

## Dual-Training Pipeline BY THE NUMBERS

**244** employers assisted through Pipeline consulting and activities to support their efforts with dual training.

**15** industry forums conducted throughout the year.

**72.5** percent of 2025 Dual Training Grant recipients who engaged with the Pipeline team in the year leading up to the application.

**102** occupations with industry-approved competency standards.

**6** new occupations in development for 2026.

## Pipeline team celebrates Manufacturing Month



To celebrate October as Manufacturing Month, DLI Commissioner Nicole Blissenbach (second from left), the Dual-Training Pipeline team and other state agency representatives visited manufacturer Aagard in Alexandria.

## Dual-Training Pipeline continues to help employers across Minnesota

In 2025, Minnesota Dual-Training Pipeline continued the program's progress with advanced manufacturing, agriculture, child care, health care services, information technology, transportation and the legal cannabis industry. The team added 10 new occupations and continued to help employers address their critical workforce challenges through consulting, industry forums, tools and educational events.

Pipeline staff worked with employers to develop and enhance training efforts that pair competency-based on-the-job training with related formal education. Dual training allows employers to realize immediate benefits to employee retention and workplace culture while motivating existing employees and new hires. Employees earn credentials, grow their careers and support business workforce needs.

The Pipeline team also hosted eight Workforce Community Conversations throughout Minnesota and connected directly with employers. Pipeline met with new industry partners, hosted two Speaker Series enrichment events and offered consulting to create dual-training programs for employers across the state. Lastly, the team updated all competency models to ensure they are more in line with current practices and standards.

## What Minnesota Dual-Training Pipeline participants are saying

*"Grand Village has participated in several cycles with Dual Training Pipeline, which has helped us recruit and retain employees by providing a pathway for staff who may not have had the financial means or opportunity to attend college. Many trainees have been able to progressively advance their education and their health care career due to the financial opportunities the Dual Training Grant has provided. As an employer, we have seen the benefits of the trainees graduating from their health care programs with a better understanding of their roles in nursing due to the on-the-job training coinciding with their related instruction. You cannot beat the "real-world" experiences our dual trainees are receiving." – Gen Bishop, people services manager*

*"Receiving the Dual Training Grant has been a dream come true. I started my health care career at Grand Village as a unit assistant when I was 16 years old and became a certified nursing assistant shortly after. At 19, I completed a LPN program and bought my first home! At 21, I was able to keep advancing by completing an associate's degree and obtaining my RN license. I then completed a bachelor's degree by age 22 and finished a total of eight semesters of nursing school with zero student debt. All of this was made possible by the support of dual training." – Lily Stone, BSN, RN*

# Workforce Community Conversations conducted throughout the state

The Minnesota Dual-Training Pipeline team hosted Workforce Community Conversations across Minnesota in the fall of 2025, connecting with employers, educators, community-based non-profits and those interested in Minnesota's workforce. Pipeline staff networked with attendees in Hermantown, Roseville, Alexandria, Thief River Falls, Rochester, Redwood Falls, Rosemount and Maple Grove, gaining valuable insight about unique workforce challenges and successes. The information collected during Community Conversations is used to inform our program about occupation and training needs throughout the state so that the team can better support employers in creating dual-training programs to address their workforce needs.

The biggest takeaways from this year's meetings were:

- Employers noted that finding innovative ways to retain workers continues to be a significant challenge.
- Creating career pathways and offering opportunities for early exposure to in-demand occupations in key industries are keys to success.
- Large structural barriers like lack of access to child care and affordable housing pose significant challenges in recruiting and retaining workers.
- Communities with partnerships among schools, businesses, local chambers of commerce, etc. are having success in addressing workforce needs.



The Pipeline team speaks to Hermantown-area businesses during a Workforce Community Conversation. (Image from [Fox21](#))

## Minnesota Dual-Training Pipeline Speaker Series success continues

Employers, educators and community stakeholders from across Minnesota benefitted from the Minnesota Dual-Training Pipeline Speaker Series. Just over 200 people attended our two speaker series events. The speakers focused on subjects that offer support for employers in the following topics:

- May 20, 2025: "Empowering Professionals with AI: Practical Techniques for Exceptional Results" with Tyler Moberg of Amplified Impact, LLC.
- Nov. 18, 2025: "Diverse Minds, Unified Goals: A Journey into Neurodiversity at Work" with Rachel Rouse of Emerge Coaching.



## All-Industry Forum in St. Cloud

The Pipeline team took the All-Industry Forum on the road to St. Cloud's River's Edge Convention Center on June 5, 2025. Over 60 people attended the event coming from businesses, higher education, nonprofits and more.

The forum featured a panel from Essentia Health, Two Rivers Enterprises and CentraCare (pictured above). It also included a presentation about labor market trends, an overview of Youth Skills Training, a discussion on latest workforce trends and an update about the Minnesota Office of Higher Education's Dual Training Grant.

## Thanking Kathleen Gordon for eight years of incredible service

As Kathleen Gordon plans to retire on Feb. 3, 2026, the Pipeline team wants to recognize her amazing contributions to the program.



In her time with Minnesota Dual-Training Pipeline, Kathleen has:

- Led the development of 39 occupational competency models in the health care services industry,
- supported the transition of information technology models to career pathway models and then back to 12 occupational competency models,
- built the infrastructure for dual training in the child care industry with three occupational competency models, and
- presented at 90+ industry forums, 40+ Pipeline 101 sessions, 25+ Workforce Community Conversations and many employer consultations.

It's the people you've worked with along the way who will miss you the most, Kathleen. Please join us in thanking and congratulating Kathleen.

## Advanced Manufacturing

- CMM programmer
- CNC programmer
- Extrusion molding technician
- Flexo technician
- Food scientist/technologist
- Industrial production manager
- Injection molding technician
- Logistics and supply chain manager
- Machinist/CNC operator
- Machinist/tool and die maker
- Maintenance and repair worker
- Manufacturing engineer
- Manufacturing production supervisor
- Mechatronics technician
- Print press operator
- Quality assurance/food safety supervisor
- Quality assurance technician
- Robotics operator
- Safety technician
- Solderer
- Welder

## Transportation

- Aircraft maintenance technician
- Automotive body repair technician
- Automotive mechanic
- Bus and truck diesel mechanic
- Heavy and tractor-trailer truck driver
- School bus driver

## New occupations in development for 2026

- Livestock veterinary technician
- Early childhood culinary supervisor
- Nurse practitioner
- Sterile processing technician
- Cannabis logistics and inventory specialist
- Aircraft dispatcher

# Occupations by industry

## Information Technology

- Application developer
- Business intelligence developer/architect
- Cloud architect
- Computer user support specialist
- Data science/artificial intelligence machine learning specialist
- Database administrator
- Information security analyst/ specialist
- IT project planner/manager
- Network engineer
- Software engineer/ developer
- Testing and quality assurance analyst
- Web developer

## Agriculture

- Agriculture applicator technician
- Agriculture equipment mechanic
- Agriculture finance/ lender
- Agronomist
- Crop farm manager
- Farm animal manager
- Grain merchandiser
- Horticulture farm manager
- Livestock veterinarian
- Meat cutter/meat processor
- Quality assurance/ food safety supervisor
- Swine technician

## Legal Cannabis Industry

- Cannabis compliance specialist
- Cannabis cultivation supervisor
- Cannabis dispensary supervisor
- Cannabis laboratory technician

## Child Care

- Early childhood director
- Early childhood educator
- School-age care supervisor

## Health Care Services

- Biomedical equipment technician
- Certified nursing assistant
- Chemical dependency and addiction technician
- Community health worker
- Community paramedic
- Critical care nurse
- Dental assistant
- Dental hygienist
- Dental therapist
- Dentist
- Electronic health records specialist
- EMT to paramedic pathway
- Emergency room nurse
- Health care social worker
- Health support specialist
- Histology technician/technologist
- Licensed alcohol and drug counselor
- Licensed independent clinical social worker
- Licensed marriage and family therapist
- Licensed practical nurse
- Licensed professional clinical counselor
- Long-term care facility culinary manager
- Massage therapist
- Medical assistant
- Medical lab assistant
- Medical lab technician
- Medical laboratory scientist
- Occupational therapist
- Occupational therapy assistant
- Ophthalmic technician
- Orthotic and prosthetic technician
- Pharmacy technician
- Phlebotomist
- Physical therapy assistant
- Positive support analyst
- Positive support specialist
- Psychiatric/mental health technician in-patient
- Psychiatric/mental health technician out-patient
- Radiologic technologist
- Registered nurse
- Respiratory therapist
- Sonographer
- Surgical technologist
- Wound, ostomy, continence (WOC) nurse



## Dual-Training Pipeline participant: Pride Wabila

Pride Wabila is wrapping up his final semester at Anoka Technical College in the Advanced CNC Machine Technology program.

Wabila began working at rms Co. in Coon Rapids during the first quarter of 2024 through the company's dual-training program. The program, which has received funding since 2020, is designed to develop skilled workers in computer numerical control (CNC) machining, tool and die work, and maintenance and repair.

For Wabila, the program has been a game-changer.

"I was able to continue my education in CNC machining while working as an intern at rms," Wabila said. "This opportunity allowed me to apply what I learned in the classroom directly to real manufacturing work."

He credits the hands-on experience and mentorship from rms employees for helping him grow as a machinist. "I learned from experienced coworkers and cell leads who took the time to share their knowledge and industry experience," he said.

The Dual Training Grant also played a key role. "The support from the grant made it possible for me to focus on learning without the financial stress," Wabila said. "Because of this program, I have grown more confident as a machinist, and I am better prepared for a long-term career in manufacturing."

Wabila has been an active participant beyond the classroom and shop floor. He served on his program's advisory board, spoke at the Connect the Dots dinner for local business leaders and was featured during Dual Training Grant orientation sessions. He will graduate in spring 2026 with both a CNC Design and Manufacturing Technology diploma and an Associate of Applied Science degree in the same field. Looking ahead, Wabila hopes to continue his education and possibly pursue a bachelor's degree.

"I am proud to represent rms, my school and the dual-training program," he said. "I'm grateful for the benefits this program has provided and the opportunities well beyond graduation."



Dual trainee Pride Wabila

## Inventory of education providers online

The team continues to update and improve a dynamic, interactive tool to help employers find training partners for approved occupations. The web-based system contains a searchable, sortable directory of education programs that offer industry-recognized credentials that can be used to create your own dual-training program.

Visit [dli.mn.gov/business/workforce/pipeline-related-instruction-inventory](https://dli.mn.gov/business/workforce/pipeline-related-instruction-inventory) to use the inventory tool.



## Contact us

For more information contact [PIPELINE.Program@state.mn.us](mailto:PIPELINE.Program@state.mn.us) or:

- Dan Solomon, Dual-Training Pipeline manager, at [dan.solomon@state.mn.us](mailto:dan.solomon@state.mn.us) or 651-284-5355
- Kathleen Gordon, Dual-Training Pipeline consultant, at [kathleen.gordon@state.mn.us](mailto:kathleen.gordon@state.mn.us) or 651-284-5388 until Feb. 3, 2026.
- Erik Holtan, Dual-Training Pipeline consultant at [erik.holtan@state.mn.us](mailto:erik.holtan@state.mn.us) or 651-284-5082
- Madolyn Martini, Dual-Training Pipeline consultant at [madolyn.martini@state.mn.us](mailto:madolyn.martini@state.mn.us) or 651-284-5088

Sign-up for Minnesota Dual-Training Pipeline emails at [dli.mn.gov/pipeline](https://dli.mn.gov/pipeline).

Follow us on social media at:



[instagram.com/MinnesotaDLI](https://instagram.com/MinnesotaDLI)



[facebook.com/MinnesotaDLI](https://facebook.com/MinnesotaDLI)



[x.com/mndli](https://x.com/mndli)



[linkedin.com/company/mndli](https://linkedin.com/company/mndli)