What is your organization's greatest success story in 2020? Feel free to note additional success stories, and please explain why you see these stories as successful.

We have a couple of things to highlight for success stories for Metro South ABE in 2020. When things shut down in March, we very quickly moved into an online programming model and were able to retain about 2/3 of our participants. Since we didn't know how long this shutdown was going to last, we continued to offer programming to the best of our ability using online resources. Our office staff worked to quickly transition to being able to register students online or over the phone. Our teachers used Google Classroom or Google Sites to get lessons to students. Our teachers started using Zoom and transitioned to Google Classroom as mandated by Bloomington Public Schools. We were already using some Distance Learning platforms, like MobyMax, Read Theory, and Edmentum, so our students continued working on those platforms. (This included our currently attending students and many of our formerly attending students. Some of our students were unable to continue due to lack of technology or lack of confidence with technology.)

When we learned that we would still be online in the fall, we standardized some of our processes and procedures in order to be more efficient and equitable. We moved all of our classes to Google Classroom and created a structure for teachers which we named our lesson planning template. This included a structure of synchronous and asynchronous timeframes and lesson materials that could/should be used under which timeframe for our different classes, many of these are state-approved DL platforms for proxy hours. We also created a position for a teacher to serve as a tech support on campus in the afternoon, but none of our teachers expressed an interest in taking on that role due to COVID concerns. Our office staff continued marketing our classes and worked to implement online testing. We designed a Career Pathways website for students to get career and community resources and sign up for training classes. We have also moved our career navigation support to a virtual service model.

One other success we are currently celebrating is a collaboration between the partnership of Hennepin County and PCs for People which, through grant funding, allowed us to distribute 250 new computers to our students in need. Many of our adult learners had been attending class using their phones, so getting computers into those students' hands has been a game-changer for their learning and success in our online classes.

How does your organization address issues of equity in your community? For example, implementing culturally competent programming, language services, and/or outreach.

Bloomington Public Schools has been looking at Cultural Proficiency and Cultural Competency in recent years. This year, the district is running a cohort for Cultural Competency under the train-the-

trainer model. Our trainer, Trudy T. Arriaga, EdD, is the author of the bestselling books *Opening Doors* and *Leading While Female*. She was the first female Superintendent of Ventura Unified School District for 14 years before retiring to become a full-time Distinguished Educator in Residence in the Graduate School of Education at Cal Lutheran University. She offers workshops in the area of equity and cultural proficiency. This year-long training and related materials for Bloomington's cohort this year, *Cultural Proficiency* and *Opening Doors,* will inform how the district moves forward in the coming years around issues of equity. Metro South's ABE Director and our ESL Lead/Coordinator are participating in Cohort 1, along with about 40 other BPS district staff.

Bloomington also utilizes the Office of Educational Equity to help with Cultural Competency training, language services and outreach. Our ABE program is able to collaborate with this team when needed. For translation support not available through our OEE office, we have access to The Language Banc which allows us to use a district code to request and access interpreting services over-the-phone for any language we need.

What strategies has your organization employed to address digital inclusion? What has worked or has not worked well? And why do you believe that it has or has not worked?
Our program utilizes two AmeriCorps members each year. One is a CTEP (Community Technology Empowerment Project) and the other is an Opportunity Navigator. Our students work with these AmeriCorps members to improve technology-related skills, build a resume, and other skills as needed. This year, these service members have collaborated to create netiquette videos to help our students better navigate virtual learning. They are currently working on a Daily Life Project, which will include self-guided modules with video support for students in the Northstar areas of *Social Media, Information Literacy, Career Search Skills*, and *Digital Footprint*.

For the past two years, we have successfully run Computer Basics and Computers for Work classes that teach students the digital literacy skills related to the workforce, as well as, support students to earn from one to three Northstar Digital Literacy certificates. We also continued running our open computer lab time virtually, in order to support and sustain our digital literacy integration taking place in all our classes. We have also seen an increase in the number of Northstar certificates our students earn each year.

This fall, we started to loan out some of our ABE program's Chromebooks to students in need as identified by their teachers. Our district has a technology department and we have been able to collaborate with them for the pick-up process. It has been somewhat of a struggle to work with

students that only use cell phones to attend class. There is a wide variety of devices and troubleshooting is complicated because there is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Helping our students navigate all these systems has not been easy.

How has your organization reached clients/participants since March? Do you have recommendations for adoption of services or community outreach strategies?

We have made some adjustments to our website to include COVID-related information and we included an online registration form. Students are encouraged to call our office with questions in regard to registration. We have updated our marketing procedures by making some changes to our website and our Facebook page. We have our newsletter, which goes out to stakeholders, and we have contacted former students via email, Remind messages, and phone calls in order to make sure students are aware we are still running our classes online. Some of our former students have contacted our program using our website or by calling our office. Some have contacted their teachers to find out about re-enrolling.

We recently started using Google Analytics to measure the effectiveness of our marketing and recruitment efforts on our Career Pathways website and we are considering using Google Analytics on our main website.

What recommendations do you have for organizations to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic and/or expand digital access? Or what would you recommend to your organization if you could return to March and coordinate a response?

It would be hard to make recommendations to other organizations without knowing what their capacity is to make these changes to expand digital access. If we could return to March and coordinate a response, we would make some decisions earlier because we would know that this wasn't a short-term endeavor. One of these changes would have been our messaging to current students as our shutdown approached. The other would have been to get our online systems standardized in the spring and to take some time to provide better training to the staff since we would know what is coming and how long we will be off campus. Also, we would have made sure that all our students knew about their school email address and could successfully access that email. This was a critical step in communicating with our students and is the gateway into our online classes using Google Meet. To do this, we would have had tech orientation days where we would have used a checklist to cover things like helping our learners get set up for online classes with their school gmail, Google Meet, and Google Classroom. We would have taken time to review netiquette and other norms so that students would know the expectations for muting and turning cameras on and off as the need arises. We also could have used this time to review our Distance Learning platforms like MobyMax, Read Theory, and Edmentum.

We would also start the conversation about loaning out Chromebooks and partnering with PCs for People sooner so we could get technology (and relevant support) in the hands of our students sooner rather than later. We would have ensured that as teachers went off campus they would have a device with a camera and microphone capabilities. We did provide the option to take a computer home (which had microphone and camera), but we also allowed teachers to opt out if they had a computer at home. We didn't think to ensure that these home computers had the microphone and camera that would be needed for online teaching. Again, many of these changes would come from knowing that the duration of this shutdown event would be much longer than originally anticipated.

What is the greatest barrier to digital access in your community? What are other barriers? How do resources in your community ameliorate barriers to digital access? And what further support is needed to achieve digital equity?

The greatest barrier to digital access is lack of access. This ranges from everything to lack of funds for things like internet service and/or a computer to lack of infrastructure and information or adequate training on using a computer and the internet. We need to consider the learning curve when it comes to technology. Getting a device does not equate to successfully using a device. There are many aspects to navigate from setting up a device, to understanding basic usage, to troubleshooting issues as they arise, etc. There needs to be support with not only getting devices and internet to folks who need it, but also education about how systems work.

What adaptations that your organization has made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic do you believe will remain after the public health environment improves? Why do you believe that adaptations will prove permanent?

We are continuing to discuss what aspects of our program will remain permanently changed as a result of what we have learned throughout this COVID-19 period. We have gotten feedback from a number of students who have indicated they prefer the online model, usually due to scheduling concerns, transportation, or childcare issues. We may need to consider the possibility of having an online offering that will allow us to reach students who otherwise may not be able to access our program as evidenced by some students returning to our program because it is online. If we move in this direction, we will continue to learn how to design/teach online classes with online best practice pedagogy (UDL) for both synchronous and asynchronous methods.