

Business and Business-Related News for Economic Development Region 6E:

DEED News: DEED has awarded \$1.6 million in Youth Support Services to 21 organizations to prepare underserved young adults for successful employment. The grants are anticipated to serve over 1,900 young people from low-income communities, communities of color and young adults from families with a history of intergenerational poverty.

DEED's [Youth Support Services](#) provides grants to organizations that offer job training, employment preparation, internships, job assistance to parents, financial literacy, for low-performing students, and youth intervention activities.

Career Solutions	Benton and Stearns Counties	\$80,000
Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services	Central Minnesota	\$80,000

Paid Leave News from DEED: As of March 15, 34,000 Minnesotans have been approved for leave since the program began, according to new data from DEED.

"Minnesota Paid Leave is working according to plan," said **Commissioner Matt Varilek**. "I am proud we delivered this program on time and under budget, and that Paid Leave is delivering timely service and payments, reinforced by strong program integrity measures to ensure funding goes where it is needed. Paid Leave makes it possible to be there for the moments that matter and makes Minnesota a better place to work, live and raise a family."

Minnesota is spotlighted: **Site Selector Magazine's** latest coverage highlights our state's incredible economic resilience, innovative programs, and the unique strengths that set Minnesota apart. "As we look ahead, we're focused on leveraging our business advantages, supporting expansion, and creating an environment where companies can thrive." Read more [HERE](#):

Spicer Business closure: SureStay Hotel has closed its doors, effective March 9 said Spicer City Administrator Jen Beckler. Beckler said she heard the owners, who live in California, suffer from poor health, and decided to shutter the business. When she heard the business closed, Beckler tried to contact officials with the business. "I was trying to get a hold of somebody over there looking for their lodging tax—got no response," said Beckler. She said Public Works Supervisor Chad Lien went by the business and noticed a sign taped to the front door of the establishment. The sign read: "Dear Guest, We regret to inform you that the SureStay Hotel in Spicer has closed as of Monday, March 9, 2026."

Ridgewater College news: Dr. Craig Johnson, President of Ridgewater College, has been selected to receive the Michael Bennett Lifetime Achievement Award, presented by the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and its Board of Directors. The award recognizes retiring college presidents whose leadership demonstrates an enduring commitment to student success and the development of student leaders.

"The strength of each student's experience is shaped in many ways by the value college presidents place on Phi Theta Kappa," said Lynn Tincher Ladner, Ph.D., President and CEO of Phi Theta Kappa. "Dr. Johnson's nomination and election reflect a career grounded in student success from the very beginning."

Spring is Busy in Region 6E:

Please feel free to stop by any of the events and say “Hi” to the CMJTS staff hosting a table.

Region 6E events:

- **April 8: BOLD High School Job Fair (Olivia), 9:00 am–12:00 pm**
- **April 10: Hutchinson Tiger Path Job Fair, 7:00 am–1:00 pm**
- **April 13: Renville West High School Job Fair, 1:30–4:00 pm**
- **April 15: Touch-a-Truck at Willmar High School 11 am to 2pm.**
- **April 23: Willmar High School Job Fair, 9:00 AM–1:30 pm**

Note: The April 24 “Explore Your Future at Ridgewater” event has been cancelled.

There were 625 postings on Minnesotaworks.net for Region 6E.

Up from last month from 421.

Kandiyohi County:	261 posts (225 FT and 36 PT) Increase from last month
McLeod County:	208 posts (186 FT and 22 PT) Increase
Meeker County:	109 posts (85 FT and 24 PT) Increase
Renville County:	47 posts (39 FT and 8 PT) Increase

Committee/Project Involvement/Misc. Business Service Coordinator Activity Highlights:

I have been fortunate to participate in several EDA, Community based, and agency-based meetings:

- Mid-MN Regional Transportation Coordinating Council MMRTCC.
- Kandiyohi County Business Retention & Expansion Board meeting.
- Ticket to Work and Placement Referral customer meetings.
- Hutchinson and Litchfield CareerForce staff coverage days.
- Willmar High School job fair kick off planning meetings.

Talent Development is going strong in Region 6E:

6 more Talent Development applications have been sent to businesses and CMJTS assisting with identifying their training needs and completing the TD paperwork.

Talent Development projects:

- **Lindberg Excavating:** CDL 2 People \$14,000.
- **Cedar Lake Metal Solutions:** Leadership Enterprise 9 people \$17,300.
- **Landskaping Hutchinson:** CDL 3 People \$21,000.
- **SWIF:** Marketing and Leadership training. 1 Trainees \$1400.
- **Mid MN Builders:** CDL training 2 trainees. \$14,000.
- **Willmar Schools:** Teacher Apprentice Training. SW MN State Univ. 14 Trainees. \$25,000.

TD Applications in process:

- **Loecken Repair:** CDL 2 people \$10,000.
- **Marcus Construction:** CDL 1 Person \$7,000.
- **JR Consulting:** Human resource training. 1 Person \$10,000

Follow Up TD Projects:

- **Von Ruden:** Machine Programming. 2 Trainees. \$20,800
- **DC Diesel Tec:** CDL training. \$14,000 for 2 trainees.
- **Viking Engineering:** Mechanical Assembly Principles. 13 trainees. \$12,100.
- **Simonson Lumber:** CDL training Ridgewater College. 9 Trainees. \$25,000.

Minnesota DEED Unemployment Statistics posted are 30 days behind.

Local Unemployment Statistics for January 2026: <https://apps.deed.state.mn.us/lmi/laus/>

Area - click name for historical data	Labor Force	Labor Force Participation Rate	Employment	Employment to Population Ratio	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
U S	170,723,000	62.1%	163,720,000	59.6%	7,003,000	4.1%
Minnesota	3,144,470	67.7%	3,008,163	64.7%	136,307	4.3%
U S Seasonally Adjusted	171,495,000	62.4%	163,992,000	59.7%	7,503,000	4.4%
Minnesota Seasonally Adjusted	3,170,051	68.2%	3,038,526	65.4%	131,525	4.1%
EDR 6E- Southwest Central	63,315	NA	60,001	NA	3,314	5.2%

Area - click name for historical data	Labor Force	Labor Force Participation Rate	Employment	Employment to Population Ratio	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
Kandiyohi County	22,651	NA	21,508	NA	1,143	5%
McLeod County	20,046	NA	19,069	NA	977	4.9%
Meeker County	12,944	NA	12,222	NA	722	5.6%
Renville County	7,674	NA	7,202	NA	472	6.2%

Business Trends/Updates/Events

- Kendall Howard, in Chisago City www.kendallhoward.com/ is expanding by adding a 244,000 sq. ft space on 17 acres in Chisago City. The expansion aims to support growing demand for their American-made IT hardware, cabinets, and rack solutions. They currently have 104 employees and plan to add 100 more by the end of the year. CMJTS staff together with DEED Workforce Strategy Consultant met with company representatives to discuss their needs and will continue to follow up to help them with recruitment and other resources.
<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063651696128>
- Semi Pro Truck Driving Academy has opened in Mora with space in the industrial park. Meeting with them on 4/8 to learn more about their programs. <https://www.semiproacademy.com/>
- Broekema Beltway in Pine City will be adding a steel forging line this summer and had been awarded DEED funds to help with this project. CMJTS has been actively involved with Broekema for Talent Development over the past several years. The shared some of their work with CMJTS at the Workforce Development Board meeting in December 2025. DEED press release:

Broekema Beltway USA Inc., Pine City – JCF \$167,500, MIF \$200,000

Broekema Beltway USA Inc., manufactures advanced sieving conveyor belt systems and components, serving the agricultural and industrial sectors across both North and South America. The proposed project will establish a new manufacturing line at the current facility in Pine City, including new steel forging and upsetting capabilities, integration of robotics and automation of traditional manual processes, and other necessary equipment. The total project cost is \$5.6 million and is expected to create 12 jobs within the first three years.

- Age-Flourishing Greater St. Cloud is hosting an interactive workshop focused on **Building Age-Friendly Workplaces** with special presentation on “Returnships” by the Northspan Group. Tuesday, May 5, 2026, 11am-1pm at the Great River Regional Library in St. Cloud. See flyer and registration info below.
- The City of Isanti highlighted its community and economic development growth during the March North 65 Chamber of Commerce meeting. They continue to have positive population growth, business additions and expansions, and a wide variety of community development projects. Highlights are available in a slide show at this link: <https://www.north65chamber.com/assets/pdf/State+of+the+City+of+Isanti+2026/>
- During the February North 65 Chamber of Commerce Meeting, The State of the City of Cambridge was shared. Highlights of their growth and development can be found at this link: <https://shorturl.at/bxuPR>
- The City of Isanti is hosting free monthly Entrepreneurship Workshops in collaboration with North 65 Chamber of Commerce and East Central Regional Development Commission. (see full details below)
- East Central MN Career Fair is scheduled for April 14 from noon – 2pm in Pine City at the Pizza Pub. Resume review assistance will be offered at 11am. Employer registration is at 26 employers with a waiting list. This event is open to the public.
- East Central & Willow River High Schools Career Fair will be held on Friday, April 24th. This event is only for the students attending East Central and Willow River schools.
- North Branch High School Career Fair is scheduled for Friday, May 8.
- Rush City High School Career Fair is scheduled for Wednesday, May 13.
- East Central Development Partnership FAM Event, Wednesday, May 13.

MN Indigenous Energy Workforce Initiative – attended the second session of this initiative bringing together a wide-range of groups from across the state to consider how to understand trends for energy careers and consider how to engage the indigenous workforce into training and careers in this sector across the state. This initiative is being led by Great River Energy and DEED. This session had great info from the MN State Energy Center of Excellence. There was also a SWOT analysis which allowed for helpful information sharing and the opportunity to learn from table members about their organizations, opportunities for partnership, and ideas for more effective engagement. The next session for this initiative will be May 20. There is some great information and visuals in this report: [Careers in Energy and Natural Resources Report – RealTime Talent](#) Also of interest, an example of which we can see in this report, is that the National

Career Cluster framework shows sub-clusters such as “cross-cutting clusters” and “related clusters” which help us look at how occupations connect across sectors for transferability. (See example below)

East Central Development Partnership – the March meeting was hosted by the City of Mora held at the Mora High School. High School Principal, Brent Nelson, Superintendent, Dan Voce, CTE Instructor Dean Sand, all shared about the school district, new high school and CTE programming. A panel of 6 students who have all participated in CTE programs did an amazing job sharing their insights and experiences. Notes on their comments will be shared at a later date.

Human Resources Cooperative – During the March meeting highlights from the Skills-Based Hiring Accelerator were shared by those who attended. All found it valuable and had either already using what they learned or have plans to do so. Comments will be shared soon. MN Retain tools and resources were reviewed and discussed including the upcoming April Workplace Wellness workshops.

Chisago County Child Care Coalition and Mille Lacs County Child Care Coalition – Both groups met this month. A new initiative focused on childcare is available through Initiative Foundation and North Central Small Business Development Center called the Revive and Thrive program. It will be a planning effort to allow groups to build on the work they have done while working together to develop clear, cohesive plans for each coalition and how they will move forward. Funding will be available for this through the Initiative Foundation over the course of 10 months and engaging in this planning program will help groups ensure they access and use these resources well. There are several steps/sessions for this program, with the first being on Monday, April 13 from 9am-3pm at the North Branch Library.

Cambridge-Isanti Schools C4 Group – Career Center Director will be submitted a YST grant for health careers to help build out their programming and start a nursing assistant course at the high school. Twenty-three students are now enrolled in the manufacturing program. They will be hosting a career day in April. The high school seniors will be divided into groups – Enrolled, Employed, or Enlisted and the activities they do will be geared toward the avenue they have chosen.

East Central High School Career Fair – assisting with employer invitations and event planning. Career Fair is scheduled for April 24.

North 65 Chamber of Commerce – State of the City of Isanti was presented by the Mayor of Isanti. There is a great deal of business and community development occurring in the City of Isanti, along with positive population growth. Shared about MN Retain program and upcoming workshops.

Skills-Based Hiring Accelerator Workshops – The event in Mora was well-attended with 18 individuals from a variety of companies. Received positive feedback about the event during the HR group in March.

Registered Apprenticeship – arranged and participated in a meeting for Olympak Printing and Packaging in Mora with MN Department of Labor and Industry to discuss how registered apprenticeship might benefit their company, staff growth and retention. MN DOLI will now assist the company in next steps. CMJTS will assist and will continue working with the company directly on their initiatives.

Incumbent Worker Projects

New

M&M Precision Machine, Sherburne County, 24 trainees

On-Going

City of Mora, 1 trainee

Karlsburger Foods, Inc., Wright County, 12 trainees

Hoffman Truck Repair, Kanabec County, 5 trainees

Completed

CDI Curb, Sherburne County, 16 trainees

Pat Fruth Trucking, Wright County, 1 trainee

Evergreen Recycling, Chisago County, 1 trainee

Enrollments collected and processed for new projects. On-going file management, close out of projects, and follow up for IW files in WF1.

Business Assistance – Set up employer of the day for Twin City Staffing to help them with recruitment for a woodworking business in Isanti, MN. The used office space at the Cambridge CareerForce on 4/2 and 4/7. Shared job leads with staff for several other companies during the month.





Job Seeker Assistance – Met with two universal customers this month – one is a Veteran, another a mechanical engineer. Providing, ideas, introductions/connections with businesses, and job leads. Communicating with Career Navigator staff about potential referrals as appropriate.

MN Customized Employment Training – attending bi-weekly training sessions to learn about customized employment as a tool and resource for individuals and employers.



Unemployment Rate Data and Information

January data is not yet available on website as of the compiling of this report.






Local Unemployment Statistics for December 2025

More Info	Area - click name for historical data	Labor Force	Labor Force Participation Rate	Employment	Employment to Population Ratio	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
	U S	170,723,000	62.1%	163,720,000	59.6%	7,003,000	4.1%
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	Minnesota Seasonally Adjusted	3,170,051	68.2%	3,038,526	65.4%	131,525	4.1%

Local Unemployment Statistics for December 2025

More Info	Area - click name for historical data	Labor Force	Labor Force Participation Rate	Employment	Employment to Population Ratio	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
 	EDR 7E- East Central	92,870	NA	86,180	NA	6,690	7.2%

Local Unemployment Statistics for December 2025

More Info	Area - click name for historical data	Labor Force	Labor Force Participation Rate	Employment	Employment to Population Ratio	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
	Chisago County	32,074	NA	30,404	NA	1,670	5.2%
	Isanti County	23,647	NA	22,118	NA	1,529	6.5%
	Kanabec County	8,774	NA	7,818	NA	956	10.9%
	Mille Lacs County	14,801	NA	13,578	NA	1,223	8.3%
	Pine County	13,574	NA	12,262	NA	1,312	9.7%

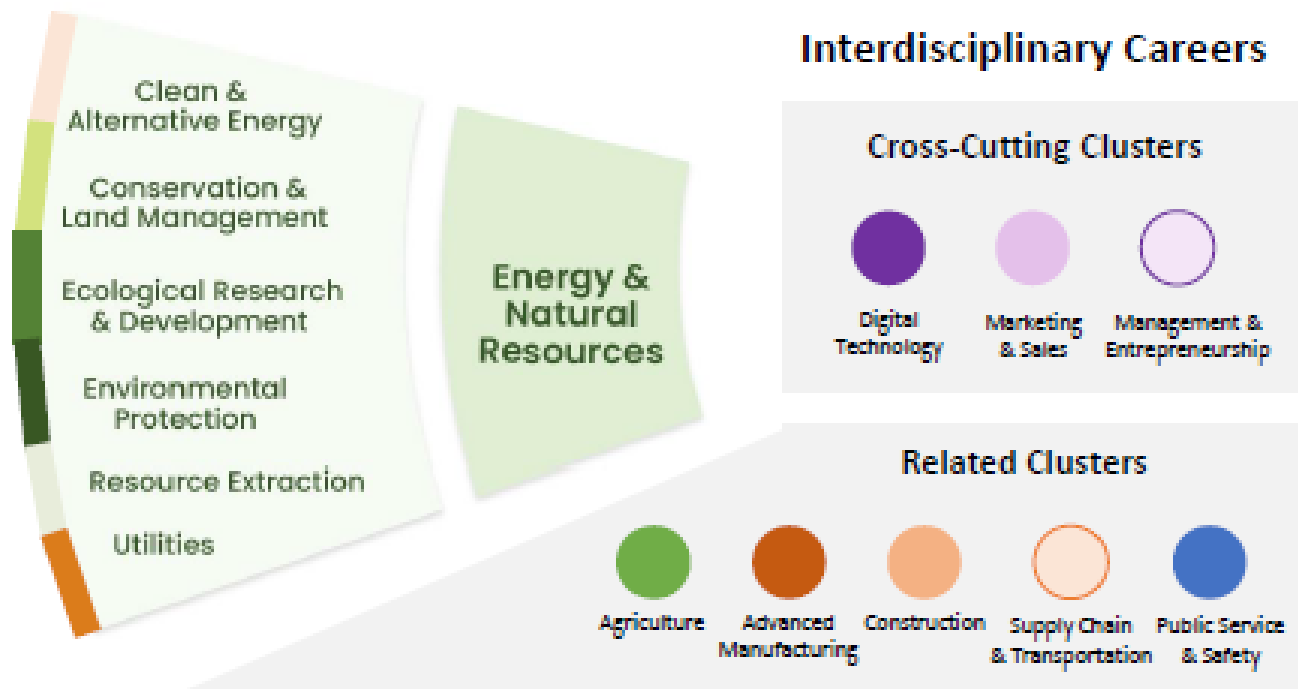
Careers in Energy



MINNESOTA STATE
Energy Center of Excellence

Exploring Clusters and Sub-Clusters

The National Career Cluster Framework's Sub-Clusters are major groupings of career areas within a given Cluster that have similar skills as defined by industry area. In Energy and Natural Resources, there are six Sub-Clusters.



While the Cross-Cutting Career Clusters are designed to be applicable to all other Career Clusters, many other Career Clusters are closely connected. For Energy and Natural Resources, other Related Clusters include **Advanced Manufacturing; Agriculture; Construction; Public Service & Safety; Supply Chain & Transportation.**

Given the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of the world of work, programs may be designed to bridge across two or more Career Clusters.

Building Age-Friendly Workplaces



For HR professionals and organizational leaders building diverse talent pipelines.

Facilitator: Ali Bilden Camps
Senior Consultant
Northspan Group, Inc.



Date: Tuesday, May 5, 2026

Time: 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

**Place: Great River Regional Library
1300 West St. Germain Street St. Cloud, MN**

SPONSORED BY: AGE FLOURISHING GREATER ST. CLOUD • NORTHSPAN GROUP

N O R T H S P A N

You'll Learn How To:

- Tap into a skilled, experienced talent pool ready to contribute
- Increase workforce diversity with nontraditional hires
- Address staffing shortages with flexible placements
- Build your reputation as an innovative, inclusive employer
- Launch your own Returnship program with ready-to-use tools and templates

Register: <https://tinyurl.com/AF-Workplaces>



Format: 11:00 AM - Lunch & Professional Networking

11:30 AM- 1:00 PM - Interactive Workshop

For more information: ageflourishing@ci.stcloud.mn.us



MONTHLY ENTREPRENEUR *Workshops*

ISANTI COMMUNITY CENTER • 4:30PM - 6:30PM

Foundational Concepts

- January 6, 2026 - Idea to Execution: What Problem Does Your Business Solve?
- February 3, 2026 - How to Write a Business Plan (That You'll Actually Use).
- March 3, 2026 - Financing Your Business: Boots & Beyond
- April 7, 2026 - The Business Structure: Legal Steps to Legitimacy

Operations & Management

- May 5, 2026 - Basic Bookkeeping and Budgeting for the Non-Accountant
- June 2, 2026 - Pricing Your Product or Service (Profit 101)
- July 21, 2026 - Simple Systems: Time Management & Productivity Tools
- August 4, 2026 - Hiring Your First Employee/Contractor: Rules of the Road

Sales and Marketing

- September 15, 2026 - Marketing on a Shoestring: Local and Low-Cost Tactics
- October 6, 2026 - Beginner Digital Marketing: Website, Social and Reviews
- November 4, 2026 - Customer Service that Keeps Them Coming Back
- December 1, 2026 - Protecting Your Idea: Trademarks, Copyrights & Patents



Questions or More information:
Visit our website at www.cityofisanti.us
Stephanie Hillesheim
Community Development Director
shillesheim@cityofisanti.us ~ 763-444-5512

Project Work

1. Central MN Manufacturers Association: Board and Workforce Development Initiatives

- Continued promotion and development of the Youth Apprenticeship Toolkit and the “K-12 Navigator” workforce development tools. Improving utilization and functionality with mobile and social media platforms.
 - Awarded a 10k grant from United Way to upgrade site
 - <https://cmmaworks.org/k12-navigator>
 - <https://cmmaworks.org/youth-appren>
- CMMA is creating an education committee to enhance its workforce development initiatives
- A new CMMA Impact report available here: [MMA Impact report Final version](#)
- CMMA Scholarship Info: [CMMA Academic Scholarship - Midwest Manufacturers Association](#)
- Manufacturing Matters-Student Voices Contest: [Manufacturing Matters-Student Voices Contest - Midwest Manufacturers Association](#)
- Pre Planning for Tour of Mfg: [Central Minnesota Tour of Manufacturing - Midwest Manufacturers Association](#)
- Next Membership Meeting: [CMMA April Tour at Geringhoff Midwest Manufacturers' Association](#)
- CMMA CTE Spring Summit: [CMMA CTE Spring Summit Midwest Manufacturers' Association](#)
- CMMA Golf Social - June 9, 2026: [Fundraisers - Midwest Manufacturers Association](#)

2. Central MN HR Cooperative: meets monthly, second Thursday, 8:00 – 10:00. Group meeting is hybrid model. In person attendance is increasing. MN Paid Leave Act is an issue of ongoing concern. Hiring as slowed/leveled off for some while employee retention remains a challenge for others.

3. Wright County Economic Development Partnership: <https://www.wrightpartnership.org/>

- Continued development and promotion of web-based career exploration data tool, *WorkForce Pathways*. This site assists Wright County businesses with their Workforce needs to create a long-term vibrant community through education, training, marketing and collaboration. This project is ongoing with new committee members needing continued outreach to schools.
- [Workforce Pathways - Wright County Economic Development Partnership](#)
- Job fair partner, 21st Annual Cen MN Job Fair scheduled for 3/31

4. Work Based Learning Coordination:

Promotion and development of OJT and Incumbent Worker services and training. Providing CMJTS and CFC resources and services info to area businesses through outreach and response to incoming inquiries. Continued interest in Incumbent Worker/Talent Development services from business partners. Interest in leadership supervision training from manufacturers in central area. Extensive Business Services team collaboration to deliver these services in Wright and Sherburne counties.

5. Create and broadcast a weekly (Monday) workforce/employment/training program entitled *Work Wright Radio* on KRWC, [Work Wright Radio | KRWC 1360 AM](#) featuring Wright County employers, careers, CFC services, events and resources. Sharing info on CMJTS, UI, CFC, Partners, and more. Highlight business sectors and employment opportunities along transportation corridors in the county helping listeners to understand local labor market and in demand occupations to slow labor exportation from the county and to increase local skill base.
6. Providing job search assistance to active CMJTS job seekers as referred from our Career Navigators in PA, Adult/DW and Youth programs. Assisting with job matching, job leads, employer connections and on the job training opportunities.
7. Co-facilitate the CMJTS and Monticello CFC Job Seeker Professional Development and Networking Group. Session occurs on Tuesday's 10:00 – 12:00 via Teams. Discussion topics include: job search strategy, finance in career transition, advanced Linked In strategies and self- branding/promotion and networking. Sessions in collaboration with and promoted by DEED. Average of 25 people per session. Many dislocated workers with workplace maturity attending from I.T., Finance and other technical backgrounds.
8. Serving walk in job seekers at CFC, offering local labor market info, job leads, contacts and connections to CMJTS and CFC partner services.
9. 21st Annual Central MN Job Fair in collaboration with DEED and CFC partners. Completed successfully on March 31 with 28 employers and 236 job seekers in attendance. Extensive planning and promotion.
10. Presented CMJTS Mature Worker service info at Central MN Council On Aging event on 3/2
11. Participating in MN CE Training (Customized Employment)
12. Participating in CMJTS Personal Empowerment Training
13. Promoted and participated in CMJTS Skills Based Hiring event on 3/5
14. Attended CMJTS All Staff and Pillar Meeting

MN DEED Labor Market Info

The unemployment rate increased to 4.1% in Minnesota in December, on a seasonally adjusted basis.

The number of unemployed increased to 131,525 workers and the number of employed decreased to 3,038,526 workers. The labor force grew to 3,170,051 workers, and the state's labor force participation rate remained level at 68.2%.

The U.S. unemployment ticked down to 4.4% in December, on a seasonally adjusted basis. The nationwide labor force participation rate decreased to 62.4%.

Unemployment Rates			
	December 2025	November 2025	December 2024
Minnesota			
Seasonally Adjusted	4.1%	4.0%	3.0%
Not Seasonally Adjusted	4.3%	3.9%	2.6%
United States			
Seasonally Adjusted	4.4%	4.5%	4.1%
Not Seasonally Adjusted	4.1%	4.3%	3.8%

County Unemployment Rates, not seasonally adjusted, Dec. 2025 (most current DEED info available)

Wright 4.5%
 Sherburne 4.7%