



Minnesota

Clear Outcomes in Action

The state has developed tools that make education and employment outcomes accessible and actionable for policymakers, institution leaders, employers, and students.

Minnesota continues to have one of the nation's leading postsecondary education-to-employment data systems. Through strong cross-sector partnerships, Minnesota has built education-to-employment data systems that support policymakers, institution leaders, and employers, as well as students and their families. This commitment, which dates back to former Gov. Mark Dayton's administration in the 2010s and continues under Gov. Tim Walz's One Minnesota Plan, is rooted deeply in the state's focus on equity, access to opportunity, and a well-prepared workforce.

The Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System, or SLEDs,¹ and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development's² Labor Market Information Office continue to develop and enhance tools that make education and employment outcomes accessible and actionable for these audiences. For instance, both offices have networks of regional data experts to help local decision-makers — such as secondary and postsecondary educators, workforce boards, and chambers of commerce — access and use state data resources.

- ➔ Minnesota's commitment to building education-to-employment data systems is rooted deeply in the state's focus on equity, access to opportunity, and a well-prepared workforce.



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I Minnesota's approach

Data collected

Minnesota collects enrollment and credential outcome data for most nondegree and noncredit postsecondary education and training programs. The state's robust nondegree and noncredit collections include:

- College-issued, for-credit nondegree credentials
- College-issued, noncredit nondegree credentials through occupational training
- Occupation licensure
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act-eligible training programs
- Other third-party credentials, including industry certifications and apprenticeships

Minnesota has also enhanced its state wage records by collecting hours worked and work location and is one of only two states using these enhancements in education-to-employment analysis. With these enhancements, Minnesota can report not only annual or quarterly earnings but also hourly wages and full- or part-time employment in the Graduate Employment Outcomes tool.³ SLEDs' high school-to-employment reporting tool⁴ also includes hourly wages.

Data integrated across sources

Minnesota participates in three national and multistate initiatives to assess employment outcomes for students who relocate or work outside of the state – the U.S. Census Bureau’s Post-Secondary Employment Outcomes project,⁵ the State Wage Interchange System through the U.S. Department of Labor,⁶ and the Multi-State Data Collaborative.⁷

Data provided to the public

The state publishes integrated education and employment data for:

- Public four-year institutions
- Private four-year institutions
- Community colleges
- Nondegree credentials

Only seven other states publish employment outcomes for both public and private four-year institutions. These education-to-employment outcomes are available as open data files and a public interactive reporting tool through the Department of Employment and Economic Development’s Graduate Employment Outcomes tool,⁸ with disaggregation by race/ethnicity. Separately, the Minnesota Department of Employment and Education Development, or DEED, publishes employment outcomes for WIOA-eligible training in the Uniform Report Card⁹ with disaggregation by race/ethnicity, gender, and other demographic characteristics. The state is in the process of linking additional nondegree credentials to employment outcomes.

SLEDs publishes integrated high school-to-employment data¹⁰ in a public interactive reporting tool, which supports downloading aggregate education-to-opportunity statistics. The reporting tool allows disaggregation by race/ethnicity, gender, family income/economically disadvantaged status, and other demographic categories.

SLEDs affords researchers access to de-identified, individual-level education-to-opportunity datasets. It has established clear processes¹¹ to ensure that research aligns with state priorities and publishes completed research on its website so that findings are available to policymakers and the public.

Data used for impact

The Minnesota P-20 Education Partnership governs SLEDs, and the project is managed jointly by the Minnesota Office of Higher Education,¹² Minnesota Department of Education,¹³ and DEED. SLEDs is responsible for providing education and workforce policymakers, researchers, and students and their families with data, research, and reports to expand reporting on students’ educational outcomes, evaluate the effectiveness of educational and workforce programs, and evaluate the relationship between education and workforce outcomes.

SLEDs has sustainable funding, dedicated staffing, and ready access to integrated education-to-employment data from which it generates education-to-employment insights, including publicly available reports and interactive reporting tools. The system also responds to other agencies’ data requests, supporting informed policymaking.

For instance, the Minnesota Department of Health leveraged SLEDs education-to-employment data to evaluate the state’s health professional loan forgiveness program. The Department of Health found that this program effectively serves its intended purpose, ensuring that residents of small towns and rural communities have access to licensed health care providers.¹⁴ Seeing this success, the state then increased funding for this loan forgiveness program and expanded the types of health care professionals who are eligible.

I Alignment with goals of state leadership and key partners

Minnesota has developed SLEDs to match data from third grade through completion of postsecondary education and into the workforce. The SLEDs Governance Committee includes representatives from these three state agencies, the state's public higher education institutions and systems, and education associations and advocates, including the Minnesota Private College Council, the Minnesota Career College Association, and Education Minnesota. This cross-agency structure combined with strong community relationships ensures SLEDs' research aligns with statewide priorities and is used to inform decision-making and education policy.

I Strategy

The ongoing work aligns closely with the governor's One Minnesota Plan,¹⁵ which envisions that "Minnesota is the best state in the country for children to grow up in — those of all races, ethnicities, religions, economic statuses, gender identities, sexual orientations, disabilities, and ZIP codes." Nora Morris, director of SLEDs, noted that Minnesota is consistently rated as one of the country's best K-12 education systems, but the state also struggles with one of the nation's largest education opportunity gaps. The data systems prioritize disaggregation to ensure all Minnesotans are benefiting from the states' policies and programs.

Transparency is also a core value in Minnesota's data culture. In response to challenges related to small reporting samples, the state actively seeks creative solutions, such as combining multiple years or refining suppression protocols. In 1999, the Labor Market Information Office adopted an internal philosophy of releasing the most data possible, prioritizing data access while remaining compliant with privacy laws.

I Implementation

SLEDs and the Minnesota Early Childhood Longitudinal Data System have established a Regional Coaching Network,¹⁶ placing one or two data coaches in each of the state's nine regional service cooperatives to support local schools, districts, colleges, and other stakeholders in using integrated education-to-employment data resources. These coaches hold full-time data roles in their region's education community and take on their coaching position in addition to these full-time responsibilities. SLEDs provides training, and the coaches meet together regularly to share tips and project updates. Coaches teach local stakeholders about SLEDs resources, helping them understand and use data for decision-making. Coaches can access sensitive SLEDs data, conducting analysis on behalf of local stakeholders.

SLEDs borrowed this model from DEED's Regional Analysis & Outreach unit.¹⁷ DEED employs six full-time regional analysts.¹⁸ Similar to their SLEDs counterparts, these data experts conduct presentations to higher education institutions, workforce development boards, and chambers of commerce. They regularly publish blogs (such as the metro region's March 2025 post exploring employment in the construction industry)¹⁹ and host virtual training sessions.²⁰

I Measuring success

SLEDs and DEED track the number of users served, but the systems define success in terms of the strength of partnerships. Broad data use is not possible without partnerships. These regional networks share the state's resources with local users and report local users' needs back to the state. This feedback loop helps SLEDs and DEED identify limitations of existing tools.

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TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Minnesota has developed several tools and resources to support its efforts:

- The [Regional Coaching Network](#) and [Regional Labor Market Analysts](#) are promising models for increasing data literacy and building champions for using integrated education-to-opportunity data for decision-making. The state also produces training materials to support interpretation of complex labor market and education data.
- The [Graduate Employment Outcomes tool](#) includes employment outcomes for the state's public and private four-year institutions as well as community colleges, streamlining navigation for users.
- [SLEDs' tool visualizing employment outcomes for high school graduates](#) allows users to disaggregate employment rate, hourly wages, and industry of employment by race/ethnicity, gender, economic status, and other demographic categories.

Endnotes

- 1 Minnesota SLEDs. (Saint Paul, MN: Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System, accessed April 24, 2025). <https://sleds.mn.gov/>.
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- 3 Graduate Employment Outcomes. (Saint Paul, MN: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, accessed April 24, 2025). <https://mn.gov/deed/data/data-tools/graduate-employment-outcomes/>.
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- 7 Multi-State Data Collaboratives. (Washington, DC: National Association of State Workforce Agencies, accessed April 24, 2025). <https://www.naswa.org/partnerships/multi-state-data-collaboratives/about>.
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- 9 Report Card. (Saint Paul, MN: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, accessed April 24, 2025). <https://mn.gov/deed/data/workforce-data/report-card/report-card.jsp>.
- 10 "Entering the Workforce: What happens to high school graduates who don't enroll in college?" https://sleds.mn.gov/#HSGraduatesToEmployment/orgId-999999000__groupType-state__ECODEVREGION-FOC_NONE__hsGradEmploymentCOHORTID-2023__p-1.
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- 13 Minnesota Department of Education. (Saint Paul, MN: Minnesota Department of Education, accessed April 24, 2025). <https://education.mn.gov/mde/index.htm>.
- 14 Evaluation of Minnesota's Health Professional Loan Forgiveness Program. (Saint Paul, MN: Minnesota Department of Health, accessed August 13, 2025). <https://sleds.mn.gov/#data~:text=Loan%20Forgiveness%20Evaluation>.
- 15 One Minnesota Plan. (Saint Paul, MN: Minnesota Management and Budget, accessed April 24, 2025). <https://mn.gov/mmb/one-mn-plan/>.
- 16 Regional Coaching Network. (Saint Paul, MN: Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System, accessed April 24, 2025). <https://sleds.mn.gov/#outreach>.
- 17 Regional Labor Markets. (Saint Paul, MN: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, accessed April 24, 2025). <https://mn.gov/deed/data/regional-lmi/>.
- 18 DEED's Regional Analysts. (Saint Paul, MN: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, accessed April 24, 2025). https://mn.gov/deed/assets/deed_rao_flyer_121624_tcm1045-578925.pdf.
- 19 Tim O'Neill. "Exploring Construction Jobs in the Metro," Metro Region (blog). (Saint Paul, MN: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, March 31, 2025). <https://mn.gov/deed/data/locallook/metro/metro-blog.jsp#detail/appld/1/id/675867>.
- 20 Labor Market Information Training. (Saint Paul, MN: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, accessed April 24, 2025). <https://mn.gov/deed/data/regional-lmi/lmi-training.jsp>.