

# CAPLP CAREER CONNECT

by Lakes & Prairies Community Action Partnership, Inc.

Region 5 • Moorhead, Minnesota  
caplp.org



Workforce Development • Job Training • Economic Development

## INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

The CAPLP Career Connect initiative is a project that connects low-income people with high-demand, living-wage careers. Through a partnership with the local community college, the project targets families unable to participate in traditional employment programs, providing technical and soft skills necessary for success in the workplace. The CAPLP Career Coach works alongside families every step of the way, assisting them in addressing challenges and helping them attain and maintain employment. This whole family workforce model seeks to break the inter-generational cycle of poverty by moving the family toward economic security, all the while addressing the need for a skilled labor force.



## LOCAL NEED ADDRESSED

The need for a new model of workforce development was discovered during our last Community Assessment process. As a part of the Community Assessment, CAPLP conducted both customer focus groups and customer surveys. The number one need identified by customers was a good-paying job. While there are other workforce programs in our community, the families that we surveyed stated that traditional workforce programs were either (a) too long to complete or (b) provided them with employment that did not allow them to support their family. At the same time, the region had been experiencing a severe workforce shortage in skilled labor, especially in welding, manufacturing, and healthcare. Additionally, the low unemployment rate was negatively impacting local employers, local

economy, and broader community. This program was born out of a dream to address both of these issues. It provides low-income families with the skills necessary to attain living-wage employment, while simultaneously addressing the identified skills gap in our community.

## ROLE OF CSBG FUNDS

CSBG played a critical role in launching this program in response to the needs identified in the Community Assessment. By pairing CSBG funds with a partnership with the United Way, CAPLP was able to begin a pilot project in the summer of 2016 to determine whether this model would be effective. The United Way provided the funding to support the

CAPLP Career Coach, and CSBG funds covered the training itself, which costs approximately \$1,000 per person through the local community college. In addition, CSBG funds covered the project's starting operational costs, as well as on-going program administration and oversight. Without CSBG funding, this project would not have been possible.

## TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT

This project has been highly transformative for not only participating families, but also the local economy. The partnerships developed through this project have connected families with high-demand careers that address the severe workforce shortage in the community. This workforce shortage is especially evident in the healthcare industry in our community, with a severe lack of Certified Nursing Assistants, especially in senior care facilities. Since 2017, 64 people have received a certificate or credential through the CAPLP Career Connect program, and 76% of those that received a certificate or credential obtained living wage employment within 3 months of completing their certification. After completing the program, most families obtain and sustain employment, moving from surviving to thriving. **The best way to demonstrate the transformative impact of this project is to hear it from one of the families first-hand. This is Jamie's story:**

"When I found CAPLP my family did not have a place to call home. I enrolled my youngest daughter, Laila, in Head Start, with the hope of better preparing her for kindergarten. Laila's Head Start teacher introduced me to CAPLP's Workforce Development Case Manager. I enrolled in the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Program, making my childhood dream a reality. I attended class at 8 a.m. each morning, often after working a shift until 2 or 3 a.m.

It was difficult to balance the needs of my job and family while training for my CNA, but CAPLP walked with me every step of the way. I received support and encouragement that I've never felt before in my life. CAPLP's Housing Program helped get my family into an apartment, and they even helped get beds for my kids to sleep in. My kids were so excited to have their

own beds! CAPLP's support didn't stop after the CNA class ended. I was encouraged to apply for jobs, and I was hired full-time as a CNA at a local nursing home. I have worked very hard to be where I am today and I'm proud of how far I've come.

Thanks to CAPLP, my family was able to move out of our 2-bedroom apartment and into a house with more room! I now have goals for my future, and CAPLP has helped me take control of my finances. I plan to work toward earning a Certified Medication Aide and eventually going on to enroll in a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) program. I hope to someday be a Registered Nurse (RN)."

## EVIDENCE-BASED OUTCOMES

Since 2017, CAPLP has tracked program outcomes very closely. In total, the CAPLP Career Connect program has enrolled 108 community members, with 64 completing the program and receiving their certificate or credential. As with any higher education program, there is some attrition throughout the process, with individuals unable to either complete the program or pass the exams to receive certification. However, for those able to complete, 76% have obtained living wage employment within 3 months of completing their certification.

The CAPLP Career Connect Coach works with each household for up to 2 years, helping them address barriers to obtaining and sustaining employment. These services have proven to be highly effective, with 87% of participants that were unemployed at the time of program enrollment able to obtain and maintain employment upon program completion.

## EQUITY LENS

The vast majority of the community's residents are white (93.56%), but the majority of people experiencing poverty identify as non-white. Within the report area, 27.7% of the Hispanic/Latino population, 38.16% of the Black population, 52.29% of the Native American population, and 36.5% of the Asian Population live below the poverty line. Comparatively, the poverty rate among the White

population is only 10.71%. These inequalities in the community are a high priority at CAPLP, and the agency works every day to level the playing field.

CAPLP is proud to report that the Career Connect program is one way it is doing just that. Since this project began in 2016, they have a proven record of providing opportunities to people of color in the community. Of those who have served over the past 4 years, 43% were Black or African American, 14.4% were Native American, and 8.65% were Hispanic. In addition, 31% of participants reported not having a high school diploma or GED, and 35% were single parents. 58% of enrollees were women and 42% were men. This program's primary goal is to connect people experiencing poverty with living-wage employment to break intergenerational cycles of poverty, which is an incredibly important step in advancing equity.

## CUSTOMER VOICE

Customer voice has driven the development of this project. This project was born out of feedback provided from the customer surveys and focus groups conducted during the Community Assessment process. As the program has evolved, CAPLP has collected client surveys with every training cohort, which have directly influenced program design and the training options provided.

One example of this is that CAPLP worked with the Community College to shorten trainings to 4-8 weeks (compared to 12 weeks in the pilot program) based on feedback from customers. Families enrolled in the program stated that 12 weeks was too long to successfully balance the demands of their personal life with the training program. The flexible design of this program is one key to success, as CAPLP is able to accommodate customer voice every step of the way.

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