

READY AND ABLE:
ADDRESSING LABOR MARKET NEEDS
AND BUILDING PRODUCTIVE CAREERS
FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH
COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES

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PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND
RESEARCH CENTER TO PROMOTE
LEADERSHIP FOR INCREASING
EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC
INDEPENDENCE OF ADULTS WITH
DISABILITIES

APRIL 2011

Acknowledgments

The National Technical Assistance and Research Center to Promote Leadership for Increasing Employment and Economic Independence of Adults with Disabilities (NTAR Leadership Center) is a collaboration of partners with expertise in workforce development, disability employment, economic development, financial education, benefits planning, and leadership development. Established in September 2007 through a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, the NTAR Leadership Center is housed at the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. The mission of the NTAR Leadership Center is to build capacity and leadership at the federal, state, and local levels to enable change across workforce development and disability-specific systems that will increase employment and economic self-sufficiency for adults with disabilities.

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This report was published by the NTAR Leadership Center under a grant/contract from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (Number OD-16563-07-75-4-34). The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Labor, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply the endorsement of the U.S. Department of Labor.

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Executive Summary

People with disabilities can work and want to work. Given the growing body of evidence that demonstrates that workers with disabilities meet or exceed the job performance of co-workers without disabilities, the continuing high unemployment rate and low labor force participation rate of people with disabilities deprive the nation of a valuable pool of talent. Increasing the employment of people with disabilities produces significant benefits to the economy, the nation, and people with disabilities themselves.

The National Technical Assistance and Research (NTAR) Leadership Center at Rutgers University chose to address this issue by conducting research on employer and market-driven initiatives to recruit, hire, train, and retain people with disabilities. Using a case study approach, NTAR Leadership Center researchers selected 13 diverse examples from around the nation of partnerships — between employers and trusted workforce intermediaries — with a track record of helping employers recruit, hire, train, and retain employees with disabilities. Over the course of six months, researchers conducted in-depth research and interviewed and visited leaders and practitioners at the heart of these business-public collaborations. The goal of this research was to identify successful elements of these strategies and offer lessons that can be learned by employers and employer organizations, workforce development and disability service organizations, and federal, state, and local policymakers.

While each partnership has its own distinctive qualities, NTAR Leadership Center researchers found several overall themes, identified as key *Ready and Able* findings:

- **Employers respond to a business case for employing people with disabilities.** Employers believe that people with disabilities who possess the skills needed for the job add value to the employer and positively affect the “bottom line.” Successful experiences with qualified workers with disabilities increase the employer’s willingness to expand employment opportunities. Because employers tend to listen to each other, business-to-business marketing of the value of employing people with disabilities is most powerful.
- **Innovative collaborations with and between workforce-supplying organizations enable employer efforts to recruit, hire, train, and support employees with disabilities.** Employers do not want to have to maintain relationships with many varied workforce-supplying organizations — they find it daunting to learn the intricacies of the workforce and disability service worlds. Accordingly, they prefer a single point of contact to coordinate needed assistance and supports they require to recruit and hire. In some cases, intermediaries organize and coordinate supports and provide technical assistance on workforce issues, including disability-specific issues.
- **Collaborations ensure that workers are qualified and productive.** Many effective projects feature internships and mentorships, encouraging hands-on guidance and work experience. Others provide opportunities for workers to earn credentials and degrees for jobs with good wages and benefits, or offer access to career ladders, workplace training,

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and skills. Needed supports and accommodations are provided to enable employees to be successful once on the job.

- **Successful collaborations nurture and reward continuous leadership.** Leaders in the partnerships studied showed a willingness to develop, coordinate, nurture, and manage the collaboration.

The chapters in this report are organized to highlight different partnership models.

Chapter 1, “Challenging the Conventional Wisdom: National Employer Collaborations” profiles two large global companies that organized local partnerships with service agencies to support disability employment initiatives.

The first profile describes how *Walgreens* established a corporate goal of having 30% of the workers in its new distribution centers be people with disabilities, with a focus on people with intellectual disabilities. The profile further describes how the company established effective partnerships with state and community agencies in South Carolina and Connecticut and exceeded its goal at its two new distribution centers in Anderson, South Carolina and Windsor, Connecticut.

The second profile provides an overview of the *Lockheed Martin* Seamless Transition Apprenticeship Program to recruit and train injured veterans for career path jobs in supply chain management and information technology. The success of this effort is the result of the company’s innovative collaborations with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and the Wounded Warriors advocacy group.

Chapter 2, “Winning Together: A Sector Strategy Model” features a profile of an intermediary that focuses on a particular sector.

This chapter describes the *International Association of Jewish Vocational Services’* Financial Career Pathways project. Building on a partnership developed by its Los Angeles affiliate with six banks, the Association coordinated an effort among three of its affiliates to serve as intermediaries between job seekers with disabilities and banks in their regions. The project served 145 individuals with disabilities.

Chapter 3, “Preferred Solutions: How Job Brokers for People with Disabilities Meet Employer Needs” features two profiles of staffing companies that coordinate outreach and disability services in order to provide multiple employer customers with qualified employees with disabilities.

The first profile examines *GoodTemps*, a staffing agency operated by Goodwill Industries of Greater New York and Northern New Jersey. GoodTemps maintains relationships with a long list of local service provider agencies from which it recruits job seekers with disabilities to meet its employer customers’ workforce needs. GoodTemps places more than 2,000 people each year; approximately 60% are individuals with disabilities.

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The second profile describes the *Manpower Inc.* TechReach program in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Manpower partnered with employers, the workforce system, the vocational rehabilitation agency, and the local community college to recruit and train people with disabilities to respond to a business need for skilled employees for electronic assembly.

Chapter 4, “Career Tracks: Placing Skilled College Students and Graduates with Disabilities through Partnerships between Employers, Colleges and Universities, and Intermediaries” profiles three organizations that support nationwide networks of employers to recruit college graduates with disabilities.

The first profile describes the National Business and Disability Council’s *Emerging Leaders* program, which partners with businesses to help them find outstanding talent while also considering diversity and inclusion in their hiring practices. The program provides paid summer internships for highly qualified undergraduate and graduate students with disabilities at major employers throughout the nation.

The second profile examines the *Career Opportunities for Students with Disabilities* program, a national association comprising over 600 colleges and universities and nearly 300 national employers. The program promotes coordination between campus career and disability services offices and serves as a recruitment hub for college students with disabilities for collaborating universities and employers throughout the United States.

The third profile describes *Lime Connect*, a nonprofit organization that connects undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students to major companies in the United States and Canada. Corporate partners work with Lime Connect to source talented students with disabilities for full-time, internship, and co-op opportunities.

Chapter 5, “Bridging Workforce Gaps: Hiring People with Disabilities through Local and Regional Collaboratives” features three profiles of local organizations that assist multiple local employers to recruit, hire, and retain employees with disabilities.

The first profile describes the Supported Employment Network led by the *New Bedford, Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce*. The Chamber serves as an intermediary between local service provider agencies and over 250 employers to meet the workforce needs of member employers and provide opportunities for good jobs for people with disabilities.

The second profile features the *Start on Success* program operated by the Pittsburgh Public School System in partnership with the workforce system, the vocational rehabilitation agency, and local employers. The program provides paid internships for high school students with disabilities at collaborating employers and offers a pipeline of skilled employees to meet workforce needs.

The third profile describes *Project SEARCH*, which was started at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital and has been replicated across the nation to solve workforce problems through recruitment of employees with disabilities. A core element of the program’s model is

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partnerships with local school districts and service providers to recruit, train, and support employees for skilled jobs.

Chapter 6, “Catalysts: Business-Affiliated Organizations Leading Disability and Employment Partnerships” profiles two organizations that foster partnerships between service providers and employers seeking to employ people with disabilities.

The first profile describes *disabilityworks*, a joint initiative of the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and the City of Chicago. The organization serves as a hub linking business, nonprofit, and community partners with the goal of expanding employment opportunities for people with disabilities while meeting workforce needs.

The second profile features the *Oregon Business Leadership Network*, which, until it closed in April 2010, was an employer-led organization that provided Oregon businesses with networking opportunities, education, and resources to effectively increase understanding and awareness of disability issues in the workplace. The organization used an economic development approach for a myriad of nationally recognized activities and partnerships, all directed toward assisting employers in finding talented individuals with disabilities for their workforces.

Conclusion

A growing number and a broad range of America’s leading companies view people with disabilities as a valuable source for meeting their needs for reliable, skilled employees. The *Ready and Able* research concludes that the future is bright, but challenging, for the expansion of employment opportunities for people with disabilities. A core element of state and community efforts to stimulate the employment of people with disabilities should be the establishment of partnerships and collaborations between disability service organizations, the workforce development system (including employment and training entities and postsecondary institutions), business-serving associations, and economic development agencies to support employers in recruiting, hiring, training, and retaining employees with disabilities.

Introduction

Disabilities and Work: Solutions for Markets and People

We know the problem. It is complex, and defies bromides and sound bites.

The United States spends an estimated \$300 billion annually to support unemployed people with disabilities who could be, and are willing to be, employed.¹ A study conducted in 2000 by the National Organization on Disability/Harris Poll indicated that 67% of working-age people with disabilities would rather be working than be unemployed and nonproductive. Yet, the labor force participation rates for people with disabilities is less than half that of people without disabilities. In June 2010, the labor force participation rate for working-age men (ages 16 to 64) with disabilities was 36.7% compared to 83.8% for working-age men without disabilities. For women, the rates were 30.8% and 71.7%, respectively.² For those people with disabilities considered to be in the labor force, unemployment rates are significantly higher. In June 2010, the unemployment rates for men and women (ages 16 to 64) with a disability were 16.2% and 14.8%, respectively compared to 10.3% and 8.8% for men and women without a disability in that age group.³ People with disabilities represent a vast, underutilized labor pool.

Employment has important implications for the lives of people with disabilities. As was noted in the influential Chicago Mayoral Task Force Report on People with Disabilities,

When people with disabilities become employed, they achieve a “vocational identity,” an identity that everyone in this country values. People with and without disabilities who achieve this vocational identity have more disposable income, pay taxes, purchase more goods and services and have increased financial security. Subsequently, people who are gainfully employed are more independent, self-confident, make greater contributions to their communities and in many instances, no longer rely on costly government programs and subsidies.⁴

In short, lack of employment for people with disabilities has profound personal and financial effects on their lives.

Additionally, given the growing body of evidence that workers with disabilities meet or exceed the job performances of co-workers without disabilities, the continuing high unemployment rate and low labor force participation rate of people with disabilities deprive the nation’s workforce of a valuable source of talent.⁵

Over the past decade, research on this problem has focused on negative attitudes and workplace culture that inhibit employers from hiring people with disabilities. This research has been valuable in understanding the obstacles to the employment of people with

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disabilities. The NTAR Leadership Center was aware, however, of successful employer and market-driven initiatives to recruit and hire people with disabilities, and decided to initiate an in-depth study of such initiatives to identify elements that made them successful.

In early 2009, the NTAR Leadership Center began new research by conducting a literature review of employer-initiated and market-driven approaches to recruiting, hiring, and retaining employees with disabilities. The review noted that there was limited published literature and research on these employer-driven efforts and the factors that contributed to their success over the long run.⁶

The review of available literature on successful market-driven practices to recruit and retain employees with disabilities focused on four key areas:

1. Direct recruitment and hiring initiatives by private-sector businesses as well as the public sector;
2. Recruitment and hiring initiatives by staffing companies;
3. Partnerships that have been developed by employers with workforce intermediaries, such as workforce, vocational rehabilitation, disability-specific service providers, and other organizations specifically for the recruitment and training of employees with disabilities; and
4. Entrepreneurial efforts and other initiatives to support people with disabilities to be self-employed and/or own their own businesses.

The review found evidence of numerous innovative initiatives by some of the nation's leading companies to recruit, hire, and retain employees with disabilities. A common and significant element among these companies was that they *chose* to establish disability employment initiatives. In each case, the company determined that hiring people with disabilities would add value to the company's workforce and positively affect the company's bottom line. This affirmed to NTAR Leadership Center researchers the presence of an underlying and less well-understood business case for hiring people with disabilities. In the competitive environment of the business world, employers make decisions for reasons that improve their business conditions and operations. Had the factors contributing to those decisions been understood by policymakers and service providers and their leadership? Very little research had been performed on what made initiatives *work*, not fail, on what motivated *employers*, rather than *providers*. Previous reports had examined employer *culture*, not employer *behavior*.

Partnerships with workforce intermediaries are a key factor in successful employer-driven recruitment, hiring, and retention initiatives.

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Based on these findings, the research team concluded that a deeper understanding of the dynamics of business decisions around hiring people with disabilities might yield transformative insights into how agencies and providers serving people with disabilities could align their investments with labor market need and employer practice. The research team believed this alignment with the forces of demand could be a gateway to breakthrough results.

The literature review yielded glimpses into the motivation and experiences of employers that have established disability recruitment and hiring efforts. The review discovered a critical component of employer initiatives. Many, if not all, are built on and sustained by a partnership with an intermediary, generally with a single trusted entity that recruits individuals and either coordinates outreach, assessment, training, and support services from multiple agencies for prospective employees or provides all of the services itself. Examples included Walgreens, Lockheed Martin, and Manpower, all of which are profiled in this study.

The literature review arrived at a premise. Partnerships and collaborations with workforce intermediaries are a key element in employer-driven recruitment, hiring, and retention initiatives. The research team concluded that there was a need for in-depth research that would identify and describe the key factors in the success of business-driven initiatives and the partnerships that often appeared essential to their operation. This trend is one that has important implications for leaders and practitioners working in disability and workforce development systems who are looking to better engage employers to expand employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

The research team selected a case study methodology to explore common elements and unique aspects of diverse partnerships between employers and disability service organizations. Case study research is accepted as appropriate to explore phenomena and produce new theory. It is also consistent with models of learning and gaining expertise.⁷ The research team recognizes that only a few of the profiles in this study include data to document success. In each profile, however, there is testimony from stakeholders, most notably employers, regarding the successful elements of the partnership. As such, these profiles will lead to a better understanding of partnerships as a strategy to expand the employment of people with disabilities and can form the basis for further research.

The NTAR Leadership Center research team chose 13 diverse examples from around the nation of partnerships that work with employers to recruit, hire, train, and retain employees with disabilities for in-depth study. The focus of these profiles was to uncover key lessons learned, critical practices, and essential organizational behaviors that are associated with successful partnerships and collaborations between employers and organizations looking to place individuals with disabilities in good jobs. Additionally, the study sought to understand and validate a business case for employers of hiring and retaining employees with disabilities. What recruitment practices make sense for employers? What is a sustainable policy that matches supply and demand over the long term? What makes for effective relationships between employers and community organizations? Why are these brokers critical to job seekers with disabilities and what makes them work?

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In this way, the study findings serve to both show the way for additional employers to establish such partnerships and collaborations, as well as to prepare workforce and disability employment service providers to develop more effective strategies and partnerships that respond to employer needs.

Over the course of six months, researchers interviewed and visited leaders and practitioners at the heart of these business-public collaborations. They carefully examined practices fostering economic independence and workforce access for people with disabilities through market-oriented approaches. They sifted through their findings, the established literature, and spoke with employers, to identify the core principles and the foundational practices that result in sustainable success. This research, without a doubt, shows that the most productive innovations grew from organizations and leadership committed both to the competitive and social logic of hiring people with disabilities. These partnerships required trust, collaboration, and a sense of market urgency.

This report's chapters are organized to highlight diverse partnership models:

- Chapter 1 comprises two profiles of *large national* companies that organized local partnerships with service agencies to support disability employment initiatives;
- Chapter 2 features one profile of an *intermediary that coordinated* disability services for multiple employers *in a specific sector*;
- Chapter 3 features two profiles of *staffing companies* that coordinated outreach and disability services in order to provide multiple employer customers with qualified employees with disabilities;
- Chapter 4 includes three profiles of *national organizations* that supported nationwide networks of employers to recruit *college graduates with disabilities*;
- Chapter 5 features three profiles of *local organizations that assisted multiple local employers* to recruit, hire, and retain employees with disabilities; and
- Chapter 6 presents two profiles of organizations that *fostered partnerships* between service providers and employers that want to employ people with disabilities.

One common element in these profiles is that intermediaries assist employers to recruit, hire, and retain employees with disabilities through coordinating services and supports from organizations that provide employment and disability services.

Findings

This study examined a diverse spectrum of private and public organizations, including many identified in the literature review for their potential leadership in disability employment initiatives.

In all, the 13 profiles in this report are based on over 100 interviews, and six months of fieldwork. In each profile, the documented outcomes of the initiatives are included, where available, and the implications for employers, policy leaders, and providers are discussed. The culmination of this analysis is a core set of findings that provide insight as to what makes for innovative and sustaining collaborations in workforce development.

In assessing the outcomes and implications of the case studies, the NTAR Leadership Center research team developed *four core findings* that serve as a common point of reference.

1. Employers respond to a business case for employing people with disabilities. Identified in this research are three trends in how employers see workers meeting their business and workforce needs:

- Employees with disabilities who possess the skills needed for the job add value to the employer and positively affect the “bottom line.”
- Successful experiences with qualified employees with disabilities increase the employer’s willingness to expand employment opportunities, and
- Business-to-business marketing of the value of employing people with disabilities is most effective.

2. Innovative collaborations with and between workforce-supplying organizations enable employer efforts to recruit, hire, train, and support employees with disabilities. The report notes five aspects of this theme:

- Employers do not want to have to maintain relationships with many varied workforce-supplying organizations — they find it daunting to learn the intricacies of the workforce and disability service worlds on their own;
- Accordingly, they want a single point of contact to coordinate the assistance and supports they need to recruit and hire;
- Assistance and supports are based on an employer’s needs and standards;
- The collaborations organize and coordinate supports and provide technical assistance on workforce issues, including disability-specific issues; and
- Employers come to depend on the workforce-supplying organization.

3. **Collaborations ensure that workers are qualified and productive.** As will be seen in the report, effective projects feature:

- Internships and mentorships that encourage hands-on guidance and work experience;
- Employment based on labor market needs as defined by employers;
- Opportunity for workers to earn credentials and degrees for good jobs with benefits;
- Access to career ladders, workplace training, and skills;
- Training in soft skills; and
- Provision of needed supports and accommodations to assist employees to be successful once on the job.

4. **Successful collaborations nurture and reward continuous leadership.** Leaders in the partnerships studied exemplified three principal traits:

- Willingness to develop, coordinate, nurture, and manage the collaboration;
- Ability to motivate, inspire, and connect employer leaders at all levels to continuously define workplace job needs and support the employment process; and
- Ability to act day in and day out as a champion to make things happen.

As this report illustrates, what are often seen as barriers and obstacles can become catalysts for innovation and gateways of access to sustained employment for people with disabilities through the presence of market-driven collaborations. This report points out a number of the most highly regarded innovations.

Finally, this report offers new, more in-depth insight into what makes progressive, successful market-driven partnerships and collaborations work. It includes detailed descriptions of numerous operations within these initiatives and draws salient conclusions about promising and effective practices. Some of the conclusions may be more familiar to readers of workforce analysis, and represent common-sense practices that will never fall out of favor but bear repeating. This report draws readers' attention to those practices that generate and reinforce trusted relationships among public and private partners that are essential to actual job creation — that, in fact, *spur job and economic activity*.

Chapter 1: Challenging the Conventional Wisdom: National Employer Collaborations

Profiled in this chapter:

- Walgreens Distribution Centers
- Lockheed Martin's Seamless Transition Apprenticeship Program

This chapter discusses the potential of large national employers seeking to establish targeted disability employment initiatives as a phenomenon generating hundreds of new job opportunities. These opportunities require extensive, sophisticated partnerships with local providers and agencies that find they must navigate and work out complex arrangements with global corporations. The collaborations described in this chapter are particularly important in showing models of effective practices and policies for provider agencies developing relationships and responsibilities with major employers. The cases also demonstrate to employers how to rethink their workforce practices to attract talented workers with disabilities, and provide the training and supports that retain valued workers.

The first profile describes how a major global retail firm, Walgreens, spearheaded a disability employment initiative at two new distribution centers in South Carolina and Connecticut. State and local government agencies, local community service providers, and Walgreens arrived at a successful system for hiring people with significant cognitive disabilities to staff more than one third of the workforce at its distribution centers in two locations. These developments have attracted the attention of other large national brand retailers that have met with Walgreens and its partners to learn more about the program. Walgreens has also expanded this practice to additional distribution centers.

The second profile provides a brief overview of Lockheed Martin's success in establishing the Seamless Transition Apprenticeship Program (STAP) to recruit and train injured veterans for career path jobs. STAP's success required Lockheed Martin to forge innovative collaborations with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and the Wounded Warriors advocacy group. Despite the global scope, complexity, and diversity of Lockheed Martin's operations, the firm has carved out niche career and training paths for veterans with significant disabilities.

As the research will demonstrate, both of these cases are partnerships that work well to effectively engage public- and private-sector organizations and funding in a sustainable initiative that succeeds in its goal to generate employment in private markets by meeting employer workforce needs.

Walgreens Distribution Centers: How Walgreens Opened the Door

Introduction

Walgreens is the nation's largest drugstore chain with sales of \$63 billion in 2009.⁸ In a 2009/2010 *CAREERS* and *The disABLED* magazine survey, readers ranked Walgreens second in the nation for creating a positive workplace environment for people with disabilities. It ranked sixth among food and drug stores on *Fortune's* list of the world's most admired companies, and was named a "best diversity company" in the *Diversity/Careers* magazine's readers choice survey in June/July 2009.⁹ *The Wall Street Journal* said Walgreens' "innovative program" is offering jobs "to people with mental and physical disabilities of a nature that has frequently deemed them 'unemployable,' while saving Walgreens money through automation."¹⁰ According to *Supply Chain Management Review*,¹¹ Walgreens' disability jobs initiative offers a solution to the needs of businesses faced with "an aging workforce" and "the need to redesign supply chains" to accommodate a workforce that is older, language-challenged, and has physical and mental disabilities.

How did Walgreens become recognized, and what can other organizations learn from its approach to maintaining a competitive workforce? The success of this initiative is found in the ongoing collaboration between Walgreens and organizations such as South Carolina's Anderson County Disabilities and Special Needs Board, which today coordinates activities at a Walgreens training center that prepares people with cognitive disabilities for full-time work. This chapter describes the history and practices of the innovative approaches developed in South Carolina and Connecticut and the implications of the success of these practices for the expansion of employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

"We Opened the Door": Walgreens Challenges Conventional Wisdom

It was 2002 when Randy Lewis, Senior Vice President of Supply Chain and Logistics, issued a challenge to Walgreens and its stakeholders to address the serious unemployment of people with significant disabilities while meeting the needs of their workforce and distribution supply chain. Since the company was investing in new technology to make distribution more efficient, Mr. Lewis proposed, why not create opportunities for people with disabilities? As Mr. Lewis would say later at a warehouse industry conference, Walgreens was inspired to challenge the conventional wisdom:

Now, when we started out, we started this building with the hope that we could end the belief that people with disabilities can't perform just as well as anybody else. And that has paid off... This is the first time we wanted to say, "Full-time employees, side-by-side, same standards, same pay." And that has paid off for us. We're not a charity. We only make

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three cents on the dollar. We can be as hard-nosed as anyone, and we have shareholders that drive us just like anything else. It's not a charity. But the unkindest cut is that it is a charity. A lot of these people worked a year on their own time in a training center just to prepare them for this. We opened the door but they had to walk through and they had to earn their time there every day.¹²

Deb Russell, Walgreens Manager of Outreach and Employee Services, recounts that in 2003 the company charged James Emmett, a consultant on business and disability issues, with assisting Walgreens as it studied the implications of the disability employment initiative for its human resource policies and operations. Emmett advised Walgreens on disability etiquette in the workplace, and reinforced the principle that people with disabilities can be valued employees. He further advised Walgreens to establish partnerships with local agencies in the workforce, vocational rehabilitation, and disability services systems to assist the company in outreach, recruitment, training, and support for employees with disabilities. Emmett was subsequently hired as a Walgreens employee.

Based on this recommendation, in 2003, Walgreens established a goal that one third of the workforce at new high-tech distribution centers that the company planned to open would be employees with disabilities, in particular, workers with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In fact, since these new distribution centers would be greenfield operations (built and designed new), they would be designed to incorporate process technologies that would enable the widest spectrum of individuals to perform various jobs in the centers. Later that same year, Walgreens began to seek local partners at potential sites for the new distribution centers to assist the company in meeting its disability employment goals.

Walgreens subsequently located new distribution centers in Anderson, South Carolina and Windsor, Connecticut in part based on having willing, capable partners to assist in the recruitment, training, and retention of employees with disabilities. The planning occurred over three years.

"Throughout the planning of this initiative, we held the belief that people with disabilities, given the right training and support, could work as fast, as accurately and as safely as our current workforce. In addition, we believed that people with significant disabilities could work full-time jobs and be on time. We have seen this proven to be true in all of our buildings; the higher our expectations, the more our workers with disabilities achieved."

Randy Lewis, Walgreens

“If You Don’t Share the Vision, You Can’t Be A Partner”: A Commitment from the South Carolina Disability System Partners — The South Carolina Experience

In 2003, Walgreens began the design and development of its new \$175 million distribution center in the southeastern United States. Walgreens’ policy was to open recruitment to a wide spectrum of workers with disabilities, including those with significant intellectual and developmental disabilities, such as autism. Walgreens first contacted the South Carolina Anderson County Economic Development Office as well as other economic development offices in the southeast regarding the potential development of the distribution center. The company specifically noted that it needed assistance in recruiting employees with disabilities. As a result of the company’s request, the Anderson County Economic Development Office asked Dale Thompson, Executive Director of the Anderson County Disability and Special Needs Board, and Robert Oppermann, Director of the regional vocational rehabilitation office, to prepare a presentation on strategies to train people with disabilities to meet an unnamed employer’s workforce needs. Mr. Thompson and Mr. Oppermann made the presentation to economic development officials and Walgreens representatives in November 2003 and were subsequently asked to visit Walgreens’ corporate headquarters in Chicago for more detailed discussions on training strategies. At the Chicago meeting, Walgreens executives explained that the company was seeking to hire approximately 250 employees with disabilities at its new distribution center, which would be equipped with new technology to improve the center’s productivity.

Additionally, the Walgreens executives noted that job specifications for employees with disabilities would mirror those for all employees, and would pay comparable salaries and benefits. Walgreens officials asked if Mr. Thompson and Mr. Oppermann would agree to enter into a partnership with Walgreens and take the lead on recruiting, screening, training, and supporting employees with disabilities at the new distribution center. They agreed that they would. Mr. Thompson noted that his willingness to take on this challenge was due to his belief that “if you do not respond to an extraordinary opportunity like this for the people you serve, you don’t belong in the business.”

Walgreens drew up a list of principles it holds for its disability agency partners. It expected the company’s partners to:

1. “Share our vision of people with disabilities working side by side with other workers doing equal work for equal pay;
2. Be interested in increasing the employment rate of people with disabilities;
3. Understand their own capability to work with us to achieve the vision;

Chapter 1: Challenging the Conventional Wisdom: National Employer Collaborations

4. Be invested in learning how we do business in order to create an understanding of characteristics, skills, and supports for people with disabilities to be successful as Walgreens employees;
5. Be open to trying new methods to accomplish the vision and to use problem solving to find effective ways to success;
6. Believe that the people they serve can work in a competitive setting and meet the standards set by our company;
7. Provide the support needed for their clients to be successful (this can include training, job coaching, and helping Walgreens learn how to support the individual);
8. Share the same high standards of conduct for their staff; and
9. Commit to clear and timely communication in whatever timeframes are established.”¹³

The Anderson County Disability and Special Needs (DSN) Board serves a total of 350 people. Thompson identified partner agencies to create a pool of potential workers large enough to meet Walgreens’ goal. He recruited the DSN boards from Greenville, Pickens, and Oconee Counties, and the school districts in Anderson County, to participate in a partnership with the Anderson County DSN Board and the South Carolina vocational rehabilitation department. The partners agreed that the importance of the initiative required the leaders of the groups to compose and agree upon a set of common principles and values that would guide them in decision making. The following are the core points of agreement that were adopted by the partnership:

1. Each agency participating in the partnership agrees to engage the mission with all the resources, energy, and talent they can pull together...no exception.
2. Each partner agrees to commit the necessary training staff to the project.
3. Each partner agrees to use the guiding principles of person-centered choice in the project. Each training participant must choose to be part of the training process and may leave it if they choose to do so.
4. Staff resources committed to the project must complete required training regimens and demonstrate competencies (related to the Walgreen’s training curriculum) before being assigned to the project. Any staff from any partner not meeting acceptable guidelines (of either Walgreens or the partners) is to be reassigned elsewhere.
5. We agree that no hiring quota will be utilized. The “first ready” to go worker candidates will be the first into the distribution center for the employment trial period regardless of which agency serves them.

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6. We agree to jointly develop a pre-screening tool to be used consistently across all partners to ensure the referral of consistent worker candidates.
7. We agree that walk-in referrals meeting our state eligibility criteria can receive training and support.
8. We agree to commit transit resources to support our workers getting to and from the workplace and training facility.
9. We agree to meet periodically with Walgreens distribution center staff and among ourselves to resolve problems.
10. We will help one another cross train our staff to help each other as needed.
11. We will be truthful to ourselves, our families, and our consumers in what we do and will not create false expectations among them.¹⁴

Initially, Walgreens identified three mechanized jobs thought to be appropriate for individuals with cognitive disabilities — Case Check-In, AKL Pick to Light, and Detrash. In the end, the company learned that employees with cognitive disabilities could do all types of jobs, not just these three.

In order to provide the skills and social training required for individuals with disabilities to apply to work at the Walgreens distribution center, the partners set up a training center, which is coordinated by the Anderson County DNS Board. The partners first became involved in the idea of a training center when they provided assistance to Walgreens on designing and producing a training curriculum to prepare people with cognitive disabilities for three standard positions in the distribution center. Walgreens defined the jobs as: (1) requiring independent functioning, (2) relying on interaction with computers, (3) requiring some amount of exception handling, and (4) requiring high productivity and accuracy. Cross-training for temporary assignments is the norm.¹⁵

Walgreens and the partners accessed specialized training from the University of North Carolina Medical School's Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communications Related Handicapped Children (TEACCH) program. TEACCH is an evidence-based service, training, and research program for individuals of all ages and skill levels with autism spectrum disorders. This training helped Walgreens and its partners understand how people with autism spectrum disorders learn and how to develop learning and teaching aids. The partners found that this training was also applicable to people with other types of intellectual and developmental disabilities.¹⁶

The provider group shared an overarching principle that "if you do not share the vision, you can't be a partner."

Walgreens provided the agencies with corporate “train the trainer” materials and specifications for the jobs. The curriculum developed by Walgreens, with input from the partners, based on a sophisticated task-analysis process, covers both skills necessary to do the respective jobs and “soft” skills to address social expectations in the workplace. Using the TEACCH approach, the curriculum minimizes written and verbal teaching and relies heavily on “iconology” (the use of symbols and pictures) for instruction. Additionally, the training process assumes that people with cognitive disabilities learn best by doing. The curriculum and training process were written into training manuals.

The training was designed to prepare employees for the distribution workflow and technology that would be deployed in the distribution center. In addition, the partnership, in concert with James Emmett, guided Walgreens in creating an accessible and inclusive environment. The center is fully wheelchair accessible and the bathrooms are designed to be comfortable for people with various types of disabilities. One national expert described the center’s application of universal design and built-in accommodations for people with disabilities as “elegant.”

The work process changes included automated guided vehicles that can be operated by people with disabilities, adjustable workstations, and a redesigned, easier-to-use computer interface. A simplified computer touch screen was developed, with fewer prompts and more descriptive pictures.¹⁷

“Our screens were way too complex,” Lewis told *Chain Store Age*, an industry publication, “so we got rid of the keyboard and are using more graphics to describe the work flow.” Equipment was also modified, making it more ergonomic. The height of some workstations was also adjusted. “We made work surfaces flexible for different heights to limit the range of motions needed to do a job,” Lewis added. “We also took away some of the heavy lifting.”¹⁸

“We found that the improvements actually benefit all distribution center employees,” Lewis told *Chain Store Age*. “It’s easier and quicker to train all employees on how to use the system. Also, some of the changes we’ve made have given us the added benefit of flexibility in that we can move people around the building more easily than in the past.” In other words, the result is a workplace that is worker friendly to all of its employees.¹⁹

Start-Up and Launch

The Anderson County Development Office and the South Carolina Department of Commerce provided grants to finance renovations to the training center building and other start-up costs. In addition, the Anderson County government funded initial operating costs, while Walgreens provided workstations, software, and sample products for the training center. The training center was initially located adjacent to the Anderson County DNS Board offices but was later moved into the distribution center to simplify logistics.

Due to the lack of public transportation in the area, the Anderson County DSN Board spearheaded a transportation initiative that would pick up and drop off workers with disabilities on regular routes throughout the five counties represented in the partnership.

The partnership sought and received a special state appropriation of the purchase of four buses for this transportation system. Although the system has received some grant funding from the South Carolina Department of Transportation, the Anderson County DSN Board provides the operational funding. Given the considerable expense of operating a freestanding transportation system, Dale Thompson and the partners are considering establishing a vanpool program to reduce costs. Additionally, Walgreens is promoting ride sharing for its employees and efforts will be made to include workers with disabilities.

The establishment of the partnership with the Anderson County DSN Board and the extensive planning that went into the establishment of the distribution center put Walgreens in a position to meet its ambitious goals for recruiting workers with disabilities.

Getting Ready, Going to Work

The distribution center in Anderson, South Carolina began operations in January 2007. In preparation for the opening, Walgreens trained all staff of the distribution center in disability awareness. Nonprofit and government partners played a core role in assisting Walgreens to reach its goals for recruiting employees with disabilities. The nonprofits, government agencies, and Walgreens had completed the initial rounds of training, and established a pipeline for the recruitment, training, and retention of employees with disabilities.

The initial step in the employment process is an assessment and screening of potential candidates. The partners use a common tool to identify candidates who will most likely have the prerequisite skills to meet the work requirements at Walgreens. The competency-based tool assesses potential candidates in areas such as physical and social domains, behavioral history, communication skills, mobility needs, and type of disability, family supports, and personal choice.

Candidates who are identified through this process begin training to learn job skills using the aforementioned curriculum developed by Walgreens Learning Services, which allows people to learn over a flexible timeframe. Trainers from each partner agency are on site to provide the job skills training and individual supports to employees served by their respective agencies. The partnership coordinates the activities of the trainers and it is standard practice for trainers to fill in for a colleague from another agency if needed. Mr. Thompson said that generally the very best trainers from each partner agency are assigned to the distribution center.

To see videos of employees with disabilities discussing their experience working in the distribution centers, visit:
http://www.walgreensoutreach.com/topic/sr/sr_disability_inclusion_awards_recognition.jsp.

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During the training period, the partners provide extensive counseling to families of worker trainees so they are aware of the training process and the implications of employment. Specifically, they advise families about the impact of employment on Social Security disability and other benefits at meetings arranged by the partners with Social Security staff.

When candidates have learned the required skills, they are placed in a paid on-the-job trial. Candidates receive on-site supports from the training staff and are assessed on their job performance like any other Walgreens employee.

Upon the completion of the on-the-job trial, Walgreens makes a decision about whether to hire the candidate. The employees who are hired are paid at a rate determined by a labor market survey (in 2007, the starting pay was \$10.50 per hour) and receive a full benefits package just as any employee performing the same job. The trainers also serve as ongoing support for people with disabilities that work at the distribution center as well as for Walgreens management and staff. Thompson said that for candidates that are not hired by Walgreens, his agency puts a special priority on finding them another job quickly.

It is important to note that people with disabilities can directly apply for jobs at the distribution center as well. The Walgreens distribution center has two staff members dedicated to providing supports to all employees if needed. Staff use the training center and work as a team with the trainers from the partnership. Deb Russell noted that it is the gaps in eligibility for publicly funded job coaching for employees with disabilities that necessitates these staff, which is an issue that needs to be addressed in the future.

“We had no hesitation whatsoever...” — The Connecticut Experience

The Connecticut distribution center largely adopted the same approach. In 2005, a firm confidentially representing Walgreens approached two states on the eastern seaboard to ask how they could assist in the start-up of a distribution center that would employ 600 to 800 people, with a target of 250 to 300 individuals with a range of intellectual and developmental disabilities. The firm representing Walgreens (unnamed at that point) approached both Brenda Moore, then Director of the Connecticut Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) and Jim Burke, a representative of the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD).

“We could not imagine that it was an [authentic] phone call at first. Few employers of this size have made contact with the Connecticut vocational rehabilitation agency. We had no hesitation whatsoever. Not even a question. The interest was getting more people with disabilities into employment.”

Brenda Moore, Director, Connecticut Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

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The two agencies — BRS and DECD — together wrote a proposal for Walgreens that would meet the needs of the company's workforce plan. The plan included other workforce supply agencies such as the Capital Region (Hartford) Workforce Development Board and its CTWorks One-Stop Career Centers, the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and the Board of Education and Services for the Blind. DECD brought in the transportation department and the economic development office from the Town of Windsor. Ms. Moore had previous working relationships with many of the agencies as a result of collaborating on a National Governors Association (NGA) project in which resource mapping was done of all disability agencies in Connecticut.

Walgreens assigned James Emmett as the initial contact in 2005 for the Connecticut initiative, supported by Randy Lewis. DECD approved a financing package to open the Walgreens distribution center. The package included \$1.5 million for activities to provide for the employment of individuals with disabilities in the Walgreens workforce. The United Way administered the funding as a fiscal intermediary through an arrangement with the Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC), Connecticut's state workforce board. The board would lead and coordinate all agencies involved in recruitment for the distribution center — both people with and without disabilities. Under the direction of OWC, BRS was the lead agency (single point of contact) for individuals with disabilities. The Connecticut Department of Labor was the lead agency (single point of contact) for the general population. Because of the resource mapping that had been done under the NGA grant, BRS had worked closely with all of the disability agencies and with OWC.

DECD recruited other state agencies for the partnership. DECD and BRS invited agency heads of the Workforce Board, and Mental Health and Developmental Service agencies to attend a planning meeting. At the meeting, Ms. Moore noted that the purpose of the Walgreens initiative was to meet the needs of their corporate partner, not merely to transact hiring of workers with disabilities.

After Walgreens selected Windsor, Connecticut as the location, a team went to Anderson, South Carolina twice to observe the distribution center operation. They worked with Deb Russell to identify how Connecticut could learn from the experience in South Carolina and perform to expectations. South Carolina's providers organized a partnership, with the developmental disability service agency taking the lead while Connecticut assigned the vocational rehabilitation agency as lead agency, based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the commissioner of each disability agency. Each agency designated a contact person that coordinated activities within that agency. The whole team went to South Carolina.

The teams from each state also compared approaches to the training facility. In South Carolina, the partnership had initially located the training facility some distance from the distribution center (it was subsequently moved to the distribution center). The Connecticut team felt that the training center should be located at the distribution center. The Connecticut team also examined the training curriculum that had been developed specifically for people with disabilities, and Ms. Russell provided coordination with Walgreens.

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As noted earlier, the package of incentives in the successful Connecticut proposal to Walgreens included funding from DECD dedicated to train people with disabilities for employment at the distribution center. In addition, the local transportation district changed an existing bus route to go directly to the distribution center, a benefit for all employees, but particularly for people with disabilities, many of whom do not drive. The incentives were in response to the criteria in the Walgreens solicitation that the company was looking for assistance to meet its disability employment goals.

BRS initiated a request for proposals (RFP) and selected Community Enterprises, Inc. to conduct training for applicants with disabilities. A contract was executed between Community Enterprises, Inc. and the United Way. In addition, BRS funded two staff positions for the Walgreens initiative and costs related to the RFP process for the training provider agency.

In the year before the training class, the training team undertook a number of efforts to educate potential trainees, and help them apply to Walgreens directly or to the training center. John Halliday, in an unpublished brief on the implications of the Walgreens Connecticut project for state vocational rehabilitation agencies, noted that BRS believed that all consumers of vocational rehabilitation services could participate in the program, and worked with partner agencies, particularly the State Department of Education, the Division of Developmental Services, the Board of Education and Services for the Blind, and the Connecticut Department of Labor, to identify individuals for training. Mr. Halliday noted, “BRS and its partners developed the referral and funding mechanism that would enable interested applicants to become eligible for the appropriate programs and have access to funding and supports for the training center.”²⁰

BRS included the Walgreens initiative information on its Web site and posted the information in BRS literature for programs such as the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, known in Connecticut as Connect-Ability. BRS’ Walgreens project manager played a significant role in the marketing and outreach aspects of the Walgreens jobs initiative. The partners’ outreach concentrated on adults with disabilities, older youth (ages 18 to 21), as well as families, schools, and adult service agencies. BRS tapped every public channel available to raise awareness of the opportunities for competitive employment through the Walgreens project. Local school systems and referring agencies communicated that training, trial, and transitional employment opportunities were available at Walgreens. Additionally, BRS committed to connect job seekers not represented by a program or agency to the appropriate resources so they could apply for training and employment.²¹

In March 2008, BRS created the part-time position of Walgreens liaison by utilizing a small portion of the \$1.5 million in state funding administered through the United Way. The liaison screened each individual referred by the disability agencies to determine whether the individual appeared to be a good fit for the Walgreens training program. This included both the individual’s interest and the likelihood of acceptance to the training program. The liaison also followed up with the referring agencies and provided ongoing coordination with agencies and programs throughout the training program. Walgreens and the partner agencies reported

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that this consistent approach to the referral and application process was a critical practice for effective problem solving and coaching throughout the training process. It provided a single point of contact for candidates with disabilities.²² In addition, the Walgreens liaison worked with candidates with disabilities who applied directly through Walgreens' job application process.

Community Enterprises, Inc. initially provides candidates with nine weeks of training geared to developing both interpersonal and behavioral skills as well as the specific skills needed for the jobs identified by Walgreens. Through the Connecticut Walgreens training center, candidates with disabilities have the opportunity for training on equipment used in the distribution center and are also provided with classroom instruction in such areas as safety standards, work rules, social skills, company expectations, product identification, and other topics.

Candidates who successfully complete this training enter a nine-week Transitional Work Group (TWG). Candidates are paid a training wage of \$10 per hour by Community Enterprises, Inc. with funds provided by Walgreens. Deb Russell describes this as the candidate's "job application and interview." During TWG, the candidate "demonstrates to us they can do the job and meet our standards." If candidates are not successful in an area, they can attempt a TWG in another area if there are openings. During TWG, each candidate is evaluated at least once every three weeks to determine additional achievement needed to receive an employment offer from Walgreens. As soon as an evaluation shows proficiency in six designated areas, Walgreens extends a job offer to the candidate. As with all Walgreens employees, new hires undergo a probationary period. After hire, Walgreens assumes full supervisory responsibility and provides any additional training that workers need. BRS provides limited post-employment supports.

The costs of the training center are covered from the \$1.5 million one-time grant from DECD and by Walgreens, which pays for the space and utilities, and also provides training materials, equipment, test product, support, and methods.

Community Enterprises, Inc. notes that one major challenge of the initiative is that few trainees have ever worked an eight-hour day prior to referral to training. The length of the workday has led some people to opt out. According to Carla Gaouette, Community Enterprises Inc.'s program director at the Walgreens site, some people take longer to become ready for work, but do make steady progress and should not have an arbitrary cut-off date. Flexible timelines have been used with the last round of hires. Ongoing in-service training needs for hired workers are handled internally by the Walgreens training specialists, but Community Enterprises, Inc. is involved as well if needed.

Clients of state agencies will still get training or resources as needed if additional support needs emerge. Joe Wendover from Walgreens stated that the company "does not want the employee to cut that tie." BRS requires agencies to make follow-along contacts after a case is successfully closed and the case can be re-opened if additional services are needed. Additionally, some employees are eligible for long-term employment supports through the developmental disabilities system.

Results of the Walgreens Collaboration

As of late 2009, the Anderson, South Carolina distribution center employed nearly 200 employees with disabilities that were hired through the partnership. Four in ten employees at the distribution center have a disclosed disability. The efficiency rate at the Anderson distribution center is 120% of the rate for the other Walgreens distribution centers.

Absenteeism is lower for the employees with disabilities who use agency transportation. Deb Russell noted that the safety statistics for employees in 2008 at the Anderson County center averaged \$500 per case less for employees with disabilities than those without disabilities.

Angela Mackey, Outreach Coordinator for Walgreens' Anderson distribution center, is pleased with the contribution of the employees with disabilities. She said, "It's about capability not disability." Ms. Mackey stated that the employees with disabilities who work at the center have a lower turnover rate and bring extraordinary commitment to the job. She also said that the center could not have benefited from its employees with disabilities without its partners. She is comforted that if an employee has a problem, "Dale Thompson said that many people with disabilities in the region have benefited as well: 'Walgreens presented us with extraordinary employment opportunities for the people we serve. It has been a real challenge and a great deal of work, but it has been worth it.'" He commended his partners for dropping the boundaries of their "turf" and working collaboratively.

In Connecticut, Joe Wendover said that objectives have been met, and Walgreens is "very satisfied with the partnership's result in facilitating the recruitment and retention of qualified employees with disabilities." He continued that Walgreens also is "satisfied with supports from Community Enterprises. Community Enterprises has an office on site and it has been really helpful. We have that feeling of belonging. They are part of the Walgreens family."

Walgreens has far exceeded its goal of people with disabilities forming more than one third of both the South Carolina and Connecticut distribution centers' workforce. Walgreens has 17 applicants in the pool to hire who just finished the course and will hire them when positions become open. As of the date of the research for this report (summer 2009), in the Connecticut distribution center, 100 potential workers started training, 58 entered the transitional work group, and 31 were hired by Walgreens.

According to Brenda Moore, "It is an excellent collaboration. It has worked because we had people who said we will make this work. We needed commitment from all quarters and we had that. We know that Walgreens was committed to it. Workforce boards were at the table. No conflict behind the scenes at all. We worked well together." As with any ambitious project, there were details that had to be addressed. Moore reported some system issues, including a few related to the fact that the project hired former BRS employees. There were considerations to address in the working relationship with Walgreens as well, including the location of the Connecticut transit bus stop. Careful development of the contract with Walgreens addressed many of the issues.

Conclusion

The distribution centers offer several practices of significance to public officials and employers interested in strengthening the recruitment, training, and retention of employees with disabilities. The company has established significant expectations for its partners but offers employment opportunities for large numbers of people with disabilities. At each site, capable and passionate partners have accepted this challenge. The partners have successfully placed hundreds of people with significant disabilities into good paying jobs with full benefits. In short, the Walgreens distribution center partnerships have resulted in a win for the company, a win for its partners, and a win for the people with disabilities who have been employed.

It is important to note that Walgreens is committed to being inclusive at all of its distribution centers. For example, the Walgreens distribution center in Texas has been the most successful in increasing the numbers of people with disabilities in their workforce. The Texas Department of Vocational Rehabilitation has agreed to be the lead partner on the recruitment, training, and retention of employees with disabilities. In this case, Walgreens provides training and work supports directly. This adaptation warrants review as another partnership option.

Walgreens has also implemented a partnership at its distribution center in Pendergrass, Georgia. The Georgia Department of Vocational Rehabilitation is the lead partner at this center and 24% of the center's current workers are individuals with disabilities. Angela Mackey said that information to date has shown that the model works in centers without high-tech features. Deb Russell said, "It is nice to contrast Anderson with Pendergrass because both are very successful with employing people with disabilities and we credit our partners in each state for that. But it proves that high tech (like Anderson) is not required for success."

Ms. Russell also said, "We have partnerships in each community where we have a distribution center but the success of the partnerships varies. We have three buildings who struggle with their partnerships and we have not found better options in those communities yet, but we are disappointed that not all providers have responded to our 'we want to hire people with disabilities into good jobs' cry as enthusiastically as Anderson DSN, who is a model of the true meaning of partner."

The decision by Walgreens to locate the distribution centers in South Carolina and Connecticut over other states was influenced by the enthusiasm, dedication, and capability of the local disability systems to meet the company's needs. In addition, each state's economic development department contributed significant grant funds to support the training of people with disabilities developed by the partnerships that were formed.

The success of the Walgreens partnerships in South Carolina and Connecticut has important implications for employers and local service systems seeking to expand employment opportunities for job seekers with disabilities. These are presented according to the *Ready and Able* findings as follows:

- **Employers respond to a business case for employing people with disabilities**

Employees with disabilities produce. The Walgreens distribution centers employ hundreds of people with disabilities. The company continues the initiative because its employees with disabilities contribute to greater efficiency and reliability. Further, Walgreens has found that the accommodations developed for employees with disabilities assisted all of its employees to be more productive. The initiative meets a business need.

- **Innovative collaborations with and between workforce-supplying organizations enable employer efforts to recruit, hire, train, and support employees with disabilities**

Meeting recruitment goals. The partnerships in South Carolina and Connecticut have provided recruitment, screening, training, and on-site and family supports to assist Walgreens in meeting its disability employment goals. The partnerships did the legwork that provided Walgreens with access to reliable, skilled employees and positively contributed to the company's bottom line. Initially, only three jobs at the centers were targeted for the recruitment of people with disabilities. However, with experience, Walgreens found that employees with disabilities could do all types of jobs at the centers.

Major employers can significantly expand employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The Walgreens partnerships have facilitated the employment of hundreds of people with significant disabilities at the two distribution centers. Walgreens personnel say that the employment of these people would not have been possible without the partnerships. This is a strong message to local disability and workforce systems that the ability to establish corporate partnerships creates new and expanded employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Given the positive experience of the distribution centers, other companies with distribution center operations have approached Walgreens for guidance on replicating its initiative and the partnerships that support it. The question for local service systems is whether they are prepared to establish the innovative, disciplined partnerships seen here.

- **Collaborations ensure that workers are qualified and productive**

Quality training and support staff contribute to success. Both partnerships emphasized the importance of skilled experienced staff in training and support roles. In addition to the complexity of preparing people with significant cognitive disabilities for technical jobs, the Walgreens partnership model requires service agency staff to work collaboratively with Walgreens staff to meet the company's explicit expectations. Accordingly, both partnerships have assigned their best staff to work at the distribution center training facilities.

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People with significant cognitive disabilities can be trained for jobs requiring technical skills. The Walgreens partnerships have shown that people with significant cognitive disabilities can be trained for full-time, technical jobs that pay well and offer full benefits. Preparing two or three people for such jobs would be noteworthy given the norm for this population of part-time service jobs at nominally above minimum wage. However, the partnerships have successfully prepared hundreds of people for these positions and opened up new possibilities for the employment and independence of people with cognitive disabilities. The flexible training curriculum used by the Walgreens partnerships should be required reading in disability service systems.

Local disability systems need to establish relationships with economic development offices and other state agencies. Walgreens pursued the development of the distribution centers through state economic development offices with a stipulation that the company was seeking assistance in recruiting employees with disabilities. The South Carolina and Connecticut economic development offices sought assistance from their respective local disability services systems in responding to Walgreens. This profile demonstrates the importance of local disability services systems establishing relationships with the respective state economic development agencies in order to be aware of new employment opportunities for people with disabilities and to access funding for employment initiatives. Likewise, the South Carolina and Connecticut partnerships received funding and support from an array of agencies, including but not limited to, the Department of Commerce, the Office of Workforce Development, the state legislature, vocational rehabilitation, systems for people with developmental disabilities, and the Department of Transportation. Local disability services systems should view these agencies as potential sources of revenue for supporting efforts to increase employment opportunities for job seekers with disabilities.

■ **Successful collaborations nurture and reward continuous leadership**

Corporate leadership is a catalyst to success. The leadership of Walgreens Senior Vice President Randy Lewis was a key element in setting and achieving an extraordinary goal.

Local service leadership that responds to the opportunity. In both South Carolina and Connecticut, a leader from the disability service system accepted the Walgreens challenge, organized an effective partnership, and guided the development of a process to meet Walgreens' disability employment goals and expectations. They went "above and beyond" meeting their agency's performance goals to be responsive to a company that had a lot to offer people with disabilities.

The results of the leadership of Walgreens and its partners in South Carolina and Connecticut were pipelines of quality employees with disabilities for the company and extraordinary employment opportunities for people served by the disability agency partners.

Warriors to Work: Lockheed Martin and the Seamless Transition Apprenticeship Program

Introduction

Lockheed Martin is a global security company with about 136,000 employees worldwide.²³ As an extension of its role as a contractor to the U.S. Department of Defense, the company has a commitment to recruiting veterans of the U.S. military. The company received a U.S. Department of Labor New Freedom Initiative Award in 2008 for its efforts to employ people with disabilities, including veterans with disabilities.

Lockheed Martin established the Seamless Transition Apprenticeship Program (STAP) to recruit and train injured veterans for career path jobs. This program is operated in partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Walter Reed Army Medical Center, National Naval Medical Center (which will be combined with Walter Reed in 2011), and the Wounded Warriors advocacy group. This profile describes the progress of the program to date, and how a group of partners make it work.

“Because of Who We Are” — Development of the Partnership

Planning for STAP started in 2005 as the result of a challenge by Lockheed Martin’s CEO to recruit veterans of the U.S. military with service-related disabilities “because of who we are as a company.” Christine Neigh, Director of Equal Opportunity Programs, said that there is a strong business case for Lockheed Martin’s efforts to recruit veterans. She also said that veterans with disabilities “are an under-tapped source of talent. Veterans often have the skills we need and have used or know of Lockheed Martin’s products.” The program recruits employees for jobs in supply chain management and information technology. In selecting these occupations, Lockheed Martin looked internally to parts of the company that had skill needs it needed to meet. For the global supply chain management position, the sponsor was the supply chain management group, which needed additional people to perform this job. The sponsor partnered with human resources from “day one” to develop the specifications and standards for the position. The program began with meaningful and rewarding opportunities for four veterans in an auto parts contract won by the company for military vehicles.

Esteria Johnson, Manager, Strategic Development at Lockheed Martin Information Systems and Global Services, designed a program to recruit, train, and support veterans with disabilities. Lockheed Martin and its partners are aware that many veterans return from Iraq and Afghanistan with little college education and a range of physical challenges. Many

are young parents responsible for raising a family. For them to become gainfully employed, they need access to a complete set of services for their transition to employment and self-sufficiency.

As a result, Ms. Johnson incorporated principles from transition programs for students with physical disabilities into the STAP model. This model prepares veterans with disabilities for full-time, flexible employment in the areas of supply chain management and information technology with career ladders. The STAP model includes a two-year paid registered apprenticeship for the targeted positions. Lockheed Martin and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VRE) Services provide needed supports to the veterans, including career specialists, mentors, and coaches, as well as military and Lockheed Martin benefits. In addition, veterans have access to web-based training and other educational resources to prepare them for careers in the company.

Ms. Johnson initially identified two titles for the STAP apprentices — Subcontract Administrator and Subcontract Administrator Associate. These salaried positions put employees on the first step of a career ladder in supply chain management. The positions require a high school degree with relevant experience and training in the military. The positions can be performed from home via technology, and are available in various Lockheed Martin businesses, allowing veterans from different regions of the nation to apply. Maryland certified the supply chain management apprenticeship program in 2006, and the U.S. Department of Labor then nationally certified the program in 2007. As of 2009, two new positions (Information Specialist I and Information Specialist II) provide veterans with two certified registered apprenticeship tracks from which to select.

From the start, Ms. Johnson recognized that Lockheed Martin needed partners to implement STAP. To accomplish this, she reached out to Walter Reed Army Medical Center, National Naval Medical Center, and Wounded Warriors to collaborate in outreach and screening for potential candidates for STAP. She also worked with VRE to assist in both recruitment and the provision of needed supports.

Warriors to Work: Operation of the Partnership

According to Lockheed Martin, the STAP partners provide critical assistance to their outreach to veterans with disabilities. Walter Reed Army Medical Center, for example, provides medical and transition supports to veterans recovering from injuries and facilitates the applications of veterans who are interested in STAP. Lockheed Martin, Ms. Johnson noted, shares information on STAP employment opportunities with external groups that have contact with this population. Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the other partners routinely link Lockheed Martin staff to relevant events and facilitate appropriate contacts.

Dr. Vernon Ross, Director of Learning and Development at Lockheed Martin Information Systems and Global Services, noted that the VRE is also an important source of referrals to STAP. Lockheed Martin staff, he noted, periodically go to VRE and make presentations about STAP, describing VRE as part of the company's "veterans' recruitment strategy."

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“Lockheed Martin works to ensure all qualified individuals, including those with disabilities, have opportunities to pursue careers at the company. This vision is implemented by the Focus on Abilities team, which works to integrate disability employment issues across all aspects of the company’s recruitment, selection, development and retention programs and processes.”

U.S. Department of Labor New Freedom Initiative Award Winner, 2008

The apprentices train and work with a journeyman (certified employee) for two years. During this time, they receive on-the-job training, mentoring, coaching, and feedback from the hiring manager and learning and development professional. The apprentices are strongly encouraged to pursue a college degree by using both veterans benefits and employee benefits from Lockheed Martin. All of the STAP apprentices to date have been enrolled in college during their apprenticeships. Based on the successful completion of the apprenticeship, STAP graduates receive an internal program certification and an external certification from the U.S. Department of Labor. They become highly skilled and eligible for positions throughout the company.

Ms. Johnson believes that employees enrolled in STAP are highly motivated and want to make a significant contribution, which is reflected in their accomplishments at Lockheed Martin. The veteran population is a great group to expand the workforce. With strategic workforce initiatives, such as STAP, and meaningful, collaborative, partnerships, Lockheed Martin can make a difference in the lives of returning veterans and their families.

One employee completed his undergraduate degree, and was recently promoted. Because of his high level of success, his promotion was in the prestigious Information Systems Leadership Program, where he will attain higher leadership and technology-advanced opportunities. This achievement was concurrent to completing STAP.

Others are on their way. The first pilot class of the Seamless Transition Apprentice Program graduated in a ceremony held in Bethesda, Maryland on December 14, 2009. This was a great achievement attended by partners, Lockheed Martin executives, mentors, and managers. The graduation validates that STAP is a viable and replicable model.

Lockheed Martin also looks to VRE to “augment” the company’s transition supports. Ms. Johnson noted that VRE assists Lockheed Martin in assessing the veterans’ disability or impairment and support needs, providing career counseling, and coordinating veterans’ benefits. VRE counselors work closely with Lockheed Martin staff to coordinate the provision of services.

Dr. Ross, who oversees STAP, is responsible for the continued development of the program and interfaces with the U.S. Department of Labor. For him, it is critical that this team ensure adherence to the U.S. Department of Labor’s Standards for Apprenticeship and that all requirements for certification are completed as scheduled. The progress of each apprentice is tracked and many consultations take place to identify the right opportunity for each veteran.

Chapter 1: Challenging the Conventional Wisdom: National Employer Collaborations

Although much has been said about the role of partnerships, Ms. Johnson notes that “without the partners, we would not be as effective in the recruitment, training, and support of these employees.” As program architect, Ms. Johnson is clear in recognizing the role of the internal program sponsor, Lockheed Martin. She said, “STAP would not be a successful model without the leadership of the Lockheed Martin human resources team.” This is a major responsibility and a strategic partnership that must be in place for the overall functionality of internal and external partnerships. The human resources team is the glue that holds the STAP employees and the business together. It is the human resources team that will keep up with things like new U.S. Department of Labor regulations, veteran benefits, compensation, and the expertise to know when and how to update new U.S. Department of Labor standards to benefit the veterans and the business, as in the case of adding the two new occupations for Information Technology Specialists I and II.

Vernon Ross said that the company views STAP as a “huge success.” For him, the program is a win-win for veterans and the company. He said, “The veterans bring in skills and with the training they get in STAP, they can progress to higher job levels.” He concluded that STAP assures a “pipeline” of talent to the company. Esteria Johnson adds that Lockheed Martin has concluded that STAP is an effective model and it is now available throughout the company and its components.

The most powerful testimonials to the program are from the STAP apprentices themselves:

“My life didn’t have a great outlook. It is difficult for someone with neck and back injuries to find suitable employment...Lockheed Martin provided me an opportunity to continue to be productive and provide my expertise in many areas outside the confines of normal daily life. I have more to look forward to than just another day when I come to work...They provide me with the necessary tools to help me be successful and make Lockheed Martin successful.”

STAP apprentice

“I believe in order for any organization to succeed you have to invest in the most important asset of the organization, the people...The value of STAP goes way beyond the fact of hiring a disabled veteran. It goes to the fact that the organization is willing to say thank you for your service and we can be the next chapter in your life as a token of our gratitude.”

STAP graduate

Conclusion

The STAP analysis yields insights of value to major employers concerned about measuring their employment policy and practices to the cut and shape of the values of their stakeholders. Lockheed Martin's military and technology business is in some measure based upon the confidence and good faith of the American public, military veterans and active military personnel, and their families. By actively collaborating with organizations that serve the needs of these constituents, Lockheed Martin learns from stakeholders who have a great personal stake in their business and the role of the U.S. military. By providing a suite of training and support services, the firm locks in a quality employee for longer-term service, with a high level of commitment. The careful, step-by-step approach to identifying prospective employees vastly increases the prospects of success.

The success of the Lockheed Martin STAP has important implications that confirm the *Ready and Able* findings:

- **Employers respond to a business case for employing people with disabilities**

The partnership is critical to ensuring a pipeline of talent. STAP was developed as a result of strong support from senior management for employing veterans with disabilities. As applied, however, the company views STAP as a vehicle for bringing talent to its workplace and positively affecting its bottom line. The positions selected for apprenticeships were in areas of labor demand within the company. The program meets a business need.

- **Innovative collaborations with and between workforce-supplying organizations enable employer efforts to recruit, hire, train, and support employees with disabilities**

The collaboration is the heart of the project. Lockheed Martin says that STAP “would not be possible” without support from Walter Reed Army Medical Center, National Naval Medical Center, Wounded Warriors, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, VRE. These organizations assist the company in outreach to veterans and in providing supports for employment preparation and retention.

- **Collaborations ensure that workers are qualified and productive**

Hands-on guidance and work experience is important. The core of STAP is a two-year registered apprenticeship that provides veterans with disabilities the opportunity to earn credentials for good paying jobs. Upon completion, veterans with disabilities have access to the career ladder and are eligible for jobs throughout the company. Veterans are also encouraged to enroll in college courses during the apprenticeship, and all have done this.

- **Successful collaborations nurture and reward continuous leadership**

Corporate interest and leadership is essential to program start-up and sustainability. STAP was developed based on leadership from Lockheed Martin's CEO. The program has provided the company with a pipeline to quality veterans with disabilities.

Chapter 2: Winning Together: A Sector Strategy Model

Profiled in this chapter:

- International Association of Jewish Vocational Services (IAJVS) and the Financial Services Industry

The workforce development field has established sector-based workforce development programs as an innovative practice that both meets employers' needs for workers and is effective in preparing individuals for employment. Sector-based initiatives serve as successful avenues for establishing greater understanding and better relationships between workforce practitioners and employers. These partnerships have developed between workforce organizations and specific industries or clusters of occupations, including but not limited to health care, advanced manufacturing, transportation, financial services, and most recently, "green" industries. While sector strategies and partnerships have been used extensively in the workforce development field, sector-based partnerships have only recently emerged as a strategy that can benefit all types of workers, including individuals with disabilities.

This chapter features a profile that shows how three affiliates of IAJVS collaborated with a major industry sector to meet employer demand and generate new jobs for people with disabilities. This major initiative offer insights into effective staffing, recruitment, training, and case management operations, and documents how the leaders in this program are transparent and forthcoming about their successes and challenges.

This profile also points out implications for agencies and providers in how industry and nonprofit organizations can co-create training curricula for people with disabilities, in how to deploy business-to-business messaging, in creating models for sustainable funding streams, and in implementing effective public relations and communication techniques. Corporate and nonprofit leadership are particularly crucial for sector-based initiatives that involve numerous companies and service agencies. This profile demonstrates that leadership is about the capacity to listen to and act on behalf of multiple independent companies and groups. Of particular interest are the lessons learned by IAJVS as they relate to sustaining partnerships in volatile economic times.

Blazing New Pathways in a Tough Economy: International Association of Jewish Vocational Services and the Financial Sector

Introduction

IAJVS is a not-for-profit membership association that links 28 health and human service agencies in the United States, Canada, and Israel, and provides a wide range of educational, vocational, and rehabilitation services. Building on a partnership developed by its Los Angeles affiliate with six banks, IAJVS coordinated an effort among three of its affiliates to serve as intermediaries between job seekers with disabilities and banks in their respective regions.

The project began during a period of labor shortages in the banking industry, and was still in operation as the economic crisis decimated the financial services sector, and as mergers affected programs at some participating banks. According to affiliates, the “jobs in banking dried up,” the “market collapsed,” and “there were fewer and fewer positions in banks.” Yet, despite the downturn in the banking industry, the Los Angeles affiliate has successfully continued its BankWork\$ program, the New Jersey affiliate has incorporated a Financial Career Pathways track into its customer service and business skills training, and the San Francisco affiliate has formed a financial services advisory group comprised of eight banks. All three affiliates have deployed practices and lessons that can be used by IAJVS, its affiliates, and other service agencies. IAJVS has conducted its own evaluation of the Financial Career Pathways project, which can be accessed at: http://www.iajvs.org/documents/IAJVS_Financial_Career_Pathways_Evaluation_Report.pdf.

The IAJVS report, *Enhancing Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities*,²⁴ notes that, “[T]here are two groups of ‘customers’ that employment and training programs must serve: trainees and businesses.” The report adds that workforce development programs (nonprofits, community colleges, etc.) have “developed expertise in creating and delivering training opportunities that are valued by participants, but for many, engaging and serving employers has been a much more elusive pursuit.” The report further states that most employer-program relationships “go through a series of stages in their development before they arrive at a true partnership.” Typically, relationships start off as trial arrangements where both parties take a risk by investing resources in one another. As successes become apparent over time, they may evolve into “key partnerships.” At this point, ownership of the project is truly shared.

Financial Career Pathways operated from August 2006 through December 2008 under a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor as part of the President's High Growth Job Training Initiative. Three IAJVS affiliates — Los Angeles, MetroWest New Jersey, and San Francisco — served a total of 145 individuals with disabilities and placed more than half (55%) into jobs.

Banks and IAJVS Begin a Major Collaboration

The origin of this sectoral partnership was an initiative by the Los Angeles Jewish Vocational Services (JVS-LA) affiliate that began in late 2004. A former executive from Wells Fargo approached JVS-LA with his concern about the growing skill and labor shortages in banking, especially in entry-level jobs. The executive gathered leaders from several interested banks to discuss prospective solutions. All agreed to cooperate as JVS-LA conducted a study to determine job shortages, specific skill requirements of these jobs, and what might be appropriate in a partnership between banks and JVS-LA. The study found that banks had unacceptably high rates of turnover among bank tellers, and that these positions were suitable for a pre-employment initiative by JVS-LA that would increase the supply of qualified candidates. The banks expressed interest in reaching out to underrepresented populations that may not have known about or considered banking before. They were specifically interested in drawing from groups that had higher unemployment or lower labor force participation rates. JVS-LA was well positioned to recruit individuals in these underrepresented populations and train them in the skills needed for the entry-level teller position. It was this match between the banks' labor demand and JVS-LA's organizational capacity that led to the launch of BankWork\$ as a small demonstration program in southern California funded by grants from the Sheri and Les Biller Family Foundation and a consortium of six banks.

Over the same time period, the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration's (USDOL/ETA) High Growth Job Training Initiative had identified financial services as a growth industry, and conducted several forums in 2005 to gather information about workforce challenges. The U.S. Department of Labor encouraged IAJVS to address these challenges through a pilot program that would engage, train, and place people with disabilities in jobs in the financial services sector. IAJVS prepared a proposal including three of its affiliates that would provide pre-employment financial services training to workers with disabilities and career advancement strategies for existing bank employees (with and without disabilities). The three affiliates included were MetroWest New Jersey, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, naturally incorporating the BankWork\$ demonstration program.

In July 2006, USDOL/ETA awarded a grant to IAJVS to engage the financial services sector and to build its capacity to attract, employ, and retain workers with disabilities to meet growing labor market demand. The program, called Financial Career Pathways, would run for two-and-a-half years with the goal of identifying, recruiting, and qualifying a new source of entry-level workers (individuals with disabilities) for the financial services sector. It also included advancement strategies for existing bank employees.

“Win-Win for Everyone”: The Initiative Takes Shape

A crucial step in planning the project was securing corporate partners in New Jersey and San Francisco. The New Jersey and San Francisco affiliates did this through their board members and other contacts. In San Francisco, the president of the Jewish Vocational Services (JVS) board had been an executive of a major bank that was one of the organization’s largest donors and was already partnering with JVS. As in Los Angeles, banks in San Francisco and New Jersey identified teller turnover as a huge issue. A representative of a bank in New Jersey cited a 47% annual turnover rate in the teller position, and added that much of this turnover was “involuntary” — the bank had to let people go because of lateness, absenteeism, and errors. A number of the banks noted that some “back office” administrative support jobs were in demand; these jobs would require less customer contact. In addition to addressing recruitment and turnover issues, several banks were interested in increasing the diversity of their workforces and in becoming more involved in their communities.

Under the USDOL/ETA-funded project, the Los Angeles BankWork\$ program expanded to recruit people with disabilities, who were integrated with other underrepresented populations in the pre-employment training. The MetroWest New Jersey and San Francisco programs initially served only individuals with disabilities, although the San Francisco program later expanded to include other job seekers as well.

In order to prepare prospective employees to meet the banks’ workforce needs, IAJVS developed a pre-employment training curriculum tailored to the needs of the banks. The first pre-employment curriculum was developed for BankWork\$ by the JVS-LA affiliate, which received input from five banks on the requirements for the bank teller position as well as the issues the banks were having with this workforce. Based on the groundwork laid by BankWork\$ and curricula developed by other IAJVS affiliates, the three affiliates each developed curricula that included a combination of “Banking 101,” “Workplace 101,” and “Career Development and Job Search Skills.” The curricula for each affiliate were modified to suit each bank. The sites had regular monthly phone calls and shared information through the life of the initiative.

Throughout the development of the curricula, affiliate staff worked closely with partner banks. In San Francisco, meetings, conversations, focus groups, and phone calls with the banks were regularly held. According to one San Francisco bank representative, they were “very involved” in curriculum development. In New Jersey, JVS staff sat in on the banks’ own employee training and had the banks review the curriculum in detail to ensure it was designed to lead to employment, including reviewing position descriptions and interviewing top performers in the teller position to find out the key competencies needed to be successful. Additionally, guest speakers from each bank were built into the curriculum and class schedule. As noted by one New Jersey bank representative, “The training was very high quality” and the customer service modules “amazing.” The banks were very satisfied with the pre-employment curricula, and reported that JVS “listened and cared.”

Financial Pathways: Curriculum Topics

“Banking 101” included such items as:

- Banking Overview
- Introduction to Bank Services
- The Role of a Bank Teller
- Federal Reserve System and How Banks Work
- Federal Regulations
- Checking Accounts for the Consumer
- Check Negotiability and Handling
- Security/Loss Prevention
- Savings Accounts and Interest Rates
- Credit Reports and How they are Used
- Money-Handling Skills

“Workplace 101” included such areas as:

- ABCs of the Corporate Workplace
- Business English
- Business Math
- Computer Skills
- Customer Service Skills
- Customer Expectations
- Communication Skills — Verbal, Written, Nonverbal, Listening, Telephone
- Attitude, Personal Appearance, and Work Ethic
- Working with Dissatisfied Customers; Conflict Resolution
- Problem Solving and Critical Thinking
- Cultural Awareness

Career Development and Job Search Skills

- Best Practices in Securing Employment
- Today’s Job Market
- ADA Employment Provisions
- Résumé Development
- Interview Skills and Strategies
- Applying for Jobs Online
- Employment Tests: Types, Helpful Hints
- Job Offer and Negotiation Process
- Job Acceptance and Job Refusal

Recruitment and Screening of Individuals with Disabilities: An Important Next Step

All three sites recruited individuals with disabilities by building on existing relationships with state vocational rehabilitation agencies and local One-Stop Career Centers. They also recruited directly from some disability-specific community-based organizations, such as the Multiple Sclerosis Society. Since these methods did not produce enough candidates for the program, the sites eventually began advertising more widely and conducting their own screening for candidates with disabilities, based on self-disclosure by individuals.

Meeting enrollment goals for people with disabilities required a fair amount of effort. The Los Angeles affiliate, which has continued the BankWork\$ program, today fills classes largely with word-of-mouth referrals. The relocation of BankWork\$ to a more convenient location was instrumental in leading to increased enrollment.

All of the affiliates conducted an initial screening based on bank requirements. Recruits had to be 18 or older, pass a criminal background check, read at a ninth-grade level, perform math at a seventh-grade level, and have a high school diploma or GED. Each affiliate also conducted additional screening. In New Jersey, structured interviews were conducted, individual work history secured, a transferable skill analysis performed, and achievement and aptitude testing, career interest inventories, work samples, and situational assessments administered. This screening produced a high level of program completion.

In San Francisco, an extensive assessment was conducted, including reviews of individuals' attention to detail and customer service skills. The thoroughness of this assessment resulted in no dropouts from the San Francisco program. In Los Angeles, the program coordinator conducted interviews with each person to gauge verbal communication skills and "front office appearance," asking candidates why they wanted to work for a bank. Over time, all three affiliates refined the screening and assessment process as they learned more about the bank hiring processes and criteria, and became more skilled at screening for the characteristics banks valued most.

Among the graduates of the MetroWest New Jersey program is 44-year old Brian Wolf, a former New York City pastry chef. When diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, a chronic disease of the central nervous system, he was forced to give up his job because it was difficult for him to work in the hot and fast-paced environment of a commercial kitchen.

"When I found out about this program it was sort of serendipitous," said Mr. Wolf. "The main thing is that this program is allowing me to do something in which I can be successful."

After completing the eight-week course, Wolf was hired as a full-time teller by Sovereign Bank, a position he still holds after more than a year. He loves his job and especially enjoys providing patrons with outstanding customer service.

New Jersey Banker, Winter 2009

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Jacqueline Ardito, Vice President and Senior Recruitment Manager at Sovereign Bank, expressed the feeling of each of the eight partner banks when she observed, “This is a win-win for everyone involved. We’ve added skilled individuals to the work force, fulfilled our hiring needs and provided opportunities for these students to advance in their careers.”

New Jersey Banker, Winter 2009

The training offered in all three sites varied somewhat in length. In Los Angeles, the program was expanded from 8 to 10 weeks midway through the federal funding cycle and included 120 hours of training. In New Jersey, the program operated Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. for eight weeks, or 240 hours of training. And, in San Francisco, the program included 195 hours of training. In all three affiliates, class expectations mimicked expectations on the job. Students who did not attend regularly or were disruptive in class were asked to leave. Absences, tardiness, and inappropriate behavior were not tolerated.

While all three affiliates were able to find sufficient numbers of qualified applicants, placement and retention would emerge as the most challenging aspects of the initiative for banks and the affiliates for a number of reasons:

- The hiring processes used by the banks were difficult to navigate. Each bank had its own complicated path, which generally included online applications and online assessments, and usually also included personality assessments, honesty tests, and numerous other steps, sometimes including timed tests.
- Although bank recruiters generally conducted initial interviews, in most cases branch managers made hiring decisions. In some cases, there was a disconnect between the two.
- The banks were willing to make reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities but would only consider individuals who had the competencies to meet what they considered the essential functions of the position.
- At least two of the affiliates were led by some of the banks to believe that there would be positions available in “back office” jobs that would involve less customer contact. As it turned out, there were very few of these jobs — hiring was predominantly into the teller positions. A number of individuals with disabilities recruited for the program had conditions that did not lend themselves to customer contact or high pressure, and were therefore not well suited for the teller jobs.
- In the first half of the pilot program, when banks were hiring, one affiliate reported that the regular pay rate for the teller position was not competitive given the skills demanded of candidates, and some of the teller positions were part time with no benefits. Many individuals finished the training and found jobs with other employers that paid more than the bank teller positions.

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- Toward the end of the program, due to the volatility of the industry, hiring by all banks fell substantially, and some of the partner banks were involved in mergers or acquisitions.

Without a doubt, many of the placement and retention factors noted above, especially the state of the financial industry, were outside the control of both the banks and the IAJVS affiliates. As the program progressed, the IAJVS affiliates adapted and became quite adept at responding to situations that were within their control. They also began to identify issues the banks could address that would result in their ability to hire more qualified program graduates.

The Los Angeles affiliate had all students complete online applications for all partner banks prior to completing the course. Then, the program coordinator would send a list of students to bank recruiters so that they could “flag” these students in their internal recruitment systems. On graduation day, each bank was present for a job fair, during which the banks were able to interview each student. Los Angeles also took a “three-tier” approach to placement: placement with a partner bank, placement with another bank or credit union, and lastly a job anywhere. Each student was assigned a job placement specialist to help navigate both bank hiring processes and other job applications. According to affiliate staff that worked on the program, before the banking crisis, JVS-LA had a 90% placement rate, with 70% retention after six months. After a long period when banks froze hiring, hiring eventually picked up in the second half of 2009 and the affiliate was ready to move its job seekers into employment again. New Jersey and San Francisco followed similar processes, and helped students to negotiate the complicated multi-step hiring processes used by banks. As noted by one bank representative, a critical lesson learned was that while the bank representatives were involved in the curriculum development, they also needed to be as involved in the hiring process.

All three affiliates partnered with a wide number and variety of banks, not just one. According to the banks, several motivations drove participation in the program:

- They needed a more reliable supply chain to meet human resource needs. They wanted to reduce recruitment costs and lower turnover.
- They were looking for a new source for bank tellers.
- They wanted to give back to the community as good corporate citizens (“corporate responsibility”) by engaging members of the community who were underrepresented in their workforces.
- Some wanted to increase the diversity of their workforces.

Some banks were more focused than others on what they wanted to get out of the initiative, and some had longstanding relationships with the JVS affiliate and wanted to be involved; however, the exact shape of their involvement evolved over time. The way in which banks were involved varied, but included:

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- Memoranda of Understanding agreeing to consider/hire a specified number of individuals with disabilities.
- Designation of a staff person as liaison.
- Cash or in-kind contributions. Half of the funding for BankWork\$ in Los Angeles came from the banks themselves.
- Résumé consultation and mock interviews with students to prepare them for actual interviews.
- Extensive curriculum consultation for the pre-employment training.

In some affiliates, bank partners would meet with JVS staff after each program cycle to evaluate the class and tweak the curricula before the next cycle. In all three, changes were made to the curricula and to the assessment and screening processes based on feedback from the banks. Most important, the banks hired graduates of the programs as long as they met the screening guidelines and positions were available. Some bank liaisons went out of their way to help students manage the complicated hiring processes. One bank representative observed that many participants were hired by the smaller banks, largely because their hiring processes had fewer steps or were easier to negotiate.

Because the banks had similar needs and hiring requirements, it made sense to develop, conduct, and periodically modify the pre-employment training for all of them in a geographic area with a single program. Although the curriculum for each affiliate suited all of the banks in the area, each JVS affiliate had specifically tailored partnerships with *each* bank, especially for the purpose of negotiating the unique hiring process for its candidates. In addition to working with bank recruiters, the JVS affiliates provided disability awareness training to the banks in preparation for hiring of employees with disabilities. Recruitment of individuals with disabilities was a challenge, yet all of the affiliates utilized partnerships with their local or district vocational rehabilitation offices and One-Stop Career Centers. In New Jersey and San Francisco, vocational rehabilitation was the largest source of referrals of individuals with disabilities.

Financial Career Pathways: Partner Banks

JVS Los Angeles: Bank of America, Citibank, City National Bank, Pacific Western Bank, Union Bank of California, U.S. Bank, Washington Mutual (now Chase), Wells Fargo

JVS MetroWest New Jersey: The Bank of New York, Citibank, Commerce Bank (now TD Bank), Pershing (securities clearinghouse), PNC Bank, Sovereign Bank (since acquired by Banco Santander), Valley National, Washington Mutual (now Chase)

JVS San Francisco: Bank of America, Bank of the West, Federal Reserve Bank, Wachovia, Wells Fargo

Lessons Learned in the Wake of a National Recession

The Financial Career Pathways program exceeded the quantitative goals set in the IAJVS agreement with USDOL/ETA, a significant accomplishment considering the banking crisis that occurred toward the end of the project. In part, the sites were able to meet their goals by placing people in occupations and industries that needed many of the same skills as the bank teller jobs. Some participants were able to use what they had learned from the banking pre-employment training and apply it to other service-oriented occupations and industries that required similar skills.

The participant population of Financial Career Pathways was quite diverse. According to IAJVS, participants had a range of disabilities, including:²⁵

- 32% of participants had a psychiatric or emotional disability,
- 23% had a learning or neurological disability, and
- 21% had a medical disability (as defined by JVS).

While the banking crisis affected the project's outcomes, JVS was able to achieve impressive results:²⁶

- 81% of the total enrolled completed training,
- 55% of the total enrolled were placed in jobs, and
- Of 118 individuals completing training, 79 were placed in jobs.

According to Los Angeles officials, the bank tellers it placed had lower turnover than banks had been experiencing with other new hires. In New Jersey, the JVS affiliate successfully placed more than 30 graduates into employment at area banks, with a retention rate of 80%, substantially higher than the previous rate for new hires in banking.

All three sites were positive about the program but found it challenging to fill classes aimed at one type of job (bank teller) with sufficient numbers of appropriate candidates with disabilities. The Los Angeles Bankwork\$ program, which is still operating, serves individuals with disabilities as well as other underrepresented groups. The other affiliates used the lessons learned and capacity built by the program in other efforts, including using some of the financial services curricula in other programming. They feel this gives people with and without disabilities more options for employment and expands the potential workforce for banks.

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A significant lesson learned was that in setting up a sector project for individuals with disabilities with a particular industry, it is necessary to understand the nature of the jobs in demand and the potential match between these jobs and individuals with disabilities.

- If the sector program is limited to individuals with disabilities and a narrow range of positions, massive recruitment may be needed through agencies that serve adults with disabilities, specialized disability organizations, special education departments of school systems, and general outreach to the public.
- The sector program could target individuals with disabilities among other underrepresented populations, and look for the best match with the positions available.
- The pre-employment training program for individuals with disabilities could target a particular occupational sector, such as customer service, with “tracks” for different industries.

Another key lesson from the project was that while training people in the skills required for the job is essential, it is also necessary to look at the hiring process and to focus on ensuring that the best-qualified candidates can get through the hiring process.

All in all, IAJVS and its network of affiliates felt that the program was built on relationships with agencies and organizations that serve individuals with disabilities (such as vocational rehabilitation agencies and One-Stop Career Centers), and was important to expanding their horizons about jobs that people with disabilities would qualify to fill. On the employer side, both IAJVS and the banks agreed that in order for the partnerships to be successful:

- The groundwork for partnerships must be laid at more than one level. In the successful relationships, the banks and JVS communicated at the executive, management, and staff levels. In hierarchical organizations like banks, the message must come from the top and reach the other levels. Active engagement was also needed with recruiters and hiring managers, a common issue in large organizations.
- It is advantageous to have a written Memorandum of Understanding outlining the responsibilities of each party — the employer and the intermediary or training organization. Although this is not strictly necessary in all cases, it helps to clarify expectations and commitments.
- A strong industry champion is needed who can bring resources and commitment to the effort. In some cases, leadership turnover has an effect on the partnership.
- Partner organization staff must be knowledgeable about the industry and skilled at performing their jobs, whether it is curriculum development, training, or placement.

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- The intermediary organization must realize that the industry is in the “driver’s seat,” but at the same time it must give feedback to industry partners on ways in which the hiring process can be expedited. One New Jersey bank representative said that the intermediary organization must “make it easy for the employer.” Some of the JVS affiliate staff found the bank requirements and hiring processes to be rigid and overly complicated. While the JVS affiliates did everything they could to adapt to bank hiring needs and requirements, they also suggested modifications to the complicated bank hiring processes. In Los Angeles, some of the banks did modify their hiring processes in response to feedback from BankWork\$ staff. Both JVS affiliate staff and bank representatives agreed that the hiring process should not be so cumbersome as to prevent qualified applicants from being hired.
- Some felt that it is easier if the employer partner has one or more clear objectives for joining the partnership, communicates these clearly, and has a way of measuring whether these objectives were met. The banks that were focused on a specific business need (for example, the need to hire and retain more bank tellers) were easier for JVS to work with and the results were easier to measure. On the other hand, some banks become involved in order to explore what they may have in common with other banks, and together develop an initiative that meets their collective needs.
- The employer must be receptive to hiring individuals with disabilities, and to providing or arranging for staff development in disability etiquette and other disability-related areas.
- Even though there were economies of scale in the project, there was a need to be flexible and work at the community level. Each affiliate adapted to the needs of its local bank partners.
- There is a need to publicly recognize the employer organizations and share the success of the partnerships. At least two of the JVS affiliates received positive media coverage connected with their involvement in Financial Career Pathways. The MetroWest New Jersey program was described as a “win-win for everyone” in *New Jersey Banker* in winter 2009. Los Angeles’ BankWork\$ program was favorably profiled in the August 17, 2009 edition of the *Employment and Training Reporter*.

IAJVS’ own evaluation, *Financial Career Pathways: Lessons from a Sectoral Demonstration Project for Workers with Disabilities*, can be accessed at http://www.iajvs.org/documents/IAJVS_Financial_Career_Pathways_Evaluation_Report.pdf.

Conclusion

The financial sector initiative experience of IAJVS and three of its affiliates demonstrate all of the *Ready and Able* findings:

- **Employers respond to a business case for employing people with disabilities**

Meeting the employers' workforce needs. This initiative began with a “business case” — banks were experiencing workforce issues: a shortage of candidates and high turnover. They were looking for qualified employees and were willing to try a new, untapped resource. It was a promising industry, with sufficient job openings and various advancement possibilities from the entry-level teller position.

- **Innovative collaborations with and between workforce-supplying organizations enable employer efforts to recruit, hire, train, and support employees with disabilities**

Meeting the needs of several banks through a single, highly engaged, point of contact. All three IAJVS affiliates became deeply involved with multiple banks and other employers in financial services. They became increasingly knowledgeable about how to recruit, screen, and train to the banks' requirements. The combination of a major banking crisis and complicated bank hiring processes affected some of the outcomes during the project. IAJVS learned that although banks wanted to broaden their recruitment sources and were willing to make accommodations for individuals with disabilities, the banks would only hire people who met their requirements, and were specifically focused on a particular position, that of bank teller. Nonetheless, the banks involved in this project found the experience so positive that in at least two locations, they are interested in developing follow-on sector initiatives with the affiliates, possibly targeting additional positions. They have confidence in the IAJVS affiliates as responsive partners and intermediaries to help them address workforce issues.

- **Collaborations ensure that workers are qualified and productive**

Meeting the banks' needs for qualified, trained workers was front and center. The banks and IAJVS affiliates collaborated closely on the pre-employment training curricula, and all were pleased with the results. One bank called it “amazing.” Before the banking crisis, individuals were placed in banks at a high rate and had much better job retention than other hires. One key lesson learned through the Financial Career Pathways project was that while training people in the skills required for the job is essential, it is also necessary to look at the hiring process and to focus on ensuring that the best-qualified candidates can get through the employer's hiring process.

- **Successful collaborations nurture and reward continuous leadership**

Leadership from the affiliates to the firms mattered. A successful partnership requires leadership at multiple levels. A strong industry champion in Los Angeles brought resources and commitment that allowed the BankWork\$ effort to become a reality. Leadership from IAJVS drove the sector initiative as a pilot for employment of people with disabilities. Continued leadership from both banks and affiliates is fostering a next generation of partnership.

Chapter 3: Preferred Solutions: How Job Brokers for People with Disabilities Meet Employer Needs

Profiled in this chapter:

- GoodTemps — New York and Northern New Jersey
- Manpower Inc.'s TechReach Program in Albuquerque, New Mexico

Over the past 20 years, employer use of staffing services has grown and the positions created by this practice are a major source of work for many individuals, especially new entrants to the labor force. While most staffing services are run by private, for-profit companies, a number of community-based organizations and national nonprofit organizations also operate staffing services. A national network, the Alternative Staffing Alliance, was formed to help alternative staffing programs access technical assistance, address policy issues, and obtain advice on how to expand. The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, which has been active in supporting alternative staffing services, recently conducted an alternative staffing demonstration in order to assess the value of the alternate staffing organization model. Two companion research reports describe the findings from this demonstration project.²⁷

This chapter profiles two staffing services successfully coordinating partnerships to meet employer needs through the recruitment and training of people with disabilities. These profiles examine the work of a nonprofit staffing service (GoodTemps) and a private, for-profit staffing service (Manpower Inc.), both devoted to providing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in the public and private competitive labor market.

GoodTemps is an alternative staffing agency operated by Goodwill Industries of Greater New York and Northern New Jersey. A report by the National Academic and Law Center to the Mott Foundation in 2005,²⁸ defined alternative staffing agencies as not-for-profit, fee-for-service agencies that charge companies a competitive mark-up rate for their workers while also helping hard-to-employ individuals secure permanent jobs with self-sufficiency wages and benefits. Alternative staffing agencies differ from for-profit agencies in a number of ways. First, they make extra efforts to place “hard-to-employ” workers. Second, they typically attempt to pay workers a higher rate than these workers would receive from other staffing agencies. Third, they make pointed efforts to eliminate the problematic workplace issues often associated with private staffing services. Fourth, many of these agencies attempt to couple job placements with day care, housing assistance, educational assistance, and other supportive services that can help workers maintain employment. Fifth, they often undertake political advocacy in order to directly challenge the adverse working conditions many in their service population face.

In this profile, it is evident that GoodTemps maintains relations with a lengthy list of local provider agencies from whom it recruits job seekers with disabilities. It trains them and provides qualified employees with disabilities to mostly public agencies and ensures that employees have appropriate supports. GoodTemps makes it possible for these employers to benefit from the employment of workers with disabilities through its service of providing quality employees and through its trusted relationships with these employers.

Manpower Inc. is a world leader in the employment services industry, with 4,100 offices in 82 countries and \$22 billion in worldwide revenues.²⁹ The Manpower profile involves an effort in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and shows how relationships can be transformed into lasting partnerships when employer job needs are identified and met. Manpower worked with Central New Mexico Community College, state workforce agencies, and other providers to establish a Manufacturing Academy and develop a curriculum, with input from the employers and partners, to train workers with disabilities for electronic assembly work.

The GoodTemps and Manpower profiles demonstrate successful market-based approaches to serving individuals with disabilities while ensuring that businesses and public-sector agencies have the best workers possible. It is the ability of these organizations to compete “toe-to-toe” with standard commercial enterprises that frames these models as particularly promising. Both organizations demonstrate a sophisticated, flexible mindset in working with employers.

The GoodTemps Advantage: Reliable and Ready

Introduction

GoodTemps operates as a full-service staffing agency with a specialty in placing people with disabilities and other underrepresented populations. GoodTemps is the largest of the 25 staffing services operated by a Goodwill Industries member agency across the United States and Canada.³⁰ Over the past several years, GoodTemps has placed an average of 2,000 people per year in short- and long-term temporary assignments in the public and private sectors. More than half of the temporary staff placed are people with documented disabilities.³¹ GoodTemps is a mission-based business, with substantial net revenue that has supported the establishment of Goodwill-funded community services.

GoodTemps seeks to help people who have traditionally faced challenges to securing employment, and to expand the types of jobs they are able to obtain. GoodTemps focuses on people with disabilities, and a significant portion of its current business is generated through its participation in state preferred-source programs for people with disabilities. It also generates a fair amount of other types of business, and has won private-sector as well as public-sector contracts through competitively bid (not preferred-source) procurements.

GoodTemps' approach to pre-qualifying applicants includes developing a pool of pre-screened applicants for placement, giving skill assessments, and providing useful data on all potential candidates, therefore competing with other major placement agencies. GoodTemps' practices in building this pre-qualified pool and acting as a labor intermediary bear close examination by workforce and disability service agencies.

"GoodTemps, a division of Goodwill Industries of Greater New York and Northern New Jersey, has been providing temporary staff to our offices...since October 2003. We have three different shifts, which consist of 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., 4:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m., and 12:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. Duplicating USA has a stringent testing procedure and screening process that GoodTemps has not only executed but has consistently provided qualified copy operators at different skill levels.

We have been happy with the attention to detail and service that has been provided by this agency. As a result, we have hired on to our staff permanently, approximately 12 of GoodTemps' employees.

We recommend GoodTemps highly and are continuously growing our business. GoodTemps has been a resource that has proven to be extremely effective. We look forward to a long-lasting relationship."

Robert Snow, General Manager, Duplicating USA

GoodTemps meets the needs of large and small private- and public-sector organizations through a temporary workforce of qualified individuals, most with disabilities, who work at market rates and compete against private-sector staffing firms. David Schoch, Senior Vice President of GoodTemps, maintains, and many experts agree, that GoodTemps workers compete successfully against commercial agency temps. If GoodTemps placements do not perform well, Mr. Schoch states, its public-sector customers would “protest their way out of their mandate” to use GoodTemps, and find a way of justifying competitive procurement of temporary staffing services. It is this record of competition in a tough staffing marketplace that demonstrates the agency’s focus on customers, and confirms the value of its screening, qualifying, and training protocols in preparing people with disabilities and others to meet business client needs consistently. GoodTemps places 2,000 workers per year, and about 900 are working at any one time.³²

The GoodTemps Protocols

GoodTemps began on April 8, 1996. Its goal is to be the best temporary staffing service available in the area. While GoodTemps markets its services to both the public and private sectors, its status as a preferred-source vendor in New York and New Jersey has led to contracts with a number of public agencies and quasi-governmental organizations. Preferred-source programs provide mechanisms to increase employment for people with disabilities. In New York, the preferred-source program is administered through the New York State Industries for the Disabled (NYSID). Government agencies and public benefit corporations may contract with GoodTemps for NYSID-covered services without competition; in fact, they are expected to try to negotiate such a contract before they engage in competitive procurement. Its preferred vendor status has helped GoodTemps to become the largest provider of temporary office staff to New York City.

“When I became involved with GoodTemps, I was looking for training that would qualify me to do temporary work while I assessed the next step in my life professionally. I was treated with impeccable professionalism, respect, and compassion. I received the training that I needed in a very supportive environment, and was placed in my first temporary assignment very promptly. I am so very grateful for the door that GoodTemps opened to me into a new working world.”

Marilyn Barney, Brooklyn, NY

“GoodTemps is a very cooperative company with a well-rounded group of employees who treated me with respect and care. You should be proud to be a member of GoodTemps as it was a very rewarding experience for me. I appreciate the fact that you acknowledged my skills and capabilities, and hope to learn more through your agency. I look forward to being on the team of GoodTemps agency.”

Janie Battles, Brooklyn, NY

In New Jersey, the Association for Choices in Community Supports and Employment Services (ACCSES NJ) serves as the central nonprofit agency to administer the State Use Law for Rehabilitation Facilities. In 2005, then New Jersey Governor Richard Codey issued Executive Order #67, directing every department, agency, authority, and instrumentality of New Jersey to make a “good faith effort to purchase three percent of such goods and services from the Central Nonprofit Agency, which has been established to fulfill the aims of the Rehabilitation Facility Set Aside Act.”³³ ACCSES NJ and GoodTemps engaged in a four-year process to have temporary office work listed on a contract line under this law, and to have GoodTemps be a designated provider of such services in northern New Jersey. Under this law, individuals with disabilities that are engaged in temporary office work must be paid market wages and work in an integrated employment setting.

In addition to the preferred-source programs, GoodTemps has made concerted efforts to generate business in the private sector. GoodTemps has found it challenging to compete with international staffing agencies such as Adecco, Kelly Services, and Manpower, which leverage many more of their resources to promote their brand names, and have the advantage of being able to contract with international employers, many of whom prefer to have a single staffing service vendor in multiple locations. As part of Goodwill Industries of Greater New York and Northern New Jersey, GoodTemps is restricted to a defined New York/northern New Jersey area. Another common business practice in the staffing industry is for larger companies to employ a Managed Service Provider (MSP), which contracts with multiple staffing agencies in a local, regional, national, or international area. Such agencies then compete on an order-by-order basis to provide a candidate ultimately chosen by the company. GoodTemps began soliciting these MSPs and was able to successfully serve private-sector customers such as General Electric, Sony, and JPMorgan Chase.

GoodTemps continues such arrangements with sanofi-aventis and Con Edison, but began to focus on a new strategy to attract small and mid-sized businesses. After conducting a marketing campaign that emphasized advertising on Google, Yahoo, and MSN, with some good results, the strategy now involves social networking sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter as a means of promoting GoodTemps’ service to smaller private-sector employers and to job seekers. GoodTemps has provided temporary staffing services to approximately 1,400 small and mid-sized companies.³⁴

In order to grow, GoodTemps has begun to focus on markets outside New York City. In addition to northern New Jersey, it is concentrating on suburban Long Island and Westchester County in New York. GoodTemps currently has contracts with the State University of New York at Stony Brook and with Westchester County. GoodTemps has also considered joining with other Goodwill staffing services in national marketing. Goodwill International is exploring how to leverage its staffing service network to facilitate contracting.

GoodTemps stakes its existence on its belief that people with all different types of disabilities are skilled and can be placed into jobs.

The market for temporary workers, in general, declined by 30% during the 2007-2009 recession,³⁵ and GoodTemps' roster of working temporary employees decreased by 20% due to general business conditions.³⁶ In addition to general business conditions, David Schoch notes that "customer churn" is part of the staffing service business. According to Mr. Schoch, the staffing service industry across the board has suffered a major decline due to business conditions, but the GoodTemps decline has been less than the industry average. The staffing industry has begun to grow again as the economy begins to recover. Companies that are not ready to commit to hiring will initially grow through temporary staffing. Mr. Schoch believes that GoodTemps, having weathered the recession better than the staffing industry in general, is positioned to fulfill this need.

GoodTemps recruits candidates from a wide variety of organizations, with particular emphasis on those that serve people with disabilities. Most of its placements are in office administrative and professional jobs and require a high level of functioning. Many of GoodTemps' temporary placements are relatively long-term assignments, and generally last from six weeks to six months. While most assignments are full time, some are part time, although part-time assignments may also last for many months.

GoodTemps places people with all different types of disabilities into jobs. Some of the disabilities are visible, while others are not. Many of the candidates placed into jobs have disabilities such as hypertension, hearing loss, heart problems, eyesight loss, mental illness, depression, bipolar disorder, learning disabilities, and many others.

GoodTemps' first job is to build a pool of qualified people, including people with disabilities, and this effort continues on an ongoing basis. This is seen as the key to the agency's success. Business customers expect orders to be filled immediately. Because GoodTemps always has pre-qualified candidates, it has earned a reputation as a reliable and responsive staffing service.

The key word is "qualified," and GoodTemps' pre-qualification process can be done in one visit that may take up to three hours. Candidates visit a GoodTemps office, either in Manhattan, Elmsford, New York, or Harrison, New Jersey. They complete an application, and, depending on the type of job they are interested in, they may be asked to take a skills assessment. GoodTemps uses Kenexa Prove-It, which includes more than 1,000 validated assessments. Prove-It is often used by employers to assess skills typically used by office personnel, such as Microsoft Office applications and other basic office skills. If a candidate's skills do not measure up to the standards needed for the position, GoodTemps will help them improve their skills. Goodwill offers free training to anyone registered with the agency, both on site at computer labs and via the Internet.

In addition to the skills assessment, GoodTemps interviews each candidate and evaluates other attributes, such as work-appropriate attire, motivation, professionalism, communication skills, and experience in the field in which they are seeking work. Based on both the skills assessment and the interview, GoodTemps makes a determination about whether it is likely to be able to refer the individual to a position. This is the benchmark decision. If GoodTemps thinks it will be able to refer the individual to an assignment, the individual is registered in

GoodTemps' database. In New York, GoodTemps estimates that 75% of all applicants are placed in its database, which is searched every time there is a placement opportunity.³⁷ In New Jersey, less than half of all applicants are ready to be placed in the GoodTemps database for referral.³⁸ GoodTemps gives candidates constructive feedback that will help them realistically assess their skills and opportunities in the labor market. GoodTemps staff stressed that the organization is there to help candidates who sincerely want to improve their skills.

Relationships with Customers

Because 75% of the individuals placed under NYSID contracts must be documented as having a disability, GoodTemps has developed a process for obtaining and keeping this documentation. Any candidate referred by the New York State Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID), New York State's vocational rehabilitation agency, brings documentation that automatically qualifies them under NYSID contracts. For other referrals, Goodwill's vocational rehabilitation division signs off on the documentation of a disability.

In order to handle both candidate and business customer relations, GoodTemps employs a staff of approximately 30 people, including two in Harrison, New Jersey and one in Westchester County (a suburban area just north of New York City). GoodTemps has its own Web site (<http://www.goodtemps.org>), through which it recruits both employer customers and applicants. For David Schoch, GoodTemps needs to and is driven by commitment to create value for the candidates, their referring organizations, and clients. It is this market solution to the needs of three disparate groups that deserves further study and potential replication.

Recruiting Partnerships

GoodTemps recruits candidates from Goodwill's own programs and a wide variety of agencies and carefully nurtures these relationships. In New York, GoodTemps has established a good working relationship with VESID. The relationship with VESID covers all five boroughs of New York City as well as suburban Westchester County. GoodTemps sends representatives to VESID's monthly consortium meetings, which include both VESID offices and community providers of vocational rehabilitation services, and has a staff person who serves as a liaison with community organizations. GoodTemps maintains a community outreach database of more than 200 organizations. Recruitment sources in New York include a large and diverse array of organizations, including nonprofit organizations, vocational rehabilitation, and One-Stop Career Centers.

Referral agencies work with GoodTemps because the agency has access to jobs, because working on a temporary basis has advantages for people with disabilities, and because GoodTemps pre-qualifies and pre-tests applicants. A representative from VESID said that this

information is extremely valuable. GoodTemps representatives are very clear on what they can and cannot offer, and on what job seekers can expect. Referral agencies appreciate the directness and clarity of the communication, which makes it easier to work with GoodTemps.

GoodTemps is “user friendly” for the staff of referral agencies. GoodTemps is inviting, wants to hear their concerns, and is responsive to this feedback. A VESID representative said that GoodTemps has improved its service based on feedback. The relationships with GoodTemps offer another avenue for many organizations that are required to place people with disabilities into jobs. An advantage to GoodTemps is that if an issue arises on the job, GoodTemps can engage that agency to intervene.

Good Temps Sources of Recruitment in New York City

- VESID, the largest source, has referred more than 600 people to GoodTemps. Approximately 30% have been placed into assignments. One advantage of working with VESID is that it certifies eligibility of disability status that satisfies the requirements of the preferred source requirements of NYSID.
- Federation Employment and Guidance Service (F·E·G·S), a large New York City-based nonprofit organization and provider of services to individuals with disabilities. GoodTemps works especially with F·E·G·S’ “We Care” and “Back-to-Work” programs.
- Goodwill’s own programs
- Lighthouse International
- Workforce 1 (One-Stop) Centers in New York City
- Abilities!
- Career and Educational Consultants
- Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow
- North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System
- National Jewish Council for Disabilities
- International Center for the Disabled
- Goddard Riverside Community Center
- Fountain House
- AARP

In New Jersey, the major referral sources are the New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the One-Stop Career Centers, and community providers. The regular e-mail blasts from GoodTemps go to more than 125 people in New Jersey, including many community providers. In addition to its regular referral sources, GoodTemps attends job fairs, particularly those that focus on people with disabilities, is listed on various Internet search engines, and lists its jobs with such Web sites as Craigslist, SimplyHired, Indeed, and HotJobs.

Conclusion

The majority of GoodTemps placements are temporary, although many are long-term temporary assignments. In some cases, individuals are hired on a permanent basis where they have been assigned, but this is the exception rather than the rule. David Schoch says that some individuals prefer long-term temporary work, with breaks in between. For others, the experience of working for GoodTemps provides work experience that serves as a stepping stone to finding other work. Approximately 85% of the individuals placed under NYSID contracts were people with disabilities.

Most of the jobs (70%) are administrative in nature; another 25% are professional, and the remainder are a mixture of other types of jobs, such as warehouse positions. The average wage of GoodTemps placements in 2008 was \$13.13 per hour.⁴⁰ GoodTemps offers statutory fringe benefits but does not provide paid benefits such as health care coverage.⁴¹

This profile has the following implications related to the *Ready and Able* findings:

- **Employers respond to a business case for employing people with disabilities**

GoodTemps' business customers use temporary workers for business reasons. Temporary workers fill in for absent employees or temporary vacancies in order to provide extra support during busy seasons or times, to staff special short-term projects, or as a source of permanent employees in temporary-to-permanent arrangements. GoodTemps believes that people with all kinds of disabilities have skills, want to work, and can be placed into jobs. The businesses or agencies at which people are placed want someone who can do the job, and GoodTemps provides them with people with disabilities who can do the job. Feedback from employers indicates that GoodTemps placements are as good as or better than candidates from other staffing services with which they have worked.

GoodTemps registers 500 to 800 new candidates for employment per month. As of 2009, there were 35,000 individuals in GoodTemps' pool. GoodTemps places 2,000 people per year into temporary assignments, with approximately 900 working at any one time. Of this 900, approximately 550, or more than 60%, are individuals with disabilities.⁴²

- **Innovative collaborations with and between workforce-supplying organizations enable employer efforts to recruit, hire, train, and support employees with disabilities**

As a staffing service, GoodTemps illustrates the vital importance of a single point of contact for the business customer. GoodTemps focuses on the needs of the business customer, recruits from multiple service providers, and makes the match. This makes it easier for business customers to hire people with disabilities. GoodTemps assesses and screens candidates on an ongoing basis and screens to employer skill specifications. Through a temp-to-hire staffing model, employers can be sure of the candidates they hire before committing them to their payroll.

Public and community agencies refer candidates to GoodTemps for placement in temporary jobs. GoodTemps has access to jobs and serves as a central point of contact for provider agencies that want access to these jobs for their clients and customers.

- **Collaborations ensure that workers are qualified and productive**

GoodTemps gives people with disabilities an opportunity to work that they may not have had otherwise. This is a critical advantage that it achieves through its partnership with providers. By removing direct employer screening, GoodTemps eliminates the inadvertent discrimination that sometimes takes place in the marketplace. Also, GoodTemps can often place people who have no experience as long as they have the necessary skills.

Through GoodTemps, individuals with disabilities are gaining experience and learning skills that make them more marketable. This is true for people with little or no experience in the workforce as well as for people interested in changing careers. It is a good way of transitioning those with skills but little experience into the competitive workforce. GoodTemps is able to give many people jobs quickly, which some people need. Workers can then continue to search for other work while working in a temporary position. This builds up the supply of workers GoodTemps can offer customers.

GoodTemps also offers free training in its computer labs and via the Internet to individuals who are registered with the organization.

- **Successful collaborations nurture and reward continuous leadership**

GoodTemps has grown due to its customer focus and successful relationships with public agencies, community providers, and employers. GoodTemps has also played a leadership role within Goodwill Industries International in promoting the use of temporary staffing services to benefit underrepresented populations served by Goodwill as part of its mission.

Manpower Inc.: The Albuquerque, New Mexico TechReach Program

Introduction

Manpower Inc. is one of the largest staffing companies in the world. According to the company Web site, “Founded in 1948, the \$22 billion company offers a range of services for the entire employment and business cycle including permanent, temporary, and contract recruitment; employee assessment and selection; training; outplacement; outsourcing; and consulting.”⁴³ The company has 4,200 offices worldwide and meets the staffing needs of 400,000 clients. In 2008, Manpower had four million associates placed in permanent, temporary, or contract positions around the world.⁴⁴

From its inception, Manpower Inc. has had a strategy of tapping disenfranchised employees, including people with disabilities. Martha Artiles, Global Chief Diversity Officer, said that the company has been “very passionate” in its efforts to recruit employees with disabilities because it improves Manpower’s competitive position with competitors. She said, “It’s about business; it’s about talent; but it helps communities.”

The TechReach program in Albuquerque, New Mexico, offers a rich example of how Manpower recruited people with disabilities to meet employer demand for skilled employees.

Development of the Partnership

The TechReach partnership was initiated in response to a business need for skilled employees for electronic assembly. A regional manager for an electronics company said the company did not have sufficient skilled workers to meet customer demand. A contracts administrator for an aerospace company said that their company was experiencing a shortage of skilled workers as well. As a result, these companies approached Manpower for help.⁴⁵

Jeff Parker, Regional Director for Manpower-Albuquerque, proposed the TechReach program, which would recruit a new diverse group of workers, including at-risk youth, veterans, dislocated workers from ethnic minority groups, and people with disabilities. The proposed program combined “candidate selection, training, certification, placement, and continuous skill-upgrade components to deliver comprehensive solutions for employers.”⁴⁶ A key element of the proposed program was the establishment of a partnership between the employers, Manpower, and community organizations such as the Employers’ Disability Resource (New Mexico’s Business Leadership Network), the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico (the local One-Stop system), and Central New Mexico Community College. Each of these entities brought expertise and resources needed for program implementation.

Partnering with employers, government, community agencies, and the local community college, the TechReach program recruited and trained people with disabilities for high-demand jobs in the technology sector. TechReach is an example of a partnership where a staffing company assumes the role of intermediary between entities serving people with disabilities and employers.

Lawrence Rael, Executive Director of the Middle Rio Grande Council of Governments, which serves as the administrative entity for Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico, recalls when Mr. Parker presented the idea for TechReach to his board. He said that a core issue was that the community college did not have a curriculum for certification for the needed jobs. In collaboration with employers and Manpower, Workforce Connection and the Council were able to “entice” the college to develop a curriculum and establish training for these jobs. Employers’ Disability Resource agreed to screen applicants for TechReach and provide needed supports. It was further agreed that each participant would be registered with Workforce Connection to facilitate funding for the training. Mr. Rael said that the TechReach program is consistent with his agency’s commitment to “adapt to meet the needs of customers including people with disabilities.”

Training and Curriculum are Key

The initial challenge for the TechReach partnership was the development of a curriculum for training prospective candidates. Central New Mexico Community College established a Manufacturing Academy and developed a curriculum with input from the employers and partners. This curriculum not only provides classroom laboratories for skill training in electronic assembly but also training for soft skills such as interviewing, résumé writing, and customer service. Denise Gardner, Business Development Manager at the college, noted that the curriculum was developed for all demographics, including people with disabilities. Jeff Parker added that the curriculum meets the highest international standards for assembly training in areas such as military, avionics, and medical devices. Upon completion of the training, students receive a certificate qualifying them for employment in electronic assembly.⁴⁷

Once the Manufacturing Academy was ready for students, recruitment for the first class was initiated through the Employers’ Disability Resource. The Employers’ Disability Resource, which is funded by the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, had access to vocational rehabilitation counselors in the area. Leah Rhule, Executive Director of the Employers’ Disability Resource, said that when Manpower approached her about recruiting for the classes, “we put the word out and the classes were filled.”⁴⁸ Specific referrals were made by the individual vocational rehabilitation counselors. The classes were funded by Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico using federal Workforce Investment Act funding. The costs of housing and transportation for students who needed them were funded by the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Manpower provided pre-screening, post-screening, and job placement supports.

There were four classes of 12 to 14 students who completed the TechReach program. The fourth class was comprised entirely of people with hearing impairments. In response, the curriculum at the Manufacturing Academy was translated into American Sign Language and interpreters were provided to facilitate instruction. Martha Artiles noted with pride that technical terms were added to the sign language dictionary as part of this process.⁴⁹

The TechReach program was put on hold after its fourth class due to a lull in the demand for employees.

Outcomes from the Partnership

TechReach was able to meet a local workforce need through the recruitment and training of employees with disabilities. Manpower statistics indicate that 100% of the graduates of TechReach were hired by employers, with a 93% retention rate.⁵⁰ Leah Rhule said that employers felt “more comfortable” hiring people with disabilities because of the TechReach partnership. She said further that the TechReach program was a “win for the job seeker, a win for the employer, and a win for Manpower.”

The contracts administrator from the aerospace company was very pleased with its hires from TechReach. She said, “The quality of these graduates brought value to our business.” A production supervisor at the electronics company said, “We seek out the best employees for the job; these graduates get the job done.”

Denise Gardner echoed the employer sentiments. She said that when students graduate from TechReach, “They get work.” Ms. Rhule agreed, saying that through TechReach “people with disabilities are getting jobs.”⁵¹ Mr. Rael described the results of TechReach as “terrific” and said that Workforce Connection is willing to consider providing funding for the model in the future to meet workforce needs.

Manpower views TechReach as a successful model to meet local workforce needs through the recruitment and training of people with disabilities. Martha Artiles said that TechReach is “alive and well in the Manpower system” and is an important tool for facilitating employment for people with disabilities that is available to all of its offices worldwide.

Conclusion

The TechReach program is viewed as a success by Manpower, employers, and participating partners. The partnership provides important models for private-sector collaborations consistent with the *Ready and Able* findings:

- **Employers respond to a business case for employing people with disabilities**

The Albuquerque TechReach program was developed by Manpower in response to a local workforce need for skilled electronic assembly workers. Manpower recruits employees with disabilities because it improves the company's position with competitors. TechReach is one model the company uses in its recruitment efforts. Company leadership states firmly "it's about business."

- **Innovative collaborations with and between workforce-supplying organizations enable employer efforts to recruit, hire, train, and support employees with disabilities**

Manpower organized a partnership that included the vocational rehabilitation system, the workforce system, the local community college, and the Business Leadership Network (BLN) to address this need through the recruitment and retention of people with disabilities. The TechReach program illustrates a staffing company successfully coordinating a partnership with the local disability, workforce, and community college systems to meet employer workforce needs through the recruitment and training of people with disabilities. This presents a model for Manpower and other similar types of companies to be the catalyst and coordinator for local partnerships that facilitate the employment of people with disabilities.

The New Mexico BLN played an important role in coordinating the outreach to potential employees with disabilities for the TechReach program. This highlights the potential for BLNs participating in local partnerships that facilitate the employment of people with disabilities.

- **Collaborations ensure that workers are qualified and productive**

Through the partnership, an innovative program of outreach, training, supports, pre- and post-program screening, and certification provided employers with a pipeline of skilled employees with disabilities to meet their workforce needs. People with disabilities in the TechReach program were funded through the local workforce system using Workforce Investment Act funds. The curriculum at the TechReach Manufacturing Academy was developed and adapted to meet the diverse needs of people with disabilities and resulted in certification upon graduation. This highlights the possible resources workforce agencies can provide in local partnerships that facilitate the employment of people with disabilities. The local community college developed and operated the TechReach Manufacturing Academy with the capability of training students with disabilities for skilled positions. This illustrates the potential for community colleges to provide training and certifications for local partnerships.

- **Successful collaborations nurture and reward continuous leadership**

Manpower assumed leadership to meet a local workforce need through the employment of people with disabilities. Using the TechReach model, it coordinated a partnership to recruit, train, and place people with disabilities in high-tech jobs. The result was a win for employers who received qualified employees to meet their workforce needs and expanded employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Chapter 4: Career Tracks: Placing Skilled College Students and Graduates with Disabilities through Partnerships between Employers, Colleges and Universities, and Intermediaries

Profiled in this chapter:

- Emerging Leaders and the National Business and Disability Council
- Career Opportunities for Students with Disabilities
- Lime Connect

Based on recent data, the employment rate for college graduates without disabilities is 89.9%. For college graduates with disabilities, the rate is 50.6%.⁵²

Increasingly, employers are interested in tapping into the underutilized talent pool of college graduates with disabilities and are collaborating with intermediary organizations. The three initiatives profiled in this chapter illustrate the ways in which companies can access these skilled graduates and ways in which college students and graduates can connect with employers interested in them.

Postsecondary students with disabilities must know the nature of true perseverance if they are to enter the job market successfully and benefit from a strong start to their careers. Various studies show that college students with disabilities must find a way to meet specific qualifications of a desired job,⁵³ as well as demonstrate transferable skills such as communication, troubleshooting, decision making, leadership, and problem solving. They will have to determine whether they will need accommodations to help them succeed in their jobs. Work-based learning and mentoring experiences are critical to helping students with disabilities explore different accommodations, as well as provide opportunities to practice disclosing their disabilities and requesting accommodations from employers.⁵⁴ Naturally, they also provide the contacts and networking that create employment opportunities.

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Paige Marcus, a student at the University of Michigan, participated in the Emerging Leaders program, the first case study in this chapter. She wrote of her experience, “The experiences I’ve had have been invaluable in preparing me for a full-time career. My supervisor is great and is providing an outlet for me to develop my analytical, communication, and general business skills. The Emerging Leaders Program has really opened the door for me, for which I am eternally grateful!” People with disabilities at every educational level cope with preconceptions, attitudes, and stereotypes among employers, managers, and co-workers. College students such as Ms. Marcus and graduates with disabilities have navigated a number of barriers in their journey to self-sufficiency and employment. Most of these individuals have learned in high school and childhood that they will have to think further ahead, think faster, and multitask more than their peers to keep up with the demands of school and activities. The race is rarely a fair start, but in the words of one observer, “Perseverance is not a long race. It is many short races one after another.”

The profiles in this chapter demonstrate how academic and career goals can be achieved by organizations with corporate institutional partnerships and a strong tradition of understanding corporate hiring practices. The Emerging Leaders and Career Opportunities for Students with Disabilities (COSD) programs deliver on the core challenge of *lowering barriers* for students with disabilities to desirable internships, employer relationships, interviews, and mentoring. Emerging Leaders showcases a “best-in-class” internship experience that many employers are studying. COSD’s Career Gateway Web site and full-service Student Summits provide universities, corporations, and college students with disabilities with opportunities for information sharing and facilitate the employment of college students with disabilities.

Lime Connect’s approach is “inclusive, inspirational, dynamic and cutting-edge,” in the words of one corporate partner. This nonprofit has discarded the language and assumptions of traditional disability approaches, and brings verve and contemporary marketing approaches to “rebranding” the professional with disabilities. Lime Connect’s founder is famous for saying about people with disabilities, “Kill the current brand with quality. Get the message out that people with disabilities can and will deliver.”⁵⁵ The specialized recruitment, experiential learning, job shadowing, and work-based learning experiences seen in these case studies are all good market-driven models for increasing employment for college students and graduates with disabilities.

Experiencing the Difference: Emerging Leaders and the National Business and Disability Council

Introduction

In August 2009, Suzanne Robitaille posted on her blog:

Internships are a cornerstone of a student's college experience, but only a few programs exist to place students with disabilities. One notable front-runner is Emerging Leaders, which finds and places qualified college and graduate students with disabilities into paid summer internships throughout Corporate America.

In 2009, more than 100 students competed for internships at MetLife, CIT, JPMorgan Chase, Mutual of America, Booz Allen Hamilton, Lockheed Martin, and Shell...As part of the application process, students had to have a minimum 3.0 GPA and submit an essay on how living with a disability has had an impact on their lives.

At a recent gathering at MetLife in New York City, the Class of 2009 shared their experiences and heard from the program's benefactors. The students had just completed a rigorous two-day leadership development conference in New York, with facilitators from L'Oreal, MetLife, Prudential, and UBS.

"Only half of disabled college graduates secure employment, and they are often underemployed — working at jobs for which they are overqualified, unrelated to their degrees, or in temporary or part-time jobs," says Edmund Cortez, President of Just One Break, the organization that runs the Emerging Leaders program. "We're working to change that," he adds.⁵⁶

This profile shows how Emerging Leaders (<http://www.emerging-leaders.com>) partners with businesses to help them access talented, career-minded college students with disabilities. This competitive program provides paid summer internships for highly qualified undergraduate and graduate students with disabilities at major employers throughout the United States. Booz Allen Hamilton founded Emerging Leaders in 2001 and transitioned its management to the National Business and Disability Council (NBDC) in 2005. NBDC, a membership organization of major private- and public-sector employers nationwide, is a program of Just One Break, Inc. (JOB), founded in 1947 by Orin Lehman, Howard Rusk, Bernard Baruch, and Eleanor Roosevelt to bring together returning veterans with disabilities and proactive employers seeking qualified workers. JOB is part of the Abilities! family of services, a

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nonprofit organization that operates a wide variety of disability-related programs with local, national, and international reach.

In addition to their paid internships, Emerging Leaders interns participate in a three-day leadership development conference focusing on strengthening work-related skills and strategies for effectively managing disabilities in the workplace. The culmination of the conference consists of Emerging Leaders presenting case study findings to an audience of new and prospective corporate partners, Emerging Leaders alumni, members of the media, facilitators, and NBDC staff.

While simultaneously learning about and modeling values of teamwork, respect, and professionalism, the class of 2009 incorporated numerous ideas and diverse perspectives in their case studies. Working collaboratively in small groups, students were able to practice patience and active listening while recognizing the contributions of others. The intern group found in its exercise many trends that illuminate this profile:

- People with disabilities are a diverse population as disabilities are universal;
- People with disabilities are the single largest minority group in the world;
- This population is a virtually untapped resource and its members are often underemployed, despite their capabilities;
- Internally, companies can focus on an accessible physical work environment and help with a culture change/cultural climate; and
- Appealing to people with disabilities as part of the workforce creates a diverse and competent employee base.

One intern remarked during the conference, “What I learned was that people with disabilities are ‘normal,’ fun, smart, and amazing, which others will discover once they learn to look past the disability. We are just as, if not more, capable, with just an extra challenge to overcome to spice up life a bit. I know all of us had a great time, and we wish that we could relive that weekend again.”

How the Initiative Works

Since its creation, the quality of Emerging Leaders interns and the program have driven steady growth, both in terms of the number of students placed and in the number of companies offering internships.

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Emerging Leaders interns have been successfully placed at Barclays Capital, Bloomberg, Booz Allen Hamilton, CVS, JPMorgan Chase, Lehman Brothers, Liz Claiborne, Lockheed Martin, MetLife, Mutual of America, and Shell.

By 2005, Booz Allen Hamilton recognized the limitations of internally managing the program, and transitioned the Emerging Leaders program management to NBDC in order to facilitate further program growth and offer opportunities for as many deserving students as possible. Meredith DeDona of Booz Allen Hamilton described the decision to work with NBDC as an obvious one. Not only was NBDC already screening students for internships, Booz Allen Hamilton had been a longstanding member. NBDC's ready-made network of business partners, with numerous contacts with institutions of higher education, and natural connections, would ensure the future health of the initiative. These were unique areas of expertise for NBDC, more so than for Booz Allen Hamilton.

The mission of Emerging Leaders under NBDC is to partner with businesses to help them find outstanding young talent while also considering diversity and inclusion in their hiring practices. Internships are recognized as an important feature of career development for all students, and it is particularly important for students with disabilities who are less likely than the average student to have this type of experience.

NBDC reaches out to corporate partners to develop internship sites for qualified students and to member schools to market the program to students. A deadline is set each year for applicants to the Summer Internship Program. Emerging Leaders staff review and process applications as they are submitted, conducting telephone interviews with applicants. Then, based on the students' interests and geographical preferences, Emerging Leaders provides applicant information to corporate partners. Once an offer is made and accepted, Emerging Leaders provides support prior to, during, and following the internship for both the intern and the employer, including information and technical assistance to the corporate partner on the issues of disability etiquette, reasonable accommodation, and integration of an individual with a disability into the work team.

The corporate partner has responsibilities as well. The partner must complete a template that provides a profile of internship opportunities, participate in a review of pre-screened applicant résumés, and conduct telephone or in-person interviews with potential interns. The underlying commitment is that the partner must provide internship opportunities. The partner makes internship offers to appropriate applicants, provides interns with reasonable accommodations, and pays interns consistent with compensation to other interns. The partner must also allow interns to participate in a three-day Leadership Development Conference. There is no requirement to hire a specific number of interns, but to make a good faith effort to consider those interns with whom there are appropriate matches.

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“The quality of the young people participating in the Emerging Leaders program is unsurpassed. Their character and fortitude are truly inspirational. These talented young people have had an opportunity to network and develop their business skills, while the company has benefited from their significant contributions.”

Felipe Botero, Vice President, Technology and Operations, MetLife

In addition to funding Emerging Leaders, Booz Allen Hamilton is a primary corporate partner. Hiring teams are designated at the front end of the hiring process to design and oversee intern activities, and care is paid to ensuring that experiences are meaningful. Interns at Booz Allen Hamilton are encouraged to participate in numerous events and to network with other interns and internship programs.

In 2009, interns attended an American Association of Persons with Disabilities reception for the 19th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Meredith DeDona of Booz Allen Hamilton noted that “the goal is to help students increase their network of supports and help each of the other programs to continue to flourish.” As mentioned earlier, interns participate in an annual three-day leadership development conference focused on strengthening work-related skills and strategies for effectively managing disabilities in the workplace. Presenters include professionals in the area of disability supports, corporate partners, and alumni.

Funding for Emerging Leaders

When Booz Allen Hamilton transitioned management of Emerging Leaders to NBDC, a three-year grant was established from 2006 to 2008 that included decreasing levels of support throughout the duration of the contract. Booz Allen Hamilton expected that NBDC would seek other sources of funding to replace its own. As a nonprofit entity, NBDC could secure grants and other funding sources that would not have been available to a business. The agreement was established through a collaborative process in which Booz Allen Hamilton examined program goals, and talked to NBDC about its expectations and what was realistic. At the same time, Booz Allen Hamilton set targets that would push NBDC beyond just maintaining the program. This was an opportunity to advance the program both in terms of revenue sources and participation, which is exactly what occurred. Booz Allen Hamilton has continued to fund NBDC since 2008, with additional funding from The UPS Foundation, Lockheed Martin, and other firms, as well as the MENTOR Charitable Network. The Johnson Scholarship Foundation also funded a special outreach effort to the nation’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

2010 Emerging Leaders Program Application

Note: This internship program is specifically designed for undergraduate and graduate students with disabilities. To qualify for application, you must:

- Self-identify as a person with a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended
- Have completed a minimum of 60 college/university-level credits
- Maintain at least a 3.0 GPA (some participating employers require higher)
- Maintain student status the semester following your internship (graduating seniors immediately continuing on the graduate-level study may also apply)
- Have U.S. citizenship or be a documented individual legally authorized to work in the United States.

See full application at <http://www.emerging-leaders.com/studentsHowToApply.htm>

Satisfying Outcomes from the Partnership

Emerging Leaders is getting results, and growing every year. Between 2001 and 2009, the program placed 105 students in internships, and 19 interns ultimately accepted jobs at nine corporate partners. The program feedback has been consistently strong, with 100% of the corporate sponsors indicating that the intern had a very successful job experience in 2008, and all noting that they would consider hiring their intern if they had a future vacancy. Of the alumni surveyed in 2008, nearly 9 in 10 agreed that the internship experiences helped them to clarify their career objectives. More than 90% of the alumni who responded to the survey were employed at least part time.⁵⁷

Meredith DeDona of Booz Allen Hamilton said, “You can see exponential growth on all fronts.” Some student interns at Booz Allen Hamilton have extended their internships, and nine have moved into paid employment. Upon review of the program, Sean Cruse at the Research and Evaluation Center of Abilities noted, “Consistently, the data shows that the Emerging Leaders program is successful for both interns and corporate sponsors. The program gives students insight to their personal career objectives and provides them with a network of contacts for continued personal and professional development; further, the most recent study found that the majority of intern respondents were employed a year after the program. Additionally corporate sponsors benefit from participating in Emerging Leaders by realizing that individuals with disabilities are truly effective and productive employees.”

Conclusion

High employer and student satisfaction, as well as the growing placement and hiring rates, indicate that the Emerging Leaders model represents an effective strategy for helping companies access students with disabilities and for addressing the high unemployment and underemployment rates of college graduates with disabilities. Internships are an important part of career development for all students, and Emerging Leaders shows that extending this experience to students with disabilities results in positive outcomes.

The following are implications of the success of the Emerging Leaders program for the *Ready and Able* findings:

- **Employers respond to a business case for employing people with disabilities**

Booz Allen Hamilton and the other corporate partners support Emerging Leaders and participate in its activities to access talent to meet their workforce needs. These companies view college students with disabilities as an untapped resource.

- **Innovative collaborations with and between workforce-supplying organizations enable employer efforts to recruit, hire, train, and support employees with disabilities**

Emerging Leaders coordinates outreach through college and university partners to recruit qualified students with disabilities and coordinates training, supports, and internships. It prepares students for careers with the corporate partners. Emerging Leaders also provides technical assistance to the corporate partners on disability issues. These efforts encourage employers to hire college graduates with disabilities.

- **Collaborations ensure that workers are qualified and productive**

The Emerging Leaders internships and training experiences such as the leadership development conferences prepare students with disabilities to be quality employees. The paid internships also give the corporate partners the opportunity to view a student in the workplace before making a decision to hire permanently. The corporate partners have concluded that Emerging Leaders results in productive employees.

- **Successful collaborations nurture and reward continuous leadership**

Booz Allen Hamilton took the lead on establishing Emerging Leaders and continues to be a primary supporter of the program. This leadership has resulted in a successful model that has created a pipeline of quality employees for all of the corporate partners. It has also created new opportunities for college students with disabilities for professional careers.

Gateways and Summits: Career Opportunities for Students with Disabilities

Introduction

Career Opportunities for Students with Disabilities (COSD) is a national association comprising over 600 colleges and universities and nearly 500 national employers, housed at the main campus of the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee. The authors of this report note COSD's success in promoting stronger coordination between career and disability services on campuses in order to ensure the recruitment of qualified college graduates with disabilities. As a national coordinating office, it provides the "standards and practices" that can be effectively adopted across a spectrum of higher education institutions.

COSD's standards and guidance have improved success rates in job search for hundreds of college graduates, thus improving employment rates and job satisfaction. As its Web site states, "COSD's mission is to improve the employment rate of college students and recent graduates with disabilities on a national basis."⁵⁸

The process of developing COSD began in 1998, as Alan Muir met with Dr. Robert Greenberg, Director of Career Services at the University of Tennessee at that time. Dr. Greenberg believed his office was not effectively supporting students with disabilities in career development and preparation. He was instrumental in Alan Muir being hired as a Coordinator of Disability Services, with the purpose of identifying a method of providing better service to students with disabilities. Muir came to the position after a 16-year career at Chase Manhattan Bank and came with a keen understanding of the business community. Through a small grant from Tennessee Vocational Rehabilitation, Mr. Muir initiated research to identify promising practices in career services for students with disabilities nationwide. The results of this research found no model programs as such but did find elements that he combined into a comprehensive program at the University of Tennessee.

Mr. Muir also surveyed major national corporations to find initiatives to recruit and hire college graduates with disabilities. The results of this survey indicated that companies were uncertain about how to recruit college graduates with disabilities and wanted assistance from universities. Based on the results of the research, he began the development of a "loose consortium" of university career offices and major corporations dedicated to improving the employment rate of college graduates with disabilities. Activities of the consortium, including its first annual meeting, were funded through contributions from partners.

In 2001, the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) provided a four-year grant to develop a formal structure for COSD. This included the creation of an Executive Director position that was filled by Alan Muir. This provided the organization

with capacity to promote innovative programs across the nation and, most importantly, to recruit and grow the network of participants. Mr. Muir also established rich working relationships with other related organizations such as the Association of Higher Education and Disability, the National Association of Colleges and Employers, and the U.S. Business Leadership Network. Since the ODEP grant funding ended in 2005, COSD has relied on corporate and foundation funding to support its programs and growth.

Partnership Gateway Allows Résumé Postings, Access to Employers, and Jobs

The COSD office is the hub of activities for the network. The organization routinely disseminates information on best practices in career planning for students with disabilities and fosters information sharing among the disability and career services offices at participating colleges and universities. Mr. Muir and a COSD staff member are also available to provide technical assistance by phone or by making presentations at college campuses. The COSD office is also a valued point of contact for corporations for information pertaining to the recruitment of college students and graduates with disabilities. Jody Hestand, Diversity Recruiter for Walmart, said that Alan Muir has a business background and understands corporations' needs. Katherine McCrary, Vice President of SunTrust Bank, said that COSD's efforts to foster collaboration between career service and disability service offices has helped to facilitate corporate recruitment of college students with disabilities. COSD's Career Gateway Web site and Full Access Student Summits provide universities, corporations, and college students with disabilities with opportunities for information sharing, and facilitate the employment of college students with disabilities.

Career Gateway is a Web site exchange designed for college students with disabilities to post their résumés and for employers to post job and internship openings. Accessed through the COSD Web site, it serves as a primary vehicle for employers to reach out to college students with disabilities. It also identifies employers that are specifically including students with disabilities in their recruitment efforts. Susann Heft-Sears, a Disability Specialist at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, believes this latter point is important. She said that many students with disabilities are apprehensive about the reception they will receive when applying for a job, and indicated that students are "reassured that companies posting jobs on Career Gateway are interested in hiring people with disabilities."

Corporate diversity efforts increasingly include recruitment of people with disabilities. Katherine McCrary, Vice President of SunTrust Bank, said that COSD is a great resource for corporate university outreach coordinators in their disability recruitment efforts.

"At SunTrust, we post jobs on the Gateway," says Ms. McCrary, "and the Gateway also directs students to our Web site to learn more about our commitment to employing people with disabilities." Similarly, Jody Hestand said that Walmart "posts job openings and solicits qualified candidates throughout the year from the COSD Career Gateway system for both internships and full-time positions."

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Career Gateway provides the companies in the COSD network with access to qualified college graduates nationwide. The COSD Web site states, “For employers, COSD Career Gateway is a vital pipeline for their future workforce.”⁶⁰ A Full Access Summit brings together up to 60 college students or graduates with disabilities and representatives of national and regional employers for networking and information sharing. COSD emphasizes that the summits are not career fairs. Rather, the summits operate to make students more comfortable when talking with employers, and to help educate employers about college students and recent graduates with disabilities. They also encourage employers to include students with disabilities when developing corporate diversity recruitment plans.⁶¹ One recent summit was sponsored by corporations in the COSD network.

Lockheed Martin is a sponsor of the summits, according to Jerry Kirby of the company’s University Relations office. Mr. Kirby notes that many university students with disabilities feel intimidated at generic career fairs and believe that the summits provide a comfortable alternative for career exploration. Jody Hestand confirms that Walmart was also a recent sponsor of the summits. She sees them as valuable to the company in providing a “small venue” for dialogue with students with disabilities, networking, and identifying talent. She noted that students with disabilities often do not realize their value to meeting an employer’s bottom line. The summits help build student confidence in this regard.

Annual Conference

COSD holds a national conference each year. The conference brings together staff from university career and disability service offices, representatives from corporations, and students with disabilities. The conference is planned by a committee of representatives from the universities. Barbara Batson, Director of the Career Development Center at the University of Arkansas, is on the annual conference planning committee. She said that the conference has content and networking opportunities that support career planning for students with disabilities. The conference agenda includes presentations on disability issues and employer best practices as well as student-led discussion groups. Jerry Kirby said that the conference provides a valuable opportunity for discussion between corporations and career service offices regarding recruiting strategies for students with disabilities, and the COSD national conference “really helps us with recruiting.”

The COSD network continues to add both university and corporate participants. It is also developing a web portal offering state-of-the-art information and strategies to assist university career services professionals to effectively serve students and recent graduates with disabilities. COSD plans to expand the portal as part of the development of a COSD research institute that would include corresponding information and strategies for disability services staff and corporations.

Among the sponsors of COSD’s 2009 annual conference were: American Airlines, AT&T, Bank of America, Dow, Ernst & Young, Exxon Mobil, Lockheed Martin, Medtronic, Merck, Microsoft, Nordstrom, P&G, Shell Oil Co., SunTrust, and Walmart.⁶²

Outcomes from the Partnership

COSD is not yet able to produce data on the number of students and recent graduates who obtain employment through its activities. According to Alan Muir, the Career Gateway process is a resource for students and employers and there is no obligation on the part of either to report on contacts that occur based on the information posted. He noted, however, that the organization is considering evaluative research possibilities that would provide information on the number of students who are hired and the effectiveness of its programs in general.

COSD gathers feedback from university representatives confirming that COSD is a valued resource in its efforts to support students and recent graduates with career planning. Barbara Batson of the University of Arkansas recounts a student with a disability who was hired by NASA as an example of the benefits of COSD activities. She said that the University of Arkansas' participation in the COSD partnership is confirmation to its students that "the university is serious about supporting students with disabilities." Susann Heft-Sears of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign told of a student who was hired by Dow through COSD activities. She said that COSD assists the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in refining and improving its techniques in pursuit of its goal of "providing strategic career planning for all of its students."

Employer representatives also lauded COSD as a resource for recruiting qualified employees with disabilities. Jody Hestand said, "COSD is instrumental in increasing Walmart's knowledge, connections, and relationships with persons with disabilities, agencies, programs, and subject matter experts. This adds value to our recruiting and retention of diverse talent as our company continues to grow and serve our global customer base." Katherine McCrary said, "SunTrust wouldn't have connections on campus with regard to students with disabilities without COSD." She said she would recommend COSD to every employer. SunTrust has had nothing but positive results. Jerry Kirby agreed, saying that COSD "has been very good for Lockheed Martin."

Meriah Nichols, Transitions Program Coordinator at the University of California at Berkeley, said she "loves" COSD. "COSD is a convenient one-stop shop," Nichols said. "As program coordinators, we can connect with others that do what we do, we can connect with those that will hire our students, we can learn about new resources and best practices, and we can refer our students to the Career Gateway for jobs and internships!"

Conclusion

The success of COSD has important implications related to the *Ready and Able* findings as follows:

- **Employers respond to a business case for employing people with disabilities**

Corporate representatives see COSD as adding value to their recruitment and retention of diverse talent. Employers view COSD as a key to recruiting educated employees that bring talent to their companies and contribute to their company's bottom line.

- **Innovative collaborations with and between workforce-supplying organizations enable employer efforts to recruit, hire, train, and support employees with disabilities**

COSD serves as the hub and point of contact for collaborating universities and employers throughout the nation. Employers are enthusiastic about recruiting students with disabilities when provided with supports from the COSD partnership. Prior to COSD, employers did not know how to reach students with disabilities who frequently do not participate in mainstream career fairs. COSD is a single point of contact for employers for information about the recruitment of students with disabilities nationwide and its Career Gateway network gives employers easy access to the résumés of students with disabilities seeking employment. By coordinating career services offices from many colleges and universities, the COSD partnership facilitates employers meeting their workforce needs through the recruitment of college students with disabilities.

- **Collaborations ensure that workers are qualified and productive**

The COSD partnership fosters improved practices in preparing college students with disabilities to enter the workforce. As a partnership with 600 colleges and universities throughout the United States, COSD has increased the body of knowledge nationally on career planning for students with disabilities. Its dissemination of information on best practices and its efforts to integrate the work of university disability services and career offices has resulted in students with disabilities who have clear career goals and are better prepared to engage employers.

- **Successful collaborations nurture and reward continuous leadership**

Strong leadership and a coordinating entity result in successful partnerships. The COSD partnership has over 1,100 university and employer participants. An important element in its success is a single entity that coordinates activities and disseminates information to a broad network of participants. The organization also has benefited from strong leadership from Alan Muir who has passionate support from both the employer and university participants.

Fearless Partnering: Lime Connect

Introduction

Lime Connect, founded in 2006, is a nonprofit organization that works primarily to connect undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students with disabilities to major “best-in-class” companies with which it partners. Bank of America, Merrill Lynch, and PepsiCo are Lime’s founding partners; Target Corporation is a leading partner; and Goldman Sachs and Google are partners. Lime is also active in Canada and has additional corporate partners there. Lime has developed relationships on 28 university campuses in the United States and 7 in Canada to attract top talent for its partner companies, which want to hire the best person for the job, regardless of disability. All of Lime’s partner companies have made a clear commitment to disability as a dimension of diversity within their workforces and customer bases. Corporate partners are working with Lime to source talented students with disabilities for full-time, internship, and co-op opportunities. Some of the partners provide scholarships for outstanding students with disabilities; in the United States, there are Google Lime scholarships for students with disabilities. Lime’s mission is “to add demonstrated value to the global corporate community by unlocking economic potential through employment of people with disabilities.”⁶³ Lime hosts networking events designed to connect undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students with disabilities to best-in-class companies in the United States and Canada. These companies can be found on the Lime Connect Web site, <http://www.limeconnect.com>.

Susan Lang, President and CEO of Lime, said that talented students with any type of disability — visible or invisible — are encouraged to attend Lime’s networking events. Ms. Lang said, “We simply serve as a broker of the supply and demand of talented people with disabilities, and make that connection. Lime puts talent first and disability second. Partnering with Lime is about being smart — finding top talent that happens to have a disability — not about being nice.”⁶⁴

Background

Lime Connect was founded by Rich Donovan, a Columbia University MBA and former member of Merrill Lynch’s proprietary trading team, who has cerebral palsy. While at Merrill Lynch, he was instrumental in influencing the company to fully include disability in the company’s overall diversity strategy. He has been called a “reluctant activist”⁶⁵ in that he did not always think of himself as a role model and inspiration to other people with disabilities.

He experienced a change in attitude in 2004 after agreeing to participate in a forum on corporate outreach and people with disabilities sponsored by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and he subsequently founded Morris Street Partners, which became Lime Connect in 2006. In founding Lime, his philosophy was that people with disabilities are an untapped pool of valuable talent, and that people with disabilities should

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have the same opportunities as everyone else. He has told audiences that the current “brand” for people with disabilities is “rooted in medical terms and do-gooder expressions of pity, is so negative, it’s radioactive. Nobody wants to come near it.” His approach with Lime is to “kill the current brand with quality. Get the message out that people with disabilities can and will deliver.”⁶⁶ The name “Lime” is meant to communicate a fresh approach.

How Lime Works

Lime’s primary activity is diversity recruiting. Through Lime Connect networking events, partner companies meet qualified candidates with disabilities that they would probably not meet otherwise. While a student at York University in Toronto, Rich Donovan realized that a lot of talented people were intimidated by the corporate recruitment process because of their disabilities.⁶⁷ In fact, many students with disabilities would not attend the corporate recruitment sessions. After graduation, talented students would sometimes be underemployed, would join family businesses, or might continue their studies in academia. The Lime Connect approach encourages students to become acquainted with best-in-class companies and to see themselves as competitive with everyone else based on their talent.

“When I think of Lime, I think inclusive, inspirational, dynamic, and cutting-edge. You connect us to a huge population of students and professionals whom we would not otherwise have been able to meet.”

Corporate partner

“Lime has demonstrated an aggressive philosophy as it relates to identifying career opportunities for people with disabilities. Lime has also exhibited unusual leadership in developing relationships with top-notch employers who are breaking boundaries by attracting top employees from every walk of life to their companies.”

Campus partner

“I was extended an offer to be a summer analyst at Goldman and I’ve decided to take it! I’m really excited about this opportunity and I want to thank you for your unwavering support and guidance throughout the recruiting process.”

Senior, Georgetown University (subsequently received a full-time offer)

“Without Lime, I would definitely not be where I am today. Lime connected me to recruiters on a more personal level, an opportunity I would not have had anywhere else. My experience greatly enhanced my relationships with Lime’s partners and led to an amazing summer at Google. I was hesitant at first, but I’m so glad I checked out Lime when they came to campus!”

Junior, University of Pennsylvania

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Partner companies are interested in considering students with disabilities for all types of positions, including technical, accounting, finance, sales, marketing, public relations, retail store management, supply-chain management, logistics, account management, analytical jobs, and others.

Lime hosts events targeted to students with disabilities and recruits heavily through college disability service and career service offices as well as other targeted avenues. Consistent with the skills sought by partner companies, Lime recruits through computer science departments and MBA programs. The company Web site is upbeat and also serves as a recruitment vehicle. The Web site includes tips for success at Lime campus recruitment events and answers to frequently asked questions. One of the most common questions is from students with “invisible” disabilities asking whether they can attend an event if they have not previously disclosed their disability. In its 2009 recruitment season, Lime utilized students and alumni as Lime Campus Ambassadors who spread the word on campus about Lime’s work and served as mentors to other students with disabilities. One of these ambassadors is Daniel Lipsitz, a student at Columbia University, who said that the Lime Connect event “eliminates concerns about disability disclosures that so often arise when a person with a disability is being considered for a job. This allows our clients to go forth into the recruitment process without fear of being discriminated against.”⁶⁸

During the fall of 2009, Lime conducted nine networking events in the United States at which Bank of America/Merrill Lynch, PepsiCo, Target, Goldman Sachs, and Google met students from a number of universities. The schedule included stops in Austin, Washington, D.C., New York, Silicon Valley, Philadelphia, Chicago, Minnesota, and others. Company representatives who attended these events were positive about meeting qualified students with disabilities and about getting the message out that they *want* qualified people with disabilities in their workforces.

At the networking events, Susan Lang moderates a discussion with a panel comprised of representatives of partner companies. Company representatives describe their companies, including their major business lines, products or services, locations, types of jobs, and “day in the life” company culture. They discuss available internships as well as full-time opportunities. They talk about what they look for in successful candidates. Following this, students interact with company representatives — both recruiters and business people — in an informal setting. It did not resemble a “job fair.” There are no tables and no lines. Students are often able to speak with company representatives one-on-one. The networking events vary in size from 20 students for a single university new to the process to 100 students in New York and Chicago.

Branching Out

Lime is hoping to expand its network of partners to other industries, including pharmaceuticals, consulting firms, accounting firms, and other high-tech industries. Lime would like to be able to offer a more diverse set of opportunities for students with disabilities,

Chapter 4: Career Tracks: Placing Skilled College Students and Graduate with Disabilities through Partnerships between Employers, Colleges and Universities, and Intermediaries

which would have the potential to draw larger numbers of candidates. Lime has also been reaching out to additional colleges and universities for the networking events, which gives partner companies access to more qualified students with disabilities.

In response to requests from the partner companies, Lime will return to four cities to conduct workshops that will help students with disabilities be better prepared to negotiate the corporate recruitment process.

Lime is considering a hiring initiative for experienced candidates with disabilities in targeted geographic markets. Successfully piloted in New York in May 2008, this effort would be a way for partner companies to find top experienced talent. Lime is also working on a “Global Corporate Standard” that will serve as a guidebook for any company of any size, anywhere in the world, on how to source, recruit, develop, and market to individuals with disabilities. The guidebook is being developed by corporate partner experts in both disability employment and standard development.

Key Partnerships

Rich Donovan’s basic idea in founding Lime was that corporate America should recruit and give qualified people with disabilities the same type of opportunities that Merrill Lynch already had in place for other underrepresented populations. Lime’s first corporate champion was Tom Wilson, head of talent sourcing and recruiting for Merrill Lynch, who fully supported the premise behind Lime from the start. Merrill Lynch was Lime Connect’s first partner. PepsiCo was next. Ron Parker, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer at PepsiCo, said it isn’t just a good will gesture; rather, “there’s a business case for hiring people with disabilities. This is a market we need to, and want to, tap into as much as we can.”⁶⁹

Introductions were made to other companies through business-to-business networking. Someone from PepsiCo made the connection to someone at Target, one of PepsiCo’s major partners. Networking resulted in interest from Google. Bank of America became involved with Lime when Merrill Lynch became part of the company. Some people who previously worked at Merrill Lynch now work for other companies and have spread the word about Lime to their new employers. Susan Lang said that as Lime gains in experience and contacts, the “sales cycle” is getting shorter.

Lime’s corporate partners contribute a flat dollar amount to the organization, depending on the level of partnership. The founding partners, Bank of America/Merrill Lynch and PepsiCo, contribute the largest amount, followed by Target. All three serve on Lime Connect’s Board of Directors. Goldman Sachs and Google are partners and also contribute a given amount. Other organizations, such as the Kessler Foundation, have supported Lime Connect, and Lime continues to seek foundation funding.

Tom Wilson serves as Chair of Lime’s Board. The staff is small, and consists of Susan Lang, President and CEO; Emily DePury, Director of Campus and Recruiter Relations; and Pat Holt, Executive Vice President.

Conclusion

All of Lime's partner companies are committed to disability as diversity in their workforces. The main question is how best to accomplish this. They find value in their relationship with Lime Connect such that they are excited about attending networking events with students recruited by Lime and contribute financial support to the organization. Lime is effective and targeted in its recruitment and, according to the companies that participate in networking events, is able to deliver qualified candidates for its partner companies to consider. In its relatively short history, Lime Connect has been successful in partnering with several major corporations to make special efforts to recruit college students with disabilities. Some of these students have been successful in obtaining internships and full-time positions with these companies. Most begin as interns. One partner company described the interns as the pipeline to full-time employment after graduation. The companies are looking for qualified interns and appear to be more than willing to employ students with disabilities.

Lime Connect serves as a viable resource for corporations looking to recruit college graduates with disabilities. Its success has important implications related to the *Ready and Able* findings as follows:

- **Employers respond to a business case for employing people with disabilities**

Employers see Lime Connect as a key to recruiting educated employees that bring talent to their companies and contribute to their companies' bottom line. Business-to-business networking reinforces the case for students, graduates, and experienced workers with disabilities as "a secret weapon" in the war for talent.

- **Innovative collaborations with and between workforce-supplying organizations enable employer efforts to recruit, hire, train, and support employees with disabilities**

Lime Connect plays an innovative intermediary role between its corporate supporters and a network of colleges and universities. Lime Connect's efforts facilitate its corporate supporters to identify and hire qualified college graduates with disabilities.

- **Collaborations ensure that workers are qualified and productive**

Lime Connect is trusted by employers and its students perform well in their corporate settings. Lime Connect's leadership, marketing, and awareness all communicate that they "get it." For Lime Connect, hiring people with disabilities is all about being smart, not about being nice.

■ **Successful collaborations nurture and reward continuous leadership**

Lime Connect is highly respected by its corporate partners for its fearless mission to “rebrand” people with disabilities as an untapped source of talent and strategic advantage. The crisis in the financial system has had an impact on some of Lime’s major clients. Merrill Lynch suspended hiring for a period of time, and Goldman Sachs slowed its hiring. As of the writing of this report, all partner companies are hiring, and students are getting jobs through connections made by Lime. Leaders of early partner companies, such as Merrill Lynch, have drawn in additional partner companies, all of which are looking to identify the best talent.

Lime’s more ambitious objective is “to attain employment parity as measured by the workforce composition of Standard and Poor’s 500 firms reflecting 3% employees with disabilities by the year 2016.”⁷⁰ Lime’s activities are directed toward this goal, but measurement is a challenge. Time, effort, the state of the economy, and the availability of data to measure accomplishment will determine whether it can be accomplished.

Chapter 5: Bridging Workforce Gaps: Hiring People with Disabilities through Local and Regional Collaboratives

Profiled in this chapter:

- Star Chamber: The New Bedford Chamber of Commerce Supported Employment Network
- The Start on Success Program in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- Project SEARCH and the Cincinnati Ohio Model

This chapter profiles three local or regionally established collaborative projects that have achieved national reputations for being successful in brokering and developing job opportunities for individuals with disabilities and meeting employer workforce needs. At the heart of their success is the presence of an essential, trusted, and managed private-public partnership. Initiatives such as Cincinnati's Project SEARCH and Pittsburgh's Start on Success have been embraced as national models and are being replicated in other locations across the nation. Both programs primarily serve younger adults. These, and other profiles in this report, beg the question: What is required for partnerships to succeed over the long term? When asked why the New Bedford model has never been replicated in other areas, former Chamber President Jim Mathes noted, "Working together well is the most critical element of a partnership. Why isn't this done more? People get territorial. It requires different systems to work together. It is a team effort, but people don't often work well together."

The three profiles in this chapter provide analysts, advocates, and employers with the operational details and first-person accounts that reveal the inner workings of successful public-private "to work" initiatives. In each profile, the importance of employers having a single point of contact and the presence of a hands-on administrator providing communication and support across all partners is identified.

The profiles demonstrate that internships and on-the-job training are formative for participants, and require collaboration and unified management from the partners. Business leadership makes a difference in each profiled partnership. Participating employers live up to their commitments. They also contribute space and resources, adding the resources that

make the difference in keeping an operation functioning smoothly. The projects are market driven, as participants become valued employees. However, the projects also demonstrate that effective corporate partners share a sense of social mission and responsibility in going the extra mile to invest in and support an underemployed, underrepresented population. The outcomes of these projects confirm one of the most important findings of this report: when given training and basic job support, people with disabilities perform to a high level of employer satisfaction. They get the job done.

Star Chamber: The New Bedford Chamber of Commerce Supported Employment Network

Introduction

According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and employers that have benefited from its efforts, the success of the New Bedford, Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce's Supported Employment Network is based upon the Chamber's ability as a business organization to communicate to employers that hiring people with disabilities is a good business decision. The Chamber coordinates a network of agencies that provide employment services for people with disabilities that has been able to successfully match local employer workforce needs with an expanded labor pool of qualified employees with disabilities. The outcomes of the New Bedford initiative have been impressive. Network members provide supports to 289 employees with disabilities at 163 diverse employers in the New Bedford Area.⁷¹ This profile outlines how a regional Chamber of Commerce bridged the gap between employers and public-sector providers in order to meet the workforce needs of member employers and was able to create good paying, permanent jobs for people with disabilities.

"A Group of Good People" — The 1980s Taskforce

In the early 1980s, the Massachusetts Department of Mental Retardation approached the New Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce to collaborate in the creation of a summer program designed to enhance work search assistance activities for individuals with disabilities. Today, the collaboration has evolved into a year-round partnership with the Chamber, the Department of Developmental Services (formerly the Department of Mental Retardation), and several area organizations.

Finding and keeping good workers are among the greatest challenges facing businesses in the 21st century. Today, more than ever, businesses need access to a skilled and diverse workforce. They cannot stay competitive and increase profitability without qualified personnel.

People with disabilities are a source of qualified workers that is frequently overlooked. This pool of workers represents one of the largest groups seeking employment in today's market — some 9 million unemployed Americans with significant disabilities want to work.⁷²

U.S. Chamber of Commerce

The public sector and community provider team had all worked with adults and students with disabilities and shared a goal of improving work supports and job access for people with disabilities. This group included representatives from the local Arc, the Massachusetts Department of Mental Retardation (now known as the Department of Developmental Services), the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, the area Office for Job Partnerships, the New Bedford Chamber of Commerce, the local university disabled students office, special education directors and teachers, and other local disability support providers.

The early conversations considered employment options for youth and young adults with disabilities ages 14 to 25. At the time, the Department of Mental Retardation operated small initiatives in supported employment, as well as a traditional sheltered workshop and other day programs. The Department's support of the Supported Employment Network was part of its efforts to expand employment opportunities for the people it serves. The Department's current mission is "to support individuals with intellectual disabilities to fully and meaningfully participate in their communities as valued members."⁷³ Further, the Department now believes that "individual employment in the community is the preferred goal" for the people it serves.⁷⁴

The group called itself the Young Adult Vocational Training Taskforce, and sought to improve education and cooperation among local school systems, families, and employers. In 1988, the taskforce learned of a funding opportunity, and developed a request in collaboration with the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (the state vocational rehabilitation agency) to create a position at the New Bedford Chamber of Commerce to expedite employment for people with disabilities. The group believed the grant would help families by reducing stress for families with young adults with disabilities living at home. It was thought that efforts to facilitate real employment options would meaningfully support families and provide an outlook that would not be limited to sheltered employment or day habilitation. Phil Tully, Director of the New Bedford Area Department of Developmental Services office, noted, "We got a group of good people together and they came up with this."

At that time, the Chamber of Commerce was led by Jim Mathes, who already had collaborated with state agencies and school districts on various projects to help youth and people with disabilities. While not all Chambers engage in these kinds of activities, he saw them as a way to lift the entire community. He wanted his work at the Chamber to be relevant to both the businesses and the community. When Mr. Mathes was approached with this idea, he did not know much about the topic, and spent time learning the field. He noted, "This effort simply made sense. I had seen that people with disabilities were...hardworking and loyal employees. I had seen that the people in sheltered workshops could do stuff despite being lower functioning. It made sense economically and it made people's lives better." Mr. Mathes also knew that the Chamber was key to engaging businesses, as the Chambers are the "club of businesses."

In August 1988, the grant award went to the Chamber, which hired a professional staff member to coordinate the Supported Employment Network. One of the early activities included creation of a summer jobs program for youth with disabilities. Over time, as school-

based supports in the area improved, the network focused more on employment for adults with intellectual disabilities.

How the Partnership Bridged the Gap

The Supported Employment Network is currently comprised of 10 local provider agencies from the workforce, vocational rehabilitation, developmental disabilities, and mental health systems that provide supported employment services to job seekers with disabilities. The network agencies provide work search assistance and employment supports (such as job coaching and transportation) that people with disabilities may need to be gainfully employed.⁷⁵ Joanne Rego, an employee of the Chamber, serves as coordinator and chairs monthly meetings of the network. She facilitates communication with the Chamber's employer membership and "discussion regarding current employment opportunities and successful job placement strategies for persons with disabilities."⁷⁶ The network agencies receive valuable information on meeting local employer needs that expands employment opportunities for the people they serve and employers have easy access to an expanded labor pool of qualified employees with disabilities.⁷⁷

The largest roles the Chamber plays in promoting the network are stressing business benefits and encouraging communication within the network. For example, businesses have responded positively to information about the federal tax benefits associated with hiring workers with disabilities. The New Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce is extremely active in promoting network events. These efforts include:

- A section in the Chamber's monthly newsletter, entitled *Enterprising Minds*, which features success stories, lists upcoming network events, and reinforces the business benefits of participating in the Supported Employment Network.
- A video entitled *Supported Employment: Make it Work for You!*, which is presented in an employer-to-employer perspective, featuring area business leaders discussing their positive experiences with hiring workers with disabilities.
- A monthly forum for representatives of the organizations that provide employment supports, which offers an opportunity for staff of these organizations to reflect on practices and share ideas. The monthly network meetings are seen as critical, especially when multiple provider agencies have placed people with a single employer or know of an employer's need for a worker that the provider cannot fill.
- Network-sponsored "Business After Hours" socials at a Chamber member establishment.
- An informational brochure on supported employment, which is mailed to all Chamber members.

- The Chamber informs members of the network of local businesses that are new, coming to the area, or expanding. If the local economic development agency is aware of future hiring, that information is given to Ms. Rego, who distributes it to the local provider agencies.⁷⁸

Early implementation of the network showed great promise, despite some skepticism from both the service provider and business communities. As predicted by Jim Mathes, once people with disabilities were hired, the feedback from Chamber members was overwhelmingly positive. They were hired for real jobs and most people hired performed well. Shawn O'Hara of O'Hara Mazda employs two workers with disabilities, and noted, "I don't look at it as doing anything special. I look at it as something I should do. Their work productivity is fantastic. One is a workhorse." Hiring persons with disabilities was never presented as a charitable service to the community, even though some employers also report feeling satisfaction over providing opportunities for disenfranchised people.

According to Mr. Mathes, other employers stated how happy they were, which resulted in business-to-business connections that led to further hiring. He noted, "One woman said in clear terms that the person with disabilities was her best employee based on every aspect of the employee's performance. Always on time, never slacked off, was productive, and had a positive attitude. Over the years, I've always had something with every employee I've ever had except her." The program quickly became relevant to the members who became involved, the employee, and the employee's family. Mr. Mathes said, "It reflected well on my Chamber. We provided them with a valuable service and in the community."

As a result of the efforts of the New Bedford Chamber of Commerce, the local economic development agency hired an individual with disabilities. Matt Morrissey, the Director of the New Bedford Economic Development Council, stated that it was important for his organization to participate as a model employer, communicating the value of persons with disabilities in the workplace. Morrissey noted that hiring a person with disabilities fit well into the mission of an economic development agency, which is not just to create jobs, but also to serve the health of the community.

A focus on issues related to disability might be uncommon for a Chamber, current New Bedford Chamber of Commerce Director Roy Nascimento noted. But this commitment aligns with more recent concerns of Chambers across the nation related to workforce development. "We are involved in workforce development initiatives and this fits in nicely with our efforts to help employers find qualified workers," he stated.

Funding for the Network Coordination

Funding for the coordinator position does not occur as a direct contract between the Chamber and the local office of the Department of Developmental Services. Rather, funding is given to the local provider agencies and the Chamber of Commerce bills the agencies for the time. Stability of funding is a great concern in this economic climate. As noted by one participant, “One concern is convincing the state that it is worth long-term funding.”

While it is recognized that all employees are different and people with disabilities need to be seen as individuals, on the whole, employers are extremely satisfied with the people with disabilities who have been hired through network activities, and the workers with disabilities compare favorably with other employees. Bob Gaspar, co-owner of Gaspar’s Linguica Products, has employed two workers with disabilities brought on through the network in 1987. Mr. Gaspar noted that one worker has never taken a day off, and once walked a significant distance to work in inclement weather when he missed a bus. He acknowledged that the workers needed some additional support, especially initially, but the workers are fully independent now, and “the people embrace these two. The work done by the two workers with disabilities adds value to the business. They fill a need. If they weren’t here, we would have to hire new people.”

Like any other applicant for a job or any other worker, some people do not work out well. Dorothy Cox, of Dorothy Cox Chocolates, noted that not all people can manage in a small business environment like hers in which things are different from day to day, but that does not mean that a different potential employee with disabilities will not work out in the job. The Supported Employment Network has created an awareness of the value of workers with disabilities, and during difficult economic times, the relationships with employees have led employers to reduce hours rather than doing blanket layoffs for persons with disabilities.

Employers Benefit from Supported Employment by:

- Hiring dependable employees who are committed to doing the job creating less turnover,
- Having easy access to an expanded labor pool and prescreened, qualified employees,
- Expanding the diversity of their workforce, and
- Assisting the employer in training the new employee.

Conclusion

The New Bedford Chamber of Commerce collaboration model underscores the *Ready and Able* findings:

- **Employers respond to a business case for employing people with disabilities**

Employers benefit from employing people with disabilities. Bob Gaspar stated, “More people would be willing to hire [workers with disabilities] if they could see that it would work. The thing that businesses like to hear is what other businesses do.” Rather than attempting to create new means for communication with employers, as is often done by supported employment organizations, marketing to employers using existing employer organizations can be far more effective. An active and supportive Chamber or other business-oriented organization makes the business case for hiring people with disabilities. These organizations provide access to employers more efficiently than any other means. Providing funding to a business-oriented organization to coordinate job outreach for persons with disabilities can be a cost-effective means for job development.

Employers’ appreciation for the value of employees with disabilities increases with experience. New Bedford area employers were skeptical of hiring people with disabilities when the Supported Employment Network was first developed. Successful experiences with employees with disabilities hired through the network have made them eager to include people with disabilities in their recruitment efforts to meet their workforce needs.

- **Innovative collaborations with and between workforce-supplying organizations enable employer efforts to recruit, hire, train, and support employees with disabilities**

New Bedford’s network of provider agencies led to a more tightly knit community and increased cooperation among supported employment providers. Competition between supported employment organizations can impede employment for people with disabilities. The Supported Employment Network has helped to reduce this. Creating a burden for employers is the single quickest way to impede employment for persons with disabilities. Making it simple and easy for employers is the fastest way to increase employment. The Supported Employment Network works because it is so easy for employers to participate. This innovative collaboration provides a strong unified voice in working with the New Bedford Chamber. Jim Mathes suggested that any project needs to start with shared affinities. An overlap between disability support people and the Chamber opened the initial doors. There was a shared set of values that made this project seem appealing to all parties. Because of this, Mathes was willing to do some initial fact finding that led him to support development of the partnership.

- **Collaborations ensure that workers are qualified and productive**

Professional staffing and troubleshooting in this project were seen as a tremendous benefit. Joanne Rego communicates with employers and disability support providers, and is fluent in both “languages.” Appropriate levels of on-site supports are a critical element for hiring persons with disabilities. Dorothy Cox highlighted the need for the support providers to be effective on site, as their actions are critical to the success or failure of a person with disabilities. Global and local knowledge of what employers want can be of great utility in improving employment for persons with disabilities.

- **Successful collaborations nurture and reward continuous leadership**

The New Bedford Chamber of Commerce showed impressive leadership in accepting the role of intermediary between local disability service agencies and its employer members. The result was the establishment of a pipeline of qualified employees with disabilities to meet local workforce needs. This is a model that can be replicated by Chambers of Commerce throughout the nation.

A New Approach to “Schoolwork”: The Pittsburgh Start on Success Program

Introduction

The Start on Success (SOS) program model was developed by the National Organization on Disability (NOD) in 1994 to prepare special education students from low-income urban families for competitive employment before they leave high school. SOS provides paid internships at nearby universities, hospitals, and corporations, introducing young people with disabilities to workplace realities before they leave high school. Students are matched to internships that take full advantage of their skills, interests, and longer-term career goals. Supervisors and co-workers at the business — non-teaching staff who are managers at the students’ internship sites — serve as mentors, providing a constant source of guidance and support to young people in need of dependable adults in their lives.⁷⁹

NOD has assisted in the development of SOS programs in New Orleans, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York City, Newark (New Jersey), central Connecticut, Los Angeles, and Pittsburgh. NOD “seeds” the model in these cities, but local government and education institutions adapt the model based on local preferences. The budgets to sustain the programs come from local sources. NOD sponsors an annual conference for representatives of SOS sites to come together to share successful practices.

In the national SOS program, more than 1,500 high school students with disabilities have had internships at universities, hospitals, and small businesses in the five cities, and 85% have gone on to full-time jobs or further education.⁸⁰ The founder and Director of SOS, Charles Dey, was honored with the Civic Ventures Purpose Prize, a “genius” grant program for exceptional achievement by social innovators over the age of 60.⁸¹

According to Cori DiBiase, the former national director of SOS for NOD, the Pittsburgh SOS program is one of the most comprehensive and successful replications of the SOS model, and has made the most of the public-private partnership at the heart of the project’s design. This profile discusses the innovative strategies that have shaped the SOS replication in Pittsburgh and its formal partnership, including the Pittsburgh Public School System, workforce and vocational rehabilitation agencies, and a network of local employers. The statistical outcomes of the Pittsburgh SOS program are impressive. SOS program graduates have a high school graduation rate of 97%. Further, 80% of program graduates are employed or enrolled in postsecondary education or training three months after graduation.⁸² These percentages are considerably higher than national averages.

A Comprehensive and Successful Replication

The Pittsburgh program was developed by the Pittsburgh Public School System in 1998 with assistance from NOD and the Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board (TRWIB). According to Ellen Estomin, former Executive Director of Special Education for the Pittsburgh Public Schools, the school system has a longstanding commitment to employment and independence for special education graduates. The SOS model was viewed by the school district as a promising model to fulfill this commitment to students with learning disabilities.

Ashley McFall, SOS Transition Facilitator, said that a key component of the program is funding for the salaries for the student internships. The school district developed a collaborative relationship with TRWIB, which provides an allocation of Workforce Investment Act youth funding to cover the costs of the students' salaries each year.

The school district was also successful in establishing a collaborative relationship with the Pittsburgh district office of the Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) regarding the SOS program. OVR assigned a designated vocational rehabilitation counselor to each of the nine high schools to work collaboratively with SOS staff on transition planning. Finally, the school district cultivated relationships with key local employers to provide mentorships, internships, and post-graduation employment opportunities.

High Stakes for High Skills: Operation of the Partnership

The Pittsburgh SOS program serves special education students with learning disabilities from nine high schools. It is a four-year program that starts when students enter the ninth grade. During the 2008-2009 school year, the Pittsburgh SOS program served 250 students in grades 9 through 12.⁸³ According to the SOS Web site, "Students in the Pittsburgh SOS program begin in the ninth grade with one elective course per day, preparing them for the career marketplace, including exploring their career goals, interests and capacities, building self-advocacy skills, and financial education."⁸⁴

During the 10th grade, students continue to participate in the career development curriculum

How are job sites chosen? According to Ashley McFall:

"In matching interns to job sites, we begin with student interests and aptitudes. Therefore, in selecting job site partners, we look for universities, hospitals, and corporations that offer exposure to a broad sampling of career pathways. Though not always feasible, we take pride in placing interns in settings non-traditional for young people with disabilities. There is no expectation that interns will become candidates for regular employment at their job sites."

but also receive an eight-week community mentorship experience at local employers to “provide them with exposure to a real work environment.”⁸⁵ Also during the 10th grade, students develop career portfolios and make presentations to local employer partners as part of an application process for paid internships in the 11th and 12th grades.

In the 12th grade, students continue to take transition courses but also participate in a paid internship at a local employer two hours per day. Students receive elective credits and are paid the local minimum wage for their work. Employer supervisors and co-workers mentor the SOS students. They supervise them in their assigned duties and guide and assist them as they adapt to the work environment. Itinerant teachers, in addition to teaching classes, provide supports to the employers. Ashley McFall emphasized that the itinerant teachers do not supervise interns at the worksite. She said an important element of the project is facilitating interns being fully included in the workplace.

During the 12th grade, SOS students meet with OVR, and almost all are enrolled with OVR. OVR counselors participate in planning for each enrolled student’s transition to employment or postsecondary education and provide a range of resources to support transition plans. Marci Katona, Assistant District Administrator with OVR, said the agency wants to open cases before graduation and sometimes as early as the spring of the student’s junior year if needed. She said that the partnership with the SOS program has resulted in students coming to OVR with greater job skills and ability to advocate for themselves.

Upon graduation, students begin employment, many at the same employers where they had internships, and some go on to postsecondary training. SOS staff track information on employment and postsecondary education outcomes for one year after each student exits the program.

Roles of the Partners

The Pittsburgh Public School System relies on support from a partnership, which is essential to the operation of the SOS program. Critical partners include TRWIB, CareerLink (Pennsylvania’s One-Stop system), OVR, and a network of local employers. The SOS program, in addition to providing core resources for students in the program, also is the coordinating partner.

Pittsburgh Public School System

The Pittsburgh Public School System employs the SOS Transition Facilitator who manages the program and seven itinerant teachers who are assigned to the program. The teachers participate in Individualized Education Program (IEP) planning, teach transition courses, collaborate with OVR counselors, provide travel training, monitor student mentorships and internships, and provide supports to employer partners. During their internships, the students are on the school system’s payroll, and are issued checks via funds provided by the Workforce Investment Board through the Pittsburgh Partnership. The school system also assists students in applying for post-graduation employment.

Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board

TRWIB provides an annual allocation of Workforce Investment Act youth funding to cover the cost of the wages for the SOS student internships. The funds are administered through the Pittsburgh Partnership, a division of the City of Pittsburgh's Department of Personnel and Civil Service Commission that acts as the administrative entity for Pittsburgh under the Workforce Investment Act. Each of the SOS students is enrolled in the Workforce Investment Act, and is registered with both Pennsylvania's One-Stop system, CareerLink, and the SOS program. The SOS program provides required reports and documentation to TRWIB and Pittsburgh Partnership staff.

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

OVR assigns a designated counselor to each of the high schools participating in the SOS program. Although these cases are generally opened during the student's senior year, the counselors collaborate with SOS itinerant teachers in IEP planning and keep abreast of the status of student internships before OVR cases are opened. Once a case is opened, OVR can provide funding for items such as clothing, transportation, and job coaching, and can also cover postsecondary education and training costs. OVR supports participants until 90 days of competitive employment is reached.

Employers

The SOS program has five primary employer partners: the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University, Allegheny General Hospital, the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, and CIGNA Group Insurance. In addition to Workforce Investment Act funding, CIGNA also provides \$5,000 per year from the CIGNA Foundation to fund the summer employment program at CIGNA. These employers each have SOS internships within various departments. SOS also seeks other employers to respond to career interests of SOS students resulting in additional employer partnerships. In all, SOS had students placed in mentorships and internships at 53 employer sites during the 2008-2009 school year.

SOS signs a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with each employer site. The MOU states that employer staff will "...serve as role models, mentors and work supervisors. They will expose the interns to all aspects of the job and hold the interns to workplace standards for attendance, punctuality and communication. They will support the concept of lifelong learning. They will complete monthly progress reports and communicate with SOS staff, as needed to ensure success." Fulfilling these commitments requires a significant investment of employer staff time. As noted earlier, the employers that host mentorships and internships also hire many of the SOS interns upon graduation.

Not only does each partner contribute critical resources to the success of the program, each also receives benefits from the SOS program that sustain the partnership. The Pittsburgh Public Schools graduate special education students that are better prepared for an adulthood of education, employment, and independence. TRWIB and Pittsburgh Partnership have a

valuable and successful Workforce Investment Act youth program in SOS. OVR gets a large number of successful closures each year that on average require a smaller investment of resources. Finally, the employer partners have access to a pool of well-prepared, qualified employees that they have screened, trained, and developed relationships with before they are permanently hired. The SOS partnership, therefore, is based on common interests among the disability service and workforce entities. It also provides a supportive structure for employers to meet their workforce needs through training and recruiting transitioning students with disabilities.

Program Outcomes

While SOS has not compiled data on the percentages of its graduates who are hired by the employer partners, interviews with representatives of the employer partners indicate that they view the program as an opportunity to recruit qualified, reliable employees.

Lauren Catarinella, from the Department of Housing and Food Services at the University of Pittsburgh, said that the department hired the intern that was placed there. She said, “We knew what he can do. We built off the relationship and experience of the internship and have expanded his responsibilities since he has been employed full time.” She noted further that after a two-year internship, he had a “leg up” for full-time employment “since we know him.” She concluded that the ongoing communication and supports from SOS staff make it possible for the department to benefit from the program.

Tricia Crowley, Human Resource Manager for Sodexo Dining Services, confirmed that her company has hired seven of its interns. She views the employees that have been recruited from SOS as more reliable and loyal, resulting in lower turnover. She said, “It is an advantage to test out an employee to get experience and see if the employee will fit. This process leads to more successful hires.” She noted that her company values the support it receives from SOS staff and added, “We could not do this ourselves.” She concluded that supports to employers from community entities need to be ongoing and that this is an aspect of her company’s relationship with SOS that she particularly appreciates.

Ann Franks, from the University of Pittsburgh, Office of Institutional Advancement, said the university participates in SOS because it recognizes diversity as an important value. She said that supporting people with disabilities in the workplace is successful “when the employer has ongoing supports.” She concluded that SOS “makes it easier for us.”

When asked what benefits they receive from participating in the SOS program, Lori Ferguson, Director of Support Services for Allegheny General Hospital, said without hesitation “potential employees who have been trained.” She said that five SOS interns who worked there were hired in the past few years. In addition, Ferguson indicated that support from the SOS itinerant teacher was essential to the hospital’s participation in the project.

The Pittsburgh SOS program meets all five of the guideposts for success identified by the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), in collaboration with the National Collaborative on Workforce Disability for Youth. The guideposts reflect what research has identified as key educational and career development interventions that can make a positive difference in the lives of all youth, including youth with disabilities. The five guideposts are as follows:

- School-based preparatory experiences,
- Career preparation and work-based experiences,
- Youth development and leadership,
- Connecting activities, and
- Family involvement and supports.

Dr. John Wilds, Director of the Office of Governmental and Community Relations at the University of Pittsburgh, who has been a partner in SOS since its inception, said that “SOS gives students the opportunity to demonstrate capability to employers. It makes the employer more comfortable and puts the student in a preferred position for hiring.” He said that an important reason for the university’s participation in SOS is to meet staffing needs. He said that his office has had success with students it has hired and some have gone on to postsecondary education at the university. He said that he is “very pleased with the program.”

Conclusion

The Pittsburgh SOS program is a successful example of a school system coordinating a partnership to enable employers to recruit, hire, and retain transitioning students with disabilities. The overall graduation and employment rates for SOS graduates well exceed national norms. Additionally, feedback from employer partners indicate that SOS is a valued resource for meeting their workforce needs.

The innovations of the Pittsburgh SOS program and the strength of its cooperative institutions have important implications for the *Ready and Able* findings:

- **Employers respond to a business case for employing people with disabilities**

Employers invest considerable staff resources into training and mentoring students with disabilities, which results in the recruitment of qualified, reliable employees. The employer partners in the Pittsburgh SOS expend an extraordinary amount of staff resources on

training and supervising mentees and interns. They are willing to do this because their participation in the program assists them in meeting their workforce needs. This shows the value employers place on recruiting skilled employees with disabilities.

- **Innovative collaborations with and between workforce-supplying organizations enable employer efforts to recruit, hire, train, and support employees with disabilities**

The Pittsburgh SOS program is a model for school districts to establish and coordinate partnerships to facilitate the employment of transitioning students with disabilities. The success of the program creates opportunities for employers to meet their workforce needs through collaborations with school districts. School system staff supports are essential to employer participation in the program and their recruitment of SOS students. Although employers see the value of participating in the SOS program to their respective bottom lines, they say their participation would not be possible without the ongoing, trusted support from SOS staff. This highlights the importance of a single point of contact that provides supports for employers' efforts to facilitate the employment of people with disabilities.

The Pittsburgh SOS partnership opened up new possibilities for the partner organizations to provide employment opportunities for transitioning students with disabilities. The Pittsburgh SOS program is a rich example of using resources available through the Workforce Investment Act and the generic workforce system to facilitate the employment of students with disabilities. Workforce entities can be valued partners in disability employment initiatives.

- **Collaborations ensure that workers are qualified and productive**

The program shows the value of mentorships and internships for employers to have greater experience with people with disabilities and allows people with disabilities to show their talent to employers. The mentorship and internship experiences facilitated by the Pittsburgh SOS program result in students being better prepared for employment. Additionally, employers value the opportunity to get to know the person and their skills prior to making a decision to hire them. These pre-graduation experiences are effective strategies for both employers and individuals with disabilities.

- **Successful collaborations nurture and reward continuous leadership**

The leadership of the Pittsburgh SOS program has done an extraordinary job of developing and maintaining successful relationships with an ever-expanding network of employers and vocational rehabilitation and workforce partners. These relationships have resulted in greater employment outcomes for graduating students with disabilities.

The Project SEARCH Model: Partnerships for Sustained Opportunity

Introduction

Project SEARCH began in 1995 as part of a broad diversity effort by Cincinnati Children's Hospital to build a reliable, stable workforce that represented the surrounding community. At that time, Cincinnati Children's Hospital was having difficulty filling entry-level positions, and turnover was an endemic problem. Erin Riehle, R.N., Director of the hospital's emergency department, looked to new strategies to solve this problem.

Ms. Riehle contacted staff from Great Oaks Institute of Technology and Career Development, the largest technical school in the area, and one with a significant proportion of students (28%) with developmental disabilities. She also contacted the Hamilton County Board of Developmental Disabilities (BDD) for assistance. The response to Ms. Riehle from Susie Rutkowski at Great Oaks, and Jennifer Linnabary, at Hamilton County BDD, was very positive. They viewed the contact from Ms. Riehle as a great opportunity for the people they served.

Great Oaks and Hamilton County BDD assisted Ms. Riehle in hiring a young woman with Down syndrome as a stock clerk. The employee excelled, leading Cincinnati Children's Hospital, in partnership with Great Oaks, BDD and, subsequently, the Cincinnati School District and the Ohio Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation, to create the Project SEARCH High School Transition Program to train and place students with disabilities or other challenges in positions at the hospital. The partnership helps to solve workforce issues at the hospital and at the same time provides opportunities for youth with disabilities. Ms. Riehle, in a *Washington Post* interview, noted, "A fair amount of hospital revenue comes from providing medical care to kids with disabilities. We had an awareness that we needed to provide role models in our workforce."⁸⁶ A program for adults with disabilities was developed subsequently.

There are currently five programs in Cincinnati, all coordinated through public schools. Most participants have an intellectual disability, with about 50% having dual diagnoses or another disabling condition such as autism. On average, each business in the program hires 25% of the interns it hosts each year. Program staff assist the other participants to find jobs in the community using their skills in related businesses. In total, the employment rate for Project SEARCH graduates has been approximately 80%. In 2009, Cincinnati Children's Hospital employed 60 individuals with disabilities hired through Project SEARCH.⁸⁷ The average work week for these employees is 32 hours at an average salary of \$10.83 per hour. Turnover for these employees is lower than for employees without disabilities and the program director reported that many participants have worked at the hospital for 12 or 13 years.

The success of Project SEARCH in facilitating the employment of people with disabilities has generated interest across the United States and the world. With its positive track record, Project SEARCH also operates as a business, providing technical assistance to sites and states across the nation seeking to replicate this model of workforce development.

How Project SEARCH Works: An Immersion Approach

Project SEARCH at Cincinnati Children's Hospital has two components: the High School Transition Program and the Adult Employment Program.

The *High School Transition Program* includes a one-year skills training program for transition-age youth with disabilities that continues to support those participants who are hired by the hospital for as long as they remain employed. It is targeted for students whose main goal is competitive employment. It is a challenging program because it forces families and young adults to make a major transition during the year.

Unlike traditional high school special education experiences, Project SEARCH immerses students in the host business for an entire school year. The curriculum occurs on site with five to six hours per day spent on individualized skills training in real work sites. Students complete a "rotation" through various jobs to discover their interests and aptitudes. Each student averages 910 hours on skills training per year. Each day also includes one hour that focuses on employability skills such as problem solving, communication, use of technology, budgeting, nutrition, and hygiene, all related to the specific business environments. The internships focus on acquiring clinical and technical "core skills" that are competitive and transferable to other similar work environments.

Individualized job development and placement begin after the rotations are completed. Students are given support through job coaching and worksite accommodations with the ultimate goal of independence. Program staff connect students to appropriate community services in order to ensure a successful transition to work as well as retention and career advancement. This program is funded by participating school districts. The Cincinnati School District has been a long-term participant in Project SEARCH. Greg Lynch of Project SEARCH noted that being located in a large city with a large school district assisted the initiative's initial development.

Project personnel focus on each student's interests and job preferences. When potential participants come for an orientation, they are asked what kind of work they want to do. In the first few weeks in the program, participants are exposed to a variety of internships and program staff encourage the students to consider options. Project SEARCH staff help young people develop an "individual career plan," taking into account the team's assessment, family wishes, and available jobs.

The program maintains a staff-to-participant ratio of 1 to 3, with 1 teacher-coordinator hired by the school district and 3 job coaches for 12 students. The job coaches are paid through a combination of vocational rehabilitation, community agency, and school district funds. The teacher provides instruction and some job coaching, identifies internships, and acts in a case management role. For those employees with mental health disabilities, when needed, staff consult with or refer participants to a program-sponsored psychiatric nurse who has specific training in dual diagnosis. They may take advantage of supports provided by the hospital's Employee Assistance Program, a benefit available to any employee. Students may be eligible for other specialized training and therapy depending on their disability.

Project SEARCH staff emphasize family involvement through open houses, an annual picnic, and monthly meetings with family members. The project requires parents to sign a contract outlining their involvement. Families are involved in selecting internships and updating the career plan as the year progresses and the student moves toward employment. Program staff have found that families who attend meetings have a much better understanding of the goals and are more likely to support their family member to be successful in the job search process. Project SEARCH continues to support family involvement through a curriculum that encourages involvement during the transition, training, and job search process. This program engages families and caregivers in monthly meetings to learn skills to assist their family member with creating linkages and finding jobs. Program staff meet with families to discuss Social Security benefits and planning.

Through the *Adult Employment Program* at Cincinnati Children's Hospital, graduating students receive a comprehensive approach to employment, job retention, and career advancement for individuals with disabilities. Erin Riehle noted that in other settings, multiple disability provider organizations might be operating within a single place of employment, causing confusion and burden to the employer. Project SEARCH's Adult Employment Program functions as a single point of entry, which greatly simplifies the functioning. The Adult Employment Program coordinates job development and agency referrals with human resource needs. Project SEARCH assists the hospital and potential employees by matching qualified employees with open positions in a variety of settings. On-the-job support, such as job coaching, adaptations and accommodations, final task definitions, and travel training, are provided by the Adult Employment Program rather than by external providers. Funding for this service is provided by the Ohio Vocational Rehabilitation agency. It is important to note that Cincinnati Children's Hospital has access to a tremendous amount of disability expertise through the partnership.

Greg Lynch described the arrangement between Project SEARCH and Cincinnati Children's Hospital to be a standard educational agreement. The hospital provides space and a business liaison that gives 10% to 15% of time in job and internship location. Work opportunities at the hospital go beyond traditional jobs for persons with disabilities. "All job titles as appropriate are available," stated Mr. Lynch. Training is adapted for the specific student or employee, through Great Oaks and the school district.

High Involvement, High Expectations: How Project SEARCH is a Model Nationwide

Based on its success, the Project SEARCH model has been replicated in over 140 other sites in the United States and in Europe. Information about Project SEARCH is disseminated via the Internet and public presentations to a wide variety of audiences. The replication model requires participants to receive an hour of employability skills curriculum each morning and then spend the rest of the day (five hours), Monday through Friday, working in a hospital department or in a business. Participants get three 10-week rotations with the goal of preparing participants for competitive employment. The first two internships are at the host business and often the third internship is in the community near where the student lives.

Each Project SEARCH site serves 12 young adults with collaboration among many partners, including education, vocational rehabilitation, service providers, employers, and families. Students are in their last year of high school eligibility, meaning they are 18 to 21 years old. If there are not enough young adult students interested in the program, the openings are offered to young adults who have previously graduated from high school but remain unemployed. The program works with a variety of employers, including banks, hospitals, insurance companies, a zoo, universities, and government. Typically, program staff seek employers that are willing to open their business to training. They prefer businesses on a public transportation line and with a cafeteria, based on a belief that people with significant disabilities want to gain independence.

Once a business hires a Project SEARCH graduate, it can take advantage of long-term services offered by developmental disabilities agencies or by referring them to typical employee assistance programs, if the business has one. The program director reported that staff also work with the department managers to help them “understand what is acceptable and what is not with a person with a disability, so they are not making them jump through hoops that are too high, or not making the hoops so low.” They also work with human resources departments as necessary to revise policies.

In each Project SEARCH program, regardless of industry sector, internships are developed that are complex but systematic. Core skills are identified and taught in a systematic manner. Departments have the support of job coaches and the instructor. When hired, individuals with disabilities make the prevailing wage for that position.

Project SEARCH is based on partnerships that are led by the business. As the program director commented, “It is the business saying, ‘I want a hand in selecting the students. I am going to get involved with them...I want to be involved daily.’” Project SEARCH participants must have finished the education credits necessary for graduation and must be 18 to 21 years old. They must not have accepted their diploma and must still be enrolled in their local school district in order to be considered eligible for the educational funding. The program seeks participants who are ready for community employment, specifically young people who “can have good attendance and punctuality” and have good “work behaviors.” For example,

as a program leader noted, “You can’t wear jeans and a...sweatshirt. You have to dress like the work people. You have to act like them. You have to have attendance like they do.” Participants must be able to take basic direction and, if necessary, modify their performance and behaviors, have a method of communicating, and be independent in toileting or feeding, although assistance can be provided by a personal assistant. Parents are required to sign a contract saying that they will support the participant.

Project SEARCH offers a licensing agreement so that others can replicate the model and use its materials, curriculum, application packet, marketing tools, DVD, and grant application templates at no cost. Organizations that want to create a Project SEARCH program must agree to the model components, including collaborating with local partners, creating an inclusive work environment, and paying a prevailing wage. They also have to agree that they will not use Project SEARCH materials to create their own consulting business. If local communities are interested in establishing a program, they invite one of the program leaders to provide training and share information about the model. They assist with the planning process, which includes an implementation plan, curriculum, sample internships, and Memoranda of Understanding. Program start-up typically takes 6 to 10 months.

Replicating the Model: Project SEARCH at Riverview Medical Center in Red Bank, New Jersey

Riverview Medical Center (RMC), a health care facility in Red Bank, New Jersey, and member of the Meridian Health Family, hosts one of the Project SEARCH replication sites. Initiated in 2008, the program is a partnership between RMC and Educational Collaborations, Inc./ LifeWork, a disability support provider. As of 2009, all persons with disabilities participating in the project are high school students. The partnership started when Jessica Short from LifeWork saw Erin Riehle speak at a conference in New Jersey. She recalls thinking, “This was a perfect program for high school students we were currently working with and we wanted to bring it to our area.” Ms. Short contacted Ms. Riehle about starting a replication site in New Jersey, got some advice on the best way to initiate this, and approached the Meridian Health human resources department to propose the idea of the partnership.

Beth Mulroy, R.N., a human resources generalist with RMC, noted, “It was intriguing enough for us from an organizational perspective to come in and pitch it to the HR steering committee, which is comprised of members of our Board of Trustees. They pitched the whole Project SEARCH idea and background and we got very excited about it so we said we’re on.” Project SEARCH fits well within the Meridian Health Family’s vision of progressive health care and future orientation. The fact that there was support from the top level and from the presidents of each of the hospitals was crucial in the establishment of the Project SEARCH efforts at RMC.

A Model that Works: How to Build a Project SEARCH Program

- “Braided funding” creates a program that taps into existing funding for staffing and services.
- The host business contributes the classroom or a meeting space, the internship sites, and a business liaison. The business also provides desks or cubicles for teachers and staff. The business liaison (usually a department manager or human resource associate) assists the teacher to identify internships and helps navigate the business and its culture.
- The education system provides the teacher and employability skills curriculum, including supplies and equipment such as computers or assistive technology.
- Job coaches are provided by combined funding from vocational rehabilitation, community agencies, and the school. Coaching staff provide on-site systematic training at the internship site. This provides support to both the student intern and the co-workers.
- Developmental disabilities services or mental health funding pays for follow-along services for those graduates who are hired and eligible.

Establishment of the Project SEARCH replication was helped greatly by visits from Erin Riehle and Susie Rutkowski who shared information on Project SEARCH and the experiences from Cincinnati Children’s Hospital. Selection of potential jobs at RMC for the students was an early area of focus for the project and involved significant effort from RMC. Beth Mulroy noted, “It starts with seeing what has been successful at Cincinnati Children’s. We look to where other hospitals have had success and our operations. We use common sense — service, clerical, professional, and clinical. We look at where they could do the work as well as the management of those areas.”

Details of the partnership were established early in the development and mirrored the efforts pioneered at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital. Among the most difficult challenges were issues such as space and purchase of materials. Many other details were resolved through use of the templates provided by Project SEARCH. All parties agreed that the roles were clear from the start. RMC and LifeWork operate through a completely delineated agreement with the expectations and time commitment, but not a contract. Ms. Mulroy observed, “It was all well laid out thanks to Project SEARCH and their success elsewhere. They have a business plan that is well defined and we kind of bought it.” Along with the goal of establishing a pipeline of workers, RMC has an additional expectation to give work opportunities to students with disabilities. RMC sees disability as part of health care and wants to mirror the community.

In the 2008-2009 school year, students from seven different districts participated, and students from each followed a common school calendar. In May, students interview with Project SEARCH and RMC staff. Parents of the students participate in the interview activities as well. During July, the students are trained in use of public transportation and participate in team-building activities. Orientation to the hospital occurs in September, including hospital tours, and occurs with other general staff who are being oriented at that time. There is a significant effort to immerse the students in the culture of RMC. Following completion of the orientation, the students begin 10-week work activity rotations. The work activities are identified by RMC. The human resources department meets with the hospital managers and “hammers out” the jobs and expectations. Each manager selects a point person in the department to mentor the student. There is a clear expectation that the department makes the student a part of the team.

The day for each student begins with a one-hour morning meeting in which instruction is provided. Much of the instruction focuses on social and work behavior. Project SEARCH staff are careful to use work language, and not educational language (e.g., conference room instead of classroom). Of the educational content for the students, approximately half was created locally, and the other half came directly from Project SEARCH in Cincinnati. A handbook for hospital managers explains relevant details of the project, including roles and responsibilities. On-site activities are determined by the specific work that the students are doing. Students are evaluated every three weeks, and there is a team meeting for students, including their families, every six weeks. Students are instructed in the use of sick time and vacation protocols, like any other hospital employee. At the completion of the school year, if students have acquired the necessary skills, they can be hired by RMC. Funding for LifeWork is provided by fees paid by the school on a per-student basis. LifeWork purchased support from the Project SEARCH national office.

All parties involved with Project SEARCH at RMC see tremendous success, and the initiative has spread within RMC. The efforts at RMC started in 7 departments, and based on the accomplishments of the project, it had expanded to 13 departments by the end of the 2009 school year. Meridian Health Family operates two other hospitals, and planned to expand Project SEARCH to another hospital in the system in 2010. The third hospital is under expansion, and will be considered as a host site for Project SEARCH when it is completed. As another measure of success, three of the nine students for the first year have been hired. LifeWork continues to provide service and a job coach, for one student in particular. Jessica Short noted, “The partnership between Meridian and LifeWork has been an instrumental part of bringing the Project SEARCH model into reality in New Jersey. I really see it as the next developmental step for the students we are working with, to be fully immersed in a genuine work experience.” It has not been perfect for all students. One student did not want to work, and was “fired.” However, Beth Mulroy noted that the students add value to the hospital that cannot be measured. “The interns add something to the culture of the organization that is felt throughout,” she said. “I can’t put my finger on what it is, but it is good for the organization.”

Replicating the Model: Project SEARCH at the U.S. Department of Labor in Washington, D.C.

Project SEARCH DC is a collaborative project between the U.S. Department of Labor and its Office of Disability Employment Policy, the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), the District of Columbia Department on Disability Services - Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and Developmental Disabilities Administration, the Lt. Joseph P. Kennedy Institute of Catholic Charities, and Project SEARCH in Cincinnati.

The partners started working together in December 2008 to lay the groundwork for the 2009-2010 school year. This program prepares participating students in their last year of high school for competitive employment in the community. Up to 12 students spend their entire school day at the U.S. Department of Labor with a DCPS teacher and several employment staff, furnished by RSA and the Kennedy Institute. At the start and end of each day, the students work on employability skills, following an employability skills curriculum, in a classroom provided by the U.S. Department of Labor. The rest of the day is spent in work experiences for which they applied, were interviewed, and were selected. These work experiences teach competitive, marketable job skills. Each student participates in three 10- to 11-week internships during the program year. Participating students receive daily support from the instructor, job coaches, and mentors within the U.S. Department of Labor. Each student participates in a variety of skills development experiences to obtain skills leading to employment in the community or within the federal government.

This is the first project of its kind in the federal government and the U.S. Department of Labor views it as a model that it hopes to replicate throughout the federal government system. The partners are very excited about bringing this proven model to the District of Columbia.

Conclusion

The success of the Project SEARCH strategy, plus the acclaim it has received, has important implications for strategies to expand employment opportunities for people with disabilities. These implications are presented in the context of the *Ready and Able* findings as follows:

- **Employers respond to a business case for employing people with disabilities**

Project SEARCH was created in response to a business need at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. The hospital was having problems with attracting sufficient candidates and staff turnover. Due to the success of the program in meeting employment needs at the hospital, the Project SEARCH model has been replicated at over 140 sites worldwide. This expansion continues because Project SEARCH is meeting employers' needs for qualified, reliable employees.

- **Innovative collaborations with and between workforce-supplying organizations enable employer efforts to recruit, hire, train, and support employees with disabilities**

The Project SEARCH model involves partnerships between employers and organizations providing supports for people with disabilities, including school systems, and agencies providing vocational rehabilitation, developmental disabilities, and mental health services. The model includes strategies for coordinating public funding from multiple sources for training and supports configured to meet the needs of the employer. Additionally, Project SEARCH at Cincinnati Children's Hospital operates its own support program for its employees with public funding.

- **Collaborations ensure that workers are qualified and productive**

Project SEARCH utilizes an innovative curriculum to prepare young adults with significant disabilities for non-traditional jobs, including youth who are dually eligible for services. The curriculum addresses a range of skills related to employment preparedness and independent living, including problem solving, communication, use of technology, budgeting, nutrition, and hygiene. Participants have opportunities to experience different internships and staff work with them to develop an "individual career plan." Staff break down jobs into their essential duties and then spend a year teaching those core technical and employability skills. Internships are arranged in real employment environments.

Project SEARCH confirms that the coordinated use of innovative workforce supports makes it possible for persons with significant disabilities to work in a wide variety of jobs. Project SEARCH participants have shown the ability to complete complicated work tasks with accuracy and speed.

Finally, Project SEARCH demonstrates a successful strategy to provide mental health supports in the workplace, as a component of an effective employee assistance plan. This has broad implications for replication. Many employers offer employee assistance plans, but may not think of such a plan as being applicable to workers with disabilities. Project SEARCH's experience indicates that employing a more generic, universal resource, such as employee assistance plans, is less burdensome to organizations as they pursue new collaborations.

- **Successful collaborations nurture and reward continuous leadership**

Project SEARCH was developed at Cincinnati Children's Hospital as a result of the leadership of Erin Riehle. She established partnerships with impressive leaders in the disability community such as Susie Rutkowski at Great Oaks and Jennifer Linnabary at Hamilton County BDD. Their collaborative efforts led to the development of a model that now meets the needs of employers across the world through the employment of people with disabilities.

Chapter 6: Catalysts: Business-Affiliated Organizations Leading Disability and Employment Partnerships

Profiled in this chapter:

- *disabilityworks*
- The Oregon Business Leadership Network

This chapter features profiles of two business-centric organizations that include within their organizational missions and frameworks many aspects of the collaborations addressed in this report. These organizations include businesses as members and business leaders on their boards of directors, yet draw upon a range of nonprofit and government workforce development agencies and leaders to meet their missions. Both *disabilityworks* in Chicago and the Business Leadership Network in Oregon were founded because local employers and policymakers believed there was a market for the talent of people with disabilities and wanted to serve that market. The qualities of innovative partnerships discussed in the other chapters in this report are integral to the organizations profiled here — a single point of contact, employer interest and commitment, as well as the presence of a high level of social nonprofit management expertise.

William G. Parrett, President of Deloitte & Touche, said, “There is a war for talent and anyone who intends to win it better realize two things: First, that it is a global war and, second, that if you restrict your search for talent in any way...you will be giving your competitors the edge they need to put you out of business.”⁸⁸ The organizations profiled here are executing their agendas using every function of successful business practices — strong marketing and communications, attention to customer relationship management, commitment to efficient execution and operations, and high-performing executive management — because of their passion and their urgency for bringing employers and job seekers together. In many respects, these two models are the most promising for national replication in communities across the nation, as they provide the one-stop shopping for employers that are characteristic of workforce intermediaries at their most effective.

disabilityworks: A Catalyst for Collaboration

Introduction

disabilityworks is a joint initiative of the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), and the City of Chicago. The organization serves as a hub linking business, nonprofit, and community partners under a common goal to “increase economic and employment opportunities for people with disabilities while meeting workforce needs throughout the State of Illinois through the development of collaborative partnerships between the private and public sectors.”⁸⁹ The organization, established in 2005, is recognized as an effective catalyst and change agent bringing public and private players together to fulfill the challenge cited in the words of the Mayor’s Taskforce report:

...[T]he United States spends an estimated \$300 billion annually to support unemployed people with disabilities who should be, and are willing to be, employed. Unemployed people with disabilities face an unnecessary loss of self-esteem and community integration, while the economy experiences the loss of income taxes and other related revenues.

Increasing the employment of people with disabilities yields significant benefits to our City, our nation, our economy and most importantly, to the people themselves. When people with disabilities become employed, they achieve a “vocational identity,” an identity that everyone in this country values. People with and without disabilities who achieve this vocational identity have more disposable income, pay taxes, purchase more goods and services and have increased financial security. Subsequently, people who are gainfully employed are more independent, self-confident, make greater contributions to their communities and in many instances, no longer rely on costly government subsidies, programs and services.⁹⁰

Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley established the Taskforce through an Executive Order in 2002 to address his administration’s concern over sustained underemployment among people with disabilities. The mayor sought a coordinated and aggressive citywide plan to bring more people with disabilities into the workforce. The Taskforce included members from several city departments, disability advocates, business and education leaders, state policymakers, and members of the community. For three years, Daley’s Taskforce examined the barriers to, and conditions of, employment for people with disabilities in Chicago. The Taskforce’s final report, issued in July 2005, established a comprehensive plan designed to directly address the challenges that result in the lack of opportunities and resources available to people with

disabilities that keep them from finding employment. The report has been widely praised and credited for motivating numerous innovations and changes to foster stronger business-agency partnership and cohesion.

While the Taskforce was still in session, it established the Chicagoland Provider Leadership Network (CPLN), a network of provider organizations that help people with disabilities find jobs and training. The Taskforce also brought in the already existing Chicagoland Business Leadership Network (CBLN) to join in a combined effort that developed both a supply and demand action that would address the employment of people with disabilities. After the Taskforce finalized its charge, a decision was made by the City of Chicago, the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, and the State of Illinois to place the new *disabilityworks* at the Chamber to set the foundation for the recommendations made by the Taskforce. In naming the new organization, the Mayor's Commission noted that, "The *disabilityworks* brand conveys the City's acknowledgement that Chicagoans with disabilities, when provided with opportunities, can be among the finest employees that any company can hope to employ. Leveraging opportunities under the *disabilityworks* brand, public and private sector organizations share talent and resources to increase the employment and community participation of people with disabilities throughout the Chicagoland area."⁹¹

Chicago Mayoral Taskforce on Employment of People with Disabilities

Established by Mayor Richard M. Daley by executive order in October 2002, and co-chaired by the Chair and CEO of Northern Trust Company, the Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development, and the Commissioner of the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, this Taskforce, with more than 100 members, was divided into five work groups, each of which addressed a specific employment-related goal. These included:

- An evaluation of "supply-side" issues such as the effectiveness of job development programs and the adequacy of the labor pool of job applicants with disabilities,
- Revision of Chicago's procurement policies designed to increase economic opportunities for businesses owned and operated by people with disabilities,
- The City of Chicago becoming a model employer of people with disabilities,
- Improvements to transition services and employment outcomes for youth with disabilities, and
- The establishment of private-public sector partnerships designed to increase economic incentives for businesses hiring people with disabilities.

Gerald Roper, President and CEO of the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, felt strongly that in order for this effort to be successful and sustainable, it had to be placed inside a business organization. He advocated for the Chamber to take the lead. By including the Chamber and private employers in the leadership and board of *disabilityworks*, Mr. Roper believed the Chamber would market the value and benefit of hiring people with disabilities directly to Chicago businesses. Since 2005, *disabilityworks* has officially been part of the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce where the CBLN and the CPLN represent two of three divisions of the *disabilityworks* initiative.

Karen McCulloh, former Executive Director of *disabilityworks* at the time this research was conducted, maintained close relationships with the business community, while educating many constituencies and advocating for systemic change within the workforce development system directed to the employment of people with disabilities. Ms. McCulloh had previously held a federal appointment to the U.S. Department of Labor Job Corps Advisory Committee where she served as the Chair of the Disability Committee. Resigning from that appointment, she became a member of President-Elect Barack Obama's Education and Labor Transition Team, focusing on employment-related efforts for people with disabilities. She works to influence disability policy on a local, state, and national level, including promoting health care careers for people with disabilities, transition services for youth with disabilities, and the admission of students with disabilities into vocational training opportunities and into higher education.

Recognizing the important work accomplished by the Taskforce, DCEO, under the leadership of Jack Lavin, entered into a partnership with the City of Chicago and the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce that brought valuable financial and other resources that have been used to support *disabilityworks* as an organization and to implement many of the Taskforce's recommendations. From that point on, *disabilityworks* has held two identities: as a workforce development initiative of the State of Illinois and as an innovation of the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce.

In 2006, *disabilityworks* was one of the recipients of the U.S. Secretary of Labor's New Freedom Initiative award for targeting both the supply and demand sides of employment through strategies that include reaching out to businesses to develop employment opportunities, engaging educational programs for youth and adults with disabilities, and building awareness of work incentives and workforce development services.⁹²

How the Organization Works and Gets Results

With its origins in a Mayoral Taskforce, *disabilityworks* had an initial road map for its work within Chicago. When it became part of the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, seed funds were granted by the City of Chicago while the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity contributed funding so the scope of activities extended to the northeast region of Illinois, an 11-county area covered in part by the Chamber. On July 1, 2007, *disabilityworks* became a statewide initiative, with the hiring of eight people who had

previously been Disability Program Navigators. (Disability Program Navigators were part of a national U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration initiative to increase and improve services to individuals with disabilities in the One-Stop Career Center system across the nation.)

disabilityworks is the umbrella organization for CBLN, CPLN, and disability Resource Coordinators (dRCs), each of which is overseen by a *disabilityworks* managing director. *disabilityworks* also provides employment-related job leads and news directly to people with disabilities who register on its Web site for this information. Approximately 400 people with disabilities have become employed as a result of the job leads. Even though there is delegation of responsibilities to each division of *disabilityworks*, the organization's mission provides the primary motivation to keep all staff on track.

CBLN provides a forum for businesses to share their knowledge, expertise, and experience with other businesses. Membership in the CBLN is free and open to professionals from for-profit businesses, health care institutions, chambers of commerce, and educational attractions (i.e., zoos, museums) in the northeast region of Illinois. The CBLN has developed "A Business Case: Top 10 Reasons to Employ Qualified People with Disabilities,"⁹³ and one of the CBLN members worked to develop employer best practices for recruiting, hiring, training, retaining, promoting, and accommodating people with disabilities. Selima Ani, the *disabilityworks* Managing Director for the CBLN, finds out what businesses want to know about disability-related issues, understands business concerns, and responds to business needs. CBLN also provides information not only about the benefits to the business bottom line in hiring people with disabilities but also emphasizes the benefits of reaching out to this customer base. Many companies are now interested in recruiting veterans with disabilities, and *disabilityworks* is tapping expert resources to assist members in pursuing this.

Many business members want to accommodate existing employees that have developed disabilities, especially experienced employees that have developed conditions after they started working. Karen McCulloh believes that engaging businesses in their areas of interest and addressing the information they need leads some "to be more open to talking about and learning more about the skills they need to interview, hire, accommodate, retain, and promote people with disabilities into their workforces."

CBLN co-chair Robye Smith, of Harris Bank, has been involved with *disabilityworks* since it began. Ms. Smith notes that the CBLN is free and local, that it allows her to engage with her peers, and that it is a cost-effective, time-effective way to be connected and share ideas. Several factors drive her company's participation with *disabilityworks*. These include respect for customers. The disability community, as a group of bank customers, is important to the business. Additionally, the bank wants to attract, hire, retain, accommodate, and develop the best talent, including people with disabilities. Finally, having a partnership with *disabilityworks* holds the bank to a higher standard, a higher performance level, in a creative and cost-effective way. For example, because of *disabilityworks*, the bank's Web site on careers is now accessible to people with disabilities, and the bank's online and print bank statements are now available in accessible formats. As a result of its involvement on the CBLN, Harris

Bank has hosted “lunch and learn” case studies for its managers, has become more receptive to employees who need accommodations, and has encouraged those who need accommodations to self-identify in a safe and accepting workplace environment.

The CPLN is a network of organizations that offers employment-related services to job seekers with disabilities. The CPLN has over 300 unique member organizations with more than 500 staff participating. These are primarily job developers who work to place people with disabilities into employment. According to Joe Chiappetta, *disabilityworks* Managing Director for the CPLN, the network grew out of a demand from employers to coordinate organizations that were each vying for attention from employers, sometimes in competition with each other. Through membership in the CPLN, members can gain access to business relationships developed by *disabilityworks*. The CPLN also enhances providers’ capacity and encourages communication among providers to improve services provided to people with disabilities. The CPLN pays particular attention to job developers and job placement professionals who work for service provider organizations. Training for job developers is conducted on a regular basis, and the CPLN has developed “job-matching best practices” for service providers.

Once the seed funding from the City of Chicago was exhausted in 2006, DCEO became the major funder, supporter, and partner of *disabilityworks*. At the outset, in 2005, DCEO committed to funding for the development of the *disabilityworks* Web site and financial support for the salaries of the Managing Director of the CBLN and the Executive Director and, since 2006, has been the primary funder through the utilization of Workforce Investment Act and other DCEO funds. However, in looking to the future and the organization’s sustainability, *disabilityworks* has also received two grants from the Chicago Community Trust, two grants from Field Foundation of Illinois, a Polk Brothers Foundation grant, and significant contributions from corporations.

In late 2006, DCEO wanted to sustain the concept of Disability Program Navigators but wanted them to be within a centralized structure, part of an overarching organization that specialized in people with disabilities. DCEO had come to the conclusion that people with disabilities were not visiting Illinois workNet (One-Stop) Centers, and that employers were not accessing the market of individuals with disabilities as workers. DCEO was interested in bringing the two together —businesses and workNet Centers — around the issue of employing people with disabilities. They wanted the navigators to go beyond offering direct service at workNet Centers, to becoming “circuit riders” within the economic development regions. They wanted an organization, like *disabilityworks*, with connections with the business community. Out of this grew the current contract for dRCs. In addition, *disabilityworks* assisted DCEO in ensuring that the Illinois workNet Web site is fully accessible. DCEO was in a partnership with CareerBuilder.com for its high-growth job training initiative. With advice from *disabilityworks*, CareerBuilder has changed its software to achieve accessibility.

Speed Networking: Business Leaders Meet Nonprofit Leaders

Members of the CBLN met members of the coordinating council of the CPLN for an afternoon of speed networking on September 23, 2008. CBLN member businesses interested in hiring people with disabilities engaged in a highly interactive series of four-minute exchanges with service providers that provide employment placement services for people with disabilities.

This experience resulted in providers developing a greater understanding of the workforce needs of individual businesses and created linkages with service providers that represented a cross-disability population of job seekers with disabilities.

On July 1, 2007, DCEO awarded *disabilityworks* the responsibility for employing, managing, and supervising staff that were previously known as Disability Program Navigators and had been employed by local workforce area organizations. There are currently eight dRCs, who are assigned to the state's eight economic development regions and cover all 46 Illinois workNet Centers. The dRCs have a home base office at one workNet Center and travel on a regularly scheduled basis to spend time at each workNet Center to which they are assigned. They improve access for people with disabilities to the services of the workNet Centers. They also work with Chamber of Commerce organizations, business representatives, and others in their specific economic development regions of the state. They are supervised by *disabilityworks* Managing Director, Jonathan Wheat.

One dRC describes herself as an “educator, resource, model, translator, and expert on disability systems.”⁹⁴ Another sees herself as a resource for transportation, housing, income, insurance needs, and referrals to service providers. They train staff at workNet Centers in disability etiquette and using assistive technology. One dRC has partnered with Comcast to engage in a new pilot program focused on increasing hiring of people with disabilities in IP support and call centers after a 12-week training program.⁹⁵

The organization's board of directors is co-chaired by Mark Schiller, the CEO of Quaker Oats (a division of PepsiCo), and Jana Schreuder, President of Worldwide Operations and Technology for Northern Trust Corporation, and includes high-level representation from corporations such as Walgreens, McDonalds, and Aon, small businesses, and business organizations, as well as DCEO and the President and CEO of the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce.

Board members like the fact that *disabilityworks* is focused on employment. They believe in the business case for recruiting and hiring people with disabilities, and they contribute to *disabilityworks*, both individually and through corporate contributions. They support *disabilityworks'* efforts to secure grants from other businesses and organizations. Jana Schreuder says that it must be made as easy as possible for businesses to access qualified people with disabilities.

A Catalyst for Collaboration

Initiated by the Mayor's Taskforce, *disabilityworks* commissioned DePaul University to conduct a study comparing employees with disabilities to those without in three key sectors of the economy in the Chicago area. The findings of the research, *Exploring the Bottom Line: A Study of the Costs and Benefits of Workers with Disabilities*,⁹⁶ issued in July 2007, are being used to bolster the case for hiring people with disabilities to employers who may be reluctant based on perceived costs of accommodations, absenteeism, or performance.⁹⁷

With encouragement from the executive level of Walgreens' retail store division, a district manager in Chicago agreed to a pilot project in eight retail stores in downtown Chicago. The pilot, which became operational in February 2009, establishes *disabilityworks* as the single point of referral for people with disabilities from six service provider agencies to the eight Walgreens retail stores. Memoranda of Understanding were developed that set up specific protocols that service providers must follow when they refer qualified job seekers to *disabilityworks*.

In approaching disability provider agencies to be part of this pilot project, *disabilityworks* included organizations that work with people with different types of disabilities. Six organizations were involved in developing and finalizing the communication and referral plan from the provider side. On the Walgreens side, the store managers and assistant managers attended *disabilityworks*' two-hour disability sensitivity and awareness training before referrals began. Job analysis was conducted on five different positions that are available at the Walgreens retail stores.

During the summer of 2009, DCEO, *disabilityworks*, and the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) were involved in a collaboration on a pilot project for college students. Funded by a School-to-Work grant through DCEO, TechWorks involved a pilot project between MOPD and *disabilityworks* to help students with disabilities secure internships in information technology and other technology fields during the summer of 2009. Eighteen students with disabilities in high schools, colleges, and universities in the Chicagoland area were placed in eight-week internships.

At Wheeling High School in suburban Chicago, funds from the Workforce Investment Act, Technical Education, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) support a pilot health science cluster project that includes special education students. The project is working with *disabilityworks* in several areas. Through its Web site and other means, *disabilityworks* is creating awareness of health careers and offering resources. *disabilityworks* has also advised about accessibility issues and spoken to teachers and administrators developing the pilot. Through DCEO funding, Jewish Vocational Services, a CPLN member, is providing reinforcement of students' academic skills through e-learning. The high schools will develop individual career plans for each student, which, for special education students, will incorporate their Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Karen McCulloh, who is a Registered Nurse (as well as then-Executive Director of *disabilityworks*), will do a presentation to human resource managers of Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council's 123 member hospitals and

health care organizations about best practices in bringing underrepresented populations into the workplace.

One of the most recent initiatives of *disabilityworks* is a series of Chamber of Commerce summits in locations throughout Illinois. Funded by the Illinois Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, administered by the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, the goal of these summits is to educate businesses about hiring people with disabilities, and to provide resources and referral sources so that businesses may utilize the untapped resource of qualified workers who have disabilities. All resource materials are handed out on a flash drive so employers may access the materials electronically and send the information on to other employers and internally to their staff. Attendees are provided with *disabilityworks*' paper, *Business Case Bottom Line*, information on the 2008 ADA Amendments Act, and information on employers' frequently asked questions. Handout information is available at <http://www.disabilityworks.org>.

The summits are sponsored by the Illinois Chamber of Commerce, the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, DCEO, and its statewide Small Business Development Centers, the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, and Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center (DBTAC) Great Lakes ADA Center. Local chambers throughout the state agreed to host summits where surrounding chambers partner to promote and attend the summits. All of the summits were held by the end of 2009. *disabilityworks* has also partnered with DBTAC Great Lakes ADA Center, which made presentations at each of the summits.

Conclusion

The collaborative projects initiated or supported by *disabilityworks* offer examples of market-sensitive partnerships for other cities, metropolitan areas, and states, and confirm the *Ready and Able* findings.

■ Employers respond to a business case for employing people with disabilities

The inclusion of disabilityworks within a large Chamber of Commerce sends a message that increasing employment of people with disabilities is being approached from a business perspective. Additionally, most of the businesses recruited to the Business Leadership Advisory Board of Directors and the CBLN have been accomplished through individualized communication. Networking skills have proven to be essential.

Corporate leaders from major national and global corporations serve on the *disabilityworks* board and support the organization. This validates the *disabilityworks* programs and initiatives as valued resource to employers. It also confirms *disabilityworks* as a partnership provider that gives valued assistance to corporations in their disability recruitment efforts.

Although “social responsibility” is a “buzz” word, *disabilityworks* demonstrates that businesses appear to respond better to the concepts of finding the best quality workforce, and serving customers who may have disabilities, as a business interest. They are also interested in accommodating existing employees who develop disabilities.

- **Innovative collaborations with and between workforce-supplying organizations enable employer efforts to recruit, hire, train, and support employees with disabilities**

The founders established two separate networks, one for businesses and another for providers. This enabled businesses to have their own organization where they could discuss their concerns, and likewise, the providers have their own set of issues and can discuss these in a friendly environment.

disabilityworks and its network organizations relentlessly focus on the message that people with disabilities want to work and are qualified to work. The group is repeatedly referred to as “an untapped resource of qualified workers for employers.” Ms. McCulloh noted that many of the key stakeholders are leaders who have disabilities or have a personal connection to disability.

disabilityworks is action oriented. In one quarter, *disabilityworks* staff conducted 45 presentations to approximately 1,000 people across the state on various topics where all presentations, no matter the topic, were directed by the mission. All 12 staff, including the Executive Director, Managing Directors, and dRCs offer educational presentations about hiring people with disabilities.

- **Collaborations ensure that workers are qualified and productive**

The Walgreens pilot project, TechWorks, and health cluster initiatives all incorporate training and coaching curricula.

- **Successful collaborations nurture and reward continuous leadership**

The disabilityworks initiative recognizes that successful partnerships exist at multiple levels within the same organization. Within large companies, people at the top level must set priorities, take action, and devote resources to the effort. Without full organizational commitment, partnerships are sometimes difficult to maintain because of staff turnover.

Making the Business Case: The Business Leadership Network in Oregon

Introduction

The Oregon Business Leadership Network (OBLN) was organized in June 2004 as an employer-led organization to provide Oregon businesses with networking opportunities, education, and resources to effectively increase understanding and awareness of disability issues in the workplace. The research for this profile was done in 2009. OBLN ceased operations in April 2010.

During the time it operated, the OBLN developed materials and made important contributions to fostering partnerships with the business community to increase employment for people with disabilities. OBLN was statewide in scope, with activities and chapters in Portland and Salem. It was particularly effective in its communication strategies, especially with business, and carried the message that people with disabilities want to work. The approach of the OBLN was not to “reinvent the wheel,” but to build on initiatives that work. It was free to business members, who were called “associates.” Several large corporations that made larger contributions to the organization were called “sponsors.”

The OBLN held its first meeting on June 29, 2004. The Board of Directors included major employers, such as Intel Corporation, Portland General Electric, Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU), and Fred Meyer Stores (Kroger Company). The Executive Director of OBLN, Lucy Baker, believes that actions taken early on set the foundation for the entire enterprise.

The Business Case for Inclusion: A Guiding Principle

At its first meeting, the OBLN Board of Directors decided that OBLN would:

- Incorporate as a standalone statewide 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation with local chapters;
- Establish a digital presence, with its own URL, that would help it serve as a clearinghouse and source of information on a wide range of disability issues;
- Assist member companies in a friendly atmosphere;
- Recognize people with disabilities as workers and as customers;
- See disability as part of diversity, and work to enable all OBLN members to be well-versed and welcoming of disability;

- Have the expertise to assist employers to improve their practices on inclusion, including universal design and “cultural readiness” assessments;
- Have connections with nonprofit organizations with which employers could work; and
- Reach out to people within corporations in multiple roles, such as those who deal with equal employment opportunity, diversity contracting, recruiting, accommodation, managers and line supervisors, retention, as well as those who handle Workers’ Compensation.

OBLN’s first major project was the crafting of a business case for inclusion of people with disabilities in the competitive workplace and consumer base. The *method* for development of its business case was very important. Within eight weeks of its first meeting, the OBLN hosted a CEO forum. Suggestions for invitees came from the Oregon Business Council (OBC), the Oregon Business Association, and Oregon Workforce Investment Boards. The two honorary co-chairs of the OBLN for this event — Oregon State Representative Brad Avakian and Peter O. Kohler, M.D, President of OHSU — extended the invitations and hosted the meeting. The meeting was attended by 15 representatives of corporations across key sectors, representing 100,000 workers, or about 6% of the Oregon workforce. Leaders of state organizations attended in helping roles. The output of this effort was the OBLN business case,⁹⁸ which recognizes the demographic realities of the future workforce, and the importance of people with disabilities as both consumers and talented members of the workforce. The development of this business case in a peer-to-peer setting led to stronger buy-in on the part of businesses.

Within its first year of operation, OBLN had created a web presence (<http://www.obln.org>) that served as a comprehensive resource for employers regarding disability in the workplace and marketplace; developed flexAbility, a guide for employers, in partnership with the Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation Services (OVRs) and area disability experts; established a monthly e-magazine featuring interviews with Oregon leaders and showcasing successful models, viewpoints, and messages around disability; conducted quarterly roundtables on subjects of interest to business members; and influenced the OBC to include “accommodating Oregonians with disabilities into the workplace” as part of the Oregon Business Plan, a statewide initiative of Oregon’s business community to shape a long-term vision and strategy for creating more quality jobs in Oregon. In October 2005, the U.S. Business Leadership Network presented OBLN with an Exceptional Leadership Award, and named it Chapter of the Year (along with Miami Dade Business Leadership Network).

Economic Development Approach to Hiring People with Disabilities

Lucy Baker describes the OBLN as having an “economic development” as opposed to a “human service” approach, using “pull” rather than “push” strategies. This approach recognizes the value of inclusion to employers and both promotes and addresses business interests in people with disabilities. OBLN offered:

- Education for employers on accessibility, disability etiquette, Windmills® attitudinal training, disability awareness, and trainer resources;
- Customized leadership development training on diversity, disability, and the “bottom line”;
- Assistance in finding talented workers with disabilities; and
- Capacity building, including “cultural audits” for inclusion, accessibility assessments, and “reasonable accommodations” consultations.

OBLN was particularly talented with its communication approaches, including *Look at My Ability* (<http://www.obln.org/LAMA.htm>), a two-minute video from the OBLN in partnership with the Oregon Business Plan (Oregon Medicaid Infrastructure Grant).⁹⁹ The video focuses on the largely untapped skilled labor pool of Oregonians with disabilities and addresses the work ethic and skills represented in this group. The video was produced with a grant from the Oregon Department of Human Services by Morgali Films.

While OBLN benefited from a start-up grant through OVRS, and several project-based contracts through the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG), its quest to establish natural, ongoing funding for its activities continued in its fourth fiscal year. Promising beginnings in this direction came from an increase in corporate contributions, including those providing repeat sponsorships in its third fiscal year, and new fee-for-service contracts with OVRS (for internships) and the Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center.

Notable challenges remained. The OBLN applied for a number of foundation and other grants, with limited success. Foundations are not accustomed to receiving appeals from a business-led organization and were also unable, during the recession, to fund many new organizations. The recession imposed other challenges. Many businesses are under financial pressure and may be constrained in their ability to make corporate contributions. The OBLN Board voted in November 2009 to continue the OBLN through June 2010 on the strength of actual and pending contacts and collaboration with the U.S. Business Leadership Network on proposals to the Office of Disability Employment Policy and AmeriCorps. In April 2010, the Board voted to cease operations.

At the time this research was conducted, OBLN had one staff person, the Executive Director, and a part-time webmaster. An early investment by OVRS in OBLN’s capacity building in Fiscal Year 2008-2009 provided a part-time program coordinator and full-time development director, and while they helped move the OBLN further along its path in building funding, partnerships, and services, it was not possible to support the positions beyond the grant period.

OBLN Initiatives

OBLN facilitated the “economic development” approach through the following activities and partnerships, all directed toward assisting employers to find talented individuals with disabilities for their workforces:

- **Internship Center.** OBLN operated a summer internship center in partnership with Incight, an Oregon-based nonprofit organization that connects talented university and college students with disabilities to industry. In operating this program, OBLN and Incight connected with other organizations that establish internships for college students, such as the Emerging Leaders Program of the National Business and Disability Council (run by Abilities, Inc.); the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy’s EARN program; the Oregon Department of Human Services’ Oregon Transition Program; the Oregon Commission for the Blind’s Summer Work Experience Program; and the Business Education Compact, which connects Oregon businesses with schools in “hands-on, innovative experiences.” Working with Incight, OBLN reached out to member businesses to host interns. The internship center was the first OBLN effort to attract foundation funds (from the Juan Young Trust) and was focused on opening the doors of corporations because it is advantageous for their businesses. It is part of OBLN’s “economic development” model. At the same time, the OBLN functioned as a “team player” by working with other organizations involved in similar efforts.
- **“Tapping Fresh Talent” Career Expo.** Beginning in 2007, in partnership with OVRS, OBLN hosted an annual job fair for approximately 200 youth in transition with disabilities, veterans and adults with disabilities, and employers. The 2009 expo included a post-expo business reception, during which “new tools for inclusion” were presented by two consultants who partnered with OBLN. In past years, employers were impressed with the quality of the candidates who attend the expo.
- **“flexAbility” Toolkit for Employers.** In partnership with and under contract to OVRS, OBLN issued and subsequently updated the “flexAbility” toolkit¹⁰⁰ for employers. The toolkit is a 200-page free guide for employers that explains disability-related employment resources in an easy-to-understand way. For example, the section on “reasonable accommodations” explains that they are “workplace adjustments or modifications that enable individuals with disabilities to do their jobs. As such, they are on par with the desks, chairs, phones and computers that an employer provides all employees as the means for getting their job done.”¹⁰¹
- **Live Résumé.** As described in the OBLN newsletter, “Live Résumé provides employers with the opportunity to meet a small group of polished, motivated, skilled, and dependable job seekers with disabilities and hear their ‘live résumés.’ This event gave employers the opportunity to tap into the talent they need as well as help them meet their workforce diversity goals and strategies.” OBLN held Live Résumé events every three or four months, in different locations throughout the state. OBLN recruited the employers. The business liaison for OVRS was the single point of contact or “funnel” for providers.

An OVRS liaison met with each job seeker before the Live Résumé event and determined if the job seeker was ready. Also, OVRS prepared candidates for Live Résumé by reviewing résumés and conducting workshops, especially on informational interviewing. There was also some involvement by the Commission for the Blind and the U.S. Department of Education-funded Projects with Industry grantee, Easter Seals, based in Portland.

- **Project SEARCH Replication.** OBLN was involved in facilitating a health careers project modeled on Cincinnati Children’s Hospital’s Project SEARCH. The partners were Incight and OHSU. After some initial meetings, the project was on hold due to workforce reductions brought on by the recession but was looking to place its first workers in 2010.

Conclusion

OBLN demonstrated the *Ready and Able* findings in the following ways:

- **Employers respond to a business case for employing people with disabilities**

In concert with its employer members, OBLN developed “The Business Case for Inclusion of People with Disabilities in the Competitive Workplace and Consumer Base.”¹⁰² OBLN promoted the importance of workplace skills and experience and consumer participation of people with disabilities to be fully competitive or successful.

- **Innovative collaborations with and between workforce-supplying organizations enable employer efforts to recruit, hire, train, and support employees with disabilities**

Through OBLN’s internship center, career expos, and support of Project SEARCH and related initiatives, the organization encouraged, facilitated, and supported innovative approaches and collaboration among workforce and social service agencies. It promoted Oregon’s best practice and leadership models that are successful in improving employment for people with disabilities.

- **Collaborations ensure that workers are qualified and productive**

The attempted Project SEARCH replication and internship center are examples of how this collaboration was concerned with training people with disabilities to be qualified and productive for jobs in demand.

- **Successful collaborations nurture and reward continuous leadership**

OBLN cultivated and promoted leadership through education, training, and awareness, working with leading employers, nonprofit leadership, and elected officials. It educated employers that people with disabilities are an important part of workplace and leadership diversity, that accommodation is a key business strategy for competitiveness, and that a culture of inclusion is a leadership strategy recognized at the top and practiced at all levels.

Considering its modest size, the OBLN accomplished a great deal and developed products and approaches that can be utilized by other organizations that are similarly trying to foster a market-driven, or economic development, approach to increasing employment for people with disabilities.

Conclusion: A Story of Mutual Success for Employers and People with Disabilities

At a time when the employment rate for people with disabilities is unacceptably low, this study describes a dynamic between employers and a diverse array of workforce suppliers that, if nurtured, can result in large numbers of people with disabilities having expanded employment opportunities. A broad range of America's leading companies view people with disabilities as a valuable resource in meeting their needs for reliable, skilled employees, and they are *recruiting* them.

This report shows what works when organizations identify a source of good jobs at an established employer. This opportunity acts as a powerful incentive to spur successful, sustainable, and trusted partnerships. By seeking these opportunities, workforce and human services agencies that understand the employers' business case can build their capacity and serve their job-seeking clients more effectively. By building relationships with more employers, public agencies and private nonprofit organizations can learn more about how to work successfully with a range of employers. A number of these practices have been identified in this report.

In this difficult economic era, when both U.S. and global businesses are scrambling for new advantages, new markets, and business models that will make them more competitive, this report demonstrates that a wellspring of talent and enormous human resource assets are to be found within our own communities. As demonstrated in the stories in these profiles, people with disabilities are abundantly capable of meeting a range of employment situations and helping any firm be competitive and profitable. By training and hiring this talented resource, with the assistance of trusted partners in the community, employers can sharpen their competitive edge.

The profiles in this report document initiatives to employ people with disabilities driven by active, engaged employers that have found it advantageous to collaborate with trusted organizations to understand their business needs, and assist them in finding the right talent at the right time. The report finds that:

- These profiles involve an impressive list of America's leading companies and equally impressive nonprofit and public agencies;
- These employers respond to a business case, and their partners understand this dynamic; and
- These employers are motivated, first and foremost, by a need for qualified and reliable employees, and their partners understand and respond to that need.

Conclusion: A Story of Mutual Success for Employers and People with Disabilities

In each of the cases profiled, employers receive assistance from one or more organizations acting collaboratively that help the employers to recruit, hire, train, and support employees with disabilities. These organizations, whether acting singularly or as a network, address fears employers have about needing to arrange and coordinate services and supports from organizations and systems whose mission it is to help people with disabilities get to work and keep working. In most cases, these efforts evolve into full, collaborative partnerships. Simply put, the broad range of employers in this report want to recruit employees with disabilities and the collaborations supporting these initiatives have provided a range of needed services and supports that make it easier for them to do so. There is a will and a way. The profiles present successful strategies for fully including people with disabilities in America's workforce. The profiles highlight important lessons for policymakers, practitioners, and employers. These are presented through four *Ready and Able* findings.

- **Employers respond to a business case for employing people with disabilities**

The profiles show a broad range of employers and employment arrangements that have demonstrated that hiring people with disabilities brings value and productivity to the workplace, and contributes to a firm's bottom line. Employers' appreciation of the value of employees with disabilities, including the types of jobs that they can do, grows with experience. Further, employers report that the accommodations made for people with disabilities benefit all workers. People with disabilities are as much a part of America's talent pipeline as any worker without a disability. The experiences noted in these profiles only confirm this conclusion.

- **Innovative collaborations with and between workforce-supplying organizations enable employer efforts to recruit, hire, train, and support employees with disabilities**

The profiles show that partnerships and collaborations between trusted partners are important to achieving employment gains for people with disabilities. The report shows varied types of collaborations and partnership arrangements that work with employers to recruit, hire, train, and support people. Some are created to support a single company and some serve multiple firms. Some are coordinated by a broad range of entities, including service providers, business associations, school systems, universities, and staffing companies. Other entities foster new collaborations based on employer needs. A frequent refrain heard from the employers interviewed was "we couldn't have done it without them."

- **Collaborations ensure that workers are qualified and productive**

The profiles show partner organizations handling screening for employers to assure that qualified applicants meet employer needs, and public, nonprofit, and for-profit organizations work side by side with employers to mutually develop training programs to teach people with disabilities the skills for jobs and positions in need by employers. In addition, the profiles highlight the benefits of providing people with disabilities with

Conclusion: A Story of Mutual Success for Employers and People with Disabilities

opportunities for trying out jobs through vehicles such as internships. The feedback from employers indicates that employees with disabilities meet or exceed the performance of co-workers who do not have a disability.

■ **Successful collaborations nurture and reward continuous leadership**

The profiles highlight “champions” from employers who set expectations and who either had (or developed) a commitment to diversity and disability employment goals and who reached out to organizations for assistance. Likewise, each of the collaborations has a coordinator and a group of leaders who responded to the opportunity to meet employer needs through the employment of people with disabilities.

Implications for the Future

This study concludes that the future is bright, but challenging, for the expansion of employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Current strategies in disability employment, workforce development, and economic development systems must change in order to better incentivize, support, and sustain employers and job seekers in these opportunities. A core element of state and community efforts to employ people with disabilities should be the establishment of partnerships and collaborations between disability service organizations, the workforce development system (including employment and training entities and postsecondary institutions), business-serving associations, and economic development agencies. A key question to ask is: How will your organization respond if an employer such as Walgreens calls?

For State and Local Policymakers:

- Develop strategies for proactively reaching out to employers and responding to employers who want assistance in the recruitment of employees with disabilities. These strategies should look at the situation from the *employer point of view* and make it *easy* for the employer to work with the public sector and provider organizations.
- Make workforce training programs more universal and integrated, with inclusive access and services that benefit job seekers with a wide range of learning styles, languages, educational levels, and abilities.

For Disability Service and Workforce Development Organizations:

- Develop strategies such as co-operative education, internships, and apprenticeships that give employers experience employing people with disabilities and that can serve as a vehicle to better prepare people with disabilities for skilled, career ladder positions.

Conclusion: A Story of Mutual Success for Employers and People with Disabilities

- Foster collaborative relationships among workforce-supplying organizations (e.g., public agencies, nonprofit organizations, K-12 schools, and postsecondary institutions) that make it easier for employers or employer organizations to work with publicly funded programs.

For Business-Serving Organizations and Employers:

- Recognize that people with disabilities can be a valuable resource to meet employer needs for reliable, skilled employees. The broad range of employers that benefit from the collaborations covered in this report believe they are getting a “leg up” on their competitors by recruiting people with disabilities to meet their workforce needs.
- Look to engage in partnerships with responsive workforce development, disability service organizations, and other agencies to recruit, hire, train, retain, and support employees with disabilities.

Reader's Guide to Terms and Governmental Systems Used in this Report

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) - The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 prohibits public and private employers, employment agencies, and labor unions from discriminating against qualified individuals with disabilities. The ADA covers employers with 15 or more employees and includes all employment activities such as hiring, firing, advancement, and compensation. Source: <http://www.ada.gov>

Autism - One of a group of serious developmental problems called autism spectrum disorders that appear in early childhood, usually before age three. Though symptoms and severity vary, autism disorders affect a person's ability to communicate and interact with others. Source: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/autism/DS00348>

Braided Funding - The access and coordination of funding from multiple sources to support a comprehensive employment supports plan for a job seeker with a disability.

Customized Employment - Individualizing the employment relationship between employees and employers in ways that meet the needs of both. It is based on an individualized determination of the strengths, needs, and interests of the person with a disability and is also designed to meet the specific needs of the employer. It may include supported employment, individualized job development, and job carving and restructuring. Source: <http://www.dol.gov/odep/>

Disability Program Navigators - The Disability Program Navigator initiative was developed and funded jointly by the U.S. Department of Labor and the Social Security Administration. The goal was to facilitate comprehensive employment services for job seekers with disabilities through the One-Stop Career Center system. Disability Program Navigator positions were funded at One-Stop Centers in 42 states, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Federal funding for Disability Program Navigators expired in June 2010. Some states have retained Disability Program Navigators using other sources of funding. Source: http://www.doleta.gov/disability/new_dpn_grants.cfm

Employment Supports - Services, benefits, policies, tools, and equipment that allow people to obtain and maintain employment. Supports can vary, but examples include transportation, child care, access to health care, technology, and flexible work schedules. Source: http://www.dol.gov/odep/categories/employment_supports/

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) - Requires public schools to make a free appropriate public education available to all eligible children with disabilities. Public schools must utilize a team of knowledgeable persons to create and follow an Individualized Education Program that meets the needs of each disabled student. Source: <http://www.ada.gov/cguide.htm#anchor65310>

Individualized Education Program (IEP) - Also referred to as an Individualized Education Plan, the IEP is a highly customized plan of action created for each child with a disability that guides the delivery of special education supports and services in order to help the student be involved in, and progress in, the general curriculum. Public schools are required to facilitate the process and include parents, teachers, and appropriate agency representatives throughout. Source: <http://www.ed.gov/parents/needs/speced/iepguide/index.html>

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities - A diverse group of severe chronic conditions that are manifested by mental or physical impairments. People with intellectual or developmental disabilities have challenges with major life activities such as language, mobility, learning, self-help, and independent living. Developmental disabilities begin anytime during development up to 22 years of age and usually last throughout a person's lifetime. Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/dd/default.htm>

Internship - A work program, paid or unpaid, that allows a student to gain practical knowledge through supervised experience in a particular field.

Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) - Administered by the Federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), provides money to states to modify their health care and other service delivery systems to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities who want to work. The goal of the program is to support people with disabilities in securing and sustaining competitive employment in an integrated setting.

Medicaid Waiver - The Social Security Act authorizes multiple waiver and demonstration authorities to allow states flexibility in operating Medicaid programs. Waivers can be approved under three major categories: projects that test policy innovations, managed care delivery system implementation, and long-term care service delivery in a community setting as an alternative to an institutional setting. Many community services programs for people with disabilities are funded through Medicaid waivers. CMS administers the waiver and demonstration programs. Source: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MedicaidStWaivProgDemoPGI/>

NISH - A national nonprofit agency whose mission is to create employment opportunities for people with severe disabilities. Opportunities for employment are created by helping nonprofit agencies secure federal contracts to provide quality goods and services at fair market prices to government agencies. Source: <http://www.nish.org>

Preferred Source Programs - Programs at the federal and state levels refer to preferences given on designated government contracts for goods and services to community agencies that employ skilled individuals with disabilities.

Provider - An organization or agency that provides supports and services to people with disabilities.

Sector Strategy - Workforce initiatives focused on one target industry in a specific geographic region or with several industry sectors. They are designed and implemented by a range of institutions and groups working collaboratively, including community organizations, business and industry groups, Workforce Investment Boards, One-Stop Career Centers, and others. Source: The Aspen Institute, *Sector Strategies in Brief* (Washington, D.C., November 2007).

Special Education - Curriculum and instruction designed to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. Instruction may be conducted in the classroom or other locations as required and may include traditional instruction as well as speech or other services needed to achieve educational goals. Source: <http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view/p/,root,regs,300,A,300%252E39>

Supported Employment - Assistance such as job coaching, transportation, assistive technology, and specialized job training that enables individuals with significant disabilities to obtain and retain employment. Supported employment facilitates competitive work in integrated work settings for individuals with significant disabilities for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred, and who, because of the nature and severity of their disability, need ongoing support services in order to perform their job. Source: <http://www.dol.gov/odep/archives/fact/supportd.htm>

Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Program (WIPA) - Provides supports to Social Security Administration beneficiaries who have disabilities on job placement, benefits planning, and career development. WIPA is staffed with Community Work Incentive Coordinators who provide information on benefits and referrals to an array of services such as work incentives programs and vocational rehabilitation services. Source: <http://www.ssa.gov/work/wipafactsheet.html>

System Summaries

Department of Veteran's Affairs, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) - The VR&E program provides vocational rehabilitation services for veterans who have a service-connected disability. A vocational rehabilitation counselor determines whether a veteran has an employment handicap based on the results of the comprehensive evaluation. Entitlement to services is established if the veteran is within the 12-year period of eligibility and 20% or greater service-connected disability rating and an employment handicap. The outcome of these services lead to suitable employment consistent with aptitudes and interests, or achieving independence in daily living. VR&E provides additional services, including educational and vocational counseling for eligible service members and their dependents. VR&E also developed a Web site (<http://www.VetSuccess.gov>), which creates a vehicle for VR&E partners — organizations with a commitment to hire disabled veterans — to link to disabled veterans seeking employment.

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Systems - Known in some states as Departments or Divisions of Developmental Disabilities or Mental Retardation, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities service systems are state agencies that provide services for individuals with disabilities that include intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and traumatic brain injuries occurring in the developmental years. Programs provide a range of residential, day, and employment services and supports. Employment supports are typically offered through contracts with community agencies, often in conjunction with vocational rehabilitation-funded services. State services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are primarily offered through a combination of state and Medicaid funding.

Medicaid - A federal health care program for individuals and families with low incomes, including many people with disabilities. The Federal government, through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, retains oversight responsibility for Medicaid but each state administers its own program. The cost of Medicaid services to eligible individuals is shared by the Federal government and the states. States may also choose from a list of optional services authorized under Title XIX of the Social Security Act. Medicaid long-term care services through Home and Community-Based Waivers provide supports for eligible people with disabilities to live and work in the community. The federal government and each state share in the cost of furnishing Medicaid services to eligible individuals. Medicaid is an entitlement program, meaning that states must enroll all persons who meet the state's eligibility criteria and provide Medicaid services to every eligible individual who requires them. While each state Medicaid program is different, many programs include provisions to enable people with disabilities, even if they are gainfully employed, to qualify for Medicaid. Source: <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/info/medicare-medicaid/>

Medicare - A federal health insurance program that pays for hospital, medical care, and prescription drugs for people age 65 and older, and people with certain disabilities. Medicare is administered directly by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and funded by payroll taxes through the Federal Insurance Contributions Act. To qualify for Medicare, a person must be eligible for Social Security benefits with at least 10 years of payments contributed into the system. People with disabilities receiving Social Security Disability Insurance benefits are eligible to receive Medicare after receiving benefits for 24 months. Some people with disabilities who are spouses, dependents, or survivors of Social Security recipients are eligible for Medicare. Source: <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/info/medicare-medicaid/>

One-Stop Career Centers - Designed to provide a full range of assistance to job seekers under one roof. Established under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, offer training referrals, career counseling, job listings, and similar employment-related services. Customers can visit a center in person or connect to the center's information through computer or kiosk remote access. The One-Stop system is coordinated by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration. Source: <http://www.careeronestop.org>

Social Security Administration - Provides a range of benefits and supports for individuals with disabilities. Social Security Disability Insurance provides cash payments for those who had worked previously and paid Social Security taxes before becoming disabled. Alternately, Supplemental Security Income provides cash benefits to disabled individuals qualified by an asset and income means test. Working-age recipients of both programs are encouraged to access work incentives specifically designed to help recipients gain and maintain employment. Counseling on the use of work incentives and the effect of work on benefits is provided by the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance program. The various incentive programs fall into two major categories: exclusion of income or assets and recovery of employment expenses. The exclusion of certain income or assets allows the individual to earn wages and accumulate assets over the means-tested allowance while maintaining benefits in order to encourage employment or personal investment in a future business plan. Expense recovery programs offer the individual the ability to make purchases such as equipment, services, or building modifications that support their plan for employment.

Special Education - All public school students with disabilities are entitled to free, appropriate education that prepares them for higher education, employment, and independent living. This mandate was created in 1975 by PL 94-142, Education of All Handicapped Children Act, and is now codified in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It applies to any student with a doctor-certified disability, either medical or psychological. In addition to special education, transitional services are mandated that support the student's progress toward appropriate post-school activities. The mandated Individualized Education Plan (IEP) documents how each particular combination of instruction and life experiences will translate the individual student's interests, strengths, and goals into achievement of post-school goals. Public schools often contract with community rehabilitation providers to allow student access to experiences required to highlight opportunities available and to provide customized instruction required to support students' educational, vocational, or independent living goals.

State Mental Health Service Systems - Known in some states as Departments or Divisions of Mental Health, offer a diverse range of programs and services to remediate the symptoms of mental illness and to assist people in the recovery by providing targeted rehabilitation in the following areas: supported employment, illness and management recovery, assertive community treatment, integrated dual disorders treatment (chemical health), and family psychoeducation. Eligibility for mental health services varies from state to state, but generally conform to the federal definition of a serious mental illness coupled with a functional need for services. Mental health services are supported by a number of funding streams, including a federal Block Grant program, Medicaid, state appropriations, county or regional taxes and funds, and local provider fundraising. States administer programs for people with mental illness in widely varying ways, including direct care, block grants to regional entities, and direct grants to providers.

State Vocational Rehabilitation Programs - The Rehabilitation Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Education provides Title 1 formula grants to vocational rehabilitation agencies in each state to provide employment-related services to individuals with disabilities. Eligible individuals must: have a physical or mental disability that causes a substantial

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barrier to obtaining and retaining employment, and have a reasonable chance of obtaining employment through vocational rehabilitation services. Vocational rehabilitation agencies provide a broad range of supports, including counseling, medical and psychological services, job training, and individualized services. Some vocational rehabilitation services are provided through contracts with community agencies known as Community Rehabilitation Providers.

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Appendix: List of Interviews

The authors would like to thank the following individuals from the NTAR Leadership Center's National Research Advisory Panel who participated as early external reviewers of this report and provided helpful feedback: Kate Brady, Employment Policy and Programming Director at the Georgia Office of Developmental Disabilities; Elaine Katz, Vice President of Grant Programs and Special Initiatives at the Kessler Foundation; Dr. Christopher King, Director of the Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources at the University of Texas at Austin; Dr. David Mank, Director of the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community; and Steve Miranda, Chief Human Resource and Strategic Planning Office at the Society for Human Resource Management.

The authors would also like to thank the following individuals who participated in this research and contributed to the richness and depth of the profiles contained in this report:

Chapter 1

Walgreens Profile. Thanks to Deb Russell, Manager, Outreach and Employee Services, Walgreens; Angela Mackey, Career Outreach Coordinator, Walgreens Anderson Distribution Center; Dale Thompson, Executive Director, Anderson County Special Needs Board; Joe Wendover, Career Outreach Coordinator, Walgreens Connecticut Distribution Center; Leslie Waite; Brenda Moore; John Halliday; and Carla Gaouette.

Lockheed Martin Profile. Thanks to Christine Neigh, Director, Equal Opportunity Programs, Lockheed Martin Corporation; Esteria Johnson, Chief Learning Consultant, Lockheed Martin Information Systems and Global Services; and Vernon Ross, Director of Learning and Development, Lockheed Martin Information Systems and Global Services.

Chapter 2

Jewish Vocational Service (JVS) and Financial Services Industry Profile. Thanks to those at the International Association of JVS: Lucy Klain, National Projects Director; at the JVS-Los Angeles affiliate: Claudia Finkel, Chief Operating Officer; Jay Soloway, Director of Career and Business Services; and Lisa Meadows, Manager, BankWork\$, Customer Service Training and Employment Program; at the JVS-San Francisco affiliate: John Halpin, Deputy Director of Programs; Brandi Mancato, JobLink Program Coordinator; Mike Wetzell, Program Development Manager; and banking industry representative Mark Kelsey, Vice President, Wells Fargo; at the JVS MetroWest New Jersey affiliate: Dr. Leonard C. Schneider, Executive Director; Nancy T. Fisher, Director, Education and Training; Peggy Himsl, Associate Director of Rehabilitation Services; Ivan Schragen, Project Coordinator; and banking industry representative Jacqueline Ardito, former Human Resources Manager, Sovereign Bank.

Chapter 3

GoodTemps Profile. Thanks to those at the Goodwill Industries of Greater New York and New Jersey: David Schoch, Senior Vice President; Nerieqa N. Williams, Intake Specialist; Gale Fisher, Coordinator; at Goodwill International: Brad Turner-Little, Director of Workforce Development; Cheri Joseph, National Staffing Services Specialist; at referral agencies: Arnold Dorin, Regional Marketing Coordinator, New York State Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities; representing business clients: Ross Clark, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; and Floyd Nesse at ACCSES New Jersey.

Manpower Inc. Profile. Thanks to Martha Artiles, Chief Diversity Officer, Manpower Corporation; Mary Stewart, Communications Professional-Diversity, Manpower Corporation; Jeff Parker, Regional Director, Manpower Corporation; Leah Rhule, Executive Director, New Mexico Business Leadership Network; and Lawrence Rael, Executive Director, Middle Rio Grande Council of Governments.

Chapter 4

Emerging Leaders and the National Council on Disability Profile. Thanks to Lana Smart, Sean Cruse, Meredith DeDona, and Felipe Botero.

Career Opportunities for Students with Disabilities Profile. Thanks to Alan Muir, Executive Director, Career Opportunities for Students with Disabilities, University of Tennessee; Katherine McCrary, Vice President, Sun Trust Bank; Jody Hestand, Diversity Recruiter, Walmart, Inc.; Jerry Kirby, Office of University Relations, Lockheed Martin Corporation; Barbara Batson, Director of Career Services, University of Arkansas; Susann Heft-Sears, Disability Specialist, University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign; and Meriah Nichols, Career Counselor, University of California Berkeley.

Lime Connect Profile. Thanks to Susan Lang, Executive Director, Lime Connect; David Nail, President, EnAble; Emily Roushy, Talent Acquisition, PepsiCo; Jenna Curtis and Claire McGoldrick, Recruiters, Target Corporation; and Paula Quinn, University Programs, Google.

Chapter 5

New Bedford Chamber of Commerce Profile. Thanks to Jim Mathes, Phil Tully, Joanne Rego, Roy Nascimento, Shawn O'Hara, Matt Morrissey, Bob Gaspar, Dorothy Cox, and Charles Murphy.

Pittsburgh Start on Success Profile. Thanks to Cori DiBiase, former Director, SOS Programs, National Organization on Disability; Ashley McFall, SOS Transition Facilitator/Coordinator, Pittsburgh Public Schools; Crystal Evans, Transition Facilitator, Pittsburgh Public Schools; Ellen Estomin, Executive Director, Program for Students with Exceptionalities, Pittsburgh Public Schools; Marci Katona, Assistant District Administrator, Office of Vocational

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Rehabilitation; Courtney Naugle, Counselor, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation; Lori Ferguson, Director of Support Services, Allegheny General Hospital; Stephanie Greenleaf, Northside Leadership Conference; Lauren Catarinella, Department of Housing and Food Services, University of Pittsburgh; Tricia Crowley, Human Resources Manager, Sodexo Corporation; Rachel Hills, Manager, Cathedral Café, Sodexo Corporation; Ann Franks, Office of Institutional Advancement, University of Pittsburgh; and John Wilds, Director, Office of Governmental and Community Relations, University of Pittsburgh.

Project SEARCH, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Profile. Thanks to Erin Riehle, Susan Franer, and Greg Lynch at Cincinnati Children's Hospital, and at Riverview Medical Center in Red Bank, New Jersey: Beth Mulroy, Jessica Short, Sarah Mullings, and Amy Ilaria.

Chapter 6

***disabilityworks* Profile.** Thanks to those at *disabilityworks*, including Karen McCulloh, former Executive Director; Joe Chiappetta, Managing Director, Chicagoland Provider Leadership Network; Selima Ani, Managing Director, Chicagoland Business Leadership Network; Jonathan Wheat, Managing Director, Special Projects; Pepper Curington, *disabilityworks* Resource Coordinator; Linda Sullivan, *disabilityworks* Resource Coordinator; Josh Scanlon, Executive Assistant; and Fatiyah Abimbola, *disabilityworks* TechWorks intern; at the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce: Gerald J. Roper, President and CEO; representing the employer community: Jana Schreuder, Senior Vice President, Worldwide Operations and Technology, Northern Trust Corporation; Kip Kelley, Regional Managing Director, Aon Corporation; Robye Smith, Vice President, Senior Diversity Consultant, Harris Bank and Chicagoland Business Leadership Network co-chair; Matt Horton, Store Manager, Walgreens; at the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity: Therese McMahan, Deputy Director, Bureau of Workforce Development; Lisa Jones, Workforce Investment Act Policy Manager; Bill Sinwell, Disability Services Specialist; representing the Chicago Mayor's Office of People with Disabilities: Karen Tamley, Commissioner; Joe Albritton, Deputy Commissioner; Carolyn Jones, Assistant Commissioner; and Health Care Initiative Consultant Kathy Tosh, DCEO Consultant on the Critical Skills Shortage Initiative in Health Care.

Note: A member of the NTAR Leadership Center research team attended the *disabilityworks* Business Leadership Advisory Board of Directors meeting on July 8, 2009. The meeting was chaired by Mark Schiller, CEO of Quaker Oats (a Division of PepsiCo) and was attended by Mark Wagner from Walgreens, Steve Russell from McDonald's, and Tom Prinske, a small business owner who has a disability. Also in attendance were Gerald Roper, Executive Director of the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, and two staff members from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

Oregon Business Leadership Network Profile. Thanks to Lucy Baker.



Founded in 2007 under a grant/contract with the Office of Disability Employment Policy at the U.S. Department of Labor, the NTAR Leadership Center's mission is to build capacity and leadership at the federal, state, and local levels to enable change across workforce development and disability-specific systems that will increase employment and economic self-sufficiency for adults with disabilities.



The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) provides national leadership on disability employment policy by developing and influencing the use of evidence-based disability employment policies and practices, building collaborative partnerships, and delivering authoritative and credible data on employment of people with disabilities.