

state government offices (Nebraska Department of Economic Development, 2011 & ReferenceUSA Database, 2011).

The state’s fastest-growing companies indicate the source of many new job opportunities in the coming years. Like much of the Midwest, Nebraska is branching out into industries where high growth is expected. Two of Inc.com’s fastest-growing companies located in Nebraska, the Five Nines Technology Group (#527) and DocuLynx (#689), provide technology solutions that help companies adjust to a changing marketplace. Fortune ranked Nebraska-headquartered retailer Buckle the 58th fastest-growing company thanks to growing online sales.

**TABLE 4: SNAPSHOT OF EDUCATIONAL DEMAND FOR TOTAL JOBS IN NEBRASKA (2008 AND 2018)**

	2008	2018	% change
High school dropouts	81,000	87,000	7%
High school graduates	287,000	307,000	7%
Some college	254,000	274,000	8%
Associate’s	117,000	127,000	9%
Bachelor’s	207,000	225,000	9%
Graduate	80,000	89,000	11%

In Nebraska, 66 percent of all jobs—some 750,000—will require at least some postsecondary training by 2018. Between 2008 and 2018, new jobs requiring postsecondary training will grow by 56,000, while those for high school graduates and dropouts will grow by 25,000. Overall, Nebraska will create 321,000 job vacancies, counting both new jobs and old positions vacated by retirees. Of these new opportunities, 207,000 will be for workers with postsecondary credentials; 89,000 for high school graduates; and 25,000 for high school dropouts.

Nationally, Nebraska ranks 17th in the share of its jobs that will require a Bachelor’s degree by 2018 and 36th in jobs for high school dropouts.

## North Dakota

Unlike most U.S. states, the recession seems to have had only a minimal effect on North Dakota’s economy. Minor job losses were recorded in the second half of 2009, but the state’s year-to-year rate of growth and private sector employment have been significantly better than those in other Midwestern states and the nation as a whole.

North Dakota’s unemployment rate was 3.6 percent in March 2011, well below the national rate of 8.8 percent. A variety of national and global economic factors have favored some industries in the state, especially mining. Mining wages have increased by 80 percent over the last 10 years, and there have been upturns in other occupations important to North Dakota, including transportation, trade, and utilities. Even though mining is a significant piece of the economy, North Dakota’s largest industry is healthcare services, which had 48,400 jobs in 2008. Retail trade is the next largest industry by employment (North Dakota Workforce Review, 2009).

In 2009, seven of the state’s top 10 employers were in the healthcare services industry; major employers in other industries included Microsoft and U.S. Bank (North Dakota Workforce Intelligence Network). The prevalence of healthcare-related employers indicates that this industry is a vital sector of the state’s economy. North Dakota is also home to Appareo Systems, which is the nation’s fastest-growing engineering firm according to Inc.com (#159). North Dakota’s significant and growing employers already reflect its transition away from production industries and toward high-skill service industries such as information services and financial services, and toward highly skilled occupations such as engineering.

**TABLE 5: SNAPSHOT OF EDUCATIONAL DEMAND FOR TOTAL JOBS IN NORTH DAKOTA (2008 AND 2018)**

	2008	2018	% change
High school dropouts	21,000	23,000	10%
High school graduates	108,000	114,000	6%
Some college	97,000	102,000	5%
Associate’s	57,000	60,000	5%
Bachelor’s	85,000	89,000	5%
Graduate	24,000	25,000	4%

Healthcare support occupations are projected to grow by 11 percent between 2008 and 2018. STEM occupations are the fastest-growing occupations (engineers and technicians at 16%, and computers and science occupations by 26%).

About 277,000 jobs in North Dakota—70 percent of the total—will require some training beyond high school by 2018.

Between 2008 and 2018, new jobs in North Dakota requiring postsecondary education and training will grow by 14,000, whereas jobs for high school graduates and dropouts will grow by only 6,000. In addition, the state is projected to create a total of 120,000 job vacancies, both from newly created jobs and retirements from existing jobs. Of these openings, 80,000 will require individuals with postsecondary credentials, 33,000 will require at least high school diplomas, and 7,000 will be open to high school dropouts.

Nationally, North Dakota ranks 6th in the share of its jobs that will require a Bachelor’s degree by 2018, and 51st in jobs for high school dropouts.

## South Dakota

Much like its neighbor to the north, South Dakota held up well as the recession swept through the country. South Dakota’s unemployment rate was 4.9 percent in March 2011, nearly four points less than the national average of 8.8 percent. The state also ranked near the top for GDP growth in 2008 and had the 10th-largest GDP growth last year among all 50 states.