

## Keeping Communication Current

February 3, 2014

### Who Are The Long-Term Unemployed? (In 3 Graphs)

When you are out of work and looking for 27 weeks or longer, you become part of a group the Bureau of Labor Statistics calls long-term unemployed. The share of long-term unemployed workers hit its peak in May 2010, when 46 percent of the unemployed were long-term unemployed. It has hovered

around 40 percent of the unemployed in the three years since.

[In the State of the Union address, the President talked] about helping the long-term unemployed. He is expected to press big American companies to pledge not to discriminate against them when they're

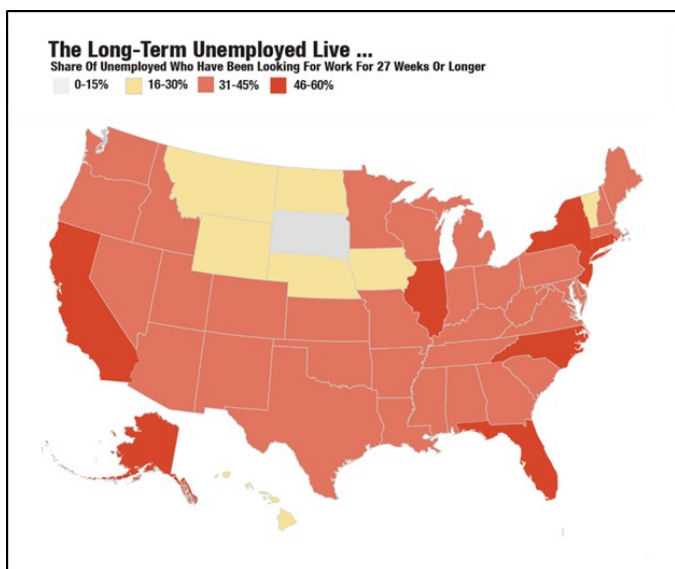
hiring. Dow Chemical, Bank of America and Xerox have reportedly already signed the president's pledge.

That got us wondering, who are the long-term unemployed?

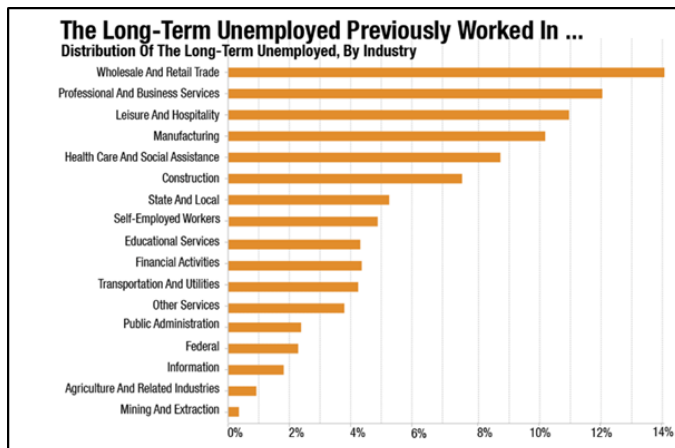
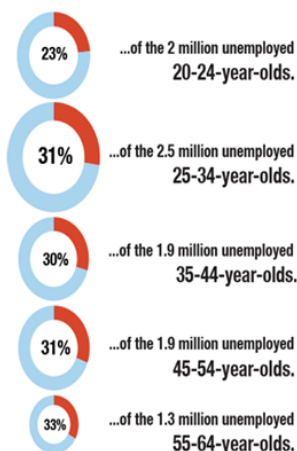
*One thing to note — this is a rough measure. It doesn't distinguish between mean-*

*ingful employment and seasonal employment. That means workers who happen to pick up a shift or two somewhere or find a job for a season won't appear in these numbers.*

Submitted by Jinny Rietmann, WDI – Rochester. Article by Quoc Trung Bui at <http://www.npr.org/blogs/money/2014/01/28/267743569/who-are-the-long-term-unemployed-in-three-graphs>



#### The Long-Term Unemployed Make Up ...



Source:  
Bureau Of Labor Statistics

Credit:  
Quoc Trung Bui/NPR

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## Job/Career Fairs

The following is a list of sector-based job fairs that will be held at the Rochester WorkForce Center:

Retail/Customer Service—Wednesday, February 26  
Health Care—Wednesday, March 12  
Staffing Agencies—Wednesday, May 21

Each will run from 9:00 a.m. to Noon in the lower level of the Rochester WorkForce Center.

The Construction Job/Career Fair will be held in the Commons area of the Heintz Center on Wednesday, March 26, from 9:00 a.m. to Noon.

The Post Bulletin/WorkForce Center/RCTC Job Fair will be held at the RCTC Sports Center on Wednesday, April 30 from 9:00 a.m. to Noon.

*Submitted by Bruce Thompson, WDI—Rochester.*

## Living on too little?

Find resources and information at:

**South Central MN**

**Project Community Connect**

**Tuesday, March 25, 2014**

**11 a.m. — 3:30 p.m.**

**Verizon Wireless Center**

**1 Civic Center Plaza, Mankato**

### Services Offered

- Legal services
- Medical/dental services
- Housing resources
- Veterans' services
- Financial literacy
- Free HIV testing
- Free Lunch
- ID & birth certificate vouchers
- Youth out-of-school activities
- Transportation/Transporte/Gaadiid — Call Kari at MVAC: 507-389-6968 with transportation questions.
- Interpreters available. Hablamos español. Soomaali baan ku hadalnaa.
- Childcare available. Cuidado de niños disponible. Childcare laga heli karaa.

For more information: facebook: South Central MN Project Community Connect, [www.scmnpcc.wordpress.com](http://www.scmnpcc.wordpress.com) or (507) 389-6968. Veterans can call 888-VET-LINK for assistance.

Organized by:  
Blue Earth County  
Homeless Response Team

Leadership by:

Minnesota  
Valley Action  
Council  
Employment  
Services & Supportive  
Housing

Minnesota  
Valley Action  
Council  
Affordable  
Housing

Partners  
Affordable  
Housing

United  
Way  
Greater Mankato Area  
United Way

## Workforce Development Council (WDC) Leadership

On January 23, 2014, an election for WDC Officers and Trustees was held during the Workforce Development Council Annual Winter meeting in Washington, D.C. Following the election, newly seated WDC President Laurie Bouillion Larrea also made five allotted appointments to the national Board. We are pleased to announce that among the individuals who will serve on the WDC Board of Trustees for a one-year term is Randy Johnson, Workforce Development, Inc., Rochester, MN.



Randy Johnson is the Executive Director of Workforce Development, Inc. (WDI) in southeastern Minnesota. He has held leadership positions in the Minnesota Workforce Council Association (MWCA), the Rochester Area Math Science Partnership (RAMSP), HealthForce Minnesota, the Area Health Education Committee for SE MN, the statewide STEM Network, the Southern Minnesota Regional Competitiveness project, and the three-state AIM-2-WIN economic development consortium. In 2013 he became a member of the U.S. Conference of Mayors Workforce Development Council – Policy and Advocacy Committee. Johnson has been Executive Director and lead staff to the Southeast Minnesota Workforce Investment Board since 1997.

The Workforce Development Council, established in 1977 as the Employment and Training Council, works with mayors' representatives to influence Congress and the U.S. Department of Labor in directing more employment and training funds to cities, to identify key issues in workforce development that affect cities, and to assure that the role of cities is paramount in all workforce development activities.

Congratulations, Randy!

From Kathy Wiggins, U.S. Conference of Mayors. See a complete list of Officers and Board members at [http://usmayors.org/workforce/employment\\_training/wdcmembership.asp](http://usmayors.org/workforce/employment_training/wdcmembership.asp)

**About a Workforce Investment Board Member****Wayne Stenberg, Semcac – Serving SE MN**

Wayne Stenberg is the Executive Director of Semcac. The Agency's mission is, "to assist people to achieve or maintain independence and self-reliance through their own and community resources," he said. For over 48 years Semcac has been impacting communities throughout SE MN. As a leading non-profit we are committed to providing outstanding services to the region. The Agency currently has over 20 programs in the areas of Community Development, Transportation, Family Planning, Head Start, Senior and Outreach and Emergency Services. Each is led by caring, com-

passionate staff that are there to help people achieve independence.

Semcac believes in collaborations and currently works with and is connected to 772 different partnerships. This is a testimony to the many years of hard work and time that has been invested into cultivating long lasting and trusted relationships. From these efforts the Agency has been able to glean excellent volunteers who continue to work alongside staff to accomplish the ongoing vision of creating, "a vibrant southeastern Minnesota, led by thriving individuals, families

and communities".

In 2013 Semcac reached an unduplicated count of 32,932 people who received some form of service. Our largest demographic continues to be the senior with 9,283 served. The next demographic would be people 24-44 with 6,479 seeking assistance.

"It's an Agency where people make a difference in the lives of others", Wayne said, "employees at Semcac truly enjoy serving the people in SE MN and that is a reward that pays lasting dividends."

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*By Wayne Stenberg*

**CWS Cares 2014 Recipients**

CWS, Inc. would like to thank everyone who applied for a CWS Cares grant this year! Our CWS Cares committee met with over 15 organizations this year and realized the great need in our community. We would like to congratulate the organizations who were chosen for a CWS Cares project receiving just over \$10,000/each:

RT Autism  
YMCA of Rochester  
Rochester Area Math and Science Partnership

We would also like to recognize other organizations who were given a CWS Cares grant:

Rochester Art Center  
Family Service of Rochester  
Cabin Fever/Eagles Cancer Telethon  
Make A Wish of Minnesota/Swinging for the Stars



Thank you again to all of the organizations who took the time to come meet with us. We look forward to continuing the CWS Cares initiative again for 2015. Applications for 2015 will begin in October of this year. You will find the application [here](#).

Find out more about CWS on their website at <http://www.cws.net/>.





***Further Detail on Executive Actions the President Is Taking to Empower American Workers with the Skills That Employers Demand Today and the Jobs of Tomorrow***

**Presidential Memorandum Directing the Vice President to Lead an Across the Board Review of How to Best Reform Federal Training Programs.**

The President has asked the Vice President to lead an across the board review of the federal training system within existing legislative authority. This review will be focused on making sure that our training programs are job-driven. Under the Vice President's leadership and the interagency coordination of the National Economic Council, the Domestic Policy Council, the Council of Economic Advisers and the Office of Management Budget, the Secretaries of Labor, Education and Commerce as well as leaders from other relevant Federal agencies will develop an action plan to make the workforce and training system more job-driven, integrated and effective, which will identify concrete steps that we can take including:

- Partnerships with Businesses and Labor, Workers and National Industry Associations. Promoting more active engagement with industry and labor, regional employers, and worker representatives to identify the skills and support that workers need, and to make sure those skills are better communicated to education and training providers, workforce leaders as well as job seekers.
- Innovations for Better Infor-

mation. Making available to workers, job seekers, and employers the best information regarding job demand, skills matching, supports, and education, training, and career options, as well as innovative approaches to training using learning science and advanced technology.

- Building Evidence and Greater Accountability. Building on existing evidence of success, we will improve the metrics used to assess programs and providers, to disseminate effective approaches and commit to a plan to evaluate more strategies for effectiveness.
- Ensuring Better Alignment and Coordination. Identifying ways to ensure better alignment across workforce training, including better coordination of Federal skills, education and apprenticeship programs.

**Immediate Stakeholder Consultation Led by the Vice President on Best Practices to Make Our System of Skills Training More Job-Driven.** The President is asking the Vice President, senior White House officials and his Cabinet, including the Secretaries of Labor, Commerce and Education, to start immediate consultation with business, labor and community college leaders, Governors, Mayors, worker representatives, and Republican and

**Joe Biden's Latest Challenge: Closing the Workplace "Skills Gap"**

President Barack Obama said in Tuesday's State of the Union address he'd asked Vice President Joe Biden to overhaul federal training programs with the goal of ensuring U.S. workers have the skills needed by today's employers. The "skills gap," as it is known, has been a repeated refrain in Mr. Obama's speeches on economic policy. Many economists believe it's a contributing factor to the stubbornly high unemployment rate as well as the falling percentage of people in the workforce.

Mr. Biden has been given many tough jobs by the president, and this one won't be easy either.

Read the Wall Street Journal article at <http://blogs.wsj.com/economics/2014/01/29/joe-bidens-latest-challenge-closing-the-workplace-skills-gap/>

Democratic Congressional officials to continue to tackle some of the challenges associated with preparing and matching workers to good jobs.

- Business and labor leaders, including in high-growth industries and small businesses, about how they would use community colleges and training system partnerships to help them hire skilled workers, and their role in spreading these programs across the country.
- Governors and Mayors about job-driven training that has worked in their communities, (Continued on page 5)



Click [HERE](#) to read the report released by the White House on 1/31/14.

***Further Detail on Executive Actions the President Is Taking***

and how community college-employer partnerships can get more people into good jobs.

- *Worker representatives, community- and faith-based organizations* on successful approaches to train low-skilled or displaced workers for well-paying, career-path jobs
- *Community college and other education leaders* on how to collaborate effectively with employers and align training programs to industry-recognized credentials and hiring.
- *Leading technologists, researchers and entrepreneurs* on how to make the best information available to jobseekers, as well as inno-

vative approaches to training using learning science and advanced technology.

**Focus Final \$500 Million Community College Competition on Best Practices for Job-Driven Training.**

The Trade Adjustment Assistance and Community College and Career Training (TAA-CCCT) competitive grant program has, over the last three years, supported community colleges in a range of strategies, including a range of partnerships that have increasingly focused on job-driven training strategies. Secretary Perez has already undertaken serious engagement since being sworn into office to ensure that training programs at the Labor De-

partment are focused on meeting the needs of employers that will do the hiring. Building on his progress, the President has asked the Secretary of Labor to make job-driven training strategies as well as the best practices identified through the stakeholder consultations to be taken into consideration in the selection criteria for the final \$500 million of the TAA-CCCT competition. This grant competition will seek to scale job-driven training partnerships between regional employers and national industry associations that advance the best practices identified throughout the immediate stakeholder consultations. In particular, this grant competition will fund the work of win-

ning partnerships advancing elements of the most successful models identified throughout the immediate stakeholder engagement and consultation, including at least one winner in every state.

- *Community College Partnerships with Regional Employers.* Winning community college grantees will partner with regional employers to create training programs for in-demand jobs. Proposals in which applicants commit to replicating programs nationally will be encouraged.

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*From WDC News, January 31, 2014. Read at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/01/30/fact-sheet-opportunity-all-empowering-all-americans-skills-needed-demand>*

**JPMorgan Chase & Co's New Skills at Work Initiative Will Partner with the White House to Focus on Long Term Unemployed Workers**

JPMorgan Chase & Co. (NYSE:JPM) today announced that New Skills at Work -- its landmark, \$250 million global effort to close the skills gap -- will partner with the White House and use its ground-breaking local workforce research to provide critical data on the challenges facing the long-term unemployed.

New Skills at Work aims to help people get the training they need to compete for the jobs that are available today and into the future.

"We welcome the opportunity to work with the Administration to rally employers across our economy to build industry-based workforce partnerships that can align our investments in education and skills training with current job openings and future career pathways," said JPMorgan Chase Chairman and CEO Jamie Dimon.

"Even though unemployment is high, we hear from our business clients every day about the challenges they face finding workers with the right skills for jobs that are open right now," said Dimon. "That's why we are working with community leaders across the country -- technical training programs, community colleges, policymakers and employers -- to address this skills gap."

Joseph Carbone, President and CEO, The WorkPlace, and a key participant in today's White House event on developing a skilled workforce, said, "An essential tool in helping the long-term unemployed return to work is innovative, data-driven industry intelligence on the needs of the business community. New Skills at Work will encourage collaboration between employers and training partners while being a guide for targeted investments to increase worker capacity."

JPMorgan Chase & Co. recently launched New Skills at Work, a five-year workforce readiness and demand-driven training initiative. Working closely with local businesses, elected officials, academics and community leaders, JPMorgan Chase will use new data and industry intelligence to direct grants and forge partnerships to help close the skills gap. <[Read More](#)>

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*From a press release in the Wall Street Journal at <http://online.wsj.com/article/PR-CO-20140131-911748.html>*

## Why Workforce Development Professionals Should Care About Middle-Skill or Middle-Wage Jobs

*Note: The following commentary on middle-wage or middle-skill jobs was written by Scott Sheely, one of EMSI's long-time workforce development clients. EMSI wrote about trends with middle-wage jobs in October. For more on Sheely, visit the Lancaster County WIB website. A PDF version of this article is available here.*

Over the last two years, a flurry of articles in the professional literature (Autor, 2011; Abel and Deitz, 2011; Tuzemen and Willis, 2013) has once again brought the health of "middle-skill or middle-wage" jobs in America to light. These recent studies offer additional quantitative detail to earlier works by the Brookings Institution (Sommers and Osborne, 2009) and the Workforce Alliance (Holzer and Lerman, 2007) that described the scope and nature of this category of jobs.

Interpreting the recent research can be difficult because much of it has been done by people with a national or broad regional point of view and with a bent toward valuing formal education.

There are a variety of ways to define middle-wage jobs but most approximate the wage numbers used by the National Employment Law Project — from \$13.84 to \$21.13 (Berhardt and others, 2012).

There is no doubting the numbers, which say that middle-wage jobs are not growing as fast as low-wage and high-wage jobs.

For those of us in the workforce world, the information that comes out of this recent research has great applicability in our everyday practice.

In our role of preparing people to engage employment, our systems need to be much more sophisticated about career pathways as well as the occupations and skills that comprise them — and not the career pathways that come out of the education world but rather career pathways that are based on data and validated by employers. Drilling down to occupations and skills will help us provide the information that the jobseekers and trainees with whom we work need and guide them toward the right training. Middle-skill and middle-wage jobs will be an

important part of those conversations given their important place in all career pathways.

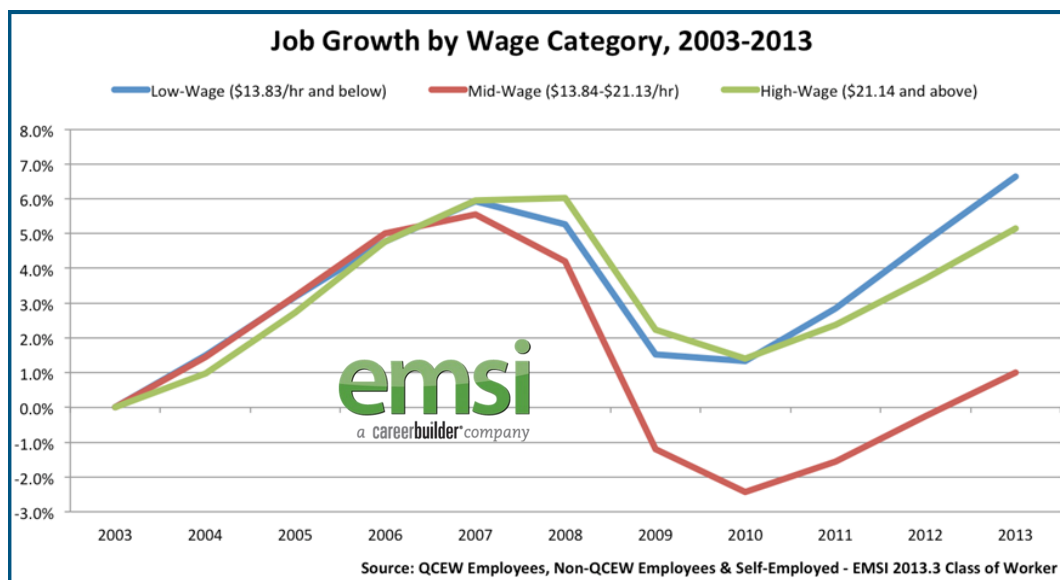
Finally, nearly every workforce investment board in the nation runs a youth program that focuses on career guidance and skill development for the next generations. Often, our educational partners have a different idea of what employers will require from the future workforce. Workforce professionals have an obligation to lift up middle-skill and middle-wage jobs as viable alternatives for the many bright kids out there (and their families) who are forced in one way or another to a four-year college only to find a great amount of debt and no opportunities in the career that they have chosen. Workforce professionals need to be truth-tellers as parents and students consider their future.

So the takeaways for work-

force development professionals:

- Whenever possible, look for good *local* data about middle-skill and middle-wage jobs and their place in *local* career pathways;
- Be as informed and as current as possible about the nature and requirements of middle-skill and middle-wage jobs;
- Become fluent in the language of skills and help the people with whom you work to speak it as well as understand it for their professional development;
- Understand that many of the people that we see will already have 80% of the skills that they need for their next job. We have to help them fill the gap in their skills;
- Look for training options that really meet the skill acquisition needs of the people with whom you work, particularly those working toward middle-skill and middle-jobs. They will frequently not be in a classroom;
- Encourage other parents and their children by your example with your own family to consider career pathways that include middle-skill and middle-wage jobs.

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Read the entire article by Scott Sheely, Executive Director, Lancaster County (Pa.) Workforce Investment Board from <http://www.economicmodeling.com/2014/01/02/why-workforce-development-professionals-should-care-about-middle-skill-or-middle-wage-jobs/>



### Educators Working to Engage Students, Fill Skills Gap

Employers have long recognized the importance of an educated workforce.

But educational institutions have not always been in tune with the needs of business and industry. That is beginning to change, as a Dec. 12 roundtable discussion at The Courier demonstrated.

Fourteen educators and community members from Cedar Valley school districts and post-secondary institutions peered into the future of their institutions as they talked about preparing students for careers and meeting workforce needs.

Waterloo Community Schools Superintendent Gary Norris acknowledged a sense of disconnect between the education and business worlds.

"We have some very well-prepared students, but there's misalignment with the exact skills that certain

industries or businesses want."

He cited data from a fall Adecco Staffing survey of 500 top corporate executives, 92 percent of who believe there is a serious gap in workforce skills. It's not only in technical skills that American graduates come up short, though.

Forty-four percent of the respondents said workers lack soft skills like communication, critical thinking and group work. Only 22 percent saw a lack of technical skills as the reason for the skills gap.

"That was eye opening to me," said Norris. "We have to make sure that we engage our kids but that we (also) help give them as many of the soft skills that they need."

Randy Pilkington, executive director of business and community services at the University of Northern Io-

wa, confirmed that companies are now paying close attention to what's happening in schools. But though the skills gap is of real concern, he said businesses also want employees who are innovative.

"We've done a good job of educating students to go and work for somebody, but we haven't talked too much about creating your own opportunity," he said.

Community colleges have stepped up to the plate, attempting to fill in those gaps with a concerted emphasis on technical education.

Hawkeye Community College plans to train 2,400 high school students for technical jobs in construction, transportation, health care and advanced manufacturing jobs by 2020.

"We're going to grow that pipeline very aggressively and very rapidly," said Linda

Allen, president of Hawkeye.

But the administrators agreed just capturing student's attention is a major problem in education.

"I would say, charitably, that 50 percent of the high school kids in America are really engaged in a daily lesson," Norris suggested. "In Waterloo, we're going to keep on task for raising student achievement, but we also see a need to engage young people in different ways."

He said the district hopes to make "the learning more applicable, more applied, more hands-on. We believe two to four years from now that will lead to much higher graduation rates; we believe that will lead to growing student enrollment."

<[Read More](#)>

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By Andrew Wind and MacKenzie Elmer

### Are Specialized Job Boards More Effective?

Specialized job boards aim to filter out the dross so recruiters can get a more detailed batch of potential candidates, but downsides remain.

As the so-called war for talent rages on and employers continue to seek qualified candidates, specialized job boards are becoming more prevalent, adding to the already robust offering of tools available at recruiters' fingertips.

Yet, with job boards already divided into niche subsets — like JournalismJobs.com or GovernmentJobs.com — some employers are requesting even more specificity.

The latest example is We Work Remotely, a job board that caters to organizations seeking remote workers. It primarily focuses on computer programming and design jobs, though it also features posts for copywriting and customer service positions. <Click [HERE](#) to read the entire article by Eric Short>





## **Steele County Employers Encouraged to Participate in Survey to Identify Strengths**

Many times, employers across southern Minnesota find themselves competing to draw employees from the same talent pool. Some companies get those employees, others don't. Workforce Development, Inc., is trying to help companies figure out why.

Workforce Development is encouraging employers of southern Minnesota to participate in the "Best Places to Work" survey, in which employers answer 40 questions about their company to help identify best practices for employee recruitment and retention.

"It can be for the private sector or non-profits, as well," Coleman said. "What we've found is that for-profit businesses and non-profit businesses are competing for the same talent. You can take an operations manager, for example. In either sector, the duties and the skill sets are pretty similar."

The survey, which is conducted online through a Florida-based company called Personnel Dynamics, includes 40 questions. Some of the questions in the survey include what types of insurance coverage are offered to employees, turnover rate within the company, pay rate, percentage wage increases and what types of methods are used to evaluate employees.

Once the survey is completed, Personnel Dynamics takes the results and evaluates them to determine which companies are the best places to work. Winners are honored at a banquet in April in Rochester.

Steele County has had winners in the past, including companies like CliftonLarsonAllen, Viracon, Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric and Pearson Assessment and Information. As Coleman puts it, the winners can use the award as a recruiting tool, but the other companies also gain valuable information.

"Each business that takes the survey will get a full-blown report about how they compare to other businesses that are similar in size," Coleman said. "It goes through the whole thing, all the things that employers struggle with and looks at how they compare to other businesses. That's a key factor in this, letting other businesses know what other companies are doing that maybe they want to incorporate into their own business."

Once the company gets the results of the survey, Workforce Development staff will go through the results. "We'll come out and give them a comparison, give them their own survey and go through it with them," Coleman said. The survey is free to participate in, Coleman said, adding that similar services will charge money to get the same results.

"Do you really want to know how your company is doing? If you do, this is an opportunity to do it for free," Coleman said. "A lot of other areas will charge quite a heavy fee to do something like this. We're throwing it out there for everybody to take advantage of the opportunity."

The deadline to participate in the survey is February 14, 2014. Any interested companies can fill out the survey at [PersonnelDynamics.net](http://PersonnelDynamics.net). Questions about the survey can be referred to Workforce Development's Jakki Trihey by calling her at 507-529-2701 or by calling Personnel Dynamics' Gerry Hoeffner at 772-979-5028.

By Al Strain from [http://www.southernminn.com/owatonna\\_peoples\\_press/news/local/article\\_c0921ee9-228f-5c77-8ad8-6ef1c8cc9a72.html](http://www.southernminn.com/owatonna_peoples_press/news/local/article_c0921ee9-228f-5c77-8ad8-6ef1c8cc9a72.html)



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