

DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE (DEI)

Quarterly Narrative Report

Grantee Name: Minnesota Round 7 youth DEI Partners for Youth
Address: 332 Minnesota St. Ste. E200
City/State/Zip: St. Paul, MN 55101
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Summary of Grant Progress: Describe the status of your state’s implementation of the grant against the DEI workplan. Include major activities that address grant requirements (e.g., Integrated Resource Teams, Asset Development, Customized Employment, Self-Employment, Blending and Braiding Resources, or Guideposts to Success, as applicable). If grantees have nothing to report, that should be specified.

At Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services (CMJTS), the DRC and the Development Manager have begun to implement the second level of the Disability Resource and Information Training (DRI). One specific module for the DRI Level II training includes a webinar created by NDI titled “IRT Teams Part 2: Comprehensive Breakdown of the IRT Approach.” The level II training is provided to employment counselors to ensure they have the tools and understanding to provide high-quality services to youth and adults with disabilities. The DRI Level II training builds on the DRI Level I training that was originally developed under Alaska’s DEI project and enhanced by CMJTS.

CMJTS adapted the DRI training, which was previously developed by the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB), with their permission. CMJTS delivered the adapted DRC training to staff from CMJTS, Anoka County (a DEI implementation site for Minnesota Round 5 project), and the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council. DEED’s Youth Services Team secured the Technical Assistance and Training funds needed to take the training to the next level and now includes more information on Section 188 of WIOA. The new DRI training is now available at DEED’s website: <https://bit.ly/2J78uVG>. The newly-developed DRI training is a prime example of what can be done, in a relatively short period, to improve workforce services throughout the state by making educational resources widely available to all partners. Every WIOA service provider along with other employment and training agencies in Minnesota now has a cost-free way to ensure staff competence in providing services to people with disabilities. Both existing and new staff have the opportunity to gain this expertise, as schedules permit, as a result of this cooperation, which occurred not only within our state but reached all the way to Alaska and U.S. DOL.

The DRC at Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council (SWMNPIC) shared with VRS Counselors and VRS management at both the state and local level the benefits to both participants and

their organizations in partnering with one another's participants and SWMNPIC's Employment Networks. The DRC had this opportunity at two Pre-ETS meetings that were held over the last quarter. While this is not an IRT meeting related specifically to one individual, VRS is a common member brought to the IRT table and strengthening this partnership will benefit mutual clients. More specifically, the SWMNPIC can provide support to participants past the 90 days successful when VRS typically closes an individual. Both ENs would still be eligible to split milestone payments after the 90 days and the participant would receive continued support. SWMNPIC EN could also assist individuals on the VRS wait list and transfer the individuals to VRS if they choose, once a spot opens up.

SWMNPIC recently learned that it can renew its Pre-ETS contract for the 2018-2019 school year. This means that we can continue to provide these services which align well with the DEI initiative. This also strengthens our partnership with VRS as well, as we continue to refer and share participants with disabilities and meet their unique needs.

All three projects have been diligent with co-enrollments. Examples of co-enrollments include: WIOA Youth, WIOA Adult, state-funded Minnesota Youth Program (MYP), SNAP, MFIP, State Youthbuild, Federal YouthBuild, and the state-funded TANF Youth Innovations grant program. Three enrollments this quarter also have a waiver from the county where they live (DD or CADI). Several participants are or in the process of receiving services from VRS.

Integrated Resource Teams are an integral part of service delivery in each of the three implementation sites. However, the three sites have noted that it is more difficult to schedule IRT meetings with youth in the summer months. This is often due to the fact that teachers are not available to participate in the IRT. Each site has noted that they will be scheduling IRTs once the school year begins.

Development and Implementation of Effective Practices and Program Model Strategies: Identify any innovative strategies the state has undertaken or implemented to achieve DEI objectives. If grantees have nothing to report, that should be specified.

The DRC at SWMNPIC is identifying ways to strengthen relationships with county Health and Human Services (HHS) to partner more to support individuals served by both agencies. Participants will be able to better understand how receipt of public assistance may be affected by obtaining employment. The DRC is interested in strengthening partnerships and referrals with county HHS. The DRC and the State Lead are researching whether or not SWMNPIC can provide waiver services since the DRC is a Certified Work Incentives Practitioner and Benefits Planning is a waiver service. If in fact the DRC can provide waiver services and receive reimbursement, this strategy will be incorporated into sustainability efforts after the DEI grant has ended.

Similarly, RMCEP is seeing increased contacts with Human Service and Corrections due to the at risk nature of youth in foster care or youth involved with the juvenile justice system. RMCEP is also working with three youth who receive waiver-funded services and it is important to partner with social services staff to assure inter-agency planning.

SWMNPIC became an Employment Network in January 2018. SWMNPIC is a member of the American Dream Employment Network (ADEN) and has completed all of the mandatory trainings. The DRC and another staff member are Certified Work Incentives Practitioners. Three additional staff

members went through ADEN training and suitability clearance so that they can assist individuals receiving SSI and SSDI in returning to work. The DRC visited with many individuals receiving SSI or SSDI. Many of those individuals have not been good Ticket candidates They are simply looking to supplement their benefits and improve their quality of life without losing their benefits or health insurance. During the second quarter of 2018, SWMNPIC assigned its first Ticket. The DRC is working with this individual to find work and update their resume.

RMCEP added 5 new Tickets in this quarter with several more pending. RMCEP's total active Tickets as of June 30, 2018 is 14. Three more staff received their full credentials as Work Incentive Practitioners, increasing their team of Certified Work Incentive Practitioners to eight. The team completed intensive training through ADEN webinars and established a W.I.P. Peer Mentor Group which began in July. The team meets monthly to do Ticket case review, tutorials on various websites (such as db101, JAN, etc.), and other Ticket resource sites and discusses other potential co-enrollments that Ticketholders might be eligible for.

To date CMJTS has a Ticket revenue of over \$100,000. CMJTS currently has 13 active tickets holders and has plans to increase this number. In August, an AmeriCorps Vista participant will join CMJTS. They will assist the Ticket Team in the development of marketing and outreach materials to promote and grow the Ticket to Work program.

On June 6, 2018, the three DRCs and the State Lead attended a local Ticket to Work Networking event hosted by the Social Security Administration. The event brought together Employment Networks from across the state to discuss best practices, share resources, and engage with Social Security Administration staff. This meeting also brought in staff from the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) who were able to address questions related to how other public assistance benefits affect SSI/SSDI. The State Lead has since contacted the representative from DHS and she will meet with Minnesota's DEI project in September at the quarterly in-person meeting. She will answer questions related to waiver services that are eligible for reimbursement. This is of particular interest to the DRCs because they have identified the provision of benefits planning and waiver services as a vehicle for sustaining the DEI grant after it has ended.

Following the Employment Network meeting, the three DRCs and the State Lead went to State Services for the Blind (SSB) for a tour of the services that they offer. While a large majority of the services that are provided by SSB are only available to individuals who are blind or visually impaired, they do offer some resources for individuals with other disabilities. For example, SSB is able to provide audio version of textbooks that may help individuals with cognitive disabilities better grasp the material. This was new information to the State Lead and the DRCs. Minnesota will continue to find ways that youth enrolled in DEI can receive all necessary services by identifying areas for collaboration with other state and local agencies.

PACER staff are working on a second draft of the publication, *Guide on Incorporating the Guideposts for Success into MN's Personal Learning Plan Process*. The second draft includes additional examples of how expanding Integrated Resource Team (IRT) membership to include outside agency representatives with expertise in a range of Guideposts areas can contribute to successful IRT employment outcomes. A final version of the guide will be completed later this summer.

PACER leveraged funding from another project to conduct a second parent training this grant year in the RMCEP region on May 10, in Alexandria, MN on career pathway options for MN students with disabilities. The training focuses on several Guidepost categories including career exploration and planning, connecting activities and family involvement. The event was attended by 34 individuals.

Key Issues and Technical Assistance Needs: Identify any specific barriers, lessons learned, or opportunities during implementation of DEI strategies in your state. If grantees have nothing to report, that should be specified.

No technical assistance needs have been identified at this time. Now that RMCEP and SWPIC are established ENs as part of the ADEN, technical assistance regarding Ticket to Work has shifted to the experts at ADEN.

Minnesota was informed that the National Disability Institute (NDI) will be providing limited technical assistance beginning July 1, 2018. The State Lead will be working with NDI to determine the role and scope of the TA liaison assigned to Minnesota.

One challenge that RMCEP has identified is that many youth have a parent/step-parent who have their own at-risk factor(s) and cannot serve as a meaningful support to the youth. This can be an incarcerated parent, those addicted to drugs or alcohol, a parent who is frequently absent from the home unexpectedly, a parent who removes a youth participant from a successful work experience to serve as a babysitter for younger siblings, and other family violence or dysfunction which can result in grandparents or other family members serving as the stable influencer. Sometimes, youth cannot identify even one single person who acts in a supportive role. The State Lead is working with RMCEP to identify other ways in which caring adults can support youth as they transition to employment.

Significant Activities, Accomplishments, and Success Stories: Describe significant activities, accomplishments, and/ or success stories on the implementation of the Career Pathway elements or how different systems are working together to benefit the customer. If grantees have nothing to report, that should be specified.

Participant Data Highlights through June 30, 2018

26% are Youth of Color

56% are Basic Skills Deficient

11% are Youth Receiving SSI or SSDI

8% are Youth Offenders

8% are Youth from Families Receiving Public Assistance

4% are Foster Youth

3% are High School Dropouts

35% are co-enrolled in WIOA Youth/Adult

57% are co-enrolled in the Minnesota Youth Program

18% of participants attained work readiness or educational goals

14% of participants received academic credit or service learning credit

11% of participants remained in school or dropout returned to school

11% obtained high school diploma, GED, certificate, or degree

The DRC was invited to be a participant on a national webinar that will be held in September to discuss RMCEP's process and decision to become an Affiliate Provider EN under American Dream Employment Network. <https://www.workforcegps.org/events/2018/05/30/14/06/Ticket-to-Work-Program-An-Aligned-Mission-with-WIOA>

SWMNPIC volunteered with Technology and Trades on the Prairie (<http://prairiecareers.com/>) and served as group monitors. Students were introduced to careers and hands on activities in Automotive/Power Sports Tech, Mechatronics, Pioneer Public Television, Solar, Computer Networking, Electrician, Radiological Tech, Agriculture, Welding, Railroad, Medical Lab Tech and Energy/Wind/Biofuels. Students received one hundred dollars, a t-shirt and goodie bag for attending both days of the career institute. *Note: DEI funds were not used to cover those costs.* Several students who participated in the event are also enrolled in programs offered by SWMNPIC, including the DEI project.

SWMNPIC in collaboration with the SW MN Career Pathway Partnership hosted four youth and young adult focused Career Pathway trainings throughout the region this school year (17/18). Basic and Advanced Welding were held in Worthington, MN. Five youth participated in Basic Welding and 5 youth participated in Advanced Welding. In addition to the welding courses, these 10 students also participated in Blueprint Reading. Each student earned 6 college credits, which are needed to earn a Welding Diploma or Certificate from Minnesota West Community and Technical College. The class was sponsored by SW MN Private Industry Council, MN West Community and Technical College and the Worthington School District (High School and Alternative Learning Center). Half of these students returned to secondary school, while the other half will continue their education and/or work. Some of the students who participated in the trainings were enrolled in DEI.

Five youth participants (some youth were enrolled in DEI) successfully completed a CAN course in Montevideo, MN. The class was sponsored by SW MN Private Industry Council, Adult Basic Education, MN West Community and Technical College and the MN Valley ALC. The students attended nursing class two - three days a week and also continued their regular classes at the MN Valley ALC. Included as part of the class were visits to several local businesses, employability skills, integrated instruction and opportunities to explore other healthcare careers. The students visited Project Turnabout and Granite Falls Health –Westwood Elderly Care in Granite Falls to learn more about the health care and social assistance careers available locally.

Five youth that participated in SWMNPIC's newest Career Pathway program - Electrical Controls. The electrical controls pathways was developed because local businesses identified a need for skilled workers in the field. Students earned 5 college credits and they gained the technical skills needed to obtain employment in the high-demand field of Engineering and Manufacturing. The class was sponsored by SW MN Private Industry Council, Adult Basic Education, MN West Community and Technical College and the Marshall Area Technical Education Center (MA-TEC; Marshall School District 413). Included as part of the class were employability skills, integrated instruction and opportunities to explore other manufacturing and engineering careers. Some of the youth who participated in this training were enrolled in DEI.

PACER hosted a Livestream parent training workshop focusing on "Paths to Employment: Exploring the Options" on June 21, 2018. Although local agency representatives usually speak at DEI parent

trainings in the community, this training featured representatives from the Minnesota Department of Education (Special Education as well as Career Technical Education), Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and MN WorkForce Center Youth programs so that it would contain information applicable to families throughout the state. The training was archived so that families around the state who could not attend either this Livestream training or DEI Project trainings in their Greater Minnesota communities will be able to access relevant career pathways information for youth with disabilities. The training can be viewed online at <https://livestream.com/pacercenter/events/8210345>.

Twenty-two (22) individuals livestreamed the training online. Twelve individuals (10 parents; 2 professionals) from the Twin Cities metropolitan area attended the training in person. The workshop was rated very highly. 100% of individuals who completed evaluations rated the workshop as excellent (7) or very good (3). 100% also indicated that they had learned something new, learned information that they would use to help their young adult work towards their employment goals, learned information that would help them explore additional services for their young adult, and found the materials they received useful.

A Livestream in-service training for workforce development professionals was conducted on May 7, 2018. Presenters Renelle Nelson and Jennifer Thomas, from PACER's Inspiring Opportunities, Children's Mental Health and Emotional and Behavioral Disorders Project highlighted strategies that can be used to work effectively with transition-age youth (age 14-24) with mental health challenges. Promotional information was sent to DEED and DEI DRCs as well as NDI to share with colleagues who are workforce development youth professionals. Forty-five (45) individuals live-streamed the training and 10 professionals attended the training in-person at PACER Center. Four youth development professionals from Tree Trust, which provides WIOA youth program services in the Bloomington area, were in the in-person audience.

The new handout for Minnesota parents *What is a Workforce Center? Information for Minnesota Families of Youth with Disabilities* has been disseminated to both DEED staff and DEI DRCs and is now available online at <http://www.pacer.org/parent/php/PHP-c257.pdf>. This new publication will be utilized as a handout at all future DEI parent trainings. In addition, a generic national version of this document, *What is an American Job Center?* is now posted on PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment at <http://www.pacer.org/transition/resource-library/publications/NPC-61.pdf>.

PACER staff also completed a series of social media graphics of diverse youth that can be posted by local DEI partner WorkForce Centers on their websites and Facebook pages as part of their efforts to make their programs more welcoming to diverse youth. The graphics feature images of youth from a range of ethnicities with and without visible disabilities. Contact information varies to reflect local sites. Images and text can also be adapted by local sites.

PACER conducted the following in-service trainings this quarter:

- May 7, 2018. In-service training for workforce youth professionals, "Mental Health and Transition-age Youth: Preparing for the Future," Livestream broadcast.
- June 21, 2018. Parent training on "Career Path Options for MN Youth with Disabilities," both a Livestream broadcast and an in-person training.
- June 28, 2018. RCEP In-service on "Working with Culturally Diverse Youth and Their Families," Brainerd MN.

The State Lead completed the annual monitoring visit to each of the three DEI implementation sites. There were no compliance issues identified with any of the three sites. Each site is progressing as they should in terms of their work plans and budgets. All three sites are on target to fully expend grant funds by March 2020. The PACER Center was also monitored in the May 2018, and there were no compliance issues identified. The State Lead will be completing the second year monitoring visit in the fall of 2018.

SUCCESS STORY:

John is seventeen and will be a senior this year at Adrian High School in Adrian, Minnesota. John has a Developmental Cognitive Disability. His goal is to own and operate his own pheasant farm and take over the family farm when his father retires. When John met Leah Hastad, Disability Resource Coordinator with Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council, he was interested in finding a job to help increase his confidence and learn employability skills. John began working with the City of Adrian as a maintenance assistant on January 16th 2018. The City Administrator, Bruce, often reports how well John is doing and how he takes on new and various tasks. Bruce also appreciates the extra help John provides with the cities limited budget. John got his driver's license and started helping the city by driving golf carts and lawn mowers. John has stained picnic tables, helped with city clean up after storms and performs various maintenance tasks in the city building. Hastad said "It is obvious that John's confidence has grown through his work with the City of Adrian and through Bruce's mentoring and guidance. It is incredibly rewarding when we can partner with employers, school districts and our youth to create mutually beneficial work experiences like this." *The picture shows John assisting the city to get ready for Adrian Days which was held this summer in Adrian, Minnesota.*



SUCCESS STORY:

Student successfully graduated from high school this spring, even though he has been in and out of mental health treatment facilities numerous times throughout the past year. After graduation, Student returned to a work site at the local library with the support of the staff and Youth Coordinator. I recently met with Student and site supervisor. Both state everything is going well and Student is doing great on the job site. Student has rented his own apartment with the assistance of county case management. We discussed budget and his income. He would like to increase his hours to 25 hour per week now that he has had some time to adjust. We are also going to start working on his resume and job search so he can be putting in applications while he is still working at the library through work experience. He also attends a weekly group for peers through social services and will continue receiving regular mental health support through his scheduled appointments. He has continued attending the weekly community event at the library where he has gotten to know some of the participants.

SUCCESS STORY:

The client has some pretty significant physical limitations and so wanted to only work 10-15 hours a week at Camp Confidence, but the first week went extremely well and his supervisors accommodated his abilities so he has decided work 25 hours a week. He is a natural leader when given the right circumstances.

Short-term Grant Goals (three - six months): Describe plans and activities covering the next three to six months that address the workplan and objectives of the grant.

To expand community awareness of TTW, RMCEP plans to set up a Ticket to Work feature area in each of the 8 resource rooms, use the ADEN marketing toolkit for Public Service Announcements, update RMCEP website and/or FB pages with monthly or quarterly Ticket topics and resource links, and expand TTW and SSA information to families of students on SSI through ongoing CTIC parent events.

The State Lead is coordinating an in-person quarterly meeting for July 12, 2018. This meeting will allow the three DEI sites to share best practices as well as to discuss any challenges that they may be facing. The meeting will also have Emily Saed, the Executive Director of the Minnesota Foundation for Student Organizations (MNFSO), deliver a Poverty Training. The topics covered in this training will include: Poverty Competencies for Leaders, Oral & Written Communication Skills, Educating Students in Poverty A-Z, Strategies to Break Poverty Barriers, The Meaning of Poverty in America, Types of Poverty, and Building Relationships & Navigating. Emily Saed will also be working with the DRCs to identify strategies to improve connections between employment counselors and advisors of Career and Technical Education Student Organizations such as: Future Farmers of America (FFA), Business Professionals of America (BPA), and SkillsUSA.

PACER Center's short-term goals:

- Complete publication of a new guide applying the Guideposts for Success to the development of a youth's Person Learning Plan—Minnesota's version of an Individual Learning Plan. (Summer 2018).
- Begin planning for Year 3 webinars on Assistive Technology and ABLE Accounts. (July 2018 – September 2018)
- Begin planning for Year 3 infographic and related short video on MN career pathways. (July 2018 – September 2018)