



Rural Career Counseling Coordinators Program

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Introduction

Minnesota's Strategic Plan for workforce development is built on stakeholder and service delivery approaches that require partnerships at the state, regional and local levels. The Rural Career Counseling Coordinators Program (RC3) is part of the plan's priority strategies for talent development and resource alignment to ensure and grow Minnesota's competitive edge. This report:

- Summarizes Minnesota's Rural Career Counseling Coordinators Program 2018.
- Highlights stakeholder engagement efforts to connect regional educational pipelines with in-demand career pathways that meet the current and future workforce needs of area businesses.
- Provides aggregate data on stakeholder engagement and the statewide total numbers served.

Minnesota's Strategic Workforce Development Plan

The vision of the plan is to have a healthy economy where all Minnesotans have – or are on a path to – meaningful employment and a family sustaining wage, and where all employers are able to fill jobs in demand.

Goals

1. Reduce educational, skills training and employment disparities based on race, disability, disconnected youth or gender.
2. Build employer-led industry sector partnerships that expand the talent pipeline to be inclusive of gender, race and disability to meet industry demands for a skilled workforce.

Rural Career Counseling Coordinators Program

Each workforce development region located outside the metropolitan area has a Rural Career Counseling Coordinator position. This position is charged with improving coordination and communication of workforce development programs and services with administering agencies. The RC3 professionals have advanced local and regional workforce development program and service delivery knowledge; they apply that expertise with customer outreach and engagement and by making recommendations for continuous improvement or new workforce initiatives.

Customers and Services

- **Business** – understand workforce development needs of new, existing and prospective businesses.
- **Job Seekers** – connect to secondary and higher education, employers, stakeholders and partners.
- **Career Seekers** – provide counseling, training and work experience opportunities.
- **Workforce Development System Stakeholders and Partners** – share best practices and collaboration to enable state-level coordination among workforce development programs and administering agencies.

Regional Planning and Rural Career Counseling Coordinators

Minnesota’s approach to regional planning is based on the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requirements and the state’s experience working in partnership on regional economies with the Humphrey School of Public Affairs and the Harvard School of Business.

Minnesota has six workforce development regions. The process of identifying regions considered factors such as geographical size, population, migration patterns and the workforce market. Minnesota’s six workforce regions align with its sixteen Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) and its federal Economic Development Areas. Each region developed a four-year plan to showcase their distinctive regional economies, unique workforce development strategies and tactics and projected outcomes.

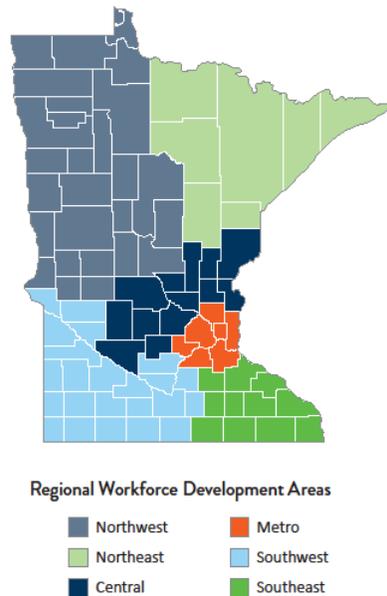
Rural Career Counseling Coordinators have a key role in their region’s work plan to:

- Connect employers with the diverse talent pools in their region and improve employee retention.
- Implement regional approaches to connect service providers and community members to their region’s racial, ethnic and disability communities to collaborate on workforce development needs and opportunities.
- Build talent pipeline partnerships to connect secondary and post-secondary students and the out-of-school and disconnected youth with hands on experiences in pre-apprenticeships, work-based learning, dual enrollment and equity programs, skills camps, career pathways and occupations in-demand. Intentional talent retention and exposure to a wide variety of career pathway post-secondary options are vital to growing regional economies.
- Collaborate with local and regional economic development boards, employers and governmental entities to strategically align key messages, identify and address workforce and skills needs, and retain current and attract new businesses and industries.

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Map – Rural Career Counseling Coordinators Program



Regions with a Rural Career Counseling Coordinator position and their Local Workforce Development Areas are:

- **Northwest Region**
 - Northwest Private Industry Council, Inc.
 - Rural Minnesota Concentrated Employment Program, Inc.
- **Northeast Region**
 - Duluth Workforce Development
 - Northeast Minnesota Office of Job Training
- **Central Region**
 - Career Solutions
 - Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services, Inc.
- **Southwest Region**
 - Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council, Inc.
 - South Central Workforce Council
- **Southeast Region**
 - Winona County
 - Workforce Development, Inc.

Each region submitted a 2018 Rural Career Counseling Coordinator report to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). DEED has consolidated the submitted reports for this annual program report to the Legislature.

The next five (5) sections of this report highlight the work of each region’s Rural Career Counseling Coordinator.

Northwest Region – Rural Career Counseling Coordinator

Regional Approach

An established Regional Workforce Alliance membership convenes quarterly to review, oversee and evaluate their area’s Rural Career Counseling Coordination efforts. Alliance members are Local Workforce Development Area Board members and leaders from the American Indian, New American and Disability communities. In 2018, the region launched business cohorts – Partners for Workforce Solutions. These new cohorts help connect local businesses with job seekers and validate career pathways. Also new for 2018 is an improved process to align resources – **SOURCE**. The acronym represents RC3 and regional approaches with **S**tudents, **O**lder Workers, **U**nder-Employed and under-represented workers, **R**esidents, **C**aregivers, and **E**fficiencies in workforce development.

Best Practices

- Launching new and more localized business-focused cohorts named Partners for Workforce Solutions.
- Establishing a regional database of K-12 Career Exploration and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and their capacity.
- Tapping the expertise of Partners for Workforce Solutions to advance regional career pathways.
- Developing the “**SOURCE**” acronym to highlight work with Students, Older Workers, Under-Employed and Under-Represented Workers, Residents, Caregivers and program Efficiency.
- Filling identified gaps in the K-12 and adult career preparation and delivery systems using new and flexible regional career advisement, internship and work-based learning models.

Connecting System Partners

Regional leaders and workforce development partners produced new and timely Regional Workforce Summits in three Economic Development Regions. Participants included workforce development system partners, Local Workforce Development Boards, Economic Development Commissions, CAP Agencies, Initiative Foundations, Adult Basic Education Consortia, Perkins Consortia, Chambers of Commerce, education and business. Additional events are planned for 2019. Rural Career Counseling Coordinators presented at statewide conferences including the Minnesota Rural Education Association (MREA) Conference and the Annual Minnesota Career and Technical Education Conference.

Best Practices

- Aligning the RC3 and WIOA Regional Planning to eliminate duplicate strategies and tactics.
- Presenting at statewide conferences of K-12 and post-secondary education professionals.

Career Services – Outreach and Marketing

The new Regional Workforce Summits and Partners for Workforce Solutions business cohorts enhanced awareness of the critical shortage of workers in the rural regions. To better explain these needs during stakeholder interaction, all the Rural Career Counseling Coordinators collaborated on a new and better outreach and marketing approach, including social media. New materials featuring each region’s in-demand business sectors and occupations were finalized in December 2018. During 2019, the Northwest’s infographic materials about their in-demand occupations and career pathways will be distributed to the 93 school districts in their region and shared with job seekers and businesses at job fairs and other venues.

Best Practices

- Creating new infographics about career pathways and occupations in-demand using regional labor market information.
- Planning and implementing a new marketing approach featuring occupations in-demand info-graphics.

Achieving Equity

The Regional Workforce Summit events had contributors and collaborators from community non-profits representing diverse populations. The region’s Partners for Workforce Solutions business-focused cohorts are simultaneously engaged in this effort. The common goal is better solutions to address the area’s critical workforce shortages. From employer tool kits to providing more detailed population and sub-population data, in 2018 the region, Rural Career Counseling Coordinator, and the WIOA Regional Planning leaders expanded their understanding of and engagement with under-represented populations in their region. Another result is a common regional strategy in equity and inclusion for welcoming workplaces and welcoming communities.

Best Practices

- Partnering with populations experiencing disparities in education and employment to develop new methods to attract, retain, and train or upskill an available workforce.
- Implementing services and gaining new professional skills to help guide inclusion efforts including:
 - Rural Minnesota CEP, Inc. implemented the Minnesota Pathways to Prosperity - New Americans Program and the Minnesota Disability Employment Initiative.
 - The Rural Career Counseling Coordinator is a member of various regional and local equity and diversity committees and has completed the IDI® cultural competency training.

Northeast Region – Rural Career Counseling Coordinator

Regional Approach

The Rural Career Counseling Coordinator collaborates with the region’s two Local Workforce Development Boards, several career pathway committees, private sector businesses and public institutions. The RC3 has identified the workforce needs and challenges of businesses in key sectors including the construction trades and healthcare. Regional entities developed seminars – Workforce Solutions Series – to convene and focus on the topics of recruiting new employees and retaining current employees.

Best Practices

- Knowing and understanding the region’s key industry sectors and their career pathways.
- Connecting sector businesses to recruitment, training and retention resources.
- Linking non-profit organizations to regional workforce development services and partnerships.

Connecting System Partners

During 2018, the Rural Career Counseling Coordinator focused on three key projects. The first, and primary project, was to enhance and increase the Northeast Minnesota Office of Job Training and Advanced Minnesota partnership. Advanced Minnesota is a customized training collaborative consisting of the area’s five Minnesota State Community Colleges.

The second project was to expand the area’s incumbent worker training program. This program partners with a business to help fund skills training for full-time employees. Reskilling and upskilling incumbent workers meets industry demands for new skills, higher overall skill levels and advanced skills and improves a business’s financial results.

The third project was braiding various funding streams to produce regional career exploration events for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) careers and the forestry, construction trades and manufacturing sectors. The career exploration events resulted in increased outreach to area employers and high schools to showcase the area’s career pathways and in-demand occupations.

Best Practices

- Participating in Career Fairs and an incumbent worker Talent Development Training Program.
- Partnering with the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB) for Career Exploration.
- Engaging with the North Star Expo - Future Forests Stewards, Construct Tomorrow, Engineering Mentoring Night, STEM Showcase, Iron Range Science and Engineering Festival (IRSEF).
- Providing student career awareness and industry exposure by setting up business tours.

Career Services – Outreach and Marketing

The Rural Career Counseling Coordinator partnered with northeast Minnesota entities to create and deliver an awareness campaign for the region’s skilled trades. This campaign, named **218 Trades**, focused on

reaching out to four distinct school audiences – (1) high school students, (2) teachers and guidance counselors, (3) parents and family members, and (4) groups under-represented in the trades [primarily women and people of color]. The awareness campaign used multiple media and methods to reach their four audiences and overcome the challenge of getting them to consider a construction trades career.

Best Practices

- Working with the construction and skilled trades. This work will continue in 2019.
- Replicating and expanding the construction and skilled trades career awareness campaign beginning with the healthcare business sector.

Achieving Equity

The Local Workforce Development Boards in northeast Minnesota have established Diversity and Equity Committees. In 2018, these committees developed and delivered cultural competency training for the partners and staffs at the Careerforce™ locations in the region. The Rural Career Counseling Coordinator is a member of these committees and has completed the IDI® cultural competency training.

The Rural Career Counseling Coordinator and the local Career and Technical Educations representatives worked on the gender disparities for various business sectors such as how to enroll more girls in welding classes and more boys in nursing classes.

Ongoing conversations and technical assistance with employers and business leaders has been conducted by the Rural Career Counseling Coordinator. The technical assistance included a review of job postings for diversity and inclusion and recommending new recruitment approaches that included how to access talent by engaging with diverse community groups.

Best Practices

- Being a member of a Local Workforce Development Area’s Diversity and Equity Committee.
- Conducting equity and diversity training for local businesses.
- Partnering with local business leaders including the region’s various chambers of commerce and other engaged groups to produce equity and diversity training for business.

Central Region – Rural Career Counseling Coordinator

Regional Approach

Regional collaboration with business, community, employer organizations and chambers of commerce supplement this area's regional workforce data. The result of this approach is informed validation regarding the region's current and projected skills and talent needs, career pathways and in-demand occupations. The Rural Career Counseling Coordinator was part of a project to develop a new design for the region's career materials. Project goals included using infographic design techniques that appeal to and engage with multi-generational and diverse audiences. The new materials use contemporary visuals to show the region's labor market information. Regional partners aided with the creation and distribution of these new materials.

Best Practices

- Engaging in regional planning including update presentations at all regional planning board meetings.
- Identifying and mapping regional workforce resources.
- Showing career and technical education activities on a regional asset map.
- Sharing incumbent worker training, on-the-job training and other resources with business.

Recommendations

- Continuing to have the Rural Career Counseling Coordinator give presentations to and share career tools and resources with schools, job seekers, partners, and local businesses.
- Expanding partnerships and collaborations through enhanced engagement across the region.
- Leveraging the Rural Career Counseling Coordinator's existing value as a trusted resource to engage and collaborate with new regional workforce development entities, community partners and businesses.

Connecting System Partners

System partners connect through coordinated job fairs, panel discussions, employer tours, youth-focused programs and other projects that highlight career pathways, postsecondary customized training, workplace learning options and labor market information. The Rural Career Counseling Coordinator has in-depth knowledge of local resources and regularly refers youth and adults to appropriate and timely resources.

Best Practices

- Producing a career exposure and hands on event in February 2019 titled EPIC (Explore Potential Interests & Careers) with the anticipated attendance of 2,500 high school students. The planning team includes local colleges, economic and workforce development professionals and businesses. Employers from six of the region's key industries are the hands-on activities facilitators.

Recommendations

- Integrating the Rural Career Counseling Coordinator information, outreach materials and best practices into the new CareerForceMN.com platform that began rolling out in late 2018.
- Minimizing duplication and realizing a seamless career preparedness processes by braiding funding streams and performance measures to better prepare rural youth populations for the future workforce.

Career Services – Outreach and Marketing

The Rural Career Counseling Coordinators connect key workforce partners and stakeholders, share workforce development information and grow and maintain an employer network.

Best Practices

- Offering Somali job search resources and workshop curriculum.
- Converting recently developed disability awareness training to an online format to promote universal access to CareerForce programs and services.
- Introducing career information at an early age including local career days, career planning events and school presentations. This includes middle school, junior high and high school presentations.

Recommendations – Career Services

- Funding to update and develop in-demand occupations materials and expand distribution.

Achieving Equity

The Rural Career Counseling Coordinator is an active member of the region’s planning team, knowledgeable about the region’s career and technical education offerings, world’s best workforce legislation action plans and counselor to student ratio data. This role has a collaborative approach to fill in career guidance system gaps in high schools. The Rural Career Counseling Career Coordinator has expertise with and connections to Somali job resources, disability resources and information and offender information.

Best Practices

- Creating labor market information materials that can be customized with local in-demand occupations, career pathways, median wages and job growth information. Job seekers, students and businesses have found this information to be a helpful visual starting point for their career planning.

Recommendations

- Establishing an online resource directory available to diverse populations.
- Sharing best practices in programming for employment and training providers online for capacity building, professional development and more effective service delivery methods.

Southwest Region – Rural Career Counseling Coordinator

Regional Approach

This region's Rural Career Counseling Coordinator is expanding partnerships with local school districts, developing career materials, providing career advisory services, connecting career education and business, disseminating career information and services, addressing disparities and growing stakeholder collaboration across the region. Parents, teachers and coaches are the primary source of career information for students.

Best Practices

- Increasing high school students' exposure to occupations in demand through school districts and career services partnerships that increase career option awareness.
- Growing career awareness and career counseling opportunities for students and parents through events, stakeholders, outreach and updated in-demand occupations materials.

Recommendations

- Supporting the region's promising collaborations focused on career exploration and development.
- Educating families, teachers, and creating community awareness regarding career pathway options.

Connecting System Partners

The Rural Career Counseling Coordinator is an intermediary to connect job seekers, schools, students, parents, employers, education institutions and other stakeholders to each other and to the workforce development system. This is accomplished by one-on-one and group meetings, ongoing communications, presentations and resource sharing. The RC3's work in career advisory services and work-based learning opportunities has positively impacted the region's career pathway work and benefited the future workforce and local employers. Work-Based Learning is a significant component to this region's Career Academies/Career Pathway programming.

Best Practices

- Bringing the Greater Twin Cities United Way to address disparities in education and employment by launching Career Academies/Career Pathway programming in the most diverse secondary schools to earn high school and college credits and gain marketable skills in high demand occupations.
- Expanding career pathways' work-based learning opportunities, internships, work experience, job shadows, employer guest speakers, industry tours and apprenticeships.
- Providing Career Navigator staff to support students and employers who are engaged in work-based learning opportunities. Real-world applications and work experiences in combination with key training provide paths to educational and career advancement building the local talent pipeline to help employers meet their needs for a skilled workforce.

Recommendations

- Reducing duplication by the RC3 coordinating and distributing responsibilities, establishing partnership agreements, assuring accountability and holding implementers to agreed accountability measures.

Career Services – Outreach and Marketing

The Rural Career Counseling Coordinator conducted an asset mapping gap analysis of the career advising and career pathway coursework. Throughout the region, after interviews with nearly half of the secondary schools, it was found that small rural schools have very limited, if any, staff time dedicated to career advising. In larger schools with a full time guidance counselor, only about 35% of their time is dedicated to career advising. The majority of schools that visited indicated they were not sharing current labor market information with students due to lack of time to research and package the information for students. Providing career services in the region's school districts is critical. With the skilled labor shortage challenges impacting the expansion plans of regional employers, it is essential that all secondary students graduate with an understanding of the career pathways and opportunities for their area's in-demand occupations.

Best Practices

- Providing labor market information to students, parents and school counselors.
- Launching a regional labor market campaign, "Know Before You Go," that includes median wage range by education level, post-secondary cost estimates and in-demand jobs.

Recommendations

- Expanding the use of the new career advisory materials.
- Funding the updating, high-quality printing and requested quantities of career advisory materials.

Achieving Equity

The Southwest Region's Leadership Team created goals and strategies to increase their capacity to provide equitable services to reduce educational, skills training and employment disparities based on race, disability, disconnected youth or gender to provide greater opportunity for all Minnesotans.

Best Practices

- Belonging to, active membership in and utilization of the professional development available through the Youth Intervention Programs Association (YIPA).
- Increasing diversity on boards, committees and staff. Results include new Local Workforce Development Board members and Diversity and Equity Committees and Career Pathway Partnership Committees with membership from organizations representing populations experiencing disparities.

Recommendations

- Continuing the work with employers on the benefits of hiring targeted populations.
- Intentionally engaging workforce development boards, staff, partners and employers in training/professional development opportunities on diversity and cultural competency and responsiveness.

Southeast Region – Rural Career Counseling Coordinator

Regional Approach

The Rural Career Counseling Coordinator serves eleven counties, and during 2018, focused on Career Pathways partnership development with the region’s educational institutions, community, professional and business organizations. This, and the work to fulfill the statutory responsibilities of this position, was not being done in rural Minnesota prior to the creation and funding of the Rural Career Counseling Coordinator position. The RC3 position is one of the best ways to keep the focus on the needs of the people in rural Minnesota, address those needs and expand the talent pipeline to meet the industry demands for a skilled workforce while being inclusive of gender, race, persons with a disability and other people with barriers to employment.

Best Practices

- Replicating current employer-led industry Sector Pathways Committees and the Equity Taskforces to engage employers, board members, community members, and individual career seekers in discussion and planning surrounding career pathways.
- Partnering with business, creating workforce upskill training and providing Labor Market Information.

Connecting System Partners

The Rural Career Counseling Coordinator and the Local Workforce Development Boards created regional partnerships focused on experiential learning for high school students. Each collaboration includes partnerships from K-12 education, post-secondary and employers. One collaboration has seven school districts from Houston and Fillmore Counties adopting similar experiential learning programming. The region shares a position working in the Owatonna High School as a Career Counselor, funded through three organizations and the school district.

Best Practices

- Coordinating with the Local Workforce Development Board’s Career Planners to support students as they encounter skill training program barriers.
- Providing wrap-around services to successfully bridge education and employment.

Career Services – Outreach and Marketing

The Rural Career Counseling Coordinator was part of a statewide team that developed new career pathways outreach and marketing materials. Seven different templates were created for each region to showcase their labor market information, career pathways, in-demand occupations and their median incomes. This region’s sectors are business, construction, education, health care, manufacturing, retail services and transportation.

Career Services

- Funding the updating, high-quality printing and requested quantities of the career advisory materials.
- Placing the new career advisory materials on local websites and social media.

Achieving Equity

This region uses Equity Taskforces to connect with and engage individuals with barriers to employment. This includes out-of-school youth, people with disabilities, veterans, women, minorities and people with a criminal background. The Rural Career Counseling Coordinator is linked to these task forces to build relationships with community partners and employers and guide priorities for service delivery.

Recommendations

- Funding to continue the Rural Career Counseling Coordinator (RC3) program and its work to provide labor market information, develop career pathways and tackle workforce shortage issues.
- The RC3 position is one of the best ways to keep the focus on the workforce needs of rural Minnesota, address those needs and expand the talent pipeline to meet the industry demands for a skilled workforce while being inclusive of gender, race, persons with a disability and other people with barriers to employment.

Data Table – Rural Career Counseling Coordinators

The following table summarizes the outreach and engagement activities of the state’s Rural Career Counseling Coordinators. In 2018, Minnesota’s Rural Career Counseling Coordinators standardized the criteria for stakeholder group classification, engagement methods summaries and data collection processes.

| Stakeholder Group | Engagement Methods Summary | Total Number Served in 2018 |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Business | Business tours; Career Pathways and Economic Development meetings; Career Exploration events; Job Fairs; Internships. | 3070 |
| Job Seekers | Layoff, Job Search Workshop and Career Exploration presentations; Job Fairs; Business tours. | 10,229 |
| K-12 Institutions | Career Exploration Summer Camps; Mock interviews in high schools; Career Exploration presentations; Local Careers. | 321 |
| Post-Secondary Institutions | Disability Employment Initiative programming; College fairs; Integrated instruction for career pathways programming. | 93 |
| Adult Basic Education | Two-way referrals; LEARN & EARN programs; providing services in local jails; How to enroll in skills training - local and regional in-demand occupations. | 25 Consortiums |
| Community Based Organizations | Collaborative business engagement efforts; Cross-referrals; Engaging diverse communities; Partners in regional planning; Accessing new talent for regional workforce and in-demand careers / jobs. | 47 |
| Economic Development | Participation on regional comprehensive economic development committees; Collaboration with local and regional economic development; Business recruitment presentations and tours; Regional talent development to meet business and industry current and future workforce needs. | 152 EDR’s, County, City, Other Entities |
| Other | Regional Initiative Foundations; United Way; New Americans Project; Tribal Governance and Tribal Workforce Steering Committees; Public Libraries; Community Action Agencies. | 77 |