

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. *K12 Navigator has been redesigned and improved!*
 - [Workforce Development in Midwest MN | Pathway to Careers](#)
 - Education committee is 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](#)
 - October 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 Legislative Panel, Bad Habit Brewing Company and Tour of Hansen & Company Woodworks
 - Thursday, September 24, 2026
 - 7:15 a.m. - Breakfast and Networking
 - 7:30 a.m. - Meeting Starts - Announcements and Legislative Panel
 - 9:00 - 10:00 a.m. – Tour
 - CMMA Breakfast Meeting at St. Martin Community Center and Tour at Rotochopper Inc. Thursday, October 22, 2026
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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. Discussing Apprenticeships, MN Retain and fair chance hiring.

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.
- Group is in process of hiring a new Executive Director
- Annual Golf Fundraiser event 9/15

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. Completed 2 OJT. One at Functional Industries in Buffalo and the other at Charlies Appliance Repair in Howard Lake.

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. Facilitated 9/17 on site job fair at Monticello CFC, 34 job seekers and 12 employers. Successful event.
10. Attended “team pipeline” workforce development meeting at New Flyer Bus.
11. Planning 10/21 onsite job fair with Trelleborg Medical in Delano

MN DEED Labor Market Info

The unemployment rate rose slightly to 4.4% in Minnesota in August, on a seasonally adjusted basis.

The number of unemployed increased to 137,026 workers and the number of employed decreased to 2,987,499 workers. The labor force shrunk to 3,124,525 workers, and the state's labor force participation rate decreased to 66.8%.

The U.S. unemployment held at 4.1% in August, on a seasonally adjusted basis. The national labor force participation rate increased to 61.6%.

Unemployment Rates

Geography	Seasonal Adjustment	August 2026	July 2026	August 2025
Minnesota	Seasonally Adjusted	4.4%	4.3%	3.9%
Minnesota	Not Seasonally Adjusted	4.8%	4.6%	4.0%
United States	Seasonally Adjusted	4.1%	4.1%	4.3%
United States	Not Seasonally Adjusted	4.3%	4.4%	4.5%

Current DEED Posted County Unemployment Rates

Sherburne County 6.0%
Wright County 5.6%

Business Trends/Updates/Events

⇒ **East Central MN Career Fair – Tuesday, October 6, 2026, at the City of Isanti Community Center from Noon - 2pm.**
Resume review assistance available at 11am.

⇒ October is manufacturing month and many activities are happening in the region and across the state.

- Chisago County Manufacturing Month event for high school students, hosted by Chisago County HRA-EDA and partners will be Tuesday, October 20.
- Two Pine City manufacturers, Atscott and Broekema Beltway are open to student tours. Working with Lezlie Sauter, Pine County to invite and schedule schools.

Construct Tomorrow will be held in Hinckley on January 20, 2027 and a new location, Cokato High School is being added for April 7, 2027.

East Central Development Partnership is hosting its **annual meeting** on Friday, October 23, from 9:30am – 1:00pm, at Pine Technical and Community College. The theme is **“Making AI Part of Your Team.”** The full agenda can be found below. Please use this link to register: <https://forms.gle/mw4GWJMbBGknDVz98>

East Central Development Partnership hosted a Manufacturers Summit on Friday, September 25 as a kick off to Manufacturing Month. Speakers included Mark O’Leary, President and CEO of Enterprise MN and Kirsten Kennedy representing MN CEO, along with business owners, Blake Pendzimas of BP Metals and Marc Volk and Jason Polzin with Metal Coatings and Manufacturing who all told the stories of their local business growth. Tours of BP Metals were offered.

Human Resources Cooperative – Several group members have noted that their hiring has been solid and they are nearly or are fully staffed. They feel the quality of worker they are encountering has improved. Still others with certain entry-level roles struggle a bit more to get consistent workers that they need. One employer shared their recent positive experiences and opportunities for reduced insurance rates by using the Kavira Health service add on for their employees. Employers are still working through challenges and gaps resulting from MN Paid Leave, however they have also seen it be helpful for those who are able to use it.

Chisago County Child Care Coalition – Hosted an event on 9/22 to further introduce the coalition to local stakeholders. This included conversation with those in attendance, a community childcare discussion, and a presentation – Child Care is Community Infrastructure, by Jamie Bonczyk. This group is excited to add community champions such as employers to the work they are doing. They are working to distribute a survey to various groups as well. See summary below. Presentation slides available upon request.

Mille Lacs County Child Care Coalition – A provider recognition is being scheduled for October. The house purchased by the county for a childcare business is continuing to move forward.

MN Paid Leave – Continued outreach to assist employers and employees. Will be working to provide additional assistance to small employers and let them know more about the grants described here:

Small Employer Assistance Grants: *As you may know, small employers can apply for financial assistance to help offset the cost of employees taking leave - up to \$6,000 per year. We held a webinar Sept. 28 to explain how to apply for and receive the grants. Here’s a link to the recording:* [Small Employer Assistance Grants Program Webinar](#)

Incumbent Worker Projects

New

Brother Built Masonry, Big Lake, 2 trainees

Abode Salon, New London, 6 trainees

CB Machining, Big Lake, 1 trainee

Precision Utilities, Cokato, 2 trainees

Falcon Mechanical, Dassel, 2 trainees

On-Going

Canvas Health, multiple counties, 6 trainees

Completed

M&M Precision Machine, Sherburne County, 24 trainees

Hoffman Truck Repair, Kanabec County, 5 trainees

Business Assistance – Scheduled Twin City Staffing to in the Cambridge office to help them with recruitment for a woodworking business in Isanti, MN. They will be at the Cambridge CareerForce on Tuesdays in September and into October. Have fielded multiple requests by employers to share their job leads and to discuss available resources.

Job Seeker Assistance – Both universal customers previously noted - one a Veteran, another a mechanical engineer have found employment. Providing, ideas, introductions/connections with businesses, and job leads. Meeting with Career Navigators regarding job seeker referrals.

Unemployment Rate Data and Information

Local Unemployment Statistics for August 2026

More Info	Area - click name for historical data	Labor Force	Labor Force Participation Rate	Employment	Employment to Population Ratio	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
	U S	170,048,000	61.7%	162,667,000	59.1%	7,381,000	4.3%
	Minnesota	3,128,973	66.9%	2,980,322	63.7%	148,651	4.8%
	U S Seasonally Adjusted	169,777,000	61.6%	162,746,000	59.1%	7,031,000	4.1%
	Minnesota Seasonally Adjusted	3,124,525	66.8%	2,987,499	63.8%	137,026	4.4%

Local Unemployment Statistics for August 2026

More Info	Area - click name for historical data	Labor Force	Labor Force Participation Rate	Employment	Employment to Population Ratio	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
	Chisago County	31,542	NA	29,993	NA	1,549	4.9%
	Isanti County	23,171	NA	21,883	NA	1,288	5.6%
	Kanabec County	8,234	NA	7,712	NA	522	6.3%
	Mille Lacs County	14,281	NA	13,448	NA	833	5.8%
	Pine County	13,090	NA	12,227	NA	863	6.6%

Local Unemployment Statistics for August 2026

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	90,318	NA	85,263	NA	5,055	5.6%



The use of AI has become an important topic for businesses and communities across the nation. Understanding that AI is part of the TEAM that can help draft, organize, analyze and generate options and is not replacing the need for employee judgement, subject expertise, privacy safeguards or final review. Join us as we learn about the use of AI at Work and how it can help create smarter local businesses in our communities.

ECDP welcomes community leaders, economic developers, superintendents, school leaders, housing development and real estate professionals, nonprofit leaders, and regional influencers to learn more about its work and how we can collaborate as a region and build toward common solutions.

Annual Meeting Agenda

- 9:30 am** **Check-in & Networking**
- 10:00 am** **Welcome & Year in Review**
Greg Carlson, 2026 Board Chair for East Central Development Partnership
- 10:15 am** **AI at Work: Practical Prompts for Smarter Local Businesses**
Dr. Janice Aanenson, Executive Director of the Minnesota State IT Center of Excellence
- 11:00 am** **Break**
- 11:10 am** **Supporting Patient Care: AI's Growing Role in Health Care**
Nick Nehman, Director of Operations at Allina Cambridge Medical Center
- 11:30 am** **Q & A with Presenters**
Moderated by Dr. Joe Mulford, President for Pine Technical & Community College
- 12:00 pm** **Networking Lunch**
The networking lunch has been sponsored by Pine Technical & Community College

In addition to the complimentary lunch, attendees will have the opportunity to tour the newly expanded and remodeled campus and showcase the new PTCC eleven passenger electric shuttle to support student transportation needs and promote Pine City as a true college town.

Special Thanks to ECDP Sponsors:

Midwest Business Finance Corporation, Falcon National Bank, and Great River Energy
Visit our Calendar of Events at www.ecdp.us/calendar or [Use this link to Register](#)

East Central Development Partnership is an economic development consortium dedicated to regional cooperation and marketing the assets of East Central Minnesota. We collaborate to strengthen the regional economy by: providing a regional approach to workforce development, business attraction, retention and expansion; as well as acting as a conduit for members and the region to access resources and educational opportunities.



Child Care Connection Breakfast Brings Community Together!

More than 30 community members attended the Chisago County Child Care Coalition Outreach Breakfast on September 22nd to learn about the growing impact of child care shortages on local families, employers and the workforce. The event featured an engaging presentation by Jamie Bonczyk, who shared valuable information on child care trends, workforce challenges and opportunities for community involvement.

Attendees represented businesses, schools, government agencies, nonprofits, health care organizations, and child care providers from across the county. The morning generated meaningful discussion and provided participants with a greater understanding of how child care affects the economic vitality and future growth of our communities.

The event's primary call to action was for attendees to become Child Care Coalition Champions. Champions help spread awareness, share information within their networks, advocate for solutions, and connect people and resources that can help move projects forward. By building a network of informed community advocates, the coalition hopes to continue advancing efforts that support working families, strengthen the workforce, and improve child care opportunities throughout Chisago County.



[Become a Child Care Champion in Chisago County>](#)