

SFY 2026 Big Brothers Big Sisters Direct Appropriation

Final Report

10/20/2026

Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
Employment and Training Programs Division

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Introduction

The Minnesota State Legislature appropriated $250,000 Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Greater Twin Cities to provide work readiness, employment exploration, and skills development for youth ages 12 to 21 in the Twin Cities, central Minnesota and southern Minnesota. This appropriation, enacted under Minnesota Session Laws – SF 17, Article 1, Section 2, Subd. 3(v), permits the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) to retain five percent of these funds for administration and monitoring. This is a onetime appropriation and is available until June 30, 2027.

Summary of Goals and Objectives Presented in the Work Plan

Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS), the nation's largest mentoring program, matches youth with mentors when they are between the ages of 8 and 12 and continues to support them until young adulthood. In addition to receiving tremendous benefits from forming positive relationships with their mentors, mentees are also able to participate in numerous enrichment activities hosted by BBBS to help youth (both mentees and youth mentors) plan for their education and career futures.

- During SFY 2026, the BBBS agencies in the Twin Cities, Central Minnesota and Southern Minnesota had a goal to serve at least 1,750 youth through a variety of activities to prepare them for the future workforce:
- Mentoring that leverages caring adult volunteers to provide long-term, one-on-one mentoring for teens, with an emphasis on high school and post-high school success;
- Career pathways exploration and readiness through one-on-one support, group activities in partnership with local businesses, and referrals;
- Post-high school college and training access and success through college/training tours, test prep, application support, Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), access to scholarships, and on-going support during college and training/certificate programs; and
- Unique mentoring programs focused on future planning and career pathway success for high school students, including AVID and Leaders Inspiring Futures Today (LIFT) in southern Minnesota, Dr. Potter Bigs on Campus in partnership with St. Cloud State University, the Career Ambassador Program in the Twin Cities area, and Graduation Coaches Program in partnership with Hope Community Academy in St. Paul.

Program Activities

Described below are highlights of activities delivered during the period July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026.

- Bigs on Campus – initiative pairing junior and senior high students with an adult mentor who is a St. Cloud State University alumnus, staff member, or community professional. Matches spend time exploring campus, touring academic departments, participating in college activities and events, and talking about future goals, career options, and college life. (central Minnesota)
- Scholarship Opportunities – Federated Challenge scholarship competition sponsored by Federated Insurance and administered by BBBS was open to Littles/Alumni who have been matched for 18 months or longer and are planning to attend a two-year or less post-secondary Minnesota institution. This past

year, 38 applicants received Federated scholarships. In addition, the Stand Tall Scholarship was available for BBBS youth and volunteers for four-year schools in or out-of-state. This was a pilot program made possible this past year through the generosity of a donor.

- Post-Secondary Success Coordinator – meeting with BBBS alumni college students to assist with financial aid applications and other college-related topics. (Twin Cities)
- AVID Matches –BBBS staff had individual conversations with youth about college and career readiness. This included future planning, interest exploration, and answering questions about applying for college, resumes, interviews, and other college and career related topics. (southern Minnesota)
- Little Big Virtual Academy-BBBS continues to be an educational and enriching resource for our youth and matches. It includes an extensive list of virtual and in-person college and career readiness activities that can be found at https://bigdefenders.org/little-big-virtual-academy-3/
- One-on-one match support – BBBS staff at all three Minnesota agencies continue to connect with all the youth and volunteers on a quarterly basis to share college, career, and community resources. They provide coaching and support to help matches build strong relationships that will are likely to last well beyond a youth's high school graduation.

Participant Data

The SFY 2026 grant period ran from July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026. The participant data is listed below.

Demographic Data

Total Participants Served: 2,029

Gender	Total
Male	845
Female	1166
Other	17

Age	Total
12-13	552
14-15	528
16-17	725
18	182
19-21	42

Race/Ethnicity	Total
Hispanic/Latino	124
American Indian or Alaska Native	33
Asian/Pacific Islander	94
Black, African American, or African	479
White	843
Multiracial	123
Other/Not disclosed	333

Education Level	Total
8th grade and under	500
9th Grade – 12th Grade	1376
High School Graduate or equivalent	153
Post-Secondary Education	N/A

Program Services and Activities Data

Program Service or Activity	Total
Received Education and Job Training Activities	741
Received Work Experience Activities	16
Received Community Involvement and Leadership Development Activities	2029
Received Post-Secondary Exploration, Career Guidance and Planning Activities	2029
Received Mentoring Activities	1457
Received Support Services	2029

Participant Satisfaction Data

Participant Satisfaction	Total
Number of participants rating experience as “Excellent”	489
Number of participants rating experience as “Very Good”	241
Number of participants rating experience as “Average”	19
Number of participants rating experience as “Below Average”	0
Number of participants rating experience as “Poor”	0
Total Number of Surveys Completed	749

Program Outcome Measures

1. Healthy youth development, focused on the social, emotional, and academic development of youth
    a. Percentage of participants who maintain or strengthen their social competence – goal 80%, actual 89%
    b. Percentage of participants who maintain or strengthen grades and academic performance – goal 80%, actual 86%
    c. Percentage of participants who maintain or strengthen their educational expectations for the future – goal 80%, actual 96%
    d. Percentage of participants who maintain or improve emotional regulation skills – goal 80%, actual 92%
    e. Percentage of participants who report having an encouraging, caring adult in their lives – goal 80% actual 96%

2. High school graduation
    a. Percentage of high school seniors in a mentoring relationship at the beginning of senior year who graduate – goal 80%, actual 93%

3. Youth skills and knowledge related to career, training and college readiness

a. Percentage of youth who report having an increased understanding of the careers or topics presented at events – goal 80%, actual 82%
b. Percentage of youth who report having a stronger connection between their interests and future goals after participating in career exploration and readiness programming and activities – goal 80%, actual 73%

Expenditure Data

Expenditures from July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026 were as follows:

Budget Category	SFY 2026 Expenditure
Administration (up to 10% allowed)	$16,787.69
Participant Wages and Fringe Benefits	$0.00
Direct Staff Services	$220,712.31
Support Services	$0.00
Total	**$237,500.00**

Success Stories

All 3 Minnesota BBBS agencies: Across all the Minnesota Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies, 68 young people were awarded scholarships for post-secondary education and training, amounting to $267,750. The number of scholarships and dollar value distributed this year was unprecedented. BBBS also saw a 150% increase in the number of applications between 2025 and 2026, with an increase in pursuing higher education. It also showed the incredibly positive impact the funding can had to alleviate financial burdens and barriers for young people served.

New Grant Funds

State funds for the SFY 2026 grant 6BO6300 have been 100% expended. Big Brothers Big Sister has begun to expend SFY 2027 grant funds of $237,500 and is expected to fully expend these funds by the grant end date of June 30, 2027.