



CITY OF HOPKINS

Memorandum

To: Honorable Mayor and Council Members
Mike Mornson, City Manager

From: Emma Hurbanis, Youth Workforce Development Intern

Date: October 11, 2022

Subject: Summer 2022 Youth Internship Pilot Program Findings and Future

PURPOSE

During the summer of 2022, Hopkins launched a pilot version of a youth workforce development program using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding provided by the City Council and a grant from Hennepin County. This program, intended to minimize youth's barriers to employment and combat City and community hiring difficulties, offered an 8-week paid summer internship to youth ages 14-24 with barriers to employment. This report and presentation are in response to a request from the City Council to more deeply understand the need for the program, program administration, and future recommendations.

Program Overview + Need

Hennepin County has identified Hopkins as a focus area for youth opportunity; this is a measure based on statistics regarding youth unemployment, poverty levels, and youth population density by census tract. Having a higher need for youth opportunity means there is a need for programs to not only engage youth in Hopkins but give them the skills to positively shape their future outcomes. The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) found "The number one predictor of future successes in the workforce is early exposure to work experience." Early work experience, especially in workforce preparedness programs, can lead to higher future wages and better academic performance. Additionally, data from The Opportunity Atlas shows that low-income and Black low-income youth in Hopkins have lower future incomes than their higher income or white peers. This research, interest, and input from HREI, and proven success from similar models in the Twin Cities metropolitan area led Hopkins to launch a pilot version of a youth internship program in the summer of 2022.

To qualify for the program, applicants had to live or go to school in Hopkins, be ages 14-24, and face one or more barrier to employment (*ex. qualify for free or reduced lunch, be a member of a historically marginalized group*). The City received almost 70 applications and hired 5 interns based on administrative and budgetary constraints. The program was funded through a Hennepin County grant and ARPA funds.

Three days a week, youth interns worked in their designated department (*Fire Department, Police Department, Public Works, Hopkins Center for the Arts, and The*

Depot Coffeehouse). Interns supported the work of their supervisors and worked on projects of their own in areas including community outreach, event planning, advertising, and other operational tasks. Throughout the summer, interns made professional connections with their supervisors and other City employees, attended weekly professional development sessions, and learned career readiness skills through the work in their department.

Reflections and Suggestions

This program had an immediate impact on interns; this was not just a summer job, but an opportunity to learn career readiness skills and facilitated strong connections with peers and mentors. For City of Hopkins employees, it was a valuable experience mentoring and supervising youth in the community. From the number of applications, we know Hopkins youth are and will be interested in these positions.

Following the conclusion of the pilot program and research on youth workforce development best practices, five suggestions are presented:

1. Continue the program, tailoring it more to the needs of Hopkins students and hiring challenges.
2. Address City-wide hiring challenges by partnering with local businesses and providing support for employers to host interns.
3. Strengthen partnerships and broaden this work to extend the impact on youth.
4. Establish and strengthen existing career pipelines for students interested in jobs within the City.
5. Monitor recruitment efforts and track data to analyze program growth and performance as well as intern outcomes.

Intern Retention

Evolution of the program model will aim to recruit interns into permanent positions within the City once they have completed the required education or training. By supporting past interns who have experience working in Hopkins into careers with the City, it aims to solve both youth employment challenges and city hiring challenges. Increased program exposure and a partnership with the Hopkins High School career center will make it possible to recruit interns who already have an interest in local government broadly or a specific department.

Partnerships

The City of Hopkins has been working with Golden Valley, Minnetonka, and the Hopkins School District to consider the expansion of this program between the municipalities. Greater employer participation in this program would create more opportunities for youth and staff in the program. Even with external partnerships, Hopkins support would continue to oversee and chiefly administer the program.

Funding Needs

This summer, the cost per intern salary was \$2,160, which excludes other program costs. A tenant of this program is that interns are paid a competitive wage; this summer,

the rate was \$15/hour. Additionally, a seasonal employee or college level intern is needed to manage program operations throughout the spring and summer. To continue, this program should be funded through grants; funding for youth programs exists through DEED and Hennepin County.

FUTURE ACTION

Next steps for the program include working with Brooklynk on further program development for next year (these funds were already allocated by the City Council through ARPA). Staff is also requesting additional funds to hire an intern or part-time position to support the program in 2023 as an ARPA request.

Hopkins Youth Internship Program Report

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Introduction

During the summer of 2022, Hopkins launched a pilot version of a youth workforce development program. This program, intended to minimize youth's barriers to employment and combat City and community hiring difficulties, offered an 8-week paid summer internship to youth ages 16-24 with barriers to employment. This program is in response to needs expressed by the Hopkins Race and Equity Initiative (HREI) and the funding received by the City Council's ARPA fund allocation. A grant was received by Hennepin County to pay for a limited pilot version of this program this past summer.

The following report aims to inform the City Council on the need for programs like the one piloted this summer, in addition to detailing the findings, reflections, and recommendations for future years so that the City council can make informed decisions regarding future funding.

The program has the following goals:

- Connect youth with barriers to employment to career pathways and a professional network
- Address internal and external hiring challenges
- Diversify the City's workforce
- Engage with youth in the community

In addition to providing workforce readiness experience, the program also aimed to connect students who have obstacles to attaining a job with a network of professional connections and mentors. Through positive and constructive coaching from supervisors, interactions with coworkers, and formal mentor relationships, students are exposed to different career paths and make connections in those fields.

Over the past several years, the City has increasingly made equity a priority, which contributed to the investment in this program. Stemming from an idea within HREI, the City supported the workforce program financially through the provision of items like uniforms and bus passes to ensure all eligible students can participate. As will be discussed in this report, youth of color disproportionately face barriers to employment contributing to disparate outcomes compared to

white peers. Research shows that early work experience directly contributes to success in future careers; therefore, youth work programs can help reduce these barriers.

If extended beyond the pilot year, there are many potential avenues for expansion, such as the formation of an alumni network made up of former interns where resources like jobs within and external to the City can be shared, as well create a network among past program participants. This can also create a pathway to hiring youth into open jobs in the City to help solve internal hiring and diversity issues. Additionally, future years of the program could bring in additional government and private employers.

Similar workforce development programs in other cities have had proven success with continued growth; Step Up in Minneapolis and BrookLynk in Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park are used as models.

Program Need

The City of Hopkins, compared to the state and Hennepin County, has a higher level of poverty and lower incomes.^{A.1} Hopkins differs from its suburban neighbors, with a high level of residents who rent and a racially and economically diverse community. Within the Hopkins School District, 36% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch, and 11.2% of school district parents are unemployed.¹

Hennepin County has identified Hopkins as a focus area for youth opportunity; this measure combines statistics on youth unemployment, poverty levels, and youth population density by census tract.^{A.2} A higher need for youth opportunity means that there is a need for programs that will not only engage youth but give them skills to positively shape their future outcomes.

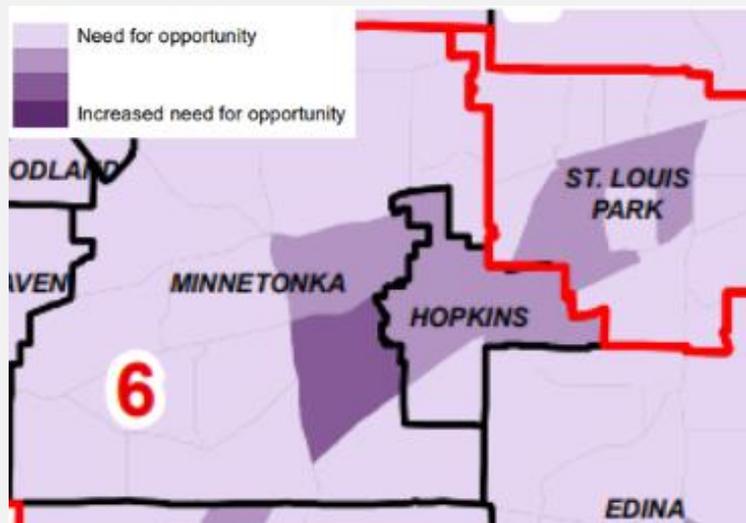


Figure 1: The Hennepin County focus area for youth opportunities map highlights Hopkins as having a need for youth programming.

Programs like these are not only needed in Hennepin County, but across the United States. Employment rates for youth of color drag behind those of their white peers. In 2016, white men ages 16-19 saw an employment rate of 28%, while Black men of the same age had a 16% rate.² This research suggests paid employment, job skills training, and connections with employers are potential solutions to this problem. Hopkins' youth workforce development program was designed with a foundation of research promoted by Minnesota Department of Employment and

¹ <https://www.hopkinsmn.com/DocumentCenter/View/2001/Appendix-A1-Community-Profile-PD>

² https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2017/08/BMOC_Employment.pdf

Economic Development (DEED). This research found that “the number one predictor of future successes in the workforce is early exposure to work experience.”³ The same research found that early work experience is proven to lead to higher wages and better academic performance. The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth supports these findings, emphasizing that work during teenage years leads to positive future wage and benefit outcomes.⁴

The Opportunity Atlas, a collaboration between researchers at the Census Bureau, Harvard University, and Brown University is a web-based platform which shows a longitudinal measure of economic opportunity and mobility based on annual income.⁵ These maps display the unequal outcomes for low income and Black low-income youth in Hopkins, as both groups have lower incomes than other West Metro suburbs. Because early work experience is a predictor of higher future wages, this program hopes to increase the social mobility of youth in Hopkins and reduce income disparities for low-income youth, and specifically Black low-income youth.

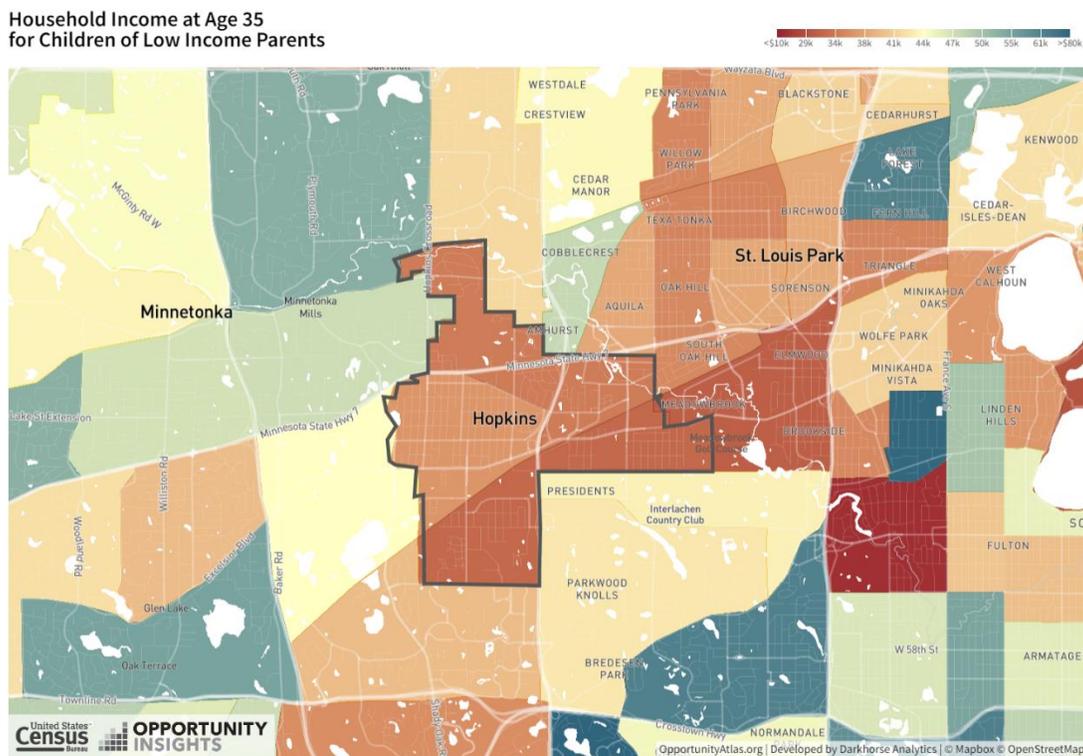


Figure 2: This map displays the average household income at age 35 for children of low income parents compared to all other children nationally. The average future income for these children in Hopkins is \$35,000.

³ https://mn.gov/deed/assets/2019-myp-annual-report-acc_tcm1045-421827.pdf

⁴ <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26632343>

⁵ <https://www.opportunityatlas.org/>

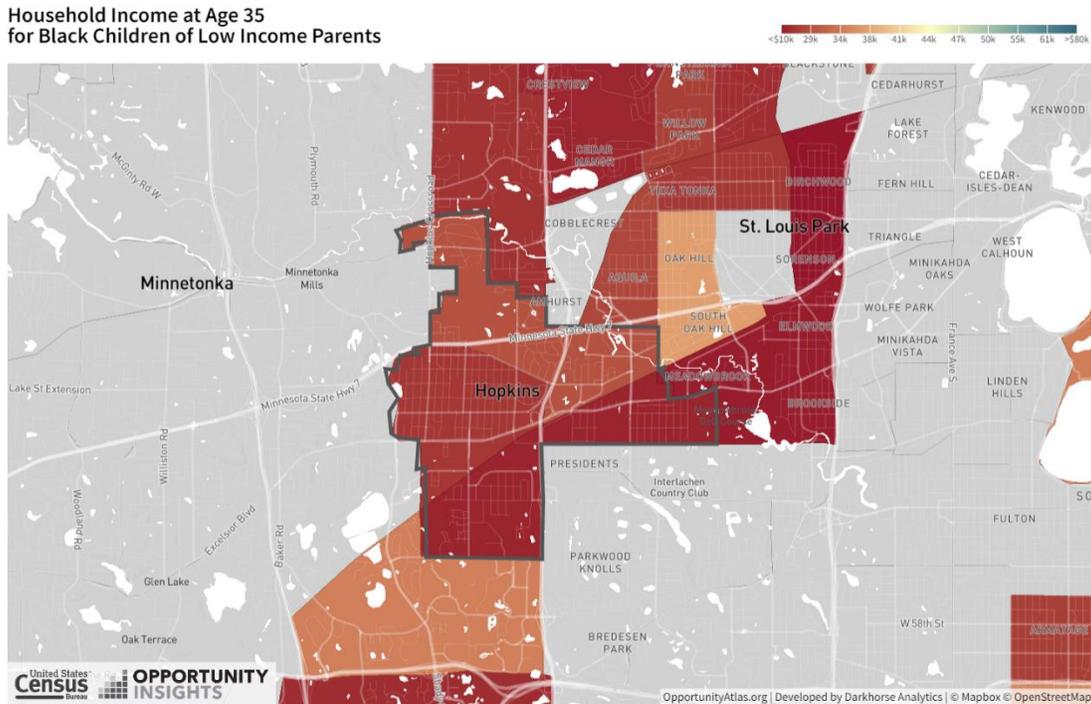


Figure 3: This map displays the average household income at age 35 for Black children of low-income parents compared to all other children nationally. The average future income for these children in Hopkins is \$26,000.

As a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, economic and employment patterns saw large changes with remaining impacts. Minnesota as a whole saw dramatic effects on employment rates due to COVID-19 with a 13.1% job loss rate in the first month of 2020.⁶ We are still in the middle of this pandemic, and not all of the impacts of it can be measured— many will take years to understand. In our community, youth are facing a wide variety of challenges that were only amplified by the pandemic. However, this presents an increasingly valuable opportunity to foster job skills early, helping more youth secure jobs now and in the future despite changing economic trends.

Students in the Hopkins School District have shown a desire for summer employment opportunities; the City received over 70 applications for five positions in just two weeks during the pilot program year. Conversations with Hopkins School District staff have also continually highlighted that students are eager to develop job skills. With similar programs like BrookLynk and StepUp serving hundreds of students in Hennepin County, there is a wider need and desire for these programs which is reflected in Hopkins. As the program expands, the gap between the number of students who need this program and those who are able to complete it will hopefully close.

⁶ <https://mn.gov/deed/newscenter/publications/trends/june-2020/state-of-the-state-covid-19.jsp>

Community Feedback

Over the fall, City staff developed a survey for Hopkins youth, including those who may live outside of Hopkins but attend the Hopkins School District, to reflect on their needs for a summer employment program. While the program structure would remain, youth input could change elements such as the weekly schedule, professional development topics and other items.

The survey was released for three weeks in September and participants were offered an opportunity for a \$25 gift card through a drawing incentive. Approximately 50 students took the survey, with about 50 percent of respondent saying they would like to go to college or university following high school, and other 50% saying they were interested in a vocational program or entering the workforce. Nearly all respondents said they were looking for a Monday through Friday work program in the summer and identified that they had trouble finding summer employment. When asked what they felt was the reason they could not find a job during the summer, the most respondents said they were either unsure where to look for a position, or that they applied to jobs without getting called back. Survey respondents expressed interested in a variety of positions, but many said administrative work, manufacturing and public safety were of interest.

Staff will likely hold 1-2 focus groups over the winter with respondents who said they would participate in a focus group, to hear more about youth workforce needs. This could be done in collaboration with the GEN network students.

Existing Resources

Currently, no similar youth workforce development or training program is offered in Hopkins. While there are other recreational and professional opportunities, none are specifically aimed at youth facing barriers to employment. Community Education classes through the Hopkins School District offer youth under age 18 recreational classes, and adult classes feature a wide variety of topics. Through an external provider, the school district also offers academic and professional courses for a fee. Currently, career resources that are offered through the school district, such as the Professionals Providing Experience for Life (ProPEL) program at Hopkins High School, are targeted at high-achieving students. Not only does this youth workforce development program fill a gap in professional skills programming for youth aged 16-24, but it provides a resource that is directly intended for traditionally underserved youth.

Local non-profits such as ResourceWest, ICA, and MoveFwd provides resources for youth, however, none of them currently offer employment services for youth ages 16-24 directly. ICA does offer employment assistance in the form of coaching on topics like job search, resumes, and interviews. ResourceWest also offers employment assistance, but it is geared towards adults searching for jobs. These programs do not provide paid, hands-on experience and career preparation similar to the workforce development program model.

Internal Hiring Challenges

One goal of a workforce program would be to help address internal hiring challenges. While certain positions in the City have been increasingly difficult to hire for, such as Police and Fire, diversity amongst employees is also a core challenge. Organization-wide, the City has a lack of diversity among employees. Over 87% of employees identify their race as white, while around 40% of Hopkins residents are non-white. Illustrating, City staff is not representative of the

community it serves; an issue discussed by department staff to get an idea of the efforts to recruit and hire diverse candidates.

Below is a table which shows demographic breakdowns by major service area from August 2022:

Table 1: Employee Demographics by Service Area

Service Area	# of Employees	White	Non-White
Admin & Finance	19	74%	26%
Community Development	7	86%	14%
Inspections	4	50%	50%
Fire	41	88%	12%
Police	38	95%	5%
Public Works	47	96%	4%
Recreation	44	86%	14%
Citywide Total	177	87%	12%

Department heads within the City were consulted to see how this program could solve issues in their departments. Department heads were asked about current hiring and retention issues and the requirements for employees in their departments. Naturally, some departments are more or less compatible with interns eventually filtering into them based on size, requirements, and hiring frequency. One recommendation may be to focus in on the larger departments, which have more turnover and positions, and according to the data in Table 1, are less diverse.

Fire:

The Fire Department faces multiple problems in terms of recruiting staff, especially staff of color. Potential applicants may face many barriers to the career; they may be limited by time, location, or connections and in many circumstances a multitude of these challenges overlapping.

One major challenge unique to the Fire Department is hiring for paid on-call staff (the majority of the department). These positions are unique in their abnormal shift hours. For prospective candidates, not knowing when they might be scheduled to work, along with having unusual hours deters many people from the job. There are consistently fewer applicants for part-time positions now than in the past because people are not interested in the kind of work and the unpredictable schedule. The application and hiring process involves a written exam, physical exam, interviews, and a psychological evaluation. Hiring diverse candidates has been a challenge both because of the lack of applicants and generally not all applicants have made it through the application process due to the requirements.

Another barrier for recruitment, and especially recruitment of diverse candidates, is that staff must live within 12 minutes of the fire station to ensure quick response times. The limits this puts on potential staff members is even more extreme given the rising cost of housing within the community, especially for those purchasing a first home. Candidates not willing to or not having the means to move within this 12-minute radius limits the hiring capabilities of the Fire Department.

A large obstacle in having a racially diverse staff is that this is a field that is often driven by generational interest; many people who want to be a firefighter want to because they know someone who is. If people are not seeing role models who work in fire, they are less likely to want to follow that career path. Additionally, candidates with relationships with firefighters, have an inherent support system and are more likely to understand the role and to successfully complete the application and training. Additional mentorship, throughout this process would reduce this barrier. The intensity of this kind of work and the requirements for it may become hard to navigate without support from those in a similar role.

Training is also intensive, and the Fire Department has moved away from training staff themselves. It takes approximately a year and a half to fully train firefighters; to have this financially pay off for the department, they need to work for the department for five years. Staff are now turning over quicker than this, which makes it difficult to do all new employee training within the department. Now, the Fire Department looks to hire people who have training from external sources like technical schools, private organizations, or those who are transferring from different departments. If they are trained, once they are hired, they then go through a three- or four-week boot camp.

While turnover is high, another challenge for recruitment in the department is that while pay is relatively low, the largest benefit to part-time work is the retirement plan. Therefore, a long-term commitment to the job is required to get the payoff that some other jobs may have upfront. This level of commitment and requirement to live within the 12-minute radius throughout their career may be hard for many applicants, especially those who do not own a home. Working for a low hourly rate in anticipation for retirement may not be feasible for many and narrows the pool of potential applicants inequitably.

The hiring challenges within the Fire Department align with the future goals of this program as they are looking for qualified candidates who have experienced some training that would make transitioning to a role on the department easier. Programs like the youth workforce development program provide important face time and mentoring to create connections to the department, as well as training within the department which sets candidates up for future success. A diverse pool of young people who are knowledgeable and interested in working in a Fire Department would be a great asset to the Hopkins Fire Department.

Police:

The main challenge the Police Department is facing regarding hiring is a decreased pool of applicants due to recent general policing reputation challenges. This problem is even more prevalent in communities of color. This is another field that often relies on candidates who have generational interest in the career. Many police officers have relatives or mentors in the field, meaning those who do not have established connections in the field are less likely to choose the career or have the supports to successfully complete training.

As hiring has been an increasing challenge, requirements have been reanalyzed and eliminated where they are creating barriers. The hiring process now involves less testing, but still involves interviews with employees and community members. Applicants are required to hold an associate degree or two-year technical certificate, have a valid driver's license, be physically capable, pass a background check, and pass a psychological evaluation.

Since seniority plays a big part in the scheduling in the department, it is assumed that mid-career turnover is rare, so employees do not lose their seniority associated privileges (shift bid, vacation scheduling, etc.). However, since hiring challenges are not isolated to the City of Hopkins, other department in the metro area are offering large incentives for employees to transfer. This combined with other motivations such as unique assignments like K-9 units, special investigations, etc. have resulted in high levels of turnover. Recently, even employees who have been with the department for a significant tenure are leaving. High turnover is not only an issue which creates staffing challenges, but also because of the resources required to onboard new employees; it costs around \$80,000 to train a new officer and takes over a year.

The Police Department already has an established cadet program for those who are in training to be a police officer. Historically, the cadet program has employed someone who is interested in becoming an officer— this is a non-sworn, part-time position. Successful completion of education and training and performance in this role can lead to a full-time position in the department. Compared to other departments, such as the fire department, police office positions are full-time with substantial benefits for those who stay in the position as a long-term career.

Similar to the Fire Department, a youth workforce development program creates positive connections to the police department. Many officers come to police work through familial connections so creating opportunities for youth to meet and be mentored by members of the department can create these connections where they may not have existed. Especially for youth of color or youth who have had existing negative interactions with police departments, these positive interactions can be incredibly beneficial. Future careers in policing are possible, and the Department has full-time positions with appealing benefits.

Public Works:

Public Works has many seasonal workers; many of these employees work to supplement other jobs and work for varying amount of times from two months to nine months which makes it an ideal department for positions for the youth workforce development program. Typically, these employees are required to be 18 years old and have a valid driver's license. Seasonal workers work in the parks or streets divisions, which vary in tasks and technicality. Additionally, workers in water and sewers divisions require more training and need to be licensed once they begin working.

Hiring in Public Works has been a challenge due to an overall lower number of applications in recent years. Once again, this is a job that many people don't know exist unless they know someone who works in it. Public Works also has a strong culture among employees, and most of the employees are men. There is little diversity of any kind within the department, which should be a consideration in all recruitment and hiring practices, not just that of interns. However, placing interns in Public Works can be mutually beneficial; providing exposure to youth on the work of the department may help them discover a potential career, while the department would benefit from additional passionate employees.

The Public Works department has a trainee program that has only been used once, but is a great option to be expanded in coordination with the youth internship program. This position is meant to take someone who has interest in working in Public Works and have them work up into a full-time permanent staff member. When this position was used in the past, it was filled by a previous seasonal worker. However, in the future, this should be posted as a separate job posting externally (since many seasonal workers have other jobs, they are not looking to become full time employees).

Administration, Finance, Community Development and Recreation:

The Administration, Finance, Planning departments hire less frequently and require more education and experience. However, there are also hiring challenges, specifically regarding diversity, within these departments. These smaller departments do not need as much of a constant flow of new employees and often require more experience than an entry-level position but can still accommodate interns in this program. The option to place interns in Finance, Planning, and Administration intern roles increases the breadth of options for prospective interns, thus attracting more applicants to the program. For example, a Hopkins High School student who has an interest in finance or IT can gain experience through an internship and may find a new interest in a career in local government. Increasing the number of departments interns are placed in also benefits other interns, as the cohort model benefits from youth having differing work duties and interests. Although an intern may not be working in a certain department, they may hear about it from a peer and become interested in the role for the future.

Regarding Recreation, the City is limited regarding recruitment for recreation since joint recreation employees are considered employees of Minnetonka and not included in the data. The data does include the Activity Center, Art Center, Depot, and Pavilion. Filtering former interns into positions in the recreation departments may be more targetable considering they have the required education for many building supervisor positions. The Depot also has a unique relationship with the school district and the Depot Youth Board that is advantageous for recruitment of youth.

Inspections:

While Inspections is also a smaller department that hires more infrequently, there can be a more direct pathway. Certification for building inspections is available at North Hennepin Community College, and can be completed in two semesters, one night a week. Currently, the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry already funds a grant program for building official training. However, this program operates on limited funds.

Generally, across the metro there is a large shortage of qualified building inspectors, which makes hiring difficult. A major issue with hiring building inspectors is that many come from construction backgrounds, and construction salaries are higher than those for building inspectors or officials. This is also a position that varies in volume based on season; the summer is busy, so it is hard to hire someone during that time. Additionally, this is another job that many people do not know exists, so they do not consider it as an option when they are going through school. Youth exposure to the career would be mutually beneficial to youth and the department. Offering internships in the inspections department provides youth another choice of role, meaning more students may be interested in the internship program overall. Local certification programs like North Hennepin make filtering interns into full time positions feasible.

An opportunity with this position is to work with the school district and interested high school students at working towards their licensing while in school. This would be a future pipeline project for the City and School to collaborate with career services.

External Hiring Challenges

The 2022 Summer pilot program only focused on internal positions; however, staff has received feedback from business partners that there is an interest in private businesses hosting interns. Many of the City's businesses and small businesses have similar hiring challenges as the City. This may be an excellent hiring/recruitment model and serve as an additional business support the City provides to the community.

Findings and Recommendations:

Once this program is more established, it can add another overall goal of preparing and training youth for careers within the City of Hopkins or public service generally. This would differ from this year's program because it would target youth who are expressly interested in certain departments and want the opportunity for a full-time career within the City. Based on department feedback, we have identified Fire, Police, and Public Works to be the most suited for a pipeline program.

The first recommendation is to work with the school district and bring in employees from the City to talk about their jobs and the path they took to get there. Promoting and making youth aware of the jobs, especially within their own community, is essential to having students that want to go through this pipeline. This will also attempt to make careers with lots of familial connections more equitable, by giving students role models of professionals in those areas if they do not already have them. Once the high school has established their career center, this should be easier to make this connection.

If students discover a career they want while they are with the City, it should be a goal of the program to guide students down the easiest path to complete education and certification for the job.

Hopkins High School offers PSEO (Postsecondary Enrollment Options) at Hennepin Technical College, Minneapolis College, North Hennepin Community College, Normandale, and the University of Minnesota. Students can enroll either part-time or full-time at these schools for no cost to them and can even get reimbursed by the school district for their travel costs if they meet the criteria.

Hennepin Technical College at its Eden Prairie campus offers certificates in law enforcement and public works and an associate degree in fire protection; North Hennepin offers pathways in law enforcement and building inspection. These opportunities should be highlighted to students who are in the internship program and an information session could be one of the professional development sessions. Any students who already participate in these programs through PSEO should be targeted for this program, if any there are any.

Program Models

Similar programs in other cities have had proven success with continued growth; BrookLynk in Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park and Step Up in Minneapolis are used as models.

BrookLynk:

BrookLynk is a program operated by the cities of Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center that matches youth who live or attend school in Brooklyn Park or Brooklyn Center with summer internships. These internships are both internal, in Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center governments, but also external, in more than 20 different businesses and organizations. To qualify for an internship, youth must be ages 16-24, face one or more barriers to employment, and complete a job readiness training called GetReady!. GetReady! is available to youth 14-24, and annually has around 300 participants. Youth apply through BrookLynk, but are interviewed, hired, and paid through their employer. There is an average of 100 BrookLynk summer interns each summer; more than \$750,000 has been earned by interns since 2015.⁷ A strong part of BrookLynk's format is their alumni network; alumni are interns who have completed at least one summer of a BrookLynk internship. After this is completed, they are afforded access to professional training sessions, networking events, and a job board exclusively for alumni. Since the program's start in 2015, 50 alumni have been hired by BrookLynk employer partners through the job board. This pipeline helps companies recruit talent that they know have training and experience and help youth secure jobs within successful organizations.

Step Up:

Step Up is administered through Achieve Twin Cities, and places around 700 Minneapolis School District youth ages 14-24 with barriers to employment in internships annually. Working with more than 200 external companies and organizations, Step Up has two different levels of the program based on age. Interns ages 14 to 15 are placed in public agencies or community organizations, and their wages are paid for by the City of Minneapolis. Interns ages 16 to 21 are placed in public agencies or private businesses, and their wages are paid by the employer. Additionally, Step Up offers a paid online career exploration program that had over 600 participants in 2021. Including this program and the internship program, more than \$2 million was earned by youth in 2021.⁸

Program Partnerships

With prospects to broaden this program through a partnership with the cities of Minnetonka, Golden Valley, and the Hopkins School District, it is likely that this program could continue to grow by number of interns, as well as placement opportunities. Minnetonka and Golden Valley have expressed a need for the program as a way to diversify their workforces and increase opportunities for youth.

Partnerships not only expand the number of opportunities afforded to youth in the communities, but also continue to advance the mission of further diversifying the cities' workforces. When there are more students placed in internships among these cities, and eventually in local businesses, new perspectives are brought in from youth who will make up the next generation of employees. A wider net of supporters also opens more doors for students who know what they are interested in or are ready to discover it. If students have more options of internships to choose from, interns will be able to find things they are interested in, and therefore will be more successful and more helpful to their department.

⁷ <https://www.brooklynk.works/employers>

⁸ <https://www2.minneapolismn.gov/government/programs-initiatives/step-up/history-leadership/>

Even when the program broadens, students should continue to connect with each other and work in a cohort. Students will all complete the same training before their internship starts, and will have professional development sessions and collaborative activities as a group. No matter what an intern is working on throughout their internship, they will still come away with essential, hireable skills and connections with other interns.

BrookLynk, mentioned previously, has served as a partner in developing Hopkins' program. A next step for the workforce program is to use the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds allocated by the Hopkins' City Council staff will work with BrookLynk to purchase curriculum, technical and legal documents, and technical assistance from BrookLynk staff as the program expands.

Program Administration and Changes

During the pilot year, five high school interns were placed in five different divisions of the City. Interns worked in the Police Department, Fire Department, Public Works, the Hopkins Center for the Arts, and The Depot Coffeehouse. Interns supported the work of their supervisors and worked on projects of their own in areas including community outreach, event planning, advertising, and other operational tasks. Internships operated in a cohort model, meaning that interns learned from supervisors and coworkers as well as from interns working in different divisions.

Applications & hiring:

Internship applications were released in early summer, and Hopkins received nearly 70 applicants over a short application period. Students were encouraged to apply by school counselors, parents, and other community and Hopkins School District members. To be eligible to apply, students had to meet one or more criteria that is considered a barrier to employment.^{A.3} These included factors like qualifying for free or reduced lunch, are or parents are immigrants to the US, or are a part of a historically marginalized group. Students were interviewed in-person in the second week of June, but in future years, applications and interviews would ideally be earlier.

This year, students ages 14-24 were invited to apply, and hired youth were aged 14-18. Staff and supervisors determined that in the future, students should be at least 16 to apply. Going forward, youth 16-24 will be eligible, and it is predicted that most of the youth who will apply will be high school-aged or just graduated. However, for Public Works, it is beneficial to hire students who are at least 18 and have a valid driver's license to be able to complete essential tasks in the department. In the future, for students who apply but are not hired, Kerri Fischer, the Employment Consultant at ICA, has offered to be a resource for students who are still looking for work.

Throughout the school year, information about the program should be given to schools so that school staff or city staff can present to students about the opportunity. This program should be especially aimed at students who have a interest in a career in one of the City's departments. Recruitment could also be done with students at the technical colleges.

Internship training:

Compared to similar programs in other cities, one of the biggest differences in this pilot program was the absence of training or programming to prepare students for their internship, or even what to expect on their first day. Feedback from interns emphasized this, saying they wanted more information before they started their internship. With plans to acquire this program in the form of training curriculum from BrookLynk, students will be more successful overall if they have a baseline of professional skills going into their first day of work.

Additionally, a curriculum like this, even if it is short, will affirm who can commit to this program, preventing students from not attending required days of work. There should be some kind of “buy in” to ensure that students are committed to the program before their time in the office begins.

Supervisor training:

Supervisors were checked in with regularly and a formal check in happened halfway through the program. Other than this, there was no other responsibility to report to program staff on what their intern was working on, their performance, etc.

One of the concerns from supervisors during the length of the program was that their department did not have enough work for their intern to do. To aid this, supervisors should submit an overview of tasks and schedule for the intern. Even if it is broad, this helps employees in the department who may be working with the intern to prepare and to ensure that students will have sufficient works. Additionally, there could be a requirement for supervisors and interns to sit down at the beginning of their internship to determine their career goals and what they want to learn from the internship.

As the program grows, supervisors who repeatedly host interns will learn what to expect and how to create a schedule for their intern and what types of projects are good for this level of a position.

Professional development:

Six, one-hour long professional development sessions were held throughout the program length. Presenters talked to students about various topics at an elementary level, presenting with understanding that these are first-time employees. Topics included professionalism, conflict resolution, time management, entrepreneurship, finance, and a resume and interview workshop. It was also important that presenters were also people of color as a way to showcase the many professions and successes of people who may have had similar backgrounds to the interns.

Professional development sessions are a key component of this program, complimenting and emphasizing the skills that are learned in their placement. Since this is a first job for many students, the importance of teaching seemingly simple skills should not be understated. Presenters in these sessions also act as models of successful professionals, and offer to be resources for students in the future. As the program is run in a cohort model, these sessions are held in-person and with the whole group of interns as this adds to the success of these lessons, and interns can learn with and from each other weekly.

Intern schedule:

When students applied and interviewed, the position was intended to be 9 a.m.-4 p.m., three days a week for a total of 18 hours a week. Students and supervisors were given the option to

change their schedule if it was mutually agreed upon. Most interns did end up changing their schedule to accommodate department events, special projects, or based on their preferred hours.

Interns working 18 hours a week provides flexibility for them to participate in other activities, but also doesn't overwhelm youth who may be experiencing their first job or become a large burden on staff. These hours also make it a possibility to pay youth a fair wage while staying in the confines of the program cost.

Paying the interns a fair wage should remain a priority throughout this program in order to strive for equity. This internship is not only a springboard for future careers, but also offers students a competitive wage at a time when many are looking for work in the summer.

Mentors:

To ensure that interns are forming connections in the City and have a resource outside of their own department, interns were paired with mentors who are City staff. Mentors and interns were expected to meet two or three times throughout the summer, though this did not actualize in the first year. These interactions are intended to give interns more opportunities to practice their professional skills, learn more about careers in the City, develop additional mentors and feel more connected to Hopkins.

In future years, the initial contact between mentors and interns should be facilitated by the program. Pairs could meet after the first professional development session or another time when all interns are together.

Transportation:

During interviews, interns were given the option of securing their own transportation or receiving a free bus pass from the City (cost of \$100/ month per bus pass). Hopkins is connected to neighboring cities by bike paths and bus routes. During the pilot program, only one intern drove themselves to work— others got rides from parents or took the bus.

Transportation options did not appear to limit students in accepting internship offers, but could have factored into reasons why students did not apply, show up for their interview, or show up once they were hired. As long as it is a requirement to plan their own transportation, that should be heavily emphasized in the application and hiring process. Students should make clear to their supervisor how they are getting to work to plan for any instances of arriving late or leaving early.

Paychecks:

Interns were paid on the same pay schedule as all other City employees. To pay interns, they had to provide a bank account (their own or one of a trusted adult) and their social security number. Even when offered the option of paper checks, some students did not have a way to deposit them due to other challenges. Hiring interns over the age of 16 may remove some of these barriers, like students not having a bank account or proper identification, but likely not all. Programs like BrookLynk, have a banking partner which comes to speak to the interns about finances and banking solutions. Having a similar partner who could work with students to ensure they have bank accounts could be helpful in future years.

Legally, within three days of the first day of work, interns must complete an I-9 however getting information for this was challenging. In the future, providing this paperwork at the orientation

day may help reduce barriers to completing this and interns should not be allowed to work without filling out this paperwork to encourage compliance.

Career exploration vs. career readiness:

The pilot program focused primarily on career readiness rather than career exploration, meaning that it prepares interns for jobs in general, not necessarily a specific job. While there is inherently career exploration aspects imbedded in any job, there were no explicit requirements for supervisors to expose interns to different jobs.

These internships focus on giving students soft skills like communication, knowledge of office norms, responsibility, and timeliness. This internship does not revolve around helping students find a potential career path, although that can be a positive outcome. Students will discover types of tasks they like doing more or less, which will help lead them to discover what kind of job they want to do in the future. However, this program does not allow students to work a day in each different department to discover their future career, for example.

In the future, partnerships between local schools (community colleges, trade programs, technical schools, colleges) could be developed to help funnel interns into jobs they discovered they really liked. If students develop a strong passion for the department they are working in, supervisors or program staff should help connect students with resources within the City, if available.

Grants and Funding

During the pilot year, this program was funded through a combination of Council designated ARPA funds and a grant through Hennepin County. Through the Youth Entrepreneurship Pilot Program grant, the City of Hopkins was awarded \$15,500 to be put towards youth wages for the program. This grant matched well with the program because of the focus on serving youth who have barriers to employment with pre-professional programming in Hennepin County.

Hopkins has set aside a total of \$17,000 of ARPA funding for this program, which needs to be spent by December 31, 2024. In addition to this funding, Hopkins should continue to pursue grant opportunities. Possibilities include Youth at Work Competitive Grants through DEED, a grant that funds programs which provide year-round or summer work and job skills training for at-risk youth. Additionally, the Youth Entrepreneurship Pilot Program through Hennepin County is expected to continue to have available funds into the near future.

To pay five students \$15 an hour for the summer, Hopkins spent \$11,894. This number was lower than anticipated due to students not working all of the hours expected. Other program costs such as bus passes, food for welcoming and final celebrations totaled around \$400. For the current schedule (8 weeks, 3 days a week, 6 hours a day at \$15 per hour), the cost per intern for salary alone is \$2,160.

This program requires a heavy administrative lift; there must be someone to coordinate with external partners, recruit and hire students, plan programming, communicate with supervisors, plan professional development, etc. In its current iteration, one staff member is needed to coordinate the day-to-day operation of the program. This could be a college level intern or

seasonal employee, working 30 hours from early spring through the end of the summer. Future expansion of the program could benefit from a full-time year-round staff who can apply for grants, continue partnerships and foster connections in the community, and do year-round recruitment for summer programming. Similar programs like BrookLynk, have three full-time staff in addition to summer seasonal staff. They receive support from both communities and grants to fund these positions.

Recommendations

1. Continue the program, tailoring it more to the needs of Hopkins students and hiring challenges.
2. Address City-wide hiring challenges by partnering with local businesses and providing support for employers to host interns.
3. Strengthen partnerships and broaden this work to extend the impact on youth.
4. Establish and strengthen existing career pipelines for students interested in jobs within the City.
5. Monitor recruitment efforts and track data to analyze program growth and performance as well as intern outcomes.

After running the pilot program, it is suggested that it continues and expands, continuing to serve the diverse needs of Hopkins youth. Even without long-term evidence that this program improves employment outcomes, the immediate impact of the program for students is visible. For students, this is a summer job that teaches them lessons they can apply to their education or other jobs while also meeting peers and mentors they formed strong connections with. For City of Hopkins employees, it is a valuable experience mentoring and supervising the next generation of staff. For many employees, they may not interact frequently with the public, or with diverse populations due to their position. This experience results in an important cultural exchange for both the employee and the student.

One recommendation for this program is to consider feedback from Hopkins students and what they want to get out this program. While the program is modeled after goals similar to comparable programs and the perceived needs of Hopkins students, it is best to hear directly from youth what they need. One way we have identified to do this is to send a survey to students at Hopkins High School asking about post-secondary plans, challenges in finding a job, professional interests, and scheduling preferences. Surveys at the beginning of end of the summer should also be sent to interns who participate in the program; feedback from mid-summer site visits will also help shape the program based on youth input. This input should be intentionally considered in the growth and development of the content and structure of this program. Student input should be especially considered regarding professional development sessions, schedule format, and desired department assignments. To try and ensure the best outcomes for students, supervisors, and the workforce needs, students should be placed in an area they have an interest in, if applicable. Supervisors from the pilot program as well as supervisors who have hosted BrookLynk interns cited their students having a lack of professional interest in the field as one of the biggest challenges. If students are considering a career in the field, they will be more committed and interested in the work. Additionally, a partnership with the school district, especially as the high school develops their career center, should help funnel student input into this program. Observed needs from both Hopkins High

School and Ubah Medical Academy should be taken into consideration through connections with staff and informal feedback channels.

Starting with a pilot version in 2023, the City of Hopkins should partner with local businesses to employ youth interns through this program. Again, using BrookLynk and StepUp as models, placing interns in external partners can help local businesses with employment struggles, while youth are afforded more opportunities for work positions. Professional development would still continue for students working outside of the City, and the goals of the program would remain, with the added goal of collaborating with businesses to help meet their employment needs.

With this, another recommendation for the future of this program is to strengthen community and program partnerships both to employ more youth and to increase the quality of programming. Existing partnerships with BrookLynk, Hopkins School District, Minnetonka, and Golden Valley should be emphasized as this program continues to be developed. As emphasized previously, partnerships expand the reach of the program as well as opportunities that are afforded to employers and interns.

Another component of this program that should be added is having an alumni network, similar to the platform and resources that BrookLynk provides. This can be as simple as a Facebook group or GroupMe and could include a job board and list of resources exclusively for alumni. Keeping alumni in touch with both other interns and the City has benefits for all parties. For former interns, they are able to network with each other and meet more peers who were not in their intern year. The City (and other future employer partners) can then post job openings to alumni and hire students who already have experience working in local government. Keeping youth engaged with the program further than their internship opens up opportunities for youth and employers, and this should be capitalized on.

Eventually, a goal of this program should be to filter former interns into positions within the City. If students work in a department, they have a vested interest in, or discover they like working within local government in general, this program could help them secure a full-time position. Furthermore, departments should be supported in providing alumni with resources to attain the necessary training or certification to return to department. Examples like the Police Department Cadet program and Public Works Trainee program can serve as models. By filtering past interns who already have experience working in Hopkins into careers with the City, it aims to solve both youth employment challenges and city hiring challenges.

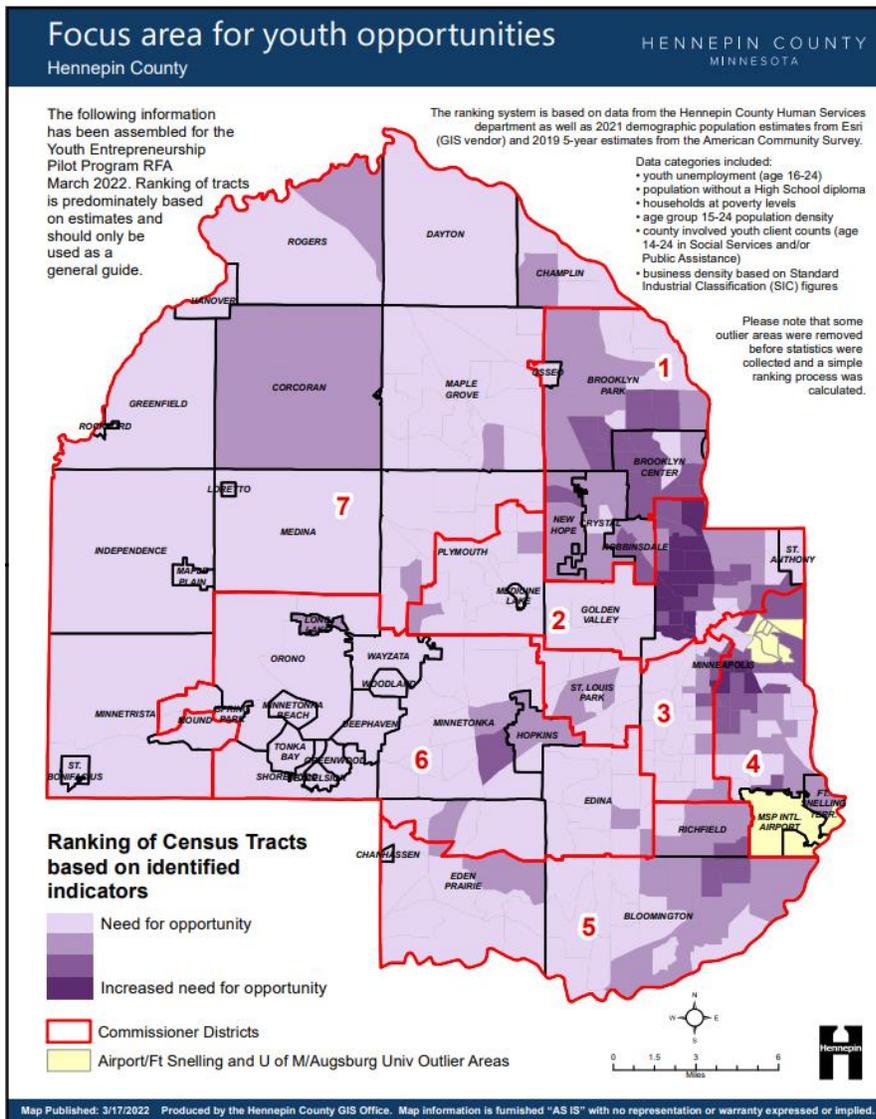
Throughout the program, the City should retain records of recruitment and hiring efforts (ex. number of applications, interns and their departments or placements). This data is helpful to analyze the growth of the program and better understand the demographic. Additionally, follow-up surveys sent to interns a certain period after their internship can help determine if interns have perused a career in public service or related to their role in the program.

Appendix

A.1

All Topics	Minnesota	Hennepin County, Minnesota	Hopkins city, Minnesota
Population Estimates, July 1 2021, (V2021)	5,707,390	1,267,416	18,573
Income & Poverty			
Median household income (in 2020 dollars), 2016-2020	\$73,382	\$81,169	\$59,141
Per capita income in past 12 months (in 2020 dollars), 2016-2020	\$38,881	\$47,618	\$38,081
Persons in poverty, percent	8.3%	9.3%	11.1%

A.2



A.3

- Eligible for free or reduced lunch at school.
- Having an individual education plan (IEP) or have a physical, mental, learning, emotional or behavioral disability.
- Are pregnant, an expecting father or a parent.
- Are/will be the first person in my immediate family to receive a High School Diploma.
- Are/will be the first person in immediate family to attend college or graduate from college.
- Are or parents are immigrants to the US
- Are currently taking English Language Learner (ELL) classes or parents are non-native English speakers
- Have experienced homelessness or staying in temporary housing in the last 6 months.
- Have received or currently receiving foster care services.
- Have been involved in the juvenile justice system.
- Have had interactions with Hopkins Police and or Hennepin County and would like consideration.
- Dropped out of high school before receiving a diploma or GED, or are attending an alternative learning center.
- Are part of a historically marginalized community (BIPOC, LGBTQIA+).
- Face another barrier not listed, but requesting consideration.