

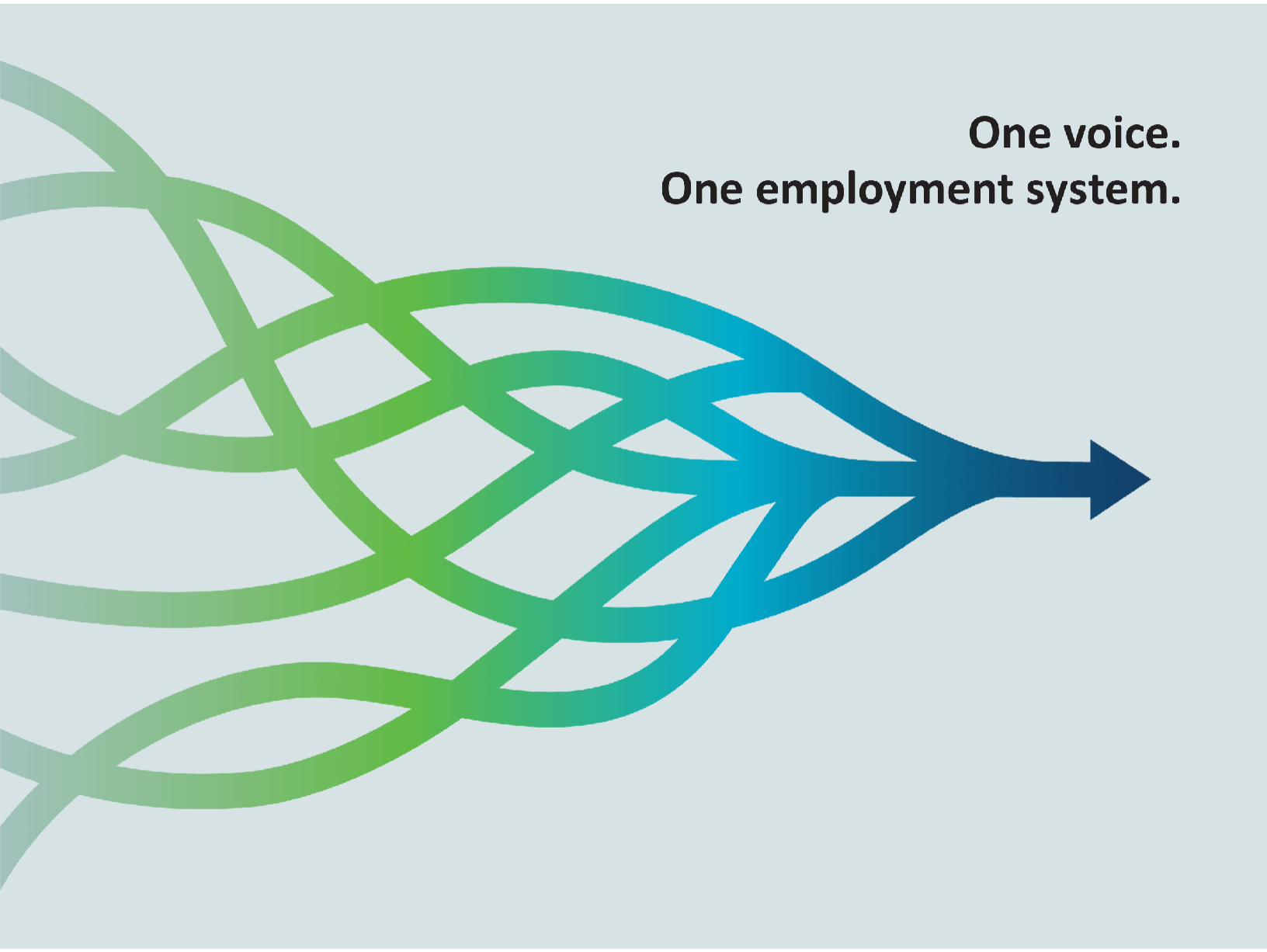


# A STATE-AGENCY PARTNERSHIP ADVANCING EMPLOYMENT FIRST

## Overview

June 2023

**One voice.  
One employment system.**



# About this document

This document summarizes current efforts of the E1MN partnership and our plans for the coming years. It serves as an internal grounding document for state agency staff and may be drawn from to shape external communications about the E1MN partnership.



For accessible formats of this information or assistance with additional equal access to human services, write to any of the email addresses below.



## How to contact us

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## Who we are

E1MN is a state partnership to advance Employment First outcomes for youth and adults with disabilities. The state agency partnership evolved from Minnesota's [Employment First policy](#) adopted by the Minnesota Olmstead Plan Subcabinet in 2014.

E1MN is led by the Minnesota Departments of Education (MDE), Employment and Economic Development (DEED), and Human Services (DHS).

- MDE – Career and Technical Education and Special Education Divisions
- DEED – Vocational Rehabilitation Services and State Services for the Blind
- DHS – Disability Services Division



## What we're trying to achieve

We're working together to deliver a more seamless and timely employment support system for youth and adults with disabilities so they understand their options and get what they need to achieve and maintain competitive integrated employment.



## What's important to us as we do this work

**Employment First:** The values and guiding principles found in Minnesota's Employment First Policy will serve as the foundation for our work.

**Person centeredness:** We will embed person-centered principles in our work to help people move toward meaningful work that builds on their unique interests, strengths, and talents.

**Equity:** Equity is fundamental to our work. People with disabilities of all races, ethnicities, and socio-economic statuses should have access to the supports they need to succeed.

**Collaboration:** We will support each other and bring out the best each of our agencies has to offer to people and to the process.

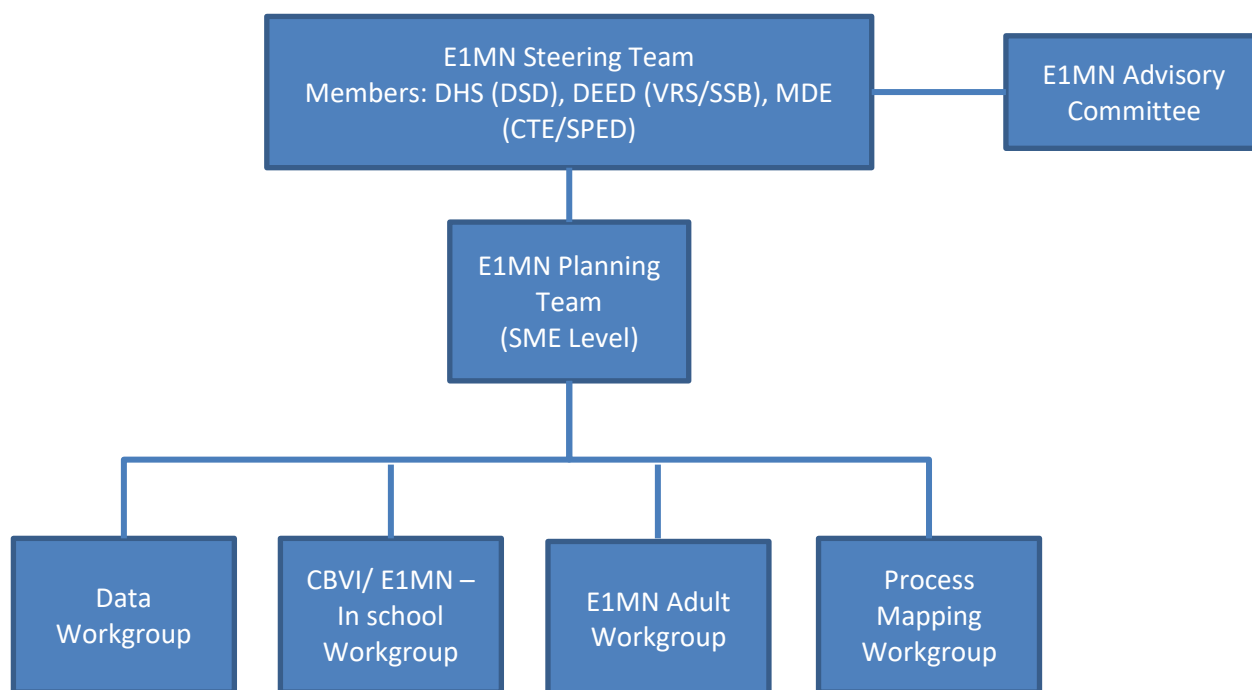
**Simplicity:** We will develop a system that is easier to understand, implement and navigate.

**Continuous improvement:** We will engage with stakeholders, leverage promising practices, use data to adapt efforts, use resources wisely, and improve outcomes.

## How We Do Our Work

E1MN internally organizes our work through a Steering Team, Planning Team, and Workgroups.

- **E1MN Steering Team:** Sets strategic direction, allocates resources, and approves suggestions from planning team
- **E1MN Planning Team:** Under direction from the E1MN Steering Team, conducts E1MN work, including managing workplan, providing technical assistance, and developing proposals for steering team approval
- **Workgroups:** Ad hoc groups comprised of subject matter experts that are formed by the planning team to carry out E1MN work



## What we're doing to achieve our shared goal

In our E1MN partnership, we are focused on improving employment outcomes for people with disabilities. The lists below overviews the main strategies and efforts of our shared work. You can find out more about any of these efforts by using the links in this document.

## We're aligning our policies, programs, funding, and roles.

- **DHS/DEED/MDE Partnership:** We are partnering to support youth and adults with disabilities in accessing a more seamless and timely employment system. We are learning from professionals who support people with disabilities, researching barriers, improving alignment across our programs, and fostering collaboration between schools, VRS, waiver lead agencies and employment service providers.
  - **Researching Barriers and Improving Alignment Across our Programs:** E1MN is planning how we can continue to make working across our programs better support seamless access to services and supports, as well as timely outcomes. We will look across services, rate structures, administrative procedures, licensing/enrollment standards, etc. to create more comprehensive and efficient employment support programs. This work will be guided by an Interagency Supports Alignment Study established in the 2023 legislative session.
  - **Embedding Collaboration:** Since launching in January 2021, E1MN has asked professionals working within our programs to change the way they do work and partner. E1MN is now working to embed those expectations into our system and establish them as standard processes in how we support people with disabilities in employment. We are doing this by hosting regional, virtual collaboration meetings, encouraging local area partnerships, developing training curriculum for supervisors to use with staff, and developing tools and resources partners can use (located in the [Work Toolkit](#) and [Youth in Transition Toolkit](#)).
  - **Encouraging Provider Dual Enrollment:** DEED and DHS are working to align services by encouraging current employment service providers who are only enrolled in their program (Medicaid or VRS/SSB) to become an enrolled provider in each program. We are exploring how to align our licensing and enrollment requirements to support dual enrollment. We are tracking equitable statewide access to dually enrolled providers and looking for solutions to service access in the context of a shortage of direct support professionals.
  - **Creating a Transition Framework:** We've worked together, along with a local-level transition workgroup, to develop a [framework](#) that defines high-quality transition programming for youth with disabilities. By setting common:
    - Shared practices,
    - Guiding principles, and
    - Learning expectationsThe framework helps youth and people who support them have:
    - Consistent expectations,
    - Aligned practices,
    - Coordinated services and supports, and
    - Intentional collaboration.

DEED, DHS and MDE have worked with Minneapolis Public Schools, Princeton Public schools, and teams participating in the Employment Capacity Building Cohort (ECBC) to identify consistent processes and best practices for working with students. We

have developed a [Youth in Transition Toolkit](#) to support professionals implementing the framework. We will work with contractors to create messaging, share stories of successful collaboration, and best practices state-wide.

- **Future Work:** We are exploring future work to:
  - Create a common release of information, based on feedback from partners.
  - Expand [Project SEARCH](#) to adults. Project SEARCH is an evidence- based, internationally recognized, employer-driven model that DEED, DHS and MDE currently partner in implementing for high school students with developmental disabilities in their last year of high school.
- **Partnership Agreements:**
  - **DHS and DEED:** DHS and DEED partnered through a [Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#) to align our systems, create redesigned services and processes, and provide training to stakeholders. These changes will help ensure that people receiving waiver services seeking competitive, integrated employment can get seamless and timely supports to meet their employment goals.
  - **MDE and DEED:** MDE and DEED are partnering through an MOU to provide special education secondary transition services and [Pre- Employment Transition Services \(Pre-ETS\)](#) for students with disabilities.
  - **DHS and MDE:** DHS and MDE are partnering through an [interagency agreement](#) focusing on strategic coordinated planning efforts across home, school and community. [MN State Interagency Committee \(MnSIC\)](#) is a planning initiative that helps local schools and counties establish coordinated service systems.

## We're connecting and supporting partners to solve problems.

- **Employment Capacity Building Cohort:** The Employment Capacity Building Cohort (ECBC) is connecting school districts, VRS/SSB, and county staff in approximately 30 communities across the state to support competitive integrated employment (CIE) for transition age youth with disabilities. Community teams set goals for competitive integrated employment for students and receive training, resources and technical assistance. We plan to re-evaluate the structure, scope, and purpose of the ECBC for the 2023-2024 school year to foster state-wide collaboration between all partners.
- **Technical Assistance and Support:** E1MN works with local partners (schools, lead agencies, VR offices, service providers) to learn about collaborative process and assist in resolving questions, providing interagency policy guidance, or developing collaborative efforts across the state. Some key parts of this support are:
  - **Regional Collaboration Meetings:** We facilitate regional collaboration meetings as needed between professionals working in the programs we administer to better support collaboration between partners.
  - **[E1MN Training curriculum](#):** We have developed an on-demand training curriculum

for professionals to learn how to work across the programs we administer. Currently this curriculum is geared toward professionals working with adults. We are considering if/how to expand for those working with youth.

- [E1MN Inquiry Form](#): We have an inquiry form where partners can submit questions about working across programs and get an interagency response.
- [E1MN FAQs](#): We are maintaining shared responses to Frequently Asked Questions on the Disability Hub and updating them to best address the needs of our partner organizations.

## We're using data and information to drive our work.

- [E1MN Youth Outcomes Dashboard](#): MDE, DEED, and DHS developed a public facing dashboard to provide information on employment outcomes for transition age youth receiving supports through our programs. E1MN is annually updating this dashboard and refining it to provide the best insight available on employment outcomes.
- **E1MN Evaluation Plan**: Our agencies are working together to evaluate the impact and success of our joint efforts. Using available data, we are developing monitoring reports that the E1MN Steering Committee can use to identify what's working, what's not working, and how we can improve our collaborative work. We will use this data to inform our future work together.
- **Olmstead Goal**: E1MN has developed a baseline (and annual goals) to increase the number of people on Medicaid waivers receiving vocational rehabilitation services as well as address disparities by race and ethnicity in participation. E1MN also supports each of our partner agencies in reaching their respective Olmstead goals related to increasing employment outcomes for people with disabilities (EM1, EM2, EM3).

## We're building on existing strengths and great ideas, while also developing new resources to share.

- **Online Tools and Resources**: We have developed online tools and resources to help support professionals across the state navigate our services and help people make informed choices about employment. These tools will help people experience more seamless and timely supports – during school and into adulthood. The [DisabilityHubMN.org](https://DisabilityHubMN.org) web site hosts many tools to support people with disabilities and professionals who help them, including:
  - [Work Toolkit](#): This toolkit introduces professionals to steps they can take and tools they can use to help people with disabilities make informed choices about work and reach their work goals. In this toolkit professionals will find things like [policies](#), [best practices](#), step-by-step guide to providing effective services in the [engage – plan – find - keep framework](#), practical tools to [support person-centered discovery](#), have conversations about benefits, create job application and resume templates, and [training](#) to help understand their role in providing support to people on waivers.
  - [Youth in Transition Toolkit](#): This toolkit introduces professionals who support youth to

Minnesota's [youth in transition framework](#) and gives them the tools and resources they need to implement the framework. In this toolkit professionals will find things like a consistent [youth planning process](#), and information and tools to [engage families](#) and [supporting youth](#). We also created a series of [videos](#) to help people to see possibilities and help promote person-to-person learning and connections. Professionals can explore tools and resources to use with the youth they support to plan for their best lives.

- ***Benefits Planning Toolkit:*** This toolkit gives professionals who support people with disabilities the information, resources and tools they need to have good conversations about work and benefits. In this toolkit professionals will find things like [how to talk about work and benefits](#), the [importance of having conversations about benefits](#), [planning activities](#), and trainings that start with the [basics](#) and move to the [details](#) of work and benefits.
- ***My Vault:*** My Vault is a secure, online tool for people with disabilities, families, and support professionals to use to plan for the future, collaborate, and store and share information across their team. My Vault has [planning paths](#) where people can complete short activities to help think about their goals and options for their best life, work, benefits, and housing. It also allows people the ability to create their own contact lists and securely store and share files and results of activities completed in the planning paths.
- ***Finding Promising Practices:*** E1MN works collaboratively across our programs to find what's working in other states, engage technical assistance firms (like the State Employment Leadership Network –SELN, Workforce Innovation National Technical Assistance Center - WINTAC, and National Association of Benefits and Work Incentives Specialists - NABWIS), and share success we see across Minnesota. We participate in the Capacity Building Institute (CBI). We develop success stories to share how professionals are collaborating to support people in reaching their employment goals.



## We're engaging and educating families to help build and support early work experience.

- **Charting the LifeCourse:** Charting the [LifeCourse](#) tools are available on the Disability HUB MN and being used to support early planning for life and speak in a common language across our programs. Materials include a transition and employment guidebook.
- **Increase Engagement of Hard-to-Reach Families:** We plan to engage families and expand their representation in giving feedback on our messaging, tools, communications and materials. We plan to begin this work with the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP).

## We're engaging stakeholders, letting them know about our work and incorporating their feedback.

- **Employment First Advisory Committee:** Our interagency [Employment First Advisory Committee](#) brought together stakeholders and representatives from key organizations to guide the work of E1MN in launching our partnership to support people on waivers. We are now looking at creating an Employment First Advisory Committee to inform our ongoing work.
- **PIPEin:** The [Professional Input Panel for Employment \(PIPEin\)](#), hosted by DHS and DEED, is a volunteer group of professionals who want to provide feedback on our work to align our employment service systems and advance Minnesota's Employment First efforts.
- **VIP:** The [Virtual Insight Panel](#), hosted by the Disability Hub MN is a key tool for how E1MN engages people with disabilities.
- **Employment Liaisons:** DEED has identified [VRS and SSB Waiver Liaisons](#) who serve as points of contacts for lead agencies in working with local VRS/SSB offices and have expertise in E1MN processes. DHS has identified [Lead Agency Employment Liaisons](#) who serve as points of contacts for lead agency employment efforts. E1MN is supporting the development of these professionals and engaging them in our work. Over the next year we will explore the idea of school-based liaisons.