

Minnesota Annual Performance Report (APR) FY20

FY20 North Country Consortium
North Country Consortium

NOTE: This APR is reporting on the Perkins V transition year, FY20, 1 July 2019-30 June 2020 and corresponds to the funding opportunity FY20 Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) in Amplifund.

1. Describe the consortium's efforts to design, implement, and/or improve programs of study during the Perkins V transition year.

Secondary: Programs of study were initiated in the following:

Park Rapids Ag program. One new teacher was hired in school year 2019-20 with another new teacher coming on board in 2020-21. Both hold CTE credentials. The process was started in 2019-20 and abruptly, but temporarily, interrupted in March, 2020. With both teachers now on board, there is progress in the process with State program approval.

Voyageurs Expeditionary School. Prior to COVID, meetings were conducted with administration and the teacher to provide support for the program design.

Academies at Bemidji High School were each reinforced by equipment upgrades, professional development and improvements to curriculum offerings in every program area.

Walker High School. Meetings with administration and a newly hired teacher in the carpentry program were conducted to determine a plan for licensure, facilities, and other opportunities to develop a program of study.

Academies at Cass Lake High School. Technologies for machining were added to upgrade program offerings. This, combined with the Century Program grant, strengthened the program to an industry-level point.

Every North Country program was reviewed and in spite of COVID, remained strong.

Post-Secondary: Examined enrollment in programs at NTC and looked at courses offered at consortium high schools to better align programs of study. Made necessary adjustments to include more entry and exit points and diversify programs of study.

2. Explain how size, scope, and quality informed your data-determined decisions concerning programs of study and local uses of funds.

Secondary: It became known through the CLNA process that certain areas, particularly in health sciences and manufacturing, are in high need within the North Country region. Efforts are underway to strengthen programs in those, and other program areas, in professional development and upgrading of equipment. Of particular importance to schools was the Century Grant that provides for industry-level equipment and instruction in trades and industry. COVID did not put a damper on that initiative because the equipment was scheduled for delivery during the shut-down of schools. Training of teachers moved forward, distribution of supporting materials stayed on schedule, and now the technology is being launched in many of the participating school districts. The effect of the Century Program funding affected all programs in North Country by fulfilling a need in trades and industry; that created an offset of funding that strengthened other program areas.

Post-Secondary: Examined programs offered at NTC as well as course offering at consortium high schools and then examined DEED data to inform alignment of programs.

3. Describe the consortium's efforts to partner with business, industry, and local communities and to provide CTSO experiences to students. What were your successes and challenges?

Secondary: Business and industry contacts were held in place throughout the COVID situation. As business, industry and education emerge from the shut-down, a continuation of the forward movement is anticipated. Success would be that we held our ground and challenges include: getting schools back in session; encouraging teachers to pursue professional development; and making sure students who experienced distance learning in traditional, hands-on courses get remedial methods to keep them current and motivated.

Post-Secondary: Health Care Panel featuring Sanford and Northern Dental Access health care professionals as a kick-off for Health and Human Services Program and Career Event. Electrical program specific career fair during school day with prep time for students offered by career services. Hosted career exploration days for all 3 divisions with advisory board members invited to participate. Active CTSO's at NTC include nursing, automotive, electrical, and early childhood. Challenge: Scheduled a Plumbing/HVAC/CREF career exploration event with time for participants to ride along and spend time at local shop but had to cancel due to COVID.

4. Describe successes and challenges in your efforts to improve service to special populations during the transition year.

4a. Based on the data, what student group(s) did you identify as needing specific attention. What resources were applied to address these concerns?

Secondary: Based on the data from each school, the largest group for special populations in North Country is American Indian. Considerable resources within the communities and schools have been directed towards services to this special population and continue to be provided to the maximum level possible. Many, many concerns must be addressed ahead of getting this group to engage in opportunities available to them through CTE in every one of the North Country schools. Continuing dialog with Indian Education staff in the North Country schools assures NCVCC that every avenue of help is made available.

Post-Secondary: In looking at data, the group needing specific attention are American Indian students at NTC. Working closely with the American Indian Resource Center to provide support at NTC more consistently. AIRC staff hosted a welcome lunch for students and keeps students informed of events taking place at the AIRC at BSU. American Indian Advisory Board meets twice a year. Summer 2020 a grant was written for an American Indian Advisor to be on campus at NTC for 20 hours on top of the time the assistant director is on campus. NTC leadership participated in and Indigenous Studies course in summer 2020.

4b. How did your consortium provide support to students in special populations to ensure equitable access to programs leading to high-skill, high-wage and in-demand occupations?

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Secondary: In discussion with administration and teachers in each program/school about equitable access it was shown that equitable access for special populations is in place. Continuing support for professional development and involvement in problem-solving will continue.
Post-Secondary: Support provided to students in the Student Success Center: disability services, American Indian resource center, and center for diversity, equity and inclusion are present as a resource. Financial Aid office works with students to find scholarships and grants and assist in completion which include Scholarships provided to students through the NTC Foundation, Post-secondary childcare grant. Peer tutors are available for all divisions both on-campus and online. Admissions works closely with incoming students to provide access to resources. For example, in working with a single mom the admissions representative was able to work with Residential life at BSU to provide housing for a single parent.

4c. How did your consortium provide academic support ensuring all CTE students made meaningful progress in performance, including subgroups of students?

Secondary: This is accomplished through supporting the decisions/requests teachers make for adding equipment and professional development for their individual programs. As an example, in the Red Lake School, North Country has supported the innovation of the business program teacher in adding software and equipment that expands the current business curriculum into areas of career awareness in manufacturing. Innovation has been key in discussions; and so has teacher networking. In all North Country programs, teachers were reminded of the support Perkins V offers for strengthening and improving curriculum. In the early part of the year, frequent career day events were held at NTC which provided awareness of career paths for students and secondary instructors.
Post-Secondary: Student tutors/mentors for all divisions, offered on campus and virtually in spring. Starfish flags generated by instructors are followed up individually and referred to other support services if needed. Lab Assistants available to provide academic support in Nursing and Automotive programs.

4d. How did your consortium support non-traditional (by gender) students (For example, women in traditionally male-dominated careers and men in traditionally female-dominated careers)

Secondary: Courses are not rated/advertised per gender in the majority of North Country programs. All courses are available to students, regardless of gender with the exception of Automotive for Girls course at Bemidji High School (fills every time offered). Another example is the robotics league for girls at Cass Lake High School - - also very successful in career awareness. Male students are welcome to sign up for medical careers classes, (and they do) which is an area traditionally dominated by females.
Post-Secondary: admissions presentations at area high schools, attended Leech Lake College and Career Fair. Student Success Center hosts free popcorn on Tuesday, free coffee on Thursday and a fall bubble hockey tournament - to create community. Student Senate is active as well.

4e. As you reflect on your service to special populations, what strategies were successful? What strategies were not successful and why?

Secondary: The primary special population of American Indian students is very well serviced by North Country and each of the consortium school districts. Some are totally American Indian (Red Lake, Cass Lake, Bug School) while others have a very high percentage of American Indians (Kelliher, Blackduck, Northome). A success is that classroom facilities are kept up-to-date with the highest level of technology that can be incorporated by the teacher. For instance, the Cass Lake trades/industry program has equipment second to none. Something that can't be considered "not successful" because great effort is put forth by the teachers but impacts outcomes, is the cooperation of the family unit in supporting learning. That would include things like attendance, after school participation, completion of studies, graduation rates, etc. How the teachers value excellence in education does not necessarily mean families value the opportunities available to them in their definition of "success."
Post-Secondary: Campus is committed to following up with students when concerns arise. Starfish flags continue to increase. A counselor was on campus 2 afternoons a week prior to COVID but is now available daily via telehealth, which is better suited for the needs of students. A challenge is reaching the large percent of online students.

5. Describe successes and challenges in the consortium's efforts to improve transitions for students from high-school to college and/or career.

5a. Examples should include articulation, early-college credit, career and college readiness activities, transition of adult learners into the workforce, and brokering with other consortia.

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Secondary: An outstanding example of success is the Academy model adopted by Bemidji High School several years ago. It brings students into contact with business and industry within the region. It also offers many students the opportunity for work-based learning because Bemidji designates a staff position specifically to manage/expand WBL. The model has expanded to Cass Lake High School in a mini-form of academy model. First-time opportunities for WBL have expanded in all program areas in Cass Lake; this is a real break-through. Another example is the Ag program being developed in Park Rapids. A local industry (RDO) has offered a partnership with the Park Rapids school district to collaborate on a plan that utilizes green space and additional farm land for teaching students management of farms/equipment and agricultural practices. The Century Program is a powerfully important addition to all schools in Northwest Minnesota. The technology introduced to 38 schools will have the capability to prepare students for entry level into manufacturing throughout the State.

Online College in the High School continues to offer students in small districts the opportunity to gain college credit while in high school. An excellent example is the small district of Nevis; over 20 students per year graduate with credentials for a 2-year degree at the partner school, Alexandria Technical College.

Reporting numbers of students participating in transition to careers or college at the secondary level is difficult since most courses in high schools now include career awareness in all of the courses.

Post-Secondary: PSEO Nursing Assistant - 3 sections taught for Bemidji HS, 1 section for Cass Lake-Bena HS, PSEO PLHE 1000 for Advanced Construction students at Bemidji HS, Program and Career Events hosted at NTC both in the fall and spring for the 3 divisions. Program and Career Event hosted specifically for 9th graders entering or exploring career pathways for Cass Lake-Bena and Blackduck. 7th grade program and career exploration event for Bemidji MS.

5b. In addition to the narrative, please provide numbers of students participating in these categories.

Post-Secondary: PSEO - Nursing Assistant: 50 students, PSEO PLHE 1000 - 29 students, Program Events: 250 participants, Freshman Exploration Events: 110 students, 7th grade Exploration Event: 300 students.

6. Describe the consortium's efforts to BE BOLD during the transition year and beyond. What innovation took place during the reporting year and what was the impact? What were the barriers or challenges to innovation?

Secondary: Hands-down the best plan was to apply for (and be awarded!) the Career and Technical Education Consortium Grant - FY20 (Century Program). As collaboration between North Country and Pine-to-Prairie the list of benefits to 38 participating school districts is long and includes (but is not limited to):

Industry-level technology available to all students in 38 district trades and industry programs.

Professional development for teachers that upgrades all aspects of the curriculum in trades and industry.

Safety equipment and instruction at industry-level standards.

Networking for instructors on a regional level.

Bringing small school districts in line with larger districts.

Opportunities for business and industry to contribute information/professional development for teachers and students.

That's just some of the positive effects. To realize the full impact, we will see what further positive outcomes emerge after the project is fully functioning.

Barriers to innovation, especially in small school districts, include staffing of CTE courses. One teacher may have the assignment of covering many topics per semester rather than focusing on career pathways within the school. Regionally there are many business' (Sanford Health) but for rural schools WBL, for instance, may be impossible due to the distance required to travel to the business. Also, the availability of advisory board members may be very low in many of the rural districts.

Post-Secondary: PSEO Nursing Assistant course taught at Cass Lake Bena High School. CLB is starting Career Pathways school wide and transportation was a barrier so NTC and CLB worked together (with some donations from Sanford) to build a satellite lab at the high school. An NTC faculty taught the class there. A challenge was making sure that all the paperwork and schedules lined up and transportation was taken care of for clinicals. The school nurse picked up a district bus to pick up students for clinicals.

7. Describe Perkins-funded professional development (PD) that took place in the consortium during FY20.

7a. What was the total Perkins-funded investment in PD for the year?

Secondary: The proposed PD for the consortium was very good prior to COVID. Many of the PD events were scheduled for the second half of the school year and were cancelled. However, we were still able to get PD included in FY 20: Total funded PD for the year:

Approximately \$16,000 was funded in PD.

Approximately 8,500 was cancelled due to COVID

Post-Secondary: \$4000.00 was spent on Professional development. An additional \$7000.00 was allocated but was not spent due to COVID-19.

7b. Who (positions, not specific names) benefited from professional development?

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Secondary: Trades and Industry training in specialized welding processes
Updates in engineering design software
Coaching in hospitality careers
Electronics training in engineering processes
Business education participation in BestPrep
Leadership training in FCS

Post-Secondary: Early Childhood faculty - alignment with state regulations, Community Health Worker and Health Science Broad Field faculty - participation and presenting at conferences and trainings.

7c. What professional development activities were conducted/sponsored?

Secondary: Plasma welding processes from Lincoln Electric
Engineering software training online
Mentorship coaching in hospitality careers and FCS
Travel to business development mentorship and training
Travel to workshops in FCS

Post-Secondary: Rural Minnesota Community Health Worker, building of Gerontology certificate, Early Childhood alignment with state standards and work towards transfer pathway.

7d. What topics were addressed and what were the related outcomes?

Secondary: Plasma welding techniques at industry level were added to curriculum
Updates in engineering software were installed on computers
Networking and mentorship/coaching provided new standards for FCS
Networking and training brought students and the instructor into industry situations for real-life experiences
Post-Secondary: CHW topics - strategies to manage trauma, collaboration, human trafficking, advocacy. Early Childhood topics - alignment of curriculum with transfer pathways and state requirement. Gerontology - pulling together biological, psychological, and social aspects of aging.

8. Recognizing that some students need multiple entry and exit points to CTE programs, describe how your consortium has helped students return to the education system to complete their GED or secondary school education, or to learn a new skill following job loss.

Post-Secondary: Adult Basic Education is located at NTC. Teachers with ABE and NTC Instructors collaborate to support learners. Tuition assistance through Rural MN CEP, collaboration with their office in Bemidji.

9. What actions did the consortium take to advance teacher recruitment, retention, training, and education? What were your successes and challenges? What would you change in the future?

Secondary: 9. The focus of North Country is on retention. When teachers are acknowledged, appreciated, and supported with professional development and updated equipment, they experience job satisfaction as well as increased effectiveness. Without access to new teacher training programs, retention becomes even more important as retirement becomes an option. Several teachers are eligible for early retirement but have decided to stay in their careers longer. Licensing continues to be an obstacle. For instance, in one school the social studies teacher is fully capable of teaching the carpentry class but must put in many hours of coursework to obtain credentials in trades and industry. With a young family and a job already teaching in a subject area, he's not willing to do that. This scenario is repeated in many schools.
Post-Secondary: Hiring of Institution Effectiveness and Assessment Coordinator to support instructors and programs with common assessment, learning objectives and outcomes and program outcomes. I wish there was a more hands on approach to supporting industry professionals entering higher education. A few online courses are not adequate enough to prepare, for example an Electrician, to teach, plan, manage a classroom, and provide meaningful feedback.

10. What actions did the consortium take to expand equitable access and opportunities for work-based learning for all students? How were students made aware of these opportunities?

Secondary: 10. Work-based coordinators in each program did a very good job of establishing business partnerships for employment opportunities and real-life experiences in their communities. In February it was all shut down as businesses closed or were restricted.
Post-Secondary: Give kids a smile - provides free dental screenings for kids. Screenings provided by Dentists in collaboration with Dental Assistant students. Automotive Students work on local communities cars as part of their Capstone course. Electrical students enrolled in their Capstone helped bend conduit for the PLC being built on campus.

11. What actions did the consortium take to improve integration of academic and technical skills in CTE programs? Please provide specific examples in your response.

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Secondary: 11. Every opportunity possible is explored to improve integration of academic and technical skills. A couple of examples of strategies: mathematics for trades and industry materials were added to programs wherever possible; assignments and supporting materials that encouraged reading/comprehension; assessments that measured outcomes.

Discussion has also been ongoing about why technical skills are not considered academic skills. ? Maybe if these two were looked at as one, it would create new types of measurements. With math skills needed in fabrication and engineering, why aren't they considered academic as well? The line seems to be drawn at industry. That one may not be resolvable.

Post-Secondary: Basic Education skills co-taught by English and Plumbing/HVAC faculty incorporating technical math and writing skills, career searching and resume building. Math Instructor partnered with trades instructors to create a hands-on Technical Math class with problems specific to the trades. Student tutors and Lab Assistants hired for each division to support students.

12. Reflecting on your FY20 work, what "points of pride" or highlights would you like to share?

Secondary: * The Rural CTE Consortium grant (Century Program) did not allow North Country to lose momentum. Equipment was delivered, training was done (in person!), a network was formed, plans were made to fully launch the designs and projects beginning September, 2020. It took a tremendous amount of coordination on the part of North Country and Pine-to-Prairie to keep everything on track. Because of the amount of work to be done, no days of work were lost; there was no shut-down going on here. Except for a few days when the office was off-limits for cleaning, the work was accomplished in the office where productivity was highest.

* When COVID restrictions were mandated the two of us at North Country hovered over the budget and monitored the ever-changing needs of teachers. We made it to the fiscal year end successfully by responding quickly to correspondence and opportunities. Keeping everything connected was an extreme balancing act . . . but we learned a lot. There was a LOT of discussion with teachers about effective alternative teaching methods and how those could be utilized later on when students returned to classrooms.

* The effectiveness of Awards of Excellence which are awarded to outstanding teachers within the North Country Consortium could be seen in networking activities that continued during the COVID shut-down. When one of the teachers had a question of "how to" handle distance learning or any other topic, everybody responded with helpful suggestions and many other ways of contributing to a solution. The awardees took it upon themselves to expand the network to include robotics coaches, non-CTE teachers, paraprofessionals and others. The group will be expanding to include all teachers within the Century Program.

* There is great appreciation for the work Sarah Behrens has contributed to the connections being made at Northwest Tech and North Country schools. The academy model at Cass Lake can be attributed to the work Sarah has done. Working with counselors and teachers she has created a pathway for CNA training in a community with extreme needs in this area. The connections also extend to management training within the community and Indian gaming, which never existed prior. An impact can already be seen turning graduation rates in a positive direction. As the COVID experience gets behind us, the Cass Lake model is being considered by many schools and will draw post-secondary much closer as an education option for students in all of our schools.

Post-Secondary: PreCOVID I was able to visit over 2/3 of our consortium high schools and visit with counselors and some Tech teachers.

I coordinated a shadow type experience for 3 students from Laporte High School who were on the fence about college. They spent time in a Math class, a Dental and Electrical Lab. Bemidji High School Advanced Construction students participated in a PLHE 1000 course at NTC on Fridays - the other days they were building a house. Instructors worked together to link content. Cass Lake - Bena HS started a Career Pathways Model for their High School. In working with the Career Pathway a Nursing Assistant course was scheduled at the high school to remove transportation as a barrier. In helping set up the class I spent quite a bit of time at the high school and in doing so met the Art teacher. Student Art is hung in the new Student Success Center at NTC and we hosted an Art Gallery "soft opening" inviting the Artists to talk about their Artwork. The Freshman at CLB choose their pathway in January so in December NTC hosted the freshman class for a Program Exploration day.