

Minnesota RETAIN Success Story (June 2022)

Minnesota RETAIN Increases BIPOC Engagement With Community Outreach

The Minnesota RETAIN Program surpassed its goal of 15 percent participation within Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities with a cohesive community outreach plan.

BACKGROUND

Minnesota RETAIN works with more than 55 job centers statewide to make stay-at-work/return-to-work (SAW/RTW) assistance available to all Minnesotans, with a focus on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities to encourage equitable access to program services. By helping participants remain in the workforce, Minnesota RETAIN helps them maintain not only their housing and medical benefits, but also their self-esteem and sense of purpose. The program trains participants to identify safe work tasks that align with doctor recommendations. Minnesota RETAIN also partners with employers to help them accommodate workers with an injury or illness, which reduces business costs through decreased employee turnover.

CHALLENGE

After reviewing workforce data from across the state, Minnesota RETAIN found that members of BIPOC communities, on average, take three to four weeks longer to return to work after an injury or illness. Among people who never return to work, Black Minnesotans are twice as likely as their White peers to permanently leave the workforce after long-term unemployment due to injury or illness. Minnesota RETAIN also learned that it had not served as many BIPOC participants as expected during the first phase of the program. In response, Minnesota RETAIN placed a renewed focus on equity. The team set a goal to reach 15 percent BIPOC enrollment in RETAIN to match the state’s demographics.



Challenge-Action-Results

Challenge: Focus on equity and increase BIPOC enrollment to 15 percent to match state demographics.



Action: MN RETAIN hired a community engagement specialist, translated materials into 15 languages, and established a Community Advisory Board.

Results: BIPOC enrollment increased to 19 percent by connecting with Asian, Native American, African, and refugee communities.

ACTIONS

Minnesota RETAIN created a grassroots outreach program to gain a better understanding of community needs and goals, help achieve its equity goal, raise awareness of the program, and create community ownership and trust. Their efforts included a multifaceted approach, such as publishing flyers in popular newsletters, on websites, and across social media platforms relevant to African, Asian, Native American, Hispanic, and refugee communities. Minnesota RETAIN also partnered with churches and other faith-based organizations to host events, hired a community engagement specialist to help promote Minnesota RETAIN, translated materials into the top 15 languages spoken in Minnesota, and established a Community Advisory Board with leaders from local BIPOC communities.

Fostering community engagement. The community engagement specialist creates and builds relationships with leaders in community- and faith-based organizations. These leaders connect Minnesota RETAIN with culturally specific organizations and agencies that serve



various underrepresented communities across the state. These organizations and agencies include African Career, Education, and Resource, Inc.; the Coalition of Asian American Leaders; Ebenezer Community Church; the Minnesota Department of Human Services; the Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs, the Office on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs; Prosperity Ready; the Tribal/Indian Health Board; and UniteUs. Leaders of these organizations also invite Minnesota RETAIN to participate in

various community-focused events and forums, such as the Afghan Evacuee Roundtable and the St Paul/Minneapolis Immigration Forum.

The program also published flyers in the Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs newsletter and a BIPOC newsletter from the Minnesota Department of Human Services with a circulation of more than 50,000. A presentation at Ebenezer Community Church—one of the state’s largest immigrant churches in the Minneapolis metropolitan area—reached 1,300 people through a worship service and Facebook livestream. The church leader is a community advocate who works closely with state agencies and serves on the Minnesota RETAIN Community Advisory Board. This increased visibility and trust makes it easier to promote the RETAIN program in BIPOC communities.

Creating inclusive materials. To support its BIPOC enrollment goal, Minnesota RETAIN translates its flyers into the top 15 languages spoken in the state: Afan (Oromo), Amharic, Arabic, Burmese, Cambodian, French, Georgian, Hangul, Korean, Laotian, Russian, Somali, Spanish, traditional Chinese, and Vietnamese. By producing inclusive materials, Minnesota RETAIN provides valuable information to members of BIPOC communities who need SAW/RTW services.

Creating a Community Advisory Board. The Minnesota RETAIN Community Advisory Board provides advice and gives strategic direction to advance equity for underserved communities. People who serve on the board are influencers with established relationships

within African, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, and refugee populations and subpopulations. The board has five members so far: a community advocate, a liaison member of the Piikuni band of the Blackfoot Nation, an assistant commissioner for immigrant and refugee affairs, a recruiter at the Minnesota Department of Human Services, and a senior pastor. Without the guidance of these local leaders, it would be nearly impossible for Minnesota RETAIN to reach deep into BIPOC communities.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND RESULTS

Current BIPOC enrollment in Minnesota RETAIN is at 16 percent, exceeding its original equity goal of 15 percent BIPOC enrollment. Minnesota RETAIN took the following steps to attract more BIPOC participation:

- ✓ *Hired a community engagement specialist to meet and connect with BIPOC communities.*

Community engagement creates a bridge of understanding and fosters community awareness of RETAIN.

- ✓ *Translated Minnesota RETAIN materials into multiple languages to expand its reach to BIPOC newsletters, websites, and social media platforms.*

Distributing inclusive materials provides a voice for those who face challenges and prejudice.

- ✓ *Recruited local BIPOC influencers among African, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, and refugee communities for its Community Advisory Board.*

Minnesota is home to a vibrant mix of communities. Each leader brings Minnesota RETAIN into different spaces trusted by members of various BIPOC communities and associations.



Minnesota is participating in "RETAIN," (Retaining Employment and Talent After Injury/Illness Network) to build connections and improve coordination among employers, health care providers, and other key parties to help newly injured and ill workers stay in the workforce. MN RETAIN is a collaboration between the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development; Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry; Minnesota Department of Health; Governor's Workforce Development Workforce Board; Workforce Development, Inc.; and Mayo Clinic. The U.S. Department of Labor, in collaboration with the Social Security Administration, sponsors RETAIN.

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