

**Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)****Abstract - Partners for Youth Career Pathways Project**

The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) is submitting an innovative proposal to the U.S. Department of Labor for \$2.5 million over 3.5 years to conduct the *Partners for Youth Career Pathways* Project. The purpose of the project is to improve employment outcomes for **youth with disabilities ages 14-24 years with visible and non-visible disabilities, including chronic health conditions** by increasing their participation in career pathways programs. The project will also enhance the State's public workforce capacity to serve youth with disabilities using a job-driven approach and provide local and regional businesses with qualified new workers.

DEED is partnering with key stakeholders to complete project activities and ensure alignment with existing adult career pathways and youth training programs in Minnesota. Three rural Workforce Development Areas (WDAs) - Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council (WDA 6), Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services (WDA 5), and Rural Minnesota Concentrated Employment Program (WDA 2) - will provide intensive wraparound services to in- and out-of-school youth that utilize individualized career pathways programming leading to stackable credentials and employment in high demand fields. PACER Center, a national Parent Center located in Minneapolis serving families of youth and young adults with disabilities, will provide training, technical assistance, and resource development to improve the capacity of WDAs to serve youth with disabilities and their families. Other important partners include community colleges and other postsecondary training and education institutions, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, local school districts, Adult Basic Education programs, and employers and businesses.

In addition to strategic partnerships, DEED's strategic approach includes integration of the six key elements of career pathways and **Guideposts for Success** framework into the project design. The **Partners for Youth Career Pathways workplan** focuses on 5 objectives:

1. Strengthen partnerships and strategically align youth and adult career pathways systems to effectively serve youth with disabilities through multiple entry and exit points.
2. Build capacity of WDA staff to support at least 300 youth with disabilities to participate in the state's career pathways system using the Guideposts for Success best practices framework and an Integrated Resource Team (IRT) approach.
3. Utilize innovative intergenerational family support approach to promote successful outcomes for youth with disabilities participating in career pathways system and programs.
4. Implement specific strategies to address the state's employment gap for racially and culturally diverse individuals.
5. Increase the state's number of employment networks (ENs) and the number of Social Security disability beneficiaries participating in career pathways programs.

As a result of this project, 300 youth with disabilities will enter career pathways programs and 85 percent will progress toward or attain a high school diploma/equivalency, attain unsubsidized employment, receive a post-secondary degree or certification, or complete National Career Readiness Certification. Two WDAs will become new Ticket to Work Employment Networks. Additionally, an estimated 150 family members will receive training to help them support their youth to meet their career and post-secondary education goals, and WDA staff will increase their capacity to serve youth with disabilities. More than 160,000 individuals will receive information about the project and career pathways programs through information dissemination. The cost per youth participant for the Partners for Youth Project will be \$ 8,333.