

How do I know what job is right for me?

In our diverse economy, there are many ways to achieve workforce success, and they don't all follow the same straight or orderly path. Employers in Southwest Minnesota now provide nearly 173,000 jobs and the state has nearly 3 million jobs, so it can be hard to know which one might be right for you.

Assessments and career exploration are a great way to help students and jobseekers make the best possible choices. What things do you like to do? What's your personality style? What skills and abilities do you have? There are a variety of free career assessments available online at sites including CareerOneStop (careeronestop.org), O*NET (www.onetonline.org), and DEED (www.careerforcemn.com) that can help.

Knowing more about yourself is critical to career planning. People choose different jobs at different points in their lives, and for very different reasons, but no one can do it for you.

You are in charge of your career planning process!



How much education or training will I need to get that job?

Graduating from high school is an important first step, but from there the path to success can go in many different directions. For example, students and jobseekers can go straight to work, into the military, on to college, start an apprenticeship, or something else, depending on your career goals.

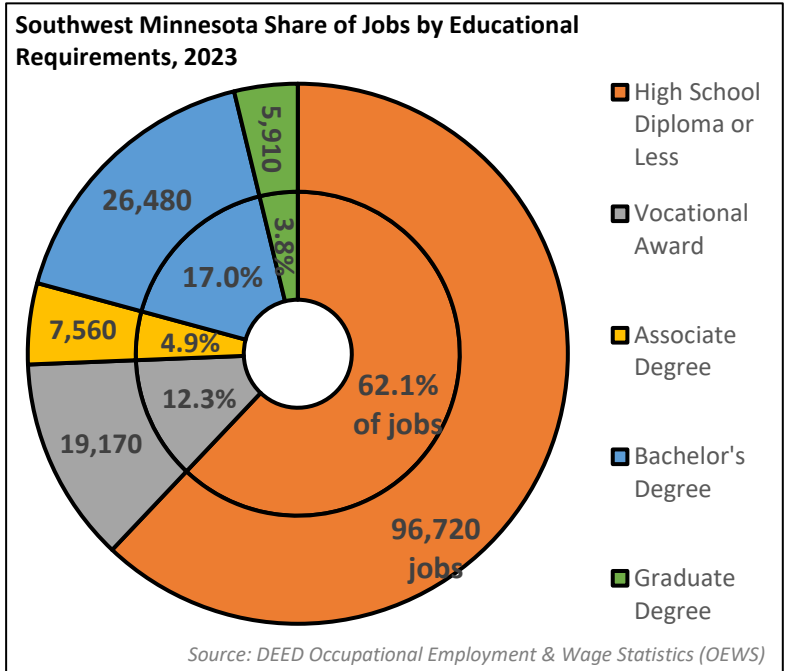


In other words, there are many pathways into the labor market. Some are short-term solutions, while others are long-term decisions. There are costs and benefits to every approach, and there are practical steps that students and jobseekers can take to make the most out of their career planning and educational investment.

It's best to pick something that you enjoy doing, and that matches your skills and personality. Once you've found something you like, it's important to know that every occupation requires some training, ranging from short-term to long-term. **Whether you go to college or not, on-the-job training and continual learning is critical to your career success.**

Do I need to go to college?

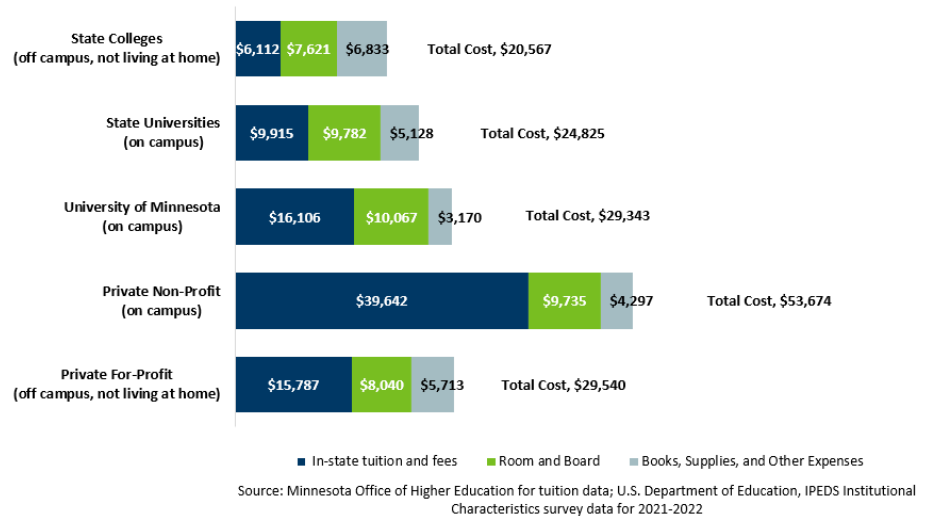
College is an excellent way to move up career ladders and open windows of opportunity to fields that would otherwise be closed, such as nursing or engineering. Many of these occupations offer high wages and are in high demand in the marketplace. Certain careers – such as dentists, lawyers, and schoolteachers – require a college education, while other jobs – including cost estimators, sales representatives, and correctional officers – do not. **Students and jobseekers might be surprised to learn that over three-fifths of all jobs in Southwest Minnesota can at least be started with a high school diploma or less, and only a quarter require college.**



How much does college cost?

While education is typically a worthwhile investment, **college can be expensive** – with average annual expenses ranging between \$13,000 and about \$54,000 per year in Minnesota. If living at home, an associate degree at a state college in 2022 cost roughly \$26,000 (\$12,945 x 2 years) while a four-year bachelor's degree at the University of Minnesota passed \$117,000 (\$29,343 x 4 years). The Office of Higher Education provides a list of tuition and fees for every college in Minnesota (www.ohe.state.mn.us).

Average Annual Expense for a Resident Undergraduate Attending Full-Time at a Minnesota College, 2021-2022



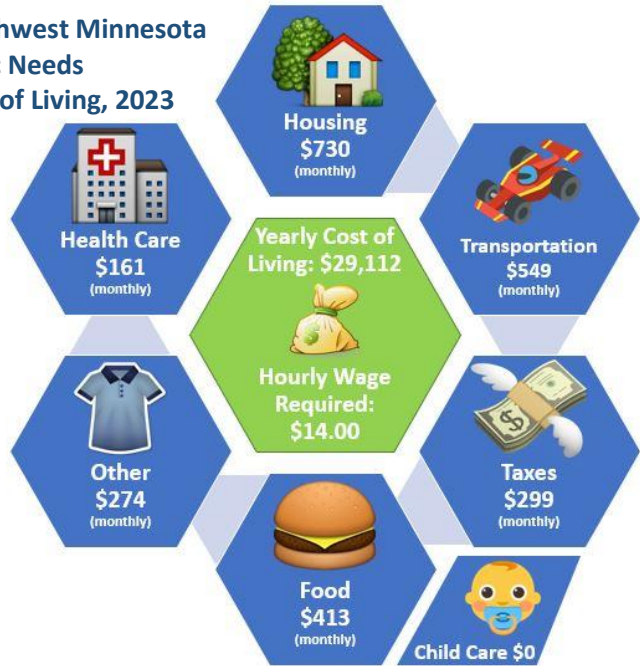
For those who go to college, your **choice of major matters** – different programs lead to different jobs that earn different amounts of money. For example, students who graduated from a Minnesota college or university with an associate degree in Registered Nursing were earning over \$79,500 within 2 years of graduating working full-time, year-round; while students with a 4-year bachelor's degree in Parks, Recreation & Leisure Studies working full-time were earning under \$39,500. DEED's [Graduate Employment Outcomes tool](#) can help potential students compare the costs of college with the typical earnings of graduates from programs at every Minnesota postsecondary institution to determine if their chosen major makes financial sense.

How much income will I need to make?

DEED's [Cost of Living tool](#) provides a yearly estimate of the basic needs cost of living in Minnesota, for individuals and families, by county, region, and statewide. The tool uses federal and state data to examine monthly living costs in seven categories: food, housing, health care, transportation, child care, other necessities, and net taxes.

According to 2023 estimates, the basic needs cost of living for a **single person** in Southwest Minnesota was **\$29,112**, which would require an hourly wage of **\$14.00** over the course of a full-time, year-round work schedule (2,080 hours). The highest costs were for housing and transportation, but of course both of those are greatly impacted by where you choose to live. Other costs would also vary based on your lifestyle, family size, and work status, and can go up or down based on your choices.

Southwest Minnesota Basic Needs Cost of Living, 2023



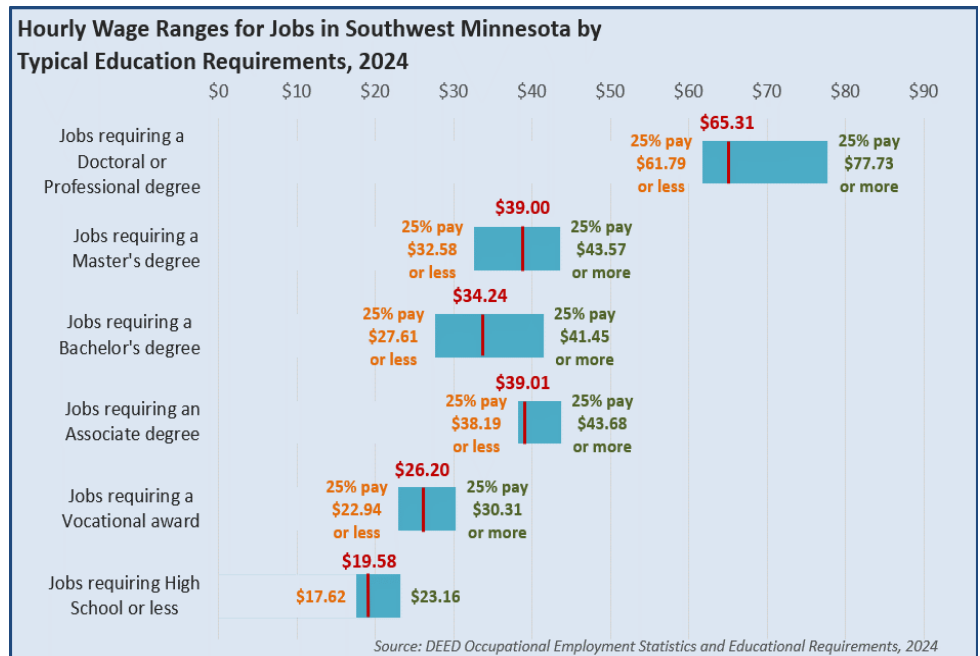
Source: DEED Cost of Living tool, 2023

How much income will I actually make?

While income isn't the only thing that matters when choosing a career, everyone wants and needs to make money. In general, the job you choose determines the amount of money you're able to make over the course of your lifetime.

Data show that hourly wages rise for each additional level of education completed; however, it's important to see that **there are opportunities for jobs that provide livable wages at every level of education**, including many that boast strong current and future demand in your region of the state.

Put simply, **not all great jobs require college, and not all college graduates end up in great paying jobs**. You can find



Source: DEED Occupational Employment Statistics and Educational Requirements, 2024

state and regional wage information for about 800 occupations in Minnesota using DEED's Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics tool (<https://mn.gov/deed/data/data-tools/oes/>).

What jobs are in demand in my region?

According to DEED’s [Occupations in Demand tool](#), there are more than 220 occupations showing high demand in Southwest Minnesota, with training and education requirements ranging from short-term on-the-job training to postsecondary education to advanced degrees:

Occupations in Demand by Typical Required Education in Southwest Minnesota with Median Annual Wage, 2023			
High School or Less	Vocational Training	Associate’s Degree	Bachelor’s Degree or Higher
Retail Salespersons \$34,798/yr	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers \$54,491/yr	Registered Nurses \$85,138/yr	Accountants & Auditors \$69,245/yr
Home Health & Personal Care Aides \$36,495/yr	Nursing Assistants \$39,764/yr	Police & Sheriff’s Patrol Officers \$74,684/yr	General & Operations Managers \$82,482/yr
Fast Food & Counter Workers \$30,228/yr	Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses \$58,499/yr	Dental Hygienists \$84,870/yr	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education \$65,364/yr
Cashiers \$30,595/yr	Heating, Air Conditioning, & Refrigeration Mechanics & Installers \$64,265/yr	Industrial Engineering Technologists & Technicians \$60,049/yr	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special & Career/Technical Education \$66,349/yr
Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary \$38,031/yr	Bus & Truck Mechanics & Diesel Engine Specialists \$59,444/yr	Radiologic Technologists & Technicians \$78,236/yr	Substitute Teachers, Short-Term \$52,112/yr
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers \$45,427/yr	Bookkeeping, Accounting, & Auditing Clerks \$47,963/yr	Agricultural Technicians \$50,274/yr	Financial Managers \$119,560/yr
Janitors & Cleaners, Except Maids & Housekeeping Cleaners \$37,379/yr	Plumbers, Pipefitters, & Steamfitters \$61,794/yr	Human Resources Assistants, Except Payroll & Timekeeping \$49,828/yr	Industrial Engineers \$90,455/yr
Construction Laborers \$49,744/yr	Substance abuse, behavioral disorder, & mental health counselors \$49,947/yr	Civil Engineering Technologists & Technicians \$71,227/yr	Computer Systems Analysts \$96,291/yr
Bus Drivers, School \$49,228/yr	Automotive Service Technicians & Mechanics \$50,024/yr	Physical Therapist Assistants \$62,988/yr	Middle School Teachers, Except Special & Career/Technical Education \$66,534/yr
Laborers & Freight, Stock, & Material Movers, Hand \$43,003/yr	Industrial Machinery Mechanics \$60,689/yr	Veterinary Technologists & Technicians \$40,453/yr	Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education \$37,747/yr

Source: DEED Occupations in Demand

Who can help me with my job search?

There are a lot of people and resources that are willing and able to help you find a job or plan for your career, but it is up to you to reach out to them and put their advice into action.

The sooner you get started forging your path, the better!

CAREER INFORMATION RESOURCES IN SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA:

Southwest MN Private Industry Council

Youth & Young Adult Team

Office: 507-476-4040

Web: www.swmnpic.org/services/youth-and-young-adults/

South Central Workforce Council

Youth Council

Office: 507-344-2622

Web: www.workforcecouncil.org/youth-council/

DEED Regional Analysis

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