

DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE (DEI)

Quarterly Narrative Report

Grantee Name: Minnesota Round 7 Youth DEI
Address: 332 Minnesota St. Ste. E200
City/State/Zip: St. Paul, MN 55101
Grant Number : MI29688
Date Report Submitted:
Report Period: 10.1.18-12.31.18

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.

Minnesota worked closely with the U.S. DOL on the desk review of the Round 7 youth DEI grant. U.S. DOL completed the desk review of Minnesota's Round 7 Youth DEI project in December 2018. The desk review provided Minnesota with the opportunity to enhance its current DEI policy. The policy has been updated and can be found here:

https://mn.gov/deed/assets/youth-disability-employment-initiative-policy_tcm1045-335803.pdf The desk review was helpful to Minnesota moving into the final year of the grant.

Minnesota's Round 7 Youth DEI project identified five main objectives to be achieved by the end of the grant life. **Minnesota met or exceeded all five objectives stated in the initial proposal.** Below is an explanation for each objective outlining Minnesota's progress on meeting and achieving the five objectives

Objective 1: Strengthen partnerships and strategically align youth and adult career pathways systems to effectively serve youth with disabilities through multiple entry and exit points. **Each of the Workforce Development Areas (WDAs) participating in the Round 7 DEI project co-enroll participants in WIOA Youth or WIOA Adult programs as necessary. Co-enrollments allow services to meet the needs of participants and support their education and employment goals. The WDAs have also strengthened partnerships with local Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and increased co-enrollments, especially for individuals with significant barriers to employment. Unique partnerships with County Social Services staff have strengthened through the implementation of the Round 7 Youth DEI grant. These partnerships facilitate referrals that help county and WDA staff meet the complex needs of youth with disabilities.**

Objective 2: Build capacity of WDA staff to support at least 300 youth with disabilities to participate in career pathways system using the Guideposts for Success best practices framework and Integrated Resource Team (IRT) approach. **As of December 31, 2018, the Round 7 Youth DEI project served 339 youth with disabilities. Minnesota fully expects the number of youth served to increase throughout until the grant ends on March 31, 2020.**

Objective 3: Utilize innovative intergenerational approach to support successful outcomes for youth with disabilities participating in career pathways process system and programs. **The PACER Center is an integral part of Minnesota’s efforts to leverage parents and families in supporting youth with disabilities to achieve their education and employment goals. Parent and family workshops provide resources to families who, in turn, can make better informed decisions. Parents and families are also involved with Integrated Resource Team (IRT) meetings and support their youth when making decisions about education and career opportunities.**

Objective 4: Implement specific strategies to address the state’s employment gap for culturally and racially diverse individuals. **Each WDA made it a priority to serve youth of color with a disability through the Round 7 Youth DEI grant. The PACER Center’s multicultural advocates have been helpful in providing guidance to employment counselors on how best to engage communities of color. Professional development opportunities are identified and the Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs) participate. The result is to increase cultural competency which, in turn, leads to higher quality service provision.**

Objective 5: Increase the state’s number of employment networks (ENs) and the number of Social Security disability beneficiaries participating in career pathways programs. **All three WDAs are operating as Employment Networks as of January 2018. In total, 49 tickets have been assigned across all three Employment Networks accounting for nearly \$220,000 in ticket revenue. Each WDA views the potential revenue as an effective way to sustain the efforts of the DEI grant beyond the end of the federal grant.**

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.

Best Practice

The DRC at RMCEP has developed a policy that iterates key components of strategic service delivery using the *Guideposts for Success* as a guideline. Attachments to the policy include the PACER Center’s publication on “Three Important Federal Laws: Protecting the Rights of Students with Disabilities in Public Schools.” DEED’s Office of Youth Development considers this a best practice. RMCEP noted that once the DEI grant is complete, the new policy will be integrated with other policies to ensure that core programs (i.e. WIOA Youth) sustain effective service delivery strategies developed with the federal DEI funds.

Co-Enrollments

Co-enrolling youth continues to be an important way to meet the needs of youth with disabilities. DEI implementation sites are co-enrolling youth in WIOA Youth, WIOA Adult, Minnesota Youth Program, TANF Youth Innovation project, Youthbuild, and other locally funded projects.

Integrated Resource Teams

At CMJTS, use of the Integrated Resource Teams are expanding beyond the DEI project and DEI participants. In November, a TANF counselor facilitated an IRT meeting with a participant. The participants invited other service providers to be a part of the IRT. All members believed the IRT was helpful in setting clear expectations and creating a path to success. This practice will continue with future TANF participants when applicable.

SWPIC recently received a SOAR (SSI/SSDI, Outreach, Access, and Recovery) grant from the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) to serve homeless youth in Southwest Minnesota. The goal of SOAR is to help individuals apply for Social Security disability benefits if the individual is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, and has a disability expected to last a year or more. A key strategy in helping these individuals will be to convene Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs). SWPIC will encourage individuals to enroll in a program to help build work and education skills. When applicable, SWPIC will leverage the Youth DEI grant to support the needs of youth participating in the SOAR grant. The SOAR grant is a fee for service model and will be operating for two years. The SOAR grant has allowed the DRC has become more involved with the Homeless and Hungry Task Force (part of the Continuum of Care in SWPIC's region). SWPIC's goal is to create a consistent revenue stream by the end of the SOAR grant which will also help support the sustainability efforts of the Youth DEI grant. SWPIC will receive payments for each application that is submitted and approved.

Partnerships

CMJTS is expanding on a partnership with the Cornerstone Day Treatment Program for at-risk youth with disabilities. The school serves youth with emotional behavioral disorders (EBD). Students are recommended for the Cornerstone program by their IEP team with approval from their district's administration. The program has an emphasis on reintegrating the students into mainstream settings including their home school district and work sites. CMJTS will provide a leadership curriculum to the youth who enroll in DEI. The leadership curriculum includes topics such as: self-awareness, conflict resolution, life skills, and goal setting, and decision making.

SWPIC participated in a marketing pilot organized by the Social Security Administration (SSA). The SSA provided SWPIC with a list of ticket holders who do not have their tickets assigned. The DRC called 98 individuals in one county and consequently led to three individuals assigning their tickets to SWPIC's Employment Network.

SWPIC partnered with Project Search and invited the Project Search participants to tour the American Job Center and inform them of the services that are provided. Some of the students that toured were current or past DEI participants.

RMCEP has made a commitment to have Minnesota Career Information System (MCIS) active for all 8 American Job Center locations so counselors can share assessments and career pathway strategies with secondary schools if appropriate. RMCEP can also use this technology to assist out of school youth by leveraging school historical data and apply it to career planning.

RMCEP is often a host site for CTIC groups. Several CTIC groups are now reaching out to PACER for local parent events instead of relying on the DRC to broker these workshops.

RMCEP is in the development stages of Apprenticeship Pilots and Program models to weave together meaningful work, mentorship, and academic credit. In time, this may provide a more customized career development opportunity for youth and young adults with disabilities.

Employment Networks

As part of its Employment Network, CMJTS has formed a “Ticket Team.” The Ticket Team is made up of counselors who are experts on adult and dislocated worker, DEI, TANF, and WIOA Youth programs. The counselors are also spread across the 11 counties within CMJTS’ region. The formation of the Ticket Team is an integral part of CMJTS’ sustainability strategy. This model ensures that when there is staff turnover, program knowledge will not be lost because multiple staff members understand the Ticket to Work program and can support each other.

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.

Understanding the intersections of federal public assistance benefits and state public assistance benefits is complicated not just for individuals receiving those benefits, but also for employment counselors. In order to better understand the intersections of complex public assistance programs, RMCEP, SWPIC, and CMJTS are continuing to send staff to the Minnesota Department of Human Services’ Benefits Coach Training. The staff who have already completed the training noted that the training was helpful in understanding state public assistance programs.

The three implementation sites note that many individuals who are eligible for a Ticket to Work (TTW) do not fully understand the TTW program. This contributes to confusion about how the TTW program can benefit them and help them return to work. To address this issue, RMCEP in particular suggests that the potential Ticketholder watch the “[Meet Ben – An Introduction to Ticket to Work](#)” video from the Social Security Administration. Other documents from SSA are also provided to the individual. This helps ensure that the individual can make an informed choice about participating in the Ticket to Work program when they are ready.

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.

The three implementation sites selected staff to complete the “**Benefits Coach Training**” offered and developed by the **Minnesota Department of Human Services**. The goal of the training is to provide social services professionals with the skills to work with individuals who receive public assistance benefits. This training is similar to the Certified Work Incentive Practitioner (CWIP) training offered through Cornell University and Virginia Commonwealth University. The difference between the CWIP and Minnesota’s Benefits Coach Training is that the Benefits Coach Training builds the capacity of social services professionals to work with individuals who receive public assistance benefits specific to Minnesota. The training is essentially an enhancement to the CWIP training. All three implementation sites have staff complete the CWIP training and the sites will have additional staff complete the Benefits Coach Training offered by the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

The Benefits Coach Training will help support the growth of the Employment Networks operating in each of the implementation sites because customers will have the opportunity to work with professionals who understand the intersections of the public assistance programs. The training helped the participants gain a better understanding of the intricacies of public assistance benefits offered by the State of Minnesota and how those benefits are impacted by employment and other federal benefits. All three implementation sites will select additional staff members to complete the training in 2019.

PACER staff worked on a third draft of the publication, ***Guide on Incorporating the Guideposts for Success into MN’s Personal Learning Plan Process***, to address suggestions made by reviewers of the second draft. In December reviewer V. Scott Solberg from Boston University on behalf of the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth commented on the draft. Four fictional case study scenarios will be integrated into the publication during the formatting process. The guide also contains a new comprehensive listing of organizations who are subscribers to the Minnesota Career Information Systems. The third draft was also reviewed by DEED staff and the resulting fourth draft is now being reviewed by PACER editors before being formatted by PACER publications staff.

PACER held a **Parent Training** on October 9th, 2018 at PACER’s Bloomington, MN office location that was a Livestream event as well as an in-person training. Thirty-four individuals viewed the training online. Nineteen individuals attended the training in-person and 10 evaluations were collected. 100% of participant evaluations rated the training Good to Excellent. 100% of respondents indicated they learned something new from this workshop; 100% indicated they would use information learned at this workshop to help their young adult work toward their employment goals; 100% indicated they would use information learned at this workshop to explore additional services for their young adult; and 100% indicated that the materials they received at this workshop were useful. Topics included Vocational Rehabilitation Services, the Disability Law Center, SSI programs and Employment Networks, and MN American Job Centers. An archived version of the training is available online and can be found here:

<https://www.pacer.org/livestream/?wksp=5BDFC855-A48D-44DA-87A7-32D3D2227DC4>

On October 23rd the PACER Center arranged a **Parent Information Event** in which a representative from the ABLE National Resource Center presented information to parents and families about ABLE accounts. PACER has also invited a representative from the Minnesota Department of Human Services who works on [Minnesota's ABLE plan](#) options and structure. On the 24th, the representative from the ABLE National Resource Center provided an informational session geared toward direct service professionals. Minnesota's DRCs were invited and encouraged to attend both sessions. Thirty individuals attended the training in-person and there were 124 unique live views of the Livestream broadcast. A total of 30 evaluations were received from both the in-person audience and the Livestream audience. 100% of participant evaluations rated the training Good to Excellent. 100% of respondents indicated they learned something new from this workshop; 85% indicated they would use information learned at this workshop to help their young adult work toward their employment goals; 88% indicated they would use information learned at this workshop to explore additional services for their young adult; and 100% indicated that the materials they received at this workshop were useful. Evaluation comments indicated that this training was well received. For example, one individual who provided feedback said: "I have been looking for a workshop on this topic, both presenters did a good job; good general overview; knew very little about ABLE before; all new information for me; I learned more at this seminar than other ones; amazing presenter; thank you for livestreaming your program when we can't get to you; this was an excellent presentation; there was a lot of good info; questions elicited good answer." The link to the archived presentation can be found here: <https://www.pacer.org/livestream/?wksp=DF861AA5-EBDF-49BB-8067-F82DAEF8D169>

On October 24th, PACER Center invited the ABLE Resource Center representative and the Minnesota Department of Human Services representative to present additional information to a group of 12 people which included members of PACER's leadership and advocacy staff, DEI DRCs, and DEED staff. Attendees received information about ABLE accounts as well as ways to improve information dissemination about ABLE programs, how the MN ABLE program can solicit stakeholder input, and ways the PACER Center could support the ABLE National Resource Center.

In the third quarter of 2018, the WDAs had assigned 20 tickets across all three Employment Networks. In the fourth quarter of 2018, the WDAs collectively assigned an additional 29 tickets for a total of 49 assigned tickets.

Data Highlights:

17% - Hispanic/Latino

5% - American Indian/Alaska Native

3% - Black/African American

48% - Mental or Psychiatric disability

15% - Learning Disability

24% - Cognitive/Intellectual Disability

34% - Youth From Families Receiving Public Assistance

9% - Youth Receiving SSI or SSDI

6% - Foster youth

5% - High School Dropout

9% - Youth Offender

2% - Pregnant or Parenting Youth

59% - Basic Skills Deficient

2% - Homeless or Runaway

72% - Participated in Activities related to Guidepost 1

99% - Participated in Activities related to Guidepost 2

62% - Participated in Activities related to Guidepost 3

85% - Participated in Activities related to Guidepost 4

63% - Participated in Activities related to Guidepost 5 (Family Involvement)

30% - Participated in an Integrated Resource Team

50% - Co-enrolled in WIOA Youth or Adult

49% - Co-enrolled in State-funded Minnesota Youth Program

34% - Attained work Readiness or Education Goals

Success Stories:

Megan is a junior at the Minnesota River Valley Education District (MRVED) Alternative Learning Center in Montevideo, MN. Megan was faced barriers with transportation in order to get to and from work at her job as a cashier at Walmart. She had a strong work history there and did not want to lose her job. When Megan was referred to SWPIC she was interested in earning her driver's license in order to eliminate her transportation barrier. While Megan worked with SWPIC to improve her situation by earning her driver's license, she was informed of a Nursing Assistant Career Pathway course. The course is funded through PIC, MRVED, Adult Basic Education, and Minnesota West Community and Technical College. Megan attended the Nursing Assistant training and successfully passed her examination and officially obtained her Minnesota Nursing Assistant License. She is very excited and has applied for a Certified Nursing Assistant position at a nursing home in her hometown. Megan

also passed the test to obtain her Minnesota Driver's License.

When Antonio came to RMCEP, he had just recently reconnected with ABE to get his GED. Antonio had multiple barriers to employment including a disability and living in an MFIP household. Antonio really needed to find employment. Since ReStore was close to Antonio's house (transportation was also an issue and RMCEP provided him with a bike to use to go to and from work), Antonio was placed there for a work experience. Antonio did so well that ReStore hired him after the work experience.



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.

The Round 7 Youth DEI will have an in-person quarterly meeting in February 2019. This meeting will bring all three implementation sites' Disability Resource Coordinators together along with PACER Center Staff. The meetings allow for the DRCs to identify and share best practices with one another. This meeting will also include a training on creating accessible documents in Microsoft Word. Accessibility training was requested by the DRCs and will help the DRCs better serve individuals with visual impairments. The training will be hosted by Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development's Accessibility Coordinator.

Minnesota was asked to present on a national webinar scheduled for February 2019. The webinar's focus is on Section 188 of WIOA and best practices around implementing strategies related to Section 188. The webinar is hosted by the LEAD Center and will have representatives from the Civil Rights Center. Cory Schmid, the DEI Project Lead will present on Minnesota's Disability Training Strategy. Two other states will also present their best practices.

In an effort to increase Ticket assignments, CMJTS will explore the Partnership Plus model with Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS). In addition to working with VRS, CMJTS will increase collaboration with AVIVO, a community-based organization, to coordinate services in order to better assist ticket holders.

On January 15, 2019, the PACER Center will host a training on "Assistive Technology in Adult Settings: Postsecondary, Employment, and Community" For DRCs and Minnesota American Job Center youth program staff. The training will also include a guest speaker from the Great Lakes ADA Center.

PACER will publish the *Guide on Incorporating the Guideposts for Success into MN's Personal Learning Plan Process*.

PACER and CMJTS will collaborate to host a parent workshop in the spring. The topic will be "Paths to Employment: Exploring the Options."