

Kansas' major employers in 2010, provided by the Kansas Department of Labor, reflect both old-line industries and the emerging economy dominated by healthcare services and private education services. Aeronautical manufacturing companies such as the Hawker Beechcraft Corporation and the Cessna Aircraft Company continue the Midwestern tradition of manufacturing but require increased skills and education of their workers. Meanwhile, employers such as the University of Kansas, Stormvont-Vail Healthcare, and several public school districts reflect the growing dominance of these services industries. Finally, the federal government, in the form of the Postal Service, Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans' Affairs, continues to employ large numbers of Kansans.

However, the biggest companies are not the full story. Information on the fastest growing companies tells us about the direction of the state and sources of new opportunities. Inc.com ranks InfoSync Services (#325) and Vin Solutions (#447) among the 5,000 fastest growing companies in the nation. These companies are in information services and professional and business services, two fast-growing industries. These industries are growing at a similar pace across the country, accelerating changes in the demand for postsecondary workers to operate and manage these enterprises, and Kansas is no exception.

Computer and mathematical science occupations; community and social services occupations; and farming, fishing and forestry occupations are projected to grow the fastest through 2018, at rates of 22 percent, 21 percent, and 20 percent, respectively.

Between 2008 and 2018, new jobs in Kansas requiring postsecondary education and training will grow by 99,000, whereas jobs for high school graduates and dropouts will grow by 51,000. For the same time period, the state will have 482,000 openings from job creation and retirements. Of these, 301,000 will require postsecondary credentials, 136,000 will require high school diplomas, and 45,000 will require no diploma.

In the share of jobs that will require a Bachelor's degree by 2018, Kansas ranks 15th nationwide, versus 32nd in jobs for high school dropouts. By 2018, about 1 million jobs in Kansas, or 64 percent of the total, will require postsecondary education and training.

Nebraska

The overall unemployment rate in Nebraska was 4.2 percent in March 2011, which was still well below the national level of 8.8 percent (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). Nebraska's private sector lost about 25,000 jobs in 2009, but the state's year-to-year rate of employment losses was lower than other Midwestern states and the United States as a whole.

Through 2018, the fastest-growing occupations are projected to be healthcare support, computer and mathematical sciences, and community and social services. They will grow at rates of 20 percent, 18 percent, and 18 percent, respectively.

Thousands of Nebraskans are employed by its diverse range of major employers, from Tyson Foods, Inc., a food manufacturer, to hospitals and healthcare organizations, and federal and

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).