

**SFY 23 Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio, Inc. (CLUES) Direct Appropriation**

Final Report

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

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## SFY 2023 CLUES Equity Direct Appropriation

### Introduction

The Minnesota State Legislature appropriated funds during the 2021 Legislative Session to Communidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio (CLUES) to “expand culturally tailored programs that address employment and education skill gaps for working parents and underserved youth by providing new job skills training to stimulate higher wages for low-income people, family support systems designed to reduce intergenerational poverty, and youth programming to promote educational advancement and career pathways.”

#### Legislative Appropriation Reference

The Minnesota Legislation is referenced in [Laws of Minnesota, 2021, Chapter 10, Article 1, Section 2, Subdivision 3(ff)](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/laws/2021/1/Session+Law/Chapter/10/)) [Minnesota Session Laws- 2019, 1st Special Session, Ch. 7, H.F. 2, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 3(](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/laws/2019/1/Session+Law/Chapter/7/)r).

#### Appropriation

This equity appropriation provided a total of $700,000 in State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2023. At least fifty percent of this amount must be used for programming targeted at greater Minnesota. The Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) is permitted to use five percent of the appropriation to administer the grant, making the amount available to CLUES $665,000.

#### Target Groups

CLUES targets low-income adults and youth ages 16 to 24 who are primarily Latinx or BIPOC and live in the Twin Cities metropolitan region or communities surrounding Austin and Willmar where CLUES operates satellite offices. Adult participants typically have some work experience, may have lost a job, and are looking for a better paying job. For many adults, their limited English proficiency poses the greatest barrier to obtaining employment or advancing to higher paid employment. With support from DEED, CLUES now offers an On-Ramp Program with intensive *English for Work* classes to offer these participants extra and more individualized support.

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

CLUES used its direct appropriations funding to support the expansion of culturally tailored programs that address employment and education skill gaps for working adults and underserved youth. The programs providie new job skills training to stimulate higher wages for low-income people, family support systems designed to reduce intergenerational poverty, and youth programming to promote educational advancement and career pathways. The overall goal is to advance opportunities for job skills training and skill-building resources for Latinx and immigrant communities.

In the past year, education and job skills training in the Twin Cities metropolitan area and in the greater Minnesota communities of Austin and Willmar focused on four high-demand employment sectors that offered career pathways to family-sustaining, livable wage employment in healthcare, bilingual customer service/administrative support, commercial driver’s license (CDL) transportation, and welding.

From the period July 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023, CLUES served 441 youth and adults in group employment activities and 183 in individual case-managed services and activities.

In accordance with the legislative appropriation, fifty percent (50%) of the funding is used for programming targeting the Twin Cities Metro Area, and fifty percent (50%) is used for targeting the greater Minnesota area.

#### Programming

Of the 183 youth and adults receiving individual, case managed services, 45 were youth between the ages of 14-21 and 138 were adults, ages 22 and older. Over 70% of clients were Hispanic, over 60% were low income, and a third were receiving public assistance at enrollment.

Employment and training services and activities provided to these clients included: paid internships and work experiences, post-secondary career exploration and planning, mentoring, and leadership. Vocational training options were provided by CLUES and their training partners Ridgewater College, Riverland College, HeartCert, and a Customer Service and Banking curriculum provided by UnidosUS but taught in-house by CLUES staff and employees from WINGS Financial Services. Throughout programming, CLUES has provided bilingual and culturally relevant wrap-around support services to assist participants in overcoming barriers. Career Navigators assisted participants with job placements and identifying additional community resources to meet their goals.

Performance outcomes show that 99% of individual clients attained work readiness or education goals, 44 earned a high school diploma or credential, 85 entered unsubsidized employment, and 105 individuals enrolled in post-secondary education, credentialed vocational skills training, or an apprenticeship.

#### Programs and Performance

**Career Development Training:** In SFY 2023, CLUES participants completed Bridge to Workforce training and sought employment opportunities in several career pathways:

Seven participants earned their Commercial Driver’s Licensure (CDL). An additional four students were enrolled in CDL training in Willmar, working on behind-the-wheel training.

Eight participants were working on their hands-on CNA skills training and studying for their final exams. One obtained employment and two are retesting for the state exam. An additional twelve (12) participants were registered for the CLUES’ Phlebotomy course.

Eleven participants were enrolled in the Banking and Customer Service Training, four in Austin, four in the Twin Cities, and one in Willmar. Four obtained customer service employment.

Career Development staff have been working with Latinx students in Finance on new marketing strategies including video testimonials, additional networking events, and increased advertising in targeted publications such as Minnesota Women’s Press.

**Youth Technology:** Youth participated in several activities, including FAFSA Walkthrough and application assistance, Financial Empowerment and Education, Mental Health Workshop - Collaboration with CLUES Behavioral Health and a Career Pathways Final Presentation. In addition, 21 youth completed the New Vision Coding course, with 17 youth obtaining internships at Best Buy, Accenture, and at CLUES. Finally, seven youth completed the Fresh Films filmmaking course and six were placed in internships at Fresh Films Texas, CLUES, and the Neighborhood Development Center facilitated by CLUES..

**Employer Partnerships:** CLUES’ Job Developer continues to expand partnerships to increase the number of employment opportunities CLUES can offer participants. New partners include Bremer Bank, Associated Bank, Wings Financial, St. Thomas Dougherty School of Education, McNeilus Trucking & Manufacturing, and Second Harvest Heartland.

**English as a Second Language (ESL) Services:** During the past year, classes were hosted virtually and served clients from around the state, delivering *English as a Second Language* (ESL) curriculum at three varying levels of difficulty. During 2023, 113 individuals attended online classes and students completed 4,660 hours of class time. More recently, ten graduates of the ESL program are now in enrolled in post-secondary programs or have obtained employment.

**Clubhouse-to-Careers (C2C) Training and Internships:** In 2021, CLUES launched an exciting new year-long *Clubhouse-to-Careers* program that offers employment readiness training, technology-specific classes, and paid professional work experience to youth, ages 16 to 22, who are interested in exploring technology careers. Nineteen young people completed the program in 2022 and the majority were placed in paid summer STEM internships at companies such as 3M, Accenture, Best Buy, or Xcel Energy Center.

Through CLUES’ C2C partnership with FRESH Films, seven students had a five-day film internship in Boston, with two days of additional educational tours, including a visit to MIT. These internships offer invaluable workforce experience, which nearly doubles the chance of a job offer to youth. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers 2021 Student Survey, this is an advantage that only 7% of Latinx students can access, compared to 73% of white students. CLUES programming for C2C programming will focus exclusively on coding in SFY 2023.

**Best Buy Teen Tech Center (BBTTC):** The Best Buy Teen Tech Center (BBTTC) continues to support the creativity and technical skills of Latinx youth through drop-in hours, workshops, and special events. Youth participated in the *2022 Facebook Engineer for the Week,* a national competition. One CLUES team won the challenge with a video game they created related to climate justice.

The BBTTC continues to support the creativity and technical skills of Latino youth through drop-in hours, workshops, and special events in 2023. During SFY 2023, 73 youth attended and participated in activities by completing projects at the Best Buy Teen Tech Center.

**2022 CLUES Youth Conference:** The CLUES Youth Conference was held on November 19th in 2022 at Metro State University. About 150 youth and young adults and 100 parents or guardians attended. The aim of the conference is to connect students, parents, and communities to resources, explore future academic and career pathways, and uplift the experience and identities of students.

#### Culturally Responsive Support Services

Bilingual navigation services guide participants to develop short- and long-term career plans that are realistic and aligned with their individual skills and interests. CLUES staff work with participants to identify and resolve employment, transportation, childcare, and housing barriers, family violence, and other unique issues affecting participants’ ability to enroll in trainings and obtain and retain employment.

Support services include direct financial supports to help low-income participants access transportation, professional clothing, work tools, and other needs. Participants are encouraged to engage in CLUES’ other economic empowerment services such as financial coaching, homeownership trainings, lending circles, and free tax services. CLUES offers a bi-weekly Canasta Familiar food distribution program for households experiencing food insecurity.

**COVID Impact on Programming**

COVID had little impact on the CUES program other than reduced enrollment in certain programs.

#### Data Elements and Performance Indicators Being Collected and Reported

CLUES submits data to DEED every quarter to document the demographics of participants served, services and activities provided, and outcomes achieved. The data items collected are listed below.

### Grant Outcomes

Demographic and outcome data for the SFY 2023 CLUES Direct Appropriation for individual services, for the period July 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023, is as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **SFY2023 PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS** | **TOTAL** |
| Total Participants served in group services (no detailed demographics available | 441 |
| Total individual participants served | 183 |
|  |  |
| Male | 37 |
| Female | 144 |
| Did Not Disclose | 2 |
|  |  |
| Age 14-15 | 3 |
| Age 16-17 | 3 |
| Age 18-19 | 20 |
| Age 20-21 | 19 |
| Age 22 and over | 138 |
|  |  |
| Hispanic/Latinx | 145 |
| American Indian/ Alaskan Native | 5 |
| Asian/ Pacific Islander | 6 |
| Black/African American | 21 |
| White/Not Hispanic | 84 |
|  |  |
| 8th grade and under | 0 |
| 9th grade – 12th grade | 14 |
| High School Graduate / equivalent | 109 |
| Some post-secondary education | 49 |
|  |  |
| Limited English proficient | 1 |
| Recent Immigrant | 20 |
| Youth from Families Receiving Public Assistance | 57 |
| Youth Offender | 9 |
| Youth with a Disability | 5 |
| High School Dropout at Enrollment | 5 |
| Basic Skills Deficient | 1 |
| Homeless or Runaway Youth | 5 |
| Not employed at program enrollment | 58 |
| Veteran | 2 |
| Low-income | 100 |
| Aging out of Foster Care | 0 |
|  |  |
| **PROGRAM SERVICES RECEIVED** | **TOTAL** |
| Job Training or Education Services | 182 |
| Paid Internships and Work Experience | 50 |
| Mentoring, Leadership and Community Service | 183 |
| Support Services | 79 |
| Post-Secondary and Career Exploration, Guidance, and Planning | 183 |
|  |  |
| **PERFORMANCE INDICATORS** | **TOTAL** |
| Attained Work Readiness/Education Goals | 182 |
| Obtained High School Diploma or Equivalent, Remained in School, Obtained a Certificate or Degree, Returned to School | 44 |
| Entered Unsubsidized Employment | 50 |
| Entered Post-Secondary Education, Apprenticeship, or Credentialed Vocational Occupational Skills Training | 54 |
| Placment in Employment, Military, Job Search, Post-Secondary Education, Vocational Occupational Skills Training | 105 |
| Completed Program Objectives | 85 |
|  |  |
| **CUSTOMER SATISFACTION** | **TOTAL** |
| Number of Participants Rating Experience as “Excellent” | 6 |
| Number of Participants Rating Experience as “Very Good” | 9 |
| Number of Participants Rating Experience as “Average” | 4 |
| Number of Participants Rating Experience as “Below Average” | 0 |
| Number of Participants Rating Experience as “Poor” | 0 |
| Surveys Completed | 19 |

### Expenditures

### Expended Grant Funds

CLUES has expended 94.1% of **SFY 2023** Direct Appropriation grant funds from July 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023):

| **SFY 2023 Budget Category** | **Amount** |
| --- | --- |
| Administrative costs (up to 10% allowed) | $56,858.80 |
| Contracted services | $69,530.00 |
| Direct services | $498,805.00 |
| Support services | $253.48 |
| **Total budget expended through September 30, 2023** | **$625,447.28** |

### New Grant Funds

The 2023 Legislature provided a total of $1,000,000 in direct appropriation funds to CLUES this year. The Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) is permitted to use five percent of the appropriation to administer the grant, making the amount available to CLUES $950,000. As of the end of August 31, 2023, CLUES has expended $26,328 of it’s $950,000 SFY 2024 Direct Appropriation grant funds, which began August, 2023.

### Success Stories

**Serge**

Serge is an immigrant to the United States from Benin, which is located in West Africa by Togo and Nigeria. Serge has been employed for the past 4 years at Austin Minnesota’s Quality Pork Processors plant where he works as a forklift operator making $19.50 an hour.

Serge diligently worked on the CLUES Bridge to Your Future portion of the course. Staff could count on Serge to always return a text or email and reach out for help when needed. As a caregiver parent, he did his best to complete an entire CDL online course, missing the deadline by one week to continue to the next step. During this time, Serge was also working towards his US citizenship and was so happy to share this with staff when he became a United States citizen.

Staff advocated on behalf of Serge due to his dedication and was able to register for Behind the Wheel classes in Austin, MN. CLUES staff assisted Serge in registering for Behind the Wheel classes in Willmar to continue his CDL education. Serge passed his Pre Trip Test, sharing with CLUEs staff that he was “focused on his test to get it done well.” Serge surprised the CLUES staff with a text and a picture of his paper Commercial Driver’s License two days later, adding that he is, “so happy to make the staff happy and let them know they can count on me for anything.” Serge “thanks God, everyone who is part of his CDL story like the CLUES staff and the Ridgewater College Team with a special thanks to (his) instructor, who gave him the entire details about the road test skills that helped me pass the exam one time.” CLUES knows that the employer who hires Serge will not be disappointed, we know Serge will be successful in whatever he chooses, and CLUES is happy to have been able to join him in this journey.

**Jorge**

Jorge was one of the first C2C program participants. His CLUES C2C instructor Greg Romero says, “This young man stepped up, showed up, and took home all he aimed for. When he joined the C2C Pathways program he was living in Albert Lea and was attending the program virtually. He soon found a way to relocate to Lakeville so he could be closer to CLUES and obtain employment to further his goals. He took a position working in food production, baking cookies, so he could move to the city and prepare for his summer internship as part of the C2C Pathways program, which he completed at Accenture. He then applied for a paid STEM apprenticeship at Accenture. They noticed his perseverance, interest, and passion to enter into the STEM field of work and granted him the apprenticeship. Now he's on his way to becoming the full-stack web developer he wants to be.”

**Hailey**

Throughout her life Hailey felt as she if was never good enough. From dealing with issues with depression, focusing on tasks, needing to take extra classes in school to graduate, to all the financial barriers she and her family have experienced, she knew she needed to make a change. She knew she needed to find employment and break out of the cycle.

While looking for new opportunities, Hailey found Riverland Community Colleges’ Customer Service and Banking course. Hailey called CLUES and registered for the 10-week course. She worked hard to complete the course and her dedication was bolstered by her CLUES Navigator who encouraged her to “keep going” and “keep pushing” at times when she wanted to give up and during regular check-ins.

Hailey learned a lot about professionalism – how to dress, how to communicate professionally, interviewing skills. Hailey used to be scared speaking in front of people, but she said, “they (CLUES) taught me to overcome that. Now I’m more open.” Hailey has also learned how to handle different situations and has gained wisdom and knowledge in areas that she didn’t know she had, including seeing different points of view and working with others. This helped her be truly happy with herself. Hailey got a job offer as a PCA supervising a group of people for an Austin senior center and is thriving and using all the tools she learned through the CLUES program.