

Companies from Grand Forks, region land on Forbes' America's Best-in-State Employers list

Two Grand Forks employers make top 5



DigiKey made Forbes' annual list of America's Best-in-State Employers 2023. The Thief River Falls, Minnesota, company is ranked No. 15 out of 60 Minnesota companies. / Courtesy DigiKey

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GRAND FORKS – Two Grand Forks employers, the regional American Crystal Sugar Company and DigiKey, a Thief River Falls, Minnesota-based company, all were named to the fifth annual list of America's Best-in-State Employers 2023 by Forbes. Companies with more than 500 employees were recognized.

American Crystal, which is based in Moorhead, Minnesota, but has sites in North Dakota, ranked No. 1 on the North Dakota list. Grand Forks School District is ranked No. 2 and University of North Dakota is ranked No. 3.

Dr. Terry Brenner, superintendent of Grand Forks Public Schools, said making the list was a nice surprise.

“(It) does highlight, from an employee's perspective, that the Grand Forks Public School District is a great place to work,” Brenner said. “Since the study gleaned opinions about working conditions, diversity, compensation packages, potential for development and company image, and was generated by a third party neutral, there's an incredibly positive feeling of validation. I'm certainly proud to be one of 1,600 team members wearing our district badge and logo.”

UND President Andy Armacost expressed his appreciation for the university's leadership team.

“The recognition by Forbes validates the great work by the members of our campus to create and sustain an environment that is supportive and offers everyone a chance to grow. I am grateful to our nearly 5,600 employees for their hard work and dedication,” Armacost said. “In return, we owe it to them to continue to make UND worthy of this type of national recognition. I'm thankful to all leaders and supervisors for creating a campus environment that supports everyone's success, as well as the leaders of all the listed institutions that make North Dakota a wonderful place to live and work.”

Although the Forbes list indicates 2,500 employees at UND, that is the number of benefitted employees, a spokesman at UND clarified. Including part-time and temporary employees, UND's employee number is closer to 5,600.

DigiKey, a leading global commerce distributor offering technical components and automation products in stock for immediate shipment, is ranked No. 15 out of 60 Minnesota companies.

“Being recognized as a best employer by Forbes is a true testament to our unwavering commitment to fostering a workplace where every individual's potential is not just acknowledged, but celebrated,” Shane Zutz, vice president, human resources for DigiKey, said in a release. “At DigiKey we truly believe that people make the difference, which means our success is built upon the collective strengths, diverse perspectives and endless dedication of our incredible team.”

DigiKey employees enjoy one of the leading benefits packages in the state, an abundance of on-site amenities, and robust educational and professional development opportunities, the release stated.

The U.S. Department of Defense and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs took spots in 28 states, the most of any company. Several other companies ranked in 20 or more states, including Amazon, Costco, Home Depot, Marriott, Microsoft, Target and UPS.

The top five North Dakota companies on the list, with their ranking, headquarters location and number of employees, are:

1. American Crystal Sugar (Moorhead, Minnesota): 1,400
2. Grand Forks 1 School District (Grand Forks): 1,600
3. University of North Dakota (Grand Forks): 2,500
4. Fargo 1 School District (Fargo): 2,200
5. Deere & Company (Moline, Illinois): 75,600

The top five Minnesota companies on the list:

1. Costco (headquartered in Issaquah, Washington): 202,000 employees
2. Mayo Clinic (Rochester): 76,000
3. General Mills (Minneapolis): 15,000
4. Delta Airlines (Atlanta, Georgia): 95,000
5. Osseo Area Schools (Maple Grove): 2,370

The top five South Dakota companies on the list:

1. U.S. Dept. of Defense (Arlington County, Virginia): 3,400,000
2. Sanford Health (Sioux Falls): 47,757
3. Avera (Sioux Falls): 20,500
4. Midcontinent Communications (Sioux Falls): no employee number listed
5. U.S. Dept of Veterans Affairs (Washington, D.C.): 426,104

The list is based on an independent survey of 70,000 U.S. employees across 25 industry sectors in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Participants were asked if they would recommend their employer to others, and to evaluate their employer based on working conditions, diversity, compensation packages, potential for development, company image and more. Forbes partnered with market research firm Statista to complete the survey, and all surveys were anonymous.

The number of companies on each state's list varied by the size of its companies and workforce, the results state. Ultimately, 1,329 organizations made at least one state list, with 269 ranking in multiple states. Companies do not pay a fee to participate on the list, Forbes stated.