

# 2018 TANF Innovation Project Report

The TANF Innovation Project is a partnership between the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS), Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), and the Minnesota Workforce Council Association (MWCA). The project offers structured work experiences, career exploration and counseling, work readiness skills instruction, financial literacy training and related support services to youth receiving Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) benefits.

The 2018 TANF project served two groups of youth:

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

In addition to **work experience**, the project incorporated **labor market information**, measurement of **work readiness skill development**, introduction to **career pathways**, **financial literacy training**, **preparation for post-secondary education**, and **culturally responsive programming**. Participants work with a youth counselor to develop a plan for **services based on individual need**. The plans include short-term and longer-term goals and incorporate career counseling and case management services for the participant to obtain and maintain employment and develop a career plan.

## Work Experience

For many of the participants, this project provides their first opportunity for work experience, a planned and structured learning experience in a workplace for a limited period of time. Typically the work experiences are **paid employment opportunities** during the summer and/or school year, but they may also include unpaid **internships**, **job shadowing**, **on-the-job training** and/or **pre-apprenticeship** activities. Work experiences provide opportunities for career exploration and skill development, and are targeted as much as possible to the **specific career interests** of the participant. Examples of employers providing work experiences in 2018 can be found further on in this report. Several youth have subsequently been hired by the employers who hosted their work experience.

## Labor Market Information

Youth counselors have been trained in using **labor market tools** and also access the expertise of DEED's **regional labor market analysts** as they work with the

Funding amount:	<b>\$1,014,856</b>
TANF innovation funds from the Department of Human Services.	
Cost per participant:	<b>\$2,275 per youth</b>
Number served in 2018:	<b>446</b>
Gender:	<b>72% female; 28% male</b>
Youth from Communities of Color:	<b>77%</b>
Youth with a disability:	<b>9%</b>
Teen Parent:	<b>40%</b>
Younger Youth in MFIP Household:	<b>60%</b>
Youth Attaining Work Readiness Skills:	<b>79%</b>

youth to develop the individual plan. Participants learn about the opportunities available in **high-growth, in-demand occupations**, and how to use tools such as **Minnesota Works.net**, and **CareerWISE**.

### **Work Readiness Skill Development**

Work readiness training provides an introduction to the **expectations and responsibilities** of having a job. Work readiness skill development occurs **before and during placement** in a work experience. Many project sites use a curriculum to teach basic work readiness skills in a workshop setting before the participant begins the work experience. Common topics of this training include: identifying transferrable and employability skills; effective time management; goal-setting strategies; communication skills including listening, non-verbal communication, communicating with supervisors and co-workers, appropriate worksite language and language etiquette; job search techniques, how to complete a job application, prepare a resume and cover letter; interviewing skills; employment laws and employment forms; interpreting a paycheck; keeping a job, problem solving and conflict resolution. Work readiness skills are **evaluated by worksite supervisors** at multiple points during the work experience and participants receive **feedback on strengths and areas for improvement**.

### **Introduction to Career Pathways**

In addition to general career exploration, many youth were introduced to the idea of career pathways and career laddering opportunities. Several of the sites have career pathway programs in industries such as **construction, health care, manufacturing, information technology, human services, office and administrative technology, call center and 911 Telecommunications**. Career Pathways programs provide a pathway in high-growth, in-demand occupations where individuals can enhance basic academic skills, participate in job training and earn industry-recognized credentials and post-secondary education credits. TANF Innovation Project participants have the opportunity to enter these programs or create their own pathway in an area of individual interest with the help of their youth counselor.

### **Financial Literacy Training**

A variety of **financial literacy tools and strategies** help each youth learn skills necessary for long-term financial stability. Counselors assisted youth in **opening a bank account** for direct deposit of their paychecks and the development of a personal relationship with a local financial institution. In many cases, this was the first time anyone in the family had ever opened a bank account. Curricula such as the **FDIC's Money Smart for Young Adults** and the **University of Minnesota Extension's Dollars into Sense** introduced key personal finance concepts such as saving, budgeting, and the importance of credit, investments and loans. In some cases, youth used earnings from the program to contribute to the family household budget.

### **Preparation for Post-Secondary Education**

Counselors work with participants in a variety of ways to prepare them to pursue and succeed in post-secondary education as part of their career plan. Activities may include: arranging **tours of training institutions**; assisting participants with **applying for college and paying for application fees**; helping the participant sign up for **Accuplacer exams**; connecting participants to **services at the training institutions**

(such as TRIO, Student Services, Academic Center, Bookstore, etc.); assisting with **completion of financial aid forms and identifying scholarships, grants and student loans**; helping with **registration for classes**; and providing **ongoing support** throughout each school term.

### **Culturally Responsive Programming**

Local sites work with partners and worksites to provide services responsive to various needs and cultural backgrounds. Youth are placed at quality worksites that fit their interest and can **accommodate their cultural beliefs**. In addition, employers are informed of any necessary accommodations to the worksite. For example, there are many cultures that prohibit people from touching pork. In such a case, the youth

#### **Examples of Employers Providing Work Experience:**

Salvation Army, Mississippi Library, Anoka Government Center, Park Terrace Elementary, Footlocker, Menards, Twice New Clothing and Treasures, Cerenity Senior Care, Four Directions Child Care Center, Hospitality House for Youth, Keystone Community Services, Java Café, Berrywellness LLC Acupuncture & Asian Medicine, Arrow Ace Hardware, Subway, Property Assessing and Zoning, Hennepin Healthcare, Minnesota Trades Academy

counselor would either avoid a worksite that involves contact with pork, work with the employer to assign duties that don't involve contact with pork or develop other worksite accommodations for the participant. In all services, **interpreters** are utilized when requested. Some sites have worksite **supervisors who speak other languages**. The supervisors are encouraged to use English when possible to practice the language in a work setting, but are able to communicate important safety or workplace policies or procedures in their native language to avoid

misunderstandings and ensure a successful work experience. The work experiences can also provide an opportunity for participants to **share their cultural heritage with others**, such as one participant who was able to share her Hispanic heritage with the children at her worksite at a local daycare.

### **Success Stories**

#### **Bianca - Rural MN CEP, Inc.**

Bianca came into youth services through the Minnesota Youth Program in the summer of 2018. As the year progressed, she was identified as a candidate for the TANF Youth Program. Bianca is 14 years old, attending 8<sup>th</sup> grade at Frazee High School. She enjoys working with kids, so working in the Latch Key after school program was a perfect fit! Bianca started working with the kids in activities, snacks & monitoring for safety. She has very much enjoyed working with the kids, is very engaged in activities and interacts with the kids well. She is a self-starter, initiating snack preparations, clean-up and transition onto the next activity. Bianca's worksite supervisor completed the work evaluation; she scored strong in areas of Relations, Work Site Appropriateness and Safety. She did well in reliability, problem solving, communication, productivity and accuracy. Bianca did a great job demonstrating good work ethic. In the areas of Math and Reading she increased 2 ½ grade levels. Her teacher reports that she stays on task and never has behavior issues. Bianca is very involved with her youth group, participates in dance, and her future goal is to be an art teacher.

### **Candace - Rural MN CEP, Inc.**

Candace came to the TANF Youth program at Rural MN CEP the summer after her 11<sup>th</sup> grade year at Cass Lake ALC. She had been missing a lot of school and hanging out with the wrong crowd. She had never had a job before, and received training on how to develop skills for work and how to interview for a job. Her Youth Counselor connected her with the Boys and Girls Club of the Leech Lake Area and she interviewed for and received a work experience position as a Junior Staff member. She worked 29 hours a week during the summer and was able to save some money from her earnings. Her counselor walked her through the results of her first performance review to help her learn how she could improve her skills. She stopped hanging out with the friends who were bad influences so she could be successful at school and work. She is now in 12<sup>th</sup> grade at Cass Lake ALC and will graduate this year. In October 2018, she was hired as a part time employee of the Boys and Girls Club, working about 15 hours a week as Program Staff for the club in Cass Lake. She is in charge of the volunteer staff and junior staff employees. She lives with her mother and siblings in Cass Lake and has applied to Leech Lake Tribal College where she plans to study early childhood education next school year.

### **Megan – Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council (PIC)**

Megan is a junior at the Minnesota River Valley Education District (MRVED) Alternative Learning Center in Montevideo, MN. She was running into barriers with transportation to be able to get to and from work at her job as a cashier in Walmart. She was interested in earning her driver's license to address her transportation barrier but was not able to come up with enough money to pay for the training by the registration deadline. While Megan was working with the PIC for assistance earning her driver's license, she learned of the Nursing Assistant Career Pathway course that was going to be held through PIC, MRVED, Adult Basic Education, and Minnesota West Community and Technical College. Megan recently attended the Nursing Assistant training and has now successfully passed her examination and has obtained her Minnesota Nursing Assistant License. She is very excited and has applied for a Certified Nursing Assistant position at a nursing home in her hometown and is really hopeful she gets the job. She enjoys being with people and helping them. In addition, Megan passed and obtained her Minnesota Driver's License to help with her transportation issues.

### **Alana - Minnesota Valley Action Council**

Alana began working with youth staff in September 2017. Alana had goals in mind when she came to the program and has constantly kept the ball rolling and has never let her momentum drop. In addition to caring for her daughter Tatiana on her own, Alana has earned her driver's license, earned her GED, secured daycare after searching intensively for many months, accepted full time employment with Divine Providence in Sleepy Eye, MN as a Nursing Assistant and completed her CNA certification which was sponsored by Divine Providence. Alana is now earning a livable wage and is no longer receiving public assistance. Alana always looks forward to days off that she can take her daughter outside and do other fun activities together. Alana is working hard gaining experience in her field and may look into pursuing LPN training in the future.

### **Yaile - Minnesota Valley Action Council**

Yaile successfully completed a work experience with the Gaylord Public Library and earned one academic credit through Sibley East High School. She reports learning about the importance of a service

like the library to a smaller community for so many people of all ages. Yaile returned to high school following the completion of her work experience.

### **Page – Workforce Development, Inc. (WDI)**

Page is a 22-year-old single mother of one. She has her high school diploma and some past work experience, but has been unsure of what career field to go into. She was hoping to work in an office setting helping others so she was placed in a TANF Youth work experience through WDI as a Front Desk Assistant. Page started in early October and has excelled in learning new skills over the course of her work experience. She has significantly improved her typing speed and her ability to use Microsoft Word. She has helped clients with resumes and applications and they have shown much appreciation for her assistance. Page reports that this job with a consistent daily routine has helped her to “smooth out” some of the past difficulties with daycare and has greatly improved her budgeting and time management skills. Page says that her favorite thing about working there is that “It doesn’t feel like work. It’s a great environment and everybody is friendly.”

### **Keyira - Minneapolis Employment and Training/HIRED**

Keyira has been a student in the Pathways to Success Program since July 2018. She entered the program to obtain credit toward high school and learn more about career pathways while simultaneously working towards graduation. Keyira is a very motivated self-starter and displayed this when she completed a Career Readiness Seminar credit within her first month of attending Pathways. Keyira then pursued an internship through HIRED and the TANF Youth Program at Four Directions Child and Family Center as a Teacher Aide. She has always been interested and passionate about working with people, and enjoyed her experience working with young children. Keyira received glowing reviews from her internship site; she was reliable, engaged well with the children, was a team player, and maintained a positive attitude. Keyira completed her internship in December 2018 and continues to work with the Pathways program on college and career readiness. She recently was accepted to Minneapolis College, and started her first semester as a Psychology Major in January 2019.

### **Amadeus – Minneapolis Employment and Training/MVNA**

Amadeus is an impressive young man who is no stranger to hard work. Last spring, however, the financial and familial demands placed on this 18 year-old father seemed to be conspiring against him. Facing homelessness along with the mother of his child and their fifteen month-old daughter, Amadeus contemplated dropping out of school to get a second job. His Teen HOPE social worker connected him with a TANF Youth internship at Hennepin County Medical Center (HCMC) where he worked on a resident record keeping and a survey tabulation project with the hospital’s Medical Administration Department. In his own words, Amadeus describes how things started to turn around: “Having an internship through HCMC gave me hope and motivated me to continue my education. I would like to be a veterinarian and working around people in the medical field has shown me how to act professionally and has allowed me to network with so many people.” Not only did the internship give him a chance to learn new skills, it also helped him build social capital and develop important relationships. Amadeus states it best: “It was nice to have my manager act as a mentor and encourage me to invest in myself and my future. He always gave good feedback and listened to me.” The wages he earned through his internship, combined with a rental assistance program through Teen HOPE, allowed Amadeus and his

young family to find stable housing. Both Amadeus and the mother of his child are currently attending school full-time (she has graduated and is now at MCTC), he's working part-time, and will graduate from Menlo High School in June. Amadeus plans to enroll in college next fall where he hopes to pursue his dream of becoming a veterinarian. "I'm happy HCMC and TANF Youth gave me an opportunity to earn money to take care of my family and gave me something I can be proud to put on my resume."

### **Eric – Anoka County**

Eric is currently enjoying his second year in the TANF Innovation project. Last year, his first year as a custodial assistant at the Anoka County Government Center, he enjoyed the opportunity to work independently and complete assigned cleaning tasks. He finds value in completing a task and taking pride in the outcome. This year Eric received a company cellphone and email to stream line communication in the department. His supervisor knew that Eric was ready for these upgraded responsibilities. The supervisor describes Eric as adding value to the department mission to provide a safe, clean, comfortable, and well-maintained environment at Anoka County. He helps with a variety of projects and provides valuable input at team meetings. Eric enjoys his experience at the Government Center and would consider future employment if presented the opportunity. He has learned many of the benefits to working at Anoka County, including help with future trainings and education. Eric appreciates how easy it is to communicate with his supervisor and coworkers, in addition to the flexibility of the schedule and the proximity to his house.

### **Olivia – Anoka County**

Olivia is currently a 9<sup>th</sup> grader in high school and enjoys working after classes at the Learning Ventures child care in Spring Lake Park. As her first job, she greatly appreciates that it's more like play than work stating, "There is always something to do, coloring, playing cars, board games". Beyond just playing, she also assists with snack time, outdoor activities, and arts & crafts. Supervisors at Learning Ventures appreciate the added assistance of a teen worker. The children admire having a younger helper in the room. Olivia leads by example, mentoring good behavior and sportsmanship. Olivia appreciates the easy scheduling that allows her to focus on her schooling and gain valuable work experience at the same time. In the future, Olivia, would enjoy finding another childcare position where she could continue teaching and playing with children.

### **Celisa - Ramsey County/Workforce Solutions**

Celisa completed her TANF work experience with Ramsey County Care Center. She was interested in pursuing a career in healthcare and completed a nursing assistant course at St. Paul College. She was praised numerous times by nursing staff and residents for her initiative and enthusiasm when working with residents. She was even offered conditional employment upon passing the MN State CNA exam. Through her work experience at Ramsey County Care Center, Celisa could explore additional careers in healthcare and identify a pathway that fit her skills. She was accepted into St. Paul College's Health Unit Coordinator Program and will also start school in February.

### **Jessica – Ramsey County/HIRED**

Jessica was referred to HIRED's MFIP Young Adult Program in the summer of 2018 and shortly thereafter enrolled into the TANF Youth Program. At that time, she was working on obtaining her High School



Diploma and had just started working full-time in the medical field as a Personal Care Attendant. Through the TANF Youth Program, Jessica received school supplies, behind the wheel assistance, interview and work clothing, and housing support. She worked closely with her TANF Youth Employment Counselor to develop a resume and cover letter and completed a mock interview. Jessica successfully completed a job shadow at a senior living facility where she was able to observe a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN). In December of 2018, Jessica's hard work paid off and she earned her High School Diploma! Jessica feels that without this program, she would not have known what was needed to start her pathway towards nursing. The job shadow experience and continual discussions with her Employment Counselor allowed her to plan the next step on her career pathway. Jessica is scheduled to attend a CNA training at the end of January 2019.

### **Kymel – Career Solutions**

Kymel shared the following thoughts about his time with CareerONE (TANF Youth project): "I joined CareerONE because I heard about it from somebody and they explained that it was a good opportunity and experience, and that you make a lot of money. I had to try it, but at first I was kind of just in it for the money and I didn't really expect anything more....I've learned so much from CareerONE these few weeks. I've learned things that aren't just preparing and equipping me for the workplace, but for my future and everyday life, too. I've learned...many life skills that have taught me how to be a leader and ... how to handle different situations. I have learned a lot about integrity, respect, and leadership through team building exercises at the YMCA....I also learned that when you work as a team you get things done quickly and done right. I like the experience of the whole program and how it focuses on giving us the knowledge and tools to be ready for the workforce. I feel like I've learned a lot, such as how to manage money and my rights as an employee. I've also met new people and had lots of fun. I think I will use the money I have earned to save and get interest. I will also help out my family with our big move coming up and for school expenses. I recommend CareerONE to anyone who wants to earn money, wants to learn and be a part of something bigger than themselves and to someone who wants work experience. I say this because you have to work and be a part of a team in every job and you have to earn money. There is lots to learn from CareerONE, but you have to work at it and do your best at everything you do just like you would at any job. I have learned so much from CareerONE and I will use all the skills I have learned to make my work experience much smoother. I really enjoyed the program and the people in it and I hope more kids have the chance to do this in the years to come."

### **Tesha - Tree Trust**

Tesha started with the TANF program in the fall of 2017 and was eager to work with Tree Trust again in the spring of 2018 when the program restarted. Before working in the TANF program, Tesha had a part-time job in the food industry, but she wanted work experience in a different field. She decided to get involved in the Tree Trust program because she "knew it would be a good opportunity to get [her] to where [she] wanted to be." In 2017, she was placed at La Creche as a Childcare Assistant. She had recently completed a child development training at her daughter's school, so she was excited to apply her new skills in a work setting. She successfully completed her internship at La Creche and received great reviews from her host site supervisor.

In 2018 Tesha was interested in office work, so she was placed as an Administrative Assistant at CAPI. Her dedication and positive attitude has opened doors for her there. When asked what she wants to do after the program, Tesha said, "I know I like to help people, so I've always wanted to be a CNA or assistant nurse. CAPI actually offered me CNA classes; I just did orientation last week, and we start classes next week!" She was also proud to say that during her time working with Tree Trust, she has almost completed her GED and is looking forward to achieving that milestone. Tesha explained that working through Tree Trust has been a great "opportunity to learn something new every day about a different job you have never worked before." She made a point to say that "if anyone is looking for a good opportunity to learn something new... Tree Trust is the program for that."

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