



## MWCA Best Practices

### SUBMISSION FORM

WIB Name/WSA: **Ramsey County Workforce Solutions (WSA #15)**

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#### **The Anukey Partnership**

##### **Overview**

Anukey, an Ojibwe word meaning to work, is a unique partnership between Ramsey County Workforce Solutions and the local American Indian community. This emerging government-community relationship was created in response to the racial disparities that exist within the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) American Indian population and the disproportionate employment outcomes experienced by American Indians on MFIP.

This project holds several key features serving as a basis to create a model that works effectively with American Indians:

- 1- *Claimed Ownership "Buying In"*- The vision of reducing MFIP employment outcome disparities and moving American Indian families from welfare to self-sufficiency is embraced by the Indian community, Ramsey County Board of Commissioners, and Ramsey County Workforce Solutions MFIP management teams.
- 2- *Trusting Partnership "Dismantle Distrust"*- Trust is the foundation of the viable and authentic partnership between the American Indian community and Ramsey County Workforce Solutions.
- 3- *Culturally Competent Setting*- Community based access to Financial Workers and Employment Counselors improves relationship, increases confidence and trust, and facilitates communication between the system and the client.
- 4- *Cultural Context Services*- Accomplish through training to all staff that work with American Indian clients on issues around American Indian history, culture, communication, traditions, values, etc.

##### **Jobseeker Impact**

Through Anukey, American Indian clients are building on their cultural strengths and values as the main asset to increase their employability. The work of the partnership aims to dismantle the historic barriers for Indian clients and to recognize the importance of culture to Indians. This cultural content and the benefit of building a trusting relationship between American Indian clients and Employment Counselors enables to:

- Strengthen client connections to culture and community
- Empower role modeling and communication
- Change the attitudes of American Indians from "welfare" to "work"

As a result of this work, promising outcomes are shown including an increase in the number of hours American Indians are participating in work-related activities, and an increase in the number of American Indians working and the number of hours worked.

##### **Community Impact**

Stark disparities and generational poverty issues face the majority of the American Indian families that are served by the partnership. While expectations are high, mutual understanding of the community impact and the scope and depth of Anukey, are key to produce tangible results to benefit the community.

It will not be enough to have a family work their way off of MFIP only to find themselves still in the grip of poverty while being fully employed. If Ramsey County Workforce Solutions and the American Indian community focus only on improving MFIP outcomes, a grand opportunity will be missed. The Anukey model goes the next step to make sure that the programs and services emanating move families up and out of poverty. With this understanding, the shared vision and common outcomes of this collaboration are as follow:

- Create a culturally specific service delivery model
- Close the employment outcome disparities gap of American Indians and increase American Indians' successful transition off MFIP
- Strengthen family stability to improve the condition of the American Indian community and the overall health and well being of American Indian families

### **Partners**

- Ramsey County Workforce Solutions
- American Indian community
- Ramsey County Community Human Services
- Lifetrack Resources
- American Indian Family Center
- American Indian Policy Center

### **Leveraging/alignment of outside resources**

Anukey will continue to make new connections to further the goals of the partnership, and add partners to the Anukey governance table:

- 1- Public Health
- 2- Workforce Investment Board
- 3- American Indian Elders
- 4- MNSCU
- 5- Public Schools/Indian Education
- 6- Other Ramsey County service areas
  - Child Protection/Child Services
  - Corrections
  - Child Support

### **Ideas for replication/lessons learned**

The Anukey partnership is a uniquely successful joint effort between local government and a cultural community. The factors that make Anukey successful and unique can be replicated in other settings by other government institutions that truly desire to partner with a community of color.

This government-community initiative to establish partnerships and community engagement processes can be utilized as a working model on how local government agencies can effectively work with Indian communities. This model has practical applications for other local governments and American Indian communities that wish to improve their relationships.