



SFY25 Youth at Work Competitive Grant Program Annual Report

As required by Minn. Stat. §116L.562 Subd. 4

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Program History

The Youth at Work Program was established by the Minnesota Legislature beginning in State Fiscal Year (SFY) SFY13 as a pilot program. In SFY13, there were eight organizations awarded funding through a competitive process. To ensure the program would target youth who had barriers to employment and education success, the program aligned with the at-risk factors identified by the Federal Workforce Innovation Act (reauthorized by Congress in 2014 as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)) and the Minnesota Youth Program. The at-risk factors are now found in [Minnesota Statute §116L.56](#) and include involvement in foster care, involvement in the juvenile justice system, as well as youth who are pregnant/parenting, homeless, receiving public assistance, have limited English proficiency, or have a disability. In addition to the at-risk factors, the program placed an emphasis on serving “economically disadvantaged” youth as defined by WIOA. The program’s focus on economically disadvantaged and at-risk youth was bolstered in the 2016 Legislative session when the Youth at Work Program was officially codified in state statute. At that time, additional emphases for the program included giving priority to grant applicants that:

1. Provide students with information about education and training requirements for careers in high-growth, in-demand occupations; and
2. Serve youth from communities of color who are underrepresented in the workforce; or
3. Serve youth with disabilities.

As noted below, the Youth at Work program received additional funds from the legislature, which allowed for more programs to be funded. By SFY24, 47 organizations were awarded funding and served over 14,000 youth statewide.

The Youth at Work Program is a critical source of youth workforce development funding for various organizations throughout Minnesota. Historically, the Youth at Work program has been used to fund summer youth employment programs that have garnered national recognition.

Legislative History

The Youth at Work Program was established by the Minnesota Legislature beginning in [SFY13](#) and appropriated \$2,848,000 from the Workforce Development Fund for a youth workforce development competitive grant pilot program. The program was started with the intention of reducing the number of youth workforce development programs receiving legislative direct appropriations and, instead, requiring programs to compete in a request for proposal (RFP) process. For SFY15 and SFY16, the Legislature appropriated \$3,348,000 each year from the Workforce Development Fund. Beginning in SFY18 and SFY19, an additional \$500,000 was appropriated from the General Fund and brought the grant total up to \$3,848,000 per year. In SFY20 and SFY21 an additional \$250,000 per year was appropriated from the General Fund and brought the grant total up to \$4,090,000 per year and remained at that level until SFY24-25. SFY24-25 saw a \$3,300,000 million increase from the Workforce Development Fund and brought the grant total to \$7,448,000 per year. Under the current SFY26 and SFY27 biennium, the Youth at Work program was appropriated \$4,843,000 per fiscal year, while DEED received over \$31,000,000 in requests per fiscal year. Therefore, DEED was only able to award grants that covered 14% of the total ask from applicants. Since the inception of the Youth at Work program in SFY13, there has been more

demand for funding than is available per fiscal year to award. Even during the SFY24-25 biennium when the legislature appropriated \$7,448,000 per year, DEED received over \$26,000,000 in funding requests per year and was only able to fund about 27% of the requested amount. Despite the fact that funding availability is far lower than funding need in the Youth Workforce Development system, grantees have successfully implemented a broad spectrum of programming models that have positively impacted the educational and employment outcomes of economically disadvantaged and at-risk youth across the entire state.

Youth at Work Overview

Youth at Work:

- Provides experiential learning opportunities for economically disadvantaged or at-risk youth, ages 14 through 24;
- Promotes mastery of work readiness competencies and 21st century skills;
- Promotes skill acquisition (academic and work readiness) through project-based instruction;
- Increases exposure to in-demand jobs important to regional economies;
- Provides high-quality worksites and overall participant and employer satisfaction;
- Provides youth an opportunity to apply and connect classroom skills to work-based settings;
- Exposes youth to work settings that offer direct employer or supervisor feedback; and
- Engages youth while allowing them to explore and discover their interests and abilities.

The program's experiential learning is offered through internships, project-based learning, career planning, service learning, and work experience. Frequently, in-school youth have the ability to earn academic credit for experiential learning opportunities, which helps to keep youth on track to graduate high school.

Youth have the ability to access Youth at Work programming from various non-profit, governmental, Tribal Nations, and school-based entities. The number of Youth at Work programs varies every biennium, depending on how many organizations are funded. The geographic location of the Youth at Work programs varies by biennium as well, given that grants are awarded on a competitive basis. Through the grant review process, some grantees may not see funds renewed. Historically, the Youth at Work program has awarded anywhere from under 10 to over 45 grants depending on funding levels and the outcomes of the proposal review.

Below are a few highlights of the Youth at Work grant process:

- The RFP was posted on DEED's website in January 2023 under [Grant and Contract Opportunities](#).
- The DEED Communications team proactively notified individuals, organizations, the Governor's Workforce Development Board, Ethnic Councils, and an extensive list of interested parties regarding the release of the RFP for the Youth at Work Competitive Grant. The Youth Development team shared the Youth at Work RFP with the Shared Vision for Youth interagency workgroup and their networks. Also, pursuant to State law, the State Register included information about RFPs available through DEED including the Youth at Work Competitive Grant.

- The RFP directed potential applicants to submit all questions on the RFP in writing via e-mail to a specified DEED contact. All questions submitted in writing were answered on a weekly basis and published on DEED's [Grant and Contract Opportunities](#) website.
- DEED's Office of Youth Development hosted an informational webinar about the Youth at Work funding opportunity. A link to the recorded webinar was available on DEED's [Grant and Contract Opportunities](#) webpage.
- DEED's Office of Youth Development received 80 proposals requesting more than \$26 million dollars. Approximately 71% of funds requested focused on the Twin Cities area; 23% of funds focused on Greater Minnesota, and 6% of funds targeted Minnesota statewide. Approximately 61% of available funds were awarded to the Twin Cities area and 37% were allocated to Greater Minnesota, and 2% went to statewide projects.

Background Data

There are concerning national-level trends regarding the state of youth employment. Per the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, July 2025 recorded a 10.8% unemployment rate for youth ages 16 to 24 across the country. That reflects a two-percentage point increase in the unemployment rate since July 2022. The July 2025 unemployment rates for Black/African American, Hispanic, and Asian youth are higher than the national average and range from 12.6% to 14.3%.¹ This highlights the disparities that Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) youth may face as they seek to gain education and employment skills that allow them to succeed in the labor force. The Youth at Work program is a critical tool in the State of Minnesota's toolkit to address youth unemployment rates. Moreover, having youth who have the proper education and skills to enter in-demand, high-growth career paths will produce better employment outcomes as youth enter the adult labor force. Youth at Work funding is used by a variety of organizations for a variety of program models. One particular set of organizations that seeks out Youth at Work funding are the Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) in each of Minnesota's 16 Workforce Development Areas (WDAs). The LWDBs are the providers of WIOA and Minnesota Youth Program formula funds. Through the LWDBs, youth workforce development programming is made available in all of Minnesota's 87 counties. For some Minnesota counties, the LWDBs are the only entity directly charged with providing workforce development services to youth 14-24. The Youth at Work funds have historically supported projects that do not supplant existing programming, but rather provide the ability for innovative service delivery strategies within youth workforce development programs – a rarity in this field across the country. For the non-profits, local education agencies, and Tribal Nations that have historically received Youth at Work grants, the funding is often used to sustain existing programming or to expand existing services already provided to youth. Given the participant eligibility outlined in statute, the importance of Youth at Work funding cannot be overstated – youth who are in most need are receiving workforce development services that will support their success in the adult labor force.

¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/youth.t02.htm>

Program Selection and Award Amounts

As mentioned earlier, Minnesota Statutes ([116L.562](#)) authorize the Youth at Work competitive grants and direct DEED to “award grants to eligible organizations for the purpose of providing workforce development and training opportunities to economically disadvantaged or at-risk youth ages 14-24.” The total amount of funding appropriated was \$7,448,000 each year during SFY24-25; \$6,698,000 from the Workforce Development Fund and \$750,000 from the General Fund. Legislation permits DEED to retain five percent of these funds for administration and monitoring, making the total amount available for grants equal to \$7,075,600 per year during SFY24-25.²

The Youth at Work RFP identified the following priorities, impact areas, and goals for all proposals:

- Provide summer and/or year-round work experience and introduction to career pathways for economically disadvantaged or at-risk youth, ages 14 through 24 (including those who are out-of-school and/or involved in the foster care and juvenile justice systems, residing in MFIP households, youth with disabilities, and youth from communities of color who are underrepresented in the workforce, homeless and/or runaways); and,
- Increase exposure to in-demand jobs important to regional economies; and,
- Introduce and promote career pathways and skill acquisition (academic and work readiness) through project-based instruction; and,
- Promote mastery of work readiness competencies and 21st century skills, as demonstrated through workplace portfolios and other assessments; and,
- Provide high-quality worksites and overall participant and employer satisfaction.

Under M.S. [116L.562](#), Subd. 2, “eligible applicants/organizations” means a local government unit, nonprofit organization, community action agency or a public school district. In addition, applicant agencies:

- Must have demonstrated effectiveness in administering youth workforce programs and must leverage non-state or private sector funds; and
- Must be youth-serving organizations with significant capacity and demonstrable youth development experience and outcomes to operate a youth workforce development project.

If a program is not operated by a local unit of government or a LWDB, the grant recipient must coordinate the program with the LWDB.

As mentioned earlier, \$26 million in funding requests per year were submitted to DEED for \$7,075,600 in available grant funding per year during the SFY24-25 funding cycle. All proposals were read and scored by a team of community and state agency reviewers.

The following 47 organizations were recommended for funding:

² [Minnesota Session Laws – 2023, Regular Session, Chapter 53, S.F. 3035, Article 20 Sec. 2 Subdivision 3\(l\)](#)

Organization	Area Served	SFY24 Grant Award	SFY25 Grant Award
Achieve Twin Cities	Minneapolis/St. Paul	\$125,000.00	\$125,000.00
African Community Services	West Metro	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00
African Immigrant Community Services	Twin Cities Metro Area – 7 counties	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00
American Indian OIC	South Minneapolis	\$176,059.00	\$176,059.00
Anoka County (WDA 12)	Anoka County and surrounding areas	\$147,150.00	\$147,150.00
Appetite for Change	North Minneapolis	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00
Banyan Community	South Minneapolis	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00
Brooklynk (Grantee is Brooklyn Park Econ. Dev. Authority)	Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center	\$125,000.00	\$125,000.00
Career Solutions (WDA 17)	Benton/Stearns Counties	\$115,816.00	\$115,816.00
Center for African Immigrants and Refugees Organization (CAIRO)	Benton/Stearns Counties	\$150,000.00	\$150,000.00
City of Duluth (WDA 4)	Duluth	\$236,800.00	\$236,800.00
City of Minneapolis (WDA 10)	Minneapolis	\$775,000.00	\$775,000.00
City of St. Paul	St. Paul	\$775,000.00	\$775,000.00
Cloquet Public Schools	Carlton, Southern St. Louis County, City of Cloquet, Fond du Lac Reservation and Fond du Lac Service Area	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00
Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio (CLUES)	Twin Cities Metro Area – 7 counties	\$134,555.00	\$134,555.00
Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services, Inc. (CMJTS) (WDA 5)	WDA 5 – 11 counties in Central Minnesota	\$188,000.00	\$188,000.00
Construction Careers Foundation	Hennepin/Ramsey	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00
Cookie Cart	Minneapolis/St. Paul	\$82,972.00	\$82,972.00
Cristo Rey Jesuit High School	Metro	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00

Organization	Area Served	SFY24 Grant Award	SFY25 Grant Award
Dunwoody College	Metro, North Minneapolis, Cedar Riverside	\$150,000.00	\$150,000.00
East Side Neighborhood Services	Minneapolis	\$89,713.00	\$89,713.00
Elpis Enterprises	Hennepin and Ramsey Counties	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00
Face to Face	Ramsey and Dakota County	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00
Faribault Public Schools	Rice County	\$83,712.00	\$83,712.00
Goodwill Easter Seals	Willmar, St. Cloud, and the 7-county Twin Cities Metro Area	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00
Greater Bemidji	Headwaters Region including Red Lake, Leech Lake, and White Earth Reservations	\$197,500.00	\$197,500.00
Hired	Ramsey and Dakota County	\$125,000.00	\$125,000.00
Karen Organization Minnesota	Twin Cities Metro Area – 7 counties	\$90,000.00	\$90,000.00
Keystone Community Services	St. Paul	\$65,000.00	\$65,000.00
MAHUBE-OTWA	Mahnomen, Hubbard, Becker, Otter Tail, Wadena Counties	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00
Merrick Community Services	St. Paul and surrounding Ramsey communities	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00
Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe	MLBO Catchment Area (Districts overlapping Aitkin, Mille Lacs, and Pine Counties)	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00
Northeast Minnesota Office of Job Training (WDA 3)	WDA 3 - 7 counties in Northeast Minnesota	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00
Pine Technical College	Pine Mille Lacs, Chisago, Kanade, Isanti County	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00
Project for Pride in Living	Hennepin County	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00
Project Legacy	Olmsted, Winona, Bemidji, Fergus Falls, Hennepin, and Ramsey Counties	\$200,000.00	\$200,000.00
Red Lake Nation	Red Lake Nation	\$300,000.00	\$300,000.00
Reve Academy	Minneapolis	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00

Organization	Area Served	SFY24 Grant Award	SFY25 Grant Award
Rural Minnesota Concentrated Employment Program, Inc. (WDA 2)	WDA 2 - 19 counties in Northwest Minnesota	\$110,000.00	\$110,000.00
RWDA 5 (Southwest PIC (WDA 6) and Minnesota Valley Action Council for South Central Workforce Council (WDA 7))	Upper and Lower Sioux Communities, 23 counties in Southwest/South Central Minnesota	\$448,323.00	\$448,323.00
Somali Community Resettlement Services	Olmsted, Rice, and Hennepin Counties	\$100,000.00	Grant not awarded SFY25
Studio 180	South Minneapolis	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00
Tree Trust	Beltrami County, Red Lake Nation	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00
Urban Boatbuilders	Ramsey/Hennepin County	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00
Urban Roots	St. Paul	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00
Wildflyer Coffee	Hennepin/Ramsey County	\$200,000.00	\$200,000.00
Workforce Development, Inc. (WDA 8)	WDA 8 - 11 counties in Southeast Minnesota	\$225,000.00	\$225,000.00
Total:		\$7,075,600.00	\$6,975,600.00

Project Descriptions

Achieve Twin Cities - \$125,000. Achieve's Career and College Readiness (CCR) program clears the path for high school students to begin purposeful, life-sustaining careers after graduating high school. Achieve partners with Minneapolis Public Schools and Saint Paul Public Schools to provide individualized, student-centered postsecondary advising and coordinate CCR resources and activities.

Contact: Danielle Grant, dgrant@achievetwincities.org

African Community Services - \$50,000. Youth Self-Empowerment program will provide career exploration, training and employment opportunities for Somali youth. Participants will also be supported with remedial classes through community college or high school diploma equivalency program. English as a second language course are also leveraged to improve participants' language skills.

Contact: Hassan Omar, homar@africans.org

African Immigrant Community Services (AICS) - \$100,000. This project will provide job readiness workshops, support services, advocacy, IT training and certification. Internship and job placement will be a priority for the youth served under this program.

Contact: Mohamed Ahmed, m.ahmed@aicsmn.org

American Indian OIC - \$176,059. Through hands-on experience and career pathways exposure, youth of color will be prepared to pursue education and employment in fields that have current and projected labor demand in the Twin Cities.

Contact: Joe Hobot, joeh@aioic.org

Anoka County - \$147,150. Assist youth in gaining marketable skills through meaningful, paid work experiences/internships and/or training that results in industry recognized credentials that align with high-growth, demand-driven career pathway opportunities.

Contact: Nicole Swanson, nicole.swanson@co.anoka.mn.us

Appetite for Change - \$100,000. Appetite for Change will provide training, employment, and leadership opportunities for BIPOC youth in North Minneapolis through the Youth Training and Opportunity Program (YTOP). Youth will learn skills that will help them succeed in a variety of careers, primarily in the food industry, IT, and healthcare sectors.

Contact: Tasha Powell, tasha@afcmn.org

Banyan Community - \$60,000. The Banyan Community's ASPIRE program is an intensive high school academic support program focused on tutoring support, mentoring, family engagement, college readiness, and graduation from high school. Students benefit from one-on-one tutoring, mentoring, accountability, and parental involvement.

Contact: Carl Schlueter, carl@banyancommunity.org

Brooklyn - \$125,000. Youth at Work funds will be used to coordinate partnerships that prepare employers to engage the next generation of workers and to connect young people in Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park facing barriers to employment with the skills, experiences and professional social networks needed to develop their pathway to college and career.

Contact: Jolene Rotich, jolene.rotich@brooklynk.works

Career Solutions - \$115,816. Provide youth with intensive services through case-managed support. Youth will have the opportunity to build, demonstrate, and document work readiness skills through experiential learning opportunities and work experiences.

Contact: Tammy Stark tammy.stark@csjobs.org

Center for African Immigrants and Refugees Organization (CAIRO) - \$150,000. MySTEP is a project designed to provide black immigrant and refugee youth in Central Minnesota with targeted career exploration and preparation opportunities. The goals of the project are to provide access to high-quality education and training opportunities, increase soft skills, and personal development, improve employability, and foster a supportive and inclusive community among program participants. Through MySTEP, underserved black immigrant and

refugee youth will gain the skills, knowledge, and experience necessary to succeed in high-growth and in-demand occupations, ultimately creating a more equitable workforce in Minnesota.

Contact: Abdikadir Bashir, bashir@cairomn.org

City of Duluth (Youth Employment Services (YES) Duluth) - \$236,800. YES Duluth is focused on increasing work readiness and employment skills of economically disadvantaged and at-risk youth, emphasizing completion of high school diploma or equivalent, work readiness training, paid work experience, and career pathways.

Contact: Elena Foshay, efoshay@duluthmn.gov

City of Minneapolis (Step Up) - \$775,000. Step Up connects Minneapolis young people with Twin Cities employers through internships and training that build careers and lead to a diverse, skilled, and equitable workforce.

Contact: Deb Bahr-Helgen, deb.bahr-helgen@minneapolismn.gov

City of St. Paul (Right Track) - \$775,000. Young people will develop work readiness skills through job training and work experience. Youth will explore potential career pathways and develop relationships with adults and build their own professional networks. Paid work experience and financial literacy training will also be provided to youth participants.

Contact: Andy Rodriguez, andy.rodriguez@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Cloquet Public Schools - \$100,000. Youth at Work funding will help expand Career and Technical Education (CTE) course offerings and include partnership with Fond du Lac Ojibwe School for increased secondary opportunities in the CTE field for targeted Native American participation.

Contact: Michelle Wick, mwick@isd194.org

Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio (CLUES) - \$134,555. CLUES will expand its existing Clubhouse to Careers Pathways (C2C) programming which operates through its Teen Tech Center. This intensive ten-month after-school program provides classroom and workforce training twice per week followed by optional paid internships during the summer with our area partners.

Contact: Ruby Lee, rlee@clues.org

Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services (CMJTS) - \$188,000. Improve work readiness and career pathway awareness through Operation Exploration (OE), an innovative hands-on career exploration camp focusing on the in-demand career pathways of healthcare, trades, manufacturing, and/or information technology. Youth will earn credentials or certificates of completion. After OE, based on individual needs, youth will participate in a work-based learning experience, service-learning project, and/or credentialed training. In addition, CMJTS will help homeless youth and youth with disabilities develop independent living skills necessary to increase self-reliance and stability.

Contact: Dina Wuornos, dwuornos@cmjts.org

Construction Careers Foundation - \$50,000. Minnesota Trades Academy provides high school students with hands-on skill building, personal development, and knowledge of how to access jobs in the construction industry. Students participate in a paid \$15 per hour, 8-week summer internship and gain opportunity to earn OSHA 10 certification. Trades navigators develop close relationships with youth to help identify barriers to success.

Contact: Pat Wagner, pwagner@ontrackforlife.com

Cookie Cart - \$82,972. Cookie Cart will provide 30 BIPOC youth with the opportunity to participate in paid work experience and career readiness training to build employment, life, and leadership skills needed for success in future employment.

Contact: Cynthia Fraction, cfraction@cookiecart.org

Cristo Rey Jesuit High School - \$100,000. Cristo Rey will further maximize career readiness for 450 underserved youth of color by teaching and utilizing technical skills across 4-year business curricula and corporate work study program, as well as maximizing student performance and company satisfaction through the use of client relations managers.

Contact: Jason Morrison, jasonmorrison@cristoreytc.org

Dunwoody College - \$150,000. This project will build career pathways for underserved and underrepresented students leading to certificates or associate degrees and career attainment in high-growth, in-demand careers.

Contact: Rich Wagner, rwagner@dunwoody.edu

East Side Neighborhood Services - \$89,713. The FutureConnect program targets youth affected by disparities and prepares them for sustainable employment by providing work readiness, career exploration, and connections with community-minded employers who need promising, effective workers.

Contact: Mary Anstett, manstett@esns.org

Elpis Enterprises - \$50,000. The employment readiness training program and career pathway support offers 500 or more hours of employment readiness training, career exploration, and career pathway guidance. Our social enterprises are the starting point for careers related to manufacturing, production, construction, and business services as well as back office and administration aspects of high growth sectors. Paid work experiences are provided to youth participants.

Contact: Paul Ramsour, paul@elpisenterprises.org

Face to Face - \$100,000. This project will provide work experience, job-readiness training, education assistance, and wraparound supports so that youth can pursue their career aspirations.

Contact: Hanna Getachew-Kreusser, getachew-kreusser@face2face.org

Faribault Public Schools - \$83,712. Leveraging a community-wide coalition of more than 20 partners committed to supporting youth efforts, the Building Bridges program will provide advising, mentoring, academic support, career exploration, and career pathways to at least 50 Faribault youth who have dropped out of school since the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Contact: Jamie Bente, jbente@faribault.k12.mn.us

Goodwill Easter Seals - \$100,000. Explore, Learn, and Earn in Vocational and Academic Training Experiences (ELEVATE) is a comprehensive learn and earn career exploration model where youth discover their interests, connect with employers from in-demand occupations and participate in paid work-based learning.

Contact: Jim Durdle, jdurdle@gesmn.org

Greater Bemidji - \$197,500. Youth at Work funding will help youth development technical and employment skills. Participants create an individual development/employment plan including options to learn about employer expectations, work readiness, careers in high demand occupations and technical training in mechatronics. Work experiences are also provided to participants.

Contact: Dave Hengel, dhengel@greaterbemidji.com

Hired - \$125,000. Hired will provide youth with workforce skills training and experiences for careers in high-demand occupations, helping youth avoid further justice involvement and move toward work, careers, and a future where they can build equitable wealth. Activities include pre-employment skills, work readiness skills training, career exposure, introduction to career pathways, and credentials. Barriers will be eliminated through support services and individual coaching.

Contact: Julie Brekke, Julie.Brekke@hired.org

Karen Organization of Minnesota - \$90,000. The What's Next training program will provide training, individualized coaching, and service-learning opportunities for refugee youth ages 14-24 to identify their skills and career interests, pursue work experiences in their desired fields, and develop leadership skills.

Contact: Eh Tah Khu, ekhu@mnkaren.org

Keystone Community Services - \$65,000. Increase youth competitiveness for future educational and employment opportunities by providing meaningful paid internships with opportunities for leadership and personal development.

Contact: Mary McKeown, mmckeown@keystoneservices.org

MAHUBE-OTWA - \$50,000. Support enrolled youth parents and their families on an employment pathway toward life-sustaining wages as part of a two-generational approach to move families out of poverty.

Contact: Liz Kuoppala, lkuoppala@mahube.org

Merrick Community Services - \$100,000. The Mpower program's mission is to develop foundational life skills, offer career exploration opportunities, and build pathways to meaningful and lucrative careers.

Contact: Daniel Rodriguez, drodriguez@merrickcs.org

Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe (MLBO) - \$100,000. The MLBO Aanjibimaadizing Department will use Youth at Work funding to provide summer internships and parallel ten-week job training classes.

Contact: Tammy Wickstrom, tammy.wickstrom@millelacsband.com

Northeast Minnesota Office of Job Training (NEMOJT) - \$100,000. Services will be provided to youth in tandem with WIOA and Minnesota Youth Program programming. Programming will include career awareness activities, career camps, postsecondary information and industry tours. Apprenticeship opportunities will be available for youth through union contractors. Other paid work experiences with local employers will be available to youth participants as well.

Contact: Marie Domiano, marie.domiano@nemojt.org

Pine Technical College - \$50,000. The Alternative College Pathway Program will provide students with career exploration advising and student needs assessments. Students will also complete introductory credit-based course offerings in five high growth or in-demand occupations. Life skills training and resources will also be offered to participants.

Contact: Wendy Walburg, wendy.walburg@pine.edu

Project for Pride in Living (PPL) - \$50,000. The overarching goal of PPL's Youth Employment Strategies is to implement employment-focused resources and services to the youth served at PPL's contract alternative schools and the students served in the Learn and Earn to Achieve Potential (LEAP) network to improve their education, employment, and overall life outcomes through Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) coursework and access to earn-and-learn work experiences through apprenticeship opportunities.

Contact: Amy Anlauf, amy.anlauf@ppl-inc.org

Project Legacy - \$200,000. The goal of Project Legacy is to assist low-income, marginalized BIPOC youth and young adults enroll in college and get a post-secondary degree or certificate to increase opportunities for employment, higher wage earnings, job retention, and opportunities for career growth. In addition, all participants receive access to assistance securing a job post-degree or certificate attainment.

Contact: Karen Edmonds, karenedmonds.mn@gmail.com

Red Lake Nation - \$300,000. Youth will participate in work readiness training that includes career exploration activities, postsecondary education exploration, and paid 12-week work experience opportunities. Wraparound case management services will be provided to youth in addition to intergenerational cultural activities focused on family wellbeing.

Contact: Jerry Loud, jloud@redlakenation.org

Reve Academy - \$50,000. Youth at Work funds would be used to support expansion of Reve Academy's career readiness pathway programs. These are focused on school partnerships, internships with business and entrepreneurial opportunities. Funds will also focus toward expanding a pilot program that began in 2021 with a focus is on digital skill building, project management, and mentorship of youth.

Contact: Brad von Bank, brad@reveacademy.org

Rural Minnesota Concentrated Employment Program, Inc. (RMCEP) - \$110,000. The primary goal of this initiative will be to provide a recognized credential in one of the identified career pathways and pair the training with a related work-based learning experience. Each youth participant who is placed in work-based learning will be mentored for development of employability skills.

Contact: Tina Jaster, tinaj@rmcep.com

Southwest MN Private Industry Council and South-Central Workforce Council/Minnesota Valley Action Council (RWDA 5) - \$448,323. The RWDA 5 Youth at Work Project will focus on eliminating barriers contributing to economic disparities by supporting at-risk BIPOC and youth with disabilities in completing high school education, preparing for the world of work through work readiness skills training, exploring in-demand occupations through labor market information and career events, learning positive work habits through work experiences and helping identify career goals and the pathway to that career while building a talented pipeline of workers for local employers.

Contact: Amanda Mackie, amanda@mnhvac.org

Studio 180 - \$50,000. Youth at Work funding will help provide construction trades programming to high school seniors. In addition, mentorship, financial literacy, career development and planning will be provided to youth.

Contact: Art Erickson, art@studio-180.org

Tree Trust - \$100,000. Tree Trust will provide paid career readiness training and technical workforce training in skilled trades and green careers. Participants can earn industry-recognized credentials, academic credit, and technical skills. A project-based learning and case management model will be utilized.

Contact: Jared Smith, jareds@treetrust.org

Urban Boatbuilders - \$100,000. The apprenticeship program provides paid employment training to underserved youth facing barriers to employment. In addition to building boats, youth engage in weekly workshops and training ranging from self-advocacy in the workplace to financial literacy.

Contact: Marc Hosmer, info@urbanboatbuilders.org

Urban Roots - \$100,000. Urban Roots will offer career readiness training and educational opportunities reaching 85 youth per year. Three program tracks are offered to youth and provide them with paid work experience and community interaction. Participants who explore the food/culinary track will earn a ServSafe certificate.

Contact: Hayley Ball, hayleyball@urbanrootsmn.org

Wildflyer Coffee - \$200,000. Participants will participate in a 4-month paid work experience and receive customer service training. Employment support specialists will work with youth to ensure they are on track to complete programming successfully. Mental health supports are offered to youth throughout programming.

Contact: Carley Kammerer, carley@wildflyercoffee.com

Workforce Development, Inc. - \$225,000. Viewing Your Future will provide youth and young adults from underrepresented communities with virtual reality career exploration in high-growth, in-demand occupations. Youth will have the opportunity to explore various career pathways through a virtual reality headset that puts

them directly in the career field. Once youth have identified a career path, they will have the opportunity to engage in work experiences, work-based learning, and career pathways programming.

Contact: Jinny Rietmann, jrietmann@wdimn.org

Program Results in SFY25

Program Highlights

Over 10,000 youth were served during SFY25. Some program highlights are as follows:

- 73% of Youth attained work readiness or education goals as described in their plan
- 50% obtained high school diploma or equivalent, remained in school or returned to school
- 64% of youth served were from families receiving public assistance benefits
- 12% of youth served received paid work experiences as part of programming

Outcomes

The following tables provide demographic data, programming data, and outcome data for all the youth participants who received individualized services through the Youth at Work service providers in SFY25.

Summary Outcome Data for the SFY

Individuals Served	Number served
Total Individual Participants Served	10,154
Total Individuals Served Through Group Services*	1,645
Total Individual and Group Services	11,799

*Group services include career exploration events or job fairs for non-case-managed youth.

Demographic Data (Cumulative for the SFY):

Demographic Data for Individual Services		Number of Individual Services	Percent of Individual Services
Gender	Female	5,105	50.3%
	Male	4,705	46.3%
	Other	344	3.4%
Age	14 – 15	2,380	23.4%
	16 – 17	3,218	31.7%
	18 – 21	4,232	41.7%
	22 – 24	384	3.8%
Ethnicity / Race	Hispanic/Latino	1,351	18.0%
	American Indian or Alaska Native	1,904	18.8%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	353	3.5%
	Black or African American	1,223	12.0%
	White	3,567	35.1%
	Multiracial	2,432	24.0%
	Not Disclosed	902	8.9%

Demographic Data for Individual Services		Number of Individual Services	Percent of Individual Services
Education Level	0 – 12 th Grade	8,813	86.8%
	High School graduate or equivalent	761	7.5%
	Post-Secondary Education	104	1.0%
	Not Employed at Program Enrollment	4,178	41.1%
Other Demographics	Basic Skills Deficient	1,056	10.4%
	Potential Dropout	643	6.3%
	Economically Disadvantaged	7,991	78.7%
	Youth with a Disability	1,715	16.9%
	Limited English Proficient	1,196	11.8%
	Pregnant or Parenting	182	1.8%
	Justice System-Involved	296	2.9%
	Homeless or Runaway Youth	346	3.4%
	Foster Youth (or aged out of foster care)	182	1.8%
	Youth from Families Receiving Public Assistance	6,480	63.8%

Program services, activities and other related assistance for individual services (Cumulative for the SFY)

Type of Service Provided	Number of Individual Services	Percent of Individual Services
Received Education, Employment Preparation, or Work Readiness/Job Training Activities (Includes Training in ABE/Remedial, Basic Skills, Classroom, Labor Market Info, Life Skills, and Occupational Skills)	1,792	17.6%
Received Work Experience, Internship, or Apprenticeship Activities	1,186	11.7%
Received Community Involvement and Leadership Development Activities	117	1.2%
Received Post-Secondary Exploration, Career Guidance and Planning Activities	4,590	45.2%
Received Mentoring Activities	247	2.4%
Received Support Services	25	0.2%
Financial Literacy	562	5.5%

Indicators of Performance for Individual Services (Cumulative for the SFY)

Participant Outcomes	Number of Individual Services	Percent of Individual Services
Attained Work Readiness and/or Education Goals	7,404	72.9%
Received Academic Credit or Service-Learning Credit	1,728	17.0%
Obtained High School Diploma, GED, Remained in School, Obtained a Certificate or Degree, or Dropout - Returned to School	5,052	49.8%
Entered Post Secondary Education, Vocational/Occupational Skills Training, Apprenticeship, or Military	2,355	23.2%
Entered Employment	288	2.8%
Retained Employment, Increased Wages, or Advanced Career	5	0.0%
Completed Program Objective	5,300	52.2%

Stories of Impact

Story of “S”

“S” transferred from Camden High School to a Contract Alternative Program after her junior year to be in an environment that better suited her learning style, but she still had strong ties to Camden since most of her friends were still there. As a senior, S. was determined to participate in the Camden graduation ceremony and worked hard to earn additional credit by mid-May to make sure she could. This May, she joined the rest of her Camden class in walking across the stage and receiving her diploma.

Story of “C”

“C” enrolled in the program seeking support across multiple areas of his life, determined to make a fresh start and build a brighter future. His journey has been shaped by significant challenges, including involvement with the justice system and the foster care system and struggles with drug and alcohol use – both of which deeply impacted his well-being and long-term outlook. With the guidance and encouragement of the youth programming staff, “C” has made meaningful progress. Through the program he was enrolled in a GED program and has started an internship to build real-world work experience. His commitment is evident – he travels nearly 20 miles by bus, four days a week, to attend his classes. He has clear goals for his future, including becoming an auto technician or mechanic, and is steadily working toward them. He is also actively seeking independent

housing and is currently on a waiting list, having accessed housing assistance services with the help of youth programming staff. The program has provided vital support along the way, including transportation assistance to meetings and on-site GED classes, clothing for his internship, and access to a loaner phone through the program's cell phone initiative. He also regularly attends youth programming to continue building his job readiness and life skills.

Story of "J"

"J" first connected with YES Duluth through one of our local partners, Life House. At the time, she was couch-hopping, had recently lost her job, and was facing significant uncertainty about her future. Despite these challenges, including not having completed high school, "J" expressed a strong desire to earn her GED and find stable, consistent employment. She shared that she had previous experience working in assisted living facilities and genuinely enjoyed helping others. However, maintaining steady employment was difficult due to transportation barriers and housing instability. Often, she had to spend most of her earnings on rideshare services just to get to work. Other times, simply finding a safe place to stay made it challenging to keep a regular schedule. Once enrolled in YES Duluth, "J" began working closely with her career counselor and Life House staff to get on track toward earning her GED. She was provided structured study time and began receiving stipends for the hours she dedicated to her education, alleviating some of her financial stress.

"J" also expressed interest in gaining hands-on job experience. Her goals aligned perfectly with Legitimate Hustle, a worksite coordinated by YES Duluth that offers paid work experience. Through this program, "J" developed entrepreneurial and job-readiness skills while continuing her GED studies. With support from the Youth at Work Grant, YES Duluth was able to offer "J" additional supportive services, including transportation assistance, clothing, access to technology, and referrals to community resources, helping her build a strong foundation of support. "J's" motivation and commitment were evident throughout her journey. Her supervisors consistently praised her for being diligent, focused, and motivated. In under four months, she exceeded her own expectations by passing all of her GED tests. During her regular check-ins with her career counselor, she proudly shared her progress and enthusiasm for her work experience.

Recognizing her leadership potential, "J's" supervisors recommended her for a leadership position within the program. Described as positive, kind, and encouraging, she consistently took initiative and supported her peers. By the time she completed her GED, "J" had successfully stepped into a leadership role and had also secured her own apartment. As her time in the leadership role came to a close, "J" and her career counselor developed a transition plan focused on securing stable, unsubsidized employment that matched her strengths and transportation needs. Within just a couple of weeks of applying, "J" landed a job near her apartment. The position offered consistent hours, a livable wage, and minimal transportation barriers, directly supporting the goals she had shared at the start of her journey. "J's" path is a powerful testament to what can be achieved when determination meets opportunity. With the support of YES Duluth, our community partners, and the Youth at Work Grant, she not only earned her GED but also gained skills that she can take with her in pursuing future career goals.

Story of “M”

“M” came into our education and employment program several months ago through a referral from her Face to Face therapist. She had been couch-hopping for several months and did not have steady employment because of her housing instability. Staff assisted her with getting a bed at a local shelter and connected her to an internship opportunity. While working with our education and employment program, “M” was the victim of a crime and was able to receive additional support through our Youth Justice Program to address the harm caused to her. With support from staff, “M” was able to find housing after the incident; she has now found stability and has a full-time job in the field of her internship.

Conclusion

As evidenced by the data and stories of impact, it is clear that Youth at Work grantees continue to serve some of the most at-risk and in-need youth in Minnesota. Through the various program models that are funded, youth are receiving the educational and workforce supports they need to be ready to enter post-secondary education and the adult labor force.