

# 2021

## ANNUAL REPORT

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American Jobs for America's Youth, Montana



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# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Happy New Year!

First and foremost, thank you for your support in 2021. You truly make it possible for us to fulfill our mission.

Next, we hope you enjoy reading this Annual Report, which outlines our programs and partnerships of 2021. We have been working tirelessly to fulfill our mission of fostering life and work skills in youth. We are particularly proud of our collaborative relationships. By working with community partners (organizations, businesses, schools, and citizens), our small, part-time staff is able to reach more youth and make a deeper impact than if we worked alone.

We weathered the year 2020 with the onset of Covid-19, organizational downsizing, and the death of our founder. We regained our balance and found some traction both internally and externally in 2021. Looking forward to 2022, I am confident we will continue to grow stronger as an organization. We are reaching new partners, improving our programs, launching new initiatives, and working to double our staff capacity. You, our supporters, have helped us through these challenges and will help us continue to build forward momentum.

Thank you for being with us as we work to prepare Montana's youth for a sustainable, productive, and civic adulthood. Brian Kahn (1947 - 2020), the founder of American Jobs for America's Youth, continues to influence and inspire us. He holds a special place in our hearts. His vision was that AJAY MT would serve as a model for the nation. I think that together, we are creating a model to be proud of.

Our work strengthens Montana's communities and ensures that youth truly are our greatest asset. Together we are helping Montana thrive.

Gabrielle Eklund Rowley  
Executive Director



You now have the opportunity to follow AJAY MT on Instagram and Facebook! We are excited to share our stories with you, and to have you tag us in yours! Please follow us today! @AJAYMT406





# MISSION

***FOSTER LIFE AND WORK SKILLS  
IN AMERICA'S YOUTH  
THROUGH COLLABORATION  
AMONG COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS,  
CITIZEN MENTORS, AND EMPLOYERS.***

# VISION

***ALL YOUNG MONTANANS HAVE  
ACCESS TO MEANINGFUL WORK AND  
PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT***

Every high school junior, senior, and recent graduate who seeks improvement of social and life skills and employment prospects shall have access to a mentor-mentee relationship and the opportunity to obtain internships and jobs with community employers.

# STRATEGIES

***IN ORDER TO FULFILL OUR MISSION, AJAY  
MT EMPLOYS A VARIETY OF STRATEGIES:***

- Connect mentors and students who work together to nurture the student's social and work skills, self-esteem, and work ethic
- Collaborate with partners to provide students with meaningful early work opportunities
- Strengthen professional development opportunities for students in order to provide communities with a sustainable pipeline of valuable employees
- Build capacity in communities to educate, support, and mentor young Montanans

# SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

## ***HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS EARN AND LEARN***

In 2021, we expanded our program to include the East Helena and Townsend communities and we doubled the number of students served! We marked the third year of the program in 2021. During this time, SJP has placed over 100 students in more than 40 businesses, with increased demand from employers and students annually.



Watch a video featuring Helena Area Summer Jobs Program students, employers and mentors. The video is made possible by Helena WINS, an initiative of the Helena Area Chamber of Commerce.



### ***What is it?***

The Summer Jobs Program (SJP) is a work-based learning program designed to sustainably improve the lives of young employees. SJP matches participants with a job or paid internship, provides a paid foundational work skills training, and connects students with an adult mentor for the summer. SJP participants are high school students and recent graduates eager to develop their work skills and explore their career options. Participating area businesses and community organizations help strengthen the local economy by connecting youth to meaningful work experiences. The summer program elements include:

1. **Employability Skills Development:** Students gain foundational skills such as time management, teamwork, communication through a training designed to prepare them for the workforce. Students who complete the training receive a \$50 stipend.
2. **Connection to Trained Adult Mentors:** Students in the program meet regularly with a mentor to reinforce skills, reflect on their work experiences, and discuss career options. Importantly, the mentor is not the student's supervisor, although the mentor may be an employee of the host business. All mentors are screened and trained to ensure safety.
3. **Paid Work Experience:** Host employers commit to hiring a student for at least 150 hours during the summer and paying above minimum wage. Positions vary and have included positions like dental assistant, groundskeeper, marketing assistant, and daycare assistant.



**Who's involved?**

AJAY MT piloted the Summer Jobs Program (SJP) in Helena in 2019 in conjunction with Helena WINS (Workforce Innovation Networks), an initiative of the Helena Area Chamber of Commerce; Reach Higher Montana; and three public high schools. In 2021, the SJP committee expanded to include the nonprofit STOKE in Townsend, Helena College, and two more high schools.

**“I LEARNED HOW TO BE A CONTRIBUTING MEMBER OF A TEAM, AND HOW TO BE MORE CONFIDENT.” – SJP STUDENT**

**“ONE THING I LEARNED THAT WILL HELP ME IN MY NEXT POSITION IS HOW TO BE MORE ASSERTIVE, AS WELL AS HOW TO TALK WITH PEOPLE I WOULD NORMALLY NOT BE AS FAMILIAR AND COMFORTABLE WITH.” – SJP STUDENT**

iGraduate, an initiative of the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation, the Office of Public Instruction and the Montana Department of Labor and Industry, generously provided grant funding for the Summer Jobs Program 2019, 2020, and 2021. The grant funded stipends, which students receive upon successful completion of the work skills training. We also appreciate the program sponsorship of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Montana, Anderson ZurMuehlen, and Montana Radio Company.

Thank you to our partners in the schools helping to connect students with our program, thank you to the partner employers, and thank you to each of the volunteer mentors!



# SUMMER JOBS PROGRAMS IMPACTS

**Students Gain Skills, Experience, and Professional Networks**



Through the Summer Jobs Program, students gain skills, experience, and professional networks that prepare them for success in future endeavors. The work skills our students learn and practice serve them well both in and out of the workforce.

**96%**

96 % recommend the program to others



**“EVEN THOUGH I HAD A JOB BEFORE, I LEARNED SO MUCH FROM THIS PROGRAM. I LEARNED TO BE AN ADVOCATE FOR MYSELF. I ALSO LEARNED ABOUT TIME MANAGEMENT, CUSTOMER SERVICE, AND HOW TO BE A GOOD COWORKER. I LEARNED THAT WORKING HARD PAYS OFF.” – SJP STUDENT**

**91%**

91% reported learning about their work or career options

**88%**

88% said they learned from their mentors



**“I LEARNED HOW TO WORK WITH PEOPLE AND MAINTAIN A POSITIVE ATTITUDE.” – SJP STUDENT**

**100%**

100% said they learned something about themselves or work skills

**99%**

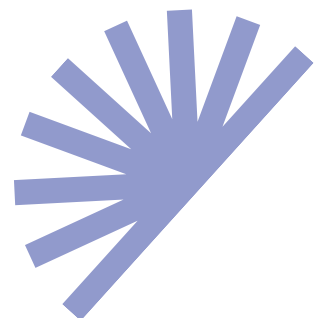
99% said they positively contributed to the organization where they worked



**“I LEARNED FROM MY MENTOR TO BELIEVE IN MYSELF AND WORK TOWARDS MY GOALS IN STEPS THAT I CAN MANAGE.” – SJP STUDENT**

**81%**

81% said “I practiced soft skills at work that were new or uncomfortable.”



# SUMMER JOBS PROGRAMS IMPACTS

## *Employers Gain Productive Employees*



**100%**

100% said that their student employee practiced soft skills such as communication, problem solving, and time management



**96%**

96% stated that their student employee positively contributed to their organization.



**96%**

96% want to host Summer Jobs Program Students Again

AJAY MT collects both qualitative and quantitative data from student participants, employers, and mentors. We use this data to continually improve the program. The results here are based on three years of evaluation data for the Helena Area Summer Jobs Program.



# SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM EXPANSION

*Summer Jobs Program is growing in 2022!*



This expansion effort is made possible in part by the generous support of the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation, Gianforte Family Foundation, and Reach Higher Montana.

We are proud to support the Summer Jobs Program Expansion in Butte & Anaconda, Flathead region, Forsyth, and Yellowstone County.

Yellowstone County Summer Jobs Program, a partnership of AJAY MT, Big Sky Economic Development, Billings Association of Realtors, Billings Changer of Commerce, Billings School District, BillingsWorks, City College, and Reacher Higher Montana serving Huntley Project, Laurel Lockwood, Senior Shepard, Skyview, and West High Schools

Butte and Anaconda Summer Jobs Program, a partnership of AJAY MT, Anaconda Community Intervention, Butte Chamber of Commerce, Butte Local Development Corporation, Discover Anaconda, Headwaters RC&D, Highlands College, Montana Tech, Reacher High Montana, and Water & Environmental Technologies serving Butte and Anaconda High schools

Workforce Flathead Summer Jobs Program, a partnership of AJAY MT, Discover Kalispell Chamber, Flathead Community College, Reach Higher Montana, and Workforce Flathead serving Bigfork, Columbia Falls, Flathead, Glacier, Linderman, Stillwater Christian, and Whitefish High Schools.

Forsyth Summer Jobs Program, a partnership of Reach Higher Montana and AJAY MT serving Forsyth High school.



# WORKPLACE CONNECTIONS WEBSITE

## *"Earn While You Learn" Opportunities*

We are excited about the new Montana Workforce Connections website, where students connect with businesses for training opportunities outside the traditional classroom.



<https://svc.mt.gov/dli/wc/>

This state-sponsored website launched February 1, 2021. The Montana Department of Labor and Industry partnered with Chambers of Commerce across Montana to create the new website that highlights unique "Earn While You Learn" opportunities. This site is free, easy to use, and provides access to options across Montana. Opportunities range from job-shadowing to on-the-job training to internships.

This platform is the perfect place for organizations and businesses to think outside of the box and post positions with benefits that entice high school students and young adults into the workforce. Unique benefits might look like seasonal jobs that pay an added incentive bonus for completing the contract, housing stipends to offset rising housing costs, or paid training that leads to certifications.

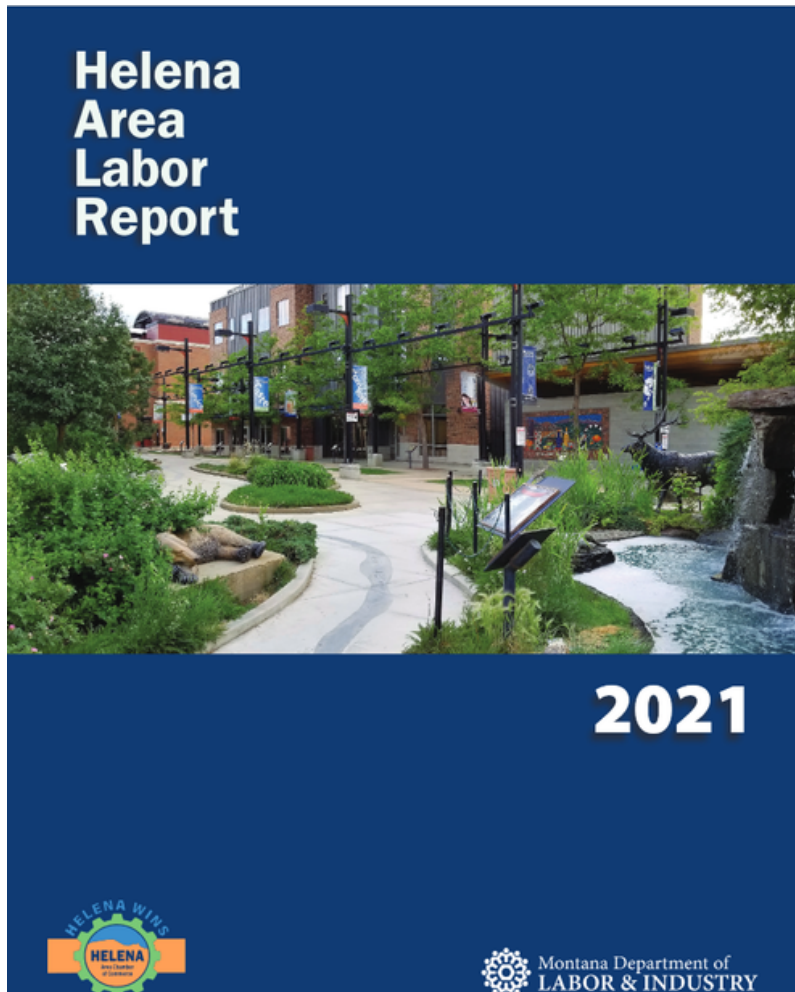
AJAY MT posted opportunities through the Summer Jobs Program, and promoted this resource to partner employers and organizations. We are confident that the Workforce Connections website will prove to be a valuable and constructive tool for Montana businesses and students for many years to come.



# HELENA AREA LABOR REPORT

## **INFORMATION & ANALYSIS TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES**

The Helena Area Labor Report was released in October, 2021 and is jam-packed with data analyses and valuable information. The project scope includes Lewis & Clark, Broadwater and Jefferson Counties. The results of this multi-month project informs local businesses and organizations working to strengthen the community.



**LOOK INSIDE!**



Highlights include:

- Economic growth analysis
- Workforce needs
- Population growth and in-migration
- Housing and childcare demands in Helena

AJAY MT funded this Helena Area Labor Report from the Montana Department of Labor and Industry in partnership with Helena WINS of the Helena Area Chamber of Commerce, Montana Business Assistance Connection (MBAC), Reach Higher Montana, and Montana Youth Apprenticeship Partnership (MYAP).



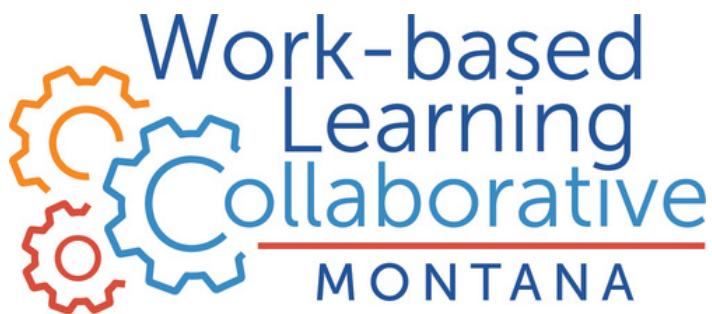


# WORK-BASED LEARNING COLLABORATIVE

## *Engage Business and Extend the the Classroom to the Workplace*

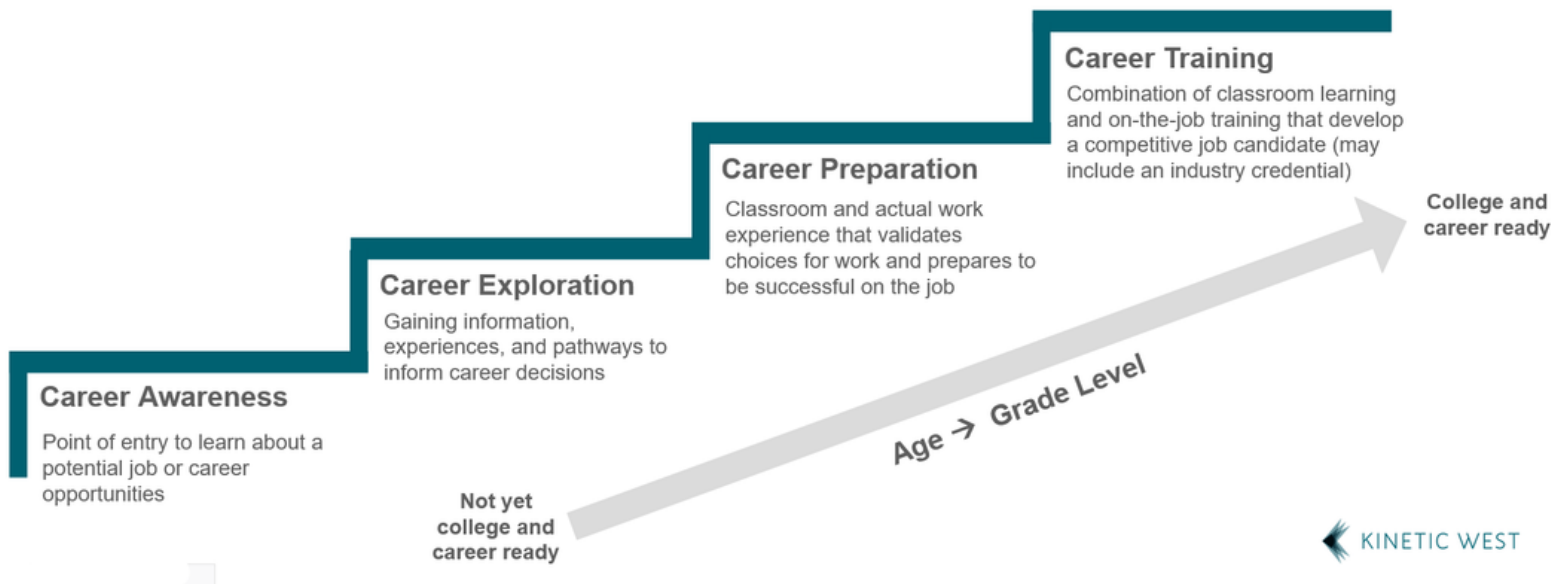
We joined the Montana Work-based Learning (WBL) Collaborative in fall 2021. The collaborative is a new initiative, working on strategies that promote, implement, and expand high quality, work-based learning opportunities for Montana's youth. Meeting quarterly, the group is comprised of 30 individuals from around the state working in education, workforce development, employer associations, government, and youth services. The WBL Collaborative is funded in part by the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation and is facilitated by Kinetic West.

The vision of the initiative: Every young adult in Montana will have multiple pathways to economic self-sufficiency, supported by a statewide work-based learning system that honors the potential of students and addresses the workforce needs of Montana businesses, today and tomorrow.



## What is work-based learning?

**Work-based learning** is a continuum of activities that engage business and extend the classroom into the workplace, connecting acquired knowledge and skill to a student's future employment. Work-based learning may take place in a workplace, in a school, or the community.



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## *Dedicated to Our Work and Our Communities*

We are pleased to add two new members to our board of directors: Callie Aschim of Helena, Montana and Cullen Gilbreath of Butte, Montana. They both bring valuable experience and a deep passion for serving their community and youth. Our board is incredibly excited to have them join us. We look forward to working together to further AJAY MT's mission!

**CALLIE ASCHIM** "I am committed to AJAY MT because our youth are the key to the success of our workforce."

**PATRICIA COTTER,  
CHAIR** "I am committed to AJAY MT because it is brightening the futures of young people in our communities."

**DIANE FLADMO,  
TREASURER** "I am committed to AJAY MT because AJAY MT is building great futures for kids and communities."

**CULLEN GILBREATH** "I am committed to AJAY MT because it is creating opportunities for Montana's youth and meeting workforce development challenges."

**DAVID MORINE,  
VICE-CHAIR** "I am passionate about AJAY MT because strong communities depend on strong and talented youth."



***Thank you for your service!***



# 2021 FINANCIAL REPORT

AJAY MT reports on a January 1 fiscal year.  
This financial information is for January 1 - December 31, 2021.

## Revenue

**\$43,757**

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM INDIVIDUALS,  
CORPORATIONS, AND FOUNDATIONS

+

**\$17,000**

PRIOR YEAR ROLLOVER

**\$9,890**

SPONSORSHIPS AND PARTNER CONTRIBUTION

**\$3,575**

FEEs FOR SERVICE (WORKSHOPS)

**\$74,641**

TOTAL INCOME



and **\$5,521,60** cash equivalent of 2021 Volunteer Hours\*

## Expenditures

Contract Services	\$14,428
Operations	\$3,685
Program Expenses	\$4,752
Payroll	\$24,337
Travel, Conferences, Workshops	\$1,641
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$48,620</b>

AJAY MT employed a 0.5 FTE executive director in 2021. AJAY MT worked in partnership with community collaborators to fulfill our mission. AJAY MT staff capacity will increase in 2022, reflecting our growing initiatives and programs.

*\*One hour of volunteering has a \$27.20 cash equivalent, as calculated by Independent Sector from data provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020)*

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**2021 DONORS**

**THANK YOU!**