



SFY 2025 Indigenous Roots

Annual Progress Report

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Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
Employment and Training Programs Division

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Introduction

Indigenous Roots was granted state funding to develop, along with its partner, Cypher Side Dance School, the *Cypher Side Youth Work Experience Program*. The initiative was designed to specifically address the critical need for soft skills and career readiness training among marginalized youth in the Twin Cities. It also addresses the gap in traditional workforce programs by leveraging the cultural power and structure of dance and hip-hop culture. By turning dance instruction and studio operations into a structured professional learning environment, the program provides a low-barrier, culturally relevant entry point for youth to gain essential job skills.

Funds for this project are appropriated in [Minnesota Session Laws – 2024, Chapter 120, S.F. 5289, Article 1, Section 2, Subdivision 3\(p\)](#). The amount available to the Indigenous Roots in SFY 2025 is \$95,000.00 (Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development is permitted to retain up to 5% of the \$100,000.00 appropriation for administration and monitoring of the grant). This is a one-time appropriation.

Summary of Goals and Objectives Presented in the Work Plan

The Indigenous Roots program operates as a structured professional learning experience offered to youth aged 14–24 residing in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area (Ramsey, Hennepin, and surrounding counties). The program actively emphasizes reaching individuals who are BIPOC, LGBTQ+, or have a physical/mental health condition.

Youth are recruited through the existing customer base of Cypher Side Dance School and through social media/advertising. Once enrolled, they participate in professional learning experiences at the Cypher Side Dance School facilities.

The program offers opportunities such as:

- Teaching assistants or instructor aides
- Administrative or clerical support
- Event assistant
- Performance team member

Participants are engaged in work that develops a range of career soft/readiness skills: leadership, mentorship, interpersonal communication, teamwork skills, and executive abilities such as planning, organizing, coordinating, and scheduling. All activities are guided by Cypher Side staff, including two directors, twelve instructors/coaches, and administrative personnel, who provide constant oversight and mentorship. Youth are encouraged to take the lead on projects and actively participate in designing their learning experience, such as creating project timelines and daily checklists.

Participant Data

Participants Served: Individual Services (cumulative)

Total Participants Served 7

(1) Gender	Project to Date: 7/1/2024 –6/30/2025
(1) Male	1
(2) Female	6
(3) Gender non-confirming	0
(4) Prefer Not to Answer	0
(2) Age	Project to Date: 7/1/2024 –6/30/2025
(1) 15 and under	0
(2) 16-17	1
(3) 18-19	3
(4) 20-21	1
(5) 22-24	0
(3) Race/Ethnicity	Project to Date: 7/1/2024 –6/30/2025
(1) Hispanic/Latino	0
(2) American Indian or Alaska Native	0
(3) Asian/Pacific Islander	6
(4) Black, African American, or African	0
(5) White	1
(6) Multi-Race or Other	0
(4) Education at Enrollment	Project to Date: 7/1/2024 –6/30/2025
(1) 8 th grade and under	0
(2) 9th Grade-12th Grade	5
(3) High School graduate or equivalent	0
(4) Some Post-Secondary Coursework	2
(5) At Risk Characteristics	Project to Date: 7/1/2024 –6/30/2025
(1) Limited English proficient	0
(2) Participants who receive Public Assistance	0
(3) Economically Disadvantaged	0
(4) Participants who report a disability	0
(5) High school drop-out – all participants included	0
(6) Participants who are justice involved	0
(7) Pregnant or parenting youth	0
(8) Foster Youth	0
(9) Participants showing as Homeless Participant/Runaway	0
(10) Not employed at program enrollment – all participants included	0
(11) Veteran – all participants included	0

Program Services, Activities, and Other Related Assistance

	Number
1. Received Education or Job Training Activities	7
2. Received Work Experience Activities	7
3. Received Community Involvement and Leadership Development Activities	7
4. Received Mentoring Activities	7
5. Received Internship or Apprenticeship Activities	7
6. Received Case Management, Guidance, Counseling Services	0

Outcome Data

Indicators of Performance	Number
1. Attained work readiness or education goals	7
2. Number of participants rating experience as "Very Good"	7

Expenditure Data

Expenditures from July 25, 2024 through September 30, 2025 for grant5 51R6300:

SFY 2025 Budget Category	SFY 2025 Budget	SFY 2025 Expenditures through September 2025
Administration	\$9,500.00	\$9,430.00
Direct Services/Project Staff	\$63,500.00	\$44,579.19
Participant Wages	\$22,000.00	\$10,880.65
TOTAL	\$95,000.00	\$64,889.84

Outcomes and Program Highlights

The Cypher Side Youth Work Experience Program has demonstrated early impact, transforming passionate youth into confident, career-ready leaders.

Program Highlights

- 100% of participants engaged in triple-layered workforce services. All seven currently active youth participants are engaged in three high-value workforce activities: work-based learning, internship/apprenticeship activities, and mentoring, ensuring a comprehensive developmental experience.
- Rapid leadership advancement: One participant, S, was promoted from a Junior Assistant Coach to the Main Junior Hip Hop Coach in less than four months (February to June 2025), a clear indicator of successful leadership and executive skill development.
- High-visibility professional experience: Youth instructors managed their student teams for at least four major public-facing performances, including a showcase in front of 500 people, the Project Hope Festival, a performance at the State Capitol, and the Hmong Arts Event at the Mall of America.

Story of Impact

S's journey exemplifies how the program converts passion into professional prowess. After seven years as a student at Cypher Side, S entered the program, marking this past year as her first time teaching. She rapidly progressed from a Junior Assistant Coach to the Main Junior Hip Hop Coach in June 2025.

Reflecting on her growth, S states, "The skills I've picked up since I've started include leadership, organization, creativity, collaborative, being articulate, being a team player, being more assertive especially while teaching or being a part of a group, coaching younger dancers, and the ability to pick things up quickly."

Her program duties quickly expanded to high-profile work-based learning opportunities, including managing her students for major public performances at the State Capitol and the Project Hope Festival, as well as choreographing and dancing in a Hmong Arts Event at the Mall of America.

Crucially, the career readiness skills gained directly enabled external professional success: "It has also helped me become better with communication when it comes to opportunities in the real world." As a direct result of the skills and determination she gained in the program, S was accepted into and is a successful member of two professional NBA Timberwolves entertainment groups: 'The Pups' (2 years) and the '612 Crew' (2+ ongoing years). She considers this a huge accomplishment, stating, "I wouldn't have gotten here if it wasn't for the program. It has helped with my determination to be a part of those groups because I love performing in front of huge crowds!"

New Grant Funds

As of September 30, 2025, state grant funds for the SFY 2025 grant 51R6300 are 68% expended. They are expected to be fully expended by the grant end date, June 30, 2026. No new direct appropriation state funds have been granted to Indigenous Roots for the SFY26-27 biennium.