State of Minnesota Connect 700 Program

The State of Minnesota aspires to be a leader in employing individuals with disabilities in state government jobs. One of many state agencies, Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) at the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) provides employment services directly to individuals with disabilities, as well as through community service providers. VRS provides specialized, one-on-one employment services for individuals with disabilities such as job counseling, job search assistance, training, and job placement services.

In October 2016, Governor Mark Dayton announced the State of Minnesota’s Connect 700 (C700) program, an innovative approach to promoting hiring of individuals with disabilities. Connect 700 provides a path to a state job for people who encounter barriers in the typical job interview process. Vocational rehabilitation counselors assist VRS participants who are interested to apply for C700 and certify their eligibility for the program. Participation in VRS is not required to be eligible for C700.

To be considered for a C700 job, first individuals must submit an “Application for Eligibility” to the state Equal Opportunity Office. If approved, the eligible individuals will receive a “Certificate of Eligibility” that is valid for two years. Then, they may apply to any job posting that includes the C700 option, which is all ‘unlimited, classified’ jobs. The individual must meet the minimum qualifications in order to be considered.

If they meet the minimum qualifications, the hiring manager will offer a non-competitive interview to a C700 applicant prior to considering all other applicants. As part of the non-competitive interview process the hiring manager works with an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) coordinator.

If the C700 candidate is offered the job, the hiring manager works with the ADA coordinator to determine reasonable accommodations that may be needed on the job. Successful completion of the C700 appointment results in the person being hired as a State of Minnesota employee. C700 allows qualified individuals to establish that they can perform the required job responsibilities on the job for up to 700 hours, with or without reasonable accommodation.

In Program Year 2019, 43 participants in Vocational Rehabilitation Services found jobs with the State of Minnesota, which was the third highest employer. Twenty-eight of those 43 placements (65%) were a result of the Connect 700 program within 14 departments and agencies statewide:

The average hourly wage for the 2,290 VRS participants that became employed was $13.27 and the average hours worked per week was 25.6. In comparison, the average hourly wage for all participants that became employed with the State of Minnesota was $21.13 per hour and the average hours worked per week was 30.5 hours.

The average hourly wage for participants placed in state employment via the Connect 700 program was $20.18 per hour and the average hours worked per week was 37.6 hours.

The Connect 700 program is optional; individuals with disabilities do not have to use the Connect 700 program to apply for state positions. Individuals may also apply for some positions as a C700 candidate and chose to apply for other positions without using the C700 program.