

DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT

Suggested

Quarterly Narrative Report

The information that DEI projects provide in the ETA Narrative Report template helps to track grantee actual performance outcomes in relation to the negotiated goals on a quarterly basis. For each reporting period, it would be helpful if grantees could provide cumulative information for each quarterly update.

| Grantee Information | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Grantee Name: Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development | |
| Address: 332 Minnesota Street, Suite E200 | |
| City/State/Zip: Saint Paul, MN 55101 | |
| Grant Number : DI – 23803-12-75-A-27 | Report Period: 1/1/14-3/31/14 |

Status of Grant Implementation and Progress To-Date

For this grant reporting period, please provide the status of implementation of the Strategic Service Delivery Components that your project is implementing to include: a. current status; b. challenges, and c. notable activities:

- Integrated Resource Team Approach:**

a. Current status:

MN's three Implementation Sites continued to convene Integrated Resource Team (IRT) meetings for DEI participants during this quarter and develop partnerships which will strengthen these teams and address the needs of the participants. The Youth Profile Form and Youth Action Plan documents being used by the sites help guide the formation of the IRTs. Activities in the implementation sites include:

In the South Central region, IRT meetings were explained and offered to all youth enrolled in DEI. During this quarter five IRT meetings were held, resulting in co-enrollments and added resources offered to youth and their families. Through the IRT meetings further resources and contacts have been discovered and added to the local site Resource Mapping Tool.

Rural Minnesota CEP (RMCEP) has established 55 Integrated Resource Teams (IRT) throughout the Workforce Service Area 2 (WSA 2) area. Utilizing the *Guideposts for Success* to provide a holistic approach to the participant's goals has been effective. A roadmap tool was created to better illustrate each participant's pathway to success in the career pathway they want to pursue. This tool has created clarity and perspective to not only the participant but the family and professionals that support these goals. In an effort to accommodate those persons with disability that do better with systematic structure, RMCEP has modified the Youth Action

Plan to be a chronological checklist instead of organized by each *Guidepost*. The *Guidepost* is now represented by a numeric indicator next to the task.

In the Southeast region, the DRC and case managers continue to establish and identify key players in IRTs throughout the WSA. The IRTs are explained to each youth at enrollment into DEI and each DEI youth is assessed to determine when an IRT is appropriate. The IRTs have resulted in additional resources and connections in the community and have been an effective way to connect parents and inform them of the resources available.

b. Challenges:

One of the challenges encountered by all sites is coordinating schedules of IRT members so the appropriate people can attend the meeting. The South Central DRC has found that at times it has been difficult getting parent involvement. Other times the parents can be over involved by answering questions and speaking for the youth. The DRC often needs to remind everyone who participates in the IRT that the meeting is to be led by the youth.

Collaboration between RMCEP and Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) continues to improve in most areas. RMCEP and VRS are co-located in the WorkForce Centers but cooperation between the two agencies is not consistent across the service area. Staff is working to build consistent communication and collaboration between RMCEP and VRS across the entire region.

c. Notable activities:

The South Central DRC facilitated an IRT for a youth at a local high school that included the youth's Minnesota Valley Action Council (MVAC) Vocational Advisor, VRS Counselor and School Counselor. The youth changed his goals and career choice to what he feels is a more realistic goal for him with his type of disability. The youth wanted help from the IRT members to begin working toward his new goal. This IRT resulted in the youth starting an extended work experience at the school in his interest area. Using resources from both VRS and MVAC will allow this work experience to be longer than would be possible with just one agency's resources. Both agencies and the school will provide monitoring and follow-up services for this youth.

Two agency-wide trainings on DEI and Ticket to Work principles and strategies were conducted to train both youth and adult WIA staff in the RMCEP region. As more IRTs are established and more partners are brought to the table, more collaborative relationships have developed. In the last quarter, RMCEP staff has seen increased involvement from county social workers throughout the service area further increasing the effectiveness of the IRTs and bringing more resources in support of the participants.

• ***Guideposts for Success:***

a. Current status:

Each local implementation site continues to use the Youth Profile and Youth Action Plan forms (or variations thereof) developed by PACER Center to document the use of the *Guideposts for Success* in the assessment and development of service strategies for youth participants.

In the South Central region the *Guideposts for Success* is addressed in the Youth Action Plan with all youth participants in the DEI. The DRC tracks all of the DEI participants to ensure that the document is completed with every youth. The DRC reviews the Youth Action Plans in Active Resource Coordination (ARC) and IRTs.

The *Guideposts* are fully integrated into the IRT process in the RMCEP region and the *Guideposts* are being used with all youth, not only those youth with disabilities. The resource mapping tool is used to identify gaps that could derail a participant's success. *Guidepost*-related activities are illustrated with the roadmap tool (mentioned above). Community Transition Interagency Committee (CTIC) members and Individual Educational Plan (IEP) teachers have accepted the idea that the *Guideposts for Success* are a useful way of providing transition-age students with the tools they need to succeed. RMCEP staff has been instrumental in convincing the three CTICs involved with the DEI to focus on *Guideposts for Success*.

The Southeast DRC is continuing to promote *Guideposts* with case managers and partners and within the community. Each case manager utilizes the *Guideposts* when working with the youth and references the *Guideposts* in IRT meetings. The DRC is tracking each DEI enrollment to ensure that the Youth Action Plan has been completed which ensures that the *Guideposts* have been addressed with each youth.

b. Challenges:

The South Central region is still modifying the process for fully incorporating the *Guideposts for Success* into the youth program enrollment and assessments. The DRC plans to continue to provide additional training to youth counselors to reinforce the value and review the Youth Action Plan so it is easier for staff to use with youth. Additional training for youth counselors on the *Guideposts for Success* is planned for next quarter.

RMCEP is working to raise awareness of youth staff and WIA Adult staff who work with those ages 24 and younger about the importance of addressing all five *Guidepost* areas, and sharing this information with partners to develop strategies to address the gaps through the goals in the Individual Service Strategy (ISS).

The Southeast DRC is continuing to promote and market the *Guideposts*, especially among school staff which is a sector that should be aware of the value of the *Guideposts*.

c. Notable activities:

A MN DEI Partners for Youth flyer is available from the project website and includes a brief description of the *Guideposts for Success*. The implementation sites continue to introduce and reinforce the *Guideposts for Success* among local staff, partners, participants and families.

The MN DEI Partners for Youth Needs Assessment Survey determined that partners in the local regions are interested in additional training on the *Guideposts*. Additional *Guideposts* training is a focus of the CTIC training described below.

Guideposts have been introduced to all DEI participants and their IRT members in the RMCEP region. The DRC uses the resource mapping tool to identify gaps for each participant. The roadmap tool was created to effectively present the collaborative Individual Service Strategy (ISS) and provide a substantive product that will drive the IRT activities for the participant. The modified action plan is created after all partners have agreed to the tasks on the roadmap. In response to a request from the RMCEP DRC, PACER staff presented information on the *Guideposts for Success* during a February 19th training event for their workforce development staff working with young adults age 21 and above.

In the Southeast region, the Rochester CTIC planned a training to be held in April for parents, youth, school faculty and community members who want to learn about the *Guideposts*, how to apply them and their value to each youth.

In February and March of 2014, PACER staff met several times with MN Department of Education (MDE) Transition Specialist, the DRCs of two implementation site regions, and representatives of Community Transition Interagency Councils (CTICs) in their regions to plan presentations on the *Guideposts for Success* to family and community groups later this Spring. Presentations on the *Guideposts* were requested by these CTICs and are being offered in conjunction with the MDE DEI mini-grants to CTICs in implementation areas. Presentations will be delivered by PACER staff, MDE and DRCs. They will address the *Guideposts* themselves and how to use them as tools to promote employment in a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a young person's Individualized Service Strategy (ISS). Two sessions were scheduled in Rochester for April 9th and two sessions in Brainerd on April 24.

• **Partnerships and Collaboration:**

a. Current status:

At the state level, Minnesota's Shared Vision for Youth (SVY) State Team continues to be an active group meeting on a regular basis to promote and develop state-level interagency collaboration in serving the neediest youth, including youth with disabilities. The DEI Steering Committee is a subset of the SVY team. The full SVY team met on December 11 and will meet again this summer; the group did not meet during this quarter while the State Legislature was in session.

The three implementation sites continue to reach out to community organizations to spread the word about DEI and to get information to providers. In addition, the local implementation sites are working with each other to share best practices and strategies that they are developing as the project is progressing. The State Co-Leads facilitate a monthly conference call with the three sites to provide a forum for sharing their successes and challenges.

The South Central region is currently focusing recruitment efforts on youth that are not connected to the WSA's youth programs. Project staff continues to work with partnering agencies such as Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Job Service and welfare to work service providers to identify candidates, and also plans to screen WIA Adult and FastTRAC Adult Career Pathway programs for eligible older youth participants with disabilities.

During the quarter the South Central DRC met with several organizations regarding services offered through the DEI project, identified resources for youth and potential Integrated Resource Team representatives. Examples of this collaboration included:

- monthly meeting with Youth Program Coordinator and VRS staff to review new referrals and get a better understanding of the services each provider offers;
- tour and exchange of information with THE REACH, an area homeless shelter for youth, and the Salvation Army homeless shelter;
- partnership with MRCI WorkSource *Track to Success* and *Bridge to the Future* programs that assist youth with disabilities to develop soft skills and social skills as they gain work experience;
- assisting with Fairmont and Mankato CTIC trainings for youth and parents;
- attending the PACER/SSA workshop on Social Security and Benefits Planning for Transition-Age Youth and sharing information regarding DEI and MVAC Youth Career Development Program services;
- participation in the Minnesota Partnership for Adolescent Health Southern Regional community meeting.

PACER and RMCEP continue to work very closely together to provide outreach to youth, families, and professionals, market available resources, and provide training on the DEI strategies. Significant collaboration with VRS is now occurring across the entire RMCEP region. RMCEP has re-established itself as a leader in CTIC planning meetings and activities. A collaborative relationship with disability coordinators at Central Lakes College in Brainerd has been established. The Career Assessment Center, although outside of the RMCEP service area, has been effectively used to identify key strengths and weaknesses as participants prepare themselves for work or post-secondary education.

Successful blending and braiding of resources continues to occur in the RMCEP region through the Career Advisor project, which combines foundation resources with state and DEI funds to provide career advisors for 12 schools in the Little Falls, Brainerd and Wadena area schools. Four hours per week per career advisor is reserved for serving transition age youth with disabilities. In the last quarter, two career advisors have been hired and are working in the targeted school systems. RMCEP and PACER have collaborated and shared resources to provide culturally diverse outreach in the Pelican Rapids area and increase the participation of Somali youth and, as a result, four Somali youth have enrolled into RMCEP programs from that area. Outreach is also planned for the American Indian population living in the Mahnomen area. CTICs and RMCEP have partnered to plan training for families, professionals and youth on *Guideposts for Success*. The first DEI CTIC training is scheduled for April 24th. More DEI funds have been budgeted for supportive services increasing the level of blending/braiding opportunities available to RMCEP in 2014.

The Southeast DRC continues outreach and promotion of DEI through local organizations, agencies and schools. The DRC is also able to identify additional IRT members through the collaboration and outreach to partners.

b. Challenges:

The South Central region focused DEI services in the first year of the project in three counties and has expanded to include the entire nine-county service area. The development of relationships with new partners in the expanded service area is time intensive but progressing slowly.

In the RMCEP region, county social workers have increased their participation in the IRTs but continue to have challenges to full engagement due to limited time and staff resources.

c. Notable activities:

CTICs in each of the three regions are implementing their action plans to hold multiple joint CTIC/DEI trainings and events over the next year. Planned topics for the trainings include benefits planning, *Guideposts for Success*, mental health and employment, vocational rehabilitation services, career development/pathways, supporting first generation learners with disabilities in post-secondary settings, working with employers, assistive technology resources, and preparing learners with disabilities for competitive employment using 21st century foundation skills. The action plans incorporate measurable goals that can be accomplished by the end of the DEI grant period.

The South Central DRC met with MVAC Youth Program Coordinator and Vocational Rehabilitation Services to discuss ways to improve information and the referral process between the two providers. They have scheduled monthly meetings to review new referrals and get a better understanding of the services that each provider offers.

In the RMCEP region, the SSA Area Work Incentives Coordinator and the Brainerd SSA Office Manager attended DEI training in February leading to a better working relationship between RMCEP and the SSA office.

The Southeast DRC and partners continue to plan meetings for further collaboration. The WDI case managers assisted in planning the Freeborn County CTIC Transition Fair to be held on April 30th, 2014.

Southeast Minnesota partners, including the DRC, youth case managers, SE MN Center for Independent Living and VRS staff, developed a brochure that can help school personnel, individuals with disabilities and their families, and other service providers understand that they can access employment services for youth with disabilities through any of the partner agencies. This brochure is neither DEI-specific nor funded with DEI grant funds but provides an example of the partner agencies working together for the benefit of youth with disabilities in the region and could be replicated by other regions. This brochure has been well received by school personnel and families.

PACER staff continues to collaborate with staff from the Social Security Administration to present parent trainings on *Social Security and Benefit Planning for Transition-Age Youth: Ticket to Work* in MN DEI's Southeast and South Central regions.

PACER staff facilitated a meeting between DEED staff responsible for Assistive Technology in Minnesota's WorkForce Center system and PACER's Simon Technology Center (STC) to

discuss how PACER might help Minnesota's WorkForce Centers improve their use of assistive technology.

A webinar titled *Understanding the Challenges of Minnesota's Culturally Diverse Youth* has been scheduled for May 20, 2014. PACER's multicultural specialists will be delivering the content and have been working on the development of the webinar's agenda and content. PACER's staff began meeting in February to plan the webinar. This event will be open to community partners as well as DRCs and workforce development staff affiliated with the project.

Obstacles/Barriers to Grant Implementation, if applicable:

Provisions in Minnesota's Government Data Practices Act limit the ability of the DEED Statewide Workforce Employment Network (EN) to share customer data with SSA/Maximus through the E-Data Share process without the customer's specific consent. This state statute makes it more challenging to check Ticket status for Job Center (WorkForce Center) customers and conduct outreach for the Ticket program. The EN is encouraging the implementation sites to reach out to customers who are already enrolled in intensive services through the WorkForce Centers and have a relationship with an employment counselor to obtain consent to check Ticket status and assign the Ticket to the EN, if appropriate. DEED's DEI team and the DRCs are exploring the possibility of pushing out e-mail messages to customers in the implementation regions who are enrolled in Workforce One (the state's employment and training management information system) to encourage them to contact the DRCs if they receive Social Security disability or SSI benefits to learn more about Ticket to Work.

Other Significant Accomplishments:

Minnesota submitted a request to DOL/ETA in February 2014 to modify the grant to include more flexibility for the implementation sites to support the development of a job-driven system. The modification was approved in late April with an effective date of 7/1/14 and will allow the local sites to offer opportunities such as on-the-job training, private sector internships, apprenticeships, project-based learning, service learning, field study/practicums, individual training accounts, and mentorship to appropriate DEI participants.

The MN DEI Project Steering Committee met on February 10 to continue to discuss and plan a strategy for addressing the results of the MN DEI Needs Assessment Survey that was conducted in November. Topics that have been identified as areas for additional training during the remainder of the grant include: understanding Minnesota's mental health system; transition planning for youth with mental health disabilities; special education transition planning; and *Guideposts for Success*.

PACER Center worked with DRCs in each of the implementation regions during the previous quarter to conduct activities in support of the project's goal to increase service to multicultural youth with disabilities and their families. PACER staff has presented training on working with multicultural youth and families to staff in the RMCEP region, and held focus groups of Somali youth (RMCEP region) and Hispanic youth and families (Southeast region). A focus

group with Hispanic family members in the South Central region has not yet taken place due to challenges identifying and convening a group of participants. A group has now been identified and a focus group has been scheduled for May 12, 2014. A webinar for all three of the implementation sites and partners will be held May 20, 2014 on the topic *Understanding the Challenges of Minnesota's Culturally Diverse Youth*.

A total of 166 youth have been enrolled into DEI project activities since enrollment began on August 1, 2013. Of these participants, 99 are co-enrolled in WIA and the remaining 39 are co-enrolled in other programs including the state-funded Minnesota Youth Program, TANF, and Youthbuild.

Data for the DEI evaluation is being sent on a quarterly basis to Andy Crouter at Altarum Institute. The DEI state team is working on a process to give Social Dynamics information on DEI participants who are co-enrolled in programs other than WIA.

Ten Tickets have been assigned to the DEED Employment Network as a result of the DEI project (eight from RMCEP and two from MVAC). The DEED EN has a Partnership Plus agreement in place with VRS to effectively coordinate services for Ticket Holders also being served by VRS. The EN has not yet received any revenue from Tickets assigned through the DEI project. The Partnership Plus agreement has not yet resulted in assignment of any Tickets to the DEED EN or revenue.

RMCEP is in the process of finalizing a limited-use vendor contract (up to \$20,000 annually) with Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) to provide work incentive planning/benefits planning services within the RMCEP areas along with underserved service areas that border RMCEP's area. This fee for service concept is intended to expand benefits planning services in the rural Minnesota area. Revenue from this service will be used to sustain and expand services for those whose disability is a barrier to employment.

The South Central DRC is beginning Certified Work Incentives Counselor (CWIC) training in May 2014 to be able to provide benefits planning assistance to customers.

To create competition among RMCEP's eight WorkForce Centers in enrolling participants into the DEI, RMCEP has incentivized each enrollment by allocating DEI client service funds on a per capita basis. WorkForce Centers in the RMCEP region will receive \$98 for each DEI participant recruited by their staff in 2014. These funds are flexible dollars that must be used to support DEI participants to successfully transition into post-secondary or work. RMCEP anticipates continuing this incentive until its goal of 120 DEI enrollments is reached.

For this grant reporting period, please describe the development of any DEI products and/or materials (include electronic copies as separate attachments with your report, if available):

Activity reports and updated work plans describing the second year activities of the three implementation sites are posted to the MN DEI website: <http://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/office-youth-development/index/disability-employment-initiative/index.jsp>.

The following documents described above are attached to this report as separate files:

- Youth Action Plan Checklist format (adapted by Rural MN CEP)
- Southeast Minnesota Employment Services Brochure for Youth with Disabilities

Short-term Grant Goals (three - six months):

- Continue outreach and enrollment of DEI participants to reach a total of 225 participants by the end of the second year and 360 participants by the end of the grant
- Continue to identify members for Integrated Resource Teams (IRT) and facilitate IRT meetings
- Continue outreach to Ticket Holders and assignment of Tickets to the DEED EN
- Continue to provide TtW/EN technical assistance and guidance for local implementation sites
- Continue trainings for local implementation site staff based on the work plan and Needs Assessment Survey results
- Continue to add relevant information to MN DEI website
- Continue to develop partnerships that support the goals and strategies of the MN DEI project
- Issue planning documents to local implementation sites for third allocation of funding
- Identify strategies for sustainability of grant activities in the implementation sites and replication in other regions of the state following the end of the grant in September 2015

Outstanding Questions:

None at this time.