



EPIC

**Exploring Potential
Interests & Careers**

Student Day Playbook

**Bridging education and industry for
Central Minnesota students and
businesses.**

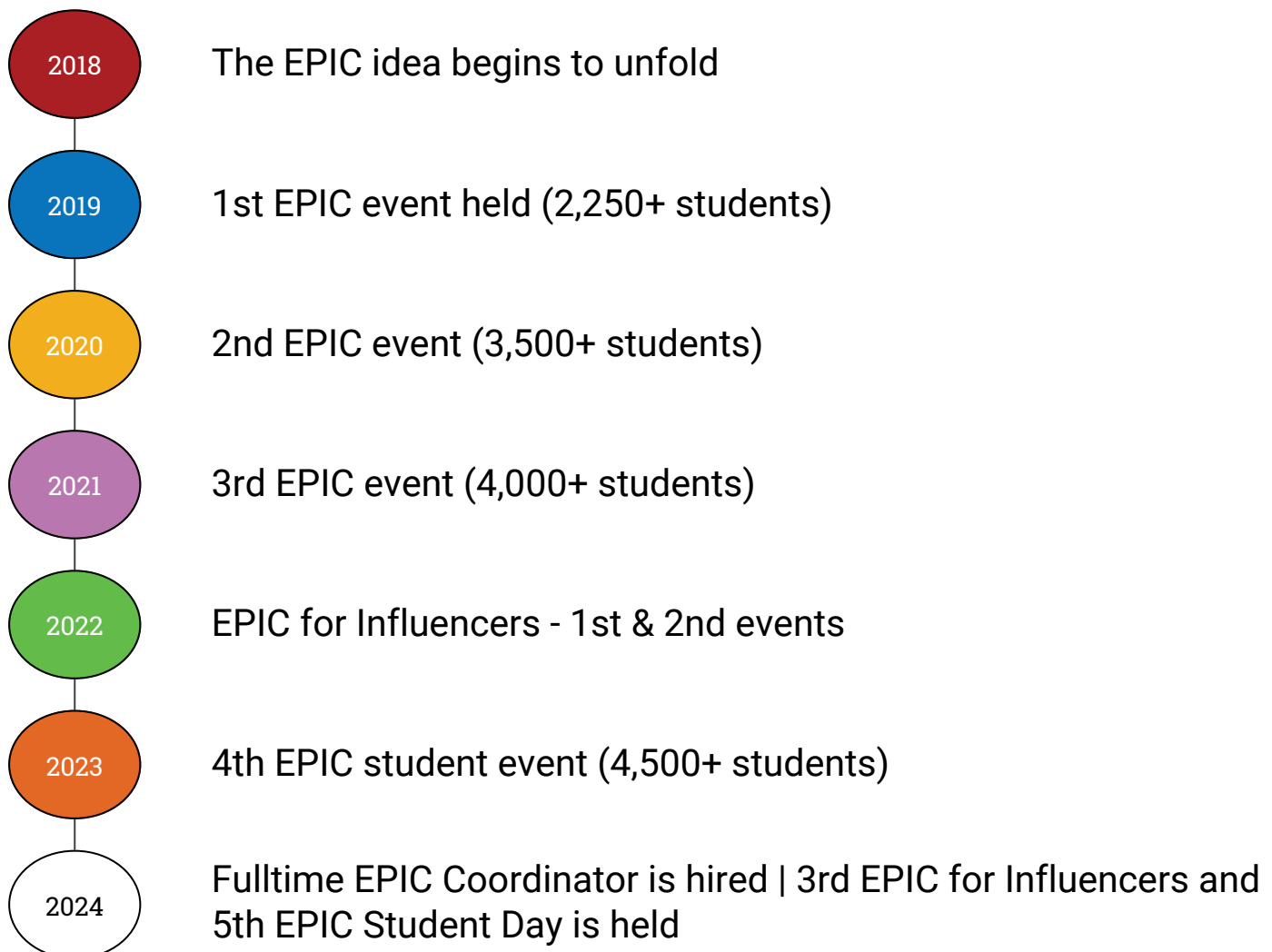
Table of Contents

History	1
Evolution	1
Organizational Chart	2
Position Descriptions	2 & 3
Clusters & Descriptions	4
Funding	5
General Overview of EPIC Student Day	5
Business Items	6
School Items	7
Volunteers	9
Important Partners & Contact Info	10

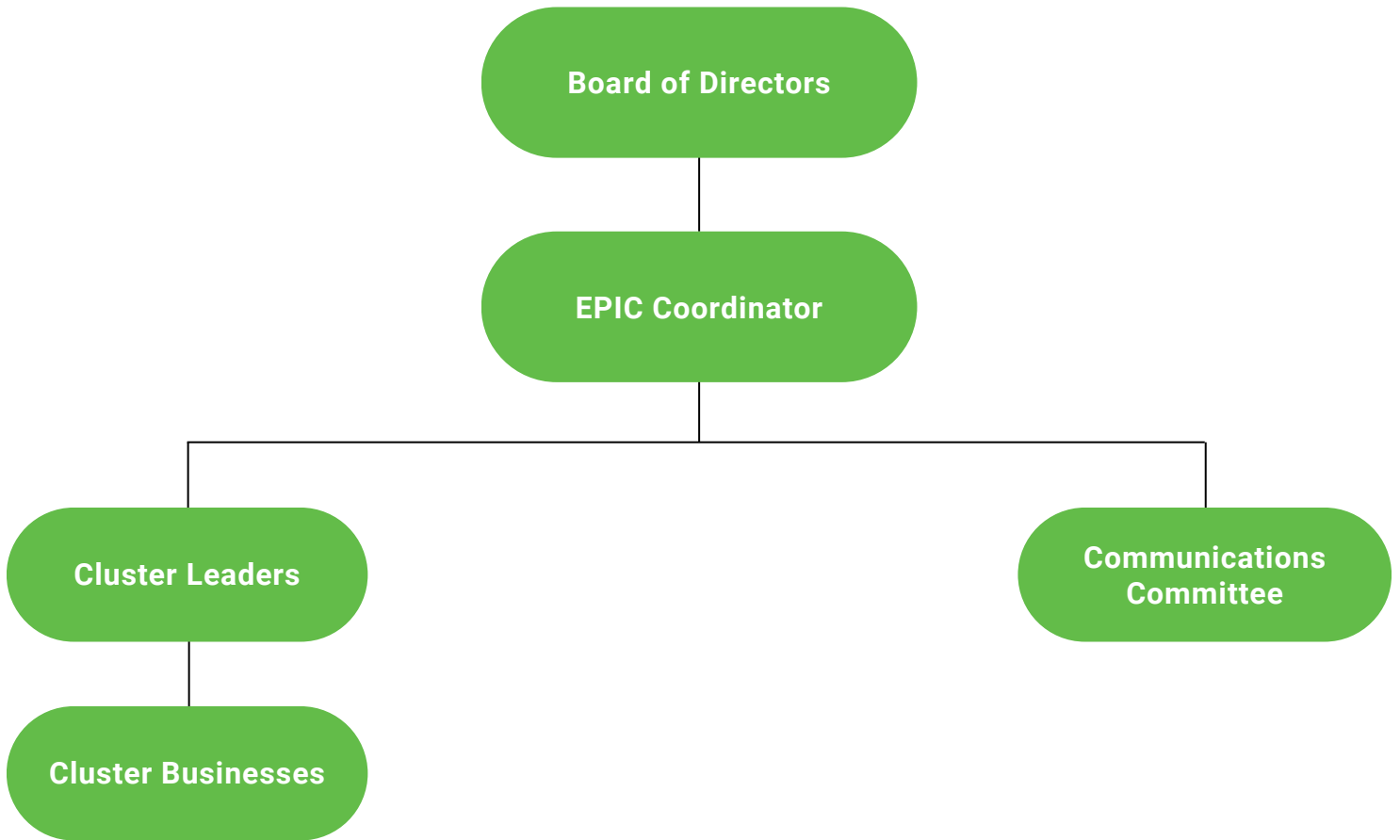
EPIC History

EPIC (Exploring Potential Interests & Careers) is a Central Minnesota community collaboration that provides accessible, engaging, hands-on experiences, empowering people to discover and navigate career pathways. It was started in 2018 by a group of caring professionals that came together to help create an event that helped students exploring careers in the area. This group visited the Bridges event in Brainerd, MN and modeled EPIC after it. Below, you can see the timeline of the organization and how it has grown over the years! In 2024, EPIC hired a full time coordinator to facilitate the collaborative throughout the year.

Evolution of EPIC



EPIC Organizational Chart



EPIC Board of Directors

The EPIC Board of Directors consists of 13 members from for profit, non-profit, secondary and post-secondary education sectors. The secondary education representatives come from St. Cloud Area, Sauk Rapids - Rice and Sartell - St. Stephens school districts. They are from all levels of the administration. Our post-secondary representatives are from St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud Technical and Community College and St. Bens/St. Johns. We also invite our engaged industry cluster employers to have representatives on our board.

EPIC Coordinator

The EPIC Coordinator is responsible for overseeing the day to day operations of EPIC. This includes but is not limited to working with partners to plan the EPIC events, maintain and grow relationships with sponsors and partners, explore funding opportunities and expand the EPIC network. Please note that an EPIC Coordinator was not hired until 2023 when it was determined that the size of the initiative and day to day operations became too much for the board to handle and when they raised enough capital to fund a full-time coordinator's salary.

Communication Committee

The EPIC Communication Committee is tasked with overseeing the branding, marketing and communications that EPIC produces. It is made up of members from our partners that have an interest in marketing for EPIC. The committee handles the marketing guidelines for EPIC as well as overseeing the website and social media pages. The EPIC Coordinator meets with the committee once per month to review items and discuss any communications coming from the EPIC Coordinator / board. The members of the committee also help out as volunteers on EPIC Student Day.

Cluster Leaders

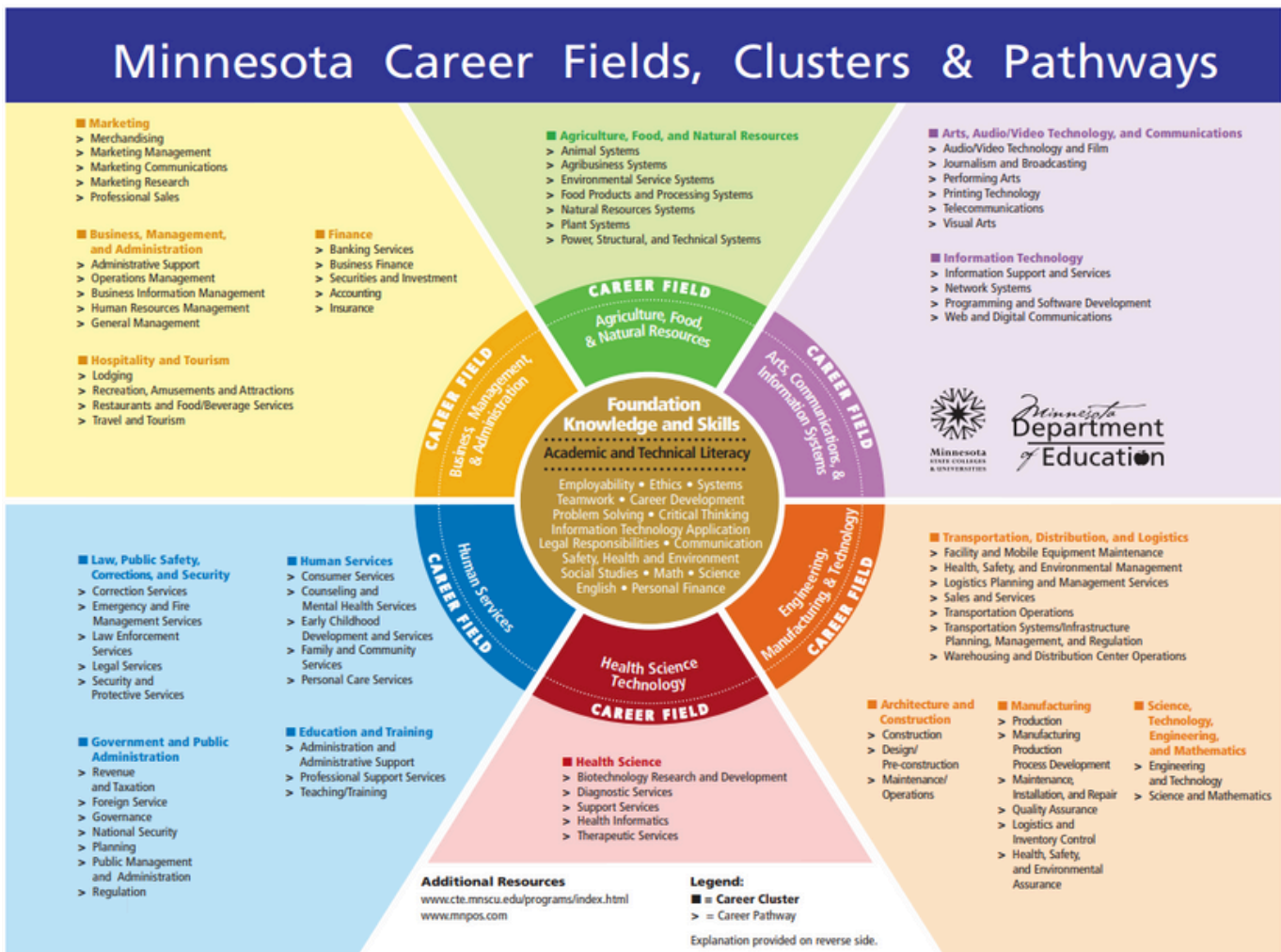
Cluster Leaders are the professional(s), both industry and educational, within each cluster that leads the cluster. This person could also be a professional from outside the cluster that is passionate about that cluster. They organize meetings to assist the planning of hands-on activities for EPIC Student Day with the participants within the cluster. They encourage companies to work together on activities as well as make sure that the materials needed for the activities are provided. They also act as a liaison between the EPIC Coordinator and the businesses for any communication for EPIC Student Day or any other important information throughout the year. A description of responsibilities is linked [here](#).

Cluster Businesses

These are the businesses that participate in EPIC Student Day and other EPIC initiatives. Visit our list of EPIC Student Day activities to see specific engaged employers! It is linked [here](#).

Clusters

We use the Minnesota Department of Education's career wheel to cluster like businesses together. On the day of the event, they are all placed near each other in classrooms. We have also had some clusters that have needed to be broken out into mini clusters due to the overwhelming support from businesses within their clusters.



Funding

Currently, EPIC's budget is over 75% funded by the generous donations of the St. Cloud business community and private donors. For start up funding, we partnered not only with local businesses, but also with the Greater St. Cloud Development Corporation, the United Way of Central Minnesota, and the Initiative Foundation. The other 25% of our funding comes from grants from local foundations and private funds.

General Overview

Overview:

EPIC Student Day is an event that brings together 4,500 students from 30 high schools, from 27 districts, within 22 communities, located in 10 counties. This event is a hands-on approach to career exploration. Our goal of the event is to have students interact with a variety of career fields throughout the clusters with hands-on activities. This event would not be possible without the support of the volunteers and staff of St. Cloud Technical and Community College. Below you will find all of the information needed to start planning your own career exploration day!

Where:

We are very fortunate to partner with St. Cloud Technical and Community College for use of their campus. The event takes over the campus for the day of the event as well as the night before for set up. The campus, because it is also a technical college, provides the equipment and space for the manufacturing, transportation and health care clusters. The college allows us to use the equipment for these clusters as well as provides us the space.

When: We have tried this event in all of the seasons of the school year, but through that trial and error and many conversations with our school partners, we have decided to continue to host it in the fall, typically the last Friday in October. This way we miss the homecoming rush in the beginning of the year, don't run the risk of having to reschedule due to snow and we also avoid the testing schedule of spring.

Business Items

Business Overview for Student Day: About 150 employers participate in EPIC Student Day. We welcome businesses of all sizes and industries to participate. The cluster leaders work with the employers to come up with hands-on activities for EPIC Student Day. It is recommended, depending on the number of employers in the cluster, that employees work together for activities. We know that in the open market they are competitors, but on this day, we ask them to work together to lift up their industry. We also recommend the companies avoid items with their logos such as swag. We remind them that this is not an event that they will immediately hire employees from, rather, a way for students to explore careers.

Cost to Participate: There is **no charge** for a company or educational partner to participate.

Recruitment of Businesses: Both the EPIC Coordinator and the Cluster Leader recruit businesses for the event. New businesses are welcome to join the cluster at any time.

Cluster Planning Meetings: The cluster planning meetings are organized and led by the cluster leader. These meetings bring the cluster businesses together to welcome new businesses and to plan the activities. The EPIC Coordinator also attends as many of the cluster meetings as possible to keep the lines of communication open.

Communication with Cluster Participants - All communication for the day of the EPIC Student Day comes from the cluster leaders. This makes it easier for communication.

Day of Email - The day of info includes everything from where to park and check in, where their classroom is, schools attending, school schedule, where the hospitality rooms and lunch are located, when clean up can start to happen, and a reminder that a follow up survey will be sent out following the event. We typically try to get this info out to the businesses a week before the event.

A sample of the email can be found [here](#).

Business Items Continued

Ways You and Your Business Can Engage with EPIC | Exploring Potential Interests & Careers!

Volunteer at one of our events

Each of our events requires volunteers to help them go off with out a hitch! You can volunteer at one to learn more about EPIC and the work we do!

Be a Cluster Member for our events

Our events are powered by the business community. We group them in link businesses in clusters according to the Minnesota Department of Education Career Wheel. You can join one or more clusters to become involved.

Become a Cluster Leader

Each cluster has a cluster leader that acts as a liaison between the EPIC Coordinator and the cluster. They organize meetings with cluster participants to organize activities for EPIC Student Day as well as pass along any communication necessary to the cluster participants

Financial Support

Over **75% of EPIC's budget** is made up of business contributions. EPIC's success would not be possible without the business communities support. In order to continue to provide the opportunities to students, additional funding is needed. We appreciate your generosity.

Become a Committee Member

Become a member of the communication committee! This committee meets once per month and assists with the communication and marketing strategy for all things EPIC!

School Items

School Overview: School participation in EPIC has spread through word of mouth. Every year the number of districts that attend has grown. Due to this, we have unfortunately had to limit the amount of students that each district is able to bring as we are at capacity at 4,500 students.

School Cost: There is **no charge** for a school to attend this event.

School Registration: In order to accurately assess how many students each school would like to bring, we ask them to register with an estimation of how many students they would like to bring in the spring of the previous year. We do this with a Google Form to make it easy. A link to to a sample form can be found [here](#).

School Schedule: Schools attend in 2 hour time blocks. We have found that this is the ideal length of time. We do not allow schools to select when they come to the event, but do take into consideration how far away schools are coming from as well as how many students they are bringing. A sample schedule can be found [here](#).

School Items Continued

School Communication: All communication to the school goes through a school liaison or the EPIC Coordinator. This allows for less confusion when the schools have questions. Our school liaison happens to be a member of the communications team for ISD 742. She also handles preparing the scheduling of timeslots for the schools. We send out multiple emails to the schools before the events to help prepare the students for the day of the event as well as post event school activities.

Student Identification: We ask schools to have their students wear school colors so they may be easily identifiable while at the event. We do realize that this may not be a possibility for some of the students. This is not a requirement to attend the event.

School Chaperones: We ask schools to bring an appropriate amount of chaperones for the number of students they bring and for those chaperones to actively engage in the activities while watching over their students.

School Lunch: We do not provide lunch to the schools that attend the event. The schools that are coming from a distance either bring bag lunches from the school or they eat on their travels home.

Follow Up Survey: After the event, we send a survey to all students that attended. It is nice to hear their feedback about what went well and what we need to improve on. We have historically done this on Google Forms and have offered a reward for better participation. We distribute this through the school counselors. You can find a sample [here](#).

Pre-Event Information: EPIC provides curriculum for schools to utilize if they choose prior to the event to help prepare students for the event. It can be overwhelming to walk into the event with about a thousand other students and then also have to make a decision as to where to go once they are inside. These items can be found on our website and are linked [here](#).

Post-Event Information: EPIC also provides post-event curriculum so students have resources for what the next steps are for continuing career exploration. These items can be found on our website and are also linked [here](#).

Educator Resources: EPIC also provides resources for educators for pre and post event. This allows them to better prepare their students and allows them to provide resources to their students after the event. These items can be found on our websites, but they are also linked [here](#).

Volunteers

Volunteer Overview: Our event would not be possible without the generous support of our volunteers. About 300 volunteers give of their time on the day of the event. We are very fortunate to partner with the United Way of Central Minnesota, and the Boys and Girls Club of Central MN to utilize their volunteer networks. Both organizations send out information about the event with a link to the EPIC website for the volunteers to sign up. We are also lucky to partner with SCTCC to tap into their faculty for volunteer positions.

Volunteer T-Shirts: We provide t-shirts for all volunteers. This allows students, teachers employers, ect. to easily identify a volunteer if they have a question during the event. Our t-shirt colors are coordinated with the colors on the MN Department of Education career wheel.

Volunteer Positions: Below you will find a list of the volunteer positions and descriptions that we currently have for EPIC Student Day. We take a look at these positions after the event each year to see if we need to add or change positions.

- Bus Greeters - These volunteers greet the buses from each school as they arrive. They get on the bus and read from a script some information for the day. The script is linked [here](#).
- Sign Holders - We have many volunteers hold directional signs throughout SCTCC's campus throughout the day.
- Hospitality Room Hosts - These hosts are responsible for refilling the snacks and water that we provide for the businesses and volunteers.
- Student Bag Distributor - These volunteers hand out the cinch sacks that we give to each student as they walk in.
- Hall Monitor - Monitor the halls and make sure that students are acting appropriate.
- Cluster Liaison - Be the first point of contact on the day of if the clusters need anything.

Volunteer Lunch: We feed the volunteers for donating their time.

Volunteer Time Slots: We offer multiple time slots for our volunteers. Some of them include all day, half day or 2 hour slots.

Volunteer Follow Up: After the event, we also survey our volunteers so we know what we could make better for the next year. A link to the survey can be found [here](#).

Important Partners

Business Community
School Districts
Post Secondary Institutes
Economic Development Authority or Corporation
City Leaders
Chamber of Commerce
Workforce Centers
Non-profits

EPIC Contact Information

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