



November Feature:

Workforce Development, Inc. (WDI) – Staff Services & Trades Sector Update

The Service & Trades Sector is one that oversees a variety of good careers in the SE Minnesota Region. The Trades sector generally consists of careers involving construction of either buildings or infrastructure. Examples of Trades careers available in our area are: Carpentry, Masonry, Electrician, Plumbing, Heating and Cooling, and Cement work. The Services Sector is a broader sector that includes careers that have a lot of customer face-to-face interaction. Examples of Services Careers in our area include Customer Service, Call Center Operator, Retail Associate, Hospitality Worker, and Restaurant Employee.

The Trades Sector is one of the fastest growing due to the amount of construction taking place in our area. These positions are very in demand and generally well paying. In response to this employer demand, WDI has partnered with both the Carpenters and Laborers Unions to conduct pre-apprenticeship training programs that provide an entryway into these careers. Over two dozen students graduated from these programs in 2018, and most were able to secure solid jobs that pay \$17+/hour to start with full benefits. This has been an excellent program for our customers, as well as our employers, and we are looking for more groups to partner with in order to expand this program in 2019.

Another way that WDI has been working to support the Service and Trades Sector is by hiring two new navigators. Bryce Bjork is our Construction Navigator who is focusing his efforts of the pre-apprenticeship trainings. He has experience in the construction industry and has already been invaluable in helping connect job seekers to employers. Jodi Skurdahl, our new Public Sector and Customer Service Careers Navigator, will be providing recruitment and career navigation services to people interested in the Public Sector and/or Customer Service Fields. This will include outreach and recruiting, assisting with the elimination of barriers, helping people make successful transitions between educational programs, and connecting with employers.

Anyone with interest in the Service & Trades Sector is welcome to attend the WDI Sector meetings that meet bi-monthly at 1:00pm, before the Workforce Development Board meeting. Our next meeting is on December 6 at 1:00pm at the Rochester WorkForce Center. We are always seeking new ideas, presentations, and input on how to grow this vital sector of our local economy.

*Submitted by: Mike Postma
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