OCCUPATIONS

HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

Household incomes were significantly lower in Southwest Minnesota than the rest of the state. The median household income in Southwest was \$56,796 in 2017, compared to \$68,411 in Minnesota. Almost 45% of the households in the region had incomes below \$50,000 in 2018, compared to 36.4% of households statewide. Another 34% earned between \$50,000 and \$100,000, and 21.8% earned over \$100,000 per year. See Figure 11.



Median household incomes varied by race or origin in the region. Black or African American households reported the lowest incomes in Southwest Minnesota, with a median income that was over \$32,000 lower than for White households. With the exception of households of Two or More Races and Some Other Race, all of the other race and origin groups had median incomes around \$41,000 per year, which was about \$17,000 lower than the median household income for Whites. See Figure 12.



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) was \$56,772 in 2019. The cost of living for a similar family in Southwest Minnesota was \$47,088 – which was the lowest of the 6 planning regions in the state. The highest monthly costs were for transportation, food, and housing; though the region’s housing, child care, taxes, and transportation costs were significantly lower than the rest of the state. In order to meet the basic cost of living for the region, the workers in the family scenario described would need to earn \$15.09 per hour over the course of 60 hours per work week.

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 Southwest would be \$27,228, which would require an hourly wage of \$13.21 to meet the basic needs standard of living. See Table 8.

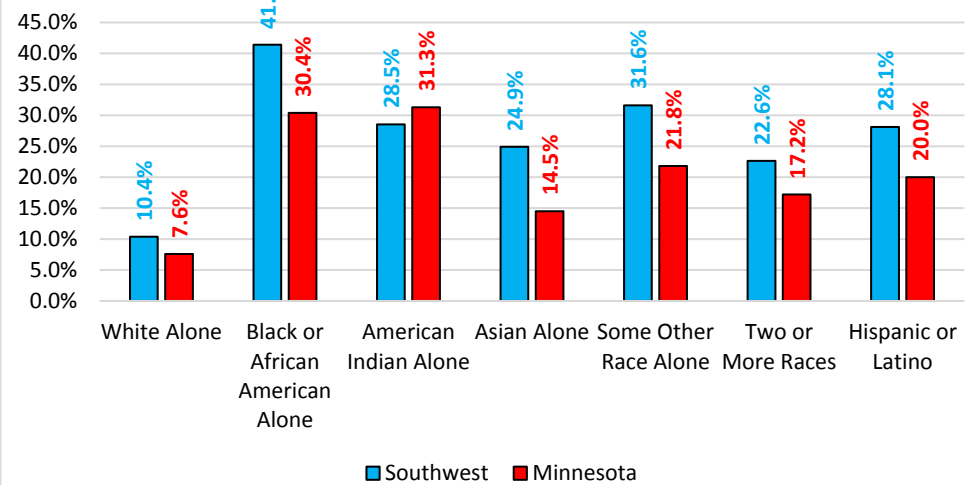
Table 8. Southwest Minnesota Cost of Living, 2019										
Family Composition	Number of Workers	Yearly Cost of Living	Hourly Wage Required	Monthly Costs						
				Child Care	Food	Health Care	Housing	Transportation	Other	Taxes
Southwest Minnesota										
Single, 0 children	1 FT	\$27,228	\$13.21	\$0	\$321	\$196	\$599	\$616	\$258	\$299
Single, 1 child	1 FT	\$39,288	\$18.89	\$454	\$494	\$385	\$780	\$620	\$357	\$184
2 parents, 1 child	1 FT, 1 PT	\$47,088	\$15.09	\$227	\$763	\$659	\$780	\$709	\$433	\$353
2 parents, 2 children	2 FT	\$50,892	\$12.23	\$454	\$763	\$659	\$780	\$709	\$433	\$443
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, Southwest Minnesota’s poverty rate was 11.9%, which was higher than the statewide rate of 10.1%. Like incomes, poverty levels varied widely by race and origin. It was estimated that over 40% of the region’s Black or African American population was below the poverty level in 2018, compared to just 10.4% of the White population. Likewise, poverty levels hovered around 30% for American Indians, people of Some Other Race, and people of Hispanic or Latino origin. About 25% of Asian residents and 23% of people of Two or More Races were below the poverty level in 2018. In almost all cases, the region’s poverty rate was higher than the state’s poverty rate, a reflection of the lower household incomes as noted above. See Figure 13.

Figure 13. Percent Below Poverty Level by Race or Origin (2018)

Source: 2014-2018 American Community Survey



WAGES AND OCCUPATIONS

According to DEED's [Occupational Employment Statistics](#) program, the median hourly wage for all occupations in Southwest Minnesota was \$18.38 in the first quarter of 2020, which was the lowest wage level of the six planning regions in the state (tied with Northwest). Southwest's median wage was \$3.11 below the state's median hourly wage, equaling 85.5% of the statewide wage rate, and \$4.92 below the median hourly wage in the Twin Cities metro area, which would amount to over \$10,200 per year for a full-time worker. At \$17.91, EDR 8 had the lowest median wage in the region, just below EDR 6W at \$18.02, and well below EDR 9 at \$18.75. See Table 9.

	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Regional Employment
Central Minnesota	\$19.28	278,730
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
EDR 6W - Upper MN Valley	\$18.02	32,970
EDR 8 - Southwest	\$17.91	53,190
EDR 9 - South Central	\$18.75	99,570
State of Minnesota	\$21.49	2,880,650

Source: [DEED Occupational Employment Statistics](#)

Based on location quotient, Southwest Minnesota stands out for having higher concentrations of occupations in Farming, Fishing and Forestry, Production, Installation, Maintenance and Repair, Education, Training and Library, and Transportation and Material Moving. The largest occupations in the region include Office and Administrative Support, Production, Food Preparation and Serving Related, Transportation and Material Moving, and Sales and Related. Not surprisingly, the lowest-paying jobs are concentrated in Food Prep and Serving, Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance, Sales and Related, Personal Care and Service, and Healthcare Support, which tend to have lower educational and training requirements. For the most part, the gap in pay between Southwest Minnesota and the state is also much lower in these jobs. See Table 10.

Occupational Group	Southwest 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	\$18.38	176,420	100.0%	1.0	\$21.49	2,880,650	100.0%
Office & Administrative Support	\$18.23	21,320	12.1%	1.0	\$20.03	363,800	12.6%
Production	\$18.10	18,650	10.6%	1.4	\$19.03	212,650	7.4%
Food Preparation & Serving Related	\$11.77	16,840	9.5%	1.1	\$12.43	244,300	8.5%
Transportation & Material Moving	\$17.93	15,550	8.8%	1.2	\$18.06	216,890	7.5%
Sales & Related	\$14.57	15,090	8.6%	0.9	\$15.37	277,000	9.6%
Education, Training & Library	\$21.96	13,190	7.5%	1.3	\$24.38	165,310	5.7%
Healthcare Support	\$14.30	11,470	6.5%	1.1	\$14.81	163,160	5.7%
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	\$30.46	10,080	5.7%	0.9	\$36.07	190,800	6.6%
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	\$21.71	8,000	4.5%	1.3	\$24.31	100,060	3.5%
Management	\$40.47	7,940	4.5%	0.8	\$52.70	170,650	5.9%
Construction & Extraction	\$23.35	7,290	4.1%	1.1	\$28.97	104,900	3.6%
Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maint.	\$14.05	5,450	3.1%	1.1	\$15.23	83,860	2.9%
Business & Financial Operations	\$29.20	5,320	3.0%	0.5	\$33.87	171,550	6.0%
Personal Care & Service	\$13.16	4,150	2.4%	1.0	\$13.65	70,290	2.4%
Community & Social Service	\$22.64	4,010	2.3%	1.1	\$23.34	57,200	2.0%
Protective Service	\$19.75	2,830	1.6%	1.0	\$22.45	45,030	1.6%
Architecture & Engineering	\$32.03	2,750	1.6%	0.8	\$38.00	55,520	1.9%
Computer & Mathematical	\$31.61	1,710	1.0%	0.3	\$42.71	97,960	3.4%
Life, Physical & Social Science	\$27.19	1,640	0.9%	1.0	\$34.35	27,070	0.9%
Arts, Design, Entertainment & Media	\$18.68	1,630	0.9%	0.7	\$24.52	38,540	1.3%
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	\$16.62	920	0.5%	3.7	\$17.72	4,060	0.1%
Legal	\$30.61	580	0.3%	0.5	\$37.35	20,050	0.7%

Source: DEED Occupational Employment Statistics, Qtr. 1 2020

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 Southwest Minnesota reported 8,740 job vacancies in the fourth quarter of 2019, which equaled nearly 1,550 fewer openings compared to the past year, but was the fourth highest number ever reported in the region. The median hourly wage offer was \$15.00 across all occupations, but ranged from a low of \$10.00 per hour for Arts, Design, Entertainment and Media workers to more than \$27 per hour for Healthcare Practitioners and Technical occupations. Reflecting changing demand for occupations and for the workers to fill the openings, the median wage offer increased almost \$3.00 compared to the fourth quarter of 2014, a 25% increase.

The largest number of vacancies were in Food Preparation and Serving Related occupations, followed by Transportation and Material Moving, Healthcare Practitioners and Technical and Healthcare Support occupations, Sales and Related and Personal Care and Service. Almost 60% of the vacancies in the region were in these six occupational groups. Overall, 43% of the vacancies were part-time, 31% required post-secondary education, and 41% required one or more years of experience. See Table 11. In sum, educational requirements in the region had been stable or declining over the past 5 years, while work experience requirements were rising.

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

Southwest Minnesota	Number of Total Vacancies	Percent Part-time	Percent Temporary or Seasonal	Requiring Post-Secondary Education	Requiring 1 or More Years of Work Exp.	Requiring Certificate or License	Median Hourly Wage Offer	Job Vacancy Rate
Total, All Occupations	8,740	43%	12%	31%	41%	51%	\$15.00	4.9
Management	199	15%	1%	41%	87%	41%	\$20.29	2.5
Business & Financial Operations	151	4%	0%	51%	90%	60%	\$21.11	2.9
Computer & Mathematical	134	0%	0%	91%	23%	6%	\$16.40	6.7
Architecture & Engineering	94	2%	0%	84%	57%	52%	\$20.37	3.9
Life, Physical & Social Sciences	49	50%	54%	81%	35%	19%	\$12.95	4.2
Community & Social Service	130	21%	6%	55%	63%	67%	\$16.04	3.1
Legal	45	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	\$24.01	6.3
Education, Training & Library	316	48%	63%	82%	87%	85%	\$15.73	2.5
Arts, Design, Entertainment & Media	117	89%	2%	6%	9%	2%	\$10.00	8.1
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	753	53%	2%	93%	42%	94%	\$27.38	7.1
Healthcare Support	660	75%	0%	32%	1%	68%	\$13.45	9.3
Protective Service	141	73%	23%	53%	34%	92%	\$15.44	5
Food Preparation & Serving Related	1,512	65%	2%	0%	21%	13%	\$11.73	9.3
Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maint.	172	54%	9%	1%	16%	23%	\$12.60	3.2
Personal Care & Service	503	65%	5%	11%	18%	58%	\$12.34	6.9
Sales & Related	584	33%	2%	5%	26%	44%	\$14.99	3.5
Office & Administrative Support	376	29%	6%	11%	46%	12%	\$14.26	1.5
Construction & Extraction	260	0%	77%	19%	83%	22%	\$14.31	3.7
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	455	9%	1%	56%	67%	70%	\$19.26	5.6
Production	441	17%	2%	16%	26%	7%	\$14.65	2.4
Transportation & Material Moving	1,087	47%	4%	4%	43%	85%	\$17.28	7.7
Internships	395	5%	94%	99%	94%	94%	\$14.21	0

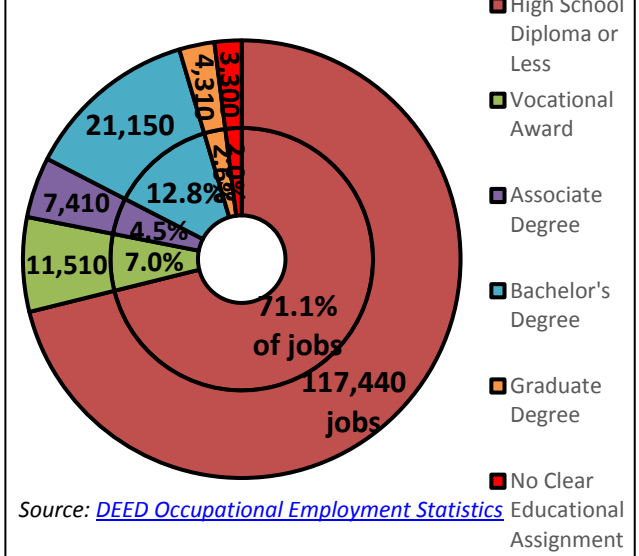
Source: DEED Job Vacancy Survey, Qtr. 4 2019

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Similar to Job Vacancy Survey results, data from DEED’s Occupational Employment Statistics program shows that only about 30% of jobs in the region require postsecondary education for entry. The other 70% can be started with a high school diploma or less and some amount of on-the-job training See 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 different jobs that earn different amounts of money. Students and jobseekers can use labor market data to make more informed career decisions.

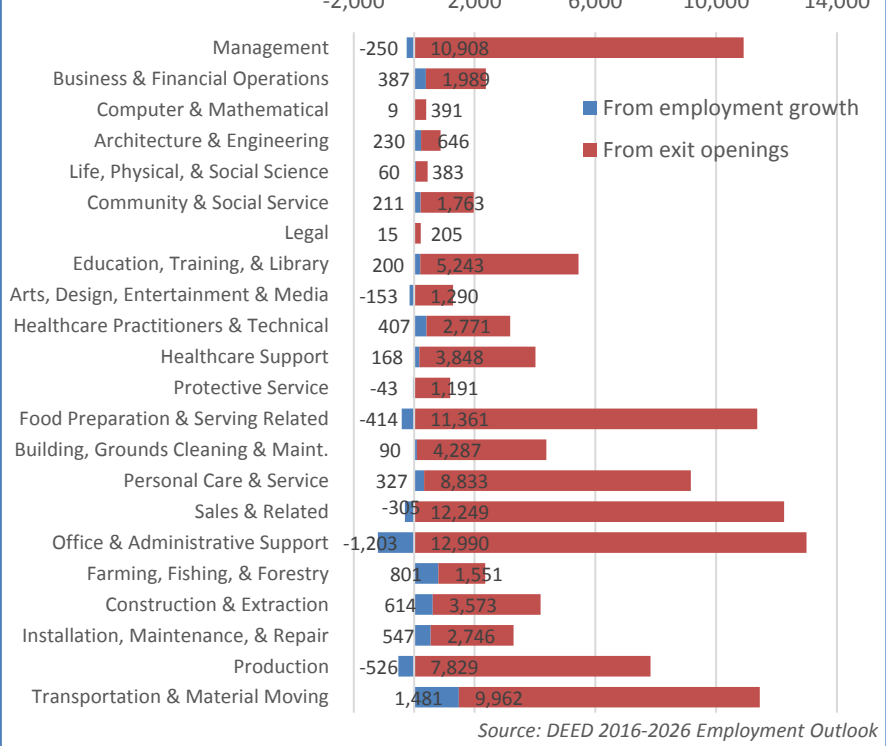
Figure 14. Southwest Minnesota Share of Jobs by Educational Requirements, 2019



EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS

Overall, the 23-county Southwest Minnesota planning area is projected to grow 0.9% from 2016 to 2026, a gain of just 1,885 new jobs. That is the slowest of the 6 planning regions in the state. In addition, the region is also expected to have 103,553 replacement openings with the need to fill jobs left vacant by retirements and other career changers. Transportation and Material Moving, Farming, Construction and Extraction; Installation, Maintenance, and Repair; 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. See Figure 15.

Figure 15. Southwest Minnesota Employment Projections, 2016-2026



OCCUPATIONS IN DEMAND

According to DEED's [Occupations in Demand](#) tool, there are well 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, teachers, mechanics and repair workers, and heavy and tractor trailer truck drivers are among the top occupations in demand based on the consistent need for workers in these fields. Many of the jobs are concentrated in manufacturing, health care, transportation, and other related industries. See Table 12.

Less than High School	High School or Equivalent	Some College, Vocational Training, or Assoc. Degree	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Personal Care Aides (\$26,919)	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers (\$44,307)	Registered Nurses (\$65,723)	Elementary School Teachers (\$49,919)
Combined Food Prep. & Serving Workers (\$23,754)	Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers (\$40,150)	Nursing Assistants (\$30,046)	Secondary School Teachers (\$51,607)
Cashiers (\$23,665)	Childcare Workers (\$23,494)	Machinists (\$41,453)	Agricultural & Food Science Technicians (\$42,140)
Janitors & Cleaners (\$27,891)	Office Clerks, General (\$34,602)	Licensed Practical & Vocational Nurses (\$45,512)	Preschool Teachers, Except Special Ed. (\$35,030)
Retail Salespersons (\$25,408)	Maintenance & Repair Workers, General (\$40,722)	Automotive Service Techs. & Mechanics (\$36,107)	Industrial Engineers (\$76,019)
Home Health Aides (\$27,561)	Teacher Assistants (\$28,683)	Industrial Machinery Mechanics (\$47,807)	Accountants & Auditors (\$61,676)
Waiters & Waitresses (\$21,617)	Secretaries & Administrative Assistants (\$38,419)	Police & Sheriff's Patrol Officers (\$58,377)	Middle School Teachers (\$49,989)
Laborers & Freight, Stock, & Material Movers (\$34,151)	Sales Representatives, Wholesale & Mfg. (\$62,712)	EMT's & Paramedics (\$36,520)	Financial Managers (\$102,734)
Stock Clerks & Order Fillers (\$26,428)	Welders, Cutters, Solderers & Brazers (41,595)	Industrial Engineering Technicians (\$48,612)	Mechanical Engineers (\$78,526)
Cooks, Restaurant (\$24,812)	Supervisors of Food Prep & Serving Workers (&33,357)	HVAC & Refrigeration Mechanics (\$44,355)	Human Resources Specialists (\$53,909)

Source: [DEED Occupations in Demand](#)

ECONOMY

INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT

According to DEED's [Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages \(QCEW\) program](#), Southwest Minnesota was home to 12,311 business establishments providing an average of 176,514 covered jobs through 2019, with a total payroll of just under \$7.6 billion. That was about 6.1% of total employment in the state of Minnesota. Average annual wages were \$42,988 in the region, which was over \$16,600 lower than the state's average annual wage. See Table 13.

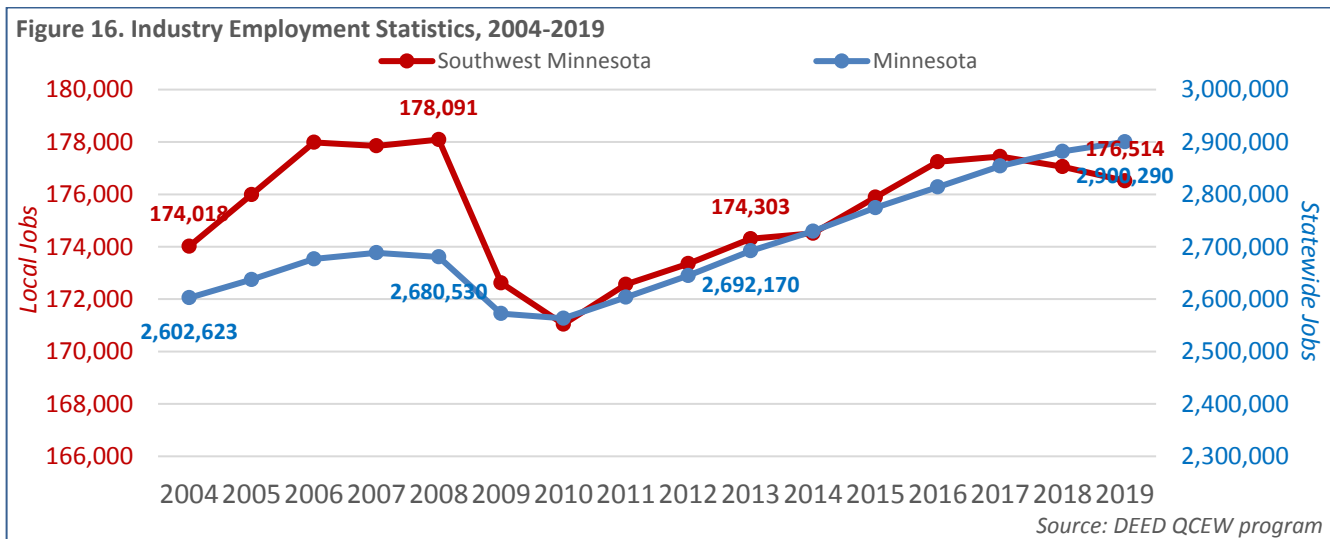
Geography	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Total Payroll	Average Annual Wage	2014-2019		2018-2019	
					Change in Jobs	Percent Change	Change in Jobs	Percent Change
Southwest Minnesota	12,311	176,514	\$7,587,985,355	\$42,988	+2,003	+1.1%	-540	-0.3%
Region 6W	1,570	17,249	\$671,670,265	\$38,940	-64	-0.4%	-156	-0.9%
Region 8	3,969	53,230	\$2,232,881,780	\$41,948	-1,456	-2.7%	-421	-0.8%
Region 9	6,772	106,034	\$4,683,433,310	\$44,169	+3,520	+3.4%	+36	0.0%
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 106,034 jobs at 6,772 business establishments, EDR 9 accounts for about 60% of total employment in the Southwest Minnesota planning region. EDR 9 also provided all of the region's job growth during the recovery

from 2014 to 2019, adding 3,520 net new jobs. In contrast, EDR 6W had the smallest number of firms and jobs, with 17,249 jobs at 1,570 firms, and saw a loss of 64 jobs in the past five years. EDR 8 had 3,969 establishments providing 53,230 jobs in 2018, despite a loss of 1,456 jobs since 2014. EDR 9 had the highest average annual wages at \$44,169, though that was still over \$15,000 below the state average. See Table 13.

Southwest Minnesota has seen employment ups and downs over the past 15 years, ending 2019 with about 2,500 more jobs than it had in 2004. The region entered the recession later than the state, still experiencing job growth through 2008, before suffering severe declines in 2009 and 2010. Since then, Southwest Minnesota has recovered much more slowly than the state, which gained jobs at a 6.3% percent clip from 2014 to 2019, compared to a 1.1% increase in the region. Southwest reached a peak of 178,091 jobs in 2008, then hit a low of 171,042 jobs in 2010, and has still not recovered all of the jobs lost during the recession. See Figure 16.



After gaining more than 1,000 jobs in the past 5 years, the largest industry in Southwest Minnesota is now Health Care and Social Assistance, with 31,577 jobs at 1,366 firms. Due to the region’s older population, the largest sector was Nursing and Residential Care Facilities with 10,865 jobs, followed by Ambulatory Health Care Services with 7,725 jobs, Hospitals with 7,686 jobs, and Social Assistance, with 5,301 jobs.

With 31,338 jobs at 588 firms, Manufacturing is now the second largest employing industry, accounting for 17.8% of total jobs in the region. That is 6% higher than the state’s concentration of employment in manufacturing. At \$51,737 in 2019, average annual wages were nearly \$10,000 higher in manufacturing than the total of all industries. Retail trade is the third largest industry, with 19,193 jobs at 1,505 establishments, while the fourth largest industry is Educational Services, with just over 16,100 jobs at 238 firms, followed by Accommodation and Food Services with 12,228 jobs. Combined these top five industries account for 62.6% of the total jobs in the region.

Other important industries include Public Administration, Construction, Wholesale Trade, Transportation and Warehousing, Finance and Insurance, Agriculture, Other Services, and Administrative Support and Waste Management Services. Nine of the 20 main industries in the region added jobs since 2014, with huge gains occurring in Transportation and Warehousing, Health Care and Social Assistance, Educational Services, Public Administration, and Construction, while smaller gains were seen in Agriculture, Real Estate and Rental and Leasing, Other Services, and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation. The largest job loss was seen in Retail Trade, Accommodation and Food Services, Information, and Management of Companies. See Table 14.

Table 14. Southwest Minnesota Industry Employment Statistics, 2019

NAICS Industry Title	2019 Annual Data			Avg. Annual Wage	2014-2019		2018-2019	
	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Total Payroll (\$1,000s)		Change in Jobs	Percent Change	Change in Jobs	Percent Change
Total, All Industries	12,311	176,514	\$7,587,985	\$42,988	+2,003	+1.1%	-540	-0.3%
Health Care & Social Assistance	1,366	31,577	\$1,351,699	\$42,806	+1,192	+3.9%	+236	+0.8%
Manufacturing	588	31,338	\$1,654,492	\$52,795	-28	-0.1%	+205	+0.7%
Retail Trade	1,505	19,193	\$486,267	\$25,336	-1,045	-5.2%	-689	-3.5%
Educational Services	238	16,104	\$698,681	\$43,386	+764	+5.0%	-174	-1.1%
Accommodation & Food Services	852	12,228	\$171,420	\$14,019	-442	-3.5%	+112	+0.9%
Public Administration	569	10,070	\$451,458	\$44,832	+533	+5.6%	+35	+0.3%
Construction	1,538	8,266	\$450,864	\$54,544	+481	+6.2%	+89	+1.1%
Wholesale Trade	642	7,714	\$476,352	\$61,752	-36	-0.5%	-286	-3.6%
Transportation & Warehousing	768	7,268	\$286,039	\$39,356	+1,217	+20.1%	+88	+1.2%
Finance & Insurance	698	5,887	\$378,744	\$64,336	-50	-0.8%	-109	-1.8%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & Hunt	662	5,382	\$235,672	\$43,789	+362	+7.2%	+48	+0.9%
Other Services	1,034	5,030	\$143,847	\$28,598	+60	+1.2%	+96	+1.9%
Admin. Support & Waste Mgmt. Svcs.	385	4,033	\$152,483	\$37,809	-65	-1.6%	+95	+2.4%
Professional & Technical Services	593	3,806	\$227,732	\$59,835	-250	-6.2%	-170	-4.3%
Information	212	2,496	\$122,502	\$49,079	-412	-14.2%	-129	-4.9%
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	237	2,013	\$34,693	\$17,234	+60	+3.1%	+46	+2.3%
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	277	1,427	\$39,971	\$28,010	+185	+14.9%	-3	-0.2%
Management of Companies	45	1,414	\$115,325	\$81,559	-385	-21.4%	+6	+0.4%
Utilities	80	948	\$88,156	\$92,991	-68	-6.7%	-16	-1.7%
Mining	25	319	\$21,590	\$67,681	-67	-17.4%	-18	-5.3%

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 (24.8%) of workers in the region were 55 years or older, compared to 21.5% statewide and just 18.4% 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. See 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-full-time jobs in industries like Retail Trade and Accommodation and Food Services, these two age groups enjoyed the fastest percentage increase in wages from 2009 to 2019. Wages were highest for workers between 45 and 64 years of age, and males worked more hours than females, though the gap was narrowing.

Table 15. Workforce Demographics by Age Group and Gender, Total of All Industries, 2009-2019

Southwest Minnesota	Percentage of Workers		Percent of Workers, Minnesota		Median Hourly Wage		Median Hours Worked (Per Qtr.)	
	2019	2009	2019	2009	2019	2009	2019	2009
Total, all ages	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	16.49	\$12.75	401	402
19 years & under	7.6%	9.4%	6.1%	7.5%	\$10.40	\$7.39	105	109
20 to 24 years	11.3%	12.5%	10.3%	11.6%	\$13.11	\$10.15	252	260
25 to 44 years	39.1%	37.6%	42.9%	42.7%	\$18.67	\$14.44	462	470
45 to 54 years	17.3%	22.1%	19.1%	22.5%	\$20.23	\$15.60	480	480
55 to 64 years	18.2%	13.8%	16.7%	12.6%	\$19.25	\$15.00	480	465
65 years & over	6.6%	4.6%	4.8%	3.1%	\$14.76	\$10.97	207	186
Male	47.8%	47.1%	49.1%	49.0%	\$18.91	\$14.65	469	478
Female	52.2%	52.9%	50.9%	51.0%	\$15.38	\$11.71	365	350

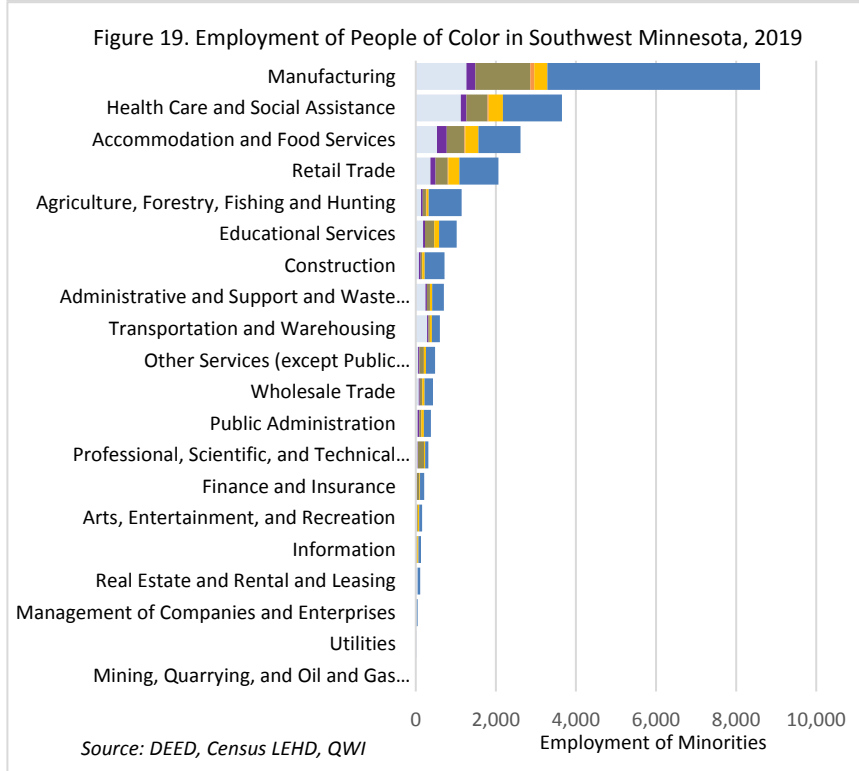
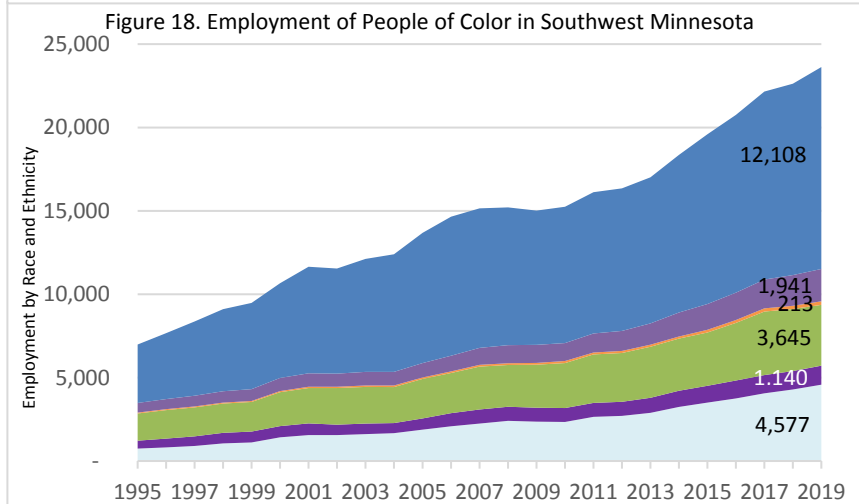
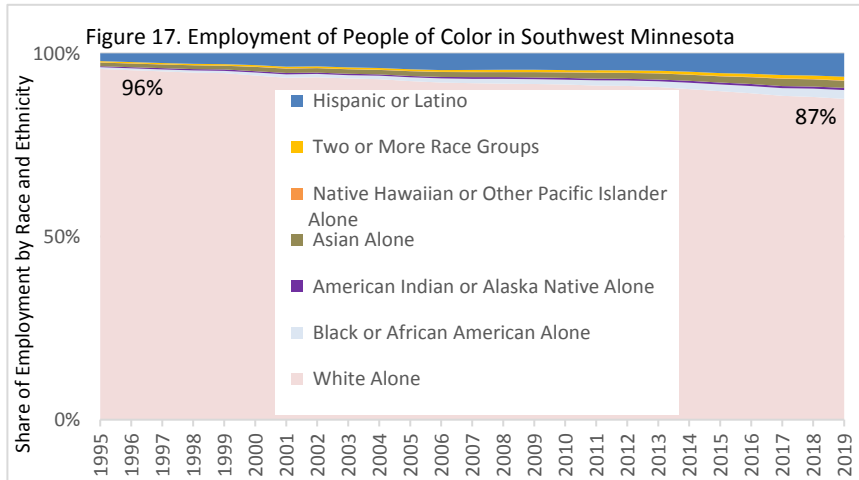
Source: DEED Quarterly Employment Demographics

EMPLOYMENT DIVERSITY

People of color account for 11% of the total population in Southwest Minnesota and hold roughly the same share of jobs, compared to the state overall where they amount to 16.7% of the population but only hold 14.5% of jobs. According data from the Quarterly Workforce Indicator program people of color held 23,624 jobs compared to 166,578 jobs held by White Workers. The number of jobs held by minorities has more than doubled since 2000 when People of color held 6% of jobs (See Figure 17).

People of color have filled an additional 12,967 jobs since 2000 compared to 918 by White workers, amounting to 93% of all new jobs. Hispanic/Latino workers hold the largest number of jobs of the racial and ethnic minority groups with 12,108 jobs in 2019, over half of all minority held jobs. The next largest number of jobs held by a minority group was Black or African American, holding 4,577 jobs in 2019. The number of jobs held by this race has increased by 3,158 since 2000, amounting to a 223% increase (See Figure 18).

The Manufacturing, Agriculture, and Accommodation and Food Services sectors have the highest share of non-White employment at 33%, 20% and 19%, respectively. Administrative Support and Waste Management also had 16% of jobs held by non-white workers. The largest numbers of non-White workers are employed by manufacturing (8,595 jobs) and healthcare and social assistance (3,649 jobs).



INDUSTRY PROJECTIONS

As noted above, Southwest is projected to grow just 0.9% from 2016 to 2026, a gain of 1,885 new jobs, which would make it the slowest growing region in the state. Unlike any other region, the largest and fastest growing industry is expected to be agriculture, which is projected to add over 1,425 jobs from 2016 to 2026. Likewise, Health Care and Social Assistance is expected to add over 1,330 jobs, a 4.5% increase. The region is also expected to see significant job growth in Transportation and Warehousing, Construction, and Professional and Technical Services. In contrast, Retail Trade, Other Services, Manufacturing, Accommodation and Food Services, Information, and Arts and Recreation are all expected to suffer job cuts in the next decade. See Table 16.

Table 16. Southwest Minnesota Industry Projections, 2016-2026

Industry	Estimated Employment 2016	Projected Employment 2026	Percent Change 2016-2026	Numeric Change 2016-2026
Total, All Industries	211,618	213,503	+0.9%	+1,885
Health Care & Social Assistance	29,857	31,196	+4.5%	+1,339
Manufacturing	31,264	31,145	-0.4%	-119
Retail Trade	20,647	19,748	-4.4%	-899
Educational Services	16,891	16,886	0.0%	-5
Public Administration	13,150	13,136	-0.1%	-14
Accommodation & Food Services	12,207	11,965	-2.0%	-242
Construction	7,995	8,408	+5.2%	+413
Wholesale Trade	8,272	8,323	+0.6%	+51
Transportation & Warehousing	7,176	8,023	+11.8%	+847
Other Services, Ex. Public Admin	7,632	7,142	-6.4%	-490
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & Hunt	5,599	7,026	+25.5%	+1,427
Finance & Insurance	6,314	6,369	+0.9%	+55
Professional & Technical Services	4,296	4,600	+7.1%	+304
Administrative & Waste Services	4,163	4,277	+2.7%	+114
Information	2,746	2,569	-6.4%	-177
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	2,544	2,402	-5.6%	-142
Management of Companies	1,563	1,541	-1.4%	-22
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	1,232	1,269	+3.0%	+37
Utilities	755	831	+10.1%	+76
Mining	349	312	-10.6%	-37

Source: DEED 2016-2026 Employment Outlook

NONEMPLOYER ESTABLISHMENTS

Southwest Minnesota was home to 27,297 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).” Southwest Minnesota saw a decline in nonemployers since 2007, losing 224 nonemployers from 2007 to 2018, a -0.8% decrease. However, these nonemployers generated sales receipts of close to \$1.3 billion in 2018. See Table 17.

Table 17. Nonemployer Statistics, 2018

	2018		2007-2018	
	Number of Firms	Receipts (\$1,000s)	Change in Firms	Percent Change
Southwest Minnesota	27,297	\$1,283,235	-224	-0.8%
Region 6W	3,272	\$139,906	-121	-3.6%
Region 8	8,445	\$404,503	-12	-0.1%
Region 9	15,580	\$738,826	-91	-0.6%
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 Southwest Minnesota, including 18,319 farms producing just under \$7.8 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 Southwest Minnesota, including Martin (#2), Nobles (#4), Blue Earth (#5), Redwood (#6), and Rock (#9). Like the state, the number of farms in the region declined over the past 5 years, but Southwest Minnesota still accounts for 26.6 percent of the farms in the state. See Table 18.

Table 18. Census of Agriculture, 2017

	Number of Farms	Market Value of Products Sold	State Rank
Southwest Minnesota	18,319	\$7,758,272,000	1
Region 6W	3,526	\$1,185,918,000	8
Region 8	7,287	\$3,350,135,000	1
Region 9	7,506	\$3,222,219,000	2
Minnesota	68,822	\$18,395,390,000	

Source: 2017 Census of Agriculture

Upon request, this information can be made available in alternate formats by contacting Luke Greiner at 320-308-5378 or at luke.greiner@state.mn.us or Mark Schultz at 507-205-6068 or at mark.schultz@state.mn.us

South Central Demand Occupations 2021

(July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022)

Medical	
29-1141.00	Registered Nurses
31-1120.00	Home Health and Personal Care Aides
31-1131.00	Nursing Assistants
31-9092.00	Medical Assistant
29-2072.00	Medical Records Specialists
29-2061.00	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses
29-2032.00	Diagnostic Medical Sonographers
29-2042.00	Emergency Medical Technicians (Paramedics)
29-2052.00	Pharmacy Technician
29-2034.00	Radiologic Technician
29-2010.00	Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians
11-9111.00	Medical and Health Service Managers
31-9096.00	Veterinary Assistants & Laboratory Animal Caretakers
43-6013.00	Medical Secretaries & Administrative Assistants

Service	
21-1093.00	Social and Human Service Assistants
21-1021.00	Child, Family and School Social Workers
33-3051.00	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers
35-2021.00	Food Preparation Workers
37-2011.00	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeepers
37-2012.00	Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners
37-3011.00	Landscaping and Groundskeeping
39-9011.00	Childcare Workers
43-5071.00	Shipping, Receiving & Traffic Clerk
43-4051.00	Customer Service Representatives
43-6014.00	Secretaries/Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical & Executive
43-9061.00	Office Clerks, General
43-1011.00	First-Line Supervisors of Office/Administrative Support Workers
49-9071.00	Maintenance and Repair Worker
53-7065.00	Stockers and Order Fillers

Business & Finances	
13-2072.00	Loan Officers
13-1071.00	Human Resources Specialists
13-1020.00	Buyers and Purchasing Agents
13-2011.00	Accountants and Auditors
43-3031.00	Bookkeeping Accounting and Auditing Clerks
11-3031.00	Financial Managers
41-2011.00	Cashiers
41-1011.00	First Line Supervisors of Retail Workers
41-2031.00	Retail Salespersons
41-4012.00	Sales Representatives, Wholesale & Manufacturing

Computers	
15-1256.00	Software Developers & Software Quality Assurance Analysts/Testers
15-1232.00	Computer User Support Specialists

Education	
25-9045.00	Teachers Assistants, Except Postsecondary
25-2031.00	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Care
25-2058.00	Special Education Teachers, Secondary School
25-2052.00	Special Education Teachers, Kindergarten & Elementary School
25-2021.00	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Ed.
25-2022.00	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career
25-9031.00	Instructional Coordinators

South Central Demand Occupations 2021

(July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022)

Trades	
47-2031.00	Carpenters
47-2151.00	Pipelayers
47-2061.00	Construction Laborers
47-1011.00	First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades & Extraction Workers
47-2111.00	Electricians
49.9051.00	Electrical Power-Line Installers & Repairers
49-9021.00	Heating and Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics
49-3023.00	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics
49-3031.00	Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists
49-9041.00	Industrial Machinery Mechanics (Mechatronics)
49-1011.00	First Line Supervisor of Mechanics and Installers
49-3041.00	Farm Equipment Mechanics & Service Technicians
51-4041.00	Machinists
51-4121.00	Welding

Engineers/Technicians	
17-3027.00	Mechanical Engineering Technologists & Technicians
17-3026.00	Industrial Engineering Technicians
17-3022.00	Civil Engineering Technologists & Technicians
17-3023.00	Electrical & Electronic Engineering Technologists & Technicians

Agriculture	
45-2093.00	Farm Workers, Farm, Ranch Aquacultural Animals
45-2092.00	Farm Workers & Laborers, Crop, Nursery & Greenery

Manufacturing	
51-3023.00	Slaughterers, and Meat Packers
51-1011.00	First Line Supervisors of Production and Operating
51-2090.00	Miscellaneous Assemblers & Fabricators
51-3022.00	Meat, Poultry & Fish Cutters & Trimmers
51-9061.00	Inspectors, Testers, Samplers, and Weighers
51-9162.00	Computer Numerically Controlled Tool Programmers
51-9195.00	Molders, Shapers & Casters, Except Metal & Plastic
51-9023.00	Mixing & Blending Machine Setters, Operators & Tenders
53-7064.00	Packers and Packagers, Hand
53-7062.00	Laborers, Freight, Stock, and Material Movers

WIOA
Memorandum of Understanding for
Local Workforce Development Area 7
One-Stop Service Delivery System

RECITALS

WHEREAS, the South Central Workforce Development Area Joint Powers Board has created a Workforce Development Board (WDB) pursuant to the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA). The WDB represents the local Workforce Development Area #7 (LWDA); and

WHEREAS, WIOA §121 requires that all Local Workforce Development Boards establish and operate a Local Workforce Development System and sets forth the services and activities that must be provided through the LWDA. The WDB is responsible for oversight of the System in each LWDA and must develop the local WIOA Plan.

WHEREAS, WIOA Section 121(c) requires that each Local WDB with the agreement of the Chief Elected Officials, enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with all the entities that will serve as partners in the LWDA; and

WHEREAS, WIOA Section 121(b)(1) identifies the federal programs and requires that the services and activities under each of the programs must be made available through each LWDA. All entities that receive federal funds for each of the programs are required partners to this Memorandum of Understanding.

WHEREAS, WIOA Section 121(b)(2) prescribes how entities that provide programs other than those required under Section 121(b)(1)(B) may participate in the local area's Local Workforce Development System as 'additional partners' and provide the services available under their programs.

WHEREAS, WIOA Section 121(a)(1) and 121 (b)(1) requires that all entities that participate in the Local Workforce Development System as One-Stop partners (Partners) whether required or additional, must be parties to this MOU and must abide by the terms prescribed herein and by all applicable federal, state and local rules, plans and policies.

NOW THEREFORE, the parties agree to the following provisions:

1. Parties to this Agreement:

- a. South Central Workforce Development Area Joint Powers Board
John Roper, Chair
706 N. Victory Drive
Mankato, MN 56001

- b. South Central WorkForce Council
Deborah Barnes, Chair
Diane Halvorson, Executive Director
706 N. Victory Drive
Mankato, MN 56001

c. Required Partners. (* indicates Core Partner to be co-located in CareerForce locations):

Partner Name	Program	Program Authority
Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development Minnesota Valley Action Council	WIOA Adult & Dislocated Workers	WIOA Title I – Adult and Dislocated Worker programs*
Minnesota Valley Action Council	WIOA Youth	WIOA Title 1 – Youth Programs
Area Adult Learning Cooperative Faribault Co Adult Basic Education Mankato Area Adult Basic Education	Adult Basic Education, ESL, GED, High School Diploma	WIOA Title II – Adult Education & Literacy
Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development –Job Service	Wagner Peyser and Migrant Seasonal Farmworker	WIOA Title III - Wagner-Peyser & Migrant Seasonal Farmworker Programs*
Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development –Vocational Rehabilitation Services	Vocational Rehabilitation Services	WIOA Title IV- Rehabilitation Act, Title I, Vocational Rehabilitation Services*
Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development Minnesota Valley Action Council	Minnesota Dislocated Worker	MN Statute 116L.17 – State Dislocated Worker Program*
Minnesota Valley Action Council	Minnesota Youth	MN Statute 116L.56 – Minnesota Youth Program
Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development	Veteran Employment Services	Chapter 41 Title 38, USC - Jobs for Veterans
Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development	Unemployment Insurance and Re-Employment Assistance	Unemployment Compensation
Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development Minnesota Valley Action Council MRCI Watwan County Employment & Training	Minnesota Family Investment Program Diversionary Work Program SNAP E&T	Social Security Act – part A of Title IV programs (TANF) USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
Minnesota Valley Action Council Senior Service America, Inc. Motivation Education & Training	SCSEP	Older Americans Act Title V – Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)*
Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development Minnesota Valley Action Council	Trade Adjustment Assistance	Trade Act Title II, Chapter 2 – Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)
South Central Service Cooperative	Career and Technical Education	Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006
Minnesota Valley Action Council	CSBG Employment & Training activities	Community Services Block Grant Act
Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development	State Services for the Blind	Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended, and Minnesota Statute 248.10*
Motivation Education & Training, Inc.	National Farmworker Jobs Program	1964 Civil Rights Acts and WIOA Section 167

d. Additional Partners

Partner Name	Program	Program Authority
Life Work Planning Center	MN Family Resiliency Program SNAP E&T	Minnesota Statute 116L.96 MN Family Resiliency Program USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

2. Definitions:

- a. **Additional Partner:** An entity that carries out a program not identified as required under WIOA that is approved by the LWDB and the Chief Elected Officials to be included as a One-Stop partner in a local area. WIOA Section 121 (b)(2).
- b. **Administrative Entity:** Entity(ies) designated by the Chief Elected Officials to coordinate and administer WIOA activities and services within a local area on the LWDB's behalf and in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local rules, policies, plans, and the terms of this MOU. The South Central WorkForce Council is the Administrative Agency for LWDA #7.
- c. **Career Services:** The services that must be provided at a minimum to eligible individuals through the One-Stop delivery system in each local area. WIOA Section 124(c)(3).
- d. **Chief Elected Officials:** The chief elected officer of a unit of general local government in a local area or the individuals designated under a local agreement. The South Central Workforce Development Area Joint Powers Board serve as the Chief Elected Officials for purposes of this agreement.
- e. **Cost Allocation/Infrastructure Agreement:** The measurement of actual costs in relation to the benefit received to be able to determine each partner's fair share of One-Stop operating costs. 66 Fed. Reg. 29639.
- f. **Fair Share:** The portion of One-Stop operating costs allocated to each partner in proportion to the benefits the partner receives from participation in the One-Stop system. 20 CFR 662.270.
- g. **Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA).** A geographic region of a state designated by the Governor. WIOA Section 106.
- h. **Local Workforce Development Board:** The board created by the chief elected officials with responsibility for the development of the local plan and for oversight of the workforce development activities in the Local Workforce Development Area. WIOA Section 107.
- i. **Local Workforce Development System:** The all-encompassing system within a local area that contributes to preparing workers for jobs, including all WIOA programs, secondary and post-secondary education (both public and private), community-based organizations, non-profits, faith-based organizations, and all of the parties to this Memorandum of Understanding.

- j. **One-Stop Center (also known as CareerForce or American Job Center):** A physical location that provides a full range of services to job seekers and employers under one roof. WDA 7 has locations in Fairmont, Mankato and New Ulm.
- k. **One-Stop Delivery System:** The One-Stop Delivery System is a collaborative effort among public service agencies, non-profit organizations and private entities that administer workforce investment, educational, and other programs to make the variety of services available under those programs more accessible to job seekers and employers.
- l. **Required Partner:** An entity that carries out one or more of the programs or activities identified under WIOA Section 121 (b)(1) and is required under that Section to participate in the One-Stop delivery system and to make services under its program or activity available through the One-Stop System.
- m. **Training Services:** Services that include, but are not limited to occupational skills training, on-the-job training programs that combine workplace training with related instructions, private-sector training programs, skills upgrades, entrepreneurial training, job-readiness training, adult education and literacy activities in combination with a training program, or customized training.
- n. **WIOA:** The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 which outlines the structure of a national workforce preparation and employment system designed to meet the needs of both employers and individuals

3. Local Workforce Development System Description

a. **Overview and General Description**

- i. The WDB is responsible for oversight of the Workforce Development System and is responsible to prescribe the activities and functions of the local system as well as the guidelines to carry out the responsibilities found in the Local WIOA Plan.
- ii. The South Central Workforce Development System consists of three (3) CareerForce locations:
Fairmont CareerForce, 400 S. State Street, Fairmont, MN;
Mankato CareerForce, 12 Civic Center Plaza, Mankato, MN;
New Ulm CareerForce, 1618 S. Broadway, New Ulm, MN.

b. **Administrative Structure:**

- i. State Workforce Agency: MN Department of Employment and Economic Development
332 Minnesota Street, Suite E200
St. Paul, MN 55101
- ii. Administrative Entity: South Central WorkForce Council
706 N. Victory Drive
Mankato, MN 56001
- iii. Fiscal Agent: Minnesota Valley Action Council
706 N. Victory Drive
Mankato, MN 56001

- iv. Chief Elected Officials: South Central Workforce Development Area Joint Powers Board
706 N. Victory Drive
Mankato, MN 56001

- v. One-Stop Operator: Consortium of required Core One-Stop Partners* including:
MN Department of Employment & Economic Development and
Minnesota Valley Action Council
12 Civic Center Plaza
Mankato, MN 56001

4. Term of Agreement:

- a. This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) shall become effective upon the last required signature and shall remain in effect until June 30, 2023, unless terminated earlier pursuant to Section 4(d) below.

- b. This agreement shall be reviewed at least every three years to ensure appropriate funding and delivery of services. This agreement shall be amended as necessary to ensure full compliance with the requirements of WIOA or in the event of an infrastructure change. A renewal of this MOU will be executed in order to remain compliant with WIOA Section 121(c). In the event that the renewal will not be fully executed and effective on the date this MOU expires the appeal process described in item 13 of this document must be initiated.

- c. Any single partner may request to terminate its participation as a party to this MOU as follows:
 - i. Provide written notice to the WDB at least 90 days prior to the intended withdrawal.
 - ii. The WDB will provide written notice within sixty (60) days of the request to all remaining partners.
 - iii. The WDB will amend this MOU once the termination is final.
 - iv. Upon the withdrawal of a mandatory partner, the WDB shall secure a replacement partner to meet the requirements of WIOA.
 - v. The termination of one or more partner's participation as a party will not result in a termination of the MOU unless the number of contribution of the terminating partner(s) is so substantial that it necessitates the negotiation of a new MOU.
 - vi. Any partner that terminates its role as a party to this MOU is no longer eligible to participate as a partner in the Local Workforce Development Area and will not be permitted to serve on the WDB as a One-Stop partner representative.

- d. This MOU shall remain in full force and effect unless:
 - i. A simple majority of partners mutually agree to terminate this agreement;
 - ii. WIOA regulations are repealed and the agreement is no longer necessary; or
 - iii. Modifications are made to the local area designations that render this agreement inapplicable.

- e. If a partner to this MOU loses funding or the authority to administer the federal or state program in the Area and, therefore, no longer qualifies as a required partner, the partner must send written notice of the change in status to the WDB as soon as possible, but no longer than 15 days following the notice of the change. The WDB must notify the MN Department of Employment & Economic Development. This

MOU will be amended. The partner may continue as an Additional Partner if the WDB and remaining partners agree.

f.

5. Partner Responsibilities:

- a. All parties to this agreement have the following responsibilities unless otherwise specified in this section:
 - i. Utilize the local CareerForce locations to provide necessary services to all eligible individuals, including career services provided under the Partner’s program available to individuals through the Area’s one-stop delivery system in accordance with item 6 of this MOU.
 - ii. Participate in cost-sharing activities as described in item 9 and use a portion of funds made available from each partner’s program consistent with the federal law that authorizes each program to:
 - A. Create and maintain the local CareerForce locations; and
 - B. Provide the services required under WIOA §121(e), the One-Stop Delivery System.
 - iii. Participate in the operation of the CareerForce locations according to the terms of this MOU. Remain as a party to this MOU throughout the Agreement period identified in item 4 in order to participate in one-stop center operation.
 - iv. Provide priority of service to veterans and covered spouses for any qualified job training program pursuant to the Jobs for Veterans Act as prescribed in 38 USC 4215.
 - v. Comply with WIOA and all federal, state and local laws, rules and policies applicable to parties in their respective roles under this MOU and consistent with the rules that govern each partner’s respective program. Each partner expressly agrees to notify the WDB of any changes to the rules governing its program that impact that partner’s responsibilities under this MOU.
 - vi. Ensure compliance with the One-Stop Center policies and procedures published on the MN DEED policy website.

6. Programs, Services and Activities:

- a. All required one-stop partner programs are accessible on-site at the comprehensive Mankato CareerForce Center per 20 CFR 678.305. Pursuant to §121 of WIOA the following services and related activities will be provided through the CareerForce locations.

Partner Name	Program Name	Services Provided (<i>see also attached Service Matrix</i>)	Service Delivery Method
MN DEED MVAC	WIOA Title I – Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs	Career Services Training Services (defined in WIOA Section 134 and SC	In person at Fairmont, Mankato, New Ulm CareerForce locations

		WIOA RFP) for eligible adults and dislocated workers.	and non-CareerForce locations identified in Local Plan.
MVAC	WIOA Title I – Youth Programs	Youth Services (defined in WIOA Section 129 and the SC WIOA RFP) for eligible in school and out of school youth.	In person at Fairmont and New Ulm CareerForce locations and non-CareerForce locations identified in Local Plan.
AALC Faribault Co ABE Mankato Area ABE	WIOA Title II – Adult Education and Literacy	ABE, ESL, GED/High School Diploma Services (defined in ABE Application) for eligible learners.	In person at ABE service locations.
MN Dept. of Employment & Economic Development	WIOA Title III – Wagner-Peyser & Migrant Seasonal Farmworker Programs	Wagner Peyser Services as defined in the State Plan including labor exchange and business services.	In person at Fairmont, Mankato, and New Ulm CareerForce locations and through on-line job bank
MN DEED	WIOA Title IV – Rehabilitation Act, Title I, Vocational Rehabilitation Services	Vocational Rehabilitation Services as defined by WIOA Title IV and the Rehabilitation Services Act for eligible individuals that meet priority.	In person at the Fairmont, Mankato and New Ulm CareerForce locations.
MN DEED & MVAC	MN Statute §116L.17 – State Dislocated Worker Program	Dislocated Worker Career and Training Services as defined by MN Statute 116L.17 for eligible dislocated workers.	In person at Fairmont, Mankato, and New Ulm CareerForce locations and non-CareerForce locations identified in Local Plan.
Minnesota Valley Action Council	MN Statute §116L.56 Minnesota Youth Program	Youth Services as defined by MN Statute for eligible youth.	In person at Fairmont and New Ulm CareerForce locations and non-CareerForce locations identified in Local Plan.
MN DEED	Chapter 41 Title 38, USC – Jobs for Veterans	Veteran Services as defined by Chapter 41 Title 38 for eligible veterans.	In person at the Fairmont, Mankato and New Ulm CareerForce locations.
MN DEED	Unemployment Insurance and Re-Employment Services	Unemployment Insurance Payments and Re-Employment Services defined by MN Statute for eligible individuals.	On-line or by phone bank and in person at the Fairmont, Mankato and New Ulm CareerForce locations.

MN DEED MRCI MVAC Watonwan Co E&T	Social Security Act – part A of Title IV Programs (TANF)	MFIP (TANF), DWP and SNAP E&T services as defined by SSA Title IV and MN Statute for individuals referred by the County.	In person at the Fairmont and New Ulm CareerForce locations, MVAC Brown, LeSueur, Nicollet, Sibley & Waseca County offices, MRCI Blue Earth County office, and Watonwan County E&T office.
Minnesota Valley Action Council Senior Service America, Inc./ MET, Inc.	Older Americans Act Title V – Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)	Senior Community Service Employment Services as defined by the Older Americans Act Title V for eligible older workers.	In person at the Fairmont, Mankato, New Ulm CareerForce locations, and non-CareerForce locations identified in the local plan. Services provided through referral to staff located in Dakota County for individuals in LeSueur, Sibley & Waseca Counties.
MN DEED MVAC	Trade Act Title II, Chapter 2 – Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)	Trade Adjustment Assistance and RTAA Services as defined in the Trade Act Title II for eligible dislocated workers.	In person at the Fairmont, Mankato, and New Ulm CareerForce locations in cooperation with centralized services at MN DEED located in St. Paul
South Central Service Cooperative	Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education	Development Career and Technical Education as defined by the local SCSC Carl Perkins Plan.	Collaboration of 26 schools districts, 2 Education Districts, South Central College and SC Service Cooperative.
Minnesota Valley Action Council	Community Services Block Grant Employment and Training Activities	Local access to services and support services for low income individuals.	In person services through MN Valley Action Council County Offices.
MN DEED	State Services for the Blind	Services for the visually impaired to live independently and prepare for employment.	In person at Mankato CareerForce location and home visits
MET, Inc.	Motivation Education & Training –National Farmworker Jobs Program	Provides employment and training services for migrant and seasonal farmworkers	In person services at Waseca office.

- b. Pursuant to §121(b)(2)(8) of WIOA the following partners may be included as additional programs provided through the WDC.

Partner Name	Program Name	Services Provided	Service Delivery Method
Life Work Planning Center	MN Family Resiliency Program SNAP E&T	MN Family Resiliency program services as defined by MN Statute for eligible individuals and SNAP E&T services.	In person at LWPC and workshops provided at other locations as appropriate.

7. Method of Referral:

- a. The parties agree that the referral of clients between the One-Stop partners for the services and activities described in item 6 will be performed using the following methods:
- i. Customers access services through one common reception area at each CareerForce location.
 - ii. Based on information collected from the client, direct referrals are made to the appropriate program staff. Program staff will make direct contact with other program staff for referrals either in-person, by telephone or written correspondence, sharing allowable information about the customer.
 - iii. A workforce development referral form may be used when appropriate especially for partner services that are not co-located at the CareerForce locations.
 - iv. Clients will only be referred to the specialized services of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Services for the Blind or Veteran Services when the specialized services are requested or additional screening for Veteran Services identifies a referral is appropriate.
 - v. Semi-annual staff training keep CareerForce partners updated and informed about services and appropriate referrals.

8. One-Stop Operator

- a. The South Central WorkForce Council identified through a competitive request for proposal process the consortium of core required partners* as the One-Stop Operator for the three CareerForce locations located in the LWDA. The consortium includes MN Department of Employment and Economic Development partners and MN Valley Action Council.
- b. The role of the One-Stop Operator is to coordinate the service delivery of required CareerForce partners and service providers. In this role, the One-Stop Operator will ensure that services provided through the CareerForce locations meet the needs of its customers (business and job seekers) in an efficient and effect manner.
- c. Duties include:
- i. Provide leadership for local CareerForce locations on-site operations, space configuration, customer flow and integration of services.
 - ii. Maintain appropriate and updated publicly posted ADA posters, ensure building accessibility meets requirements and develop/address safety plans/requirements with the support of the South Central WorkForce Council.
 - iii. Address building/facility needs, including recommending solutions related to growth and space utilization.

- iv. Promote CareerForce program services, internally and externally, in partnership with the South Central WorkForce Council.
- v. Participate in partner meetings.
- vi. Participate in CareerForce Certification process.
- vii. Report operational updates and outcomes to the South Central WorkForce Council as requested
- viii. Support and develop networks between workforce, economic development, education and community groups.
- ix. Create and maintain a welcoming and professional CareerForce environment.
- x. Facilitate inclusive services and operating environment.
- xi. Ensure resource area and reception staff are trained and provide quality customer services to job seekers and employers.
- xii. Participate in the evaluation of customer needs and satisfaction to continually refine and improve service strategies.
- xiii. Participate in the development of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and resource sharing agreements (for example, cost allocation/infrastructure plans, office closing policies, dress codes, holiday scheduling, etc.).
- xiv. Be knowledgeable of the mission and performance standards of all partners (including South Central Workforce Council) and facilitate/participate in cross-training among staff.
- xv. Comply with all WIOA and MN DEED regulations and policies governing the operations of a one-stop center.
- xvi. Other duties as assigned relevant to local needs.

- d. One-Stop Operator services will be provided by a combination of in-kind contributions of staff time by the consortium of core required partners* and \$3,000 provided by the South Central WorkForce Council as identified in the One-Stop Operator MOU.

9. Funding and Resource Sharing:

Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFAs) for the three CareerForce Centers are attached to MOU. These documents are serving as interim IFAs for the first six months of the time period of the MOU per (c) of 20 CFR 678.715.

WIOA Section 121(c) and 20 CFR 662.270 require that the funding arrangements for services and operating costs of the One-Stop Centers must be described in this MOU.

- a. The methodologies described herein must be allowable under each partner's respective program and under all applicable federal and state rules, including the Office of Management and Budget circulars applicable to each partner's type of organization. Per 66 Federal Regulations 29638, this MOU must identify:
 - i. Shared One-Stop Center costs:
 - A. Each party's proportionate fair share of the one stop center costs;
 - B. Each party's fair share of costs across the cost categories;
 - C. The following methods will be utilized by each party to fund its fair share of costs, to include: cash contributions, contributions of staff time, equipment and/or other resources or in-kind contributions.
 - ii. One-Stop Operating Costs
 - A. Shared operating costs;
 - B. Projected cost amounts

C. Each party's method of funding its fair share of the costs.

iii. Cost Allocation/Infrastructure Agreements

- A. Shared costs will be identified through cost sharing/infrastructure agreements that are reviewed and negotiated as necessary on an annual basis.
- B. Cost sharing plans/infrastructure agreements are included as an attachment to the MOU and hereby incorporated.
- C. All parties agree that the initial costs outlined above are subject to change as actual costs are incurred and paid during the term of this MOU;
- D. The parties agree to execute an amendment to this MOU to reflect the changes to cost sharing;
- E. Any time the cost sharing agreement is modified, the WDB will provide all parties with notice of the modification and a copy of the modified Agreement.

10. Programmatic Accessibility

All partners agree to utilize methods to ensure that the needs of workers, youth, and individuals with barriers to employment, including individuals with disabilities, are addressed in providing access to services, including access to technology and materials that are available through the one-stop delivery system. Method descriptions include but are not limited to:

Technology – Accessible technology for those who are visually or hearing impaired at CareerForce locations; use of CareerForce.com to share program and activity information; e-mail blasts of training, employment and career services to registrants of the system and partners; the use of other on-line/social media resources to promote the system, such as Facebook.

Materials – Printed materials about services at partner locations and printed materials in multiple languages.

11. Amendments:

- a. Any material change to this MOU requires a written Amendment.
- b. This MOU may be amended upon the mutual agreement of the parties if it is consistent with federal, state, and local laws, plans or policies; or for one or more of the following reasons:
 - i. The addition or removal of a partner from this MOU.
 - ii. Removal or addition of program responsibilities for any partner that administers more than one federal program.
 - iii. A change in the One-Stop Operator of fiscal agent or a change in the physical location of a One-Stop center.
 - iv. A change in the services, service delivery method currently utilized or referral methods.
 - v. A change in a cost sharing agreement/IFA.
 - vi. If funding cuts by one or more programs are so substantial that One-Stop operations cannot continue as specified herein and a new MOU must be negotiated.
- c. All amendments to this MOU must be signed by the authorized representatives of the WDB, the Chief Elected Officials and the partners unless the amendment is specific to one partner and not the whole agreement.

- d. If an amendment is requested by a partner relating specifically to that partner's duties and it will not impact the other partners, that partner may request an amendment.
 - i. The partner asking for the amendment must submit the request in writing to the WDB which outlines the proposed amendment, the reason for the amendment, the effective date, each section/item of this MOU that will require revision, and the signature of the requesting partner's authorized representative.
 - ii. The WDB will notify all remaining partners of the proposed amendment and provide those partners 15 days to comment on the proposed amendment. Failure by a partner to respond within the 15 days shall be deemed to be an approval of the proposed changes.
 - iii. Any questions or comments raised about the proposed amendment will be reviewed by the WDB. The WDB will submit a response within 30 days of the comment.
 - iv. If the amendment is approved, the approved amendment will be signed by the authorized representative of the affected partners and then signed by the WDB.
 - v. The WDB will distribute copies of the fully executed Amendment to all partners and MN DEED upon execution.
- e. The Agreement constitutes the entire agreement among the parties with respect to each party's role and responsibility in the Area's One-Stop system. All parties agree that any amendments to any applicable laws or regulations cited herein will result in the correlative modification of the MOU without necessitating a formal, written agreement.
- f. All parties agree to communicate details of the amendment to their respective staff members whose responsibilities may be impacted by changes and further agree to ensure that their respective staff members are referencing or utilizing the most current version of the MOU and attachments in the performance of responsibilities under this MOU.

12. Confidentiality and Data Privacy:

- a. Each partner and all other parties agree to abide by all applicable federal, state and local laws regarding confidential information. All WDB members have executed the Conflict of Interest Disclosure.
- b. For purposes of this MOU, each partner is determined to be part of the Welfare System as defined in Minnesota Statutes §13.46 and as such, the parties are subject to the rules and requirements of the Minnesota Data Practices Act.
- c. Each party will ensure that the collection and use of any information, systems or records that contain personal identifying data will be limited to purposes that support the programs and activities as described in this Memorandum of Understanding.
- d. Each party will ensure that access to software systems and files under its control that contain personal identifying information will be limited to authorized staff members who are assigned responsibilities in support of the services and activities provided as part of the One-Stop system and who must access the

information to perform those responsibilities. Each party expressly agrees to take measures to ensure that no personal identifying information is accessible by unauthorized individuals.

13. Dispute Resolution

The parties agree to work together to resolve all disputes. In the event that all reasonable attempts to resolve an impasse at the local level are unsuccessful, the following process must be followed:

- a. The local WDB and partners must document the negotiations and efforts that have taken place in the development of the MOU. The Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB), One-Stop partner programs, and the Governor may consult with the appropriate Federal agencies to address impasse situations related to issues other than the infrastructure funding after attempting to address the impasse. Impasses related to infrastructure funding must be resolved using the State infrastructure cost funding mechanism described in 20 CFR 678.730.
- b. The local WDB must report failure to execute an MOU with a required partner to the Governor, GWDB, and the State agency responsible for administering the partner's program (20 CFR 361.510).
- c. If necessary, the GWDB will act as mediator to assist all parties to come to agreement on an MOU.
- d. If after mediation an impasse still exists, the GWDB will approve an MOU that will be binding to all parties included in the MOU.

14. Limitation of Liability:

- a. To the extent permitted by law, each party is responsible for any liability that directly relates to its own acts or omissions or the acts or omissions of its employees. In no event, will any party be liable for any indirect or consequential damages caused by actions or omissions of another party or by the employees of another party.

15. General Provisions:

- a. The laws and regulations listed in this section are generally applicable to most publicly funded programs administered by the WDB and MN DEED. The laws and regulations herein do not encompass all the laws and regulations that govern the parties in their respective roles under this MOU. All parties expressly agree to comply with the federal laws and regulations listed below unless the laws and regulations that govern a specific program state otherwise:
 - i. Jobs for Veterans Act. Each party agrees to provide priority of service to veterans and covered spouses for any qualified job training program pursuant to 38 USC 2813.
 - ii. Americans with Disabilities Act. Each party, its officers, employees, members, and subcontractors hereby affirm current and ongoing compliance with all statutes and regulations pertaining to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
 - iii. Drug-Free Workplace. Each party, its officers, employees, members, sub-recipient(s) and/or any independent contractors (including all field staff) associated with this MOU agree to comply with 29 CFR 94 and all other applicable state and federal laws regarding a drug-free workplace and to make a good faith effort to maintain a drug-free workplace. Each party will make a good faith effort to ensure that none of each party's officers, employees, members, and

sub-recipient(s) will purchase, transfer, use, or possess illegal drugs or alcohol or abuse prescription drugs in any way while working or while on public property.

- iv. Ethics Laws. Each party certifies that by executing this MOU, it has reviewed, knows and understands the State of Minnesota's ethics and conflict of interest laws. Each party further agrees that it will not engage in any action(s) inconsistent with Minnesota Ethics laws.

16. Partial Invalidity:

- a. This MOU will be governed, construed, and enforced in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws. Should any portion of this MOU be found unenforceable by operation of statute or by administrative or judicial decision, it is the intention of the parties that the remaining portions of this MOU will not be affected so long as performance remains feasible with the absence of the illegal or unenforceable provision(s).

17. Authorized Signatures:

- a. This agreement may be executed in one, or more than one counterpart. Each executed counterpart will be considered an original, provided that the counterpart is delivered by facsimile, mail courier, or electronic mail, all of which together will constitute one and the same agreement.

The proper parties having signed this Memorandum of Understanding; the parties wish to be bound by the terms of this Agreement:

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING SIGNATURE PAGE
LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREA #7
ONE-STOP OPERATIONS**

By signing below, all parties mutually agree to the terms prescribed herein.


South Central WDA Joint Powers Board

South Central WorkForce Council

Commissioner John Roper, Chair
Printed Name & Title

Deborah Barnes, Chair
Printed Name & Title


Signature 6/15/2020
Date

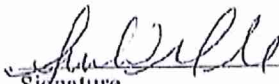

Signature 6/19/20
Date

Minnesota Valley Action Council

MN Dept. of Employment & Economic Development

Amanda Mackie, Executive Director
Printed Name & Title

Reggie Worlds, Area Manager
Printed Name & Title


Signature 6/11/2020
Date

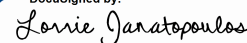

Signature 6-14 2020
Date

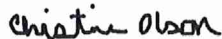
**MN Dept. of Employment & Economic Development
Wagner Peyser & Jobs for Veterans**

**MN Dept. of Employment & Economic Development
Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

Lorrie Janatopoulos, CareerForce Director
Printed Name & Title

Christine Olson, Area Manager
Printed Name & Title

DocuSigned by:

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Signature
Date



Signature 6/22/2020
Date

**MN Dept. of Employment & Economic Development
Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

**MN Dept. of Employment & Economic Development
State Services for the Blind**

Dee Torgerson, VRS Director
Printed Name & Title

Natasha Jerde, SSB Director
Printed Name & Title

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Signature
Date

DocuSigned by:

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Signature
Date

**MN Dept. of Employment & Economic Development
Trade Adjustment Assistance**

Marc Majors, ETP Director
Printed Name & Title

DocuSigned by:
Marc Majors
329125E063DC4BB
Signature Date

**MN Dept. of Employment & Economic Development
Unemployment Compensation**

Blake Chaffee, Deputy Commissioner
Printed Name & Title

DocuSigned by:
Blake Chaffee
F4F643F80BEE461
Signature Date

Area Adult Learning Cooperative - ABE

Nathan Warden, Coordinator
Printed Name & Title

Nathan Warden 6/22/2020
Signature Date

Faribault County Adult Basic Education

Sue Vogelsang, Manager
Printed Name & Title

Sue Vogelsang 6/25/2020
Signature Date

Mankato Area Adult Basic Education

Karen Wolters, Coordinator
Printed Name & Title

Karen Wolters 6/16/2020
Signature Date

**South Central Service Cooperative
CTE Programs - Carl Perkins**

Glenn Morris, Director
Printed Name & Title

Glenn Morris 06-22-2020
Signature Date

**MRCI
MFIP, SNAP E&T**

Brian Benshoof, CEO
Printed Name & Title

Brian Benshoof 6/22/2020
Signature Date


**Motivation, Education & Training, Inc.
National Farmworkers Jobs Program**

Cynthia Arzola, NFJP Director
Printed Name & Title

Cynthia Arzola 6/22/2020
Signature Date

Motivation Education & Training, Inc.
National Farmworkers Jobs Program

Ariana Boelter, State Specialist
Printed Name & Title

 6/30/2020
Signature Date

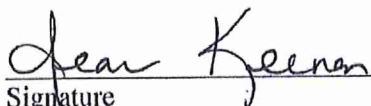
Motivational Education & Training, Inc.
Senior Community Service Employment Program

Cindy Labanzat, Operations Manager
Printed Name & Title

 6-22-2020
Signature Date

Life Work Planning Center
MN Family Resiliency Partnership

Jean Keenan, Executive Director
Printed Name & Title

 6-16-2020
Signature Date