

Emerging Leaders Workforce Development, Inc.

Overview describing the innovative practice

Workforce Development, Inc.'s "Emerging Leaders" project focuses on molding and honing the leadership skills of youth and young adults as they explore the worlds of work and education. Their leadership skills are developed through their exposure to and participation in career and college readiness training, volunteerism, financial literacy, community education activities and work experiences. Emerging Leaders is practiced in small cohorts to foster peer mentorship and teambuilding.

Jobseeker impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for jobseekers)

The youth and young adults participating in the "Emerging Leaders" project gain knowledge of their passion by participating in the SPARKS activity courtesy of the Search Institute in Minneapolis. The SPARKS activity asks seven "essential questions" which include: What is your spark? What helps feed your spark, and how can your Career Counselor help? Combined with a career assessment tool such as the STRONG Interest Inventory, youth and young adults learn to visualize and connect their passions to careers that would be meaningful to them.

"Emerging Leaders" participants also gain basic money management, interviewing, resume writing and job search skills to help them navigate and be successful in the world of work. Touring local businesses and colleges and visiting with WDI's Industry Career Coaches expose the youth to employer's demands and a plethora of career pathways to explore.

Employer/Community impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for non-jobseekers)

Employers benefit by having access to talented young people they might not normally encounter through their usual recruitment methods. Employers are also able to directly impact these young job seekers by offering advice and sharing information about the skills they need in their workforce.

Employers also learn about the needs and circumstances of the youth and young adults, and are able to put the barriers to employment/education that exist in perspective so that they can better evaluate their hiring policies.

Teachers, staff, parents, and social workers are able to provide access and referrals to services and resources that help their youth be active participants in their career planning and guidance.

The community at large benefits by having youth and young adults focused on developing meaningful employment and education options, and becoming productive members of our communities.

Identification of those involved, including collaborators

1. Mayo Clinic offered a tour and job shadows to youth who are interested. Mayo Clinic is interested in feedback to customize their efforts to the needs of the youth. Mayo is seeking to develop internship opportunities for youth/young adults.

2. Rochester School District: Various departments within the school district including the Bilingual, Student And Family Education (SAFE), and ALC programs are referral agents for youth who can most benefit from the “Emerging Leaders” program.
3. County Social Worker are referral agents for the “Emerging Leaders” program.
4. Parents are mentors and referral agents the “Emerging Leaders” program.
5. Habitat For Humanity ReStore is the worksite for the work experiences. Habitat for Humanity ReStore is a nonprofit home improvement store owned and managed by the local Habitat for Humanity chapter.

Leveraging/alignment of outside resources

We are able to utilize the expertise and staff time of several of our leading employers in the area, as well as other youth-serving organizations and area schools. We are able to leverage funding from various youth grant sources, including private donations, to maximize our impact, as well as utilizing partnering agency staff and resources to provide referrals and education.

Ideas for replication/lessons learned

- Provide clear standards and expectations to all involved
- Give responsibilities to each youth, parent/guardian, teacher/counselor, employer
- Hold each accountable for their level of responsibility
- Offer youth interview opportunities to express their interest and purpose in the program. This shows commitment and ownership.
- Engage employers, parents, teachers, counselors and youth throughout the process
- Ask for and include input from youth on a regular, consistent basis