



2023 ACE Program

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Overview

The Advancing Careers and Employment (ACE) program offers a paid summer internship for young adults ages 16-24 who might traditionally face barriers to employment, to gain valuable work experience, expand their skillset, and get a head start in a career path that interests them.

In 2023, the cities of Hopkins and Minnetonka hosted eight interns who worked part-time (18 hours per week) and were employed in different departments across both cities, including the Police Department, Fire Department, Public Works, Activity Center, the Arts Center, Planning and Zoning and Minnetonka Administration. Throughout their internships, the interns participated in weekly professional development opportunities including topics of conflict resolution, entrepreneurship, and personal finance to name a few. These sessions were followed by a fun teambuilding activity which ranged from a scavenger hunt, bowling, an escape room and more.

ACEentials Work Readiness Training

The ACEentials Work Readiness Training was held on Saturday, May 6th from 9:00am to 12:00pm at the Hopkins Pavilion. The purpose of this training was to prepare youth to enter the ACE Program feeling ready and confident. This training was both lecture style along with having participatory and reflective elements for the youth to learn and practice skills. Participants are given a handbook to keep that covers concepts from exploring skills and careers, landing the job and navigating through the work environment.

Youth then were able to do interviews after the presentation using the information they have learned. Youth were able to choose where they would like to interview, including Police, Fire, Hopkins Activity Center, Hopkins Center for the Arts, Minnetonka Administration, Public Works, and more. As we grow the program, in the future it would be more beneficial for the interns to have all supervisors present for interviews, as well as having the work plan for the summer completed so that interns can get a preview of what an internship at the art center or fire department would look like. This internal training and preparation of staff will continue to grow annually.

After the Work Readiness Training, ACE staff configured and placed interns in seven different departments across Hopkins and one being in Minnetonka. Interns were then notified about their offer letters and placements and either accepted or declined.

Benefits

- Building bridges for youth entering the workforce by introducing them to various departments within the City of Hopkins and Hennepin County.
- Implementing professional development opportunities for youth to learn and grow professionally and personally.
- Encouraging growth for youth and assisting them in finding more opportunities.
- Providing a basic understanding of local government and the structure of cities within Minnesota
- Participants are paid a competitive wage, and have somewhat flexible hours
- City Staff is provided opportunities to mentor young adults while also growing their cultural competency skills
- Youth are prepared and ready to enter the workforce after the ACE Program. The Hopkins Fire Department hired their ACE intern following the program as a paid-on-call member and other interns were asked to come back as seasonal employees the following summer.

Lessons Learned

- Having panels as a professional development is an amazing opportunity for youth to connect with others and receive insight from various individuals with different pathways.
- It's important that youth have a say in things because we want the best for them, and we would like for them to take in every moment.
- Communication is crucial between the supervisors, youth, and managers. We made sure that youth knew that it is okay to contact us whenever they needed something or had to notify us of anything.

