



## LEGISLATIVE GRANT REPORT RURAL CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION CONSORTIUM ANNUAL REPORT – JANUARY 2022

The SWWC Service Cooperative (SWWC) and its partners received a \$3 Million **Rural CTE Education Consortium** grant from the Minnesota Legislature at the conclusion of the 2017 Session. The award is being coordinated by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). A grant application was submitted to MDE by the SWWC and its project partners in September of 2017 and was approved in October 2017. The original grant application indicated a June 30, 2019 project end date. After reviewing the Legislative Statute, it was determined that funds could be available through June 30, 2022. In order to use the \$3 Million grant in the most efficient manner and to have the best opportunity to create a new model for the delivery of rural CTE programs, a request was made to MDE on July 13, 2018 that the use of funds be extended to June 30, 2022. That request was granted to the SWWC on August 8, 2018.

### PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND OVERSIGHT

#### Current Rural CTE Advisory Committee

**Ann Trochilla**, Adult Basic Education

**See Moua-Leske**, Adult Basic Education

**Bridget Paulson**, Central Minnesota Jobs and Training

**Luke Greiner**, DEED

**Jessica Miller**, DEED

**Andrea Moore**, Hutchinson High School

**Eric Day**, Mid Minnesota Development Commission

**Jodi Jordon**, Mid Minnesota Carl Perkins Consortium

**Bruce Bergeson**, Minnesota River Valley CTE Collaborative

**Theresa Ireland**, Minnesota West

**Kayla Westra**, Minnesota West

**Judy Tebben**, Minnesota West

**Gail Polejewski**, Minnesota West Carl Perkins Consortium

**Bill Adams**, New London-Spicer School Superintendent

**Eriann Faris**, Private Industry Council

**Leonard Runck**, Red Rock Central School District

**Sam Bowen**, Ridgewater College

**Matthew Feuerborn**, Ridgewater College

**Ross Wastvedt**, Southwest Minnesota State University

**George Taylor**, Southwest Minnesota State University

**Jay Trusty**, Southwest Regional Development Commission

**Scott Marquardt**, Southwest Minnesota Initiative Foundation

**Dawn Hegland**, Upper Minnesota River Valley Development Commission

**Ryan Luft**, KMS High School Teacher

**Lisa Gregoire**, SWWC

**Tom Hoff**, SWWC

**Cliff Carmody**, SWWC

**Stephanie Streng**, SWWC

**Cheryl K. Glaeser**, Facilitator, Achieve TFC

The SWWC initiated the Rural CTE Advisory Committee (now the LYFT Pathways Advisory Committee), and began meeting on November 21, 2017 and have met 3-4 times per year since that time. Complete meeting notes can be found at [www.LYFTpathways.org](http://www.LYFTpathways.org)

The purpose of the committee has been to:

- Provide oversight of the initiative
- Develop the grant application process
- Brand the CTE initiative (Launch Your Future Today - LYFT Career Pathways)
- Coordinate effort and resources to avoid duplication
- Determine website content
- Determine communication strategies
- Review the progress of the initiative
- Assist in marketing LYFT Career Pathways to their colleagues and customers
- Assist in the development and marketing of local and regional workshops
- Review and approve partnership application for LYFT Pathways grant funding
- Assist in connecting organizations, school districts and businesses to CTE project opportunities

The primary project staff from the SWWC for this grant project include:

- Cliff Carmody, Executive Director of the SWWC has worked with school district superintendents, the Minnesota Service Cooperatives, and legislative contacts to keep them updated on the progress of the grant project.
- Lisa Gregoire, Senior Director of Teaching and Learning provides supervision of staff, coordinates professional development, approve contracts, works with budgeting and the advisory committee to assist in developing a regional, sustainable CTE model.
- Tom Hoff, Career and Technical Project Coordinator works with the advisory committee and both of the Carl Perkins Consortia to develop regional management and delivery structures and implementation of the work plan. He will also provides technical assistance to partnerships that are interesting in accessing funds to develop new CTE projects.
- Gail Polejewski, Career Development Coordinator for the Minnesota West Carl Perkins Consortium works with CTE teachers, counselors and school administrators to set CTE program development priorities within the consortium.
- Randy Erdman, Director of Finance oversees the budget, accounts payable and receivable, fiscal reporting, and annual audits.

## **PROJECT FOCUS AREAS**

Based on the Legislative language the following focus areas were determined:

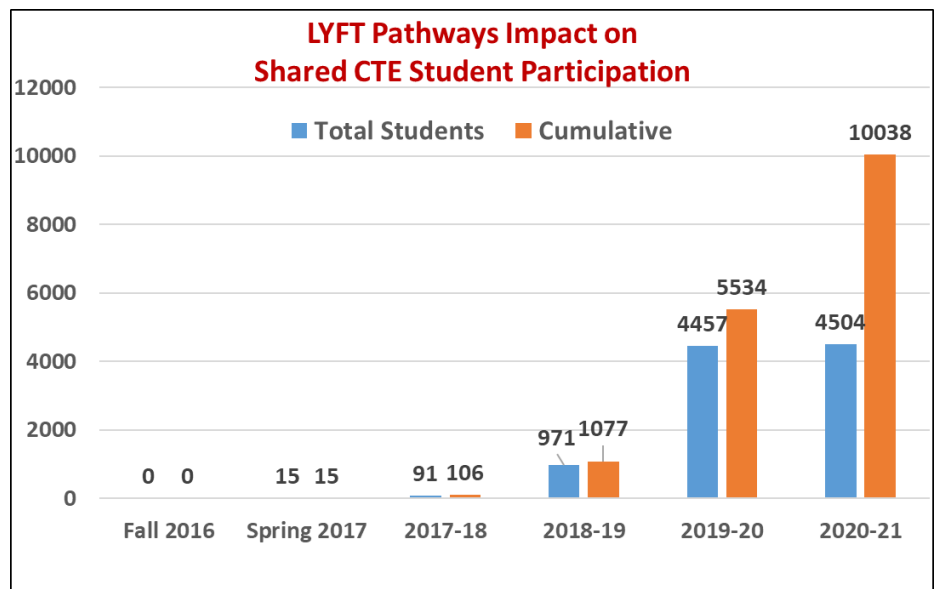
1. Develop courses and programs that encourage collaboration between two or more school districts;
2. Develop new career and technical programs that focus on the industry sections that fuel the rural regional economy;
3. Facilitate the development of highly-trained and knowledgeable students who are equipped with technical and workplace skills needed by regional employers;

4. Improve the access to career and technical education programs for students who attend sparsely populated rural school districts by developing public and private partnerships with business and industry leaders and by increasing coordination of high school and postsecondary program options;
5. Increase family and student awareness of the availability and benefit of career and technical education courses and training opportunities; and
6. Provide capital start-up costs for items including but not limited to a mobile welding lab, medical equipment and lab, and industrial kitchen equipment

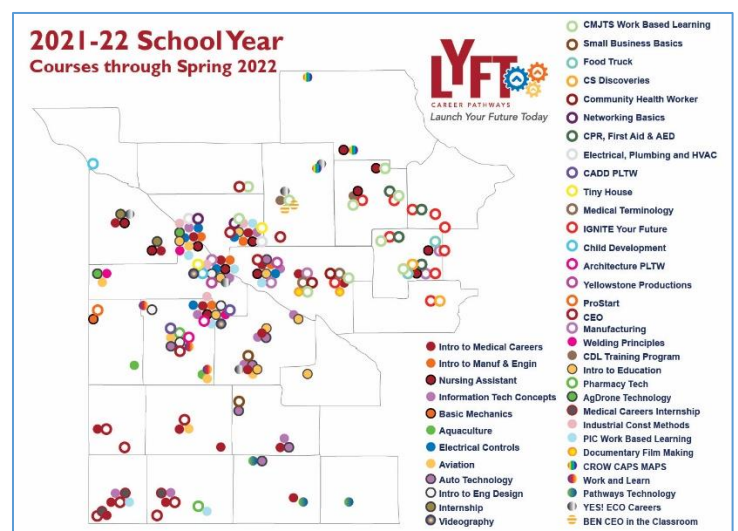
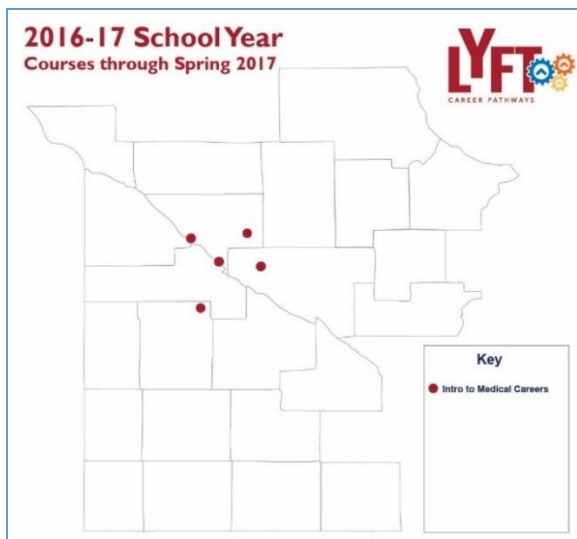
## PROGRESS AND EVALUATION INFORMATION

Since the LYFT Pathways application for funds was made available to partnerships on January 15, 2018 there have been 58 applicants awarded funding to develop new CTE experiences for students in areas such as:

- Medical Careers
- Aviation
- Auto Technology
- Aquaculture
- Culinary
- Pharmacy Technician
- Engineering
- Precision Manufacturing
- Filmmaking/Videography
- Entrepreneurship
- Welding
- Computer Science
- Internships
- Construction Trades
- Intro to Education



## GROWTH OF CTE PROGRAMS SINCE 2017



In the Fall of 2016, there were no schools involved in a shared-CTE delivery model. Due to the Rural CTE Consortium Legislative Grant and the formation of LYFT Career Pathways, by the end of the 2021-22 school year over 10,000 students benefited from new CTE courses and experiences that match our regional labor market needs. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the upheaval it has caused for schools and businesses, there was a slight decline in LYFT Pathways applications for funding. The final number of students impacted will be available at the conclusion of the 2021-22 school year.

Based on current and historical registration data, approximately 700 students have received 1,600 transcribed credits from Minnesota public colleges for their participation in the LYFT Pathways funded courses. Students that do not receive transcribed credit will have access to articulated college credit at a wide variety of Minnesota two-year colleges through the [CTECreditMN.com](https://CTECreditMN.com) project.

Two promotional videos have been produced to create awareness about [LYFT Career Pathways](#) and to encourage replication of successful CTE programs that were developed or expanded through the Rural CTE Consortium funding. The first video focused largely on shared-CTE courses that were developed by five partnering schools that make up the Minnesota River Valley CTE Collaborative. Pioneer Public Television recorded interviews with faculty and students and produced the promotional video. The other video was produced by a college student who grew up in southwest Minnesota and has formed his own video production company, Blue Key Media. This video tells the story of the Rural CTE Consortium Legislation and how it led to the development of LYFT Career Pathways. Each video features currently funded projects and provides perspectives from students, faculty, school board members, and business leaders.

An additional video was developed through Don't Blink, an animation media company and in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). *"What's Next After High School"*, was created to provide practical advice to parents and high school students about the process of career and education planning. It is fully animated, Minnesota focused, and available in four languages and can be found on the [www.LYFTpathways.org](http://www.LYFTpathways.org) website and DEED'S ["The Path to Workforce Success"](#) webpage.

In addition to the animated video, an interactive 3 E's (Exploration, Exposure, and Experience) Roadmap was created, along with companion web-based materials and a worksheet to guide students through the career planning process. For more information go to the [www.LYFTpathways.org](http://www.LYFTpathways.org) website and use the [3 E's Roadmap](#) menu.

### **RIPPLE EFFECT MAPPING EVALUATION**

Ripple Effect Mapping (REM) was used to collect evaluation data for the LYFT Career Pathways project. REM is a type of evaluation technique used to document the impacts of an initiative that can be difficult to collect using other methods. REM combines four evaluation methods — one-to-one interviews, group interviewing, mind mapping and qualitative data analysis. Besides serving as an effective qualitative evaluation tool, REM also engages and re-energizes project partners. Scott Chazdon, Evaluation and Research Specialist with the Extension Center for Community Vitality, led the evaluation process.

There were four stakeholder groups that participated in the REM process: CTE students, LYFT Pathways Advisory Board members, high school and college educators, and business partners. Below are the key takeaways from the REM Project Report. Please see the complete report for more specific details.

This Ripple Effects Mapping project has shown what happens when intentional efforts are made to connect schools, businesses, and economic development professionals with a focus on expanding career options for students in southwest Minnesota. Students, educators, business owners, and Advisory Committee members offered a variety of examples about ways that the program has:

- Built connections that expand opportunities
- Promoted collaboration
- Revitalized CTE
- Created real-world experiences
- Provided a range of opportunities for career exposure and exploration
- Promoted student growth and leadership

Participants acknowledged that there are many challenges involved when trying to rebuild a culture that supports a full range of career education options including but not limited to pursuit of a four-year college degree. As the nation debates making a two-year college degree even more accessible than it has been, Career and Technical Education programs such as LYFT Career Pathways will play a vital role helping students understand their options, helping employers secure their workforce needs, and helping communities communicate to youth that remaining or returning to their communities is a viable option.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

The rollout of the LYFT Pathways initiative occurred over a several month period and has been positively received. One of the reasons the development, launch, and operations of the initiative has gone so smoothly is due to the high level of engagement of the regional partners and the Advisory Committee. You will notice in the promotional materials on the website that LYFT Career Pathways is not branded by any single partner, but is owned by all that are involved. This shared ownership is one of the main factors that has led to the partnership's success. Another reason the initiative has been successful is that the Legislative funding has provided a safety net for partnerships to take risks to develop and implement innovative delivery methods for CTE classes and experiences.

While there was a history of sharing CTE programs in the 1970s and 1980s via rural vocational centers, many of the current school administration and staff were not involved in those programs. Therefore, collaborating between schools and businesses on the development, implementation, and management of shared-CTE programs is a new endeavor for most. The heightened level of engagement by businesses has been remarkable, expanding their involvement from supporters to true partnership in exposing students to careers in their fields and providing real-world work experiences. To date, over 300 businesses are engaged in LYFT Pathways funded programs. Not all of the first programs will be successful and partnerships will need to make adjustments to improve the process in subsequent years. However, the relationships that have been established will benefit the students, schools and communities for years to come. One of the main purposes of the Legislative Grant is for the

development of a new collaborative model for the delivery of rural CTE programs. The model can have variations from school to school and partnership to partnership, but the Legislative funding is allowing schools the opportunity to determine what works best for their circumstance.

In FY2021 four additional regions of the state received Rural CTE Consortium funding, Northeast Northwest, South Central and Southeast Service Cooperatives. The SWWC and its partners have met with representatives from those regions, shared all of our LYFT Pathway resources with them, and are currently working cooperatively with them to continue the growth and sustainability of CTE for all rural areas in the State.

### **BARRIERS TO OVERCOME**

Several key barriers have been identified by local and regional partners. The four listed below are the ones most commonly voiced during partnership meetings and on project reports.

- **Student travel for center-based instruction for shared-CTE project.** Schools bussing students the greatest distance for face to face instruction or labs end up bearing the greatest financial burden.
- **Graduation requirements.** Schools would like more local control and flexibility around graduation requirements and mention Algebra II, Chemistry, and Physics most often.
- **Dedicated funding for shared-CTE projects.** Funding is needed to incentivize cooperation between school district, business, and post-secondary partners that will fuel and sustain innovative CTE projects.
- **Shortage of CTE teachers.** There is a significant teacher shortage in all areas, but a severe shortage in all CTE fields. The new Minnesota Tiered Licensing system has provided some flexibility for filling open CTE positions. The success of any class or program depends a great deal on the quality of instruction.

### **BUDGET SUMMARY**

In total, \$2,397,000 in Rural CTE Consortium funds have been expended at the time of this report. The remaining \$603,000 have been awarded for regional projects and will be expended by June 30, 2022. Conservatively, about \$1,500,000 in additional funds have been leveraged through school, business and agency partners. Budget reports are regularly sent to the Minnesota Department of Education by the SWWC Finance Department.

- \$254,899.20 expended in Fiscal Year 2018 (school year began before funding was available)
- \$560,150.55 expended in Fiscal Year 2019
- \$807,474.18 expended in Fiscal Year 2020
- \$590,317.69 expended in Fiscal Year 2021
- \$183,626.23 expended to date in Fiscal Year 2022. All remaining funds have been allocated for regional projects and will be spent by June 30, 2022.

### **PLANS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023**

- All nine Minnesota Service Cooperatives (MSC) plan jointly for continued growth of CTE throughout the State.

- Continue to grow new CTE courses and program through high school, college, and business partnerships.
- Offer a regional First Tech Challenge competition at Southwest Minnesota State University to teach junior high and high school students programming, engineering and manufacturing skills.
- Expand the Midland CEO high school entrepreneurship program from two to four regional programs.
- Implement a work-based learning management system, which includes a comprehensive list of business partners in cooperation with Southeast Service Cooperative's Future Forward website.

#### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Please visit the [www.LYFTpathways.org](http://www.LYFTpathways.org) website for additional information, resources and videos.

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