



May 11, 2023

To the Regional Career Pathways Review Team:

The purpose of this letter is to support the 7 Rivers Regional Career Pathways Collaborative and serves as a Letter of Commitment to support the initiatives and goals for the fourth year of this project.

The need to continue creating strong career pathways to assist students in connecting to high-skill, in-demand careers is integral to ensuring a strong pipeline of talent for our regional employers. Knowing that these pathways are developed in partnership with local economic and education stakeholders from varying backgrounds gives strength to the program as a whole. We are happy to serve as one of these partners and look forward to providing a lens of insight as we work to provide equitable access, participation, and completion for all students, with an emphasis on special populations, in regional career pathways.

The La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce serves almost 600 member businesses across the region who represent numerous different industries, sizes, and locations. Our Chamber's mission is to elevate and strengthen the business community to enhance the La Crosse area's quality of life. One of the hallmarks of our organization is our ability to connect our businesses with resources in the community that can help them advance their efforts to grow their business, their workforce, and their impact on the community.

At the Chamber, we are dedicated to partnering in the effort to create successful regional career pathways. We are excited to announce that we have recently created a new role called *Workforce Strategies Director*. One of our staff was promoted to this role with the aim of partnering with area organizations to develop strong, purposeful talent pipeline programming. We know that area businesses benefit from direct contact with K-12 and higher education students. Some of the initiatives in our strategy include:

1. K-12 pipeline programming:
 - a. The Chamber is currently partnering with the La Crosse School District, CESA, and CRVA to create a two-year initiative for a robust Academic Career Pathway program, where high school students will be exposed to one of the 16 career pathways per month. Each month will feature 3-4 lessons held during the high school's common resource period, with guest speakers from businesses within that featured field, hands-on experiences, and activities that highlight what types of careers students can explore within the field. The program will repeat itself every two years, with 8 career pathways highlighted each year.
 - b. In regards to creating new programming, it is our intent to first gather information from the numerous community partners who are already engaged in connecting K-12 students with area businesses through career fairs, job shadow experiences, apprenticeships, specialty career days, etc. After creating a clearinghouse of that

information, we will work to identify the gaps that exist in our community and work to create programming to fill those gaps. Continued conversations with businesses and educational partners will drive these efforts. We imagine that a focus on special populations will be an element of this programming.

2. Maximizing the potential of our 180+ Chamber Young Professionals (YPs). We aim to create mentorship programs between our YPs and K-12 students, as well as those in higher education. Our YPs are employed at 100+ businesses across the region and bring a wealth of knowledge and excitement about their respective careers. We know a mentorship program between young individuals employed the business world and students on the verge of exploring future careers has the potential to be powerful and life changing.
3. Higher education pipeline programming. We will begin with the same strategy outlined above of identifying the currently existing efforts to connect higher education students with area businesses, then fill gaps. We aim to create a strong program to support summer interns.

The creation of this new *Workforce Strategies Director* role demonstrates the Chamber's commitment to strengthening our region's efforts to connect students of all ages in our region with area businesses. The Chamber is proud of the partnerships it engages in each day, and this is no exception. We are here to support this initiative in whatever ways possible.

We look forward to working with all partners on this grant and believe the benefits of this project will have a positive impact on our region and state for many years to come.

Sincerely,

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