



# MINNESOTA YOUTH PROGRAM

## ANNUAL REPORT SFY2024



This 2024 Annual Report provides an overview of youth employment and training activities funded under the Minnesota Youth Program (MYP) in SFY2024.

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# Minnesota Youth Program Annual Report SFY2024

## WHO IS SERVED BY THE MINNESOTA YOUTH PROGRAM?

During State Fiscal Year 2024 (SFY2024), 4,575 youth were served through the work experience component of the Minnesota Youth Program (MYP) and an additional 40,374 youth were served through the Outreach to Schools/Career Advisor component of MYP. Of the youth that were served, 55% are Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), 40% are youth with disabilities and 58% are youth from families on public assistance.

Program participants are at-risk, low-income youth ages 14 to 24 who lack academic and “applied skills” considered critical for current and future workplace requirements. MYP meets the needs of youth who are hands-on, applied learners. MYP provides safe and healthy worksites and sets high expectations for growth and learning. Detailed information on youth served under MYP in SFY2024 and outcomes are included in charts at the end of this report.

For SFY2024 the program was funded with \$4.05 million from the Workforce Development Fund and \$4.51 million from the General Fund, an increase from the SFY2023 appropriation of \$4.05 million in Workforce Development funding.

## HOW DOES MYP PREPARE YOUTH FOR THE WORKFORCE?

Comprehensive services include:

**Early Assessment:** Skill assessment and interest determinations individualize the service, assist in career development.

**Work-Based Learning:** Job opportunities in public and private sectors introduce youth to career pathways.

**Mentoring:** Builds workplace skills, career awareness and confidence.

**Financial Literacy:** Budgeting and independent living skills developed.

**Leadership Skills:** Opportunity to work with diverse groups and engage in community service.

**Employer Engagement:** Employers evaluate work readiness skills of youth in pre and post assessments on the worksite.

**Support Services:** Transportation, clothing, tools, child care, housing/rental assistance, and school-related financial assistance are available to support participants in work experience.

**Credentials/Academic Credit:** Youth can earn academic credit, service-learning credit or industry-recognized credentials, degrees and certificates.

## WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY ABOUT WORK EXPERIENCE FOR TEENS?

Research has shown that the number one predictor of future success in the workforce is early exposure to work experience:

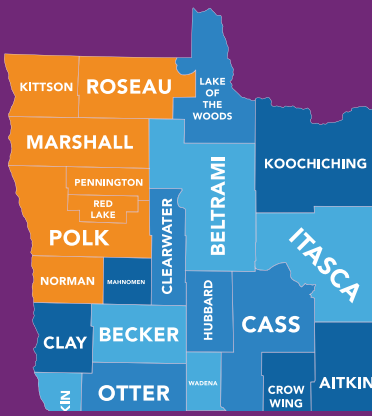
- Contextual learning improves student’s grades, attendance, and graduation rates.
- Young people who have an opportunity to gain work experience as teens are more likely to stay in school, avoid criminal involvement, gang behavior, drugs and unplanned pregnancies.
- Teen employment contributes to significantly higher wages as young adults enter their twenties.
- Teens in low-income families have the least access to jobs – especially jobs that combine part-time work and school.

## WHAT IS THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI) FOR THE MINNESOTA YOUTH PROGRAM (MYP)?

Each state dollar invested in MYP yielded an estimated return on investment of \$6.80 for SFY 2024 through taxes paid by participants and other public benefits saved. See ROI chart at the end of this report.

## HOW ARE MINNESOTA YOUTH PROGRAM SERVICES PROVIDED?

In SFY2024, services were provided by 18 grantees throughout the state. A description of each local program is provided on the following pages.



# Northwest Minnesota

## Inter-County Community Council (ICCC)

Catherine Johnson, Executive Director

207 Main Street, P.O. Box 189, Oklee, MN 56742

Phone: (218) 796-5144

[intercountycc.org](http://intercountycc.org)

*Counties served: Kittson, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake, and Roseau*

## OVERVIEW

Inter-County Community Council (ICCC) is a nonprofit Community Action agency dedicated to providing employment and training services for youth and young adults across seven counties in Northwest Minnesota. ICCC collaborates with school districts, social service agencies, probation and parole agencies, and foster care providers to identify at-risk youth who can benefit from the MYP program.

ICCC connects these youth, who face significant barriers to employment, with activities and opportunities designed to reduce those barriers. The focus is on helping them develop essential work and soft skills for success in the workforce. ICCC case managers review in-demand occupations and provide youth with assessment tools to identify good career choices based on their individual interests and strengths.

ICCC offers services that include paid work experiences and additional training as needed. Case managers work closely with each youth to ensure ongoing success in both school and work environments. The ultimate goal is to empower youth to become successful and self-sufficient adults.

Funding for these services comes from MYP funds and federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth funds. All youth programs are developed with input from staff, Youth Committee members, and the local workforce development board.

## BEST PRACTICES

Referrals and strong partnerships between ICCC and local agencies in Northwest Minnesota are essential for the success of youth in MYP. Many participants require additional resources to overcome barriers, and having the ability to connect them with partner agencies allows ICCC to concentrate on helping them achieve their employment goals.

Building relationships with partners, worksites, and the youth themselves is crucial to the MYP's effectiveness. Case managers cultivate connections with youth to better understand their challenges, needs, and pathways to success. ICCC prioritizes providing paid work experiences, which can be particularly challenging in rural Minnesota; however, the relationships case managers develop with employers and worksites play a vital role in overcoming these challenges.

ICCC relies on partnerships with local school districts, county human services, and other organizations for referrals of youth who could benefit from the MYP. Through these referrals, ICCC offers wrap-around services to ensure that youth receive comprehensive support and do not fall through the cracks of the system.

## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

- Local secondary and alternative schools – referrals and worksites
- Public, non-profit, and private sector employers – worksites
- Community Action Partnership (CAP) Agencies – referrals and worksites
- County Human Services – referrals
- CareerForce partners – referrals and worksite development

## SERVING BIPOC YOUTH AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

ICCC is deliberate in its efforts to serve youth of color and youth with disabilities. Examples include:

- Partnering with Adult Basic Education (ABE) and local New American organizations in East Grand Forks to provide resources for the area's New American population. Through this partnership ICCC funded paid work experience for New American youth to be classroom aides that helped with technology in a combined English Language Learner/Career Exploration class offered by ABE.
- Partnering with Vocational Rehabilitation Services through Pre-ETS programs has increased outreach to youth with disabilities.

## CUSTOMER COMMENTS

- "I wasn't confident enough to apply for a job before I went through a year of work experience, but I had no fear this summer looking for a job and interviewing." – *PARTICIPANT*
- "It was great watching the youth grow as they worked." – *WORKSITE SUPERVISOR*
- "I wasn't sure if the youth would ever have enough confidence to work independently." – *SPECIAL ED TEACHER*

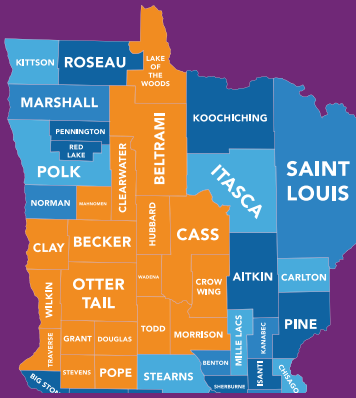


### SUCCESS STORY: **Andrew**

Andrew is thriving in his role at Digi-Key. He reports that he loves his job and appreciates the supportive work environment. Andrew's transformation from a hesitant student to a confident, employed young adult is a testament to his resilience and the effective support of the Minnesota Youth Program.







# Rural Minnesota

## Rural Minnesota Concentrated Employment Program (RMCEP)

Tina Jaster, Executive Director

803 Roosevelt Avenue, P.O. Box 1108, Detroit Lakes, MN 56502

Phone: (218) 846-7400

[rmcep.com](http://rmcep.com)

*Counties served: Becker, Beltrami, Cass, Clay, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Douglas, Grant, Hubbard, Lake of the Woods, Mahanomen, Morrison, Otter Tail, Pop, Stevens, Todd, Traverse, Wadena, and Wilkin*

## OVERVIEW

Rural Minnesota Concentrated Employment Program (RMCEP) is a private, non-profit employment and training agency. RMCEP covers 19 counties in Northwest Minnesota and includes 8 CareerForce Centers. RMCEP provides youth with individualized career pathway exploration that includes assessment and career investigation, labor market information and in-demand careers, in-school career advising, barrier navigation, work readiness skills development, financial literacy through money management skills, work experience, training and tuition assistance, job seeking techniques and support services. Local businesses and communities also provide local youth opportunities for hands-on skill development, mentoring, and equity, cultural and inclusion exposure.

RMCEP braids funding as needed between MYP, WIOA youth funds, Youthbuild, and Youth at Work funds to provide seamless services to a wide array of youth. The youth programs serve participants ages 14-24 through person-centered assessments, comprehensive services to build and enhance work skills, and steady guidance to identify and leverage a career pathway unique to each youth.

## BEST PRACTICES

Youth Coordinators use a variety of platforms to meet youth where they are, which is key for successful communication. They focus on helping youth be successful, listening for understanding, deciding on a solid path, and decision making. Employer engagement and support in mentor relationships are also cultivated.

- Career Advisors work individually with students to determine appropriate career goals and develop plans to reach those goals. RMCEP works with 13 school districts to provide a Career Advisor menu of services.
- RMCEP assists youth with transportation issues by providing financial assistance with drivers' training, providing gas cards and bus tickets for participants, and partnering with the Car Care Program for reduced repair costs and donated vehicles to ensure participants get to work and school.
- Eligible MYP participants are considered for enrollment into RMCEP's other programs so continued services and supports can be provided through braiding program funds to ensure seamless services.

## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

- RMCEP Youth Coordinators have strong partnerships with local schools and Area Learning Centers, Adult Basic Education, mental health providers, crisis centers, public transportation services, community organizations such as Love Inc., Salvation Army, the Car Care Program and United Way, Youth Centers for homeless or at-risk populations, Youth Ministry, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, probation/juvenile justice, housing, school Individualized Education Plan (IEP) managers, foster care, and business worksites. Youth Coordinators are recruited as classroom speakers, participate in career fairs, and contribute through Community Transition Inter-Agency Committees and IEP meetings.
- RMCEP works with many area colleges to provide tuition assistance in areas such as Mechatronics, CNA coursework, and Education and Human Services. RMCEP has also developed over 900 worksites within the service area over time, with one location adding 10 new worksites this year and increasing work experience enrollment from last year by almost 100%.
- RMCEP partners with local educational systems where youth can earn school credits for their work experience activity.

## SERVING YOUTH UNDER-REPRESENTED IN THE WORKFORCE

RMCEP serves an area with three American Indian tribal nations and the border city of Moorhead, which has been the home for many area immigrants. This past year, RMCEP served 590 youth. Of those, 24.3% were persons of color/ American Indian, 68.7% had a disability, 5.1% were involved in the justice system, 2.09% were in foster care, 1.94% were homeless, and 45.8% were female. Age ranges included ages 14-15 = 20.0%, 16-17 = 29.5%, 18-21 = 45.2% and 22-24 = 5.4%. Many at-risk youth come from low-income families and families with many generations living in the same household, and youth with a disability represent the fastest growing underserved population.

Resources and speakers on inclusion and diversity are also part of RMCEP's professional development to build staff cultural competencies. Diversity training is covered in the work experience orientation, with Youth Services Coordinators and worksites working together to maintain flexibility to meet each participant's needs.

## OUTREACH TO SCHOOLS/CAREER ADVISOR COMPONENT

Utilizing a variety of resources for Career Advising, staff encourage students in 10th grade and up to explore how their current interests and abilities translate into the type of career they want to pursue.

One RMCEP location had a Youth Services Coordinator set up a “Career Booth” with information about RMCEP and the programs available. She interacted with over 1,900 students during a 15-week period and answered questions for almost 400 students. Another coordinator serves at the Annual Business Professionals of America (BPA) conference, judging resumes and interview skills.

Part of the outreach to schools is focused on providing information on job fairs with employers who hire youth under 18. To promote youth attendance, RMCEP assists schools with the cost of bussing students to job fairs. This year, at least seven schools transported students with RMCEP’s assistance, with approximately 1,400 students attending RMCEP job fairs. Visits from the Big Ideas Trailer and trade unions provided hands-on opportunities for attendees.

One of the greatest outreaches this year was partnering with motivational speaker Ben Rudrud to engage students from several school districts. His presentations, which highlighted the importance of social media awareness and personal branding, resonated with many, particularly those on the brink of entering the workforce. His emphasis on resilience and making informed decisions in the face of life’s challenges was especially relevant to students who may be struggling with their educational and personal paths. Overall, his presentations were attended by 3,580 students from 17 school districts. Throughout his presentation, he referred to available programs from RMCEP and Youth Coordinators were available for students to visit with after each of his presentations.

## CUSTOMER COMMENTS

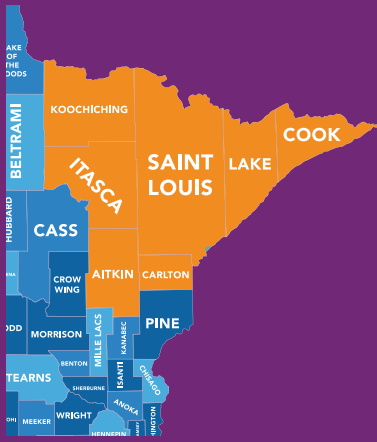
- “My daughter said you spoke to her like an adult, and she appreciated that. It made her feel special.” – *PARENT*
- “I love my job!” – *STUDENT*
- “Person with extreme anxiety, I can do this.” – *STUDENT*
- “She is amazing with the kids and myself!!” – *WORKSITE SUPERVISOR*



## SUCCESS STORY: Gavin

Gavin enrolled in the MYP, Youth at Work and WIOA In-School Youth programs in June 2023. He came to RMCEP the summer before his senior year at Ulen Hitterdal High School looking to do maintenance work at Viking Manor in Ulen, with hopes that the work experience would lead to a direct hire. Gavin was able to develop a mentoring relationship with his worksite supervisor over the summer. He continued to work at Viking Manor during the school year, graduated in May 2024, and was hired directly by Viking Manor the week after he graduated from high school. In reflecting on Gavin’s work experience, his mother noted that RMCEP is a great program to work with. *“CEP is such a great opportunity for the youth in our rural area, helping them develop career goals, working skills, a good reference to use for future employment, transitioning into employment opportunities and much more. Thank you, MN CEP program, for the successful program opportunity for Gavin!”*





# Northeast Minnesota

## Northeast Minnesota Office of Job Training (JET)

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 Phone: (218) 748-2200  
[nemojt.org](http://nemojt.org)

*Counties served: Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, and St. Louis (except City of Duluth)*

## OVERVIEW

Northeast Career EdVenture powered by JET is the Minnesota Youth Program (MYP) Outreach to Schools (OTS) service to provide free career planning and guidance services to local school districts using the expertise that resides in the local CareerForce system and the partnerships developed over the years. While some districts have robust career planning resources to guide students, many have very little to offer students for career planning. Career EdVenture offers a standardized menu of services available to any school district in the region. Partnerships have been developed to increase services to youth and school districts in and outside of the service area to the benefit of the Northeast region. JET OTS serves nearly 3,000 youth and parents directly and several thousand more indirectly.

Career EdVenture services are divided into two categories: services for individuals (one-on-one career guidance, career assessment, postsecondary planning, resume development, personalized job search strategy, and transitioning from high school) and services for groups/classes (Navigating Business Culture, Financial Literacy, business and industry speakers and tours, postsecondary planning, career interest and values assessments, and games and activities with career exploration themes, and more). Services are not targeted to any specific at-risk population through the schools but are used to educate and assist enrolled at-risk participants in the youth programs. In some cases, resources are delivered by request to unique groups such as special education students or groups traditionally underserved in the region such as Free-At-Last foster care groups or in Alternative Learning Programs.

JET has assisted with the challenges faced by current employers to address the staffing needs in health care. A good example of exposing youth to careers in health care was achieved with the Iron Range Area SCRUBS Camp providing a multi-day event to explore multiple careers in healthcare at Minnesota North College – Hibbing. 218Trades is another example meeting a potential shortfall of workers in the northeast region by creating and promoting an initiative to make youth aware of careers in the trades, and to demystify the process of trade union joint apprenticeships. Both forementioned areas are proposed in the Minnesota WIOA State Plan and current DWA-3 Workforce Development Regional Plan.

OTS services are geared to help students understand the opportunities available to them in the world of work. For example, a postsecondary planning workshop addresses how to identify programs that lead to jobs in high demand careers using various research approaches that include labor market information on high-demand, high-pay jobs, and career pathways. Business and industry representatives from high demand industries serve as classroom speakers to provide insight into career opportunities from a local perspective. Financial literacy workshops are offered in partnership with the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency. JET recognizes that financial planning is necessary to understand what constitutes a living wage and viable future career, and can set into motion a process of financial planning for post-secondary to minimize or eliminate student debt.

Numerous resources help students identify and explore high growth industries and in-demand occupations, including a 2-part Career Exploration series, and worksheets that engage students in understanding high-demand, high-wage occupations and help them determine where to find reputable sources of information on in-demand occupations. JET staff teach self-advocacy skills to help youth gain a voice to speak up for themselves, aid in their decision-making process, understand their rights and identify how and where to go to get and receive help.

## BEST PRACTICES AND HIGHLIGHTS

To assess and improve the quality of JET youth services, JET utilized surveying tools via Microsoft Teams for individual and group OTS. The Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) tool relies on youth evaluations for meaningful outcomes and provides youth with tools such as a reflection for self-evaluation. The tool also gathers feedback about the overall effectiveness of JET's OTS services.

JET is participating with CareerForce partners, regional educators, businesses and community-based organizations to become Employer Champions to demonstrate and advocate for hiring and engagement of underserved and BIPOC populations.

Career EdVenture included several events that engaged larger groups throughout northeast Minnesota to inform youth about high demand and high pay careers, especially in the crafts and trades. The region has a projected shortfall of workers entering the trades and a high demand due to numerous



regional construction projects expected to occur well into the next decade. On a larger scale JET is an integral part in the delivery of 218Trades information designed to assist students and parents to understand careers in the crafts and trades. Construct Tomorrow is a hands-on event for high school students to introduce them to the skilled trades in tandem with the JET regional initiative 218-Trades.

Career EdVenture activities across the region involve field trips to the local CareerForce Sites, post-secondary institutions, business & industry tours and career camps such as JET's four-day summer Iron Range EmpowHER Girls in the Trades Camp. All events and services share career resources. The activities mentioned provide an overview for high school students of partners and services available to them for their entire time/lifetime in the workforce. A Minnesotaworks.net and CareerForce training and registration activity was built into youth activities.

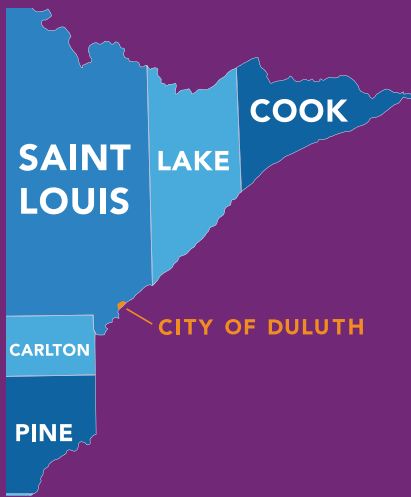
A desire to reengage and attend in-person events and activities following the COVID-19 pandemic has been noted by JET counselors, from students, educators, and parents. Many have noted a gap in personal behavior and soft-skills needed for employment and for proper social interactions. JET has been front and center in delivering in-person offerings and ramped up efforts to provide additional support to events. Notable in-person offerings included: Construct Tomorrow north and south events, The Discover Center Science & Engineering Festival, Minnesota North Technical days across several campuses, Iron Range Job Fair, Cloquet Area Community Black Bear Job fair, Future Foresters event, SCRUBS Health Care Career Camp, EmpowHER Girls in the Trades camp, and 218Trades Joint Apprenticeship training centers visits. Many of the technologies and processes that arose from the pandemic have been adapted and taken hold as commonplace practices for education, hiring, and working. Staff have created content to share with students via a YouTube channel and directly from the JET/NEMOJT website to better educate the current and emerging workforce, many of those now being youth and young adults. As the educational and work landscape continues to evolve post-COVID, JET provides supports to enhance students' technology needs and offset expenses to meet the demands of on-line learning by providing items such as webcams, support services for internet or referrals to resources such as PCs For People. A value of Career EdVenture that goes above and beyond the normal career offerings is the sense of community JET counselors bring to those in isolated and changing learning environments.

## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

JET takes pride in working collaboratively with partner agencies such as Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) as part of comprehensive efforts by JET to reach all students in a school district. This often occurs with blended activities from various resources as appropriate such as Perkins funding, Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB) and Applied Learning Institute (ALI). Integration of service delivery allows JET staff to serve virtually any students and parents in a school district regardless of their needs and abilities. The coordination of services across the broad spectrum of a student population as an OTS activity builds enrollments for established Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), MYP and Youth at Work programming. JET supports access to programming and events by administering a regional Career Exploration (CEX) fund supported by IRRRB to serve communities in the Taconite Relief Area (TRA) with financial supports to offset transportation costs and substitute teacher costs allowing schools to participate in career enhancing events and educational site tours in northeast Minnesota. Aside from blending WIOA and Rural Career Counselor (RC3) resources JET leverages in-kind support and financial support such as CEX from community partners.

JET counselors continue to have an on-campus presence at most regional technical and community colleges. JET staff can be found at Fond-du-Lac Tribal and Community College, and Lake Superior College as well as on campuses that comprise the Minnesota North System in the Grand Rapids, Ely, International Falls, Hibbing, Eveleth, and Virginia communities. These efforts provide a bridge from secondary to post-secondary education with the most up-to-date information on careers, programming, and access to resources.





# City of Duluth

## Duluth Workforce Development

Elena Foshay, Director

402 West 1st Street, Duluth, MN 55802

Phone: (218) 730-5241

[www.duluthmn.gov/yesduluth](http://www.duluthmn.gov/yesduluth)

Area served: City of Duluth

## OVERVIEW

Duluth Workforce Development provides services to in-school and out-of-school youth through the YES Duluth program. YES Duluth serves youth and young adults who experience barriers to achieving their goals in employment and/or education through a wide array of employment and education support services. YES Duluth's program elements include career pathways assessment and education, work readiness training, soft skills training, work experience, job skills training, financial literacy training, and other program elements as appropriate to the individual.

Support and guidance for individuals working toward their GED, high school diploma, post-secondary education and short-term training is available to participants. CareerForce in Duluth partners with Duluth Adult Education (DAE) and Life House to provide tutoring support to help participants with study skill development, basic skills training, and GED preparation.

## BEST PRACTICES

YES Duluth works in close partnership with youth serving agencies throughout the community to ensure youth have support in achieving individualized education and employment goals. Through a strong network of collaborative partnerships, the agency leverages the strengths and resources provided through partner agencies to make connections, provide stability, connect with resources and pave the way for individual skill building as youth begin their career path.

YES Duluth counselors work one-on-one with youth to develop an individual employment and education plan. In the early stages of enrollment, activities focus on guidance and counseling in career planning, job seeking, confidence and self-management, handling conflict and employability skills. YES Duluth counselors use activities and assessments from Holland Code Interest Surveys and career pathway assessments as tools for individuals to identify personal strengths, explore possible career paths and plan for obtaining stackable credentials in post-secondary education. Counselors also integrate online work readiness assessment and training programs, Conover Company and Pathful, into the available resources.

Using DEED data tools, YES Duluth staff maintain an "LMI Snapshot" which is distributed to youth participants. The

Snapshot illustrates current and local Labor Market Information (LMI) data including growing careers, jobs with the most openings in the area and LMI "fun facts." Presenting this information to youth initiates discussions and informs decision making regarding how the youth's goals and interests fit into the region's current labor market picture.

Counselors provide a variety of financial literacy training opportunities and support to youth based on the age, experience and needs of the individual youth. YES Duluth staff utilize include CFPB's Your Money, Your Goals toolkit, and have partnered with local financial institutions to facilitate youth-directed financial literacy learning circles. Outreach and referrals with community partners that teach financial literacy, including Duluth Adult Education, Community Action Duluth, and Lutheran Social Services is emphasized.

## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

YES Duluth program maintains a strong referral network that effectively refers and connects youth with the program. This core network includes local youth-serving organizations such as ISD 709 staff, Duluth Adult Education, Life House, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, SOAR Career Solutions, YWCA, Valley Youth Center, Family Freedom Center, NYS Inc., and Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) Counselors. YES Duluth staff meet regularly with area partners to effectively refer youth to appropriate services and to communicate regarding eligibility, program elements, support services and incentives to aid in outreach.

YES Duluth staff continually diversify and engage the pool of employers that provide work experiences and experiential learning opportunities to participants. Staff strive for a balance of LMI-based employer connections and person-centered employment options. YES Duluth is currently working with the local workforce board's Emerging Workforce Committee to expand engagement between youth and community employers. Part of this work includes utilizing tools and resources from the Diversity and Inclusion Employer Action Guide, [duluthmn.gov/media/12991/di-employer-action-guide-final.pdf](http://duluthmn.gov/media/12991/di-employer-action-guide-final.pdf), while developing or renewing worksites.

YES Duluth utilizes MYP funding to leverage and enhance services offered through WIOA Title I Youth and MFIP programs, among others. Youth are co-enrolled in multiple grants whenever possible.

## SERVING YOUTH UNDER-REPRESENTED IN THE WORKFORCE

YES Duluth staff are continually building relationships and extending into the community in partnership with area organizations to connect with youth in greatest need of support. Current connections and projects are forming with American Indian Community Housing Organization (AICHO), University of Minnesota - Duluth, Family Freedom Center, Human Development Center, Lutheran Social Services, Goodwill, Duluth Public Library, Duluth Parks and Recreation, and additional ISD 709 staff.

YES Duluth counselors meet youth where they are at, including where and how they connect with youth. Meetings and outreach occur in public spaces and/or where youth gather, in community-based youth serving agencies, in the participant's school or workplace. Participants have the option of meeting in person, on the phone or through a video call, with the option of completing documents and updates virtually or electronically when faced with barriers such as transportation, child-care or tight work schedules. These changes were made to adapt to youth's needs during the pandemic and have been maintained as a positive change for the benefit of current and future participants.

YES Duluth collaborates with partners to engage a diverse group of young people, including youth of color and those with disabilities, through events such as Construct Tomorrow, Duluth Back to School Event/Unity in the Community, Tour of Manufacturing, Discover Healthcare, and job fairs and mock interviewing events with ISD 709, assisting individuals in obtaining scholarships and employment.

## OUTREACH TO SCHOOLS

YES Duluth staff are embedded at the Career Centers located at the East and Denfeld High Schools, the Area Learning Center, and Harbor City International Charter school. One key priority of this effort is to engage with and serve minority populations and students with disabilities. YES Duluth staff are strengthening relationships with school integration specialists, attendance recovery specialists, Check and Connect staff, and the Special Education departments. Activities complement the work of school guidance counselors and part-time career center staff and provide greater opportunities for students to:

- Identify and explore areas of career interest;
- Gain exposure to different occupations through tours and other opportunities;
- Gain work experience and internship opportunities that help prepare students for future work; and
- Receive individualized assistance with and development of a plan that puts them on track for success in work and life.

YES Duluth staff work to engage with students as they move into out-of-school status, connecting them to education, employment, and other opportunities before they disconnect from the school system.

YES Duluth has collaborated with the Denfeld Community School Collaborative to serve more students and families at a deeper level. YES Duluth engages families in conversations about scholarships, financial aid, post-secondary training, and services offered through CareerForce and the community at large.

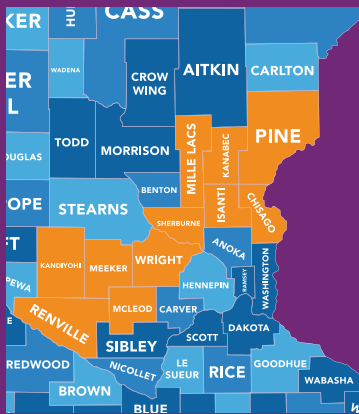
## CUSTOMER COMMENTS

- “YES Duluth let me do things at my own pace while keeping me on track. They're all so kind and helpful.” – *PARTICIPANT*
- “My job placement was incredible! Everyone was so helpful and always there for me!” – *PARTICIPANT*
- “YES Duluth helped with finding a well-paying job and their services assisted me in doing my job well, such as transportation assistance and purchasing proper work gear.” – *PARTICIPANT*



## SUCCESS STORY: Simon

Simon was referred to YES Duluth by Duluth Adult Education (DAE) in May of 2023 for assistance in obtaining his GED. He was offered an hourly stipend for GED study, transportation assistance, cell phone and Wi-Fi support, as well as incentives for GED test completion. Simon struggled to attend scheduled appointments and was making no or slow progress on his education plan. His YES Duluth counselor made regular attempts to contact Simon, encouraged use of support services, and offered support to DAE in helping Simon stay on track. In the fourth quarter of his YES Duluth enrollment, after an in-person meeting that was very positive and included the development of a concrete plan, Simon began working consistently on his education goal. Simon completed his GED in March of 2024 and met with his YES Duluth counselor to create a resume and talk through further education and employment goals. Simon chose to focus on leadership development in employment and he is aware of post-secondary support available through CareerForce programs in the future. Simon worked through the job search process with his YES Duluth counselor. He was hired in his number one choice for employment, in a full-time position, and has retained his position since.



# Central Minnesota

## Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services, Inc.

Diana Ristamaki, Youth Program Manager

406 East 7th Street, P.O. Box 720

Monticello, MN 55362

Phone: 320-364-0321

[cmjts.org](http://cmjts.org)

*Counties served: Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, Mille Lacs, Pine, Renville, Sherburne, and Wright*

## OVERVIEW

Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services, Inc. (CMJTS) is a private, non-profit organization that provides leadership in building a skilled workforce—workers who can do the jobs of today and learn the jobs of tomorrow. Through career counseling, job training, and strong business relationships, CMJTS helps prepare young adults for career pathways and the world of work that leads to meaningful employment. Through an individualized approach, these services include work-based learning opportunities, career exploration and job search assistance/guidance, and provision of labor market information, including information on high-opportunity careers, career success skills development activities, financial literacy training, dropout recovery services, occupational skills training, and entrepreneur development.

CMJTS leverages MYP funds through co-enrollments with the Youth at Work Opportunity Grant Program, TANF Youth Innovation Project, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Youthbuild, Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), and other competitive grants to deliver effective wraparound services and to provide youth with additional opportunities for career advancement.

## BEST PRACTICES

### Leadership Development

Helping area youth develop into leaders is critical to the future of Central Minnesota's workforce and communities. Youth gain leadership skills through the LEAD (Learn, Empower, Achieve, Discover) program utilizing a curriculum which touches upon the development of group rules/culture, self-awareness, leadership, community service, goal setting, taking initiative, time management, coping skills, conflict resolution, and constructive feedback. During this program youth also take part in a group-identified, service-learning project to give back within their communities and inspire others.

### Operation Exploration (OE) Camps

Youth from diverse communities gain knowledge, enhance skills, and strengthen communities through five innovative two-week hands-on career exploration camps. This Operation Exploration initiative targeted youth with disabilities, youth of color, and/or homeless youth that are economically disadvantaged and/or at-risk. Operation Exploration offered a unique opportunity for youth to learn about exciting, high-demand, well-paying careers in their area through hands-on career pathway projects,

business presentations/business tours, development of career success skills, and classroom instruction. The focus was on in-demand career pathways such as health care, trades, automotive, manufacturing, welding, or other sectors in which labor market indicators show a need for skilled workers. Camps provided training in employability skills, team building, leadership development, financial literacy, résumé writing, job application preparation, interviewing practice, CPR credential, and career exploration. After the Operation Exploration camp, based on individual needs, youth participated in a work-based learning experience, service-learning project, and/or credentialed training. View a video about Operation Exploration to learn more. [youtu.be/OjugEMsJadk](https://youtu.be/OjugEMsJadk)

### Legacy 2 Inspire

An innovative partnership with Legacy 2 Inspire, a nonprofit that focuses on teaching youth construction and metalworking skills via a mobile lab, provided a unique way to connect with youth through a mentorship model. Legacy 2 Inspire notes: "When youth and mentors come together and work side-by-side it creates a unique environment for learning, growth, and transformation. Shared experiences have an extraordinary power to unlock the potential in youth and foster personal growth. With the mobile workshop, we build relationships through the shared experience of building together." Legacy 2 Inspire's mentorship model is built around three core components: Connect, Build Trust, and Mentor.

### Youth with Disabilities

In 2024, 76% of participants served identified as having a disability. Recruiting is accomplished through targeted outreach to partner organizations that work directly with this population. Efforts are enhanced through a partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS). CMJTS is a limited-use vendor (LUV) to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services to youth with disabilities, ages 14-21, who are potentially eligible for VRS services. This provides an opportunity for youth to explore career and training options, gain work skills, and learn how to be successful after high school, including post-secondary education and/or competitive employment.

### Serving Youth of Color

CMJTS hosted a week-long interactive camp for Indigenous youth in the Mille Lacs Band Ojibwe Ge-Niigaanizijig program. Youth were provided hands-on experiences to gain exposure to careers with the featured trades: carpenters, cement masons, electricians, bricklayers, and operating construction trades, and learned about union apprenticeship training opportunities.





## OUTREACH TO SCHOOLS (OTS)

CMJTS partners with more than 70 organizations and/or schools throughout the 11-county region to provide career counseling services to youth and their families in areas such as labor market information, industries in demand, planning for post-secondary school/employment, career exploration and assessments, scheduled tours of CareerForce centers, colleges, and businesses, connections to community resources, and career success skills preparation.

In addition, staff are connected to the local Perkins Consortium and other local agencies/businesses to partner regularly on in-demand career pathways activities, including Construct Tomorrow, IGNITE, SCRUBS camps, and participation in EPIC. These career exploration events provide high school students with hands-on, interactive activities to better understand what it is like to do work associated with their career fields of interest. This past year, CMJTS served 6,592 youth and 433 families for a total of 7,025 through OTS efforts.

## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

Partnerships play a key role in the success of CMJTS' MYP program. Partners included local secondary schools and alternative learning centers, colleges/training vendors, county human/social service and public health agencies, court services/probation offices, private businesses, Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), CareerForce partners, Adult Basic Education, Perkins consortiums, Mille Lacs Band Ojibwe Ge-Niigaanizijig, Minneapolis Building and Construction Trades Council, Local 633 JATC Training Center, Minneapolis Electrical JATC, IBEW Local Union 292, IUOE Local 49, North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters, Fair Contracting Foundation of Minnesota, Legacy 2 Inspire, community action agencies, and other community-based organizations.

## COMMENTS

- “CMJTS shows their dedication by showing up to help and talk to kids. For me personally, CMJTS made a difference by taking the time to help me find my path to the future.”  
– YOUTH PARTICIPANT
- “This program is very impactful. Students who have attended come back with positive recommendations and feedback.” – TEACHER
- “You are all amazing, and so patient. Thank you for giving us this opportunity.” – YOUTH PARTICIPANT

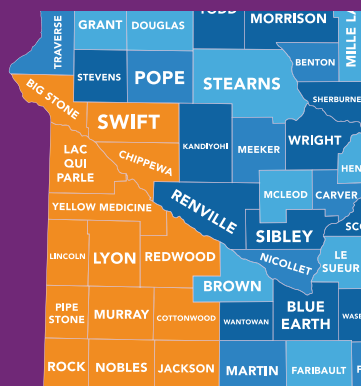
## SUCCESS STORY: Abdoulie

Abdoulie moved to the U.S. from his home country, Gambia, in Africa. He was struggling with his English and figuring out what path he wanted to take when entering the U.S. Abdoulie had no previous job history before enrolling with CMJTS. Abdoulie wanted to attend the health care camp and worked on career exploration activities because he was interested in the health care field but was undecided on which career pathway to take. He says: “I’m proud of taking the first steps towards achieving my



*dream of becoming a nurse. It’s been a journey of preparation and determination, and I’m excited to be starting my nursing course this August. This new chapter represents a significant commitment to my future career and personal growth. CMJTS has been an invaluable partner in my journey so far. They’ve provided crucial support in helping me navigate the process of enrolling in my nursing program. From offering guidance on career choices to providing resources and mentorship, CMJTS has been there every step of the way. They’ve helped me feel confident and prepared as I embark on this new adventure. My immediate next step is to begin my nursing course this August. I’m looking forward to gaining the foundational knowledge and skills necessary for a successful career in health care. After completing the course, I plan to gain hands-on experience through clinical placements and possibly internships. My long-term goal is to specialize in a particular area of nursing and continue advancing in the field. For anyone interested in nursing, I would say that preparation and passion are key. It’s important to do your research, find the right program, and be ready to commit to the hard work ahead. Don’t be afraid to reach out for support—organizations like CMJTS can provide invaluable resources and guidance. Most importantly, keep your passion for helping others at the forefront of everything you do. Thank you, CMJTS, for being a part of my journey and helping me move closer to my dreams!”* Abdoulie currently works at Spectralytics, A Cretex Medical Company, as a member of the production team making \$18/hour to support himself and gain work experience while he pursues his nursing degree.





# Southwest Minnesota

## Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council (PIC)

Maria Peters, Youth Program Manager

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Phone: 507-295-5020

[swmnpic.org](http://swmnpic.org)

*Counties served: Big Stone, Chippewa, Cottonwood, Jackson, Lac Qui Parle, Lincoln, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Rock, Swift, and Yellow Medicine*

## OVERVIEW

The Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council (PIC) is a private, nonprofit organization that offers customized training and employment services for individuals and businesses in a 14-county area of Southwest Minnesota. Services are facilitated through three CareerForce locations in Marshall, Montevideo, and Worthington. The Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council has been working to build and strengthen tomorrow's workforce since 1985!

Collaborating with employers and educators, the youth and youth adult division assists students and their families with career awareness and exploration activities, career preparation, transition and career advisory services, work-based learning opportunities, support services, employment opportunities, post-secondary scholarships, and career pathway skills training that align with the needs of local employers. Youth and young adults are provided with hands-on "real-life" experiences in the workplace. These experiences are prioritized and emphasized to aid in career preparation and to build a pipeline of future skilled workers in Southwest Minnesota.

PIC leverages other resources, such as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Youth at Work Competitive Grant Program, Youth Intervention Funds, and local funding from foundations, partners, and counties to complement and maximize services for youth. Co-enrolling individuals allows for efficiencies with financial resources and expanded services for participants.

## SERVING UNDER-REPRESENTED YOUTH IN THE WORKFORCE

Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council continues to partner with the Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU), Southwest West Central Service Cooperative, Southwest Adult Basic Education and Minnesota West Community and Technical College to jointly host a Major Madness event at SMSU in Marshall and Worthington. English Language Learners are able to learn about their options after high school through BIPOC professionals who share their experiences and advice. Students also hear from peers in college about admissions, financial aid, and the college/work experience.

Breaking Traditions has also been an endeavor focused on under-represented youth. In the past year, five different campuses of Minnesota West Community and Technical College hosted an event. These events were very interactive and hands on and highlight programs that lead to in-demand occupations. Highlighted programs included automotive, powerline, electrical, welding, plumbing and heating technology, and wind energy. Breaking Traditions was sponsored by Minnesota West Community and Technical College and the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council. Students from area alternative schools were recruited to attend.

Southwest Minnesota is very diverse, and the youth served reflect that with 68% of enrolled youth identifying as a person of color.

## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

As the impact of the work of the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council becomes more and more evident, more community partners join the effort. Some current partners include Southwest Minnesota State University, Southwest West Central Service Cooperative, Southwest Adult Basic Education, Minnesota West Community and Technical College, local high schools, and Area Learning Centers/alternative high schools, local employers, and community leaders.

## BEST PRACTICES

The Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council provides youth with a variety of work-based learning opportunities as well as career assessment and career exploration services. Youth are guided through the development of employability skills that will prepare them for unsubsidized employment. Youth Employment Specialists work with youth to assess their career interests, strengths and needs. Barriers are identified and addressed so that youth can continue receiving experiential and work-based learning opportunities, focusing on paid internships/work experiences. It is through these experiences that youth acquire not only the skills but also the hands-on experience that will lead to success in the workplace. Other services that youth receive include business and college program tours, guest speakers from various occupations, career exploration events, job shadows, and mock interviews.

Youth have opportunities to learn basic skills and competencies for success in employment through placement into entry level paid work experiences. Some of the basic skills and competencies that they gain are:

- Learning what employers expect and how to meet those expectations;
- Trying different jobs to find the best fit as well as likes and dislikes; and
- Providing youth exposure to work, careers, and a professional network.

In addition, work-based learning supports a broader pipeline of workers by connecting businesses to a pool of underrepresented populations, benefiting all those involved.

## CUSTOMER COMMENTS

- “You made a big impact on me by looking hard for me to work at a shop. You made my happiness go up. I finally have a job that I love.” - *PARTICIPANT*
- “The PIC helped me get a job I really enjoyed and looked forward to working every day.” - *PARTICIPANT*
- “I learned something new and got to meet new people.” - *PARTICIPANT*
- “I got to learn a lot of new tips and new roles in life.” - *PARTICIPANT*

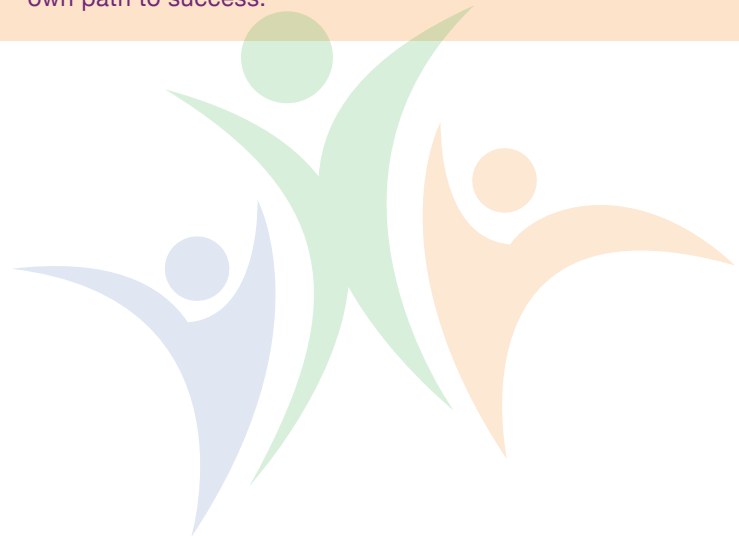


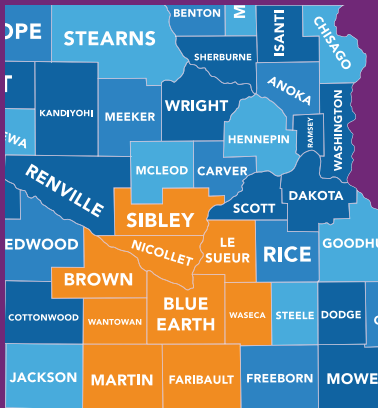
## SUCCESS STORY: Lizbeth

Lizbeth wasn't your typical candidate for welding training. A young mom at 19, her most recent experience came from waiting tables at her family's business. But Lizbeth, a senior at Worthington Learning Center, had the determination to build a better life for herself and her three-year-old son. That's where the Southwest Minnesota Private



Industry Council (PIC) through their Minnesota Youth Program (MYP) and Youth at Work programs stepped in. Lizbeth saw an opportunity, and with PIC's guidance, she enrolled in a welding program. The program wasn't easy. It meant juggling motherhood with the demands of learning a new skill. But Lizbeth persevered, earning six college credits – three in welding and three in blueprint reading. Lizbeth's journey is more than just acquiring a skill; it's about resilience and strength. As she puts it, “At 19, welding is more than just joining metals – it's a study in strength and precision. As I master this craft, I'm not only building structures but also constructing a resilient future, providing that determination and skill can forge the path to success.” Lizbeth's story doesn't end there. With her newfound skills and a hunger for more, she's set to enroll at Minnesota West Community College to pursue an HVAC career. Lizbeth's journey is an inspiration, a testament to the power of determination and the support offered by the PIC and its programs. She's not just welding metal; she's welding a future filled with opportunity, proving that with the right tools and unwavering spirit, anyone can forge their own path to success.





# South Central Minnesota

## South Central Workforce Council/ Minnesota Valley Action Council

Heather Gleason, Executive Director

706 North Victory Drive Mankato, MN 56001

Phone: (507) 345-2418

[workforcecouncil.org](http://workforcecouncil.org)

*Counties served: Blue Earth, Brown, Faribault, Le Sueur, Martin, Nicollet, Sibley, Waseca, and Watonwan*

## OVERVIEW

Minnesota Valley Action Council (MVAC) provides comprehensive services that prepare youth for the world of work including career exploration/planning, labor market information on demand occupations, job-seeking and job-keeping skills, financial literacy and work experience opportunities. Based on assessment results, youth are placed in worksites that fit their career interests and whenever possible at private sector sites where there is a greater opportunity for youth to get hired. Financial fitness training requires youth to open a savings account to direct deposit the paycheck and workshops teach them about money management, saving money and building assets.

South Central leveraged additional funding to complement and maximize services to target populations including BIPOC youth, youth transitioning out of the foster care system, youth with disabilities, teen parents and youth in public assistance households as well as career services to high school students. Funding sources include Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Youth At Work Competitive Grant, Youth Intervention Program Grant, Youth Support Services, TANF Youth Grant, Rural Career Counseling Coordinator and funding from local partners to support career exploration events. [Careers that Pay: Jasmine's Story video](#) features how young adult programming successfully assist Jasmine on her career journey.

## BEST PRACTICES/SERVING BIPOC YOUTH

The "Dream It. Believe It. Achieve It." Program targets services to BIPOC youth. With input from youth participants, parents and representatives from agencies that serve communities of color, key strategies have been successful in reaching BIPOC youth. To recognize the strong family connection for BIPOC youth, parents are invited to participate in the initial meetings for program enrollment as well as the group activities. To increase cultural awareness in the community, worksite supervisors participate in cultural awareness training. The program provides positive role models from the BIPOC community that have overcome adversity to demonstrate that it is possible to achieve their dreams. A networking event for youth connects them with adults working in career fields of interest, helping them to expand their professional network. This program was recognized as a best practice by the Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards.

## VIRTUAL SERVICES

Both virtual and in-person methods effectively support youth with career exploration, counseling, and work readiness services. Get Started is a four-week online course that covers essential topics such as effective workplace communication, budgeting, the impact of health and wellness on employment, and available local community resources. Participants earn a \$50 stipend for each week of completed assignments, totaling up to \$200 over the course. Besides these topics, the Get Started course also helps youth develop technology skills, reliability, time management, and self-confidence.

Skills for Success offers classroom presentations to high school students on a range of subjects, including career assessments, planning and exploration, labor market information, job search strategies, work readiness, post-secondary planning, and financial literacy. Additionally, the [Skills for Success video series](#) provides local school districts with three videos covering Skills, Interviewing, and Maintaining Employment, supplementing the in-person presentations.

[Career Passport videos](#) offer students a chance to explore local career opportunities from a student's perspective. In these videos, local students interview local businesses to discover rewarding career paths in their area. The resulting short reels and videos will be shared with other youth and parents via youth counselors, educational partners, and social media.

## CAREER EVENTS

A variety of career exploration events featured in-demand occupations in key industries in the area. Over 400 students from 20 area high schools participated in the Tour of Manufacturing where local manufacturers opened their doors for tours and provided information on career opportunities at their business. About 600 students from 28 area high schools attended the Construct Tomorrow event, an interactive career fair that provides hands on experiences in each of the construction trades to expose students to union apprenticeship opportunities. The South Central Construction Trades Boot Camp offers students an opportunity to further explore different construction trades through interactive hands-on learning projects each session. This year, the camp introduced a new model by offering sessions on early release days and was acknowledged as the first place promising practice by the Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards. Around 60

students participated in a three-day SCRUBS Camp which offered an opportunity for students to explore health science professions through hands on activities.

## PARTNERS IN CAREER EXPLORATION (PICE)

PICE is a partnership between workforce development and education that places interns in local rural schools districts to provide one-on-one career exploration and career counseling assistance to high school students. The interns are first year graduate students in the Student Counseling Program at Minnesota State University-Mankato. Interns receive training about CareerForce partners and their services along with labor market information on high growth/demand occupations in the region.

The interns meet with every high school junior and senior enabling them to reach students that are not proactive about their plans after high school and would otherwise go unnoticed and fall through the cracks. The interns also provide career exploration activities for younger grade levels so that they can begin to consider their plans after high school. This program was recognized as a best practice by the Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards.

## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO LABOR MARKET INFOGRAPHICS

South Central and Southwest Minnesota identified a great need to provide labor market information to students, parents and school counselors to create awareness of career opportunities in high-growth, in-demand occupations. The launch of the labor market and social media campaign “Know Before You Go” shares infographics on education and wage range by education level, annual tuition increases, cost of a degree, and demand jobs in the region. Industry specific infographics are available in health care, manufacturing, information technology, agriculture, transportation, construction, business and education. The infographics feature a variety of occupations in each industry and compare education, important qualities, job description, employment opportunities, work environment and career paths at every education level. The infographics are also available in Spanish. A monthly [Career Corner](#) newsletter shared with school districts highlights the infographics and in-demand industries.

## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

Collaborative partners include: local school districts, Minnesota State University-Mankato (Education Talent Search and Student Counseling Department), South Central College (Financial Aid Outreach and Secondary Relations), South Central Service Cooperative, CareerForce Location Partnering Agencies (Job Service, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Minnesota Valley Action Council, and the DEED Regional Labor Market Analyst).

## CUSTOMER COMMENTS

- “This program allowed me to get more comfortable with the process of employment. I feel as if I have gained a lot of experience.” – *YOUTH PARTICIPANT*
- “My youth counselor is very supportive and helpful in finding the resources I need to be a successful man and I’m very thankful.” – *YOUTH PARTICIPANT*
- “I’m super impressed with the engaging staff from the trades. They make the session fun and full of energy while being supportive and encouraging to students.” – *EDUCATOR THROUGH CONSTRUCTION TRADES BOOTCAMP*
- “I learned that resumes can be an important thing that can determine whether you get a job over someone else.” – *STUDENT THROUGH OUTREACH TO SCHOOLS*
- “I learned that soft skills are actually really important.” – *STUDENT THROUGH OUTREACH TO SCHOOLS*



## SUCCESS STORY: Mayra

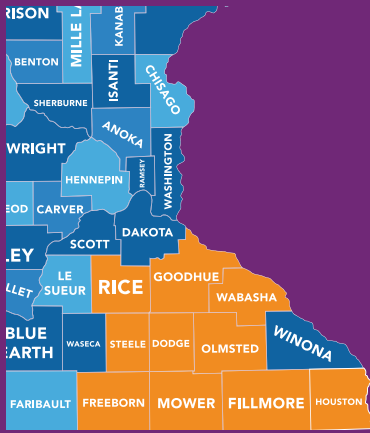
Mayra was determined to be self-sufficient. She found her own apartment, found daycare, attended high school, all while raising an infant as a first-time single mom. She completed two work experiences within the Youth Program, first as a cashier at a local gas station, and next as a residential assistant at an assisted living facility. Mayra was unsure if she would like the assisted living work, but she continued to go to work and learn new skills. She gained confidence in herself as a residential assistant. Mayra was also able to obtain her Personal Care Assistant certification, adding a new skill on her resume.



Mayra gained her driving permit and soon successfully obtained her Minnesota driver’s license. While working, attending high school, and raising her child, Mayra started focusing on training to obtain the Nursing Assistant Certification. She completed training, passed her exams to become a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), and was hired at a different facility as a CNA. Mayra is now working at a long-term care facility close to her home that supports her needs by allowing her an on-call schedule. Most recently, Mayra was recognized as employee of the month for her continued contribution to serving elderly residents with care.

She continues to regularly attend high school, and enjoys school, learning, and being actively involved. Mayra will graduate June 2025 with her high school diploma. She has expressed interest in post-secondary education for a career in nursing. Mayra has worked hard to get where she is today and was recognized as MVAC’s Sibley County Achiever this year.





# Southeast Minnesota

## Workforce Development, Inc.

Jinny Rietmann, Director

2070 College View Rd E, Rochester, MN 55904

Phone: (507) 292-5152

[workforcedevelopmentinc.org](http://workforcedevelopmentinc.org)

Counties served: Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, and Wabasha

## OVERVIEW

Workforce Development, Inc. (WDI) is a private, nonprofit organization providing employment and training services to youth and young adults in 10 counties of Southeastern Minnesota. These services include extensive career counseling, work skills development, career pathways programming, preparation for employment, and hands-on work experiences. Assessments and plan development are completed with participants to identify interests, aptitudes and education and work goals. Work experiences and career pathways are designed based on these interests and skills. Employers provide mentoring, worksite supervision, and cultural competency training to help youth while they are learning on the job. Counselors, youth and young adults, parents, other youth-serving community organizations and employers work together to ensure a successful work experience and career pathway. Educational goals of completing high school, obtaining a GED or pursuing post-secondary education are also included within an Individual Service Strategy for each youth, and these education goals are braided in their career pathways programming.

## BEST PRACTICES

Career Pathways opportunities are the heart of WDI's youth and young adult programming. Several Career Pathways training programs are currently available through WDI, focused on the key sectors in the region including construction trades, manufacturing, public sector and health care. The construction and trades sector provides short-term trainings in partnership with local unions where individuals are often moved directly into a union apprenticeship program. Once hired by a union contractor, clients sign with the union and are enrolled into the apprenticeship program. WDI seeks applicants from underserved populations for these programs, including people of color, women, and those previously incarcerated.

Bridges to Healthcare is a nationally recognized program and serves a bridge to college and in-demand healthcare careers. Young adults who are underprepared for college complete a prep course to help prepare them to be successful in college. Current pathways in this program lead to careers as Nursing Assistants, Administrative Clinic Assistants and Health Unit Coordinators. Once these programs are completed, students can continue down the pathway into other health care careers. This model has provided a critical pipeline of workers into the largest demand industries in the region. In some cases, clients who participate in this program are co-enrolled in WIOA Youth and MYP programs.

55% of the Bridges to Healthcare program students are people of color and represent speakers of 22 languages.

WDI has been involved with various experiential learning programs throughout Southeast Minnesota. In Houston and Fillmore counties, a multi-school/employer collaboration among seven school districts has developed work-based learning opportunities that mirror one another to offer similar ways to connect for employers. In Mower and Freeborn counties, a dedicated Southeast Asian Outreach Specialist helps youth ages 18 and older with career navigation, college supports and a variety of employer connections.

This past summer, a cohort of youth participated in a summer Youthbuild work experience program. In addition to learning basic construction skills, they also built positive relationships with each other and gave back to the community through their work. Youth also participated in intensive life skills and employment training including essential skills and financial literacy.

A group of youth interested in biomedical research science participated in a summer internship at the Hormel Institute. They performed basic laboratory experiments and shadowed laboratory staff. Youth participating in the internship were part of a program at a local high school that serves a diverse student population. The program comprehensively addresses educational disparities, economic hardships and language barrier by providing crucial support for students to overcome obstacles that may hinder their academic achievement, graduation, and career readiness. This support includes academic planning and assistance, social-emotional support, family support services, and facilitating connections to community resources.

## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

In youth programming, the most success is achieved through collaboration with several agencies and partners. A few of the strong partnerships are those within education: high school principals, counselors and teachers, adult basic education, and community college systems. Those within various nonprofit and government agencies are also strong partners: social workers, mental health providers, probation officers, and youth workers within organizations such as the Empowerment Center, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Community Corrections, United Way, Homeless Coalitions, Somalia Rebuild, Red Wing Youth Outreach, the Rochester Link program and the Rochester Boys and Girls Club.



The input and participation of youth is valued in all aspects of programming as well. Some of the most important partners are employers, providing real-life work experiences and funding for career pathways programming, including key stakeholders such as Mayo Clinic, Habitat ReStore and local trades union partners. A wide variety of funding streams support WDI programs, and all of these are vital to help maintain consistent programming. MYP funds are often braided into co-enrollments with other programs to better serve youth, including Adult Career Pathways, Youth Support Services, Youth at Work, Youth Intervention Program, Community Crime Intervention Program, TANF, Youthbuild and WIOA. Without the availability of co-enrollment with multiple funding sources, opportunities for youth would be greatly diminished. Being able to diversify services allows the youth staff to implement more thorough programming, thus providing more benefit to local youth.

## SERVING YOUTH OF COLOR

WDI has advanced in developing partnerships and coming together with other community organizations to develop a collaborative youth programming model for Southeast Minnesota. WDI currently employs multiple individuals who provide targeted outreach and programming to underrepresented individuals in their specific communities. WDI continues to make gains in tackling equity in employment for youth of color.

## OUTREACH TO SCHOOLS

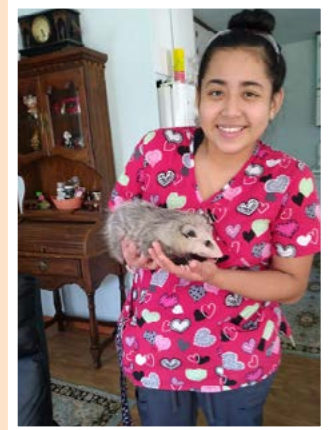
Career Planners work closely with schools, providing information to administrators, teachers and students on the services available through youth programming. WDI staff have regular hours at the schools throughout the 43 districts in the region. Working with school counselors and reaching students through class presentations allows students easy access to employment and education opportunities. Youth Career Planners also give group presentations at career-focused school events. Topics include career assessments, teaching essential employment skills, job search techniques, resume writing, interview skills and financial literacy.

## CUSTOMER COMMENTS

- “Working with WDI helped me open up and made me feel free to say whatever I wanted without being judged. The kids I worked with were really nice too.”  
– YOUTH PARTICIPANT
- “This program marked the beginning of my dream to be a biologist. Without this I wouldn’t have gained this experience and background knowledge that could help me in my future.” – YOUTH PARTICIPANT
- “I’m so appreciative of this program. It restored my confidence in myself and gave me something a lot of peers already had (driver’s license) but something that was inaccessible to me until now.” – YOUTH PARTICIPANT

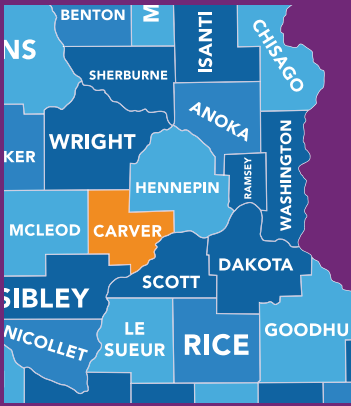
## SUCCESS STORY: Wendy

Wendy was referred to WDI by her Academic Skills/ELL teacher for career guidance and training exploration. Four years prior, she had come to the United States with her family and did not speak any English. She learned the language on her own, enrolled in her junior year of high school at the age of 19 and completed high school a year later at the age of 20 in May of 2022. She also started working at a local care center and obtained her driver’s permit.



After she graduated high school, she completed her nursing assistant training and testing and moved into a nursing assistant position with her employer. She wanted to continue her education either in nursing or phlebotomy. Through completing career interest inventory, reading assessments, and researching career and training options, Wendy determined she wanted to pursue phlebotomy. She was referred to the local Adult Basic Education (ABE) program to complete a Phlebotomy Prep course. She scored at the 12th grade reading level on her assessment which showed how hard she worked on learning English over the past few years. While she was in the prep course, she began working on the Mayo School of Health Sciences Phlebotomy Program application and essay. During this time, she also obtained her driver’s license, earned her CPR/BLS certificate and completed the NorthStar Digital Literacy training. She was accepted into the Phlebotomy Program and began the 9-week training in June 2023. By the beginning of August Wendy had completed the program requirements and exams, earning her NHA Certified Phlebotomy Technician certification and her Mayo Clinic School of Health Science Phlebotomy Program Diploma. Wendy applied and was hired at Mayo Clinic in September of 2023 as a Certified Phlebotomy Technician making \$19.30 per hour. She also maintained her part time position as a Certified Nursing Assistant. Wendy is so resilient, always pushing herself to learn more and accomplish her goals. She is already planning to pursue training to become a Licensed Practical Nurse in 2025.





# Carver County

## Carver County Health & Human Services

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Area served: Carver County

## OVERVIEW

CareerForce in Chaska in Carver County serves youth ages 14-24 utilizing funds from both the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the Minnesota Youth Program (MYP).

The Summer Youth Program (SYP) offered by Carver County is a 10-week work experience allowing students to test their interests, gain work experience, and earn a paycheck. Students can work up to a maximum of 25 hours per week during the summer and up to 15 hours per week during the school year. Throughout the program youth are evaluated twice to help them know where they are excelling and where they have opportunity for improvement before entering the unsubsidized employment.

Youth are introduced to career exploration by completing O-Net's mynextmove.org assessment. This assessment is based on interest categories developed by John Holland. The website provides a job interest report based on their assessment results, so youth have this information before starting their work experience. The intention of this assessment is to get the youth thinking about future career opportunities, and the training and education that may be needed to support their field of interest.

In 2024, program staff worked with the Carver County Employee Relations department to implement formal onboarding for youth. Employee Relations staff and the Youth Employment Counselor held sessions in May to complete onboarding paperwork and required training modules in the CareerForce center prior to youth interviewing with work-sites. This was a great addition to programming as it is a preview to the formal onboarding process in the world of work.

Youth are encouraged to connect with CareerForce in Chaska to receive guidance from an Employment Counselor on building or enhancing a resume, interviewing techniques, assistance with job search and how to access training and support services.

## BEST PRACTICES/COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

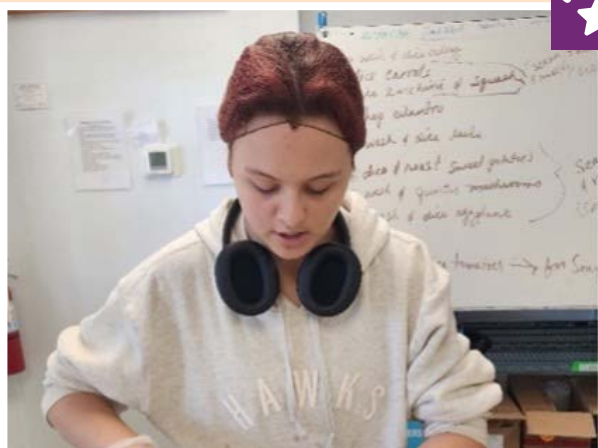
Carver County collaborates with Southwest Metro Co-op for Youth Build, The Forge, Auburn Manor, Chaska Heights Senior Living, Chanhassen Library, Chaska Library, Country Inn & Suites, Carver County Historical Society, Trending Upward Thrift Shoppe, Unite Lodge (Humanity Alliance), Positive Presence, and CareerForce in Chaska and many of these sites participated in the SYP this year. Worksites selected provide a genuine work experience for youth and the worksite supervisors exhibit patience and create a safe and supportive environment. Worksite supervisors coach and teach youth skills needed to demonstrate appropriate work behavior, provide information about accountability, and offer valuable feedback during evaluations to help prepare youth for future employment and life. In addition, the Youth Build worksite also provides the opportunity for youth to earn academic credit while they learn valuable skills in the construction trade.

For the SYP, Carver County braided MYP funding with WIOA youth funding and all participants were co-enrolled, if eligible, into both programs to maximize resources available to them.

## SERVING YOUTH OF COLOR AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

Carver County tries to recruit as many eligible youth for the SYP as possible. This year 29 youth were enrolled, with most being from traditionally under-represented communities in the workforce. Twenty-four out of the 29 youth enrolled experience a disability while 17 are youth of color. If deemed ineligible for programming, the county makes every effort to offer youth additional resources and referrals to ensure their success.

Carver County and its partners are committed to creating an integrated system that ensures equity, cultural appropriateness, and that the services provided have a positive impact on the lives of the youth served. School counselors, teachers, vocational rehabilitation counselors, DEED staff, Health and Human Services case managers, and corrections have all shared that the SYP is a valuable opportunity to provide necessary skills youth need in the workplace.



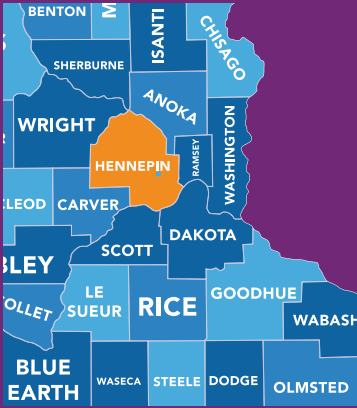
## SUCCESS STORY: **Nox**

Nox, age 14, was referred to the SYP by Unite Lodge (aka Humanity Alliance). Unite Lodge, a local 501(c)(3) nonprofit, delivers a variety of healthy and flavorful meals to people living in and around their nine-county service area who need extra support and a lifestyle change. Their mission is to bring communities together and feed people with love and dignity.

This is Nox’s first year in the Summer Youth Program and first year working with Unite Lodge although Nox has volunteered at Unite Lodge in the past. He has led groups as large as 20 people through various tasks which include processing and packaging meals. He also prints labels for the meals which can be a very complex task with special dietary descriptions and unique labels noting allergy restrictions. Nox does a great job keeping the space organized and clean and works hard to keep up with the amount of food coming and going. Nox is mindful of following food safety guidelines when storing large amounts of food. He also does an excellent job sorting meals to the correct hubs and preparing them to be picked up and delivered to other hubs.

Nox really enjoys working with the volunteers at Unite Lodge, *“I love working with volunteers, I get to meet tons of new people and learn about them.”* Nox mentioned how he has grown in the role, *“when I first started working, I didn’t have a lot of confidence in my work and was constantly checking with my supervisor. Now, after a couple of months on the job, I am able to confidently complete tasks on my own.”* Nox also mentioned the cleaning tasks of the job and learning about food safety have inspired him to possibly be a food inspector. In fact, Nox plans to be food safety certified in the future. His secondary career goal is to be a kitchen manager.





# Hennepin County

## Hennepin-Carver Workforce Development Area

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Hennepin-Carver Workforce Development Board

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*Area served: Hennepin County (excluding the City of Minneapolis)*

## OVERVIEW

The Hennepin County Summer Youth Employment and Training Program funded through the Minnesota Youth Program (MYP) offers critical work experience opportunities to low income and at-risk suburban youth ages 14 to 24. The goal is to invest in young people who are the most likely to face threats to long-term economic success and connect them with experiences at a critical period in their lives. The Hennepin County Summer Youth Employment and Training program continues to address the needs of participants and the diversity of challenges they face by integrating social and emotional learning, work readiness training, community engagement, career pathway exposure, immediate earnings from structured well-supervised work, and opportunities to earn academic credit or service-learning credit. The work done by program providers addresses racial disparities in employment and income and opens up new opportunities to a new generation of skilled workers in a wide range of industries. Hennepin County subcontracts with Tree Trust, BrookLynk, and Ka Joog as MYP providers to ensure that youth receive early exposure to experiential employment, culturally responsive services, and key supports that pave the way for future success in the workplace.

### BrookLynk

BrookLynk provides work readiness training and paid work experiences to youth and young adults ages 14-24 who live and/or attend school in Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center, or surrounding suburbs and face barriers to employment. BrookLynk's summer internships are offered for 6-10 weeks in June to August and introduce youth to a variety of professional career opportunities across industries and sectors such as education, government, health care, human services/non-profit organizations and more. Participants also receive ongoing employment skills training, one-on-one job coaching, and networking opportunities through the BrookLynk Alumni Network. In 2024, 96 youth were matched to summer internships.

### Ka Joog

Ka Joog provides culturally responsive, personalized workforce development opportunities for East African youth in Minnesota, equipping them with marketable skills, certifications, and credentials aligned with employer demands in high-growth industries. Through various assessment tools and individualized case management, the program helps young people identify their career interest and establish long-term goals. Ka Joog connects participants to internship placements

that align with their skills and aspirations. Career Specialists work closely with participants to review current internship opportunities and forge new partnerships with businesses and organizations to match the unique career goals of each individual. They also leverage strong relationships with schools and offer programs that provide training and internships, particularly in technology-driven fields.

### Tree Trust

Tree Trust's mission is to transform lives and landscapes by engaging people to build skills for meaningful careers, inspiring people to plant trees, and making the community a greener, healthier place to live. Tree Trust provides a distinctive Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) that offers paid, hands-on work opportunities for youth ages 14-21 who face barriers to employment. SYEP runs for nine weeks from June to August and provides entry-level work experience and employment training in a supportive team environment. In 2024, 26 Hennepin County MYP-funded youth participated in this unique program.

## BEST PRACTICES

**Program Design** – Many young people in Hennepin County face barriers to employment and self-sufficiency. These barriers may result from systemic or generational poverty, systemic racism, lack of effective education, uncertain childcare, homelessness, transportation obstacles, chemical dependency, justice involvement, or mental health concerns. By offering hands-on employment training, Tree Trust provides an opportunity for young people to develop practical life skills in a safe, supportive context. The projects provide an alternative learning option for youth who may struggle in traditional classroom settings. Ka Joog Nonprofit Organization brings their valuable cultural understanding of East African youth to Hennepin County's program. They also bring relationships with schools and programming that provides training and internships in technology-based industries.

**Community Collaboration** – Hennepin County's program providers have a collaborative model of work– with each other, with community partners, and with the people served. Tree Trust has deep-rooted partnerships with organizations throughout the Twin Cities that provide SYEP participants with valuable resources. In Hennepin County, these partnerships include Karen Organization of Minnesota, Interfaith Outreach & Community Partners, Bridge for Youth, 180 Degrees, CAPI USA, Minneapolis Community & Technical College,



BlueSky Online School, Robbinsdale Armstrong High School, Robbinsdale Virtual Academy, Richfield High School, John F. Kennedy High School, Jefferson High School, SouthWest Metro Intermediate District 288, and Transitional Education Service Alternative Program. Tree Trust collaborates with these partners for program referrals, participant support services, and employment opportunities.

### Employer Engagement and Supervisor Training –

Recognizing the incredible contribution and perspective of the youth who participate enhances the internship experience. BrookLynk provides supervisor training that focuses on mentoring youth, cultural competencies and implicit bias training. Employers for BrookLynk commit to paying 100% of the youth wages and demonstrate a proven commitment to the community and workforce development. In SFY2024, BrookLynk has continued to foster these important employer relationships and develop more opportunities for the youth they serve. Ka Joog is a leader in the space of employer engagement. In 2024, 25 participants successfully completed their internships with local employers, including but not limited to: Bright Star Autism, Hilltop Market, Avis Rental Car, Superior Home Care Inc, First Child Daycare, East African Immigrant Services, Moonlight Day Care Center, and the Confederation of Somali Community in Minnesota.

**Training and Certifications –** Tree Trust’s SYEP participants have the potential to earn a Tree Trust Certificate. Participants learn about tool identification, safety, environmental stewardship, budgeting, career exploration, resume building, and interviewing. These skills act as building blocks for future careers such as Tree Trimmers, Landscapers, City Park Professionals, Carpenters, and Project Managers. In 2024, all 26 Hennepin County MYP participants earned a Tree Trust Certificate. Ka Joog provides training opportunities for youth participants engaged in their internship program. Trainings are provided to participants after an initial interest assessment is administered. In 2024, the following trainings were offered to all participants, with 69 youth completing the training programs: Foundations of Digital Work, Entrepreneurship in the Digital Space, and Leadership and Career Development.

## SERVING UNDERREPRESENTED YOUTH

Recruitment is focused on areas of racial and/or economic disparity. Tree Trust fosters relationships with educational partners, libraries, youth outreach centers, and culturally specific organizations to engage underrepresented youth. Crew leaders receive diversity, equity, and inclusion training to enhance staff knowledge and awareness and create safe environments. Many SYEP participants identified as BIPOC, from low-income households, or had a diagnosed disability. Ka Joog’s deep-rooted connections within the East African community enhance the availability of culturally responsive services for youth. These young individuals benefit from mentorship and skill development opportunities with staff and leaders who share their lived experiences, ensuring a more meaningful and effective workforce development journey.

## LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The 2024 Tree Trust SYEP participants’ accomplishments and leadership were recognized at the Summer Youth Employment Celebration in August. Participants, parents/guardians, community partners, and Tree Trust staff gathered to celebrate how the participants beautified the local community while building skills for meaningful careers. A total of 92 participants received Perfect Attendance Awards, and participants who excelled in leadership won the Governor’s Award, Founder’s Award for Outstanding Personal Growth, and Founder’s Award for Leadership.

### SUCCESS STORY:

## Sanang

Sanang learned trade skills by building a timber staircase at Girard Lake Park in Bloomington during the 2024 Tree Trust Summer Youth Employment Program. He acquired transferable skills, including the importance of doing a job with precision, learning how to overcome problems and working as part of a team. He also learned persistence while performing the difficult job of removing buckthorn, an invasive species that harms native plants. Sanang shared, *“My favorite thing was pulling up the buckthorn. It was a satisfying process. I like hearing the snap or crackle as you pull it, especially when it rains because it’s easy to pull it.”* Sanang earned a Tree Trust Certificate which documented his education of tool identification, worksite safety, environmental stewardship, budgeting, career exploration, resume building, and interviewing. Tree Trust recognized Sanang’s commitment to exemplifying reliability and responsibility by honoring him with a Perfect Attendance Award.



### SUCCESS STORY:

## Nadira

Nadira writes: *“I first learned about the Minnesota Youth Program through a friend, whose aunt works with the Ka Joog organization. After hearing so much about the program, I was excited to join. Initially, I had set my sights on learning more about entrepreneurship. However, as I progressed through the course, I discovered a variety of skill areas and entrepreneurial paths that piqued my interest, motivating me to dive deeper into learning. One area that particularly captured my attention was photography. I’ve since been honing my skills and have plans to turn my newfound passion into a profitable venture. I also had the opportunity to intern at Bright Star Autism Center. I thoroughly enjoyed my time there, and this internship allowed me to gain valuable experience, particularly in communication and understanding workplace dynamics. I’m incredibly grateful for the training and internship opportunities provided by the Minnesota Youth Program and Ka Joog. These experiences have helped shape my personal and professional growth, and I highly recommend that others take advantage of the opportunities they offer in collaboration with Hennepin County.”*







# City of Minneapolis

## Minneapolis Employment and Training

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Area served: City of Minneapolis

## OVERVIEW

The City of Minneapolis Step Up program prepares today's youth for tomorrow's careers by recruiting, preparing, and placing young people (ages 14- 21) in paid work and training experiences. This year, 1,220 young people worked with 96 employers representing small businesses, Fortune 500 companies, public agencies, and nonprofits. As one of the region's leading youth employment programs, Step Up leverages a collective of 200 partners spanning 15 industries and multiple sectors. It's a backbone of support that unites businesses, schools, community-based organizations, and the city together in a common goal: to build and strengthen our future economy and the talented youth who will power it.

Step Up supports historically underrepresented youth in Minneapolis who are ready to navigate the professional world. The program helps organizations diversify their workforce and build a base of young skilled workers for the entire region. Step Up has provided over 31,000 internships since 2003, building a competitive talent pipeline and supporting a stronger economy.

Building a highly skilled and diverse workforce starts with programs like Step Up supporting youth by providing access to quality education, training and work experiences. Ninety-two percent of Step Up interns are people of color, and 51 percent come from immigrant families who bring a wealth of language and cultural diversity to the workforce and community.

## BEST PRACTICES

**Work Readiness:** All Step Up interns complete work readiness training in the spring which prepares them to have a successful work experience in a professional setting. Pre-internship training is offered fully online and youth can complete it when their busy schedules allow. The curriculum has been developed to be engaging, accessible, and relevant. Of the 2,575 youth invited to training, 2,010 (78%) completed orientation, and 1,455 completed all training required to be prepared for a paid summer experience.

**Career Exploration and Industry Exposure:** Step Up training includes modules that allow youth to explore a variety of careers that help them determine which industries and job types they want to pursue during their summer experience and beyond. Many youth in Step Up gravitate toward the careers they see in

daily life including health care, education, and STEM. Step Up helps youth learn about some of the career options they may not be considering such as arts, transportation, green/outdoor occupations, public safety, and finance.

After youth learn about and explore career options – including the short-term and long-term industry outlooks, wages, and education required — they select their internship preferences. Their internship helps them gain practical experience and learn what it may be like to work in that career field.

## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

Step Up is a collective of partners — a backbone of support that joins the City of Minneapolis, nonprofits, businesses, corporations, schools and students, and their families together in a common goal: to prepare today's youth for tomorrow's careers and build a strong regional economy. Directed by the City of Minneapolis, Step Up wouldn't be possible without the support of several important community partners, including Achieve Twin Cities, Project for Pride in Living, and CareerForce in Minneapolis.

## SERVING UNDERREPRESENTED YOUTH

Step Up extensively recruits youth in all the large high schools in Minneapolis. The team also recruits in several charter and alternative schools to reach more underrepresented youth. Additionally, staff does robust outreach to community-based partners and parks to share resources to help youth apply to the program.

## FEEDBACK FROM EMPLOYERS AND INTERNS

Feedback from stakeholders, particularly interns and employers, is essential for Step Up to understand what's working and what innovations or improvements may be required to continue to provide a top-quality experience to youth and the community.

Each year, Step Up surveys interns and supervisors about their experience with the program. This year, 94% of supervisors reported that their Step Up intern made a valuable contribution to their workplace, and 87% reported that their experience as a Step Up supervisor allowed them to develop a meaningful

relationship with a young person. In addition to satisfaction with the program and the matches made at their businesses, supervisors were asked what they most enjoyed about their participation with Step Up. Most supervisors said their experience helped them feel more prepared to work with the young people.

### SAMPLE COMMENTS FROM SUPERVISORS IN RESPONSE TO WHAT THEY MOST ENJOYED ABOUT BEING A STEP UP SUPERVISOR:

- “Seeing the young people grow and get more comfortable.”
- “Listening to the goals of my interns and pushing them to be introduced to work that is challenging.”
- “Watching the interns grow in confidence in the working environment.”
- “I enjoyed seeing how different all the interns were, but they all got along.”

Overall, Step Up interns rated their experience 4.3 out of 5 stars! In addition, 84% of interns also stated that they learned a lot from their experience, and 78% said they feel prepared to succeed in future jobs.

### SAMPLE COMMENTS FROM INTERNS WHEN ASKED WHAT THEY ENJOYED ABOUT THEIR STEP UP EXPERIENCE:

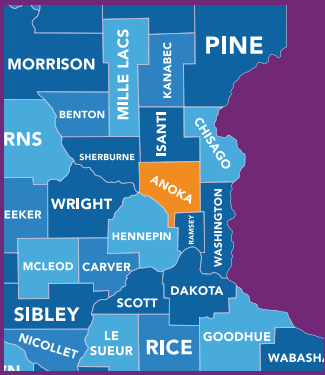
- “The people that were around me were amazing and super fun to talk to, and the supervisors support you a lot.”
- “I liked working at an organization where I felt welcome and is very diverse.”
- “Getting that check, yes ma’am! Getting to explore new things and learn each day.”
- “My favorite part was getting to know people and hear how they got into the workforce.”



## SUCCESS STORY: Emaleah

Emaleah is a rising sophomore at Southwest High School in Minneapolis. She applied for Step Up for the first time in 2024. She didn't know what to expect but had heard from friends that Step Up was a good way to get a first job experience and earn money. On her application, she commented, *“I hope that I'll be able to better my skills with other people and skills in life so that when I'm older and looking for my dream job, I'll be ready for it.”* She said she preferred to work in a customer service environment. The Step Up team matched her with an internship at the Sisterhood Boutique with Pillsbury United Communities. The Boutique is located in the heart of the East African community in Minneapolis and caters to young women seeking East African clothing and fashion. The Boutique also promotes and sells items from local entrepreneurs. Emaleah's job was to assist in the shop. Her supervisor was really impressed with Emaleah's work and nominated her for Intern of the Year. She said that Emaleah was extremely creative and focused on achieving her goals. But more than that, she was able to bring the interns at the worksite together. She noted, *“Before Emaleah started no one talked to each other besides work conversations. After she came, she made a lot of friends and made everyone else feel more comfortable.”*





# Anoka County

## Anoka County Job Training Center

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 Area served: Anoka County

### OVERVIEW

Anoka County Job Training Center's Empowers Program provides year-round services to eligible at-risk youth in Anoka County ages 14-24. Anoka County leverages and braids funding from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Minnesota Youth Program (MYP), Youth at Work, TANF Innovations, Pre-Employment Training Services with VRS (Pre-ETS), Pathways to Prosperity, Drive for 5, and federal financial aid resources to serve youth. Local Anoka County Community Action Funds assist with support services such as transportation through a program called Transportation Solutions. A variety of career services are provided including assessments and goal setting, assistance with completing high school/GED and/or obtaining an in-demand industry-recognized credential, career counseling, postsecondary planning, placement in work experiences/internships, financial literacy, job search and/or job placement assistance and follow-up services.

### BEST PRACTICES

Empowers utilizes a hybrid service delivery model, offering both in-person and virtual services.

**CNA partnership with Fridley High School:** The Empowers Program partners with Fridley High School (FHS) Leadership staff and Pine Technical College to support students who are completing their Certified Nursing Assistant training while also completing high school. A health lab was built on site at FHS. Last school year 12 students earned their CNA certification through the program. This year six students are already enrolled with the hope to add more during the school year.

**Connecting Virtually:** An online inquiry system gives interested youth the chance to connect with the counseling team to receive individual basic career services or information on programs or other community resource referrals. This system gets new applicants connected to a counselor the same day, greatly decreasing the time it takes to enroll a new youth applicant into the program. For example, in the month of August, 244 inquiries were made through the kiosk, resulting in the JTC receiving 98 applications leading to 64 enrollments.

**Safe and Meaningful Work Experiences:** Youth work with their employment counselors to identify interests and possible worksites that allow the youth to build skills, manage transportation issues and other responsibilities such as schoolwork. Staff developed over 30 new worksites in the private sector this program year that were utilized for both work experiences and internships.

**Hope 4 Youth (drop-in center for youth experiencing homelessness):** Staff offer in-person hours and weekly in-person services and meetings with staff at Hope Place – a transitional housing facility for youth experiencing homelessness - and at the drop-in center.

**Project Focus:** Project Focus, managed by the Anoka County MFIP team, provides resources to families that are granted certain forms of humanitarian protection status to help them build, achieve, and maintain self-sufficiency through a network of supports. The Youth staff reach out to these families and let them know about the Empowers Program and services available.

**Pre-ETS Vendor (assisting youth with disabilities):** Referrals are received from Vocational Rehabilitation Services to serve youth with disabilities and in-school youth (grades 9-12) who live in Anoka County and are attending secondary school. These youth are placed in work experiences in an integrated environment in the community at both public and private sector employers.

**Partnerships with Anoka County Human Services:** The youth team works closely with Community Corrections and Truancy, Economic Assistance, Public Health Nursing and Community Social Services and Behavioral Health in the county. Staff present at and attend events throughout the year and attend staff meetings to educate about referral processes. A youth counselor is on a County Youth Team that meets twice a month, consisting of staff from Foster Care, ACJTC staff, Minor Parent Program, ACCAP Childcare, Economic Assistance, and Public Health.

### OUTREACH TO SCHOOLS

Empowers allocates a percentage of MYP funds to provide Outreach to Schools (OTS). The activities complement the work of existing school counselors and provide young people career exploration and career guidance, college information and current labor market information with an emphasis on high-demand occupations. Examples of OTS activities include:

- **Big Ideas Hiring Event at the National Sport Center:** Collaboration with Metro North Chamber, the JTC and ATC/ARCC with over 30 vendors including a Big Idea trailer and multiple employers.
- **Columbia Heights Post-Secondary Fair for LEP Families:** Event coordinated by the Columbia Heights Public Schools to serve students that speak Spanish and Somali. The school provides student interpreters at each table to help each vendor communicate with the families.

- **8th Grade Day at Anoka Ramsey Community College and Anoka Technical College:** Staff present to over 300 8th graders on both campuses with an introduction to Career Planning and Youth Services and an Introduction to Budgeting.
- **Staff Presence at all six local school districts and charter schools:** Staff attend multiple activities at local high schools including Job Fairs, Trades Day, Career Spotlight Explore Activities, Career Exploration Fairs, College Fairs, and Industry Roundtable Events.
- **On-Site Staff Assistance at Anoka Technical College/STEP/Anoka-Hennepin Technical High School:** Staff from the Job Training Center office at this shared location each week to assist students or potential students with their employment and training needs.
- **Metro North Adult Basic Education:** Staff present at classes at local ABE locations in Blaine and Columbia Heights sharing information about services to ESL learners and GED students. Staff also are asked to present on job search and career exploration topics.

- Empowers staff continue to work closely with Metro North ABE sites in Blaine and Columbia Heights to serve youth as both sites serve a large diverse population.
- Empowers staff partner with the Indian Education Program in the Anoka-Hennepin School District. This program focuses on the educational needs of American Indian students.
- Partnering with Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) through Pre-ETS programing has increased the overall outreach to young people with disabilities.



## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

The current partnership network includes Anoka County Economic Assistance and Social Services Departments, the YMCA, Perkins/CTE-Oakland Consortium, local high schools, and educational learning centers, Hope 4 Youth (the local youth homeless drop-in center) and Hope Place (transitional housing for homeless youth), Metro North Adult Basic Education (ABE), the Minnesota Family Investment and Diversionary Work Programs, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Anoka Technical College (ATC), Anoka Ramsey Community College (ARCC), Job Corps VRS, Juvenile Corrections, Stepping Stone Emergency Shelter, and local secondary schools in an ongoing effort to recruit young people for the program. Staff also work closely with the TRIO Student Support Services/Academic Advisor. The Standing Youth Committee has members from many of these agencies to ensure strong communications and linkages are maintained to serve young adults.

## SERVING YOUTH OF COLOR AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

There are many ongoing and targeted efforts to connect with youth from communities of color and youth with disabilities such as:

- Of the 213 youth that were served through MYP during the last program year, 58% were youth of color (154) and 54% (144) of them identified as having a disability.
- ACJTC has a strong partnership with the YMCA to connect services to under-served and under-represented youth.
- The Future Leaders Program with Anoka-Hennepin School District 11 serves young people representing diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds who are primarily juniors and seniors. Students are given direction by their SAA (Student Achievement Advisor) that is provided by the school district to assist in working through issues that are challenging for youth of color.

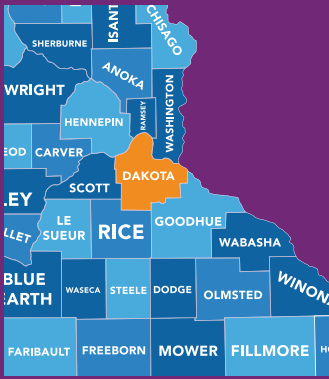



### SUCCESS STORIES: Fabricio

Fabricio is originally from Ecuador. In 2019 at the age of 13, he moved to the United States with his family, speaking only Spanish at the time. Fabricio worked at McDonald's part-time as a cashier while attending Columbia Heights High School when he learned of the Anoka County Empowers Program. Fabricio enrolled into the Empowers Program in June 2023 when he was 17 years old. He was enrolled into the Minnesota Youth Program and Youth at Work program, and assigned a Career Counselor who assisted him in starting a paid internship as an Information Technology (IT) Help Desk intern for summer 2023. He worked on his interview skills through a one-on-one interview workshop and was offered to continue his IT Help Desk internship throughout his entire senior year of high school. He went on to graduate high school in June 2024 with a 3.9 GPA as well as numerous academic awards. After graduation in June 2024, Fabricio started a new paid internship as an Intern to the Mayor of Columbia Heights, Amáda Márquez Simula. He was able to continue to build his IT skills by creating new digital tools to assist the mayor's productivity for community engagement, marketing, and organization. Fabricio also credits this internship experience for helping him build networking skills, confidence in navigating how to prioritize work responsibilities, as well as enhancing his time management skills at work and in his personal life. Fabricio felt extremely supported at his internship with the mayor. He expressed how working with someone who has a shared cultural background helped him appreciate his skill sets and cultural knowledge as the strengths they are.

Through all Fabricio's hard work in school, extracurricular activities, and work experience he earned two scholarships that will provide him with a full ride at St. Olaf college. He will be starting this Fall 2024, to work on his declared major of Physics. When asked what he would tell a student who is deciding if they should enroll in the Empowers Program he said *"In general, life is challenging but take all the opportunities that you can. I felt supported through this program. Surround yourself with people who know your worth."*





# Dakota County

## Dakota County Workforce Services

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Area served: Dakota County

## OVERVIEW

Tree Trust Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) offered young people entry-level work experience in the green industry and skilled trade careers. Over nine weeks, participants ages 14-21 gained paid, hands-on education working on outdoor construction and landscape projects. Crew Leaders and Field Coordinators trained participants in valuable trade skills, including hand tool use, job site safety, personal protective equipment, construction math, and following directions to complete a plan while installing community-enhancing projects. Employment Coaches provided additional training in transferable workplace skills, which included employment readiness, mentoring, money management, and identifying career goals.

### Summer Youth Employment Program

Participants completed three impressive projects in Dakota County in 2024 using hand tools, teamwork, and grit.

In Apple Valley, SYEP participants beautified Cobblestone Park by installing two concrete retaining walls. This ambitious project taught crew members to practice time management and develop stamina. Young people dug and leveled trenches before installing concrete bricks. Retaining walls add to the aesthetic of the park's landscape and mitigate the effects of erosion.

In Inver Grove Heights, participants built a new 12-target archery course. The crew constructed and painted each wood target. This new archery course will offer an exciting opportunity for community members to enjoy the outdoors. In addition to construction, youth removed invasive species, like burdock, from the landscape.

In Eagan, participants made a meaningful impact at Caponi Art Park, restoring a labyrinth. In a 60-acre park filled with trees and rolling hills, the labyrinth enhances the park's natural beauty.

## BEST PRACTICES

### Building Life Skills

Participants increased essential life skills through interactions with fellow participants and Crew Leaders, Field Coordinators, and Employment Coaches. Young people created goals and developed an Individual Service Strategy with the assistance of the career coaching staff. They also learned how to write a resume and interview and increased their financial literacy,

including budgeting. In post-program evaluations, participants commented on the excellent learning opportunities, positive work environment, personal growth and development opportunities, making new friends, enjoying the outdoor work experience, and the chance to earn a paycheck.

### Certifications

Young people from Dakota County had the opportunity to earn a Tree Trust Certificate. Awarding of this certificate demonstrated knowledge and experience of tool identification, safety, environmental stewardship, budgeting, career exploration, resume building, and interviewing. These essential skills help prepare for potential careers such as tree trimmers, landscapers, city park professionals, carpenters, and project managers.

### Leadership Opportunities

Participants learned the importance of civic responsibility by improving their park system. Crew Leaders mentored participants to increase leadership skills, and participants grew interpersonally by working in a crew environment. Crew Leaders appointed participants to lead their peers in a specific work task. Tree Trust also recognized the leadership of individual participants with the Governor's Award and Founder's Awards for Outstanding Leadership and Outstanding Personal Growth. At the end of the program, Tree Trust recognized the participants' achievements at the 2024 Summer Youth Employment Celebration. The keynote speaker, Tim Johnstad, had an IEP in school and encouraged participants to remember their achievements that summer, "Let it be a reminder of your capabilities—the hard work you've put in and your ability to overcome challenges. When you face difficulties, remember you can do this."

## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

Tree Trust has longstanding partnerships with many local organizations, including schools, private foundations, social service agencies, government entities, and businesses. Dakota County partners included DEED Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Dakota County Technical College, 360 Communities, BEST Transition, Hastings High School, Lakeview South High School, Farmington High School, Apple Valley High School, Burnsville High School, and Dakota Ridge High School. Tree Trust collaborated with these community partners for program referrals, participant support services, internships, and employment opportunities.





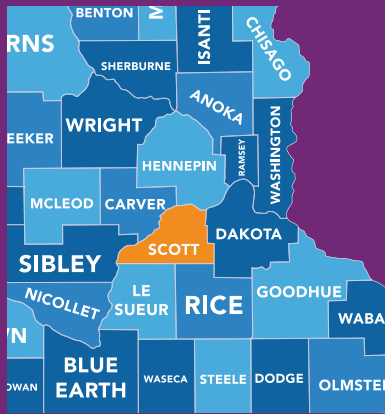
## SUCCESS STORY: **Madelyn**

Madelyn [Maddie] learned important skills during the 2024 Tree Trust Summer Youth Employment Program, where she and her crew improved the local community by constructing archery target stands for Sun Valley Park in Inver Grove Heights. Maddie earned a Tree Trust Certificate, Perfect Attendance Award, and Governor’s Award. Maddie showed an incredible ability to overcome challenges in her life. Her crew leader said, *“Maddie has made remarkable strides this summer, not only in building professional skills but also in fostering workplace relationships that will last long after her time at Tree Trust. She has been a cornerstone of the A crew and has established herself as a leader, playing a crucial role in constructing the archery range.”*

## PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

- “Get to know different things about the environment and working out in the fresh air.”
- “Tree Trust is a great job to get some new experience.”
- “Getting to know new people.”
- “Working outside in the environment, get to know different plants.”





# Scott County

## Scott County Employment and Training

Brandon Kmety, Supervisor

Government Center West

200 4th Avenue West

Shakopee, MN 55379

Phone: (952) 445-7751

[scottcountymn.gov/475/Employment-Training](http://scottcountymn.gov/475/Employment-Training)

Area served: Scott County

### OVERVIEW

Scott County Minnesota Youth Program (MYP) youth participated in the summer program, with several participating year-round for career counseling, training, work experience, or job placement. Scott County utilizes a portion of the MYP funding to assist youth that need credit recovery, especially high school seniors needing credits to get their high school diploma. Other youth are enrolled for assistance in meeting their education, training, and work experience goals. MYP youth in post-secondary education programs include Esthetician, IT Helpdesk, Barber and Large Engine Mechanics.

Scott County Employment and Training administers many programs including the Minnesota Youth Program (MYP), Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth and Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) Employment Services. Counselors do case reviews and internal referrals to youth programs. Youth are co-enrolled into other programs to help them achieve their goals. Scott County Employment and Training also collaborates with local youth serving agencies to serve targeted populations. State, federal, and local resources leveraged by MYP funds include county funds, WIOA Youth Program funds, WIOA Adult funds, TANF Consolidated Fund, Youthbuild funds and local school funds.

### BEST PRACTICE

Scott County has collaborated with SouthWest Metro Intermediate District 288 (formerly Carver Scott Educational Cooperative) for the past 20+ years in the Youthbuild credit recovery program. Many youth have acquired credits to maintain grade level or to complete their high school diploma requirements during this summer activity. Students also gain skills in leadership, financial literacy, social/civics, OSHA 10, carpentry skills and community awareness. The Youthbuild students also complete certification for CPR and First Aid.

### COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

- SouthWest Metro Intermediate District 288 – YouthBuild credit recovery and work experience programs.
- Public, non-profit, and private sector employers – work experience programs

- Local secondary and alternative schools – referrals and worksites
- Community Action Programs (CAP) Agency – referrals and worksites
- Scott County – referrals and worksites
- CareerForce location partners – referrals and worksite development
- Training vendors/agencies – education and training

### SERVING YOUTH OF COLOR

Scott County staff recruited program applications from schools, previous enrollees, youth serving organizations and the Scott County Family Resource Center. Program participants come from a wide variety of backgrounds, race, ethnicity, income levels, poverty groups, and abilities/disabilities.

### CUSTOMER COMMENTS

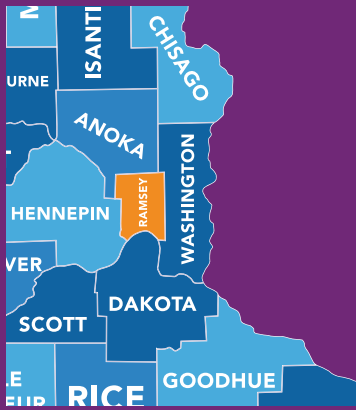
- *"I learned the importance of being on time."*  
– YOUTH PARTICIPANT
- *"The credits will help me graduate on time."* – YOUTH PARTICIPANT
- *"I was able to save a lot of money this summer that I will need when I go to college."* – YOUTH PARTICIPANT
- *"The students made great strides over the summer. It took some adjusting, but they all learned the importance of hard work and maintaining a great attitude."* – SUPERVISOR



## SUCCESS STORY: **Aimee**

Aimee is a current high school student at a local alternative school. Her goal for the summer was to find a job where she could learn some new skills and learn what it was like to have a job. Her brother told her about the Scott County youth program and she decided to explore what options were available to her. She met with the Scott County youth Counselor and decided that she liked the idea of participating in the summer YouthBuild program. She saw it as a great opportunity to get out of her comfort zone, learn new skills, earn high school credits and earn money at the same time. Aimee always describes herself as a very shy person and saw an opportunity to *“try some new things that would help her prepare for work and college.”* Aimee earned her OSHA 10 certification as well as her First Aid/CPR certification. She loved learning how to use new tools and practice construction skills for when she lived on her own. Her supervisor described her as *“quiet, but serious about work and very hard working.”* Aimee says that the biggest thing she learned was how to be a professional. *“Getting to work on time and being ready to work.”* Learning these new skills was a great confidence booster for Aimee. She successfully completed the summer program and the credits she earned will help her graduate sooner. She plans on using the money she earned this summer when she goes to business school at NYU.





# Ramsey County

## Ramsey County Workforce Solutions

Michelle Belitz, Interim Director

121 Seventh Place E., Suite 2100

Saint Paul, MN 55101

Phone: (651) 266-9890

[ramseycounty.us/youngadultemploymentprogram](https://ramseycounty.us/youngadultemploymentprogram)

Area served: Ramsey County

## OVERVIEW

Ramsey County Workforce Solutions (WFS) delivered Minnesota Youth Program employment and training supports to young people ages 14-24 through four community-based vendor organizations: Hired, Hmong American Partnership, Tree Trust, and Urban Boatbuilders. In addition to these vendors, WFS leveraged MYP funds to pilot several new programs. These initiatives include the expansion of the Right Track summer employment/internship program to include 26 internships across 23 county departments; the Summer Journalism Institute, where participants created media projects and gained hands-on experience; and the Semiconductor Accelerator Program, which provided immersive industry experiences. These programs utilized a combination of MYP and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to meet the evolving needs of local youth. Services are guided by Ramsey County's vision of "A vibrant community where all are valued and thrive."

## BEST PRACTICES

Ramsey County's Youth and Young Adult Employment Program partners provided individualized, year-round comprehensive guidance and support to 242 young people over the last year using MYP funds. Together, the vendors facilitated work experiences, internships, and employment exposure opportunities. Notable collaborations include Urban Boatbuilders, which teaches construction and work readiness skills through hands-on canoe and woodworking projects, and Tree Trust, which engages youth in landscaping and tree care projects with Ramsey County Parks & Recreation. Hired continues to partner with the Construction Careers Foundation to offer trades exploration through the Minnesota Trades Academy.

To enhance youth experiences further, Ramsey County offers the Get S.E.T. supervisory training program, which is now recorded and accessible online, providing supervisors with valuable resources for effective engagement with young people. The bi-monthly practitioner meetings, now primarily hosted and facilitated by Ramsey County Workforce Solutions planners, promote collaborative planning and resource sharing among local organizations. Additionally, Ramsey County holds "Creating Meaningful Connections" sessions once per quarter, bringing together MYP and other grant-funded vendors to engage in discussions with young people and subject matter experts. These sessions focus on identifying resources and

best practices for serving Opportunity Youth, which includes justice-impacted, foster, homeless, and parenting young people. Feedback from vendors has led to an expansion of this definition to include young people of color, those living with disabilities, and more.

## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

Many community and state partners have contributed to the success of Ramsey County's Youth and Young Adult Employment Programs. Case management and program elements are delivered through WFS's four vendor partners, who provide outstanding employment supports. Educational partners include, but are not limited to, Saint Paul Public Schools, Roseville Area Schools, White Bear Lake Area Schools, Mounds View Public Schools, Saint Paul School District Career Connect, Saint Paul College, Century College, and Change Inc. Ramsey County also leveraged MYP Outreach to Schools funds to enhance and strengthen these relationships by hiring a new Outreach to Schools Program specialist.

Numerous employer partners, including ISD 622, Ramsey County Libraries, Minnesota Trades Academy, The Sanneh Foundation, Solid Ground, Cookie Cart, Urban Roots, Bridgemakers, World Youth Connect, and others, actively participate in Ramsey County's and the Suburban Ramsey Family Collaborative's bi-monthly practitioner meetings for cross-organization collaborative planning and resource sharing.

## SERVING YOUTH OF COLOR

As the most racially and ethnically diverse county in Minnesota, Ramsey County WFS and its partners strategically plan and deliver youth services to historically underserved neighborhoods and communities. This year, 89% of youth served identified as a race other than "white alone," with 8% identifying as "Hispanic or Latino(x)." In response to the need to diversify specific industries that are underrepresented, well-paid, and growing, Ramsey County partnered with culturally specific, BIPOC-led organizations, including Hmong American Partnership and Restoration for All Inc. The new pilot programs were initiated to further support this goal, ensuring that the unique cultural and community needs of participants are met.

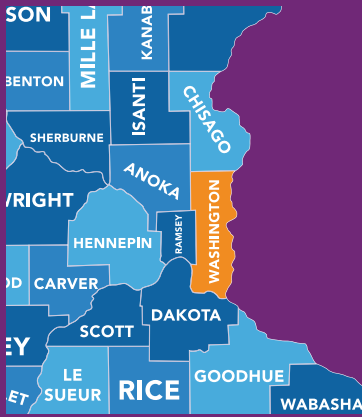




## SUCCESS STORY: Tree Trust's Summer Celebration

On August 16th, Tree Trust hosted their Annual Summer Celebration at Long Lake Park in New Brighton, honoring the achievements of this year's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) graduates. The event celebrated over 100 participants who gained valuable experience working in cohorts across 12 diverse worksites, including Tamarack Nature Center in White Bear Township and Swede Hollow Park in St. Paul. Each graduate received a certificate of completion, with special awards recognizing outstanding attendance, accomplishments, and leadership. This celebration not only highlighted the impressive contributions of these young professionals but also marked a successful summer of growth and achievement. Congratulations to all the graduates and thanks to Tree Trust for their unwavering commitment to youth development and meaningful employment experiences. Their efforts continue to empower young people and foster a vibrant community where all can thrive.





# Washington County

## Washington County CareerForce

Rick Roy, Workforce & Veterans Services Division Manager

Woodbury Service Center

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Phone: (651) 275-8650

[mn.gov/deed/woodbury](http://mn.gov/deed/woodbury)

Area served: Washington County

## OVERVIEW

Washington County provides a mix of direct and contracted work experience and career pathway activities to eligible youth. Tree Trust is the contracted provider for summer work experience. The flexibility of Minnesota Youth program (MYP) funds allows Washington County to provide: a) first-time work experience for youth who may not find success in a first job without the additional support available with the structure of MYP services and worksites; and b) access to meaningful work in their own neighborhood for youth who face transportation barriers.

## BEST PRACTICES

**Work Readiness:** Contracted services through Tree Trust offer summer work experience opportunities designed to teach work-readiness skills in a supportive and realistic work environment through the Summer Youth Employment Program. Skills taught include basic measuring and math, use of basic hand tools, and worksite safety within the context of public community space improvement through landscaping work.

**Youth Conservation Corps Crew:** Tree Trust provides work experience in a conservation corps model, providing close, onsite supervision and teaching of work readiness, tool use, and safety skills. Results of effort are visible and tangible, providing lasting projects at public worksites in the communities where work is performed. Washington County youth are eligible to earn a merit-based raise based on performance factors. Youth also complete lessons in basic budgeting and job search.

**Leadership Development:** Youth in the communities of Landfall and Cimarron who work as assistants for youth activities operated by Family Means (a non-profit agency serving Washington County) are trained in leadership traits and behaviors. Younger youth who live in the communities participate in the youth activities, and Washington County youth enrolled in work experience as activities assistants are seen as mentors and leaders in the community.

## SERVING YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

Tree Trust has over 45 years of experience working with youth with disabilities. Recruiting is accomplished through targeted outreach to, and referrals from, partner organizations that work directly with this population. Serving youth with disabilities and helping them find success in the workplace is foundational to Tree Trust's mission.

## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

Tree Trust partners with area schools, county libraries, and CareerForce locations to aid in the youth recruitment application process. Park and recreation agencies, municipalities, public schools, and private businesses collaborate with Tree Trust to provide projects and worksites.

Washington County has a history of collaboration with Family Means, a community-based non-profit that provides after-school and summer programming for children and teens in low-income communities. Washington County offers paid work experience with MYP funds to (typically) older youth who live in the communities. They work as program assistants in the after school and summer activities, as well as serve as mentors to younger youth participating in the Family Means programs, gaining leadership and work readiness skills. As a result, the younger youth have positive role models within their own community. Many have been overheard saying that they want to be a program assistant when they get older.

## CUSTOMER COMMENTS

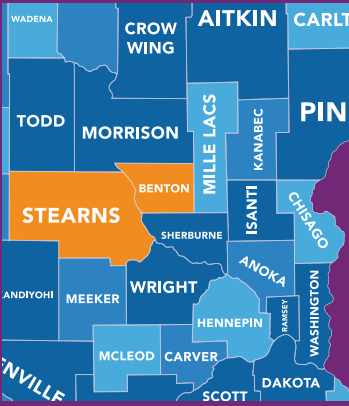
- "It taught me good skills and it was nice getting paid for my first time." – *YOUTH PARTICIPANT*
- "I've gotten stronger, and I've gotten to know how to build a staircase. The best part about my experience was meeting new people." – *YOUTH PARTICIPANT*
- "I've learned to be more independent, and I've learned to be more helpful. I have a lot of stamina now and Tree Trust has taught me a lot about landscaping and using equipment." – *YOUTH PARTICIPANT*



## SUCCESS STORY: **Konstantin**

*Konstantin participated in the Tree Trust Summer Youth Employment Program for seven years. In 2024, Konstantin and his crew constructed baseball dugouts at Northland Park in Stillwater. Konstantin decided to write and deliver a heartfelt speech to crew members and staff about what he learned during his many years at Tree Trust. He remarked, "Tree Trust has taught us that the things that we learned are more important than the money we received for the job. When I think of Tree Trust, I don't think of any one person. I think of a community of workers and a family." He earned a Tree Trust Certificate in 2024 which documented learning about tool identification, worksite safety, environmental stewardship, budgeting, career exploration, resume building, and interviewing. He also showed incredible dedication and earned a Perfect Attendance Award. Konstantin now wants to pursue a career in construction.*





# Stearns-Benton Counties

## Career Solutions (Formerly Stearns-Benton Employment and Training Council-SBETC)

Tammy Biery, Director

1542 Northway Drive, St. Cloud, MN 56303

Phone: (320) 266-5060

[mn.gov/deed/stcloud](http://mn.gov/deed/stcloud)

Counties served: Benton and Stearns counties

## OVERVIEW

Career Solutions offers CareerONE, a youth employability skills training opportunity utilizing Minnesota Youth Program (MYP) funding. CareerONE provides training in team building and SCANSkill activities, safety training, financial literacy, community work projects, resume writing, job application preparation, interviewing practice, and career exploration.

## BEST PRACTICES

CareerONE is a unique, contextual learning experience which has demonstrated success since 2000. Each year, Career Solutions seeks to improve on the model and continue to deliver an elite opportunity for youth. During the summer of 2024, CareerONE had a 93% completion rate. Of those who completed, 99% received employability skills and 99% received safety certificates. Youth participate in teams of 8-10 led by an adult team leader and a youth assistant leader. The youth assistant leader is a previous CareerONE graduate. The youth leader prepares and delivers the SCANSkill activities to their assigned team and assists the team leader with lesson preparations. Components of CareerONE include: career exploration; team building activities at YMCA; MoneySmart FDIC curriculum; SCANSkill activities; Youth@Work Talking Safety curriculum; community service projects; employability skills training; reflection and journaling. CareerONE is 20 days in length and operates during June and July. The Money Smart curriculum is aligned with Minnesota State Standards and applying credit to the youth's transcript is possible. The youth participate in the KeyTrain assessment and use the online KeyTrain curriculum to help increase their math and reading skills. Youth work toward demonstrating skills in attendance, punctuality, dress code, teamwork, cooperation, safety, work quality and work quantity. The youth receive a portfolio containing the certificates they have earned. The certificates that may be earned include the Career Solutions Employability Skills Certificate, Career Solutions Safety Certificate Youth at Work Talking Safety Certificate of Completion and a FDIC Money Smart Certificate of Completion. Other portfolio items include a resume, master application and career plan.

For the seventh year, CareerONE offered the HealthCare Track where students could obtain 2.5 college credits by taking a

CPR/First Aid Class and course #1 of the Health Care Core Curriculum class. For the sixth year, the Manufacturing and Construction Track offered students opportunities to learn about construction, 3D printing, workplace safety, earn 2 college credits and earn their OSHA 10 certification. For the third year, the Early Childhood Education track provided training on human development, behavior management, inclusive learning environments, relationship building, and professional behavior. Students completed a course called "Managing the Physical & Social Environment". The course is provided by the St. Cloud Technical & Community College and students could earn 3 college credits for completion. In 2023 a Public Safety track was added and students can earn 1 college credit for completing an introduction to Criminal Justice course that is provided by Alexandria Technical & Community College.

## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

CentraCare, United Way of Central Minnesota, and other local sponsors partner with CareerONE providing additional funding and work-based learning projects. The CentraCare staff and CEO also participated in career information sessions instructing participants about professions in the health care system. CentraCare employees also provided mock interviews for students through their virtual interviewing program called "HireVue." Career Solutions collaborates with area county human services, school districts, juvenile corrections and youth serving agencies in the recruitment of youth and families for CareerONE. Work projects are coordinated with area non-profit organizations to give students work experiences to add to their resumes. St. Cloud Technical & Community College and a local bus company assist with classroom space, computer labs, transportation, etc.

## STRATEGY FOR SERVING YOUTH OF COLOR

CareerONE's population consisted of 77% youth of color. The greater St. Cloud area is a diverse mix of youth of color. Because of this diversity, Career Solutions' partnerships with local schools and youth serving agencies ensures that youth of color are being served. Career Solutions attempts to ensure an equal representation of each ethnicity, age, gender, geography,



ability to benefit, etc. This allows the creation of teams that expose youth to a variety of experiences and challenge their comfort zone. Applications are processed in order of receipt and due to the high demand for this service the program consistently has a waiting list.

## OUTREACH TO SCHOOLS

Career Solutions Outreach to Schools (OTS) provided 875 students with a positive career planning experience. Services were provided in person to five area schools and others were assisted with virtual interview and career planning classes. The school districts served were very appreciative of the assistance provided to the students with their career planning needs, which assures compliance with the World’s Best Workforce legislation requirements.

## CUSTOMER COMMENTS

- “I learned that becoming an adult costs a lot of money. It’s important to decide how you’re going to pay things off.”  
- PARTICIPANT
- “I learned how to communicate effectively in a group as well as understand others in high pressure environments.”  
- PARTICIPANT
- “I learned to cooperate with my team and to talk through our problems so that we wouldn’t counter any miscommunications along the way.” - PARTICIPANT
- “I got to use a miter box and cut a board into pieces for our golf tee board game project.” - PARTICIPANT
- “I loved that everyone shared the twists and turns of their own career journeys.” - PARTICIPANT



## SUCCESS STORY: Fatuma

Fatuma says, “When I first came into CareerONE, I expected somewhere in which we would simply go straight into the workforce and gain some first-hand work experience. Rather than that, they made sure I was able to understand the basics and took their time in teaching me everything I’d need for when I officially start job searching. Thanks to CareerONE, I was able to understand what I need to obtain a job and gained the basic formatting for



a resume, master application, cover letter, and networking. I was also able to learn college level material when it came to child discipline, that I wouldn’t have been able to learn had I chose not to join CareerONE. I was able to expand my knowledge on the things I both did and didn’t know: childcare, personal finance, and work safety rights. I also went beyond my comfort zone and practiced communication skills by properly communicating with my peers whom I’ve never met prior to CareerONE. The free college credits and money is a bonus that comes with the program. CareerONE was an amazing experience that I definitely would recommend to anyone who seems interested in the program to join. I hope to join again next year!”





# Winona County

## Winona County WorkForce Council

Rick Pospichal, Youth Program Manager

1250 Homer Road – Suite 200

Winona, MN 55987

Phone: (507) 205-6058

[careerforcemn.com/winona](http://careerforcemn.com/winona)

Area served: Winona County

## OVERVIEW

The Winona County Youth and Young Adult programs serve youth ages 16-24 with barriers to employment. Youth earn academic credit and a paycheck, while building confidence, gaining essential employment skills, and specific work-related skills throughout the duration of the program. The youth program offers hope and provides clarity to participants and their families regarding the transition from secondary education to post-secondary education and/or entering the workforce.

The program provides local businesses with employees. CareerForce staff work closely with school staff and employers to ensure youth are fully engaged in work experience and youth have an opportunity to transition to competitive employment at the end of the program. Many employers enjoy the opportunity to mentor and train youth and to observe the personal growth that happens over the school year.

## BEST PRACTICES

Work experience is offered at all the school districts located in Winona County along with the Winona Alternative Learning Center, and the Hiawatha Valley Education District Alternative Learning Center located at Minnesota State College Southeast. CareerForce staff work closely with the high school work-based learning coordinators to identify and enroll students in the Minnesota Youth Program. Youth are assigned a worksite within the community, or the school district, and they work four days per week. Prior to reporting to the worksite youth complete interest assessments, review child labor laws and worksite responsibilities, and complete basic safety training. Youth spend one day per week in the classroom learning about managing money, practicing professional communication, completing mock interviews, creating a resume and cover letter, and practicing other skills that will help prepare them to enter the workforce.

Youth Work Skills Challenge is a day where students of all abilities from throughout southeast Minnesota come together to learn and compete against each other in real-world work scenarios such as applications, resumes and interviews. Students listen to speakers, receive resources, and engage with agencies focused on life skills and/or opportunities for growth in careers.

A major component of the program is placing youth in worksites throughout the community. Because the program serves youth with a variety of barriers, many youth are enrolled in the program for multiple years. A young person may initially be placed at a worksite within the school district with more supervision and as work skills are gained, they will transition into a community-based position. Before sending youth into the community to work, staff ensure they are job ready. Indications of this include promptness in returning phone calls, follow-through with assignments and timeliness in appointments at the CareerForce Center, and professional presentation at their school worksite. Youth gain a deeper appreciation of work through the actual experience of having to be at work on time, follow a supervisor's instructions, get along with coworkers and other work-related soft skills gained on the job. Staff work to provide worksites that are easily accessible to the youth, including youth in the cities of Winona County and in rural areas.

Youth staff work with students in three school districts and two alternative learning centers throughout the school year. Collaborating with high school instructors is essential to the success of the program and CareerForce staff complement the work that is being done within the schools.

## OUTREACH TO SCHOOLS

Outreach to Schools (OTS) Activities in Winona County complement the work of existing school counselors and provide youth and families with career exploration, college information and current labor market information. Examples of Outreach to Schools activities that have been implemented include (but are not limited to):

- Providing information to individuals and groups regarding occupations and industries in demand and with the highest growth throughout the region using current labor market information, which may include providing opportunities for students to directly experience occupations through job shadowing, mentoring and business tours.
- Providing workshops and classes on planning for post-secondary training, including accessing financial aid and selecting an appropriate program, as well as other career planning topics such as goal setting and navigating business culture.

- Tours of the Winona CareerForce Center and information about the resources available at the Winona CareerForce Center and how to access and utilize the resources.
- Connections to community and private sector resources through a local career fair offered in the fall and spring, career events, and tours of businesses in strategic industries.
- Group and individual sessions including instruction and presentations on O\*Net, labor market information and strategic industries and in-demand occupations.
- Individualized career development activities including career exploration and career assessments, resume preparation, mock interviews, and job search assistance.

## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

The Winona Youth and Young Adult Program partners with and utilizes community resources provided by organizations such as Winona County Social Services, the Winona School District Academic Success Coordinators, St. Charles School District, Lewiston-Altura School District, Winona Cotter schools, the Southeast Service Coop Career Navigators, and SEMCIL to coordinate services for area youth. Staff synchronize efforts with Vocational Rehabilitation Services and counselors with the MFIP programs to maximize positive outcomes. Youth program staff coordinate recruitment efforts with Minnesota State College Southeast and Winona State University to ensure youth are aware of careers and corresponding training in an area with high demand, living wage occupations.

## CUSTOMER COMMENTS

- “We enjoy having the youth help at the Center. We feel that we are helping them learn new skills, which will help them in the future.” – *SUPERVISOR*
- “Working at the Resource Center taught me how to be organized and neat. It was fun to help the clients.” – *YOUTH PARTICIPANT*



**SFY2024 MINNESOTA YOUTH PROGRAM (MYP) DATA SUMMARY (JULY 1, 2023 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2024)**

COMBINED WDA TOTALS		TOTAL	PCT	WDA 1	WDA 2	WDA 3	WDA 4	WDA 5	WDA 6	WDA 7	WDA 8	WDA 9H
1. Total Participants Served		4,575	100.0%	43	440	242	143	392	121	374	348	346
1a. Total Participants Exited		2,949	64.5%	21	227	111	64	151	79	144	116	224
Gender	2a. Male	2,240	49.0%	27	249	110	54	210	67	166	179	200
	2b. Female	2,298	50.2%	16	191	131	82	182	54	203	167	144
	2c. Did Not Self-Identify	130	2.8%	0	0	1	7	0	0	5	2	2
Age	3a. 14 - 15	1,520	33.2%	12	125	21	32	65	19	114	34	51
	3b. 16 -17	1,473	32.2%	24	144	79	42	145	64	130	134	125
	3c. 18	615	13.4%	6	75	61	9	87	19	45	69	51
	3d. 19 - 21	707	15.5%	0	76	59	35	71	16	61	62	84
	3e. 22 - 24	260	5.7%	1	20	22	25	24	3	24	49	35
Ethnicity / Race	4a. Hispanic/Latino	692	15.1%	13	26	8	14	68	59	70	104	37
	4b. American Indian or Alaska Native	129	2.8%	1	30	15	14	7	4	3	6	4
	4c. Asian or Pacific Islander	253	5.5%	0	2	1	2	14	6	4	20	37
	4d. Black or African American	1,492	32.6%	2	23	6	34	26	4	64	53	263
	4e. White	2,056	44.9%	37	358	206	53	283	89	269	220	17
	4f. Multi Race	323	7.1%	2	27	13	37	25	8	29	23	8
Education Level	5a. Grades K-12 (No Diploma/GED)	3,537	77.3%	40	313	128	113	305	105	303	226	160
	5b. High School graduate or equivalent	770	16.8%	3	108	90	20	74	12	62	109	93
	5c. Post-Secondary Education	264	5.8%	0	19	24	10	13	4	8	11	93
Other Demographics	6. Limited English Proficient	224	4.9%	1	8	2	2	43	6	10	14	12
	7. Youth From Families Receiving Public Assistance	2,644	57.8%	37	177	123	85	125	42	174	175	144
	8. Foster Youth	197	4.3%	1	13	21	26	23	3	17	13	12
	9. Youth with a Disability	2,084	45.6%	33	310	161	58	291	67	235	168	52
	10. High School Drop-Out	175	3.8%	0	20	12	36	26	1	29	31	1
	11. Offender	211	4.6%	1	26	17	17	24	13	35	34	4
	12. Pregnant or Parenting Youth	199	4.3%	3	10	21	17	20	7	29	60	1
	13. Basic Skills Deficient	1,844	40.3%	26	380	43	7	340	27	301	282	152
	14. Homeless or Runaway Youth	190	4.2%	1	6	28	29	10	6	6	29	4
	15. Not Employed at Program Enrollment	3,594	78.6%	38	326	126	115	262	93	304	219	228
<b>PROGRAM SERVICES, ACTIVITIES, AND OTHER RELATED ASSISTANCE</b>												
1. Received Education/Job Training Activities		2,233	48.8%	39	45	184	73	215	23	287	246	203
2. Received Work Experience Activities		2,055	44.9%	37	272	123	68	86	58	214	123	185
3. Received Community Involvement and Leadership Development Activities		572	12.5%	0	7	0	7	18	1	13	0	62
4. Received Post-Secondary Exploration, Career Guidance and Planning Activities		2,113	46.2%	43	84	238	4	357	7	192	346	109
5. Received Mentoring Activities		471	10.3%	0	43	2	0	1	2	236	0	186
6. Received Support Services		595	13.0%	8	39	35	46	47	15	85	67	26
<b>INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE (Based on Number Served)</b>												
1. Attained Work Readiness or Education Goals in ISS		2,409	81.7%	13	96	86	29	151	39	172	72	125
2. Received Academic/Service Learning Credit		1,858	63.0%	12	3	31	11	68	34	24	43	53
3. Obtained High School Diploma/GED, Remained in School, Obtained a Certificate or Degree, or Drop-out; Returned to School		2,180	73.9%	9	102	43	30	73	56	94	59	216
4. Entered Post Secondary Education, Vocational/Occupational Skills Training, Apprenticeship, or Military or Entered Employment		587	19.9%	6	105	75	23	72	40	53	98	25
<b>CUSTOMER SATISFACTION</b>												
1. Number of Participants Rating MYP Experience as "Excellent"		179	49.7%		53	18	11	28		21	2	
2. Number of Participants Rating MYP Experience as "Very Good"		136	37.8%		56	9	5	20		7	0	
3. Number of Participants Rating MYP Experience as "Average"		31	8.6%		9	1	0	4		3	0	
4. Number of Participants Rating MYP Experience as "Below Average"		7	1.9%		2	0	0	3		1	0	
5. Number of Participants Rating MYP Experience as "Poor"		3	0.8%		0	0	0	1		0	0	
6. Total Number of Surveys Completed		360			120	28	16	60		32	2	



**SFY2024 MINNESOTA YOUTH PROGRAM (MYP) DATA SUMMARY (JULY 1, 2023 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2024)**

COMBINED WDA TOTALS		TOTAL	PCT	WDA 9C	WDA 10	WDA 12	WDA 14D	WDA 14S	WDA 15	WDA 16	WDA 17	WDA 18
1. Total Participants Served		4,575	100.0%	53	1009	313	88	29	218	62	333	21
1a. Total Participants Exited		2,949	64.5%	9	1004	147	88	20	152	59	320	13
Gender	2a. Male	2,240	49.0%	29	399	158	65	18	111	44	141	13
	2b. Female	2,298	50.2%	24	593	159	23	11	105	18	188	7
	2c. Did Not Self-Identify	130	2.8%	0	76	6	5	0	21	0	4	1
Age	3a. 14 - 15	1,520	33.2%	16	658	30	34	7	19	28	253	2
	3b. 16 -17	1,473	32.2%	20	250	99	30	10	73	11	80	13
	3c. 18	615	13.4%	4	66	66	5	4	37	6	0	5
	3d. 19 - 21	707	15.5%	11	35	90	19	5	65	17	0	1
	3e. 22 - 24	260	5.7%	2	0	28	0	3	24	0	0	0
Ethnicity / Race	4a. Hispanic/Latino	692	15.1%	14	124	69	15	11	25	7	28	0
	4b. American Indian or Alaska Native	129	2.8%	2	28	5	2	0	4	3	1	0
	4c. Asian or Pacific Islander	253	5.5%	1	49	17	4	2	81	4	7	2
	4d. Black or African American	1,492	32.6%	11	632	70	21	10	62	11	199	1
	4e. White	2,056	44.9%	25	114	130	55	11	44	33	95	17
	4f. Multi Race	323	7.1%	6	80	32	0	3	20	5	4	1
Education Level	5a. Grades K-12 (No Diploma/GED)	3,537	77.3%	45	993	212	73	22	106	41	332	20
	5b. High School graduate or equivalent	770	16.8%	8	16	79	3	5	82	4	1	1
	5c. Post-Secondary Education	264	5.8%	0	0	22	12	2	29	17	0	0
Other Demographics	6. Limited English Proficient	224	4.9%	3	27	29	3	2	16	1	45	0
	7. Youth From Families Receiving Public Assistance	2,644	57.8%	17	873	175	48	16	124	31	271	7
	8. Foster Youth	197	4.3%	3	17	14	15	0	11	3	3	2
	9. Youth with a Disability	2,084	45.6%	40	216	161	71	16	61	43	80	21
	10. High School Drop-Out	175	3.8%	1	0	15	0	1	1	1	0	0
	11. Offender	211	4.6%	2	4	17	7	3	4	1	1	1
	12. Pregnant or Parenting Youth	199	4.3%	1	8	10	0	2	9	0	1	0
	13. Basic Skills Deficient	1,844	40.3%	15	8	53	26	20	29	11	122	2
	14. Homeless or Runaway Youth	190	4.2%	2	12	25	3	0	13	4	12	0
	15. Not Employed at Program Enrollment	3,594	78.6%	47	1,008	193	88	20	136	62	310	19
<b>PROGRAM SERVICES, ACTIVITIES, AND OTHER RELATED ASSISTANCE</b>												
1. Received Education/Job Training Activities		7	0	309	78	14	128	50	311	21	246	203
2. Received Work Experience Activities		7	458	141	79	21	111	51	0	21	123	185
3. Received Community Involvement and Leadership Development Activities		0	0	0	79	0	25	50	310	0	0	62
4. Received Post-Secondary Exploration, Career Guidance and Planning Activities		27	3	309	79	29	214	50	3	19	346	109
5. Received Mentoring Activities		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	186
6. Received Support Services		3	59	54	43	26	17	25	0	0	67	26
<b>INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE (Based on Number Served)</b>												
1. Attained Work Readiness or Education Goals in ISS		7	1004	51	81	0	109	53	309	12	72	125
2. Received Academic/Service Learning Credit		5	1004	39	78	7	79	45	309	13	43	53
3. Obtained High School Diploma/GED, Remained in School, Obtained a Certificate or Degree, or Drop-out; Returned to School		0	925	43	74	15	91	46	291	13	59	216
4. Entered Post Secondary Education, Vocational/Occupational Skills Training, Apprenticeship, or Military or Entered Employment		3	0	53	4	3	26	1	0	0	98	25
<b>CUSTOMER SATISFACTION</b>												
1. Number of Participants Rating MYP Experience as "Excellent"		4		1	23		18				2	
2. Number of Participants Rating MYP Experience as "Very Good"		2		1	23		13				0	
3. Number of Participants Rating MYP Experience as "Average"		0		0	8		6				0	
4. Number of Participants Rating MYP Experience as "Below Average"		0		0	1		0				0	
5. Number of Participants Rating MYP Experience as "Poor"		0		0	0		2				0	
6. Total Number of Surveys Completed		6		2	55		39				2	

# MINNESOTA YOUTH PROGRAM - RETURN ON INVESTMENT INFORMATION

State Fiscal Year 2024 (July 1, 2023 to September 30, 2024)

Minnesota Youth Program (SFY2024)	WDA DATA
A. Unduplicated Count of MYP Enrollees	4,575
B. Total number of MYP termed	2,949
C. Total number of MYP terminees that returned to school	1,919
D. Total number of MYP terminees that were placed in jobs	480
E. Average wage at placement for MYP placements	\$17.52
F. Average number of hours per week for MYP placements	30
G. Total number of MYP placed in work experience	2,055
H. Average wage for those MYP placed in work experience	\$13.26
I. Average number of hours per week for MYP work experience	35
J. Total MYP expenses for the program year	\$1,219,943
K. Total Annual Wages Earned by MYP Participants	\$18,841,329
L. Total Government Taxes Paid (est at 26.6%)	\$5,011,794
M. Est. Welfare Savings on Placements (Avg. \$6835)	\$3,280,800
N. Total Annual Return to Government	\$8,292,594
O. Positive Termination Rate	81.3%
P. Entered Employment Rate	16.3%
Q. Return on Investment	\$6.80







## **MINNESOTA YOUTH PROGRAM**

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