

**Unified Local Youth Plan
 PY 2017 WIOA Youth Formula Funds
 SFY 2018 Minnesota Youth Program (MYP)**

Cover Sheet/Signature Page

APPLICANT AGENCY - Use the legal name and full address of the fiscal agency with whom the grant will be executed.	Contact Name and Address
(Fiscal Agent for the South Central WorkForce Council) Minnesota Valley Action Council, Inc. 706 North Victory Drive Mankato, MN 56001	Heather Gleason South Central WorkForce Council 706 N. Victory Drive Mankato, MN 56001
Director Name: Amanda Mackie Telephone Number: 507-345-2400 FAX: 507-345-2414 E-Mail: amanda@mnavac.org	Contact Name: Heather Gleason Telephone Number: 507-345-2418 FAX: 507-345-2414 E-Mail: hgleason@workforcecouncil.org

MN Tax ID #: 94865358 Federal Employer ID #: 41-6050353

DUNS Number: 0708675337

I certify that the information contained herein is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and that I submit this application on behalf of the applicant agency.

Signature: _____

Title: Executive Director, MVAC

Date: 3/8/2017

Signature: _____

Title: Executive Director, SC WorkForce Council

Date: 3/8/2017

Checklist of Items to be Submitted With Unified Local Youth Plan Prior to Submittal to DEED:

NOTE: Once your unified plan is approved by DEED, separate PSP Forms will be sent for you to complete and sign so that funding can be released at the appropriate time.

Signed Cover Page	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Completed PY 2017 PRELIMINARY WIOA Youth Budget	<input type="checkbox"/>
Completed SFY 2018 PRELIMINARY MYP Budget	<input type="checkbox"/>
List of Youth Committee Members	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
List of Youth Service Providers For PY17/SFY18 (WIOA and MYP)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Current Youth Committee Mission Statement and Workplan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Copy of the Most Recent Request For Proposal (RFP) Used to Select WIOA Youth Service Providers (and MYP, as appropriate)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Best Practices for Serving the Neediest Youth	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Completed Narrative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

[Attachment 2]

PY 2017 Budget Information Summary:
WIOA Youth Formula Grant Program
 (See page 5 for definitions of cost categories)

WSA/Contact:	
E-Mail Address/Phone Number:	
Date Submitted (or Modified):	

Cost Category	Carryover From PY16 (Cannot Exceed 20% of PY16 Amt.)	New Funds Under WIOA	Total Funds Available	Estimated CUMULATIVE Quarterly Expenditures			
				4/1/17 to 6/30/17	7/1/17 to 9/30/17	10/1/17 to 12/31/17	1/1/18 to 3/31/18
833 Administration (Cannot Exceed 10%)							
WIOA Youth Program Financial Information							
841 In-School Youth Work Experience Wages/Fringe							
825 Out-of-School Youth Work Experience Wages/Fringe							
872 In-School Youth Work Experience Staff Costs							
855 Out-of-School Youth Work Experience Staff Costs							
874 In-School Youth Direct Services (Non-Work Exp.)							
877 Out-of-School Youth Direct Services (Non-Work Exp.)							
848 In-School Youth Support Services							
862 Out-of-School Youth Support Services							
860 In-School Youth Other Services							
878 Out-of-School Youth Other Services							
TOTAL:							
Pct. Of Funds Expended on Out-of-School Youth (75 percent REQUIRED for PY 17):							

Estimated Number of WIOA Youth Served		
In-School Youth	Out-of-School Youth	Total Est. Served

[Attachment 2]

SFY 2018 Budget Information Summary:
Minnesota Youth Program*
 (See page 5 for definitions of cost categories)

WSA/Contact:	
E-Mail Address/Phone Number:	
Date Submitted (or Modified):	

Cost Category	CUMULATIVE Quarterly Expenditures for SFY 2018**					Carry Over to SFY19*
	Total Funds Available	7/1/17 to 9/30/17	10/1/17 to 12/31/17	1/1/18 to 3/31/18	4/1/18 to 6/30/18	
833 Administration (Up to 10%)						
Minnesota Youth Program Financial Information						
881 Youth Participant Wages and Fringe Benefits						
885 Direct Services to Youth						
860 Outreach to Schools (Direct Services – Up to 20 percent)						
891 Support Services						
TOTAL:						

*MYP funds CAN be carried over into the next biennium (SFY 2019).

**All quarterly figures must be cumulative.

Estimated Number of MYP Youth Served/Cost Per Participant (7/1/17 - 6/30/18)	
Summer	
Year-Round	
(Optional) Outreach to Schools (Youth+Families)	
EST.TOTAL MYP YOUTH SERVED:	
Estimated Cost Per MYP Participant:	
Estimated Cost Per OTS Participant/Family:	

Definitions of Cost Categories

(WIOA and MYP) Administration – Costs are defined by WIOA Final Rules and Regulations (20 CFR, Section §667.220) and are generally associated with the expenditures related to the overall operation of the employment and training system. Administrative costs are associated with functions not related to the direct provision of services to program participants. These costs can be both personnel and non-personnel and both direct and indirect.

Specifically, the following functions are considered to be “administrative”:

- Accounting, budgeting, financial and cash management functions;
- Procurement and purchasing functions;
- Property management functions;
- Personnel management functions;
- Payroll functions;
- Audit functions
- Incident reports response functions;
- General legal service functions;
- Costs of goods and services required for the administrative functions of the program including such items as rental/purchase of equipment, utilities, office supplies, postage, and rental and maintenance of office space;
- Systems and procedures required to carry out the above administrative functions including necessary monitoring and oversight;
- Travel costs incurred for official business related to the above administrative functions;

(WIOA and MYP) Youth Participant Wages and Fringe Benefits – Wages and benefits paid directly to youth participants while engaged in program activities. Stipends provided for educational activities should be included in this cost category.

(WIOA and MYP) Direct Services to Youth – Costs associated with providing direct service to youth, **EXCLUDING** costs of youth participant wages and fringe benefits and support services. Wages and fringe benefits for staff who provide direct services to youth participants should be included in this cost category.

NOTE: The definition of Direct Services to Youth also applies for those WSAs choosing to operate an “Outreach to Schools (OTS) Initiative.” At the discretion of the WSA, up to **20 percent** of your MYP allocation may be used for Outreach to Schools activities. (See the following page for further discussion of OTS.)

(WIOA and MYP) Support Services – Items that are necessary for a youth to participate in WIOA, such as transportation, clothing, tools, child care, housing/rental assistance, school-related expenses, etc. These expenses may be paid directly to the youth or to a third-party vendor.

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

- Providing information to individuals and groups regarding occupations and industries in demand and with the highest growth throughout the region using current labor market information, including providing opportunities for students to directly experience occupations through job shadowing, mentoring and business tours.
- Providing workshops to classes on planning for post-secondary training, including accessing financial aid and selecting an appropriate program, as well as other career planning topics such as goal setting and navigating business culture. Providing opportunities to interact with local business and industry including tours, organizing business and industry speaker panels, job shadowing, and mentoring.
- Providing individual counseling and career exploration including career assessments, resume preparation and job search assistance, and mock interviews.
- Tours of the WorkForce Center and information about the resources available at the WFC and how to access and utilize the resources.
- Connections to community and private sector resources through a local career fair, career event, and tours of businesses in strategic industries.
- Group and individual counseling including instruction and presentations on ISEEK, labor market information and strategic industries and demand occupations.
- Individualized counseling including career exploration and career assessments, resume preparation, mock interviews, and job search assistance.

Youth Committee and Service Provider Information

Provide a current Mission Statement and Work Plan for your Youth Committee

The current Mission Statement and Work Plan are attached.

Include a Current Youth Committee Membership List (see below for sample format). Add additional boxes as needed. Indicate “Yes” or “No” in the right column if the Youth Committee member is a voting member of the LWIB.

YOUTH COMMITTEE MEMBER NAME	ORGANIZATION/REPRESENTING (examples: business, education, community- based organizations, youth, parent, etc.)	Full LWIB Member?
Chair: Reggie Worlds Phone Number: 507-344-2600 E-Mail: reggie.worlds@state.mn.us	MN DEED-Mankato WorkForce Center/Employment Services	Yes
Co-Chair: Deanna Steffensmeier Phone Number: 507-344-2632 E-Mail: deanna.steffensmeier@state.mn.us	Vocational Rehabilitation Services/Youth w/Disabilities	No
Member Name: Jim Abraham Phone Number: 507-469-1465 E-Mail: jim.employmentrelatedservices@gmail.com	Employment Related Services/Business	Yes
Member Name: Bill Aufderheide Phone Number: 507-354-4171 E-Mail: billa@mrpaving.com	M.R. Paving & Excavating/Business	Yes
Member Name: Valerie Bentsdahl Phone Number: 507-625-4436 E-Mail: vbentsdahl@jonesmetalinc.com	Jones Metal/Business	No
Member Name: Angie Blackstad Phone Number: 507-345-5222 E-Mail: ablack2@isd77.k12.mn.us	Mankato Area Adult Basic Education/Education	No
Member Name: Laura Dhuyvetter Phone Number: 507-344-7897 E-Mail: laura@rcef.net	Regional Center for Entrepreneurial Facilitation/Business Development	No
Member Name: Amy Gorka Phone Number: 507-389-5580 E-Mail: agorka@mrciworksource.org	MRCI WorkSource/Youth w/Disabilities	No

YOUTH COMMITTEE MEMBER NAME	ORGANIZATION/REPRESENTING (examples: business, education, community- based organizations, youth, parent, etc.)	Full LWIB Member?
Member Name: Bukata Hayes Phone Number: 507-385-6652 E-Mail: bhayes@mankatodiversity.org	Greater Mankato Diversity Council/Community-Based Organization	No
Member Name: Kirstin Hanke Phone Number: 507-359-6602 E-Mail: kirstin.hanke@elkay.com	Elkay Wood Products/Business	No
Member Name: Amanda Mackie Phone Number: 507-345-2400 E-Mail: amanda@mnavac.org	MN Valley Action Council/Community-Based Organization/Youth Services/Housing	Yes
Member Name: Jeannie Meidlinger Phone Number: 507-389-7419 E-Mail: jeannie.meidlinger@southcentral.edu	South Central College/Post-Secondary Education	No
Member Name: Shane Meier Phone Number: 507-345-2133 E-Mail: shane@ibewlocal343.org	IBEW Local 343/Organized Labor	Yes
Member Name: Jennifer Moore Phone Number: 612-875-9369 E-Mail: Moore.Jennifer@jobcorps.org	Job Corps/Youth Services	No
Member Name: Glenn Morris Phone Number: 507-389-5106 E-Mail: gmorris@mnspsc.org	South Central Service Cooperative/Carl Perkins/Education	No
Member Name: Kim Mueller Phone Number: 507-387-1477 E-Mail: kmuell1@isd77.k12.mn.us	ISD #77 Mankato Area/Secondary Education	No
Member Name: Jon Nowak Phone Number: 651-341-4436 E-Mail: jnowak@ncsrcc.org	North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters/Organized Labor	Yes
Member Name: Karie Oachs Phone Number: 507-382-2088 E-Mail: koachs@lifeworks.org	Lifeworks Services, Inc./Youth w/ Disabilities	No

YOUTH COMMITTEE MEMBER NAME	ORGANIZATION/REPRESENTING (examples: business, education, community-based organizations, youth, parent, etc.)	Full LWIB Member?
Member Name: Jonathan Rubischko Phone Number: 507-625-6556 E-Mail: jonathan.rubischko@rasmussen.edu	Rasmussen College/Post-Secondary Education	No
Member Name: Abdi Sabrie Phone Number: 507-351-8142 E-Mail: afecmankato@gmail.com	African Family & Education Center/Community-Based Organization/Parent	No
Member Name: Heather Sellner Phone Number: 507-387-3461 E-Mail: hselln1@isd77.k12.mn.us	ISD #77 Mankato Area/Secondary Education	No
Member Name: Nancy Sprengeler Phone Number: 507-389-6068 E-Mail: nancy.sprengeler@mnsu.edu	MN State University-Mankato-Education Talent Search/Education/Youth Services	No

Provide an updated list of all current youth service providers (see below for sample format). The information provided in this chart will be posted on the DEED website. Please be sure that the contact person's name, phone number and e-mail address are entered correctly. Add additional boxes as needed.

Youth Service Provider/Contact	WIOA	MYP
Name of Service Provider: Minnesota Valley Action Council Address: 706 North Victory Drive City, State, ZIP Mankato, MN 56001 Contact Person: Nancy Haag Contact Person Phone: 507-345-2405 Contact Person E-Mail: nancyh@mnvac.org Service Provider Website: www.mnvac.org	Yes No In-School? [X] [] Out-of-School? [X] []	Yes No Summer? [X] [] Year-Round? [X] [] OTS*? [X] []

OTS = Outreach to Schools component of MYP.

[Attachment 1]

Workplan: Youth Program Service Delivery Design (WIOA Young Adult and MYP)

IMPORTANT NOTE: *This narrative section will cover **PY 2017** for purposes of WIOA planning and **SFY 2018** for MYP planning purposes.*

1. Attach a copy of the most recent Request for Proposal(s) (RFP) issued by the WSA for WIOA Young Adult and/or the Minnesota Youth Program, as appropriate.

The South Central Request for Proposal is attached.

Every four years, the South Central WorkForce Council will release a Request For Proposal (RFP) to solicit proposals to provide workforce development services for youth. A Task Force made up of members from the Youth Council, WorkForce Council and Joint Powers Board review the current RFP and they update the information being requested of proposers. A notice is printed in each of the legal newspapers in the nine county area and notices are sent to local school districts, county human services, social service organizations and employment service agencies. Interested parties request copies of the RFP and are invited to a proposer's conference. At the proposer's conference, the RFP is reviewed, interested parties are given an opportunity to ask questions about the RFP, and organizations intending to submit a proposal are required to declare their intent in writing. Proposals that are submitted by the due date are reviewed and rated by the Task Force. Their recommendation for a youth services provider is presented to the Youth Council, WorkForce Council and Joint Powers Board for approval. Minnesota Valley Action Council was selected as our youth services provider in January 2016. This was approved by the Youth Council, the SC WorkForce Council and the Joint Powers Board.

2. Describe outreach and recruitment of:

Spreading the word about available WIOA services is an important component of our recruitment effort. MVAC will build on its history of our network of established partnerships throughout the nine county area. Below are partial lists of organizations with whom we share a connection.

Education Community:

1. School Districts in nine counties
2. Alternative Schools
3. Adult Basic Education & GED Programs
4. Post-secondary institutions

WorkForce Center Partners including:

- Job Service
- Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- MRCI WorkSource
- South Central Youth Council
- State Services for the Blind
- Lifework Planning Center

Area Service Providers:

1. Human & Public Health Services
2. Community Corrections
3. Lutheran Social Services
4. Salvation Army
5. Committee Against Domestic Abuse
6. Catholic Charities
7. Area Homeless Shelters
8. Mental Health Agencies
9. Foster Care Agencies
10. Minority-Serving Agencies
11. Veterans Service Offices
12. Worksites
13. Goodwill Easter Seals
14. Lifeworks

MVAC Internal Programs: Two-hundred staff based locally in each of our nine counties working with multiple programs provide an internal network of referrals. These referrals may come from staff working with:

1. Homeless Prevention Programs
2. Head Start
3. Employment/Training: Dislocated Worker, MFIP, WIOA Adult, Senior Programs
4. Car Ownership Program
5. Energy Assistance Program
6. Housing Programs
7. Again Thrift Stores
8. Food Hub

MVAC's outreach and recruitment will also be achieved through word of mouth from past and present youth participants, their parents, worksite staff, and our expanded community network.

Targeting our efforts to recruit more out-of-school youth will involve reaching out to Adult Basic Education, MFIP Employment Services, high school social workers, homelessness prevention staff, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and postsecondary recruitment offices.

MVAC will publicize our programs for all encompassing recruitment through:

- *MVAC website*
 - *Use of social media (Facebook account in each county)*
 - *Brochures, posters, and flyers*
 - *Presentations to area service and educational providers, in person or via email*
 - *Public service announcements via television, radio, and print media*
 - *Announcements on monitors at human services, courthouses, community centers and WorkForce Centers*
 - *Online job search sites*
 - *E-mail newsletters*
 - *Booths at area career fairs and postsecondary schools*
- **Out-of-School Youth (“OSY”)**

Outreach and recruitment efforts that are unique to out-of-school youth include a stronger partnership with Adult Basic Education in our area including Adult Area Learning Cooperative, Faribault County Adult Basic Education, Mankato Area Adult Education and Southwest Adult Basic Education.

Angie Blackstad from Mankato Area Adult Basic Education is a member of the Youth Council and coordinates the Diploma Completion Program and College Prep Program. MVAC and ABE have developed a google document to track shared clients, new referrals and progress reports. Both entities have access to the document at any time to review or

update progress. This has been a helpful communication tool between agencies and streamlined the referral process.

Also, it has become a regular practice at several local school districts including Mankato East, Mankato West, Riverbend Academy and St. Peter High School to provide information on our youth program to students that drop out of high school.

Jennifer Moore from the Hubert H. Humphrey Job Corps has joined our Youth Council. She presented information on the services provided at Job Corp at our last meeting and will be a valuable resource to connect to eligible youth that return to the area after participating in Job Corps.

MVAC has also developed a strong partnership with The REACH Drop-In Center, which is a gathering place for homeless youth. MVAC staff are present at the center one day a week to meet with current program participants and for outreach to other eligible youth that could benefit from the services.

In addition, MVAC provides MFIP Employment Services and performs both roles as youth counselor and employment counselor in five of the nine counties in South Central Minnesota. In two counties, MVAC staff are co-located with the employment service provider. In the last two counties, MVAC staff have strong working relationships with the employment services providers and have been in contact with them about the program.

MVAC has also reached out-of-school youth through job postings on Minnesota Works and ads in local newspapers.

- **In-School Youth (“ISY”)**

In addition to the strategies above, informational letters and program applications are distributed to county human service agencies, school principals and counselors, probation, foster care agencies, mental health facilities, psychologists and psychiatrists throughout the nine county area to identify and refer eligible in-school youth.

South Central provides Outreach to School activities under our Partners in Career Exploration Program where interns from the Student Counseling Program at Minnesota State University – Mankato are placed in local school districts to provide career exploration activities to high school juniors and seniors. PICE interns received training from MVAC staff on the youth programs to share with their school districts to assist with outreach and recruitment.

MVAC staff have been working with local school districts through the Higher Education Career Advisor Project (HECAP). Staff provide classroom presentations on a variety of topics including: career assessments, career planning & exploration, financial literacy, job search skills, navigating business culture, and post-secondary planning. MVAC staff have visited over 400 students at 19 schools so far this year. This connection provides services to high school students and help identify and recruit eligible youth.

Carrie Bendix, Rural Career Counseling Coordinator, has visited about 40% of the high schools in the region so far to discuss the career counseling services happening in the school as well as offer the services that MVAC can provide. Her outreach efforts have produced additional connections with area high schools that have helped connect eligible youth to the program.

MVAC has connected with admissions, financial aid, retention, student support services, TRIO/Upward Bound staff at post-secondary institutions in our area to explain the program and how it can benefit their students. MVAC will be involved in new student orientation sessions at South Central College to share information on the youth program directly with college students that could benefit from additional assistance in completing their post-secondary training. Our outreach also included post-secondary institutions outside of the nine county area that many youth from our area also attend including Minnesota West Community & Technical College, Riverland Community College, and Ridgewater College.

3. Describe eligibility determination process, include WSA's strategy for use of the "5% window" for non-income eligible ISY and OSY young adults (up to 5% of ISY and OSY participants served by WIOA Young Adults may be individuals who do not meet the income criteria for eligible in-school participants, provided they fall within one or more of the categories described in WIOA Sec. 129 (C). See Chapter 2 of the WIOA Youth Administrative Policy.

Eligibility of participants will be documented by securing all supporting documentation including a copy of their social security card, birth certificate, age certificate, driver's license, school ID card, etc. Application information for all applications received will be entered in the Workforce One client data system to assist in the establishment and tracking of youth participants and a working file for each enrolled youth will be maintained. Applications for any youth that are not served due to ineligibility or lack of follow through will be entered and kept on file.

Unfortunately, there will be youth we cannot serve under WIOA due to unmet eligibility requirements. Staff will assess youth for other MVAC programming to meet their needs and/or provide referrals to South Central Workforce partners, secondary or postsecondary schools/training facilities, temporary employment agencies, or other service providers.

The 5% window gives us the discretion to serve (up to 5% of individuals enrolled) in-school youth or out-of-school youth who would be enrolled under the low-income criteria, but are not income eligible and face barriers to employment. These barriers are defined by WIOA legislation as basic skills deficient, English language learner, offender, homeless, runaway or foster care youth, pregnant or parenting, disabled youth and requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment.

In South Central, the 5% window will be considered when an in-school youth lacks family support (confirmed by a school official and/or professional). In general, in school youth are often living with parents or guardians. For youth that lack family support, they

often face additional burdens such as paying for their own housing, transportation, childcare, etc. WIOA services can help these youth identify career plans and provide the supports needed to achieve their goals.

4. Identify the WSA’s definition of “An individual who requires additional assistance to complete an education program or to secure and hold employment.” The definition must be reasonable, quantifiable, and based on evidence that the specific characteristic of the young adult identified objectively requires additional assistance. See Chapter 2 of the WIOA Youth Administrative Policy.

The criteria for “An individual who requires additional assistance to complete an education program or to secure and hold employment” for our service area will be at-risk youth as defined by MN State Statute 116L.56. As defined by state statute, these youth have barriers which are indicators they are at-risk (i.e. disability, one or more grade levels behind, offender, chemically dependent, foster child, etc.). These youth need additional assistance to ensure they attain their high school diploma/GED, transition to post-secondary opportunities, complete their education plan and/or secure employment. No more than 5% of the in-school youth enrolled may be eligible based on this criteria.

5. Describe the objective assessment process used to identify appropriate services and potential career pathways for young adults. Identify the assessment tools used by the WSA for all in-school and out-of-school participants.

MVAC administers a variety of assessments with youth during their participation on the program. MVAC’s assessment process is participant-centered and encompasses informational interviews, written tests, and other tools to examine vocational interests and abilities. The result is youth are guided through a series of activities to assist them in making informed decisions about choices which impact their educational and vocational futures.

Assessment Process:

The process begins with a review of the youth’s application. Applications provide a significant amount of information including: their family composition, household income, public assistance status, migrant/seasonal farmworker status, the youth’s age, race, ethnicity, education status, disability status, and at-risk factors.

The initial assessment is the next step for youth which reviews a youth’s educational background, employment history, work readiness skills, and needs in the areas of transportation, child care, health, legal, and housing. Once identified, a youth’s strengths, goals, and dreams become the motivators as we continue to work with them to help shape their future.

Staff utilize South Central WorkForce Council’s established Youth Competencies system as a building block to provide a road map for our work with the youth. This instrument allows staff to measure the youth’s competencies in three major areas: Basic, Work Readiness, and Occupational Skills. It demonstrates where youth have a skill competence and where they need to develop additional skills.

Below is a further explanation of these three components. For each area, there are a series of questions asked. The MVAC employment counselor, in conjunction with the youth, will answer the questions to determine if the youth is competent in each of the goal areas. If they are, this is evident on the assessment and no further goal development is necessary. If they are not, this becomes a focus of our involvement with the youth. The employment counselor designs strategies which will be utilized to assist the youth in becoming competent in the goal areas. As the goals are accomplished, the employment counselor records the date completed.

- **Basic Skills:** *The purpose is to ensure youth have the basic skills necessary for success in the workforce and/or additional training. Competent is defined as reading and math skills at or above the ninth grade level. If an in-school youth is below this level, a basic skills goal will be set. This will be a measurable goal to be re-assessed by a follow-up TABE test within 12 months of the previous TABE test. Staff will strategize with youth and encourage methods to increase these skills. When the youth reaches a ninth grade level or above in each of these areas, they will be determined competent in that area and will have no further need to be tested. MVAC coordinates services with Adult Basic Education (ABE); when a youth has TABE tested in ABE this score may be utilized to determine the Basic Skills level rather than retesting.*
- **Work Readiness Skills:** *The purpose of work readiness is to ensure that the youth has the critical skills or employability skills found necessary to be successful in employment. If the answer is “no” on any of the work readiness competencies, a work readiness goal will be established.*

There are four main areas of focus in this component. They are listed below along with the questions to determine work readiness skills competency. For each area where a youth is not competent, staff will implement strategies to achieve competency in the areas needed.

1. Career Exploration

- **Career Decision:** *Has the youth completed an exploration of careers and identified a career interest area to pursue?*
- **Labor Market Information:** *Has the youth completed research to ensure a positive job outlook, job growth, and adequate wages to sustain a living wage in the career of their choice?*

2. Job Search Techniques:

- **Resumes:** *Has the youth completed a resume?*
- **Applications/Cover Letter:** *Does the youth have the knowledge to complete a job application and a cover letter?*
- **Interviewing/Follow-up Letter:** *Has the youth successfully completed an interview and have they written a follow-up letter?*

3. Positive Work Habits:

- **Punctuality:** *Has the youth proven they can be ready to work on time and work their entire shift?*

- **Attendance:** Does the youth work the days and hours as scheduled?
- **Positive Attitude:** Does the youth display a positive, healthy attitude at work and are they friendly and polite with co-workers and customers?
- **Appearance:** Does the youth dress and groom themselves appropriately for the job?
- **Interpersonal Relations:** Does the youth work effectively with others and contribute productively?
- **Task Completion:** Does the youth consistently complete work and meet quality standards?
- **Maintain employment:** Can the youth maintain employment for at least 90 days?

4. Daily Living Skills:

- **Budgeting/Banking:** Has the youth developed a budget and received instruction in financial fitness?
 - **Driver's License/Transportation:** Does the youth have a driver's license and/or know how to utilize public transportation?
 - **Community Resources:** Does the youth know how to find services in the community to meet their needs?
- **Occupational Skills:** The purpose of occupational skills is to ensure youth have the skills to succeed in a specific occupational area related to their interests and abilities as identified in the assessment process. Competent is defined as a youth who has employable, occupational skills in an area related to the interests and abilities of the youth. If a youth does not have an employable occupational skill in an area related to their interests and abilities, an occupational skills goal will be established to address this need. The goal will be measurable and time-limited.

The information gathered from these assessments will be used by the employment counselor and the youth in the development of the youth's Individual Service Strategy (ISS).

Career Assessment Process:

MVAC staff use a variety of career assessment tools throughout service provision. These include the Minnesota Career Interest assessment, school offered career assessment websites, the Career Occupational Preference System (COPSystem), and the Occupational Research Packet.

- The Minnesota Career Interest assessment (MN Careers) is a quick tool where youth select from a list of 42 activities they like. Example, I like to... build things, work outdoors, or dream about starting my own business. A tabulation of their answers provide a career interest profile that can be matched with career areas to narrow down one's focus based on interests.
- Some school district career exploration tools, such as Naviance, offer a view into any career exploration already being done in the high school setting. Depending on the

content and items completed, employment counselors may use the results for career exploration.

- *The Career Occupational Preference System (COPSystem) Comprehensive Career Guide, available in online or paper format is used to assess a participant's interests, abilities, and work values. This is used primarily with out-of-school youth to further define their career path and the training required. It does not pinpoint one single career best suited for an individual, however, it divides all jobs into 14 career categories and identifies the strongest areas for the participant.*
 - *The first section is called the Career Occupational Preference System (COPS) Interest Inventory. Participants must determine their feelings toward the activity by choosing one of the following: like very much, like moderately, dislike moderately, or dislike very much. The results define the types of work the participant is interested in doing. It helps to compare the relative strengths of the participant's interests in activities performed in a variety of occupations.*
 - *The second section is called the Career Ability Placement Survey (CAPS), and its purpose is to provide information regarding abilities to help in career planning. It is a series of tests which help participants identify some of their strengths and weaknesses. There are eight skill areas evaluated:*
 - *Mechanical Reasoning – measures how well a person can understand mechanical problems*
 - *Spatial Relations – measures how well a person can visualize or think in three dimensions*
 - *Verbal Reasoning – measures how well a person can reason with words*
 - *Numerical Ability – measures how well a person can reason with and use numbers*
 - *Language Usage – measures how well a person can recognize and use standard English grammar and punctuation*
 - *Word Knowledge – measures how well a person can understand the meaning and precise use of words*
 - *Perceptual Speed and Accuracy – measures how well a person perceives small detail rapidly and accurately*
 - *Manual Speed and Dexterity – measures how well a person can make rapid and accurate hand movements*
 - *The third section is called the Career Orientation Placement and Evaluation Survey (COPES) and identifies what work values are most important to the participant. A value statement is paired with a contrasting statement and participants must choose which statement best describes their values.*
 - *The online version provides results in an auto-calculated and user friendly manner. When paper format versions are used, MVAC staff score the sections by hand using the guide standards. Staff interpret the scores of the three components to identify the participant's strengths in abilities, values, and interests in various occupational careers. The results are reviewed with the participant, to validate a*

career interest for someone or give direction to someone who did not know at what career they would likely be successful. Once suitable career areas are identified, information from the career assessment will be used to begin the examination of demand occupation and training options.

- *For participants interested in postsecondary education/training, staff utilize an Occupational Research Packet (ORP) to guide the youth in making an informed career choice. The COPS system completion and review described above is the initial step to the ORP. The next steps include researching the labor market, finding job openings, discussion of their career goal, and two informational interviews.*
 - *The labor market research includes step-by-step instructions for looking at websites such as Department of Employment and Economic Development for occupational employment statistics, occupations in demand, looking at people already in the field of interest, working conditions of interest area, and finally education/training needed to achieve goal.*
 - *Finding job openings introduces the youth to Minnesota Works and Indeed websites and how to use them.*
 - *Several questions are answered by youth to start them visualizing themselves in their interest area, as well educational needs to accomplish their career goal.*
 - *Two interviews are requested of each youth, one with someone working in their field of interest and another with someone hiring in their field. There are suggested questions to be asked to gain the insight one needs to learn the various aspects in their area of interest.*

Staff may utilize additional career exploration tools as needed to further guide youth. Recently workforce partners developed materials focused on non-traditional careers which include labor market information, an interest assessment, and a brochure staff can use for youth as well.

6. Describe process for developing the Individual Service Strategy and use of the Individualized Education Plan, including provision of wraparound support services.

Following the completion of the above outlined set of assessments, MVAC employment counselors will work with youth to complete their Individual Service Strategy (ISS). The ISS will summarize the results of the assessments, establish employment and education goals, and define a career path. The ISS provides a road map that gives measurable steps and timelines for completion. There are two versions of the ISS that we use, a standard version and an enhanced version for youth pursuing postsecondary training.

The ISS will address the 14 program components which are critical elements in every youth's development. Employment counselors will determine how to best meet the requirements of each element as needed. The components include:

- *Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence-based prevention and recovery strategies that lead to the completion of requirements for a secondary school diploma or recognized postsecondary credential*
- *Alternative secondary school services or dropout recovery services*
- *Paid and unpaid work experiences including: summer employment, pre-*

- apprenticeships, internships and job-shadowing, and on-the-job training*
- *Occupational skills training*
 - *Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster.*
 - *Leadership development activities, which may include community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors*
 - *Supportive services*
 - *Adult mentoring for a duration of a minimum of 12 months, that may occur during and after program participation*
 - *Follow-up services for a minimum of 12 months after program completion.*
 - *Comprehensive guidance and counseling, including drug and alcohol abuse counseling, as well as referrals to counseling, as appropriate to the needs of the individual youth*
 - *Financial literacy education*
 - *Entrepreneurial skills training*
 - *Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration*
 - *Activities to help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training*

The ISS contains the following elements:

- *Training and employment goal*
- *Basic math and reading grade level equivalence*
- *Objectives and timelines to meet the stated goal*
- *Career strength areas from written career assessment, also known as, Career Occupational Preference System (COPSystem)*
- *Supporting labor market information for employment goal*
- *Support services needed to remove barriers to employment goal success*
- *Progress, follow up information, referrals, and plan updates*
- *Job search and placement plan after training is complete or youth is ready to become employed*

The ISS is a working document and is modified as the youth progresses through their plan. Youth meet regularly with MVAC staff to review progress and modify the plan as needed.

Individual Education Plans (IEP) will be utilized as a foundation to build on in the development of the Individual Service Strategy (ISS) plan. It will identify specific needs of the participant to develop appropriate and achievable goals for youth, including necessary accommodations.

The development of an individual service strategy encompasses the overall career development of a youth. Several employment counselors in our area completed training through Normandale Community College and became certified as Global Career

Development Facilitators (GCDF). The certification demonstrates the mastery of 12 competency areas including: helping skills, diverse populations, ethical & legal issues, consultation, career development models, assessment, labor market information, technology, employability skills, training clients & peers, program management and public relations. A GCDF helps individuals make educational and vocational choices at various times across their lifespan in ways that expand and improve their opportunities and life satisfaction. MVAC has 12 certified counselors.

Youth counselors also completed Youth Intervention Certification (YIC) through the Youth Intervention Program Association. YIC demonstrates the mastery of 8 core competencies including: youth intervention basics, youth development, communications, ethics, diversity, behavior intervention, at-risk behaviors, and mental health basics. The YIC prepares youth counselors to help youth overcome challenges and thrive.

In addition, youth counselors regularly attend the Minnesota Social Service Association Annual Statewide and Regional Conferences and DEED Counselor Conference.

7. Describe strategy for providing experiential learning, work-based learning, and work experience for participants.

MVAC provides experiential learning, work-based learning, and work experience opportunities year round to all youth with a focus on work readiness skills, academic and occupational learning.

In 2016, across all youth programs, we provided paid work experiences to 245 youth, ages 15-24. Prior to the start of these work experiences, youth receive training on getting and keeping a job, which includes topics such as the application process, interview practice, employers expectations, how to handle various situations at work, and the importance of building a positive work history. To further encourage a positive work experience, the youth counselor discusses possible worksite opportunities that fit the career interest area of the youth. Youth select worksites they are interested in and complete interviews. Based on the worksite's feedback, the youth are placed at one of their choices. In addition to being a worksite, worksite supervisors provided youth mentoring in topics such as expectations of employers, career options, and life lessons and choices.

In addition, to work experiences that focus on developing work readiness skills, we also provide paid internships that focus on a youth's career pathway.

Work experiences and internships provide:

- *Skills to get and maintain a job*
- *Practice interviewing for jobs*
- *Customer service skill development*
- *Exposure to career opportunities*
- *Experience for future employment*
- *Income for youth*

- *Hands-on learning strategies that may improve youths' grades, attendance, and graduation achievement*
- *Awareness of skills and competencies needed to meet employer expectations in the areas of responsibility, respect, and hard work*
- *Worksite supervisors and youth employment counselors who serve as role models and mentors, while supporting them as they learn concepts or problem-solve issues*
- *Possible exposure to non-traditional careers and apprenticeship opportunities*
- *Possible leadership skill development*

Work experience, internships, and job shadowing provide youth with hands-on opportunities to develop the following:

- *Inquiry: Fostering a curiosity and desire in youth to develop new skills and explore new areas.*
- *Technology: Exploring and becoming familiar with current technologies, used in job searches or job tasks.*
- *Science, Engineering, and Math Skills: Practicing vital skills to enhance mastery.*
- *Decision-Making and Daily Living Skills: Learning important time management skills and practicing decision-making skills.*
- *Interaction with Others: Working with diverse groups of people and learning how to work together to reach goals.*
- *Positive Attitudes and Behaviors: Teaching young people about the importance of attitude in the workforce and having the confidence to solve problems.*

MVAC educates and encourages youth to pursue educational and employment options in high-growth industries and in-demand occupations, including Healthcare, "STEM" Occupations (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Manufacturing) and "Green Jobs". We recruit employers who are able to provide work experience opportunities in high-demand careers. Some examples of recent work experiences include:

Health Care Industries:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • <i>Autumn Grace Memory Care</i> | • <i>New Richland Nursing Home</i> |
| • <i>Benedictine Living Center</i> | • <i>Northpoint/Willowpoint A.L.</i> |
| • <i>Center for Specialty Care</i> | • <i>Oak Hills Living Center</i> |
| • <i>Central Health Care</i> | • <i>Parkview Care Center</i> |
| • <i>Country Neighbor</i> | • <i>Pathstone Day Living</i> |
| • <i>Ecumen</i> | • <i>Pleasant View Nursing Home</i> |
| • <i>Fairmont Medical Center</i> | • <i>Sleepy Eye Care Center</i> |
| • <i>Good Samaritan Center</i> | • <i>Sleepy Eye Medical Center</i> |
| • <i>James Kalina Dental</i> | • <i>Temperance Lake Ridge</i> |
| • <i>Luther Memorial Home</i> | • <i>Truman Senior Living</i> |
| • <i>Mayo Clinic, Helpdesk</i> | • <i>Valley View Dental</i> |

Manufacturing Jobs:

- *Lindsay Windows*
- *3M*
- *ADMFG Incorporated*
- *Avery Weigh-Tronix*
- *Javens Electric*
- *Martin County Implement*
- *Navitor*
- *Zierke Built Manufacturing*

Information Technology:

- *Q InfoTek*
- *St. Clair Public School IT Department*
- *Saint Peter Community Center: Online Event Scheduling*

Green Jobs:

- *Habitat for Humanity Restore*
- *Lake Crystal GRACE Thrift Store*
- *Vagabond Village*
- *VINE Home Furnishings Store*
- *Neighborhood Thrift Store*
- *Salvation Army Thrift Store*
- *Collectibles and Thrift Store*
- *Waseca Area Neighborhood Service Center*
- *MVAC Again Thrift Store*
- *MVAC Food Hub*

MVAC has targeted work experience opportunities in the private sector. Although we continue to have great success at public and non-profit worksites, there have been greater opportunities for youth to be hired in the private sector after the completion of their work experience.

MVAC has also enhanced internship opportunities for youth. When a youth has successfully completed a work experience and demonstrated that they have the basic work readiness skills to be successful on the job, they have an opportunity to be placed in an internship that directly relates to their career interests.

8. Describe strategy for introducing Career Pathways for young adults and process for providing current labor market information on high-growth, in-demand occupations in the region.

MVAC staff spend time working with both in-school and out-of-school youth to explore careers. The Youth Competency System includes a section on career exploration which involves investigating careers and the labor market information that relates to them. Labor market information includes statistics such as the number of jobs in an area, average wages, and the projected outlook. There are a variety of resources staff use to

explore the local labor market including MN Careers, Occupational Outlook Handbook, Career One Stop, Minnesota Works, DEED website, and Construction Careers website. The Southwest/South Central regional career website, www.careerwise.mnscu.edu/guide/southwest, provides additional local information regarding current and future demand jobs along with salary and cost of living information for the region.

Each year the South Central WorkForce Council develops a demand occupation list from a rich set of labor market information, including statistics on current demand and future outlook, coupled with real time input from local employers and job counselors.

Information utilized includes:

- Jobs with large numbers of vacancies or indication of labor shortages.
- Jobs projected to grow along with regional industries, providing good future employment opportunities.
- Jobs that support key regional industries or industry clusters.
- Jobs paying higher than average wages or jobs that are part of career pathways that lead to higher wages.
- Education and training requirements of the job.

The demand occupation list is utilized by employment counselors to assist participants in identifying high growth/high demand occupations in the region.

The top industry sectors in South Central Minnesota are healthcare, manufacturing and transportation. In South Central, home health aides and personal care aides rank at the top of our demand occupation list. South Central has developed a strong career pathway in the healthcare industry through FastTRAC programming. FastTRAC Pathways to Healthcare Careers is a partnership between Adult Basic Education, South Central College and the WorkForce Center to provide preparatory classes to low-skilled adults and youth over 17 that are interested in obtaining a nursing assistant certification as a first step into a career in healthcare.

Students attend preparatory classes and receive instruction from ABE to explore healthcare careers and prepare them for the Basic Nursing 101 course which includes the nurse assistant certification. The classes occur in multiple locations in Blue Earth, Brown, Le Sueur, and Faribault Counties. Upon successful completion of the preparatory class, students attend the Integrated Basic Nursing 101 held at South Central College. The course is team taught by a South Central College instructor and an ABE instructor to provide extra supports in the classroom. In addition, a workforce employment counselor visits students in the classroom to provide career counseling, assists students develop a career plan and provides support services to be successful in the classroom. Students then take the Medical Terminology course at South Central College. Students earn a total of 7 credits which are prerequisites for many healthcare programs at South Central College.

Similar to the healthcare model with preparatory and integrated instruction, a career pathway in the manufacturing industry was implemented. Students completed four core manufacturing courses to prepare them for the Manufacturing Skills Standard Council

(MSSC) Certified Production Technician assessments resulting in a nationally recognized industry credential. For an additional 8 weeks, students completed a Manufacturing Production Certificate which includes courses required for machining, mechatronics and welding programs at South Central College. Students were also eligible to participate in Advanced Manufacturing apprenticeship opportunities.

We are trying to implement a new career pathway model in transportation industry but so far have not had enough interest to run a class. With preparatory and integrated instruction, students will be prepared to take the Class A Commercial Driver's License exam. Students will earn 22 credits which can be applied to the Agribusiness Service Technician program at South Central College.

Students interested in any of the 3 career pathway models can begin at any time through a new on-ramp model. Students begin learning where they are at and can start bridge classes when they are ready.

In addition, there are several opportunities for in-school youth. Many school districts in the area provide nurse assistant training in their high schools. The training costs are covered by the high school program but the certification testing is not covered so MVAC has assisted with those fees for youth program participants.

Youth also participate in the High STEP Health Science Academy which provides students with health science coursework and work-based learning experiences to prepare them for health science and technology careers. Over 1,600 students from 23 school districts have participated in this initiative since 2010.

This year, the Perkins Consortium piloted a Career Navigator Program for 9th graders from area high schools to explore careers and guided pathways toward achieving their goals. Through the Career Navigator Program, students learn about 6 career fields including: (1) Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources; (2) Arts, Communications and Information Systems; (3) Engineering, Manufacturing and Technology; (4) Health Science Technology, (5) Human Services; (6) Business, Management and Administration. Students complete a skills assessment to determine their interests, talents and strengths; explore careers and the skills needed; and develop an education plan for high school and beyond.

Youth also participate in the Greater Mankato Career Expo where over 200 businesses and community volunteers showcase hundreds of career opportunities to over 1,400 area high school students. Rather than a traditional career fair, this event is a highly interactive educational experience. Youth explore careers that align with their skills and interest through hands-on activities and face to face discussions with local experts. They are encouraged to have high achievement in high school and seek higher education and training beyond high school. Youth develop their job skills by increasing their understanding of what employers are looking for and the transferable skills they need for all careers. The event increases awareness to students, teachers, and the community on the career and employment opportunities that exist in our area. The Greater Mankato Career Expo has been replicated in two other communities in our area. The Area Career Exploration (ACE) is held in Fairmont and Career Fair in New Ulm.

Minnesota State University-Mankato will be hosting a three day Scrubs Camp which offers an opportunity for high school students to explore health science professions through engaging hands on activities. Health care science careers that will be featured include alternative health, dentistry, EMT, medical lab, nursing, nutrition/wellness, pharmacology, physical therapy, psychology, surgery, regenerative medicine and more. We are expecting 65 area students to attend the camp this year.

Youth participated in the Tour of Manufacturing where local manufacturers opened their doors for tours and provided information on career opportunities at their business. About 200 students from 6 area high schools participated in the event. For more information visit: www.tourofmanufacturing.com

Last fall, Mankato hosted a Construct Tomorrow event. Construct Tomorrow is an interactive career fair that provides hands on experiences in each of the construction trades to inform students about union apprenticeship opportunities. About 750 students from 22 schools attended the event. The overall feedback was very positive and we are hosting a two day event next fall.

Youth participated in Career Day at South Central College which was organized by school counselors in the area where a wide array of professionals give presentations about their career field. Each junior attends four different career sessions of their choosing to gain a better understanding of those careers.

Youth participated in monthly program information sessions at South Central College which includes an academic, career and community fair and campus tour showcasing the variety of majors and programs at the college.

As result of our regional planning efforts and the Rural Career Counseling Coordinator, Southwest and South Central 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. We have embarked on a joint effort across Region 5 to distribute labor market infographics that are easy to understand and can be shared on school newsletters, websites, parent emails and social media posts.

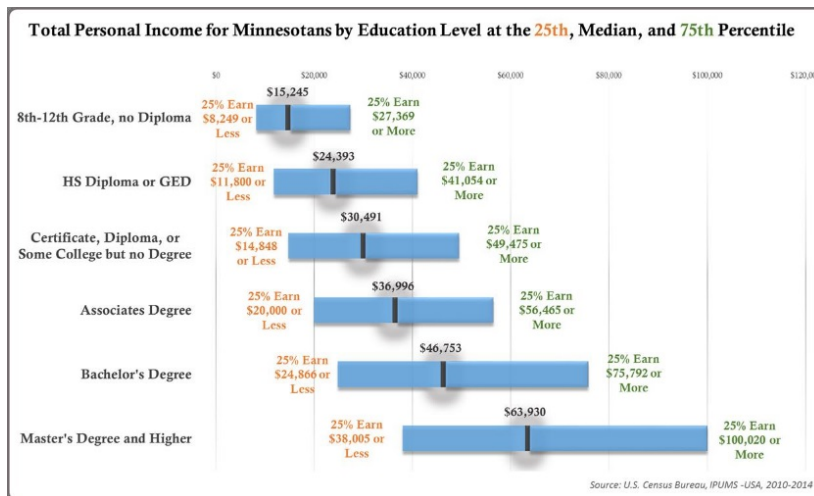
The launch of the labor market campaign “Know Before You Go” shared infographics on education and wage range by education level, annual tuition increases, cost of a degree, and demand jobs in the region. The information below was sent to school counselors, principals, superintendents and workforce partners in the region.

*“People may spend their whole lives climbing the ladder of success only to find, once they reach the top, that the ladder is leaning against the wrong wall.”
Thomas Merton.*

Today’s labor market is very different than it was 20+ years ago when many of your parents and teachers were making decisions about their career. Please share these infographics with your students, parents, teachers and greater community so that students can make informed decisions regarding their future.

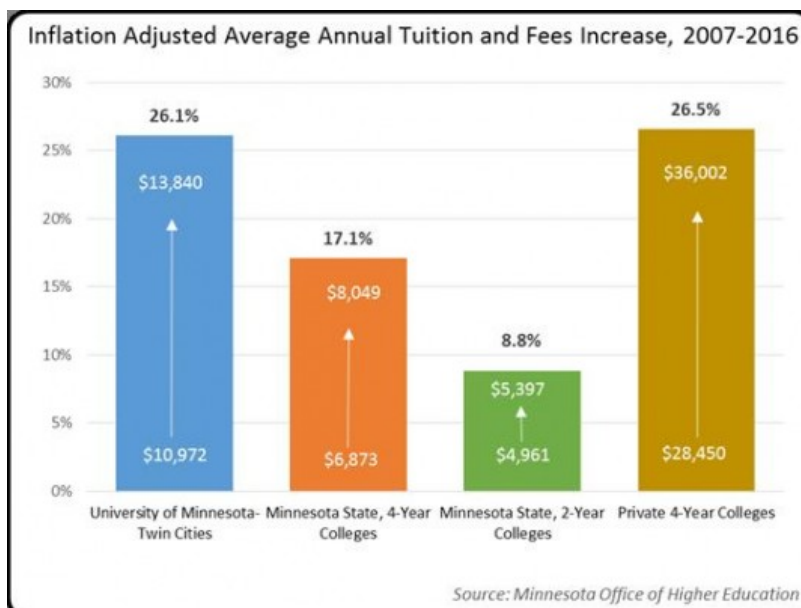
Graphic 1: Annual Wages by Education Level [PDF](#)

The type of position as well as the degree are vital factors in determining future wages. Each degree offers a range of wages that differ by industry. For example, students who graduated from a Minnesota college in 2010/2011 with an Associate Degree in the **Construction Trades** is making a median full-time wage of **\$50,831** compared to a graduate with a Bachelor Degree in **Liberal Arts and Sciences; General Studies and Humanities** who is making **\$38,930** (Source: DEED Graduate Employment Outcomes).



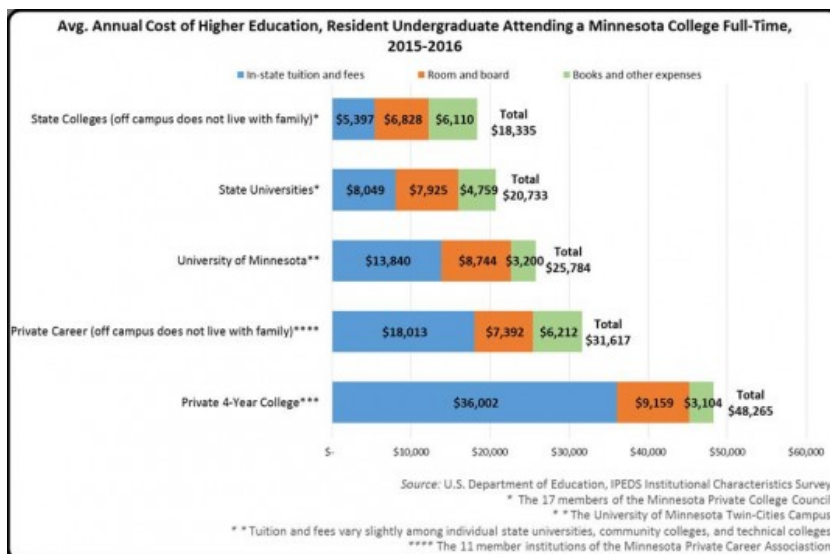
Graphic 2: Average Annual Tuition Increase [PDF](#)

When deciding on a career, it's important to consider the cost of education as it compares to projected earnings. Higher education often brings significant benefits, such as increased earnings and job opportunities, along with newly minted skills and knowledge. However, the price for this expanded horizon has become increasingly more costly. Learn more by clicking [HERE](#).



Graphic 3: Cost of a Degree [PDF](#)

An Associate's degree at a state college will cost roughly **\$36,670** (\$18,335 x 2 years) and a Bachelor's degree with four years attending a state university will cost roughly **\$82,932** (\$20,733 x 4 years). These estimates do not factor in annual changes in tuition or other expenses. Click [HERE](#) to read the article "What to Know Before You Owe."



Graphic 4: Jobs in Demand in Your Region [PDF](#)

Here are the current jobs in demand in your region of Minnesota by education level. They are listed in order of demand and include median wages.

Jobs in Demand in South Central Minnesota	
Credential, Certificate or Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Nursing Assistants \$25,136/yr	Sales Managers \$95,718/yr
Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers \$37,196/yr	Accountants and Auditors \$60,471/yr
Registered Nurses \$55,837/yr	Industrial Engineers \$72,620/yr
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers \$37,964/yr	School Teachers, Except Special Ed \$54,061/yr
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses \$41,577/yr	Network & Computer Systems Administrators \$62,067/yr
Automotive Service Technicians & Mechanics \$37,407/yr	Financial Managers \$95,820/yr
Computer User Support Specialists \$42,052/yr	Physician Assistants \$102,714/yr
Plumbers, Pipefitters, & Steamfitters \$56,983	Child, Family, & School Social Workers \$51,702/yr
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics \$47,356/yr	Industrial Production Managers \$78,204/yr
Police & Sheriff's Patrol Officers \$49,054/yr	Clinical, Counseling & School Psychologists \$59,020/yr
Medical Secretaries \$34,559/yr	Construction Managers \$73,888/yr
Industrial Machinery Mechanics \$46,190/yr	Human Resources Managers \$81,050/yr

Positions are listed in order of demand with median wages.

Source: MN DEED Occupations in Demand, June 2016 <https://mn.gov/deed/data/data-tools/oid/>
 Prepared by the South Central Workforce Council

9. Attach a copy of the WSA's policy for developing Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and indicate the date approved by the LWIB/Youth Committee.

Youth that are interested in and appropriate for post-secondary training, will complete the Career Occupational Preference System (COPS System) Comprehensive Career Guide to assess their interest, abilities and values. This assessment will assist youth to define their career path and the training required. Youth will complete an occupational research packet to explore the local labor market including demand occupations and training requirements with the assistance of their youth counselor. If the youth identifies an appropriate career path supported by local labor market information for a training program with a certified training provider and demonstrates the ability to complete the program, the youth would be eligible to utilize an Individual Training Account (ITA).

The youth, post-secondary institution and the youth counselor will sign an ITA identifying all resources provided to the youth for their training plans. Payments would be made directly to the post-secondary institution by a voucher. The ITA would cover one school year and would be reviewed on a semester/quarter basis. The ITA would include tuition, books, fees and supplies.

10. Describe follow-up strategies for the WIOA Young Adult program.

All youth receive 12-months of follow up services through contact from their employment counselor upon completion of the WIOA program to provide support and assist with any problem solving that may be needed. At the time of enrollment, staff explain the follow-up services and attain contact information for the youth and at least two others that may know how to reach the youth. The contact with youth occurs at 3, 6, 9, and 12 months post-exit and may happen in a variety of ways including, face-to-face, over the phone, letters, e-mail, or social media. The employment counselor gets information about schooling updates, current employment, and assess for any current needs. Staff help them resolve issues or provide referrals.

11. Describe the Youth Incentive Policy (attach copy and identify date approved by the LWIB/Youth Committee).

Incentives will be provided for youth who have completed a basic skills, work readiness, or occupational skills goal; or who has obtained a credential. Youth who have achieved a goal, documented on the Youth Employability Goals System (competencies), will receive a \$25 gift certificate for every goal they achieve, up to a maximum of \$100 in gift certificates per year. This policy has been approved by the South Central Youth Council and South Central WorkForce Council.

12. Describe how co-enrollments will be facilitated for youth.

For all funding sources, youth complete one application and the youth counselor determines the appropriate enrollment. Co-enrollments are utilized as needed due to funding, when appropriate. Youth could be co-enrolled in the MN Youth Program, WIOA Youth Program or other specialized youth grants targeting services to youth in foster care, youth from communities of color, teen parents on MFIP or youth from MFIP

households. Youth over 18 may also be co-enrolled in FastTRAC programming.

13. Describe local partnerships to serve “opportunity youth” who have significant barriers to employment and/or youth who are under-served and under-represented in the workforce, including:

MVAC will customize their career services as needed to assist youth in meeting their goals. In some cases, this means working with multidisciplinary teams that may consist of school personnel, probation officers, county social workers, mental health, chemical dependency, rehabilitation workers, interpreters, youth, and the youth’s parents or guardians. During these meetings, the team will develop an action plan to support the youth. For example, MVAC will assist youth with a work experience while the school will provide a specialized or modified education plan. A probation officer will ensure the youth is getting to school, work, therapy appointments, and chemical dependency treatment; and parents will be a support system to encourage the youth to continue to make positive choices in their life. An interpreter, whether it is for a non-English speaking individual or a hearing-impaired person, may also be utilized as needed.

- Dropouts and potential dropouts

Our ultimate goal for out-of-school youth will be placement and retention in unsubsidized employment at livable wage in high growth, demand occupations as well as the completion of an occupational skills training.

Strategies to help youth meet that goal include:

- *Obtain a high school diploma/GED*
- *Basic Skills: Ensure youth have the basic skills necessary to succeed in education/employment.*
- *Occupational Skills: Youth to obtain a credential in an occupational skills training.*
- *Work Readiness Skills: Ensure youth have job seeking and job keeping skills.*

These strategies will require the coordination of services with local school districts, GED/ABE programs, college prep programs, post-secondary education and WorkForce Centers.

In addition, the Adult Area Learning Cooperative, Faribault County Adult Basic Education, Mankato Area Adult Education and Southwest Adult Basic Education are pilot sites for the new state adult diploma program. The Adult Diploma program gives individuals another option to complete their high school equivalency.

Youth will be encouraged and supported to complete their high school diploma or equivalent and attain some type of post-secondary education. A four year college degree is not for everyone so youth will be informed of other training opportunities such as two year degrees or one year certificates at community and technical colleges, apprenticeships, On-The-Job Training, and occupational licensures or certifications.

For potential high school dropouts, services will be individualized to address their specific needs. As significant barriers are identified, a service strategy is developed to overcome the barrier. Depending on the needs of the youth, the strategy may be more frequent contact for intensive one-on-one services. Often the strategy includes a referral or coordinating other community resources such as Rehabilitation Services, community education (ABE/ESL/GED), Human Services, corrections, Lutheran Social Services, The REACH Drop-In Center, individual/family counseling, CTICs or special school district programs such as individualized tutoring. In some cases it involves working with multidisciplinary teams, or Integrated Resource Teams, to assist youth to meet his or her goals.

- Youth with language and/or cultural barriers to employment

In addition to the work readiness, basic skills (including high school diploma/GED) and occupational skills training that is assessed and addressed, staff will identify barriers that need to be addressed due to language barriers. We will provide interpreters, as needed, for one on one meetings and workshops. We would coordinate services with local ESL programs to ensure the youth has the English skills they will need to succeed in education and employment. The youth may also be referred to community programs such as African Family and Education Center, Life Work Planning Center, Migrant Employment & Training, Migrant Farmworker Program, Minnesota Council of Churches, etc.

For the past four years, South Central provided programming specifically for youth from communities of color through a MN Youth Workforce Development Competitive Grant. Language and cultural barriers can provide special challenges to youth trying to assimilate into the United States culture. This grant engages youth from communities of color and their families in group activities and workshops to assist them make plans for their future and outline the steps needed to be successful while being sensitive to their culture of origin.

It was equally important to provide cultural awareness to worksite supervisors. Youth were placed at quality worksites that fit their interest and could accommodate their cultural beliefs. For example, there are many cultures that prohibit people from touching pork. In that case, we avoided 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. The Greater Mankato Diversity Council provided a training session to worksite supervisors on cultural awareness and sensitivity.

This project was recognized as a best practice by the MN Workforce Council Association in August 2016.

In addition, youth with language barriers experienced significant growth in their development when they were able to practice the English language on a regular basis in the context of employment.

- Youth in foster care and aging out of foster care

MVAC has been providing specialized services to youth in foster care for the past 9 years through the Youth Intervention Program which was funded by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Justice Programs. This program serves foster care youth between ages 16-24 with an emphasis on youth transitioning out of foster care. The purpose of the program is to provide career and life skills curriculum to explore, identify and attain positive educational, career and life goals.

Youth counselors work closely with several organizations to identify youth that could benefit from these services including: Human Services, corrections/probation, foster care agencies, foster parents, mental health professionals and schools.

- Homeless youth or runaways

MVAC is the service provider for the Family Homeless Prevention Assistance Program (FHPAP). The goal of the program is to stabilize families or individuals in their current housing unit or re-house without a day of homelessness. The program also assists families or individuals who are homeless find permanent housing and maintain that housing. FHPAP provides case management services and support services to assist with rent, other housing costs, transportation, or education expenses. Youth ages 14-24 are a priority group to receive these services. There is specific funding set aside for this age group as well as additional support services.

MVAC has developed and facilitated Homeless Response Teams in each of the nine counties in the region. The Homeless Response Team is facilitated by MVAC staff and includes a variety of members of the community such as police officers, social services, homeless shelter staff, school staff and others. The teams meet on a quarterly basis to discuss homeless issues in the community.

In addition, Project Community Connect is a free event that is organized by the Blue Earth County Homeless Response Team each year for people experiencing poverty. The goal of the event is to reduce poverty and homelessness in South Central Minnesota by providing a way for people in need to access services. The event is a “one-stop shop” approach where over 90 organizations will provide needed services in one location to engage people who need the services but don’t normally participate or who don’t know the services exist. Some of the services offered include legal services, medical/dental services, housing resources, veteran services, financial literacy, free HIV testing, free lunch, haircuts, photographer and ID & birth certificate vouchers. Transportation, interpreters and childcare is available for attendees. Over 900 guests are expected to attend the event.

MVAC also coordinates services with Lutheran Social Services homeless youth programs including the Street Outreach Program, which provides advocacy and community connection and the Reach Drop-In Center, which is a gathering place for homeless youth. MVAC staff are present at the center one day a week to meet with current program participants and for outreach to other eligible youth that could

benefit from the services.

- Youth offenders and at-risk of involvement with the juvenile justice system

In addition to the work readiness, basic skills (including high school diploma/GED) and occupational skills training that is assessed and addressed, we will pay particular attention to the barriers that youth face due to their adjudication. We will coordinate their plan with their probation plan. We may provide the youth a work experience or internship in their local community or connect them with opportunities in another community if there are reputation issues. Our youth providers will work with youth one-on-one to explore issues that may have caused adjudication and refer them to other community resources as needed such as drug/alcohol, mental health, financial and legal counseling. MVAC will assist adjudicated youth with expunging their criminal record and/or utilization of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and Minnesota Bonding Program in their job search.

- Youth with disabilities

In addition to the work readiness, basic skills (including high school diploma/GED) and occupational skills training that is assessed and addressed, staff will identify barriers that need to be addressed due to disabilities. Staff work closely with special education at high schools in the area. Staff are members of local CTICs. As a core WorkForce Center partner, MVAC has a close working relationship with Rehabilitation Services and MRCI and coordinates with these agencies as appropriate. MVAC refers youth to Mike Goodlander, Placement Coordinator for Rehabilitation Services, to provide additional assistance with job placement.

South Central was an implementation site for the Minnesota Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) to serve youth with disabilities. A Disability Resource Coordinator (DRC) was hired to coordinate DEI activities and assist youth to navigate the resources and services available to help them meet their employment and training goals. The DRC developed strong relationships with numerous agencies and organizations in the community that serve individuals with disabilities. Several organizations have participated in Integrated Resource Teams, which is a customized group that is brought together to coordinate services/resources for the individual youth. These teams have resulted in connections to new programs and resources that helped the youth, family and organizations involved gain a better understanding of the youth's needs.

Strong partnerships were developed through this initiative with the following organizations: local school districts, CTICs, MRCI WorkSource, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, State Services for the Blind, State Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, Social Security Administration, SMILES, Goodwill Easter Seals and PACER.

Although the grant has ended, the key strategic approaches for the DEI Project including Guideposts to Success, Integrated Resources Teams, and Partnerships &

Collaborations were proven to be very successful and continued after the grant period.

To build on the momentum of the DEI Project, several partners were invited to join the Youth Council to focus on services to people with disabilities under the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Staff from partnering agencies participated in a training on working with people with disabilities. The training titled, “Beyond Barriers to Employment” featured Denise Bissonnette and Richard Pimentel and addressed the following:

- *Paradigm Shifts Regarding Ability and Disability*
- *Empowering the Applicant in the Job Search*
- *Getting Businesses on Board*
- *Shifting the Mindsets—Employers’ and Our Own*

MVAC staff purchased “Beyond Traditional Job Development” and “30 Ways to Shine as a New Employee” authored by Denise Bissonnette to incorporate into curriculum utilized in the youth program. These resources are an innovative and practical approach to job development and focus on the soft skills that enhance job performance and retention.

To gain a better understanding of the resources that are available for youth participants with disabilities, PACER provided a workshop to staff on the assistive technology offered at their Simon Technology Center and the System of Technology to Achieve Results (STAR) including resources to assist with reading, writing, organizational skills, vision and hearing. Staff also participate in PACER parent meetings.

MVAC has utilized a sign language interpreter through the State Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services for a youth participant which has allowed him to participate in workshops with other youth.

MVAC staff utilize the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) publication “Postsecondary Resource Guide: Successfully Preparing Students with Disabilities for the Postsecondary Environment” which outlines the support services that are available in college compared to the support services they may have received in high school through their Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

- Teen parents

In addition to the work readiness, basic skills (including high school diploma/GED) and occupational skills training that is assessed and addressed, staff will identify barriers that need to be addressed due to being a teen parent. Our youth providers will refer and coordinate with other community resources such as county human services, Public Health, Women Infants and Children (WIC), Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), etc.

South Central has provided specialized services to teen parents on the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) in the nine county area for 3 years through a MFIP Innovation Grant. Teen parents work with a single point of contact that act as a mentor to assist teens in navigating and accessing community resources. The program includes comprehensive services that promote high school completion, prepare teens for the world of work through work experience opportunities, connects teens to community resources to improve personal development and supports healthy lifestyle decisions for teen parents and their children. The grant funding for this project has ended, however, seven of the nine counties in the region continued these services. These services are provided to all teen parents in Nicollet County regardless of their participation in MFIP.

MVAC provides specialized services to teen parents who are also receiving Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) benefits through the Teen Parent Project that was funded by the Department of Human Services. The Teen Parent Project provides work experiences to teen parents receiving MFIP benefits where they can work an average of 30 hours per week for 12 weeks while meeting their MFIP work participation requirements.

- Youth of color and other under-served, under-represented youth populations

For the past four years, South Central provided programming specifically for youth from communities of color through a MN Youth Workforce Development Competitive Grant. In addition to providing work readiness activities, work experiences, information on in-demand occupations and career pathways for youth, this program engages youth and their families, provides cultural awareness to the community, positive role models and leadership opportunities to inspire youth and specialized services for those with disabilities. Because we recognize the strong family connection in communities of color, 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 communities of color that have overcome adversity to demonstrate that it is possible to achieve their dreams. In addition, the YWCA Mankato provides leadership opportunities, such as SURGE!, which is a leadership program for young girls grades 9-12 or the Annual Women's Leadership Conference. Youth with disabilities that are not ready for competitive employment participate in specialized programming to build their employability skills.

In addition, several youth participants and staff attended the Marnita's Table event that was held in Mankato on February 21st at the Southern Minnesota Children's Museum. The event included a dinner and dialogue on equity and inclusion in the workplace and community. Approximately, 150 community members attended. Over a third of the audience was youth and over half of the audience was from communities of color. There was discussion around inclusive environment, micro-aggressions and generational activities. Attendees were invited to continue their engagement by participating on our committees.

14. Describe how the Work Readiness Indicator will be implemented for youth participants. If the WSA uses a standardized form for measuring and documenting work readiness skills, please attach a copy.

- Approach to assuring work readiness skill attainment for youth participants

MVAC will address work readiness skills with youth from the time they apply for our program to the time that they exit our program. Ways in which we will do this include the following:

- *Reviewing and providing feedback to the youth on their program application and its thoroughness and neatness.*
 - *Workshops will be conducted which focus on work readiness skills, the initial phone call to employers, greeting the employer including a firm handshake and good eye contact, interviewing skills and mock interviews, resume-writing, cover letter, and thank-you letters.*
 - *Completing a pre-assessment and post-assessment of each youth's work readiness skills and working on areas that need improvement.*
 - *Completing a pre-assessment and post-assessment of each youth's employability competencies and working on areas that need improvement.*
 - *Assessing work readiness skills on each monitoring visit to worksites, discussing the feedback with supervisor and youth, and recording it on the monitoring tool.*
 - *Supervisors will evaluate youth's work readiness skills on their timesheet bi-weekly. Staff will use this information to provide guidance to youth.*
 - *Staff will provide recognition for positive work readiness development.*
 - *Out-of-school youth can complete the National Career Readiness Credential assessment to address work readiness skills.*
- Assuring that the worksite supervisor evaluates work readiness skills of youth participants, including a process for documenting the employer's evaluation of the youth participant's work readiness skills

The worksite monitoring tool includes an evaluation of attendance, punctuality, appearance, taking initiative, quality of work, communication skills, response to supervision, teamwork, and problem solving/critical thinking. The youth is evaluated by the worksite supervisor. In addition, worksite supervisors evaluate youth performance on attendance, punctuality, communication, cooperation, work quality and quantity on the youth's bi-weekly timesheets. The worksite supervisor's evaluation is documented on the worksite monitoring tool at each visit and the bi-weekly timesheets.

15. If the WSA is planning to provide Outreach to Schools activities in SFY 2018 as a component of MYP, please describe. See page 6 for definition of OTS activities.

South Central plans to utilize our MYP allocation for Outreach to Schools activities. In South Central, the Partners In Career Exploration program 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. Prior to placing the interns at area high schools, they receive training from the Mankato WorkForce Center staff, Minnesota State University-Mankato, South Central College, and our local labor market analyst who provides them with information on our labor market including high growth/demand occupations in the region. The training includes tours with local businesses so that interns have hands on exposure to demand occupations.

Once the interns have been trained, they are placed at local school districts to provide career exploration and career counseling assistance through one-on-one advising and classroom presentations. The intern meets with every high school junior and senior enabling them to reach students that are not proactive about their plans after high school and would otherwise go unnoticed and fall through the cracks. The interns also provide career exploration activities for younger grade levels so that they can begin to consider their plans after high school.

Interns are expected to work one school day per week and receive \$150 monthly stipend to apply toward their expenses. We would assist school districts with the costs of supplies for career exploration, such as, career assessments, career resources for high school career centers and transportation for students including busing costs for field trips, college visits and WorkForce Center tours.

Higher Education Career Advisor Project (HECAP) is included in our Outreach to Schools model. Staff provide classroom presentations on a variety of topics including: career assessments, career planning & exploration, financial literacy, job search skills, navigating business culture, and post-secondary planning. MVAC staff have visited over 200 students at 10 schools so far this year.

Lastly, the South Central WorkForce Council and MVAC participated in the Community of Practice developed by the South Central Service Cooperative (Perkins Consortium). This partnership brings together area school counselors and MVAC youth counselors on a regular basis to address the following:

- *A key professional development, growth or problem solving topic of interest as determined by the community*
- *Student support service and partnership opportunities*
- *Collaboration with the WorkForce Center System and their provider for youth services, Minnesota Valley Action Council (MVAC)*
- *Collaboration with Office of Career and College Success*
 - *Curriculum, assessment, graduation and programming requirement updates*
 - *Student options opportunities including regional and Perkins initiatives, post-secondary options, and online and blended learning options including SOCRATES Online advisory work*
- *Round table discussion and sharing time*

16. Describe Youth-Focused Innovations/Best Practices, including but not limited to:

- Attach the Shared Vision for Youth Blueprint to identify local interagency partnerships which serve the neediest youth and address the “opportunity gap”, “achievement gap”, and disparities in the workforce. (See Attachment 3)

See Attachment 3.

- Private sector internships, on-the-job training, mentoring, job shadowing, pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship training.

Our worksites are a fundamental part of our program’s success and more so for the youth’s success in gaining crucial work readiness skills and training for their future employment. Staff continuously see that youth participants gain skills, but perhaps more importantly, self-confidence through interactions at and feedback from the worksite. We recruit worksites that target the interest areas of youth that will provide a quality work experience.

In the past year, we utilized 105 worksites, 62 were for-profit and 43 were non-profit businesses. We continue to increase the number of for-profit worksites as they have a greater tendency to result in an unsubsidized job. We work closely with Randy Long, DEED Business Service Representative, to increase our pool of worksites. While recruiting worksites we keep in mind finding those in demand based on local and regional labor markets. We find ourselves receiving requests from employers looking for workers. Often times we can turn these conversations into new worksites for youth with the possibility for unsubsidized employment in the future.

We keep the lines of communication open with the worksites by requesting feedback on the program and the working relationship between MVAC and the worksite. Annually, we deliver certificates of appreciation to each worksite to recognize their contribution to mentoring area youth. Many worksites display their certificates in public locations with pride.

The Martin County Internship Project is a partnership with Martin County Commissioners, Minnesota Valley Action Council and the South Central WorkForce Council. The goal of this project is to expose college age youth to potential career opportunities in Martin County to attract them back to the area after graduation. Last summer, 16 youth were recruited, assessed and matched with for profit and non-profit paid internships. Seven interns completed 8 weeks of the internship and were hired for the remainder of the summer. Ten interns received college credit. The project will be provided again during the Summer of 2017. The project was recognized by the Association of Minnesota Counties for the 2013 County Achievement Award.

An area of focus is to provide information on apprenticeship opportunities specifically for women. Several partners including Adult Basic Education, Department of Employment & Economic Development, Life Work Planning Center, MRCI WorkSource, Minnesota Valley Action Council, South Central College, and South Central WorkForce

Council joined efforts to bring awareness to non-traditional careers for women. The group developed several resources including a brochure on non-traditional careers, an assessment to determine if someone is interested in a non-traditional career and steps to take to enter a non-traditional career. Our local labor market analyst developed a list of occupations in the area that are considered non-traditional. The group developed a non-traditional careers page on the South Central WorkForce Council website <http://www.workforcecouncil.org/nontradcareers/> where these resources are available along with information on local training opportunities and apprenticeship opportunities.

In addition, staff attended a training titled “Scare Away Stereotypes: Women in Non-Traditional Careers”. The keynote speaker was Lori Hodapp who presented “Often Missed Opportunities” that focused on challenging our clients and our own perceptions of non-traditional careers. Several local labor representatives presented to staff on how to connect participants to career opportunities in the trades such as Electrician, Carpenters, Plumbers & Pipefitters, Operating Engineers, Millwrights, Laborers, Painters, Elevator Constructors, Cement Masons, Mechanical (heating & cooling) and Bricklayers. We developed a handout that describes each of the trades, types of apprenticeships, length of apprenticeship and journeyman wages. By gaining a better understanding of how to access opportunities in skilled trade occupations, we will be better equipped to match appropriate youth with these viable careers. Lastly, there was a panel of local women in non-traditional careers that shared their experiences. These women were featured in the January 2016 issue of the River Valley Woman Magazine. The story can be found at: <http://www.rivervalleywoman.com/flipbookcreator/January2016/January2016.html>

The partnership has provided all of these resources at area career fairs for high school students stressing the importance of non-traditional careers.

As mentioned earlier, South Central hosted a Construct Tomorrow event October 26, 2016 to inform high school students and job seekers about the apprenticeship system of paid-on-the-job training that leads to careers with great pay and benefits.

Lastly, South Central College was awarded a \$15 million dollar grant for Advanced Manufacturing. A component of that grant will be to provide apprenticeships in Advanced Manufacturing. The Workforce Center System will have a role in this grant as a Navigator for Career Pathways, Apprenticeship Coordinator, NCRC testing, recruit veterans, data collection and job placement.

- Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) project.

We are interested in exploring this opportunity in South Central with our Vocational Rehabilitation Services partners.

- Strategies implemented during the Disability Employment Initiative including: Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs); expanded collaboration with local partners, including Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS); and activities related to the “Guideposts for

Success” such as employability skills/work experience, career preparation, leadership development, family engagement, and connecting activities.

The implementation of the key strategic approaches for the DEI Project including Guideposts to Success, Integrated Resources Teams, and Partnerships & Collaborations were proven to be very successful and we continued the following practices after the grant period:

- ***IRT meetings*** are instrumental in coordinating services and resources with multiple agencies for youth with disabilities. The IRTs have resulted in increased communication and coordination between agencies. This strategy will be helpful for all youth participants.
- ***Guideposts for Success*** represent key educational and career development interventions that make a positive difference in the lives of youth with disabilities. The Guideposts strategy can benefit all youth participants and has been included in the youth assessment and Individual Service Strategy for all youth programming.
- ***Partnerships & Coordination*** – The DRC has developed strong relationships with numerous agencies and organizations in the community. Many agencies and organizations have participated in the IRT meetings and seen the benefits of working together to help youth with disabilities reach their goals. To build on the momentum of the DEI Project, several partners were invited to join the Youth Council to focus on services to people with disabilities under the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).
- ***Meetings with Vocational Rehabilitation Services*** – Due to the number of youth jointly being served by VRS and MVAC, staff from both agencies meet on a monthly basis to discuss co-enrolled youth, services and resources. Both agencies have a better understand of what each other does. Appropriate referrals are being made more often and ultimately more youth are being served.
- ***Community Transition Interagency Committee involvement*** – The DRC participated in local CTIC meetings and has gained a better understanding of the services being provided to youth with disabilities through the high school. Participation on this committee has also built a better connection to special education staff.
- ***Relationship with high school special education staff*** has resulted in increased referrals. The staff have a better understanding of the services that MVAC can provide to youth with disabilities.
- ***Awareness of different types of disabilities*** - This project has been a tremendous learning experience for staff. In the past, many DEI youth may have been referred to other agencies with disability expertise. The DEI project has increased the level of awareness of disabilities including impact in school/work, accommodations, and services/resources that are available to help youth with disabilities achieve their employment and training goals.
- ***High expectations for youth with disability*** – The DEI Project has demonstrated repeatedly that youth with disabilities can succeed.
- ***Access to resources*** – The DEI Project has helped staff become more aware of the resources such as assessments, assistive technology, training to help youth

with disabilities. These resources have made it easier for youth to participate and be successful in employment and training activities.

- **Resource mapping** – *The DRC collected information on area services and resources for youth with disabilities. This information was incorporated in the Youth Directory of resources in the nine county area that was developed by the Youth Council.*

We are planning to pursue other funding opportunities to support this initiative again.

- Strategies for coordinating with after-school and out-of-school time programming.

MVAC strongly encourages youth to participate in after-school or out-of-school time programming. Such programs have been proven to increase academic achievement, keep youth safe, and avoid risky behaviors. Although a work experience is the primary after-school or out-of-school activity, youth are often referred to the following programs: 4-H, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Big Brother/Big Sister mentoring programs, YMCA, YWCA (including SURGE Leadership), and libraries. Youth are also referred to Connecting Kids, which provides scholarship assistance to help cover the costs of a youth program or activity.

- Connections with MFIP and SNAP partners to assure policy alignment for youth under age 25.

In five of the nine counties in our service area, Minnesota Valley Action Council provides MFIP Employment Services and performs both roles as youth counselor and employment counselor. In two counties, MVAC staff are co-located with the employment service provider. In the last two counties, MVAC staff have strong working relationships with the employment services providers and have been in contact with them about the program.

We were fortunate enough to receive a Support Services Equity Grant that is focused on serving SNAP participants. This new initiative will provide more opportunities to partner with our SNAP providers and connect to eligible youth.

MINNESOTA BLUEPRINT FOR SHARED VISION FOR YOUTH Interagency Projects Supporting Positive Outcomes for At-Risk Youth

Vision: “By Age 25, Minnesota’s young people will be ready for the responsibilities and rewards of economic self-sufficiency, healthy family and social relationships, community involvement, stable housing and life-long learning.”

MISSION STATEMENT: *State and local agencies will collaborate to assure that Minnesota’s neediest youth will acquire the talents, skills, and knowledge necessary to ensure their healthy transition to successful adult roles and responsibilities.*

Outcomes				
Improve Transition Outcomes for Ex-Offenders	Improve Transition Outcomes for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care	Improve Transition Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities	Prevent and End Homelessness	Reduce High School Dropout Rates
Strategies				
<p>MVAC assist adjudicated youth with expunging their criminal record and/or utilization of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and Minnesota Bonding Program in their job search.</p> <p>Partners include: Probation/Correction, In/Out-Patient Treatment Facilities, Mental Health Professionals and School Counselors/Social Workers.</p>	<p>Youth Intervention Program MVAC has been providing specialized services to youth in foster care for the past 9 years through the Youth Intervention Program which was funded by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Justice Programs. This program serves foster care youth between ages 16-24 with an emphasis on youth transitioning out of foster care. The purpose of the program is to provide career and life skills curriculum to explore, identify and attain positive educational, career and life goals.</p> <p>Partners include: Human Services, Corrections/Probation, Foster Care Agencies, Foster Parents, Mental Health Professionals, and School Counselors/Social Workers.</p>	<p>Disability Employment Initiative MVAC provided specialized services to youth with disabilities through the Disability Employment Initiative. Service strategies include: Integrated Resources Teams, Guideposts to Success and Partnerships. This grant has ended but we continue to utilize these key strategic approaches and are planning to pursue other funding opportunities to support this initiative.</p> <p>Partners include: Local School Districts, Community Interagency Transition Committees (CTIC), MRCI WorkSource, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, State Services for the Blind, State Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Social Security Administration, SMILES, Goodwill Easter Seals and PACER.</p>	<p>Family Homeless Prevention Assistance Program (FHPAP) MVAC provides services to stabilize families or individuals in their current housing unit or re-house without a day of homelessness. The program also assists families or individuals who are homeless find permanent housing and maintain that housing. Youth ages 14-21 are a priority group to receive these services. There is specific funding set aside for this age group as well as additional support services.</p> <p>Homeless Response Teams The Homeless Response Team is facilitated by MVAC staff and includes a variety of members of the community such as police officers, social services, homeless shelter staff, school staff and</p>	<p>MVAC provides programming to in-school youth to encourage them to stay in school and complete their high school diploma or equivalent.</p> <p>The work experience is used as a “carrot” to motivate youth. When students are in school and successfully meeting their requirements, they can participate in work experience. For some youth that are having a negative experience in the classroom setting, a work experience can be an area where they excel. Youth that successfully complete a work experience can earn academic credit. School districts receive a summary of the youth’s work preparation and work experience activities and award academic credit ranging from .5 -7 credits.</p>

