

Building Nebraska's Future Workforce: *A Statewide Landscape Assessment*

MARCH 2026 | NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR



NEBRASKA

Good Life. **Great Careers.**

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Message from the Commissioner

Dear Nebraskans and Partners,

It is an honor to serve as Nebraska's Commissioner of Labor, and I am proud to present Building Nebraska's Future Workforce: A Statewide Landscape Assessment. This report reflects the hard work of countless partners across our state, including educators, employers, workforce professionals, and community leaders, all committed to the same goal: ensuring every Nebraskan has access to a good life and a great career.

The world of work is changing faster than at any point in recent memory. Artificial intelligence is reshaping industries. Demographic shifts are tightening labor markets. Rural communities are competing for workers alongside our growing urban centers. Healthcare systems are stretched thin by a shortage of nurses and medical professionals, and across nearly every sector, employers are telling us the same thing: they need skilled workers, and they need them now.

Nebraska is not standing still. As of December 2025, more than 1,066,000 Nebraskans are employed, a historic high for the eleventh consecutive month. We lead the nation (excluding the District of Columbia) in labor force participation. These are not just statistics; they are a testament to the work ethic and resilience of Nebraska's people. Sustaining and building on this momentum requires deliberate, coordinated action.

That is why I am committed to strengthening the connections between Nebraska's employers, education systems, and workforce programs in a way that is practical, regionally responsive, and built for the long term. Through the Governor's Good Life, Great Careers initiative, we are working to expand Registered Apprenticeships to 6,000 new participants by 2030, reduce barriers for employers who want to offer earn-while-you-learn opportunities, and align training investments with the occupations where demand is greatest, from healthcare and construction trades to manufacturing and other high-demand industries.

We also know that our workforce system, though deep in resources and genuine in commitment, can be difficult to navigate. This report candidly acknowledges that complexity and points toward a path forward: better coordination, clearer roles, and shared accountability across state agencies, educational institutions, and regional partners. My goal is to make Nebraska's workforce system as strong and accessible as the workers and employers it serves.

I invite you to read this report not just as a snapshot of where we are, but as a call to action for what we can achieve together. Nebraska's greatest workforce asset has always been its people. That strength is shown through their ingenuity, dedication, and willingness to adapt. With the right partnerships and the right investments, I am confident we can ensure that every Nebraskan, in every corner of our state, has the opportunity to thrive. The Good Life is open for business.

Sincerely,



Katie Thurber
Commissioner of Labor



Executive Order No. 25-15

Nebraska State office of Registered Apprenticeship

Signed by Governor Jim Pillen on October 14, 2025, Executive Order No. 25-15 establishes a coordinated approach to expanding registered apprenticeship programs throughout Nebraska as part of the state's broader workforce development efforts.

The order comes in response to federal workforce initiatives, including an April 2025 Presidential directive on skilled trade jobs and an August 2025 interagency workforce plan released by the U.S. Departments of Labor, Commerce, and Education. The Governor acknowledged that while Nebraska already administers a range of workforce development programs across multiple agencies, no unified strategic framework exists to guide those efforts.

The Nebraska Department of Labor is directed to launch the Good Life, Great Careers Initiative, with a focus on connecting Nebraskans to quality, in-state career opportunities. Within that initiative, the Department will establish a new Office of Registered Apprenticeship to serve as the state's central coordinating body on apprenticeship matters. Priority industries include manufacturing, healthcare, transportation, construction, and the bioeconomy. The office is also charged with pursuing formal recognition as a State Apprenticeship Agency through the U.S. Department of Labor.

The initiative carries a concrete goal of adding 6,000 new registered active apprentices by December 31, 2030.

Read the full executive order here: <https://govdocs.nebraska.gov/docs/pilot/pubs/eofiles/25-15.pdf>

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Introduction

Purpose

This assessment brings together employer survey results, labor market information, apprenticeship data, and a comprehensive review of Nebraska's education and workforce systems. The employer survey was distributed to 34,692 Nebraska employers and received 4,001 responses, providing a robust foundation of direct employer input. Its central aim is to better understand how existing programs and institutions support employer workforce needs, and to identify where additional alignment, investment, and coordination can strengthen outcomes statewide. The findings are intended to inform all stakeholders surrounding the state's workforce strategy under the Governor's Good Life, Great Careers Initiative.

Key Findings

1. Nebraska's Workforce Ecosystem is Extensive

The State of Nebraska Workforce Ecosystem map illustrates a broad and deeply resourced workforce system involving multiple state agencies, education systems, grant programs, and regional partners operating across six workforce regions. The map highlights strong coverage across employment services, education and training, reentry programs, apprenticeships and targeted populations.

However, the scope of programs and administrative ownership also reveals a highly fragmented structure. Workforce activities are dispersed across numerous agencies, funding streams, and service delivery systems, creating complexity for employers, individuals, and policymakers who are attempting to navigate the system efficiently. This fragmentation can result in duplicated efforts, gaps in service, and missed opportunities for coordination.

Nebraska could improve system effectiveness by realigning select workforce programs under fewer lead agencies, which will improve the entire systems effectiveness, enhance visibility, and reduce administrative complexity. Clarifying agency roles, consolidating overlapping functions, and streamlining entry points for employers and individuals will make the system easier to navigate while maintaining regional flexibility. A more centralized structure, supported by shared data systems, will strengthen coordination and accountability across the entire workforce ecosystem.

2. Nebraska Has a Strong Education Pipeline Ready to Maximize Its Potential

Nebraska has built a robust, statewide education pipeline spanning K-12, community colleges, state colleges, universities, and tribal colleges, with programs aligned to high-demand fields such as healthcare, education, agriculture, and skilled trades. These systems prioritize access, affordability, and place-based pathways, particularly for rural and underserved communities.

Community colleges across the state are producing strong workforce outcomes, with many programs reporting employment and transfer rates near or above 90 percent. Innovative pathways, such as Wayne State College's 2+2 Early Admission Nursing program with the University of Nebraska Medical Center, University of Nebraska—Lincoln's (UNL) Nebraska Elite 11 Veterinarian Program, and Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) Nebraska's youth workforce initiative, demonstrate how tailored programs can effectively connect learners with high-demand careers.

To fully maximize impact, continued focus on coordination, pathway alignment, and shared outcome measurement is essential to ensure that education investments translate into long-term workforce success in Nebraska. Greater integration between K-12, post-secondary institutions, and employers would help learners move more seamlessly from education to meaningful employment. To fully realize these efforts, a more intentional focus on aligning the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) with Nebraska's education systems is needed to strengthen workforce pathways and outcomes.

3. Labor Demand Remains High in Several Priority Sectors

Employer demand continues to be strongest in healthcare, construction, transportation, and skilled trades. While healthcare, particularly nursing and allied health roles, remains a consistent area of concern, hiring challenges extend across multiple sectors. Employers in construction and skilled trades report some of the highest rates of hiring difficulty in the state, and transportation and logistics face similarly sustained demand, with strong growth projected through 2032.

Across all of these sectors, the gap between available workers and open positions represents one of the most pressing challenges for Nebraska's workforce system. Nebraska's education and training programs already align with many of these high-demand fields, but deeper coordination and stronger employer partnerships will be essential to closing persistent gaps and supporting continued economic growth statewide.

4. Registered Apprenticeships Offer Untapped Potential

Registered Apprenticeships are well supported within Nebraska's workforce and education systems and are approved for many in-demand occupations. Currently, Nebraska has 4,795 active apprentices, a solid foundation but well below neighboring states like Iowa (9,352) and Colorado (9,630). The state's Good Life, Great Careers goal of adding 6,000 new apprentices by 2030 represents a meaningful and achievable opportunity to close this gap.

A survey of employers reveals a key challenge: 45% of businesses are not familiar with Registered Apprenticeships, and 46.5% have never used apprentices. Of those who have not participated, nearly 60% of the businesses surveyed say it is simply not relevant to their business, suggesting a widespread lack of understanding of how the apprenticeship model can apply across diverse industries and occupations. Additionally, only 3 to 4% cite cost or administrative burden as barriers, meaning expanded awareness and targeted outreach, not programmatic reform, are the primary levers for growth.

Expanding awareness and sharing real-world examples of apprenticeships in less traditional industries can help more employers understand how the model can be adapted to different business needs. Showing the flexibility of apprenticeships and how they can be structured to fit various roles, skill levels, and business sizes makes it easier for organizations to see them as a cost-effective strategy for building talent. Highlighting industries that are experiencing rapid growth and showing how apprenticeships have successfully addressed workforce gaps can encourage wider adoption and innovation in workforce development.

5. Workforce Needs and Opportunities Vary Across the State

Labor market conditions differ significantly by region, and a one-size-fits-all approach to workforce development will not adequately serve all parts of the state. Urban areas such as Douglas, Lancaster, and Sarpy counties experience the highest volumes of job openings in absolute terms, with Douglas County alone posting over 10,500 job openings. However, relative to available candidates, rural counties often face more acute shortages in specific occupations.

Rural communities frequently face targeted workforce needs in healthcare, agriculture, logistics, and skilled maintenance. Regions such as the Nebraska Panhandle, Mid-Plains, and Northeast Nebraska have limited labor pools and face challenges attracting and retaining workers. The Six Regions, One Nebraska framework, which aligns workforce development with Nebraska's six community college districts, provides an effective structure for tailoring strategies to local conditions.

This regional difference highlights a clear opportunity to tailor workforce investments to local conditions. Employment vacancies by county, labor force participation, and employer survey responses can guide where apprenticeship programs, educational partnerships, and recruitment efforts will have the most impact.

6. AI Is Creating New Training Opportunities

The majority of Nebraska businesses, over 52%, report no current use of AI and no near-term plans to adopt it. Among those currently using AI, most are doing so in a limited capacity, such as customer service chatbots or scheduling tools. Only 2.7% report extensive AI integration into core operations. Furthermore, 71.8% of businesses using AI do not expect it to change the number of employees in their organization over the next three years.

This does not mean AI is unimportant to Nebraska's workforce future. Rather, the data suggests the state is at an early inflection point, one where proactive investment in education and training can position businesses and workers to benefit from AI tools rather than be disrupted by them. The roles most commonly expected to be changed by AI in the near term include administrative/clerical (34.4%), sales and marketing (22.1%), and customer service (17.8%).

When businesses using AI were asked what training would be most helpful, the top responses were: training on AI-related tools used in daily work (37.5%), assistance assessing which tasks can be automated (22.0%), and management training on AI strategy and change management (21.9%). Nebraska's community colleges, universities, and workforce programs are well positioned to deliver exactly this kind of practical, accessible, employer-driven AI training, making this an area of significant near-term opportunity.

7. Employer Recruitment is Largely Disconnected from the Nebraska Department of Labor Workforce System

Survey data reveals a significant gap between where Nebraska employers actively recruit and the NEworks infrastructure the Nebraska Department of Labor provides. The most commonly used recruitment channels among survey respondents are commercial online job boards such as LinkedIn and Indeed (50.4%), social media (44.7%), and employee referral programs (37.1%). By contrast, only 7.3% of employers report using government job boards such as NEworks, the state's primary publicly managed labor exchange system.

This disconnect has real consequences. When employers bypass these systems in favor of commercial platforms, they forfeit access to services that could reduce recruitment costs, support talent pipeline development, and connect them to workforce grants and apprenticeship resources. It also limits the state's ability to gather accurate data on employer needs and match job seekers to openings efficiently.

Increasing employer engagement with NEworks and other public workforce resources is not simply a matter of promoting a government platform, it is essential to the effectiveness of the state's broader workforce strategy. As Nebraska works toward the 6,000 new apprentice goal and seeks to address critical shortages in healthcare, construction, and skilled trades, ensuring that more employers are actively connected to the public workforce system will strengthen the state's ability to match supply and demand, measure outcomes, and deploy resources where they are needed most.

8. Low Employer-Education Partnership Rates Create Opportunity For Growth

Nebraska has built one of the most comprehensive public education and training systems in the region, with six community colleges, three state colleges, four university campuses, two tribal colleges, and a robust network of workforce programs. Yet survey data reveals that 70.4% of employers do not partner with any educational institution for their hiring needs. Even among those who do engage with education, the rates are modest: 19.7% report working with community colleges, 13.6% with the state college system, and just 10.1% with K-12 institutions.

Introduction

This gap exists despite the fact that Nebraska's education system is actively producing graduates aligned with high-demand fields. The disconnect is not primarily one of program quality or alignment; it reflects a structural gap in how employers and educational institutions find and engage with one another.

Closing this gap is one of the highest leverage opportunities available to Nebraska's workforce system. Employers who partner with educational institutions gain access to talent pipelines before graduates enter the open market, can shape curriculum to reflect real-world skill needs, and are better positioned to offer internships, apprenticeships, and work-based learning experiences. Strengthening these relationships through targeted outreach, shared platforms, and formalized partnership models will accelerate the translation of Nebraska's education investments into workforce outcomes at scale.

Nebraska Statewide Employment & Labor Highlights — 2025



Record-Breaking Employment

Statewide employment hit a **historic high for the 11th consecutive month** in December.

Total employed:
Over 1,066,233 Nebraskans.



Nation-Leading Workforce Participation

Nebraska had the **highest labor force participation rate** in the U.S. (excluding D.C.) in December.

Participation rate: **69.9%**



Unemployment

As of December 2025, Nebraska had the **6th lowest unemployment rate** in the nation.

Unemployment rate: **3.0%**

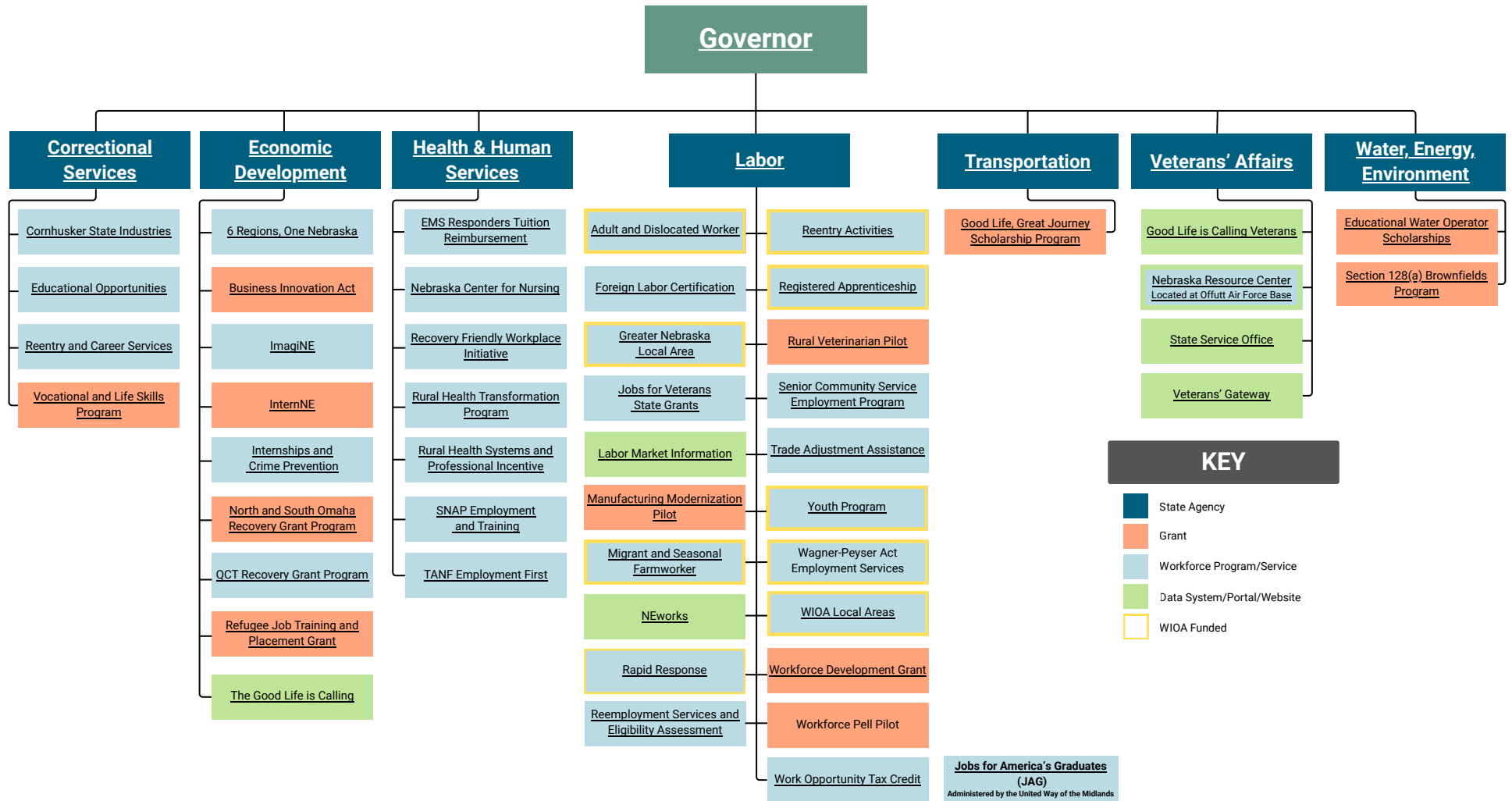


Employed Population

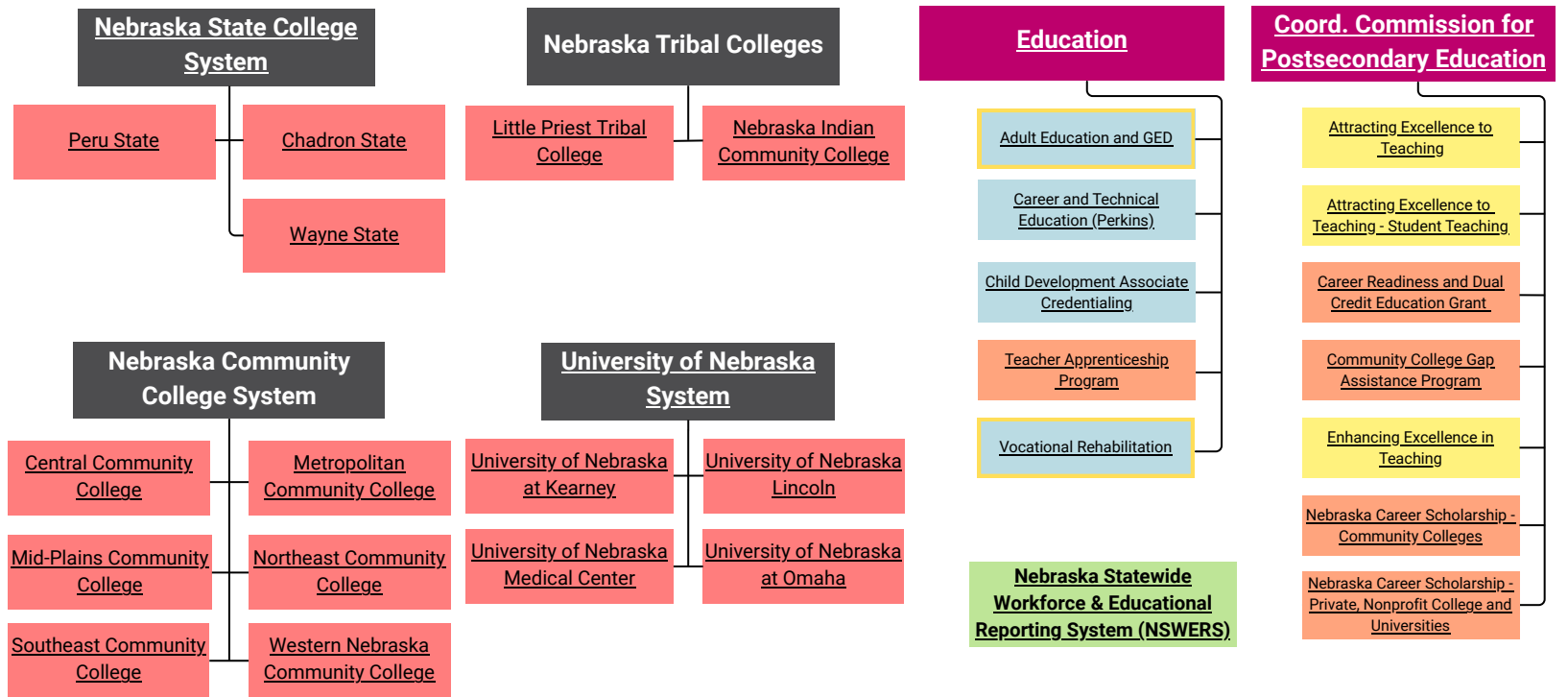
Nebraska saw a **two percent increase** over the year.

Employed population:
Grew by 21,414

Nebraska Workforce Program Ecosystem By Code Agencies



Nebraska Workforce Ecosystem Non-Code Agencies | Public Educational Institutions



KEY

- Constitutional Agency
- Grant
- Workforce Program/Service
- Data System/Portal/Website
- WIOA Funded
- Loan Forgiveness Program
- Educational System
- Educational Institution

6 Regions, One Nebraska

Six Regions, One Nebraska is a statewide economic development strategy that groups communities into six regions based on Nebraska's community college districts. The model is:

- Community-directed – led by local leaders,
- Action-oriented – focused on real projects,
- Partnership-driven – encouraging cross-community collaboration.

Workforce development is central to this approach: regions assess local needs—such as labor shortages, housing, skilled training. The goal is to coordinate priorities and projects that strengthen regional labor markets and attract/retain workers.

1. Southeast Region

- Includes: Southeast Nebraska communities (e.g., Lincoln/Southeast Community College area).
- Focus: Collaborative planning across urban and rural areas; discussions have prioritized infrastructure and a regional mindset shift toward innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Workforce impact: By strengthening infrastructure and innovation networks, this region supports job growth and workforce readiness tied to education and business development.

2. Metropolitan (Metro) Region

- Includes: Omaha-area communities (Metropolitan Community College district).
- Focus: Leveraging metropolitan growth while addressing workforce shortages, housing, and economic competitiveness.
- Workforce impact: Enhances regional capacity to recruit talent, align training with employer needs, and support career pathways in a major population hub.

3. Central Region

- Includes: Central Nebraska (Central Community College district).
- Focus: Linking smaller communities to coordinate resources and investments (e.g., training partnerships, business support).
- Workforce impact: Encourages cooperative workforce initiatives and strengthens pathways from education into local employment.

4. Northeast Region

- Includes: Northeast Nebraska (Northeast Community College district).
- Focus: Building partnerships among neighboring communities to address shared challenges like housing and labor supply. Workforce impact: Tailors workforce strategies (e.g., housing for workers) to retain and attract employees across the region.

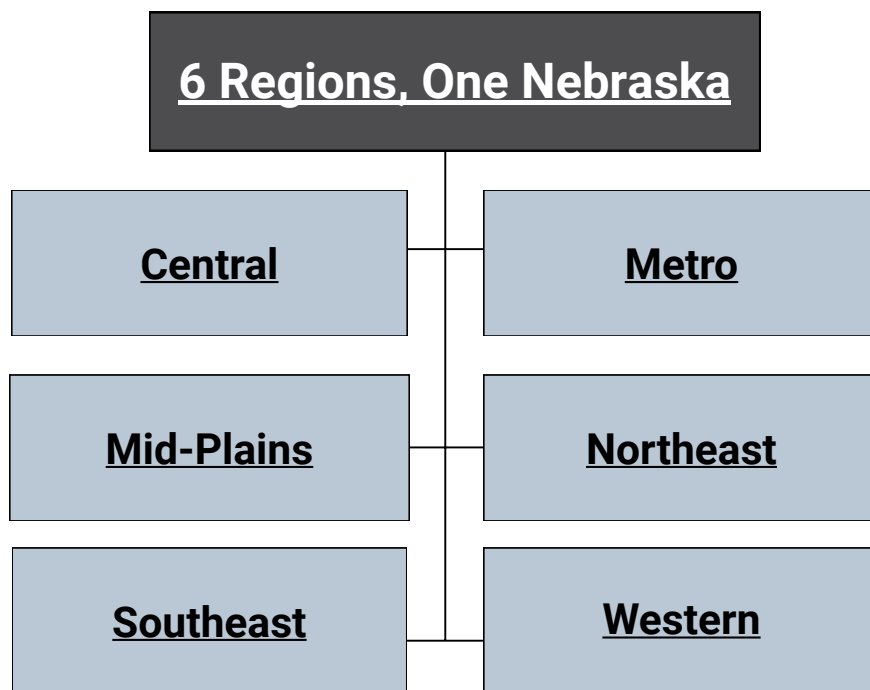
6 Regions, One Nebraska

5. Mid-Plains Region

- Includes: West-central Nebraska communities (Mid-Plains Community College district).
- Focus: Bringing communities like North Platte and Valentine together to share insights and strategies.
- Workforce impact: Supports projects—often around housing and training—that help regional employers find skilled workers and expand opportunities for residents.

6. Western Region

- Includes: Nebraska Panhandle (Western Community College district).
- Focus: Strengthening rural/agricultural economies through cooperative planning among leaders.
- Workforce impact: Regional cooperation helps address labor shortages in rural sectors by aligning training programs with local industry needs and by improving quality-of-life amenities that attract workers.



JAG Nebraska (Jobs for America's Graduates Nebraska) is a for-credit classroom program dedicated to empowering middle and high school students with the personal, academic, and professional skills needed to succeed in education, employment, and life. It uses an evidence-based model developed by the national Jobs for America's Graduates organization and is supported in Nebraska through a public-private partnership with state agencies and the United Way of the Midlands.

Founded in 2019, JAG Nebraska began in just three schools and has rapidly expanded to serve about 4,000 students in 81 middle and high schools across the state, with plans for further growth. The program is offered during regular school hours at no cost to schools for the first two years, and then increases to \$10,000 per year.

The UMÓⁿHOⁿ (Omaha) Nation Public Schools in Macy, Nebraska partnered with JAG to create a student-led agribusiness and community health initiative focused on addressing local challenges such as high unemployment, poverty, food insecurity, and serious health disparities.

Students in the JAG program identified key barriers in their community such as limited access to healthy food, few local job opportunities, and reliance on distant employment. They chose to use a plot of land to grow produce, integrating both modern agricultural methods and traditional practices passed down through generations.

The garden project has expanded from 8 to 15 acres, harvesting about three tons of produce annually and cultivating over 25,000 plants each season. Students are actively engaged in all aspects of the project, including cultivation, food processing (freeze-drying/dehydrating), pricing and selling produce, and learning financial literacy (e.g., opening checking accounts and handling paychecks). Project work teaches transferable employability skills such as entrepreneurship, customer service, teamwork, and communication.

The initiative has strengthened community ties, with tribal elders sharing heritage and skills, and has drawn national and international attention from other tribes and schools looking to replicate the model. Planned future expansions include a processing center to enhance job creation and further build technical skills.

Nebraska Statewide Workforce & Educational Reporting System (NSWERS) is a statewide, longitudinal data system that integrates education and workforce information from early childhood programs, K-12 schools, postsecondary institutions, and employment records. Its primary goal is to provide educators, policymakers, and employers with reliable data to track student outcomes, workforce entry, and career progression, enabling evidence-based decisions that improve education and economic opportunities in Nebraska. By linking multiple data sources, NSWERS helps answer critical questions about graduation rates, college enrollment and completion, time to employment, job placement, and workforce gaps across industries.

Governed by a partnership of Nebraska's educational institutions and workforce agencies, NSWERS also provides secure, de-identified data and public tools, including interactive dashboards, research reports, and briefs. These resources allow communities, schools, and policymakers to monitor trends, evaluate programs, and identify areas for improvement. By connecting educational outcomes to workforce results, NSWERS plays a key role in strengthening Nebraska's talent pipeline, supporting student success, and fostering economic development across the state. Its comprehensive, data-driven approach ensures that decisions about education and workforce programs are grounded in real evidence, helping Nebraska build a stronger, more prepared workforce.

Community Colleges

Central Community College (CCC) is a multi-campus public community college serving a 25-county region of central Nebraska, providing affordable, open-access education and workforce training. CCC offers career and technical programs, academic transfer pathways, online learning, and business-driven training to support students, employers, and regional economic growth.

Data provided to the Nebraska Department of Labor by CCC highlights the college's role as a key workforce and education engine for Nebraska. CCC delivers employer-driven non-credit training to thousands of individuals each year in high-demand sectors such as health care, safety/OSHA, trucking, welding, and advanced manufacturing, while also operating a robust adult education system that served 2,510 adults in 2024–25, demonstrating strong retention, skill gains, and GED completion outcomes.

CCC's most recent graduate outcomes report data, submitted to the Nebraska Department of Labor, shows that through its credit programs the college awarded 2,788 credentials, with 88% of graduates employed or continuing their education and 91% remaining in the local service area, reinforcing a strong, place-based workforce pipeline. CCC also expands early access to postsecondary education by serving thousands of high school students from 81 schools through Early College programs, with most participants continuing into postsecondary education.

Metropolitan Community College (MCC) is a public community college based in Omaha, Nebraska, serving Dodge, Douglas, Sarpy, and Washington counties. As the state's largest community college, MCC provides affordable education through associate degrees, career and technical programs, workforce training, adult education, and transfer pathways that prepare students for employment, continued education, and economic mobility.

Data submitted to the Nebraska Department of Labor by Metropolitan Community College reflect strong workforce outcomes across credit, non-credit, and adult education programs. MCC serves a broad population of learners through programs aligned with high-demand industries such as healthcare, information technology, construction, manufacturing, transportation, and the skilled trades. Enrollment and completion activity demonstrate a clear emphasis on workforce relevance and stackable pathways that support both immediate employment and continued education.

Non-credit and Adult Basic Education programs further show positive results, with several workforce training programs reporting high completion rates in areas such as CDL, project management, healthcare, and technical fields. Adult Education and ESL programs also support strong participation and completion outcomes, helping individuals earn a GED, improve English proficiency, and transition into employment or postsecondary training.

Mid-Plains Community College (MPCC) is a public two-year college serving southwest Nebraska, offering associate degrees, certificates, and transfer pathways focused on accessible, affordable education and workforce readiness across multiple rural campuses.

Data submitted to the Nebraska Department of Labor by Mid-Plains Community College highlight the college's role in preparing workers for high-demand occupations across central and western Nebraska. MPCC's credit and diploma programs are closely aligned with regional labor market needs, particularly in healthcare, emergency services, construction, transportation, agriculture, and skilled trades. Programs such as nursing, paramedic training, welding, HVAC, electrical technology, diesel, and automotive fields show steady participation and strong student outcomes, supporting both workforce entry and long-term career pathways.

MPCC's non-credit and workforce training programs further demonstrate impact through short-term, employer-responsive training models. Commercial driver training, forklift and equipment operation, welding, and safety-focused credentials serve a significant number of individuals and directly support regional employers, particularly in rural and transportation-dependent communities.

Community Colleges

Northeast Community College (NCC) is a public two-year college serving northeast Nebraska, offering a broad range of academic, technical, and workforce programs that support career entry, advancement, and transfer. The college emphasizes hands on learning, strong alignment with regional workforce needs, and positive employment and education outcomes for students across its multi-campus service area.

Performance metrics provided to the Nebraska Department of Labor by NCC reflect strong workforce outcomes and effective alignment with labor market needs. Completion rates most commonly fall in the 50%–70% range, with several programs achieving 100% completion for recent cohorts. Employment and transfer outcomes are similarly strong, averaging close to 90%, with many programs reporting full placement and others serving incumbent workers who were already employed. Where field-specific placement was reported, a large majority of completers secured jobs directly related to their training, indicating that these programs are closely tied to in-demand occupations.

Southeast Community College (SCC) is a public two-year college serving southeast Nebraska with campuses in Lincoln, Milford, and Beatrice. SCC offers career and technical education, academic transfer programs, and continuing education, with a strong focus on workforce alignment, hands-on learning, and accessible pathways for students and employers.

Data shared by SCC with the Nebraska Department of Labor highlight strong workforce outcomes across several high-demand sectors, including healthcare, advanced manufacturing, construction, transportation, and energy. Multiple associate degree programs lead to strong wage outcomes, notably Associate Degree in Nursing (\$85,800), Automation & Robotics (\$76,960), Energy Generation Operations (\$71,344), and John Deere Construction & Forestry Equipment Technology (\$74,360), with many technical programs producing average salaries in the \$50,000–\$70,000 range.

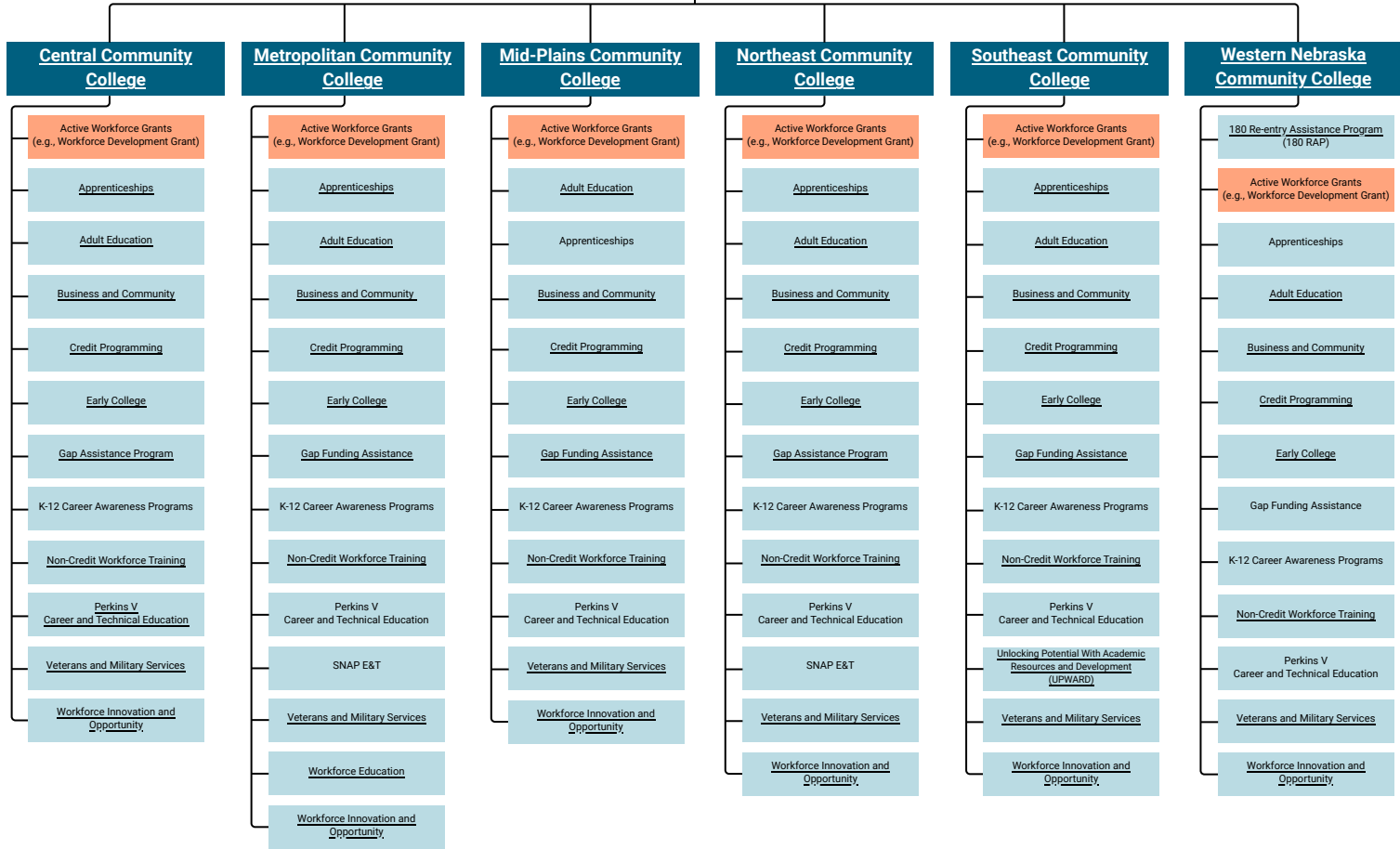
Employment results further reflect the strength of SCC's employer-connected, hands-on training model. Programs in skilled trades, manufacturing, transportation, and healthcare frequently report employment rates near or at 100 percent, indicating clear pipelines from education to work.

Western Nebraska Community College (WNCC) is a public two-year college serving the Nebraska Panhandle through campuses in Scottsbluff, Sidney, and Alliance, as well as online. WNCC offers a wide range of degree, diploma, and certificate programs focused on workforce readiness, transfer pathways, and community engagement, with an emphasis on accessible, student-centered education.

Data submitted to the Nebraska Department of Labor by WNCC demonstrates strong workforce outcomes across a wide range of credit and non-credit programs that are closely aligned with regional labor market needs. WNCC shows particularly strong performance in healthcare, transportation, energy, manufacturing, and the skilled trades, including nursing, emergency medical services, welding, diesel technology, powerline construction, aviation maintenance, and CDL training. Many programs report high pass and completion rates, reflecting effective instruction and strong alignment with industry standards and certification requirements.

WNCC's mix of degree, diploma, certificate, and short-term training programs provide flexible pathways for both immediate workforce entry and longer-term career advancement. High participation and completion rates in programs such as nursing, surgical technology, health information technology, powerline construction, and aviation maintenance highlight the college's role in supporting critical workforce needs in rural and western Nebraska.

Nebraska Community College System



NSWERS

KEY

- Community College
- Grant
- Workforce Program/Service
- Data System/Portal/Website

The Nebraska State College System

The Nebraska State College System comprised of Chadron State College, Peru State College, and Wayne State College provides a strong, accessible public higher education network across the state. The system is known for high-quality academic programs, personalized attention, affordable tuition, and career-focused opportunities, preparing students for workforce success while supporting Nebraska's communities and economy.

All three colleges participate in several programs designed to connect students with high-demand careers. The Career Scholarship program offers renewable awards ranging from \$2,000 to \$15,000 per year, helping cover tuition, fees, and room and board, while providing opportunities for career-related internships and experiential learning. They also partner with the University of Nebraska in rural pathway programs, including the Rural Law Opportunities Program and the Rural Health Opportunities Program, which support students pursuing legal or health careers in rural Nebraska communities.

Chadron State College

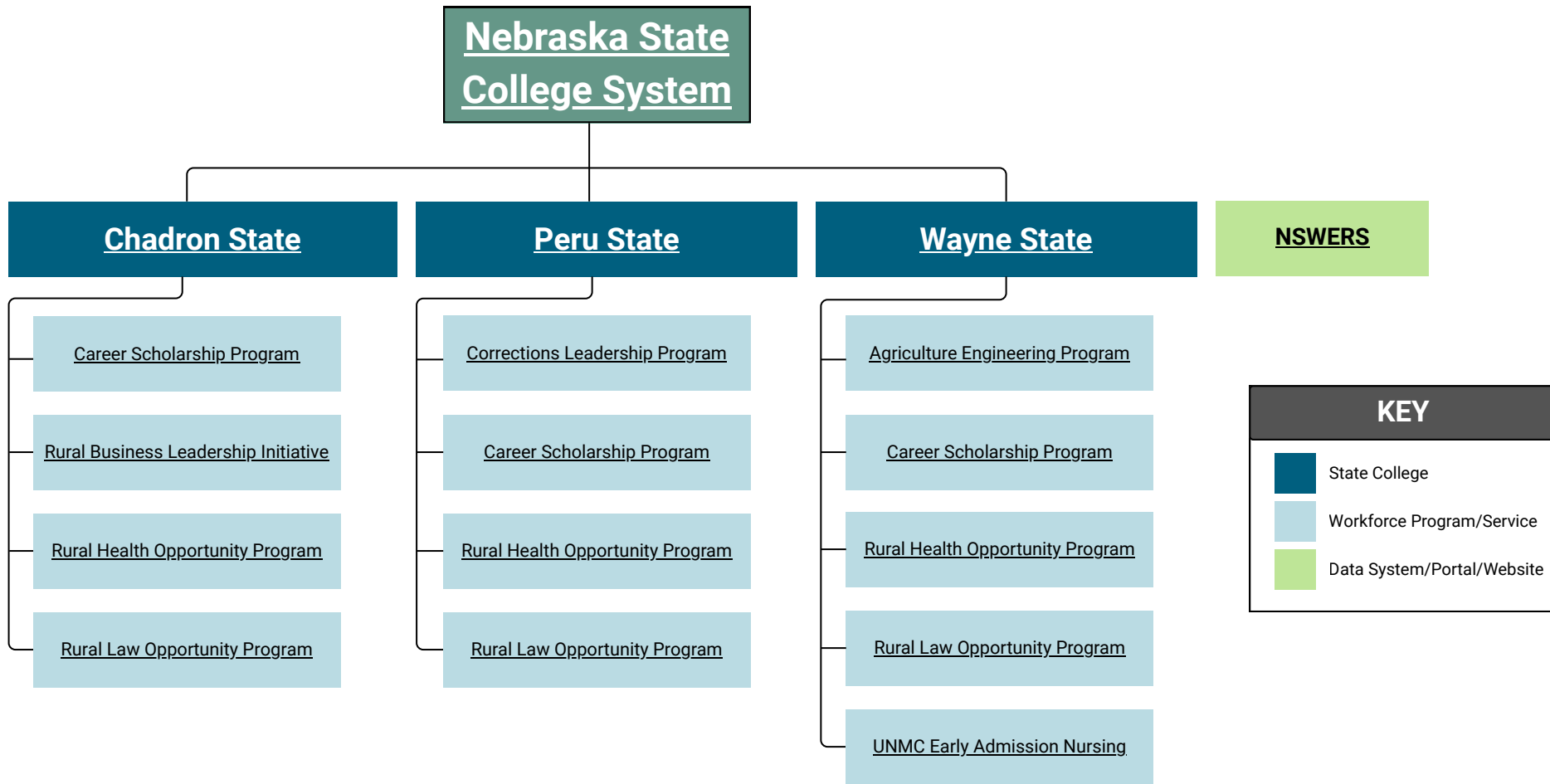
The Rural Business Leadership Initiative at Chadron State College prepares students in Accounting, Agribusiness, and Finance for leadership roles in rural communities. The program offers full tuition scholarships, professional networking, internships, and hands-on experiences to develop skills for business and community success.

Peru State College

The Corrections Leadership Scholarship Program at Peru State College provides Criminal Justice students with paid work experience at Tecumseh State Correctional Institution and scholarships up to \$15,000 per year, preparing them for careers in Nebraska's corrections system.

Wayne State College

Wayne State College partners with the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) to offer a 2+2 Early Admission Nursing pathway, where students complete two years of undergraduate coursework at Wayne State and then finish their Bachelor of Science in Nursing at UNMC's College of Nursing in Norfolk, Nebraska. This pathway provides guaranteed early admission for qualified students, joint advising with UNMC faculty, and a seamless route to a nursing career that helps meet Nebraska's healthcare workforce needs.



Note: Eligible Career Scholarship Programs include Business Administration; Communication; Computer Information Systems/Computer Science; Criminal Justice; Education; Engineering/Industrial Technology; Rangeland Management; and Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC).

The University of Nebraska System

The University of Nebraska System (NU) is Nebraska's only public university system, made up of four distinct campuses that collectively serve nearly 50,000 students and employ thousands of faculty and staff. Its mission is to transform lives and communities in Nebraska and beyond through accessible education, research, creative activity, and public service. Each campus brings unique strengths:

- University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL): The flagship Big Ten and land-grant university, providing a wide spectrum of undergraduate and graduate programs.
- University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO): A metropolitan university committed to accessibility, affordability, and strong community connections.
- University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK): Focused on delivering high-quality undergraduate education.
- University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC): The state's public academic health science center, educating health professionals and driving medical research forward.

University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK)

UNK's Teacher Scholars Community supports future educators with cohort based mentoring, academic support, and early engagement in K-12 school experiences, fostering leadership and community building among students preparing for teaching careers.

University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL)

UNL's Nebraska Elite 11 Veterinarian Program offers Nebraska students scholarships and support to pursue degrees in Animal Science or Veterinary Science, with up to full tuition coverage for veterinary school in exchange for a commitment to practice as a production animal veterinarian in rural Nebraska. The program is designed to help increase the number of veterinarians serving the state's livestock industry.

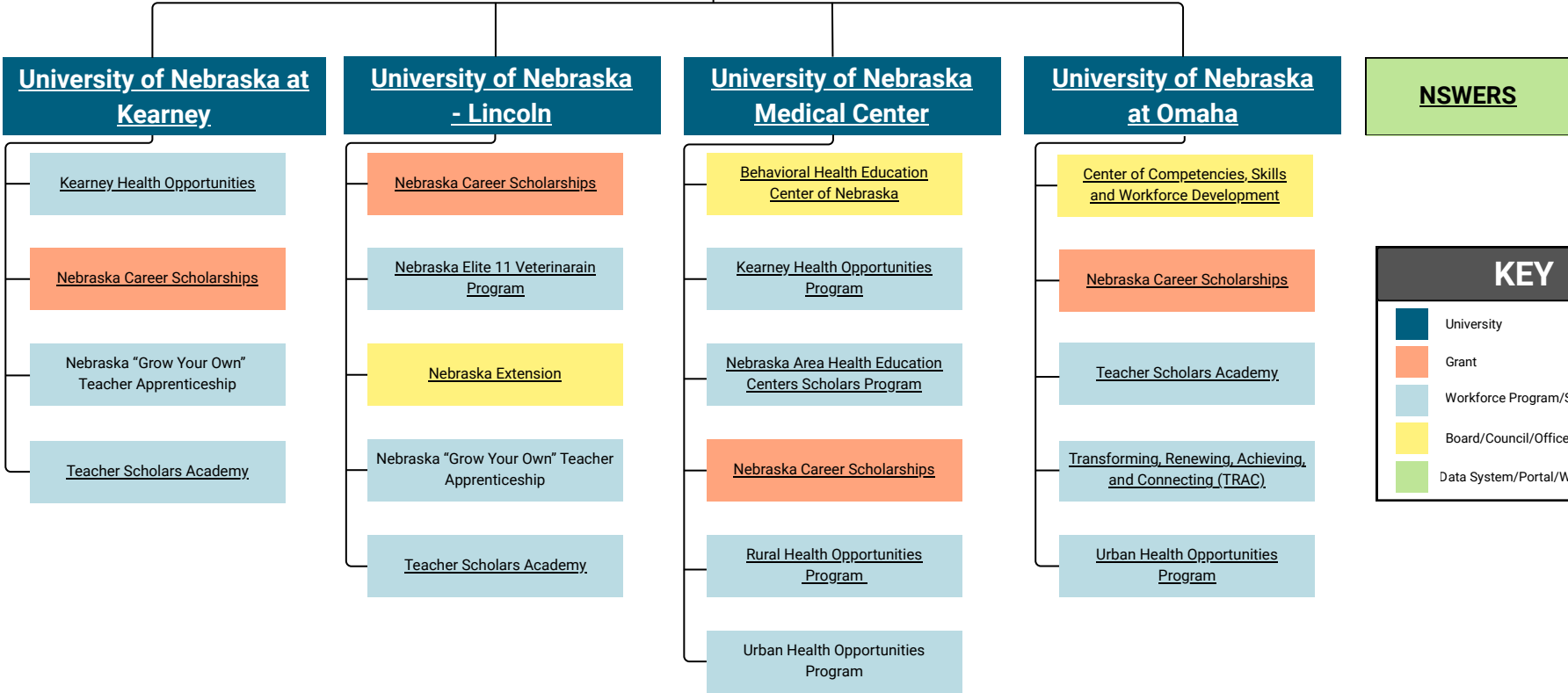
University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC)

UNMC's Nebraska AHEC Scholars Program prepares health profession students to serve in rural and medically underserved areas through workshops, community based training, and interdisciplinary health education, enhancing students' career readiness and connections with community health leaders.

University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO)

UNO's Center for Competencies, Skills & Workforce Development builds an ecosystem linking academia and industry by promoting competency based education, workforce partnerships, skills verification through a Skills Lab, and employer aligned training to strengthen student career readiness and economic mobility.

University of Nebraska System



KEY	
	University
	Grant
	Workforce Program/Service
	Board/Council/Office
	Data System/Portal/Website

Nebraska Tribal Colleges

Little Priest Tribal College is a fully accredited, two year tribal college chartered by the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska. It is committed to preparing students for career success while supporting community and economic development.

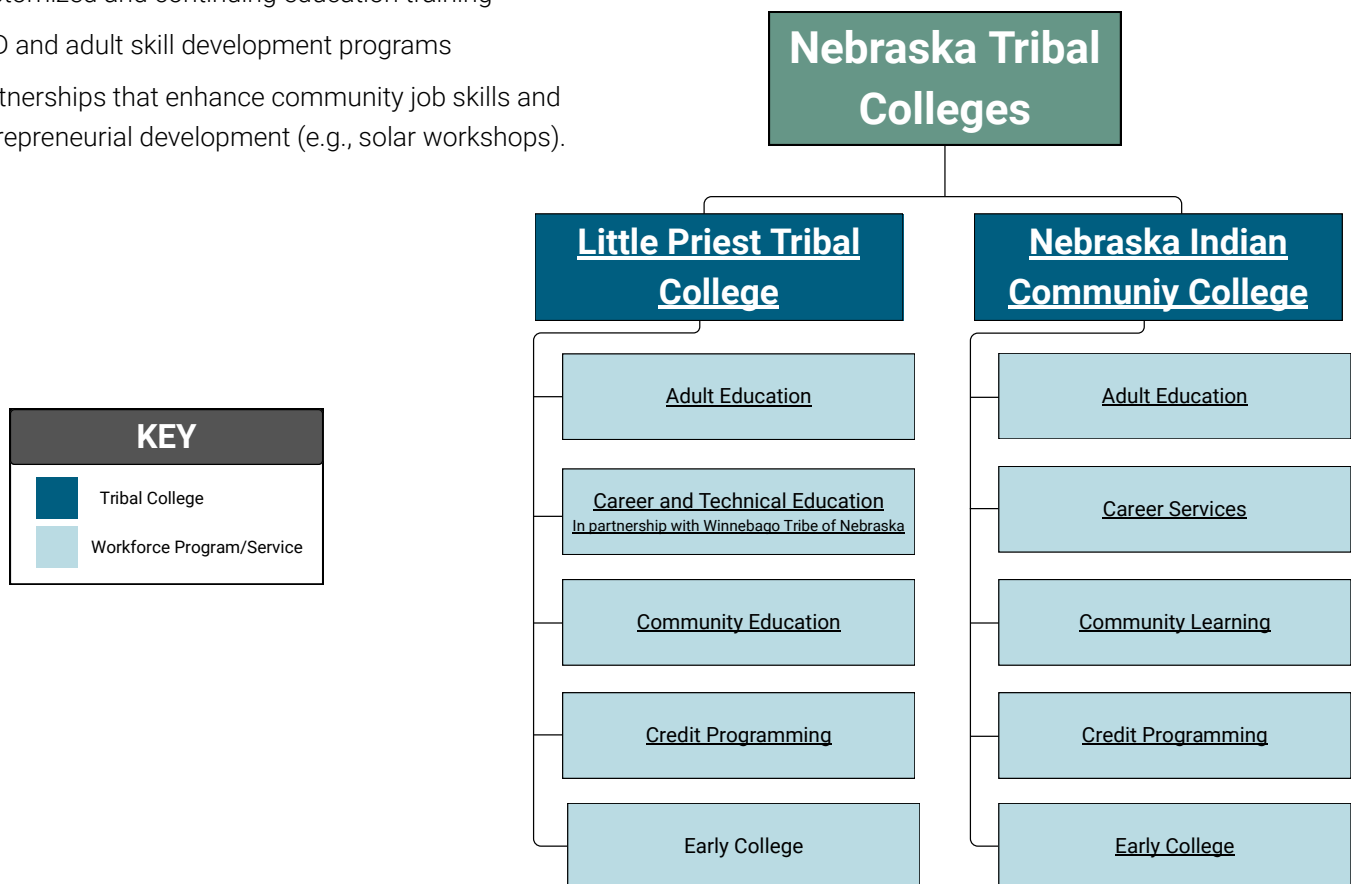
Highlighted Career Aligned Programs:

- Diversified Agriculture: Equips students with skills in sustainable farming and agribusiness to support local agricultural initiatives.
- Certified Nursing Assistant: Prepares students for entry level healthcare roles in a sector with strong regional demand.
- Early Childhood Education: Trains students for careers in early childhood care and education, critical for community services and workforce participation.
- Carpentry Program: A new diploma and certificate based carpentry program funded in part by a \$1.4 million U.S. Department of Labor grant is being launched to meet local demand for skilled construction workers. Construction of a dedicated \$1.3 million carpentry building began in 2025 to support this workforce pipeline.

Nebraska Indian Community College (NICC) was founded in 1973 to provide postsecondary education to tribal communities in Nebraska. It became an independent, tribally chartered college in 1979, achieved accreditation in the early 1980s, and was designated a federal land-grant institution in 1994. Today, NICC serves students through campuses in Macy, Santee, and South Sioux City.

While NICC's main catalog emphasizes higher education pathways, it also supports workforce readiness through:

- Career services (e.g., internships, job boards, career advising)
- Customized and continuing education training
- GED and adult skill development programs
- Partnerships that enhance community job skills and entrepreneurial development (e.g., solar workshops).



State of Workforce Development Survey

Good Life, Great Careers

The Governor's Good Life, Great Careers Initiative expands high-quality apprenticeships, aligns training with industry needs, and prepares Nebraskans for careers.

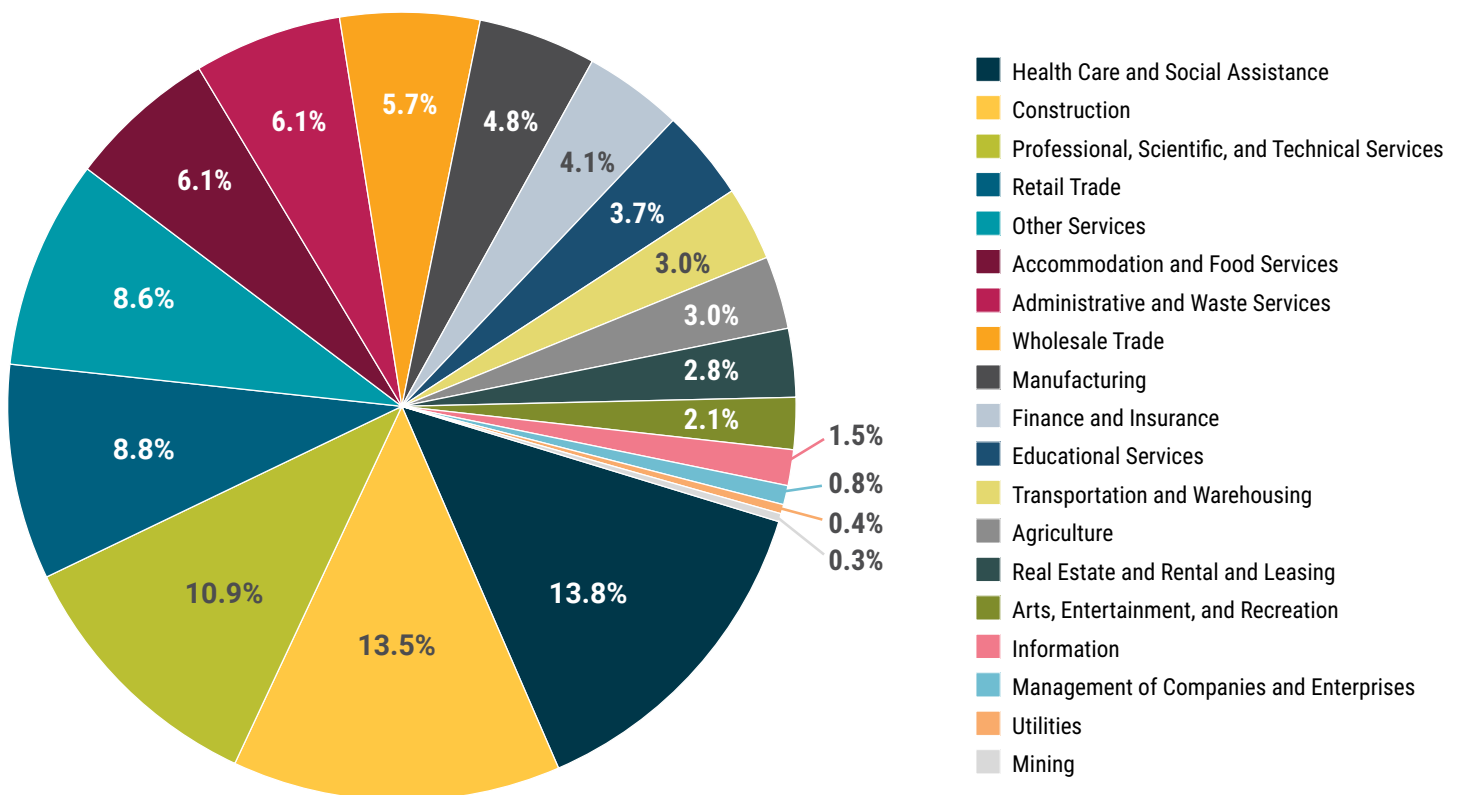
The State of Workforce Development Survey was created to explore topics not covered in the Labor Availability and Skills Gap reports. It also aims to better understand areas of interest for the Good Life, Great Careers Initiative.

Survey Design:

The survey collected feedback from Nebraska employers on workforce needs, apprenticeship participation, and the growing role of artificial intelligence. It asked about current job openings by wage level, experience with Registered Apprenticeships, and reasons for not participating, while also measuring awareness and use of state workforce resources such as NEworks, workforce boards, and American Job Centers.

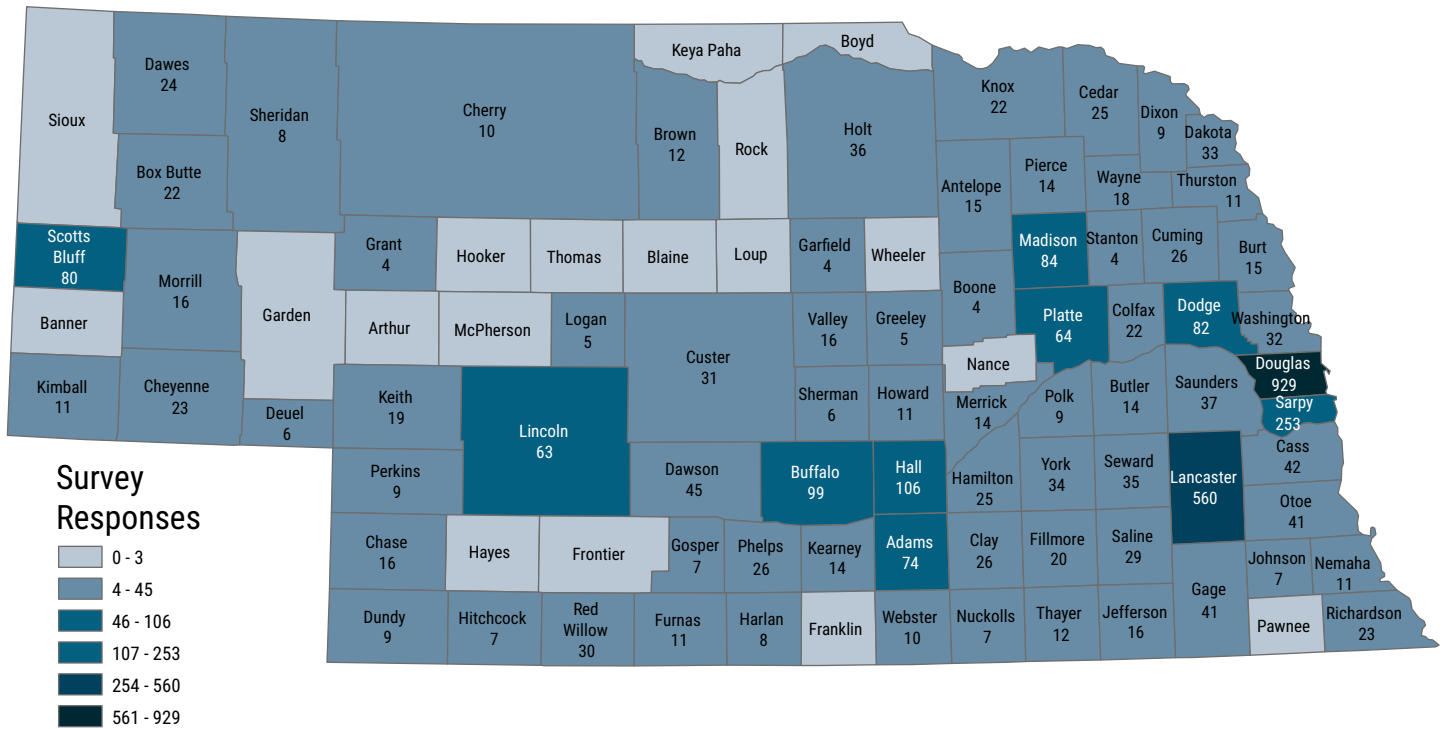
The survey examined how businesses were using AI, how they expected it to affect employment over the next three years, which roles might change, and which types of training would help them adopt AI. Overall, the results will help guide Nebraska's workforce strategy by identifying apprenticeship opportunities, employer partnerships, and the skills needed for an AI-driven economy.

Survey Responses by Industry Sector



State of Workforce Development Survey

Survey Responses by County



This map displays employer survey responses by county and identifies regional participation levels. By analyzing survey feedback by county, the Office of Registered Apprenticeship can design programs that fit local needs, such as agribusiness in rural areas or tech in urban centers. The qualitative data from these responses enable the state to move beyond a one-size-fits-all approach.

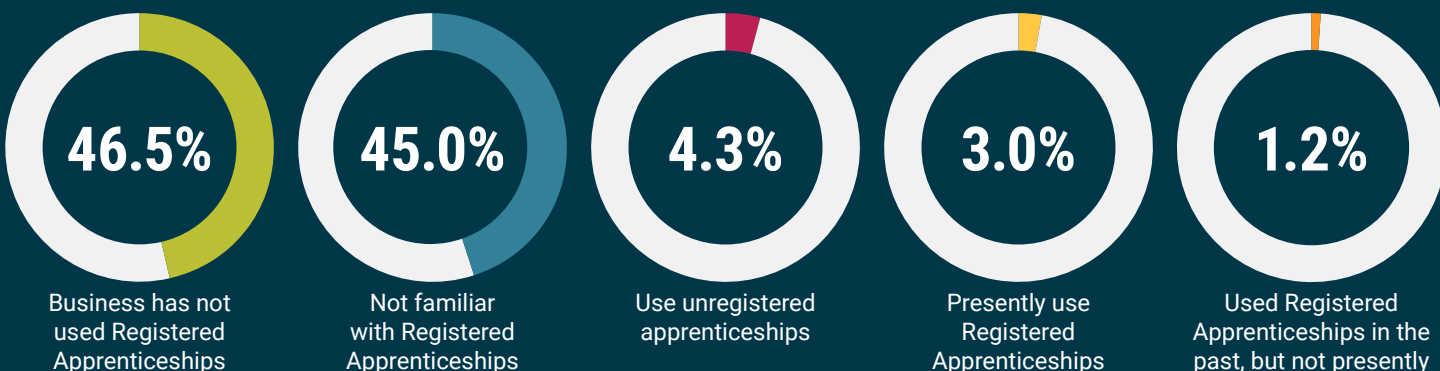
Survey Participation Summary

- **34,692 private businesses registered in Nebraska were invited to participate via email. A variety of roles are represented among the respondents in this report (e.g., President/CEO, human resources, accounting/bookkeeping, owner/operator).**
- **Sample represented businesses with a total of 621,621 covered employees in 2025 Q1, or about 61.8% of the covered employee workforce during that time.**
- **Received 4,001 responses.**

State of Workforce Development Survey Results: Registered Apprenticeships

Participation in Registered Apprenticeships

The US Department of Labor defines Registered Apprenticeship as an industry-driven career pathway involving paid work experience, classroom instruction, and a portable, nationally-recognized credential upon completion. Almost 60% of businesses who said they used Registered Apprenticeships in the survey were in the construction sector. The majority of businesses utilizing any type of apprenticeships (39.6%) are also concentrated in the construction sector.



Reasons for Not Participating in a Registered Apprenticeship Program

Respondents identified limited perceived relevance and program awareness as the main barriers to implementing these initiatives. Few participants mentioned time commitments and costs associated with Registered Apprenticeships as reasons for not utilizing them. Respondents' views highlight the need for outreach and education. Employers may not realize how these workforce programs can apply in their fields.

Reasons	Percent of Responses
Not Relevant to my Business	59.0%
Unaware of Available Registered Apprenticeship(s) Opportunities	17.2%
No Applicable Registered Apprenticeship(s) Available	11.1%
Not Enough Interest from Potential Employees/Participants	8.9%
Not Enough Interest from Company Leadership	4.9%
Too Much Work to Maintain and Meet Requirements	4.2%
Too Costly to Start Offering	3.3%
Too Costly to Maintain	2.9%
Too Much Initial Time to Set Up	2.7%
Other	9.3%

"Other" Responses

"Not sure what registered apprenticeship is"

"Apprenticeships are not offered in our specialized area of service"

"In the process of getting the classes going"

"We just don't have enough openings to participate at this time"

"We're small, mostly part time and volunteers, interested but not if just another time consuming expensive feel good program..."

"We are a small family business."

"We are a small growing company. Still exploring the idea."

"Our labor partners use registered apprentice programs, we are a small association and it is not applicable to us. My contractor members of my association then employ those apprentices."

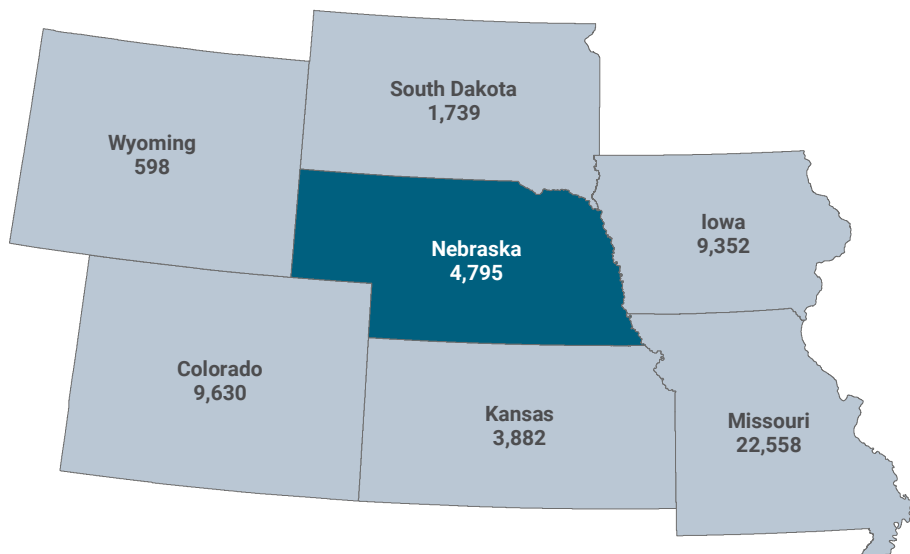
Registered Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships

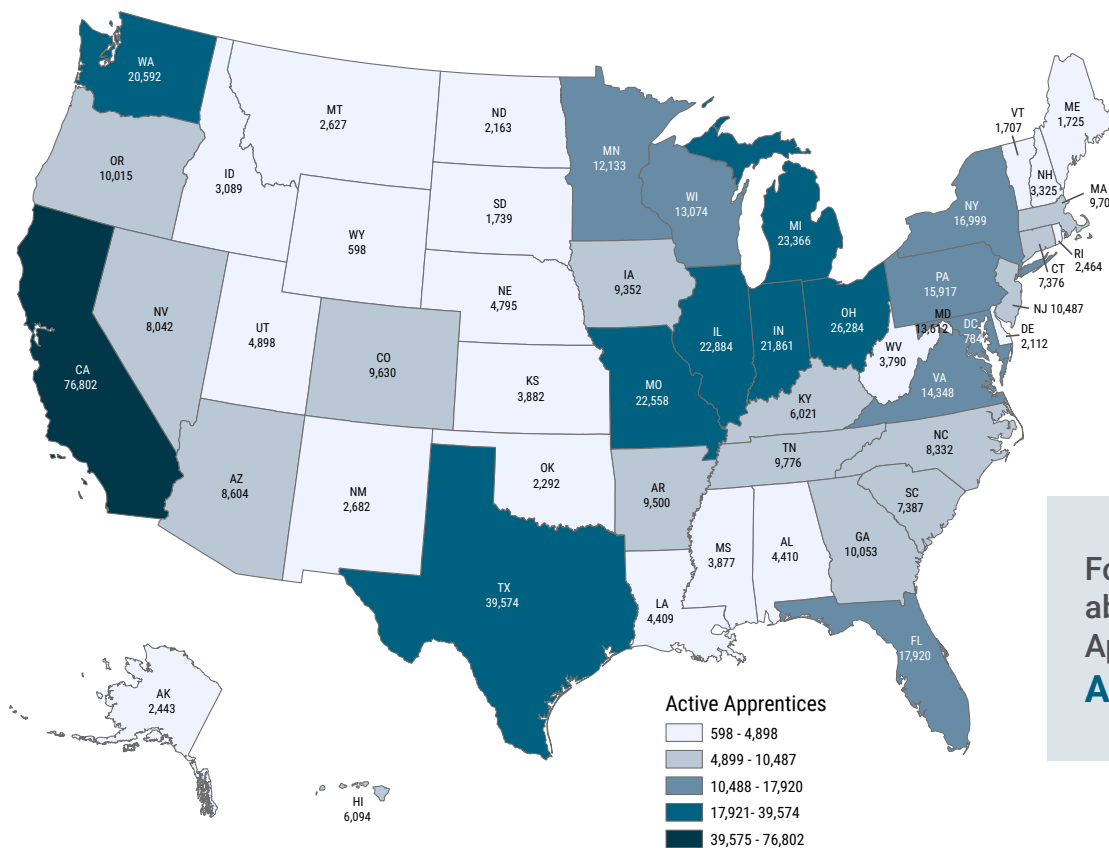
This map shows active apprenticeships by state through 9/23/2025. This includes state and national program data entered or uploaded into the Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Database System (RAPIDS). It allows stakeholders to benchmark Nebraska's apprenticeship density against peer states, validating whether the goal of adding 6,000 new apprentices is keeping pace with or exceeding national momentum.

RAPIDS is the federal system for apprenticeship tracking. Increasing the number of apprenticeships ensures that Nebraska continues to create a sustainable loop where verified success attracts further investment into the local workforce ecosystem.

Current apprenticeship goals are removing barriers, streamlining program creation for employers, and converting interested businesses into active sponsors.

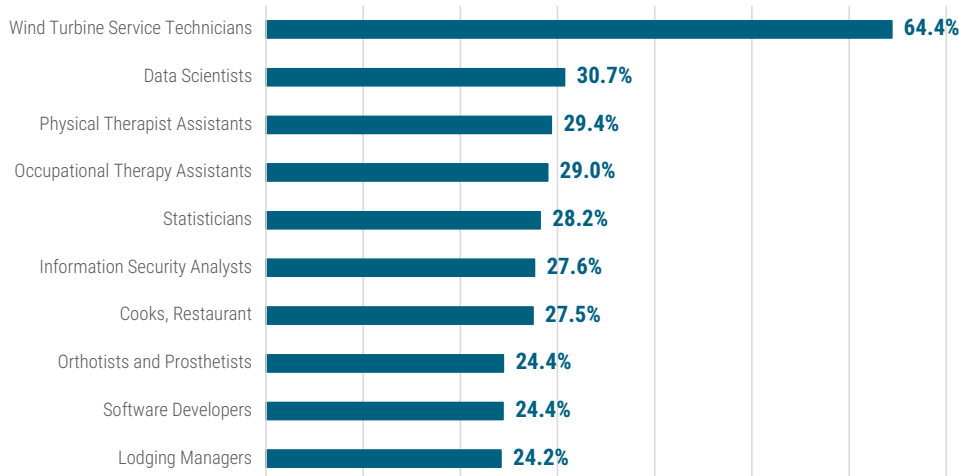


Source: Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Database System (RAPIDS).



Registered Apprenticeships

Nebraska Registered Apprenticeship Occupations with the Fastest Projected Employment Growth by Percentage Change



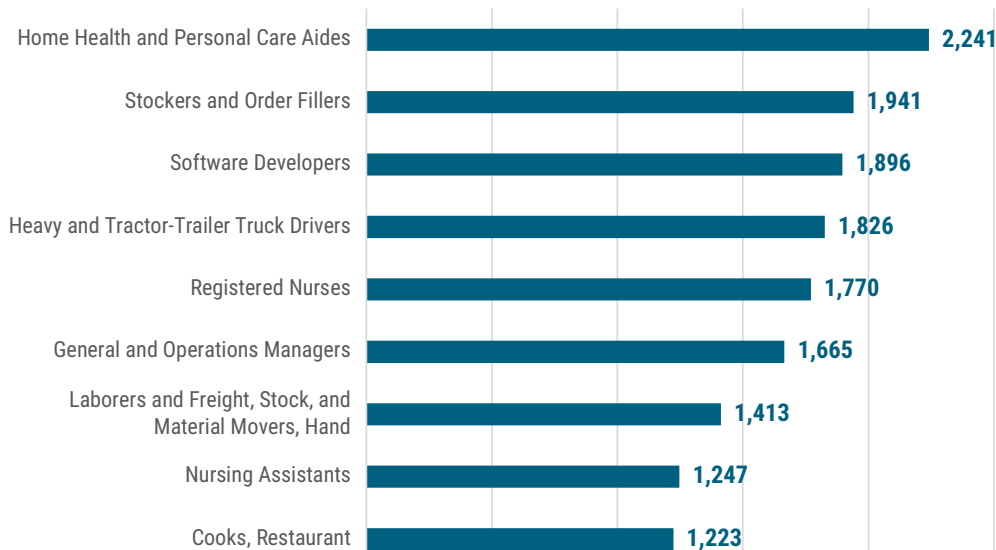
Not every occupation has a clear training route. By focusing on the largest percent change, we pinpoint emerging opportunities in nontraditional fields like wind turbine technicians. This allows the state to deploy resources efficiently by scaling up existing programs for occupations with high numeric growth and creating new intermediary programs for those with the fastest percentage growth in Nebraska.

Source: 2022 to 2032 Long-term Occupational Employment Projections, Nebraska Department of Labor, Office of Labor Market Information and U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship

Approved Registered Apprenticeship Occupations with the Largest Projected Employment Growth

In this chart, Nebraska's long-term projections data is focused specifically on Registered Apprenticeship-approved occupations and those that are projected to have the highest numeric growth through 2032. Growth areas can identify actionable training pathways. The chart identifies where the state's Registered Apprenticeship (RA) expansion will potentially have the most significant impact on the actual economy. By focusing on the largest numeric change, we identify high-volume needs in sectors like transportation and warehousing, construction, and healthcare and social assistance.

Registered Apprenticeship Approved Occupations with the Largest Projected Employment Growth by Total Number of Nebraska Jobs



Source: 2022 to 2032 Long-term Occupational Employment Projections, Nebraska Department of Labor, Office of Labor Market Information and U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship

Supply vs. Demand

Advertised Job Openings by County, November 2025

This table shows the top 10 counties by the number of advertised job openings in [NEworks.nebraska.gov](https://neworks.nebraska.gov) as of January 14, 2026. The candidates for the job openings include anyone who said they would be willing to work anywhere in the state, which is around 11,700, in addition to those who would prefer to stay in a certain county. This chart also shows the labor force, employed, unemployed, and the unemployment rate for those counties, sourced from the latest Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) data.

These job openings reveal geographic “hot spots” with the greatest need for skilled workers, where traditional hiring may be insufficient. These areas offer the best opportunities for the Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs, which help employers address talent shortages by training workers, boosting retention, and lowering recruitment costs, enabling them to develop their own talent pipelines.

If a county shows a high density of job openings in a specific field, the Office of Registered Apprenticeship can work with local businesses to establish multi-employer apprenticeship programs that address those vacancies.

Top 10 Counties by Job Openings

County	Job Openings	Candidates	Candidates per Job	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
Douglas	10,516	25,772	2.45	329,773	319,476	10,297	3.1%
Lancaster	4,526	19,540	4.32	192,761	187,247	5,514	2.9%
Sarpy	2,143	20,209	9.43	112,577	109,337	3,240	2.9%
Hall	1,277	14,347	11.23	35,605	34,508	1,097	3.1%
Buffalo	1,177	12,952	11.00	29,651	28,871	780	2.6%
Platte	842	12,750	15.14	18,950	18,442	508	2.7%
Madison	720	12,654	17.58	19,444	18,907	537	2.8%
Scotts Bluff	655	12,475	19.05	17,502	16,923	579	3.3%
Lincoln	600	12,596	20.99	18,684	18,170	514	2.8%
Dodge	449	15,709	34.99	20,127	19,547	580	2.9%

Source: Online advertised jobs data, [NEworks.nebraska.gov](https://neworks.nebraska.gov)

Supply vs. Demand

Job Openings and Candidate Pool by Occupational Group

Rank	Occupation Group	Job Openings	Candidates
1	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	6,427	869
2	Management	2,333	3,955
3	Sales and Related	1,903	2,766
4	Office and Administrative Support	1,723	5,728
5	Educational Instruction and Library	1,605	597
6	Food Preparation and Serving Related	1,494	2,212
7	Business and Financial Operations	1,445	1,816
8	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	1,291	1,741
9	Transportation and Material Moving	1,248	4,192
10	Healthcare Support	1,119	1,434
11	Computer and Mathematical	1,108	1,626
12	Production	955	4,743
13	Architecture and Engineering	646	553
14	Life, Physical, and Social Science	540	471
15	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	469	1,551
16	Community and Social Service	463	737
17	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	456	697
18	Construction and Extraction	397	5,272
19	Personal Care and Service	359	489
20	Protective Service	251	417
21	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	234	288
22	Legal	127	159
23	Military Specific	16	20
24	Total other	1,477	0

Source: Online advertised jobs data, NEworks.nebraska.gov

Apprenticeship opportunities exist in healthcare practitioners and technical occupations, with 6,427 job openings and only 869 candidates. Examples include nursing, medical technician, and other health careers. The second-largest gap is in educational instruction and library occupations, with 1,605 openings and just 597 candidates, indicating potential for apprenticeship pathways in early childhood education, paraprofessional roles, and specialized instructional roles.

The third largest gap appears in architecture and engineering occupations, where 646 openings exceed the 553 available candidates. While smaller than healthcare and education, this shortage still signals a need for technical, earn-while-you-learn programs that prepare workers for engineering, drafting, and advanced technical careers. Together, these three groups represent strong potential targets for expanding Registered Apprenticeships to address critical workforce shortages.

Job Opportunities

As of January 2026, there were approximately **47,601 job openings** on NEworks.

Supply vs. Demand

Employment Percent Change, 2022-2032, by Occupation Group

Employment projections serve as a guide for prioritizing the expansion of Registered Apprenticeship programs. The Registered Apprenticeship program is designed to create talent pipelines in these rapidly expanding fields, ensuring that the training infrastructure exists to meet these long-term projections.

With transportation and material moving occupations expected to add 7,861 jobs, and construction and extraction occupations projected to add 4,763 jobs, the scale of the state's workforce need is substantial. With the survey responses, the state can identify where the gap between projected need and available talent is the most critical. This allows the Office of Registered Apprenticeship to focus its outreach on sectors where the data shows a high demand for skilled labor.

Employment Percent Change, 2022-2032 by Occupation Group

Occupational Title	2022 Estimated Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Computer and Mathematical	34,464	39,218	4,754	13.8%
Healthcare Support	38,000	43,028	5,028	13.2%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	68,743	75,310	6,567	9.6%
Community and Social Service	15,162	16,604	1,442	9.5%
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	48,183	52,428	4,245	8.8%
Construction and Extraction	56,420	61,183	4,763	8.4%
Management	97,164	105,284	8,120	8.4%
Architecture and Engineering	12,312	13,300	988	8.0%
Transportation and Material Moving	98,884	106,745	7,861	8.0%
Legal	6,859	7,375	516	7.5%

Source: 2022 to 2032 Long-term Occupational Employment Projections, Nebraska Department of Labor, Office of Labor Market Information

Image by Bob Walker -
Standing Bear Lake, Omaha, NE
from Unsplash

Supply vs. Demand

Labor Supply vs. Demand Snapshot

The table below highlights Nebraska's top ten occupations by online advertised job openings and the estimated pool of potential candidates based on active resumes in the workforce system. This comparison provides a snapshot of labor supply relative to demand across key occupations.

Top Occupations in the State by Number of Job Openings

Rank	Occupation	Job Openings	Potential Candidates	Potential Candidates Per Job Opening
1	Registered Nurses	2,346	217	0.09
2	Retail Salespersons	733	449	0.61
3	Customer Service Representatives	688	1,672	2.43
4	Physicians, All Other	611	0	N/A
5	General and Operations Managers	406	608	1.50
6	Fast Food and Counter Workers	334	266	0.80
7	Managers, All Other	328	409	1.25
8	Computer Occupations, All Other	326	354	1.09
9	First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	325	164	0.50
10	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	324	95	0.29

Job Source: Online advertised jobs data. Candidate Source: Is comprised of individuals whose resumes have been active in the workforce system over the past twelve months.

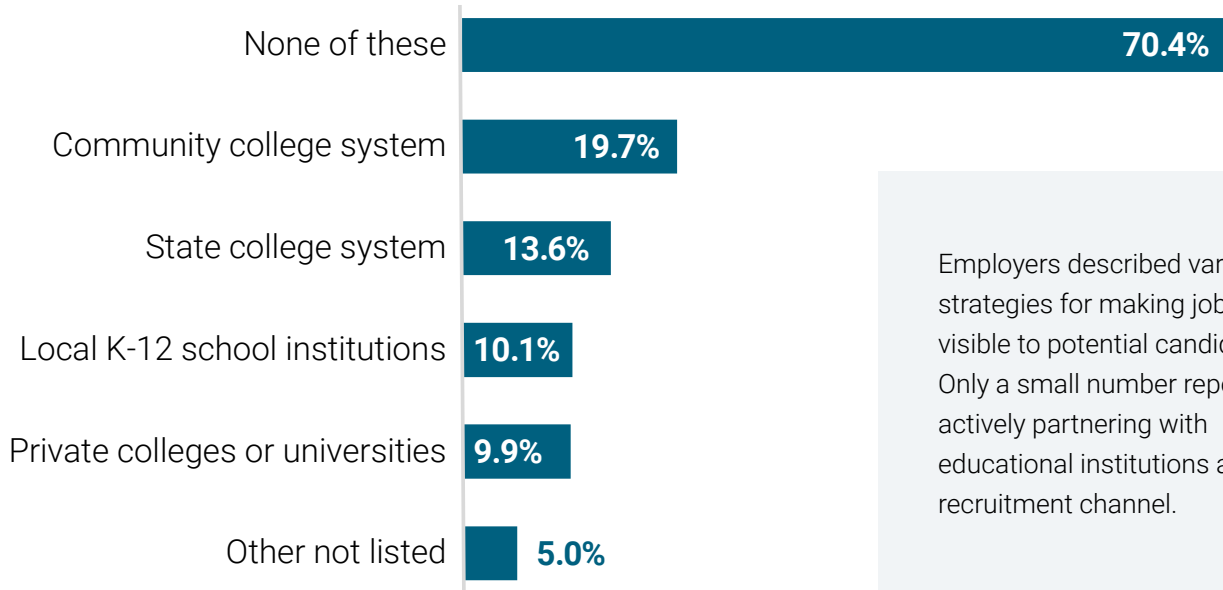
Downloaded: 12/23/2025

As of December 22, 2025, Registered Nurses show the greatest demand with 2,346 openings, followed by Retail Salespersons (733) and Customer Service Representatives (688). The candidates-per-opening metric indicates where labor shortages or surpluses may exist. Registered Nurses face a severe shortage, with roughly 0.09 candidates per opening, while Customer Service Representatives show a surplus, with approximately 2.43 candidates per opening.

While this measure does not account for differences in skills, licensing, or geographic constraints, it serves as a useful planning tool. The results can help inform workforce development strategies by identifying occupations with critical shortages and potential opportunities to transition workers from more saturated fields into high-demand roles through targeted training and career pathways.

State of Workforce Development Survey Results: Hiring Needs

Collaboration with Educational Institutions for Hiring Needs



Employers described various strategies for making job listings visible to potential candidates. Only a small number reported actively partnering with educational institutions as a recruitment channel.

Current Recruitment Channels Used by Your Organization

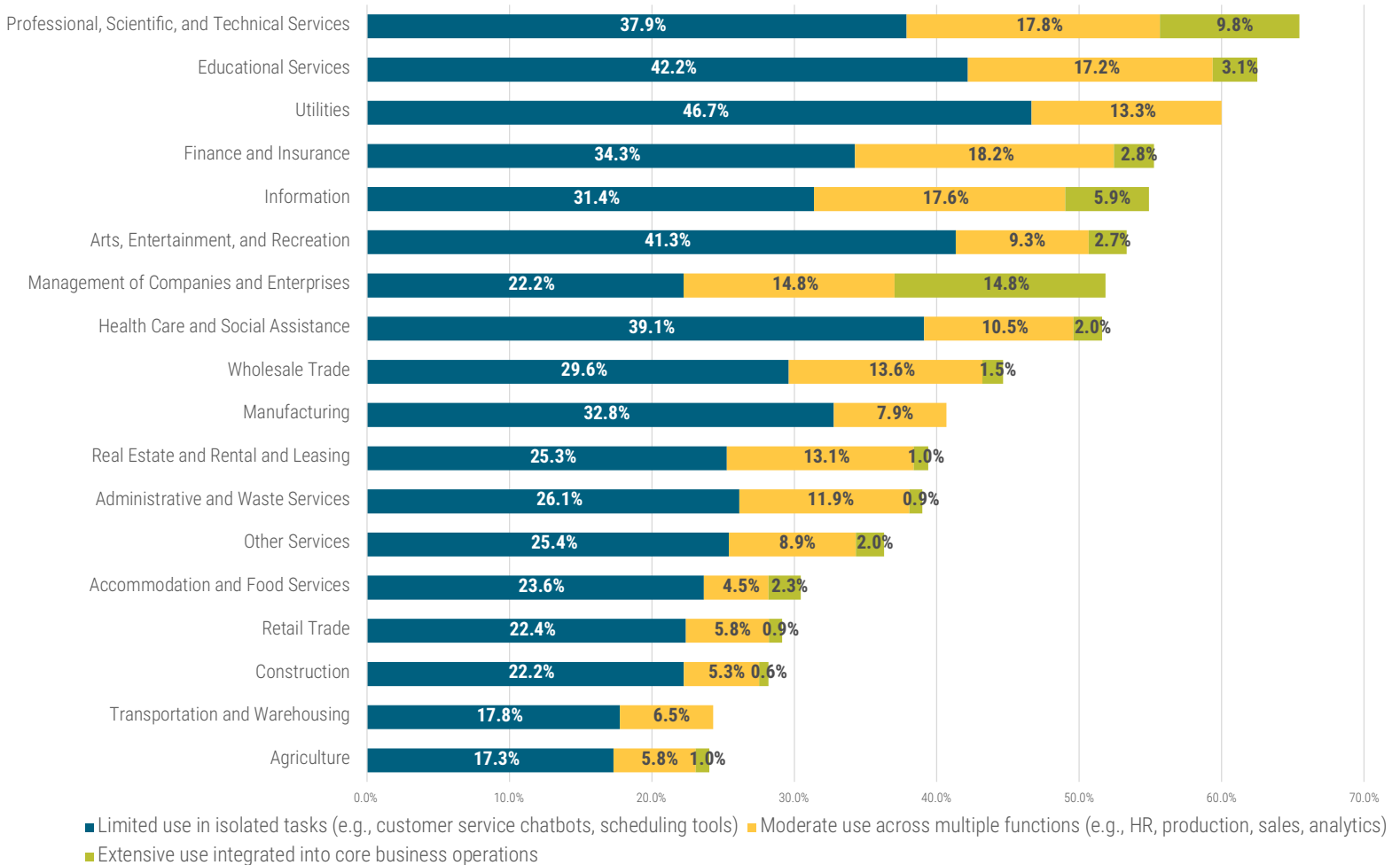
Recruitment Channels	Percent of Responses
Online jobs boards (e.g. LinkedIn, Indeed)	50.4%
Social media	44.7%
Employee referral programs	37.1%
Company website career page	25.1%
Industry-specific job boards or professional associations	15.4%
Print media (newspapers, trade magazines)	12.0%
Staffing agencies or temporary employment agencies	10.6%
Government jobs boards (e.g. NEworks)	7.3%
Other (e.g. word of mouth, job fairs, union hiring halls)	20.1%

State of Workforce Development Survey Results: AI Use in Businesses

AI Adoption Across Industry Sectors

Sectors such as agriculture, transportation and warehousing, construction, and retail report the highest shares of businesses with no current AI use, generally around two-thirds of respondents. These industries tend to rely more on manual or operational work, and only a small share reports moderate or extensive AI integration.

In contrast, knowledge-based industries such as management of companies and enterprises, professional, scientific, and technical services, information, and finance and insurance, show the highest levels of AI adoption. These sectors report much larger shares of businesses using AI in moderate or extensive ways, often exceeding 20 percent. Overall, the chart suggests that AI use is concentrated in technical, financial, and information-driven industries, while traditional or service-oriented sectors are still in early stages of adoption.



State of Workforce Development Survey Results: AI Use in Businesses

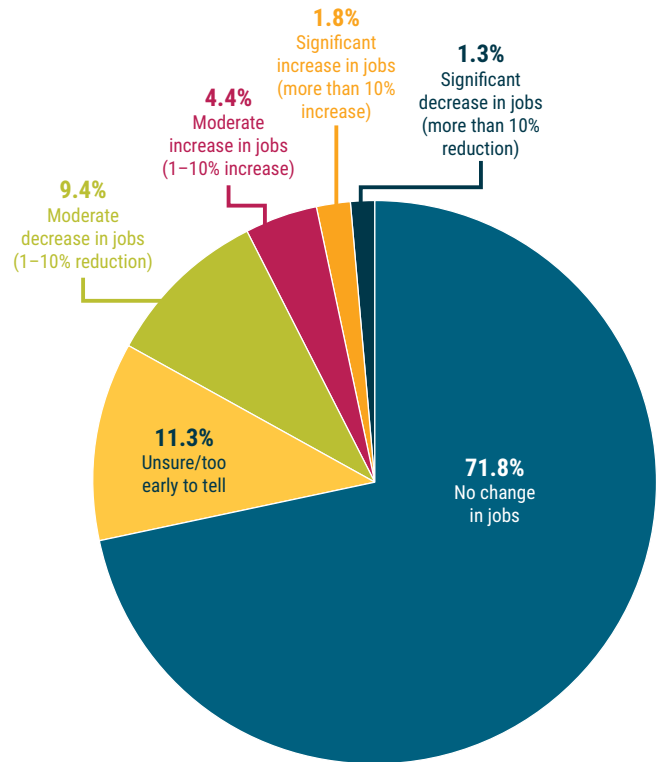
Current Organizational Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools or Systems

Use of AI	Percent
No current use and no near-term plans	52.3%
Limited use in isolated tasks (e.g., customer service chatbots, scheduling tools)	29.4%
Moderate use across multiple functions (e.g., HR, production, sales, analytics)	10.5%
Don't know	5.3%
Extensive use integrated into core business operations	2.7%

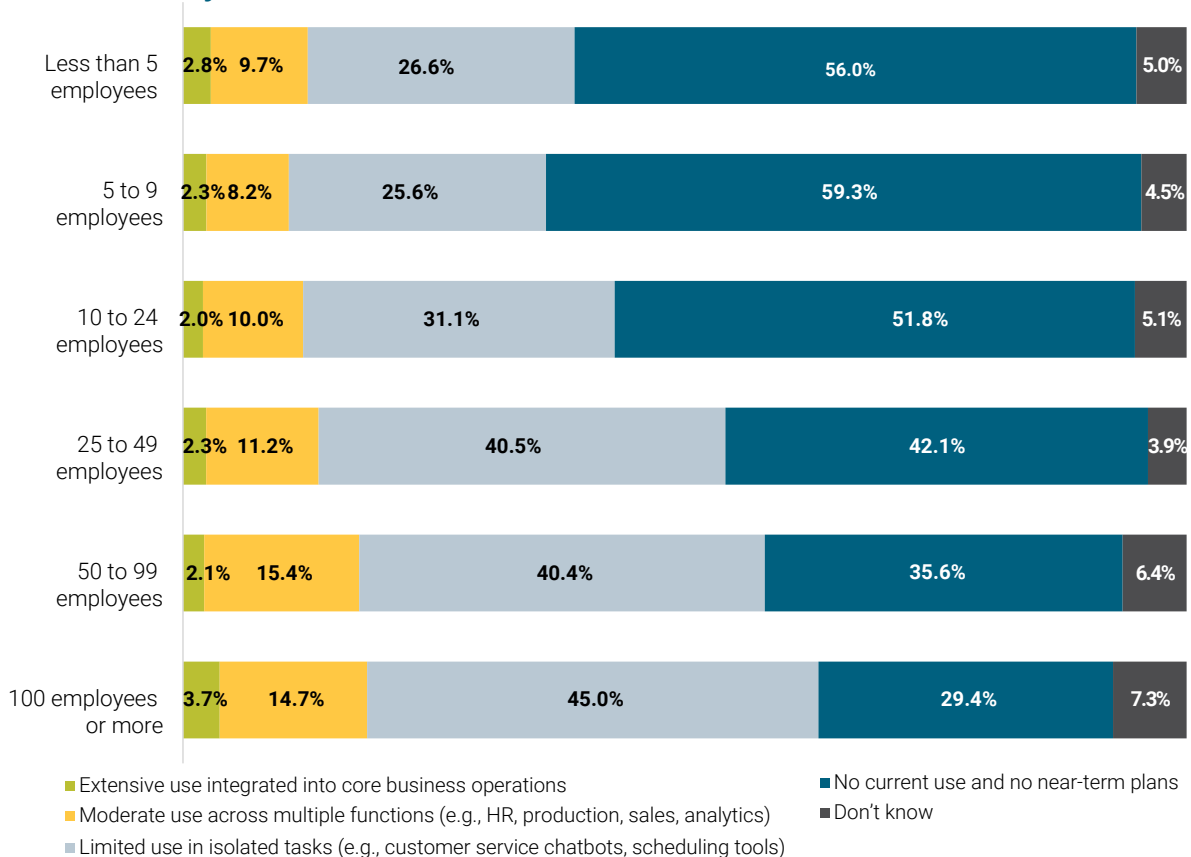
Most businesses surveyed state they have no current use or near-term AI use plans. 29.4% state limited current use in isolated tasks.

Of those businesses presently using AI, the majority of respondents did not expect AI to impact the number of employees in their organization.

Expected Impact of AI on Employee Numbers Over the Next Three Years

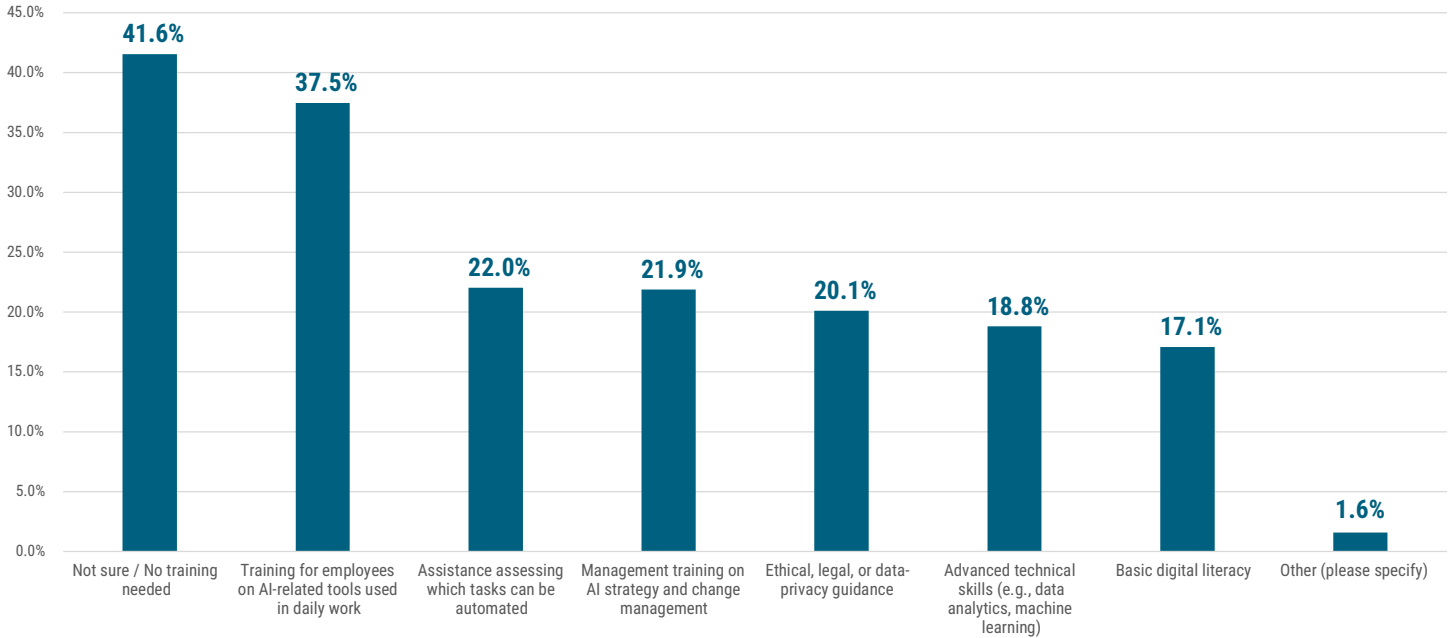


Use of AI by Business Size

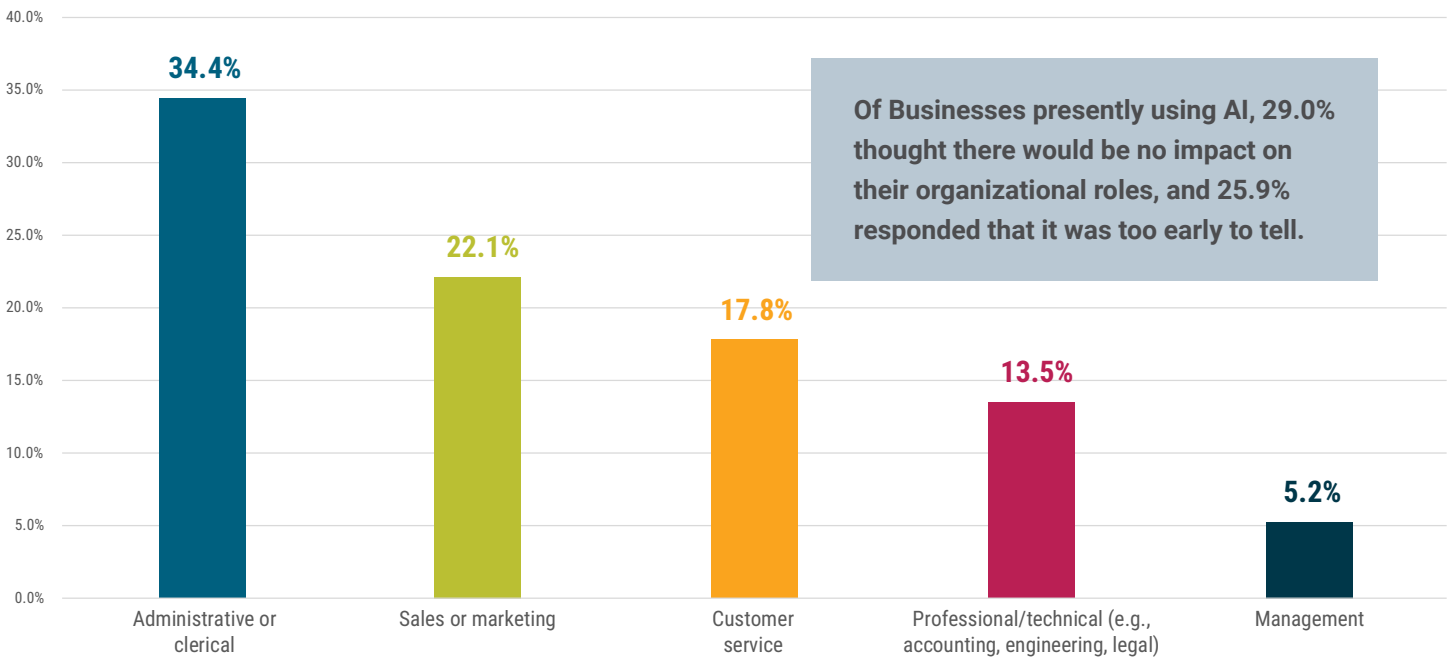


State of Workforce Development Survey Results: AI Use in Businesses

Businesses using AI were asked: "What types of training or workforce development would most help your organization implement or adapt to AI technologies? (Select all that apply.)"



Businesses using AI were asked: "Which types of roles in your organization are most likely to be automated, augmented, or significantly changed by AI in the next three years? (Select all that apply.)"



Labor Availability Study Results Overview

Statewide Highlights

The Labor Availability Study (LAS) is a questionnaire-based research project aimed at helping workers and businesses make more informed decisions about the local workforce and job market. Since 2014, LAS has been surveying businesses and households across the state to gain insight into employer needs, labor availability, and potential skills gaps that may affect Nebraska's labor markets and economy. Surveys are conducted on a rolling basis by geographic area.

Between May 2021 and October 2023, NDOL surveyed 27 areas across the state, encompassing 86 counties. **Responses from 7,138 businesses and 9,968 households were compiled for a statewide report, which can be found on the Labor Market Information Publications page at: [NEworks.nebraska.gov](https://nworks.nebraska.gov).**

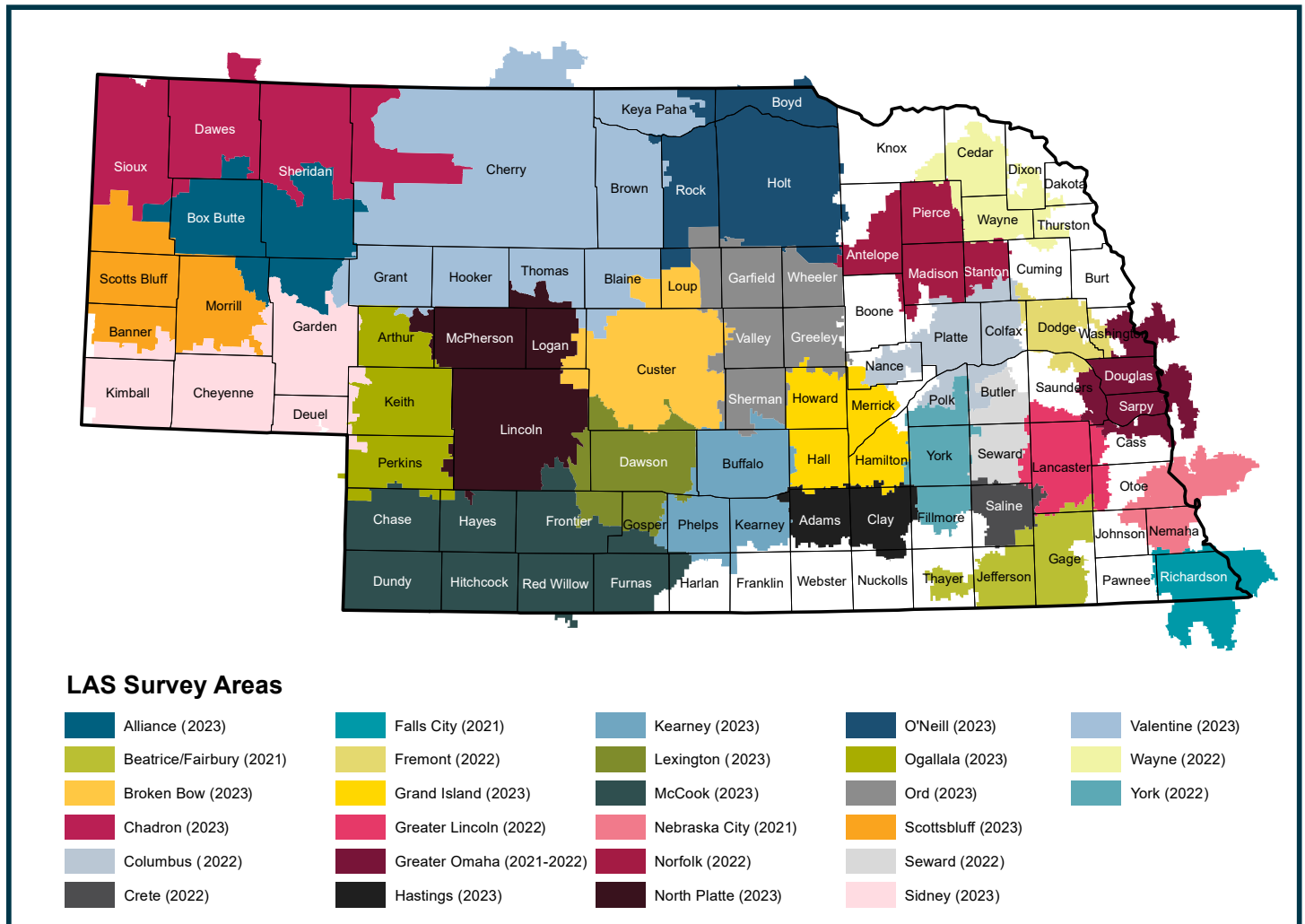
Survey Area Population
Age 18+:

1,481,176 ⁽¹⁾

Estimated Total
Labor Force:

1,056,798 ⁽²⁾

Surveyed Areas



Statewide Highlights

Top 3 Industries with Greatest Difficulty Hiring

Industries	Percentage of Respondents with Difficulty
Construction	89.5%
Agriculture	89.0%
Wholesale Trade	87.9%

Factors Most Important to Potential Job Seekers When Considering New Employment

- Salary
- Job security/stability
- Paid vacation
- Paid holidays

Top Job Satisfaction Factors for Employed Potential Job Seekers

- Job security/stability
- Work schedule
- Use of existing skills
- Commute Satisfaction

Top Obstacles to Employment for Potential Job Seekers

- Inadequate pay offered at local area employers
- Work schedule flexibility
- Lack of job opportunities in local area

Top 3 Occupation Groups with Greatest Difficulty Hiring

Occupations	Percentage of Respondents with Difficulty
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	92.4%
Construction and Extraction	89.4%
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	87.8%

Top 3 Reasons Given by Employers for Hiring Difficulty

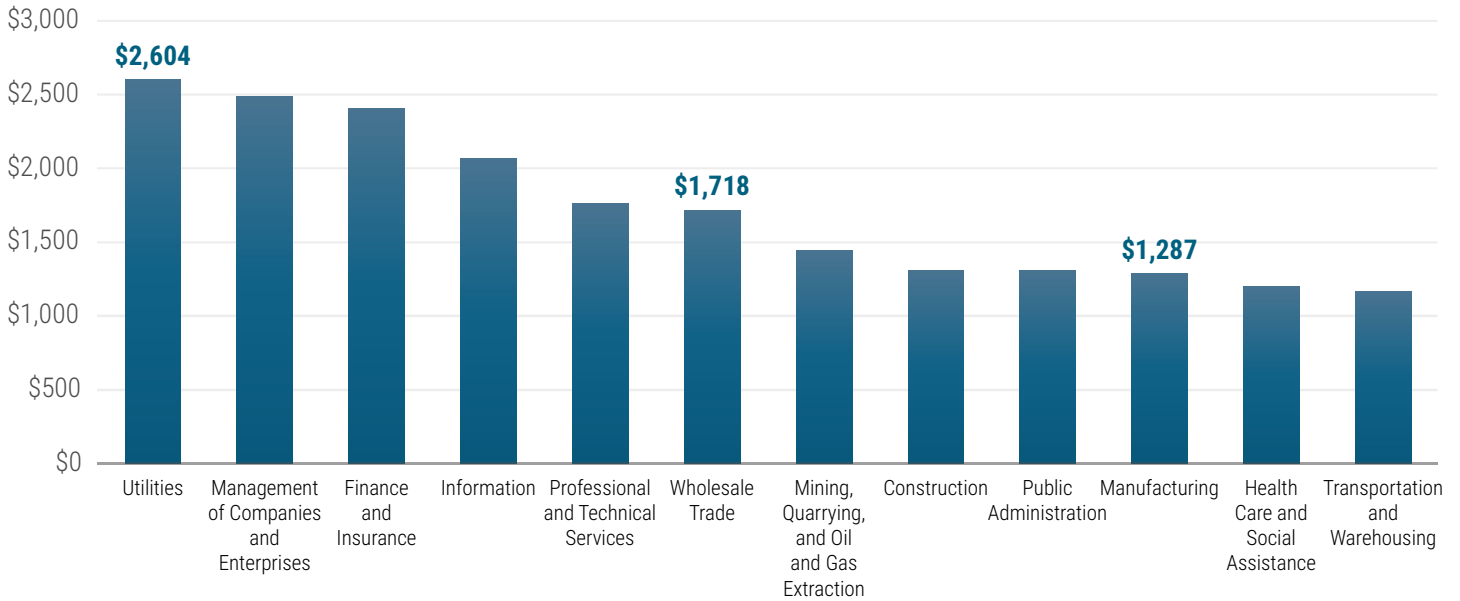
Reasons	Percentage of Respondents with Difficulty
Not enough applicants	88.9%
Poor Work History	57.1%
Lack of work experience	55.8%

Available on NEworks

To read more from the Nebraska Statewide Labor Availability and Hiring Needs Report, or other Labor Market Information publications, please visit our [Publications page](#).

Statewide Employment

Top 12 Industries in Nebraska by Average Weekly Wage, 2025 Q1



Source: Nebraska Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages 2025Q1.

Industry	Employment Growth from 2021Q1-2025Q1
Health Care and Social Assistance	14,933
Accommodation and Food Services	13,435
Construction	8,218
Educational Services	5,902
Manufacturing	4,334
Professional and Technical Services	3,820
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	3,770
Other Services, Ex. Public Admin	3,056
Wholesale Trade	2,157
Public Administration	1,654
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1,042
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	843
Utilities	694
Transportation and Warehousing	648
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	635
Retail Trade	408
Information	265
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	-4
Finance and Insurance	-2,141
Administrative and Waste Services	-2,498

The average weekly wage across all industry sectors was \$1,230 in the first quarter of 2025. Utilities held the highest average weekly wage at \$2,604, followed by management of companies (\$2,485) and enterprises, and finance and insurance (\$2,406). On the low end, accommodation and food services had the lowest average weekly wage at \$434, followed by arts, entertainment, and recreation (\$522), and retail trade (\$723).

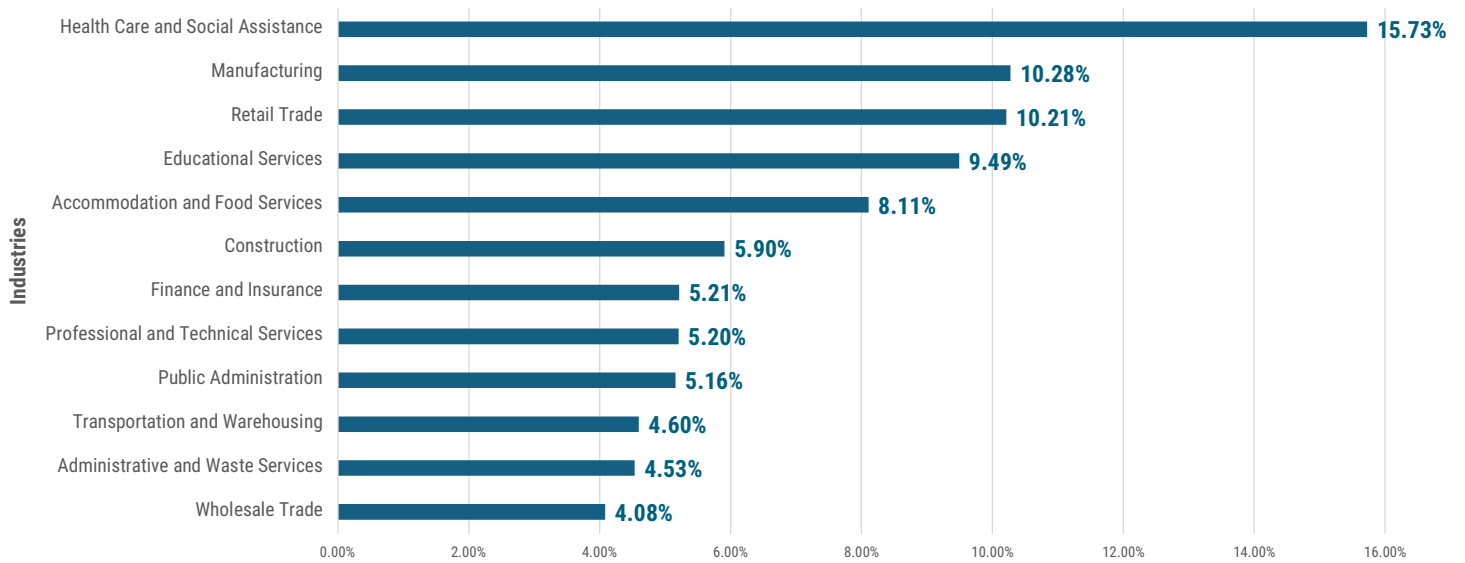
Employment Trends by Industry

As you can see from the table, 17 out of 20 industries had growth in employment from the first quarter of 2021 to the first quarter of 2025. The top industries by employment growth were healthcare and social assistance (14,933), accommodation and food services (13,435), and construction (8,218). The three industries that dropped in employment were administrative and waste services (-2,498), finance and insurance (-2,141), and mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction (-4).

Statewide Employment

The most employment in the state comes from health care and social assistance, making up 15.73 percent of total employment. Manufacturing and retail trade round out the top three for highest employment, both making up a little over 10 percent of the total.

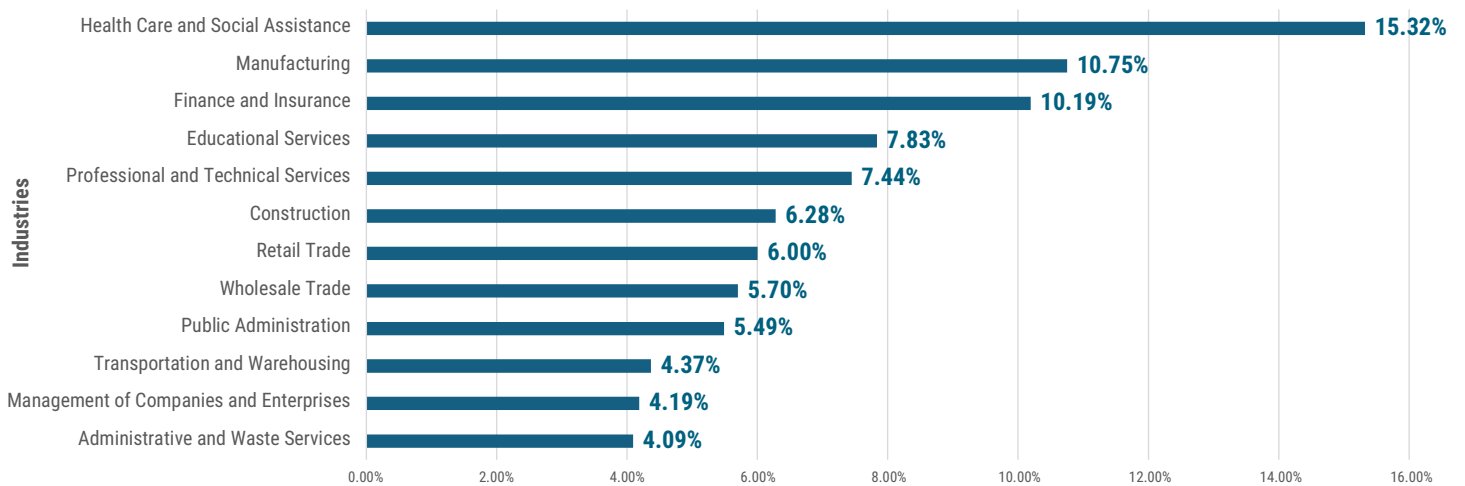
Top 12 Industries by Percent of Total Employment in Nebraska, Q1 2025



Source: Nebraska Department of Labor, Labor Market Information, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages 2025Q1.

Health care and social assistance, being second in establishments and first in employment, is also first in total paid wages, making up 15 percent of the wages paid by all industries. Manufacturing and finance and insurance round out the top three at 11 and 10 percent respectively.

Top 12 Industries in Nebraska by Percent of Total Wages Paid, Q1 2025



Source: Nebraska Department of Labor, Labor Market Information, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages 2025Q1.

Conclusion

Implications for Workforce Strategy

The findings from this assessment point to several clear strategic priorities for Nebraska's workforce development efforts over the coming years:

- Improving coordination across the workforce system would reduce complexity and improve navigation for both employers and individuals. Strategic realignment of programs under fewer lead agencies, supported by shared data infrastructure, can strengthen accountability while preserving the regional flexibility that is essential to Nebraska's diverse communities.
- Registered Apprenticeships should be more broadly positioned as a practical option for a wide range of industries and occupations. Outreach and education, particularly to small and mid-sized employers unfamiliar with the model, represent the most direct path to growing participation across diverse industries and occupations.
- Businesses need clearer pathways to understand and access existing education and training programs. Partnerships between employers and educational institutions remain underutilized. Only about 20% of employers report collaborating with community colleges or state colleges for hiring. Strengthening these connections would reduce duplicative efforts and align training more directly with demand.
- Regional labor market information should be used more systematically to guide program emphasis and employer engagement. The variation in workforce conditions across Nebraska's six regions means that programs most effective in the Omaha metro may not meet the needs of rural western or central Nebraska communities.
- Pathway alignment and coordination across education systems from K-12 through postsecondary will better connect learners to high-demand careers. Shared outcome measures, particularly through NSWERS, can help ensure that education investments translate into measurable workforce success and inform continuous improvement.
- AI-related skills and management training should be incorporated into ongoing workforce development efforts now, before AI adoption accelerates. Nebraska has a window of opportunity to proactively build the training infrastructure that will help workers and managers adapt effectively to new tools, maintaining the state's competitive edge in workforce participation.
- Outreach strategies for apprenticeships, workforce programs, and employer-education partnerships must be designed with small businesses as the primary audience. The data consistently show that smaller employers, those with fewer than 25 employees, are the least likely to be familiar with Registered Apprenticeships, the least likely to use AI, and among the least likely to partner with educational institutions for hiring. Yet small businesses represent the vast majority of Nebraska's employer base. The state should develop simplified, low-barrier pathways for small employers to access apprenticeship sponsorship, education partnerships, and workforce services, including peer learning opportunities, intermediary support organizations, and streamlined onboarding processes.

Conclusion

As Nebraska moves through 2026, the state's workforce system continues to demonstrate significant strengths. The state leads the nation in labor force participation, has achieved record employment levels for consecutive months, and is supported by an extensive network of education and training providers committed to connecting Nebraskans to meaningful careers. Yet this assessment also makes clear that complexity, fragmentation, and uneven coordination are limiting the system's full potential. Workforce programs spread across multiple agencies, limited employer familiarity with apprenticeships, regional variation in labor market conditions, and the emerging challenge of AI adoption all point to the need for a more intentional and coordinated approach.

The path forward is not about building new systems from scratch. It is about strengthening the connections and aligning what already exists. By improving coordination and governance, expanding apprenticeship awareness, reinforcing employer-education partnerships, and incorporating practical AI training, Nebraska can ensure that its considerable workforce investments translate into measurable outcomes for workers, businesses, and communities across the state.

With targeted coordination, stronger employer engagement, and continued investment in Nebraska's education and training systems, the state is well positioned to bolster the talent pipelines and support long-term economic growth. These efforts will advance the Good Life, Great Careers goal of 6,000 new apprentices by 2030 while reinforcing Nebraska's position as a national leader in workforce participation, talent development, and economic opportunity.

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- Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs
- Nebraska Department of Water, Energy, Environment
- Nebraska State College System
- Nebraska Tribal College System
- University of Nebraska System

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Questions? Email NDOL.PIO@nebraska.gov or call 402-471-2600.

1. State Agencies & Government

- Nebraska Department of Economic Development
 - Six Regions, One Nebraska
 - <https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/regions/>
 - https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/DED_Regional_Development_Initiative_2024.pdf
 - Regional and project pages:
 - Southeast: <https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/regions/southeast/>
 - Central: <https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/regions/central/>
 - Northeast: <https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/governors-office-ded-and-nebraska-chamber-kick-off-6-regions-one-nebraska-in-the-northeast-community-college-region/>
 - Metro: <https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/governors-office-ded-and-nebraska-chamber-kick-off-6-regions-one-nebraska-in-the-metro-community-college-region/>
 - Mid-Plains: <https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/regions/midplains/>
 - KNOP News 2 (Mid-Plains Region grant coverage): <https://www.knopnews2.com/2025/03/28/6-regions-one-nebraska-grant-aims-meet-community-college-needs/>
 - Western: <https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/regions/western/>
 - Additional: <https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/6-regions-one-nebraska-developing-tailored-solutions-to-address-economic-needs-across-nebraska/>
 - Governor's Office project awards: <https://governor.nebraska.gov/gov-pillen-announces-awards-6-regions-one-nebraska-priority-projects>
- Nebraska Statewide Workforce & Educational Reporting System (NSWERS): <https://nswers.org/>

2. Community Colleges

- Central Community College (CCC): <https://www.cccneb.edu/>
- Metropolitan Community College (MCC): <https://www.mccneb.edu/>
- Mid-Plains Community College (MPCC): <https://www.mpcc.edu/>
- Northeast Community College (NCC): <https://northeast.edu/>
- Southeast Community College (SCC): <https://www.southeast.edu/>
- Western Nebraska Community College (WNCC): <https://www.wncc.edu/>

3. State Colleges (Nebraska State College System)

- System overview and programs
 - <https://www.nscs.edu/>
 - <https://www.nscs.edu/career-scholarship>
 - <https://law.unl.edu/RLQP/>
 - <https://www.unmc.edu/rural-health/workforce/index.html>
- Chadron State College
 - Rural Business Leadership Initiative: <https://www.csc.edu/academics/rbli/>
- Peru State College
 - Corrections Leadership Scholarship Program: <https://www.peru.edu/corrections/>
- Wayne State College
 - UNMC Early Admission Nursing: <https://www.wsc.edu/unmc-early-admission-nursing>

Sources

4. University of Nebraska System

- System overview: <https://nebraska.edu/>
- University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK)
 - Teacher Scholars Community: <https://www.unk.edu/academics/coe/teacher-scholars-community.php>
- University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL)
 - Nebraska Elite 11 Veterinarian Program: <https://casnr.unl.edu/nebraska-elite-11-veterinarian-program/>
- University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC)
 - AHEC Scholars Program: <https://www.unmc.edu/familymed/education/ahec/programs/scholars-program/index.html>
- University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO)
 - Center for Competencies, Skills & Workforce Development: <https://www.unomaha.edu/innovative-and-learning-centric-initiatives/competencies-skills-and-workforce-hub/index.php>

5. Tribal Colleges

- Little Priest Tribal College
 - <https://www.littlepriest.edu/>
- Nebraska Indian Community College (NICC)
 - <https://www.thenicc.edu/index.php>

6. Nonprofits, Initiatives & National Programs

- JAG Nebraska (Jobs for America's Graduates Nebraska)
 - Program overview: <https://jagnebraska.org/>
- Jobs for America's Graduates (national)
 - UMÓⁿHOⁿ (Omaha) Nation Case Study: <https://jag.org/umo%E2%81%BFho%E2%81%BF-omaha-nation-case-study/>

Notes:

- Workforce and educational outcome data for Nebraska's community colleges were obtained from institutional reports submitted to the Nebraska Department of Labor.
- Some programs (e.g., Rural Law Opportunities Program, Rural Health Opportunities Program) are collaborative between state colleges and the University of Nebraska system.

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