

MANUFACTURING AND TRADES

From Occupations to Skills

DATA SUMMARY

Regional
Data & Analytics
Summit

June 5th, 2025

The Greater Fargo Moorhead Economic Development Corporation, in partnership with Lightcast, is proud to present this workforce report—a collaborative effort to assess and strengthen the region’s economic vitality and talent readiness. As our region experiences rapid growth and investment, we face both significant opportunity and an urgent need to align workforce capabilities with business demands.

Key sectors such as manufacturing, bioscience, and ag-tech are expanding, yet employers continue to grapple with talent shortages. Our analysis of current labor market data highlights critical skills gaps—from technical and digital proficiencies to soft skills like communication and adaptability. Preparing our workforce for both today’s roles and the jobs of tomorrow is essential.

To address these challenges, we are introducing the Promising Practices Toolkit—a set of actionable, evidence-based strategies that include proven training models, successful employer-education partnerships, inclusive hiring practices, and data-driven planning tools for stakeholders. We invite you to engage with these insights and resources as we work together to build a more adaptive, inclusive, and globally competitive workforce for the Fargo-Moorhead region.



Joe Raso
President & CEO
GFMEDC



Josh Wright
Head of Growth
Lightcast

While the primary objective of this summit is to address the workforce needs of industry, it is essential to acknowledge a set of interconnected factors that significantly impact workforce participation, development, and sustainability.

ADJACENT FACTORS

- Affordable & Available Housing Supply
- Childcare Availability & Affordability
- Livable Wage & Economic Mobility

PERSISTENT WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

- Lack of Clear Career Pathways
- Foundational Skill Gaps
- Soft Skill Deficits

HUMAN AIDED WORK

- Artificial Intelligence
- Automation

Though not the primary focus, factors like housing, childcare, and wages directly affect workforce participation and stability. With this in mind, we now turn to workforce demand—over 47,000 job postings in the past year highlight the pressing need to align talent with industry needs.

Current State of Affairs: FM MSA Job Postings

Over the last year, our region has seen a wide array of open positions across different industries. From May 2024 to April 2025, there were 47,000 unique job postings in the FM MSA across all industry sectors. Over 3,500 employers competed for talent during this time.

May 2024 - Apr 2025

Sample of Top Industries

Unique Postings

Health Care and Social Assistance	8,805
Administrative and Support and Waste Management	6,354
Retail Trade	4,704
Manufacturing	2,404
Wholesale Trade	2,390
Construction	2,149
Accommodation and Food Services	2,072
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1,995
Finance and Insurance	1,581
Educational Services	1,517
Public Administration	1,048
Transportation and Warehousing	999
Other Services (except Public Administration)	894
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	879

**Less than half
(48%)**

of the job
postings in
the last year
listed any
education
requirement.

**About 1 in 4
(23%)**

asked for an
**Associates or
Bachelor's
Degree.**

Staffing Patterns Now and Through 2031

Sample of Top Occupations

	Employed in Industry (2025)	Employed in Industry (2031)	Change (2025- 2031)	% Change (2025- 2031)
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	18,392	17,951	(441)	(2%)
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	15,601	16,868	1,268	8%
Sales and Related Occupations	14,082	14,091	8	0%
Management Occupations	11,788	12,360	572	5%
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	9,215	9,492	277	3%
Production Occupations	9,059	9,495	436	5%
Construction and Extraction Occupations	8,917	9,571	654	7%
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	7,164	7,559	395	6%

Expected growth amongst all occupations is greater than 7,200 new positions.

Manufacturing & Trades

Education, Experience and Qualifications

Over 4,553 unique job postings in Manufacturing and Construction industries were posted in the last year (May 2024-Apr 2025) in the FM MSA. Over 560 employers competed for talent across the metro.

In the past year, approximately **50% of job postings in the Manufacturing and Trades sectors did not specify any formal education requirement**, while just over 25% requested a minimum of a high school diploma or GED.

Education Level	Unique Postings	% of Total
No Education Listed	2,188	48%
High school or GED	1,188	26%
Associate's degree	471	10%
Bachelor's degree	1,159	25%
Master's degree	159	3%
Ph.D. or professional degree	39	1%

Additionally, **more than half of all postings in these fields did not list any prior work experience as a requirement**, indicating a significant number of entry-level opportunities within the sector.

Minimum Experience	Unique Postings	% of Total
No Experience Listed	2,419	53%
0 - 1 Years	633	14%
2 - 3 Years	827	18%
4 - 6 Years	464	10%
7 - 9 Years	124	3%
10+ Years	86	2%

Specialized skills requested in job postings:

- Project Management 13%
- Construction 13%
- Warehousing 8%
- Continuous Improvement Process 7%
- Machinery 7%

Qualification	Postings with Qualification
Valid Driver's License	928
Commercial Driver's License (CDL)	134
CDL Class A License	117
Forklift Certification	73
Hazmat Endorsement	51
CDL Class B License	45
Tanker Endorsement	44
10-Hour OSHA General Industry Card	36
Tanker And Hazmat Combo X Endorsement	33

Manufacturing & Trades: Pipeline Gap

Evaluating a potential talent surplus or shortage involves considering multiple variables. Key factors such as an occupation’s share of total industry employment, the average number of annual job openings, median hourly wages, and projected employment changes provide a comprehensive framework for assessing workforce alignment. For reference, there are 17,900 people currently employed in the Manufacturing and Trades Industries in the FM MSA.

Top 10 Occupations in Manufacturing and Trades by % of total Jobs in Industry Group

Description	% of Total Jobs in Industry Group (2024)	Entry Level Education	Average Annual Openings	Annual Post-Secondary Surplus/ (Gap)*	Median Hourly Earnings	Change in Jobs (2025-2031)
Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	9.40%	HS diploma	323	*	\$22.51	27
Construction Laborers	7.30%	No formal credential	199	*	\$23.75	149
Carpenters	4.40%	HS diploma	114	*	\$28.17	81
Electricians	3.30%	HS diploma	88	*	\$33.58	39
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	3.20%	HS diploma	86	*	\$34.81	64
Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	2.80%	HS diploma	92	*	\$29.84	63
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	2.60%	HS diploma	66	*	\$30.18	33
General and Operations Managers	2.50%	Bachelor's degree	333	458	\$45.42	64
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	2.50%	No formal credential	620	*	\$20.29	58
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	2.40%	HS diploma	84	*	\$28.95	57

Note: Change in the table above is the net difference for the occupation; inclusive of exits and growth.

*This surplus/gap is arrived at taking the number of regional completions less the number of average annual openings. Due to lack of program information or that no post-secondary program is needed, we are unable to ascertain a surplus or gap for this occupation.

Grey Shaded Occupations:

As we contemplate how to address the needs of the manufacturing and trades industries, we can’t overlook the demand for key positions and the role they play in these sectors. However crucial, these positions have median hourly earnings under \$25/hour and pose difficulties to fill now and in the future without intentional action.

Red Shaded Occupations:

Targeted Occupations filtered by % of jobs in industry, quantity of openings, and median hourly wage as well as highly anticipated retirements in future years.

Career Pathways Mapping

Career Pathways Mapping, a Lightcast tool, helps address in-demand occupations by focusing on the skills that occupations need. Many adjacent occupations have similar skill sets that can be developed, or up-skilled to move workers into in-demand careers. Looking at the top occupations in each grouping of targeted industries, General and Operations Managers are a common needed occupation throughout.

Manufacturing & Trades

Carpenters

First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers

General and Operations Managers

Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators

Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers

Healthcare & Bioscience

Registered Nurses

General and Operations Managers

Managers, All Other

Software Developers

Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder and Mental Health Counselors

AgTech & Autonomous

Software Developers

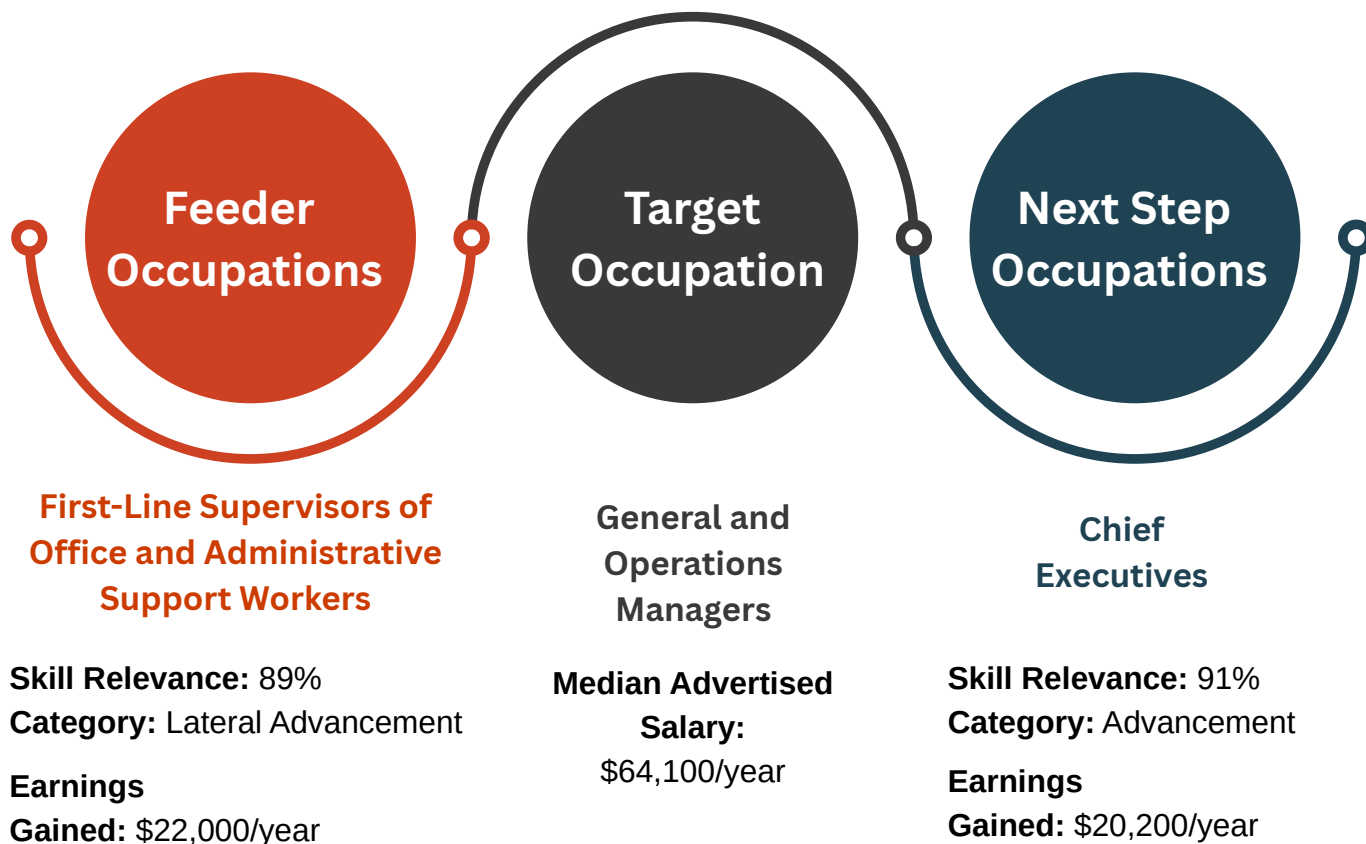
Civil Engineers

General and Operations Managers

Computer User Support Specialists

Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers

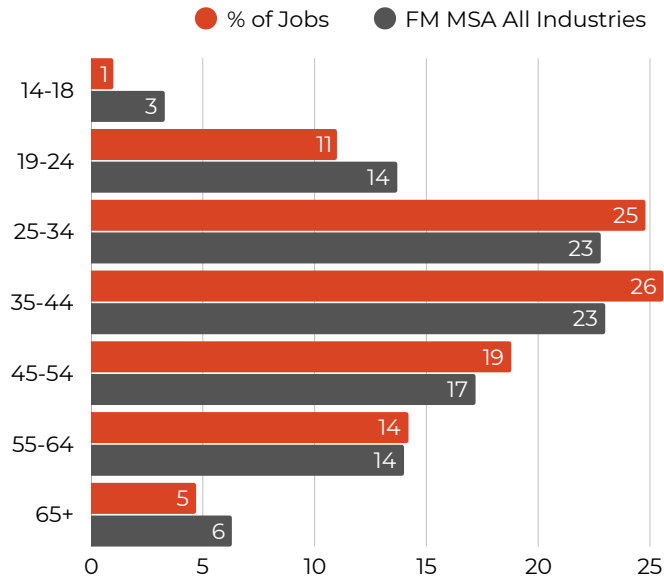
Example of Career Mapping for: General and Operations Managers



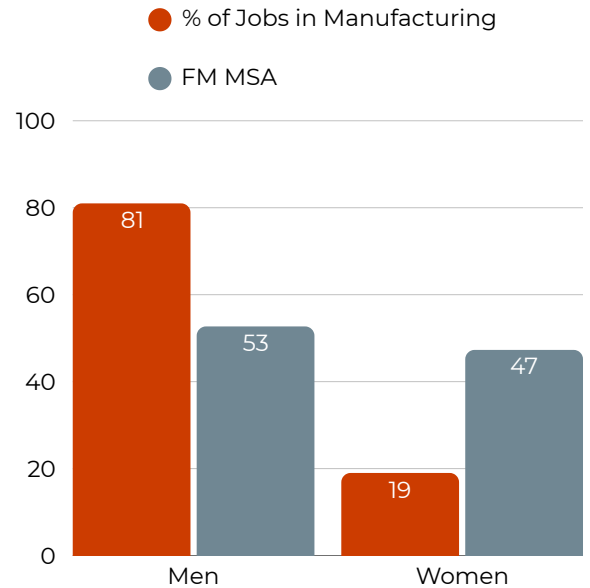
Manufacturing and Trades Industry Demographics

Examining the age, gender, and race or ethnicity of an industry's workforce helps identify key challenges in recruitment, retention, and equity. These demographics reveal trends like aging workers, underrepresentation, or lack of diversity, all of which affect workforce stability and long-term growth.

Industry Age Breakdown



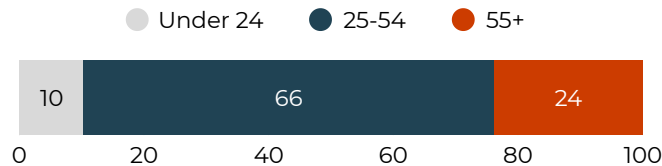
Gender Breakdown



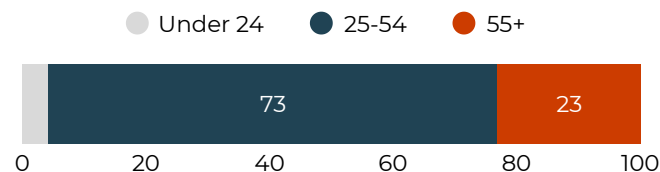
Nearly **20%** of the workforce in the manufacturing and trades industries are **over the age of 55**. This indicates a significant portion of the workforce is nearing retirement age with the industries facing a loss of experienced workforce.

Over **80%** of the workforce in the manufacturing and trades industries are **male**. Additionally, about **1/5** of the workforce in manufacturing and trades industries are **diverse**.

Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators



First-Line Supervisors of Construction and Extraction Workers



Looking deeper at demographic trends such as age can help us spot occupation gaps before they become critical.

For the occupations to the left, more than 20% of their workforce is age 55+ and likely considering retirement in future years.

Promising Practices

Promising practices refer to strategies that effectively increase occupational completions and market entries. While this list is not exhaustive, they serve as key building blocks for addressing workforce challenges.

How do we make a collective impact with promising practices?

- Align resources, expertise, and training to scale programs targeting in-demand skills.
- Streamline pathways from skill development to microcredentials to employment.
- Build a statewide data network to connect employers with programs that expand talent pools (e.g., ND's Childcare and ROOTS Talent Attraction Programs).



Skills-Based Hiring

PartnerHighlight



A skills-based approach is primarily used in the hiring process. It's put into practice when a hiring manager places a greater emphasis on the skills a candidate has over their degree or previous job titles. In evaluating a candidate by the skills needed for the job, as opposed to using degree title and job title filters, companies can expand their talent pool for skilled candidates.

Read about Lightcast's Skills-Based Hiring Toolkit here →



Talent Recruitment



PartnerHighlight



The GFMEDC has been engaged in talent recruitment strategies that have both built awareness of the FM Region and helped companies engage in talent outreach. The www.liveinfargo.com and www.workinfargo.com websites are tools that companies can use when showcasing the region to out-of-market candidates. The GFMEDC's Lightning Recruitment Program can help pin-point outside talent to recruit. Additionally, the FMWF Chamber's Community Concierge Program can help new comers cultivate connections.



Accelerated Credentialing

Accelerated credentialing refers to streamlining the process that workers learn skills and are tested on those skills for entry into a profession. Benefits of accelerated credentialing include:

- Faster entry into the workforce
- Microcredentialing and credential stacking
- Recognition of prior learning and experience



Career Exposure



PartnerHighlight



How can learning about a career be accessible, fun and rewarding? Providing career information in an engaging way can help. To do this, numerous efforts have been made by the GFMEDC and our partners in the following:

- Virtual Reality
- Work-Based Learning
- The Good Jobs Challenge



Company Culture



Workplaces with great company culture attract and retain employees. The GFMEDC is gathering these best practices in a collaborative network that companies can tap into and assess their own culture.

CONTACT US



701-364-1900



gfmedc.com



info@gfmedc.com



51 Broadway Suite 500 | Fargo, ND 58102

FULL DATA PROFILE

gfmedc.com/industries/



Data Profile Prepared by:



DATA ANALYSIS

Sammi Rowe

Sr. VP Business Intelligence

In collaboration with Lightcast



DESIGN

Chelsie Wertman

Executive Assistant &

Program Support Manager



Thank You

