



REGION 3 LEADERSHIP & PLANNING BOARD

REGIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. Business Engagement

The Region 3 Leadership & Planning Board (R3LPB) coordinated three healthcare summits, which included attendees from across the 13-county region. Stakeholders attending included representatives of economic development, employers, healthcare entities, and education: K–12, Adult Basic Education (ABE), and post-secondary. The R3LPB has now transitioned the work moving forward to an employer-led sector partnership, the Healthcare Task Force. The R3LPB will continue to support the work of this partnership.

Building on the traditional job fair format, sector-specific hiring events and expos narrow the focus of job fairs to a specific industry sector and combine them with a panel of sector experts and activities. In Region 3, sector employers were recruited to participate. Panelists for the expo were chosen based on their expertise and passion for the industry. Often, one of the panelists was an employee who started in an entry-level position and moved up the career ladder. Sometimes, these employees became the owners of the business. Interviewing and computer lab spaces were available for employers and jobseekers to interview on site and to complete online applications. Staff were on hand to assist employers and jobseekers. To date, Region 3 has hosted sector-specific hiring events in:

- healthcare
- construction
- transportation
- retail
- manufacturing

2. Community Engagement and Partnerships

CMJTS and Career Solutions leverage experience and lessons learned from past and current programs to engage diverse populations, to customize all services to meet the needs of each participant, and to reduce racial economic disparities. In addition, both organizations incorporate knowledge gained through participation in the Immigrant Employment Connection Group (IECG), a collaboration of St. Cloud community businesses and organizations that address workforce issues and opportunities of the Somali population. The IECG model has recently been duplicated to support veterans seeking employment.

Throughout Region 3, CMJTS and Career Solutions develop and maintain relationships and partnerships with community-based organizations, such as chambers of commerce, economic development authorities, and community action agencies, to advance workforce development initiatives.

Recently, members of the CMJTS team met with members of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe to establish new partnerships and create opportunities for program collaboration.

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3. Customer Centered Design

A multi-partner team of WIOA core program representatives from ABE, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Wagner-Peyser Job Service, and CMJTS Title I attended a seven-week, online training curriculum. The team was excited to learn about the human-centered design (HCD) process and apply it to a specific challenge. The training, “Design Kit: The Course for Human-Centered Design,” created by Acumen and delivered by NovoEd, was an intensive, hands-on learning experience that challenged each person to take a look at WorkForce Center System partnerships and service delivery from the customer’s point of view.

The goal of the HCD team was to increase customer satisfaction through innovative solutions to WorkForce Center (WFC) challenges. Examples of the work include:

- The HCD team held a focus group that included key stakeholders from all core partners, WFC customers, and program staff. The purpose of the group was to identify opportunities for customer-driven changes at the WFCs.
- HCD members completed surveys with random WFC users across LWDA 5 counties. Sample questions included, “What brought you here today? Tell us about your experience here today. What did you like and what did you not like? Describe your ideal experience.” Customer responses resulted in changes to the WFC reception areas such as decreasing written communication about services and increasing face-to-face communication.
- Implementation of “soft seating” in the Monticello WFC created a more relaxed atmosphere and reinvented the perception of the WFC. Customer feedback validated this action: “... takes away some of the anxiety of coming in,” “... allows for a place to take a quick break during job search,” and “...offers a comfortable place to wait for family or friends meeting with their employment specialist.”

4. Funding/Resources, Policy and Systems (combined strategies)

- Resources have been developed, in collaboration with DEED’s labor market analyst, which will be distributed to schools, ABE providers, parents, and those seeking a career change. It includes information on career pathways and growing occupations in central Minnesota.
- Geographic mapping of area schools and resources and completion of an experiential learning survey has been completed.
- Career pathway visuals have been developed and shared across the region.
- Grant opportunities are pursued collaboratively, as appropriate. Best practices are shared and replicated.
- Career Solutions, District 742 ABE, and Sauk Rapids manufacturing company, Coleman, formed a partnership in July 2017 to create a job training program called *CareerONE Coleman*. The program teaches individuals who face English language barriers—individuals who have “aged out” of high school and are unemployed—the skills they need for positions with local employers. Fourteen students enrolled in the joint training program with the option to interview for employment opportunities with Coleman upon completion of the program.

CareerONE Coleman is a five-week program with four components: literacy/adult diploma program, employability instruction, mentoring by a Somali elder, and on-the-job training. The classroom training consists of English, reading, writing, basic math, production safety, work-related vocabulary, as well as soft skills instruction, including organization, time management, responsibility, teamwork, and leadership skills.

Career Solutions set up a mobile computer lab at Coleman, where the training is held, to assist with the classroom portion of the program. Work-based learning allows participants to learn a variety of manufacturing skills and duties on the production floor. Participants are enrolled in the Minnesota Youth Program (MYP) with Career Solutions. Other companies in the community are interested in duplicating this program at their site.