



2024-2027 Strategic Workforce Plan

2026 Update

Region 2: Northeast Minnesota

Local Workforce Development Area 4: Duluth



Background

As required by the Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA), the [Governor's Workforce Development Board](#) updates the [state strategic plan](#) every four years. This plan sets goals and strategies to guide investments and implementation of Minnesota's workforce system.

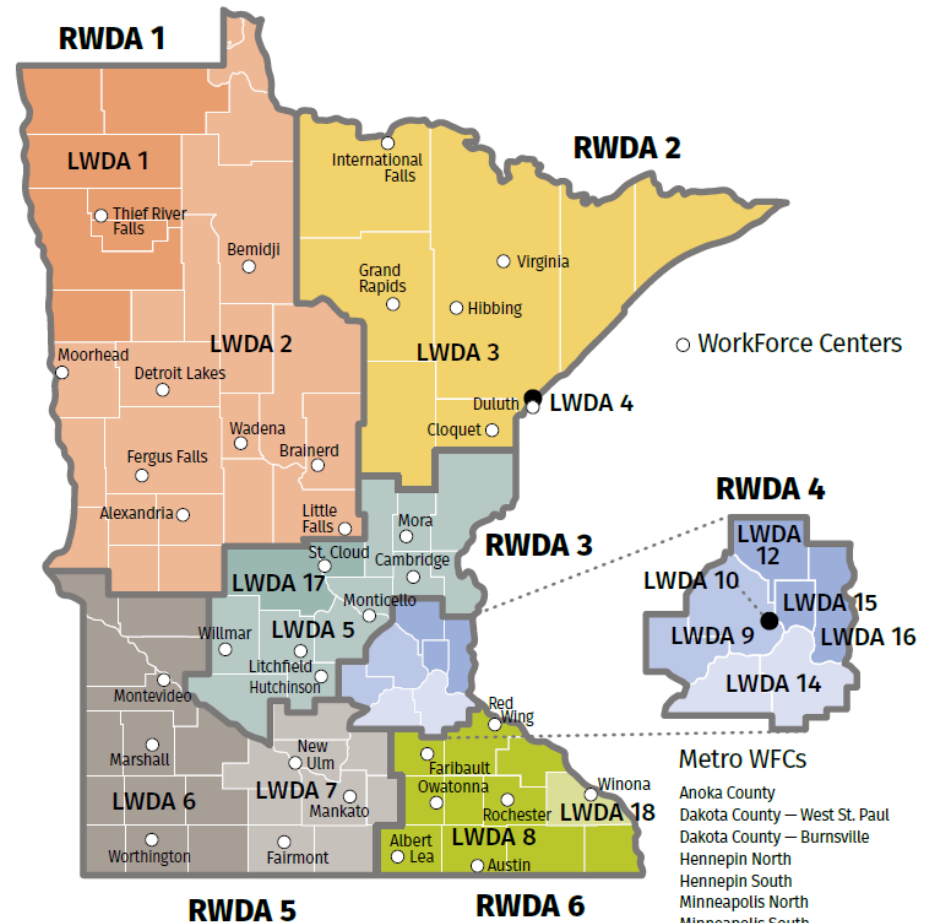
Local Workforce Development Boards then develop their own local and regional strategic plans in alignment with the state plan. The plan uses labor market data and stakeholder engagement to set a unified vision, goals, and workforce strategies for the local area.

Minnesota Workforce System Map

City of Duluth is Local Workforce Development Area (**LWDA**) 4

Northeast Minnesota (JET) outside Duluth is **LWDA 3**

Together, we form **Region 2**



Minnesota Workforce System Services

Virtual Services:

- Assessment of skills, strengths, interests
- Labor Market Information
- Career exploration
- Skill-building workshops

In-Person Services:

- On-on-one appointments with a job counselor
- Resume help
- Assistance with job applications
- Interview prep

Program Services:

- Assessment of academic skills, work history, interests, motivation, barriers
- Individualized career planning
- Intensive job search assistance
- Support for completing a GED
- Work readiness training
- Training for high-wage, high-demand careers
- Internships, subsidized employment, and paid work experience
- Support services to address employment-related needs

Employer Services

Relationships

- Ongoing engagement with employers to understand their workforce needs and challenges

Recruiting Assistance

- Strategy development
- Post jobs on CareerForce.MN.gov
- Hiring events and job fairs
- Connection to students and jobseekers
- On-the-job training and apprenticeship
- Employer Champions Initiative

Retention Services

- Talent Development Program
- Internships and paid work experience
- Career pathway mapping
- Connection to state resources



Who Developed the Plan?

- The [Duluth Workforce Development Board](#)'s 27 employer, education, and community stakeholder members
- The Northeast Regional Leadership Team, which includes CareerForce leaders and members of the Duluth and Northeast Workforce Boards
- DEED Regional Labor Market Analyst
- 100+ employers, unions, education representatives, and community stakeholders who participate in workforce board committees
- CareerForce Duluth and Northeast staff
- Community member surveys and focus groups

Timeline

- September 20, 2023: “Ideas to Action” sessions at state Workforce Summit
- Mid-September 2023: Guidance issued for State, Regional and Local Plans
- Fall 2023:
 - Construction Working Group strategic planning
 - Healthcare Working Group strategic planning
 - Manufacturing Working Group strategic planning
- November 13, 2023: Review guidance at Duluth Workforce Board meeting, discuss plan for any community/employer input
- January 2024:
 - Equity Committee strategic planning
 - Emerging Workforce strategic planning
 - Focus on local/regional strategic plan at 1/29 Board meeting
- January 15, 2024: State Plan submitted for Governor’s Review and posted for 30-Day Public Comment
- February 1, 2024: Regional Leadership Team meeting
- March 20, 2024: GWDB Meeting to Approve State Plan
- March 25, 2024: Draft plan sent to Duluth Workforce Development Board for review and edits
- April 8, 2024: Local plan final draft posted for 30-day public comment
- April 5, 2024: WIOA 2024-2027 State Plan submitted to US DOL
- April 30-May 9, 2024: Public comment period ends, final plan edits
- May 10, 2024: Final plan draft to Duluth workforce board for final review
- May 20, 2024: Plan overview presentation and Board approval to submit plan to DEED
- May 31 – August 30: GWDB Special Committee review and provide feedback or suggested modifications
- August 30, 2024: Final local/regional plan submission to DEED
- January-May 2026: DWDB review of plan goals, priorities, and labor market data
- October 1, 2026: Revisions and updates to plan submitted to DEED



Region 2 Strategic Plan



Northeast Minnesota - Vision



Northeast Minnesota's 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.

Northeast Minnesota – Best Practices

- **Talent Development Program** to support incumbent worker training
- **Apprenticeship Expansion** to grow the number of apprenticeship programs available in all industries
- **Diversity & Inclusion Employer Action Guide** – tools and best practices for recruiting, hiring, onboarding, retention, and advancement
- **Employer Champions Initiative** – Ongoing training and technical support for workplace inclusion efforts
- **218 Trades** – Marketing & education campaign focused on the construction trades
- **Discover Healthcare, Construct Tomorrow, Manufacturing Expo** – Hands-on event to explore career pathways

Regional Goals & Strengths

Regional Goals:

- Expand registered apprenticeships
- Explore ways to support entrepreneurs and hospitality & tourism industry businesses
- Continue to research and track clean energy job opportunities in the region
- Expand regional efforts focused on talent attraction

Regional Strengths:

- Partnerships and collaboration
- Industry-led sector strategy partnerships
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as a priority
- Education institutions – K-12 and post-secondary

Regional Targeted Industry Sectors

- Healthcare & Social Assistance
- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Educational Services
- Leisure & Hospitality

Local Area 4 Strategic Plan



Duluth Workforce Development Board 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.



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CareerForce Partners - Duluth

- **City of Duluth Workforce Development**

- Youth Employment Services (YES) Duluth
- Older Worker Program
- WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker
- Career Pathway Training
- MFIP, SNAP Employment Services

- **Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency (AEOA)**

- SNAP Employment Services
- State Dislocated Worker

- **Northeast MN Office of Job Training (JET)**

- Youth Services
- WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker
- MFIP Employment Services

- **Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)**

- Job Service
- State Services for the Blind
- Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- Labor Market Information
- Workforce Strategy Consultant

- **Duluth Adult Education**



Local Targeted Industry Sectors

- Healthcare & Social Assistance
- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Business & Professional Services
- Transportation, Warehousing, & Utilities



DWDB Goal 1

Engage employers from high-growth, high-demand industries 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

DWDB Goal 2

Expand employer and workforce system partner engagement with K-12, Adult, and Post-Secondary Education to support career exploration, work readiness, 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.

DWDB Goal 3

Develop and strengthen relationships with workforce and community service providers to deliver coordinated, individualized, and client-centered services

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.

DWDB Goal 4

Lead initiatives to reduce educational, skills training, and employment disparities based on race, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, veteran status, age, and criminal background

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.

How We Measure Success

Youth/Adult Programs:

- Measurable Skills Gain
- Credential Attainment
- Employment Placement
 - Entry into employment aligned with training
- Employment Retention
- Average Wage
- Entry into further education

MFIP/DWP:

- Work Participation Rate
- Self-Sufficiency Index
- Placement into employment
- Credential Attainment

LWDA 4 - Duluth Strengths & Best Practices

Strengths

- Skilled, kind, supportive staff
- Partnership
- Engaged board and committees
- Duluth Adult Education
- Equity-focused service delivery
- Culture of innovation and teamwork

Best Practices

- Youth seat on workforce board
- Industry-led sector strategy working groups
- Employer Champions Initiative
- Hands-on career exploration events
- YES Duluth partnerships
- Community Liaisons
- Employer Navigators



Duluth Area Workforce System Map

Economic Development

APEX
UMD Bureau of Business and Econ.
Research
City of Duluth
Northspan
Minnesota Power
ARDC
LISC
DEED

Business/Industry Organizations

Duluth Chamber
Northland Human Resources Assoc.
Arrowhead Manufacturers & Fabricators
Duluth Building & Construction Trades

Community Organizations

True North Goodwill
Community Action Duluth
Life House
Family Freedom Center
Boreal Development
Brightwater Health
Northern Bedrock
Lutheran Social Services

Small Business/Entrepreneurship

Northland SBDC
Family Rise Together
Entrepreneur Fund
1200 Fund
DAWN

CareerForce

DWD
AEOA
DEED (VRS, Job Service,
SSB, LMI, Veterans)
JET

Other Partners

St. Louis County
Work Experience Host Sites
Supported Employment Programs
DWDB/Committee Members
Labor Unions
MNDOT

Education/Training

ISD709 – Duluth Public Schools
Harbor City International School
Lake Superior College
University of MN – Duluth
College of St Scholastica
Fond du Lac College
University of WI – Superior
Northwoods Technical College
Proctor, Hermantown School Districts
Duluth Adult Education
Apprenticeship Programs



Service Accessibility

- Computer lab staffed by Digital Navigators
- On-campus office hours at Lake Superior College, University of MN – Duluth, and College of St. Scholastica
- YES Duluth staff work on-site at Duluth high schools, and at community partner organizations
- Social media messaging
- Staff have texting capability
- Online program applications
- Virtual service delivery



Labor Market Information

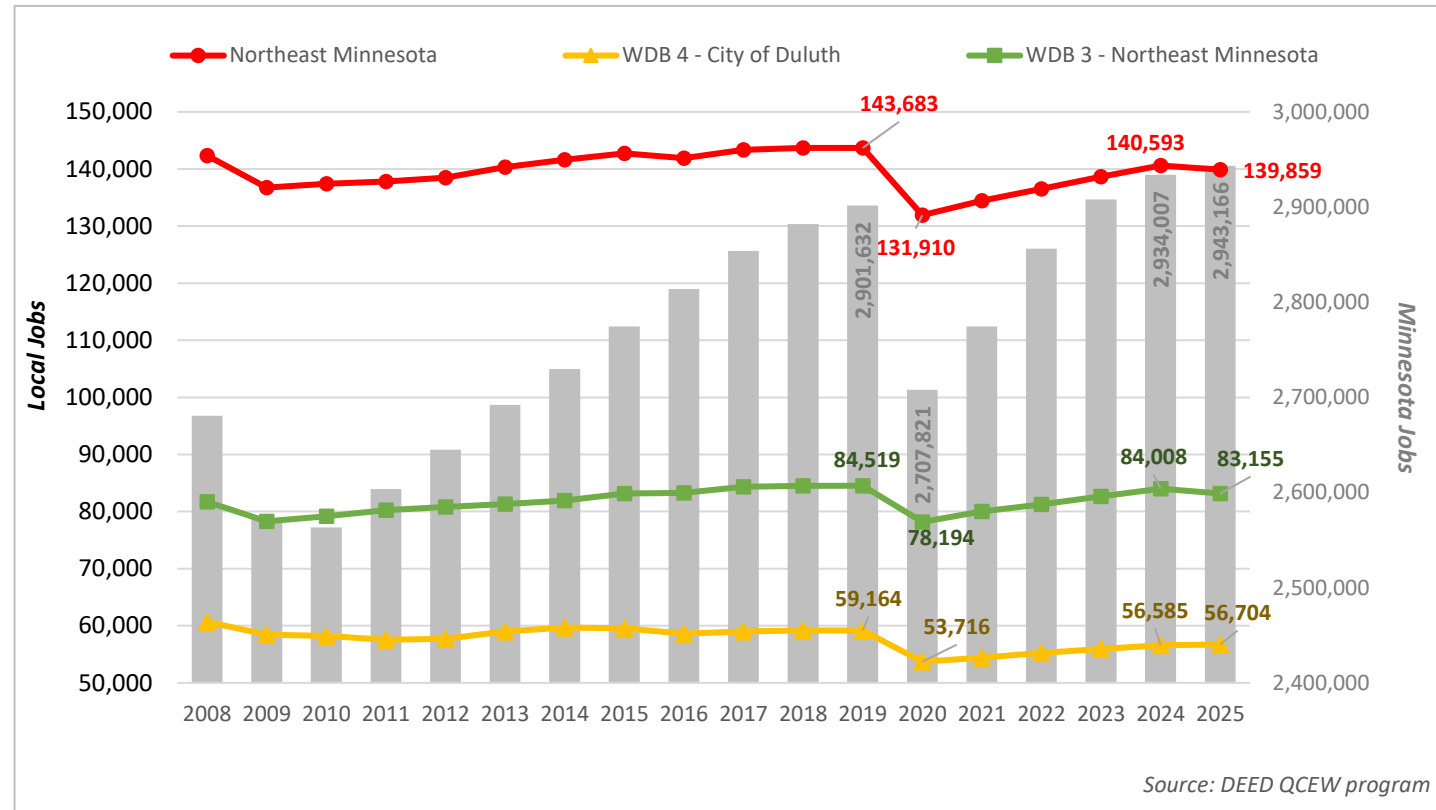
Summary of data used to inform development of the strategic workforce plan. More detailed information can be found in the plan document.



Regional Employment

- 139,859 jobs across 9,262 firms in NE Minnesota
 - 3,824 fewer jobs compared to 2019
- Average annual wage of \$60,580
 - 3.3% increase from 2024
 - 21% below state average wage
- Largest Industries:
 - Healthcare and Social Assistance
 - Retail Trade
 - Accommodation and Food Services
 - Educational Services
 - Public Administration
- Fastest Growing Industries
 - Construction
 - Manufacturing
 - Utilities
 - Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services
 - Real estate

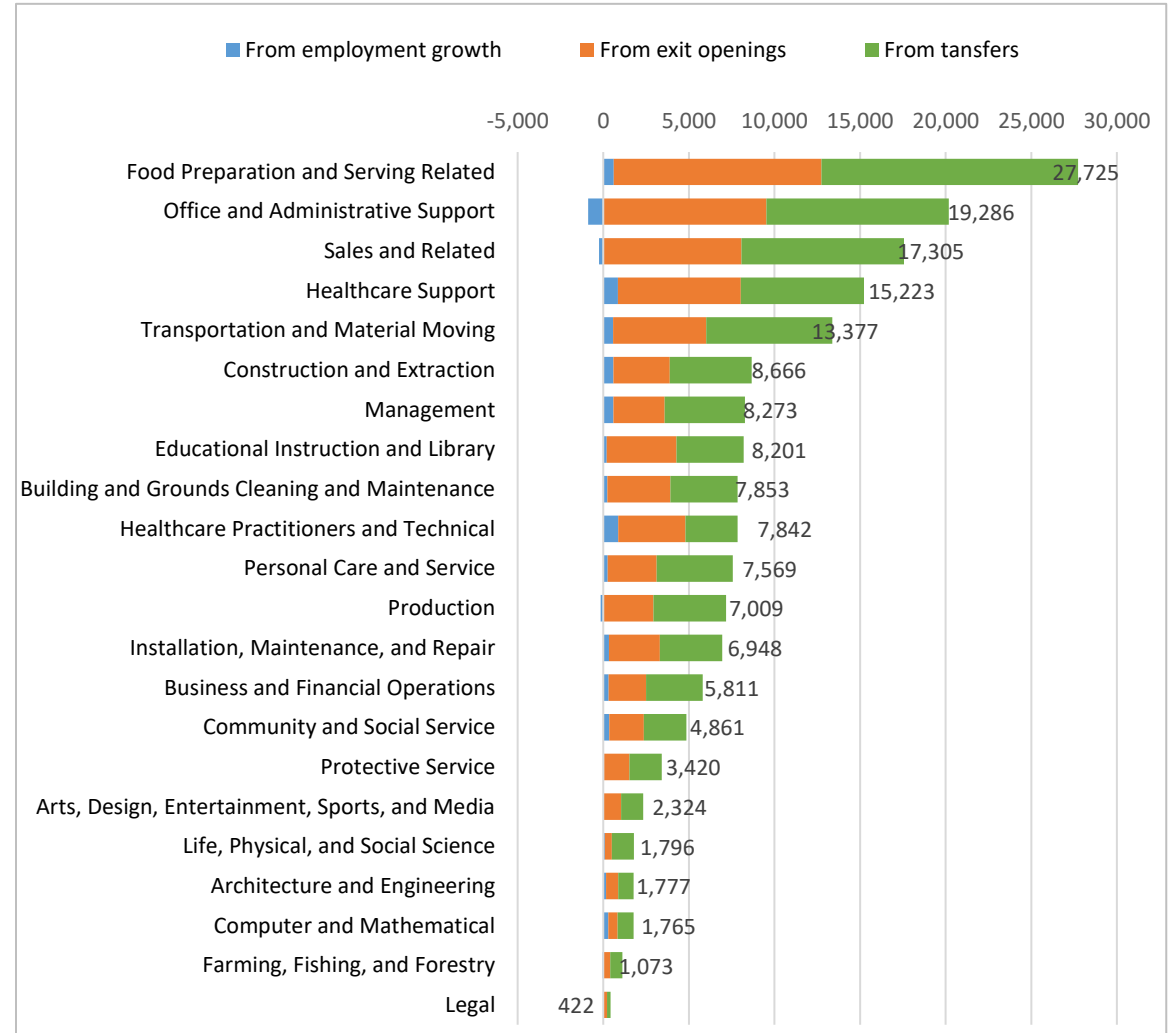
Total Employment by Area and Year, 2008-2025



Occupations In Demand

- Healthcare
 - Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, Nursing Assistants
 - Substance abuse & mental health counselors
 - Home health aides
 - Clinical Lab Technicians
 - Medical Assistants
 - Dental Hygienists
 - Radiologic Technicians, Surgical Technologists, Respiratory Therapists
 - Pharmacists, Pharmacy Technicians
- Police Officers
- General & Operations Managers, Project Managers, Financial Managers
- Accountants and Bookkeepers
- Automotive Service Technicians/Mechanics
- Electricians
- K-12 Teachers and Teaching Assistants
- Truck Drivers
- Retail Salespersons, Food Prep, Janitors, Wait Staff

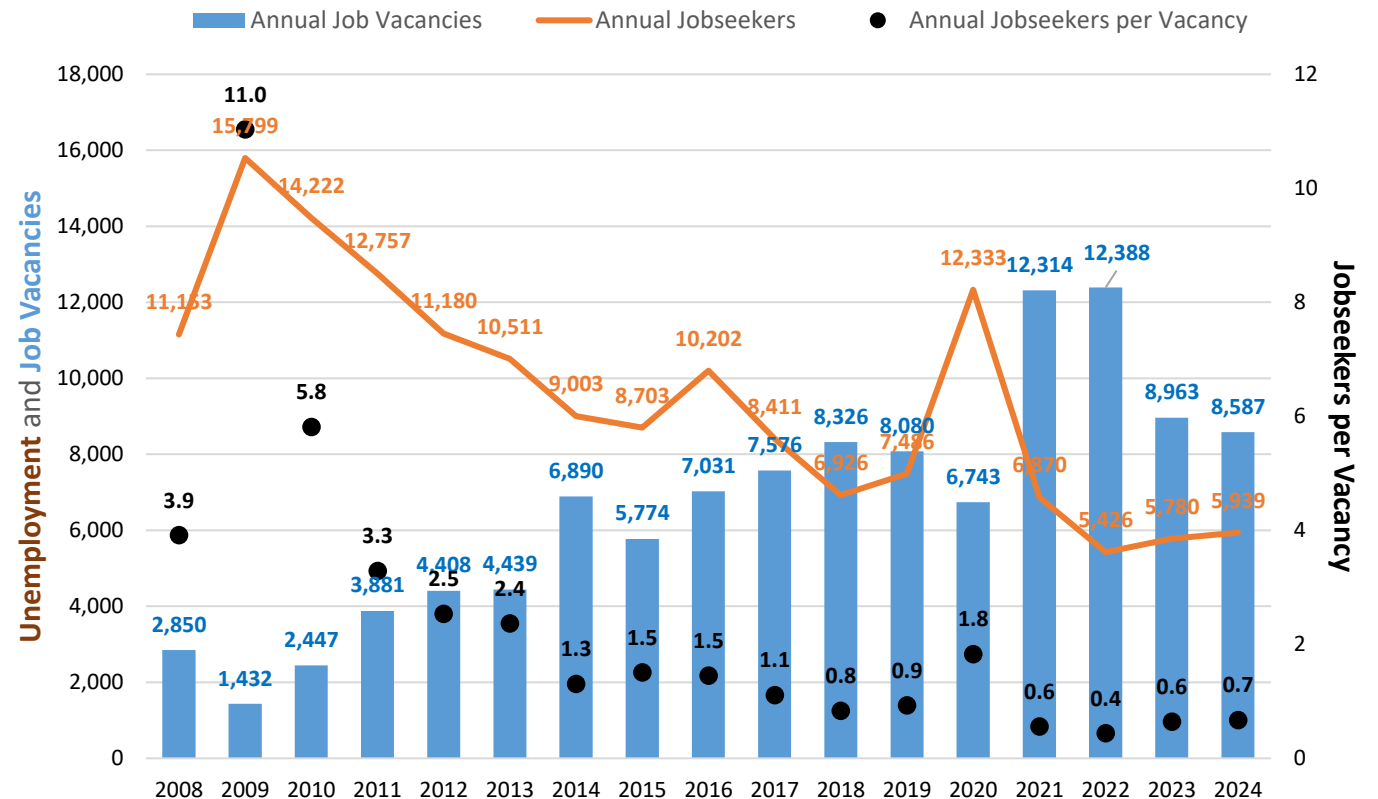
Northeast Minnesota Occupational Projections, 2022-2032



Workforce Characteristics

- 160,251 in labor force across the region
 - 48,265 in Duluth
- Workforce shortage easing
- Aging workforce
 - 25% of workers are over 55
- 9% of labor force is BIPOC in NE Region
 - 12% is BIPOC in Duluth
- 9% of labor force has a disability
- 24% have a high school diploma or less, 36% have a Bachelor's degree or higher
 - Significant educational disparities by race
- Significant gender disparities in all targeted industries

Jobseekers per Vacancy in Northeast Minnesota, 2008-2024



For Additional Information

**Full plan document available at
City of Duluth Workforce Development
www.duluthmn.gov/workforce-development**

**Labor Market Information
www.mn.gov/deed/data**

