

Record Job Openings, Abundant Opportunities

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Job vacancies have tripled in Northwest Minnesota since 2010, increasing by more than 6,000 jobs. Regional businesses reported more openings in the second half of 2016 than in any fourth quarter on record, according to DEED's Job Vacancy Survey. With nearly 9,000 vacancies, job demand in the region continues to grow overall, but the mix of vacancies has changed.

As employers look to fill openings on a level not seen for over a decade, data show they are making adjustments to job requirements and wage levels. Vacancies have increased in every job category since 2010, but the same cannot be said for the past year.

Despite an overall increase of 731 job vacancies between the fourth quarters of 2015 and 2016, there were over 50 fewer vacancies in education, training and library occupations; health care support; food preparation and serving; construction and



extraction; and installation, maintenance and repair.

On the positive side, the fourth quarter 2016 survey showed over 100 more openings for health care practitioners; building and grounds cleaning workers; personal care and service occupations; and sales jobs (see Table 1).

Job Shifts

With employers struggling to fill more openings, wage offers have increased in almost

every occupational group. In some cases, the makeup of job openings in a specific occupational group has also shifted, creating changes in wage offers and education and work experience requirements.

Health care practitioners and technical occupations are a good example. While the number of these vacancies increased between 2015 and 2016, the majority of new vacancies were in lower-paying technical jobs, such as licensed practical nurses, EMTs and paramedics, leading

to a declining median wage offer overall.

Wage offers, however, actually went up in the last year for both technicians and higher-earning health care practitioners such as registered nurses and physical therapists. But the surge in technician openings brought the median wage offer down overall.

In the last year the largest increase in median wage offers was for protective service jobs, but that was entirely due to the addition of higher-paying vacancies for correctional officers and jailers. Wage offers declined for other protective service workers such as security guards.

Conversely, wage offers for

transportation and material moving occupations increased significantly. Wage offers for motor vehicle operators rose \$9 from the year before, with wage offers climbing above \$20 per hour for heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers in the region.

In addition to changing wage offers, some businesses have

TABLE 1

Northwest Minnesota Job Vacancy Survey Results, Qtr. 4 2010 – Qtr. 4 2016						
	Number of Job Vacancies Q4 2016	Median Wage Offer Q4 2016	Change in Vacancies Q4 2010 – Q4 2016	Change in Wage Offer Q4 2010 – Q4 2016	Change in Vacancies Q4 2015 – Q4 2016	Change in Wage Offer Q4 2015 – Q4 2016
Total, All Occupations	8,982	\$12.87	6,039	\$2.23	731	\$0.68
Sales and Related	1,383	\$11.64	823	\$3.27	572	\$1.48
Personal Care and Service	1,252	\$10.65	1,131	\$2.78	550	\$0.84
Food Preparation and Serving Related	1,147	\$9.98	892	-\$1.02	-223	\$0.64
Health Care Practitioners and Technical	882	\$21.81	616	-\$1.77	265	-\$1.20
Production Occupations	674	\$13.85	513	\$2.58	33	\$0.70
Transportation and Material Moving	620	\$15.68	473	\$2.76	-12	\$4.34
Office and Admin. Support	541	\$12.83	201	\$2.60	-68	\$0.86
Health Care Support	464	\$13.59	55	\$2.70	-156	\$1.65
Building, Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	434	\$11.10	354	\$2.57	171	-\$0.02
Education, Training and Library	294	\$15.47	206	\$3.05	-58	\$1.05
Construction and Extraction	250	\$16.68	233	\$6.42	-158	-\$0.59
Installation, Maintenance and Repair	210	\$14.68	122	-\$4.36	-105	-\$4.77
Community and Social Service	198	\$17.54	146	\$7.60	-2	\$1.30
Business and Financial Operations	168	\$22.25	102	\$9.76	18	\$3.25
Management Occupations	106	\$27.35	56	-\$1.71	14	-\$0.41
Arts, Design, Entertainment and Media	99	\$15.71	22	\$4.62	5	\$2.02
Protective Service	93	\$15.38	79	\$5.02	26	\$6.38
Architecture and Engineering	73	\$24.61	42	-\$3.63	-37	\$0.11
Life, Physical and Social Science	41	\$18.02	8	\$3.73	-26	-\$1.83
Computer and Mathematical	33	\$23.47	8	\$3.50	-26	-\$5.30

Source: DEED Job Vacancy Survey 2010-2016

adjusted their job requirements to help attract applicants. For example, employers hiring for life, physical and social science occupations required a bachelor's degree or higher less often in 2016 than the year before, turning to applicants with no more than a high school degree more often. Management vacancies have followed the same trend, requiring a bachelor's degree or higher less often today than in 2010.

In contrast, employers looking for personal care and service workers began looking for applicants with vocational training much more often in 2016.

Current Education Requirements and Attainment

Current jobs in Northwest Minnesota require a wide mix of educational attainment for entry, ranging from no formal education to graduate degrees. Most prevalent are jobs that require a high school diploma or less, accounting for about 67 percent of jobs.

About 19 percent of jobs require a bachelor's degree or higher, with another 10.5 percent requiring vocational training or an associate degree (see Figure 1).

This varies slightly from the

educational requirements in the statewide job mix, where approximately 22 percent require a bachelor's degree or more and 64 percent a high school diploma or less.

Northwest Minnesota's higher reliance on jobs requiring vocational training and associate degrees indicates an emphasis on technical know-how in the region. In fact, Quarterly Workforce Indicators data show that in 2015 over 30 percent of workers 25 and older in Northwest Minnesota had some college or an associate degree, while just 37.5 percent had a high school diploma or less (see Table 2).

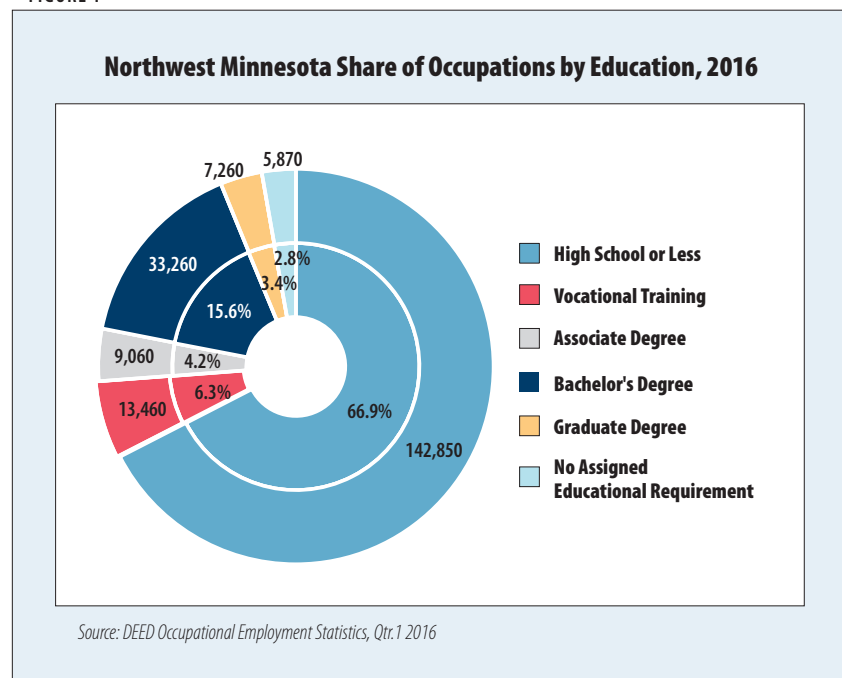
The apparent surplus in technical educational attainment versus

regional job requirements suggests that many workers in Northwest Minnesota are underemployed. Another 33,945 employees in the region, however, were 18 to 24 years old, and jobs that require just a high school education provide ample opportunity for young workers to start by learning on the job. Either way, employers certainly benefit from a highly-skilled workforce.

Non-Postsecondary Career Tracks

The abundance of jobs in Northwest Minnesota without postsecondary educational requirements does not necessarily translate to lower wages for workers. Although postsecondary education typically leads to

FIGURE 1



higher lifetime earnings, there are nearly 35,000 jobs in the region that require no more than a high school education but still have a median wage of over \$35,000 per year.

For example, the top 10 jobs in this category employed over 15,000 workers in Northwest Minnesota, including

transportation, construction and production occupations (see Table 3).

Furthermore, there are opportunities for workers without postsecondary education to advance. Over 5,000 of these jobs are in management and supervisory positions, ranging from office and administrative

support managers and first-line supervisors of production workers to supervisors of correctional officers and managers of farming, fishing and hunting workers. This shows that Northwest Minnesota provides people without postsecondary training the opportunities to move up the career ladder and improve their wages over time. **T**

TABLE 2

	Less than high school	High school or equivalent	Some college or associate degree	Bachelor's degree or higher	Educational attainment not available (workers aged 24 or younger)
Employees	19,170	64,299	67,477	37,531	33,945
Percent of Total	8.6%	28.9%	30.3%	16.9%	15.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau LEHD, Quarterly Workforce Indicators

TABLE 3

Occupation	Number of Jobs	Annual Wage Percentiles		
		25th	Median	75th
Truck Drivers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer	3,120	\$31,655	\$37,007	\$45,361
Carpenters	1,980	\$32,955	\$38,676	\$45,482
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	1,850	\$28,138	\$35,283	\$43,450
First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Office and Admin. Support Workers	1,680	\$36,802	\$45,305	\$55,786
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing	1,660	\$36,420	\$50,545	\$64,958
First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Production and Operating Workers	1,170	\$43,057	\$51,403	\$62,523
Cutting, Punching and Press Machine Setters, Operators and Tenders	1,140	\$30,613	\$35,948	\$42,164
Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	1,060	\$35,425	\$42,101	\$48,668
Highway Maintenance Workers	990	\$38,880	\$45,512	\$48,267
Welders, Cutters, Solderers and Brazers	950	\$33,114	\$37,609	\$44,161

Source: DEED Occupational Employment Statistics, Qtr. 1 2016