2021 Annual Report
CareerForce division of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
HELPING MINNESOTANS PREPARE FOR AND FIND FULFILLING EMPLOYMENT.
HELPING MINNESOTA EMPLOYERS FIND THE WORKERS THEY NEED TO GROW AND THRIVE.
JULY 1, 2020-JUNE 30, 2021
The past year has been like no other. CareerForce services were needed more than ever. Between the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and the end of June 30, 2020, 815,584 Minnesotans applied for Unemployment Insurance benefits. Since then, we’ve been focused on helping the unprecedented number of people who lost employment find family-sustaining work as quickly and as safely as possible.

When we started our program year in July 2020, there were more than 450,000 Minnesotans requesting weekly unemployment benefits. Our work was immediately focused on helping those out of work prepare for in-demand and living-wage employment. As of June 30, 2021, 219,172 Minnesotans were requesting weekly unemployment benefits. Most of the more than 230,000 Minnesotans no longer requesting benefits have returned to work - either at their previous employer or in a new job. That is a tremendous amount of labor market upheaval in a matter of months - and that upheaval had real impacts on Minnesotans’ lives.

There were unique challenges in reaching and serving customers during the pandemic. In-person services were stopped to slow the spread of the coronavirus, so all services had to be delivered online or over the phone. Many people couldn’t return to work because of family obligations. Many Minnesotans needed to care for children who were distance learning or who couldn’t be in child care due to daycare closures. Many others needed to care for family members with health conditions or were isolating to protect their own health during the pandemic.

During the early days of the pandemic, in the previous program year, CareerForce staff and partners stood up new ways of reaching customers, new ways of delivering services and new ways of helping Minnesotans who needed us most during the pandemic.

In early 2021, we started making calls to Minnesotans receiving unemployment benefits, helping them consider their options, connecting them to job search and training resources and reminding them of work search requirements. This Good Jobs Now outreach campaign raised awareness about CareerForce services among thousands of Minnesotans who were not aware of our services.

As we ended our program year in June 2021, the economic recovery from the pandemic recession was underway and employers were struggling to find workers for tens of thousands of job openings across the state. From the largest and fastest job loss in state history to the steepest and swiftest employment recovery Minnesota has ever witnessed, the job market has been shaken up like never before.

As jobs are coming back, they aren’t always in the same fields or requiring the same skills as the jobs that were lost. If a person lost a job during the pandemic and remains unemployed now, they likely will need to find new employment that requires new skills.

CareerForce is here to help Minnesotans prepare for and find good jobs now.
Rebuilding a More Equitable Minnesota

Equity is at the center of all we do at CareerForce. Helping people overcome barriers to employment and find fulfilling, family-sustaining work is core to our mission. One of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) three current strategic objectives is to radically increase DEED’s economic impact for individuals and businesses that face systematic barriers to growth, including Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) Minnesotans.

We acknowledge that systemic barriers have kept some of our fellow Minnesotans from accessing the educational and employment opportunities that allow a person to achieve economic success. This is an issue that impacts all of us. Disparities based on race, geography, and economic status keep Minnesota from reaching its full potential. These inequities that impact our fellow Minnesotans’ ability to be successful impact all of us in many ways. Addressing these inequities is not only an economic necessity, it is a moral imperative.

As our economy began recovery from the COVID-19 recession, we renewed our commitment to achieving equity in employment and economic opportunities in Minnesota. We believe that rebuilding to where we were before COVID-19 is not good enough. We need to rebuild Minnesota’s economy in a way that addresses disparities and empowers the growth of the Minnesota economy, for everyone.

Demographics of Job Seekers Served
July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021:

- **BIPOC Minnesotans:** 15,599 (20% of CareerForce customers served/19.1% of Minnesota’s total labor force)
- **American Indian/Native American:** 2,287 (3%/0.8%)
- **Asian or Pacific Islander:** 4,331 (6%/5.1%)
- **Black/African American:** 7,538 (10%/6%)
- **Hispanic/Latinx:** 2,904 (4%/5.2%)
- **White Minnesotans:** 58,874 (77%/80.9%)

Percentages may not total as 100% due to rounding. Some customers did not provide demographic information.

Language Services

CareerForce is hiring staff who are fluent in languages spoken by our customers, including Hmong, Somali and Spanish. We have revised certain position descriptions to make fluency in English and a second priority language a minimum qualification for new hires. Currently, the CareerForce team has 21 staff members who speak a priority language in addition to English. We are committed to providing welcoming and helpful service to customers who speak languages other than English.

Cultural Awareness

DEED’s Office of Diversity & Equal Opportunity is hiring for a new position for a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion trainer to work with DEED staff on increasing our understanding and capacity to deliver our programs and serve customers in a culturally aware way that respects all people.
Services Provided to Job Seekers

During the pandemic, CareerForce quickly implemented virtual services – services that some customers prefer to in-person services. From virtual career fairs to online Explore Careers events to 1:1 meetings over the internet, customers started engaging almost immediately. At the same time, we recognize that lack of internet access and digital skills gaps were barriers to many Minnesotans over the past year. We connected with people without internet access over the phone, at libraries and at drive-through hiring events. As we emerge from the pandemic the lessons we learned about providing services in a variety of ways and reaching out to serve customers where they are at will continue to guide us.

Job Seekers served 2021 7/1/20-6/30/21:

» 1:1 sessions: 62,712

» Workshop attendees: 5,743

» Hiring and career exploration event attendees: 1,318

» MinnesotaWorks.net utilization: 75,179

Job Seekers served 7/1/19-6/30/20:

» 1:1 sessions: 80,139

» Workshop attendees: 17,466

» Hiring and career exploration event attendees: 1,637

» MinnesotaWorks.net utilization: 101,545

Lisa shared this message with CareerForce staff in June 2021:

I just wanted to pass along thank yous to your staff. I lost my job in December and wasn’t sure if I wanted to continue with my current career.

I know there are oodles of resources on CareerForceMN.com, but I focused on the webinars you offered on many industries as well as entrepreneurship. I participated in several webinars per week to just get exposed to as many job ideas as I could, to see if something looked interesting. I was “casting a wide net”, if you will.

I attended a webinar on MSP airport jobs and it really interested me. One of the presenters was with a large retailer and restaurateur that operates at MSP, and I went ahead and applied for a server position. I got the job and started last week! I absolutely love it.

Thank you for all the work you do. Please know that it makes a difference.

Thank you for helping me find a new job, especially during this unique pandemic time.

THIS REPORT DOCUMENTS THE WORK OF THE CAREERFORCE DIVISION OF THE MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (DEED). The DEED CareerForce division is part of the larger CareerForce system, which is a collaborative partnership between DEED, the Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards (MAWB), and the Governor’s Workforce Development Board (GWDB). Additional workforce development partners from community organizations across the state are essential in carrying out our work to help Minnesotans prepare for and find fulfilling employment and help Minnesota employers find the workers they need to grow and thrive. This report focuses on the work of DEED Job Service, Veteran’s Employment Services, Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Program and Foreign Labor Program staff.
Good Jobs Now

From March through June 2021, Job Service and Unemployment Insurance staff called nearly 50,000 Minnesotans currently receiving unemployment benefits. Initial outreach focused on Minnesotans laid off from jobs in Leisure & Hospitality, the industry sector hardest hit by initial layoffs in 2020. Since then, calls have shifted to laid-off retail workers and office staff. The goal of the phone conversations is to connect unemployed Minnesotans with a good work search plan and with resources.

There are good signs this campaign is working. During the first four months of the Good Jobs Now calling campaign, more than 16,000 people looking for work have created accounts on MinnesotaWorks.net, the state’s official job website, to look for open positions that meet their needs and share their information with employers looking for workers with their skills and experience.

These Good Jobs Now conversations also highlighted some natural misalignments of people out of work and the types and locations of work available. Common, mismatches include geographic location, necessary skills, transportation to work, work schedules to allow for child care or other family needs, wages that don’t provide sustainable income and other barriers. These mismatches align with findings of a survey by DEED and the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis of CareerForce customers in the April and May 2021.

Here’s what one Minnesotan who received a Good Jobs Now call had to say:

“I was really happy to speak with someone who was willing to go above and beyond on giving me advice on next steps in life. He listened to everything I had to say and helped me out in ways I didn’t even think could work out for me with finding a new job.”


Percent of respondents citing the issue as a moderate or significant challenge:

» Low pay at available jobs 68%
» Lack of opportunities in my field/professional area 68%
» Concern over COVID-19 exposure 64%
» Lack of transportation 58%
» Lack of qualifications 56%
» Lack of a telework option 52%
» Their own level of education/training 52%

DEED / Minneapolis Federal Reserve CareerForce Customer Survey conducted April and May resulted in 645 completed surveys out of 2,574 valid email addresses contacted for the survey.
CareerForce Helps Mathew Reskill to Reach Career Goals

Mathew always knew he wanted to go into the nursing field, but it was something he kept putting off as his career took him in a different direction. Now thanks to reskilling resources he learned about through CareerForce, Mathew is back on a health care career track and excited about what his future will bring.

Mathew was recently laid off. When he filed for unemployment benefits, he learned about the many different programs and services offered by CareerForce, including resume writing assistance, mock interviews, and help networking.

His counselor at CareerForce in Winona, Autumn Herber, also told him how the Dislocated Worker program could help him go back to school to pursue his dream to work in health care.

Mathew enrolled for a Licensed Practical Nurse degree at Minnesota State College Southeast. The Dislocated Worker Program helped pay for Mathew’s tuition and school supplies.

“When you get laid off you wonder ‘what do I do now?’, but when I worked with the people at Dislocated Worker Program, it was a game changer for me,” Mathew said.

Mathew always wanted to become a nurse and thanks to help from CareerForce he was able to make that goal a reality. Mathew now works as an LPN at a senior living community in Winona.
Veterans Employment Services
Veterans and eligible spouses receive priority of service through CareerForce. Job seekers are asked if they are current or former members of the U.S. military when they contact CareerForce and are connected with services that meet their needs. This priority of service continued during the pandemic through a variety of phone and virtual services.

Veterans served through Veterans Employment Services:
July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021: 585
» 89% of Veterans receiving case-managed services successfully exited the program
» Average wage at exit: $24.03/hour

July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020: 703
» 86% of Veterans receiving case-managed services successfully exited the program
» Average wage at exit: $22.18/hour

Education and perseverance are key to Aaron’s success
Aaron worked with Jane Kerntz, the Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program representative based at CareerForce in Hibbing after he was released from prison. Previously, while he was in the Army National Guard, he had deployed to Kuwait where he operated heavy equipment and drove huge trucks. Jane worked with Aaron to determine that getting a Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) would be his best bet for gainful, sustainable employment.

The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans provided tuition assistance for Aaron to attend the Advanced Minnesota Program at Hibbing Community College to prepare for his getting his CDL. With Local Veterans’ Employment Representative Lee Okerstrom, Jane guided Aaron through a difficult job search which ebbed and flowed for over two years and during the pandemic. No matter the setback, Aaron did not give up. When he would get passed over for a job, he didn’t get mad or upset – he just kept applying for jobs and keep moving forward. Jane remarked that Aaron was the most resilient job seeker that she had ever worked with.

Finally, Aaron landed a truck driver/equipment operator position at a recycling facility. His starting wage was $18.00 per hour. After working incredibly hard to prove himself, Aaron was bumped up to $20.00 per hour after three months on the job. Education and perseverance were the key factors in this Minnesota veteran’s success.
Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Services

Every year, Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFWs) travel to Minnesota to work with crops and in food processing plants where those crops are packaged. All MSFWs are American citizens who migrate internally within the United States for work. CareerForce Migrant Labor Representatives (MLRs), based at the Faribault, Mankato, Rochester, and Willmar CareerForce locations work face-to-face with farmworkers and provide services through their outreach efforts. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic the State Monitor Advocate (SMA) and MLRs understood the need to advocate for the safety of Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFWs) who are considered “essential workers” but whose safety at the workplace was not always addressed even before the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 posed additional challenges for Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers. There was misinformation about whether migrants would be allowed to travel and some migrant housing was not available because of social distancing limitations. CareerForce Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker staff helped both workers and the employers who need them overcome the unique challenges presented by the pandemic.

DEED leadership, the SMA, and MLRs advocated for the safety and health of MSFWs and worked in collaboration with other agencies that serve farmworkers, including the Minnesota Department of Health, and helped bring safety and health issues to the Governor’s attention. This resulted in Executive Order 21-14, which was signed by Governor Walz on March 19, 2021, establishing the Governor’s Committee on the Safety, Health, and Wellbeing of Agricultural and Food Processing Workers. Committee members will continue their work beyond the COVID-19 pandemic to address the safety, health, and wellbeing of our farmworkers.

Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker served:
July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021: 298
July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020: 511
HOW WE HELP MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARMWORKERS:

* Information on types of jobs available
* Assistance with registration
* Job referrals, testing, counseling
* Training opportunities
* Complaint resolution
* Referrals to support services and other organizations that serve migrant and seasonal farmworkers
* Information about farmworker rights protected by state and federal laws

HOW WE HELP AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS:

* Assistance with interstate and intrastate clearance orders
* Understanding federal and state farm labor compliance regulations
* Mediation and interpreter services
* Liaison between migrant service providers and employers
* Creating a skills-based job order and posts on the state’s no-fee online job bank
Services Provided to Employers
From July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021, job service staff served 1,592 Minnesota employers. Services provided to employers ranged from hosting virtual or safe and socially distanced hiring events to continuing on-the-job training support to assisting with posting job openings on MinnesotaWorks.net. As with our services provided to job seekers, we will build on lessons learned during the pandemic recession to serve Minnesota employers better through more virtual services, creative ways to find job candidates from underutilized talent pools and more.

Number of CareerForce Job Service sponsored/cosponsored hiring or career exploration events:
July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021: 213
July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020: 414

Work Opportunity Tax Credit
The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) allows for-profit employers of any size to reduce their federal tax liability by up to $9,600 per new hire by hiring people who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment. 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations who hire veterans are also eligible for WOTC. Any type of job can be eligible for WOTC, including temporary, seasonal, part-time or full-time work. There is no limit to the number of new hires an employer may claim for the WOTC, however the WOTC applies only for new employees who have never previously worked for the employer. CareerForce administers this federal program in Minnesota and can help Minnesota employers who have questions about this tax credit.

Number of WOTC hires by Minnesota Employers:
July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021: 73,551
July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020: 63,898

Federal Bonding
The Federal Bonding Program was established more than 50 years ago to provide Fidelity Bonds for “at-risk,” hard-to-place job seekers, such as people with a criminal record or those in recovery from substance abuse. Fidelity Bonds insure against fraud or theft committed by covered employees. The bonds cover the first six months of employment of an at-risk individual at no cost to the job applicant or the employer. CareerForce administers this federal program in Minnesota and can help Minnesota employers who have questions about applying for federal bonds for at-risk employment candidates.

In April 2021, DEED was awarded a $100,000 grant to expand the Fidelity Bonding program. The Fidelity Bonding Demonstration (FBD) Grant will expand DEED’s use of our fidelity bonds to improve employment outcomes and reduce recidivism.
for the formerly incarcerated and those in recovery for substance abuse. With the new Federal Bonding Demonstration grant, DEED is in a position to grow the program to serve an estimated 400 to 800 justice-involved individuals and the employers who hire them over the next four years.

**Foreign Labor Certification**

The Foreign Labor Certification Program allows employers to hire foreign workers when there are insufficient numbers of qualified U.S. workers available and willing to perform the work at wages that meet or exceed the prevailing wage paid for that occupation in the area of intended employment. These foreign workers may have highly specialized knowledge or skills (H-1B), be seasonal agricultural workers (H-2A) or seasonal or temporary non-agricultural workers (H-2B). CareerForce works with the U.S. Department of Labor on Foreign Labor Certification and can assist employers who have questions about hiring foreign workers.

**Number of Foreign Labor Certifications (one per worker) granted to Minnesota Employers:**

July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021:
H-2A - 3,200 / H-2B - 1,750

July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020:
H-2A - 2,200 / H-2B - 1,500

**What Employers Say**

Here is what some Minnesota employers had to say about how they were helped by CareerForce during the previous year:

Following the Explore Careers: Women in Construction virtual event, we heard this from Donna Kooiman at S.M. Hentges & Sons in Jordan:

“We hired our first new employee from your hiring event!! Her name is Emily!! I am lining up a few more interviews from applications we have received. Thank you for this amazing platform and helping to inspire women in construction!!”

After completion of a successful on-the-job training program, a southwest Minnesota employer shared this information with staff at CareerForce in Fairmont:

“Working with Mary and the On The Job Training Program has been a great experience for us. It not only allowed us to be reimbursed for expenses but it also offered monthly check ins based on our job description for the employee. While we have always done monthly reviews during the first 120 days of employment, CareerForce gave us the idea to really look at our job ad and see how the employee was progressing toward goals. We plan to continue to use this in the future with other hires in the form of benchmarking. We would highly recommend working with CareerForce to any employer considering on-the-job training.”
CareerForce Job Service

Job Service is part of the workforce system in Minnesota. The CareerForce workforce system functions in cooperation with business leaders, government agencies and other organizations to connect workers with employment to strengthen families and communities and connect employers with workers to help Minnesota’s businesses and economy thrive.

CareerForce Job Service Values

» Focus on the customer
» Communicate early and often
» Seek solutions
» Create inclusion
» Encourage new ideas
» Be gracious

CareerForce Mission

Facilitate thriving career solutions for individuals, employers, communities and Minnesota.

What guides the work of CareerForce staff

COLLABORATION: The work we do together matters to each other and to the people we serve. The greater the collaboration, the better the outcome.

EQUITY: We meet people where they are in life. We strive to deliver what’s needed for ongoing success. We make everyone feel included, valued and respected.

PASSION: People find happiness through work. They find what they’re passionate about. We’re passionate about making that happen.

EMPOWERMENT: We empower individuals, organizations and communities. We help make life better for people every day. We respect individual needs.

INNOVATION: Innovative thinking leads to new ideas. New ideas lead to powerful solutions. Powerful solutions lead to prosperous opportunities.
Our work at a glance
Total number of job seekers served by Job Service staff: July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021: 78,693
Total number of job seekers served by Job Service staff: July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020: 111,104
Total number of employers served by Job Service staff: July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021: 1,592
Total number of employers served by Job Service staff: July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020: 1,482

Demographics of Job Seekers Served
July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021:
» BIPOC Minnesotans: 15,559 (20% of CareerForce customers served/19.1% of Minnesota’s total labor force)
» Minnesota Veterans: 4,340 (5%/3.2%)
» Minnesotans with a Disability: 5,398 (7%/5.6%)
» Minnesotans Over 50: 19,085 (25%/33.2%)
» Minnesotans 16-24: 15,214 (20%/14.5%)
» Minnesotans with a Criminal Record: 549 (2%/estimated 10%)
» Residents of Greater Minnesota: 37,128 (47%/44.6%)

Percentages may not total as 100% due to rounding.
Some customers did not provide demographic information.
Job Service staff know it’s the big things – and the little things – that make a difference in a successful job search

Susan Dahl is a career counselor at CareerForce in Burnsville. Throughout the pandemic she continued to give job seekers expert and caring career seeking advice, even though for many months she couldn’t see her customers in person. While social distancing was an impediment to getting to know her customers, Susan didn’t let this get in the way of helping them find the right career fit for them and overcome specific challenges they faced in their career search.

Here’s part of an email exchange between Susan and a CareerForce customer she had been working with for some time:

“I had an interview today and did a much better job sticking to why I’m the right candidate for the position, rather than getting too far ahead of myself (in terms of wanting to be a manager). You were a big help! Thank you again.”

“I’m so glad to hear the interview went better! I’m glad we connected....Keep moving ahead with your plans – you’re doing great work!”

Susan, like so many other CareerForce staff, has dedicated herself to serving customers with compassion during the difficult past year. She and her fellow staff in Job Service provide guidance on job search, resume writing, interviewing skills and career development every day. Offering an empathetic ear, sage advice – and hope – are at the heart of how CareerForce has helped Minnesotans during the pandemic recession.

“You deserve ‘Kudos’ and many thanks from all of us that you helped get going on the right path with all the bumps along the way!” that was the message from a overjoyed online workshop participant to Robin Johnson at CareerForce in Brooklyn Park, who facilitated the workshop.

Thanks to the skills she learned and the confidence she gained through the workshop, the workshop participant successfully interviewed for and landed a job in her field during the pandemic.

The workshop participant closed her message of gratitude to Robin with the following words, “Thank you for your classes and walking us through these stressful times of COVID and job searches with a sense of humor and professionalism, you affirmed that we all experience the challenges and positive experiences. Let’s pick up and go from here!”
Looking Forward

Over the next year we’re focused on building a mobile-friendly labor exchange – a online job board that meets the needs of today’s workers and employers, who often access our resources on their phones. And of course, we are continuing to explore ways we can better reach those who need our services most.

» How can we better go out to meet people where they are and deliver services where it makes sense for them?

» How can we serve those left behind because of the digital divide?

» How do we overcome misalignment and barriers to connect people who need work with the employers who need them now?

» How do we help breakdown systemic barriers and assist people facing disparities find employment success?

We’re working with our partners to find answers to these questions – and serve Minnesota workers and employers even better, in new ways, now and in the future. Together, we will help rebuild a Minnesota labor market – and economy – that works for everyone.
This report documents the work of the CareerForce division of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). The DEED CareerForce division is part of the larger CareerForce system, which is a collaborative partnership between DEED, the Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards (MAWB), and the Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB). Additional workforce development partners from community organizations across the state are essential in carrying out our work to help Minnesotans prepare for and find fulfilling employment and help Minnesota employers find the workers they need to grow and thrive. This report focuses on the work of DEED Job Service, Veteran’s Employment Services, Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Program and Foreign Labor Program staff.