

Final Data: State Fiscal Year 2013 Youth Competitive Grants

South Central Minnesota, “Dream It, Believe It, Achieve It” (Summer 2012)

Participant Summary

| | |
|---------|----|
| Total: | 71 |
| Male: | 30 |
| Female: | 41 |

| | |
|--------|----|
| 14-15: | 1 |
| 16-17: | 30 |
| 18; | 10 |
| 19-21: | 25 |
| 22-24; | 5 |

| | |
|------------------------|----|
| Hispanic/Latino | 31 |
| American Indian | 1 |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 1 |
| Black/African American | 40 |
| White | 31 |

GOAL 1: Provide work experience for youth who are economically disadvantaged or at-risk, ages 14 through 24

Work experience provides participants with opportunities to learn workplace expectations related to future career

The South Central’s “Dream It. Believe It. Achieve It.” Program served youth ages 16-24 from communities of color in the nine county area. About 56 percent were Black or African American, 43 percent were Hispanic, and 2 percent were American Indian and/or Asian. Youth were placed in worksites where they worked an average of 15 hours per week earning minimum wage for an average of 12 weeks. While youth were working at the worksites, employment counselors provided on-site monitoring on a regular basis to identify what the youth was doing well and supported their growth. At the worksite, youth acquired positive work habits, new job skills, customer service skills, teamwork skills and developed relationships with positive, caring adults. A total of 56 youth participated in a work experience and worked a total of 9,151 hours during the pilot project.

GOAL 2: Promote mastery of work-readiness competencies and 21st Century skills as demonstrated through workplace portfolios and other assessments.

Work-readiness competencies allows participants greater access to future jobs

We utilized our Youth Competency System to define, measure, and document the mastery of work readiness skills. The SC WorkForce Council established these competencies working with local employers and youth service providers to identify standards and skill sets that youth would need to be “competent” in the areas of career exploration, job search techniques, positive work habits, and daily living skills. Under these four broad areas are 15 skill sets. The assessment determines if youth has identified a career goal and gathered labor market information supporting their career interest. In job search techniques, youth must demonstrate that they know how to complete a job application, resume, cover/thank you letter and a job interview. Youth must maintain successful employment and exhibit positive work habits including punctuality, attendance, positive attitude, appearance, interpersonal relations, and task completion. Youth must demonstrate daily living skills such as developing a budget, opening a bank account, getting their driver’s license or accessing public transportation, finding an apartment, etc. Youth must also know how to access community resources.

Evaluation information was also gathered through worksite supervisor evaluations on youth’s bi-weekly timesheets and worksite monitoring visits by staff. On youth’s bi-weekly timesheets, supervisors evaluate youth performance on attendance, punctuality, communication, cooperation, work quality and quantity. At worksite monitoring visits, supervisors evaluated youth on the following categories: attendance, punctuality, appearance, initiative, work quality, communication, teamwork and problem solving.

GOAL 3: Promote skill acquisition (academic and work readiness) through project based instruction

Skill acquisition allows participants greater access to future jobs requiring such skills

Youth participated in a variety of project-based activities throughout the year. Youth attended workshops on job seeking and job keeping, career exploration, labor market information including demand occupations, value of post-secondary education, entrepreneurial opportunities, goal setting, connections to community resources, life skills training and financial fitness training.

An example of an activity focused on the importance of cooperation and teamwork on the job involved youth building a structure out of school supplies. The facilitator built a structure from the supplies that was hidden from the rest of the group. Youth were split into teams and each group had to designate a “runner” to view the hidden structure, a “communicator” to instruct the group which supplies to use and where to put them to duplicate the structure and the rest of the team had to follow instructions to actually build the structure. Students learned to work as a team, communicate with others even when there was a language barrier and utilize each other’s strengths to complete a task.

GOAL 4: Increase exposure to in-demand jobs important to regional economies.

Participants learn what jobs are expected to grow in the future allowing them to learn what skills are important to acquire.

Youth participated in field trips including: tours of local businesses to gain hands on exposure to potential careers in demand occupations and industries in the area; visits to local colleges and universities to learn about post-secondary options and visits to local WorkForce Centers to ensure that all youth are aware of the services available to connect to education and employment opportunities throughout their lifetime. Youth also participated in the annual Tour of Manufacturing event where local manufacturers opened their doors for tours and provided career opportunities at their business.

GOAL 5: Provide high-quality work sites and overall participant and employer satisfaction

Participants learn best at high-quality work sites

Youth were placed at quality worksites that fit their interests and could accommodate their cultural beliefs. For example, there are many cultures that prohibit people from touching pork. In that case, we avoided a worksite that involves contact with pork, work with the employer to assign duties that don’t involve contact with pork or develop other worksite accommodations.

Examples of worksites included:

- Ace Hardware
- Grandview Good Samaritan
- Golden Heart Daycare
- HyVee
- Maverick Bookstore
- Mayo Clinic
- Q Computers
- School Sisters of Notre Dame
- Second Harvest Heartland

Worksite supervisors served as mentors to youth and received a mentoring training and curriculum designed to engage youth in conversation about their career goals. Worksite mentors reinforced the importance of completing school and model life skills and positive work habits.

Youth that participated in the “Dream It. Believe It. Achieve It.” pilot project participated in a focus group. Those youth indicated that they would not have been able to get a job on their own without the help of the program. One youth said, “The program tells you step by step what you need to do to get a job and they don’t teach you that in school.” Several youth stated that the program helped build their confidence and that they never would’ve thought to apply for the job they got through their work experience. As a result of their success at their work experience, several youth have been hired by their employer. In addition, youth with language barriers experienced significant growth in their development when they were able to practice the English language on a regular basis in the context of employment. During the pilot project, there were a total of 49 youth that participated in a work experience. Of those youth, 84 percent demonstrated the mastery of work readiness skills.

During the pilot project, we heard from several employers that benefited from having a youth from communities of color at their worksite. One employer that mentored a youth with a language barrier explained that the youth gave him a new perspective because he had to articulate and explain tasks differently. That experience helped him make improvements to the company training for all new staff.

GOAL 6: Connect to and strengthen other key educational initiatives and systems in the area

Programs are more effective when there is a coordination effort allowing more efficient use of resources

This project was developed from the input of current youth participants, parents and representatives from agencies that serve youth from communities of color. This project strengthened our relationship with the following organizations and initiatives:

- *African Family and Education Center* which works with a range of issues for immigrants and refugees like housing, education, social services, workplace issues, and more by bridging cultural and language barriers.
- *Greater Mankato Diversity Council* which addresses changing demographics by providing diversity education as a catalyst for social and economic success. They work with students in K-12 as well as adults on the theme of respect for regardless of differences.
- *Life-Work Planning Center* which serves young Latinas through a weekly after school program.
- *MRCI WorkSource* which is the provider of public assistance employment programs in Blue Earth Co.
- *MN Council of Churches Refugee Services* provides specialized services for refugees and people seeing asylum to assist them on the path to self-sufficiency and support them as they work towards achieving their dreams.
- *South Central Service Cooperative* partnership helps us to develop strategies and collaborate programs and services to meet the needs of youth in this demographic.

GOAL 7: Other South Central program goals

- **Engage families in work readiness activities and the development of youth's career plan.**

Youth from communities of color have unique needs. When there is a language barrier it can be very difficult for families. As youth assimilate to the United States culture and learn the English language, it can often cause a power struggle between youth and parents. Youth are often asked to interpret for their parents which can be a stressful responsibility and ethical dilemma for youth. It is also difficult for parents to maintain authority when they are unable to communicate and rely on what the youth is translating for them. Even when no language barrier is present, it can be difficult for youth that are stuck between two cultures. They are trying to fit in the United States culture while trying to remain connected to their culture of origin.

It was important for the overall success of youth that their parents were involved in their career development. We worked with parents to improve their son's or daughter's everyday decision making skills and help parents feel empowered to support their son's or daughter's growth. This enhanced collaboration addressed the gap that can occur between youth and parents. In addition, many of the topics covered in the group activities were also beneficial to parents and they were invited to participate in workshops on job seeking and job keeping, career exploration, labor market information including demand occupations, value of post-secondary education, entrepreneurial opportunities, goal setting, connections to community resources, life skills training and financial fitness training. During the pilot project, there were a total of 33 parents that participated in group activities with their youth.

- **Provide cultural awareness to worksite supervisors.**

The Greater Mankato Diversity Council provided a training session to worksite supervisors on cultural awareness and sensitivity. Because many worksites involved in the program were spread out in the nine county area, we will also utilize YouTube videos developed by the Greater Mankato Diversity Council to address cultural awareness in the workplace that staff could share on a laptop at the worksite.

- **Provide role models to inspire youth to “Dream It. Believe It. Achieve It.”**

The focus group of youth participants from our pilot project noted that one of the most valuable components of the program was an event that was held this past March, where we invited youth and their families for dinner and a program at the Courtyard Marriott Hotel. The program included short presentations from an employer who spoke on what businesses look for in applicants, a refugee who is also a student from the Social Work program at Minnesota State University - Mankato (MSU) who spoke about achieving your goals, and a graduate student from the Sport Management program at MSU who addressed the hard work that was needed to be successful. The youth participants enjoyed the speakers and it was important for them to hear from other people from communities of color who have overcome adversity to demonstrate that it is possible to achieve their dreams. One parent of a youth participant shared that the speakers inspired her to go back to school. Youth also created "Dream Boards" using pictures from magazines and personal drawings to visualize their own dreams and goals for their future. One of the youth participants said he kept his dream board and had it hanging in his bedroom. A professional photographer was at the event to take family photos. We had a world map and asked youth to identify where they were born and where their parents were born. This activity allowed youth to connect with other youth with similar experiences and help understand each other's differences. It was a successful event with over 80 attendees and youth were inspired.

- **Outcomes**

| “Dream It. Believe It. Achieve It.” Pilot Project Outcomes | # of Youth |
|--|------------|
| Participated in a Work Experience | 56 |
| Attained Work Readiness Skills | 41 |
| Graduated from High School | 17 |
| Attended Post-Secondary Education | 16 |
| Will Begin Post-Secondary Education Fall 2013 | 8 |
| Entered Unsubsidized Employment | 8 |

Expenditures

Allocation: \$135,000

Expended: \$135,000

Leveraged Funds

**Sources: Private Sector in-kind; Other
Programs**

\$237,726

YOUTH COMPETITIVE GRANT DATA SUMMARY

| IDENTIFYING INFORMATION | | |
|--|--|----|
| Grantee: South Central WorkForce Council | Contact: Heather Gleason | |
| Phone #: 507-345-2418 | E-mail Address: hgleason@mnvac.org | |
| PERIOD OF REPORT: July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013 | | |
| PARTICIPANT SUMMARY INFORMATION | | |
| Total Participants Served | | 71 |
| Gender | A. Male | 30 |
| | B. Female | 41 |
| Age | A. 14 – 15 | 1 |
| | B. 16 – 17 | 30 |
| | C. 18 | 10 |
| | D. 19 – 21 | 25 |
| | E. 22 – 24 | 5 |
| Ethnicity / Race | A. Hispanic/Latino | 31 |
| | B. American Indian or Alaska Native | 1 |
| | C. Asian/Pacific Islander | 1 |
| | D. Black or African American | 40 |
| | E. White | 31 |
| Education Level | A. 8 th grade and under | 2 |
| | B. 9 th Grade – 12 th Grade | 46 |
| | C. High School graduate or equivalent | 23 |
| | D. Post-Secondary Education | 0 |
| Other Demographics | A. Limited English Proficient | 18 |
| | B. Youth From Families Receiving Public Assistance | 43 |
| | C. Foster Youth | 3 |
| | D. Youth with a Disability | 8 |

YOUTH COMPETITIVE GRANT DATA SUMMARY

| | |
|--|-----|
| E. High School Drop-Out | 6 |
| F. Youth Offender | 11 |
| G. Pregnant or Parenting Youth | 9 |
| H. Basic Skills Deficient | 32 |
| I. Homeless or Runaway Youth | 4 |
| J. Not Employed at Program Enrollment | 61 |
| K. Veteran | 0 |
| PROGRAM SERVICES, ACTIVITIES, AND OTHER RELATED ASSISTANCE | |
| A. Received Education or Job Training Activities | 24 |
| B. Received Work Experience Activities | 56 |
| C. Received Community Involvement and Leadership Development Activities | 13 |
| D. Received Post-Secondary Exploration, Career Guidance and Planning Activities | 71 |
| E. Received Mentoring Activities | 56 |
| F. Received Support Services | 22 |
| INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE | |
| A. Attained Work Readiness or Education Goals in ISS | 43 |
| B. Received Academic Credit or Service Learning Credit | 0 |
| C. Obtained High School Diploma, GED, Remained in School, Obtained a Certificate or Degree, or Dropout – Returned to School | 40 |
| D. Entered Post Secondary Education, Vocational/Occupational Skills Training, Apprenticeship, Military, Job Search or Employment | 33 |
| E. Completion Rate | 84% |
| CUSTOMER SATISFACTION | |
| A. Number of participants rating experience as “Excellent” | 15 |
| B. Number of participants rating experience as “Very Good” | 10 |
| C. Number of participants rating experience as “Average” | 1 |
| D. Number of participants rating experience as “Below Average” | 1 |
| E. Number of participants rating experience as “Poor” | 0 |
| F. Total Number of Surveys Completed | 27 |