



Regional and Local Workforce Strategic Plan 2024-2027

LWDA #4 – City of Duluth

2026 Update – Final Draft for Board Approval

State Strategic Vision, Goals and Strategies for 2024-2027

2024-2027 WIOA Strategic Vision

The strategic vision of the One Minnesota Workforce Development Vision is a healthy economy where all Minnesotans have equitable access to a workforce development system in which partners across the state are working toward a collective goal of providing workforce development programs that are responsive to employer needs in in-demand occupations and lead to good jobs with family-sustaining wages.

2024-2027 WIOA State Plan Goals

1. Increase interagency and local area coordination and alignment around shared goals, maximizing efficiency and coordination of workforce funding and programs and improving system integration, and creating a “no wrong door” approach for individuals or employers engaging in the workforce system.
2. Build new and support existing employer-led industry-sector partnerships across the state to create or expand responsive and equitable workforce development programs and career pathways with embedded work-based learning or on-the-job training, including Registered Apprenticeships, focused on closing gaps in participation and representation based on race, ethnicity, disability, gender, veteran status, and age.
3. Create a more inclusive, equitable, accessible, and proactive workforce system to serve all Minnesotans, preparing employers and the current and emerging workforce for the changing nature of work including new and emerging technology, changing labor market demands, and for the state’s shifting demographics, including our new Minnesotans.

2024-2027 WIOA State Plan Strategies

For the state to achieve the One Minnesota Vision for workforce development, each workforce partner across the state should be working toward implementing the Governor’s major workforce priorities in a unified manner. The revised strategies described below are intended to reflect a more proactive approach through state and federal funding to support and expand sector partnerships within the state.

In 2025 the Governor’s Workforce Development Board (GWDB) adopted a statewide sector partnership strategy to establish a shared model for developing, supporting, and scaling sector partnerships across Minnesota. This strategy supports alignment around partnership scope, core activities, and performance measurement to promote consistency and effectiveness statewide. In doing so, the strategy advances Goal #2 of the WIOA State Plan by expanding

employer-led industry-sector partnerships across the state to create or expand responsive and equitable workforce development programs and career pathways.

The GWDB defines Sector Partnerships as follows:

- Employer-driven collaborations that advance high-quality job opportunities within a specific industry and regional market.
- Bring together partners, including a convener who organizes multiple employers, education and training providers, workforce boards, and other partners, as well as applicable labor organizations and community partners.
- Align around shared workforce goals and outcomes that strengthen both economic competitiveness and opportunity for workers.

This strategy identifies core partnership activities such as convening employers and relevant local workforce system stakeholders, using labor market data to inform decision-making, aligning education and training with industry demand, and advancing job quality strategies. It also establishes the use of common metrics to assess partnership effectiveness and support continuous improvement. Overall, the statewide sector partnership strategy is intended to strengthen regional collaboration, better align workforce investments, and ensure Minnesota's workforce system remains responsive to employers and workers. The GWDB will continue to develop resources, guidance, and governance structures to support implementation of this strategy.

As part of the State plan for 2024-2027, the GWDB will be expanding sector partnership initiatives throughout the state and through DEED's strategic activities. This includes the following activities:

- GWDB Statewide Sector Partnership Mapping and Best Practice Sharing:
 - *GWDB Committees*: Through the Industry Partnership Committees, the GWDB will be supporting the collection of best practices and identification of statewide sector needs that could be created or expanded to support local sector partnership work.
 - *Sector Partnership Mapping*: While many great initiatives and partnerships already exist across the state, Minnesota lacks a comprehensive database and mapping tool of the geographic and sector diversity of partnerships. The GWDB will be exploring creating an online tool as part of the GWDB website for partners and the public to see where sector partnerships exist across the state.
 - *Best Practice Sharing*: Quarterly meetings led by the GWDB Committee Chairs will bring together representatives from sector partnerships across the state to

share best practices, discuss common needs across the partners within the industries or occupations of focus, and inform the GWDB of additional resources or guidance needed from the state.

- *Sector Partnership Convening*: The GWDB will host convenings on each of the 3 State plan goals as part of achieving these goals over the next four years and gaining broader statewide awareness and adoption of the goals. This includes hosting a convening on the development and implementation of our statewide sector partnership strategy, engaging local and regional sector partnerships from across the state and including those that have recently formed or are expanding as a result of Drive for 5 funding.
- *Career Pathway Development*: The GWDB will work in partnership with the P-20 Partnership to develop statewide career pathways for each of the Drive for 5 sectors, building from existing best practices from across the state's local and regional partners. These will include information on wages and benefits, skills, competencies and credentials that are fully portable, stackable and have multiple on-and-off ramps and include work-based learning and on-the-job training opportunities like Registered Apprenticeship Programs.
- State and Local Strategies
 - *Drive for 5 Funds*: The Drive for 5 Initiative will release funding to selected partners in 2024, with the grant funding available over a two-year window. These grant funds are meant to address current job vacancies, but the state will be exploring over this two-year period how to continue and sustain partnerships in the future.
 - *Local/Regional Sector Partnerships*: DEED will provide technical assistance as requested for local and regional sector partnerships across the state. Minnesota is using the required WIOA Local and Regional Plan to better identify where partnerships exist and what best practices have been developed or resources are needed to support partners across the state.
- DEED Internal Partners:
 - *Business Engagement and Workforce Strategy Consultants*: These divisions within DEED will be formulating a plan to provide more targeted technical assistance to sector partnerships and employers throughout the state.
 - *Rapid Response and UI*: Once the GWDB has established a statewide network of sector partnerships, we will create more direct lines of communication for our Rapid Response and Unemployment Insurance teams to be flagging relevant roles subject to layoff or unemployment in the geographic area of each or any relevant sector partnership. We will also explore supporting stronger initial

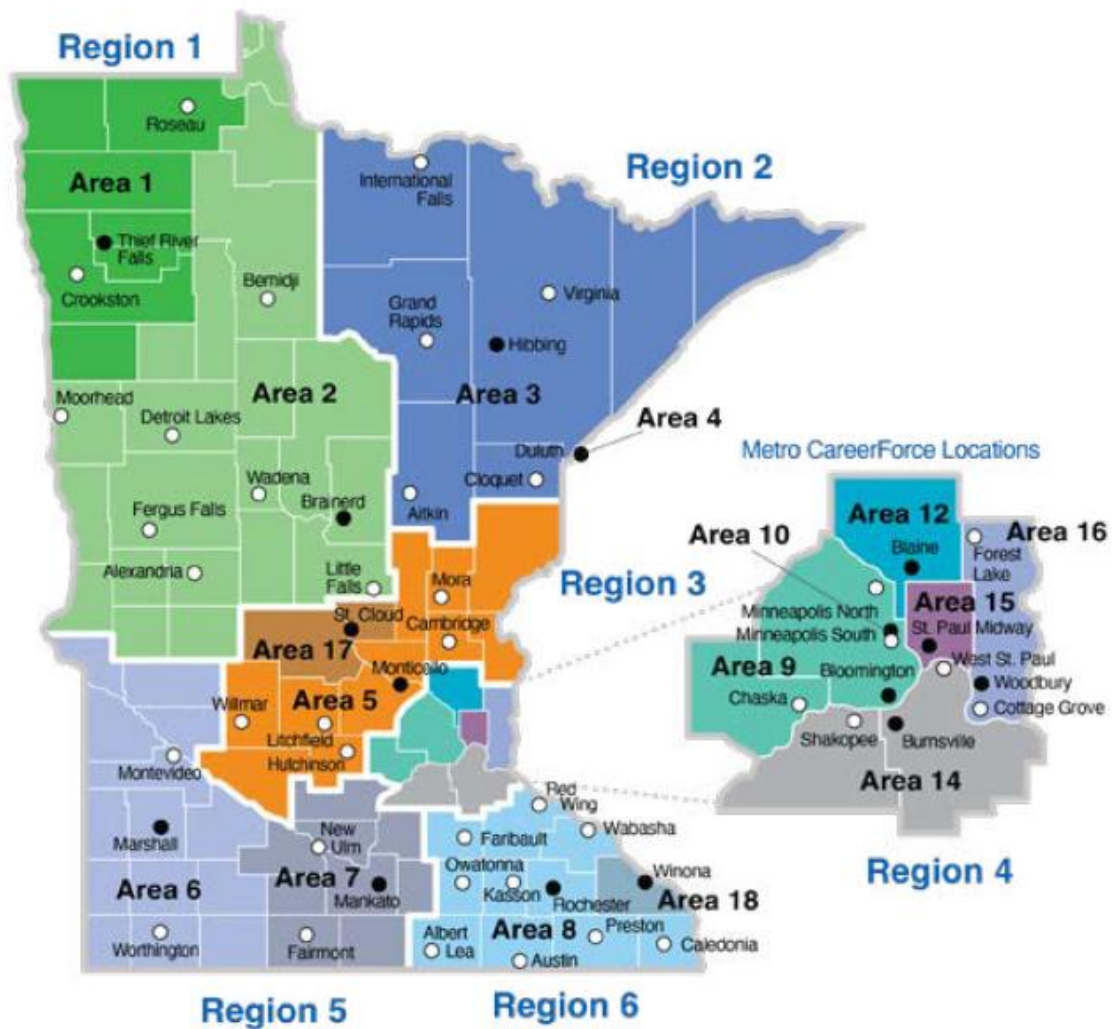
outreach to individuals in those in-demand positions to do skill and competency assessments to align with identified skill and competency needs of the sector partnerships and identify any additional skill or competency development strategies that could be leveraged by the sector partnerships to address immediate job vacancies.

- Interagency and Educational Alignment
 - This includes working across partners at DEED and state agencies like DLI to incorporate registered apprenticeship programs into the sector partnership strategies, with the P-20 Partnership to support development state-wide career pathways which can be used by sector partnerships to inform their local or regional education and training efforts as described above. This also includes secondary and postsecondary career and technical education programs and the Minnesota State system for creating or expanding academic and training offerings.

2024-2027 WIOA State Plan Strategies

- [Drive for 5](#): The Drive for 5 Initiative was created to prepare more Minnesotans for high-demand jobs in five occupational categories: technology, the trades, caring professions, manufacturing, and education. Local boards are encouraged to consider how their programs, local areas, or regions prioritize any or all of the five in-demand sectors.
- [Transformative Career Pathways](#): This state-wide initiative was created to bring workers who have been overlooked for employment – particularly people of color – into the workforce at family-sustaining wages. Plan writers are encouraged to consider who their program’s Targeted Populations are and their plans for providing pathways to family sustaining wages.
- [Office of New Americans \(ONA\)](#): ONA was created to support immigrant and refugee inclusion, reduce barriers to employment, and improve connections between employers and job seekers. Plan writers are encouraged to consider how they will work with ONA to support immigrants and refugees in their programs.
- [High Quality Jobs Framework](#): T Minnesota’s High Quality Jobs Framework provides a shared definition and guiding principles for what constitutes a high-quality job across the state’s workforce development system. The framework emphasizes wages that support economic stability, access to benefits, safe and healthy working conditions, opportunities for advancement, and inclusive workplace practices. By centering job quality, Minnesota seeks to align workforce development, education, and economic development efforts to connect jobseekers to sustainable employment while supporting employers in building a skilled, stable workforce and advancing equitable economic growth.[North Star Promise](#): Minnesota is implementing a free college program

beginning in the fall of 2024. Plan writers are encouraged to examine eligibility criteria as compared to their existing clients and consider how they will account for changes in uses of funds in light of the free college program. Individualized Career Services: Career services to job seekers play a critical role in supporting placement, and providing more individualized career services as described in section 134(b)(2)(A)(xii) of WIOA are an evidence-based model for improving individual's earnings. Plan writers are encouraged to describe how they will be utilizing this strategy to improve outcomes for job seekers, and how they may potentially shift funding to career services as funding for workforce training becomes more readily available with the implementation of the North Star Promise Program. Attracting and retaining workers: Minnesota continues to face challenges with population growth, which makes attracting and retaining workers all the more important to supporting a healthy and thriving economy in our state. Plan writers are encouraged to describe what strategies they are implementing to support employers in improving job quality and marketing of job opportunities to support attraction and retention strategies. Supportive Services: Providing wraparound or supportive services is critical to ensuring that underrepresented populations or individuals with barriers to employment have access to the resources they need to enroll or complete workforce development programs and are retained in employment. Plan writers are encouraged to describe how they are providing supportive services, leveraging partnerships to expand access to such services, or potentially shifting resources to provide supportive services as funding for workforce training becomes more readily available with the implementation of the North Star Promise Program. Please see the [WIOA TEGL](#) for more implementation ideas.



Visit www.CareerForceMN.com/locations for detailed contact and address information.

○ CareerForce Locations
● Comprehensive CareerForce Locations

Local/Regional Plan Section Summary

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Region 2 - Northeast Minnesota 2024-2027 Plan

SECTION A: REGIONAL VISION, GOALS AND STRATEGIES

A.1. **Describe the regional workforce development area's vision for a skilled workforce.**

The Region 2 - Northeast Minnesota vision for a skilled workforce is to convene and collaborate with partners and key stakeholders to build on our region's strengths and leverage opportunities that will support local businesses, attract workers, and connect job seekers to employment that offers family-sustaining wages and connection to career advancement.

A.2. **Describe the region's strategic alignment with the State's Vision, Goals and Strategies.**

The State's vision highlights a healthy economy, equitable access, and responsiveness to employer needs – all of which aligns with regional priorities. Region 2 - Northeast Minnesota's strategic plan aligns with state goals and strategies in a number of ways:

1. Region 2 – Northeast Minnesota identifies coordination and alignment through ongoing, deep and meaningful partnerships as one of its greatest strengths. The Duluth and Northeast Workforce Boards convene and collaborate with a wide array of workforce system partners, including K-12, post-secondary, and adult education institutions; community-based organizations; labor unions; industry associations; government and economic development entities; and employers from a variety of industries. In alignment with State Plan Goal #1, Region 2 – Northeast Minnesota maintains a continuous focus on coordination to improve system integration and create a “no wrong door” approach for both job seekers and businesses.
2. In alignment with State Plan Goal #2, Region 2 – The Duluth Workforce Development Board convenes regional employer-led industry-sector partnerships focused on Healthcare, Construction, and Manufacturing. These sector partnerships help focus investments on workforce initiatives that align with employer needs, and align programs and resources around common goals. The Construction industry-sector partnerships, in particular, maintain a strong focus on closing gaps in participation and representation based on race, ethnicity, and gender.
3. In alignment with State Plan Goal #3, Region 2 – Northeast Minnesota is customer-focused - both for jobseekers and employers – and remains nimble and responsive to local customer needs. Northeast Minnesota prioritizes equity, accessibility, and inclusiveness and is a leader in advancing equity initiatives among employers to ensure they are prepared for the current and emerging workforce. This includes development and dissemination of tool kits, employer workshops and learning sessions, and active participation in a variety of regional inclusion-focused groups and programs.

A.3. **Describe best practices or area of strength of the region as it relates to the State's Vision, Goals and Strategies that should be considered for replication or scale across the state.**

There are a number of areas of strength in our region, which could be considered for replication or scale:

- The **Talent Development Program** is our region's Incumbent Worker Training effort, which has grown and gained momentum over the past few years. In addition to helping employers avert layoffs and add jobs, and helping workers advance in their careers, TDP is a good example of regional coordination and alignment. Duluth Workforce Development and JET aligned local-level program rules, forms, and branding so employers experience a seamless, no-wrong-door opportunity to access support for employee training. This model has been shared with other local areas around the state for possible replication.
- **Apprenticeship Expansion** is a newer area of focus in the region. With support and partnership from the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry, both Duluth Workforce Development and JET are reaching out to employers in a variety of industries to share information about the benefits of apprenticeship and the steps to build a new apprenticeship program – and how to leverage WIOA funds to support Registered Apprenticeship. Both partners are also building awareness of apprenticeship as a training pathway among students and jobseekers, and facilitating connection to new and existing apprenticeship opportunities.
- The **Diversity & Inclusion Employer Action Guide** is a guide that includes vetted, practical tools and resources to help employers implement DEI efforts in five areas: Recruiting, Hiring, Onboarding, Retention, and Advancement. The Employer Action Guide was crowd-sourced from employers, who shared best practices and specific resources like sample job descriptions, interview guides, and onboarding processes. The Guide has been shared by other workforce boards around the state, and was previously picked up by the US Department of Labor for sharing among employers and workforce providers nationwide.
- The **Employer Champions Initiative** was initiated to launch the Employer Action Guide in a way that was interactive and useful. Employers were invited to send teams of Human Resources and other staff to both learn and share best practices. After a series of monthly virtual workshops to kick off the Initiative, we have continued with a lunch and learn series that takes a deep dive on areas where employers have faced challenges in advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within their organizations. What has emerged is a supportive peer learning network that shares a commitment to positive change.

- **218 Trades** is a marketing and education campaign that raises visibility and awareness of construction careers. Launched as a website with information for students, parents, and job seekers, 218 Trades has expanded to offer workshops that travel to area high schools to present about careers in the trades, tabling events and job fairs – including two large Construct Tomorrow events each year, and one-on-one guidance to help individuals navigate entry into the trades. 218 Trades has the support and engagement of unions, apprenticeship programs, and contractors, and has many success stories resulting from its efforts.
- Hands-on Career Exploration events focused on key industries like **Construct Tomorrow, Discover Healthcare, and the Made Here! Manufacturing Expo** are career exploration events held annually in Duluth, Northwest Wisconsin, and on the Iron Range. These events invite employers to set up interactive booths to expose attendees to a wide range of healthcare careers. With support from Perkins, high school students from around the region attend the event and have the chance to try on different healthcare occupations through games and hands-on activities. In the evening, jobseekers attend to learn about opportunities and connect directly with employers.

A.4. **Describe the strategy to work with the entities within your region to carry out the core programs to align resources available in the region to achieve the strategic vision and goals of the local area boards and the state.**

There are several strategies in place to align resources, carry out core programs, and achieve the strategic vision and goals of the local area boards and the state:

- Core program partners sign Memoranda of Understandings (MOUs) outlining shared responsibility for operating CareerForce locations and offering workforce services.
- The One Stop Operator selected through a competitive process by both the Duluth and Northeast workforce boards is a consortium that includes Duluth Workforce Development, the Northeast Minnesota Office of Job Training (JET), the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency (AEOA), DEED Job Service, State Services for the Blind, and Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS). This group meets monthly to provide oversight and coordination of core programs and service delivery across all CareerForce locations in the region, and identify opportunities for alignment.
- Operations Committees within the two comprehensive CareerForce locations include staff representatives from each co-located agency who meet quarterly to identify opportunities for coordination and collaboration.

- The Workforce Strategy Consultant meets with the Duluth and Northeast LWDA Directors on a regular basis to coordinate employer engagement, share insights and resources, and develop effective approaches to employer workforce needs.
- CareerForce partners work with individuals and organizations across the region in the community to maintain connectivity and facilitate alignment of resources. This is often accomplished through participation on boards and committees, engaging in community conversations, partnering on grant proposals, and other activities.
- Partners organize a Regional Professional Development Day once per year for all CareerForce staff in the region to come together, share updates, and engage in professional development sessions.
- Where clients are shared across organizations, a Release of Information is signed to allow case managers to communicate and coordinate with each other in the best interest of that client, and to avoid duplication of services.

A.5. **Describe any additional goals being set by the regional leadership or individual local area boards.**

There are a few additional goals set by regional leadership in response to immediate needs and with a focus on the long-term economic health of the region:

- **Expand Registered Apprenticeship across the region.** Duluth Workforce Development and JET actively collaborate with the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry to expand awareness of apprenticeships among students, jobseekers, and employers. The organizations work together to identify employers interested in creating apprenticeships and provide technical assistance to begin working toward program launch. The result will be more apprenticeships available in healthcare, manufacturing, and other key sectors in the region.
- **Explore ways to support entrepreneurs and hospitality & tourism industry businesses,** both of which play a critical role in the region's economy. Programs to support entrepreneurs typically function in separate silos from the workforce system, and there is work to do to understand how these programs can improve their focus on workforce strategies and how workforce entities can better support job seekers with the goal of becoming small business owners.
- **Hospitality & tourism businesses** play a critical role in creating jobs and generating revenue – but workforce system partners struggle to engage with and support this sector because wages are often low and there aren't credentialed training programs serving this sector. Regional leaders will continue to explore

how to best support these businesses while also connecting job seekers to opportunities that offer family-sustaining wages and opportunities for advancement.

- **Engage in regional efforts focused on talent attraction.** The population in our region is aging, and the workforce is shrinking. We need to attract more workers and their families to fill jobs and maintain our economic strengths. This means building housing, expanding child care, and ensuring that communities are welcoming of diversity. There are many opportunities to collaborate with partners in this effort.

A.6. Describe how the region is working together to prepare the workforce for state and federal investments in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), the Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors (CHIPS) and Science Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) (collectively referred to as Investing in America (IIA)), as applicable.

There are many existing efforts which ensure our region is well positioned with a workforce prepared for state and federal infrastructure investments.

- Duluth continues to work collaboratively with JET and the DEED Workforce Strategy Consultant to advance workforce initiatives in the manufacturing sector.
- With multiple major infrastructure construction projects in the region, all of our construction sector work has gained a new significance.
 - The Duluth Workforce Development Board's Construction Working Group will continue to be a place for coordination and alignment at the local and regional level, and with state efforts.
 - 218 Trades will continue its campaign to excite youth and adults about careers in construction.
 - The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT) awarded a new five-year contract to Duluth Workforce Development as part of the Blatnik Bridge Replacement Project to support a team of Community Liaisons – BIPOC community members who conduct deep outreach, facilitate career exploration, and mentor youth and adults interested in entering a career in the trades.
 - MNDOT is also facilitating deeper connections to tribal representatives, to help connect band members to construction training and job opportunities.
 - Both the Duluth and Northeast workforce boards support a number of construction training programs, including high school Career Technical

Education programs, Youthbuild, and programs at Community Action Duluth and True North Goodwill.

SECTION B: REGIONAL OPERATIONS

B.1. Provide a Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats (SWOT) analysis of the regional workforce system.

A Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats (SWOT) analysis of the regional workforce system was completed by the Regional Leadership Team in early 2024.

- **Strengths:** Education system/institutions and teachers, workforce attraction – people want to live in area, state support and infrastructure, strong collaboration and partnerships, unions offering good jobs, training opportunities for job seekers, strong sector partnerships, healthcare and construction working groups, targeted events/efforts, strong and engaged boards, many individuals/organizations working on important initiatives;
- **Weaknesses:** Aging workforce, ageism, limited employment services specific for older workers, lack of population growth, low employment participation rate, low international migration rates, no support system for New Americans, lack of employer engagement, navigating apprenticeship system – confusing and not cohesive, lack of transportation/dependence on cars, evolving work ethic, low high school graduation rates - especially for people of color, regulatory requirements such as paid family leave putting pressure on businesses, union wages make it hard for non-union businesses to compete, silos, lack of collaboration/connectivity, lack of regional coordination, duplication of efforts;
- **Opportunities:** Clean energy/manufacturing, climate migration to region, change/grow/adapt/evolve to new paradigms, trades training – increase training of non-traditional populations, on-the-job training, funding availability, update of Diversity & Inclusion Employer Action Guide, retaining both high school and college graduates in the region, artificial intelligence, beautiful clean environment, remote work trends, recruitment campaigns, high paying jobs available, evolution of industry/new technology to stay on top of new skills and workforce needs, expanded Career Technical Education in high schools, engagement of older and youth workers, agency collaboration/partnerships, attracting New Americans/immigration;
- **Threats:** Funding limits and changing priorities of funders, unskilled/uneducated workers, business climate not friendly to business, public policy/anti-mining policy, aging workforce, not enough people in the workforce means businesses suffer, perception that young people must leave region to succeed, new Minnesota residents leave because communities are not welcoming, flat population growth,

housing shortage/affordability, child care shortage, status quo/resistance to change, industry and business are evolving quickly, in real-time - can they keep up and adapt? How do we stay on the cutting edge?

B.2. Describe the selection process for the membership who will provide the leadership to oversee the development and coordination of the regional plan.

The Regional Leadership Team is comprised of the Executive Committees of the Duluth and Northeast workforce boards, plus key regional staff including the DEED Labor Market Analyst, Workforce Strategy Consultant, VRS and Job Service Regional Managers, and the Executive Directors of Duluth Workforce Development, JET, and AEOA.

B.3. Describe how the selected organizations from the region will provide oversight to development and implementation of the regional plan. Complete Attachment A - Regional Oversight Committee

The Regional Leadership Team meets a minimum of twice per year, with one meeting focused on strategic planning, with review of labor market information and assessment or update of regional goals and strategies. The other meeting each year will focus on oversight and assessment of progress toward goals in the regional plan. Additionally, the Duluth and Northeast workforce boards will monitor customer feedback and performance outcomes of workforce programs within the region, to ensure they are successfully contributing toward regional goals.

B.4. Describe how the approach used will ensure that partner engagement includes diverse representation, specifically among populations experiencing barriers to employment.

Our region's best work to ensure partner engagement includes diverse representation happens at the local level and through the two local workforce boards. Efforts taking place at the regional level include:

- Engagement with tribal representatives to connect enrolled members living outside reservation lands to workforce services and programs;
- Engagement with Tribal Employment Relations Officers (TEROs) to connect tribal members to employment opportunities on area construction projects;
- Support for efforts to bring together diverse stakeholders in rural communities, welcome new community members, and build inclusive social systems and networks;
- Ongoing efforts to connect with partners in the region to enhance our ability to serve immigrants and refugees seeking employment and training;
- Active partnership with high schools in the region to serve students with disabilities through our youth programs as they prepare to transition into adulthood.

We are also exploring new partnerships and implementing pilot projects with partner agencies to address housing/homelessness, transportation challenges including difficulty obtaining a driver's license, employment for older adults, and child care navigation. Through these partnerships, our two workforce boards play a key role in identifying needs and gaps, and advocating for funding or policy changes to better serve populations experiencing barriers to employment.

B.5. Describe how the local area boards will direct system alignment within the region through shared policies and practices.

There are two types of formal agreements which outline the roles and responsibilities of each partner. The One Stop Operator for CareerForce locations in the region has typically been a consortium of co-located partners, with a Memorandum of Understanding defining the nature of the partnership. In addition, the One-Stop MOU and Infrastructure Funding Agreement detail how all partners in the region will work together to provide consistent and quality services, as well as share costs.

Existing informal agreements between CareerForce partners in the Northeast region that continue to work effectively will also remain in place. For example, determination of which WIOA provider at the Duluth Workforce Center serves Duluth residents vs. non-Duluth residents is clear and referrals occur seamlessly: Duluth Workforce Development staff generally work with City of Duluth residents, and JET and AEOA staff work with non-Duluth residents. If situations arise that necessitate adjustments to the established process, partners simply maintain open lines of communication and adjust accordingly to ensure the needs of program participants are met.

JET, AEOA and DWD are committed to system alignment through shared policies and practices. All are providers of WIOA programs and MFIP Employment Services in St. Louis County, which necessitates some consistency in how services are delivered. To improve coordination and consistency, JET, AEOA, and DWD improved alignment between our respective support service policies when working together on a dislocated worker project grant over the past few years. JET and DWD aligned our incumbent worker training policies and forms under the shared Talent Development Program. JET and DWD both work with students at East High School, but have carved out separate niches and areas of focus within the building.

To further support regional priorities, cooperative efforts in the following areas are also taking place:

1) Coordinated professional development for staff.

Each year, the Northeast Region sets aside regional planning funds to support a full-day professional development conference for all CareerForce staff, with opportunities to share information across organizations, build connections among staff, and engage in learning sessions of shared relevance. Duluth Workforce Development hosts monthly

CareerForce Huddles for staff from across the region with guest speakers representing local programs, organizations, and employers. These huddles offer the opportunity to learn about resources relevant to our work, and to provide updates on programming from partner agencies as well as connecting with new or growing employers. We also host occasional training workshops for staff, including one on skills-based hiring and on motivational interviewing.

2) Coordinated marketing and communication of CareerForce programs, events and initiatives.

While each organization maintains its own identity, we are unified by and lead with CareerForce as a shared identity. We regularly promote programs and events hosted by all partner organizations in the region through the CareerForce email list and event calendar. We also have a strong social media presence in the region, which is an increasing source of connection to our programs and services. And we have good connections with local earned media, which is very supportive and willing to share information about our programs and services.

3) Coordinated Career Pathways Efforts

Strong, employer-led sector partnerships are critical to meeting the needs of job seekers and employers across the entire Northeast region, specifically in the areas of healthcare, skilled trades/construction, and manufacturing. To maximize the time and effort employers are willing and able to invest, working groups and sector initiatives are coordinated – with opportunities to come together as a region to identify shared priorities.

Partners in the northeast region also work collaboratively on special projects and frequently facilitate cross-referrals and co-enrollments between agencies. For example, individuals served through WIOA or other programs may also co-enroll with Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS). Job counselors may promote program eligible participants to training opportunities available through another partner's special project (i.e. Duluth's career pathway training classes).

B.6. Describe 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 CareerForce partners in the Northeast region maintain a Memorandum of Understanding for each comprehensive location which outlines how they will work cooperatively to deliver services using a 'no wrong door' approach that is responsive to both customer and employer needs. Coordination and collaboration occurs at both the staff and manager level to help promote a consistent customer experience within the region and in alignment with state policy. Additionally, Job Service and RESEA maintain a cooperative service arrangement statewide to connect Unemployment Insurance recipients to CareerForce services and programs. Job Service also maintains a

cooperative service arrangement with the state Department of Human Services to conduct outreach to SNAP recipients and connect them to CareerForce services.

SECTION C: PROGRAM AND SERVICE DELIVERY

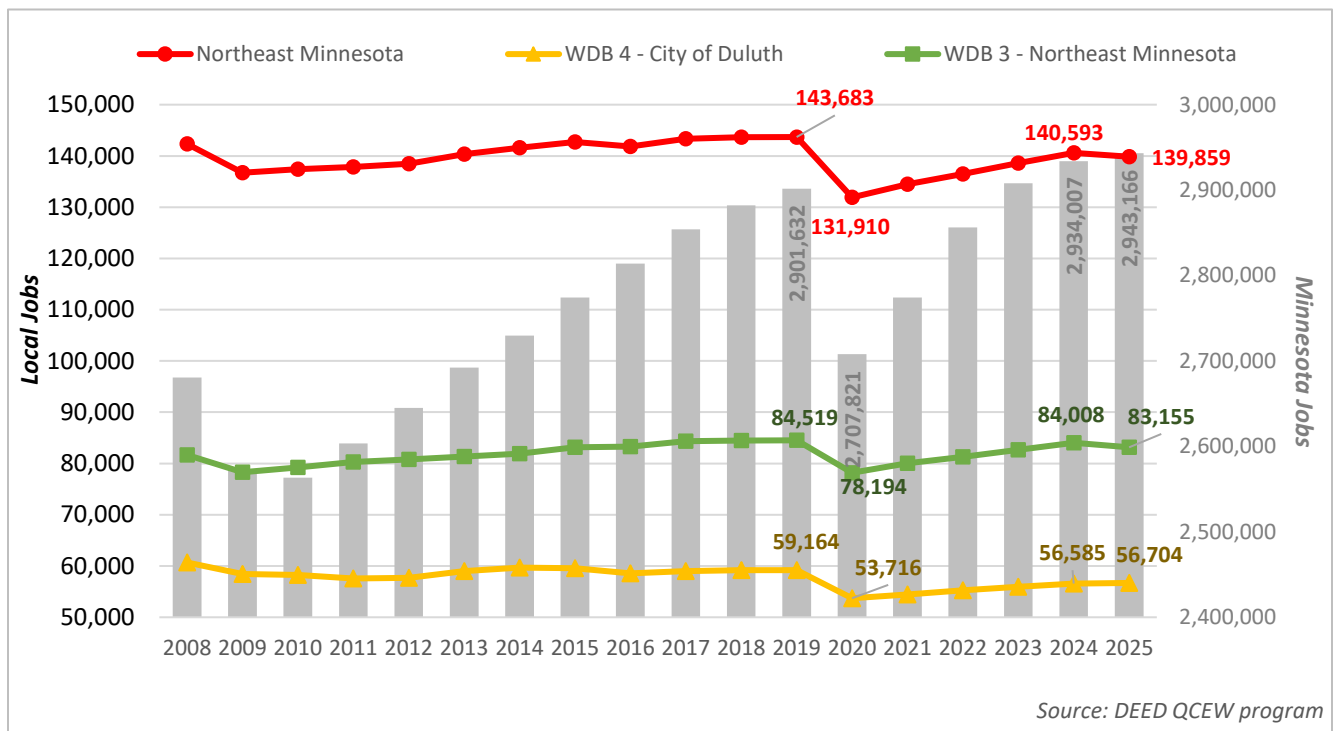
C.1. **Describe the condition of the regional economy (cite the sources of data and analysis);**

Industry Employment

Employment, which was relatively steady prior to the coronavirus pandemic, declined in 2020 at rates greater than other areas of the state, largely due to the disproportionate impacts on service-providing sectors and industries that are relatively more concentrated in the Northeast region, and Local Area 4 in particular. Employment growth has also been weaker in Northeast Minnesota since 2020, reflecting an ongoing and uneven recovery.

Prior to the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in March of 2020, Northeast Minnesota saw relatively stable employment levels. From 2019-2020 total employment in the region declined by 11,800 or 8.2% which was larger relative to the 6.6% statewide decline. Since 2020, the region has added back 7,950 jobs or just over two-thirds of the employment loss in 2020. Meanwhile, the state has fully recovered the jobs lost between 2019 and 2020. Of the two workforce service areas in the region, WSA 3 lost relatively fewer and gained back relatively more compared to the WSA 4 - City of Duluth. The employment recovery from 2020 slowed in WSA 4 and turned to decline in WSA 3 from 2024-2025 (see Table 1). The number of establishments in the region, by contrast, has increased consistently since 2019, by the count of 430 (+4.9%).

Figure 1. Total Employment by Area and Year, 2008-2025



Source: DEED Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Table 1. Industry Employment and Wage Statistics by Area, 2019-2025

Table 1. Industry Employment Statistics, 2019-2025								
	2025 Annual Average				2024-2025		2019-2025	
Area	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Total Payroll (\$1,000s)	Avg. Annual Wages	Change in Jobs	Percent Change	Change in Jobs	Percent Change
WDB 4 - City of Duluth	2,525	56,704	\$3,783,610	\$66,716	+119	+0.2%	-2,460	-4.2%
WDB 3 - Northeast	6,737	83,155	\$4,695,176	\$56,463	-853	-1.0%	-1,364	-1.6%
Northeast Minnesota Region	9,262	139,859	\$8,478,786	\$60,580	-734	-0.5%	-3,824	-2.7%
State of Minnesota	208,123	2,943,166	\$226,470,727	\$76,960	+9,159	+0.3%	+41,534	+1.4%

Source: DEED Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Industry Breakdown

Through concentration or scale, there are several industries that play important roles in the economy of Northeast Minnesota, with Healthcare and Social assistance continuing to lead employment. The impacts of the pandemic fell on all industries, but especially on service-based industries such as Retail, Other Services, and Leisure & Hospitality. The employment recovery is on-going and varies by sector.

Total employment in the region remains down 2.7% (-3,800 jobs) compared to 2019 levels, despite the addition of nearly 8,000 jobs since 2020. **Healthcare and Social Assistance** continues to be the largest industry in Northeast Minnesota, accounting for 34,600 jobs as of 2025 – nearly a quarter of all employment in the region (Table 2). Losing 4.3% of jobs through Q3 2020 under the pandemic, the industry initially weathered the associated downturn better than the region’s average, is one of seven sectors that has more jobs in 2025 than in 2019, and one of five that added jobs from 2024 to 2025.

The next largest industries in Northeast Minnesota are **Retail Trade** (12.1% of jobs), **Accommodation and Food Services** (10.2%), **Public Administration** (8.1%), and **Educational Services** (8.0%). Of those four sectors, Public Administration (+1.7%) was the only one to add jobs since 2019. Accommodation & Food Services, Educational Services, and Retail Trade remain down -5.9%, -5.5%, and -0.9% respectively.

Relative to 2019 levels, **six sectors other than Health Care had more employment in 2025: Manufacturing** (+7.7%), **Utilities** (+7.0%), **Construction** (+4.8%), **Real Estate** (+4.8%), **Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services** (+4.4%) **Public Administration** (+1.7%). These six sectors were buoyed by large local construction projects as well as their relative insulation from the worst of the pandemic’s impacts. Manufacturing was buoyed by growth in the Transportation Equipment Manufacturing, Beverage Manufacturing, and Miscellaneous Manufacturing subsectors. Utilities employment rebounded strongly after a half decade of decline leading into 2020. The sectors that remain the furthest below their respective pre-pandemic levels are Information (-26.5%), Finance & Insurance (-19.4%), Management (-15.1%), Administrative Support & Waste Management Services (-14.9%), and Transportation & Warehousing (-13.0%). Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation (-14.6%), Other Services (-11.9%), and Finance & Insurance (-10.2%). With the exception of Transportation & Warehousing, each of these sectors was experiencing long-term declines even prior to

the pandemic.

The average annual wage for the region in 2025 was \$60,580, up 29.7% from 2019 and 3.3% from 2024 (Table 2). Since 2019 wage growth was strongest for Real Estate Rental and Leasing (+42%), Accommodation & Food Services (+38%), Administrative Support a& Waste Management Services (+38%), Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (+34%), Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation (+33%), and Finance & Insurance (+33%). And while all sectors saw wage growth over six years, the smallest gains occurred in Information (+18%), Utilities (+19%), Mining (+20%), and Management (+22%). Wage gains were seen across the wage spectrum, but larger relative gains were more likely to occur in lower-paying sectors. The sectors with the highest wages in 2025 were Utilities (\$122,148), Mining (\$116,688), and Management (\$104,624). The sectors with the lowest average wages were Accommodation & Food Services (\$23,660), Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation (\$32,656), Other Services (\$35,308), and Retail Trade (\$35,568).

Lastly, the sectors with the **highest employment concentration** relative to the state were **Mining** (14.3 times more concentrated in NE MN), **Utilities** (2.2), **Public Administration** (1.6), **Arts, Entertainment & Recreation** (1.4), **Health Care & Social Assistance** (1.4), and **Accommodation & Food Services** (1.3). Retail, Other Services, and Construction were all slightly more concentrated in the region. The least concentrated sectors were Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, & Hunting (0.1), Management (0.2), Wholesale Trade (0.4), Information (0.4), and Administrative Support and Waste Management Services (0.5).

Table 2. Northeast Minnesota Industry Employment and Wage Statistics, 2019-2025

Northeast Minnesota	2025 Annual Data				2024-2025		2019-2025	
NAICS Industry Title	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Total Payroll (\$1,000s)	Avg. Annual Wage	Change in Jobs	Percent Change	Change in Jobs	Percent Change
Total, All Industries	9,308	139,859	\$8,478,786	\$60,580	-734	-0.5%	-3,824	-2.7%
Health Care & Social Assistance	1,068	34,607	\$2,337,653	\$67,548	+621	+1.8%	+19	+0.1%
Retail Trade	1,266	16,936	\$603,116	\$35,568	-55	-0.3%	-147	-0.9%
Accommodation & Food Services	979	14,321	\$339,823	\$23,660	-55	-0.4%	-892	-5.9%
Public Administration	381	11,346	\$788,178	\$69,472	-11	-0.1%	+190	+1.7%
Educational Services	269	11,224	\$642,709	\$57,460	-142	-1.2%	-652	-5.5%
Manufacturing	332	9,576	\$760,167	\$79,404	+345	+3.7%	+685	+7.7%
Construction	1,081	7,341	\$614,252	\$83,408	-110	-1.5%	+334	+4.8%
Professional & Technical Services	596	4,550	\$397,579	\$87,412	-124	-2.7%	+192	+4.4%
Other Services	975	4,507	\$159,079	\$35,308	-252	-5.3%	-638	-12.4%
Mining	35	3,950	\$459,683	\$116,688	-277	-6.6%	-268	-6.4%
Transportation & Warehousing	351	3,670	\$248,224	\$67,600	-199	-5.1%	-547	-13.0%
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	277	3,630	\$118,508	\$32,656	+25	+0.7%	-141	-3.7%
Finance & Insurance	435	3,495	\$273,895	\$78,364	-192	-5.2%	-841	-19.4%
Admin. Support & Waste Mgmt. Svcs.	354	2,924	\$122,511	\$41,860	-207	-6.6%	-510	-14.9%

Wholesale Trade	259	2,748	\$213,459	\$77,688	-77	-2.7%	-237	-7.9%
Utilities	50	1,568	\$191,266	\$122,148	+30	+2.0%	+102	+7.0%
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	282	1,352	\$62,327	\$46,072	+63	+4.9%	+62	+4.8%
Information	143	964	\$53,811	\$55,848	-68	-6.6%	-347	-26.5%
Management of Companies	49	637	\$66,698	\$104,624	-41	-6.0%	-117	-15.5%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & Hunt	130	508	\$25,847	\$50,648	-8	-1.6%	-71	-12.3%

Source: DEED Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Industry and Occupational Projections

2022-2032 employment projections indicate strong growth in industries that experienced the largest employment losses at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Much of the forecasted growth can be attributed to recovery, and to exit and transfer openings. Indeed, many occupations are facing a wave of impending retirements creating a need for a new generation of skilled workers to step in.

Table 3. Northeast Minnesota Occupational Employment Projections, 2022-2032

Occupational Group	2022 Estimate	2032 Projection	2022-2032 Percent Change	Total Job Growth Change	Labor Force Exit Openings	Transfer Openings	2022-2032 Total Hires
Total, All Occupations	153,945	159,102	3.3%	5,157	77,963	95,406	178,526
Food Preparation & Serving Related	14,240	14,851	4.3%	611	12,125	14,989	27,725
Office & Administrative Support	18,152	17,264	-4.9%	-888	9,529	10,645	19,286
Sales & Related	12,772	12,517	-2.0%	-255	8,073	9,487	17,305
Healthcare Support	9,587	10,436	8.9%	849	7,193	7,181	15,223
Transportation & Material Moving	10,093	10,678	5.8%	585	5,427	7,365	13,377
Construction & Extraction	9,080	9,675	6.6%	595	3,293	4,778	8,666
Management	9,807	10,400	6.0%	593	3,000	4,680	8,273
Educational Instruction & Library	8,792	9,003	2.4%	211	4,062	3,928	8,201
Building & Grounds Cleaning & Mtnc.	5,510	5,751	4.4%	241	3,674	3,938	7,853
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	12,025	12,898	7.3%	873	3,925	3,044	7,842
Personal Care & Service	4,059	4,319	6.4%	260	2,849	4,460	7,569
Production	6,852	6,695	-2.3%	-157	2,924	4,242	7,009
Installation, Maintenance, & Repair	7,501	7,835	4.5%	334	2,964	3,650	6,948
Business & Financial Operations	6,806	7,126	4.7%	320	2,173	3,318	5,811
Community & Social Service	5,005	5,353	7.0%	348	2,015	2,498	4,861
Protective Service	3,288	3,345	1.7%	57	1,479	1,884	3,420
Arts, Design, Enter., Sports, & Media	2,312	2,352	1.7%	40	999	1,285	2,324
Life, Physical, and Social Science	1,955	2,045	4.6%	90	419	1,287	1,796
Architecture & Engineering	2,274	2,444	7.5%	170	698	909	1,777
Computer & Mathematical	2,356	2,654	12.6%	298	546	921	1,765
Farming, Fishing, & Forestry	798	755	-5.4%	-43	402	714	1,073
Legal	681	706	3.7%	25	194	203	422

Table 4. Regional Industry Employment Projections, 2022-2032

Industry	Estimated Employment 2022	Projected Employment 2032	Percent Change 2022-2032	Numeric Change 2022-2032
Total, All Industries	153,945	159,102	+3.3%	+5,157
Management of Companies	753	820	+8.9%	+67
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	3,125	3,383	+8.3%	+258
Professional and Technical Services	5,055	5,444	+7.7%	+389
Construction	7,006	7,544	+7.7%	+538
Transportation & Warehousing	4,151	4,437	+6.9%	+286
Health Care & Social Assistance	31,799	33,864	+6.5%	+2,065
Accommodation & Food Services	14,034	14,860	+5.9%	+826
Wholesale Trade	3,202	3,359	+4.9%	+157
Admin. Support & Waste Mgmt. Services	3,097	3,231	+4.3%	+134
Mining	4,006	4,134	+3.2%	+128
Other Services	5,953	6,118	+2.8%	+165
Manufacturing	8,777	9,016	+2.7%	+239
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	1,235	1,268	+2.7%	+33
State Government Employment	2,229	2,288	+2.6%	+59
Local Government Employment	11,038	11,275	+2.1%	+237
Public Administration	15,176	15,440	+1.7%	+264
Educational Services	12,004	12,056	+0.4%	+52
Finance & Insurance	4,592	4,578	-0.3%	-14
Utilities	1,352	1,342	-0.7%	-10

Source: DEED Employment Outlook

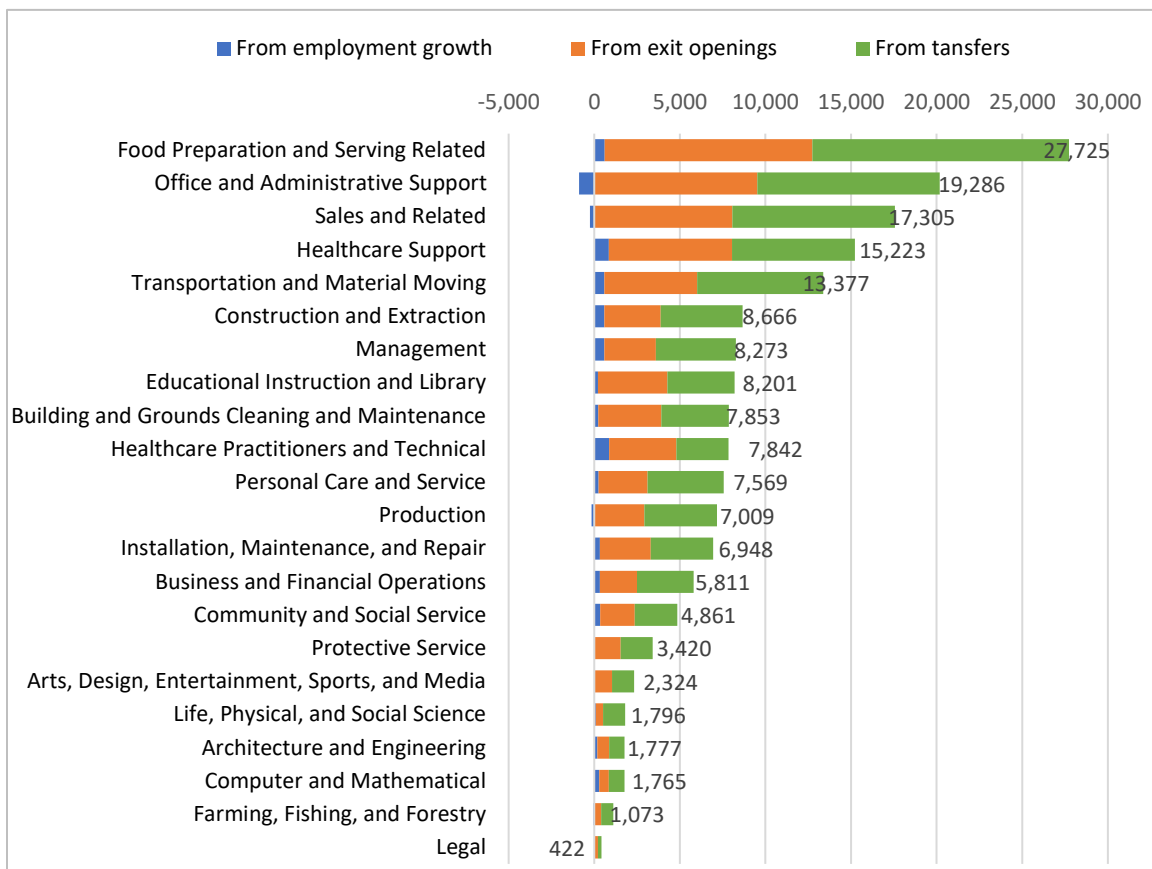
DEED's Employment Outlook tool also provides industry and occupation employment projections for the period 2022-2032 including openings created due to exit openings, often from retirements (Table 3). This is an important data point, as 37.2% of the population in Northeast Minnesota is over age 55, has already retired, or will reach retirement age in the next decade. This is expected to create a critical need for skilled workers, particularly in certain occupations where larger shares of workers are older.

Overall, the Northeast planning area is projected to grow 3.3% from 2022 to 2032, a gain of 5,157 new jobs. This is compared to a projected growth rate of 4.6% statewide. The region is also expected to need 178,526 replacement openings to fill jobs left vacant by retirements and career changers. Employment growth is expected to slow from the initial pandemic recovery, more in line with pre-2020 employment growth. Accordingly, Food Preparation & Serving is the occupational group expected to add the most jobs, followed by Office & Admin. Support, and Sales & Related occupations (Table 3). The largest percent growth is expected for Computer & Mathematical (+12.6%), Healthcare Support (+8.9%), Architecture & Engineering (+7.5%), and Healthcare Practitioners & Technical (+7.3%).

By industry the trends are similar. The sectors expected to grow the fastest are diverse, and include high and low-paying industries such as Management and Arts, Entertainment, & Rec. (see Table 4). The most new jobs are expected to be added in Health Care & Social Assistance, Accommodation & Food Services, and Construction. By contrast, Retail, Utilities, Information, and Finance & Insurance were projected to see employment declines as the way we work continues to evolve under the implementation of new technology and structural changes to the economy. More recent trends point toward a change toward

growth for Utilities.

Figure 2. Northeast Minnesota Occupational Projections, 2022-2032



Source: DEED Employment Outlook

Occupational Distribution and Projections

Employment is less concentrated in a single occupational group than by industry, yet the same emphasis in service-oriented occupations is evident.

Like the state, **the largest share of employment in the 7-county Northeast region in 2020 was in Office and Administrative Support (11.7%)**, despite recent employment declines in that occupational group (Table 5). The next largest occupational group was **Food Preparation and Serving Related (10.3%)**, which was more concentrated than in the rest of Minnesota. **Healthcare Support and Healthcare Practitioners and Technical** accounted for a combined 15.4% of regional jobs, again, more concentrated than the corresponding statewide share (12.5%). **Construction and Extraction (5.6%)**, **Installation, Maintenance & Repair (4.8%)**, **Community & Social Services (3.1%)**, and **Protective Services (2.2%)** employment were also notably more concentrated in the region. Sales & Related, Education & Training, and Office & Admin Support occupations made up 26.1% of employment, each about equal to the statewide share for those occupational groups.

Relative to the state, the Northeast region had notably smaller employment shares in Production (4.5%), Business and Financial Operations (4.3%), Computer and Mathematical (1.5%), Arts, Design,

Entertainment, & Media (0.9%), and Legal (0.4%).

The regional median wage for all occupations in 2025 was \$23.47, \$2.75 lower than the statewide median (Table 5). About 12% of jobs in the region had wages below \$17.00 per hour. The occupational groups with the lowest median wages were Food Prep & Serving Related (\$14.56), Sales & Related (\$16.71), and Personal Care & Service (\$17.15). The occupational groups with the highest median wages were Management (\$46.38), Legal (\$40.98), Architecture & Engineering (\$40.58), Healthcare Practitioners & Technical (\$40.04), and Computer & Mathematical (\$38.42). The three lowest paying occupational groups accounted for 21.2% of jobs. The four highest-paying occupational groups accounted for 15.8% of jobs.

Table 5. Northeast Minnesota Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, 2025

Occupational Group	Northeast 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	\$23.47	139,940	100.0%	1.0	\$26.22	2,920,470	100.0%
Office & Administrative Support	\$22.70	16,400	11.7%	1.0	\$24.07	340,040	11.6%
Food Preparation & Serving Related	\$14.56	14,420	10.3%	1.2	\$16.05	240,830	8.2%
Sales & Related	\$16.71	11,750	8.4%	1.0	\$18.66	244,780	8.4%
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	\$40.04	11,570	8.3%	1.3	\$46.51	187,480	6.4%
Healthcare Support	\$18.28	10,020	7.2%	1.2	\$18.67	176,750	6.1%
Transportation & Material Moving	\$21.57	8,930	6.4%	0.8	\$22.85	228,260	7.8%
Education, Training & Library	\$25.07	8,410	6.0%	1.0	\$27.84	170,270	5.8%
Construction & Extraction	\$34.23	7,820	5.6%	1.4	\$34.20	114,050	3.9%
Management	\$46.38	7,780	5.6%	0.8	\$59.38	200,060	6.9%
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	\$30.21	6,770	4.8%	1.3	\$30.40	105,650	3.6%
Production	\$25.14	6,360	4.5%	0.6	\$23.56	205,220	7.0%
Business & Financial Operations	\$36.09	6,060	4.3%	0.6	\$39.95	208,210	7.1%
Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maint.	\$17.77	4,660	3.3%	1.2	\$19.16	81,700	2.8%
Community & Social Service	\$27.67	4,330	3.1%	1.5	\$29.82	59,290	2.0%
Personal Care & Service	\$17.15	3,520	2.5%	1.2	\$17.54	63,300	2.2%
Protective Service	\$27.12	3,020	2.2%	1.3	\$29.37	46,960	1.6%
Architecture & Engineering	\$40.58	2,240	1.6%	0.8	\$45.03	57,950	2.0%
Computer & Mathematical	\$38.42	2,100	1.5%	0.4	\$50.02	97,460	3.3%
Life, Physical & Social Science	\$36.86	1,730	1.2%	1.1	\$38.33	32,150	1.1%
Arts, Design, Entertainment & Media	\$23.54	1,280	0.9%	0.7	\$28.84	36,030	1.2%
Legal	\$40.98	530	0.4%	0.5	\$49.52	20,750	0.7%
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	\$24.08	230	0.2%	1.5	\$23.48	3,300	0.1%

Source: DEED Occupational Employment and Wages Statistics

Occupations in Demand

Led by Healthcare and Social Assistance/Service, a wide array of occupations, with varying wages and educational requirements, were in demand in 2023.

According to DEED's Occupations in Demand Tool, in 2025 there were about 270 occupations with moderate-to-high demand in the region (Table 6). **Of the 89 occupations considered to have the most favorable demand conditions, 28 were in Healthcare, Personal Care, Education, or Social Service**

occupations. Production, Maintenance, Transportation, and Construction & Extraction occupations accounted for 19 of the most in-demand occupations and Food Preparation & Serving Related and Office & Admin occupations represented an additional 11 and 10 of the most in-demand jobs respectively. The in-demand occupations were spread across most industry sectors with concentrations in Healthcare, Personal, and Social Support and Assistance. The most in-demand occupations also showed varying education requirements, however 17 of the top 20 occupations with the highest demand in the region required a high school diploma or equivalent.

Table 6. Occupations in Demand by Typical Required Education in Northeast Minnesota with Median Wage, 2025

High School or Less	Vocational Training	Some College or Assoc. Degree	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	Nursing Assistants	Registered Nurses	General and Operations Managers
\$36,611/yr	\$43,783/yr	\$84,451/yr	\$77,788/yr
Retail Salespersons	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	Accountants and Auditors
\$33,817/yr	\$62,124/yr	\$76,419/yr	\$74,639/yr
Food Preparation Workers	Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	Pharmacists
\$33,094/yr	\$39,033/yr	\$79,035/yr	\$143,951/yr
Fast Food and Counter Workers	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	Project Management Specialists
\$30,019/yr	\$57,976/yr	\$47,241/yr	\$94,155/yr
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	Medical Assistants	Dental Hygienists	Financial Managers
\$37,249/yr	\$47,235/yr	\$91,369/yr	\$128,471/yr
Waiters and Waitresses	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	Surgical Technologists	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education
\$22,952/yr	\$53,239/yr	\$66,757/yr	\$61,345/yr
First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	Substance abuse, behavioral disorder, and mental health counselors	Respiratory Therapists	Substitute Teachers, Short-Term
\$43,418/yr	\$51,475/yr	\$81,337/yr	\$41,454/yr
Cashiers	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	Physical Therapist Assistants	Medical and Health Services Managers
\$29,732/yr	\$48,935/yr	\$64,843/yr	\$103,535/yr
Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary	Electricians	Civil Engineering Technologists and Technicians	Human Resources Specialists
\$38,028/yr	\$85,688/yr	\$79,462/yr	\$67,642/yr
Cooks, Restaurant	Pharmacy Technicians	Cardiovascular Technologists and Technicians	Industrial Engineers
\$36,715/yr	\$47,252/yr	\$86,132/yr	\$95,993/yr

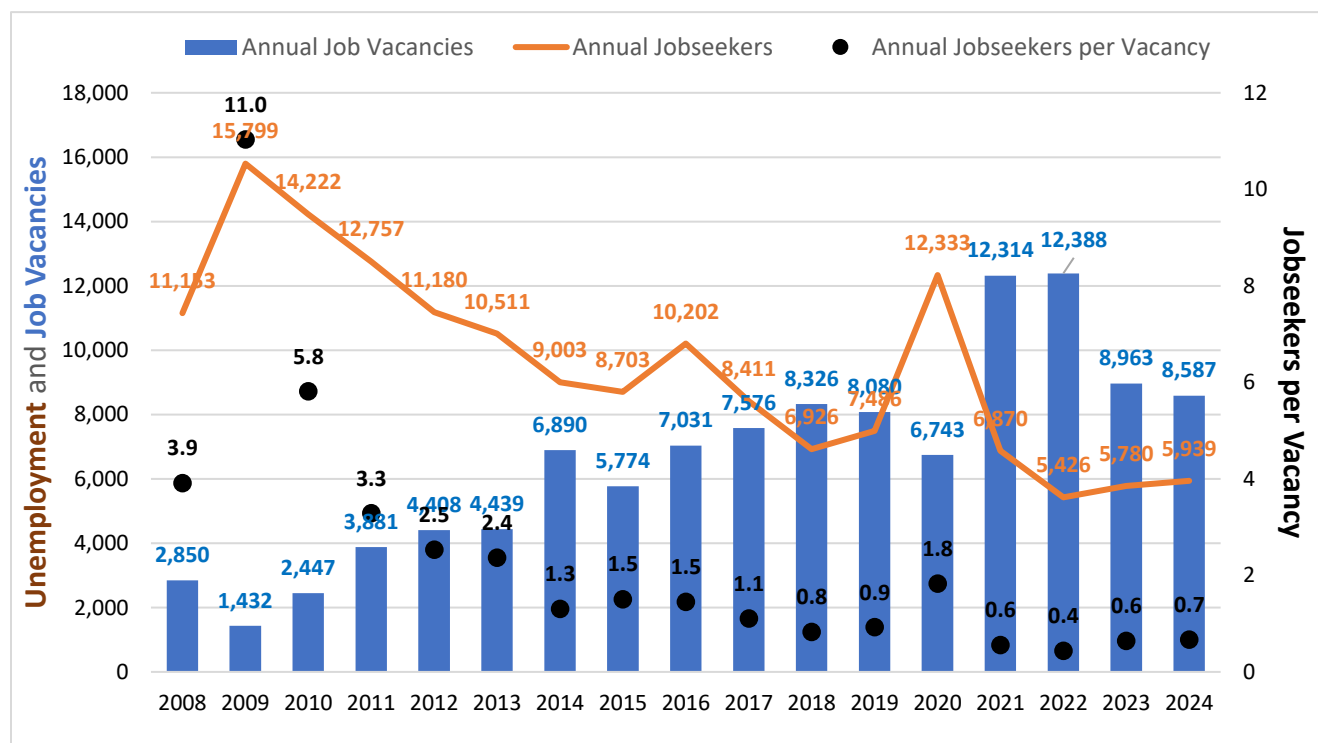
Source: DEED Occupations in Demand

Job Vacancy Survey

Job vacancies fell from all-time highs in 2021 and 2022 to levels in 2024 more in line with pre-pandemic numbers. At the same time, unemployment consistently rose from record lows directly following the pandemic. As a result, the labor market has loosened and the ratio of the number of jobseekers per job vacancy continued to rise. African American and Indigenous populations as well as individuals with disabilities continue to face higher rates of unemployment, and recent college graduates face ongoing challenges connecting to employment in their fields of study.

The number of job vacancies in Northeast Minnesota fell by 376 from 8,963 in 2023 to 8,587 in 2024, the lowest number of vacancies since 2020. (Fig. 3). Despite this drop, vacancies remained higher relative to the number of unemployed persons in the region, maintaining a ratio of jobseekers to job vacancies (0.7) in 2024. When this ratio falls under one, it represents a tight labor market where job candidates and applicants are more difficult to find for employers across many industries and occupational groups. So while the ratio indicates a tight labor market persisted into 2024, rising unemployment combined with declining job vacancies points toward more recent loosening.

Figure 3. Jobseekers per Vacancy in Northeast Minnesota, 2008-2024



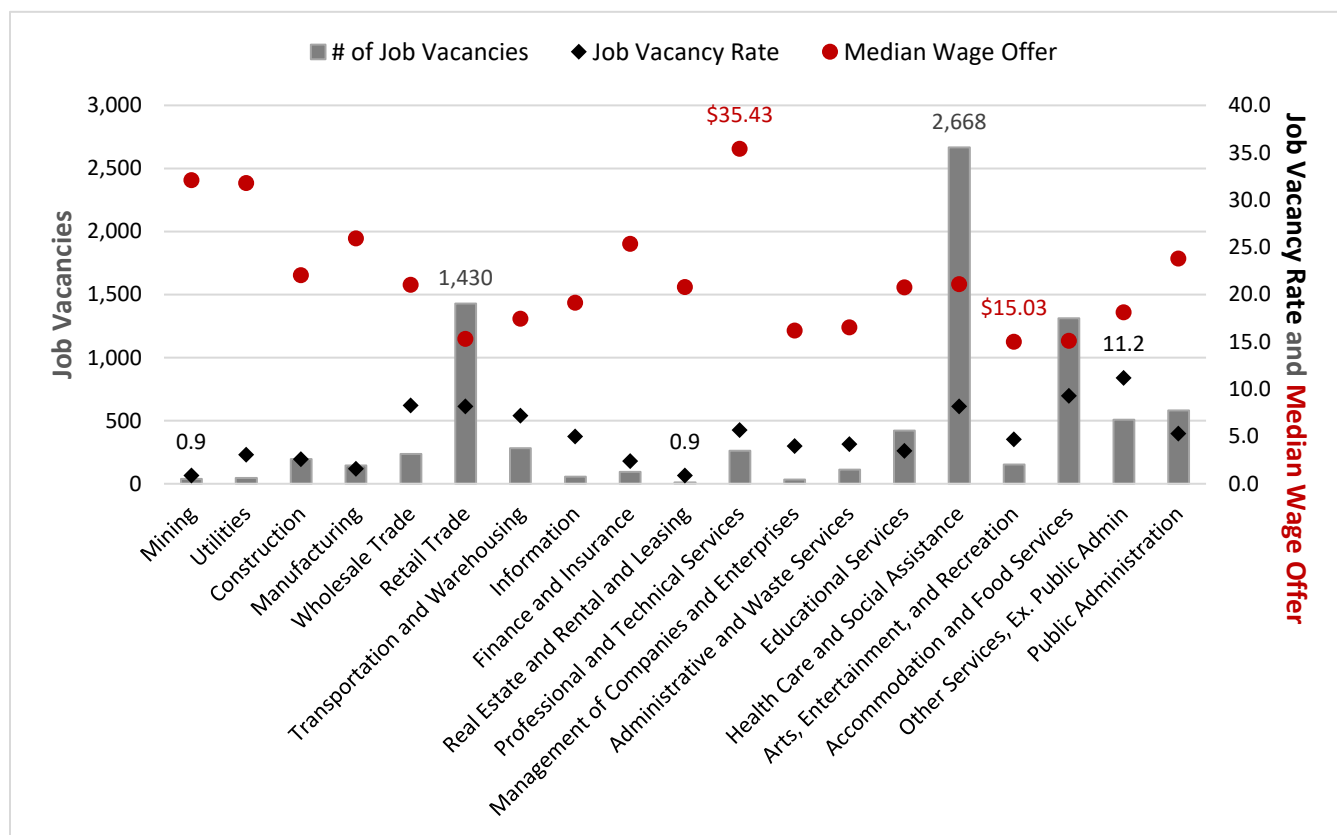
Source: DEED LAUS, Job Vacancy Survey

The total vacancy rate for all industries in Northeast Minnesota as of 2024 was 6.2%, meaning that open positions represented nearly one out of every 16 jobs in the region. The statewide vacancy rate for the same period was a lower 4.3%. Northeast Minnesota had the highest vacancy rate of the six planning regions in the state. Prior to 2020, the regional vacancy rate varied from 5% to 6%. In 2024, the industries with the highest vacancy rates were Other Services (11.2%), Accommodation & Food Services (9.3%), Wholesale Trade (8.3%), Health Care & Social Assistance (8.2%), and Retail Trade (8.2%). The more service

and tourist-oriented Other Services, Accommodation & Food Services, and Arts, Entertainment & Recreation in general have higher systemic turnover elevating average vacancy rates. Health Care & Social Assistance has experience increased turnover during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, elevating vacancy rates for occupations in that sector as well.

The sectors with highest shares of part-time vacancies were Administrative and Waste Services (70% of vacancies), Management (65%), Arts, Entertainment & Recreation (57%), and Information (55%). The sectors with the highest share of vacancies for temporary or seasonal positions were Public Administration (52%), Transportation & Warehousing (44%), Educational Services (42%), and Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation (33%). The sectors offering the highest median wages were Professional & Technical Services (\$35.43), Mining (\$32.12), Utilities (\$31.82), and Manufacturing (\$25.96). Those four sectors accounted for less than 6% of all regional job vacancies.

Figure 4. Job Vacancies and Median Wage Offers by Industry, Northeast Minnesota, 2024



Source: DEED Job Vacancy Survey

Occupational Detail in Sectors of Focus

In Educational Services the occupations with the highest numbers of vacancies were Teaching Assistants (120), Substitute Teachers (51), and Pre-K-12 Teachers (52). Vacancy rates were the highest for Career and Technical Education Teachers (24.2%), Substitute Teachers (24.2%), and Tutors (10.0%).

In Healthcare and Social Assistance, there were numerous occupations with high numbers of

vacancies and/or high vacancy rates. The highest number of openings were for Nursing Assistants (444), Registered Nurses (431), Personal Care Aides (428), Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses (80), and Pharmacists (79). Those five occupations alone combined for 17% of total vacancies and 72% of all Healthcare vacancies. Counselors, Social Workers, and Other Community and Social Service Occupations accounted for 225 vacancies. Vacancy rates exceeded 30% for several occupations including Nurse Anesthetists, Audiologists, Orthopedic Surgeons, and Physicians, All Other.

The most vacancies among Construction, Installation, Maintenance & Repair, and Production occupations were for Maintenance Workers, Machinery (94), Maintenance and Repair Workers, General (78), Construction Trades Workers (41), and Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics (28). Vacancy rates for these occupational groups were lower than average.

Finally, Leisure & Hospitality-related occupations with the highest number of openings were Food Preparation Workers (452), First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations (222), Cooks, Restaurant (145), Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists (139), and Waiters and Waitresses (138). Those with vacancy rates exceeding 30% were Food Preparation Workers, First-Line Supervisors of Personal Service Workers, and Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists.

Labor Force Participation and Unemployment

Northeast Minnesota has the lowest labor force participation of the six planning regions and WSA 3 has the lowest participation rate among all service areas in the state. At the same time, African American and Indigenous populations as well as individuals with disabilities continue to face higher rates of unemployment and lower participation both compared to other groups within the region as well as compared to the same groups statewide. Recent college graduates face ongoing challenges connecting to employment in their fields of study (Table 7).

Table 7. Employment Characteristics by Group in Northeast Minnesota, 2024

Demographic Group	Northeast Minnesota			Minnesota		Percent of Total Labor Force	
	In Labor Force	Labor Force Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate	Labor Force Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate	Northeast Minnesota	Minnesota
Total Labor Force	161,251	59.1%	4.7%	68.1%	4.1%		
16 to 19 years	8,820	51.6%	8.9%	52.6%	10.3%	5.5%	5.1%
20 to 24 years	19,239	82.0%	7.3%	83.3%	6.6%	11.9%	9.5%
25 to 44 years	63,150	84.9%	5.1%	88.7%	3.7%	39.2%	43.4%
45 to 54 years	30,346	83.8%	2.8%	87.8%	3.0%	18.8%	18.7%
55 to 64 years	28,806	61.7%	3.4%	72.7%	3.2%	17.9%	17.2%
65 to 74 years	9,143	20.3%	3.6%	27.7%	3.6%	5.7%	5.2%
75 years & over	1,710	5.7%	4.5%	6.7%	3.2%	1.1%	0.9%
Employment Characteristics by Race & Hispanic Origin							
White alone	146,635	59.1%	4.3%	67.0%	3.5%	90.9%	78.7%
Black or African American	1,727	49.4%	29.5%	70.8%	8.7%	1.1%	6.5%

American Indian & Alaska Native	2,498	49.1%	12.3%	58.0%	10.8%	1.5%	0.7%
Asian or Other Pac. Islanders	1,618	69.7%	2.9%	75.2%	3.5%	1.0%	5.5%
Some Other Race	1,204	66.2%	2.3%	75.4%	5.8%	0.7%	2.9%
Two or More Races	7,569	64.8%	6.4%	74.0%	5.7%	4.7%	5.9%
Hispanic or Latino	2,831	67.2%	8.2%	76.6%	5.8%	1.8%	6.1%
Employment Characteristics by Veteran Status, 18 to 64 years							
Veterans, 18 to 64 years	6,204	74.6%	4.5%	80.9%	4.6%	4.2%	3.1%
Employment Characteristics by Disability, 20 to 64 years							
With Any Disability, 20 to 64 years	11,798	47.9%	9.1%	56.1%	9.4%	8.3%	6.4%
Employment Characteristics by Educational Attainment, 25 to 64 years							
Population, 25 to 64 years	122,306	77.8%	4.1%	84.5%	3.4%	75.8%	79.4%
Less than H.S. Diploma	4,016	51.4%	6.8%	66.2%	4.9%	3.3%	4.6%
H.S. Diploma or Equivalent	25,894	67.6%	3.2%	76.6%	2.5%	21.2%	18.5%
Some College or Assoc. Degree	48,005	79.4%	3.7%	85.0%	3.7%	39.3%	31.7%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	44,403	87.7%	2.2%	90.5%	2.2%	36.3%	45.1%

Source: 2020-2024 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Source: 2020-2024 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

C.2. Describe the sectors or occupations of focus for region, including:

- **How the region will use the labor market information and conduct outreach to business and industry to select the targeted sectors for developing sector partnerships for occupations in demand that provide family sustaining wages. If sectors and occupations have been already selected, describe them within this response.**

Using a combination of labor market information and engagement with employers through our workforce boards and sector strategy groups, Region 2 – Northeast Minnesota has selected four industry sectors of focus, based on the significance for our region, the total number of jobs, projected job growth and/or anticipated exit openings due to retirement, and the potential for family-sustaining wages and career advancement:

Healthcare & Social Assistance: With 34,607 jobs at 1,068 establishments, Health & Care and Social Assistance is the largest sector in the region, accounting for 24.7% of employment through 2025. Employment in the sector is 1.4 times more concentrated in Northeast Minnesota than the sector statewide. 2022-2032 employment projections forecasted 6.5% growth in the sector for the region, an estimated addition of 2,065 jobs over 10 years. Job vacancy data show a high number of openings (2,668) in 2024, which represented 31% of all openings in the region at that time. That high number of openings equated to an 8.2% vacancy rate, the fifth-highest among all sectors. This sector also offers multiple entry points and opportunities for advancement, with family-sustaining wages and benefits. The sector had an average annual wage of \$67,584, which was nearly \$7,000 higher than the all-sector average and 11th-highest out of 20

sectors. Since 2019, the average wage grew 30.7%, faster than the 29.7% for all sectors over the same period.

Construction: The Construction sector accounted for 7,341 jobs at 1,081 establishments, making it the 7th largest in the region in terms of employment. While this industry sector currently represents just 5.2% of total employment for the region, Construction is projected to lose roughly a fifth of its workforce to retirement over the next decade. At the same time we will see a significant construction boom related to the Blatnik Bridge replacement and other major infrastructure projects, as well as a boom in desperately needed housing construction. Since 2019, the sector added 334 jobs (+4.8%), the third-fastest growing of all 20 sectors over that period. 2022-2032 employment projections forecasted an addition of 538 jobs (+7.7%). Job vacancy data in 2024 indicated an estimated 197 openings for a vacancy rate of 2.6%. The average annual wage of \$83,408 is nearly \$23,000 higher than the all-sector average wage and made it the 5th highest wage among 20 sectors in the region. Wage growth since 2019 was about average, expanding 29.9% over 6 years.

Manufacturing: The Manufacturing sector in Northeast Minnesota had 9,576 jobs at 332 establishments, good for 6.8% of area employment, making it the 6th largest by employment. While manufacturing is projected to lose some jobs due to automation, the industry sector will need to replace a much larger share of workers due to retirements. Additionally, some of our largest manufacturing employers are planning for expansion, and many manufacturing workers will need training to learn new skills and adapt to new processes and technologies. Since 2019, the sector was the fastest expanding, adding 685 jobs and growing 7.7% compared to the -2.7% decline of all sectors. Since 2024, the sector also grew rapidly, adding 345 jobs (+3.7%), good enough to be the second-fastest growing over the year. The sector was projected to grow more slowly over the 2022-2032 period (+2.7%). 2024 job vacancy data indicate 154 openings in the sector for a vacancy rate of 1.6%. Since 2018, vacancies in the sector ranged from 63 to 506 and the vacancy rate was typically below the all-sector average. The sector had an average annual wage of \$79,404, about \$19,000 higher than the all-sector average and the 6th highest of 20 sectors. The average wage grew 29% from 2019, about equal to the all-industry average.

Educational Services: With many school districts, seven technical colleges, and two universities in the region – not counting the college and university located in Superior, Wisconsin – this sector represents an important asset in our region. This is a sector that is experiencing significant workforce challenges post-pandemic, particularly among high-need roles in special education and post-secondary instruction. This is also a sector that is critically important for training, to ensure workers enter employment with the skills employers need. The Educational Services Sector accounted for 11,224 jobs at 381

establishments in the region, good enough to make it the 5th largest sector. The sector has lost 652 jobs (-5.5%) since 2019 about 140 jobs (-1.2%) since 2024. The sector was forecasted to add 52 jobs over ten years (2022-2032), growth equal to 0.4%. 2024 job vacancy data showed 421 openings and a 3.5% vacancy rate. The median wage offer in 2022 was \$20.76, above the all-sector median of \$18.66. The average wage for the sector in 2025 was \$57,460, about \$3,100 below the all-sector average. Since 2019, Educational Services wages have grown 23.6%, below the all-sector average wage growth of 29.7%.

Leisure & Hospitality: While not selected as a targeted sector for the region in this plan, the Regional Leadership Team identified Leisure & Hospitality as critical to the regional economy. This sector is home to many small businesses and often struggles to recruit and hire enough workers, and was deeply impacted by the pandemic. It is also frequently the sector where many people in the region work at some point in their working lives. The Leisure & Hospitality supersector consists of the smaller Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation and Accommodation & Food Services sectors. Combined they accounted for 17,951 jobs at 1,256 establishments which would make it the second largest sector in the region by employment. Separately, Accommodation & Food Services was the 3rd-largest and Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation was 12th-largest among 20 sectors. Both sectors have higher than average concentrations of employment when compared to the rest of the state. Leisure & Hospitality saw larger-than-average employment losses early in the pandemic and remains down 5.4% and 1,033 jobs compared to 2019. More recently the supersector has seen slower-than-average growth losing 30 jobs since 2024 for a decline of 0.2%. Reflecting the large losses early in the pandemic, long-term projections forecast 6.3% growth from 2022-2032, equivalent to an addition of 1,084 jobs. Job vacancy data showed 1,464 job vacancies with a vacancy rate near 10%, higher than the all-industry average. The average annual wage in Leisure & Hospitality was \$25,532, which is far below the average for the region. Accommodation & Food Services (\$23,660) and Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation (\$32,656) were the sectors with the two lowest wages. Since 2019 average wage growth for Accommodation & Food Services was 37.9% and wages rose 33.3% for Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation workers, both higher than the all industry growth rate of 29.7%. Combined, Leisure & Hospitality wages rose 4.7% over the year into 2025 as employers looked for ways to attract workers. Region 2 – Northeast Minnesota will continue to find ways to support this sector by connecting employers to job seekers and building connections with career pathways that offer a family-sustaining wage.

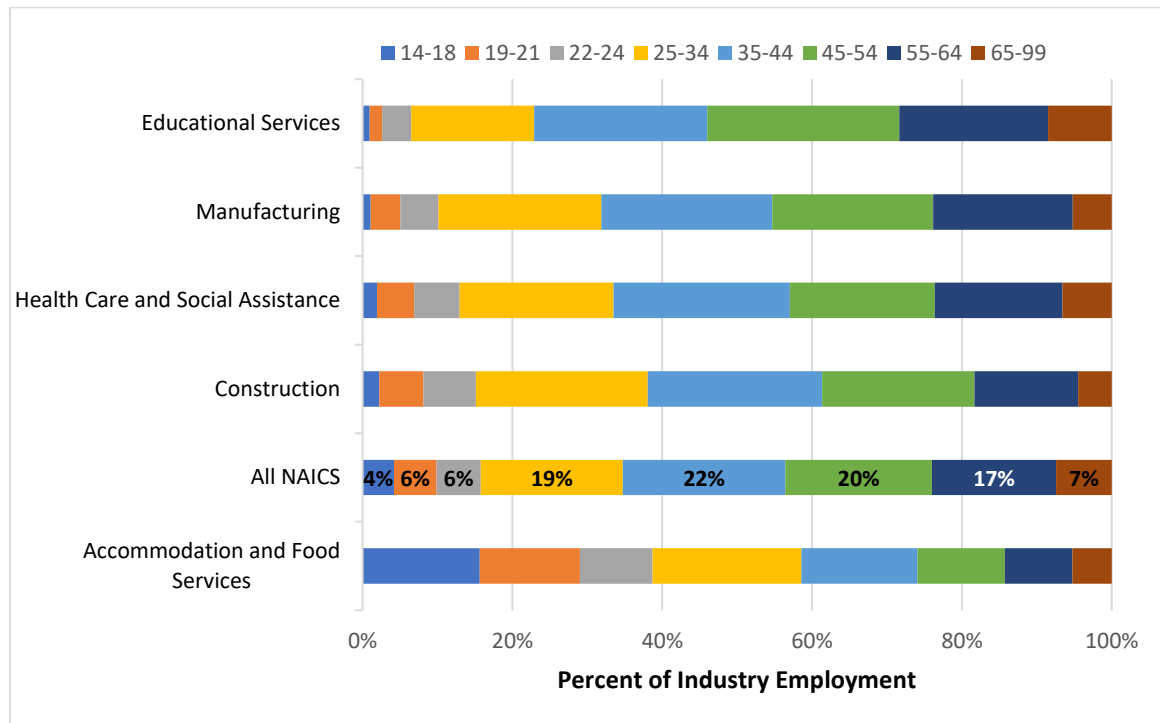
C.3. The demographic makeup of the labor force in those sectors as compared to the regional labor force, and how the region will work to close any identified gaps.

Age

The prime working ages of 25-54 accounted for 60% of all workers in Northeast Minnesota as of Q2 2025. Each of the sectors of focus had higher shares of their workforce in that prime age group: Healthcare & Social Assistance (63%), Manufacturing (66%), Educational Services (65%), and Construction (67%). Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation and Accommodation & Food Services had much higher shares of workers 24 or younger at 29% and 39% respectively. Sectors that had below average (16%) shares of workers aged 24 and under were Educational Services (6%), Manufacturing (10%), Healthcare & Social Assistance (13%), and Construction (15%).

Arts, Entertainment & Recreation also had an above average share (25%) of workers 55 or older. Educational Services had the highest share of 55+ workers with 28% of the sectors of focus workforces. Healthcare and Manufacturing both had slightly lower shares than average. Construction had the second-lowest share of older workers (18%) behind Accommodation & Food Services (14%) among all sectors. Workers aged 55 or older accounted for 24% of all workers across all industries (see Figure 1).

Figure 5. Share of Employment by Age and Industry Sector in Northeast Minnesota, 2024/25



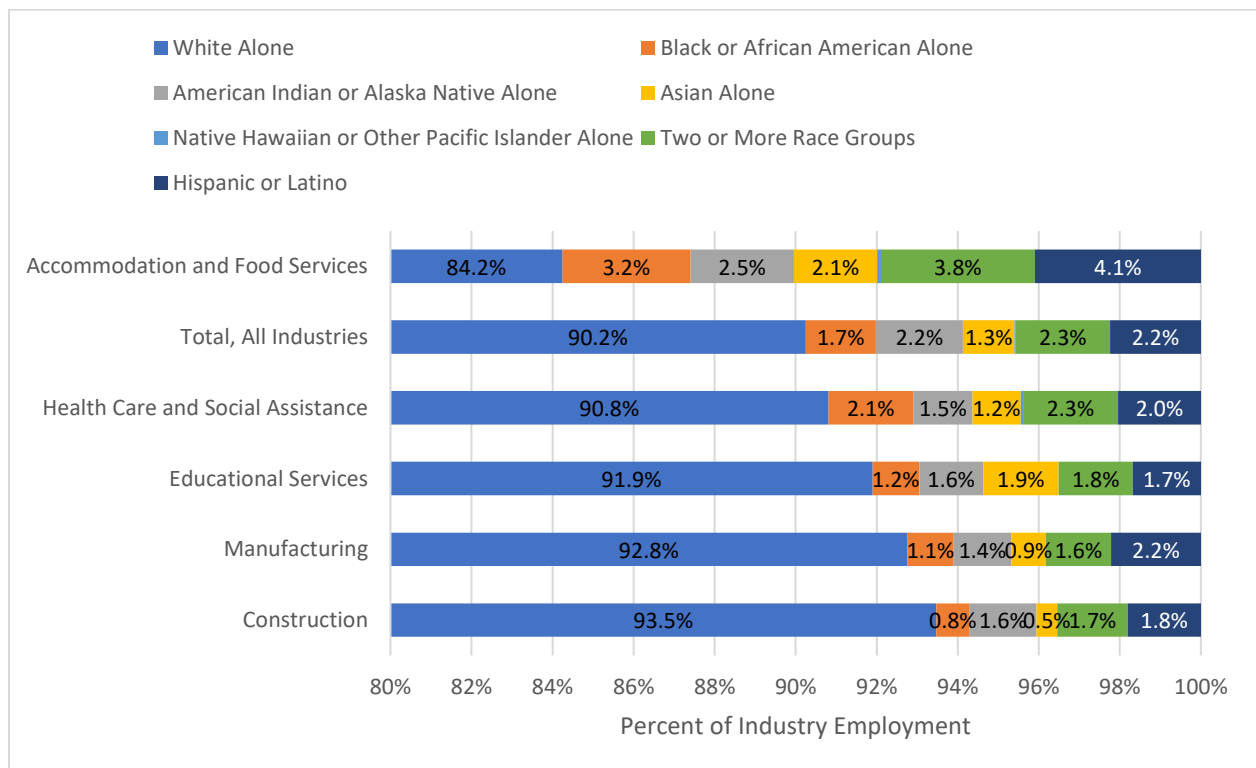
Source: U.S. Census Bureau Quarterly Workforce Indicators

Race & Ethnicity

Workers of color accounted for 9.8% of the workforce in Northeast Minnesota in 2025. That was slightly below the total population (12.1%) and slightly higher than the share of the labor force identifying as people of color (10.8%). By sector, the two sectors in the Leisure & Hospitality supersector were the most diverse with 19.1% (Arts, Entertainment, & Rec.) and 15.8% (Accommodation & Food Services). Each of the sectors of focus had smaller than average shares of workers of color with Manufacturing, Construction, and Educational Services having between 6.5% and 9.2% workers of color (see Figure 2).

In the four sectors of focus, Construction had the highest shares of Hispanic or Latino (2%) and Indigenous (1.6%) workers. Educational Services had the highest share of Asian workers (1.8%) and Health Care and Social Assistance had the highest shares of Black or African Americans (2.1%) and workers of Two or More Races (2%).

Figure 6. Share of Employment by Race & Ethnicity and Industry Sector in Northeast Minnesota, 2024/25



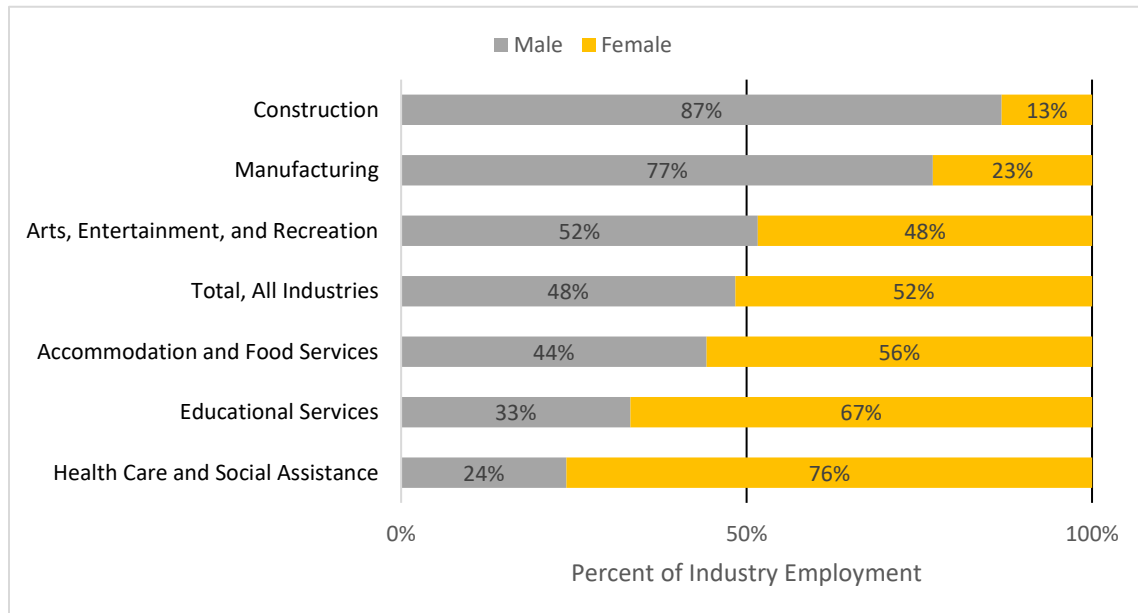
Source: U.S. Census Bureau Quarterly Workforce Indicators

Gender

There is considerable variation of each sector's workforce by gender. The split was 48% male, 52% female across all industries. Construction (87%) and Manufacturing (77%)

skewed much more male while Educational Services (67%) and Health Care & Social Assistance (77%) had higher shares of their workforces reporting as female. Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation and Accommodation & Food Services were closer to an even split on either side of average (see Figure 3).

Figure 7. Share of Employment by Gender and Industry Sector in Northeast Minnesota, 2024/25



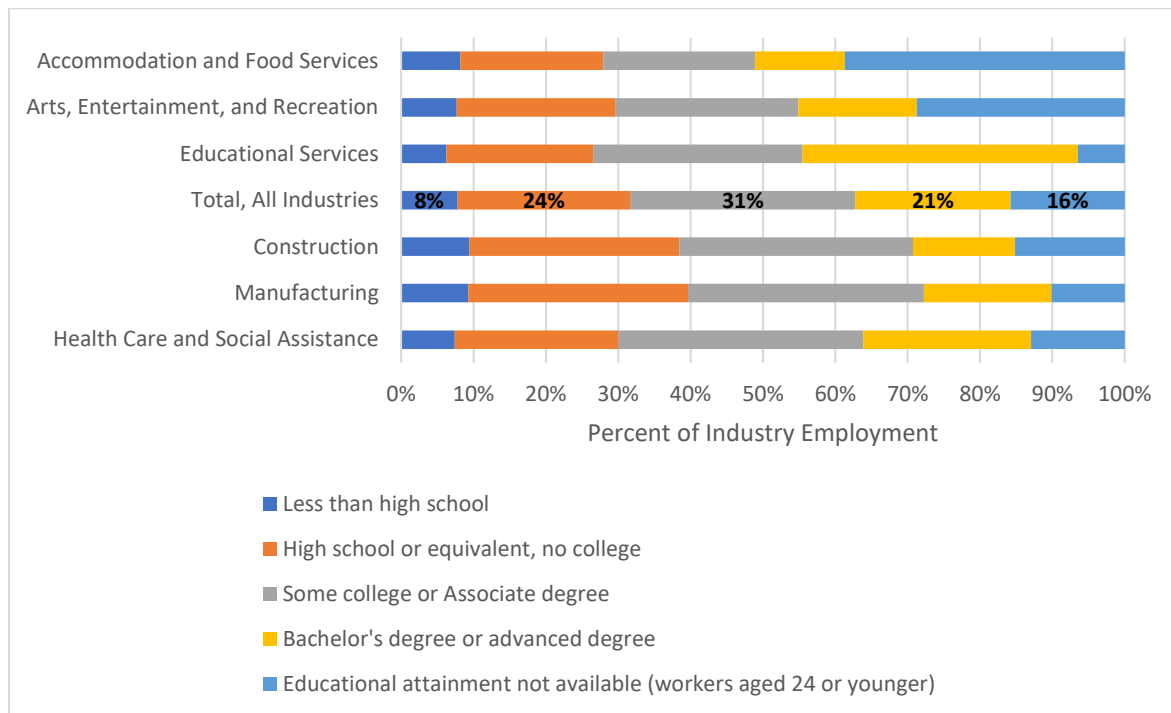
Source: U.S. Census Bureau Quarterly Workforce Indicators

Educational Attainment

In many ways Educational Attainment reflects the requirements and training associated with jobs in a given sector. It can also reflect the age of workers in an industry. As demonstrated above, Educational Services has an older workforce, but it also often has higher educational requirements for workers in positions such as administrators and teachers. These factors combined, the sector had the highest share of workers holding a Bachelor's degree or higher at 38%. Health Care & Social Assistance which has many occupations that also require higher educational attainment or training has the second highest share among sectors of focus with 23%, but also has the highest share of workers with some college or Associate degrees (34%). Educational Services and Health Care & Social Assistance had the smallest shares of workers with less than a high school degree.

Manufacturing and Construction both had high shares of workers with high school degrees or equivalent, but also above average shares of workers with some college or associate degrees. The two Leisure & Hospitality sectors had the highest shares of workers with educational attainment unavailable due to being younger than 25 (see Figure 4).

Figure 8. Share of Employment by Educational Attainment and Industry Sector in Northeast Minnesota, 2024/25



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Quarterly Workforce Indicators

- **Alignment to the five sectors of focus in Drive for 5, including which local area in the region is focused on each or any of the Drive for 5 sectors. Complete Attachment G – Local Workforce Development Area Key Industries in Regional Economy.**

The four industry sectors of focus all align with Drive for 5. Healthcare and Social Assistance falls under Caring Professions. Educational Services, Construction Trades, and Manufacturing are all identified as Drive for 5 areas of focus. Region 2 – Northeast Minnesota will seek to collaborate with and contribute to statewide efforts to meet workforce needs and advance sector initiatives within these four areas.

- **The make-up of the sector partnerships will be determined and the expertise and resources they bring to the partnership.**

Industry-led sector partnerships focused on Construction, Healthcare, and Manufacturing are led by the Duluth Workforce Development Board on behalf of the region and have been in existence for some time. The Construction Working Group includes representation from the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the City of Duluth, which fund construction projects and set diverse workforce goals for these projects; building trades unions and apprenticeship program representatives;

community organizations that recruit, train, and place adults with barriers to employment into construction careers; Community Liaisons who conduct outreach and facilitate career exploration; and a wide range of union contractors. This group has an established work plan focused on short- and long-term goals, and meets monthly to discuss workforce challenges and strategies to overcome barriers to entry into construction careers.

The Healthcare Working Group was launched after a series of workforce summits that took place in 2018-2019. The group includes both large hospital systems, as well as a variety of smaller long-term care providers, health clinics, and treatment centers as well as local colleges and workforce organizations. The group has an established work plan, and implements strategies using a collective impact approach to address workforce needs.

The Manufacturing Working Group is active and includes firms located in and around Duluth and beyond. Participants include both large and small manufacturers of a variety of product types; K-12 and post-secondary education systems; and workforce agencies. This group developed an action plan, and is working to implement strategies identified in the plan.

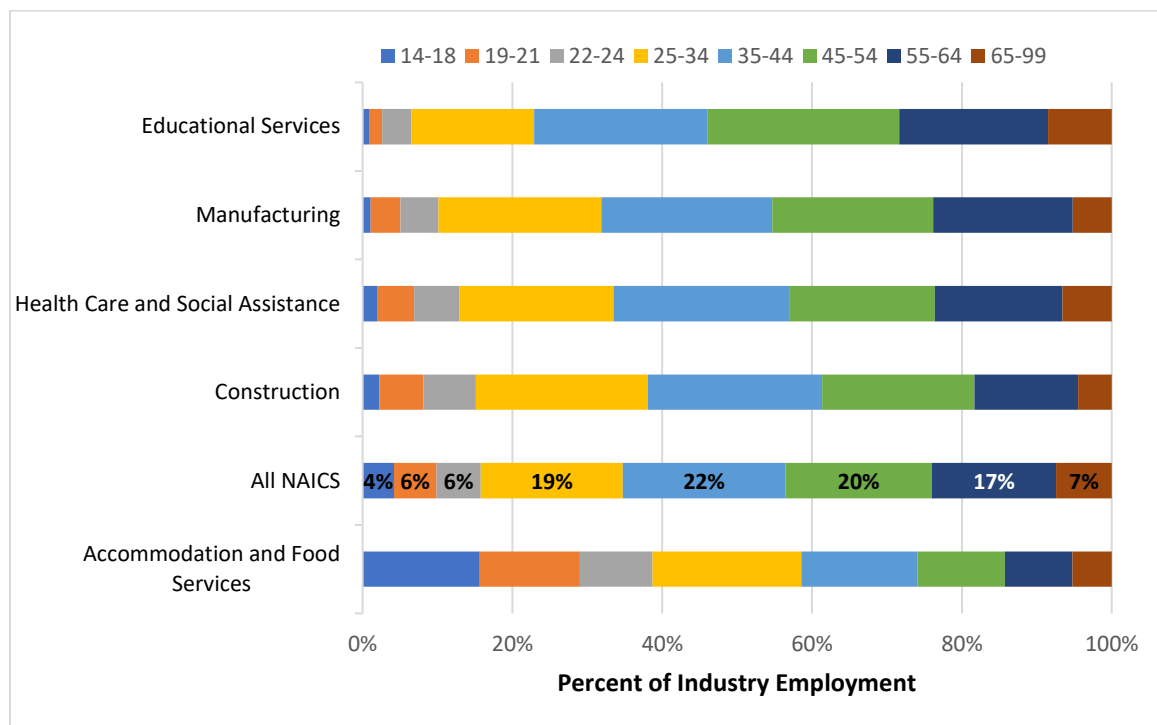
C.4. The demographic makeup of the labor force in those sectors as compared to the regional labor force, and how the region will work to close any identified gaps.

Age

The prime working ages of 25-54 accounted for 60% of all workers in Northeast Minnesota as of Q2 2025. Each of the sectors of focus had higher shares of their workforce in that prime age group: Healthcare & Social Assistance (63%), Manufacturing (66%), Educational Services (65%), and Construction (67%). Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation and Accommodation & Food Services had much higher shares of workers 24 or younger at 29% and 39% respectively. Sectors that had below average shares of workers aged 24 and under were Educational Services (6%), Manufacturing (10%), Healthcare & Social Assistance (13%), and Construction (15%). Workers aged 24 or younger accounted for 16% of all workers.

Arts, Entertainment & Recreation also had an above average share (25%) of workers 55 or older. Educational Services had the highest share of 55+ workers with 28% of the sector workforce. Healthcare and Manufacturing both had slightly lower shares than average. Construction had the second-lowest share of older workers (18%) behind Accommodation & Food Services (14%). Workers aged 55 or older accounted for 24% of all workers across all industries (see Figure 1).

Figure 9. Share of Employment by Age and Industry Sector in Northeast Minnesota, 2024/25



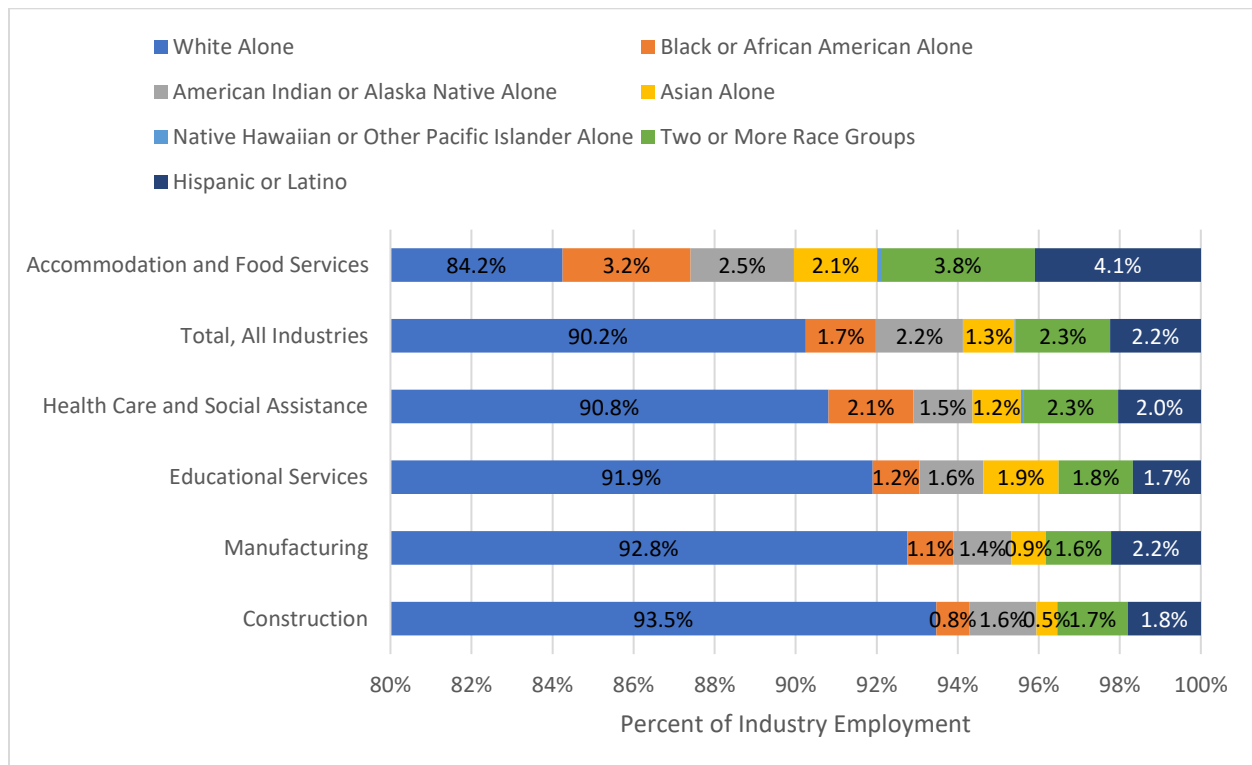
Source: U.S. Census Bureau Quarterly Workforce Indicators

Race & Ethnicity

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Figure 10. Share of Employment by Race & Ethnicity and Industry Sector in Northeast Minnesota, 2024/25

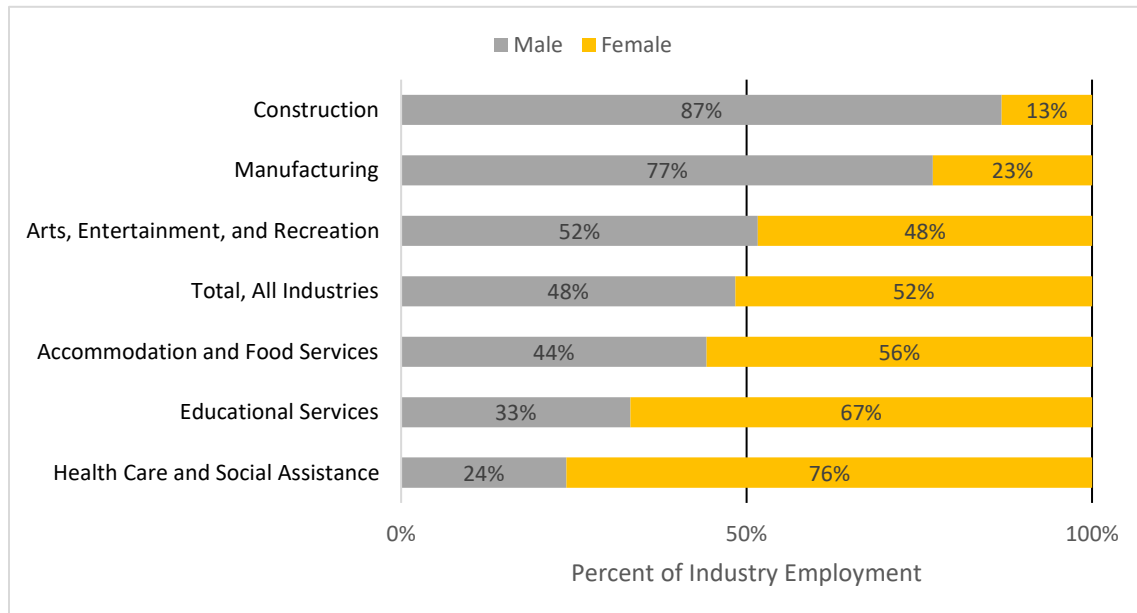


Source: U.S. Census Bureau Quarterly Workforce Indicators

Gender

There is considerable variation of each sector's workforce by gender. The split was 48% male, 52% female across all industries. Construction (87%) and Manufacturing (77%) skewed much more male while Educational Services (67%) and Health Care & Social Assistance (77%) had higher shares of their workforces reporting as female. Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation and Accommodation & Food Services were closer to an even split on either side of average (see Figure 3).

Figure 11. Share of Employment by Gender and Industry Sector in Northeast Minnesota, 2024/25



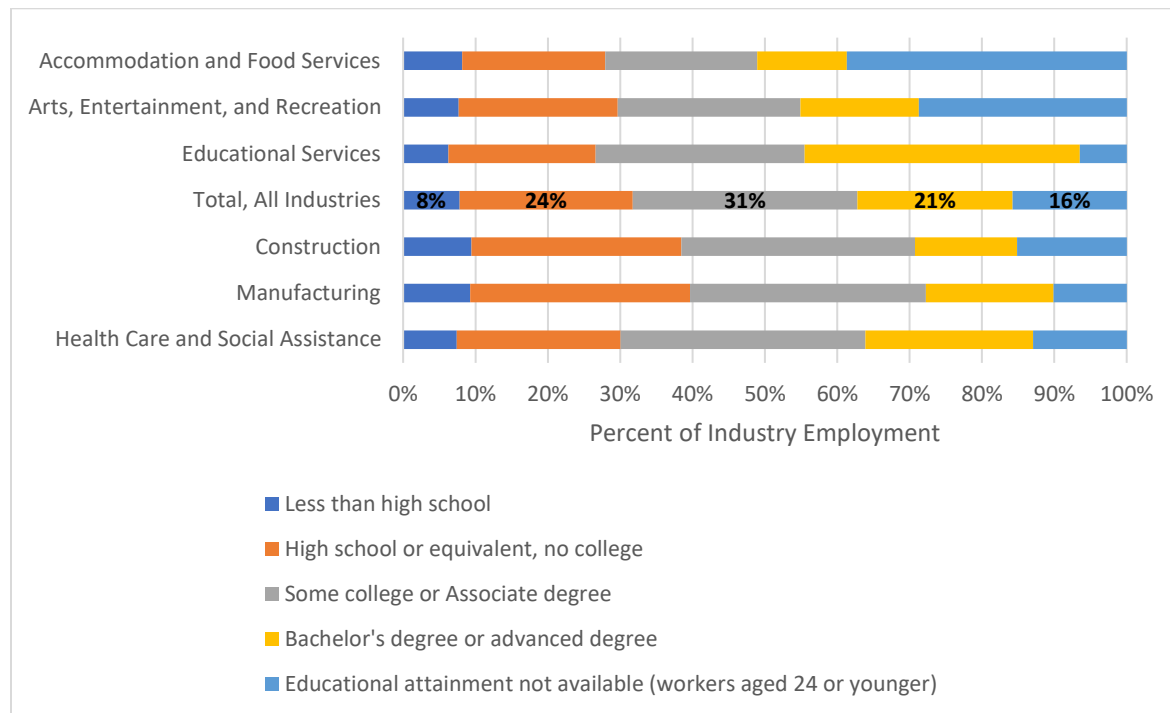
Source: U.S. Census Bureau Quarterly Workforce Indicators

Educational Attainment

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Manufacturing and Construction both had high shares of workers with high school degrees or equivalent, but also above average shares of workers with some college or associate degrees. The two Leisure & Hospitality sectors had the highest shares of workers with educational attainment unavailable due to being younger than 25 (see Figure 4).

Figure 12. Share of Employment by Educational Attainment and Industry Sector in Northeast Minnesota, 2024/25



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Quarterly Workforce Indicators

C.5. How the local board will make opportunities in these areas known to customers, including employers and job seekers, and how the local board will create, modify or expand responsive workforce development programs and initiatives.

There are many ways the Duluth and Northeast boards make opportunities in our key industry sectors known to customers. All counselors receive training in how to use DEED labor market information tools, and regularly use them when guiding participants through career exploration. CareerForce partners regularly host job fairs across the region, with specific priority on inviting employers in the targeted industry sectors. Youth programs host classroom presentations and field trips to talk about careers and educational pathways in the targeted industry sectors. And our two largest events – Construct Tomorrow and Discover Healthcare – focus on two of our priority industry sectors.

Over the next two years, there are several areas where we hope to expand efforts. The manufacturing sector strategy group plans to host a Manufacturing Expo similar to Construct Tomorrow, and launch and marketing campaign about careers in the industry. 218 Trades has expanded its focus to 218 Workplace, covering a wider range of career pathway options across the region. Both workforce boards are exploring the potential of expanding high school-based Career Technical Education and employer-based registered apprenticeship opportunities, particularly in healthcare and manufacturing.

And we are exploring opportunities to partner with Perkins consortia to expand career exploration camps and paid work experience opportunities for high school students across the region.

Employers will continue to be key partners in developing and implementing these initiatives. Through our sector initiative working groups, they identify occupations of focus, help define recruiting strategies, and lend resources and capacity for project implementation. Employers participate in job fairs, hire graduates from training classes, and host work experience participants and college students interns.

C.6. Based on the regional/local assessment of workforce development system services, describe how strategies will be created to pursue a more responsive alignment of employment and training services.

Both workforce boards regularly review labor market information to identify occupations in demand, and cross reference this information with input from industry employers. Boards use this information to guide investments in programs and strategies, to ensure they remain responsive to regional workforce needs. Over the next four years, we will continue to work with both Perkins and college partners to find alignment between parallel efforts to engage employers in providing input that guides employment and training services. Our goal is to create a streamlined process, where sector strategy initiatives are multi-purpose, serving the requirements to gather employer feedback for college programs, Perkins, and workforce boards. The result will be better alignment and integration of programs, with less demands on time and capacity of our region's employers.

C.7. Describe how the entities responsible for participating in this process will be selected, including their expected roles and responsibilities.

Participating entities will include workforce board members, as well as those who participate in sector strategy groups who are not members of local workforce boards. Additional stakeholders who are industry employers or part of the region's workforce system will be invited to engage in sector strategy groups as they express interest and capacity to contribute in a meaningful way.

C.8. Describe how outcomes will be determined in terms of employment and training services.

Outcomes will be determined using a number of performance measures:

- Program performance measures tracked and reported to DEED, which measure number of people served and the employment, education, and income results of those services;

- Demographics of program participants, to ensure underrepresented populations and adults with barriers to employment remain the priority focus of our programs and services;
- Shared metrics, gathered annually across all CareerForce partners within each location to assess common measures of job seeker services;
- Labor Market Information, looking specifically at employment/unemployment rate by age, race, and disability status; job growth and vacancy rate by industry; and median household income by race.

Local Workforce Development Area 4 – Duluth 2024-2027 Plan

SECTION A: LOCAL BOARDS VISION, GOALS AND STRATEGIES

- A.1. **Describe the local area board’s strategic vision for preparing a skilled workforce and how it aligns with the State’s Vision, Goals and Strategies.**

Strategic Vision: The Duluth Workforce Development Board (Duluth WDB) convenes and collaborates with partners to assess workforce demand, support employers in accessing the workforce they need to fill available jobs, and ensure that people of all backgrounds can achieve meaningful employment and a family-sustaining wage.

- A.2. **Describe the local area board’s goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including youth, individuals with barriers to employment, and individuals underrepresented in the local labor force.**

The Duluth Workforce Development Board identified four goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce. Under each of these goals are a set of strategic priorities, which will be paired with metrics the board will use to track and monitor progress over the next four years.

1. **Engage employers** from high-growth, high-demand industry sectors to identify and design strategies to meet workforce needs, adapt to the changing nature of work, and activate overlooked workers;

Strategic Priorities:

- Expand awareness of employer services available through the workforce system, and provide easy access points for those services – particularly for small businesses;
- Ensure alignment and coordination with local economic development entities, including City and County Economic Development teams, DEDA, APEX, the Duluth Chamber, and Northforce;
- Convene sector strategy working groups focused on Construction, Healthcare, and Manufacturing to develop short- and long-term workforce pipeline strategies;
- Support efforts to connect local college graduates to employers and job opportunities in the region;
- Support and engage employers in talent attraction efforts to grow the available workforce in our community and region;
- Continue offering high demand industry sector career pathway training classes, with an emphasis on serving overlooked workers and individuals with barriers to employment;
- Engage employers in supporting and advocating for child care and housing as critical workforce attraction and retention needs.

2. **Expand employer and workforce system partner engagement** with the K-12, adult basic education, and post-secondary education systems to support career awareness

and exploration, work readiness training, soft skills development, and exposure to career and training pathways;

Strategic Priorities:

- Expand opportunities for work-based learning and Registered Apprenticeship across the local area;
- Expand employer support for paid internships/work experience placements for high school and college students, and make these opportunities easy to find and connect with;
- Engage employers in helping to sponsor/host career exposure events such as Construct Tomorrow, Discover Healthcare, and the Manufacturing Expo;
- Identify opportunities to reach more students in 8th, 9th, and 10th grades with information on career pathway options and occupations in demand;
- Increase and coordinate to simplify employer engagement with colleges and high schools, and with youth and adult career pathway training classes and Career Technical Education programs;
- Advocate for additional resources to support employer engagement across the workforce system.

3. **Develop and strengthen relationships with workforce and community service providers** to deliver coordinated, individualized, and client-centered services through a collaborative model;

Strategic Priorities:

- Support and advocate for in-person career services offered on-site at CareerForce and through off-site locations;
- Refine vision for an individualized, accessible, and client-centered service model, and unite CareerForce partners behind that vision;
- Build a connected system of workforce partners offering customers “no wrong door” access to a network of services;
- Expand awareness of CareerForce services among the Duluth community;
- Build the workforce system’s capacity to reach and serve key overlooked worker populations, including New Americans, Black and Indigenous community members, formerly incarcerated individuals, and disconnected youth.

4. **Lead initiatives to reduce educational, skills training, and employment disparities** among overlooked workers.

Strategic Priorities:

- Lead training, and provide resources and support for employers;
- Provide focused programming aimed at increasing labor market participation and employment among overlooked workers, especially

focusing on the exceptionally high unemployment rate for BIPOC individuals;

- Integrate efforts aimed at decreasing disparities among overlooked workers into all other goals and the work of DWDB committees;
- Provide focused programming for inclusion of overlooked workers including people with disabilities, gender diverse, and older adults;
- Continue to update the Equity Dashboard as a tool to track the impact of DWDB's equity work.

A.3. Describe how these goals relate to the performance accountability measures based on the primary indicators to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency.

All programs track the number of individuals served and exited each year, and whether the exit was successful. Programs also track demographics of enrolled participants, to ensure services are reaching priority populations. Youth program indicators are similar to those for the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, but with greater emphasis on educational development and credential attainment. These also align with a career pathways system approach, and correlate with the Duluth Workforce Development Board's goals outlined in the previous section and reflect identified strategies for preparing an educated and skilled workforce.

WIOA Youth, 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. 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 participation in or within 1 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.

5. Measurable 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 skill gains toward such a credential or employment.

Additional performance measures are tracked under other programs offered at CareerForce in Duluth:

- The **Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) Employment Services** program tracks: Work Participation Rate, the percent of Universal Participants who fulfill participation requirements; and Self-Sufficiency Index, a longitudinal measure which tracks the percentages of clients who are either off cash assistance or working at least 30 hours per week three years after a baseline quarter. Duluth Workforce Development also tracks credential attainment and rates of employment among MFIP participants.
- **Career Pathway Training Programs** are funded through a variety of state competitive grants, and measure: The number of enrolled participants completing training, earning an industry-recognized credential, obtaining employment, whether that employment is related to training, and whether that employment pays at least \$16 per hour. Career Pathway Training also measures the number of participants continuing on to further training after program exit.
- **Youth programs** funded through state formula and competitive grants track participation in career pathway exposure and employment readiness training, participation in work experience, and satisfactory performance reviews from work experience supervisors.

Finally, the Duluth Workforce Development Board will set additional metrics tied to each goal and subsequent strategic priority, to facilitate tracking of progress and success.

A.4. **Describe the strategy to work with the entities within your local workforce development area that carry out the core programs to align resources available to the local area to achieve the strategic vision and goals of the local area board and the state.**

There are several strategies in place to align resources and achieve the strategic vision and goals of the local area board:

- All partners required under WIOA sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Infrastructure Funding Agreement outlining shared responsibility for infrastructure and shared costs related to operating the CareerForce location, and how they will work together to deliver workforce services.
- Partners meet monthly to ensure resources in the local workforce development area are coordinated and leveraged to achieve maximum impact and support the vision and goals of the local workforce development board.

- Monthly CareerForce Huddles facilitate information-sharing among staff and keep partners informed of new and emerging initiatives, resources, and opportunities for collaboration and alignment.
- Strong partnerships with community organizations create opportunities for referrals, off-site service delivery, and co-enrollment across programs. Staff often braid funding and resources to ensure access to all of the services needed by a given individual. Where enrolled participants are shared across organizations, a Release of Information is signed to allow case managers to communicate and coordinate with each other in the best interest of that participant.
- CareerForce partners work with individuals and organizations in the community to maintain connectivity and facilitate alignment of resources. This is often accomplished through participation on boards and committees, engaging in community conversations, partnering on grant proposals, and other activities.

A.5. Describe a best practice or area of strength of the local area as it relates to the State’s Vision, Goals and Strategies that should be considered for replication or scale across the state.

There are many areas of strength and best practices currently being implemented in Duluth:

Best Practices

- In 2023, the Duluth Workforce Development Board (DWDB) noted that youth voice was missing in Board decisions, and created a seat for a youth member between the ages of 16 and 24. Youth representatives have been seated on the Board since November 2023.
- As detailed later in this plan, the Duluth Workforce Development Board has long-established and highly engaged industry-led sector strategy working groups. The Healthcare Working Group, in particular, has launched a number of initiatives, including: Discover Healthcare, a hands-on career exploration event; Development of career pathways visuals for student engagement; and launch of several Career Pathway Training classes.
- The Duluth board launched the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Employer Action Guide in 2021 to provide employers with practical tools and resources they need to advance DEI efforts in recruiting, hiring, onboarding, and retention.
- To help provide ongoing support to employers using the Action Guide, the DWDB launched the Employer Champions Initiative in 2022 and has since offered a regular schedule of in-person and virtual workshops in partnership with Northforce and the Duluth Chamber, as well as bi-monthly peer learning sessions that have continued into 2026.

- A Manufacturing Working Group was launched in 2024 to identify and focus on workforce needs for this sector. The group is planning a first-of-its-kind Manufacturing Expo to take place in 2026.
- Construct Tomorrow is an annual construction career fair hosted over two days each year, with interactive booths highlighting different building trades careers and participation from contractors who are hiring. In 2026, more than 700 high school students and 200 adult job seekers attended the event.
- Our youth program, YES Duluth, has partnered with the Duluth Community Schools Collaborative to offer both school year and summer leadership and life skills development to youth ages 14-18 at Denfeld High School. Participants take part in leadership development workshops, career exploration, financial literacy, and paid work experience.
- Through support from MNDoT and other grants, Duluth Workforce Development contracted with a team of Community Liaisons. These are individuals with deep connections to the BIPOC community, who have worked with kids and families for decades. They identify youth and adults in need of direction, coach and mentor them through career exploration and barrier reduction, and then connect them to training programs and career pathway opportunities that will launch them in a positive direction.
- With limited resources dedicated to employer services, we have made a number of efforts to engage and serve employers. An Employer Navigators group comprised of CareerForce agency staff meets monthly to coordinate efforts around expanding awareness of CareerForce services among the Duluth community. The group also hosts monthly job fairs at CareerForce, ensuring a variety of sizes and types of employers are represented. Finally, group members regularly present to local Chambers and other employer groups about CareerForce services, labor market information, and resources available to help attract and retain workers.

Areas of Strength

- One of our greatest strengths, as identified through multiple sources of customer feedback, is our staff. They are knowledgeable, professional, kind, helpful, and supportive. Many have lived experience facing similar barriers and life circumstances as the people they serve, which helps provide insight and useful guidance.
- Another of our greatest strengths, highlighted often in strategic planning discussions, is partnership. We operate as a collaborative organization, and work in partnership with Duluth Public Schools, local colleges, businesses, and community-based organizations.

- Duluth is also known for strong community engagement, and we benefit from a large and active workforce board as well as board committees that involve additional community members and stakeholders in our work.
- Our Healthcare, Construction, and Manufacturing Sector Strategy Working Groups serve as a place where employers, unions, and community partners can build relationships, network, and collaborate around shared goals and outcomes.
- Duluth Adult Education is a strong partner, willing to think creatively about how to best serve the community and always looking for ways to braid resources and strengthen integration with WIOA and Career Pathway Training programs.
- We continue to approach service delivery through an equity lens. Duluth CareerForce partners continue to work toward creating a welcoming environment where access to services is easy and responsive to individual needs. Duluth Workforce Development staff have participated in Trauma Informed Care training, and strive to empower each participant to feel in control of their own journey and see the value in themselves.
- The organizational culture in Duluth Workforce Development is one that prioritizes teamwork, innovation, and high-quality service delivery. Staff are given autonomy within their respective programs, and supported in testing new ideas and approaches that will amplify impact.

A.6. Describe the sectors or occupations of focus for the local area board, including:

- **How those sectors compare to the sectors of focus within your workforce region;**

The sectors of focus for LWDA 4 – Duluth mostly align with those for the region, with small differences based on the number and type of establishments located within Duluth. Of note is the number of workers who commute into Duluth each day for work – more than 37,000. This means that efforts to support our targeted industry sectors must extend beyond city limits, and that partnership at the regional level and across state lines into Wisconsin remains critically important.

Healthcare & Social Assistance

Healthcare & Social Assistance had 18,700 jobs at 360 establishments in the City of Duluth as of 2025. The sector was the largest by more than a factor of three and accounted for a third (33%) of the jobs in the city. Employment in the sector is nearly twice (1.8x) as concentrated as it is statewide. While the sector has 370 fewer jobs compared to 2019, a decline of 2.0%, over the longer term the sector has seen strong growth. The sector is up 3,617 jobs (+24%) from 2005 and from 2005-2019 the sector was up an even larger 26%, much larger than the 1.1% growth across all employment.

Strong growth is expected to continue as long-term employment projections forecast 6.5% growth from 2022-2032 in Northeast Minnesota, which translates to an estimated addition of 207 jobs a year for ten years. Projected growth for all sectors is forecast at 3.3%.

The average annual wage for the sector was \$76,804, about \$10,000 higher than the city average as well as \$9,300 higher than the average wage for the sector region-wide. Wages are up 30% from 2019, just under the average city-wide growth of 31%.

Job vacancy data show a high number of openings (2,668) in 2024, which represented 31% of all openings in the region at that time. That high number of openings equated to an 8.2% vacancy rate, the fifth-highest among all sectors.

Construction

The Construction sector accounted for 1,740 jobs (3.1%) at 165 establishments in Duluth in 2025, making it the 9th-largest out of 20. Employment in the sector in the City has fallen consistently since a peak in 2015, falling 16.6% (-350) from 2019. Only four sectors declined faster over that period.

Despite recent employment trends, regional employment projections forecast the addition of 538 jobs from 2022-2032, an increase of 7.7%, and increased federal and state funding for projects, along with high demand for housing, may increase future demand for construction workers. The Construction industries expected to see the highest growth are Other Specialty Trade Contractors (+11.6%), Utility Systems Construction (+10.2%), and Highway, Street, and Bridge Construction (+9.6%). Job vacancy data in 2024 indicated an estimated 197 openings for a vacancy rate of 2.6%. The highest number of openings were for Construction Trades Workers including Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators and Construction Laborers.

The \$89,544 average annual wage for Construction was more than \$20,000 above the regional average for all industries. From 2019 to 2025 the average wage rose 42%, the fastest wage growth of all sectors in the City over that period.

Manufacturing

The Manufacturing sector accounted for 3,900 jobs (6.9% of employment) at 80 establishments in Duluth in 2025, making it the 5th-largest sector in the city. It has been one of the best-performing sectors in the City since 2019, expanding 8.2% (+625 jobs) compared to 0.2% overall City growth. Growth continued more recently as well with 293 jobs added (+8.2%) between 2024 and 2025, the fastest growth among all sectors. Long-term employment projections forecast a regional increase of 2.7% over 10 years.

2024 job vacancy data indicate 154 openings in the sector for a vacancy rate of 1.6%. Since 2018, vacancies in the sector ranged from 63 to 506 and the vacancy rate was typically below the all-sector average.

Manufacturing wages are above average. Paying \$82,264 per year, they are about \$15,600 greater than the city average wage. Wages grew 30% from 2019-2025, but saw more robust growth recently with 7% wage growth, second-fastest among sectors.

Business/Professional Services

Professional and Business Services accounted for 4,340 jobs at 356 establishments in 2025 in Duluth. The supersector consists of the Professional & Technical Services (3,021), Management (370), and Administrative Support and Waste Management Services (947) sectors. While Admin. Support and Management have seen longer term employment declines, the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services sector has added 1,077 jobs since 2005, an expansion of 55%. Over the nearer term, Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services was one of the few sectors to not lose jobs since 2019 and even added jobs between 2019 and 2020 when most job losses occurred. Admin. Support (-26%) and Management (-22%) have experienced relatively large declines since 2019.

Regionally, growth is expected over the longer term as employment projections forecast 672 new jobs from 2022-2032, an increase of 6.2%, driven by Management and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services. In particular, high growth is expected in IT and analysis occupations such as Software Developers (+29.8%), Information Security Analysts (+23.1%), Operations Research Analysts (+18.8%), Logisticians (+18.2%), and Mechanical Engineers (+14.6%). Combined, Professional & Business Services accounted for 406 job vacancies in the region in 2024, 4.7% of total vacancies.

The average annual wage for Professional & Business Services in 2025 was \$83,595. That wage was higher than the all-sector average by nearly \$17,000, and up 38% from 2019. From 2024-2025, wages in the supersector grew much faster than the city average (+7.7%), driven by wage increases in Management (+10.4%).

Transportation & Warehousing (Transportation & Logistics) and Utilities

The Transportation, Logistics, and Utilities super-sector, referred to here as Transportation & Warehousing and Utilities represents a relatively small share of jobs but has important local and regional economic significance. The port represents a key element of Great Lakes infrastructure and serves as a key hub of economic activity, and regional utility Minnesota Power is headquartered in Duluth.

Transportation & Warehousing had 1,545 jobs (2.7%) at 53 establishments in Duluth in 2025. These jobs include port-based warehouse workers and CDL drivers, as well as

workers at shipping and logistics companies based in Duluth. Additionally, the Duluth Transit Authority and school bus systems in the area have struggled with workforce shortages, forcing reductions in transit routes which impacts workers in all sectors.

Since 2019, the sector has lost 9 jobs for a below-average employment decline of -0.6%. More recently, the sector has seen larger losses, declining by 85 jobs (-5.2%) from 2024-2025. Nonetheless, regional employment projections forecast the addition of 286 jobs over ten years, an above-average increase of 6.9%. Within the sector, employment growth is expected to be especially strong in subindustries of Other Ground Passenger Transportation (+18.9%), Charter Bus Industry (+16.7%), Couriers (+15.6%), Freight Transportation Arrangement (+12.5%), and School and Employee Bus Transportation (+8.5%).

Regional job vacancy data show 283 openings in 2024 with a job vacancy rate of 7.2%, with additional openings anticipated due to anticipated retirements. The Transportation & Material Moving occupations with the highest numbers of vacancies were Stockers and Order Fillers (104), Bus Drivers, School (86), and Light Truck Drivers (48).

The average annual wage for Transportation & Warehousing was \$80,496 in 2025, about \$13,800 above the city average wage. Wages in the sector have grown more slowly in the mid-term, but faster more recently; 15% since 2019 and 7.0% since 2045.

The Utilities sector is relatively small in terms of number of jobs in the city of Duluth, yet is the most concentrated and pays high wages. With 801 jobs, the sector accounted for less than 2% of total jobs in the area as of 2025. The local employment share nevertheless was nearly three times that of the statewide Utilities employment share. Employment in the utilities sector was up both over the short and medium terms. Over the year the sector grew 1.8%. Since 2019 the sector was the fastest growing in the city, expanding by 21.4% or 141 jobs. Reflecting increasing demand for workers, job vacancies (47) in the region in 2024 were the second highest in the 20 year record. Additionally, the annual average wage of \$125,648 was the highest in the workforce service area by more than \$20,000.

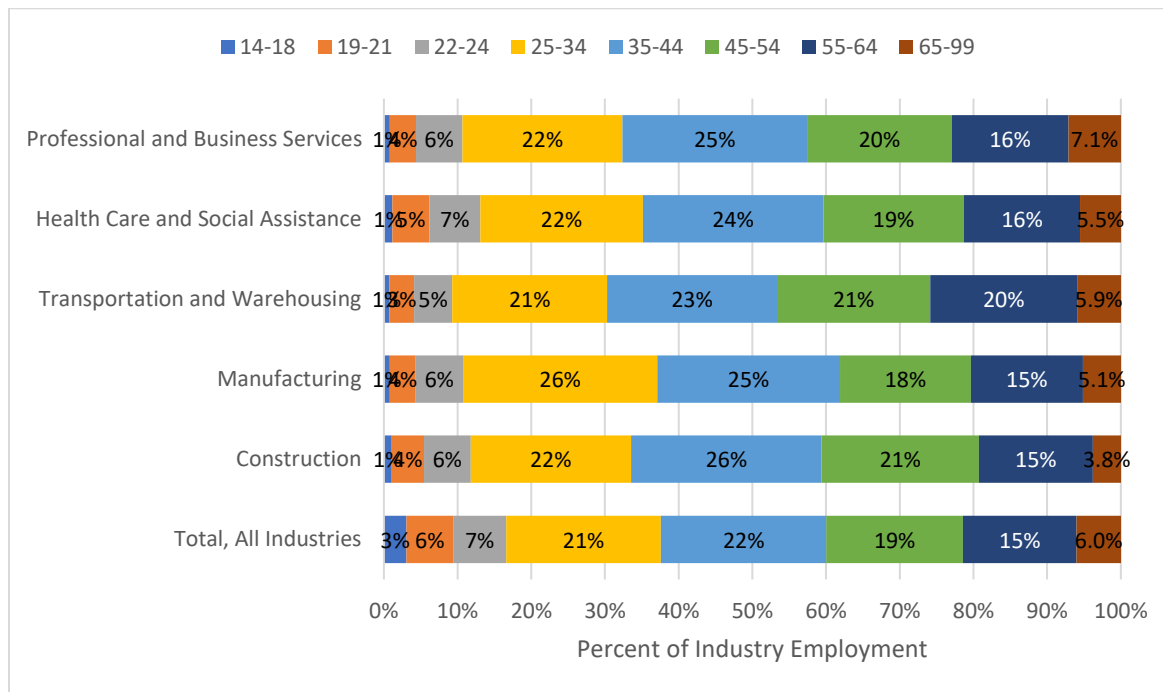
- **The demographic makeup of the labor force in those sectors as compared to the local labor force, and how the local area will work to close any identified gaps;**

Age

The prime working ages of 25-54 accounted for 62% of all workers in Duluth as of Q2 2025. Each of the sectors of focus had higher shares of their workforce in that prime age group: Healthcare & Social Assistance (66%), Manufacturing (69%), Transportation & Warehousing (65%), Construction (69%), and Professional & Business Services (66%). As a result, only Professional and Business Services (7.1%) of the sectors of focus had a share of workers older than 65 that were above the all-industry average (6.0%). None of

the sectors of focus had higher than average (17%) shares of younger workers (under 25). Transportation and Warehousing (9%), Manufacturing (10.7%), and Professional and Business Services (10.7%) had the smallest shares of younger workers.

A.1 Figure 13. Share of Employment by Age and Industry Sector in WSA 4 - City of Duluth, 2024/25

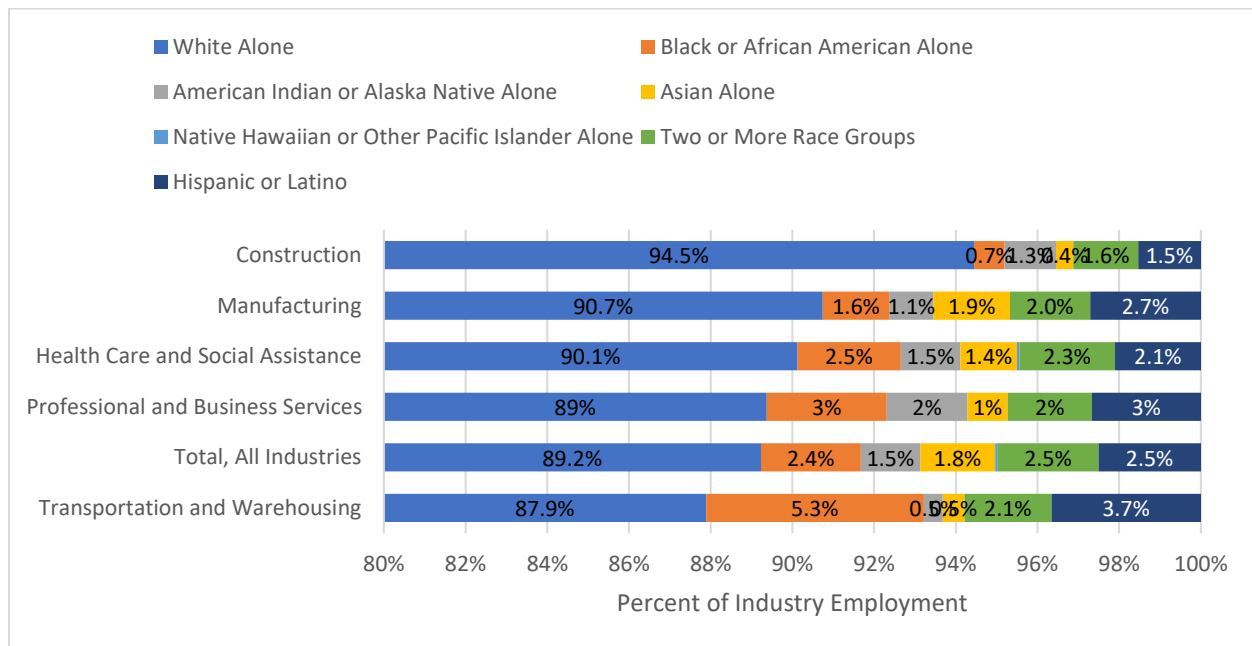


Source: U.S. Census Bureau Quarterly Workforce Indicators

Race & Ethnicity

Overall, Duluth's population is comprised of approximately 12% Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Just 3.1% of Duluth's total population, or just over 2,700 people, are foreign-born, with no one ethnicity dominating our local immigrant population. Among the sectors of focus, only Transportation & Warehousing (12%) had a higher-than-average share (10.8%) of its workforce identifying as people of color. The four sectors with higher BIPOC shares (Accommodation & Food Services, Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, Admin. Support, and Real Estate) include the 3 lowest paying. Driving the difference in Transportation and Warehousing were relatively large shares of Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino workers, combining to account for 9% of that sector's workforce. Construction (5.5%) and Manufacturing (9.3%) had the smallest shares of workers of color among the sectors of focus.

Figure 14. Share of Employment by Race & Ethnicity and Industry Sector in WSA 4 - City of Duluth

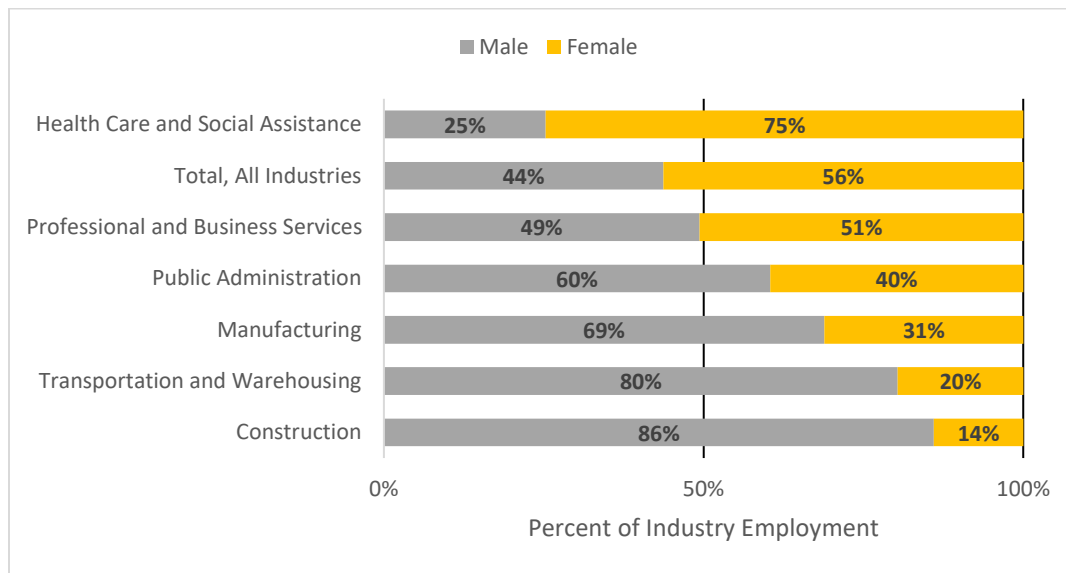


Source: US Census Bureau Quarterly Workforce Indicators

Gender

The workforces of the sectors of focus varied significantly by gender. Manufacturing, Transportation & Warehousing, and Construction all skewed male. Health Care & Social Assistance had the highest share of women workers of all 20 sectors, at 75%. Professional & Business Services was closest to average with 51% of its workforce identifying as female (see Figure 7).

Figure 15. Share of Employment by Gender and Industry Sector in WSA 4 - City of Duluth, 2024/25

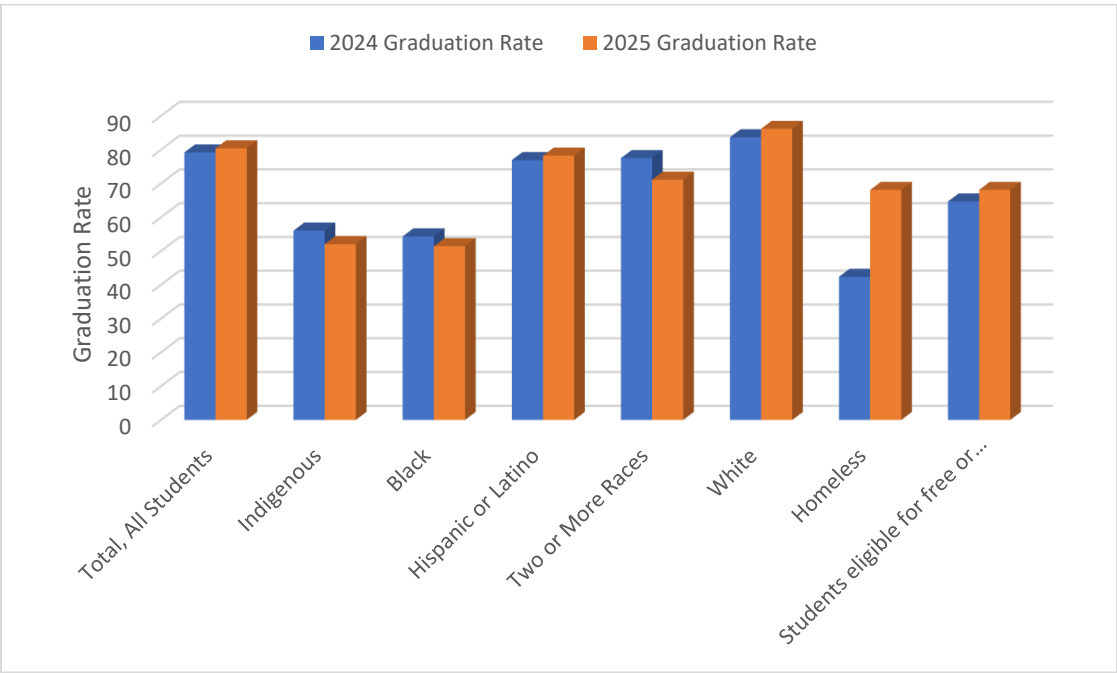


Source: US Census Bureau Quarterly Workforce Indicators

Educational Attainment

Overall educational attainment among adults aged 18 years and over is slightly lower than the state as a whole. Just under 47% of adults have an Associate's Degree or higher. A smaller than-average share (4.4%) of the Duluth population has less than a high school education compared to the state. Duluth faces significant differences in educational attainment by race (Figure 8). Beginning with high school, Black and Indigenous graduation rates are far below the overall average. When looking at participation in high school Career Technical Education, those students who have completed at least two CTE courses in a single pathway are 75% male and 82% White. These disparities continues into college, where the percentage of Black and Indigenous adults over the age of 25 with a Bachelor's degree or higher is a third that of their White counterparts.

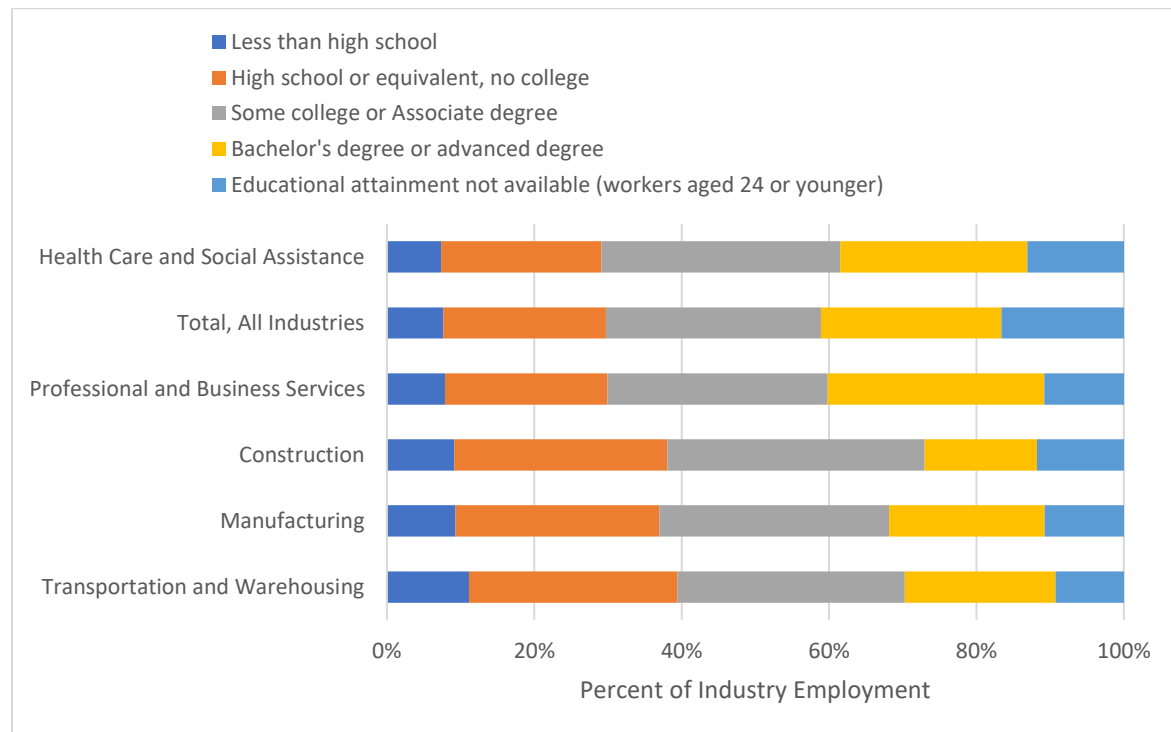
Figure 16. Duluth Public Schools Graduation Rates, 2024-2025



Source: Duluth Public School District

The city’s sectors of focus have a good diversity of typical educational requirements and that is reflected in their respective workforces. Professional & Business Services and Health Care & Social Assistance both have higher than average shares of workers with at least bachelor’s degrees. Conversely, Manufacturing, Transportation & Warehousing, and Construction have higher than average shares of workers with some college or associate degrees as well as workers with a high school diploma or less. Health Care & Social Assistance also had an above average share of workers with some college or associate degrees (see Figure 9).

Figure 17. Share of Employment by Educational Attainment and Industry Sector in WSA 4 - Duluth, 2024/25



Source: US Census Bureau Quarterly Workforce Indicators

Reducing Disparities

The Duluth Workforce Development Board engages in a number of efforts to try and close gaps – particularly gaps in employment and income by gender, disability status, and race. Our youth program, YES Duluth, focuses heavily on supporting BIPOC individuals to complete their high school diploma or GED. Our Career Pathway Training programs focus on BIPOC and low-income individuals, as well as those with barriers to employment, and include connection to college programs that offer opportunities for continued post-secondary education. The Diversity & Inclusion Employer Action Guide is a practical tool kit with resources for employers on how to improve DEI outcomes in recruiting, hiring, onboarding, and retention. This guide was updated and re-launched in 2025. The Employer Champions Initiative provides ongoing support for a network of employers deeply engaged in advancing workplace DEI initiatives. The board also participates in DEI workshops for employers hosted by the Duluth Chamber, Northforce, the Northland Human Resources Association, and others. In 2024, the board launched an Equity Dashboard, which includes a number of metrics that will be tracked over time to assess impact of DEI efforts, and identify opportunities to strengthen impact.

Since before the pandemic some disparities in workforce outcomes have grown in the City, which highlights the importance of ongoing, focused work on reducing disparities and improving education and employment outcomes. While labor force participation rose for all

groups of color, unemployment rose rapidly among Black and African American workers in the city. Additionally, labor force participation rates fell for workers with less than a high school diploma, just as unemployment rates rose for that group. Among education levels, unemployment rates rose relatively fastest for the most educated workers, with at least a bachelor's degree. By age, unemployment rose the most for older workers (tripling from 2015-2019 to 2020-2024), just as 65-74 year olds saw the largest declines in labor force participation.

Statewide, we can see some of the same trends. Unemployment rates are up the most for Black or African American workers from March 2024-2026, followed by teenaged workers, and workers with college degrees. Labor force participation is down the most for teens, workers with some college, and Black workers.

- **How the local board will make opportunities in these areas known to customers, including employers and job seekers, and how the local board will create, modify or expand responsive workforce development programs and initiatives.**

There are many ways the Duluth Workforce Development Board makes opportunities in our key industry sectors known to customers. All counselors receive training in how to use DEED labor market information tools, and regularly use them when guiding participants through career exploration. CareerForce Duluth hosts monthly Hiring Now! job fairs, with a priority on highlighting employers in our targeted industry sectors. YES Duluth hosts classroom presentations and field trips to talk about careers and educational pathways in the targeted industry sectors. And our signature career exploration events – Construct Tomorrow, Made Here! Manufacturing Expo, and Discover Healthcare – focus on three of our priority industry sectors.

Over the next four years, there are several areas where we hope to expand efforts. ThOur WIOA Adult and Career Pathway Training programs continue to focus on our targeted industry sectors, supporting post-secondary education, paid internships, and job placement. Another area is increasing visibility of area employers, and of lesser-known occupations that are in demand, among both jobseekers and students. The board previously supported development of infographics highlighting the wide variety of career pathways in healthcare, with corresponding information sheets highlighting specific occupations. Similar work was done for construction and manufacturing. Staff and Community Liaisons offer class presentations at area high schools and colleges, providing useful information about occupations in demand.

Employers will continue to be key partners in developing and implementing these initiatives. Through our sector initiative working groups, they identify occupations of focus, help define recruiting strategies, and lend resources and capacity for project implementation. Employers also participate in job fairs, hire graduates from training classes, and host work experience participants and college student interns.

- A.7. **Describe the process used by the local area board to provide opportunity for public comment, including comment by representatives from businesses and comment by**

representatives of labor organizations, and input into the development of the local plan, prior to submission of the plan.

There were a number of opportunities for engagement in development of this strategic plan:

- Feedback on perception and experience with CareerForce services was gathered in several ways:
 - MFIP customer survey data was gathered through an online and paper survey.
 - Data was gathered from all Career Lab users on whether they were return customers and which services were delivered.
 - A broad community survey evaluating library and workforce services was delivered online and on paper at tabling events
- The Wealth, Entrepreneurship, and Economic Sustainability (WEES) working group hosted focus group sessions for BIPOC community members where a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats analysis was completed and discussed.
- Focus groups were held with diverse groups of community members by an engagement consultant to evaluate past experience with workforce services and craft a vision for future improvements.
- Hosted facilitated strategic planning sessions with the Board's Emerging Workforce and Equity Committees.
- Hosted facilitated strategic planning sessions with the Construction and Healthcare working groups.
- Hosted facilitated strategic planning sessions with Manufacturing employers, industry partners, and training providers.
- Hosted a focus group with restaurant employers to gather feedback on workforce challenges and opportunities.
- Hosted facilitated strategic planning discussions with the full workforce board.
- Hosted strategic planning conversations with economic development partners and CareerForce partners.
- Discussed workforce challenges and priorities with the Duluth Chamber.
- Participated in the Mayor's Child Care Task Force and the Child Care Workforce Working Group to gain insight into the unique challenges of employers in this sector.

Public comment was solicited by posting the draft plan on the City of Duluth website for 30 days. Notification of the public comment period was sent to workforce board members, CareerForce and community partners, and other key stakeholders. Comments received were logged, and revisions were made to the final plan based on input received.

A.8. Describe how the local area is working together to prepare the workforce for state and federal investments in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), the Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors (CHIPS) and Science Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) (collectively referred to as Investing in America (IIA)) as applicable.

As Duluth is the primary employment center for the region, it is difficult to separate local and regional work in this area. As mentioned above, there are many existing efforts which ensure our region is well positioned with a workforce prepared for state and federal infrastructure investments.

- Duluth continues to focus on our regional manufacturing sector strategy initiative, and support workforce development initiatives to support manufacturing business attraction and expansion in partnership with economic development partners.
- The Blatnik Bridge replacement project will begin in 2027 and last for several years. In addition to this project, there are other major city and county infrastructure projects and a strong focus on housing construction across the region. All of these projects mean that our construction sector work has gained a new significance.
 - The Duluth Workforce Development Board's Construction Working Group will continue to be a place for coordination and alignment at the local and regional level, and with state efforts.
 - 218 Trades will continue its campaign to excite youth and adults about careers in construction.
 - The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT) awarded a five-year contract as part of the Blatnik Bridge replacement to Duluth Workforce Development to support a team of Community Liaisons – BIPOC community members who conduct deep outreach, facilitate career exploration, and mentor youth and adults interested in entering a career in the trades.
 - MNDOT is also facilitating deeper connections to tribal representatives, to help connect band members to construction training and job opportunities.
 - Both the Duluth and Northeast workforce boards support a number of construction training programs, including high school Career Technical Education programs, Youthbuild, and programs at Community Action Duluth and True North Goodwill.

SECTION B: PROGRAM OPERATIONS

CareerForce Operations – Connection to Services

B.1. Describe how local area boards will work with each other, core title providers and available data to designate at least one CareerForce Center per local workforce development area as comprehensive and make recommendations on recognizing affiliate and standalone partner sites.

There is only one comprehensive CareerForce location in Duluth, and all core title providers are co-located within the building except for Adult Basic Education, which is housed across the street, and Perkins, which is housed at Lake Superior College and provides an on-campus office for CareerForce staff.

The location was chosen because it is highly accessible. CareerForce Duluth is in the center of town, across from City Hall and on or near several major bus lines. The location is near the Government Services Center, which is the hub for St. Louis County human services. It is also within walking distance of many other community-based service providers that frequently refer clients for employment-related services.

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

While LWDA 4-Duluth has just one comprehensive one-stop workforce center, most partners work from home or off-site at least part time. As a result, it has become even more important to find ways to maintain connectivity between staff and programs. CareerForce partners collaborate to ensure all required and needed services are available to both individuals and businesses. Services provided by each partner depend on their respective eligibility requirements and may not include Universal Customers. Staff work together to create an integrated customer experience and ensure quality service delivery. To generate referrals, partner staff provide individuals with information on the full array of applicable and appropriate program services available through all one-stop partners. Referrals are coordinated with partners and delivered according to procedures set by the receiving partner in accordance with data privacy requirements, and delivered in a manner that facilitates individual independent decision-making and informed choice. All referrals and outcomes of referrals are documented and tracked through available data systems, including Minnesota Works, Workforce One, and agency-specific internal tracking mechanisms. In addition, specific efforts are made to facilitate and improve connectivity and coordination, including:

- Operations Committee meetings involve at least one staff member from each core partner organization and occur quarterly. Committee members monitor overall operational effectiveness of the CareerForce location and discuss matters that include but are not limited to: Flow, process, safety, continuous improvement, and customer service. They are also charged by management to fulfill certain responsibilities including documentation of procedures, supply ordering, and other

tasks as assigned. Members of the committee all work directly with program participants and serve as the eyes, ears and voice of what is happening. They will often bring communication back to partner managers if they believe any action is needed.

- Monthly partner meetings involve management from each core partner organization that forms part of the One Stop Operator consortium. Partner meetings provide an opportunity to discuss items that impact all partners. Topics may include discussion of key issues related to the operation of CareerForce locations within the region, information-sharing, programmatic or funding updates, opportunities for collaboration, agency needs, cost-allocation-planning, policy review, and more. These meetings promote open dialogue among partners and facilitate positive working relationships across agencies. Partners also review Operations Committee reports and provide direction and/or feedback as needed.
- The Employer Navigator team meets monthly and includes representatives from several Duluth CareerForce partners (Duluth Workforce Development, JET, AEOA, Veteran's Rep, Wagner Peyser, VRS) who work with employers. Discussion focuses on employment trends, recent successes and challenges, and forecasted needs of area employers. Meetings provide opportunities for collaboration and sharing of resources.
- CareerForce Duluth hosts CareerForce Huddles. These are monthly meetings for all staff at the location, featuring a different organization, program, or topic each month. These are delivered virtually, to allow staff who primarily work remotely or in the field to attend. Huddles ensure all staff stay up-to-date on opportunities for cross-referral between programs as well as community resources. All staff also receive regular email communications about various employment and referral opportunities for clients.

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

As indicated in the previous question, partners located within the Duluth CareerForce location have established a number of strategies to ensure connectivity and coordination. For additional details regarding which partners provide which services within LWDA 4-Duluth, refer to the Career Service Matrix in Attachment H.

Strategies to promote connectivity and coordination among service providers who are within the local workforce development area, but not physically located in the CareerForce location include:

- 1) Participating in Duluth Workforce Development Board committees;
- 2) Actively engaging in workshops and community conversations focused on key

- issues, such as the Child Care Task Force and Employer Champions Initiative;
- 3) Utilizing the State digital communication platform (Gov Delivery) as well as email lists to inform service providers and interested community partners of programs and events hosted by CareerForce;
 - 4) Collaborating on grant-funded projects such as Pathways to Prosperity and Youth at Work;
 - 5) CareerForce staff participation in events hosted by other service providers and organizations, including tabling at community events like Juneteenth;
 - 6) Facilitating information sharing with other providers and/or employers who participate in Duluth Workforce Development Board committees;
 - 7) Hosting focus groups or forums to discuss key issues and gather input;
 - 8) Visiting service provider worksites to better understand what they do and who they serve;
 - 9) Maintaining an active presence on social media;
 - 10) Co-facilitating meetings of MFIP Employment Services providers and St. Louis County Financial Workers focused on resource and best practice sharing.

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

There are a number of strategies currently being implemented to maximize access to services:

- Duluth Workforce Development, JET, and AEOA staff who work with WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs hold regular office hours at the CareerForce office on the campus of Lake Superior College. These office hours are open to all students for drop-in help with resumes and job search, and allow enrolled participants attending LSC to meet with their counselor on campus. Staff also connect with LSC Admissions and Financial Aid staff to facilitate referrals for WIOA services.
- Duluth Workforce Development Adult and Dislocated Worker program staff hold regular office hours in the career centers at the College of St Scholastica and the University of Minnesota – Duluth. This facilitates referrals for enrollment, and allows enrolled participants to meet with their counselor on-site.
- YES Duluth staff serving in-school youth typically work on-site at both Denfeld and Duluth East high schools, as well as Harbor City International School and the Area Learning Center. There, they present in classes and meet with students one-on-one and in groups. They also connect with teachers and other school staff to create a web of support for students who are struggling.

- YES Duluth staff serving out-of-school youth host office hours at Life House, facilitating referrals and providing services to enrolled participants co-located with other program services offered through partner organizations.
- CareerForce partners are continuing to explore the possibility of co-locating with the library in a proposed new location that is currently under discussion.

We have also increased efforts to market CareerForce Duluth services and programs in a variety of ways, and are working to improve tracking to determine which marketing methods are most effective. We work with the City communications office to market through earned media, and are regularly featured in local newspapers and on TV news shows. Duluth Workforce Development and YES Duluth both have an active social media presence on Facebook and Instagram, and regularly use paid boosts as a way to reach targeted audiences. Duluth Workforce Development, AEOA, and JET all updated their websites to make connection with CareerForce more accessible, including creation of online application portals.

Another aspect of service access relates to a welcoming environment. If customers do not feel welcome, are find accessing services too complicated, or feel that available services are not responsive to their needs, they are left feeling like CareerForce isn't for them. LWDA 4 – Duluth has worked hard to address these concerns. We have invested in maintaining staffed front desk and computer lab, where anyone can find an accessible starting point. Job Service offers one-on-one appointments available to anyone, creating a place for customers to receive quick help with resume and job search. Through these entry points, staff carefully assess what the customer needs and determines how best to meet that need. When a referral is made, staff attempt to ensure a warm handoff so customers are not asked to share the same information over and over with multiple people. This will continue to be an ongoing area of focus for Duluth CareerForce partners.

B.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.

All elements of Career Services defined in WIOA are available, with a mix of in-person and online options.

- **Basic Career Services**
 - Outreach and orientation to the services, programs, tools, and resources takes place through a number of channels: Social media marketing, email newsletters through GovDelivery, RESEA phone calls to Unemployment Insurance recipients, job fairs, tabling at community events, presentations to employers and community groups, virtual workshops, one-on-one

appointments with Wagner-Peyser staff, visits to the CareerForce or Duluth Workforce Development websites, and visits to the Career Lab.

- Eligibility determination typically takes place during an initial conversation with Adult, Dislocated Worker, Older Worker, or Youth staff. Clients may also submit an online application to indicate initial interest and screen for eligibility.
- Intake and orientation to services available through the CareerForce system takes place once eligibility is established, and is conducted by the job counselor.
- Initial assessment of skills, aptitudes, abilities, skill gaps, and support service needs are completed one-on-one with job counselors as part of program enrollment. For programs that require assessment of math and reading levels, Duluth Adult Education offers CASAS testing at their location across the street from CareerForce.
- Job search and job placement assistance is available to the general public on a drop-in basis through our Career Lab, or one-on-one through in-person or virtual appointments.
- Information about available supportive services and referrals to other programs and services is provided to enrolled clients by job counselors, based on assessments of needs and barriers to employment. Participants are given support service policies, and must sign acknowledgement of receipt of this information as part of enrollment paperwork. Where clients are identified as eligible for SNAP, Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Care Assistance, Medicaid, or other public benefit and assistance programs, referrals are made to St. Louis County or community partner agencies to assist with enrollment.
- Information on in-demand sectors and occupations, as well as labor market information, is provided by a DEED Labor Market Analyst housed within the Duluth CareerForce location and through online tools accessed through the DEED and CareerForce websites. The Labor Market Analyst publishes reports and data summaries, and offers in-person and recorded presentations summarizing local and regional labor market characteristics, employment trends, job vacancy rates, and information about in-demand occupations.
- Information about eligible providers of training can be accessed through the DEED website. Computers in the Career Lab are available for public use to access this information.
- Performance information is reported to the Duluth Workforce Development Board on an annual basis, and is recorded in minutes which are posted on the City of Duluth website.
- Information and meaningful assistance on filing an Unemployment Insurance claim is accessed through the UI website or phone number. The Career Lab

offers public access to computers and a phone, as well as assistance navigating the UI online application.

- Information and assistance in applying for financial aid is provided to all youth program participants with support from YES Duluth staff, and is available to visitors of the Career Lab as needed.

- **Individualized Career Services**

- Comprehensive skill level and service needs assessments are conducted by job counselors as part of intake for program enrollment.
- Assessment results are used to develop Individual Employment Plans, which set goals and objectives and map out service needs.
- Individual counseling and career planning, as well as case management takes place one-on-one with job counselors in person or by phone or web meeting.
- Group counseling is available virtually through CareerForce statewide.
- Literacy training and English Language Learning is available as needed through Duluth Adult Education. CareerForce staff can make referrals to DAE for literacy services.
- Workforce preparation includes both in-person one-on-one assistance and virtual group workshops on resumes, interview skills, job search, computer skills, and more.
- Internships and work experiences are available to youth, adult, and senior participants, and are coordinated by CareerForce partner agencies in partnership with area employers.
- Instructions in self-advocacy are provided by Vocational Rehabilitation Services to enrolled participants.
- Follow-up services are available to any participant previously enrolled in WIOA programs, based on individual program rules.

B.6. 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.

In spite of advances from digital equity efforts during the pandemic, there are still more than 4,000 households in Duluth without access to a computer or internet at home. Even those with a computer and internet may struggle with basic computer skills needed to access online services and resources. We must take our community's diverse needs, abilities, and preferences into account when considering ways to facilitate access to services through technology. Strategies currently in place to facilitate access through technology include:

- Live and recorded virtual workshops available through the CareerForce website.

- Program applications, forms, timesheets, manuals and other materials that can be accessed and completed online;
- Use of social media to extend connectivity (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn);
- Computer literacy training offered through Duluth Adult Education, Light House, and through our Career Lab.

Additionally, we will ensure compliance with accessibility standards by:

- Providing assistive technology at the Workforce Center;
- Meeting established standards for IT accessibility, including access to local provider websites for all users.

While technology makes accessing services easier for some, others prefer or require in-person services and access to technology. We remain committed to offering in-person services and technology support through our staffed Career Lab at the Duluth CareerForce location.

B.7. 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 WIOA and programs carried out by one-stop partners.

Integrated case management is an effective strategy for helping individuals navigate across systems to access a range of services. All CareerForce partners use Workforce One and/or CareerForce.MN.gov to track and record case management interactions and services delivered. Duluth Workforce Development exclusively uses fillable electronic forms, electronic signature tools, Electronic Document Storage through Workforce One - except for SCSEP participants. This technology-enabled intake and case management system facilitates collaboration and co-enrollment to support participants with their employment and educational goals. Duluth Workforce Development has implemented systems to track and record visitors at the front desk and through the Career Lab. DEED has retired MinnesotaWorks and replaced it with new features on the CareerForce website that will facilitate intake and referrals between Wagner-Peyser and other programs that use Workforce One as their primary case management database. Vocational Rehabilitation Services developed and released an online interest form that can easily be accessed by persons interested in services or referral sources interested in learning more and connecting to VRS services. VRS utilizes e-signatures with AdobeSign for most common documents to give greater portability in obtaining signatures from participants without having to print documents.

Artificial Intelligence is rapidly expanding and changing the technology landscape. CareerForce Duluth staff are actively learning to use AI tools to assist jobseekers with resume writing, job search, interview prep, and career exploration. They are also helping customers navigate AI-driven job application processes, and appropriate use of

AI for resume writing and the job search process. This will be an ongoing area of development as new tools are rapidly released and integrated into everyday use.

B.8. 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.

Duluth Workforce Development, JET, and AEOA all offer supportive services to enrolled participants in alignment with their respective supportive services policies. VRS also provides supportive services to eligible participants in conjunction with their employment plan, and refers to other partners as appropriate for these services as well. CareerForce Duluth partners coordinate with each other to avoid duplication and maximize services for co-enrolled program participants, and they also connect with the broader network of supportive service providers in the community. By doing this, providers can maximize resources and potentially serve populations who they may not otherwise reach.

To connect participants with needed support services, job counselors must have a broad understanding of the resources available in their community, including those provided by workforce system partners, community-based organizations, state or local agencies, and other organizations. The 2-1-1 Information and Referral program is available 24 hours/day, 365 days/year and is a valuable resource for case managers. Job counselors reach out to staff at community organizations on a regular basis to ensure there is mutual understanding of programs available, and that there can be a warm handoff when a client is referred.

Duluth Workforce Development and JET are both MFIP Employment Service Providers co-located within the Duluth CareerForce location. This offers direct connection to cash assistance, child care support, and other resources available through the County. Additionally, AEOA and Duluth Workforce Development are a SNAP Employment & Training providers, which helps connect enrolled participants to SNAP benefits and vice versa.

Our Career Pathway Training programs offer a unique collaboration and coordination of resources by engaging multiple program and partners. Each pathway involves workforce partners, employers, higher education, Adult Basic Education, community-based organizations and others who work together to ensure individual progress. Each partner brings its own resources and supports that can be woven together to leverage available resources in a manner that provides exactly what the individual needs to be successful.

B.9. Describe strategies that will be used to leverage technology for services and ensure compliance with accessibility standards.

Because today's workforce is comprised of multiple generations of workers, our learning and language strategies must take into account their diverse needs, abilities, and preferences when it comes to accessing services. Technology not only makes this possible, it challenges us to become more responsive, flexible, mobile and agile. For this reason, we will continue working toward the following both locally and in partnership with DEED:

- Live and recorded virtual workshops available through the CareerForce website, which is fully compliant with federal regulations for accessibility standards;
- For customers who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, staff are comfortable using the customer's chosen method for communication including but not limited computer/phone applications (ie: voice to text apps). Video-based ASL interpreters are available if needed;
- Program applications, timesheets, manuals and other materials that can be accessed and completed online;
- Use of social media to extend connectivity (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn)
- Access to digital literacy training for program participants and the general public through Duluth Adult Education, Light House, and in-the-moment through our Career Lab;

Additionally, we will ensure compliance with accessibility standards by:

- Providing assistive technology at the workforce center;
- Meeting established standards for IT accessibility.

B.10. Describe the replicated cooperative agreements (as defined in section 107(d)(11) of WIOA) 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.

Each WDA is required to complete a Memorandum of Understanding to include all collocated and non-collocated partners that define each area as required by federal

regulations. In Duluth and across the Northeast region, Vocational Rehabilitation Services collaborates with other CareerForce partners to deliver services to individuals with disabilities. To the extent possible, services are co-located within the CareerForce location and offered virtually. Each CareerForce location provides an orientation to services available to assist job-seekers make an informed choice of service provider. Direct service staff participate in cross-training to ensure they understand the services offered by the various partners, and the eligibility criteria for each program.

Vocational Rehabilitation staff are available for staff or individual consultation without the need for the person to apply for services. Typical topics include how and when to disclose a disability, effective use of assistive technology, Social Security work incentives, and benefits planning. TDisability Benefits 101, a software program developed using Medicaid Infrastructure grant funding, is available to all partners to assist staff with informing jobseekers about the impact earned income will have on federal and state benefits, including public health insurance.

CareerForce agency partner managers, including VRS managers, meet monthly to identify and implement regional services including career, training, and/or follow-up services for jobseekers. These meetings allow for discussions leading to program alignment of goals. Assigned VRS staff attend monthly Employer Navigator meetings to collaborate among agencies on job leads and identifying needs of area businesses and job seekers to increase effectiveness of CareerForce services and reduce duplication of services. Partners also offer monthly staff trainings (CareerForce Huddles) to provide updates and descriptions of services and programs so that all CareerForce staff are well informed about partner services. In 2024, VRS managers provided training for Duluth Workforce Development staff on motivational interviewing, and will continue to be available to provide staff training on disability and accessibility topics. VRS managers and staff also attend and participate in meetings and committees of the Duluth Workforce Development Board and contribute to many initiatives, including initiatives to promote and enhance diversity and inclusion.

B.11. Describe how entities within the one-stop delivery system will comply with section 188 of WIOA, 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 programs within the CareerForce system are expected to be fully accessible to all Minnesotans. For this reason, CareerForce locations are equipped with accessible equipment that is monitored by the Department of Employment and Economic

Development (DEED) to ensure it is current and in working order. Software developed by DEED for CareerForce locations is also designed to be fully accessible.

As required by DEED, an ADA and EEO review is completed annually at the Duluth CareerForce location. Upon satisfactory completion of the assessment, DEED certifies the Duluth CareerForce location as ADA compliant. In addition, we have assistive technology devices available for persons with disabilities. Necessary paperwork, meetings and workshops are all offered with an option of alternative formats. Staff have been trained in the use of the adaptive technology for services to ensure compliance and equal access. Highly visible signs are displayed on the front and side of building, including photos representing diversity of race, age, ability. Welcome signs are displayed in multiple languages inside the location.

Printed materials about services at partner locations will comply with accessibility requirements and standards. Where possible, printed materials will be provided in multiple languages. There are currently staff on-site who are speakers of other languages (Spanish) and can be called on to interpret as needed. Three partners have Language Line accounts established to serve customers who speak languages other than English. These accounts can be accessed by staff from DEED Job Service, VRS, DWD, AEOA, and at the front desk and computer lab. For customers who are hearing impaired, staff are comfortable using the customer's chosen method for communication. Video-based ASL interpreters are available if needed. Vocational Rehabilitation Services located within the Duluth CareerForce location is available to program staff for consultation, should unexpected issues of accessibility occur. There is co-enrollment and collaboration between Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the other CareerForce partners, which further enhances overall accessibility.

Together, partners continue to make efforts to ensure our customer service environment feels welcoming and inclusive. All CareerForce Duluth staff regularly participate in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training. All partners have policies in place to address non-discrimination. All agencies have clients sign an equal opportunity form as part of enrollment that includes information on the process for filing complaint if the client feels they have been treated unfairly. All forms and applications have been reviewed and updated to allow for gender diversity.

CareerForce Operations – EEO Compliance

- B.12. 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.13. The local workforce development area is aware of and conducts annually a physical and program accessibility review.

Yes x

B.14. Does the local workforce development area have in place an agreed upon WIOA Discrimination complaint process per the [regulations](#)?

Yes x

B.15. Does the local workforce development area have in place an agreed upon WIOA Program Complaint Policy per the [regulations](#)?

Yes x

B.16. **Does the local workforce development area have in place a [language access policy and plan](#)? Describe your local workforce development areas language access policy.**

Yes X

The Duluth CareerForce Location uses Language Line for live translation services as needed, and has information posted at the front desk to inform customers in their own language of how to request this resource. We also have brochures and flyers available in other languages for Unemployment Insurance and basic CareerForce services, and both the CareerForce and Unemployment Insurance websites include language translation features.

B.17. **Describe the affirmative outreach strategies your local workforce development area will employ to recruit participants that are representative of the populations in your region.** (You may also attach an outreach or engagement plan if one exists for your LWDA).

As outlined in our One-Stop MOU, CareerForce Duluth partners conduct outreach in a number of ways to raise awareness of available services, open hours, and programs. Basic information about the Duluth CareerForce location is available on CareerForce.MN.gov. This website also includes more detailed program information, virtual workshops, assessments, and other resources for job seekers and employers across the state. More detailed information about programs available to LWDA #4 customers is available on the City of Duluth website.

Jobseeker Outreach:

- Duluth Workforce Development, YES Duluth, JET, AEOA, and the City of Duluth all maintain an active presence on social media;

- We maintain GovDelivery email lists for job seekers in the area, and regularly send out information about programs and events;
- DWD maintains a community partner email list that was built with a focus on organizations that serve Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals and other overlooked populations, and sends out flyers and information about programs and events;
- The City of Duluth communications office supports outreach through press releases that generate earned media coverage;
- Partner organization staff host presentations at college campuses, and staff a CareerForce office at Lake Superior College;
- DWD, JET, and VRS staff work on-site in Duluth area secondary schools, connecting with teachers, integration specialists, and other staff and delivering career exploration and work readiness curriculum with a focus on BIPOC students and those with disabilities;
- DWD staff conduct presentations to St. Louis County and community organization case managers, probation officers, and others who may refer clients to CareerForce;
- DWD posts flyers in public areas around the community, and publishes information in the Community Education brochure sent out quarterly to all households;
- CareerForce Corners exist in several area libraries, with information and office hours;
- VRS staff meet with county social workers and waiver providers quarterly to collaborate;
- VRS hosts an online Interest Form, as well as accepting phone inquiries and referrals from stakeholders;
- Duluth CareerForce partners collaborate to host job fairs, career exploration events like Construct Tomorrow, the Made Here! Manufacturing Expo, and Discover Healthcare, table at career nights and other events, and host on-site and virtual employer-of-the-day events.

CareerForce Partners

B.18. Describe the roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners.

One-stop partners work together to offer universal basic career services to all customers, as well as more intensive services to enrolled clients. All required partners under WIOA are part of an MOU and Infrastructure Funding Agreement to outline roles, resource contributions, and cost sharing agreements. Partners not housed within the CareerForce location may make in-kind contributions toward operation of the one-stop center, also outlined in the IFA. Both the MOU and IFA are re-negotiated every three years, with opportunity for IFA revisions annually due to staffing or other changes.

Duluth Workforce Development

The City of Duluth's Department of Workforce Development (DWD) provides a number of employment, job training, and career assistance programs for individuals who live within the city limits of Duluth and surrounding areas.

- The **Youth Employment Services (YES) Duluth** program provides education and employment services for youth 14-24 years of age. YES Duluth participants can receive assistance with: GED completion, education and career planning, job search, paid work experience, education (including funding for eligible training programs), follow-up, and related services including mentoring and connection to other supports.
- The **Older Worker** program helps individuals who are 55 or older to build the experience, skills, and confidence they need to find permanent employment. Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) with other resources, Older Worker participants can receive assistance with skill and interest assessments, work readiness skill development, digital literacy and other kinds of training, job search, and paid internships.
- The **WIOA Adult** Program serves individuals 18 years old or older who fall under one of our Priority of Service categories and are eligible to work in the United States. Male participants born after 1960 must be in compliance with Military Selective Service requirements, and all participants need to have a willingness and ability to make a commitment to staying in regular contact with a job counselor while in the program. WIOA Adult enrollees can receive assistance with: Comprehensive assessments, career planning, job search, job training (including funding for eligible training programs), support services, follow-up, and related services.
- The **Dislocated Worker** Program offers services to help individuals who have lost a job through no fault of their own and need help finding suitable employment. Services provided may include career planning and counseling, job search assistance, vocational assessments, and funding for counselor-approved training, as well as assistance in starting a business for those who select the CLIMB track.
- **Career Pathway Training** offers short-term career & technical education focused on in-demand occupations, with direct connection to employers and a wraparound support model.
- Duluth Workforce Development also provides employment and training services for **Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP)** and for **SNAP** (food stamp) recipients. MFIP is a *Work First* focused program designed to assist public assistance recipients and enhance their efforts so they can successfully transition to economic self-sufficiency. Participants receive wraparound case management, supportive services, support for GED and post-secondary training, and job search support. This is provided through a Trauma Informed Care lens focused on empowerment and choice.

AEOA (Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency)

AEOA is a private not-for-profit agency that provides various programs throughout the Arrowhead region of Minnesota. AEOA provides a number of employment and training services to the unemployed, underemployed, and those seeking new or different job opportunities within the seven counties of Northeast Minnesota (Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, and St. Louis). AEOA also provides SNAP Employment Services for St. Louis County, and State Dislocated Worker services in Duluth which includes job search assessments, career counselling, funding for training, on the job training and support services.

Northeast Minnesota Office of Job Training (JET)

The Northeast Minnesota Office of Job Training (JET) provides a number of employment and training services to the unemployed, underemployed, and those seeking new or different job opportunities within the seven counties of Northeast Minnesota (Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, and St. Louis *excluding the City of Duluth*).

Services available to eligible dislocated workers, youth, or adults include personalized career assessments and guidance, job search assistance and resources, funding for education, work experience, on-the-training opportunities, and support services.

State of Minnesota

Job Service is the program through which several of DEED's key services to job seekers are delivered. Services target three main areas: Universal Customers, Veteran's and Reemployment Assistance for recipients of Unemployment Insurance. Staff also assist customers through one-on-one appointments and virtual workshops.

State Services for the Blind (SSB) helps people who are blind, visually impaired, or DeafBlind to live and work as independently as possible. Services include training people to adjust to blindness and vision loss, exploring assistive technology, and teaching adults how to prepare for, find and keep jobs.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) specializes in working with individuals with disabilities that impact employment, post-secondary training, independent living and community integration. VRS provides pre-employment transition services, vocational assessments, job tryouts, community-based evaluations, job search assistance, job coaching, case management, tuition assistance and supportive services. Staff from Vocational Rehabilitation Services are available as needed, to consult with partners who happen to be working with individuals with disabilities.

Adult Basic Education

ISD709's Duluth Adult Education (DAE) provides math and reading skills assessments required for program enrollment, as well as GED preparation and testing. DAE also

provides contextualized math and reading skills instruction as part of Career Pathway Training classes.

Community Services Block Grant Employment & Training

Community Action Duluth (CAD) is our local CSBG E&T provider, and a frequent referral partner for a number of services. CareerForce programs refer clients to CAD for financial literacy training, transportation assistance, GED completion, and tax filing assistance. CAD refers clients to CareerForce for job search assistance, Career Pathway Training, and WIOA program enrollment.

Housing & Urban Development Employment & Training

HUD funds employment and training through Community Development Block Grants, which are administered by the City of Duluth. The Duluth Workforce Development Board provides critical input into priorities and workforce needs, and CDBG E&T grantees are required to partner with CareerForce as a component of their program model.

B.19. Describe how the local area board will ensure continuous improvement of eligible providers of services through the system.

Continuous improvement is part of the culture of Duluth Workforce Development. As an organization, we regularly review performance data and customer feedback and look for opportunities to improve and strengthen our work. Staff are given autonomy over their programs, schedules, and budgets, which allows room to innovate. Collaboration and partnership is encouraged and supported, and is often built into program design.

The Duluth Workforce Development Board fulfills its responsibility to monitor and provide oversight of the One Stop Operator and service providers by conducting annual review of: Compliance with the One Stop Operator and One-Stop MOUs, compliance with ADA, EEO, and Accessibility requirements, staff training provided, and overall coordination of services. The board also reviews:

- Quarterly Cybrarian reports tracking customer service and demographics
- Annual reports on all CareerForce programs from all Duluth partner agencies
- Review of customer survey and feedback data
- Review of customer complaints and resolution
- Review of employer engagement and responsiveness to employer workforce needs/priorities
- Review of performance outcomes for all grants
- Review of support services provided to clients, as an indicator of barriers to employment

The Duluth Workforce Development Board also supports continuous improvement by reviewing program performance and insights at least once per year for each program.

In addition, the board reviews labor market data at least quarterly, to track overall workforce needs and labor market trends. The ensuing discussion helps guide priorities and investment of resources to ensure we are meeting the needs of the local area.

B.20. Describe the local workforce development area's processes to assure non-duplicative services and avoid duplicate administrative costs.

Co-enrollment between partners at the Duluth CareerForce location is increasingly common as we improve collaboration among programs. To ensure services and administrative costs are not duplicated, each participant maintains a primary job counselor who holds responsibility for their case, including maintaining records in Workforce One. During intake and enrollment, participants are asked which other agencies they are currently working with, and a check is done in Workforce One to see if they are currently enrolled with another workforce agency. Anytime a participant is co-enrolled with another program, they are asked to sign a Release of Information to allow staff to communicate and coordinate around provision of training funds, support services, or other cost items to ensure duplication is avoided.

B.21. Describe how the Memorandum of Understanding will be or has been developed and used to ensure commitment of resources from service providers and required partners.

One-stop partners in the Duluth CareerForce location sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that accurately reflects the services to be provided by each partner and how they will be coordinated and delivered through the system. Additionally, an Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) is negotiated and signed by all required partners to outline cost sharing related to operation of the one-stop location.

Elements in the MOU and IFA include but are not limited to:

- How the costs for services and infrastructure costs will be shared through cash, non-cash, and in-kind contributions;
- Methods to ensure the needs of workers, youth, veterans, and individuals with disabilities or barriers to employment are addressed, including access to technology and materials made available through the CareerForce system;
- The duration of the MOU/IFA and the procedures for amending the MOU, including assurances that the MOU shall be reviewed at least every three years and the IFA shall be reconciled on a quarterly basis.

The Duluth Workforce Development Board reviews the MOU and IFA every three years to ensure it clearly describes operations, services provided and coordinated, funding, and referrals.

B.22. 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.

All required partners under WIOA are included as part of a Memorandum of Understanding and an Infrastructure Funding Agreement, which maps out both cash, non-cash, and in-kind contributions toward the operation of the Duluth CareerForce location. The Memorandum of Understanding governs partner roles, and outlines how cross-referrals and co-enrollments will take place as well as responsibilities for shared staffing. Discrepancies and disagreements are first discussed by One-Stop Operator consortium partners in monthly partner meetings.

Per DEED policy, if the partners are not able to reach agreement on an IFA, the Local Workforce Development Board will convene all partners and attempt to resolve the dispute. If an agreement still cannot be reached, the Local Workforce Development Board must notify DEED that an impasse has been reached. DEED will review the process and make a dispute resolution recommendation. If this is not successful the State Funding Mechanism will take effect, taking into consideration the distribution and allocation of services of all required partners within the local area.

B.23. 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 134(c)(3)(G) of WIOA.

N/A

B.24. 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 section 107(d)(16) WIOA.

Duluth Workforce Development adheres to uniform administrative requirements pertaining to procurement for sub-grantees and vendored services, listed in 29 CFR 97.36. The Duluth Workforce Development Board (Duluth WDB) shall make recommendations to the Mayor of Duluth on the most effective designation of administrative entities, grant recipients and program operators for the area with the exception of the State of Minnesota Job Service, as the administrative entity and grant for Wagner-Peyser, Veterans Title 38 programs and unemployment insurance.

Should the Duluth WDB wish to identify a new service provider, a competitive Request for Proposals process would be instituted. The RFP process includes solicitation for bids that request comprehensive information addressing the following elements: Knowledge of identified need, experience of administration and staff, services to be provided, performance outcomes, commitment to partnerships and collaboration, budget and

costs, and operational capability. Each one of these criteria are assigned a point value and ranked for a total score. The solicitation contains a description of program requirements and basic design elements to which bidders respond. Eligibility for bidding includes organizations which have adequate administrative controls and personnel to achieve the goals and objectives of the program. This includes but is not limited to governmental units, public or private non-profit corporations, educational institutions, a tax supported organization or a private or for-profit entity.

The board will select the One Stop Operator every four years, as required under WIOA. Additionally, the board will conduct a competitive process that includes a cost contribution analysis to ensure bids accurately reflect the cost of operating the one-stop center as required by WIOA.

B.25. Describe and identify the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds described in section 107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III) of WIOA.

WIOA Section 107 (d)(12)(B)(i)(I) states that the chief elected official in a local area shall serve as the local grant recipient for, and shall be liable for any misuse of, the grant funds allocated to the local area. In Local Workforce Development Area 4 (City of Duluth), this is Mayor Roger Reinert.

WIOA Section 107 (d)(12)(B)(i)(II) states that the chief local elected official may designate an entity to serve as a local fiscal agent to assist in the administration of grant funds. The entity that has been designated under this provision that serves as the local fiscal agent is the Workforce Development Department of the City of Duluth, under the oversight of Director Elena Foshay. Duluth Workforce Development staff are located in the Duluth CareerForce location. Fiscal management and accounting of grant funds is done by the City of Duluth's Auditor's office, with oversight from the City Auditor, Josh Bailey.

Levels of Performance

B.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 of WIOA and the One-stop delivery system.

Overall performance accountability measures for the state are negotiated every two years between DEED and the U.S. Department of Labor, covering all WIOA programs. Local Workforce Development Area 4-City of Duluth then works with DEED to set local performance targets to track and demonstrate progress toward our goals. These targets are based on past performance and local conditions, and are balanced with

performance targets elsewhere in the state to ensure fair contribution toward statewide goals.

Targets for state formula and competitive grants are set in negotiation with DEED. LWDA 4 proposes performance targets, which are approved by DEED as part of annual reviews of work plans. These targets may be adjusted through work plan modifications throughout the year if needed.

Targets for subgrantees are assigned based on negotiated program goals approved by DEED.

B.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.

Since 2016, the Duluth Workforce Development Board's Governance Committee has undertaken a number of initiatives to help ensure board remains aligned with the standards for a high-performing board. These initiatives include:

- Setting a Board vision and goals that align with the Governor's Workforce Development Board vision and goals, as well as local workforce priorities.
- Creating DWDB Bylaws to ensure compliance with WIOA (April 2016), updated as needed to reflect changes to state policies and local priorities.
- Developing:
 - Conflict of Interest policy (July 2016)
 - DWDB Task Calendar, which outlines annual tasks (e.g. update policies, chair/vice-chair nominations, term renewals, new member orientation) (August 2016)
 - Board attendance policy (September 2019)
- Creating onboarding process for new members, which includes:
 - Orientation with Workforce Director (January 2017)
 - Online application (March 2019)
 - Interview between interested candidates and Governance Committee member (January 2021)
 - Board orientation manual (Updated January 2024)
- Conducting board assessments related to:
 - Member satisfaction/engagement (February 2017)
 - Committee engagement and participation (January 2019)
 - Board and committee diversity (Conducted annually)
- Developing job descriptions for Board members, Board chair, Secretary, and Vice-chair (May 2018)
- Working with committee chairs to develop, for each committee:

- Committee chair job descriptions (March 2019)
 - Committee descriptions (Updated annually)
 - Member rosters (Updated regularly)
- Developing Workforce Board Appointment Process Map to guide recruitment efforts. The map outlines the step-by-step process for reaching out to interested members, reviewing applications, recommending members to the executive committee, approving members, and orientation (January 2020).
- Creating:
 - Exit interview (January 2020), for members who recently retired from board
 - Board member onboarding interview (December 2020), for newer members who have served for 6 months to a year
 - Mentoring program, which pairs new board members with those who have been involved for a longer period of time to help answer questions and ensure they feel connected and engaged
- Developing an annual calendar to help the board stay on top of yearly monitoring and implementation tasks.
- Participating in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training segments at each Board meeting;
- Convening two employer-led sector initiatives focused on healthcare and construction, and launching a third focused on manufacturing;
- Participating in the Regional Leadership Team to discuss regional issues and priorities.

In addition, the Governance Committee continues to work on member recruitment, with a special focus on increasing board representation among people of color. Part of this work includes building new strategic partnerships with organizations led by people of color in the community, with a focus on board committees as a key nexus for relationship building.

Local Workforce Board Governance

- B.28. Briefly describe the local area board’s policy and timetable for filling vacancies, replacing/reappointing individuals whose terms have come to an end.** Include in your description any plans to fill the terms that will be expiring as of June 30, 2024.

As stated in board bylaws, when vacancies occur the board, in collaboration with the Workforce Development Director, shall solicit and receive nominations. The Governance Committee and Director shall consider the candidate nominations and make recommendations to the Executive Committee based upon meeting the federal and state Board composition requirements and the appropriateness and degree of fit for the needs

of the Duluth's economy, targeted industry sectors and occupations, and businesses, workers, and job seekers. Final recommendations will be submitted to the Mayor for review and consideration. He/she will make appointments from the list of candidate nominations submitted by the Executive Committee and Director.

The term of membership on the board shall be for three (3) years. The term of appointments will be staggered to the extent possible to ensure only a portion of the membership expire in a given year. Members may choose to renew their term, as long as they have remained in compliance with the board's attendance policy.

B.29. 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 by June 30, 2024? Not Applicable

B.16. Please include in Attachment B the composition of your board, including the sectors represented on the board, and to the extent practicable, the demographic makeup of your board.

SECTION C: PROGRAM AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Local Area Board Program and Service Delivery

C.1. 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 barriers to employment.

A variety of strategies will be implemented to expand access to employment opportunities for eligible individuals, particularly those with barriers to employment. The most significant of these is continued expansion of our Career Pathway Training program, which packages technical skill development for in-demand occupations with academic and case management support. These short-term training classes offer participants an entry point for career-track employment, in a supportive learning environment. Partners, including both True North Goodwill and Duluth Adult Education, as well as Duluth Workforce Development, offer on-ramps to training, which provide various work readiness workshops and opportunities to resolve barriers to employment. Employers are actively involved in career pathway training, helping identify in-demand occupations, design curriculum, provide exposure to the job, and conduct mock interviews. This allows participants to build a direct connection to employment opportunities once they complete training. It also builds a connection between employer and job counselor, which allows them to work together to support success after hire.

In addition to Career Pathway Training, each core program partner also plays a unique role in expanding access to employment for individuals with barriers to employment.

Duluth Workforce Development (DWD): As the administrator of WIOA and State-funded programs in Local Workforce Development Area 4-Duluth, DWD has engaged in new methods for increasing enrollment in dislocated worker, adult, SCSEP, and youth programming, specifically for those with a range of barriers to employment. One key strategy is to build new and strengthen existing partnerships with organizations who provide direct services to people of color and individuals with barriers to employment. In some instances, this partnership includes funding for direct outreach and engagement of populations who suffer the greatest employment disparities.

The Duluth Workforce Development Board also approved a fourth priority of service for WIOA Adult clients, which allows Duluth Workforce Development to enroll priority populations who face the greatest employment challenges, including people of color, women seeking non-traditional careers, individuals with a criminal background, individuals who are or recently have been homeless, and others. Additionally, DWD contracts with a team of Community Liaisons through support from the Minnesota Department of Transportation and other sources. These individuals conduct deep community outreach to engage youth and young adults in career exploration, mentoring, and resolution of barriers so they are ready for entry into high-demand careers like construction.

Our Older Worker program serves low-income individuals over the age of 55 through SCSEP, providing connection to training and employment as well as referrals to other services to ensure participants are able to retain employment. Over the past year, this program has increased its focus on computer access and digital literacy training, which are significant barriers to accessing employment, health care, and other services.

YES Duluth also makes significant efforts to engage out of school youth, a population with a high incidence of barriers to employment. YES Duluth works closely with partners such as Life House, Duluth Community Schools Collaborative, and Duluth Public Schools to connect youth with employment and/or paid work experience, offer incentives to complete a GED, and work on employment readiness. YES Duluth is also engaged with St. Louis County and a group of community organizations working on innovative solutions to youth homelessness through an integrated service model that combines employment and housing assistance with mentoring and supportive services.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS): The mission of Vocational Rehabilitation Services is to empower Minnesotans with disabilities to achieve their goals for

employment, independent living and community integration. Employment for those with disabilities is in integrated, competitive positions in the community, at or above minimum wage. Wages are not less than that customarily paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by non-disabled individuals. All of the individuals that VRS serve have at least one disability that has an impact on employment. In addition, many VRS clients are from diverse racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, as well as individuals with criminal histories. Barriers related to poverty are common as well. VRS has expanded services to high school and transition aged youth, in the areas of job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, career exploration, and counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs at institutions of higher education, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy.

Job Service: Job Service/Wagner-Peyser staff coordinate with Unemployment Insurance staff delivering Reemployment Assistance sessions to increase awareness of CareerForce programs and services, aimed at individuals most likely to exhaust benefits. These sessions, held virtually and in person, reach individuals seeking employment and/or training. In addition to serving unemployment insurance recipients, Job Service staff serve veterans and those not enrolled in eligibility-based programs. Veterans with barriers to employment are case managed by the Disabled Veteran Outreach Program staff to find appropriate employment. The Senior Veteran Employment Representative works with regional businesses to promote veteran employment as well as monitor, report on, and ensure that performance standards are met or exceeded as specified in the Jobs for Veterans State Grant.

State Services for the Blind (SSB): SSB's Workforce Development staff provide counseling, training, job skills, and placement services for individuals who are blind, visually impaired, DeafBlind, or experiencing vision loss and looking for work. SSB also assists employers with pre-employment services, connecting future employees with companies through internships, mentoring opportunities and training that is customized to the business need or delivered on the job. CareerForce Duluth also has assistive and adaptive technology readily available for those who need it.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services: The Duluth Workforce Center utilizes State Relay and Interpreter Services (711) to assist those who are deaf or hard of hearing. The Northeast Region Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services office is also located in Duluth, just a few blocks from the CareerForce location.

- C.2. 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 barriers to employment.**

To expand access to supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly those with barriers to employment, the local area board will work with entities carrying out core programs to ensure effective systems are in place to effectively meet the needs of individuals entering the public workforce system. The local board will also work with employers to facilitate reverse referrals of individuals with barriers to employment, who need assistance with purchasing work clothes, tools, or other items to begin work.

All CareerForce partners have policies on supportive services that ensure eligible individuals have access to the supports they need for both training and employment. Supportive services such as transportation, child care and dependent care, housing, and needs-related payments are necessary to enable an individual to participate in activities authorized and consistent with the provisions of WIOA. The need for and provision of supportive services is documented in the participant's IEP (Individual Employment Plan) or Individual Service Strategy (ISS).

Core partners determine need for supportive services by conducting an initial assessment to identify an individual's skill levels (including literacy, numeracy and English language proficiency) and aptitudes and abilities (including skills gaps) as well as barriers to employment. This assessment provides information that allows job counselors to facilitate referrals to and coordinate with other programs and services, including those within the one-stop delivery system and those provided by other organizations and agencies in the local area. Information and referrals for specific programs and services provided by external partners may include, but are not limited to: Childcare Assistance (CCAP), TANF/MFIP, Child Support, SNAP, health insurance, transportation assistance, housing navigation, financial literacy, GED completion, and Earned Income Tax Credit.

A resource plan is also developed for each participant to identify and track the exact mix of funds planned to be used to pay for training and supportive services. Should future funding become available that is more appropriate and/or takes priority over original resource plan funds, the resource plan may be modified. Additionally, the resource plan helps ensure that WIOA funds are not used to pay for training or services already covered by other sources.

C.3. 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.

Career pathways align education and training programs with industry needs and direct employer involvement to help individuals develop skills for in-demand jobs and advance in their careers, while helping employers access the skilled workers they need to compete.

Career pathways are at the center of the Duluth Workforce Development Board's work, at both the local and regional level. Center to this work are industry-driven sector strategy working groups focused on three of our primary industries – healthcare, construction, and manufacturing. These working groups identify current and future workforce needs, and design strategies to meet those needs. They also foster collaboration between training providers, community-based organizations, and industry employers. Some of the outcomes of our work to date include infographics outlining career pathways and occupations, job fairs and career exploration events, training programs, and testing new strategies to help employers move internal candidates into hard-to-fill positions.

We also offer Career Pathway Training, in partnership with True North Goodwill, Duluth Adult Education, local colleges, and employers. Key components of this training model include:

- Shorter-term training opportunities that are available both in-person and online;
- One-on-one career navigation that includes assessment of skills, strengths, and barriers to employment as well as access to supportive services;
- Entry-level “rungs” that focus on work readiness and that are accessible to adults with low reading and math skills and/or an unstable work history;
- Contextualized training that integrates adult basic education with occupational skills;
- Technical training that leads to industry-recognized post-secondary credentials that are portable and stackable;
- Engagement of employer partners to provide input on curriculum, expose participants to networking opportunities, and connect graduates to employment;
- Paid internships to provide work-based learning opportunities through employer partners;

Participants enrolled in MFIP, SCSEP, and YES Duluth often co-enroll in WIOA Adult or Career Pathway Training, which supports braiding of resources and a team approach to supporting participants as they pursue their goals. We continue to seek out ways to integrate Career Pathway Training with GED, credit recovery, and high school CTE to allow students working toward high school completion to simultaneously earn industry-recognized credentials and have exposure to paid work experience opportunities. Duluth Public Schools and Lake Superior College are both key partners in this endeavor.

C.4. Describe and assess the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local workforce development area.

Duluth Workforce Development's Adult Career Services provides career counseling, job search assistance, paid internships, and when appropriate, education and training funding to eligible adults. Participants work one-on-one with a counselor to determine

eligibility based on our priorities of service and, if eligible, are enrolled in WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, or one of our Career Pathway Training programs. Across our Adult Career Services, activities can include:

- Identifying skills and strengths via structured interview and appropriate skills and vocational assessments;
- Career exploration using online tools like O*Net Online, Career One Stop and My Skills My Future;
- Researching labor market information to determine a match between interests, abilities and opportunities in our area including marketability of skills;
- Developing a plan outlining steps the participant will take to achieve their goal and what support the counselor and program will provide while they are working towards their goal;
- Connecting with training that leads to occupations in sectors of the economy that have a high potential for sustained demand or growth in our area including researching training options and financial aid options for the student and funding for tuition, books and fees for approved training programs;
- Case management including barrier identification and reduction while the student is upskilling or retraining;
- Assistance with job search during and after training including resume development and tailoring, interview practice, job search techniques and guidance;
- If appropriate, internship or work experience to build resume content during or after training;
- On the job training funding for those with job goals that could be learned while working in partnership with an area employer;
- Supportive services to overcome barriers identified in plan development;
- Job retention counseling to ensure employment fits job goal and participant is on track for success prior to successful exit from the program;
- Follow-up services to support employment retention and access to further training.

Duluth Workforce Development also offers the Talent Development Program, our region's offering to support incumbent worker training. This resource helps employers invest in and retain their current workforce, avoiding layoffs and supporting business growth. This program has seen increased demand over the past few years as a result of

a tight labor market paired with a strong economy, and has helped support critical areas of need such as child care.

C.5. 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.

Youth workforce investment activities are provided by Duluth Workforce Development's Youth Employment Services (YES) Duluth program, serving youth and young adults ages 14 to 24, with a goal of increasing access to career pathways. The program's mission and outcomes align with local economic priorities to meet labor market demands while serving and supporting marginalized youth populations including youth with disabilities. Support is provided through effective collaboration across systems addressing the needs of youth including career development, work readiness, individual health and mental health needs, and the provision of support services.

YES Duluth program elements support success in education and employment goals through a variety of activities.

Education activities include:

- Basic skills development in math and reading;
- Classroom training including secondary, alternative secondary, GED and post-secondary;
- Prioritizing supports leading to credential attainment;
- Supporting youth in their transition from secondary to post-secondary education and occupation skills training.

Employment activities include:

- Work readiness skill building;
- Career exploration, including informational interviews and job shadowing;
- Individualized strengths-based identification of skills transferable across positions and occupations;
- Work experience including subsidized employment opportunities, , job shadowing and entrepreneurial skill building;
- Transition to employment including job search skills, labor market research and financial literacy.

Identifying and overcoming barriers to success in education and employment includes the following program model:

- The development of an Individual Service Strategy (ISS) with a youth-centered, strengths-based approach;
- Long-term mentoring;
- Collaboration with education systems and employers, as well as supportive service agencies to address independent living skills and health needs;
- Incentives that reinforce learning to encourage participation in activities and/or achievement of goals;
- Follow-up services to assist youth sustaining a successful transition.

Workforce investment activities are delivered effectively through the development of sustainable public-private partnerships between government, education institutions, employers, and the existing and emerging workforce. Youth serving agencies and workforce development entities connect with these stakeholders as we support and improve our workforce system.

There are a number of key partners that support youth with disabilities through coordinated efforts. Throughout the State of Minnesota, Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) provides students with disabilities Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to meet their needs. Additionally, VRS transition services assist eligible youth to plan for and make the transition from secondary school to competitive integrated employment. Ultimately, VRS assists students in choosing a post high school employment goal and ensures that they receive the services needed to reach that goal. Each school is assigned a VRS Counselor who works in collaboration with school staff to provide services to students with disabilities, including attending Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, providing group services and instruction to prepare for employment, arranging work experiences or job try-outs for students, and any activity that aligns with the Pre-ETS categories below that will meet the need of a student and fill in the gaps of what the school is unable to provide:

- Job exploration counseling;
- Work-based learning experiences;
- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education;
- Workplace readiness training;
- Instruction in self-advocacy

Introductory Career Services (ICS) are offered to students across the state and virtual courses are coordinated with schools. Work experiences for students enrolled in VRS Full Career Services (FCS) are developed by internal and contracted partner placement coordinators. Internal and contracted partner business engagement staff

work to develop business relationships to foster work experience opportunities for students.

In addition, YES Duluth actively works with providers of physical and mental health services, as well as disability services in secondary and post-secondary institutions. Coordinated strategies address aspects of identity and ability by assessing and building skills in self-awareness, goal-setting and self-advocacy. Youth are given access to a variety of vocational assessments such as interest inventories, aptitude testing, and functional capacities testing, as well as employment opportunities that provide feedback and skill building.

Commitment to accessibility for other marginalized groups includes addressing the willingness and success of potential employers to hire and employ youth. Our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion includes the development and strengthening of partnerships with employers. The Employer Champions Initiative seeks to provide employers with ongoing skill building and implementation of inclusive practices. As a result, employers move from seeing youth as “too risky” to seeing youth as a viable asset and investment in our community. Continued implementation of the Employer Champions Initiative will offer employers a network of peers to collaborate with on training and teaching practices to increase hiring and retention of youth deemed “at-risk.”

Over the next four years, YES Duluth will continue its strong support of dropout prevention in partnership with Duluth Public Schools, and high school diploma/GED completion in partnership with Life House and Duluth Adult Education. YES Duluth will build out a stronger program for 14-15 year olds, who increasingly seek out engagement opportunities. We will also continue engagement in efforts to end homelessness among young adults, as a partner and employment/education services provider.

C.6. Describe how training services under chapter 3 of subtitle B of WIOA will be provided in accordance with section 134(c)(3)(G) of WIOA, 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.

To maximize informed customer choice and to provide training services, Duluth Workforce Development staff, working with the individual, identify possible eligible training providers and, upon the individual’s selection of a training provider, coordinate funding sources and arrange for payment to the training provider through an Individual Training Account if the training services are directly linked to a locally in-demand

career. It is anticipated that all training services for WIOA Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker participants will be provided through Individual Training Account, and that the local board will not provide training through a training contract unless the local board determines that providing training through a contract is necessary and that the requirements for implementing a training contract have been met.

C.7. 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.

System coordination is threaded through every level of CareerForce through a variety of regularly planned meetings with partners, staff and, in some cases, stakeholders.

Training and information regarding initiatives and regulations are provided at Wagner-Peyser (Job Service) Managers meetings and are then brought to local CareerForce Job Service staff through regular bi-weekly meetings and e-mails. Directors of the Workforce Development Areas meet monthly through the Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards and have regular updates from DEED leadership. Local and regional partner and staff meetings are held monthly to discuss service delivery, CareerForce operations, initiatives and plans.

A referral and resource database is accessible to all partner staff electronically to facilitate referrals among CareerForce partners and staff members throughout the state. This means that no matter which CareerForce office a customer calls, we will be able to provide a warm handoff to the person within the system who can best serve their needs.

Interagency Coordination

C.8. 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 Duluth Workforce Development Board actively collaborates with the Lake Superior Carl Perkins Consortium. Perkins is included as a required partner in the Duluth CareerForce location's Memorandum of Understanding and Infrastructure Funding Agreement, providing non-cash support toward the operation of the one-stop center. Both the Secondary and Post-Secondary coordinators sit on the board's Emerging Workforce committee, and are involved with both the Healthcare and Construction working groups. The Director of Duluth Workforce Development also sits on the advisory committee for the Lake Superior Consortium.

There are a number of initiatives that Duluth Workforce Development and the Lake Superior Perkins Consortium work on together each year:

- Construct Tomorrow, a hands-on career fair focused on the construction industry which is attended by 1,200+ high school students and 250+ adults from around the region. Perkins assists with transportation costs so that students may attend the event.
- Professional development and externships for Career Technical Education teachers, to ensure they are up to date on skills and technology for our area's most in-demand career pathways.
- College and career fairs, hosted by Perkins and attended by Duluth students, including YES Duluth participants, for exposure to post-secondary education options in the area.
- Evening hands-on career exploration events for students from under-represented groups, in partnership with the Boys and Girls Club, Valley Youth Center, Neighborhood Youth Services, and Family Freedom Center.
- SCRUBS camp, a hands-on summer program for high school students and young adults which exposes them to career pathways in the healthcare sector.

In addition to these annual events, there are a number of other initiatives led by the Perkins Consortium which are of value to workforce development partners. One is a project that aligns post-secondary training programs with the Minnesota career wheel infographic, so that students, parents, and advisors can better understand how different degree and certificate programs link to in-demand career pathways. This project will also include interactive elements like videos and websites to assist with career exploration. We are also working to strengthen Career Technical Education, and build better linkages with employers in the community. And we will continue to work together to deepen integration of career pathways into middle and high school across all subject areas, and provide stronger advising and support for students as they chart their post-graduation path.

C.9. 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.

Coordination with secondary and post-secondary education programs is critical to the success and impact of our youth and adult programs. We serve students at both levels of education who are not otherwise being assisted, providing one-on-one support for exploring career pathways and training options, enrollment in certificate and credential programs, assistance with scholarship applications and completing the FAFSA,

connection to work-based learning opportunities, and an array of support services. All is provided through a person-centered approach.

More specifically, we partner with a number of education entities to ensure we avoid duplication of services.

Secondary education partners include:

- St. Louis County truancy court attorney led meetings with court-affiliated providers
- Check and Connect staff at Denfeld and East High Schools
- ISD709 Office of Education Equity Integration Specialists at East, Denfeld, and Area Learning Center
- Denfeld Full-Service Community Schools
- Social Work, Guidance Counselors, and Special Education staff
- GED and Credit Recovery initiatives through Duluth Adult Education and the Area Learning Center

Post-secondary partners include:

- Disability Services at Lake Superior College
- TRIO Services
- College Advisors at Lake Superior College
- Duluth Adult Education
- College of St. Scholastica
- University of Minnesota – Duluth
- Fond du Lac Tribal and Technical College

One feature of our WIOA and State-funded activities that sets us apart from our partners is our ability to maintain services across the educational lifespan of the student. Working in partnership with Duluth Public Schools, our goal is that every student graduate high school with a plan for what comes next. For students who need more guidance and support in developing this plan, YES Duluth steps in. We then stay in touch with the student if they have dropped out or transferred, as well as after graduation. This ensures ongoing contact with a caring adult who helps keep the student on-track and working toward their educational and career goals. We also continually assess students' changing needs for supportive services, and frequently make referrals for assistance with housing, mental health, child care, and other work supports.

As part of efforts to support work-based learning and connection to local employers and industries, we will continue to leverage available youth and adult program funds to

support paid internships and work experience for both high school and college students. This is part of a larger effort across community partners to retain students in the community after graduation, and connect them to job opportunities here that meet employer needs and offer opportunities for advancement. We have had strong success supporting paid internships for college students in a variety of high-demand fields, including social work, K-12 education, IT, and healthcare occupations. As part of this work, we provide training to host sites on how to successfully hire, train, and retain young people – covering a range of topics from use of appropriate gender pronouns to setting expectations and effective coaching. We hope to expand the number of students and employers participating over the next four years.

In response to participant feedback, we are currently working to expand and strengthen our offerings around financial literacy. This includes identifying a banking partner that can help establish new bank accounts, build credit, and provide one-on-one financial advising. It also includes adopting curriculum modules which can be completed in group workshops or in one-on-one meetings with counselors, to help provide basic financial education. Finally, it includes strengthening referral partnerships with organizations that can assist with credit repair, home buying, and other financial goals.

Duluth Workforce Development staff also sit on advisory committees for various degree programs at Lake Superior College, including both Healthcare and Post-Secondary Perkins. This informs our programs and priorities, and ensures we are working in alignment with employer needs.

C.10. 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.

Providing access to supportive services for eligible individuals is an important element of Duluth Workforce Development program case management. Program participants complete a comprehensive assessment at intake to help identify support service needs. Supportive services are provided in response to identified needs to increase participants' stability and reduce their barriers to employment. Supportive services provided include transportation assistance such as bus passes, gas cards, and assistance with car repairs; vouchers to purchase clothing or tools required for work; financial assistance for participants to attend training programs; computers to attend online training classes; and housing and emergency financial assistance.

One area we are working to develop further is assistance with obtaining a Driver's License, which is a basic requirement for many types of employment. Additionally, our community was built to be car-dependent, so individuals without a license and/or

vehicle are at a significant disadvantage when seeking out employment. To date, we have revised our supportive services policies to allow support for driver's education, driver's license fees, and car repairs. Duluth Adult Education added a class to help adults prepare for the permit test. Both Community Action Duluth and AEOA offered programs to assist eligible individuals purchase a vehicle in the past, but these services are funding-dependent. Over the next year, the Duluth Workforce Development Board will explore other policy and program solutions to help address this significant barrier to employment.

All students enrolled in area colleges are able to obtain a student ID that serves as a bus pass. Our youth program was part of an effort to launch a pilot program offering a similar benefit to high school students, who can now ride buses for free during the school year using their student IDs. Counselors help ensure students are connected to Student Services to obtain the ID, and then help them learn how to navigate the Duluth Public Transit system through their phone app or website.

C.11. 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 of WIOA, and the review of local applications submitted under title II of WIOA.

Duluth Adult Education provides a number of services that qualify as workforce investment activities that are recognized and coordinated with the local board. The Duluth Adult Education Manager holds a seat on the Duluth Workforce Development Board. The manager also is a member of the Emerging Workforce Committee (Youth Committee) which meets monthly and acts as an advisory committee to YES Duluth.

Duluth Adult Education provides academic testing in the form of CASAS assessment for participants of various programs provided through the one-stop system at the CareerForce Center in Duluth. This basic academic assessment process determines a participant's basic reading and math level as a component of enrollment into various programs. This service can result in co-enrollment opportunities for participants that may need to brush-up skills, gain computer literacy skills or who may need to complete a GED or credit-recovery for a High School Diploma.

The Local Workforce Development Board also invests in Career Pathway Training classes focused on high-demand occupations. Partners in this training model consist of the City of Duluth, True North Goodwill, Duluth Adult Education, and area colleges. Industry trainings are selected with LMI local data in mind and currently consist of Certified Nurse Assistant, Phlebotomy/Med Lab, Intro to Human Services, and the Construction Trades. Duluth Adult Education provides academic basic skill testing for participant entrance into this training model using the CASAS assessment. Duluth Adult Education also provides industry-contextualized classes that are integrated with technical training, as well as standalone training in areas such as Digital Literacy, Construction Math, and English and a Second Language. This component provides foundational skills in digital literacy, reading, and math as well as improvement in study skills, test taking skills and basic employment skills that are needed to be successful throughout the training. Finally, Adult Education provides integrated instruction alongside Lake Superior College instructors or Industry instructors to support participants' successful completion of the short-term training. This training model has proven highly successful, and has great potential to expand to other occupations and industry sectors.

Employer & Economic Development Engagement

C.12. Describe how the local area board will ensure that eligible providers meet the employment needs of local employers, workers and job seekers.

The local area board facilitates connectivity between eligible training providers and employers through industry-led sector strategy partnerships. These working groups ensure employers have the ability to directly influence training program investments as well as training/educational program design and content to guarantee it will meet their needs. We also stay focused on the needs of local employers by reviewing data shared by our Regional Labor Market Analyst to explore trends and sector needs, and by participating in Advisory Committee meetings for our largest employer sector (Healthcare). In addition, we maintain direct employer contact through a variety of networking opportunities through the Duluth Chamber, Northland Human Resource Association as well as accompanying Economic Development staff on business retention and expansion visits to strategically selected employers in the area.

In addition to utilizing Individual Training Accounts to support job seekers in pursuing training through eligible providers, the local area board will work collaboratively with our local post-secondary education institutions to promote strategies that integrate training of existing workers for new and high-demand occupations. These strategies are essential in a time of workforce shortage, where both employers and workers benefit from investment in skill development to meet current needs. Strategies include

incumbent worker training, Registered Apprenticeship, and customized training, as well as On-the-Job Training (OJT) and paid work experience.

C.13. 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.

Employers are key customers, and form the foundation of our work at CareerForce. We engage and assist employers in a number of ways:

- Assistance with recruiting:
 - Assist with posting jobs through Minnesota Works
 - Invite to present to job counselors
 - Host hiring events at CareerForce
 - Host large job fairs, including Construct Tomorrow
 - Assist CareerForce customers with completing online job applications
- Assistance with hiring:
 - Allow employers to conduct interviews on-site at CareerForce
 - Allow CareerForce customers to participate in virtual interviews at CareerForce
 - Connect employers to resources like On the Job Training subsidies and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit
 - Provide paid work experience opportunities through our Adult Programs, YES Duluth, and our Older Worker Program
- Strategic workforce development
 - Support incumbent worker training through the Talent Development Program
 - Connect employers to MJSP, JTIP, and other state resources to support training
 - Work with employers to develop strategies to meet their workforce needs, such as apprenticeship and career pathway training
 - Engagement with regional talent attraction efforts
 - Engagement in collaborative work focused on key issues such as housing, child care, broadband access, and reducing homelessness

Employer engagement is facilitated by CareerForce Employer Navigators. These individuals network through the Chambers of Commerce, industry associations, and other business groups to make connections and inform employers about our services. Duluth Workforce Development also participates on the Driving Access to Wealth and

Networks (DAWN) advisory committee, to help connect to new and growing businesses – especially those led by Socially and Economically Disadvantaged individuals.

Employers also engage through their involvement on the Local Workforce Development Board, where at least 51% of membership is from private business. Board members provide oversight of workforce development activities, share information on targeted sectors or occupations, establish credibility and access to employer networks, and/or engage other employers in program activities. As previously mentioned, the Duluth workforce board hosts three industry-led sector strategy working groups focused on key industry sectors – healthcare, construction, and manufacturing. Through our partnerships with Perkins, Lake Superior College, and ISD709 Career Technical Education, we are looking for ways to streamline and coordinate employer engagement so that we are not all competing for attention from the same group of individuals.

The Duluth Workforce Development Board also engages employers to lead and/or participate in efforts to reduce disparities in employment. The Duluth and Northeast workforce boards sponsored the 2023 Workforce Solutions Series hosted by Northforce, four large forums over three years that addressed topics like demographic trends and strategies for recruiting, hiring, and retaining a diverse workforce. The Duluth board's Equity Committee updated its DEI Employer Action Guide in 2025, which offers tools to assist employers with diversity and inclusion in recruiting, hiring, onboarding, and retention. The committee also hosts the Employer Champions Initiative, a peer sharing network that meets through facilitated conversations on specific equity topics, and to connect employers who are committed to being equity champions.

**C.14. 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.
102(b)(4)(ii).**

The local workforce development system plays a key role in meeting the needs of business and there are multiple ways the local board can influence the workforce development system's effectiveness in this area.

The first step is to better understand what they are experiencing. To accomplish this, the Duluth Workforce Development Board partners with economic development and business organizations, including APEX, the Duluth Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Duluth, Northforce, and the City Planning and Economic Development Department to learn about pain points in recruiting, hiring, and retention. The board's industry-led sector strategy working groups also provide deep insight into workforce challenges. There are often common themes that emerge across business sizes and types, for

example: Difficulty finding applicants with the necessary qualifications, lack of diversity in the candidate pool, difficulty attracting qualified extra-regional candidates due to challenges finding housing, child care, and community connection, challenges managing a multi-generational workplace, and difficulty retaining diversity.

Once challenges are identified, the board helps create an aligned and coordinated approach that conveys the full strength of the system and increases its efficiency. The board plays a critical role in coordinating services and connecting partners to develop a comprehensive approach to business services. The end goal is to create single entry points for businesses, where they can connect with a broad range of services and resources. This requires all entities and staff responsible for business engagement to become familiar with the range of workforce services available to employers through CareerForce, and to have a point person they can bring in to assist with workforce strategy.

The board also works to ensure that local businesses clearly understand the benefits of engaging with the public workforce system. From posting employment opportunities on [CareerForce.MN.gov](https://www.careerforce.mn.gov), accessing current labor market information, utilizing training services, or getting assistance with hiring and recruitment, there are multiple ways the local workforce development system can support employers and their workers. Board members who are business representatives are the best advocates for what the workforce system has to offer, and play a key role in connecting their peers with workforce services.

The board also has a responsibility to track and introduce new and innovative strategies to meet employer workforce demand. For example, Registered Apprenticeship is an employer-driven model that combines on-the-job training with job-related instruction, which progressively increases an apprentice's skill level and wages. While most often associated with the skilled trades, there are currently more than 1,000 occupations – including careers in health care, information technology, transportation, and energy – in which apprenticeship is used to meet business needs for qualified workers.

Apprenticeship offers an industry-proven approach for preparing workers for careers while meeting employers' need for a highly-skilled workforce, and Duluth Workforce Development in partnership with JET are working to expand the number of available Registered Apprenticeships in this region.

C.15. Describe how the local area board will better coordinate programs and services with local and regional economic development providers.

As stated above, the Duluth Workforce Development Board works closely with regional economic development entities to coordinate services and facilitate connection

between businesses and the workforce system. Workforce is increasingly the top issue for business attraction and expansion. Duluth Workforce Development staff and the DEED Workforce Strategy Consultant often get called in by economic development partners to discuss workforce resources and strategies.

Specifically, the local board works collaboratively with regional economic development providers by:

1. Engaging economic development providers on the local board and/or committees;
2. Involving economic development entities in development of career pathways and sector specific initiatives;
3. Serving on economic development advisory boards and committees, including those of Northforce, Driving Access to Wealth & Networks (DAWN), and the Northland Foundation;
4. Actively participating in regional economic development planning, including the City of Duluth Comprehensive Plan and the Arrowhead Regional Development Corporation's strategic plan.

At the local level, Duluth Workforce Development has increased engagement and coordination with the City's Economic Development team. Staff from both departments meet monthly to facilitate communication and coordination, and are working to develop a 'no wrong door' approach for employers who reach out with a variety of business support needs. This collaboration comes to life in a number of ways:

- Conducting Business Retention and Expansion visits together;
- Engaging the Duluth Economic Development Authority and the 1200 Fund to support key workforce-related initiatives, such as child care Workforce Solutions grants and the Jump Into Child Care training program;
- Ensuring CDBG grants supporting job training projects align with Duluth Workforce Development Board goals and strategic priorities;
- Collaborating on talent attraction efforts, to grow Duluth's workforce;
- Integrating Community Benefits into housing and commercial development projects, to ensure they support construction workforce goals.

- C.16. 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.).**

Our local area's Dislocated Worker program uses a variety of methods to connect with laid-off workers. Since RESEA sessions now take place over the phone, we no longer have the opportunity to make a direct connection with Unemployment Insurance recipients. Those who indicate an interest in additional assistance during the RESEA call are referred to Job Service for a one-on-one appointment conducted by phone or in person. If the individual indicates during that appointment an interest in pursuing training, they are referred to the Dislocated Worker program for further screening and potential enrollment.

Duluth Workforce Development also connects with Unemployment Insurance applicants who visit the Career Lab for assistance submitting their application, as well as through job fairs and referrals from college financial aid offices. Dislocated Worker counselors also reach out directly to businesses experiencing layoffs of less than 50 people, to promote Dislocated Worker services. Services are also marketed via social and earned media coverage.

CareerForce.MN.gov also provides a connection to CareerForce services through Job Service (Wagner-Peyser) staff who periodically review the job bank for new registrations and connect with those individuals to provide information about available services. Additionally, Job Service staff will search the database for qualified job seekers to match relevant business job openings. Online resume review assistance is available to anyone, and is specifically offered to all UI recipients to help them build employer-friendly, searchable content in CareerForce.MN.gov.

We also continue to promote Incumbent Worker Training, and have experienced high demand this past year as employers have become champions of this important program. We partner with JET to pool our resources, allowing more employers to be served through IWT across the region. Over the past few years, we have directed IWT funds toward high-need sectors, including both manufacturing and child care. As our region continues to face a workforce shortage, we will promote IWT as a solution to retain and upskill an existing workforce to meet employers' evolving needs.

C.17. 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.

The Duluth Workforce Development Board has been, and will continue to be, actively engaged in local and regional economic development activities. To begin, key economic development entities are members of the workforce board – APEX, Duluth LISC, and the University of Minnesota Center for Business and Economic Development. Additionally,

the Director of Duluth Workforce Development serves on the advisory board for Northforce, and the Board of Trustees of the Northland Foundation, and participates in the Child Care Task Force. These connections help ensure that workforce remains a key aspect of economic development across the city and region.

The City of Duluth made Workforce Development its own department in 2018, with a Director at the head. The Director serves as part of the Mayor's leadership team, and represents the needs of both employers and workers in all conversations. Workforce development features heavily in the economic development section of the City's Comprehensive Plan, and there is active collaboration between the Workforce and Economic Development departments on a wide variety of issues. Additionally, the Workforce Development Department holds responsibility for implementing the City's community benefits program, which attaches workforce goals to City-supported construction projects. This is a powerful tool to help build career pathways into construction for women, people of color, and disadvantaged workers.

Duluth Workforce Development is increasingly engaged in efforts to support entrepreneurship. For some time we have enrolled a growing number of participants each year in CLIMB, a component of the state Dislocated Worker program that supports laid-off workers in starting their own business. Demand for this program continues to increase, necessitating stronger connections with the Northland Small Business Development Center and other entrepreneurship resources. Through YES Duluth, our partnership with Family Freedom Center helps develop young entrepreneurs, some of whom are co-enrolled in our youth program.

Dislocated Worker Supports

C.18. How does the local workforce development area ensure staff comply with the policies and procedures for Rapid Response as communicated on DEED's website?

Local staff have many years of experience working closely with Rapid Response and continue to participate in trainings and updates as available to ensure compliance with policies and procedures. The Partner Express email is a valuable resource for counselors to stay up-to-date as well.

- **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)?**

As soon as we are notified of or we hear about a mass layoff event of any size occurring in Duluth we notify the Rapid Response team through their established process. If it is after hours we notify them first thing the following day.

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

Dislocated Worker Counselors regularly deliver information on-site or virtually about the dislocated worker program and available CareerForce services. This is done in partnership with the Rapid Response team in the case of a large layoff, or independently after Rapid Response has determined the layoff does not meet the 50-person threshold. Duluth Workforce Development will also assist in making contact with the employer if Rapid Response is unable, including visiting the work site in person. Dislocated Worker counselors are often in contact with Rapid Response staff to coordinate information sessions, and provide a local contact to affected employers and employees.

C.19. How does the local workforce development area inform the state Trade Act staff of companies that are potentially TAA certifiable?

As TAA has sunset, the state is no longer certifying companies as TAA eligible.

- **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?**

DWD staff continue to coordinate with remaining state TAA staff regarding remaining TAA-eligible individuals to connect them to available benefits and ensure eligibility, activities, and outcomes are properly documented.

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

Yes X

C.20. The local workforce development area has developed and implemented local Supportive Service policies that are consistently applied for all participants.

Yes X

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

Counselors are trained in our local and state policies to ensure understanding. Counselors use our internal Voucher System to track and issue support services, a budget spreadsheet to track obligations and use of support services, and documentation in the Workforce One support services log for transparency with partner agencies and DEED. Our voucher system provides the framework for issuing supportive services in categories allowed under our local and state policies. File review and monitoring ensure adherence to policy.

Services to Military Service Members and Spouses

- C.21. Are all WIOA-funded partners complying with the guidance provided in [TEGL 10-09](#) regarding Priority of Service for Veterans and Eligible Spouses?**

Yes ☒ X

- C.22. How do you identify current or former Military Service Members coming into your CareerForce Center?**

Staff at the CareerForce reception desk and in the Career Lab are trained to ask customers whether they have served in the military. If the answer is yes, staff refer to on site signage and direct them to fill out the veteran's questionnaire to draw out information regarding military service. That, in addition to signage posted in visible places throughout our public spaces, helps us to determine their status.

- C.23. How do you inform current or former Military Service Members coming into your CareerForce Center about "Veteran Priority of Service?"**

Veterans and their spouses have priority of service in every CareerForce office. Signage is visible at points throughout our public spaces. We thank them for their service and tell them verbally that Veterans and their spouses have priority of service. We coach them to register on CareerForce.MN.gov and check the box that indicates they are a veteran. This simple detail assigns them special status on CareerForce.MN.gov. When they enter their resume on CareerForce.MN.gov and make it viewable to employers, their resume will come up first when an employer searches for skills that match their resume and will be flanked by an American Flag symbol indicating to the employer that they served our country and are a priority for hire.

- C.24. If your CareerForce Center has a presence on the Internet (outside of your local DEED CareerForce Center site) how do you promote Public Law 107-288, "Veterans Priority of Service" to veterans on that website?**

Duluth Workforce Development maintains a page on the City of Duluth website, as well as a presence on social media through Facebook and Instagram. A Veterans Priority of Service statement is included on the front page of the website, and noted on both social media pages.

- C.25. How do you identify current or former Military Service Members with "significant barriers to employment?"**

We request that that customers who indicate that they are current or former Military Service Members answer the Veterans Service questionnaire, which is then reviewed by staff to see who can best serve them to meet their needs. When veterans answer "yes"

to one of the questions, then they are deemed as having a Significant Barrier to Employment and eligible for DVOP referral and services. We rely on self-disclosure for customers to answer the questions honestly but recognize that until we have built rapport, they may not feel comfortable doing so. We build relationships through customer service and eventually, they may disclose things that were not brought to light initially.

C.26. 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?

If they qualify for services with the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist, we immediately give or scan the questionnaire to the DVOP who contacts the Veteran for services. DVOPS do outreach services and every office has a DVOP assigned. We also make sure to meet any immediate needs through one of our CareerForce staff. We are all able to guide them with information, services and resources to reach their employment goals, and immediate assistance is always a priority.

C.27. How are DVOP and/or Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) staff integrated into the overall service delivery strategy in your CareerForce Centers?

DVOP and LVER staff are an integral part of our team, and participate in meetings and services in the office. LVERs are the direct contact with employers in the region to help with Veterans job placement and job referral services. The DVOPs provide intensive case management services and often refer the customer to CareerForce partners for appropriate services based on their individual needs such as WIOA Adult or Dislocated Worker programs for a training plan or VRS for services to accommodate a disability. LVERs and DVOP's are invited to all CareerForce staff meetings, and to present information to our staff when they have programmatic or information to share. The LVER also participates in the Employer Navigators to share insight on employer engagement with other employer-focused staff.

C.28. What is your strategy to ensure that job-ready job seekers enrolled in your programs (including non-program universal customers) are registering in CareerForce.MN.gov and are making their resumes viewable to employers?

Our strategy to ensure that job ready job seekers are registering on CareerForce.MN.gov and making their resume's viewable is to explain and demonstrate the benefits of the system and encourage them to use this tool to maximize their job search success. All CareerForce customers utilizing the Career Lab and all workshop attendees are given a brief orientation which includes information about our state's premier labor exchange system that is free for both employers and job seekers. We encourage job seekers to create a complete profile with up to 5 targeted resumes and to make them viewable for

employers. All Unemployment Insurance recipients are asked to create their CareerForce account with a viewable resume. Wagner-Peyser staff do outreach to follow up with UI recipients and help them with this task if it is not completed. We also encourage employers to post their job openings and to create their account on CareerForce.MN.gov to be able to search the database for job seekers who have the targeted skills they are looking for. Employers can then reach out to the job seekers directly for recruitment purposes.

C.29. Are all WIOA-funded partners complying with the guidance provided in [TEGL 11-11, Change 2](#) regarding Selective Service?

Yes X

SECTION D: ASSURANCES AND CERTIFICATIONS

Training and Employment Guidance and State Law Compliance

Conflict of Interest, Integrity, Fraud, and Abuse:

Indicate below that the local area board affirms and assures that it makes all decisions in accordance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations, including the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Uniform Guidance at [2 CFR 200](#), and [Minnesota OGM 08-01](#). The local workforce development board assures that its conflict-of-interest policies comply with these requirements and that the board upholds transparency, ethical conduct, and integrity in all governance and decision-making processes.

The local area board further assures that it maintains policies and procedures for preventing, detecting, and reporting fraud and abuse, consistent with federal requirements under Training and Employment Guidance Letter [No. 15-23](#) and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) [Fraud Prevention and Abuse policy](#). The board confirms that it will immediately contact DEED, the US Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, and the Office of Inspector General if potential fraud or abuse issues arise and will follow all required reporting, documentation, and corrective-action procedures.

Additionally, the local area board confirms awareness of:

A) the applicable statutes related to government records;

B) requirement to retain documentation for six years.

By providing the indication below, the local area board certifies that its policies and practices are consistent with all relevant federal and state requirements for conflict of interest, integrity, fraud and abuse prevention, documentation, and ethical governance.

Yes X

Handling and Protection of Personally Identifiable Information: The local workforce development area is complying with the guidance provided in [TEGL 39-11](#).

Yes X

Uniform Guidance: The local workforce development area is aware of [TEGL 15-14](#) regarding Uniform Guidance.

Yes X

Assurances

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

As a condition to the award of financial assistance from the Department of Labor under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and any other DEED/Workforce Development Employment and Training funds, the grant applicant assures that it will comply fully with the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions and other assurances of the following laws:

- **Accessibility** - [Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended](#) - Requires that federally funded program providers make their electronic information and technology accessible to people with disabilities;
- **Audits** – [2 CFR 200.501](#) and [Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996](#) - organization-wide or program-specific audits shall be performed;
- **Buy American**- Buy American Act – award may not be expended unless the funds comply with [USC 41, Section 8301-8303](#);
- **Data Sharing** – [MN Access to Government Data](#), [MN Duties of Responsible Authority](#); [MN Access to Information](#); [MN Administrative Rules Data Practices](#); [DEED Policy – Data Practices](#);
- **Disability** - that there will be compliance with the [Architectural Barriers Act of 1968](#), [Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#), as amended, and the [Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990](#);
- **Drug-Free Workplace** – [Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988](#) – requires all organizations to maintain a drug-free workplace;
- **Equal Opportunity** - [Section 188 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\)](#) - [Requires applying nondiscrimination provisions in the administration of programs and activities for all eligible individuals, including individuals with disabilities](#);

- **Equal Opportunity** - [Section 188 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 \(WIA\)](#) - Requires applying nondiscrimination provisions in the administration of programs and activities for all eligible individuals, including individuals with disabilities;
- **Equal Opportunity** - [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended](#) – Prohibits discrimination on the bases of race, color, and national origin under any program receiving federal financial assistance;
- **Equal Opportunity** - [Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended](#) - Prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin in employment;
- **Equal Opportunity**- [Title II of the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008](#) - Prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of genetic information;
- **Equal Opportunity** - [Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 - Prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national original, age disability or political affiliation or beliefs in any program funded in part with Senior Community Services Employment Program funds;](#)
- **Equal Opportunity** - [Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended](#) - Requires applying nondiscrimination provisions, based on sex, in educational programs;
- **Equal Opportunity** - Title I (Employment) Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) - Prohibits state and local governments, from discriminating against qualified individuals with disabilities in job application procedures, hiring, firing, advancement, compensation, job training, and other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment;
- **Equal Opportunity** - [Title II \(State and Local Governments\) Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) - Prohibits qualified individuals with disabilities from discrimination in services, programs, and activities;
- **Equal Opportunity** - [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended](#) - Prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities;
- **Equal Opportunity** - [Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended](#) - Prohibits discrimination on the basis of age;
- **Equal Opportunity** - [Title 29 CFR Part 31](#) Nondiscrimination in federally-assisted programs of the Department of Labor, effectuation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964;
- **Equal Opportunity** - [Title 29 CFR Part 32](#) Nondiscrimination on the basis of disability in programs and activities receiving or benefiting from federal assistance;
- **Equal Opportunity** - [Title 29 CFR Part 33](#) Enforcement of nondiscrimination on the basis of disability in programs or activities conducted by the Department of Labor;

- **Equal Opportunity** - [Title 29 CFR Part 35](#) Nondiscrimination on the basis of age in programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance from the Department of Labor;
- **Equal Opportunity** - [Title 29 CFR Part 37](#) Implementation of the Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity provisions of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998;
- **Equal Opportunity** - [Title 29 CFR Part 38 Implementation of the Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#);
- **Equal Opportunity** - [Executive Order 13160](#) Nondiscrimination on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, disability, religion, age, sexual orientation, and status as a parent in federally conducted education and training Programs;
- **Equal Opportunity**- [Executive Order 13279](#) - Nondiscrimination against grant seeking organizations on the basis of religion in the administration or distribution of federal financial assistance under social service programs, including grants, contracts, and loans;
- **Equal Opportunity** - The Minnesota Human Rights Act of 1973, Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 363A - Prohibits discrimination in employment and providing public services on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, natural origin, sex, marital status (employment only), disability, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, familial status (employment only), citizenship, or age (employment only), and local human rights commission activity (employment only);
- **Equal Opportunity**- that collection and maintenance of data necessary to show compliance with the nondiscrimination provisions of WIA and [WIOA Section 188](#), as provided in the regulations implementing that section, will be completed;
- **Equipment** – [2 CFR 200. 313](#), [200.439](#) – must receive prior approval for the purchase of any equipment with a per unit acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more, and a useful life of more than one year;
- **Fire Safety** – [15 USC 2225a](#) – ensure that all space for conferences, meetings, conventions or training seminars funded in whole or in part complies with the protection and control guidelines of the Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act ([Public Law 101-391](#));
- **Fraud/Abuse** - that the provider has policies on fraud and abuse and will contact DEED for potential fraud and abuse issues; [20 CFR 667.630](#); [DEED Policy – Fraud Prevention and Abuse](#);
- **Health Benefits** – [Public Law 113-235, Division G, Sections 506 and 507](#) – ensure use of funds for health benefits coverage complies with the [Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015](#);
- **Insurance** - that insurance coverage be provided for injuries suffered by participants in work-related activities where Minnesota's workers' compensation law is not applicable as required under Regulations [20 CFR 667.274](#);

- **Insurance** – [Flood Disaster Protection Act of 1973](#) – provides that no Federal financial assistance to acquire, modernize or construct property may be provided in identified flood-prone communities in the United States, unless the community participates in the National Flood Insurance Program and flood insurance is purchased within 1 year of the identification;
- **Personally Identifiable Information (PII)** – [Training and Guidance Letter 39-11](#) – must recognize and safeguard PII except where disclosure is allowed by prior written approval of the Grant Officer or by court order;
- **Procurement** – Uniform Administrative Requirements – [2 CFR 200-317-36](#) – all procurement transactions to be conducted in a manner to provide, to the maximum extent practical, open and free competition;
- **Publicity** – no funds shall be used for publicity or propaganda purposes, preparation or distribution or use of any kit, pamphlet, booklet, publication, radio, television or film presentation designed to support or defeat legislation pending before the Congress or any state/local legislature or legislative body, except in presentation to the Congress or any state/local legislature itself, or designed to support or defeat any proposed or pending regulation, administrative action, or order issued by the executive branch of any state or local government. Nor shall grant funds be used to pay the salary or expenses of any recipient or agent acting for such recipient, related to any activity designed to influence the enactment of legislation, appropriations regulation, administrative action, or Executive Order proposed or pending before the Congress, or any state government, state legislature or local legislature body other than for normal and recognized executive-legislative relationships or participation by an agency or officer of a state, local or tribal government in policymaking and administrative processes within the executive branch of that government;
- **Salary/Bonus** – [Public Law 113-235, Division G, Title I, Section 105](#) – none of the funds appropriated under the heading “Employment and Training” shall be used by a recipient or sub-recipient of such funds to pay the salary and bonuses of an individual, either as direct costs or indirect costs, at a rate in excess of [Executive Level II](#). Further clarification can be found in [TEGL 5-06](#);
- **Seat Belts** - [Executive Order 13043](#) – Increasing Seat Belt Use in the United States;
- **Text Messaging** – [Executive Order 13513](#) – encouraged to adopt and enforce policies that ban text messaging while driving company-owned or –rented vehicles or GOV or while driving POV when on official Government business or when performing any work for or on behalf of the Government;
- **Trafficking of Persons** – [2 CFR 180](#) – OMB Guidelines to Agencies on Government wide Debarment and Suspension – may not engage in severe forms of trafficking, procure a commercial sex act or use forced labor in the performance;

- **Veteran Priority of Service** - [Public Law 107-288: Jobs for Veterans Act](#) - Priority of service for veterans (including veterans, eligible spouses, widows and widowers of service members) in qualified job training programs;
- **Veterans** - [Public Law 112-56: Vow to Hire Heroes Act of 2011](#) - Establishes guidelines for service providers who are providing employment, training, academic or rehabilitation services for military veterans;
- **Veterans** - that veterans will be afforded employment and training activities authorized in WIA and WIOA Section 134, and the activities authorized in Chapters 41 and 42 of Title 38 US code, and in compliance with the veterans' priority established in the Jobs for Veterans Act. ([38 USC 4215](#)), U.S. Department of Labor, [Training and Employment Guidance Letter 5-03](#) and Minnesota's Executive Order 06-02;
- **Voter Registration** - that the required voter registration procedures described in [Minnesota Statutes 201.162](#) are enacted without the use of federal funds;
- **Voter Registration** – [52 USC 20501 – 20511](#) – National Voter Registration Act of 1993.

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 boards 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 the respective contract/master agreement and all assurances will be followed;
- H. that it will ensure that no funds covered under the contract/master agreement are used to assist, promote, or deter union organizing;
- I. that this plan was developed in consultation with the local area board;
- J. that it acknowledges the specific performance standards for each of its programs and will strive to meet them;
- K. 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;
- L. that local area board and staff are aware of local WorkForce Center services, and are working with and referring to the WorkForce Center services as appropriate;
- M. that all staff are provided the opportunity to participate in appropriate staff training;
- N. 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;
- O. that sponsored (in whole or in part) conferences are charged to the grantee as appropriate and allowable; and
- P. 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.
- Q. that the local area board and its sub-grantees must also adhere to the same certifications and assurances that DEED must assure.

WIOA Guidance

This list of guidance is non-exhaustive and applies only to ETA programs. ETA has published a number of documents to guide the operationalization of WIOA, with the most recent and popular listed below. Find the full library of guidance [here](#).

- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 07-25](#)
 - *Conveys to states the Administration's priorities, modification requirements, submission process, and deadline for the required two-year modification of the WIOA Unified and Combined State Plans (State Plans) for PY 2026 and 2027, consistent with WIOA Sections 102 and 103.*
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 05-25](#)
 - *Encourages state and local workforce development boards to maximize innovation and flexibility within WIOA formula-funded programs — including through the use of waivers — to align service delivery with the Administration's strategic priorities under Executive Order 14278.*
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 04-23](#)
 - *Conveys to states the Administration's priorities, State Plan requirements, submission process, and deadline for WIOA Unified and Combined State Plans (State Plans) for PY 2024 through 2027, consistent with WIOA Sections 102 and 103.*
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 05-23](#)
 - *Provides information to the public workforce system and other entities that receive federal financial assistance under Title I of WIOA, as well as education and training programs or activities receiving DOL financial assistance, regarding the prohibition on discrimination based on actual or perceived religion, shared ancestry, or ethnic characteristics.*
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 09-22](#)
 - *Guidance and planning information to states, local workforce areas, and other recipients of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I youth formula funds on the activities associated with the implementation of WIOA.*
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 07-22](#)
 - *Increasing Employer and Workforce System Customer Access to Good Jobs.*
- [Training and Employment Notice \(TEN\) 16-22](#)

- *The Employment and Training Administration is Implementing Grant Solutions for Grant Award Processing and the Payment Management System for Financial Reporting.*
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 22-20](#)
 - *Program Year (PY) 2021 Funding Allotments and Instructions for the Indian and Native American (INA) Programs.*
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 23-20](#)
 - *Program Year (PY) 2021 Planning Guidance for National Farmworker Jobs Program Career Services and Training Grantees and Housing Grantees.*
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 07-20](#)
 - *Effective Implementation of Priority of Service Provisions for Most in Need Individuals in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult Program.*
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 08-19](#)
 - *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I Training Provider Eligibility and State List of Eligible Training Providers (ETPs) and Programs.*
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 19-16](#)
 - *Guidance on Services provided through the Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service (ES), as amended by title III of WIOA, and for Implementation of the WIOA Final Rules.*
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 21-16](#)
 - *Third Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I Youth Formula Program Guidance.*

SIGNATURE PAGE

Local Workforce Development
Area Name

LWDA 4: City of Duluth

Local Area Board Name

Duluth Workforce Development Board

Name and Contact Information for the Local Area Board Chair:

Name

Ian Vincent

Title

Director of Contract Services & Business Development

Organization

True North Goodwill

Address 1

700 Garfield Ave

Address 2

City, State, ZIP Code

Duluth, MN 55802

Phone

218-722-6351

E-mail

ivincent@truenorthgoodwill.org

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

Name

Roger J. Reinert

Title

Mayor

Organization

City of Duluth

Address 1

411 W 1st Street

Address 2

City, State, ZIP Code

Duluth, MN 55802

Phone	218-730-5000
E-mail	rreinert@duluthmn.gov

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 Ian Vincent

Name Roger J. Reinert

Title Local Area Board Chair

Title Mayor - LEO

Signature

Signature

Date

Date

Attachment A

REGIONAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Regional Workforce

Development Area

Region 2 – Northeast Minnesota

Local Workforce Development

Area

LWDA 4-Duluth

Name	Title/Role	Organization	LWDA
Angie Frank	Manager	Duluth Adult Education	4
Carol Turner	Operations Manager	Duluth Workforce Development	4
Carson Gorecki	Labor Market Analyst	DEED	3&4
Susie Gilbertson	Vice Chair	Duluth Workforce Development Board	4
Elena Foshay	Director	Duluth Workforce Development	4
Emily Edison	Healthcare Working Group Chair	Duluth Workforce Development Board	4
Jan Francisco	Director of Employment and Training	AEOA	3
Vacant	Job Service Supervisor	DEED	3&4
Kari Paulsen	Operations Director	JET	3
Ian Vincent	Chair	Duluth Workforce Development Board	4
Kristy Dobson	Assistant Director of Employment and Training	AEOA	3
Marie Domiano	Executive Director	JET	3
Monica Haynes	Secretary, Governance Committee Chair	Duluth Workforce Development Board	4
Randa Lundmark	Area Manager	Vocational Rehabilitation Services	3
Shayla Drake	Workforce Strategy Consultant	DEED	3&4
Andrea Chirhart	Area Manager	Vocational Rehabilitation Services	4
Travis Leiviska	County Commissioner – Aitkin; Chair	Local Elected Official Board	3
Wade LeBlanc	WDB Chair	Northeast Workforce Development Board	3

Attachment B

LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREA CONTACTS

ROLE	Contact Name	Phone	Email	Reports to (name only)
Rapid Response Liaison for Mass Layoffs	Betsy Hill Alex Arend	218-730-5228 218-730-5397	bhill@duluthmn.gov aarend@duluthmn.gov	Elena Foshay
Equal Opportunity Officer	Marsha Lue	218-730-5299	mlue@duluthmn.gov	City Administrator Karla Culhane
Program Complaint Officer	Elena Foshay	218-730-5241	efoshay@duluthmn.gov	City Administrator Karla Culhane
Records Management/Records Retention Coordinator	Carol Turner	218-730-5244	cturner@duluthmn.gov	Elena Foshay
ADA Coordinator	Carol Turner	218-730-5244	cturner@duluthmn.gov	Elena Foshay
Data Practices Coordinator	Carol Turner	218-730-5244	cturner@duluthmn.gov	Elena Foshay
Language Access Coordinator	Vacant	218-302-8405		

CareerForce Center in Duluth

ROLE	Contact Name	Phone	Email	Reports to (name only)
Site Representative	Carol Turner	218-730-5244	cturner@duluthmn.gov	Elena Foshay
Job Service Manager	Vacant	218-302-8405		
Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manager	Andrea Chirhart	320-249-1136	andrea.chirhart@state.mn.us	Jeri Werner
State Services for the Blind Manager	Sara Kreiling		Sara.L.Kreiling@state.mn.us	Natasha Jerde
Local Workforce Development Area Director	Elena Foshay	218-730-5241	efoshay@duluthmn.gov	City Administrator Karla Culhane
Adult Basic Education (ABE)	Angie Frank	218-336-8725	angie.frank@isd709.org	Anthony Bonds
Carl Perkins Post-Secondary Manager	Jill Murray	218-733-5970	jill.murray@lsc.edu	Linda Kingston
Adult	Betsy Hill	218-730-5228	bhill@duluthmn.gov	Elena Foshay
Dislocated Worker	Alex Arend	218-730-5397	aarend@duluthmn.gov	Elena Foshay
Youth	Hannah Grunzke	218-391-5072	hgrunzke@duluthmn.gov	Elena Foshay

Attachment C

**Regional Workforce
Development Area**

Region 2 – Northeast Minnesota

**Local Workforce
Development Area**

LWDA 4 - Duluth

MEMBER	POSITION/ORGANIZATION	TERM ENDS
<i>Representatives Of Business in Local Workforce Development Area:</i>		
Andrea Chartier	Workforce Strategist, Essentia Health	10/31/2028
Nicole Christenson	HR Manager, Aspirus St. Luke's Hospital	10/31/2029
Kayla Dietzmann	Director of HR and Marketing, SCS Interiors	10/31/2027
Claire Farmer-Lies	Marketing & Communications Specialist, Residential Services Inc.	10/31/2028
Jen Farrell	Employee Services Manager, Northland Constructors	10/31/2029
Brianna Gunderson	General Manager, Holiday Inn & Suites	10/31/2028
Carolyn Haney-Sears	Owner, Duluth Core Learning	10/31/2028
Andy Johnson	District Engineer, Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT)	10/31/2029
Kathy Koch	Human Resources Manager, Allete	10/31/2029
Vance Okstad	Director of Talent Acquisition, Cirrus	10/31/2029
Devyn Uotinen	National Bank of Commerce	10/31/2029
Ian Vincent	Director of Contract Services & Business Development	10/31/2027
Faith Wickenhauser	HR Consultant, Terch & Associates	10/31/2029
<i>Labor & Community-Based Organizations:</i>		
Jack Carlson	President, Duluth Building & Construction Trades	10/31/2028

Corey Cusick	Community Services Director, AFL-CIO/United Way	10/31/2027
Classie Dudley	Executive Director, Community Action Duluth	10/31/2027
Jennifer Cady	Veteran Representative	10/31/2029
<i>Education & Training:</i>		
Carrie Taylor Kemp	Director of Workforce Development and CECT	10/31/2027
Brian Vieths	CTE Coordinator, ISD709	10/31/2029
Angie Frank	Manager, Duluth Adult Education	10/31/2024
Susan Hundman	Employer Engagement Assistant Director, University of Minnesota - Duluth	10/31/2028
<i>Economic Development:</i>		
Monica Haynes	Director, UMD Bureau of Business and Economic Research	10/31/2029
<i>Government:</i>		
Shayla Drake	Workforce Strategy Consultant, MN DEED	n/a
Carson Gorecki	Labor Market Analyst, MN DEED	n/a
Vacant	Job Service (Wagner-Peyser), MN DEED	10/31/2027
Andrea Chirhart	Vocational Rehabilitation Services, MN DEED	10/31/2029
Amanda Yates	Assistant Director for Economic Services & Supports, St. Louis County	10/31/2028
<i>Other:</i>		
Vacant	Youth Board Member	12/31/2027

CONTACT INFORMATION

NAME	ADDRESS/PHONE/EMAIL
Chair Ian Vincent	True North Goodwill 700 Garfield Ave, Duluth MN 55802 ivincent@truenorthgoodwill.org 218-722-6351
Vice Chair Susie Gilbertson	maurices 425 W Superior St., Duluth MN 55802 sgilbertson1@maurices.com 218-726-7895
Secretary Monica Haynes	UMD Bureau of Business and Economic Research 1318 Kirby Dr, LSBE 330F, Duluth, MN 55812 mrhaynes@d.umn.edu 218-726-7895

Attachment D

LOCAL AREA BOARD SUBCOMMITTEE LIST

Regional Workforce Development Area	Region 2 – Northeast Minnesota
Local Workforce Development Area	LWDA 4 – Duluth

Committee Name	Objective/Purpose
Executive Committee	The work of the executive committee revolves around the following key areas: • Set overall direction of the Board’s work, ensuring alignment with local and regional plans; • Provide input on agendas for Board meetings; • Coordinate development of strategic planning process and monitor progress toward goals; • Handle urgent issues and act on behalf of the Board between meetings as needed; • Act as liaison to the Workforce Director; • Review and make final recommendation for new members to the Mayor.
Governance Committee	The governance committee oversees Board structure and functioning, ensuring alignment with WIOA requirements by: • Ensuring Board member roster is in compliance with bylaws, recruiting new members as needed; • Developing and administering policies and governing documents (e.g. bylaws, conflict of interest policy, board calendar, member roster, etc.); • Maintaining and updating Board documents and files, including member orientation manual and Dropbox archive; • Tracking member attendance and engagement to ensure an active Board;

	• Conducting board evaluation and assessment, and making recommendations to Executive Committee regarding necessary trainings and facilitation. • Providing oversight, guidance, and support to committees, including designation of committee chair based on member recommendation.
Healthcare Working Group	The Healthcare Working Group convenes healthcare industry employers, higher education institutions, and community based organizations to develop and lead sector-based initiatives in alignment with both local and regional strategic workforce plans. This is accomplished by: • Working to create a bridge between educational institutions and employers by articulating career pathways and stackable credentials; • Supporting initiatives which increase the labor supply and equitable access for high demand occupations; • Serving as a hub for communication and coordination of career pathways efforts throughout the community; • Identifying gaps and barriers in career pathways and develop strategies to address and resolve.
Construction Working Group	The Construction Working Group engages employers, union representatives, education entities, and workforce development organizations to: • Help connect people to careers in the construction trades • Ensure our region is prepared for expected demand for construction workers • Engage in group problem solving to address persistent challenges with hiring and retention • Create programs to help disadvantaged adults access jobs in construction • Work with unions and contractors to serve as leaders and role models in creating an inclusive workplace
Manufacturing Working Group	The Manufacturing Working Group leads and coordinates sector strategy initiatives to: • Raise visibility of and exposure to career pathways in manufacturing in Northeast Minnesota • Grow the pipeline of students and jobseekers pursuing careers in manufacturing • Help manufacturing employers improve worker retention

	• Develop and strengthen training programs to ensure alignment with workforce needs
Emerging Workforce Committee (Youth Committee)	The Emerging Workforce committee works to support eligible youth in accessing education and employment opportunities by: • Recommending policy direction to the Local Board for the design, development, and implementation of programs that benefit all eligible youth; • Design ways to better coordinate serviced and leverage resources among schools, programs, and community organizations that serve youth; • Provide ongoing local and regional leadership in identifying and implementing best practices and continuous quality improvement in services provided to youth in the community; • Advise and support planning and operations of YES Duluth services, assisting with resolution of any issues that may arise.
Equity Committee	The equity committee's purpose is to drive equitable workforce outcomes by: • Engaging Board members, workforce staff, job seekers and community partners in embracing and attracting diversity; • Addressing opportunity gaps affecting underrepresented populations in the Duluth workforce; • Introducing new perspectives and developing better solutions by ensuring People of Color and workforce clients are represented on the Board and committees; • Working to address and overcome implicit bias among workforce staff, Board members, and employers.

Attachment E

LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREA SUB-GRANTEE LIST

**Regional Workforce
Development Area**

Region 2 – Northeast Minnesota

**Local Workforce
Development Area**

LWDA 4 - Duluth

Name of Sub-Grantee	Services Provided	Funding Source	Sub-Grantee located in which CFC?	If not in CFC, provide Address, City, State, ZIP Code
True North Goodwill	Participant recruitment, case management, job placement, program coordination	Pathways to Prosperity	N/A	700 Garfield Ave, Duluth 55802
Duluth Adult Education	Math and reading assessments, contextualized education	Pathways to Prosperity	N/A	325 W 2st St, 3 rd Floor Duluth 55802
Lake Superior College	Training services	Pathways to Prosperity	N/A	2101 Trinity Rd, Duluth 55806
Fond du Lac Tribal and Technical College	Training services	Pathways to Prosperity	N/A	2101 14 th St, Cloquet 55720

Attachment F

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

**Regional Workforce
Development Area**

Region 2 – Northeast Minnesota

**Local Workforce
Development Area**

LWDA 4 - Duluth

Name and Location (City)	Program Service Delivered
Lake Superior College, Duluth	WIOA Adult, WIOA Youth, WIOA and State Dislocated Worker, Pathways to Prosperity
Duluth Adult Education, Duluth	Adult Basic Education
Virtual	RESEA/Unemployment Insurance
Denfeld and East High Schools, Duluth	WIOA Youth, Minnesota Youth Program, Youth at Work
Life House	WIOA Youth, Minnesota Youth Program, Youth at Work

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.

As detailed in Region 2 Section C, there are five key industries in our region, the first four of which have been identified as targeted industries for regional workforce development activities:

1. Healthcare & Social Assistance
2. Construction
3. Manufacturing
4. Educational Services
5. Leisure & Hospitality

As detailed in LWDA 4 – Duluth Section A, the Duluth Workforce Development Board identifies 5 key industries in our local area:

1. Healthcare
2. Construction
3. Manufacturing
4. Business & Professional Services
5. Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities