

E1MN Stakeholder Engagement for Interagency HCBS Shared Visioning

Engagement 11 Summary Report: VRS/SSB Waiver Liaison Role

September 17, 2021

The **Improve** Group

Contents

Contents.....	2
Report purpose.....	3
Introduction.....	3
Executive Summary.....	3
Survey Findings.....	5
Current work across agencies	5
Working with the new VRS/SSB liaisons.....	7
About you.....	10
Appendix A: Survey Instrument.....	13

Report purpose

The E1MN Stakeholder Engagement for Interagency HCBS Shared Visioning is being conducted as iterative, ongoing, agile engagement. As a part of this approach, PIPEin and VIP members are being invited to several data collection opportunities to help improve products and services. This report summarizes findings from E1MN's eleventh stakeholder activity.

Introduction

The E1MN Stakeholder Engagement for Interagency HCBS Shared Visioning's eleventh engagement was a survey to gather feedback on the DEED Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS)/State Services for the Blind (SSB) waiver liaison role. The survey was administered in August/September 2021 and led by The Improve Group (IG), a research and evaluation firm based in St. Paul, Minnesota. E1MN sent an invitation to 177 PIPEin members, and a total of 32 individuals participated (18% response rate). IG analyzed the survey data; key findings and supporting evidence from this analysis are provided below.

About the new VRS/SSB waiver liaison role:

The VRS/SSB waiver liaison is a new role created to make it easier for waiver employment service providers and waiver case managers to connect with VRS/SSB when needed. If there is an established working relationship between providers and waiver case managers and local VRS/SSB office or counselors, they probably will not need to work through a liaison. The liaisons will be available if workers are not sure where to start or want to talk with someone who's been specially trained in working with waiver services. Workers can connect with a VRS/SSB waiver liaison any time they have questions about VRS/SSB or want to collaborate.

Executive Summary

Overall, most respondents either said that they have a solid working relationship (34%) with VRS/SSB staff or communicate with them periodically (31%). The majority of respondents said they collaborate with their local VRS/SSB office (81%). Respondents shared that they currently collaborate with their local VRS/SSB office in the following ways: through ongoing communication, regular meetings, and collaboration on serving clients; through referral processes for clients; and on special projects to better serve clients and improve processes.

The majority of respondents shared that they are definitely likely to reach out to a VRS/SSB waiver liaison (59%). The majority of respondents shared that they will reach out to a VRS/SSB waiver liaison when they have questions about VRS/SSB (62%) and when a person starts receiving services under the plan phase (55%). The majority of respondents said they would ask a VRS/SSB waiver liaison: "When should I refer someone for VRS/SSB services?" (77%), or "How should I refer someone for VRS/SSB services?" (58%). Respondents shared that they would work with a VRS/SSB waiver liaison in the following ways: communicating around timing to ensure timely services for clients; on service coordination and supports for clients; and to improve the client referral process.

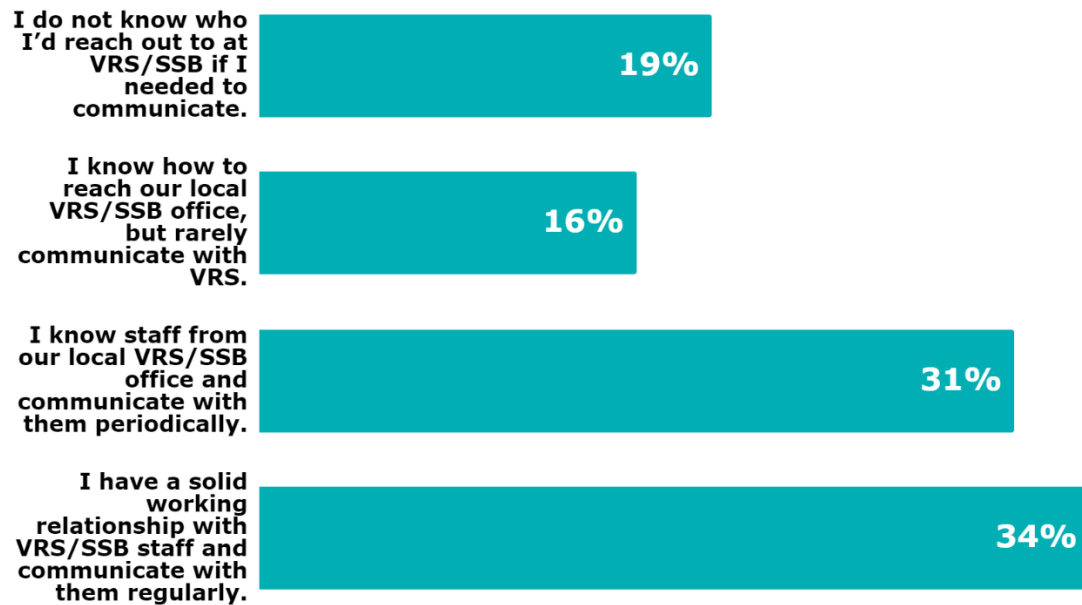
Overall, the responses were quite positive about the opportunities that exist to work with a VRS/SSB waiver liaison.

Survey Findings

Current work across agencies

Which response best describes your current communication with your local VRS office? (n=32)

Overall, most respondents either said that they have a solid working relationship with VRS/SSB staff (34%) or communicate with them periodically (31%).



Do you collaborate with your local VRS/SSB office? (n=32)

The majority of respondents said they collaborate with their local VRS/SSB office (81%).



If yes, what does that collaboration look like? (open-ended) (n=24)

Respondents shared that they currently collaborate with their local VRS/SSB office in the following ways (quotes are representative of responses):

Through ongoing communication, regular meetings, and collaboration on serving clients.

- “We tend to email back and forth per individual situation with case managers to collaborate timelines that the waiver would need to take over. Also, they have been attending our mentor meetings at the county level for information and case consultation.”
- “My company is a vendor for both VRS and a 245D licensed provider. Collaboration occurs formally at scheduled meetings. We also collaborate informally mostly through phone conversations. These can be upcoming changes and what that might mean for service delivery or an inquiry to see if a certain need can be met. I think there is a mutual respect so ideas can be freely exchanged.”
- “Through the BEN meetings, and Community of Practice meetings. Staff have spoken about services available at team meetings, staff or referral lines receive inquiries for services. We have met with the Pre-ETS staff in person.”

Collaboration also occurs through referral processes for clients.

- “We provide both waiver and VR services. We receive referrals for VR services, provide updates about how services are going, work together with VR Counselors and Pre-ETS reps to plan for and deliver services for each VR participant we serve.”
- “Minimal as of recent, but in the past, I have made referrals to VRS on behalf of my waiver clients. We then shifted to utilizing waiver services for employment so used VRS minimally. With the shift back to VRS there will be a significant increase in our need to collaborate with VRS from a waiver case management standpoint.”

While most referral processes appear to run smoothly, one participant shared about a challenging perception that disrupts the process.

- “Support case managers in reaching out to [the] local VRS office to refer their clients for E1MN PBA. Open to communication with assigned VRS counselor but have run into some difficulties with perception of our referral as a solicitation for business. This makes it difficult to deliver seamless services. Additionally, the timeline is extremely long for referred individuals to transfer from Employment Plan to E1MN PBA.”

Respondents work with VRS/SSB staff on special projects to better serve clients and improve processes.

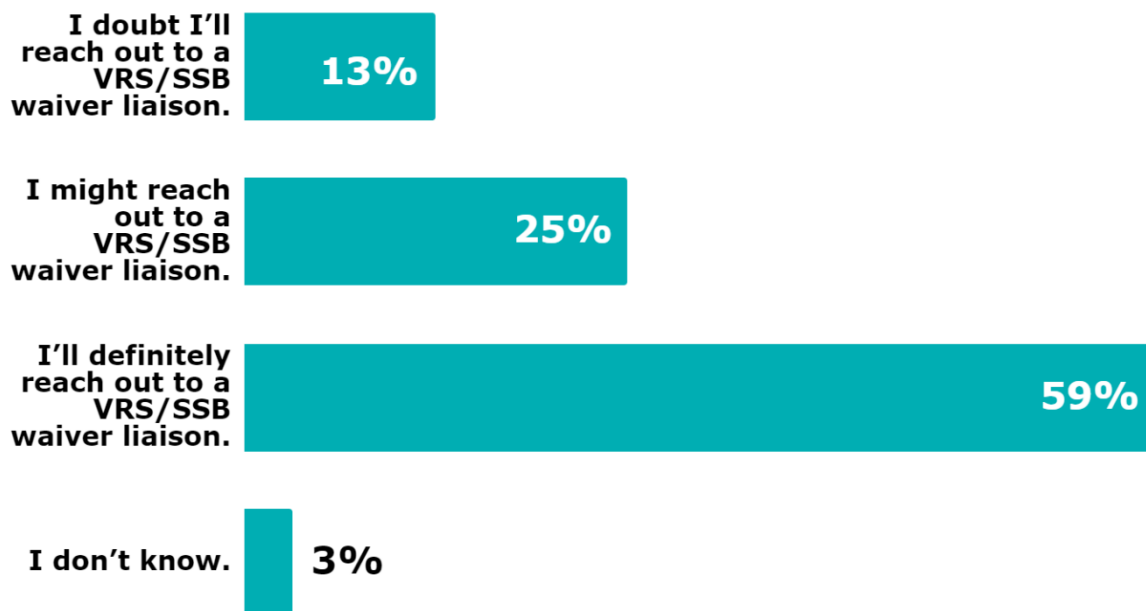
- “We are participating in a pilot project to coordinate services so have a team-like approach to discuss waiver and VRS supports needed for individuals who are interested in employment. We also have an IPS program in our community and have a VRS counselor as part of that team that we have developed a relationship with.”

- “We recently started having meetings with VRS leadership to help guide our processes and trainings for E1MN.”
- “We did a transition fair one year to introduce parents of transition aged students to resources that were waiver funded and VRS funded.”

Working with the new VRS/SSB liaisons

How likely are you to reach out to a VRS/SSB waiver liaison? (n=32)

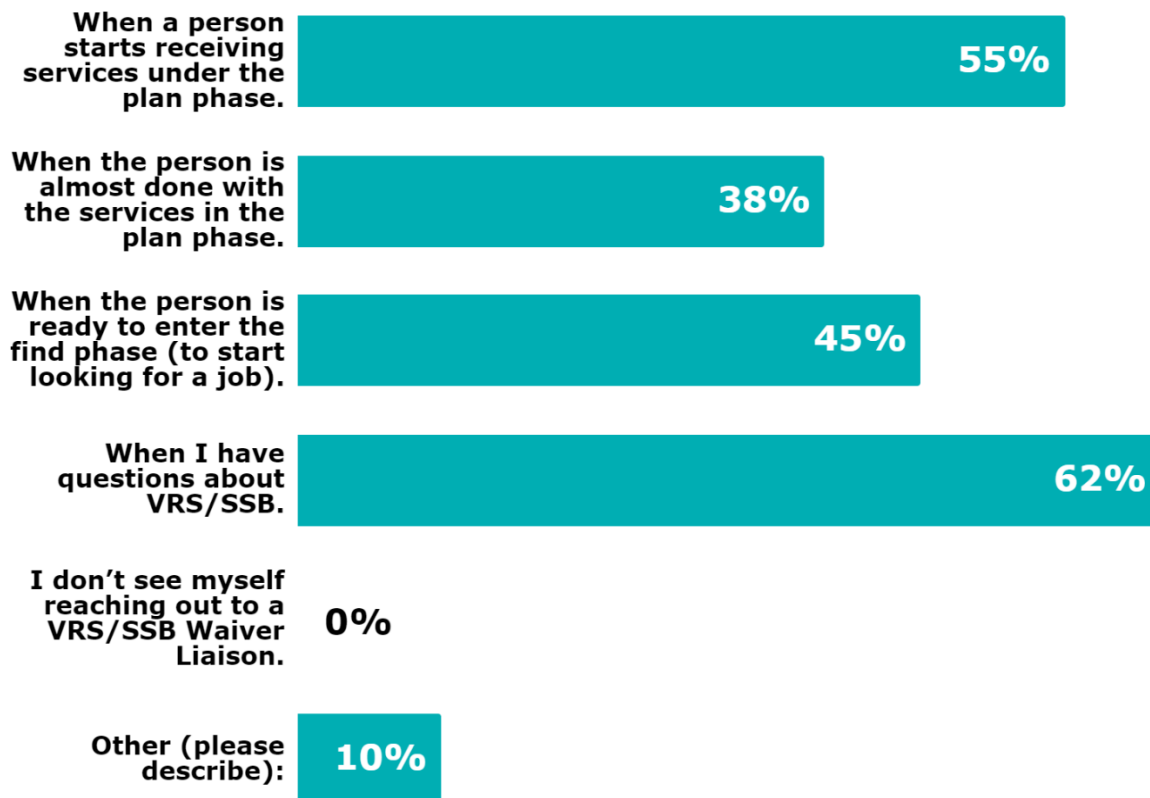
The majority of respondents shared that they will definitely reach out to a VRS/SSB waiver liaison (59%).



When do you see yourself reaching out to a VRS/SSB waiver liaison, if at all? (select all that apply) (n=29)

The majority of respondents shared that they will reach out to a VRS/SSB waiver liaison when they have questions about VRS/SSB (62%), and when a person starts receiving services under the plan phase (55%).

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because participants were able to select more than one response.



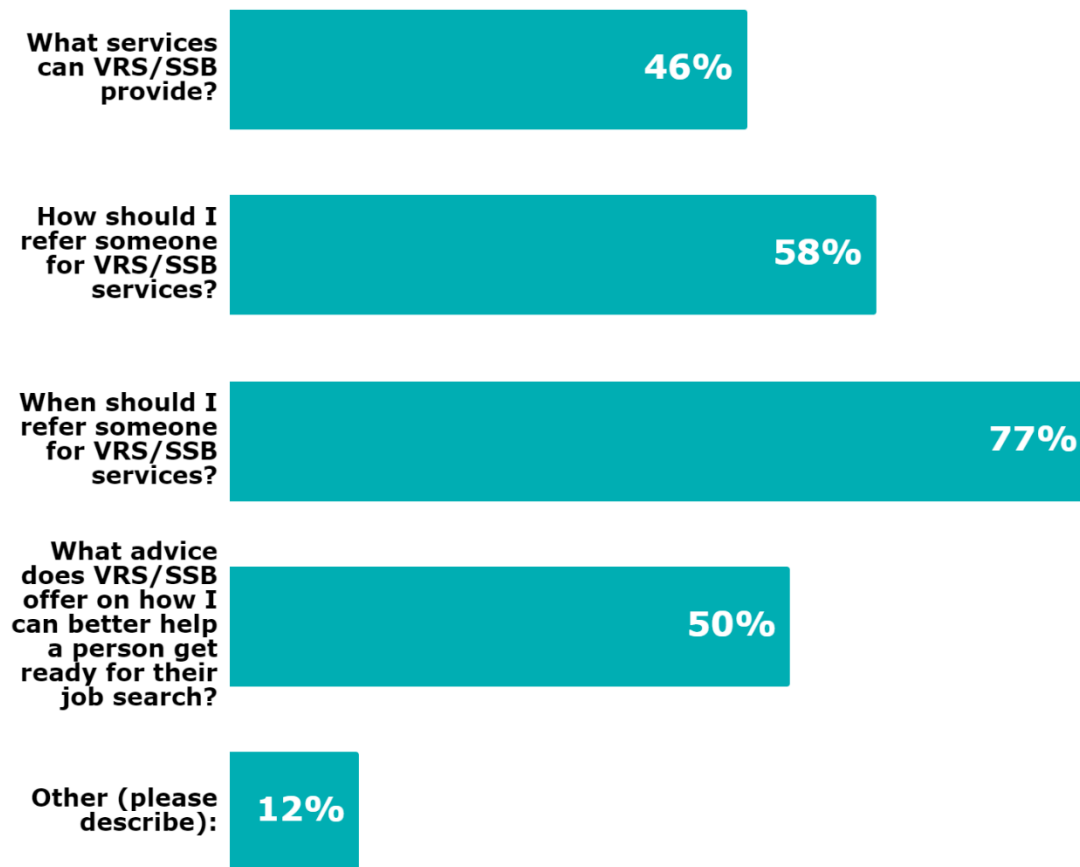
Three respondents provided write-in responses for “other,” they were:

- “If I'm having trouble getting in contact with, or in communicating with the assigned VR Specialist.”
- “Which phase a person is in when I reach out to the liaison may depend on the person.”
- “I don't know because we haven't done anything in the plan phase, as it is new and a bit confusing.”

What questions do you see yourself asking a VRS/SSB waiver liaison, if any? (select all that apply) (n=26)

The majority of respondents said they would ask a VRS/SSB waiver liaison: "When should I refer someone for VRS/SSB services?" (77%), or "How should I refer someone for VRS/SSB services?" (58%).

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because participants were able to select more than one response.



Three respondents shared write in responses for "other," they were:

- "How will VRS support someone who will need customized employment and 1:1 supports?"
- "I would be interested in the application process, especially the timeline so that it is in place when needed."
- "To discuss how the process is going between county staff and VRS."

Please share more about how you see yourself working with a VRS/SSB waiver liaison (open ended) (n=16):

Respondents shared that they would work with a VRS/SSB waiver liaison in the following ways (quotes are representative of responses):

Communicating around timing to ensure timely services for clients.

- “Employment services are complex and the issue we're running in to is waiting on staff availability to help with job searches in particular. I would like to coordinate with them on when it would be best to make referrals and which providers have availability without having to make a large number of time consuming phone calls.”
- “I would utilize them to help brainstorm on best timing for folks to start employment services, as well as customized employment options and helping improve the whole process so that VRS staff know what case management staff need from them and vice versa.”

On service coordination and supports for clients.

- “Collaborating about how to support people who have high needs and need more support than many individuals.”
- “I could see it being helpful to reach out to the liaison about connecting an individual who is in a waiver-funded phase to services and resources that are available through VR such as funding for a background check, work uniform funding, an accommodation assessment for someone who has a job, or small business start-up funding.”
- “Assuring a smooth and uninterrupted transfer to E1MN services and back to Employment Support when a PBA is completed.”

To improve the client referral process.

- “I would like a better system to refer to VRS/SSB. The application process can be lengthy and confusing for persons served. I would like to be able to apply for services together, or have a different way to get into VRS/SSB.”
- “A standardized referral process for VRS would be very helpful. There are going to be MANY waiver individuals who will need to be referred to VRS with the shift away from waiver-funded employment searching. Thus far, it has been difficult to efficiently refer our waiver clients to VRS services and reaching out 1:1 to the waiver liaison doesn't seem sustainable for that position. An online referral form would be ideal so that all information can be submitted and then reviewed by VRS staff.”

Additional ways respondents see themselves working with a VRS/SSB waiver liaison:

One respondent is a supervisor and would work with them to develop overall processes and procedures. And a couple of respondents were unsure of how they might work together.

About you

What is your role? (select all that apply) (n=32)

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because participants were able to select more than one role.

Waiver case manager

47%

Waiver employment support services provider

47%

Lead agency staff

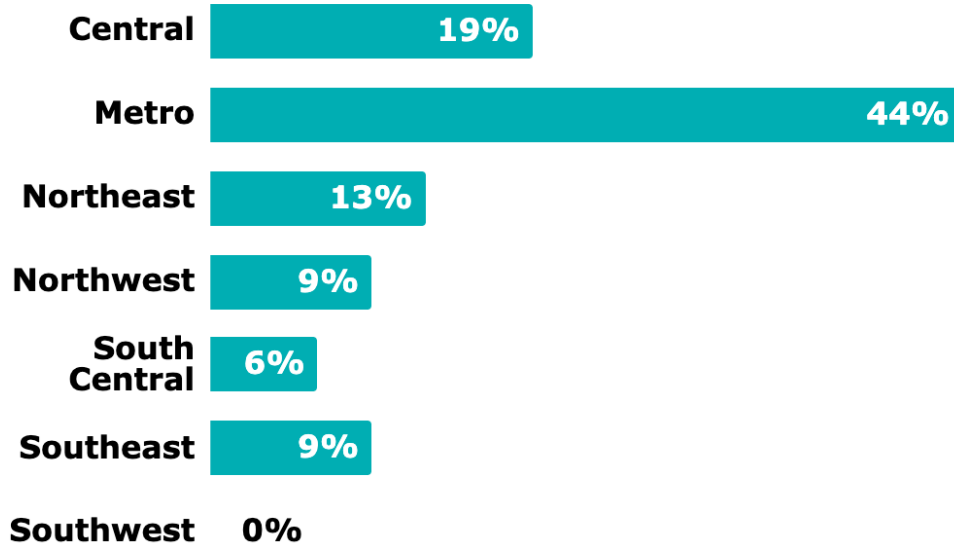
19%

Role	Percentage	Number
Waiver case manager	47%	15
Waiver employment support services provider	47%	15
Lead agency staff	19%	6

In what Native Nations do you work, if any? (select all that apply) (n=1)

One respondent indicated that they work within both the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and Red Lake Nation.

In what region do you primarily work? (select one) (n=39)



Region	Percentage	Number
Central	19%	6
Metro	44%	14
Northeast	13%	4
Northwest	9%	3
South Central	6%	2
Southeast	9%	3
Southwest	0%	0

Appendix A: Survey Instrument

VRS/SSB Waiver Liaison Survey

Thank you for your input about how you are working with DEED Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS)/State Services for the Blind (SSB)! Please provide your honest responses about how you are working with DEED-VRS/SSB; DHS and DEED will use your input as they plan training for and implementation of the new VRS/SSB waiver liaison position. This survey is confidential; your name will not be associated with your responses.

About the new VRS/SSB waiver liaison role:

The **VRS/SSB waiver liaison** is a new role created to make it easier for waiver employment service providers and waiver case managers to connect with VRS/SSB when needed.

If you have a good working relationship with your local VRS/SSB office or counselors, you probably won't need to work through a liaison. But if you're not sure where to start or you want to talk with someone who's been specially trained in working with waiver services, a VRS/SSB waiver liaison can be a great resource.

You can connect with a VRS/SSB waiver liaison any time you have questions about VRS/SSB or want to collaborate.

You can learn more about the VRS/SSB waiver liaison position in the "working with VRS/SSB" section of the Plan Page in the Disability Hub MN - Work Toolkit by clicking [here](#).

[page break in survey]

Current work across agencies

Which response best describes your current communication with your local VRS office?

- ☐ I do not know who I'd reach out to at VRS/SSB if I needed to communicate.
- ☐ I know how to reach our local VRS/SSB office, but rarely communicate with VRS.
- ☐ I know staff from our local VRS/SSB office and communicate with them periodically.
- ☐ I have a solid working relationship with VRS/SSB staff and communicate with them regularly.

Do you collaborate with your local VRS/SSB office?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, what does that collaboration look like? (open-ended)

[If answered yes] E1MN staff will be reaching out to select agencies to create success stories describing various ways to collaborate across agencies. Please note your contact information if you are interested in potentially sharing your collaboration story as an example for other agencies:

Name: _____

Email: _____

County: _____

Working with the new VRS/SSB liaisons

How likely are you to reach out to a VRS/SSB waiver liaison?

- ☐ I doubt I'll reach out to a VRS/SSB waiver liaison.
- ☐ I might reach out to a VRS/SSB waiver liaison.
- ☐ I'll definitely reach out to a VRS/SSB waiver liaison.
- ☐ I don't know

When do you see yourself reaching out to a VRS/SSB Waiver Liaison, if at all? (select all that apply)

- ☐ When a person starts receiving services under the plan phase.
- ☐ When the person is almost done with the services in the plan phase.
- ☐ When the person is ready to enter the find phase (to start looking for a job).
- ☐ When I have questions about VRS/SSB.
- ☐ I don't see myself reaching out to a VRS/SSB Waiver Liaison.
- ☐ Other (please describe):

What questions do you see yourself asking a VRS/SSB Waiver Liaison, if any? (select all that apply)

- ☐ What services can VRS/SSB provide?
- ☐ How should I refer someone for VRS/SSB services?
- ☐ When should I refer someone for VRS/SSB services?
- ☐ What advice does VRS/SSB offer on how I can better help a person get ready for their job search?
- ☐ Other (please describe):

Please share more about how you see yourself working with a VRS/SSB waiver liaison (open ended):

About you

What is your role? (select all that apply)

- ☐ Waiver case manager
- ☐ Lead agency staff
- ☐ Waiver employment support services provider

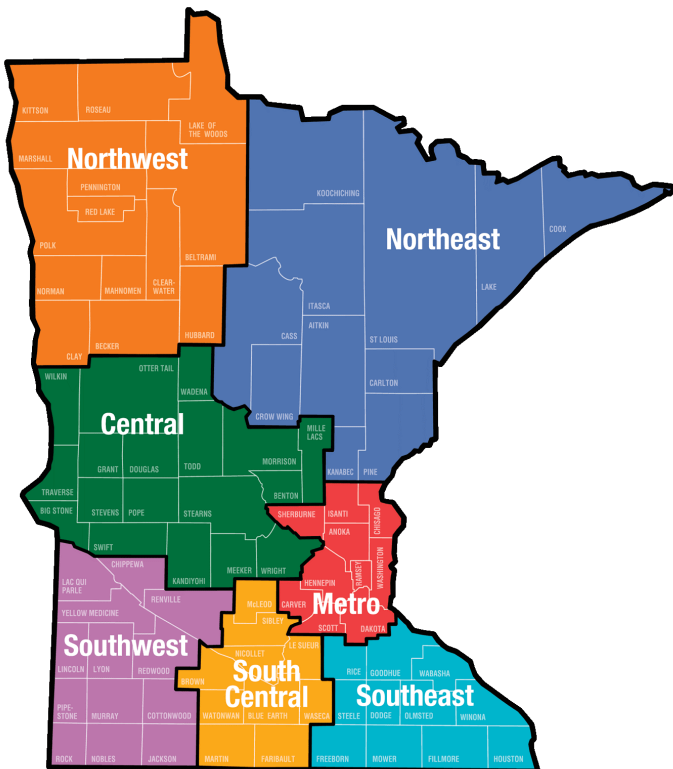
In what Native Nations do you work, if any? (select all that apply)

- ☐ Bois Forte Band of Chippewa
- ☐ Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- ☐ Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- ☐ Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
- ☐ Lower Sioux Indian Community

- ☐ Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
- ☐ Prairie Island Indian Community
- ☐ Red Lake Nation
- ☐ Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
- ☐ Upper Sioux Community
- ☐ White Earth Nation

In what region do you **primarily** work? (select one) (See map below; alt text [here](#))

- ☐ Northwest
- ☐ Northeast
- ☐ Central
- ☐ Metro
- ☐ Southwest
- ☐ South Central
- ☐ Southeast



Map courtesy of the Statewide Emergency Communications Board

Thank you for taking the survey! Click "Submit" to submit your answers.