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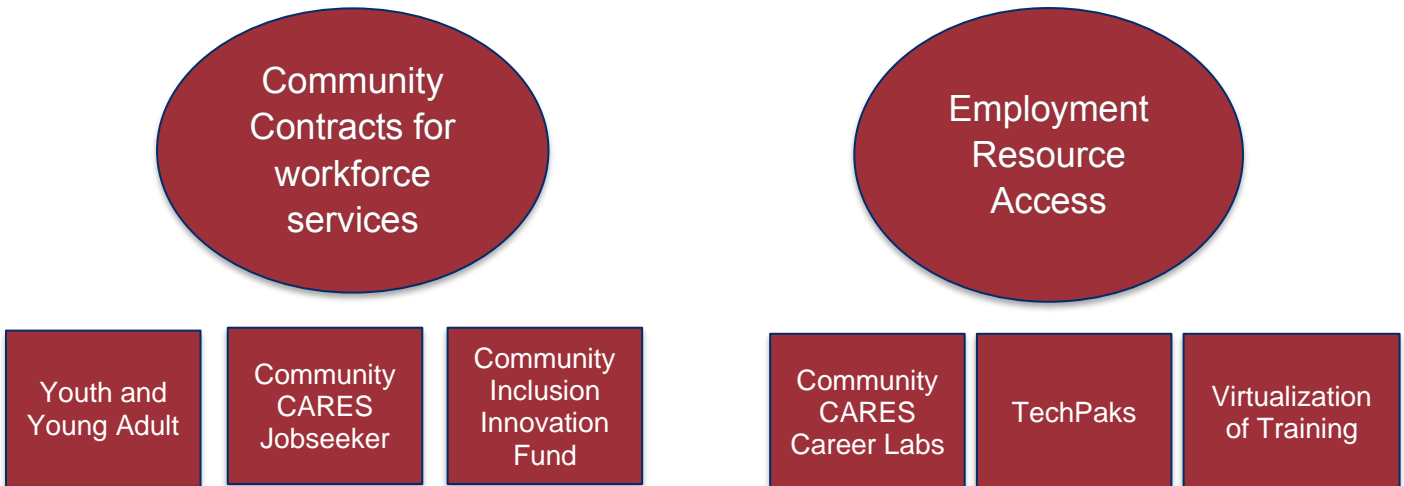
Date: 8/6/2020

Health and Wellness Administrative Division: Evaluation Plan for
Workforce Solutions CARES Programming

Program Description

Ramsey County is the recipient of a direct allocation of federal funds through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act; also known as the CARES Act. Workforce Solutions received \$15 million in CARES funding and developed a series of Requests for Informal Quotes (RFIQs) to solicit requests from community agencies for resources to programs targeting employment services for COVID-19 impacted with the CARES allocation. The purpose of these contract opportunities is to address and help mitigate the economic and workforce gaps of Ramsey County residents most impacted by COVID-19. This can stem from those who experienced job loss, reduction in hours, are at increased COVID risk due to health concerns, uncertainty in their future employment opportunity, or an increase in existing barriers to employment as a result of the pandemic and its secondary affects.

The economic impact from COVID-19 is disproportionately affecting black people, indigenous people, people of color, people with disabilities, veterans and opportunity youth communities. Organizations that focus on ending racial and socioeconomic disparities were encouraged to apply. These opportunities were organized into two groups, each with three identified strategies for closing gaps resulting from COVID-19 that are not provided through existing programs, current funding or potentially new funding allocations.



More than 120 proposals were submitted through the procurement process, with most being funded by early August to start delivering services.

Goals and key outcomes of the programs vary across the strategies, but all CARES funding is intended to close gaps in services resulting from COVID-19. In accordance with CARES funding, the programs will end during December 30, 2020 at which time any remaining funding will be turned back to the federal government. Strategies and target populations:

1. **Learn, Earn, Lead** - Partner with community youth (ages 14-19) employment providers to pivot programming that would fill existing service gaps for at-risk youth to ensure they are receiving critical opportunities this summer despite COVID-19
2. **Young Adult Transitions Program** - Provide quality summer or fall employment and career transition services in Ramsey County to young adults (ages 18-24, culturally specific) impacted by COVID-19 in: mentorship, financial literacy, leadership, entrepreneurship, self-esteem, confidence, emotional regulation, healthy relationships, cultural identity and wellness, etc.
3. **Generation Future: Youth Life Skills** - Provide services and training to youth (ages 16-19) in areas of workforce development, learning and life skills: Career exploration and pathways (learning kits, virtual coaching, etc.); Labor market information, to assist youth in making informed career decisions, leadership, time management and problem-solving skills; Digital literacy and social media etiquette; Financial wellness; Personal and professional support networks; Cultural identity; Social capital, self-advocacy and social engagement.
4. **Community CARES Employment Services** - Provide employment and career services targeting specific populations impacted by COVID-19 including justice involved, seniors, culturally specific, veterans and people with disabilities. Funding will be provided for the areas of curriculum, coaching, career tools, engagement, job placement and training referrals.
5. **Virtualization of Training** - Transformation of current workforce skill building curriculum to digital platforms and provide those virtual training opportunities to residents most impacted by COVID-19. Will fund initiatives to increase access to technology infrastructure for the purpose of engaging in training.
6. **Community Innovation and Inclusion Fund** - Open to non-profits or fiscally sponsored organizations where the mission is rooted in the culture(s) and identity(ies) of individuals served and the services incorporate the values, traditions, worldview of Black, American Indian, and other racially and ethnically diverse communities who are most impacted by COVID-19. We encourage projects which promote and accelerate racial healing, equity and inclusion; and reduction of racial inequities and bias against racial and ethnic communities through developing and leveraging workforce and career readiness programming using inclusive tactics via new and advancing partnerships. Organizations will be supported in a cohort model by the Center for Economic Inclusion.

Evaluation Methods

The evaluation of WFS CARES programming seeks to answer four questions.

1. Was the contracting process and experience provided in a timely and satisfactory way to Workforces Solutions and to CARES funded community agencies?
2. Was the CARES programming successful at building capacity in the community to deliver services to those most negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. What training and supports are necessary to develop community capacity to enhance work-readiness and attachment to the workforce for targeted populations?
4. Are Ramsey County residents better off as a result of participating in CARES programming?

Several evaluation methods will be used to answer the evaluation questions:

- monthly progress reporting from community partners,
- demographic reports of staff and residents served,
- focus groups and/or surveys of community partners and program participants, survey of career lab visitors, survey of TechPak recipients,
- cohort feedback from organizations funded by the Community Inclusion Innovation Fund (CIIF) with analysis from the Center for Economic Inclusion,
- open dialog with RECERT and the Equity Action Circle (EAC) and
- analysis of impacts on resident outcomes for those with available data.

Data will be collected monthly from each contracted community partner to ensure agencies are delivering on their contracted deliverables and also to ensure that agencies receive the support and technical assistance necessary for success. Data collection is organized into a database by WFS agency planners with the data collection plan attached to this evaluation plan.

Race equity or community engagement components of the methods are built into each strategy that make up the WFS CARES programming. Services are intentionally targeted to specific populations where the negative impact of COVID-19 is most significant. Ongoing input from RECERT, the CIIF and the EAC will ensure ongoing improvement to services are coordinated and implemented for the duration of the CARES programming.

Budget

Provided by evaluation resources funded outside of CARES. The Budget for gift cards and other identified evaluation supports will be drawn from community engagement and department levy budgets.

Timeline and Deliverables

Month	Activity
July/August	Draft evaluation plan
August/ September	Plan community engagement, feedback Develop plan for collecting quantitative data and coordinate with open data portal Draft surveys for TechPaks and Career Labs and administer to sites Meet with EAC First Monthly reports submitted by community agencies
September	Draft surveys and focus groups for remaining strategies First round of surveys to community agencies and program participants
October	Mid-program report on implementation and initial results from strategies Identify changes made to improve services and issues requiring adjustment to improve programming
November	Community provider and program participants focus groups and/or surveys (build on what was learned in September)
December	All data is collected prior to program closeouts and lock data for analysis Integrate Community Inclusion Innovation Fund report into the evaluation
January	Initiate final report analysis and write-up of the evaluation
February	Final report

Communication Plan

The primary audiences for this evaluation are the Ramsey County Board, Workforce Innovation Board, the Equity Action Circle, the County Manager, Ramsey County residents, department leadership, the Center for Economic Inclusion and impacted communities. Evaluators will present interim results to the Ramsey County Board, the Workforce Innovation Board, the Equity Action Circle, the Center for Economic Inclusion and others as requested. The final report will be presented to these groups and other groups as identified. The evaluation should be shared on the public Ramsey County website for access by community and other stakeholders.

The Ramsey County Board is responsible for responding to and acting on recommendations with input from each of the groups identified in the communication plan.