

Evaluation of the Minnesota DEED Workforce Innovation Grant



Final Report
September 27, 2019



SUBMITTED TO

Department of Employment and Economic Services (DEED)

ATTENTION

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REPORT

Evaluation of the Minnesota DEED Workforce Innovation Grant

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Abstract

The Minnesota Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) grant funded development of CareerForceMN.com, an innovative, online platform that integrates and enhances workforce system tools for career seekers and employers. With a modern interface and customized content for each user, the platform contains online communication tools that appeal to a broad audience, including career seekers, employers, workforce staff, and partners. The platform represents the new CareerForce communications strategy by describing workforce system services in plain language, rather than technical program terms (e.g., “hiring incentives for employers” rather than “Work Opportunity Tax Credit”), with the goal to assist customers find the services they need quickly. CareerForceMN.com also centralizes all CareerForce location and partner service offerings, to help career seekers and employers more easily navigate the decentralized network of local service providers. CareerForceMN.com is fully integrated with the CareerForce brand. The two efforts rolled out as a joint CareerForce initiative, re-enforcing their shared goals to improve customer experience and attract new customers to Minnesota’s workforce system services. CareerForceMN.com embodies the brand’s visual identity and communication strategy.

This evaluation documents: (1) how the Minnesota WIF grant program was implemented, (2) program outcomes before and after rollout, and (3) the allocation of grant expenditures and cost-effectiveness. We assess early indicators of satisfaction and examine the portal’s performance since its launch.

Overall, workforce staff and partners were optimistic about the future of CareerForceMN.com and the CareerForce brand. Most expect that the CareerForce initiative will improve the customer experience and engage more career seekers and employers with the workforce system services. Our study points to some encouraging signs of grant performance, even though we cannot attribute these changes causally to development of the platform. However, a common theme that emerged across the implementation, outcome, and cost studies was that it was too early to fully assess the grant performance since the CareerForce initiative still existed as a “work-in-progress” at the time of the evaluation’s follow-up data collection activities. At the time of the final round of site visits and the post-survey, several features and functionality for the platform were still under development, the CareerForce brand signage was being installed, and the public media campaign to broadcast CareerForce to career seekers and employers across the state was still pending.

Keywords: workforce development system, web platform, collaborative platform, branding, data tool integration, workforce innovation fund grant.

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List of Acronyms

ABE	Adult Basic Education
API	Application Programming Interface
BM	Budget Modification
DEED	Department of Employment Economic Development
DOL	U.S. Department of Labor
ESL	English as a Second Language
ETPL	Eligible Training Provider List
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
FY	Fiscal Year
GED	General Education Development
GWDB	Governor’s Workforce Development Board
IMPAQ	IMPAQ International, LLC
LMI	Labor Market Information
MAWB	Minnesota Association of Workforce Board
IMN	Minnesota
MNIT	Minnesota Information Technology Services
MTN	Minnesota Talent Network
NDLA	Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment
O*NET	Occupational Information Network
PWW	Portland Webworks
RFP	Request for Proposals
SSB	State Services for the Blind
SSN	Social Security Number
SOW	Scope of Work
TAA	Trade Adjustment Assistance
UI	Unemployment Insurance
WF1	Workforce One
WIF	Workforce Innovation Fund
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
WOTC	Work Opportunity Tax Credit
WDA	Workforce Development Areas

Executive Summary

In September 2015, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA) awarded a four-year, \$6 million Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) grant to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). The WIF grant is designed to support implementation of new and innovative approaches to service delivery or other processes in the workforce investment system. Minnesota's WIF grant funded the development and rollout of a comprehensive online platform in Minnesota, named CareerForceMN.com.

In May 2016, DEED contracted with IMPAQ International, LLC (IMPAQ) to perform an evaluation of its WIF grant initiative. IMPAQ's evaluation comprises an implementation study, an outcome study, and a cost study. Section 1 describes broad aspects of the project, including its management and target audience. Section 2 summarizes the evaluation design. Sections 3 through 5 present findings of the three studies—implementation, outcomes, and costs, respectively. Section 6 concludes this Executive Summary by highlighting project recommendations.

1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Minnesota WIF grant's purpose is to support development and implementation of an innovative platform that harnesses technology, mobile first design, and social media trends to better equip career seekers for the job search process, and assist employers to find and retain talent. CareerForceMN.com aims to be a one-stop-shop for labor market tools and information for career seeker and employers in Minnesota. It is a collaborative platform, facilitating online information-sharing among job seekers, employers, workforce system staff, and partner organizations—enabling them to access resources and make connections to achieve individual and mutual goals. The mobile-friendly interface and social media-inspired features were developed to improve user experience and attract more customers, including younger workers, to its online tools.

The CareerForce wheel shown in Exhibit E.1, summarizes the scope of the CareerForceMN.com platform.¹ It highlights the primary laws and policies that guide the platform, including the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Minnesota's strategic initiative to align workforce system resources around key industry sectors by region,² data security, and accessibility requirements for those with disabilities. It also names the key data systems integrated into the platform: job postings from MinnesotaWorks.net, the state labor exchange, and labor market information data (e.g., occupational forecasts). Finally, the wheel highlights

¹ CareerForce Wheel is from the program's Year 2/Quarter 2 Quarterly Narrative Report.

² Minnesota is aligning workforce system resources within each of its six geographic regions around five high-demand industries: manufacturing, healthcare and social assistance, professional and business services, construction, and natural resources (source: Year 4/Quarter 2 Quarterly Performance Narrative).

many of the platform’s goals—including creating a social-media-enabled, user-friendly interface, and hosting diverse resources that reach a broad audience. We highlight below the three main design components of the platform.

Integrated workforce system tools and resources.

The platform, as noted, aims to be a one-stop-shop for workforce system information and tools in Minnesota for career seekers and employers. The content includes job postings, regional labor market information (e.g., occupation forecasts), workshop listings, career planning resources and e-learning tools, talent recruitment and retention resources, and information on workforce system services. Users can register for any workshops offered by workforce staff and partners across the state, ranging from career preparation topics like resume writing to skill-building courses in Microsoft Excel. Some skill-based courses will also be available online, such as digital literacy modules, with plans to continue to expand the e-learning offerings over time. Much of the content pulled in from other sources, including workshops, labor market information, and job postings, is enhanced and updated to make it more user-friendly—such as modern dashboard interfaces and advanced search capabilities to pull up the most relevant content, by keyword and geography.

Modern interface with customized content. A sleek and tailored user experience is paramount to improving the customer experience and engaging new types of customers. The platform offers a social media-enabled, mobile-friendly interface with relevant content based on user attributes. For example, users can view labor market information by region. The platform also features resources for special populations, such as youth, veterans, individuals with disabilities, those with a criminal record, and older workers. The content is fully accessible to individuals with disabilities who use screen readers or similar tools.

Collaborative Platform. As employers and jobseekers move increasingly to online and social media channels for recruiting, hiring, and even upskilling their staff, CareerForceMN.com aims to provide ways for staff and customers to connect with each other online. A key aspect of the platform is a virtual convener. It has features to support online messaging and information-sharing (e.g., partner pages, employer pages) among workforce system staff, partner organizations, career seekers, and employers. More efficient internal coordination enables workforce staff and partners to use CareerForceMN.com to quickly pass (and track) customer inquiries to the relevant workforce staff or local partner across the state.

Exhibit E.1: CareerForce Wheel





Platform Audience

Career Seekers. The platform contains tailored resources and content for career seekers at different points in their careers. It integrates and improves previously disaggregated labor market tools and resources, so career seekers can quickly access the information they need to make better labor market decisions. The information is customized by region. For example, career seekers can search by geography for workforce system services, jobs, and labor market information. The platform also hosts materials tailored to special populations (e.g., youth, those with disabilities, ex-offenders, veterans), as well as resources to support diversity in the workplace. Each user also customizes his/her account profile to meet the user's individual needs (e.g., career goals, favorite organizations, and favorite pages).

Employers. The platform serves as a channel employers with operations in Minnesota can use to recruit workers through job postings and employer profiles (free employer pages to promote their company culture). They can also use regional labor market information data to inform longer-term human capital planning. Additional resources (e.g., employee development plan, workforce plan) in the platform can help employers train and retain their current personnel.

Workforce System Staff and Partners. CareerForceMN.com is designed to forge stronger communication channels among workforce staff and partners by bringing all players together in a single web platform. Through the portal, CareerForce location staff can easily transfer and track referrals to Proud Partner[†] staff, and vice-versa. To keep the whole service network up to date on the latest offerings, Proud Partners and other community partners also have their own pages that contain information on their programs and services (e.g., adult basic education classes) and web links to further details (e.g., class schedules). Staff can also post articles and blog posts on the Newsroom to publicize their initiatives and success stories. Finally, the platform offers restricted content for staff and partners to access policies, reference materials, best practices, training resources (e.g., webinar recordings), and performance measures, among other exclusive resources.

[†] Proud Partner organizations receive funding from DEED, local government, and/or workforce development boards to deliver services to career seekers and employers.

In December 2017, two years into the grant, DEED leadership decided to integrate CareerForceMN.com with a parallel workforce system branding effort with similar goals. With the new brand, the Minnesota workforce system is now renamed as “CareerForce” and the WIF-funded platform adopted CareerForceMN.com as its name. The branding initiative started one year prior to the WIF grant, in 2014.³ Its goals are to raise awareness of workforce system services to attract new customers, such as white collar professionals; and improve the customer experience in navigating the complex network of services and partners. The two initiatives rolled out jointly in Fall 2018. The CareerForce brand provides not only a common visual identity for the workforce system; it also aims to propagate a cultural shift with uniform business processes and communication strategy, to ensure every customer gets the same high level of service across the state. Key focus areas of the communications strategy are fostering a welcoming, “no wrong door” environment for all customers (which is also an original tenet of the Minnesota WIF grant

³ Becoming CareerForce, Background: <https://becomingcareerforce.com/background/>

proposal); and describing service offerings in plain English (rather than jargon and technical partner and program names).



Project Management

The MN WIF grant program was implemented by a multidisciplinary team of workforce, information technology (IT), communications, and other stakeholders. MNIT was a close partner with DEED in this effort, as the centralized IT agency that supports the technology needs for all state government programs in Minnesota. The WIF project team slowly built up over time. During the requirements-gathering phase, in Year 1 and Year 2, the joint MNIT and DEED team was lean—with only four key staff (Administrator, Project Director, IT Project Manager, and Business Project Manager). An additional four staff members joined the WIF team during the platform development phase in Year 3 (Project Coordinator, Integration Project Manager, Content Coordinator, and Training Coordinator).

DEED's other program divisions (e.g., DEED Office of Performance Management, DEED Communications Office, the Labor Market Information division) played an important role in WIF grant activities. These offices received WIF funds for staff time on WIF grant activities and/or for contracts providing WIF grant services or products. Lastly, dozens of key stakeholders outside the scope of WIF grant funds generated support for the WIF grant initiative—directly contributing to the platform's design—such as DEED Divisional Leadership, the Minnesota Department of Education, Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB), and the Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards (MAWB). GWDB is a neutral body that represents businesses and industry, education providers, community-based organizations, organized labor, state agencies, and the state legislature. MAWB represents the 16 local workforce development boards across the state.

2 EVALUATION DESIGN SUMMARY

2.1 Logic Model

The grant was motivated by a wide range of workforce system challenges. First, the Minnesota WIF grant program is designed to reduce workforce barriers—such as lack of integrated and cohesive technology systems, and lack of coordination among workforce system providers. The grant initiative also aims to overcome a perception problem in attracting new audiences to the workforce system (e.g., youth, immigrants/communities of color and those with disabilities); and to be more responsive to the economic context of Minnesota, offering a customized online experience for each user, regardless of where they live (e.g., rural or urban) or what demographic they represent.

The overall objective of the Minnesota WIF grant is to address workforce system challenges with an innovative, comprehensive technology platform that better equips career seekers to understand and prepare for in-demand jobs in Minnesota and support employers to find and retain talent. Here, we briefly describe the program logic model's inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes to support this larger goal.

Inputs. Key grant inputs include USDOL WIF grant resources; project leadership staff from DEED and MNIT; other key workforce system stakeholders who provided critical guidance (such as workforce system state and local workforce development boards, CareerForce location staff, employers, and education and training partners); and the branding and platform vendors.

Activities. The first major activity was a robust platform requirements-gathering process led by MNIT and DEED, to identify the critical components of the new platform and select the vendor to build and deploy CareerForceMN.com. Once the platform vendor was in place, DEED, MNIT, and the vendor designed, tested, and enhanced the platform based on feedback from key stakeholders. After the platform's launch, the WIF team continued to collect feedback from the field and improve the platform's features. Importantly, midway through platform development, the WIF grant team harmonized their content with the overall CareerForce branding effort to ensure the portal content reflected the CareerForce brand and its communication strategy. Finally, the DEED team spearheaded efforts to train workforce staff and partners on the platform and plan for sustainability.

Outputs. The results of these activities were the development and release of CareerForceMN.com. Outputs include specific capabilities in the platform, such as a mobile and accessible interface; customized content for each user; e-learning materials; collaboration features that enhance the ability of career seekers and employers to directly message workforce staff and partners through online connections; and the integration of online tools and resources in the single platform. In addition, the WIF grant helped fund and integrate with the CareerForce brand, including developing a new unified visual identity and a standardized culture and communications strategy across the state.

Outcomes. Overall, CareerForceMN.com and the CareerForce brand are expected to produce a number of positive outcomes, such as new customers engaged with workforce system services, robust web traffic, and increased use of the workforce system's online tools (e.g., job postings, job searches, workshop registrations). Beyond increased online activity, the platform is expected to improve user experience through customized content and by providing an inclusive, mobile-friendly service that is available and assessable to all with easy-to-digest content. It should also enable more efficient communication channels for career seekers, employers, staff, and partners. Overall, CareerForceMN.com is expected to reach new audiences and increase employer and career seeker satisfaction with the state's workforce system.

2.2 Implementation Study

The implementation study examines implementation fidelity, documents how the program was implemented, provides contextual information for interpreting program outcomes, and identifies implementation challenges and success factors. Exhibit E.2 presents the primary research questions for the implementation study, organized by six broad research areas.

Exhibit E.2: Primary Research Questions, Implementation Study

Broad Topic	Primary Research Questions
Program Context	What factors motivated the WIF grant's design?
Platform Design	What was the process to design the platform and what were its key features?
Grant Implementation	How was the platform and CareerForce brand rolled out to the field?
Partnerships	What was the role of partners and outside resources in the WIF grant?
Grant Management, Funding, and Sustainability	How was the program managed and how will it be sustained after the grant funding ends?
Grant Outcomes	What are the lessons learned from all phases of the project?

To answer these research questions, the evaluation team conducted a thorough **documentation review** related to the program. The team also conducted **three rounds of semi-structured in-person and phone interviews** (see Exhibit E.3) with a diverse array of project stakeholders (e.g., WIF grant project staff, Steering Committee members, brand ambassadors). The team developed interview protocols based on program knowledge, documentation review, and interactions with DEED's program staff. To ensure we asked the most pertinent questions of each interviewee, we developed separate interview protocols for each site visit round, all based on the interviewee role.

Exhibit E.3: Data Collection Rounds, In-person and Phone Interviews

Round 1

1

- Occurred in **May 2017**
- 51 in-person and phone interviews at:
 - DEED's Headquarters
 - 4 CareerForce locations across the state in both rural and urban regions
- Occurred in the requirements-gathering phase, when the WIF team was still constructing the vision of the WIF platform.

Round 2

2

- Occurred in **June 2018**
- 16 in-person and phone interviews at:
 - DEED's Headquarters
- Occurred while CareerForceMN.com was under development.

Round 3

3

- Occurred in **April 2019**
- 64 in-person and phone interviews at:
 - DEED's Headquarters
 - Same 4 CareerForce locations across the state in both rural and urban regions from Round 1
- Occurred after the platform was online.

Following each data collection round, we thoroughly reviewed interview notes using the qualitative analysis software NVivo. A systematic review of the interview notes allowed the team to identify key program activities, success stories, challenges faced, best practices, lessons learned, and recommendations for improvement. We designed a deductive and inductive coding scheme to search for recurring themes and clusters.

2.3 Outcome Study

The outcome study is divided into two distinct domains of key outcome measures: stakeholder satisfaction and platform performance. The **first domain of the outcome study** refers to a pre-post analysis of satisfaction of stakeholders (career seekers, employers, and workforce system staff) with the workforce system. Key research questions included in the surveys are:

- **Career seekers:** (i) How did the amount of interaction that career seekers had with the workforce system change? (ii) Which services did career seekers use before and after the implementation of the platform? (iii) How did their level of satisfaction with them change? (iv) How did awareness of job market conditions change? (v) How did career seekers' usefulness of web-based workforce system tools change?
- **Employers:** (i) How did employer satisfaction with the workforce system change? (ii) How did employers' ease or difficulty in communicating their workforce needs to state and local workforce agencies change? (iii) How did employers' use of web-based tools for working with workforce system stakeholders change?
- **Workforce staff:** (i) How did workforce system staff satisfaction with the tools and resources available to help them serve career seekers change? (ii) How did workforce system staff satisfaction with the tools and resources available to help them serve employers change? (iii) How did workforce system staff ease or difficulty of working with career seekers (to help them achieve their goals) change? (iv) How did workforce system staff ease or difficulty of working with workforce system stakeholders change?

We relied on quantitative survey data to gauge stakeholder satisfaction from (1) jobseekers who received services at a CareerForce location,⁴ (2) employers posting a job opening to MinnesotaWorks.net,⁵ and (3) Minnesota's workforce system staff.⁶ Each survey was fielded twice—in the beginning of the grant period (Fiscal Year 2017, or Year 2) and after the platform was online (Fiscal Year 2019, or Year 4). The first survey wave gathered baseline information on stakeholder satisfaction prior to development of the platform. The second, follow-up survey wave was fielded after the platform went online. Each wave of the survey used the same survey instrument, thereby enabling us to observe how satisfaction within a group changed from before implementation to after. Exhibit E.4 summarizes the survey population in each survey, as well as samples and response rates.

⁴ The full list of criteria DEED utilized to determine the career seeker sample included career seekers who: (1) were found in DEED's administrative records as having either used a computer at a CareerForce location or attended a workshop at a CareerForce location in February 2017 (pre-survey) or February 2019 (post-survey); (2) had not been part of other DEED job seeker surveys in the previous year; (3) had a valid email address in DEED's administrative records.

⁵ The full list of criteria DEED utilized to determine the employers sample included: (1) posted a job opening on MWN in January/February 2017 (pre-survey) or January/February 2019 (post-survey); (2) had not been part of other DEED employer surveys in the previous year; (3) had a valid, unique email address in DEED's administrative records.

⁶ The full list of criteria DEED utilized to determine the workforce staff sample included: (1) managers, business service representatives, and case workers of all 50 CareerForce locations; (2) senior representatives of DEED's Workforce Development, Business Development, Vocational Rehabilitation, and other relevant divisions; (3) chairs of the administrative entities managing WIOA programs in all 16 of Minnesota's Workforce Service Areas.

Exhibit E.4: Summary of Survey Populations, Samples, and Responses

<i>Pre-Platform Development Survey</i>	<i>Survey</i>		
	<i>Career Seekers</i>	<i>Employers</i>	<i>Workforce Staff</i>
<i>Number - Received Tennesen Notice[†]</i>	1,540	1,533	1,183
<i>Opted into Survey</i>	134	102	388
<i>Received Survey Invitation</i>	119	101	388
<i>Responded to the Survey (Response Rate)*</i>	73 (61.3%)	78 (76.5%)	317 (80.5%)
<i>Post-Platform Development Survey</i>	<i>Survey</i>		
	<i>Career Seekers</i>	<i>Employers</i>	<i>Workforce Staff</i>
<i>Number - Received Tennesen Notice**†</i>	1,465	1,237	2,355
<i>Opted into Survey</i>	179	61	535
<i>Received Survey Invitation</i>	179	61	535
<i>Responded to the Survey (Response Rate)*</i>	86 (48.0%)	50 (82.0%)	383 (71.6%)

Source: DEED summary data and IMPAQ survey data.

Notes: The number of survey invitations delivered is sometimes less than the number opting into the survey due to invalid e-mail addresses; these were e-mail addresses self-reported in response to the Tennesen notice, not the e-mail addresses from DEED's administrative records.

[†]As mentioned in Section 3.2.1, Survey Data Analysis and Reporting, the number of employers and workforce staff who received the Tennesen notice corresponds to the total population; in other words, all employers and workforce staff who met the selection criteria were invited to participate in the survey. However, only a random, stratified sample of career seekers were invited to participate in the survey. The population numbers for the first wave of the career seeker survey was 8,360 and for the second wave was 7,772.

* Valid responses include complete responses (e.g., answers to all survey questions) and partial responses (e.g., question 1 and at least one other question was answered). The response rate is calculated by dividing the number of completed surveys by number of individuals who received the survey invitation, not the numbers that received the Tennesen notice. This is not the same as traditionally reported survey response rates, which omit the advance notice required in Minnesota.

** Minnesota law requires DEED to provide advance notice to the subjects of state-sponsored information gathering activities, and to allow individuals the opportunity either to consent to participate, decline to participate, or make no response to the request. Only individuals who opt in can be contacted. This step is referred to as a Tennesen notice.

IMPAQ created survey weights to make the group of respondents to the employer (by industry) and career seeker (by race and education) surveys representative of the population of interest. See section 4.2 for a full description of the survey weights. To assess how satisfaction changed for each stakeholder group, we compared the distributions of survey responses from the first and second waves of each survey. We used statistical significance tests to assess observed changes between the two waves,⁷ but required a minimum threshold of 30 observations per category to run such tests.⁸ It is important to note that the analysis conducted in this study cannot be interpreted as implying causal impact of the platform implementation on stakeholder satisfaction measures. This is because the design does not control for non-program factors that may have changed during implementation that also could affect the outcomes of interest. This is a limitation of pre-post studies in general, not of our design in particular.

⁷ Because the samples for each survey wave are independent, we used independent sample tests.

⁸ Cross-tabulations were not run for several subgroups due to sample size limitations, especially in the employer and jobseeker surveys.



Interpretation of Survey Results

Workforce Staff Survey. We made no adjustments to the workforce staff survey data, so the survey results should be interpreted as representing only the opinions of the respondent group. This may or may not reflect sentiment among either: (1) the broader group of staff who received the survey, or (2) the larger group of staff initially contacted and asked for consent to be sent the survey.

Employer/Career Seeker Surveys. Based on the survey implementation and our procedure for creating and using the survey weights, the results for the employer survey are representative of the population of employers that: (1) posted a job opening to MinnesotaWorks.net at a point in time before the fielding of either survey, (2) were not part of a DEED employer survey within the preceding year, and (3) had a valid e-mail address in DEED records. Likewise, our results for the career seeker survey are representative of the population of job seekers who: (1) used a computer or attended a workshop at a point in time for either survey, (2) were not part of a DEED job seeker survey within the preceding year, and (3) had a valid e-mail address in DEED records. Our results do not apply to the general population of all employers or career seekers in Minnesota.

The **second domain of the outcome study** refers to usage statistics on the new portal. The purpose of this domain is to: (1) describe performance metrics related to the new platform, and (2) compare key performance measures between MinnesotaWorks.net and the CareerForceMN.com platform. This domain's goal was to answer two primary research questions: (1) How is CareerForceMN.com performing currently? (2) How do key performance measures compare between MinnesotaWorks.net and CareerForceMN.com?⁹ We relied on DEED's administrative data on platform outcomes for both MinnesotaWorks.net and CareerForceMN.com. The administrative data, which comes from analytical tools embedded in each platform system, represents a reliable way to track and report platform traffic, page visualizations, number of accounts, and document uploads, among other statistics. We prepared relevant statistics describing how the measures evolved over the grant period. For selected outcomes (e.g., number of employer accounts), we also calculated cumulative performance totals over the grant period.

2.4 Cost Study

For the **cost allocation domain**, we relied on financial administrative data from DEED to observe grant expenditures by quarter and fiscal year.¹⁰ We also disaggregated fund allocation by key expenditure categories noted in the project budget (e.g., costs with personnel, travel, supplies, miscellaneous). Lastly, we leveraged interview notes with key grant staff and other stakeholders, to provide context to project expenditures when needed; and to provide a description of budget modifications submitted to DOL, as well as a detailed description of contracts and contractual

⁹ We only compared one metric between MinnesotaWorks.net and CareerForceMN.com, because some metrics are not applicable on one of the two platforms (e.g., number of resumes uploaded does not apply to CareerForceMN.com since career seekers cannot upload resumes to this portal; number of pages shared via email does not apply to MinnesotaWorks.net since this feature is not available in it), and some others are not tracked by one of the platforms (e.g., DEED has not started tracking the number of searches conducted by career seekers or employers on CareerForceMN.com).

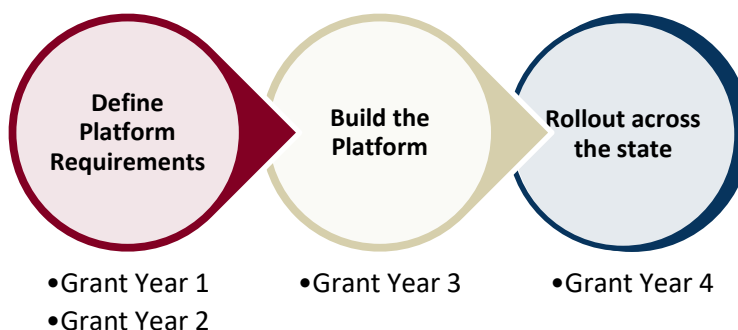
¹⁰ The cost study analysis refers to the first 14 quarters of the project, or up to Year 4's Quarter 2 (March 31, 2019).

amendments DEED signed with subcontractors. This domain's goal was to answer two research questions: (1) What was the total amount of resources used to implement the program? (2) How were grant funds spent, by major category of expenditure? (I.e., how were project funds distributed to the components of platform development and implementation (e.g., staff, equipment, and other costs)?

For the **cost effectiveness domain**, we used both costs and outcomes data to calculate the per unit cost of the program, using the following equation: $\text{Unit Cost} = \frac{\text{Total Cost}}{\text{Outcome}}$. **Total cost** refers to project expenditures up to the end of Quarter 2, Year 4 (or March 31, 2019). We used two **outcomes** in this cost effectiveness analysis: number of unique accounts created on the platform, and number of users who registered for a workshop. This domain's goal was to answer the following research question: What was the total cost of the program per unit, for the two outcome measures of interest (namely, the number of unique accounts created on the platform and the number of users who registered for a workshop)?

3 IMPLEMENTATION STUDY FINDINGS

Minnesota's major WIF grant activities fall into three phases: (1) developing requirements for the platform, (2) building and releasing the platform, and (3) jointly rolling out CareerForceMN.com and the CareerForce brand to the workforce system. Several key themes



carried through all three phases. First, the project benefited from extensive stakeholder engagement with state and local stakeholders throughout the four-year grant period. The WIF team used this support to build a comprehensive platform that leverages existing resources (e.g., time, knowledge, and existing online tools) and relies on stakeholder input to meet the needs of its diverse users across the state. This foundation fostered excitement among stakeholders for the potential of CareerForceMN.com, as well as their continued commitment to work with the platform administrators to refine the features and content. Second, the WIF team navigated a continuously broadening platform scope, most notably to build an entirely new platform rather than enhancing the existing Minnesota Talent Network (MTN), and fully harmonizing CareerForceMN.com with the CareerForce brand. The team tackled these scope expansions in a compressed platform development timeline and with an under-staffed project team. This four-year journey also highlighted the importance of strong, consistent top-level leadership that drives the vision and commitment for such complex, system-wide changes. Some interviewees thought that leadership turnover at DEED – both at the Commissioner level and in other strategic

positions over the four-year grant period—caused uncertainty as new leaders lack the project’s institutional knowledge and require time to get up to speed and articulate their priorities and vision. We briefly summarize the activities of the three WIF grant phases below.

Defining Platform Requirements. The original WIF grant work plan was based on the idea that the WIF grant would largely consist of a series of enhancements to MTN, an existing web-based talent community—such as integrating the job postings and workshop registration feeds from MinnesotaWorks.net, and repackaging labor market information from the DEED platform. However, DEED’s contract with the vendor hosting MTN ended in September 2015—just as DEED learned it had won the WIF grant—and was not renewed. With the MTN platform closure, the focus of the WIF grant had to shift from enhancing an existing platform with an incumbent vendor to developing and implementing a new one with a new vendor. In light of this change, the first two years of the grant spanned the work to define the platform’s business requirements in collaboration with stakeholders, and hire a technology vendor to execute the vision. This requirement-development phase was slowed by the potential overhaul of MinnesotaWorks.net (a key data source for CareerForceMN.com). Near the end of this period, the grant scope expanded even further, with a DEED leadership decision to fully align the platform with the CareerForce brand. This complicated platform development, but ultimately strengthened both initiatives.

Building the Platform. In grant Year 3, the platform vendor built the IT infrastructure through a flexible, agile design methodology, deploying iterative capabilities in two-week sprints to allow for immediate feedback from the WIF team and adjustment. The work to develop the narrative content occurred in parallel with the support of the DEED Communications Division and the branding vendor, to ensure the platform aligned with the CareerForce brand’s communications strategy. The WIF team built and launched the platform in a mere nine months, despite delays in hiring for critical staff roles and the expanded scope to align the platform with the CareerForce brand. However, the platform deployed at launch was a work-in-progress during the rollout phase, with the expectation that the team would continually refine the features and content over the next year.

Rollout. The CareerForce platform and brand rolled out as a joint initiative in grant Year 4. The CareerForce team conducted extensive training and outreach with workforce staff and partners to disseminate CareerForceMN.com and the policy guidance associated with the new brand. At the same time, the team continued to enhance the platform in response to user feedback and planned milestones. Much of the policy guidance supporting the CareerForce brand also rolled out slowly over this period, including what was expected around the Proud Partner role on the platform and at CareerForce and stand-alone partner locations. Interviewees reported that multiple factors slowed acceptance of the joint initiatives across the state—including the “work-in-progress” status of both the platform and the brand; concern that some of the platform content was too advanced for the mostly low-skilled career seeker client base; a postponed public launch; and a new DEED commissioner, whose vision for CareerForce was still being defined. Midway through Year 4, the CareerForce team also began planning for the sustainability of the CareerForce initiative, including identifying the staffing structure, funding resources, and strategies that would guide its longer-term vision.

4 OUTCOME STUDY FINDINGS

4.1 Stakeholder Satisfaction

While the platform is still incorporating new features and functionality and has not been fully integrated to stakeholders' day-to-day activities, this preliminary effort points to a few promising results. For instance, a higher proportion of workforce staff said it is 'now' easy or very easy to assist employers compared to before development of the new platform; a smaller percentage of them said they are not at all satisfied with the use of social media to connect with stakeholders; and fewer find it difficult or very difficult to communicate with postsecondary schools. As noted, low sample sizes prevented us from running statistical significance tests for response options with fewer than 30 responses. Below, we discuss some results that were statistically significant.

For those staff who only serve career seekers, the post-survey showed a decrease in satisfaction with tools and/or resources available to help career seekers. This may reflect either a learning curve or lack of comfort staff still has with the new platform: as we found in our implementation study, the platform is continuing to add new features and functionality, and still being incorporated to workforce staff's day-to-day activities. Also, for those staff who only serve career seekers, 55.1 percent were only slightly or moderately satisfied (pre-survey) with their access to resources on economic development initiatives, but 64.2 percent were slightly or moderately satisfied once the platform was available. This may point to a need for more resources on economic development initiatives, or perhaps better access or organization of this information through the new platform.

Finally, the proportion of career seekers who reported using a computer in a CareerForce location decreased, suggesting that career seekers may now, with the new platform, be accessing workforce system tools on their own personal computers or mobile phones.¹¹ As DEED continues to improve the portal's resources and functionalities, as well as adding new ones, we expect the platform to move closer to meeting stakeholders' needs.

4.2 Platform Outcomes

A total of 6,362 users created an account with CareerForceMN.com between November 2018 and April 2019, averaging about 1,000 new accounts a month. While some features (e.g., social media use, connections, groups) are still at a slow take-up pace, others have been highly popular, such as workshops (with more than 30,000 registrations), job postings views (more than 200,000), and education and training page views (nearly 3,000). Career seeker searches on MinnesotaWorks.net also began to sharply decrease around September 2018, when CareerForceMN.com launched. Since CareerForceMN.com allows users to search for job postings

¹¹ Following customer surveys in 2017 that reported that the resource room (bank of computers) did not rank highly among respondents, the delivery model changed to provide more direct access to job search experts and WIOA intensive career services, where staff provided direct triage services and focused on productive career search strategies. This change may also be associated with a decrease in the proportion of career seekers using a computer in a CareerForce location.

on MinnesotaWorks.net, this trend may point to a potential migration of users from MinnesotaWorks.net to the CareerForce platform.

5 COST STUDY FINDINGS

Through the first 14 quarters of the 16-quarter grant period, DEED spent a total of \$3,230,271 (54 percent) of the \$6,000,000 grant award. As of March 31, 2019, DEED has spent or obligated a total of \$5,149,343, including unspent obligations. Funds were utilized at a largely even pace for about the first five quarters, underutilized in the roughly next seven quarters, and then at a much faster pace in the last two quarters. DEED appears to have sufficient funding remaining to support the remainder of grant activities, as demonstrated by the fact that DEED has 14 percent of the total award funding (\$850,657) remaining to be spent in approximately 12.5 percent of the grant period (as measured by calendar quarters). Most of DEED's expenditures to date have been on contractual expenses, amounting to \$2,010,629 (about 62 percent of total expenditures to date). While MNIT's expenses appear to be the largest contractual expense so far (\$606,664), the cost of the platform vendor and the external evaluator trail closely behind at \$583,114 and \$592,603, respectively. Personnel costs account for the highest proportion of total expenditures that are not contractual (31 percent).

The total cost as of March 31st 2019 per unique account amounted to \$637, while the total cost per user who registered for a workshop amounted to \$114. We anticipate these costs will drop further as CareerForceMN.com builds more features and functionality of importance to its users, and becomes a central resource for the state's workforce system.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The CareerForce initiative still existed as a "work-in-progress" at the time of evaluation's follow-up data collection activities between April and May 2019 (namely, the final site visit, the fielding of the post-survey, and administrative program data). As a result, a common theme that emerged across the implementation, outcome, and cost studies was that it is too early to assess grant performance. DEED should continue to carefully track program performance into the future. At the time of the final round of site visits and the post-survey, several features and functionality for the platform were still under development, the CareerForce brand signage was being installed, and the public media campaign to broadcast CareerForce to career seekers and employers across the state was pending.

Further, the final site visit interviews highlight that the penetration of CareerForceMN.com among staff, partners, career seekers, and employers has only just begun. Staff and partners expect platform traffic from career seekers and employers to rise substantially after the public launch. They also said that employers are generally unaware of the platform as yet, because the employer content and features has not been introduced so far, though they anticipate much higher employer traffic in the future when employer-related features are up and running. Overall, workforce staff and partners were optimistic about the future of CareerForceMN.com and the

CareerForce brand. Most expect that the CareerForce initiative will improve the customer experience and engage more career seekers and employers with the workforce system services.

We describe below the implications of the findings for CareerForce.



Recommendation: Continue to track CareerForce performance outcomes over the long term and develop continuous feedback mechanisms to gather input from diverse groups of users to ensure CareerForce meets their needs.

DEED should continue to track performance on stakeholder satisfaction and platform metrics at regular intervals. Specifically, the CareerForce initiative aims to make it easy for career seekers and employers to navigate the network of local service providers; improve perceptions of the workforce system; and engage diverse new audiences who had never used workforce system services in the past—including youth, white collar professionals, and people of color and indigenous populations. DEED should devise performance management with these goals in mind, but should also conduct follow-up research and evaluation activities to address whether or not the site is achieving its goals, as described below.

To support progress toward CareerForce’s performance goals, DEED should prioritize development of a systematic feedback program at regular intervals, to capture sequential input from diverse users on the platform and the brand. The program must also devote staff and leadership time to promptly analyze the feedback and generate actionable recommendations. DEED should brainstorm creative and low-burden solutions to gather input (e.g., focus groups, user surveys embedded in the platform).

In addition, DEED should focus on gathering direct input from users, career seekers, and employers in particular, to ensure the platform navigation and content of CareerForceMN.com meet their needs. Direct outreach to career seekers and employers, such as targeted focus groups for specific user types (e.g., veterans, English as a Second Language (ESL) clients, manufacturing employers) can help ensure the platform navigation is logical and the content useful.



Recommendation: Define the longer-term strategic vision of CareerForceMN.com among other DEED portals and partner websites and, as feasible, prioritize a single sign-on with MinnesotaWorks.net in the short-term.

CareerForceMN.com so far has not achieved the status of a one-stop-shop. Workforce staff and partners mentioned uncertainty surrounding the platform, especially its ability to fit into the larger picture of related DEED tools (MinnesotaWorks.net, WorkForceOne, DEED state government website) and similar partner tools across the state (e.g., Minnesota Career Information System). This ambiguity reduces buy-in from staff at CareerForce locations and partner sites, who need to incorporate yet another tool into their day-to-day work. This is cumbersome for both career seekers and employers, and ultimately a heavier financial burden on DEED as it sustains a growing list of technology platforms.

DEED has considered multiple proposals for further integration across DEED platforms, but has yet to implement them. Staff and partner interviewees consistently suggested that the lack of a single sign-on with MinnesotaWorks.net was the largest roadblock to the success of CareerForceMN.com, and should be an immediate priority going forward.¹² DEED staff explained that the job search/candidate recruitment is the main reason career seekers and employers would visit CareerForceMN.com. However, users still have to register and use MinnesotaWorks.net to apply for jobs or post jobs, which limits the portal's apparent usefulness. To ensure the sustainability of CareerForceMN.com, DEED should articulate the desired identity of CareerForceMN.com among the suite of DEED's tools and partner tools, and map out realistic short- and long-term steps to achieve this goal.



Recommendation: Sustain a robust training and outreach campaign to workforce staff and partners on the CareerForce initiative, and engage the DEED Commissioner directly in these outreach efforts.

Staff and partners across the state suggested more in-person training to understand and recommend relevant features to career seeker and employer clients. Many partner staff, particularly those who run adult education and training services or technical college partners, were particularly disengaged or generally unaware of the platform. In several cases, partners already had robust online tools to help their clients navigate the job market, but were open to learning what CareerForceMN.com offered their customers beyond the existing online resources. Some said they had received emails and watched a webinar, but that they really needed in-person, tailored outreach from the CareerForce team to discuss their unique programs and client needs.

Importantly, workforce staff interest and excitement in the new platform and brand has waned due to the fatigue of trying to keep up with platform and brand policy updates, as well as the uncertainty of DEED's leadership commitment to the initiative moving forward. Interviewees recommended that the DEED Commissioner kick-start a new wave of forward momentum, with enthusiastic endorsement of his vision for CareerForce transmitted directly to workforce system staff and partners.

¹² The CareerForce Integration initiative is a current proposal that would create a seamless, single-sign-on capability for career seekers and employers across MinnesotaWorks.net, CareerForceMN.com, and Cybrarian (a system that controls resource room computers across CareerForce locations). With a single username and password, users would then be able to easily log in to any of the three platforms.



Future Recommendations

Based on best practices and lessons learned from the Minnesota DEED experience

Project Management Recommendations

- Develop and strongly enforce a detailed project work plan. Create a work plan that prioritizes a core set of features and content that can be achieved within the timeline set.
- Look to talented outside vendors who can dedicate their full resources to building the technology and harness agile design-based processes.
- Prioritize and onboard the required staff early in the grant period, and allow key project staff to be fully dedicated to the grant. To the extent possible, ensure that increases in scope are met with increases in project staff.
- Start sustainability planning and ensure buy-in from leadership early on. Planning for a unification of the multiple overlapping web systems should occur in the initial requirements gathering stage of the project and remain an essential element of the sustainability plan.

Leadership Support Recommendations

- Top leadership needs to prioritize and champion a single vision for projects of this size and complexity to be successful in meeting their timelines.
- Leverage the authority of the top leadership to strongly advocate for the new initiative to staff and partners in the field.

Stakeholder Engagement

- Comprehensive stakeholder engagement is critical to gain buy-in and inform the project design at the beginning. Project leadership should strategically define the end of the input-gathering phase to ensure sufficient time to develop the product.
- Rely on a wide range of workforce system stakeholders to serve as advocates and to contribute their ideas, resources, and time to build a product that meets the diverse needs of the state.
- Design an efficient feedback loop with outside contributors to communicate changes to the project scope, timeline, and future plan—to manage expectations when the product launches.
- Create systematic feedback mechanisms to continually engage workforce system staff, partners, career seekers, and employers to ensure the platform meets their needs.

Training and Outreach

- Maximize buy-in by releasing broad, system-wide business process changes to the state workforce system once the technology and policy guidance are fully formed.
- While passive training modes such as webinars and emails are helpful, prioritize in-person training sessions to the extent feasible to ensure staff set aside time to really embrace the new tool, and address the unique concerns of each site.

1. Introduction

In September 2015, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA) awarded a four-year, \$6 million Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) grant to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).¹³ The WIF grant is designed to support implementation of new and innovative approaches to service delivery or other processes in the workforce investment system.¹⁴ Minnesota's WIF grant funded the development and roll-out of a comprehensive online platform in Minnesota, named CareerForceMN.com.

The grant's purpose is to support development and implementation of an innovative platform that harnesses technology, a mobile first design, and social media trends to better equip career seekers for the job search process, and assist employers to find and retain talent. CareerForceMN.com aims to be a one stop-shop for labor market tools and information for both career seekers and employers in Minnesota. It is a collaborative platform, facilitating online information-sharing among job seekers, employers, workforce system staff, and partner organizations—enabling them to access resources and make connections to achieve individual and mutual goals. The mobile-friendly interface and social media-inspired features were developed to improve user experience and attract more customers, including younger workers, to its online tools. Along the way, in December 2017 DEED leadership decided to integrate CareerForceMN.com with a parallel new workforce system branding effort with similar goals: to raise awareness of Minnesota's workforce system services among all Minnesotans and improve customer experience in engaging with the workforce system.

DEED contracted with IMPAQ International, LLC (IMPAQ) to perform an evaluation of its WIF grant initiative in May 2016. IMPAQ's evaluation comprises: (1) an implementation study, (2) an outcome study, and (3) a cost study. The implementation study examines implementation fidelity, documents how the program was implemented, provides contextual information for interpreting program outcomes, and identifies implementation challenges and success factors. The outcome study analyzes program outcomes, including outcomes related to both stakeholder (career seekers, employers, and workforce system staff) satisfaction with the workforce system and usage statistics on the new portal. The cost study describes the allocation of grant expenditures and presents cost-effectiveness metrics.

1.1 BACKGROUND

This section describes the two components of the Minnesota WIF grant program. We start with the motivation and scope of a major branding effort as the program expanded (Section 1.1.1).

¹³ Minnesota is one of six grantees in this third WIF grant round (\$35 million total). The awardees include state workforce agencies and one Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Section 166 grantee serving Indian and Native American communities: <https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/eta/eta20150928>

¹⁴ DOL's WIF grant: https://www.doleta.gov/workforce_innovation/

We then describe the key features and functionality of the new platform, CareerforceMN.com (Section 1.1.2).

1.1.1 CareerForce Branding Initiative

The WIF grant program has evolved over the last four years. Most notably, the grant program scope expanded to partially fund (\$90,000 of WIF grant funds)¹⁵ and harmonize with the parallel statewide workforce system branding effort. With the new branding, the Minnesota workforce system is now named as “CareerForce”; the WIF-funded platform similarly adopted the name of CareerForceMN.com. Exhibit 1.1 highlights the old versus the new visual identity in the building signage.¹⁶ The branding initiative started one year prior to the WIF grant, in 2014.¹⁷ Its goals are to raise awareness of workforce system services to attract new customers, such as white collar professionals, and improve the customer experience in navigating the complex network of services and partners. The two initiatives rolled out jointly in Fall 2018.

Exhibit 1.1: Transition to the CareerForce Visual Identity



The scope of the branding effort is the full workforce system delivery network. The statewide workforce system delivers services (e.g., employment and training programs, unemployment insurance [UI], vocational rehabilitation services) to career seekers and employers through DEED

¹⁵ A WIF Statement of Work and budget modification, approved by USDOL in December 2016, contributed \$60,000 to the branding initiative for architecture recommendations, logo concept, and testing; and to provide brand management support (source: Year 2/Quarter 3 Quarterly Performance Narrative). Later, in December 2018, USDOL approved a second budget modification of \$30,000 in WIF funds for the branding vendor’s work to develop content for CareerForceMN.com. This included creating new webpage content, refining webpage content based on partner and stakeholder feedback, and brand management after the platform launch (source: Year 3/Quarter 3 & Year 4/Quarter 1 Quarterly Performance Narratives).

¹⁶ Image sources are as follows:

- Top Left: <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/MNDEED/bulletins/11e99bb>
- Bottom Left: <https://www.dl-online.com/news/4506596-helping-people-find-work-1968-rural-minnesota-cep-celebrate-50th-anniversary-oct-3-dl>
- Top Right: CareerForce logo file
- Bottom Right: IMPAQ staff photograph

¹⁷ Becoming CareerForce, Background: <https://becomingcareerforce.com/background/>

staff at 50¹⁸ CareerForce locations as well as hundreds¹⁹ of partner organizations across the state. Exhibit 1.3 (see Section 1.1.2), from the CareerForce Brand Playbook, illustrates the scope of the CareerForce brand.

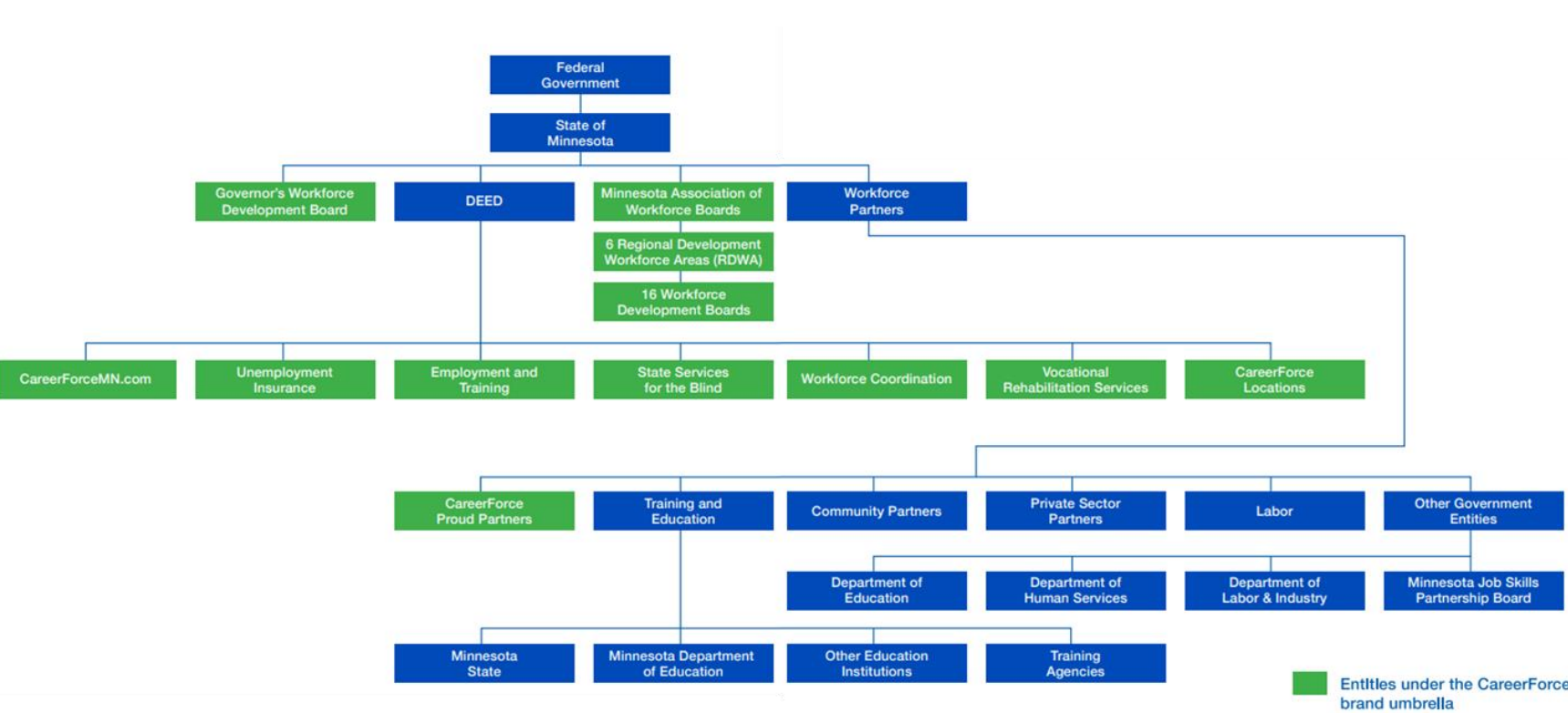
As demonstrated by their prominence in Exhibit 1.2, partner organizations are a critical part of the workforce system service delivery in Minnesota. The branding initiative coined the term “*Proud Partners*” to describe the network of partner organizations that receive funding from DEED, local government, and/or workforce development boards to deliver services to career-seekers and employers. Minnesota has 16 local Workforce Development Boards across the state, which manage their own networks of partners to deliver workforce system services. Partners are sometimes co-located at CareerForce locations but often have their own stand-alone facilities. The workforce system also connects its customers with other community services funded by different sources, such as the Minnesota Department of Human Services. These other workforce partners, though outside the scope of the CareerForce brand, are important referral sources for the workforce system. Often these other partners, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) services, are co-located at CareerForce locations.

The CareerForce brand provides not only a common visual identity for the workforce system; it also aims to propagate a cultural shift with uniform business processes and communication strategy, to ensure every customer gets the same high level of service across the state. As explained in the CareerForce Brand Playbook, all local service providers should “talk the same talk” and “walk the same walk.” Key focus areas of the communications strategy are fostering a welcoming, “no wrongdoor” environment for all customers, and describing service offerings in plain English (rather than jargon and technical partner and program names).

¹⁸ WIOA State Plan for the State Of Minnesota FY-2018: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rsa/wioa/state-plans/mn.pdf>

¹⁹ CareerForce Proud Partner webinar—March 19, 2019 (captioned video)

Exhibit 1.2: Entities Under the CareerForce Brand Umbrella



1.1.2 CareerForceMN.com

The CareerForce wheel shown in Exhibit 1.3 summarizes the scope of the CareerForceMN.com platform.²⁰ It highlights the primary laws and policies that guide the platform—including the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Minnesota’s strategic initiative to align workforce system resources around key industry sectors by region,²¹ data security, and accessibility requirements for those with disabilities. It also names the key data systems integrated into the platform: job postings from MinnesotaWorks.net, (the state labor exchange) and labor market information (LMI) data (e.g., occupational forecasts). Finally, the wheel highlights many of the platform’s goals—including both creating a social-media-enabled, user-friendly interface; and hosting diverse resources that reach a broad audience.

Exhibit 1.3: CareerForce Wheel



CareerForceMN.com supports both sides of Minnesota’s labor market to align career seekers’ skills with business needs. The features were designed to: (1) integrate and improve the disaggregated workforce system resources and tools for career seekers and employers; (2) improve the career seeker and employer online experience through a modern web interface with customized content; and (3) adapt to social media trends to foster greater online collaboration and communication among career seekers, employers, workforce system staff, and partners. We briefly highlight these three main design components below. Chapter 3 details the specific features of CareerForceMN.com.



Integrated workforce system tools and resources. The platform aims to be a one stop–shop for workforce system information and tools in Minnesota for career seekers and employers. The content includes job postings, regional LMI (e.g., occupation forecasts), workshop listings, career planning resources and e-learning tools, talent recruitment and retention resources, and information on workforce system services. Users can

“Putting our job postings in the same place with the tools is helpful. In the past, I would have to hand a jobseeker a list of 12 websites. This is way easier.”



²⁰ CareerForce Wheel is from the program’s Year 2/Quarter 2 Quarterly Narrative Report.

²¹ Minnesota is aligning workforce system resources within each of its six geographic regions around five high-demand industries: Manufacturing, Healthcare and Social Assistance, Professional and Business Services, Construction, and Natural Resources (source: Year 4/Quarter 2 Quarterly Performance Narrative).

register for any workshops offered by workforce staff and partners across the state, ranging from career preparation topics like resume writing to skill-building courses in Microsoft Excel. Some skill-based courses will also be available online, such as digital literacy modules, with plans to continue to expand the e-learning offerings over time. Much of the content pulled-in from other sources (including workshops, labor market information, and job postings) is enhanced and updated to make it more user-friendly—such as modern dashboard interfaces or advanced search capabilities to pull up the most relevant content, by keyword and geography.



Modern interface with customized content. A sleek and tailored user experience is paramount to improving customer experience and engaging new types of customers. The platform offers a social media-enabled, mobile-friendly interface with relevant content based on user attributes. For example, users can view LMI by region. The CareerForceMN.com platform also features resources for special populations, such as youth, veterans, individuals with disabilities, those with a criminal record, and older workers. The content is fully accessible to individuals with disabilities who use screen readers or similar tools.

“Anybody under 40 was not paying attention to us. We will be more relevant than before.”



Collaborative Platform. As employers and jobseekers move increasingly to online and social media channels for recruiting, hiring and even upskilling their staff, CareerForceMN.com aims to provide ways for staff and customers to connect with one another online. A key aspect of the platform is a virtual convener. It has features to support online messaging and information-sharing (e.g., partner pages, employer pages) among workforce system staff, partner organizations, career-seekers, and employers. More efficient internal coordination enables workforce staff and partners to use CareerForceMN.com to quickly pass (and track) customer inquiries to the relevant workforce staff or local partner across the state.

“You never knew what happened when you referred someone to a partner agency. You never knew if the person went and what the outcome was. Now, with the connections [feature] we have an electronic means to do that.”



1.2 EVIDENCE BASE

The evaluation findings presented in this report expand the evidence base on how innovative, technology platforms like CareerForceMN.com can: (1) engage more career seekers and employers with modern web features and centralized online resources; and (2) improve workforce system collaboration and communication among career seekers, employers, workforce staff, and partners. CareerForceMN.com can prepare more career seekers for in-demand jobs, strengthening both sides of the labor market. CareerForceMN.com offers career seekers and employers access to a one stop-shop of online resources they can access from anywhere (such as the labor exchange, LMI, online tools and content for e-learning); provides an online collaboration platform for career-seekers, employers, workforce staff, and partners; and represents the new CareerForce brand’s culture plan to improve the customer experience with a plain language approach and user-friendly, modern interface to appeal to a wide customer base.

The rest of this section presents the findings from a literature review that examined the evidence base for five CareerForceMN.com's key program components: (1) labor exchange services, (2) LMI, (3) tools and content for e-learning, (4) a collaborative web platform, and (5) branding the workforce system. For each area, we provide a synopsis of the evidence supporting the associated grant element.

Labor Exchange Services CareerForceMN.com integrates the job feed (i.e., job bank information) from MinnesotaWorks.net into its suite of resources. This integration was motivated by research studies and surveys that both demonstrate the effectiveness of labor exchange services and show declines in the use of stand-alone job banks. For example, in a 2013 study, researchers found that internet job searches reduced individual workers' unemployment durations by approximately 25 percent.²² Another 2013 report produced by an organization of staffing professionals found that employers reported that stand-alone job banks were becoming less able to meet their recruitment needs.²³ To preserve their investment in these platforms, and to more effectively reach job seekers, many employers have developed online spaces where they use social media to interact with potential job candidates.²⁴

Labor exchange services, which have been provided through the public workforce system for decades, have been a critical component in connecting job seekers with employers. A comprehensive evaluation of labor exchanges was completed in 2004.²⁵ The final report estimated that job referrals provided through the labor exchange were associated with large increases in earnings. Moreover, the cost-benefit analysis component of the study estimated reductions in joblessness, increases in earnings, and reductions in UI payments, based on a five-state sample of job seeker administrative data. The authors concluded that the benefits stemming from UI claimants' searches on labor exchange systems were considerably greater than the cost of running the systems and providing such services.

Labor Market Information. CareerForceMN.com incorporates LMI products into the platform to provide all stakeholders with current, customized information on occupations by region. For example, users can select their geographic region and then view regional wages, as well as the regional forecasted 10-year growth in job openings for any occupation of interest. Users can also view the top 20 in-demand occupations in their region. The occupational details displayed also note educational requirements, work activities, and licensing or other credentials needed. To our knowledge, there is no existing research on the integration of LMI tools into a platform like

²² Kuhn, P. and H. Mansour, "Is Internet Job Search Still Ineffective?" (September 2011), Working paper, IZA. Available at <http://ftp.iza.org/dp5955.pdf>

²³ Crispin, G. and M. Mehler, "Sources of Hire 2013: Perception is Reality (March 2013)," *Blog post*. Available at <https://chinagorman.com/2013/03/19/sources-of-hire-is-perception-reality/>

²⁴ <https://blog.capterra.com/top-15-recruiting-statistics-2014/>; <https://www.slideshare.net/eremedia/2014-employer-branding-global-trends-study-report?ref=http://www.careerarc.com/blog/2014/06/76-companies-choose-social-media-communicate-employer-brand/>

²⁵ Jacobson, L., I. Petta, A. Shimshak, and R. Yudd, "Evaluation of Labor Exchange Services in a One-Stop Delivery System Environment," (Feb 2004) U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration Occasional Paper 2004-09. Available at https://wdr.doleta.gov/research/FullText_Documents/Evaluation%20of%20Labor%20Exchange%20in%20One-Stop%20Delivery%20System%20-%20Final%20Report.pdf

CareerForceMN.com. While there is no study focused on receipt of LMI, it is referenced as part of the overall core services.²⁶

There is some evidence supporting the use and effectiveness of LMI in job search, reemployment, and career navigation. For example, a 2013 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report showed that 90 percent of local training providers require or encourage training participants to gather LMI about an occupation before enrollment, 95 percent require or encourage meeting with a case manager to discuss LMI, and nearly 90 percent use LMI to identify occupations that are in high demand.²⁷ A study of the provision of LMI in the reemployment and eligibility assessment program increased the likelihood of reemployment by 20 percent within two quarters.²⁸ More recently, a pre-post 2017 study of college students examined the use of “My Next Move,” a DOL web-based interactive tool that allows career seekers to learn about LMI for different occupations. The study found that using the tool was associated with significant increases in career awareness and career preparedness.²⁹ Another non-experimental study, also from 2017, looked at the role of LMI on community college student choice of major. That study found that salary information had a significant effect on major job choice, suggesting that providing better LMI to community college students could improve labor market prospects.³⁰

There are also some reports on the prevalence, benefits, and challenges associated with the emerging use of real-time LMI to inform workforce decision making. In a 2013 report, real-time LMI is defined as an emerging web tool for tracking the extent and nature of employers’ demand for labor by occupation, industry, and geography.³¹ This report notes that real-time LMI is supported primarily by recently developed capabilities for mining data from online job openings and artificial intelligence software that aggregates information across a variety of publicly available labor market datasets. Another report on an environmental scan of real-time LMI vendors found that workforce system stakeholders have gained confidence in the reliability of the data as platforms have become more fully developed.³²

²⁶ Providing Public Workforce Services to Job Seekers: 30-month Impact Findings on the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs. https://wdr.doleta.gov/research/FullText_Documents/ETAOP_2018-04_1-WIA-30mo-main-rpt.pdf

²⁷ Government Accountability Office, “Workforce Investment Act: Local Areas Face Challenges Helping Employers Fill Some Types of Skilled Jobs,” (Dec 2013), *Report*. Available at <https://www.gao.gov/assets/660/659322.pdf>.

²⁸ Michaelides, M., E. Poe-Yamagata, J. Benus, and D. Tirumalasetti, “Impact of the Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) Initiative in Nevada,” (Jan 2012), Final Report, Columbia, MD: IMPAQ International, *prepared for the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration*. Available at <http://1.usa.gov/28Jh6zU>.

²⁹ Koys, D. J. “Using the Department of Labor’s “My Next Move” to Improve Career Preparedness,” (2017). *Journal of Management Education*. 41(1): 94-117. Available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1052562916670195>

³⁰ Baker, R., Bettinger, E., Jacob, B., and I. Marinescu. “The Effect of Labor Market Information on Community College Students’ Major Choice,” *National Bureau of Economic Research*, (Apr 2017). Available at: <https://www.nber.org/papers/w23333.pdf>

³¹ Reamer, A., “Using Real-Time Labor Market Information on a Nationwide Scale: Exploring the Research Tool’s Potential Value to Federal Agencies and National Trade Associations,” (Apr. 2013), *Jobs for the Future; prepared for the Lumina Foundation for Education and the Joyce Foundation*.

³² U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Office of Workforce Investment “Real-Time Labor Market Information: An Environmental Scan of Vendors and Workforce Development Users,” (Sep. 2014) *Report*. Available at <https://www.jff.org/resources/real-time-labor-market-information-environmental-scan-vendors-and-workforce-development/>

A USDOL report from 2015 highlighted promising practices among states using real-time LMI in combination with traditional LMI.^{33,34} Many of the report's recommended approaches for providing user-friendly LMI to career seekers are embedded in the design of CareerForceMN.com. The USDOL report identifies promising strategies to use real-time LMI to enhance online tools such as expanding state job banks to have career assessment tools, advanced search capabilities based on career track, and resume builders; developing labor market reports and LMI online dashboards; identifying in-demand occupations; and developing occupational profiles.

Our understanding of the literature on the effectiveness of providing LMI to job seekers and employers is that the research done so far has focused on the intrinsic value of the data itself, not on how best to provide it to customers/consumers. We are not aware of any rigorous studies of how access to LMI affects either labor market outcomes for job seekers or key outcomes for employers.

Tools and Content for e-learning. CareerForceMN.com incorporates interactive course content and informational videos, documents, and other guidance materials related to: (1) career planning and skill development for career seekers; and (2) attracting, developing, and retaining talent for employers. Career seekers can register for the full library of workforce system workshops; the portal will also offer an online, self-guided set of 12 modules for career seekers to gain computer competencies in topics such as using the internet; email; and Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, and Microsoft PowerPoint. In addition, both career seekers and employers can access a library of content to help them achieve their goals, such as strategies to find a first job or get promoted, tips on essential elements of an employee development plan, and guidance on developing a hiring plan to achieve a diverse staff.

There are indications that e-learning such as this is effective. The evidence cited by DEED in its WIF grant technical proposal, for example, indicates that online instruction can be more effective than in-person instruction. A recent comprehensive meta-analysis conducted by the U.S. Department of Education reported that students taking online courses performed better than those in traditional in-person instruction.³⁵ The overall finding of the meta-analysis was that classes with online learning (whether taught completely online or blended) produce stronger student learning outcomes, on average, than do classes with solely face-to-face instruction.

³³ Traditional LMI is defined as information from government-administered censuses and surveys that often is time lagged by a month or longer.

³⁴ U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Office of Workforce Investment "Promising Practices in Leveraging Traditional and Real-Time Labor Market Information," (June 2015), *Report*. Available at: https://www.gc.cuny.edu/CUNY_GC/media/365-Images/Uploads%20for%20LMIS/Reports%20and%20Briefs/ETA_LMI_Promising_Practices_Report_20150623.pdf

In addition to the meta-analysis, a 2011 report from USDOL provides a qualitative assessment on effective program design, instructional methods, and course structure for online classes.³⁶ The report highlights two key observations relevant to CareerForceMN.com. First, program administrators must bear in mind the technological capacity of target groups. Second, online and asynchronous approaches are critical in enabling participants to overcome training barriers related to time, transit, and distance.

Data suggests that state workforce agencies are increasingly turning to e-learning to deliver services. But researchers have not evaluated the effectiveness of these platforms in the specific context of the workforce system. A 2013 report from USDOL examined the use of technology-based learning by surveying state workforce agencies and local workforce investment boards.³⁷ Over half (60 percent) of state workforce agency respondents rated technology-based learning as a medium or high strategic priority, and 40 percent reported that their states established policies or funded initiatives to promote technology-based learning. At the local level, 79 percent of local workforce investment board respondents reported that their American Job Centers (AJCs) offered blended services with both electronic and in-person access.

Collaborative Platform. CareerForceMN.com is also a platform for communication and coordination among users. A primary motivation for developing CareerForceMN.com was to consider opportunities to revitalize state labor exchange activities in recognition of the changing mechanics and search techniques in labor markets in response to the advent of online recruiting. On CareerForceMN.com, career seekers and employers can engage directly with workforce staff and partners through an online message feature, called “connections.” In addition, CareerForce locations, workforce system partners, and employers have their own pages to share information with users. For example, workforce staff and partners highlight their programs and services, while employers describe their scope and mission to potential job candidates. All users can also designate “favorite” content and “share” content through LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter. The WIF team plans to add more communication capabilities in the future, such as: (1) an artificial intelligence chat box to determine if career seekers are dislocated workers and affected by a trade-related event, to direct them to Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) services; (2) public networking group forums between career seekers and staff; and (3) private forums to share information and best practices between staff and partners.

In its grant proposal, DEED cited some evidence supporting the concept of using social media platforms to better match career seeker skills to appropriate employers or job postings. For instance, according to the *Jobvite 2014 Social Recruiting Survey*, 93 percent of recruiters use or plan to use social media platforms to support their recruiting efforts, and 73 percent of

³⁶ Dunham, K., R. Estrella, J. Leufgen, and J. Henderson-Frakes, “Evaluation of Technology-Based Learning Grants,” (Dec 2011), Final Report, Oakland, CA: Social Policy Research Associates, *prepared for the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration*. Available at <https://www.spra.com/wordpress2/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/ETAOP-2011-21.pdf>

³⁷ Gan, K. N., Schneider, G., Harvill, E. L., and N. Brooke, “Exploring the Role and Adoption of Technology-Based Training and Employment Services,” (Sep. 2013), *Final Report*, Bethesda, MD: Abt Associates Inc., *prepared for the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration* Available at: https://wdr.doleta.gov/research/FullText_Documents/ETAOP_2015-09_Attach.pdf

companies highlight and market their company culture on social media to attract candidates.³⁸ Similarly, in the *Employer Brand International 2014 Employer Branding Global Trends Study Report*, 76 percent of companies use social media as the main communications channel to promote their employer brand, compared to only 38 percent who use online job boards as their main communications channel.³⁹

Similar to the vision of “forums” and the “connections” features on CareerForceMN.com, government agencies at multiple levels are increasing interaction with citizens through online messaging platforms. To our knowledge, researchers have not assessed the impact of these platforms on key outcomes like customer satisfaction or increased efficiency in service provision. However, a survey of local governments on digital communications found that 66 percent of municipal and county agencies said that expanding citizen engagement was a priority for technology investment for online communication.⁴⁰ This focus holds true through examples like the City of Golden, Colorado, which has fostered interaction between residents and city staff members through online discussion boards on the city’s website with questions from citizens and responses from city staff members.⁴¹ Another example of engagement between citizens and government offices is *SeeClickFix*, an online platform that encourages citizens in participating areas to report potholes, illegal dumping, and graffiti, which has been used by the Utah Department of Transportation, Carbondale, IL, New Haven, CT, and other entities in the United States.⁴²

New branding of the workforce system. The new brand, CareerForce, aims to raise awareness of workforce system services and improve the customer experience in navigating the decentralized network of local service delivery partners. The CareerForce brand represents both a common visual identity for the workforce system and an attempt to improve how services are provided—with consistent messaging protocols for staff and a uniform approach to business practices across the state.

Other states, such as Florida, Massachusetts, and Virginia, have also given new brand to their workforce systems, responding to lack of awareness of their services (beyond UI) among employers and job seekers.^{43,44} For example, in Florida, the workforce system implemented new branding in 2014 due to a lack of awareness and clarity of the mission, which included changing

³⁸ Minchington, Brett, “2014 Employer Branding Global Trends Study Report, (May 2014), Employer Brand International. Available at: <https://www.jobvite.com/jobvite-news-and-reports/2014-social-recruiting-survey-infographic/>

³⁹ “2014 Employer Branding Global Trends Survey Report by Employer Brand International”, LinkedIn Slide Deck. Available at: <https://www.slideshare.net/brettminch/2014-employer-branding-global-trends-survey-report-by-employer-brand-international>

⁴⁰ “What’s Next in Digital Communications for Local Government: 2018 Research Brief,” (2018) *Vision*. Available at: <https://www.americancityandcounty.com/2018/02/15/study-whats-next-in-digital-communications-for-local-government/>

⁴¹ City of Golden, “Broadband in the City of Golden,” (July 2019), *Newsletter*. Available at: <https://www.guidinggolden.com/golden-broadband>

⁴² “Strong Communities, More Efficient Government,” *SeeClickFix*. Available at: <https://seeclickfix.com/>

⁴³ Welker, Grant. “Worcester Career Center Unveils Rebranding, New Focus,” (6 September 2018). *Worcester Business Journal*. Available at: <https://www.wbjournal.com/article/worcester-career-center-unveils-rebranding-new-focus>

⁴⁴ “Virginia Career Works,” (19 January 2018). *IDEAS*. Available at: <https://ideasorlando.com/government/virginia-career-works-brand-unveiled/>

the name from Workforce Florida to CareerSource Florida. Similar to CareerForce in Minnesota, Florida changed names and logos for 24 regional workforce boards and nearly 100 One-stop career centers to align with the new brand. At the same time, Minnesota and other states initiated statewide branding efforts, and WIOA statute required a common identifier to be used by the One-Stop delivery system to help inform customers of the services and resources the system provides.

There is also encouraging, although limited descriptive evidence from a 2017 study on the Florida initiative that suggests new branding efforts do change the perception of state workforce systems. The study's cross-sectional, pre- and post-surveys showed that, between 2013 and 2017, awareness and knowledge of CareerSource Florida and local workforce development boards increased significantly among employers, under-employed individuals, and gainfully employed individuals. Notably, awareness decreased among those who were unemployed.⁴⁵ However, the 2017 group of unemployed individuals had different characteristics on average—they were younger, less educated, and had been searching for jobs for a shorter time—than those surveyed in 2013.

Summary. This literature review demonstrates that the core components of CareerForceMN.com are based on related research and promising practices. While there is no rigorous evidence that conclusively demonstrates the impact of these components on relevant workforce outcomes, studies germane to the initiative have documented trends that motivate development of the platform and provide suggestive evidence that job seekers, employers, and workforce system staff may all benefit from its implementation and use. The findings from this MN DEED evaluation will help build the evidence base on initiatives such as CareerForceMN.com. It represents the first rigorous attempt to evaluate the development and implementation of such a platform.

1.3 ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

This final evaluation report presents findings from both the qualitative and quantitative components of the Minnesota WIF grant evaluation. These findings contribute to the existing evidence-base related to the effectiveness of comprehensive, collaborative online platforms for state work workforce agencies. The findings also provide important insights for those seeking to implement similar online platforms.

Chapter 2 summarizes the program context and theory of change. Chapter 3 presents the evaluation design and methodology. Chapter 4 describes the key features of CareerForceMN.com. Chapters 5 through 7 highlight the key implementation study, outcome study, and cost study findings, respectively. Chapter 8 summarizes our study findings and recommendations.

⁴⁵ "CareerSource Florida Brand Remeasure," (2017). Integrated Insight Inc., and Moore Communications Group, *Report*. Available at: <https://careersourceflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/CareerSource-Florida-Brand-Remeasure-Final-Report-Final.pdf>

2. Program Context

The Minnesota WIF grant has a broad scope to improve workforce system online resources and bring new branding to the workforce system. From the beginning of the WIF grant through the present, Minnesota has enjoyed a strong economic climate with a low unemployment rate and businesses eager for help finding talent. The workforce system was positioned to act as a bridge between employers and hard-to-find job candidates. The WIF grant program is motivated by a variety of workforce system challenges that limit the system’s ability to prepare job seekers for in-demand occupations to meet employer needs. Chapter 2, Program Context, lays out these key workforce system challenges, and how the WIF grant was designed to address them (Section 2.1.) and describes the program’s theory of change and program logic model (Section 2.2).

2.1 WORKFORCE SYSTEM CHALLENGES

This section highlights four key workforce system challenges in Minnesota—lack of cohesive and integrated technology resources, lack of coordination among workforce system service providers, engaging new audiences, and economic context—based on interviews with workforce staff and partners, and document reviews. The accompanying text boxes note how the platform was designed to address each challenge.

2.1.1 Lack of Cohesive and Integrated Technology Resources

Many interviewees mentioned that the MN workforce system has numerous unintegrated, often antiquated, online tools for career seekers and employers. Prior to the WIF grant, the primary challenge with the data and technology tools available to career seekers and employers was not the quality of the information available, but lack of integration in how it was made available to them. The available systems were not connected in a cohesive way. Interviewees emphasized that job seekers and employers need one portal, instead of having to go to several places.

“Right now, we have everything in so many different areas. You know, you can find the schools with programs over here, and you can find the wages and the labor market data over here, and you can find the jobs here, and you can find the job seekers over here.”



Historically, DEED developed several tools and systems that provide customers with relevant data, such as DEED’s LMI system and MinnesotaWorks.net with job postings and workshops. The traditional state DEED government portal⁴⁶ provides information on the agency programs and services. State and local workforce partners have also invested in their own tools for career seekers. For example, Minnesota state’s college and university CAREERwise (formerly iSEEK) platform provides career exploration tools—assessments, information about education and training, and job search tools (including links to MinnesotaWorks.net). Locally, workforce staff and partners have also used other technology platforms in creative and innovative ways to

⁴⁶ DEED’s webpage: <https://mn.gov/deed/>

provide services. For example, one CareerForce location has used HIREWIRE to create a video resume for employers to view.

In addition, interviewees explained that it was difficult to navigate and find what they needed from MinnesotaWorks.net and the LMI data tool. While many interviewees agreed that MinnesotaWorks.net functions well as a job-matching site, the technology itself is outdated, not mobile friendly, and looks and feels antiquated—especially relative to other job sites, such as Indeed.com and LinkedIn. Similarly, interviewees said the LMI data was presented in a way geared for researchers, rather than a general audience. This was challenging for job seekers who may not even know what “Labor Market Information” means or how to drill down to information relevant to their individual situation—a particular concern for English as a Second Language (ESL) users. Interviewees also noted that the LMI data would be more useful if it had more real-time data and projections, with less focus on looking backwards at past trends. These attributes resulted in inefficiencies and limits to how knowledge and resources were shared. Information was often described as buried. Users had to “go through 14 clicks” and were not able to quickly see what they were interested in.



CareerForceMN.com integrates and improves online tools and resources

CareerForceMN.com is designed to integrate a variety of online tools (e.g., labor market information, job postings, workshop listings, e-learning resources) into a one stop-shop. The platform also improves the tool interfaces and content so relevant information is immediately visible. For example, both career seekers and employers can view 10-year job opening projections in their region for their desired occupation with a single click. In addition, career seekers can immediately search job postings on CareerForceMN.com, rather than filling out the seven registration pages to create a user account on MinnesotaWorks.net.

2.1.2 Lack of Coordination among Workforce System Service Providers

Minnesota’s workforce system operates a decentralized network of service offerings delivered by DEED staff at 50 CareerForce locations and hundreds of local partners. DEED staff at CareerForce locations offer WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser Services, which include universal intake, job search assistance, and MinnesotaWorks.net. However, workforce boards contract with local community partners to deliver more intensive case-managed services, such as WIOA Title I adult and dislocated worker services. Many of these partners are also co-located at the CareerForce locations, though WIOA Title II adult basic education services generally operate out of separate facilities.⁴⁷ Prior to CareerForceMN.com, as detailed below, this complex network presented challenges for career seekers and employers to find services, and for staff and partners to collaborate on customer referrals and to share information with each other.

⁴⁷ WIOA State Plan for the State Of Minnesota FY-2018: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rsa/wioa/state-plans/mn.pdf>

The decentralized service delivery network of local partners could be difficult for both career seekers and employers to navigate.

The advantage of any network of local service providers is that local workforce partners and processes adapt to the local needs. The disadvantage of a decentralized one is that it can be confusing for customers. Local partners in this case often had their own branding, scope of services, and unique processes. This could create ambiguity for career seekers on who to go for specific services.

“We have a network of providers that do things differently, due to funding sources and requirements. For example, they have different intake forms and exit processes, all born out of policies developed locally.”



Additionally, a customer that went to a standalone partner facility may not have realized they were receiving workforce system services and may even have received conflicting information.



CareerForceMN.com aims to get career seekers and employers quickly to relevant workforce services

The platform features are designed to help career seekers and employers navigate the decentralized service offerings. It hosts a listing of service offerings at each CareerForce location and partner organization (e.g., adult education classes, assistance starting or changing a career). Importantly, the services are described in plain language so the user is not overwhelmed with technical jargon or partner names (e.g., “get help before, during, and after layoffs” is used rather than “Trade Adjustment Assistance Program”). In addition, career seekers and employers can send an online query to a CareerForce or partner location or call the centralized helpdesk to get assistance quickly on how to access specific services (e.g., “I’m looking for help recruiting veterans for my job posting.”).

The referral process between workforce staff and partners could be disjointed, relying on the customer to navigate the system to obtain services.

DEED staff and local partners work together on a daily basis to connect career seekers and employers to relevant services across their networks. However, prior to CareerForceMN.com, multiple interviewees expressed a need for a better business process to reduce the burden on the customer to access these additional services. Specifically, the workforce system lacked an easy, mechanism for “warm-handoffs” (direct introductions) of clients for referrals between organizations. Instead, the client was often handed a phone number to call, left to navigate the network of partners on his/her own, and the case manager was unsure if the contact was made. This limited the ability of the workforce system professionals to collaborate efficiently to get clients the services they need and track the resolution of a referral.

Workforce staff faced challenges in using their internal platforms to find and communicate information with partners.

DEED’s internal website was available to DEED staff but not to staff from other agencies in the CareerForce locations—a huge barrier to collaboration and effective communication through other branches of the workforce system. Similarly, DEED’s Workforce One case management system was not linked to the other data systems, so staff had no good way of integrating information about job seekers and employers. Several staff also reported

challenges finding up-to-date information about policies, contact information, reports, and templates.

Workforce staff perceived communication with technical college partners, including alignment of college-based training programs and business needs, as uneven. Staff at multiple CareerForce locations reported that collaboration with the technical colleges occurred, but that staff would like to see workforce become more of a strategic partner. Workforce system staff often felt uninformed about what programs were starting or ending, and relayed stories of finding out a program no longer existed only when they referred a job seeker to it, or heard about a new program only on the radio. Interviewees also noted that training programs responded to business solely at a high level, especially when there was a large employer approaching the college. However, interviewees also expressed the opinion that specific curriculum components could be improved, if college staff were more pro-active in their communication with workforce staff or the business community. For example, one interviewee felt that a college's construction program should have been more focused on commercial construction instead of residential construction, since that was where industry demand was concentrated.



CareerForceMN.com is setup to ease communication between workforce staff and partners

CareerForceMN.com is designed to forge stronger communication channels among workforce staff and partners by bringing all players together in a single web platform. Through the portal, CareerForce location staff can easily transfer and track referrals to Proud Partners staff, and vice-versa. To keep the whole service network up to date on the latest offerings, Proud Partners and other community partners also have their own pages that contain information on their programs and services (e.g., adult basic education classes) and web links to further details (e.g., class schedules). Staff can also post articles and blog posts on the Newsroom to publicize their initiatives and success stories. Finally, the platform offers restricted content for staff and partners to access policies, reference materials, best practices, training resources (e.g., webinar recordings), and performance measures, among other exclusive resources.

2.1.3 Enagaging New Audiences

Minnesota's robust workforce system service offerings are relevant for all types of workers—from youth embarking on their first career to white collar professionals looking to advance in their professions to populations that face significant barriers to employment. However, staff felt they were failing to reach many of these groups. In addition, staff and partners struggled to sufficiently engage employers to understand their long-term human capital needs, critical industry information to prepare career seekers for in-demand positions. In this section we discuss the common challenges with engaging new types of career seekers and employers prior to CareerForceMN.com—including a stigma associated with workforce system services, an outdated service delivery model that failed to attract youth, and limited outreach with employers.

There was lack of awareness of, or even stigma about, the workforce system. According to interviewees, many job seekers thought the workforce center was a welfare office where they could get an unemployment check. Other job seekers did not think they needed assistance, and only recognized the value of the workforce system after they received services. Similar to job seekers, employers were generally satisfied with services once they received them. However, interviewees expressed the belief the CareerForce locations were the “best kept secret” in Minnesota—that if more businesses knew about the workforce system, business services and partnerships would be even stronger.



CareerForceMN.com aims to attract new career seekers and employers to workforce systems services

Jointly, the platform and the CareerForce fresh look and communications strategy is designed to attract new career seekers and employers to the workforce system and change the perception of its services. The communications materials for the CareerForce brand convey the workforce system as the place to turn for career development and talent recruitment for all. In addition, CareerForceMN.com embodies these principles, presenting a unified workforce system with a professional look and feel, e-learning opportunities, and innovative data tools. The platform also highlights the full spectrum of workforce system services, such as support to advance in or change careers.

Statewide, the workforce is aging, highlighting an unmet need for workforce system services to adjust to a younger generation. Across the state, the proportion of workers entering retirement exceeded the proportion of youth entering the workforce. Therefore, youth programs were focusing on developing youth to be job-ready when these positions open up. In addition, many interviewees felt the workforce system was struggling to reach and respond to younger and early middle-age workers, especially those ages 21-40. Many interviewees also said they did not think the system packaged itself well to younger audiences. For example, several interviewees emphasized that millennials, even those with low-incomes, had mobile phones and were used to services being online and mobile-friendly.



CareerForceMN.com’s modern interface is expected to appeal to younger workers

CareerForceMN.com diverges from traditional government websites to offer a modern feel, online communication channels, a mobile-friendly interface, and social media-enabled content. These elements are particularly designed to appeal to younger customers.

Workforce staff struggled to meaningfully engage employers to understand their longer-term human capital needs. Although interviewees believed employers were engaged to some degree with the workforce system, several interviewees also felt that the workforce system had limited understanding of business needs. As one interviewee explained, “I think we take a couple conversations from employers, and generalize that all employers feel that way, instead of really truly understanding the scope of needs from the employers.” Additionally, a challenge with

employer engagement was that businesses did not take the time, or were not able to articulate, their longer-term needs. Many employers had immediate concerns, especially about filling open positions; but they struggled to project out their workforce needs and communicate those needs in time for workforce staff to plan or develop responsive programs.



CareerForceMN.com facilitates new ways for employers to share information with workforce staff and partners

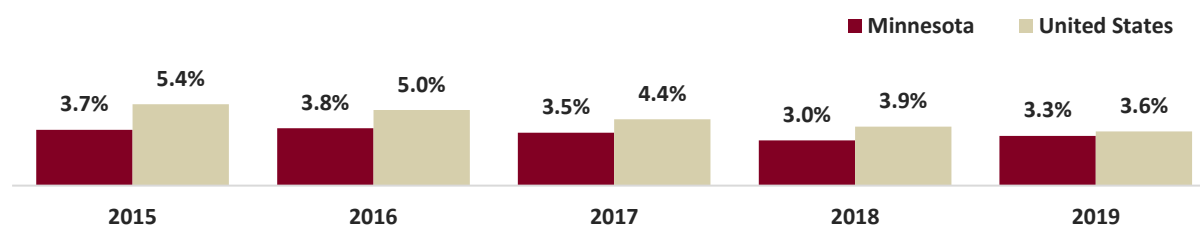
CareerForceMN.com is designed to offer more opportunities for employers to engage with the workforce system and express their longer-term hiring needs. For example, employers can host their own pages on the platform to share their mission and corporate culture. They can also find contact information for their regional workforce staff and use the online messaging platform to contact them.

2.1.4 Economic Context

The WIF grant was implemented in a time of overall economic prosperity in Minnesota, but the economic gains were not evenly divided. Many residents still faced significant barriers to employment and certain groups (including communities of color, immigrants, and those with disabilities) had much lower labor market outcomes than others. In a large state, the demographics and social service infrastructure also vary by urban or rural regions, causing very different demands on the workforce system. Below, we discuss the challenges related to Minnesota's economic context that motivated the CareerForceMN.com platform's design.

The low unemployment rate highlighted the employment barriers for job seekers in need of specialized services. Throughout 2015-2019, Minnesota had a strong and diverse economy with an unemployment rate of 3-4 percent, below the national average (as shown in Exhibit 2.1), and businesses eager for help finding talent. However, because there were more job vacancies than qualified candidates, job seekers still coming to the workforce system for services often had particularly high needs or barriers to employment. Common challenges included lack of in-demand skills such as computer skills, a long history of unemployment, limited English, no General Education Degree (GED) or high school diploma, a criminal record; and/or lack of access to childcare, affordable housing, or transportation.

Exhibit 2.1: Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment Rate, Minnesota and United States



Notes: April rates for each year are reported.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Local Area Unemployment Statistics: [https://beta.bls.gov/dataQuery/find?fq=survey:\[la\]&s=popularity:D](https://beta.bls.gov/dataQuery/find?fq=survey:[la]&s=popularity:D)

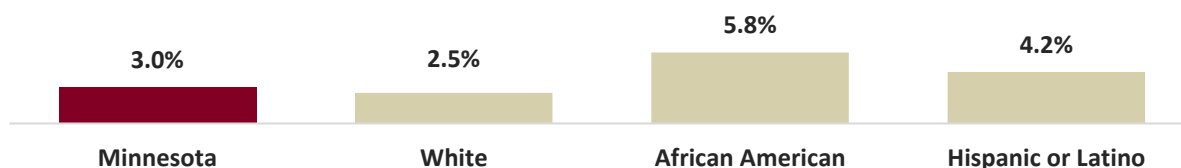


CareerForceMN.com offers customized content for those with specialized needs

CareerForceMN.com is designed to offer tailored online resources for those who may face particular barriers to employment. For example, the platform has e-learning content to build digital literacy; a searchable database of workforce system programs and partners to find supportive services like childcare; and special resource pages for vulnerable populations, such as ex-offenders. A future platform enhancement is aimed to provide a comprehensive database of adult basic education (ABE) classes from the Minnesota Adult Literacy Hotline to search for ABE programs. CareerForceMN.com will display ABE locations and learning opportunities on individual ABE location.

Disparities in unemployment rates, wages, and program outcomes persisted for some groups, including communities of color and people with disabilities. Communities of color, immigrants, refugees, people with disabilities, and those living in communities with inter-generational poverty faced disproportionately worse employment outcomes. Exhibit 2.2 shows that the state unemployment rate for African American workers in 2018 (5.8 percent) was more than double the rate of white workers (2.5 percent). Similarly, in 2017, the employment rates for disabled workers were much lower than the employment rates for workers without a disability, 49 percent versus 86 percent, respectively.⁴⁸ Despite these worse labor market outcomes, workforce programs struggled to attract jobseekers from diverse backgrounds. Interviewees explained that UI recipients are funneled to the CareerForce locations for re-employment services from the UI program, and make up a large volume of job seeker traffic. The UI population is more likely to be white compared to all job-seekers. Outreaching to non-UI recipients requires more effort and intention around inclusion—such as using ethnic radio for Hmong residents, face-to-face networking for Somali residents, and special meetings with local Native American tribes. In addition, some communities, like the growing Somali immigrant population, were still assimilating into the U.S. economy and afraid to go to the government for services.

Exhibit 2.2: Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment Rate in Minnesota by Race and Ethnicity



Source: 2018 Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Expanded State Employment Status Demographic Data: <https://www.bls.gov/lau/ex14tables.htm>

⁴⁸ Statistic refers to individuals ages 21-64. Cornell University's Disability Statistics: <http://www.disabilitystatistics.org/reports/acs.cfm?statistic=2>



CareerForceMN.com aims to foster a welcoming environment for all career seekers

A strong focus of the CareerForce communications strategy is to ensure all customers who interact with the workforce system, including those with disabilities and communities of color, receive equitable services and a welcoming environment. CareerForceMN.com offers content aligned with this initiative in multiple ways. For example, the platform has a specific resource page for individuals with disabilities and all content on the platform is fully accessible to screen readers. The platform images also feature the diverse communities served, and in the future, the platform will offer content in multiple languages for ESL customers.

Employers were often hesitant to hire employees with diverse backgrounds, such as immigrants, that lack U.S.-recognized credentials. Some interviewees stressed the importance of building understanding among employers about the value of hiring workers with diverse backgrounds. For example, many immigrants and refugees had skills and education that should have been of great value to employers, but lacked English language skills or U.S.-recognized credentials, making employers hesitant to hire them. Similarly, one interviewee from Greater Minnesota was disappointed that Native Americans and other minorities could get entry-level jobs but believed employers did not invest in training or developing their employees, leaving such employees stuck in low-wage work, without much opportunity for advancement.



CareerForceMN.com offers resources to support diversity in the workplace

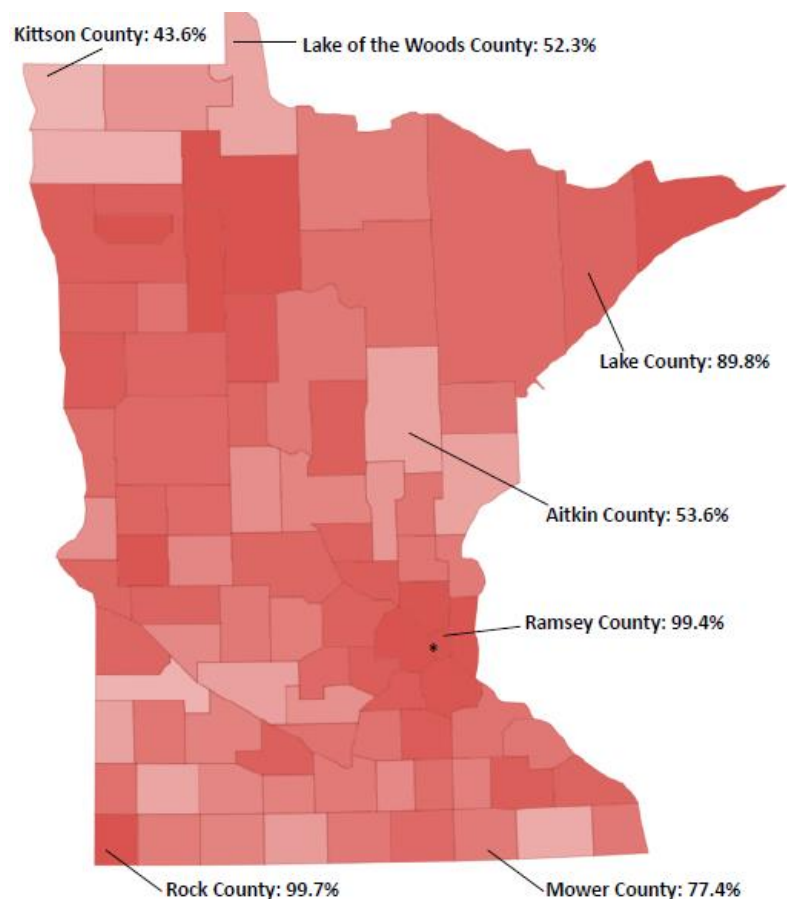
CareerForceMN.com is designed to support a diverse and inclusive labor market in Minnesota. For example, it offers a “diversity in the workplace” toolkit, with separate resources for employers and career seekers. Employer content offers guidance to plan for (e.g., create a plan of action), implement (e.g., create a diversity statement), and manage (e.g. create diversity metrics) an inclusive workplace. Career seeker guidance includes materials to understand legal rights in the workplace and information on filing a discrimination complaint.

As a state with a large geography, economic and demographic trends vary by region, so workforce system services and online tools must be flexible to respond to local needs. Minnesota is the 12th largest state by land area, and its geography is marked by important regional differences. Most interviewees contrasted the “Metro Region,” made up of the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area, with “Greater Minnesota,” which includes the rest of the state. Important demographic and economic characteristics differ between the two. For example, Greater Minnesota is more rural, less racially diverse, older, has more acute worker shortages, and is more likely to have communities with population declines. Other workforce challenges in rural regions include: (1) limited broadband access, (2) limited access to public transportation leaving people to rely on personal vehicles, and (3) lack of service providers outside a CareerForce location.

In contrast, the Metro region attracts younger people and has a larger immigrant population with language barriers. The more urban areas also have many social service organizations that provide assistance, in some instances competing with services offered at CareerForce locations. Also, talent shortages in the Metro Region are not related to population declines as they are in more rural areas, but to skill mismatches.

Recent data from Broadband Now⁴⁹ highlights that populations in rural counties have lower rates of access to strong internet services than urban counties. While 91.5 percent of Minnesotans across the state have access to 25mbps wired broadband service, the proportions vary considerably by county, ranging from 43.6 percent in Kittson County (which is entirely rural) to 99.7 percent in Rock County, which is mostly urban (see Exhibit 2.3). These gaps highlight the importance of the ongoing Minnesota Border Broadband Development Grant Program⁵⁰ and other such projects, building broadband infrastructure in underserved areas in the state, and in turn, helping to maximize the reach of CareerForceMN.com.

Exhibit 2.3: Proportion of the Population with Access to Wired Broadband



Source: Broadband Now.

Notes: The darker the county, the higher the proportion of the population with access to wired broadband, with speeds of at least 25mbps. The star corresponds to the approximate location of the Twin Cities.

⁴⁹ Reese, Nick. "Internet Access in Minnesota: Stats & Figures." (06 Mar. 2019), *Broadband Now*. Web. Accessed 30 May. 2019. <<https://broadbandnow.com/Minnesota>>.

⁵⁰ Broadband Grant Program: <https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/grant-program/>



CareerForceMN.com tools are customizable for each user, no matter where they live

CareerForceMN.com is designed to offer flexible resources that adapt to local needs. Career seekers and employers can search for job postings, local events, CareerForce locations, and partner services by city or zip code. Similarly, employers and customers can view in-demand jobs and occupational forecasts by region. The online content, assessments, and e-learning accessed from home can also significantly extend the reach of brick-and-mortar CareerForce locations in rural locations.

The next section lays out the theory of change, which posits how CareerForceMN.com features will address these key workforce challenges by aligning system resources to better support both sides of the labor market in Minnesota.

2.2 THEORY OF CHANGE

The overall objective of the Minnesota WIF grant is to build an innovative, comprehensive technology platform that better equips career seekers to understand and prepare for in-demand jobs in Minnesota and support employers to find and retain talent. To meet these goals, the Minnesota WIF grant created a more vibrant workforce system that can reach more Minnesotans with: (1) relevant, user-friendly online tools for career seekers and employers; and (2) more efficient and effective collaboration between workforce staff and partners. As described in Section 2.1, the grant was motivated by a wide range of workforce system challenges.

Below, we discuss the grant's theory of change, which identifies how the components of the Minnesota WIF grant initiative address these challenges to achieve the WIF grant program objectives. We worked with DEED program staff to define the theory of change for this program. The items below detail how they envision the program components will address workforce system challenges. We discuss how the new portal and new branding effort together are designed to reduce workforce barriers—such as lack of integrated and cohesive technology systems, and lack of coordination among workforce system providers. We also identify how the initiative attracts new audiences to the workforce system, and is responsive to the economic context of Minnesota to offer a customized experience for each user, regardless of where they live or what demographic they represent. (See Section 2.2.1 for the actual program logic model.)

Technology resources. The platform integrates and improves previously disaggregated labor market tools and resources, so career seekers and employers can quickly access the information they need to make better labor market decisions. This includes job postings, LMI, workshop listings, e-learning tools, tips, and a full listing of workforce system services.

Collaboration and communication. The Minnesota workforce system is a complex network of local service providers, as noted, which can be confusing for customers and impede collaboration across organizational lines to serve customers. Bringing all workforce system service providers

together online under the CareerForce brand, CareerForceMN.com helps career seekers and employers to quickly navigate to the services they need. CareerForceMN.com also improves communication and information-sharing among customers, workforce staff, and partners through a variety of features—such as online queries (called “connections”), the referral tracking platform, the Newsroom, employer pages that advertise employer work cultures, partner pages that publicize their local service offerings, and the ability to share content on social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter). Through these mechanisms, employers can better communicate their long-term human capital needs to workforce staff and partners, to ensure a ready talent pipeline within in-demand industries. In addition, workforce staff and partners can collaborate quickly to get career seekers and employers critical services and track resolution of the referrals.

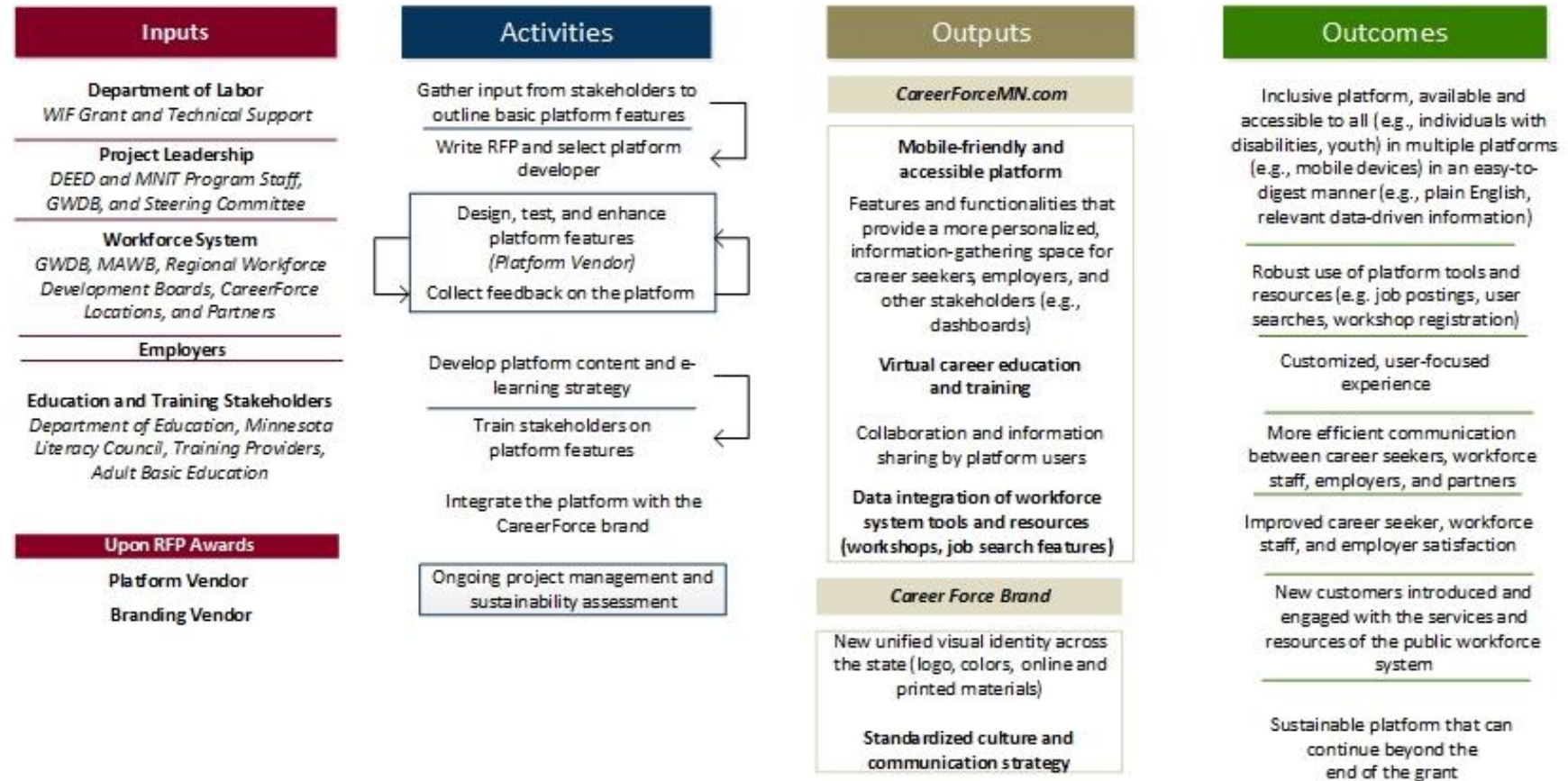
Engaging new audiences. CareerForceMN.com presents the full spectrum of the workforce system’s professional services in an engaging, mobile-friendly, social media-enabled interface to appeal to all Minnesotans. In particular, it was designed to attract new audiences, such as youth and white-collar professionals, as well as economically disadvantaged groups who may have the most to gain from workforce system services (such as those with disabilities and communities of color). CareerForceMN.com is fully accessible for screen readers and other similar tools, and will eventually host content in multiple languages.

Economic context. Given the important differences in demands on the workforce system by region, the platform is designed to offer flexible tools and resources that can be customized for any type of career seeker and employer, regardless of geography and demographic profile. For example, LMI is presented by region. Users can search for CareerForce locations, partner services, workshops, and jobs, by zip code. The platform also hosts materials tailored to different populations (such as those with disabilities and ex-offenders), as well as resources to support diversity in the workplace. Each user also tailors his/her account profile to meet their individual needs (e.g., career goals, favorite organizations, and favorite pages).

2.2.1 Program Logic Model

The program logic model (Exhibit 2.4), which is based on the theory of change, describes how the Minnesota WIF grant inputs (resources) support activities to produce program outputs and desired outcomes. The WIF program includes activities (such as selecting a platform vendor, designing the platform, and training staff) to be accomplished using inputs (such as USDOL resources, the WIF grant team, and key stakeholders). These inputs and activities are intended to result in specific program interim outputs and outcomes.

Exhibit 2.4: Program’s Logic Model



Inputs. The left-hand column of the logic model shows the inputs to the WIF grant program. Key inputs include USDOL WIF grant resources; project leadership staff from DEED and Minnesota Information Technology Services (MNIT); other key workforce system stakeholders who provided critical guidance (such as workforce system state and local workforce development boards, CareerForce location staff, employers, and education and training partners); and branding and platform vendors. The WIF steering committee and other stakeholders helped shape the design and development of the WIF grant activities. Their contributions ensured that the interface and content on CareerForceMN.com would: (1) meet the needs of career seekers in their job search and employers to recruit and retain talent, and (2) provide important resources and collaboration tools for workforce staff and partners in their day-to-day work.

Activities. The second column of the logic model lists the activities that brought the WIF grant to fruition. The first major activity was a robust requirements-gathering process led by MNIT and DEED, to identify the critical components of the new platform and select the vendor to build and deploy CareerForceMN.com. Once the platform vendor was in place, DEED, MNIT, and the vendor designed, tested, and enhanced the platform based on feedback from key stakeholders. After the platform's launch, the WIF team continued to collect feedback from the field and improve the platform's features. Importantly, midway through platform development, the WIF grant team harmonized their content with the overall CareerForce branding effort to ensure the portal content reflected the CareerForce brand and its communication strategy. Finally, the DEED team spearheaded efforts to train workforce staff and partners on the platform and plan for sustainability.

Outputs. The results of the activities shown in the logic model are the development and release of CareerForceMN.com. The outputs shown in the third column of Exhibit 2.4 highlight specific capabilities in the platform, such as:

- *Mobile and accessible interface*, to work seamlessly on all types of mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets. Individuals with disabilities can also fully access all content with screen readers or other tools.
- *Personalized content*, with regional labor market information, tailored resources for specific populations such as youth and veterans, and user accounts that keep track of career goals and favorite content.
- *E-learning materials*, to prepare career seekers to find their first job or a better job. Examples include the Skills Assessment tool that matches career seekers to occupations that match their skills and experience, as well as a connection to the existing Northstar Digital literacy Assessment (NDLA) to help career seekers gain computer proficiency. On a broader scale, partnership with Minnesota's ABE program provides CareerForceMN.com the functionality to display the over 300 ABE locations across the state and a link to program information, content areas, and classes.
- *Collaboration features* that enhance the ability of career seekers and employers to directly message workforce staff and partners through online connections. Workforce staff and partners can transfer these inquiries to each other and track referral status. In

addition, all users can share content via social media, like Facebook and Twitter. Other avenues for information-sharing include employer pages, partner pages, and Newsroom articles and blogs.

- *Data integration*, including integrating job feeds, workshop listings, and LMI from multiple websites into a single, user-friendly interface.

In addition, the WIF grant helped fund and integrate with the CareerForce brand, including developing a new unified visual identity and a standardized culture and communications strategy across the state.

Outcomes. CareerForceMN.com and the CareerForce brand are expected to produce a number of positive outcomes, as shown in the right-hand column of the logic model. The WIF initiative is expected to attract new customers, produce robust web traffic, and increase customer use of the workforce system's online tools (e.g., job postings, job searches, workshop registrations). Beyond increased online activity, the platform will improve the user experience, both through customized content and by providing an inclusive, mobile-friendly service that is available and assessable to all with easy-to-digest content. It should also enable more efficient communication channels for career seekers, employers, staff, and partners. Overall, CareerForceMN.com expects to reach new audiences and increase employer and career seeker satisfaction with the state's workforce system.

3. CareerForceMN.com

The Minnesota WIF grant funded creation of a web-based, collaborative platform that was developed to offer multiple resources to career seekers, employers, partners, and workforce staff in Minnesota to better align labor supply and demand. Accessible, mobile-friendly, and fully integrated into social media, the platform contains job posting data from MinnesotaWorks.net, Minnesota-specific LMI, education and training resources, and region-tailored information, among other resources. The platform's ultimate goal is to improve employment outcomes for career seekers and employers' ability to find skilled talent by providing a user-friendly platform that career seekers can directly access.



Platform Audience

Career Seekers. The platform contains tailored resources and content for career seekers at different points in their careers. It integrates and improves previously disaggregated labor market tools and resources, so career seekers can quickly access the information they need to make better labor market decisions. The information is customized by region. For example, career seekers can search by geography for workforce system services, jobs, and labor market information. The platform also hosts materials tailored to special populations (e.g., youth, those with disabilities, ex-offenders, veterans), as well as resources to support diversity in the workplace. Each user also customizes his/her account profile to meet the user's individual needs (e.g., career goals, favorite organizations, and favorite pages).

Employers. The platform serves as a channel employers with operations in Minnesota can use to recruit workers through job postings and employer profiles (free employer pages to promote their company culture). They can also use regional labor market information data to inform longer-term human capital planning. Additional resources (e.g., employee development plan, workforce plan) in the platform can help employers train and retain their current personnel.

Workforce System Staff and Partners. CareerForceMN.com is designed to forge stronger communication channels among workforce staff and partners by bringing all players together in a single web platform. Through the portal, CareerForce location staff can easily transfer and track referrals to Proud Partner staff[†], and vice-versa. To keep the whole service network up to date on the latest offerings, Proud Partners and other community partners also have their own pages that contain information on their programs and services (e.g., adult basic education classes) and web links to further details (e.g., class schedules). Staff can also post articles and blog posts on the Newsroom to publicize their initiatives and success stories. Finally, the platform offers restricted content for staff and partners to access policies, reference materials, best practices, training resources (e.g., webinar recordings), and performance measures, among other exclusive resources.

[†] Proud Partner organizations receive funding from DEED, local government, and/or workforce development boards to deliver services to career seekers and employers.

The platform, initially called Minnesota Talent Network, was newly branded to become CareerForceMN.com (hereafter, “the platform”). It was launched in September 2018 with limited password-protected access, and opened to all users in November 2018. It has been continually enhanced with new features and content, while collecting and incorporating users’ feedback. The WIF grant team plans to continue enhancements through the end of the grant period.

Section 3.1 describes the platform’s key features of integration, customization, modern and accessible interface, information dissemination, e-learning, and diversity and inclusion. Section 3.2 discusses the stakeholder-specific features for career seekers (Section 3.2.1), employers (Section 3.2.2), and workforce system staff and partners (Section 3.2.3).

3.1 KEY PLATFORM FEATURES

The platform integrates and improves online resources for career seekers and employers, improves their online experience with a modern interface and customized content, and fosters greater collaboration among career seekers, employers, and the workforce system staff and its partners. In this section, we describe the main platform characteristics that reflect the vision stakeholders collectively had for the platform.

3.1.1 Integration

While Minnesota’s workforce system has a strong set of resources and services, they were previously scattered across different web portals, providers, and locations. The platform tackles this challenge by integrating information and resources from multiple sources into a single platform. The integration effort required the platform vendor, Portland Webworks (PWW),⁵¹ MNIT and DEED to work closely to build, test, implement, and integrate numerous Application Programming Interfaces (APIs)⁵² needed to bring data from other systems and agencies to the platform. Exhibit 3.1 details three main types of content that have been integrated into the platform from other institutions within Minnesota’s workforce system.

The platform integrates resources from:

1. MinnesotaWorks.net
2. CareerOneStop.org
3. O*NET
4. DEED’s Labor Market Information
5. Northstar Digital Literacy Assessments
6. MN Adult Literacy Hotline
7. GovDelivery Subscription



⁵¹ Following an exhaustive consultation process with numerous stakeholders, MNIT, in partnership with DEED developed a Request for Proposals (RFP) that outlined the platform’s general features and goals, and competitively contracted with the Maine-based IT firm in December 2017. This platform vendor was a key partner for this grant, working closely with DEED to develop and enhance platform features and functionalities. See Chapter 5 for more information.

⁵² APIs allow data from a website or source to communicate with another platform.

Exhibit 3.1: Main Integration Content

Content	Description
Job Postings 	CareerForceMN.com automatically pulls all Minnesota-related job postings from the CareerOneStop.org, enabling employers to have their job postings integrated to a single web portal. Career seekers can search and see all job postings directly in the platform. If a job posting was entered originally at MinnesotaWorks.net, the link on the platform takes the career seeker to a login page at MinnesotaWorks.net. If the job posting comes from CareerOneStop.org, the career seeker is taken to the employer's page if the job originated from the National Labor Exchange (NLX).
Event Postings 	Career seekers can search for events, workshops, trainings, job clubs, coaching sessions, and career fairs originally posted in MinnesotaWorks.net in the platform. Registration takes place at MinnesotaWorks.net, but career seekers can see what events they are registered to in their personal dashboard. Users are also able to cancel their own registrations within CareerForceMN.com (something that previously had to be done over the phone by calling CareerForce location staff).
Labor Market Information 	Building on DEED's Career and Education Explorer Data Tool, ⁵³ the platform leverages key analytics from DEED's LMI data in a user-friendly way. Information on hourly wages and education requirements of different occupations by region is available to both career seekers and employers to help them make better informed career or hiring decisions. (See Section 4.2 for detail.)

3.1.2 Customization

Rooted in a customer-centered design, the platform enables users to leverage its resources, matching them with their own interests and career or business goals. Customization means that the platform provides the right content to the right user at the right time.

The platform offers two types of customization. The first type is currently being developed and will occur as a behind-the-scenes tool to tailor content based on user attributes and platform usage. Users currently supply their attributes by creating an account within the platform, and populating the optional fields on their geographic region and demographics. Platform use information, which will be captured in the backend simply when users surf the platform, will be used to gauge their interests and needs. Both data sources—users' characteristics and platform behavior—will feed into a computer algorithm, which will result in tailored information popping up for each user. For example, a user from Thief River Falls will see specific banners on workshops happening in that city's CareerForce location. The second type of customization is directly activated by the user, as explained below.

My Account Dashboard. The dashboard, which is completely customizable by the user, lists his/her favorite platform pages and organizations, as well as connections created (e.g., with career seekers, employers, or partners).

⁵³ DEED's Career and Education Explorer Data Tool: <https://mn.gov/deed/data/data-tools/career-education-explorer/>

My Career Goals. Career seekers can set up a list of careers they are interested in, to target their job-seeking effort and also learn more about each career. To add careers to their list, jobseekers can complete the skills matcher questionnaire and see the suggested careers the platform returns, based on how well (in percent) the careers matches the jobseeker’s skills. Alternatively, career seekers can enter job titles they previously had, to find careers that require similar skills. After the **My Career Goals** section is populated, career seekers can click on **Learn More** to access LMI data on each career on their specific list.

Unique Pages. Employers, partners, and CareerForce locations can have unique, customizable pages of their own. CareerForce locations display their address, hours of operation, and on-site services provided. Employers and partners present a description of their organizations, such as their mission and how they fit in the market or the community. They also post their contact information and a link is provided for users to directly connect with them through the platform.



Creating an Account with the Platform

The platform’s customizable features are only available to users who create an account with the platform. For example, career seekers can only complete the skills matcher⁵⁴ if they have an account. Employers and partners cannot have their unique page up in the platform without registering. No user (career seeker, employer, or partner) can have a customized dashboard (e.g., with their connections, bookmarked pages, and occupations of interest) unless they create an account. They cannot access the LMI data without an account either. Features and pages available to all platform users—and thus do not depend on having an account—include job postings, events happening at CareerForce locations, and the content-related pages (e.g., on education and training resources, resumes).

When creating an account,

- **Career Seekers** are prompted to answer a questionnaire on their gender, age range, race and ethnicity, level of education, first language, as well as disability and veteran statuses.
- **Employers** are asked to provide information on the company’s location and industry.
- **Workforce System Staff** and **Partners** complete a form on their location (e.g., CareerForce location’s address, or the organization’s address), as well as who they serve (e.g., youth, adults) and what services they provide (e.g., employment services, support services).

3.1.3 Modern and Accessible Interface

Two of DEED’s primary goals were to: (1) make the platform highly usable and accessible anytime, anywhere, on any device; and (2) link it to today’s most popular social media platforms. We list below three of the platform’s main general interface characteristics that allowed DEED to achieve these goals.

⁵⁴ The skills matcher allows career seekers to map their skills to specific occupations. (See section 4.2.1.)

Mobile-friendly. A mobile-friendly platform can be especially useful in engaging younger career seekers. The platform content was made mobile friendly in that it looks appropriate on small screens and pages that can be loaded with mobile network service. The platform is fully functional on current generation (e.g., released within the last two years) smartphones and tablets.

Accessible. Complying with federal and state legislation,⁵⁵ the platform is fully accessible to individuals with disabilities, with an adaptable user interface for barrier-free navigation and interaction. Key partners (e.g., State Services for the Blind) were invited to test the platform and make recommendations to guarantee and improve its accessibility.

Social Media Presence. All pages can be shared on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and via email through direct links. All pages can also be liked on Facebook and bookmarked through the user's browser (see Exhibit 3.2).

Exhibit 3.2: Social Media Presence in the Platform



3.1.4 Improved Information Dissemination

CareerForceMN.com also aims to serve as a platform where relevant information for workforce stakeholders can be disseminated more easily and in more targeted and direct ways. Three platform features contribute to this goal.

Newsletters. Through the platform, users can subscribe to the newsletter (through GovDelivery) of specific CareerForce locations to receive updates on services being offered and other local news related to workforce development in the region.

Newsroom. This page contains news articles and blog posts on workforce-related topics posted by regional staff. Each article contains audience (e.g., career seekers, employers), region (e.g., Northeast, Northwest), and industry tags, so logged-in users see articles most relevant to them. Additionally, the newsroom content automatically feeds CareerForce's Twitter and Facebook accounts, which maximizes information dissemination.

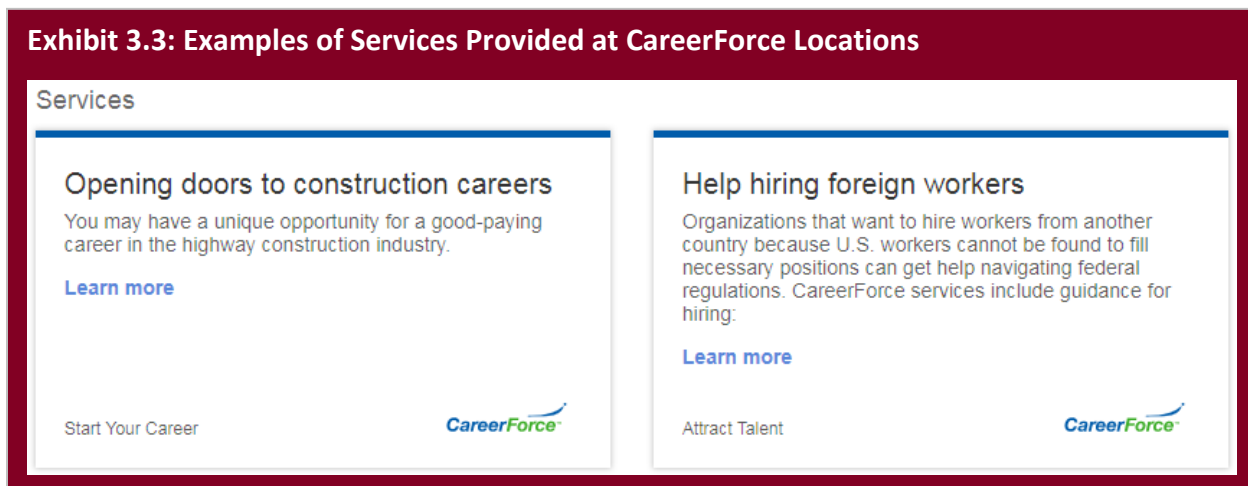
Newsroom articles may help all stakeholders in different ways. For example, an article featuring a specific industry and the education requirements for a job in that field may prompt career seekers to tailor their education plans based on that industry. This information may also help workforce staff guide their clients in light of the information shared about that industry. Another example relates to articles posted on workforce trends in a region, which could help employers that are recruiting and need information on wages and labor supply.



User-friendly language not organized by grant-funding streams. As opposed to DEED's website, the platform is not organized by grant funding streams of WIOA or Wagner-Peyser (e.g., dislocated workers, unemployed individuals). Rather, services are listed and described in a more

⁵⁵ Complying with the state's accessibility standards for Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (as amended) and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 level AA (AAA compliance is strongly encouraged).

general and accessible way to career seekers, employers, and partners. Exhibit 3.3 shows two services offered by a CareerForce location. The descriptive title of each service, and the accompanying details, demonstrate the platform’s goal of using plain language to communicate services and tools to workforce stakeholders.



3.1.5 e-learning

Another important functionality of the platform is that it supports e-learning tools. These allow career seekers to access instructional videos, training, and assessments; and focus on the content they need most at their own pace.⁵⁶ This is one of DEED’s key priorities for the platform, since these important, high-quality resources can potentially impact a large number of career seekers for as long as the resources are maintained in the platform. Examples of e-learning content currently being linked or incorporated into the platform include the NDLA⁵⁷ and information on ABE locations and opportunities. (See Section 3.2.1.)

3.1.6 Diversity and Inclusion

The platform has an entire section dedicated to diversity in the workplace for both career seekers and employers. The page for career seekers contains information on workers’ rights, and guidance for career seekers to find employers that respect their rights and value inclusion. The page for employers lists their anti-discrimination responsibilities as well as the potential benefits of having a diverse staff, with guidance for them to implement and manage a diverse workplace.

⁵⁶ An example of an instructional video that will be available in the platform in the future includes modules of the *Creative Job Search*. See information on “Creative Job Search Modules” in Section 4.2.1 below.

⁵⁷ In partnership with Minnesota Department of Education and the Minnesota Literacy Council, DEED updated the original NDLA ten assessment modules; added two additional modules (Creative Career Search and Your Digital Footprint); and created curriculum around each module. The NDLA is recognized on a national scale as one of the best assessments available for individuals to determine their current level of digital literacy skills. CareerForceMN.com is a resource for individuals seeking help on digital literacy by connecting them directly to the NDLA. CareerForce locations can use NDLA as a part of their service delivery; use the curriculum associated with the 12 assessment modules; serve as proctors for the NDLA assessments; or work collaboratively with ABE locations to proctor NDLA. See NDLA’s portal: <https://www.digitalliteracyassessment.org/>

The platform also contains a separate set of tailored resources for a number of career seeker subgroups. (See Exhibit 3.4.) Many of these pages contain links to web portals of partners and providers that focus on specific subgroups (e.g., the veterans page has a link to O*NET's page on Military Crosswalk Search).

Exhibit 3.4: Tailored Resources to Specific Subgroups of Career Seekers⁵⁸

Resources	Description
 Veterans	This page points users to veteran-specific rights, education benefits, and events. It also provides guidance to veterans interested in starting a business and those looking to transition to civilian occupations using their military skills. Finally, the page also connects users to Veterans Employment Representatives.⁵⁹
 Disability	This page provides users with information on the rights and the informed choice policy for people with disabilities—as well as counseling, training, and skills development options for them. The page also provides resources on long-term career support and assistance for living independently, and connects platform users to vocational rehabilitation services counselors, and State Services for the Blind.
 Youth	This page targets workers below age 25, and provides information on the whole job application process (e.g., resumes, cover letters, interviews), as well as training and education options and labor market information.
 Criminal Record	This page provides guidance for individuals with a criminal record on how to overcome their specific barrier to employment. The page contains information on their rights, provides tips for job interviews, and also connects them with resources to help them with this transition. The section also describes resources available to employers hiring ex-offenders, such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC).
 Over 50 Workforce	This page, focused on mature workers, provides tips on how to better present their experience when looking for a job. It also contains information on resumes and networking.
 Unemployment Insurance	This page focuses on resources tailored for unemployed individuals—such as social-emotional support to cope with job loss, information on how to make smart financial choices after job loss, and guidance on how to access benefits they may qualify for (e.g., UI). This page also contains a direct link to search for CareerForce locations, so users can get one-on-one career search guidance.

⁵⁸ Veterans Resources: <https://www.careerforcemn.com/veterans-resources>;

Disability Resources: <https://www.careerforcemn.com/disability-resources>;

Youth Resources: <https://www.careerforcemn.com/youth-resources>;

Criminal Record Resources: <https://www.careerforcemn.com/criminal-record-resources>;

Over 50 Workforce: <https://www.careerforcemn.com/over-50-workforce>;

Unemployment Insurance: <https://www.careerforcemn.com/unemployment-insurance>

⁵⁹ DEED, Veterans Employment Representatives: <https://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/veteran-services/employment-services/vets-reps.jsp>

3.2 PLATFORM STAKEHOLDER-SPECIFIC FEATURES

The platform is essentially divided into three sets of pages, which directly relate to career seekers (Section 3.2.1), employers (Section 3.2.2), and partners/workforce staff (Section 3.2.3). Additionally, while anybody can surf the platform and access most pages, numerous tailored resources are available to stakeholders who choose to create an account within the platform. Appendix A shows general, career seeker, employer, staff, and partner pages from CareerForceMN.com.



WHERE TO FIND HELP

The platform has a page dedicated to training resources on a variety of topics—from how to create an account and post a job, to tips on what can be included on the career seeker dashboard. Some of these resources are reference sheets; others are videos with demonstrations. The platform also has a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page and a helpdesk. The Training Resources page contains videos and tip sheets to guide workforce staff on platform content and features, as does a page under regular development. Additionally, system-wide webinars have been held to get staff up to speed on the platform, the CareerForce brand, and new approaches to serving clients. (See Section 5.4.3).

3.2.1 Career Seekers Features

Skills Matcher. The skills matcher is designed to link a career seeker’s interests and abilities with the most relevant careers. It allows career seekers to complete a questionnaire in which they chose their expertise level (e.g., beginner, basic, skilled, advanced, or expert) for a total of 50 activities. Each activity represents a skill or knowledge needed for broad job fields, such as Administration and Management (“How much do you know about business planning and leadership?”) and Biology (“How much do you know about plant, animal and cell functions?”). After completing the questionnaire, the platform returns a list of careers that best match career seekers’ interests and abilities. Careers are listed in descending order, from best to worst match (in percent). LMI is available for each career statewide or at the region level (e.g., metro, southeast), and career seekers can add their top choices to their dashboard as a “current career goal.” (See Exhibit A.5 in Appendix A.)

Labor Market Information. After either completing the skills matcher or entering a job title in the search engine, career seekers can look for occupations and find related descriptions and metrics for each. For example, they can learn about different job titles that someone with that occupation may have (e.g., Broadcast New Analyst is also known as Radio News Anchor, Radio Talk Show Host, and News Anchor); the daily activities this occupation entails; and whether any licensing or certification is needed to enter the field. Career seekers can also learn the required level of education and demand for the occupation, including the 10-year growth in demand and number of openings in the previous decade. Finally, the platform shows a range of hourly wages for the occupation and how it compares to the cost of living tailored for the user’s geographic

region. The box below lists data elements available to career seekers when searching for occupation-specific LMI. (See Exhibit A.8 in Appendix A.)



Examples of Labor Market Information For Career Seekers

1. Occupations in Demand. Occupations listed based on demand statewide or by the user's region. Each occupation has 1-5 stars depending on level of demand.

2. Hourly Wages. A range of regional occupational wages for each occupation, as well as the median (50th percentile) wage offer for openings in the selected occupation.

3. Education Requirements. The typical education needed to secure a job in the selected occupation.

4. Cost of Living. The region's estimated cost of simple living that meets the basic health and safety needs of a typical Minnesota family of two adults working a combined 60 hours a week with one child.

My Work Experience and My Career Goals. This tool allows career seekers to enter job titles they previously held, to find careers that require similar skills. The platform returns a list of similar careers in descending order, from the best to the worst match (in percent). LMI is available for each career, and career seekers can add their top choices to their dashboard as a “current career goal.” (See Exhibits A.6 and A.7 in Appendix A.)

My Account Dashboard. To organize a user's occupations of interest, connections, as well as favorite pages and organizations, the dashboard (Exhibit 3.5) is completely customizable by the user. It lists his/her favorite platform pages and organizations, as well as connections created (e.g., with career seekers, employers, or partners).

Exhibit 3.5: Detail of *My Account Dashboard*

My Favorites

[Education and Training](#) [★ Remove from favorites](#)

My Connections

You have no connections at this time.

My Favorite Organizations

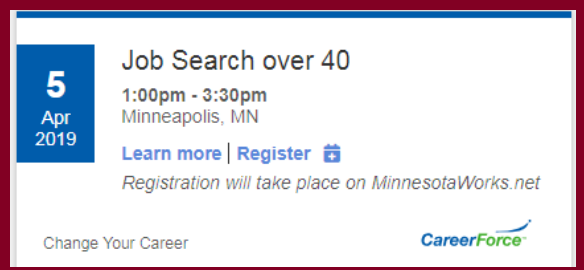
You haven't selected any favorites.

Job Postings⁶⁰ and Workshops.⁶¹ Career seekers can search for job postings and workshops (see Exhibit 3.6) originally posted in other portals, such as MinnesotaWorks.net and CareerOneStop.org. They can also cancel their registration to a workshop directly through the platform. In addition, the platform offers a direct link to the Occupational Information Network (O*NET), a comprehensive, federally sponsored database with information on skills, abilities, knowledge, work activities, and interests associated with occupations.

⁶⁰ Job Postings page: <https://www.careerforcemn.com/search-new-opportunities>

⁶¹ Event Postings: <https://www.careerforcemn.com/events>

Exhibit 3.6: Example of Event Posted in the Platform



CareerForce Location. All users can enter their ZIP code to find the closest and most convenient CareerForce locations to them if they need the assistance of trained staff. Each CareerForce location has its unique page, with address, hours of operation, phone number, and email address. The page shows a picture of the building, the services that location provides, and trainings to be held soon. The user can also subscribe to that particular location's updates. (See Exhibit A.9 in

Appendix A.)

Information on Education, Training, and Job Search. The platform contains a page on education and training resources (e.g., high school diploma, ABE, short-term training, certification) offered by a large array of partners (e.g., ABE providers, colleges, universities), as well as on-the-job training opportunities (e.g., apprenticeships and internships). When clicking on each resource, careers seekers are taken to tailored pages on DEED's website, which may also contain information on financial options. The education and training page is also designed to help users identify the resources that best fit their career goals and the time they have available, since it briefly describes each training or education opportunity, time taken for completion, and the skills or qualifications acquired after completion.

The platform accesses an API from the Adult Literacy Hotline and allows career seekers to take assessments, as explained below:

Adult Literacy Hotline. Active in the state of Minnesota since 2011, hotline services were brought to the platform as a tool to help adults find basic literacy classes. A variety of training options were made available for users to obtain the most up-to-date information about WIOA-aligned career pathways (including Integrated Education and Training), and e-learning opportunities for adults seeking (or being referred to) these services. The upgrade also connected the ABE statewide data management system directly to the online Adult Literacy Hotline, making it possible for individuals to do a search (based on location, type of class, and other factors) and be connected to real-time, detailed information about ABE classes available within the specified criteria.

Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment (NDLA). Career seekers can assess their ability to use a computer and the internet by completing twelve online, self-guided modules: Basic Computer Skills, Internet, Using Email, Word, Excel, Information Literacy, PowerPoint, and Social Media.⁶² On the NDLA platform, they can receive digital badges when they pass assessments, or certificates if they pass assessments in a proctored environment at ABE Locations and some CareerForce locations.

⁶² NDLA's portal: <https://www.digitalliteracyassessment.org/>

Tailored Resources. The platform contains a set of pages tailored for specific career seeker subgroups, including: veterans, disabled individuals, youth, ex-offenders, over 50 workforce, and unemployed individuals. Each page contains a comprehensive list of links to resources tailored for that subgroup, as described in Section 3.1.7. (See Exhibit A.11 through Exhibit A.15 in Appendix A.)

Job Applications and Personal Marketing. The platform contains numerous resources that focus on the job application process—including networking, writing cover letters and resumes, and performing well in job interviews. Career seekers can download templates for cover letters and resumes, among other materials (e.g., typical questions asked in job interviews). Additional pages are tailored for career seekers planning to advance or change their careers.

Discovery. This feature is an open-ended search engine where career seekers can type a word or expression, and the platform returns specific content or materials (e.g., workshops, events, programs, services, how to build a resume).

3.2.2 Employer Features

Information on how to attract, develop, and retain talent. The platform contains a set of pages designed to assist employers not only in their recruitment processes, but also in investing in their current workforce. Employer-focused pages provide an employee development plan template, a list of training opportunities (including on-the-job training), and guidance on how to retain talent. (See Exhibit A.33 through Exhibit A.35 in Appendix A.)

Discovery. This feature is an open-ended search engine where employers can type a word or expression, to which the platform returns specific content or materials (e.g., workshops, events, programs, services).

Unique Pages. As mentioned in Section 3.1.2, employers can have a unique page of their own, where they may describe their mission and how they fit in the market, as well as post their contact information. This feature, which is only available to employers who create an account with DEED, can help employers get exposure among jobseekers, and thus contribute to their recruitment process.

My Labor Market. For employers with an account, this tab on employers' personal dashboards allows them to see both statewide and regional (e.g., central, metro, northeast) LMI, including labor force, unemployment rate, and industry trends. Employers can also select occupations they are currently hiring for under My Hiring, and get information on demand for that occupation (based on 10-year growth and openings), occupation requirements (e.g., education, licensing, certification), and hourly wage ranges. All the data, which is Minnesota-specific, was integrated into the platform from DEED's LMI division, as explained in Section 4.1.1. (See Exhibit A.44 and Exhibit A.45 in Appendix A.)



Examples of Labor Market Information For Employers

1. **Industry Wage and Employment.** The industry, job title, median wage, and number of persons employed in the selected industry at the statewide level.
2. **Employment Projections.** The projected one-year and 10-year estimated number of job openings in an occupation.
3. **Educational Attainment.** The percentage of persons holding jobs in the selected occupation and their specific level of educational attainment.
4. **WIOA Regional Workforce Development Areas.** Selection and display of labor market information by region (e.g., metro, northeast, southwest).

3.2.3 Workforce Staff and Partners Features

Best Practices and Performance Measures Pages. The platform has a Best Practices page dedicated to workforce staff and partners who wish to share their best practices for serving the community with career development, talent recruitment, and other services. The objective of this page is to allow these stakeholders to inspire one another and create the sense of a unified system. To share their best practices, workforce staff and partners are encouraged to email the platform administration based on their experience and effort. The Performance Measures page focuses on tracking and measuring the success of workforce programs, fostering a performance-driven mindset across the workforce system. While both pages are currently visible in the platform, best practices and performance measures have not yet been published. (See Exhibit A.65 and Exhibit A.66 in Appendix A.)

Unique Pages. As mentioned in Section 3.1.2, partners and CareerForce locations can have a unique page of their own. CareerForce locations display their address, hours of operation, services being provided on site, and events being held. Partners present a description of their organizations, such as their mission and how they fit into the market or the community. They also post their contact information; and a link is provided for users to connect with them directly through the platform.

My Labor Market. Also available for employers, this data in workforce staff and partners' dashboards allows employers to see both statewide and regional LMI and get information on specific occupations. (See section 3.2.2 for detail.)

Connections. Workforce staff can leverage the platform's connection feature to stay in touch with career seekers, employers, and partners when planning events in the community, assisting a client, or simply keeping users updated with the CareerForce location's activities and needs.

3.3 PLATFORM FEATURES UNDER CONSTRUCTION

While the platform currently contains multiple resources and tools for its users, MNIT and DEED are still closely working with the platform vendor to develop new platform functionalities and

improve currently available features. In the box below, we list platform features that will be introduced to the platform by the end of the grant period.

At the time of the 2019 site visit, staff and partners mentioned they were excited about the planned chat box and forum features, which will create a more modern and interactive platform, and enable them to more efficiently respond to customer inquiries. Additionally, diverse forums will be tailored to specific interests (e.g., manufacturing collaborative) and allow career seekers and partners to directly interact with workforce staff. Partners suggested using forums to display and share an array of industry topics to a wide audience.

“Employers should be able to type in questions to workforce staff.... Banks and clothing stores do this. For example, an employer could ask, “What is my Employer ID #?” to help them post jobs.”

“You could have a whole section of the site on start-ups and innovation. That is information people want.”

(Interviewees on chats and forums)



Additionally, workforce staff find it useful that access to free online learning resources (e-learning) will be consolidated in one place, meeting the needs of the various stakeholders and partners (e.g., access to digital literacy courses, skills, and interest assessments). Many staff and partners highlighted the importance of integrating the digital learning platforms (e.g., NDLA) to serve the substantial computer literacy skills gap among many of their clientele.

Finally, a partner suggested including a virtual career fair, where employers could speak with potential candidates live through the platform. In addition, stakeholders suggest customizing and grouping information by region, to help employer navigators easily access relevant and locally pertinent information (e.g., creation of local geographic resources to house Minneapolis-specific resources). Workforce staff envision additional resources for companies that directly engage career seekers in WIOA regional industry sector strategies, track and learn about employment rates, and connect to informed workforce staff.

“In 2012, we screened for digital literacy skills for folks coming in for UI. 25% of UI folks had the lowest level of literacy skills (barely know what a computer is).... Digital literacy education is really important.” (Interviewees on e-learning and assessments)





Platform Features Under Construction

1. **Group Functionality Enhancements.** A “Staff and Partner Only” group is being created, allowing DEED to manage delivery of training resources, templates, and other relevant materials and content to only those with staff or partner accounts on the platform.
2. **Integration of O*NET’s Interest Profiler to the platform.** This tool helps users find out what their interests are and how they can translate those into an occupation.
3. **User Dashboard Resume & Job Posting Functionality Enhancements.** Discussions began in Year 4’s Quarter 3 on creating a platform functionality that allows career seekers to upload their resumes, which will be available to employers.
4. **Chatbot Integration Discovery.** MNIT and DEED are working with the platform vendor to explore adding chatbot functionality to the platform, to allow platform users to quickly and easily find content and connect with workforce staff.
5. **Collaboration Enhancements.** The platform vendor is developing public and private forum functionalities in the platform, as well as direct messaging between users and platform notifications.
6. **Translation Support.** DEED will be contracting for Spanish and Somali translations of the CareerForceMN.com navigation and for many of the content pages. The platform vendor will be responsible for implementing the approved translations on the platform.
7. **Other Enhancements.** Include improvements on several pages and tools, such as Events, User Dashboard, Job Posting functionality, MN Literacy Hotline Integration, e-learning Content, and Content Management.

4. Evaluation Design and Methodology

This chapter presents the three-part evaluation design and methodology for evaluating the CareerForceMN.com platform: (1) an implementation study, which constitutes the qualitative component of the evaluation and describes project activities; (2) an outcome study, which is the quantitative component and analyzes program outcomes, including stakeholder (career seekers, employers, and workforce system staff) satisfaction with the workforce system and platform performance; and (3) a cost study, which describes general and categorized WIF grant funds allocation and calculates per unit of effectiveness for two key outcomes (number of unique accounts created on the platform and number of users who registered for a workshop).

Section 4.1 discusses the implementation study approach. The outcome and cost studies are provided in Sections 4.2 and 4.3 respectively. Each section begins with a list of key research questions and includes the data sources used, data collection activities undertaken, and analyses conducted.

4.1 IMPLEMENTATION STUDY

The implementation study documents the process of developing the platform and new branding for the state’s workforce system—identifying what worked and what did not work, as well as factors contributing to successes, challenges, and lessons that can be learned. In addition to answering the associated study research questions, findings from the implementation study provide important context for the results of the outcomes analyses. Exhibit 4.1 presents the key research questions for the implementation study, organized by six broad research areas.

Exhibit 4.1: Implementation Study Key Research Questions

Broad Topic	Primary Research Questions	Secondary Research Questions
Program Context	What factors motivated the WIF grant’s design?	What was Minnesota’s economic environment prior to implementation of the platform and new branding effort? What were the challenges facing the Minnesota workforce system prior to WIF grant implementation? What challenges did the grant address?
Platform Design	What was the process to design the platform and what were its key features?	What information was used to design the platform? Who were its champions? What are the key components of the platform? Who was involved in conceptualizing and developing its components? Which platform features were created to help improve career seekers’ access to employment/training services? Which aspects were developed to help employers communicate their workforce needs and identify career seekers with compatible skills? To what extent does the new platform

Broad Topic	Primary Research Questions	Secondary Research Questions
		facilitate interactions among career seekers, employers, and service providers?
Grant Implementation	How was the platform and CareerForce Brand rolled out to the field?	What was the timeline for the grant implementation? Was this timeline met? What was the process for providing guidance to CareerForce location staff or others for using the platform and representing the CareerForce brand? What activities were undertaken to market the new platform and the CareerForce brand? What tools were developed to help users learn how to use the platform? What other resources (e.g., website, phone customer service) were available to users for asking questions about how to use the platform? What platform features seem most helpful to career seekers, employers, staff, and partners?
Partnerships	What was the role of partners and outside resources in the WIF grant?	What were the contributions of partners and key stakeholders—employers, workforce system, educators, local government—to the WIF grant? Which contributions were most critical? What factors affected partner involvement or lack of it? What leveraged resources were used to support the platform?
Grant Management, Funding, and Sustainability	How was the program managed and how will it be sustained after the grant funding ends?	What was the organization of the team responsible for developing and implementing CareerForceMN.com? What were the responsibilities of each team member? How is the platform maintained? What is the plan for updating it? Was a sustainability plan developed? Which platform components were deemed sustainable? How does DEED plan to support future platform improvements?
Grant Outcomes	What are the lessons learned from all phases of the project?	What promising practices were most important to platform and CareerForce brand success? What challenges were faced during platform and CareerForce brand implementation? How were they addressed? What “lessons learned” came out of platform and CareerForce brand implementation?

4.1.1 Data Sources

The implementation study used two sources of data: (1) semi-structured interviews conducted either in-person or by phone, and (2) program document reviews.

Interviews. The evaluation team conducted three rounds of semi-structured in-person and phone interviews with a diverse array of project stakeholders (see box below). The team

developed interview protocols based on program knowledge, documentation review, and interactions with DEED’s program staff.



Interviewees included a diverse array of project stakeholders

1. WIF Grant Staff (DEED & MNIT)
2. Steering Committee members
3. WIF Workgroup leaders
4. Other DEED Workforce Program Leadership
5. Governor’s Workforce Development Board
6. Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards
7. Local Workforce Development Board Directors
8. Minnesota Department of Education
9. Platform Vendor
10. DEED CareerForce Location managers/frontline staff
11. Brand Ambassadors
12. Proud Partners
13. Community Partners
14. MN State Colleges and Universities
15. Employers

To ensure we asked the most pertinent questions of each interviewee, we developed separate interview protocols for each site visit round based on the interviewee role. For example, we asked WIF staff about challenges and successes in their efforts to design, build, and rollout the WIF grant project. We asked CareerForce location staff about daily challenges they face serving their customers and how CareerForceMN.com and the CareerForce brand affect their work.

The first round of interviews occurred early in the grant (May 2017), while

the WIF grant team was still crafting the platform vision. This round included site visits to DEED’s headquarters in St. Paul and four CareerForce locations throughout the state. The first round aimed to develop a comprehensive understanding of how Minnesota’s workforce system operated before the release of CareerForceMN.com. The information obtained through this round was used to characterize the workforce system along six key dimensions—economic context, challenges, how the system serves career seekers, how the system serves employers, partnerships, and data/technology resources. The second round of interviews happened in June 2018, during the platform development phase, through a single visit to DEED’s headquarters. It focused on the process of building the portal roughly midway between hiring the platform vendor in January 2018 and the platform launch in September 2018.

The third round occurred in April 2019, when the platform had been launched and was online. This final round of interviews consisted of a return to the same sites visited in the first round. It focused on the joint rollout of CareerForceMN.com and the CareerForce brand, and plans for sustaining the platform beyond the grant period. It also aimed at identifying best practices, challenges, lessons learned; and the platform’s effects on the way Minnesota’s workforce system serves career seekers, employers, and partners. Exhibit 4.2 details each interview round. (Appendix B shows a sample site visit itinerary for the in-person interviews.)

Exhibit 4.2: Data Collection Rounds, In-person, and Phone Interviews



- Occurred in **May 2017**
- 51 in-person and phone interviews at:
 - DEED's Headquarters
 - Four CareerForce locations across the state in both rural and urban regions
- This was the requirements-gathering phase, when the WIF team was still constructing the vision of the WIF platform.



- Occurred in **June 2018**
- 16 in-person and phone interviews at:
 - DEED's Headquarters
- This was while CareerForceMN.com was under development.



- Occurred in **April 2019**
- 64 in-person and phone interviews at:
 - DEED's Headquarters
 - Same four CareerForce locations across the state as in Round 1
- This was after the platform was online.

4.1.2 Analysis

Following each data collection round, we thoroughly reviewed interview notes using the qualitative analysis software NVivo. A systematic review of the interview notes enabled the team to identify key program activities, success stories, challenges faced, best practices, lessons learned, and recommendations for improvement. We designed a deductive and inductive coding scheme to search for themes and clusters. For example, we grouped interviewee comments by phase of platform development and stakeholder role, as well as by broader topics of best practices, challenges, and recommendations.

4.2 OUTCOME STUDY

The outcome study documents how two key outcome measures changed after the platform was put into operation: (1) satisfaction of workforce stakeholders with the workforce system, and (2) performance of the platform itself. We describe below our study approach to each outcome measure.

4.2.1 Stakeholder Satisfaction

Three main stakeholders are affected by implementation of the CareerForceMN.com platform: career seekers, employers, and workforce system staff. Exhibit 4.3 shows the key research questions to gauge how the satisfaction of each group changed after the platform was launched.

Exhibit 4.3: Stakeholder Satisfaction Research Questions

Stakeholder Group	Key Research Questions Comparison Before and After Implementation of the Platform
Career Seekers	1. What are career seekers' ages and race/ethnicity? 2. How did the amount of interaction career seekers had with the workforce system change? 3. Which workforce system services did career seekers use? 4. How did career seekers' satisfaction with the workforce system change? 5. How did awareness of job market conditions among career seekers change? 6. How did career seekers' ease or difficulty of identifying job opportunities change? 7. How did career seekers' ability to prepare for job opportunities change? 8. How did career seekers' perceived usefulness of web-based workforce system tools change?
Employers	1. What are employers' industries? How many employees do employers have? 2. How did employer satisfaction with the workforce system change? 3. How did employers' ease or difficulty in communicating their workforce needs to state and local workforce agencies change? 4. How did employers' ease or difficulty in communicating their workforce needs to K-12 schools and post-secondary institutions change? 5. How often did employers use web-based tools for working with workforce system stakeholders? 6. How did employers' use of web-based tools for working with workforce system stakeholders change? 7. How did the amount of interaction employers had with the workforce system change?
Workforce System Staff	1. How did workforce system staff satisfaction with the tools and resources available to help them serve career seekers and employers and otherwise do their jobs change? 2. How did workforce system staff's ease or difficulty in working with career seekers (to help them achieve their goals) and employers (to identify their workforce needs) change? 3. How did workforce system staff's ease or difficulty in communicating with K-12 schools and post-secondary institutions about local workforce investment needs change? 4. How did workforce system staff's awareness of labor market conditions in and out of the local Workforce Service Area they serve change? 5. How did workforce system staff's ease or difficulty in communicating with workforce system stakeholders in other areas change?

Survey Timeline and Protocols.

We relied on quantitative survey data to gauge stakeholder satisfaction from three groups: (1) jobseekers who received services at a CareerForce location, (2) employers posting a job opening to MinnesotaWorks.net, and (3)

Minnesota's workforce system staff. Each survey was fielded twice—in the beginning of the grant period (Fiscal Year 2017, or Year 2) and after the platform was online (Fiscal Year 2019, or Year 4). A detailed explanation of all three survey samples is provided under Sample Selection. Exhibit 4.4 describes the five steps DEED and IMPAQ took when working together to field the three stakeholder satisfaction surveys.

Minnesota law requires DEED to provide advance notice to the subjects of state-sponsored information gathering activities, and to allow individuals the opportunity to either consent to participate, decline to participate, or make no response to the request. Only individuals who opt in can be contacted. This step is referred to as a Tennesen notice.



Exhibit 4.4: Steps Taken to Field Stakeholder Surveys in Both Rounds

- 1 The office of the DEED Commissioner sent a brief email to all workforce staff, employers, and career seekers in the survey sample to: (1) inform them of the upcoming data collection effort and (2) encourage them to participate.
- 2 DEED emailed all workforce staff, employers, and career seekers in the survey sample to request their consent to participate in the survey. The email explained the purpose of the survey and asked the recipient to reply with their consent decision within seven business days.
- 3 DEED securely transferred to IMPAQ a list of respondents who opted into the survey, along with their contact information.
- 4 IMPAQ sent survey invitations and weekly reminders via email for a total of four weeks, to allow sufficient time to respond to those who opted in.
- 5 IMPAQ prepared an analysis file containing the response data and a codebook for each stakeholder survey.

IMPAQ developed a web-based survey instrument based on the key research questions shown in Exhibit 4.5. Survey questions were multiple choice, mostly using Likert scales⁶³ but with some questions allowing for open-ended responses (e.g., other race, other role in the workforce system). The email invitation included a brief description of the survey, the deadline to respond, and a link to the questionnaire. It also clarified that survey responses would be kept confidential. A helpdesk email

We used the survey programming system Acuity to build and host the three web-based surveys, which also met all standards for 508 compliance through use of a custom Java script. An alternative formatted survey was created using a fillable PDF. Both regular and alternative formatted surveys were tested with Non-Visual Desktop Access (NVDA) screen reader and reviewed by an in-house certified 508 compliance expert.



⁶³ Examples include: (1) Very Easy, Easy, Difficult, Very Difficult; and (2) Extremely Satisfied, Very Satisfied, Moderately Satisfied, Slightly Satisfied, Not at All Satisfied.

address and a Frequently Asked Questions page were also provided. (See Appendix C for the survey instruments.)

As mentioned above, each survey was fielded twice. The first survey wave aimed to gather baseline information on stakeholder satisfaction prior to development of the platform. The second, follow-up survey wave was fielded after the platform went online. Each wave used the same survey instrument, thereby enabling us to observe how satisfaction within a group changed from before implementation to after. Exhibit 4.5 provides a detailed timeline for implementation of all three surveys in both fielding periods.

Exhibit 4.5: Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey Timeline

Pre-Implementation Survey (2017)	Survey		
	Workforce Staff	Employer	Career Seeker
<i>Email from Commissioner's Office sent</i>	<i>March 17</i>	<i>May 1</i>	<i>May 15</i>
<i>Tennessee Notice email</i>	<i>March 22</i>	<i>May 3</i>	<i>May 17</i>
<i>Reminder email sent</i>	<i>March 29</i>	<i>May 8</i>	<i>May 22</i>
<i>Response period closes</i>	<i>April 5</i>	<i>May 15</i>	<i>May 30</i>
<i>Opt-in list sent to IMPAQ</i>	<i>April 10</i>	<i>May 22</i>	<i>June 5</i>
<i>Survey accessibility approved</i>	<i>May 5</i>	<i>June 9</i>	<i>June 9</i>
<i>IMPAQ fields survey</i>	<i>May 9</i>	<i>June 12</i>	<i>June 26</i>
<i>Deadline to complete the survey</i>	<i>June 6</i>	<i>July 10</i>	<i>July 21</i>
Post-Implementation Survey (2019)	Survey		
	Workforce Staff	Employer	Career Seeker
<i>Email from Commissioner's Office sent</i>	<i>March 1</i>	<i>March 11</i>	<i>March 11</i>
<i>Survey accessibility approved</i>	<i>March 1</i>	<i>March 1</i>	<i>March 1</i>
<i>Tennessee Notice email sent</i>	<i>March 6</i>	<i>March 13</i>	<i>March 13</i>
<i>Reminder email sent</i>	<i>March 13</i>	<i>March 18</i>	<i>March 18</i>
<i>Response period closes</i>	<i>March 20</i>	<i>March 25</i>	<i>March 25</i>
<i>Opt-in list sent to IMPAQ</i>	<i>March 27</i>	<i>April 1</i>	<i>April 1</i>
<i>IMPAQ fields survey</i>	<i>April 15</i>	<i>April 22</i>	<i>April 22</i>
<i>Deadline to complete the survey</i>	<i>May 10</i>	<i>May 17</i>	<i>May 17</i>

Sample Selection. DEED determined the target population for each survey based on pre-established criteria, and submitted to IMPAQ a list of workforce staff, employers, and career seekers who opted in to participate. We detail below the processes used to determine each survey sample.

Workforce Staff Survey. For both workforce staff survey waves, the entire list of workforce staff and partners available to DEED was used as the target population, and thus no sample was drawn. For the first survey wave, DEED identified any personnel in Minnesota's workforce system and

partners (e.g., frontline workers at CareerForce locations, ABE providers, non-profits) in February 2017 who were likely to either use the platform after it was launched, or be affected by its implementation (see examples of workforce staff and partners in the box above). In total, 1,183 workforce staff and partners were identified, of whom 388 accepted the Tennessen notice and opted in to participate in the survey. For the second survey wave, DEED used the new CareerForce mailing list maintained to keep the workforce system updated and identified work-force staff and partner in February 2019. In total, 2,355 individuals were identified and 535 opted in. See Exhibit 4.6 for a summary of survey populations, sample, and response rates for both rounds.



Workforce staff identified to complete the survey

1. Managers, Business Service Representatives, and Case Workers of all 50 CareerForce locations.
2. Senior representatives of DEED's Workforce Development, Business Development, Vocational Rehabilitation, and other relevant divisions.
3. Chairs of the administrative entities managing WIOA programs in all 16 of Minnesota's WDAs.

Employer Surveys. For both employer survey waves, DEED used the entire list of employers that posted a job opening on MinnesotaWorks.net in the January and February timeframe to determine the target population (see box), and thus no samples were drawn. For the first survey wave, DEED identified 1,533 employers, of which 102 accepted the Tennessen notice. The second wave included 1,237 employers, of which 61 opted in. See Exhibit 4.6 for a summary of survey populations, sample, and response rates for both rounds.



Selection criteria for the target population of employers

1. Posted a job opening on MinnesotaWorks.net in January/February 2017 (pre-survey) or January/February 2019 (post-survey).
2. Had not been part of other DEED employer surveys in the previous year.
3. Had a valid, unique email address in DEED's administrative records.

Career Seeker Surveys. For both career seeker survey waves, DEED used administrative records on individuals who interacted with the workforce system at a certain time - period (see box). Then, a random sample of 20 percent⁶⁴ of the career seeker population was drawn, stratifying the population into three groups: (1) 53 percent white, (2) 44.5 percent persons of color, (3) and 2.5 percent persons of unknown race/ethnicity. In the first survey wave, DEED identified 8,360 career seekers, of whom 1,540 were chosen at random to be included in the



Selection criteria for the target population of career seekers

1. *Career seekers found in in DEED's administrative records as having either: (1) used a computer at a CareerForce location or (2) attended a workshop at a CareerForce location in February 2017 (pre-survey) or February 2019 (post-survey).*
2. *Had not been part of other DEED job seeker surveys in the previous year.*
3. *Had a valid email address in DEED's administrative records.*

⁶⁴ In the first survey wave, DEED drew the sample prior to removing career seekers with invalid email addresses, and thus the survey sample corresponds to 18 percent of the population of career seekers.

survey sample. Of these, 134 accepted the Tennessen notice and thus opted in to participate in the survey. In the second survey wave, 7,772 career seekers were identified, of whom 1,465 constituted the sample. A total of 179 opted in. See Exhibit 4.6.

Exhibit 4.6: Summary of Survey Populations, Samples, and Responses

<i>Pre-Platform Development Survey</i>	<i>Survey</i>		
	<i>Career Seekers</i>	<i>Employers</i>	<i>Workforce Staff</i>
<i>Number, Received Tennessen Notice†</i>	1,540	1,533	1,183
<i>Opted into Survey</i>	134	102	388
<i>Received Survey Invitation</i>	119	101	388
<i>Responded the Survey (Response Rate)*</i>	73 (61.3%)	78 (76.5%)	317 (80.5%)
<i>Post-Platform Development Survey</i>	<i>Survey</i>		
	<i>Career Seekers</i>	<i>Employers</i>	<i>Workforce Staff</i>
<i>Number - Received Tennessen Notice***†</i>	1,465	1,237	2,355
<i>Opted into Survey</i>	179	61	535
<i>Received Survey Invitation</i>	179	61	535
<i>Responded the Survey (Response Rate)*</i>	86 (48.0%)	50 (82.0%)	383 (71.6%)

Source: DEED summary data and IMPAQ survey data.

Notes: The number of survey invitations delivered is sometimes less than the number opting into the survey due to invalid email addresses, as these were email addresses self-reported in response to the Tennessen notice, not the email addresses from DEED's administrative records.

†As mentioned in section 3.2.1, Survey Data Analysis and Reporting, the number of employers and workforce staff that received the Tennessen notice corresponds to the total population - in other words, all employers and workforce staff that met the selection criteria were invited to participate in the survey. However, only a random, stratified sample of career seekers were invited to participate in the survey. The population numbers for first wave of career seeker survey was 8,360 and the second wave was 7,772.

* Valid responses include complete responses (e.g., answers to all survey questions) and partial responses (e.g., question 1 and at least one other question was answered). The response rate is calculated by dividing the number of completed surveys by number of individuals who received the survey invitation, not the numbers that received the Tennessen notice. This is not the same as traditionally reported survey response rates, which omit the advance notice required in Minnesota.

** Minnesota law requires DEED to provide advance notice to the subjects of state-sponsored information gathering activities, and to allow individuals the opportunity either to consent to participate, decline to participate, or make no response to the request. Only individuals who opt in can be contacted. This step is referred to as a Tennessen notice.

Survey Data Analysis and Reporting. We explain below two key aspects of the survey data analysis process: the use of survey weights and pre- and post-survey statistical significance tests.

Survey Weights. IMPAQ created survey weights so the groups of respondents to the employer and career seeker surveys are representative of the populations of interest. DEED provided IMPAQ with all population figures required for calculating the survey weights.

Using the survey weights adjusts the results to account for differences between the representation of each group among survey respondents and the population. Nevertheless, there is an important caveat. Because the survey weights only control for population/response differences along particular dimensions, differences along other dimensions may remain. If such differences exist, our results may be biased if those differences are associated with employer/job seeker satisfaction as measured by the survey questions.



For the **employer survey**, the survey weight for an individual respondent was calculated using the formula below, where i indexes employers and j indexes a set of nine industries.^{65,66}

$$w_{ij}^{EMP} = \frac{N_j}{n_j} = \frac{\text{Population in group } j}{\text{Respondents in group } j}$$

For the **career seeker survey**, the survey weight for an individual respondent was calculated using the following formula:

$$w_{ijk}^{JS} = \left(\frac{N_j}{S_j} \right) \cdot \frac{\left(\frac{P_k}{p_k^{bw}} \right)}{R} \\ = (\text{Base weight for group } j) \cdot (\text{Post-stratification adjustment for group } k),$$

where R is the event of a response calculated as $\frac{\sum b_i}{N}$, N refers to population size,

$p_k^{bw} = \frac{\sum_k b_i}{\sum b_i} = \frac{\text{Sum of base weights for all } i \text{ in group } k}{\text{Sum of base weights for all } i}$, i indexes career seekers, j indexes the three race categories (white, persons of color, unknown race/ethnicity), and k indexes the six mutually exclusive groups defined by combinations of race and educational attainment (high school diploma or less education, more than high school diploma).

The first term in parentheses in the survey weight equation represents a base weight that accounts for the differential sampling proportions DEED applied by race/ethnicity when selecting

⁶⁵ Because there were several industries with only one responding employer, four industries were grouped into a single category (other) for calculating the survey weights. The industries consolidated in this way were: (1) information; (2) financial activities; (3) natural resources and mining; and (4) trade, transportation, and utilities. With this adjustment, each industry group had at least four respondents.

⁶⁶ For example, if there were 50 employers in the construction industry in the population and four such employers among respondents, the survey weight for each employer in the construction industry would be equal to: $w_{ij}^{EMP} = 50/4 = 12.5$.

the sample. In that term, N_j represents the population of career seekers in race/ethnicity group j and S_j represents the number of career seekers in race/ethnicity group j included in the survey sample.⁶⁷ The second term in parentheses represents a post-stratification adjustment for each of the four mutually exclusive groups defined by combinations of race/ethnicity and educational attainment. In that term, P_k represents the proportion of the career seeker population in group k and p_k^{bw} represents the proportion of base-weighted respondents in group k .⁶⁸



Interpretation of Survey Results

Workforce Staff Survey. We made no adjustments to the workforce staff survey data, so the survey results should be interpreted as representing only the opinions of the respondent group. This may or may not reflect sentiment among either: (1) the broader group of staff who received the survey, or (2) the larger group of staff initially contacted and asked for consent to be sent the survey.

Employer/Career Seeker Surveys. Based on the survey implementation and our procedure for creating and using the survey weights, the results for the employer survey are representative of the population of employers that: (1) posted a job opening to MinnesotaWorks.net at a point in time for both pre- and post-surveys, (2) were not part of a DEED employer survey in the preceding year, and (3) had a valid email address in DEED records. Likewise, our results for the career seeker survey are representative of the population of job seekers who: (1) used a computer or attended a workshop at a point in time for both pre- and post-surveys, (2) were not part of a DEED job seeker survey within the preceding year, and (3) had a valid email address in DEED records. Our results do not apply to the general population of all employers or career seekers in Minnesota.

To assess how satisfaction has changed for each stakeholder group, we compared the distributions of survey responses from the first and second waves of each survey. For instance, we documented the proportion of employers reporting that it is easy to communicate their needs to the workforce system in each of the two waves—enabling us to observe how such variables changed.⁶⁹ We used statistical significance tests (e.g., t -tests) to assess whether observed changes between the two waves are statistically significantly different.⁷⁰ All analyses were performed using Stata, a statistical analysis software program.

We also prepared cross-tabulations to assess how responses varied among stakeholder subgroups, which may reveal which types of stakeholders were more likely than others to have

⁶⁷ For example, if there were 100 white career seekers in the population and DEED selected 40 of them for inclusion in the survey sample, the first term in parentheses would equal $100/40 = 2.5$ for whites.

⁶⁸ For example, if the sum of the base weights among all respondents is equal to 100 and the sum of the base weights among only white respondents with a high school education or less is equal to 60, then the term p_k^{bw} would equal $60/100 = 0.6$ for that group. If the proportion of job seekers in the same group in the population was equal to 75 percent, then combining the example calculations for job seekers implies that the survey weight for each respondent who is white and has less than a high school education would be equal to: $w_{ijk}^{JS} = 2.5(0.75/0.6) = 3.125$.

⁶⁹ It is important to note that such analyses cannot be interpreted as implying anything about the causal impact of the platform implementation. This is a limitation of pre-post studies in general, not of our design in particular, because the design does not control for non-program factors that may have changed during implementation and also could affect the outcomes of interest.

⁷⁰ Because the samples for each survey wave are independent, we will use independent sample tests.

positive outcomes.⁷¹ For example, we summarized employer satisfaction by industry, to highlight whether employers in certain industries feel more or less satisfied with the system than employers in other industries.

4.2.2 Platform Performance Domain

The purpose of this domain is to: (1) describe performance metrics related to the new platform and (2) compare performance measures between MinnesotaWorks.net and the CareerForceMN.com platform, whenever feasible. The key research questions for this domain are listed in Exhibit 4.7.

Exhibit 4.7: Platform Performance Domain, Key Research Questions

Primary Research Questions	Secondary Research Questions
How is CareerForceMN.com performing currently?	- Number of unique accounts - Sociodemographic and other characteristics of career seekers, employers, and staff/partners who registered in the platform - Number of clicks on specific pages (e.g., career seeker content, employer content) - Downloads of materials from the platform (e.g., resume templates for career seekers, workforce plans for employers) - Number of employer and partner groups - Number of users who added “favorite pages” and “favorite organizations” to their dashboard - Number of users who shared content on Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter - Number of users who liked a page on Facebook - Number of pages shared via email - Number of users who clicked on a registration link to a workshop - Number of users who registered for a workshop - Number of unique events pageviews - Number of job posting visualizations - Total number of connections made by career seekers or employers
How do key performance measures compare between MinnesotaWorks.net and CareerForceMN.com? [†]	Number of new account registrations

[†]This is the only metric available to be compared across both platforms. Some metrics are not applicable on one of the two platforms (e.g., number of resumes uploaded does not apply to CareerForceMN.com since career seekers cannot upload resumes to this platform; number of pages shared via email does not apply to MinnesotaWorks.net since this feature is not available in it), and others are not tracked by one of the platforms (e.g., DEED has not started tracking the number of searches conducted by career seekers or employers on CareerForceMN.com).

⁷¹ A threshold of 30 observations per cross-tabulation category was used as a minimum. Therefore, cross-tabulations were not run for several subgroups due to sample size limitations, especially in the employer survey.

Data Collection and Analysis. DEED collects administrative outcomes for both MinnesotaWorks.net and CareerForceMN.com using analytical tools embedded in each platform system. These tools are a reliable way to track and report platform traffic, page visualizations, number of accounts, and document uploads, among other statistics.

All data elements provided by DEED for either platform was displayed by month. Data elements that referred to MinnesotaWorks.net spanned from April 2018 to May 2019, while data elements on the platform generally spanned from October 2018 to May 2019. However, some performance measures began to be tracked later (e.g., in March 2019).



We used quantitative data from DEED on the outcome measures listed in Exhibit 4.7 to prepare relevant statistics describing how the measures evolved over the grant period. For selected outcomes (e.g., number of employer accounts), we also report cumulative performance totals over the grant period.

4.3 COST STUDY

The cost study consists of both: (1) a cost allocation analysis, which documents the costs of operating this project and how they were distributed among different expenditure categories; and (2) a cost effectiveness analysis, which provides per unit cost of output, such as costs by stakeholder involved with the platform (e.g., career seekers, partners, CareerForce locations).⁷² Combined, the cost-allocation and the cost-effectiveness analyses answer the three key research questions listed in Exhibit 4.8 below.

Exhibit 4.8: Research Questions, Cost Study

Domain	Key Research Questions
Cost Allocation	- What was the total amount of resources used to implement the program? - How were grant funds spent, by major category of expenditure? I.e., How were project funds distributed to the components of platform development and implementation (including staff, equipment, and other costs)?
Cost Effectiveness	What was the total cost of the program per unit for two outcome measures of interest (number of unique accounts created on the platform and number of users who registered for a workshop)?

4.3.1 Cost Allocation: Data Sources and Analysis

We relied on financial administrative data from DEED to observe grant expenditures by quarter and fiscal year,⁷³ presenting calculations of unspent obligations and remaining funds over time

⁷² Note that neither approach is a cost-benefit analysis. Our proposed cost allocation and cost effectiveness analyses will shed light on the *distribution* of costs and *per unit* costs of the platform initiative. However, they will not indicate whether the program's benefits outweigh its costs. A true cost benefit analysis requires isolating the program impact on outcomes of interest.

⁷³ The cost study analysis refers to the first 14 quarters of the project, or up to Year 4, Quarter 2 (March 31, 2019).

and comparing remaining funds with time left in the grant period. We disaggregated fund allocation by key expenditure categories noted in the project budget (e.g., costs with personnel, travel, supplies, miscellaneous).

For the cost allocation analysis, we leveraged interview notes with key grant staff and other stakeholders to provide context for project expenditures, when needed. We also submitted a description of budget modifications to DOL, as well as a detailed description of contracts and contractual amendments that MNIT and/or DEED signed with subcontractors, such as the platform vendor and the external evaluator.

4.3.2 Cost Effectiveness: Data Sources and Analysis

The average program cost per unit of outcome helps determine value-added of programs or interventions, and provides useful information to other states considering implementing similar platforms in the future. We calculated the per unit cost of the program using the following equation:

$$\text{Unit Cost} = \frac{\text{Total Cost}}{\text{Outcome}}$$

Total cost refers to project expenditures up to the end of Quarter (Q) 2, Year 4 (or March 31, 2019). We used two **outcomes** in this cost effectiveness analysis: number of unique accounts created on the platform and number of users who registered for a workshop.

5. Implementation Study Findings

Minnesota’s major WIF grant activities fall into three phases: (1) developing requirements for the platform, (2) building and releasing the platform, and (3) jointly rolling out CareerForceMN.com and the CareerForce brand to the workforce system. This chapter presents a detailed summary of how the Minnesota WIF grant program was implemented across the three phases and highlights successes, challenges, and recommendations. The implementation study findings are important to provide context for both the outcomes and the cost studies, help DEED strengthen CareerForceMN.com and the CareerForce brand going forward, and offer lessons learned to other states that plan to implement similar initiatives. As noted in Chapter 3, the implementation study is informed by document reviews, as well as three rounds of interviews with WIF staff and a wide variety of other key stakeholders involved with each of the WIF grant phases.

We begin this chapter by describing the overall program management structure in Section 5.1. Sections 5.2-5.4 describe each of the three program phases. Section 5.2 summarizes tasks undertaken to define the platform requirements and select a platform vendor. Section 5.3 describes the process to build the platform features and content up to the launch in September 2018. Section 5.4 discusses the activities to rollout the CareerForce brand and platform across the state, as well as sustainability plans for the initiative beyond the WIF grant. Section 5.5 provides a brief conclusion. At the end of each section, we reflect on key takeaways, including emerging best practices and challenges, and recommendations.

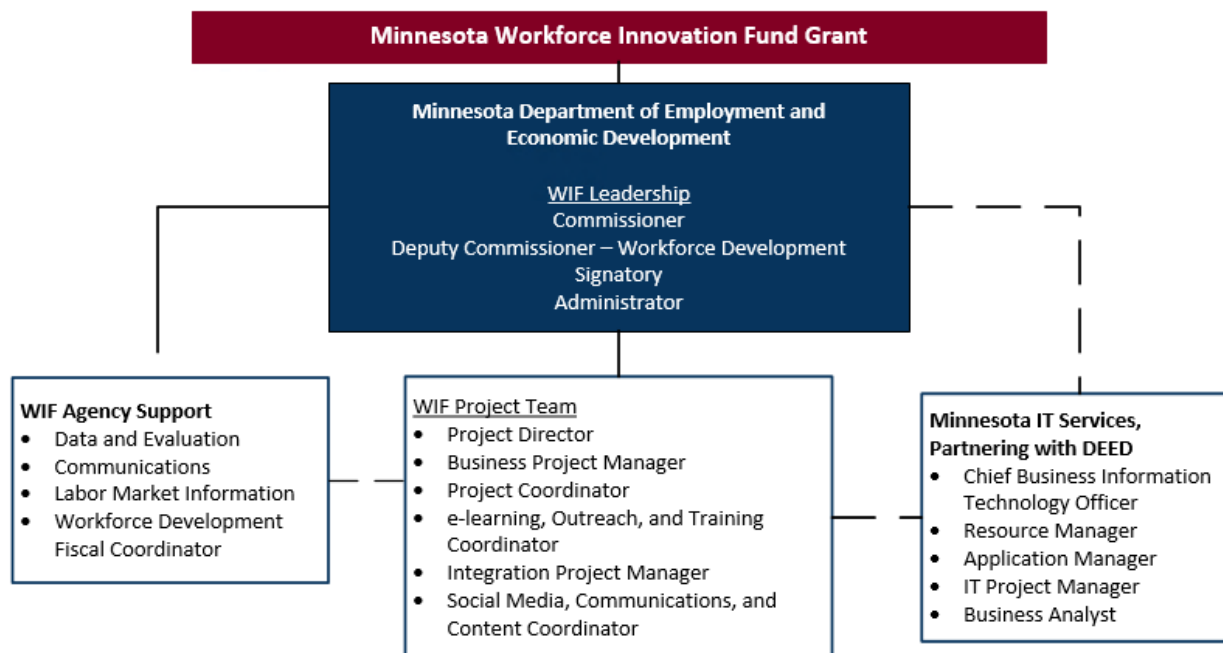
5.1 PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

This section presents an overview of the WIF grant program organization, key stakeholder groups, and leveraged resources outside the \$6 million WIF grant that supported its development.

5.1.1 Key WIF Staff and their Roles

The MN WIF grant program was implemented by a multidisciplinary team of workforce, IT, communications, and other stakeholders. Exhibit 5.1 presents the organizational chart depicting the WIF project team responsible for management and implementation of the grant, along with the senior leadership at DEED and MNIT—such as the DEED Commissioner and DEED Deputy Commissioner of Workforce Development, who provided strategic guidance for the project.

Exhibit 5.1: Minnesota WIF Grant Organizational Chart



MNIT is a close partner with DEED in this effort, as the centralized IT agency that supports the technology needs for all state government programs in Minnesota. The WIF Administrator oversaw the WIF project team, which was headed up by a WIF Project Director. The Project Director was supported by three project managers, each with his/her own domain of focus—business (administrative management and stakeholder engagement), IT infrastructure development (MNIT)⁷⁴, and integration with the branding effort. The team also had three coordinator positions to analyze the platform’s business needs, develop narrative content and create a dissemination strategy, and lead training initiatives, respectively. Exhibit 5.2 describes the roles and responsibilities of key staff that supported the WIF grant.

The WIF project team slowly built up over time. During the requirements gathering phase, in Year 1 and Year 2, the joint MNIT and DEED Team was lean—with only four key staff (Administrator, Project Director, IT Project Manager, and Business Project Manager). An additional four staff members joined the WIF team during the platform development phase in Year 3 (Project Coordinator, Integration Project Manager, Content Coordinator, and Training Coordinator). With the consent of USDOL, one of these additional hires was a new WIF-funded position that was not envisioned at project inception—the CareerForce Integration Program Manager—to support the expanded scope of the grant program to integrate fully with the DEED branding initiative.

The WIF Agency Support box in Exhibit 5.1 highlights the important role of several of DEED’s other program divisions to the WIF grant. These offices received WIF funds for staff time on WIF grant activities and/or for contracts providing WIF grant services or products. The DEED Office of Performance Management (Data and Evaluation) supported the evaluation team’s data

⁷⁴ The IT Project Manager was supported by an Application Manager and Business Analyst.

collection activities; and one of their staff took on expanded responsibilities as a Senior Project Manager for the WIF grant near the end of grant Year 3. The DEED Communications Office received WIF-grant funds to partially fund the CareerForce branding vendor’s contract, which was instrumental in the joint rollout of the CareerForce platform and brand.⁷⁵ The Labor Market Information division was a key partner to build out the platform’s LMI features for career seekers and employers. The Workforce Development Fiscal Coordination office provided business services to coordinate grant expenditures. Beyond these resources, the WIF grant relied heavily on “donated” time from other critical DEED staff and partners to plan, build, and roll-out the initiative, as described in Sections 5.2–5.4.

The roles and responsibilities of the key WIF DEED and MNIT staff are highlighted in Exhibit 5.2. Several of these positions are filled by individuals with other responsibilities within the agency, reflected by having a position only partially paid for by the WIF grant. The positions are listed sequentially in the order in which they came onboard the WIF team. While these summaries describe the key job functions, the highly collaborative team often pitched in on ad-hoc tasks, as well. For example, the e-learning, Outreach, and Training Coordinator also conducted accessibility testing of written content appearing on the portal; the WIF Project Coordinator also supported the help desk; and the Senior Project Manager also wrote narrative content for the platform.

Exhibit 5.2: WIF Project Team Roles and Responsibilities (through April 2018)

Role	Responsibilities	Onboarded
WIF Administrator (20% WIF-funded ⁷⁶)	Provided oversight and guidance and served as a liaison between the WIF team and key groups involved with the grant, including senior DEED leadership, other divisions within DEED, and external partners. This position turned-over five times over the four years of the grant.	Project Inception
WIF Project Director (60% WIF-funded)	Managed the third-party evaluation task including the evaluation RFP, vendor selection, contract management, hiring process for WIF funded-positions, and budget and contracts. Responsible for biweekly reports to Commissioner, Quarterly Grant Reports, and monitoring review and response. Coordinated the day-to-day activities of the grant and monitored implementation progress and the financial status of the grant.	Project Inception

⁷⁵ The DEED Communications Office received \$90,000 in WIF funds for the branding vendor’s contract. Although not funded by the WIF grant, this office also contributed substantial staff time to support efforts to harmonize the platform with the CareerForce brand’s communication strategy, create narrative content for the platform, and roll out the joint CareerForce initiative in grant Year 4.

⁷⁶ The WIF Administrator position was 20 percent WIF-funded, however on average this position only charged 0-5 percent of the time over the course of the grant.

Role	Responsibilities	Onboarded
WIF MNIT Project Manager (100% WIF-funded)	Was the MNIT staff member responsible for the development and implementation of the WIF platform, including managing the RFP development and scoring processes, negotiating and managing the platform vendor contracts and amendments, overseeing the day-to-day work of the platform vendor, prioritizing work to be delivered, providing production support, and overseeing the day-to-day work of the MNIT integrations and implementations. The position was supported by MNIT Business Analysts, Application Developers, Applications Architect, Database Administrator, Application Development Director, and Chief Business Technology Officer (CBTO).	Year 1/ Quarter 4 (July 2016)
WIF Business Project Manager (100% WIF-funded)	Was the DEED staff member with shared responsibility for the development and implementation of the WIF platform, including convening stakeholders, RFP development, user experience, and monitoring the day-to-day work of the selected platform vendor. Coordinated WIF grant operations, and monitored the fiscal status of the grant.	Year 2/ Quarter 1 (October 2016)
WIF Project Coordinator (100% WIF-funded)	Worked with the WIF Business Project Manager and WIF Project Director to analyze business needs in developing the CareerForce platform. This role's responsibility was to collect, analyze, develop, document, and communicate project requirements and analyses to achieve the WIF Grant goals, such as considering how the user testing results should inform platform improvements.	Year 3/ Quarter 2 (January 2018)
CareerForce Integration Project Manager (60% WIF-Funded)	Was created midway through the platform build phase, to support the expanded WIF grant activities to integrate with the branding initiative. The position worked closely with the Creative Director and CareerForce Social Media, Communications, and Content Coordinator to ensure both CareerForceMN.com and the CareerForce brand were moving in a coordinated manner before and after launch (i.e., the strategy and materials developed for the branding effort and the online content of CareerForceMN.com aligned).	Year 3/ Quarter 3 (May 2018)
CareerForce Social Media, Communications and Content Coordinator (100% WIF-funded)	Was responsible for both managing creation of narrative content on the CareerForceMN.com platform (curating from existing sources, editing, generating original content) and developing and implementing a marketing and communication plan for the joint rollout of the platform and the CareerForce brand.	Year 3/ Quarter 4 (August 2018)

Role	Responsibilities	Onboarded
Data and Performance Coordinator (20% WIF funded)/Senior Project Manager	Supported the evaluation team’s data needs in her role in the DEED Office of Performance Management. The scope of her responsibilities expanded late in the platform development phase (August 2018) to become a Senior Project Manager. In this role, she led the project management team in propelling the platform to the launch deadline. The responsibility of this role was to: (1) establish clear project milestones to accomplish prior to launch, and (2) operationalize conceptual platform features into detailed design specifications and policies to guide platform use.	Year 3/ Quarter 4 (August 2018)
E-Learning, Outreach, and Training Coordinator (100% WIF-funded)	Was responsible for developing training materials to support the use of CareerForceMN.com by all types of users. She also conducted trainings on the platform across the state (e.g., hosting webinars and offering in-person training for staff and partners). As part of this outreach role, she also regularly collected recommendations from end users on ways to improve the platform and shared this feedback with the WIF team.	Year 3/ Quarter 4 (October 2018)

5.1.2 Key Stakeholders

The WIF team used formal mechanisms, such as a WIF Steering Committee, and less formal meetings to engage key stakeholders throughout Minnesota, to both generate support for the WIF grant initiative and gather input for its design. The box below describes key stakeholder groups involved with the WIF grant—including the GWDB, MAWB, WIF Steering Committee, WIF Workgroups, and Brand Ambassadors. The project’s success relied on support from influential players in the state workforce system beginning in the grant’s first year, namely partners from the GWDB, MAWB, and DEED Divisional Leadership. These groups served as early advocates and active participants throughout all phases of the WIF grant.



Key Stakeholder Groups

GWDB is the state’s Workforce Development Board and a neutral body representing business and industry, education providers, community-based organizations, organized labor, state agencies, and the state legislature. GWDB makes policy recommendations to the governor and legislature. Leaders from GWDB provided strong advocacy and a vision for CareerForceMN.com and the branding effort.

MAWB represents the 16 local Workforce Development Boards across the state. They work closely with DEED on strategic initiatives to improve the workforce system. MAWB and its network of local workforce development board directors regularly participated in feedback sessions to inform the platform design and workgroups, and served as advocates to roll out the platform and CareerForce brand throughout the service delivery network. Like GWDB, MAWB was a critical champion for the platform and the branding effort.



Key Stakeholder Groups

The **WIF Steering Committee** was composed of DEED divisional leadership. The committee provided oversight during all phases of the WIF grant. Members included the Deputy Commissioner for Workforce Development; representatives from DEED’s Labor Market Information (LMI), Unemployment Insurance (UI), Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Business Development, State Services for the Blind; representatives from MNIT; DEED’s Chief Information Officer; a representative from GWDB; and a representative from the DEED Office of Policy.

WIF workgroups were dedicated task forces to inform platform features and content, led by DEED staff and local workforce board directors, and composed of subject matter experts from across the state. Active workgroups included Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Learning and Education; MNIT partnering with DEED; employers; and jobseekers.

Brand Ambassadors were tasked with the mission to disseminate and advocate for the CareerForce brand and the new platform to their staff and colleagues. The diverse group included WIF grant project staff, DEED Division Leadership, MAWB leadership, local workforce board directors, and CareerForce location managers. After the joint brand and platform launch in Fall 2018, Brand Ambassadors also served as important voices from the field to raise questions and answer concerns to help ensure a successful rollout of these initiatives.

Once the platform vendor was selected at the beginning of grant Year 3, the WIF team broadened their outreach further to engage local CareerForce location staff and service delivery partners in a series of “discovery sessions” with the platform vendor, to begin to prioritize the platform’s core features to target for the September 2018 launch date. At that point, the WIF team also commissioned WIF workgroups composed of DEED staff and partners (e.g., community organizations, local workforce board directors, and state agencies such as the MN Department of Education) to inform plans for specific features and the narrative content of the platform. Local CareerForce staff and partners also served as Brand Ambassadors to roll out the joint CareerForce brand and platform across the state.

5.2 DEFINING PLATFORM REQUIREMENTS

As defined in the WIF grant application, DEED planned for CareerForceMN.com to be an extension of the existing Minnesota Talent Network (MTN). DEED established MTN, a web-based talent community, through a prior grant. The original WIF grant work plan was based on the idea that the WIF grant would largely consist of a series of enhancements to MTN, such as integrating the job postings and workshop registration feeds from MinnesotaWorks.net, and repackaging labor market information from the DEED website. However, DEED’s contract with the vendor hosting MTN ended in September 2015—just as DEED learned it had won the WIF grant—and was not renewed. With the MTN platform closure, the focus of the WIF grant had to shift from enhancing an existing platform with an incumbent vendor to developing and implementing a new one.

Hence, Years 1 and 2 of the grant supported a robust stakeholder engagement and technology research process to map out a new strategy for the base technology platform and define the platform’s business requirements, to culminate in an RFP to hire a new platform vendor. It was

challenging to determine how CareerForceMN.com should fit into the suite of existing resources and tools supported by DEED, as well as new ones DEED might pursue. In particular, DEED considered overhauling MinnesotaWorks.net alongside the WIF grant, which created ambiguity in how these two initiatives would fit together. During this phase, there was also turnover in important DEED leadership positions, such as the DEED Commissioner and several other strategic leadership positions. Some interviewees thought that lack of continuity created additional uncertainty as the team tried to navigate these hurdles to define the platform's vision.

These complications—canceling the MTN platform and ambiguity around MinnesotaWorks.net—led to a longer than expected time to define a vision for the WIF platform. By the time the RFP was issued and the vendor chosen, the WIF team had less than one year to build the platform and define its core services and features.

In Section 5.2.1, we describe the timeline of roughly the first two years of the grant, up to the point when the platform vendor was selected in December 2017. In Section 5.2.2, we discuss the information used to design the business requirements for the platform and select the platform vendor. Section 5.2.3 describes the key decision to fully integrate the platform with the new branding initiative after the platform vendor was selected. Section 5.2.4 reflects on the key successes and challenges during this phase of defining platform requirements and hiring a platform vendor.

5.2.1 Timeline for Defining Requirements

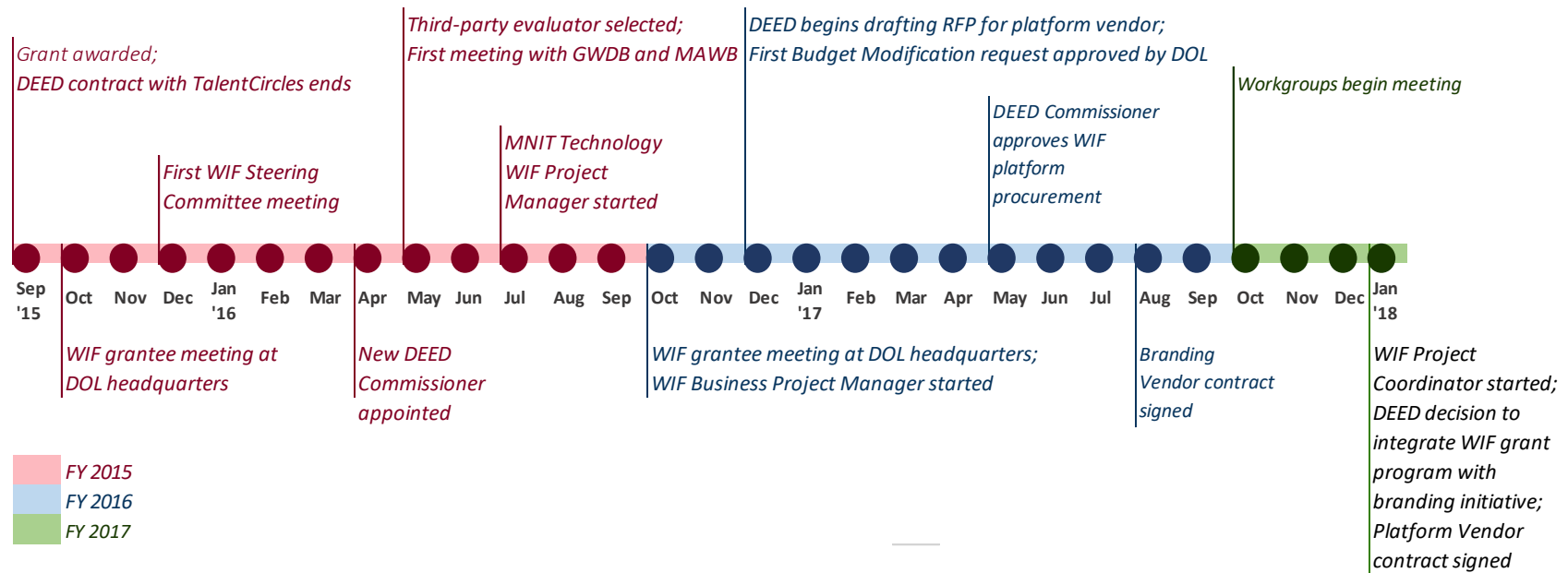
The timeline in Exhibit 5.3 highlights key milestones in the start-up phase of the grant, which ran from the WIF grant award in October 2015 to the platform vendor selection and finalization of the contract in January 2018. We briefly highlight these milestones below.

The timeline shows that the DEED contract with the incumbent vendor for the WIF platform ended just as the WIF grant was awarded in October 2015. This change required the team to reimagine the technology solution and begin a lengthy procurement process to hire a replacement platform vendor. From December 2015 through March of 2016, the WIF team began to onboard the staffing infrastructure of the project. A new DEED Commissioner was appointed in May 2016, midway through the grant Year 1. The DEED Commissioner played a critical role in providing strategic direction for the project.

Grant Year 2 focused on procuring a vendor to build CareerForceMN.com. MNIT, in partnership with DEED, began drafting the RFP to hire a platform vendor in December 2016. Over the course of roughly six months, the WIF team iterated on the RFP collaboratively with staff across DEED divisions. MNIT posted the RFP; the WIF team reviewed and scored the RFP responses, identifying the highest scoring responder. MNIT initiated contract negotiation and signed a contract with the winning platform bidder in January 2018 near the beginning of grant Year 3. This left less than one year to build the new platform before the launch deadline in September 2018. Notably, the timeline in the WIF grant application assumed the platform vendor would start initial MTN platform enhancements by June 2016.

Several other notable milestones in Exhibit 5.3 relate to the CareerForce branding effort. At the beginning of grant Year 2, USDOL approved a budget request for the WIF team to contribute \$60,000 in funds to the parallel branding effort, supporting the work of a branding vendor to create materials and templates. Several months later, in December 2017, DEED leadership made the decision to fully integrate the WIF grant with the branding effort, formally recognizing the shared goals of both projects.

Exhibit 5.3: Timeline for Defining Requirements, October 2015 to January 2018



5.2.2 Stakeholder Engagement and Vendor Selection Process



Key Takeaways

- Early engagement with influential players, including GWDB, MAWB, and DEED Divisional Leadership in the state, set the project up for success. However, some interviewees felt that the exhaustive stakeholder engagement on the platform design slowed the forward momentum of the project.
- Some interviewees thought the lack of continuity in leadership positions, including the DEED Commissioner who supported the original WIF grant, created additional uncertainty as the team tried to propel the project forward.
- The unexpected requirement to identify a technology vendor protracted the project's start-up phase, a delay that was further aggravated by leadership deliberation over the future of MinnesotaWorks.net.
- The platform vendor RFP was well-designed to hire a nimble, collaborative vendor with innovative ideas to shape the less defined features of the CareerForceMN.com vision.

In the first two years of the WIF grant, the WIF team heavily engaged key workforce system stakeholders to build a consensus around the platform vision to finalize platform requirements and release an RFP to select a platform vendor. Further, the WIF team continued to define the platform features and create narrative content in collaboration with key stakeholders and the platform vendor during the development phase in grant Year 3, described in Section 5.3. Below, we discuss early stakeholder engagement and the vendor selection process.

Early Stakeholder Engagement. Early outreach to influential stakeholder groups to garner their support for the project and use their expertise to refine the platform design plans was critical for achieving the goals of this grant. The WIF team began their outreach to the workforce system in grant Year 1 with the state and local workforce system governmental structures, GWDB, and MAWB. Both groups had signed Letters of Support for the platform during the WIF grant application phase. They engaged regularly with the WIF team to receive regular project status updates, help align the platform with existing state and local initiatives, and advise the team on how the platform could serve the needs of the field. One interviewee noted that the power and influence of MAWB in the workforce system is so strong that the platform simply would not have been successful without them. As a result, the WIF team was careful to develop a product that would fit their needs.

Another critical factor was DEED Divisional Leadership staff. The WIF team ensured appropriate stakeholders within DEED were aware of the platform vision and were given the opportunity to provide their input. The WIF team required the support of the full DEED leadership team to develop the platform and advocate for its use among staff in CareerForce locations across the state. To these ends, the WIF team organized a WIF Steering Committee within the first few months of the grant award. The Steering Committee, composed of a DEED Deputy Commissioner and DEED division leaders, met monthly to advise the WIF team on all aspects of the platform implementation, including reviewing the RFP for the platform vendor. The continuous

involvement and advocacy of the DEED Deputy Commissioner on the Steering Committee was especially critical, since the Deputy Commissioner served as a mediator between the WIF team and the DEED Commissioner on the platform’s vision. The Deputy Commissioner’s involvement became even more important as the Commissioner position turned over twice during the four-year WIF grant—and every Commissioner tried to steer the platform vision in a different direction.

During this phase, the WIF team also convened meetings with DEED program staff, who would contribute essential resources to the platform. They began strategizing with the LMI team on data and technology products to integrate into CareerForceMN.com, such as incorporating the existing functionalities of the legacy Career and Education Explorer website. The WIF team also engaged with leaders of existing strategic workforce initiatives across the state to determine how the platform could re-enforce their goals. For example, the WIF staff coordinated with an existing WIOA Digital Literacy task force, and met with leaders on business initiatives (such as the Minnesota Apprenticeship Initiative) and regional industry sector pipelines.

The buy-in from DEED top leadership and divisional leadership appeared mixed during the first two years of the grant. Many interviewees noted that the greatest challenge during the project startup phase was articulating a single leadership vision. Some interviewees explained that this uncertainty stemmed from turnover in several grant leadership positions, including the departure of the DEED Commissioner who championed the original project. The replacements needed time to get up-to-speed on the project and provide strategic direction to guide its development. In addition, a loosely defined project scope made it difficult to explain the project to stakeholders and challenging to define the business requirements in an RFP concretely enough to hire a platform vendor. While there were plenty of staunch supporters among DEED Divisional Leadership, there was also general skepticism among some staff who believed that such initiatives come and go without producing results. It was also hard for some to champion such an ambitious and intricate project until they could see something concrete.

“The actual rubber to the road is a long time in coming. The project seemed to be hung up for a long time due to a lack of vision and agreement on what it is meant to accomplish.”



Interview respondents reported that the communication and performance of the WIF team with stakeholders during this phase was excellent. According to respondents, the WIF team provided timely communication, and was responsive to needs that arose. It combined technical knowledge with an ability to develop collaborative relationships among the various stakeholders involved. Such receptiveness to stakeholder input also came with drawbacks. Some interviewees noted that the WIF team was so amenable to stakeholder input over the first two and half years of the project that it delayed forward momentum to build the platform. Others who were passionate contributors during the brainstorming phase reflected that the vague scope of the

“[Stakeholders] felt heard. They understood DEED was trying to help them. They were excited to advertise the services they provide. They felt like we were all on the same page.”



platform at the beginning perhaps produced too many stakeholder suggestions that could not be realized. One staff member explained that the platform's scope was not well-defined on the front end when they were gathering input, and "they should have not promised that it could do everything for everyone."

RFP Release and Vendor Selection. While strong stakeholder engagement to build a consensus around platform requirements was an expected key start-up activity in the grant application, finding a new technology vendor to replace the existing one was not. To support this process, the WIF team explored alternative technology solutions through technology demonstrations from a range of interested vendors. They also sought out best practices from other states' IT projects, such as a tour of Utah's WIF-funded labor exchange overhaul project. While ultimately deemed infeasible, the team also considered how they could achieve efficiencies by leveraging a concurrent platform development effort funded by the Minnesota State legislature, called the RealTime Talent Exchange.^{77,78} The Exchange offered a talent-matching tool to help businesses recruit workers in Minnesota and had similar objectives as the WIF grant initiative.

DEED, leveraging their partnership with MNIT, selected a vendor for platform development through a competitive RFP. Developing the RFP language was a critical milestone in which the WIF team mapped out the platform's expected capabilities. When drafting the RFP, the WIF Project Managers tried to explain complex and somewhat open-ended business requirements in a way that would feel more concrete. A strong feature of the final RFP was that it balanced articulating the specific requirements of the platform with the desire to allow enough flexibility for potential bidders to demonstrate their own creative ideas for how they could innovate and add value. The WIF team divided their business requirements into three general categories: capabilities they knew they wanted and could clearly articulate (e.g., content customization based on user attributes); innovations they talked about but were uncertain how to operationalize (e.g., artificial intelligence and machine learning); and potential capabilities they had not thought of yet but wanted the vendors to propose. DEED successfully used this process and partnership to hire a vendor that would collaborate with MNIT and DEED to build the new WIF platform in an iterative way.

The WIF Project Managers successfully engaged a wide variety of DEED stakeholders during the drafting and scoring of the RFP. Stakeholder engagement was labor-intensive, but also helped build buy-in and ensured the right voices were heard. For example, the WIF Project Managers recruited 17 scorers to evaluate responses to the RFP. The scoring team included representatives from several DEED divisions: Technology, Veterans, Job Services, Employer Services, LMI, and Communications, as well as WIF project staff. The WIF team used an anonymous, digital scoring process that allowed remote scoring and ensured all would feel comfortable providing their honest opinions. The large group of scorers was intentional, to make sure all the units likely to be affected by the WIF platform were included in the decision-making process.

⁷⁷ The RealTime Talent Exchange platform has since been renamed to MN Job Match: <https://www.realtimetalent.org/mnjobmatch/>

⁷⁸ On the Exchange, employers were charged a fee for each job posting, but DEED leadership ultimately decided the fee charging model did not align with the WIF grant vision.

Notably, as the team finalized the RFP language in grant Year 2, the RFP release was delayed by leadership deliberation over plans to start a separate, simultaneous project to overhaul MinnesotaWorks.net. The WIF platform was intended to connect to MinnesotaWorks.net. The MinnesotaWorks.net initiative, while ultimately put on hold, complicated the challenge of defining a vision for the WIF platform, and whether/how it would interact with MinnesotaWorks.net in its current form.

5.2.3 Unifying the Portal and Branding Efforts



Key Takeaways

- DEED leadership made the decision to integrate the WIF grant with the CareerForce branding initiative in December 2017, creating synergies across the two efforts and unifying their common goal of improved customer experience. With this, the platform would be a highly visible, online representation of the new CareerForce brand.

DEED leadership made the decision to formally integrate the platform with the CareerForce branding effort in December 2017, just as the platform vendor was selected.⁷⁹ The platform now had a new priority to be fully consistent with not just the CareerForce name and logo, but also the lexicon and communication strategy of the new brand. Administratively, this change meant that the CareerForce branding team would join forces with the WIF team to launch both initiatives together, collaboratively creating the platform's communications, marketing, and training plan.

This decision to integrate the initiatives presented opportunities for synergy and mutual support. DEED leadership recognized that both projects were simultaneously attempting broad-scale systems change to improve customer experience, either online or in brick-and-mortar buildings, and to attract more career seekers and employers to the workforce system's professional services. The platform would be a highly visible, online representation of the new CareerForce brand. DEED leadership expected both initiatives would be more effective together, and that it would be easier to get buy-in from the field with a unified approach rather than launching two loosely coordinated initiatives with similar goals. See Section 5.3 for a more detailed discussion.

⁷⁹ Both the branding effort and the WIF grant have been coordinated since the inception of the WIF grant, but operated as independent teams with separate timelines.



Key Takeaways

EMERGING BEST PRACTICES

Early Stakeholder Engagement. The WIF team prioritized stakeholder engagement from the inception of the WIF grant, gaining critical buy-in from influential players in the state to develop a relevant platform that would address the state workforce needs. The key players were GWDB, MAWB, and DEED Division Leadership, who helped to inform the platform’s business requirements and championed its implementation.

KEY CHALLENGES

Protracted Start-Up Phase. The “defining requirements phase” was prolonged, as the WIF team navigated unexpected changes in project scope. The project’s scope changed at inception due to the loss of the incumbent technology vendor for the platform, opening up the possibility of re-imagining what the platform could be, and necessitating a lengthy procurement process to hire a new vendor. Some interviewees thought that turnover in several key leadership positions, including the DEED Commissioner, created additional uncertainty in this phase as the new leaders required time to define their priorities and project vision. The fully executed contract with the platform vendor was not finalized until January 2018, leaving only nine months until the soft launch deadline of September 2018.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OTHER STATES

- Top leadership needs to prioritize and champion a single vision for projects of this size and complexity to be successful in meeting their timelines.
- Comprehensive stakeholder engagement is critical to gain buy-in and inform the project design at the beginning. Project leadership should strategically define the end of the input-gathering phase to ensure sufficient time to develop the product.

5.2.4 Defining Platform Requirements – Takeaways

The WIF grant application sketched out an innovative and ambitious online platform that sought to modernize the workforce system in Minnesota. The goal of the start-up phase of the grant was to concretely define the platform’s requirements and hire a vendor for building out the platform. This section presents a discussion of the important takeaways from the start-up phase. We discuss emerging best practices and key challenges, both of which inform the recommendations highlighted in the call-out box below.

5.3 BUILDING THE PLATFORM

Signing a contract with the platform vendor in January 2018 marked the beginning of the second major phase of program operations—to build, test, and release the platform. To achieve these goals, the WIF project team worked to: (1) select platform capabilities at a manageable workload of core features to deploy at launch, (2) harmonize the platform look and feel to be consistent with the CareerForce brand, and (3) develop features and narrative content. In recognition of evolving requirements, the MNIT and DEED team used an agile design IT development structure

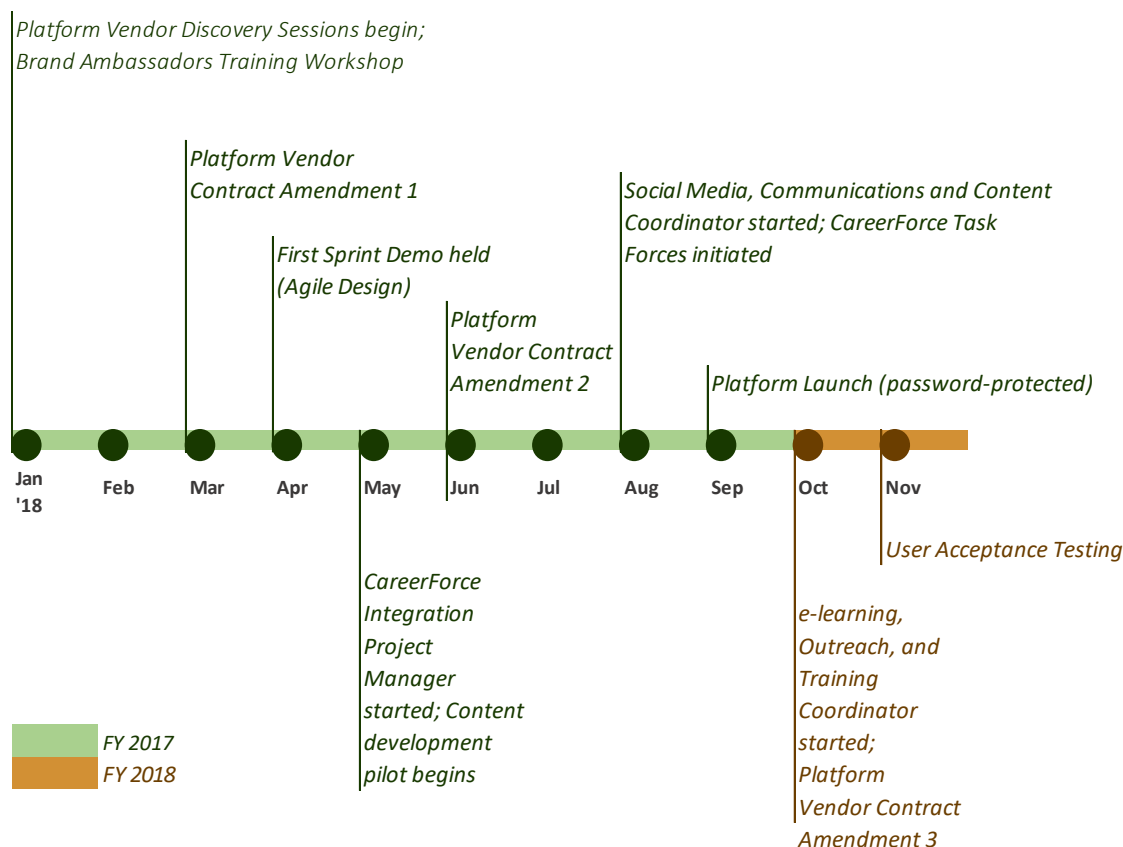
supported by a high-performing platform vendor.⁸⁰ A key challenge facing the WIF team in this phase was building and launching a platform with desired features and functionality in a mere nine months.

We begin this section with a timeline of the platform build phase (Section 5.3.1). In section 5.3.2 we describe the role of stakeholders to inform and develop the platform’s essential features and content. Section 5.3.3 highlights the efforts made to harmonize CareerForceMN.com with the CareerForce brand. Sections 5.3.4 summarizes the key steps to build and test the portal prior to launch in September 2018. Section 5.3.5 summarizes key takeaways, reflecting on the key successes and challenges during this phase.

5.3.1 Timeline for Building the Platform

The timeline in Exhibit 5.4 highlights key milestones in the last three quarters of grant Year 3, from signing a contract with the platform vendor to launching the platform and conducting User Acceptance Testing. We briefly highlight the key milestones below.

Exhibit 5.4: Timeline for Building the Platform, January 2018 - November 2018



⁸⁰ An agile design is an iterative and collaborative approach to software development, where the software developer presents small pieces of functionality to the client for feedback and then can immediately make necessary adjustments. Benefits include a quick feedback loop, transparency, and the ability to support changing requirements. Source: <https://uxdesign.cc/agile-design-process-24be92018ad2>

At the outset of the platform build phase—in January and February 2018—the platform vendor held “discovery sessions” with GWDB, MAWB, DEED divisional leadership and several other stakeholder organizations across the state to prioritize the features for the September 2018 launch, especially given the limited platform build timeframe. Informed by this process, MNIT signed an amendment to the platform vendor’s original contract in March 2018, on behalf of DEED, that established the scope of work through the end of Oct 2018. WIF workgroups, composed of workforce services subject matter experts inside and outside DEED, met throughout the platform development phase to inform the platform features and content.⁸¹

The process for building the IT infrastructure began shortly after. In April 2018, the platform vendor presented its first completed technical component to the WIF team in their first agile design sprint demonstration.⁸² Two-week agile sprints continued for the remainder of the platform build phase. MNIT signed subsequent contracts, with DEED as the Service Recipient, in June and October 2018, to expand the scope of work further and to extend the contract deadline through November 2018.

Content creation for CareerforceMN.com began in May 2018 with a content development pilot, in which 10 pilot users tested and refined the processes and workflows to pull content from existing sources using the GatherContent software tool. The WIF team also added staffing resources to support content development, including the CareerForce Integration Project Manager in May 2018 and the CareerForce Content Coordinator in August 2018.

The platform and branding teams also started preparing for the joint CareerForce rollout. The Brand Ambassador role was created in January 2018, with the mission to help disseminate the new CareerForce brand and platform across the state.⁸³ Similarly, four CareerForce task forces—composed of DEED staff, local workforce development area staff, CareerForce Proud Partner representatives,⁸⁴ and workforce stakeholders—were initiated in August 2018 to help develop brand policy infrastructure and longer-term business process improvements in the workforce system.⁸⁵

The September 2018 launch was required to meet grant requirements. CareerForceMN.com launched on September 27, 2018 to a restricted group of users with password-protected access.⁸⁶

⁸¹ WIF workgroups first met in October 2017.

⁸² Agile sprint demonstrations are the primary feedback mechanism in agile design, where the platform vendor demonstrates a small piece of completed functionality and receives immediate comments from the WIF team to inform any necessary refinements.

⁸³ Brand Ambassadors are representatives from DEED, CareerForce locations, and partner organizations who supported adoption of the new CareerForce brand and platform amongst their staff and colleagues.

⁸⁴ As described in Chapter 1, Proud Partners are local service delivery organizations that receive funding from DEED, local government, and/or workforce development boards.

⁸⁵ The 4 task forces were tasked with the following goals: to enhance service delivery with more efficient processes, improve customer experience through technology, streamline employer services with standard protocols, and ensure proactive communication to engage customers.

⁸⁶ On September 27, 2018, platform access opened to a small group of 23 staff from DEED and MNIT. Access expanded to additional stakeholders for the next two months until the full release on November 29, 2018 when all password restrictions were lifted. For example, the MAWB, GWDB, WIF Steering Committee gained access on October 22, 2018; CareerForce location staff gained access on October 29, 2018; and Proud Partners gained access on November 5, 2018.

Following user acceptance testing in early November, the restrictions were lifted on November 29, 2018 and the platform released to all users.

5.3.2 Stakeholder Engagement in Building the Platform



Key Takeaways

- The platform vendor met with 130 DEED staff and partners across the state through ‘discovery sessions’ at the beginning of the platform build phase. These sessions helped to prioritize and better define the features that would define the core functionality for the platform’s launch.
- The WIF team leveraged resources beyond the WIF funds inside and outside DEED to design and develop CareerForceMN.com. However, some stakeholders felt “out-of-the-loop” once the platform started construction, and found that their contributions were not reflected in the product at launch.

The WIF team engaged stakeholders throughout the platform build phase via extensive discovery sessions (see call-out box for details), workgroups, the WIF Steering Committee, meetings with DEED staff and partners, and community outreach (e.g., presentations on the platform and brand at CareerForce locations and partner conferences). DEED also signed an Interagency Agreement with the Minnesota Department of Education in June 2018 to integrate and enhance several of their online tools, including a database of adult basic education classes and e-learning content on digital literacy.

DEED staff at all levels and partner organizations donated their time and resources to build the platform, contributing ideas to inform feature specifications and workflows, integrating their data feeds, and refining platform page narratives. DEED Divisional Leaders brought the knowledge, resources, and skills of their larger teams, who were not funded even partially by the WIF grant. For example, staff from the State

Services for the Blind tested the platform for accessibility, and staff across workforce program offices—such as veteran’s services and youth programs—curated and refined narrative content. The DEED Labor Market Information and CareerOneStop teams also collaborated closely with MNIT and WIF staff to integrate live data feeds (through Application Program Interfaces) into CareerForceMN.com and design a display of occupational characteristics relevant for job seekers (e.g., regional job forecast, projected wages, videos, educational requirements) that would deliver relevant and easily digestible information to customers and staff across the state. Outside



Discovery Sessions Fast Facts

Who: The platform vendor met directly with CareerForce location managers, workforce development board directors, DEED leadership, all work groups, GWDB Operations Committee, MAWB, CareerForce Brand vendor, joint WIOA/WIF Digital Literacy team, LMI team, CareerOneStop team, MNIT team.

Why: Gather input from 130 stakeholders—to prioritize the features that would represent the core functionality for the platform’s launch in September 2018, and better understand how the features could meet the diverse needs of the field.

How: 50 onsite and virtual meetings

When: January and February 2018

the scope of WIF grant funds, community partners across all six WIOA regions participated in discovery sessions and WIF workgroups.

Once the platform vendor and the WIF project team began development activities, the goals of the WIF project were better operationalized and more visible to stakeholders within and outside DEED. With this improved understanding, more stakeholders became enthusiastic. However, some DEED and partner staff expressed frustration that previously agreed-upon design plans had changed, e.g., important resources and information were less prominently displayed than expected. A few interviewees were also concerned that platform features they had helped conceptualize were still not built, and expressed discontent over the delay in finalizing several essential portal features until after the platform launch deadline.

“The WIF team did a ton of partner engagement to design the vision. I don’t think anyone has been fully informed on if the work plan has changed or if it is still the same.”



Based on the tenets of customer-centered design, the WIF team had initially planned to rely on stakeholders across the workforce system to draft platform content. However, the core team felt that the contributions were more limited than they had expected. Ultimately they had to move to a more centralized content development strategy undertaken by the WIF and communication teams in the last few months of the platform build phase (discussed in Section 5.3.4). On the flip side, some DEED program staff said that they were unhappy with the level of stakeholder engagement in the process of content creation. They felt that the WIF team did not adequately consult with program offices to ensure the web page text offered the full set of resources their clients need, in a logical sequence and a user-friendly format. Interviewees explained that high-quality platform content is critical to gaining buy-in from the users. They expressed concern that if the platform appears too bare-bones, its intended audiences may get a negative first impression, even if the platform had some useful features.

“We scrambled to provide content when they asked for it but they didn’t consult with us to make sure it was appropriately sequenced. It is just dropped-in. We need to get our SMEs to refine the sequence.”



5.3.3 Harmonizing the Portal with the CareerForce Brand



Key Takeaways

- The WIF team was able to leverage the broader resources of the branding initiative, including the services of the branding vendor and the leadership of the Communications Division staff, with the integration of the two efforts.
- Integrating the two efforts added another layer of complexity to the platform build phase and further increased the demands on the relatively small WIF team as they raced to prepare the CareerForceMN.com platform to meet the launch deadline.
- With the support of a dedicated liaison staff, namely the CareerForce Integration Project Manager position, the platform and branding teams were able to better coordinate the integration of CareerForceMN.com with the CareerForce brand.

The WIF team coordinated with the CareerForce branding team throughout the platform build. The decision to formally integrate the WIF platform in December 2017 was largely viewed by interviewees as the right choice to strengthen both efforts. Championed by the same organizations—DEED, GWDB, and MAWB—the overlap in top staff eased the transition to a cohesive initiative. The flexibility of both the WIF grant funding structure and the platform’s agile design method (detail in Section 5.3.4) allowed for a straightforward integration process.

The teams became a well-coordinated unit, prepared to jointly rollout the brand and platform. Interviewees emphasized the importance of both teams making the effort to thoroughly understand each other’s goals. Integrating two separate and established tasks – both several years into their work– initially presented logistical challenges in ensuring continuous communication between two distinct teams on tight deadlines, and full alignment between the platform design and the branding strategy. A critical factor for successfully integrating the two efforts was hiring a liaison position, the CareerForce Integration Project Manager, in May 2018, to ensure strong communication across the two teams. Interviewees noted that while there were some kinks in the beginning, the groups developed an effective process to ensure all platform content aligned with the CareerForce brand. For example, the branding vendor conducted a compliance check before the content was approved for publication, to ensure the text was consistent with the communication strategy.

The expansion in the project scope to align with the branding increased the WIF team's reliance on the branding vendor and the DEED Communications Division.⁸⁷ The full scope of the branding vendor's services became critical to the platform, although the branding vendor was only partially funded by WIF grant resources.⁸⁸ CareerForceMN.com benefited

"Bringing the pieces together gave them both direction. It was a big positive. The rebranding is bigger than new logos. It's a new way of doing business. It's a new way of looking at labor market information. It's a new way of thinking innovatively."



from the branding vendor's services to develop the entire suite of brand materials and their work to produce webpage narrative content (e.g., created platform templates, reviewed content for final approval) and materials to support rollout. In addition, the DEED Communications Division Creative Director, who co-led the branding initiative, became an integral contributor to the WIF team to strategize on how the platform would represent the CareerForce brand's visual appearance and communication strategy. The larger Communications staff also supported the joint roll-out of the CareerForce brand and CareerForceMN.com.

Harmonizing the platform and the CareerForce brand required coordination to strategize on the new customer-friendly CareerForce vocabulary and how it would fit within the platform structure and design. For example, the platform navigation was originally linked to WIOA geographic regions; but this was inconsistent with the CareerForce brand's communication strategy to move away from a .gov feel to a user-friendly .com feel. Motivated by focus group research findings in 2015 that



Changes from .gov to .com

- Avoid technical workforce program names and jargon (e.g., Dislocated Worker Program). Instead, describe service offerings in plain language (e.g., losing your job because of a layoff).
- Minimize workforce system descriptions linked to funding sources, like WIOA.
- Use the aspirational language of "career seeker," rather than "job seeker."

career seekers and employers were confused on how to access services, the CareerForce communications strategy strived to describe the workforce system's service offerings with plain language, rather than using traditional workforce system program descriptions.⁸⁹ This fresh, customer-centric approach aimed to quickly connect customers with the services they need, irrespective of the funding stream or partner organization hired to deliver the service. The call-out box above highlights several key aspects of the CareerForce terminology reflected on CareerForceMN.com.

⁸⁷ The staff time of the DEED Communications Office was not funded by the WIF grant.

⁸⁸ The full branding vendor contract budget was \$635,000; the WIF grant funded \$90,000 (14 percent) of that amount.

⁸⁹ Source: Year 2/Quarter 3 Quarterly Performance Narrative

5.3.4 Feature and Content Development



Key Takeaways

- The continuous feedback loop of the “agile IT management” methodology allowed the WIF team and platform vendor to quickly build and enhance CareerForceMN.com together.
- The platform vendor provided exceptional customer service and the technical acumen to solve problems as they arose.
- While the conceptual vision for each feature was defined earlier, much of the work to actually create the platform features, as well as the narrative content, was delayed until the last few months of the platform development phase.
- Due to limited testing with end users, the platform team should look for opportunities to gather feedback directly from career seekers and employers to refine the platform to meet customer needs.

The WIF team faced an immense challenge with an expanded scope to align with the CareerForce Brand within a compressed timeframe to: (1) iteratively deploy platform features, (2) create webpage narrative content, and (3) test the portal to identify bugs and improve user experience. As a result, a significant portion of platform development occurred in the last few months of the development phase.

Feature Development. The development strategy for CareerForceMN.com was strong. Interviewees explained that the approach was responsive to both the abbreviated platform development timeframe and the need for flexibility to adapt to an evolving platform vision. The WIF team understood that that they needed to define a scope for the nine-month development phase that prioritized the critical features (as informed by the discovery sessions) to be in place by the September launch date, and designated other capabilities as post-launch platform enhancements.

“It’s very beneficial to build a platform in parts and pieces. Reiterating in things and involving more people so that we make sure we are building something that we are actually going to use.”



Further, under the agile design approach, the platform vendor produced complete, functional components in two-week sprints, and then demonstrated the work product immediately to the WIF team. The first agile sprint occurred in April 2018 and continued through launch and during roll-out as the team added further functionality. WIF staff explained that this practice offered valuable transparency into the design of each feature and opportunity to fix problems as the feature was being built. The WIF staff also ensured that the technology backbone of CareerForceMN.com was built flexibly enough to support its continual evolution. As one interviewee explained, “We made it very modularized so we can change things easily.”

The WIF team was appreciative of the platform vendor’s responsiveness and help in problem solving. As one member of the WIF project team put it, “they do what we want and then they do a little bit more.” Multiple WIF staff said the vendor had exceeded expectations. The strong collaboration and performance of the vendor helped the WIF project overcome challenges related to delays in vendor selection.

Content Development. Content development—the process to create the narrative text and downloadable templates for CareerForceMN.com—was a parallel effort alongside the feature development work of the agile design team. The content creation process was deliberately collaborative—led by WIF project staff, the DEED Communications Division, and the branding vendor, but reliant on the expertise of DEED subject matter experts from across the agency to help identify and repurpose existing text (e.g., refine content from the DEED website). While the WIF team piloted the workflow for gathering content from existing sources and stakeholders across the workforce system in May 2018 (see Section 5.3.2 on stakeholder engagement in content development), most of the substantive work was rushed in the last few months of the platform build phase.⁹⁰ As a result, the narrative content on the platform was also considered a work-in-progress at the time of launch that was to be refined carefully with subject matter experts moving forward.

“[The vendor] has been fantastic, responsive, customer-focused, and always talking about how we get it done in the best way possible. They continue to surprise us, pull together designs we hadn’t thought of, and ask good questions. The amount of work we got done in a little over a year is crazy.”



Testing. Thorough testing was a critical part of the platform creation process to identify bugs and refine the user experience. As detailed in the call-out box, the WIF team tested the platform internally and with a small, but diverse group of end users in November 2018, through a process called User Acceptance Testing.^{91,92} Since the platform launch, the limited User Acceptance Testing activity has been the WIF team’s primary mode to gather feedback on the platform directly from career seekers and employers. Interviewees recommended more extensive activities to gather feedback from end users in the future.

⁹⁰ The WIF team also hired a WIF Content and E-learning strategy consultant in January 2017 to develop a strategic roadmap for CareerForceMN.com content at the outset of the platform build phase. This work, completed in April 2018, supported the subsequent content creation process.

⁹¹ User Acceptance Testing occurred with 25 career seekers and staff across five CareerForce locations and partner sites, as well as DEED staff from the Vocational Rehabilitation Services and State Services for the Blind, with the goal to confirm that the platform “does what it is supposed to do” and to fix bugs before releasing the platform fully in November 2018 to all users. The WIF team captured feedback from a diverse set of users by gender, age, individuals with disabilities, communities of color, and English language learners (source User Acceptance Testing Report).

⁹² Year 3/Quarter 4 Narrative Report.



Examples of Testing Activities

- Accessibility testing was done at every sprint to confirm all features and content work with screen readers.
- Testing each API to ensure that the platform vendor is consuming and displaying the data provided by the API(s).
- Stakeholder testing of platform navigation and the “findability of topics” in a sandbox environment was done with over 200 participants in July 2018. A sandbox environment is a way to create an isolated, working version of the platform for users to test out while the platform developers simultaneously continue their work to enhance the platform.⁹³
- User Acceptance Testing was done in November 2018, including expert testing on accessibility from the Vocational Rehabilitation Services and State Services for the Blind.

The Final Push to Platform Launch. CareerForceMN.com was launched to a restricted group of users on time on September 30, 2018. After two months of additional development, CareerForceMN.com was fully released to all users on November 29, 2018. The team added much of the platform’s essential functionality and narrative content between August and November 2018. Interviewees said this owed primarily to staffing capacity challenges, described further below.

Interviewees involved in the platform development phase almost unanimously agreed that a project of this scope and complexity required a larger team with full-time staff from the beginning to meet its deadlines. When the proposal team submitted their WIF grant application, as noted, they proposed a staffing structure based on a narrower project scope—one that enhanced an existing platform rather than this much larger effort to build a technology infrastructure from scratch. Interviewees also pointed out that DEED staff involved with the WIF grant also had other responsibilities within the agency. This was true, not only for some of the key WIF grant management team staff, such as the Project Director and Project Administrator, but also for many of the other DEED stakeholders involved with the WIF initiative, such as those making up the WIF Steering Committee. These staff were sometimes required to put higher priority on non-WIF issues that had to be dealt with quickly.

Many interviewees noted that the WIF team lacked a project manager position over the platform—someone responsible for devoting the time necessary to develop and enforce a detailed project work plan to push the project forward. As one respondent explained, without this type of leadership and documentation, it was “a scattershot approach.” A staff member from the DEED Office of Performance Management took on this task as Senior Project Manager in August 2018, a few months before launch. With the support of the new Senior Project Manager, the team created a detailed work plan for deploying the platform’s core capabilities to meet the launch deadline in September 2018 and a full release to all users in November 2018, including timelines and key milestones for each feature. These milestones included developing the

⁹³ <https://getsandbox.com/why-sandbox>

workflow and policies to support the core platform features, which required translating a broad vision into pragmatic plans for how the user would interact with a given feature on the platform.

In addition, interviewees explained that the team began gathering content from the field in May 2018—a point at which the CareerForce Content Coordinator position had not been filled to provide leadership and overall management of the process. As one WIF project team member said, figuring out “who’s going to write it, what it’s going to say, and how it’s going to feel” was a critical need at that point. Because contributions from the field were more limited than expected, the overburdened WIF team scrambled to get the work done, relying heavily on the Communications Division and the branding vendor to generate the basic platform content. The work accelerated when the Content Coordinator joined the team in August 2018, but this was only two months before the September soft launch deadline.

5.3.5 Building the Platform - Takeaways

Section 5.3 summarizes the nine-month platform development process, which was a joint effort among WIF team, vendors, and stakeholders to deploy the CareerForceMN.com portal by the September 30, 2018 launch deadline. Below, we discuss important takeaways from the section, including emerging best practices, key challenges, and future recommendations for other states considering implementing a similar type of initiative.



Key Takeaways

EMERGING BEST PRACTICES

- **Using a high quality platform vendor with a flexible approach.** The WIF team contracted out the platform creation to a high-performing vendor who executed an efficient, collaborative agile design process. The decision to use an agile-design, rather than a traditional IT development approach where the client is mostly hands-off, effectively supported a project with a somewhat ambiguous scope and evolving requirements.
- **Phased Launch.** Given the abbreviated timeline for platform construction, the WIF team worked with stakeholders and the platform vendor to identify a core set of components of the platform that would support the workforce system’s most critical needs and still meet the launch deadline. This led to a common understanding that the platform launched in Fall 2018 would be only a starting point, consisting of a core set of functions and features.
- **Leveraged Resources.** The WIF team leveraged outside resources and donated staff time to bring the grant program to fruition. DEED staff contributed thousands of hours to feature and content development, and several partner organizations energized WIF workgroups.



Key Takeaways

KEY CHALLENGES

Under-staffed with an Expanded Scope and Compressed Timeframe. The WIF project was under-staffed to tackle the immense task, with an expanded scope, in the compressed platform development timeframe. Several key staff roles were only part-time positions and two critical staff came onboard late in the platform development stage, with only two months remaining until the September 30 launch deadline, including a new senior project manager role critical in defining a detailed work plan and the staff role responsible for managing the narrative content for the platform.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OTHER STATES

- Look to talented outside vendors who can dedicate their full resources to building the technology and harness agile design-based processes.
- Prioritize and onboard the required staff early in the grant period, and allow key project staff to be fully dedicated to the grant. To the extent possible, ensure that increases in scope are met with increases in project staff.
- Rely on a wide range of workforce system stakeholders to serve as advocates and to contribute their ideas, resources, and time to build a product that meets the diverse needs of the state.
- Develop and strongly enforce a detailed project work plan. Create a work plan that prioritizes a core set of features and content that can be achieved within the timeline set.
- Design an efficient feedback loop with outside contributors to communicate changes to the project scope, timeline, and future plan—to manage expectations when the product launches.

5.4 PLATFORM ROLL-OUT

In the final phase of the WIF grant, the CareerForce team, including both the platform and branding teams, disseminated the joint CareerForce initiative to workforce system staff and partners through training webinars, in-person sessions, short videos, email communications, online reference materials, and the advocacy of Brand Ambassadors. Although this was ultimately postponed, the team also planned local events and a statewide media campaign through a “public launch” to advertise CareerForce to career seekers and employers across the state. Throughout rollout, the team continued to iteratively enhance the content and add new features to CareerForceMN.com. They also developed the policy infrastructure of the CareerForce Brand to guide processes on the platform, and in CareerForce and other partner locations. During this period, DEED also began to plan for resources to support sustainability of the joint CareerForce platform and brand initiatives after the WIF grant ended.

The rollout phase was marked by a shifting landscape—as the platform added features, the larger CareerForce brand continued to develop policy infrastructure, a new DEED Commissioner was appointed, and the public launch was postponed—all of which slowed adoption of initiatives across the workforce system. Despite these challenges, the WIF grant team was able to successfully engage stakeholders during this phase. The team promptly delivered user-friendly training resources, rapid updates on the platform, and policy changes to the staff and partners

across the state. The team also gathered extensive feedback on CareerForceMN.com from these groups to refine the platform's features and content.

We begin the rest of this section with a timeline of the rollout phase in Section 5.4.1. We describe the continued work to develop CareerForceMN.com and the CareerForce brand policy infrastructure in Section 5.4.2. Section 5.4.3 highlights the training and outreach activities to disseminate the CareerForce initiative across the workforce system. Section 5.4.4 discusses sustainability for the platform and the brand. Section 5.4.5 describes key takeaways from the rollout phase.

5.4.1 Timeline for Rollout

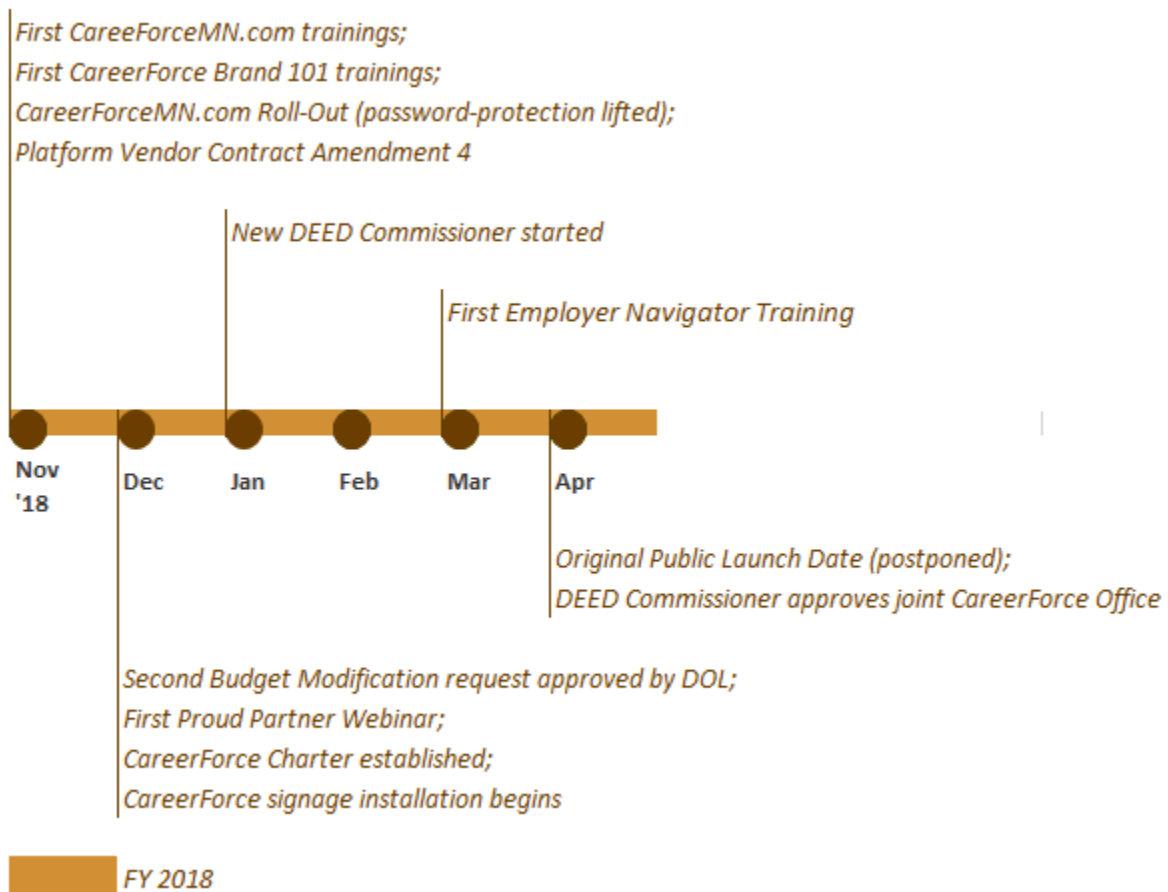
The timeline in Exhibit 5.5 highlights key milestones of the joint rollout of the platform and CareerForce brand of grant Year 4 through April 2019. The WIF team officially rolled out the CareerForce brand and platform on November 29, 2018. The team began conducting training and outreach to workforce system staff and partners in early November, beginning with CareerForceMN.com and CareerForce Brand 101 trainings; these dissemination efforts then continued throughout grant Year 4. The DEED Communication team began installing the new CareerForce exterior signs at CareerForce locations in December 2018. In addition, the CareerForce team hosted monthly Brand Ambassador meetings to share CareerForce updates, answer questions, and elicit feedback from the field.⁹⁴ A larger public launch to raise awareness of the brand and platform to career seekers and employers was planned for April 2018; but that was postponed to coordinate with the new DEED Commissioner, who started his new position at the end of January 2019.

In parallel with these activities, the platform vendor continued two-week agile design sprints to deploy additional functionality to CareerForceMN.com. In November 2018, MNIT signed the fourth contract amendment with the platform vendor, on behalf of DEED, to deploy platform enhancements through May 2019; a deadline that was subsequently extended, through another amendment, to the end of the grant period in September 2019.

The CareerForce team also refined governing structures to support sustainability of the platform and branding initiatives into the future. For example, DEED, MAWB, and GWDB signed a CareerForce charter in December 2018, formalizing their joint decision-making authority with respect to the CareerForce initiative. The charter defined the joint staffing structure and roles and responsibilities of the leadership team—including executive sponsors from all three organizations to make strategic decisions, a core staff from all three organizations to manage the day-to-day activities, and a team of advisors from across the state. In April 2019, the DEED Commissioner approved a new DEED CareerForce Office, a single unit to manage the platform and brand in the future.

⁹⁴ As defined in Section 5.1, Brand Ambassadors are workforce staff and partners across the state who are tasked to disseminate and advocate the CareerForce initiative to their staff and colleagues.

Exhibit 5.5: Timeline for the Platform's Rollout, November 2018 through April 2019



5.4.2 Continuous Enhancements to the Brand and Platform after Launch



Key Takeaways

- The CareerForce team continued to build CareerForceMN.com’s features and content to meet defined milestones and refine the user experience in response to feedback from the field.
- For much of the rollout phase, CareerForceMN.com was missing many of the anticipated features, which reduced buy-in from staff and partners who were expecting a finished product from the start.
- The most common criticism on the new platform was that career seekers and employers still had to sign-in separately to MinnesotaWorks.net to post or apply for jobs. Some said that the public launch should be postponed until a single sign-on capability existed.
- Some respondents thought the platform navigation and content were too advanced for much of their client base, who are low-skilled individuals struggling with digital literacy issues. Interviewees recommended targeted feedback sessions with career seekers to refine the platform.
- The roles and responsibilities of partner organizations within the CareerForce initiative were more fully defined six months into the rollout phase, delaying progress to engage partners on the platform.

Below, we describe the CareerForce team’s combined efforts to enhance the platform’s capabilities and build-out the policy infrastructure of the brand during grant Year 4.

Refining Platform Capabilities. The WIF team extended the contract for the platform vendor to enhance platform capabilities through the end of the WIF grant. In the first few months of grant Year 4, the team deployed partner pages and integrated the GovDelivery subscription service.⁹⁵ They also established milestones for the vendor to add e-learning content on digital literacy, a database of adult basic education courses, language translation capabilities, and regional LMI for career seekers and employers, among many other features, before September 2019.⁹⁶ CareerForce staff also began to work with subject matter experts from DEED program offices to refine the content that can resonate with their unique client populations. For instance, the team collaborated with the DEED Youth Division to design content for high school students that aligns with the Minnesota Department of Education’s personal learning plan requirements.

However, the phased platform development approach meant that CareerForceMN.com was missing comprehensive narrative content as well as many anticipated core capabilities at the time

“At launch, it looked like a building under construction. You shouldn’t go in there yet because it is not safe.”



of the initial staff training in early November —such as customized LMI by region and employer resources —that reduced buy-in. Some WIF team members felt that it was extremely difficult to train staff on a platform that was not final: “It was clear staff were expecting to see a finished product.” Staff were excited about the potential for the platform but could not see the full value

⁹⁵ GovDelivery is an existing electronic subscription service to receive the latest news via email from the Minnesota workforce system.

⁹⁶ A list of platform features currently under construction is presented in Chapter 3.

and struggled to keep track of the constant changes. The impact, as one interviewee explained, was reluctance to integrate the platform into daily operations. One manager explained, “I’m hesitant to dive into the website because things are changing and I don’t want to have to retrain my people.”

At the time of the final site visit in April 2019, many interviewees believed the platform team needed more work before it would be ready for a statewide public launch to disseminate the platform and brand to career seekers and employers. One of the most frequent complaints, as noted, was lack of a single-sign on capability with MinnesotaWorks.net. Some said the public launch should occur only after this capability exists. The status of this single sign-on capability is detailed later in Section 5.4.5.

As in the previous years of the grant, active stakeholder engagement remained a success factor in the rollout phase to inform the platform build. Interviewees said that the WIF grant team was extremely receptive to constructive feedback. As staff and partners began to try out the platform, they offered extensive comments on existing bugs, and how the platform could better support their business operations and improve the user experience for their clients. The call-out box at the end of this section highlights strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations the evaluation team summarized from interviewees on existing platform features to support future platform refinements.



Staff and Partner Feedback on Current Platform Features

Job Searches. Career seekers found the job search feature not as simple and user friendly as it could be (e.g., results of the filter minimized the quantity and quality of results). They also reported that there could be more flexibility in the search radius feature.

“The job search feature is not as user friendly as MinnesotaWorks.net, and customers are more used to the latter. When this feature is more user friendly in the platform, it’ll be easier to direct them to it. Users should be able to see a full comprehensive list of jobs for a given ZIP code or city”

Occupation Search. Whether an employer or staff member was looking for LMI data on a career profile, or a career seeker is using the “Find a career based on my experience” feature, the occupation search was too restrictive and required specialized content knowledge of occupation titles.

“The ‘Find a career based on my experience’ feature doesn’t work well. I entered multiple job titles, and had no matches. Also, if there are no matches, there’s no information on what should happen next. There could be more job titles matches or a drop-down menu to pick from.”



Staff and Partner Feedback on Current Platform Features (cont.)

Connections and Social Media. While the connections feature has not yet been widely used, interviewees were excited about its potential as being an easy way to be in touch with stakeholders and track referrals among service providers. However, staff noted that the connection feature created some burden for staff and partners and was only useful if all staff and partners actively monitored the messages. Similarly, the platform's connectivity to social media was welcome, even though it was not clear if users knew how to best use this feature to increase collaboration and share information.

"I like that customers can send a connection to a CareerForce location. Not just a generic email address. It is much better than going into a black hole."

Workshops. While interviewees suggested it was easy to sign up for events and workshops, partners indicated the workshop feature was missing basic sort and filter capabilities to easily identify topics of interest. They suggested that providing options to select user preferences and apply flags for workshops/topics of interest might increase the success of this feature.

"When somebody does want to take a workshop and you enter a ZIP code, A LOT of "business cards" pop up on the page and you need to scroll forever to find the workshop you want. They might need a sorting feature."

Labor Market Information. Workforce staff and partners found this tool easy to use, easy to understand, and extremely helpful, especially from the employer perspective. However, some staff voiced concerns about the LMI content needing to be better tailored to the career seeker audience as well.

"The power the API gives an employer to switch back and forth between regions is great."

"A cool thing about it is LMI is offered in an easy to understand way, which is unique. It's unusual. We have a ton of great data. We can show what other companies offer in wages, and employment outlook in other occupations. Great tool for young people or new to the country who are looking to start careers."

CareerForce Location and Partner Pages. Staff and partners were excited about their pages to advertise their local services and believed they would be very helpful for customers. Interviewees indicated the CareerForce Location Search is a great place to easily find a center using the ZIP code lookup feature, even though some noted that the search feature should include a map to help users easily find other convenient locations. Stakeholders suggested the next step is to further cultivate individual pages to increase their effectiveness and value (e.g., clarity in the information provided, more links to outside resources, and sharing best practices). One DEED staff member also suggested that the CareerForce location pages should have public performance metrics and highlight best practices to both motivate staff and market to customers, including the number of people served or the traffic on the platform.

"Community partners are knocking down the door to get on the website to network and get publicity. They get the DEED vetting seal-of-approval."

"It has a great list of where to find locations.... I like there is one source of truth for that. It is all labeled the same way too. Before, things were named differently."

The CareerForce location staff and other partners emphasized that the WIF team should consider how the platform can best meet the needs of clients who face digital literacy barriers, such as older adults and immigrants who have low computer literacy skills. Several staff members said the platform navigation was too complicated and they could not recommend CareerForceMN.com to the average client they work with, who struggles to use a computer. Several CareerForce location staff mentioned that they have to work with their clients to use multiple websites, including MinnesotaWorks.net and the Unemployment Insurance website. Also, having to ask them to use CareerForceMN.com, which requires them to establish an email account, is counterproductive.

DEED workforce program leadership, CareerForce location staff, and other partner staff made suggestions to refine the content to be more responsive to the diverse set of career seekers across the state. Several suggested customer feedback sessions, such as focus groups, with career-seeker and employer user groups, to ensure the platform can meet their needs. Some hoped that the future enhancement of digital literacy e-learning content, slated for deployment in the summer 2019, would offer a bridge to career seekers for them to gain computer proficiency and be comfortable using the new platform. The planned language translation enhancement in Spanish and Somali was also noted as a good way to make the platform more useful for clients still learning English. Others noted that clients not comfortable with computers could call the CareerForce location and get help over the phone or visit a location.

“There’s a desire from DEED to serve a middle-class professional clientele. But these people are not going to go to a Career Force location.”



Refining the Brand. Alongside the platform development activities, the CareerForce team rolled out branding materials and policy guidance to workforce staff and partners throughout grant Year 4. The team prepared a suite of CareerForce Brand materials for staff and partners to support the November 29 CareerForce release—including posters, brochures, a brand playbook,⁹⁷ and sample communication protocols to guide interactions with customers (e.g., welcoming protocol, elevator speeches, and language to use when inviting customers to visit CareerForceMN.com). DEED installed CareerForce signage at the 50 CareerForce locations over a seven-month period, starting December 2018 and ending with the projected end date of June 2019. Many interviewees praised the high-quality brand infrastructure products crafted by the branding team, such as logos, templates, and posters. As one respondent explained, “getting professionals involved [branding vendor] was a huge plus.”

Throughout the first six months of the rollout phase, the CareerForce team, with the support of recommendations from the CareerForce task forces, continued to create policy infrastructure to define the roles of staff and partners under the CareerForce regime online and in physical locations. The role of partners in the CareerForce system was firmly established around March 2019. For example, a new staff role with the branding initiative—an employer navigator—

⁹⁷ The brand playbook is a comprehensive manual that explains the reason for the culture shift, defines the brand strategy and values, offers messaging guidance such as a CareerForce elevator speech, and presents the brand architecture (logos, templates for posters, and business cards).

became the point of contact for employers at every CareerForce location, to ensure employers were quickly connected to appropriate services. In the second quarter of grant year 4, the team established Draft Proud Partner Guidelines to formalize the expectations of a Proud Partner on CareerForceMN.com. This document laid out how all Proud Partners should represent the CareerForce brand on their websites and print materials. A policy change also allowed Community Partners (rather than just Proud Partners) such as technical colleges, to have pages on the CareerForceMN.com to advertise their services.

As with the continued development of CareerForceMN.com, staff and partners noted that the slow roll-out of both signage and brand materials (such as policy guidance for partner organizations, print materials, and a universal intake form to use across all CareerForce locations) somewhat dampened the rollout's overall progress. Additionally, they agreed that physical changeover to the new CareerForce signage, which was still pending at many sites as of the Spring 2019 site visit, was important to initiate more meaningful behavioral change.

"It would have been to everyone's benefit if they would have figured out more of the details of the branding for partners from the beginning."



5.4.3 Training and Outreach



Key Takeaways

- Staff and partners appreciated the high-quality CareerForce trainings and prompt communication of updates on the new platform and brand, but relayed that it was overwhelming to keep track of the abundance of training resources for the continuously changing platform.
- It became harder to keep the attention of staff and partners focused on implementing these business process changes when the public launch was postponed. With a new DEED Commissioner recently appointed, staff were unsure when, or even if, the public launch would occur.
- Brand Ambassadors served as an important outreach mode to encourage their staff to implement the business process changes in their day-to-day work.
- Interviewees felt that more outreach was needed to partner organizations—that, as much as possible, outreach to partners should be in person and tailored to their specific needs.
- Some staff and partners found elements of the CareerForce brand to be unhelpful, and in some cases even detrimental, to their goals. For example, some staff thought the technical program names were important and meaningful to customers, and that their omission actually made the platform less user-friendly.

This section describes the key training and outreach activities used to disseminate the CareerForce platform and brand across the state. The training and outreach efforts in grant Year 4 focused on the workforce system staff and partners, who then used word of mouth to share the new initiatives with their clients. The training and outreach activities had three goals:

- Help staff and partners feel confident to use the new platform so they could integrate the changes into their day-to-day work, such as using the platform's "connections" feature to respond to customer inquiries and pass referrals to other service providers.

- Share the platform with career seekers and employers in daily interactions.
- Use the new brand messaging guidelines to explain workforce system services.

Outreach Strategies. Beginning in November 2018, DEED offered a wide suite of training and resources to workforce staff and partners statewide to disseminate CareerForceMN.com and the CareerForce brand. The call-out box below describes the resources used for this process. DEED largely delivered trainings through live webinars, which were also recorded and posted on an internal website for staff and partners, BecomingCareerForce.com. Additionally, the CareerForce e-Learning and Training Outreach Coordinator and CareerForce Integration Project Manager, often jointly, delivered in-person training sessions, trained staff and partners on the platform, and shared the new brand culture and business practices across the state. They gave presentations to CareerForce locations, MAWB, GWDB, local workforce development boards, adult basic education staff, and other state agencies like the Department of Human Services Refugee Resettlement office. A full list of all trainings through May 2019 is in Appendix D. By the end of March 2019, the team had reached 1,947 individuals through webinars, trained 449 participants in person, and had 1,081 views of short YouTube training videos.⁹⁸

The CareerForce team also kept staff and partners apprised of the latest platform features and new CareerForce brand materials through weekly emails and the “What’s New on CareerForce” webinar. Staff described all training resources as high quality and the recorded webinars and short videos as especially convenient. At the time of the interviews in April 2018, many workforce staff said they still needed more training, either self-guided or through in-person workshops. A few interviewees mentioned that the WIF team might need additional staff to support the outreach and training mission to reach the hundreds of state and local partner organizations that deliver services to workforce system clients.

The Brand Ambassador role was important to advocate for the brand and platform implementation across the system.⁹⁹ Brand Ambassadors are staff with leadership roles in the field (e.g., CareerForce location site managers, local workforce board directors, DEED workforce program directors). Several Brand Ambassadors explained that their positional authority as a manager ensured that staff began to use the platform and adopt the brand communication protocols. As one brand ambassador explained, “Staff is using the website because I have been pushing them.” Given the importance of this role, several interviewees recommended that the Brand Ambassador cohort be augmented to represent the full spectrum of workforce system stakeholders. Many Brand Ambassadors have been passionate advocates for the CareerForce brand and platform, but as one interviewee explained, most of these individuals represent DEED Jobseeker Services, rather than the broader set of DEED divisions or partner organizations.

⁹⁸ Year 4/Quarter 2 Quarterly Narrative Report.

⁹⁹ In this role, Brand Ambassadors are tasked with keeping up to date with the CareerForce initiatives, disseminating this information to their staff and colleagues, advocating for and enforcing the implementation of the CareerForce initiatives, and sharing questions and concerns back to the CareerForce team.



CareerForce Training Resources

CareerForce Curriculum. The CareerForce team delivered several in-person and webinar training sessions to staff and partners, including CareerForce 101, Introduction to CareerForceMN.com, Managing Your CareerForceMN.com Group, Our CareerForce Culture, CareerForce Proud Partners, CareerForce Employer Navigators, Welcoming Protocol, and What's New on CareerForce.

BecomingCareerForce.com. This website is a comprehensive online repository for staff and partners with informational resources on the brand and platform, such as recorded training webinars, recorded agile sprint demos, a library with best practice guides and communication protocols, CareerForce templates and logo file, and the installation dates of CareerForce signage across the state.

Weekly update emails. The CareerForce team sends out weekly emails to staff and partners with the latest updates to the CareerForce platform and brand.

Resources on CareerForceMN.com. CareerForceMN.com hosts FAQs to assist all users to navigate CareerForceMN.com. It also hosts short 5–10 minute videos and tip sheets tailored to staff and partners.

CareerForceMN.com Help Desk. The Help Desk can be reached via phone or email, is a universal resource for all user types—staff, partners, career seekers and employers—to provide technical support, onboard new employer and partner groups onto the platform, and help career seekers and employers identify the services they need.

Brand Ambassadors. These individuals serve as an additional resource for staff and partners in the field, sharing the latest CareerForce updates and conveying questions and concerns from their colleagues up to the CareerForce team.

Three primary challenges emerged during the CareerForce outreach and training efforts:

- **Staying up to date.** The most common challenge cited by CareerForce location staff was keeping track of the continuous changes. Local service providers said the amount of information sent in weekly emails, while useful and professionally presented, was also overwhelming. One respondent suggested limiting the email content to a “Tip of Week” rather than an exhaustive explanation of all changes. Several interviewees also recommended that the new DEED Commissioner author more of these communications to demonstrate his commitment to the initiatives, particularly in light of the postponed public launch that stalled the initiative’s momentum.

“People start to tune-out messages because the launch was so delayed.”


- **Partner engagement.** Second, compared to the training and outreach with workforce system staff, outreach to partners on the platform has been more limited. With much of the policy and platform infrastructure for partners now established, many recommended that the CareerForce team prioritize outreach to workforce system

“How do we use the platform with our adult learners to make their lives better? What does this have to do with my job?”



partners moving forward. As one CareerForce location site manager explained, the power of the “connections” feature is to improve collaboration among partners and workforce staff, but partners were not actively using the platform yet. Similarly, workforce system partners, particularly adult basic education providers, were less familiar with CareerForceMN.com and often did not understand how the platform was relevant to their work. Some partner staff were unsure how the platform was different from their existing online tools, like the Minnesota Career Information System, a career tool for students funded by the Minnesota Department of Education. Partners expressed the need for the CareerForce team to prioritize tailored and in-person outreach that establishes the relevance of the portal to their work. Finally, the new CareerForce brand vernacular of “Proud Partner” was also ambiguous, as many partner staff we interviewed were unsure if they met the criteria of a Proud Partner or had a less official status.

- **Pushback on the new Brand.** Finally, an important challenge to disseminating the CareerForce Brand to the field was skepticism from staff and partners who did not see the value of some elements of the communication strategy or mandates to change business processes—including the movement away from the traditional workforce system language on the portal, the need to improve customer service, and a standardized CareerForce visual identity at Proud Partners locations. Many staff believed that the technical program names were important and meaningful to customers and their omission actually made the platform less user-friendly. Location staff also mentioned that the terminology of “career seeker,” which replaced “job seeker” as part of the CareerForce brand, was confusing to many customers who simply wanted a job.

Along the same lines, some staff and partners thought the messaging of the CareerForce brand implied they were not already providing high-quality customer service at their locations.

“My staff is proud that our organization has existed for 50 years, providing good services.... We need some local identity to keep my staff happy. Finding that balance has been challenging but we are using the logo.”



The general sentiment was that perhaps “other sites” needed improvement but “our site” already lived these values. One workforce system leader reflected that the branding effort “could have done a better job of explaining customer perceptions” to better justify the CareerForce brand cultural elements, in order to reduce pushback from staff.

Finally, many Proud Partners felt they were being asked to give up their local identity under the CareerForce system-wide brand.¹⁰⁰ As some partners explained, their organizations often provide more than just workforce services, and so need to preserve their existing brand to support their other programs, like cash assistance and housing services. At the time of the interviews, the CareerForce team and partner organizations

¹⁰⁰ Per the draft Proud Partner Guidelines, Proud Partners must use CareerForce branding materials on their websites, business cards, and at their facilities (if not co-located at a CareerForce location).

were working to strike the appropriate balance by allowing co-branding with the CareerForce and the partner's own logo.

5.4.4 CareerForce Sustainability



Key Takeaways

- While many interviewees thought sustainability planning should have started earlier, the CareerForce team worked collaboratively with the new DEED Commissioner to define the future scope and funding sources to support the joint CareerForce unit into the future.
- DEED is still maintaining unintegrated technology platforms (CareerForceMN.com, MinnesotaWorks.net, Workforce One¹⁰¹), causing impediments to adoption of CareerForceMN.com. DEED should consider fuller integration to reduce administrative costs and improve the user experience for career seekers, employers, staff, and partners.
- The success of the CareerForce platform and brand relies heavily on the leadership commitment of the DEED Commissioner.
- The CareerForce team established a joint leadership structure among DEED, MAWB, and GWDB—CareerForce Charter—to support the continued improvement of the CareerForce initiatives moving forward.
- The CareerForce team should continuously engage workforce system stakeholders, and hold feedback sessions with career seekers and employers to ensure the platform meets their needs.

Midway through grant Year 4, DEED leadership began to plan for the overall sustainability of the CareerForce platform after the WIF grant ends—including defining the structure of a joint CareerForce unit that would manage both the brand and platform, and identifying funding sources. Many DEED workforce system leaders were concerned that sustainability planning started quite late in the grant period, given the complexity of both state budgeting and the technology infrastructure, as well as the staff jobs that depend on it.

On the technology front, CareerForceMN.com would be competing for funding with the other critical technology platforms of MinnesotaWorks.net (performance data repository for Wagner-Peyser programs) and Workforce One (case management system and performance data repository for all other WIOA programs). Although DEED has considered multiple proposals for further integration, the overall strategy of integrating these systems moving forward was still uncertain, making it difficult to plan the future budget and communicate a longer-term vision with staff and partners across the state. Several interviewees suggested that decisions on these types of strategic technology resources should have been made in the first year of the grant, during the requirements planning phase.

Staff and partners consistently noted that a large impediment to adoption of the CareerForce platform was that career seekers and employers must still sign-in separately to CareerForceMN.com and MinnesotaWorks.net to post and apply for jobs. In addition, these

¹⁰¹ Workforce One is a case management system and performance data repository for all WIOA programs.

unintegrated platforms also support important internal staff administrative functions; better integration would help create a single source for workforce system workshops and simplify federal reporting.¹⁰² Staff expect greater integration across CareerForceMN.com, MinnesotaWorks.net, and Workforce One to reduce the administrative costs of sustaining these capabilities, reduce pressure on the DEED budget, and create a better online experience for career seekers, employers, staff, and partners.

Furthermore, the appointment of a new DEED Commissioner, who started only in late January 2019, also added to uncertainty about the future of CareerForce. The CareerForce team worked to quickly onboard the new Commissioner to the CareerForce initiative, and worked collaboratively with him to ensure the plans were consistent with his leadership vision. The DEED Commissioner also established the joint CareerForce Office in April 2019 to administer the platform and the brand as a permanent DEED unit. Workforce system leaders across the state agreed that the CareerForce initiatives will only truly take root and be sustained if the new DEED Commissioner demonstrates a strong leadership commitment moving forward. This includes funding, advocating, and enforcing the CareerForce brand and platform use across the workforce system.

DEED, MAWB, and GWDB formalized their joint governance structure in a CareerForce charter at the beginning of the rollout phase, in order to continue to develop and improve the CareerForce brand and platform in the future. The charter describes the equal decision-making authority of all three organizations. The three-legged leadership team met weekly, and as one interviewee explained, the three organizations were working through problems together throughout the rollout phase, which was “a big cultural change.” Moreover, the CareerForce task forces also represent an important mechanism to support long-term continuous improvement of the CareerForce initiative, both online and at physical locations. For example, the task forces are working on strategies to improve the customer experience by standardizing the workshop curriculum and creating a universal intake form for staff to use at all CareerForce locations across the state.

Beyond leadership commitment from the DEED Commissioner and shared governance of the effort, the success of the CareerForce initiative depends on: (1) sustained activities to promote the initiatives to the public (rather than a one-time public launch event), and (2) developing feedback mechanisms with staff, partners, career seekers, and employers to continuously improve the brand and platform, to ensure both stay relevant and address the needs of the diverse range of end users.

5.4.5 Rollout - Key Takeaways

Section 5.4 summarizes the tasks undertaken to disseminate the CareerForce platform and brand to staff and partners across the state during the roll-out phase of the WIF grant initiative. Below, we discuss emerging best practices, key challenges, and important recommendations from this phase of the WIF grant.

¹⁰² For example, staff use both MinnesotaWorks.net and WorkforceOne to submit workshop listings and DEED tracks data for federal performance metrics through both MinnesotaWorks.net and WorkforceOne.



Key Takeaways

EMERGING BEST PRACTICES

- **Continuous Feedback Loop.** As in the previous three grant years, the CareerForce team emphasized extensive stakeholder engagement to support continuous improvement and keep staff and partners up to date. Staff and partners in the field communicated technical bugs and cumbersome features to the CareerForce team, who made immediate improvement adjustments. Staff also appreciated rapid communications using weekly emails and monthly “What’s New on CareerForce” webinars about latest enhancements to the platform and the brand guidance materials.
- **Comprehensive Training Resources.** The CareerForce team was responsive to stakeholder training needs, offering a varied suite of user-friendly training and outreach resources. The dozens of high-quality, in-person trainings were considered to be the most valuable, but interviewees also appreciated recorded webinars, five-minute online videos, weekly emails, and Brand Ambassador support.
- **Jointly Sustained Initiatives.** The CareerForce platform and brand rolled out as a fully integrated initiative that will be sustained by the joint DEED/GWDB/MAWB leadership team in the future. Formalizing this shared leadership structure ensures broad-based support for the initiative across the most influential workforce system stakeholders in the state.

KEY CHALLENGES

Slow Progress to Gain Widespread Recognition. Multiple factors slowed progress to gain widespread recognition of the CareerForce platform and brand across the state:

- Staff and partners were frustrated that anticipated features of CareerForceMN.com were still under construction while training was under way, and struggled to keep up with platform updates.
- Staff in some locations said they found the platform not easy to navigate for career seekers with low digital literacy.
- CareerForce brand signage and policy guidance rolled out over time, making it difficult for staff and partners to fully embrace and understand the new brand.
- The public launch to broadcast CareerForce to the general public was postponed, reducing the focus of staff and partners on the business process changes.
- Turnover in the DEED commissioner position created uncertainty about the initiative’s future.



Key Takeaways (cont.)

Delayed Sustainability Planning. Sustainability planning started midway through the final grant year, creating uncertainty about the platform's future. DEED now supports three related IT systems: CareerForceMN.com, MinnesotaWorks.net (performance data repository for Wagner-Peyser programs) and Workforce One (case management system and performance data repository for all other WIOA programs). DEED has floated various initiatives to integrate these important tools to reduce administrative costs and more fully realize the vision of a one-stop-shop, though none has been finalized at this point. Without an integrated plan, it is difficult to build the CareerForce budget and communicate a longer-term vision with staff and partners across the state, who are particularly frustrated that their customers still have to sign on separately to MinnesotaWorks.net to post or search for jobs.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OTHER STATES

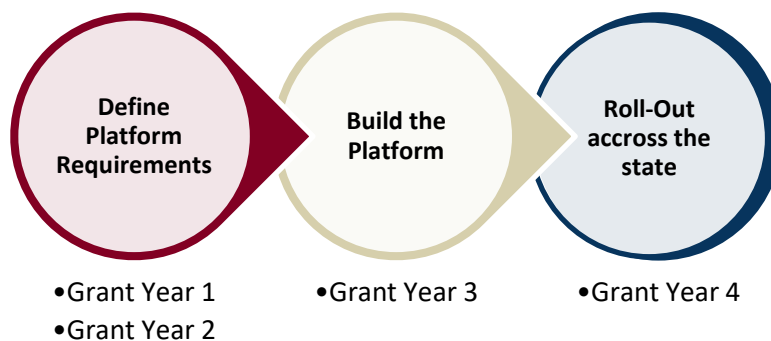
- Maximize buy-in by releasing broad, system-wide business process changes to the state workforce system once the technology and policy guidance are fully formed.
- Leverage the authority of the top leadership to strongly advocate for the new initiative to staff and partners in the field.
- Create systematic feedback mechanisms to continually engage workforce system staff, partners, career seekers, and employers to ensure the platform meets their needs.
- While passive training modes such as webinars and emails are helpful, prioritize in-person training sessions to the extent feasible to ensure staff set aside time to really embrace the new tool, and address the unique concerns of each site.
- Start sustainability planning and ensure buy-in from leadership early on. Planning for a unification of the multiple overlapping web systems should occur in the initial requirements gathering stage of the project and remain an essential element of the sustainability plan.

5.5 CONCLUSION

CareerForceMN.com rolled out in grant Year 4 in full alignment with the CareerForce branding initiative. Together, the platform and brand—referred to as the unified CareerForce initiative—aim to improve the customer experience with the Minnesota workforce system, both online and across all CareerForce locations and partner sites; and to attract more career seekers and employers to access the state's workforce services. CareerForceMN.com, packaged in a modern interface, improves the online experience with centralized information and user-friendly tools that appeal to a broader audience. The new brand creates a consistent and unique visual identity for Minnesota's workforce system and standardizes business processes and communication strategy for the complex network of local service delivery providers across the state.

The grant activities were divided into three key phases: defining platform requirements, building the platform, and rolling out the CareerForce initiative across the state. Several key themes carry through all three phases. First, the project benefited from extensive stakeholder engagement with state and local stakeholders throughout the four-year grant period. The WIF team used this

support to build a comprehensive platform that leverages existing resources (e.g., time, knowledge, and existing online tools) and relies on stakeholder input to meet the needs of its diverse users across the state. This foundation fostered excitement among stakeholders for the potential of the CareerForceMN.com, as well as their continued commitment to work with the platform administrators to refine the features and content in the future. Second, the WIF team navigated a continuously broadening platform scope, most notably to build an entirely new platform rather than enhancing the existing MTN, and fully harmonize CareerForceMN.com with the CareerForce brand. The team tackled these scope expansions in a compressed platform development timeline and



with an under-staffed project team. This four-year journey also highlighted the importance of strong, consistent top-level leadership that drives the vision and commitment for such complex, system-wide changes. Some interviewees thought that leadership turnover at DEED – both at the Commissioner level and in other strategic positions over the four-year grant period– caused uncertainty as new leaders lack the grant’s institutional knowledge and require time to get up-to-speed and articulate their priorities and vision.

We briefly summarize the activities of the three WIF grant phases below.

Defining Platform Requirements. The first two years of the grant spanned the work to define the platform’s business requirements in collaboration with stakeholders, and hire a technology vendor to execute the vision. This phase was slowed by loss of the incumbent technology vendor, and a potential overhaul of MinnesotaWorks.net, as well as the appointment of a new DEED Commissioner who lacked the needed urgency and project focus. Near the end of this period, the grant scope expanded with a DEED leadership decision to fully align the platform with the CareerForce brand. This shift further delayed platform development but ultimately strengthened both initiatives.

Building the Platform. In grant Year 3, the platform vendor built the IT infrastructure through a flexible, agile design methodology, deploying iterative capabilities in two-week sprints to allow for immediate feedback from the WIF team and adjustment. The work to develop the narrative content occurred in parallel with the support of the DEED Communications Division and the branding vendor. The WIF team built and launched the platform in a mere nine months, despite delays in hiring critical staff roles and the expanded scope to align with the branding effort. However, the platform deployed at launch was a work in progress during the rollout phase, with the expectation that the team would continually refine the features and content over the next year.

Rollout. The CareerForce platform and brand rolled out as a joint initiative in grant Year 4. The CareerForce team conducted extensive training and outreach with workforce staff and partners to disseminate CareerForceMN.com and the policy guidance associated with the new brand. At the same time, the team continued to enhance the platform in response to user feedback and planned milestones. Much of the policy guidance supporting the CareerForce brand also rolled out slowly over this period, including what was expected around the Proud Partner role on the platform and at CareerForce locations. Multiple factors slowed acceptance of the joint initiatives across the state—including the “work-in-progress” status of both the platform and the brand; concern that some of the platform content was too advanced for the mostly low-skilled career seeker client base; a postponed public launch; and another new DEED commissioner, whose commitment to the current CareerForce vision was uncertain. Midway through Year 4, the CareerForce team also began planning for the sustainability of the CareerForce initiative, including identifying the staffing structure, funding resources, and strategies that would guide its longer-term vision.

6. Outcome Study

This chapter documents two key outcome measures related to the CareerForceMN.com platform: (1) the perceptions of workforce stakeholders (e.g., career seekers, employers, workforce staff) about the tools and services available in the workforce system before and after the development of the platform, and (2) the platform performance itself. Results from three surveys (one for each type of stakeholder) are presented in Section 6.1. Section 6.2 details platform performance indicators. Section 6.3 concludes the chapter.

6.1 STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION SURVEYS

We fielded two survey rounds during the grant period of performance to gather stakeholder perceptions of workforce system services: at the beginning of the grant period, before the portal was developed; and when the platform was online. In Section 6.1.1 we describe the survey of workforce system staff. In Section 6.1.2 we describe the survey of employers who posted a job to MinnesotaWorks.net. In Section 6.1.3 we describe the survey of career seekers who received services at a physical CareerForce location. Survey questions, which were tailored to each audience, generally requested information on basic characteristics (e.g., demographics of career seekers, industry of employers), workforce-related services recently used, awareness of services, and the use of web-based tools in achieving their workforce-related objectives. See Exhibit 4.4 for the key research questions.

DEED provided its full support to conducting the survey and assisted in gathering the respondent samples. DEED emailed potential respondents regarding the upcoming survey and gathered the contact information of those career seekers, employers, and staff who opted into the survey.¹⁰³ Finally, the DEED team transferred the contact information for respondents who agreed to participate in the surveys to the IMPAQ team.

We did not weight the workforce staff survey, so its results reflect the opinions of those individuals who responded to the survey. We did weight the survey response data for employers and career seekers, to make the results representative of the population of interest.¹⁰⁴ Note that, although the samples are representative of individuals connected to the workforce system in some way (e.g., employers who recently posted a job on MinnesotaWorks.net), they are not representative of *all* employers or career seekers in Minnesota. Section 4.2.1 provides a comprehensive discussion of all three survey samples and the survey results.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ This step is mandated by law in Minnesota and is known as Tennessen notice. See Exhibit 4.5 for a full timeline of all three surveys.

¹⁰⁴ We weighted the employer survey data by industry, and the career seeker survey data by race and educational attainment.

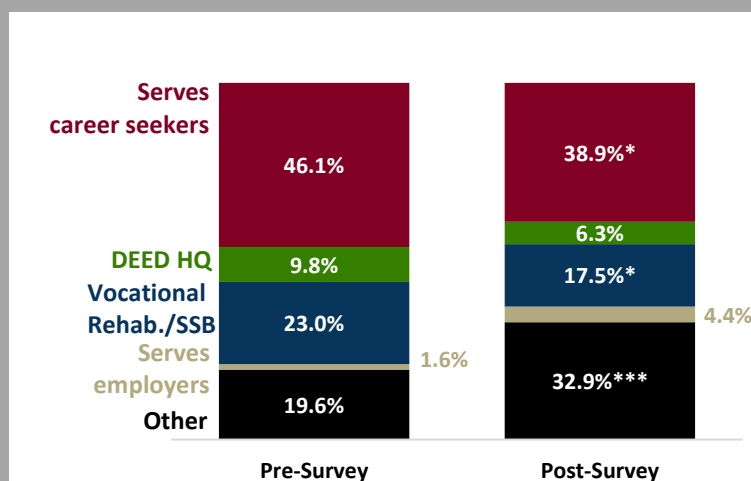
¹⁰⁵ To compare pre- and post-survey results, we ran statistical significance tests whenever the survey sample size allowed. No statistical testing was done for questions with sample sizes below 30. As a result, most of the statistical testing was restricted to the workforce staff survey items.

6.1.1 Workforce System Staff Survey

Exhibit 6.1 describes the workforce role of respondents to the workforce staff survey in the pre- and post-surveys. The largest share of respondents at both survey points directly served career seekers or worked with Vocational Rehabilitation and the State Services for the Blind (SSB), with the smallest percentage responding from those who served employers. The “other” category includes open-ended responses (e.g., employment services provider, employment counselor).

The proportion of workforce staff respondents in the “other” category increased in the post-survey by more than 13 percentage points (significant at the 1 percent level). The only other group with an increase was those serving employers (from 1.6 percent to 4.4 percent), but small sample size precluded testing for statistical significance.

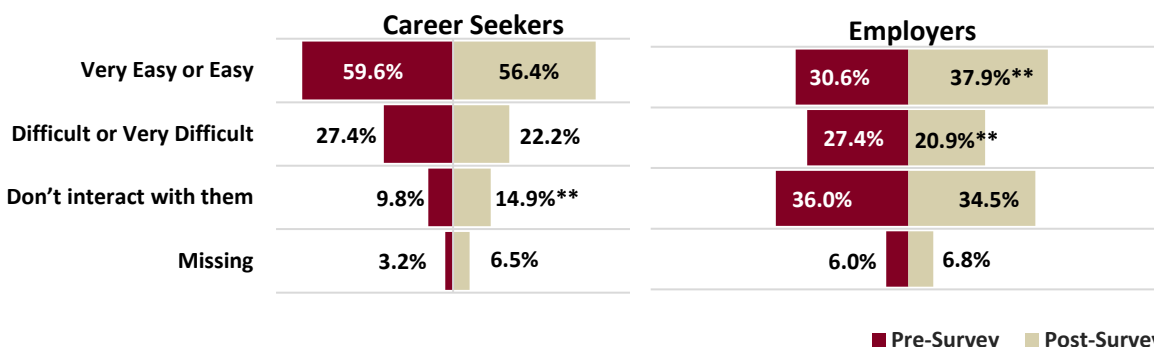
Exhibit 6.1: Current Role in the Workforce System



Notes: Results refer to Survey Questions 1: N=317 (Pre-Survey), N=383 (Post-Survey). There were no missing values. SSB = State Services for the Blind. Statistical significance: *p-value < 0.1, **p-value < 0.05, ***p-value < 0.01. No significance test was run for “Serves employers” or “DEED HQ” due to fewer than 30 individuals in either survey.

Exhibit 6.2 shows how workforce staff viewed their ease in providing assistance to career seekers and employers, both pre- and post-launch of the platform. The proportion of individuals who found it easy or very easy to serve career seekers decreased (from 59.6 to 56.4 percent), but this difference was not statistically significant.

Exhibit 6.2: Level of Difficulty when Assisting Career Seekers and Employers



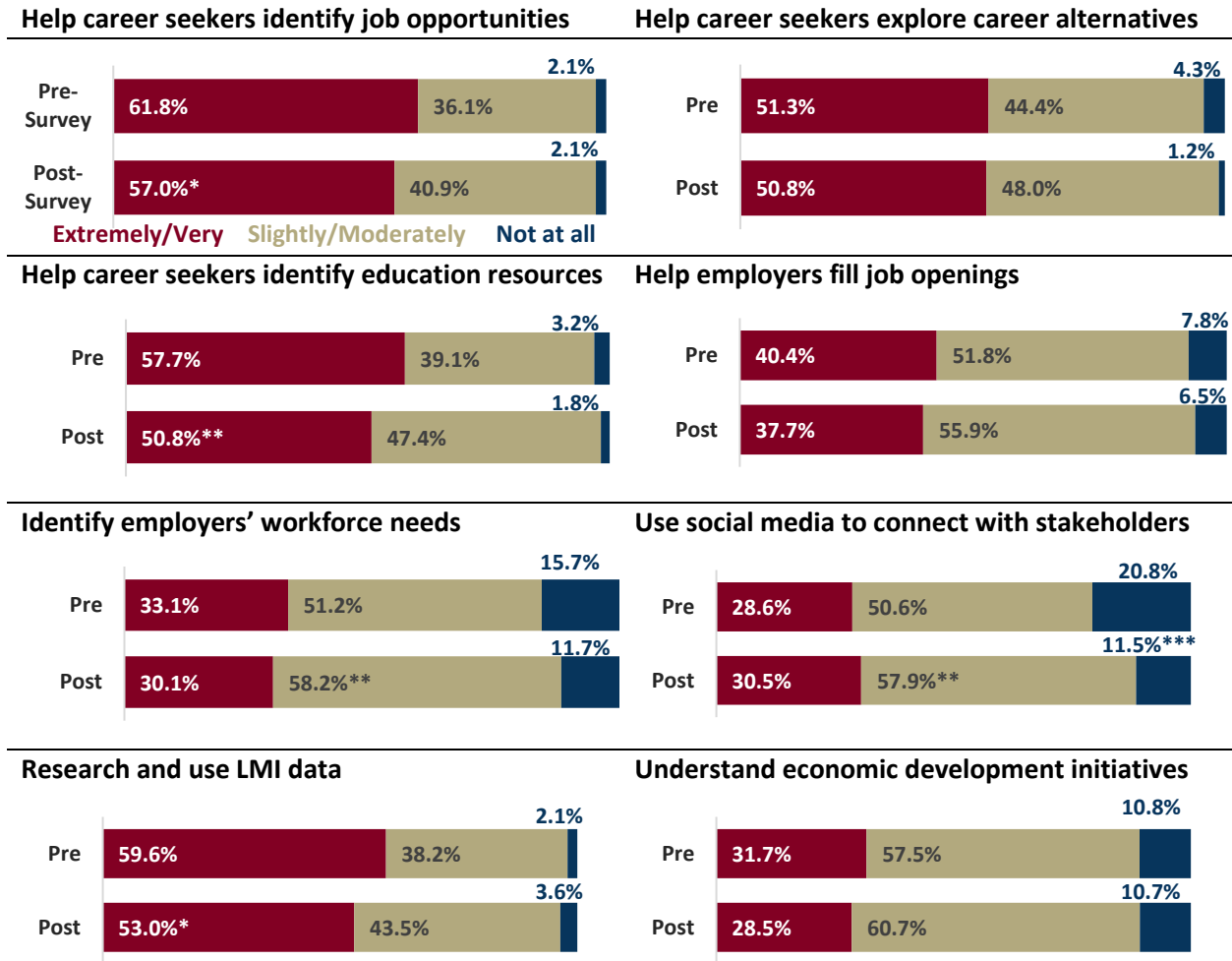
Notes: Results refer to Survey Questions 3 and 4. N=317 (Pre-Survey), N=383 (Post-Survey). Statistical significance: *p-value < 0.1, **p-value < 0.05, ***p-value < 0.01. Response categories were combined (“Very Easy”/“Easy”, “Very Difficult”/“Difficult”). Bars with the same colors add to 100 percent. No significance test was run for the “Missing” category due to fewer than 30 individuals in either survey.

Individuals serving employers reported an increase in ease in serving them by 7.3 percentage points (from 30.6 to 37.9 percent, a difference that is statistically significant at the 5 percent level) after the platform's launch, validating WIF team goals to improve services through launching the site. Interestingly, the proportion of workforce staff who served career seekers and did not interact with them directly increased by 5 percentage points (statistically significant at the 5 percent level) after the launch of the new platform—an indication that more career seekers received services online through their own initiative post-launch.

Exhibit 6.3 displays the satisfaction workforce staff had with the tools and resources available to them, both on and outside the platform, to serve their clients' needs. Several of the results are statistically significant:

- The proportion of workforce staff extremely or very satisfied with tools to identify education resources for career seekers dropped from 57.7 to 50.8 percent in the post-survey (significant at the 5 percent level). Also, a lower proportion of respondents were extremely or very satisfied with the availability of research and LMI data (from 59.6 to 53.0 percent), a difference that is statistically significant at the 10 percent level.
- The proportion of respondents slightly or moderately satisfied with the tool that allows them to use social media to connect with stakeholders increased substantially in the post-survey (57.9 percent, compared to 50.6 percent in the pre-survey), statistically significant at the 5 percent level. The proportion of workforce staff not at all satisfied with this tool dropped to 11.5 percent (from 20.8 percent in the pre-survey), a difference that is statistically significant at the 1 percent level.
- For those staff who only serve career seekers (not shown in the exhibit), the post-survey showed a decrease in satisfaction with tools and/or resources available to help career seekers (68.8 percent were very or extremely satisfied before the platform launch, with 59.9 percent reporting that level of satisfaction after platform launch), statistically significant at the 10 percent level. This may reflect the learning curve or lack of comfort staff still had with the new platform: as we found in our implementation study, the platform is continuing to add new features and functionality, and is still being incorporated into workforce staff's day-to-day activities. (See Appendix E for the results.)
- For those staff who only serve career seekers (not shown in the exhibit), 55.1 percent were slightly or moderately satisfied (pre-survey) with their access to resources on economic development initiatives, but 64.2 percent were slightly or moderately satisfied once the platform was available (statistically significant at the 10 percent level). This may point to a need for more resources on economic development initiatives, or perhaps better access or organization of this information through the new platform. See Appendix E for the results.

Exhibit 6.3: Level of Satisfaction with the Available Tools and Resources



Notes: Results refer to Survey Question 2. Each Sub-Question of Survey Question 2 has a different sample size because respondents answer each Sub-Question only if it was applicable to them. For the sample size for each Sub-Question, see Appendix E. Statistical significance: *p-value < 0.1, **p-value < 0.05, ***p-value < 0.01. No significance test was run when sample size was smaller than 30 individuals (and thus no tests were run for the “Not At All” category for all questions, except for “Identify employers’ workforce needs” and “Use social media to connect with stakeholders”). Response categories were combined (“Slightly Satisfied”/“Moderately Satisfied”, “Very Satisfied”/“Extremely Satisfied” were combined.) Other cross-tabulations of these sub-questions were run (mostly with Question 1), but were not statistically significant.

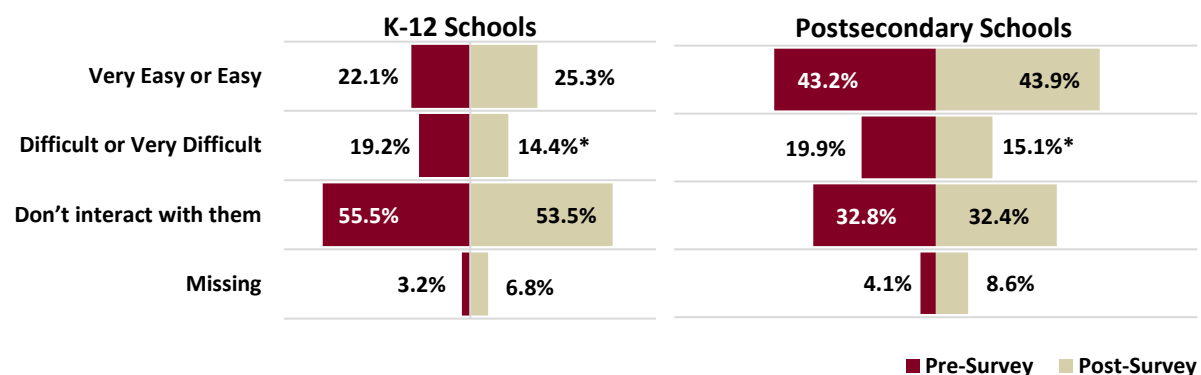
Next, we review the satisfaction expressed by workforce survey respondents about their interaction with educational institutions at the kindergarten–12th grade level, as well as postsecondary education (Exhibit 6.4).

The share of workforce staff reporting that it was easy or very easy to communicate with their education partners about workforce needs remained relatively constant from pre- to post-launch (from 22.1 to 25.3 percent for K-12 schools; and from 43.2 to 43.9 percent for postsecondary schools). However, there was a statistically significant drop in the number of staff who reported it was difficult or very difficult to communicate with education partners at both

education levels after the launch (from 19.2 to 14.4 percent for K-12 schools; and from 19.9 to 15.1 percent for postsecondary schools, both statistically significant at the 10 percent level.

While we cannot point to the platform as the direct cause of these results, it may show that the platform made information more easily available to workforce staff to use when communicating with educational institutions, or that staff from educational institutions could access workforce investment information themselves prior to working with workforce staff.

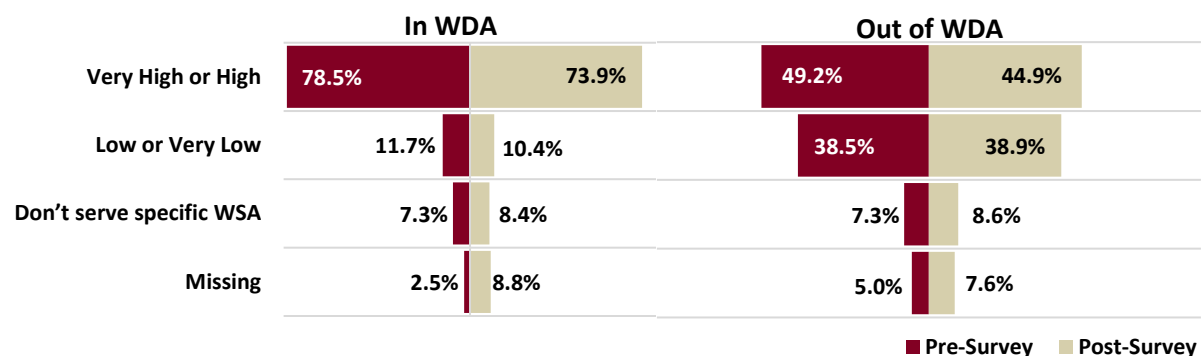
Exhibit 6.4: Level of Difficulty to Communicate with Educational Institutions about Local Workforce Investments Needs



Notes: Results refer to Survey Questions 5 and 6. N=317 (Pre-Survey), N=383 (Post-Survey). Statistical significance: *p-value < 0.1, **p-value < 0.05, ***p-value < 0.01. Response categories were combined ("Very Easy"/"Easy", "Very Difficult"/"Difficult"). Bars with the same colors add to 100 percent. No significance test was run for the "Missing" category due to fewer than 30 individuals in either survey.

Finally, we looked at the workforce system staff's self-assessment of their level of awareness of labor market conditions inside and outside their WDAs, as well as how they viewed the ease with which they worked with their counterparts from other workforce service areas (Exhibits 6.5 and 6.6, respectively).

Exhibit 6.5: Level of Awareness of Labor Market Conditions In and Out of WDA Served

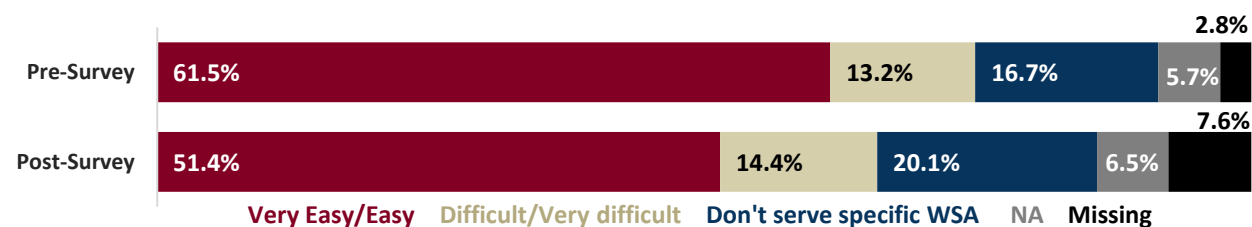


Notes: Results refer to Survey Questions 7 and 8. N=317 (Pre-Survey), N=383 (Post-Survey). WDA = Workforce Development Area. Statistical significance: *p-value < 0.1, **p-value < 0.05, ***p-value < 0.01. Response categories were combined ("Very High"/"High", "Very Low"/"Low"). Bars with the same colors add to 100 percent. No significance test was run for the "Don't serve specific WDA" and "Missing" categories due to fewer than 30 individuals in either survey.

Although none of the results are statistically significant when tested, it is interesting to note that three-quarters of the staff generally felt aware (high or very high awareness) of labor market conditions within their service areas; but slightly below half felt confident in their awareness of conditions outside their service areas. Further, in results not shown in the exhibits, for those staff who only served job seekers, 87 percent rated themselves as highly aware of conditions within their service area prior to the launch of the platform; but that decreased to 78.5 percent after the platform launch. The same downward trend appeared for outside their service areas, with 52.1 percent feeling aware during the pre-survey compared with 42.3 percent after platform launch, both trends statistically significant at the 10 percent level. This may reflect that the platform provided much more thorough information on LMI than previous resources had, and staff were more able to recognize their incomplete awareness levels once richer data was readily available. (See Appendix E for the results.)

When considering communications with workforce system staff outside their own service areas, survey results show declines (though not statistically significant ones) in perceived ease of working with other staff (Exhibit 6.6).

Exhibit 6.6: Level of Difficulty Interacting with Staff from Out of WDA Served



Notes: Results refer to Survey Question 9. N=317 (Pre-Survey), N=382 (Post-Survey). WDA = Workforce Service Area. Statistical significance: *p-value < 0.1, **p-value < 0.05, ***p-value < 0.01. Response categories were combined (“Very Easy”/“Easy”, “Very Difficult”/“Difficult”). NA refers to workforce staff that do not interact with staff from out of WDA served. No significance test was run for the “NA” and “Missing” categories due to fewer than 30 individuals in either survey.

6.1.2 Employer Survey

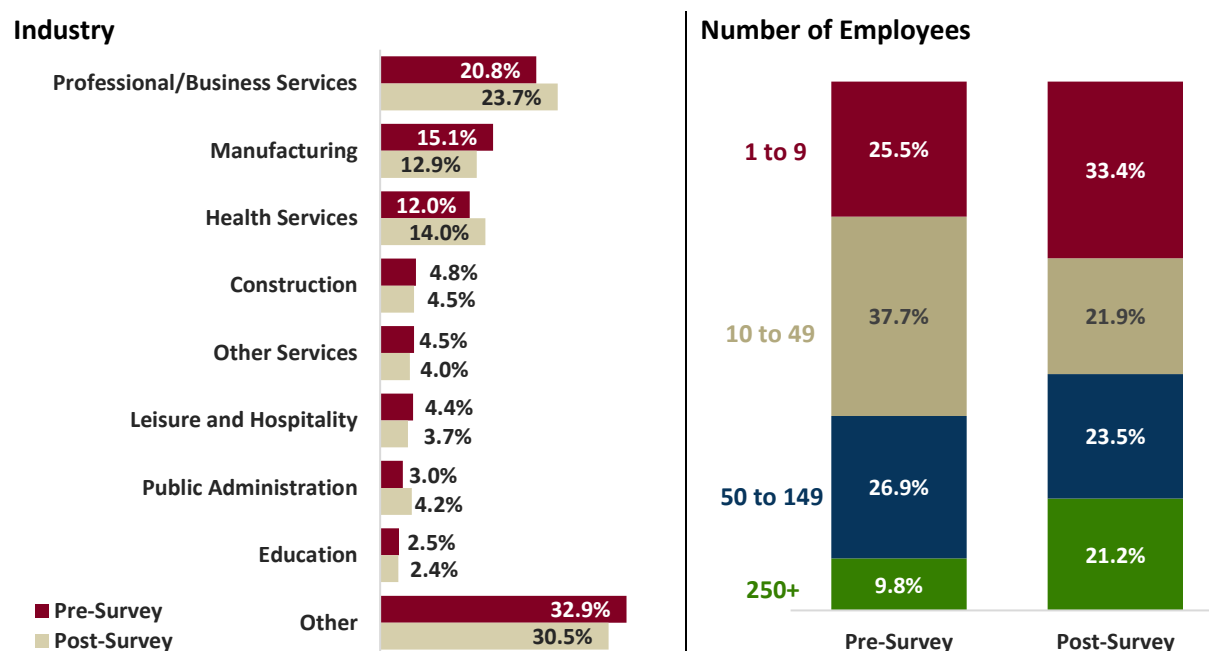
The employer survey consisted of all employers posting a job opening on MinnesotaWorks.net in the January and February timeframe for each survey.¹⁰⁶ The respondents to the survey—as for the other two surveys—were individuals who accepted DEED’s invitation to respond to the pre- and post-surveys. Very few findings discussed in this section could be tested for statistical significance because of small sample sizes, though several are suggestive of trends over time.

Exhibit 6.7 shows the attributes of employers at the time of the relevant survey. The industry distribution remained relatively constant over time, with the largest share of employers belonging to the Professional and Business Services industry (20.8 percent in the pre-survey and 23.7 percent in the post-survey) or the Other category (32.9 and 30.5 percent, respectively), consisting of information; trade, transport, and utilities; natural resources and mining; and

¹⁰⁶ We weighted the employer survey data by industry.

financial activities. Additionally, employee size became more divers: two-thirds of the employers in the pre-survey had 10–149 employees (64.6 percent), compared to slightly below half (45.4 percent) during the post-survey.

Exhibit 6.7: Employers’ Industry and Number of Employees



Notes: Results refer to Survey Questions 1 and 2. Weighted N=1,521 (Pre-Survey), Weighted N=1,233 (Post-Survey). Statistical significance: *p-value < 0.1, **p-value < 0.05, ***p-value < 0.01. “Other” industries refer to “Information”, “Trade, Transport, Utilities”, “Natural Resources and Mining”, and “Financial Activities.” Bars of the same color add to 100 percent. No significance test was run for any categories in these questions due to sample sizes smaller than 30.

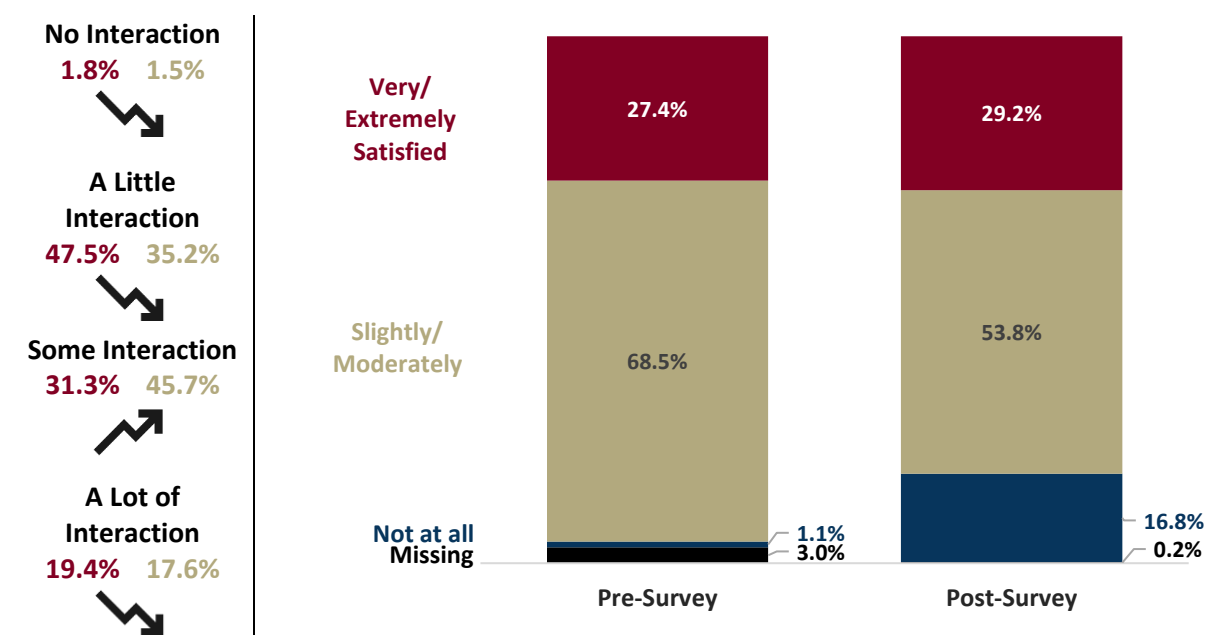
We reviewed employers’ interaction with the workforce system—and their overall satisfaction with that interaction—for tasks that include posting job openings, accessing labor market information, and talking to staff at CareerForce locations. As shown in Exhibit 6.8, there was an increase in employers reporting “some interaction” with the workforce system after the platform launch (from 31.3 to 45.7 percent). While we were unable to test for statistical significance, these findings suggest that the new platform may serve as a gateway for employers to start interacting more with the workforce system.¹⁰⁷

However, a much larger proportion of employers reported being “not at all satisfied” with their interaction with the workforce system (an increase from 1.1 to 16.8 percent)—although employers reporting being very or extremely satisfied with their interaction with the workforce system also (slightly) increased (from 27.4 to 29.2 percent), though we could not test for statistical significance. It should be noted that the launch of the platform may not have directly influenced employers’ satisfaction with the system, since most of the employer-related platform content and functionalities (e.g., employer pages, employer dashboard) only became available in

¹⁰⁷ It should be noted that a significant change in structure occurred between surveys: 24 Business Service Representative positions were eliminated and replaced with 7 Workforce Strategists.

Fiscal Year 4, Quarter 3 (between April and June 2019) so employers would not have seen relevant updates on the portal.

Exhibit 6.8: Amount of Interaction with the Workforce System and Level of Satisfaction



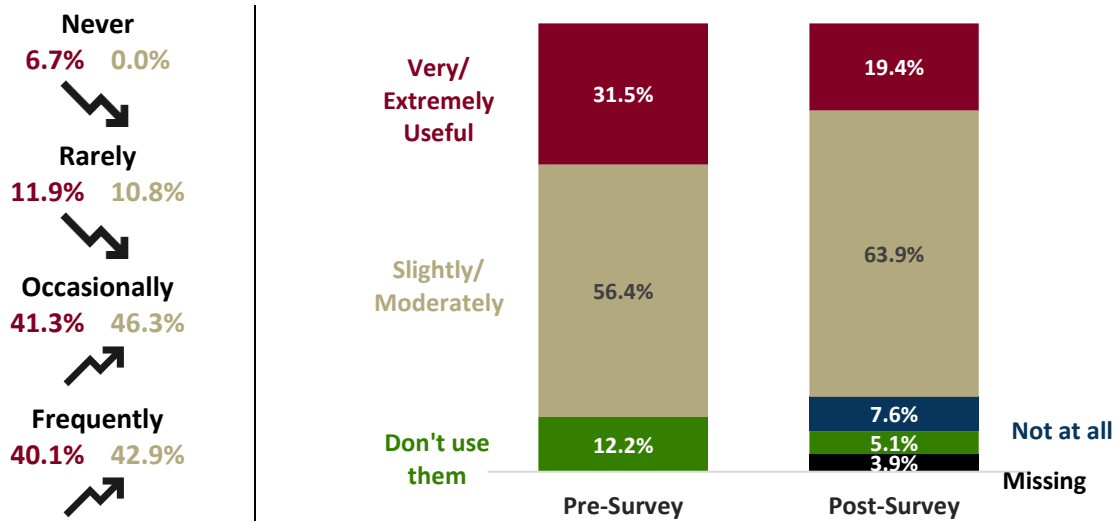
Notes: Results refer to Survey Questions 3 and 5. Weighted N=1,521 (Pre-Survey), Weighted N=1,233 (Post-Survey). Response categories were combined (“Slightly Satisfied”/“Moderately Satisfied”, “Very Satisfied”/“Extremely Satisfied”). It was not possible to run statistical significance tests for any response options of survey questions 3 and 5 due to a small sample (unweighted frequencies). No significance test was run for any categories in these questions due to sample sizes smaller than 30.

Exhibit 6.9 shows employers’ response on how often their company used web-based tools for working with workforce system stakeholders, and their related satisfaction in doing so. In asking the question, we referenced the platform as a whole, as well as any other web tools employers might have available to them from the workforce system (e.g., MinnesotaWorks.net). As a result, we cannot isolate responses to using the new platform *per se*. After launch of the platform, there was a decrease in employers reporting being very or extremely satisfied with the web-based tools (from 31.5 to 19.4 percent), and an apparent increase in being “not at all satisfied” (from 0 to 7.6 percent), though we could not test for statistical significance.

Exhibit 6.10 shows employers’ assessment of the ease of interaction with the workforce system, as well as with K–12 and postsecondary schools (Exhibit 6.10). Employers reported improvements in working with the education system in the post-survey period, with a larger proportion reporting it was easy or very easy to communicate with both K-12 schools (from 5.9 to 22.4 percent) and postsecondary schools (from 38.6 to 49.9 percent), though the sample size was not sufficient to test for statistical significance.

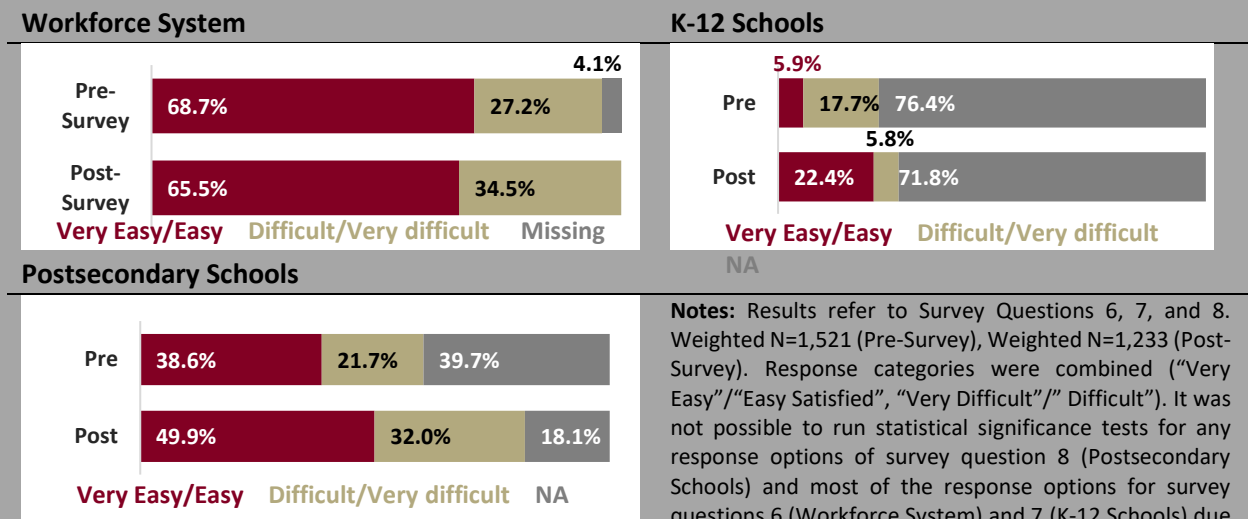
A slightly smaller proportion of employers found it easy or very easy to communicate with workforce staff in the post-survey (Exhibit 6.10) compared to the pre-survey (a decline from 68.7 to 65.5 percent). Here again, we could not test for statistical significance.

Exhibit 6.9: Frequency of Use and Satisfaction with Web-Based Tools for Workforce System



Notes: Results refer to Survey Questions 4 and 9. Weighted N=1,521 (Pre-Survey), Weighted N=1,233 (Post-Survey). Response categories were combined ("Slightly Satisfied"/"Moderately Satisfied", "Very Satisfied"/"Extremely Satisfied"). It was not possible to run statistical significance tests for any response options of survey question 4 and most of the response options for survey question 9 due to a small sample (unweighted frequencies). No significance test was run for sample sizes smaller than 30. Only one statistical significance was run, for the Slightly/Moderately response option, but the result was not statistically significant.

Exhibit 6.10: Level of Difficulty in Communicating with the Workforce System and Educational Institutions



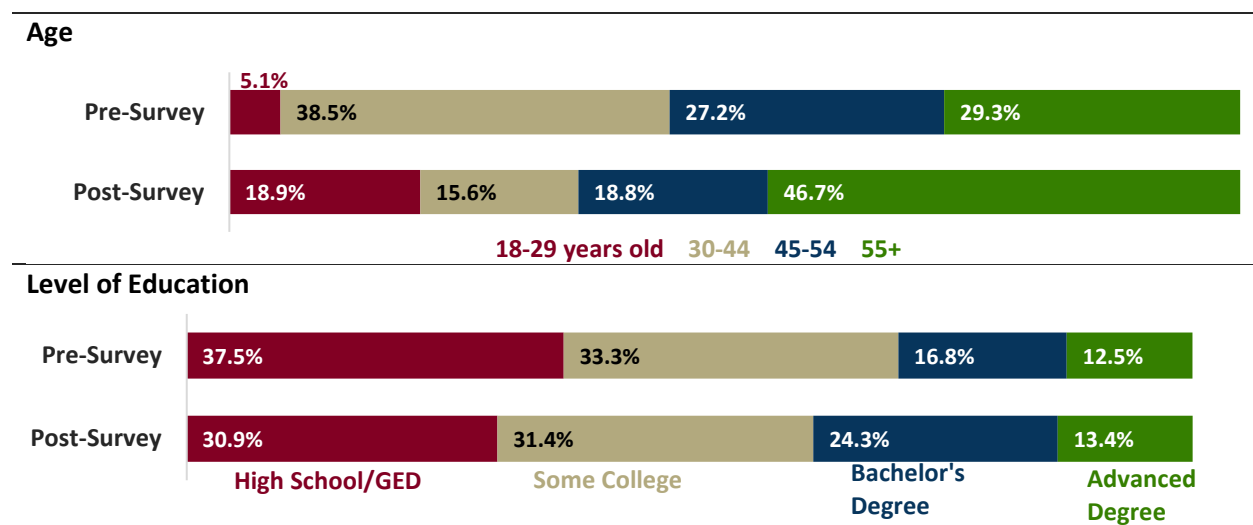
Notes: Results refer to Survey Questions 6, 7, and 8. Weighted N=1,521 (Pre-Survey), Weighted N=1,233 (Post-Survey). Response categories were combined ("Very Easy"/"Easy Satisfied", "Very Difficult"/"Difficult"). It was not possible to run statistical significance tests for any response options of survey question 8 (Postsecondary Schools) and most of the response options for survey questions 6 (Workforce System) and 7 (K-12 Schools) due to a small sample (less than 30 individuals). NA responses refer to individuals that do not interact with that population. We were only able to test for statistical significance of those reporting very easy/easy (Workforce System) or where the response was "did not interact" (K-12 Schools), and neither was significant.

6.1.3 Career Seekers Survey

The career seeker survey waves are based on a random sample of 20 percent of the career seeker population reporting use of a computer or attendance at a workshop at a CareerForce location in February 2017 or February 2019.¹⁰⁸ Since virtually none the results could be tested for statistical significance due to low sample size, the findings in this section should be interpreted as lacking statistical significance unless otherwise stated.

Exhibit 6.11 depicts the age and educational background of the career seekers who participated in the survey. Older workers (55 years and over) made up the largest share of those who responded to either survey, with the post-survey (46.7 percent) share up by 17.4 percentage points from the pre-survey.

Exhibit 6.11: Career Seekers' Age and Level of Education

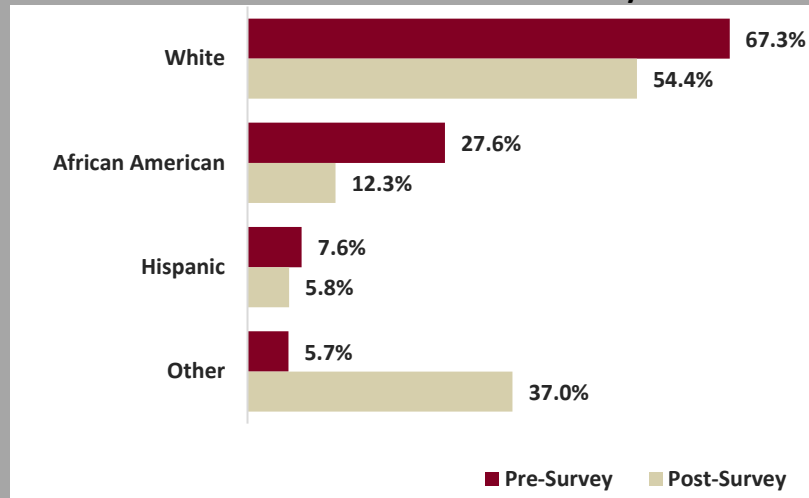


Notes: Results refer to Survey Questions 1 and 3. Weighted N=7,714 (Pre-Survey), Weighted N=7,693 (Post-Survey). Statistical significance: *p-value < 0.1, **p-value < 0.05, ***p-value < 0.01. "Some College" refers to some college education or an Associate's Degree. "Advanced Degree" refers to an advanced or graduate degree. No significance test was run for sample sizes smaller than 30. We were only able to test for statistical significance of those 55 years old or older and those with some college education. Neither were statistically significant.

Exhibit 6.12 shows career seekers' race and ethnicity in both surveys. Results show that the proportion of all races and ethnicities dropped between surveys, with the exception of the Other categories (which includes American Indians, Alaska Natives, Asians, and Pacific Islanders). The proportion of Whites, for example, dropped from 67.3 to 54.4 percent, though this drop was not statistically significant.

¹⁰⁸ We weighted the career seeker survey data by race (white, non-white, missing) and educational attainment (high school or less, more than high school).

Exhibit 6.12: Career Seekers' Race and Ethnicity

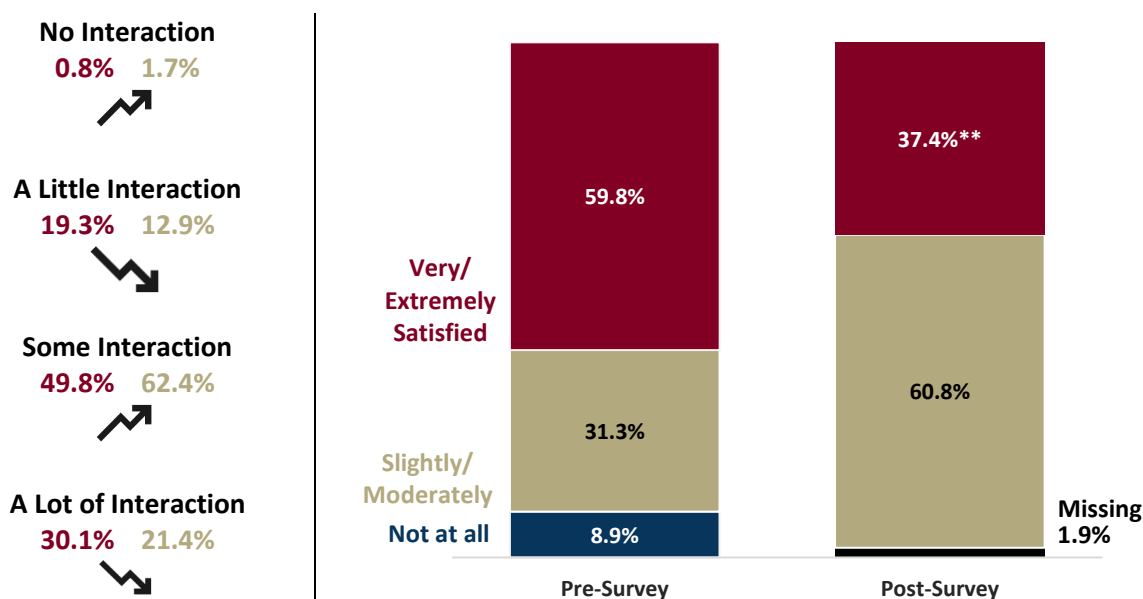


Notes: Results refer to Survey Question 2. Weighted N=7,714 (Pre-Survey), Weighted N=7,693 (Post-Survey). Statistical significance: *p-value < 0.1, **p-value < 0.05, ***p-value < 0.01. Career seekers could select multiple race/ethnicity categories, and thus figures do not add to 100 percent. The "Other" category includes American Indian, Alaska Native, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Others. Bars with the same colors add to 100 percent. Given small sample size (less than 30 individuals in either survey), we were only able to test for statistical significance of White career seekers. It was not statistically significant.

Next, we show career-seekers' reported level of interaction and satisfaction with the workforce system before and after the platform launch (Exhibit 6.13). The increase in the proportion of career seekers with some interaction with the workforce system from 49.8 to 62.4 percent may be an early indication that the branding effort was helpful. However, the decline in career seekers reporting high satisfaction with the system from 59.8 to 37.4 percent (statistically significant at the 5 percent level) is cause for further exploration. This finding may reflect peoples'

learning curves and lack of comfort with the new tool; alternatively, it may be that they perceived the platform made it harder for them to engage with the workforce system. Career seeker focus groups may be helpful in gauging satisfaction with the platform, as well as the overall workforce system, as DEED makes future platform updates.

Exhibit 6.13: Level of Interaction with the Workforce System and Level of Satisfaction with It

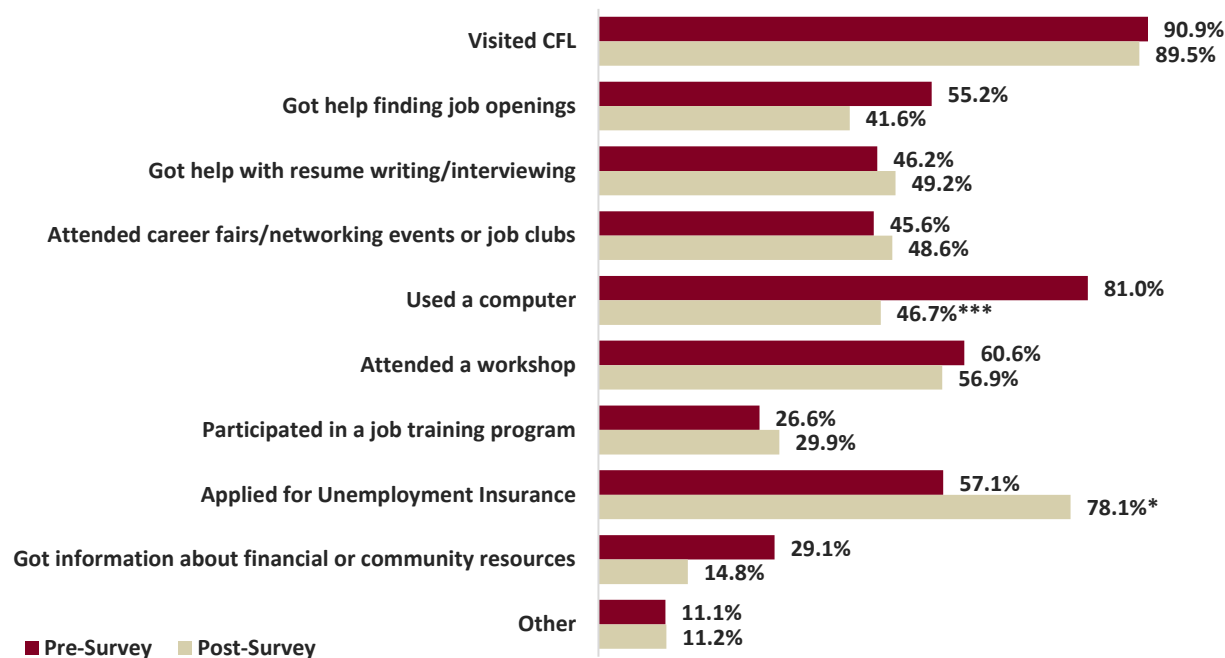


Notes: Results refer to Survey Questions 4 and 10. Weighted N=7,714 (Pre-Survey), Weighted N=7,693 (Post-Survey). Statistical significance: *p-value < 0.1, **p-value < 0.05, ***p-value < 0.01. Response categories were combined (“Slightly Satisfied”/“Moderately Satisfied”, “Very Satisfied”/“Extremely Satisfied”). Given small sample size (less than 30 individuals in either survey), we were only able to test for statistical significance of those with some interaction and very or extremely satisfied with the workforce system.

Exhibit 6.14 lists the workforce system services career seekers have used in the past, showing that the vast majority of them visited a CareerForce location in both pre- and post-surveys (90.9 and 89.5 percent respectively). Interestingly, there is a notable decrease in career seekers reporting using a computer after the platform became available: from 81.0 to 46.7 percent, which is statistically significant at the 1 percent level. We cannot attribute this change to the platform *per se*, but it could suggest that individuals were able to access workforce services from their phones or other devices once they were aware of it, and did not need to use a center’s computer to do so.¹⁰⁹ Finally, it is also noteworthy that the proportion of career seekers who reported applying for unemployment insurance in the post-survey (78.1 percent) increased from 57.1 percent in the pre-survey (statistically significant at the 10 percent level). Given the small sample size of this survey, it may be worthwhile for DEED staff to compare their own data on these services to note any important patterns and trends.

¹⁰⁹ Following customer survey findings that the resource room (bank of computers) did not rank highly among respondents, the delivery model changed to provide more direct access to job search experts and WIOA intensive career services, where staff provided direct triage services and focused on productive career search strategies. This change may also be associated with a decrease in the proportion of career seekers using a computer in a CareerForce location.

Exhibit 6.14: Workforce System Services Used

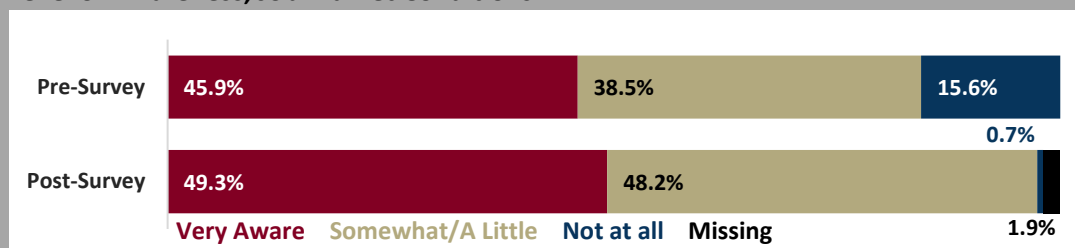


Notes: Results refer to Survey Question 5. Weighted N=7,714 (Pre-Survey), Weighted N=7,693 (Post-Survey). Statistical significance: *p-value < 0.1, **p-value < 0.05, ***p-value < 0.01. Career seekers could select multiple services, and thus figures do not add to 100 percent. Bars with the same colors add to 100 percent. Given small sample size (less than 30 individuals in either survey), we were only able to test for statistical significance for the following categories: Visited CareerForce location; Attended career fairs/networking events or job clubs; Used a computer; Attended a workshop; and Applied for unemployment insurance.

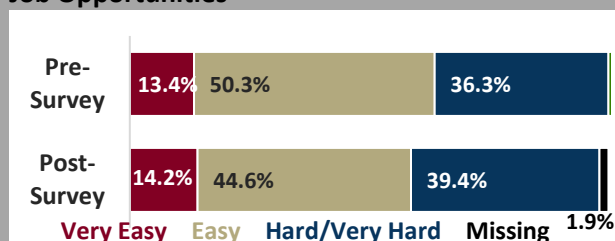
Exhibits 6.15 and 6.16 show career seekers' reported awareness, ease, and usefulness of web tools available from the workforce system. After the launch of the platform, the share of career seekers reporting no awareness of the job market decreased from 15.6 percent to 0.7 percent (Exhibit 6.15). This improvement could be related to the very existence of the platform, since there were minimal changes in the reported level of difficulty job seekers had with identifying job opportunities before versus after the site launch. That the share of career seekers who reported improvement in the ease with which to prepare for job opportunities increased is a positive indicator that may also be attributed to the launch of the platform (33.4 percent in the post-survey compared to 11.0 percent in the pre-survey).

Exhibit 6.15: How Career Seekers are Learning from the Workforce System

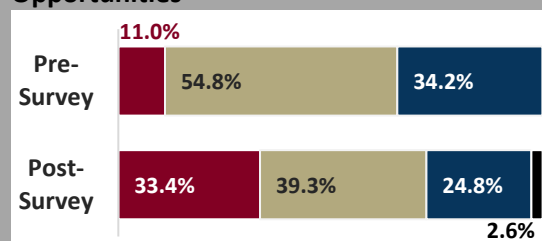
Level of Awareness, Job Market Conditions



Level of Difficulty, Identifying Job Opportunities



Level of Difficulty, Preparing for Job Opportunities



Notes: Results refer to Survey Questions 6, 7, and 8. Weighted N=7,714 (Pre-Survey), Weighted N=7,693 (Post-Survey). Statistical significance: *p-value < 0.1, **p-value < 0.05, ***p-value < 0.01. Response categories were combined ("Somewhat"/"A Little", "Hard"/"Very Hard"). Given small sample size (less than 30 individuals in either survey), we were only able to test for statistical significance in the following categories: "Somewhat/A Little" (Job Market Awareness), "Easy" (Identifying Job Opportunities), and "Easy" (Preparing for Job Opportunities). None of them were statistically significant.

Finally, career seekers did not report any increase in usefulness of web-based tools after the launch of the platform (Exhibit 6.16). The proportion reporting that the tools were either moderately or very useful was 88.8 pre-survey and 89.8 percent post-survey.

Exhibit 6.16: Usefulness of Web Tools



Notes: Results refer to Survey Question 9. Weighted N=7,714 (Pre-Survey), Weighted N=7,693 (Post-Survey). Statistical significance: *p-value < 0.1, **p-value < 0.05, ***p-value < 0.01. Response categories were combined ("Slightly Useful"/"Moderately Useful", "Very Useful"/"Extremely Useful"). Given small sample size (less than 30 individuals in either survey), we were only able to test for statistical significance for those who responded "Very/Extremely Useful" and "Slightly/Moderately Useful". None were statistically significant.

6.2 PLATFORM PERFORMANCE

This section describes key performance outcomes related to the platform’s outreach and use. Section 6.2.1 focuses on metrics for CareerForceMN.com after it was launched. Section 6.2.2 compares selected indicators common across the platform and MinnesotaWorks.net.

6.2.1 CareerForceMN.com Performance

This section focuses on performance metrics that reflect the reach of CareerForceMN.com between November 2018 and May 2019. When reviewing these metrics, it is important to keep in mind how new the platform was in May 2019, and that DEED only launched it via phased rollout,¹¹⁰ continually enhancing features and adding functionality after the launch date. DEED continues to improve or develop features and functionalities, incorporating platform use into the day-to-day activities of workforce staff and partners, and disseminating it to career seekers and employers across the state.

Between November 2018 and May 2019, the platform had a total of 101,674 visitors, who accessed an average of 4.62 pages per session. The average session lasted for 3.44 minutes. The most popular pages were “Events and Workshops” and “Find a CareerForce Location”, suggesting that portal users may want to cultivate further interaction with workforce staff, through either in-person events and workshops or visiting the nearest CareerForce location. The data also show that the most visited CareerForce location pages were Bloomington, Brooklyn Park, Blaine, Minneapolis North, Minneapolis South, Burnsville, St. Paul, and St. Cloud—a trend showing that CareerForce locations in urban areas were the most visited locations online. This may have implications for developing targeted outreach for users in more rural areas; but it may be a matter of more limited internet access in rural communities.



CareerForceMN.com Analytics

How users find CareerForceMN.com. A total of 38% of users accessed the site from a referral link from another site (e.g., Mn.gov, GovDelivery, MinnesotaWorks.net, or other sources; 35% typed the address; 26% found the platform through a search engine; 1% clicked on a link on a social media webpage.

How CareerForceMN.com users accessed the platform. A total of 68% used a desktop computer; 27% used a mobile device; and 5% used a tablet.

Where CareerForceMN.com users are from. A total of 61% are from Minnesota; 18% from Illinois; 3% from Washington; 3% from Wyoming; 2% Ohio.

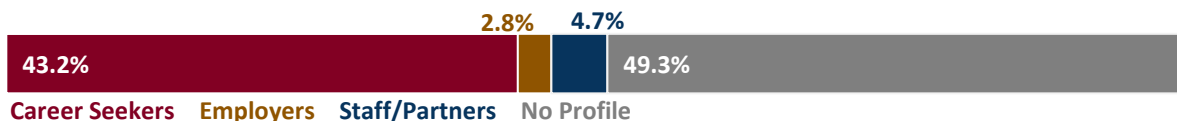
Source: DEED Administrative Data.

Notes: Data refer to the time frame between November 29, 2018 and May 8, 2019.

¹¹⁰ The DEED administrative data was retrieved through Standardized Query Language (SQL) queries and Google Analytics reports

It is not necessary to create an account to access resources across the site. However, as Exhibit 6.17 shows, 43.2 percent of platform users who created an account¹¹¹ between November 2018 and April 2019 were career seekers. A much smaller proportions of users were employers (2.8 percent) or workforce staff/partners (4.7 percent).¹¹² Virtually half (49.3 percent) of users created an account but did not identify themselves as belonging to either group.

Exhibit 6.17: Users with Accounts, CareerForceMN.com



Source: DEED administrative data on CareerForceMN.com.

Notes: N=6,374 users with an account in the platform as of April 2019. Data points refer to the sum of users that created an account between November 2018 and April 2019.

¹¹¹ Even though several platform content pages and functionalities (e.g., the job posting search engine, resume templates) are available to anyone visiting the portal, others are restricted to those with an account. See Chapter 3 for more information on platform content.

¹¹² DEED collections platform statistics on partners and workforce staff together.



Platform Performance, General and Tailored Pages

GENERAL PAGES, *Miscellaneous Statistics*

Job Postings

- 208,540 users viewed job postings from February to May 2019.
- 1,218,002 users viewed job postings on MinnesotaWorks.net from November 2018 to April 2019.

Workshops

- 9,236 workshops were posted on the events page from November 2018 to April 2019.
- 10,253 users clicked on a registration link in the platform from February to April 2019.
- 32,441 users registered for a workshop from October 2018 to April 2019.
- 26,055 unique event page views from October 2018 to May 2019.

Social Media

- 128 users shared content on Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter from March to May 2019.
- 47 users “liked” a page on Facebook from March to May 2019.
- 136 pages were shared to email from March to May 2019.

Favorites, Connections, and Groups

- 7,956 pages were added as favorites between March and May 2019.
- 5,356 organizations (e.g., employers, partners, or CareerForce locations) were added to the dashboard between March and May 2019.
- 206 connections¹¹³ were made by employers.
- 30 employer groups and 157 Proud & Community Partner Groups were created from October 2018 to May 2019.

TAILORED PAGES, *Number of Page Views between November 2018 and May 2019*

Career Seekers

Education and Training	2,699	Complete skills matcher	1,459
Veterans Resources	634	Click “learn more” on an application	22,068
Disability Resources	1,279		
Youth Resources	624	Employers	
Criminal Record Resources	658	Meet Your Regional Team	1,247
Over 50 Workforce	1,611	Training Opportunities	438
Unemployment Insurance	665	Labor Market Information	759

Source: DEED administrative data on CareerForceMN.com

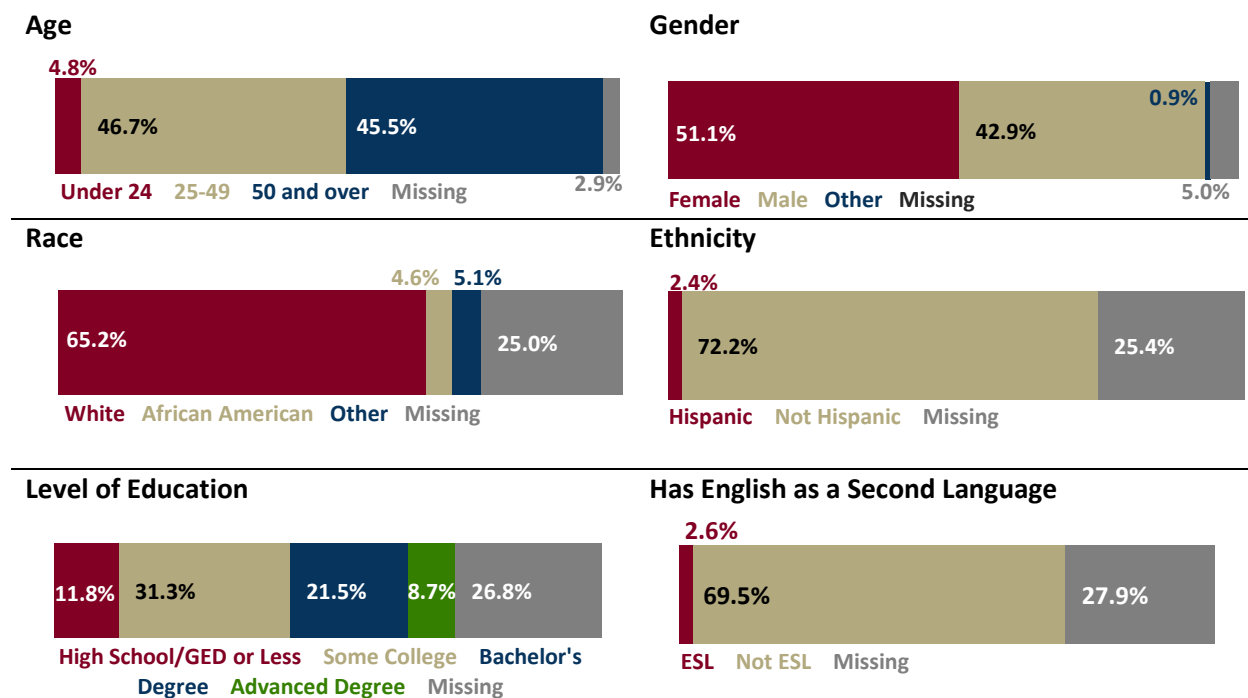
An important goal of the CareerForce initiative is to reach a diverse group of new users who were not affiliated with the workforce system in the past, especially youth, communities of color, and people with disabilities. Exhibits 6.18 and 6.19 shows statistics on registered career seekers that assess DEED’s progress towards the diversity goal. As noted in the implementation study, these are early statistics. The platform has rolled out slowly over grant Year 4, along with future dissemination efforts (like the public launch with a media campaign and community events) to raise the platform’s profile and bring new career seekers and employers to the platform.

Exhibit 6.18 shows the demographics of **career seekers** with an account with the platform. Just over half are women (51.1 percent), almost two-thirds are White (65.2 percent), almost three-quarters are non-Hispanic (72.2 percent), and slightly over two-thirds are native born English

¹¹³ This functionality allows workforce staff to directly connect with employers and partners through the platform. See section 3.1.

speakers—that is, not ESL (69.5 percent). The proportion of career seekers with an account on the new portal who are ages 25–49 (46.7 percent) is similar to the proportion who are 50 and older (45.5 percent). Additionally, slightly over half the career seekers with a platform account have some college education or a Bachelor’s degree (52.8 percent); 11.8 percent have a high school education or less; a little over one-fourth of career seekers with an account did not report their level of education (26.8 percent).

Exhibit 6.18: Demographic Characteristics of Registered Career Seekers

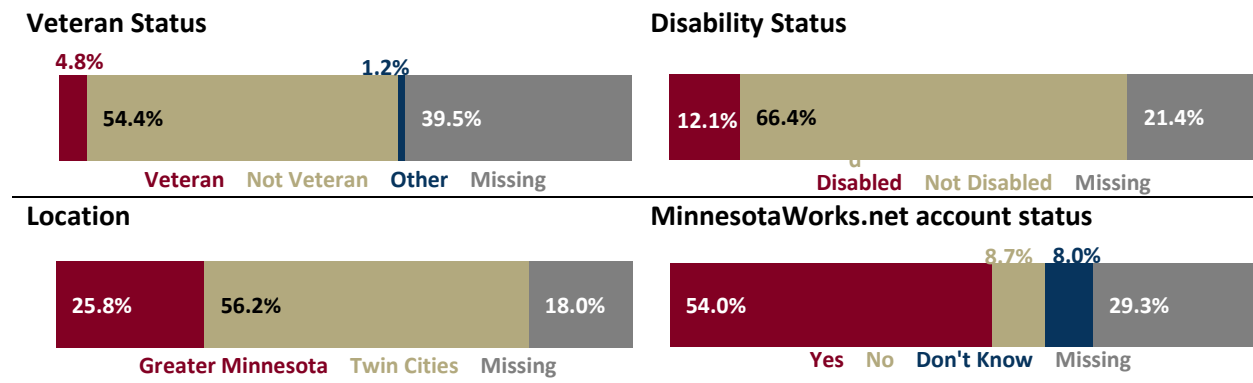


Source: DEED administrative data on CareerForceMN.com.

Notes: N=2,751 career seekers who created an account on the platform between November 2018-April 2019. “Other” race refers to American Indian, Alaska Native, Hawaiian Native, Pacific Islander, or Asian. Some college refers to jobseekers who possess a vocational certificate or an Associate’s degree.

Exhibit 6.19 shows veteran, disability, location status, as well as MinnesotaWorks.net status of registered career seekers. Almost 5 percent are veterans and 12.1 percent are disabled, two groups targeted by the platform through its tailored resources. Slightly more than half live in the Twin Cities (56.2 percent) and only a fourth in the rural Greater Minnesota area (25.8 percent). Finally, more than half (54.0 percent) of the registered jobseekers also have a MinnesotaWorks.net account.

Exhibit 6.19: Veteran, Disability, Location, and MinnesotaWorks.net Status of Registered Career Seekers

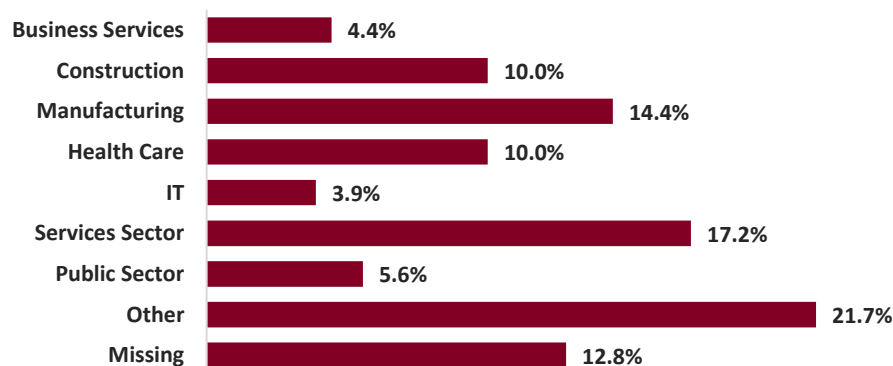


Source: DEED administrative data on CareerForceMN.com.

Notes: N=2,751 Career Seekers that created an account on the platform between November 2018 - April 2019. The "Other" category for "Veteran Status" is comprised of Active Service or Ill/Wounded; Spouse/Caregiver; Transitioning; more than 180 days active duty. While the totals for the other categories is 2,751; Veterans totaled to 2,155 since the data for veterans was available through March 2019.

Among registered employers, shown in Exhibit 6.20, the other category (21.7 percent) comprises the largest component of the industries represented, followed by the services sector (17.2 percent), manufacturing (14.4 percent), and construction (10.0 percent). Over 12 percent of the employers did not provide information on their industry.

Exhibit 6.20: Industry of Registered Employers



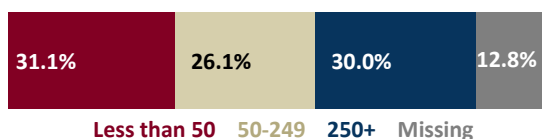
Source: DEED administrative data on CareerForceMN.com.

Notes: N=180 Employers that created an account on the platform between November 2018 - April 2019.

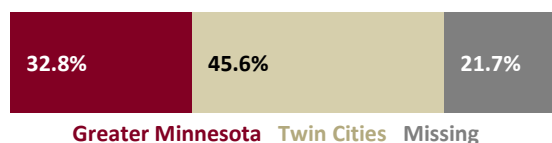
Exhibit 6.21 shows that almost one-third of employers with an account on the platform had less than 50 employees (31.1 percent)—nearly the same proportion as have 250 or more employees (30.0 percent). About one-fourth (26.1 percent) have 50-249 employees. Additionally, about half the registered employers are located in the Twin Cities (45.6 percent); approximately one-third are located in Greater Minnesota (32.8 percent).

Exhibit 6.21: Characteristics of Registered Employers

Number of Employees



Location



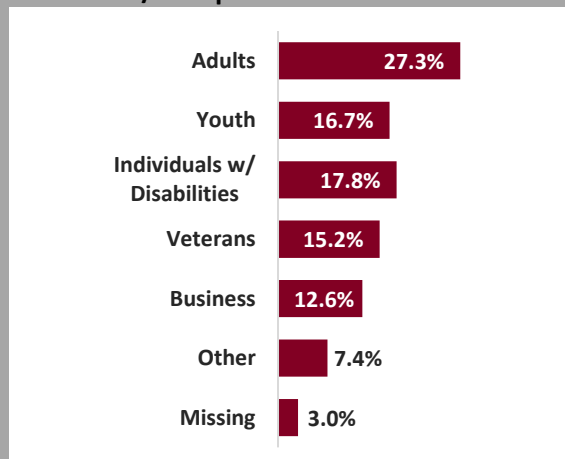
Source: DEED administrative data on CareerForceMN.com.

Notes: N=180 Employers that created an account on the platform between November 2018-April 2019.

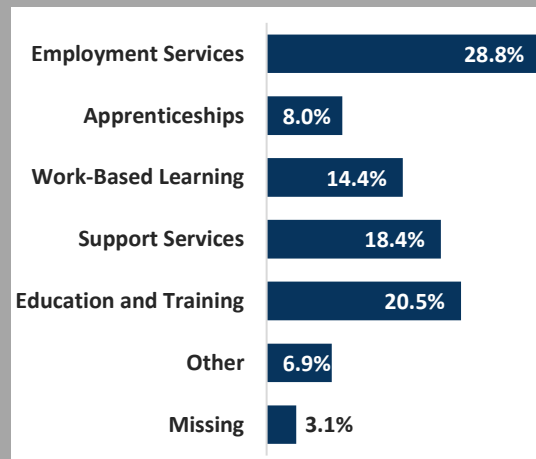
We now turn to the statistics on staff and partners registered on CareerForceMN.com as of April 2019 (Exhibit 6.22). Over one-fourth (27.3 percent) of all staff and partners registered on the portal served adults, 17.8 percent served individuals with disabilities, 16.7 percent served youth, and 15.2 percent served veterans. Additionally, 12.6 percent served businesses for whom the platform might offer interesting resources (such as tailored LMI data, workforce plan templates, and pages unique to their businesses). Among the services provided by registered staff and partners, over one-quarter (28.8 percent) provided employment services, one-fifth (20.5 percent) provided education and training assistance, and 18.4 percent provided support services.

Exhibit 6.22: Characteristics of Registered Staff and Partners

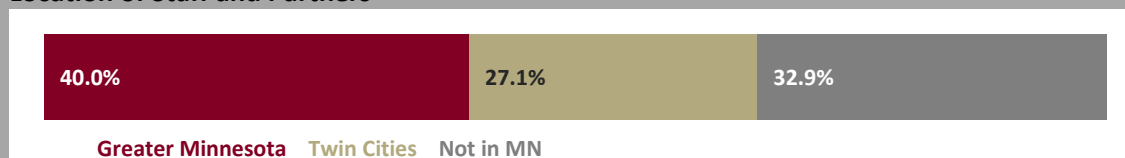
Individuals/Groups Served



Services Provided



Location of Staff and Partners



Source: DEED administrative data on CareerForceMN.com.

Notes: N=301 partners or workforce staff that created an account on the platform between November 2018 - April 2019.

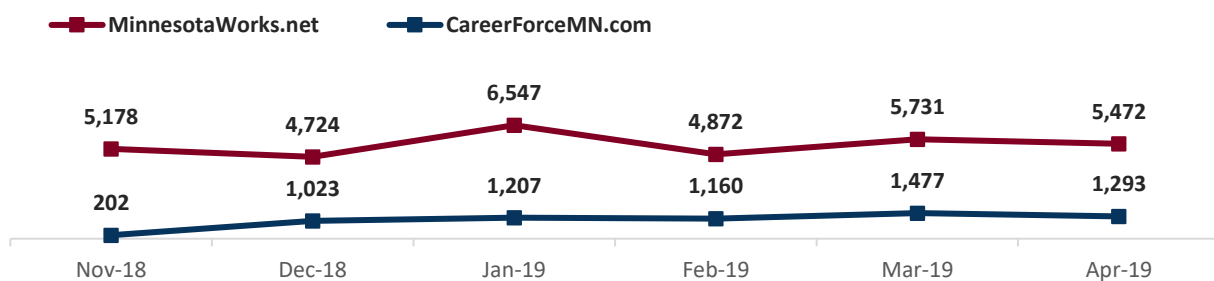
Also, a larger proportion of workforce staff and partners, compared to career seekers or employers, were located in the greater Minnesota area (40 percent); slightly over one-quarter (27.1 percent) were located in the Twin Cities. Interestingly, one-third (32.9 percent) were not located anywhere in Minnesota.

6.2.2 Comparing MinnesotaWorks.net and CareerForceMN.com

In this section, we compare the number of new account registrations between MinnesotaWorks.net and CareerForceMN.com. We also show trends in career seeker and employer searches on MinnesotaWorks.net before and after launch of the new platform.¹¹⁴

The number of individuals who created an account in MinnesotaWorks.net between November 2018 and April 2019 (32,524) was much larger than for CareerForceMN.com (6,362). As Exhibit 6.23 shows, the number of new accounts created in MinnesotaWorks.net decreased slightly in December 2018, but increased again in January 2019 and has remained relatively stable since then. The CareerForce platform has accumulated about 1,000 new accounts per month since it was launched. This trend suggests that MinnesotaWorks.net is still the primary workforce portal for career seekers, employers, and workforce staff in the state of Minnesota. A single sign-on across the two portals could plausibly increase the number of new account registrations on CareerForceMN.com, making it easier for users to access different features and functionality available on the two sites.

Exhibit 6.23: Number of New Account Registrations, MinnesotaWorks.net and CareerForceMN.com, November 2018-April 2019



Source: DEED Administrative data on MinnesotaWorks.net and CareerForceMN.com.

Notes: For MinnesotaWorks.net, this statistic refers to new accounts for career seekers, employers, and workforce staff. For CareerForceMN.com, in addition to these three groups, the statistic includes partners and users that did not specify a user type. The total number of accounts created in MinnesotaWorks.net was 32,524 as opposed to 6,362 accounts in CareerForceMN.com.

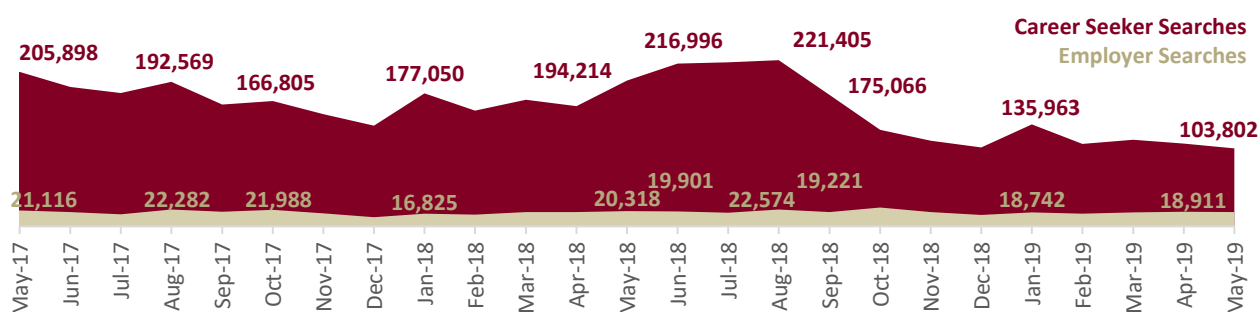
Exhibit 6.24 shows the number of searches career seekers and employers performed in MinnesotaWorks.net between May 2017 and May 2019.¹¹⁵ Most notably, career seeker searches on MinnesotaWorks.net began to sharply decrease around September 2018, when CareerForceMN.com launched. Since CareerForceMN.com allows users to search for job postings on MinnesotaWorks.net, this trend might point to a potential migration of users from MNW to

¹¹⁴ Some metrics are not applicable on one of the two platforms (e.g., number of resumes uploaded does not apply to CareerForceMN.com, since career seekers cannot upload resumes to this portal; number of pages shared via email does not apply to MinnesotaWorks.net, since this feature is not available on it), and some others are not tracked by one of the platforms (e.g., DEED has not started tracking the number of searches conducted by career seekers or employers on CareerForceMN.com).

¹¹⁵ Searches in the context of MinnesotaWorks.net refer to employers using keywords to search for career seekers when recruiting, and career seekers searching for potential employers.

the CareerForce platform. Conversely, employer searches in MinnesotaWorks.net remained stable over the period, since they cannot publish job postings on CareerForceMN.com.¹¹⁶

Exhibit 6.24: Number of Career Seeker and Employer Searches in MinnesotaWorks.net, May 2017-May 2019



Source: DEED administrative data on MinnesotaWorks.net.

6.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter presents results from a pre- and post-survey of key platform stakeholders—career seekers, employers, and workforce staff—to gauge stakeholder perceptions of the tools and services available in the workforce system. While the platform is still incorporating new features and functionality, and has not yet been fully integrated to stakeholders’ day-to-day activities, the preliminary effort reflected in this chapter, points to a few promising results. For instance, a higher proportion of workforce staff said it was now easy or very easy to assist employers compared to before development of the new platform (Exhibit 6.2); a smaller percentage of staff said they were not at all satisfied with the use of social media to connect with stakeholders (Exhibit 6.3); and fewer found it difficult or very difficult to communicate with postsecondary schools (Exhibit 6.4). Also, the proportion of career seekers who reported using a computer in a CareerForce location decreased (Exhibit 6.14), suggesting they may be accessing workforce system tools on their own personal computers or mobile phones with the new platform.¹¹⁷ As DEED continues to improve the portal’s resources and functionalities, as well as adding new ones (see Section 3.3), we expect the platform to move closer to meeting stakeholders’ needs.

In spite of the limitations of the survey results, they serve as baseline satisfaction results that DEED can build on in the future, when additional satisfaction surveys are fielded. DEED can also use these preliminary results to inform the planning of new platform tools or functionalities, or stakeholder training to better take advantage of the platform.



¹¹⁶ DEED does not collect data on user searches on CareerForceMN.com.

¹¹⁷ Following customer survey findings that the resource room (bank of computers) did not rank highly among respondents, the delivery model changed to provide more direct access to job search experts and WIOA intensive career services, where staff provided direct triage services and focused on productive career search strategies. This change may also be associated with a decrease in the proportion of career seekers using a computer in a CareerForce location.

Further, this chapter shows performance indicators for CareerForceMN.com and MinnesotaWorks.net. A total of 6,362 users created an account with CareerForceMN.com between November 2018 and April 2019, averaging about 1,000 new accounts a month. While some features (e.g., social media use, connections, groups) are still at a slow take-up pace, others have been highly popular, such as workshops (with more than 30,000 registrations), job postings views (more than 200,000), and education and training page views (nearly 3,000). Finally, career seeker searches on MinnesotaWorks.net began to sharply decrease around September 2018, when CareerForceMN.com launched. Since CareerForceMN.com allows users to search for job postings on MinnesotaWorks.net, this trend might point to a potential migration of users from MinnesotaWorks.net to the CareerForce platform.

The results presented in this chapter have several implications for DEED's consideration. For example, DEED should conduct focused outreach activities within rural communities to ensure the platform is serving those living in remote areas. While it is expected that a large number of platform users will be living in the Twin Cities area due to population concentration, reaching career seekers and employers in more remote areas is an important goal for the platform and the workforce system generally. Additionally, DEED should focus on training workforce staff and partners more widely, to guarantee buy-in to the platform from both career seekers and employers, since staff will likely be the best promoters of the portal through interactions with other stakeholders. Lastly, the complementary nature of features and functionalities on MinnesotaWorks.net and CareerForceMN.com strongly reinforces the argument for a single sign-on across the two platforms that will make it easier for the users to access both.

7. Cost Study

This chapter describes the results of the cost study, which consists of both cost-allocation and cost-effectiveness analyses. Section 7.1 documents the costs of operating CareerForceMN.com, and how they were distributed among different expenditure categories, including information on contract and budget modifications. Section 7.2 provides cost estimates per unit of output, such as costs by stakeholders involved with the platform (e.g., career seekers, partners, CareerForce locations). Section 7.3 summarizes the chapter's findings.

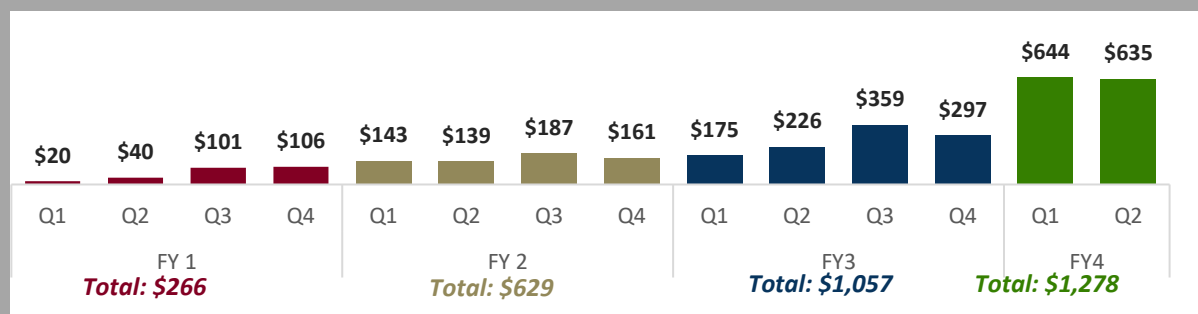
7.1 PROJECT COSTS ALLOCATION

This section describes how grant funds were spent through the first three and a half years of the grant's four-year period, from October 2015 through March 2019.¹¹⁸ To support this analysis, DEED's staff provided IMPAQ with extensive documentation on quarterly expenditures.

7.1.1 Total Expenditures over Time

An initial overview of project expenditures by quarter, with expenditures rounded to the nearest thousand dollars, is provided in Exhibit 7.1. Grant expenditures were lower in the first two fiscal years (FYs), when DEED was consulting with stakeholders and determining the requirements of the platform. Expenditures began to increase in FY3, Q1, when the contract with the platform vendor was signed. As most of FY3 and FY4 were spent on developing the platform, total expenditures for these years were the highest.

Exhibit 7.1: Quarterly Project Expenditures in Thousands of Dollars, October 2015 - March 2019



Source: DEED administrative data.

Notes: Expenditures were rounded to the nearest thousand. Expenditure reports for FY2019's Quarters 3 and 4 were not available when this report was drafted.

¹¹⁸ Expenditure reports for FY2019's Q3 and Q4 were not available when this report was drafted in June 2019.

Exhibit 7.2 provides project expenditures, total unspent obligations, and remaining funding by quarter and fiscal year. DEED spent \$3,230,271 and obligated \$1,919,073 in additional funds through the end of March 2019. Subtracting the cumulative expenditures and total unspent obligations from the \$6 million award leaves DEED with \$850,657 in grant funding or about 14 percent of the initial award for the remaining two quarters of the grant period. Thus, DEED spending of \$425,328 per quarter on average over the remaining two quarters would exhaust the grant funds. This is about 33 percent less than DEED spending in the most recent quarter (\$634,539).

Exhibit 7.2: Project Expenditures by Quarter, October 2015 - March 2019

Fiscal Year (FY) and Quarter (Q)	Expenditures in Dollars		Total Unspent Obligations	Remaining Funding in Dollars
	Quarter	Cumulative		
-	-	-	-	\$6,000,000
FY2016 (Oct. 2015 - Sep. 2016)				
Q1	\$19,720	\$19,720	\$0	\$5,980,280
Q2	\$39,939	\$59,659	\$0	\$5,940,341
Q3	\$100,604	\$160,163	\$700,350	\$5,139,388
Q4	\$106,230	\$266,493	\$666,882	\$5,066,624
FY2017 (Oct. 2016 - Sep. 2017)				
Q1	\$142,917	\$406,411	\$1,351,733	\$4,238,857
Q2	\$138,557	\$547,968	\$1,297,071	\$4,154,960
Q3	\$186,507	\$734,476	\$1,169,328	\$4,096,196
Q4	\$160,632	\$895,108	\$557,128	\$4,547,764
FY2018 (Oct. 2017 - Sep. 2018)				
Q1	\$175,306	\$1,070,414	\$1,582,051	\$1,582,051
Q2	\$225,834	\$1,296,248	\$1,466,893	\$1,466,893
Q3	\$358,732	\$1,654,980	\$889,927	\$889,927
Q4	\$296,944	\$1,951,924	\$1,754,316	\$1,754,316
FY2019 (Oct. 2018 - Sep. 2019)				
Q1	\$643,807	\$2,595,731	\$2,053,660	\$2,053,660
Q2	\$634,539	\$3,230,271	\$1,919,073	\$850,657
Q3†	-	-	-	-
Q4†	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	-	\$3,230,271	\$1,919,073	\$850,657

Source: DEED administrative data.

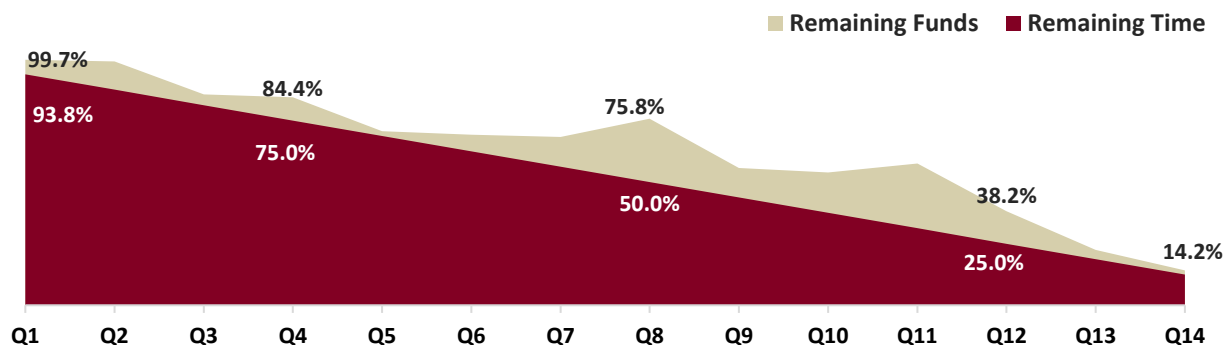
Notes: Cumulative expenditures, total unspent obligations, and remaining funding may not sum to the grant award amount due to rounding. The total row shows values up to March 31, 2019.

† Expenditure reports for FY2019's Q3 and Q4 were not available when this report was drafted.

Exhibit 7.3 shows how the project's remaining funds compare to the remaining quarters in the grant period. If project expenditures were evenly distributed across quarters, the lighter area of the graph would completely overlay the darker one. In fact, the funds were utilized at a largely even pace for about the first five quarters, underutilized in the roughly next seven quarters, and then used at a much faster pace in the last two quarters. At the end of Q8 (and as the second project year ended), 75.8 percent of the funds were still available. Note that, compared with prior

quarters, funds were utilized at a much faster pace starting in Q12. With nearly one year left in the grant period (i.e., 25 percent of the total time), 38.5 percent of the funds were still available.

Exhibit 7.3: Remaining Funds Compared to Remaining Time, Percent



Notes: Remaining funds refers to the proportion of funds available compared to the total grant value of \$6,000,000. Remaining time refers to the proportion of quarters left compared to the total amount of quarters for this grant (16 quarters or four years). The graph ends at Q14 since expenditure reports for FY2019's Q3 and Q4 were not available when this report was drafted.

7.1.2 Categorized Project Costs

DEED administrative data permit more detailed examination of program costs by six major expenditure categories: contractual, personnel, indirect, travel, supplies, and other. Exhibit 7.4 summarizes budgeted expenditures for the entire grant period and actual grant expenditures, both in dollars and as a percent of total expenditures for the first 14 quarters of the grant period. Through the end of grant year 4, Q2, DEED had spent 54 percent of the total budget (\$3,230,271), a figure that ignores future expenses already obligated. (See Exhibit 7.2.)

Contractual expenses represent the largest expenditure category, which (at \$2,010,629) accounts for 62.2 percent of total expenditures. With two quarters remaining in the grant period, the actual contractual spending remained \$1,689,371 under the \$3,700,000 budgeted. Although DEED spending was under budget, the proportion of the budget set aside for contractual expenses (62 percent) closely matched actual spending for this category (62.2 percent).

While MNIT's expenses appear to be the largest contractual expense so far (\$606,664), the cost of the platform vendor and the external evaluator trail closely behind at \$583,114 and \$592,603, respectively. However, DEED's largest contractual expense by the end of the grant period is expected to be the platform vendor, given the large contract value in place (\$1,329,590). Other smaller contractual expenses include those with the Minnesota Department of Education, the branding vendor, and the content creation vendor.

Among non-contractual expenses, the biggest expense is personnel expenditures; DEED spent \$993,232 on this category, about 31 percent of total actual expenditures. While DEED's actual spending in this category falls under its budgeted cost of \$1,794,002, the percent of total

expenditure projected in the budget (30 percent) is very close to actual expenditures in this category (31 percent).

DEED appears to have overestimated the amount needed for expenses that fall under the ‘other’ category, which includes miscellaneous costs (e.g., utility services and insurance). Although DEED budgeted \$478,998, its actual expenditure so far is only \$57,475.

Exhibit 7.4: Categorized Grant Expenditures, October 2015 - April 2019

Category	Expenditures in Dollars† (Percent of Total Expenditures)	
	Actual	Budgeted
Contractual	\$2,010,629 (62.2%)	\$3,700,000 (61.7%)
MNIT	\$606,664 (30.1%)	-
Minnesota Department of Education	\$90,398 (4.5%)	-
Branding Vendor	\$60,000 (3.0%)	-
Content Creation Vendor	\$79,850 (4.0%)	-
Platform Vendor	\$583,114 (29.0%)	-
External Evaluator	\$592,603 (29.5%)	-
Personnel		
Salary and fringe benefits of DEED staff	\$993,232 (30.7%)	\$1,794,002 (29.9%)
Indirect		
DEED and Statewide indirect costs	\$153,898 (4.8%)	-
Travel		
DEED/WIF travel costs	\$12,595 (0.4%)	\$20,000 (0.3%)
Supplies		
Grant operations costs, such as printing and postage	\$2,441 (0.1%)	\$7,000 (0.1%)
Other		
Miscellaneous costs, such as utility services and insurance	\$57,475 (1.8%)	\$478,998 (8.0%)
TOTAL	\$3,230,271 (100.0%)	\$6,000,000 (100.0%)

Notes: Expenditures reported up until March 31, 2019. Expenditures for FY2019’s Q3 and Q4 were not available when this report was drafted.

The Budgeted column refers to the original budget submitted to USDOL for the entire grant period, ending in September 2019.

7.1.3 Project Contracts and Amendments

DEED submitted a Scope of Work (SOW) and Budget Modification (BM) request to USDOL in August 2016, after the end of the first project year (FY2016). The SOW described a new task under the WIF grant—a branding initiative—to develop a consistent brand and logo for the state’s workforce system. DEED tied this initiative to one of the grant proposal’s objectives of improving the quality of services provided in job centers. The BM request included several areas, such as shifting funds from FY1 to subsequent years (e.g., e-learning development costs), reallocation of funds (e.g., since the evaluation contract was lower than estimated, remaining funds were reallocated to DEED Evaluation Activities personnel cost), and adjustments in rates (e.g., the indirect rate was reduced from 16.7 percent to 14.3 percent).

The second SOW and BM request was submitted to USDOL in November 2018, the beginning of the last project year (FY2019). The SOW described continuing branding efforts towards Minnesota’s workforce development system and the addition of further features and functionality on CareerForceMN.com for the platform. The BM request included the reallocation of funds from personnel and non-personnel services (e.g., software/hardware updates, cubicles) to contractual (e.g., e-learning, MNIT), as well as an increase in fringe and indirect rates. Exhibit 7.5 provides a timeline of both BMs submitted to USDOL, as well as all contracts and their respective amendments signed throughout the grant period.

Exhibit 7.5: Timeline of Budget Modifications and Contracts

Project Time	DOL or Contractor, Contract/Amendment Value
Year 1 FY 2016	Q1
	Q2
	Q3 External Evaluator, \$754,223
	Q4 First Budget Modification submitted to USDOL, NA
Year 2 FY 2017	Q1 First Budget Modification approved by USDOL, NA
	Q2
	Q3
	Q4 Branding Vendor (Initial Contract), \$60,000
Year 3 FY 2018	Q1
	Q2 Platform Vendor (Initial Contract), \$34,990
	Platform Vendor (Amendment 1), \$460,488
	Platform Vendor (Amendment 2), \$85,500
	Q3 Minnesota Department of Education, \$415,699
Year 4 FY 2019	Branding Vendor (Amendment 2), \$30,000 ¹¹⁹
	Q4 Second Budget Modification submitted to/approved by USDOL, NA
	Q1 Platform Vendor (Amendment 3), \$0
	Platform Vendor (Amendment 4), \$748,612
	Q2
	Q3 Platform Vendor (Amendment 5), \$0
	Q4

Notes: Budget Modifications that did not increase contract values are listed as NA (Not Applicable).

7.2 COST EFFECTIVENESS ANALYSIS

The average program cost per unit of outcome can help determine potential value-added of a program or intervention, and provide useful information to other states considering implementation of similar initiatives in the future. This section provides per unit cost of the platform for particular outcomes, as given by equation (1).

$$\text{Unit Cost} = \frac{\text{Total Project Cost}}{\text{Key Platform Outcome}} \quad (1)$$

¹¹⁹ The first amendment to the contract with the branding vendor was signed a month after the initial contract, in FY 2, Q4. The amendment of \$375,000 was not covered by WIF grants, and thus is not included in Exhibit 7.4. The second amendment had a value of \$200,000, of which \$30,000 was covered by WIF funds. The second amendment was included in Exhibit 7.4.

Two outcomes were identified as key to measuring the platform's goals: (1) **total number of unique accounts** created in the platform by career seekers, employers, workforce staff, partners, and non-identified profiles between November 2018 and March 2019; and (2) **total number of platform users who registered for a workshop** from October 2018 through March 2019.

Exhibit 7.6 shows that 5,069 unique users created an account in the platform between November 2018 and March 2019, and 28,459 users registered for a workshop between October 2018 and March 2019. Since total project expenditures up until March 2019 equaled \$3,230,271 (see Exhibit 7.2), total cost per unique account as of March 31st 2019 amounts to \$637; total cost per user who registered for a workshop amounts to \$114.

Exhibit 7.6: Contracts and Amendments, DEED and Contractors

Key Platform Outcomes	Number	Per Unit Cost in Dollars
Number of Unique Accounts†	5,069	\$637
Number of Platform Users who Registered for a Workshop††	28,459	\$114

Source: DEED administrative data on CareerForceMN.com

Notes: Total number of unique accounts consists of 2,155 career seekers, 136 employers, 263 staff/partners, and 263 accounts without a profile.

† From November 2018 through March 2019.

†† From October 2018 through March 2019.

The per unit program cost can serve as a reference point to understand program effectiveness. In this context, the average cost for platform users (career seekers, employers, partners and other non-identified users) to have an account and access all customized features (e.g., dashboard, LMI data) and workforce content equals \$637. Similarly, the average cost for registering for a workshop on the platform amounts to \$114. Absent the platform, these users would have to interact with workforce staff or spend time looking for the information elsewhere, without the convenience of having content and resources always available at a centralized location. As the platform continues to add new features and functionality, and becomes a more prominent feature of Minnesota's workforce system, it is expected to be more widely used by its key stakeholders—reducing the per unit costs further, and increasing the platform's cost effectiveness.

7.3 CONCLUSION

The cost study focuses on understanding how grant funds were spent and on measuring the cost-effectiveness of the platform the first three and a half years of the grant's four-year period (from October 2015 to March 2019). The study showed that through the first 14 quarters of the 16-quarter grant period, DEED spent a total of \$3,230,271 (54 percent) of the \$6,000,000 grant award. Including unspent obligations, DEED has spent or obligated a total of \$5,149,343, leaving \$850,657 in funding available to support the last two quarters of the grant period. Our analysis also shows that the funds were utilized at a largely even pace for about the first five quarters,

underutilized in the roughly next seven quarters, and then at a much faster pace in the last two quarters. Currently, DEED appears to have sufficient funding remaining to support the remainder of grant activities, as demonstrated by the fact that DEED has 14 percent of the total award funding remaining to be spent in approximately 12.5 percent of the grant period (as measured by calendar quarters).

An analysis of categorized grant expenditures shows that most DEED expenditures to date have been on contractual expenses, amounting to \$2,010,629 (about 62 percent of total expenditures to date). While MNIT's expenses appear to be the largest contractual expense so far (\$606,664), the costs of the platform vendor and the external evaluator trail closely behind, at \$583,114 and \$592,603, respectively. Personnel costs account for the highest proportion of total expenditures that are not contractual (31 percent).

Lastly, the cost effectiveness analysis showed that the total cost as of March 31st 2019 per unique account amounts to \$637; the total cost per user who registered for a workshop amounts to \$114. We anticipate these costs will drop further as CareerForceMN.com builds more features and functionality of importance to its users, and becomes a central resource for the state's workforce system.

8. Conclusion

The Minnesota WIF grant funded development of CareerForceMN.com, an innovative, online platform that integrates and enhances workforce system tools for career seekers and employers. It offers a modern interface, customized content for each user, and online communication tools that appeal to a broad audience. CareerForceMN.com is fully integrated with the CareerForce brand. The two efforts rolled out as a joint CareerForce initiative, re-enforcing their shared goals to improve customer experience and attract new customers to Minnesota's high-quality workforce system services. CareerForceMN.com embodies the brand's visual identity and communication strategy. The platform represents the new CareerForce communications strategy by describing workforce system services in plain language, rather than technical program terms (e.g., "hiring incentives for employers" rather than "Work Opportunity Tax Credit"), with the goal to assist customers find the services they need quickly. CareerForceMN.com also centralizes all CareerForce location and partner service offerings, to help career seekers and employers more easily navigate the decentralized network of local service providers.

This evaluation documents: (1) how the Minnesota WIF grant program was implemented, (2) program outcomes before and after rollout, and (3) the allocation of grant expenditures and cost-effectiveness. We assess early indicators of satisfaction and examine the portal's performance since its launch. Importantly, the CareerForce initiative still existed as a "work-in-progress" at the time of the evaluation's follow-up data collection activities between April and May 2019, which covered the final site visit, the fielding of the post-survey, and administrative program data. As a result, a common theme that emerged across the implementation, outcome, and cost studies was that it was too early to fully assess the grant performance. At the time of the final round of site visits and the post-survey, several features and functionality for the platform were still under development, the CareerForce brand signage was being installed, and the public media campaign to broadcast CareerForce to career seekers and employers across the state was still pending.

Our study points to some encouraging signs of grant performance, even though we cannot attribute these changes causally to development of the platform. For instance, the proportion of workforce staff slightly or moderately satisfied with the use of social media to connect with stakeholders increased from 50.6 percent to 57.9 percent. More than 100,000 individuals visited the CareerForce platform at least once between November 2018 and May 2019; 208,540 users viewed job postings from February to May 2019; 32,441 users registered for a workshop through the platform between October 2018 and April 2019; and more than 22,000 users clicked on "learn more" for an occupation. We expect the April 2019 cost-per-outcome measures—\$637 per unique account and \$114 per user who registered for a workshop—to fall over time as more users benefit from the portal's features.

The final site visit interviews highlight that the penetration of CareerForceMN.com among staff, partners, career seekers, and employers has only just begun. Staff and partners expected platform traffic from career seekers and employers to rise substantially after the public launch.

They also said employers were generally still unaware of the platform, because the employer content and features had not yet been introduced. They anticipated much higher employer traffic in the future when employer-related features are up and running. Overall, workforce staff and

“ **Workforce staff and partners are excited about the future of CareerForceMN.com**

One-Stop-Shop. *“There is a single platform that career seekers and employers can go to get the information they need.”*

Modern layout. *“The layout of the platform is new, fun, and fresh. I’m confident it will be a good website for career seekers and employers.”*

Accessible. *“I like the platform; it is user-friendly compared to the DEED platform, which was the main platform for people with disabilities.”*

Mobile-friendly. *“The fact that it’s mobile also helps. It’s also a chance for us to see more of our younger customers. A lot of people that come in are 40 or older, but I think that we also need to reach that population through our workshops.”*

Convenient from anywhere. *“Our services are more accessible. We have a lot of small towns around here that are a long drive. Now they can access services through this site. It adds the convenience factor.”*

New communication mode. *“People like that they can get answers staying behind the screen.”*

Navigating the network of local partners. *“What we ultimately need is to have all of these players in one place and that’s what the platform does.”*

Plain language. *“It really speaks to what a career-seeking customer needs. It actually allows the customer to be in the driver’s seat and they don’t need to know our acronyms and jargon. They know what they need and can connect to those services directly on the platform”*

partners were optimistic about the future of CareerForceMN.com and the CareerForce brand. Most expect that the CareerForce initiative will improve the customer experience and engage more career seekers and employers with the workforce system services. The call-out box shows comments from the workforce staff and partners. As one interviewee summarized, “Everything it has to offer is wonderful but a lot of stuff is still to come.”

The rest of this concluding chapter describes key recommendations based on data trends, emerging best practices, and challenges identified throughout this study. Section 8.1 highlights recommendations for DEED to help the CareerForce team continue to improve the platform and brand into the future. Section 8.2 offers recommendations to other states—based on lessons learned from Minnesota’s journey—on how best to implement a similar initiative.

8.1 IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS FOR CAREERFORCE

This section describes recommendations to support Minnesota’s CareerForce initiative in the future—including measuring program outcomes and creating systematic feedback mechanisms (Section 8.1.1); establishing a clear, distinct CareerForceMN.com identity (Section 8.1.2); and sustaining training and outreach efforts (Section 8.1.3).

8.1.1 Measuring Program Outcomes



Recommendation: Continue to track CareerForce performance outcomes over the long term, and develop continuous feedback mechanisms to gather feedback from diverse groups of users to ensure CareerForce meets their needs.

The outcome study measured changes in stakeholder satisfaction for career seekers, employers, and workforce staff with the workforce system through pre/post surveys, and examined key platform metrics. The post-survey was fielded in April–May 2019, shortly after the platform launch in November 2018, when several new features and functionality, as noted, were still under construction. Similarly, most platform metrics were collected from November 2018–April 2019, before the grant initiative had time to take root across the state. Lack of statewide dissemination of the brand and portal in a public launch further limited the number of stakeholders consistently using the new brand tools or the platform.

Given this context, DEED should continue to track performance on these metrics at regular intervals. To inform improvements to the portal or brand implementation, DEED should also consider expanding its long-term performance management framework to track progress on addressing the larger set of workforce system challenges (identified in Chapter 2) that motivated the CareerForce initiative’s design. Specifically, the CareerForce initiative aims to make it easy for career seekers and employers to navigate the network of local service providers; improve the reputation of the workforce system; and engage diverse new audiences who had never used workforce system services in the past, including youth, white collar professionals, and communities of color. DEED could devise performance management with these goals in mind, but should also conduct follow-up research and evaluation activities to address whether or not the site is achieving its goals, as described below.

To support progress toward CareerForce’s performance goals, DEED should prioritize development of a systematic feedback program, to capture input from diverse users on the platform and the brand at regular intervals. The program needs also to devote staff and leadership time to promptly analyze the feedback and generate actionable recommendations. DEED should brainstorm creative and low-burden solutions to gather input. For instance, focus groups, user surveys embedded in the platform (e.g., Rate Your Experience pop-ups), as well as data collection tools for CareerForce location staff to collect feedback directly from their customers, can all be useful modes to gather feedback on customer perceptions of the workforce system, platform features, and functionality they already find valuable, as well as those that need improvement.

DEED should focus on gathering direct input from users, career seekers, and employers in particular, to ensure the platform navigation and content of CareerForceMN.com meet their needs. Many staff and partners interviewed mentioned that tailored resources for special populations on the platform were not focused or relevant; Youth and Veterans resources were not prominently displayed, but instead buried in a line-item in the extra resources section; and

non-English speakers found it hard to comprehend the content and obtain insight from the platform. Interviewees also consistently mentioned that the platform needed to be more intuitive and user-friendly (e.g., cater to users with low digital literacy skills), and contain interactive components (e.g., such as moving away from lists and bullets towards images and videos/blogs). Direct outreach to career seekers and employers, such as targeted focus groups for specific user types (e.g., veterans, ESL clients, manufacturing employers) can help ensure the platform navigation is logical and the content useful. The CareerForce team has collected a large volume of *ad hoc* feedback from staff and partners, but little feedback from career seekers and employers.

“The customer shouldn’t have to think. We shouldn’t have to scroll all the way down to find what we are looking for. Everyone should immediately find what they need.”

“There are things that need to be on the site that aren’t there... Voc Rehab needs to be front and center on the site (people with disabilities and low literacy skills).”

“The platform is too cumbersome, it’s difficult to go through pages and find things. We still have people that come here and struggle with using websites, so it’s hard for these people to use the platform.”

“We should have videos, employers telling their stories and testimonials.”

“It would be great for customers to be able to make appointments directly with workforce staff on the website.”

“ ”

8.1.2 Establishing a Clear and Distinct Identity for CareerForceMN.com



Recommendation: Define the longer-term strategic vision of CareerForceMN.com among other DEED portals and partner websites; and, as feasible, prioritize a single sign-on with MinnesotaWorks.net in the short term.

CareerForceMN.com so far has not achieved the status of a one-stop-shop. Workforce staff and partners mentioned uncertainty surrounding the platform, especially its ability to fit into the larger picture of related DEED tools (MinnesotaWorks.net, WorkForceOne, DEED state government website) and similar partner tools across the state (e.g., Minnesota Career Information System). This ambiguity reduces buy-in from staff at CareerForce locations and partner sites who need to incorporate yet another tool into their day-to-day work. The ambiguity also makes the site cumbersome for career seekers and employers, and ultimately puts a heavier financial burden on DEED as it sustains a growing list of technology platforms.

DEED has considered multiple proposals for further integration across DEED platforms, but has yet to implement them. Staff and partner interviewees consistently suggested that lack of a single sign-on with MinnesotaWorks.net was the largest roadblock to the success of

CareerForceMN.com, and should be an immediate priority going forward.¹²⁰ DEED staff explained that the job search/candidate recruitment is the main reason career seekers and employers visit CareerForceMN.com. However, they still have to register and use MinnesotaWorks.net to apply for jobs or post jobs, which limits the portal's apparent use. To ensure the sustainability of CareerForceMN.com, DEED should articulate the desired identity of CareerForceMN.com among the suite of DEED's tools and partner tools, and map out realistic short- and long-term steps to achieve this goal.

Opportunities for Further Data Integration

"This platform should be the entry point to all career services and Minnesota's job bank. MinnesotaWorks.net should go away. Integrating the full job bank isn't currently funded within grant funds."

"I'm not sure why the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) wasn't included in CareerForceMN.com. It would be great to have ETPL. In ETPL, the occupations are already lined up to education & training programs. I'm not sure if there are federal regulations around how the ETPL information is set up."

8.1.3 Sustaining Training and Outreach Efforts



Recommendation: Sustain a robust training and outreach campaign to workforce staff and partners on the CareerForce initiative, and engage the DEED Commissioner directly in these outreach efforts.

Staff and partners across the state suggested more in-person training to understand and recommend relevant features to career seeker and employer clients. While some CareerForce location staff actively managed the "connection features" and were well-versed in the portal, most staff and partners had only attended a training or two and were just beginning to use the platform. Many others did not use it at all.

Many partner staff, particularly those who run adult education and training services or technical college partners, were disengaged or generally unaware of the platform. In several cases, partners already had robust online tools to help their clients navigate the job market, but were open to learning what CareerForceMN.com offered their customers beyond the existing online resources. Some said they received emails and watched a webinar, but that this was not enough. Instead, they needed in-person, tailored outreach from the CareerForce team to discuss their unique programs and client needs.

Importantly, workforce staff interest and excitement in the new platform and brand has waned, due to the fatigue of trying to keep up with platform and brand policy updates, as well as the

¹²⁰ The CareerForce Integration initiative is a current proposal that would create a seamless, single-sign-on capability for career seekers and employers across MinnesotaWorks.net, CareerForceMN.com, and Cybrarian (a system that controls resource room computers across CareerForce locations). With a single username and password, users would then be able to easily log in to any of the three platforms.

uncertainty of DEED’s leadership commitment to the initiative moving forward. Interviewees recommended that the DEED Commissioner kick-start a new wave of forward momentum, communicating his enthusiastic endorsement of his vision for CareerForce directly to workforce system staff and partners.

8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

In this section, we expand on the recommendations provided in Chapter 5, by drawing on best practices and lessons learned from the Minnesota DEED experience. Below, we provide recommendations on project management, leadership support, stakeholder engagement, and training and outreach.

8.2.1 Project Management



Project Management Recommendations

- Develop and strongly enforce a detailed project work plan. Create a work plan that prioritizes a core set of features and content that can be achieved within the timeline set.
- Look to talented outside vendors who can dedicate their full resources to building the technology and harness agile design-based processes.
- Prioritize and onboard the required staff early in the grant period, and allow key project staff to be fully dedicated to the grant. To the extent possible, ensure that increases in scope are met with increases in project staff.
- Start sustainability planning and ensure buy-in from leadership early on. Planning for a unification of the multiple overlapping web systems should occur in the initial requirements gathering stage of the project and remain an essential element of the sustainability plan.

Strong project management is critical for an ambitious project like CareerForceMN.com to meet its goals on a strict grant timeline. The project manager must define attainable project objectives within the grant’s time and resource constraints, create a detailed work plan to get there, harness the appropriate staff and contractors at the right time to execute that plan, and ensure sustainability of the project after the grant ends. Along the way, the project manager should carefully consider how emerging changes in product scope will affect the team’s ability to meet their defined project milestones and make appropriate adjustments, such as matching any increases in scope with increases in project staff support or other resources. Large IT projects likely will also depend on legacy IT platforms or strategic programmatic initiatives. From the start, the project manager should coordinate with senior leadership to clearly articulate how the platform fits within and supports the shared goals, and build a viable plan for sustainability after grant funds end.

The WIF team was successful on several of these fronts. First off, working with a shortened product development timeline, the WIF team collaborated with stakeholders and the platform vendor early on to identify the essential components of the platform that would support the

workforce system’s most critical needs to complete for the launch deadline. They worked to distinguish these priority items from stakeholders’ wish lists of “hopes and dreams.” This led to a common understanding—that the platform that launched in September 2018 would be a work-in-progress, consisting of a core set of functions and features. Second, they hired a talented group of contractors to perform the work. The WIF team contracted-out the technology development work to a high-performing vendor, who executed an efficient, collaborative agile design process. Contracting out to a dedicated team “poised for action” was critical. The decision to take an agile-design approach, rather than a traditional IT development approach, effectively supported a project with a somewhat ambiguous scope and evolving requirements.

However, the WIF team also struggled with three key areas of project management: staffing the WIF project team commensurate with the project schedule and scope, defining a detailed work plan from the beginning of the platform development phase, and planning for sustainability from the start. Interviewees involved in platform development agreed that, to meet its deadlines, a project of this scope and complexity, complicated further by the integration of the branding initiative, required a larger team with full-time staff from the beginning. Several critical staff were on-boarded extremely late into the platform development phase, including a Senior Project Manager who created the detailed workplan needed to propel the platform forward to meet the launch deadline. As a result, the WIF team rushed to build the narrative content and feature specifications at the very end, placing a huge burden on project staff as well as disseminating a less finalized platform than desired when the platform was presented to workforce system staff and partners in November 2019. Sustainability planning also happened quite late, midway through grant Year 4. This put immense pressure on the CareerForce leadership team to find sufficient funding resources to maintain the site beyond the grant period, and sort out the long-term vision of CareerForceMN.com from other major IT initiatives.

8.2.2 Leadership Support



Leadership Support Recommendations

- Top leadership needs to prioritize and champion a single vision for projects of this size and complexity to be successful in meeting their timelines.
- Leverage the authority of the top leadership to strongly advocate for the new initiative to staff and partners in the field.

The Minnesota WIF grant experience highlights that the staunch support of the most senior leader in the state’s workforce system is critical to program completion and success. Workforce system staff and partners are generally passionate about serving their clients, but can be skeptical of process improvement initiatives, such as new websites and branding initiatives, which they have seen come and go over the years. Large and complex business process changes require top leadership to articulate the long-term strategic vision and drive the project’s implementation and sustainability in the form of funding, advocacy, and policy enforcement. Without this type of leadership support, new initiatives will likely struggle to navigate unexpected changes, and will be slow to gain widespread buy-in during rollout.

“It was unclear who should drive the vision. Was it the Project Director? Was it the Commissioner? There were a lot of competing agendas.”

“ ”

Some interviewees thought that leadership turnover at DEED, both at the Commissioner level and in other strategic positions, caused uncertainty as new leaders lack the grant’s institutional knowledge and require time to get up-to-speed and articulate their priorities and vision. Minnesota had three different DEED Commissioners in the grant’s four-year trajectory, all with different visions. The Commissioner who championed the original WIF grant application left just as the project was getting off the ground. Similarly, according to many interviewees, a new DEED Commissioner in the rollout phase also tempered the effectiveness of training and outreach efforts to integrate the CareerForce platform and brand into daily operations. The rollout phase already faced hurdles with the “work-in-progress” status of the platform and the CareerForce brand. The leadership shift made staff and partners unsure of the new Commissioner’s commitment to the existing CareerForce vision.

8.2.3 Stakeholder Engagement



Stakeholder Engagement Recommendations

- Comprehensive stakeholder engagement is critical to gain buy-in and inform the project design at the beginning. Project leadership should strategically define the end of the input-gathering phase to ensure sufficient time to develop the product.
- Rely on a wide range of workforce system stakeholders to serve as advocates and to contribute their ideas, resources, and time to build a product that meets the diverse needs of the state.
- Design an efficient feedback loop with outside contributors to communicate changes to the project scope, timeline, and future plan—to manage expectations when the product launches.
- Create systematic feedback mechanisms to continually engage workforce system staff, partners, career seekers, and employers to ensure the platform meets their needs.

In many ways, the Minnesota WIF initiative offers an excellent template for early and effective stakeholder engagement. The WIF team prioritized stakeholder engagement from the inception of the WIF grant, gaining critical buy-in from influential players in the state (GWDB, MAWB, and DEED Divisional Leadership). The team also developed formal and informal mechanisms to bring all relevant state, regional, and local partners together throughout the WIF grant implementation phases. This ranged from site managers at CareerForce locations to other state agencies such as

the Minnesota Department of Education. The WIF core team leveraged external staff and resources for their skills and expertise to design and build the platform features and content. This reliance became even more critical as the WIF core team was stretched thin to build the platform in a compressed timeframe, and unify the platform design with the branding effort.

The advocacy of influential stakeholders across the state is also essential to drive meaningful changes at local service delivery sites when the initiative rolls out. In the Minnesota WIF grant, stakeholders served as effective Brand Ambassadors to advocate for the CareerForce initiative at CareerForce locations and partner sites. WIF staff also enthusiastically encouraged stakeholder input and actively used that input to inform immediate improvements. During rollout, CareerForce also established the joint GWDB, MAWB, and DEED leadership team to govern the CareerForce initiative into the future, to ensure broad-based support for the platform and the brand after grant funds end.

Notably, as highlighted by the Minnesota WIF experience, stakeholder management is critical during the platform design and creation stage. The project team enthusiastically welcomed ideas but also faced looming project deadlines. The project team should set clear expectations on when, how, and on what stakeholders can provide feedback. Some interviewees noted that the Minnesota WIF grant team had such a lengthy stakeholder engagement process that it created additional uncertainty in the project scope, and continued to delay the project's forward momentum to create a work plan and define the platform features. Further, some DEED staff and stakeholders were unsatisfied and felt "out-of-the-loop" when their contributions (including narrative content, data feeds, and planned features) were not reflected in the final product. Other states should consider developing an efficient follow-up mechanism to update all team members of changes in design plans, so they feel like a valued partner.

8.2.4 Training and Outreach



Training and Outreach Recommendations

- Maximize buy-in by releasing broad, system-wide business process changes to the state workforce system once the technology and policy guidance are fully formed.
- While passive training modes such as webinars and emails are helpful, prioritize in-person training sessions to the extent feasible to ensure staff set aside time to really embrace the new tool, and address the unique concerns of each site.

Other states trying to implement a platform similar to CareerForceMN.com should ensure the product presented at training sessions reflects a fully formed tool that can offer obvious, tangible value to all user types immediately. The Minnesota WIF team presented staff and partners a "work-in-progress" version of CareerForceMN.com when training began, which reduced buy-in. Staff and partners had anticipated an innovative, finished product that would help them perform their work more efficiently and introduce exciting new centralized information and tools for their clients. Instead, many were quickly frustrated by the limited functionality presented at launch. In addition, staff had to allocate time to follow the continuous enhancements to the tool; some

decided to wait until the tool was finished before they devoted the time needed to fully learn its functionality.

The training and outreach materials and skilled trainers were a significant strength of the Minnesota WIF project (although as mentioned in Section 8.1.3, continued training is needed to support broader platform use among staff and partners). Following the model of the Minnesota WIF grant, other states should hire a dynamic outreach and training team to disseminate the product through a wide array of training options that support different learning styles (e.g., self-guided reference materials, live and recorded webinars, videos, in-person trainings). Prioritizing in-person trainings, which require staff to set aside time to learn the tool and can be customized to a site's unique concerns and needs, can be especially helpful. Further, states should gather feedback from trainees on what other types of training support they need, and quickly develop responsive materials to address these requests. For example, trainees in Minnesota said it was hard to set aside time to view the hour-long recorded webinars. As a response, the CareerForce staff created short five-minute videos on targeted topics to reference as needed.

In addition, developing prompt and user-friendly communication mechanisms can be useful in keeping the workforce system up to date as the project team fixes bugs or adds new features or content to enhance the platform. In the CareerForce rollout, interviewees appreciated the rapid weekly and monthly communications on new platform features and the CareerForce brand, although they said the sheer volume of new material could be a bit overwhelming.

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Appendices

Appendix A: CareerForceMN.com Pages

Appendix B: Sample Itinerary

Appendix C: Surveys

Appendix D: Training Sessions and Attendance Counts

Appendix E: Survey Tables

Appendix A: CareerForceMN.com Pages

Section A.1 General Pages

Exhibit A.1: Home Page

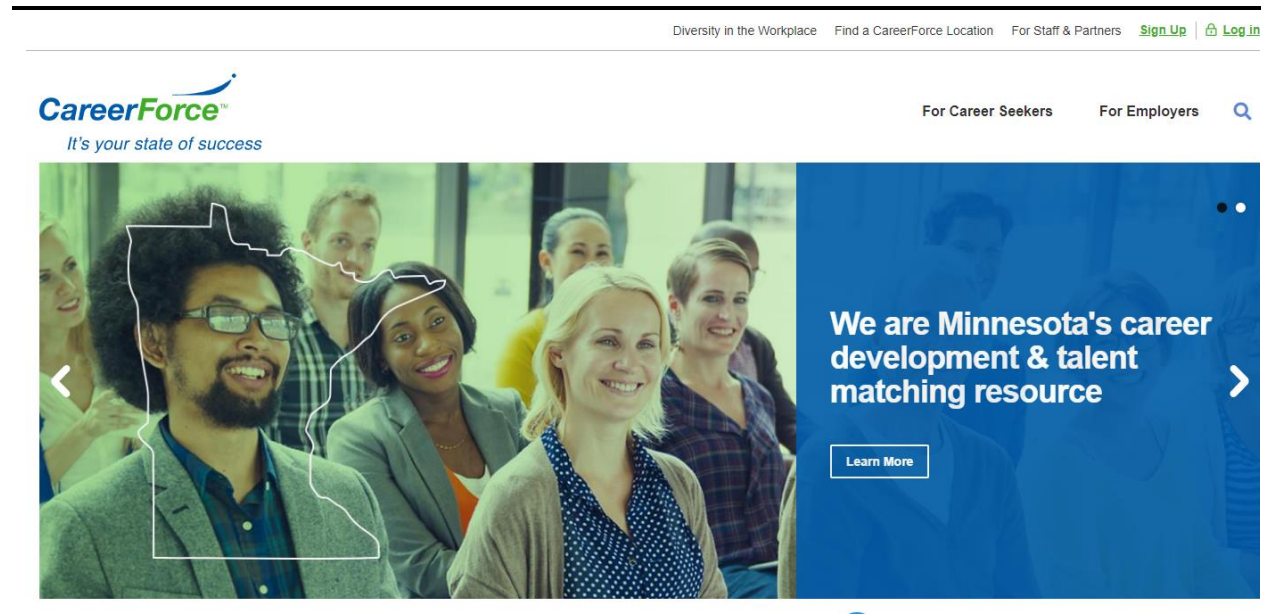


Exhibit A.2: Employer Unique Page

Anchor Paper Company

Anchor Paper Company in Saint Paul, Minnesota is a distributor of fine paper from the world's greatest mills. We pride ourselves on our personal service, knowledge of the industry and dedication to the highest standards. We have worked hard to develop a good name, but we want you to know something; we're more than just paper.

At Anchor Paper Company, we continually strive to provide exceptional products and service for our customers; believing that teamwork, positive attitudes, and the promotion of creative thinking should be considered benchmarks of our success.

Our commitment is to build relationships with both customers and vendors based on honesty and integrity. We rely on the considerable talents of our employees to guide each interaction to its most logical and beneficial outcome for all parties.

We are proud to be an Employee Owned Company with 4 generations of family leadership and involvement, offering a family oriented culture as well as the following benefits:

- Health and wellness
- ESOP – Employer stock
- Financial well-being
- Succession and training opportunities

Anchor Paper Company is an equal opportunity employer.

[Like](#) | [Add to favorites](#) | [f](#) [in](#) [t](#) [e](#)

Map Satellite

Capitol Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Mister Car Wash

St. Paul

DOWNTOWN LOWERTOWN

Map data ©2019 Google 200 m Terms of Use Report a map error

Address 480 Broadway Street
Saint Paul, MN 55101

Phone 651-298-1311

Website <http://www.anchorpaper.com>

Exhibit A.3: Connect With Us

Connect With Us

[Home](#) > Connect With Us

Like [1] | Add to favorites | [f](#) [in](#) [t](#) [✉](#)



Maximize your success

There are many great ways to maximize your success with CareerForce. Meet with a CareerForce specialist for any career development or talent matching need. Find a CareerForce location near you for personalized local support. Or continue to browse [CareerForceMN.com](#) for helpful information and resources.

[Find a CareerForce location](#) →

[Customize your connection](#) →

Section A.2: Career Seeker Pages

Exhibit A.4: Start Your Career

Start Your Career

[Home](#) > [For Career Seekers](#) > [Start Your Career](#)

 **Career Search**

Search by job title, keyword or company

City, State or ZIP code

Search jobs

 Like [8] |  Add to favorites |    



Start your career off right

You're ready to land your first job. You want to be seen and appreciated for who you are and what you offer. You can't wait to get started but may not know exactly what to do next. We're here to help you with your first opportunity.

Our wide variety of success services will make your first career steps a little easier and a whole lot more productive. We'll show you how to:

- Determine the right career fit
- Gain valuable new skills
- Write a great first resume
- Interview with confidence
- Find your first job

FOR CAREER SEEKERS

- [START YOUR CAREER](#) —
- Get Prepared
- Find New Skills
- Education and Training
- Market Yourself
- [ADVANCE YOUR CAREER](#) +
- [CHANGE YOUR CAREER](#) +
- [EVEN MORE RESOURCES](#) +



What's your next step?

Thanks to CareerForce, there are a number of ways to get started:

- [Explore potential careers](#) →
- [Request an informational interview](#) →
- [Get one-on-one career guidance](#) →

CareerForce is here to support your success



Search for New Opportunities



Create Your CareerForce Account



Connect With Us

Exhibit A.5: Skills Matcher

Skills Matcher



Use the examples to help choose your levels. Think about whether you have done the example activity, or something like it in your own field.

SKILL	BEGINNER	BASIC	SKILLED	ADVANCED	EXPERT
1. Administration and Management How much do you know about business planning and leadership?	☐ Complete A Timesheet	☐	☐ Monitor Project Progress To Complete It On Time	☐	☐ Manage A \$10m Company
2. Biology How much do you know about plant, animal and cell functions?	☐ Care For A Pet	☐	☐ Investigate Effects Of Pollution On Plants	☐	☐ Identify A New Virus
3. Body Coordination How well can you coordinate moving your arms, legs, and torso together?	☐ Get In And Out Of A Truck	☐	☐ Swim One Pool Length, Or Play A Ball Sport	☐	☐ Perform Ballet Choreography
4. Building and Construction	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Continue

Cancel

Exhibit A.6: In Demand Careers

In Demand Careers

✓

✓

✓

✓

5

×

Here is a list of occupations that are in demand in your region.
Select the careers you're interested in to save them to your list of career goals.

Current Career Goals

CAREER	WAGES	TYPICAL EDUCATION REQUIRED	DEMAND
☒ Interpreters And Translators	\$21.64 - \$29.66 /hr	High school diploma or equivalent	★★★☆☆

In Demand Careers

YOUR MATCH	CAREER	WAGES	TYPICAL EDUCATION REQUIRED	DEMAND
☐ 1	Retail Salespersons	\$11.05 - \$15.51 /hr	Less than high school	★★★★★
☐ 2	Registered Nurses	\$32.54 - \$45.33 /hr	Associate's degree	★★★★★
☐				

Update Career Goals

Cancel

Exhibit A.7: Search Jobs Based on My Work Experience

My Work Experience

Enter past job title

+

Exhibit A.8: Labor Market Information

Occupation

Survey Researchers

DEMAND N/A
N/A

Plan, develop, or conduct surveys. May analyze and interpret the meaning of survey data, determine survey objectives, or suggest or test question wording. Includes social scientists who primarily design questionnaires or supervise survey teams.

ALSO KNOWN AS

Market Survey Representative, Research Assistant, Telephone Interviewer, Study Director, Research Interviewer, Research Associate, Field Interviewer, Survey Director, Research Methodologist, Research Fellow

Education

The typical education required for this career in Minnesota is:

Master's degree

Demand

Minnesota

N/A

10-Year Growth **10.9%**

10-Year Openings **126**

Wages

People in this occupation tend to earn between **\$24.63 to \$39.45 per hour**

Cost of Living

A typical family with two adults - working a combined 60 hours per week - with one child at home needs to earn **\$17.80** per hour per worker to meet their basic needs.



Daily Work Activities

- Direct scientific activities.
- Plan social sciences research.
- Collaborate on research activities with scientists or technical specialists.
- Confer with clients to exchange information.
- Collect information from people through observation, interviews, or surveys.

Licensing Information

No licenses found for this occupation.

Certification Information

Some employers may require an occupational certification to work in this career.

- [Insights Association](#) - Professional Researcher Certification - Advanced

Exhibit A.9: Search Engine for Events, CareerForce Locations, and Job Opportunities

Events

[Home](#) > [For Career Seekers](#) > [Even More Resources](#) > Events

[f](#) [in](#) [t](#) [e](#)

Keyword From Less Than Date And [Apply](#) [Reset](#)

CareerForce Locations

[Home](#) > CareerForce Locations

[f](#) [in](#) [t](#) [e](#)

From Less Than [Apply](#) [Reset](#)

Displaying 1 - 4 of 4

CareerForce in Minneapolis North 800 West Broadway Avenue Minneapolis, MN 55411 Distance: 1.9 mi 612-299-7200 Learn more 	CareerForce in Minneapolis South 777 East Lake Street Minneapolis, MN 55407 Distance: 2.0 mi 612-621-4000 Learn more 	CareerForce in Saint Paul 540 Fairview Avenue North, Suite 103 St. Paul, MN 55104 Distance: 4.5 mi 651-539-4100 Learn more 
--	--	--

Search for New Opportunities

[Home](#) > [For Career Seekers](#) > [Even More Resources](#) > Search for New Opportunities

 **Career Search** [Search jobs](#)

Exhibit A.10: Education and Training

Education and Training

[Home](#) > [For Career Seekers](#) > [Even More Resources](#) > Education and Training

 Like [1]



Education pays

Do you have the training you need to reach your career goals? Is your current experience enough to take you where you want to go? Do your skills match your aspirations? Important questions need inspiring answers. We'll help you find rewarding training and education programs. We'll support your desire to learn more so you can ultimately earn more.

[Explore education and training options](#) →

[Find out about apprenticeships](#) →

[Consider internships](#) →

[Connect with a CareerForce specialist](#) →

[Learn about Vocational Rehabilitation Services for people with disabilities](#) →



Learn about financial options

You may be interested in gaining a new skill or discovering a new talent but may not have the economic means. There are a number of financial resources in Minnesota for those who qualify. Whether you're college-bound or ready to learn new skills, we can guide you toward resources that can enrich your life. To find out if you're eligible, [connect with a CareerForce specialist](#).

Exhibit A.11: Veterans Resources

Veterans Resources

[Home](#) > [For Career Seekers](#) > [Even More Resources](#) > Veterans Resources

 Like



Your career success is a top priority

You're duty-bound to our country. We're duty-bound to your success. Because of that, we're here to support your career development needs. Most current or former military members are eligible for veterans benefits or services. There are many resources available to you if you served or are serving with any of the branches of the military, including as a reservist or National Guard member. Complete this [online questionnaire](#) to help us serve you best in finding a rewarding career path, or search below for more support:

[Learn about veterans education benefits](#) →

[View the rights you've earned](#) →

[Explore starting a business](#) →

[Find additional veterans resources](#) →

[Attend veterans career events](#) →

[See how your military experience translates to civilian occupations](#) →

[Contact a dedicated Veterans Employment Representative](#) →

Exhibit A.12: Youth Resources

Youth Resources

[Home](#) > [For Career Seekers](#) > [Even More Resources](#) > Youth Resources Like



Your future awaits

You may have a clear vision for your first career but aren't too sure how to get there. Or you may need a little support deciding what to do and where to get started. Either way, we can get you prepared for a promising future. We'll help you narrow down your interests. We'll guide you toward the training and skills you need. We'll put you on the right path for a rewarding career adventure.

Thanks to CareerForce, there are a number of ways to get started:

- [Learn about wages, employee demand and more](#) →
- [View education and training options](#) →
- [Get tips on resumes and cover letters](#) →
- [Learn how to interview for success](#) →
- [Get one-on-one help at any one of our nearly 50 CareerForce locations](#) →

Exhibit A.13: Disability Resources

Disability Resources

[Home](#) > [For Career Seekers](#) > [Even More Resources](#) > Disability Resources Like



Believe in what's next

You may be more than ready to make a rewarding career move. You may have untapped skills in search of a terrific work environment. You may need some extra help getting there. We have many resources designed to support a diverse set of career goals and disability needs. They include:

- Career planning
- Vocational rehabilitation services
- Training and skills development
- Workplace rights
- Information for family members and guardians

Contact a Vocational Rehabilitation Services counselor now at VRS_CustomerService@state.mn.us to get started on the journey to your career goals.



See these additional career resources for people with disabilities:

- [Learn more about counseling, training and skills development](#) →
- [Find out about the informed choice policy](#) →
- [Get information about workplace accommodations](#) →
- [Know Your Rights](#) →
- [Explore resources for youth with disabilities](#) →
- [See options for long-term career support](#) →
- [Find out more about assistance for living independently](#) →
- [Learn about how work and disability benefits go together](#) →

Exhibit A.14: Criminal Record Resources

Criminal Record Resources

[Home](#) > [For Career Seekers](#) > [Even More Resources](#) > Criminal Record Resources

Like [1]



Prepare for a fresh start

Having a criminal record can be a barrier to employment, but it doesn't mean there aren't real opportunities out there for you. We want you to have what you need to achieve a successful fresh start. Here is some helpful information to support your career search.

Learn what's legal and what's not

Minnesota law requires employers to wait to ask about a person's criminal record until after he or she has been selected for an interview or a conditional job offer has been extended. This means you shouldn't be asked about your criminal record on an application form. If you are asked if you've ever been convicted of a crime on an application, then that application is in violation of Minnesota law. You are asked to report such violations to the [Minnesota Department of Human Rights](#).

You may also want to visit the [Minnesota State Law Library](#) to learn more about laws affecting employment of people with felony convictions. A [CareerForce specialist](#) can help you work through this important information.

Be well prepared for your interviews

During an interview, prospective employers can ask if you've ever been convicted of a crime. We suggest working with a CareerForce specialist to help you prepare your response, get ready for the interview and create a path to successful employment. If you're not able to meet with a CareerForce specialist, consider the following advice:

- Don't provide too many details about your crime
- Use simple terms to describe your crime
- Clearly point out the soft skills and technical skills you've learned during your rehabilitation
- Emphasize how you've stayed out of trouble and are making good decisions for yourself and your family
- Practice your responses in advance so you're prepared with the right language and can stay on message during the interview
- Remind the interviewer why your skills are a good match for the position
- End the interview on a positive and enthusiastic note

Understand what's available to employers

It's a good idea to familiarize yourself with special resources available to employers who hire people with criminal records, such as the [Work Opportunity Tax Credit](#) and [Federal Bonding](#). A CareerForce specialist can guide you through this information and show you how these resources might improve your chances of getting hired.

Exhibit A.15: Over 50 Workforce Page

Over 50 Workforce

[Home](#) > [For Career Seekers](#) > [Even More Resources](#) > Over 50 Workforce

Like |



A wealth of skills

More and more Minnesotans are working later in life. Over 70 percent of Minnesotans ages 55 to 64 are employed, and the over 55 workforce holds one in five jobs in Minnesota. There are many reasons for this. People are living longer and healthier lives, and many need to work into their 60s or 70s for financial reasons.

Unfortunately, when people over 50 lose their jobs, it can be much harder to find a new position that's comparable in pay, benefits and professional fulfillment. Despite decades of research finding that age does not predict ability or performance, 60 percent of older workers have seen or experienced age discrimination in the workplace, and 90 percent of those say it is common.

To help increase your chances of landing a position that matches your experience and skills, talk to a CareerForce specialist. You may also want to consider this advice:

- **Work your network.** Check back with former colleagues—including former coworkers from younger generations. Talk with friends about helpful connections they may have. And stay active with professional associations and civic groups. Since most positions are never posted, networking is key to your success.
- **Build your network online.** If you aren't on LinkedIn, signing up should be your first step. If you need help creating or updating your LinkedIn profile, watch an online tutorial or make an appointment with a CareerForce specialist.
- **Revamp your resume.** It might make sense to switch to a functional resume format. This allows you to highlight your skills and accomplishments without tying everything to a year or a specific job. Many employers use screening software to "review" resumes and applications before a human ever sees them. If you aren't mentioning specific skills required for the position, you may never make it to the hiring manager.
- **Focus on recent accomplishments.** In your cover letter and during your interview, focus on recent achievements that made a difference for a past employer. And make sure to highlight any recent training or professional development that's pertinent to the new position.

We also have helpful information on:

[Learn about networking](#) →

[See functional resume samples](#) →

Exhibit A.16: Unemployment Insurance Page

Unemployment Insurance

[Home](#) > [For Career Seekers](#) > [Even More Resources](#) > Unemployment Insurance Like



Unemployment benefits and beyond

Losing a job is not easy. You may be feeling a little shocked. You may be grieving a loss of community or even pride. And, of course, there's the financial impact. Luckily, help is available to you.

Unemployment insurance can temporarily cover part of your lost wages, so it's important to apply as soon as possible. See if you qualify for benefits by completing this [online application](#).

A CareerForce specialist can help you transition beyond unemployment insurance. With dedicated one-on-one support, we'll guide you toward new opportunities. We'll put you on a confidence-boosting path to a new future. Visit one of our nearly [50 CareerForce locations](#) throughout Minnesota to see how we can help.



More ways to get help

[Find help with housing, transportation or other needs](#) →
[See ways to cope with the emotions of job loss](#) →
[Get one-on-one career search guidance](#) →
[Learn about smart financial choices after a job loss](#) →

Exhibit A.17: Diversity in the Workplace

For Career Seekers

[Home](#) > [Diversity in the Workplace](#) > For Career Seekers Like [1]



Finding the right fit

CareerForce is here to assist you in finding the right career. Finding the right career may also mean finding an employer that values you and wants to include your unique background and perspectives in the workplace. CareerForce can help you find an employer that is right for you, get you familiar with your rights, and provide other useful resources tailored to meet your needs.

We'll help you:

- Find employers that welcome diversity throughout their workplace
- Determine if you have been discriminated against in the workplace
- Access resources that are specific to your needs

Exhibit A.18: Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships

[Home](#) > [For Career Seekers](#) > [Start Your Career](#) > [Education and Training](#) > Apprenticeships

 Like



Learn enterprising new skills as an apprentice

An apprenticeship is a great way to prepare for a prosperous future. With practical on-the-job training, your wages will increase while your skills improve. You'll work side by side with experts in your chosen field. You'll get the technical instruction and experience you need to soar in an exciting new career. With over 100 different occupations to choose from, apprenticeships offer more than you might think. You can:

- Earn a good salary while learning
- Receive classroom training at no cost to you
- Achieve hands-on skill mastery
- Get nationally recognized credentials
- Improve your job security

Check out [apprenticeship options and resources](#) to learn more. You'll find what you need to get started.

Exhibit A.19: Internships

Internships

[Home](#) > [For Career Seekers](#) > [Start Your Career](#) > [Education and Training](#) > Internships

 Like



Start your career with an internship

An internship is another great way to get started. You'll gain invaluable knowledge in your area of interest. You'll enhance your resume. You'll have a better chance of landing your first big gig. You might even get paid while you're at it.

Internships will help you:

- Learn more about your career field of interest
- Use what you've learned in a real world setting
- Gain practical work experience and professional references
- Decide the right career path for you

One way to find an internship is to set yourself on a course of [informational interviews](#). You'll be showing initiative while discovering exciting new opportunities.

Exhibit A.20: Market Yourself

Market Yourself

[Home](#) > [For Career Seekers](#) > [Start Your Career](#) > Market Yourself

 Like



Make a great impression

You're excited to find your first career. You're ready to grow in rewarding ways. You want to show the world what you've got. Now is the time to create a practical career plan. We'll help you write a resume that gets you noticed. We'll work with you to develop great interviewing skills. We'll give you the support you need to market yourself to potential new employers. Here are a few ways to get started:

[Write an attention getting resume](#) →

[Prepare well for interviews](#) →

[Network for success](#) →

[Contact a CareerForce specialist](#) →

Exhibit A.21: Resumes

Resumes

[Home](#) > [For Career Seekers](#) > [Start Your Career](#) > [Market Yourself](#) > Resumes

 Like [1]



An art and a science

The basic purpose of a resume is to provide a prospective employer with an at-a-glance look at your qualifications. Sounds straightforward enough. So why does writing a resume cause so many people so much stress? The answer is straightforward too: There's a lot riding on your resume when it comes to meeting your career goals. The good news is CareerForce has many tips and tools to help you write a resume that gets you an interview and puts you on a path to success.

See resume samples and outlines:

- [Chronological resume outline](#)
- [Chronological resume sample](#)
- [Chronological resume sample—recent college graduate](#)
- [Functional resume outline](#)
- [Functional resume sample](#)
- [Combination resume outline](#)
- [Combination resume sample—1 page](#)
- [Combination resume sample—2 page](#)

We also have helpful information on:

- [Cover letters](#)
- [References](#)
- [Networking](#)

Exhibit A.22: Interviews

Interviews

[Home](#) > [For Career Seekers](#) > [Start Your Career](#) > [Market Yourself](#) > Interviews

 Like



Preparation is key

An interview is not only a chance to shine, it's an opportunity to see if an organization is the right fit for you. And the single most important way to prepare is to practice your interview responses with another person. Or you can contact a CareerForce specialist who has experience preparing candidates for interviews. You can schedule an appointment for a no-cost practice interview session to help you make a great impression. In the meantime, take a look at these [common interview questions](#).

Informational interviews

Informational interviews are a great way to find your future opportunity. Here are a few ways to get started:

- Follow up with someone you met briefly at an event and ask for a chance to meet again to find out more about his or her organization
- Leverage a friend or colleague who is a mutual connection and say that person recommended that you meet
- Request an informational interview with a leader in your field with whom you don't have a connection

When you make the request for a meeting, clearly state that you're looking for information about their organization or industry. Feel free to ask for recommendations for other people you can meet to help you with your career search. And don't forget to send a personal thank you note as soon as possible.

[Prepare for common interview questions](#) →

[Learn more about informational interviews](#) →

[Find a workshop on interviewing skills](#) →

[Get one-on-one interview prep assistance](#) →

Exhibit A.23: Networking

Networking

[Home](#) > [For Career Seekers](#) > [Start Your Career](#) > [Market Yourself](#) > Networking

 Like



Connect your way to success

Who you know can make a significant difference in your efforts to find a rewarding career. That's why networking works. The fact is, many positions are filled through word-of-mouth recommendations, so it pays to get out there and connect with as many people as possible. Here are some ideas to improve your networking skills:

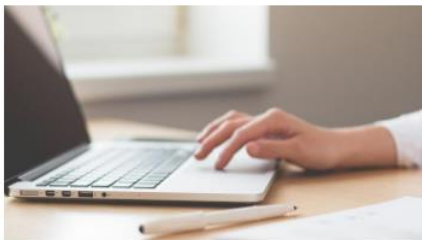
1. Stay in touch with former classmates, colleagues and employers, but make an effort to connect more broadly, too. You might consider volunteering to serve on a board or committee, or getting active in a community organization. Either way, the more connections you make, the more you'll improve your chances of finding the right opportunity for you.
2. Be fearless about informational interviews. The connections you make may not lead to a position now, but getting to know someone today could be the relationship that puts you on the path to career success tomorrow. Don't be afraid to ask for recommendations for other people to meet with.
3. Think of every meeting or event as a potential networking opportunity. Be prepared with what you want to accomplish and who you want to talk with. Sometimes the most important networking happens when you least expect it.
4. Be a friend and a follower—take the time to really listen and get to know people. Plus, make sure to follow your connections and/or their organizations on social media. Networking is a two-way street. You want others to be there for you when you need them and point you in the right direction when a career opportunity arises, and you need to do the same for them.

Exhibit A.24: Get Prepared

Get Prepared

[Home](#) > [For Career Seekers](#) > [Start Your Career](#) > Get Prepared

 Like



What's your next step?

Starting your first career is exciting. It has the potential to launch you in a direction that not only promises a great beginning, but also paves the way for a successful future. To make sure you're heading down the right path, it's important to be well prepared. Here are a few ways to do that:

[Learn about wages, employee demand and more](#) →
[Connect with a CareerForce specialist](#) →

Exhibit A.25: Plan for Career Advancement

Plan for Career Advancement

[Home](#) > [For Career Seekers](#) > [Advance Your Career](#) > Plan for Career Advancement

 Like



Plan to move ahead

You're excited to move forward in your career. You're ready to grow in rewarding new ways. You want to show the world what you've got. Now is the time to create a purposeful plan for a promising future. We'll help you update a resume that reflects your hopes for advancement. We'll work with you to strengthen your interviewing and networking skills. We'll give you the support you need to market yourself to potential new employers.

Here are a few helpful tips to plan for successful career advancement:

[Learn about networking opportunities](#) →

[Go on informational interviews](#) →

[Revamp your resume](#) →

[Pursue a promotion](#) →

[Get one-on-one career advancement guidance](#) →

Exhibit A.26: Informational Interviews

Informational interviews

[Home](#) > Informational interviews

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Get tips from the experts

Informational interviews are a great way to meet the employment decision makers prior to the hiring process. There are a number of ways you can get an informational interview with a leader in your career field of interest. You can:

- Follow up with a leader whom you met briefly at an event and ask for a chance to meet again to find out more about his or her organization
- Leverage a friend or colleague who is a mutual connection and say that person recommended that you meet
- Request an informational interview with a leader in your field with whom you don't have a connection

In all cases, your initial email needs to clearly state what you are asking for (an informational interview) and what you are hoping the email recipient will do (agree to meet with you). If you have specific days and times that work for you to meet, include that information in the email. That will make it as easy as possible for the email recipient to set up an interview with one email or meeting appointment.

You will also want to put some parameters on your request to make it manageable. Say you would appreciate just 15 or so minutes of his or her time. Don't make it look like you are looking for a job right now (even if you are) because then you may be referred to the HR department—or be declined with the message that the organization doesn't have any positions open at the time. Follow up your email with a phone call in a few days.

Again, the purpose of an informational interview is to gain information!

Preparing for your informational interview

There are some differences between an interview for a specific position and an informational interview. But there are many similarities: be prepared for common interview questions, develop some questions of your own and do your research on the organization. Plus, promptly thank your interviewer. Here's an outline to help you prepare for hitting all the points you need and still wrap up in 15 minutes:

- 1. Start confidently by being collegial and asking the interviewer a few questions about herself or himself. A few ideas:**
 - "How did you start out in the organization?"
 - "What drew you to this field of work?"
 - "What's the most exciting project you're working on now?"
- 2. Make a good impression by displaying your soft skills and talking about your technical skills—plus showing you've done your research, all while being conversational. Some examples**
 - "A business journal article I read reported a 34% increase in demand for widgets like the ones your company makes over the coming decade, do you see a need for more electrical engineers like me to meet that demand?"
 - "I really admire the work you've done on the XYZ Company rebranding campaign, I had an internship at ABC Company where I learned a lot about the brand development process."
- 3. Find out what your interviewer can tell you that could directly advance your career plans. Like this:**
 - "What's your advice for someone starting out or looking to move up in this field?"
 - "What particular skills do you look for in new employees your department?"
 - "What would you recommend I do to leverage my skills and experience for a position in your field or at your organization?"
- 4. Thank the interviewer sincerely and ask if there is anyone else the interviewer recommends you contact for an informational interview. Such as:**
 - "You have been so helpful. Thank you so much for the time you spent with me today. I have a much better sense of my next steps. Is there anyone else you would recommend I speak with as I move forward?"
- 5. Express your gratitude to the interviewer again after the interview with a short thank you note .**
 - If you meet with anyone he or she recommended, keep this networking connection active by sending a follow up with a thank you for that recommendation.

Exhibit A.27: Pursue a Promotion

Pursue a Promotion

[Home](#) > [For Career Seekers](#) > [Advance Your Career](#) > Pursue a Promotion

 Like



Prepare to be promoted

It's not always easy to ask for a promotion, but there are some sound ways to get ready for your next career move. Here are some helpful tips.

Before talking with your supervisor about a promotion, ask yourself a few questions.

- Is there an available position you'd like to pursue?
- Will one be available in the near future?
- Are you prepared with the right skills and experience?
- If not, what steps do you need to take?
- What past performance can you point to that shows you're prepared for a more challenging role?
- What are the [average wages](#) for a comparable position to the one you're pursuing?

When you set up a meeting with your supervisor, make sure he or she has a general idea about your ambitions.

- You can start by saying you want to talk about your future growth at the organization
- If you have information to share to back up your request, send it in advance of your meeting
- If you're proposing a new position, share a draft summary of duties, title and role within the organization
- Don't send any information related to increased compensation

Plan the topics you want to cover during your meeting and practice staying on message.

- Be prepared to make a strong case for the promotion you're looking for
- Remember, even asking for a promotion shows your employer that you have the courage and confidence in your own skills
- Don't expect an answer right away, this might not ultimately be your supervisor's decision to make
- Don't be discouraged if you hear a "no, not now," instead ask what you can do to get ready for your next career move

If you're offered the promotion, be prepared to negotiate compensation and benefits.

- It's okay to aim high because your employer expects to negotiate with you—don't sell yourself short

Contact a [CareerForce specialist](#) for one-on-one support.

- We're committed to helping you achieve your career goals

[Network to advance in your field](#) →

[Seek expert advice from a mentor](#) →

Exhibit A.28: Change Your Career

Change Your Career

[Home](#) > [For Career Seekers](#) > Change Your Career

 **Career Search**

Search by job title, keyword or company

City, State or ZIP code

Search jobs

 Like [5] |  Add to favorites |    



Make a change for the better

You're ready to do something different. You want to move toward work that's closer to your heart. Making a career change can pose some challenges, but it also offers many rewards. It can give you a new lease on life. If you've dreamed of doing something new but didn't quite know how to get there, we can help.

Our wide variety of success services will make your career change a little easier and a whole lot more productive. We'll show you how to:

- Develop a career change plan
- Leverage existing skills and gain new ones
- Market yourself in a new way
- Find a new opportunity

FOR CAREER SEEKERS

START YOUR CAREER +

ADVANCE YOUR CAREER +

CHANGE YOUR CAREER -

Find a New Career

Leverage Your Skills

Plan for Career Change

Overcoming Job Loss

EVEN MORE RESOURCES +

Exhibit A.29: Leverage Your Skills

Leverage Your Skills

[Home](#) > [For Career Seekers](#) > [Change Your Career](#) > Leverage Your Skills  Lik



Build on where you've been

You've worked hard to get where you are today. You've learned a lot along the way, but you might be wondering if you have the skills you need to make a successful career change. Here are some ideas to help you identify, transfer and grow your skills.

[Match current skills to future aspirations](#) →

[Consider additional education and training](#) →

[Get one-on-one skills development guidance](#) →

Exhibit A.30: Plan for Career Change

Plan for Career Change

[Home](#) > [For Career Seekers](#) > [Change Your Career](#) > Plan for Career Change

 Like



Plan a change for the better

You've decided it's time for something new. You want a rewarding career that promises a successful new outlook. You want to work to live well. So now what? The best path forward is one that's well planned. We'll help you create a resume that reflects your new vision. We'll work with you to enhance your interviewing skills. We'll give you the support you need to market yourself to potential new employers. Here are some helpful resources for making a great career change.

[Consider using a functional resume to highlight your skills](#) →

[Write a powerful cover letter that reflects your vision for career change](#) →

[Get one-on-one career change guidance](#) →

Exhibit A.31: Cover Letter

Cover Letter

[Home](#) > [For Career Seekers](#) > [Start Your Career](#) > [Market Yourself](#) > Cover Letter

 Like



Your chance to shine

Are cover letters necessary? In many cases, yes. They're also a great place to highlight factors that make you an ideal hire, but that aren't included in your resume. For starters: Your cover letter is where you communicate your passion for what your prospective employer does and how you could help the organization do even better. Cover letters let you show a bit more personality and stand out from the stack of applications.

Here are some tips to help you write a great cover letter:

1. **Address the hiring manager by name** at the top of the letter. If you know the hiring manager, use Mr., Ms. and the last name. If you don't know who the hiring manager is, address the head of the department for the open position. If that's not possible, address the letter "Dear Hiring Manager."
2. **In the first paragraph:** highlight your interest in the organization in general and the position you're applying for in particular. Drop a name if possible. If you can say that a respected mutual acquaintance puts in a good word for you, do so.
3. **In the second paragraph** (and third, if needed): Showcase the skills and experience that make you a great fit for the position—and make them stand out by telling a short real-life story or two about them. Or have a short block of bullets that align your skills with the most important requirements for the position.
4. **In the final paragraph:** Say you look forward to an interview to discuss your qualifications in greater detail. And say you'll follow up by phone in a few days.
5. **Use a professional closing**, like "Sincerely" above your signature and printed name.
6. **Proofread your letter.** Then read it aloud and see if you notice any other corrections. Ask a friend to read it. Run spellcheck.
7. **Keep it short.** A cover letter should never be more than one page.

See cover letter samples and outline:

- [Basic cover letter outline](#)
- [T-format cover letter sample](#)

Exhibit A.32: Overcoming Job Loss

Overcoming Job Loss

[Home](#) > [For Career Seekers](#) > [Change Your Career](#) > Overcoming Job Loss

 Like



Turning loss into victory

Losing a job isn't easy. It can bring up fears. It can make you question what's next. But it can also lead to exciting new opportunities. When you're faced with a job loss, you want strong support. A great place to start is a one-on-one meeting with a career specialist at CareerForce. Our career specialists are experts at helping you leverage your skills and experience to find a position that's right for you.

[Explore education and training resources](#) →

[Get help improving your resume and interview skills](#) →

[Visit one of our nearly 50 CareerForce locations throughout Minnesota](#) →



Help if you've lost a job

[Find out about unemployment insurance benefits](#) →

[See ideas for coping with the emotions of job loss](#) →

[Learn about help with housing, healthcare and other necessities](#) →

[Attend a job search workshop](#) →

Section A.3: Employer Pages

Exhibit A.33: Attract Talent

Attract Talent

[Home](#) > [For Employers](#) > Attract Talent

 Like



Be a talent magnet

There's a lot to consider when it comes to attracting talented individuals. Are they intrigued by what you have to offer? Are you and your employees prepared to welcome them as part of the team? Do they even know how to find you? The best way to make your business thrive is to find the right people and put them in the right positions. Easy to say but not always easy to do. Our wide variety of employer services will help you create an effective workforce plan enabling you to attract more people ready to make more of a difference to your organization.

- From recruitment planning to hiring tactics, we'll help you get started.
- From job posting tips to career matching events, we'll support your recruitment efforts.
- From benefits and compensation information to diversity and equity action, we'll guide you toward success as an employer of choice.

Exhibit A.34: Develop Talent

Develop Talent

[Home](#) > [For Employers](#) > Develop Talent

 Like



Prepare for promising growth

How are you going to make sure the good people you've hired are on a path toward long-term success? It's important to know what training possibilities are available to you. It's critical to provide ongoing opportunities for growth – for each employee and for your entire team. Our vast range of employer services will help you develop your talent and your teams.

- With CareerForce support, you'll create employee development plans and engaging new hire experiences.
- You'll find out about training opportunities—inside and outside the workplace—some of which have funding options.

Exhibit A.35: Retain Talent

Retain Talent

[Home](#) > [For Employers](#) > Retain Talent

Like [



It pays to have a good retention plan

Happy employees are productive employees, and productive employees are good for your bottom line. There are many ways to make sure you're building employee satisfaction, loyalty and commitment. You can ensure a positive workplace culture. You can be present and accounted for in the community. You can create long-term plans to encourage and empower the people you've hired to work at peak performance. Our range of employer services will help you increase your return on employee investment.

- We'll provide tools to help you develop a workforce plan with an eye toward increasing retention.
- We'll help you become an employer of choice through community engagement guidance resources to optimize workplace culture and tools to help you offer competitive benefits and compensation.
- We'll support your efforts to ensure workplace inclusion with greater accessibility and cultural competency.

Exhibit A.36: Even More Resources

Even More Resources

[Home](#) > [For Employers](#) > Even More Resources

 Like



Tools to support your success

Thanks to our wide network of private sector, public sector and nonprofit partners working together in one unified system, you'll find more support, more information and more opportunities to attract, develop and retain talent. We are, in fact, the only career development and talent-matching system dedicated to achieving prosperous outcomes for career seekers, employers, communities and Minnesota.

Here, you'll find a broad range of information, tools and resources to help you connect with regional workforce experts, get information on your local labor market, hire from untapped populations and more.



Specialized resources

- [Ensure Workplace Inclusion](#) →
- [Get help hiring veterans](#) →
- [Learn about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities](#) →
- [See important information for employing youth](#) →
- [Learn more about hiring people with a criminal record](#) →
- [Meet your regional team](#) →
- [Post a job](#) →

Exhibit A.37: Build a Diverse and Inclusive Workplace

Employers

[Home](#) > [For Employers](#) > [Even More Resources](#) > Employers

 Li



Build a diverse and inclusive workplace

Diversity is incredibly important for the success of your business and the satisfaction of your employees. Minnesota's workers are becoming more and more diverse as time goes on. By 2035, about 25% of Minnesota's population will be people of color. Knowing how to attract and retain more diverse talent can help you get the best person for the job. Making diverse employees feel welcome and included will help you get the best outcomes for your organization.

We have resources for hiring and retaining diverse employees, understanding the legal side of things and checking for progress in creating a diverse and inclusive workplace. We're here to help your business improve its diversity, equity and inclusion capacity by providing:

- Diversity recruiting resources
- Equitable hiring best practices
- Ideas for creating an inclusive workplace

Exhibit A.38: Veterans Resources - An Extraordinary Talent Resource

Veterans Resources

[Home](#) > [For Employers](#) > [Even More Resources](#) > Veterans Resources



An extraordinary talent resource

People who have served in the military or are currently serving have maturity and self-confidence. They can work under pressure in a team environment. They accept authority, are adaptable and seek responsibility and advancement. Veterans know how to communicate effectively and work efficiently within a system to get the job done right.

Contact a CareerForce specialist for help hiring veterans or visit these helpful pages:

[Learn more about the benefits of hiring veterans](#) →

[Find out more about how to hire a veteran](#) →

[See an overview of employer responsibilities](#) →

[Get information on hiring incentive tax credits](#) →

Exhibit A.39: Disability Resources - Discover the Advantages of Hiring People with Disabilities

Disability Resources

[Home](#) > [For Employers](#) > [Even More Resources](#) > Disability Resources



Discover the advantages of hiring people with disabilities

If you're looking for dedicated employees who will make a commitment to your organization and a difference in your workplace, you'll want to consider all the benefits of hiring a person with a disability. Learn why hiring people with disabilities makes good business sense. Find out how you can create a diverse and welcoming workplace. See what fellow employers have to say about workers with disabilities.

Here are some helpful resources:

[Find out about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities](#) →

[Get help hiring people with disabilities](#) →

[Learn about workplace accommodations](#) →

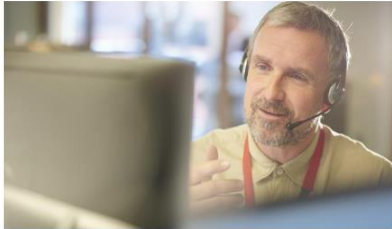
[Explore recruiting, hiring, retaining and promoting people with disabilities](#) →

Exhibit A.40: Diversity in the Workplace

Meet Your Regional Team

[Home](#) > [For Employers](#) > [Even More Resources](#) > Meet Your Regional Team

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Experienced specialists for any employment need

We've got you covered. Our CareerForce specialists are here to support any employment need you have. We have a team of professionals who can answer your questions, connect you with customized resources and data or guide you toward greater talent attraction, development and retention success.

[Workforce strategy](#)—We develop innovative workforce solutions by aligning resources, facilitating collaboration and leveraging expertise in targeted industry sectors to drive economic equity and growth.

[Disability employment](#)—We are experts in disability employment and can provide resources and strategic alliances to tap the talent pool of people who have disabilities.

[Regional labor market analysis](#)—We offer the latest labor market intelligence, economic conditions and trends by providing accessible expertise, analysis services, training and presentations on special topics.

[Layoff assistance](#)—We can guide you through the difficult process of a major layoff or plant closing. That includes helping you comply with federal regulations that apply to mass layoffs, bring a variety of services for your employees straight to your workplace, and even propose some useful alternatives.

[Business development](#)—We turn your business plan to reality by helping you expand an existing business, relocate from another state, or need regulatory and permitting guidance for a complex startup, expansion or relocation.

[Veterans employment](#)—We can help you recruit and hire our nation's veterans, a highly skilled talent pool who will bring values, leadership and teamwork to the workplace.

Exhibit A.41: Youth Resources - Recruiting and Developing Young Talent

Youth Resources

[Home](#) > [For Employers](#) > [Even More Resources](#) > Youth Resources

 Like



Recruiting and developing young talent

Seventy percent of young people ages 16 to 24 in Minnesota are in the workforce. That's significantly higher than the national average of 55 percent. Young people in Minnesota are very much engaged in the labor market—and that's excellent news for employers who want to hire them.

There are many reasons employers may want to hire young people. They're often energetic and enthusiastic about their work. Employers also know a promising young person could turn into a long-term dedicated employee. Plus, hiring young people can foster new creativity and shift perspectives among all generations. This can be a huge win for your workplace culture.

While employers may appreciate the flexibility, enthusiasm and willingness to learn that young people bring to the workplace, there are other factors employers need to take into consideration with younger employees, especially teens:

- Greater need for supervision and guidance
- Lack of life and work experience
- Higher turnover rates compared with other age groups
- Restrictions on the wages, hours and types of work employees under 18 can do

Here are some helpful resources:

[See Minnesota rules for workers under 18](#) →

[Learn about special considerations for managing teens](#) →

[Find teen employees](#) →

Exhibit A.42: Criminal Record Resources - Fair Chance Hiring

Criminal Record Resources

[Home](#) > [For Employers](#) > [Even More Resources](#) > Criminal Record Resources

Like [1]



Fair chance hiring

There has been a dramatic increase in the past few decades in the percentage of employers who run background checks on prospective employees. This is making it harder than ever for people who've committed a crime to be hired, regardless of what the crime was or how long ago it was committed. This impacts many career seekers, particularly those of color. In fact, nearly one in three American adults has an arrest or conviction on their record, according to data from the FBI.

Many of these career seekers are more than ready to reenter the workforce with valuable skills, but just need a fair chance at being hired. They need employers committed to helping them succeed in their new or reinstated careers. Below is important information for any employer ready to hire someone with a criminal record.

"Ban the box" law

Minnesota law requires all employers to wait to ask about an applicant's criminal record until after they've been selected for an interview or a conditional job offer has been extended. This "ban the box" law means employers may not ask on an application form whether or not a person has ever been arrested or convicted of a crime. Employers who violate this law may be subject to a fine.

Minnesota's ban the box law is designed to allow job candidates with an arrest or conviction history to be evaluated on their skills and experience before their criminal record can be considered. This law also helps address racial employment disparities, because arrest and incarceration rates are disproportionately high for people of color. Minnesota has some of the largest racial disparities in the country for employment and economic outcomes.

Minnesota law does not require private employers to hire or give preference to a person with a criminal record. Employers may still conduct a criminal background check before hiring a job applicant, provided it occurs after the job applicant has been interviewed or had a conditional job offer extended.

Compliance with Minnesota's ban the box law does not equate to compliance with federal or state anti-discrimination laws regarding criminal background check policies. An employer may violate anti-discrimination laws if the employer treats criminal history information differently for different applicants or employees based on their race or national origin.

Here are some additional criminal record resources:

[Download the ban the box brochure for employers](#) →

[Avoid discrimination when using information from a criminal background check](#) →

[Learn more about issues related to criminal background checks](#) →

[See Minnesota Employers' Fair Chance Hiring Guide](#) →

[Find out about tax credit hiring incentives](#) →

Exhibit A.43: Post a Job

Post a Job

[Home](#) > [For Employers](#) > [Even More Resources](#) > Post a Job

Li

Cast a wide talent recruitment net

Find more ways to attract more people by posting jobs online. [MinnesotaWorks.net](#) is a no-fee resource designed to connect potential employees with promising opportunities. Employers can post job positions and search for new candidates at the same time. Individuals can upload resumes while searching for new positions. After all, it's about finding the right talent match.

When you post a job online, you can:

- Search the state's largest online resume database
- Find candidates with diverse experience
- Use an option to "find more resumes like this"
- Opt to have interested career seekers apply on the site or apply directly on your website
- Save resumes for future postings

Once you're a registered employer, you're ready to start posting job openings. Your post will be matched with prospective resumes. From there, top applicants will be identified using a unique five-star rating scale. You can opt to be notified by email when new candidates match your posting or you can log in and conduct the search at your convenience.

You can do much more online as well. Showcase what's unique about your organization to prospective candidates. Share the skills you're looking for and the hiring process you have in place. Then get ready to connect with potential new additions to your organization.

See the [MinnesotaWorks.net brochure for employers](#).

Exhibit A.44: Statewide LMI Data Available in Employer's Dashboard

Statewide Economic Highlights

Minnesota added **14,434 jobs** in April 2019 over the year, a **0.49 percent** increase.

Labor Force

Minnesota's labor force totaled 3,086,223 individuals in April 2019, including 2,987,393 employed and 98,830 unemployed who were available and looking for work.

Unemployment Rate

Minnesota had an unemployment rate of 3.2% percent in April 2019, compared to 3.3% for the United States.

Industry Trends

There are 178,886 firms in Minnesota, with an employment total of 2,910,309 jobs in the 4th quarter of 2018.

The largest employing industries were:

- Health Care and Social Assistance - 499,616 jobs
- Manufacturing - 324,410 jobs
- Retail Trade - 303,018 jobs
- Educational Services - 245,097 jobs
- Accommodation and Food Services - 230,060 jobs

CareerForce Locations Near You

CareerForce in Minneapolis North

800 West Broadway Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55411

Distance: 1.9 mi
612-299-7200

[Learn more](#)



CareerForce in Minneapolis South

777 East Lake Street
Minneapolis, MN 55407

Distance: 2.1 mi
612-821-4000

[Learn more](#)



[Find more locations →](#)

Exhibit A.45: Regional LMI Data Available in Employer's Dashboard

^ Metro Region >

Current Economic Trends

Labor Force

The Metro region's labor force totaled 1,713,874 individuals in April 2019, including 1,667,995 employed and 45,879 unemployed who were available and looking for work.

Unemployment Rate

The Metro region had an unemployment rate of 2.7% percent in April 2019, compared to 3.2% for Minnesota and 3.3% for the United States.

A year ago April, the average unemployment rate for the region was 2.5%.

Industry Trends

There are 84,779 firms in the Metro region, with an employment total of 1,776,206 jobs in the 4th quarter of 2018.

The largest employing industries were:

- Health Care and Social Assistance - 277,011 jobs
- Manufacturing - 172,446 jobs
- Retail Trade - 171,082 jobs
- Educational Services - 143,208 jobs
- Accommodation and Food Services - 139,452 jobs

Industry Sector Partnerships

Coming soon.

Regional News



Very appreciative of what you guys do

[See more posts →](#)

Exhibit A.46: Employer Dashboard

[Dashboard](#)
[My Profile](#)
[My Employer Profile](#)
[My Goals & Experience](#)
[My Labor Market](#)

My Favorites

You haven't selected any favorites.

My Connections

Organization	Status	Last Updated ▾	Actions
[REDACTED]	Open	05/22/2019 - 10:03	View

My Favorite Organizations

[CareerForce in Minneapolis North](#)
 Minneapolis, MN
 [★ Remove from favorites](#)

Exhibit A.47: For Employers

[Home](#) > [For Employers](#)
Like [3]



Target greater talent success

Finding the right people for the right positions can be challenging. It's also one of the most important tasks you undertake, and getting it right yields tremendous returns.

- A positive workplace culture
- Enhanced sense of work ownership by employees
- Increased individual and team productivity
- Stronger competitiveness in the marketplace



We're here for you

CareerForce is here to help you find what you need to enable your organization to thrive. We'll support your efforts to attract, develop and retain talent. We'll provide you with the information you need to achieve successful recruitment results, including:

- Talent matching opportunities
- Talent development and retention strategies
- Regional wage and demand data

Exhibit A.48: Get Started

Get Started

[Home](#) > [For Employers](#) > [Attract Talent](#) > Get Started

 Lik



Harness your hire power

When it comes to hiring great people, it helps to have great support. That's particularly true when you think about what you have to gain or lose. You want to find individuals who are not only right for your employment needs, but are also the right fit for your workplace culture. You need a deep understanding of hiring protocol. You look for the reassurance and satisfaction that comes with choosing well. We'd like to help you harness that power.

Given the collaborative clout of the CareerForce system, we can help with resources, tools and information designed to maximize your hiring success, such as:

[Get information on developing a workforce plan](#) →

[Use a tool to help create strong position descriptions](#) →

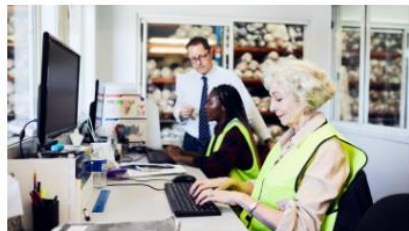
[See a hiring checklist](#) →

Exhibit A.49: Workforce Plan

Workforce Plan

[Home](#) > [For Employers](#) > [Retain Talent](#) > Workforce Plan

 Lik



Plan for long-term talent success

Vital to your organization's success is the approach you take with short- and long-term workforce needs. Nurturing the talent you have with effective retention tactics is a critical part of your strategic plan, and a detailed workforce plan is a smart way to make that happen.

We're available to help you create a workforce plan. In the meantime, here is some helpful information:

[See questions to consider when developing a workforce plan](#) →

[Employ retention strategies to keep staff](#) →

Exhibit A.50: Questions to Consider

Questions to Consider

[Home](#) > Questions to Consider

 Like |  Add to favorites |  f  in  t  e



Prepare for a productive workforce plan

No one has a crystal ball, but creating and updating a comprehensive workforce plan can help ensure you have the right people with the right skills at the right time. It requires examining your organization's strategic plan.

- Where will your organization be in one year? In five years? In 10 years?
- What does the vision for your organization's future say about future workforce needs?
- What skills will your future workers need? What skills will become obsolete?

Clearly, discussing these big picture questions can be difficult because many of them will impact your employees. Challenging topics can include bringing the right skills on board for a variety of reasons, from meeting the needs of a demanding client to planning for the retirement of a key executive.

The best way to prepare for necessary changes is to talk about them as early as possible. That means cultivating a workplace culture of open communication about the organization's future and a transparent process for developing a workforce plan.

We can help you identify what's needed to develop or update your workforce plan. Get started by considering these important questions:

- **Does your organization have an up-to-date strategic plan?** Developing a practical workforce plan requires knowing which direction your organization is headed. The more specific and realistic the strategic plan, the better.
- **What skills and talents will you need to achieve your vision?** Do you have the information you need to make a clear-eyed assessment of any gaps between your current workforce and what will be needed to achieve your strategic goals? If you don't, where can you get the information to assess where your current workforce and your future organizational needs may require alignment?
- **What time or budget constraints must be calculated into your workforce plan?** No organization has unlimited resources, and it helps to know your budget parameters for hiring or developing talent. Timing can also be tricky; hiring too soon or waiting too long both have costs.
- **What has the past year been like?** Assessing recent workforce successes and challenges is a necessary step in developing a useful workforce plan. How well does your current workforce meet your needs? Where are the gaps in skills and knowledge? Have your efforts to hire new or develop existing talent to meet your needs been successful? What has worked? What hasn't?
- **What workforce changes can you plan for?** You've heard the old adage that no one is irreplaceable. Successful organizations make a priority of succession planning. They also plan for likely staff retirements. For example: Do you have several workers in the same department nearing retirement age at the same time? If so, how are you ensuring they transfer essential institutional knowledge before they leave?

Here are some helpful resources:

[Meet your regional team](#) →

[View a workforce plan template](#) →

[Explore retention strategies](#) →

Exhibit A.51: Employer of Choice

Employer of Choice

[Home](#) > [For Employers](#) > [Attract Talent](#) > Employer of Choice

 Like



Choose to be the best

Attracting excellent employees takes an honest look at your workplace. What makes it a great place to work? What could make it even better? Why should they say yes? The best employees have choices about where they work and how long they stay. It can be a tall order but there are plenty of things you can do to help ensure they choose you.

CareerForce can help you:

[Plan for diversity and inclusion in the workplace →](#)

[Find out how to foster a positive workplace culture →](#)

[Get information on competitive compensation and benefits →](#)

[See ideas for growing community engagement →](#)

Exhibit A.52: Hiring Checklist

Hiring Checklist

[Home](#) > [For Employers](#) > [Attract Talent](#) > [Get started](#) > Hiring Checklist

 Like



Smooth the hiring process for everyone

Whether you've hired many people or just a few, having a hiring checklist can smooth and speed up the process—and ensure that steps are not overlooked.

Assess the position

- Determine whether you need to replace an existing position, revamp it or create an entirely new job.
- Meet with people in your organization to discuss responsibilities and qualifications for the position.
- Create a list of "required" and "preferred" qualifications. Clarify what experience and characteristics an ideal candidate would have.
- Write a [Job Description](#) which includes all the essential job responsibilities.
- Figure out a Benefits and Compensation for the position. Use our [Labor Market Information](#) to come up with a realistic wage for your locale.

Spread the word

- Post the job internally and on your company website.
- Notify staff that they're welcome to apply.
- Ask employees to tell their friends, associates and contacts about the position and to recommend qualified candidates.
- Post it on professional- and industry association-related job posting boards.
- You can [Post a Job](#) on the state's largest no-fee online job bank.
- Use online social media—Facebook and LinkedIn—to post the position. Consider job sites such as Indeed, Monster and Glassdoor, which have various free and paid options for employers.
- Talk with university career offices and post the position with them.

Exhibit A.53: Workplace Culture

Workplace Culture

[Home](#) > [For Employers](#) > [Attract Talent](#) > [Employer of choice](#) > Workplace Culture

 Like



Culture shows character

Being a great place to work plays a vital role in your success. That's why workplace culture is so important. Your workplace culture is a combination of your values, beliefs, behaviors, attitudes and habits. It's reflected in how people interact and treat each other, how well they work together toward a common goal, and how they feel about the work they do.

Having a positive workplace culture is part of being an employer of choice—of being perceived as a place where people actively *want* to work. It matters because a positive workplace culture can help you:

- Attract and retain talent
- Enhance teamwork and collaboration
- Increase engagement and drive productivity
- Spark innovation and creativity

Unfortunately, many organizations allow their workplace culture to form without clearly defining what it should be. Neutral or negative behaviors and attitudes can become ingrained. That's when genuine change is needed. Culture change requires a long-term commitment from leadership and emotional buy-in from employees.

Exhibit A.54: Compensation and Benefits

Compensation and Benefits

[Home](#) > [For Employers](#) > [Attract Talent](#) > [Employer of choice](#) > Compensation and Benefits

 Like



It pays to stay competitive

Competitive wages and benefits are vital to attracting talent—but determining what you should offer is a complicated, ever-shifting calculation. Our labor market information experts are constantly updating information about wages, hiring demand and employment trends across Minnesota and in your region. You can access this data in the tools under [Labor Market Information](#). Also consider the following compensation and benefit options:

Compensation can take many forms:

- Base pay
- Commissions
- Overtime pay
- Bonuses, profit sharing and merit/performance pay
- Stock options
- Travel, meal or housing allowances

Some employers are providing more creative and customizable benefit options to better match the needs of existing and prospective employees. A growing number of employers offer:

- Student loan debt reimbursement
- Tuition assistance
- Paid parental leave
- Adoption assistance
- Employee assistance programs
- Paid volunteer time off
- Flex time
- Work-from-home options
- Paid pet leave

Exhibit A.55: Community Engagement

Community Engagement

[Home](#) > [For Employers](#) > [Attract Talent](#) > [Employer of choice](#) > Community Engagement

 Lik

Community Matters



Community matters

One way to be an employer of choice is to become actively engaged in the community. It speaks volumes about your organization's values. It's a good short- and long-term recruiting strategy. It increases your name recognition while demonstrating commitment to your community.

Here are a few ways you can get more engaged:

Offer learning opportunities. Opening your doors for public tours—like many Minnesota manufacturers do each October during Manufacturing Week—is a good way to inform people about your industry and what you do. Other learning opportunities can include:

- Job shadowing
- Mentoring programs
- Apprenticeships
- Internships
- On-the-job training
- Volunteer roles

Exhibit A.56: Plan for Diversity

Plan for Diversity

[Home](#) > [Diversity in the Workplace](#) > [Employers](#) > Plan for Diversity

 Like



Inclusive workplace strategies work

More and more businesses are realizing how important it is to have employees from different backgrounds and experiences. Whether you're a small business or a large corporation, diversity is a huge benefit that leads to higher retention rates.

- Diversity brings new talents, skills and experiences to your organization
- A wide variety of cultural backgrounds and language skills among your employees expands your ability to engage with a diverse customer base
- A diverse and inclusive workplace makes everyone feel valued

As with any initiative, it's best to have a plan of action. CareerForce can provide you with the necessary information to get you started, including:

- Diverse recruiting resources
- A compliance toolbox
- A training plan to build your diversity and inclusion capacity

Exhibit A.57: Implement Diversity

Implement Diversity

[Home](#) > [Diversity in the Workplace](#) > [Employers](#) > Implement Diversity

 Like



Bring your diversity strategy to life

After you've created a plan to diversify your workplace, it's time to make your ideas real. Implementing diversity includes hiring diverse candidates, retaining those candidates, and making sure they feel included and have room to advance. CareerForce supports your diversity implementation efforts by providing you with tools and resources for realizing a diverse workplace, promoting employees fairly and much more. We're here to provide you with helpful resources that will make implementing diversity more effective.

- Template language to help you craft a diversity statement
- Methods on how to reduce bias in your hiring process
- Ideas on how to effectively promote diverse employees

Exhibit A.58: Manage an Inclusive Workplace

Manage an Inclusive Workplace

[Home](#) > [For Employers](#) > [Retain Talent](#) > Manage an Inclusive Workplace

 Lik



Track your success for continual improvement

Diversifying your workplace doesn't end with hiring a few diverse candidates. It's not an item on a list you can check off. Managing a diverse workplace requires consistent attention and constant improvement. As with all desired growth, you need to track your progress. CareerForce provides you with tools and resources to help you measure your successes, track improvements and manage your inclusive workplace so that you can keep diversity as a top priority.

CareerForce will help you:

- Determine what types of diversity and inclusion measurements you should track
- Generate ideas on how to address shortfalls in your diversity strategy
- Figure out the next steps to keep your diversity work going

Exhibit A.59: New Hire Experience

New Hire Experience

[Home](#) > [For Employers](#) > [Develop Talent](#) > New Hire Experience

 Like



Create a welcoming start for lasting success

A good first impression is a good first step toward creating long-term loyalty and retention. Since effective onboarding is about making people feel welcome, appreciated and comfortable, you might want to ask yourself a few questions. How welcoming is your organization's culture? What are you doing to ensure long-term success for new employees? What's your new hire experience plan?

To help you get started, take a look at our tips on how to create a positive [Workplace Culture](#) or consider these action steps:

1. Beforehand: Get ready, set

Taking certain steps before new employees start can make a big difference in how they feel their first days on the job:

- Make sure they have the right tools and equipment on Day 1
- Let coworkers know when someone new is starting and explain their responsibilities
- Consider who to involve in the person's orientation and training
- Set up welcome lunches during the first few days
- Ask a colleague to serve as a friendly "work buddy" to answer any questions that arise

2. Day of: Paint the big picture

Orientations often include a blizzard of information ranging from vision, mission and values to benefits, policies and procedures. But sometimes they miss the most important stuff. Consider talking about:

- Your organization's culture—what makes it a great place to work
- Achievement—how you define and reward success
- Your customers—try to provide opportunities for new employees to talk directly with customers to learn firsthand what really matters
- Fellow co-workers and teams—talk about the team and consider adding photos to names and titles

3. Early and ongoing: Provide clarity and direction

- Don't hesitate to delegate specific, doable tasks right from the start—it helps people feel successful, engaged and excited
- Provide clear direction on duties, deadlines and expectations—greater clarity leads to higher productivity
- Talk about an employee development plan early on—it will help develop, sharpen and grow needed skills and competencies
- Check in on a regular basis to see how new employees are doing, if they have any concerns and if they have creative ideas for improvements

See more resources to help develop talent:

[Learn more about individual employee development plans](#) →

[Foster a healthy workplace culture](#) →

Exhibit A.60: Employee Development Plans

Employee Development Plans

[Home](#) > [For Employers](#) > [Develop Talent](#) > Employee Development Plans

Like



Individual plans for infinite growth

In our fast-changing world, organizations need to keep their employees engaged or risk seeing great talent walk out the door. One of the best ways to increase employee loyalty and commitment is to create individual development plans. You'll help employees identify advancement opportunities. You'll show you care about their career path. You'll go a long way toward building long-term loyalty.

Here are some essential questions and steps to follow:

- 1. What skills and talents will help your organization grow?** Consider short- and long-term goals, as well as industry trends. Ask yourself:
 - Do you foresee an expansion or new processes/equipment that will require new skills or talents?
 - Are employees up to date on the latest techniques or software used in your industry?
 - Are there any skill or knowledge gaps?
 - What knowledge transfer needs to take place in light of foreseeable promotions, retirements or other personnel changes?
- 2. What details need to be figured out before you start?** Work through and finalize all of the key parameters and logistics before communicating the individual development plan process with employees. Make sure the following points (and others you decide are necessary for your workplace) are clearly communicated upfront to avoid misunderstandings and potential hard feelings later:
 - Is training paid or unpaid time for employees?
 - Will someone need to cover for employees when they are in training sessions?
 - Will training take place during or outside of regular work hours?
 - Is there anything employees need to do to prepare for training?
 - What will you do if an employee refuses to take part?

Exhibit A.61: Training Opportunities

Training Opportunities

[Home](#) > [For Employers](#) > [Develop Talent](#) > Training Opportunities

 Like



The more they learn, the more you'll succeed

Training comes in all shapes and sizes, with many different ways to enhance productivity in your organization.

Skills development: This can include pretty much everything you need your employees to do well, from knowing how to use new accounting software or new robotic equipment to developing marketing skills for social media. Improving basic math, writing and computer skills may also be useful.

Workplace expectations: This often includes sensitivity, harassment and employee communication training. It can also include training about the workplace and its culture so that employees understand what is expected.

Leadership training: You may want to create your own leadership and supervisory training program to develop talent within your organization. The more specific the training, the more useful it may be to your organization.

Training can be:

- Customized or general in content
- Conducted in a classroom setting, on the job or online
- Offered as a one-time session, multiple sessions or an ongoing commitment

Regardless of what kind of training your organization needs or how you believe it could be best delivered, you'll want to explore all of your options. A [CareerForce specialist](#) can walk you through your choices to help determine what's best for you.

Plus see these additional resources:

[View training grant resources](#) →

[Learn more about apprenticeships](#) →

Section A.4: Staff and Partner Pages

Exhibit A.62: Staff and Partners - Better Together

Staff and Partners

[Home](#) > [Staff and Partners](#)



Better together

Being part of CareerForce is something we can all be proud of. Our collaborative programs and services make a significant difference to the people we serve and the state we proudly call home. We give individuals the information, tools and confidence they need to find the careers they want. We provide employers with valuable economic and employment information while supporting their recruitment needs. We strengthen communities through ideas, innovations and connections. And together, we advance economic prosperity in Minnesota.

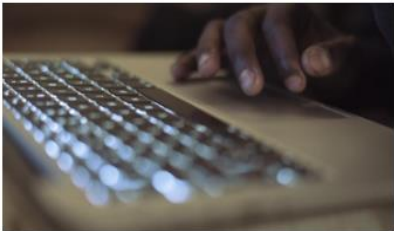
If you're not currently a CareerForce partner but would like to be, visit [join CareerForce](#).

If you would like to share feedback with CareerForce, please use this online [feedback form](#).

Exhibit A.63: Training Resources

Training Resources

[Home](#) > [For Staff & Partners](#) > [Training Resources](#)



Help is here

This is where you can find help with CareerForceMN.com, including tip sheets and short videos that answer common questions about site features and tools. You may also want to check out our [FAQ About CareerForceMN.com](#).

How to create your account tip sheet	How to create your account video
How to use career search tool tip sheet	How to use career search tool video
How to use event search tool tip sheet	How to use event search tool video
How to find a location or partner tip sheet	How to find a location or partner video
How to use My Goals and Experience tools tip sheet	How to use My Goals & Experience tools video
How to use My Labor Market tools tip sheet	How to use My Labor Market tools video
What's on the career seeker dashboard tip sheet	What's on the career seeker dashboard video
What's on the staff and partner dashboard tip sheet	What's on the staff and partner dashboard video
Group management (instructions for staff and partners) tip sheet	Staff and Partner group manager video
How to post a job information	How to post a job video

Exhibit A.64: Join CareerForce

Join CareerForce

[Home](#) > [For Staff & Partners](#) > Join CareerForce

Like [

Become a partner for prosperity



Become a partner for prosperity

CareerForce is the Minnesota workforce system brand supporting career development opportunities and talent recruitment needs. It's comprised of Workforce Development Boards, career centers and system partners. Through innovative collaboration we deliver tremendous impact. We change people's lives. We bolster bottom lines. We drive economic prosperity in Minnesota. CareerForce might just be your opportunity to make a bigger difference to the people and communities you serve.

Find out how you can [become a CareerForce partner](#).

Exhibit A.65: Best Practices

Best Practices

[Home](#) > [For Staff & Partners](#) > Best Practices

Like



Share the best with the rest

From career development to talent recruitment to economic growth in Minnesota, we strive for the very best. That means we dig deep to find better ways to do business. We put new wisdom into everyday practice. And we share best practice successes with each other. In fact, the more we share, the more successful we'll be as one inspiring unified system, driving prosperous outcomes for career seekers, employers, communities and Minnesota.

Contact [CareerForce](#) to share your best practice successes with credentials.

Exhibit A.66: Performance Measures

Performance Measures

[Home](#) > [For Staff & Partners](#) > Performance Measures Like



Your work counts

Federal and state workforce development programs are required to measure performance outcomes. These outcomes help tell the story of CareerForce performance throughout our system. They speak to the demographics we serve while also acting a tool to help us understand, manage and improve our service to career seekers, employers, communities and Minnesota. Outcomes are often grouped around questions such as:

- How much do we do?
- How well do we do it?
- Are individuals better off?

Exhibit A.67: CareerForce Partners Search Engine

CareerForce Partners

[Home](#) > CareerForce Partners

Keyword

From

Less Than

40 mi ▼

Apply

Reset

Exhibit A.68: DEI Resources

DEI Resources

[Home](#) > [For Staff & Partners](#) > [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) > DEI Resources

Like [1]



Understanding inequities

Understanding the inequities faced by many of the different communities in Minnesota is critical to our work. No community faces the same set of challenges as another. Diversity, equity and inclusion resources will help us all better understand the inequities that exist and how to address them in our work.

Here are some resources to help understand inequities and be empowered to better serve our diverse customers:

[Examine disparities in economic conditions by race and disability status](#) →

[See racial and ethnic category definitions](#) →

[Learn more about consultation and collaboration with Tribal Nations](#) →

Exhibit A.69: Equity Funding

Equity Funding

[Home](#) > [For Staff & Partners](#) > [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) > Equity Funding

Like



Equity in grant making

There are a number of grant programs to help organizations serve diverse customers. The grant programs that the legislature creates can change from year to year. You can see up-to-date grant information and sign up for notifications on the [DEED contract and grant opportunities page](#).

See these resources to learn more about efforts to ensure a transparent and equitable grant process:

[View the grant process timeline](#) →

[See grant areas of focus](#) →

[Learn about diverse grant review panels](#) →

Exhibit A.70: DEI Resources

Nondiscrimination Compliance

[Home](#) > [For Staff & Partners](#) > [Diversity Equity and Inclusion](#) > Nondiscrimination Compliance

Like [1]



Providing equal opportunity

We are all required to provide equal opportunity to all customers. We must not discriminate based on:

■ Race	■ Sexual orientation
■ Color	■ Creed
■ Religion	■ Status with regard to public assistance
■ National origin (including limited English proficiency)	■ Political affiliation or belief
■ Disability	■ Citizenship status (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act program participants only)
■ Age	■ Participation in any Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title 1 financially assisted program or activity
■ Sex (including gender identity and expression, pregnancy, childbirth and related medical conditions)	

We can ensure nondiscrimination requirements by:

[Follow the seven compliance requirements for staff and partners](#) →

[Understand nondiscrimination requirements under WIOA](#) →

[Find your Equal Opportunity Officer](#) →

Appendix B: Sample Itinerary

Exhibit B.1: Sample Itinerary

Role	Meeting Time
Day 1	
DEED Careerforce, Branding Integration Manager	8:45 AM
MNIT Applications Manager	9:45 AM
DEED Deputy Commissioner Workforce Development	10:30 AM
DEED Commissioner	11:15 AM
Lunch	12:00 PM
WIF Project Coordinator	12:45 PM
CareerForce Help Desk /MNW.com Help Desk	1:45 PM
DEED Director Job Seeker Services	2:30 PM
CareerForce eLearning, Outreach & Training Coordinator	3:30 PM
MNIT WIF Project Manager	4:30 PM
Day 2	
DEED Director Employment and Training	8:00 AM
Dakota-Scott Workforce Services Workforce Development Board Director	10:30 AM
DEED Youth Programs	11:15 AM
Lunch	12:00 PM
Former DEED WIF Grant Administrator	1:00 PM
Workforce Strategy Consultant	1:45 PM
DEED Director Employer Services	2:30 PM
DEED Creative Director	3:30 PM
DEED WIF Project Manager	4:30 PM
Day 3	
DEED Director Veterans Services	8:45 AM
DEED Veterans Field Operations Manager	9:45 AM
Vocational Rehabilitation	10:30 AM
DEED and Department of Corrections (DOC) New Leaf Program	11:15 AM
Unemployment Insurance	12:15 PM
Assistant Commissioner Economic Equity & Opportunity	1:00 PM
Lunch	1:45 PM
Product owner for WF1	3:00 PM
DEED Director Adult Career Pathways	4:00 PM
DEED Staff Director MinnesotaWorks.net and WIF Project Director	

Appendix C: Surveys

C.1: Career Seeker Survey

1. What is your age today?

☐ 18-29 years old
☐ 30-44 years old
☐ 45-54 years old
☐ 55 years or older

2. How would you describe yourself (check all that apply)?

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native	☐ Latino/Hispanic
☐ Asian or Pacific Islander	☐ White
☐ Black or African American	☐ Other (please specify: _____)

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

☐ Less than a high school diploma or GED	☐ Bachelor's Degree
☐ High school diploma or GED	☐ Graduate/Advanced Degree
☐ Some college or Associate's Degree	

4. Which of the following best describes the amount of interaction you've had with the workforce system?

☐ A Lot of Interaction ☐ Some Interaction ☐ A Little Interaction ☐ No Interaction

5. Which workforce system services have you used (check all that apply)?

☐ Visited a CareerForce location	☐ Attended a workshop
☐ Got help finding job openings	☐ Participated in a job training program
☐ Got help with resume writing/interviewing	☐ Applied for Unemployment Insurance
☐ Attended career fairs/networking events or job clubs	☐ Got information about financial or community resources (health care, transportation, child care etc.)
☐ Used a computer	☐ Other (please specify: _____)

6. How would you rate your awareness of job market conditions where you live and work? Would you say you are ...

☐ Very Aware ☐ Somewhat Aware ☐ A Little Bit Aware ☐ Not at All Aware

7. Please rate how easy or hard it is for you to identify job opportunities. Would you say it is ...

☐ Very Easy ☐ Easy ☐ Hard ☐ Very Hard

8. Please rate how easy or hard it is for you to prepare yourself for job opportunities. Would you say it is ...

☐ Very Easy ☐ Easy ☐ Hard ☐ Very Hard

9. Thinking of your experience with internet-based workforce system tools (e.g., CareerForceMN.com, online job banks/boards, career exploration tools), please rate how useful these tools are. Would you say that the tools are ...

☐ Not at all Useful ☐ Slightly Useful ☐ Moderately Useful ☐ Very Useful ☐ Extremely Useful
☐ I don't use any internet-based workforce system tools

10. Overall, based on your experience with the workforce system, how satisfied are you with the workforce system?

☐ Not at All Satisfied ☐ Slightly Satisfied ☐ Moderately Satisfied ☐ Very Satisfied ☐ Extremely Satisfied

C.2: Employer Survey

1. Of the categories listed below, which best describes your company's industry?

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Natural Resources and Mining | ☐ Professional and Business Services |
| ☐ Construction | ☐ Education |
| ☐ Manufacturing | ☐ Health Services |
| ☐ Trade, Transportation and Utilities | ☐ Leisure and Hospitality |
| ☐ Information | ☐ Other Services |
| ☐ Financial Activities | ☐ Public Administration |

2. How many employees does your company have?

- ☐ 1-9 Employees
- ☐ 10-49 Employees
- ☐ 50-249 Employees
- ☐ 250 or more Employees

3. Which of the following best describes the amount of interaction (e.g., posting job openings, accessing labor market information, talking to staff at CareerForce locations about workforce needs) your company has had with the workforce system?

☐ A Lot of Interaction ☐ Some Interaction ☐ A Little Interaction ☐ No Interaction

4. How often has your company used web-based tools for working with workforce system stakeholders (e.g., CareerForceMN.com, online job banks/boards, websites related to labor market information)?

☐ Never ☐ Rarely ☐ Occasionally ☐ Frequently

5. Overall, based on your company's interactions with the workforce system, how satisfied is your company with the workforce system?

☐ Not at all Satisfied ☐ Slightly Satisfied ☐ Moderately Satisfied ☐ Very Satisfied ☐ Extremely Satisfied

6. Thinking of your company's interactions with the workforce system, please rate how easy or difficult it is to communicate your workforce needs to state/local workforce agencies? Would you say that communication is ...

☐ Very Easy ☐ Easy ☐ Difficult ☐ Very Difficult

7. Thinking of your company's interactions with K-12 schools, please rate how easy or difficult it is to communicate your workforce needs to them. Would you say that communication is ...

☐ Very Easy ☐ Easy ☐ Difficult ☐ Very Difficult

☐ I don't interact with K-12 schools

8. Thinking of your company's interactions with post-secondary schools (e.g., community/technical colleges, Minnesota state colleges and universities), please rate how easy or difficult it is to communicate your workforce needs to them. Would you say that communication is ...

☐ Very Easy ☐ Easy ☐ Difficult ☐ Very Difficult

☐ I don't interact with post-secondary schools

9. Thinking of your company's use of web-based tools for working with workforce system stakeholders (e.g., CareerForceMN.com, online job banks/boards, websites related to labor market information), please rate how useful these tools are to your company. Would you say that the tools are ...

☐ Not at all Useful
 ☐ Slightly Useful
 ☐ Moderately Useful
 ☐ Very Useful
 ☐ Extremely Useful
☐ I don't use web-based tools to work with workforce system stakeholders

C.3: Workforce Staff Survey

1. Which of the following best describes your current role within the workforce system?

☐ Work out of a CareerForce location (primarily with the public or job seekers)
☐ Work out of a CareerForce location (primarily with employers)
☐ Work for Vocational Rehabilitation or State Services for the Blind
☐ Work at DEED headquarters in St. Paul
☐ Other (Please Specify: _____)

2. How satisfied are you with the tools and/or resources available to you to help you serve job seekers, employers, and otherwise do your job as you perform each of the activities listed below? (Please mark only those activities you perform in your current role.)

	Not at all Satisfied	Slightly Satisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
a. Help job seekers identify and prepare for job opportunities (e.g., via job fairs, job banks, and workshops)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Help job seekers explore career alternatives (e.g., via career exploration tools)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Help job seekers identify relevant education and training resources	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Help employers fill job openings (e.g., via job fairs, job banks, and hiring events)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Work with employers to identify their workforce needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Connect with job seekers or employers using social media	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Research and use information on current labor market conditions and/or projected future labor market conditions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Understand and leverage current economic development initiatives in Minnesota	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. Thinking of your interactions with job seekers, please rate how easy or difficult it is for you to work with job seekers to help them achieve their goals. Would you say that it is ...

☐ Very Easy
 ☐ Easy
 ☐ Difficult
 ☐ Very Difficult
☐ I don't interact with job seekers

4. Thinking of your interactions with employers, please rate how easy or difficult it is for you to work with employers to identify their workforce needs. Would you say that it is ...

☐ Very Easy
 ☐ Easy
 ☐ Difficult
 ☐ Very Difficult
☐ I don't interact with employers

5. Thinking of your interactions with K-12 schools, please rate how easy or difficult it is for you to communicate with them about local workforce investment needs. Would you say that it is ...

☐ Very Easy
 ☐ Easy
 ☐ Difficult
 ☐ Very Difficult

☐ I don't interact with K-12 schools

6. Thinking of your interactions with post-secondary schools (e.g., community/technical colleges, Minnesota state colleges and universities), please rate how easy or difficult it is for you to communicate with them about local workforce investment needs. Would you say that it is ...

☐ Very Easy
 ☐ Easy
 ☐ Difficult
 ☐ Very Difficult

☐ I don't interact with post-secondary schools

7. Please rate your level of awareness of labor market conditions in the Workforce Service Area you serve. Would you say your level of awareness is ...

☐ Very High
 ☐ High
 ☐ Low
 ☐ Very Low

☐ I don't serve a specific Workforce Service Area

8. Please rate your level of awareness of labor market conditions outside the Workforce Service Area you serve. Would you say your level of awareness is ...

☐ Very High
 ☐ High
 ☐ Low
 ☐ Very Low

☐ I don't serve a specific Workforce Service Area

9. Thinking of your interactions with staff outside the Workforce Service Area you serve, please rate how easy or difficult it is for you to communicate with workforce system staff in other areas. Would you say that it is ...

☐ Very Easy
 ☐ Easy
 ☐ Difficult
 ☐ Very Difficult

☐ I don't serve a specific Workforce Service Area

☐ I don't interact with staff from other areas of the state

Appendix D: Training Sessions and Attendance Counts

Date	Training/Demo	Webinar Attendees	In-Person Attendees	Total Participants	Duration, in Minutes
2018					
Nov-8 9:00 AM	CareerForce 101	366	0	366	60
Nov-14 9:00 AM	Introduction to CareerForceMN.com	84	16	100	90
Nov-14 11:00 AM	Managing Your CareerForceMN.com	19	3	22	90
Nov-14 11:00 AM	Introduction to CareerForceMN.com	37	5	42	90
Nov-14 1:30 PM	Managing Your CareerForceMN.com	31	4	35	90
Nov-14 2:00 PM	Introduction to CareerForceMN.com	55	3	58	90
Nov-15 9:00 AM	Managing Your CareerForceMN.com	28	1	29	90
Nov-15 9:00 AM	Introduction to CareerForceMN.com	87	6	93	90
Nov-15 11:00 AM	Managing Your CareerForceMN.com	43	3	46	90
Nov-15 11:00 AM	Introduction to CareerForceMN.com	25	3	28	90
Nov-15 3:00 PM	Introduction to CareerForceMN.com	31	2	33	90
Nov-16 9:00 AM	Introduction to CareerForceMN.com	83	3	86	90
Nov-16 11:00 AM	Managing Your CareerForceMN.com	57	4	61	90
Nov-28 2:00 PM	Our CareerForce Culture	130	0	130	60
Dec-3 1:00 PM	Region 3 One-Stop Operator Meeting	0	18	18	60
Dec-5 1:00 PM	Web Chat with MNABE	100	0	100	60
Dec-6 8:30 AM	Anoka County Workforce Development Board Meeting	0	19	19	75
Dec-13 11:00 AM	CareerForce Proud Partner	87	0	87	75
Dec-17 8:30 AM	Burnsville intro for staff	0	15	15	75
Dec-19 11:00 AM	DHS/DEED SNAP E&T Meeting demo	0	9	9	30

Date	Training/Demo	Webinar Attendees	In-Person Attendees	Total Participants	Duration, in Minutes
2019					
Jan-3 10:00 AM	What's New with CareerForce	46	0	46	45
Jan-4 8:30 AM	Dakota County board subcommittee update	0	11	11	30
Jan-11 3:00 PM	EMERGE group management training	0	3	3	75
Jan-18 1:00 PM	Brooklyn Park group management training	0	2	2	75
Jan-22 1:00 PM	Takoda training for staff	0	7	7	75
Jan-24 10:30 AM	Duluth intro for staff	26	13	39	75
Jan-24 1:00 PM	Duluth intro for staff	6	11	17	75
Feb-7 10:00 AM	What's new with CareerForce	34	0	34	30
Feb-8 9:00 AM	Bloomington intro for staff	0	11	11	75
Feb-13 9:00 AM	Marshall intro for staff	0	13	13	75
Feb-13 11:00 AM	Marshall intro for staff	0	14	14	75
Feb-13 1:30 PM	Marshall intro for staff	0	13	13	75
Feb-14 8:30 AM	Minneapolis Partnership Placement demo	0	10	10	60
Feb-15 12:30 PM	Partners with Youth conference	0	9	9	60
Feb-22 9:45 AM	Minneapolis North intro for staff	0	52	52	75
Feb-25 2:00 PM	Brooklyn Park intro for staff	0	14	14	75
Feb-26 9:00 AM	St. Paul intro for staff	0	12	12	75
Feb-27 12:00 PM	Avivo intro	0	20	20	75
Feb-28 9:00 AM	Monticello group manager	0	8	8	75
Mar-1 10:30 AM	Thief River Falls intro	17	0	17	75
Mar-6 1:00 PM	Chaska demo	0	7	7	60
Mar-7 9:30 AM	Mankato intro for staff	0	14	14	75
Mar-7 10:00 AM	What's New with CareerForce	73	0	73	30
Mar-14	St. Cloud intro for staff	0	18	18	75
Mar-14	St. Cloud intro for staff	0	9	9	75
Mar-14	St. Cloud intro for staff	0	0	0	75
Mar-18 9:00 AM	Bloomington group manager	0	9	9	75
Mar-19 2:00 PM	Proud partner webinar	62	0	62	45
Mar-26 10:00 AM	Kidney foundation demo	10	0	10	30
Mar-27 9:00 AM	Monticello intro for staff	0	50	50	75

Date	Training/Demo	Webinar Attendees	In-Person Attendees	Total Participants	Duration, in Minutes
Mar-27 2:00 PM	Employer navigator webinar	40	0	40	45
Mar-29 12:00 PM	Takoda training for staff	0	5	5	60
Apr-2 10:00 AM	Employer navigator webinar	54	0	54	45
Apr-4 10:00 AM	What's New with CareerForce	77	0	77	30
Apr-8 1:00 PM	MFIP manager meeting demo	0	40	40	30
Apr-9 10:00 AM	Willmar intro for staff	0	12	12	75
Apr-10 2:00 PM	Jewish Family and Children's Services	0	12	12	75
Apr-10 8:30 AM	Blaine staff	0	10	10	75
Apr-10 10:00 AM	Blaine staff	0	10	10	75
Apr-11 8:30 AM	Blaine staff	0	10	10	75
Apr-11 10:00 AM	Blaine staff	0	6	6	75
Apr-11 12:30 PM	Blaine staff	0	5	5	75
Apr-11 2:00 PM	Blaine staff	0	10	10	75
Apr-12 8:30 AM	Blaine staff	0	8	8	75
Apr-12 10:00 AM	Blaine staff	0	10	10	75
Apr-15 1:00 PM	Chaska connections/group training	0	10	10	75
Apr-16 3:00 PM	Blaine staff	0	10	10	75
Apr-17 2:30 PM	DHS continuums of care meeting demo	6	0	6	60
Apr-18 1:00 PM	South Central Workforce Board	0	70	70	70
Apr-18 12:30 PM	Mpls employer demo	0	10	10	30
Apr-23 10:00 AM	DHS HR recruiters demo	0	25	25	30
Apr-24 10:00 AM	HIRED staff training	0	100	100	45
Apr-25 11:00 AM	Minneapolis adult conference training	0	0	0	60
Apr-25 1:00 PM	Minneapolis adult conference training	0	0	0	60
May-2 10:00 AM	What's New with CareerForce	-	-	-	-
May-4 8:30 AM	Dakota County Board subcommittee demo	-	-	-	30
May-10 10:00 AM	Avivo Welfare to Work	-	-	-	60
TOTAL		2084	807	2891	5245

Note: All times listed are in Central Time. Dashes ("-") refer to information not available.

Appendix E: Survey Tables

E.1: Career Seeker Survey Results

Exhibit E.1: Question 1. What is your age today?

Question 1	Pre-Survey			Post-Survey		
	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent
18-29 years old	1	391	5.1%	2	1,453	18.9%
30-44 years old	15	2,968	38.5%	16	1,202	15.6%
45-54 years old	25	2,097	27.2%	19	1,442	18.8%
55 years or older	32	2,257	29.3%	49	3,596	46.7%
Total	73	7,713	100.0%	86	7,693	100.0%

Notes: Due to rounding, weighted totals may vary by survey question.

Exhibit E.2: Question 2. How would you describe yourself?

Question 2	Pre-Survey			Post-Survey		
	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent
American Indian/Alaska Native	1	58	0.8%	6	1,968	26.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2	385	5.0%	11	2,463	32.5%
African American	7	2,125	27.6%	9	935	12.3%
Hispanic	2	584	7.6%	4	441	5.8%
White	63	5,192	67.3%	62	4,120	54.4%
Other	0	0	0.0%	3	1,585	20.9%

Notes: Respondents could choose multiple response options, and thus totals do not add to 100%.

Exhibit E.3: Question 3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Question 3	Pre-Survey			Post-Survey		
	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent
Less than high school diploma/GED	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%
High school diploma/GED	6	2,891	37.5%	5	2,376	30.9%
Some college or Associate's Degree	35	2,566	33.3%	35	2,416	31.4%
Bachelor's Degree	20	1,293	16.8%	29	1,869	24.3%
Graduate/Advanced Degree	12	964	12.5%	17	1,032	13.4%
Total	73	7,714	100.0%	86	7,693	100.0%

Notes: Due to rounding, weighted totals may vary by survey question.

Exhibit E.4: Question 4. Choose your response to the following questions based on your experiences since December 2018. Which of the following best describes the amount of interaction you've had with the workforce system?

Question 4	Pre-Survey			Post-Survey		
	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent
A lot	25	2,320	30.1%	27	1,646	21.4%
Some	39	3,844	49.8%	45	4,800	62.4%
A Little	8	1,492	19.3%	12	990	12.9%
None	1	58	0.8%	1	129	1.7%
Missing	0	0	0.0%	1	129	1.7%
Total	73	7,714	100.0%	86	7,693	100.0%

Notes: Due to rounding, weighted totals may vary by survey question.

Exhibit E.5: Question 5. Which workforce system services have you used?

Question 5	Pre-Survey			Post-Survey		
	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent
Visited a CareerForce location	69	7,014	90.9%	59	4,480	89.5%
Got help finding job openings	38	4,254	55.2%	28	2,080	41.6%
Got help with resume writing/interviewing	36	3,560	46.2%	28	2,461	49.2%
Attended career fairs/networking events or job clubs	31	3,515	45.6%	31	2,433	48.6%
Used a computer	50	6,247	81.0%	32	2,338	46.7%
Attended a workshop	44	4,672	60.6%	40	2,846	56.9%
Participated in a job training program	17	2,055	26.6%	20	1,498	29.9%
Applied for Unemployment Insurance	44	4,403	57.1%	52	3,910	78.1%
Got information about financial or community resources	18	2,248	29.1%	13	741	14.8%
Other	9	855	11.1%	9	562	11.2%

Notes: Respondents could choose multiple response options, and thus totals do not add to 100%.

Exhibit E.6: Question 6. How would you rate your awareness of job market conditions where you live and work? Would you say you are...

Question 6	Pre-Survey			Post-Survey		
	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent
Very	43	3,543	45.9%	54	3,789	49.3%
Somewhat	23	2,069	26.8%	23	1,845	24.0%
A Little	4	899	11.7%	6	1,860	24.2%
Not at all	3	1,203	15.6%	1	54	0.7%
Missing	0	0	0.0%	2	145	1.9%
Total	73	7,714	100.0%	86	7,693	100.0%

Notes: Due to rounding, weighted totals may vary by survey question.

Exhibit E.7: Question 7. Please rate how easy or hard it is for you to identify job opportunities. Would you say it is...

Question 7	Pre-Survey			Post-Survey		
	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent
Very Easy	9	1,036	13.4%	16	1,091	14.2%
Easy	43	3,877	50.3%	41	3,428	44.6%
Hard	19	2,686	34.8%	22	2,721	35.4%
Very Hard	2	116	1.5%	5	308	4.0%
Missing	0	0	0.0%	2	145	1.9%
Total	73	7,715	100.0%	86	7,693	100.0%

Notes: Due to rounding, weighted totals may vary by survey question.

Exhibit E.8: Question 8. Please rate how easy or hard it is for you to prepare yourself for job opportunities. Would you say it is...

Question 8	Pre-Survey			Post-Survey		
	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent
Very Easy	10	849	11.0%	17	2,567	33.4%
Easy	39	4,224	54.8%	44	3,019	39.3%
Hard	22	2,193	28.4%	22	1,907	24.8%
Very Hard	2	449	5.8%	0	0	0.0%
Missing	0	0	0.0%	3	199	2.6%
Total	73	7,715	100.0%	86	7,693	100.0%

Notes: Due to rounding, weighted totals may vary by survey question.

Exhibit E.9: Question 9. Thinking of your experience with internet-based workforce system tools (e.g., CareerForceMN.com, online job banks/boards, career exploration tools), please rate how useful these tools are. Would you say that the tools are...

Question 9	Pre-Survey			Post-Survey		
	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent
Not at All Useful	6	862	11.2%	4	217	2.8%
Slightly Useful	6	348	4.5%	9	636	8.3%
Moderately Useful	20	1,626	21.1%	27	2,256	29.3%
Very Useful	34	3,870	50.2%	32	3,339	43.4%
Extremely Useful	7	1,008	13.1%	9	674	8.8%
Don't Use Tools	0	0	0.0%	3	427	5.6%
Missing	0	0	0.0%	2	145	1.9%
Total	73	7,713	100.0%	86	7,963	100.0%

Notes: Due to rounding, weighted totals may vary by survey question.

Exhibit E.10: Question 10. Overall, based on your experience with the workforce system, how satisfied are you with the workforce system?

Question 10	Pre-Survey			Post-Survey		
	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent
Not at All Satisfied	3	688	8.9%	0	0	0.0%
Slightly Satisfied	8	463	6.0%	14	832	10.8%
Moderately Satisfied	21	1,954	25.3%	28	3,842	49.9%
Very Satisfied	30	2,656	34.4%	36	2,474	32.2%
Extremely Satisfied	11	1,953	25.3%	6	400	5.2%
Missing	0	0	0.0%	2	145	1.9%
Total	73	7,715	100.0%	86	7,963	100.0%

Notes: Due to rounding, weighted totals may vary by survey question.

E.2: Employer Survey Results

Exhibit E.11: Question 1. Please select only one response for each question. Choose your response based on your company's experiences since December 2018. Of the categories listed below, which best describes your company's industry?

Question 1	Pre-Survey			Post-Survey		
	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent
Natural Resources and Mining	1	63	4.1%	0	0	0.0%
Construction	5	73	4.8%	2	56	4.5%
Manufacturing	13	229	15.1%	8	159	12.9%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	3	188	12.3%	4	376	30.5%
Information	1	63	4.1%	0	0	0.0%
Financial Activities	3	188	12.3%	0	0	0.0%
Professional and Business Services	7	317	20.8%	6	292	23.7%
Education	6	38	2.5%	2	30	2.4%
Health Services	13	182	12.0%	6	173	14.0%
Leisure and Hospitality	5	67	4.4%	3	46	3.7%
Other Services	17	69	4.5%	16	49	4.0%
Public Administration	4	46	3.0%	3	52	4.2%
Total	78	1521	100.0%	50	1233	100.0%

Exhibit E.12: Question 2. How many employees does your company have?

Question 2	Pre-Survey			Post-Survey		
	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent
1 to 9	7	150	9.8%	7	261	21.2%
10 to 49	18	409	26.9%	10	290	23.5%
50 to 249	31	574	37.7%	15	270	21.9%
250+	22	388	25.5%	18	411	33.4%
Total	78	1521	100.0%	50	1233	100.0%

Exhibit E.13: Question 3. Which of the following best describes the amount of interaction (e.g., posting job openings, accessing labor market information, talking to staff at CareerForce locations about workforce needs) your company has had with the workforce system?

Question 3	Pre-Survey			Post-Survey		
	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent
A lot of interaction	14	295	19.4%	7	217	17.6%
Some Interaction	30	476	31.3%	25	564	45.7%
A Little Interaction	32	723	47.5%	16	434	35.2%
No Interaction	2	27	1.8%	2	18	1.5%
Total	78	1521	100.0%	50	1233	100.0%

Exhibit E.14: Question 4. How often has your company used web-based tools for working with workforce system stakeholders (e.g., CareerForceMN.com, online job banks/boards, websites related to labor market information)?

Question 4	Pre-Survey			Post-Survey		
	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent
Never	4	102	6.7%	0	0	0.0%
Rarely	13	181	11.9%	9	133	10.8%
A Little Interaction	29	629	41.3%	22	571	46.3%
Frequently	32	610	40.1%	19	529	42.9%
Total	78	1521	100.0%	50	1233	100.0%

Exhibit E.15: Question 5. Overall, based on your company's interactions with the workforce system, how satisfied is your company with the workforce system?

Question 5	Pre-Survey			Post-Survey		
	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent
Not at all Satisfied	2	17	1.1%	6	207	16.8%
Slightly Satisfied	14	215	14.1%	5	86	7.0%
Moderately Satisfied	41	827	54.4%	22	578	46.9%
Very Satisfied	19	410	27.0%	15	340	27.6%
Extremely Satisfied	1	6	0.4%	1	20	1.6%
Missing	1	45	3.0%	1	3	0.2%
Total	78	1521	100.0%	50	1233	100.0%

Exhibit E.16: Question 6. Thinking of your company's interactions with the workforce system, please rate how easy or difficult it is to communicate your workforce needs to state/local workforce agencies? Would you say that communication is...

Question 6	Pre-Survey			Post-Survey		
	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent
Very Easy	8	141	9.3%	4	115	9.3%
Easy	51	905	59.5%	36	692	56.1%
Difficult	14	316	20.8%	10	426	34.5%
Very Difficult	4	98	6.4%	0	0	0.0%
Missing	1	63	4.1%	0	0	0.0%
Total	78	1521	100.0%	50	1233	100.0%

Exhibit E.17: Question 7. Thinking of your company's interactions with K-12 schools, please rate how easy or difficult it is to communicate your workforce needs to them. Would you say that communication is...

Question 7	Pre-Survey			Post-Survey		
	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent
Very Easy	1	6	0.4%	3	55	4.4%
Easy	7	83	5.5%	9	221	17.9%
Difficult	13	216	14.2%	3	43	3.5%
Very Difficult	5	53	3.5%	1	29	2.3%
I don't interact with them	52	1163	76.4%	34	886	71.8%
Total	78	1521	100.0%	50	1234	100.0%

Note: Due to rounding, the weighted total equals to 1,234 and not 1,233.

Exhibit E.18: Question 8. Thinking of your company's interactions with post-secondary schools (e.g., community/technical colleges, Minnesota state colleges and universities), please rate how easy or difficult it is to communicate your workforce needs to them. Would you say that communication is...

Question 8	Pre-Survey			Post-Survey		
	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent
Very Easy	2	67	4.4%	7	128	10.3%
Easy	36	521	34.1%	20	488	39.6%
Difficult	19	319	21.0%	10	346	28.0%
Very Difficult	2	10	0.7%	2	49	4.0%
I don't interact with them	19	603	39.7%	11	223	18.1%
Total	78	1521	100.0%	50	1234	100.0%

Note: Due to rounding, the weighted total equals to 1,234 and not 1,233.

Exhibit E.19: Question 9. Thinking of your company’s use of web-based tools for working with workforce system stakeholders (e.g., CareerForceMN.com, online job banks/boards, websites related to labor market information), please rate how useful these tools are to your company. Would you say that the tools are...

Question 9	Pre-Survey			Post-Survey		
	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent	Unweighted	Weighed	Percent
Not at all Useful	0	0	0.0%	1	94	7.6%
Slightly Useful	16	170	11.2%	12	281	22.8%
Moderately Useful	28	688	45.2%	20	507	41.1%
Very Useful	18	257	16.9%	10	188	15.2%
Extremely Useful	9	222	14.6%	2	52	4.2%
Don’t use web tools	7	185	12.2%	4	63	5.1%
Missing	-	-	-	1	49	3.9%
Total	78	1521	100.0%	50	1234	100.0%

Note: Due to rounding, the weighted total equals to 1,234 and not 1,233.

E.3: Workforce Staff Survey Results

Exhibit E.20: Question 1. Which of the following best describes your current role within the workforce system?

Question 1	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Serves jobseekers in a CareerForce location	146	46.1%	149	38.9%
Serves employers in a CareerForce location	5	1.6%	17	4.4%
Vocational Rehabilitation/SSB	73	23.0%	67	17.5%
DEED Headquarters	31	9.8%	24	6.3%
Other	62	19.6%	126	32.9%
Total	317	100.0%	383	100.0%

Exhibit E.21: Question 2a. Help job seekers identify and prepare for job opportunities

Question 2a	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Not at all Satisfied	6	2.1%	7	2.1%
Slightly Satisfied	20	6.9%	27	8.1%
Moderately Satisfied	84	29.2%	110	32.8%
Very Satisfied	147	51.0%	161	48.1%
Extremely Satisfied	31	10.8%	30	9.0%
Total	288	100.0%	335	100.0%

Notes: Only respondents that work with job seekers or in a workforce-related area specified in the question answered this question. For this reason, the total frequency may be smaller than 317 (pre-survey) and 383 (post-survey).

Exhibit E.22: Question 2b. Help job seekers explore career alternatives

Question 2b	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Not at all Satisfied	12	4.3%	4	1.2%
Slightly Satisfied	32	11.6%	38	11.5%
Moderately Satisfied	91	32.9%	121	36.6%
Very Satisfied	122	44.0%	142	42.9%
Extremely Satisfied	20	7.2%	26	7.9%
Total	277	100.0%	331	100.0%

Notes: Only respondents that work with job seekers or in a workforce-related area specified in the question answered this question. For this reason, the total frequency may be smaller than 317 (pre-survey) and 383 (post-survey).

Exhibit E.23: Question 2c. Help job seekers identify relevant education and training resources

Question 2c	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Not at all Satisfied	9	3.2	6	1.8%
Slightly Satisfied	28	10.0%	39	11.9%
Moderately Satisfied	82	29.2%	117	35.6%
Very Satisfied	139	49.5%	133	40.4%
Extremely Satisfied	23	8.2%	34	10.3%
Total	281	100.0%	329	100.0%

Notes: Only respondents that work with job seekers or in a workforce-related area specified in the question answered this question. For this reason, the total frequency may be smaller than 317 (pre-survey) and 383 (post-survey).

Exhibit E.24: Question 2d. Help employers fill job openings

Question 2d	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Not at all Satisfied	20	7.8%	21	6.5%
Slightly Satisfied	42	16.5%	46	14.2%
Moderately Satisfied	90	35.3%	135	41.7%
Very Satisfied	82	32.2%	105	32.4%
Extremely Satisfied	21	8.2%	17	5.2%
Total	255	100.0%	324	100.0%

Notes: Only respondents that work with employers answered this question. For this reason, the total frequency may be smaller than 317 (pre-survey) and 383 (post-survey).

Exhibit E.25: Question 2e. Work with employers to identify their workforce needs

Question 2e	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Not at all Satisfied	38	15.7%	37	11.7%
Slightly Satisfied	53	21.9%	69	21.8%
Moderately Satisfied	71	29.3%	115	36.4%
Very Satisfied	67	27.7%	80	25.3%
Extremely Satisfied	13	5.4%	15	4.7%
Total	242	100.0%	316	100.0%

Notes: Only respondents that work with employers answered this question. For this reason, the total frequency may be smaller than 317 (pre-survey) and 383 (post-survey).

Exhibit E.26: Question 2f. Connect with job seekers or employers using social media

Question 2f	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Not at all Satisfied	53	20.8%	37	11.5%
Slightly Satisfied	53	20.8%	73	22.7%
Moderately Satisfied	76	29.8%	113	35.2%
Very Satisfied	61	23.9%	79	24.6%
Extremely Satisfied	12	4.7%	19	5.9%
Total	255	100.0%	321	100.0%

Notes: Only respondents that work with job seekers or employers answered this question. For this reason, the total frequency may be smaller than 317 (pre-survey) and 383 (post-survey).

Exhibit E.27: Question 2g. Research and use information on current labor market conditions and/or projected future labor market conditions

Question 2g	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Not at all Satisfied	6	2.1%	12	3.6%
Slightly Satisfied	30	10.5%	32	9.5%
Moderately Satisfied	79	27.7%	114	33.9%
Very Satisfied	127	44.6%	138	41.1%
Extremely Satisfied	43	15.1%	40	11.9%
Total	285	100.0%	336	100.0%

Notes: Only respondents that need labor market information answered this question. For this reason, the total frequency may be smaller than 317 (pre-survey) and 383 (post-survey).

Exhibit E.28: Question 2h. Understand and leverage current economic development initiatives in Minnesota

Question 2h	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Not at all Satisfied	28	10.8%	35	10.7%
Slightly Satisfied	60	23.2%	68	20.9%
Moderately Satisfied	89	34.4%	130	39.9%
Very Satisfied	68	26.3%	68	20.9%
Extremely Satisfied	14	5.4%	40	11.9%
Total	259	100.0%	326	100.0%

Notes: Only respondents that work on current economic development initiatives answered this question. For this reason, the total frequency may be smaller than 317 (pre-survey) and 383 (post-survey).

Exhibit E.29: Question 3. Thinking of your interactions with job seekers, please rate how easy or difficult it is for you to work with job seekers to help them achieve their goals. Would you say that it is...

Question 3	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Very Easy	44	13.9%	47	12.3%
Easy	145	45.7%	169	44.1%
Difficult	80	25.2%	77	20.1%
Very Difficult	7	2.2%	8	2.1%
I don't interact with them	31	9.8%	57	14.9%
Missing	10	3.2%	25	6.5%
Total	317	100.0%	383	100.0%

Exhibit E.30: Question 4. Thinking of your interactions with employers, please rate how easy or difficult it is for you to work with employers to identify their workforce needs. Would you say that it is...

Question 4	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Very Easy	17	5.4%	22	5.7%
Easy	80	25.2%	123	32.1%
Difficult	67	21.1%	71	18.5%
Very Difficult	20	6.3%	9	2.3%
I don't interact with them	114	36.0%	132	34.5%
Missing	19	6.0%	26	6.8%
Total	317	100.0%	383	100.0%

Exhibit E.31: Question 5. Thinking of your interactions with local K-12 schools, please rate how easy or difficult it is for you to communicate with them about local workforce investment needs. Would you say that it is...

Question 5	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Very Easy	13	4.1%	21	5.5%
Easy	57	18.0%	76	19.8%
Difficult	51	16.1%	47	12.3%
Very Difficult	10	3.2%	8	2.1%
I don't interact with them	176	55.5%	205	53.5%
Missing	10	3.2%	26	6.8%
Total	317	100.0%	383	100.0%

Exhibit E.32: Question 6. Thinking of your interactions with post-secondary schools (e.g., community/technical colleges, Minnesota state colleges and universities) please rate how easy or difficult it is for you to communicate with them about local workforce investment needs. Would you say that it is...

Question 6	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Very Easy	18	5.7%	29	7.6%
Easy	119	37.5%	139	36.3%
Difficult	52	16.4%	49	12.8%
Very Difficult	11	3.5%	9	2.3%
I don't interact with them	104	32.8%	124	32.4%
Missing	13	4.1%	33	8.6%
Total	317	100.0%	383	100.0%

Exhibit E.33: Question 7. Please rate your level of awareness of labor market conditions in the Workforce Service Area you serve. Would you say your level of awareness is...

Question 7	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Very High	64	20.2%	51	13.3%
High	185	58.4%	232	60.6%
Low	33	10.4%	36	9.4%
Very Low	4	1.3%	4	1.0%
I don't serve a specific Workforce Service Area	23	7.3%	32	8.4%
Missing	8	2.5%	28	8.8%
Total	317	100.0%	383	100.0%

Exhibit E.34: Question 8. Please rate your level of awareness of labor market conditions outside the Workforce Service Area you serve. Would you say your level of awareness is...

Question 8	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Very High	28	8.8%	15	3.9%
High	128	40.4%	157	41.0%
Low	98	30.9%	128	33.4%
Very Low	24	7.6%	21	5.5%
I don't serve a specific Workforce Service Area	23	7.3%	33	8.6%
Missing	16	5.0%	29	7.6%
Total	317	100.0%	383	100.0%

Exhibit E.35: Question 9. Thinking of your interactions with staff outside the Workforce Service Area you serve, please rate how easy or difficult it is for you to communicate with workforce system staff in other areas. Would you say that it is...

Question 9	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Very Easy	28	8.8%	35	9.1%
Easy	167	52.7%	162	42.3%
Difficult	34	10.7%	43	11.2%
Very Difficult	8	2.5%	12	3.1%
I don't serve a specific Workforce Service Area	53	16.7%	77	20.1%
I don't interact with them	18	5.7%	25	6.5%
Missing	9	2.8%	29	7.6%
Total	317	100.0%	383	100.0%

Exhibit E.36: Thinking of your interactions with job seekers, please rate how easy or difficult it is for you to work with job seekers to help them achieve their goals. Would you say that it is...

If serves JOBSEEKERS	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Very Easy	29	19.9%	24	16.1%
Easy	74	50.7%	82	55.0%
Difficult	36	24.7%	35	23.5%
Very Difficult	3	2.1%	4	2.7%
Don't interact with them	3	2.1%	4	2.7%
Missing	1	0.7%	4	2.7%
Total	146	100.0%	149	100.0%

Notes: This exhibit uses data from Questions 1 and 3.

Exhibit E.37: Help job seekers identify and prepare for job opportunities

If serves JOBSEEKERS	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Not at all Satisfied	2	1.4%	1	0.7%
Slightly Satisfied	14	9.7%	12	8.5%
Moderately Satisfied	29	20.1%	44	31.0%
Very Satisfied	82	56.9%	72	50.7%
Extremely Satisfied	17	11.8%	13	9.2%
Total	144	100.0%	142	100.0%

Notes: This exhibit uses data from Questions 1 and 2a.

Exhibit E.38: Help job seekers explore career alternatives

If serves JOBSEEKERS	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Not at all Satisfied	4	2.9%	1	0.7%
Slightly Satisfied	20	14.5%	13	9.3%
Moderately Satisfied	44	31.9%	46	32.9%
Very Satisfied	58	42.0%	68	48.6%
Extremely Satisfied	12	8.7%	12	8.6%
Total	138	100.0%	140	100.0%

Notes: This exhibit uses data from Questions 1 and 2b.

Exhibit E.39: Help job seekers identify relevant education and training resources

If serves JOBSEEKERS	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Not at all Satisfied	3	2.2%	0	0.0%
Slightly Satisfied	15	10.9%	18	13.0%
Moderately Satisfied	45	32.6%	42	30.4%
Very Satisfied	62	44.9%	64	46.4%
Extremely Satisfied	13	9.4%	14	10.1%
Total	138	100.0%	138	100.0%

Notes: This exhibit uses data from Questions 1 and 2c.

Exhibit E.40: Connect with job seekers or employers using social media

If serves JOBSEEKERS	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Not at all Satisfied	26	20.2%	18	13.4%
Slightly Satisfied	28	21.7%	30	22.4%
Moderately Satisfied	37	28.7%	44	32.8%
Very Satisfied	32	24.8%	37	27.6%
Extremely Satisfied	6	4.7%	5	3.7%
Total	129	100.0%	134	100.0%

Notes: This exhibit uses data from Questions 1 and 2f.

Exhibit E.41: Research and use information on current labor market conditions and/or projected future labor market conditions

If serves JOBSEEKERS	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Not at all Satisfied	2	1.4%	5	3.6%
Slightly Satisfied	16	11.6%	15	10.9%
Moderately Satisfied	41	29.7%	51	37.0%
Very Satisfied	59	42.8%	53	38.4%
Extremely Satisfied	20	14.5%	14	10.1%
Total	138	100.0%	138	100.0%

Notes: This exhibit uses data from Questions 1 and 2g.

Exhibit E.42: Understand and leverage current economic development initiatives in Minnesota

If serves JOBSEEKERS	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Not at all Satisfied	19	15.0%	15	11.2%
Slightly Satisfied	28	22.0%	32	23.9%
Moderately Satisfied	42	33.1%	54	40.3%
Very Satisfied	33	26.0%	29	19.4%
Extremely Satisfied	5	3.9%	7	5.2%
Total	127	100.0%	134	100.0%

Notes: This exhibit uses data from Questions 1 and 2h.

Exhibit E.43: Awareness of labor market conditions in WSA

If serves JOBSEEKERS	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Very High	30	20.5%	16	10.7%
High	97	66.4%	101	67.8%
Low	13	8.9%	21	14.1%
Very Low	3	2.1%	3	2.0%
Don't serve specific WSA	2	1.4%	3	2.0%
Missing	1	0.7%	5	3.4%
Total	146	100.0%	149	100.0%

Notes: This exhibit uses data from Questions 1 and 7.

Exhibit E.44: Awareness of labor market conditions out of WSA

If serves JOBSEEKERS	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Very High	9	6.2%	4	2.7%
High	67	45.9%	59	39.6%
Low	54	37.0%	65	43.6%
Very Low	12	8.2%	12	8.1%
Don't serve specific WSA	2	1.4%	3	2.0%
Missing	2	1.4%	6	4.0%
Total	146	100.0%	149	100.0%

Notes: This exhibit uses data from Questions 1 and 8.