

**Contact Name:** Catherine Penkert

**Government Entity Name:** City of Saint Paul – Department of Parks and Recreation

**Organization Address:** 25 W. 4<sup>th</sup> Street, 400 City Hall Annex

**Organization City:** Saint Paul, MN 55102

### **Description of your Entry and Your community (100 words) 91**

Right Track is Saint Paul's pipeline for youth career development and building a diverse future workforce. It brings together partners to address changing demographics and disparities by providing work experiences and skills development for youth facing barriers. Right Track moves youth from subsidized to unsubsidized jobs and creates pathways into in-demand careers.

In Saint Paul 24 percent of youth are unemployed. Our city struggles with poverty and racial disparities. However our diversity is an asset: 40 percent of residents are people of color. Additionally, more than 23,000 businesses are located here.

### **INNOVATION**

#### **What makes your entry innovative? (250 words) 250**

Right Track presents youth employment as a pipeline rather than a program:

- Youth Jobs 01 (YJ01) provides City-subsidized jobs for youth in parks, libraries, and nonprofits.
- Youth Jobs 02 (YJ02) matches youth with employer-paid professional internships while also providing ongoing skills training and job coach support to ensure success.
- Youth Jobs Pro (YJPro) is a collection of partner-run programs that provide advanced opportunities in specific sectors, such as IT and emergency medical services.

Right Track aims to help young people understand how a first job in a park or a library could lead to a summer internship with a company like Ecolab, which could lead to a certificate or credential through a program like Genesys Works or the EMS Academy. The Right Track vision communicates to employers how a summer internship fits into a student's career trajectory. Right Track matches young people's need for work with employers' needs to develop diverse talent.

Many cities do youth employment. Right Track stands out for these reasons: 1) clear pipeline that makes it easy for youth and employers to understand the pathways from subsidized to unsubsidized jobs, 2) use of technology to give young people a voice in their worksite assignment in the form of bookmarking preferences via a searchable online job bank, 3) high level of training and support we provide to youth and supervisors in the YJ02 professional internship program, and 4) intentional marketing of partner-run YJPro opportunities to youth in Right Track YJ01 and YJ02 to expand awareness of possibilities.

**Check all the innovation and service redesign strategies that apply and provide 1-2 sentences detailing how each strategy applies:**

**Creating greater accountability** – Prior to 2012, we had no frameworks in place to assess or develop young people’s “soft” skills. Through researching best practices in other cities, we implemented MHA Labs, a 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills framework and assessment tool, and introduced the tool to partner organizations so that it is now also used by Minneapolis Step-Up, Genesys Works, and the Brand Lab.

**Collaboration or consolidation** – Partnership is fundamental to the Right Track model; the City is not trying to run programs at every level but rather present branding and a vision that better connects youth with existing partner organizations. Genesys Works helps us develop and deliver training to YJ02 youth; the Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce, Midway Chamber of Commerce, and Saint Paul Port Authority help recruit businesses; and Saint Paul Public Schools staff and Sprockets out-of-school time network partners help recruit youth.

**Using incentives, charges, and targeting** – In 2014, the Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce Foundation and three other funders created an incentive opportunity for small businesses and nonprofits to hire youth for YJ02 professional internships: those who hired an intern received a \$1,000 reimbursement at the end of the summer.

**Funding consumers** – In the past, City staff assigned youth to summer jobs based on proximity to home address. Since implementing the online job bank in 2012, youth (our consumers) have been able to help select their work assignments for the City-subsidized positions.

**Prevention** – Research shows that employment during high school years can generate a variety of positive short- and long-term impacts on future employability, wages, school performance, and violence reduction.

**Creatively Using Technology** – Eligible youth create an account on the Right Track Job Bank at [sprocketssaintpaul.org/jobs](http://sprocketssaintpaul.org/jobs) to search worksites and submit preferences that inform placement decisions. We are in the process of building a stand-alone Right Track website for 2015 that we hope will include the job bank as well as more user-friendly ways for youth, employers, and the community to interact with us.

## **OTHER**

## **IMPACT**

**What outcomes and impact has your innovation achieved (150 words) 149**

Re-branding as “Right Track” and adding the YJ02 professional internship component engaged 29 new employers in Saint Paul youth employment and leveraged an additional \$127,000 in wages paid by employers directly to youth in 2014. Supervisors reported that 65 percent of YJ02 internships were new

positions created specifically for Right Track. We increased the total number of youth jobs by 36 percent in one year without adding permanent program staff.

Ninety-nine percent of 90 YJ02 interns successfully completed their 2014 summer placements, and 78 percent of YJ01 and YJ02 supervisors said they would hire their summer employee if they had an opening.

Using technology to engage youth in selecting their placements has increased completion rates in the subsidized program.

Of 21 participants in the 2013 pilot of YJ02, 23 percent completed advanced IT training through Genesys Works, and an additional 29 percent completed a second YJ02 internship in 2014.

## **SUSTAINABILITY & POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH**

### **How sustainable is your innovation? Could it be replicated in other communities (150 words) 146**

Right Track is very sustainable and replicable. The Right Track Manager has presented to a National League of Cities group and has fielded inquiries from other cities about our model.

We used a local foundation grant to invest in branding and marketing strategy. For relatively little expense, we were able to rebrand disparate programs as a coherent pipeline and, by doing so, create clearer pathways for youth and partnership opportunities for employers.

Strategic partnerships with business membership organizations, schools, and youth program providers allow us to recruit participants with a small staff.

We fund ongoing costs, like wages for YJ01 positions and two full-time staff positions, with reliable public funding sources. We use smaller grants from foundations for targeted costs like marketing materials and part-time summer staff. The MHA Labs skills framework is free and open-source.

We are exploring opportunities to collect individual donations and sponsorships.

## **CROSS-ORGANIZATION OR CROSS-SECTOR INNOVATION**

### **How – if at all – has your innovation involved cross-organization or cross-sector collaboration or input? (150 words) 149**

Collaboration is fundamental to our model.

We engaged an action team with representatives from the business community and political stakeholders to inform our messaging and employer recruitment strategy. Their input led us to rebrand all of our youth jobs work as a continuum rather than simply establishing a new private sector program. The Midway Chamber of Commerce and Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce market Right Track through their events, e-newsletters, and so on.

Young people helped choose our logo and named YJ01/YJ02/YJPro.

We regularly seek input from our nonprofit YJ01 partners to inform our youth recruitment and hiring process. We work closely with other career readiness organizations, especially AchieveMpls, the City of Minneapolis, and GenesysWorks, to share best practices and find areas for alignment across organizations. We meet monthly with college and career readiness staff from Saint Paul Public Schools to find ways of supporting each other's efforts.

## **SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION**

**Please attach photos, newspaper articles, video, or other supplemental info that would be helpful in the judging process. Limit to 2 items or less.**

### **WOULD LOVE INPUT ON WHICH 2 ITEMS TO INCLUDE**

- Link to "Because of Right Track" video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHR0Ns8oNV0>
- Star Tribune article: <http://www.startribune.com/local/stpaul/264333251.html>
- Year-end summary with list of employers?

Extra copy that didn't fit in proposal:

Right Track is innovative for several reasons:

- 1) We use technology to give youth a voice in selecting their job placement. Young people apply online and are screened for basic eligibility (age, residency, family income or other barrier). Those who are eligible then create an account with our online job bank that allows them to search over 100 job descriptions and bookmark the five most interesting to them. The job bank ensures youth voice in the job matching process while also allowing us to maintain a lean staff team of only two FTEs that match over 600 youth with summer jobs.
- 2) Focus on quality and support. When recruiting employers to hire for YJ02 positions, our message is: "We know supervising a young person can be a lot of work. Let us share that role with you." We hire college students to work as summer job coaches who lead weekly professional development sessions on topics such as collaboration, social awareness, communication, and problem solving, while also providing individualized coaching and support to interns as needed.
- 3) We present youth employment as strategy to address several social issues: education, economic and workforce development, and racial equity. This is about recruiting and mentoring the next generation of diverse talent to ensure a vibrant future for our local economy.

