



Minnesota Rural Health **Policy Summit**

St. Cloud, MN | Nov. 19, 2025



Sharing Solutions that Support Rural Workforce



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Shifting Economic Development

MINNESOTA RURAL HEALTH POLICY SUMMIT

NOVEMBER 17TH, 2025

Help wanted – Job vacancies

Looking for pools of labor – Current state of workforce

How did we get here? – Increasing deaths, Decreasing births, Stagnant migration

Shifting economic development

A quick journey

First – lets brag

Top-5 lowest unemployment rate

Top-5 highest labor force participation rate

Top performing state during recessions

5th most diverse economy

What may
threaten our
awesome-ness?

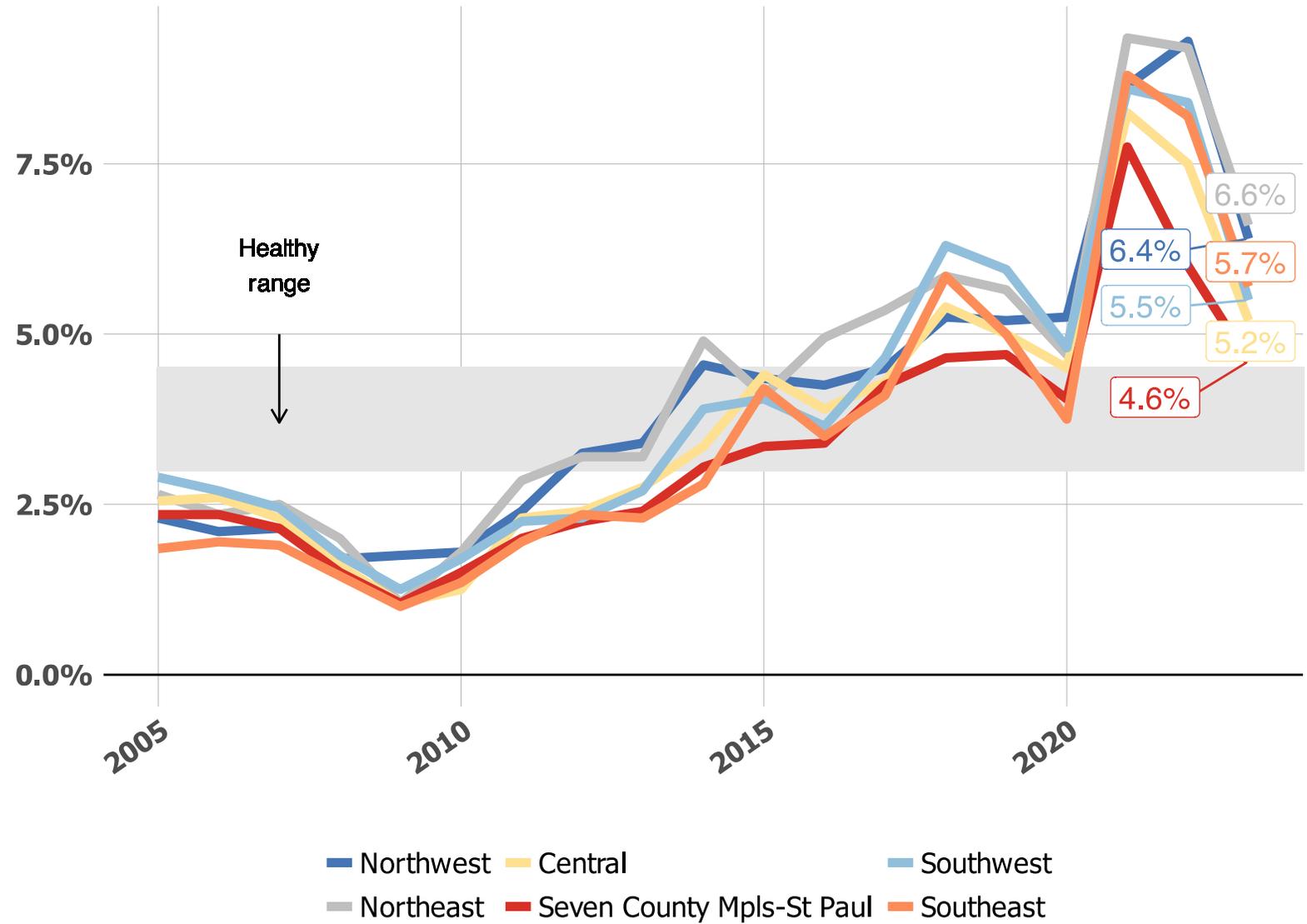
LACK OF PEOPLE!

- Labor force growth has been decreasing for 2 decades
- Terrible at keeping youth (statewide)
- Immigration policy



Job vacancy rate

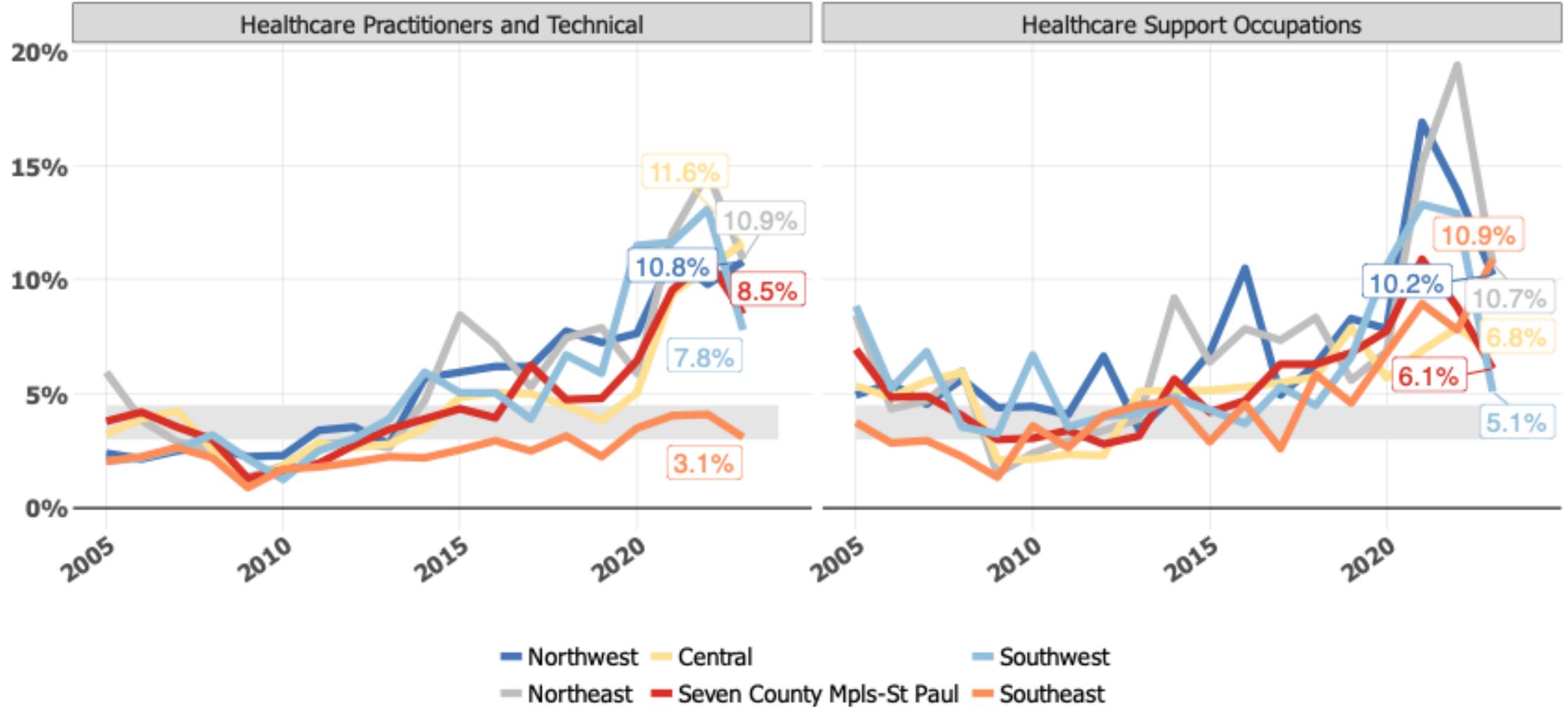
Job vacancy rate continues to be historically high



MN DEED - Job Vacancy Survey

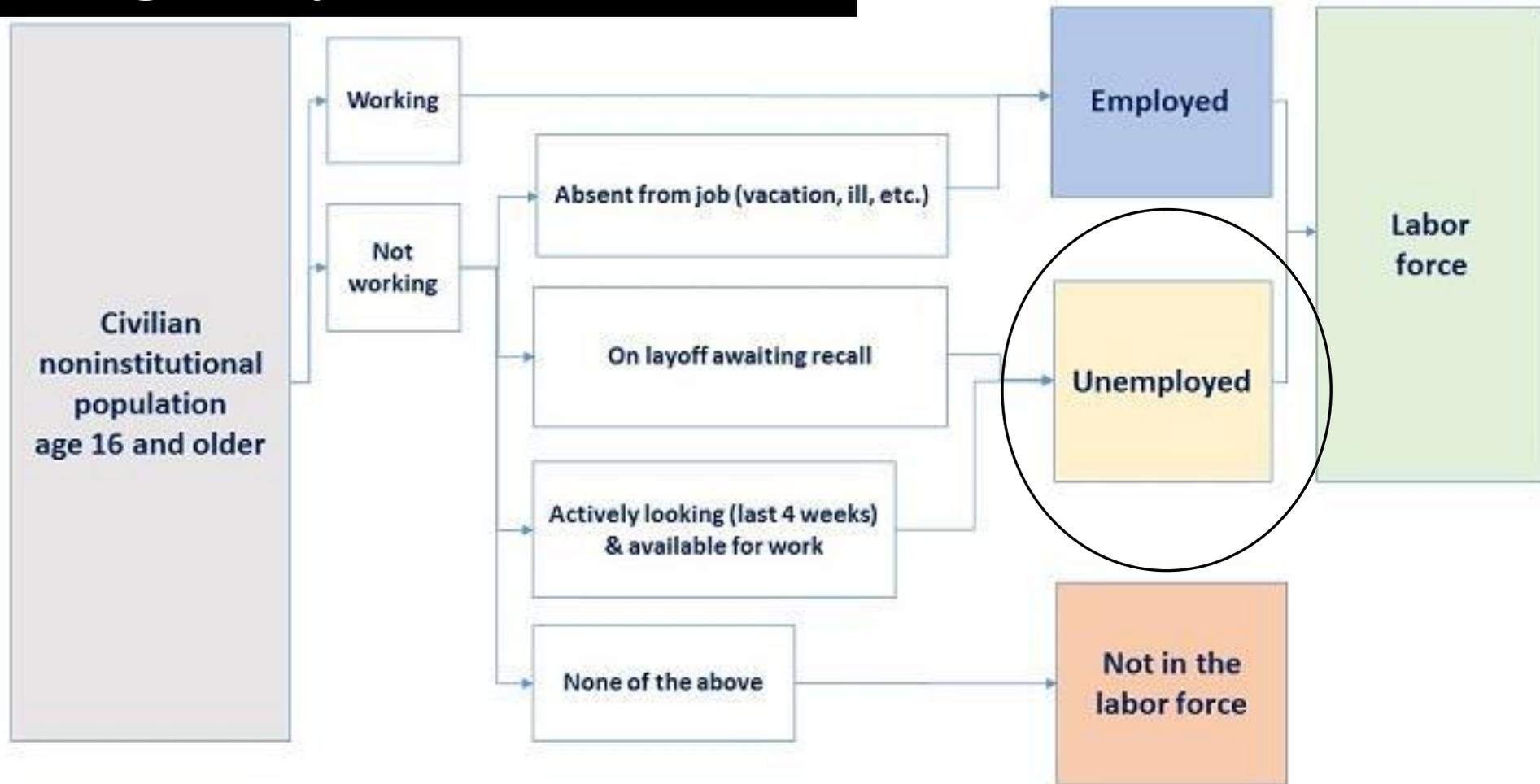
Job vacancy rate - healthcare occupations

Healthcare occupations continue historically high vacancy rates



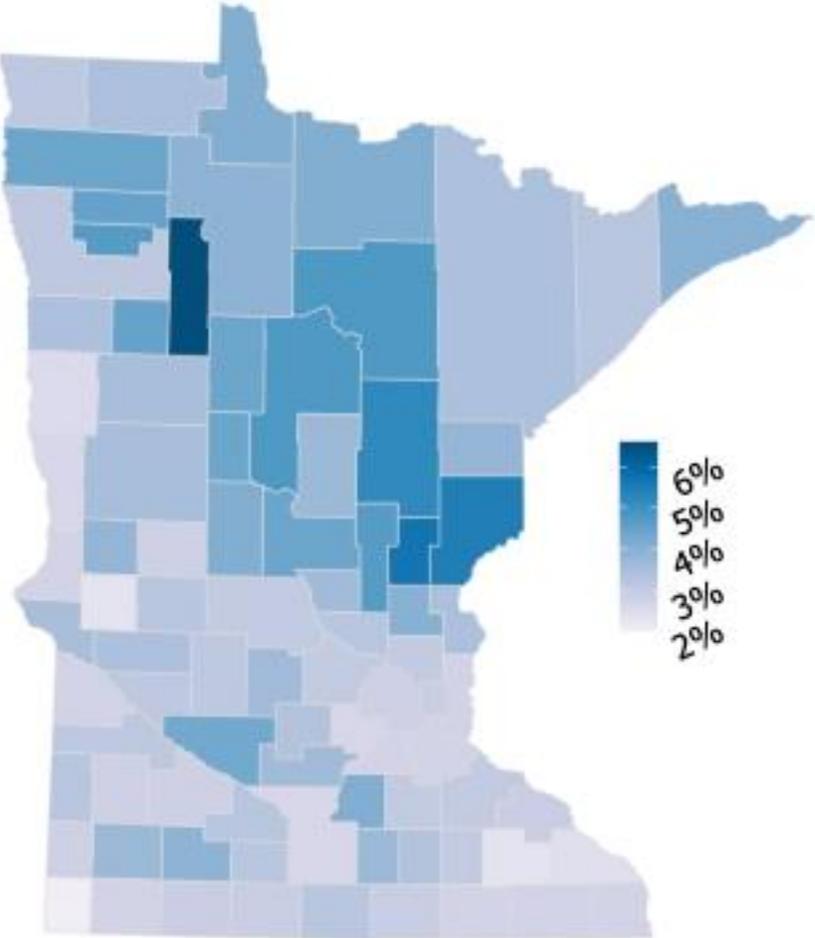
MN DEED - Job vacancy rates

Looking for pools of labor



2024 Unemployment Rate

Historically low unemployment rates



MN DEED - LAUS

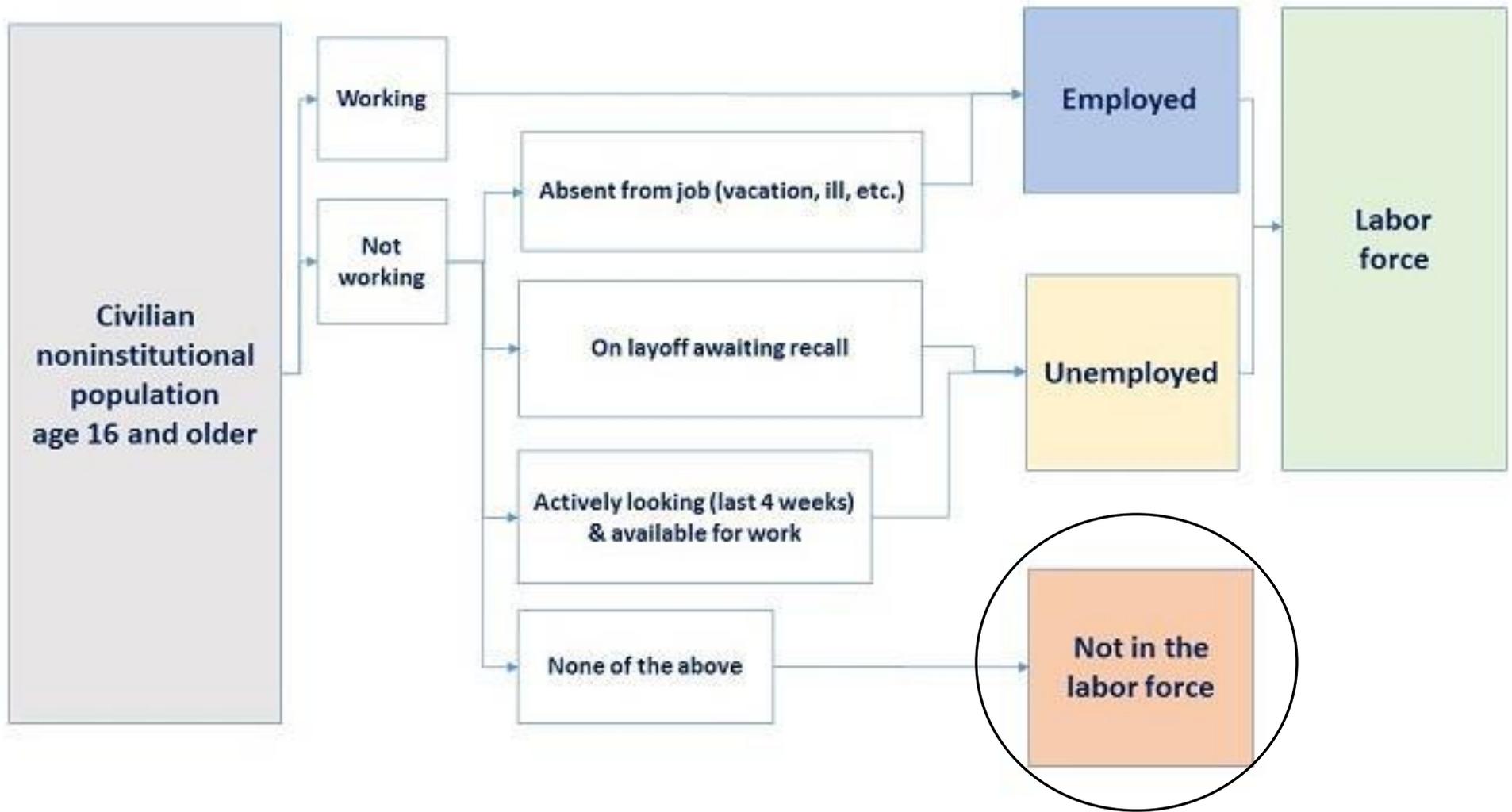
Unemployment rate

Rock – 2.0%

Median – 3.2%

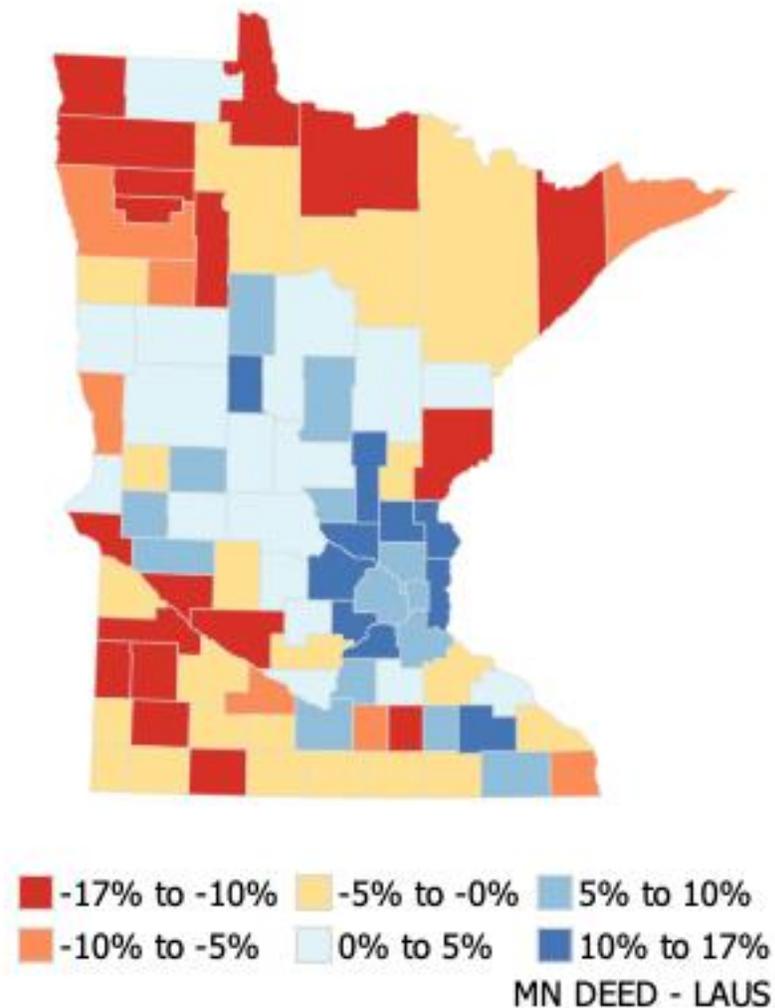
Mean – 3.4%

Clearwater – 6.6%



Percent change in labor force since 2012

Most of rural Minnesota has less labor force in 2024 than in 2012



Change in NUMBER of labor force participation

Largest decline: -16.7% (Steele)

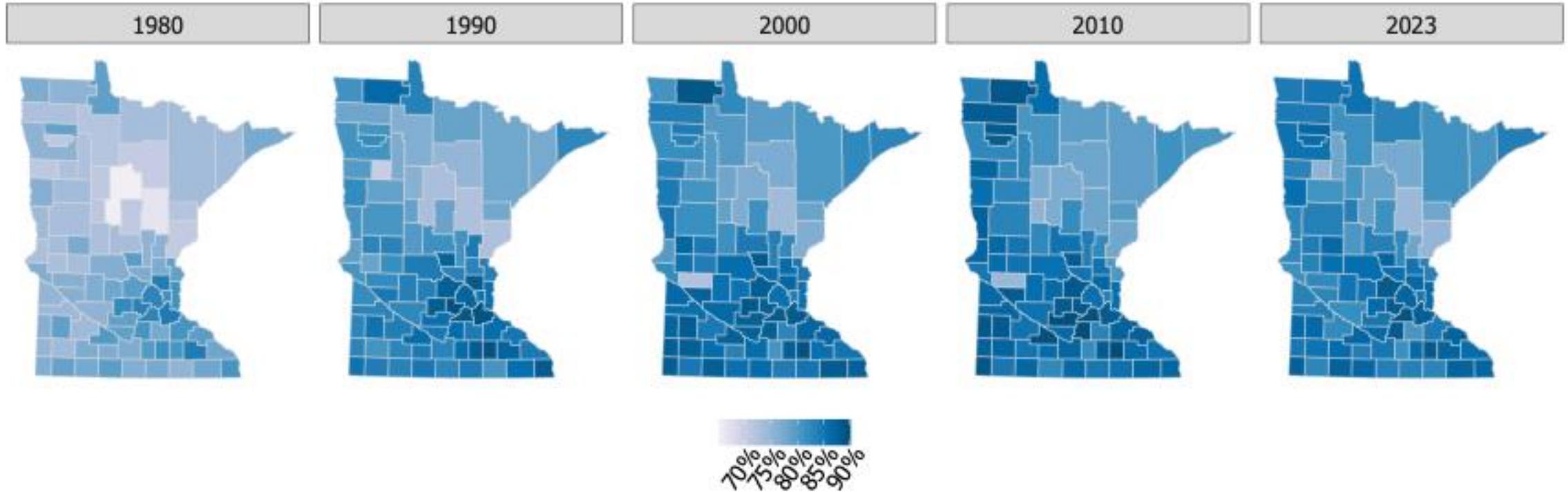
Mean change: -.5%

Median change: -1.5%

Largest increase: 20.8% (Wright)

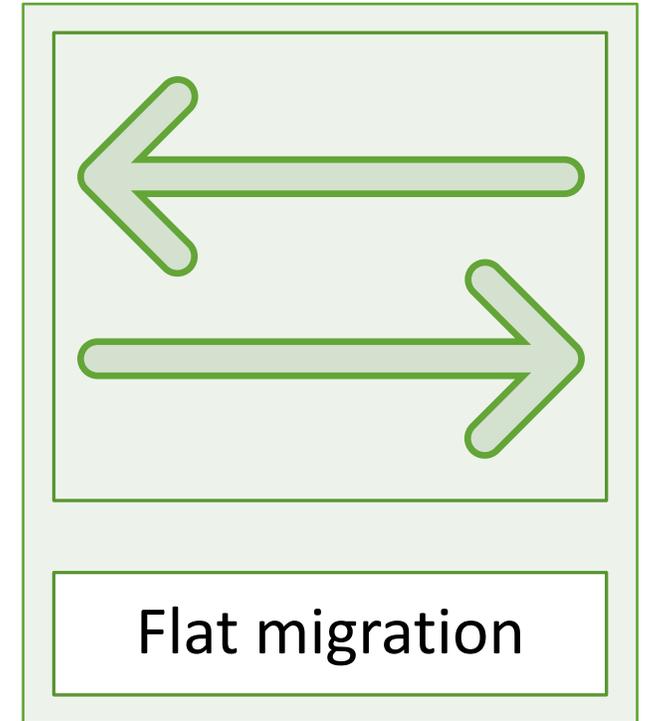
Percent of 20-64 years olds participating in labor force

Labor force participation has improved dramatically



U.S. Census Bureau - Decennial Census & ACS 5-year

Labor force participation RATE



Minimal pools of labor - How did we get here?



**Time to work
together: our roles
in keeping and
attracting
residents**

To summarize

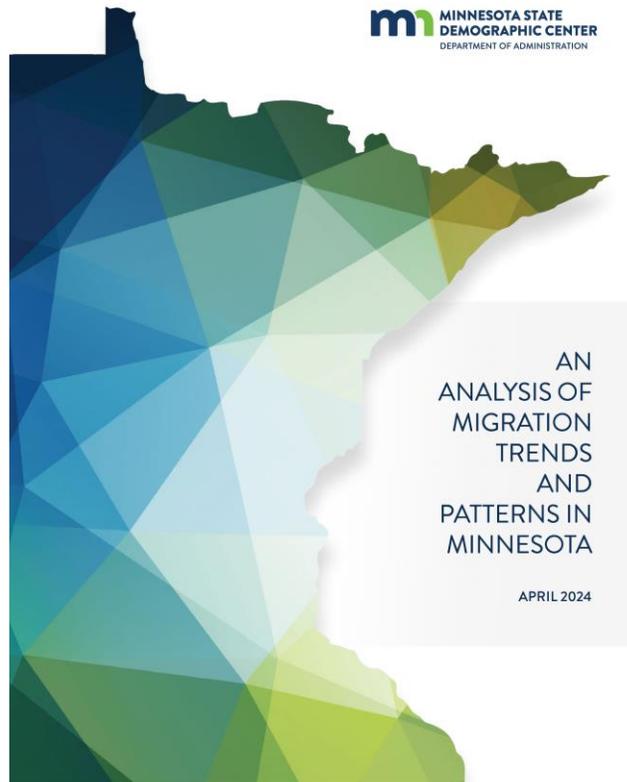
**GOOD NEWS
for Rural MN!**

All areas are experiencing an increase in deaths while births are flat or declining.

Our more rural areas are experiencing more deaths than births and it's worsening.

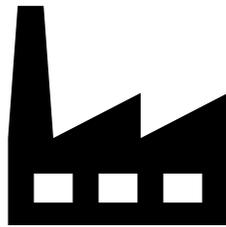
Improved migration numbers across all of Minnesota except for our core urban areas has helped mitigate the worsening natural change occurring.

Future growth will be from migration

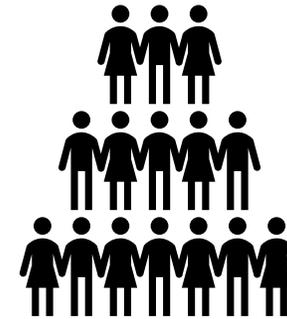


[T]he importance of migration is growing as birthrates fall and the state's population ages.... By the late 2040s any population growth that the state experiences will be due to migration rather than natural growth (the balance of births minus deaths).Pg. 2

Taking advantage



From Business
Recruitment



To People
Recruitment

This is a statewide issue!

Policy implications: from chasing smokestacks to chasing people

JOB RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

Tax incentives

Infrastructure investments

Focus on labor force

PEOPLE RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

Engaging high school students

Housing programs

Childcare

Visitor strategies

Engaging recent retirees

Current resident engagement

Investments in natural amenities

Focus on quality of life issues

Source: University of Minnesota Extension | Center for Community Vitality

Economic Development – Resident Recruitment



18-29

College

Perceived ideas of opportunities

Night life



30-49

Affordable housing

Smaller class sizes

Quality of life

Moving to rural

U of MN Extension Economic Development –

Rural Brain Gain



50+

Access to natural amenities

Healthcare

Retirement pace-of-life and
community

Warmer weather

MEDIA

In Rural Minnesota, a Documentary Series Tells Local Stories and Invites New Residents

Otter Tail County's "Rural by Choice" docuseries has been well received, with a second season in the works.

<https://ottertailakescountry.com/rural-by-choice/>

VARIETY

Rural Minnesota pitchman says small-town life sells itself. Millennials and GenXers are buying.

Minnesota's a leader in amplifying the "brain gain" trend.

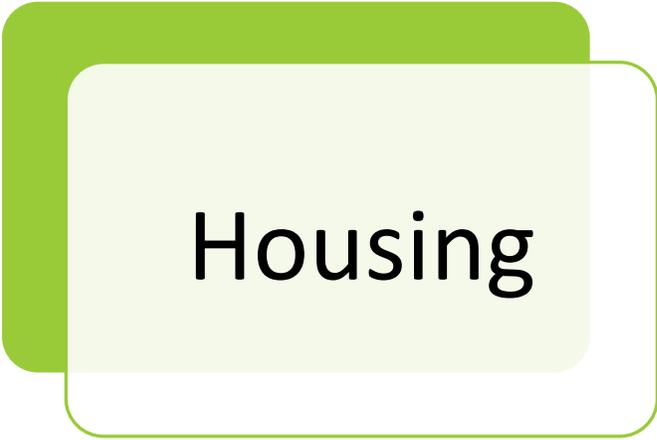
By Rachel Hutton Star Tribune | JUNE 17, 2022 — 7:55AM



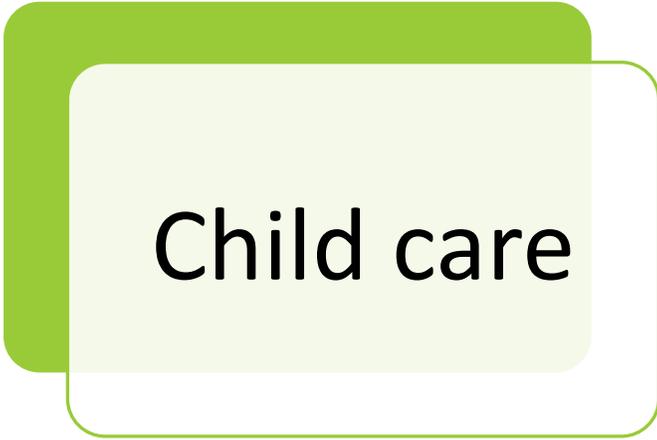
AARON LAVINSKY, STAR TRIBUNE

John Carlson and son Sutton, 4, enjoyed the lakeside setting at home in New York Mills, Minn.

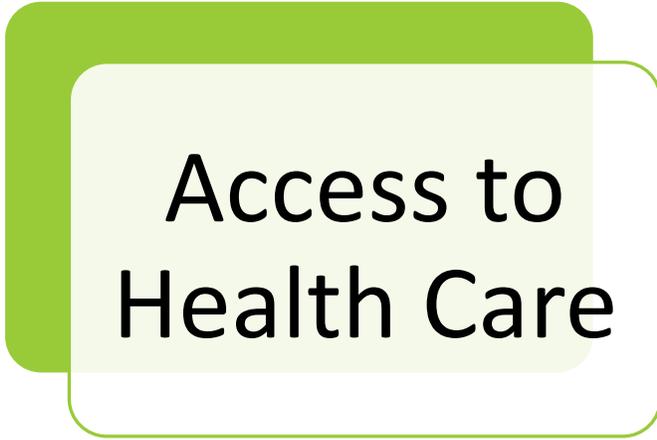
Marketing and....



Housing



Child care

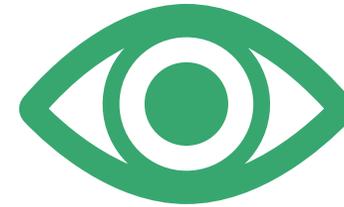


Access to
Health Care

Economic Development – Retaining high school graduates



Relationships

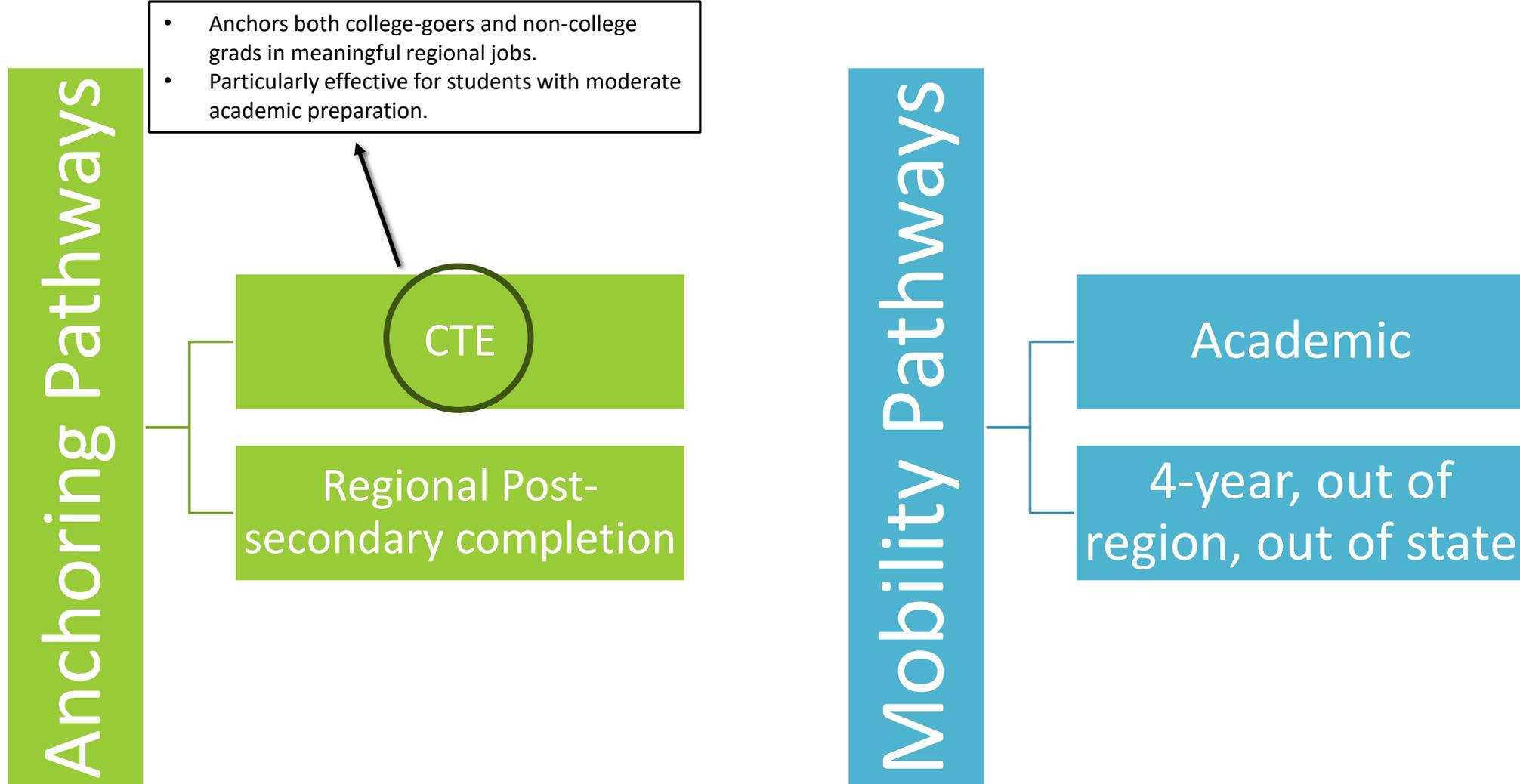


Observations

Retention – engaging youth



Engaging high school students



Unanchored Pathway

Not engaged
in CTE

Non-college
grads

Disconnected
academically

We are not alone



LOCAL

South Dakota ends college tuition reciprocity with Minnesota. Here's what that means for students.

Both states are launching new programs as the competition for a smaller number of college students intensifies.

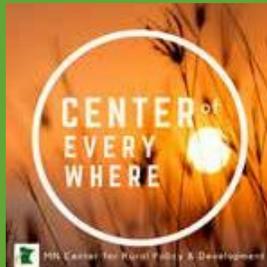
North Dakota State extends new scholarship amid worries about Minnesota tuition program





center for **rural policy**
and development
ruralmn.org

Thank you!





Medi-Sota

Serving Rural Healthcare



3 R N E T

Initiatives

School Engagement

Higher Education Collaboration

Career Pathways & Apprenticeships

Policy & Resource Needs

**Support &
Funding**

**Strengthen
School
Partnerships**

**Promote
Rural
Careers**

MN State HealthForce Center of Excellence

- Part of [Minnesota State Colleges and Universities](#) (MN State)
- Develop Minnesota's healthcare workforce
 - [Scrubs Camp](#)
 - [HOSA- Future Health Professionals](#)
 - Classes and curriculum for: Pre-nursing ([Nursing Assistant](#), [Medication Aide](#), [Mental Health First Aid](#), [Healthcare Core Curriculum](#))
 - Nursing ([Center for Nursing Equity and Excellence](#))
 - Allied Health – Lab Workforce Group and the Health Education & Industry Partnership

MN HFCOE Contact: Elaine Vandenburg -
elaine.vandenburg@winona.edu

MN HOSA-Future Health Professionals

*HOSA-FHP is an international, **student-led** organization for students in 6th grade - college who are interested in learning more about the healthcare profession. Through **leadership** activities, hands-on **learning**, volunteer and community **service** and **innovative** competitive events, HOSA members become better prepared for college & career.*

*A Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO), **MN HOSA-FHP** is focused on creating the next generation of healthcare professionals. Serving over **2,500 students** across the state, we are an **effective talent pipeline** for the healthcare industry in Minnesota.*

www.minnesotahosa.org @minnesotahosa



MN HOSA-FHP call for support:

- **Judges & event volunteers** for our Mid-Winter Conferences January 5 (Eden Prairie), January 7 (Anoka) and January 9 (Rochester)
- **Support hundreds** of Minnesota high school students exploring healthcare careers and leadership.
- **Make an impact** by helping develop the future healthcare workforce - an opportunity to give back, support the talent pipeline, and inspire the next generation of professionals.
- **All materials provided** and volunteers from *all* fields are welcome! Events include presentations and hands-on skills, with opportunities for professionals and students in allied health, nursing, and biological sciences.
- **To learn more** contact Summer Hagy: director@minnesotahosa.org





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***Success is when reality catches up
to your imagination.***

Simon Sinek