Summary of the 2018-2019 Minnesota Family Investment Program Biennial Service Agreements

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Minnesota Department of Human Services
Economic Assistance and Employment Supports Division
P.O. Box 64951
St. Paul, MN 55164-0951
Minnesota Department of Human Services
Economic Assistance and Employment Supports Division
444 Lafayette Road North
St. Paul, MN 55155

Submit questions related to this summary report to:
Tria Chang at 651-431-3988 or email Tria.Chang@state.mn.us

Abbreviations

ABE: Adult Basic Education
BSA: Biennial Service Agreement
CNA: Certified Nursing Assistant
DHS: Department of Human Services (department)
DWP: Diversionary Work Program
ESL: English as a Second Language
FPG: Federal Poverty Guidelines
FSS: Family Stabilization Services
FWL: Functional Work Literacy
GED: General Educational Development Certificate
MAXIS: Minnesota Department of Human Services’ eligibility system
MFIP: Minnesota Family Investment Program
DWP: Diversionary Work Program
TANF: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
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Introduction

The Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) Consolidated Support Services Grant (MFIP Consolidated Fund hereafter) is allocated to each county, county consortia or tribe based on 50% of its proportion of an established 2002 historic spending base, and 50% on the proportion of a county or tribe’s share of the adjusted caseload factor. For details on this topic, see: https://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/publications/documents/pub/dhs-300242.pdf.

To implement the contractual component of the MFIP Consolidated Fund, Minnesota Statutes (Minn. Stat.), section 256J.626, subd. 4, mandates individual counties, county consortia, and tribal service providers to have in place a biennial service agreement (BSA) approved by the Minnesota Department of Human Services (department). Counties with a city considered to be a first class city, with a population of more than 300,000, must also consider a biennial service agreement (BSA) that includes a jointly developed plan for delivery of employment services. To enter into a biennial service agreement with the department, counties, county consortia and tribes (service areas hereafter) must submit DHS-3863, a form that outlines all items that are required to be covered in their respective agreements. Counties that successfully attain a score above their own range target of the Self Support Index (S-SI) measure can draw down from the Consolidated Fund their MFIP performance bonuses for that year.

The different sections of the BSA form (DHS-3863) that service areas submit document resources and challenges in their respective communities when serving low-income families. This form is designed to provide the department with specifics about each locale in terms of:

- The sub-populations served
- Service delivery models to administer and integrate services
- Mechanisms for cross-program partnerships, and
- Specifics about the ways in which policies and procedures are implemented to ensure provider compliance with state and federal expenditure rules are legally maintained.

The governing board of a service area must ensure that before submitting the BSA form that its agreement is duly certified by checking the appropriate box on the form. This indicates that a BSA has been prepared and approved by the appropriate governing body, or its designee, per provisions of Minn. Stat. 256J.

The following paragraphs provide an overview of the BSA form components:

- **Needs statement** – the purpose of this section is to identify the primary challenge facing financial assistance and employment service providers in a particular service area. It also allows service areas to assess and share their sense of resources at their disposal (or lack of) when serving families (MFIP ES, DWP ES, FSS, teen parents, 200% FPG). This section allows service areas to describe their service models they employ to support and engage program participants as it relates to the following:
o Populations served (FSS, teens, racial/cultural backgrounds, no longer on MFIP but under 200% of Federal Poverty Guidelines).
  o Strategies to engage hard-to-serve participants in MFIP/DWP programs.
  o Types of job development, and job advancement strategies utilized by each service area.
  o Job retention/job advancement of services for employed participants on MFIP.

- **Performance measures** – this section is related to service areas that meet specific criteria for the three-year Self-Support Index (S-SI) performance bonus, and the ethnic/racial outcome disparity performance improvement plans. Each service area that received an S-SI performance bonus is expected to share its strategies for facilitating successes that earned a bonus for a specific calendar year. If a service area is on the improvement list for outcome disparity among its racial/ethnic groups, it must describe all planned strategies and action steps for improvement for the biennium.

- **Program monitoring/compliance** – this section lists policies and procedures that service areas can check to determine what is in place to ensure service area monitoring of the use of program funds.

- **Collaboration and communication with others** – this section identifies the number of ES staff/supervisors who have access to MAXIS, as well as the level of collaboration between employment services and income maintenance functions in a service area to resolve any discrepancies between MAXIS and WorkForce 1 data.

- **Emergency services/Crisis Fund** – the purpose of this section is to provide space for service areas to describe how they plan provision of emergency/crisis services, as well as for whom those services are available. Emergency/Crisis Services plans funded with Consolidated Fund dollars must maintain fair treatment for all participating families in MFIP/DWP programs. If a service area updates its emergency services, it must submit a copy of the updated version to the department’s contact for BSAs.

- **The “Other” section (G)** – includes several subs-sections about different policy areas:
  
  (i) **Administrative cap waiver** – this applies only to counties seeking a waiver beyond the allowed 7.5% administrative cost. These counties are expected to describe activities to be provided, reasons for increased administrative costs, and the target population to be served with the additional funds.

  (ii) **Unpaid work experience** – this is intended to allow counties/consortia providing unpaid work experience activities for MFIP program participants to file an Injury Protection Plan (IPP) with the department if they do not already have one, or something has changed in their unpaid work experience activities (since prior budget cycle), by describing the location where unpaid work experience activities occur, the type of organization involved, etc.

  (iii) **Financial hardship request** – allows local providers to ask for an exception from MFIP funding provisions that require all MFIP/DWP program participants to be afforded a choice of at least two employment service providers, unless a workforce center is being utilized. [Minn. Stat., section 256J.50, subd. 9] To request such an exception, a county/consortia must:

    (1) Describe what has changed if it had a choice of providers in calendar year 2018, i.e., factors that indicate a financial hardship, reason for expecting that a hardship will persist in the near future, and the magnitude of the hardship

    (2) (a) Provide a summary of options explored (factor/cost analysis of each option
(2)(b) Process used to determine the cost of other options (RFP versus other county process), and
(3) If the county/consortia is proposing to directly deliver MFIP/DWP employment services, it must provide a budget and staffing plan that clearly shows Consolidated Funds will not be used to supplant county funds, and the staff delivering services have the experience and skills needed for employment services delivery.

- **Budget** – this section is intended for service areas to indicate 2018 and 2019 proposed budgets items (DWP/MFIP ES, Crisis Fund, administration cost, income maintenance and other)
- **Certifications and assurances** – this section requires a 30-day public input period as well as documentation of formal assurances that the governing board/body approving the BSA understand and agree that the funds granted under the provisions of the service agreement must be expended for purposes outlined in Minn. Stat., 256J and related federal funding rules.

**Needs statement**

The Needs Statement section of the BSA describes what services are or are not available to program participants at service area locations. Open-ended questions allow service providers to give details about local challenges in implementing program policies and procedures, and share what they do to address specific needs of MFIP/DWP program participants. Aggregate data from BSA forms is compiled to list resources available in local service areas through MFIP funds, partnerships with others, or with community resources. The results of this aggregation show that the majority of MFIP and DWP participants have access to employment-related services, elder services, remedial education programs, youth programs, and computer labs through their local service areas (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Services and resources available to MFIP participants through MFIP (in-house resources, partner resources, and/or community wide resources)**
However, resource gaps may remain for MFIP/DWP participants in six general domains for some service areas: Volunteer opportunities, paid work experience, on-the-job training programs, supported work, English language learners (ELL) services, and credit counseling/financial literacy.

In describing in detail what each service area perceives as the greatest challenge (besides funding) when serving families on MFIP/DWP, many provided more than one answer, but the most common responses fell under the following seven themes:

- **Participant challenges** that hamper employment success and/or personal development: Physical and psychological health issues, chemical dependence, involvement with child protection, low IQ, gaps in education or marketable skills, insufficient soft skills, criminal/felony background, domestic violence, transient lifestyle/homelessness.

- **Organizational capacity challenges**: Staffing issues including worker stress, turnover, retirements, and newer workers needing more training/mentoring, increasing caseloads, or needing to give more time to FSS participants and others from racial and culturally/linguistically diverse backgrounds.

- **Work support resources challenges**: Child care, lack of living wage jobs, lack of employment opportunities due to geographic location or racism, or willful participant in compliance with program rules.

- **Performance measures challenges**: S-SI and WPR requirements can get in the way of customer service due to paperwork burdens, or not taking into consideration growing FSS proportions of the caseload or customer’s personal long-term development outcomes.

- **Program complexity challenges**: Increasing frequency of changes across all programs which put administrative burdens on counties, particularly for workers who maintain and serve families in multiple programs, excessive required federal and state paperwork that stresses workers and curtails time given to customer service.

- **Systems challenges**: Frequent MAXIS workarounds when policy changes do not get automated or known MAXIS problems that remain unfixed, and pressures from system modernization that sometimes create inoperability between MAXIS and METS.

- **Community infrastructure challenges**: Lack of public transportation; lack of public housing/high cost of private rental properties that are out of reach for low-income families; few job opportunities in an area; unaccommmodating employers; low population density with few public services in an area; multigenerational poverty in an area; high mobility of families within the state, crossing from neighboring states, including those who speak no or limited English (English language learners).

Although Financial Assistance Services (income maintenance) and Employment Services (ES) serve the same pool of low-income families, their separate roles present differing understanding of what they consider to be the most pressing problems and/or needs that must be addressed efficiently and effectively to unleash participant’s cycle of success. Employment services appears to be more concerned about participant problems and infrastructure issues (child care and transportation), and the financial assistance side seems more focused on macro issues that involve organizational capacity and policy/systems complications as exemplified by the following statements:
“Until METS functionality is sufficiently improved and technical/policy changes slow down, we feel we have limited good options relating to our service delivery.” (Washington County).

“Child care seems to be edging out transportation as the number one challenge facing our customers. Lack of available child care, lack of sick child care and child care hours that don’t fit with work hours continues to be a problem. We are working hard to develop career pathways that allow participants to develop skills and move up into higher paying jobs but lack of child care options and lack of stable transportation continue to be challenges.” (Fillmore County)

Figure 2 below depicts the most common challenges presented by Financial Assistance services and Employment Services, respectively.

**Figure 2: Most Common challenges reported by Financial Assistance and Employment Services**

The following quotes further capture the challenges that service areas described in their BSAs Needs Assessment sections:

“It is difficult to find new and creative methods to assure that the counties and region meet the Work Participation Rates and the Self-Support Index standards.” (Cottonwood/Jackson Consortium).

“Because child care options are scarce, providers can charge more than the county rate or charge for full-time care to secure a spot when the parent only has part-time work and a partial child care subsidy. Child care has become incredibly difficult to find and very costly.” (Freeborn County)
“The release of a new policy usually requires Combined Manual changes, form changes, and system changes, which almost always lag significantly behind the requirement that the policy be implemented immediately. This lapse in giving counties the tools to apply a policy change makes for error-prone cases and incorrect policy interpretations. Sometimes policy changes are enacted retroactively, creating additional reports and burdens for financial workers and confusion for clients.” (St. Louis County)

“Many participants have multiple barriers to employment. These barriers impact both placement and job retention for each participant. Employment counselors need to work more intensively with each participant to achieve program success. Barriers include ex-offender status, mental health issues, chemical dependency, and involvement in the child protection system. In addition to these widely documented barriers, Scott County’s employment counselors have documented additional barriers to employment shared by significant numbers of Scott County MFIP participants, including: unaffordable/unstable housing, physical health, issues with domestic violence, learning disabilities, low levels of educational attainment, lack of job training and work preparation, transportation, child care, and lack of soft skills.” (Scott County)

“We have attempted many new ways to encourage participation, including historical trauma education and support groups, and including culture into our programming. We have also recently added a case aide whose sole purpose besides facilitating job search, is to contact clients who are scheduled for job search and did not show up. They receive constant phone and letter reminders which has increased participation, but not yet to the level we hope for.” (White Earth Nation).

“The biggest concern still is those receiving MFIP and allowing the $65 ½ disregard, the housing allowance, the keeping of child support up to $200 is actually preventing these people from becoming self-sufficient.” (J. Westney, Freeborn County)

Service models in use

Each service area described its local service delivery approach to support participants through job development and job retention services or outreach. The BSAs also included strategies adopted to specifically involve hard-to-engage participants in programming. In addition, service areas were asked to share specific employment services they have for racial/ethnic groups in their caseloads.

Job development

Most service areas reported in BSAs that they provide opportunities for individualized job development types (94%), and to a lesser extent in the sector job development type (66%). These efforts encompass ongoing job development partnerships or sector-based job development with community employers to assist MFIP/DWP participants with employment. The most common types of assistance were help with job placement and interview opportunities. Figure 3 indicates the number of service areas that reported various employment
supports for MFIP and DWP participants (interview opportunities, job placement, job skills training, on-site job training, job shadowing, help with planning training programs, and other offerings).

Figure 3: Number of service areas providing MFIP participants job development opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Area</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview opportunities</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job placement</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job skills training</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site job training</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job shadowing</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps plan training programs</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Job retention and job advancement services

Job retention and advancement are often offered to employed participants. Table 1 below shows the percentage of service areas reporting activities and strategies utilized to support employed MFIP/DWP participants (see Table 1 for breakdown of categories of job retention services for employed participants).

Table 1: Percent of BSAs that indicate job retention services for employed participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job retention services for employed MFIP/DWP participants</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist with issues that develop on the job</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft skills training</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal contact with employee</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial planning</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>less than 1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In contrast, the most frequent category (73%) of job advancement services for MFIP/DWP employed participants was assisting with ongoing job search to get better employment opportunities (see Table 2 for details).
Table 2: Percent of BSAs that indicate job advancement services for employed participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job advancement services for employed MFIP/DWP participants</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing job search</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching/mentoring</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career laddering</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education/training</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (intensive support to move from part-time to full-time jobs)</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another component of job advancement activities (28%), as described by service areas, was encouragement of participants to move from part-time to full-time jobs.

The time period for offering job retention services varied across service areas, from several weeks/months to over a year, as shown in Figure 4 below:

![Figure 4: Number of service areas providing retention services and duration](image)

Strategies for hard-to-serve participants

Almost one-third of service areas reported that they strive to reach out to hard-to-serve participants using different strategies, including: Offsite meeting opportunities (91%), sanction outreach services (90%), and home visits (74%). Another one-third (29%) encourage and motivate perseverance behaviors like completing workshops, attending GED classes or job clubs, finishing education/training required for credential completion and job retention. Other examples of strategies in use to engage hard-to-serve participants were support services (bus cards/gas cards, clothing, car repairs, and car insurance), financial incentives (cash, gift cards, stored value cards), educational/training opportunities, and socializing events (field trips, and events with free food).
Culturally specific programming
Fifty-nine percent of service areas reported that they have culturally specific employment services for racial/ethnic groups in their communities. Figure 5 below indicates the number of culturally specific programs targeted towards American Indians, African immigrants, African Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, Asian immigrants and Asian Americans.

**Figure 5: Available culturally specific employment service programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Americans</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Immigrants</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Immigrants</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assessments and credentialing
Sixty-nine percent of service areas reported that they offer career pathway programs or skill assessment and credentialing programs, including Pathways to Prosperity, formerly Fast-Trac; National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC); Work Keys; and others (JAG, CASAS, ISEEK, etc.). Figure 6 shows the breakdown.

**Figure 6: Types of assessments and credentialing being used**

- Pathways to prosperity (P2P) 32%
- National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) 28%
- Work Keys 22%
- Other 18%
Family Stabilization services
Professionals in different disciplines are available to serve MFIP FSS participants (97%). These professionals include adult mental health (73%), adult rehabilitation mental health services – ARMHS (57%), chemical health (65%), public health nurses (71%), psychologists (59%), social workers (91%), vocational rehabilitation workers (63%), and children’s mental health (66%). Other services available to FSS families are community services, psychiatrists, licensed therapists with master’s degrees, veterans services, Lives in Transition program, and supportive women’s shelter staff.

Children of MFIP FSS families benefit from services offered by non-MFIP providers, when appropriate, at the local level: Children’s mental health services; public health nurse home visiting services; Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program; and others like Head Start; Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (IOA) youth programs; YMCA; PACER; Salvation Army; Parent Support Outreach Program (PSOP); and county waivered services.

The majority of service areas (96%) report they afford children of non-FSS parents the same access to services as children of FSS parents. The areas that do not provide access did not elaborate on the rationale behind withholding services for children of non-FSS families.

Former MFIP/DWP families under 200% of Federal Poverty Guidelines
Families with incomes below 200% of federal poverty guidelines (FPG) who exited MFIP or DWP are eligible for services funded under the Consolidated Fund. Figure 7 indicates types of services and number of service areas that reported they offer such services for former MFIP/DWP families who are still under 200% of FPG using the Consolidated Fund.

Figure 7: Services for families under 200% of Federal Poverty Guidelines
Additional resources available for families who are no longer on MFIP/DWP but still remain under 200% of the FPG threshold include co-enrollment with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity (WIOA) programs, assistance with completing job applications and resumes, Displaced Homemaker program, referrals to employment and training programs, as well as providing access to resources while looking for a job (job club, job fairs and transportation), educational opportunities such as the SKILL class in partnership with Adult Basic Education, and support services for working up to six months after MFIP closes.

**MFIP teen parents**
The majority of service areas (90%) have specialized staff who work primarily with MFIP teen parents. Minor teens were more likely to work with a social worker whereas older teens (ages 18-19) were more likely to work with an Employment Services worker. Figure 8 shows the number of service areas that offer designated services for teen parents on MFIP.

![Figure 8: Targeted services for teen parents on MFIP](image)

Seventy-seven percent of teen parents work with a primary staff. Minor teen parents were primarily assigned to social workers whereas 18-19-year-olds were more likely to work with an employment services worker. Minor parents had more contact with public nurses than older teen parents. Local public health agencies often get teen parents (including those on MFIP) to enroll in public health nurse home visiting services. When such an arrangement exists in a service area, it is mostly on a voluntary basis for all teen parents, but more so for older teen parents.

**Emergency assistance/crisis fund**
Service areas that choose to administer MFIP emergency assistance programs can use Consolidated Fund resources to provide services to eligible families in crisis. For the 2018 budget, all but seven service areas reported that they provide emergency assistance based on their criteria for eligibility. For budget year 2019, most reported that they provide...
funds for emergency services. For these two budget years, the range of allocations varied from a minimum of 3.4% to a maximum of 24.4% of BSA funds for emergency/crisis services.

Program monitoring/compliance

Program monitoring and procedures in place (as reported in BSAs for the 2018-2019 biennium) fall into categories shown in Table 2 below:

### Table 3: Percent of biennial service agreements that indicate services for employed participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedures in place to ensure program funds are used as directed in law</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Budget control procedures for approving expenditures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal policies regarding use of funds for support services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash procedures for permitted services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedures in place to ensure program policies are followed and applied accurately</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample case review by supervisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample case review by workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (worker joint meetings, case reviews, team review for support service requests above $100, etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of BSAs that included a response to the question about service areas that administer the policy on random drug testing of convicted drug felons on MFIP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written policy within MFIP unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not mention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination with corrections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently establishing new policy/procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submitted as an attachment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Collaboration and communication with others

Service areas reported 476 front-line employment services counselors across Minnesota endeavoring to provide Employment Services to MFIP/DWP participants; 57% of these ES workers have access to MAXIS. Seventy-nine ES managers were reported to have access to MAXIS; however, access was uneven, with some service areas reporting zero MAXIS access for ES managers.

In describing processes that each service area follows to identify and resolve discrepancies between MAXIS and WorkForce 1 data in areas such as FSS coding, employment/hours, sanction status, etc., 70% reported regular interaction between financial and employment services workers to resolve discrepancies. This included in-person meetings (weekly, bi-weekly, quarterly, and as needed), in addition to regular check-ins about cases through email, phone and status updates.
Performance measures

Annualized Self-Support Index: S-SI success strategies

Minnesota uses the annualized Self-Support Index to determine which service areas are eligible for performance bonuses; staff was asked to share strategies they found helpful in achieving success related to this measure. Sixteen service areas described their best strategies (Aitkin, Beltrami, Carver, Chisago, Crow Wing, Grant, Isanti, Itasca, Kittson, Lake, Mille Lacs, Minnesota Prairie County Alliance, Polk, Rice and Scott counties, and White Earth Nation).

The following were highlighted as key to successful service delivery:

- Developing positive, long-term relationships between workers and participants.
- Providing employment-related assistance: Job readiness training, advancement and retention services, even for those no longer on MFIP.
- Determining availability of local job opportunities, supported work experience programs, and intentional focus on education/training and career laddering.
- Using workforce centers to provide classes for life skills training, motivational learning techniques, etc.
- Identifying and providing services early for FSS families, finding ways to better engage and refer them to apply for Social Security benefits, as appropriate.
- Targeting education (ABE/GED and/or short-term training).
- Co-locating services (employment, financial, child care), along with a team-based approach to case management.
- Educating participants about how to work within an environment of team workers.

Some service areas stated they endeavor to maintain the same message and support for the long-term goal of self-sufficiency for families they serve.

“We also offer post-employment support services and our workforce service center is open as a resource to anyone, even after they are off the program. They are able to come and receive core services from a familiar face in a familiar location. The Workforce Service Center is even open one night a week for those who may be working but still looking to make a change. We also offer a four-week “Skills for Success” workshop series. This workshop series helps prepare clients to maintain their employment post program.” (G. Jansen, Carver County)

Success was also attributed to the importance of strong, positive relationships between employment services and program participants:

“The one key element that always seems to predict successful outcomes is the relationship between the participant and ETC Workforce Development Representative (WDR). If the participant doesn’t have a good working relationship with their WDR they won’t believe what they are saying and won’t buy into the program. ETC staff work very hard to form a partnership with participants they are working with no matter what strategy they utilize. It is the building of this partnership that is the basis of a strong...
working relationship that typically leads to a successful outcome for the participant.”
(N. Dahlin, Chisago County)

One site noted the importance of reassuring participants before they exit the program:

“Prior to leaving the MFIP program, we make our clients aware of any and all benefits they may be eligible to continue to receive. We also make appropriate referrals to other agencies that may be able to assist our clients.” (L. Holte, Polk County)

One-year Self-Support Index: Racial/ethnic disparities

Racial/ethnic disparity is defined as a one-year Self-Support Index that is five or more percentage points lower for a non-white racial/ethnic group than for the white group of MFIP/DWP-eligible adults in the county or consortium. Eighteen service areas (Anoka, Becker, Beltrami, Blue Earth, Cass, Clay, Dakota, Goodhue, Hennepin, Minnesota Prairie Consortium, Polk, Rice, Scott, Sherburne, St. Louis, Stearns, Washington and Winona) reported they either implemented or are considering strategies they feel will contribute to improvement of their racial/ethnic S-SI disparities scores.

General strategies for addressing racial and ethnic disparities included hiring employment and financial services staff reflective of the communities being served, quickly attending to participant needs that prevent focusing on employment and self-sufficiency. Models and programs designed for the needs of racial and ethnic groups are used (American Indian, African American, immigrant/new Americans), and the Lifelong Learning Initiative, which combines higher level coaching techniques and executive skill development tools.

Others described strategies for reducing disparities which include providing cultural diversity training to workers, building stronger partnerships with other agencies that serve MFIP families, as well as with area employers, working on providing a more welcoming environment for everyone. Several providers noted that they will focus on making career training accessible to underserved groups. Training opportunities will include certified nursing assistant (CNA) classes, warehouse work classes, job credentialing, and work experience education with WIOA, and a workshop series for employed participants.

Some sites with disparities specific to American Indian participants decided to work more closely with tribal providers to offer participants access to culturally specific activities. Other counties with barriers specific to participants for whom English is not their native language decided to increase the number of bilingual staff, and to offer program overviews and workshops in alternative languages.

One service area described its intent to develop culturally sensitive job search classes specifically designed to address the needs of African American participants.

For those who were successful in the past with racial and cultural groups, this new status of gaps for these groups was seen as a setback that they are determined to overcome by re-engaging with participants and communities.
Administrative cap waiver

Minnesota Statutes stipulate that administrative costs that are not matched with county funds may not exceed 7.5% of a county’s or 15% of a tribe’s or nation’s allocation under provisions of the Consolidated Fund. The only exception is when a request for an administrative cap waiver is approved by the department for service areas electing to provide an approved supported employment, unpaid work, or community work experience program for a major segment of a county’s or tribe’s MFIP population.

For calendar years 2018 and 2019, four counties applied for administrative cap waivers (Carlton, Stearns, Ramsey and St. Louis). Reasons for waiver requests varied, with most providers requesting additional funds for:

- Supporting the administration and implementation of targeted projects providing monitoring of paid and unpaid work activities for racial/ethnic/cultural groups; providing 1:1 with FSS participants on potential part-time employment; supporting participants with health problems (physical, mental), or with chemical dependence, or a criminal record; so they can stay connected with area businesses.
- More specialized education/training activities, job coaching, and planning resources to find ways to address disparities in outcomes through work experience activities, community work experiences, and employee retention.
- Payroll support, and more specialized staff to support participants in their journey to move from unpaid to paid work.
- Continuing the 12-week supported work model.
- Continuing to leverage partnerships with others who serve MFIP/DWP families in the area (WIOA, area employers, community-based organizations, public health services, schools, etc.) to meet administrative services for participants and strategic goals of agencies.

Addendum for unpaid work experience

There were no addendums for unpaid work experience for the 2018-2019 biennium for the Injury Protection Program (IPP). However, the four counties that applied for administrative cap waivers (see above) also described their proposals for unpaid work experiences for participants.

Provider choice

The majority of BSA service areas (79%) reported having a workforce center that provides multiple employment and training services, offering multiple service options under a collaborative effort, and can document that participants have choices among employment and training services. Two requested financial hardship (Lake and Mahnomen counties); 11% did not respond to the topic, either because they were not a county or county consortium, or they did not complete the section related to this policy when submitting the DHS-3863 form.

Figure 8 shows the breakdown of the provider choice options and the number of BSAs that indicated availability of such choices as part of their service delivery for MFIP/DWP families.
Public input
Eighty-two percent of service areas reported that they sought public input regarding their BSA content prior to its submission to the department, a state requirement for the BSA process. Only three indicated that they received public input, but did not describe whether that feedback impacted their BSA content.

Budget
The 2018-2019 MFIP biennial service agreement guidelines instructed all service areas to indicate the amount and percentage for each item listed for budget line items.

The 2018 and 2019 budgets included:

- DWP Employment Services.
- MFIP Employment Services.
- Emergency services/crisis fund (for those counties that chose to offer such programs and services).
- MFIP administration (capped at 7.5% unless a county applied for a waiver, or it is for a tribe/nation service area).
- Income maintenance administration.
- Other (intended for service areas to indicate additional services that they wanted to budget for. Two spaces were provided for service areas to provide brief descriptions of additional services.

Figure 9 below shows breakdowns of projected expenditures by service area over the biennium.
Complete BSAs were submitted by 79 service areas, comprised of 72 counties, three county consortia and four tribal service providers.¹

¹ There are currently 82 units with fiduciary responsibility: 74 individual counties, Faribault/Martin County Consortium, Des Moines Valley Health and Human Services, Southwest Health and Human Services, Minnesota Prairie Alliance, and four tribal service providers (Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, Red Lake Nation and White Earth Nation). See Appendix A which individually lists county, consortia, and tribal nations, that completed 2018-2019 BSAs.
Additional resources for this report

https://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&Render=Primary&allowInterrupt=1&noSaveAs=1&dDocName=dhs-296100

https://www.leg.state.mn.us/docs/2017/other/170927.pdf

Appendix A

List of local service areas that completed Biennial Service Agreements, in alphabetical order.

County areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County Area</th>
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<td>Aitkin</td>
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<td>Anoka</td>
<td>McLeod</td>
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<td>Becker</td>
<td>Meeker</td>
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<td>Beltrami</td>
<td>Mille Lacs</td>
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<td>Big Stone</td>
<td>Morrison</td>
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<td>Blue Earth</td>
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<td>Chisago</td>
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<td>Clearwater</td>
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<td>Douglas</td>
<td>Renville</td>
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<td>Faribault-Martin</td>
<td>Rice</td>
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<td>Houston</td>
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<td>Wright</td>
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<td>LeSueur</td>
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County consortia

Des Moines Valley Health and Human Services (DVHHS): Cottonwood and Jackson Faribault/ Martin Consortia
Minnesota Prairie County Alliance (MNPrarie): Dodge, Steele and Waseca
Southwest Health and Human Services (SWHHS): Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Pipestone, Redwood and Rock

Tribal service providers

Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
Minnesota Chippewa Tribe
White Earth Nation