**Champion Report**

Theme Area: **Education and Workforce Development**

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**REPORTING PERIOD: April 5, 2016-June 21, 2016**

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| **Goals/Strategies or Action Steps:** | **What NEW success have you had in moving your theme goals forward over the reporting period?** |
|  | NJPA= National Joint Powers Alliance (a national purchasing alliance)  NJPA’s 3rd Annual Innovation Funding Day for Schools happened on Thursday, May 12th.  11 current and new projects totaling over $1.4 million dollars were presented for Region 5 superintendents to evaluate and discuss.  10 of these projects will be recommended for funding at NJPA’s Board of Directors meeting on Tuesday, June 21st when they finalize next year’s budget. |
|  | Kassidy Rice, currently an Education Consultant with NJPA, will take over as the Leader of Education Solutions at NJPA on July 1st.  Rice takes over for Rynell Schock, who is transitioning to a new role within the organization.  NJPA is excited for the transition in leadership and for both Kassidy and Rynell in their new roles! |
|  | NJPA Education Solutions is excited to be starting the summer training season with Region 5 teachers and leaders this June.  Our summer training season culminates with the Minnesota Summit for Learning and Leading.  This event takes place on August 9-10th at Madden’s Resort in Brainerd, MN.  Nine nationally renowned speakers highlight this two day event that will focus on high levels of learning for students and leading for teachers and administrators.  Almost 300 educators have already registered for this training. |
|  | RMCEP = Rural Minnesota Concentrated Employment Program (our Workforce Investment Board)  RMCEP Regional Career Exploration program funded for a third year by NJPA , September 2016 – May 2017 - $358K  RMCEP providing targeted Work Training opportunities for youth enrolled in the State of MN  Department of Rehabilitation Services, summer 2016  - $27K.  RMCEP partnering with County MFIP Programs to provide targeted Work Training opportunities for Young Parent on MFIP, summer 2016  - $27K  RMCEP partnering in the M-state TAACCCT Grant – Soft Skills Training  RMCEP providing On-The Job Training,  Work Training, and Classroom Training for long term Dislocated Worker through the DOL  National Emergency Grants - $450K  RMCEP Providing Internship opportunities for low income and at-rick youth through the DEED Youth Services Division  - Transitional  Internship Experience Grant (TIE)  - $250K  RMCEP Conducting WIOA Regional Planning with Economic Development Agencies, Perkins Consortium, Adult Basic Education (ABE), and Secondary Education and Post Secondary Education (RC3) |
|  | M State – Minnesota State Community & Technical College  \*Education and workforce partners (NJPA, Rural MN CEP, M State, CLC, Bridges, etc.) in the region have expanded collaborations to increase student awareness of college and career opportunities and pathways.  \*Education and industry partners in the region are holding an Energy Day on the M State Wadena campus to bring secondary and postsecondary instructors together to develop and share curriculum related to high demand energy careers.  \*M State is providing additional training opportunities for industry partners and employees in the region in welding, CDL, and manufacturing through a Department of Labor grant. |
| **What future activities has your theme prioritized for the coming year?** | |
| From that discussion three ideas emerged that align with Resilient Region plan:   1. Alignment with Resilient Region Plan - Action Step: EW5A “Build on current efforts.” Discussion of the group focused on Teacher Career Planning, an initiative being led by Steve Jones in Little Falls via NJPA Innovation Funding. To address our desire to attract and retain quality teachers the ideas shared were to:    1. Consider having MnState and CLC offer a customized summer TRAINING (maybe online) that satisfies the needs of the individual teacher professional development plans.    2. Consider if RMCEP can provide or add value to the continuation and replication of the Little Falls teacher career planning.   *Lead Champion: I believe NJPA, RMCEP, CLC and MnState will communicate with Steve Jones and will continue to lead the progression of this idea/conversation. Not sure who is taking the flag first to coordinate this communication.*   1. Alignment with Resilient Region Plan - Action Step: EW4B “Create open doors to teachers in the workplace.”  Discussion of the group focused on how we might partner with the private sector to provide PAID summer workplace placements.   Ideas included how to:   * 1. Align the workplace placement with teacher accreditation needs, again per the work that Steve Jones is piloting.   2. Add additional value to the teacher workplace placements with a 1:1 grant match of the summer salary, specifically dedicated to pay off college debt. Another idea was a 1:1 grant match of summer salary, specifically dedicated to offset housing to address affordable housing.   *Lead Champion: I believe after the Little Falls pilot is underway, NJPA, RMCEP, MnState & CLC will communicate with Steve Jones and will continue to lead the progression of this idea/conversation. Not sure who is taking the flag first to coordinate this communication. Hills is committed to helping find the matching grant and private sector partners as this idea evolves.* | |
| **How are you working with any of the other RR Theme areas?** | |
| Energy, Economic Engines (local foods) | |
| **List any Goals or Recommendations within the plan that your team of theme Champions are struggling to address?** | |
| Finding time to meet | |

**Education and Workforce Development**

**Education and Workforce Development Issue I (EWI)**

**Educating and retaining workforce:** Facets of this issue include; understanding the demographic and skill make-up of the people in the region’s major employment sectors. Other key components of this issue include lifelong learning aspects: how to keep young workers in the region, how to attract & retain talent, and how to best utilize an older workforce. Collaboration between private/public/non-profit sectors is of paramount importance for recommendations and actions to be successful under this theme.

**Education and Workforce Development Issue I Goal**

**Educated workforce:** Our region provides affordable and multiple educational opportunities to effectively employ the current and future workforce, and to improve our knowledge of how to live a sustainable life as individuals and as a community at large.

**Recommendation EW1**

**Lifelong learning:** Prioritize and promote lifelong learning for all residents of the region.

**Action Step EW1A**

**Workforce training:** Create a WPA-like (aka transitional jobs) workforce training effort.

**Action Step EW1B**

**Early childhood education:** Prioritize early childhood education and maintain consistent educational pathway options.

**Action Step EW1C**

**Education resource center:** Consider developing a one-stop shop and education center site where people can learn about resources and how they can be a part of the solution.

**Recommendation EW2**

**Educational system improvements:** Improve the educational system to provide a well-qualified future workforce.

**Action Step EW2A**

**Experiential learning:** Foster advanced placement opportunities, promote entrepreneurial skills, and involve students in hands-on work experience, on-the-job training and paid internships. Expand upon the “Bridges Academy” initiative administered by the Brainerd Lakes Chamber of Commerce.

**Action Step EW2B**

**Assessment:** Create a technical assessment of interests and skills.

**Action Step EW2C**

**Connect students and employers:** Promote the skills that employers are looking for and where the jobs opportunities are to high school and college-aged students.

**Action Step EW2D**

**Critical thinking skills:** Teach critical thinking skills.

**Action Step EW2E**

**4-year degrees:** Seek to have four-year college degrees delivered from within the region.

**Action Step EW2F**

**Various types of degrees:** Create areas of excellence but allow for a broad range of learning opportunities (liberal arts as well as engineering). Allow for flexibility of learning when needed.

**Action Step EW2G**

**Teacher engagement and accountability:** Teachers often have excellent ideas of how to improve performance, allow for 180-degree evaluations that come from colleagues, students and parents. Let performance be evaluated, not length of employment. Set higher standards and give higher pay for exceptional performance. Keep practices and ideas that are working.

**Action Step EW2H**

**Home schooling:** Expand upon and grow homeschooling and social networks of homeschooling locations.

**Action Step EW2I**

**Charter schools:** Expand charter school options as an additional option to delivery of education.

**Recommendation EW3**

**Non-college pathways:** Promote options in addition to college for pursuing education, job advancement, and higher pay. This may include additional workplace training, achieving advanced certifications and licenses, or seeking other non-traditional pathways to climb the ladder of success.

**Action Step EW3A**

**Senior workforce:** Retool and engage the senior workforce. Access retired talent as educators. Encourage seniors to maintain competency with emerging technologies.

Capitalize on experienced professionals to mentor others. Encourage employers to recruit across the experience spectrum. Create distance at-home learning opportunities while allowing experienced workers to “test out” of training modules.

**Recommendation EW4**

**Role of business in workforce development:** The business sector should be proactive in preparing the region’s future workforce.

**Action Step EW4A**

**Hire locally:** Encourage employers to hire locally.

**Action Step EW4B**

**Welcome teachers:** Create open doors to teachers in the workplace.

**Action Step EW4C**

**Engineering and agricultural careers:** Develop more educational opportunities for engineering and agriculture careers.

**Action Step EW4D**

**STEM:** Focus on Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) training.

**Action Step EW4E**

**Focus economic effort:** Concentrate on a specific economic cluster for the region such as creating a hub for agriculture or a green job training center.

**Action Step EW4F**

**Employer/student correlation study:** Complete a study on which employers are hiring and correlate the findings with information on students taking classes, going to college, or graduating from high school in the state. Consider instituting programs where employers pay for relevant certifications.

**Action Step EW4G**

**Employer/worker correlation study:** A survey should be sent out to all employers in the region to find out where job opportunities may be as a result of people retiring, future business expansion, etc. and this information should be shared with citizens seeking employment.

**Action Step EW4H**

**Educational pathways:** Develop an educational pathway for varied stages of business development with associated resources.

**Action Step EW4I**

**Training and technical assistance for businesses and entrepreneurs:** Expand business training and technical assistance. Offer workshops and other technical assistance to educate prospective and current entrepreneurs on how to locate and apply for loans for new or expanding businesses. Assist in educating people in finding capital

**Recommendation EW5**

**Affordable workforce education:** Reform our education and workforce development systems by making education affordable for all learners.

**Action Step EW5A**

**Build on current efforts:** Build on existing education and workforce development collaborations such as the Public Work Force Development System, MnSCU, and Adult Basic Education.

**Action Step EW5B**

**Agricultural workforce:** Emphasize and promote agricultural education along with gardening.

**Action Step EW5C**

**Training:** Combine the concepts of on-the-job training (training at the work site) and lateral training (career path – next level of training). Institute additional apprenticeships that will enhance job creation and enhance skills.

**Action Step EW5D**

**Skills assessment:** Conduct an assessment of the demographic and skills makeup/aptitudes in the region’s major employment sectors, including incumbent workforce sectors and the unemployed and underemployed workforce. Use this information to identify gaps and gain a better understanding of what education is needed to fill these gaps. Assess and improve soft skills.

**Action Step EW5E**

**Skills assessment connected to education:** Inventory existing skills, compare these to needed skills in key industries, and address the gaps. Focus on evaluating skill sets of high growth industries to determine which incumbent workforce sectors may be transitioned into higher growth industries. Develop core educational disciplines at basic levels to provide greater flexibility for workers throughout their career.

**Action Step EW5F**

**Distance learning:** Promote community-based distance learning via global interconnectivity. For example, integrate home-based learners at the community level for social activity along with an advanced online learning experience.

**Action Step EW5G**

**Work-at-home:** Provide more work-at-home employment opportunities. This can be accomplished through the expansion of telework and home-based services and businesses.

**Action Step EW5H**

**Affordable, accessible training:** Provide affordable and accessible training in promising fields. For example, online courses are more accessible for people without transportation options.

**Recommendation EW6**

**Coordination of economic development efforts:** Businesses and government should work closely with local economic development and community development agencies to attract new employers and small businesses to the area.

**Action Step EW6A**

**Livable wage jobs:** Focus efforts on attracting employers that will provide a variety of jobs that pay livable wages.

**Action Step EW6B**

**Minimum wage jobs:** Discuss minimum wage standards and area jobs in our community with state government and public office.