

## Request for Board Action Details

<b>File #:</b>	2021-288	<b>Status:</b>	Passed
<b>Type:</b>	Administrative Item	<b>In control:</b>	Board of Commissioners
<b>On agenda:</b>	6/1/2021	<b>Final action:</b>	6/1/2021
<b>Title:</b>	Funding for Ramsey County and City of Saint Paul partnership for Right Track+ Young Adult Career Pathway Internship Program utilizing American Rescue Plan Act Funding		
<b>Sponsors:</b>	Workforce Solutions		
<b>Indexes:</b>			
<b>Code sections:</b>			
<b>Attachments:</b>	1. Resolution		

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
6/1/2021	1	Board of Commissioners	approved	Pass

**Sponsor:** Workforce Solutions

**Title**  
Funding for Ramsey County and City of Saint Paul partnership for Right Track+ Young Adult Career Pathway Internship Program utilizing American Rescue Plan Act Funding

### Recommendation

1. Allocate \$2,100,000 of American Rescue Plan Act funds to the new Right Track+ Young Adult Career Pathway Internship Program, in accordance with federal guidance.
2. Authorize the County Manager to enter into agreements and amendments to agreements in accordance with the County's procurement policies and procedures, provided the amounts are within the limits of the grant funding.

### Background and Rationale

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 was signed into law on March 11, 2021. The relief package provides funding in several areas such as state and local aid, education, rental assistance, transit, stimulus payments for individuals, and other provisions. In addition, ARPA provides \$350 billion in additional funding for state and local governments. Funds may be used to provide job training to individuals to address the negative economic impacts created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Workforce programs for youth and young adults were identified as an ARPA Tier 1 funding priority by the County Manager at a County Board workshop on April 20, 2021.

### COVID-19 Pandemic Impact and Population

Residents that have experienced the most disproportionate economic impacts by the COVID-19 pandemic are as follows:

- People who are under 35.
- People with less education, especially less than a high school diploma.
- People of color and indigenous people.
- Younger workers are over-represented in service industries, which were struck hardest by restrictions on movement, activities, and businesses. They are particularly vulnerable due to lower levels of seniority and work experience.

These impacts are a critical disruption to young people who are launching what may be their first-ever job. Beyond the immediate damage caused by the loss of a first job is the risk of “scarring,” what economists refer to as the long-term harm to income levels, career growth, access to training, ability to pay off debt, or deal with the added mental and social burdens of instability. Scarring has been proven to impact women, people of color, and young people, particularly in the job market.

#### Community Collaboration

Workforce Solutions (WFS) will partner with the City of Saint Paul to launch a new career pathway internship program focused on serving up to 300 COVID-19 pandemic impacted young adults (aged 18-24) in Ramsey County.

Through subsidized internships, supported by the County and the City, young adults will gain entry level skills and access to professional networks in six targeted industries. To ensure participant success, the Right Track+ program will partner with community-based organizations who will:

- Recruit and enroll COVID-19 impacted young adults.
- Provide 1:1 employment case management and wrap around services.
- Support participants’ engagement in Right Track+ through a new passport exploration program for participants to attend a variety of industry driven exploration events throughout the City and County.
- Provide each participant with a community mentor.
- Develop specialized personal or professional development for the young adults they are serving.

Targeted industries for Right Track+ include: Public Sector, Trades/Green Energy, Urban Agriculture, Creative Arts, Technology, and Healthcare. All program participants will receive a training internship for up to 16 weeks. Right Track+ will partner with businesses and public sector employers to create and support these internships. Guidance will be provided to employers, leveraging tools that both the City and County have to most effectively support these young people.

Young adults who successfully complete the summer Right Track+ program may be eligible to move into other workforce training programs, building upon the career pathway they started by further pursuing certified and credentialed training.

Intentional partnership between the City of Saint Paul and WFS will provide the opportunity for each partner to lead in different areas, while bringing resources for the creation of this program which will run through the then end of 2021.

Ramsey County: The County will provide overall leadership for the program through Workforce Solutions. The County will fund the work of the community-based organizations and provide the back-office support to work with those vendors.

City of Saint Paul: The new program, Right Track+, will leverage assets and resources from Saint Paul’s existing Right Track Program. The City plans to host and pay wages for up to 100 interns. In addition, the City will hire a program support role while also dedicating Parks and Recreation staff to execute professional development events for all Right Track+ participants. The Saint Paul City Council will be considering this project at it’s June 9, 2021 meeting.

The urgency to put every young person on a career pathway is immediate. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that our economy is built too heavily on low income, low wage jobs for many who already have significant barriers to education and employment. Government, collaboratively partnering with community-based organizations, is a necessary linkage to reach disconnected young adults and ensure they receive culturally relevant supports. Putting young people into career pathways ensures there will be a vibrant,

diverse, skilled workforce in Ramsey County into the future, in alignment with the strategies identified in the Economic Competitiveness and Inclusion Plan.

**County Goals** (Check those advanced by Action)

☒ Well-being

☒ Prosperity

☒ Opportunity

☐ Accountability

**Racial Equity Impact**

As described in the background, young people of color have been disproportionately impacted by the economic impacts of COVID-19, including job loss, reduction of hours, deferring school and reduced wages. Due to the need to earn incomes to support themselves and their families, many young people have been pushed out of career tracks and into low-wage jobs in sectors that have limited availability for growth and opportunity. It is expected that the majority of young adults served in the Right Track+ program will be people of color or indigenous people. By infusing resources, including wages and access to professional development and networks, Right Track+ will allow young adults to enter or re-enter a career pathway that leads to increased opportunity for them, their family and their community.

**Community Participation Level and Impact**

WFS has participated in a multitude of community engagement efforts to learn from a variety of community stakeholders regarding ways to improve employment outcomes for COVID-19 impacted residents. These include several town halls with residents and focus groups with community-based organizations most connected to COVID-19 impacted residents, as well as employers through the Workforce Innovation Board. In addition, WFS co-convenes with the Suburban Ramsey Collaborative, Youth Works!, which includes dozens of partners in the County focused on improving the employment opportunities of young people. In developing Right Track+, WFS has incorporated suggestions that community-based organizations provided in the CARES evaluation. These include: additional, ongoing technical assistance, different payment structures, and more clarity about program monitoring. In response to this feedback, the County and City will lead a Right Track+ Community Team. This team will consist of staff leaders as well as representation from each of the community organizations working with the program. This team will work collaboratively to share resources and support all young people participating in Right Track+ and the community-based organizations supporting them.

☒ Inform

☒ Consult

☒ Involve

☒ Collaborate

☐ Empower

**Fiscal Impact**

A total of \$2.1 million is being requested from the Ramsey County local government ARPA funds. This includes approximately \$750,000 for contracts related to case management and employment navigation support services. In addition, \$1.3 million is dedicated to payment to interns (up to 200). The City of Saint Paul is also contributing approximately \$516,500 toward intern wages and one new FTE to help with the professional development events. The County has received over \$53 million in local ARP funds and at the April 20 Board Workshop, the County Manager highlighted five tiers for investment. This initiative is in Tier one and is an emergency response to the immediate needs in our community. Finance will provide regular reporting on ARPA funds.

**County Manager Comments**

Right Track+ will provide immediate relief to those most impacted by the economic impacts of the pandemic. Youth and Young Adult employment supports are identified as a neglected portion in ARPA. This aligns with the ARPA funding principals as a Tier 1 priority for Ramsey County.

**Last Previous Action**

None

**Attachments**

1.None