

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: 10/01/13-12/31/13

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 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 nine 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 36 IRTs throughout Workforce Service Area 2 (WSA2). Utilizing the *Guideposts for Success* to provide a holistic approach to the participant's goals has been effective. A visual tool (sample attached) was created to better illustrate each participant's road 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 the Southeast region, weekly IRT meetings have begun with a Freeborn County DEI youth and other areas are also collaborating with key members in the DEI youth's life to establish and hold IRT meetings.

b. Challenges:

One of the challenges encountered by the South Central DRC is coordinating busy schedules of IRT members so the appropriate people can attend the meeting.

The RMCEP DRC is finding that participation from Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) in IRT meetings is improved in some areas but remains a challenge in others. Word of mouth is spreading among VRS staff members who are embracing the concept of the IRT. Lines of communication continue to improve but the level of collaboration in this regard can certainly get better.

In the Southeast region, connecting with the schools has been challenging in some areas due to new staff at the local schools and at Workforce Development, Inc.

c. Notable activities:

As a result of the IRT meetings, one South Central youth was able to co-enroll in Vocational Rehabilitation Services to get additional assistance with transition to post-secondary education/employment. Another youth registered for the *Track to Success* program offered at MRCI WorkSource with a goal to improve soft skills and social skills while gaining work experience. In another case, the IRT brought a better understanding of the needs/goals of the youth.

Youth case managers in the Southeast region have re-established a presence in the schools and work with school faculty on setting up meetings and organizing key IRT members for each youth.

• ***Guideposts for Success:***

a. Current status:

PACER Center developed the Youth Action Plan and Youth Profile forms to document the use of the *Guideposts for Success* in the assessment and development of service strategies for youth participants. The three implementation sites are using these documents with DEI participants. These forms were included with the July-September 2013 quarterly report.

The MN DEI Partners for Youth Needs Assessment Survey (referenced below) was structured to identify information and training needs of project stakeholders in all five *Guidepost* categories. Survey results indicated that 43 percent of the respondents would like to learn more about the *Guideposts for Success*. The MN DEI team will be working with NCWD/Youth and PACER Center (a partner in NCWD/Youth and highly involved in the development of the *Guideposts*) to address those needs.

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 Integrated Resource Teams (IRT).

In Rural MN CEP, *Guideposts* are introduced to all DEI participants and their IRT members. Resource mapping tool is used to identify gaps for each participant. The roadmap tool mentioned above 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. Planning for trainings on the *Guideposts* in Brainerd, Alexandria and Fergus Falls is ongoing.

The Southeast DRC is continuing to promote the *Guideposts* with case managers and partners. There have been multiple phone calls and meetings with partners to emphasize and help them recognize the importance of the *Guideposts* as a strategy to improve the outcomes of the youth.

b. Challenges:

It can be challenging to have people shift their thinking to focus on the *Guideposts*. Youth staff still needs to become aware of the importance of all five *Guideposts* and how to more effectively share information leading to a collaborative Individualized Service Strategy (ISS). All staff also needs to understand the importance of incorporating the *Guideposts* into assessments already in place and the fact that the *Guideposts* are appropriate and valuable for all youth, not only youth with disabilities.

The South Central region is still modifying the process for incorporating the *Guideposts for Success* into the youth program enrollment and assessments. The DRC plans 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.

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.

PACER staff presented an overview of the *Guideposts for Success* to 31 workforce development professionals attending the RMCEP Regional Training on October 9th. An additional session on working with families from diverse cultural groups specifically related to the Family Involvement *Guidepost*.

The MN DEI Partners for Youth Needs Assessment Survey (described below) included questions related to all five *Guidepost* categories, integrating *Guidepost*-based strategies into project practices and ensuring a continued focus on identifying and addressing the holistic needs of youth served in Minnesota's program.

The *Guideposts* are fully integrated into the IRT process in Rural MN CEP. The resource mapping tool is used to identify gaps that could derail a participant's success if not accounted

for. *Guidepost*-related activities are illustrated with the roadmap tool referenced above. CTICs and Individual Educational Plan (IEP) teachers have bought into the idea that the *Guideposts for Success* are a useful way of providing transition-age students with the tools they need to succeed.

- **Partnerships and Collaboration:**

- a. **Current status:**

- At the state level, Minnesota's Shared Vision for Youth (SVY) State Team meets 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 SVY team met on December 11 (see below under Significant Accomplishments for more information and a link to the meeting notes).

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.

In the South Central region, the DRC, Youth Program Coordinator and Youth Vocational Advisors have continued to identify youth on current caseloads who would be eligible for the DEI. Staff also identified eligible youth through new applications. Next quarter the focus will be on youth that are not currently being served through the youth programs. Staff will work with partnering agencies such as Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Job Service and welfare-to-work service providers to identify potential candidates.

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:

- meeting with Youth Program Coordinator and Vocational Rehabilitation Services staff to discuss ways to improve information and referral process between the two providers;
- meeting with Social Security staff to discuss the DEI project and learn how to obtain work benefit analysis or other Social Security services for youth;
- meeting with MN State Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing to learn about services and resources for deaf youth;
- DRC coordinated American Sign Language Interpreters that allowed a deaf youth to participate in a work readiness workshop;
- 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;
- meeting with the Fairmont and Mankato Community Transition Interagency Committees (CTICs) to discuss the DEI project, how to coordinate services to youth and assist with planning for youth/parent trainings.

PACER and RMCEP continue to work very closely together to provide outreach to youth, families, and professionals in an effort to market available resources and provide training on the DEI strategies. Significant collaboration with VRS is occurring in the Moorhead, Detroit

Lakes, Brainerd, and Little Falls WorkForce Centers. 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 also been established.

Successful blending and braiding have occurred on three separate initiatives in the RMCEP region. DEI funds will be used in conjunction with a Bremer Foundation grant to provide career advisors for 12 schools in the Little Falls, Brainerd and Wadena area schools. There is an expectation that four hours per week per career advisor will be reserved for serving transition age youth with disabilities. 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 in RMCEP programs. CTICs and RMCEP have partnered to plan training for families, professionals and youth on *Guideposts for Success*.

DRC and case managers continue to collaborate with agencies and organizations throughout Southeast Minnesota, working on finding additional ways to market the DEI to youth with disabilities. Staff is continuing to co-enroll in other programs and utilize the resources through those programs as well as DEI.

b. Challenges:

As the DEI project expands to all nine counties in South Central Minnesota, new relationships will need to be developed with local resources and organizations.

In the RMCEP region, social workers continue to lack the available time and resources to attend IRT meetings with some rare exceptions. The DRC will continue to engage county social workers where applicable.

New WDI case managers in the Southeast region are still trying to learn the process and feel confident in reaching out and promoting DEI as well as connecting with some of the local partners for collaboration.

Creating materials and scheduling meetings takes time and resources and there are many people involved which creates many opinions and options (this is a great challenge to have).

Funding reductions across programs that the DEI relies on for co-enrollment have reduced the opportunities for youth to participate in paid experiential learning. This is occurring at a time when Minnesota's Governor's Workforce Development Council (GWDC) has recognized the value of experiential learning for all youth, but especially for those who face barriers to entering the workforce, including youth with disabilities and other at risk characteristics targeted by Minnesota's DEI Partners for Youth project.

c. Notable activities:

CTICs in each of the three implementation regions have developed written 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 provided DEI training to interns in the Partners in Career Exploration Program (PICE). The PICE program recruits interns from Minnesota State University-Mankato Student Counseling program to provide career exploration services to high school juniors and seniors. This year there are four interns placed at four local school districts. They received information on the DEI project to share with the counselors at their school to help identify eligible youth and appropriate representatives for Integrated Resource Teams.

In the RMCEP region, VRS counselors and a regional VRS manager attended the two-day collaborative training in October where PACER, RMCEP and Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) staff was also present. Several IRT meetings have included VRS counselors. PACER and RMCEP have collaborated on several workshops within the region.

RMCEP staff has been instrumental in convincing the three DEI-participating Community Transition Interagency Committees (CTICs) in the region to focus on *Guideposts for Success*. As more IRTs are established and more partners are brought to the table, more collaborative relationships have developed.

In Southeast Minnesota the DRC and case managers attended trainings regarding strategies to address mental health illness for youth; this was a collaboration with a number of different agencies and organizations throughout the region. The DRC also assisted at the CTIC transitions fair on November 12th and worked with youth case managers to train school staff in Rice County on the Career Ready 101 curriculum.

Southeast Minnesota partners, including the DRC, youth case managers, SE MN Center for Independent Living and VRS staff, have been working to develop 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.

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 will make 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:

During the quarter the implementation sites updated their work plans and budgets to encompass activities planned during the second year of the grant. The State Co-Lead reviewed and approved the plans to release additional funds to the three sites for second-year activities. The updated plans are available from the DEI webpage: <http://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/office-youth-development/index/disability-employment-initiative/index.jsp>

The MN DEI Project Steering Committee met on December 4 via conference call to discuss the results of the MN DEI Needs Assessment Survey that was conducted in November. The results are attached to this report. Many different topic areas within the five Guideposts were identified as areas of need by the local implementation sites and partners. Only 19 of the 85 survey respondents were directly affiliated with the MN DEI sites or the MN WorkForce Center system. The majority of respondents (60) were related to potential IRT partner agencies in each region. Six individuals identified themselves as parents or disability advocates. Further analysis of regional similarities and differences is occurring and will be discussed at the next Steering Committee meeting in February and will help determine where the national TA resources can be of assistance. Notes from the meeting are available on the DEI webpage: <http://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/office-youth-development/index/disability-employment-initiative/index.jsp>.

An update on Minnesota's DEI project was provided to Minnesota's Shared Vision for Youth (SVY) State Team, which met on December 11. Notes from the December 11 meeting are on the SVY webpage: <http://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/office-youth-development/index/shared-vision/>.

PACER Center has worked with DRCs in each of the implementation regions during the quarter to conduct activities in support of the project's goal to increase service to multicultural youth with disabilities and their families. PACER's Multicultural Specialist and Transition Specialist presented a session on working with multicultural youth and families to 31 youth case managers and other workforce development staff in the RMCEP region on October 9. A focus group of Somali youth was held in Pelican Rapids (also in the RMCEP region) on November 25. A focus group with Hispanic youth and families was held in Rochester (Southeast region) on December 18 and another is planned for the South Central region in the first quarter of 2014. Questions asked during the focus group are attached. A summary of the conversation is still in development. Plans are being made for PACER staff to meet with the DRCs and other staff to discuss potential follow-up activities.

PACER staff worked closely with DRCs in the three implementation sites to conduct training for staff in each region on Assistive Technology (AT). Staff at all three implementation sites received hands-on demonstrations of assistive technology and learned about PACER's AT

lending library. Training occurred on October 10 (RMCEP region), October 17 (Southeast region) and November 20 (South Central region).

DEED DEI staff visited all three implementation sites on-site in October and November 2013 to review the activities occurring in the first year of the grant.

A total of 98 youth have been enrolled into DEI project activities since enrollment began on August 1, 2013. Of these participants, 59 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.

Supplemental information for the DEI evaluation is being collected on participants enrolled in the DEI project and recorded on paper forms which are being sent on a quarterly basis to Andy Crouter at Altarum Institute at the direction of Rob Bartolotta, MN's DEI evaluation liaison with Social Dynamics. The first data file and batch of supplemental forms for the evaluation was sent to Andy Crouter on 1/15/14 (data file) and 2/3/14 (supplemental forms). 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.

Five Tickets have been assigned to the DEED Employment Network as a result of the DEI project (three from RMCEP and two from MVAC).

RMCEP is in the process of establishing a limited-use vendor contract 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.

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):

Monthly 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:

- MN DEI Partners for Youth Needs Assessment Survey Results
- Culturally specific focus group questions
- RMCEP visual roadmap example

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

- 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
- Develop plans for meeting technical assistance and information needs identified in the Needs Assessment Survey
- Continue trainings for local implementation site staff based on the work plan and Needs Assessment Survey results
- Continue development of MN DEI website
- Continue to develop partnerships that support the goals and strategies of the MN DEI project

Outstanding Questions:

None at this time.