

**Lower Sioux Community Youth at Work Program
Southwest MN Private Industry Council
WDA 6**

Overview describing the innovative practice

The Lower Sioux Indian Community's Summer Youth at Work Program is a creative and collaborative initiative, utilizing a transdisciplinary educational and experiential work program. Youth learn Dakota language, culture, core values, while engaged in diverse work skills, including helping with yard work at community elder homes, delivering meals, tending/harvesting gardens, etc. Cultural, historical, and environmental site visits will also be integrated into the program. This initiative reflects a strong collaboration between health, education, recreation, cultural environmental departments, as well as supportive agencies like the Southwest Private Industry Council, Minnesota Indigenous Women's Society, and Dakota Wicohan.

In partnership with the SW MN Private Industry Council (PIC), the Lower Sioux Indian Community hosted a Summer Youth at Work Sign-Up Day for their 7th, 8th, and 9th grade youth focusing on job seeking, applications, and interviewing.

The Youth at Work Sign-Up day provides a method of coaching the students through the process of completing a job application and preparing for an interview. PIC staff provided feedback to each of the students on their final application and interview. The students' shared the following comments on their evaluation of the day: "We had to learn how to get a job and how much work you have to put in to get a job"; "I think it was a good idea to have us experience the job process"; and "I feel more prepared for job searching in the future".

On June 6th the Lower Sioux Indian Community kicked off their Summer Youth at Work program. All of the youth and their families participated in a presentation by CLIMB Theater. Using improvisation games, role playing, and scene study, students learned how to create a professional workplace persona which gets and keeps jobs. Through the use of 'theater' students learn the skills needed to succeed in a work environment. The hands on learning method is more than a traditional class or video and allows the students to practice their new skills in a safe learning environment.

Other activities included career assessments and interpretation, a presentation from DEEDs Labor Market Analyst highlighting: components of Career Planning; utilizing the results of their assessments; creating awareness of the tools and resources available to assist with their career planning.

In addition, an employer panel, comprised of elders from the Lower Sioux Indian Community, was held to discuss their career pathways with the younger community.

Jobseeker impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for jobseekers)

The assets the youth are gaining from their community include:

- Knowledge and a better understanding of labor market information.
- The importance of career planning.
- Awareness and knowledge of career exploration tools, to determine wages, job growth, education required, etc.
- Identify career options
- A sense of contribution to their community
- Demonstrate good job keeping skills, and understand the key elements of a job search.

As a result of participation in the initiative, it is anticipated that the youth will increase their school attendance, obtain their high school diplomas, and continue their education beyond high school. Their ability to secure a career they enjoy and receive a living wage are all projected positive outcomes.

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

The Summer Youth at Work program affects the attitudes, and practices of the youth to encourage readiness for, access to, and success in the workforce by increasing community involvement. Other outcomes might be the production of more business leaders, improving their health, and increase voting to mention a few long-term outcomes.

The local partner agencies, businesses, and community in general will benefit by the positive impact of the mentoring occurring throughout the project. In addition, the skill development and work based training opportunities will result in future job seekers to meet the needs of employers in the area.

Identification of those involved, including collaborators

Southwest Private Industry Council,
Minnesota Indigenous Women's Society,
Dakota Wicohan,
The Lower Sioux Indian Community,
DEED Labor Market Analyst
Redwood Falls High School,
Cedar Mountain High School

Leveraging/alignment of outside resources

Several employers contributed time and resources, as did other community serving organizations. The contributors were a part of the planning process. These contributors were all willing in some capacity to provide time to mentor, give monetary donations for snacks and/or transportation for tours and site visits, etc. Businesses provided experiential learning activities at their businesses or agencies. Partners and staff deliver quality and successful services in a collaborative manner resulting in a strong collaborative partnership.

Ideas for replication/lessons learned

The power of partnership is fascinating. It takes driven and focused community leaders to gather together to discuss the opportunities available in their communities for youth to be more engaged in the community. In doing so, a discussion around value added activities in which to compliment those opportunities within the community to demonstrate to the young people what it looks like to have a work ethic, live healthy, be positive, and so much more of which can be passed on from generation to generation. In a matter of time, the resources, schedules, partners, etc. begin to fall in place. Our planning of the program started about 9 months prior to the start of the Summer Youth at Work Program. Every day, every year new best practices surface in which to create an even better program the next time.