

Final Data: State Fiscal Year 2015 Youth Competitive Grants

South Central Workforce Council/MN Valley Action Council (Summer 2014)

Participant Summary

Total: 88	Hispanic/Latino: 39
Male: 42	American Indian: 2
Female: 46	Asian/Pacific Islander: 2
	Black/African American: 46
	White: 0
14-15: 3	
16-17: 47	
18: 17	
19-21: 18	
22-24: 3	

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

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 52% were Black or African American, 44% were Hispanic, 2% were American Indian and 2% were Asian. Youth were placed in worksites where they worked an average of 15 hours per week earning minimum wage for up to 12 weeks. While youth are working at the worksites, employment counselors provided on-site monitoring on a regular basis to identify what the youth is doing well and support their growth. At the worksite, youth acquire positive work habits, new job skills, customer service skills, teamwork skills and develop relationships with positive, caring adults. A total of 60 youth participated in a work experience.

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

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 evaluate 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

Youth participated in a variety of project-based activities that began in the summer and continued 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 a project-based life skills training activity focused on communication and teamwork. Youth were provided a recipe and on a separate table were small appliances (i.e. blender, skillet, and griddle), cooking utensils, and grocery items needed for each recipe. Each group had to select the appropriate items to complete the recipe. Youth created fruit smoothies, quesadillas and a rice dish. Youth demonstrated leadership, communication, and teamwork while youth created items to each other's liking. The topic of ingredients of good employers and employees was emphasized throughout the activity.

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

Youth participated in field trips that began in the summer and continued throughout the year 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

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
- Golden Heart Childcare Center
- Maverick Bookstore
- Mayo Clinic
- Q Computers
- Autumn Grace
- Mankato Public Schools
- Jerry's Auto Body Shop
- Nicollet County Social Services

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.

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

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 asylees 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: Leverage other non-project funds

Other resources that supported this project through June 30, 2015 included:

\$182,198.00 In-kind match for employers' time for supervision at the worksite

\$ 1,710.91 WIA Youth

\$ 18,618.69 MN Youth

\$ 2,975.04 Youth Intervention Program

\$ 2,125.00 Disability Employment Initiative

\$207,627.64 Total Match

GOAL 8: 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 or daughter's everyday decision making skills and help parents feel empowered to support their son 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.

- *Provide cultural awareness to worksite supervisors.*

The Greater Mankato Diversity Council provided two training sessions to worksite supervisors on cultural awareness and sensitivity. Because many worksites involved in the program are spread out in the nine county area, a recording of the training will be available that staff can share on a laptop at the worksite.

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

MVAC held a dinner for youth participants and their families. After dinner, the first two speakers had been young parents in their high school years but were now in their early 30's and decided to pursue Certified Nursing Assistant training. Both were on track to finish their program within the next month and already had jobs lined up. Their messages were both of feeling “stuck” and unsatisfied in previous jobs until they decided to go after their goals of nursing careers. They both plan to continue for their Licensed Practical Nursing degree.

The third (and final) speaker had a powerful story of a troubled childhood in a poor village from Thailand and all ten children being raised by an abusive oldest sister after their parents passed away. She shared her determination to “be someone” and her ability to come to United States. She is working on her Master's degree in Social Work. The evening wrapped up with an activity of each youth participant and younger siblings getting memory box frames to decorate in honor of a current (long or short term) goal they want to reach. Youth were honored for the goals they have already reached in life and for those yet to accomplish. One mother of a participant started college this August at the age of 47, later admitting she was inspired that night and wanted to show her kids that despite her life happenings, it is never too late to go after your dreams.

**YOUTH COMPETITIVE GRANT DATA SUMMARY
(Cumulative Through June 30, 2015)**

SUMMER

IDENTIFYING INFORMATION		
Grantee: Minnesota Valley Action Council Fiscal Agent for South Central WorkForce Council		Contact: Heather Gleason
Phone #: 507-345-2418		E-mail Address: hgleason@workforcecouncil.org
TOTAL SERVED – GROUP SERVICES		55
<p>The number provided above is to include all persons who participate in grant funded group activity (or activities). For example, the number is to include the number of persons involved in job fairs or the number of family members of a participant who also participate and benefit from the granted funded activity. In the case of an activity led by a youth participant, the participant is to be counted in both the group services and individual services categories.</p>		
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS SERVED – INDIVIDUAL SERVICES		
Total Individual Participants Served		88
Gender	A. Male	42
	B. Female	46
Age	A. 14 – 15	3
	B. 16 – 17	47
	C. 18	17
	D. 19 – 21	18
	E. 22 – 24	3
Ethnicity / Race	A. Hispanic/Latino	39
	B. American Indian or Alaska Native	2
	C. Asian/Pacific Islander	2
	D. Black or African American	46
	E. White	0
Education Level	A. 8 th grade and under	0
	B. 9 th Grade – 12 th Grade	62
	C. High School graduate or equivalent	24

**YOUTH COMPETITIVE GRANT DATA SUMMARY
(Cumulative Through June 30, 2015)**

	D. Post-Secondary Education	2
Other Demographics	A. Limited English Proficient	24
	B. Youth From Families Receiving Public Assistance	76
	C. Foster Youth	11
	D. Youth with a Disability	19
	E. High School Drop-Out	3
	F. Youth Offender	19
	G. Pregnant or Parenting Youth	9
	H. Basic Skills Deficient	53
	I. Homeless or Runaway Youth	5
	J. Not Employed at Program Enrollment	82
	K. Veteran	0
PROGRAM SERVICES, ACTIVITIES, AND OTHER RELATED ASSISTANCE		
	A. Received Education or Job Training Activities	15
	B. Received Work Experience Activities	60
	C. Received Community Involvement and Leadership Development Activities	41
	D. Received Post-Secondary Exploration, Career Guidance and Planning Activities	88
	E. Received Mentoring Activities	56
	F. Received Support Services	82
INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE		
	A. Attained Work Readiness or Education Goals	54
	B. Received Academic Credit or Service Learning Credit	15
	C. Obtained High School Diploma, GED, Remained in School, Obtained a Certificate or Degree, or Dropout – Returned to School	50
	D. Entered Post Secondary Education, Vocational/Occupational Skills Training, Apprenticeship, Military, Job Search or Employment	44
	E. Completion Rate	88% (77 of 88)
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION		
	A. Number of participants rating experience as “Excellent”	33

**YOUTH COMPETITIVE GRANT DATA SUMMARY
(Cumulative Through June 30, 2015)**

B. Number of participants rating experience as "Very Good"	23
C. Number of participants rating experience as "Average"	5
D. Number of participants rating experience as "Below Average"	0
E. Number of participants rating experience as "Poor"	1
F. Total Number of Surveys Completed	62