

TALENT PIPELINE ECOSYSTEM — CO-LAB

Executive Summary

WHY CO -LAB, WHY NOW?

Re-Engaging Young Adults Is Essential For Our Economy

55%

Of 9th graders report feeling in control of their lives and future

2022 Minnesota Student Survey

27,800

Young people ages 16 to 24 in the Twin Cities (8.4%) disconnected from school and work in 2022

Measure of America, Youth Disconnection in America Report, 2024

\$350M

Annual cost to Minnesota taxpayers from disconnected youth

Measure of America, Youth Disconnection in America Report, 2024

\$17,500

The replacement cost for a recent college hire in Minnesota earning a median salary of \$43,867

Gallup Workforce, 2024; Minnesota Office of Higher Education College Graduate Outcomes, 2024

WHY CO-LAB, WHY NOW?

Co-Lab: Investing Smarter in Young Adult Success

What if \$5,000 per young adult , including \$2,000 in direct financial recognition, could unlock a future of career readiness and personal growth?

WHERE WE STARTED

Our Vision

Our vision is to engage the full **workforce ecosystem to align educational pathways and career development** in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metro area **for young adults** between the ages of 16 and 24 **to thrive**.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS

- Our region faces a supply/demand crisis with many unemployed, under-employed or non-participating
- Efforts to address the talent pipeline are often isolated and siloed

YOUNG ADULT CENTERED

Central to this work is the perspective and experience of young adults aged 16-24 from under-resourced communities. Through ongoing engagement, they guide our thinking, direction, and solutions. We believe this is a critical differentiator of our work in this space.

ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS

Representatives from the full ecosystem co-create opportunity areas, and solutions within those opportunity areas. We know professionals in education, non-profits, businesses, governments, and funding organizations have unique perspectives on how to position young adults for success.

PROACTIVE AND VALUE -ADDING

Our work seeks not to recreate what already exists in this space, but to further the learnings and efforts already underway. We know this important work has been approached from many different angles, and we hope to bring these angles together for increased collective impact to drive systemic change.

WHERE WE ARE GOING

Our Theory of Change

OUR CORE HYPOTHESIS

IF young adults engage in a co-created space that offers practical resources, wraparound supports, and real decision-making power,

THEN they will gain the confidence, clarity, and capacity to shape their futures and influence the systems meant to support them.

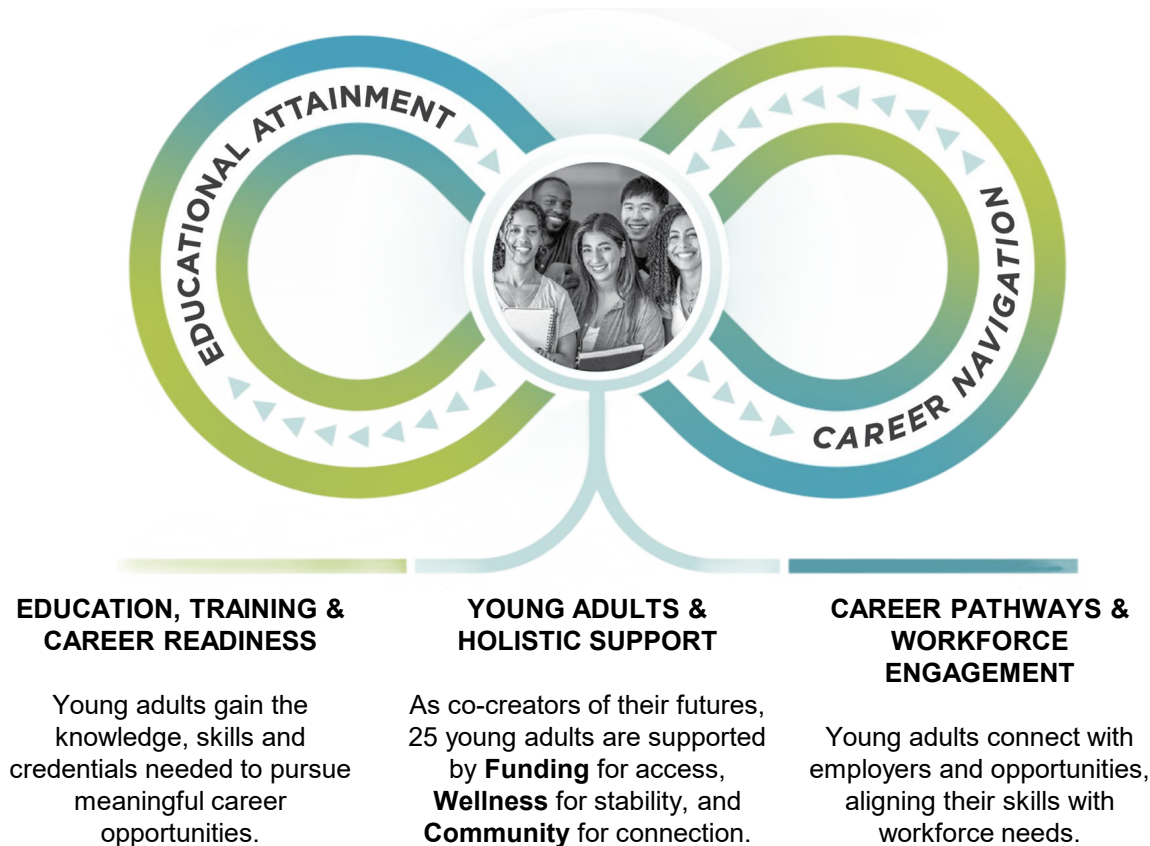
EMPOWERING YOUNG ADULTS, SHAPING STRONGER SYSTEMS

At its core, Co-Lab believes that when young adults are seen, supported, and in charge of their growth, they become catalysts for change in their lives and their communities.

HOW THIS HAPPENS

- ✓ **Whole-Person Readiness:** Co-Lab supports mental and physical health, financial wellness, and community connection to help young adults fully engage.
- ✓ **Clearer Future Pathways:** Young adults explore high-growth sectors with 1:1 career navigation, grounded in Minnesota's labor market data.
- ✓ **Co-Creation in Practice:** Young adults shape the experience at every stage, keeping Co-Lab relevant and aligned with their goals.

The Co -Lab Model



THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUNG ADULT CO-CREATION

Co-creation is at the heart of the Co-Lab model, reflecting the real needs, aspirations, and experiences of young adults.

Co-Lab builds shared ownership with young adults through:

- **Young Adult Council** (n=11, ages 17 to 24, from across the Metro, to design and refine overarching elements of the Co-Lab including space, compensation, supports and content)
- **Co-Lab Participant Representative Council** (n=5, peer selected for each Co-Lab, to design the last four weeks of Co-Lab programming)

A Partner Advisory Council provides strategic advisory and thought leadership.

WHERE WE ARE GOING

What Co -Lab Delivers Over 12 Weeks

COHORT BASED LEARNING FOR 25 YOUNG ADULTS

Weekly, in-person half-day sessions built for connection, in a space designed by young adults.

WORKFORCE-ALIGNED EXPERIENCE

Sessions and hands-on experiences introducing high-growth industries tied to **Minnesota's Drive for 5**, plus creative, entrepreneurial, and emerging sectors.

WRAPAROUND SUPPORTS

One-to-one mental health care, career navigation, wellness resources, food, transportation support, and hourly and milestone-based financial support to reduce barriers and promote stability.

FLEX LEARNING & COMMUNITY SESSIONS

Sessions focused on personal growth, including financial literacy, nutrition, wellness, and digital skills.

YOUNG ADULT LED-PROGRAMMING

In the final 4 weeks, young adults, through a peer-selected advisory council, define the sessions based on their interests, building toward a personalized future success plan.

BUILT-IN FEEDBACK LOOPS

Real-time input, co-design sessions, and youth leadership keep the program responsive and relevant.

WHERE WE ARE GOING

Join Co -Lab: Sponsorship Tiers

ENTRY TIER

\$500 - \$5K

Contribute by funding a session's services, meals or a field trip. Includes signage and website recognition.

MIDDLE TIER

\$5K - \$50K

Support a community provider's paid services, such as access to 1:1 mental health or career navigation or underwrite weeks of programming. Includes branding on materials and press recognition.

TOP TIER

\$135K

Fund an entire 12-week Co-Lab cohort (25 young adults). Includes naming rights and premier recognition.

Participate in Co -Lab

1. Participate in a "World Café" session to share your personal and professional journey while exposing young adults to your career and workplace.
2. Lead a hands-on learning session to expose young adults to your industry, career, and workplace.
3. Invite Co-Lab to your workplace for a tour and hands-on learning experience that introduces and excites young adults to the industry and your organization.
4. Become a Co-Lab mentor and regularly contribute time to meet with young adults, helping create their career pathways.



[View All Media](#)



2024 PILOT

Alpha Pop -Up Overview

WHEN

July 09 – August 01, 2024
Tues. / Thurs. 9:00am – 1:00pm

WHERE

Ramsey County
Junior Achievement North – *Rented*

WHAT

A 4-week pop-up to test the desirability, feasibility, and viability of our early-stage concept in-market and help us learn, grow, and scale the Co-Lab idea to other communities in the Twin Cities and beyond.

WHO

Young Adults (YAs):
n= 20, 18–24-year-old young adults of color*

PARTNERS

n=27 workforce ecosystem partner organizations
(90+ volunteers)



*Disclaimer: Alpha participant demographics varied slightly from our original YA Advisory Group; we accepted adults only (18-24) and hosted participants identifying as Black, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander.



The opportunity to **cultivate a space for BIPOC individuals to develop skills and connect** inspired me at the Co-Lab. I loved that we had the chance **to not just learn from our partners and professionals but to foster a community** and hopefully lasting friendships between one another as we all continue down our own paths. - YA

2024 PILOT

Alpha Results

YOUNG ADULT ENGAGEMENT

70%

Persistence Rate

14/20 YAs attended 20+ hrs (of 32 offered) over 4 weeks. On average, YAs attended 22 hours (20 hrs of which were paid).

100%

Satisfaction

13/19 YAs were extremely satisfied, 6/19 somewhat satisfied with their overall Co-Lab experience.

68%

Likelihood to Participate (With No Incentives)

13/19 YAs would be somewhat or extremely likely to participate if they were not getting paid for it.

PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

70%

Partner-to-Partner Relationships

12/17 partners said they formed meaningful/beneficial relationships with other partners during the Co-Lab pop-up.

94%

Likelihood to Return

16/17 partners would be extremely likely to participate again AND felt that participating in the pop-up was a good investment for the time/energy/effort required.

PROGRAM QUALITY + IMPACT

66%

Relationships Maintained

YAs reported in a 12 month post program survey to have followed-up directly with partners.

100%

Confidence to Achieving Goals

1-year following the Co-Lab program, YAs reported very confident to somewhat confident in achieve their goals.

83%

Increased Income

The majority of YAs reported higher income 12 months after the Co-Lab program. All YAs reported taking on leadership roles in their jobs or communities after Co-Lab.

2025 PILOT

Beta 1 Co -Lab

WHEN

May 27-August 14
Tues. / Thurs. 2:00-6:00

WHERE

St. Paul College

WHAT

A 12-week program to further test the desirability, feasibility, and viability of our early-stage concept in-market.

WHO

Young Adults (YAs):
n= 24, 18–24-year-old young adults

PARTNERS:

n= 40+ workforce ecosystem partner organizations, employers, educators and community based organizations

COMPENSATION

Young Adults received \$25 an hour for up to 5 hours per week. \$10 a week transportation stipend. Dinner every Co-Lab day. Access to mental health 1:1 counseling, gym membership, Mental Health First Aid Certification, and IT Certifications.



*Disclaimer: Beta participant demographics varied slightly from our Alpha Co-Lab cohort; we accepted adults only (18-24)..

2025 PILOT

Beta 1 Results - After 12 weeks

COHORT COMPOSITION + ENGAGEMENT

Over the course of 12 weeks, a cohort of young adults ages 18 - 24 shared their lived experience, learned from partners, and built a community.

66%

Experience with Housing Instability

16/24 YAs in the cohort reported experiencing housing instability.

<\$1,000

Monthly Earnings

About half of the cohort was employed, earning on average less than \$1,000 monthly.

One-Fifth

YA Hold Caregiving Responsibilities

23% of the YA reported holding primary caregiving responsibilities.

"A lot of us growing up, weren't as comfortable talking about mental health to others than how it is today. I learned about other people's perspective and how to deal with [them]." - YA Participant

"I'm doing this kinda late but like overall one thing I learned was that I could actually have a future." - YA Participant

"[Today] made me think about career exploration as more of a two way street. Instead of only focusing in figure out what I want to do, now I'm also understanding the advantage that lies and knowing what the area I live in needs." - YA Participant

93%

Completion Rate

22/24 YAs attended all 12 weeks of the program and completed their Future Success Plan.

4.52

Satisfaction Rating

On average, YAs rated the overall Co-Lab experience 4.52 out of 5. Additionally, YAs rated Co-Lab's helpfulness for their next steps 4.6 out of 5.

\$46,645

Direct Payments

Over 12 weeks, YA earned up to \$1,850 each. Totalling over \$46,000 for the cohort.

Disclaimer: Beta sample size was not statistically significant. More testing is recommended to account for potential self-report bias. Additional metrics will be tracked overtime.

2025 PILOT

Beta 1 Results - After 12 weeks

PROGRAM QUALITY + IMPACT

Immediately following the program, the young adults shared their learnings and their appreciation for the program. A three month, six month, and twelve month follow up survey will further solidify the program's impact.

"I trust myself more, that I know enough, and it's okay to have many different passions and that it doesn't mean you're indecisive. I also learned a lot that has helped me already." - YA Participant

"[I learned that] when I show up the right way people naturally want to help." - YA Participant

"The most important thing I learned here was how many opportunities in life there are. How networking impacts many ways. You can achieve success through many different routes in life." - YA Participant

"The students had really good questions and were engaged as soon as I sat down and asked their names. I had a little moment with each of them giving them a positive response to just their name, so that they understand I see them in a room full of people." - Session Partner

85%

Comfortable Establishing Relationships

YAs felt confident in building relationships with mentors, partners, and peers.

75%

Confidence Toward the Future

By the end of Co-Lab, 75% of YAs expressed confidence in their future, reflecting a stronger sense of agency and control.

45%

Found New Careers

YAs discovered new careers and interest through Co-Lab.

Disclaimer: Beta sample size was not statistically significant. More testing is recommended to account for potential self-report bias. Additional metrics will be tracked overtime.

2025 PILOT

Beta 2 Co -Lab

WHEN

September 15-December 5th
Mon. / Wed. 3:30-7:30

WHERE

Urban Ventures

WHAT

A 12-week program to further test the desirability, feasibility, and viability of our early-stage concept in-market, incorporating best practices and lessons learned from Beta 1.

WHO

Young Adults (YAs):
n= 26, 16-19 year-old young adults

PARTNERS:

n= 40+ workforce ecosystem partner organizations, employers, educators and community based organizations

COMPENSATION

Similar to Beta 1, with an adjustment of \$20 per hour for 5 hours per week.



2025 PILOT

Measuring Co -Lab's Impact

Testing key elements of **format, supports, timing, and relevance** to understand what works and for whom.

LEARNING FOCUS	MEASUREMENT FORMAT
FORMAT & DURATION	Retention rates, session attendance, participant feedback on the 12-week structure.
WRAPAROUND SUPPORTS	Reported satisfaction, frequency of use, continued engagement after program completion.
FINANCIAL INCENTIVE IMPACT	Motivation to participate, completion of milestone goals, engagement beyond compensation.
PROGRAMMING RELEVANCE	Clarity on goals, career interest shifts, alignment with regional workforce needs.
PARTICIPANT AGENCY	Sense of belonging, strength of peer and adult relationships, participant reflections.
LEADERSHIP & CO-CREATION	Participant input in design, use of feedback loops, and changes made as a result.
EDUCATION & CAREER PATHWAYS	Enrollment and completion data, number of pathway entries, engagement with career supports.
PARTNER ENGAGEMENT	Number of partner touchpoints (e.g. site visits, panels), referrals, and partner feedback.
SCALABILITY & SUSTAINABILITY	Partner interest in expansion or funding, feasibility of adapting the model in other settings.

2025 PILOT

Data Collection

A mix of **participatory, creative, and program data tracking methods** to collect feedback from young adults and partners, and track progress at the **individual and system levels**.

These methods support Co-Lab's developmental, process, and early impact evaluation goals.

- **Participant Pulse Surveys and Session Check-Ins**
Quick surveys to gauge session clarity, relevance, and connection.
- **Closing Co-Lab Feedback Surveys**
Comprehensive reflections capturing participant satisfaction, goal progression, and program experience.
- **Story-Based Reflections and Creative Evaluation**
Visual storytelling, arts-based feedback, and personal narratives
- **Young Adult-Led Feedback Activities**
Opportunities for participants to design and lead feedback moments that shape program adjustments.
- **Partner Feedback Forms and Reflection Surveys**
To gather partner impressions of collaboration, participant engagement quality, and ideas for improvement.
- **Administrative Data Tracking**
Ongoing tracking of attendance, completion of success plans, use of wraparound supports, and referrals.