

YOUTH COMMITTEE RESOURCE GUIDE



**Cooperative
Youth Services
and Best
Practices**

Career & Technical Education

June 2025

This is a compilation of best practices providing a snapshot of cooperative youth service strategies underway in Minnesota's Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs).

Youth Committees are multi-sector local partnerships involved in shared decision-making, community education and awareness, resource mapping, youth-centered planning, program development and capacity building.

Youth Committees (per Sec. 681.120 in WIOA Final Rules found in <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2016-08-19/pdf/2016-15975.pdf>):

- Recommend policy direction to the LWDB for the design, development, and implementation of programs that benefit all youth;
- Recommend the design of a comprehensive community workforce development system to ensure a full range of services and opportunities for all youth, including disconnected youth;
- Recommend ways to leverage resources and coordinate services among schools, public programs, and community-based organizations serving youth;
- Recommend ways to coordinate youth services and recommend eligible youth service providers;
- Provide on-going leadership and support for continuous quality improvement for local youth programs;
- Assist with planning, operational, and other issues relating to the provision of services to youth; and
- If so, delegated by the LWDB after consultation with the chief elected official (CEO), oversee eligible youth providers, as well as other youth program oversight responsibilities.

The Youth Committee Membership (per Sec. 681.110 in WIOA Final Rules found in <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2016-08-19/pdf/2016-15975.pdf>) shall include the following as described in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA):

- Chaired by a member of the LWDB and including members with special interest or expertise in youth policy.
- Members of community-based organizations with a demonstrated record of success in serving eligible youth and other individuals with appropriate expertise and experience who are not members of the Local Board;
- The Committee must reflect the needs of the local area. Members may represent agencies such as secondary and postsecondary education, training, health, disability, mental health, housing, public assistance, and justice, or be representatives of philanthropic or economic and community development organizations, and employers. The committee may also include parents, participants, and youth.

A LWDB may designate an existing entity such as an effective youth council as the standing youth committee if it fulfills the requirements above in the first two bullets. The Youth Committee may also include other individuals as determined to be appropriate by the Chair of the LWDB in consultation with the Chief Elected Official.

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Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Young Adult Program Web Page:

<https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/office-youth-development/youth-programs/wioa-youth.jsp>

Resources to Support Workforce Development Boards and Youth Employment Web Page:

<https://www.workforcegps.org/resources/2019/02/26/14/40/Resources-to-Support-Workforce-Development-Boards>

<https://www.workforcegps.org/resources/2019/03/29/20/42/Resources-to-Support-Youth-Employment>

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WDA 1 – NORTHWEST PRIVATE INDUSTRY COUNCIL

SERVICE AREA: Kittson, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake, and Roseau counties.

MISSION: *“Investing Today’s Resources in Tomorrow’s Workers”*

YOUTH COMMITTEE CHAIR:

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EXAMPLES OF COOPERATIVE YOUTH SERVICES AND BEST PRACTICES:

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA):

Inter-County Community Council (ICCC) offers services to young adults with a variety of supportive needs that include but are not limited to unemployment, homelessness, living in poverty, under educated, under employed. Grant funding is also utilized for support services when need is determined.

Minnesota Youth Program

ICCC works closely with local businesses and schools to provide paid work experience opportunities to youth ages 14-24 with funding from the Minnesota Youth Program grants. Grant funding is also utilized for support services when need is determined.

Case Management:

Youth Program Manager works with in- and out-of-school youth supporting their efforts to obtain high school credentials and explore post-secondary or employment placement. Youth are also offered paid work experience opportunities during in-school internships.

Work Experience:

ICCC works closely with local businesses, schools and government entities to provide work experience opportunities to youth ages 14-24 to help gain skills and experiences that are necessary to be successful in the workplace.

Some of the skills learned include:

- Punctuality
- Personal Hygiene
- Taking Constructive criticism
- Reliability
- Safety
- Interpersonal Skills

Pre-ETS partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation Services:

ICCC has contracted with VRS to provide Pre-Employment Transitional Services (Pre-ETS) to youth that are potentially eligible for VRS Services. ICCC staff receive referrals from VRS to provide one or multiple of the pre-ETS. These services include:

- Job exploration counseling
- Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities, experiences outside of the traditional school setting, and/or internships
- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs
- Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living
- Instruction in self-advocacy

WDA 2 – RURAL MINNESOTA CONCENTRATED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS, INC.

SERVICE AREA: Becker, Beltrami, Cass, Clay, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Douglas, Grant, Hubbard, Lake of the Woods, Mahnommen, Morrison, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Todd, Traverse, Wadena, and Wilkin counties.

MISSION: *“To establish a comprehensive youth development system that will assist youth to achieve economic self-sufficiency and empower them to act as solid contributors to community growth. The system will provide effective learning environments linking education and employment; leadership development; nurturing mentors; and sustained support while committed to Racial Equity in its practice, policies, and procedures.”*

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EXAMPLES OF COOPERATIVE YOUTH SERVICES AND BEST PRACTICES:

Career Advisor/Outreach Program:

Rural Minnesota CEP (RMCEP)’s Career Advising in the high school is an innovative Best Practice that has gained statewide attention. Understanding that career preparation and work-based learning experiences are essential for youth to make informed decisions about careers and the ratio of counselors to students in Minnesota’s secondary schools is challenging, RMCEP developed and delivers career advising to Minnesota school districts, the West Central Juvenile Center, and REWIND/Perham 180 as requested.

RMCEP also takes advantage of the MYP Outreach to Schools funding to plan specific youth related hands on or career pathway activities for youth in our service area. Some examples of this are the use

of the Big Ideas trailer which gives young people a simulated and augmented experience in CAT excavating, welding, and painting, as well as the use of Oculus headsets. We obtained CareerView XR to increase community engagement and interest in high-demand trade careers through immersive digital experiences that allow people to explore careers and communities virtually using 360-degree and virtual reality imagery. These allow youth to explore 23 different trades of interest, offering basic introductions from auto maintenance to warehouse crane operations to fire suppression. Other examples are coordinating tours during the manufacturing month and specific youth related areas as part of the Job Fairs held by our teams.

Financial Literacy:

In 2021, all RMCEP staff completed intensive Financial Literacy training provided by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPD), and in spring 2025, staff completed development of in-house financial literacy training to supplement the CFPD training. Using these resources as tools, counselors cover topics such as paying bills, student loan repayment, understanding credit, and saving practices to help youth participants broaden their knowledge of important life-long money concepts and the importance of planning.

Work Experience:

We incorporate program activities to instill work ethic, work maturity, and employability skills, as well as equity and inclusion awareness, to prepare youth for apprenticeships, employment, and/or post-secondary success. Our staff have completed diversity, equity and inclusion training to ensure that we are carrying this message and information to all our participants. One of the most valuable activities we employ is Work Experience, where youth can “learn and do” in an environment that closely matches their career interest.

This is a planned, structured learning experience that provides an opportunity for assessment, intervention strategies, and demonstration of job retention skills. These are measured using an Evaluation of Trainee Performance and Behaviors tool which is tied to the participant’s Work Readiness goal in their ISS/ Employment Plan. Skill areas reviewed include reliability, interpersonal relationships, work site appropriateness, problem solving, communication skills, productivity, accuracy, and safety.

From the time the participants complete the World of Work orientation, most participants show progress through the end of the work experience activity. Orientation to Work Skills increases success in areas needed for lifelong employment.

Youth at Work

RMCEP helps youth learn key employability skills by focusing on career pathways in occupations in demand, coupling this training with a work-based learning program in an entry-level position within their chosen career pathway. The primary goal in this initiative is to provide a recognized credential or certificate in one of the identified career pathways and pair the training with a related work-based learning experience. Each youth participant who is placed in work-based learning will be mentored for the development of employability skills.

To support completion of educational programs and the credentials and certificates, incentives are available for those participants that complete planned training and/or earn an industry recognized credential. Work-based learning will be provided to further develop employability skills and build work history in high demand occupations.

MN Workforce Access for Youth (MN WAY):

RMCEP is the recipient of a multi-year demonstration grant from DEED, expanding transition services for young adults, ages 14 to 24, with disabilities. Participants are guided by Youth Services Coordinators through cohesive, in-depth career pathway services as they prepare for high school graduation and walk through the next door. Together, they create person-centered goals overlaid by the best practices of Guideposts for Success and Integrated Resource Teams. Parents are counted on to set high expectations for their young adult and can access an array of family-focused resources.

Increased opportunities for paid work experience offer an invaluable benefit of mentorship from a worksite supervisor or seasoned co-worker. Through more robust case management, participants are encouraged to leverage greater autonomy and self-advocacy skills to navigate the often-complex environments of post-secondary education and training or full-time competitive employment. The goal of MN WAY is to empower a person with a disability to transition past the traditional exit point of high school by bridging gaps or addressing emerging barriers in the new domains of adulthood.

Youth Focus Groups:

Each summer, the youth coordinators from CareerForce locations in RMCEP's service area conduct a focus group question and discussion session with eight to twelve participants in each group. These focus groups are designed to bring direct participant feedback on a variety of program processes, knowledge, and needed supports to the Youth Council. This information is used when the Youth Council develops the key priorities for focus during the next year's youth program.

Youth Council:

The RMCEP Youth Council has identified the following strategies as key priorities for 2025:

1. Trauma-informed support: Professional development opportunities will be provided for staff to gain knowledge and an understanding of how trauma or adverse experiences can affect participant's lives, their needs, and the service they receive through participation in our programs. Staff will then use this information to provide resources and referrals that can make a difference for participants who are struggling because of these experiences.
2. Financial Literacy practices will be embedded within the Individual Employment Plan and the services each participant is provided. Staff will help participants to understand and effectively use various financial skills, including personal financial management, budgeting and investing. This will increase the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that allow that participant to make informed decisions regarding money.
3. Staff will prioritize personal advocacy skills with each participant. Each participant needs the skills to make decisions about what they want and ask for help when they need it. This can help them feel confident in what they are learning and doing.
4. Participants will improve their employability skills to enhance success in their entry into the workforce. This will include discussion, promotion, and work with the youth to identify one caring adult relationship which models responsibility and success in meaningful and relevant activities and roles. Staff will also provide information on responsible social media etiquette to participants and resources to parents.
5. Participants will engage in Career Planning Activities to include conversations on Local Labor Market Information (LMI) and post-secondary employment and training options

RMCEP Provider Affiliate of American Dream Employment Network (ADEN):

RMCEP provides the Ticket to Work Program to SSI and SSDI beneficiaries to reconnect them to their career pathway. This is especially important for youth who turn 18 and become SSA beneficiaries under the adult status. We can build on the success they have had in youth programs and provide up to 78 months of benefit and work incentive advisement through the Ticket to Work program.

Youth Focus Groups:

Applying for federal Social Security disability benefits can be a challenge. Minnesota Department of Human Services Social Security advocates are available to help persons file an application, appeal a denied application, and make sure that you are applying for all benefits for which they are eligible.

WDA 3 – JET - NORTHEAST MINNESOTA OFFICE OF JOB TRAINING

SERVICE AREA: Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, and Saint Louis counties, excluding City of Duluth.

MISSION: *Build thriving communities by guiding and empowering individuals*

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EXAMPLES OF COOPERATIVE YOUTH SERVICES AND BEST PRACTICES:

Career EdVenture:

Career EdVenture is a well-defined partnership between the K-12 education system, the public workforce development system, and the business community. Our goal is to connect students with the expertise of the workforce system, helping them make informed decisions about their future and understand what employers expect as they enter the workforce.

Services are available through one-on-one counseling or classroom workshops, delivered either in person or virtually. Topics may include:

- Career exploration and assessment
- Labor market information
- Job search skills (resume, interviews, applications)
- Post-secondary training options
- Workplace culture and expectations

Additionally, Career EdVenture gives JET career counselors the opportunity to identify and connect eligible students with more intensive services, such as:

- In-School and Out-of-School Youth (WIOA)
- Minnesota Youth Program
- Youth at Work

218Workplace:

218Workplace provides access to comprehensive services that connect high school students and young adults to in-demand career opportunities across six key industries: healthcare, transportation and logistics, educational services, technology, manufacturing, and construction/trades.

Over the next 15 years, the 218-area region is expected to see significant growth, with more than \$2 billion in construction investment alone and increasing demand for skilled workers in all six

sectors. These industries offer high-wage, high-growth career pathways that are critical to Minnesota's future workforce.

Through strong partnerships with employers, labor unions, and educational institutions, **JET – Northeast Minnesota Office of Job Training** equips youth and their families with the knowledge and resources to explore and pursue meaningful careers in these fields.

218Workplace organizes school-based information sessions and staff participate in community events such as Construct Tomorrow, where students can engage in hands-on demonstrations and experience real-world job simulations across industries.

JET Career Counselors use www.nemojt.org and www.218trades.com to offer individualized guidance, including:

- Career exploration and interest assessments
- Support with job applications and apprenticeships
- Help navigating post-secondary training and technical programs at local colleges
- Access to labor market data and employer expectations

Visit www.nemojt.org to learn more about available services, upcoming events, and how to start a career in one of Minnesota's priority industries.

Across the region:

Across the region, JET Career Counselors partner with a wide range of community organizations to support youth and young adults. These collaborations include partnerships with treatment courts and probation, WIC offices, Adult Basic Education, and various local nonprofits and youth-serving agencies.

JET plays an active role in organizing and co-hosting both local and regional career fairs, including the biennial Aitkin County Interactive Career Fair. These events give students the opportunity to:

- Explore careers across multiple industries
- Network with employers
- Apply for jobs
- Receive feedback on their resumes

Our in-person career fairs feature hands-on activities that allow students to experience job-specific skills firsthand. JET staff are experienced with hosting virtual career fairs that connect students, businesses, and training institutions across the Northeast region. These virtual events include live chats with employers and career exploration videos.

JET Career Counselors work closely with schools to prepare students for success at both in-person and virtual events.

Preparation includes:

- Resume writing
- Interview practice
- Understanding the career fair format and strategies for engagement

These events also create valuable connections between students and representatives from colleges, the military, private businesses, and nonprofit organizations—helping build strong pathways to future careers.

WDA 4 – DULUTH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

SERVICE AREA: City of Duluth

MISSION: *“To guide and coordinate partnerships with local organizations that foster the full employment potential of youth and young adults in the Duluth area.”*

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Community Collaboration:

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

Key community partners include:

- Life House: Provides work readiness and job skills training, entrepreneurial skill building, and GED studies and testing for youth experiencing housing instability.
- Neighborhood Youth Services, Boys & Girls Club, Valley Youth Center: Offers after-school programs, mentorship and paid Work Experience for under-served youth.
- Family Freedom Center: Empowers the Black community through programming, paid Work Experience and education, including entrepreneurial training for youth.
- True North Goodwill: Offers re-entry services, job readiness, and post-secondary training.
- ISD 709 and Higher Ed: Including the Duluth

Community Schools Collaborative, local High Schools, Area Learning Center, Duluth Adult Education, Lake Superior College, and additional regional colleges and universities.

- Employers, CareerForce Partners, and Community Mentors: Helping facilitate work experiences, career pathway connections, and service and supports to individuals and families.

Emerging Workforce Committee (EWC):

With a mission to guide and coordinate partnerships that foster full youth employment potential in Duluth, YES Duluth partners with EWC committee members in a variety of ways including: Engaging employers from a variety of sectors in career exploration events through the schools, assisting in career exploration through informational interviews and mock interviews, exploring best practices within career exploration models with area school districts, training employers on recruiting, hiring, and employing youth and young adults, and recruiting employers to engage in Employer Champions initiatives through the Duluth Workforce Development Board’s Equity Committee.

Braided Funding:

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

Youth-Centered Services:

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

Career Exploration and Outreach to Schools:

YES Duluth provides comprehensive career exploration services to support youth in identifying and pursuing meaningful employment pathways. Through partnerships with private-sector employers, youth gain hands-on experience in supportive Work Experience placements, many of which lead to

positive references or permanent jobs.

Participants also explore career interests through job shadowing, site visits, and informational interviews, often as part of their individualized career pathway plans. Strong partnerships within CareerForce, Lake Superior College, True North Goodwill, and JET connect youth to exploration and certification opportunities in fields like Healthcare, Construction, and Manufacturing. Additional exposure is offered through school-based events such as Construct Tomorrow and Discover Healthcare, which engage both students and families in exploring career options and building awareness of regional workforce opportunities.

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

- Career workshops and labor market information
- Job shadows, business tours, and career fairs
- Support with FAFSA, post-secondary planning, and career assessments
- Presentations to ISD709 juniors and other groups
- Individualized counseling and career exploration including career assessments, resume preparation, job search assistance, and mock interviews

Work Experience and Leadership Development:

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

YES Duluth supports Leadership Development for participants engaged in paid Work Experience by offering a two-tiered approach to advancement and competency building. Participants that enter Work Experience in an Entry-Level position may advance into a Leadership Development position based on performance and readiness. Job Counselors, Worksite Supervisors and Participants work together to build skills in self-advocacy, soft skills and development of

leadership goals through this process. Through Leadership Development, youth expand on work readiness competencies of strategic thinking, self-management, conflict resolution, collaboration, and assertive communication.

Hiring Now Job Fairs:

CareerForce in Duluth hosts a monthly job fair with an integrated system of support including 10 to 12 employers with immediate openings, greeters and job seeker navigators, and a fully-staffed computer lab to support resume writing and application completion. Private meeting space is provided for on-the-spot interviews and the hiring events often result in direct hires and supportive connections as young people navigate their first experiences as a job seeker.

Financial Literacy:

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

WDA 5 – CENTRAL MINNESOTA JOBS AND TRAINING SERVICES

SERVICE AREA: Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, Mille Lacs, Pine, Renville, Sherburne, and Wright Counties.

MISSION: *“To help youth make a connection between learning and earning.”*

YOUTH COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

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EXAMPLES OF COOPERATIVE YOUTH SERVICES AND BEST PRACTICES: Youth with Disabilities

Youth At Work-Operation Exploration

Youth from diverse communities are provided the opportunity to challenge themselves, gain knowledge, enhance skills, and strengthen communities through five innovative two-week hands-on career exploration camps. This initiative targets youth with disabilities, youth of color, and/or homeless youth that are economically disadvantaged and/or at-risk. Operation Exploration offers a unique opportunity for youth to learn about exciting, high-demand, well-paying careers in their area through hands-on career pathway projects, business presentations/business tours, development of career success skills, and classroom instruction. The focus is on in-demand career pathways or other sectors in which labor market indicators show a need for skilled workers. Camps provide training in employability skills, team building, leadership development, financial literacy, résumé writing, job application preparation, interviewing practice, CPR credential, and career exploration. Participants receive coaching and guidance toward general career development. This opportunity truly provides youth the ability to “try on” careers while they are making decisions about their future! After the Operation Exploration camp, based on individual needs, youth participate in a workbased learning experience, service-learning project, and/or credentialed training.

<https://youtu.be/0jugEMsJadk>

Youthbuild

A partnership with Legacy2Inspire provides school dropouts and/or potential dropouts the support needed to finish their diploma by providing specialized hands-on learning opportunities in the trades. Legacy2Inspire, a nonprofit that focuses on teaching youth construction and metal working skills via a mobile lab that creates a unique way to connect with youth. Legacy2Inspire is an organization built with a heart of mentorship-first. They fundamentally believe that **all** youth deserve people in their lives advocating for them to find a productive and fulfilled life. This aligns fully with CMJTS’ mission. Legacy2Inspire notes: “When youth and mentors come together and work side-by-side it creates a unique environment for learning, growth, and transformation. Shared experiences have an extraordinary power to unlock the potential in youth and foster personal growth. With the mobile workshop, we build relationships through the shared experience of building together.” Legacy2Inspires mentorship model is built around three core components: Connect, Build Trust, and Mentor.

TANF Youth Innovation Project

The TANF Youth Innovation Project is an exclusive collaboration between the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), serving young parents, up to age 24, who are receiving cash assistance through the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP). It also serves youth, ages 14-18, from families receiving this assistance. This program focuses on career pathways and paid work experience, as well as short-term training opportunities (e.g., nursing assistant certification training, forklift training) that will lead to self-sufficiency.

Integrated Service Delivery

CMJTS is committed to serving youth with disabilities through a comprehensive approach. Our efforts focus on the following key approaches: implementing the Guidepost to Success, incorporating Integrated Resource Teams and increasing services to Ticket to Work beneficiaries. We also recognize the challenge youth face in understanding their social security disability benefits, therefore, CMJTS has three certified work incentive counselors to assist youth in transition in navigating the impact employment will have on their social security benefits. These services and framework will be strengthened as a partner under the Employment Transition Model grant.

Leadership Development: Learn, Empower, Achieve, Discover (LEAD)

CMJTS provides leadership opportunities to youth through its LEAD program. Youth gain leadership skills utilizing a developed curriculum, which touches upon the development of group rules/culture, self-awareness, leadership, community service, goal setting, taking initiative, time management, coping skills, conflict resolution, and constructive feedback. During this program youth also take part in a group-identified, service-learning project, to give back within their communities and inspire others.

Work Experience/ On-the-Job Training

CMJTS works closely with local employers to provide experiential learning, work-based learning, on-the-job training, pre-apprenticeships, mentoring, job shadows, and work experience opportunities to youth ages 14-24 to help gain the skills and experience necessary to find success in the workplace. Youth are provided with work-based learning (WBL) opportunities through placement in entry-level paid work experiences, which provide them with an opportunity to learn basic skills and competencies for success in employment. In addition, work experience can provide opportunities to:

- Apply academic and technical skills
- Improve motivation and school attendance
- Establish connections between education and work
- Explore careers that match youth's interests, aptitudes, and abilities
- Network and connect with employers
- Increase work-readiness and employability skills
- Develop leadership skills
- Experience a mentoring relationship between youth and employer

Launch Your Future Today (LYFT) is a rural career and technical education (CTE) pathway initiative to rebuild CTE in West Central Minnesota. The goal of LYFT Pathways is for every secondary student in the region to gain marketable skills through meaningful CTE courses and opportunities which lead to further education and careers that match our region's labor market needs. Through this initiative, CMJTS staff assist school-identified students with vocational exploration and advise them on the steps

required to enter careers of interest. They also help the students build workplace skills and coordinate work-based learning opportunities, internships, job shadowing, informational interviews, etc., to give them first-hand knowledge of local jobs, employers, and industries.

Career Pathway Infographics

As part of the Rural Career Counseling Coordinator Program (RC3), career pathway infographics have been created and continue to be developed to complement the Occupations in Demand infographics and DEED LMI data tools. The goal is to develop a career pathway based on each career cluster featured on the Minnesota Department of Education's Career Wheel. To date, 14 career cluster/pathway infographics have been created and are in use, as well as four occupations in demand infographics. These infographics are shared with schools, employers, jobseekers, and parents. They have proven to be an easy launching point for career exploration and provide a foundation for more in-depth career research. Career pathways in healthcare and manufacturing have been promoted, as these sectors provide a large quantity and wide variety of employment opportunities for workers in Central Minnesota.

Outreach to Schools (OTS)/Perkins Partnerships

CMJTS is currently partnering with more than 60 organizations and/or schools throughout its 11-county area to provide career counseling services to youth and their families. Schools and youth are offered tailored opportunities to meet their specific needs, including access to labor market information, in-demand industries, support with post-secondary school and employment planning, career exploration and assessments, guided tours of CareerForce centers, colleges, and businesses, connections to community resources, and training in career success skills.

In addition, staff are connected to the local Perkins Consortium and other local agencies/businesses to partner regularly on in-demand career pathways activities, including Construct Tomorrow, IGNITE, SCRUBS camps, and participation in EPIC. These career exploration events provide high school students with hands-on, interactive activities to better understand what it is like to do work associated with their career fields of interest.

WDA 6 – SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA PRIVATE INDUSTRY COUNCIL

SERVICE AREA: Big Stone, Chippewa, Cottonwood, Jackson, Lac qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Rock, Swift, and Yellow Medicine Counties.

MISSION: “To guide the coordination of services that fully develops the employment potential of youth in Southwest Minnesota.”

YOUTH COMMITTEE CHAIR:

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COOPERATIVE YOUTH SERVICES AND BEST PRACTICES IN SW MINNESOTA:

Outreach to Schools (OTS)

The goal of OTS is to provide services which will impact and improve the way youth view their future opportunities. The focus is to see more individuals achieve training beyond high school in an effort to break the cycle of poverty. The definition of college for OTS purposes is “Any post high school training opportunity resulting in an earned credential ranging from a certificate to a bachelor’s degree and beyond”. OTS services are available to youth, young adults, parents, and school districts in the region. The purpose of OTS is to identify and address unmet needs while implementing a strategy for delivering effective educational planning, career counseling and labor market information. The PIC Youth Programs work in partnership with school districts to ensure all youth have access to employment and training services including education and career planning; post-secondary planning; assistance with applications; financial aid; scheduling campus visits; job search; assistance with employment applications; resume writing skills; industry tours; career fairs; career and college readiness days; Career Pathway training, and other related services.

Labor Market Information

Providing labor market information to students, parents, and school counselors to create awareness of regional career opportunities in high-growth, in-demand occupations is critical. Region 5 has developed and distributes labor market infographics that are easy to understand and are shared through innovative and traditional avenues such as school newsletters, websites, career advisors, curriculum, sports rosters, and social media posts. We have partnered with schools, collaboratives, rural development commissions, and more as part of the dissemination process. The launch of the labor market campaign “Know Before You Go” provides infographics on median wage range by education level, annual tuition increases, cost of a degree, and in-demand jobs in the region. These are available in two languages: Spanish and English. [Know Before You Go | Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council \(swmnpic.org\)](http://www.knowbeforeyougo.org)

Launch Your Future Today (LYFT) Career Pathways

has provided tools to help students decide, “[What’s Next After High School](#)”, which is also the title of a new animated video that explores this topic. “When you ask students this question, they typically say, “College,” largely because that is what is expected of them. Unfortunately, many students aren’t connecting a college education directly to a career choice and may not be making the best decision for their future,” says Tom Hoff with the Southwest West Central Service Cooperative (SWWC). According to Luke Greiner, Regional Labor Market Analyst, with Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, over 60 percent of jobs in Minnesota require a high school diploma, and only about one-third actually require a college degree. “Four-year college is a great option for some, but it’s not for everyone and it’s not necessary for every career,” says Greiner. The video and supporting resources on the LYFT Career Pathways web site help students consider their options after high school by using the [3 E’s Roadmap](#) to EXPLORE their interests and careers, gain EXPOSURE to various jobs and companies, and gain EXPERIENCE, which leads to a variety of career options after high school. One of the resources noted is the “Know Before You Go” campaign, developed by the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council to provide labor market information to students and job seekers. “It’s important for students to make informed decisions about the variety of career options available,” says Carrie Bendix, Executive Director of the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council. We’re proud that this campaign is one of the resources on the LYFT Pathways 3E’s Roadmap.” To learn more, visit the [LYFT Career Pathways](#) website.

Work Based Learning (WBL) Opportunities

Business and youth both benefit from work-based learning (WBL) since the training is tailored specifically to the needs of business and the needs of the participants. The end result of WBL placements is increased

productivity and engagement from the worker. Work-based learning supports a broader pipeline of workers by connecting businesses to a pool of underrepresented populations that may otherwise have difficulty engaging. In order to realize these benefits, business partners are engaged in the career pathway program design and curriculum development to ensure it meets their business needs.

In order for youth to develop the skills necessary to be successful in a work environment, PIC Youth Staff address identified barriers by providing experiential and work-based learning opportunities for youth. Work-based Learning opportunities include work experience, on-the-job training, and internships with an emphasis on high growth, high wage career placements. Youth are matched with an employer based on identified career interests. The majority of the worksites have fewer than 10 employees. This close connection develops into quality mentoring relationships. To foster this bond, staff provides the employer with support and resources related to mentoring tips, practices, and activities.

Career Pathway Initiatives

In addition to providing standard work-experience activities, PIC's Career Pathway initiatives enable youth and young adults to better understand the connection between work and success, to learn basic work habits and skills, to form a positive relationship with leaders in their communities, and to develop meaningful education and/or employment goals through mentoring provided by the employer, PIC staff and partner staff. As part of the PIC Youth and Adult Career Pathway initiatives, an employer agrees to provide youth and young adults a job which will help the participant make the connection between training and long-term employability.

Supervision includes the provision of clear expectations and feedback to the youth and regular communication with PIC staff. The employer also agrees to provide mentoring and create opportunities along the career pathway for future advancement. Through the career pathway trainings, the participants also earn industry recognized certificates such as Certified Nursing Assistant, welding, and others.

Career Expo

Since 2002, Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board has sponsored the regional Career Expo event. Education, workforce agencies and regional businesses cooperate to provide regional "Career Exploration Days" for high school students. The event intends to provide valuable career and education information to high school students, plus highlighted regional businesses, and the type of jobs they provide in our communities. The two expo events serve nearly 2,000 students from local school districts. Over 290 volunteers from the following partners facilitate the event.

- Minnesota West Carl Perkins Consortium
- The Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council, Inc.
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College

- Southwest Minnesota State University
- SW/WC Service Cooperative
- Worthington Area Chamber of Commerce
- Marshall Area Chambers of Commerce
- Department of Employment and Economic Development
- Montevideo, Marshall, and Worthington CareerForce locations
- Regional businesses and service agencies

Please check out the event page to see the full exhibitor list (which can be filtered by site, career field, scholarship availability, etc.) and links to Facebook and photo gallery pictures. Go to: <http://www.swsc.org/Page/274>

Youth Intervention Program (YIP)

YIP is designed to target services to youth transitioning out of foster care. Participants receive career and life skills curriculum to explore and identify positive education, career, and life goals. Participants are also involved in various work-based learning activities.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Innovation Pilot Project

The TANF Innovation Pilot Project was funded through a collaborative effort between the MN Department of Human Services and MN Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). The project is designed to increase employment opportunities for MFIP teen parents, ages 16-24, and younger youth, ages 14-18 who are on the grant in MFIP households. The focus is to assist youth in addressing barriers which impair their ability to make successful transitions from school to work, apprenticeship, the military, or post-secondary education training and improve the individuals long term employability skills. The project builds on successful on-going business driven, short-term training initiatives and offers integrated training, job readiness, job placement services and support services to targeted populations.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

The Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council (PIC) has become a limited use vendor to provide Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) eligible youth services to be successful in the stages of career development, including career awareness; career exploration, career preparation, and career placement, while playing a primary role in helping students and their families navigate the complex multi-agency career pathways system. Funds support a Career Advisor, whose focus is exclusively on students with disabilities, helping them explore career options and develop plans for transition from high school to post-secondary training and/or competitive employment. The Career Advisor provides the link necessary to match students with disabilities to gainful employment through individualized needs assessment and comprehensive services such as career planning, postsecondary career education, systems linkages and service coordination, and other promising practices such as work experiences, career exploration, and work-readiness skills training.

WDA 7 – SOUTH CENTRAL WORKFORCE COUNCIL

SERVICE AREA: Blue Earth, Brown, Faribault, Le Sueur, Martin, Nicollet, Sibley, Waseca, and Watonwan Counties.

MISSION: *“To Advocate and Provide for the Empowerment, Involvement, Preparation and Employment of Youth in South Central Minnesota.”*

YOUTH COMMITTEE CHAIR:

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EXAMPLES OF COOPERATIVE YOUTH SERVICE STRATEGIES AND BEST PRACTICES:

The South Central Workforce Council plays a key role in preparing youth for successful careers by connecting them with local opportunities, resources, and experiences. Through partnerships with schools, employers, and community organizations, the Council supports a variety of initiatives that help students explore career pathways, build skills, and make informed decisions about their futures.

- **Skills for Success in Employment, Education and Life:** provides classroom presentations to high school students on a variety of topics including: career assessments, career planning & exploration, labor market information, job search, work readiness skills, post-secondary planning and financial literacy. The Skills for Success video series offers a virtual option to schools.
 - **Resource Mapping/Youth Directories:** The Youth Council develops youth directories of resources in the nine-county area. It includes information on child care, counseling, education, employment, health services, housing, libraries, recreation, transportation, youth organizations and youth services. Visit www.workforcecouncil.org/youth-council/projects/youth-directories/
 - **Exposure to Demand Occupations:** Helping youth understand and explore high-demand careers is a key priority in South Central Minnesota. Through a variety
- of engaging tools and experiences, students gain insight into local opportunities, employer expectations, and the skills needed to succeed in today’s workforce shared through social media, newsletters, schools, CareerForce partners, and community organizations.
- **“Know Before You Go” Labor Market Campaign:** A regional collaboration between South Central and Southwest Minnesota, this campaign distributes easy-to-understand labor market infographics. They cover wages, education levels, job descriptions, career pathways, and more, available in English, Spanish, and Somali. The infographics can be found at: <http://www.workforcecouncil.org/labor-market-information/>
 - **Career Corner Newsletter:** A virtual resource shared to increase career awareness for students and their families. Each newsletter focuses on a specific industry and includes labor market insights, career opportunities, employment tips and upcoming events. Past newsletters can be viewed at <http://www.workforcecouncil.org/career-corner-newsletters/>
 - **Career Passport:** Students connected with local businesses through youth-led interviews and on-site tours that spotlight in-demand careers. These interviews were filmed and edited into short video reels, that are shared to inspire students and promote career exploration. Find Career Passport videos here: <https://www.youtube.com/@SouthCentralWorkforceCouncil/playlists>
 - **Demand Occupations List:** The SC WorkForce Council develops a demand occupation list which includes the wages, education requirements and projections for demand occupations in South Central MN.
 - **Career Exploration Events:** Each year, students across South Central Minnesota have the opportunity to participate in a variety of hands-on, career-focused events made possible through strong partnerships with schools, employers, and community organizations. These events help youth explore high-demand industries, connect with professionals, and gain real-world insights into future career paths.
 - ▶ **Career Fairs:** The Greater Mankato Career Expo, Area Career Exploration (ACE) held in Fairmont and the New Ulm Area Career Expo are highly interactive educational experiences where business and community volunteers showcase career opportunities to high school sophomores.
 - ▶ **Tour of Manufacturing Event:** Youth participate in the Tour of Manufacturing where local manufacturers open their doors for tours and provide information on career opportunities at their business. The Tour of Manufacturing features an electronic Tour of Manufacturing magazine and additional resources to educate students on the opportunities in manufacturing. For more information visit www.tourofmanufacturing.com.

- ▶ **Construct Tomorrow:** Youth participate in Construct Tomorrow, an interactive career fair that immerses youth in each of the construction trades as they discover pathways to union apprenticeship opportunities.
- ▶ **Construction Trades Boot Camp:** The South Central Construction Trades Boot Camp provides hands-on experiences for youth to gain exposure to careers in the construction trades and learn about union apprenticeship training opportunities. During each Boot Camp session, a featured trade guides students through an interactive, hands-on project. An opportunity to tour a union apprenticeship training center is provided.
- ▶ **Scrubs Camp:** Youth attend a three-day Scrubs Camp hosted by Minnesota State University-Mankato which offers an opportunity for high school students to explore health science professions through engaging hands-on activities. Health care science careers that are featured include alternative health, dentistry, EMT, medical lab, nursing, nutrition/wellness, pharmacology, physical therapy, psychology, surgery, regenerative medicine and more.
- **Grants & Specialized Youth Programs:** SC Workforce Council and its partners provide targeted support to help youth overcome barriers, build skills, and explore meaningful career pathways. These programs are designed to meet the unique needs of youth from diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities, BIPOC youth, teen parents, and youth transitioning out of foster care.
 - ▶ **Youth Intervention Program:** targets services to youth transitioning out of foster care. Youth receive career and life skills curriculum to explore and identify positive education, career and life goals.
 - ▶ **TANF Youth Project:** Utilizes funding from MN Department of Human Services in partnership with MN Department of Employment & Economic Development (DEED) to provide work experiences for teen parents receiving MFIP benefits or youth in MFIP households.
 - ▶ **Dream It. Believe It. Achieve It. Program:** targets services to BIPOC youth. In addition to providing work readiness activities, work experiences, information on in-demand occupations and career pathways for youth, this program will engage youth and their families, provide 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 for BIPOC youth, parents are invited to participate in the initial meetings for program enrollment as well as the group activities. To increase cultural awareness in the community, worksite supervisors participate in cultural awareness training. Through program services and a dedicated networking event, youth connect with career professionals who inspire them to believe their dreams are within reach.
- ▶ **Youth Support Services:** provides additional support to youth with disabilities or BIPOC youth to obtain their driver's license, gain exposure to demand occupations and work readiness skills.
- ▶ **MN Workforce Access for Youth (MN Way):** supports youth with disabilities by providing comprehensive, person-centered career and employment services. MN Way integrates the Guideposts for Success and the Integrated Resource Team model to deliver wraparound services, including career counseling, paid work experiences, and benefits planning.
- ▶ **Get Started:** is a virtual four-week course providing training in communication skills, budgeting, health and wellness, and community exploration, which are fundamentals in being successful in life and employment. Youth learn about the importance of effective workplace communication, how to budget their money, the impacts of health and wellness on employment and local community resources that are available. Youth received a stipend for each week of completed assignments. In addition to the topics covered, youth are learning technology skills dependability, time management skills and building self-confidence through the Get Started course.
- ▶ **Financial Fitness Training:** MVAC incorporated financial fitness as a core component of all of our youth employment and training programs. Youth are required to have a savings account at the financial institution of their choice so the pay earned from their work experience can be direct deposited into their savings account. The training focuses on money management, saving money and building assets.
- **Framework for Workforce Development:** was developed by the SC WorkForce Council to outline operational principles and goals for services to all the populations in the worker pipeline. The Youth Council developed the following focus for youth services:
 - ▶ Support career exploration opportunities that provide youth with knowledge of demand/ STEM occupations.
 - ▶ Support work experience opportunities that connect youth to local employers & teach work readiness skills.
 - ▶ Support community connections through service learning & civic engagement.
 - ▶ Support all youth achieving a high school diploma or GED.
 - ▶ Support occupational training that leads to a credential.
 - ▶ Identify service gaps for at-risk youth and leverage resources.
- **Youth Council Members:** The South Central Youth Council includes community, education, probation, business, labor, parents and youth representatives.

WDA 8 – SOUTHEASTERN MINNESOTA - WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, INC.

SERVICE AREA: Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, and Wabasha Counties.

MISSION: “To Develop and Advance the Workforce of Southeastern Minnesota, in order to promote economic prosperity in the region.”

YOUTH COMMITTEE CHAIR:

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EXAMPLES OF COOPERATIVE YOUTH SERVICES AND BEST PRACTICES:

- **The SE MN Workforce Development Board** has an innovative committee structure based on industrial sectors and careers that are in demand and targeted populations accessing services.
- **The Emerging Workforce youth committee** works to empower young adults across Southeast Minnesota by building life and work skills that prepare them for their career of choice. Serving as a strategic advisory group, the committee connects education, employers, youth serving organizations and workforce systems to expand career pathways, work-based learning, and employer engagement. A key priority is encouraging local private-sector employer representatives to actively participate in WDI programming by speaking to groups, supporting educational activities, and highlighting in-demand industries and opportunities. Youth enrolled in WDI programs are also invited to join the committee, helping amplify youth voices in planning. From

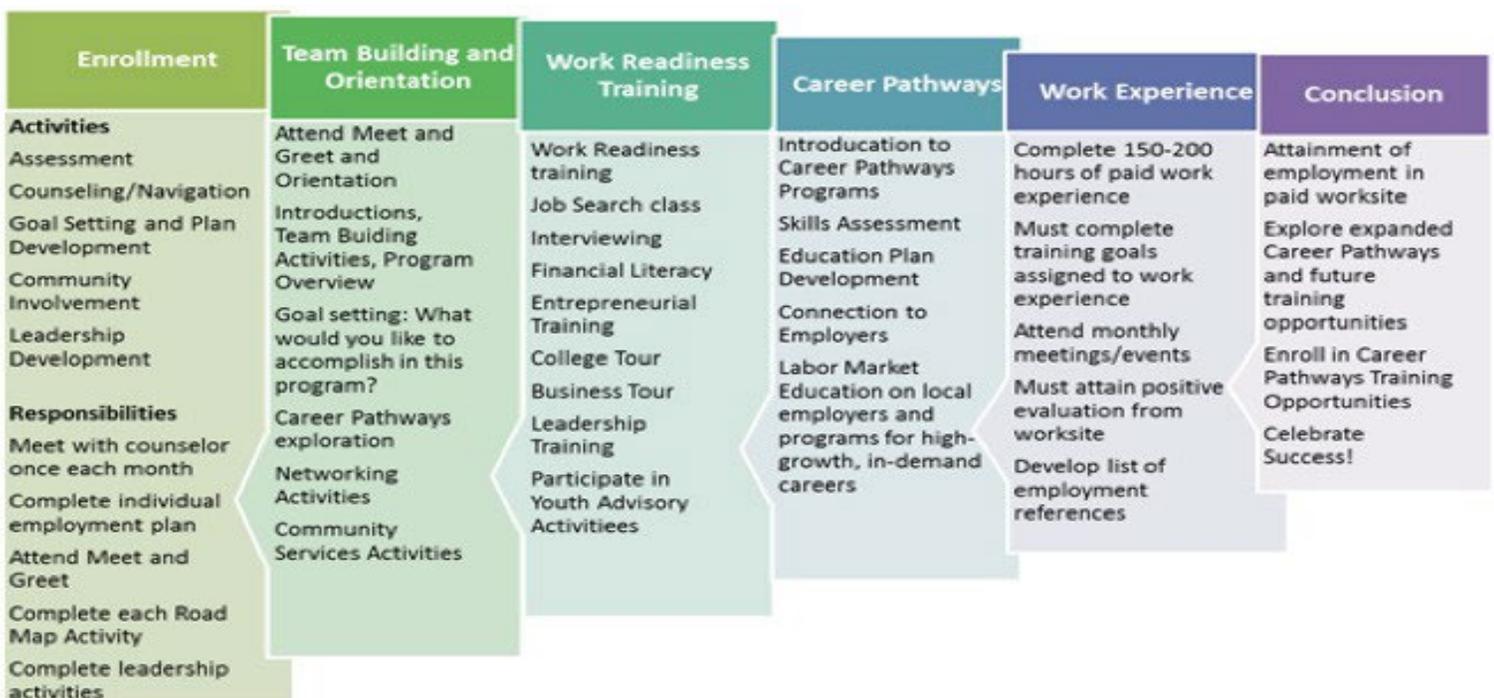
2025–2027, the committee will focus on launching an employer strategy guidebook, expanding youth work-based learning opportunities, and integrating youth perspectives to shape regional workforce strategies.

- **Southeast Minnesota Best Places to Work Award**, Workforce Development, Inc. honors top employers in Southeast Minnesota through the national *Best Places to Work* program each year. Companies are surveyed, and site visits are conducted across 10 counties to recognize outstanding workplaces.
- **Fueling Financial Futures** provides financial literacy and career exploration training to low-income youth and youth from communities of color with driver education funding available upon completion.
- **Youthbuild program** is in partnership with the Rochester and Rice County Alternative Learning Centers, Youthbuild trains students in carpentry and construction. Participants earn school credit, wages, and hands-on experience building for schools and community organizations.
- **Career Pathways and Bridges to Careers** Youth Career Planners use labor market data and employer input to guide young people toward high-demand careers, with strong emphasis on healthcare, manufacturing, public sector, and built environment industries. Through partnerships with school districts, colleges, Adult Basic Education, and employers, students receive career coaching, barrier removal support, and college prep courses alongside essential skills training. The Bridges to Careers initiative, led by Hawthorne ABE, Rochester Community and Technical College, WDI, and local employers integrates these supports to prepare participants for further education and successful careers.
- **MN Way ETM** Workforce Development Inc. (WDI) participates in the Minnesota Workforce Access for Youth (MN WAY) through the Employment Transition Model (ETM) project. We continue to support youth and young adults with disabilities as they explore career and education options. With more intensive support and longer enrollment options, allow us to serve the unique needs of each participant. We use strategies like the Guideposts to Success, Integrated Resource Teams, and Progressive Employment to help youth with career exploration, skill-building, gaining real work experience, and work toward integrated employment. WDI has a Youth Planner who focuses on transition-aged youth, along with a Disability Resource Coordinator who helps navigate how employment may affect Social Security benefits—offering benefit coaching and work incentive planning.

- **Career/Transition Fairs** are held throughout the SE MN Workforce Center System. Most often these are industry specific and offer youth an opportunity to explore careers that they are considering and determine skills and training needed to secure this career. Youth are selected to attend these fairs based on their interest and readiness for this option. High schools and post-secondary institutions are actively involved, with some serving as event hosts.
- **Work Based Learning Toolkit** developed by Workforce Development, Inc. to help employers grow their workforce through apprenticeships, internships, on-the-job training, and work experiences. The toolkit outlines program types, eligibility, benefits, and steps to get started, making it a practical resource for both new and experienced employers to train future workers, support career exploration, and strengthen community connections
- **SteeleCoWorks Partnership** is a collaboration between the Owatonna Chamber of Commerce, United Way of Steele County, and Workforce Development, Inc. to fund a Workforce Navigator who connects employers and youth in Steele County. SteeleCoWorks builds career pathways, offers work readiness training, and helps employers

engage and retain young talent. Through tiered employer participation, from hosting tours to offering internships, apprenticeships, and paid work experiences, the initiative bridges the gap between education and employment, ensuring long-term success for both students and the local workforce.

- **Bluff Country Collaborative** unites schools, employers, local government, and community partners in Houston and Fillmore counties to provide meaningful, hands-on career learning for students. Guided by a Youth Workforce Navigator and advisory team, the initiative offers career fairs, mock interviews, employer tours, and classroom speakers, along with direct access to job shadows, mentorships, internships, and other work-based learning experiences with local businesses.
- **Transfr VR Headsets** offer immersive, hands-on career exploration through realistic simulations that help students discover and plan for in-demand careers. In a safe, accessible virtual environment, learners can build confidence, practice job tasks, and explore career pathways designed to spark curiosity and support informed career decisions. This innovative approach has been shown to increase career awareness and boost student engagement in high-demand job sectors.



WDA 9 – HENNEPIN/CARVER WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREA

SERVICE AREA: Carver and Hennepin Counties (excluding City of Minneapolis)

PURPOSE STATEMENT: *The Hennepin-Carver Workforce Development Board fosters individual and family economic well-being through the development of meaningful career pathways and employment opportunities, provides a skilled talent pipeline to our employer partners through the strategic investment of workforce development resources and the building of collaborative partnerships, and works alongside community organizations to identify and recruit community members to participate in workforce development services based on the workplace requirements expressed by our employer partners as well as the needs and interests of the community.*

LOCAL CONTACT INFORMATION:

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EXAMPLES OF COOPERATIVE YOUTH SERVICES – HENNEPIN COUNTY:

Hennepin-Carver partners with four providers of youth career development services across suburban Hennepin County and Carver County. Tree Trust, BrookLynk, and Carver County funded by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Carver County, Tree Trust, BrookLynk, and Ka Joog provide services funded by the state's Minnesota Youth Program. Hennepin-Carver maintains a commitment to paid summer and year-round work experience learning for youth funded through state and federal programs. These services can be accessed by participants in one of three summer components and two year-round options:

Summer

1) Youth Conservation Corps: Youth work on teams of eight, with a dedicated supervisor, completing park improvement projects for local nature centers, local park districts, or other public hosts. Host sites provide all materials used to complete projects (which can run into tens of thousands of

dollars of commitment), youth learn by doing, both practical application of team building, employer expectations, and landscape construction.

- 2) Internships:** Youth are assigned to local organizations to provide summer and year-round help. Youth gain valuable practical work readiness, skill enhancement as well as income.
- 3) Job Coached Sites:** Working with youth's home school district, participants are provided school funded job coaches and transportation; enabling severely challenged youth the opportunity to gain valuable paid work experience.

Year-round

- 1) Case Management:** Case managers work with in- and out-of-school youth supporting their efforts to obtain high school credentials and explore post-secondary or employment placement. Youth are also offered paid work experience opportunities during in-school internships and summer community placements.
- 2) Young Adult Conservation Corps:** This program offers a paid work experience corps model for out-of-school youth. Teams of 5 participate in intense training and public works projects, with one day per week devoted to case managed interviewing and employment readiness skill practice such as conflict management, resume and application completion, financial literacy and team building. The program offers a 12-week term with an opportunity to apply for an additional 12 weeks on advanced crew placement.

EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICES – HENNEPIN COUNTY:

- **TeamTech:** Youth working on conservation crews are also provided access to four computer lessons (at the job site) using mobile computer labs. The lessons are focused on Personal Budgeting (spreadsheet application), Resumes, Job Applications, and Career Discovery. All lessons are assembled into a digital portfolio and awarded at a season ending awards ceremony.
- **High School Credit:** Working with local education partners who award elective High School credit for successful completion of Summer Program. Credit is based upon a commitment to attendance and successful supervisor evaluation; youth are eligible to receive up to two credits for summer participation.

- **Award Ceremony:** All Conservation Corps youth are invited to attend an Awards Celebration where each youth receives a certificate of commendation. Youth also receive a copy of their portfolio (TeamTech Lessons). Youth are eligible for Governor’s Award (one per crew signed by the Governor), as well as awards and gift certificates for perfect attendance.
- **Tree Trust** focuses on sustainable skills for youth interested in pursuing competitive employment and/or higher education opportunities. Additionally, Tree Trust also helps youth interested in obtaining short or long term federally recognized credentials. These credentials include, Tree Care Industry of America (TCIA), Home Builders Institute (HBI) and OHSA-10.

Internship placements are under way for enrolled youth through local business participation. By sourcing initial placements in already established worksites and applying site recruitment staff resources to expand the site selection, Tree Trust reshapes the traditional youth placement opportunity offered to include more private sector placements.

- **BrookLynk** provides supervisor training that focuses on mentoring youth, cultural competencies and implicit bias training. As part of the employer recruitment, employers for BrookLynk commit to paying 100% of the youth wages and through that demonstrate a proven commitment to the community and workforce development. In addition to summer work experiences, youth receive work readiness skills training in resume writing, interviewing and networking skills, communications, diversity at work, and more.
- **Get Ready!** BrookLynk’s annual work readiness training program, prepares hundreds of participants for their summer work experience placements by training them in resumes, job applications, interviewing, networking, professional communication and other topics that prepare them to successfully navigate the workplaces of our employer partners. This program was offered virtually in 2021.
- **Ka Joog** offers participants paid internships emphasizing high-growth career fields, individual case management and career counseling services, mentorships, and group classes that build soft skills. They help graduating youth launch careers by offering paid internships with local employers, classroom education, and mentorships with culturally-attuned professionals. Their staff, leadership, and services are culturally competent for East African communities and can be beneficial to any marginalized and at-risk youth.

EXAMPLES OF COOPERATIVE YOUTH SERVICES AND BEST PRACTICES – CARVER COUNTY:

- **Southwest Metro Educational Cooperative:** The Southwest Metro Educational Cooperative operates a Youthbuild Program that teaches construction skills and offers academic credit to youth based on the hours they work and the schoolwork they complete. Youth counselors also work directly with New Beginnings (part of SW Metro Educational Cooperative that serves pregnant and parenting teens).
- **Agencies Serving Homeless Youth:** Humanity Alliance, CAP Agency, West Creek and our own housing unit at Carver County HHS are agencies in Carver County that serve homeless youth. There is a direct referral process from the agencies to youth programming.
- **Carver County Probation and Health and Human Services:** The Carver County Youth Counselor meets regularly with juvenile probation workers and workers from child and family department for referrals across programs.
- **Community Colleges and Carver County Schools:** Carver County staff market programs at Hennepin Tech in Eden Prairie to create a cross referral program from colleges to youth programming and other county services, and from the county to the colleges for youth that need educational services. Carver County is working with Carver County Schools focusing on developing career pathways into the trade jobs.
- **Sites and placement:** Carver County has successfully placed youth internally with Carver County Health and Human Services and with multiple community sites.
- **Carver County co-enrolls youth:** Eligible for youth programs with youth eligible for SNAP E&T with the goal of placing youth in a work experience to earn extra months of food support for SNAP recipients that are Time-Limited Recipients.
- **Carver County Employee Relations:** Now conducts orientation and onboarding in collaboration with our youth ECs and with our youth that will participate in work experience to give youth a real introduction to what happens when you are hired at a company, including filling out payroll documents and completing mandated training

WDA 10 – MINNEAPOLIS EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

SERVICE AREA: City of Minneapolis

MISSION STATEMENT: *“To help youth and young adults learn academic, life and work skills, identify career paths and achieve meaningful employment opportunities.”*

Minneapolis Youth Committee Vision: *The Minneapolis Youth Council provides leadership to grow tomorrow’s workforce and build competitive advantage for Minneapolis youth, employers and the economy.*

YOUTH COMMITTEE CHAIR:

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EXAMPLES OF COOPERATIVE YOUTH SERVICES AND BEST PRACTICES:

- **Workforce Innovation And Opportunity Act (WIOA):** City of Minneapolis has partnered with five providers to offer services to young adults with a variety of supportive needs that include but are not limited to, unemployment, homelessness, living in poverty, under educated, under employed. This network of providers, which include the following organizations: American Indian OIC (AIOIC), AVIVO, EMERGE, HIRED and Pillsbury United Communities (PUC) all operate in many community based establishments to reach the wide population of underserved young adults in the city. Being place based in homeless shelters, schools, faith-based establishments and community centers, allows there to be a full comprehensive approach to how youth are served through WIOA. One of the innovative ways our providers have served young adults is to offer services within a specific demographic community. AIOIC offers supportive services in community to

address the specific needs of American Indian youth as well as offering onsite training open to the public and a myriad of other services for education to employment growth.

- **Step Up:** The City of Minneapolis Step Up program is a partnership that offers internships and career experiences for youth ages 14-21. Services are provided by key partners including Achieve Twin Cities, the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), and Project for Pride in Living. Each year, over 100 employer partners representing large and small companies in the private sector, community-based organizations, schools, and government host or hire Step Up interns at their businesses. All youth who apply for Step Up and complete training, but are not matched with an internship are offered an online course during the summer at which they can build skills and earn a \$600 stipend.
- ▶ **Education and Specialized Trainings:** All Step Up interns begin their experience with online work readiness training. The training is differentiated to offer entry level skills training to interns ages 14 and 15 who are participating in the Level 1 program. For most Level 1 youth, this is their first job experience. The training curriculum focuses on a overview of the program, reviews the types of jobs available, and discussed entry-level skills that will lead to success in the workplace. Youth also share their preferences, job interests, skills and needs during this phase of training. Once this phase of training is completed, youth are matched to internship and attend an in-person Placement Day at which they learn about their job match, complete the hiring process, and take part in instructor-led activities to prepare them for their summer internship.
- ▶ Level 2 interns ages 16-21 also begin with a deeper online training that includes a career assessment, interview preparation, and soft-skill topics. This training is following by an intake call with a Step Up staff and then an in-person mock interview experience with a business professional. Nearly 30% of Step Up interns return for more than one internship and continue to build skills in the trainings and internship preparation activities.

- ▶ **Academic Skills:** Step Up participants have the opportunity to earn elective academic credit for their training and work experience. The Step Up credit component is led in partnership with Project for Pride and Living (PPL) to align Step Up curriculum with the Minneapolis Public Schools' credit career readiness seminar.
- ▶ **Financial Literacy:** Financial literacy is an increasingly important skill for our young people. Step Up has embedded financial literacy training and exposure through the work experience. Step Up has several strategies in place to strengthen the financial skills of interns. Both Level 1 and Level 2 interns are offered in-person financial education events to learn more about their finances, banking options, and budgeting. Students leave these s event with increased insight into how to manage their earnings and plan for their future.
- **Minneapolis Partners for Youth Conference:** The goals of this annual free conference are to provide a professional development opportunity for youth serving practitioners by sharing youth development strategies and to build a foundation for ongoing networking, learning, and community- wide resource sharing. Minneapolis Employment and Training, the Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board and the Minneapolis Health Department organize this yearly event with an array of community partners.
- **Minneapolis Teen Job and Opportunity Fair:** This annual teen job and opportunity fair provides area youth a welcoming venue to connect with employers and organizations offering training, education, employment, and volunteer experiences. Minneapolis Youth Congress Employment Committee members assist not only with event planning, promotion and management, but also with creating and delivering an interactive workshop to open the Fair. Teens arrive prior to the event opening for a Prep Rally, updating their resumes, researching companies and applying to openings on-line. Additional event partners include Achieve, Hennepin County Libraries, Hennepin County Human Resources, the MN Department of Employment and Economic Development, and the Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board.

WDA 12 – ANOKA COUNTY JOB TRAINING CENTER

SERVICE AREA: Anoka County

MISSION STATEMENT: *The Standing Youth Committee collaborates to share resources and deliver services to Anoka County young adults (ages 14 – 24) by empowering them to achieve skills, knowledge and confidence resulting in their educational, workplace and personal success.*

OUR VISION: *Empowering Young Adults to accomplish their goals through education and gaining experience leading to a successful career*

YOUTH COMMITTEE CHAIR:

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EXAMPLES OF COOPERATIVE YOUTH SERVICES AND BEST PRACTICES:

- **Virtual and In-Person Career Services:** ACJTC is offering a hybrid model of both in-person and virtual career services for youth to explore careers and review online assessments or job search strategies. Youth are offered workshops including resume review, Career Exploration, and how to build a LinkedIn profile. Youth are also informed of CareerForce services, and the online tools associated with CareerForce. Counselors have access to phone, drop boxes, Web Ex, text messaging and email to deliver virtual career services.
- **An Inter-Agency Collaborative** is established between CareerForce in Blaine, Anoka Technical College (ATC) and Metro North Adult Basic Education, Anoka Ramsey Community College

(ARCC), Anoka Hennepin Technical High School (AHTHS), Professional & Workforce Training and Secondary Technical Education Program (STEP) to identify and connect with youth who can benefit from case management, educational, financial, and transitional supports of the Empowers Program. Partnering staff from each of these agencies meet annually to ensure strong communications and linkages are maintained to better serve the young people in our area.

- **Youth at Work:** ACJTC has a current grant that provides paid work experiences and assist with training for in-demand certifications and/or credentials. Each year we place youth in unique work experience sites that align with their interests, education, and transportation options.
- **Pre-ETS Vendor (assisting youth with disabilities):** Referrals from Vocational Rehabilitation Services to serve youth with disabilities, in-school youth (grades 9-12), that live in Anoka County and are attending secondary school are placed in work experiences in an integrated environment in the community at both public and private sector employers. The goal is for youth to gain confidence, develop job specific skills and positive work habits while preparing for future career opportunities.

Individualized job placement varies based on the skills, interests, and abilities of the youth. Empowers staff work with VRS staff to review assessment results to find appropriate placements. Staff consider where the student lives and available transportation options. Work experiences generally last 12 weeks with an average of 20 hours a week. Jobs are located at locations such as: YMCA, Head Start, area schools, County departments, nursing homes, hospitals, and private sector employers. A variety of jobs are available including recreations aids, teacher's assistants, park workers, crew members, maintenance, childcare, retail, library aides, office and clerical.

- **Future Leaders (developing diverse communities):** This leadership and paid work experience opportunity is possible through Anoka-Hennepin District 11 which serves young people representing diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds that are primarily juniors and seniors. These high school students are matched with elementary schools where they tutor children who have been identified as below grade expectation or at risk of falling behind in school. During the school year, the Future Leaders are also given instruction by SAA's

(Student Achievement Advisor provided by the school district) that assist them in working through issues that are challenging for youth of color.

- **Reducing Youth Homelessness through Partnerships:** Empowers has ongoing communication with the YMCA regarding program services and receives many referrals from the Y's Youth Outreach and Intervention Programs and the new StaY Safe program targeting homeless youth. In addition, staff have a good working relationship with Hope4Youth, a local drop-in center for homeless youth, and Stepping Stone Shelter which is an adult homeless shelter providing emergency services for young adults age 18 and older. Staff maintain weekly hours at Hope4Youth and provide 8 hours a week of intensive case management services to youth housed at Hope Place (youth shelter). Empowers also works closely with Job Corp staff which serves a high population of youth that struggle with homelessness or have run away. The YMCA, Hope4Youth and Job Corp all have representatives on the Youth Standing Committee.
- **Internships/Work Based Learning:** Paid internships are developed for youth who are participating in a Career Pathway, Postsecondary and exploratory career opportunities. These opportunities expose youth to occupations in demand with potential for long term growth in a local industry sector. Internships are aligned with credential bearing training opportunities to accelerate the contextual learning and earning track. Anoka County Career Connections trainings have committed employer partners who are positioned to recruit and hire successful training program graduates. Staff utilize established relationships with private employers and non-profits, including county and government agencies to create job opportunities for youth that have little or no work experience. Work experiences are designed to align with student's interests and areas of study. Empowers staff works closely with local employers to develop work experiences, internships, mentoring opportunities, job shadowing, OJT's and pre-apprenticeships.
- **Enhanced Recruitment of Dropouts:** Empowers staff work closely with Metro North Adult Basic Education and local ALCs to identify youth who have aged out of the secondary school system, are high school dropouts and/or at risk of dropping out and who can benefit from additional supports to obtain either a diploma or GED. Empowers staff have ongoing communication with the local YMCA's Youth Outreach Program, Hope4Youth, our onsite MFIP and SNAP employment services, low-income housing

partners and with perspective at-risk youth visiting our Career Lab as general customers. Targeted mailings and e-mail blasts are sent from our partners with our marketing materials to identify youth that have dropped out that may be interested in returning to school.

- **Connections with MFIP and SNAP partners:** MFIP and SNAP programs are co-located at CareerForce in Blaine allowing for ongoing regular communication between staff working in our various programs. All program staff are trained and able to navigate the myriad of program rules and policies that affect youth through the age of 24. Co-enrolling youth is done whenever possible to help leverage resources between the programs. Staff work to identify potential youth that are eligible for program services during the SNAP orientations. Once identified, they are given information about the Empowers program and a point of contact.
- **Youth in Foster Care/Aging-Out of Foster Care:** Providing employment and training services to youth in foster care and aging out of the foster care system is a priority for Empowers. Staff have developed close working relationships with social workers in the Anoka County Foster Care Unit which ensures ongoing referrals of youth most in need. Anoka County Foster Care staff are represented on our Standing Youth Committee.
- **Financial Literacy:** Financial literacy is embedded in the work experience, internship and on-the-job opportunities coordinated and/or funded in part by the ACJTC programs. Each month Youth Counselors create tips and email them to their caseload on financial topics such as savings, spending, setting up accounts, credit cards and credit reports. Additionally, Anoka employs a "pay-for-performance model" in our work experience program. Meaning, we provide a fifty cent per hour increase after a satisfactory or better performance evaluation from a paid work experience activity.
- **Perkins Partnership:** Empowers staff are connected to the local Perkins Consortium and partner on a regular basis on activities, events, data analysis and labor market trends related to guiding and providing in-demand career pathway preparation for young adults in our service area and across the state.
- **Assessments Used:** Empowers uses many assessments including the Self-Directed Search (SDS), ONET Profiler, various forms of the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), the GAIN, the GED, the Accuplacer and assessments found on My Next Move.org and ONET.

- **Career Fair and Hiring Events:** We offer On-Site Hiring events two times a month. We also offer specialized Hiring Events in the fields of Health Care, Manufacturing and Construction and specialized and Hiring Events for Women, Fair Chance (People with a criminal background) and Veterans and new this year a Career Fair just for young people. Each event highlights various opportunities in high-growth high-demand occupations including employer panels and opportunities for youth to meet one-on-one with potential employers. Extensive efforts are made for each event to promote and market these events to all the area high schools, charter schools, alternative schools, transitional school, and youth serving agencies.
- **Transportation Solutions Partner:** Empowers staff refer young adults in need of transportation assistance for secured employment in the form of a one-time grant that can be used.

WDA 14 – DAKOTA-SCOTT WORKFORCE SERVICES

SERVICE AREA: Dakota and Scott Counties

MISSION STATEMENT: *“To provide leadership and support to community partners in fostering the educational and employment success of youth.”*

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EXAMPLES OF COOPERATIVE YOUTH SERVICES AND BEST PRACTICES:

- The Dakota-Scott Youth Committee has a broad referral network, consisting of representatives from Community Corrections, Social Services, community organizations (non-profits), school districts, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, unions, CareerForce staff, local businesses, colleges, libraries, and youth.
- Dakota County partners with two youth career development service providers. Tree Trust provides services funded by the state's Minnesota Youth Program (MYP, summer), while Hired provides services funded by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA, year-round). County outreach/marketing for each program has taken place through county-wide newsletter distribution and [YouTube](#) video production featuring actual program staff and participants.

Summer – Tree Trust

- Tree Trust's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) offers young people a nine-week, hands-on, paid work experience. Youth have the option of either the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) doing outdoor environmental improvement projects or an individual internship working with a local employer partner. They receive training around goal setting, budgeting and financial literacy, career exploration, completing job applications, and creating resumes.

Year-round – Hired

- Hired provides coaching, support, and training to help youth and young adults complete a diploma or GED, explore careers, and gain employment. They work closely with schools, juvenile probation, social service agencies, and other community organizations.
 - ▶ **Educational Assistance** - Support for high school or GED completion, followed by post-secondary exploration, planning and enrollment.
 - ▶ **Workplace Readiness and Job Placement** - One-to-one instruction on workplace skills and the job search process.
 - ▶ **Internships** - Placement into subsidized work experience opportunities aligned with long-term career goals.
 - ▶ **Wraparound Support Services** - Financial assistance related to job search and education.

Scott County operates year-round MYP and WIOA Youth programs by partnering with local schools, non-profits, training providers, and juvenile probation to build connections with eligible youth. Scott County provides 1:1 counseling with an employment counselor, paid work experience opportunities, tuition assistance, support services, career exploration, job preparedness, referrals to GED/credit recovery programs, and other community resources.

EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICES:

- **Recognizing Youth Achievement** – Tree Trust hosts an annual summer celebration to highlight the accomplishments of program participants who work on landscape crews throughout the Dakota County area. Youth crews work at city and county parks on various projects including staircases, retaining walls, benches, bocce ball courts, hockey rinks, wildlife observation decks, and other general landscaping projects. Youth also have the opportunity to explore a variety of careers through the [Big Ideas](#) mobile learning lab, which utilizes virtual reality to allow youth to experience the skilled trades. All programming includes job readiness skill building and youth have an opportunity to earn pay raises for positive performance. Parents, local officials, project partners, and Youth Committee members are

invited to the celebration event where youth with perfect attendance receive special certificates and several governor's awards are given to crew members that exemplify strong leadership and teamwork skills.

- **Recognizing Youth Champions** – The Excellence in Youth Employment Services Awards recognize organizations or programs, an employer or an individual who has demonstrated a commitment to and effectiveness in preparing young people ages 14-24 to enter the workforce. Two awards are made: one for Dakota and one for Scott County. The honorees receive their award at the WDB's annual Legislative and Employer Recognition Event in front of an audience of area legislators, employers, and community leaders. Additionally, press releases are issued to provide additional recognition for their achievements. In 2024, Dakota Electric Association and Cal-Tex Electric, Inc. sponsored and presented the awards.
- **Getting Credit** – In partnership with the Southwest Metro Intermediate School 288, Scott County offered youth needing credits the opportunity to participate in YouthBuild. Work readiness skills were built into the development of each worksite. Worksite supervisors evaluated each youth's accomplishment in areas such as: interpersonal, information, systems, technology, personal qualities, basic skills and thinking skills. In Dakota County, Tree Trust and HIRED provided career related services and academic enrichment to youth resulting in school credit.
- **Financial Literacy training for youth participants** – Counselors/programs in both Dakota and Scott County work with youth to develop a personal budget that exhibits their gross pay, taxes and other deductions and net pay. Youth decide how much of their total earnings they would like to save and how much they would like to spend. Youth develop an understanding of the financial consequences of missing a day of work. Youth develop an estimated cost of the specific landscaping/construction project the crew is working on, with the approximate cost of materials.
- **Traitify** – The Dakota-Scott Workforce Development Board (WDB), along with support from the Youth Committee, launched Traitify; a personality assessment tool that recommends careers, jobs, and education based on personality and preference data. Traitify is accessible on the Dakota and Scott County websites, providing free unlimited access to all residents of Dakota and Scott County. It is being used (in addition to existing career exploration and counseling) to

enhance program services related to career awareness, education, and employment. Over 17,000 assessments have been completed since procurement in 2018.

- **Teen Job Fair** – In April 2025, the Dakota County Library, in partnership with Dakota County Workforce Services/CareerForce, Dakota County Social Services, and area school districts, hosted the annual Teen Job Fair event. Over 760 teens, young adults, and parents met with local employers to learn about employment options and application processes. In addition, the [Big Ideas](#) mobile learning lab was onsite providing virtual reality headsets and equipment simulators to engage and inspire teens to explore careers in the skilled trades. Inver Hills/Dakota County Technical College also provided career pathway and resource information. The event was a huge success: 92% of attendees that completed an evaluation indicated they learned about a new job opportunity.
- **Monthly Who's Hiring Youth Newsletters** – Monthly newsletters that provide current workforce development opportunities, events, jobs, scholarships, etc. are distributed to teachers, career counselors, youth program participants/administrators, and others working with school-aged youth across the Dakota and Scott County areas.
- **Construct Tomorrow** – The Dakota-Scott Workforce Development Board/Youth Committee has continued to support and collaborate on [Construct Tomorrow](#) events for area youth to try tools of the trades hands-on, talk to diverse tradespeople from multiple construction industries, learn about wages and benefits, and discuss registered apprenticeship with industry professionals. The 2025 event took place at the State Fair Grounds – over 750 students/educators attended.
- **Business Engagement** – CareerForce in Dakota and Scott Counties respond to the needs of businesses by facilitating connections with job seekers (both youth and adult). Access to demand-driven careers is made through hiring events, Employer of the Day events, industry exposure events, and personalized outreach.

- **Partnerships with Schools and Community Organizations** – Staff conduct virtual and in-person workshops with information about CareerForce and workforce related topics/services to students, educators, and other community organizations. Examples include:

- ▶ In collaboration with Dakota County Libraries, staff conduct Teen Job Skills workshops with topics including “How to Create Your First Resume”, “How to Prepare for Your First Interview”, and more.
- ▶ Staff meet with students and educators at the Dakota County Area Learning School (DCALS) to present information about Career Exploration Resources. This is part of an on-going partnership between Dakota County Workforce Services/CareerForce, DCALS, and 360 Communities.
- ▶ Dakota County Technical College (DCTC) and Inver Hill Community College (IHCC) participate in Educator of the Day events at CareerForce in West St. Paul.

- **Construct Tomorrow** – Canterbury Park hosted a Construct Tomorrow event to introduce construction and building trades to students and educators through experiential learning. Attendees had the opportunity to talk to young and experienced professionals about working in the trades and could try hands-on activities that simulated what it's like to work on a real jobsite! The Shakopee Fire Department also took part, conducting a live burn trailer to demonstrate the massive difference sprinklers can make in case of a fire. The event was a huge success, with approximately 700 students/educators taking part. This event is in partnership with the Dakota-Scott Workforce Development Board.
- **Business Engagement** – CareerForce in Dakota and Scott Counties respond to the needs of businesses by facilitating connections with job seekers (both youth and adult). Access to demand-driven careers is made through hiring events, Employer of the Day events, industry exposure events, and personalized outreach.

WDA 15 – RAMSEY COUNTY WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

SERVICE AREA: Ramsey County

MISSION STATEMENT: *The Workforce Innovation Board of Ramsey County is the catalyst for comprehensive workforce development strategies that address both employer and job seeker needs.*

YOUTH COMMITTEE CHAIR:

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EXAMPLES OF COOPERATIVE YOUTH SERVICES AND BEST PRACTICES:

The Youth Committee has identified seven primary strategic goals as part of the current Youth Committee Work plan. These goals include:

1. Continue to oversee WIOA Youth Programs and Plans
2. Promote and support the *Youth Works!* Initiative to increase youth/young adult employment
3. Engage with youth/young adults, employers, and community-based partners in Ramsey County
4. Develop employer support strategies in partnership with the City of Saint Paul
5. Gather nominations, evaluate, and present the Youth Workforce Champion Award
6. Showcase and learn about youth and young adult organizations
7. Assess and grow committee membership, including the addition of a youth member

CITY OF SAINT PAUL PARTNERSHIPS

Ramsey County Workforce Solutions (WFS) continues to strengthen its partnership with the City of Saint Paul's youth employment program, Right Track. Together, we are deepening collaboration through strategic planning and service alignment to support youth and young adults throughout the region. Both WFS and Right Track provide employment supports and opportunities; coordination between our teams enhances the overall impact and reach of these services.

Within the last year, Ramsey County and Right Track have worked together to expand internships and work experiences in suburban Ramsey County, especially for youth who face systemic barriers to employment, including justice-involved youth and young adults. Joint efforts have included building cross-agency career pathways and developing shared messaging for a business outreach campaign focused on reshaping employer perceptions and improving private sector engagement with youth employment initiatives.

Other examples of this collaboration include the **Young Adult Career Academy (YACA)** and **countywide interdepartmental Right Track intern placements**. Both initiatives introduce young adults (ages 16–24) to public sector careers. Through YACA and Right Track, participants engage in rotations through—and seasonal placements within—County and City departments (e.g., Public Works, Public Health, Emergency Communications) and receive support through structured networking, mentorship, and professional development. The 10-week internship is followed by an optional extended placement aligned with each intern's career interests. Enhancements in 2025 include stronger onboarding processes, more targeted department matches, and increased post-program support for interns.

CULTURALLY SPECIFIC PARTNERSHIPS

Culturally specific partnerships remain central to our efforts to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in education and employment. WFS contracts with BIPOC-led, community-based organizations that are embedded within—and reflective of—the youth they serve. These partnerships support Hmong, Karen, Latinx, American Indian, East African, and other communities through culturally grounded, youth-centered programming.

In 2025, these efforts are expanding through continued collaboration with partners such as *Power Within Us*, *the Center for Broadcast*

Journalism, Creating Meaningful Connections, and others that deliver targeted training and paid work experiences. Evaluation data from 2024 show improvements in education and employment outcomes for youth served by these programs, affirming the impact of community-led models.

RAMSEY COUNTY YOUTH WORKS!

Youth Works! is a countywide initiative co-led by Ramsey County WFS and the Workforce Innovation Board (WIB) Youth Committee. Its mission is to ensure system-wide alignment and coordination across the youth and young adult employment ecosystem to better connect youth ages 14–24 with meaningful employment, training, and career pathway opportunities.

The primary pillars of this initiative include:

- A monthly *Youth Employment Ecosystem Orientation* for community provider
- A *Youth Works!* newsletter featuring updates, funding opportunities, and program spotlights
- An expanded *Creating Meaningful Connections* quarterly learning series to share best practices for serving Opportunity Youth
- Expanded collaboration with school districts, employers, and public systems

Youth Works! continues to serve as the primary collaborative space for advancing youth employment strategies in Ramsey County.

RAMSEY COUNTY MEANS BUSINESS

www.ramseycountymeansbusiness.com remains a key tool in Ramsey County's economic and workforce development infrastructure. The platform connects employers and job seekers—including young workers—with opportunities and resources.

Key platform features include:

- Workforce Training Dashboard
- Career Pathway Directory for all local school districts
- Job Connect Job Board with a "Youth Friendly" filter feature
- Partner Connections [age featuring training and support services

This digital resource continues to promote equitable access to opportunity and simplifies navigation for both employers and job seekers.

WDA 16 – WASHINGTON COUNTY WORKFORCE CENTER

SERVICE AREA: Washington County

MISSION STATEMENT: *“Empowering youth to be successful in work and life.”*

EDUCATION ENGAGEMENT ACTION TEAM

CHAIR:

Susan Evans – South Washington County School District

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EXAMPLES OF COOPERATIVE YOUTH SERVICES AND BEST PRACTICES:

The Education Engagement Action Team is one of four distinct action teams of the Workforce Development Board (WDB) and is comprised of a chair (who must be a Board member), several members of the WDB, staff from schools and youth-serving agencies within our local area, as well as Washington County CareerForce staff. Its purpose is “connecting youth to education and training through secondary and post-secondary opportunities and other socio-economic supports that aid in the transition to adulthood and self-sufficiency.” General activities of the action team include:

- recommending youth service providers and monitoring activities
- coordinating with secondary education on strategies to reach out to out-of-school youth
- working to embed career pathway strategies into secondary education
- including equity element in all project plans
- virtual reality experiences for career explorations

- **Career Skills Day:** CareerForce youth staff join area schools to conduct Career Skills Day, designed for youth with disabilities. Students from local high schools and transition programs receive assistance with completing job applications, problem solving and mock interviewing. Local employers provide mock interviews and feedback to help youth in their job search. Youth are also given the opportunity to learn about community resources that may be available to them now and after graduation.
- **Career Conversations:** Washington County CareerForce staff partnered with the County library’s teen librarian to host a series of career conversations for teens during the 2024 - 2025 school year. Events were themed by occupation or industry with a panel of people working in the field providing background and Q & A. The final event was a job fair for teens, also held at the library and indoor city park. Another series is planned for the coming school year.
- **Work Readiness Training:** An interactive workshop entitled “Workplace Success” prepares youth for what to expect in a workplace and provides them with the tools to be successful. Appropriate workplace behavior and employer expectations are discussed including language, appearance, attendance, cell phone use, professional relationships, attendance and time management. A panel of business representatives also provides tips and answer youth questions about how to find and keep a job.
- **Opportunity for youth to earn academic credit:** Youth participating in Tree Trust’s Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) have the opportunity to earn elective academic credit through a partnership with Northeast Metro Alternative Learning Center (ALC). Youth working during the eight-week program are eligible to earn one credit for every 60 hours of work (up to two credits). They complete narrative and spreadsheet lessons to further enrich their understanding of their project and its impact on the community, their personal finances, and the impact this job can have on their future employment. Youth must complete the required number of hours and must receive satisfactory evaluations from their supervisor to earn the credit(s).

- **Community Partnerships:** Family Means is a community-based non-profit program that provides after-school and summer programming for children and teens in two low-income communities. WIOA and MYP funds provide wages for community youth to work as program assistants. The collaboration allows older youth to serve as mentors and role models for younger program participants and to learn leadership skills. Many younger youth have been overheard saying that they want to be a program assistant when they get older.

One of the projects is a community supported garden (CSA) located within one of the communities. Youth workers assisted with planning, weeding and harvesting of produce. Community members paid a minimal fee to receive healthy food in a convenient manner. Youth are exposed to new foods and recipes. Over the years and due to the success of the project, the community has given more land for the garden space and has allowed the produce harvested to be sold nearby. They also operate a produce stand that is open every Friday, at which youth learn customer service and money handling skills.



WDA 17 – CAREER SOLUTIONS (FORMERLY STEARNS-BENTON EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COUNCIL)

SERVICE AREA: Benton and Stearns Counties

MISSION: *“The mission of the Youth Council is to lead and bring together community resources to focus on youth becoming capable and satisfied workers.”*

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EXAMPLES OF COOPERATIVE YOUTH SERVICES AND BEST PRACTICES:

- **Federally-Funded Youth Programs (WIOA)** are designed to give youth individualized attention in planning their career, navigating their education plans, and preparing to find a job. Career assessments, career plans, training scholarships, supportive services, and work experience related to their career pathway (when possible) are some of the services available. If necessary, community referrals are provided. Services are provided year-round.
- **CareerONE**, an intensive summer offering that provides at risk youth ages 14 – 17 work readiness skills, training in a safe, nurturing and learning rich environment. The purpose of the summer program is to give at-risk youth a realistic and positive work readiness training experience and to keep youth from regressing academically during the summer months. Summer components include teamwork, contextual academic enrichment, career exploration, work readiness skills, workplace safety, financial literacy, reflections and journaling, and work projects for community-based organizations and agencies.

- **Youthbuild** - Career Solutions has combined our Youthbuild program with our CareerONE program, which provides an opportunity for economically disadvantaged, potential high school dropouts to receive hands-on training in Construction/ Manufacturing and Health Care careers. Participants work towards OSHA 10/30, and First Aid/ CPR, CNA certification, and earn credits from SCTCC. CareerTWO has been added to Youthbuild for those interested in furthering their careers in Construction and Health Care. We will continue to work with Habitat for Humanity, Carpenters Union Local 930, Pipefitters Union Local 539, and CentraCare Health.
- **Outreach to Schools (OTS)** activities are provided to 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. Career Solutions Youth Career Planners strive to recruit and place interns in area high schools to assist in providing career exploration, career fairs, job search assistance, college information and current labor market information to youth and families. Interns share information about other Career Solutions youth programs to include the WIOA youth program, and CareerONE.

Youth at Work (YAW) – Career Solutions recruits students from both Stearns and Benton counties. We coordinate services when needed with area high schools to offer school credit and career/post- secondary guidance. The students are placed at work experience sites with employers in Stearns and Benton Counties, they receive a competitive wage all while receiving a realistic on-the-job experience. Through YAW, Youth Career Planners partner with the local school district career and college readiness navigators to ensure students receive needed support to accomplish both employment and educational success.

- **TANF** – Career Solutions collaborates with students from both Stearns and Benton counties. We coordinate services with area high schools and our local MFIP provider AVIVO. The students are placed at work experience sites with employers in Stearns and Benton Counties, to receive a competitive wage all while receiving a realistic on-the-job experience

- **Best Practice: Discovery Day** - Career Solutions was recognized by the Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards (MAWB) with a Promising Practices award for their Discovery Days provided to job seekers. Career Solutions has partnered with the St. Cloud Technical & Community College and local businesses to develop four 3-hour, bi-monthly Discovery Day workshops. Discovery days include Health Care, Transportation/CDL, Welding and Construction. Job Seekers can “try a career” for the day and get all their questions answered about their career of interest. Discovery Day workshops are comprised of two parts which include local labor market information from employers and hands-on career activities with program instructors. They have an employer panel so the job seekers can get all their questions answered from those who work in these positions as well as hands-on activities. During these Discovery Day workshops, job seekers can learn about, job openings, great wages, company benefits and advice from these local employee/employers. Discovery days are available to current clients and the public.
- **Best Practice: Career Trek** is a 3-day, 9-hour program designed to help participants identify strengths and skills, explore careers, and begin setting goals for their employment future.
- **Best Practice: CareerONE/TWO** is a 5-week career readiness camp performed in person in a youth service team model. The team is assigned work projects for community organizations, in addition to job-seeking and keeping skills, working on Math, and Reading skills, soft skills, and industry-specific skills and completes them all under the supervision of the team leader. CareerTWO is a 3-week camp where eligible students from CareerONE can continue their career exploration and work experience in construction, healthcare, and public safety.
- **Best Practice: Immigrant Services** was developed in 2019. This program provides area businesses with cultural training for employees, supervisors, and leadership to ensure new hires feel welcome and mediation services if/when issues arise. To serve the growing Immigrant population, Career Solutions has bilingual staff to reflect the clients served. Career Solutions address the issues of language, cultural and skill barriers of immigrant job seekers. The program collaborates job seekers at Immigrant Community center including the Central Minnesota Community Empowerment Organization, area Islamic Centers, and St. Cloud and Sauk Rapids Learning Centers. This program offers multiple access points to programs, technology, and staff with appropriate skills.
- **Best Practice: Open House** Career Solutions was recognized by the Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards (MAWB) with a Promising Practices award for creating Open House events held at CareerForce St. Cloud. These events showcase the services offered by CareerForce, offer training on job search related topics and LinkedIn profile pictures and act as a recruitment tool for Career Solutions programs.

WDA 18 – WINONA COUNTY – WINONA CAREERFORCE

SERVICE AREA: Winona County

MISSION: *“The creation of a career pathway system that aligns local, state, and federal resources, policies and services to meet the workforce needs of business and industry and improves access to employment, education, and training services for Minnesota’s current and future workforce.”*

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EXAMPLES OF COOPERATIVE YOUTH SERVICES AND BEST PRACTICES:

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

Winona CareerForce offers services through the WIOA Youth Program to support young adults facing barriers to employment, such as limited work experience, housing instability, low income, educational challenges, or disabilities. Program participants may access career guidance, skill development opportunities, and support services.

Minnesota Youth Program

Through the Minnesota Youth Program, Winona CareerForce partners with local businesses and schools to offer paid work experiences to youth ages 14–24. These opportunities help students develop workplace skills while earning income. MYP funding may also be used to provide supportive services to address challenges that impact a student’s ability to participate in education or employment.

Integrated Workforce Collaboration

Winona CareerForce is uniquely structured with a small, collaborative team representing multiple programs, including Youth and Young Adult, Adult and Dislocated Worker, MN Family Investment Program (MFIP), Job Services, and Vocational Rehabilitation. This integrated environment allows staff to work together to deliver comprehensive and individualized support. MFIP and Vocational Rehabilitation counselors provide referrals for potential youth participants, and co-enrollment across programs is common to ensure individuals receive the most appropriate and effective services.

Personalized Career Support

The Winona County Youth Program provides hands-on, personalized career services to youth through one-on-one meetings, workshops, and guided assessments. Participants explore career interests, develop job search strategies, and build skills through interactive sessions focused on résumé writing, career pathways, interview preparation, and digital job search tools. Youth are also connected to additional CareerForce resources and tools to continue their career development independently.

Case Management

Youth in both in-school and out-of-school settings receive individualized case management focused on academic success, career planning, and transition support. Participants are guided through the process of achieving their high school credentials, exploring post-secondary training options, and/or preparing for meaningful employment. Youth enrolled in school-based work experience classes receive additional support to help connect classroom learning to real-world career opportunities.

Work Experience

Winona CareerForce partners closely with Winona County secondary schools' work experience coordinators to provide both paid and unpaid work experiences where students can earn academic credit at the same time as gaining needed experience for future employment. These experiences are designed to help youth gain practical workplace skills and explore potential careers.

For youth in paid work experiences, we collaborate with a local employment agency that assists with administrative components such as processing online timesheets, managing payroll invoicing, and supporting other employment logistics. This partnership allows us to focus on providing a high-quality learning experience while ensuring smooth and efficient operations behind the scenes.

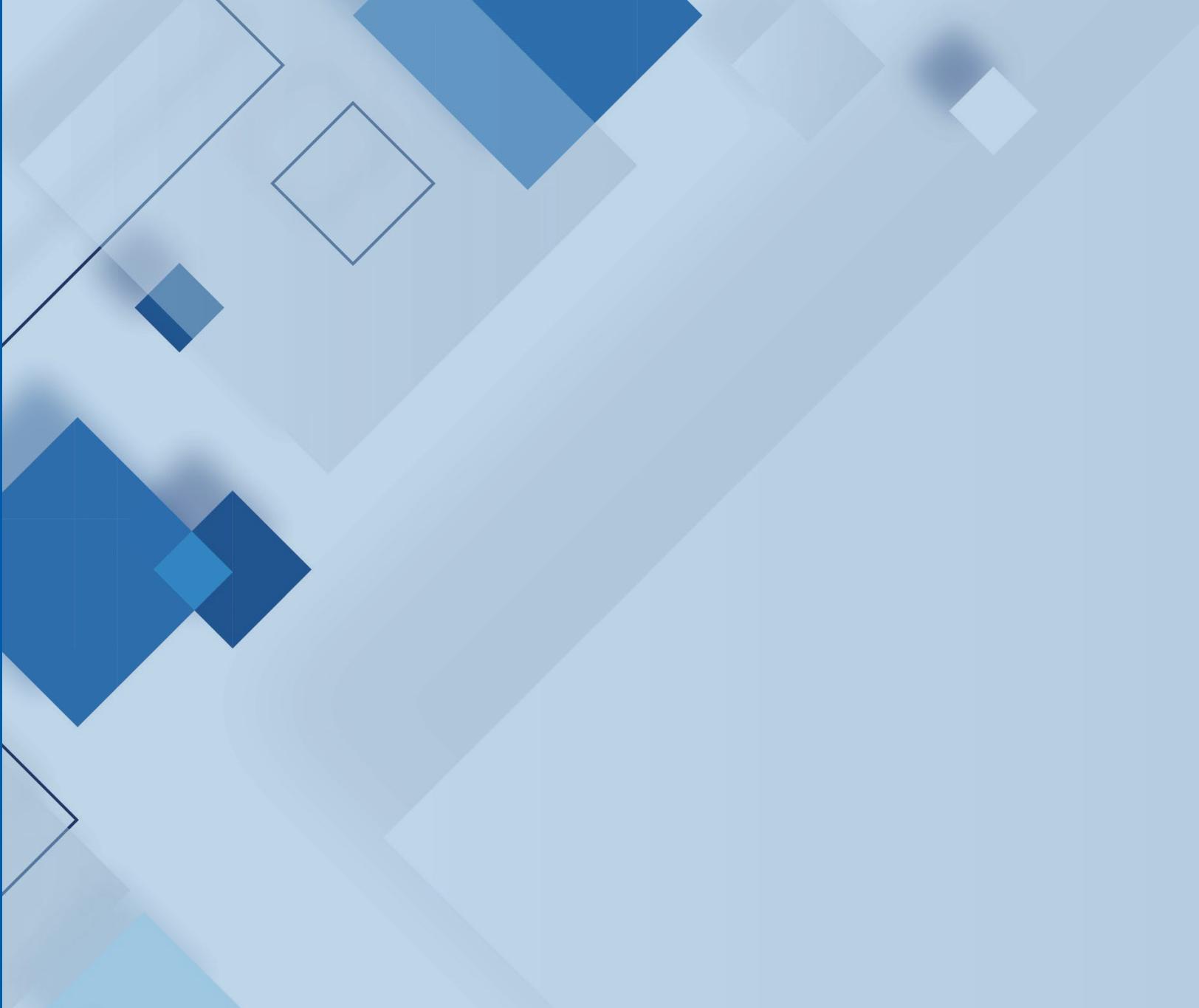
In tandem with their work experience classes, students receive training in career exploration, résumé and cover letter writing, online job search best practices, job readiness, and more - building a well-rounded foundation for future success.

Some of the skills learned in the work experience program include:

- Punctuality
- Personal Hygiene
- Reliability
- Safety
- Interpersonal Skills

Career and Job Fair

An annual in-person Career and Job Fair is held in conjunction with Winona Area Public Schools. This event provides an exciting opportunity to explore local and regional career paths, post-secondary education and training programs, and current job openings. Held at the local high school during the school day, the fair continues into the evening to accommodate family and community participation. With representation from employers, training providers, colleges, and workforce partners, the fair empowers students to make informed decisions about their future.



OFFICE OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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