

South Central Career Pathways

April 11, 2025

Those Present: Heather Gleason, Karen Wolters, Jed Highum, Sonja Bowan, Renae Wolf, LeRoy Kiecker, Sara Carrigan, Marcia Highum, Kim Mueller, Betty Blaisdell, Jennifer Johnson, John Lawton, Andrea Calderon, Keith Bauer, Emily Roiger and Mary Shumski

I. Welcome and Introductions

Karen Wolters called the meeting to order.

II. Industry Updates

Renae Wolf with Mayo Clinic Health System shared that the most challenging positions to fill are Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) and Certified Medical Assistants (CMAs). Due to a shortage of qualified candidates in these roles, Mayo has brought on unlicensed personnel to assist with specific tasks, particularly those involving direct patient care. Recruitment efforts for these roles are progressing well. Renae also emphasized that Mayo looks for individuals who are genuinely passionate about helping others. However, she expressed concerns regarding accountability among new hires, particularly in areas such as attendance and meeting job expectations.

Keith Bauer from Mankato Clinic shared that, similar to other healthcare providers, they are currently experiencing the greatest difficulty in filling positions for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) and Certified Medical Assistants (CMAs). However, their internal CMA training program has helped address this need. In addition to LPN and CMA roles, the clinic is also facing challenges in recruiting Radiologic Technologists, as well as specialists in Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and Computed Tomography (CT). On a more positive note, Keith noted an increase in the number of applicants for clerical positions. He also echoed concerns about employee accountability, observing a trend where some staff members choose to leave their roles when faced with challenges, rather than working through them. To support workforce development, Mankato Clinic offers an internal training program for Certified Ophthalmic Assistants.

III. Quarterly and Expenditure Reports

Heather Gleason shared quarterly reports for On-Ramp, Bridge, and Individualized Training Pathways (ITP). Heather reported that the grants have been extended and will end in December 2025. The quarterly reports reflect a snapshot of current progress in the grant, through March 31, 2025.

On-Ramp: Services in the On-Ramp grant include work readiness training, On-Ramp training, Adult Basic Education (ABE), and Navigator services with the goal of assisting participants with gaining or increasing their employment or moving on to the Bridge program. Currently, 50 individuals are being served in the On-Ramp grant, with a goal of 68 participants for the region of these South Central has served 34 individuals. Thirty-two participants attended classes, and 38 On-Ramp certifications were obtained. Six On-Ramp participants have moved into Bridge programming.

Bridge: The Bridge grant provides the opportunity for individuals to learn about career pathways in healthcare, manufacturing, transportation, or construction while working on their academic

and employability skills through contextualized learning. The goal is for participants to earn an industry specific credential and move into employment or advance training. The regional target is to serve 96 individuals. Currently, 100 participants have been served across the region, including 42 for South Central. Forty-one participants have earned credentials in South Central and 22 participants have moved into additional post-secondary training.

Individualized Training Pathways (ITP): ITP assists individuals that are college ready to begin programs in healthcare, skilled trades, information technology, or advanced manufacturing. Services include post-secondary training, experiential learning, and navigator services. The goal is to serve 76 individuals in the region and 85 individuals have served. Fifty participants are from South Central and 18 have attended post-secondary training.

Heather Gleason shared expenditures through February 28, 2025, for the On-Ramp, Bridge, and ITP grants. Heather Gleason indicated that the report reflects the original budget amount as the updated contracted with the modified budget is still in process.

IV. South Central Career Pathway Updates

On-Ramp: Jed Highum indicated there are 13 individuals attending ABE classes. He anticipates five participants will move to Bridge programming. The Lead Course with Taylor Corporation will begin this summer and they anticipate 15 individuals taking the course. During this course, participants learn about skills of good leaders, communication skills and conflict resolution. Jed shared that ABE students are participating in the Construction Trades Boot Camp, offering them valuable exposure to career opportunities in the skilled trades. John Lawton joined students on tours of the Electricians and Carpenters training centers, which he described as purposeful and engaging, sparking meaningful discussions.

Bridge: Sonja Bowan reported that her work group has implemented changes to their information sessions by starting them earlier and holding them on a monthly basis. These adjustments have led to a noticeable increase in participation in the bridge programs. South Central College (SCC) is planning to add a new position dedicated to tutoring and coaching students enrolled in the healthcare programs including Bridge students. Jed Highum provided data on enrollment in Bridge courses, including insights into the majors students are pursuing. He also shared that the Community Interpreter training is currently underway, with 11 students participating from South Central and 4 from Southwest Minnesota.

Individualized Training Pathways (ITP): Emily Roiger shared ITP has assisted 48 individuals across various career pathways. Among these participants, with 5 participants pursued Commercial Driver's License (CDL) training, 13 in manufacturing pathways, 22 in healthcare programs, and 1 powerline technician and 1 electrician.

V. Additional Grants

Women Economic Security Act (WESA): The WESA grant is an additional grant that can support our local career pathways programming. Specifically, WESA supports women pursuing non-traditional careers. Emily Roiger provided an update indicating that she is currently working with 12 individuals. Training programs that have been pursued include truck driving, information technology, mechatronics, welding and autobody.

Drive for Five: The Drive for Five grant mirrors services provided in the ITP program and supports specific occupations. The grant was extended to December 2026. The regional goal is to serve 70 individuals. Currently, South Central has served 18. Participants are pursuing welding, mechatronics, phlebotomy, Registered Nursing, Medical Assistance and truck driving. Jed Highum reported that there may be additional students from MSU referred for assistance with student teaching and he is meeting with four more individuals regarding truck driving.

New Americans in Long Term Care Workforce Grant: This is a grant opportunity to support New Americans in Long Term Care and is a partnership with South Central Service Cooperative, Blue Earth County Employment Services, MN Council of Churches, and ABE. This grant will serve immigrants, or children of immigrants, with a goal of supporting individuals to obtain careers in long term care. The grant provides a curriculum for long term care training including pre-nursing assistant and career exploration with online and virtual reality components. The curriculum is available in Spanish and Somali.

Transformative Career Pathways: Heather Gleason reported that a Transformative Career Pathways grant was awarded. The grant will align with existing Bridge programming and continue to support career pathways training.

VI. Next Meeting:

July 11, 2025, 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.