



Workforce Insider

Brought to you by

By Tony Burton • Feb 11, 2026

Smart Brevity® count: 3.5 mins...913 words

In this month's Workforce Insider:

- **Applications Open:** [2026 HMEF Scholarships](#)
- **Minnesota ProStart Invitational:** Celebrate 20 Years of the ProStart Invitational on March 12!
- **Apprenticeship Funding Available:** Access [Department of Labor and Industry Funds](#) Before They Run Out!
- **Minnesota Secure Choice Retirement Program:** [Voluntary Enrollment Now Open!](#)
- **Ensure Food Safety:** [Get ServSafe Certified At a Class Near You!](#)

Interested in sponsoring this newsletter? [Reach out to us](#) to get started.

Support the Foundation and its work of investing in our industry's future by training the workforce of today and inspiring the leaders of tomorrow:

[DONATE TO HMEF](#)

Hospitality Scholarships Now Available



SCHOLARSHIPS NOW AVAILABLE

Apply before the March 21, 2026 Deadline!



www.hospitalityminnesota.com/scholarships

Calling all hospitality students: Our [2026 scholarship applications](#) are open for submissions through March 21, 2026.

- **Industry leaders:** Contribute to our scholarship funds by [donating here](#).

Learn more about what scholarship opportunities are available below...

- **Hospitality Minnesota Education Foundation (HMEF) Scholarship:**
 - This scholarship supports Minnesota students pursuing careers in hospitality, foodservice, culinary arts, or lodging. Scholarships help cover tuition costs for high school seniors, GED graduates, and undergraduate students enrolled in eligible post-secondary programs.
- **Deadline to apply:** March 21, 2026.
- [Click here for HMEF Scholarship criteria.](#)
- [Click here to apply.](#)

- **Sue Zelikson Scholarship (Offered by Women Who Really Cook):**
 - This scholarship supports women in Minnesota who are pursuing education in hospitality, culinary, foodservice, or other food-related fields. Scholarships help cover tuition costs for students enrolled in eligible Minnesota post-secondary programs.

- **Deadline to apply:** March 21, 2026.
- [Click here for Sue Zelikson Scholarship criteria.](#)
- [Click here to apply.](#)

[Learn More & Apply!](#)

Connect with Minnesota's Next Culinary Talent at the 20th Minnesota ProStart Invitational



Get ready: The [2026 Minnesota ProStart Invitational](#) is returning on Thursday, March 12, 2026, to the St. Paul RiverCentre.

About the event: The Invitational proudly showcases the culinary and entrepreneurial skills of high school students enrolled in a ProStart program.

The Minnesota ProStart Invitational includes two competition divisions:

- **Culinary:** Teams of future foodservice professionals put their culinary knowledge and skills to the test. Teams have one hour to prepare a three-course meal and are judged on knife skills, teamwork, sanitation, presentation and taste.
- **Management:** Teams demonstrate their knowledge of the hospitality industry by developing a business proposal for a new restaurant concept. They are judged on concept, menu/costing, operations, marketing and critical thinking.

What's at stake for the teams: The winners of each division will represent Minnesota at the National ProStart Invitational in Baltimore, MD, on April 24-26, 2026.

Want to play a part? The Minnesota ProStart Invitational thrives with high industry and community participation. Whether you're interested in attending, sponsoring, or exhibiting—there's a place for you at the Invitational!

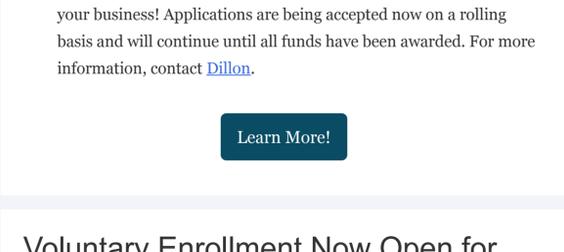
- **Attendees:** Legislators, supporters of our students, and community advocates can register for the event free [here](#).

- **Sponsors:** Industry leaders wanting to contribute to the Invitational via sponsorships are invited to reach out to [Andrea](#) for more details.

- **Exhibitors:** Industry partners interested in exhibiting their business or services to the best-of-the-best Minnesota ProStart students can reach out to [Dillon](#) for more details.

[Check out the Event!](#)

Apprenticeship Funding Available from MN Department of Labor and Industry



Workforce funding opportunity: Apprenticeship grant funding is still available now through April 30, 2026 from the MN Department of Labor & Industry.

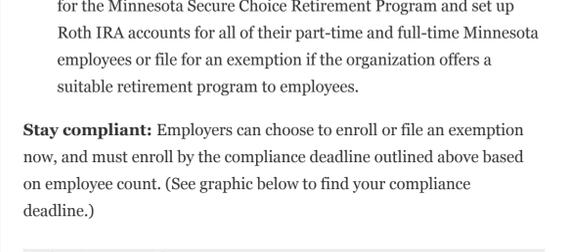
- **What to expect:** This incentive grant funding aims to assist businesses with the costs of starting or expanding a registered apprenticeship program and may be used to cover the costs of employer staff time to operationalize program logistics, develop and instruct related instruction or recruit apprentices.

Why it matters: In addition to helping start or expand a registered apprenticeship program, these grant funds may also be used to purchase tools and supplies or pay for related technical instruction if not covered by the NRAEF or AHLA. Priority will be given to a few industries including hospitality.

- **Don't wait:** Now is the perfect time to start an apprenticeship in your business! Applications are being accepted now on a rolling basis and will continue until all funds have been awarded. For more information, contact [Dillon](#).

[Learn More!](#)

Voluntary Enrollment Now Open for Minnesota Secure Choice Retirement Program



Minnesota Secure Choice Retirement Program is a state-facilitated, employer-supported retirement program that bridges the retirement savings gap for hundreds of thousands of Minnesotans.

Some background: The program will offer simple, automatic and portable individual retirement accounts (IRAs) to help employees build retirement savings through automatic payroll deductions.

What to expect: Employers with five or more employees receiving Minnesota taxable wages should have received—or can expect to soon receive—either email or postal letter communication from the record keeper, Vestwell.

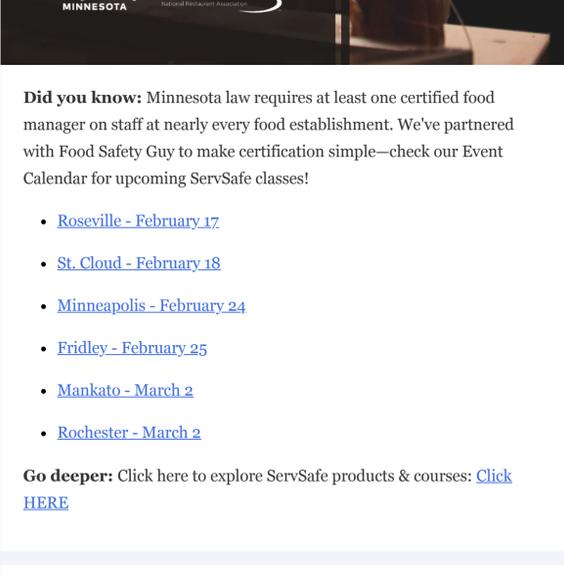
- **The next step:** Employers will be then required to either register for the Minnesota Secure Choice Retirement Program and set up Roth IRA accounts for all of their part-time and full-time Minnesota employees or file for an exemption if the organization offers a suitable retirement program to employees.

Stay compliant: Employers can choose to enroll or file an exemption now, and must enroll by the compliance deadline outlined above based on employee count. (See graphic below to find your compliance deadline.)

Employer Registration Phases	
Number of employees at covered employer	Phase duration
Soft launch and voluntary enrollment for any size covered employer	Jan. 19, 2026 to March 30, 2026
100 or more	April 1, 2026 to June 30, 2026
50 to 99	July 1, 2026 to Dec. 31, 2026
25 to 49	Jan. 1, 2027 to June 30, 2027
10 to 24	July 1, 2027 to Dec. 31, 2027
5 to 9	Jan. 1, 2028 to June 30, 2028

[Learn More](#)

Get ServSafe Certified at Your Area's Next Class!



Did you know: Minnesota law requires at least one certified food manager on staff at nearly every food establishment. We've partnered with Food Safety Guy to make certification simple—check our Event Calendar for upcoming ServSafe classes!

- [Roseville - February 17](#)
- [St. Cloud - February 18](#)
- [Minneapolis - February 24](#)
- [Fridley - February 25](#)
- [Mankato - March 2](#)
- [Rochester - March 2](#)

Go deeper: Click here to explore ServSafe products & courses: [Click HERE](#)



For more on our education and workforce initiatives, visit [our website](#).

Was this edition useful?

[Leave feedback](#)

Your responses are anonymous

[Unsubscribe](#)

Powered by **AXIOS HQ**