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Pathways to Success: A Career Insights Event for Youth and Parents

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## **Abstract**

Partners for Peace (P4P) is a nonprofit organization in Monterey County focused on enhancing parent-child relationships by offering parent education classes and a youth mentorship program. They serve over 432,000 Monterey County residents, composed of a diverse demographic with a predominantly Hispanic population. The young adults in Monterey County face challenges in transitioning to independent adulthood and achieving self-sufficiency. The contributing factors include underfunded educational systems, low educational attainment, and low financial literacy among youth, undoubtedly resulting in ungainful employment, mental illness, and dependence. P4P's "Pathways to Success" career exploration fair endeavors to boost career awareness and confidence among youth and parents to help address some of these problems, aiming for a 25% increase in career confidence to lead to career stability and self-sufficiency. Despite event delays, post-event engagement metrics aim for a 90% participation rate, expecting positive impacts on youth career exploration.

*Keywords: Youth career exploration, Failure to launch, Community services, Career awareness, Parent-child relationships*

## **Agency & Communities Served**

Partners for Peace (P4P) is an organization that has served Monterey County for over 25 years. Their mission is to “Build strong families for a more peaceful community” (Partners for Peace, 2023). P4P offers parent education classes in multiple languages, for parents with children from five to 17 years old, which focuses on intervention and prevention by offering tools and tips to strengthen communication and create everlasting bonds between parents and their children. They also offer a mentor program, for children between 11 and 14 years old, struggling with adversities, which focuses on education and career exploration.

The agency provides free services to all families in Monterey County. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Monterey County boasts a total area of 3,281 square miles, making the county larger than the state of Delaware, and houses a population of 432,858. Of these individuals, 60.8% of individuals identify as Hispanic, 47% are under 18 years old, 53% are between the ages of 18 through 64 years old and 55.4% speak a language other than English at home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022).

P4P services are available to all families voluntarily, but some families are mandated to participate in our services. Some participants are required to engage services by way of a court order, probation mandate, or referrals from Family & Children’s Services to complete their case plan. P4P understands that each family that solicits their assistance has a unique culture, unique family makeup, and equally unique adversities. The approach they take to support these families has to be just as unique, therefore, P4P must be prepared for any situation. P4P takes the “partners” in their name very seriously. They pride themselves on their ability to collaborate with community partners throughout Monterey County. By working with a plethora of other

organizations they can provide a tailored approach for each unique family. P4P shares a building with some of its closest partners, including; the Monterey County Probation Department, Restorative Justice, Behavioral Health, Drug and Alcohol Intervention Services for Youth, Workforce Development, and Silverstar. Having these organizations a door away provides youth and their parents a one-stop resource shop with the tools needed to successfully overcome any barrier. Sharing a building with these partners allows them to make referrals quickly or receive services immediately if required. P4P plays a crucial role in Monterey County, offering invaluable support and tailored services to families facing diverse challenges. With a commitment to building stronger families and fostering peaceful communities, P4P serves as a cornerstone, collaborating closely with various community partners to provide vital resources and assistance. Their dedication to individualized care ensures that each family receives the unique support needed to overcome obstacles and thrive as a healthy family, contributing significantly to the well-being of the entire county.

## **Problem Model Background and Literature Review**

### **Problem Statement**

"Failure to Launch" often describes young adults who face difficulties in transitioning into independent living. The alarming trend in Monterey County reveals a substantial portion of its young population encountering formidable challenges in effectively transitioning to adulthood. These hurdles encompass facets of their lives, including underfunded education systems, education, and a lack of essential life skills. The failure to achieve a successful transition into adulthood poses significant concerns, leading to adverse outcomes, such as diminished earning potential in later life, mental illness, and dependence on caregivers.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), young individuals, aged 10 to 24, are at the heart of this issue. A successful transition from youth to adulthood entails gaining financial independence, securing stable housing, and actively contributing to one's community. As young adults grapple with the complexities of financial and domestic independence, the family home often serves as a sanctuary. The phenomenon of young adults remaining at home, heavily reliant on their parents, while avoiding higher education and employment, perplexes clinicians and raises numerous questions (Lebowitz, 2015). However, residing with parents can also present challenges to autonomy and self-identity as they endeavor to establish their status as adults (Burn & Szoeki, 2009).

In light of these compelling circumstances, there is an urgent need to address the challenges faced by the young population in Monterey County during their transition to adulthood. This capstone project seeks to explore, understand, and propose practical solutions to enable the successful transition of young individuals into self-sufficient, stable, and contributing members of the community, benefiting both the individuals and society as a whole by sparking their interest in long-term career goals.

Multiple factors collectively such as hindered educational attainment, economic instability, and mental well-being create substantial barriers for young adults to transition into adulthood.

Ultimately, these hindrances obstruct the young individuals' capacity to navigate a successful transition into adulthood, with the potential for long-term impacts on their overall well-being and prospects. "Failure to Launch" frequently characterizes the challenges experienced by young adults as they struggle to transition into self-sufficient, independent living. Factors like mental health issues, educational barriers, and financial dependence can contribute to this phenomenon. It might manifest as difficulty in finding employment, establishing a career, or managing daily

responsibilities. There's evidence suggesting that mental health issues can significantly impact a person's ability to function independently. Conditions like depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, or personality disorders might hinder an individual's capacity to pursue education or hold a job. Without adequate support and treatment, these conditions can contribute to difficulties in launching into independent adulthood.

## **Contributing Factors**

### ***Underfunded Educational Institutions***

Young adults facing challenges in their transition to adulthood do so for a multitude of reasons. The foremost contributing factors encompass inadequately funded educational institutions. This issue is exacerbated by the unequal distribution of educational resources and opportunities among various communities, perpetuating disparities in skill development and future career prospects. Students hailing from underfunded schools or disadvantaged backgrounds frequently encounter obstacles in acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills essential for success in the job market. Consequently, this leads to elevated dropout rates and a diminished likelihood of securing stable employment. These inequalities not only contribute to the perpetuation of cycles of disadvantage but also limit young individuals' employment prospects and, consequently, their potential for achieving financial independence. The projected proportion of teenagers aged 16-19 in Monterey County who are neither employed nor enrolled in school stands at 7%, slightly exceeding California's average of 6.5% from 2016-2020. (Kid Count Data Center, 2022).

Poor educational outcomes can be linked to challenges in transitioning to independence.

Children facing learning disabilities, academic struggles, or lacking adequate educational resources may find it harder to attain higher education or necessary skills for independent living.

In examining the educational landscape of Monterey County, historical trends in educational attainment have depicted a persistent lag behind both California averages and neighboring Central Coast counties. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic further compounded challenges, significantly impacting student academic achievement nationwide. Recent data concerning proficiency levels in English Language Arts/Literacy (ELA) and Math among Monterey County students showcased an upward trajectory until the academic year 2021-22, where rates notably plummeted below pre-pandemic levels. Statewide, the decline in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding ELA and math standards from 2018-19 levels mirrored this trend. In the 2021-22 academic year, only 36% of Monterey County students achieved or surpassed the ELA standard, while a mere 21% met the math standard. This academic disparity is exacerbated by substantial income discrepancies within the county. Carmel, a notably affluent neighborhood, collecting over 49 million in property taxes annually (KION, 2019) demonstrated marked educational advantages with a graduation rate of 98%, boasting a student-to-teacher ratio of 16:1, ranking within the top 5% statewide for both ELA (80-84% proficient) and Math (60-64% proficient) test scores (Public School Review, 2021). Conversely, Gonzalez collecting only 6 million in property taxes (KION, 2019), a community with a substantial population below the poverty limit, exhibited contrasting academic outcomes. Despite a graduation rate of 91%, the student-to-teacher ratio was 22:1, impacting academic proficiency significantly. Test scores in Gonzalez reflected substantial disparities, with only 10-14% proficiency in Math (placing in the



bottom 50% statewide) and 50-54% proficiency in ELA (ranking in the top 50% statewide) (Public School Review, 2021).

Rigorous research spanning multiple states emphasizes the critical role of consistent state school finance reforms in improving both short-term and long-term student outcomes. For instance, a study showcased how equalizing spending levels led to reduced test score disparities among various family backgrounds. Access to longitudinal school finance and student outcome data facilitated extensive investigations. An analysis examining increased funding in public school districts due to 1970s and 1980s reforms revealed substantial impacts. A 21.7% rise in per-pupil spending over 12 years for low-income students closed the education attainment gap between low-income and non-poor families, resulting in a 20-percentage-point increase in graduation rates and an extra year of education. Even a 10% spending increase notably elevated graduation rates, particularly for low-income students, and correlated with a 9.6% surge in adult hourly wages, significantly reducing adult poverty rates.

Recent research on adequacy-focused school funding reforms during the 1990s and 2000s revealed gradual achievements for students in low-income districts. States investing more in education saw improved outcomes for low-income students, with smaller performance gaps between schools serving these students and more privileged populations. Notably, post-reform, the poorest districts experienced a 12% per-pupil spending rise, leading to increased graduation rates of 6 to 12 percentage points. Overall, these studies provide compelling evidence of the substantial academic and economic benefits arising from sustained additional funding for schools serving higher-poverty student populations (Baker, 2017).

### ***Low Educational Attainment***

The journey from adolescence to adulthood is marked by various milestones, including education, career prospects, and independence. However, for many young adults, low educational attainment stands as a significant obstacle on the path to a successful launch into independent adulthood. Inadequate educational achievements contribute significantly to the "failure to launch" phenomenon impacting various facets of young adults' lives.

Statistics underscore the pivotal role of education in shaping prospects for young individuals. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2022), in recent years, approximately one in five young adults aged 18 to 24 had not obtained a high school diploma or equivalent. Furthermore, data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2022) revealed that the unemployment rate for young adults without a high school diploma was more than twice as high as those with a bachelor's degree.

Low educational attainment detrimentally affects several aspects of young adults' lives, impacting their capacity to launch into independent adulthood. With a lack of essential educational credentials, individuals may face restricted access to higher education and career opportunities. This limitation impedes their ability to secure stable employment with adequate income, hindering financial independence.

Educational attainment significantly influences an individual's skill set, affecting their adaptability and competitiveness in the job market. Those with higher educational achievements possess a broader knowledge base, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving abilities, which are crucial in navigating the complexities of today's workforce. Conversely, limited educational qualifications may confine young adults to lower-paying jobs with fewer prospects for career growth and advancement.

Additionally, educational attainment correlates with various social and personal outcomes. Individuals with higher educational achievements often exhibit better health outcomes, engage more actively in their communities, and are more likely to participate in lifelong learning and personal development activities.

To address the challenges associated with low educational attainment among young adults, multifaceted interventions are imperative. Investing in quality education, providing equitable access to educational resources, and offering support systems that encourage academic success are vital steps in ensuring that young adults have the tools necessary for a successful transition into adulthood.

In conclusion, low educational attainment presents a substantial barrier to young adults' ability to launch into independent adulthood. Efforts aimed at enhancing educational opportunities, reducing educational disparities, and fostering a culture that values education are crucial in empowering young individuals to achieve their full potential and successfully transition into self-sufficient, productive members of society.

### ***Low Financial Literacy Among Young Adults***

Insufficient financial literacy among young adults in Monterey County serves as a critical contributing factor to their struggles in transitioning effectively into adulthood. In contemporary society, the transition from adolescence to adulthood represents a critical phase, often referred to as "launching." However, a significant hurdle that impedes this transition for many young adults is the lack of financial literacy. Insufficient knowledge and understanding of financial matters among young adults not only hinder personal growth but also limit their ability to launch successfully into independent adulthood.

Financial literacy encompasses the ability to manage personal finances effectively, make informed money decisions, and understand various financial concepts. Unfortunately, statistics reveal a disconcerting reality: many young adults lack fundamental financial knowledge.

According to a survey by the National Financial Educators Council (2023), nearly 67% of young adults between 18 and 24 failed a basic financial literacy quiz. Another study conducted by the FINRA Investor Education Foundation (2012) found that only 17% of young adults demonstrated a high level of financial literacy, further highlighting the pervasive issue of inadequate financial knowledge among this demographic.

This deficiency in financial literacy significantly contributes to the failure-to-launch phenomenon among youth. As young adults navigate the transition to independence, they encounter numerous financial responsibilities, including managing budgets, handling debt, understanding credit, and planning for the future. Without a solid foundation in financial literacy, these tasks become daunting challenges rather than manageable responsibilities.

The repercussions of low financial literacy are far-reaching. Young adults may fall prey to predatory financial products, accumulate high-interest debt, and struggle with budgeting or saving effectively. The lack of understanding regarding credit scores and loan terms can lead to poor credit management, hindering their ability to secure loans for essential needs, such as education or housing. Moreover, inadequate knowledge of investment and retirement planning may jeopardize their long-term financial stability.

Consequently, the inability to grasp financial concepts and make informed decisions can impede the progress and achievements that mark the transition to adulthood. Young adults may find

themselves trapped in a cycle of financial instability, hindering their ability to pursue educational opportunities, career advancement, or homeownership.

Addressing the issue of low financial literacy among young adults is crucial. Educational institutions, families, and community organizations play a vital role in providing comprehensive financial education and guidance. By equipping young adults with essential financial knowledge, skills, and resources, society can empower them to navigate financial challenges confidently and embark on successful journeys into independent adulthood.

The correlation between low financial literacy and the failure-to-launch phenomenon among youth is evident. Enhancing financial education and fostering a culture of financial responsibility is pivotal in empowering young adults to make sound financial decisions, secure their futures, and successfully transition into independent adulthood.

## **Consequences**

### ***Financial instability***

The failure of numerous young individuals to successfully transition into adulthood in Monterey County has significantly contributed to financial instability among this demographic. This issue, characterized by a lack of stable employment and economic uncertainty, has resulted in multifaceted consequences, particularly in terms of financial security.

The repercussions of inadequate transition support for young adults in Monterey County reverberate significantly in the realm of employment. With a deficit in crucial life skills, educational foundations, and career guidance, these individuals encounter substantial hurdles in securing stable, well-compensated employment opportunities. According to a recent study

conducted by the Monterey County Department of Labor (2022), 40% of individuals aged 18 to 25 are employed in part-time, temporary, or low-paying jobs, often without benefits or job security. This data underscores the stark reality faced by a substantial portion of the young population, highlighting the struggles they encounter in accessing stable and well-paying employment opportunities. As they venture into the job market, their limited skill sets and educational attainment often relegate them to low-wage positions with little job security. Many find themselves trapped in the cycle of unstable employment, grappling with irregular work hours, minimal benefits, and little to no prospects for career advancement. This landscape of precarious employment perpetuates financial vulnerability, inhibits the accumulation of savings, and restricts access to essential resources, further hindering their ability to achieve economic stability and independence.

Consequently, the prevalence of low-wage, unstable employment among these young adults not only impacts their financial well-being but also contributes to broader socio-economic challenges within Monterey County. The perpetuation of this cycle exacerbates income inequality, constrains local economic growth, and hampers the region's overall socioeconomic advancement. It creates a scenario where a segment of the population is unable to contribute meaningfully to the local economy, leading to potential long-term repercussions such as reduced consumer spending, increased reliance on public assistance programs, and a diminished capacity for community development. Addressing this issue requires concerted efforts to equip young adults with the necessary skills, educational opportunities, and mentorship support to break free from the cycle of low-wage, unstable employment, fostering a more robust, inclusive, and thriving economy for Monterey County.

Financial instability among young adults also manifests in their capacity to afford necessities. The Monterey County Community Needs Assessment Report (2022) revealed that over 30% of young adults in the region face challenges in meeting their housing expenses, often resorting to shared accommodation or experiencing housing insecurity. Furthermore, nearly 25% of this demographic report difficulty in accessing affordable healthcare services due to financial constraints. These statistics illuminate the pressing issue of financial instability, as it directly impacts the ability of young people to maintain a stable living environment and access essential services crucial to their well-being.

Moreover, the ripple effects of financial instability among young adults extend beyond immediate financial concerns. It influences their long-term prospects, hindering their ability to invest in education or skill development. Young adults in Monterey County are unable to pursue higher education due to financial limitations, limiting their opportunities for career advancement and perpetuating a cycle of low-wage employment.

In essence, the failure of young individuals to transition effectively into adulthood in Monterey County has led to a stark reality of financial instability. The statistics reveal a harsh truth – a significant portion of the young population struggles to secure stable employment, and access educational opportunities due to financial constraints, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive interventions to address this critical issue.

### ***Mental Health***

Mental health intricately weaves itself into the narrative of young adults who face challenges in transitioning successfully into adulthood. This crucial phase, often dubbed as the "failure to launch," can significantly impact mental well-being, influencing the trajectory of one's life. Mental health issues arise as a consequential byproduct of this struggle, underscoring the importance of addressing this multifaceted concern.

Statistics resonate the gravity of this issue. Research suggests that young adults facing difficulties in transitioning to independence often grapple with mental health challenges. For instance, per the Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States (SAMHSA) (2021), indicate that approximately 20% of young adults aged 18 to 25 experience some form of mental illness each year, ranging from depression and anxiety disorders to more severe conditions like bipolar disorder or schizophrenia. This demographics' susceptibility to mental health issues heightens when faced with the stressors of unemployment, financial instability, or inadequate social support, factors commonly associated with the "failure to launch."

Mental illness emerges as a consequential facet within the problem model addressing the struggle of numerous young individuals in Monterey County as they grapple with the challenging transition into adulthood. The complexities associated with this transition engender a myriad of stressors and uncertainties, contributing significantly to the manifestation of mental health issues among the youth cohort. The inadequacies in societal support structures, educational systems, and employment opportunities render this transition increasingly difficult, exacerbating feelings of anxiety, depression, and a sense of hopelessness among these individuals. The absence of robust frameworks to aid in the navigation of this critical juncture leaves many susceptible to psychological distress, resulting in an upsurge of mental health



concerns as they contend with the pressures of entering adulthood in an environment fraught with difficulties and uncertainties.

Mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety can influence individuals' engagement in healthy behaviors, while physical health issues may pose obstacles to accessing treatment for mental disorders. Enhancing the screening processes for mental health disorders can facilitate timely interventions and ensure individuals receive the necessary treatment, as outlined in Healthy People (2023). According to the 2020 Community Health Needs Assessment (2022), a substantial 34.3% of Monterey County residents rate their overall mental health as "fair" or "poor," notably surpassing the corresponding percentage observed across the United States by double (CHNA, 2022). They also found that the primary health needs identified by the majority of Monterey County residents involve access to healthcare services and affordable healthcare.

Mental health challenges during the transition into adulthood, such as anxiety or depression, can directly affect academic performance. This might lead to increased absenteeism, reduced concentration, or even dropout rates. These challenges hinder educational attainment, limiting opportunities for career growth and success. Mental illness often impacts an individual's ability to secure and maintain employment. Symptoms like lack of motivation, fatigue, or difficulty concentrating can reduce productivity and impair job performance. Consequently, affected individuals might face job instability, financial strain, or unemployment, further exacerbating their mental health concerns. Mental health struggles can isolate individuals, impacting their ability to form and sustain relationships. Feelings of loneliness or social anxiety might hinder social interactions, leading to a lack of support systems. This isolation can worsen mental health issues, creating a cycle that's challenging to break.

Moreover, data shows a significant correlation between unmet educational or career aspirations and mental health struggles among young adults. For instance, reports highlight that individuals who couldn't pursue higher education or secure stable employment due to various limitations often experience higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Van Zon et al, 2017). This is particularly evident in areas where opportunities for upward mobility are restricted, affecting young adults' mental well-being profoundly.

The failure to achieve crucial milestones in early adulthood intertwines with mental health challenges, often leading to a detrimental impact on one's overall well-being. The stresses of unstable employment, financial constraints, unfulfilled aspirations, and societal expectations create a complex web that encumbers the mental health landscape of young adults.

### ***Dependent on Caregiver***

The "failure to launch" among young adults can precipitate a lingering dependency on caregivers, a consequence that intertwines with various life domains. This circumstance, where individuals struggle to achieve autonomy and self-sufficiency, often translates into prolonged reliance on parental or caregiver support, impacting both the individuals and their families.

Statistics substantiate the trend of dependency among young adults facing challenges in transitioning to independence. According to a new Pew Research Center study approximately 52%, or 26.6 million, young adults aged 18 to 29 live with their parents or guardians, a notable increase over the past few decades. Indeed, the only instance when this figure has been greater was prior to 2020, with the peak recorded during the 1940 census at the conclusion of the Great Depression. This phenomenon is particularly evident in certain regions, with Monterey County experiencing a higher-than-average rate of young adults still residing with their families due to high cost of living, economic challenges, job instability, or unmet aspirations.

The "failure to launch" phenomenon often intersects with financial challenges, educational barriers, or mental health concerns, creating a confluence of factors that hinder young adults from achieving independence. This dependency on caregivers not only affects the individuals' sense of self but also impacts their families, altering the expected timelines of transitioning into adulthood.

A significant portion of these young adults are generously cared for by their parents, who assume responsibility for all financial obligations and expenses. While well-intentioned, this parental support can inadvertently hinder the independence of their children. By covering all financial requirements and providing spending money, parents inadvertently foster financial dependence among the youth. Consequently, young adults miss out on opportunities to learn effective financial management, make prudent budgeting decisions, and gain the self-esteem that arises from self-reliance.

The postponement of financial independence among young adults can have far-reaching, enduring consequences. When young individuals do not feel the immediacy of securing stable employment or assuming financial responsibilities like paying rent and utilities, they risk prolonging their reliance on parental support. Consequently, this delay in self-sufficiency can impede their ability to establish a solid financial foundation. Financial dependence on caregivers can stem from various factors, including economic hardships, lack of job opportunities, or disabilities. It can create a cycle where young adults rely on parents or guardians for financial support, making it harder for them to become self-sufficient.

According to a Cal Matters article, more than 50% of Californians who stay at home are not enrolled in schooling and the vast majority work only on a part-time basis. It's unsurprising that

they earn modest incomes. The median income for employed stay-at-home individuals over the age of 25 is just above \$22,000. (Levin, 2019). In contrast, the median income of working stay-at-home individuals stands notably lower when compared to the median household income between 2017-2021, which averaged \$82,013 in 2021 dollars. (United States Census Bureau QuickFacts. 2022).

<b>Contributing Factors</b>	<b>Problem</b>	<b>Consequences</b>
Underfunded educational institutions	Too many young people in Monterey County are failing to successfully transition into adulthood.	Financial Instability
Low educational attainment		Mental illness
Low financial literacy among young adults		Dependent on Caregiver

### **Project Description**

#### **Pathways to Success, A Career Insights Event for Youth and Parents**

#### **Project Justification**

This capstone project endeavors to investigate the intricate web of challenges faced by young adults in their journey to self-sufficiency and adulthood. Through a comprehensive exploration, understanding, and thoughtful recommendations, this endeavor aims to empower young individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to break free from cycles of dependence and achieve financial independence, fostering their well-being and future success. A career exploration event serves as a proactive response to the pressing issue of young adults

experiencing a "failure to launch." The objective of the event is to foster a sense of curiosity and self-discovery in children regarding their future careers by introducing them to a wide range of career options and encouraging self-assessment and exploration of personal interests and strengths. While simultaneously equipping parents with the knowledge and tools necessary to guide and support their child's career exploration and foster their active interest and involvement in their child's future. This initiative closely aligns with our community's overarching goals of promoting personal growth, self-sufficiency, and overall well-being among its young population. By offering this event, we aim to empower the youth of Monterey County to make well-considered choices and take proactive steps toward their long-term educational and career aspirations. Ultimately, the event aspires to reduce the prevalence of the "failure to launch" issue within our community, thereby contributing to the future success and prosperity of our young population.

### **Benefits**

The career exploration project provides a unique win-win opportunity with substantial benefits for all stakeholders involved. Beyond enhancing the agency's reputation by demonstrating its commitment to the community and its promise to invest in the youth and their families, this initiative has far-reaching positive implications for the broader community.

First and foremost, the project empowers clients, particularly young adults, by equipping them with the knowledge and insights necessary for making informed career choices. It goes beyond just education and training; it offers hands-on experiences, mentorship, and exposure to real-world professionals. This empowerment directly impacts the youth's ability to make strategic decisions about their educational and career paths, enhancing their prospects for long-term

success. In turn, this translates into a more informed and motivated workforce for the community, boosting its overall economic stability.

Moreover, the career exploration project fosters a sense of self-assurance and self-reliance among the youth. As they explore their interests and strengths and gain valuable exposure to a variety of career options, they become better equipped to chart their life journeys. This newfound sense of purpose and direction has ripple effects that extend into the community.

By helping young individuals make more informed choices about their futures, this project reduces the prevalence of the "failure to launch" issue, which, in turn, contributes to the long-term well-being of the community. A more informed and self-assured youth population is better positioned to achieve financial independence, thereby reducing societal burdens related to financial assistance programs. Additionally, it paves the way for a more productive and stable workforce, ultimately promoting economic growth and sustainability within the community.

The career exploration project is a testament to the positive change that community-focused initiatives can bring. It not only strengthens the agency's reputation but also fulfills its commitment to the community. Empowering clients, particularly young adults, with the tools for informed decision-making sets the stage for a brighter, more prosperous future for both the individuals and the community as a whole. This initiative truly embodies a win-win scenario where everyone benefits.

### **Implementation Process**

To create a successful career exploration day event for youth and parents, the following steps should be taken into account. First, define your goals and objectives, which should include determining the primary event objectives, such as exposing youth to various career options,

providing networking opportunities, and offering information about educational pathways. Next, create a planning team by assembling a diverse group of individuals who can contribute their expertise in event planning, education, and career development. It's crucial to choose a date and venue that aligns with school schedules and comfortably accommodates all participants. Identify the target audience, specifying the age groups you want to reach, such as high school students, middle school students, and their parents. Develop a detailed event schedule that balances activities for both youth and parents, including keynote speakers, workshops, panel discussions, and interactive activities. Promote the event through various channels, such as flyers, social media, emails, and outreach to schools and community organizations to maximize awareness. Invite professionals from various fields to conduct engaging and interactive workshops and presentations, providing valuable insights into their careers. Incorporate hands-on activities or career simulations to give youth a practical understanding of different professions. Secure funding and sponsorships to cover event costs, including venue rental, marketing materials, and refreshments.

Set up information booths or resource areas where parents and youth can access materials about educational pathways, scholarships, and career resources. Implement a feedback mechanism to collect participant input for evaluating the event's success and identifying areas for improvement.

Recruit and train volunteers and staff to assist with event logistics, registration, and guiding participants.

Assess the event's impact by measuring participation, collecting feedback, and tracking follow-up actions taken by attendees, such as changes in career goals or further education pursuits.

Document the event through photos, videos, and testimonials to promote future events and maintain a record of your success. Finally, provide participants with resource materials, such as a career exploration guide, to support their ongoing career and educational journey. By following this comprehensive approach, you can create an event that effectively engages both youth and parents, helping them make informed decisions about their future careers and educational paths.

### **Assessment Plan & Expected Outcomes**

#### ***Assessment Plan***

The expected outcome for youth is to introduce children to a wide range of career options, encourage self-assessment and exploration of personal interests and strengths, and provide access to real-world professionals for insights and inspiration. The expected outcome for parents is to equip parents with the knowledge and tools necessary to guide and support their child's career exploration, by conducting informative workshops and sessions for parents on career development and educational pathways, creating a supportive community where parents can exchange experiences and tip and offer resources like career assessment tools and guides for parents. The expected attendance is to have a total of 200 youth and their parents attend. The assessment plan for the implementation of the Youth Career Exploration Fair involves a



structured approach to monitor and evaluate the execution process. It begins with a pre-implementation assessment, which includes defining clear objectives, identifying target participant groups, and establishing logistics and resource needs. During the implementation phase, continuous monitoring will track adherence to the timeline, engagement with stakeholders, and troubleshooting of any unforeseen challenges.

Post-implementation evaluation will assess the overall execution quality, stakeholder satisfaction, and the extent to which the fair aligned with its intended objectives using event surveys using SurveyMonkey, an online survey tool, as well as feedback from attendees, mentors, and exhibitors. One measurable expected outcome for the implementation of this project could be achieving a participant satisfaction rating of 85% or higher based on post-evaluation surveys and verbal feedback.

To assess whether the objectives of the career fair for both youth and parents were achieved, here are some questions that can be asked:

For Youth:

1. Did the career fair introduce you to new career options that you hadn't previously considered?
2. Were the activities or presentations helpful in identifying your interests or strengths?
3. Did you feel inspired or motivated by the professionals you interacted with? If so, in what ways?
4. Did the fair provide enough information about different educational pathways related to the careers you're interested in?
5. Were there specific workshops or sessions that you found particularly useful in guiding your career exploration?

For Parents:

1. Did the workshops or sessions offer valuable insights into guiding your child's career exploration?

2. Have you gained more knowledge about the educational pathways available for your child's areas of interest?
3. Did the fair provide resources or tools that you found helpful in supporting your child's career exploration at home?
4. Were you able to engage with other parents and exchange experiences or tips regarding guiding your child's career decisions?
5. Do you feel more equipped now to support and encourage your child in their career exploration journey based on the information and resources provided at the fair?

These questions aim to gauge whether the career fair effectively fulfilled its objectives by eliciting feedback from both the youth and their parents about their experiences, knowledge gained, and the practical utility of the resources and information offered.

### ***Expected Outcomes***

The anticipated outcomes of the career exploration fair cater to the multifaceted needs of both youth and parents. For the youth, the objectives encompass a comprehensive approach:

Firstly, the fair aims to broaden the horizons of young individuals by exposing them to a diverse array of career possibilities, diverging from conventional paths. Secondly, it endeavors to facilitate a process of self-assessment, encouraging introspection to identify personal interests, strengths, and talents that resonate with potential career trajectories. Additionally, the fair seeks to bridge the gap between youth and industry professionals, providing firsthand access to real-world experts across diverse fields. Lastly, it strives to impart knowledge about the various educational pathways and requisite training essential for pursuing specific career aspirations.

Conversely, for parents, the intended outcomes are equally extensive and strategic: The fair aims to empower parents by equipping them with comprehensive knowledge and tools necessary to guide and bolster their child's expedition through the labyrinth of career exploration. This empowerment is facilitated through dedicated workshops focusing on career development, educational pathways, and efficacious methods of supporting their child's aspirations. Moreover,

the event endeavors to establish a supportive community amongst parents, fostering an environment conducive to the exchange of experiences, insights, and resources vital in steering their children toward informed career choices. Lastly, it aims to furnish parents with an assortment of resources, including career assessment tools and guides, empowering them to contribute actively to their child's career exploration journey within the confines of their homes.

Ultimately, the overarching objective is to cultivate an environment where both youth and parents feel adequately equipped, informed, and inspired to navigate the intricate realm of career exploration and decision-making. This collective empowerment aims to culminate in informed choices, proactive parental support, and a heightened engagement towards shaping the future career paths of the youth.

This career exploration fair is designed to address several contributing factors within the problem model of young people failing to successfully transition into adulthood in Monterey County. Primarily, it focuses on mitigating the impact of low educational attainment by providing students with exposure to diverse career options and information about different educational pathways. Additionally, it aims to tackle the issue of underfunded educational institutions by supplementing the limited resources available within these institutions through real-world professional engagements and workshops. Moreover, it indirectly addresses the factor of low financial literacy among young adults by equipping parents with tools and resources to guide their children's career exploration, potentially aiding in financial decision-making and planning for their future. Overall, the event serves as a strategic effort to ameliorate the challenges stemming from underfunded education, low educational attainment, and low financial literacy among young adults in Monterey County.

## **Project Results**

The Youth Career Exploration Fair will primarily aim to enhance participants' understanding, confidence, and interest in pursuing prospective educational or vocational pathways. This intended outcome will be assessed through a comprehensive approach involving various measures. Pre-event surveys will be conducted to establish a baseline of participants' career aspirations and knowledge. Attendance and engagement tracking mechanisms will meticulously record workshop participation, mentor interactions, and overall engagement during the fair. Furthermore, post-event surveys will be planned to evaluate participants' satisfaction, perceived knowledge gain, and intentions regarding their explored career paths, supplemented by one-on-one interviews with randomly selected individuals.

To substantiate the project's success, a blend of quantitative and qualitative methodologies will be employed to gather evidence. Analysis of pre-event and post-event surveys will aim to quantify shifts in participants' career aspirations and confidence levels. Quantitative data, extracted from attendance records and engagement tracking, will provide statistical metrics elucidating participation levels. Qualitative feedback garnered through surveys and interviews, will delve into participants' experiences, perceived learning outcomes, and future career intentions.

Foreseen post-event assessments will envision a significant 25% increase in participants expressing confidence in their chosen career paths. Expectations will also indicate robust engagement, with an estimated 90% of attendees actively engaging in diverse workshops and mentorship sessions. Similarly, it will be anticipated that 90% of respondents in post-event surveys will articulate gaining fresh insights into various career options. While minor logistical challenges, such as a delayed event due to venue procurement issues, may impact some fair

components, overall positive participant feedback is expected, underscoring the fair's success in providing enriching career exploration prospects for the youth. This meticulous and structured approach will enable a comprehensive evaluation of the project's implementation, outcomes, assessment measures, and collected evidence, thereby facilitating a robust assessment of its effectiveness in addressing the identified need.

Following the postponement of the event, an evaluation was conducted on the implementation process involving Kendall Perez, the intern working closely with mentor Vicki Law. The assessment provided a comprehensive overview of Kendall's contributions and skill sets. In summary, "She [Kendall] actively participated in check-in meetings, showcasing attention to detail and outstanding time management amidst her diverse roles as a student, intern, and full-time employee. Kendall's swift grasp of new concepts proved beneficial in a fast-paced environment at Partners For Peace, indicating her adaptability to the agency's growth cycle. Praised for her leadership, she independently engaged multiple partners and devised educational, interactive components geared towards youth in the career exploration track. Moreover, Kendall's meticulous budgeting efforts and adept communication skills earmarked her progress toward a successful event in March 2024. Despite a setback due to venue conflicts, Kendall navigated the situation gracefully, maintaining professionalism and promptly reinitiating the event planning process with renewed enthusiasm. Her commitment to teamwork ensured the event's continuity without overshadowing the endeavor with the drama of cancellation. While commended for her continual dedication and learning mindset, suggestions were made for Kendall to remain self-aware and seek further educational opportunities for ongoing development." (V. Law, personal communication, November 17, 2023).

## **Conclusion & Recommendations**

A career exploration fair for youth and parents represents a proactive step toward mitigating the challenges contributing to the issue of young people struggling to transition into adulthood in Monterey County. It directly addresses several underlying factors, including underfunded educational institutions, low educational attainment, and low financial literacy among young adults.

By organizing a career exploration fair, the community can bridge some of the gaps caused by underfunding in educational institutions. This fair provides an avenue for students and parents to access information about various career paths, educational opportunities, and essential skills required for success. It acts as a supplemental resource to the limited educational guidance available within underfunded institutions, empowering young individuals to make more informed decisions about their future.

Moreover, the fair directly tackles the issue of low educational attainment by offering exposure to diverse career options, potentially inspiring students to pursue higher education or vocational training aligned with their interests and strengths. It catalyzes expanding horizons and breaking barriers that hinder educational advancement, especially in communities where resources might be lacking.

Additionally, the fair's focus on enhancing financial literacy indirectly addresses one of the critical hurdles faced by young adults. By providing information about different career trajectories, earning potentials, and financial planning strategies, it equips both youth and parents with knowledge crucial for navigating the complexities of financial independence, thereby mitigating the impact of low financial literacy on successful transitions into adulthood.

In conclusion, a career exploration fair represents a multifaceted solution that directly addresses contributing factors to the identified issue in Monterey County. By supplementing educational gaps, inspiring educational attainment, and fostering financial literacy, such initiatives offer a holistic approach to empowering young individuals, potentially enhancing their transition into successful and self-sufficient adulthood.

Based on the findings, recommendations for the agency organizing the career exploration fair in Monterey County would involve strategic improvements in planning and resource allocation. To enhance the success of future initiatives, it is advised to plan further in advance and meticulously delegate responsibilities among team members. Adequate lead time allows for comprehensive preparation, securing necessary resources, and ensuring seamless coordination among stakeholders. Additionally, having a well-defined plan for funding, including seeking financial commitments in advance and securing necessary funds beforehand, is crucial. This proactive approach mitigates potential setbacks due to financial constraints and enables more effective execution of such large-scale events. By implementing these recommendations, the agency can significantly enhance the efficiency and efficacy of its projects, ensuring smoother coordination, sufficient resources, and a more impactful outcome for the youth and parents involved in career exploration initiatives.

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## Appendix A

### Project Implementation Plan

Activities	Deliverables	Timeline/Deadlines	Supporting Staff
Defined Goals and Objectives	Determined the primary goals of the event, such as exposing youth to various career options, providing networking opportunities, and offering information about educational pathways	9/6/2023	Mentor
Created a Planning Team	Assembled a diverse team of individuals who can contribute their expertise in event planning.	9/25/2023	Mentor
Chose a Date and Venue	Selected a date that aligns with school schedules and the availability of potential venues. Ensured the venue can accommodate all participants comfortably.	9/25/2023	Mentor and Artemis Delgado (Soledad union School District)
Target Audience	Identified the specific age groups of the target audience and their parents.	09/25/2023	Mentor and support staff Cindy

Scheduled Event	Developed a detailed schedule that includes keynote speakers, workshops, and interactive activities. Make sure there is a balance between activities for youth and parents.	09/25/23	Mentor and support staff Cindy
Defined Goals and Objectives	Determined the primary goals of the event, such as exposing youth to various career options, providing networking opportunities, and offering information about educational pathways	09/25/2023	None
Created a Planning Team	Assembled a diverse team of individuals who can contribute their expertise in event planning.	09/25/2023	Mentor, Cindy, and Brenda
Chose a Date and Venue	Selected a date that aligns with school schedules and the availability of potential venues. Ensured the venue can accommodate all participants comfortably.	09/25/2023	Mentor, Artemis, Cindy, and Brenda

<p>Invitations and Promotion</p>	<p>Created marketing material (flyers, social media posts, programs) to spread the word about the event. Reached out to schools, community organizations, and local media to increase awareness.  </p>	<p>10/06/2023</p>	<p>Mentor and support staff Brenda</p>
<p>Workshops and Presentations</p>	<p>Identified material that would be presented at the event. Invited professionals from various fields to conduct workshops and presentations to ensure they would be engaging, interactive, and provide insights into their careers.</p>	<p>10/11/2023</p>	<p>Mentor and support staff Brenda, Cindy and Melissa</p>
<p>Sponsorship and Budget</p>	<p>Secured funding and sponsorships to cover event costs, such as venue rental, marketing materials, and food/refreshments.</p>	<p>10/11/2023</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Information Booths</p>	<p>If impermists, arrange information booths or resource areas where parents and youth can gather materials about educational pathways, scholarships, and career resources.</p>	<p>10/11/2023</p>	<p>Support staff Cindy and Brenda</p>

Feedback Mechanism	Determined best ways to collect feedback from participants to evaluate the event's success and identify areas for improvement.	10/11/2023	None
Volunteers and Staff	Recruited volunteers from high schools and local partner to assist with event logistics, registration, and guiding participants	10/15/2023	Support Saff Brenda
Target Audience	Identified the specific age groups of the target audience and their parents.	10/11/2023	Mentor

**Vision Statement:** "To empower children to make informed career choices by providing them with valuable insights, and to equip parents with the knowledge and resources they need to support their child's career exploration journey."

**Goals:**

1. **Empowerment of Children:**

- **Goal:** Foster a sense of curiosity and self-discovery in children regarding their future careers.
- **Key Objectives:**
  - Introduce children to a wide range of career options.
  - Encourage self-assessment and exploration of personal interests and strengths.
  - Provide access to real-world professionals for insights and inspiration.

2. **Parental Support:**

- **Goal:** Equip parents with the knowledge and tools necessary to guide and support their child's career exploration.
- **Key Objectives:**
  - Conduct informative workshops and sessions for parents on career development and educational pathways.
  - Create a supportive community where parents can exchange experiences and tips.
  - Offer resources like career assessment tools and guides for parents.

### 3. **Inspiration and Exploration:**

- **Goal:** Spark enthusiasm in children for exploring different career possibilities.
- **Key Objectives:**
  - Arrange interactive hands-on workshops.
  - Showcase success stories of individuals who followed unique career paths.
    - Options:
      1. Welding
      2. Tattoo Artist
      3. Nail tech
      4. Esthetician
      5. Barber
      6. Newscaster
      7. Chef
      8. Nurse
      9. Soil Conservationist/ Ag Engineer
      10. Emergency dispatcher
      11. Correctional Officer
      12. Police
      13. Fire

### 4. **Measurable Outcomes:**

- **Goal:** Evaluate the event's success by measuring its impact on children and parents.
- **Key Objectives:**
  - Collect feedback from participants through pre and post surveys and testimonials.
  - Track the number of children and parents who attend
  - Complete in person surveys with a select few participants to receive feedback on the event, its usefulness and what was learned.

### **Strategies:**

#### 1. **Diverse Program Content:**

- Offer a small range of sessions, workshops, and activities to cater to age groups 11 – 17 years old.

#### 2. **Expert Involvement:**

- Invite professionals from various industries to share their experiences and insights.

#### 3. **Interactive Learning:**

- Incorporate hands-on activities and interactive sessions to engage children and parents actively.

### **Action Plan:**

#### 1. **Event Planning:**

- Secure a venue and date for the event.
- Develop a detailed schedule of activities and sessions.

- Recruit speakers and professionals.
- 2. **Promotion and Outreach:**
  - Create promotional materials (flyers, posters, social media posts, website).
  - Reach out to schools, parent-teacher associations, and local organizations.
- 3. **Resource Development:**
  - Prepare informational materials, career assessment tools, and guides for parents.
- 4. **Logistics and Operations:**
  - Arrange logistics for the event, including registration, catering, and AV equipment.
- 5. **Feedback and Evaluation:**
  - Collect feedback from participants during and after the event.
  - Analyze data and identify areas for improvement.
- 6. **Follow-up and Support:**
  - Provide ongoing support to parents and children through follow-up workshops and resources.

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