

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
INTEROFFICE COMMUNICATION

**DATE:** February 12, 2021

**TO:** Supervisor Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, County Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Aaron Hertzberg, Director, DAS Economic Development

**SUBJECT:** From the Director of Economic Development – Department of Administrative Services providing an informational report on the distribution of CARES Act funds: Community Resource Navigator Employment Program

**REQUEST**

This report is for informational purposes, there is no request at this time.

**REPORT**

Milwaukee County Received \$77,428,492 from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES), signed in March of 2020. The County allocated \$3.5 million for a Community Resource Navigator Employment (CRN) Program, operated by the Department of Administrative Services – Economic Development Division. See the previous legislative actions referenced below for details of allocations to the CRN program.

The intention of the CRN program was to hire unemployed job seekers, during a time of spiking unemployment due to COVID-19. Additionally, the program worked to build job skills and place job seekers in positions that aided community response to the pandemic.

To operate the program, Milwaukee County hired Employ Milwaukee, who in-turn partnered with WRTP | Big Step and Triada Employment Services to hire and place individuals in the program. Employ Milwaukee's compensation was based on a per participate rate of \$1,400 with a not to exceed value of \$250,000. Employ Milwaukee over saw all recruit, vetting, placement, compensation, support services and reporting for the program. Additionally, Employ Milwaukee recruited, vetted and managed relationships with placement sites. It should be noted that the City of Milwaukee operated a complementary program with Employ Milwaukee. For this reason, the City may similarly be referenced in Employ Milwaukee's prepared materials about the program.

Employees were hired for part-time position between 25 and 30 hours per week at an hourly rate of \$17 for up to six months. Resources were also offered for training, PPE, work materials and transportation. Through the program 342 job seekers were placed into employment at 111 locations. A full list of placement locations is attached.

Original contract term was between August 1st and December 31, 2020, in alignment with requirements to spend down CARES Act funds prior to the end of 2020. When the federal government extended the expenditure period for CARES Act funding as part of the second pandemic relief bill signed in December 2020, Milwaukee County extended the CRN program for existing employees in the program through March 31, 2021. This did not include any additional funding, but rather allowed continued spend down of existing funds, previously allocated to the program.

Employ Milwaukee was asked to specifically target recruitment of both workers and work sites in zip codes with high rates of COVID-19 or to zip codes and demographic populations that have historically faced barriers to employment. Of the recruited applicants, 80% identified as minorities and 57% as female. As identified on the attached maps, applicants were most heavily recruited from the north, near west, and south side zip codes. A map of job placements is also included.

25 employee placement opportunities were reserved for collaboration with the County's Department of Health and Human Services. Details on those programs was provided by Enterprise Project Administrator, Sumaiyah Clark:

### **Energy Assistance**

Each year, the Energy Assistance Program provides more than 60,000 qualified Milwaukee County residents with a one-time, annual payment toward heating and electric bills. The funding pays a portion of energy costs determined by household size, income and energy costs, and is usually paid directly to the energy supplier. Five individuals were hired as Community Resource Navigators to serve in the Energy Assistance Program. They were placed at Community Advocates and UMOS. These individuals provided support to the program by scheduling appointments, assisting with clerical duties, and completing other tasks to get people enrolled. To proactively avoid disconnections, they also assisted with outreach activities to share information about the program with eligible customers.

### **Division of Youth & Family Services**

Milwaukee County Division of Youth & Family Services (DYFS), Employ Milwaukee and Running Rebels partnered to develop a program for young people to participate in the CRN program.

Twenty youth between the ages of 16-18 participated. In addition to payment, youth were eligible for gift cards to incentivize their continued efforts and completion of the following key milestones: a) completion of application process; b) participation in workplace readiness training and program orientation; and c) work assignment. This is significant because 100% of the youth who were referred to the program were able to successfully complete each of the milestones. Additionally, youth received support throughout the duration of the program to ensure their success and achievement of the following outcomes:

- Youth learn a new skill(s) as a result of Program Involvement
- Youth establish a new positive adult relationship(s) as a result of Program Involvement
- Youth ability to articulate the connection between their current work assignment and future goals

Youth were placed at the following worksite locations: Urban Ecology, COA, Holy Redeemer, Oats Screen Printing and Housing Authority. The program officially ended in December 2020 and two youth were honored for outstanding work effort and received \$250 gift cards during Christmas.

Some youth are still working. At Oats Screen Printing, the program was started again on the January 4th for certain individuals and four young people were requested. DYFS leaders continue to receive praises from the owner of the company on how great these young people are doing, and he is looking into the possibility of hiring them on full-time.

*“These young people were phenomenal to work with. We had some individuals who were a little tougher to get through to, but I think it was a great success. They learned what was expected of them to be employable and they are still hanging in there.”*

~Romel Greer, Employ Milwaukee

A video highlighting the CRN program is available at: <https://vimeo.com/506298391>

### **Previous Legislation**

File 20-809 –adoption of a request authorizing a realignment of expenditures within the County’s 2020 CARES allocation from the federal government to maximize community usage and benefit.

File 20-557 –adoption of a request authorizing a spending framework and allocation of the County’s CARES allocation from the federal government

### **RECOMMENDATION**

This report is for informational purposes, there is no request at this time.

Submitted by:

---

Aaron Hertzberg  
Economic Development Director

cc: David Crowley, County Executive  
Sherri Jordan, Interim Director, Department of Administrative Services  
Economic and Community Development Committee Members  
Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation  
MaryJo Meyers, Chief of Staff, Office of the County Executive  
Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, County Board of Supervisors  
Scott Manske, Comptroller  
Steve Cady, Research & Policy Director  
Joseph Lamers, Director, Performance Management and Budget