**MJSP Funded Projects**

**October 25, 2021**

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| **Grantee** | **Contributing Business (es)** | **Amount** | **Program** |
| Anoka Ramsey Community College | Choice Bank | $49,759 | Short Form |
| Choice Bank, located in Eagan, understands, that in the constantly evolving, technology-powered banking environment, it must continue to improve to remain competitive. To effectively work with a lean staffing environment, Choice Bank believes that the avenue to improving value to the customer is through improvement of its current employee’s collective performance. Choice Bank has, after surveying the industry, determined that Value Stream Mapping (VSM) is the most pertinent performance improvement process for its needs. The proposed training includes developing a base level understanding of VSM concepts and developing a VSM toolkit applicable to financial institutions, especially technology driven institutions. The program will also include training workshops to apply VSM concepts and a VSM Impact Metrics course to develop and apply metrics to determine measurable outcomes.  Contact: Matthew Salo, Anoka-Ramsey Community College, 763-422-6116 | | | |

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| **Grantee** | **Contributing Business (es)** | **Amount** | **Program** |
| Anoka Ramsey Community College | Toy N Around | $49,269 | Short Form |
| Toy-N-Around, located in Eden Prairie, acts as a broker between toy producers and retail sellers. Recently, Toy-N-Around (TNA) has gone through several changes which is creating a need for additional workforce training. Changes the company has experienced include separating its external business relationship with a sister organization resulting in a new and more independent course that embraces a more expansive business enterprise, dramatic sales growth, COVID related changes in business operations including remote work and increased flexibility in order fulfillment (online purchasing and curb-side pick-up systems), and vertical integration to include manufacturing. Revenue growth has fueled workforce growth, and TNA has doubled its employment in less than two years. This new workforce needs training in TNA’s new business model. In addition, TNA workers need training that addresses digital acceleration taking place in the workplace. This acceleration also necessitates the introduction of more sophisticated electronic technology, a change in methods of social media usage, and building a workforce more responsive to an increasingly diversified cultural environment. In summary, TNA needs training to transform its organization to a new type of business, create a highly flexible business adept at operating in an ecommerce environment, meet the demands of digital acceleration, and create workforce sensitive to a diverse society. To address these needs, training will be provided in the areas of Organizational Transformation, Ecommerce Flexibility, Digital Acceleration, and Diversity Responsiveness.  Contact: Matthew Salo, Anoka-Ramsey Community College, 763-422-6116 | | | |

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| **Grantee** | **Contributing Business (es)** | **Amount** | **Program** |
| Century College | Delkor Systems | $49,903 | Short Form |
| Delkor, located in St. Paul, is a manufacturer of advanced robotic packaging systems and is the automation partner for a wide spectrum of companies in the food, beverage, and consumer products markets. They are currently operating in an economy where customer expectations for the development and on-time delivery of highly advanced and fully integrated automated systems continues to rise. That migration is having a profound impact on the need for self-service access to accurate data as it relates to accounting, engineering, supply chain vendor capacity and management, production floor scheduling, and customer equipment installations. For Delkor to remain competitive, it is imperative that the internal software systems being used in operations are accurate and robust enough to handle growth in business and production activity. The existing Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software used at Delkor is outdated, unsustainable, and cannot support future expansion. By contrast, updated ERP software solutions are agile, secure, and data-driven systems that are used to manage day-to-day business activities ranging from procurement to operations and even sales. It empowers leaders to analyze various business scenarios, discover process improvements, and generate major efficiency gains. Delkor is committed to building a highly skilled, dynamic workforce that can consistently meet customer demands on schedule amid fluctuating priorities and rapidly changing technology. To accomplish this, Delkor recently purchased a new ERP solution. Comprehensive ERP training for its entire workforce is needed so they can quickly and consistently respond to customer needs without experiencing major disruptions in production.  Contact: Eric Riedel, Century College, 651-779-3310 | | | |

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| **Grantee** | **Contributing Business (es)** | **Amount** | **Program** |
| Minnesota State Community and Technical College | DENCO II | $30,632 | Short Form |
| DENCO II, located in Morris, is a corn to ethanol production facility. The company is seeking various development trainings focused on leadership essentials, maintenance, and business technology. The training program will enhance leadership and interpersonal skills among management to improve employee retention and employee engagement. The program will also enhance the maintenance skills and business technology acumen which will, in turn, lead to more efficient workplace practices, less turnover, and more employee engagement. Training will include the following courses: Maintenance Skills, Operator Skills, Train-the-Trainer, Supervisory Skills Workshop and Business Technology (Excel, Word, Microsoft Teams, Outlook and OneNote). The partnership between DENCO II and Minnesota Sate Community and Technical College will introduce employees to trainings with high powered hydraulic equipment through their maintenance and operator courses.  Contact: Amy Hochgraber, Minnesota State Community and Technical College, 218-846-3766 | | | |

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| **Grantee** | **Contributing Business (es)** | **Amount** | **Program** |
| South Central College | Precision Press Inc. | $49,998 | Short Form |
| Precision Press Inc., located in North Mankato, is an important component of Taylor Corporation’s family of businesses combining high volume production expertise with highly customized specific labeling capabilities. This capability requires many workers dedicated to production to work in a fast-paced, multi-shift workplace. In addition, it also requires a support system of workers “in-tune” with the vital production operations of the business. Precision Press is faced with a growing worker shortage that is challenging future success. The company realizes that they are entering an era where the number of available workforce entrants is insufficient to replace workers exiting the workforce, and these employment issues are severe enough to impede future growth of the company. In this environment, Precision Press understands the increasing importance of retention of workers. In consultation with South Central College, Precision Press has devised a threefold strategy to reduce turnover and improve retention. The strategy considers the establishment of a support system for new employees where each is provided with a “caretaker”; creating workplace teams to improve workflow and promote group cohesiveness and sense of belonging; and altering work duties to prevent burnout. Implementation of this strategy will require training in the following areas: Peer-to-Peer Training to identify and train a cadre of workers that can mentor new employees, Team Integration Training to create a more collaborative work environment, Job Enrichment Training that focuses on production workers to improves their satisfaction during highly repetitive work.  Contact: Tanja Stading, South Central College, 507-389-7392 | | | |

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| **Grantee** | **Contributing Business (es)** | **Amount** | **Program** |
| Central Lakes College | Polaris Corporation and Power Lodge | $349,094 | PART |
| Polaris Corporation, with headquarters in Medina, manufactures off-road vehicles, motorcycles, snowmobiles and boats. Power Lodge, located in Brainerd, is a powersports and marine dealership. From the proliferation of electric vehicles to the development of connected and automated vehicles (CAV) that can communicate with infrastructure and other vehicles, several trends are forcing automakers to not only redefine their business, but entirely rethink the concept of transportation. Private OEM companies such as Polaris Inc. are rapidly developing, integrating, and deploying CAV technologies into their latest vehicle platforms to help increase safety, mobility, and efficiency, and to allow for over the air updates for important future vehicle improvements. The MN Department of Transportation has defined this massive industry change of technologies as a pillar for development and has established a CAV office and written a strategic plan for implementing CAV systems. One of the goals is establishing a strong workforce to meet the employment needs for building and supporting these future CAV systems. This future work will require highly technical skills as the advancement of connected, electric, hybrid, and autonomous vehicles surge. As a result, there is a growing need to train and upskill transportation technicians. CLC and Polaris are developing a curriculum to allow student technicians to work on customer vehicles to complete a specific list of services while mentoring under dealership technicians as they complete their training. Students will be paid for their work as part of a new career pathway in the industry. Student technicians must complete training from both Polaris University and CLC’s 9-month Marine and Powersports diploma program. Approximately 4 weeks into the program, students will start a new Industry Certification course from Polaris University focusing on connected vehicles and product-specific trainings. Student technicians will receive 896 hours of training to complete their Marine and Powersports diploma and will also achieve up to four different Polaris student technician certifications for vehicle repair specialties. In addition to 80 student technicians, training in new CAV curriculum will be provided to 89 current Polaris and Power Lodge employees. Through this project, CLC and Polaris will also develop a new GIG app that will connect students to OJT opportunities, document their work to be reviewed by CLC instructors, and to provide feedback to students from senior dealer technicians and instructors.The project will benefit the businesses in providing additional workforce to support the growing Marine and Powersports industry and the move to connected and autonomous vehicles. The project can also be scaled to other industries, such as automotive, that is also heavily moving towards CAV technology and need trained technicians. The project will allow CLC to integrate new CAV technology curriculum into their diploma program. In addition, the curriculum, equipment, and GIG app will support training of technicians both at CLC and at other colleges after the grant is completed by providing the infrastructure for connecting students and graduates with training opportunities and jobs. The industry certification framework will provide additional skills for technicians and additional assurances to dealers that the technicians have the requisite skills to be successful in their jobs once hired.  Contact: Rebekah Ehlebracht, Central Lakes College, 218-855-8067 | | | |

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| **Grantee** | **Contributing Business (es)** | **Amount** | **Program** |
| Century College | Rise Baking Company | $168,764 | PART |
| Rise Baking Company, located in Minneapolis, is a baked goods manufacturer for supermarket in-store bakeries, foodservice and convenience stores. With significant sustained volume growth due to high demand for its products, Rise Baking Company recognizes the need to collaborate with Century College to further develop its training program. The Covid-19 pandemic made it apparent that the food and beverage manufacturing industry must adjust and adapt to change as a critical part aspect of business success. Rise Baking Company recognized the need for additional training and committed to developing its many new and diverse employee’s skills to further build the company’s future while providing promotional opportunities for employees. The proposed training program will provide training for 237 employees (20 new) and will include several key topics that will help entry-level employees not only understand the basics of their jobs, but also develop more seasoned maintenance and engineering staff to ensure safety, productivity, and adherence to quality manufacturing standards. Over the course of this two-year project, approximately ninety production line operators and operator assistants will receive training on several key topics essential to their job functions. The Basic Skills for Food Manufacturers course will include sections such as Food Manufacturing, Introduction to Programmable Logic Controls, Lean Manufacturing Concepts, and other related topics. Approximately twenty maintenance staff will receive training in both Electrical and Mechanical Maintenance, including courses in Programmable Logic Controls, Rigging and Fasteners, Adhesives, Sealants, Electrical Troubleshooting and other related classes. Also, at least ten employees will complete Ammonia Safety training to meet the OSHA 192.120(q)(6(iii) guidelines. Participants will know how to implement Rise Baking Company’s specific emergency response plan as well as the classification, identification, and verification of materials by using correct surveying techniques and equipment. Finally, training for managers and supervisory employees will include topics on leadership and managing talent. The manufacturing skills portion of this training program will provide new and less-seasoned employees the opportunity to gain the skills necessary to perform their daily tasks. Rise’s leadership believes that investing in people on the front-end will show employees that they are valuable to the organization and build their confidence to apply for more complex internal roles. Training is also expected to result in less downtime, improved safety, and increased production. Century College will gain experience working with the food manufacturing industry and will be able to expand their catalog with new food-manufacturing related courses.  Contact: Eric Riedel, Century College, 651-779-3310 | | | |

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| **Grantee** | **Contributing Business (es)** | **Amount** | **Program** |
| Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College | Sappi | $300,000 | PART |
| Sappi, located in Cloquet, produces Coated Printing Paper and is a leader in the production of Dissolving Pulp and associated products such as renewable energy production and utilization as well as sustainable forestry practices. The current occupational environment includes an aging workforce. This means there is increased turnover as senior employees, who possess knowledge and skills that currently are not well documented, enter retirement. This grant will address the need to capture and formalize the knowledge of these senior maintenance employees in a more structured and sustainable form that can be easily utilized for training newer, less experienced employees and for training those who wish to advance their skills. Current job applicants lack the knowledge and training that Sappi needs in its highly competitive business environment. There is an immediate need for students/applicants who are better prepared with this broader exposure to enter the maintenance workforce of the future. This grant will support the development of a maintenance excellence process that Sappi calls SMPs (Standard Maintenance Procedures). Technical writers will create detailed, clear, step-by-step instructions (SMPs) for safety guidelines and correctly completing maintenance work on the factory floor. These new SMPs will be incorporated into the existing SAP system (a computerized maintenance and management system currently in use at Sappi) utilizing newly purchased software/ hardware that mobilizes SAP to “point of service”. By integrating SMPs with a revamped SAP system, new procedures will be readily available via tablets on the factory floor. An introduction to enterprise system software will be provided to 670 employees. Select employees will receive additional training on the utilization of the enterprise software systems including topics such as creating and editing work orders, task lists, bill of materials and maintenance plans; displaying materials and equipment; time-entry on work orders; and purchasing. In addition, Sappi will provide in-house training to the Maintenance Technicians on the SMPs developed. Training is expected to improve safety, decrease downtime, increase productivity, extend equipment lifetime, and support employee advancement efforts. The project will also provide a framework and resource that can be utilized by other businesses with a maintenance team and an enterprise resource planning or computerized maintenance management system. In addition, the program could potentially provide the foundation to partner with other area educational institutions to create and blend certifications into a general certification for “Maintenance Technician” programming.  Contact: Bret Busakowski, Fond du Lac Tribal & CC, 218-879-0810 | | | |

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| **Grantee** | **Contributing Business (es)** | **Amount** | **Program** |
| MN State University – Mankato | Christensen Farms | $300,000 | PART |
| Headquartered in Sleepy Eye, Christensen Farms is one of the largest, family-owned pork producers in the United States. As current leadership are nearing retirement, Christensen Farms wants to create a new generation of leadership and desires to ensure that the positive cultural attributes their original founder, Bob Christensen, brought to the company carry on for generations to come. The organization must prepare stronger capabilities to manage the business, grow talent from within, and provide the business with the leadership and talent it needs both for today and in the future. Labor in many industries is tight, and this is particularly true for many rural areas. The organization currently struggles to obtain labor in both rural communities to serve their farms and in metropolitan areas at their plants. To keep up with production demands, workforce retention must be increased. One of the biggest challenges facing this workforce is in communication of operations, SOP’s, policies, etc. With the shortage of labor, innovation and career development will be the key to the future of food agriculture. To sustain business, the company must develop leaders who are ready to take on these challenges.  Leadership training will focus on multiple levels of executive, management, and communication skills with various managers receiving training in the following courses: Executive Leadership, Leadership Clinic, Spanish as a 2nd Language, Project Management, Crisis Management, Future of Farming, Agile Leadership, and Business Acumen. In addition, all employees will receive training in the Science of Inclusion and Interpersonal Communication Skills; and select employees will receive training in American Business Practices. The project is anticipated to have far reaching benefits to Christensen Farms on multiple levels. Refining the selection process for employees, prioritizing communications, and a focus on engraining the culture of the company is anticipated to increase retention. The Future of Farming course will help the company prepare to integrate new automation and technologies that will be key to their future success. The project will give MSU–Mankato an opportunity to work with their first agriculture business since launching their new Agribusiness major.  Contact: Tammy Bohlke, MN State University – Mankato, 507-389-2572 | | | |

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| **Grantee** | **Contributing Business (es)** | **Amount** | **Program** |
| Riverland Community College | Bio-Plastic Solutions | $170,554 | PART |
| Located in Ellendale, BPS is a plastic profile extruder that markets proprietary extruded products and provides custom profile extrusions and services to OEMs in many industries. To reach their growth goals, BPS is looking to grow their recycled/repurposed products line, modify several existing product lines and add new product lines. As production lines are modified, employee skills will also need to be re-tooled. Furthermore, while the candidate pool for production openings is limited, especially given the rural setting of this growing company, current positions require employees to possess above-average manufacturing skills. To meet employment goals and operate new technology at BPS, the company must build the skillset of the workforce, increase employee engagement, and develop abilities to respond to a new labor situation. By obtaining a more advanced skill set, employees will become more competitive candidates for future promotional opportunities, have an opportunity to earn college credit for prior learning, and increase their engagement to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. Riverland Community College will work with BPS to develop an evidence-based competency training program and ongoing evaluation for production, maintenance, and supervisor/management employees. Training will be provided in the following areas: Manufacturing Skills Standards (Safety, Quality, Production and Processes, and Maintenance Awareness); Extrusion; BPS Operations; Die Design and Balancing; Leadership; CPR/First Aid; Reliability, Preventative and Maintenance Engineering; and Quickbooks Enterprise for Manufacturing. Students displaying competencies aligned with college credit may petition for credit for Prior Learning at an educational institute of choice, should they choose to continue their education. Certificates earned will include OSHA 10, American Heart Association CPR, and MSSC Certified Production Technician. Training is expected to improve efficiency, increase production, decrease waste and downtime, provide career and educational pathways for employees, and result in pay increases for those who earn the MSSC Certified Process Technician certification. Riverland will develop several new courses and will expand their capacity to provide advanced manufacturing training.  Contact: Peggy Young, Riverland Community College, 507-433-0602 | | | |

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| **Grantee** | **Contributing Business (es)** | **Amount** | **Program** |
| St. Cloud State University | Eye-Kraft | $278,442 | PART |
| Eye-Kraft, located in St. Cloud, is an independent, family-owned wholesale ophthalmic laboratory that manufactures eyeglasses and accessories for eye care providers. The company is growing organically while striving to remain competitive in the optical industry. To maintain core skill sets critical to future success, the company needs the ability to recruit an adaptable workforce capable of handling increasingly technical industry tasks. Eye-kraft has a dedicated employee base with some having worked for the company as long as 40 years. However, attrition from this employee base will eventually create skills gaps within the company creating a strong need to transfer essential knowledge to a new generation of workers. In addition, the optics industry is changing at a rapid pace and technology is becoming increasingly important in production processes and equipment usage. The workforce needs specific technical skills to remain competitive and manage a difficult and changing environment. Overall, the global ophthalmology market is growing due to an increasingly aging population and their need for vision aids such as glasses and contact lenses, which is leading to an increased demand for ophthalmic laboratory technicians. SCSU and Eye-Kraft will develop a customized training program that allows Eye-Kraft to provide a cohesive training program for their new employees, provide transfer of knowledge from senior employees, and advance the technical knowledge and skills of the entire team. The training program is divided into three tracks. The Process Improvement/Operations track will include topics such as job instruction, process documentation, quality management systems and root cause analysis. The Technical track will include topics such as ophthalmic optics; ocular anatomy, physiology, and pathology; ophthalmic products; and instrumentation. The Supervisory Skills track will include topics such as diversity, equity, and inclusion; succession planning; communication; customer service; change management; and strategic planning. Several employees will be eligible to take the American Board of Opticianry (ABO) National Opticianry Competency Exam (NOCE). This certification is the starting point for those in the field of Opticianry. The training is expected to assist in succession planning and provide advancement opportunities. In addition, it is expected to result in improved quality, increased production, reduced waste and improved customer satisfaction. SCSU will have an opportunity to leverage ABO certification and other general optical training to optician offices and other optical manufacturing companies.  Contact: Tammy Anhalt-Warner, St Cloud State University, 320-308-4252 | | | |

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| **Grantee** | **Contributing Business (es)** | **Amount** | **Program** |
| St. Cloud State University | Sand Companies, Inc. | $250,000 | PART |
| Sand Companies, located in Waite Park, is a fully integrated design, development, construction, and management company for both hotel management and residential property management. The Bureau of Labor Statistics lists the construction industry in the top 25 occupations with the most job growth. While some sectors of the economy continue to be devastated by the COVID19 pandemic, a standout sector has been construction. In keeping in line with this growth, Sand Companies Inc. plans to develop, design, and build an additional 3-5 housing construction properties in the next year. With the increased demand in the real-estate and construction industry, coupled with the shortage of skilled workers, retention of Sand’s current associates is imperative. Sand Companies intends invest in the development of their current workforce while maximizing the use of new technology tools that enable them to use integrative real-estate, property management and construction building tools and software to plan effectively. The workforce needs specific technical skills to successfully operate in this rapidly changing environment. There are a variety of positions that require a high degree of knowledge in mechanical functions and devices including boilers, furnaces, plumbing, and appliances. In addition, their corporate departments require knowledge of technology, leadership, and general management competencies. SCSU and Sand Companies will develop a training program that includes four tracks. The Communication track will include topics such as diversity, equity, and inclusion; teambuilding; and conflict management. The Supervisory Skills track will include topics such as developing effective teams, managing change, enabling learning, and coaching for success. The Maintenance Technician Skills track will include topics such as trouble shooting, calibrating and repairing boilers, HVAC systems, math, measurement, and blueprint reading. Finally, the Technology track will provide training to maximize the use of advanced software applications and technology enabling them to use integrative real-estate, property management and construction building information modeling. It is anticipated that training will increase employee retention and advancement opportunities. In addition, employees will be able to gain industry recognized credentials and improve their skillsets while providing a meaningful path through a growing industry. Improved quality processes will increase production capacities and minimize waste and inefficiency which in turn is expected to improve customer satisfaction. SCSU will gain in-depth technology/software knowledge in the construction industry and build a collaborative partnership with a growing MN company.  Contact: Tammy Anhalt-Warner, St Cloud State University, 320-308-4252 | | | |

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| **Grantee** | **Contributing Business (es)** | **Amount** | **Program** |
| Century College | Absolute Quality Mfg. | $234,448 | PART |
| Absolute Quality Manufacturing, located in Minneapolis, is a distributor of electronic parts and equipment, batteries, cable and test measurement instruments. Absolute Quality recognizes that the only way to stay relevant in today’s economy is through training and improving their own workforces. This includes both training entry-level employees to meet production standards and train-and-retain more advanced employees in the company. Absolute Quality is looking to implement a comprehensive training program that will ensure all employees have a foundational understanding of the nature of their jobs. Absolute Quality has partnered with Century College to request assistance from MJSP in addressing the need for attracting and retaining skilled manufacturing workers. Absolute Quality will work in partnership with Century College during the proposed project period to develop several customized training programs for their workforce. The training will cover topics designed to optimize the performance and work process of employees as well as to increase the ability of Absolute Quality to attract and retain long-term employees. The first set of courses will be built for existing and incoming employees for the assembler role at Absolute Quality. Curriculum for this Basic Manufacturing Skills course will be built to include introductory abilities and hands-on experience in a variety of manufacturing skills. Assemblers will also participate in training on IPC/WHMA-A-620. This industry standard prescribes the practices and requirements for cable, wire, and harness assemblies. Additionally, participating employees will potentially receive a IPC-J-Std-001 certification. This training provides skills in quality soldering and assembly of electronic devices to quality standards designed by the IPC. In addition, a variety of software and machine specific training will be provided to employees on the production line. Managers, supervisors, and office staff will learn introductory Lean training as well as leadership and soft skills training. Finally, selected individuals will participate in project management training. The proposed training will enable Absolute Quality to strengthen their overall workforce in many ways. It ensures a base level of high skill and competence in every line assembler. Lean and Continuous Improvement training will lead to both employees and the company being more adaptable and productive in day-to-day operations. Certificate based training will increase the wages and employment options of all participating employees.  Contact: Eric Riedel, Century College, 651-779-3310 | | | |