

**mn** MINNESOTA  
GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE  
DEVELOPMENT BOARD

# Report to the Legislature

JANUARY 2021



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## ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is a collaborative publication from the Governor’s Workforce Development Board (GWDB), its Executive Committee, and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) as mandated by Minnesota Statutes, section 116L.665, subdivision 4. The GWDB approved this report at its December 9, 2020 meeting of the full board. Total cost of salaries, printing, and supplies in developing/preparing this report is \$6,460 (reported as required by Minn. Stat. 3.197).

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**DEAR GOVERNOR WALZ AND MEMBERS OF THE  
MINNESOTA STATE LEGISLATURE:**

Dear Governor Walz and Members of the Minnesota State Legislature:

As a new year and a new legislative session begins, I am pleased to share the 2021 Legislative Report of the Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB) to the Governor and the Minnesota State Legislature. This report satisfies the Board's state statutory responsibility to provide recommendations for talent development, resource alignment, and system effectiveness for our state's workforce development system to ensure and grow Minnesota's competitive edge.

While our state's public workforce development system has made progress toward accomplishing the vision and goals of our 2020-2023 State Plan, which was approved by the U.S. Department of Labor in June, our economy and workforce are in very different places than they were when the State Plan was developed between late 2019 through early 2020. The GWDB plans to revise the State Plan later this year and into early 2022, as required by U.S. DOL, which will likely require some significant revisions to the strategies laid out in the current State Plan.

The GWDB recognizes that much work remains ahead as our state looks to recover economically from the impacts of COVID-19, particularly as we continue the important mission of eliminating disparities and the barriers to sustainable employment that impact some communities in our state more disproportionately than others. Sadly, these same communities that were experiencing disparities prior to COVID-19 have also been the most impacted by the economic downturns stemming from the pandemic. In order to help all Minnesotans get onto a career pathway that will lead them to a family sustaining income, we must continue to align and invest in industry-driven approaches aimed at reducing educational, skills training, and employment disparities based on race, disability, disconnected youth, or gender.

The Board looks forward to working with legislators and state agency leadership in the important work ahead. Thank you for your thoughtful review of this report and consideration of our recommendations.

Sincerely,

Laura Beeth, Chair

Governor's Workforce Development Board

# ABOUT THE GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD



## STRATEGIC PLAN, GOALS AND PRIORITIES

State-level workforce development advisory boards have existed across the nation to advise governors and legislatures since the passage of the federal Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) in 1982. JTPA was later replaced by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in 1998, but the most significant changes and modernization of workforce development policies were enacted by the United States Congress with bipartisan support in 2014 under the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). With the implementation of WIOA came a mandate

for State Workforce Development Boards to be business-led by having business leaders from in-demand industries serve as the majority of members on the board, while it also explicitly ensured that other vital workforce partners are represented on the state board, including representatives of labor, education, community-based organizations, and government at both the state and local levels.

The Governor's Workforce Development Board's Strategic Plan for 2020-2023, as required under WIOA, is [The One Minnesota State Combined Plan](#)<sup>1</sup>, which was approved by the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Education. This plan is built on strategies developed by GWDB members that require partnerships at the state, regional and local levels. The Vision of the plan is for Minnesota to have a healthy economy, where every Minnesotan has meaningful employment and a family-sustaining wage, and employers are able to fill jobs in demand.

### Goals

1. Reduce educational, skills training, and employment disparities based on race, disability, gender, or disconnected youth.
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.

### Priority Strategies

The most effective method to achieve these goals is to strategically build on the state's robust Career Pathways System and to align with the purposes of WIOA and the needs of Minnesota's businesses and workforce. Our six priority strategies are:

1. Business engagement
2. Community engagement
3. Customer-centered design
4. Funding and resources
5. Policy and system alignment
6. System management

### Governance

Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB) members are appointed by the Governor and are key leaders from across the state representing business, education, labor, community-based organizations, and government. Some members of the board are federally required under WIOA, while other member positions were created by the Minnesota State Legislature in [State Statutes 116L.665](#). Under WIOA, the GWDB has a responsibility to advise the Governor on Minnesota's workforce system, and to promote policies and strategies to be utilized by the state system in order to better align and coordinate programs across agencies and partners. Members collaborate to build a shared vision, mission, and goals around workforce strategies and opportunities for the state, which can be found in the WIOA State Plan developed under the guidance of the GWDB. More information is at <https://mn.gov/deed/gwdb/>.

<sup>1</sup> The 2020-2023 WIOA State Plan for Minnesota is available online at [https://mn.gov/deed/assets/wioa-state-plan\\_tcm1045-443536.pdf](https://mn.gov/deed/assets/wioa-state-plan_tcm1045-443536.pdf).

# INTRODUCTION

In late fall 2019, Minnesota was experiencing record low unemployment and the biggest concern for most employers in the state at the time was a shortage of qualified candidates to fill job vacancies. The economic picture has changed dramatically in one year’s time. Minnesota’s over-the-year payroll employment loss stood at 187,897 in October 2020, down 6.2%, while the private sector lost 158,253 jobs, down 6.1%. These were both improvements from September’s annual declines of 6.8% and 6.7%.

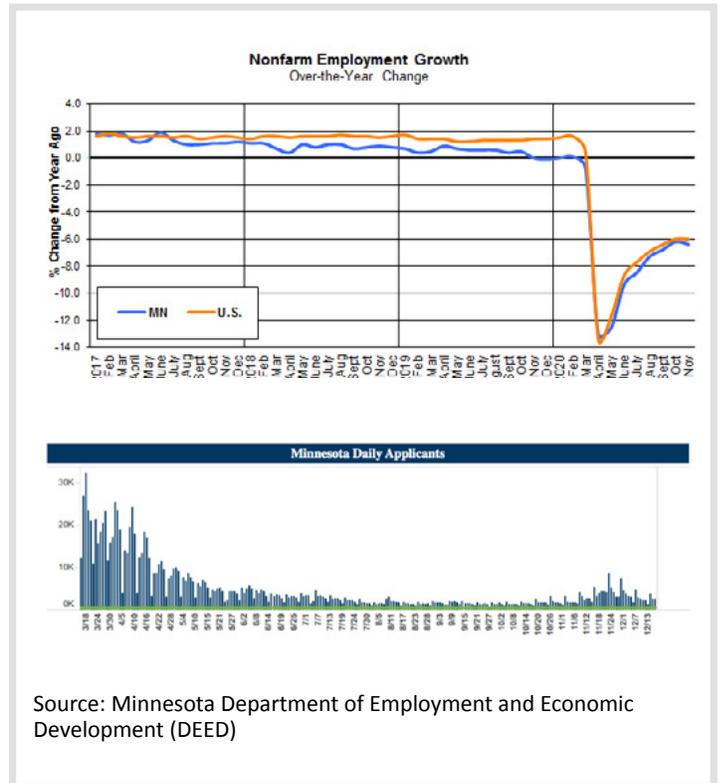
U.S. over-the-year job loss stood at 6.0% with the private sector down 6.2% in October.

Annual job losses were greatest in Leisure & Hospitality, down 24.5% or 67,143 jobs. Logging & Mining decreased 15.3% or 1,041 jobs, Information was down 13.8% or 6,345 jobs and Other Services fell 7.9% or 9,015 jobs over the year.

Three Minnesota sectors showed strength compared to the nation: Manufacturing was down 4.3% in Minnesota compared to 4.6% nationwide. Trade, Transportation & Utilities declined 1.2% in Minnesota compared to 3.5% nationwide. Professional & Business Services fell 2.7% in Minnesota compared to 4.8% nationwide.<sup>1</sup>

Like other states, Minnesota has experienced record numbers of filings for unemployment insurance. Since March 16, 2020, the number of individuals who have applied for benefits is 1,154,506.<sup>2</sup> Demand for business aid is similarly dire. Nearly 14,000 Minnesota employers received at least \$150,000 in federal Paycheck Protection Program loans.<sup>3</sup> At the state level, the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) awarded \$10,000 grants through its Small Business Relief Grant program; of the more than 27,000 applications received, DEED’s funding could only support grants to 5,780 businesses.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, some businesses that received small business emergency loans earlier in the pandemic are now unable to access or apply for other grant programs in the future due to varying state or federal restrictions.

Minnesota’s State Rapid Response Team (SRRT) at DEED exists to assist workers and businesses through the inevitable periods of economic transition that will occur throughout the business cycle. Fundamentally, its goal is straightforward: to prevent layoffs when possible, limit their impact on workers should they occur, and help dislocated workers transition to new employment as



Source: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)

quickly as possible. Since February 15, 2020, the SRRT has been working to track all layoffs throughout the state due to the COVID-19 pandemic. SRRT layoffs include any Mass Layoff (50 or more affected workers), Small Layoff (Under 50 employees affected), and businesses that have informed the SRRT they would be temporarily laying off or furloughing their workforce. To date, the SRRT has worked with approximately 279 businesses affecting 31,106 employees. The SRRT is reconnecting with employers who were initially laying off temporarily or furloughing their employees; an increasing number of businesses have decided they will be permanently shutting their doors.

The CareerForce team at DEED, in partnership with the boards and staff from each of the state’s 16 local workforce development boards, have also worked since the pandemic to establish more services that can be accessed online rather than by first visiting a CareerForce location as done prior to COVID-19. The CareerForce website – [www.CareerForceMN.com](http://www.CareerForceMN.com) – has been regularly updated since March to provide more of these services on the system’s website, including new tools like virtual career fairs, online workshops, and access to no-cost online learning through the Coursera platform. While there was a need to deliver more services through innovative, digital means prior to COVID-19, the need is now more vital than ever.

# A GLOBAL PANDEMIC AND CLASHES OVER JUSTICE, RACIAL AND ECONOMIC EQUITY



The first known case of coronavirus was detected in Minnesota in late February 2020.<sup>5</sup> By March, the number of positive cases had grown exponentially, attributed to travel and community spread, and the state's first documented death from COVID-19 occurred on March 21.

Initially, most deaths occurred in congregate care settings for the aging population but, over time, people in younger age groups experienced symptoms and tested positive for coronavirus. Case patterns in Midwestern states are currently spiking, and COVID-19 has reached every corner of the state, including metropolitan and rural areas. As of December 1, more than 4.2 million tests have identified 322,312 cases, and over 3,615 Minnesotans have died as a result of the virus.<sup>6</sup> These numbers are expected to continue to climb dramatically in the coming weeks.

Governor Tim Walz issued emergency orders to close public schools, bars and restaurants, and places of public accommodation and amusement. Subsequent emergency orders re-opened most sectors of the economy in late May but instituted capacity limits on bars and restaurants, and many businesses in the public accommodation and amusement industry remain closed. Some essential businesses, such as meat processing plants, have struggled to contain virus outbreaks, necessitating periodic shutdowns of major processing plants and hindering employment and wages for whole communities. Additionally, although Minnesota is a hub for medicine and medical innovation, many layoffs have occurred in the medical sector as a result of halting nonessential procedures in order to stockpile and ration personal protective equipment.

On May 25, 2020, the impact of the public health threat and a stay-at-home order, sudden loss of employment, and outrage over Minneapolis police officers' use of force in the death of George Floyd caused residents of the Twin Cities and beyond to converge on Minneapolis to protest the brutality captured on a by-stander's cell phone. Protests, which continued into the summer months, have been documented in all 50 states and internationally.<sup>7</sup>

In Minnesota, as well as across the nation, those most negatively impacted by the pandemic and the civil unrest have been disproportionately Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC), as well as those living and working in low-income communities.<sup>8</sup> For example, pre-pandemic, the American Indian population in Minnesota was experiencing widespread homelessness, but COVID-19 and the economic downturn have greatly exacerbated this problem, forcing many individuals and families to live in encampments.<sup>9</sup>

On November 18, Governor Walz announced new emergency order requirements that take effect beginning at 12:00 AM on Saturday, November 21. As of November 22, these requirements include no indoor dining at restaurants or bars, no public indoor entertainment facilities, and limits on the number and types of in-person gatherings allowed for the coming month.

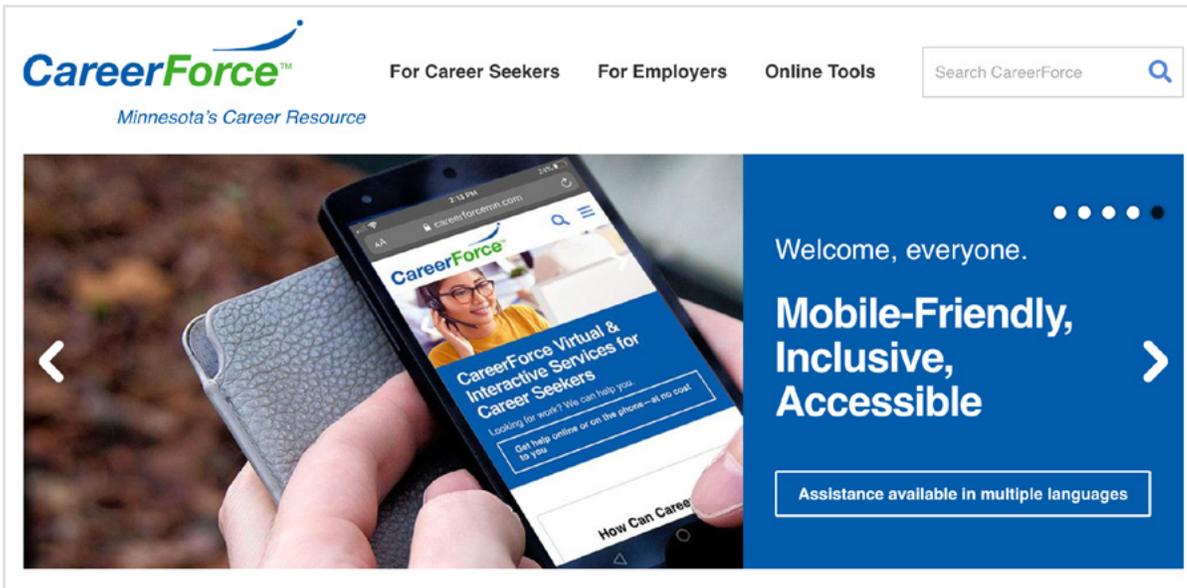
In Minnesota, these simultaneous and catastrophic events have impacted every community across the state, but particularly the state's urban centers, especially Minneapolis and St. Paul, who have experienced the greatest levels of social unrest. Strong and vital industries throughout Greater Minnesota, including food processing, manufacturing, and tourism, have all taken enormous hits, while many small businesses have been forced to drastically change their business models just to survive or close their doors entirely.

This report:

- Highlights labor market information data regarding workforce trends
- Reviews the Minnesota Strategic Plan's goals and progress on six strategic priorities
- Recaps regional planning approaches by the workforce development system
- Presents the GWDB's recommendations on strategies and actions for policy makers
- Provides an at-a-glance overview of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs in Minnesota

# CAREERFORCE

In a collaborative effort led by the GWDB, the Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards (MAWB), and DEED, a unified public workforce system was created under the CareerForce name and brand as a way to improve Minnesota’s delivery system of services that are typically provided at or through the almost-50 CareerForce locations (formerly WorkForce Centers) around the state, and to bring the online labor exchange, career services, and other resources under one “roof”. CareerForce combines state and federal funding to support the work of the 16 Local Workforce Development Boards, the GWDB, and various nonprofit partners into one system. However, WIOA-funded programs and other workforce development programming that does not pass through DEED when administered at the state level are not considered “CareerForce programs” and have not been branded as such. More can be learned about the CareerForce system and services at [www.CareerForceMN.com](http://www.CareerForceMN.com).



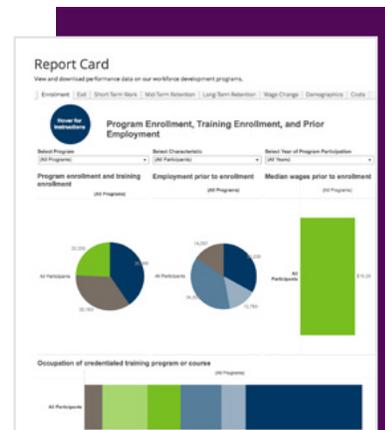
Screen shot of CareerForce website

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

Core to our state's workforce development system are the eligibility-based programs for individuals with barriers to employment and the formula-allocated funds from the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). As part of the system innovation under WIOA, Minnesota provides performance data and information in web-based interactive tools and an annual summary report. The GWDB and its Operations Committee helped to develop and support these tools and reports. Highlights of these efforts are summarized below.

### PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES - WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

- Uniform Report Card** – The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) measures the performance of all the programs it funds or provides at the state level. [The Uniform Report Card](#) shows activities and employment outcomes for select workforce development programs by education level, race, ethnicity, gender and geography. Because this web-based tool is regularly updated, accessing the link provides current data not available on a static point-in-time chart.
- Annual WIOA Report** – System management is a coordinated effort of the GWDB, state agencies and programs that are part of the Strategic Plan, regional workforce development entities and local workforce development boards. The GWDB's Operations Committee has a review and oversight role to ensure the performance data required by the federally funded workforce development programs for WIOA is collected and reported. The most recent Minnesota Annual Report for WIOA highlights the programs and contains performance outcomes. It is posted online on DEED's website ([Annual Report](#)).
- Performance Management Department** – DEED administrators inform strategic direction by providing data-driven analysis and context to those who use, deliver and fund the Minnesota economic and workforce development systems. The Performance Management Office's three core functions are information analysis, management analysis and outreach. This office coordinates the Annual WIOA Report.
- The State Longitudinal Educational Data System (SLEDS)** is a data sharing project governed by the Minnesota P-20 Education Partnership and jointly managed by the Minnesota Office of Higher Education, Minnesota Department of Education and DEED. The project brings together data from education and workforce tracking systems to identify viable pathways for individuals to achieve successful outcomes in education and work; inform decisions to support and improve education and workforce policy and practice; and assist in creating a more seamless education and workforce system for all Minnesotans.



### MINNESOTA'S WIOA POLICY AND GUIDANCE

Service providers rely on DEED policies to ensure that their services comply with federal and state laws and rules and with DEED policy requirements. DEED's policies and guidance are also an important means for implementing department and program priorities and providing assistance on how service providers can meet program requirements. DEED's Policy and Guidance for WIOA, CareerForce, Complaints, Equal Opportunity and Public Comments are posted on DEED's website at <https://mn.gov/deed/about/what-guides-us/governance/policy.jsp>.

## MINNESOTA’S WORKFORCE SYSTEM UNDER WIOA: STATE, REGIONAL, AND LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS

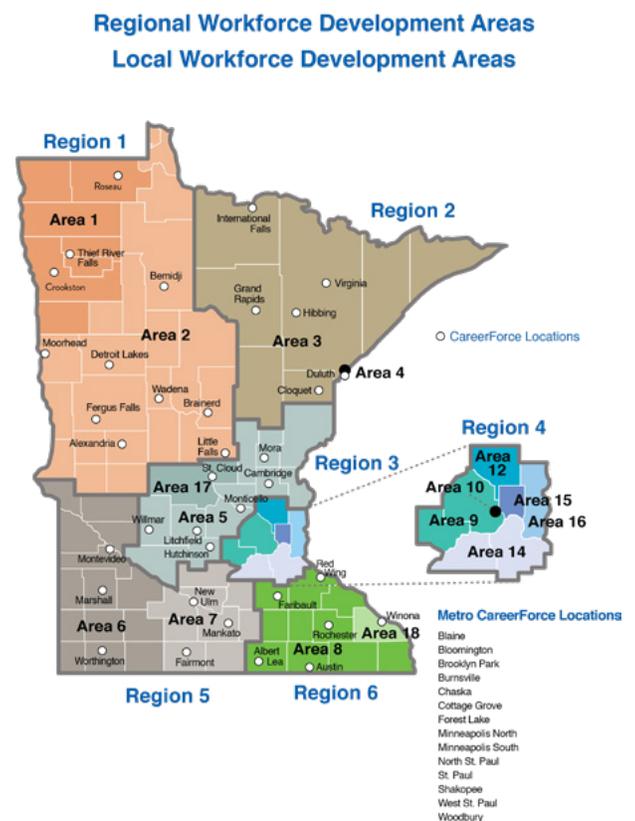
Under WIOA, state workforce boards like the GWDB provide guidance and set the mission and vision of the state’s public workforce development system. WIOA also creates a layered level of system governance for the purposes of promoting partnerships, fiscal administration, and then actually delivering programming and services at the local level. When WIOA was first being implemented in Minnesota in 2014-15, the Dayton Administration chose to largely keep the existing public workforce development system intact when Governor Dayton used his authority under WIOA to designate 16 local workforce development areas (WDAs) that existed under pre-WIOA legislation. Each of the WDAs is governed by a local workforce development board whose memberships are based on the composition of the state board, which includes business representatives, education and labor partners, community-based organizations, and local elected officials. The administrative entities for each board, along with the geographic areas they serve, vary by local area but include single local government entities, multiple local governments utilizing a joint-powers agreement, and nonprofit entities. All of the local workforce development boards are also members of the [Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards \(MAWB\)](#), formerly the Minnesota Workforce Council Association (MWCA).

WIOA also tasked states with doing more strategic planning and supporting industry-led partnerships at the regional level to strike a balance between very localized efforts and the focus of the state boards. Members and staff of local workforce development boards have developed various partnerships for regional planning purposes, including the creation of a regional WIOA plan (similar to the local workforce plans that local workforce development boards must develop and approve under guidance from the GWDB and DEED).

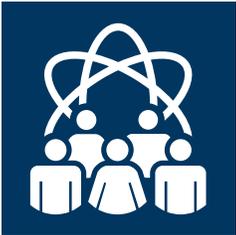
While WIOA and guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor encourages states to more effectively leverage state funding by incorporating state workforce efforts into the structured system that WIOA sought to create for states, Minnesota thus far has not fully broken down these barriers between state-funded and federally-funded programs. This has largely led to Minnesota, in many ways, having multiple workforce development “systems” – one federally-funded through WIOA and one funded by the State of Minnesota, with WDAs finding ways to “braid” state and federal funding streams to create a more cohesive effort and structure at the local level. Additionally, workforce programs that are not funded through a standard competitive grant process usually have little to no connection to the existing system or the strategic workforce plans developed by the LWDA or RWDA to serve individuals in the same community or geographic area.

In order to actualize the goals of the GWDB – creating more career pathways for all Minnesotans through industry-led partnerships and programs and eliminating economic disparities along the way – the local and regional workforce development boards are tasked with developing their local and regional plans with the GWDB’s WIOA State Plan serving as a guide (in addition to guidance developed by DEED in cooperation with the GWDB). In addition to strategic planning, providing services, and administering contracts with local grantees, the GWDB’s 2020-2023 WIOA State Plan lays out the expectation that local workforce development boards continue to engage with industry and other partners but to also prioritize community engagement and outreach beyond existing partners as a way to improve access to services for populations facing barriers to employment.

The adjoining map shows Minnesota’s local and regional workforce development areas (WDAs):



## WORKFORCE SYSTEM ADMINISTRATION – STRATEGIC PLANNING



Minnesota’s Strategic Plan for WIOA was developed as a comprehensive partnership plan. Only a few states undertook the challenge to develop this type of plan for submission to federal agency administrators, as it requires more state partners to be involved and participate. The process requires collaboration, commitment to a customer-centered design and approach, and a willingness to share information and work with teams across various state-level partners across agencies. The resulting outcome provides ongoing opportunities for partners to continue collaborating on continuous improvements to Minnesota’s workforce development system, and a framework for continuous improvement that can be utilized at the state, regional, or local levels.

The One Minnesota State Combined Plan for 2020-23 is posted on the DEED and GWDB websites. The GWDB previously fulfilled its duties by gaining approval of Minnesota’s Strategic Plan for WIOA 2016-2020 and the April 2018 two-year plan revisions as required by the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education.

### STRATEGIC PLAN – GOALS AND PROGRESS ON THE SIX PRIORITIES

The most effective method to achieve the two goals of Minnesota’s Strategic Plan is to strategically build on the state’s robust Career Pathways System and align it with the purposes of WIOA and the needs of Minnesota’s businesses and those participating in the workforce. Members of the GWDB and other workforce partners have collectively identified six key strategies to accomplish the two goals of Minnesota’s Strategic Plan for WIOA.

### GOALS OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The Strategic Plan’s goals were updated in March 2020 to recognize continued economic disparities and the vital need to address and expand economic opportunities for all Minnesotans.

1. Reduce educational, skills training, and employment disparities based on race, disability, gender, or disconnected youth.
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.





## Progress on Strategic Priority #1 – Business Engagement

**Definition:** Businesses lead in the identification and development of career pathway maps that target occupations in demand and provide family sustaining wages.

The GWDB’s Career Pathways Partnership (CPP) was formed to focus on business and industry career pathways. The members of the CPP support and advance regional sector-based Career Pathways that bring together industries that are critical to the economic success of our state and its regions. These business-led and industry-specific regional sector partners on the CPP work in collaboration with public partners in economic development, workforce development, human services, education and community-based organizations. Members of the GWDB are nationally recognized leaders for their efforts to lead, manage, contribute to our state’s growing number of industry sector partnerships. The CPP is tapping the expertise of these members to champion and share best practices, quantify the results and advance the business case for using Career Pathways models for employee retention, career advancement, internships, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship equity programs.

The GWDB and its Career Pathways Partnership’s employer engagement strategies are to:

1. Engage more employers in Career Pathways throughout Minnesota by presenting a business case for their involvement and providing opportunities for employer involvement.
2. Highlight successful employer engagement in Minnesota to promote best practices in the state and to contribute to the national conversation.
3. Establish and implement outcome-based Career Pathways demonstration projects in each Local Workforce Development Area.

## Progress on Strategic Priority #2 – Community Engagement

**Definition:** Communities experiencing inequities in education, skills training and employment outcomes; gender opportunity gaps; and providers with specialized services contribute to the design and delivery of activities within the Career Pathways System.

The GWDB expanded its membership and now includes representation from the Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans, Minnesota Council on Latin Affairs, Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage, Minnesota Indian Affairs Council and the Minnesota State Council on Disability. Representatives from each council are active members of the GWDB’s Racial Equity Committee and the Disability Equity Committee.

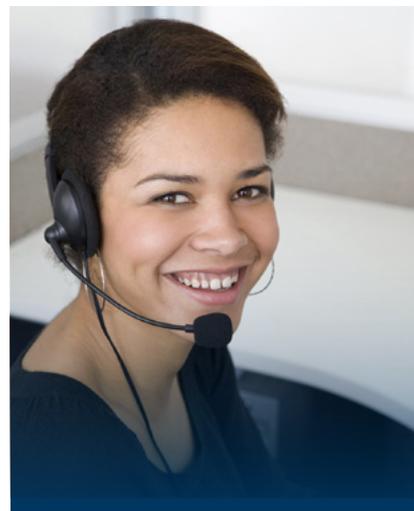
Minnesota has a diverse provider network with many community-based organizations offering specialized approaches to serving the populations experiencing inequities in education, skills training and employment outcomes. Community member involvement with the workforce development system strengthens services, affords connections between providers, and opens new doors of accessibility to and connections with services for the impacted populations. State agencies, led by DEED, provided new and in-depth sub-population and gender data as part of community stakeholder outreach and engagement. The GWDB and the Local Workforce Development Boards are actively engaging communities experiencing disparate impact in education and employment outcomes, gender opportunity gaps, and service providers with specialized skills in working with populations experiencing inequities in education, skills training and employment outcomes.

### Progress on Strategic Priority #3 – Customer Centered Design

**Definition:** Redesign the CareerForce system to better meet the needs of businesses and job seekers who need multiple services and “on ramps” to be successful through Career Pathways opportunities.

The CareerForce mission is to facilitate thriving career solutions for individuals, businesses, communities and the State of Minnesota with customers at the center of this redesign. Customers were surveyed as the system was redesigned and have had continuous input during the inception and development of the CareerForce rebranding initiative.

Following rebranding CareerForce culture-building workshops held across the state, four task forces were created to help the workforce development system become a resource that career seekers and businesses **want to** access vs. one they **have to**.



### Progress on Strategic Priority #4 – Funding and Resource Needs

**Definition:** Understand the resource capacity of federal, state, local and philanthropic organizations who fund and provide resources to the Career Pathways System.

To improve transparency and allow for better resource alignment, DEED developed and published a web-based interactive tool that displays DEED workforce system funding awarded through the Dislocated Worker, Adult, Youth, and Minnesota Job Skills Partnership programs. It includes both state and federal funding and competitive and direct appropriations, where applicable. Funding is displayed by program, year, region and grantee. Continuous improvement efforts are being carried out to enhance dashboard results.

DEED’s **Employment and Training Programs Division** is DEED’s primary grant making arm for federal workforce development grants and provides state level administration for the core programs under WIOA as well as for programs created and funded through direct appropriations from the Minnesota Legislature. These programs include Title IB (Adult, Youth and Dislocated Worker), Title III (Job Service), Title IV (Vocational Rehabilitation & State Services for the Blind), Rapid Response Team, Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers, Jobs for Veterans Grant, and Senior Community Service Employment.

### Progress on Strategic Priority #5 – Policy and System Alignment

**Definition:** Understand the program and policy change needed to achieve greater alignment that will support a stronger and broader engagement of system partners in building a Career Pathways System.

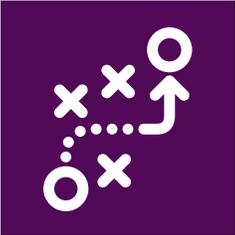
Policy and system alignment processes and policy opportunities are integrated into the local and regional workforce development plans. These plans align with the state’s Strategic Plan. At the state level, agency leaders whose programs are part of the Strategic Plan, convene alignment meetings. Data-sharing agreements, shared intake processes and customer referral protocols are examples of the work program administrators have undertaken to enhance customer service and improve program administration.

### Progress on Strategic Element #6 – System Management

**Definition:** Create system measures for the Career Pathways System, including unemployment and outcome measures.

Tools developed to track performance include the WIOA Annual Report, Uniform Report Card and dashboards managed by DEED’s Performance Management Department and Labor Marketing Information Office.

# REGIONAL PLANNING AND THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM



## FEDERAL REGIONAL PLANNING REQUIREMENT FOR WIOA

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) charged states with a new requirement to designate planning regions

to better align workforce development activities and resources with larger economic development areas and available resources. WIOA further charged states to require these new regions to develop and submit a four-year regional plan that is a big picture of the region's economy and workforce environment. The plans were directed to develop, align and integrate service delivery strategies and resources among multiple local workforce development areas. While the current four-year State Plan was approved by the U.S. Department of Labor in 2020, an extension was granted for Local and Regional Plans and those plans are due in 2021. The GWDB and staff will work closely with the DEED workforce development division to establish guidance and procedures for local and regional planning in 2021.

## MINNESOTA'S REGIONAL PLANNING PROCESS

Minnesota's approach to regional planning was based on the WIOA requirements and the state's experience working in partnership with the Humphrey School of Public Affairs and the Harvard School of Business in the mid-2000's on regional economies. Minnesota designated six workforce development planning regions. The process of identifying regions considered factors such as geographical size, population, migration patterns and the workforce market. Minnesota's six workforce regions align with its sixteen Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) and its federal Economic Development Areas. Local workforce development board members convene and work together to develop regional plans that encompass two or more local areas. The new Regional Plans contain two components – a narrative telling the story of the region and a work plan outlining activities and how those activities and strategies align with the goals of the State Plan.

## REGIONAL PLAN ELEMENTS

The Regional Plans showcase distinctive regional economies, unique strategies and tactics, and projected outcomes. The plans introduce new initiatives or enhancements that reflect each region and are in alignment with WIOA. Common elements in all six regional plans are:

- Actions to connect employers with the diverse talent pools in their region and improving employee retention.
- Implementing regional approaches to engage service providers and community members with connections to their region's racial, ethnic and disability communities to collaborate on workforce development needs and opportunities.
- Building talent pipeline partnerships to connect secondary and post-secondary students and the out-of-school and disconnected youth with hands on experiences in pre-apprenticeships, work-based learning, dual enrollment and equity programs, skills camps, career pathways and occupations in-demand. Intentional talent retention and exposure to a wide variety of career pathway post-secondary options are vital to growing regional economies.
- Collaborating with local and regional Economic Development boards, employers and governmental entities to strategically align key messages, identify and address the workforce and skills needs, and to retain current and attract new businesses and industries.

## REGIONS AND THEIR LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS (WDAS)

The list below includes each of Minnesota's six workforce development regions and the local workforce development entities in that region. These are also shown on the map earlier in this section of the report.

### ■ Northwest Region

Northwest Private Industry Council, Inc.  
Rural Minnesota Concentrated Employment Program, Inc.

**■ Northeast Region**

Duluth Workforce Development  
 Northeast Minnesota Office of Job Training

**■ Central Region**

Career Solutions  
 Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services, Inc.

**■ Metro Region**

Anoka County Job Training Center  
 Dakota - Scott Workforce Services  
 Hennepin - Carver Workforce Development  
 Minneapolis Employment and Training  
 Ramsey County Workforce Solutions  
 Washington County

**■ Southwest Region**

Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council, Inc.  
 South Central Workforce Council

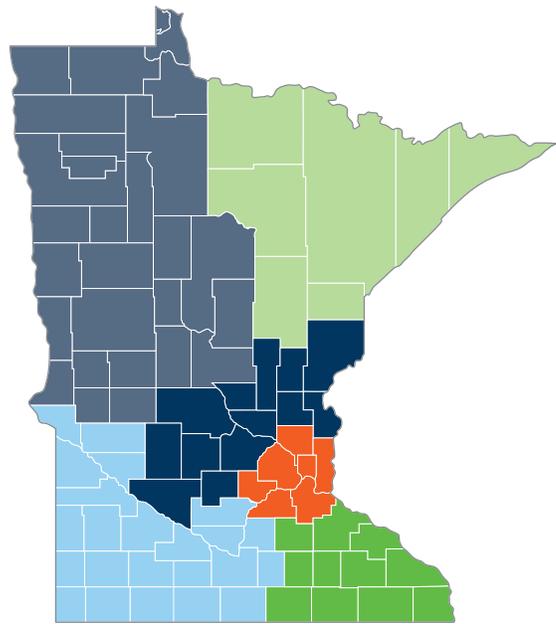
**■ Southeast Region**

Winona County  
 Workforce Development, Inc.

Sector partnerships with Career Pathways to expand the talent pipeline so it is inclusive of gender, age, race, and disability and meets industry demands for a skilled workforce are in progress across the state. These partnerships reflect the shared contributions of industry employers, a training provider, the Regional Planning entity, community-based organizations, regional industry trade associations and philanthropic partners. Partnerships assess skill needs, formalize a standard curriculum and training process, recruit participants, establish connections with service providers, and award participants a recognized, stackable and portable credential upon program completion.

**REGIONAL INDUSTRY SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS**

The GWDB identified Health Care and Social Assistance, Manufacturing, Construction, Professional and Business Services and Natural Resources as priority industries for workforce development efforts in the state. Due to the impacts of COVID-19, additional priority may be needed in deeply impacted sectors such as hospitality and retail, which may be impacted long-term by the pandemic.



Regional Workforce Development Areas

- Northwest
- Metro
- Northeast
- Southwest
- Central
- Southeast

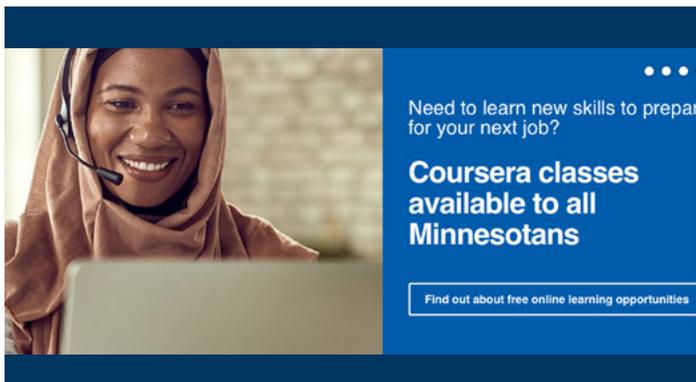
**Partnerships by Region and Sectors in Common**

Northwest	Northeast	Central	Metro	Southwest	Southeast
Health Care Education	Health Care Construction Trades	Health Care	Health Care Construction Trades Government Business Services Information Technology	Health Care Construction Trades Agriculture	Health Care Construction Trades Public Sector Service Sector

## EDUCATION INITIATIVES AND PARTNERSHIPS

### COURSERA

To help individuals impacted by the pandemic gain new skills and certifications, DEED announced an online skills training initiative through a public-private partnership with Coursera, a leading online learning platform that offers courses from over 200 top universities and businesses around the world, allowing Minnesotans to be able to access over 4,800 online courses and guided learning projects at no cost. DEED’s agreement with Coursera allowed the state to give an unlimited number of individuals the ability to learn on Coursera, and earn certificates for completing courses on the platform, at no direct cost to them between June 2020 through March 31, 2021. As of November 12, 2020, almost 17,000 requests for no-cost access have been requested at [www.CareerForceMN.com/Coursera](http://www.CareerForceMN.com/Coursera), almost 10,000 are learning on it regularly, and Minnesotans have completed almost 5,000 courses. Examples of the top courses for enrollments and completions on Coursera include various IT and programming courses, project management, career readiness, college exploration, Excel Skills for Business, data science, human resources, courses designed to help small businesses with marketing, and many others. GWDB staff are assisting in the management and oversight of this initiative.



### MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

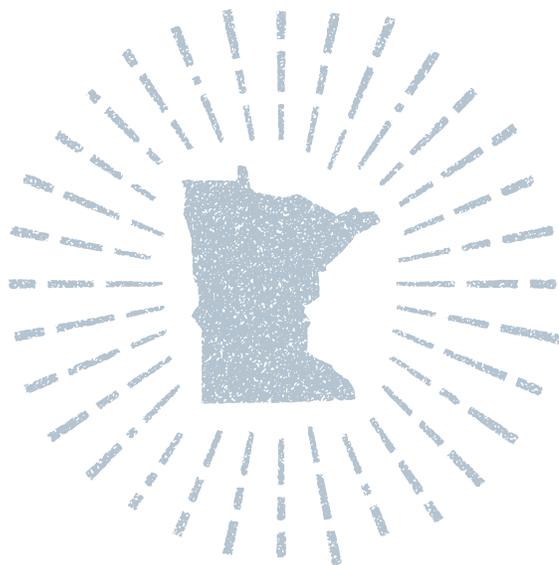
The Minnesota State college and university system is the third largest system of state colleges and universities in the United States and includes 30 colleges, seven universities, and 54 campuses located in every region of the state. Minnesota State serves over 340,000 students to help them move up the social and economic ladder. This is critically important for students from communities traditionally underserved by higher education, including:

- the 30 percent of students (72,500) who come from families of limited financial resources;
- 28 percent (66,000) who are students of color or American Indian;
- 18 percent (42,500) who are first-generation students; and
- 4 percent (8,800) veterans and active duty service members.

With nearly 39,000 students graduating annually with certificates and degrees in many career pathways, Minnesota State provides the workforce necessary for both the current and emergent economy. Many approaches support the state’s future workforce:

- Minnesota State is the lead agency for the U.S. DOL Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins) supporting high school to college transitions in high-demand career pathways.

- Minnesota State facilitates ongoing professional education and lifelong learning with business and industry through non-credit continuing education and customized training.
- Students are offered alternative pathways to degree completion through direct assessment of learning outside of the classroom (credit-for-prior learning) eliminating traditional scheduling boundaries in order to better meet the needs of adult and working students.
- Minnesota State offers a blend of liberal arts learning and specialized workforce skills needed to successfully navigate the future world of work, including professional graduate education.
- By growing and strengthening partnerships with local communities, business and industry, chambers of commerce, workforce centers, philanthropic partners, and state agencies, Minnesota State is increasing both formal and informal bridges and creating opportunities for workforce collaboration and innovation. Through these partnerships, Minnesota State's eight Centers of Excellence enhance a pipeline of future talent in high-demand careers in six industry sectors.
- Leveraging federal dollars allocated through Strengthening Career and Education (CTE) in the 21st Century, an amendment to Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education, Minnesota creates opportunities for students to progress from secondary to postsecondary opportunities, focuses on educational disparities, supports quality career and technical education programs to address high-skill, high-wage and in-demand careers and recruits and supports our CTE teachers and faculty.



## OTHER PARTNERS

The University of Minnesota, Minnesota Private Colleges and the Minnesota Office of Higher Education guide and lend their time, talent and leadership to the Minnesota P-20 Educational Partnership; Minnesota Job Skills Partnership Board; National Governors Association Education and Workforce Initiatives; Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDS); and Real-Time Talent, CareerWise, CareerForce, and CareerOneStop labor market data shared resources. Additionally, the GWDB has participated in an ongoing interagency work group, funded through the Educate for Opportunity grant from the National Governors Association and Strada Education Network, to support policy changes that will better align the state's workforce development and postsecondary systems.

Minnesota's 16 local workforce development boards, which are collectively represented by the Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards, play a vital role in the workforce system that is created by WIOA because they are responsible for administering the majority of local workforce development program funds through agreements with industry employers, community organizations, education institutions, and other training providers. Many local workforce development board members also serve as members of the GWDB, strengthening our important partnership.

## WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA)

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The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) brings together:

- Employment and training services for adults, dislocated workers, and youth programs, as well as Wagner-Peyser employment services administered by the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) through formula grants to Minnesota; and
- Adult education and literacy programs and Vocational Rehabilitation state grant programs that assist individuals with disabilities in obtaining employment administered by the U.S. Department of Education.
- Other education, training, and support services for individuals facing barriers to steady employment that are funded through WIOA.

### CORE PROGRAMS IN MINNESOTA'S STRATEGIC PLAN FOR WIOA

#### **Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)** (<https://mn.gov/deed>)

- Titles IB – Adult, Youth and Dislocated Worker
- Title III – Job Service
- Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation Services & State Services for the Blind
- Trade Adjustment Assistance For Workers (TAA)
- Jobs For Veterans Grant
- Senior Community Service Employment

#### **Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)** ([www.education.state.mn.us](http://www.education.state.mn.us))

- Title II – Adult Education & Family Literacy Act (ABE)

#### **Minnesota Department of Human Services** (<https://mn.gov/dhs/>)

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Employment & Training programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
- Work Programs under the Food and Nutrition Act

#### **Minnesota State** (<http://www.minnstate.edu/>)

- Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act – Post Secondary (Perkins V). Reauthorized on July 31, 2018.

## GWDB RECOMMENDATIONS



The GWDB submits the following recommendations for consideration by the Minnesota Legislature, Governor’s Office, and the state agencies and partners involved in Minnesota’s public workforce development system:

1. Decrease and seek to eliminate employment outcome disparities for Black Minnesotans, Indigenous People, and other People of Color statewide by investing in workforce initiatives and strategies developed through cross-sector partnerships between Minnesota businesses, organizations with demonstrated experience in effectively serving BIPOC communities, and Minnesota educational institutions or training providers with demonstrated experience helping individuals overcome barriers to employment.
2. Recruit, Retain, and Accelerate the hiring and retention of teachers, counselors, and instructors from BIPOC communities in Minnesota’s E-12 schools and postsecondary institutions. This is critical to helping all children succeed at school so that they are prepared to locate and enter onto a career pathway after completing high school.
3. Support efforts that will increase economic opportunities for Minnesotans living with disabilities, including crucial continued funding from the Minnesota State Legislature to support individuals with the most significant disabilities who are eligible for services through Vocational Rehabilitation Services through the State of Minnesota (DEED).
4. Support training and professional development for all state and partner staff that provide workforce services to individuals with disabilities and those that serve BIPOC communities in order to ensure that programs and services are truly accessible to all Minnesotans. Staff and partners should utilize e-learning training modules developed by the Disability and Employment eLearning Task Force in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (DOLETA) to help support the professional development needs of workforce development staff.
5. Strengthen and better connect “wrap-around support services” for career seekers in order to better support individuals facing substantial barriers to employment, especially in light of COVID-19. Many of the programs or services that exist “outside” of the workforce development system, including mental health resources, should be better coordinated with workforce development services or programs in order to help more Minnesotans succeed. Access to child care, transportation, broadband access, and other factors all also greatly impact an individual’s ability to be successful and should be considered when developing person-centered strategies to help Minnesotans enter onto a career pathway. Career and education navigation services for are vital and in-need.
6. Promote and support career pathways and strategies. These efforts may include:
  - Apprenticeships are a proven and affordable “earn while you learn” skills training model leading to stable jobs, career advancement, and family sustaining wages and benefits. Apprenticeships help bridge racial, ethnic, gender, and disability equity gaps within a growing span of industry sectors and in-demand occupations. Apprenticeship programs provide employers with skilled, credentialed and experienced workers, and help individuals support themselves or their families while also training and gaining new skills. Additionally, registered apprenticeship programs provide a key mentorship component for learners to benefit from by being connected to individuals that have already been working in an industry.

- Entrepreneurship – Some initiatives have been successful in helping create economic prosperity and job creation by supporting start-ups and entrepreneurs who wish to start a business in our state. For example, Launch Minnesota is a state-funded initiative designed to build a bridge between two previously separate infrastructures – workforce development and economic development. Initiatives like these, which use a hub-and-spoke structure, involve organizations connected to and trusted by local communities across the state. These Network partners that were selected through a competitive grant process also emphasized their ability to serve and recruit entrepreneurs from underserved communities, who in turn may be more likely to employ individuals from the same communities.
  - Reskill and upskill incumbent workers to meet industry demands for new skills, higher overall skills levels, and advanced skills to prepare the workforce for technological advancements. With the economic and workforce impacts of COVID-19, it is imperative that the workforce development system prioritize efforts to help more Minnesotans learn the skills that they need to succeed in a rapidly changing economy. While the development of many skills requires in-person, hands-on training, a changing economy also means that the ways we teach and learn must adapt. As such, the workforce development system must embrace and utilize innovative technology and digital tools to aid in these efforts, including those that can be started quickly or require no previous training to begin.
7. Support new or emerging industries in Minnesota through industry-led partnerships that aim to train and prepare Minnesotans for careers in growing fields like renewable energy production, information technology/services, and other innovative industries that offer promising job opportunities for more of the workforce of the future. Such investments will help keep us competitive, attract new talent to the state, and will grow Minnesota’s innovation ecosystem.
  8. Better support tribal and indigenous communities by utilizing flexibility provided to governors under WIOA, including Section 166 and “set-aside” funding, to provide additional or more direct supports to indigenous individuals who are seeking services and the organizations serving them directly within a community. Other states have also worked to remove barriers for entities serving tribal members by changing the way tribal workforce entities are funded, such as designating a geographically non-contiguous local workforce development area that specifically serves tribal members and other indigenous individuals living in the community.
  9. Address the digital divide by supporting digital skills training and services that can be accessed by more Minnesotans, and by aligning resources so that career seekers and workforce participants can access the computers, technology, or other digital tools needed to learn and be successful in an economy that is changing rapidly due to technology, automation, and changing consumer habits (exacerbated by COVID-19). Reliable access to high-speed internet is a necessity for career seekers who want or need to work or learn new skills at home. The location of one’s employer may be less important in an economy where more are working from home, which could help some of the state’s rural communities, but Minnesotans across the state need reliable internet access in order to even consider all employment and training options available.

## FOOTNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Statistics <https://mn.gov/deed/data/current-econ-highlights/state-national-employment.jsp>

<sup>2</sup> ibid

<sup>3</sup> Which Minnesota Companies Received Money from the Paycheck Protection Program? <https://www.startribune.com/find-which-minnesota-companies-received-money-from-paycheck-protection-program/571663411/>

<sup>4</sup> Minnesota Small Business Relief Grants <https://mn.gov/deed/business/financing-business/deed-programs/relief/>

<sup>5</sup> Health Officials Confirm First Case of Coronavirus in Minnesota <https://www.health.state.mn.us/news/pressrel/2020/covid19030620.html>

<sup>6</sup> Situation Update for COVID-19 <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/situation.html#death1>

<sup>7</sup> The Heart of the Uprising in Minneapolis <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/06/22/the-heart-of-the-uprising-in-minneapolis>

<sup>8</sup> BIPOC defined <https://www.nytimes.com/article/what-is-bipoc.html>

<sup>9</sup> Minneapolis Native American History <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2020/07/31/patrolling-minneapolis-native-american-history/>



JANUARY 2021

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