



MINNESOTA YOUTH PROGRAM

SFY2025 ANNUAL REPORT



This 2025 Annual Report provides an overview of youth employment and training activities funded under the Minnesota Youth Program (MYP) in SFY2025.

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WHO IS SERVED BY THE MINNESOTA YOUTH PROGRAM?

During State Fiscal Year 2025 (SFY2025), 4,352 youth were served through the work experience component of the Minnesota Youth Program (MYP) and an additional 43,791 youth were served through the Outreach to Schools/Career Advisor component of MYP. Of the youth served, 59% were Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), 49% 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 SFY2025 and outcomes are included in charts at the end of this report.

For SFY2025 the program was funded with \$4.05 million from the Workforce Development Fund and \$4.51 million from the General Fund.

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?

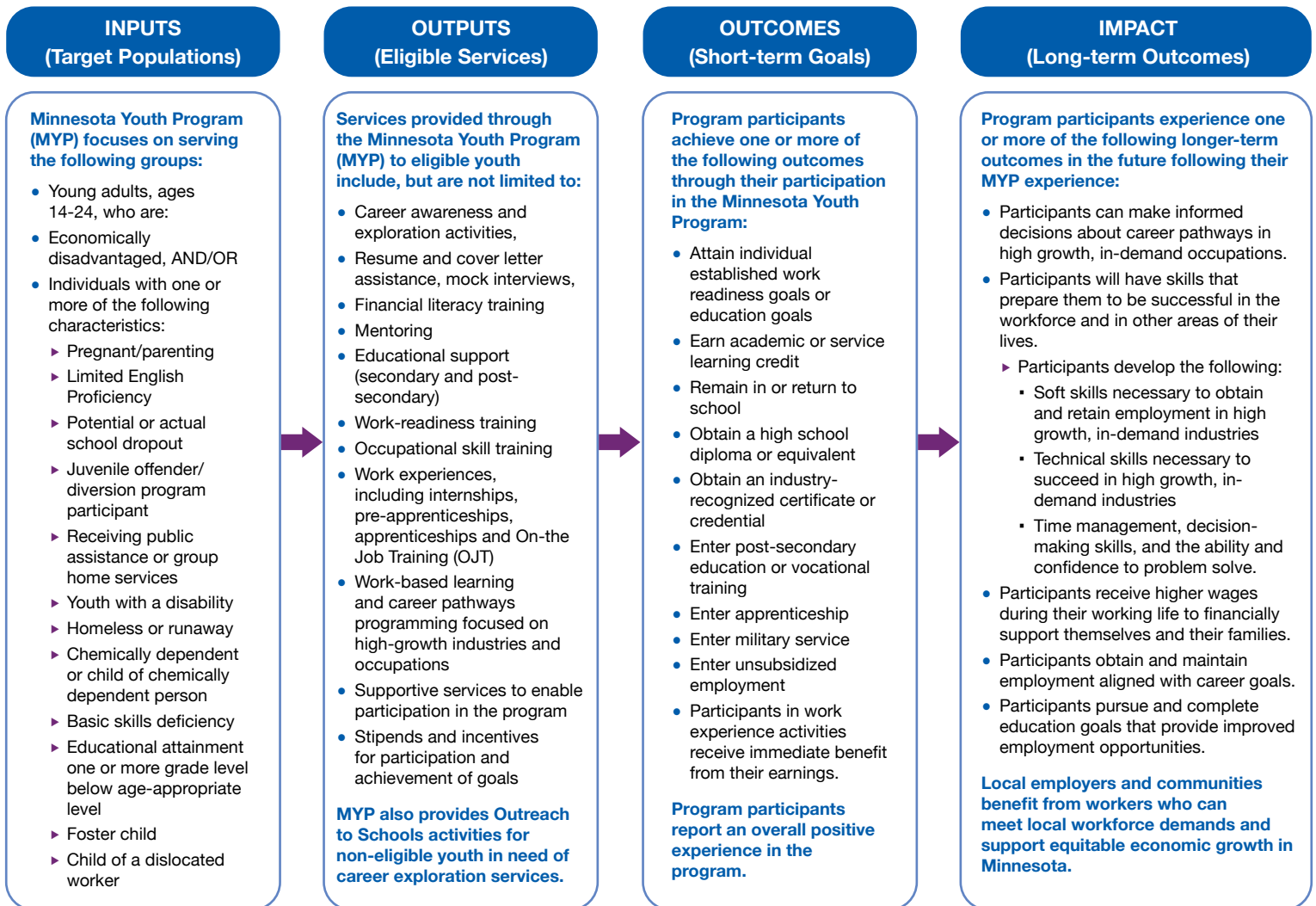
Research has shown that the number one predictor of future success in the workforce is early exposure to work experience:

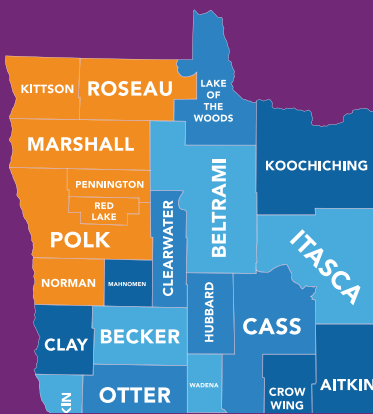
- Contextual learning improves student's grades, attendance, and graduation rates.
- Young people who have an opportunity to gain work experience as teens are more likely to stay in school, avoid criminal involvement, gang behavior, drugs and unplanned pregnancies.
- Teen employment contributes to significantly 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.

HOW ARE MINNESOTA YOUTH PROGRAM SERVICES PROVIDED?

In SFY2025, services were provided by 18 grantees throughout the state. A description of each local program is provided in the next section of this report. The following logic model describes the overall target populations, eligible services, and short-term and long-term desired impacts of the MYP.

MINNESOTA YOUTH PROGRAM – LOGIC MODEL





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

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

OVERVIEW

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

ICCC connects these youth – many of whom face significant barriers to employment – with targeted activities and opportunities designed to reduce those barriers. The program focuses on helping participants develop essential work and soft skills needed for long-term success in the workforce.

Case managers play a central role by reviewing in-demand occupations and using assessment tools to help youth identify career paths that align with their interests and strengths. ICCC also provides paid work experiences and additional training as needed to support skill development and career readiness.

To ensure continued success in both school and work environments, case managers maintain close, individualized support for each participant. The ultimate goal is to empower youth to become successful, self-sufficient adults.

Funding for these services is provided through MYP funds and federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth funds. All youth programs are developed with input from ICCC staff, Youth Committee members, and the local workforce development board to ensure they are responsive to community needs.

BEST PRACTICES

Strong referrals and collaborative partnerships between Inter-County Community Council (ICCC) and local agencies across Northwest Minnesota are essential to the success of youth participating in the MYP. Many of these young individuals face significant barriers, and ICCC's ability to connect them with trusted partner organizations ensures they receive the additional resources needed to thrive.

These partnerships allow ICCC to focus on helping youth achieve their employment goals. Building meaningful relationships—with community partners, worksites, and the youth themselves—is central to MYP's effectiveness.

Case managers play a key role by cultivating connections with youth to better understand their challenges, needs, and aspirations. The relationships case managers develop with employers and worksites are instrumental in overcoming these challenges. ICCC places a strong emphasis on providing paid work experiences, which can be especially difficult to secure in rural Minnesota.

ICCC also relies on referrals from local school districts, including East Grand Forks, county human services, and other community organizations to identify youth who would benefit from MYP. Through these referrals, ICCC delivers wraparound services that ensure comprehensive support and help prevent youth from falling 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. ICCC partners with local nonprofits, the East Grand Forks School District, and Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs to identify and recruit New American youth for participation in MYP. These collaborative efforts help ensure that outreach is inclusive and responsive to the unique needs of immigrant and refugee communities. Furthermore, through these partnerships ICCC is able to recruit youth with disabilities. Once enrolled, MYP participants gain meaningful work experiences that enhance their professional development, build confidence, and foster stronger connections within the community. Through this initiative, ICCC is helping to empower youth with the tools and opportunities they need to thrive in both educational and career pathways.



CUSTOMER COMMENTS

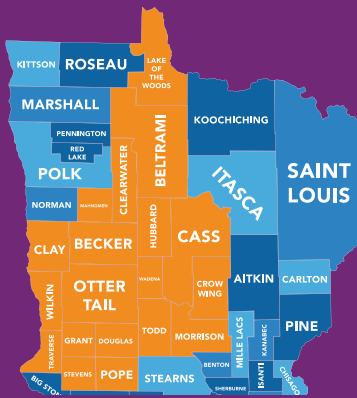
- “I wasn’t confident enough to apply for a job before I went through a year of work experience, but I had no fear this summer looking for a job and interviewing.”
– YOUTH PARTICIPANT
- “It was great watching the youth grow as they worked.”
– WORKSITE SUPERVISOR
- “I wasn’t sure if the youth would ever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





Rural Minnesota

Rural Minnesota Concentrated Employment Program (RMCEP)

Tina Jaster, Executive Director

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Phone: (218) 846-7400

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 Programs (RMCEP) is a private, non-profit employment and training agency. RMCEP covers 19 counties in Northwest Minnesota and includes 8 CareerForce locations. 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.

- RMCEP assists youth with transportation issues by providing financial assistance with drivers' training, gas cards and bus tickets, and partnering with the Car Care Program for reduced repair costs and donated vehicles to get participants 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.
- Using public schools as worksites has been a great way to support communities and give youth meaningful and well-supervised work experiences in a familiar setting
- Collaboration with community agencies and local financial institutions has enhance service delivery and referral networks.

MN EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION MODEL (ETM) GRANT

RMCEP is the recipient of a multi-year demonstration grant from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) expanding transition services for youth and young adults with disabilities, aged 14 through 24, with a priority focus on 17- to 24-year-olds. Participants are guided by Youth Services Coordinators through cohesive, in-depth career pathway services in preparation for high school graduation and the next step. Together, they create person-centered goals overlayed with best practices of Guideposts for Success and Integrated Resource Teams. Parents are counted on to set high expectations for their youth or young adult, with access to an array of family-focused resources.

This program offers more in-depth assessments and job exploration, as well as increased opportunities for paid work experience, which offer an invaluable benefit of mentorship from a worksite supervisor or seasoned co-worker. Through more robust case management, participants are encouraged to leverage greater autonomy and self-advocacy skills to navigate the complexities of post-secondary education and training or full-time competitive employment.

The goal of the MN ETM grant is to empower a person with a disability to transition past the traditional exit point of high school by bridging gaps or addressing emerging barriers in the new domains of adulthood.

SERVING YOUTH UNDERREPRESENTED IN THE WORKFORCE

RMCEP serves an area with three American Indian tribal nations and the city of Moorhead, which has become home for many New Americans. This past year, RMCEP served 636 youth across MYP, Youth at Work, and WIOA programs. Of those, 19.5% were persons of color/American Indian, 72.8% had a disability, 3.9% were pregnant or parenting youth, 3.8% were involved in the justice system, 3.0% were in foster care, 1.6% were homeless, and 45.6% were female. Age ranges included ages 14-15 = 19.5%, 16-17 = 30.0%, 18-21 = 44.0% and 22-24 = 6.4%. Many at-risk youth come from low-income families and families with many generations living in the same household. Youth with a disability represent the fastest growing underserved population.

Resources and speakers on cultural competency are part of RMCEP's professional staff development, and Youth Services Coordinators and worksites work 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.

Career Advising work done by staff includes Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Information and Completion Nights, where Youth Services Coordinators can speak with high school students and parents about the FAFSA, as well as funding opportunities available through RMCEP programs. RMCEP staff have been able to partner with other local non-profits and community businesses to reach out to students with information on financial literacy and connect with students planning to enter in-demand fields such as Heavy Equipment Operations, Law Enforcement, and Teaching. Through these and other efforts, RMCEP staff have reached out to over 9,000 youth in the past year.

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 busing students to job fairs and promotes events through media such as radio, newspaper, email and social media outreach. Events included October Manufacturing Month events, a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Exploration Event, a Career and Transfer Fair, a Transition Resource Fair, and a Career & Community Resources Fair that had over 500 students in attendance, as well as around 100 members of the community.

Outreach efforts by staff also include presentations on RMCEP programs to various area schools and learning centers, promotion of the MYP summer program, resume and interview workshops done in collaboration with area ABE locations, career exploration classes for youth pursuing college tuition assistance, and individualized assistance with resume reviews, mock interviews, and job application completion. Youth Services Coordinators provide resources such as job search and career exploration websites and tools such as career interest assessments to help youth align their interests and abilities with potential career paths and understand available training options, such as short-term and post-secondary training, apprenticeships, work experience, and on-the-job training. Overall, RMCEP staff have a strong focus on building rapport with participants to provide effective mentorship and holistic support.



CUSTOMER COMMENTS

- “I love the work I was able to do this summer. I learned a lot from the owner and my coworkers. I was really nervous at the beginning, especially with talking to customers, but everyone was so nice and now I’m not nervous at all!” – *YOUTH PARTICIPANT*
- “Having the student here over the summer has been a wonderful experience for everyone involved. Center staff have seen tremendous growth since he started.” – *SUPERVISOR*

SUCCESS STORY: Wayne

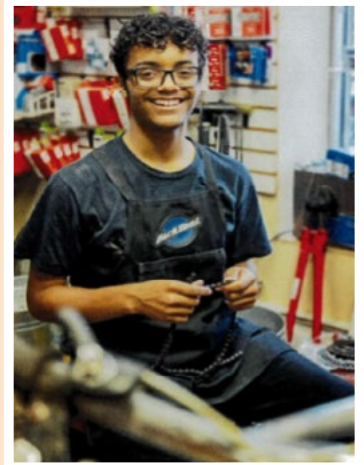
Wayne is an MYP participant in RMCEP's MYP program who was recently named the August Employee of the Month by the local chamber and featured in the Morrison County Record newspaper. Here is an excerpt of his story:

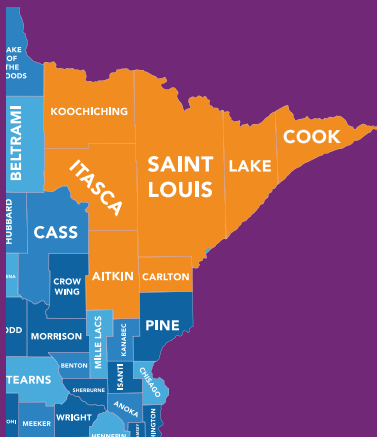
“(Wayne) was surprised when he learned he had been selected as Employee of the Month by the Little Falls Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism. ‘I was very shocked. I never saw myself as an Employee of the Month,’ he said. ‘I kind of just come here and try to do whatever job needs to be done.’

He began working at Touright in the summer of 2022 and said he has enjoyed the experience – not only because of the people he’s met, but also because of the knowledge he’s gained. When he started, he didn’t know anything about repairing bicycles. Now, he said, he does.

(Wayne) first learned about the Rural Minnesota CEP program and met with Youth Services Coordinator David Stumpf at CareerForce in Little Falls. Although a variety of job opportunities were listed, he chose Touright. His only connection to the shop beforehand was that his father would occasionally stop in to bring doughnuts and visit with owner David Sperstad.

‘I’ve learned everything from the ground up,’ (Wayne) said. ‘I didn’t know how to do anything on bikes, and he (David Sperstad) taught me everything. Now I can do all these different things. It’s very cool to be able to do these things that some people just can’t. I’ve never had a skill in life before that people around me didn’t have, so it’s very rewarding.’”





Northeast Minnesota

Northeast Minnesota Office of Job Training (JET)

Marie Domiano, Executive Director
820 North 9th Street – Suite 240
P.O. Box 1028, Virginia, MN 55792
Phone: (218) 748-2200
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 MYP Outreach to Schools (OTS) service that provides free career planning and guidance to local school districts. It leverages the expertise of the CareerForce system and longstanding regional partnerships.

While some districts offer strong career planning resources, many lack the tools needed to prepare students for life after high school. Career EdVenture addresses this gap by offering a standardized menu of services available to any district in the region. Services have expanded beyond the core area through partnerships, benefiting the broader Northeast Minnesota region. JET OTS annually serves nearly 3,000 youth and parents directly, and several thousand more indirectly.

CAREER EDVENTURE SERVICES

Services fall into two main categories:

1. Individual Services

- One-on-one career guidance
- Career assessments
- Postsecondary planning
- Resume development
- Personalized job search strategies
- High school transition support

2. Group/Classroom Services

- Navigating Business Culture
- Financial Literacy
- Business and industry speakers/tours
- Postsecondary planning workshops
- Career interest/values assessments
- Career exploration games and activities

Services are available to all students, with tailored efforts to support at-risk youth, including special education students, youth in foster care, and participants in Alternative Learning Programs (ALPs).

JET continues to support regional workforce needs with the expansion of the 218Trades Initiative to 218Workplace, which focuses on the occupational sectors of construction, manufacturing, health care, transportation/logistics, leisure and hospitality services, and education.

HELPING STUDENTS NAVIGATE THE WORLD OF WORK

Career EdVenture helps students explore opportunities through:

- Post-secondary planning workshops using labor market information
- Classroom presentations from local business/industry professionals
- Financial literacy workshops with referrals to the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency (AEOA)
- Self-advocacy and decision-making skills training

Students use tools like a 2-part Career Exploration series and accompanying worksheets to research high-demand, high-wage careers, and to identify reputable sources of career information.

BEST PRACTICES AND HIGHLIGHTS

To maintain quality and effectiveness, JET uses Microsoft Teams surveys for group and individual OTS services.

JET continues to expand its impact through involvement in events like:

- Construct Tomorrow, a hands-on trades career event
- The Iron Range EmpowHER Girls in the Trades Camp
- Tours to CareerForce sites, technical colleges, and local businesses
- Participation in regional job fairs

All events aim to provide students with exposure to the skills, pathways, and real-world opportunities available in their communities. Youth also receive training in using Minnesotaworks.net and the CareerForce system.



JET has also integrated modern resources and delivery methods, including:

- A dedicated YouTube channel and online educational content via the JET/NEMOJT website
- Support for students' technological needs and connections to services like PCs for People

JET counselors are a consistent presence across regional technical and community colleges, including:

- Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College
- Lake Superior College
- Minnesota North College campuses in Grand Rapids, Ely, Hibbing, International Falls, Eveleth, and Virginia

These efforts strengthen the bridge from secondary to postsecondary education with timely and relevant career information.

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

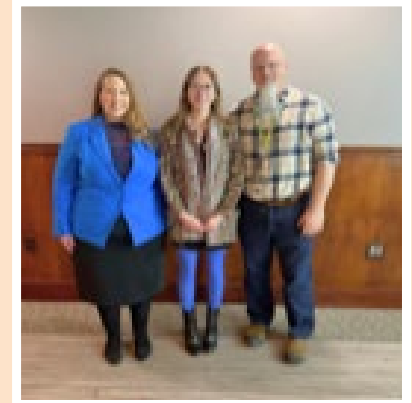
JET works closely with:

- Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS)
- Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board
- Applied Learning Institute
- Perkins-funded programs

Blended services allow JET to reach all students in a school district, ensuring inclusive access regardless of need or ability. These activities support enrollment in WIOA, MYP, and Youth at Work programming.

SUCCESS STORY: Brooklyn

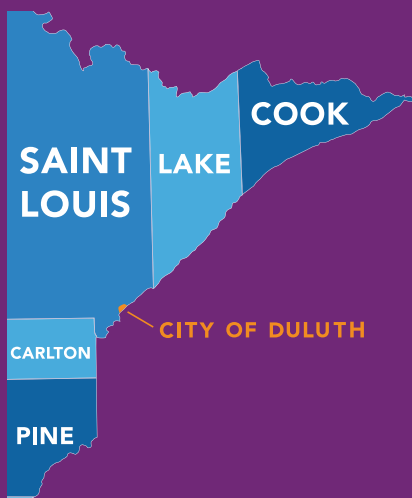
Kim Parmenter, Hermantown Chamber of Commerce President, shared her experience working with JET program participant, Brooklyn:



"During her time with us, Brooklyn has demonstrated incredible initiative and resilience. She obtained her driver's permit, earned her license, and purchased her first car – an achievement made even more impressive by the fact that she personally financed and repaired it to make it roadworthy. She has developed time management and accountability skills that are essential in a small business environment, where we depend on each other every day. She has also enrolled in our local community college, with dreams of pursuing a degree in psychology and social work, fueled by her fascination with the science of the brain.

"Brooklyn has grown into a pleasant, polite, and professional young woman. She has rapidly developed problem-solving abilities and social skills, demonstrating an eagerness to learn and adapt. With a little guidance and oversight, she has largely taught herself how to use our Customer Relationship Management system, and professional tools such as Canva, Facebook, LinkedIn, Outlook, Microsoft Office and others, all of which streamline our office operations. These skills will serve her well in any future career path, but the most significant impact has been on her personal growth. She is now a confident and capable individual who believes in her potential and future."





City of Duluth

Duluth Workforce Development

Elena Foshay, Director

402 West 1st Street, Duluth, MN 55802

Phone: (218) 730-5241

www.duluthmn.gov/yesduluth

Area served: City of Duluth

YOUTH-CENTERED SERVICES

YES Duluth staff work under a model of “meeting youth where they are at” in a variety of ways. Staff are trained in Trauma Informed Care and make efforts to serve youth under a harm reduction model. Staff work with program partners to provide a “no wrong door” approach, allowing youth to access services and resources through a system of support and warm handoffs. YES Duluth sustains a hybrid service model, supporting youth in-person, virtually, or by text, email, or phone. Services are responsive to participant preference, increasing accessibility and engagement.

CAREER EXPLORATION AND OUTREACH TO SCHOOLS (OTS)

YES Duluth provides comprehensive career exploration services to support youth in identifying and pursuing meaningful employment pathways. Through partnerships with private-sector employers, youth gain hands-on experience in supportive work experience placements, many of which lead to positive references or permanent jobs. Participants also explore career interests through job shadowing, site visits, and informational interviews, often as part of their individualized career pathway plans. Strong partnerships with CareerForce, Lake Superior College, True North Goodwill, and JET connect youth to exploration and certification opportunities in fields like Healthcare, Construction, and Manufacturing. Additional exposure is offered through school-based events such as Construct Tomorrow and Discover Healthcare, which engage both students and families in exploring career options and building awareness of regional workforce opportunities.

OTS expands on school guidance efforts by offering activities through Career Centers at local high schools, including:

- Career workshops and labor market information
- Job shadows, business tours, and career fairs
- Support with FAFSA financial aid forms, post-secondary planning, and career assessments
- Presentations to ISD709 Career and College Readiness classes and Denfeld High School Indigenous Cohort
- Individualized counseling and career exploration including career assessments, resume preparation, job search assistance, and mock interviews

WORK EXPERIENCE AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

YES Duluth paid work experience is customized to youth interests, abilities, and needs. Placements are designed to develop transferable skills, employability, and positive references or permanent jobs. Participants, Job Counselors and Worksite Supervisors collaborate to help youth practice employment skills in a supportive environment that promotes learning and open communication. Through paid work experience, youth improve employability and work readiness, explore their career goals, and reinforce skills through on-the-job learning and mentoring.

YES Duluth supports leadership development for participants engaged in paid work experience by offering a two-tiered approach to advancement and competency building. Participants that enter work experience in an entry-level position may advance into a leadership development position based on performance and readiness. Job counselors, worksite supervisors and participants work together to build skills in self-advocacy, soft skills and development of leadership goals through this process. Through leadership development, youth expand on work readiness competencies of strategic thinking, self-management, conflict resolution, collaboration, and assertive communication.

FINANCIAL LITERACY

YES Duluth provides participants the opportunity to engage in financial literacy development through Financial Literacy Learning Circles. Learning Circles are designed to provide person-centered, youth-driven financial literacy education. Through the process, youth engage in group discussions with their peers around their money-based questions such as budgeting, credit building, and savings, with follow-up learning in partnership with local bankers. Facilitated by YES Duluth staff, local banks and credit unions, these events include optional one-on-one financial counseling focused on credit-building and savings goals. These efforts emphasize and support person-centered financial decisions and long-term relationships with local financial institutions.

BRAIDED FUNDING

YES Duluth braids MYP funding with WIOA Youth, TANF Youth, Youth at Work, and Youth Support Services funding to support youth holistically. Through collaboration with CareerForce partners, including Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), WIOA Adult, Pathways to Prosperity, JET, VRS and DEED services, participants access multiple funding streams to achieve education and employment goals. Services are coordinated through co-located programs, shared consent forms, and fluid referrals between program staff.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

YES Duluth's work is rooted in strong community partnerships. Staff actively participate in community-based committees including the Duluth Youth Agency Coalition, Reaching Housing Stability with Young People, Duluth Workforce Development Board's Equity Committee, Student Attendance Referral Board, Interagency Coordinating Council of Duluth and the Emerging Workforce Committee. These collaborations foster cross-referrals, shared grants, and wrap-around services for YES Duluth participants.

Key community partners also include:

- Life House: Provides work readiness and job skills training, entrepreneurial skill building, and GED studies and testing for youth experiencing housing instability.
- Neighborhood Youth Services, Boys & Girls Club, Valley Youth Center: Offers after-school programs, mentorship and paid Work Experience for under-served youth.
- Family Freedom Center: Empowers the Black community through programming, paid work experience and education, including entrepreneurial training for youth.
- True North Goodwill: Offers re-entry services, job readiness, and post-secondary training.
- ISD 709 and Higher Ed: Including the Duluth Community Schools Collaborative, local High Schools, Area Learning Center, Duluth Adult Education, Lake Superior College, and additional regional colleges and universities.
- Employers, CareerForce Partners, and Community Mentors: Helping facilitate work experiences, career pathway connections, and service and supports to individuals and families.



SUCCESS STORY: Jasmine

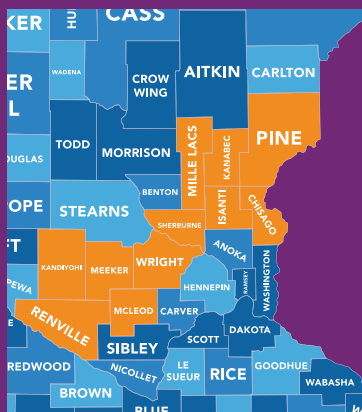
Jasmine came to YES Duluth seeking support to earn her GED and find stable employment. At the time, she was experiencing housing instability and managing chronic health issues.

Her YES Duluth counselor worked with Jasmine to create a personalized plan. The first step was to connect her with Life House for GED tutoring and housing application assistance. To provide daily structure and financial stability, Jasmine also completed paid work experience through YES Duluth. Within a year, Jasmine had earned her GED and secured her own apartment.

While working in hospitality, Jasmine shared her goal of pursuing a career in health care. Her YES Duluth counselor referred her to Duluth Workforce Development's Adult/Dislocated Worker program for training assistance. With this added support, Jasmine completed Nursing Assistant training and passed the certification exams.

Jasmine is now a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) at Essentia Health and is continuing her nursing studies at Lake Superior College. Jasmine's dedication and hard work, combined with the support she received from the YES Duluth team and partners, have been key to her success.





Central Minnesota

Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services, Inc.

Diana Ristamaki, Youth Program Manager

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Monticello, MN 55362

Phone: 320-364-0321

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, WIOA, Youthbuild, 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 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 six innovative two-week hands-on career exploration camps. This 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, resume writing, job application preparation, interviewing practice, CPR certification, 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. <https://youtu.be/0jugEMsJadk>.

Legacy2Inspire – An innovative partnership with Legacy2Inspire, a nonprofit that focuses on teaching youth construction and metal working skills via a mobile lab, provided a unique way to connect with youth through a mentorship model. Legacy2Inspire 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." Legacy2Inspire's mentorship model is built around three core components: Connect, Build Trust, and Mentor.

Youth Voice – CMJTS is committed to understanding the community's diverse needs and believe that youth voice offers unique insights that shape programs. A grant through Greater Twin Cities United Way amplified these voices through youth focus groups. These groups fostered open dialogue, enabling youth to identify needs and contribute directly to program development. The goal was to ensure CMJTS youth programs met the real needs and goals of those served. Most importantly, youth had a voice in the agency's work. Six focus groups were conducted across 11 counties. CMJTS is gathering data and elevating youth voice through the creation of a Youth Ambassador group. This initiative ensures that youth are not only participants in programs but also active partners in shaping, promoting, and strengthening the services that impact their future.

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 Explore Youth Future. 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 over 7,773 youth and families through OTS efforts.

YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

In 2025, 78% of participants served identified as having a disability. Strategies and initiatives are enhanced through the Employment Transition Model (ETM) grant. This grant is administered by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), in partnership with DEED. These initiatives are designed to develop innovative strategies that assist youth and young adults with disabilities, particularly those from underserved communities, in overcoming barriers to employment and successfully transitioning into the workforce.

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, VRS, Adult Basic Education, Perkins consortiums, Legacy 2 Inspire, Operation Exploration camp partners, community action agencies, and other community-based organizations.



SUCCESS STORY: Porter

"My name is Porter, and I recently graduated from Annandale High School. As a hands-on learner, classroom work was challenging, and college didn't seem like an option. But after working with my Career Navigator Jodi from CMJTS, I applied to college, was accepted into the Electrical Line Worker Program at MN State Wadena and started courses this fall. Jodi also introduced me to the Heavy Equipment Operator Program at Wright Technical Center, where I earned my OSHA 10 certification.



"Attending Operation Exploration Trades Camp last summer exposed me to welding, vehicle maintenance, heavy equipment operation, and business tours that broadened my career interests. Making friends at camp was an added benefit.

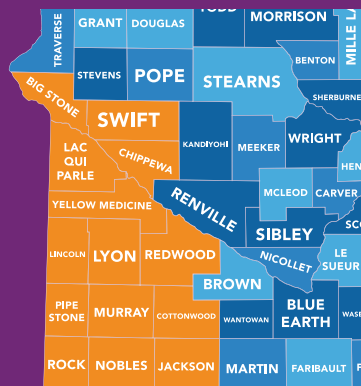
"My high school work experience coordinator and Jodi have been really helpful with ideas that match my interests and supporting me to do new things. CMJTS recently helped get my CDL needed for my Electrical Lineman schooling. I would definitely recommend summer career camp and working with a CMJTS Career Navigator like Jodi to other students."

STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

- "CMJTS employs highly competent and motivated Career Navigators who strengthen student teams to provide the best possible outcome for finding meaningful employment and self-sufficiency. I see students increasing engagement with their studies, improving attendance, and being motivated as they see a direct connection between their education and potential career outcomes." – *TEACHER*
- "Learning small but important things that most adults don't know after high school has been such a great experience. I think opportunities like this open so many doors for students, and everyone deserves the chance to be part of it. I'm grateful I had this experience, and honestly, I wish I could do it again. I believe every student should have the opportunity to benefit from something like this."

– *YOUTH PARTICIPANT*





Southwest Minnesota

Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council (PIC)

Maria Peters, Youth Program Manager

318 9th Street, Worthington MN 56187

Phone: 507-295-5020

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 (SWMNPIC) 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. SWMNPIC has been working to build and strengthen tomorrow's workforce since 1985, celebrating 40 years this year!

Collaborating with employers and educators, the youth and young 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.

SWMNPIC leverages other resources, such as 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

SWMNPIC 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 can learn about their options after high school through professionals that look like them and have similar stories and background. The professionals 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 underrepresented 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 SWMNPIC. Students from area alternative schools were recruited to attend.

Southwest Minnesota is very diverse, and the youth served reflect that with 67% of enrolled youth identifying as a person of color.

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

As the impact of the work of the SWMNPIC 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 SWMNPIC 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:

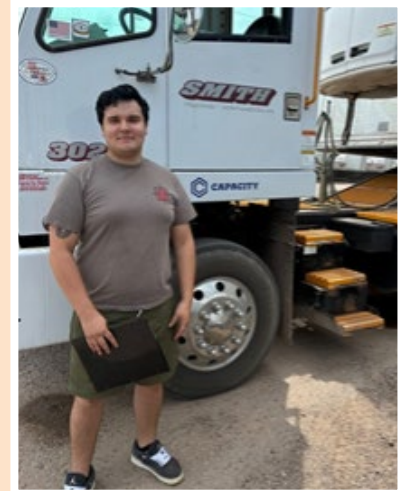
- Learning what employers expect and how to meet those expectations,
- Trying different jobs to find the best fit as well as likes and dislikes,
- Providing youth exposure to work, careers, and a professional network.

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



SUCCESS STORY: Frank

Frank, a 17-year-old student at Worthington High School, lived with his grandmother, aunt, and five cousins when he enrolled in the MYP. At the time, he was working at KFC, taking customer orders, but after a year on the job, he realized he wanted to pursue something different.



Not knowing where to go or how to take the next steps, but with a clear interest in learning a trade, Frank sought out help from SWMNPIC and joined the welding training program. In this program, he discovered his passion. Through dedication and hard work, he successfully completed the course and earned six college credits from Minnesota West, three in welding and three in blueprint reading.

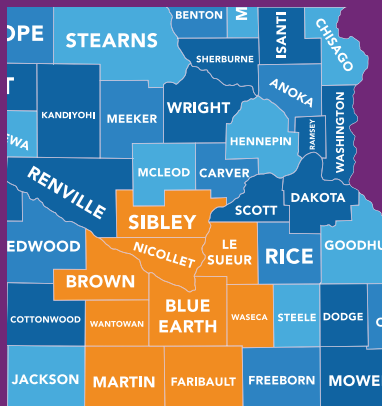
While finishing his senior year of high school, Frank also gained real-world experience through a work placement, which provided valuable on-the-job training. His commitment quickly paid off when he was hired by Smith's Trucking, a local family-owned trucking company, shortly after completing the program. Frank helps by cleaning out the trailers, doing light repairs, and is even getting to learn to drive the semis.

Frank reflected on his experience, saying "You'll never know you'll be good at something until you try it." His worksite supervisor, Chad, also spoke highly of him, sharing: "Frank is a good worker. He keeps things picked up and in order, and he gets along with everyone."

CUSTOMER COMMENTS

- "This program helped me boost my confidence in my skills and helped establish new skills."
– YOUTH PARTICIPANT
- "I am proud of the confidence and communication skills I built. Being able to talk to people not only helped me socially but helped gain confidence which resulted in producing better work."
– YOUTH PARTICIPANT
- "I'm being given the ability to chase my dream."
– YOUTH PARTICIPANT
- "I got a better understanding about jobs."
– YOUTH PARTICIPANT





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

www.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 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 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 assisted 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.

VIRTUAL SERVICES

Both virtual and in-person methods effectively support youth with career exploration, counseling, and work readiness services. The Get Started virtual online course teaches workplace communication, budgeting, wellness, and local 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](#) offers schools three videos on Skills, Interviewing, and Maintaining Employment, to supplement the in-person presentations.

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

CAREER EVENTS

A variety of career exploration events featured demand occupations in key industries in the area. Over 500 students from 18 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 875 students from 35 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 through eight sessions including a training center tour. Boot Camp was recently acknowledged as a first-place promising practice by the Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards. Sixty-five 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 school 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.

During individual and group services, interns discussed career assessments and planning, provided help with career exploration tools, shared post-secondary information, and assisted with job searches to ensure students were on track to graduate and transition from 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 & Somali. A monthly [Career Corner](#) newsletter shared with school districts highlights the infographics and in-demand industries.

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

Collaborative partners include: local school districts, industry partners, union trade representatives, 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, VRS, MVAC, and the DEED Regional Labor Market Analyst).



SUCCESS STORY: ADRIANA

At 17, Adriana faced more challenges than most teens ever imagine. Living in foster care with her grandmother, alongside her younger brother and sister, she was navigating a world that demanded strength, maturity, and perseverance.

Through the MVAC Youth Program, she started working at a local flower shop after school, where she found not just a job, but a community.

Her joy was infectious—she once said, “Even the garbage smells good!” That simple quote captured her spirit: finding beauty even in the mess.

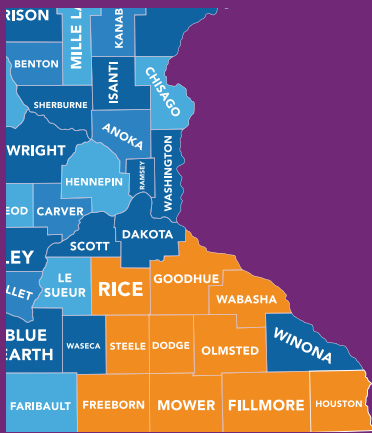
Determined to build a future, Adriana explored career paths and enrolled in a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) course over the summer. She balanced her studies with increased hours at the flower shop and successfully completed the program. Her dedication paid off—at a recent school meeting, it was revealed that she had not only caught up on credits but exceeded graduation requirements.

Through it all, Adriana has remained a steady, inspiring role model for her siblings. Her journey is a testament to what happens when courage meets opportunity. She’s not just moving forward—she’s paving the way. Adriana’s story reminds us: no matter where you start, with heart and determination you can build the life you dream of.



STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

- “I was able to learn about banking, credit and debit, checks, and anything about that subject.”
– YOUTH PARTICIPANT
- “The program helped me pay for my CNA test and staff reminded me to stay on track!”
– YOUTH PARTICIPANT
- “It was inspiring to have the opportunity sitting down with a student each month and discussing their growth and interests and see them settle on a field they were enthusiastic about.” – PICE INTERN
- “I learned questions to ask employers, and how fast first impressions are made to employers.”
– STUDENT SERVED THROUGH OUTREACH TO SCHOOLS
- “The activities helped students make connections to the topic. We love what you provide, and this topic (identifying skills) was great.” – EDUCATOR COMMENTS ABOUT OUTREACH TO SCHOOLS SERVICES



Southeast Minnesota

Workforce Development Inc. (WDI)

Jinny Rietmann, Director

2070 College View Rd E, Rochester, MN 55904

Phone: (507) 292-5152

www.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 the 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 AND SERVING UNDERREPRESENTED YOUTH IN THE WORKFORCE

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. Youth Career Planners use labor market data and employer input to guide young people toward high-demand careers, with strong emphasis on these key industries. Through partnerships with school districts, colleges, Adult Basic Education, and employers, students receive career coaching, barrier removal support, and college prep courses alongside essential skills training. The Bridges to Careers initiative, led by Hawthorne ABE, Rochester Community and Technical College, WDI, and local employers integrates these supports to prepare participants for further education and successful careers.

WDI has been involved with various experiential learning programs focused on serving underrepresented youth in the workforce 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 Steele County, a Workforce Navigator builds career pathways, offers work readiness training, and helps employers engage and retain young talent, bridging the gap between education and employment and ensuring long-term success for both students and the local workforce. 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.

The past two summers, 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 barriers 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.

This past summer a group of youth participated in a Career Exploration Summer Camp in partnership with Riverland Community College. The camp offered a group of students hands-on experiential activities in advanced manufacturing, agriculture, and transportation. Participants had the chance to build their own mini robot, engage in agriculture activities and explore transportation through simulations and interactive experiences.

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, Southeast Service Cooperative 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 VRS, Community Corrections, United Way, Homeless Coalitions, Somali American Social Service Association (SASSA), Red Wing Youth Outreach. 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, Harmony Enterprises, Wenger Corporation 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.

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.

Career Fairs and other exploration events are held throughout the Southeast Minnesota CareerForce system. Most often these are industry specific and offer youth an opportunity to explore careers that they are considering and determine skills and training needed to secure this career. Youth are selected to attend these fairs based on their interest and readiness for this option. WDI, high schools and post-secondary institutions are actively involved, with some serving as event hosts.

SUCCESS STORY: Henry



Henry was referred to WDI by a teacher for assistance with skills identification to revise his resume. He was a part of the Internship class at Kasson Mantorville High School (KMHS) and had been part of the workshops the WDI Career Planner had been providing. Upon learning about WDI programs and services, Henry enrolled

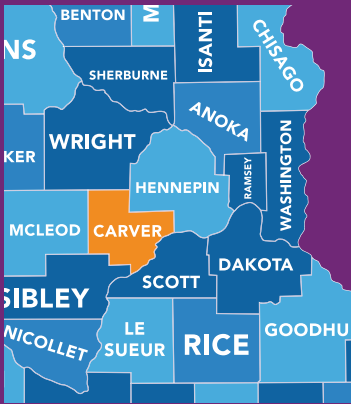


into the youth program. Henry had already been working as a farm laborer and equipment operator but needed certifications to verify his great skill level. Henry completed the OSHA 30 training, the online portion of the Forklift Certification, and completed the Operating Engineers Pathway - International Union of Operating Engineers Local 49 in preparation of joining the union and starting an apprenticeship for a heavy equipment operator. Henry graduated from KMHS in June 2025 and began as an indentured apprentice through Local 49, working full time as an equipment operator for M. A. Mortenson making \$33.08 hour and a fringe benefit package of \$29.25, for a total package of \$62.33.

CUSTOMER COMMENTS

- “I’m super proud of the way they handled the situation of my CNA Exam and made sure I didn’t give up on that and as a result I passed the Exams and now I’m a CNA.” – *YOUTH PARTICIPANT*
- “I am mostly an introvert, so I don’t like to socialize with random people. My career planner on the other hand is very social and has been role modeling that. He put me in a great internship to help with those skills as well. I love it and I’ve been able to thrive and speak up more than ever.” – *YOUTH PARTICIPANT*
- “The people involved do care about the young adults in the program and have resources that would help youth in any way possible.” – *YOUTH PARTICIPANT*





Carver County

Carver County Health & Human Services

Kate Probert Fagundes, Deputy Director

602 East 4th Street, Chaska, MN 55318

Phone: (952) 361-1600

www.co.carver.mn.us

Area served: Carver County

OVERVIEW

Carver County Health & Human Services serves youth ages 14-24 utilizing funds from both WIOA and MYP.

The Summer Youth Program 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 they are evaluated twice to help them know where they are exceling and where they could use improvement for when they enter the unsubsidized workforce.

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 immediately before starting their work experience. The intention of using 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.

Due to limited budget for work experience, career exploration and preparation opportunities in lieu of subsidized employment have been offered. Youth are encouraged to connect with CareerForce in Chaska to receive guidance from an Employment Counselor on building or enhancing a resume, pointers on interviewing, and assistance with job search and accessing training and support services. These efforts facilitated results for youth program participants in gaining unsubsidized employment. Carver County also offered a financial literacy two-hour class as part of the summer youth program as youth begin to earn a paycheck.

BEST PRACTICES/COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

Carver County collaborates with Southwest Metro Co-op for Youthbuild, The Forge, Carver Ridge Senior Living, Chaska Heights Senior Living, Trending Upward Thrift Shoppe, Unite Lodge (Humanity Alliance), Positive Presence, and CareerForce Chaska and many of these sites participated in the SYP this year. Worksites selected provide a genuine work experience and the worksite supervisors exhibit patience and create a supportive environment. 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. The Youthbuild work site also provides the opportunity for youth to earn academic credit while they learn valuable skills in the construction trade.

Carver County braids 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's goal is to recruit as many eligible youth as possible each year. Twenty-seven youth enrolled and most are traditionally underrepresented in the workforce due to their race or disability. Demographically, 20 youth experience a disability and are low-income while 11 are youth of color. Carver County is focusing on system integration to ensure that services have deep impacts on the lives of youth. School counselors, teachers, vocational rehabilitation counselors, DEED staff, Health and Human Service case managers, and corrections staff identify the Summer Youth Program as a valuable opportunity for providing necessary skills for the youth.

All the partners are committed to providing support and program enhancements to ensure the success of the youth participants. Carver County is focusing on providing services to all individuals with equity and cultural considerations in mind. If deemed ineligible for this programming, Carver County makes every effort to offer youth additional resources and referrals to ensure their success.



SUCCESS STORY: **Gabriel**

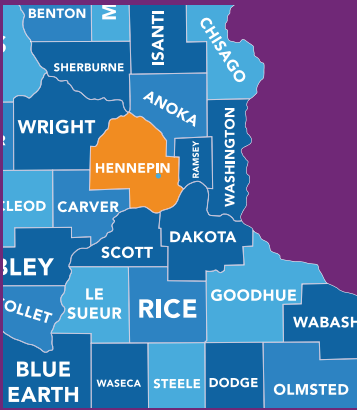


Gabriel, age 17, was referred to the SYP by an instructor at Southwest Metro Co-op and participated in the 2025 Youthbuild program. Youthbuild participants worked on a major cabin building project in partnership with Three Rivers Park District. When finished, these cabins will be available for park guests and will be housed at Carver Park Reserve in Victoria. The Youthbuild team also assisted in shed and small furniture building projects during the summer.

This was Gabriel's first year in the Summer Youth Program and Youthbuild. He is seeking a career in construction work, specifically in either a framing or brick masonry role. In Youthbuild, Gabriel contributed to the build of cabins, sheds, and assembled small furniture like chairs and tables. He mentioned the most challenging aspect of building was putting up the walls within these structures, but it was a good learning experience for him. Gabriel was recognized for his remarkable work ethic, eagerness to learn, and dedication to each task he was completing. He led by example which greatly contributed to the overall success of the team. Gabriel also learned new skills at a fast pace and was a consistent performer on the worksite.

Gabriel noted that Youthbuild was a valuable experience for his preparation for a career in construction and appreciated the efforts of the Youthbuild instructor for his effective teaching style and patience. Gabriel is looking forward to potentially graduating in December of 2025 and is looking forward to beginning a career in the construction field soon after.





Hennepin County

Hennepin County Department of Workforce Development

Brianna Zaiss, Sr. Planning Analyst, Youth Programs

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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 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 addresses 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 BrookLynk and Tree Trust 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 provides work readiness training and paid work experiences to youth and young adults ages 14 to 24 in Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center, and surrounding suburbs who face barriers to employment. Each summer, BrookLynk matches youth to 6- to 10-week internships across industries such as education, government, health care, human services, and nonprofit organizations. In 2025, 85 youth participated in summer internships, supported by job coaching, skill development, and the BrookLynk Alumni Network.

The Tree Trust Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) offers paid, hands-on work opportunities June to August for youth ages 14-21 who face barriers to employment. Through SYEP, participants develop professionalism, integrity, and resilience as they learn to take initiative on landscape construction projects and deliver high-quality results while working in a team. These skills provide a foundation for young people to excel in future employment. In 2025, 32 Hennepin County MYP-funded youth participated in this impactful program.

BEST PRACTICES

Serving Underrepresented Youth – Tree Trust makes a real impact where it's needed most by engaging youth from underrepresented backgrounds. Many SYEP participants identify as BIPOC, come from low-income households, or have diagnosed disabilities. To reach young people, Tree Trust builds strong, lasting connections with referral partners in schools, libraries, youth centers, and culturally specific organizations. SYEP Crew Leaders receive extensive training to strengthen their ability to create safe, welcoming spaces where all youth feel valued and supported. BrookLynk's recruitment and program design are intentionally structured to reach underrepresented youth and reduce barriers to participation. Across all programs, more than 80 percent of participants identify as youth of color. To ensure accessibility, BrookLynk offers culturally responsive materials in multiple languages and leverages a recruitment network of over 40 referral partners, including schools, nonprofits, housing programs, probation officers, and faith communities.

Leadership Opportunities and Youth-Led Program Design

– Tree Trust celebrates the achievements and leadership of youth at the August SYEP Celebration. Participants, parents/guardians, community partners, and Tree Trust staff honor how the youth transformed their community while building transferable skills. A total of 4 Hennepin County MYP funded 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. BrookLynk intentionally creates opportunities for youth to step into leadership roles within the program. In SFY25, two Youth Liaisons served on the Youth Advisory Committee, where they contributed to program design, implementation, and evaluation while also supporting marketing, outreach, and social media. Five Alumni Ambassadors conducted trainings, shared their stories, and helped prepare new participants for success. BrookLynk also introduced two new leadership roles: a Community Development Intern who gained hands-on experience supporting cross-departmental projects and increasing supervisor capacity, and a Workforce Development Intern who supported Friday Workshops and helped plan Intern Day.

Trainings, Certifications, and Employer Partnerships

– Tree Trust youth participants gain hands-on experience in technical trade skills, develop teamwork, and learn to meet professional workplace expectations while making a lasting impact on their communities. In 2025, SYEP youth completed

meaningful green projects, including constructing a boardwalk at Westwood Hills Nature Center in Saint Louis Park and building a timber staircase at Lake Girard Park in Bloomington. In 2025, 29 Hennepin MYP youth earned a Tree Trust Certificate recognizing their growth in tool identification, safety, environmental stewardship, budgeting, career exploration, resume building, and interviewing. BrookLynk introduces youth to construction and trades careers through partnerships with Brooklyn Center High School, the Finishing Trades Institute, and the Construction Careers Foundation, offering industry-recognized credentials and hands-on experience through the Minnesota Trades Academy. Employers commit to paying 100 percent of youth wages and participate in supervisor training focused on mentoring, cultural competency, and inclusive practices. These partnerships strengthen employer capacity while creating meaningful career exposure and supportive work environments for youth. The creation of a Community Development Intern position further expanded leadership opportunities by giving youth hands-on experience in program delivery and supporting multiple projects across divisions within the Department. This role also helped increase supervisor capacity where it had been a challenge in the past, and BrookLynk hopes to replicate this approach with other employer partners who may have limited supervision capacity.

Building Skills for Meaningful Careers – Before their internships, youth completed BrookLynk’s Get Ready! training, which builds professional skills through interactive sessions, employer engagement, and applied practice. A series of Friday workshops further strengthened preparation by combining career readiness, financial literacy, and technology, including AI tools for success, resume and cover letter development, personal branding, and financial management through a Virtual Reality (VR) budgeting simulator. The workshops concluded with alumni networking and next-step planning for continued success. Financial literacy has also been integrated throughout BrookLynk’s programming through strong partnerships with TopLine Credit Union and Stearns Bank, equipping participants with essential budgeting, planning, and decision-making skills that support long-term economic stability.

Community Collaboration – Hennepin County’s program providers collaborate with each other, with community partners, and with the people served. Tree Trust has established strong and enduring partnerships with various organizations across the Twin Cities. This includes nonprofit and government agencies, such as Fraser, Hired, My Path Coaching and Consulting, and VRS. Additionally, Tree Trust collaborates with schools serving Bloomington, Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, and Champlin to provide students with valuable career-building skills, setting them on a path to successful and meaningful careers.

OUTREACH TO SCHOOLS

Hennepin GO, or Growth and Opportunity, is Hennepin County’s overarching programmatic strategy to provide residents with internships and employment pathways, which play a crucial role in reducing disparities in employment, education, and income.

Hennepin GO offers a clear and comprehensive strategy that includes employment pathways, internships, externships, and

various programs focused on career readiness, skills-based learning, and targeted services for youth. By working closely with state and community partners, the county maximizes impact and creates meaningful opportunities for all.

In 2025, Hennepin GO launched an externship program for youth 14-24 as a complement to its internship offerings. The expansion of externship activities at Hennepin includes career exploration opportunities, job shadowing, and informational interviews.

The goals of the Hennepin GO externship program are to:

- Gain awareness of internship and employment opportunities with Hennepin County
- Learn how to prepare for a job in the public sector
- Gain skills and knowledge for specific career paths
- Increase employment skills and build confidence
- Expand personal network in the local labor market
- Prepare youth for livable wage jobs



SUCCESS STORY: Angelina

Angelina spent the summer of 2025 with the City of Brooklyn Park’s Recreation and Parks Department, where she completed her second summer internship through the BrookLynk program. Her main role was to plan and lead pop-up art activities for young people at various city events.

Early on, Angelina and her supervisor realized the position required her to step outside of her comfort zone. While she had plenty of creative ideas and experience working with youth, she found difficulty taking the initiative to bring those ideas to life. Through many conversations, they worked together to create a system of support, giving Angelina varied opportunities to share her ideas and build confidence.

With this additional support, Angelina began to grow. She successfully organized art activities for large events like Gus Macker and the City’s Arts and Business Expo. She learned to choose the right art supplies for different settings, estimate how many to prepare for, and, most importantly, design activities that people of all ages enjoyed. Her supervisor reflected on her contributions, sharing that, “Our intern made a significant impact on our division and department this summer. She supported art activities, community engagement, and youth program needs, while also contributing to community events. Our intern brought valuable knowledge, creativity, and initiative—developing and leading new art activities that she designed herself. Even when tasks were new to her, she stepped in with confidence and handled them exceptionally well.”

With her supervisor’s support and a newly created environment for success, Angelina’s skills in communication, initiative, and creativity grew significantly. Angelina embraced every challenge, remained curious, and committed herself to growth. BrookLynk staff are so proud of her dedication and hard work this summer and are excited to see what she accomplishes next.



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, 1,385 young people worked with 85 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 35,000 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-three 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 2,802 youth invited to training, 1,873 (67%) completed orientation, and 1,629 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.

Financial Education – A partnership with local banking partners allows Step Up interns to access and set up non-custodial bank accounts that they can manage and use to directly deposit their paychecks. In addition, Blaze Credit Union hosts summer financial education sessions called Reality Fairs at which youth can learn how to manage and budget their money during a real-time, engaging experience. Youth who have attended the sessions report they have learned practical information that they can use in the future.

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 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.

Overall, Step Up interns rated their experience 4.3 out of 5 stars!

- 92% of Step Up Interns reported that they felt like they made a valuable contribution to the employer/organization and 85% of supervisors felt like their interns made a valuable contribution.
- 86% of Step Up interns reported that because of their engagement with Step Up, "I can name at least two people I can ask for a professional reference."

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."



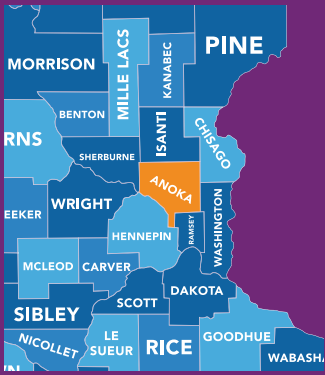
SUCCESS STORY: Javon

On July 31, Step Up intern Javon, working with the Minneapolis Police Department, showed incredible courage and compassion when he helped save a man's life on the 3rd Street Bridge. While walking to work, Javon saw someone in crisis and didn't hesitate to help. "He told me he didn't want to live anymore," Javon said. "I just listened and reminded him that struggling doesn't mean you're broken."

Javon stayed with the man, kept him calm, and waited until help arrived. His actions didn't just prevent a tragedy, they showed the humanity behind the badge. "Even though I was nervous, I knew it was important to stay with him," Javon said. "Just being there might have made all the difference."

Javon's bravery reminds us that public safety is about people first, and that showing up with kindness can truly save lives.





Anoka County

Anoka County Job Training Center

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Blaine, MN 55434

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www.anokacounty.us/JTC

Area served: Anoka County

OVERVIEW

Anoka County Job Training Center's (ACJTC) Empowers program provides year-round services to eligible at-risk youth in Anoka County ages 14-24. Anoka County leverages and braids funding from WIOA, MYP, Youth at Work, TANF Innovations, Pre-Employment Training Services with VRS (Pre-ETS), Pathways to Prosperity, 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. ACJTC provides tailored guidance to youth helping to identify strengths, interests, and career goals.

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.

Trades Partnership with Paladin High School – Empowers partners with Paladin and Finishing Trades Institute to support students who are interested in the trades pathway while completing high school.

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.

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.

Hope4Youth (Drop-in Center for youth experiencing homelessness) – Staff offer in-person hours and weekly in-person services and meetings with staff 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.

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 (OTS)

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

- **Made in the Metro Event at the National Sport Center:** October 8 Collaboration with Metro North Chamber, the JTC and ATC/ARCC with vendors and multiple employers.
- **Construct Tomorrow at the National Sport Center:** February 24, 2026, Metro regional event, collaboration with Ramsey County, Construct Tomorrow, and Anoka Tech. Event for youth to explore careers in trades.
- **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.
- **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.

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, Hope4Youth (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, and Stepping Stone Emergency Shelter in an ongoing effort to recruit young people for the program. Staff also work closely with 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 265 youth that were served through MYP during the last program year, 57% were youth of color (151) and 47% (129) of them identified as having a disability.
- ACJTC has a strong partnership with the YMCA to connect services to under-served and underrepresented youth.
- The Future Leaders Program with Anoka-Hennepin School District 11 serves young people representing diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds that 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.
- Empowers staff 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 VRS through Pre-ETS programing has increased the overall outreach to young people with disabilities.



SUCCESS STORIES: Eric

Eric came to Anoka County Empowers Program under the Youth at Work program and the MYP because he needed help finding employment. He was 21 years old and living with his parents. He specifically wanted to find a job in heating and air conditioning. He was about to graduate from Century College Heating and Air conditioning program with only one semester left and felt he needed this experience to help him further his skills in this trade. No one was even granting him an interview at the time.

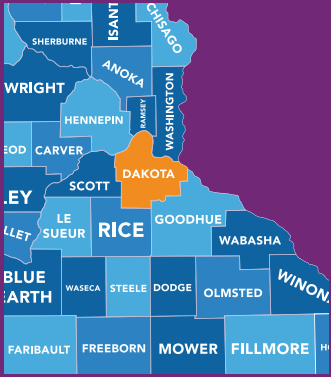


The Career Counselor in the Empowers program started working with him in July 2024 and was impressed by the fact that he was an Eagle Scout. This was prevalent while working with him because he was determined and had a plan, a backup plan, and just this force to succeed. The Career Counselor made some modifications to his resume and did some educating on what employers look for in a resume.

The Career Counselor assisted Eric in finding a work experience in heating and air conditioning. He started working and installing units in August. He had some obstacles while working. His supervisor worked all over the city and Eric was on a limited budget. With his family support and some support dollars from the Empowers program, Eric was able to work throughout the summer and fall and gained knowledge on how to install units. He told the career counselor that learning at school is one thing but doing it at someone's house is another and safety is so important with this type of position.

Eric completed his training at Century College in December 2024 and on January 16, 2025, was offered a position at Metro Heating and Air conditioning as an assistant apprentice. This is a full-time position, and he now has benefits. His long-term goal is to obtain his own housing and he is now on track for fulfilling his long-term goal.





Dakota County

Dakota County Workforce Services

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Area served: Dakota County

OVERVIEW

Tree Trust Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) opened opportunities for young people in Dakota County to explore entry-level work in the green industry and skilled trade careers. Over the course of nine weeks, participants aged 14-21 earned a paycheck while completing outdoor construction and landscaping projects. Crew Leaders and Field Coordinators mentored participants to develop essential trade skills, such as hand tool use, job site safety, personal protective equipment, construction math, and following directions to complete a plan while working on community-enhancing projects. Employment Coaches also mentored participants in workplace skills, money management, career exploration, and job-hunting skills.

The young people enhanced Dakota County green spaces through their dedication and hard work. The Eagan Crews made a positive impact on their local community by painting hockey rinks in parks like Sky Hill Park. This often involved working under the hot summer sun. In Inver Grove Heights, crews focused on trail maintenance and natural resource management, including improvements such as mulching at North Valley Disc Golf. Participants frequently expressed in surveys how much they enjoyed being in nature while completing these projects. Their efforts not only beautified the community but also fostered a deep appreciation for the environment.

BEST PRACTICES

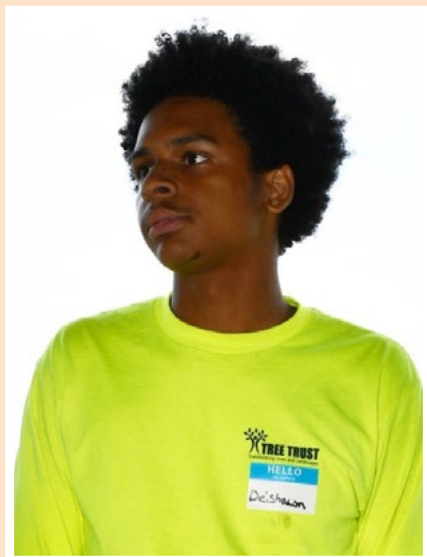
Building Life Skills – SYEP laid a solid foundation for success in school and the workforce, teaching youth the value of hard work, investing in their community, and working well on a team. Participants boosted their interpersonal skills by connecting with fellow participants, Crew Leaders, Field Coordinators, and Employment Coaches. They enhanced their teamwork abilities, learning to collaborate and take initiative in various projects. Young people set and developed goals with the guidance of Employment Coaches. They also acquired valuable skills in resume writing, interviewing, and financial literacy, including budgeting. Participants frequently praised the excellent learning opportunities, positive work environment, personal growth and development, the joy of making new friends, the outdoor work experience, and the opportunity to earn a paycheck, as program strengths in post-program evaluations.

Certifications – Young people from Dakota County had the opportunity to earn a Tree Trust Certificate, demonstrating their proficiency in tool identification, safety, environmental stewardship, budgeting, career exploration, resume building, and interviewing. This certificate shows their growth and preparedness for careers such as tree trimmers, landscapers, city park professionals, carpenters, and project managers. By acquiring these essential skills, they are preparing to successfully enter the workforce and excel in their chosen career paths.

Leadership Opportunities – Participants learned the importance of civic responsibility by improving their park system, aligning with Tree Trust's mission to transform lives and landscapes. Guided by Crew Leaders, participants experienced growth in their leadership abilities, including Tree Trust's core values of Professionalism, Integrity, Commitment, Resilience, and Stewardship. Working in a crew environment, participants grew interpersonally. Tree Trust recognized the exceptional leadership of individual participants with the Governor's Award and Founder's Awards for Outstanding Leadership and Outstanding Personal Growth. Tree Trust celebrated the participants' achievements at the 2025 Summer Youth Employment Program Celebration attended by parents and guardians, funding partners, and Tree Trust Board Members and Staff.

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 VRS, 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, and employment opportunities.

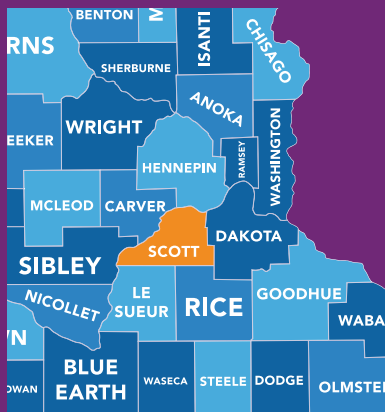


SUCCESS STORY:

Dei'Shawn

Dei'Shawn demonstrated incredible personal growth during the Tree Trust Summer Youth Employment Program. He brought an abundance of infectious energy to his work. At first, this sometimes resulted in distractions for the crew. However, Dei'Shawn was very open to feedback from his supervisors, and through consistent communication with them, he made huge strides in channeling his energy in positive, productive ways. He soon stepped up to volunteer first whenever a task needed completion. During long days or challenging tasks, he encouraged his teammates to keep going, bringing laughter and joy to the whole crew. Dei'Shawn earned the Founder's Award for Outstanding Personal Growth.





Scott County

Scott County Employment and Training

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<https://www.scottcountymn.gov/475/Employment-Training>

Area served: Scott County

OVERVIEW

Youth in the Scott County MYP participated in summer activities, with many also engaged year-round in career counseling, occupational training, work experience, and job placement services. A portion of MYP funding is allocated to support credit recovery, particularly for high school seniors who need additional credits to earn their diplomas. Other participants receive assistance in achieving their education, training, and employment goals. MYP youth enrolled in post-secondary education programs are pursuing careers in fields such as Nursing Assistant, Library Information, Barbering, and Construction.

Scott County Employment and Training administers a variety of youth-focused programs, including MYP, the WIOA Youth Program, and MFIP Employment Services. Counselors conduct regular case reviews and make internal referrals to ensure youth are connected with the most appropriate support. Many youth are co-enrolled in multiple programs to maximize available services.

The department also collaborates with local youth-serving agencies to support targeted populations. MYP funding is leveraged alongside state, federal, and local resources, including county funds, WIOA Youth and Adult funds, TANF Consolidated Fund, Youthbuild funds, and local school district funds to enhance program reach and impact.

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.

Scott County Youth Program staff maintain regularly scheduled visits to several local organizations, including the Juvenile Alternative Facility and area alternative schools. During these visits, staff engage directly with students, offering career and educational exploration activities tailored to their interests and needs. Assessments are conducted to better understand each student's goals, followed by personalized, one-on-one guidance to help them create actionable plans for success.

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.



SUCCESS STORY: Neftali

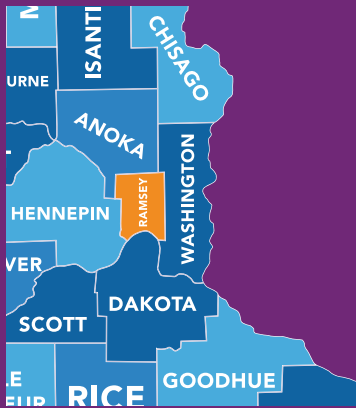
Neftali is a student at a local alternative high school who was eager to develop new skills that could lead to a well-paying job after graduation. Although he wasn't sure what career path to pursue, a meeting with his youth employment counselor, Monica, helped him start exploring his options. After completing an interest assessment, Neftali discovered he had a strong interest in construction. With no prior job experience, Neftali was nervous about looking for a job after high school. Neftali and Monica agreed that the Youthbuild program would be a great fit. It would allow him to gain hands-on construction training while also earning a paycheck. It was a perfect opportunity for someone just starting out. Neftali quickly realized how much he enjoyed the work. He maintained perfect attendance throughout the summer program and became more confident in his abilities. He now plans to pursue a career in construction after high school. He credits his Youthbuild instructor for making the learning process fun and engaging, and for helping him believe in his potential to succeed in something new.



CUSTOMER COMMENTS

- “It was great to see us come together as a team and use our individual skills to accomplish a goal.”
– YOUTH PARTICIPANT
- “I enjoyed getting to work with the new people. We had a lot of fun and learned a lot.”
– YOUTH PARTICIPANT
- “This is the first job I have ever had. It gives me confidence to know that I can go out on my own and do it.” – YOUTH PARTICIPANT
- “We are so grateful that Scott County has a presence in our school. The students love meeting with the counselors and they are learning how to achieve their goals.” – YOUTH PARTICIPANT





Ramsey County

Ramsey County Workforce Solutions (WFS)

Catrice O'Neal, Director

121 Seventh Place E., Suite 2100

Saint Paul, MN 55101

Phone: (651) 266-9890

www.ramseycounty.us/youngadultemploymentprogram

Area served: Ramsey County

OVERVIEW

Ramsey County Workforce Solutions (WFS) continues to leverage MYP resources to provide meaningful employment and career exploration opportunities for youth and young adults, with an emphasis on equity, inclusion, and long-term career pathways. MYP funding supports activities that help young people gain early work experience, develop professional skills, and connect with education and training opportunities that align with in-demand industries.

In 2025, MYP funding is strategically invested in the Summer Journalism Cohort, integration with the City of St Paul's Right Track program and suburban expansion, Outreach to Schools, and programming delivered by long-standing vendor partners. These activities ensure MYP remains focused on equitable access to early training and work-based learning experiences across Ramsey County.

BEST PRACTICES

Ramsey County's Youth and Young Adult Employment Program partners provided individualized, year-round comprehensive guidance and support to 196 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. Hmong American Partnership provides culturally responsive programming tailored to the needs of Southeast Asian youth and families.

To enhance youth experiences further, Ramsey County WFS continues to offer the Get S.E.T. supervisory training program, now available in recorded format for ongoing use by employers. The bi-monthly practitioner meetings, hosted and facilitated by Ramsey County WFS planners, promote collaborative planning and resource sharing among local organizations. Additionally, Ramsey County WFS hosts Creating Meaningful Connections sessions on a quarterly basis, bringing together MYP and other grant-funded vendors to engage with young people and subject matter experts.

These sessions highlight resources and best practices for serving Opportunity Youth, which includes justice-impacted, foster, homeless, and young parents. Based on vendor and participant feedback, the definition of Opportunity Youth has expanded to intentionally include young people of color, youth living with disabilities, and other populations experiencing systemic barriers.

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

Collaboration remains central to Ramsey County WFS's MYP model. Partners include:

- **Community-based organizations** – Hmong American Partnership, Hired, Tree Trust, and Urban Boatbuilders (core vendors).
- **Education partners** – Saint Paul Public Schools, suburban districts, alternative schools, and charter schools.
- **City of Saint Paul Right Track** – Strengthened integration allows youth to transition seamlessly between city- and county-funded opportunities.
- **Center for Broadcast Journalism** – Expanded Summer Journalism Cohort in 2025.
- **Minnesota CareerForce** – Joint outreach, training resources, and labor market information.
- **Ramsey County Libraries** – Support with digital literacy, career exploration, and credential preparation.

SERVING YOUTH OF COLOR AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

Ramsey County WFS serves one of the most diverse youth populations in Minnesota, and MYP intentionally addresses disparities faced by youth of color and youth with disabilities. In 2025:

- Over 80% of participants identify as youth of color.
- Providers employ staff who are linguistically and culturally aligned with participants, fostering trust and retention.
- Programs adapt to support youth with disabilities through individualized planning, job coaching, and employer education.
- WFS works with schools, VRS, and disability resource partners to ensure youth with disabilities have equitable access to career pathways.



SUCCESS STORY:

Tree Trust participants build skills and community across the country

This summer, 21 Ramsey County WFS youth participated in [Tree Trust's Summer Youth Employment Program \(SYEP\)](#), a long-standing partnership with Ramsey County WFS supported through the MYP. The program gives young people real-world work experience while improving local parks. Despite challenging weather, participants completed landscaping at [Battle Creek Regional Park](#) in Saint Paul and built retaining walls at [Tamarack Nature Center](#) in White Bear Lake.

Participants gained valuable hands-on and interpersonal skills while receiving support and professional development from Tree Trust. Most youth will return to high school this fall, while others have plans to pursue college, skilled trades or [Tree Trust's Branches program](#). Regardless of their next steps, participants leave the summer with a deeper connection to their community and new confidence built through hard work.

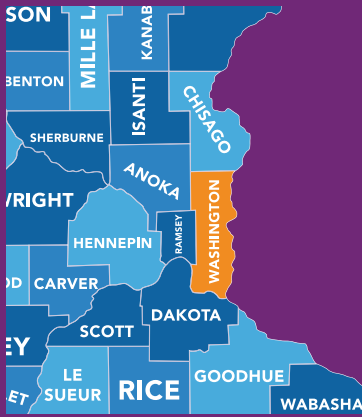
OUTREACH TO SCHOOLS (OTS)

Ramsey County significantly expanded its OTS initiative in 2025. With a dedicated OTS Program Specialist, WFS and its providers increased presence in high schools and alternative programs across the county. Activities include:

- Career fairs, classroom presentations, and workshops on job readiness.
- Early connections to work readiness and summer jobs.
- Collaboration with counselors and teachers to identify students most in need of workforce services.

This expansion strengthens pipelines from school to career, ensuring more youth are aware of and connected to MYP opportunities.





Washington County

Washington County CareerForce

Tatum Heller, Supervisor

Washington County Workforce Development Division

1261 Woodlane Drive, Woodbury, MN 55125

Phone: (651) 275-8658

<https://careerforce.mn.gov/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 MN 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 – The Tree Trust Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) offers young people ages 14-21 the opportunity to develop career-ready skills. SYEP participants gain valuable trade experience while working on outdoor construction and landscape projects in public spaces. With the mentoring of qualified Tree Trust Crew Leaders, youth learn foundation skills including taking initiative, communication, teamwork, and critical thinking.

Summer Youth Employment Program – Tree Trust youth can earn a SYEP Certificate by demonstrating knowledge and experience in tool identification, safety, environmental stewardship, budgeting, career exploration, resume building, and interviewing. In 2025, sixteen Washington County MYP youth earned a Tree Trust Certificate in recognition of their accomplishments and commitment to developing professional skills.

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 brings nearly 50 years of experience transforming lives and landscapes. SYEP recruitment is accomplished through targeted outreach and strong referral partnerships with schools, community organizations, and agencies. Tree Trust staff mentor promising young people with disabilities, engaging them in skill-building experiences that prepare them for meaningful careers and support their successful transition into competitive employment.

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

Tree Trust partners with area schools, county libraries, and CareerForce locations to aid in the youth recruitment application process. In 2025, Tree Trust SYEP crews collaborated with Brown's Creek Park in Stillwater to replace a bridge and boardwalk. This was an impactful project that improved the park while providing youth with hands-on experience in technical skills, environmental stewardship, and teamwork.

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.



SUCCESS STORY: Faith

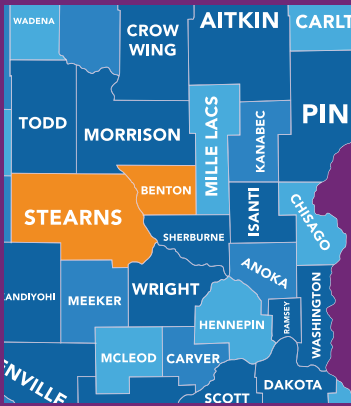
At the start of the Tree Trust Summer Youth Employment Program, Faith was quiet and reserved. As the summer progressed, she grew more socially engaged, allowing her kind and thoughtful nature to shine through. Faith quickly became a valued team member, demonstrating a strong work ethic, a powerful ability to learn, and consistent attention to detail. Her Crew Leader shared, “It makes my job easier to have a person like Faith in the crew.” This sentiment reflects the positive impact Faith had on her team and the program. A testament to her reliability, growth, and emerging leadership, Faith earned both the Perfect Attendance Award and the Governor’s Award.



CUSTOMER COMMENTS

- “Tree Trust has shown me that I can both stand up and be there for myself but also for others as well.”
– YOUTH PARTICIPANT
- “Tree Trust has inspired me to open a business for landscaping and also has helped me talk with other people.” – YOUTH PARTICIPANT
- “It has taught me about nature.”
– YOUTH PARTICIPANT





Stearns-Benton Counties

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

Tammy Stark, Director

1542 Northway Drive, St. Cloud, MN 56303

Phone: (320) 266-5060

careerforce.mn.gov/saintcloud

Counties served: Benton and Stearns

OVERVIEW

Career Solutions offers CareerONE, a youth employability skills training opportunity utilizing 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 2025, CareerONE had a 98% completion rate. Of those who completed, 99% developed 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 youth may earn academic credit. 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.

CareerONE offers four unique track opportunities: Health Care, Construction/Manufacturing, Early Childhood and Public Safety. In the Health Care Track, students can earn 2.5 college

credits by taking a CPR/First Aid Class and course #1 of the Health Care Core Curriculum class. The Manufacturing and Construction Track offered students opportunities to learn about construction, 3D printing, and workplace safety, while earning 2 college credits and their OSHA 10 certification. 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", provided by the St. Cloud Technical & Community College, and earned 3 college credits for completion. In 2023 a Public Safety track was added and students can earn one 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 by 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 Career Solutions collaborates with area county human services agencies, 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 75% 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.

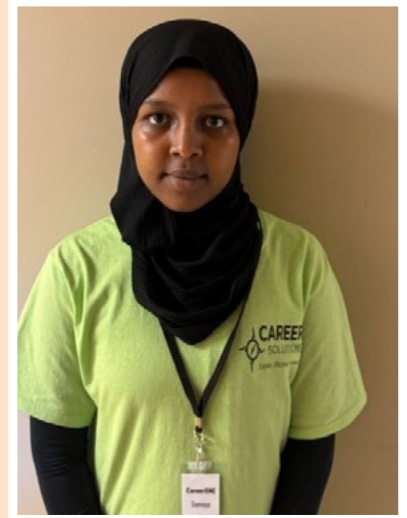
OUTREACH TO SCHOOLS (OTS)

Career Solutions OTS provided 3,208 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 Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readiness (formerly known as World's Best Workforce) requirements.



SUCCESS STORY: Sumeya

Sumeya says,
"Before I started CareerONE, I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do with my summer. I wanted to do something meaningful, something that would help me grow, but I did not know what that would look like. That's when I found out about CareerONE from my school counselor.



This program gave me a real look at what it's like to have a job. I learned how to be on time, how to work with different people, and how to stay focused even when the day felt long. I also learned how to build a resume, and that's something I have never done before. One of my favorite parts of CareerONE is how supportive and friendly everyone was. I was nervous at first, but I met people who were kind and encouraging and it made it easier to step out of my comfort zone. Because of CareerONE, I have the chance to join CareerTWO, where I'll be getting my Certified Nursing Assistant Certification. That's a big deal to me because I have always wanted to work in health care and help others and now I am actually taking steps to do it. This program helped me grow in confidence, responsibility, and direction. I'm really grateful I joined and I would tell anyone who's thinking about it to give it a try, you might discover more about yourself than you expect."

CUSTOMER COMMENTS

- "I learned that you might have a disagreement with someone, but the goal stays the same, to get the work done with good quality and quantity."
 – YOUTH PARTICIPANT
- "I learned how important it is to persevere through things even if you don't like them because that is your job" – YOUTH PARTICIPANT
- "I learned that everyone has a role in our community and public safety is an important career."
 – YOUTH PARTICIPANT
- "I learned how to work better with my team, and what different people on my team could handle and what they all do best." – YOUTH PARTICIPANT
- "I learned that, first and foremost, you should have the proper gear before working at any job site. I also learned that, when working at community work sites, the better communication and cooperation you have, the more you can get done at a quicker pace, while still remaining professional." – YOUTH PARTICIPANT





Winona County

Winona County WorkForce Council

Jessica Stoner, Youth Program Manager

1250 Homer Road – Suite 200

Winona, MN 55987

Phone: (507) 205-6058

Careerforce.MN.gov/winona

Area served: Winona County

OVERVIEW

The Winona County Youth and Young Adult Programs serve individuals ages 16–24 who face barriers to employment. Participants have the opportunity to earn a paycheck while building confidence, developing essential workplace habits, and gaining career-specific skills. For those enrolled through their school, the program may also provide academic credit. Overall, the program offers youth and their families hope and clarity as they navigate the transition from high school to post-secondary education and/or the workforce.

The program also strengthens the local economy by connecting businesses with motivated young employees. CareerForce staff partner closely with schools and employers to ensure that youth are actively engaged in meaningful work experiences. Many participants transition into competitive employment upon completion of the program. Employers often value the opportunity to mentor and train youth, while also witnessing the personal and professional growth that occurs throughout the year.

BEST PRACTICES

Work experience is offered in every school district within Winona County, as well as at the Winona Alternative Learning Center and the Hiawatha Valley Education District Alternative Learning Center. CareerForce staff collaborate closely with high school work-based learning coordinators to identify and enroll students in the MYP.

Youth are assigned to worksites either within their school district or in the community, where they typically work up to four days per week. Before starting, participants complete interest assessments, review child labor laws and worksite expectations, and participate in basic safety training. Depending on the school and work experience program structure, some students also take part in classroom-based activities focused on career readiness during the academic year. For example, at Winona Senior High School, youth spend one day each week in the classroom practicing money management, professional communication, mock interviews, résumé and cover letter development, and other essential workforce preparation skills.

A major component of the program is connecting youth with worksites throughout their local community. Because the program serves youth with a wide variety of barriers, many participate for multiple years. Often, students begin with a school-based placement that provides more structure and supervision. As their skills and confidence grow, they transition into community-based worksites. Staff ensure that participants are job-ready by monitoring indicators such as returning phone calls or emails promptly, completing assignments on time, keeping appointments with the Youth Program Coordinator, and/or demonstrating professionalism in school-based roles. Through these experiences, youth develop a deeper understanding of what it means to be successful at work —arriving on time, following directions, collaborating with coworkers, and strengthening other essential soft skills. Collaboration with school instructors remains a cornerstone of the program's success. CareerForce staff complement classroom learning by reinforcing workplace readiness skills and supporting students as they progress toward competitive employment.

OUTREACH TO SCHOOLS (OTS)

OTS activities complement the work of school counselors by providing career exploration, post-secondary planning, and labor market information. This outreach ensures students and families have access to resources and support, even if they are not enrolled in the youth program. Activities include:

- Presentations in classrooms on career pathways and local labor market trends
- Collaboration with school staff to connect students to resources and opportunities
- Participation in career fairs and school-hosted events

PARTICIPANT ACTIVITIES

In addition to school-based outreach, youth program participants receive a wide range of individualized and group supports designed to prepare them for both post-secondary education and employment. These include:

- **Career Exploration and Labor Market Information –** Students receive up-to-date information on occupations and industries in demand across the region. Activities may include attendance at local job fairs, mentoring, and business tours, giving students firsthand exposure to career opportunities and workplace environments.

- **Post-Secondary Planning and Preparation** – Workshops and classes are offered on a variety of career planning topics, such as goal setting, understanding workplace culture, and exploring post-secondary training options. Students also receive guidance on selecting appropriate programs and navigating financial aid resources.
- **CareerForce Center Connections** – Tours of the Winona CareerForce Center introduce students to the resources available in their community. Staff provide guidance on how to access these tools for ongoing career development and job search assistance.
- **Individualized Career Development** – Youth also receive one-on-one support with career exploration, résumé preparation, mock interviews, and job search strategies. These activities ensure students are prepared for both immediate employment opportunities and long-term career success.

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

The Winona Youth and Young Adult Program works closely with a wide network of community partners to ensure youth have access to the resources and support they need to succeed. Key partnerships include Winona County Social Services, Work Experience Coordinators within the Winona School District, St. Charles School District, Lewiston-Altura School District, the Southeast Service Cooperative Career Navigators, and SE MN Center for Independent Living.

Staff also coordinate services with VRS and MFIP program counselors to align supports and maximize positive outcomes for youth. In addition, recruitment efforts are carried out in collaboration with Minnesota State College Southeast, St. Mary's University, and Winona State University, ensuring that students are informed about in-demand, living-wage careers and the training opportunities available to them.

CUSTOMER COMMENTS

- “I would like to express how much help the youth participant was for our events this summer. They were a tremendous help for our library. I hope they had a good experience with us and were able to learn a few things that will help them in the future.” – *SUPERVISOR*
- “My work experience taught me independence, and I found out that doing new things isn't as scary as I thought it would be. I'm very grateful for this opportunity.” – *YOUTH PARTICIPANT*

SUCCESS STORY: RJ

RJ was referred to the Winona County Youth and Young Adult Program by his VRS counselor as he prepared for his senior year at St. Charles High School. With an interest in pursuing a future career at a public library, RJ was eager to gain meaningful work experience and build his workplace skills over the summer. Within a week, a work experience placement was arranged at St. Charles Public Library and RJ began working 6–10 hours per week, assisting with youth activities, library events, and general organizational tasks to ensure the library remained welcoming and accessible for the community.



Over the course of 12 weeks, RJ developed invaluable workplace skills while also experiencing significant personal growth. The impact of the experience extended well beyond job skills. Amanda, his VRS counselor, reflected, “The work experience RJ successfully completed through the Youth and Young Adult Program and VRS was truly life changing. It did much more than help him explore future careers. He grew in remarkable ways, especially in confidence—sharing that, for the first time, he actually talked on the first day of school, something he had never done in previous years. His leadership skills blossomed, helping him realize he is capable of far more than he once believed.” RJ's journey demonstrates how collaborative partnerships and meaningful work experiences can transform lives. With the support of the Youth and Young Adult Program, his supervisor, and his VRS counselor, RJ not only gained skills for his future career but also discovered his own potential, independence, and confidence to thrive.



SFY 2025 MINNESOTA YOUTH PROGRAM (MYP) DATA SUMMARY (JULY 1, 2024 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2025)

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		4,352	100.0%	45	418	197	140	430	131	399	493	222
1a. Total Participants Exited		2,798	64.3%	21	224	111	64	207	77	204	171	152
Gender	2a. Male	2,110	48.5%	30	232	93	56	213	68	175	259	124
	2b. Female	2,187	50.3%	15	185	103	74	217	63	218	232	96
	2c. Did Not Self-Identify	38	0.9%	0	1	1	0	0	0	6	0	2
Age	3a. 14 - 15	1,345	30.9%	10	120	21	25	75	17	103	65	34
	3b. 16 -17	1,449	33.3%	24	138	66	39	150	66	136	198	102
	3c. 18	602	13.8%	9	64	46	9	104	25	56	92	34
	3d. 19 - 21	707	16.2%	1	78	48	49	71	18	69	91	43
	3e. 22 - 24	249	5.7%	1	18	16	18	30	5	35	47	9
Ethnicity / Race	4a. Hispanic/Latino	667	15.3%	12	31	6	11	74	49	87	129	26
	4b. American Indian or Alaska Native	115	2.6%	0	34	12	10	8	2	4	8	1
	4c. Asian or Pacific Islander	240	5.5%	0	2	1	1	19	8	3	22	36
	4d. Black or African American	1,294	29.7%	2	17	3	30	34	9	73	72	138
	4e. White	2,118	48.7%	38	332	172	61	304	81	286	336	22
	4f. Multi Race	248	5.7%	3	31	8	2	25	8	30	24	8
Education Level	5a. Grades K-12 (No Diploma/GED)	3,387	77.8%	42	310	105	105	342	108	312	351	152
	5b. High School graduate or equivalent	767	17.6%	3	87	79	28	76	18	74	127	39
	5c. Post-Secondary Education	197	4.5%	0	21	13	7	12	5	12	15	31
Other Demographics	6. Limited English Proficient	214	4.9%	1	8	4	2	40	6	18	12	13
	7. Youth From Families Receiving Public Assistance	2,529	58.1%	37	176	82	78	127	45	180	236	132
	8. Foster Youth	217	5.0%	1	13	19	31	25	2	23	20	13
	9. Youth with a Disability	2,142	49.2%	35	311	147	63	304	95	253	273	61
	10. High School Drop-Out	173	4.0%	0	18	6	38	28	2	33	28	0
	11. Offender	208	4.8%	0	20	17	12	28	8	43	37	4
	12. Pregnant or Parenting Youth	185	4.3%	2	9	15	15	20	8	31	53	2
	13. Basic Skills Deficient	1,878	43.2%	25	362	31	2	391	38	348	417	24
	14. Homeless or Runaway Youth	211	4.8%	1	5	16	34	13	7	7	50	3
	15. Not Employed at Program Enrollment	3,400	78.1%	41	311	109	107	273	104	323	334	183
PROGRAM SERVICES, ACTIVITIES, AND OTHER RELATED ASSISTANCE												
1. Received Education/ Job Training Activities		2,356	54.1%	41	60	159	61	231	24	355	389	119
2. Received Work Experience Activities		2,013	46.3%	37	264	103	60	76	90	211	205	162
3. Received Community Involvement and Leadership Development Activities		603	13.9%	0	5	0	13	20	1	20	0	65
4. Received Post-Secondary Exploration, Career Guidance and Planning Activities		2,259	51.9%	44	74	188	17	401	21	232	493	61
5. Received Mentoring Activities		365	8.4%	0	37	1	3	4	1	234	1	83
6. Received Support Services		792	18.2%	3	69	23	35	73	28	89	67	42
INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE (Based on Number Served)												
1. Attained Work Readiness or Education Goals in ISS		2,406	86.0%	17	114	65	31	242	47	193	92	149
2. Received Academic/Service Learning Credit		1,598	57.1%	17	2	49	14	50	41	24	113	31
3. Obtained High School Diploma, GED, or Remained in School, Obtained a Certificate or Degree, or Drop-out-Returned to School		1,899	67.9%	10	109	41	30	104	41	122	86	111
4. Entered Post Secondary Education, Vocational/Occupational Skills Training, Apprenticeship, or Military or Entered Employment		646	23.1%	4	100	68	14	130	32	81	104	31
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION												
1. Number of Participants Rating MYP Experience as "Excellent"		527	53.9%	1	46	10	11	21	26	17	70	42
2. Number of Participants Rating MYP Experience as "Very Good"		342	35.0%	3	28	7	5	8	18	11	24	16
3. Number of Participants Rating MYP Experience as "Average"		95	9.7%	1	12	6	2	3	2	1	7	2
4. Number of Participants Rating MYP Experience as "Below Average"		7	0.7%	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
5. Number of Participants Rating MYP Experience as "Poor"		7	0.7%	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
6. Total Number of Responses		978	100.0%	5	88	25	19	32	46	31	101	60

SFY 2025 MINNESOTA YOUTH PROGRAM (MYP) DATA SUMMARY (JULY 1, 2024 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2025)

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		4,352	100.0%	50	728	288	78	27	256	47	372	31
1a. Total Participants Exited		2,798	64.3%	23	726	200	77	21	218	43	232	27
Gender	2a. Male	2,110	48.5%	32	275	152	57	17	115	30	157	25
	2b. Female	2,187	50.3%	17	438	131	21	10	134	17	211	5
	2c. Did Not Self-Identify	38	0.9%	1	10	5	0	0	7	0	4	1
Age	3a. 14 - 15	1,345	30.9%	10	490	26	27	5	18	16	282	1
	3b. 16 -17	1,449	33.3%	26	181	90	26	11	77	13	89	17
	3c. 18	602	13.8%	3	31	49	11	6	51	2	1	9
	3d. 19 - 21	707	16.2%	8	26	89	14	4	78	16	0	4
	3e. 22 - 24	249	5.7%	3	0	34	0	1	32	0	0	0
Ethnicity / Race	4a. Hispanic/Latino	667	15.3%	10	79	58	10	11	30	6	38	0
	4b. American Indian or Alaska Native	115	2.6%	2	22	4	1	0	3	2	2	0
	4c. Asian or Pacific Islander	240	5.5%	1	27	19	3	2	86	1	8	1
	4d. Black or African American	1,294	29.7%	6	492	71	21	9	70	13	232	2
	4e. White	2,118	48.7%	29	71	123	48	11	60	21	98	25
	4f. Multi Race	248	5.7%	8	39	26	1	1	25	4	2	3
Education Level	5a. Grades K-12 (No Diploma/GED)	3,387	77.8%	43	708	176	65	23	112	32	372	29
	5b. High School graduate or equivalent	767	17.6%	7	20	88	6	3	108	2	0	2
	5c. Post-Secondary Education	197	4.5%	0	0	24	7	1	36	13	0	0
Other Demographics	6. Limited English Proficient	214	4.9%	2	10	21	2	3	20	4	48	0
	7. Youth From Families Receiving Public Assistance	2,529	58.1%	25	678	166	51	20	157	33	299	7
	8. Foster Youth	217	5.0%	1	9	14	21	0	16	4	1	4
	9. Youth with a Disability	2,142	49.2%	42	137	132	67	15	79	34	63	31
	10. High School Drop-Out	173	4.0%	1	0	15	0	0	4	0	0	0
	11. Offender	208	4.8%	1	0	17	9	2	7	1	1	1
	12. Pregnant or Parenting Youth	185	4.3%	0	6	9	1	0	12	0	2	0
	13. Basic Skills Deficient	1,878	43.2%	12	9	35	28	19	27	13	95	2
	14. Homeless or Runaway Youth	211	4.8%	1	10	22	1	1	22	4	14	0
	15. Not Employed at Program Enrollment	3,400	78.1%	43	711	197	78	18	152	45	341	30
PROGRAM SERVICES, ACTIVITIES, AND OTHER RELATED ASSISTANCE												
1. Received Education/ Job Training Activities		2,356	54.1%	4	0	286	70	17	130	37	345	28
2. Received Work Experience Activities		2,013	46.3%	11	383	106	70	24	145	38	0	28
3. Received Community Involvement and Leadership Development Activities		603	13.9%	0	0	0	70	0	28	36	345	0
4. Received Post-Secondary Exploration, Career Guidance and Planning Activities		2,259	51.9%	38	2	286	70	27	243	36	0	26
5. Received Mentoring Activities		365	8.4%	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
6. Received Support Services		792	18.2%	7	102	63	30	18	126	17	0	0
INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE (Based on Number Served)												
1. Attained Work Readiness or Education Goals in ISS		2,406	86.0%	15	720	61	72	1	165	42	357	23
2. Received Academic/Service Learning Credit		1,598	57.1%	4	693	26	43	7	80	25	357	22
3. Obtained High School Diploma, GED, or Remained in School, Obtained a Certificate or Degree, or Drop-out-Returned to School		1,899	67.9%	0	698	61	63	15	15	37	331	25
4. Entered Post Secondary Education, Vocational/Occupational Skills Training, Apprenticeship, or Military or Entered Employment		646	23.1%	5	0	65	3	3	3	2	0	1
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION												
1. Number of Participants Rating MYP Experience as “Excellent”		527	53.9%	3	163	4	9	5	24	7	67	1
2. Number of Participants Rating MYP Experience as “Very Good”		342	35.0%	2	93	2	8	1	22	5	89	0
3. Number of Participants Rating MYP Experience as “Average”		95	9.7%	1	29	0	5	0	13	3	8	0
4. Number of Participants Rating MYP Experience as “Below Average”		7	0.7%	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
5. Number of Participants Rating MYP Experience as “Poor”		7	0.7%	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
6. Total Number of Responses		978	100.0%	6	290	7	22	6	60	15	164	1



MINNESOTA YOUTH PROGRAM

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