



# Board Workshop / Discussion Agenda

15 West Kellogg Blvd.  
Saint Paul, MN 55102  
651-266-9200

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February 18, 2025 - 10:30 a.m.

Courthouse Room 220

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## WORKSHOP

1. American Rescue Plan Act Workforce Updates

[2025-047](#)

Sponsors: Workforce Solutions



# Board of Commissioners

## Request for Board Action

15 West Kellogg Blvd.  
Saint Paul, MN 55102  
651-266-9200

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**Item Number:** 2025-047

**Meeting Date:** 2/18/2025

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**Sponsor:** Workforce Solutions

**Title**

American Rescue Plan Act Workforce Updates

**Attachment**

1. Presentation



# American Rescue Plan Act Workforce Updates



# Agenda

## I. Introductions

## II. Community Workforce Investments

- Background
- Program Overviews
  - Learn & Earn Initiative
  - Ramsey County Driver's License Academy
- Takeaways & Lessons Learned

## III. Public Health Career Pathways Investments

- Program Overview
- Participant Demographics
- How Did We Do

# Introduction and Presenters

## I. Introduction

- Kari Collins, Deputy County Manager of Economic Growth and Community Investment
- Catrice O'Neal, Workforce Solutions Director

## II. Community Workforce Investments

- Rachael Molenaar, Planning Manager Workforce Solutions
- Kristi Cobbs, Planning Specialist Workforce Solutions

## III. Questions and Discussion

- Tina Curry, Director Public Health Career Pathways
- Noelana Gates, Public Pathways Coordinator

## IV. Questions and Discussion

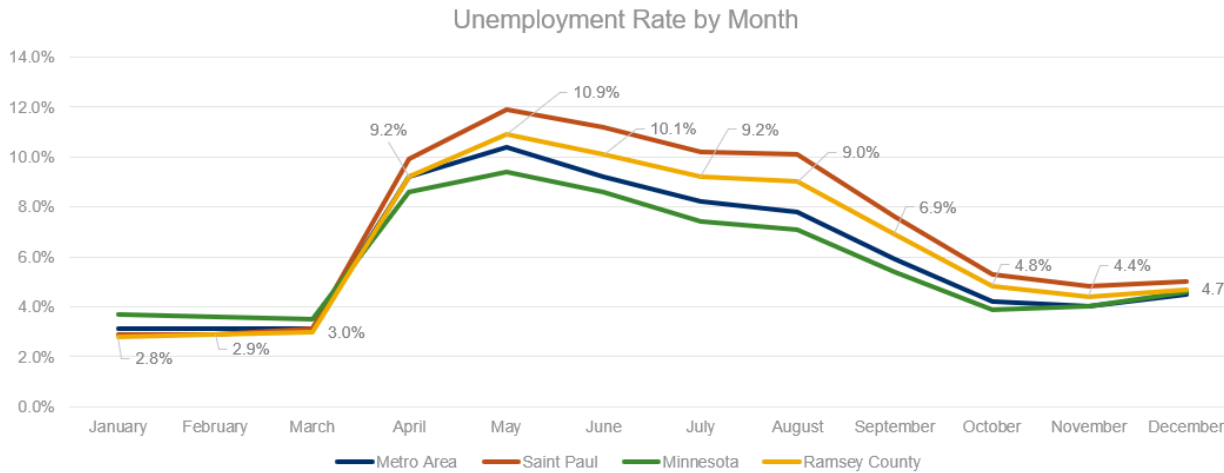


ARPA

# Community Workforce Investments

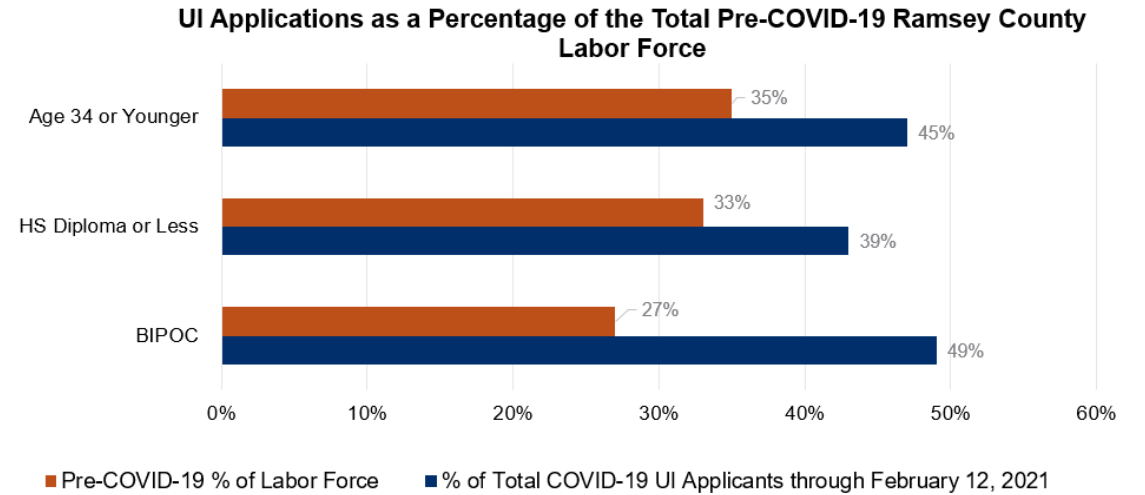
# Pandemic Employment Impacts

## Ramsey County Monthly Unemployment Rate compared to State and Metro Area during 2020



- Unemployment rate is the share of the labor force that is jobless, expressed as a percentage.
- Ramsey County entered 2020 with an unemployment rate lower than MN and the Metro Area, but COVID-19 caused Ramsey County to lose jobs at a faster rate than MN and the Metro Area.
- Unemployment rates increased most in the MSP urban core during the first two months of COVID-19 and the recovery in the urban core so far is slower than the surrounding areas.
- According to DEED, most of the reduction in unemployment rate from September to October is attributable to people leaving the labor force.

## COVID-19 Has Disproportionate Employment Impacts on Ramsey County Residents



- BIPOC = Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, represented as all applicants reporting as something other than Non-Hispanic White
- Labor Force = People who are willing and able to work, including all working and unemployed residents
- 121,819 unemployment applications filed in Ramsey County from March 16 through February 12, 2021
- Percentages on each metric have remained mostly stable since the Summer of 2020

# Overview of ARPA Workforce Investment



## Tier 1: People in Need (Immediate Relief)

Programs and Projects to Support People in Crisis and Immediate Need

- Address increasing economic disparities:
  - Residents disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 in employment by factors of **race/ethnicity, age and education level.**
- Invest in people through **Learn and Earn** models.
- **Removing barriers** to employment.
- Supporting and Aligning **Youth and Young Adult** Employment through **Youth Works!**



# Right Track Highlights

- Young people were most immediately impacted as sectors of early employment were devastated by the stay at home orders.
- In partnership with City of Saint Paul Right Track, created Right Track Plus, summer 2021.
  - Some of the earliest spend of ARPA at the County.
- Paid summer internships for young adults, ages 18-24, that included other professional learning and career exploration (passport events).



# Right Track Partnerships



## THANK YOU!



Level Up, MN

94 Employer Partners

212 Completed Internships

32 Passport Events



City of Saint Paul • Ramsey County Suburban Youth Employment

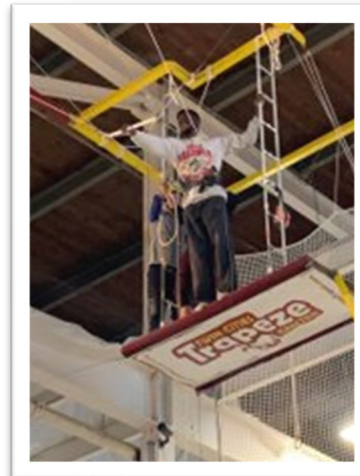
# Right Track Plus Highlights



“I was able to get an internship in exactly what my dream job was and I feel so excited that I now have experience that can get me hired in a permanent job afterwards!”

“Right Track Plus has allowed me to gain insights into various fields and gave me the tools to feel confident in my work”

“I developed better communication skills with my coworkers and those around me”



# American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Workforce Investments

Total Co-Investment Administered by County: **\$18,070,000**

County Funds: **\$8,210,000**

City Funds: **\$9,860,000**

Programs
Digital Career Pathways
Opportunity Youth Programming/LEAP
Driver's License Academy
School Affiliate Model & Job Ready Supports
No Barrier Jobs
Learn & Earn Initiative
Right Track Expansion
Employer Outreach/Engagement
Ramsey County Early Childhood Academy/Think Small
Administration

# Workforce Partnerships



# Learn & Earn Initiative – Why the Investment?



## Meet Employer Talent Needs

Cohort of participants at 80% completion rate (much higher than traditional programs serving this population).



## Invests In People

Residents are interested in the industries but unable to pursue training because they need income from current employment (informed by community & young people).



## Holistic Supports

Demonstrate the effectiveness of programs that provide comprehensive supports for participants.



## Co-Creation of Programs

Co-creation of programming with invested partners (employer, unions, education partners).

# Learn & Earn Initiative



- All programs offer PAID occupational or entrepreneurial training (classroom and on the job).
- Programs all targeting Gateway Occupations (current & predicted growth, short-term training, starting wages at least \$42K/year):
  - IT
  - Clinical Assistant
  - Human Services
  - Construction/Green Energy
  - Tree Care
  - Entrepreneurship

## Partners

Spark-Y YOUTH ACTION LABS

TWIN CITIES RISE ei EMPOWERMENT INSTITUTE

BRIDGEMAKERS YOUTH LEADING CHANGE

MINNESOTA Training Partnership Progress, equity & opportunity

MILESTONE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

hired

HACK<the>GAP

TREE TRUST Transforming Lives and Landscapes

cee Center for Energy and Environment

NEW VISION FOUNDATION

YOUTH LENS

GOODWILL EASTER SEALS

MERRICK Community Services

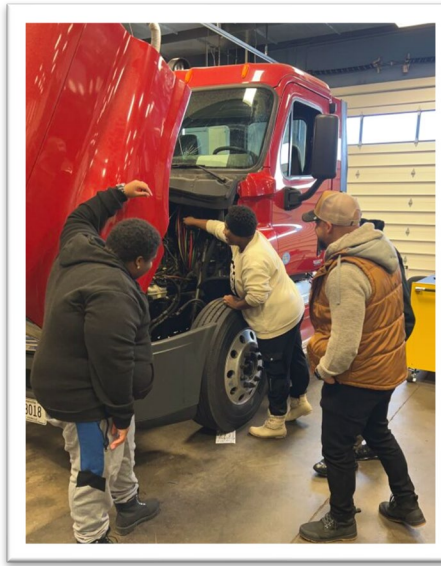
KOM Karen Organization of Minnesota

336 Participants Served through 2024  
\$679,284 Paid to Participants

# Program photos



Merrick, KOM, Hired- Human Services



Twin Cities Rise- Diesel Technician



Goodwill Easter Seals- Advanced Manufacturing



Milestone Community Development- IT



Merrick Community Services- Food Entrepreneurship



Hack the Gap - IT



# **ARPA Program Showcase: Driver's License Academy**



# Driver's License – Background

- Prior to the pandemic, only 15 percent of teens receive driver's ed at school, compared to 95 percent in the 1970s.
- The shifting economy and the need for more workers in a new pandemic economy requires young people to have their driver's licenses.
- **It is critical we switch from a mental model of a driver's license as one of individual autonomy to one of a needed workplace credential.**



# Driver's License Academy – Why the Investment?



## Lack of Access

The vast majority of young people do not receive driver's education as a part of high school. Have to receive through private service.



## Connection to Work

During the pandemic, there was an increase in job postings that require driver's license for hiring.



## Vehicle Access

Many young people in urban settings do not have access to a car to practice driving or take the behind the wheel exam.



## Increase Wages

Driver's license is required for many industries that pay high wages and have growing opportunity.



# Driver's License Academy

Supports young adults 18-24, who are on a career pathway that requires driver's license with:

- Tutoring and support to obtain Instruction Permit.
- Virtuality Reality Driving Simulation for new/nervous drivers.
- Minimum of 6 hours of Behind-The-Wheel instruction.
- Vehicle for road test.
- Incentives for reaching goals.
- Supported the expansion of 5 new third-party proctor sites in Ramsey County.





# Diver's License Academy- Impact on Participants

- 116 young adults have obtained their driver's license since the program launch in Fall of 2023.
- Progress Milestones:
  - Many more made progress towards driver's license obtainment (obtained permit, complete BTW).
- 108 Unique Community Partners Referrals.
- 5 new Third-Party Permit Testing Proctor Sites.
- 2024 National Association of Counties Achievement Award.



- ✓ Ramsey County resident
- ✓ Ages 18-24
- ✓ Enrolled in career pathway programming
- ✓ Experience barriers related to employment (Household income below 200% federal poverty, homeless, system-impacted, IEP, ELL)

Participants who did get a driver's license identified the following **ways in which the program supported students in getting a license** including: making students comfortable to learn, help with remembering appointments, giving students confidence, and help with specific driving skills such as parallel parking or parking at an angle.

- *They help me with my parking which I need help the most.*
- *I like how they remember the appointment.*
- *The program gave me confidence. (I passed on my first try.)*
- *They sent me right into what needed to be done.*
- *Generous – I needed an extra lesson, and they accommodated me.*
- *Use their car to [take] test.*



# Driver's License Academy – Impact on Community



## Centralized Support Model - Streamlined process

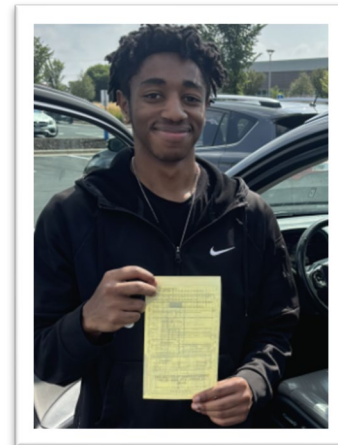
- Relieves community organizations from duplicating efforts.
- Enables focus on core missions: job training, mentorship, education etc....
- Central referral system simplifies access to critical resources.



## Addressing Systemic Inequities - Overcomes financial, knowledge, and administrative hurdles.

- Focus on young adults of color and low-income communities.
- Reduces disparities in workforce credential access.
- Builds a more equitable and inclusive workforce pipeline.

I just want to say how appreciative I am for you and your program. You have changed my life and opened up so many doors for my daughter and I. I can't say how much I am grateful and thankful for you. Thank you so much



# Youth Works! Goals and Values



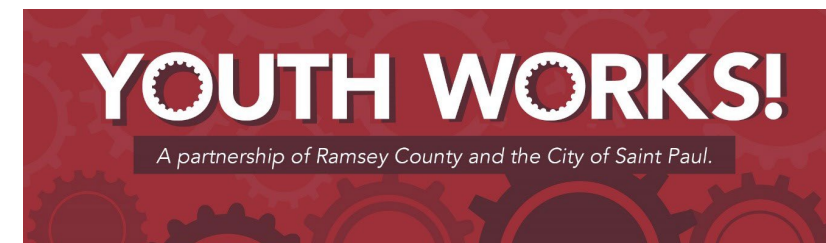
*Youth Works! opens doors of opportunity for youth and young adults in Ramsey County*

## Initiative Goals

- Develop and align resources, activities and events that bring community partners together.
- Highlight how engaging youth in employment, apprenticeship, internship and volunteer opportunities is of great value to the community.
- Ask for participation in opening doors of opportunity for youth to learn, earn and lead in their communities.

## Core Values

- Centers Young People
- Equity
- Quality



# Youth Works! Pillars

*The Youth Works! pillars strengthen, support and uplift the youth workforce ecosystem in the county. These pillars make it easier for community partners to help young people identify and pursue their career pathway by reducing complexity and burden on organizations. Ramsey County offer programs that young people, and the organizations that support them, can access to increase their career pathways success. These pillar programs include:*



## Employer Engagement

Assist employers to become more inclusive workplaces and reduce barriers for hiring young people.



## Connections

Provides workforce development organizations and professionals opportunities to connect and network.



## Removing Barriers

Support young adults ages 18-24 to obtain driver's license as a work credential.



## Opportunity Youth

Intentional resources to support opportunity youth with employment and training resources and supports.



## Future of Work

Informing and supporting young people, workforce development professionals and educators on the changing skills needed for the future economy.



# Youth Works! Events



## Power Within Us



[Power Within Us](#) aims to connect young adults ages 16-24 currently on probation in Ramsey County with various internships, job and educational training programs, caring adults and other positive youth development supports.

During the sessions, community partners who provide employment and job training programs to justice impacted young adults present "right now" opportunities in which young people can start

earning while learning new skills.

Sessions are held every second Tuesday, from 4-5:30 p.m., at Rondo Community Outreach Library.

For more information, please email [Charie Gill](#).

## Youth Works! Employment and Supports Orientation



Navigating the complex web of youth and young adult employment and training resources can be difficult.

As the lead public workforce agency in Ramsey County, Workforce Solutions is committed to ensuring everyone that works with young people in Ramsey County have a foundational understanding of resources and programs available. All those who interact and work with Ramsey County young

people are invited to monthly virtual orientations.

We look forward to your attendance, and please share this opportunity with others!

Nov. 8 and Dec. 13  
11 a.m.-noon.

[Register.](#)



RAMSEY COUNTY  
Workforce Solutions

Now Available On  
Demand

## Join the Youth Works! Practitioner Meetings

Are you a youth-serving organization in Ramsey County? The Youth Works! Practitioner Table is your opportunity to:

- Identify resource gaps in workforce training programs as voiced by young people.
- Strategize solutions to systemic barriers to youth employment.
- Expand access to opportunities for youth to earn, learn and lead in their communities.

Held the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month  
9-10 a.m.

[Join via Zoom](#)

*Co-facilitated by Ramsey County Workforce Solutions and the Suburban Ramsey Family Collaborative (SRFC), these virtual meetings offer a collaborative space for building stronger support systems for our youth.*

## Unleash Potential: Employment Resource Fair



Looking to unleash your potential? Join us to explore employment opportunities, training, wealth building and other supportive resources! For ages 16 and up and their families.

Every second Tuesday  
6-7:30 p.m.  
Arlington Hills Community Center

[Learn more](#)

## Get S.E.T. – Successful Employment Training



Ramsey County is partnering with [World Youth Connect](#), a local youth-led organization, to help bridge generational and cultural gaps between Ramsey County employers and the region's young workforce. As Minnesota's most diverse county, Ramsey County is excited to support employers to be more inclusive youth and young adult friendly workplaces. This opportunity is offered monthly and complimentary for any Ramsey

County employer to ensure their supervisors are well-prepared to adapt and succeed alongside the next generation of workers.

The [Successful Employer Training \(S.E.T.\)](#) is an opportunity for both new and existing youth supervisors and employers to learn essential youth and young adult onboarding, retention, and communication skills and strategies to ensure a positive work environment for all.

Nov. 17 and Dec. 15  
11 a.m.-noon

[Register.](#)

# Youth Works! ARPA Investment Outcomes

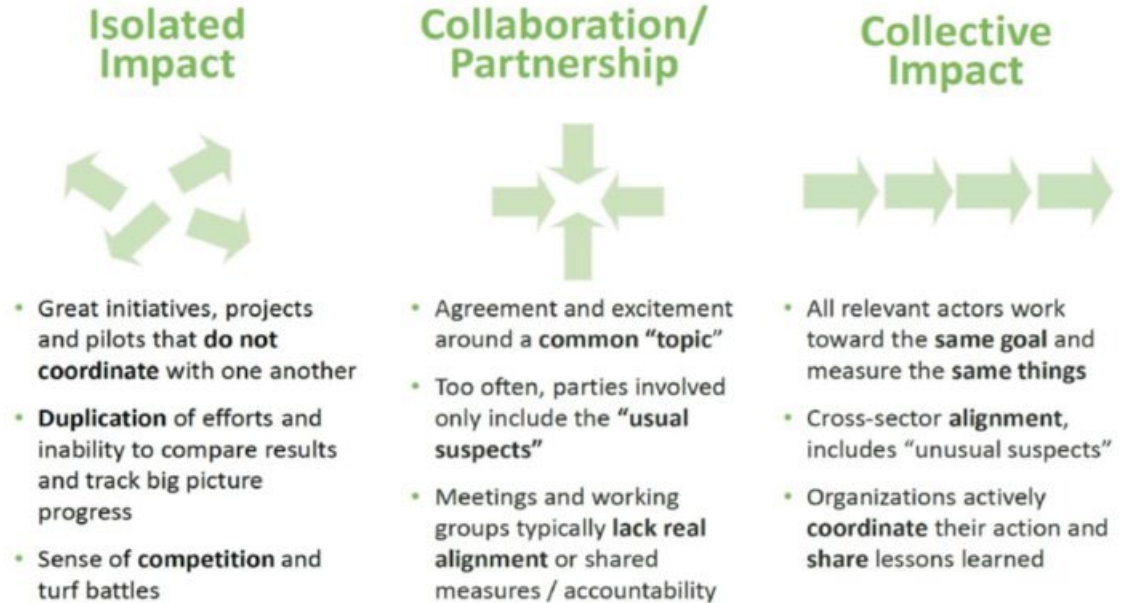


- Because of the co-investment of Saint Paul funds, many specific programmatic outcomes are being tracked utilizing.
  - Focus Groups.
  - Monthly vendor reports.
  - Surveys.
  - Internal data collection/tracking.
- Initial findings demonstrate success in connecting young people to career opportunities and removing barriers for success.
- Interest in collecting more data and anecdotes to illustrate the need for continued flexibility in existing state and federally funded workforce programs to improve outcomes (i.e. stipends, driver's license, barrier removal, etc.).

# Moving Toward Collective Impact

- Common Agenda & Shared Commitments.
- Shared Measurement Systems- collective impact, qualitative/storytelling.
- Mutually reinforcing activities.
- Continuous Communications.
- Backbone Support Organization.

## Moving from Isolated Impact to Collective Impact





ARPA

# Public Health Career Pathways Project

# Overview of PHCP Pathways Project

Why the project was created

What's special about the project and what are we learning

What participants and stakeholders are saying and what's ahead

# Tier 5 Investment

Bold investment in staff

New approach to professionally developing staff

Addressing health care shortage that is on the horizon

Supporting residents using an innovative approach

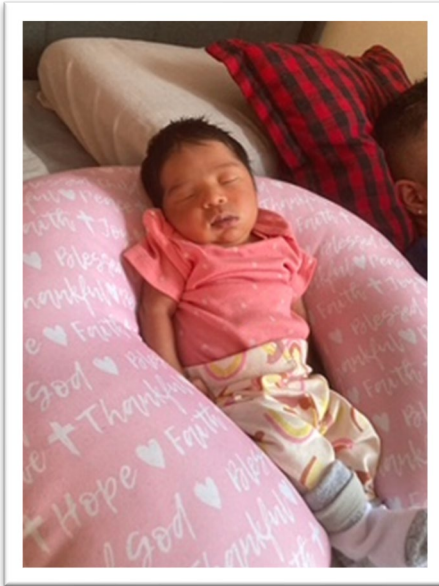
# Public Health Career Pathways Program

There are two Public Health Career Pathways:

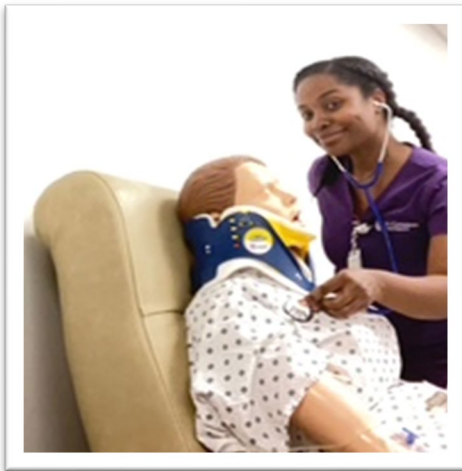


Project funded with \$1.1 million dollars of American Rescue Plan dollars.

# Project Features



- All participants work a reduced schedule which provides them time to study and complete coursework.
- A wage supplement is provided to cover the hours participants would normally work.
- Participants sign a program agreement which outlines project expectations and service commitment.



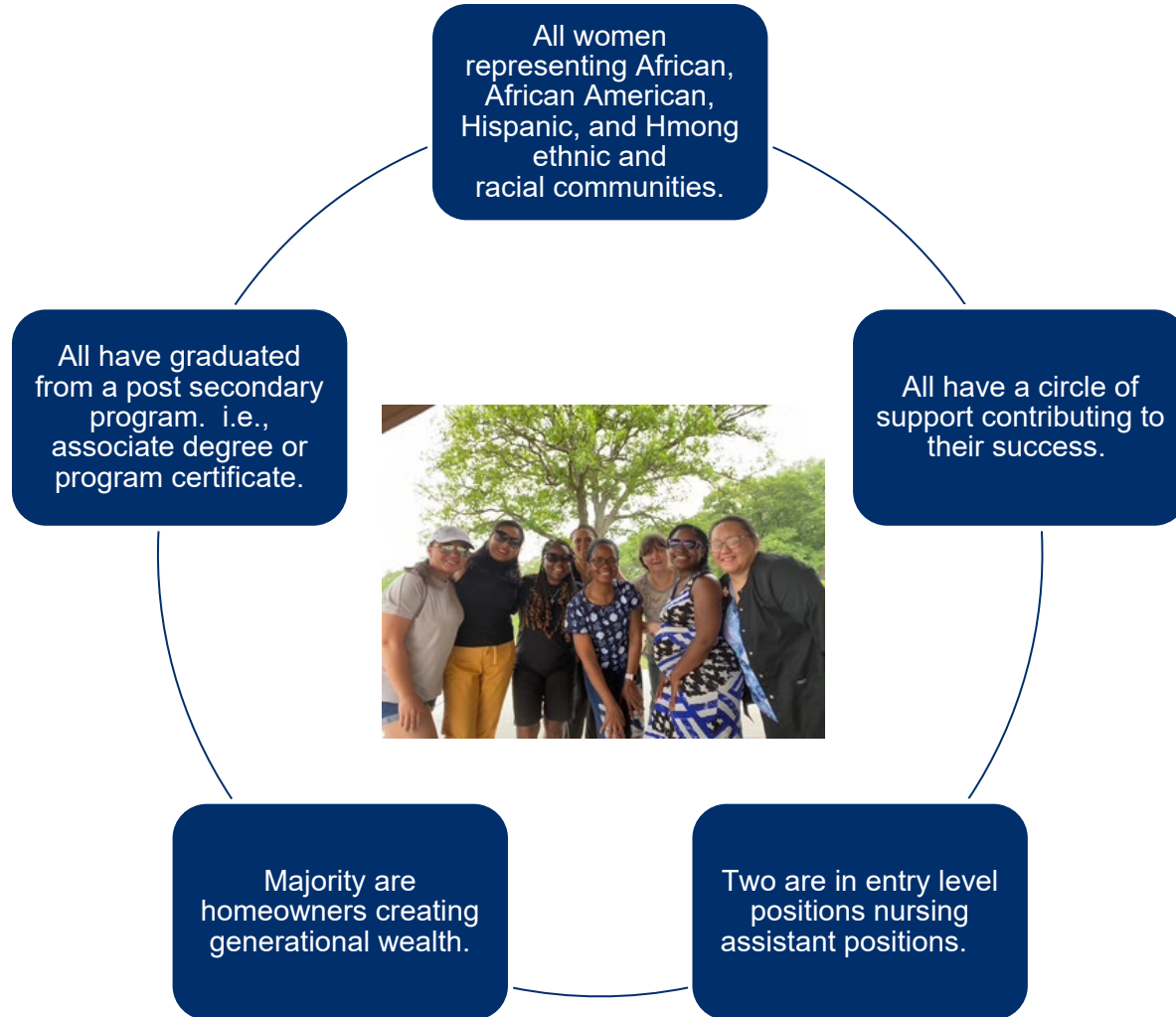


## Demographics of CHW Participants

- All women representing African American, American Indian, Hmong and Indo-Caribbean ethnic and racial communities.
- All were entry level staff in clerk/typist positions.
- Majority are single parents with two or more children.
- Majority are first generation college students.

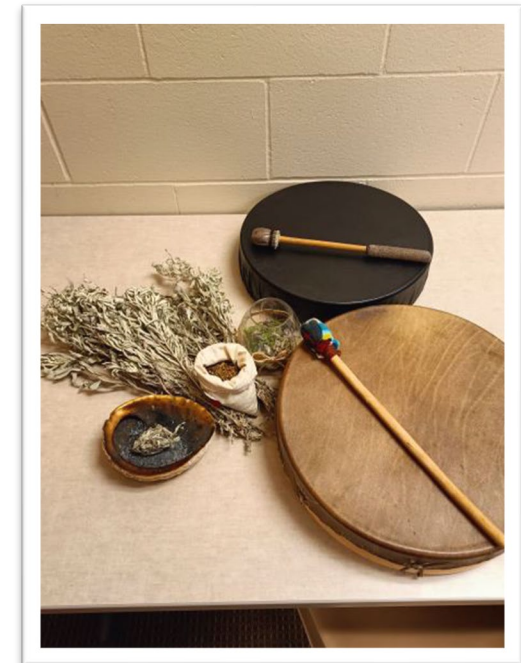


# Nursing Participant Demographics



# How Did We Do

- Five staff are now certified CHWs and three become certified this spring.
- Two CHR participants are now employed as Health Education Program Assistants.
- One CHW participant is building on her CHW certificate and pursuing a BA degree at St. Kate's.
- First nursing participant scheduled to graduate Spring 2025.
- Program was recognized by President Biden at 2023 NACO Legislative Conference.





# Questions & Discussion