

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

**DEED Launched** “Choose Minnesota,” a statewide effort to encourage ongoing support for local businesses and to strengthen Minnesota's economy.

"Small businesses are the backbone of Minnesota's economy, and this year many have faced unprecedented challenges. It's more important than ever for Minnesotans to show up and support the businesses that help our communities thrive." said **DEED Commissioner Matt Varilek**.

As part of the initiative, DEED will partner with business owners and other leaders to host a series of roundtables – all of which are open to credentialed members of the press – in communities across the state. These conversations will highlight the challenges and opportunities facing small businesses and identify ways Minnesotans can support local businesses that power local economies. **The first roundtable will take place in St. Cloud next Monday, May 11, with** additional roundtables being planned in communities statewide in the months ahead.

The initiative will also feature [online resources](#) and social media engagement.

For more information about the Choose Minnesota initiative, visit [mn.gov/deed/choosemn](https://mn.gov/deed/choosemn).

**Kandiyohi County Economic Development** Joint Powers Board approved a conditional offer to Sheri Wegner for the executive director position, which Wegner accepted "with a lot of gratitude."

Wegner has served as the economic development manager of Kandiyohi County Economic Development for the last five months.

"I think that she's done a great job in her current role, and I think she'll be phenomenal as executive director," said Joint Powers Board Chair and Willmar City Councilor Vicki Davis.

She earned a nonprofit mini Master of Business Administration from the University of St. Thomas, a master's degree in fine arts from St. Cloud State University and earned her bachelor's in art education and photography from St. Cloud State University.

"We know we had a big spread, that we talked to a lot of different people and we had connections with a lot of different people," Calvin Martin. " We have a candidate we're bringing forward because the candidate exemplifies the skills that this organization needs to take the next step forward moving in a positive direction."

**Ridgewater College news:** The Board of Trustees of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities has named **Cheryl Norman** to serve as president of **Ridgewater College**.

“Dr. Norman brings a proven track record in enrollment management, developing data-driven strategies that strengthen student recruitment, retention, and completion,” said Scott Olson, Minnesota State chancellor.

“Her ability to lead initiatives that drive equitable student success and post-completion outcomes will serve Ridgewater College and the Willmar and Hutchinson communities well.”

Dr. Norman has dedicated her career to higher education at Minnesota State colleges as well as outside of the Minnesota State system. She currently serves as the vice president of academic and student affairs at Central Lakes College (CLC) in Brainerd and Staples.

At CLC, she has successfully led efforts to align programs with workforce demand, strengthen employer partnerships, and advance fundraising and scholarship access through advisory board engagement and community collaboration.

Dr. Norman succeeds Craig Johnson, who has served as president of Ridgewater College since 2018 and has announced his intention to retire.

**Region 6E events attended:**

- **April 8: BOLD High School Job Fair (Olivia), 9:00 am–12:00 pm:** 250 students 25 businesses.
- **April 10: Hutchinson Tiger Path Job Fair, 7:00 am–1:00 pm:** 800 Students 32 businesses.
- **April 13: Renville West High School Job Fair, 1:30–4:00 pm:** 300 students 28 businesses.
- **April 15: Touch-a-Truck at Willmar High School 11 am to 2pm.** 150 Students 10 businesses.
- **April 23: Willmar High School Job Fair, 9:00 AM–1:30 pm:** 1200 students 2 businesses.

**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.
- Ignite Ridgewater College event planning meetings.
- Hutchinson Human Resources Round Table member
- Meeker County Workplace Wellness Committee member
- Willmar Business Engagement Committee member

**Talent Development is going strong in Region 6E:**

**Talent Development projects:**

- **Tow Master:** Lean Training 4 trainees \$7,900.
- **Precera Medical:** ISO Lean Auditor 12 trainees \$15,000
- **OPS Assembly Inc:** Leadership Essentials \$20,683. 12 trainees
- **Loecken Repair:** CDL 2 people \$10,000.
- **Tucker Site Services:** CDL 1 person \$5,449.
- **Lindberg Excavating:** CDL 2 People \$14,000.
- **Cedar Lake Metal Solutions:** Leadership Enterprise 9 people \$17,300.
- **Landskaping Hutchinson:** CDL 3 People \$21,000.
- **Mid MN Builders:** CDL training 2 trainees. \$14,000.
- **Willmar Schools:** Teacher Apprentice Training. SW MN State Univ. 14 Trainees. \$25,000.

**Follow Up TD Projects:**

- **SWIF:** Marketing and Leadership training. 1 Trainees \$1400.
- **Von Ruden:** Machine Programming. 2 Trainees. \$20,800
- **DC Diesel Tech:** 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 April 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
<a href="#">U S</a>	169,548,000	61.7%	162,781,000	59.2%	6,768,000	4%
<a href="#">Minnesota</a>	3,129,892	67%	3,004,651	64.3%	125,241	4%
<a href="#">U S Seasonally Adjusted</a>	169,995,000	61.8%	162,622,000	59.1%	7,373,000	4.3%
<a href="#">Minnesota Seasonally Adjusted</a>	3,145,932	67.4%	3,005,022	64.4%	140,910	4.5%
<a href="#">EDR 6E- Southwest Central</a>	63,809	NA	60,914	NA	2,895	4.5%

Area - click name for historical data	Labor Force	Labor Force Participation Rate	Employment	Employment to Population Ratio	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
<a href="#">Kandiyohi County</a>	23,008	NA	22,004	NA	1,004	4.4%
<a href="#">McLeod County</a>	20,099	NA	19,293	NA	806	4%
<a href="#">Meeker County</a>	12,859	NA	12,226	NA	633	4.9%
<a href="#">Renville County</a>	7,843	NA	7,391	NA	452	5.8%

### **Business Trends/Updates/Events**

- The Book Match, apartments in the renovated high school in Sandstone, is now available for rent. This project is an incredible feat that has taken much work, vision, and securing of resources. The space is amazing and is available at reasonable rates – workforce housing. It is also very unique and has retained much of the original building design and features. See more here about the project: <https://www.jillpine.com/the-bookmatch> and see the rental opportunities here. <https://www.thebookmatchsandstone.com/>
- Presented about CMJTS tools and resources on May 7 for the Pine City Area Chamber of Commerce.
- East Central Development Partnership FAM Event was held on Wednesday, May 13.
- Minnesotaworks.net is retiring on June 10 and the new Post A Job on CareerForce website is taking its place. <https://careerforce.mn.gov/post-a-job>

**East Central Development Partnership** – the meeting on May 29 was hosted by Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures at Grand Casino Mille Lacs in Onamia. Zach from Lake Leaf Cultivation provided information about their cannabis production facility located on site. Luke Greiner presented information about Region 7E specifically. Sara Treiber with MLCV gave an update on their business incubator sites in Isle and Hinckley. Lake Leaf Cultivation shared that their workforce needs are specific and unique and no one is skilled at this time in this new industry. Many employees are specialized machine operators and all of their training has to be done on the job because to date there are no other ways to get these skills. Also, with an indoor grow facility there is lots of environmental controls and factors that need to be accounted for. One comment that stood out is to “train more HVAC technicians.” Lake Leaf employees some themselves, and contracts for others, but it was stated that there are not nearly enough HVAC techs for this and other businesses. Slides from some of the presentations at this meeting and more information about the business incubator spaces in Hinckley and Isle will be added to next month’s report as they are not currently available.

**Human Resources Cooperative** – Discussed opportunities for creating Registered Apprenticeship in businesses across multiple industries. Promoted upcoming paid leave power hour sessions and the MN Retain Mental Wellness workshop recording.

**Chisago County Child Care Coalition** – met on 5/5 for additional strategic planning and mapping out activities for grant funded initiatives.

**Mille Lacs County Child Care Coalition** – Mille Lacs County purchased a property that will be converted to be into a special license home childcare and may become a business incubator site for providers as well. Met with the group online on May 26, they are looking for ways to engage with providers more. They are also participating with the Initiative Foundation program and working on mission/vision and direction going forward.

**North 65 Chamber of Commerce** – Progressive networking session. Learned about organizations and employers and had the opportunity to share with these individuals about CMJTS. The Brave Project, Plugs Garage, Security Bank & Trust, Go Savvy Social, Scooters, Commissioner Berg, New Pathways, Serenity Circle, Out of the Woods Nutrition.

**Registered Apprenticeship** – met with DOLI coordinator Annie Jenkin regarding CMJTS RA work. On-going communication with Olympak in Mora and DOLI regarding their pursuit of RA for their printing positions. Follow up with organizations who indicated an interest in RA as part of the career fair employer post-survey.

**MN Paid Leave** – review of webinars for continued resource learning. Follow up with organizations who indicated an interest in paid leave as part of the career fair employer post-survey.

**Webinar** – Aspen Institute, “When Work Isn't Enough: Improving Job Quality for ALICE Households”

**Princeton Community Connections Group** – shared that 333 students received their certificates for participation in career pathways academies this year and about 20 also did internships with local businesses. The high school YST coordinator shared that she has seen a shift over the past year or two in the interests of students. She has noticed less interest in areas such as manufacturing and engineering and an increase in social service related areas, and attorneys, and social media related careers. Nursing in particular remains a top pick. BSC shared the opportunity with the group to

have students participate in the student survey being done by Luke Greiner and they are very interested in pursuing this in the coming year. Helped coordinate staff to do a hands-on presentation for a community ed class about job search skills held on June 1. Princeton High School is also partnering with Flight Expo located in Cambridge at the airport, to offer NextGen Aviation student program for both Aviation Mechanics and Pilots. They will be able to host 8-10 students in each cohort.

**Incumbent Worker Projects**

**New**

Canvas Health, multiple counties, 6 trainees

**On-Going**

M&M Precision Machine, Sherburne County, 24 trainees

City of Mora, 1 trainee

Hoffman Truck Repair, Kanabec County, 5 trainees

**On-the-Job Training**

Dal-Kor Corporation, Mora – Welding Employee





**Business Assistance** – Set up employer of the day for Twin City Staffing to help them with recruitment for a woodworking business in Isanti, MN. They scheduled use of office space at the Cambridge CareerForce on Tuesdays in May and extended into June. Shared the following leads with staff as requested by these employers – Advance Design and Systems – PT Accounts Payable; Nemadji – Revenue Cycle Specialist I; Mille Lacs County – Eligibility Worker, Assessor Trainee, Certified Assessor; HireQuest – multiple listings for production, forklift, mold operators, CNC Machine Operators, CNC Lathe, Fabricator, Shipping & Receiving, Welder at undisclosed employers in Princeton, Pine City, Braham, Stanchfield, Mora, and Isanti; Freedom Center – Peer Recovery Specialist.

**Job Seeker Assistance** – Additional communication with two universal customers this month – one is a Veteran, another a mechanical engineer. Providing, ideas, introductions/connections with businesses, and job leads. Both attended the career fair on April 14.






**MN Customized Employment Training** – attending bi-weekly training sessions to learn about customized employment as a tool and resource for individuals and employers. Working on related course homework. Created visual resume.

**Unemployment Rate Data and Information**



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Local Unemployment Statistics for April 2026

More Info	Area - click name for historical data	Labor Force	Labor Force Participation Rate	Employment	Employment to Population Ratio	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
	<a href="#">Chisago County</a>	31,655	NA	30,280	NA	1,375	4.3%
	<a href="#">Isanti County</a>	23,273	NA	22,106	NA	1,167	5%
	<a href="#">Kanabec County</a>	8,533	NA	7,786	NA	747	8.8%
	<a href="#">Mille Lacs County</a>	14,498	NA	13,539	NA	959	6.6%
	<a href="#">Pine County</a>	13,421	NA	12,343	NA	1,078	8%

## Local Unemployment Statistics for April 2026

More Info	Area - click name for historical data	Labor Force	Labor Force Participation Rate	Employment	Employment to Population Ratio	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
 	<a href="#">EDR 7E- East Central</a>	91,380	NA	86,054	NA	5,326	5.8%

## 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.
    - <https://cmmaworks.org/k12-navigator>
    - <https://cmmaworks.org/youth-appren>
  - Newly formed education committee focusing on further engagement with schools and tour promotion
  - 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](#)
  - CMJTS PAID LEAVE POWER HOUR FOR EMPLOYEES: [CMJTS Power Hour - For EMPLOYEES Midwest Manufacturers' Association](#)
  - CMMA Golf Social - June 9, 2026: [Fundraisers - Midwest Manufacturers Association](#)
  - CMMA table at Granite Partners annual event
  - Membership meeting and tour of Galaxy Precision
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2. Central MN HR Cooperative: meets monthly, second Thursday, 8:00 – 10:00. Group meeting is hybrid model. 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. Several new members. Discussed Shared Work program as a resource.

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](#)
- Group is reviewing organizational structure for opportunities to increase services and efficiency.
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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. CDL and Leadership/Supervision training are in demand.

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. Recently hosted Sherburne County economic development representative Brain Fleming.
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. Hosted Dislocated Worker orientation session for Heilene on 5/6
10. Participating in MN CE Training (Customized Employment)
11. Planning 6/25 on site job fair at Monticello CFC

### **MN DEED Labor Market Info**

The unemployment rate held at 4.5% in Minnesota in April, on a seasonally adjusted basis.

The number of unemployed workers decreased to 140,910 and the number of employed decreased to 3,005,022 workers. Minnesota's labor force shrunk to 3,145,932 workers, and the labor force participation rate decreased to 67.4%

In comparison, the U.S. unemployment rate held at 4.3% in April, on a seasonally adjusted basis. The national labor force participation rate decreased to 61.8%.

### **Unemployment Rates**

<b>Geography</b>	<b>Seasonal Adjustment</b>	<b>April 2026</b>	<b>March 2025</b>	<b>April 2025</b>

Minnesota	Seasonally Adjusted	4.5%	4.5%	3.6%
Minnesota	Not Seasonally Adjusted	4.0%	4.9%	3.5%
United States	Seasonally Adjusted	4.3%	4.3%	4.2%
United States	Not Seasonally Adjusted	4.0%	4.3%	3.9%

**Current DEED Posted County Unemployment Rates**

Sherburne County is 6.0 %  
Wright County is 5.6 %