

**LEGISLATIVE GRANT REPORT
RURAL CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION CONSORTIUM
ANNUAL REPORT – OCTOBER 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

Cheryl K. Glaeser, Achieve TFC Facilitator
See Moua-Leske, Adult Basic Education
Ann Trochilla, Adult Basic Education
Coreen Geurts, ACGC Counselor
Dr. George Taylor, Center of Innovation and Entrepreneurship
Luke Greiner, DEED
Jessica Miller, DEED
Andrea Moore, Hutchinson Public School
Jodi Jordon, Mid Minnesota Carl Perkins Consortium
Eric Day, Mid-Minnesota Rural Development Commission
Bruce Bergeson, Minnesota River Valley CTE Collaborative
Theresa Ireland, Minnesota West
Linda Pesch, Minnesota West
Judy Tebben, Minnesota West
Kayla Westra, Minnesota West
Gail Polejewski, Minnesota West Carl Perkins Consortium
Jamie Boelter, New London-Spicer Schools Superintendent
Bonnie Spohn, New London-Spicer Schools Principal
Sam Bowen, Ridgewater College
Matthew Feuerborn, Ridgewater College
Scott Marquardt, Southwest Minnesota Initiative Foundation
Ross Wastevidt, Southwest Minnesota State University
Jay Trusty, Southwest Regional Development Commission
Carrie Bendix, SW MN Private Industry Council
Cliff Carmody, SWWC
Liz Deen, SWWC
Eriann Faris, SWWC
Doug Jans, SWWC
Kathryn Les, University of Minnesota Extension
Dawn Hegland, Upper Minnesota River Valley Development Commission

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

The purpose of the committee in the beginning was to:

- Provide oversight of the initiative
- Develop the grant application process
- Brand the CTE initiative (Launch Your Future Today - LYFT Career Pathways)
- Coordinate efforts 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 purpose of the committee at the current time is to:

- Identify and determine local priorities needing focus to ensure the progress of the initiative
 - Advancing Student/Employer Connections
 - ✓ Assist in connecting organizations, school districts, and businesses to CTE project opportunities
 - Ensuring Equitable Access to Advanced CTE Opportunities for All Students
 - ✓ Refine as needed the grant application process
 - ✓ Review and approve partnership application for LYFT Pathways grant funding
 - ✓ Coordinate efforts and resources to avoid duplication
 - Expanding Regional Awareness and Collaboration
 - ✓ Determine effective local communication strategies that increase awareness and state the benefits of CTE through unified messaging.
 - ✓ Assist in marketing LYFT Career Pathways to their colleagues and customers
 - Advancing Educator Awareness/Development
 - ✓ Assist in the development and marketing of local and regional workshops

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.
- Liz Deen, Senior Director of Teaching and Learning provides supervision of staff, coordinates professional development, approves contracts, works with budgeting, and directs the advisory committee to assist in developing a regional, sustainable CTE model.
- Eriann Faris, Career and Technical Project Coordinator works with the advisory committee and both Carl Perkins Consortia to develop regional management and delivery structures and

implementation of the work plan. She will also provide technical assistance to partnerships that are interested 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

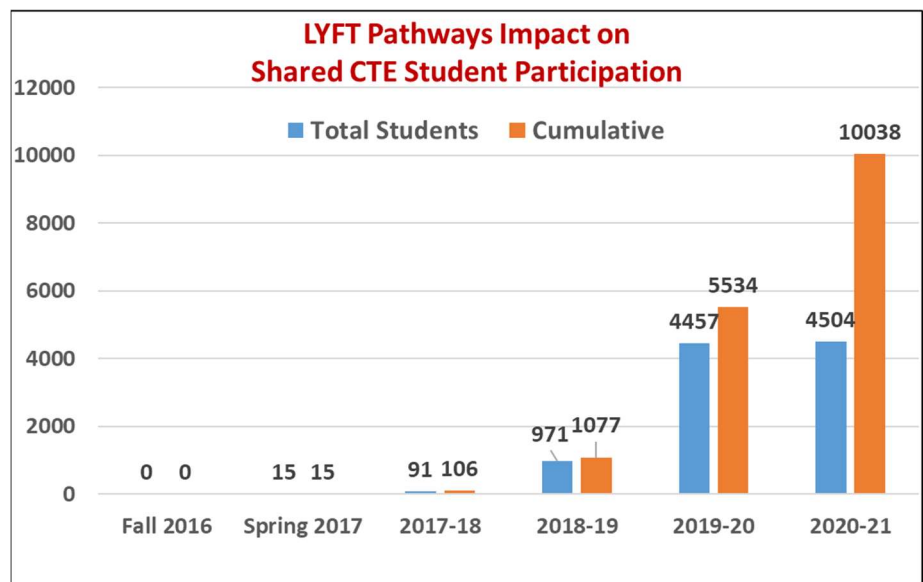
Based on the Legislative language the following focus areas were determined:

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

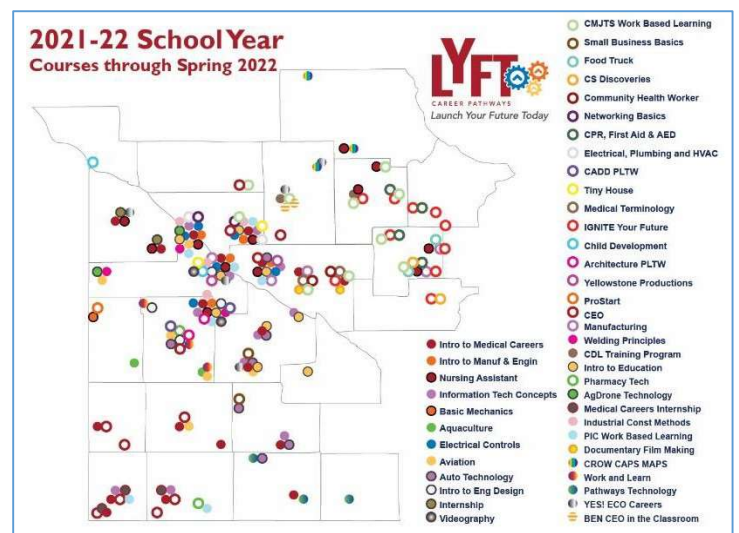
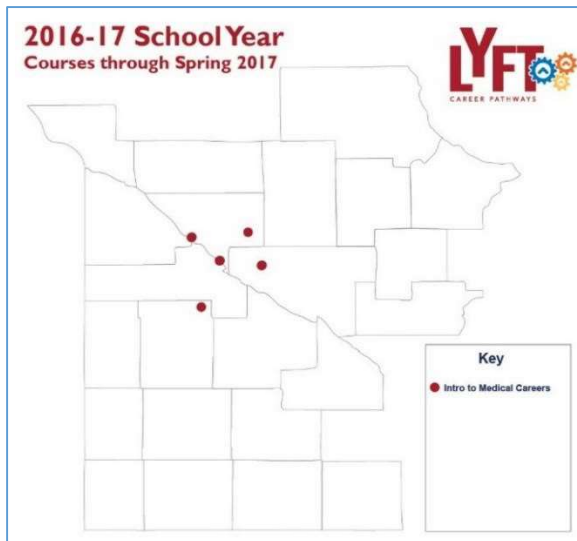
PROGRESS AND EVALUATION INFORMATION

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, 18,884 students benefited from new CTE courses and experiences that match our regional labor market needs.

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 project.

Two promotional videos have been produced to create awareness about [LYFT Career Pathways](#) and to encourage the 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 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 website and use the [3 E's Roadmap](#) menu.

The [LYFT Pathways 3E's Career Course](#) was developed to complement the LYFT Pathways 3E's Roadmap and What's Next After High School video. Course lessons incorporate regional and statewide resources and are designed to be taught as a full course or incorporated as individual lessons within an existing course. The 15 lessons include:

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|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| 1. Why Career Planning | 6. Workplace Styles | Insights & Connections |
| 2. Interests, Skills, and Talents | 7. Workplace Culture | 12. Reality Check: Lifestyle and Finances |
| 3. Discovering Personal Values | 8. Skills Employers Want | 13. Real-world Skills – Work-based Learning |
| 4. Discovering Workplace Values | 9. Workplace Ethics – Etiquette | 14. Building Your Brand |
| 5. Learning Styles | 10. Matching Skills & Interests with Careers | 15. Job Searching & Interviews |
| | 11. Exposure: Gaining | |

During FY22, two schools fully piloted the Careers Course for a total of 237 students that were impacted by the course. Testimonials from teachers include: “The career landscape has changed and a one-size-fits-all approach to career planning just isn’t appropriate in the 2020s. By emphasizing discovery and exposure, these new “3Es” tools will help guide our students, and their parents, through a strategy that will help them find their niche in today’s evolving workforce. A way for them to use their unique combination of strengths to make their own mark.” AND “I truly think this resource can be a game changer for our youth/young adults making plans for their futures!”.

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.

Four (4) stakeholder groups 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 examples of 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 the 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 in 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 period of several months and was 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. Nearly five hundred (500) businesses were engaged in LYFT Pathways funded programs. Not all the first programs were successful, and partnerships needed to adjust to improve the process in subsequent years. However, the relationships that have been established are benefitting the students, schools, and communities for years to come. One of the main purposes of the Legislative Grant was to develop 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. The advisory committee continues to guide the LYFT Pathways initiative by providing oversight of the funded initiatives, identifying priorities needed to be considered on both macro and micro levels to safeguard the progress of CTE initiatives and ensure innovative collaboration is occurring to connect organizations, school districts and businesses to CTE project opportunities.

In FY2021, four additional regions of the state received Rural CTE Consortium funding that includes Northeast Northwest, South Central, and Southeast Service Cooperatives. The SWWC and its partners have met with representatives from those regions, shared all 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.

In FY2022, the Minnesota Service Cooperatives (MSC) proposed to collaboratively leverage the rural CTE grant funding to bridge gaps in Minnesota's career preparation ecosystem to cross imaginary borders and better serve students across the state. This will require connecting and expanding existing career and technical education programming, developing new programming, and customizing or bringing to scale collaborative work to meet unique regional and statewide needs now and into the future. In addition, it will require statewide, cross-agency commitment; deeper public-private partnerships; and supportive funding and accountability models that reinforce the ecosystem by valuing collaboration, equity, and innovation. Essential elements of the work will include activities that build on existing models as well as innovations that promote career awareness and advance student learning.

Under the proposed state-wide collaboration, grant activity will be guided by a shared state-wide advisory

committee and fiscal agency. MSC will use similar models of state and regional coordination, evaluation collection, and reporting systems. The MSC CTE Consortium would engage in intentional and facilitated discussions on common processes or practices and collect input on innovative practices from each region with a focus on reducing barriers to students' affordable access to quality, student-centered educational experiences.

Each region will utilize regional CTE advisory groups to ensure that regional needs are addressed, therefore our LYFT Pathways Advisory committee will continue to exist. This grant includes specific, innovative, non-duplicative activities to support the career preparation ecosystem that addresses barriers to equitable and accessible CTE programming that provides students with an awareness of and exposure to regional careers and teaches students transferable workplace skills in applied learning context.

That goal is to intentionally pool our expertise and resources to provide a cohesive, flexible, and responsive career preparation ecosystem that will close equity gaps in education outcomes and workforce readiness.

BARRIERS TO OVERCOME

Several key barriers have been identified by local and regional partners. The four listed below are the ones most often 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 districts, businesses, 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, \$3,000,000 in Rural CTE Consortium funds have been expended at the time of this report. Conservatively, about \$1,750,000 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
- \$787,158.38 expended to date in Fiscal Year 2022

PLANS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023

- All nine Minnesota Service Cooperatives (MSC) work jointly for continued growth of CTE throughout the State.
- Replicate innovative practices and increase shared resources to address barriers and advance CTE.
- Develop career pathways services and CTE learning opportunities in partnership with regional stakeholders.
- Provide funding and support for regional CTE innovation through business/education partnerships.
- Increase business engagement by building a statewide system for experiential and WBL opportunities.
- Increase the awareness/benefit of CTE courses and training opportunities for students and parents through unified messaging.
- Address the shortage of CTE teachers by providing teacher licensure and professional development opportunities.
- Continue to grow new CTE courses and programs that are innovative and collaborative across high school, college, and business partnerships in southwest and west Central Minnesota.
- Further refine and develop career course materials and determine outreach and training for educators interested in using career course materials.
- 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 three to five regional programs and implement a unique one-of-a-kind Student Entrepreneurship Conference for the second year. The event will engage secondary, post-secondary, and professional entrepreneurs to convene in a space in which they can network with one another, pitch business ideas, get feedback from seasoned entrepreneurs, and tour local businesses.
- 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 website for additional information, resources, and videos.

Submitted by:

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