

**American  
Jobs for  
America's  
Youth**

**MT**



2022

# ANNUAL REPORT



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American Jobs for America's Youth Montana  
PO Box 923  
Helena MT 59624  
[www.americanjobs4youth.org](http://www.americanjobs4youth.org)  
@AJAYMT406 - Instagram & Facebook

# A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As we ramp up our planning for the 2023 Summer Jobs Program, I am reflecting back on 2022 with very warm thoughts. I am grateful beyond words for our donors, sponsors, and community partners who make our work possible. And I am filled with gratitude that I get to spend each day working toward a truly inspiring mission.

Your support has been instrumental in helping AJAY MT build our foundation as a new nonprofit in 2019, overcome the hurdles of 2020, and grow momentum the past two years. Thank you for all that you do to make a difference for the next generation of Montana's workforce.

2022 was a busy year for AJAY MT! You enabled us to double our budget and staff capacity from 2021 to 2022 so we could meet the growing demand for our programs. Multiple communities asked us to help them create and implement programming, so we stayed busy sharing resources, developing program components, crafting strategies, and supporting the process.

With your help, we are on track to expand our programming again in 2023 and ensure that it is high-quality. I am excited to serve even more Montana communities!

When Brian Kahn first imagined the project called American Jobs for America's Youth, he envisioned an organization that would help teens acquire skills that are vital for the future workforce. AJAY MT is proud to continue this vision. As you know, this work has never been more important.

The power of AJAY MT's work is that it is truly collaborative and community-based. Our partners across the state dedicate time, energy, and resources to implement programs and promote opportunities for students. With our small organization, we are able to magnify our efforts through these community partnerships.

What does the future hold for our youth? AJAY MT wants to ensure that it is bright, productive, and healthy. We also want to ensure our communities can thrive with a robust workforce. AJAY MT is helping to address the statewide challenge of a shortage of quality employees, by offering younger workers training and providing work-based learning experiences. We are excited to continue strengthening our youth, workforce, and communities.

***I look forward to  
working together to make  
2023 an impactful year!***



GABRIELLE EKLUND ROWLEY



*At the end of the day  
it's not about what you  
have or even what  
you've accomplished...  
it's about who you've  
lifted up, who you've  
made better, it's  
about what you've  
given back.*  
- Denzel Washington



# AMERICAN JOBS FOR AMERICA'S YOUTH, MONTANA

## MISSION

*FOSTER LIFE AND WORK SKILLS IN 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 members.

## 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 to provide communities with a sustainable pipeline of valuable employees
- Engage communities to expand opportunities for youth
- Build capacity in communities to educate, support, and mentor young Montanans



*In 2022 AJAY partnered with 16 different organizations. It is a truly collaborative effort in fulfilling our vision and supporting youth in our communities.*





# SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

A VENTURE OF AJAY MT

OVER 4 YEARS:

Every time a student improves their work skills, the community is a little bit stronger. AJAY MT works to help students have the know-how and confidence they need to be quality employees, today and in the future.

Working with community partners, AJAY MT facilitates the Summer Jobs Program (SJP). SJP is a work-based learning program designed to sustainably improve the lives of young workers, ages 15-19.

SJP builds students' employability skills, supports career exploration, and strengthens the local workforce pipeline. The job skills students learn serve them well after the program ends, benefiting them as individuals and strengthening the communities where they live and work.

While we support student learning and growth through work positions, mentoring and work skills trainings, we are also building the local economy by strengthening the workforce pipeline.

146

Students Served

113

Volunteer Mentors

85

Partner Employers

*Thank you to funders and sponsors of the Summer Jobs Program in 2022. You made it possible for us to serve more students and communities this year!*

DENNIS & PHYLLIS WASHINGTON FOUNDATION

GIANFORTE Family Foundation

Jeremy Bullock SAFE SCHOOLS SUMMIT

Reach Higher Montana

HELENA COLLEGE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

CELEBRATING OUR 100<sup>TH</sup> YEAR Opportunity Bank OF MONTANA SERVING MONTANANS SINCE 1922

BlueCross BlueShield of Montana

ANDERSON ZURMUEHLEN

BROWNING KALECZYC BERRY & HOVEN P.C. ATTORNEYS AT LAW

HOME 2 SUITES BY HILTON



# SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

A VENTURE OF AJAY MT

## PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Students participating in the Summer Jobs Program are eager to learn how to be a high quality employee, gain experience, and explore their career options.

### 1 WORK SKILLS TRAINING

Students complete a four-hour paid training focused on soft skills that will serve them well in any position - i.e. time management, communication, problem solving, & conflict resolution.



### 2 SUMMER POSITION

Students are matched with a summer work experience based on their skills and interests. The host employers are invested in developing the next generation of our workforce.



### 3 ADULT MENTORS

Students meet each week or two with a volunteer adult mentor. This mentor provides support and guidance as the student practices work habits and thinks about future opportunities.





# FREE COLLEGE CREDITS

In 2022 we piloted a tuition-free, 3-credit course, Interpersonal Communication in the Workplace, at Helena College for SJP students in the Helena area. The assignments throughout this summer course asked students to reflect on and apply course information to their experiences at work.

Since the pilot was so successful last year, we will offer a free 3- credit Interpersonal Communication in the Workplace course through Helena College to students across the state who are interested in 2023.

*THANK YOU TO REACH HIGHER FOR FUNDING TUITION FOR SJP 2022 PILOT PROGRAM!*



# WORK SKILLS TRAINING



*STUDENTS WHO TAKE COLLEGE COURSES WHILE THEY ARE IN HIGH SCHOOL ACHIEVE HIGHER FIRST-TERM COLLEGE GPAS AND GRADUATE AT HIGHER RATES THAN OTHER STUDENTS.*



1/3 of Helena Area Summer Jobs Participants earned college credit through the pilot program.

In 2022 we partnered with Opportunity Bank of Montana, Helena College, and Career Training Institute to offer optional public speaking, personal finance, budgeting, and resume writing sessions for students in the Helena Area

*IN 2022, SUMMER JOBS STUDENTS ACROSS MONTANA EARNED \$2,500 FOR COMPLETING WORK SKILLS TRAININGS*



# EXPANSION & PARTNERSHIPS 2022

We collaborate with community leaders across the state to accelerate their efforts in developing an effective youth summer jobs program. AJAY MT provides a program toolkit, resources, and guidance throughout the implementation process.

Our communities launch their local Summer Jobs Program by assembling a dedicated team with leaders from across their region. Through their collaborative efforts, the implementation team provides logistical support to businesses, students, mentors, and schools throughout the process.

*“We could not have run our Summer Jobs Program without the resources, technical expertise, and support AJAY MT provided. Our committee relied heavily on the Summer Jobs Program Implementation Toolkit in setting up and successfully running the program this summer and are already looking forward to working with AJAY MT next year.”*

**CAREER OUTREACH DIRECTOR, BILLINGS PUBLIC SCHOOLS**



## ANACONDA

AJAY MT  
Anaconda Community  
Intervention  
Discover Anaconda  
Reach Higher Montana

## BUTTE

AJAY MT  
Headwaters RC&D  
Highland College  
Montana Tech  
Reach Higher Montana

## HELENA AREA

AJAY MT  
East Helena School District  
Helena Area Chamber of  
Commerce  
Helena College  
Helena School District  
Reach Higher Montana  
STOKE

## WORKFORCE FLATHEAD

AJAY MT  
Discover Kalispell Chamber  
Flathead Valley Community College  
Reach Higher Montana  
Workforce Flathead

## YELLOWSTONE COUNTY

AJAY MT  
Big Sky Economic Development  
Billings Chamber of Commerce  
Billings Association of Realtors  
Billings School District  
BillingsWorks  
Reach Higher Montana

# 88%

Employers said the student practiced soft skills in their position (communication, time management)

# 96%

Employers would hire the student again or recommend to other positions

*"I would recommend the program - it helps encourage young workers to consider the manufacturing field, particularly locally."*

Kalispell Employer who retained their summer participant

# 46%

Employers retained the student beyond the Summer Jobs Program

# 100%

Employers would partner with the SJP again



*"I learned the importance of open communication about any and all tasks I had to complete."*



*"It's an amazing opportunity not only gain work experience, but to also make connections and develop new skills."*



# THE POWER OF MENTORING

Our 2022 intern Michaela Wolfinger revealed an unexpected connection between the AJAY MT model and improving public health in our communities.

## Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Adverse Childhood Experiences, also called ACEs, are traumatic events that happen during childhood and can have a long-lasting negative impact on a person's overall health and well-being as they enter adulthood.

Individuals with multiple ACEs may be more likely to perform poorly in school, be unemployed, and develop high-risk behaviors.



## Mentoring & Positive Benefits

Researchers have identified several factors that can strengthen one's ability to overcome adversity. Namely, safe, stable, and nurturing relationships build resilience, prevent violence, improve mental health, and support health across one's lifespan.

Mentorship is a key tool in helping those with a high number of ACEs. "Relationships with caring adults who are positive role models can prevent ACEs and improve future outcomes for young people" (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019).

Students in the Summer Jobs Program meet with a mentor multiple times. AJAY MT not only is creating stronger local economies by improving the employment pipeline, but is also building resilience from negative childhood experiences through our job skills training and mentoring components. While AJAY MT is a youth and workforce development organization, a better understanding of the programs' impacts allows AJAY MT to serve students and their communities better.

## 225 MENTOR HOURS IN 2022



Click to watch a video for mentors, made by a student

*"I recognize how important a mentor was to me as a youngster, and want to pass that on however possible. I think this is a great program for young people with little to no direction, and confused about life after high school.*

*We allowed the student last year to use tools and work alongside us having no prior experience. He had tons of questions and interest in many different fields, and we were able to give him the chance to do a lot of things he was always curious about.*

*At the end of the term, everyone noticed a huge increase in his self-confidence, and we were proud to be a part."*

- 2022 Mentor



# CAPACITY BUILDING - 2022

*In order to achieve our vision of all young Montanans having access to meaningful work and professional support, AJAY MT employs a variety of strategies.*

*Strategy in Action: AJAY builds capacities in schools and communities to educate, support, and mentor young Montanans.*

## A FRAMEWORK FOR POVERTY TRAINING

### IMPACT:

Students of all backgrounds have the knowledge and skills to succeed in their academic and work worlds.

### GOAL:

Increase the number of educators and student service professionals across Montana trained in helping students of all economic backgrounds achieve academic, professional, and personal success through A Framework for Understanding Poverty by Ruby Payne.

### 2022 EFFORTS:

AJAY MT presented at the Montana College Attainment Network Annual Conference. The workshop focused on helping students better understand common hidden rules of school and work, why hidden rules can be a barrier, and some strategies to teach hidden rules to students.

AJAY MT trained

# 25

*professionals from nonprofit organizations, government, and education (K-12, 2 & 4 yr Post-Secondary, and Tribal Colleges)*

**Montana CAN!**  
MONTANA COLLEGE ATTAINMENT NETWORK

*Montana College Access Network supports, services, and enhances its affiliate members in their efforts to increase post-secondary participation and completion for all Montanans.*



a framework for  
**UNDERSTANDING  
POVERTY**



# PARTNERING WITH THE MONTANA WORK-BASED LEARNING COLLABORATIVE

*Through the WBL Collaborative, AJAY MT has supported new initiatives, connected with new program and funding partners, and gained insights from diverse stakeholders."*

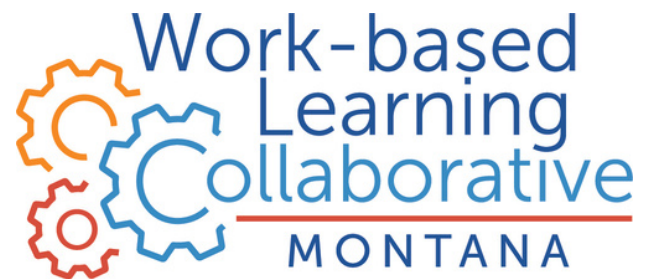
- GABRIELLE EKLUND ROWLEY

## IMPACT:

Increased opportunities for educators to enhance pathways for student learning; tools and resources to support employers who hire youth employees.

## GOAL:

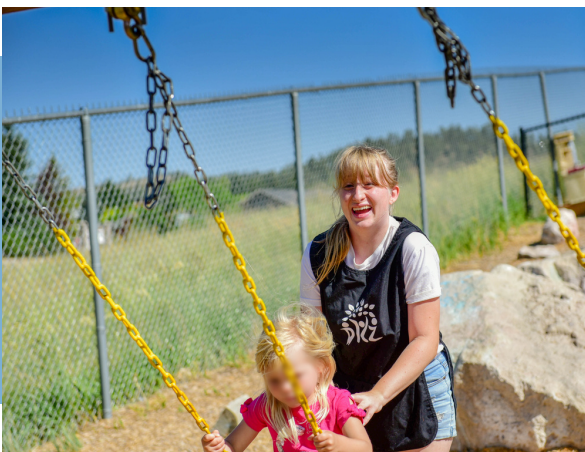
Increase statewide capacity to grow young employees' work skills by connecting to new partners and prioritizing efforts.



## 2022 EFFORTS:

The Work-based Learning (WBL) Collaborative published an Employer Work-based Learning Toolkit and launched a Teacher Externship program to connect teachers with industry partners.

The WBL collaborative has over 30 different members. In one year, we created a common vision and identified working strategies to support Work-based Learning (WBL) across Montana. WBL includes job shadows, work-site tours, internships, and apprenticeships.



# MAXIMIZING WORK-BASED LEARNING WORKSHOP

## IMPACT:

More employers will hire young employees with positive impact on both business and employees.







## GOAL:

Increase the tools and resources student organizations and employers have to support young employees in succeeding the workplace.

## 2022 EFFORTS:

AJAY MT collaboratively hosted an InternBridge workshop called Maximizing Work-Based Learning Opportunities in June 2022. Attendees gained practical tools for working with youth and new strategies for preparing for and hosting young employees. They received resources to share with their organizations and partners. Sponsoring organizations helped minimize the cost of the workshop to make it accessible for participants.

### Key Benefits for Employers Hosting Interns

-  **Increased Productivity** - interns assist staff to achieve what may not otherwise be completed
-  **Cost Effectiveness** - intern programs save in recruitment costs and potential mis-hires
-  **Broadened Capabilities** - interns bring new skills and knowledge
-  **Injected Enthusiasm** - interns add fresh ideas and positive energy

From InternBridge, 2022

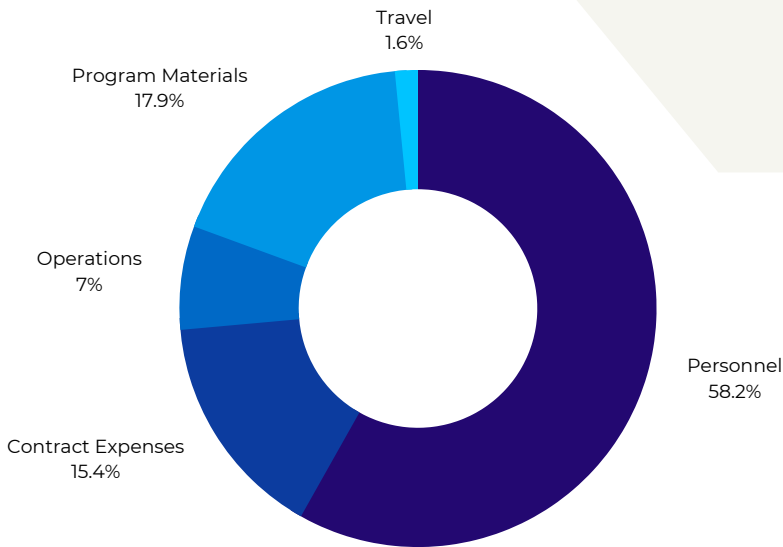
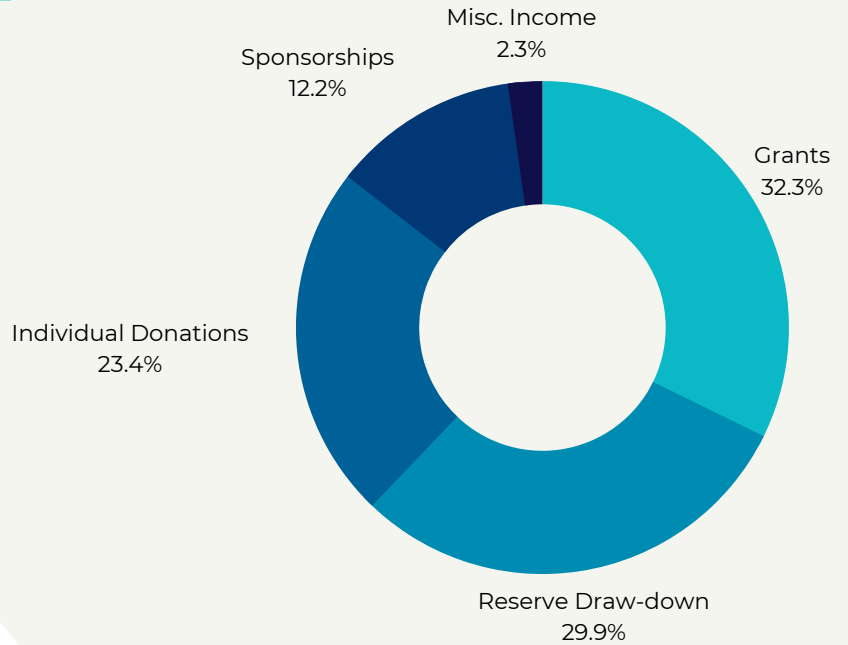
THANK YOU TO REACH HIGHER MONTANA, HELENA WINS, MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & INDUSTRY, HELENA COLLEGE - UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA, MONTANA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF MONTANA, MONTANA RADIO COMPANY, & CARROLL COLLEGE FOR SPONSORING THE WORKSHOP WITH AJAY MT.



# FINANCIALS 2022

## Income Total: \$83,682

Foundations (Grants)	\$27,000
Individual Donations	\$19,545
Sponsorships	\$10,250
Misc. Income	\$1,888
Reserve Draw-Down	\$25,000



## Total Expenses: \$83,591

Personnel	\$48,619
Contract Expenses	\$12,878
Operations	\$ 5,867
Program Materials	\$14,928
Travel	\$1,299

In-kind contributions from Reach Higher Montana, Montana Radio Company, and Carroll College = \$7,140

254.5 Volunteer hours = \$7,622



\*One hour of volunteering has a \$29.95 cash equivalent, as calculated by Independent Sector from data provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022)

# THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS & SPONSORS

Anderson ZurMuehlen & Co., P.C.

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Montana Chamber of Commerce

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