

Finding work or finding workers?

Part 3: Engaging populations with high barriers to employment

As the number of unemployed hits record lows, employers are running up against something new: engaging with and recruiting workers who struggle with high barriers to employment. These barriers must be addressed so that workers can get jobs and keep them.

What are high barriers to employment?



Disabilities



Criminal
history



Immigrants/
refugees



Poverty

Barriers to employment

Individual barriers: For workers, barriers to employment involve barriers to the basics of life many of us take for granted: access to transportation, child care, housing, and health care. Other barriers include obligations they have little control over, like meetings with parole officers, attending court-ordered counseling, or caring for a sick child.

Business barriers: Barriers on the employers' side fall under a couple of themes.

- Fear of the unknown: For example, do potential legal liabilities go with hiring someone from these groups?
- Perceptions: For example, assuming someone with a criminal background will be a bad employee.

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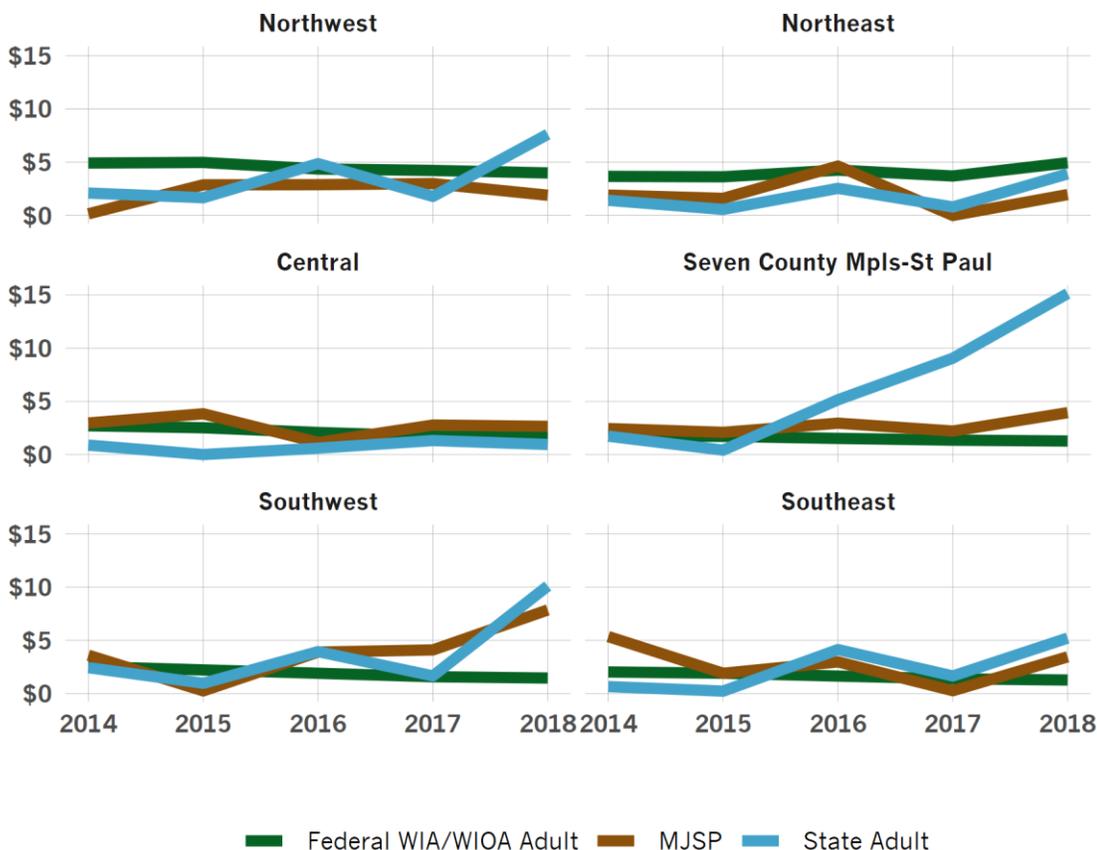
Providing a network of services

Beyond training people in specific job skills, workforce development organizations are partnering with more state and local agencies and community organizations to build **networks of support services** for individuals with high barriers to employment.

Funding disparities

There is a perception among the rural workforce development professionals we interviewed that despite the higher costs to provide services and support programs in rural areas, Greater Minnesota is disadvantaged by the system distributing state funds to worker programs.

WIOA, MJSP & State Adult funds per 18- to 64-year-old



Three main sources fund programs that help people with high barriers to employment. The State Adult funding stream has changed the most in the last few years, largely due to the introduction of direct appropriations and competitive grants.