

# 2017 TANF Innovation Project Report

The 2017 TANF Innovation Project is a partnership between the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, and the Minnesota Workforce Council Association (MWCA) to provide structured work experiences, direct services to youth, financial literacy training and related support services to youth receiving Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) benefits.

The TANF project served two groups of youth:

- **Teen parents, ages 16-24, who are receiving cash MFIP benefits; and**
- **Younger youth ages 14-18, who are on the grant in MFIP households.**

The youth served in the 2017 TANF youth project were assigned a youth counselor to provide career counseling and case management services to obtain and maintain employment and develop a career plan. Youth counselors educate and encourage the youth to pursue opportunities in **high growth and high demand occupations**, using local labor market information and tools such as **MN Careers, Minnesota Works, and CareerWISE**. Youth were taught about how to start to explore careers and match interests, skills and career outlooks to find a job in the community that would lead to a wage that could support them in the future.

In addition to general career exploration, many youth were introduced to the idea of career pathways and career laddering opportunities. Some of the industries that were introduced to youth included: **information technology, manufacturing, transportation, child care, and healthcare**. Youth received information about how to get involved in existing career pathway training programs that can lead to careers with the potential for advancement. Counselors help the youth understand how to break their career pursuit into smaller, more manageable steps while increasing earnings along the way.

Individual and group activities on **career exploration, job search techniques, positive work habits, and daily living skills** prepare youth to become self-sufficient. Youth participated in **business tours, career fairs, as well as college visits, and career days** to learn more about post-secondary opportunities geared toward high demand industries and occupations.

Funding amount:	<b>\$863,300</b>
TANF innovation funds from the Department of Human Services.	
Cost per participant:	<b>\$1,617 per youth</b>
Number served in 2017:	<b>534</b>
Gender:	<b>80% female 20% male</b>
Youth from Communities of Color:	<b>81%</b>
Youths with a disability:	<b>11%</b>
Pregnant or Parenting Youth:	<b>59%</b>
Youth Earning Academic Credit:	<b>44%</b>
Youth Attaining Work Readiness Skills:	<b>71%</b>

**Individualized planning** contributes to the success of the project. The work experiences that youth received were targeted as much as possible to their specific career interest areas to provide the youth with hands-on exposure to a field that is intriguing to them. **Career readiness skills** are assessed on the worksite by the worksite supervisors, helping the youth understand employer and industry-specific

expectations and requirement. For many of the youth participants the work experience was their first job.

**Examples of Employers Providing Work Experience:**

Salvation Army, Meeker Memorial Hospital, Klein Bank, Kids Castle Child Care, Prairie River Home Care, SNAP Fitness, Benson Bakery, Walgreens, Simplified Technology Solutions, Hennepin County Medical Center, Anoka County National Sports Center, Highland Park Library, Ramsey County Public Health, Super One Foods, Hy-Vee, Spring Lake Park Child Care Center, Family Pathways Child Care

A variety of **financial literacy tools and strategies** help each youth learn skills necessary for long-term financial stability. Counselors assisted youth in opening a bank account for direct deposit of their paychecks and the development of a personal relationship with a local financial institution. In many cases, this was the first time anyone in

the family had ever opened a bank account. Curricula such as the FDIC’s Money Smart for Young Adults and the University of Minnesota Extension’s Dollar Works introduced key personal finance concepts such as saving, budgeting, and the importance of credit, investments and loans. In some cases, youth used earnings from the program to contribute to the family household budget.

Several youth have been hired by the employers who hosted their work experience. TANF Youth Innovation funds are frequently braided with resources from other funding sources to provide continued support and opportunities to advance along their career pathway and achieve lasting success. Ultimately, the TANF project has enabled young adults, many of whom have significant barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment, to explore educational opportunities and fulfilling careers that will set them and their families up for lifelong success.

## Success Stories

### **Natasha, Rural MN CEP, Inc.**

Natasha was 14 when she started work training under the TANF Youth project as a dog walker at a local shelter. When she first started she was very shy, quiet, indecisive, and just really didn’t have a lot of confidence in herself. She was also struggling in school. Then things began to change with the help of a dedicated worksite mentor. At her 30 day evaluation she received great reviews, gaining skills in reliability and work site appropriateness. She really started to shine! She is still there walking dogs and is now helping train other youth in on the daily duties. Her mom has shared that she has been happier at home as well. Both she and her mom say how thankful they are that Natasha got this opportunity because it has really transformed her with school and home life and doing her best. She has the confidence to ask questions and receive feedback on how she can improve. Natasha is now enrolled in the WIOA In-School-Youth program where she continuing her work at the shelter.

### **Hannah, City of Duluth**

Hannah came to YES Duluth to request help finding work. She recently had to withdraw from college due to medical reasons and wanted to find a position working in human services in an office setting. She learned about the Young Mother's program and the supervisor and Hannah agreed that it would be a good fit. Hannah was able to work in a supportive environment that allowed her to make her medical appointments and still earn a paycheck. Hannah successfully completed her work experience and has recently accepted a position working for a home health agency. She is hopeful that she will be able to return to college and continue pursuing a career in human services.

### **Takota, City of Duluth**

Takota is a high school senior with both parents disengaged from the workforce. He does not have any adults in his immediate family engaged in the workforce. He participated in a subsidized work experience during the summer of 2017. After completing his 240 hours of work with kudos from his employer, he had a taste of receiving paychecks and this sparked his appetite for additional work and more hours. He sought out and obtained unsubsidized employment at a local grocery store. In his short time at the grocery store, he has been promoted and received a wage increase. He is proud to be earning a check because of his diligent work ethic. With graduation approaching, he is interested in additional mentoring and advice from the YES Duluth staff on the types of career pathways that could help him reach a sustainable wage that would allow him to move out and become independent.

### **Kayle, Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services**

At age 21, Kayle was a proud African-American mother of two young children. She had dropped out of school and was struggling to support her family as a resident assistant at a care facility. While she worked hard, her wages were simply too low and it was a struggle for her to get the hours she needed to get ahead. She'd been in a pattern of receiving public assistance, on and off, for several years and wanted something more for her family. Unfortunately, as a high school dropout, her options were quite limited. CMJTS enrolled Kayle into the TANF Innovation Youth Program and funded nursing assistant certification training. With this training, Kayle knew that she could find a better job and connect with an exciting, in-demand career pathway. She would also be able to increase her earning potential and reduce her dependence on public assistance programs. Kayle successfully participated in the nursing assistant training, earned her certification, and even landed a full-time job at a skilled nursing facility before her last day of instruction! Today, she earns over fifteen dollars per hour, with shift differentials. She is moving away from public assistance and has found renewed motivation to work towards getting her GED. While she enjoys her current position, she hopes to eventually move up the healthcare career ladder by becoming a licensed practical nurse. Kayle's future, and her family's future, now has a much brighter outlook!

### **Alana, Minnesota Valley Action Council**

Alana began working with youth staff in September 2017 and has constantly kept the ball rolling and never let her momentum drop. In addition to caring for her daughter on her own, Alana has earned her driver's license, passed two GED tests, secured daycare after searching intensively for many months, scheduled her final two GED tests and has recently accepted full time employment with Divine Providence in Sleepy Eye, MN as a Nursing Assistant. Divine Providence will be assisting Alana in earning

her CNA upon completion of her GED and working successfully for three months. She hopes to move on to become an LPN once she gains some experience as a CNA.

### **Sumaya, Minnesota Valley Action Council**

Sumaya came to MVAC as one of the youngest youth participants. At the ripe age of 15, Sumaya obtained a work experience at MVAC Thrift Again. Sumaya started off as a timid but eager young worker. Along the way, Sumaya learned skills such as how to follow directions, work on a team, and communicate with supervisors. Sumaya now has a solid start in her many years of work ahead because of the work experience provided through the TANF project.

### **Mia, Minneapolis Employment and Training**

The City of Minneapolis Employment and Training works in partnership with local community based programs to make a difference in the lives of low income residents. Mia is a 20 year-old who had been served by MVNA and HIRED to successfully graduate from high school. Mia lives with her two children and has struggled relying on public assistance. Mia looked for a job, but without job experience she didn't have success finding employment. After talking with HIRED staff about the employment and training opportunities available, Mia decided to sign up for HIRED's Hospitality training. The City of Minneapolis TANF Teen Parent program provided the funding for this training and internship opportunity. Because of her eagerness to learn and commitment to the program, Mia received a Hospitality Certification and requests for interview from a number of hotels. Mia accepted a job offer at the Marriott Hotel in Downtown Minneapolis. She enjoys her job and is happy she went through the hospitality training.

### **Aliyah, Anoka County**

Aliyah is a 10<sup>th</sup> grader who participated in the TANF Youth Innovation Program for the second year. Her goal after graduating high school is to study athletic medicine. She is a skilled athlete and brought her love of fitness to her position at Discovery Days Child Care in Spring Lake Park. Her supervisors agreed that she was a welcome addition to the classroom where she assisted in the care of 3 to 5-year-old children. She excelled at connecting with the children by reading, playing, and coloring. She also learned valuable new skills such as how to effectively coordinate group activities and give directions. The experience that Aliyah gained from this program allowed her to improve her ability to work with others, be accountable, and be a leader herself. She received an inside view into the world of work and can now better understand the expectations that come along with it.

### **Lasherion, Ramsey County**

Lasherion is a single parent of two, full time student, and was unemployed until June 2017 when she enrolled in the TANF Innovation Project. Lasherion was pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Public Health at St. Catherine's University and, through the TANF project, was placed in a work experience with Ramsey County's Public Health Department, an employment opportunity that directly reflected her future employment goal. Lasherion was also able to give back to her community and be guided by her supervisor, learning valuable information about what it takes to succeed and thrive in the public health field. She took part in conducting community outreach, facilitating parent groups, and working alongside Community Health Workers to raise awareness on health-related topics affecting disadvantaged

communities. In December, Lasherion graduated from St. Kate's with her Bachelor's Degree in Public Health, becoming the first person in her family to graduate from college. She is continuing her internship with Public Health through Ramsey County's ULEAD Program while searching for a full-time position. Lasherion was able to access valuable work experience and mentorship while completing her education goals, providing for her family, and getting one step closer to her full-time career in public health.

### **Myesha, Tree Trust**

Myesha started with the TANF program in the fall of 2017. She had part time job experience in retail and customer service, but had expressed a passion for childcare and an interest in learning more about that field. She was placed at Sunshine Tree Child Development. Myesha's supervisor said of her work: "Even in the midst of her struggle with housing and the county, Myesha does a great job with the children as well as staff... She cleans the room faithfully and is always willing to assist in any way needed... The children really enjoy her, and she gives them the love and patience that they need on a daily basis." Myesha's Tree Trust supervisor also noted her positive attitude and initiative. As the end of Myesha's internship approached, she was offered and accepted a position at Sunshine Tree Child Development!

### **Deaijia, Tree Trust**

Prior to joining Tree Trust through the TANF program, Deaijia had worked at the airport and retail. She enjoyed working with people in those roles, and wanted a position where she could assist and connect with people. Deaijia was placed at Families Moving Forward, where she worked to help clients navigate services and conduct their own job and housing searches. Deaijia felt that Tree Trust's TANF program taught her interpersonal skills that helped her better serve her clients, placed her at a job that let her help and connect with people, and also helped her with her resume and job search skills. Her supervisor encouraged Deaijia to apply for a position at a Families Moving Forward in Chaska. Deaijia was offered the job, though she chose not to take it because she has the goal of returning to college to finish a degree in business management and is seeking a part-time position to accommodate that goal.

### **Chandler, Workforce Development, Inc.**

Chandler is a 16 year old junior at Austin High School. He heard of the TANF project from a letter that was sent out to families that were income eligible for the program. Chandler had not had any previous work experience, but was involved in the Student Tech Team at high school. Because of his experience with the Tech Team, he was interested in doing a work experience in an IT field at Simplified Technology Solutions. His counselor contacted the company and they were able to set up a work experience for Chandler starting in August working after school 4 days a week. When the work experience ended at the end of December, Chandler was hired on by Simplified Technology Solutions immediately after. He had an article written about him in the Austin Living magazine about his leadership and involvement in the community. Chandler plans to go to college for IT to become a Microsoft Systems Engineer.

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