

SFY 2021 Big Brothers Big Sisters Direct Appropriation

Final Report

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Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
Employment and Training Programs Division

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## Introduction

The Minnesota State Legislature appropriated $237,500 ($250,000 minus $12,500 for DEED administration) in [2019 Minnesota 1st Special Session Laws, Chapter 7, House File 2, Section 2, Subdivision 3 (gg)](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/laws/2019/1/Session%2BLaw/Chapter/7/) for SFY 21 to Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Greater Twin Cities to provide work readiness, employment exploration, and skills development for youth ages 12 to 21 in the Twin Cities, central Minnesota and southern Minnesota.

## Summary of Goals and Objectives Presented in the Work Plan

Teen Program: College & Career Readiness is part of Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS), the nation’s largest mentoring program, which matches youth facing adversity with mentors when they are between the ages of 8 and 12 and continues to support them until young adulthood. In addition to receiving tremendous benefits from forming positive relationships with their mentors, mentees are also able to participate in numerous enrichment activities hosted by BBBS. As part of this, BBBS helps youth (both mentees and youth mentors) plan for their education and career futures, including by offering a Career & College Readiness structure that provides guidance and opportunities.

The BBBS agencies will undertake the following activities in order to prepare youth between the ages of 12 and 21 for the future workforce.

***Goal 1: Implement Career & College Readiness Programming: Offer a comprehensive Career & College Readiness program for youth 12-21 that includes both individual counseling and group activities focusing on interest identification and development, career exploration, work-based learning and skill building opportunities, and culminating in actualizing post-secondary plans.***

In the Twin Cities, this includes theme-based programming for youth in grades 7-10; assessments for interest identification and alignment; short-term goal planning based on CCR; college and career exploration and readiness events; soft-skills building for future employment; parent support and engagement; and mentor training and support. BBBS Twin Cities also added Graduation Coaches programming which consists of 1:1 mentoring with 9th grade High School students during the school day focused on CCR concepts to bring access to youth at two partner high schools in Minneapolis. Through this approach, BBBS instills employability skills to help youth avoid risky behavior that might negatively impact future employability and prepares youth to communicate with co-workers, solve problems, work as a team, make responsible decisions, and create a positive career pathway.

In addition, BBBS Twin Cities supports active teen matches in the 11th and 12th grades and high school graduates with a dedicated staff person who supports high school graduation and planning for post-secondary success. This includes coaching and support for mentors and parents/guardians.

BBBS Central and Southern Minnesota also offer a comprehensive college and career readiness program for youth ages 12-21 that includes both individual and group activities, and connections to program and career opportunities offered through the community. They also provide support for college persistence and retention.

***Goal 2: Community Engagement and Participant Recruitment and Retention.***

All Minnesota BBBS agencies work on community engagement and participant recruitment/retention. They focus on creating and implementing a strong College and Career Readiness promotional and recognition plan designed to increase engagement of the community, youth, matches and families and recognize youth success throughout Minnesota. To support staff in all of the agencies to provide high quality services to Minnesota youth, continued professional development is offered and encouraged.

## Program Activities

Described below are highlights of activities delivered during the period July 1, 2020 through October 31, 2021.

* **Bigs on Campus** – initiative pairing junior and senior high students with an adult mentor who is a St. Cloud State University alumnus, staff member, or community professional. Matches spend time exploring campus, touring academic departments, participating in college activities and events, and talking about future goals, career options, and college life. Most activities during the past year were moved online. (Central Minnesota)
* **Scholarship Opportunities** – Federated Challenge scholarship competition sponsored by Federated Insurance and administered by BBBS open to Littles/Alumni who have been matched for 18 months or longer and are planning to attend a two-year or less post-secondary Minnesota institution. This year 38 applicants received Federated scholarships. In addition, the Stand Tall Scholarship was available for BBBS youth and volunteers for four-year schools in or out-of-state. This was a pilot program this year made possible through the generosity of a donor.
* **Post-Secondary Success Coordinator** – meeting with BBBS alumni who are college students to assist with financial aid applications and other college-related topics. (Twin Cities)
* **AVID Virtual Academy** – virtual mentorship program pairing students in AVID college and career class with mentors to do activities focusing on topics such as relationship building, organization, time management, education and career paths, soft skills, email etiquette, growth mindset, etc. Information about the program is at: <http://www.bbbsofsouthernmn.org/virtualacademy/avid> (Southern Minnesota)
* **Virtual College Tours** – group sessions with virtual campus and dormitory tours, and information about the programs available on campus.
* **Graduation Coaches** – 31 students at Patrick Henry High School in Minneapolis were matched with 15 mentors who focus on supporting the students who are not on track to graduate on time with the goal of high school graduation and planning for post-secondary success. (Twin Cities)
* **Junior Achievement Finance Park** – 10 matches participated in the Finance Park virtual program, where they explored careers, developed personal money management skills and prepared for financial decisions and challenges in their adult lives. (Southern Minnesota)

## Effect of COVID-19 on Big Brothers Big Sisters Activities

#### Central Minnesota

The number of participants was down as a result of schools not being open for in person meetings and activities.

#### Southern Minnesota

Obstacles with technology and internet reliability impacted some students meeting virtually at school with their mentors. When students in a class were all meeting with their mentors at the same time virtually, the internet at some schools lacked the bandwidth to support so many video calls at one time. BBBS staff came up with creative solutions such as spreading students out throughout different areas of school and working with the IT department to improve bandwidth.

Many youth struggle with technology access, housing instability, food insecurity, and transportation issues. BBBS staff is providing individual support to matches to overcome these challenges and provide resources. Summer is especially hard for food insecurity since students are not in school to receive school meals. BBBS staff provides information to matches about summer meal programs to help mitigate this difficulty for Littles.

#### Twin Cities

Programming has been impacted by COVID19 in multiple ways. Matches are struggling with everyday life needs such as housing, food, transportation and other essentials. These challenges have made maintaining a mentoring relationship much harder. BBBSTC Coordinators work with all parties to meet them where the matches are to be supportive of struggles mentors and families are going through.

Although matches want in-person programming, they are also hesitant to participate due to the risks of COVID-19. One such example is the Match Celebration, normally held in early spring. A survey was administered to high school senior matches to gather input on the structure of the celebration this year. With more than half of the matches saying they would prefer an in-person gathering one was scheduled in July, however, the event had to be rescheduled for August due to low registration.

For the Graduation Coaches program, one of the school partners has not engaged with BBBS this year due to challenges in the school and community during the pandemic which made participating in the program a lower priority.

## Participant Data

The grant period for SFY 2021 funds ran from July 1, 2020 through October 31, 2021. The participant data for this period is below.

### Demographic Data

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTIC | NUMBER SERVED |
| Total Served | 2,155 |
| Male | 906 |
| Female | 1,238 |
| Trans/Other | 11 |
| Age 12-13 | 661 |
| Age 14-15 | 613 |
| Age 16-17 | 532 |
| Age 18 | 261 |
| Age 19-21 | 88 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 178 |
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 23 |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 33 |
| Black/African American | 557 |
| White | 1,001 |
| Multi-racial | 318 |
| Other/Unreported Race | 45 |
| 8th grade student or younger | 749 |
| 9th-12th grade student | 1,248 |
| High school graduate or equivalent | 59 |
| Post-secondary education student | 99 |
| Family qualified for free or reduced-price school lunch | 1,255 |

### Program Services, Activities, and Other Related Assistance

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| SERVICE PROVIDED | NUMBER SERVED |
| Education or Job Training Activities | 481 |
| Work Experience Activities | 5 |
| Community Involvement and Leadership Development Activities | 2,155 |
| Post-Secondary Exploration, Career Guidance and Planning Activities | 2,155 |
| Mentoring Activities | 2,155 |

### Customer Satisfaction

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| CUSTOMER RATING | NUMBER SERVED |
| Program Experience “Excellent” | 182 |
| Program Experience “Very Good” | 134 |
| Program Experience “Average” | 46 |
| Program Experience “Below Average” | 0 |
| Program Experience “Poor” | 0 |
| Number of Participants Completing Customer Satisfaction Survey | 362 |

## Expenditure Data

Expenditures from July 1, 2020 through December 31, 2021 were as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Budget Category | Expenditures |
| Administration (up to 10% allowed) | $16,335.00 |
| Participant Wages and Fringe Benefits | $0.00 |
| Direct Staff Services | $219,747.15 |
| Support Services | $1,417.85 |
| Total | $237,500.00 |

## Program Successes

#### Southern Minnesota Story 1

Big Sister and Little Sister were matched in 2018 through the Little Sister’s REACH class, a class designed for students with high academic potential who also face additional obstacles in life. In August of 2021, Little Sister missed her freshman year orientation due to family transportation issues. She missed picking up her class schedule and student ID card and was going to have to go to the first day of school without this information. Big Sister and their Match Support Specialist (MSS) worked together to coordinate a time to bring Little Sister to the high school to tour the school, locate school resources, and gather the materials she needed. Throughout the hour, Big Sister, Little Sister, and MSS were able to have great conversations about the struggles Little Sister was facing at home and concerns she had about the start of the school year. They were also able to connect Little Sister with the high school’s Career Pathways Navigator as a resource and familiar face to rely on at her new school. Little Sister said she felt more confident about starting school and was very happy to see her Big Sister in-person again after a year and a half of virtual meetings.

#### Southern Minnesota Story 2

Little Sister is fifteen and she and her Big Sister place a large focus on the future and take part in many college & career readiness activities. Big Sister does an awesome job planning activities that line up with Little Sister’s interests such as a vet activity and also a flying activity where Little Sister developed an interest in auto body work on planes. The match also takes part in BBBS events focused on college and career and continue to reach out for resources to help Little Sister choose her goals and build a path to success in life.

#### Twin Cities Story 1

A Little expressed interest in cosmetology to the Match Engagement Coordinator (MEC) and Big Sister [BS]. The match talked about it on their own but wanted to explore the field more. Staff reached out to another BS who is a cosmetologist and owns a hair salon and was willing to talk about her experiences in the field. The MEC connected the Bigs and the match is planning on meeting up with the BS working in cosmetology to talk more about the field and to see her salon. They are SUPER excited!

#### Twin Cities Story 2

BBBS staff member Eric introduced a Little (14 years old) and Big to each other and welcomed them to the BBBS program. Information from the Enrollment and Matching Team noted that the Little expressed an interest in being a firefighter and brought this up during the introduction. Having a professional connection to a firefighter, Eric asked the Big if he could immediately help with connecting his new Little to this firefighter for an informational interview. Over the next couple of weeks, Big and Little worked together to schedule and execute the informational interview and, based on the new information they received from the firefighter, started the application process for a firefighter explorer program at a local fire department. Regardless of whether the Little is accepted into the program, Eric can confirm that the Little has made a lasting impression on the firefighter he interviewed with and the representative from the department that hosts the explorer program. The Little’s network is growing and his local fire department can now provide him with additional mentoring as he pursues his dream.

## Future Allocation

The Big Brothers Big Sisters SFY 2022 allocation is $237,500 for the period July 16, 2021 through June 30, 2022.