

ADVANCING INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY IN THE WORKFORCE

Published by the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) Workforce Development Council (WDC) in Collaboration with the State Exchange on Employment and Disability (SEED)



THE U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

BEST PRACTICES
JULY 2020



THE U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Since 1977, the U.S. Conference of Mayors Workforce Development Council (WDC) has worked closely with Mayors and their workforce development officials to inform Congress, policy, and the U.S. Department of Labor in directing employment and training funds throughout the country. The WDC works to ensure that workforce development activities are a key focus of cities.

THE STATE EXCHANGE ON EMPLOYMENT AND DISABILITY (SEED)

The State Exchange on Employment and Disability is an initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Labor’s (DOL) Office of Disability and Employment Policy (ODEP) to help address barriers to employment for people with disabilities. SEED collaborates with leading intermediary organizations that help state and local governments develop and implement effective policies and best practices in order to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities.



Credit: ADA National Network (adata.org)

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FOREWORD

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely disrupted everyday routines for billions of people across the globe and abruptly put millions across the United States out of work. Unfortunately, in the last few months, many of the obstacles that already existed for at-risk and underserved populations seeking economic self-sufficiency have only grown more pronounced. Individuals with disabilities, in particular, are facing new and immense barriers to gaining meaningful employment and fully participating in the economy amidst this uncertain environment.

How mayors, businesses, city officials, and local leaders respond to this crisis matters a great deal. The new and emerging challenges that stand before us today present an opportunity to approach problems from different angles, invest in creative and innovative solutions, and bring diverse perspectives to the table. Capitalizing on the talents of *all* segments of the population, including people with disabilities, will be essential for our economic recovery and growth in the coming months. We urge you to rise to the occasion and take steps to ensure that your city is better able to serve students, career seekers, and employees with disabilities, even in a rapidly changing economy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

JULY 26, 2020 MARKS THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ENACTMENT OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA). The landmark legislation hailed in a new era for the advancement of individuals with disabilities in the United States. For the first time in U.S. history, the law affirmed the right of individuals with disabilities to “fully participate in all aspects of society” and established legal protections and recourse options to help combat widespread discrimination against individuals with disabilities. Since the passage of the ADA, significant progress has been made in addressing basic accessibility issues in the physical environment and raising greater awareness around the challenges that individuals with disabilities may face in society. The adoption of emerging assistive technologies, universal design principles, and virtual and physical accessibility standards has expanded access to a wealth of information and allowed individuals with disabilities to connect with their environments in new ways.

Although there are certainly many reasons to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the ADA, much work remains to be done. Significant gaps still exist today between individuals with disabilities and individuals without disabilities in employment rates, wage levels, poverty levels, and educational attainment. According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s annual American Community Survey (ACS), 10.4% of non-institutionalized working-age U.S. citizens (ages 21-64) reported a disability in 2018.² For most individuals living with disabilities, meaningful work opportunities remain limited, out of reach or financially unfeasible due to benefits cliffs related to Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). Consider the following statistics from the ACS for the year 2018:

While 80% of working-age U.S. citizens without disabilities reported holding employment, only 37.8% of non-institutionalized working-age U.S. citizens with disabilities reported holding employment. At the same time, only 24.3% of individuals with disabilities held full-time jobs in 2018, compared to 61.1% of working-age individuals without disabilities. Only 7.3% of unemployed individuals with disabilities were actively searching for work in 2018, compared to 16.6% of unemployed working-age individuals without disabilities.

According to ACS data, median annual earnings for individuals with disabilities were \$40,500 in 2018, compared to \$49,200 for individuals without disabilities. Also that same year, the poverty rate for individuals with disabilities stood at 26% compared to 10% for individuals without disabilities. Only 15.2% of individuals with disabilities reported having earned a Bachelor’s degree or above in 2018, compared to 35.2% of working-age individuals without disabilities.

These vast statistical disparities are no coincidence. They indicate that the majority of individuals with disabilities living in the United States today still face unequal access and opportunity when it comes to higher education and competitive, integrated employment. As critical as the ADA continues to be for guaranteeing the rights of individuals with disabilities at the national level, there is no substitute for awareness and action at the local level to ensure that individuals with disabilities have access to meaningful educational and employment opportunities. Particularly in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is crucial that individuals and employers in cities across the country understand their rights and responsibilities under the ADA.

“Let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down.”

PRESIDENT GEORGE H.W. BUSH, July 26, 1990¹

In August 2019, the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) Workforce Development Council (WDC) formally engaged with the State Exchange on Employment and Disability (SEED), an initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Labor’s (DOL) Office of Disability and Employment Policy (ODEP), to help address barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities in cities across the United States. The partnership was announced at the September 2019 WDC Board Meeting in Washington, DC.

As part of USCM’s partnership with SEED, the WDC formed a **Disability Employment Working Group** in October 2019 to study disability employment issues facing cities and make recommendations for identifying and collecting disability employment best practices from organizations in USCM member cities. The WDC Disability Employment Working Group currently consists of more than 20 WDC member cities (see Appendix A) spread across the United States, and has been convening on a periodic basis to discuss disability employment issues, solicit completed Disability Employment Best Practice Surveys (see Appendix B) from USCM members, and share disability employment best practices.

The Working Group invites mayors, workforce development professionals, city officials, nonprofit leaders and community members to read through this best practice publication and consider how they can advocate for and implement disability-inclusive policies that lead to increased educational and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in their own cities.

If you would like to participate in this best practice sharing initiative or share a **disability employment best practice** from your city with the Disability Employment Working Group, please reach out to Micah Kyler at mkyler@usmayors.org for additional information. The Working Group welcomes the participation of all USCM members in this important collaboration with SEED and hopes to recognize leaders across the country for their efforts in tearing down the “shameful wall of exclusion” that prevents so many individuals with disabilities from economic independence and full participation in society.

Sincerely,

TOM COCHRAN

CEO & Executive Director

The United States Conference of Mayors

PAMELA NABORS

President & CEO, CareerSource Central Florida

Chair, WDC Disability Employment Working Group

¹George H.W. Bush, “Remarks on the Signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act” (speech, Washington, DC, July 26, 1990), University of Virginia Miller Center, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/july-26-1990-remarks-signing-americans-disabilities-act>

² Erickson, W., Lee, C., & von Schrader, S. (2020). 2018 Disability Status Report: United States. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability (YTI).

METHODOLOGY

To solicit disability employment best practices, the WDC Disability Employment Working Group agreed on a standard survey template (see Appendix B) that could be used to collect submissions from organizations with workforce development initiatives targeted at increasing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. WDC staff distributed this survey template to WDC members and reached out to organizations in USCM member cities to encourage them to submit best practices.

The Working Group ultimately collected 23 Disability Employment Best Practice Surveys from 14 different states and 20 different cities across the United States, resulting in over 100 total pages of best practice survey material, not including additional materials and attachments linked to the surveys.

WDC staff developed a standardized template (see Appendix B) to evaluate and analyze the completed disability employment best practice surveys. After conducting a review of the submitted best practice surveys, WDC staff identified common themes between the surveys and determined which surveys to include in the best practices publication as well as appropriate categories to break the publication into. The best practices that appear in the sections below are divided into five categories:

1. System-Wide Initiatives
2. Advisory Boards, Committees and Mayor's Offices
3. Career Development Programs
4. Career Fairs & Educational Events
5. Innovative Approaches

SYSTEM-WIDE INITIATIVES

BUILD YOUR CITY'S CAPACITY TO SERVE CAREER SEEKERS.

System-wide initiatives aim to create a more robust workforce system that is better equipped to assist individuals career seekers as they seek meaningful employment opportunities. The best practices described in this section demonstrate the strength of organizations in cities working together as a community to focus on eliminating barriers to employment rather than working alone in silos. By strategizing together and coordinating resources, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and other local entities can improve the ability of their local region to efficiently serve career seekers by offering more entry points into the workforce system and providing a wider variety of specialized services to a larger population

than before. The following best practices are included in this category:

- Project CASE (Creating Access to Successful Employment) – Louisville, KY
- Tempe's BEST: Building Employment Supports & Training – Tempe, AZ
- Ticket to Work – Orlando, FL
- State of Colorado Disability Employment Initiative – Denver, CO
- Disability Program Navigator & Disability Employment Initiative Demonstration Grants – Hartford, CT
- US Department of Labor Disability Employment Initiative (Rounds 4 & 7) – Waterbury, CT



LOUISVILLE, KY

MAYOR GREG FISCHER
PRESIDENT, U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS



Project CASE (Creating Access to Successful Employment)

*KentuckianaWorks
Louisville, KY*

Project CASE (Creating Access to Successful Employment) is a federally-funded demonstration grant

being implemented by KentuckianaWorks and Kentucky's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) to expand participation of individuals with disabilities in the high-demand sectors of healthcare, manufacturing, and information technology (IT). Career Pathways Coordinators (CPCs) are the key drivers of Project CASE. CPCs work internally with OVR to establish relationships with OVR customers and counselors as well as externally to share resources with employers and partner organizations across the workforce system, helping to create referral networks and opportunities for individuals with disabilities to participate in training programs and secure stable employment in high-skill, high-wage jobs.

As part of Project CASE, each CPC is dedicated to strengthening career pathways in the fields of healthcare, manufacturing, and IT. During the initial stages of the grant, CPCs spent time working with staff at corresponding sites operated by KentuckianaWorks -- the Kentucky Health Career Center, the Manufacturing Career Center, and Code Louisville -- to learn about existing sector-based initiatives being carried out by the board. CPCs were also placed on the region's Business Services Team sharing the same data system for employer contacts, and later transitioned to OVR to work with OVR counselors and increase the number of referrals for OVR clients to participate in sector-based training and employment opportunities. Coordinators regularly attend employer group meetings

and events to share information on Project CASE, arrange site visits to training facilities and workplaces for OVR staff members and customers to learn about available opportunities, and provide training to employers on inclusive hiring practices, adaptive technology, and the benefits of employing individuals with disabilities.

In addition to helping coordinate the larger workforce system, CPCs provide individualized support to OVR clients and assist them as they find their place in the workforce (see figure 1). Coordinators may also serve in other roles in the community to raise awareness about barriers to sector-based employment for individuals with disabilities. For example, one CPC served as the co-chair of the Post-Employment Subcommittee of the Health Careers Collaborative of Greater Louisville, an employer group that provides guidance to the Kentucky Health Career Center on workforce issues in the healthcare field.

As a result of these efforts, staff assigned to Project CASE have been able to raise greater awareness about opportunities in the workforce system for individual OVR clients to obtain sector-based training and work experience in the fields of healthcare, manufacturing, and IT, and have helped OVR clients enter meaningful employment and training opportunities in these high-paying career pathways. For example, customers have participated in three-week Manufacturing Training and Employment Connection (M-TEC) training sessions at the Kentucky Manufacturing Career Center, interviewed with employers at Health Career Center hiring events, and participated in KentuckianaWorks' Youth Career Center Internship Academy. In just the past two program years, over 70 OVR customers have participated in paid employment or credentialed training opportunities as a result of Project CASE. Customers have also participated in partner workforce services, such as Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth and Adult Programs, in over 100 instances. Meanwhile, CPCs have led more than 150 visits to employer work sites and training program



Figure 1. PROJECT CASE SUCCESS STORIES

- A customer was struggling with the entry process and paperwork for employment and reached out to the CPC that had helped the customer with their placement. The CPC reached out to the employer to help facilitate the customer receiving appropriate assistance to successfully onboard and begin employment.
- Through collaboration with the KHCC, a customer was placed in employment. The CPC then worked with the employer to resolve transportation issues experienced by the customer.
- A customer who is blind is pursuing an occupation in the IT sector. CPCs and the Project CASE Program Director

engaged multiple partners to create opportunities for this customer. After completing a customer service training offered by the Adult Career Center, the customer then gained experience through a 12-week internship at a local business in a computer support role facilitated by the Youth Career Center. As a result, the customer is now pursuing an A+ credential to be better positioned to begin career pathway employment in IT.

- A CPC developed a connection with a senior living facility and then took a customer on a tour of this employer's facility. The CPC then helped with the customer's resume and interview preparation, leading to the employment of this customer with this employer.

sites, and Project CASE staff have developed and carried out over a dozen events designed to engage employers and career seekers, including panels, hiring fairs, and employer training sessions.

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TEMPE, AZ

Tempe’s BEST: Building Employment Supports & Training

Strategic Management & Diversity Office
City of Tempe, AZ

In 2018, the City of Tempe was awarded a \$124,731 grant by the Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (ADDPC) to develop Tempe’s BEST, a municipal employment model designed to support neurodiversity and inclusion in city government and beyond. The City of Tempe also demonstrated its commitment to supporting this initiative by matching this ADDPC grant over 100% with \$152,295 of in-kind and non-federal money. The goals of Tempe’s BEST (see figure 2) are to:

- Build cultural change in Tempe to facilitate inclusion and language competency.
- Employ a minimum of six applicants with neurodiversity in competitive city positions.
- * Support city employees, including supervisors, work groups, and employees, with skills and tools to facilitate inclusion and rebut stereotypical thinking.
- Train supervisors, workgroups, and employees to facilitate inclusion, accommodations, and success in supervising.

Tempe’s BEST is supported by numerous partners in the community that help provide the necessary training, policy changes, and support services for the initiative. Developmental disability providers and agencies perform community outreach and provide referrals to individuals with neurodiversity who are interested in working in competitive integrated city positions, as well as participate in quarterly progress updates to provide advice and guidance for the project. Examples of developmental disability service providers and agencies that currently partner with Tempe’s BEST are shown in figure 3.

Tempe’s BEST uses grant funds to provide job coaching services to newly hired employees. Focus Employment Services, the contracted job coaching agency, helps bring on employees who have not previously had support

from Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and provides them with onboarding and learning tasks when they first begin working. The University of Arizona / Sonoran University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UA/Sonoran UCEDD) is contracted as the education and training provider for Tempe’s BEST and conducts employee training and workgroup training on a quarterly basis. Tempe’s BEST also contracts a consulting company to provide continuous evaluation of the project to ensure that the grant requirements are being met.

Tempe’s BEST aims to provide the necessary training, policy changes, and employment supports to facilitate change at the systems level and build greater support for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in Tempe. To achieve this vision, staff assigned to Tempe’s BEST have put in place a centralized department fund to cover the cost of accommodations and have worked with VR and the Arizona Department of Developmental Disabilities to resolve barriers related to the wording of the application for Tempe’s BEST. Tempe’s BEST staff have also presented information about the employment model to department directors and supervisors in the City of Tempe, and participated in the design of an “Advancing Abilities and Inclusion” Department Head Focus Group. Other ongoing initiatives in Tempe, including the ADA Transition Plan, Advancing Abilities & Inclusion project, and Disability Social Inclusion strategic management goals, also help to bolster the success of Tempe’s BEST.

To date, Tempe’s BEST has successfully hired three individuals with neurodiversity who are currently working in competitive integrated city positions. Now in its second year, Tempe’s BEST staff are currently working to renew the grant for a third year with the goal of institutionalizing Tempe’s BEST as a permanent city program. Program staff are also seeking additional funds to share the model with other cities and assist them in implementing similar programs. In part as a result of Tempe’s BEST, the City of Tempe has been designated as an Employment First City, and was the first city in Arizona to be designated as such.



“Over the years, the City of Tempe has become known in Arizona as ‘one of the first’ in inclusive cultural initiatives regarding disability culture. Everything from serving as the first city in Arizona to be an ‘Employment First’ city to providing a strong anti-discrimination ordinance in our Charter. We’ve also initiated a strong priority change in HR policy, and in all departments to support cultural inclusion and hiring people with neurodiversities and other abilities. Through this effort, we are ‘one of the first’ cities in Arizona, developing a municipal model to share with other cities, to increase cultural inclusion and employment of people with neurodiversities. Nothing removes stigma in a more robust fashion than working side by side with qualified employees with disabilities. In return, we receive a broader cultural viewpoint from our workforce which benefits the city as a whole.”

MAYOR COREY D. WOODS

Figure 2. TEMPE'S BEST MODEL

Building	Employment	Supports	Training
Friends of Tempe Partnerships & Friends	You got the job Competitive Opportunities	We Welcome You as you Are Cultural/Linguistic	We are so glad you're here BEST Orientation
Begin at the End Evaluation, Metrics & Reporting	Discover Your Genius Job Themes	To Your Benefit Money & Benefit Counseling	Getting to know all about you 1:1 Training
Tempe wants you Inviting Applicants Selection/Referral	Show & Tell Informational Interviews	What to do Policies, Practices & Procedures	Embrace the Dis' Awareness Training
Practice makes Perfect Refinements	Your way works Customized Strategies	What you need Universal Design Accommodations	Tempe Culture Employee's Cultural Training
Best & Final Create the BEST Program Model	Try, Try Again Work Opportunities	Work longer Promotions	BEST Workgroup Workgroup Cultural Training
Share the Wealth Marketing the Model	Work Smarter Job Skill Training	Getting There Transportation Support	Classy Tempe City Training classes for Emp.

Figure 3. TEMPE'S BEST - PARTNERING DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY AGENCIES/PROVIDERS

- Ability360
- The Arc of Tempe
- AZ Disability Employment Services (DES) Division of Developmental Disability (DD)
- AZ DES Vocational Rehabilitation Administration (VR)
- Best Buddies of Arizona
- The Centers for Habilitation (TCH)
- Elite Community Services
- First Place
- Pathway to Work
- Scottsdale Training and Resource Services (STARS)
- Southwest Autism Research and Resource Center (SAARC)

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ORLANDO, FL

Ticket to Work

CareerSource Central Florida
Orlando, FL

Since July 2017, CareerSource Central Florida (CSCF) has been approved by the United States Social Security Administration (SSA) as an employment network (EN) for SSA's Ticket to Work program. Ticket to Work (TTW) is open to job seekers ages 18-64 who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and are looking to become economically self-sufficient by achieving part-time or full-time employment. The program expands the availability of employment services and support for individuals with disabilities through the creation of employment networks (ENs). Employment networks can be an individual entity, a consortium of organizations, or a public or private alliance that partners with SSA to deliver or coordinate services to recipients of federal disability benefits.

In order to raise awareness about Ticket to Work, CareerSource Central Florida developed a plan to reach out to approximately 20 different community agencies by June 2020 to inform them about the program, and created a database to help track and maintain CSCF's relationships with these community agencies. CareerSource Central Florida regularly attends disability community council meetings to share information with community partners about TTW and gain additional referrals to the program. Additionally, CareerSource Central Florida has placed information about Ticket to Work on its website and has developed marketing materials to help spread the word about the program.

Individuals who are selected to participate in Ticket to Work receive a ticket which they may choose to assign to an approved EN in their area. The EN then provides the Ticketholders with employment services such as career and financial counseling, resume assistance, job readiness workshops, educational training options, invitations to business meet-ups, job assistance, and job

referrals. CSCF's Disability Navigators work closely with the Business Services Department to identify and develop job opportunities for Ticketholders. The Business Services Team at CSCF conducts assessments of each individual career seeker to identify their career expectations as well as potential barriers to realizing their goals. Using these assessments, Business Service Consultants (BSCs) identify businesses and organizations with potentially suitable career opportunities and work with them to coordinate interviews with individual career seekers. Following the interview, BSCs follow up with the business or organization to collect feedback and determine the outcome of the interview. This feedback is then shared with CSCF's Disability Navigators, who in turn provide feedback to the Ticketholder.

Through the TTW program, the Social Security Administration provides discretionary funding to employment networks when TTW participants achieve specific employment outcomes that are predetermined by SSA. Over time, as more Ticketholders achieve employment, Ticket to Work can become a self-sustaining service. CareerSource Central Florida's Ticket to Work program has proven to be a great success with 23 Ticketholders already enrolled since July 2019, of which nine are currently working, eight are currently enrolled in educational training, five are currently receiving intensive job readiness services, and one has been offered an internship. Many organizations listed throughout this publication also participate in the SSA's Ticket to Work Program in addition to carrying out other initiatives aimed at expanding employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

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Figure 4. CAREER SOURCE CENTRAL FLORIDA
TICKET TO WORK SUCCESS STORY

[M] connected with us as a visually impaired individual looking for employment, who had been unemployed since 2015. [M] had basic computer skills and his previous employment was in the car wash industry. He was selected to participate in the Lighthouse Central Florida Customer Service training for individuals with a visual impairment. After completing the training at the end of October 2018, [M] was hired as a Call Center Customer Service Representative with Lighthouse Works for Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) Reemployment Assistance in January 2019. [M] expressed how impressed he was with

the CareerSource Central Florida staff that he encountered. He said they were very dedicated and showed a passion in their service. He appreciated the encouragement and motivation of his Career Consultant. Having a visual impairment, [M] said that people think you can't perform. It meant a lot to him that his ability to work was the focus instead of his disability, as he had encountered in the past. In July 2019, [M] was able to improve his living situation. He moved out from living with family members and into his own apartment. He now feels like he has his independence back and is looking forward to the future instead of dreading it.



“As Mayor, a key focus for my administration has always been economic health and putting residents to work, and that is more critical than ever right now. As a city we remain committed to supporting programs that provide opportunity and skills for our residents to connect them with meaningful careers and jobs and ultimately a better future.”

MAYOR BUDDY DYER

DENVER, CO

MAYOR MICHAEL B. HANCOCK



State of Colorado Disability Employment Initiative

Denver Economic Development & Opportunity, Office of the Mayor City and County of Denver, CO

In 2017, the State of Colorado received a \$2.25 million Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. Three local workforce areas in Colorado – Arapahoe/Douglas Works! (AdWorks), Denver, and Pikes Peak – applied for and were selected to support the DEI project. The goal of the DEI grant is to broadly strengthen the capacity of these local workforce systems to serve career seekers with disabilities and ensure that the career pathways system is inclusive and effective for both youth and adults. The initiative has resulted in greater integration of services between the three local workforce areas, a toolkit of resources shared by state and local agencies to enhance the effectiveness and accessibility of the career pathways system, and many other positive changes that have increased the capacity of the workforce system to serve career seekers with disabilities.

Shortly after receiving the DEI grant award, AdWorks, Denver, and Pikes Peak submitted applications to become Employment Networks (ENs) as part of the U.S. Social Security Administration's (SSA) Ticket to Work (TTW) program. In close coordination with Colorado's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), the three workforce systems developed marketing strategies, informational materials, and data collection systems to effectively participate in TTW. Collected data suggests that as many as 20,000 candidates in the Denver metro area may qualify for TTW, presenting many new possibilities for providers in the region to serve a wider population of job seekers than

previously and generate additional income for workforce development services. The workforce system in the Denver area is currently developing outreach events to engage potential TTW candidates, assess if they qualify to enroll in the program, and advise them on how Ticket to Work can support their employment goals without negatively impacting their existing financial and medical benefits.

The DEI grant provides funds for a Disability Resource Coordinator in each of the three participating workforce areas to strengthen the career pathways system and help career seekers enroll and participate in training opportunities funded through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The Denver workforce area has developed an Integrated Resource Team (IRT) strategy for serving job seekers with disabilities and is currently working to expand partnerships and collaborations with organizations such as the Denver Commission for People with Disabilities. IRTs help to identify the best combination of resources offered by service providers in the community and coordinate their efforts and leverage funding to meet the individual needs of job seekers who are eligible for services in multiple systems. A job search consultant provides each individual enrolled in services provided through the DEI grant with a strength-based comprehensive assessment to help guide them to the most appropriate entry point into a career pathway.

As part of the DEI grant, assigned staff now monitor approved providers on Colorado's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) and conduct site visits and training on an ongoing basis to ensure that providers are meeting accessibility guidelines and that appropriate supports are being provided to customers. In January 2019, training was conducted for 120 education providers statewide to inform them about the benefits that the DEI grant can offer to their training facilities and how they can better provide services to WIOA customers through the ETPL process. As part of the session, a focus group was held to get a better understanding of the services that providers currently offered for job seekers with disabilities and what needs



they had around serving customers in high-demand career pathway industries, including information technology (IT), healthcare, retail hospitality, professional services, and construction. The DEI grant has also allowed for etiquette training to be carried out for workforce center staff on an ongoing basis as well as training on how to operate accessible technology.

These cumulative efforts have led to greater involvement by partner organizations in the workforce system, helping to streamline services and increase the visibility of sector-based employment opportunities available to individuals with disabilities. During Disability Awareness Month in October 2018, Denver worked with employers in the community to help place six DEI participants in employment with an average wage of \$14.00. By the end of

2018, eight of the 19 participants enrolled in DEI at the time received full-time employment with average hourly wages ranging from \$14.75 to \$18.00. As of September 2019, the Denver workforce area had registered 61 individuals with disabilities in (WIOA) Adult & Dislocated Worker programs, of which 24 entered training opportunities and 22 completed training.

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HARTFORD, CT

MAYOR LUKE BRONIN



Disability Program Navigator & Disability Employment Initiative Demonstration Grants

*Capital Workforce Partners
Hartford, CT*

In May 2007, the State of Connecticut received a Disability Program Navigator (DPN) demonstration grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. Capital Workforce Partners (CWP) was selected to participate in the DPN grant, which provided funding for Disability Program Navigators at one-stop career centers in Connecticut to promote employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. These DPNs helped equip American Job Centers (AJCs) with assistive technology and acquired Work Incentive Practitioner Certifications to help advise career seekers with disabilities on how to achieve stable employment without losing their existing benefits. A separate three-year Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) grant awarded to the State of Connecticut by the U.S. Department of Labor in 2013 helped CWP continue to build off the accomplishments of the DPN grant and led CWP to apply to become a Ticket to Work (TTW) provider through the Social Security Administration (SSA). Following the conclusion of both grants, CWP has continued to fund the role of a Disability Program Navigator, now renamed the Disability Resource Coordinator (DRC). As of 2018, Capital Workforce Partners supports the DRC position with funding from the Federal Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA), Housing Opportunities for Persons with Aids (HOPWA), and state funds.

CWP's Disability Resource Coordinator conducts outreach to career seekers, employers, and organizations in the community to help inform them about employment resources available to individuals with disabilities, such as

services offered through AJCs, career readiness programs, SSA employment supports, and Ticket to Work. In addition, the DRC works with employers to promote employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities and participates in disability advisory groups such as the Governor's Committee for Employment of Persons with Disabilities, the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE), and the Job Development Leadership Network (JDLN). Even after the conclusion of the DPN and DEI grants, CWP has maintained an Integrated Resource Team (IRT) approach to help coordinate the delivery of services for individual career seekers who receive services from multiple provider agencies through WIOA (see figure 5). The DRC also leads a special team consisting of one staff member from each AJC in Connecticut's North Central workforce development area. These staff members receive additional training on an ongoing basis to support career seekers with disabilities and meet on a quarterly basis for updates on relevant legislation and community resources available to AJC customers.

The Disability Resources Coordinator at CWP has developed an informational workshop called ACCESS that is designed to answer frequently asked questions and help individuals with disabilities navigate the workforce system and make use of the resources available to them. ACCESS has been adopted statewide as a training resource for new case managers. Additionally, the DRC conducts "Train the Trainer" workshops to help other AJCs adapt the ACCESS Workshop for their regions and provides technical assistance and training on subjects such as universal design and disability awareness. Since 2011, a planning committee headed by CWP's DRC has carried out a no-budget Disability Employment Awareness Month Resource Fair in collaboration with partner agencies to provide assistance to career seekers with disabilities and help raise awareness about resources available to them. The fair has grown significantly in size from just 4 vendors in 2011 to over 35 vendors and over 260 attendees last year, while remaining at no cost

Figure 5. CAPITAL WORKFORCE PARTNERS - INTEGRATED RESOURCE TEAM SUCCESS STORIES

Success Story #1: A jobseeker who is deaf, non-verbal and has a federal felony conviction was referred to the Disability Program Navigator (DPN) at one of the North Central American Job Centers by his psychiatrist. She expressed her need for assistance in guiding her client back into the workforce. The DPN met with the job seeker and psychiatrist and learned that the customer had to follow certain guidelines as he was on parole. Through discovery, the DPN learned the customer was a “jack of all trades” and was interested in manufacturing. The DPN assembled the Integrated Resource Team (IRT) consisting of the job seeker, DPN, psychiatrist, Step-Up Coordinator from the American Job Center (AJC), parole officer, Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf (RCD), Benefits Counselor (CWIC) and the job seeker’s mother. The team agreed on their roles in the IRT:

- The AJC coordinated funding for job development and job preparedness skills, including resume writing and interviewing skills.
- The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) provided a job coach to help set up communication in the workplace.
- The psychiatrist and parole officer provided technical assistance and guidelines to the IRT.
- The benefits counselor assisted with transitioning the job seeker off Social Security disability benefits.
- The mother served as the communication liaison, as the customer was not able to use the internet.
- The employer provided weekly updates to the IRT.
- The DPN worked with the customer and employer to provide retention supports.

In the end, the customer obtained a full-time job in a family owned manufacturing company as a result of his hard work, with support from the IRT. The job seeker was such a good worker that when things were slow, he would use his other skills such as painting and landscaping so that he could keep busy. As a result of his strong work ethic, he received a raise after his

90-day probation. Additionally, the company provided fork lift training and he obtained a license, resulting in a promotion and another raise. The company is extremely happy with his performance and has advocated to other companies on the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities. Meanwhile, the customer has gone off Social Security disability benefits and now owns a new SUV and a house!

Success Story #2: A job seeker with autism and a criminal background was receiving services from the Department of Developmental Disabilities and clinical and case management supports from a Local Mental Health Affiliate (LMHA). His case manager from the LMHA brought him to meet the DPN at the AJC for assistance in seeking employment. At that time, he did not have an employment goal. Through conversation, CWP determined he is passionate and highly skilled with computers and he was eligible for WIOA as a low-income adult. He was interested in a training scholarship, so the DPN made a referral. DPN believed an IRT would better serve the customer since he was receiving services from multiple agencies. Additionally, the DPN referred the customer to BRS for job development support.

- Members of the IRT included the job seeker, DPN, American Job Center career agent, BRS rehabilitation counselor, LMHA case manager, and the customer’s mentor from the Connecticut Department of Developmental Services (DDS).
- The AJC provided training funds for A+ and Network+ and pre-employment services.
- The BRS provided job placement and on-the-job-training.
- DDS provided a job coach/mentor and retention supports.
- The customer agreed to provide updates to the IRT, and the mentor agreed to communicate with the customer’s training provider on his progress.

As a result of the efforts of the job seeker and support from the IRT, the customer landed a help desk job at the Autism Resource Center.



to participants, including meeting space for the event and American Sign Language interpreters. This year, CWP is planning to operate the fair virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through carrying out these numerous initiatives over the years, CWP has successfully provided the following services to career seekers with disabilities: Orientations (424), Assessments (352), Case Management (351), Partner Referrals (313), Intensive Services (311), Training (47), Support Services (125), Job Placements (98), Retention Services (78), and Tickets-To-Work (39). Capital Workforce

Partners plans to continue building on these successes by continuing to support the role of the DRC, expanding the number of Integrated Resource Teams for WIOA-funded programs, and establishing and maintaining new partnerships with employers, local and state agencies, and other organizations in the community.

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WATERBURY, CT

MAYOR NEIL M. O'LEARY



US Department of Labor Disability Employment Initiative (Rounds 4 & 7)

Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board
Waterbury, CT

Since 2014, the Northwest Regional

Workforce Investment Board (NRWIB) has been carrying out several different initiatives to serve career seekers with disabilities. This includes a four-year Disability Employment Initiative grant (Round 4) that was conducted from 2014 to 2017 and funded by the same DEI grant to the State of Connecticut from the U.S. Department of Labor described in the previous best practice. The grant has allowed NRWIB to provide job seekers with disabilities (ages 18 through 62) with a wide variety of career services, including assessments, counseling, training, readiness skills, assistive technology, referrals, and assistance with job searches, interview skills, resume preparation, and job placement. Over the 2014-2017 grant period, NRWIB served close to 180 participants through this initiative.

From 2016 to early 2020, NRWIB also participated in another Disability Employment Initiative grant (Round 7), known as "DEI Youth," which was specifically targeted at expanding services for in-school and out-of-school youth (ages 17-24). Under this grant, NRWIB provided career services and work-readiness workshops to youth with disabilities, helping them transition into postsecondary education, career pathways training programs, and the workforce. NRWIB also offered an internship component through this initiative which paid participants \$14 hourly. By collaborating with six local school districts and conducting outreach efforts in the region, NRWIB was able to serve approximately 75 youth through this initiative, representing a significant increase in youth with

disabilities taking advantage of American Job Center career services and seeking employment or training opportunities.

Since 2015, NRWIB has also been designated as a Ticket to Work provider by the Social Security Administration and has served over 150 job seekers to date, resulting in over \$40,000 in revenue from the Social Security Administration in unrestricted funds. NRWIB has developed a list of best practices and lessons learned from carrying out these Disability Employment Initiative grants and providing services as part of the SSA's Ticket to Work program.

Figure 6. NRWIB SUCCESS STORIES

- A person who was recovering from a major, severe automobile accident came to us with a goal of obtaining yoga instructor certification. NRWIB funded her training and she was hired as a full time instructor. One particularly gratifying element of her success is that she became self-sufficient financially and that she now is a yoga instructor for persons who are recovering from injuries and accidents. She has been courageous and persistent.
- A person with a psychological disability and anxiety disorder was able to gain a career in providing home aid and assistance full time with an agency in Torrington. Reviews from her supervisors have been extremely positive. Her clients are more than satisfied.

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ADVISORY BOARDS, COMMITTEES, AND MAYOR'S OFFICES

PAVE THE WAY FOR SUCCESS.

Advisory boards, committees, and mayor's offices dedicated to upholding the rights of individuals with disabilities can play a powerful role in expanding the visibility of career seekers from underrepresented backgrounds and shaping new norms around diversity and inclusion. Institutions help to proactively raise awareness in the community about the barriers to employment that individuals with disabilities regularly face and serve as valuable networks for career seekers to tap into as they navigate the world of work. Through advocacy efforts and collaboration with

local organizations, advisory boards, committees, and mayor's offices help to secure increased resources, training, and employment opportunities for career seekers with disabilities and elevate conversations with employers around adopting more inclusive hiring practices. The following best practices are included in this category:

- NYC: ATWORK, ability Training Academy, EmpoweredNYC – New York, NY
- MaxAbility Employment Taskforce – Rochester, MN
- Opening Doors Bay Area – Sunnyvale, CA



NEW YORK, NY

NYC: ATWORK, abillTy Training Academy, EmpoweredNYC

NYC Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities
New York, NY

The New York City Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) is carrying out numerous initiatives to support the advancement of individuals with disabilities in the workforce, including NYC: ATWORK, abillTy Training Academy, and EmpoweredNYC. In 2015, the NYC MOPD hired a director to create a business-driven approach to serving job seekers with disabilities and to establish relationships with state workforce agencies and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), community based organizations, educational institutions, and the business community with the goal of raising awareness about disability etiquette, creating models for training and empowering individuals with disabilities, helping employers create strategies for hiring and retaining qualified workers, and creating opportunities for the city's largest pipeline of untapped talent. The initiative that has grown out of this effort is NYC: ATWORK, a private-public partnership led by the NYC MOPD to help connect job seekers with disabilities to meaningful career opportunities in high-demand sectors. NYC: ATWORK is funded by over \$1 million in generous contributions from foundations as well as significant funding from the New York State Education Department (NYSED). The NYC MOPD has hired staff to manage NYC: ATWORK and built its own content management system and job board.

In order to connect employers to qualified job seekers with disabilities, NYC: ATWORK staff have assembled a talent coalition made up of college students and graduates, unemployed or underemployed individuals, and recipients of state vocational rehabilitation services from over 65 nonprofit organizations. This talent coalition interacts with a business development council consisting of over 100 employers in industries such as technology, business services, healthcare, transportation, arts and culture, hospitality, and city government. To date, NYC: ATWORK

has provided sector-based training on disability etiquette and awareness to over 3,000 hiring managers and human resources specialists from more than 90 businesses and agencies. The initiative has also organized over two dozen targeted recruitment events to connect employers with talented career seekers and created internship models to assist businesses as they strive to develop more inclusive recruitment strategies. Approximately 40-50% of job seekers who have been referred to NYC: ATWORK employer partners have been hired as a result of these efforts, resulting in the placement of over 325 New Yorkers with disabilities in the past 18 months alone. More than 80% have been retained as employees for at least one year with higher post-placement salaries and wages.

NYC: ATWORK has allowed NYC to take the lead as a model employer by revisiting the city's 55-a program, a diversity and inclusion initiative established in the 1970s which allows individuals with disabilities to obtain employment in city positions without taking a civil service exam. The NYC MOPD worked with the NYC Department of Citywide Administration (DCAS) and state VR agencies to review and clarify language related to the 55-a program, streamline the disability verification process for new hires, and provide training to relevant city staff on how to make the best possible use of the program. The NYC MOPD is currently working to develop a mandatory online training by October 2020 for all city staff on disability awareness, etiquette, and reasonable accommodation. These efforts have helped establish NYC as a model employer. In both 2016 and 2017, 4 individuals were hired each year through the 55-a program, and in the 18 months leading up to December 2019, a total of 80 individuals with disabilities were hired in a wide variety of city positions ranging from entry level to managerial.

In addition to NYC: ATWORK, the NYC MOPD also launched two related initiatives, EmpoweredNYC and abillTy Cisco Academy. EmpoweredNYC was started in 2017 and provides confidential one-on-one financial counseling tailored specifically for individuals with disabilities in all



“New York City is known for its great diversity, and every day we strive to be inclusive, equitable, and accessible on every level. As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act, we are reminded that the participation of people with disabilities in New York City’s workforce is crucial. That’s exactly why we launched the NYC: ATWORK initiative, the first public-private partnership for employment for New Yorkers with disabilities. We are more committed than ever to inclusive workplaces that connect New Yorkers with disabilities with good jobs.”

MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO

five boroughs of New York City. Counselors who provide services as part of the initiative are knowledgeable about disability benefits and are able to provide information on how individuals with disabilities can manage adjustments in their income when returning to work. The initiative is operated through the NYC Department of Financial Empowerment's Office of Consumer and Worker Protection. In 2019, over 650 New Yorkers received financial counseling through 1,125 separate sessions. Counselors are placed at Financial Empowerment Sites across the city and may also provide financial counseling for people with disabilities via sessions organized by community based organizations and nonprofits as well as at popup sites at the City University of New York (CUNY) colleges. EmpoweredNYC is part of a larger national campaign that is also being carried out in Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Boston with \$2 million in funding from Citi Community Development (CCD).

The abillTy Cisco Academy or IT Academy is an approximately \$300,000 initiative that was launched in 2018 with funding provided by UJA-Federation of New York, J.E. & Z.B. Butler Foundation, Standard Chartered Bank, and BNP Paribas. This program uses a “train-to-place” model that prepares individuals with disabilities for careers in the field of cybersecurity. Participants complete an industry-recognized Cisco certification program in an

accessible classroom provided by the Institute for Career Development (ICD). This program is the first instructor-led Cisco Network Academy exclusively for people with disabilities, and the curriculum has specifically been designed to adapt to various learning styles. The program also includes soft-skills training and business engagement opportunities, which allows students to build a professional network of peers within the disability community and find employment opportunities as they complete their certificate. To date, two cohorts of 16 students have participated in the six-month training program. Upon graduating, these cohorts have also been provided with three-month paid internships at companies such as Cyber Command NYC, Northwell Lenox Hill Hospital, Frick Museum, Standard Chartered Bank, Goldman Sachs, Metadata, Montefiore Hospital, and NYC Transit. The abillTy Cisco Academy is currently serving a third cohort of students and is working to approach funders and corporate sponsors to arrange scholarship opportunities for program participants who are not eligible for VR funding.

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ROCHESTER, MN

MAYOR KIM NORTON



MaxAbility Employment Taskforce

Workforce Development, Inc. (Southeast Minnesota Workforce Development Board) Rochester, MN

The MaxAbility Employment Taskforce

in Rochester, Minnesota, was established in 2014 as a result of grassroots conversations among employers, job coaches/Community Rehabilitation Partners (CRPs), non-profits, and educators in the region. The taskforce serves as a subcommittee of the Southeast Minnesota Workforce Development Board and aims to expand competitive employment opportunities for job seekers with disabilities while helping local businesses in Southeast Minnesota meet their workforce needs by hiring from a diverse talent pool. The MaxAbility Employment Taskforce operates off of a small budget of approximately \$5,000 per year, donated by 25 individuals and businesses in the community.

Despite its small budget, the work of the taskforce has been amplified by Destination Medical Center (DMC), a \$5.6 billion economic development initiative in Southeast Minnesota led by the Mayo Clinic. The DMC initiative began in 2013 and is expected to establish Southeast Minnesota as a global hub for high quality medical care and create new jobs and businesses in the region over a 20-year period. The MaxAbility Employment Taskforce has helped to shape conversations around how career seekers with disabilities can be included in the DMC initiative as it expands. By spreading awareness about the concept of universal design, the taskforce has helped influence stakeholders carrying out the DMC initiative to consider how they can make physical spaces more inclusive and accessible for people with disabilities.

The taskforce regularly organizes educational events, networking meetings, career fairs, and celebratory events to help spread awareness about career seekers with disabilities. For example, the taskforce holds two career fairs each year to help match employers with qualified candidates, as well as an annual community celebration held every December on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. One of the job fairs is a 'Reverse Job Fair' where employers travel to different job seekers at the event and speak with them, while the other is a more traditional career fair with an educational session held in advance of the fair for employers to learn about best practices in interacting with diverse groups of jobseekers. At the 2019 Reverse Job Fair, there were 20 candidates and 16 employers seeking talent. Several candidates ultimately interviewed and were offered positions as a result of the event.

In addition to these regular events, the MaxAbility Employment Taskforce spotlights companies in Southeast Minnesota that have embraced diverse hiring practices and works with employers to inform them about the barriers to employment that career seekers with disabilities regularly face. The taskforce has also developed a workshop on inclusive job descriptions to assist employers with writing job postings that include only the essential functions and actual requirements of a position in order to attract the widest pool of candidates possible.

The MaxAbility Employment Taskforce has set a goal for 2020 to begin recording more data and hard numbers to help inform its future work and build off the successes of the regular convenings that the taskforce facilitates between employers and career seekers. The taskforce is also working to engage more employers and develop a library of online "bite-sized" training modules to raise awareness and help supervisors and individuals create more inclusive and accessible workplaces for employees with disabilities.

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Figure 7. MAXABILITY EMPLOYMENT TASKFORCE OUTLINE

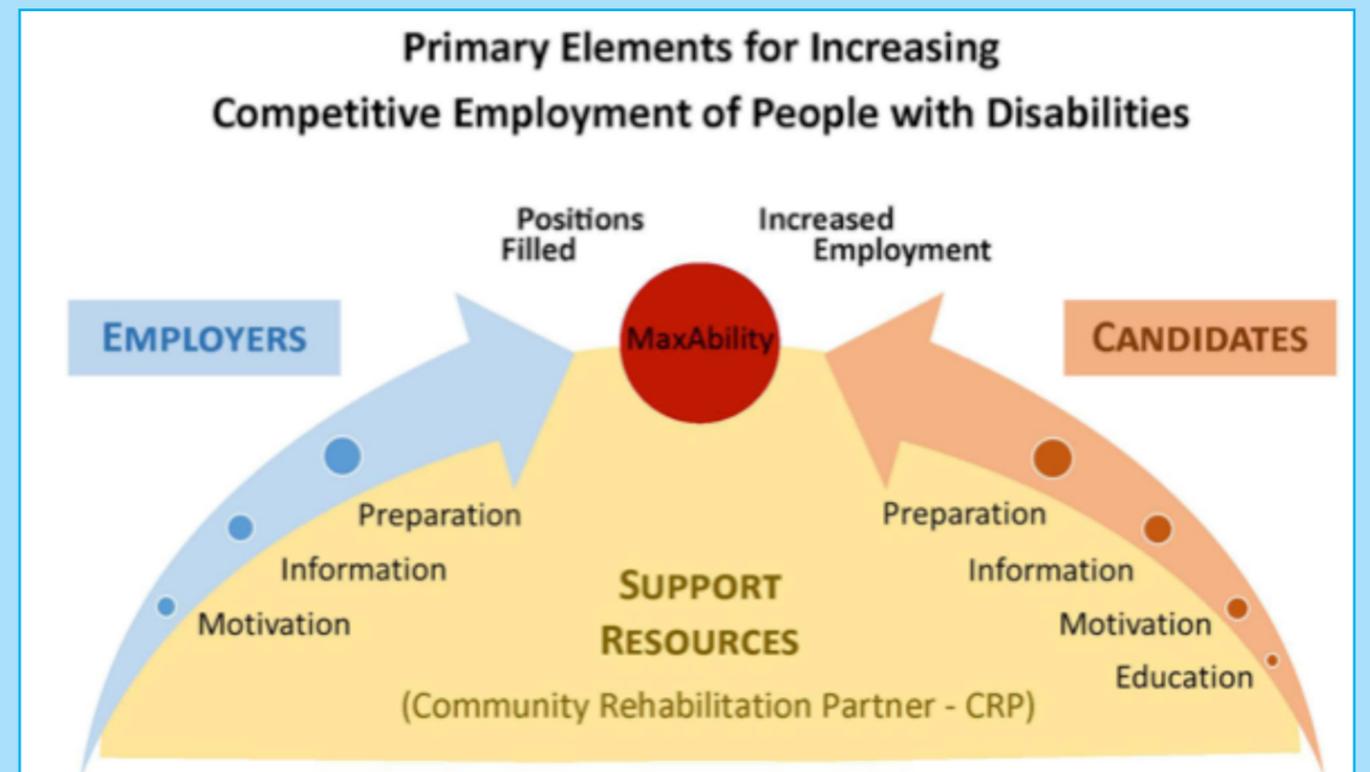


Figure 8. MAXABILITY EMPLOYMENT TASKFORCE SUCCESS STORY

- The Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce has been a partner with the MaxAbility Employment Taskforce since it began. When the Chamber took on the initiative of hiring various interns for the Summer of 2018, they connected with Opportunity Services, a CRP active with the MaxAbility Taskforce, to learn more about hiring

an intern with a disability. Once needs were established, Opportunity Services facilitated a meeting between a qualified candidate and the Chamber hiring manager. The individual worked as an intern for the months of July & August. By mid to late August, he was offered a permanent position with the Chamber. All three entities continue to work together to identify strengths and areas of growth.

SUNNYVALE, CA

Opening Doors Bay Area

NOVA Workforce Development
Sunnyvale, CA

Founded in 2019, Opening Doors Bay Area is a coalition of businesses, community organizations, workforce agencies, and talent channels in the San Francisco Bay Area that are dedicated to expanding employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in the technology industry and other high-skill sectors of the economy. NOVA Workforce Development is one of the founding members of Opening Doors Bay Area. The coalition currently consists of nine companies and five workforce agencies in the San Francisco Bay Area, and is currently operated on a volunteer basis by members of the coalition (see Figure 9 below). Opening Doors Bay Area aims to serve as a regional workforce system to assist employers in connecting to talented career seekers with disabilities and helping them to create more diverse organizations that are better able to problem-solve, innovate, and perform effectively.

Since its inception, Opening Doors Bay Area has launched conversations with companies such as Google and LinkedIn to explore what opportunities exist in their organizations for identifying, hiring, and retaining career seekers with disabilities. Opening Doors Bay Area is currently in the process of seeking grant funding for volunteer leadership development and to hire a disability rights specialist with knowledge of human-centered design principles to ensure that the needs of customers are central to all efforts designed and carried out by the coalition.

While the initiative is relatively new, the emerging model shows significant potential and represents an excellent example of how volunteers from organizations across a region can come together to spearhead new initiatives and help raise awareness about opportunities for companies to engage with untapped networks of job seekers and hire qualified career seekers with disabilities.

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“The City of Sunnyvale is proud of its multi-pronged efforts to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for individuals with disabilities in our region. These initiatives include ironclad protections against discrimination and harassment in the city’s workplace as well as ongoing efforts to connect Silicon Valley employers and talented individuals with disabilities.

NOVA Workforce Development, a city department, is currently co-leading a regional initiative to bridge the gap between employers seeking diverse talent and workers with disabilities. This initiative, Opening Doors Bay Area, includes major companies, education and training institutions, workforce agencies and community-based organizations. NOVA has also joined the Stanford Neurodiversity Project Consortium on Autism Employment, a recent initiative launched specifically to help neurodiverse individuals address economic challenges caused by COVID-19.”

MAYOR LARRY KLEIN

Figure 9. OPENING DOORS BAY AREA COALITION

Employers & Community Partners

- Agilent
- Auticon
- Bay Area Kind
- Cisco
- Ernst & Young
- The Kelsey
- SAP
- Silicon Valley Bank
- VMware
- YMCA of Silicon Valley

Workforce Agencies

- Gatepath
- Goodwill of Silicon Valley
- Hope Services
- NOVA Workforce Board
- Project HIRED

Talent Channels & Networks

- Colleges & Universities
- Indeed
- Postsecondary Programs
- Regional Centers



CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

INVEST IN A MORE DIVERSE WORKFORCE.

Effective career development programs provide job seekers with valuable training and hands-on learning experiences in real-life work settings, helping to prepare them for rewarding career opportunities at the conclusion of the program. Employers also benefit from career development programs, allowing them to tap into new networks of talent, see new possibilities for their businesses and organizations to grow, and develop strategies to better accommodate customers and employees of all backgrounds. The result is a stronger, more resilient workforce that is representative of communities all across the country. The following best practices are included in this category:

- Individuals with Developmental Disabilities Demonstration Project – Houston, TX
- Career Pathway Advancement Project (CPAP) – Omaha, NE
- Succeeding Through Achieving Retail Success (STARS) Program – Daytona Beach, FL
- YOU Learn! Summer Earn and Learn Program – Corpus Christi, TX
- Project SEARCH at Ascension Seton – Cedar Park, TX
- Student HireAbility Navigator, Year-Round Work Experience, Project HIGHER, Project SEARCH, Summer Earn and Learn – El Paso, TX



“Currently, the unemployment or underemployment rate for people with disabilities is about 70%, and this statistic is simply unacceptable. My administration is committed to creating, promoting, and supporting competitive and integrated employment opportunities for Houstonians with disabilities. I am very proud of the partnership between the Gulf Coast Workforce Board, the HEART Program, and the University of Houston Downtown. Together they help individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities advance their education, participate in supported employment activities, and gain stable employment or pursue additional education upon graduation from the program. It is critical that we, as mayors, help develop and support partnerships and programs designed to strengthen workforce readiness, job placement, and retention for people with disabilities.”

MAYOR SYLVESTER TURNER

HOUSTON, TX

Individuals with Developmental Disabilities Demonstration Project

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board / HEART-UHD Program Houston, TX

The Housing, Entrepreneurship and Readiness Training (H.E.A.R.T.) Program is an organization in Houston, Texas that has been providing services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities since 2006. The H.E.A.R.T. Program is currently partnering with the University of Houston Downtown to carry out the Individuals with Developmental Disabilities (IDD) Demonstration Project, which is designed to help individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities advance their education and obtain recognized college credit, participate in supported employment activities, and enter stable employment or pursue further education upon graduation of the program. The Gulf Coast Workforce Board oversees the project, and funding for the project is provided by the Gulf Coast Workforce Board, the Texas Workforce Commission, and the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy as part of recovery funds for Hurricane Harvey.

The H.E.A.R.T. Program carries out outreach and recruitment efforts for the IDD Project. Once applicants are selected to participate in the IDD Project, the University of Houston Downtown (UHD) enrolls them as students in a continuing education certificate program designed by UHD's Center for Public Service and Community Research. The UHD-H.E.A.R.T. program includes a mentoring component, a paid on-campus internship, and a paid off-campus externship with private employers. Classes for the continuing education certificate program are conducted on the UHD campus. Two cohorts of participants have already successfully graduated from the IDD Project. The first cohort graduated in August 2019 and the second in December 2019. As of November 2019, of the total 72 individuals that were currently enrolled in the IDD Project, 64 completed on-campus internships and 65 completed paid externships. Overall, 63 participants had already successfully graduated from the program or were on track to graduate, with 9 employed and 3 continuing in higher education.

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OMAHA, NE

MAYOR JEAN STOTHERT



Career Pathway Advancement Project (CPAP)

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation
Omaha, NE

In October 2015, Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) was awarded a five-year Career Pathway

Advancement Project (CPAP) demonstration grant by the United States Department of Education (ED) Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSER) Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). The demonstration grant provides funds for Nebraska VR to carry out a project targeted at upskilling past Nebraska VR clients who were successfully placed in high-demand, high wage career pathways such as manufacturing, information technology (IT), health sciences, architecture and construction, transportation, and distribution and logistics. The goal of the grant is to upskill youth and adults with disabilities so that they are able to move into higher positions in their organizations with increased wages and benefits and ultimately gain economic self-sufficiency. Through CPAP, Nebraska VR also works with employers to backfill vacated positions when a client successfully transitions into a higher role in their company (see Figure 10).

To find participants for the program, CPAP staff reached out via mail and phone calls to over 2,000 past Nebraska VR clients from the 2013-2016 period to see whether they would be interested in pursuing one or more industrial certifications or diploma, associate, bachelor's, master's, or doctoral training programs. Approximately 14% of past clients expressed interest in participating in the project. Upon joining the project, the CPAP demonstration grant offers clients transportation stipends and partial financial support to help cover the cost of upskilling programs. CPAP staff works with the clients to provide

career planning services as well as information regarding community resources and other possible outside funding options to support them as they participate in the upskilling project. Additionally, CPAP staff engage with the employers of their clients (if the client consents) to identify ways that employers might help their employees advance in their workplace as an incumbent worker.

To date, 302 clients have pursued 421 credentials through the CPAP demonstration grant, resulting in 94 returned clients with successfully closed cases and 80 additional closures expected in the final year of the program. In the first 4.5 years of the program, clients' average weekly wages increased by \$387 and benefits increased by 2.17 per employee, demonstrating the significant benefits of upskilling. The demonstration grant has also allowed Nebraska VR to form new connections with businesses in the region, leading to over 173 relationships with new business contacts.

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Figure 10. CPAP DEMONSTRATION GRANT SUCCESS STORY

- [D] is the Plant Manager at a food and pet product manufacturer in a rural Nebraska town. After serving three years in prison and being diagnosed with drug/alcohol addiction and ADHD, [D] sought Nebraska VR services to attain the skills and equipment necessary to work in the food manufacturing industry. He was successfully employed and his case closed in 2011. When Nebraska VR CPAP Recruiter Zach Arter contacted him in January 2017 about the grant opportunity, he was working as a Quality Control Technician in the manufacturing plant. With the grant resources he was able to upskill through a preventive controls

certification known as Preventive Controls Qualified Individual or PCQI. This helped him be promoted to Quality Control Manager. His next step was to further upskill by enrolling in a food management course allowing him to advance again to Plant Manager. With the help of the grant and [D]'s hard work, his wages increased by 35%. He has earned 5 credentials since working with the grant. Another employee and Nebraska VR client was back filled into his initial position. Meanwhile, his replacement has also accessed the CPAP opportunity to upskill into the Quality Control Manager role. Her initial position was backfilled with yet another Nebraska VR client. Both clients were able to increase their income by an average of 17%.

DAYTONA BEACH, FL

Succeeding Through Achieving Retail Success (STARS) Program

CareerSource Flagler Volusia
Daytona Beach, FL

In October 2018, CareerSource Flagler Volusia received grant funding from CareerSource Florida and the Able Trust (also known as the Florida Endowment Foundation for Vocational Rehabilitation) to carry out the Succeeding Through Achieving Retail Success (STARS) program. The STARS program, modeled after Walgreens' Retail Employees with Disabilities Initiative (REDI), is a work-based learning opportunity that helps prepare job seekers with disabilities for work in entry-level retail positions. Ticketholders enrolled in SSA's Ticket to Work program are identified and considered for participation in the STARS program. To raise awareness about the STARS program and encourage retailers and individuals with disabilities to participate, CareerSource Flagler Volusia conducts outreach to local disability advocacy groups, school districts, chambers of commerce, business partners, and local media outlets.

Candidates selected to participate in the STARS program have the opportunity to work on-site at Walgreens and other partnering retail companies in the area alongside trained job coaches for a period of three weeks. Over

the course of the program, participants learn how to handle cash, merchandise products, and provide effective customer service. Participants who successfully complete the three-week program are awarded a retail skills certificate and encouraged to apply for open positions at the host retail company or other retail companies in the area. Disability Navigators at CareerSource Flagler Volusia provide assistance throughout the application process and also continue to offer follow-on employment support, conflict resolution strategies, and advocacy to employers even after the conclusion of the program.

To date, 19 individuals with disabilities have participated in the STARS program. As a result, eleven participants gained employment, with seven obtaining either full-time or part-time positions at the conclusion of the program. Although grant funding for the STARS program will expire in August 2020, CareerSource Flagler Volusia plans to continue operating the program with unrestricted funding received from the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work program.

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Figure 11. STARS PROGRAM SUCCESS STORY

- When [V] first came into our Career Center, he was disheartened about having to start over in a new career after having a successful 30-year career in the construction industry. Years of wear and tear on his body had resulted in multiple surgeries that had forced him to close down his construction business and had left him unemployed for several years. [V] had significant challenges, as his health also was declining. You would never know through, from his friendly smile and firm handshake as he introduced himself to the staff and stated that he was 'ready to get back to work.' Retail was never anything [V] had pictured

himself doing, but he was up for the challenge and ready to give it his best shot. He was determined to use the skills he acquired over the years and put them to good use in a new career. [V] spent three-weeks training with our job coach at Walgreens, and upon completion was offered a part-time position, which quickly developed into a full time position. "I am happy. I feel accomplished and look forward to a rewarding career" said [V]. "I want to thank my team of coaches and the staff, who continues to encourage me on my journey. I am very appreciative of the STARS Program and grateful for CareerSource Flagler Volusia and Walgreens for such a great opportunity."



“Supporting every citizen in their quest to gain full employment that is aligned with their skills is a core value for the city of Daytona Beach. We are delighted to have a great workforce board in our community that is ensuring that all of our residents are able to pursue the American dream through fair employment opportunities.”

MAYOR DERRICK L. HENRY

CORPUS CHRISTI, TX

YOU Learn! Summer Earn and Learn Program

Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend
Corpus Christi, TX

Since 2017, Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend (WFSCB) has been carrying out the YOU Learn! Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL) program on an annual basis in collaboration with the Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWS-VRS) and local businesses. Funded by the Texas Workforce Commission, the SEAL program is a statewide initiative that connects students between the ages of 16 and 22 years old with paid work-based learning opportunities at local businesses over the summer. To be eligible for the SEAL program, participating students must be enrolled in an educational program, which can include secondary, nontraditional or alternative secondary education programs, home schooling, postsecondary education programs, or other recognized educational programs, such as those offered through the juvenile justice system.

The summer opportunities, which last a minimum of five weeks, help participants develop the skills required to succeed in the workforce and provide participants with direct experience working in real-life work environments and earning money. The program also allows employers to learn about how to provide appropriate accommodations and create more inclusive workplaces for individuals with disabilities, with guidance and support from WFSCB and TWS-VRS staff.

In 2019, 64 students successfully completed WFSCB's SEAL program at 41 worksites in the region, including at local libraries operated by the City of Corpus Christi. This represented an increase of 20 participants from when the program first began in 2017. In total, the program attracted 113 registrants. Of these registrants, 73 completed at least 4 hours of work readiness training provided by WFSCB's Business Services Unit, 69 were placed at a local worksite, and 64 successfully completed five weeks of employment. At the conclusion of the program, five participants who successfully completed the program were offered unsubsidized employment opportunities by their worksite employers.

WFSCB has created a foundation to help build on the successes of the Summer Earn and Learn program and continue growing its partnership with the City of Corpus Christi so that more students with disabilities have the opportunity to work with and learn from local employers, and vice versa. WFSCB staff also regularly attend monthly meetings held by Corpus Christi's Committee for Persons with Disabilities to provide updates to the committee about relevant employment opportunities and resource fairs available to job seekers with disabilities.

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Figure 12. **SUMMER EARN AND LEARN SUCCESS STORY**

- The City of Corpus Christi was successful in placing 5 students within their offices and departments over the summer. Several successful outcomes were shared by employers of the SEAL program regarding their experience with the students and the growth they witnessed as students gained foundational employment skills. The City of Corpus Christi was one of the many employers that had success stories from students that participated in the program.
- [S] was placed with the City of Corpus Christi McDonald Public Library, and assisted in the Library Director's office with clerical duties. She was able to keep her companion, a small dog to help with her anxiety and panic attacks. She was repeatedly complimented on her dependable hard work, and will be kept in mind if a position opens in the future.

- [R] was placed with the City of Corpus Christi McDonald Public Library. Her quiet disposition fit in right with her job duties as arranging and shelving books. She excelled in her duties by finishing her tasks ahead of time with a strong work ethic and worked well with other employees.

- [P] was placed with the City of Corpus Christi Public Library. She was placed assisting with shelving books. The Librarian noticed she was having problems with keeping up and was placed as Library Director's assistant. [P's] computer skills were outstanding; she was tasked to do the library's publication flyers. Ms. Laura Garcia, Public Library Director commended her for her excellent technical skills.



“The City of Corpus Christi, through city ordinance and our Committee for Persons with Disabilities, is committed to assisting persons with unique and special abilities learn vital employment skills that will enable them to find gainful employment, earn wages, and contribute and share in the wealth of our city. The City is appreciative of the opportunity to have assisted in teaching essential employment skills via our partnership with the Texas Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend valuable work training programs and other similar programs with various community partners. It is important to the future of our Coastal Bend community that we realize how important it is to include persons with different employment abilities within our dynamic and diverse workforce. We look forward to continuing this partnership and encourage our Coastal Bend workforce community to employ and give persons of all abilities the opportunity to fully partake in all aspects of our communities.”

MAYOR JOE MCCOMB

SAN MARCOS, TX

Project SEARCH at Ascension Seton

Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area

Cedar Park, TX

(Representing the City of San Marcos on the USCM Workforce Development Council)

Project SEARCH at Ascension Seton is a yearlong internship program designed for young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Project SEARCH is carried out by Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWS-VRS) in collaboration with local hospitals, independent school districts, workforce development boards, and rehabilitation, and disability service providers. The program is based on a successful model that was originally developed at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center in Ohio, and was introduced at Ascension Seton in 2007 as the first program of its kind in Texas. Over 400 organizations in the United States and in other countries operate similar programs based on the Project SEARCH model.

Project SEARCH is a program that provides VRS recipients from local school districts with work readiness and independent-living skills training, career exploration services, real-life work experience, long-term job coaching, and continuous feedback from teachers, skills trainers, and employers. The goal of Project SEARCH is to help youth with disabilities transition successfully into the workforce. The initiative is a collaboration between numerous community organizations, including the El Paso Community Foundation, Hospitals of Providence East Campus, and El Paso and Socorro Independent School Districts. As part of the program, students complete three unpaid internships at the Hospitals of Providence East Campus. Project SEARCH has served three cohorts of 10 students from the El Paso School District and one cohort of 10 students from the Socorro Independent School District, and one participant has already been offered permanent employment at the hospital as a result of the program. WSB serves as the job developer for participants who are not hired permanently by the host business upon conclusion of the program.

Participants enrolled in Project SEARCH gain real-life work experience by interning at four hospital sites in the region: Dell Seton Medical Center at the University of Texas, Ascension Seton Williamson, Ascension Seton Hays, and Ascension Seton Northwest Hospital. Over the course of the program, participants have the opportunity to work with three different departments at the Ascension Seton hospital sites. Participants also receive intensive training and ongoing classroom instruction to help them develop the soft skills needed to succeed in an entry-level job.

Staff from partner organizations collaborate with independent school districts to help share information about Project SEARCH with employees, parents, and eligible students. For example, in September 2019, Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area held a marketing event with TWS-VRS, Goodwill, and Ascension Seton to spread word about the program. Following this, Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area and TWS-VRS developed a weekly information seminar to celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Independent school districts serve as partners for Project SEARCH and provide instructors and skills trainers for each hospital site. With funding from TWS-VRS, Goodwill also provides a Community Rehabilitation Partner to provide job coaching and job development services to program participants over the course of the internship program. Finally, local developmental disability agencies provide long-term employment support and follow-up services to students after the conclusion of the program to assist with retention and career advancement.

Since the inception of the program in 2007, Project SEARCH at Ascension Seton has served over 245 interns and has successfully placed an overwhelming 91% of program participants in employment at hospitals, school districts, local daycare facilities, and other organizations at the conclusion of the program.

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“I am proud of the City of San Marcos’ efforts to maintain its status as an inclusive employer. A truly diverse workforce includes not only different races and cultures, but individuals with different abilities. Making accommodations for employees when necessary is a small price for the tremendous benefit of increased productivity, a wider variety of perspectives, enhanced morale, and retaining employees with valuable experience.”

MAYOR JANE HUGHSON

EL PASO, TX

Student HireAbility Navigator, Year-Round Work Experience, Project HIGHER, Project SEARCH, Summer Earn and Learn

Workforce Solutions Borderplex
El Paso, TX

Every year, Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) in El Paso, Texas, carries out a number of programs designed to help connect individuals with disabilities to meaningful employment opportunities, including Student HireAbility Navigator, Year-Round Work Experience, Project HIGHER, Project SEARCH, and Summer Earn and Learn.

The Student HireAbility Navigator program is funded with money from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS). The program offers services to students with disabilities who are considering postsecondary education and employment

opportunities. WSB's Student HireAbility Navigators work with students to inform them of available resources, including self-advocacy training and peer mentoring, career exploration counseling, workplace readiness training, work-based learning experiences, and counseling on applying to postsecondary educational programs. Through this program, WSB has organized two HireAbility Summits to bring private, nonprofit, and education leaders together for discussions on improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

WSB's Year-Round Work Experience Program provides participants with paid work experience and on-the-job training, helping them to explore potential career paths and gain the skills needed to succeed in the workforce. VRS staff at the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) work with local workforce development boards and employers in the public and private sector to identify potential

Figure 13. WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS BORDERPLEX SUCCESS STORIES

- Summer Earn and Learn – [C] at Stein Mart. [The store manager was] very impressed with the VR clients that had been placed at the store. [She was] especially impressed with a young Associate and sent a note to express their thanks. "We are going to miss [C]. She was an amazing young lady and she did so well working with us. I know she will be successful and if she ever needs a job, she can apply with us. She let us know she is going to focus on school and family. We truly appreciate the youth that you have trusted us in training. We too learn from these young associates that they have a great heart and are ready to learn to be successful individuals in this world. We hope when they leave Stein Mart, they know they are appreciated." – V.M., Store Manager
- Year-Round Work Experience – [I] & [G] at Buddy's Furnishings. They participated in the Year-Round Program and the store sent a note to express their thanks.

"Both [I] and [G] are awesome individuals! Our team loves them because they always behave responsibly and respectfully. They are ready to do the next task and are hard workers! They are also eager to learn. Both students have a positive disposition. Whether they are cleaning windows, dusting furniture or assembling it and attending customers they are eager to please and work efficiently! It is apparent that [I] and [G] enjoy their job as they are always smiling." – Mrs. A, Supervisor. With their earnings [I] and [G] bought themselves school clothes and a Mustang. (They share the car!)

- Project SEARCH – [J] was in the first cohort of students selected to participate in Project SEARCH. Students complete three unpaid internships at the Hospitals of Providence East Campus. [J] is in his first rotation and has already been offered a part-time job directly with the hospital's warehouse department. They've also promised full-time employment in the near future if he accepts.



"The City of El Paso is proud to partner with Workforce Solutions Borderplex in leading the effort to promote inclusivity within the workplace by connecting people with disabilities to employment opportunities. Our goal is to continue to raise awareness while celebrating the contributions made by those with disabilities within our workforce."

MAYOR DEE MARGO

opportunities and appropriate worksites for the program. WSB processes payroll for the program, including costs such as federal income tax withholding, Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) expenses, workers' compensation insurance, and any other fees associated with payroll processing. WSB was one of the first workforce development boards in Texas to initiate the Year-Round Work Experience Program and successfully connected 43 individuals with disabilities to paid work opportunities in the first year of the program. In addition, WSB has secured sufficient funding to provide 56 participants with paid work opportunities in FY 2020.

Project HIGHER is a supported education model designed for VRS clients ages 18 to 25 who have intellectual and developmental disabilities and are interested in pursuing a level-one certificate at El Paso Community College (EPCC). The program involves collaboration with the Masters of Rehabilitation Counseling Program at the University of Texas at El Paso, the Volar Center for Independent Living, Region 19, and other community partners in the region. Prospective participants must apply, interview, and be selected by the Project HIGHER committee to enroll in the program. Upon successful completion of the program, participants work to secure employment in their field of study. WSB serves as the job developer for the program. Since 2015, Project HIGHER has served a total of 30 students, many of whom have been placed in permanent employment upon completion of the program.

Project SEARCH is a program that provides VRS recipients from local school districts with work readiness and independent-living skills training, career exploration

services, real-life work experience, long-term job coaching, and continuous feedback from teachers, skills trainers, and employers. The goal of Project SEARCH is to help youth with disabilities transition successfully into the workforce. The initiative is a collaboration between numerous community organizations, including the El Paso Community Foundation, Hospitals of Providence East Campus, and El Paso and Socorro Independent School Districts. As part of the program, students complete three unpaid internships at the Hospitals of Providence East Campus. Project SEARCH has served three cohorts of 10 students from the El Paso School District and one cohort of 10 students from the Socorro Independent School District, and one participant has already been offered permanent employment at the hospital as a result of the program. WSB serves as the job developer for participants who are not hired permanently by the host business upon conclusion of the program.

In addition to Project SEARCH, Project HIGHER, Year-Round Work Experience, and the Student HireAbility Navigator Program, WSB also operates a Summer Earn and Learn Program for youth with disabilities enrolled in VRS services. In 2019, a total of 90 individuals participated in WSB's Summer Earn & Learn Program.

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CAREER FAIRS & EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

CONNECT EMPLOYERS WITH QUALIFIED TALENT.

Career fairs and educational events, whether held once or on a recurring basis, create important opportunities for recruiters to directly connect with career seekers and learn about how to successfully engage with and bring career seekers with disabilities into their organizations. With each new conversation between a recruiter and a job seeker, employers are presented with an opportunity to consider how they might be able to place an individual candidate in a meaningful position at their companies. While educational events help to inform employers and spark larger conversations around inclusion and company

culture, career fairs make employers aware of individual job seekers and often serve as a bridge over the final barrier standing between a qualified candidate and a stable employment opportunity. Mayors and city staff can play an influential role in ensuring the success of career fairs and educational events by offering financial support, helping to secure meeting space, and actively promoting and participating in organized gatherings. The following best practices are included in this category:

- Greater Kansas City Disability Mentoring Day – Olathe, KS
- North Texas Capabilities Forum – Arlington, TX



“I’m incredibly proud of the work of our Persons with Disabilities Advisory Board, which has received national praise for their efforts in our community over the past 35 years. Their work through the Greater Kansas City Disability Mentoring Day event and the Midwest Ability Summit not only tell the region that Olathe is a great place to live and work for people of all abilities, but it also educates business leaders on the multi-faceted value of hiring workers with disabilities. Studies show these employees perform well, have great longevity, have the proven ability to adapt and overcome, and can even improve workforce morale and productivity. While always desirable, these attributes are even more in demand in our current environment.

Olathe is proud of our strong business community, and even more so of our outstanding residents. It’s our privilege to bring them together for the betterment of all at the Greater Kansas City Disability Mentoring Day.”

MAYOR MICHAEL COPELAND

OLATHE, KS

Greater Kansas City Disability Mentoring Day

*Persons with Disabilities Advisory Board
Olathe, KS*

In 2019, the Persons with Disabilities Advisory Board held its fifteenth annual Greater Kansas City Disability Mentoring Day, an event that is held every October or November in the two neighboring cities of Kansas City, Missouri, and Olathe, Kansas. In Olathe, the event is sponsored by the Olathe Persons with Disabilities Advisory Board and managed by a planning committee of volunteers who are dedicated to increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The event, which is free to all individuals with disabilities, is designed to provide job seekers with opportunities to interact with regional employers and recruiters from government agencies, service organizations, and other local companies. Participants at the event attend a job fair, participate in career exploration activities, and receive on-the-spot training in resume writing, interviewing, job readiness skills, and self-advocacy.

The MidAmerica Nazarene University in Olathe donates the Bell Cultural Events Center on campus each year as meeting space for the Greater Kansas City Disability Mentoring Day, at the request of Olathe Mayor Michael Copeland. In addition, the Olathe City Council and Mayor’s Office provide funding for the Persons with Disabilities Advisory Board to carry out the event and provide lunch for all participants. Meanwhile, employers pay a small fee of \$200 or \$350 to host a table at the event in one or both cities. Businesses and organizations may also pay a higher amount to serve as sponsors for the event.

Due to its longevity, many organizations regularly plan to attend the Greater Kansas City Disability Mentoring Day, especially high school transition programs, which have a new set of students every year. Each year, approximately 150 to 200 job seekers with disabilities participate in the Greater Kansas City Disability Mentoring Day. In 2019, 142 individuals in Olathe participated, along with 85 individuals in Kansas City, for a total of 227 attendees in both cities. Of these attendees, 76 received assistance with their resume and 148 participated in mock interviews. Several job seekers are typically hired directly by employers as a result of the event, and participants who obtain employment occasionally return in subsequent years to speak with job seekers about their successful experiences.

Another particular strength of the Greater Kansas City Disability Mentoring Day is the planning committee’s use of record keeping and statistics. By tracking annual registration numbers, recording basic information about participants, and collecting evaluations from employers and participants at the event, the planning committee has a set of useful data to help inform future events and better understand the impact and reach of the Greater Kansas City Disability Mentoring Day.

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PLANO, TX

North Texas Capabilities Forum

Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas
Arlington, TX

Held in October 2018, the North Texas Capabilities Forum was a diversity and inclusion event designed to help employers in the North Central Texas Workforce Area overcome challenges related to hiring and retaining career seekers and veterans with disabilities. Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas (WSNCT) worked with numerous stakeholders over a seven-month period to plan and organize the forum, which was held in Plano, Texas. Capital One HQ served as the sponsor for the event and provided the meeting space and food and beverages for the forum, along with the graphic design for informational materials to spread word about the event. Details of the event were distributed publicly via WSNCT's dozen local workforce centers, as well as social media channels, partner organizations, local newsletters, and city websites and newspapers. Ultimately, the event attracted 76 employers and 17 career seekers, along with 24 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and 20 community volunteers. At the forum, speakers from organizations such as USAA, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Texas Health Presbyterian, Essilor America, Texas Instruments, and AT&T presented on topics related to employing and supporting individuals with disabilities in the workforce. The Mayor of Plano also attended the forum to share information on the "State

of the Workforce" and encouraged employers at the forum to consider how they might create opportunities for career seekers with disabilities in their organizations. Bank of America shared information about their Supported Services division, which employs individuals with intellectual disabilities. Participants at the forum completed surveys, and the reviews demonstrated a great need in the region for similar initiatives to help draw awareness about the barriers to employment that exist for career seekers with disabilities and strategies for overcoming these obstacles.

As a follow-on to the North Texas Capabilities Forum, employers at the event were challenged to participate in a design thinking project to identify areas where they might be able to apply some of the best practices and knowledge shared at the forum. This ultimately led to a stakeholder meeting with representatives from WSNCT, Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWS-VRS), Toyota, and Bank of America to explore Toyota North America's vision of becoming a leader in sourcing, hiring, training, and supporting career seekers with disabilities.

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“The City of Plano is the epicenter for job creation in Collin County. We’ve long held the belief that every individual can bring a level of excellence and added value to the organization they work for. Because of our strong foundation of core values, Human Resources policies and a culture of inclusion, we provide great opportunities and meaningful employment for job seekers with disabilities. Initiatives such as the North Texas Capabilities Forum provide us with yet another platform to communicate best practices and encourage employers to consider all members of our educated and highly skilled workforce when hiring talent. Together, we can provide our residents – and those in all of Collin County – the opportunity for prosperity.”

MAYOR HARRY LAROSILIERE

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

USE CREATIVE SOLUTIONS TO TACKLE BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT.

As cities work to expand access to employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, they may consider a wide range of options to address barriers to employment. Creative and innovative approaches can amplify existing efforts, leading to new tools and resources for raising awareness and meeting the needs of job seekers from all backgrounds. The best practices below are examples of how organizations have gone above

and beyond what is required under existing policy in an effort to build more inclusive communities and ensure that workforce development services and employment opportunities are available to everyone. The following best practices are included in this category:

- Labor Market Intelligence Initiative – Louisville, KY
- Physical Redesign of an American Jobs Center to Increase Accessibility – Spokane, WA



LOUISVILLE, KY

MAYOR GREG FISCHER
PRESIDENT, U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS



Labor Market Intelligence Initiative
KentuckianaWorks
Louisville, KY

Funded through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), KentuckianaWorks' Labor Market

Intelligence (LMI) initiative performs research on the labor market in the Louisville area so that employers, policymakers, and community organizations can be better informed about job seekers and the challenges facing individuals who are unemployed or not actively seeking work. KentuckianaWorks' LMI research has estimated that within the Louisville region, approximately 60% of individuals ages 25-64 with disabilities are not working, a significantly higher percentage than individuals without disabilities -- and, at the time the research was conducted, triple the overall rate of all non-working adults ages 25-64.

KentuckianaWorks has presented its research findings to multiple audiences in the Louisville region, including the KentuckianaWorks Board of Directors, the KentuckianaWorks Chief Local Elected Officials Board, the Louisville Chamber

of Commerce's Barriers to Employment Task Force, and the KentuckyWorks Collaborative, a task force that guides Kentucky's workforce development efforts with input from local employers and state and federal agencies. KentuckianaWorks' research has also been shared widely on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, as well as with the nearly 2,000 subscribers of KentuckianaWorks' Labor Market Update newsletter.

The findings that KentuckianaWorks have produced have helped draw greater awareness in the community about barriers to employment that specific populations in the Louisville region face, particularly individuals with disabilities. In general, conducting research and collecting data at the local level serves as a promising practice for addressing inequities in the labor market, allowing for employment barriers to be clearly identified and ultimately addressed through informed advocacy efforts and policy solutions.

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SPOKANE, WA

Physical Redesign of an American Jobs Center to Increase Accessibility

Spokane Workforce Council
Spokane, WA

In 2016, the Spokane Workforce Council conducted a review of customer experience at WorkSource Spokane, an American Job Center (AJC) in Washington State, and identified opportunities to incorporate Customer-Centered Design (CCD) theory into a redesign of the physical space of the building. The goal of CCD is to build a product or service from the perspective of end users to ensure that their individual needs, wants, and limitations are considered. To effectively examine how WorkSource Spokane could better serve customers through a physical redesign of the building, staff from the Spokane Workforce Council and its AJC partners observed how guests interacted with the space and convened an Accessibility Advisory Committee made up of volunteers with disabilities to provide feedback and recommendations for maximizing customer experience and engagement. The Accessibility Advisory Committee assisted in formulating a new layout for the redesigned space and selecting appropriate furniture, technology, and building signage.

As a result of the review process, numerous changes were made in the redesign of the building. For example, stanchion posts and lines in the waiting area were eliminated because they posed navigational difficulties for individuals with visual disabilities. Chairs and computer stations were equipped with wheels to allow individuals with wheelchairs and scooters to move furniture as needed,

and passageways were widened beyond ADA requirements to allow for greater ease of access. WorkSource Spokane designed and introduced new tables and workstations, along with additional charging stations and upgraded WiFi to ensure greater accessibility and functionality. Photographs taken before and after the redesign provide a glimpse of the new layout. This has resulted in easier physical navigation of the building and a more usable and welcoming space for customers, leading to an increased number of customer visitors and improved access to workforce development services. In addition, the new user-friendly design of the building has contributed to improvements in staff satisfaction and morale.

The redesign of WorkSource Spokane accompanied Spokane Workforce Council's transition to an Integrated Service Delivery (ISD) approach, which involved organizing staff into functional service teams and co-enrolling customers in multiple workforce programs funded through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). In conjunction with the physical redesign of the building, this model has allowed Spokane Workforce to leverage funding between programs, resulting in more efficient service delivery and expanded offerings in the workforce system for customers of all backgrounds.

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“The City of Spokane is grateful for the dedication and passion of the Spokane Workforce Council. As a member of their Board, I am inspired by their commitment to improving accessibility within their building to continue providing individuals with disabilities the skills and resources to expand employment opportunities. The City has worked closely with the Workforce Council in developing our own Supported Employment Program, opening a HUD Envision Center, and building a more responsive, 21st Century workforce.”

MAYOR NADINE WOODWARD

CONCLUSION

AS DEMONSTRATED BY THE BEST PRACTICES ABOVE, THERE ARE MANY EXISTING MODELS THAT CITIES AND COMMUNITIES CAN CONSIDER AS THEY WORK TO EXPAND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH

DISABILITIES. Whether carrying out system-wide initiatives, establishing mayor's offices and other institutions dedicated to disability rights and employment, or organizing hiring fairs and educational events designed to raise awareness about employment barriers and help connect employers with qualified job seekers, there is an abundance of information and resources available for cities that are dedicated to the cause of equal access to employment opportunities for all.

Nevertheless, this collection of best practices is by no means a comprehensive listing. Indeed, each of the best practices that appear in this publication were collected before or around the same time COVID-19 swept across the United States and the rest of the globe. In this new environment where millions of jobs have abruptly disappeared and daily life is still being significantly shaped by COVID-19, there is a heightened need for mayors, city staff, and community organizations to brainstorm new ways of engaging and including people of all backgrounds in a reshaped economy.

It is still not fully clear how the emerging post-COVID-19 economy will look. What is clear, though, is that the policies and decisions that mayors, city staff, civic society leaders, and employers implement in the coming months will play a critical role in the economic recovery and help to shape the future of work. Approaching this crisis with a great deal of creativity and entrepreneurship will spawn new solutions that will in turn help to build a stronger, more resilient economy than ever before -- one that will be more inclusive of job seekers with disabilities and other underrepresented populations that face significant barriers to employment. While stay-at-home orders and work-from-

home policies present many challenges for businesses, they also present new opportunities for employers to consider new ways of operating that may ultimately prove to be more flexible and accommodating for all job seekers.

As mayors, city staff, and business leaders look to the future, it is also important to remember the past. A foundational concept inherent in the ADA is that workers should have access to the accommodations, or supports, they need to be productive. The importance of this concept has come to the forefront in the last few months, and will likely remain a key component of work and the workplace moving forward. Every worker has had to learn to adapt and to be flexible in the face of change. Ensuring access to appropriate accommodations and flexibility so that all Americans can succeed in the workforce, including those with disabilities, is crucial. We should remember this important connection between our collective response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the spirit of the ADA during this unforgettable year.

The upcoming 30th Anniversary of the ADA on July 26, 2020, presents an excellent opportunity for cities and communities to renew their commitment to career seekers with disabilities. The State Exchange on Employment and Disability has prepared useful resources for state and local leaders to reference as they respond to COVID-19 and prepare to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the ADA (see Appendix C). As you consider how your city's workforce will recover from the unprecedented shock caused by COVID-19, we challenge you to include a diverse set of perspectives at the table and use the resources in this publication to incorporate forward-looking policies and best practices which will ensure that job seekers with disabilities have greater access to meaningful employment opportunities now and in the future.

APPENDIX A WDC DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT WORKING GROUP MEMBER LIST

DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT WORKING GROUP

Chair:

Pamela Nabors

President & CEO
CareerSource Central Florida
Orlando, FL

Members:

Martin Aguirre

CEO
Workforce Solutions of South Plains
Lubbock, TX

Tamara Atkinson

Executive Director
Workforce Solutions Capital Area
Austin, TX

Catherine Awwad

Executive Director
Northwest Regional WIB
Waterbury, CT

Janice Berechi-Onyejiako

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Nashville, TN

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Pembroke Pines, FL

Nancy Dischinat

Executive Director
Lehigh Valley Workforce Development Board
Allentown, PA

Deborah Erwin

Student HireAbility Navigator
Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas
Arlington, TX

John Flanagan

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Tampa, FL

Luther Jackson

Program Manager
NOVA Workforce Development
Sunnyvale, CA

Alex Johnson

President and CEO
Capital Workforce Partners
Hartford, CT

Angela Carr Klitzsch

President and CEO
EmployIndy
Indianapolis, IN

Laurie Bouillion Larrea

President
Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas
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Nick Loret de Mola

Assistant Director
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Merced, CA

Leila Melendez

Chief Operating Officer
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El Paso, TX

Jim McShane

Chief Executive Officer
CareerSource Capital Region
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Clyde McQueen

President & CEO
Full Employment Council, Inc.
Kansas City, MO

Erin Porterfield

Executive Director
Heartland Workforce Solutions
Omaha, NE

Karin Norington-Reaves

CEO
Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership
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APPENDIX B DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT BEST PRACTICE SURVEY TEMPLATES

Figure B.1. DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT BEST PRACTICE SURVEY TEMPLATE

The United States Conference of Mayors Workforce Development Council Disability Employment Best Practices Survey

Please send all questions and completed surveys to Micah Kyler at mkyler@usmayors.org

Title of the Disability Employment Project, Program, or Initiative:
.....
.....
(ex: Mayor Emanuel's Task Force on Employment and Economic Opportunity for People with Disabilities)

Organization Name:
.....
(ex: Office of the Mayor - City of Chicago)

Organization Address:
.....
(Full address of organization)

Contact Person(s):

..... <i>(Name)</i> <i>(Title)</i>
..... <i>(Email Address)</i> <i>(Phone Number)</i>

Executive Summary: *(Brief overview of the project, program, or initiative -- 100 words).*
.....
.....
.....

Project Funding: *(Details of how your project was funded: federal, state, city, other).*
.....
.....

Community Outreach / Project Implementation: *(Details of how project stakeholders reached the target population and carried out the project; timeline of the project; whether the project is ongoing or has ended; barriers to success).*
.....
.....

Mayor's Role or City's Role: *(Your mayor's role in the project, if any).*
.....
.....

Workforce Development Board's Role: *(The role of your local workforce board development in the project, if any).*
.....
.....

Project Outcomes: *(Highlights of how the project has impacted its target population, most recent project data, numbers and statistics showing what results the project has produced).*
.....
.....

Success Stories: *(Important success stories of overcoming challenges, placing individuals into employment, providing talent to businesses from the target population).*
.....
.....

Additional Materials Related to the Program: *(Informational brochures about the program, program summaries, program reports, media outreach fliers, etc. -- please include these additional materials as email attachments, hyperlinks, or copy/paste them below).*
.....
.....

Figure B.2. TEMPLATE FOR OBSERVATION & ANALYSIS OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT BEST PRACTICE SURVEYS

The United States Conference of Mayors Workforce Development Council Disability Employment Best Practices Survey

Template for Observation & Analysis of Disability Employment Best Practice Surveys

In a few words, how would you categorize this best practice?
.....
.....
.....

Is this an innovative example of a best practice?
.....
.....

Does this best practice have an innovative financing model?
.....
.....

In your view, is this best practice a model that could easily be replicated in other cities? Please explain.
.....
.....

Does this best practice have strong mayoral leadership and engagement?
.....
.....

What positive elements of this best practice (i.e. data points, success stories, lessons learned) stood out most to you?
.....
.....

Do you have any questions you would like to ask about the best practice or comments you would like to share with the submitting organization?
.....
.....

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rank this best practice, where 10 represents an excellent established best practice and 1 represents an emerging best practice?
.....
.....

APPENDIX C RESOURCES FROM THE STATE EXCHANGE ON EMPLOYMENT AND DISABILITY (SEED)

The State Exchange on Employment and Disability (SEED) offers a wide variety of policy resources for state and local leaders seeking to achieve a more inclusive workforce and economy for career seekers with disabilities. The links below include numerous resources for state and local leaders to reference as they respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and prepare to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act on July 26, 2020:

1. This Template Proclamation Recognizing and Commemorating the 30th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act was developed by the SEED team in response to requests from state governments, state legislatures, and local elected officials. Hyperlinked are also two separate examples of actual proclamations that the cities of Tempe, AZ and Washington, D.C. adopted last year or plan to adopt this year to celebrate the anniversary of the ADA.
2. The SEED Team has also developed a Sample Executive Order for mayors to consider using to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the ADA in their cities and establish task forces dedicated to increasing the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce, as well as a one-pager with ideas of ways for cities to recognize and celebrate the ADA throughout the year.
3. The SEED team has compiled a policy brief entitled "COVID 19: Federal Disability-Specific and Other Related Guidance" to assist state and local policymakers as they implement new policies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The policy brief includes useful links to existing disability-related guidance and official resources developed by federal government agencies in response to COVID-19, along with brief descriptions that provide helpful context.
4. In addition, the SEED team has developed a SEED Policy Checklist: A Guidepost for Analyzing State Policy from a Disability Perspective, which "serves as a lens or guidepost for state and local government leaders when designing, implementing, and evaluating public policies (including legislation and executive orders) to ensure meaningful and effective inclusion of people with disabilities in mainstream society, including the workplace."
5. The Section 188 Disability Reference Guide "provides updated information and technical assistance that can help American Job Centers and their partners in the workforce development system meet the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity requirements for individuals with disabilities in Section 188 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act." The reference guide also "includes examples of promising practices that can help promote equal access for individuals with disabilities to the American Job Center (One Stop) system."
6. The SEED team regularly updates its webpage with helpful resources for advancing disability-inclusive policies and practices in the workforce, including policy briefs, webinars, podcasts, and blog posts and articles.





THE U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

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