

Minnesota's Disability Employment Initiative (MN DEI) is an innovative partnership among key youth-serving stakeholders in Minnesota focused on increasing the number of youth with disabilities, ages 14-24, receiving comprehensive services through Minnesota's youth workforce system. Its primary goal is to link youth with disabilities to gainful employment through individualized needs assessment and comprehensive services such as career planning, postsecondary career education, systems linkages and service coordination.

This proposal is submitted by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), Minnesota's Workforce Investment Act (WIA) state administrative agency. The MN DEI program model is built on a strong foundation of past program successes, cross-agency collaboration, working relationships with community based organizations, and commitment to serving MN youth with disabilities.

PRIMARY FOCUS, RATIONALE, AND OBJECTIVES

Need for DEI project: Unemployment of Minnesota youth age 16-19 has increased dramatically over the last decade—rising 10 percent from 9.1 percent in 1999 to 19.1 percent in 2011.¹ Youth with disabilities, who often need extra supports and assistance to transition to economic stability as adults, face even greater challenges to employment than non-disabled youth. According to recent national statistics from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), only 14.2 percent of youth with disabilities age 16 to 19 were employed in April 2012, compared to 24.8 percent of same age youth without disabilities. While employment for young adults with disabilities age 20 to 24 was higher, at 30.2 percent, it was less than half the 61.9 percent of young adults without disabilities in this age group.²

Currently, 40 percent of working-age adults in Minnesota have a postsecondary degree. However, in just seven years, 70 percent of Minnesota jobs will require education beyond high school.³ According to *All Hands on Deck*, a recent report from the Governor's Workforce Development Council (GWDC), Minnesota's State Workforce Investment Board, Minnesota's economic future depends on its ability to meet

the education and workforce development needs of Minnesotans who have been underrepresented in the workforce, including both youth with disabilities and the state's culturally diverse youth—who represent the fastest growing sectors of our population.⁴

Between 2000 and 2010, the state's foreign-born Black population rose more than 120 percent; the Hispanic population increased 74.5 percent; the Asian population grew 51 percent; and the native-born Black population increased 60 percent. According to Census data from 2007, Minnesota is home to almost 50,000 Hmong people, the second-largest Hmong population in the U.S. MN's Somali population of at least 60,000 is the largest in the country. More than 80 languages are spoken in the Twin Cities metropolitan area;⁵ approximately one in seven children comes from an immigrant family, and the proportion is rising.⁶

Concerted efforts to improve education and employment outcomes for the state's culturally diverse youth are critical as, not only is this population growing, but, Minnesota also has one of the widest academic achievement gaps between white and non-white students in the nation.⁷

The MN Department of Education (MDE) reported in May 2011 that only 17 percent of African-American students were proficient in the math portion of the MN Comprehensive Assessment compared to 56 percent of white students.⁸ MDE also reports that Minnesota's 2009-10 high school graduation rate was 75.9 percent for all students, but again rates were significantly lower for students of color: 45.3 percent for American Indian youth, 49.2 percent for Hispanic youth, and 46.9 percent for Black youth.⁹

A survey of Minnesota's outcomes for students with disabilities also reveals cultural disparities. Although 85.3 percent of special education students graduated from high school in 2009-10, Minnesota's Post-School Outcomes Survey showed that 22.4 percent of special education students did not go on to employment or some form of post-secondary education/training after leaving school. Again, this percentage is higher for multicultural youth, with 35 percent of students with disabilities from culturally diverse populations not engaged in either employment or some form of post-secondary education/training.¹⁰

Describe overall objectives & how they are consistent with and support goals of DEI

The overall objectives of MN DEI project align with and support the goals of the Department of Labor's DEI initiative to: *improve the accessibility and accountability of the public workforce development system for individuals with disabilities; continue promising practices such as improved coordination and collaboration among employment and training and asset development programs carried out at state and local levels, including the Ticket to Work program; and build effective community partnerships that leverage public and private resources to better serve individuals with disabilities and improve employment outcomes.*

The specific objectives of MN DEI are to demonstrate practices that:

Objective 1: Improve collaboration with state and local partners leading to improved education, training, and employment opportunities and outcomes of MN youth with disabilities;

Objective 2: Help youth with disabilities make successful transitions to college and careers using the *Guideposts for Success* as a framework to guide service delivery within MN's workforce system;

Objective 3: Increase the capacity of Minnesota's youth workforce system to effectively serve culturally diverse youth with disabilities;

Objective 4: Enhance staff capacity to serve youth with disabilities with one or more additional risk factors;

Objective 5: Expand the use of benefits counseling by MN youth and their families and the use of Social Security work incentives, such as Ticket to Work, by young adults with disabilities receiving SSI; and

Objective 6: Demonstrate the feasibility and benefits of MN WorkForce Centers becoming active Employment Networks.

Population Focus: Identify youth focus and fully explain the rationale for this focus

MN DEI will serve youth with disabilities, ages 14-24, who have an identified disability that corresponds to disability categories in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It is anticipated that a large percentage of youth served will have disabilities such as Emotional Behavioral Disabilities, Learning

Disabilities, and Autism Spectrum Disorders or other Developmental Disabilities. In addition, MN DEI will target youth who have at least one additional at-risk factor in addition to disability, such as foster youth, homeless youth, out-of-school youth, teen parents, or ex-offenders. Many youth with disabilities have multiple risk factors making them more challenging to serve and more likely to be served by multiple systems. MN DEI will implement practices to increase the capacity of MN's WIA-funded youth programs to meet the needs of youth with disabilities facing multiple challenges, for whom strategic interagency collaboration, blending and braiding of funding, and service coordination are critical for success.

To bridge the state's achievement gap, MN DEI will also actively recruit and serve culturally diverse youth with disabilities.

Each of the three implementation sites will provide case management services to at least 120 youth with disabilities during the DEI project (30 in year one, 45 in year two and 45 in year three), for a total of 360 youth served with case management services during the project. In addition, we estimate an additional 600 youth, parents and employers will benefit from MN DEI project resources and tools developed to support youth with disabilities. The resources will be accessed through the Drop-In Centers and Youth Zones at the local WorkForce Centers, through Workforce Service Areas (WSAs)/Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs) and Youth Councils, and state and local partners.

Demographic information on MN DEI WSA/LWIBs

The five local areas participating in this project all serve high percentages of youth with disabilities in their WIA programs, ranging from 32 percent to 64 percent of youth served. Additionally, these areas serve youth with the following characteristics, consistent with the target population of Minnesota's DEI project: 16 percent Black, 1 percent Asian, 5 percent American Indian, 8 percent Hispanic, 14 percent school dropouts, 16 percent youth offenders, 19 percent TANF recipients, 15 percent teen parents, 5 percent youth in foster care, and 4 percent homeless youth. The five areas are primarily rural with one metropolitan area (the city

of Rochester). The service areas include significant populations of youth of color: Somali and Hmong (Southeast WSA); Hispanic (Central MN, Southwest and South Central WSAs) and American Indian (Rural MN CEP WSA).

Strategic Approach

Expanded partnership and collaboration, the *Guideposts for Success*, Integrated Resource Teams and Local Disability Resource Coordinators are the service delivery strategies identified in the SGA that will be utilized by MN DEI. The project also incorporates strategies to increase enrollment and improve services to youth with disabilities highlighted by DOL in 2011: training and technical assistance to front-line staff to increase their capacity to meet the career development needs of youth with disabilities; strength-based assessment and career planning tools; a range of work experience opportunities; and active outreach, education, & relationship-building with local employers.¹¹

Participating LWIBs

Five of Minnesota's sixteen WSAs/LWIBs were selected by DEED to participate in this project: Rural MN Concentrated Employment Program; Central MN Jobs and Training Services; Southwest MN Private Industry Council; South Central WorkForce Council; and Southeast MN Workforce Development. The area served by these five WSAs/LWIBs encompasses 72 percent of Minnesota's 87 counties and includes 34 percent of the state's population. The service area is primarily rural, with one large city (Rochester). As previously noted, significant racial and/or ethnic minority populations are present in the WSAs. All have agreed to participate as *either* an implementation site *or* a control site.

All of the selected WSAs/LWIBs have experience working with youth with disabilities. Minnesota's WIA-funded youth programs currently serve more youth with disabilities than other states: 37 percent of youth exiting MN programs are youth with disabilities compared to the national average of 12.7 percent.

All five WSAs/LWIBs provide physical, programmatic, and communication accessibility to individuals

with disabilities through Minnesota's WorkForce Center certification process and have incorporated policies and procedures to effectively serve individuals with disabilities. DEED WorkForce Center Coordination staff reviews all Centers for accessibility based on WIA Section 188 every three years to identify problems that require corrective action. Each MN DEI WSA/LWIB site will be reviewed again to ensure the assessment reflects current conditions. If new problems are identified, they will be immediately rectified. Also, to assist implementation sites in their efforts to provide universal access, MN DEI project activities include training on universal design, accessible electronic and information technology, and assistive technology.

Two of the five selected WSAs/LWIBs participated in a previous grant Minnesota received from DOL. Project C3 (2003-2006), demonstrated how working in partnership with a disability-focused intermediary organization (PACER Center) could generate joint activities between local WSAs/LWIBs and area schools resulting in paid work opportunities for students with disabilities. If WSAs/LWIBs that did *not* directly participate in these demonstration grants are selected as implementation sites, they will benefit from training and technical assistance based on these models, while WSAs/LWIBs that *did* participate can build on this foundation and further increase their capacity to serve youth with disabilities by utilizing Local Disability Resource Coordinators. In addition, all of the selected WSAs/LWIBs collaborate with an extensive network of local partners to deliver effective youth services. Each has expertise that will contribute to achieving MN DEI objectives, for instance exemplary employer partnerships that can leverage paid work experience for youth and partnerships with other agencies to address the needs of higher-risk populations of youth with disabilities.

How Strategic Service Delivery components will achieve stated objectives

MN DEI will use the following strategies to provide a minimum of 120 at-risk youth with disabilities per year with comprehensive case management services and individualized supports to help them complete school, train for a career, find employment and set out on their own path to the middle class.

Strategy 1: Expand Partnership and Collaboration – MN DEI's State Steering Committee will be drawn from members of Minnesota's Shared Vision for Youth state team, an existing state-level interagency work group that includes DEED (Office of Youth Development, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, State Services for the Blind); Education (Special Education, Dropout Prevention, Adult Basic Education, Career Technical Education); MN State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU); Corrections; Human Services (Disability Services, Foster Care, TANF, Mental Health, Homeless Youth, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities); Housing; Public Safety; Job Corps; MN's Social Security Work Incentive Coordinator; PACER Center; Junior Achievement; and ISEEK (a comprehensive career exploration and career education Web site that links youth to career pathways available through MnSCU programs). LDRCs from each implementation site and their Community Transition Interagency Committee (CTIC) partners (see p. 8) will also serve on the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee's membership reflects the range of support needs outlined in DOL's *Guides for Success*: secondary and postsecondary education, career development, youth development, family involvement, VRS, Social Security programs and work incentives, and health and human service systems. The Committee will guide project activities, monitor progress, facilitate formal and informal cross-agency collaboration, and seek solutions to identified policy barriers in order to achieve the project objectives.

The Steering Committee will also facilitate the development of Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) among local partners where appropriate and necessary to identify the roles of the key partners in achieving project objectives, avoid duplication of services, promote joint planning and co-enrollment strategies, and leverage resources.

Strategy 2: Local Disability Resource Coordinators (LDRCs) – LDRCs are critical to achieving MN DEI's six project objectives. The LDRC's role is to provide service coordination for youth with disabilities with multiple service needs; facilitate training of other program staff; support local youth program staff

working with youth with disabilities; manage youth recruitment and community outreach activities; participate in the development of an assessment tool reflecting the *Guideposts for Success* framework; develop opportunities for career exploration and work-based learning in partnership with local employers; and identify local resources. LDRCs will leverage funding by developing strong local relationships with programs such as VRS/SSB, Adult Basic Education programs, and Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) Employment Service providers as well as other DOL-funded programs such as Wagner-Peyser, Job Corps; and YouthBuild. Working relationships with off site programs (such as school districts, community colleges, community-based youth programs, homeless youth service providers, Chafee Foster Care Programs, mental health services, Social Security offices and transportation, housing, independent living, juvenile probation, and faith-based partners) will be helpful in recruiting program participants and delivering services fully aligned with the five domains of the *Guideposts for Success*. Finally, LDRCs will work closely with WIPA and SSA Work Incentives staff to promote employment among youth receiving SSI and explore Employment Network status.

Strategy 3: Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs) – Person-centered IRTs will be convened by LDRCs on an ad hoc basis around the individual needs of youth enrolled in MN DEI who need supports from multiple systems to achieve their education, training, or employment goals. Their purpose is to enhance communication, leverage partner resources, and improve service coordination for youth. LDRCs will work closely with existing Community Transition Interagency Committees (CTICs) to promote IRT participation by area service providers. CTICS were created by the MN Legislature in 1987 to identify local resources for transition-age youth with disabilities and have many established relationships with local agencies.

Strategy 4: Customized individual support provided by a disability-focused intermediary – PACER Center, a Minnesota non-profit nationally recognized for its expertise on working with youth with disabilities and their families, has specialized expertise in areas of critical importance to MN DEI project objectives. PACER, a partner in the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD),

provides customized individual support on ODEP's *Guideposts for Success* and other workforce development issues concerning youth with disabilities. PACER also has expertise on universal design for learning and assistive technology, working with culturally diverse youth and their families, and a wide range of related youth and disability issues. PACER worked closely with DEED on the previous DOL-funded project mentioned above and will help achieve MN DEI objectives by facilitating interagency collaboration, providing customized individual support to the Project Lead and LDRCs, developing tools aligned with the *Guideposts for Success*, coordinating MN DEI family activities, and increasing the capacity of WIA youth programs to serve culturally diverse youth with disabilities and youth receiving SSI Benefits.

Strategy 5: Enhancing Staff Capacity to Serve Youth with Disabilities – PACER Center will support front-line staff on strategies to work effectively with youth with disabilities and their families, serve culturally diverse youth with disabilities, and meet the needs of youth with multiple risk factors. These activities are key to achieving MN DEI objectives. An online needs assessment of implementation site youth program staff will be conducted by PACER and DEED to determine the current experience, strengths, and needs of staff relating to serving youth with disabilities. PACER, in collaboration with state and local partners, will then develop customized supports reflecting MN DEI project objectives. Support will be delivered through a combination of face-to-face, hands-on and virtual delivery methods.

Strategy 6: Customized individual support to families of youth with disabilities – MN DEI will provide annual workshops for families in each MN DEI area. PACER will develop the workshops, which will address career planning and career pathways, Special Education transition planning, and benefits planning. Coordinated with local CTIC partners, the workshops will be open to the community. PACER will also provide individualized information, referral and advocacy services to MN DEI implementation site families and has staff able to assist native Spanish, Somali and Hmong speakers.

Experience reaching the populations the project expects to serve

Thirty-seven percent of youth exiting MN programs are youth with disabilities compared to the national average of 12.7 percent. This track record demonstrates the state's capacity to reach youth with disabilities. The MN DEI project, however, will engage in expanded outreach and recruitment efforts through an existing outreach to schools model in which youth workforce development staff complement the activities of school counselors to increase the exposure of high school students to labor market information and the services of the public workforce system. The Outreach to Schools model has been a well-regarded method of connecting young people and their families to Minnesota's workforce system and can be an effective method of reaching out to youth with disabilities, including culturally diverse youth, to draw them into the DEI project. State and local partner networks will be actively engaged in recruitment efforts.

Minnesota's statewide Employment Networks

Minnesota's Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), a division of DEED, has been a statewide cost reimbursement Employment Network (EN) since 1984. In 2008, MN's Disability Program Navigator program, housed within VRS, applied to create a second statewide EN, comprised of MN's 49 WorkForce Centers/Career One-Stops and their partners (including WSAs/LWIBs). This second statewide network was approved and is administered within VRS. MN DEI will tap into these existing statewide ENs, as well as the services of the Midwest Ticket to Work Partnership, to increase the utilization of the Ticket to Work program among youth receiving SSI/SSDI, particularly those from underserved populations.

How project design will impact the workforce development system

MN DEI will build the capacity of state and local youth-serving systems to improve their services and collective ability to achieve shared outcomes for MN youth with disabilities through joint strategies and coordination of efforts. Barriers to cross-systems collaboration will be identified and removed. The project will promote implementation of best practices and encourage the replication and expansion of these

practices at the end of the grant. DEI implementation sites will have stronger relationships with local partners and local employers, and be familiar with how to operate as an Employment Network through the Ticket to Work program, leading to a potential source of funding to sustain project services.

How project design will expand comprehensive service delivery and facilitate systems change

MN DEI will increase the capacity of service-delivery systems to effectively serve individuals with disabilities. It will improve educational, training, and employment opportunities and outcomes of youth with disabilities who are unemployed, underemployed, and/or receiving Social Security disability benefits; and help young adults with disabilities find a path into the middle class through exemplary and model service delivery by the public workforce system. This project will impact the youth workforce development system, expand comprehensive service delivery, facilitate systems change, incorporate universal design, and improve the effective and meaningful education, training and employment opportunities for targeted youth with disabilities. The project will help participating WSAs/LWIBs transition to new requirements expected in forthcoming WIA reauthorization. In addition, the project will demonstrate the effectiveness of service delivery strategies that can potentially be incorporated into MN's adult workforce system as well.

MN DEI will facilitate systems change by establishing an ongoing network of services to maximize the use of all available funding resources, developing local level MOUs and creating, expanding and renewing partnerships with stakeholders dedicated to serving people with disabilities.

How project design will incorporate universal design

Each implementation site has access to the assistive technology and universal design expertise available through VRS/SSB. In addition, PACER's Simon Technology Center (STC) will provide customized individual support on these topics to LDRCs and youth program staff through consultations, webinars, and hands-on training. The STC provides youth and adults with disabilities the opportunity to preview software and assistive and mainstream technology to improve reading, writing, math, science, keyboarding, problem

solving and independent living skills.

How project design improves effective and meaningful education and employment opportunities for youth

To be effective, services to individuals with disabilities must be based on a person-centered assessment leading to a service plan reflecting an individual's strengths, interests, needs and personal goals. The *Guideposts for Success* explore the application of this principle in five domains of support linked to successful post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities. MN DEI service strategies are designed to build the capacity of MN's workforce system to serve youth with disabilities whose barriers to employment demand this individualized approach. Cross-agency collaboration, comprehensive case management services, and service coordination all increase the project's capacity to deliver maximally effective and meaningful education, training, and employment opportunities.

How the strategic approach addresses the needs of the youth transitioning into the workforce

MN DEI's Steering Committee, Project Lead, LDRCs, WIA youth program staff, CTICs and other local partners will receive technical assistance and training on research-based practices that lead to high school graduation, post-school employment, and economic self-sufficiency. Youth with multiple barriers to employment will receive cross-agency supports from agencies convened as IRTs. A range of related services may be provided to MN DEI youth, including training and individual assistance to family members but all supports will be linked to the young adult's career goal.

How the project will incorporate the *Guideposts for Success*

MN DEI will use the *Guideposts* framework to improve program access, identify and access services from outside agencies, conduct strength-based assessments, and develop person-centered plans leading to postsecondary credentials and quality employment. Tools developed by MN DEI to help program staff apply the *Guideposts* in assessment and service delivery activities will promote systems change through focused methods for cross-agency collaboration, and establish a model for other states to replicate.

Vocational assessments, transition, intermediary services and parental involvement components

PACER will work collaboratively with program staff at MN DEI implementation sites to develop a practical tool based on the *Guideposts* that will help staff assess support needs in the five *Guidepost* domains as part of their youth-centered assessment and planning process. Interest inventories, abilities and aptitudes, academic and vocational assessments will also be used by program staff. Online interactive tools such as *My Next Move* and *iSeek.org* can be used independently by youth and families. Another online interactive tool available to MN DEI youth, families, program staff and local partners is Disability Benefits 101 (DB101). DB101 is a MN-specific Web site for transition-age youth with disabilities and their families offering benefit-planning tools, information on health care coverage, transportation, housing, tips for transitioning to employment and many other resources. MDE is integrating DB101 into the MN IEP process, and DB101 is also being utilized by case managers working with transition-age youth with disabilities in all 87 MN counties. MN Department of Human Services is currently finalizing a new DB101 benefits planning curriculum which can be used by MN DEI sites, CTICs and other partners.

Parent involvement is a key component of the project and families of youth with disabilities in implementation sites will be trained on strategies that help youth go on to postsecondary education, transition to competitive employment and attain economic self-sufficiency. In addition, the intermediary role played by PACER Center, an organization with expertise on family contributions to successful post-school outcomes, is key to the project's design and implementation.

Strategies for linkages with middle and secondary schools and other education components

Community Transition Interagency Committees (CTICs) will be a key partner linking MN DEI implementation sites to local middle and secondary schools and special education and secondary career and technical education programs. Individual CTIC members will serve on Integrated Resource Teams, provide information and referral support to LDRCs, refer youth with disabilities to WorkForce Centers for

services, and will help plan workshops for families of youth with disabilities on work incentives, benefits planning, and preparing children and youth with disabilities for employment and economic self-sufficiency.

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system has technical and community colleges within each WSA/LWIB. Developing and sustaining partnerships with MnSCU postsecondary colleges is key to addressing Minnesota's achievement gap and building an educated workforce that can sustain a strong state economy in the years ahead.

Summer employment, mentoring, on-the-job training, and other work experience opportunities

Participating youth will be provided with work-based learning opportunities which may include summer or year-round employment through WIA, the Minnesota Youth Program (MYP), the YouthBuild program or other paid work experience, customized employment, and internships; cooperative work-education programs through post-secondary institutions; job coaching or on-the-job support; mentoring programs; use of job placement assistance; Minnesota's Camps to Careers program; and Project SEARCH. Other services may be offered to meet the individual needs and goals of MN DEI participants such as job shadowing, entrepreneurship experiences, and paid and unpaid community service.

Linkages to business community and quality of work experiences [available to youth]

DEED selected several WSAs/LWIBs as potential MN DEI sites based on their success working with local employers to increase work opportunities for WIA youth program participants. Examples of such initiatives include a wage subsidy and mentoring model for rural youth, an online resource directory of employer based internships, apprenticeships, mentoring and work-based learning opportunities, and a nationally-recognized model for career academies in high-growth sector developed in partnership with local employers.

Each MN DEI implementation site will develop a plan to engage local employers in providing work experience opportunities for youth with disabilities. Local Workforce Councils are comprised of 51 percent

business representation which ensures that business members have both input and ongoing oversight of program development and can provide program leadership with feedback on business initiatives.

With the assistance of Wagner-Peyser-funded Business Services staff, LDRCs and youth program case managers at implementation sites will work with employers to facilitate individual placement of participants in on-the-job training experiences, permanent positions, internships or trial jobs. To assure the placement is barrier-free, VRS/SSB will help identify appropriate workplace accommodations, including assistive technology. LDRCs will see that resources for these supports are included in individual service plans.

Education, training & employment opportunities that focus on careers in high-growth job sectors

MN DEI state and local leadership will identify opportunities for career preparation, education and training, occupational certification, and placement of targeted youth with disabilities in high demand/high growth occupations. Projected high demand/high growth occupations include health care workers; computer specialists; accountants, auditors, business operations specialists; teachers and other education and training specialists; and police and correctional officers.

MN DEI sites will utilize Individual Training Accounts for older and out-of-school youth as allowed by the state's DOL-approved waiver to provide access to training opportunities in high growth job sectors as appropriate for individual participants.

MN DEI will also capitalize on a new DEED initiative funded by DOL, MN FastTRAC Career Pathways, a partnership between DEED, MnSCU, Adult Basic Education, and the WSAs/LWIBs to offer underserved adult populations accelerated pathways to a postsecondary career credential through MnSCU programs.

Objectives regarding education outcomes, credentials or other certificates of accomplishment

WSAs/LWIBs will identify targeted youth who have dropped out or are at-risk of dropping out and work to reengage them through mentoring activities, strength-based assessments and person-centered planning.

In addition to earning a high school diploma or equivalent and work readiness credentials, youth will be provided opportunities for training and industry-recognized certification. Occupational training for out of school youth will be delivered primarily through MNSCU technical and community colleges and will focus on high demand occupations requiring a short-term certificate or diploma.

Part-time, temporary and self-employment options

Each participating WSA/LWIB will make available opportunities for part-time, temporary and self-employment options based on the needs and interests of individual participants.

Partnership Commitment and Resources

MN Youth Councils established under WIA are multi-sector local partnerships involved in shared decision making, community education and awareness, resource mapping, youth-centered planning, program development and capacity building. MN Youth Councils promote local coordination with education, human services, juvenile justice, community-based and faith-based organizations, VRS/SSB, migrant and seasonal farmworker programs, and other key partners to assure that youth from all backgrounds can access a variety of youth services. Relationships between these partners vary across local areas but include referral relationships, cross-training, co-enrollment, and formal MOUs. Local WorkForce Center partners develop cost allocation plans for distributing shared costs across programs.

Developing and evaluating partnerships & linkages among participating LWIBs

Several management mechanisms exist to develop and evaluate partnerships and linkages among the LWIBs participating in MN DEI. The Project Lead will convene quarterly meetings and conference calls with LDRCs where the group will report progress on project objectives and discuss and problem-solve current challenges. Time will be reserved on the agenda for LDRCs to share knowledge and learn from one another's recruitment, networking, employer engagement and other implementation activities. LDRCs will also provide informal peer-to-peer technical assistance to one another in areas of specific expertise. Group

technical assistance activities will allow LDRCs to share information with one another. LDRCs will also participate in and contribute to MN DEI Steering Committee meetings.

Strategic Partners

MN DEI's key local partners include the WSAs/LWIBs selected as local implementation sites, WorkForce Center partners (such as VRS/SSB, MFIP Employment Service Providers, and other DOL-funded programs), local CTICS; local special education programs; County Social Service programs serving homeless youth, teen parents and other at-risk populations; foster care agencies; Technical and Community Colleges; Juvenile Corrections/Probation; community-based cultural organizations; and local employers. Co-enrollment will be an essential strategy to ensure that needs of the youth served are met and that opportunities for education and work experience are provided. Local linkages with SSA's Area Work Incentive Coordinator, Work Incentive Liaisons in local SSA offices, and benefit planning experts will also be key to serving youth who are SSI recipients and helping local WorkForce Centers transition to active Employment Network status.

Existing state-level partnerships, impact on systems change, and local level service delivery & outcomes

The core group of MN DEI state-level partners will come from Minnesota's Shared Vision for Youth state team, which has been working on interagency projects focused on youth with disabilities and other at-risk youth targeted by MN DEI for several years. Minnesota's Blueprint for Shared Vision for Youth and Resource Directory spotlight on-going interagency collaboration and best practices at the state and local level and can be viewed in Part III(c)(7).

Chief partners with DEED's Office of Youth Development are the MN Workforce Council Association (MWCA), MN's Department of Human Services (DHS), VRS/SSB, MDE, the GWDC, Social Security's Area Work Incentive Coordinator and WIPA program, MnSCU and PACER Center.

Linkages to improve services & outcomes for SSI/SSDI recipients

Minnesota recognizes that a primary barrier keeping youth in transition from accessing work is the fear that they will lose critical health care or cash support benefits. By providing family training on work incentives, online tools such as DB101, individual benefit analysis and financial literacy training, youth participants will be able to make informed choices about employment and postsecondary education.

At the state and local level, project staff will develop linkages with SSA's Area Work Incentive Coordinator (AWIC), Work Incentive Liaisons in local SSA offices, and benefit planning experts through the Minnesota Work Incentives Connection (MN's WIPA) to provide training of direct service staff and assist targeted youth who are on SSI/SSDI and their parents regarding ways in which they can transition to employment without immediately losing their benefits. Minnesota's SSA representatives will provide tools to eligible youth and their families that focus on SSA work incentives such as the Plan for Achieving Self Support (PASS) and Ticket to Work. MN DEI will use the technical assistance resources available through Maximus to build knowledge among local staff regarding effective operation as an Employment Network.

How project partnerships lead to increased enrollment of youth with disabilities in relevant DOL programs

MN Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) and State Services for the Blind (SSB) are among MN's four core WorkForce Center partners. VRS staff are housed in nearly every WorkForce Center, SSB staff are located in some WorkForce Centers, and SSB services are available in others on an itinerant basis. This close connection has allowed VRS to offer classes and job clubs to address the needs of individuals with disabilities who are universal customers or receiving services from other programs such as the MN Family Investment Program. MN WorkForce Center "Youth Zones" also offer disability related resources while providing information on all workforce programs. Formal MOUs between local programs and IRTs convened by LDRCs also promote co-enrollment of youth in relevant DOL programs.

How State's strategy for partnership/collaboration improves coordination across multiple services/programs

With the leadership of the GWDC and its *All Hands on Deck* policy advisory, state agencies have come together to develop new initiatives that address the state's achievement gap: MN FastTRAC Career Pathways, a new DOL-funded initiative focused on increasing the capacity of MN WorkForce Centers to help culturally diverse, disability, and other underserved adult populations gain postsecondary credentials in high-demand industries that pay living wages and Skills@Work, a statewide campaign that will convene regional teams of leaders from business, workforce and economic development, education, and non-profit sectors to create regional action plans for closing Minnesota's skills gap. The Skills@Work initiative is intended to foster strategic partnerships that align resources, minimize duplication, improve outcomes, and measure success. MN DEI objectives completely align with these state initiatives with an added focus on ensuring that the opportunity and support needs of youth with disabilities are addressed making MN DEI well positioned to participate in Skills@Work activities, leverage relationships with area business leaders, and ensure that MN DEI priorities are integrated into the state's regional and statewide workforce development planning.

Partner Resources

One of the responsibilities of the LDRC is to identify current services, programs and funding sources within the community to address the needs of targeted youth with disabilities and their families as they transition to employment or post-secondary education. LDRCs will be assisted in these efforts by local CTICs and by State Steering Committee members. Leveraged resources supporting MN DEI activities include Wagner-Peyser supported programs and other WIA Youth and Adult funding, Minnesota Youth Program and MN YouthBuild funding, VRS/SSB resources, MFIP Employment Services/Supported Work, AmeriCorps, Job Corps, resources from local school districts, local resources such as Community Development Block Grant funds, Chaffee Scholarship funds, Pell grants and other financial aid resources

for post-secondary education or training. Co-enrollment will be critical to the success of this project.

Minnesota is requesting to incorporate flexible funding dollars as a portion of the funds subgranted to the local implementation sites for the purposes of providing training to participants that will lead to credentials in high-demand occupations, supportive services and assistive technology resources and tools which will increase the likelihood of individual success in training and employment. Flexible funding dollars will not exceed the 15 percent maximum allowed in the SGA.

Demonstrated Experience: Services and Outcomes to Youth With Disabilities

The attachment in Part III(c)(2) summarizes Minnesota's key WIA performance measures for WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker (combined) and Wagner-Peyser for PY 2009 and PY 2010. The attachment in Part III(c)(3) provides an overview of the state's WIA Youth performance for PY 2009 and PY 2010, including specific numerators and denominators for youth with disabilities. Since Minnesota is a "Legacy Measure" state, we have included youth performance outcomes for both Legacy and Common Measures.

Over the years, Minnesota has consistently served and exited a greater percentage of youth with disabilities through WIA Youth programs than most other states. In PY 2010, 37 percent of all Minnesota's WIA Youth exiters had a disability, compared to 12.7 percent nationally. Nationally, the number of younger youth exiters with a disability in PY 2010 was 14.7 percent; 36 percent in Minnesota. For older youth exiters, only 8.2 percent of the national total had a disability, compared to 24 percent of Minnesota older youth exiters. Additional comparative data between the U.S. and Minnesota can be found at:

http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/Programs_Services/Youth_Services/PDF/ServedByWiaYth.pdf

Over time, MN WSAs have placed greater emphasis on serving older youth with disabilities. The state's experience has been that older youth with disabilities entering WIA Youth Programs frequently have additional barriers to employment (dropout, teen parent, offender status) that require additional staff time and resources. The five WSAs/LWIBs participating in this proposal are serving youth with a disability at a

rate of 43 percent. However, even with this comparative success, more work must be done to address the state’s achievement gap by improving outreach to youth with disabilities from communities of color.

SSI/SSDI status as part of registration in WIA & W-P funded programs

MN’s Workforce One system currently collects SSI/SSDI status for WIA youth participants.

Physical, Communication and Programmatic Accessibility

Element Four of DEED’s Methods of Administration (MOA) sets forth the strategies that Minnesota has implemented to address accessibility of the workforce system under WIA and is included in Part IIIc(6). All MN WorkForce Centers have been reviewed by DEED specialists to ensure that they are accessible to the universal customer. State policies relating to physical, programmatic, and communications access to the WorkForce Center System and all WIA-funded services are included in Part IIIc(6).

All WorkForce Centers are reviewed every three years to ensure compliance. Actions needed for the WFC to be in compliance are recorded by DEED staff to follow up for resolution prior to recertification. The results from site reviews in all five of the local areas participating in the DEI project, including resolution of areas of concern, are contained in the chart below:

One-Stop Location	Areas of Concern	Resolution
Rural MN CEP Fergus Falls WorkForce Center Reviewed/Certified: 5/2012	Rest rooms not accessible. Elevator cab does not meet ADA criteria. Accessible parking must be relocated from street to parking lot due to transfer space. Accommodation language needed on materials sent to customers for workshops.	The men's rest room now a unisex accessible rest room; women's rest room remains the same. Accessible parking will be relocated to the lot behind the WFC; two spots required. This is an agenda item on the city council's June 2012 meeting. All workshop invites will include a sentence about availability of accommodations. All workshops will be located on first floor because of the elevator.
Central MN Jobs & Training Cambridge WorkForce Center Reviewed/Certified: 11/2010	Additional signage needed inside and outside the WFC. New accessible striping needed in parking lot. Soap dispenser is more than 48 inches from floor. Rest room signs should be on latch side of door, 60 inches from floor with Braille.	Additional monument sign on order. Internal WFC signs are installed. Parking lot was repaved and striped. Landlord lowered soap dispensers and hung new rest room signs per ADA requirements.
Southwest MN Private	City building in middle of remodeling. Need	City has completed project and additional

One-Stop Location	Areas of Concern	Resolution
Industry Council Marshall WorkForce Center Reviewed/Certified: 11/2009	additional signage internal and external when completed. Vocational Rehab hoteling office near Resource Area needs more privacy. Sinks need to be wrapped in rest rooms.	signage has been added. Both men's and women's restrooms have sinks that are wrapped. Additional discussions about privacy and the Vocational Rehab space is in works.
South Central Workforce Council Fairmont WorkForce Center Reviewed/Certified: 3/2009	WFC logo sign is not easy to find from major thoroughfare. WFC needs a menu of services board for customers. Evacuation plan needs to be completed. Accessible technology sign needed for AT computer.	WFC has put up additional sign and logo for easy identification of building. Menu of services board posted in reception area. Evacuation plan drawn and posted. AT computer station has additional signage in cubicle.
Southeast MN Workforce Development Red Wing WorkForce Center Reviewed/Certified: 11/2010	Pipes exposed in both rest rooms. Rest room signs located on doors. Vending machine located in vestibule between inside and outside accessible doors. Path from parking lot to sidewalk more than 1/2 inch incline in pavement.	Pipes have been wrapped and signage in place on latch side of rest room door. Vending machine moved to break room for additional space when entering building. Waiting for parking lot to be resurfaced.

Continuing to increase the accessibility of Minnesota’s WorkForce Center system is one of the recommendations contained in *All Hands On Deck*, the policy advisory initially issued in 2011 and reissued in 2012 by the by the GWDC. In response to this recommendation, DEED is developing guidelines for training all WorkForce Center staff in accessibility. WSAs/LWIBs must also describe in their local WIA unified plans any staff training offered by local partners relating to physical and programmatic accessibility.

Since 2004, the MN WorkForce Center system has been using “Focus on Ability” an online learning tool created with the assistance of DOL grant funds, to help WorkForce Center staff, employers, and others better understand and work with people with disabilities <www.focusonability.net>. Revisions to the tool in 2011 were funded through Minnesota’s Disability Program Navigator Initiative and Minnesota’s Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, Pathways to Employment. DEED has plans to incorporate Focus on Ability training into Minnesota’s MOA as a requirement of the site certification process for WorkForce Centers.

Implementation of assistive technologies and improvements needed

All WorkForce Centers in Minnesota have assistive technology and software available to jobseekers with disabilities to provide access to computers in their resource area. Available software includes JAWS,

ZoomText and NexTalk. Additional assistive technology available includes: Closed-Caption Decoder-Enabled TV/VCR, Okay Vision Aide Corporation (OVAC) Reader, and Pocket Talker Personal Amplifier. UbiDuos, a portable communication device used by people who are deaf or hard of hearing, are available at the reception desk in thirty WFCs. Staff is knowledgeable regarding the customer's right to be provided a language and/or a sign language interpreter upon request. Equal Opportunity Officers have been identified and trained in all of the Workforce Service Areas.

However, a challenge facing the WorkForce Center system is keeping up with the rapid changes in both mainstream electronic and information technology and assistive technologies. For many youth and young adults with disabilities, technologies provide the only way they can write, speak, learn difficult material, or participate independently in school, home, work and community activities. The DEI will incorporate expertise from and access to PACER's Simon Technology Center resources into the training and supports provided to local staff and youth participating in the implementation sites.

Programmatic Experience and Initiative

DEED, the Department of Human Services, and the Minnesota Workforce Council Association (MWCA) have developed an ongoing relationship serving teen parents and other youth who are receiving MFIP benefits or in TANF-eligible households, including youth with disabilities. The 2009 Teen Parent project provided work experience and work readiness training for approximately 300 teen parents enrolled in MFIP. Ninety-two percent of participants developed work readiness skills through this experience. The 2010 TANF Summer Youth Program served nearly 2,300 youth who were teen parents receiving MFIP or members of TANF-eligible households. Ninety-three percent of these youth attained work readiness skills; 24 percent of TANF Summer Youth participants were youth with disabilities. In 2011, Minnesota used TANF Innovation funds for a targeted Teen Parent Summer Youth Project that was an effort to address disparities in MFIP outcomes, especially the Work Participation Rate (WPR), for African American and American Indian

participants. For the period July, 2010 through September, 2010, the WPR for all MFIP participants statewide was 41.1 percent. For white participants the rate was 44 percent while the rates for African American and American Indian participants were 37.6 percent and 30.7 percent, respectively. The 2011 project served 123 youth, 93 percent of whom demonstrated increased work readiness skills. The inter-agency relationship continues in 2012 with another Teen Parent project expected to serve over 100 youth.

Sustaining integrated services to customers w/disabilities after previous federal funding ended

MN's Disability Program Navigator (DPN) project met the outcomes established by DOL/ETA for the cooperative agreement as reflected in the chart included in Part III(c)(4). The state's strong ongoing commitment to improving services to the neediest youth, including youth with disabilities, is best reflected in its Shared Vision for Youth (SVY): "By age 25, Minnesota's young people will be ready for the responsibilities and rewards of economic self-sufficiency, healthy family and social relationships, community involvement, stable housing and life-long learning." This vision statement is supported by an interagency work-group whose mission is: "State agencies will collaborate to assure that Minnesota's neediest youth will acquire the talents, skills, and knowledge necessary to ensure their healthy transition to successful adult roles and responsibilities." DEED's SVY webpage shows the depth, breadth, and capacity of on-going interagency projects which further the goals of serving youth most in need and achieving successful outcomes.¹² Additional information can be found in Part III(c)(7).

Evidence of how the state has used partnership to enhance outcomes for persons w/disabilities.

This state-level SVY interagency partnership is replicated at the local level where Youth Councils are using similar partnerships to enhance the outcomes for all at-risk youth, including youth with disabilities. Examples of these local-level collaborations are described in DEED's *Cooperative Youth Services and Best Practices: A Youth Council Resource Guide*.¹³

Registration and Operation of an Employment Network

DEED's Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) has been a statewide cost reimbursement and milestone EN since 1984, demonstrating prior success and experience with accepting Tickets and working with Ticket holders. On a given day, 1,700 to 1,800 VRS Ticket holders are in the cost reimbursement and milestone categories. The employment rate of Ticket holders is consistent with the overall employment rate for all VRS clients, which is currently 55 percent.

In 2008, MN's Disability Program Navigator program, housed within VRS, applied to create a second statewide EN, comprised of Minnesota's 49 WorkForce Centers/Career One-Stops and their partners (including WSAs/LWIBs). This second statewide network was approved and is currently administered within DEED's VRS Division. MN DEI will tap into these existing ENs, along with the services of the Midwest Ticket to Work Partnership, to increase the utilization of the Ticket to Work program among youth receiving SSI/SSDI, particularly those from underserved populations. LDRCs will work with SSA's AWIC to conduct outreach efforts to youth with unassigned Tickets and encourage them to assign their Tickets to an EN to receive job placement and retention services.

The project will develop protocols, practices and MOUs to collaborate with VRS and meet the post-employment needs of Ticket holders through the Partnership Plus model. LWIBs and VRS work together to maximize successful entry into the workplace for young Ticket holders through MN DEI activities.

Project Management: Staff Capacity

DEED has extensive knowledge in workforce development and is the state's lead for WIA and for MN's WorkForce Center System. DEED has the capacity to quickly launch MN DEI project. It has **identified Project Co-Leads** to coordinate with Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs) and other state agencies and partners, **coordinate implementation of Ticket to Work** administrative activities with Maximus, implement additional data collection and process evaluation requirements, meet with implementation site DRCs to develop and implement **formative evaluation** strategies, and convene

regularly scheduled meetings with the project's Steering Committee to ensure **continuous quality improvement**.

The Project Co-Leads understand the complexities of providing workforce services for transition-age youth with disabilities and have both leadership and program development experience. Together, they have fifty-five years of experience in workforce development at both the state and local levels, designing and implementing youth employment and training projects consistent with federal, state, and local priorities, law, regulations, and policies. Their expertise in disability issues is based on professional experience with programs and collaborative partners serving the needs of adults and youth with disabilities as they transition to employment.

Plan to hire an experienced and knowledgeable Local Disability Resource Coordinators

LDRCs will be employees of the WSA/LWIB and will possess workforce and disability knowledge, particularly relating to transition-age youth. The WSA/LWIB will conduct the hiring process to ensure local needs are met.

Use of consultants

MN DEI incorporates the expertise of PACER Center, a Minnesota non-profit nationally recognized for its success working with youth with disabilities and their families, to implement key project activities.

Fiscal and Administrative Capacity

As the designated state agency for administration of WIA funds and the recipient of many federal grant awards from USDOL and other federal agencies, DEED has the knowledge and experience to administer the DEI project. Staff from DEED's Workforce Development, Fiscal Services, and Business and Information Technology divisions have the tools, experience and infrastructure to report program and financial activity and provide fiscal and program oversight to ensure that DEED follows established USDOL and State of Minnesota laws, regulations and/or policies regarding budgets and fiscal procedures. DEED staff have the experience and ability to complete and submit required ETA-9130 reports on a quarterly basis, and are able

to provide ongoing advice and guidance to subgrantees on fiscal activities associated with federal grant monies received by DEED.

Status of Management Information Systems and plan for further development

Minnesota is currently undertaking a rewrite of Workforce One, its centralized case management system for employment and training programs, with expected completion in mid-2014. Improvements to the system will enhance existing capability and improve the state's ability to report project outcomes.

State & LWIB audit or FPO findings, recommendations since PY 2007 & the status of corrective action(s)

MN's Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) conducts an annual audit of DEED over financial reporting as well as a federal compliance audit. Recent financial reporting audit findings have included lack of formal documentation of internal controls and improper classification of liabilities. DEED has completed risk assessments for financial reporting and federal compliance. In 2010, an OLA grants audit found that DEED failed to monitor subrecipients in accordance with state policy. DEED now requires one financial reconciliation for a payment request period during the grant cycle.

Hard copy audit reports of the participating WSAs/LWIBs prior to fiscal year 2009 are in storage. There are no audit findings for Rural MN CEP, Central MN Jobs and Training Services, South Central Workforce Council/MN Valley Action Council, and Workforce Development, Inc. For fiscal year 2009, Southwest MN Private Industry Council had two findings, including lack of internal control over financial reporting and reporting leveraged resources on the 9130. DEED accepted management's responses to the findings. In 2010 and 2011, the lack of internal control finding was repeated. In 2010, an audit finding restated net assets. In 2011, an audit finding identified material adjustments to the financial statements that were not identified by the entity's internal control structure. DEED has accepted management's responses to the audit findings.

Staff from DOL/ETA's Chicago Regional Office conducted a comprehensive review of MN's WIA-funded programs in August and September of 2011, the only such review since PY 2007. DOL's report

identified findings and areas of concern in the following areas: Design and Governance (7 findings; 1 area of concern); Program and Grant Management Systems (4 findings; 2 areas of concern); Financial Management Systems (2 findings; no areas of concern); Service Product Delivery (5 WIA findings; 8 Trade Adjustment Assistance findings; 6 areas of concern). DEED addressed both the findings and areas of concern in a response to DOL on January 27, 2012 and we are still awaiting a response from DOL as of the submission of this proposal. A copy of the original DOL report and DEED's response is available upon request.

The U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) reviewed MN's VR programs and issued a Federal Monitoring Report in 2010. All findings identified in the report have been fully resolved and the release from the Corrective Action Plan is forthcoming from RSA.

Capacity to collect the data required and participate in all phases of the evaluation

At the state level, DEED oversees and maintains an extensive, centralized case management system (Workforce One) that is used by all WSAs/LWIBs and their subcontractors throughout the State of Minnesota for all participants in federally funded or state-funded employment and training programs. We understand that USDOL will require additional data elements be added to the WIASRD file, if Minnesota is selected for participation in the DEI project. Program staff within the Workforce Development Division work closely with state and local information technology staff to stay current on all USDOL reporting requirements, including crosswalking relevant client data into the state's WIASRD file as directed. Since Minnesota receives a number of grants through USDOL, program and technical staff collaborate to ensure that all required reporting changes would be implemented into production systems in a timely manner.

How the state will provide access to the Department's duly designated contractor for evaluation purposes

DEED fully commits to working with DOL's designated evaluation contractor to evaluate project outcomes including securing releases from participants to allow access to individual participant data.

Outcomes

The overall desired outcomes of this project are increased employment opportunities and economic self-

sufficiency of targeted youth with disabilities and increased access of multicultural youth with disabilities to the services of Minnesota’s WorkForce system. (See logic model attached to project abstract.) Specific outcomes that will be tracked through this project include: number of youth with disabilities served; percent of youth employed; average number of hours worked per week; average hourly rate of all youth employed; types of positions obtained; job retention rates; percent of youth in postsecondary education programs; percent of youth attaining a certificate/ credential; percent of multicultural youth with disabilities served through Minnesota’s WIA programs; number of Tickets assigned.

Minnesota does not plan an increase in the number of LWIBs/AJCs becoming participating ENs because they are already included in the existing MN DEED Employment Network (DUNS #617962519). Rather, the project will focus on ensuring that the three DEI implementation sites are actively accepting Tickets as part of the MN DEED EN. During the three-year grant, Minnesota plans to increase the number of Tickets assigned to the MN DEED EN through the DEI implementation sites from 0 (current level) to 72 (20 percent of the youth served). Co-enrollment will be a key strategy for funding and delivering the services that participants need to achieve their desired education and employment goals. We expect that during the grant, all DEI project participants will be co-enrolled in DEI and at least one other program delivered by AJC partners.

Ability to achieve the stated outcomes and provide timely data on results within timeframe of grant

MN DEED is the lead agency and has identified DEI Project Co-Leads responsible for coordination with WSAs/LWIBs and other state agencies and partners, coordinating the project’s Steering Committee activities, coordinating implementation of Ticket to Work administrative activities, implementation of additional data collection and process evaluation requirements, and adherence to the MN DEI work plan and timeline (see Part III(a)). DEED will participate with DOL’s data collection and evaluation activities.

Capacity of workforce system to capture program co-enrollments

Co-enrollment strategies are expected to be critical to the success of this project and the participating local areas have extensive experience with co-enrollment. Existing data systems are able to capture co-enrollment information.

Sustainability

MN DEI will work closely with the project's Steering Committee partners to identify methods and potential funding to sustain the effort and develop a sustainability plan for integrating the project's effective practices throughout the state after grant period ends.

Sustaining and integrating the project's effective practices will involve multiple strategies. Developing and sustaining partnerships with MnSCU postsecondary colleges, for example, is key to addressing MN's achievement gap and building an educated workforce that can sustain a strong state economy in the years ahead. Wagner-Peyser funded Business Services staff in WorkForce Centers will be an ongoing source of support for engaging employers to provide work experiences and ultimately unsubsidized job placements for project participants. Payments from successful outcomes of Ticket to Work participants may also provide a source of funding to sustain project services.

Sustainability is also closely related to the extent to which services for youth with disabilities are integrated into all the programs and services of MN's youth workforce investment system. Thus, MN DEI's strategy of providing customized individual support of direct service staff is critical to sustaining effective project practices. Close working relationships developed over the course of the grant between MN's youth workforce system, CTICS, and local IRT partners will also help embed MN DEI strategies into ongoing local practice. Other effective practices identified through MN DEI (e.g. LDRCs, IRTs, MN DEI tools based on the *Guideposts for Success*) will be shared with MN WIA-funded youth programs via technical assistance, training, mentorship opportunities and peer-to-peer sharing. MN DEI tools based on the *Guideposts for Success* will also be available to assist replication of project practices nationally as well as in MN.

Dissemination of MN DEI promising practices to other LWIBs and One-Stop Centers

The MN Workforce Council Association (MWCA) is an essential partner in MN DEI's sustainability strategy. MWCA's members include Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth training service providers, local elected officials, and Workforce Investment Board (WIB) leadership. This statewide network representing all sixteen MN Workforce Service Areas (WSAs) ensures that local level employment and training services are delivered in a manner that meets the needs of local economies. Project resources and data collected from MN DEI activities documenting the project's effective practices can be accessed via MWCA's **archive of local level programs**. MWCA can also facilitate **feedback processes** and provide opportunities for **peer-to-peer sharing** to firmly embed these practices within Minnesota's workforce system.

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