

Unified Local Youth Plan
PY 2024 WIOA Youth Formula Funds
SFY 2025 Minnesota Youth Program (MYP)

Due Friday, April 12, 2024

**PY 2024 WIOA Youth Formula Funds
SFY 2025 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@mnvac.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:	Minnesota Tax Identification Number:
41-6050353	94865358
Unique Entity ID (UEI) Number:	SWIFT Vendor ID Number (if known):
YY82LNJLDNU7	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: 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 at that time to update and complete, sign and return so your PY24 WIOA Youth Formula Grant funding can be released as quickly as possible. Since SFY25 MYP allocations are final, we encourage you to submit the SFY25 MYP budget with the Unified Local Youth Plan in April or shortly thereafter to ensure that MYP contracts are in place when the new fiscal year begins July 1, 2024. The budget forms are Excel documents that are attached separately from this planning document.

Signed Cover Page:	_____
PY24-25 WIOA Youth Performance (submitted after local goals negotiated):	_____
List of Youth Committee Members (if applicable):	<u> X </u>
(If applicable) List of Youth Service Providers For PY24 (WIOA) and SFY25 (MYP):	_____
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	_____

PY22 and PY23 WIOA Youth Approved/Negotiated Levels of Performance - MN

(as of 7/22/22)

State	Program Year 2022 (7/1/22 - 6/30/23)					Program Year 2023 (7/1/23 - 6/30/24)				
	Q2 EET	Q4 EET	Yth Cred	Median Earnings	MSG	Q2 EET	Q4 EET	Yth Cred	Median Earnings	MSG
State	68.0%	69.0%	62.0%	\$ 4,000	41.0%	69.0%	69.0%	62.0%	\$ 4,000	42.0%
WDA 1	69.0%	69.0%	62.0%	\$ 4,000	42.0%	69.0%	69.0%	62.0%	\$ 4,000	42.0%
WDA 2	68.0%	70.0%	62.0%	\$ 4,000	49.0%	69.0%	70.0%	62.0%	\$ 4,250	50.0%
WDA 3	69.5%	69.0%	62.5%	\$ 3,800	49.0%	70.0%	69.5%	62.5%	\$ 3,850	49.5%
WDA 4	68.0%	69.0%	54.0%	\$ 3,100	41.0%	69.0%	69.0%	55.0%	\$ 3,400	42.0%
WDA 5	68.0%	69.0%	62.0%	\$ 4,000	41.0%	69.0%	69.0%	62.0%	\$ 4,000	42.0%
WDA 6	68.0%	69.0%	62.0%	\$ 3,400	41.0%	69.0%	69.0%	62.0%	\$ 3,400	42.0%
WDA 7	68.0%	69.0%	62.0%	\$ 4,000	41.0%	69.0%	69.0%	62.0%	\$ 4,000	42.0%
WDA 8	68.0%	69.0%	55.0%	\$ 4,000	46.0%	69.0%	69.0%	55.0%	\$ 4,000	46.0%
WDA 9	68.0%	69.0%	54.0%	\$ 3,500	41.0%	68.0%	69.0%	55.0%	\$ 3,500	42.0%
WDA 10	68.0%	69.0%	62.0%	\$ 4,000	41.0%	69.0%	69.0%	62.0%	\$ 4,000	42.0%
WDA 12	68.0%	69.0%	62.0%	\$ 4,000	41.0%	69.0%	69.0%	62.0%	\$ 4,000	42.0%
WDA 14	68.0%	69.0%	62.0%	\$ 4,000	41.0%	69.0%	69.0%	62.0%	\$ 4,000	42.0%
WDA 15	68.0%	69.0%	62.0%	\$ 4,000	41.0%	68.0%	69.0%	62.0%	\$ 4,000	42.0%
WDA 16	69.0%	69.0%	62.0%	\$ 4,000	50.0%	69.0%	69.0%	62.0%	\$ 4,000	50.0%
WDA 17	76.0%	74.0%	62.0%	\$ 4,000	41.0%	76.0%	74.0%	62.0%	\$ 4,000	42.0%
WDA 18	49.0%	74.0%	62.5%	\$ 4,000	41.0%	69.0%	49.0%	62.5%	\$ 4,000	42.0%

- denotes target value +/- state-negotiated levels of performance

PY 2024-2025 WIOA Youth Performance

(Definitions of Each Measure are on the Following Page)

WDA/Contact:	WDA#7 / Sara Carrigan
E-Mail Address/Phone Number:	sara@workforcecouncil.org / 507-345-2402
Date Submitted (or Modified):	

WIOA Youth Performance Measure	PY 2024 (STATE PLANNED)	PY 2025 (STATE PLANNED)	PY 2024 (WDA PLANNED)	PY 2025 (WDA PLANNED)
Employment/Training 2nd Quarter After Exit:	TBD	TBD		
Employment/Training 4th Quarter After Exit:	TBD	TBD		
Credential Attainment:	TBD	TBD		
Median Earnings:	TBD	TBD		
Measurable Skills Gain:	TBD	TBD		

Youth team will negotiate WDA-level performance goals AFTER DEED negotiates state-level performance goals with DOL in May/June 2024. No action is needed by WDAs on this form until after performance goals are negotiated.

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.

Youth Committee Information For PY 2024/SFY 2025

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 LWIB 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: Heather Anderson Phone Number: 507-345-5222 E-Mail: hander1@isd77.org	Mankato Area Adult Basic Education/Education	No
Member Name: Laura Attenberger Phone Number: 507-389-7241 E-Mail: laura.attenberger@southcentral.edu	South Central College/Post-Secondary Education	No
Member Name: Valerie Bentsdahl Phone Number: 507-625-4436 E-Mail: vbentsdahl@jonesmetalinc.com	Jones Metal/Business	Yes
Member Name: Alejandra Bejarano Phone Number: 507-389-8871 E-Mail: Alejandra@rndc.org	Region Nine Development Commission	Yes
Member Name: Becky Burnham Phone Number: 507-317-1724 E-Mail: rburnham@mymrci.org	MRCI WorkSource/Youth w/Disabilities	No
Member Name: Jocelyn Hartman Phone Number: 507-386-2191 E-Mail: jocelyn@ywcamankato.org	YWCA – Mankato	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: Frank Rutt Phone Number: 507-304-4750 E-Mail: frank.rutt@blueearthcountymn.gov	Blue Earth County Youth Diversion & Prevention Services	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: Kevin Sperle Phone Number: 612-823-4360 E-Mail: sperle.kevin@jobcorps.org	Job Corps/Youth Services	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	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@mncsc.org	South Central Service Cooperative/Carl Perkins/Education	No
Member Name: Ericka Wood Phone Number: 612-702-9861 E-Mail: ewood@lifeworks.org	Life Works/Youth Services	No

Youth Service Provider Information For PY 2024/SFY 2025

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="812 604 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="1075 604 1502 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																							
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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 2024 WIOA Young Adult and SFY 2025 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:

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

Education Community:

- School Districts in nine counties
- Alternative Schools
- Adult Basic Education & GED Programs
- Post-secondary institutions
- South Central Service Cooperative
- TRIO & Education Talent search

CareerForce Partners including:

- *Job Service*
- *Vocational Rehabilitation Services*
- *MRCI WorkSource*
- *South Central Youth Council*
- *State Services for the Blind*
- *Life-Work Planning Center*
- *South Central WorkForce Council*

Area Service Providers:

- *Human & Public Health Services*
- *Community Corrections*
- *Lutheran Social Services*
- *Salvation Army*
- *Committee Against Domestic Abuse*
- *Catholic Charities*
- *COPAL*
- *Area Homeless Shelters*
- *Mental Health Agencies*
- *Foster Care Agencies*
- *Agencies serving Minority Populations*
- *Veterans Service Offices*
- *Worksites*
- *Goodwill Easter Seals*
- *Lifeworks*
- *MN Council of Churches*
- *Unidos*

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

- *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*
- *Online job search sites*
- *E-mail program information and newsletters*
- *Booths at area career fairs and postsecondary schools*
- *Community Resource Fairs/Backpack Program*

Since March 2021, MVAC has utilized an electronic young adult interest and referral form for youth, school staff, partner staff and community agencies. In 2023, over 164 inquiries regarding youth programming have been received. The interest form includes

basic contact information, age, county of residency, at-risk factors and services of interest. Upon completion of the interest form, MVAC staff will reach out to the youth to discuss the program and services in more detail. We also share information on the program through social media, electronic newsletters to schools and partners, virtual meetings with other organizations and in classrooms through in person and remote presentations.

In addition to the strategies above, informational letters 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 and brochures 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 success story video series developed in collaboration with our Southwest regional partners to feature employment and training programs. The videos are shared on social media, in newsletters and with educational, community and CareerForce partners to promote the services available to assist at risk youth and job seekers.



[Careers that Pay - Jasmine’s Story](#) features a story about a youth participant’s successes and how the young adult program helped her along the way.

- 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 paper and electronic forms. Paper referral forms are either faxed or scanned and emailed securely. The use of electronic referrals has been a helpful communication tool between agencies and has streamlined the referral process.

MVAC has also developed a strong 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 often 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 connect with local school districts through Skills for Success in Education, Employment and Life classroom presentations. Skills for Success presentations include a variety of topics such as: career assessments, career planning & exploration, labor market information, work readiness skills, job search, post-secondary planning and financial literacy. A virtual option for Skills for Success was added in 2020 which features three videos on [Skills](#), [Interviewing](#) and [Maintaining Employment](#). Each video contains advice from four local employers representing the healthcare, manufacturing, construction and agriculture industries. The Skills for Success video series provides an additional option for virtual learning. Skills for Success presentations have reached over 340 students from 10 schools from September 2023 through December 2023. This connection provides career services to high school students, builds stronger partnerships with educators and helps 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.

The youth program continues to partner with local schools to support eligible high school students in work-based learning opportunities through paid work experiences in their career pathway. This partnership continues to seek flexible funding so all students, regardless of eligibility status in our youth programs, can participate in work-based learning experiences. One strategy utilized to achieve this is with Nicollet County Collaborative funds that support the St. Peter Project, which is a rotational work experience where high school students in career pathway programming work in various departments of a healthcare facility over the summer.

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. Several projects have been implemented and some examples include a student led manufacturing company, enhancements to tools available in the industrial arts lab at a local high school, student operated coffee shop, and drone training in collaboration with Minnesota State University – Mankato. Three workforce coordinators were hired to provide workforce coordination services at six school districts. The position serves 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 Community of Practice developed by the South Central Service Cooperative (Perkins Consortium). This partnership brings together area school counselors and MVAC youth counselors on a regular basis to address the following:

- A key professional development, growth or problem solving topic of interest as determined by the community*
- Student support 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 Talen Search and Upward Bound staff at post-secondary institutions in our area to explain the program and how it can benefit their students. MVAC has resumed involvement in 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.

Our outreach also includes post-secondary institutions outside of the nine-county area that many youth from our area also attend including MN West Community & Technical College, Riverland Community College, and Ridgewater College.

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 WIOA 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 brochure 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 webinars and South Central CareerForce Partner Training Days.

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 2023, across all youth programs, we provided paid work experiences to 127 youth, ages 15-24. Prior to the start of these work experiences, youth receive training on getting and keeping a job, which includes topics such as the application process, interview practice, employers' expectations, how to handle various situations at work, and the importance of building a positive work history. To further encourage a positive work experience, the youth counselor discusses possible worksite opportunities that fit the career interest area of the youth. Youth select worksites they are interested in and complete interviews. Based on the worksite's feedback, the youth are placed at one of their choices. In addition to being a worksite, worksite supervisors 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*
- *Hands-on learning strategies that may improve youths' grades, attendance, and graduation achievement*
- *Awareness of skills and competencies needed to meet employer expectations in the areas of responsibility, respect, and hard work*
- *Worksite supervisors and youth employment counselors who serve as role models and mentors, while supporting them as they learn concepts or problem-solve issues*
- *Possible exposure to non-traditional careers and apprenticeship opportunities*
- *Possible leadership skill development*

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

- *Inquiry: Fostering a curiosity and desire in youth to develop new skills and explore new areas.*
- *Technology: Exploring and becoming familiar with current technologies, used in job searches or job tasks.*
- *Science, Engineering, and Math Skills: Practicing vital skills to enhance mastery.*

- Decision-Making and Daily Living Skills: Learning important time management skills and practicing decision-making skills.
- Interaction with Others: Working with diverse groups of people and learning how to work together to reach goals.
- Positive Attitudes and Behaviors: Teaching young people about the importance of attitude in the workforce and having the confidence to solve problems.

MVAC educates and encourages youth to pursue educational and employment options in high-growth industries and in-demand occupations, including Healthcare, “STEM” Occupations (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Manufacturing), 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:

- Halquist Farms, Inc
- United Farmers Co-op
- Kohler Farms
- Martin Soil & Water Conservation
- Tractor Supply
- Wakefield Pork

Healthcare:

- Southview Living
- Watonwan County Human Society
- Bridgewater
- BENCHS
- Blue Earth County Community Farm
- Mayo Clinic Health Systems
- The Beacon
- Associate Optometry, PA
- Autumn Grace Memory Care
- Center for Specialty Care
- Good Samaritan Society Arlington
- Oak Terrace Health Care Center
- Parkview Care Center
- Southview Living Center
- Vista Prairie Monarch Meadows
- Valley View Dental
- **Construction Trades**
- Y-Not Plumbing and Heating
- Schwickert’s Tecta America

Information Technology:

- Easy Automation inc.
- Sibley County Auditor’s Office
- Sibley East IT Dept

Manufacturing:

- Ad Mfg, Inc.
- Herman Manufacturing
- JW Cabinets
- Lindsay Windows
- Martin Soil & Water
- Weiss Milling Inc.

Transportation:

- Key City Bikes
- Hawkins Chevrolet
- Weelborg Chevrolet
- Car Parts Direct
- D&M Body Shop
- Mankato Motorsports
- Truck Center Companies
- Arlington NAPA
- Erin’s Body Shop
- Jerry’s ABRA Auto Body & Glass
- Mankato Motors
- MN 19 Truck Wash
- N & G Auto Repair
- Waterville Auto

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.

During the COVID 19 pandemic, various strategies were implemented to adjust youth work experience services. The safety of the youth we served was a top priority. Protocols and procedures to prevent the spread of COVID 19 were reviewed during the worksite orientations. Youth Counselors still work closely with the youth and worksite supervisor regarding a COVID exposure or positive test results for a youth participant. Specific worksites were targeted for work experiences during the pandemic including businesses that had an increase of demand, agriculture and groundskeeper positions that involved outdoor work, and work experiences with remote work available. MVAC continues to utilize worksites developed during the pandemic. During the pandemic, public transportation services were limited so MVAC provided transportation for youth participants in a work experience through the use of Head Start vehicles during the summer and continues to provide this option as needed. The pandemic allowed the opportunity for staff to be trained on virtual meeting platforms which has been a benefit when connecting with youth, especially in rural areas, however in person contact is still preferred. The Get Started course, described below, was also developed and implemented as a result of the pandemic.

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. Forty-nine youth participated in the Get Started during 2023.

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

The top industry sectors in South Central Minnesota are manufacturing and health care & social assistance. South Central has developed a strong career pathway in the healthcare and manufacturing industry through Adult Career Pathway programming. Adult Career Pathways is a partnership between Adult Basic Education, South Central College and CareerForce to provide Career Pathway preparatory classes to low-skilled adults and youth over 18. Students can start on a career pathway that meets their current academic skill level, which is determined through academic assessments, through On-Ramp, Bridge or Individualized Training Pathway (ITP) programing.

Students that need to increase their basic skills to be college ready can begin their career pathway journey through the On-Ramp model. The On-Ramp class provides contextualized learning in variety of careers through learning occupational terms while increasing the student’s language and basic skills. Students also earn industry related

credentials such as NorthStar Digital Literacy, First Aid, CPR, Personal Care Aide and ServSafe Food Handler.

Students that are college ready but need academic support, may start in Bridge programming. In Bridge, students attend preparatory classes and receive instruction from ABE to explore healthcare or manufacturing careers and prepare them for college courses applicable to the industry. Upon successful completion of the preparatory class, students attend an integrated college course held at South Central College. The course is taught by a South Central College instructor and an ABE instructor provides extra educational support to the students. In addition, a workforce employment counselor connects with students frequently to provide career counseling, assist students in developing a career plan, offer job search assistance and provide support services to be successful. Students earn industry recognized credentials through the college courses including registered nursing assistant in healthcare and a National Institute of Metalworking Skills certification or Manufacturing Skills Standard Council (MSSC) credentials in manufacturing. A Community Interpreter Bridge course is also offered that assists students to become certified interpreters. After successful completion of the community interpreter preparation course, students attend a one-week in person training. Following the in-person training, students practice their oral proficiency skills with their instructor and schedule an oral proficiency examination to become a certified community interpreter. Students that plan to continue their career pathway training are supported through youth, Individualized Training Pathway 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 with obtaining a degree, diploma or certificate and employment earning a median wage of \$16 or higher in demand industries including Healthcare, 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 training costs are covered by the high school program, but the certification testing is not covered so MVAC has assisted with those fees for youth program participants. Youth are also referred to the Next Generation Nursing Initiative, which offers free nursing assistant training for MN residents interested in long-term care.

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

Through the local Perkins Consortium, a health science mobile lab trailer will be piloted at five school districts this year. The health science mobile lab trailer provides a variety of hands on activities for students to engage in learning about healthcare occupations.

As mentioned earlier, 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. This partnership continues to seek flexible funding so all students, regardless of eligibility status in our youth programs, can participate in work-based learning experiences. As mentioned earlier, Nicollet County Collaborative funds support the St. Peter Project, which is a rotational healthcare work experience for high school students in career pathways programming at Benedictine Living Community and River's Edge Hospital. In the summer of 2023, 3 youth participated in the St. Peter project and this summer, we anticipate a minimum of 3 students will explore healthcare occupations in several departments at the two facilities over the course of four weeks.

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 2,200 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. Students complete a skills assessment to determine their interests, talents and strengths; explore careers and the skills needed; and develop an education plan for high school and beyond. During the pandemic, the Career Navigator program created a virtual platform which is still a resource students can access today in addition to the in-person event. The [virtual Career Navigator website](#) features a keynote speaker, career videos from each of the six career fields, an exhibit hall to learn more about participating employers and a resource page. A Career Navigator reflection activity is available for students to reflect on what they learned. The [resource page](#) includes labor market information and local resources including the "Know Before You Go" Infographics, Career Corner Newsletters, Youth Directories and MVAC's Get Started Program. In 2021, the Career Navigator website received the Greater Mankato Growth's Brian Fazio Business Education Partnership Award, which recognizes partnerships that enhance education and business in greater Mankato.

The annual Greater Mankato Career Expo is where over 100 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 Career Fair in New Ulm. Over 500 students attend the ACE event and another 650 eighth and tenth graders attend the Career Fair in New Ulm 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 business including CareerForce partners, career testimonials for local graduates and resources.



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. In 2022 & 2023, Scrubs Camp partnered with the local Education Talent Search (ETS) program, which provides TRIO services at local area high schools. ETS offered a Scrubs Camp Night Shift option to first generation and low-income students enrolled in ETS. Scrubs Camp Night Shift allowed ETS youth that lived outside of the Mankato area to stay overnight in a hotel during camp and all ETS Scrubs Camp attendees were invited to evening activities which included a reflection of the daily Scrubs Camp interactions, healthcare career exploration, teambuilding activities, and leadership development. ETS's Scrubs Camp Night Shift was instrumental in providing an option for ETS students to engage in Scrubs camp as several ETS students would have lacked the resources to travel to Scrubs Camp for three days.

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.touofmanufacturing.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 600 students attend the event annually.

The feedback we receive from school counselors and career and technical education teachers indicates that students enjoy the Construct Tomorrow event and get excited about construction careers but are not clear on their next steps. Construct Tomorrow helps students identify an interest in construction, but they still might not know which

trade is right for them. A student in 9th through 11th grade that is interested in a construction career, would have to wait years before they could sign up for an apprenticeship. How do we help students hone in on the specific trade that is right for them? And how do we keep students that are interested in construction trades engaged and excited for their future career?

The South Central Construction Trades Boot Camp was implemented to provide an in depth exposure to the various union construction trades. Boot Camp was 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 in the following trades: laborers, carpenters, millwrights, cement masons, electrician, bricklayers, operating engineers, glaziers and painters.



The South Central Construction Trades Partnership discussed ideas on revamping the Boot Camp program based on feedback regarding the two week commitment, transportation barriers for youth in rural areas and youth work schedules. The partnership is piloting a new model with Mankato Area Public Schools where students can attend a session during early release days once a month. The Boot Camp Early Release Pilot was launched in January where the Carpenters led students through the process of building a wood bench during the 2 ½ hour session. The Electricians, Millwrights, Heat & Frost Insulators, Cement Masons and the Laborers will provide hands on projects each month through May of 2024. Weaved in with the hands on learning, 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. There were six high school students that attended the first Boot Camp Pilot session. A morning session is also being offered to Adult Basic Education students, which had ten ABE students attend the January session.

In May 2024, Boot Camp participants and students from area high schools may participate in a training centers tour at the Operators Training Center. This tour will include hands on opportunities for youth to operate equipment and gain exposure on how apprenticeship training centers are another post-secondary option to learn valuable skills while you earn a living.

The Construction Tomorrow event, Construction Trades Boot camp, Early Release Pilot and Training Center tour provided youth with 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 dedication 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 Partnership was honored with an award in August 2020.

The South Central Carl D. Perkins also promotes the explorations of careers in the construction trades through hosting the Big Idea’s Mobile Learning Lab 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. Youth experience in-demand careers in the construction trades 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, and diesel and heavy equipment. The event was hosted by local employers, post-secondary institutions, Mankato Area Public Schools and South Central Perkins Consortium. The Transportation Works committee is currently planning the upcoming event and designed a [video](#) to help promote the camp.

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 including knife skills, food art, table scaping, menu planning and cupcake decorating.

An event that provides students 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 40 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. An entrepreneur infographic was also developed. Southwest's and South Central's infographics were updated in 2022 to reflect current labor market information. The infographics are also available in Spanish.



In Fall 2023, infographics and youth employment program information was provided to Career and Technical Education educators throughout Southern MN at the CTE Works! Summit. The CTE Works! Summit allowed teachers, counselors, and other education professionals the opportunity to expand their knowledge and network with each other. A group of youth employment program coordinators from Southwest, South Central and Southeast partnered to provide a presentation regarding Labor Market Information, Outreach to School services and Youth and Young Adult Employment and training programs. Many youth look for career guidance from their local high school teachers and counselors and this opportunity allowed us share the many CareerForce partner resources available to assist youth in reaching their career goals.

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/>



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 every 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 Support Services Policy is attached and has been approved by the South Central and Southwest Boards. We are in the process of developing a specific support policy for youth which will include the provision of food for WIOA youth participants.

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, 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 that drop 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. We would 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 first-generation African youth including MN Council of Churches Refugee Services and Hikmah. Relationship building and meeting the youth where they're at underpins this partnership, and staff have hosted multiple group sessions at each of their community centers. 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. Presentations about work readiness skills were also provided during group meetings.

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 trying to assimilate into the United States culture. This grant engages youth from communities of color and their families in group activities and workshops to assist them make plans for their future and outline the steps needed to be successful while being sensitive to their culture of origin. In August 2023, the annual Youth at Work event focused on diversity and social justice. Youth and their families were connected with community leaders pursuing social and racial justice through various means, including advocacy, policy, community engagement, and art. Leaders were from the Greater Mankato Diversity Council, COPAL, and community artists who coordinate cultural festivals/events and paint murals in the area to increase visibility and representation of minority groups. Attendees heard about the various programs and initiatives that each oversaw or implemented. Attendees also learned about the importance of community partnerships in facilitating change as leaders discussed the various challenges they encounter and how to leverage resources. After lunch and networking with the community leaders, attendees learned new skills while completing a hydrodip activity in which they beautified mugs and picture frames to take home as a memento from the day. Youth and their families also learned about preparing for post-secondary plans with staff from Educational Talent Search.

It was equally important to provide cultural awareness to worksite supervisors. In 2023, two virtual training sessions to worksite supervisors on cultural awareness and sensitivity were offered. Implicit Bias Training was presented by the Greater Mankato Diversity Council and Cultivate a Welcoming Workplace, Culture that Fosters Belonging, Trust and Safety was offered through the University of Minnesota. The trainings were offered regional in collaboration with Southwest Private Industry Council. Fifty-one worksite supervisors and youth staff attended the presentation learning about cultural identities and values, as well as how those intersect in the workplace and impact the experiences of BIPOC individuals. This provided opportunities for awareness building, challenging assumptions, and reflection as staff and supervisors work towards creating more inclusive environments. The next cultural awareness and sensitivity training will be offered in March of 2024.

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.

Barriers to transportation in Greater Minnesota is apparent for all low-income youth in our service area especially with 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 15 years through the Youth Intervention Program which was funded by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Justice Programs. This program serves foster care youth between ages 16-24 with an emphasis on youth transitioning out of foster care. The purpose of the program is to provide career and life skills curriculum to explore, identify and attain positive educational, career and life goals.

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 2023 event included an employment scavenger hunt, guest speaker sharing her unique experiences when she was in foster care. Youth exercised their leadership and teamwork skills as they worked to decipher clues and gather employment information and training requirements from various business and their job positions. The group was able to continue discussions during a meal and then were joined by the Director of Educational Talent Search who spoke about preparing for post-secondary plans. Youth opened up and spoke candidly about their life experiences and family situations, as well as how those have informed their future goals and motivations to achieve them. Overall, the event was a great opportunity for youth to share their foster care experience with others and to practice leadership, teamwork and problem-solving skills through a variety of engaging activities.

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 90 organizations will provide

needed services in one location to engage people who need the services but don't normally participate or who don't know the services exist. Some of the services offered include legal services, medical/dental services, housing resources, veteran services, financial literacy, free HIV testing, free lunch, haircuts, photographer and ID & birth certificate vouchers. Transportation, interpreters and childcare is available for attendees. Over 900 guests 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 the September 6, 2023, WorkForce Wednesday focusing on Leveraging Second

Chancers for a Better Workforce and the upcoming WorkForce Wednesday schedule for June 2024 regarding Fair Chance 101: How to Recruit & retain a Justice-Involved 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. Strong partnerships were developed through this initiative with the following organizations: local school districts, CTICs, MRCI WorkSource, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, State Services for the Blind, State Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, Social Security Administration, LifeWorks, SMILES, Goodwill Easter Seals and PACER.

Although the grant has ended, the key strategic approaches for the DEI Project including Guideposts to Success, Integrated Resources Teams, and Partnerships & Collaborations were proven to be very successful and continued after the grant period. To build on the momentum of the DEI Project, several partners were invited to join the Youth Council to focus on services to people with disabilities under Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

In partnership with DEED's Youth Department and four Work Development Areas, a proposal to continue the work of the DEI was submitted in Fall 2023. We hope that Minnesota will be selected to receive another DEI grant to strengthen our partnerships, train new staff and establish an employment network.

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, MRCI, SMILES, LifeWorks, Minnesota Valley Action Council and Mankato Public Schools on the development and implementation of a Uniquely Abled Academy. Uniquely Abled Academy provides specialized training to youth with Autism to become Computer Numerical Control machinists. South Central College piloted the Uniquely Abled Academy at the North Mankato Campus in the summer of 2022 with 11 students. Six students participated in the 2023 co-hort. South Central

College is working on securing permanent funding for the program and is looking at expanding the model to training programs. The Uniquely Abled Academy is being expanded to include career exploration events for 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 carer opportunities. The Uniquely Abled Career Exploration events was designed for students with disabilities that may not attend the regional career exploration events due to the overwhelming stimulation, loud noises and large groups of 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 promoted the WorkForce Wednesday on Building a Culture of Wellness in the Workplace and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Belonging (DEIAB): More than Just an Acronym to employers and CareerForce partners. MN DEED's Employer Reasonable Accommodation Fund was also shared with employers along with Disability Inclusion Bite-Sized Learning Modules. In addition, future WorkForce Wednesday events and other trainings related to serving individuals with disabilities will be shared 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 in March 2024 on Supporting the New American Workforce.

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. Training was provided through the Rochester Diversity Council, which included a series of five Equity Logic trainings designed specifically for our Region 5 and an opportunity for each staff 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. Staff met individually with an IDI qualified administrator to review the results of their IDI assessment. The IDI and Equity Logic trainings help staff identify their own cultural bias and learn tools and tips to enhance our culturally responsive services. Our region is also focused on implementing strategies to create welcoming environments and services at CareerForce locations as well as support inclusive employers. As mentioned earlier, MVAC staff also participated in Implicit Bias training and Cultivate a Welcoming Workplace, Culture that Fosters Belonging, Trust and Safety. We are planning to offer additional diversity, inclusion and equity training in 2024.

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 will be conducted which focus on work readiness skills, the initial phone call to employers, greeting the employer including a firm handshake and good eye contact, interviewing skills and mock interviews, resume-writing, cover letter, and thank-you letters.*
 - *Completing a pre-assessment and post-assessment of each youth's work readiness skills and working on areas that need improvement.*
 - *Completing a pre-assessment and post-assessment of each youth's employability competencies and working on areas that need improvement.*
 - *Assessing work readiness skills on each monitoring visit to worksites, discussing the feedback with supervisor and youth, and recording it on the monitoring tool.*
 - *Supervisors will evaluate youth's work readiness skills on their timesheet bi-weekly. Staff will use this information to provide guidance to youth.*
 - *Staff will provide recognition for positive work readiness development.*
- 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 2025, 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 program places interns in local rural school districts to provide one-on-one career exploration and career counseling assistance to high school students.

The interns are first year graduate students in the Student Counseling Program at Minnesota State University-Mankato. 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 every high school junior and senior enabling them to reach students that are not proactive about their plans after high school and would otherwise go unnoticed and fall through the cracks. The interns also provide career exploration activities for younger grade levels so that they can begin to consider their plans after high school. During the 2022-2023 school year, interns provided lessons and activities on career interests, values, post-secondary options, 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 (2 sessions available)

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

Interviewing (2 sessions available)

- *Practice/Mock Interviews*
- *Tips, Common Questions, Asking Questions, and Thank You Letters*

Workplace Skills (Soft Skills) (2 sessions available)

- *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*

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. To provide flexibility to the unique needs of each school and classroom the video series can be offered virtually and in person. The links to the videos have also been shared with CareerForce partners and featured in the Career Corner newsletters.

A developing strategy to increase youth's awareness of demand occupations is through the creation of a Career Passport Videos series. Career Passport videos will be 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. The Career Passport videos will be shared with students, educators, CareerForce partners and others through social media stories and in newsletters. Career Passport video stories regarding agriculture are in the process of being edited and we are in the planning stages for videos in healthcare.



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 plans to host a networking event for BIPOC youth and youth in foster care where youth will be 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. We also plan to invite the professionals that attend 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 so for the youth's success in gaining crucial work readiness skills and training for their future employment. Staff continuously see that youth participants gain skills, but perhaps more importantly, self-confidence through interactions at and feedback from the worksite. We recruit worksites that target the interest areas of youth that will provide a quality work experience. We keep the lines of communication open with the worksites by requesting feedback on the program and the working relationship between MVAC and the worksite. 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 71 worksites, 45 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.

Since the summer of 2020, we offer a rotational healthcare work experience with Benedictine Living Center and River's Edge Hospital and Clinic in St. Peter, which allowed youth exposure to different career options in their interested career path. The 2023 St. Peter rotational healthcare work experience had three youth participate and we are planning and recruiting youth for the summer of 2024.

In 2021, a partnership with Dakota Meadows and Prairie Winds Middle schools through the Mankato Public School District was developed to place at-risk students entering 9th grade into a summer work experience. School counselors and social workers refer at-risk youth that would benefit from a work experience. Youth staff also present the opportunity to students during class time each spring. Interested and eligible youth begin the Get Started course in May prior to

summer break. The Get Started Course provides youth the foundational knowledge of skills they will need to be successful in work. At the start of summer break, youth attend a work readiness workshop with youth counselors. Youth and their youth counselor discuss workplace interests and youth are placed at a worksite, many times this is their first work experience. The growth and development of the work readiness skills the youth gain is remarkable. This model provides at-risk 14–15-year-olds the support they need for a positive start in the workforce that includes a worksite mentor, youth staff and wrap around services. This initiative continues to be offered each year and served 5 students in 2023.

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 implemented a similar internship program in 2022 and Nobles County is implementing a program in 2023.



The Waseca County Internship program was launched in Summer 2022 in partnership with Waseca County Commissioners, Minnesota Valley Action Council and the South Central WorkForce Council. The Waseca Internship program grew from serving 6 youth in 2022 to serving 8 youth in 2023. The 2023 interns were placed in an internship learning skills needed for construction, financial services, human relations, law enforcement, veterinary science, media production, and journalism. The Waseca Internship will continue in 2024.

An area of focus is to provide information on apprenticeship opportunities specifically for women. Several partners including Adult Basic Education, Department of Employment & Economic Development, Life Work Planning Center, MRCI WorkSource, Minnesota Valley Action Council, South Central College, and South Central WorkForce Council joined efforts to bring awareness to non-traditional careers for women. The group developed several resources including a brochure on non-traditional careers, an assessment to determine if someone is interested in a non-traditional career and steps to take to enter a non-traditional career. Our local labor market analyst developed a list of occupations in the area that are considered non-traditional. The group developed a non-traditional careers page on the South Central WorkForce Council website <http://www.workforcecouncil.org/nontradcareers/> where these

resources are available along with information on local training opportunities and apprenticeship opportunities. Non-traditional careers are also highlighted in the Know Before You Go Infographics and Career Corner Newsletters.

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 with 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 Boot Camp Early Release Pilot was launched in January 2024 and the planning team continues its discussion on the future opportunities for career exploration opportunities.

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.

In 2013, South Central was selected as an implementation site for the MN DEI Project. Several of the key strategic approaches that were implemented were proven to be successful and are still in practice in our youth programming today 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.

As mentioned earlier, we are hopefully that Minnesota will be selected for a DEI grant which will assist South Central in strengthening and expanding our services along with receiving additional training for new and current youth staff.

- 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. **SEE WIOA Youth Program Elements Checklist Regarding partners that MVAC collaborates with to deliver the 14 elements to youth when appropriate.**

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 MRCI.

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 2023, there were 33 youth that attained 55.24 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.

- 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. MVAC piloted a leadership opportunity that allowed an experienced worksite participant to help train new youth at the worksite and MVAC plans to implement this opportunity at additional worksites.

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 plans 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 leadership 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. Trainings received in 2022 and 2023 include mindset training and tool kit resources. In January 2024, staff participated in a poverty simulation to 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 completed phase 1 of the whole family services where eight staff in four different counties piloted the whole family approach. MVAC is in the planning and implementing stage of phase two which includes a whole family Pilot Navigator to help break down barriers for clients by providing a single point of contact to inquire about MVAC programming including Young Adult 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 from the CAREERwise website. 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, Banks and NovaDebt Solutions. 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 continue to discuss additional opportunities to help educate low-income youth and adults about financial literacy.

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		Activities: Alternative Secondary school Services, Study Skills Training/Tutoring, Basic Skills Training, Classroom Training, Secondary School Classes
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		Activities: Alternative Secondary school Services, Basic Skills Training, Classroom Training
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		Activities: Work Experience, OJT - Public or Private, Pre-Apprenticeship
4. Occupational skill training		X	X		Minnesota Valley Action Council, local employers, secondary	Service Provider Agreement; MOU; Individual Training		Activities: Occupational Skills Training, Credential

					and post-secondary educational institutions	Account; Individual Service Strategy		Attained without Training, Classroom 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		Activity: Workforce Preparation and Education, Career Counseling
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		Activities: Community Involvement and 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		Activity: 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		Activities: Partnering, Career Counseling

11. Financial literacy education	X		X		Minnesota Valley Action Council, Lutheran Social Services, local financial institutions	Service Provider Agreement; MOU; Individual Service Strategy		Activity: 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	Activity: 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		Activities: Labor Market/In Demand Employment Info, Career Counseling
14. Post-secondary preparation and transition activities	X		X		Minnesota Valley Action Council and local educational institutions	Service Provider Agreement; MOU; Individual Service Strategy		Activities: School to Work Transition, Transition to Post-Secondary, 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>A virtual opportunity for county case managers from county social services</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>agencies to learn about the Youth Intervention Program and MVAC’s Youth and Young Adult programming and how the programs can support youth in foster care and youth aging out of foster care will be offered in 2024.</p> <p>Information, referrals and assistance to apply for Fostering Independence 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 to become a Computer Numerical Control machinist. South Central College piloted the Uniquely Abled Academy at the North Mankato Campus in summer 2022 and offered it again 2023. MVAC youth staff provided career counseling and job search assistance during the program as needed. South Central College hopes to continue to offer the program and expand it into other college programs. The Uniquely Abled Academy is also supporting career exploration events specifically for students with disabilities.</p> <p>Partners include: MRCI, SMILES, LifeWorks, 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				
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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 70 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				
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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 presents information regarding careers, employment readiness skills and job search skills regularly to youth at the REACH Drop-In Center.	