

Support \$6 million in funding for African Diaspora Youth Workforce Development Grants

HF1907 / SF2539

Rep. Frazier Sen. Hawj

***Reducing African Diaspora youth barriers to employment
Increasing readiness of African Diaspora youth to create businesses
Boosting the economic capacity of African Diaspora youth***

About these Grants

In 2024 Youthprise dispersed \$2,565,000 appropriated from the Legislature to fund 26 grantees with 6 located in Greater Minnesota and 20 in the metro area. These organizations offer workforce programming that provides cultural training for African Immigrant youth while helping them navigate new systems and resources. Many of these youth become community navigators or translators for their parents, helping entire communities achieve economic growth and success. In year two of this grant, Youthprise hopes to disperse an additional \$2,856,000.

Our Request

Help Youthprise and its sub-grantees throughout Minnesota continue this impactful work by increasing the funding to \$6 million for the 2026-27 biennium to support an expanded group of young people from the African Diaspora. For reference, in 2024, Youthprise received 65 applications, but were only able to fund 26 organizations because of limited funding.

Quotes from the Sub-grantees

"Youthprise is a beacon of hope. This money has meant so much to use and our community. Often dollars don't make it here (Greater MN), so for the funds to make there..it's been so impactful."

2024 Highlights

30 individuals served as a part of the community grant review process, including 9 young people. Of the 30 participants, 24 identified as African or Black.

16 of the selected subgrantees serve the East African community and 10 serve a mix of African communities.

In 2024, subgrantees served 8,668 young people in activities including:

- Exploring career pathways
- Receiving credential for occupational skills and/or training
- Receiving academic credit or service learning credit
- Obtaining a High School Diploma or GED
- Obtaining a safety certificate
- Obtaining an industry-recognized credential, and/or earning an occupational certificate or degree
- Participating in an internship or apprenticeship
- Obtaining part-time employment or full-time employment
- Leadership development
- Peer mentoring

"Everyone wants to partner but nobody wants to invest... until Youthprise."

We are grateful to partner with Youthprise in this program and help effect positive life change in the lives of young people and help them to grow."

*The African Diaspora refers to all African youth who are living in Minnesota due the voluntary and involuntary movement of Africans and their descendants to various parts of the world. This includes both recent immigrants and those that are descendants of American slavery.

Thank you for reaching out and for your ongoing efforts to sustain and expand the African Immigrant Youth Career Development Grant Program. This grant has been instrumental in shaping opportunities for African immigrant youth in Minnesota, and we deeply appreciate the support from Youthprise.

For Kilimo MN, this grant has provided a transformative platform for African immigrant youth to gain hands-on experience in farming, entrepreneurship, and leadership development.

Through our program, young people have been able to:

1. Cultivate their own food plots, growing culturally significant crops.
2. Participate in farmers' markets, where they engage in business practices, customer service, and community engagement.
3. Lead cooking demonstrations, preserving and celebrating their culinary heritage.
4. Document their experiences through Photovoice, using storytelling and photography to express their journey.
5. Attend farm tours, connecting with industry experts and exploring career pathways in agriculture and food systems.

The impact of losing this funding would be devastating. It would mean fewer opportunities for African immigrant youth to access culturally relevant career development experiences. It would also limit their ability to build peer networks, gain mentorship from professionals who share their cultural backgrounds, and develop leadership skills that prepare them for the future.

Our partnership with Youthprise has strengthened our capacity to serve our youth meaningfully. The funding has helped us provide stipends, purchase essential materials, and create safe, inclusive spaces where young people can explore their identities, interests, and career aspirations. This partnership has allowed us to offer programming that meets youth where they are while empowering them to dream beyond their current circumstances.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to ensuring that African immigrant youth continue to have access to essential career development opportunities.

Best regards,

Mose Momanyi

Kilimo MN



February 17, 2025

RE: Testimonial for the African Immigrant Youth Career Development Grant Program

The African Immigrant Youth Career Development Grant has been a lifeline for young people in the Somali community in the Twin Cities. Through this funding, the Somali Youth and Family Development Center (SOMFAM) has offered a structured mentorship program helping young people build strong peer relationships, prepare for the workforce with job search strategies and resume-building support, and explore future academic opportunities through college tours.

Additionally, guest speakers and career exposure opportunities have introduced youth to a wide range of professions, including entrepreneurship and nursing, empowering them to contribute to the local economy as future business owners and skilled professionals. The impact of this program goes beyond career readiness—it fosters a sense of belonging, purpose, and hope, setting young people on a path toward long-term success.

Losing this funding would be devastating. Investing in mentorship and career development reduces crime, strengthens families, and creates a stronger workforce, benefiting the entire community. Without these resources, many young people would be left vulnerable to gangs, violence, drug use, and homelessness—issues that not only affect individuals but also have long-term consequences for public safety and community well-being.

Our partnership with Youthprise has made it possible to provide academic support, career exposure, and, most importantly, a foundation for goal-setting and long-term success. This program isn't just about jobs—it's about strengthening our economy and ensuring that every young person has the opportunity to reach their full potential. We strongly urge continued investment in this vital initiative.

Sincerely,

Fatoun Ali
Executive Director
SOMFAM



Somali American Social Service Association

1700 N Broadway Suite 152 A ♦ Rochester, MN 55906

02/12/2025

Abby Wellan

Program & Grants Manager | [Youthprise.org](https://youthprise.org)

3001 Broadway St. NE Suite #330

Minneapolis, MN 55413

Dear Abby Wellan,

I am writing on behalf of the Somali American Social Service Association (SASSA), an organization dedicated to empowering immigrant and underserved communities in Rochester, Minnesota, and surrounding areas. Our mission is to provide resources and services that promote employment, entrepreneurship, education, and self-sufficiency, enabling individuals to achieve financial stability, professional growth, and active civic engagement for both youth and adults.

The grants offered by Youthprise have been instrumental in expanding access to critical services for our community. Many of the individuals we serve face significant barriers, including limited access to education, career development, and essential resources. These barriers hinder their ability to secure employment, pursue training opportunities, and access vital support systems. This is why we are reaching out today to share with our leaders the profound impact of this funding and reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the community.

The African Immigrant Youth Career Development Grant Program has been a transformative force for both SASSA and the young people we serve. Through this grant, we have provided culturally responsive career development opportunities that equip African immigrant youth with the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to navigate their futures successfully. With this funding, we have been able to expand our programs, offering mentorship, financial literacy training, and career readiness workshops. The impact has been life-changing. Students who once faced uncertainty about their futures are now setting clear goals, developing essential skills, and securing meaningful employment opportunities.

Losing this funding would have devastating consequences. Many of the youth we serve come from underserved backgrounds, where tailored career development resources are scarce. Without this support, their pathways to success would become even more challenging, limiting their opportunities for mentorship, business education, and professional networking. These are critical tools for breaking cycles of poverty and economic instability.

Our partnership with Youthprise has been invaluable. Their support has strengthened our ability to deliver impactful programming and connect youth with industry professionals who inspire and guide them. This grant is not just about funding. It is an investment in the future of our community, ensuring that African immigrant youth have the tools and opportunities they need to succeed.

We strongly urge continued investment in this program because we have seen firsthand how it transforms lives. Cutting this funding would not just reduce resources. It would cut off opportunities, aspirations, and the potential of an entire generation.

Sincerely,

Omar Nur

Executive Director

Somali American Social Service Association (SASSA)

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