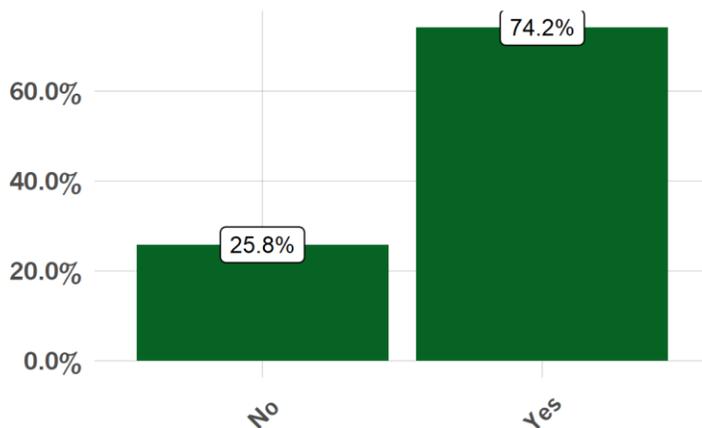


Finding work or finding workers?

Part 4: Rural high schoolers' perceptions of local job opportunities

Good news in Greater Minnesota

Finding a well-paying job in the region



DEED conducted a survey in 2018 of over 700 tenth-graders attending regional career fairs in southwest Minnesota. Results showed nearly 75% believed they could find a well-paying job in their preferred career field in the region where they reside, great news for workforce development folks and businesses across Greater Minnesota.

Helping youth understand the career opportunities available to them

Support from area businesses: One of the more important developments in workforce development recently has been growing engagement with and support from area businesses and employers. Two examples of these initiatives:

- *Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities:* Businesses and employers in Greater Minnesota are investing in the development of local “CEO” programs, which focus on entrepreneurial thinking. These courses teach students not just how to think creatively, but how to put those ideas to work by starting their own businesses.
- *Prostart:* Resorts and restaurants around the Brainerd Lakes region are investing in ProStart programs, a two-year curriculum that teaches culinary techniques and management skills, providing real-life experience in area restaurants.

Rebirth of career and technical education programs: Minnesota used to have over 60 career and technical programs, but after years of shutting them down, they’re experiencing a resurgence in Greater Minnesota. In southwest Minnesota, LYFT, an initiative to facilitate partnerships to support these programs, funded over 30 programs in the first two years and is projected to serve more than 1,000 students.

To read the full report, visit our website at ruralmn.org.

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A potential model for Minnesota in South Dakota



The Build Dakota Scholarship program provides students an opportunity to attend South Dakota technical schools tuition-free and get a job in a high-demand field afterward. In exchange, scholarship recipients commit to living and working in South Dakota, in their field of study, for three years following graduation. The program receives major funding from the Denny Sanford Foundation and the state of South Dakota, along with many other businesses.

Can we keep our students? Recommendations:

Many programs and strategies being tried in rural areas are producing results, but concern remains over their long-term sustainability. Following are some recommendations:

- The **cost of transporting students** to career programs and work sites can be the biggest barrier for rural school districts. Supporting transportation costs for school districts that participate in—or want to participate in—career and technical education collaborations would be a valuable area to explore.
- Can these career programs be tweaked so that they **contribute to students' graduation requirements**? As the rules stand right now, students must choose between exploring local, high-demand careers and taking courses that meet graduation requirements.
- Due to the teacher shortage, it is extremely challenging for career and technical education programs to find teachers that meet the state's secondary teaching license requirements needed to qualify for federal Perkins funding. Can changes be made to allow school districts more **flexibility in hiring instructors** so that they can access Perkins funding?
- **Can Minnesota build a Build Dakota-style program of its own?** Build Dakota may seem like another obstacle in the ongoing battle for workers, but we already have an extensive infrastructure of higher education institutions and K-12 schools. We also have a tradition of business and workforce development partnerships, and foundations with a history of investing funds in promising long-term projects.

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