

Minnesota Round 7 Youth DEI – Partners for Youth  
Career Pathways  
PY 2018 Annual Report

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## Executive Summary

The office of Youth Development at the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) successfully secured a \$2.5 million youth-focused Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) grant in September 2016 from the U.S Department of Labor. These Federal discretionary funds allowed Minnesota to increase service levels to youth with disabilities (ages 14-24) with an emphasis on youth of color, who receive services through the American Job Centers (AJC). The Three Workforce Development Areas (WDAs) selected for this project were Rural Minnesota Concentrated Employment Programs (Rural CEP), Southwest Minnesota Private industry Council (SWPIC), and Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services (CMJTS). In addition, the PACER center, a national parent and family training center which focuses on helping families with children and young adults with disabilities is under contract as the State-level technical assistance provider.

Minnesota identified **five** objectives for partners for Youth Career Pathways grant:

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. Building Capacity of WDA staff to support at least 300 youth with disabilities to participate in career pathways systems using the Guidepost for Success best practice framework and an Integrated Resource Team (IRT) approach.
3. Utilize innovative intergenerational approach to support successful outcomes for youth with disabilities participating in career pathways process system and programs.
4. Implement specific strategies to address the state's employment gap for culturally and racially 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.

This report outlines Minnesota's progress in increasing service levels to youth with disabilities during the second year (PY 2018) of the DEI grant.

## Round 7 Youth DEI Objectives

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

**Objective 1:** Strengthen partnerships and strategically align youth and adult career pathways systems to effectively serve youth with disabilities through multiple entry and exit points.

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

**Objective 2:** Building Capacity of WDA staff to support at least 300 youth with disabilities to participate in career pathways systems using the Guidepost for Success best practice framework and an Integrated Resource Team (IRT) approach.

- **As of December 31, 2018, the Round 7 Youth DEI project served 339 youth with disabilities. Minnesota fully expects the number of youth served to increase throughout until the grant ends on March 31, 2020.**

**Objective 3:** Utilize innovative intergenerational approach to support successful outcomes for youth with disabilities participating in career pathways process system and programs.

- **The PACER Center is an integral part of Minnesota's efforts to leverage parents and families in supporting youth with disabilities to achieve their education and employment goals. Parents and family workshops provide resources to families who, in turn, can make better informed decisions. Parents and families are also involved with Integrated Resource Team (IRT) meetings and support their youth when making decisions about education and career opportunities.**

**Objective 4:** Implement specific strategies to address the state's employment gap for culturally and racially diverse individuals.

- **Each WDA made it a priority to serve youth of color with a disability through the Round 7 Youth DEI grant. The PACER center's multicultural advocates have been helpful in providing guidance to employment counselors on how best to engage communities of color. Professional development opportunities are identified and the Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs) participate. The result is to increase cultural competency which, in turn, leads to higher quality service provision.**

**Objective 5:** Increase the state’s number of employment networks (ENs) and the number of Social Security Disability beneficiaries participating in career pathways programs.

- **All three WDAs are operating as Employment Networks as of January 2018. In total, 49 tickets have been assigned across all three Employment Networks accounting for nearly \$220,000 in ticket revenue. Each WDA views the potential revenue as an effective way to sustain the efforts of the DEI grant beyond the end of the federal grant.**

## Technical Assistance

Minnesota’s Round 7 youth DEI is unique in that there is a State-level technical assistance provider – The PACER Center. The PACER Center provides invaluable guidance to the three implementation sites. PACER assists Rural CEP, SWPIC, and CMJTS to inform parents and families about the services that are offered through the American Job Centers. The PACER Center developed a variety of materials that are used effectively by the three implementation sites. The materials are all available statewide to the workforce system and are posted on PACER’s website.

PACER held a Parent Training on October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018 that consisted of both an in-person training and a Livestream event. Thirty-four individuals participated and viewed the training online. This training helped parents be better equipped with the tools necessary to help their young adult work toward their employment goals. This training is available on the PACER Center’s website and can be found here: <https://livestream.com/pacercenter/events/7014345>

On October 23<sup>rd</sup> the PACER center arranged a Parent Information Event in which a representative from the ABLE National Resource Center and a representative from the MN Department of Human Services presented information to parents and families about ABLE accounts. This event was offered as a Livestream event and had 124 live views of the presentation. This presentation is also available on the PACER’s website and can be found here:

<https://www.pacer.org/livestream/?wksp=FDC6CF01-DDFC-451C-B72F-CCBAB4704D32>

The PACER Center began working on a document about individual Learning Plans (ILPs) and youth transition. The document titled: *Incorporating the Guideposts for Success into Minnesota’s Personal Learning Plan Process* is Guidepost-informed and will address specific ILP requirements in Minnesota. This publication was created in response to the Minn. Stat. §120B.125 which enforces that school districts must assist all students by no later than grade 9 to explore their education, college and career interests, aptitudes and aspirations and develop a plan for a smooth and successful transition to post-secondary education or employment. This document will provides examples of Guidepost activities that meet the requirements of ILPs in Minnesota. There will be four fictional case study scenarios that reflect how Guideposts for Success can be incorporated into Minnesota’s Personal Learning Plan Process. The guide will also contain a new comprehensive listing of organizations who are subscribers to the Minnesota Career Information Systems (MCIS). The document will be distributed in the summer 2019.

## Guideposts for Success

One key element to Minnesota’s Round 7 DEI grant is that the Guideposts for Success are an integral part of service delivery **(objective 2)**. The Guideposts allow the local staff to ensure that youth are receiving high-quality services that set the youth up for, long-term success. In order to track and analyze the implementation of the Guideposts, DEED required the three implementation sites to record the Guidepost-related activities that each DEI participant receives. The following data reflects how many youth have received services or participated in an activity that aligns with the Guideposts:

<b>Total Served Through 12/31/18 -- 339</b>	<b>Number of Youth</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Guidepost 1 – School Based Preparatory Experiences	243	72%
Guidepost 2 – Career Prep & WBL Experiences	337	99%
Guidepost 3 – Youth Leadership	210	62%
Guidepost 4 – Connecting Activities	287	85%
Guidepost 5 – Family Involvement	213	63%

These numbers reflect the high quality of services that youth with disabilities are receiving through Partners for Youth Career Pathways project because many are participating in activities that align with all or nearly all Guidepost. One important aspect from the data to point out is Guidepost 5 – Family Involvement. In 2017, this was ranked the lowest and one of the many factors as to why it was ranked the lowest is that Minnesota and the federal partners placed an emphasis on serving out-of-school youth and those youth may not have had a caring adult in their life. Another reason is due to the fact that some parents do not want their child to find work because of the fear that their child will lose benefits. So, some youth are more comfortable not including parents/family in IRT meetings when discussing employment and its effects on public assistance. While these are challenges that arise sparingly, Minnesota partnered with the PACER Center to educate parents/families on the importance of being involved in their young adult’s life and provide support as they transition into employment. In doing so, Minnesota is meeting its objective to utilize an intergenerational approach to support successful outcomes for youth with disabilities **(objective 3)**.

With the partnership of the PACER Center we were able to see improvement in Guidepost 5 over the course of one year, Guidepost 5 is no longer the lowest recorded. The PACER Center plays a big role in the improvement as it provided and continues to provide great resources, one being, PACER’s parent/family advocates. These advocates are from communities of color that have sizeable presence in Minnesota and they serve as intermediaries for parents/families who are navigating multiple government systems such as accessing mental health resources, navigating special education, and understanding the transition from secondary school to post-secondary opportunities or employment. Leveraging the expertise of the advocates supports not only Guidepost 5 but Minnesota’s objective to address the state’s employment gap for culturally and racially diverse individuals as well **(objective 4)**.

As previously mentioned, the PACER Center is contracted to develop materials that can be used by the Disability Resource Coordinator and Youth Counselors. One document developed by the PACER Center under Minnesota’s Round 3 youth-focused DEI grant is called the Individual Service Strategy (ISS) and Youth Action Plan. This document is Guidepost-informed and is utilized by local Youth Counselors when meeting and working with youth with disabilities. SWPIC further developed the document under

the Round 7 Youth DEI grant. The DRC and other staff at SWPIC created a cross-walk in which five Guidepost activities are aligned with the 14 Elements of WIOA and the 5 Pre-ETS activities. Minnesota identified this document as a model that has been shared with other WDAs and with technical assistance staff from U.S DOL's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP). ODEP identified the ISS and Youth Action Plan document as a prime example of how local areas can implement the Guidepost strategies in service delivery to all youth, not just youth with disabilities. To view ISS/Youth Action Plan document follow: [mn.gov/deed/assets/youth-action-plan\\_tcm1045-134384.docx](https://mn.gov/deed/assets/youth-action-plan_tcm1045-134384.docx)

### *Success Story: Antonio – Adult Basic Education*



**When Antonio came to RMCEP, he had recently reconnected with Adult Basic Education (ABE) to get his GED. Antonio lived in an MFIP household and faced multiple barriers to employment including a disability. Antonio needed to find employment but faced multiple barriers to employment including transportation. RMCEP was able to provide him with a bike to use to get to and from work. ReStore – a home improvement store through the organization Habitat for**

**Humanity was one of the businesses close to Antonio's house and was a great fit for Antonio to be placed for his work experience. Through the course of this experience Antonio was able to gain new skills, he did so well that ReStore hired him after the work experience term ended.**

PACER also hosted workshops for parents and families in coordination with the three implementation sites. The workshops covered the Guideposts for Success and empowered parents/families to better help their young adults succeed in school and in employment. Two of the workshops were held in local American Job Centers (AJCs) and the decision to do so was identified as a best practice by DEED. By hosting the workshops in the American Job Centers, parents/families came through the doors of the AJCs and familiarized themselves with the services provided at the AJCs, and also learned how they could utilize the resources in the future should they need it. This practice exemplifies Minnesota's efforts to utilize innovative intergenerational approaches to support successful outcomes for youth with disabilities **(objective 3)**.

Minnesota has identified family involvement as an integral part for all youth, and especially for youth of color and their families. Minnesota will be working with DEED's office of equity and economic Opportunity, the PACER Center, the National Disability Institute, and other WDAs in Minnesota to identify innovative ways to increase the involvement of family members in the service provision to DEI participants **(objective 3)**.

## Integrated Resource Teams

Integrated Resources Teams are an integral part of Minnesota's DEI project **(objective 2)**. The IRTs are youth-driven and are organized and facilitated by the DRC or youth counselor. This means that the youth has to want an IRT and be willing to participate in the IRT. CMJTS' Disability Resource Coordinator has trained youth counselors on the best methods to facilitate an IRT as well as the importance of bringing together other service providers that is involved in the youth's life. Minnesota leveraged the experience and expertise of the DRC at CMJTS because she was the DRC for the round 5 Adult-Focused DEI project and she has served as a mentor to the two DRCs at Rural CEP and SWPIC.

Through this mentorship, the two new DRCs were able to quickly understand the importance of IRTs and learned strategies on how to best arrange and facilitate IRT meetings.

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

Typical service providers who are brought into IRT meetings include county social workers, mental health providers, vocational rehabilitation counselors, and special education teachers. In addition to those individuals, Minnesota's implementation sites have included workplace supervisors, Youthbuild coordinators, mentors, and family members in IRT meetings. DRCs and youth counselors have also joined Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings for youth and have in turn utilized the IEP meeting as an IRT meeting. In doing so, the DRCs and Youth Counselors have been able to maximize coordination and minimize duplication of services and identify how each service providers can support the youth on achieving educational and employment

The following data shows the number of youth who received an IRT under the DEI project

Total Served Through 12/31/18 -- 339	Number of Youth	Percent
Participated in an IRT	101	30%

In July 2017, Rural CEP and SWPIC began the process to become an Employment Network. With the Assistance from Kevin Nickerson from NDI, the two sites decided that the American Dream Employment Network was the best option. As ADEN allowed for less administrative burden on the WDA, and the process to become an EN under ADEN expedited. Over the course of the 2018 year, the Rural CEP and SWPIC Employment Network has worked hard on growing in order to better serve more individuals.

### Braiding Resources & Co-Enrollments

Minnesota prides itself on aligning multiple funding streams in order to provide comprehensive wrap-around services to youth. Rural CEP has been a leader in the Youth DEI project for their efforts to increase co-enrollments in WIOA, Youth or Adult program (**objective 1**). Minnesota also administers the Minnesota Youth Program (MYP). The Minnesota Youth Program is a state-funded program that complements the WIOA youth program. MYP is leveraged by the DEI implementation sites to support job skills training and development of youth with disabilities. Oftentimes, the implementation sites will use MYP funding to support younger youth who are completing career exploration activities and job readiness trainings. Once specific goals have been achieved, the implementation sites utilize funding opportunities like DEI and WIOA to support more comprehensive and intensive services.

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

The following data demonstrates the number of DEI participants co-enrolled in WIOA and MYP.

<b>Total Served Through 12/31/18</b> -- 339	<b>Number of Youth</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Co-enrolled in WIOA Youth/Adult	168	50%
Co-enrolled in the Minnesota Youth Program	165	49%

### *Success Story: Isabelle – Marshall Area Technical Education Center*



**Isabelle (Belle) is a senior at Marshall Area Technical Education Center (MATEC). Belle has several health disabilities. When the DRC met Belle in April 2017, Belle had great volunteer work experience. Belle had not been employed, but had applied and interviewed at businesses around Marshall. She was very interested in gaining part time employment but had been unsuccessful in her attempts. The DRC was able to help Belle begin a work experience at Avera Morningside Heights, a care facility in Marshall, MN as a dietary aid in January of 2018. Belle’s skills in sign language interpretation and lip reading helped her connect with one resident in particular who could not talk due to trach tube. Belle graduated in May 2018 and plans to attend Southeast community college in Lincoln, Nebraska to study sign language interpretation and Special Education.**

## Partnerships

Following SSA Sponsored Employment Network meeting, the three DRCS and the State Lead went to State Services for the Blind (SSB) for a tour of the services that they offer. While a large majority of the services that are provided by SSB are only available to individuals who are blind or visually impaired, they do offer some resources for individuals with other disabilities. For example, SSB is able to provide audio version of textbooks that may help individuals with cognitive disabilities better grasp the material. This was new information to the State Lead and the DRCS Minnesota will continue to find ways that youth enrolled in DEI can receive all necessary services by identifying areas for collaboration with other state and local agencies.

The meeting also brought in a representative from DEED Vocational Rehabilitation Services who is currently tasked with identifying ways that the Workforce Center System can alleviate the VR client waitlist. In doing so, the VR representative provided the DRCS with information on the number of individuals on the waitlist in their respective areas. VR was able to break down the information further and identify how many youth 14 through age 24 are on the waitlist. VR also discussed possible strategies to better facilitate referrals between VR and the implementation sites. There are also a number of individuals on the waitlist who are Social Security Beneficiaries and have a ticket to work, but because they are waiting for services, they are not utilizing their ticket. Given that all three implementation sites are Employment Networks, VR and the three sites may be able to facilitate customers assigning their ticket to one of the DEI sites’ employment network if the customer so chooses.

WDAs also increased partnerships with local Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to serve individuals who are currently on the VR waitlist. This increased partnerships will allow individuals, both youth and adults with disabilities to be able to receive services that will allow them to achieve their

education and employment goals. Currently, Minnesota's VR is in the process of developing a "universal release form" which will allow for a better facilitation of co-enrollments between VR and WDAs across the state.

Furthermore, the DRC at SWMPIC is identifying ways to strengthen relationships with county Health and Human Services (HHS) to partner more to support individuals served by both agencies. Participants will be able to better understand how receipt of public assistance may be affected by obtaining employment. The DRC is interested in strengthening partnerships and referrals with county HHS. The DRC and the State Lead are researching whether or not SWMNPIC can provide waiver services since the DRC is a Certified Work Incentives Practitioner and Benefits Planning is a waiver service. If in fact the DRC can provide waiver services and receive reimbursement, this strategy will be incorporated into sustainability efforts after the DEI grant has ended.

In addition, SWMPIC in collaboration with the SW MN Career Pathway Partnership hosted four youth and young adult focused Career Pathway trainings throughout the region this school year (17/18). Basic and Advanced Welding were held in Worthington, MN. Five youth participated in Basic Welding and 5 youth participated in Advanced Welding. In addition to welding courses, these 10 students also participated in Blueprint Reading. Each student earned 6 college credits, which are needed to earn a Welding Diploma or Certificate from Minnesota West Community and Technical College. The class was sponsored by SW MN Private Industry Council, MN West Community and Technical College and the Worthington School District (High School and Alternative Learning Center). Half of these students returned to secondary school, while the other half will continue their education and/or work. Some of the students who participated in the training were enrolled in DEI.

Five youth participants (some youth were enrolled in DEI) successfully completed a CAN course in Montevideo, MN. The class was sponsored by SW MN Private Industry Council, Adult Basic Education, MN West Community and Technical College and the MN Valley ALC. The Students attended nursing class two-three days a week and also continued their regular classes at the MN Valley ALC. Included as part of the class were visits to several local businesses, employability skills, integrated instruction and opportunities to explore other healthcare careers. The students visited Project Turnabout and Granite Falls Health – Westwood Elderly Care in Granite Falls to learn more about the health care and social assistance careers available locally.

Five youth that participated in SWMNPIC's newest Career Pathway program – Electrical Controls. The electrical controls pathways was developed because local businesses identified a need for skilled workers in the field. Students earned 5 college credits and they gained the technical skills needed to obtain employment in the high-demand field of Engineering and Manufacturing. The class was sponsored by SW MN Private Industry Council, Adult Basic Education, MN West Community and Technical College and the Marshall Area Technical Education Center (MA-TEC; Marshall School District 413). Included as part of the class were employability skills, integrated instruction and opportunities to explore other manufacturing and engineering careers. Some of the youth who participated in this training were enrolled in DEI.

## Employment Networks

Minnesota identified increasing the state's number of Employment Networks (EN) and the number of Social Security Disability Beneficiaries participating in career pathways programs as a key priority for the DEI grant (**objective 5**). CMJTS had already been established as an EN by the time Round 7 DEI grant was secured. This proved to be beneficial to the two other implementation sites that were not ENs because CMJTS was able to mentor and provide guidance to Rural CEP and SWPIC when navigating the process to become an EN. CMJTS was also a model EN site for Minnesota because of the work they had completed under the Round 5 Adult-focused DEI grant secured by Minnesota. Under this grant CMJTS was able to establish a "Ticket team." This Ticket Team consisted of staff who were Certified Work Incentive Counselors (CWICs) and understood the nuances of benefits planning for individuals with disabilities. This best practice has been carried over by CMJTS into the Round 7 Youth DEI grant. The DRC and her Manager worked with youth counselors, who are now part of the Ticket Team, to provide high quality, comprehensive services to youth with disabilities. Minnesota's ticket revenue has generated more than \$232,000.

The three implantation sites note that many individuals who are eligible for a Ticket to Work (TTW) do not fully understand the TTW program. There is confusion around how the TTW program can benefit them and help them return to work. In order to address this issue, the potential Ticketholder is provided with a video titled: Meet Ben- An introduction to Ticket to Work provided by the Social Security Administration. Other documents from SSA are also provided to the individual in order to help ensure that the individual can make an informed choice about participating in the Ticket to Work program when they are ready.

## Sustainability

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

Youth Development, in partnership with the three DEI implementation sites responded to a Request for Proposals from the Minnesota Department of Human Services to serve individuals who have a county waiver, are eligible to receive a county waiver, or are on a Federal setting level 3 or 4 Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The focus of the grant opportunity was to help individuals with more significant disabilities achieve competitive integrated employment. Although this proposal did not end up being funded, the Office of Youth Development established a close partnership with DHS. This

partnership has allowed the Office of Youth Development to expand services with county waivers. Furthermore, it has also brought fourth DHS Training including the “Benefits Coach Training”.

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

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

### [Professional Development/Capacity Building](#)

The State Lead organized a quarterly meeting with the three implementation sites. That meeting was held on March 6<sup>th</sup> 2018 at Blind Inc. Blind Inc. is a service provider for Minnesota’s State Services for the blind. Blind Inc. provided a tour of their facility and provided information to the DRCs and PACER staff on how the services provided at Blind Inc. could be utilized to support youth in the workforce centers. In addition, to learning about how the DEI project could better support youth visual impairments, the DRCs were able to work through challenges they were facing as well as share the best practices that have come out of the DEI projects.

The State Lead also coordinated an in person quarterly meeting on June 6, 2018. This meeting allowed the three DEI sites to share best practices and discuss any challenges that they were facing. The theme of this training revolved around poverty, the topics covered in this training included but were not limited to: Poverty Competencies for Leaders, Oral & Written Communication Skills, Educating Students in Poverty A-Z and Strategies to Break Poverty Barriers. This Poverty Training was delivered by guest – Emily Saed, the Executive Director of the Minnesota Foundation for Student Organizations (MNSFO). Emily Saed also worked with DRCs to identify strategies to improve connections between employment counselors and advisors of career and Technical Education Student Organizations such as: Future Farmers of America (FFA), Business Professionals of America (BPA), and SkillsUSA.

Representative from DHS also presented information on a Benefits Planning Training designed for practitioners who work with individuals who have a Ticket to Work and other public assistance benefits. The training had only been available to Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living Counselors, but has since broadened to include Minnesota’s Round 7 DEI project DRCs and other key staff members at the three sites. Once completed, Staff will receive a certification for completing the

training and in order to maintain the certification, staff have to participate in certain activities and work with clients. This training will allow the three implementation sites to better address the needs of individuals with disabilities who receive public assistance.

*Success Story: John – Adrian High School*



**John is seventeen and will be a senior this year at Adrian High School in Adrian, Minnesota. John has a Developmental Cognitive Disability. One of his biggest goals is to own and operate his own pheasant farm and take over the family farm when his father retires. When John met Leah Hastad, Disability Resource Coordinator with Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council, he was interested in finding a job to help increase his confidence and learn employability skills. John began working with the City of Adrian as a Maintenance assistant on January 16th 2018. The City Administrator, Bruce, often reports how well John is doing and how he takes on new and various tasks. Bruce also appreciates the extra help John provides with the cities limited budget. After John got his driver’s license he started helping the city by driving golf carts and lawn mowers. John has stained picnic tables, helped with city clean up after storms and performs various maintenance tasks in the city building. Hastad said, “It is obvious that John’s confidence has grown through his work with the City of Adrian through Bruce’s mentoring and Guidance. It is incredibly rewarding when we can partner with employers, school districts and our youth to create mutually beneficial work experiences like this”.**

Performance Data

Minnesota intends to serve at least 300 youth with disabilities under the Round 7 DEI grant. As of December 31, 2017, a total of 131 youth with disabilities have been served. Over the course of a year after December 31, 2017 Minnesota has not only been on track to achieve its objective of serving at least 300 youth throughout the life of the grant (objective 2 and 4), but it has exceeded its goal of serving 300 youth. As of December 31, 2018, a total of 339 youth with disabilities have been served. See below for highlights of the second year:

<b>Total Served Through 12/31/18 -- 339</b>	<b>Number of Youth</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Female Participants	123	36%
Youth of Color	91	27%
Basic Skills Deficient	201	59%
Youth from Families Receiving Public Assistance	116	34%
High School Drop-Out	17	5%
Foster Youth	19	6%
Youth Receiving SSI or SSDI	31	9%

Youth Offenders	31	9%
Homeless/Runaway Youth	6	2%

For More Information:

Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

332 Minnesota St., Suite E-200

Saint Paul, MN 55101

Kay Tracy, Director

Office of Youth Development

[Kay.Tracy@state.mn.us](mailto:Kay.Tracy@state.mn.us)

Or

651-259-7555

Cory Schmid, DEI Project Lead

Office of Youth Development

[Cory.Schmid@state.mn.us](mailto:Cory.Schmid@state.mn.us)

Or

651-259-7541

Minnesota Round 7 DEI Website: <https://bit.ly/2HbWznH>