

Workforce "U"

*An evaluation of the Stearns-Benton
Employment & Training Council's pilot
project to promote the employability of
MFIP participants*

OCTOBER 2010

Workforce "U"

An evaluation of the Stearns-Benton Employment & Training Council's pilot project to promote the employability of MFIP participants

October 2010

Prepared for the Stearns-Benton Employment & Training Council by:
Ellen Shelton, Brian Pittman, and Jose Diaz

Wilder Research
451 Lexington Parkway North
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104
651-280-2700
www.wilderresearch.org

Contents

Summary	1
Introduction and background	11
The Workforce “U” program and the MFIP pilot.....	11
Evaluation purposes, methods, and data sources	13
Study limitations	17
Implementation	19
Workforce “U” as implemented in the pilot MFIP program	19
What does it take to implement a program like Workforce “U”?.....	22
What has changed as a result of the pilot?	24
What’s working?.....	28
What challenges have influenced the implementation?.....	30
Program participants and services	37
2009 pilot program study group.....	37
Comparison to Stearns-Benton MFIP participants not taking WFU courses	44
Results for participants	47
Workforce “U” a catalyst for Employment Services participation.....	47
Employment and income	49
Employment and income by industry	54
MFIP exit	60
Program outcomes for different sub-groups	61
Framework for Return on Investment (ROI) analysis	65
Discussion and implications for program replication	66
Is the program reaching its intended target population?.....	66
Is the program delivering appropriate services (in type and dosage)?.....	67
Is the program being implemented with fidelity? That is, have there been any changes in goals, concept, or design?.....	67
Are program processes (such as organization and management) operating as planned?	68
What can we say about program outcomes?.....	68
Is the program suitable for wider replication?	69

Contents (continued)

Recommendations.....	72
For Stearns-Benton Employment & Training Council.....	72
For the state.....	77
Appendix.....	81
Legislation providing for the Workforce “U” MFIP pilot and its evaluation.....	83
Summary of (originally proposed) research methods.....	84
Return on Investment framework for Workforce “U”.....	87
Workforce “U” student handbook.....	95
Partner interview protocol.....	125

Figures

1. Overview of study participants and programs	14
2. Summary of program components and changes implemented in the pilot.....	21
3. Workforce “U” program staffing	23
4. Courses taken by study participants.....	38
5. First Workforce “U” trigger courses taken, by month of study period.....	38
6. Time between first MFIP month and first Workforce “U” course	39
7. Support services dollars received by study participants (2007 – 2009).....	40
8. Sources of services received by MFIP students from Workforce “U” staff.....	41
9. Life skills assessment.....	42
10. MFIP self-screen scores.....	43
11. Characteristics of the study group and other MFIP participants in Stearns-Benton.....	44
12. Total quarterly MFIP Employment Services hours (average per participant), by calendar year quarters, 2007-2009	46
13. Average Employment Services activities hours in the 11 months before and after first Workforce “U” course.....	48
14. Average Employment Services activities hours by quarter of MFIP participation ..	49
15. Average hours worked by calendar year quarters, 2008 and 2009	50
16. Average hours worked in the 7 months before and after first Workforce “U” course	51
17. Average quarterly wages (for those employed)	52
18. Average hourly pay rate (for those employed)	53
19. Average workers per quarter by industry (2007-2009; N=80)	54
20. MFIP/Workforce “U” study group participants employed, and local unemployment rates (quarterly, 2007-2009).....	55
21. Percentage of workers employed quarterly (top five industries).....	55
22. Average wage earned quarterly per worker (top five industries, 2007-2009)	57
23. Average wage earned quarterly per worker by industries (2007-2009)	58
24. Average wage earned quarterly per worker (2007-2009).....	59
25. Average wage earned quarterly per worker – Five highest-paying industries (2007-2009).....	60
26. Patterns of MFIP use before and after first Workforce “U” class	61

Figures (continued)

27. Average quarterly work hours in the 7 months before and after first course, by Workforce “U” dosage.....	62
28. Average quarterly wages (Somali and other African immigrants)	63
29. Student survey: self-reported outcomes by type of assistance received from Workforce “U” staff.....	64

Acknowledgments

The authors thank the Kathy Zavala, Kyle Dolezal, and all the Workforce “U” staff at Stearns-Benton Employment & Training Council for their assistance in conducting this study. We also thank Leila Farah, Leslie Crichton, Mark Kleczewski, and Ann Sessoms at the Minnesota Department of Human Services, and Deb Serum at the Department of Employment and Economic Development, for their help identifying and accessing state data. We are grateful to the participants, instructors, staff, and employers and other community partners who participated in surveys and focus groups to help us understand how the program works and what it has meant to the people involved in it.

The following Wilder staff contributed to this study and report:

Mark Anton
Paul Anton
Benjamin Bushee
Philip Cooper
Paul Devereaux
Louann Graham
June Heineman
Bryan Lloyd
Ryan McArdle
Jessica Meyerson
Ron Mortenson
Nam Nguyen
Greg Owen
Dan Swanson
Kerry Walsh
Abby Struck
Lue Thao

Summary

Introduction and background

By 2018, Minnesota is predicted to be third in the nation in the percentage of new jobs that will require postsecondary education and training, and 47th in the percentage of jobs requiring only a high school diploma. Even after the economy rallies, there will likely be few jobs for which welfare recipients with limited skills will be considered.

To meet long-term needs both of job seekers and of Minnesota's economy, the Stearns-Benton Employment & Training Council (SBETC) offers a program called Workforce "U" to develop life skills, basic academic skills, work readiness skills, and specific job skills. These are offered to the full range of job-seekers, from laid-off professionals to first-time work entrants, in a college-style model. For lower-skilled job seekers, the goal is to help participants establish themselves on the first rung of a lifelong progression through career and educational advancement. The model includes "student services" to help participants address barriers that would otherwise prevent them from reliably attending courses or work.

The Workforce "U" program began in 2005 as a collaborative between SBETC and a group of employers in Central Minnesota. Recognizing it as a promising model, in 2007 the legislature appropriated money for a three-year pilot program to allow SBETC and its partners to strengthen and increase its capacity, specifically as it is offered to participants in the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), the state's family welfare program. The legislation also called for an independent evaluation of the pilot including an assessment of the program's potential for wider replication.

Implementation

Workforce "U" as implemented in the pilot MFIP program

The MFIP pilot enabled SBETC to strengthen not only direct services but also the configuration of partner organizations and its systems for delivering services. Based on interviews, staff focus groups, document analysis, and surveys of students, the evaluation finds that the following have been accomplished over the course of the pilot.

Within the program itself:

- More assessments have been developed to better identify what participants need, both in support services and in work skills.

- More student supports have been made available, and more are available through a class setting (in groups), saving limited one-on-one case consultation time for higher priority needs. New positions include a child care liaison to help increase the availability of suitable child care and help parents access it, and an outreach specialist to work with MFIP participants too distant from the WorkForce Center to access services there on a regular basis.
- New courses have been added, and existing ones strengthened and reorganized, to present content better matched to employer needs and present it in a more effective, user-friendly sequence.
- Courses have been linked to a larger-scale pathway to facilitate lifelong learning, with adult basic education at the front end and a more seamless connection to St. Cloud Technical and Community College at the other end.
- Opportunities for volunteer and paid work experience placements have been developed to provide self-confidence, experience, and qualifying work participation activities for those unable to find jobs rapidly.
- A model is being tested to better assess participants' computer skills and teach introductory skills as needed.
- An on-line course is being tested, to make the program more accessible to those unable to get to the WorkForce Center.

Primary accomplishments in the community at large were:

- Partner organizations' direct services and service capacity have been strengthened, especially in the area of child care.
- Links among organizations have been strengthened, so that agency staff are more aware of services available to clients and more able to help clients access the help they need.

Features of the pilot that made it effective in its partnership among organizations were:

- Good relationships and good communication
- Shared vision, goals, and interests
- Focus on client needs before those of organizations

- Identification and celebration of early successes

Changes for individual MFIP participants as a result of the pilot include:

- More MFIP participants are enrolling in Workforce “U” courses, although still only a small fraction of all MFIP participants.
- MFIP participants who enroll are somewhat more likely to complete courses satisfactorily than before the pilot.
- Instructors and Career Planners report that students increase in self-confidence, self-esteem, hopefulness, and career focus during their time in a course.
- MFIP and other students who complete the courses express high rates of satisfaction with the classes.

Qualitative evaluation data shows the following features to be particularly helpful for participants:

- Mixed-group classes (together with displaced workers and others)
- High quality course content and instruction
- Availability of a range of options, to fit individual needs and interests
- Paid work experience opportunities
- Group instruction and support

What challenges have influenced the implementation?

External challenges that had to be overcome include:

- The **economic downturn** hit exactly when the most significant changes to the Workforce “U” courses were being introduced. The recession changed most of the considerations on which planning had been based, and required considerable additional problem-solving to re-design solutions for unexpected changes in needs.
- **Child care subsidies** are an essential support to enable training as well as work. However, they do not cover up-front costs, which are hard for low-income parents to cover on their own, and they are often capped at an amount less than what parents are charged for care.

- **Countable work activities**, set by federal law, do not cover many of the activities essential to helping inexperienced, low-skill job-seekers become prepared for employment – especially during a recession when fewer job openings are available.

Within the program itself, challenges included:

- The overall vision of what Workforce “U” is supposed to be was not always consistent across all staff and partners, and over the time during which pilot changes were being implemented.
- The model began with a series of individual agreements with separate partners, which had to be moved gradually to a higher level of collaboration among an entire group of partners.
- There was a mismatch between employers’ expectations for perfect attendance, beginning with the first core course, and the realities of low-income parents’ lives that often include difficult and unpredictable challenges.
- A related challenge has been to motivate MFIP participants to sign up for the courses. The high expectations are daunting, and until participants experience the actual class, many do not appreciate the value of instruction in work readiness.

Program participants and services

2009 pilot program study group and the services they received

Eighty MFIP participants were identified as the overall Workforce “U” study group, based on their providing informed consent to be included in the study, having active MFIP status between January 2007 and December 2009, and taking at least one of the Workforce “U” core courses between January and September 2009. These core courses, as reconfigured for the pilot, are:

- **Career Launch**, which helps student acclimate to the job search experience and teaches foundation job preparation skills such as listening, teamwork, and problem solving. (24 class hours over four days, Monday – Thursday)
- **Career Trek**, which helps students assess their own interests, skills, and aptitudes, and then match those with potential career fields and learn more about career prospects and the needed skills. (30 class hours over five days, Monday – Friday)
- **Career Navigation**, a less computer-intensive version of Career Trek. (15 class hours over four days, Monday – Thursday)

Following these three core courses, **Career Tools** prepares students for job search, including communication skills, resumes, and thank you letters. **Career Tools Academies** combine these job preparation skills with instruction in English as a Second Language. The program also includes a variety of shorter courses on more specialized topics.

In addition to courses and individual and group supports, the MFIP program has funds available to pay for certain kinds of job preparation costs, and these were supplemented with funds from the pilot grant. Pilot funds were primarily used for training costs, whereas general support funds were mainly used for counseling, and secondarily for transportation.

Career Planners and other WorkForce Center staff also provided help to participants in a variety of other ways, including help with child care and transportation, help to balance family responsibilities with the need to attend classes regularly, and help learning to budget and manage money.

Potential barriers to employment

Assessment data shows that at least one-fifth to one-quarter of study group participants:

- have diagnosed learning disabilities (20%)
- have a chronic illness requiring a doctor's care (22%)
- had an Individual Education Plan while in school (22%)
- self-identify one or more symptoms relating to mental or chemical health (42% – however, only 13 percent reported that they had a concern about their mental health, and only 3 percent had a concern about their chemical health)
- had not completed a high school education (61%)
- needed an interpreter at intake (39%)

SBETC is hoping to expand Workforce “U” to eventually serve all MFIP participants, although it is still building capacity toward this goal. Compared to the overall group of MFIP participants at SBETC during the study period, the study group included a significantly higher proportion who were Somali or other African immigrants (51% vs. 19%), and who needed an interpreter at intake (39% vs. 15%). Study group members were also less likely to have a high school diploma or GED (39% vs. 62%).

Results for participants

Without a control group, this study cannot conclude that changes experienced by participants were caused by the program. However, there is strong evidence that Workforce “U” participation is a catalyst for increased engagement and participation in MFIP Employment Services hours.

- Workforce “U” coursework coincided with sharp increases in Employment Services hours.
- Study group participants averaged considerably more hours in the months following their first Workforce “U” course compared to the preceding months.
- In each quarter of MFIP participation after the first quarter, Workforce “U” students average more Employment Services hours than non-Workforce “U” MFIP participants. (These differences may be caused more by differences in characteristics between the two groups.)
- In terms of hours of paid employment, the Workforce “U” study group participants experienced the economic downturn of 2008 earlier and more severely than other MFIP participants in Stearns-Benton. However, participants in the Workforce “U” study group also had a faster and more robust rebound during 2009, despite having more significant barriers to employment as a result of lower education levels and English language skills.
- Wages for the study group decreased during 2008 and the first three quarters of 2009 while holding steady for non-Workforce “U” MFIP participants, but they increased more sharply in the last quarter of 2009. Longer follow up, during more stable economic conditions, and with a valid comparison group, will be required to assess wage impacts of the program.

The program’s employment outcomes are heavily affected by the overall economic slump. The trend in the number of employed participants during 2007 through 2009 closely matches the overall employment in Stearns and Benton Counties during the same time period.

The supportive services were found to make classes more effective for those who received them. Compared to non-Workforce “U” participants, those in the study group received approximately 40 percent lower wages, which is likely affected by their lower English language proficiency and educational levels. The wage gap was smaller (12%) in manufacturing jobs – one of the focal industries for Workforce “U” – suggesting that the two groups are similar in terms of the skills valued in this group of industries.

Compared to students who did not receive help with financial management or balancing family and work expectations, students who did receive such help were more likely to report that the courses had made a “big difference” to them in terms of job motivation and preparation.

Discussion and implications for replication

Is the program reaching its intended target population?

The disproportionate enrollments of MFIP participants with less than a high school education and those who are immigrants appears to indicate that the program is successfully reaching participants who are in greater need of additional skill-building help, and who are often not successfully engaged in similar programs. However, only a relatively small proportion of MFIP participants were served through the Workforce “U” program during the study period. The economy has increased the demand for the program while reducing funds available for social services to meet participants’ needs. To increase MFIP participants’ ability to compete for limited space in the courses, the staff have developed a system for reserving slots for them.

Is the program delivering appropriate services (in type and dosage)?

All stakeholder groups who provided feedback for the evaluation report that the Workforce “U” program is of high quality, and adds significantly to students’ work readiness and job potential. Support services add to the impact and increase the effectiveness of the classes. The variety of offerings allows Career Planners to assign each participant to a menu of classes best suited to their needs and interests. The main issue on which there is still a lack of consensus among stakeholders is the 100 percent, no excuses attendance policy of the core courses. Career Planners report that many of their MFIP participants have so many crises in their lives that they doubt their ability to successfully meet these attendance expectations.

Is the program being implemented with fidelity? That is, have there been any changes in goals, concept, or design?

Partners described the program with a reasonable degree of consensus on its main points. They rated SBETC highly for its flexibility and adaptability in the face of drastically changed economic conditions. The evidence we collected indicated that the adaptations have been made consistent with the original goals and principles of the program.

Are program processes (such as organization and management) operating as planned?

Most stakeholders reported that the staff at SBETC had done an excellent job of building and maintaining relationships. The program is currently moving from many separate two-way partnerships to a broader collaborative structure which should help keep all partners informed better and increase opportunities for efficiency. The program has been hampered by the lack of efficient data systems, for student registration and attendance keeping as well as program planning and management. Challenges related to data management are compounded by the need to build seamless services across multiple state agencies including DEED, DHS, Education, and MnSCU.

What can we say about program outcomes?

Based on the preliminary data available, there is reason to be optimistic about longer-term outcomes. The evidence is:

- Emphatically positive feedback from an overwhelming majority of class participants
- Confirming evidence from instructors and Career Planners that students who complete the courses are more motivated, more energetic, more hopeful, more self-confident, and have more self-knowledge and career awareness
- Preliminary data from administrative records showing a change in the direction of participation rates, work hours, and earnings that occurs following enrollment
- Preliminary data from administrative records showing that even participants with more serious work barriers show equal (and possibly stronger) outcomes after three follow-up quarters, and after receiving more intensive services

To fully realize the promise of this preliminary evidence it will be necessary to solve the problems of scale and deliver the programs to more than a small fraction of the MFIP participants. It will also require development of alternative experiences that allow participants to realize and celebrate early successes before being held to 100 percent attendance standards.

Is the program suitable for wider replication?

It is premature to answer this question while changes are still being made to increase enrollment rates, and while data are too limited to fully understand outcomes. However, the model appears to be promising and worthy of wider consideration. Both staff and organizational partner representatives almost unanimously report that they would recommend that peers in other counties seriously consider replicating the Workforce “U”

model, with suitable tailoring to fit local needs. The course-based delivery system requires a certain concentration of population to ensure that classes can be filled on a reasonable schedule, although the on-line delivery now being tested may allow for successful delivery in areas of lower population density, given adequate organizational partners.

Recommendations

For Stearns-Benton Employment & Training Council

The implementation findings show that SBETC has assembled a highly-functioning, motivated set of community partners to deliver services that are highly valued by those who receive them. This evaluation points to the following opportunities to build on this success and to address some key challenges.

- SBETC should continue to offer the Workforce “U” model, and continue to develop the model jointly with its partners
- SBETC should support and encourage front-line staff as well as clients in the adjustments to the new model
- SBETC should ensure that the perspectives of front-line staff and clients are considered in program development
- Some MFIP participants have needs and starting points that are significantly different from those of dislocated workers, and these should be accommodated
- SBETC should continue its efforts to develop a program management data system capable of managing enrollment and attendance functions
- SBETC should continue its efforts to move from a collection of bilateral partnerships to a true multiparty collaboration

For the state

The following recommendations highlight opportunities for the state to support these successes, build on them, and potentially help address some conditions that may tend to limit success.

- The Workforce “U” model should be seen as a promising way to meet MFIP participants’ needs for job readiness and longer-term self-sufficiency

- State legislators, and officials responsible for oversight of data privacy, should directly address the balance of individual privacy protection and the public's interest in improving the effectiveness of programs
- More should be done to address policy inconsistencies that impede program participation

Introduction and background

The Workforce “U” program and the MFIP pilot

A recent report from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce predicts that Minnesota will be third in the nation in the percentage of new jobs (between 2008 and 2018) that will require postsecondary education and training. It is 47th in the nation in the percentage of new jobs that are forecast to be available to workers with only a high school diploma, and 48th in new jobs accessible to those with less than a high school education.¹ In today’s recessionary economy, welfare recipients with limited skills are the last job applicants likely to be considered for employment. By 2018, even if the economy has rallied significantly, welfare recipients with limited skills may not be able to find jobs even if they are open. With smaller numbers in the generations coming up to fill the jobs vacated by retiring baby boomers, the state’s economic health will increasingly depend on ensuring that all potential workers have more than minimal skills.

To meet long-term needs both of job seekers and of Minnesota’s economy, the Stearns-Benton Employment & Training Council (SBETC) offers a program to develop life skills, basic academic skills, work readiness skills, and specific job skills. These are offered in a college-style model to help participants establish themselves on the first rung of a lifelong progression through career and educational advancement.

Workforce “U” began in 2005 as a collaborative between SBETC and a group of employers in Central Minnesota. It is intended to meet a simple core goal: to simultaneously meet job-seekers’ needs for skills and employers’ needs for a skilled workforce.

The Workforce “U” program was developed for a broad cross-section of job seekers, including dislocated workers, youth, and other first-time entrants into the job market, including participants in the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), Minnesota’s family welfare program. It is somewhat unusual among MFIP employment programs in its focus on longer-range goals of self-sufficiency rather than the fastest possible connection to the first available job. However, the program was highly regarded in the workforce development field in Minnesota for its quality and the promise of its programs. In 2007 the legislature appropriated money for a three-year pilot program to allow Stearns-Benton Employment & Training Council and its partners to increase the capacity of the Workforce “U” program. The purpose of the pilot was specifically to better help participants in MFIP to attain self-sufficiency, as well as to better meet the workforce needs of central

¹ Carnevale, A.P., N. Smith, & J. Strohl (2010, June). *Help wanted: Projections of jobs and education requirements through 2018*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

Minnesota employers. Specifically, the legislation (Minnesota Statutes Ch. 147, Art. 2, Sec. 52) appropriated funds for a grant for this purpose, and provided that:

A pilot program is established in Stearns and Benton Counties to expand the Workforce U program administered by the Stearns-Benton Employment and Training Council.

The grant to SBETC provided for \$100,000 through June 30, 2008, and \$750,000 for each of fiscal years 2009 and 2010. Due to delays in the execution of the contract, over half of the FY 2008 grant had to be returned unspent at the end of the first year.

Workforce “U” meets job-seeker, employer, and community needs through a specific set of strategies. Funding from the pilot grant was used to refine and expand the model. Prior to the pilot, the model included a relatively standard set of MFIP services, including assessments to identify potential barriers to job readiness; support services (such as child care reimbursement, access to counseling as needed, and limited funds to help defray costs for transportation, work tools and clothing); and referral to English as a Second Language or other Adult Basic Education for basic skills, as needed. The distinctive element of Workforce “U” as an MFIP program prior to the pilot was the inclusion of MFIP participants in the training component designed for a broader cross-section of job seekers. Figure 2 (page 21) summarizes the program components before and after the pilot.

Changes made during the pilot were:

- Additional assessments to identify new participants’ skills, interests, and barriers to participation and work readiness
- Additional “student services,” developed through new and expanded partnerships with existing community resources, to help participants address barriers that would otherwise prevent them from attending courses or reliably going to work (such as domestic violence threats, mental health problems, lack of child care or transportation, or needs for financial literacy)
- Expanded access to English as a Second Language or other Adult Basic Education, and greater combination of those services with job training activities
- Training in a wide variety of skills, including computer skills; work readiness (also called “soft skills”) including communication, team work, and conflict resolution; career exploration and labor market information about job openings and wage levels; what employers expect and how to present themselves professionally; job search and interviewing skills; and other more advanced training skills as needed

- Delivery of skill training, assessments, and support services through a rich menu of post-secondary style courses, which offer a credential upon completion that certifies skills to employers
- Opportunities were developed for volunteer placement or (paid) supported work experience for those unable to obtain jobs in the competitive labor market

Both before and during the pilot, the program has been overseen by two committees. At the strategic level is the Workforce “U” Committee. This is a committee of the area Workforce Council made up of employer representatives holding management positions, including (but not limited to) human resources managers. This group meets monthly to review and provide oversight for the program’s content, delivery, process, and outcomes. At the tactical level is the Staff Committee of Career Planners, trainers, and supervisors, who met weekly. This group incorporates information from the employer committee and oversees the details of implementation.

Evaluation purposes, methods, and data sources

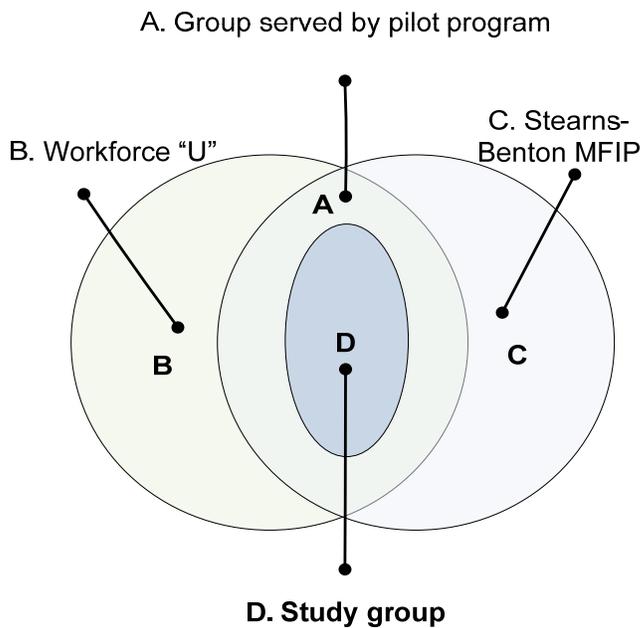
In addition to supporting program development, the legislation directed that an independent evaluation be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the Workforce “U” model and its potential for wider replication.

The Workforce U pilot program must be evaluated by a research and evaluation organization with experience evaluating welfare programs. The evaluation must include information on the total number of persons served, percentage of participants exiting the program, percentage of former participants reentering the program, average wages of program participants, and recommendations to the legislature for expanding the program statewide.

Although the pilot period was designed to run from November 2007 through June 2010, the evaluation contract was for the period April 15, 2008 through June 30, 2010. The Minnesota Department of Human Services reserved the authority to oversee evaluation methods, which were approved in September 2008. At the end of October 2008, evaluators were informed that Institutional Review Board authorization would be required for access to data on individuals in the program. When this authorization was granted, on January 15, 2009, it allowed access to administrative data for all prior (2007 and 2008) participants, but required individually signed, itemized consents for access to individual administrative data for 2009 participants. (New participants after September 2009 were not included in the evaluation design because there was not time to collect follow-up data on outcomes for them before the final report.)

Figure 1 below summarizes the different populations and programs involved in the evaluation. The Workforce “U” – MFIP pilot serves a group (A) that is only part of the overall Workforce “U” program (B), and only part of the overall group of MFIP participants (C). Within the pilot program, the evaluation only includes participants who took the revised courses between January and September 2009, and who signed informed consents to have their individual data included in the study.

1. Overview of study participants and programs



Note: Groups not shown to scale

Initially the evaluation was designed to compare MFIP participants in Workforce “U” with a statistically-constructed comparison group in other comparable counties. The propensity score matching method is at the cutting edge for analysis of outcomes of workforce programs where the use of randomized control groups is not practical. It uses statistical regressions analyses to control for potential bias in the selection of program participants, similar to the analyses often used to control for confounding factors in analyses of program outcomes.²

Unfortunately, due to a number of unforeseeable constraints, the number of participants who could be included in the evaluation proved too small for this method. Not all of the reasons for the smaller numbers are clear, but they include:

² A more detailed description of the method is included in the Appendix.

- Decreased job opportunities due to the economic downturn, which occurred at the same time as the pilot
- Limited spaces in the program being taken up by an unusually large number of dislocated workers, leaving few spaces for MFIP participants
- Lack of access to individual data from administrative records (necessary for propensity score matching or to identify participants who fit the study criteria) except by individually-signed, itemized consent forms
- Lower than expected percentage of participants who agreed to have their administrative data included in the evaluation

For some of the same reasons, implementation of the new program elements developed in the pilot was delayed, and some adjustments had to be made in plans to accommodate unforeseen economic conditions. This became evident in the late summer of 2009 when SBETC staff had finished the process of identifying 2007-2008 Workforce “U” students who had also been MFIP participants, this information had been matched with administrative data by DHS staff, and the data had been sent to Wilder Research for analysis. Due to limitations in the data permitted to the evaluators, this was the first time that research staff were able to identify the fact that the numbers of participants was too small to support the statistical methods that had been proposed. This led to a re-examination of the research methods.

Rigorous outcome evaluations are best suited for fully developed programs operating under relatively stable conditions. Given the small enrollments and still-adjusting implementation, such an evaluation design was no longer suitable. For a program that is still field-testing strategies or adapting to a changing environment, a formative evaluation is more appropriate. Formative evaluations help identify what is and is not working, and employ a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods.

During discussions with SBETC staff in the summer and fall of 2009, research and program staff determined that the number of participants could not be increased to a number that would allow statistical comparisons of results to identify differences in outcomes, no matter how large those differences might be. As a result, in a series of conversations in November and December 2009, agreement was secured from the Executive Director of the Stearns-Benton Employment & Training Council, the Assistant Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Human Services, and the legislative author to re-prioritize the evaluation approach.

The revised study purpose and methods, confirmed in a January 2010 memorandum shared with the Assistant Commissioner and legislative author, focused primarily on

understanding and learning from the process of implementation. Available administrative data was still collected, but less emphasis was placed on its detailed analysis. Instead, interviews with collaborative partners were added to understand the implementation process and the factors that help and impede its success. The Return-on-Investment component of the evaluation design was also modified to provide a framework by which a complete ROI could be conducted when data are available.

Data sources for this report include the following:³

- Selected items from state administrative data for all MFIP participants in Stearns and Benton Counties during 2007 through 2009 (demographic information, Employment Services participation hours by month, MFIP status by month, employment hours and wages by quarter) (applies to all of group C in Figure 1)
- Selected items from administrative data maintained by SBETC for the same participants (selected assessment and self-screen items, support services dollars used, Workforce “U” courses taken) (applies to all of group C in Figure 1)
- Surveys completed on the last day of class by MFIP and non-MFIP students from April 2009 through January 2010 (N=264 non-MFIP students and 29 MFIP students) (applies to a subset of group B in Figure 1: those enrolled in Career Launch, Career Tools, and Career Navigation between April 2009 and January 2010)
- Study ID numbers, assigned by the research staff in the Minnesota Department of Human Services, allow separate pieces of information to be matched for MFIP participants in Stearns and Benton Counties who gave informed consent to be included in the study (N=136 who provided consent, of whom 80 met study group criteria by also enrolling in a Workforce “U” trigger course between January and December 2009) (group D in Figure 1)

In addition to these data about individual participants, more qualitative information about the program and its implementation included:

- Notes of individual and group conversations with SBETC staff (instructors, Career Planners, and program administrators) about the process of implementation
- Semi-structured interviews with 16 representatives of organizations that partnered with SBETC in the development of the expanded pilot program, covering perceptions of the Workforce “U” program, their agency’s role in it, their satisfaction with inter-

³ The study also included a survey of employers of MFIP Workforce “U” students who obtained jobs between April and December 2009 and who gave informed consent for Wilder Research to contact their employers. The numbers of completed interviews was too small to include in this report.

agency relationships and communications, and the factors that helped and hindered effective partnership

- SBETC documents describing Workforce “U” purposes and implementation strategies
- Reports of findings from focus groups conducted with SBETC clients (Workforce “U” and non-Workforce “U” MFIP participants) by SBETC staff, covering perceptions of SBETC’s MFIP services in general and Workforce “U” courses in specific, reasons for enrolling or not enrolling in the courses, and barriers to enrollment

Throughout the evaluation, results of individual study components were shared with program staff for use in understanding and improving the program. These included summaries of staff interviews and focus groups, findings about the small numbers of enrolled participants, and findings from administrative data about the characteristics of enrolled and non-enrolled MFIP participants. These findings were used to help identify the need for recruitment strategies and to help shape the nature of those strategies.

Study limitations

Caution should be used in interpreting the results of this study due to unavoidable limits in the availability of data.

State data laws and procedures restricted this evaluation’s access to individual data on MFIP participants in Stearns and Benton Counties for 2009, when programs developed under the pilot were in effect. For this time period, data routinely collected by the state’s administrative data system about individual MFIP participants could only be used if each participant was individually approached, informed about the study, and asked to give written consent for their data to be shared with the evaluator. As a result, our study sample cannot be assumed to be fully representative of all the pilot project students, or of the overall local MFIP population from which they are drawn.

The initial study methods proposed for this evaluation included a quasi-experimental design, using a statistically-constructed comparison group to control for potential bias introduced by the fact that not all MFIP participants participated in Workforce "U." However, unexpectedly small numbers of participants opted into the study, which was partly related to the fact that unexpectedly small numbers of MFIP participants were served in Workforce “U” classes during the study period. As a result, group sizes were too small to use the quasi-experimental method. Moreover, due to lack of access to data on those who did not opt in, we are unable to examine the extent to which study participants are or are not representative of the larger group.

The pilot program was implemented at the same time that economic conditions were the worst seen since the Great Depression. The recession affected both the implementation of the pilot and the outcomes for participants. The small group sizes in the data, and the unavailability of a rigorous comparison group, prevent us from using statistical modeling to separate economic influences from the effects of the Workforce “U” program on participant outcomes. However, detailed and descriptive data from program and administrative records, as well as feedback from both project staff and participants, allow evaluators to offer a more complete picture of the program than would have been possible had the study relied solely on the original design.

Implementation

Findings in this section derive from interviews with representatives of partner agencies, notes of conversations with SBETC staff, and document analysis.

Workforce “U” as implemented in the pilot MFIP program

The MFIP pilot enabled SBETC to strengthen not only direct services but also the configuration of organizations and service delivery systems. These are described in more detail below in the section on implementation findings. The following overview describes the new Workforce “U” program, beginning with the roll-out of newly configured courses in January 2009.

The program is organized on an academic model, combining skill-development classes with a student support component. Except where a need has been identified for intensive support services, these “student supports” – including basic information about financial management and financial literacy, and mental health and stress management – are also delivered in a class format.

The program begins with individualized assessments. Classes incorporate career exploration; a thorough grounding in job readiness skills (also known as soft skills); and job search and interviewing strategies. At higher levels, classes also offer skill training more specific to certain industry sectors, as well as connections to other short-term and long-term training including credit-bearing college courses.

Four courses form the core of the Workforce “U” program.

Career Launch helps students acclimate to the job search experience. It teaches foundational job preparation skills suitable for any field, such as listening, teamwork, and problem solving. It is a one-week, 24-hour class, from 9:00 to 3:30 daily, Monday through Thursday.

Career Trek helps students assess their own interests, skills, and aptitudes, and then match those with potential career fields. Students acquire in-depth information on the current labor market and potential career paths in their field of interest, including prospects for jobs and wages, and which guidance about the skills they will in order need to advance. It is a one-week, 30-hour class, from 8:30 to 3:30 daily, Monday through Friday.

Career Navigation helps students identify a preferred field and learn more about what is needed in order to progress in the field. Students also learn to market

themselves to prospective employers and plan for how they will balance work and personal life responsibilities. (This course is for students who do not have the computer skills required for Career Trek.) It is a one-week, 15-hour class, from 8:30 to 12:30 daily, Monday through Thursday.

Career Tools follows Career Navigation or Career Trek. It prepares the student for job search, including communication skills, resumes, and thank you letters. It is a one-week, 15-hour class, from 1:00 to 4:00 Monday through Friday.

Each class is run so as to simulate workplace expectations, including a requirement of perfect attendance and strict timeliness, both at the start of each day and after breaks. A student who misses a class or comes late, even once, is dropped from the class and must take it again from the start to receive credit. Students who complete Career Launch, Career Trek, and Career Navigation receive a certificate that can be presented to prospective employers. The certificate is evidence of job readiness, giving proof that the student demonstrated reliable attendance, punctuality, and a cooperative spirit every day of the class. Students who complete Career Tools can present their completed job portfolio to St. Cloud Technical and Community College for consideration for award of college credit.

Classes build on each other, with content designed to match the most current local labor market needs. Employers in the Central Minnesota area form the program's steering committee, provide guidance on the skills that are most needed, volunteer time to teach classes, offer mock interviews, and inform other employers about the program and the value of hiring job seekers who have been trained through it.

The program operates with three guiding principles summarized as "Excellence, Honor, Passion." Each of these applies equally to students and staff, including service providers at partner organizations. The attendance expectation is one facet of the "passion" principle; another is an equivalent expectation of dedication and commitment from staff. The "honor" principle is exemplified through consistent treatment of all students and staff with respect, for example in referring to participants as "students" rather than "clients." The "excellence" principle applies both to the quality of services and to the level of expectation for outcomes. For example, rather than a short-term focus on an MFIP participant's number of qualifying participation hours in a month, the focus for service is on helping the participant establish a sound footing on a path leading to lifelong learning and career progression.

Figure 2 summarizes key elements of the Workforce "U" model and compares the pre-pilot and post-pilot implementation of those elements.

2. Summary of program components and changes implemented in the pilot

Component	Prior to pilot	Pilot plan	At end of pilot
Program oversight	Workforce “U” Committee (employers)	Add counties and MOU partners; also add a committee of staff for implementation decisions	Workforce “U” Committee continues Meetings with counties and MOU partners Staff/ABE trainer monthly meetings begin Dec.2008
Curriculum	Variety of courses, developed over time for general audiences	Refine curriculum, based on employer input about performance requirements for jobs	Some new courses, others modified/strengthened More coherent and interconnected set of classes More “student support” content (e.g. nutrition, child care, realistic job expectations)
Assessments	Some in-class pre/post tests Standard MFIP assessments	Add /strengthen assessments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of student support needs • Of student skill levels • Of course effectiveness 	Added Employability Measure to identify readiness/support needs Added more targeted skill assessments Strengthened student course assessment tools
Address student support needs	No special provisions for MFIP participant barriers to class participation	Add supports to help MFIP participants prepare for class enrollment and successfully complete classes	Recruitment of additional partners for more services; expansion and/or refinement of prior partners’ services; increased co-location
Information management	Standard state and Rural MNCEP data systems Registration and attendance tracked manually through paper/Excel files	Identify and implement an integrated Learner Management System for registration, class records, and assessments	Implemented and also being used to pilot on-line class offerings

Source: SBETC documents including monthly grant reports; Wilder Research discussions with SBETC staff; and Wilder Research interviews with program staff and program partners.

The official pilot period was July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2010. However, the SBETC contract with the state for administration of the grant was not executed until the end of December 2007.

Development of new course content (including both training and support components) occurred beginning in 2008. Additional staff were assigned for placement, retention, and childcare support in July 2008. To teach new content, faculty were recruited from private sector employers (mainly human resources staff) and County Extension. Additional Career Planners were recruited in September to expand activities related to training, placement, and retention. The introduction of new courses picked up in the last months

of the year, with the new Career Launch course first introduced in November, a new Job Club in December, and non-English language sections beginning in January 2009.

The introduction of these new courses, developed for the MFIP pilot and with the MFIP participants' needs at the forefront, coincided with the economic collapse that began in October. This change had profound implications for the implementation of the pilot, by changing both the number and the types of job seekers to be served, and the real and perceived likely outcomes of job training and job search.

What does it take to implement a program like Workforce “U”?

The Workforce “U” program seeks to offer a comprehensive set of community supports through an increasingly integrated service delivery model. Because of these features, its implementation requires the alignment of interests and resources from many sources, including employers, public policies and officials at all levels including other education providers, and nonprofit social service providers in the community. Interviews with partners and staff and a review of project documents show that the following kinds of contributions are critical to the effective delivery of this program.

Employers contribute input on the skills that are currently needed and anticipated; information on how they seek and select prospective employees; and feedback on their satisfaction with program graduates. They also provide volunteer “adjunct faculty” for Workforce “U” classes in a variety of topics, such as “Preparing for the interview,” “The job offer,” and “Attitude, ethics, and customer service.”

Public officials may not be directly involved on a personal level except at the county level. However, **public policy** at federal, state, and local levels, is an important factor shaping the program's goals and services as well as funding. Moreover, it must conform to policies from a variety of agencies and programs. For this pilot evaluation the most directly pertinent is MFIP, and its overarching federal policy of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). However, the pilot is only a subcomponent of the larger Workforce “U” program, which is also governed by the federal Workforce Investment Act and oversight by state and local Workforce Investment Boards. To improve services by coordinating efforts with other agencies, it also must take account of policies that govern other state and local public programs, including Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Basic Education, and higher education.

Nonprofit social service providers in the community are a vital part of the Workforce “U” model. For low-intensity social services, representatives of these providers offer in-class content on financial literacy and financial management; stress management and health promotion; conflict resolution; and other topics to increase general life skills. As

in other welfare-to-work programs, students with more intensive needs may be referred to partner agencies for direct, individual services such as counseling to resolve domestic violence situations or mental health problems.

Program staff are another resource critical to the implementation of Workforce “U” that must be borne in mind. Career Planners (typically called “job counselors” in other MFIP employment services programs) are the front line delivery personnel for the program. In the pilot, they have been responsible for learning and understanding a new way of doing their own jobs as well as for explaining the new program to participants. They motivate participants, which can be hard at any time in a program that is not voluntary. It is doubly hard when they must motivate low-skilled, inexperienced job seekers to prepare for employment during a severe recession when they are in classes sitting next to college graduates who are also unemployed. In order to help their clients attend the courses, they must also mobilize additional resources to ensure that they have child care and transportation available, as well as other resources based on individual needs. For Career Planners, the new model of Workforce “U” represents a significant culture shift, and one that requires ongoing support, encouragement, and professional development. This evaluation found that it also requires that they be involved in the planning and in providing reflections on how new program elements are working.

Project staffing

Including staff funded from all sources (not only the pilot funds), staffing increased from 2007 to 2010 by 44 percent. At both times, staffing included one Executive Director and one Deputy Director, and one Financial Manager for the overall agency (including many programs and responsibilities besides Workforce “U”) and one Program Director for the Workforce “U” program. Other program staff are shown in Figure 3 below. Note that it is not possible to separate MFIP pilot staff from non-pilot staff due to the program’s design for multiple target populations.

3. Workforce “U” program staffing

	2007 FTEs	2010 FTEs
Planner	-	0.5
Administrative Secretary	1	1.5
Career Planners	16.4	23.6
Employment & Training staff	4.0	6.5
Management Information System/IT	.5	.8
Purchasing	0.5	1.0

Source: Information provided by SBETC.

Career Planners have a variety of educational and professional backgrounds, from Social Work to Rehabilitation and Community Counseling, from Business Administration and private sector business ownership to public education and private sector training development and delivery. This diversity is intentional, in that it brings diverse perspectives to the model.

What has changed as a result of the pilot?

Information from our combination of data sources shows some significant changes that have occurred as a result of the pilot implementation. These are summarized below, in three main categories: changes within SBETC, changes in the community beyond SBETC, and changes among individual participants.

Changes within SBETC

As a result of the MFIP pilot, new courses have been added to the Workforce “U” program. The most notable is Career Launch, which comes at the start of the core course sequence. It incorporates a foundation of work readiness giving students an understanding of why effort, teamwork, problem solving, and other basic work skills are important to employers.

The content and progression of other courses has been strengthened. A set of classes that had built up gradually over time has now been put into one overarching scope and sequence, making it more structured and more efficient. Specific content modifications have been incorporated as well, to include skills currently in demand, and instructional methods have been strengthened to address needs of adult learners. More employers have been involved in the program, especially as “adjunct faculty” to teach courses or segments of courses. These include a variety of topics such as “Getting an interview,” “Customer service,” and “Introduction to Lean/continuous improvement,” among many others.

This sequence of courses has also been linked to a larger-scale pathway to facilitate lifelong learning. Workforce “U” staff have partnered with Adult Basic Education to ensure that students who enter lacking important basic skills – such as reading, or elementary mathematics, or English language fluency – can be referred there for needed basics, although federal welfare rules limited the amount of time participants can spend in such classes and be counted as meeting the state’s participation rate requirements. Workforce “U” staff have also worked closely with staff at St. Cloud Technical and Community College, on whose campus the WorkForce Center is located, to help facilitate students’ transfer into higher learning opportunities there. The fourth course in the newly redesigned core sequence, Career Tools, has been aligned with the college’s general education requirements so that students can receive college credit for its completion.

To help Career Planners refer participants to the courses most likely to benefit them, the process for assessing new MFIP participants' needs has been strengthened. One of the changes has been to use the Employability Measure. By administering this tool soon after a participant has begun in MFIP, the Career Planner can better identify – and therefore address – potential barriers to participation and employment. Other more specifically work-related assessments are built into the classes, especially Career Trek, which includes the Myers-Briggs Temperament Indicator, an online career assessment tool, skills identification exercises, assessment of work values, and Workkeys assessments (assessments designed and administered by ACT and measuring real-world work skills, such as in applied math, reading for information, and locating information).

The program has also added services to help prepare and motivate students to enter the courses. One such provision is a child care liaison position, in partnership with Child Care Choices, to help families identify and access suitable child care, as well as help increase the number of providers in the community providing the kinds of care needed by participants. Other new provisions include a system to reserve places in courses specifically for MFIP participants; an outreach specialist to serve participants in outlying communities, for whom transportation problems make it difficult to access services at the central location in St. Cloud; more computer skills training opportunities; and more opportunities and services related to domestic violence, mental health counseling, and financial literacy and counseling.

The complete list of community partners, by the spring of 2010, included 16 different organizations. The core partners, besides the Workforce “U” Committee of employers and the two counties, were Child Care Choices (who provided the Child Care Liaison for the program) and two programs of the regional Adult Basic Education consortium, English as a Second Language and Adult Basic Education/GED. Other partners included nonprofit agencies providing domestic violence services, financial and mental health counseling, a variety of specialized assessments such as for developmental disability or rehabilitation needs, specialized training, and a variety of nonprofit and other training and education partners, including St. Cloud Technical and Community College.

The recession has made it more difficult than ever for welfare participants to find jobs. To provide opportunities to apply job skills learned in classes, and gain self-confidence and work experience, Workforce “U” has developed volunteer and supported work placements. By spring 2010, there were at least 35 organizations in which MFIP clients were placed. A very significant number of these were organizations that provide direct services to low-income and vulnerable people, so that the placement of an additional worker, with SBETC paying the wages, itself helped to increase the community's capacity to advance the self-sufficiency of MFIP clients and other low-income people.

Efforts are ongoing to continue to strengthen the program. As of the close of the evaluation period in June 2010, the following additional changes were being worked on:

- Assess participants' computer skills prior to class enrollment, and provide a three-week introductory computer training to help students be more prepared for the ways in which computers are used in classes. This solution is being developed together with Adult Basic Education, and will involve a pre-assessment test developed by Workforce "U," instructors provided by ABE, and the computer equipment owned by Workforce "U."
- Continue to seek ways to blend vocational and basic skills content in ABE and ESL offerings. This combination has been shown elsewhere to increase low-skill students' motivation as well as success in learning the basic skills.
- Develop a work readiness assessment, and a certificate for those who pass it, that can be made widely available and be recognized by employers in the community.
- Continue to reach out to people unable to reliably get in to the WorkForce Center. Staff are currently testing an on-line version of Career Launch, through which students can test out on each of 22 different modules. If this web-based class is successful, it will greatly increase the equity of access to the program for people in outlying areas of Stearns and Benton Counties.
- Develop other web-based tools and capacity. This includes three separate kinds of capacity that Workforce "U" is seeking to develop: 1) additional methods for instruction (and for communication between instructors and students); 2) a vehicle for posting participants' resumes and portfolios and facilitating the job search process; and 3) an on-line system to facilitate program management, including course registrations, attendance tracking, record-keeping.

Many of the new components of Workforce "U" were part of the plans in place at the start of the pilot, but many more were developed after the pilot was begun. The recession, which hit with a crash in the fall of 2008, seriously affected both what could be done and also what needed to be done. In the interviews with community partners, respondents frequently described SBETC staff, and the Workforce "U" program, as "flexible" and "responsive." Some respondents considered those among the primary reasons for the program's ability to accomplish so much.

Changes in the community

Changes as a result of the Workforce "U" pilot are not limited to SBETC. In addition to the impacts described above, the pilot has resulted in adaptation of other community

programs, and gains in capacity of other human service programs. Because of the recession, informants report that more people are in need of community support services that have to be provided with fewer funds. Nevertheless, the pilot has been responsible for:

- Strengthening some of the direct service programs offered by collaborative partners of SBETC and increasing the capacity of some of those agencies to deliver programs. For example, direct services including transportation assistance and after-school care were augmented through the availability of participants on paid work experience programs to help do the work of the agency at no cost to the agency.
- Strengthening the links between community agencies and SBETC, so that each agency's staff are more aware of the services available to clients and are more able to help clients find the assistance they need.
- Expanding the community of child care providers, and increasing the number of child care providers in the area who are able to give appropriate care to the children of immigrants.

Changes for individuals

According to partner representatives who were interviewed, Workforce "U" staff, and feedback from students through the in-class surveys, these changes in SBETC programming and community capacity have resulted in impacts for individual participants as well.

Changes for which there are multiple sources of evidence are:

- More MFIP students are enrolling in Workforce "U" classes. MFIP participants are still a minority of all students, in part because the total number of students is enlarged due to the recession, but the efforts described above have succeeded in increasing MFIP enrollments in the program.
- MFIP students who enroll are slightly more likely to complete courses satisfactorily now than before the pilot.
- Instructors and Career Planners report that students increase in self-confidence, self-esteem, hopefulness, and career focus.
- MFIP and other students who complete the courses express high rates of satisfaction with the classes.

In-class student survey results show significant majorities of all students reporting that the Workforce "U" class made "a big difference" in several different kinds of motivation and self-confidence.

- Those reporting the class made “a big difference” in their **wanting to try** for a job or a better job included 66 percent of all students, and 48 percent of MFIP students. (79% of MFIP students reported that it made at least some difference.)
- Those reporting the class made “a big difference” in their **feeling well prepared** to do their job or a better job included 64 percent of all students, and 62 percent of MFIP students. (93% of MFIP students reported that it made at least some difference.)
- Those reporting the class made “a big difference” in their **chances of getting a job** or a better job included 53 percent of all students, and 31 percent of MFIP students. (79% of MFIP students reported that it made at least some difference.)

While the recession clearly depressed job chances for all students, one MFIP student volunteered the following comment at the end of the in-class survey:

I have taken many classes and they have all helped dramatically. No class has been able to change the effects of the recession. This should not diminish their usefulness or the need for them.

What’s working?

Formative evaluation data collected for this study (staff focus groups, instructor and partner interviews, and document reviews) show the following features of the Workforce “U” pilot that are particularly helpful. Items are included in these findings only if they are found from more than once source.

For students

A convergence of evidence points to the following elements of the program that make the most difference for students.

Mixed-group classes. It is very effective to mix MFIP students with other students (mostly dislocated workers) in the class setting. According to staff, some dislocated workers do not like this mix, but the open-ended comments in the in-class survey show very few students who found it a problem. In contrast, it appears to be very helpful for MFIP students. They are able to learn from other job-seekers who often have more, and more successful, job experience. One reported,

The group that I was in was very friendly and I really enjoyed working with peers and the teacher. Instead of making the whole class wait, peers helped find where I was going if I got lost in a part of an assignment.

High quality content and instruction. Students find the classes valuable, meaningful, and motivating. Instructors report that the greatest change in student attitude (and not only among MFIP students) occurs between the first and the second days, after the students have had a first taste and have begun to appreciate the value of what they are learning. One student commented in the end-of-class survey,

The facilitator that helped us with Career Trek was fantastic. “Professional” is the word. He did a fantastic job with everyone in the class. ... I think this class should be mandatory in high schools. It could really assist our young people with their future. Many thanks!!!

Range of options. It is important to have a wide variety of choices in courses available, so the assignment of MFIP participants to courses can be individualized based on their needs and interests. The combination of MFIP and non-MFIP participants in the same classes helps to make this possible by broadening the base and hence the number of students, which in turn enables a wider selection of classes to be offered regularly.

Paid work experience. It is not unusual for welfare recipients to have trouble finding jobs quickly, and in a recession it is especially hard. However, most recipients would much prefer working to taking classes. Many participants were reluctant to attend a class in order to learn “job readiness,” knowing that there were few jobs to be ready for. However, most were much more motivated to attend if they knew that successful completion would enable them to be placed in a paid work position, even though they knew it was a temporary opportunity subsidized by the program.

Group instruction. The classroom model of Workforce “U” allows Career Planners to be more efficient with the time they spend one-on-one with participants, because much of the skill training that MFIP job counselors are called on to do can be delivered by the course instructors instead, to many people simultaneously. There is also some evidence that the model may help in the identification of some of the barriers that can cause problems in getting or keeping work. For example, some common learning disabilities can cause problems with following multi-step directions. It is hard for a typical job counselor to become aware of these, because there is not enough time for observation of the client in the process of trying to follow instructions. However, in the classroom, the instructor can see what is happening and is therefore more able to identify the source of the problem.

For organizations

Because Workforce “U” depends on collaboration with many partner organizations in the community, the evaluation also examined what conditions and program elements were important to success at this level of operation. Again, we found that multiple strands of evidence pointed to a common set of themes.

Good relationships and good communication. The partnership that made new programs possible was based on carefully-tended relationships. These relationships, in turn, were nurtured and kept positive by regular, clear communication. One partner mentioned the effectiveness of creating a “safe” environment for partners to discuss difficult issues (such as safety), and pointed out that it was important to agree to revisit such issues on a regular basis to be sure they continued to be taken care of to everybody’s satisfaction.

Shared vision, goals, and interests. To be able to work together on a common set of services, the partners had to come to agreement on a common vision and goals for what they wished to accomplish. They also had to clearly understand what each organization could contribute, and what each stood to gain. Most often, the advantage for each partner was better services for their own clients. Since most of the partner organizations served similar kinds of clients, this proved a powerful unifying theme. However, it was important to be clear about what each organization’s role was in the partnership, and which partner would be responsible for which parts of the combined work.

Focus on clients. The focus of planning, as well as implementation, was consistently on the needs of clients, not the needs of the partner organizations. This helped maintain a common vision and purpose for the program, and helped ensure that the focus of the program stayed on those components that would make the most difference.

Early successes. Part of what made it possible to continue to develop the model over a multi-year time period was the ability to create, identify, and celebrate some early successes. This had several important advantages: it helped build and sustain energy; it helped persuade other “slow adopter” partners to join in; and the process of identifying successes also helped identify things that were not working as well as intended, creating a basis of knowledge for making improvements.

What challenges have influenced the implementation?

To understand what it takes to implement a program such as Workforce “U,” we also need to identify the internal and external challenges that had to be overcome to carry it out.

Challenges from outside

The main external challenges were the state of the economy, and conditions shaped by the policy and funding environment.

The **economic downturn**, not foreseen when Workforce “U” was beginning during 2005 through 2007, became the most serious and prolonged recession in over a half-century by the end of 2008 and early 2009 – exactly the time when the most significant changes to courses were being put into place. This recession changed most of the considerations on

which planning had been based, and required considerable additional problem-solving to re-design solutions for unexpected changes in needs.

Because of the severe shortage of jobs, more people in the Diversionary Work Program were unable to find jobs during the four-month intensive job search period, and rolled over into the main MFIP program, becoming subject to the federal requirements for job preparation and job search activity. At the same time, a flood of dislocated workers were turning to the WorkForce Center for help and were taking up most of the space in the new classes. Most dislocated workers already had child care and transportation arrangements in place, and could register in advance for any open seats in classes. In contrast, child care and transportation were often new problems for new MFIP participants, and it was hard to predict how long it might take to resolve them. Since the classes required 100 percent attendance, it was not advisable to register until it was certain that these were in place. As a result, by the time Career Planners were sure their MFIP participants were ready, classes were often full, and the MFIP participants had to wait a month or more until a new class was offered. This meant that the whole process of arranging child care and transportation had to start all over again. Once this difficulty was identified, SBETC instituted a system of reserving a specified number of slots in each section specifically for MFIP participants.

The delay in availability of classes also created problems for the Career Planner to identify and assign appropriate work activities for the participant during the waiting time. Finding appropriate work activities was also frequently a problem after participants had completed courses, since the tight job market slowed down job placements after training.

It was also difficult to maintain appropriate expectations for the courses and for the credentials that were awarded. On the one hand, the program needed to emphasize that the courses were designed with a high quality of instruction and content, carefully matched to local needs, in order to give the greatest possible added value to the job-seeker's level of preparation. On the other hand, the courses, and the credentials they carried, could never be a guarantee of a job under any circumstances, and especially not during such a tight labor market. However, it was hard to remind people of that without discouraging their motivation to take the courses, especially given the significant level of effort needed to maintain the perfect attendance.

The policy and funding inconsistencies affecting MFIP work programs are well known. The two that most frequently affected the implementation of Workforce "U" were related to child care subsidies and limits on countable work activities.

Child care subsidies are available to MFIP participants while they are engaged in work or approved MFIP work activities. As in most MFIP evaluations, this study confirms that they are an essential support, without which many or most participants would be unable to

prepare for work, look for work, or go to work once they become employed. However, two features of the child care program were cited that made it difficult for some participants to use the support. First, many child care providers require an up-front payment, sometimes for both the first and last months of care. For very low income participants, it may be extremely difficult to find the cash to make such a payment, and then wait for the subsidy program to reimburse the cost after the fact. Second, the subsidies paid under the program are often capped at an amount that is less than the currently prevailing tuition costs, leaving the participant to pay the remainder of the cost out of pocket.

Countable work activities are set at the federal level. Congress requires that states document that their TANF participants are engaging in an average of 30 hours of work activity each week, in order to continue to qualify for federal funding. Only 12 specified activities may be counted toward this participation rate. These countable work activities include 9 core activities that must be documented for at least 20 hours each week, plus 3 additional kinds of activities that may be counted only for the last 10 hours. The core activities include employment (subsidized or unsubsidized), community service, and work experience; on-the-job training; and providing child care for another recipient. Only two of the nine core activities are pre-employment training. One of these is job search and job readiness, and this is capped, even during times of high unemployment, at no more than 4 consecutive weeks and no more than 12 total weeks. The other is vocational educational training, which is limited to no more than 12 months for an individual, and also capped at no more than 30 percent of the total caseload. “Non-core” or supplementary activities, allowable only after the first 20 hours of the week have been accounted for, may include job skills training directly related to employment; education directly related to employment (only for those without a high school diploma or GED); or completion of a secondary school program.

Because of these caps on job readiness activities, and the delays in accessing training caused by the recession, it was hard for the Workforce “U” MFIP pilot to maintain needed work participation rates while also helping participants become prepared for employment. The “non-core” activities are the kinds of employment preparation that inexperienced, low-skill job-seekers most need, especially when the labor market is filled with more highly skilled competitors. Typically in recessions, when people are laid off, enrollment in higher education increases as people upgrade their skills while waiting for jobs to open up again. There is no comparable flexibility in the TANF rules, however, and welfare recipients are held to the same expectations (with minimal adjustments) regardless of the availability of jobs.

Challenges specific to Workforce "U"

The economic and policy issues apply equally to any welfare employment program. Certain other challenges were more specific to the unique model and setting of Workforce "U." These include some factors relating to the program's engagement with its organizational partners, and some relating to its engagement with its participants.

Consistent vision of the program among all stakeholders

From the interviews with organizational partners, it is clear that representatives generally share a consistent overall vision of what Workforce "U" is supposed to be, with the common theme of helping unemployed and under-employed people gain skills for job readiness. Slightly fewer mentioned the emphasis on individualized services in a supportive environment, the emphasis on starting a path of lifeline learning, or the emphasis on meeting employer needs simultaneously with those of job seekers.

The vagueness of the partners' understanding of some aspects of Workforce "U" points to a weakness in a model based on individual agreements with each separate partner. SBETC staff have already recognized this and are beginning a process of convening all the partners to develop a vision and implementation plan that will be jointly agreed to by all together. Some partners have already been involved in multi-party discussions, and commented on the differences they found in the level of cooperation from different agencies. In general, nonprofits were seen to be more adaptable, while public agencies were reported to be more concerned with "turf" and less client focused. While their policy and funding constraints may make them less flexible, however, most were reported as being willing to take time to help strategize about ways to jointly accomplish the purposes that they shared with the program. In fact, one staff member reported that public agency staff often had the most experience and knowledge to help identify potential roadblocks and the ways to avoid them.

The description of the Workforce "U" model provided by Career Planners tended to emphasize the courses, and to include the support services only secondarily and as a means to the end of helping participants enroll in the courses. Some of the staff input for this evaluation included a desire to be more closely involved in program planning. They believe it would be helpful to balance the employers' input, on what they are looking for in employees, with a front-line view of what is the actual starting point for a typical MFIP participant and the typical kinds of challenges these participants face in their daily lives. The value of this balanced view was echoed by one of the employers who is active in helping to teach the classes, who said:

It has been extremely educational for me. I lived in my own little world, with a good paying job, successful in my career. In my work with Workforce U, hearing and

touching the stories of what people are going through, has really grounded me in seeing that my neighbors are really going through tough times, and that this is a real problem out there.

The balance of these points of view has become more important as the Workforce “U” pilot seeks to increase the participation of MFIP participants in a program that had formerly enrolled primarily displaced or underemployed workers. Employers – the key members of the advisory committee shaping program expectations and requirements – are less well acquainted with this population than with people who already have some work history.

Enrollment rates for MFIP participants

Throughout the pilot, the program found it a constant challenge to enroll significant numbers of MFIP participants in Workforce “U” classes. During 2009 there were 454 new MFIP entrants in Stearns and Benton Counties, but fewer than one in five of these appears to have enrolled in Workforce “U.” Most program adjustments since mid-2009 have focused on strategies to increase enrollments. There are several reasons for the difficulty, which has made solutions difficult.

Some reasons are specific to MFIP participant characteristics that are different, on average, from those of dislocated workers or other students. Beginning before the pilot, there has been some reluctance by Career Planners to refer MFIP participants to the classes for a combination of reasons:

- It is difficult to motivate MFIP participants to attend “classes.” Many MFIP participants have had negative prior experiences with school, and Career Planners find it difficult to describe the classes in ways that make clear how they are different from the schools they have been in previously. Also, although those who do attend quickly appreciate the value (according to instructors), it is difficult for those who have not experienced the classes personally to envision the value that they can expect to gain.
- Many MFIP participants have little experience – or little successful experience – in such highly-structured situations. Many others who are capable of consistent attendance under normal conditions are not facing “normal conditions” when they have recently entered MFIP. They may lack adequate or reliable child care, or reliable transportation. For many, their own health or that of their dependents is unpredictable and they may be obliged to stay at home for their own or others’ health crises. Career Planners are reluctant to require a participant to attend a class if they believe there is a reasonable chance that they may be unable to follow through, and

hence risk a sanction – which in turn diminishes the motivational aspects of the program and the participant’s trust in the Career Planner.

Other reasons are specific to the unique conditions created by the recession. At just the same time that the revised courses were being introduced, an unprecedented number of dislocated workers were coming to the Workforce Center for retraining and job preparation help. These recently employed workers were able to register for courses several weeks or more in advance, whereas Career Planners hesitated to register MFIP clients until they knew that child care and transportation issues were under control. By the time this was taken care of, immediate courses were almost always full. It was similarly risky to register the participant for a later course, because by the time that arrived the child care and transportation arrangements might no longer be available, especially if they could not be used for qualifying activities in the interim.

Problems with MFIP clients’ motivation about classes were addressed by the development of a video disk, given to new clients at orientation, which allowed participants to see a much more complete picture of what classes were like, and to hear testimonials from peers who took the classes. Work on this DVD was begun in July 2009, filming began in March 2010, and the finished DVDs began to be distributed shortly after the evaluation period.

Problems with closed courses were addressed beginning in February 2010 by a system of reserving a certain number of seats in each course for MFIP clients. This has helped, but as with airline reservations, it is necessary to overbook to allow for the likelihood of a certain percentage of no-shows. It has also increased program costs because, while sometimes extra people have to be deferred at the last minute, sometimes not all seats can be filled and the fixed costs must be spread over a smaller number of students.

Attendance expectations

The employers group that oversees the Workforce "U" program strongly holds that perfect attendance, beginning with the first core course, is a reasonable expectation. Career Planners who work with MFIP participants believe that it may not be possible for some people who have limited work experience, or unreliable cars, or children prone to frequent asthma attacks. While any job seeker needs to be able to demonstrate reliable performance by the time they are placed in a job, the information collected for this evaluation indicates that a sizable minority of welfare recipients need an on-ramp to help them get up to speed first. One of the main causes of the relatively low enrollment of MFIP participants in the pilot appears to be its current lack of introductory, transitional courses, with expectations for good but not yet perfect attendance. In keeping with Minnesota welfare policy, Career Planners are reluctant to impose required activities on participants who they believe may genuinely be unprepared to comply. However, the content of the courses is excellent,

useful, and motivating, and they would like to be able to have students attend under slightly more flexible conditions.

One important component to such an “on-ramp” may well prove to be the on-line Career Launch course that is currently being field-tested. Another may be an introductory computer skills course. A significant challenge throughout the pilot period has been the mismatch between many students’ computer skills and the level of skill needed to get full benefit from the classes. The staff have tried several ways of assessing and meeting these needs. An introductory computer course is close to being introduced, and may also help to provide an appropriate “on-ramp” experience. SBETC has developed a pre-assessment tool that can be self-administered, as well as a cooperative arrangement with Adult Basic Education to deliver a three-week introductory computer class. As with the program overall, small but early successes for individual students are being sought to help build motivation and momentum for further efforts.

The creation of such an on-ramp need not violate the spirit of the program to have mixed classes. The expectations for the core courses would remain the same, and they could continue to offer the certificate of readiness that is considered so important to employers. However, for MFIP participants who might not be ready for this level of consistency at the outset, a more gradual introduction to the Workforce “U” classes could help to build both confidence and motivation, and increase the rate of referrals to the program.

Program participants and services

2009 pilot program study group

Eighty MFIP participants were identified as the overall Workforce “U” study group based on the criteria established as part of the evaluation. These criteria included:

- Providing consent at intake or afterwards
- Having active MFIP status between January 2007 and December 2009
- Taking at least one of the Workforce “U” core courses between January and September 2009 (core courses for this purpose were Career Launch, Career Navigation, and Career Trek)

To help understand the effects of more extended participation in Workforce “U” coursework, the study group was also divided into two dosage levels based on the amount of coursework in which participants engaged. The courses counted for this purpose included a number of other multi-day Workforce “U” courses (see below) that were not among the three core courses.

Of the 80 total study participants, just over half (45) completed one or two Workforce “U” courses during the study period. These study participants are the lower-dosage group. Just under half (35) of the participants in the overall study group took more than two of the identified multi-day Workforce “U” courses. These study participants are the higher-dosage group.

Workforce “U” courses taken by study participants

Career Launch was the Workforce “U” course completed most often by study participants. Seventy-six percent of the overall study group and 94 percent of the lower-dosage group completed Career Launch. Career Trek was completed by the fewest study group participants (15%) of any of the three core courses.

In addition to the three core courses, six other multi-day Workforce “U” courses were tracked and identified as having been completed by study group participants. Sixty-four percent of the participants in the lower-dosage group (and all of the higher-dosage group) took an additional Workforce “U” course. The two Career Tools courses were the most popular non-core courses for the overall study group. See Figure 4.

4. Courses taken by study participants

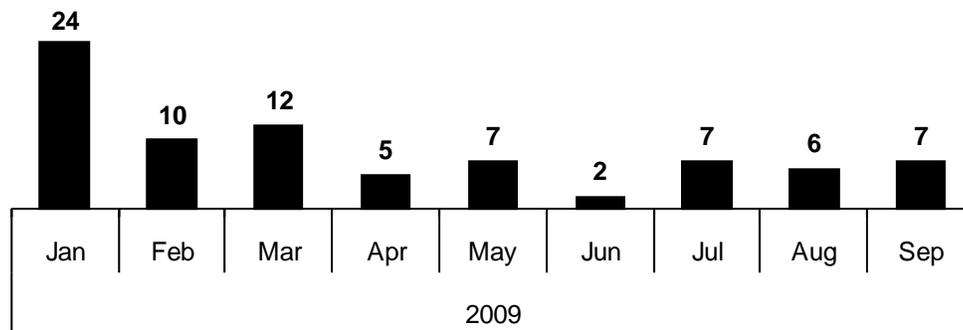
	Lower-dosage group (N=45)	Higher-dosage group (N=35)	Overall (N=80)
Core courses			
Career Launch	28	33	61
Career Navigation	17	17	34
Career Trek	5	7	12
Other courses			
Career Tools Academy	11	45	56
Career Tools	13	21	34
Pre-manufacturing Academy (ESL)	0	5	5
Pre-employment 101	0	4	4
Business Careers Academy (ESL)	0	2	2
Healthcare Careers Academy (ESL)	0	2	2

Source: Course enrollment data provided by SBETC; calculations by Wilder Research.

Timeline of first Workforce “U” course

As mentioned earlier, the timeline for taking a Workforce “U” trigger course was the first three quarters (January through September) of 2009. Overall, 58 percent of the Workforce “U” study population took their first trigger course during the first quarter, 18 percent during the second quarter, and 25 percent during the third quarter of 2009. See Figure 5.

5. First Workforce “U” trigger courses taken, by month of study period



Source: Course enrollment data provided by SBETC; calculations by Wilder Research.

Most (80%) of the study population started MFIP before they took a Workforce “U” trigger course. Participants in the higher-dosage group were somewhat more likely to have taken their first Workforce “U” course more than six months after beginning MFIP. See Figure 6.

6. Time between first MFIP month and first Workforce “U” course

Started on MFIP...	Lower-dosage group (N=45)		Higher-dosage group (N=35)		Overall (N=80)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
More than 6 months before first WFU course	15	33%	15	43%	30	38%
1 to 6 months before first WFU course	22	49%	12	34%	34	43%
In the same month as first WFU course	4	9%	1	3%	5	6%
1 to 6 months after first WFU course	3	7%	7	20%	10	13%
More than 6 months after first WFU course	1	2%	0	-	1	1%

Source: Course enrollment data provided by SBETC; MFIP start dates provided by DHS; calculations by Wilder Research.

Support and services

SBETC contracts with Rural Minnesota Concentrated Employment Program (Rural MN CEP) to handle financial services and track support services funds paid to MFIP participants. Beginning in January 2009, this system has also separately tracked funds distributed specifically through the Workforce “U” pilot project. These support services payments are provided to help MFIP participants with a variety of employment-related needs and services including transportation, training, and clothing.

The Workforce “U” study group participants received, on average and as a proportion, more support services funding than other MFIP participants. Including dedicated pilot project funds and general SBETC support services funds, 83 percent of the Workforce “U” study group participants received support services funding between January 2007 and December 2009. This compares to less than one in three (29%) of the MFIP participants who were not in the study group. Study participants who received support services funding received an average of \$1,036, while other MFIP participants who received support services funding received an average of \$575.

Twenty-nine study group participants received designated Workforce “U” pilot project support service funds between January and December, 2009. These study group participants represented 26 percent of the total number of MFIP participants receiving Workforce “U” pilot funds. Workforce “U” study participants received a total of \$17,441 in pilot project designated funding, which represented 22 percent of the total pilot funds

distributed during that time. Those funds were primarily used for training costs, whereas general SBETC support funds were mainly used for counseling, and secondarily for transportation. See Figure 7.

7. Support services dollars received by study participants (2007 – 2009)

Funding category	Workforce “U” pilot funds (1/09-12/09)			General SBETC support funds (1/07-12/09)			Total support funds (1/07-12/09)		
	N	Ave	Total	N	Ave	Total	N	Ave	Total
Tools and clothing	0	-	-	7	\$86	\$600	7	\$86	\$600
Counseling	1	\$805	\$805	9	\$3,725	\$33,526	10	\$3,433	\$34,331
Incentives and bonuses	15	\$47	\$701	30	\$27	\$797	38	\$36	\$1,354
Transportation for employed	0	-	-	29	\$106	\$3,078	29	\$106	\$3,078
Transportation for unemployed	0	-	-	58	\$183	\$10,623	58	\$183	\$10,623
Training	27	\$590	\$15,936	9	\$248	\$2,234	31	\$571	\$17,705
Other	0	-	-	1	\$90	\$90	1	\$90	\$90
STUDY GROUP TOTAL	29	\$601	\$17,441	66	\$772	\$50,947	66	\$1,036	\$68,389
OVERALL TOTAL	113	\$712	\$80,457	531	\$450	\$239,035	556	\$575	\$319,492

Source: Data from Rural MN-CEP records system; calculations by Wilder Research.

Workforce “U” Career Planners also work with students to help them connect with services they may need to complete Workforce “U” coursework and to transition into employment. These needs and services include child care, transportation assistance, and managing money or family responsibilities. Through answers given on the in-class student survey, we are able to look at which of these types of help MFIP participants received as part of their Workforce “U” experience.

Among the in-class survey respondents, 29 students (out of 293 total) were identified as MFIP participants during the study period. Of those, 10 were part of the Workforce “U” study group. Because of the low number of Workforce “U” study group participants who were identified among the in-class survey respondents, analysis has been done on all 29 MFIP participants in the sample.

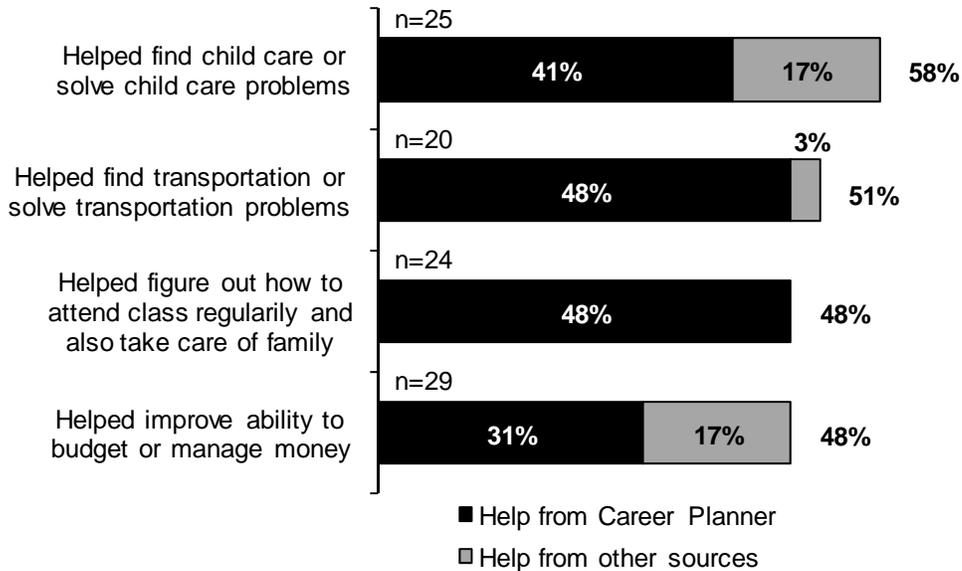
The survey asked about four kinds of help which a student might have received from some person at the Workforce Center (a Career Planner, instructor, or other staff member). For each of these, approximately half of respondents reported that they had received help. Those services, and the proportion of students who received them, were:

- Help to find child care or help to solve child care problems (59%)
- Help to find transportation or solve transportation problems (52%)
- Help to figure out how to attend class regularly and also take care of family responsibilities (48%)
- Help to improve the ability to budget or manage money (48%)

Respondents most often report receiving this help from their Workforce “U” Career Planners. Help with transportation needs (48%) and help balancing Workforce “U” coursework and family responsibilities (48%) were the type of assistance most often received from Career Planners. See Figure 8.

It should be noted that Workforce “U” contracts with outside organizations to help assist participants with their needs related to child care and managing money. This may be the reason why a smaller proportion of respondents reported receiving help to get these services from their Workforce “U” Career Planners.

8. Sources of services received by MFIP students from Workforce “U” staff (N=29 MFIP respondents)



Source: Student in-class surveys administered by SBETC; calculations by Wilder Research.

Potential barriers to employment

As part of the MFIP intake process at Stearns-Benton Employment & Training Council, participants complete a skills assessment to better understand strengths, needs, and barriers to employment. They also complete a self-screen tool relating to mental and chemical health.

Life skills assessment

During intake, MFIP participants at SBETC complete a life skills assessment. This multi-page form includes questions about potential barriers to employment including items related to family concerns and support, education and learning, and physical, mental, and chemical health. Figure 9 compares the life skills assessment responses of the higher- and lower-dosage groups. Overall, it appears that the higher-dosage group report somewhat more issues during MFIP intake. Due to restrictions on access to data, we are unable to compare these rates with those of the larger MFIP population in Stearns-Benton.

9. Life skills assessment

	Lower-dosage group		Higher-dosage group		Total	
	N*	P	N*	P	N*	P
Family concerns and support						
No family or friends to ask for support	33	27%	26	19%	59	24%
Participant or family member work with a therapist or social worker	33	21%	27	22%	60	22%
Personal or family concerns	32	9%	26	8%	58	9%
Education and learning						
Had an Individual Education Plan (IEP) in school	28	18%	27	26%	55	22%
Diagnosed with a learning disability	36	17%	33	24%	69	20%
Received special education services in school	35	9%	33	21%	68	15%
Physical health						
Chronic illness requiring a doctor's care	32	25%	35	20%	67	22%
Physical limitations due to an injury	35	6%	33	24%	68	15%

Source: Data provided by SBETC from client records; calculations by Wilder Research.

Note: * For each item, N shows the number of participants for which the data was available in client records. Percentages are calculated based on this number.

Chemical and mental health issues

Privacy restrictions placed on the data collection efforts for this evaluation did not allow evaluators to access health-related variables in the administrative data. However, as part of the MFIP intake at the Stearns-Benton Employment & Training Council, participants are asked to complete a self-screen of chemical and mental health. This self-screen consists of 16 yes or no questions asking respondents whether they have experienced various symptoms related to chemical and mental health issues in the previous 30 days. Yes answers are weighted based on the seriousness of the symptom, giving the instrument a weighted total score of 32.

The evaluators were only able to access these assessments for those Workforce “U” students for whom informed consent was provided, so no comparisons to the larger MFIP population can be made.

Sixty-five participants in the overall study group completed an MFIP self-screen at intake and the scores were almost identical between the higher- and lower-dosage groups. Three-quarters of each group scored a zero on the assessment, which means they answered “no” on all 16 questions describing various symptoms of mental chemical health issues. Average scores were 2.5 for the lower-dosage group and 2.3 for the higher-dosage group. See Figure 10.

10. MFIP self-screen scores

Out of a possible score of 32	Lower-dosage group		Higher-dosage group		Overall	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Zero	20	57%	18	60%	38	58%
One to three	7	20%	6	20%	13	20%
Four to eight	4	11%	3	10%	7	11%
Nine or higher	4	11%	3	10%	7	11%
Average score	35	2.5	30	2.3	65	2.4

Source: Data provided by SBETC from client records; calculations by Wilder Research.

As part of the life skills assessment at intake, MFIP participants are asked to self-report any concerns they have about issues with chemical or mental health. Overall, 13 percent of study group participants who completed a life skills assessment (N=67) reported they had concerns about their own mental health. Only 3 percent of respondents (N=64) reported they had concerns about their own chemical health.

Comparison to Stearns-Benton MFIP participants not taking WFU courses

The Workforce “U” study group appears to be similar in many ways to Stearns-Benton MFIP participants not in the study group. The Workforce “U” study group also appears to have certain significant differences from the overall Stearns-Benton MFIP population. These differences, described below, prevent the use of the non-Workforce “U” group as a comparison group for estimating what outcomes would be expected without the program. Comparisons of the two groups are shown for descriptive purposes only.

Figure 11 shows the characteristics gathered from the MAXIS database for which the Workforce “U” study group participants are similar to non-Workforce “U” MFIP participants in Stearns-Benton.

11. Characteristics of the study group and other MFIP participants in Stearns-Benton

	Study group (N=80)	Non-WFU (N=1,756)
Female	85%	83%
Average age at 1 st month of MFIP	31	29
Married or has ever been married	54%	55%
Average age of youngest child at 1 st month of MFIP	3.9	3.6
Average number of children at 1 st months of MFIP	2.1	1.9
Moved across a county line during study period	24%	29%
Two adult MFIP case	24%	25%
Average number of months receiving shelter subsidy	4.8	4.9

Source: MAXIS data provided by SBETC; calculations by Wilder Research.

For the most part, within the study group, the higher- and lower-dosage groups were also similar to each other in the above characteristics. However, it should be noted that the lower-dosage group averages a significantly higher number of months receiving shelter subsidy than the higher-dosage group (5.8 to 3.8).

Study group less likely to have received a sanction

Workforce “U” study group participants were somewhat less likely than other Stearns-Benton MFIP participants (25% to 33%) to have had a sanction between January 2007 and December 2009.

Study group less likely to have a high school education

The study group was significantly less likely than other Stearns-Benton MFIP participants to have a high school education. About two-fifths (39%) of the Workforce “U” study participants had their diploma or GED. This compares to more than three-fifths (62%) of the overall Stearns-Benton MFIP population. Within the study group, the proportions of participants with a high school diploma or GED were similar for the lower-dosage group (40%) and the higher-dosage group (37%).

Study group had a larger proportion of new Americans, non-native English speakers, and African-born participants

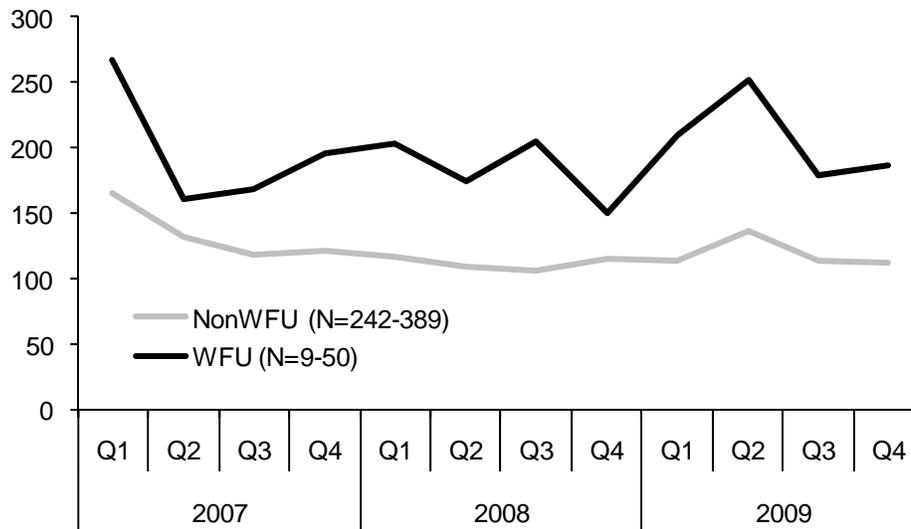
Compared to the overall MFIP group, the Workforce “U” study group was significantly different in its racial and ethnic demographics. This difference was mainly due to the significantly higher proportion of Somali and African immigrants in the study group. Of the Workforce “U” study group participants:

- 51 percent had immigrant status, compared to 19 percent of other MFIP participants
- 49 percent were Somali or other African immigrant, compared to 16 percent of other Stearns-Benton MFIP participants
- 39 percent needed an interpreter at intake, compared to 15 percent of other Stearns-Benton MFIP participants

Study group averaged more Employment Services activities hours

The Workforce “U” study group averaged more Employment Services activities hours than the non-Workforce “U” group (Figure 11). Between January 2007 and December 2009, the Workforce “U” study group participants averaged 41 Employment Services hours per month, while all other MFIP participants averaged 16 hours per month during that time. Furthermore, Workforce “U” study group participants averaged more Employment Services hours during every quarter in 2007, 2008, and 2009. See Figure 12.

12. Total quarterly MFIP Employment Services hours (average per participant), by calendar year quarters, 2007-2009



Number (count of those on MFIP during the quarter)

WFU	10	12	13	9	11	12	14	28	45	50	49	42
NonWFU	365	389	337	311	351	343	277	242	293	281	271	292

Source: MAXIS data provided by SBETC; calculations by Wilder Research.

The high percentage of study group participants who were immigrants was unexpected. Staff had expected that enrollment rates would be lower for non-English speaking participants due to significant language and child care barriers. There are several possible reasons for the higher-than-anticipated rates. First, the study period (2009) came after the introduction of several course sections specifically for Somali-speaking participants and after efforts by the Child Care Liaison to increase supply and access to culturally-appropriate child care. Second, it is likely that this group of participants were more willing to consent to participate in the study and were disproportionately represented for this reason.

The difference in Employment Services participation between the two groups is likely due primarily to the significant differences in characteristics of the groups. For the reasons just mentioned, these characteristics are themselves likely related to different levels of participation in Workforce "U."

Results for participants

It is not possible, from the data available in this study, to describe outcomes that occurred for participants as a result of their program participation. This section describes results for participants, including changes in Employment Services participation, employment, and wages. With no control group, we cannot determine that these results were caused by the program itself – that is, we cannot rule out the chance that similar results might have been observed in the absence of Workforce “U” services. These results should therefore be understood as descriptive for this study. However, examination of these results in the context of the services that participants are known to have received is useful for understanding how the program works and anticipating what outcomes might be expected from a later evaluation, if one can be conducted.

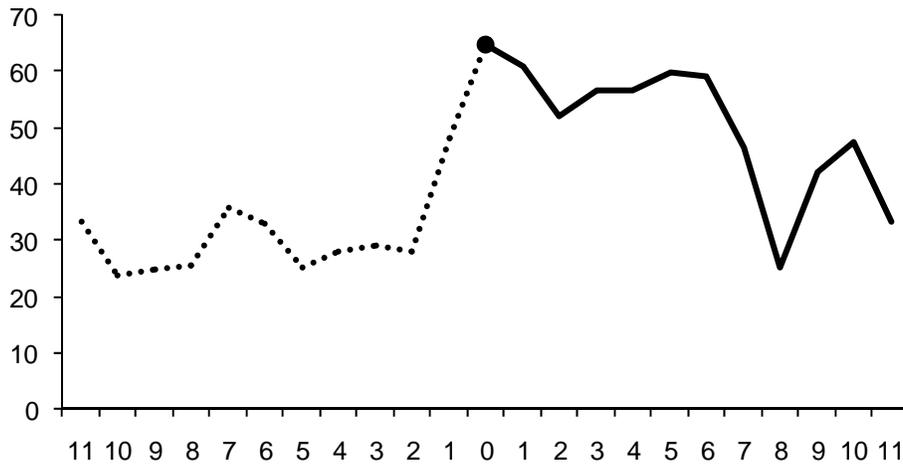
Workforce “U” a catalyst for Employment Services participation

The first level of outcomes expected from Workforce “U” participation was an increase in motivation and engagement in activities intended to help gain employment. Overall, there is strong evidence that Workforce “U” participation is a catalyst for increased engagement and participation in MFIP Employment Services hours.

Employment Services hours increase with Workforce “U” coursework. Workforce “U” study group participants averaged more Employment Services hours (65 hours) during the month of their first Workforce “U” courses than any other month before or after their first course (Figure 12).

The study group also averaged considerably more hours in the months following their first Workforce “U” course compared to the preceding months. In the 11 months before their first Workforce “U” course, study participants averaged 25 Employment Services hours, while they averaged 48 hours per month in the 11 months after their first course. See Figure 13.

13. Average Employment Services activities hours in the 11 months before and after first Workforce “U” course (N=24-65)



N on MFIP 19 26 29 29 30 33 47 52 55 63 74 75 76 75 73 67 57 50 46 39 33 24

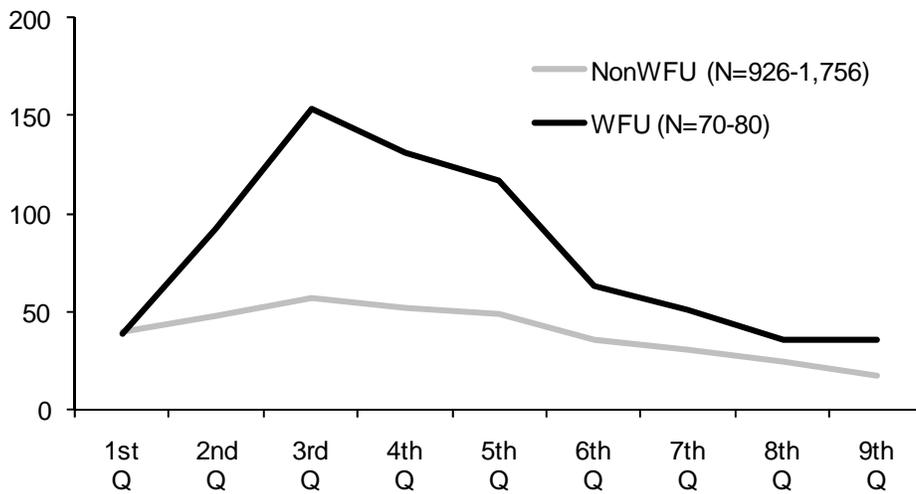
Source: MAXIS data provided by SBETC; calculations by Wilder Research.

Note: Average is computed only for those for whom Employment Services were required, i.e., those on MFIP during the month in question. Table of N's shows this number.

Employment Services hours increase by number of quarters receiving MFIP

In their first quarter of MFIP participation, the study group averaged the same number of Employment Services hours (39) as other MFIP participants. However, in every subsequent quarter tracked, the study group averaged more Employment Services hours. The largest difference was in their third quarter of participation when the study group averaged 154 hours while other MFIP participants averaged 57 hours. See Figure 14.

14. Average Employment Services activities hours by quarter of MFIP participation



Number on MFIP for the quarter

NonWFU	1756	1540	1240	1083	993	947	926	931	997
WFU	80	79	70	72	73	73	75	75	76

Source: MAXIS data provided by SBETC; calculations by Wilder Research.

Note: Average is computed only for those for whom Employment Services were required, i.e. those on MFIP during the month in question. Table of N's shows this number.

It should be noted that 25 percent of the study group took their first Workforce “U” course during their first quarter of MFIP participation and 30 percent took their first course during either their second or third quarter of MFIP participation.

Employment and income

Hours worked

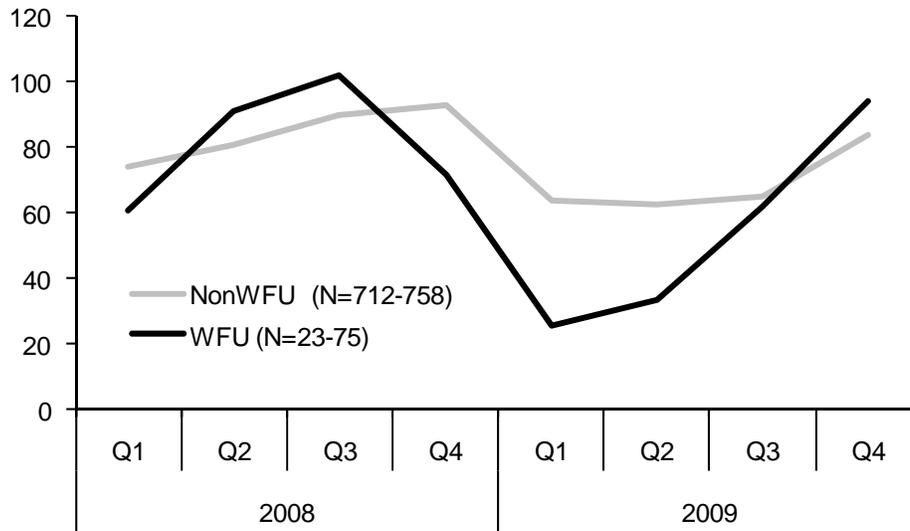
Strong rebound after hard economic downturn

An analysis of hours of employment shows that the Workforce “U” study group participants experienced the economic downturn of 2008 earlier and more severely than other MFIP participants in Stearns-Benton. However, participants in the Workforce “U” study group also had a faster and more robust rebound during 2009. The study group peaked in work hours during the fourth quarter of 2008 when they were averaging 102 hours worked. After two quarters of decreasing work hours, study group participants were averaging 26 hours work in the first quarter of 2009. However, subsequent increases in

hours worked in each of the final three quarters brought the study group back up to an average of 94 hours worked in the fourth quarter of 2009, a number that was slightly higher than the 85 hours averaged by the non-Workforce “U” group. See Figure 15.

It should be noted that, as detailed earlier, 58 percent of the Workforce “U” study group participants took their first trigger course during the first quarter of 2009.

15. Average hours worked by calendar year quarters, 2008 and 2009



Number on MFIP for the quarter

NonWFU	741	758	749	712	740	755	737	713	741
WFU	23	28	38	53	70	69	75	69	23

Source: MAXIS data provided by SBETC; calculations by Wilder Research.

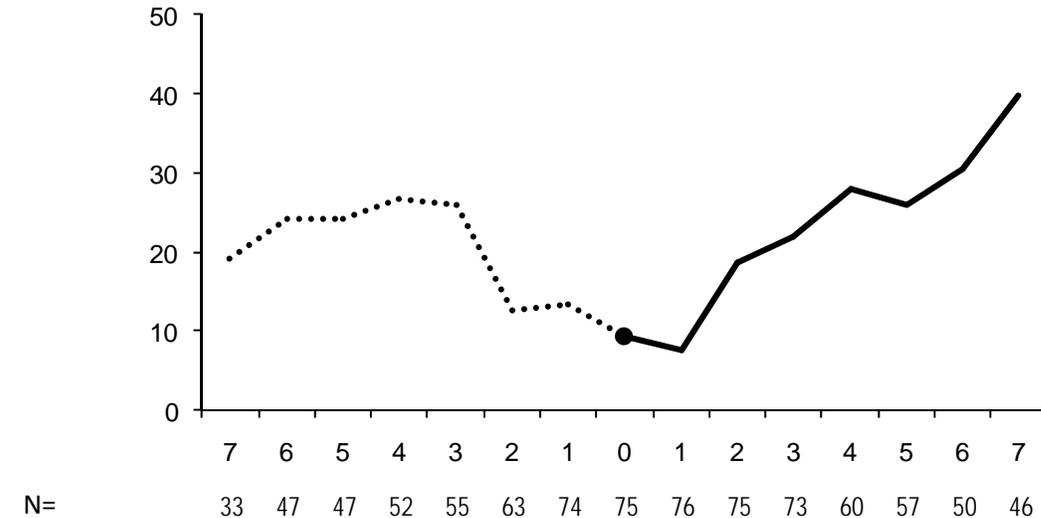
Note: Average is computed only for those for whom Employment Services were required, i.e. those on MFIP during the month in question. Table of N's shows this number. Does not include MFIP-paid work experience placements.

Timing of first Workforce “U” class corresponds to increase in average monthly hours worked

There was a general decrease in hours worked during the months leading up to the first Workforce “U” course taken by study group participants, and comparable increases in hours during the months after taking that course. The newly redesigned courses developed through the Workforce “U” pilot project (and used as the trigger courses for inclusion in the evaluation study group) were introduced in January 2009. This was the first full quarter after the market crash of October 2008, and the quarter in which Workforce “U” study participants averaged the least number of work hours. Therefore, it is difficult to determine how much of the subsequent increase in hours worked can be

attributed to overall economic recovery during those months or whether the study group’s rebound was enhanced by their participation in Workforce “U.” See Figure 16.

16. Average hours worked in the 7 months before and after first Workforce “U” course (N=33-75 per month)



Source: MAXIS data provided by SBETC; calculations by Wilder Research.

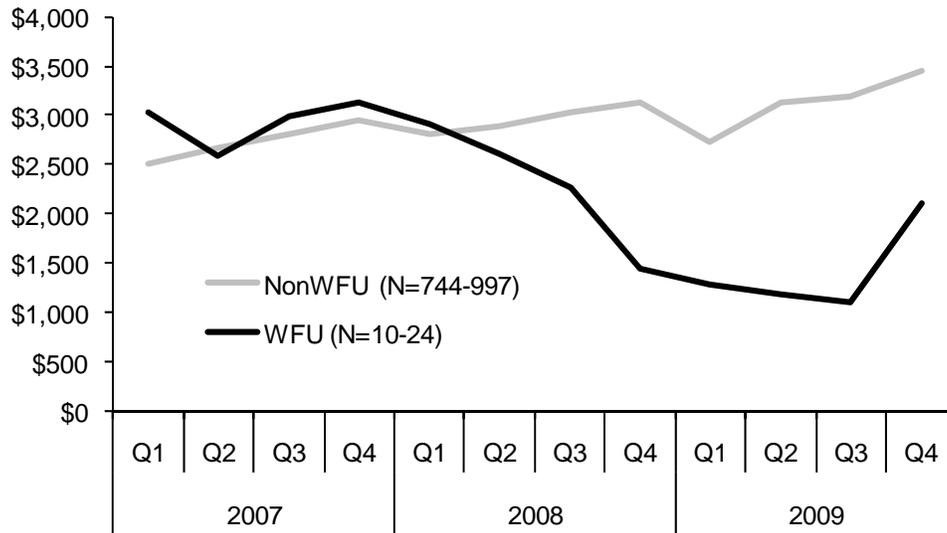
Note: Average is computed only for those on MFIP during the month in question. Table of N's shows this number.

Wages

Similar to average hours worked, the average quarterly wages⁴ of the Workforce “U” study group decreased considerably during the last two quarters of 2008. As shown in Figure 17, average quarterly wages for the study group started to increase again during the fourth quarter of 2009. However, as shown in Figure 18, hourly pay rates were relatively unchanged during the same three-year period, except for a couple of spikes in 2008. It is clear that a longer follow-up period is required for a full understanding of the impact of the program.

⁴ Average wages were computed by industry and by quarter (total wages divided by total hours). Data were examined for outliers, but none were found that had a noteworthy effect.

17. Average quarterly wages (for those employed)

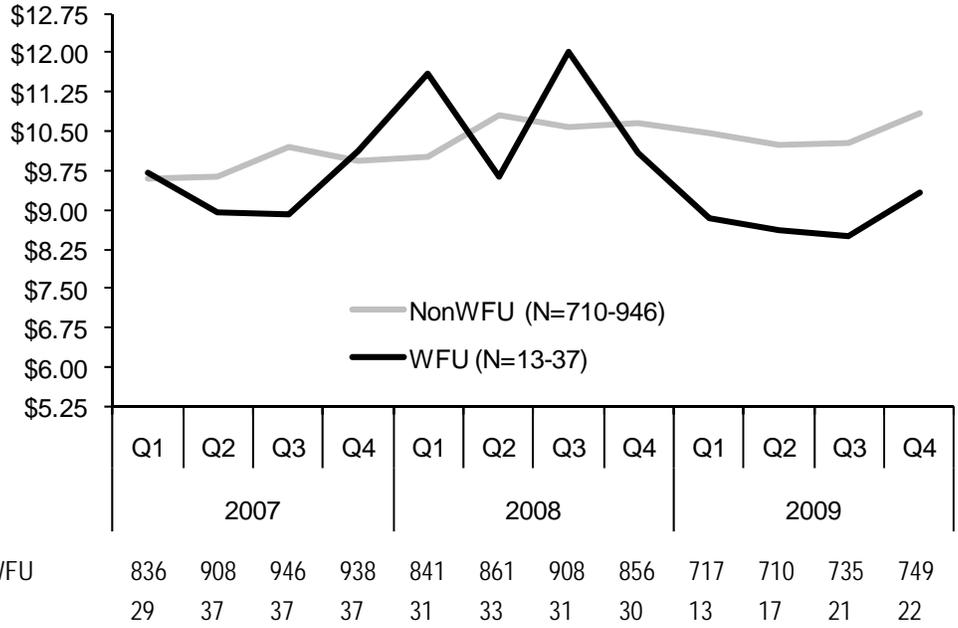


Non-WFU	878	945	979	997	885	903	957	917	744	747	775	783
WFU	16	24	22	22	18	20	20	20	10	12	14	16

Source: Wage detail data maintained by DEED and provided by DHS; calculations by Wilder Research.

Note: Average is computed only for those on MFIP during the month in question. Table of N's shows this number.

18. Average hourly pay rate (for those employed)



Source Wage detail data maintained by DEED and provided by DHS; calculations by Wilder Research.

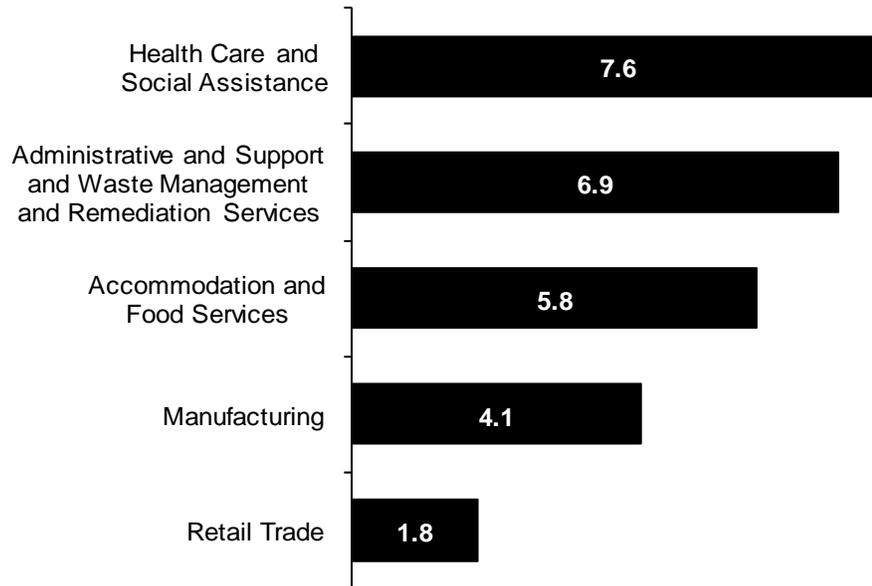
Note: Excludes cases for which only hours or only wages were reported.

Employment and income by industry

Job Placement

During the period of the study, Workforce “U” study group participants were located in jobs across more than 19 industries. The top five industries with the highest average number of workers were: “Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services” with 7.6 workers employed on average each quarter, “Health care and social assistance” with 6.9 workers per quarter, “Accommodation and food services” with 5.8, “Manufacturing” with 4.1, and “Retail trade” with nearly 2 workers employed per quarter during the period 2007-2009. See Figure 19.

19. Average workers per quarter by industry (2007-2009; N=80)

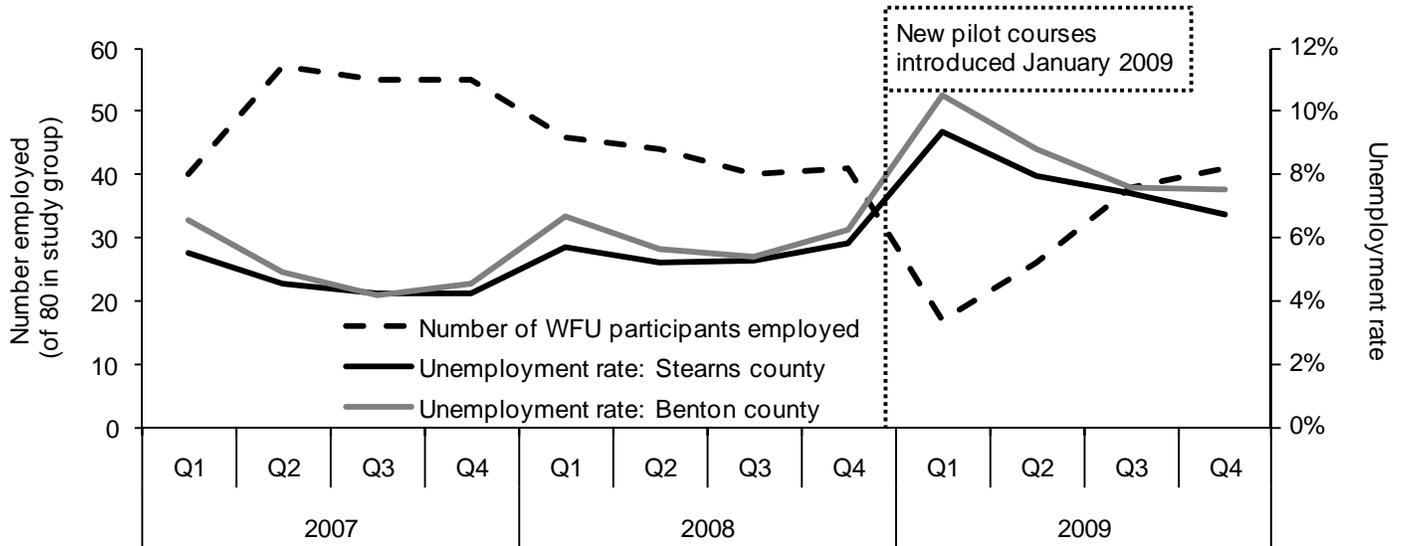


Source: Wage detail data maintained by DEED and provided by DHS; calculations by Wilder Research.

Note: Workers with jobs in more than one industry are counted in each applicable industry.

The number of placed workers each quarter that belong to the study group (MFIP/WFU), shown in Figure 20, is characterized by a sharp decline during the whole year 2008, followed by a recovery in 2009. This behavior is an indication of the impacts of the overall downturn of the economy during that period, as can be observed from the trends of unemployment rates for the Stearns and Benton counties shown in the secondary axis of Figure 20. The trend of the number of employed participants fluctuates in synchrony with the two trends of unemployment rate showing that the program outcome is heavily affected by the overall economic activity.

20. MFIP/Workforce “U” study group participants employed, and local unemployment rates (quarterly, 2007-2009)



Source: Wage detail data maintained by DEED and provided by DHS; unemployment rates from DEED labor market information web site; calculations by Wilder Research.

Some industries have hiring practices closely tied to the economic cycle and consequently are more sensitive to changes in the macroeconomic conditions. This is the case of Manufacturing, where the decline in number of workers in the fourth quarter of 2008 compared to the same quarter in 2007 reached 12.7 percent and did not recover at all during the 2009. See Figure 21, which shows the percent distribution of employment among the top five industries.

21. Percentage of workers employed quarterly (top five industries)

	2007				2008				2009			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Health care and social assistance	22.5%	19.3%	18.2%	14.5%	15.2%	13.6%	12.5%	9.8%	29.4%	42.3%	60.5%	56.1%
Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services	17.5%	15.8%	25.5%	27.3%	15.2%	22.7%	25.0%	26.8%	17.6%	11.5%	7.9%	17.1%
Accommodation and food services	12.5%	21.1%	18.2%	20.0%	21.7%	20.5%	25.0%	22.0%	29.4%	19.2%	21.1%	9.8%
Manufacturing	25.0%	19.3%	16.4%	20.0%	23.9%	18.2%	17.5%	7.3%	0	0	2.6%	7.3%
Retail trade	17.5%	15.8%	12.7%	7.3%	13.0%	15.9%	12.5%	17.1%	11.8%	7.7%	2.6%	4.9%

Source: Wage detail data maintained by DEED and provided by DHS; calculations by Wilder Research.

Note: Workers with jobs in more than one industry are counted in each applicable industry.

Another aspect that is relevant for the economic evaluation is how MFIP/WFU participants are placed in jobs in industries defined as strategic by the program. According to the Workforce “U” goals, there are six industries and occupations defined as primary targets:

- Engineering/Management
- Manufacturing
- Health Services
- Wholesale Trade
- Printing/Publishing
- Business Services

As seen in Figure 20, the top five industries where MFIP/Workforce “U” participants have found jobs include at least three industries targeted by the Workforce “U” program. The allocation of workers in strategic industries depend on several factors such as marketing efforts, networking and partnerships with industry representatives, and the set of skills required by the industries defined as strategic. However, some additional factors beyond the control of program administrators may have effects on hiring practices. These may include, for instance, labor market conditions and the performance of the overall economy.

Wages

MFIP/WFU participants in the study group earned on average \$1,603 per quarter during the 2007-2009 period. This is nearly 40 percent less than the average for the non-WFU group. WFU workers in manufacturing, professional services, finance and insurance, educational services, and health care earned the highest wages across all industries during the period between 2007-2009 (Figure 22). Out of the five highest paying industries only two are included in the goals of WFU as targeted industries (Health care services and Manufacturing). Individuals in the non-WFU group found jobs in more industries than the study group of WFU participants. This might be a indication of a narrower spectrum of skills and qualifications of the WFU participants.

Figure 23 shows the gap in average wages by industry between the WFU and Non-WFU groups. The gap is evident in most industries with the exception of Manufacturing, Professional Services, and Accommodation and food services, where WFU and non-WFU workers earned similar average wages. This suggests that these two groups are similar in terms of the skills valued in these industries.

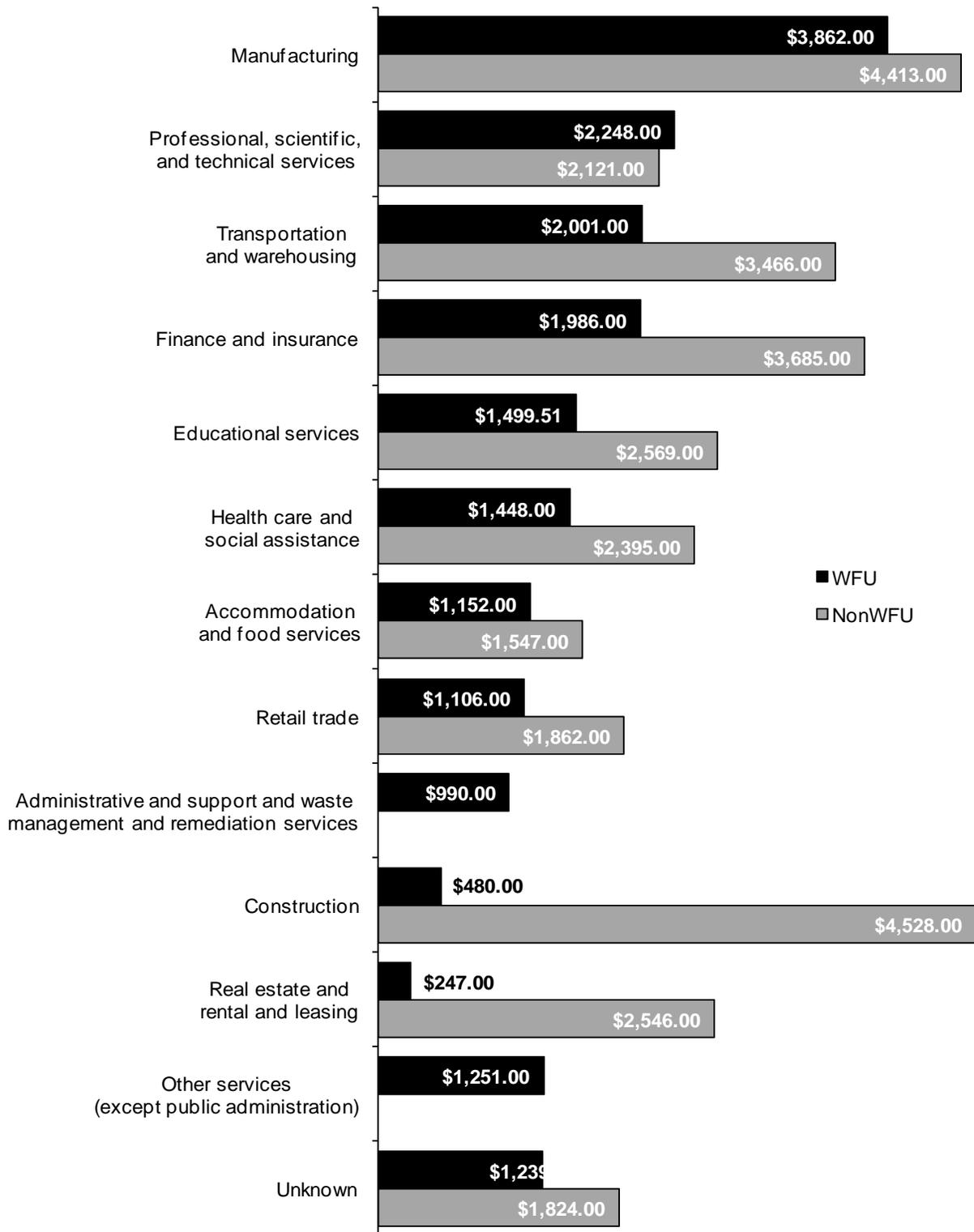
22. Average wage earned quarterly per worker (top five industries, 2007-2009)

	Average Wage	
	WFU	Non WFU
Manufacturing	\$3,862	\$4,413
Professional, scientific, and technical services	\$2,248	\$2,121
Transportation and warehousing	\$2,001	\$3,466
Finance and Insurance	\$1,986	\$3,685
Educational services	\$1,500	\$2,569
Health care and social assistance	\$1,448	\$2,395
Other services (except public administration)	\$1,251	\$1,746
Unknown	\$1,239	\$1,824
Accommodation and food services	\$1,152	\$1,547
Retail trade	\$1,106	\$1,862
Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services	\$ 990	\$1,576
Construction	\$ 480	\$4,528
Real estate and rental and leasing	\$ 247	\$2,546
Information		\$3,816
Management of companies and enterprises		\$3,616
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction		\$3,580
Wholesale trade		\$2,899
Public administration		\$2,331
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting		\$1,715
Arts, entertainment, and recreation		\$1,263
Average wage	\$1,603	\$2,651
Average wage top 5 industries	\$2,190	\$3,806

Source: Wage detail data maintained by DEED and provided by DHS; calculations by Wilder Research.

Note: Average wage for each industry was computed first by quarter, then quarterly averages were averaged.

23. Average wage earned quarterly per worker by industries (2007-2009)



Source: Wage detail data maintained by DEED and provided by DHS; calculations by Wilder Research.

Note: Average wage for each industry was computed first by quarter, then quarterly averages were averaged.

Figures 24 and 25 show the evolution of the average wage earned quarterly by the WFU and non-WFU participants during the period 2007-2009. As noted before, the non-WFU group systematically earned higher wages than the WFU group. This gap should not be interpreted as a negative outcome against the WFU program since by definition WFU participants may differ with respect to other groups in aspects that affect their productivity and wages. Usually, these differencing variables can not be observed and need to be handled in the evaluation of the outcomes with specific research techniques.

One way to analyze differences in wages of these two groups without requiring a more sophisticated methodology is to observe the behavior of wages across time as shown in Figure 25. We use only the top 5 paying industries to eliminate the effect of data from industries with very low levels of placed workers. The time trends of the wages of the groups follow similar patterns, moving almost in parallel fashion throughout the whole period; however, the WFU wages react more quickly and sharply to the downturns in the economy than the wages of non-WFU workers. This indicates the vulnerability of WFU participants to economic shocks. In this case, during periods of high unemployment, welfare recipients may be in disadvantage with respect to other unemployed workers with more experience and better qualifications. However, Figure 25 also shows that WFU's wages bounced back more quickly than non-WFU after the negative shocks. If it were possible to hold all other factors constant, and such results were still observed, one could say that part of this positive reaction could be attributed to the impact of the WFU program. Therefore, once sufficient and adequate data becomes available, a more controlled evaluation of the program would help to determine the importance of WFU impacts. The final ROI would indicate if the monetary value of positive impacts of WFU are sufficient to cover the costs of the program.

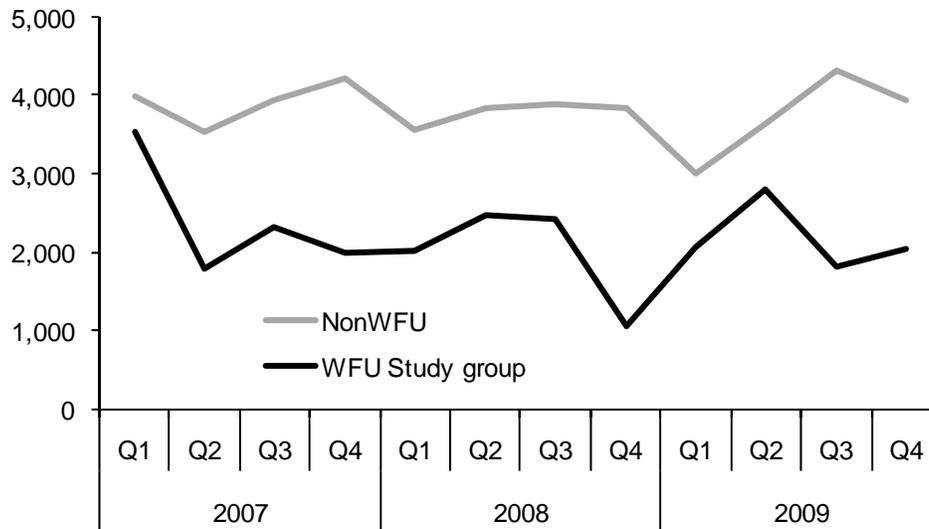
24. Average wage earned quarterly per worker (2007-2009)

	2007				2008				2009			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
WFU	\$1,956	\$1,538	\$1,934	\$1,633	\$1,249	\$2,190	\$1,805	\$1,055	\$1,380	\$1,194	\$1,299	\$2,008
Non-WFU	\$2,631	\$2,383	\$2,423	\$2,496	\$2,337	\$2,423	\$2,713	\$2,741	\$2,505	\$2,799	\$3,411	\$2,955

Source: Wage detail data maintained by DEED and provided by DHS; calculations by Wilder Research.

Note: All dollars shown at current values.

25. Average wage earned quarterly per worker – Five highest-paying industries (2007-2009)



Source: Wage detail data maintained by DEED and provided by DHS; calculations by Wilder Research.

MFIP exit

Due to small numbers, limited job opportunities, and the short follow-up times available, MFIP exit data available in this study are not able to answer questions about the effectiveness of the Workforce U program. The following information is provided for descriptive purposes only.

Of the 80 MFIP participants in the Workforce “U” study group, two had their first Workforce “U” enrollment before their first month on MFIP. Of the remaining 78 study group participants, the average time on MFIP prior to the first class, out of the 24 prior months, was 7.8 months. Almost one-fifth of the group (19%) had been on MFIP more than half of the previous 24 months. One-quarter (27%) had only three months or fewer on MFIP before first enrollment.

For 44 study group participants, the timing of first enrollment allowed at least nine months of follow-up data. Of this group, 13 participants, or 30 percent, exited MFIP during those nine months. (Consistent with DHS practices, we count an “exit” as two or more consecutive months off MFIP, because many people leave MFIP for only a single month for administrative reasons such as missing paperwork rather than because they intentionally exited.) Of the 13 who exited, 3, or 23 percent, re-entered after at least two

months off MFIP. Of the group of 44, the average time on MFIP during the nine months after the first class was 7.6 months. See Figure 26.

26. Patterns of MFIP use before and after first Workforce “U” class

	N	P
Number of months on MFIP before first WFU course (total), of previous 24 months (N=78)		
0 to 3	21	27%
4 to 7	26	33%
8 to 12	16	21%
13 to 24	15	19%
Average months on MFIP (out of 24)	7.8	
Exit MFIP within 3 months? (N=78*)		
Yes	2	3%
No	76	97%
Exit MFIP within 6 months? (N=58)		
Yes	8	14%
No	50	86%
Exit MFIP within 9 months? (N=44)		
Yes	13	30%
No	31	70%
Average months on MFIP (out of 9)	7.6	
Of those with 9 months of follow-up who had exited MFIP (N=13):		
Re-entered MFIP during that time?		
Yes	3	23%
No	10	77%

Source: MAXIS data provided by DHS; calculations by Wilder Research.

Note: *Computation excludes two cases where first month on Workforce “U” was before first month on MFIP. Percent totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Program outcomes for different sub-groups

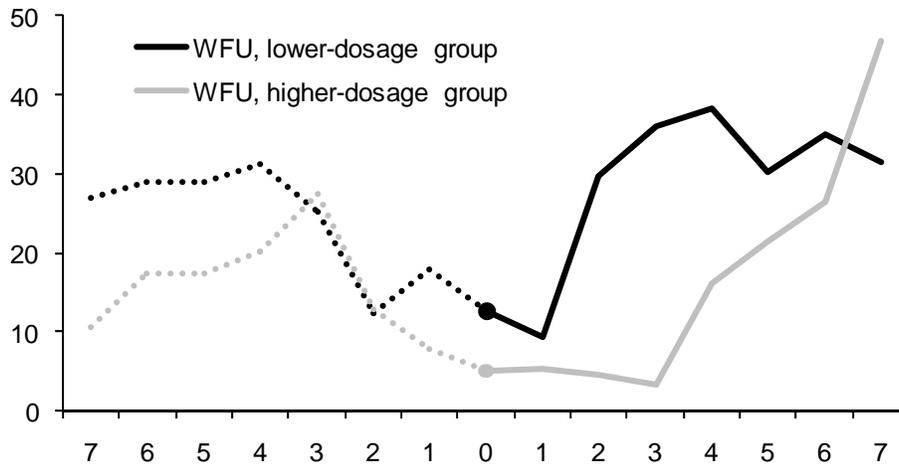
The small number of Workforce “U” study participants identified limits the ability of this evaluation to do sub-group analyses to help understand the program’s effect on different populations. However, there were a few groups with large enough numbers to examine. Sub-groups analyzed in this section include those participants with lower and higher levels of engagement in Workforce “U” (the higher- and lower-dosage groups), immigrant populations (more specifically, Somali and other African immigrants), and participants who received added support services from the Workforce “U” program.

Dosage and outcomes

As described earlier, we examined the effect of increased participation by splitting the overall Workforce “U” study group into two sub-groups based on the number of multi-day courses completed by each participant. Workforce “U” study participants who completed more than two courses only started seeing increases in work hours about four months after

taking their first Workforce “U” course, but after that they had considerable increases in average hours worked per month. Seven months after their first Workforce “U” course, the higher-dosage group participants had surpassed the lower-dosage group participants in average monthly work hours. The length of follow-up is not enough to determine whether this increase is a short-term fluctuation or is likely to be sustained. See Figure 27.

27. Average quarterly work hours in the 7 months before and after first course, by Workforce “U” dosage



Number for each month (includes people with 0 work hours)

Lower-dosage	17	28	28	31	32	37	41	42	43	42	42	32	29	23	21
Higher-dosage	16	19	19	21	23	26	33	33	33	33	31	28	28	27	25

Source: WFU dosage from SBETC; Wage detail data maintained by DEED and provided by DHS; calculations by Wilder Research.

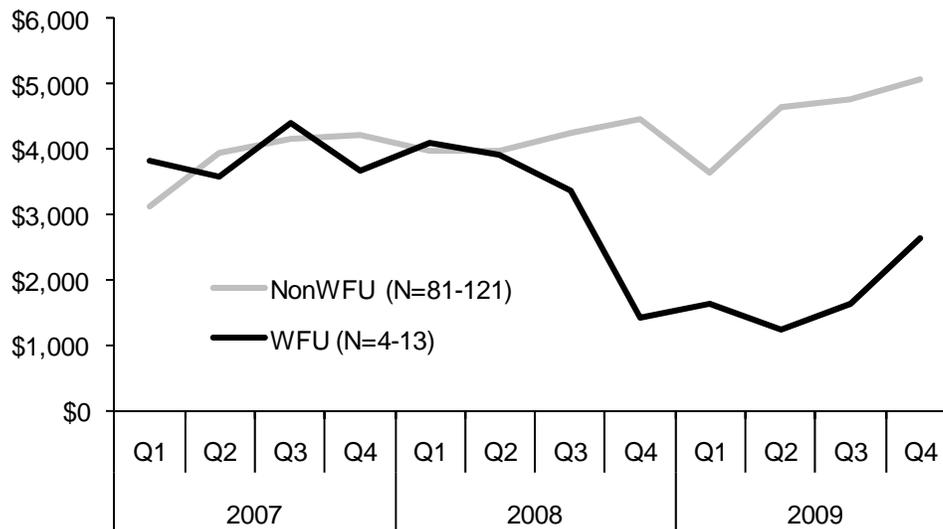
Workforce “U” and immigrant populations

As described earlier, compared to other MFIP participants in Stearns-Benton, the Workforce “U” study group had a disproportionately high proportion of Somali and other African immigrant participants. It is unclear whether this difference was due to the program (or something about the program) attracting a higher proportion of immigrants, or if it was due to a systematic bias introduced through the evaluation’s consent process. Either way, it is evident that the Workforce “U” courses are attracting and serving students with diverse backgrounds.

Overall, Somali and other African immigrant Workforce “U” study group participants experienced similar outcomes to those experienced by comparable members of the overall MFIP population. The wage comparison is shown in Figure 28. The Workforce “U” group (those enrolled in the pilot courses in January 2009 or later) were more

severely affected by the 2008 recessionary decline than non-Workforce “U” participants, but these group differences apply only to the time before the pilot courses were implemented. During 2009, after implementation, the two groups show similar changes.

28. Average quarterly wages (Somali and other African immigrants)



Number of employed persons in each group

NonWFU	81	100	106	121	118	114	121	115	89	87	89	92
WFU	11	13	11	13	11	11	10	11	4	6	7	9

Source: MAXIS data from DHS; Wage detail data maintained by DEED and provided by DHS; calculations by Wilder Research.

Participants receiving support service funding

Slightly more than one-third (36%) of the Workforce “U” study group received support services funding from the designated pilot project funding. Study group participants who received support services funding were more likely to need an interpreter at intake, less likely to have a high school diploma or GED, and more likely to be a Somali immigrant. This suggests that the support services funding are being distributed to participants with the greatest needs.

Along with funding, the Workforce “U” program is set up to have ongoing support services provided or connected to by program staff. These services are described on pages 39-41.

In looking at MFIP participants’ responses to the end-of-class Workforce “U” student survey, it appears that receiving help in these areas improves student outcomes. Students who report receiving assistance from Workforce “U” staff in all four of these areas also

more frequently reported that Workforce “U” made a “big difference” for them, compared to those not receiving help in three key outcomes areas. These outcome areas are:

- Helping students feel they want to try for a job or a better job
- Helping students feel well prepared to do a job or a better job
- Helping students get a job or a better job

It should be noted that a relatively small number of student survey respondents were identified as MFIP participants. In all, 29 student survey respondents were identified as MFIP participants. Of these, 10 were Workforce “U” study group participants. The small numbers limit our ability to draw conclusions based on the survey results. However, consistently across questions, we see that students who received help from Workforce “U” staff were more likely to report that the classes made a “big difference” in how they perceive their own job motivation, level of preparation, and likelihood of employment. See Figure 29.

29. Student survey: self-reported outcomes by type of assistance received from Workforce “U” staff

WFU made a “big difference” in...	Received help from WFU staff on...							
	Budgeting and money		Child care issues		Transportation		Attending class regularly	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Wanting to try for a job or better job	79%	20%	53%	*	60%	*	71%	10%
n=	14	15	17	8	15	5	14	10
Feeling well prepared for current or better job	79%	47%	76%	*	73%	*	86%	30%
n=	14	15	17	8	15	5	14	10
Getting a job or better job	43%	20%	29%	*	47%	*	57%	0%
n=	14	15	17	8	15	5	14	10

Source: In-class student survey administered by SBETC; calculations by Wilder Research.

Note: * Percentages not calculated; fewer than 10 participants are represented in this cell of the table. Sum of n’s within a pair do not all total the same because some students indicated they did not need the help.

Framework for Return on Investment (ROI) analysis

Preliminary analysis of the outcomes of the program show evidence that participants' wages and work hours change following enrollment. This is an indication that participants may accrue some economic benefits from the services received. But, these benefits are achieved only after the State invests significant tax payer resources in running the Workforce "U" program. It is logical then to ask whether it is worth the cost to allocate public resources into the program to accomplish these outcomes. A Return on Investment (ROI) analysis, also referred as *benefit-cost analysis*, would help answer this question by comparing the economic value of the benefits of the program with its associated costs. In particular, the ROI analysis of the referrals of MFIP participants to Workforce "U" seeks to answer the question:

What has been the return on the policy of referring MFIP participants to Workforce "U" in Stearns and Benton counties?

The ROI report (see Appendix) describes the procedure to determine the returns on investment (ROI) of this policy. It also includes a short summary of previous ROI studies of workforce programs around the U.S.

Previous studies (summarized in the Appendix) show that the great majority of investments in workforce and welfare-to-work programs pay off depending on the perspective from which the return in investment is estimated. From the participant's perspective, most of the return on investment is in increased earnings and fringe benefits. Private businesses benefit from these programs by reducing costs of unemployment benefits and insurance taxes. Participants and other private individuals usually receive positive net benefits from workforce programs. Previous ROI studies show that taxpayers benefit from increased taxes and savings in welfare expenditures and other social services; however, the costs of running these programs sometimes surpass the benefits to taxpayers, since the transfers and social benefits are accounted as costs, thus reducing the net benefits to taxpayers.

In Minnesota, the Governor's Workforce Development Council (GWDC) is working to use census data to create a standard return on investment methodology for workforce and training programs. In 2009, a law was passed that requires DEED to report on a set of accountability measures, one of which is return on investment (M.S. 116J.997). The GWDC, responsible for advising on performance standards and measures (M.S. 116L.665), convened the ROI Initiative to develop a standard ROI Measure.

Discussion and implications for program replication

In this section we use the findings above to answer a set of questions, commonly asked in formative evaluations, that help to assess whether a new program is being successfully implemented.

Is the program reaching its intended target population?

Using data for participants who gave consent for their data to be used in the study, we can compare those MFIP participants who enrolled in Workforce “U” classes with those who did not. There are few significant differences between the groups on most measures for which data are available. Workforce “U” students were more likely than other Stearns-Benton MFIP participants to be immigrants, and less likely to have a high school education. This appears to indicate that the program is successfully reaching participants who are in greater need of additional skill-building help, and who are often not successfully engaged in similar programs. Career Planners and instructors also report that courses are enrolling students with learning disabilities and low basic skills, and that instructors are individualizing their instruction to help a high proportion of them successfully complete the courses.

It is not, however, reaching all of them. In fact, only a relatively small proportion of MFIP participants were served through the Workforce “U” program during the study period. This is not unusual for a pilot, and it is generally wise to start a new program on a small scale in order to refine it before expanding to full scale. In addition, the recession has resulted in many dislocated workers needing services, and they have occupied most of the spaces in the overall Workforce “U” offerings. The program staff are aware of the challenges in getting more MFIP participants into limited class spaces, and are working to develop a means of ensuring that slots are reserved for a larger share of them.

Further increases in the scale of the program are limited by availability of space and funding. The program has developed satellite classrooms in overflow locations, but this is expensive and undercuts the advantages of the one-stop model of service delivery. When the economy improves and the surge of dislocated workers recedes, the space problem is likely to improve significantly.

Is the program delivering appropriate services (in type and dosage)?

Study findings show that all stakeholder groups from whom we collected feedback report that the Workforce “U” program is of high quality, and adds significantly to students’ work readiness and job potential. Course content has been significantly revised under the pilot. Previously, classes were a somewhat scattered array of separate offerings. They have been reorganized into a structured set of related and sequential offerings, in line with specific skills known to be important to local employers.

Support services add to the impact and increase the effectiveness of the classes. These include lower-intensity services delivered in a class format for groups, which provides greater efficiency than if they were delivered by individual Career Planners during precious one-on-one time. In addition, contracts with local service providers allow for more in-depth needs to be addressed.

The variety of offerings allows Career Planners to assign each participant to a menu of classes best suited to their needs and interests, and to prescribe prerequisites to help participants become ready for the more challenging courses. The initial problems posed by some participants’ needs for greater computer skills – and the challenges of identifying skill levels in order to provide the appropriate class placement – have been addressed through a new pre-assessment tool and a partnership with Adult Basic Education for an introductory computer class.

The main issue on which there is still a lack of consensus among stakeholders is the 100 percent, no excuses attendance policy of the core courses. This is a high priority among the employers on the council who provide substantial input into the standards for the program. However, Career Planners report that many of their MFIP participants have so many crises in their lives that they doubt their ability to successfully meet the attendance expectations, and they find that the experience of not completing a course can be discouraging. The policy thus results in lower rates of referral to classes, and problems for Career Planners to be able to identify other qualifying Employment Services activities in lieu of the classes.

Is the program being implemented with fidelity? That is, have there been any changes in goals, concept, or design?

Partners who were interviewed praised Workforce “U” for its flexibility and adaptability in the face of drastically changed economic conditions. The evidence from this evaluation is that the adaptations have been made in such a way that the original goals and principles of the program have remained intact.

The partners interviewed for this evaluation described their understandings of Workforce “U” and its guiding principles, and did so with a reasonable degree of consensus on the main points. There is room for more agreement on some of the secondary points, which can be addressed through changes in the work with partners (described below).

Are program processes (such as organization and management) operating as planned?

The development of the community-based resources needed to operate the program has occurred mainly through a set of individual relationships between SBETC staff and individual partners. While each of the partners we interviewed was able to give a description of Workforce “U” that included key elements, there was not a clear consensus among partners on a consistent single vision. Most stakeholders identified few or no disappointments with their participation in the program, and most reported that the staff at SBETC had done an excellent job of building and maintaining relationships. Among the few disappointments that were voiced, a common theme was a wish to have been more aware of, and more involved in, program development at an earlier stage.

The program has been hampered by the lack of efficient data systems. The state’s MAXIS and Workforce 1 administrative data systems are designed to collect data needed by the state to monitor accountability, but they are not designed to allow local program administrators ready ability to query the data as needed to make program management decisions. To offer its comprehensive and seamless program, Workforce “U” integrates elements of DEED’s Dislocated Worker Program, DHS’s MFIP program, MDE’s Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language Program, and provides connections to facilitate student movement into MnSCU’s St. Cloud Technical and Community College. It also has partnerships with nonprofit service providers in fields as diverse as domestic violence, mental health counseling, transportation, and financial management. It needs to be able to maintain student information in one central location but be able to slice and dice that information according to many different groupings. In addition, the program would benefit from a college-style data system to manage class registrations, attendance, and completion.

What can we say about program outcomes?

The program has a conscious “human capital” focus on the development of skills, rather than simply the quickest possible placement in the first available job. In the short term, quick placement programs often produce the most impressive results. However, programs that take more time up front to develop skills, self-confidence and self-efficacy, and a career orientation often show stronger outcomes over a longer term. Therefore, a

fair evaluation of Workforce “U” should be done with a several-year follow-up period, as well as access to complete data about all participants and a suitable comparison group.

Based on the preliminary data available, there is reason to be optimistic about longer-term outcomes. The evidence is:

- Emphatically positive feedback from an overwhelming majority of class participants
- Confirming evidence from instructors and Career Planners that students who complete the courses are more motivated, more energetic, more hopeful, more self-confident, and have more self-knowledge and career awareness
- Preliminary data from administrative records showing a change in the direction of participation rates, work hours, and earnings that occurs following enrollment
- Preliminary data from administrative records showing that even participants with more serious work barriers show equal (and possibly stronger) outcomes after three follow-up quarters, and after receiving more intensive services

To fully realize the promise of this preliminary evidence it will be necessary to solve the problems of scale and deliver the programs to more than a small fraction of the MFIP participants. This will be much easier to do when limited space is not claimed by so many dislocated workers. It will also require the development of alternative experiences to help participants with low motivation and/or chaotic lives to get a first successful experience in a class that has a level of expectation that they can meet. After an initial success they can then build on that with a series of additional small successes until they are ready for the 100 percent, no-excuses level of work readiness to qualify for the certificate that means so much to the employers council.

Is the program suitable for wider replication?

Due to delays in the contract and changes imposed by the recession, there were significant delays in the implementation of planned program changes in the pilot. Adjustments were still being made at the close of the pilot and evaluation period. Therefore, the program as described in this study cannot be considered to be fully developed, and any definitive recommendation for wider replication must be deferred until more complete data are available. It would also be unwise to generalize findings for potentially longer-term application based on results obtained solely during a most unusual set of economic conditions.

Both organizational partner representatives and Career Planners on the staff of SBETC were asked what they would recommend to a colleague in a different county who was

thinking about implementing a program like Workforce “U” in their home community. Almost unanimously, both groups answered “They should seriously consider it.” Quite a few said, more simply, “Go for it!” The consensus is that this is a successful model, implemented at a very difficult time, with promising results, and that it is worthy of wider application. They also emphasize that people planning to replicate the program should learn from SBETC’s experience.

The use of the term “model” should not be interpreted to mean a specific, concrete description of a certain staffing ratio, set of partners, and set of courses. The “model” is a flexible approach to constantly changing conditions, governed by a consistent set of principles. As a result, it will look different in Stearns and Benton Counties in the next year, or two years, or five years, even after it has reached a higher degree of program maturity. It would also look different in a different county, even if adopted with high fidelity.

The class-based delivery of Workforce “U” requires a certain concentration of participants. Furthermore, another key feature of Workforce “U” is its rich set of offerings, which requires a higher population density than is needed to sustain any individual course. This model is feasible in the medium-sized metropolitan area around St. Cloud, where an estimated 85 percent of MFIP participants are within 15 miles of the WorkForce Center. This makes centralized delivery of courses possible, which in turn allows for a reasonably efficient delivery of content. The program has used pilot funds to create an Outreach Specialist position to help deliver services to more outlying areas in the two counties. Further experience will be needed with this position, if it can be continued beyond the pilot period, to learn how this role contributes to the success of the overall model. The pilot is also currently testing an on-line version of the Career Launch course, which if successful will greatly increase the model’s effectiveness over a more broadly dispersed geographic area.

Other than a modest population density, this evaluation finds no evidence that the replicability of the program depends on any particular population characteristics. The pilot program has successfully engaged not only members of the traditional white majority group in central Minnesota but also a significant number of Somali and other African immigrants. With local input to ensure cultural competency, there is no reason the model could not be implemented with any group or mix of groups.

The model does depend greatly on successful collaborations with many different partners in the community. If a community lacks social service capacity, or if key service providers are reluctant to be part of such a cooperative arrangement, it could be difficult to implement the model. However, Workforce “U” has worked its way through some partnerships that have presented challenges (often due to rigidities caused by the partner

program's own policies or funding criteria). The evidence from our partner interviews indicates that the breadth of partnerships helps to maintain the strength of the program by allowing for alternatives to be found if any one link proves weak.

Managing the development and maintenance of so many partnerships requires a champion, or preferably several champions. The leader or leaders must have a clear vision and be able to articulate it convincingly, and must have good relationship-building skills. Program operations require the ability to understand, at a deep level, the needs and perspectives of for-profit businesses, nonprofit service providers, public agencies, and individual clients. The evaluation also points to a need to bring partners into collective planning from an early stage, and to seek and use input regularly not only from partner organizations but also from program participants and direct service staff.

Finally, while people considering replication are urged to learn from the experience of Workforce "U," one of the lessons from that experience is the importance of developing specific features that are tailored to local needs and resources. Much of the strength of the program is in its good fit with its local community and business environment.

No matter where the program is replicated, it will face some challenges due to inconsistencies in larger mandates. One example is the difficulty of helping participants attend classes, or be able to go to work, through the use of child care subsidies that do not pay the full cost of care, and do not enable very low income parents to make the substantial up-front payments that are often required. A second example is the rule about the kinds of employment services activities that can be counted toward the federal participation rate and the kinds that cannot. Many of the people who rely on welfare to help them better their lot have been left behind by a swiftly changing economy. At a time when most workforce policy is increasingly recognizing an urgent need to strengthen the skills of the entry-level workforce, the federal TANF policies continue to place great restrictions on the extent to which welfare participants may engage in training or training-readiness activities and still be counted as fulfilling their participation requirements.

Recommendations

For Stearns-Benton Employment & Training Council

The implementation findings show that SBETC has assembled a highly-functioning, motivated set of community partners to deliver services that are highly valued by those who receive them. This evaluation points to the following opportunities to build on this success and to address some key challenges.

SBETC should continue to offer the Workforce “U” model, and continue to develop the model jointly with its partners

Workforce “U” continues to implement solutions to problems that have been identified throughout the implementation of the pilot, such as how to assess needs and provide basic training in computer skills. Resolutions to thorny problems such as these are being solved through a combination of fact-gathering (to identify areas of problems) and collective problem-solving calling on the strengths of many points of view. The solution, characteristically for Workforce "U," involves a new partnership and shared resources.

The continued development of the model, in keeping with the program’s history, will likely benefit from the continued application of the organizational development model currently in use; that is, designing and testing solutions, gathering and assessing feedback from multiple perspectives, then refining the solution and implementing it at a larger scale. It should also consciously assess the distribution of resources to direct services compared to those used for program management and oversight. In times of program development and expansion, the right balance may be hard to establish, and it may take some experimentation to discover the point at which the program is most effective. Given the economic situation, SBETC appears to have put the majority of the pilot grant into direct services. A somewhat greater allocation to program management and administrative oversight might have been helpful, and should be considered for the future.

Continued development should also include ongoing examination of course content. This includes comparing what is taught to what is currently valued in the local labor market. It also includes continuing to scrutinize the way the content of different courses relate to each other and build on each other.

To meet needs of new and inexperienced workers for ongoing skill development, Workforce “U” should continue and build on the linkages it has established with Adult Basic Education and St. Cloud Technical and Community College. Research has shown that a year of post-secondary study, ending in an academic credential (such as a

professional certificate) is the “tipping point” at which a worker’s opportunities for steady employment and living wages are significantly improved. To promote the long-term self-sufficiency of its clients, Workforce “U” should not be satisfied with offering employment services that do not at least help them begin on a path that leads to this point.

The model also includes support services provided in partnership with a wide array of community organizations. SBETC should continue to nurture its current relationships and build new ones as needed. This process has already done much for Workforce “U” besides provide help for clients. It has built community service capacity on a wider scale, helping to strengthen the services that may help to prevent others from needing welfare in the future. It has also built, among the human services community, a much richer awareness of the services that are available in the area and how to access them.

Finally, the model should continue to include strong marketing efforts to ensure that job seekers needing help are aware of the value of the program. Marketing also should continue with businesses, to broaden the base of input into program contents as well as broaden the pool of employers who understand the quality of the program’s graduates.

SBETC should support and encourage front-line staff as well as clients in the adjustments to the new model

The Workforce “U” model is based on principles that fulfill the mission of MFIP to develop family self-sufficiency. However, many of the immediate steps it takes to accomplish this are different in emphasis from those of traditional welfare programs. For experienced MFIP job counselors, the transition to the new model is a significant culture shift. For the counties whose MFIP clients are served in the program, it is important to assure that short-term measures of accountability will still be met under the longer-term vision. It is essential that both of these parties be included in the ongoing development of the details of the programs, as well as in larger-scope discussions that continue to raise the profile of the overall vision and keep fresh the reasons for its importance.

The Career Planner’s role in the Workforce “U” model has elements that are different from those of traditional MFIP job counselors. While we recognize the limitations imposed by large case loads and low resources, we recommend that Career Planners be offered suitable professional development opportunities to develop both skills and comfort in their roles.

SBETC should ensure that the perspectives of front-line staff and clients are considered in program development

In keeping with the program's guiding principle of "honor," the program should regularly consult the people who have the front-row seats for how things are working, and those who are out on the playing field themselves. This group's views should be communicated as directly as possible, with a minimum of filtering, to others who may have less awareness of the circumstances with which MFIP participants struggle. Asked what had been learned through the partnership with Workforce "U", one employer on the oversight committee told us,

It has been extremely educational for me. I lived in my own little world, with a good paying job, successful in my career. In my work with Workforce "U," hearing and touching the stories of what people are going through, has really grounded me in seeing that my neighbors are really going through tough times, and that this is a real problem out there.

For the program to be responsive to MFIP participants' needs as well as employers' needs, it is essential that both perspectives be seriously and respectfully balanced in program design. For it to be effectively implemented, it is essential that both front-line workers and county human service managers be actively engaged in decisions.

Some MFIP participants have needs and starting points that are significantly different from those of dislocated workers, and these should be accommodated

The principle of mixing MFIP participants with other job seekers who have stronger work histories is beneficial for the MFIP students. Comments from non-MFIP students in the classes give no evidence that this mix detracts from the value of the classes for other job seekers. However, only a relatively small number of MFIP participants enrolled in core classes during the study period.

Input from Career Planners for this evaluation suggests that the strict attendance standards actively discourage participation. Many studies of MFIP have shown that a significant proportion of participants (especially longer-term participants) lack a stable work history and/or have learning disabilities, chronic health problems, or other disabilities that make both classroom and workplace attendance difficult. For many, individually tailored services can help remediate such barriers. However, students who enter the program from a less advantaged starting point cannot realistically be expected to immediately meet the same benchmarks for success as other students with more experience and/or more personal strengths to draw on.

A significant body of research findings has documented the value and success of supported work placements for MFIP participants who are able to work but are not yet ready for the competitive labor market. In supported work placements they can develop and practice new skills with less devastating consequences for errors, and with recognition and celebration of small successes that might be overlooked or taken for granted in other settings. This experience shapes a greater readiness for more challenging work environments by building self-confidence as well as skills. The same principle should be applied to the class structure of Workforce "U." Courses should be designed to provide access to similar kinds of content as the core courses, but at a slower pace, with less computer skill assumed, and with greater flexibility in attendance standards. This would allow students to benefit from the significant motivational gains that Workforce "U" courses consistently instill in students, which would in turn help to improve attitudes and efforts to improve attendance for subsequent classes.

SBETC should continue its efforts to develop a program management data system capable of managing enrollment and attendance functions

Current administrative data systems are designed to meet state needs for program oversight and accountability. They are not designed to facilitate oversight by local program managers or to support their program management responsibilities. Program improvement depends on accurate understanding of how programs are actually working, and during a period of intense model development these cannot wait for lengthy data collection and analysis to be completed. Rather, the program needs a record system that can be queried to easily answer such questions as "How many of our MFIP participants were enrolled in Workforce "U" classes in the last quarter?", "What is the enrollment rate for participants whose intake screenings show possible mental health needs?", or "If they enroll, are they more or less likely to successfully complete courses compared to other students?"

The larger Workforce "U" program is designed to be simple and seamless for the students, but it is very complex behind the scenes. It overlaps not only with MFIP but also with programs administered by at least three other state agencies (K-12 education, DEED, and MnSCU). Students may be entered into classes from many different entry points. This is a challenge that has helped to keep MFIP enrollments lower than they might otherwise have been. A college-style on-line registration and records system would help to manage this complexity, giving Career Planners (and staff in other contributing programs) real-time information on course availability, potential attendance problems, and other information needed to provide the one-to-one guidance for which they are responsible. Such a records system would also enable much more efficient and thorough evaluations of program outcomes.

SBETC should continue its efforts to move from a collection of bilateral partnerships to a true multiparty collaboration

Workforce “U” managers are moving beyond the initial set of two-party agreements on which initial implementation was built, and are now beginning to develop a true multiparty collaborative structure. In this way a wider range of visions and voices can be better aligned through a shared conversation. It should also help identify and resolve any problems that arise from different practices or priorities among the different partners.

Several of the partners who were interviewed indicated that public agencies have been difficult to work with. Their reports indicate that some of the difficulty is due to lack of flexibility inherent in their operations due to funding limitations or narrow guidelines for operations. Although strictures involved in oversight of public programs may make public agencies less flexible, one agency representative reports that they nevertheless can be very valuable partners because their staff are intimately knowledgeable about the details of agency rules and practices, and can help others understand opportunities and navigate appropriate solutions to barriers.

The partnership-building work should continue. It has already produced significant results in the building and alignment of more systematic responses to community needs. Several examples can easily be cited to illustrate this.

- The creation of the Child Care Liaison position has resulted in the development of greater capacity in the child care provider system in the area.
- The creation of supported work opportunities with local nonprofit service organizations has not only provided early work experience and success for the Workforce “U” students who were placed – it has also enhanced the capacity of those nonprofits to provide safety net services in the community that will help prevent other families from needing to rely on welfare. For example, a student placed with one agency was able to work on a backlog of work at the agency related to transportation help, and thereby made it possible to increase the number of rides that were provided.
- Minnesota has a grant from the Joyce Foundation (based in Chicago and serving a 6-state region in the upper Midwest) to encourage the better alignment of public entities. The purpose is to better serve communities and low-wage, low-skill workers by helping such individuals move from Adult Basic Education and/or community-based training programs into post-secondary education, and to complete at least one year of higher education with a credential documenting skills needed in the labor market. This work is considered at the forefront of workforce practice and policy, and Workforce “U” has repeatedly been highlighted as an example of SBETC’s leadership in building a helpful base of experience and knowledge from which others can learn.

For the state

The implementation findings show that the program is operating as it was intended to, despite setbacks caused by the economic environment in which it has been operating. Preliminary outcome results give support to expectations that it will add value to the region's MFIP employment services. The following recommendations highlight opportunities for the state to support these successes, build on them, and potentially help address some conditions that may tend to limit success.

The Workforce "U" model should be seen as a promising way to meet MFIP participants' needs for job readiness and longer-term self-sufficiency

The formative evaluation clearly shows strong implementation results. Program staff as well as community partners, when asked what advice they would give to hypothetical colleagues considering adoption of a program like Workforce "U," gave near-unanimous recommendations to look into it seriously. Moreover, the program has been held up by leaders in workforce development in the state as a promising model. It is regarded as a leader in the state in its work to align disparate systems to better meet needs of low-skill workers as well as those of employers and the community.

Currently available data suggest that outcomes for Workforce "U" students are more positive than those for similar but non-participating MFIP clients. These results should be regarded as promising but in need of confirmation through a longer-term outcome evaluation.

If possible, the state should seek resources to facilitate a second evaluation of Workforce "U," when it reaches its next stage of development, to examine both its overall design and its MFIP component. Due to the preliminary nature of the program itself, as well as the unavailability of complete data, it was not feasible for this evaluation to provide findings that definitively identify what outcomes were caused by the program. However, once the program model has been fully developed and stably implemented, an outcome evaluation with comparison groups will be appropriate. Efforts should be made from the outset to ensure that data are made available for all participants, not only a sample, and to control for possible confounding effects by creating statistically based comparison groups. These groups should be constructed separately for each of the different feeder strands of Workforce "U" (e.g., MFIP and DEED/dislocated worker), because each source program is likely to have different selection criteria that will have to be taken into account in the construction of an equivalent comparison group.

The Workforce "U" model is likely to be of value to other counties and employment services providers around the state. Elements of the Workforce "U" program could be

adopted and tailored to individual settings even if all the details could not be implemented. The state could help local MFIP programs across the state by facilitating an exchange of information about the model, its philosophy, the resources required to offer it, and advice from SBETC staff and partners on how to combine the best of the Stearns-Benton experience with customized adaptations to other local conditions.

State legislators, and officials responsible for oversight of data privacy, should directly address the balance of individual privacy protection and the public's interest in improving the effectiveness of programs

The effective evaluation of the outcomes of the Workforce "U" MFIP pilot will require access to complete administrative records for all program participants as well as those of eligible non-participants and a statically-constructed comparison group. Current law and related applications of data privacy and informed consent policies prevented this from being available for the current evaluation.

State researchers and data privacy officers should identify where barriers are imposed by law and where they arise from procedures and interpretation. In today's electronically networked age, privacy protection is more important than ever. However, the public interest also increasingly requires that taxpayer-funded programs be as effective as possible. Determining this effectiveness can only be done with careful, appropriately controlled sharing of program data.

Similarly, the principle of informed consent for the sharing of personal data must be observed and honored. However, participants in public programs understand that their personal data will be used for program evaluation purposes. Legislators and agency officials should re-examine current law and/or regulations that limit this use to state researchers and those with whom they directly contract, and that require individually-signed consents for other researchers to use the same data for the same purposes. In this case, Wilder's contract was with SBETC rather than directly with the state. The rules that applied to Wilder as a subcontractor severely limited access to data and flexibility in the analysis of data.

More should be done to address policy inconsistencies that impede program participation

The Workforce "U" pilot has been limited in its ability to enroll students in part because of policy barriers. Lack of adequate child care is a common problem for many MFIP participants. It is especially challenging for immigrants whose child care needs reflect important cultural differences. Culturally appropriate care is not always available, especially outside of a few metropolitan centers. The MFIP and basic sliding fee child care programs currently provide after-the-fact reimbursements for child care costs, but at

a rate that is frequently lower than prevailing rates in the community. In addition, many child care providers require a substantial prepayment upon enrollment, often including both first and last month payments. The current reimbursement system leaves very-low-income parents to find this lump sum of cash from their own resources. Efforts should be made to find whether and how other states may have successfully addressed these issues.

State DHS officials and legislators should also work with Minnesota's congressional delegation to find ways to bring MFIP employment and training policies into better harmony with the more up-to-date understanding of effective workforce training policies for the broader population of low-skill workers. The current field of workforce preparation recognizes that training models that blend job-specific skills and experience with basic education provide the most effective learning on both dimensions. In turn, these greater basic and job skills better prepare low-wage, low-skill workers to move upward in their careers and contribute more, not only to their employers, but also to their families and communities. However, the current policy on employment service activities under TANF puts very restrictive limits on the amount of time that can be counted toward the federal participation rate. Because of penalties to states that do not meet participation rate benchmarks, states limit the amount of job-specific training and pre-employment activities they will allow county employment services providers to assign to their participants. The result is a large number of low-skill MFIP participants seeking a dwindling number of low-skill jobs but being denied assistance to develop higher skills that would more securely help them become self-sufficient over time. This situation does not meet either the needs of MFIP participants, or of local employers and communities that need higher-skill workers. It also does not meet the needs of the state, which requires a better educated workforce in order to support growth in higher-income industries.

Appendix

Legislation providing for the Workforce “U” MFIP pilot and evaluation

Summary of originally planned research methods

Return on Investment framework for Workforce “U”

Workforce “U” Student Handbook (description of courses and services)

Partner interview protocol

Legislation providing for the Workforce “U” MFIP pilot and its evaluation

Minnesota Session Laws

2007, Regular Session

CHAPTER 147--H.F.No. 1078

**ARTICLE 2
CHILDREN AND FAMILY**

Sec. 52. MFIP PILOT PROGRAM; WORKFORCE U.

Subdivision 1. Establishment. A pilot program is established in Stearns and Benton Counties to expand the Workforce U program administered by the Stearns-Benton Employment and Training Council.

Subd. 2. Evaluation. The Workforce U pilot program must be evaluated by a research and evaluation organization with experience evaluating welfare programs. The evaluation must include information on the total number of persons served, percentage of participants exiting the program, percentage of former participants reentering the program, average wages of program participants, and recommendations to the legislature for possible statewide implementation of the program. The evaluation must be presented to the legislature by February 15, 2011.

Subd. 3. Expiration. The Workforce U pilot program expires on June 30, 2011.

Summary of (originally proposed) research methods

Purposes and research questions

The evaluation of Workforce “U” is designed to meet three primary purposes:

- Identify the outcomes for MFIP students in Workforce “U” and comparable MFIP participants who do not attend Workforce “U” and – to the extent possible – determine how much of participating students’ outcomes can be attributed to the program rather than other causes. In particular, to identify statistically significant differences, especially those related to employment and MFIP exit.
- Collect qualitative information about participants’ and employers’ perceptions of the program. Share learnings during the evaluation that will help staff identify features of the program that are working well for MFIP students and features that might be improved. Integrate qualitative and quantitative data in the analysis for a fuller understanding of the program and its impacts.
- Explore policy implications of the evaluation findings, including the program’s potential for statewide replication.

To contribute to fulfillment of the third purpose, Wilder Research will also conduct a companion Return-on-Investment study, which is not covered in this summary of methods.

The research questions to be addressed to meet these purposes are:

- How do the welfare and employment outcomes of MFIP students enrolled in Workforce “U” compare with welfare and employment outcomes of comparable MFIP Employment Services participants who do not go through this program?
- What services do Workforce “U” students receive, and how do these services affect their outcomes?
- How do key program stakeholders – students, employers, and staff – view the program? What do they see as key program strengths and opportunities for improvement? How do they view and describe the program outcomes?

The first two questions depend greatly on state administrative data, and are the focus of this summary. The third will be based on SBETC records and data that Wilder Research will collect directly (through self-administered questionnaires from program participants and telephone surveys with a sample of employers).

Data analysis and analytic methods

Comparison groups

We will employ a quasi-experimental design, triangulating the outcomes for Workforce “U” participants with those of two different comparison groups, one that is contemporaneous but in different counties, and one that is in the same place and service agency, but at a time before Workforce “U” was implemented.

To control for selection bias in the enrollment of Employment Services participants into Workforce “U,” and thereby construct comparison groups that are as similar as possible to the “treatment group” of Workforce “U” participants, we will use Propensity Score Matching. This is based on regression techniques very similar to those used to control for potentially confounding factors in analyses of program outcomes. The steps of comparison group construction are:

- Identify measured variables that are known or theorized to relate to factors affecting enrollment in the program (selection bias). In the case of Workforce “U” these are known to include distance from the service location, English language fluency, and factors that affect or reflect an individual’s level of organization and motivation, such as chemical dependency, mental illness, history of sanctions, or history of late submission of routine paperwork. To ensure that other potentially biasing selection factors are controlled for, we will also include other variables known to affect outcomes, such as number and age of children, race, local economic conditions, and other variables included in the state’s Self-Sufficiency Index model. Those that contribute significantly to the prediction of Workforce “U” enrollment will be retained in the model, and any that do not contribute to this prediction will be omitted.
- Create a regression equation to “predict” an individual’s likelihood of participation, with the right side of the equation being the individual’s “propensity score.”
- Apply that regression equation to the pool of potential comparison group members – in this case, (a) contemporaneous statewide Employment Services participants, and (b) SBETC Employment Services participants before Workforce “U” began.
- Match each treatment group member with the comparison pool member who has the same or the closest propensity score. If more than one has the same propensity score, one is randomly chosen.

Because of significant program modifications taking place in July 2008, we will segment the treatment group into two time periods for analysis of services and outcomes. We expect that we may need to calculate a different regression equation for the second time

period, if as seems likely the program modifications result in different rates of participation in Workforce “U.” Calculating the prediction equation separately for the two time periods will help to ensure that the comparison group is as similar as possible to the treatment group in all relevant characteristics.

The same propensity scoring methods will be used to select the second comparison group from among Employment Services participants in Stearns-Benton Counties before Workforce “U” was implemented (June 2004 through October 2005).

Analysis of outcomes

The hypothesis to be tested, for each outcome of interest, is that the outcome for the treatment group is no different than that for the comparison group, after controlling for confounding factors. Outcomes of interest include but are not limited to: length of time to job placement; placement wages; job retention; percent who leave MFIP due to employment; length of time to MFIP exit; and percent who return to MFIP within one year.

Once the comparison groups are identified and outcome data are available, analytic techniques to test for significance of differences in outcomes will include some combination of paired-sample t-tests, ANCOVAs, and multivariate regression modeling. Confounding factors to be controlled for will include individual characteristics (such as those included in the Self-Support Index model) known to affect outcomes as well as local economic conditions.

It is to be expected that the program as a whole, or certain components of the program, may be more effective for certain kinds of students. Subgroups will be based on factors known or theorized to affect outcomes, such as length of time on MFIP, age, gender, education level, prior work history, or criminal offense record (if available). We will also examine students’ experiences with specific Workforce “U” courses and support services to explore whether any of these have particular effectiveness, in general or for certain kinds of students. We will compute odds ratios separately for these different groups to determine whether any of these factors is associated with a greater likelihood of certain kinds of success. If possible, we will attempt to do such analyses also to determine whether certain program components influence success more for certain groups. Because the total number of possible combinations to examine is prohibitively large, such analyses will be limited, and prioritized based on discussions with staff about likely patterns.

July 2008

Return on Investment framework for Workforce “U”

Preliminary analysis of the outcomes of the program show evidence that participants’ wages and work hours change following enrollment. This is an indication that participants may accrue some economic benefits from the services received. But, these benefits are achieved only after the State invests significant tax payer resources in running the Workforce “U” program. It is logical then to ask whether it is worth the cost to allocate public resources into the program to accomplish these outcomes. A Return on Investment (ROI) analysis, also referred as *benefit-cost analysis*, would help answer this question by comparing the economic value of the benefits of the program with its associated costs. In particular, the ROI analysis of the referrals of MFIP participants to Workforce “U” seeks to answer the question:

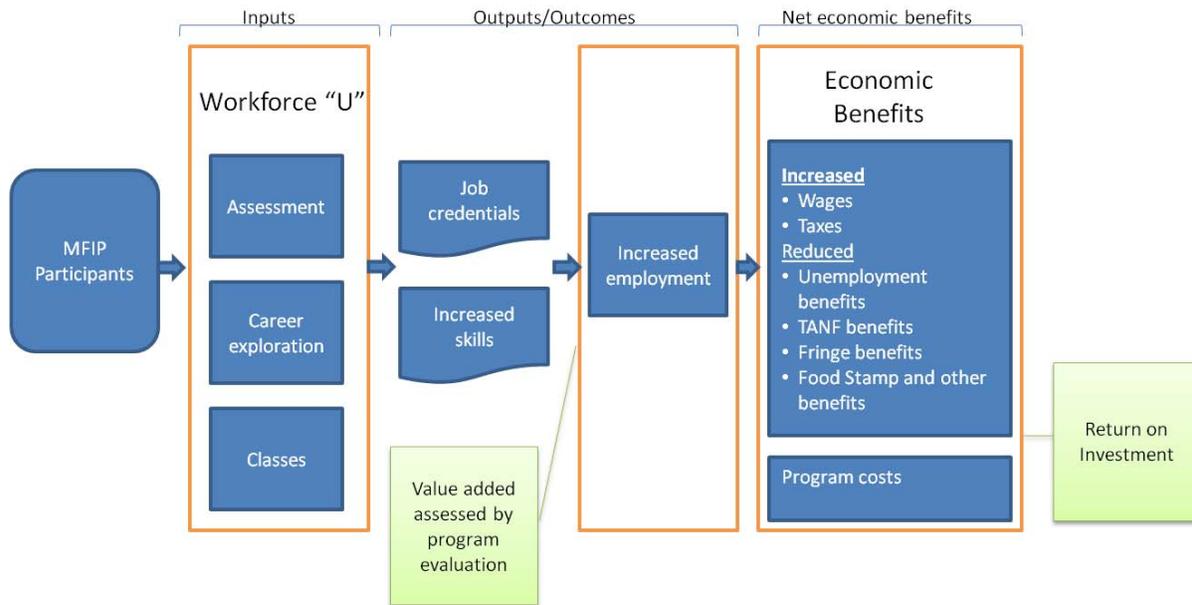
What has been the return on the policy of referring MFIP participants to Workforce “U” in Stearns and Benton counties?

In this section we present a framework that describes the procedure to determine the returns on investment (ROI) of this policy. We also present a short summary of previous ROI studies of workforce programs around the U.S.

Estimation approach

ROI analysis involves four steps: First, program costs are measured. Second, program outcomes are estimated. Third, program outcomes are valued in monetary terms. Lastly, total benefits are compared to total costs. Figure A1 shows the general logic model of the ROI for the MFIP/Workforce “U” initiative. The first stage of the process summarizes the generation of the main outcomes of the program: increased job skills and job credentials that eventually should materialize into increased employment for participants. The evaluation of these outcomes serves as a basis for the ROI estimation where outcomes are valued in monetary terms and compared to the costs of the program.

A1. MFIP/Workforce “U” ROI Logic Model



Perspective

The ROI analysis can be conducted from the perspective of participants, taxpayers, and the society. From the perspective of participants, ROI analysis measures the change in participant income per net dollar invested in the program. Benefits include the increased income, transfers, and any other direct benefits participants may receive from the programs. In the case of MFIP/Workforce “U” participants, the ROI would focus on added earnings due to increased employment. Participants may also benefit from finding jobs in industries with higher wages; however, this estimation will depend on the availability of adequate data to conduct this calculation.

The ROI from the taxpayer perspective includes benefits and costs incurred by local, state, or federal governments. Benefits include increased tax revenues from participants, and savings on public assistance benefits paid to previously unemployed participants. The costs included from this perspective are the costs to run the program, usually reflected in official budgets.

From the perspective of the society, the return on investment is calculated as the sum of the net values of benefits of participant and the government. In this case, welfare transfers are not included in the estimations since they do not represent creation of benefits (or costs), but only the transfer of resources from one sector of the economy to another, e.g., from taxpayers to participants.

Costs measurement

The ROI analysis must identify and segregate the costs involved in the provision of services to MFIP participants attending Workforce “U” activities. These costs are the monetary value of the goods and services used in the project. Examples include the wages paid to trainers, rent, and administrative costs. When these inputs are purchased in traditional markets, their price is used to measure their economic value. Existing accounting and evaluation practices of the Workforce “U” program facilitate this step and financial data collected by the program is used to complete the estimation of direct costs.

In addition to the program costs stated by Workforce “U,” financial information on program support from other sources will be included when appropriate. Government grants, transfers, etc. will help to defray the net cost of the program. From the point of view of Workforce “U” these governmental revenues help to reduce the net costs of the program, but from a societal point of view, the gross costs of operating the program are the preferred measure that should be compared to benefits.

Some ROI studies include in the analysis the cost of forgone earnings during the period of training (Hollenbeck, 2009). In the case of MFIP/WFU participants this calculation would require detailed attendance data for each participant and an assumed value of the time spent attending the WFU training classes. However, MFIP/WFU participants are likely to have very few job opportunities during their time of participation in the program; thus the cost of their forgone activities may be low and not significant enough to be included in the ROI calculation.

Outcome measurement

Three broad classes of benefits are typically included in ROI analysis of national and regional workforce training programs: increased earnings and taxes, decreased costs of social program usage, and savings for employers due to decreased unemployed insurance and taxes. Given the data available for the MFIP/Workforce “U” program the following outcomes relevant for the ROI analysis will be estimated:

- Increased personal income
- Increase in taxes

The following outcomes may be estimated if sufficient and adequate data becomes available. In addition, these calculations would require using indirect economic analysis and assumptions derived from relevant studies:

- Reduction in unemployment insurance benefits

- Reduction in TANF benefits
- Fringe benefits
- Reduction in Food Stamp benefits

Valuing outcomes

All the outcomes that we anticipate using in the ROI analysis are expressed in dollar terms, e.g. added wages, and reduced social spending. In the case that specific monetary values cannot be assigned directly from available data or by applying indirect economic reasoning, a conservative value of the outcome will be included in a section containing the non-monetized benefits of the program. These non-quantifiable benefits will not affect the ROI calculation, but will provide program leaders and stakeholders useful information about how these benefits could influence the net value of the program.

In addition, it would be necessary to choose a time horizon over which to calculate benefits of the program. The typical time horizon ranges from 5 to 25 years. Most studies use a 5-year span to estimate the benefits of workforce programs. Periods shorter than 5 years may not capture the full impact of this kind of program since the working life of participants around the time they receive services from the program is characterized by intermittent periods of employment. On the other hand, projecting benefits for more than 10 years in the future requires the assumption that the program will have long-term impacts. Thus, it seems reasonable to use a 5-year time horizon to estimate the benefit of workforce programs. Furthermore, since monetary benefits span for several years in the future it is necessary to discount the future stream of monetary benefits to present values using a discount rate. This rate is traditionally called the social discount rate and the most common value is 5 percent for studies in the U.S.

Non-measurable benefits and costs

Some benefits and costs are traditionally omitted from ROI studies because they are difficult to measure in monetary terms and we lack adequate data about them. Greenberg & Cebulla (2008) describe a set of non-measured benefits and costs related to welfare-to-work programs. These benefits and costs include:

- **Effects on nonmarket time.** This includes the cost of the activities participants forgo because now they devote more time to receiving training and to working. These activities include child care time, household chores, time spent on their own health, etc. When these costs are included in the ROI estimation they reduce the net benefits of the program. When the participants in the program belong to groups with potential high values of these costs, it is advisable to include them in the analysis.

For example, the time value of every hour that a high skilled participant does not spend working is higher than the time value of an hour not worked by a less skilled worker. Typical MFIP/Workforce “U” participants may not accrue high costs due to non-market time forgone due to the low level of skills; however, a high proportion of participants have families with many children, thus the time that parents allocate in training may be costly to their children. But, the final value of parents’ time will also depend on the work dynamic of the household. For instance, if the mother takes care of the children while the father attends the training sessions, the cost of not devoting time to the children is less significant.

- **Effects on children.** Increased income of parents may translate into more resources devoted to children’s health and education. On the other hand, when parents find a job they reduce the time dedicated to their children which may have negative impacts on several aspects of the children’s development. Estimation of these costs would require specific data on participant’s spending behavior and the use of previous estimations of these costs from comparable groups of individuals, increasing the difficulty of this task.
- **Effects on other nonmonetary outcomes.** These outcomes include health status, food security, crime rates, and housing status, among others. These types of costs or benefits are included in the ROI analysis when the researchers or program leaders suspect that they are significant for the population served. This is the case when participants belong to very vulnerable sectors of the society, or when the program operates in a rural or less developed area where basic services are scarce and the household spends a lot of time providing for basic needs. Thus, any reallocation of time away from the provision of these needs is costly to the household.

Even though these benefits/costs will not affect the ROI calculations, a range of plausible values may be discussed in the final ROI analysis to provide program leaders with useful information about the overall economic impact of the program on participants.

Literature review of the economic effects of workforce training and welfare-to-work programs

Previous studies show that the great majority of investments in workforce and welfare-to-work programs pay off depending on the perspective from which the return on investment is estimated. From the participant’s perspective, most of the return on investment is in increased earnings and fringe benefits. Private businesses benefit from these programs by reducing costs of unemployment benefits and re-insurance taxes. Participants and other private individuals usually receive positive net benefits from workforce programs. Previous ROI studies show that taxpayers benefit from increased

taxes and savings in welfare expenditures and other social services; however, the costs of running these programs sometimes surpass the benefits to taxpayers, since the transfers and social benefits are accounted as costs, thus reducing the net benefits to taxpayers.

Figure A2 summarizes the results of a set of ROI estimations in the U.S. Many of these studies focus specifically on measuring the effects of a specific program in a region (King, Tang, Carter, & Schroeder, 2008; Ernst & Young, 2009). Other studies summarize the economic returns of several workforce programs in the economy of a state or region (Hollenbeck, 2009; Hollenbeck & Huang, 2006) or present a meta-analysis of ROI studies (Greenberg & Cebulla, 2008). The returns on investment estimated by these studies ranged between \$0.63 - \$27 from the perspective of participants, and between \$0.18 - \$2.57 for the taxpayers.

In Minnesota, the Governor's Workforce Development Council (GWDC) is working to use census data to create a standard return on investment methodology for workforce and training programs. In 2009, a law was passed that requires DEED to report on a set of accountability measures, one of which is return on investment (M.S. 116J.997). The GWDC, responsible for advising on performance standards and measures (M.S. 116L.665) convened the ROI Initiative to develop a standard ROI Measure.

A2. Summary of selected ROI studies of workforce programs

Study/program	Benefits	Costs	ROI
Workforce Central Florida (Ernst & Young, 2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of assisted workers placed into jobs • Reduced length of time job seekers require to find employment • Increased personal income • Reduced business costs of unemployment benefits, and unemployment insurance taxes • Savings in Welfare and Food Stamps, and TANF (benefit for taxpayers) • Increased Taxes (benefit for taxpayers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public ROI (Fiscal benefits/public cost): \$1.36 • State and local ROI (local taxes included): \$2.36
Texas Association of Workforce Boards (King et al., 2008)	<p>Participant returns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased personal income • Fringe Benefits • Employer Output/Vacancy-days • Reduced business costs of unemployment benefits, and unemployment insurance taxes • Increased state taxes Savings in Welfare and Food Stamps (benefit for taxpayers) • Increased Taxes (benefit for taxpayers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forgone earnings per participant while receiving services: \$5,007 • Tax credit: \$200 per participant • Direct government expenditure on workforce services: \$1,300 per participant. • Welfare and Food Stamps • Taxes (cost for participants) 	<p>Returns for participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ROI(5-year): \$1.63 • ROI(10-year): \$2.74 <p>Returns for Taxpayers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ROI(5-year): \$2.08 • ROI(10-year): \$2.74 <p>Returns for the society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ROI(5-year): \$1.52 • ROI(10-year): \$2.58
Indiana. ROI of six workforce programs (Hollenbeck, 2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased personal income • Fringe benefits • Taxes(Benefit for taxpayers) • Reduction in unemployment insurance benefits (benefit for taxpayers) • Reduction in TANF benefits (benefit for taxpayers) • Reduction in Food Stamp benefits (benefit for taxpayers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taxes (Cost for participants) • Reduction in unemployment insurance benefits (cost for participants) • Forgone earnings • Tuition payments • Program costs, including tuition subsidies 	<p>Return for participants ROI range between</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ROI: 0.63 – 27.58 <p>Return for taxpayers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ROI: 0.18 – 2.37 <p>Return to Society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ROI: 0.86 – 9.32

A2. Summary of selected ROI studies of workforce programs (continued)

Study/program	Benefits	Costs	ROI
Meta analysis of cost-benefit studies of 50 mandatory welfare-to-work programs targeted a Aid for Families with Dependent Children recipients (Greenberg & Cebulla, 2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earnings Tax payments (benefit to taxpayers) Transfer payments (benefit to taxpayers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average net program operating cost AFDC payments (cost for participants) 	<p>Average net benefits for participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$1,034 <p>Average net benefit for non-participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -\$598 <p>Average net benefits for Taxpayers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -\$268 <p>Average net benefits for the society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$437
Workforce Development System in Washington State. Evaluation of 11 workforce programs in the state. (Hollenbeck & Huang, 2006)	<p>Benefits for participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earnings Fringe benefits Income transfers (TANF, Food Stamps, Medicaid, UI benefits) <p>Benefits for taxpayers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax receipts minus transfer payments 	<p>Costs for participant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct program costs (public and participant, if tuition/fees) Foregone earnings Taxes <p>Costs for taxpayers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct cost programs Transfer payments 	<p>Lifetime net benefits for participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$220,873-\$5,163 <p>Lifetime net benefits for taxpayers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 46,917 – (-7,756)

References

- Ernst & Young (2009, March). Return on Investment in workforce central Florida. Ernst & Young.
- Greenberg, D., & Cebulla, A. (2008). The Cost-Effectiveness of Welfare-to-Work Programs: A Meta-Analysis. *Public Budgeting & Finance*, 28(2), 112-145. doi:Article
- Hollenbeck, K. (2009, September). Return on Investment analyses of a selected set of workforce system programs in Indiana. W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.
- Hollenbeck, K., & Huang, W. (2006). *Workforce Development System in Washington State* (Technical Report No. TR 06-020). Kalamazoo, Michigan: Upjohn Institute.
- King, C., Tang, Y., Carter, T., & Schroeder, D. (2008, August). Returns from investments in workforce services: Texas statewide estimates for participants, taxpayers and society.

Workforce “U” student handbook



Presented by:
Stearns-Benton Employment & Training Council

...a Partner in the

Minnesota WorkForce Center - St. Cloud

1542 Northway Drive
St. Cloud, MN 56303
(Parking Lot B/ Door 2)

Telephone: 320.308.5320

Telephone: 320.308.5701

TTY: 320.308.6434

Toll free: 1-888-438-5627 and follow voice prompt
with our zip code, 56303

Fax: 320.308.1717

Email: admissions@workforceu.com

Website: www.workforceu.com

Hours: 8-4:30 M-F

Affirmative Action/ Equal Opportunity Employer/ American with Disabilities Act

“Workforce “U” provides a framework and a common language that is understood by employers and student job seekers: the language of skills.”

Student Handbook

***Mission:** We exist to provide comprehensive workforce development, helping community members acquire the skill, training, and experience to achieve economic security while meeting the human resource needs of local business and industry.

The contents of this handbook are subject to change without notice. Up-to-date information is available on-line at www.workforceu.com.

The WorkForce Center - St. Cloud and Workforce “U” do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, family status, disability or age. Further, the WorkForce Center will not tolerate acts of sexual harassment/assault within its jurisdiction.

Inquiries, complaints or grievances concerning the application of affirmative action, equal opportunity, or Title IX should be referred to the Executive Director of Stearns-Benton Employment & Training Council, a partner in the WorkForce Center - St. Cloud.

Introduction

Background

Workforce “U” was developed as a result of employers telling us they need applicants who can:

- Pass a reading and/or math test.
- Pass a drug test.
- Come to work everyday, on time.
- Problem solve.
- Bring skills to targeted industries.
- Work as a member of a team.
- Understand how their job performance impacts others, including the employer’s bottom line.

Workforce “U” is setting the standard for preparing area jobseekers for employment.

***Goals**

One goal of Workforce “U” is to meet the workforce needs of area employers. The ability to attract and keep businesses depends on a skilled labor force. You can be part of that skilled labor force.

Another goal is to grow six (6) targeted industries.

Our Student Body

Students in Workforce “U” have a wide variety of skills and work experience. They include those who are not working, laid off workers, youth, and immigrants. All are welcome. It is expected all will have a good attitude and willingness to work.

Academic Policies

*Readiness and Assessment

As a student in Workforce “U” you will research careers in targeted industries. Workforce “U” courses help you to answer:

What are your *Interests* ?
What are your *Skills* ?
What are your *Strengths* ?
What is your *Work History* ?
What are your *Training Needs* ?
How well can you *Read, do math and locate information*?

With this information you will complete your Personal Profile. Your Profile will identify which industries would be a good match for you.

Prerequisites

Basic computer skills, basic English skills, and a winning attitude are required. If you need to improve your computer skills, we can help. Or if you need to improve your basic English skills, we can help. A winning attitude must come from within you.

Attendance & Tardy Policy

Just like on a job, you are expected to be on time. This includes returning from breaks on time. When the classroom door is closed and you are late you will not be allowed to enter the room.

Declaring of a Major

Declaring a major in Workforce “U” is making an informed decision. You will know the skills needed for a job in a targeted industry. After completing our courses, you will know what an industry looks for in a qualified applicant.

Scholarships are available for advanced study. This is available only in one the targeted industries identified for growth by our Workforce Council.

Targeted Industries & Occupations

The targeted industries are:

Engineering/Management - Establishments which are primarily engaged in providing engineering, architectural & surveying services; accounting, auditing and bookkeeping services; research, development and testing services; and management and public relations services.

Manufacturing - Establishments engaged in manufacturing, industrial and commercial machinery, equipment, instruments, and computers, as well as fabricating metals and other such manufacturing.

Health Services - Establishments primarily engaged in furnishing medical, surgical, and other health services to persons.

Wholesale Trade - Establishments primarily engaged in selling merchandise to retailers: industrial, commercial, institutional, farms, construction contractors, or professional business users; or acting as agents or brokers in buying merchandise for or selling merchandise to such persons or companies.

Printing/Publishing - Establishments engages in printing by one or more common processes, such as letterpress; lithography, or screen; and establishments that perform services for the printing trade, such as bookbinding. It also includes publishing newspapers, books, and periodicals.

Business Services - Establishments primarily engaged in rendering services to business establishments on a contract or fee basis. This includes information technology providers and personnel supply services.

Targeted Occupations include:

Architecture and Engineering - Architects, Surveyors, Chemical Engineers, Mechanical Drafters, Industrial Engineering Technicians and the like.

Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations - Chiropractors, Dentists, General Practitioners, Surgeons, Therapists, Registered Nurses, Technicians and the like.

Business and Financial - Insurance Appraisers, Cost Estimators, Accountants, Auditors, Financial Analysts, Loan Officers, Appraisers of Real Estate and the like.

Computer and Mathematical Occupations - Computer Programmers, Computer Software Engineers, Computer Systems Administrators, Mathematicians, Statisticians, Network Systems Analysts and the like.

Management Occupations in the Target Industries - Top Executives; Advertising, marketing, Promotions, Public Relations, and Sales Managers; Operations Manager; Other Management Occupations and the like.

Student Services

Students with Disabilities

Workforce “U” will make reasonable accommodations. This is so you can access programs or services.

Student Code of Conduct

You are expected to follow the rules of any job. This includes:

- Respect for yourself and others.
- Dress appropriately...just like you would for job searching or work:
(no hats, shorts, torn clothes, flip-flops or bandanas)
- Be on time, all the time.
- Give your best effort, in and out of class.
- Do outstanding quality and quantity of work.

By following this Code, you will make an excellent student and employee.

Cell Phones

Please turn your cell phone off during class. An exception would be to turn it to silent mode if you are expecting a call from an employer about a job offer.

Computer Use

Our computers are for job searching, testing and training. Staff will be available to help you use this tool.

Data Privacy

Workforce “U” follows all laws about keeping your data private. We only share personal data if we have your permission.

Parking

Please use lot B. Parking passes are available at the WorkForce Center reception, Door 2. St. Cloud Technical College rules for parking apply to all students and staff.



Welcome to *Career Trek*

This course is designed to help you identify strengths and skills, explore careers and begin setting goals for your employment future. You will exit this program of discovery with a clearer understanding of yourself and careers that match your profile, the career paths available to you, how to pursue them and the value you have to offer employers.

Self Assessment Tools used:

- Myers-Briggs Temperament Indicator
- Compute-A-Match Online Career Assessment System
- Workkeys work related skills assessments including:
 - a) Locating Information
 - b) Applied Math
 - c) Reading for Information
- Skills Identification exercises
- Work Values assessment

Career Exploration/ Career Websites:

- Understand what the demand will be for jobs
- Wages you can expect to be paid
- Skills that are most important to be able to do the job well
- Where you might be able to obtain the training to be qualified to do the job
- Who are the employers who employ people in the kind of job you want to do

Certificate of Completion certifying your Work Ready Soft Skills the following areas upon successful completion of course:

- Attendance
- Punctuality
- Teamwork
- Attitude

When:	Monday- Friday, 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
Length:	One week (30 hours)
Prerequisite(s):	Basic computer skills
Maximum Class Size:	18
Materials:	Provided
Instructors:	Mike Burzette
Getting Started:	Contact your Career Planner to sign up!
Obtaining SCTC credit:	Ask your Career Planner about the procedure.



Welcome to *Career Navigation*

Helping you map out your future.

According to Forbes.com, 87% of Americans don't like their jobs. Isn't it time to find a career that fits? We will help guide people from seeing their job as just a paycheck to having it being a fulfilling, rewarding career.

This one-week hands-on training is ideal for someone who is undecided as to their career direction and has little or no computer experience. It is designed to assist students in career decision-making. The training will focus on:

- **Self Assessment** – Interest inventory, values clarification, personality assessment, and skills identification.
- **Career Exploration** – Identify options in areas of preference, research, and labor market information.
- **Decision Making** – Career, life planning, and goal setting.

Outcome: You will have a clearer idea of your career direction, be more aware of choices, and where to navigate next. You will receive a binder of information, a proposed career plan of your own choosing and a Certificate of Completion for this 15-hour career expedition.

And a knowledge of the following:

1. **Describe your ideal job.**
2. **Know the business for your ideal job.**
3. **What value do you have to bring to a company?**
4. **Have a 30-second commercial for your specific job search.**

When:	Monday- Thursday, 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Length:	One week (15 hours)
Prerequisite(s):	None
Maximum Class Size:	18
Materials:	Provided
Instructor:	Linda Schlangen
Getting Started:	Contact your Career Planner today to sign up!



Welcome to *Career Launch*

Course goals:

- Similar to the space shuttle program, our goal is to help *launch* you successfully toward a satisfying and fulfilling career.
- **Mold and shape your ideas and habits** to fit the dimensions of your new job.
- Employers repeatedly tell us about the *skills* all employees need to do well in the workplace. Learn what these necessary skills are so you can *equip* yourself to succeed.
- Sharpen your *attitudes* and ability to *communicate* positively with your new company and coworkers.

Some of the topics covered:

- Affirmations
- Transform yourself
- Self Motivation
- Respect for all people
- Teamwork
- Attitude
- Problem Solving
- Active Listening
- Conflict
- Customer Service
- Stress Management
- Healthy Assertive Communication

What to expect:

- Meeting new people
- Lots of variety
- Small group discussions
- Practicing skills

When:	Monday- Thursday, 9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Length:	One week (24 hours)
Prerequisite(s):	Basic computer skills
Materials:	Provided
Instructor:	Tom Ervasti
Where:	WFC
Getting Started:	Contact your Career Planner today to sign up!



Welcome to *Career Tools*

This course is designed to help you prepare the documents you need to create a portfolio demonstrating your skills, knowledge and experience in your career field. This course also ensures that you have all the information necessary to be prepared for and participate in an interview.

Day 1: Interest and Skills Assessment, Applications, References

- Respond to interest and skill questionnaires to identify your strengths and work experience.
- Complete a master job application.
- Fill out an employment reference worksheet.

Day 2: Resumes

- A marketing resume in a Word document.
- An on-line resume on minnesotaworks.net.
- A list of employment references.

Day 3: Letters

- A cover letter.
- An interview follow-up thank you letter.
- A letter of recommendation.

Day 4: Interviews, Portfolios

- Learn interview strategies in preparation for a mock interview.
- Create a professional portfolio.
- Demonstrate knowledge of on-line portfolios by creating and starting an account in efoliomn.com.

Day 5: Mock Interviews and Portfolio Evaluation

Student will receive a certificate of completion and will be eligible for 1 SCTC college credit upon completion of entire course!

When:	Monday-Friday, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Length:	One week (15 hours)
Prerequisite(s):	None
Maximum Class Size:	16
Materials:	Provided
Instructor:	Tom Ervasti
Location:	WFC
Getting Started:	Contact your Career Planner today to sign up!
Obtaining SCTC credit:	Ask your Career Planner about the procedure.



Welcome to *Job Club*

Class Goals:

- Motivation for job search.
- Daily follow up on job search activities outside of the class.
- Celebration of successes/ Encouragement when there are setbacks.
- Network with others.

Topics will be focused around the job seekers present job search needs and be a discussion rather than just imparting information.

Discussion Topics: 10-15 minutes.

Motivation

- What does your daily job search schedule look like?
- What motivates you to keep searching?
- How do you handle stress?
- How do you build a support system?
- How do you keep balance in your life?

Job Search

- Online sites: What sites do you find helpful? Where are you searching online?
- Networking: What are you doing? What has been helpful?
- Hidden Job Market: What are you doing to find jobs that aren't listed?
- Walk-ins: Effective techniques, what to do if you feel defeated.
- Informational Interviews: Concerns, successes, how to use the information

Employers

- When hiring, what do employers look for in a candidate?
- When you are a new hire, what do you do to show the employer they made the right decision?
- What do you do to keep the job?
- How do you handle job conflicts effectively?

Documents

- Are your documents in order?
- Applications: What are the tough questions? How do you answer them?
- Can you brag when you need to? Cover letter and Resume boosting tips to share.
- Are your references the best?

Interviews

- Do's and Don'ts of interviewing: What should you do and not do for an interview?
- Can you answer the tough questions?
- How do you prepare?

When:

Monday-Friday, 8:15 - 8:55 a.m.

Instructor:

Kim Smith

Getting Started:

Contact your Career Planner today to sign up!



Welcome to *Life Cycle of a Job*

Local hiring managers and business leaders share strategies for getting and keeping your job.

Getting an Interview: (Tuesday) 10:00-11:00 a.m.

- Getting an interview can be a real challenge. Professionals discuss strategies for finding job openings, the hidden job market, showcasing your best and most relevant qualities to get the interview.

Preparing for the Interview: (Tuesday) 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

- Interviewing can be very stressful. Professionals discuss how to dress, what to bring, and what questions could be asked. Topics will prepare you for that important interview and help you get the job.

An Honoring Workplace: (Wednesday) 10:00-11:00 a.m.

- Once you have a job, it is crucial that you take charge of your career. Professionals discuss effective communication, teamwork, managing conflict, and work performance that will help you thrive in your new job.

Introduction to Lean/Continuous Improvement: (Wednesday) 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

- Effective performance improvement programs (lean programs) can help companies continue to be productive even in tough economic times. Professionals discuss how “lean” programs work, and how everyone at the company can benefit from cost-cutting efforts done right.

Performance, Communication & Coaching: (Wednesday) 12:00-1:00 p.m.

- Once you are hired, staying employed and being productive is your goal. Professionals discuss performance evaluations, effective communication techniques, and self evaluation strategies that help you know if your performance review will be above satisfactory when the time comes.

Attitude, Ethics & Customer Service: (Thursday) 10:00-11:00 a.m.

- Choosing to be positive is very important in any work environment. Professionals discuss responding appropriately to customers, co-workers and other ethical challenges you may face in the workplace.

Basic Employment Law: (Thursday) 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

- Labor law, like other legalities can be confusing. Professionals explain the difference between the union and non-union workplace and discuss other labor law topics.

The Job Offer: (Thursday) 12:00-1:00 p.m.

- Before you start your job there may be additional tasks you need to complete. Professionals discuss how to follow up after the interview, what assessments or tests may be necessary, and how to negotiate salary. (By ING Direct)

Professionalism: (Friday) 10:00a.m.-11:00a.m.

- Through role playing and discussion with professionals, you will improve and expand your professional demeanor and demonstrate your ability to act/react in a professional manner in a variety of critical job related scenarios.

Placement Agency: (Friday) 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

- Employers sometimes outsource their hiring needs to outside agencies. Personnel from a local staffing firm discuss services offered to help you decide whether you should pursue employment using an agency. (By Express Employment Professionals)

When: Tuesday-Friday (One week per month)



Is There a Small Business in Your Future?

Project GATE II

Growing America Through Entrepreneurship

- Do you have what it takes to start your own business?
- This program provides an assessment and overview designed to help you determine if you are ready to start your own business.

Day of Week:	1 st & 3 rd Mondays of each month
Time:	2:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Presented by:	Small Business Development Center
Location:	Anderson Center, Roosevelt Road Suite 100 St. Cloud
Prerequisite(s):	*Complete the "How Ready Am I to Start a New Business?" self-assessment from your Career Planner.*
Cost:	Funded through GATE II
Materials:	None
Max. Class Size:	18
Getting Started:	Consult with your Career Planner to get registered.

*(There is a special grant for individuals 45 and older). Your Career Planner can get you registered.

FastTrac New Venture

***Once you are enrolled in GATE II, funding for the **FastTrac New Venture** course could possibly be available to you:*

In this program, you will develop a business concept and take it through each step of the business planning process. Through readings and research, activities and action steps, you will plan and analyze your entrepreneurial vision by creating a thoroughly researched and tested business plan. Opportunities to network and learn from your peers as well as seasoned entrepreneurs and professionals who work with start-up businesses are a key part of the experience. FastTrac New Venture is a ten-module program that covers concept analysis and the business planning process.

<i>*Exploring Entrepreneurship</i>	<i>*Identifying and Meeting Market *Needs Setting</i>
<i>*Financial Goals</i>	<i>*Planning the Product/Service</i>
<i>*Researching and Analyzing the Market</i>	<i>*Reaching the Market</i>
<i>*Building Organization & Team</i>	<i>*Planning for a Profitable Business</i>
<i>*Monitoring Cash Flow & Seeking Funds</i>	<i>*Implementing Next Steps</i>

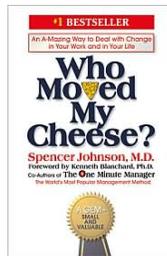


Who Moved My Cheese?

An A-Mazing Way to Deal with Change in Your Work and in Your Life

Course Description:

Based on the # 1 Bestselling Book, *Who Moved My Cheese*, this session will take you through activities that invite you to see change as a good opportunity rather than something to be feared. Presented in a fun and practical way, the session will follow the adventures of Sniff, Scurry, Hem and Haw as they travel through the Maze to find their new Cheese.



Session Goals:

- ❖ Invite you to evaluate how you respond to change.
- ❖ Provide you with positive ways of looking at change so it works to your advantage.
- ❖ Give you a fun language and method of thinking that will accelerate your ability to change.
- ❖ Show you reliable ways to “win” by doing what works in changing times.

When:	Fridays 2010: Oct. 29, Dec. 17
Time:	9:00 a.m.– Noon
Instructor:	Tom E.
Location:	WFC
Prerequisite(s):	None
Materials:	Provided
Getting Started:	Contact your career planner today to sign up!

Participant Quotes: “a very good class”. “The speaker was great!” “Tom had a lot of energy and taught the class very well.” “after this class I believe I can accomplish my goals.” “I really liked this class!” “Very interesting – Enjoyed class very much!” “Class was great – very motivational” “It was a great class, Tom did a great job” “Very positive and uplifting.” “very interesting. I learned something new about myself and what I need to change.”



Career Voyage

FISH!

Catch the Energy, Release the Potential

A Better Way To Live At Work. Become More Alive and Engaged.

The FISH! Philosophy is a global phenomenon that is helping thousands of organizations in 28 countries become more alive, engaged in the workplace and retaining their jobs.

This course is designed to inspire and empower job seekers to help create a more interesting, playful profitable and energetic work place for themselves and their future co-workers. Learn strategies to work smarter while enjoying your work more so that you can be a better employee and keep your job. FISH! is an opportunity to talk about customer service, teamwork, communication skills, and being fully engaged at work.

An organization that is schooled in FISH! is more likely to:

- *View change* not as a stress or a threat, but as an opportunity to make someone's day.
- *Enhance teamwork* by modeling the type of behavior demonstrated in FISH!
- *Enhance skills* in customer service, teamwork, communication, and being playfully productive at work.

Outcome- you will learn:

- The 4-step FISH! Philosophy.
- Motivational and creative ideas to incorporate the FISH! Philosophy into your work style.

When:	Friday 2010: November 5
Time:	9:00 a.m.– Noon
Instructor:	Tom E.
Location:	WFC
Prerequisite(s):	None
Materials:	Provided
Getting Started:	Contact your career planner today to sign up!

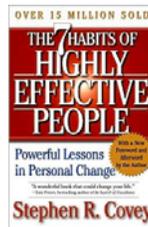
Participant Quotes: "Great class to re-engage positive thinking in looking for a job!" "Everyone should take a class like this occasionally because it is a good motivator." "Great! Love the facilitator – got everyone involved – helped us to feel comfortable." "Class was uplifting" "I love these classes. They raise my self esteem." "Tom did a great job." "High Energy" "Awesome" "I think you [Tom] do a wonderful job." "Great work! Love the humor & stories Tom!" "This was a very motivating class and will use this in my future." "good speaker" "Tom is a great instructor" "Excellent class" "It was a great class" "great class" "Tom is a great speaker. I enjoy listening to him" "Nice Presentation!" "Great Job Tom" "Tom did a great job." "It was a very interesting class" "I enjoyed the class – well thought out and fun!"



THE 7 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE

Powerful Lessons in Personal Change

Based on the #1 International Bestselling Book
by Renowned Author Steven Covey



Learn to become effective so that you are consistently practicing the habits that will bring about the results you want. Embrace this positive approach for personal and professional success.

Principles include the power of:

- Choice
- Vision
- Priorities
- Win-win
- Understanding
- Cooperation
- Self-renewal

When:	Friday 2010: Dec. 10
Time:	9:00 a.m.– Noon
Instructor:	Tom E.
Location:	WFC
Prerequisite(s):	None
Materials:	Provided
Getting Started:	Contact your career planner today to sign up!



Whale Done!



The Power of Positive Relationships

Remember the old, old song lyrics, “*accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative?*” This session will show you how to...

- *accentuate* the positive, and
- *redirect* the negative

...to make you a more productive person!

Do you wonder what training killer whales has to do with positive people relationships? Believe it or not, many of the techniques used by the whale trainers at SeaWorld have been used by effective leaders to deal more positively with others.

Techniques include:

- Building trust
- Emphasizing what’s positive
- Redirecting energy when actions get off track

These behaviors can be easily applied to both your personal and professional lives. As a result, you’ll be able to make more effective choices in your day-to-day relationships with people.

You’ll benefit from *Whale Done!* by...

- Reducing your stress
- Strengthening trust
- Getting more done
- Feeling better

When: Friday 2010: November 19
Time: 9:00 a.m.– Noon
Instructor: Tom E.
Location: WFC
Prerequisite(s): None
Materials: Provided
Getting Started: Contact your career planner today to sign up!

Other Services



Client Assistance Program: Licensed professional therapists from The Village Family Service Center bring objectivity to confusing situations. They help people define their concerns and then discover new approaches and solutions. This is based on the Employee Assistance Model, with referrals at no charge to you. The counselors are trained to help individuals dealing with:

- Depression and Anxiety
- Grief and Loss
- Eating Disorders
- Anger Management
- Relationship Issues
- Parenting
- Single Parent Issues
- Caring for Elderly Family Members
- Divorce

www.thevillagefamily.org

Contact your Career Planner to get a referral.

Consumer Credit Counseling Service: Proper money management is an important ingredient for a healthy, fulfilled lifestyle. Financial problems can lead to other problems, including depression, family conflict and ineffectiveness on the job. Village's Consumer Credit Counseling Service helps people become better money managers through educational programs, budget counseling, and debt management.

Financial Counseling: Your Counselor from The Village Family Service Center will work with you to create a budget and financial action plan – customized to reach your goals.

Debt Management Plan: The Village's Debt Management Plan (DMP) can help you reduce your debt, provide relief through reduced interest and late charges, put an end to collection calls, and give you peace of mind.

Housing Counseling/ Foreclosure Prevention: If you are behind in your mortgage payments, the thought of losing your home can be terrifying. Village counselors can assist in resolving or preventing mortgage delinquency. They can help you establish a budget, set priorities, and determine the appropriate strategies to help you keep your property – or understand your options.

www.HelpWithMoney.org

Contact your Career Planner to get a referral.

Managers/ Professionals Networking Group: Mondays 1:00pm-2:00pm

Here's an opportunity to network with other job seekers, talk about who's hiring, what's working for you and what's not, get answers to your questions, and develop a support system. By listening to others sharing, you may feel more connected. Get the lift you need to continue. The other members can offer ideas and suggestions for strategies you did not consider. You may see your situation in a different light or realize that you have more options than you once thought. Develop a sense of camaraderie with fellow members. Feel free to join us each Monday until you are employed. Bring your resume and business card.

Resource Area: Hours: 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Monday- Friday

Use computers to access job listings and e-mail, write resumes, and research businesses and new careers. Phone, fax machine, and printers are available for your use. Customers can choose from library of books related to job search. There is a staff person who can assist customers.

Client Confidentiality: Your personal information is confidential. If you come in contact with Career Planners outside of the WorkForce Center, they cannot acknowledge that they know you unless you acknowledge them first.



Other Services (Continued)

Online resume and job matching system: www.MinnesotaWorks.net

This website matches your resume to the open jobs. Do you know how you match up? Try the online resume and job matching system, available to job seekers at no fee. See how you match up today by entering your resume!



Assistance in Selecting and Securing Reliable Child Care: This service is provided so clients can successfully participate in classes, training, job search and employment. The Child Care Liaison Specialist Teresa Voight can help with the following:

- ◆ educate parents about quality child care,
- ◆ help build comfort/trust in the idea of using a child care provider,
- ◆ offer assistance in finding available providers and
- ◆ learn what to ask and look for in selecting a provider.
- ◆ learn ways to build a successful partnerships with the parent/child care provider,
- ◆ know how to understand the contract and related paperwork, and
- ◆ understand parent and provider responsibilities.
- ◆ Coordinate all involved parties so information/answers are accurate and clear.

Contact your Career Planner to get connected with the Child Care Liaison Specialist.

United Way 2-1-1:

Dial 2-1-1 or find the services you need online at www.211unitedway.org
Find local information about: Education, Health Services, Legal Help, Transportation, Counseling, Immigration, Youth Services, Childcare, Senior Services, English Language Learners, Food, Housing, Employment, Parenting Resources, Emergency Preparedness and Much More. It's free, confidential, and available 24/7. Service is available statewide. Multilingual service available.

If calling from a cell phone: 651-291-0211. 1-800-543-7709 (outstate)
TTY:651-291-8440



JobTalkAmerica: an Internet Radio Program

Listen online at jobtalkamerica.com

- *Make Your Resume Sizzle
- *How to REALLY Network
- *How to Deal With Job Hunting Blues
- *How Minnesota Community Colleges, Technical Schools & Universities Can Help You

Community Resource List

Organization	Website	Phone Number	Contact Person
Anna Marie's Alliance	www.annamarie.org	320-252-6900	Maxine Barnett
Arc Midstate	www.ArcMidstate.org	320-251-7272/877-251-7272	Cindy Owen
Benton County Human Services	www.co.benton.mn.us	320-968-5087	Open
Boys & Girls Club	www.bgcmn.org	320-252-7616	Tom Wicks
Catholic Charities(CC)-Financial	www.ccstcloud.org	320-650-1660/800-830-8254	Mishon Bulson
CC Emergency Services	www.ccstcloud.org	320-229-4560/800-830-8254	Kathryn Stolpman
Child Care Choices	www.childcarechoices.net	320-251-5081/800-288-8549	Renee Olson

Central MN Mental Health Center	www.cmmhc.org	320-252-5010	Dr. David Baraga
Legal Services	www.centralmnlegal.org	320-253-0121	Ann Cofell
Lutheran Social Services	www.lssmn.org/stcloud	320-251-7700	David Nusbaum
Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC)	www.stcloudmtc.com	320-251-1499/320-251-RIDE	Debbie Anderson
Resource Training & Solutions	www.resourcetraining.com	320-255-3236/888-447-7032	Peg Imholte
Stearns County	www.co.stearns.mn.us	320-656-6000	Open
Tri-CAP Community Services	www.tricap.org	320-251-1612/888-765-5597	Dona Ramler
Tri-CAP Family Resources	www.tricap.org	320-251-1612/888-765-5597	Patrick Shepard

Tri-CAP Transit Connection	www.tricap.org	320-202-7824/800-600-7498	Linda Elfstrand
United Way	www.unitedwayhelps.org	320-252-0227	Betty Schnettler
Veteran's Administration	www.stcloud.va.gov	320-255-6353	Joan Vincent
YMCA	www.stcloudymca.org	320-253-2664	Michelle Dick

United Way 211	www.unitedwayhelps.org	211	Open
----------------	--	-----	------

What is an Active Job Search?

- ◆ Register on MinnesotaWorks.net. Post your resume.
- ◆ Sign up with union hall.
- ◆ Make contact and apply with employers who can be reasonably expected to have suitable openings.
- ◆ Apply for positions with State, County, or Federal governments.
- ◆ Respond to want ads for suitable employment.
- ◆ Respond to job postings on the Internet.
- ◆ Attend workshops and classes offered by Stearns-Benton Employment & Training Council and Job Service.
- ◆ Write down all of your work search activities.

Staying Positive: Thoughts and Strategies for Dealing with Tough Times By Midwest EAP Solutions

In your personal life:

- ◆ Draw on past experiences and strategies
- ◆ Recognize and replace your negative thoughts
- ◆ Choose to focus on the things you can control
- ◆ Get enough rest, eat healthy food, exercise
- ◆ Keep things in perspective
- ◆ Limit exposure to media
- ◆ Build time into your day for “re-fueling” activities
- ◆ Learn to say “No” when appropriate
- ◆ Don’t be afraid to ask for help
- ◆ Allow yourself to make mistakes
- ◆ Laugh more
- ◆ Delegate when possible at work or home
- ◆ Simplify your life where possible

Regarding the financial crisis:

- ◆ Initiate a car pool schedule/ board
- ◆ Don’t check your 401k plan daily
- ◆ Focus on the things you can control
- ◆ Share with each other savings ideas
- ◆ Review/ revise/ create a budget
- ◆ Draw on strategies you have used successfully before

Financial Tips: By United Way 2-1-1

- ◆ Switch to basic cable
- ◆ Utilize your local food shelf
- ◆ Ask employer about Cobra Benefits
- ◆ Prepare a complete household budget
- ◆ Stop using credit cards, instead pay with cash
- ◆ Ask for free or reduced lunches at child’s school
- ◆ Ask credit card companies to reduce interest rates
- ◆ Downgrade cell phone plan or switch to prepaid phone
- ◆ Volunteer to gain new skills and to connect with community resources
- ◆ DO NOT ignore your lenders or creditors, communicate with them
- ◆ Use a financial counselor to mitigate home loans
- ◆ Contact your utility company about hardship payments, visit www.staywarm.mn.gov
- ◆ Apply for Minnesota Health Care Program, visit www.dhs.state.mn.us or call 1-800-657-3672



LearnKey

OnlineExpert.com

To sign up for these online classes, contact your Career Planner. Study guides are available for some of the computer certification classes. Please ask!
 Training Location: <http://sbetc.onlineexpert.com>
 You will receive E-mail instructions on how to access the training.



LearnKey Online Troubleshooting Tips: You will need to turn off your pop-up blockers (in 'Tools'). A high-speed internet connection is best. LearnKey does not work well with a MAC. You should get the latest Windows Media Player. Use Internet Explorer. Set website as trusted site. Use latest Adobe Flash player. Turn Firewall off.
 LearnKey Tech Support: 1-800-482-8244 techsupport@learnkey.com

Master Exam

- (102588A) A+ 2006 Essentials
- (102588C) A+ 2006 Exam 602
- (200641a) Access 2003
- (201478) Access 2007
- (150291) CISSP Certification
- (200641c) Excel 2003
- (201468) Excel 2007
- (630071) IC3 - Module 1: Computing Fundamentals
- (630071b) IC3 - Module 2: Key Applications
- (630071c) IC3 - Module 3: Living Online
- (102271) Network+® Certification 2005 - Separate Quizzes
- (200848) Office Specialist 5-in-1
- (200641e) Outlook 2003
- (201488) Outlook 2007
- (200641g) PowerPoint 2003
- (201498) PowerPoint 2007
- (061371) Preventing Sexual Harassment
- (101231) Security+
- (150708) Security+ 2008 Comp TIA Exam SYO-201
- (681581) Windows Server 2003 Active Directory and Network Infrastructure Design (70-297)
- (680631) Windows Server 2003 Active Directory Infrastructure (70-294)
- (680611) Windows Server 2003 Implementing Network Infrastructure (70-291)
- (680601) Windows Server 2003 Managing a Network Environment (70-290)
- (680591) Windows Server 2003 Planning Network Infrastructure (70-293)
- (681591) Windows Server 2003 Security Design (70-298)
- (681601) Windows Server 2003 Security Implementation (70-299)
- (680221) Windows XP Professional
- (681571) Windows XP Troubleshooting Desktop Applications (70-272)
- (681561) Windows XP Troubleshooting Windows (70-271)
- (200641i) Word 2003
- (201508) Word 2007

Developer/Programmer

- 372621) [.NET Security for Developers Part 1](#)
- (372681) [.NET Security for Developers Part 2](#)
- (372131) [ADO.NET for Developers Part 1](#)
- (372511) [ADO.NET for Developers Part 2](#)
- (370231) [ASP for Developers](#)
- (371301) [ASP.NET for Developers Part 1](#)
- (371741) [ASP.NET for Developers Part 2](#)
- (372551) [ASP.NET Web Services Fundamentals](#)
- (371581) [C# for Developers](#)
- (373011) [C# with ASP.NET for Developers](#)
- (370621) [COM+ for Developers](#)
- (370331) [HTML 4.0 for Developers](#)
- (371431) [J2EE for Developers](#)
- (372781) [J2SE for Developers](#)
- (370731) [Java 2 for Programmers](#)
- (370851) [JavaScript for Developers Part 1](#)
- (370941) [JavaScript for Developers Part 2](#)
- (411541) [SQL Server 2000 DTS](#)
- (410581) [SQL Server 2000 for Developers Part 1](#)
- (410711) [SQL Server 2000 for Developers Part 2](#)
- (410841) [SQL Server 2000 for Developers Part 3](#)
- (411591) [SQL Server 2000 OLAP](#)
- (411851) [SQL Server 2005 Designing Infrastructure and Security](#)
- (411721) [SQL Server 2005 Implementing a Database](#)
- (411661) [SQL Server 2005 Maintaining a Database](#)
- (411971) [SQL Server 2005 Optimizing and Maintaining Database Solutions](#)

- (441281) [Understanding Visual Studio .NET](#)
- (440731) [VB 6.0 to VB.NET Migration for Developers](#)
- (440851) [VB.NET for Developers Part 1](#)
- (441031) [VB.NET for Developers Part 2](#)
- (441151) [VB.NET for Developers Part 3](#)
- (441291) [Visual Basic .NET Fundamentals](#)
- (440451) [Visual Basic 6.0 Design & Implementation](#)
- (440371) [Visual Basic 6.0 Fundamentals](#)
- (440621) [Visual Basic with SQL Server for Developers](#)
- (371041) [XML Essentials](#)
- (370051) [XML for Developers Part 1](#)
- (370531) [XML for Developers Part 2](#)
- (372311) [XML Foundations for Developers](#)
- (372871) [XML in Java for Developers](#)
- (371111) [XML with SQL Server 2000 for Developers](#)
- (372431) [XML.NET for Developers](#)
- (370401) [XSLT 1.0 for Developers](#)

Microsoft Office XP

- (670481) [Access 2002](#)
- (670401) [Excel 2002](#)
- (130081) [FrontPage 2002](#)
- (630061) [Getting Started - Office XP Essentials](#)
- (670601) [Office XP Integration](#)
- (670321) [Outlook 2002](#)
- (670241) [PowerPoint 2002](#)
- (670161) [Word 2002](#)

Microsoft Office 2003

- (200181) [Access 2003](#)
- (200261) [Excel 2003 Series](#)
- (200581) [FrontPage 2003](#)
- (200881) [Office 2003 Macros](#)
- (200101) [Outlook 2003](#)
- (200481) [PowerPoint 2003](#)
- (200751) [Publisher 2003](#)
- (200041) [Word 2003](#)

Microsoft Office 2007

- (201181) [Access 2007](#)
- (201241) [Excel 2007](#)
- (201101) [Outlook 2007](#)
- (201301) [PowerPoint 2007](#)
- (201141) [Word 2007](#)

Design Applications

- (660661) [Acrobat 7.0](#)
- (660061) [Adobe Integration Series](#)
- (660581) [Adobe Photoshop CS Photo Restoration](#)
- (660541) [Adobe Photoshop CS Tips and Tricks](#)
- (660241) [Adobe Premiere](#)
- (660901) [Dreamweaver 8](#)
- (660361) [Dreamweaver MX 2004](#)
- (371941) [Dreamweaver, Fireworks, Flash Integration](#)
- (660861) [Fireworks 8](#)
- (660281) [Fireworks MX 2004](#)
- (660941) [Flash 8](#)
- (660321) [Flash MX 2004](#)
- (373111) [HTML Fundamentals](#)
- (660781) [Illustrator CS2](#)
- (660701) [InDesign CS2](#)

LearnKey Continued

(411781) [SQL Server 2005 Writing Queries](#)

Quick Releases

(373171QR) [ASP.NET 2.0 Web Application Development QR](#)

Algebra

(120241) [Addition and Subtraction of Polynomials](#)
(120121) [Addition and Subtraction of Real Numbers](#)
(120191) [Exponents](#)
(120211) [Fractions, Decimals, and Percents](#)
(120181) [Multiplication and Division of Real Numbers](#)
(120261) [Roots and Radicals](#)
(120161) [Solving Equations and Problems](#)
(120131) [Variables, Symbols, Expressions, and Equations](#)

Efficiency

(070901) [Assertiveness](#)
(070971) [How to De-junk Your Life](#)
(071041) [How to Get Things Done](#)
(071021) [Motivation and Goal Setting](#)
(070931) [Negaholics](#)

Productivity

(071431) [Attitude for Success](#)
(061628) [Connecting to Customers through Customer Service](#)
(061608) [Giving and Receiving Criticism](#)
(061768) [Hazardous Materials and Your Rights \(061768\)](#)
(061668) [Helping Customers Through Quality Service](#)
(071441) [Manage Time](#)
(061688) [Quality Focused Supervision](#)
(061588) [Sales Preparedness](#)
(071401) [The Art of Communication](#)
(071421) [The Art of Organization](#)
(071411) [The Art of Stress Management](#)
(061788) [The Cornerstones of Sales and Customer Service](#)
(061728) [The Power of Telephone Courtesy](#)
(061748) [The Rewards of Telephone Courtesy](#)
(061708) [Working as a Team](#)

End User Applications

(610041) [Basic Computing](#)
(280151) [Communication Skills for IT Specialists](#)
(603691) [Computer Foundations](#)
(201071) [Learning Office 2007](#)
(681991) [Learning Windows Vista](#)
(680181) [Learning Windows XP](#)
(630141) [Security Essentials for Computer Users](#)
(201341) [SharePoint Content Management and Collaboration](#)
(230581) [Understanding the Internet: Fundamental Users Guide](#)
(610021) [Understanding Your PC: Fundamental Maintenance & Repair](#)

Pre Algebra

(120271) [Becoming Successful Problem Solvers Set 1](#)
(120311) [Decimals](#)
(120331) [Fractions](#)
(120371) [Operations with Positive and Negative Numbers](#)
(120351) [Percents](#)
(120081) [Seeing Numbers](#)
(120101) [Smooth Operations: Connecting Fractions, Decimals, and Percents](#)

Communication

(061261) [Better Business Communication](#)
(061251) [Better Business Writing](#)
(061241) [Effective Presentation Skills](#)
(061281) [Making Humor Work](#)
(061271) [Successful Negotiation](#)

Curriculum in a Box: Managing Emotions

(120741) [Bullying: You Don't Have to Take it Anymore](#)
(120761) [Conflicts, Communications, and Relationships](#)
(120781) [Emotional Self-Control: Do You Have It?](#)
(120801) [Expressing Anger: Healthy vs. Unhealthy](#)
(120821) [Hurting With Words](#)
(120841) [No Excuses: Sexual Harassment](#)

(660741) [Photoshop CS2](#)

Cisco® Authorized Training

(563401) [Cisco® ICND 2.2 \(640-811\)](#)
(563491) [Cisco® INTRO 2.0 \(640-821\)](#)

Security

(150181) [CISSP Access Control Systems and Methodology](#)
(150241) [CISSP Applications and Systems Development Security](#)
(150211) [CISSP Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Planning](#)
(150251) [CISSP Cryptography](#)
(150261) [CISSP Law, Investigation, and Ethics](#)
(150201) [CISSP Operations Security](#)
(150271) [CISSP Physical Security](#)
(150191) [CISSP Security Architecture and Models](#)
(150171) [CISSP Security Management Practices](#)
(150281) [CISSP Telecommunications, Network, and Internet Security](#)
(150101) [Hacking Revealed](#)
(150431) [Hacking Revealed 2008](#)

CompTIA Certification

(102301) [CompTIA A+ Certification 2006 *](#)
(650071) [iNet+ Certification \(Retired\)](#)
(102041) [Network+® Certification 2005 *](#)
(101071) [Security+ Certification](#)
(150631) [Security+ 2008 Master Exam](#)

Accounting

(620261) [Crystal Reports](#)
(550111) [QuickBooks](#)

CIW Certification

(620161) [Database Specialist Design](#)
(620231) [Database Specialist Using JDBC 2.0](#)
(650281) [Server Administrator \(CIW\)](#)
(650211) [Site Designer](#)

Diversity

(061081) [Delivering Effective Training Sessions](#)
(061031) [Diversity Dynamics](#)
(061071) [Effective Performance Appraisals](#)
(061041) [Leadership Skills for Women](#)
(061051) [Men and Women Working Together](#)

Team Development

(061151) [Effective Meeting Skills](#)
(061141) [Increasing Employee Productivity](#)
(061111) [Mentoring](#)
(061131) [Team Leadership](#)
(061161) [Team Problem Solving](#)
(061121) [Working Together](#)

Executive Management

(061181) [Empowerment](#)
(061211) [Managing Change at Work](#)
(061191) [Managing for Commitment](#)
(061201) [Organizational Vision, Values, and Mission](#)
(061221) [Quality at Work](#)

Business & Communication – Successful Management

(071461) [Excellence in Supervision](#)
(071481) [Giving and Receiving Feedback](#)
(071491) [Managing Disagreement](#)
(070681) [Supreme Teams](#)

Microsoft Certification Electives

(510341) [Exchange Server 2003 Design](#)
(510461) [Exchange Server 2003 Implementation](#)
(510561) [Exchange Server 2003 Implementation SP2 Update](#)
(510571) [Exchange Server 2007 Configuration](#)
(170141) [ISA Server 2004](#)

LearnKey Continued

(120861) [Stressed Out: Stress Management 101](#)
(120881) [Violence in Our Schools: Over the Edge](#)

Telephone Communication

(071151) [Call Center Success](#)
(073291) [Telephone Collections](#)
(061011) [Telephone Courtesy and Customer Service](#)
(061001) [The Business of Listening](#)

Customer Service

(061301) [Calming Upset Customers](#)
(061311) [Customer Satisfaction](#)
(061321) [Quality Customer Service](#)

Business & Communication – Leadership

(070111) [Handling Conflict and Confrontation](#)
(070101) [How to Coach an Effective Team](#)
(070911) [How to Supervise People](#)
(070671) [Powerful Communication Skills](#)
(070991) [Powerful Presentation Skills](#)

Certiport

(630611) [IC3: Internet & Computing Core Certification 2005 Professional](#)
(630531) [IC3: Internet & Computing Core Certification 2005 Standard](#)
(630531sp) [IC3: Internet & Computing Core Certification ESL, Spanish \(2005 Standard\)](#)

Executive Leadership

(061401) [Leadership](#)
(061441) [Tactics of Innovation](#)
(061461) [The New Business of Paradigms](#)
(061421) [Wealth, Innovation, and Diversity](#)

Enterprise Manager Training

(072161) [LMS Training - Enterprise Administrator](#)

Medical

(500371) [Medical Billing Professional](#)
(500361) [Medical Coding Professional](#)
(500351) [Medical Terminology](#)

Automotive

(500391) [Modern Automotive Service Technician Part 1 - Foundations of Automotive Technology](#)
(500401) [Modern Automotive Service Technician Part 2 - Automotive Engines](#)
(500411) [Modern Automotive Service Technician Part 3 - Battery, Starting, and Charging Systems](#)
(500421) [Modern Automotive Service Technician Part 4 - Engine Performance and Computer Systems](#)
(500431) [Modern Automotive Service Technician Part 5 - Electrical Systems](#)
(500441) [Modern Automotive Service Technician Part 6 - Drive Train and Axles](#)
(500451) [Modern Automotive Service Technician Part 7 - Suspension, Steering and Brakes](#)
(500461) [Modern Automotive Service Technician Part 8 - Heating and Air Conditioning](#)

(201381) [SharePoint Services 3.0 Configuration](#)
(411251) [SQL Server 2000 Administration](#)

(411391) [SQL Server 2000 Implementing Database Design](#)
(681051) [Windows Server 2003 Security Design](#)
(681091) [Windows Server 2003 Security Implementation](#)
(681451) [Windows XP Troubleshooting Desktop Applications](#)
(681351) [Windows XP Troubleshooting Windows](#)

Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist

(682181) [Windows Vista and Office 2007 Deployment](#)
(682121) [Windows Vista Configuration](#)
(201811) [SharePoint Server 2007 \(70-630\)](#)

Microsoft Certification 2003

(680821) [Windows Server 2003 Active Directory and Network Infrastructure Design *](#)
(680531) [Windows Server 2003 Active Directory Infrastructure *](#)
(680351) [Windows Server 2003 Implementing Network Infrastructure *](#)
(680411) [Windows Server 2003 Managing a Network Environment *](#)
(681961) [Windows Server 2003 Managing a Network Environment R2 Update *](#)
(680641) [Windows Server 2003 MCSA Skills Update](#)
(680701) [Windows Server 2003 MCSE Skills Update](#)
(680471) [Windows Server 2003 Planning Network Infrastructure *](#)

Microsoft Certification 2008

(683691) [Windows Server 2008 Applications Infrastructure](#)

Microsoft Certification 2000/XP

(680071) [Windows XP Professional *](#)

Networking

(261171) [Wireless Network Administration](#)
(261041) [Wireless Network Security](#)

Employment Law Compliance

(071351) [Preventing Sexual Harassment for Employees US](#)
(071361) [Preventing Sexual Harassment for Employers US](#)
(061491) [Preventing Sexual Harassment in the Workplace](#)
(071371) [Successful Hiring](#)
(071381) [Successful Termination](#)
(071341) [The ADA and Disability Law](#)

Project Management

(190231) [Project 2003](#)
(061101) [Project Management](#)
(190301) [Project Management Professional 2005](#)

Cisco® Certification

(563631) [Routing and Switching Fundamentals](#)

Microsoft Certified IT Professional

(682041) [Windows Vista Client Enterprise Support](#)

* We have study guide books available for these sessions.

Additional (Free) Computer Training Website List

(On-line)

<p>New User Tutorial *Designed to help people who have never used a computer before. *Focuses on using a mouse and basic skills.</p>	<p>http://tech.tln.lib.mi.us/tutor/welcome.htm TLN Technology Committee Library Network-Public Library Cooperative serving 65 libraries in SE Michigan</p>
<p>Computer Tutor *Focuses on using a mouse, keyboard and computer screen.</p>	<p>http://bbc.co.uk/computertutor/computertutorone/index.shtml British Broadcasting Corporation</p>
<p>Mouserobics *Focuses on such skills as moving a mouse, boxes, drop-down menus, forms, copying and pasting.</p>	<p>http://www.ckls.org/~crippel/computerlab/tutorials/mouse/page1.html Central Kansas Library System</p>
<p>Computer Training *Computer basics; internet basics; using office software; online classes: Access, Publisher, PowerPoint, Word and Excel.</p>	<p>www.gcflearnfree.org/computer Goodwill Community Foundation</p>
<p>HP Home Office *Microsoft Windows Vista; Intermediate Microsoft Excel; Intro. To Microsoft Word 2007; HP Yahoo! Printing Toolbar, LightScribe, Bluetooth and Wireless.</p>	<p>http://h30187.www3.hp.com/ Hewlett Packard</p>
<p>Typing Lessons *Focuses on typing fundamentals (variety of languages); timings and practice games.</p>	<p>www.sense-lang.org/typing/ A free internet program to practice touch-typing and learning.</p>
<p>Typing Lessons/Games *Focuses on typing games, lessons and tests.</p>	<p>http://www.alfatyping.com/</p>
<p>Typing Lessons/Games *Focuses on typing games, lessons and tests.</p>	<p>www.freetypinggame.net A free internet program to teach typing.</p>
<p>Typing Lessons Focuses on typing lessons and exercises.</p>	<p>www.typing-lessons.org A free internet program to teach typing.</p> <p>Addresses may change rendering this list obsolete. The presence of an address on this list is not an endorsement of that service or enterprise. Monitor private/contact information that is entered. Suggestions for additions to this list are welcome.</p>

Job Search Websites

Job Search Sites:

www.minnesotaworks.net
www.indeed.com
www.acinet.org
www.simplyhired.com
www.linkedin.com
www.monster.com
www.careerbuilder.com
www.hotjobs.com
www.flipdog.com
www.jobcentral.com
www.jobs.net
www.careertimes.com
www.jobdig.com
www.co.stearns.mn.us
www.co.benton.mn.us
www.startribune.com/jobs
www.newspaperlinks.com
www.minnesotajobnetwork.com
www.mn-jobs.com
www.minjobs.com
www.usajobs.gov
www.doer.state.mn.us
www.positivelyminnesota.com
www.careers.state.mn.us
www.mnscu.edu
www.stcloudhelpwanted.com
www.careers.org
www.lmnc.org
www.mncn.org/jobs
www.jobbankinfo.org

MN Job Bank
Indeed, Inc.
Career One Stop
Simply Hired
Linked In
Monster
Career Builder
Yahoo
FlipDog
Direct Employers
Job Search
Saint Cloud Times-Career Builder
Job Dig
Stearns County Human Resources
Benton County Human Resources
Star Tribune
Access to online newspapers. "Help Wanted" ads.
Minnesota Job Network
Minnesota Jobs
Local Careers.com Network
Government/Federal Jobs
State of Minnesota Human Services
Job Seeker Career Information
State of Minnesota Jobs
Jobs at State Educational Facilities
Local information
Directory for Career/Job Search
LMNC-list of many city jobs
MN Council of Non-Profits
Find a State Job Bank

Career Information:

www.careeronestop.org
www.positivelyminnesota.com
www.iseek.org
www.thomasregister.com
www.onetcenter.org
www.mncis.intocareers.org
www.jobhuntersbible.com

US Department of Labor
MN Department of Employment and Economic Development
MN-ISeek Solutions
Company Profiles
Occupational Network
Assessment tools, occupational/educational information
Richard Boles site-"What Color is My Parachute?"

How to use the internet for your job search:

www.rileyguide.com

General info on housing, and other topics relevant to unemployed persons:

www.minnesotaunemployed.com
<http://unemploymentlifeline.org>

Job Search Websites (continued)

Salary Information:

www.salary.com

Also see:

www.indeed.com

www.positivelyminnesota.com

www.iseek.com

Green Jobs:

<http://sustainableenergyjobs.com>

www.greenjobsearch.org

www.minnesota.greenjobs.net

Jobs for 40+ aged persons:

<http://jobs.aarp.org/job.search/>

Veteran Services:

www.taonline.com

www.va.gov/jobs

Re-entry/Ex-offenders:

www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org

www.iseek.org/guide/exoffenders/index.html

Small Business:

<http://www.sba.gov/>

Computer training:

www.gcflernfree.org

<http://tech.tin.lib.mi.us/tutor/welcome.htm> (Very basic information)

www.freetypinggame.net (keyboarding practice)

Free E-Mail Servers:

www.hotmail.com

www.yahoo.com

www.mail.com

www.gmail.com

Company Research:

<http://www.google.com>

<http://www.investorcalendar.com/IC/index.asp> Company annual report information.

<http://www.bbb.org> Check company ratings by the Better Business Bureau.

Job or Career Fairs in Minnesota:

www.positivelyminnesota.com/JobSeekers/WorkForce_Centers/Help_for_Jobseekers/Attend_a_Job_or_Career_Fair.aspx



I'M EMPLOYED!!

Employment Verification Form

STEARNS-BENTON EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING COUNCIL
1542 Northway Drive, St. Cloud, MN 56303
Fax: (320)308-1717

Once you are employed, please give your career planner the following information

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Your Name _____ last 4 digits of SSN _____

Address _____ Home Phone _____

Message Phone _____

Best time to call _____

Your Employer's Name _____

Your Employer's Address _____

Your Job Title or Position _____ Work Phone _____

Start Date _____ Permanent _____ Temporary _____

Wage per hour _____ Hours per week _____ 1st Pay Date _____

Are there Benefits? Yes ____ No ____

Volunteer Opportunities List

Benefits of Volunteering: Volunteer work looks great on a resume and set you apart from the crowd. Past charity work says a lot about your character, giving you a multi-dimensional personality and highlighting your good nature. Even more importantly, volunteer positions show future employers your drive and dedication. Such accomplishments demonstrate initiative, personal will, leadership skills and the ability to work hard. Perhaps the most important of all reasons to volunteer is to experience the sense of achievement and personal fulfillment that volunteering can bring. Volunteering connects you to others: helping you to make new friends and contacts. Volunteering is good for your mind and body: increasing your self-confidence, self-esteem and personal value, combating depression and helping you to stay physically healthy. Volunteering can provide career experience, teaching you valuable job skills. Volunteering also helps you to acquire real world experience and could also be a foot in the door for you!

Opportunity Manor Inc: Non direct care: Clerical, Website Assistant, Marketing Assistant, Landscaping/ Yard services, Grant Writer, HR Assistant, Accounting Assistant, Maintenance, Cleaning, Errand Runner/ Shopper, Musicians, Activities/ Games, Cantina Worker, Fundraiser and Special Events. **Direct Care:** One on one visits with clients, Mentor to clients, Class Helper, Cooking Class Assistant, Movie Buddy, Pen Pal, Reading Tutor 320-271-0126 www.opportunitymanor.org

Good Shepherd: Therapeutic Recreation, Environmental Services, Therapy Department, Social Service, Northern Lights Store, Information Technician Support, Assisted Living, Meal Delivery, Driver 320-252-6525 www.goodshepherdcampus.org

Tri County Humane Society: Animal Caregiver Volunteer, In Shelter Worker 320-252-0896

Habitat for Humanity: Construction, Office 320-656-8890 www.cmhfh.org

Goodwill Easter Seals: Retail Store 320-654-9012

Great River Regional Libraries: Shelver: Shelving books, St. Cloud Times Indexer, Library Assistant, Book De-Processing

New Beginnings Home For Single Pregnant Women: Childcare 320-255-1252 www.newbeginningsmn.org

Salvation Army St. Cloud: Food Shelf Helper, Meal Prep for Shelter, Community Lunch Program 320-252-2229

Anna Marie's Alliance Women Shelter: Weekend Cooking Crew, Shelter Support Staff, After-Care Advocate Volunteer www.annamaries.org

Country Manor: Bingo Assistant, Cobble Stone Eatery, Group Facilitator, Outing Helper 320-253-1920 www.countrymanorcampus.org

County Manor Apartments: Bingo Caller, Party Assistant

Independence Center: 320-252-4146 www.independencecenterinc.org

YMCA: Childcare & Nursery Center Assistant, Office Support, Maintenance 320-253-266 www.stcloudymca.com

Boys & Girls Club of Central MN: Childcare Assistant, Reading Buddy, Office Volunteer www.bgcmmn.org

United Way: 211 Assistant & several other opportunities – check website: 320-252-0227 www.unitedwayhelps.org

St. Cloud Hospital: 320-255-5638 www.centracare.com

VA Medical Center: Hospice 320-252-1670

St Benedict Senior Community Center: Coffee Shop Volunteer, Gift Shop Sales, Outings Assistant, Kitchen Helper 320-252-0010

St. Cloud Area School District 742: 320-253-9333

St. Cloud Area Crisis Nursery: 320-654-1090

Hands Across the World: Adult ESL Classroom Assistant, ESL Early Childhood Education Classroom Assistant, Computer Tutor 1 on 1, Sewing Class Assistant, Creative Arts Class Assistant, Phy Ed Fitness Instructor, Study Session Tutor

Whitney Senior Center: Woodshop Supervisor, Fitness Center Receptionist, Information Desk 320-255-7245

St. Cloud State University: Lake George Boathouse Rental Volunteer 320-308-0121

Volunteer Opportunities List (continued)

Quiet Oaks Hospice House: Administrative Assistant, House Volunteer

Sartell Senior Connection: Host/ Hostess

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central MN: School-Based Mentor, Site-Based Mentor 320-253-1616

La Cruz Community Center: Youth Academic Mentor 320-259-1175

Reach-Up Inc.: Classroom Assistant, Rainbow Room Assistant

GREAT Theatre: Seamstress

Paramount Theatre: Gallery/ Gift Shop Volunteer 320-259-5463

Stearns History Museum: Transcriber 320-253-8424

Central MN Adult Basic Education: Classroom Assistant, Tutor

RSVP Reader's Theater: Cast Member

Social Security Administration: Mail Room Volunteer

American Red Cross Central MN: Greeter 320-251-7641

Heartland Home Health Care & Hospice: Hospice Volunteer, Office Clerical Volunteer 320-654-1136

Arlington Place: 320-363-1313

Central MN Council on Aging: 320-253-9349

Heritage of Foley: Country Store Clerk, Popcorn Maker, Bingo Assistant, Holiday Decorator 320-968-6201

Ridgeview Place (Assisted Living): Bingo Caller/ Assistant, Sing A Long Leader, Music Entertainer 320-251-5228

Senior Helping Hands Program: Senior Helping Hands Peer Volunteer

Sterling Park Health Care: Bingo Assistant, Outing Helper 320-252-9595

Sterling Park Assisted Living: Movie Night Volunteer

Talahi Senior Campus: Card Player, Bingo Volunteer, Special Outing Assistant, Sing-A-Long Volunteer 320-251-9120

Treasure Chest: Sorter 320-255-1808

Tri-Cap Transportation:

K:/SHARED/WFU/Info/Workforce U packet1 Revised 10/2010

Open Computer Lab

What is an Open Computer Lab?

The open computer lab is a time when you can come in and receive one-on-one help with any of the following skill building programs:

- WorkKeys
- Key Train
- Aztec
- Rosetta Stone
- Microsoft Office Programs

When: Certain Fridays of the month:
October 29
November 12, 19
December 3, 17

Time: 9:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Location: WFC

Getting Started: Talk with your Career Planner to get signed up today!



Partner interview protocol

Project code: 70916

ID: _____

Workforce "U" Key Informant Survey with Collaborative Partners

Hi, my name is ____ and I am calling from Wilder Research as part of our work with Stearns Benton Employment & Training Council. We are helping them evaluate the implementation of the Workforce "U" pilot program. Have you received an email from Kathy Zavala to expect our call? [PAUSE FOR RESPONSE] I hope you will be able to take a short time to answer some questions about your organization's partnership with Stearns-Benton in that work. The interview takes about a half an hour. Would you have time to do it now? [IF NO: SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT]

1. Have you worked with [name of staff contact] or one of the other staff members there in developing and providing services to their clients? Yes / No
 - a. (IF NO) They may not have used the name Workforce "U" to describe the program. Have you worked with [name from staff contact] to provide [contribution] for SBETC's clients?
2. (IF YES) Please describe briefly what you were developing or providing.
 - a. Did it lead to implementation of something new?
 - b. In the planning process, did you attempt to identify joint purposes or goals that were shared among the partner organizations? Yes / No
 1. (IF YES) How easy or hard was it to do that? Please describe.
 - c. Was there any attempt to pool funding or develop a cost sharing arrangement? Yes/No
 1. (IF YES) How easy or hard was it to do that? Please describe.
 - d. (1) How many staff from your organization were involved in the planning? ____

(2) How many staff from your organization were involved in the implementation? ____

(3) What proportion of your total staff would that be? _____%
 - e. How much overlap is there between the people your organization mainly serves and the people served through the joint work with Workforce "U"? [IF NEEDED: In general, does your organization serve mainly the same kinds of people as Workforce "U", or is there only a small overlap between your client base and theirs?]
3. If you can, please tell me your understanding of what **Workforce "U"** is? How would you describe or define "Workforce 'U'"? There is no right or wrong answer to this question. We are just interested in what the program looks like from your (or your organization's) perspective.
 - a. What is your organization's role in Workforce "U"?
 - b. How long have you (or your organization) been involved?
4. What do you see as the key principles or guiding values of Workforce "U"?
 - a. How do those principles or values compare with those of your own organization? [IF NEEDED: How are they similar or different?] (PROBE: What are the areas in which your organization's basic philosophy/approach is a good fit with Workforce "U"? Less good?)

5. Was there anything that surprised you about the work together? Yes / No

(IF YES) Please describe.

6. What are the most important accomplishments or areas of progress you have achieved in the joint work with Workforce "U" so far?

a. How would you characterize the scale of what you have implemented or accomplished?

(ASK AS APPROPRIATE):

(1) Can you give me approximate numbers of participants served?

(2) How long has the joint work been in operation?

(3) Is this implementation a pilot for experimentation, or do you consider it permanent?

b. (IF PILOT OR LIMITED IN SCALE) What would it take to bring this success to scale?

7. Is there anything that has disappointed you about the joint work to date? Yes / No

(IF YES) Please describe.

a. What reason(s) would you identify for why the work has not progressed as you expected? (PROBE: Are there policies, resource constraints, history, or other external factors that promote or limit collaborative success?)

b. What would it take to overcome that/those?

c. Do you feel your organization has been adequately recognized for its contribution to the joint work?
Yes / No

d. Why do you say that?

8. What have you learned from your experience with Workforce "U"?

9. If you were speaking with a peer or colleague in another county who was considering participating in a collaborative project similar to Workforce "U", what would you recommend to them?

10. Is there anything else I should have asked, or that you would like to tell me about your work with Workforce "U" ?

Thank you very much for your time. Is it okay for us to use your comments with attribution or do you prefer we keep them anonymous?

Attribution ok -- END

Keep everything anonymous

Keep certain parts anonymous [MARK WHICH PARTS SHOULD BE KEPT ANONYMOUS]

IF ALL OR PART ANONYMOUS: It is helpful, when we prepare a report, to be able to use short quotations in people's actual words. Is it okay if we do that with portions of your remarks, after removing anything that is likely to identify you or your organization?

Deidentified quote okay

No direct quotes