

Unified Local Youth Plan
PY 2025 WIOA Youth Formula Funds
SFY 2026 Minnesota Youth Program (MYP)

Due Friday, April 11, 2025

**PY 2025 WIOA Youth Formula Funds
SFY 2026 Minnesota Youth Program (MYP)
Cover Sheet/Signature Page**

APPLICANT AGENCY - Use the legal name and full address of the fiscal agency with whom the grant will be executed.	Contact Name and Address
(Fiscal Agent for the South Central WorkForce Council) Minnesota Valley Action Council, Inc. 706 North Victory Drive Mankato, MN 56001	Sara Carrigan South Central WorkForce Council 706 N. Victory Drive Mankato, MN 56001
Director Name: Amanda Mackie Telephone Number: 507-345-2400 Fax: 507-345-2414 E-Mail: amanda@mnavac.org	Contact Name: Sara Carrigan Telephone Number: 507-345-2402 Fax: 507-345-2414 E-Mail: sara@workforcecouncil.org

Basic Organization Information

Federal Employer ID Number: 41-6050353	Minnesota Tax Identification Number: 94865358
Unique Entity ID (UEI) Number: YY82LNJLDNU7	SWIFT Vendor ID Number (if known): 0000194809 001

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

Signature:	
Title:	
Date:	

Checklist of Items to be Included With Your Unified Local Youth Plan Submitted to DEED:

NOTE: Budget forms included in this document are samples only, to demonstrate the format of the WIOA Youth and Minnesota Youth Program budgets. After the unified plan is approved by DEED and final allocations have been released by DOL, a WIOA Youth budget form and instructions will be sent to you to complete and return so your PY25 WIOA Youth Formula Grant funding can be released as quickly as possible. The Minnesota Youth Program allocation will be determined following the end of the 2025 Minnesota Legislative Session and MYP budget form will be sent out at that time with the final allocations.

Signed Cover Page:	_____
List of Youth Committee Members (if applicable):	<u> X </u>
(If applicable) List of Youth Service Providers For PY25 (WIOA) and SFY26 (MYP):	<u> X </u>
Current Youth Committee Mission Statement and Workplan (if applicable):	<u> X </u>
Copy of the Most Recent Request For Proposal (RFP) Used to Select Service Providers and/or Services OR a Copy of LWDB Minutes Affirming LWDA Staff are the Sole Providers of WIOA Youth Services for the WDA:	<u> X </u>
Best Practices for Serving the Neediest Youth:	<u> X </u>
Copy of Current Local Supportive Services Policy for Youth Participants:	<u> X </u>
Copy of Current Local Youth Incentive Policy:	<u> X </u>
Copy of Current ITA Policy for Youth, Plus Related Forms:	<u> X </u>
Copy of Current Local Stipend Policy:	<u> X </u>
Completed “WIOA Youth Program Elements” Chart:	<u> X </u>
Completed “Shared Vision for Youth” Chart:	<u> X </u>
Completed Narrative:	<u> X </u>
(If applicable) Attachment 1H Workplan: Youth Program Service Delivery Design Addendum to Enhance Services to In-School Youth (ISY) Who Are Homeless or in Foster Care	_____

PY24 and PY25 WIOA Youth Approved/Negotiated Levels of Performance - MN

(as of 7/24/2024)

State	Program Year 2024 (7/1/24 - 6/30/25)					Program Year 2025 (7/1/25 - 6/30/26)				
	Q2 EET	Q4 EET	Yth Cred	Median Earnings	MSG	Q2 EET	Q4 EET	Yth Cred	Median Earnings	MSG
	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 5,400	53.0%	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 5,400	53.0%
WDA 1	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 5,200	53.0%	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 5,200	53.0%
WDA 2	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 5,800	55.0%	76.0%	76.0%	63.0%	\$ 5,900	60.0%
WDA 3	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 4,500	53.0%	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 5,000	53.0%
WDA 4	74.5%	74.9%	60.0%	\$ 5,400	53.0%	74.9%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 5,400	53.0%
WDA 5	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 5,400	53.0%	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 5,400	53.0%
WDA 6	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 5,400	53.0%	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 5,400	53.0%
WDA 7	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 5,400	53.0%	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 5,400	53.0%
WDA 8	75.0%	75.0%	62.0%	\$ 4,500	53.0%	75.0%	75.0%	62.0%	\$ 4,500	53.0%
WDA 9	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 5,400	53.0%	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 5,400	53.0%
WDA 10	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 6,272	53.0%	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 6,272	53.0%
WDA 12	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 5,400	53.0%	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 5,400	53.0%
WDA 14	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 5,400	53.0%	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 5,400	53.0%
WDA 15	72.0%	72.0%	62.0%	\$ 6,000	53.0%	72.0%	72.0%	62.0%	\$ 6,000	53.0%
WDA 16	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 5,400	53.0%	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 5,400	53.0%
WDA 17	76.0%	75.0%	62.0%	\$ 5,400	53.0%	76.0%	75.0%	62.0%	\$ 5,400	53.0%
WDA 18	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 5,000	53.0%	74.5%	74.9%	62.0%	\$ 5,000	53.0%

denotes WDA-negotiated level of performance which is different from state-negotiated level

WIOA Youth Performance Definitions

Employment/Training 2nd Quarter After Exit: The percentage of Title I Youth program participants who are in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment, during the second quarter after exit from the program.

Employment/Training 4th Quarter After Exit: The percentage of Title I Youth program participants who are in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment, during the fourth quarter after exit from the program.

Credential Attainment: The percentage of those participants enrolled in an education or training program (excluding those in on-the-job training (OJT) and customized training) who attain a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year after exit from the program. A participant who has attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent is included in the percentage of participants who have attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent only if the participant also is employed or is enrolled in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within one year after exit from the program.

Measurable Skills Gain: The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains, defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress, towards such a credential or employment. Depending on the type of education or training program, documented progress is defined as one of the following:

1. Documented achievement of at least one educational functioning level of a participant who is receiving instruction below the postsecondary education level;
2. Documented attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent;
3. Secondary or postsecondary transcript or report card for a sufficient number of credit hours that shows a participant is meeting the State unit's academic standards;
4. Satisfactory or better progress report, towards established milestones, such as completion of OJT or completion of one year of an apprenticeship program or similar milestones, from an employer or training provider who is providing training; OR,
5. Successful passage of an exam that is required for a particular occupation or progress in attaining technical or occupational skills as evidenced by trade-related benchmarks such as knowledge-based exams.

Median Earnings: The median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.

DO NOT COMPLETE THIS BUDGET – SAMPLE FORM ONLY

Attachment 2 - 75% OSY Version							
PY 2025 Budget Information Summary: WIOA Youth Formula Grant Program							
(See attachment for definitions of cost categories)							
WDA Number and Contact:							
E-Mail Address/Phone No:							
Date Submitted (or Modified):							
Cost Category	Carryover From PY24 <i>(Cannot exceed 20% of PY 24 amount without waiver)</i>	New WIOA Funds	Total Funds Available	Estimated Expenditures 4/1/25 to 9/30/25	Estimated Expenditures 4/1/25 to 3/31/26	Estimated Expenditures 4/1/25 to 9/30/26	Estimated Expenditures 4/1/25 to 3/31/27
833 Administration <i>(Cannot Exceed 10%)</i>							
841 In-School Youth (ISY) Work Experience Wages/Fringe							
825 Out-of-School Youth (OSY) Work Experience Wages/Fringe							
872 ISY Work Experience Staff/Support Services Costs							
855 OSY Work Experience Staff/Support Services Costs							
874 ISY Direct Services (Non-Work Exp.)							
877 OSY Direct Services (Non-Work Exp.)							
848 ISY Support Services (Non-Work Exp. or Training)							
862 OSY Support Services (Non-Work Exp. or Training)							
860 ISY Other Services							
878 OSY Other Services							
837 ISY Training and Training-Related Support Services							
838 OSY Training and Training-Related Support Services							
Total:							
Planned Percentage of NEW WIOA Funds Expended on Out-of-School Youth (Must be at least 75 percent):							
Planned Percentage of NEW WIOA Funds Expended on Work Experience (Must be at least 20 percent):							
Planned Percentage of NEW WIOA Funds Expended on Administration (Cannot Exceed 10 percent of total):							
Estimated number of youth served with PY25 WIOA funds:							

DO NOT COMPLETE THIS BUDGET – SAMPLE FORM ONLY

Attachment 2						
SFY 2026 Budget Information Summary: Minnesota Youth Program						
(See attachment for definitions of cost categories)						
WDA/Provider Name and Contact:						
E-Mail Address/Phone No:						
Date Submitted (or Modified):						
Cost Category	Total Funds Available	Estimated Expenses 7/1/25 to 9/30/25	Estimated Expenses 7/1/25 to 12/31/25	Estimated Expenses 7/1/25 to 3/31/26	Estimated Expenses 7/1/25 to 6/30/26	Estimated Expenses 7/1/25 to 9/30/26
833 Administration <i>(Cannot Exceed 10%)</i>						
881 Youth Participant Wages and Fringe Benefits						
885 Direct Services to Youth						
863 Outreach to Schools (Direct Services; cannot exceed 20%)						
828 Support Services						
Total:						
Estimated number of MYP Youth Served:						
Outreach to Schools (OTS) Youth and Families Served (Note that OTS is an optional activity):						
Estimated Total Number of MYP + OTS Youth and Families Served:						
Estimated Cost Per MYP Participant:						
Estimated Cost Per OTS Participant/Family:						
Percentage Budgeted for Administration (cannot exceed 10%):						
Percentage Budgeted for Outreach to Schools (cannot exceed 20%):						
If your area is budgeting funds for 860 - Outreach to Schools, please provide a few sentences summarizing planned activities:						

Youth Committee Information For PY 2025/SFY 2026

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

SOUTH CENTRAL YOUTH COUNCIL MISSION STATEMENT

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

GOALS

Goal #1: Empower and Involve Youth

Strategies:

- ◆ Involve and solicit input from youth.
- ◆ Promote and support leadership development opportunities for youth.
- ◆ Promote and support opportunities to connect youth with positive role models.

Goal #2: Prepare Youth for Life & Employment

Strategies:

- ◆ Provide policy, coordination, planning and oversight of youth employment programs and reward positive performance.
- ◆ Promote and support life & employability skills training.
- ◆ Promote and support career exploration and career planning opportunities, especially in high demand/growth occupations.
- ◆ Promote and support basic skill development.
- ◆ Promote and support education and training opportunities that lead to a credential and employment.

Goal #3: Expand Partnership

Strategies:

- ◆ Identify gaps and recruit members for the Youth Council.
- ◆ Establish linkages with youth development organizations.
- ◆ Develop and implement information/outreach strategies (youth/community).
- ◆ Develop and implement communication strategies (program staff, stakeholders).

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

YOUTH COMMITTEE MEMBER NAME	ORGANIZATION/REPRESENTING (examples: business, education, community-based organizations, youth, parent, etc.)	Full LWDB Member?
Chair: Jon Nowak Phone Number: 651-341-4436 E-Mail: jnowak@ncsrcc.org	North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters/Organized Labor	Yes
Member Name: Laura Attenberger Phone Number: 507-389-7241 E-Mail: laura.attenberger@southcentral.edu	South Central College/Post-Secondary Education	No
Member Name: Heather Anderson Phone Number: 507-345-5222 E-Mail: hander1@isd77.org	Mankato Area Adult Basic Education/Education	No
Member Name: Valerie Bentdahl Phone Number: 507-344-2177 E-Mail: valerie.bentdahl@risebuildingproducts.com	Rise Building Products	Yes
Member Name: Jocelyn Hartman Phone Number: 507-386-2191 E-Mail: jocelyn@ywcamankato.org	YWCA – Mankato/Community-Based Organization/Youth Services	No
Member Name: Amanda Mackie Phone Number: 507-345-2400 E-Mail: amanda@mnvac.org	MN Valley Action Council/Community-Based Organization/Youth Services/Housing	Yes
Member Name: Kim Mueller Phone Number: 507-389-2123 E-Mail: kmueller@mnsccsc.org	South Central Service Cooperative/Carl Perkins/Education	No
Member Name: Reanna Milbrett Phone Number: 507-345-4223 E-Mail: reannamilbrett@arcminnesota.org	ARC Minnesota – Southwest Region/Community-Based Organization	No
Member Name: Jaffer Ahmed Mohamud Phone Number: 507-345-1554 E-Mail: ahmed.mohamud@mnchurches.org	Minnesota Council of Churches – Mankato/Community-Based Organization	No
Member Name: Andrea Montemayor Phone Number: 507-310-8384 E-Mail: montemayor@metinc.org	Motivation Education & Training (MET)/Community-Based Organization	Yes

Member Name: Frank Rutt Phone Number: 507-304-4750 E-Mail: frank.rutt@blueearthcountymn.gov	Blue Earth County Youth Diversion & Prevention Services/Community-Based Organization	No
Member Name: Heather Sellner Phone Number: 507-387-3461 E-Mail: hselln1@isd77.k12.mn.us	ISD #77 Mankato Area/Secondary Education	No
Member Name: Cody Smeija Phone Number: 507-344-2632 E-Mail: cody.smieja@state.mn.us	DEED/Vocational Rehabilitation Services	No
Member Name: Nancy Sprengeler Phone Number: 507-389-6068 E-Mail: nancy.sprengeler@mnsu.edu	MN State University-Mankato-Education Talent Search/Education/Youth Services	No
Member Name: Jennifer Steckel Phone Number: 507-740-0495 E-Mail: jsteckel@mymrci.org	MRCI WorkSource/Youth w/Disabilities/Community-Based Organization	No
Member Name: Jenna Steckelberg Phone Number: 507-385-6853 E-Mail: jenna.steckelberg@rasmussen.edu	Rasmussen College/Post-Secondary Education	No
Member Name: Nate Warden Phone Number: 507-665-4626 E-Mail: nwarden@isd2397.org	Area Adult Learning Cooperative/Education	Yes
Member Name: Caleb Watson Phone Number: 507-387-1477 E-Mail: cwatso1@isd77.org	ISD #77 Mankato Area/Secondary Education	No
Member Name: Gwenn Wolters Phone Number: 507-389-1889 E-Mail: gwolters@mnsccsc.org	South Central Service Cooperative/Carl Perkins/Education	No

Youth Service Provider Information For PY 2025/SFY 2026

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

Youth Service Provider/Contact	WIOA		MYP																						
<p>Name of Service Provider: <i>Minnesota Valley Action Council</i></p> <p>Address: <i>706 North Victory Drive</i></p> <p>City, State, ZIP <i>Mankato, MN 56001</i></p> <p>Contact Person: <i>Margy Hendrickson</i></p> <p>Contact Person Phone: <i>507-345-2405</i></p> <p>Contact Person E-Mail: <i>margy@mnvac.org</i></p> <p>Service Provider Website: <i>www.mnvac.org</i></p>	<table border="1" data-bbox="813 604 1045 810"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Yes</th> <th>No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>ISY:</td> <td>X</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>OSY:</td> <td>X</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Yes	No	ISY:	X		OSY:	X		<table border="1" data-bbox="1078 604 1498 951"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Yes</th> <th>No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Summer ONLY:</td> <td></td> <td>X</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Year-Round (incl. summer):</td> <td>X</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Outreach to Schools:</td> <td>X</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Yes	No	Summer ONLY:		X	Year-Round (incl. summer):	X		Outreach to Schools:	X	
	Yes	No																							
ISY:	X																								
OSY:	X																								
	Yes	No																							
Summer ONLY:		X																							
Year-Round (incl. summer):	X																								
Outreach to Schools:	X																								

Attachment 1

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

IMPORTANT NOTE: The narrative section covers PY 2025 WIOA Young Adult and SFY 2026 for MYP. Please provide an answer after each question. This information becomes a part of both grant agreements with DEED.

1. Attach a copy of the most recent Request for Proposal(s) (RFP) issued by the WDA for WIOA Young Adult and the Minnesota Youth Program, as appropriate. **If the LWDB has determined there is an insufficient number of eligible youth service providers based on Section 123(b) of WIOA law, please include a copy of appropriate board minutes and/or resolution stating as such.**

The South Central Request for Proposal is attached.

Every four years, the South Central WorkForce Council releases a Request for Proposal (RFP) to solicit proposals to provide workforce development services for youth. A Task Force made up of members from the Youth Council and WorkForce Council review the current RFP and they update the information being requested of proposers. A notice is printed in the Fairmont Sentinel, Mankato Free Press, and New Ulm Journal and posted on our website. Notices are sent to local education institutions, social service organizations and employment service agencies. Interested parties request copies of the RFP and are invited to a proposer’s conference. At the proposer’s conference, the RFP is reviewed, interested parties are given an opportunity to ask questions about the RFP, and organizations intending to submit a proposal are required to declare their intent in writing. Proposals that are submitted by the due date are reviewed and rated by the Task Force. Their recommendation for a youth services provider is presented to the Youth Council, WorkForce Council and Joint Powers Board for approval. Minnesota Valley Action Council was selected as our youth services provider in January 2024. This was approved by the Youth Council, the SC WorkForce Council and the Joint Powers Board.

2. Describe outreach and recruitment of:

Promoting awareness of available WIOA and MYP services is a key part of our recruitment strategy. MVAC will leverage its longstanding network of partnerships across the nine-county region. Below is a partial list of organizations with whom we share a connection.

<p>Education Community:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Districts in nine counties • Alternative Schools • Adult Basic Education & GED Programs • Post-secondary institutions • South Central Service Cooperative • TRIO & Education Talent search
------------------------------------	--

Area Service Providers:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human & Public Health Services • Community Corrections • Lutheran Social Services • Salvation Army • Committee Against Domestic Abuse • Catholic Charities • Agencies serving Minority Populations • COPAL • Area Homeless Shelters • Mental Health Agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster Care Agencies • Veterans Service Offices • Goodwill Easter Seals • Lifeworks • MN Council of Churches • Unidos • Hikmah • YWCA
CareerForce Partners:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Service • Vocational Rehabilitation Services • MRCI WorkSource • South Central Youth Council • State Services for the Blind • Life-Work Planning Center • South Central WorkForce Council 	
MVAC Internal Programs:	<p>Two-hundred staff based locally in each of our nine counties working with multiple programs provide an internal network of referrals. These referrals may come from staff working with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless Prevention Programs • Head Start • Employment/Training: Dislocated Worker, MFIP, SNAP, WIOA Adult, Senior Programs • Car Ownership Program • Energy Assistance Program • Housing Programs • Again Thrift Stores 	

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

MVAC will publicize our programs for all encompassing recruitment through:

- *MVAC website: www.mnvac.org*
- *Use of social media*
- *Presentations to area service and educational providers*
- *Public service announcements via television, radio, and print media including Kato Living and Talk of the Town.*
- *Brochures, posters, newsletters and flyers*
- *Announcements on monitors at human services, courthouses, community centers and CareerForce locations*
- *E-mail program information and newsletters*
- *Booths at area career fairs and postsecondary schools*
- *Community Resource Fairs/Backpack Program*
- *Agency events*

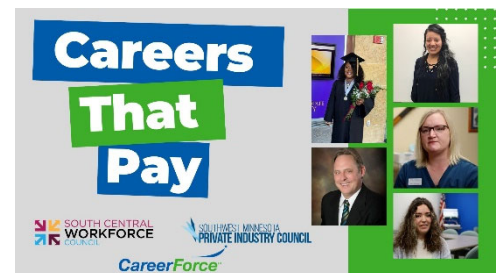
MVAC offers an electronic interest and referral form for young adults, school staff, partner staff, and community agencies. The interest form collects basic contact information, age, county of residence, at-risk factors, and services of interest. Once the form is completed, MVAC staff will contact the youth to discuss the program and services in detail. We also promote the program through social media, electronic newsletters to schools and partners, virtual meetings with other organizations, and in-person and remote classroom presentations.

PACER plans to host parent meetings in South Central up to twice annually, funded by the Office of Disability Employment Policy's Employment Transition Model (ETM) grant. The parent meetings will focus on information related to youth with disabilities. These meetings will present an opportunity to share information regarding services available through the CareerForce Partnership and programs such as WIOA, ETM, VRS, and state funded employment and training programs.

In addition to the strategies above, informational brochures, flyers, emails, and program applications are distributed to county human service agencies, school principals and counselors, school social workers, probation, foster care agencies, and mental health facilities throughout the nine county area to identify and refer eligible youth.

Staff deliver flyers to locations that potential youth applicants may visit including laundromats, community centers, skate parks, comic/game stores, libraries, youth related events, thrift stores, food shelves, food distribution events and job fairs.

[“Careers That Pay”](#) is a video series showcasing success stories from employment and training programs, developed with our Southwest regional partners. The video, [Jasmine’s Story](#), highlights how our young adult program supports at-risk youth. The videos are shared on social media, newsletters, and with educational, community, and CareerForce partners.



- Out-of-School Youth (“OSY”)

Outreach and recruitment efforts targeting out-of-school youth include strong partnerships with local Adult Basic Education consortiums including Adult Area Learning Cooperative, Mankato Area Adult Education and Southwest Adult Basic Education. Heather Anderson from Mankato Area Adult Basic Education is a member of the Youth Council and coordinates the GED Program and College Prep Program. MVAC and ABE have developed a system for referrals to each other through emails and MVAC’s youth electronic interest form.

MVAC has developed a partnership with The REACH Drop-In Center, which is a gathering place for homeless youth. The REACH Drop-In Center program staff

and MVAC collaborate regarding youth participants and referrals. MVAC staff are present at the center regularly to meet with current program participants and for outreach to other eligible youth that could benefit from the services.

In addition, MVAC provides MFIP Employment Services and performs both roles as youth counselor and employment counselor in five of the nine counties in South Central Minnesota. In the four remaining counties, MVAC staff work closely with the MFIP employment counselors to recruit youth and coordinate employment plans.

- In-School Youth (“ISY”)

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

MVAC staff and the Regional Career Coordinator engage with local school districts through Skills for Success in Education, Employment, and Life presentations, covering topics such as career assessments, planning, labor market info, work readiness, job search, post-secondary planning, and financial literacy. Between July and December 2024, more than 1,600 students participated in at least one of the 35 presentations conducted. In addition, a video series featuring [Skills](#), [Interviewing](#) and [Maintaining Employment](#) provides advice from local employers in healthcare, manufacturing, construction, and agriculture. Skills For Success allows us to offer career services to all students, foster partnerships with educators, and identify and recruit eligible youth.

The South Central WorkForce Council’s Regional Career Coordinator conducts additional connections with area high schools and helps connect eligible youth to services that MVAC provides for individual students and schools.

In addition, the South Central Service Cooperative received legislative funding through the Rural Career and Technical Education Consortium Grant to advance career and technical education in the region. The Future Ready CTE funding supports collaborative projects between school districts and employers, provides work-based learning certification for CTE instructors and workforce coordination services. The South Central WorkForce Council participated in the review process for Future Ready CTE proposals. One example of a Future Ready CTE project was implementing virtual reality into the nursing assistant course through the High STEP Health Science Academy. Virtual reality allows students to practice the skills and prepare for the MN state exam. A mobile application was also developed to review nursing assistance knowledge and practice skills. In addition, five schools

have workforce coordinators who serve as a liaison between high schools and the business community for work exploration, job shadowing, internships, and/or work experiences. The workforce coordinators, CareerForce partners, education professionals, and community partners that connect students to work based learning opportunities meet bi-monthly to share and brainstorm ideas to continue to strengthen career opportunities for students.

The South Central WorkForce Council and MVAC participate in the Counselor's and Work Based Learning (WBL) Community of Practice developed by the South Central Service Cooperative (Perkins Consortium). This partnership brings together area school counselors, WBL educators, and MVAC youth counselors on a regular basis to address the following:

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

The South Central WorkForce Council provides insight and feedback for the local Carl D. Perkins plan which is a blueprint for local Career and Technical Education services. Heather Gleason, South Central WorkForce Council Executive Director, is part of the Perkins Advisory Board. Our WorkForce Board and Youth Council provides input through the Perkin's Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment at board meetings and through electronic surveys.

MVAC connects with admissions, financial aid, TRIO Student Support Services, Education Talent Search and Upward Bound staff at post-secondary institutions in our area to explain the program and how it can benefit their students. Our outreach also includes South Central College, Minnesota State University and Rasmussen College, as well as post-secondary institutions outside of the nine-county area that many youth from our area attend, such as MN West Community & Technical College, Riverland Community College, and Ridgewater College. In addition, MVAC attends student open houses at South Central College to share information on the youth program directly with college students that could benefit from additional assistance in completing their post-secondary training.

3. Describe eligibility determination process, including the WDA's strategy for use of the "5% window" for all ISY and affected OSY participants whose income exceeds limits

(reminder: up to 5% of ISY and OSY participants (who require income eligibility) served by WIOA Young Adult program may be individuals who do not meet the income eligibility requirements, provided they fall within one or more of the categories described in WIOA Sec. 129 (C). See Chapter 2 of the WIOA Youth Administrative Policy.

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

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

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

In South Central, the 5% window will be considered when an in-school youth lacks family support (confirmed by a school official and/or professional). In general, in school youth are often living with parents or guardians. For youth that lack family support, they often face additional burdens such as paying for their own housing, transportation, childcare, etc. WIOA services can help youth attain their high school diploma/GED, transition to post-secondary opportunities, complete their education plan and/or secure employment.

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

The criteria for "An individual who requires additional assistance to complete an education program or to secure and hold employment" for our service area will be at-risk youth as defined by MN State Statute 116L.56. As defined by state statute, these youth have barriers which are indicators they are at-risk (i.e. disability, one or more grade levels behind, offender, chemically dependent, foster child, etc.). These youth need additional assistance to ensure they attain their high school diploma/GED, transition to

post-secondary opportunities, complete their education plan and/or secure employment. No more than 5% of the in-youth enrolled may be eligible based on this criteria.

5. Per WIOA Law, Section 3(5) and WIOA Final Rules at 20 CFR 681.290, the U.S. Department of Labor defines an individual as “basic skills deficient” if he or she—
 - a. has English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8th grade level on a generally accepted standardized test; or
 - b. is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society.

All Minnesota WDAs are required to include the definition of “basic skills deficient” in their local youth plans. Please provide any additional local policy that defines “basic skills deficient” differently from existing federal policy, or indicate if your local policy will mirror existing federal policy as shown above.

South Central will follow the definition above to define basic skills deficient.

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

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

Assessment Process:

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

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

Staff utilize South Central WorkForce Council’s established Youth Competencies system as a building block to provide a road map for our work with the youth. This instrument allows staff to measure the youth’s competencies in three major areas: Basic, Work

Readiness, and Occupational Skills. It demonstrates what skills youth are competent in and where they need to develop additional skills.

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

- **Basic Skills:** *The purpose is to ensure youth have the basic skills necessary for success in the workforce and/or additional training. Competent is defined as reading and math skills at or above the ninth-grade level. For youth below this level staff will develop strategies to increase their basic skills including ESL, Adult Basic Education, Adult Career Pathways programs and college academic support centers. When a youth reaches a ninth grade level or above in each of these areas, they will be determined competent in that area. MVAC coordinates services with Adult Basic Education (ABE); when a youth has completed an academic assessment in ABE this score may be utilized to determine the Basic Skills level rather than retesting.*
- **Work Readiness Skills:** *The purpose of work readiness is to ensure that the youth has the critical skills or employability skills necessary to be successful in employment. If the answer is “no” on any of the work readiness competencies, a work readiness goal will be established.*

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

1. Career Exploration

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

2. Job Search Techniques:

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

3. **Positive Work Habits:**

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

4. **Daily Living Skills:**

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

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

Career Assessment Process:

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

- The Minnesota Career Interest assessment (MN Careers) is a quick tool where youth select from a list of 42 activities they like. Example, I like to... build things, work outdoors, or dream about starting my own business. A tabulation of their answers provides a career interest profile that can be matched with career areas to narrow down one's focus based on interests.

- *Visions, Dreams, and Future Plans helps streamline short-term and long-term goals and what the youth can do to begin working toward their visions for themselves for the type of job, living situation, family, hobbies, and more that they would find valuable for themselves.*
- *Some school district career exploration tools, such as Naviance, Xello, or MCIS, offer a view into any career exploration already being done in the high school setting. Depending on the content and items completed, employment counselors may use the results for career exploration.*
- *The Career Occupational Preference System (COPSystem) Comprehensive Career Guide is used to assess a participant's interests, abilities, and work values. This is used primarily with out-of-school youth to further define their career path and the training required. It does not pinpoint one single career best suited for an individual, however, it divides all jobs into 14 career categories and identifies the strongest areas for the participant.*
 - *The first section is called the Career Occupational Preference System (COPS) Interest Inventory. Participants must determine their feelings toward the activity by choosing one of the following: like very much, like moderately, dislike moderately, or dislike very much. The results define the types of work the participant is interested in doing. It helps to compare the relative strengths of the participant's interests in activities performed in a variety of occupations.*
 - *The second section is called the Career Ability Placement Survey (CAPS), and its purpose is to provide information regarding abilities to help in career planning. It is a series of tests which help participants identify some of their strengths and weaknesses. There are eight skill areas evaluated:*
 - *Mechanical Reasoning – measures how well a person can understand mechanical problems*
 - *Spatial Relations – measures how well a person can visualize or think in three dimensions*
 - *Verbal Reasoning – measures how well a person can reason with words*
 - *Numerical Ability – measures how well a person can reason with and use numbers*
 - *Language Usage – measures how well a person can recognize and use standard English grammar and punctuation*
 - *Word Knowledge – measures how well a person can understand the meaning and precise use of words*
 - *Perceptual Speed and Accuracy – measures how well a person perceives small detail rapidly and accurately*
 - *Manual Speed and Dexterity – measures how well a person can make rapid and accurate hand movements*
 - *The third section is called the Career Orientation Placement and Evaluation Survey (COPES) and identifies what work values are most important to the*

participant. A value statement is paired with a contrasting statement and participants must choose which statement best describes their values.

- *This system provides results in a user-friendly manner. Staff interpret the scores of the three components to identify the participant's strengths in abilities, values, and interests in various occupational careers. The results are reviewed with the participant, to validate a career interest for someone or give direction to someone who did not know at what career they would likely be successful. Once suitable career areas are identified, information from the career assessment will be used to begin the examination of demand occupation and training options.*
 - *For participants interested in postsecondary education/training, staff utilize an Occupational Research Packet (ORP) to guide the youth in making an informed career choice. The COPS system completion and review described above is the initial step to the ORP. The next steps include researching the labor market, finding job openings, discussion of their career goal, and two informational interviews.*
 - *The labor market research includes step-by-step instructions for looking at websites such as Department of Employment and Economic Development for occupational employment statistics, occupations in demand, looking at people already in the field of interest, working conditions of interest area, and finally education/training needed to achieve goal.*
 - *Finding job openings introduces the youth to Minnesota Works and Indeed websites and how to use them.*
 - *Several questions are answered by youth to start them visualizing themselves in their interest area, as well educational needs to accomplish their career goal.*
 - *Two interviews are requested of each youth, one with someone working in their field of interest and another with someone hiring in their field. There are suggested questions to be asked to gain the insight one needs to learn the various aspects in their area of interest.*
 - *Staff may utilize additional career exploration tools as needed to further guide youth. CareerForce partners developed materials focused on non-traditional careers which include labor market information, an interest assessment, and a flyer staff can use for youth as well. Non-traditional careers are also highlighted in the ["Know Before You Go"](#) labor market infographics and in the [Career Corner newsletters](#).*
7. Describe process for developing the Individual Service Strategy (ISS) and use of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), including provision of wraparound support services. If your WDA/service provider(s) incorporate "Guideposts For Success" with some (or all) of your participants, please discuss when and how it is used.

Following the completion of the above outlined set of assessments, MVAC employment counselors will work with youth to complete their Individual Service Strategy (ISS). The ISS will summarize the results of the assessments, establish employment and education goals, and define a career path. The ISS provides a road map that gives measurable

steps and timelines for completion.

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

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

The ISS contains the following elements:

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

The ISS is a tool to identify services and resources that youth need to be successful in reaching their goals. The ISS is a working document and is modified as the youth progresses through their plan. Youth meet regularly with MVAC staff to review progress and modify the plan as needed. At a minimum, the ISS is updated with the youth annually.

MVAC staff coordinate services and resources with multiple organizations. Integrated Resources Teams are developed to increase communication and coordination of services between organizations to support youth in meeting their goals. When a youth has an Individual Education Plans (IEP) it is utilized as a foundation to build on in the development of the Individual Service Strategy (ISS) plan. It will identify specific needs of the participant to develop appropriate and achievable goals for youth, including necessary accommodations.

The development of an individual service strategy encompasses the overall career development of a youth. Several employment counselors in our area completed training through Normandale Community College and became certified as Global Career Development Facilitators (GCDF). The certification demonstrates the mastery of 12 competency areas including: helping skills, diverse populations, ethical & legal issues, consultation, career development models, assessment, labor market information, technology, employability skills, training clients & peers, program management and public relations. A GCDF helps individuals make educational and vocational choices at various times across their lifespan in ways that expand and improve their opportunities and life satisfaction. MVAC has 4 certified counselors.

Youth counselors are also encouraged to complete the Art and Science of Youth Work certificate through the Youth Intervention Program Association. The Art of Science of Youth Work certificate demonstrates the mastery of 8 core competencies including: the field of youth work, youth development, communications, ethics, intercultural engagement, behavior intervention, at-risk behaviors, and mental health basics. The Art of Science of Youth Work certificate prepares youth counselors to help youth overcome challenges and thrive.

In addition, youth counselors regularly attend the Minnesota Social Service Association Annual Statewide and Regional Conferences, Adult Career Pathways Networking Day, Youth Intervention Program Association (YIPA) webinars and South Central CareerForce Partner Training Days. This year, MVAC will be requiring staff to complete specific training through YIPA and other training opportunities to ensure youth staff have a well-rounded knowledge of at-risk youth. Trainings will focus on serving youth with disabilities, juvenile justice, cultural sensitivity, motivational interviewing, person centered services and the YIPA's Art & Science of Youth Work Certificate course.

8. Describe your strategy for providing integrated experiential learning, work-based learning, and work experience for participants. Discuss to what extent your WDA is adapting these activities due to changes resulting from the pandemic.

MVAC provides experiential learning, work-based learning, and work experience

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

In 2024, across all youth programs, we provided paid work experiences to 189 youth, ages 14-24. Prior to the start of these work experiences, youth receive training on getting and keeping a job, which includes topics such as the application process, interview practice, employers' expectations, how to handle various situations at work, and the importance of building a positive work history. To further encourage a positive work experience, the youth counselor discusses possible worksite opportunities that fit the career interest area of the youth. Youth select worksites they are interested in and complete interviews. Based on the worksite's feedback, the youth are placed at one of their choices. In addition to being a worksite, worksite supervisors provide youth mentoring in topics such as expectations of employers, career options, and life lessons and choices. In addition to work experiences that focus on developing work readiness skills, we also provide paid internships that focus on a youth's career pathway.

Work experiences and internships provide:

- *Skills to get and maintain a job*
- *Practice interviewing for jobs*
- *Customer service skill development*
- *Exposure to career opportunities*
- *Experience for future employment*
- *Income for youth*
- *Familiarity with workplace technology and how to complete electronic timesheets*
- *Hands-on learning strategies that may improve youths' grades, attendance, and graduation achievement*
- *Awareness of skills and competencies needed to meet employer expectations in the areas of responsibility, respect, and hard work*
- *Worksite supervisors and youth employment counselors who serve as role models and mentors, while supporting them as they learn concepts or problem-solve issues*
- *Possible exposure to non-traditional careers and apprenticeship opportunities*
- *Possible leadership skill development*

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

- *Inquiry: Fostering a curiosity and desire in youth to develop new skills and explore new areas.*
- *Technology: Exploring and becoming familiar with current technologies.*
- *Science, Engineering, and Math Skills: Practicing vital skills to enhance mastery.*
- *Decision-Making and Daily Living Skills: Learning important time management skills and practicing decision-making skills.*
- *Interaction with Others: Working with diverse groups of people and learning how to work together to reach goals.*

- *Positive Attitudes and Behaviors:* Teaching young people about the importance of attitude in the workforce and having the confidence to solve problems.

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

Agriculture:

- Aspyn Acres
- A to Zinnia
- Dee’s Floral
- Farmamerica
- Martin Soil & Water Conservation

Healthcare:

- Southview Living
- BENCHS
- New Chances Humane Society
- Center for Specialty Care
- Fernbrook Family Center
- Heartland Senior Living - Parkview
- Lakeview Methodist Healthcare
- Oak Hills Living Center
- Mayo Clinic Health System
- Prairie Senior Cottage
- United Hospital District

Construction Trades

- Gibbon Lumber & Hardware

Information Technology:

- PC’s for People
- Sibley East IT Dept
- Small Town Media and Production

Manufacturing:

- Avery Weigh-Tronix
- Dittrich Specialties
- Easy Automation Inc.
- Harty Manufacturing Inc.
- ILPEA Industries

Transportation:

- Key City Bikes
- Weelborg Chevrolet
- Northside Garage
- Nicollet Bike & Ski
- Mike’s Collision
- Jensen Motors
- Hawkins Chevrolet
- Chuck Spaeth Ford
- MN 19 Truck Repair

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

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

We no longer need to adapt work experiences as a result of the pandemic. Several strategies implemented during the pandemic and are still being used today including the use of virtual meeting platforms, electronic signatures and the Get Started Course

described below.

Before setting up a work experience, each youth receives work readiness training on how to get and keep a job. Some of the topics discussed include: first impressions, how to dress for job interviews, use of technology in job search and maintenance, completing an application, references, resume and cover letter basics, interview process and practice, expectations of employers, success in the workplace and importance of a positive work history, financial literacy, and proper endings for employment. Youth may also participate in MVAC's Get Started course. The Get Started course is a virtual four week program focused on preparing youth for the world of work. The Get Started course was developed to adapt to the changing needs of youth and in response to the pandemic. Many of the youth being served lack the necessary work readiness skills to be successful in employment and the Get Started course is the first step in their journey to be a successful employee. Get Started course provides youth and young adults (14-24 years of age) 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 receive a \$50 stipend for each week of completed assignments, earning up to \$200 over the four week course. Get Started course allows an opportunity for youth to build their employability skills prior to the work experience. In addition to the topics covered, youth are learning technology skills, dependability, time management skills and building self-confidence through Get Started.

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

MVAC staff actively engage with both in-school and out-of-school youth to explore potential career paths. The Youth Competency System features a section dedicated to career exploration, which involves researching into various professions and the corresponding labor market data. This information encompasses statistics such as job availability in specific regions, average wages, and future job outlook. To investigate the local labor market, staff utilize an array of resources, including DEED Labor Market Tools, Career & Education Explorer, CareerForce, Occupational Outlook Handbook, Career One Stop, Minnesota Works, Construction Careers website, South Central Demand Occupation Lists, and "Know Before You Go" labor market infographics.

The South Central WorkForce Council develops a demand occupation list from a rich set of labor market information, including statistics on current demand and future outlook, coupled with real time input from local employers and job counselors. The demand occupation list is utilized by employment counselors to assist participants in identifying high growth/high demand occupations in the region.

Information utilized includes:

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

In South Central Minnesota, the leading sectors are manufacturing and health care & social assistance. Through the Adult Career Pathway programming, South Central has a well-established career pathway in healthcare and manufacturing. This initiative is a collaborative effort involving Adult Basic Education (ABE), South Central College (SCC), and CareerForce, aiming to provide preparatory classes for low-skilled adults and youth aged 18 and above. Participants can begin on a career pathway suitable for their current academic skill level, as determined by assessments, via the Supporting New Americans in Long-Term Care, On-Ramp, Bridge, or Individualized Training Pathway (ITP) programs.

The "Supporting New Americans in the Long-Term Care Workforce" grant helps New Americans aged 18 and over to explore and secure careers in long-term care. Training is provided by ABE instructors and uses Virtual Reality (VR) technology to teach necessary long-term care skills. The VR simulations are offered in English, Spanish, and Somali. This initiative creates a pathway from the long-term care grant to On-Ramp and Bridge programming. This grant is a collaboration between the Minnesota Council of Churches, ABE, and the South Central Service Cooperative.

For those needing to enhance their basic skills to be college-ready, the journey begins with the On-Ramp model. This class offers contextualized learning across various careers, introducing occupational terminology while boosting students' language and basic skills. Additionally, students can earn industry-specific credentials, such as NorthStar Digital Literacy, First Aid, CPR, Personal Care Aide, and ServSafe Food Handler.

College-ready students needing academic support can start in Bridge programming. They attend preparatory classes with ABE instruction to explore healthcare or manufacturing careers and prepare for relevant college courses. Upon completion, students move to an integrated college course at SCC, taught by an SCC instructor and supported by an ABE instructor. Workforce employment counselors offer career counseling, help develop career plans, assist with job searches, and provide support services. Students earn credentials such as a registered nursing assistant in healthcare or NIMS/MSSC certifications in manufacturing. A Community Interpreter Bridge course is also available. After completing the Community Interpreter preparatory course, students attend a one-week in-person training, practice oral proficiency skills, and schedule an examination to become certified interpreters. Further career pathway training is supported through youth programs, Individualized Training Pathways, or WIOA Adult programming.

When a student is college ready and no longer needs the academic support through Adult Basic Education, the Individualized Training Pathway (ITP) program provides assistance with advancing on the career path. Students in the ITP program receive support in obtaining a degree, diploma or certificate and employment earning a median wage of \$16 or higher in demand industries including Healthcare, Transportation, Information Technology, Skilled Trades and Advanced Manufacturing. Another component of the ITP program is experiential learning through internships and work experiences in their career pathway.

In addition, there are several opportunities for in-school youth. Many school districts in the area provide nurse assistant training in their high schools. The high school program covers the training costs, but not the certification testing fees. To help with these expenses, Minnesota Valley Action Council has provided financial assistance for youth program participants. Youth and employers are also referred to the High School Credit for Caring Careers through LeadingAge Minnesota.

Youth can also participate in the High STEP Health Science Academy which provides students with health science coursework and work-based learning experiences to prepare them for health science and technology careers. High Step Health Science Academy is offered at 13 local schools in the area. Similar programming was implemented in the SourceCode Information Technology Academy and Education Career Academy which prepares students for careers in IT and Education.

Through the local Perkins Consortium, a health science mobile lab trailer can support middle and high school students to explore medical careers. Local schools can request the trailer which will provide a variety of hands-on activities for students to engage in learning about healthcare occupations led by local volunteers which typically include current and retired healthcare professionals, South Central College faculty, and health science college students.

South Central partners with local school districts to help build and expand their career pathway programs in demand industries. The youth program continues to support eligible high school students in work-based learning opportunities through paid work experiences in their career pathway. An example of collaborating with the Mankato Area Public Schools district special education staff in placing youth in paid work experiences at the coffee shop to learn retail and customer service skills. Our partnership continues to seek flexible funding so all students, regardless of eligibility status in our youth programs, can participate in work-based learning experiences.

Our area hosts several opportunities for career exploration in demand occupations. Each year, the Carl D. Perkins Consortium hosts a Career Navigator Program for over 1,800 ninth graders from area high schools to explore careers and guided pathways toward achieving their goals. Through the Career Navigator Program, students learn about 6 career fields including: (1) Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources; (2) Arts, Communications and Information Systems; (3) Engineering, Manufacturing and

Technology; (4) Health Science Technology, (5) Human Services; (6) Business, Management and Administration. This year, the South Central WorkForce Council, in partnership with MVAC, presented on careers in the Human Services field. We discussed youth and young adult programming, the role of a Family Resource Specialist, and engaged participants with a Jeopardy game to explore various careers in Human Services. The [Career Navigator](#) program launched a virtual platform during the pandemic, which continues to be a resource for students today, alongside the in-person event. The virtual website includes: keynote speaker presentations, career videos from six career fields, an exhibit hall for learning about participating employers and a [resource page](#) with labor market information and local resources (e.g., “Know Before You Go” Infographics, Career Corner Newsletters, youth Directories, MVAC’s Get Started Program).

The annual Greater Mankato Career Expo is where over 60 businesses and community volunteers showcase hundreds of career opportunities to over 1,600 area high school sophomores. Rather than a traditional career fair, this event is a highly interactive educational experience. Youth explore careers that align with their skills and interest through hands-on activities and face to face discussions with local experts. They are encouraged to have high achievement in high school and seek higher education and training beyond high school. Youth develop their job skills by increasing their understanding of what employers are looking for and the transferable skills they need for all careers. The event increases awareness to students, teachers, and the community on the career and employment opportunities that exist in our area. The Greater Mankato Career Expo has been replicated in two other communities in our area. The Area Career Exploration (ACE) is held in Fairmont and the New Ulm Area Career Expo in New Ulm. Around 600 students attend the ACE event and over 600 eighth and tenth graders attend the New Ulm Area Career Expo annually. In 2022, the Area Career Exploration career committee launched a website that allows students to learn about area business prior to attending the ACE event. The website was replicated based on the Career Navigator website. The [ACE website](#) features careers at local businesses, including CareerForce partners, career assessments and other resources.

Over 500 juniors from 10 rural schools will participate in Career Day at Minnesota State University – Mankato, which was organized by school counselors in the area where a wide array of professionals give presentations about their career field. Each junior attends three different career sessions of their choosing to gain a better understanding of those careers. New this year, the South Central WorkForce Council will be presenting on career exploration, regional demand occupations, and post-high school opportunities. This is aimed at juniors who are still considering their career options after graduation.

Our area hosts several industry specific career exploration events. Minnesota State University-Mankato hosts a three day Scrubs Camp which offers an opportunity for sixty high school students to explore health science professions through engaging hands on activities. Health care science careers that will be featured include alternative health, dentistry, EMT, medical lab, nursing, nutrition/wellness, pharmacology, physical therapy, psychology, surgery, regenerative medicine and more. Since 2022, Scrubs Camp has partnered with the Educational Talent Search (ETS) program, which provides TRIO services to first-generation and low-income students at local high schools. ETS offers 'Night Shift,' an overnight camp that coincides with Scrubs Camp. 'Night Shift' allows ETS



youth to participate in Scrubs Camp, stay overnight in a hotel, and enjoy evening activities, including reflections on daily Scrubs Camp interactions, healthcare career exploration, teambuilding exercises, and leadership development. ETS's 'Night Shift' is instrumental in enabling ETS students to engage in Scrubs Camp, as many participants would otherwise lack the resources to travel to Mankato for the three-day event. Check out highlights from Scrubs Camp by watching a [short reel](#).

Youth participate in the Tour of Manufacturing where local manufacturers open their doors for tours and provide information on career opportunities at their business. Over 400 students from 20 area high schools participate in the event each year. For more information visit: www.tourofmanufacturing.com

Mankato hosts a Construct Tomorrow event each November. Construct Tomorrow is an interactive career fair that provides hands on experiences in each of the construction trades to inform students about union apprenticeship opportunities. Over 700 students attend the event annually.

Feedback from school counselors and CTE teachers shows that while students enjoy the Construct Tomorrow event and get excited about construction careers, they lack clarity on next steps. The event helps students identify an interest in construction, but they may not know which trade is right for them. Ninth through eleventh graders interested in construction careers have to wait years before they can sign up for an apprenticeship. How can we help students find the right trade and keep them engaged and excited about their future construction careers?

The South Central Construction Trades Boot Camp was implemented to provide an in depth exposure to the various union construction trades. Boot Camp began as a two-week interactive camp that provides hands-on experiences for youth to gain exposure to careers in the construction trades and learn about union apprenticeship training opportunities. Based on feedback from youth and educators regarding the two week commitment, transportation barriers for youth in rural areas and youth work schedules, the South Central Construction Trades Partnership piloted an early release Boot Camp model with Mankato Area Public schools. The new model allowed students to attend camp during early release school days once a month from January through May. The following trades participated in the early release Boot Camp: laborers, carpenters, millwrights, cement masons, electrician, operating engineers, heat and frost insulators. Weaved in with hands on activity, each featured trade talked with students about their trade including the wages, training, benefits and how to enter the trade through an apprenticeship. The trade representatives that attended camp were training center instructors, business agents and apprenticeship coordinators. In addition, a training center tour of Operating Engineers was offered to Boot Camp participants and other local high schools districts. To see the Boot Camp in action watch the following reels: [Millwrights](#), [Laborers Cement Masons](#), and [Operators Training Center Tour](#).



The 2025 Boot Camp opportunity will be offered during the school day most Wednesdays in April and May to Mankato Area Public School students and ABE students. Students at Central High School, Mankato's alternative learning center, will gain academic credit for participating in all the Boot Camp sessions. Students will also have an opportunity to attend a training center tour of the Carpenters and Electrician Training Centers in Rochester. The Boot Camp partnership continues to promote this opportunity to school districts in the service area.

The Construct Tomorrow event, Construction Trades Boot Camp sessions, and the training center tours offer youth interested in construction the chance to deeply explore various trades. These programs help them determine if a career in construction is right for them, identify which trade is the best fit, and outline the necessary steps to enter the field.

The dedication, innovation and hard work of this partnership was recognized by the Minnesota Association of Workforce Board. Each year, MAWB recognizes best practices across the state and the South Central Construction Trades Boot Camp was honored with the first place award in August 2024.

The South Central Carl D. Perkins also promotes the exploration of careers in the construction trades and transportation careers through hosting the Big Idea's Mobile Learning Lab or Minnesota State Transportation Center of Excellence's Career

Exploration Trailer at local school districts. Big Ideas is a fully immersive virtual reality system used to introduce a variety of trades. Inside the mobile learning lab there are 3 classrooms with simulators for welding, industrial painting, and CAT excavator. MN Transportation Center of Excellence's Trailer includes simulators in Aviation, Heavy Equipment and Truck Driving along with a variety of hands on activities to learn about careers in the Transportation industry. Youth experience in-demand careers in construction trades and transportation and encourage non-traditional careers through virtual reality simulations.

Transportation Works is a three-day exploratory summer camp that was piloted in 2022 to help students learn about careers in transportation. The camp is geared towards youth entering 9th grade to graduating seniors. Some of the topics included automotive technology, autobody & collision, trucking terminology, aviation, diesel and heavy equipment. The event was hosted by local employers, post-secondary institutions, Mankato Area Public Schools and South Central Perkins Consortium. The 2025 Transportation Works event will be held in June.

The South Central Perkins Consortium hosts the Culinary Regional Arts Venue in Education (CRAVE) event where students gain hands-on experiences in the hospitality industry through breakout sessions and can compete in a variety of culinary skills, table scaping, menu planning and cake decorating. This year the South Central WorkForce Council will be hosting a breakout session exploring career opportunities and labor market in the Hospitality Industry.

An event that provides students with an opportunity to learn about current demand jobs is the Teen Connect event. Teen Connect is for 8-12 grade students from Mankato Public Schools to learn about employment, volunteer and enrichment opportunities available over the summer. Over five hundred students attend the event each year with over 35 booth representing employers, volunteering and enrichment opportunities were present.

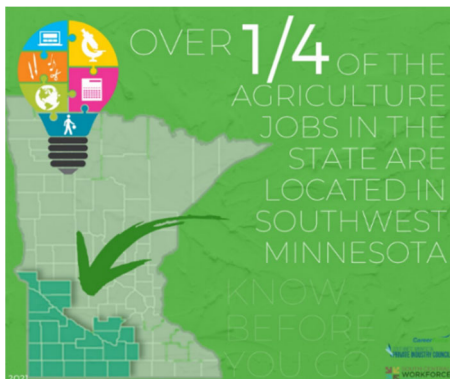


As result of our regional planning efforts, Southwest and South Central Minnesota identified a great need to provide labor market information to students, parents and school counselors to create awareness of career opportunities in high-growth, in-demand occupations. We have embarked on a joint effort across Region 5 to distribute labor market infographics that are easy to understand and can be shared on school newsletters, websites, parent emails and social media posts.

The launch of the labor market campaign "Know Before You Go" shared infographics on education and wage range by education level, annual tuition increases, cost of a degree, and demand jobs in the region. The information was sent to school counselors, principals, superintendents and workforce partners in the region. The DEED Labor Market Analysts received requests from other regions to provide the same information. As a result, regional handouts were developed that detail the costs of college, the cost of

living for a single person in each region, wage ranges for jobs requiring different levels of education, and a list of occupations in demand sorted by educational requirements. The handout can be found here: [Southwest Region Path to Workforce Success](#).

Region 5 developed industry specific infographics for health care, manufacturing, information technology and agriculture. The infographics feature a variety of occupations in each industry and compare education, important qualities, job description, employment opportunities and work environment. The infographics also feature career pathways that demonstrate demand occupations at every education level. The Rural Career Counseling Coordinators (RC3) across the state have agreed to



work on this initiative together by focusing on a few industries and sharing what has been developed. Other industries that have been developed by other areas include business, education, transportation, and construction and have been modified to include local labor market information. In addition, an entrepreneur infographic was developed. The infographics are also available in Spanish and we recently added state-wide infographics in Somali adapted from our regional partner, WorkForce Development Inc.

Studies indicate that parents have a strong influence on youth's career decisions, so we launched a social media campaign through Facebook and Instagram to inform youth and parents of demand occupations. Another strategy being used to educate youth and their families on demand occupations and career information is the Career Corner newsletter. The newsletter is distributed to school counselors, principals, superintendents and teachers. Schools are encouraged to share the newsletter through emails, school websites, and social media. Industry specific newsletters in manufacturing, construction, transportation, information technology, healthcare, agriculture, education and business have been shared with schools and CareerForce partners. Career Corner newsletters can be accessed at: <http://www.workforcecouncil.org/career-corner-newsletters/>

In 2024, a new initiative was launch to raise awareness about demand occupations to students, parents and the community through [Career Passport videos](#). Career Passport videos feature students interviewing local businesses to learn about fulfilling careers in South Central MN. The videos focus on careers in Healthcare, Manufacturing and Agriculture. Short reels and videos are shared to youth and their parents through social media and in emails and newsletters to school districts. This year, we plan to film and post additional videos highlighting other in-demand industries.

We have received positive comments from schools about the labor market resources to use with students. This information has been incorporated in all career related activities, including Career Navigator, Career Expos, Scrubs Camp, Tour of Manufacturing, Construction Tomorrow, South Central Construction Boot Camp, etc. Region 5 also purchased infographic banners to display career paths in Healthcare, Manufacturing,

Information Technology, Agriculture, Transportation, Construction, Business and Education to display at career expos and industry events to show students the many different career pathways at each education level and highlight demand occupations in our region.

10. If applicable, attach a copy of the WDA's policy for developing Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and indicate the date approved by the LWDB/Youth Committee. Indicate if your WDA will be using Minnesota's waiver to allow use of ITAs for In-School Youth, ages 16-21.

In-School and Out-of-School Youth that are interested in and appropriate for post-secondary training will complete the Career Occupational Preference System (COPS System) Comprehensive Career Guide to assess their interest, abilities and values. This assessment will assist youth to define their career path and the training required. Youth will complete an occupational research packet to explore the local labor market including demand occupations and training requirements with the assistance of their youth counselor. If the youth identifies an appropriate career path supported by local labor market information for a training program with a certified training provider and demonstrates the ability to complete the program, the youth would be eligible to utilize an Individual Training Account (ITA). The youth, post-secondary institution and the youth counselor will sign an ITA identifying all resources provided to the youth for their training plans. Payments would be made directly to the post-secondary institution by a voucher. The ITA would cover one school year and would be reviewed on a semester/quarter basis. The ITA would include tuition, books, fees and supplies. Additional details can be found in the WIOA Region #5 Provision of Training Policy attached. This policy has been approved by the South Central and Southwest Boards.

South Central will be using Minnesota's Waiver to allow for the use of ITA's for In-School Youth, ages 16 – 21.

11. Describe follow-up strategies (including provision of supportive services) for the WIOA Young Adult program and discuss any policy relating to extending beyond the statutory requirement of offering follow-up for at least 12 months after exit.

All youth receive 12-months of follow up services through contact from their youth counselor upon completion of the WIOA program to provide support and assist with any problem solving that may be needed. At the time of enrollment, staff explain the follow-up services and attain contact information for the youth and at least two others that may know how to reach the youth. Contact with youth occurs at 3, 6, 9, and 12 months post-exit and may happen in a variety of ways including, face-to-face, over the phone, letters, e-mail, texts or social media. The employment counselor gets information about schooling updates, current employment, and assess for any current needs. During follow up, assistance in problem solving, employment retention, career advancement, training opportunities and referrals are provided. Funds for supportive services for youth can be provided if it is tied to overcoming barriers to successful employment and/or post-secondary education and training.

12. Describe the Youth Incentive Policy and attach a copy of the most recent version approved by your LWIB/Youth Committee. Refer to 2 CFR 200.438 and [Chapter 18](#) “WIOA Youth Cost Matrix” for additional background.

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

13. Discuss your policy and practices relating to providing supportive services to participants. (Attach a copy of your WDA’s Supportive Service Policy for Youth)

Support Services are provided to assist youth in removing barriers that hinder their ability to achieve their employment and training goals. Common support services to youth include interview attire, work clothing, safety equipment and tools for work, transportation expenses and driver’s training. Support services will be provided based on the youth’s needs and referrals to other resources will be made when appropriate. Youth counselors will make an effort to utilize existing community resources and will coordinate the provision of support services with other programs the participant is enrolled in. Youth also have access to the youth directories which provides contacts of available resources in the county and serves as a self-referral guide to meet the youth’s needs. These directories are available in print and online. The WIOA Region #5 Youth Support Services Policy has been approved by the South Central and Southwest WorkForce Boards.

14. If applicable, describe how stipends will be used for participants and attach a copy of your WDA’s Stipend Policy.

Youth that participate in the “Get Started” virtual program will complete 5 hours per week of work readiness coursework. The program covers the following topics: basic budgeting, communication, health and wellness and community exploration. Youth will receive a \$50 stipend each week for 4 weeks after successfully completing the lessons.

15. Describe how co-enrollments will be facilitated for youth, including a summary of all funds that are “braided or blended” with participants beyond WIOA Youth Formula Grant funds and MYP funds.

For all funding sources, youth complete one application and the youth counselor determines the appropriate enrollment. Co-enrollments are utilized as needed due to funding, when appropriate. Youth could be co-enrolled in the MN Youth Program, WIOA Youth Program or other specialized youth grants targeting services to youth in foster care, BIPOC youth, youth with disabilities, teen parents on MFIP or youth from MFIP households. Youth not in high school may also be co-enrolled in Adult Career Pathway programming.

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

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

- Dropouts and potential dropouts

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

Strategies to help youth meet that goal include:

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

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

In addition, the Adult Area Learning Cooperative and Southwest Adult Basic Education offer adult diploma programming. The Adult Diploma program gives individuals another option to complete their high school equivalency.

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

MVAC has built a strong partnership with local Area Learning Centers, charter

schools and public school systems, who assist with identifying youth that are at risk of dropping out. For potential high school dropouts, strong services will be individualized to address their specific needs. As significant barriers are identified, a service strategy is developed to overcome the barrier. Depending on the needs of the youth, the strategy may be more frequent contact for intensive one-on-one services. Often the strategy includes a referral or coordinating other community resources such as Rehabilitation Services, community education (ABE/ESL/GED), Human Services, corrections, Lutheran Social Services, The REACH Drop-In Center, individual/family counseling, CTICs or special school district programs such as individualized tutoring. In some cases, it involves working with multidisciplinary teams, or Integrated Resource Teams, to assist youth to meet his or her goals. It has become a regular practice with several key staff in local school districts to provide information on our youth program to students at risk of dropping out of high school.

- Youth with language and/or cultural barriers to employment
In addition to the work readiness, basic skills (including high school diploma/GED) and occupational skills training that is assessed and addressed, staff will identify barriers that need to be addressed due to language barriers. Modified career interest assessments with pictures of people working introduce careers that a youth might be interested in exploring further. We will provide interpreters, as needed, for one on one meetings and workshops. A Somali interpreter is present one day a week in MVAC's Nicollet County office to provide interpreter services to Somali youth and families. The interpreter is also connecting with local employers to place job seekers from the Somali community.

We also coordinate services with local ESL programs and Onramp career pathways program to ensure the youth has the English skills they will need to succeed in education and employment. The youth may also be referred to community programs such as Minnesota Council of Churches, Mankato YWCA, Life Work Planning Center, Motivation Education & Training, Migrant Farmworker Program, COPAL, Unidos, etc. The MVAC's Work experience flyer has been translated into the Somali language targeting outreach to this community.



Partnerships have been developed with agencies serving BIPOC, immigrant and refugee youth including MN Council of Churches Refugee Services, YWCA, and Hikmah. Relationship building and meeting the youth where they're at underpins this partnership, and youth staff have presented on career information and work readiness skills in group sessions to youth at these agencies. In addition, youth and their family members received information about the youth employment and training services including the Get Started virtual work readiness course, paid work experiences, career counseling and assistance, and academic credit recovery.

South Central has provided programming specifically for youth from communities of color through a MN Youth at Work Competitive Grant. Language and cultural barriers can provide special challenges to youth as they adapt to life in the United States. South Central's Youth at Work grant supports youth and their families by engaging them in group activities and workshops to assist them make plans for their future and outline the steps to achieve success, all while being mindful of their cultural backgrounds. Each summer an annual Youth at Work event is held for the youth and their families and the 2024 event focused on expanding youth professional networks. This was based on input from community agencies that noted that many BIPOC youth had limited professional networks. The networking event focused on representation and connecting youth with adults who look like them or have shared life experiences. Youth met with mentors who currently or previously had experience in occupations youth expressed interest in, including the trades, military, healthcare, and entrepreneurship. Mentors shared insights about their upbringings, training/education, and career trajectories, as well as the skills that will help youth successfully navigate the working world. Youth and mentors shared a meal, continued the discussion, and played career trivia.

It was equally important to provide cultural awareness to worksite supervisors. In 2024, a virtual training session to worksite supervisors on "Cultivating a Workplace Culture that Fosters: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" led by Toby Spanier from the University of Minnesota Extension Office. All worksite supervisors and youth staff were invited to attend to learn the meaning of diversity, equity, and inclusion; identified their own cultural beliefs, values, and assumptions; recognized how one responds to cultural differences; and identified strategies for cultural agility and inclusive leadership. The next cultural awareness and sensitivity training will focus on generational differences.

Youth are placed at quality worksites that fit their interest and could accommodate their cultural beliefs. For example, there are many cultures that prohibit people from touching pork. In that case, we avoid a worksite that involves contact with pork, work with the employer to assign duties that don't involve contact with pork or develop other worksite accommodations. Another example would be religious faiths that prohibit people from bathing another person. In the healthcare field, that could be a difficult job task to avoid as a nurse assistant. Youth counselors provide thorough career exploration and guidance services, so youth are fully prepared for job duties and expectations. In some cases, youth counselors have worked with youth and elders in their community for guidance on acceptable job opportunities and/or received permission to perform certain job-related tasks. In addition, youth with language barriers experienced significant growth in their development when they were able to practice the English language on a regular basis in the context of employment. This project was identified as a best practice by the Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards in 2016.

Transportation barriers in Greater Minnesota significantly impact all low-income youth in our service area, particularly given the rising costs of housing, food, transportation, childcare, and other daily living expenses. This is especially true for low-income youth with language and/or cultural barriers and low-income disabled youth. Having a driver's license is vital in communities where limited to no public transportation exists. MVAC youth counselors work with local school districts and private driver's education training providers that provide driver's education and has dedicated funding to assist low-income and at-risk youth from communities of color and disabled youth with driver's education through the Youth at Work Competitive Grant and Youth Support Services Grant.

- *Youth in foster care and aging out of foster care
MVAC has been providing specialized services to youth in foster care for the past 16 years through the Youth Intervention Program which was funded by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Justice Programs. This program serves foster care youth between ages 14-24 with an emphasis on youth transitioning out of foster care. The purpose of the program is to provide career and life skills curriculum to explore, identify and attain positive educational, career and life goals.*

An annual event is held each year for youth in foster care to hear motivational speakers, connect youth to others in foster care and promote the development of independent living skills. The 2024 event began with an escape room challenge allowing youth to work on communication skills, problem solving, leadership, teambuilding and social skills in a small group. Through this experience, youth had an opportunity to meet youth with similar lived foster care experiences and gain new friendships. Youth shared a meal together and chose an activity of their choice, which was working on a puzzle. While the youth worked together, youth opened up about their summer experiences and feelings about the upcoming school year. The puzzle provided a distraction of not having to look at one another and possibly feeling uncomfortable, instead the youth were very open and honest and willing to share. The YIP event provided a space for youth to connect with other youth with the similar out of home experiences and work on durable skills needed in life and employment.

Minnesota State University – Mankato's Community Engagement and the Social Work Department along with Lutheran Social Services hosts an annual Foster Youth Mentor Day. This event connects foster care youth with a college mentor allowing the youth to have a positive role model and experience the college campus setting. We will refer youth in foster care to this event when applicable and continue to work in collaboration with the event hosts.

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

professionals and schools. MVAC is connected with Blue Earth, Le Sueur, Nicollet, and Waseca County Human Services Children's Services team and the Families First Collaborative in Brown, Sibley, and Watonwan Counties to promote our programming for youth in foster care. We continue to reach out to these teams in other counties in our area.

- Homeless youth or runaways

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

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

MVAC provides liaison services through the Homework Starts with Home program with Mankato Public Schools. Homework Starts with Home focuses on addressing homelessness and housing instability for school age students and their family. MVAC staff connects with school social workers, counselors, shelters, human services, CareerForce programs and other community services to provide wrap around services to the youth and their family.

In addition, Project Community Connect is an annual free event that is organized by the Blue Earth County Homeless Response Team each year for people experiencing poverty. The goal of the event is to reduce poverty and homelessness in South Central Minnesota by providing a way for people in need to access services. The event is a "one-stop shop" approach where over 85 organizations will provide needed services in one location to engage people who need the services but don't normally participate or who don't know the services exist. Some of the services offered include legal services, medical/dental services, housing resources, veteran services, financial literacy, free HIV testing, free lunch, haircuts, photographer and ID & birth certificate vouchers. Transportation, interpreters and childcare is available for attendees. Over 500 guests typically attend the event.

MVAC coordinates services with Lutheran Social Services homeless youth programs including the Street Outreach Program, which provides advocacy and

community connection and the Reach Drop-In Center, which is a gathering place for homeless youth. The REACH Drop-In Center program staff and MVAC collaborate often regarding youth participants and referrals. MVAC also provides employment readiness workshops at the REACH as needed.

- *Youth offenders and at-risk of involvement with the juvenile justice system MVAC connects with local probation workers, social workers, and school liaisons for referrals and program coordination with youth involved in the juvenile justice system. Frank Rutt, Blue Earth County Probation Officer, is a member of the South Central WorkForce Youth Council and provides insights and advocates for the needs of youth offenders and at-risk students.*

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

Referrals will be made to the New Leaf Online, which is a tailored job search workshop for job seekers with a criminal record. This workshop combines DEED's Creative Job Search course with special strategies for addressing and overcoming barriers to employment, including how, when and why to disclose your record, addressing concerns from employers, answering tough interview questions, WOTC, Federal Bonding and 'Ban the Box.'

Finally, South Central encourages employers, MVAC staff and CareerForce partners to attend training related to second chance hiring as offered including but not limited to "We are all Criminals" through Youth Intervention Program Association, and the March 5, 2025 Strategies for Developing a Fair Chance Workforce.

- *Youth with disabilities*
In addition to the work readiness, basic skills (including high school diploma/GED) and occupational skills training that is assessed and addressed, staff will identify barriers that need to be addressed due to disabilities. Staff work closely with special education at high schools in the area. Staff are members of local CTICs. As a core CareerForce partner, MVAC has a close working relationship with Rehabilitation Services and MRCI and coordinates with these agencies as

appropriate.

South Central was an implementation site for the Minnesota Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) to serve youth with disabilities. During the DEI initiative, strong partnerships were developed with the following organizations: local school districts, CTICs, MRCI WorkSource, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, State Services for the Blind, State Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, Social Security Administration, LifeWorks, SMILES, The ARC, Goodwill Easter Seals and PACER. Due to staffing changes, these partnerships are being renewed through the Office of Disabilities Employment Transition Model (ETM) Grant. Several of these partners are also part of the Youth Council to support services to people with disabilities under Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

South Central is one of five workforce services areas in the ETM grant. The ETM grant will allow us to retrain staff and enhance services in key strategic approaches including Guideposts to Success, Integrated Resources Teams, and Partnerships & Collaborations. These strategies were proven to be very successful during the DEI project. In addition, one of the goals in the ETM grant is for South Central to become an Employment Network (EN). We currently have three staff attending training to become a Community Work Incentives Coordinator to help establish an EN in our region. In addition, through the ETM grant, we plan to incorporate Virtual Reality (VR) equipment into youth services. Youth with disabilities will use VR to explore a variety of in-demand occupations, allowing them to discover careers of interest, learn about the skills needed on the job, and experience different work environments in an engaging and enjoyable way.

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

South Central College is leading an initiative in partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation Services to expand the Uniquely Abled Academy. Previously, Uniquely Abled Academy provided specialized training to young people with Autism to become Computer Numerical Control machinists. Last year, MVAC supported a youth and Uniquely Abled graduate, in a work experience to be a mentor and coach to new Uniquely Abled Academy students. This summer, the Uniquely Abled Academy is partnering with Taylor Corporation to provide training for print press operators. The eight week academy will teach a cohort of individuals with unique abilities on entry level print press operator skills and work readiness skills while offering job placement assistance and wrap around services. Following the completion of the training, graduates can pursue a Digital Production Printing Blueprint credential through Skills USA or continue to expand

their skills through the Graphic Communications programs at South Central College. Graduates may also participate in a two-week job tryout a Taylor Cooperation. Last school year, the Uniquely Abled Academy was expanded to include career exploration events for high students with disabilities. The Uniquely Abled career exploration events are held at South Central College with small student groups sizes a few times a year allowing students from various school districts to explore career opportunities. The Uniquely Abled Career Exploration events were designed for students with disabilities who may find regional career exploration events overwhelming due to loud noises, large crowds, and excessive stimulation. These events provide students a chance to explore careers in a setting that is more conducive to their needs.

As mentioned earlier, we are utilizing the Youth Support Services grant to assist low-income youth with disabilities with funding for driver's education classes.

Lastly, South Central promotes WorkForce Wednesday and other trainings that focus on individuals with disabilities such as Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Belonging (DEIAB): More than Just an Acronym, Disability Inclusion Bite-Sized Learning modules, MN DEED's Employer Reasonable Accommodation Fund, and RETAIN to employers and CareerForce partners through social media, newsletters and emails.

- **Teen parents**

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

MVAC provides specialized services to teen parents who are also receiving Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) benefits through the Teen Parent Project that was funded by the Department of Human Services. The Teen Parent Project provides work experiences to teen parents receiving MFIP benefits where they can work an average of 29 hours per week for 12 weeks while meeting their MFIP work participation requirements.

- **Youth of color and other under-served, under-represented youth populations**
South Central provides programming specifically for BIPOC youth through a MN Youth Workforce Development Competitive Grant. In addition to providing work readiness activities, work experiences, information on in-demand occupations and career pathways for youth, this program engages youth and their families, provides cultural awareness to the community, positive role models and leadership opportunities to inspire youth and specialized services for those with

disabilities. Because we recognize the strong family connection in communities of color, parents are invited to participate in the initial meetings for program enrollment as well as the group activities. To increase cultural awareness in the community, worksite supervisors participate in cultural awareness training. The program provides positive role models from communities of color that have overcome adversity to demonstrate that it is possible to achieve their dreams. In addition, the YWCA Mankato provides leadership opportunities, such as Handball to University, which is leadership development through handball along with academic support, STEM and college prep activities for girls grades 6-12 or the Annual Women's Leadership Conference. Youth with disabilities not ready for competitive employment participate in specialized programming to build their employability skills.

South Central will also continue to promote upcoming WorkForce Wednesdays and similar opportunities regarding the BIPOC community including the WorkForce Wednesday.

MVAC seeks diverse representation of the youth that they serve and seeks out diverse representation in staff as they hire. MVAC's staff current includes individuals from the Black and Latino communities.

South Central WorkForce Council in partnership with Southwest Private Industry Council hosted professional development trainings for staff focusing on diversity and cultural competency in spring 2021 and in Fall 2022. Staff were able to take a confidential INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT INVENTORY®. The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) assesses intercultural competence—the capability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities. Training was provided through the Rochester Diversity Council, which included a series of five Equity Logic trainings designed specifically for our Region 5. The IDI and Equity Logic trainings help staff identify their own cultural bias and learn tools and tips to enhance our culturally responsive services. Staff also attend trainings through the Minnesota Social Service Association, Youth Intervention Program Association, CareerForce Partners Training Day and agency trainings to continue to enhance their knowledge, understanding and skills in serving at-risk youth. In Spring 2025, youth staff will participate in a discussion facilitated by PACER on supporting culturally diverse rural youth and families. Lastly, our regional goal is to provide training and assistance to help businesses retain and attract a diverse workforce they need now and into the future.

17. Describe how the Work Readiness Indicator will be implemented for youth participants and whether this is used for WIOA participants, MYP participants, or both. If the WDA

uses a standardized form for measuring and documenting work readiness skills, please attach a copy.

- Approach to assuring work readiness skill attainment for youth participants

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

- *Reviewing and providing feedback to the youth on their program application and its thoroughness and neatness.*
 - *Get Started course to prepare youth for the world of work focusing on communication skills, budgeting, health and wellness, and community exploration.*
 - *Workshops or individual meetings will be conducted, focusing on work readiness skills, the initial phone call to employers, greeting the employer including a firm handshake and good eye contact, interviewing skills and mock interviews, resume-writing, cover letter, and thank-you letters.*
 - *Completing a pre-assessment and post-assessment of each youth's work readiness skills and working on areas that need improvement.*
 - *Completing a pre-assessment and post-assessment of each youth's employability competencies and working on areas that need improvement.*
 - *Assessing work readiness skills on each monitoring visit to worksites, discussing the feedback with supervisor and youth, and recording it on the monitoring tool.*
 - *Supervisors will evaluate youth's work readiness skills on their timesheet bi-weekly. Staff will use this information to provide guidance to youth.*
 - *Staff will provide recognition for positive work readiness development.*
- Approach to assuring that the worksite supervisor evaluates work readiness skills of youth participants, including a process for documenting the employer's evaluation of the youth participant's work readiness skills.

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

18. If the WDA is planning to provide Outreach to Schools activities as a component of MYP in SFY 2026, please provide an overview and anticipated goals/objectives.

South Central plans to utilize a portion of our MYP allocation for Outreach to Schools activities. In South Central, the Partners In Career Exploration (PICE) program places interns in local rural school districts to provide one-on-one career exploration and career counseling assistance to high school students. The PICE program has been recognized as a best practice by the Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards.

The interns are first year graduate students in the Student Counseling Program at Minnesota State University-Mankato. Interns receive training from CareerForce staff, MVAC, Minnesota State University-Mankato, South Central College, and our local labor market analyst who provides them with information on our labor market including high growth/demand occupations in the region. The training may include tours with local businesses so that interns have hands on exposure to demand occupations.

Interns are placed at local school districts to provide career exploration and career counseling assistance through one-on-one advising and classroom presentations. The intern meets with high school juniors and seniors enabling them to reach students that are not proactive about their plans after high school and would otherwise go unnoticed and fall through the cracks. The interns also provide career exploration activities for younger grade levels so that they can begin to consider their plans after high school. During the 2023-2024 school year, interns provided lessons and activities on career interests, values, college and financial aid scavenger hunt, how to prepare for college placement tests and assisted with career exploration field trips.

Interns are expected to work one school day per week and receive \$100 stipend per day for a maximum of \$400 a month to apply toward their expenses. We would assist school districts with the costs of supplies for career exploration, such as, career assessments, career resources for high school career centers and transportation for students including busing costs for field trips, college visits and CareerForce tours.

Skills for Success in Employment, Education & Life services are included in our Outreach to Schools model. MVAC Staff and the Regional Career Coordinator developed an interactive curriculum that covers the following topics.

Job search techniques

- *Skills/Strengths, First Impressions, and Networking*
- *Applications/Resumes*

Interviewing

- *Practice/Mock Interviews*

- *Tips, Common Questions, Asking Questions, and Thank You Letters*

Workplace Skills (Soft Skills)

- *Communication, Time Management, Problem Solving, Critical Thinking & Organization Skills*
- *Attendance, Different Personalities at Work, Taking Feedback, & Motivation/Attitude.*

Career Exploration

- *Career Assessments & Results*
- *Labor Market Information/ Post-Secondary Options*
- *Jeopardy Game to explore specific career fields*

Financial Literacy

- *Life Happens Game*

To respond to the changing needs of school districts during the pandemic, the [Skills for Success video series](#) was added to the Skills for Success menu of services. The three-part video series features four local employers providing advice in employability skills, interviewing and maintaining employment. MVAC staff and South Central's Regional Career Coordinator developed lesson plans and materials to accompany the videos. These videos are shared with local schools and with CareerForce partners.

As mentioned earlier, part of our OTS strategy is the creation of the Career Passport Videos series. Career Passport videos were modeled after PBS' Road Trip Nation where students interview members of their communities with fulfilling careers, learn about their work and industry and video tape it to be shared with peers. This is a student-center approach that expands the scope of career possibilities and understanding of a career pathway. Videos and reels are available in the Agriculture, Healthcare and Manufacturing industries. The Career Passport videos are shared with students, educators, CareerForce partners and others through social media stories and in newsletters.



Outreach for schools also supports area career exploration events providing students with exposure to a variety careers.

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

- Attach the Shared Vision for Youth Blueprint to identify local interagency partnerships which serve the neediest youth and address the “opportunity gap”, “achievement gap”, and disparities in the workforce. (See Attachment 3)
- Private sector internships, on-the-job training, mentoring, job shadowing, pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship training.

In 2024, MVAC hosted a networking event for BIPOC youth and youth in foster care where youth were connected to career professionals in their field of interest. Feedback from community partners indicated that many of our immigrant and refugee community members have limited networks with career professionals and this event will build bridges to connect the youth to professional and possible lead to further mentoring opportunities. Research has also identified the importance of developing positive relationships with adults for youth in foster care and the networking working event will aid foster care youth in developing another opportunity to engage with a positive adult. Additional information on this event was described in question 16 under Youth with language and/or cultural barriers to employment. We also invited the professionals that attended the networking event to the cultural awareness training provided to worksite supervisors.

Our worksites are a fundamental part of our program's success and more importantly, in helping youth develop crucial work readiness skills and training for their future careers. Staff continuously see that youth participants gain skills, but also build self-confidence through interactions and feedback from the worksite. We recruit worksites that target the interest areas of youth that will provide a quality work experience. We maintain open communication with the the worksites by requesting feedback on the program and the working relationship between MVAC and the worksite. Some examples of what MVAC has implemented based on this feedback include lengthening the duration of the work experience, creating a youth checklist at one worksite, and offering more frequent check-ins as needed.

In the past year, we utilized 69 worksites, 43 were for-profit and 26 were non-profit businesses. We continue to increase the number of for-profit worksites as they have a greater tendency to result in an unsubsidized job. While recruiting worksites we keep in mind finding those in demand based on local and regional labor markets. As we connect with employers at community events and job fairs, we have conversations regarding becoming a youth worksite and the possibility of directly hiring the youth based on their performance in the work experience.

In summer 2024, MVAC piloted a work experience and a Get Started Course cohort group. During this pilot, a group of eligible youth from various employment programs visited the MVAC Mankato office twice a week for four weeks. In the mornings, the youth participated in the Get Started course in person, and in the afternoons, they worked at the MVAC Again Thrift Store. Many of the participants were 14 and 15 years old. This pilot consisted of two cohort groups, with a total of 20 youth participating in July and August. This model allowed staff to provide additional one-on-one assistance with the Get Started, which was beneficial as the majority of the youth either had a disability or were English Learners. Staff were able to connect more frequently with the youth, which provided additional insight when assessing the youth's strengths and skills,

discussing work readiness skills, and considering placements for their next work experience or unsubsidized employment. A similar model is currently being offered with Insights, a transition school for youth with disabilities over 18 year of age. MVAC is working with students to provide the Get Started Course as a group and working on additional work readiness skills. MVAC is exploring offering similar cohort groups during 2025.

The Martin County Internship Project is a partnership with Martin County Commissioners, Minnesota Valley Action Council and the South Central WorkForce Council. The goal of this project is to expose college age youth to potential career opportunities in Martin County to attract them back to the area after graduation. Last summer, 14 youth were recruited, assessed and matched with for-profit and non-profit paid internships. The project was recognized by the Association of Minnesota Counties for the 2013 County Achievement Award. Based on this model, Waseca County, Nobles, Swift and Murray County have implemented similar internship programs.



The Waseca County Internship program was launched in 2022 in partnership with Waseca County Commissioners, Minnesota Valley Action Council and the South Central WorkForce Council. Eight youth interns were placed last summer, learning skills needed for agriculture, business, law enforcement, performing arts, and human services. Two interns from the Martin County and Waseca County Internship program were hired full-time at their site.

An area of focus is to provide information on apprenticeship opportunities specifically for women. Several partners including Adult Basic Education, Department of Employment & Economic Development, Life Work Planning Center, MRCI WorkSource, Minnesota Valley Action Council, South Central College, and South Central WorkForce Council joined efforts to bring awareness to non-traditional careers for women. The group developed several resources including a flyer on non-traditional careers, an assessment to determine if someone is interested in a non-traditional career and steps to take to enter a non-traditional career. The information was recently updated and can be accessed on a non-traditional careers page on the South Central WorkForce Council website <http://www.workforcecouncil.org/nontradcareers/>. Non-traditional careers are also highlighted in the Know Before You Go Infographics and Career Corner Newsletters. Youth over the age of 18 that interested in a non-traditional career, are also referred to the Women Economic Security Act program to receive additional support navigating their career goal.

As mentioned earlier, South Central hosts a Construct Tomorrow event annually to inform high school students and job seekers about the apprenticeship system

of paid-on-the-job training that leads to careers with great pay and benefits.

The South Central Construction Trades Bootcamp provides opportunities for youth to gain exposure to careers in the construction trades and learn about union apprenticeship training opportunities through hands-on activities. This experience offers youth an interest in construction, the opportunity to explore several trades in depth to decide if it is for them which trade is the best fit and outline the steps they need to take to enter the career. The planning committee continues to create, design and implement ways to provide exposure to the union apprenticeship construction trades. The planning team continues to share the opportunity to expand the Boot Camp session to additional school districts in the area.

Several local labor representatives participate in panel discussions for school counselors and workforce development staff on a regular basis to share how to connect students and participants to career opportunities in the trades such as Electrician, Carpenters, Plumbers & Pipefitters, Operating Engineers, Millwrights, Laborers, Painters, Elevator Constructors, Cement Masons, Mechanical (heating & cooling) and Bricklayers. By gaining a better understanding of how to access opportunities in skilled trade occupations, we will be better equipped to match appropriate youth with these viable careers.

- Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) project, if appropriate.

We are no longer a limited use vendor for Pre-ETS, however we partner closely with Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Pre-ETS providers to coordinate services and make cross referrals when appropriate.

- Strategies implemented during the Disability Employment Initiative including: Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs); expanded collaboration with local partners, including Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS); and activities related to the “Guideposts for Success” such as employability skills/work experience, career preparation, leadership development, family engagement, and connecting activities.

South Central was selected as an implementation site for the Employment Transition Model (ETM) Demonstration Grant Project. The ETM grant offers our region an opportunity to improve services for youth with disabilities and to train new staff since we implement the MN DEI project in 2013. Several key strategic approaches will be utilized in the ETM grant including the following:

- **IRT meetings** are instrumental in coordinating services and resources with multiple agencies for youth with disabilities. The IRTs have resulted in increased communication and coordination between agencies. This strategy has been helpful for all youth participants.

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

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

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

MVAC provides MFIP and SNAP Employment Services and performs both roles as youth counselor and employment counselor in five of the nine counties in South Central Minnesota. In the four remaining counties, MVAC staff work closely with the employment counselors to coordinate services. We were fortunate enough to receive a Support Services Grant that is focused on serving SNAP participants. This initiative will provide more opportunities to partner with our SNAP providers and connect to eligible youth.

20. Describe the WDA's approach to making each of the 14 required youth Program Elements available to participants in WIOA [P.L 113-128, Sec 129(c)(2) and individually defined and discussed in the final rules at 20 CFR 681.460] by completing the WIOA Youth Program Elements Checklist below. Also respond to the following for each of the 14 required elements:

- a. If the element is provided by another agency (or agencies) describe how the WDA ensures participants are receiving appropriate service levels.

A few of the ways we ensure services that youth are receiving appropriate services levels are through MOU's, communication with youth and partner agencies, and attending meetings with partners and youth.

- b. Summarize whether or not WIOA youth funds are used, and/or other funding sources are braided or blended to offset some (or all) of the cost of delivering that particular service.

As mentioned in question 1, South Central blends and braids WIOA funding with other state funded employment and training programs such as MN Youth Program, Youth Intervention Program, Youth at Work Grant, TANF Youth Innovations Project, Youth Support Services Program and RC3 funding. Youth not in high school may also be co-enrolled in Adult Career Pathway programming. We have a set of checks and balances in place to monitor the blending of funds through our accounting system, monitoring of services and WF1.

- c. Summarize how the required program element is delivered to participants and any “best practices” associated with that element.

- i. Program Element 1: Tutoring, study skills training, instruction and dropout prevention services

Along with connecting youth to area secondary schools, Adult Basic Education Services and post-secondary schools, our staff provide encouragement and guidance which has been proven an effective motivator to youth attending and graduating from high school or obtaining their GED. Staff attend and join school led youth meetings, such as Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings, truancy reviews, and behavioral or progress concerns when helpful to youth we serve.

Youth may be referred to other resources in the community to provide tutoring, counseling, and support including Alternative Schools, Day Treatment programs, GED or High School Equivalency Test (HiSET) programs, ABE programs, ESL programs, Hikmah, SMILES, academic support centers, Adult Career Pathways programs, Rehabilitation Services, and MRCL.

An effective strategy to dropout prevention is academic credit. At the end of every summer and periodically throughout the school year, we provide a report to secondary school officials of the number of hours each youth worked and workshops they attended in our program with the request that academic credit be granted to the youth. For 2024, there were 32 youth that attained 23.61 credits. Academic credit allows youth to catch up credits where they are behind and for some youth has helped them graduate from high school.

- ii. Program Element 2: Alternative secondary school services or dropout recovery services

Youth who are unable to find success in the traditional high school setting are generally served by an alternative secondary school. MVAC has developed strong relationships with Alternative Schools in the nine counties and make/receive referrals and coordinate services with them. Staff arrange and accompany youth on school tours to help youth connect to the new setting.

One other area of concentration are those clients attending and working on GED, the High School Equivalency Test (HiSET), Credit Completion and the Adult Diploma Program through Adult Basic Education. The ABE staff are instrumental in identifying youth for our services and partnering with MVAC to provide additional educational resources for not only high school completion students but those needing college preparedness work.

Online school is another alternative secondary school option. MVAC has coordinated with several of the online school providers to offer academic credit for youth who have completed our work experience component. Additionally, encouragement is provided to youth utilizing this resource and guidance when troubleshooting issues.

For youth that drop out of high school, we will work with schools to inform them about the opportunities WIOA can offer these youth in re-engaging and obtaining their diploma, GED or HiSET.

We also promote career events, career corner newsletters and other program services to homeschool networks.

iii. Program Element 3: Paid and unpaid work experience

As described in question 8, MVAC provides employment opportunities year round to all youth with a focus on work readiness skills, academic and occupational learning.

iv. Program Element 4: Occupational skill training

As described in question 6, MVAC assists youth in attending occupational skill training in high growth/high demand occupations. Staff administer career assessments and utilize an occupation research packet to guide youth in making informed choices about their career. We utilize Individual Training Accounts with local training providers such as South Central College, Minnesota State University-Mankato, Ridgewater College, Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Riverland Community College and Rasmussen University.

v. Program Element 5: Education offered concurrently with workforce preparation and training for a specific occupation

As described in Question 9, MVAC encourages youth to explore the opportunities offered by the Adult Career Pathways programming.

vi. Program Element 6: Leadership development opportunities

We empower youth to become informed, active, and engaged citizens. Leadership development is an on-going process and starts by assisting youth to gain self-confidence. Leadership development can be fostered during workshops where youth with more experience welcome new attendees and answers questions from their peers. Many workshop activities are created to allow participants to practice leadership skills through their communication and action. Feedback and encouragement for participation is given by staff who promote a safe environment to practice these skills.

We also encourage leadership opportunities for youth at their work experiences by sharing this goal with worksite supervisors during orientation. We hear examples from worksite supervisors when youth have displayed leadership skills, either in taking on appropriate tasks without being asked or by youth providing directions to other staff. When possible, MVAC provides leadership opportunity that allowed an experienced worksite participant to help train new youth at the same worksite.

Youth are invited to participate on the South Central Youth Council in which they represent the youth voice of our program participants. They have the opportunity to present themselves, provide feedback, and respond to questions from Youth Council members. They are serving as youth leaders in their community in this capacity.

We will also connect youth participants to leadership opportunities in the community including the YMCA Teen Leadership Camp, YWCA Handball to University program, Maverick Social Justice Camp, and Big Brother/Big Sister mentoring programs.

MVAC is in the process of implementing a strategy to invite current and past youth participants to new applicant meetings and other events to share their experiences and knowledge gained from the youth program. This will provide an opportunity for leaderships skills by sharing their experiences. MVAC understands that youth may not always be available to help during new applicant meetings, especially with transportation

barriers in rural communities and is looking at creating a video for when youth are not available.

As the youth counselor gets to know the youth, we can identify their skills and talents to encourage other leadership development opportunities. MVAC believes that leadership is not a position, but a way of life and opportunities present themselves on a daily basis that call youth to be leaders. Our goal is to help youth see that they can be a leader at school, in their work experience and at home by being a good role model and contributing in a positive way.

vii. Program Element 7: Supportive services

MVAC provides support to youth in a variety of ways including: getting to know the youth; identifying and encouraging youth strengths and talents; challenging youth, celebrating youth achievements; and maintaining rapport with youth.

Financial support is another way we provide support services to youth. Staff work with youth to assist them in meeting their basic needs by connecting them to resources and services in the community. MVAC provides financial support to remove other barriers that hinder the ability for youth to achieve their employment and training goals. As funding allows, we provide financial support for things including an interview outfit, work clothing, safety equipment, tools for work, transportation costs, tuition, books, fees, and driver's training. We support their individual development of effective problem-solving skills to support themselves financially.

As stated above, we utilize other resources available in our communities as needed. A helpful tool in this process is the Youth Directory, designed and produced by the South Central WorkForce Council. It is available for all nine counties we serve as a pocket-sized directory (available online as well) to provide contacts for resources and providers available in their county and serves as a self-referral guide to meet the youth's needs.

viii. Program Element 8: Adult mentoring

MVAC youth counselors seek employers who commit to mentoring relationships with youth participants. During the work experience/internship orientation conducted by MVAC staff for worksite supervisors and youth, mentoring is one of the topics emphasized. Staff

share what the research shows us about the positive impact a mentoring relationship can make in a youth's life. MVAC provides the supervisors with information on areas we encourage them to mentor on. When staff visit a worksite to review progress, they review what has occurred and encourage on-going mentoring. We have witnessed how much a youth can learn from a worksite supervisor. They learn how to be a good employee, a good person, and a good citizen. A quality supervisor challenges them to grow, helps build the youth's self-esteem, and exposes them to a wealth of possibilities. All in all, they provide another building block to the youth's success in the world of work.

Our MVAC employment counselors are strong mentors to youth participants. In partnering with our youth, we become their teachers, advocates, guidance counselors, financial advisors, and provide a positive voice. MVAC also links youth to structured mentoring programs which exist in our service area such as the Big Brother/Big Sister program.

As mentioned previously, the networking event for BIPOC and youth in foster care is another opportunity for youth to connect to positive caring adults which could develop into a mentoring relationship.

Youth are also encouraged to connect with positive adults in their life such as a school counselor, teacher, advisor or coach at their school, neighbor, church or extracurricular activities.

ix. Program Element 9: Follow-up services

As described in question 11, follow up services are provided to youth for a 12 month period.

x. Program Element 10: Comprehensive guidance and counseling

As described in questions 6 & 7, MVAC staff provide guidance and referrals on a variety of areas of employment and education. They may face other issues in which we are not qualified to handle, wherein we provide referrals to area partners. Some of these include services for chemical dependency, mental health, counseling, health and dental needs, housing partners, and safety concerns.

Minnesota Valley Action Council is a non-profit agency that focuses on families and the resources and skills needed to succeed. MVAC's whole-family mission is to empower families to take an active role in

determining their own vision for success with support from MVAC staff. With whole-family services, families move from poverty to self-sufficiency using the skills and resources needed to build confidence and ensure success. Serving participants has been changed from program-specific, not exclusively a Head Start client, or Energy Assistance client, etc. but as an agency participant who receives a holistic approach to all our programs and services. Staff have been provided with intensive training to prepare for the transition of whole family services. Staff have participated in mindset training, received tool kit resources and attended a poverty simulation. Through the poverty simulation, staff have a better understanding of the process and steps that clients go through at access services and how whole family approach will reduce and eliminate the barriers for clients. The goal of whole family is to have a coaching relationship with the family to empower them to make decisions verses a case management approach. MVAC next step in the whole family approach is to design and implement an agency-wide assessment tool for all programs to reduce the burden of paperwork for the families and aide in person center services.

xi. Program Element 11: Financial literacy education

Financial literacy services are individualized for each youth based on their current situation and what they already know. Through online and written materials, youth receive training on how to handle their money. Youth who participate in a work experience open a savings or checking account for the direct deposit of their paycheck. This often introduces youth to a financial institution, encourages one to save money, and exposes them to online banking.

Understanding the importance of money and how to manage it is an important aspect of financial literacy. We explore resources with the youth about relative costs for them to realize how much it costs to live independently. This highlights the required hourly wage and annual wage it takes to afford to live in this area. Cost of living includes food, housing, health care, transportation, childcare, and clothing.

We use material from the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection's Your Money, Your Goals curriculum and Reality Check tools. Financial literacy instruction is provided through one-on-one meetings, group workshops and the Get Started course. We have had presentations and resources from organizations including Lutheran Social Services, University of Minnesota Extension, Credit Unions, and Banks. MVAC has partnered

with SouthPoint Financial Credit Union to provide financial literacy information during a work readiness workshop. The topics covered included opening a savings account, interest rates, loans, and debit card usage. SouthPoint Financial Credit Union and MVAC filmed a video to help educate low-income youth and adults about financial literacy. The video is in the editing stages.

Referrals to Lutheran Social Services Debt Management program are made when needed to help individuals who have already found themselves in difficult financial situations.

xii. Program Element 12: Entrepreneurial skills training

MVAC connects youth to entrepreneurial training opportunities through referrals to Small Business Development Center at Minnesota State University, Mankato as well as curriculum and services through Junior Achievement at local high schools. When possible, we will partner with local business owners in the youth's expressed interest area and create a list of questions to help facilitate a conversation between a youth and business owner to explore what it is like to start a business. The entrepreneur Know Before You Go infographic is also utilized with youth interested in self-employment.

xiii. Program Element 13: Services that provide labor market information

***As described in question 9,** MVAC utilizes a variety of tools to expose youth to labor market information on demand occupations in South Central Minnesota. MVAC staff work individually and in group settings to provide career counseling and share labor market information through employer panels, career interest assessments, occupational research, field trips to local businesses and tours at local colleges.*

xiv. Program Element 14: Postsecondary preparation and transition activities

Staff help youth prepare for postsecondary opportunities by assisting the youth in identifying a career path through interest assessments and occupational research. Staff assist youth with the post-secondary enrollment process including application, financial aid/scholarship applications, orientations, class scheduling and advising. Staff attend college events with youth to further explore training opportunities. Appropriate referrals are made to ABE's college prep courses, Adult Career Pathways and student support services. Staff work closely with

admissions, financial aid, academic advisors and TRIO programs at local colleges to ensure successful transition and success for youth in post-secondary training.

WIOA Youth Program Elements Checklist

Program Element	How Each Program Element is Offered							How program element is coded and entered in MIS
	In House	Partner Agreement			Provider Name(s)	Supporting Documentation	Notes	
		Contract	MOU	Other				
1. Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and dropout prevention			X		Minnesota Valley Action Council and local educational institutions	Service Provider Agreement; MOU; Referral Form; Individual Service Strategy		Basic Skills Training, Study Skills Training/Tutoring
2. Alternative secondary school services or dropout recovery services			X		Minnesota Valley Action Council, Alternative Learning Programs, Adult Basic Education, South Central Service Cooperative	Service Provider Agreement; MOU; Referral Form; Individual Service Strategy		Alternative Secondary School Services
3. Paid and unpaid work experiences	X	X	X		Minnesota Valley Action Council, local employers and organizations	Service Provider Agreement; MOU; Work Experience Agreement; Individual Service Strategy		Work Experience, Pre-Apprenticeship
4. Occupational skill training		X	X		Minnesota Valley Action Council, local employers, secondary and post-secondary educational institutions	Service Provider Agreement; MOU; Individual Training Account; Individual Service Strategy		Occupational Skills Training; Credential without Training
5. Education offered concurrently with workforce preparation for a specific occupation			X		Minnesota Valley Action Council, Adult Career Pathway Partnership	Service Provider Agreement; MOU; Individual Service Strategy		Workforce Preparation and Education
6. Leadership development opportunities	X		X		Minnesota Valley Action Council, Youth Committee, South Central WorkForce Council, local employers, secondary and post-secondary educational institutions	Service Provider Agreement; MOU; Individual Service Strategy		Community Involvement & Leadership Development

7. Supportive services	X		X	X	Minnesota Valley Action Council	Service Provider Agreement; MOU; Individual Service Strategy; Vendor Accounts		WF1 Support Services section & case notes
8. Adult mentoring	X	X	X		Minnesota Valley Action Council, Youth Committee, local employers, secondary and post-secondary educational institutions	Service Provider Agreement; MOU; Work Experience Agreement; Individual Service Strategy		Mentoring
9. Follow-up services	X		X		Minnesota Valley Action Council	Service Provider Agreement; MOU; Individual Service Strategy; Vendor Accounts		WF1 Follow up & case notes
10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling	X		X		Minnesota Valley Action Council, Partners, local services providers	Service Provider Agreement; MOU; Individual Service Strategy		Partnering, Career Counseling, Mental Health/Substance Abuse Counseling/Referral
11. Financial literacy education	X		X		Minnesota Valley Action Council, Lutheran Social Services, local financial institutions	Service Provider Agreement; MOU; Individual Service Strategy		Financial Literacy Education
12. Entrepreneurial skills training			X	X	Minnesota Valley Action Council, Small Business Development Center, Junior Achievement	Service Provider Agreement; MOU; Individual Service Strategy; Referral Form	Referrals to SBDC & Junior Achievement	Entrepreneurial Training
13. Services that provide labor market information	X		X		Minnesota Valley Action Council, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development	Service Provider Agreement; MOU; Individual Service Strategy		Career Counseling, Labor Market/In-Demand Employment Information
14. Post-secondary preparation and transition activities	X		X		Minnesota Valley Action Council and local educational institutions	Service Provider Agreement; MOU; Individual Service Strategy		Transition to Post-Secondary, School to Work Transition, Career Counseling, Labor Market/In Demand Employment Info

WIOA Youth Program Element Section 129 (c)(2)	Is the element further described in Final Rule? If so, application citations	Relates to or overlaps with other program element?	Applicable PIRL Data Element Number(s)
1. Tutoring, study skills training, instruction and dropout prevention	No	Program elements 2 and 4	1402
2. Alternative secondary school services or dropout recovery services	No	Program element 1	1403
3. Paid and unpaid work experiences	Yes, 681.600, 681.590, 681.480		
4. Occupational skills training	Yes, 681.540, 681.550	Program element 1	1300, 1302, 1303, 1306, 1307, 1308
5. Education offered concurrently with workforce preparation and training for a specific occupation	Yes, 681.630	Program elements 2, 3, and 4	1407
6. Leadership development opportunities	Yes, 681.520, 681.530		1408
7. Supportive services	Yes, 681.570		1409
8. Adult mentoring	Yes, 681.490		1410
9. Follow-up services	Yes, 681.580	Program elements 7, 8, 11, 13, and 14	1412
10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling	Yes, 681.580		1411
11. Financial literacy education	Yes, 681.500		1206
12. Entrepreneurial skills training	Yes, 681.560		1413
13. Services that provide labor market information	Yes, 651.10		1414
14. Postsecondary preparation and transition activities	No		1415

Attachment 1H

Workplan: Youth Program Service Delivery Design Addendum to Enhance Services to In-School Youth (ISY) Who Are Homeless or in Foster Care (Applies to WIOA Youth funded programs ONLY)

IMPORTANT NOTE: The waiver granted by the U.S. Department of Labor to the State of Minnesota allows WDAs the option to enhance services to homeless, in-school youth and foster care youth who are in school and reduce the statutory requirement for OSY expenditures from 75 percent to 60 percent. If your WDA plans to implement this waiver please complete the following questions.

Questions to be completed:

1. Please describe your WDA's strategies for outreach and recruitment of homeless in-school youth and/or in-school youth in foster care.
2. Identify school district(s) you would anticipate working with to recruit homeless, in-school youth and in-school foster care youth.
3. What services would you anticipate may need to be provided above and beyond what you are already offering?

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

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

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

Outcomes				
Improve Transition Outcomes for Juvenile Offenders	Improve Transition Outcomes for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care	Improve Transition Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities	Prevent and End Homelessness	Reduce High School Dropout Rates
Strategies				
<p>MVAC will connect with county and state probation and corrections departments, treatment facilities, public assistance, and community based organizations to identify youth ex-offenders who could benefit from WIOA Youth or MYP Services.</p> <p>MVAC assists adjudicated youth with expunging their criminal record and/or utilization of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and Minnesota Bonding Program in their job search.</p> <p>MVAC will refer youth to appropriate services such as New Leaf Online,</p>	<p>Youth Intervention Program MVAC has been providing specialized services to youth in foster care through the Youth Intervention Program which was funded by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Justice Programs. This program serves foster care youth between ages 16-24 with an emphasis on youth transitioning out of foster care. The purpose of the program is to provide career and life skills curriculum to explore, identify and attain positive educational, career and life goals.</p> <p>Information, referrals and assistance to apply for Fostering Independence</p>	<p>MVAC modifies services to youth with disabilities based on the youth’s needs and strengths. Services are tailored to the individual youth in collaboration with an integrated resource team.</p> <p>MVAC partners closely with local School Districts, Community Interagency Transition Committees (CTIC), MRCI WorkSource, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, State Services for the Blind, State Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Social Security Administration, Lifeworks Planning, SMILES, The ARC, Goodwill Easter Seals and PACER to provide streamlined services to youth with</p>	<p>Family Homeless Prevention Assistance Program (FHPAP) MVAC provides services to stabilize families or individuals in their current housing unit or re-house without a day of homelessness. The program also assists families or individuals who are homeless find permanent housing and maintain that housing. Youth ages 14-21 are a priority group to receive these services. There is specific funding set aside for this age group as well as additional support services.</p> <p>Homework Starts with Home MVAC provides liaison services through the Homework Starts with</p>	<p>MVAC provides programming to in-school youth to encourage them to stay in school and complete their high school diploma or equivalent.</p> <p>Work experience is used as a “carrot” to motivate youth. When students are in school and successfully meeting their requirements, they can participate in work experience. For some youth that are having a negative experience in the classroom setting, a work experience can be an area where they excel. Youth that successfully complete a work experience can earn academic credit. School districts receive a summary of</p>

Outcomes				
Improve Transition Outcomes for Juvenile Offenders	Improve Transition Outcomes for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care	Improve Transition Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities	Prevent and End Homelessness	Reduce High School Dropout Rates
Strategies				
<p>mental health services, treatment facilities as needed and appropriate.</p> <p>Partners include: Probation/Correction, In/Out-Patient Treatment Facilities, Mental Health Professionals and School Counselors/Social Workers.</p>	<p>Higher Education Grants will be provided to youth that meet the eligibility requirements.</p> <p>Partners include: Human Services/Children’s Services, Corrections/Probation, Foster Care Agencies, Foster Parents, Mental Health Professionals, and School Counselors/Social Workers.</p>	<p>disabilities.</p> <p>South Central College Uniquely Abled Academy provides specialized training to youth with Autism or other unique abilities to become print press operators. A job tryout will be offered to graduates of the training. The Uniquely Abled Academy is also supporting career exploration events specifically for students with disabilities.</p> <p>Partners include: MRCI, SMILES, LifeWorks, VRS, ARC, Minnesota Valley Action Council and Mankato Public Schools</p>	<p>Home program with Mankato Public Schools. Homework Starts with Home focuses on addressing homelessness and housing instability for school age students and their family. MVAC staff connects with school social workers, counselors, shelters, human services, CareerForce programs and other community services to provide wrap around services to the youth and their family.</p> <p>Homeless Response Teams The Homeless Response Team is facilitated by MVAC staff and includes a variety of members of the community such as police officers, social services, homeless shelter staff, school staff and others. The teams meet on a quarterly basis to discuss homeless issues in the community.</p> <p>Project Community Connect is a free event that is organized by the Blue Earth County Homeless Response Team each year for people</p>	<p>the youth’s work preparation and work experience activities and award academic credit ranging from .5 - 5 credits.</p> <p>Staff also talk to youth about other options to obtain their high school equivalency through GED, HiSET and Adult Diploma programs.</p> <p>Skills for Success in Employment, Education and Life services has been a very effective way to reinforce the importance of completing high school. There are topics that cover demand occupations including the education requirements and wages. There are also topics that cover post-secondary planning.</p> <p>MVAC partners with local school district counselors/social workers and Adult Basic Education.</p>

Outcomes				
Improve Transition Outcomes for Juvenile Offenders	Improve Transition Outcomes for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care	Improve Transition Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities	Prevent and End Homelessness	Reduce High School Dropout Rates
Strategies				
			<p>experiencing poverty. The goal of the event is to reduce poverty and homelessness in South Central Minnesota by providing a way for people in need to access services. The event is a “one-stop shop” approach where over 85 organizations will provide needed services in one location to engage people who need the services but don’t normally participate or who don’t know the services exist. Some of the services offered include legal services, medical/dental services, housing resources, veteran services, financial literacy, free HIV testing, free lunch, haircuts, photographer and ID & birth certificate vouchers. Transportation, interpreters and childcare are available for attendees. An average of 500 guests attend the event annually.</p> <p>Lutheran Social Services MVAC also coordinates services with homeless youth programs including</p>	

Outcomes				
Improve Transition Outcomes for Juvenile Offenders	Improve Transition Outcomes for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care	Improve Transition Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities	Prevent and End Homelessness	Reduce High School Dropout Rates
Strategies				
			the Street Outreach Program, which provides advocacy and community connection and the REACH Drop-In Center, which is a gathering place for homeless youth. MVAC and the Reach coordinator services to mutual youth participants and offers information regarding careers, employment readiness skills and job search skills to youth at the REACH Drop-In Center as needed.	