



## Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP)

# PROVIDER TRANSFORMATION MANUAL

## Pilot Version

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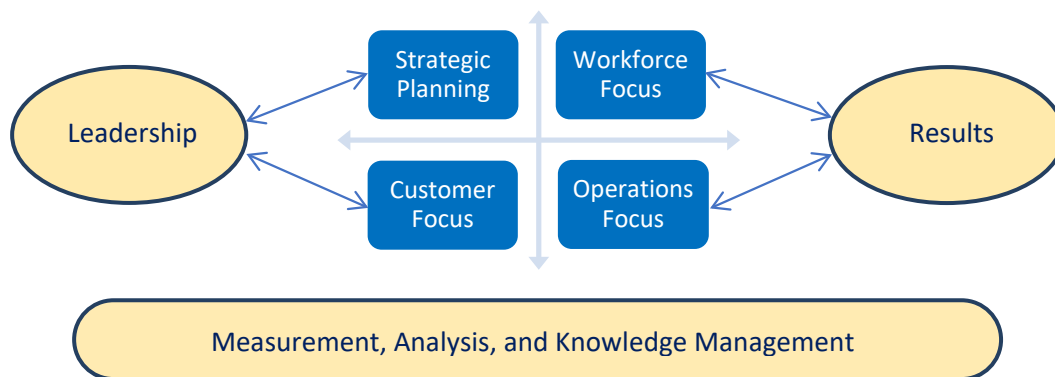
# Introduction

This manual has been created to capture learning from, and support the continued success of, the Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP), an initiative of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP).<sup>1</sup> The EFSLMP is a cross-disability, cross-systems change initiative providing a platform for multi-disciplinary state teams to focus on implementing **Employment First**<sup>2</sup> with fidelity through the alignment of policies, coordination of resources, and updating of service delivery models to facilitate increased integrated employment options for people with the most significant disabilities.

ODEP recognizes **Employment First** as a national movement providing a framework for systems change that is centered on the premise that all citizens, including individuals with complex disabilities, are capable of full participation in integrated employment and community life. ODEP defines **Employment First** as the expectation that public systems align policies, practices, and reimbursement structures to foster competitive integrated employment as the priority option in publicly-financed day and employment services for youth and adults with significant disabilities.

ODEP recognizes that the achievement of **Employment First** requires transformation of both public systems and service providers. To guide this two-pronged approach to Systems Change, ODEP has adopted the National Baldrige Model's Criteria for Performance Excellence [see Exhibit 1] which includes seven key elements: Leadership; Strategic Planning; Customer Focus; Workforce Focus; Operations Focus; Results; and Ongoing Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge.

Exhibit 1. National Baldrige Model's Criteria for Performance Excellence



Source: <http://www.nist.gov/baldrige>

To facilitate provider transformation using the Baldrige approach, ODEP has developed a set of *Criteria for Performance Excellence in Employment First Provider Transformation* [see Exhibit 2]. This provider transformation manual builds on the criteria that have been developed, offering significant, detailed information, advice and examples based on best practices for provider transformation developed through the

<sup>1</sup> This edition will be used as a pilot model. Our goal is to receive feedback over the course of the EFSLMP Community of Practice (CoP) webinar series throughout the rest of the year regarding the usefulness and applicability of the manual.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/EmploymentFirst.htm>



EFSLMP and derived from the experience and expertise of EFSLMP subject matter experts working on transformation with providers around the country.

Exhibit 2. Criteria in Performance Excellence in Employment First – Provider Transformation<sup>3</sup>

Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote ongoing professional development and mentoring of leaders within provider networks to cultivate a cadre of strong leadership capable and committed to the development of competitive, integrated employment outcomes and socioeconomic advancement for people with disabilities.</li> <li>Build in incentives for supporting, retaining, and rewarding “early adopters” of effective practices among staff.</li> </ul>
Strategic Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Infuse &amp; embed the State’s <i>Employment First</i> vision, goals, guiding principles, &amp; conceptual framework within the strategic planning processes, consistent with similar efforts undertaken across relevant State government agencies.</li> <li>Develop, disseminate, and make readily available the provision of effective practices that lead to competitive, integrated employment for individuals with disabilities, as well as benefits planning, financial capability, and economic advancement strategies for all clients.</li> <li>Develop operational agreements across various state publicly-financed systems and provider networks resulting in the alignment of policy, practice, and funding strategies to allow for a consistent focus on performance-based results.</li> </ul>
Customer Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey customers &amp; stakeholders regularly to understand level of satisfaction &amp; determine the areas of improvement needed.</li> <li>Review service coordination processes to determine whether key steps in the process could be strengthened in terms of being more focused on person-centered, individual strategies, and experiential informed choice.</li> <li>Expand and improve upon existing assessment processes to ensure a rich collection of data on the individual’s strengths, gifts, and preferences that can be used to leverage multiple options.</li> </ul>
Workforce Focus:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Realign organizational structure and standard operating procedures (SOPs) to allow the time, flexibility, and incentives required to develop professional staff in key areas critical to successful transformation.</li> <li>Ensure ongoing professional development, mentoring, coaching, and staff support promoting continued strengthening of skill sets critical for expanded business models.</li> <li>Optimize service time and ratio deployment for provision of long-term supports, crisis interventions, and new job starts within provider network.</li> <li>Consider incentives for staff to facilitate clear measurable performance outcomes for competitive, integrated employment and to effectively address individual and cultural resistance to change.</li> </ul>
Operations Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diversify funding streams to optimize available support for competitive, integrated employment services.</li> <li>Expand the provision of services to include a stronger focus on the dissemination of effective practices that result in competitive, integrated employment outcomes.</li> <li>Promote the modernization of operational processes including IT/electronic record-keeping and decentralized staffing models to successfully meet growing demand for the provision of competitive, integrated employment strategies.</li> <li>Consider reconfiguration of service management elements within provider organizations (including, but not limited to, communication, data collection, logistics, technology, transportation, billing systems, supervision, and customer satisfaction) and infusion of “lean management” techniques.</li> </ul>
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grow percentage of competitive, integrated employment placements over baseline, and capture length of time from start of service to placement.</li> <li>Coordinate employment efforts with other long-term supports (housing, transportation, natural supports) and benefits planning/work incentives.</li> <li>Survey customers &amp; stakeholders regularly to understand level of satisfaction &amp; determine the areas of improvement needed.</li> <li>Track staff development milestones, including training/TA received, credentials/certification completed, etc.</li> <li>Track impact of applying effective practices to internal daily operations and service approaches.</li> <li>Demonstrate cost-effectiveness of competitive, integrated employment supports through maximization of natural workplace supports, assistive technology, and job customization.</li> <li>Align policies, operational procedures, and funding to reflect adoption of effective practices and competitive, integrated employment service delivery.</li> </ul>
Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create shared performance-based outcomes &amp; corresponding metrics across various divisions of the organization to incentivize effective coordination of human &amp; technical resources &amp; collective action around pursuance of organizational strategic goals.</li> <li>Establish bench-marks from baseline data and collect high-impact, relevant data to help inform continued organizational restructuring, internal policy changes, operational practice updates, and development strategies.</li> <li>Translate high-impact knowledge through continued commitment to training, technical assistance, professional development and communities of practice.</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.leadcenter.org/system/files/resource/downloadable\\_version/Employment\\_First\\_Technical\\_Brief\\_\\_3\\_0.pdf](http://www.leadcenter.org/system/files/resource/downloadable_version/Employment_First_Technical_Brief__3_0.pdf)

The reader will note that the manual has been organized with individual modules that each focus on one element of the Baldrige model. In addition, modules on two other critical topics for success – bringing provider transformation to scale and being a mentor to other providers – are also included to round out this comprehensive manual. Readers can opt to use the manual as a comprehensive resource or to pull-out specific modules as they are needed during the process of transformation.

## More on the EFSLMP Approach to Provider Transformation

The EFSLMP has developed a unique approach to supporting provider transformation in a comprehensive way. The approach brings together the collective experiences of over thirty Subject Matter Experts from around the country, all of whom are either disability employment service providers themselves – who have shepherded

their organizations through a process of transformation - or integrated employment and community supports experts who have provided support, technical assistance and training to disability employment and day service providers from around the country who have been actively engaged in organizational transformation. ODEP's EFSLMP Subject Matter Experts are both, by definition and by design, an eclectic group of people with tremendous breadth of experiences and knowledge. This is particularly valuable in supporting provider transformation on a national scale because:

### **Transformation:**

It takes the desire to change, the determination to start, and the dedication to continue.

- Ben Timmis

### **Transformation:**

It isn't about improving, it's about re-thinking.

- Malcolm Gladwell

- No two providers' transformation process and circumstances are the same, even if providers may operate in the same state or locality;
- The nature of provider transformation has changed over time, both within particular states and nationally;
- Core best practices for successful provider transformation – practices that are considered “tried and true” among those who make this topic their life's work – can be implemented in many subtly different ways depending on a particular provider's circumstances and challenges;
- Effective mentoring relationships cannot be forced, and rely most heavily on “smart” matching of leaders and organizations who will “gel” in truly impactful ways;
- Communities of practice that bring together Subject Matter Experts and diverse providers on the path of organizational transformation can enhance learning, information exchange, mutual support structures and translation of knowledge.

The EFSLMP Provider Transformation Initiative brings together many experts with a deep historical perspective on provider transformation. This has greatly enhanced the project's ability to build on and further expand the historical knowledge base for provider transformation. In addition, one of the most important contributions of the EFSLMP Provider Transformation initiative has been to modernize, and recast as necessary, long-standing best practices into strategies that are geared toward the **current realities- both challenges and opportunities** facing traditional employment and day service providers across the country.

## The Case for Organizational Transformation: Why Do It and Why Now?

This manual's publication date is 2017—twenty-seven years after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. A quarter of a century ago, a very small number of community rehabilitation providers across the country, including some facility-based day service providers were engaged in organizational transformation. At the same time, federal supported employment capacity building grants were beginning to make a positive impact in many states, demonstrating the valuable outcomes that supported employment could bring to individuals with significant disabilities. Yet overall, there was not any sense that a major evolution in employment and daytime support services for people with disabilities was just around the corner.

And while it's true that the intervening years leading up to 2011 did not bring to scale, to the extent many had anticipated, the systemic momentum and best practices built in the early years of supported employment, it is hard for anyone to deny that in the past five years (2011-2016), an evolution in thinking has taken place across the field of disabilities that has set the stage for competitive integrated employment and integrated community supports to become the primary service models for transition-age youth and working-age adults with disabilities in every state. This broad-based evolution of thinking has been ushered in through a variety of different, but coinciding federal policy initiatives, state-level reforms, legal actions, and media coverage that collectively have begun to reshape public opinion. Among the most influential developments of the past five years are the following:

... in the past five years (2011-2016), an evolution in thinking has taken place across the field of disabilities that has set the stage for competitive integrated employment and integrated community supports to become the primary service models for transition-age youth and working-age adults with disabilities in every state.

- The June 2011 Statement of the **Department of Justice** on Enforcement of the Integration Mandate of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and *Olmstead v. L.C.* This Statement<sup>4</sup> established for the first time, an expectation that compliance with the ADA and *Olmstead* required states to have an effective working plan to address “individuals spending their days in sheltered workshops or segregated day programs” and which “must have demonstrated success in actually moving individuals to integrated settings in accordance with the plan.” Most of the *Olmstead* lawsuits and settlement agreements that came after this Statement have had a strong focus (and in the cases of Oregon and Rhode Island, an exclusive focus) on transitioning publicly funded state systems away from segregated employment and day services to individualized supported employment and integrated community supports.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See [https://www.ada.gov/olmstead/q&a\\_olmstead.htm](https://www.ada.gov/olmstead/q&a_olmstead.htm)

<sup>5</sup> See U.S. Department of Justice settlement agreements with the states of Georgia, Delaware, North Carolina, and Virginia, as well as the settlement agreement with the state of Oregon and the consent decree with the state of Rhode Island. See <https://www.ada.gov/olmstead/> for more information.

- The September 2011 Informational Bulletin<sup>6</sup> released by the **Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)** which provided strong guidance regarding employment and employment-related services in Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Waivers.<sup>7</sup> This guidance underscores CMS’s commitment to the importance of competitive integrated employment and self-employment opportunities for waiver participants. The guidance is now part of the Technical Guide states must follow in creating, renewing or amending HCBS Waivers, and it contains a strong expectation from CMS that states will use HCBS Waivers to increase competitive integrated employment opportunities and meaningful community integration for HCBS Waiver participants with disabilities.
- The August 2012 report by the **National Council on Disability**, a federal agency, calling for a phase out of sub-minimum wage.<sup>8</sup> This report both preceded and followed local, state and national media coverage of the use of sub-minimum wage in the employment of people with disabilities. Meanwhile, legislation to phase out and end the use of Section 14(c) special minimum wage has been introduced multiple times in **Congress**, first in October of 2011, then in February of 2013 and most recently, in January of 2015. The current House bill (HR 188) has 69 co-sponsors from both sides of the aisle, as of June, 2016, and the Senate companion (S. 2001) is bipartisan as well. Additionally, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), passed in July of 2014, established an **Advisory Committee to the U.S. Department of Labor** charged in part with making recommendations regarding the future of Section 14(c). WIOA also introduced restrictions on the ability of employers to pay youth a sub-minimum wage and new requirements for state vocational rehabilitation agencies to conduct annual outreach to all state residents with disabilities being paid sub-minimum wage to offer services that would allow these individuals to obtain competitive integrated employment paying at least minimum wage. And most recently, in March of 2016, the **AbilityOne Commission** issued a Declaration in support of minimum wage for all people who are blind or have significant disabilities.<sup>9</sup>
- The September 2013 promulgation of a new rule, by the **U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs**, governing the implementation of Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act which prohibits federal contractors and subcontractors from discriminating in employment against individuals with disabilities and requires these employers to take affirmative action to recruit, hire, promote, and retain individuals with disabilities. The rule strengthens the affirmative action provisions of the regulations, requiring increased efforts by contractors to recruit and hire people with disabilities, and improve job opportunities for individuals with disabilities.
- The February 2014 Executive Order 13658, signed by **President Barack Obama**, “Establishing a Minimum Wage for Contractors,” to raise the minimum wage to \$10.10 for all workers on Federal construction and service contracts, including all workers with disabilities whether covered under the Section 14(c) special minimum wage certificate program or not.

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<sup>6</sup> See <https://downloads.cms.gov/cmsgov/archived-downloads/CMCSBulletins/downloads/CIB-9-16-11.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Medicaid HCBS Waivers first became available in 1983 when Congress added section 1915(c) to the Social Security Act, giving States the option to receive a waiver of Medicaid rules governing institutional care. Medicaid HCBS Waivers allow a state to offer services and supports to people with disabilities, otherwise qualified for institutional care, in the community.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ncd.gov/publications/2012/August232012>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.abilityone.gov/commission/documents/US%20AbilityOne%20Commission%20Declaration%2018March2016%20Final.pdf>

- The March 2014 promulgation of the Medicaid Home and Community-Based Settings Rule by the **Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)** which requires all HCBS settings eligible for Medicaid funding to provide opportunities for individuals to pursue employment, work in competitive integrated settings, and engage in community life. The rule further requires all HCBS settings eligible for Medicaid funding to be integrated in, and support full access to, the greater community. And finally, the rule establishes a requirement that states must offer HCBS participants an opportunity to receive HCBS services in non-disability-specific settings, thus requiring states to develop and offer integrated prevocational and day habilitation service models if the state had only facility-based prevocational and day habilitation service options prior to the implementation of the rule.<sup>10</sup>
- The July 2014 passage into law of the **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**, raising expectations across state workforce and vocational rehabilitation systems that competitive integrated employment be the prioritized investment and outcome for transition-age youth and adults with disabilities. WIOA ushered in the expectation that state workforce system programs achieve true programmatic accessibility for individuals with disabilities, while also introducing new requirements for state vocational rehabilitation agencies to provide pre-employment transition services to youth with disabilities enrolled in secondary education.
- The May 2016 promulgation of new Medicaid Managed Care Rules by the **Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)** which requires states and managed care organizations to ensure access to, and supports for, competitive integrated employment in Medicaid Managed Long-Term Services and Supports programs that serve persons with disabilities. Prior to the issuance of these rules, numerous states moving to Medicaid Managed Care had built in expectations for increasing competitive integrated employment outcomes for enrollees with disabilities.

Throughout this time, the country has also seen an array of federally funded grant and technical assistance initiatives aimed at increasing competitive integrated employment opportunities for transition-age youth and adults with disabilities, including an emphasis on facilitating systems change and implementing policies consistent with **Employment First**. In addition to EFSLMP, a number of other federally funded grant and technical assistance initiatives include a focus on supporting provider transformation by extending mentoring, training, technical assistance and other key support strategies to a growing number of disability service providers across the country that are seeking such supports to evolve their organization’s services to align with changing expectations and opportunities.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.cms.gov/Newsroom/MediaReleaseDatabase/Fact-sheets/2014-Fact-sheets-items/2014-01-10-2.html>

At the same time, our nation's economy is beginning to recover from one of the most serious and long-standing recessions in history. Coupled with this is the stark reality that our workforce is fundamentally changing. With baby boomers now retiring in record numbers, most every industry and economic sector is projecting major workforce shortages in the decades to come. And there is a recognition that American workers are changing as well, with the millennials ushering in expectations for a better work-life balance and greater workplace flexibility. As employers of all kinds respond to these trends, there is a groundswell of interest in non-traditional labor pools and groups that are untapped and/or underrepresented in the current labor market, with individuals with disabilities being a key part of these groups. Further, there is growing interest in progressive and innovative approaches to human resource (talent) management, including Customized Employment<sup>11</sup> and the concept of a Teachable Fit<sup>12</sup> to bridge the divide between employers and the new face of America's modern workforce. These approaches not only make room for workers with disabilities but endorse fundamental strategies that pave the way for increased hiring of workers with all kinds of disabilities into competitive integrated employment situations.

Yet at the end of the day, what appears to be moving more and more disability service provider organizations to embrace sustained organizational transformation is the recognition of the benefits and possibilities that transformation brings to the people with disabilities each of these organizations serves.

For several decades, we have seen the emergence of a research and evidence base for competitive integrated employment services, thus enabling disability service providers to fill their toolboxes with a variety of innovative and "proven to work" strategies for facilitating competitive integrated employment outcomes for individuals with various types of significant disabilities. In the last decade, research addressing the connection between competitive integrated employment and positive health and mental health outcomes has increased, as has research demonstrating the cost-effectiveness of public investments in supported employment.

As federal and state funders of disability services increase emphasis on integrated service provision and competitive integrated employment services in particular, providers of more traditional employment and day services are no doubt feeling the pressure to participate in this evolution and bring their organizations and practices into full alignment with the many developments discussed above that have come about in rapid succession in recent years. Yet at the end of the day, what appears to be moving more and more traditional employment and day service provider organizations to embrace sustained organizational transformation is the recognition of the benefits and possibilities that transformation brings to the people with disabilities each of these organizations serves. What's more, organizations embracing transformation are also finding that staff at all levels of the organization are similarly positively affected, finding new energy, passion and satisfaction in doing new work that is changing their roles and their impact on the people with disabilities they support and

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<sup>11</sup> [https://www.accenture.com/t20150824T010002\\_\\_w\\_/us-en/\\_acnmedia/Accenture/Conversion-Assets/DotCom/Documents/Global/PDF/Strategy\\_7/Accenture-Trends-Reshaping-HR-Workforce-One.pdf](https://www.accenture.com/t20150824T010002__w_/us-en/_acnmedia/Accenture/Conversion-Assets/DotCom/Documents/Global/PDF/Strategy_7/Accenture-Trends-Reshaping-HR-Workforce-One.pdf) and [https://www.dol.gov/odep/documents/vignette\\_v3\\_blue\\_508\\_final.pdf](https://www.dol.gov/odep/documents/vignette_v3_blue_508_final.pdf) For more information on Customized Employment, also see: <https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/CustomizedEmployment.htm> and <http://www.leadcenter.org/customized-employment>

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.manpowergroup.com.au/documents/White-Papers/2010\\_Teachable-Fit-Framework.pdf](https://www.manpowergroup.com.au/documents/White-Papers/2010_Teachable-Fit-Framework.pdf)

their communities. As one thirty five-year veteran manager of employment services from a community rehabilitation provider in Wisconsin put it:

“When you have staff achieve an employment goal with someone, and you see the joy that they experience with that individual...and you have someone come into your office and say ‘Yes! I’m a working man now. I’m going to be a working man now!’ it really brings home to you why you are putting all of this effort into this.”<sup>13</sup>

And finally, it seems clear that organizations engaged in transformation are recognizing the positive benefits of this work on their reputation and standing in the wider community. They are finding support is increasing from the local business community and their traditional community supporters. They are also finding significantly increased support from their funding sources that are equally invested in their success. And they are finding that peer organizations, both from within the state and from other states, are now looking to them for advice, mentoring and technical assistance.

If these outcomes are the kinds of outcomes that resonate with you and your organization, then transformation is the right next step. This manual brings together in one place, the best strategies, tips, lessons learned and perspectives on provider transformation to help you and your organization get started, or if you have already started, to help you and your organization continue your efforts and ultimately achieve the best possible success with transformation.

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<sup>13</sup> To view a video on organizational transformation efforts in Wisconsin and the perspective of this and other community rehabilitation provider directors and managers, see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xd3qgUwLHbw>

# Module 1:

## Leadership and Setting the Tone for Change

### Key Terms

*Learning Organizations*

*Communities of Practice*

*Gap Analysis*

*Board of Directors*

*Organization Self-Assessment*

*Focus Groups*

*Historical Timelines*

*Transformation Team*

*Value Stream Mapping*



## Resources and References for Module 1- Leadership and Setting the Tone for Change

Resources	
Sample Organizational Self-Assessment Tools	
Organizational Self-Assessment Tool	Sasnett, G. 2017. Created for the Office of Disability Employment Policy, Employment First State Leadership State Mentoring Program. <a href="https://apps.econsys.com/ta-planner/resources/provider_transformation">https://apps.econsys.com/ta-planner/resources/provider_transformation</a>
Moving from segregation to integration: Organizational change strategies and outcomes	Rogan, P. 2007. In P. Wehman, K. Inge, W.G. Revell, & V. Brooke (Eds.). Real work for real pay: Inclusive employment for people with disabilities. Baltimore: Paul Brookes. <a href="https://apps.econsys.com/ta-planner/resources/provider_transformation">https://apps.econsys.com/ta-planner/resources/provider_transformation</a>
Organizational Change Technical Assistance Guide	Rinne, S., and Rogan, P. 2005. Indiana Employment Initiative, Center on Community Living and Careers. <a href="https://apps.econsys.com/ta-planner/resources/provider_transformation">https://apps.econsys.com/ta-planner/resources/provider_transformation</a>
Organizational Self-Assessment: A Tool to Assist Facility-Based Day and Prevocational Service Providers in Planning and Implementing an Organizational Transition to Community-Based Service Delivery with Integrated Employment as the Core Opportunity for All Working-Age Participants with Disabilities	Mills, L. 2013. Madison, WI: Moving To A Different Drum, LLC. <a href="https://apps.econsys.com/ta-planner/resources/provider_transformation">https://apps.econsys.com/ta-planner/resources/provider_transformation</a>
Sample Survey Tool	
Organizational Transformation Staff Survey Sample	2009. Created by Wisconsin Pathways to Independence Initiative for the Wisconsin CRP Rebalancing Initiative. Adapted from survey originally developed by Institute for Community Inclusion, UMass Boston. <a href="http://www.communityinclusion.org">www.communityinclusion.org</a>

## MODULE 1: Leadership and Setting the Tone for Change

Change can be challenging in any organization. Every community service provider agency has a history. Habits have been developed. Routines have been followed. Missions have been set and pursued. Staff and leadership have worked hard to accomplish goals. People have pride in the work they have done. The agency has been considered a success.

Now new and exciting employment strategies are being introduced and adopted that are changing the way we view community employment for people with disabilities. New options have opened for people with disabilities to be employed in competitive integrated jobs and recognized as full citizens of their communities. What an exciting time! Not only has this changed the way we think but it also impacts the way services are provided. Change is not just coming, it's here. Great, visionary leadership is needed to shepherd agencies into the future.

"In the end, it is important to remember that we cannot become what we need to be by remaining what we are."

-- Max De Pree

Times of change can be exciting and energizing but they can also be unsettling and frightening for people served by the agency, families and guardians, boards of directors and staff. Effective leadership in the change process is essential to make the shift as smooth as possible. Leadership will set the tone for the change. The attitude of leaders will affect the receptivity of stakeholders to change in either

a positive or negative manner. If the leadership presents the changes as burdensome, something the agency is being forced to do and generally undesirable, others will see it that way too. But if the leadership can project excitement and optimism about the possibilities, demonstrate a "can-do" approach, encourage inclusiveness and determination, even when the future is not absolutely clear, positive change can and will occur, no matter what obstacles are encountered.

### Some Key Areas of Focus for Leaders

- People supported – the people with disabilities who are receiving support are the most effected by transformation and should be included and actively involved in all aspects of the process
- Values, vision and mission – working with stakeholders to determine who you are as an agency, where you are going and how you will get there
- Outreach – reaching out to stakeholders in a planned and consistent manner to inform, educate and receive feedback about the changes within the agency.
- Communication and culture – providing information, making sure everyone knows the direction the agency is pursuing and why, being honest and building trust, not always having the answers but building a culture of optimism, determination, inclusiveness and teamwork.
- Planning - engaging stakeholders in the process of setting the course for the future based on the agency's values, vision and mission
- Partnering – developing partnerships with staff, families, board members, community employers, funders and other stakeholders to accomplish transformation goals. Everyone has something they can contribute, whether leads for jobs or training in the community, private fundraising opportunities or other community resource options.

- Celebrating success- keeping morale high by recognizing and rewarding accomplishments, and keeping a focus on where your agency is going rather than what you're leaving behind.
- Branding and marketing – guiding the development of branding for the agency that will better reflect its new identity. Marketing the new brand.
- Mentoring new leaders – building leadership from within the organization, providing them with the opportunities to lead throughout the change process, and mentoring them as they grow. They are the future of the agency and the ones who will carry the transformation forward.

Finally, though it can be personally very difficult, it is important for agency leaders to do some self-reflection about their role in the transformation process. You have to ask yourself if this transformation is something in which you can truly invest all of the effort, energy, and creativity that will be necessary for it to be a success. Transformation, though rewarding when you see the terrific results, is not easy and it does not happen quickly. And while you don't always have to be in the lead, because often other staff members will step up out of the ranks and drive the change, you do have to be able to embrace and support your agency's transformation. It takes courage, but at some point, you must ask yourself if you are the best person to lead this effort and if you find you are not, make the tough choice to step aside.

## Becoming a Learning Organization

Before an agency begins transformation, stakeholders need to have a clear idea of what it is transforming to. It is always good practice to stay informed about innovations and newly evolving strategies, but it is especially important during transformation. Individuals, staff and other stakeholders need to learn about what is possible and become inspired by the innovations that are occurring. Once interest and excitement is established the next step is to gain knowledge about new technologies and approaches and acquire the skills to implement them.

We gain knowledge and skills through exposure and practice. In a *learning organization*, a high value is placed on staff development and training; but learning organizations also understand that there are others among their stakeholders that would benefit from additional knowledge. Job seekers with disabilities need to know what new options are available to them. Family members need to understand the new approaches to competitive integrated employment that have become available. Members of boards of directors need to understand what is being proposed and how it may affect services and their responsibilities. And of course, staff in every position in the agency needs to gain a good understanding of both the philosophy behind new strategies and how they will be implemented.

### Key strategies to help stakeholders gain knowledge and skills

- Encourage and support attendance at key training conferences – not just leaders and supervisors, but people served; family members, board members and direct support professionals. A list of relevant conferences can be found in Module 3.
- Provide access to on-line and face to face training and webinars – While some trainings and webinars are provided for a fee, many others are offered at no cost. Webinars can be very effective in training, especially when groups view them together and discuss what they are learning.
- Develop the habit of sharing new information - In learning agencies staff develop the habit of seeking out new information and sharing what they learn. Articles, blogs, podcasts, videos and other

information should be circulated in the agency and opportunities to discuss content should be provided in staff meetings, board meetings and other forums.

- Participate in Communities of Practice (CoPs) – Participation in CoPs provides peer to peer support to agencies as they are in the transformation process. Sharing with peers can help staff learn new strategies and develop a sense of common mission with other agencies.
- Visiting other organizations that have successfully transformed and are now demonstrating exemplary practices can be very inspirational. These visits are highly effective in helping staff grasp how what they are learning can be put into action. In other words, seeing is believing. Agencies that are successful love to share their knowledge and experience.

St. John's Community Services took advantage of grant funding to pay for all their home office administrative staff to attend a national competitive integrated employment conference being held near their headquarters in Washington, DC. Different staff attended on alternate days to minimize costs. The objective was to increase the knowledge of *everyone* on staff about impending changes so that they could work cooperatively towards a commonly understood outcome.

## Convening a Transformation Team

No leader can make transformation occur alone. Teamwork is required to make change. Building a culture of teamwork will help engage stakeholders in the process, provide an opportunity for them to have input, feel invested, and to share the responsibility for planning and implementing change.

### Important things to consider when forming and using a Transformation Team

- Team Composition – The Transformation Team will be the guiding force in the transformation process. Thoughtful creation of this team is necessary to have the correct representation from across the organization. It is a good idea to have representation on the team from management as well as from people served and direct support professionals. Some agencies form several teams that work together to facilitate the transformation. In such cases, careful coordination and clear communication between the teams is essential.
- Delineating team responsibilities – team members should have specific responsibilities in the transformation planning and implementation process. People need responsibility to feel engaged and committed. One way to achieve accountability is to break down these responsibilities into specific action steps and timelines.
- Communicating with internal and external stakeholders – One of the chief roles of the Transformation Team is communication. Teams should have a communication plan that will delineate how information is going to be shared by the team and with whom it will be shared. Members should have specific responsibilities related to communication. Messages must be clear and consistent. Communication also should be two-way. That is, team members will have responsibility not only to carry messages to others but to receive and transmit message back to the team.

- Supporting your team – The team or teams will be effective if they are properly supported. Some preliminary training in team operation and facilitation can be useful. Logistical considerations must be made to accommodate member’s schedules and workloads. Participation is greater and more effective when meetings are scheduled well in advance, agendas are developed and followed, minutes are taken and made available to members and meetings are held in locations that are accessible to everyone. Note that when direct support professionals are included, it is very important that they be supported by their managers to participate. Managers should arrange for and assure staff coverage for participating direct support staff.

## Engaging Your Board of Directors from the Start

*Boards of directors* have the ultimate decision-making authority in agencies. The members of the board should be involved in the transformation process from the beginning. They must understand what you are proposing to change and why. Smart leadership will begin the education process with the Board as early as possible. The educational groundwork must be laid before the discussion of change occurs.

Board members typically have many questions and perhaps some concerns about organizational change to competitive integrated employment services. Some board members may not have the same depth of knowledge of the Employment First movement that staff has. Some may be invested in the agency as it has been. They may have raised money for buildings and equipment to provide employment services in facilities and like others in the agency, are proud of their accomplishments. Good leadership will help to guide the board’s understanding of the direction the agency hopes to go in the future, help them to see what is possible, and engage them in developing plans to get there.

### Some strategies to effectively engage boards

- Staff/board retreats – Staff and boards benefit from focused, uninterrupted time in a structured process that will allow both parties to learn together, discuss their hopes and anxieties, and plan for the future.
- Educational sessions as a part of routine board meetings – Staff presentations at meetings are not only helpful for board members, but it can challenge staff to refine their own thinking.
- Attendance at training sessions – It is a good strategy to invite board members to staff training sessions. If they can attend, they can learn along with staff and share what they learn with other board members.
- Attendance at governmental informational sessions – Attendance at government information sessions with provider agencies can help board members learn about expectations from funders first hand. They can gain additional insight into the direction your agency should be taking in response to funders’ priorities.
- Observations at other agencies – Joining staff as they visit other agencies can help board members visualize what you are trying to accomplish.
- Inviting a board member to spend time with an individual receiving services – Some board members may be very interested in spending time with and getting to know an individual who receives services at the agency. Such interactions may lead to mutually enjoyable relationships, and serve to bring the change efforts to life for both individuals.

*What about board members who continue to oppose our new direction?*

It is possible that some board members will be unable to embrace the new direction of the agency despite efforts to engage them and gain their support. The agency leader should have individual relationships with all board members and know who is supportive or not. He or she must work with supportive members to help opposed or reluctant members envision how the transformation will be beneficial to both individuals served and the agency. Time must be taken to address the concerns of these members and healthy debate is good. Ultimately it will be imperative to have a supportive board to move forward. As board membership turns over, agency leadership should support the board to recruit new members who will be knowledgeable and supportive.

## Conducting a Preliminary Gap Analysis

As the team is being exposed to new thinking and approaches to competitive integrated employment, the leadership should begin a process by which the team begins to identify best practices they would like to adopt. A description of some of these best practices is included in Modules 3 and 5. This process helps the agency to formulate a vision of where they want to be and what they want to become as they transform. This is the beginning of the visioning process that will be discussed in greater detail later in this module.

After the team has identified the best practices they would like to adopt, it is time to take an initial look at some of the agency's current practices. This activity helps identify the gaps between where the agency is and where it wants to be. A more in-depth analysis which is discussed elsewhere in this module should also occur. That analysis will surface a wealth of additional information about the agency's status and all of the elements of transformation that should be addressed. However, an initial "gap analysis" will set the stage for change by helping everyone to have a mental picture of the ideal compared to present performance.

An example of best practice they may learn about and want to adopt:

- Competitive integrated employment is an expectation for everyone supported by the agency and everyone has an employment goal and an employment plan.

An example of a current practice they may have:

- Competitive integrated employment is targeted only to people who have been identified as "job ready" and only these individuals have employment goals or employment plans.

The gap analysis would identify the absence of the expectation of employment for everyone served and therefore the lack of employment goals and plans for everyone supported by the agency.

## Conducting an Organizational Assessment and Analysis Process

### Reviewing present operations and culture

An important step in the transformation process is conducting an in-depth assessment of the agency, its culture and beliefs, services and practices and positioning for transformation. As was noted earlier, you must know where you are to plan for where you are going. This assessment process should examine the agency's beliefs and culture, customers and services, operational structures and procedures, workforce and staff development, organizational structures and management practices, community image and marketing approach.

## Conducting internal assessments

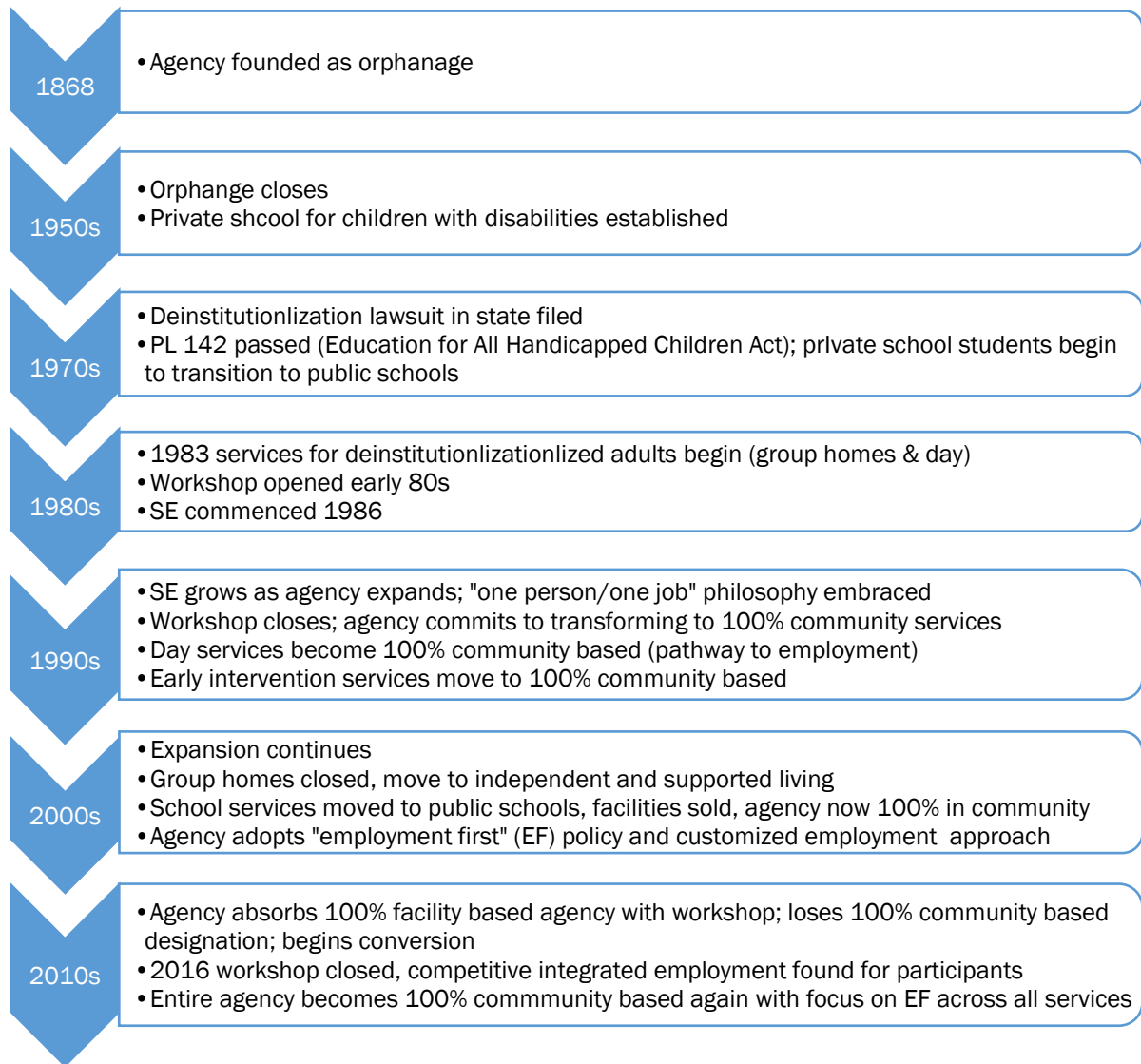
Many agencies find it helpful to conduct an internal or *self-assessment* and analysis process. Leadership and staff may find themselves more open to introspection and honest reporting of information if the assessment is an internal one rather than a traditional external review.

*What are some tools and processes for conducting an internal organizational self-assessment?*

- Organizational self-assessment surveys – These are assessments conducted by the management team and whomever they determine should be included in the process. Often parts of the surveys are conducted by different individuals or groups and then the components are all brought together as one comprehensive document.
- As a part of the self-assessment process agency staff should be prepared to review agency budgets and financial reports, reports conducted by external surveyors, agency description and marketing materials, organizational charts, business or strategic plans, services and funding sources, facilities, and other assets, among other available data. Three example tools that organizations use for internal self-assessment can be found at the end of this module. These tools are also designed to assist organizations to identify their need for training and technical assistance.
- Customer interviews and/or focus groups – The most important group of people from which to get input is the people who are most impacted by change, the people supported by the agency. Often direct, individual interviews are the best way to get the opinions of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Care should be taken to ensure that if an interview process is used, it is carefully structured to avoid leading questions or inherent bias. You want to know how well the people you support understand the anticipated changes and how receptive they are to what is being planned. It is an opportunity to identify apprehension and resistance and to develop strategies to address those concerns.
- Direct service staff, supervisor, manager surveys and/or focus groups – It is important to get some direct feedback from agency personnel while the assessment is being conducted. You want to know how well informed they are about impending changes, whether they embrace those changes or oppose them and how they feel about the direction of the agency. If staff feels uninformed and frightened for their futures as opposed to knowledgeable and confident, then that will be a clear indication of where some of the initial focus of the change process must be placed. Many agencies conduct annual staff satisfaction surveys. These surveys can be expanded to capture critical information regarding transformation or new surveys can be developed. A sample survey can be found at the end of this module.
- If the focus groups are used and can be conducted by someone the staff view as more neutral in the agency or by an external party, the most honest opinions of staff may more easily surface.
- Board of Directors focus group – The importance of board support is discussed earlier in this module. Focus groups may work well to determine how well informed they are and how they feel about the proposed changes.
- Developing a *historical timeline* of the organization – Some organizations have found it to be useful to develop a historic timeline, sometimes called a “Lifeline” that highlights key events, people, services, decisions, and outcomes in an organization’s past. The timeline serves to educate stakeholders about

the evolution of the organization and its services, and the significant changes that occurred. An example of an historical timeline is provided in Exhibit 3 below.

Exhibit 3. Example Historical Timeline for an Organization



### Conducting an external organizational self-assessment

- Parent/guardian surveys, interviews, and/or focus groups – The opinions of family members or guardians will assist the agency to understand where there is receptivity and support and where there are concerns and resistance. It will help establish current knowledge levels and future education and information needs. It will also identify where effort needs to be focused to bring these important partners on board with the changes.
- Case manager, care coordinators, rehabilitation counselor surveys and/or focus groups - The agency assessment should also include surveys or focus groups with case managers, care coordinators, and rehabilitation counselors. They are often responsible for facilitating referrals of individuals to agencies and advocating for them to receive employment services. Knowing their beliefs and philosophies,



opinion of your agency's current performance, hopes for your future direction, and overall customer satisfaction is critical to your future.

- Other stakeholder focus groups: Funding sources, employers/business leaders, the local Chamber of Commerce, local school personnel involved in transition, and other collaborative organizations – every agency has important community partners that will be impacted by the agency's transformation. Using interviews or focus groups as outreach methods will help the agency learn more about these partners, their perceptions of the agency, their understanding of and opinions about the changes that are at hand, as well as their interest and willingness to be supportive partners in the future.

*Now that we have all this information, how do we analyze and use assessment results for strategic planning?*

Once the data is collected from all assessment activities the analysis can begin. These tools can also be useful for anticipating challenges and developing solutions as part of your strategic planning process. Module 2 offers detailed information on how to use this data to move forward with development of a strategic plan.

## Identifying Your Values, Vision, and Mission

One of the most important activities to be undertaken in the transformation process is the review of your agency's core identity and making a philosophical and programmatic commitment. This is done through examination of your philosophy, values, vision, and mission. These are your guiding principles throughout the transformation process and beyond. In transformation to competitive integrated employment, dependence on facilities is either greatly diminished or eliminated. Staff members need a virtual framework in which to operate. Philosophy, values, mission, and vision become the new "four walls" of your community based agency.

### One approach to consider: Value Stream Mapping

Value stream mapping is a lean management method for analyzing the current state and designing a future state for the series of events that take a product or service from its beginning through to the customer. It can be applied to nearly any value chain. It can be helpful in achieving process improvement and efficient use of resources in service delivery of competitive integrated employment. The idea is to look at every activity (even those that aren't causing problems) and find ways for that activity to increase customer value and reduce waste. A small value increase or waste reduction in every activity performed leads to greatly increased performance and reduced costs. An example Mapping Process is provided below.

### Customer service philosophy

It is important to establish a strong customer service philosophy within your agency as the foundation upon which everything else will be built. Customer service not only means providing services needed or requested by the customer, but soliciting feedback and developing or adjusting what you do in response to that input. Providing great service that exceeds the expectations of your customers should be your primary focus.

### **Example Mapping Process:**

- Define the “issue” and agree on your goal (e.g., increase integration and employment outcomes).
- Determine what process to map.
- Map *Current Process* from the perspective of a customer (value stream) - e.g., job seeker entering your program - through finding a job and follow-up.
- Analyze current state: Identify value adding and non-value adding activities, waste, chaos, and potential resources.
- Brainstorm possible solutions and resources: Identify potential starting points for service transformation (areas to explore) - “what’s a better way?”
- Develop a *Future State* map which redefines the process and reallocates resources to achieve more and/or better outcomes/results from the perspective of the customer by eliminating waste and non-value activities.
- Analyze/Prioritize next steps (low hanging fruit, *just do it*, priorities, long/short term goals, and never minds)
- Write an action plan
- Plan/Do/Check/Adjust, Repeat.

Source: Verstegan, D. & Murphy, S. (Personal communication, December 2016). TransCen.

## Values

An agency’s values are based on its beliefs. If an agency believes economic opportunity and parity is a basic right for all people, then that is one of their values. Identification of an agency’s values is the starting place for development of its vision and mission. First the agency must determine what it believes in before it can begin to imagine where it can go in the future.

### **Example Values Statement:**

Pioneer, in Syracuse, New York, affirmed that:

- People with disabilities have the same human similarities and differences that exist among all individuals;
- Disability should be viewed as being as much a function of setting-related factors as of individual characteristics;
- People with disabilities have the same right to the same community opportunities, risks, relationships, and activities experienced by other members of the community, using, if necessary, individualized sources of support to achieve such participation;
- Having the opportunity for valued, integrated employment and community participation of one’s choosing is a right, not a privilege to be earned.

Source: Murphy, S. & Rogan, P. (1995). *Closing the Shop: Conversion from sheltered to integrated work*. Baltimore: Paul Brookes Publishing. (pp. 182-183).

## Vision

The agency’s vision is the description of *what* the organization and its services will look like in the future. Developing the agency vision requires involvement of various stakeholders. There are many strategies that can be used but the common thread among them all is dreaming without constraint. It can be difficult to let go of all of the obstacles that can get in the way of realizing the vision but it is necessary to get started. First think of what you want to be in the future, ideally. That vision is what you want to achieve. How you will achieve it will come next.

### **Example Vision Statement:**

- To comprehend, implement, and facilitate the needed activities that will shift Buffalo River Services from a facility-based, systems-centered service organization to a community-based, person-centered service network).

*Source: Buffalo River Services, Inc., Waynesboro, TN. In Organizational Change Mentoring Participant Manual (2005). Center on Disability & Employment, University of Tennessee, CRP-RCEP IV.*

## Mission

The agency's mission describes *how* the vision will be accomplished. The mission provides guidance for planning and implementation of strategies in an agency. It is the standard by which the agency's actions can be measured. It is the guidance for competitive integrated employment staff when they are in the field and may not have immediate access to supervisory support. When a decision must be made by staff, whether managers or direct support professionals, the options being considered should be evaluated to determine if they forward the mission, impede it, or contradict it.

### **Example Mission Statement:**

- Kaposia invests in the prosperity of individuals who have a disability and the profitability of our partners.).

*Source: Kaposia, Inc. (www.kaposia.com).*

## Agency name

Often as you go through examining and retooling your agency's philosophy, values, vision and mission the issue of your agency's name will arise. This is usually because the name, though sometimes very longstanding and held dear by many stakeholders, no longer accurately represents who you are. Name reconsideration can be among the most emotionally fraught and difficult issues for an agency to address. However, if the agency's name does not communicate what you are becoming and what you want the public's immediate perception of you to be, you should tackle this issue. If a name change does occur, a thoughtful and comprehensive strategy for marketing the new name and agency identify should be planned and implemented.

## Investing in Staff Development

Module 6 will provide an in-depth look at transforming your workforce. There are, however, several things that leaders should address with all agency staff from the beginning of the transformation process. Some of those items are:

- Communicating clear expectations regarding agency direction and changing staff roles - Because change can be stressful for many, it is incumbent on leadership to be supportive to staff during the transformation. You must help them understand and embrace new roles and responsibilities while staying consistently on-message about the agency's new direction.
- Providing ongoing professional development – Staff who are well informed and well trained tend to be the most satisfied at work. Satisfied staff will bring their best effort to the workplace and provide the best customer service.
- Encouraging open and honest conversations about fears, concerns and hopes – Staff can have anxiety during transformation for many reasons. They fear for the people who they have supported in facility-

based settings for years and cannot imagine how they can be successfully employed in the community. They may wonder if those people will ever get a job, will be safe, will miss their friends or will be unavailable for staff to see every day. They also may wonder about their own future and their livelihood. These fears, as well as their hopes for people, should be acknowledged and addressed by leaders. You won't be able to guarantee that there will be no problems, but you can listen and sympathize with their concerns while providing the assurance that everyone in the agency will work together thoughtfully and collaboratively toward the vision for the future.

- Understanding that there will be supporters and resisters – As with any proposal to do things differently, there will be camps into which people will fall. Some will be pro, some will be con and others will be undecided. Leaders may have to contend with some degree of conflict during the change process. Though ideally you want everyone to be supportive and excited, that may not occur. You should do as much as possible to bring everyone along, but it is important to understand that you may not win everyone over. If, after providing information, training, and support, some staff cannot make the change to the new approach, then amicable separation may have to occur and you must learn to be comfortable with that.

## Learning from Others

*It seems like there is so much to learn. Where can I get additional help if I need it?*

- Using external consultants – Consultants who can provide support and mentorship to the agency through the various aspects of transformation can be invaluable. Those that have had experience with competitive integrated employment and know how to use effective strategies and approaches can assist staff to learn to use those strategies more skillfully. Consultants that have been through the transformation process can provide advice about what must be considered in the process. Some consultants may have experience with supporting multiple organizations, in a variety of states or localities, to transform and thus bring a broad perspective on the work. An agency may choose to use one consultant or a variety of consultants to achieve their transformation goals. While consultants can't make the changes for the agency, they can provide guidance and insight that will make the process more manageable.
- Aligning with mentor agencies – Agencies that are in the process of transformation benefit from developing relationships with mentor agencies. Mentor agencies are ones that have experience they can share on a peer level with sister agencies. Agencies tend to have more trust in people and organizations that they believe have circumstances and experiences similar to theirs. Mentor agencies generally have more experience, greater expertise and an understanding that in sharing with others, they grow as an organization.

## Promoting a Strong and Consistent Message (Marketing)

### Letting your community know about the changes in your organization

Communicating commitment to the vision – As your agency is changing, the new vision for the future must be communicated to your stakeholders and the public. Many people have a preconceived notion of your agency and what it does because that is the message that you have communicated in the past. As you transition to a new way of doing things you must communicate that changes are occurring. You should let your audiences

know what you believe in now and your new direction. The way the agency commitment to its vision is communicated is multi-faceted. Some vehicles for communicating your new message are:

- Social media
- Blogs
- “Elevator” speeches (short and clear statements)
- Presentations, internally and externally
- Newspaper articles
- Television and radio programs
- Newsletters
- Annual reports
- Fund-raising events and solicitations

Changing our behavior - One strategy is subtle, but perhaps most effective. It is changing how people within the agency support people with disabilities. All staff must understand that they are modeling the message when they are with or representing people with disabilities in public. If they treat people as competent and valuable, with an ability to learn and contribute, then that is the message that is communicated. Nothing we say can be more powerful than our actions.

Supporting peer to peer education between families and individuals – The people who have benefited from competitive integrated employment and those who love them can communicate your message more strongly than anyone else. The people who have gotten jobs and experienced improved quality of life as a result may choose to share their experiences. Their families and guardians may choose to do the same. Their powerful testimonials tell the story of where you are headed as an agency and why. Some agencies have found that individualized opportunities for peer to peer education are much more successful than hosting large group forums; but both can be considered.

Developing your website, brochures, etc. with desired messages and images – What your agency is currently marketing may not be sending the message that corresponds to your new vision for the agency. In the transformation process, all marketing materials must be examined to see exactly what they are communicating and whether it is in sync with your new message. New marketing materials should:

- Include photographs of people in competitive integrated jobs, not in disability specific work settings. Photos should show individuals with disabilities engaged with community members, not just staff or other people with disabilities, working side-by-side with co-workers or supervisors in integrated workplaces, and employed in a variety of jobs and industries, not just traditional ones.
- Use language that is respectful – Always use “people first” language, focused on ability, not disability and understandable to the general public - no jargon.
- Be attractive and professional in appearance.

# Module 2:

## Strategic Planning

### Key Terms

*Goals*

*Action Steps*

*Past and Present Status*

*Resource Needs*

*Future Vision*

*Strategic Path*

*SWOT Strategy as Simple Rules*

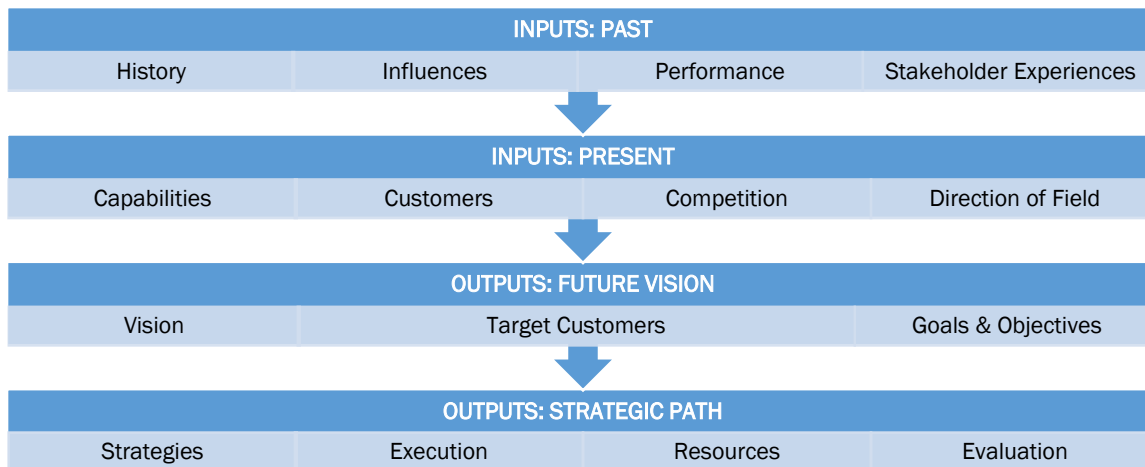
## Resources and References for Module 2 - Strategic Planning

References	
Step 5: From Strategic Planning to Implementation	
World Cafe (p. 376: World Café Process	<a href="http://www.theworldcafe.com">www.theworldcafe.com</a>
Questions that your team may want to consider (p. 37): Department of Labor Internship Rules	<a href="https://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.pdf">https://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.pdf</a>
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Resources	
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## Module 2: Strategic Planning

Simply put, strategic planning offers a process for organizations to develop, document, and communicate their goals, articulate action steps to achieve desired outcomes, and delineate methods for assessing progress and adjusting future directions. There are many frameworks that can be used for strategic planning, and most offer a similar process. The Association for Strategic Planning (ASP) is a good resource for information. Common steps are depicted below in Exhibit 4 (Caporale, Creative Strategy Framework).

Exhibit 4. Common Steps for Strategic Planning



### Step 1: Assess and Analyze the Organization's Past and Present Status

As noted in Module 1, a thorough organizational assessment provides baseline data and becomes the foundation of transformational change. The process typically involves gathering input from stakeholders who are both internal and external to the organization via individual interviews, surveys, and focus groups in order to form a composite understanding of their views and understandings.

This assessment information should be analyzed and used to inform the strategic planning process. The analysis should shed light on common themes and areas of agreement or disagreement, as well as unique perspectives. Such information should be gathered periodically as a way to track progress toward stated goals and objectives.

### Step 2: Review Values, Vision, and Mission Statements

Module 1 provided information about articulating the organization's values, vision, and mission as an important component of transformation. As part of the strategic planning process, these statements should be reviewed to ensure they reflect the new direction and are aligned well.



### Step 3: Analyze Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)

Some organizations find it helpful to conduct a SWOT analysis whereby they identify internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as its external opportunities and threats. Focus questions for each area include:

- Strengths: What does the organization do better than anyone else? What do other stakeholders see as your strengths?
- Weaknesses: What could be improved? What do stakeholders see as weaknesses?
- Opportunities: What opportunities can be developed by building upon strengths and addressing weaknesses? What trends are occurring that provide opportunities?
- Threats: What obstacles do you face? What are others doing better? What internal and/or external factors are/will impact the organization?

### Step 4: Develop a Strategic Plan

After the vision and mission statements are reviewed, the assessment information is analyzed, and a SWOT analysis is conducted, the gap between the desired outcomes and the present status should be quite clear. This dichotomy provides the bookends for where your organization is now and where you want to be, and creates a healthy tension that can propel positive change.

Strategic Plans are created to identify strategies to enable the organization to achieve its goals and desired outcomes. Key questions include:

- What are our priority organizational goals?
- How do we achieve our goals? What are the operational action steps?
- Who will be involved?
- When will we reach designated milestones and what will be the evidence or indicators?
- What are the new staff roles that are needed and how will staff be recruited and/or redeployed and prepared for these roles?
- What barriers must be addressed?
- What resources are required?
- What data will we collect? How will we evaluate our performance?

Moving from facility-based to integrated, community-based services means changing almost all major aspects of the organization: the services that are provided, staffing patterns and staff roles, relationships with external organizations, and more. This may feel overwhelming. Module 3, Making it Happen (Operations Focus), provides tips and strategies about how to get started. Don't worry - it's good to start small and do it right the first time. Strategic planning typically addresses the following priority issues:

- Realign the budget to support integrated, community-based services and plan for funding diversification.
- Reallocate resources.
- Revise policies and procedures to support integrated employment and individualized community supports.

- Redesign staffing, job descriptions, wages, recruitment, training, and support structures.
- Reshape service delivery processes to focus on integrated employment and full lives in the community.
- Revamp the data collection and evaluation system.
- Communicate with internal and external stakeholders.
- Redefine the organization's marketing plan and image in the community.

Most organizations target a one to three-year time period for their strategic plan. There are too many variables and moving parts to plan much farther ahead. Thus, the strategic plan must be revisited and revised over time. It is important to expeditiously move to action steps, rather than continue to plan. Strategic plans set in motion a think-plan-act process of continuous quality improvement.

## Step 5: From Strategic Planning to Implementation

### Identifying Resource Needs in Advance

Your strategic plan will pinpoint in broad strokes the resources you will need to launch your Employment First efforts. As you begin to implement that plan, you will want to step back and take a thoughtful look in more detail at what needs to be in place to implement your plans successfully.

This checklist might be helpful:

- Do you have funding for a pilot?
- If the pilot is successful do you have a long-term funding strategy?
- Do you have funding for job coaching and ongoing supports?
- Do you have sufficient staff and the right staff?
- What resources do you need to invest in order to train and mentor your team?
- Do staff understand your transformation goals and action plan?
- Do you have access to benefits counseling for individuals and their families?
- What kind/amount of marketing materials/resources do you need to get started?
- What kind of legal advice/insurance coverage will you need for community based work?
- Are there viable modes of transportation (e.g., accessible, affordable, and efficient) that individuals can use to get to work and other meaningful activities in the community?

An example of the first year of a Strategic Plan is provided below in Exhibit 5.

## Exhibit 5. An Example of a First Year Strategic Plan for Organizational Transformation

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**Long-term Goal:** Shift our services to competitive integrated employment to meet the individual needs of people with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities.

**Short-term Goal:** Within one year, support 12-15 individuals from the workshop to obtain individualized and integrated jobs at minimum wage or higher that match their unique strengths, interests, and needs.

**Rationale:** Individuals with disabilities are unemployed and underemployed at extraordinarily high rates, yet the majority need to work, want to work, and can work. Employers have benefitted from hiring individuals from this untapped labor pool. Cost-benefit data comparing sheltered workshops to competitive integrated employment outcomes show a clear cost-benefit advantage for people with disabilities who work in real jobs for real wages, as well as for employers and taxpayers. Furthermore, over the past five years there has been a dynamic shift in the philosophy of the federal government towards sheltered workshops. Litigation in other states has resulted in rulings by the U.S. Department of Justice that have necessitated the closing of sheltered workshops based on the segregated nature of the work environment, and the use of subminimum wage certificates to pay people below minimum wage for piece rates.

We are committed to providing high quality employment opportunities in partnership with people with disabilities, employers, and other key stakeholders by: 1) shifting our service delivery model from segregated in-house services to individualized and integrated employment and community-based services; and 2) closing our sheltered workshop.

### Action Steps:

1. Form a Transformational Leadership Team comprised of key stakeholders, including individuals receiving services, workshop and integrated employment staff, representative managers and administrators, and key office staff (e.g., fiscal manager).
  2. Gather baseline data regarding status of the organization's services and outcomes. Consider developing a visual timeline of the organization's history.
  3. Develop/revisit the Values, Vision, and Mission statements with key stakeholders.
  4. Provide training/technical assistance to staff and board members on integrated employment best practices.
  5. Support staff and board members to visit one or more service providers that are providing exemplary integrated employment services.
  6. Meet individually with people in the workshop & their parents/guardians to discuss the Employment First direction of the organization. Gather information about their hopes/dreams as well as fears/concerns.
  7. Meet with other key stakeholders to gather their interests, concerns, and potential support for the organizational change.
  8. Meet with funding agencies and potential sources of funding to discuss bridge funding, integrated employment services funding, and other funding considerations related to shifting services to the community.
  9. Develop new job descriptions for integrated employment staff. Hire new staff, as needed, with desired values, vision, and skills.
  10. Support staff to begin to explore community options and opportunities with the first group of individuals who would like a job in the community. Conduct discovery activities with each individual in order to know what individuals like and are good at, as well as their support needs.
  11. Conduct Person-Centered Planning with each individual and those who know and love the individual, including the type of job the individual might like.
  12. Form staff teams that serve a small group of individuals from the workshop. Begin job development. Team members support and back each other up for customized employment activities (job development, job training, and job follow-along support).
  13. Identify and secure accessible and affordable transportation options for each individual.
  14. Continue to collaborate with Vocational Rehabilitation, Developmental Disability Services, and other funding sources to ensure that adequate funding is in place to support integrated employment services.
  15. Revise the marketing materials and website to reflect the integrated employment focus in partnership with area businesses.
  16. Eliminate or modify staff roles as people move out of the workshop.
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17. Collect and analyze satisfaction and evaluation data. Make necessary changes.
  18. Communicate, communicate, communicate!
  19. Celebrate your successes, one person at a time!
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## Alternatives to Strategic Planning

Some organizations do not feel comfortable or well positioned to take bold action and to be forward thinking when they first undertake transformative change in their organization. They may feel too restricted by the formality and linear nature of strategic planning. These organizations are more comfortable using an 'organic' process that emanates from a set of guiding principles based on the articulated Values, Vision, and Mission. Each decision is referenced against the guiding principles to ensure actions are in alignment with them. This approach allows organizations to define direction without confining it and pursue opportunities that present themselves. The example in Exhibit 6 below reflects this approach.

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### Exhibit 6. An Example of an Alternative Approach to Strategic Planning

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#### **Strategy as Simple Rules**

A few straightforward, hard-and-fast rules that define direction without confining it:

- We support individuals
- To lead regular lives
- In their communities
- The same, not different

#### *We support individuals:*

KFI supports individuals and not groups. We begin by asking people what they want and need. Supports are designed to meet the individuals' requirements; the individuals do not need to fit into a group.

#### *To lead regular lives:*

Our supports are to assist people to live in the same places as anyone else, in ways that fit their lifestyle, which includes respecting people's desire to live by themselves; to have jobs in typical businesses at minimum wage or higher; to access services, recreation and community resources which are available to all citizens.

#### *In their communities:*

KFI recognizes the importance of community, particularly in rural sections of Maine. Our supports must help people become included into the fabric of the community, to be viewed as contributors and valuable members of it.

#### *The same, not different:*

People with disabilities have the same needs as any citizen and those needs must be addressed in regular, inclusive ways.

*Formally approved by KFI's Board of Directors, January 2003; Reviewed by KFI's Board, January 2006*

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## Anticipating Possible Challenges/Thinking of Solutions

As you are getting ready to launch new initiatives, it is helpful to engage in a process to target and plan for challenges. Several team meetings might be devoted to brainstorming about the big and small issues that might slow down or stall your efforts, based on your knowledge of government oversight and funding, your stakeholders, the business community, etc.

*What kinds of issues and challenges might we want to plan for?*

Here are a number of challenges that other providers have planned for:

- Individual and family concerns about the shift to integrated employment and community-based services
- Obtaining funding authorization from your funding agency
- Ensuring that people have eligibility for long term supports as well as Vocational Rehabilitation front-end, short-term supports
- Business community's adjustment to a new way of doing things (e.g., rather than sending subcontract work to the workshop, providing job opportunities within the business)
- Staff resistance to new responsibilities and expectations
- Relationships with a union related to reallocation of staff
- Concerns about protecting health information (HIPAA) and confidentiality in general
- Employer questions about job coaching
- Transportation issues and concerns

*How might we plan for challenges?*

Communication is key, as is involving key stakeholders from the start. No one likes to be informed or brought in to the change process after the fact. One way to understand and address the concerns of various constituencies is to engage stakeholders to obtain their input and buy-in. Organizations have used informal conversations, structured interviews, focus groups, and written surveys to obtain input and address issues and challenges. Several of these approaches were described in Module 1, and several additional approaches are described here briefly.

### Informational Interviews

Your team might want to develop a structured interview process so the same questions are asked to each constituent group, or customized for each group. This could be a starting point for some of the other processes, or might stand on its own.

### Focus Groups

Focus groups engage small groups of stakeholders in conversation in order to solicit their feedback and comments in response to specific questions.

### World Café

A World Café is a structured process designed to facilitate thoughtful open conversation among a large group of individuals by breaking into smaller groups and sharing knowledge among those smaller

groups. This can be a good way to elicit ideas, uncover concerns, and/or gather input regarding solutions. For example, families, staff and funders might focus on transportation as a potential obstacle to employment in a rural community, and develop some solutions to address that issue. The World Café process<sup>14</sup> is as follows:

- 5-8 participants sit at tables with already established questions.
- Every table has a host who remains at the table.
- People engage in conversation, share insights, and listen for about 15-20 minutes.
- When the first round is completed everyone but the host travels to a new table.
- Participants synthesize their discoveries and sometimes a deeper question emerges.
- At the end, members share collective discoveries and insights as a whole group (called “Harvesting”)
- The result is a sense of the bigger picture and new possibilities for action emerge.

## Public Forums

Although public forums can bring together a diverse group of people and give your agency an opportunity to hear a wide spectrum of views and concerns, there are reasons to avoid using a large gathering where negative comments from one or more individuals can sway the tone and direction of the meeting away from its original intent. For example, it is not a good way to first announce your transformation agenda or first discuss your plans with individuals and families. Nevertheless, it may be a way to get feedback as you are implementing your plans.

## Avoiding Pitfalls – Keeping Your Compass Pointed Toward True Community Integration

As you move forward in your transformation efforts staff, family, business partners, community partners and your board will present you with many ideas designed, they believe, to advance the agenda of community integration. You will want to explore these ideas with an eye to whether they will further your transformation agenda and meet the guiding principles that you have established, or lead the organization in an unintended or undesired direction.

### Questions that your team may want to consider:

*Does the proposed plan lead to competitive integrated employment?*

The Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA) regulations define competitive integrated employment as work side-by-side with other employees without a disability.

*Does the proposal create enclaves or work crews within the community or at an employer worksite where people with disabilities are working as a group and/or in a separate location?*

Organizations should avoid using enclaves and work crews as a strategy for moving people out of the workshop more quickly. Such placements are rarely a good match for every person, they typically require continuous on-site supervision by a staff member from the agency, they interfere with the development of natural supports, and they congregate and segregate the workers. In the end, it takes

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<sup>14</sup> www.theworldcafe.com

more time and effort to find individual jobs for each person that was initially placed in an enclave or work crew.

*Does the proposal plan maintain people with disabilities on your payroll rather than the employer's payroll?*

The intent of competitive integrated employment is for each job seeker to be hired by community employers: one person, one job. There may be some instances where a trial work period is deemed appropriate for a particular job seeker, and the service provider pays the person during this short training period. Your state vocational rehabilitation or workforce system may reimburse providers for wages during the trial work period. After the trial work period, people should be paid directly by the employer. If an employer typically uses a third-party employment agency, individuals with disabilities hired by the employer should be hired through the same third-party employment agency used to hire employees without disabilities.

*Are you operating your community-based day or pre-vocational programs within U.S. Department of Labor and your state's Department of Labor wage and hour rules, including rules about volunteers and interns?*

As you look for work experiences for people, keep in mind the following considerations: If the individual performs work without pay for a for-profit employer and they are bringing value to the business through their work, or doing work that other paid employees would otherwise be doing, the experience may violate labor laws. Even if an employer thinks they are within the law, as a provider you have a responsibility to evaluate volunteer opportunities and internships through the lens of current labor laws.

See <https://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.pdf>

See <http://webapps.dol.gov/elaws/whd/flsa/docs/volunteers.asp>

*Does the program you are creating comply with your State's contractual and/or Medicaid waiver guidelines?*

Remember to make sure that you are complying with your state agencies' regulations, contractual requirements and administrative guidelines that address the services you are providing. It's always helpful to consult with other providers and consultants, including those who have developed programs in other states, but do ensure that you check to confirm your planned approaches meet your state's requirements.

# Module 3:

## Making It Happen (Operations Focus)

### Key Terms

*Piloting Best Practices*

*Bringing to Scale*

*Sustainability*

*Decentralized Teams*

*Closing the Shop Door*

*Community Partners*



## Resources and References for Module 3- Making It Happen

References	
Keep Learning, Exploring and Sharing	
Professional Development Opportunities (p. 46): Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)	<a href="http://www.apse.org">www.apse.org</a>
Professional Development Opportunities (p. 46): American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR)	<a href="http://www.ancor.org">www.ancor.org</a>
Professional Development Opportunities (p. 46): TASH	<a href="http://www.tash.org">www.tash.org</a>
Professional Development Opportunities (p. 46): Toronto Summer Institute	<a href="http://www.inclusion.com/workshops.html">www.inclusion.com/workshops.html</a>
Professional Development Opportunities (p. 46): Reinventing Quality Conference	<a href="http://www.reinventingquality.org">www.reinventingquality.org</a>
Professional Development Opportunities (p. 46): Marc Gold and Associates Annual Discovery Retreat	<a href="http://www.marcgold.com">www.marcgold.com</a>
Professional Development Opportunities (p. 46): National Organizational Change Network Conferences	<a href="http://apse.org/conferences-training/">http://apse.org/conferences-training/</a>
Certification Courses (p. 46): Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE)	<a href="http://www.acreducators.org/">http://www.acreducators.org/</a>
Certification Courses (p. 46): Employment Support Professional Certification (APSE)	<a href="http://apse.org/certified-employment-support-professional/">http://apse.org/certified-employment-support-professional/</a>
Certification Courses (p. 46): Griffin Hammis online certification	<a href="http://www.marcgold.com/Publications/certification.html">http://www.marcgold.com/Publications/certification.html</a>
Certification Courses (p. 46): Marc Gold & Associates certification process	<a href="http://www.marcgold.com/Publications/certification.html">http://www.marcgold.com/Publications/certification.html</a>
Certification Courses (p. 46): Training Resource Network	<a href="http://www.trn-store.com">http://www.trn-store.com</a>

## MODULE 3: Making It Happen (Operations Focus)

### How to Begin: Start Small and Do It Right from the Start

Now that the strategic or transformation plan has been developed you can move to the implementation phase. The first thing to note is that transformation cannot be done all at once. You should start small, ensuring that all of the foundations for transformation are well established and tested before you move forward.

### Learning About and Investing in Best Practices

#### Incorporating Best Practices

You may feel under pressure to create competitive integrated employment and community integrated activities quickly. It is important to remember, however, that meaningful and long lasting outcomes for people require thoughtful work, on an individualized basis. If you take the time to incorporate best practices that have a track record of bringing people into the workforce and into their communities, your work will result in outcomes that make a real difference in people's lives. This does not mean that you won't also create your own innovations and strategies especially suitable for your community and economy as you move along. However, there is no reason to re-invent the wheel. You can lose valuable time experimenting, when there are already best practices out there that can help you.

Invest some of your management staff's time in learning about current best practices. It's essential that those supervising direct service staff understand the best practices that direct service staff are trying to implement. These practices may include: customized employment strategies; the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model of supported employment; other proven job development strategies; person-centered planning processes; systematic instruction; job coaching and support strategies including positive behavioral supports, social stories, strategies for building natural supports, the use of technology and visual tools to fade supports in the workplace and in the community; and specific strategies for supporting people with particular needs (i.e., traumatic brain injury, substance abuse issues, autism, visual impairments, deafness, criminal justice system backgrounds). We have included a description of some of these best practices in Module 5 of this manual as well as lists of resources and references. You will want to develop your own list of possible resources and research what these resources can offer your team.

As a provider, you will need to determine how much you can invest in training and mentoring your staff. On-line courses can be very helpful. However, there is nothing like sending your staff to a face to face direct training. And if you can afford it, it is ideal to bring in experts to work directly with your staff, onsite, in your own community. When you bring in your own trainers, they can respond to the particular issues with which you are grappling and respond to individual cases.

#### Trying It Out - Piloting New Practices

Many agencies start with pilot projects to test out new approaches. These projects allow you to develop and test strategies and procedures that will support your staff as they move into broader implementation.

## What is a pilot project?

Pilot projects are small projects conducted with fidelity to a model or plan you are considering using on a broader scale. If you are doing a customized employment pilot, for example, every step in the process should be followed. Data should be taken and analyzed to help the team see what has worked and what has not. The pilot is your opportunity to make mistakes and achieve your successes on a small scale. You want to learn from your pilot and use that information to improve how you are carrying out your implementation. It is critical to start off correctly and with high quality. That will set the stage for the scaling up of your efforts.

## Why pilot?

Transformation requires thoughtful, careful program development. That is why piloting or prototyping employment first programs is an effective approach. The goal for a pilot is to learn how to get results, create a core staff who have learned key tools and strategies, develop initial useful partnerships, address issues and challenges, revise strategies, project staffing and program requirements based on your findings, evaluate current costs and funding, and make projections of anticipated costs and funding for a full-scale project.

A pilot can also be a means to demonstrate results to funders and stakeholders. You might show a funder that a particular approach will get them the results they are looking for. Also, a pilot effort, with good results, might be just what you need to encourage hesitant individuals and families to give employment a try. Good outcomes and testimonials for employers may jump start community integrated employment in your community.

## Who are good candidates with which to start a pilot?

Begin with those people who are already expressing interest in work. You will have some people for whom the transition to competitive integrated employment may be a significant challenge. They may have worked in facility-based employment for an extended period and the change is very daunting for them. You do not want to forget those people, but they may not be the best candidates with whom to start. Start with those who are eager. Achieve success with them and then use that success to market the opportunity back to those more reluctant individuals.

### *Does that mean that I should start with the people that appear to be easiest to get jobs?*

No. Starting with those people expressing interest in work does not mean starting with those with the fewest barriers to employment. In fact, it is very important to include people with higher support needs in your first job placements. Staff and other stakeholders need to see that you can be successful with competitive integrated job placements for people with varying degrees of challenges to employment. If you start off including this population in the job placement effort from the beginning, you will minimize the inclination to focus on the job seekers who are considered the easiest to place and to neglect of others.

## Take the time to learn from your pilot—revise your initial plans

Your pilot should have given you a lot of valuable information and answered important questions. Do you need to revise your staffing pattern? How much management time does the work require? What

additional procedures do you need to support staff and work effectively with individuals? Are you getting outcomes you anticipated? If not, what were the challenges you encountered? Are there structural or staffing changes that can help you overcome those challenges?

## Ensuring Sustainability

As you construct your model, you will want to project its sustainability past the pilot stage. Questions you will want to ask are: If we have temporary pilot funding, do we have a possible funding source for our ongoing work? Can we project that the proportion of management costs to direct support costs will go down as we learn techniques and begin to achieve outcomes? How do we plan to reallocate costs as we decentralize our services?

As you begin to implement your programs, you will want to review your results, costs and funding to evaluate the sustainability of the model you have created.

## Think Big, Start Small, Scale Quickly

Plan on evaluating your pilot every quarter, and as soon as you are getting solid results that you have reason to think are replicable, start bringing the project to scale as quickly as your funding will allow. Bringing to scale as quickly as possible is advisable for a variety of reasons. First, you will help many more people find employment and a place in their community. Second, you will spread program management and administrative costs in a way that a pilot effort cannot accomplish. Third, you will gain credibility with your funders, stakeholders and business partners when they see that the program is moving forward and expanding.

## Chart out how you can effectively bring competitive integrated employment to scale

Ask yourselves; are there additional investments you need to make as you move from a pilot to a full-scale program that can place and support increasing numbers of people into competitive integrated employment? Ask yourselves what investments in staff you may need. There may be a need to increase your management capability before your revenue increases. What do you need to demonstrate to your board in order to justify that investment? What technology do you need to manage a full-scale staff engaged in finding and maintaining employment opportunities for people? How will you offer trainings to larger numbers of staff?

## Continue to project how your revenues and expenses will grow as you move to scale

As you continue to grow, you will be projecting how your revenues will continue to grow in comparison to your expenses. You will want to factor in all of the revenue and expenses that you achieve as a result of your competitive integrated employment services. For example, you may be using VR funding to develop jobs, but then add in long term support funding from Medicaid waivers or other sources, once people have been in jobs for a period of time. A small shortfall in VR funding may be balanced out by somewhat larger revenues from funding for long term supports. Similarly, if long term support funding is inadequate to cover the costs of the early stages of job coaching, net revenue from VR may offset this.

## Advocate with your funders for appropriate funding

This is where the outcomes from your pilot are so important. If the funding you initially used is not sufficient, but your results are good, you will want to negotiate with your funders to obtain a rate that will sustain the program. If the rates are set on a statewide or regional basis, you will want to work with other providers in your region or state. Your data may be just what a provider association needs to make the case for more sustainable rates. If the rates are specifically negotiated by contract with each provider, you may want to bring your board of directors into the process. Key to effective negotiations is thorough preparation based on solid data on both your costs and your outcomes. Your funders will want to see costs, understand why those costs are necessary to obtaining your outcomes, and will want to see concrete outcomes that meet their mission and goals (See Module 4 ).

### **From Pilot to Full Scale: One Provider's Story**

In 2010, Penn-Mar Human Services, a provider agency based in Maryland and Pennsylvania, began its transformation journey by piloting Customized Employment practices. The goal of the pilot was to find jobs through Customized Employment for 25 people in the sheltered work program. Penn-Mar hired a job developer for the project. A program manager was assigned to supervise and work alongside the job developer. Penn-Mar also invested some funds to bring in consultants from two organizations that train agencies in Customized Employment.

Penn-Mar staff followed the Customized Employment model including the consultant's suggestions that the job developer have responsibility for all aspects of the Customized Employment process. They analyzed the project results periodically. After an initial pilot period in which the job developer was not achieving the outcomes they anticipated, they revised their process and decided to focus the job developer on networking with employers. They reallocated discovery and job coaching to staff working in the sheltered work program.

The revised pilot was successful. By 2012, the project had achieved 30 placements and the agency was ready to make the full-scale journey away from sheltered work. Penn-Mar set a goal to transition everyone from sheltered work into community based employment. The success stories from their pilot was key to persuading Penn-Mar's Board of Directors, staff and families that discontinuing sheltered work was desirable. Sheltered work was discontinued, increasing numbers of people were placed in jobs, and any facility based time was converted to development of specific skills that would be helpful for community employment. In 2014, Penn-Mar revised its strategic plan and set a new goal that 80% of people's time should be in community based employment and other community integrated activities by 2020.

## Enacting an Employment First Approach: Key Considerations as You Move to Scale

### Teamwork in decentralized organizations: Practical considerations for making it happen

You will find that teamwork is more important than ever in highly decentralized, competitive integrated employment services. The effort to get to know job seekers and support them to determine what work they may like and be good at, learn about and develop relationships with community businesses, make excellent job matches that benefit both parties, ensure that just the right support is provided to workers as they transition into their jobs and to fade support to the maximum degree possible takes a great deal of effort. Because this process is often taking place with multiple people simultaneously and with different staff potentially playing different roles, it is important that the staff work cooperatively together to achieve the desired outcomes.

#### *What should I consider as I develop decentralized teams?*

It's important to think about the *role* of the team first. Because your agency is becoming more decentralized, teams inevitably become more autonomous in function. That means that they should be more empowered to make decisions at the "front line". This has many implications for the agency and should allow for a flattening of the organization's structure. Often this can mean a reduction in middle management. As a result, more funding can be applied to service delivery, rather than administrative costs. It certainly means that careful consideration of team composition, structure and function must be made.

#### *How will teams be composed and structured?*

Teams may be structured by role, with teams composed of staff playing different roles in the employment process. Team development may also be influenced by geography, with staff living in and providing support to individuals in a geographic area. Membership can shift as teams form to support a particular person. Job seekers may also be assigned to teams based on relationships they may have already established with a team member or the skills of a particular team.

Teams require *structure* to function optimally. It is important to know how the members are going to work together. Since these teams are decentralized, meaning their work is primarily if not exclusively in the community, they need to be as autonomous and self-directed as possible. Self-directed teams are discussed in greater detail in Module 6.

Good *communication* among team members and between the team and managers is what will make the team function optimally. Decentralized teams are almost always in the community and often the members do not see each other daily. The protocols for communication should be clearly established so that everyone stays informed and has a clear idea of their assignments and responsibilities. The methods and tools for communication must be determined as well. It is also important to have the team meet routinely to coordinate their efforts, solve problems, receive training, plan, and develop relationships with each other.

### *What are management's responsibilities in a decentralized structure?*

While teams should function more autonomously in a decentralized structure, if one or more manager positions have been retained, their role should shift to more of a community focus. That is where the work is being done. The role of the manager should become more of a coach and mentor to teams and to individual staff. Managers have responsibility for supporting the teams to function well, serving as a liaison between teams and to stay focused on the agency's mission. However, teams can still function well without managers. That is, teams can designate a team leader or rotate the role among team members once they gel as a high performing, self-directed team.

## **Just Do it! Closing the Shop/Facility Front Door**

### *Where is a good place to begin downsizing facility-based employment services?*

The first step in closing facility-based employment services is to stop accepting new referrals to this service. Almost every agency attempting to transform identifies transitioning people from the workshop into competitive integrated work as one of their biggest challenges. Many people have been told that the workshop is the best and possibly only option for them and they have been working there for many, many years. If you continue to accept new referrals into the workshop, you perpetuate this problem. You also continue to pour attention and resources into this part of your agency, rather than beginning to re-direct those resources into competitive integrated employment.

### *How do I plan for unloading 'sunk costs' (equipment, building, etc.)?*

Every provider agency engaged in transformation must do its own careful analysis of assets and costs to determine just the right time to convert the capital assets that were a necessary part of facility-based operations into the staffing and additional management resources that are key to decentralized employment and day supports.

Another starting point is to recognize that the capital costs now in your budget are costs that at some point you will no longer need to sustain your operations. As you project your funding needs, it is important to plan for selling, leasing or sub-letting capital assets and redirecting the income to community integrated services. These assets include property owned or leased from which you operate your facility based program, equipment used in production, and vans used for transportation. As you downsize your production facilities, you may have less use for space and less need for equipment. As you decentralize your operations, you may be able to convert your transportation fleet into a more flexible array of transportation resources including smaller passenger vehicles if needed.

You will want to conduct and update assessments of the cost savings that are realistically achievable as you downsize these operations. Questions you will ask are: How much space will we need for program operations when transformation is complete? How much could we generate from selling property? Is there a market for the property we own? How much will we save by giving up some of our leased space? How can we support people's transportation needs without vans?

### *What to do with contract work?*

Plenty of advance notification should be given to businesses for whom you perform contract work about your intention to cease accepting new work after a specific date. Plans should be made to return excess

inventory and any tools or equipment that may belong to the company. Often these businesses have been long term partners and it is important to maintain positive relationships with them. If there are individuals who enjoy the work they have been doing and would like to continue as employees of the company, you should develop a proposal for the company to hire and pay them directly. What should be avoided, however, is simply moving the contract into the company's building and maintaining the same relationship that existed before. If the company does not want to hire people directly, the individuals can be supported to form a limited liability company (LLC) that could contract with the company.

#### *How can I begin creating pathways for new referrals to competitive integrated employment?*

Building robust integrated, community-based pre-employment training, assessment and job placement services are important steps in moving away from facility-based employment models. If you are no longer accepting referrals to facility based work, you should be focused on developing the capability to place people, who know what work they would enjoy and be good at, into jobs as soon as possible. You also need the capacity to conduct discovery with others and develop community-based strategies to assist people who need some time to explore different kinds of jobs and try out work options. These strategies will be discussed in more detail in Module 5.

How can we create these pathways for collaboration and referral during the important school-to-work transition years?

Every effort should be made to develop relationships with local schools, Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, Intellectual/Developmental Disability agencies, and other partners to facilitate school-to-work transition for youth with disabilities. Working age students should be receiving integrated, community based job training while still in school. Your agency should seek agreements with your local school districts to provide some of this integrated, community based training and preparation. Ideally, transitioning youth supported by your agency should be leaving school and going directly into competitive integrated employment. If you are able to be involved with the youth well before their school careers end, this should be achievable. If that goal is not achieved, they should not go into facility-based work or facility-based employment readiness programs. It is especially important to continue their pre-employment preparation in the community as competitive integrated work is sought.

### **Keep Learning, Exploring and Sharing**

In the section on leadership, we emphasized sending staff and board members to conferences to help them envision change. As you implement your transformation agenda, your team will want to continue to take opportunities to keep learning and sharing with others in the field.

The field keeps changing, and you will want to keep your finger on the pulse of these changes so that your team can take advantage of other people's innovations. And, of course, you will want to share your own developing strategies. A good way to do this is through membership in and/or attendance at conferences, symposium, certifications and online courses. These include national and state conferences, certifications available throughout the country, and training available at state conferences and institutes. A list of some of the best national professional development opportunities are listed below.



- APSE (See [www.apse.org](http://www.apse.org))
- ANCOR (See [www.ancor.org](http://www.ancor.org))
- TASH (See [www.tash.org](http://www.tash.org))
- Toronto Summer Institute (See [www.inclusion.com](http://www.inclusion.com))
- Reinventing Quality Conference (See [www.reinventingquality.org](http://www.reinventingquality.org))
- Marc Gold and Associates Annual Discovery Retreat ([www.marcgold.com](http://www.marcgold.com))
- National Organizational Change Network Conferences (in partnership with National APSE)

Certification courses you might consider include:

- ACRE – Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (<http://www.acreducators.org/> )
- APSE – Employment Support Professional Certification (<http://apse.org/certified-employment-support-professional/>)
- Griffin Hammis online certification (See <http://www.griffinhammis.com/acrecertificatetraining.html>)
- Marc Gold & Associates certification process (See <http://www.marcgold.com/Publications/certification.html>)
- Training Resource Network ([www.trn-store.com](http://www.trn-store.com))

## Developing and Redesigning Relationships with Your Business Community

If your team sits down and brainstorms for even a few minutes, existing partnerships and potential collaborations will come to mind quite quickly. You will want to reach out to these partners and share your enthusiasm for your transformation plans. These partnerships may lead to jobs. Most important, they give you a network to tap into for resources that you may need as your work becomes more decentralized.

If a business has been partnering with you within your existing model – whether contracting with you to complete overflow work in your facility or contracting with you to provide a work crew to perform work at their offices or plant- you will need to help them change their framework in a gradual, congenial, and informative way. This may require the participation of your most senior managers and even members of your board, who may have greater connections and a higher profile in your community.

When developing new business partners, do bring your board into the process. You will want to encourage your board to talk with their friends and colleagues about your work and plans. It's helpful to provide board members with a low key elevator speech and a lot of stories that will come to their mind as they talk to friends, colleagues, and even acquaintances they happen to meet. One organization has a separate board meeting each year devoted to having staff share highlights of their work and the people they serve with their board. Another organization devotes a section of each board meeting to one or two individual success stories and the exciting work that is underway.

Executive staff can meet individually with board members to explore their networks and connections, as well as ways to develop partnerships with members of the business community in a low pressure manner. The goal is to try to come out of each meeting with at least several connections to pursue and a

plan to have lunch or coffee, along with a board member to meet those people. Eventually the agency's network of business partners will multiply, but in the beginning you will want to use every contact you can to build your profile in the community. Competitive integrated employment depends on a large number of employers who will each be hiring only one or a small number of employees.

Other important contacts include the professional organizations and communities that bring business leaders and professionals together. Associations to explore might include:

- The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) has membership chapters for human resource professionals. Your community may have other round tables of human resource managers specific to particular industries. It's ideal to get to know these groups informally by becoming a presence at chapter meetings. You may want to ask for the opportunity to tell some inspiring stories illustrating your work, and talk about the employers that have hired some of the persons supported by your agency.
- Research Business Leadership Networks that are in your state or nearby, that may have local members in your community.
- Local Chambers of Commerce host events and are a good way to network in the business community.
- In a larger city, there will be cross-business associations that share knowledge and expertise. For example, there are national associations of federal contractors that have state and/or regional meetings. Regional trade associations may be able to put you in touch with local members who may have their own formal or informal network in your community.
- Meet with the local Workforce Development staff and board and explore partnerships, resources and contacts that they can share.
- Local and State economic development councils and agencies
- Don't forget your vendors. People who supply you with items that you need and value your business may have connections and colleagues that can help with your mission. They may be interested in hiring someone who can make a positive and needed contribution to their operation. It is important to educate them about your work.

## Developing Relationships with Community Partners

### *Why are these relationships so important?*

If your goal is to assist people to become active participants in their communities through paid work and other meaningful activities, you will want to find community partners who can help make this happen. Each individual you support will have their own specific interests, style, contributions and needs. If your team is steeped in your community, and continues to meet and brainstorm with community leaders and organizations, you are likely to be able to help people build work and non-work connections in your community.

Beyond the impact of these partnerships for individuals, community partners may join with you in projects which may create funding opportunities. A local community center, for example, may have a connection with a foundation or corporate sponsor that you do not have, but you may have resources

and expertise that they need. An education-focused not-for-profit or school might want to partner with you in person-centered planning work with young people graduating from high school, with funding available for this purpose. A parent resource center might be interested in co-creating a transportation pool using parents of children with disabilities as sources of travel assistance for adults in your employment program, while the staff and vans of your agency could be used to transport children home from after school activities. New ideas and ventures don't develop in a vacuum. They emerge from ongoing "win-win" relationships with people who know and respect each other and are excited by the ways in which their work overlaps.

#### *What types of organizations should we reach out to?*

The following are examples of community organizations and the role they might play as your partners.

- *Not for profit organizations* – These may be places that can offer paid work opportunities, volunteer opportunities, and social/recreational activities. They also may be good partners for grants as described above.
- *Community colleges* – You can work with community colleges to modify or customize curriculum so that training programs geared to particular industries that can incorporate the people with whom you work. You can establish collaborations with community colleges to provide supports for people who can matriculate in classes as part of your wrap around/day supports. Community colleges may be good partners for grant proposals in these areas. Partnerships with professors and staff at community colleges may be useful for recruitment of staff or board members. Community college students who are interested in working with people with disabilities might make good interns, and could potentially help job coaches or provide support to other staff members.
- *Schools* – As the new mandates in the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) roll out, high schools will be partners as you develop transition services to move young adults into competitive integrated employment. Transition staff might partner with you in the discovery process (see description of customized employment in Module 5), and as part of their overall design and development of middle and high school transition services. Administrators, teachers, transition staff, and guidance counselors can partner on outreach and education with individuals and families, referrals to Vocational Rehabilitation, eligibility for services, and more.
- *Residential Support Providers* – Getting residential support providers on board is also be key to successful employment for those also receiving residential supports. They can help you understand the conditions that need to be in place for an individual to succeed in employment and can help make connections in the community for both paid work and community integrated activities. It's also important for residential providers to understand the role of work in people's lives. For example, a good partnership with providers can ensure that doctor's and other appointments are scheduled, when at all possible, during non-work hours, and ensure that people have the supports to get to work on time.
- *Foundations* – Ongoing relationships with foundations can provide funding to pilot new programs, or support expanding new programs while you downsize more traditional programs. See Module 4 for additional information. Foundation program officers may also introduce you to community

partners. For example, a foundation introduced one agency to another not-for-profit that needed technical assistance. A foundation might suggest a partner who can work with you on a joint grant proposal.

- *Transportation providers/networks* – Particularly in rural environments, you will want to work creatively with current and new providers to develop a system that has the flexibility to help people get to work. Collaborating with generic community services, such as those serving senior citizens, has proven beneficial. In one rural community, local businesses took turns sponsoring the cost of van services for seniors and people with disabilities for a month each. During the month of their sponsorship, the business name was displayed prominently on the outside of the van.
- *Advocacy Organizations/Anti-Poverty Groups* – Advocacy organizations, including anti-poverty groups can partner with you and the people you support to obtain funding for the supports they need, for benefits counseling, and to help with non-work issues, such as housing, that can impact people's work lives. Establishing ongoing relationships will ensure that you can get access to these important resources when you need them.

# Module 4:

## Funding

### Key Terms

*Title I*

*Customized Employment*

*Developmental Disability Council*

*Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act*

*American Job Center*

*Ticket to Work*

*Braiding Funding*

*Supported Employment*

*Pre-Employment Transition Services*

*HCBS Waiver*

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## Module 4: Funding

### Determining long term funding needs: Start from your Strategic Plan

Your strategic plan will be your starting point for developing sustainable funding for a new focus on competitive integrated employment and community integrated activities. Through that process, you will have a clear picture of current costs associated with your facility that will not need to be covered when transformation is complete. Costs that may not need to be covered long term include wages and benefits for persons with disabilities working in the workshop, staff associated solely with the facility-based programs who will not transition to integrated employment services or community integrated wrap-around services, building costs for workshop and facility-based day program space, contract costs, and compliance costs associated with the use of subminimum wage. The long-term costs you will need to cover will include administrative and staffing costs for your competitive integrated employment program and other integrated support services, the costs of office space, utilities, services such as phone and internet, and technology necessary to operate a decentralized program. You will want to get a good estimate of what long term costs will be and look at all your potential sources of funding to see how they align to cover the costs of a healthy and vibrant competitive integrated employment program complemented by an integrated, community based pre-employment and employment wrap around support program.

### Taking an Inventory of Potential Funding Sources

An inventory of suggested funding sources for operating and sustaining competitive integrated employment initiatives is referenced at the end of this Module. This inventory can be used as a starting point for making your own inventory of possibilities. Availability will depend on where you are located and the particular population of individuals with whom you are working. In this section, we focus on some of the most frequently sources of funding that have been used.

#### Vocational Rehabilitation Funding

**Title I Funds.** These funds will be administered by your state Vocational Rehabilitation Agency. Title I funds support a variety of services including job assessment, training, job development, and initial intensive job coaching support for people with disabilities. Although this funding is typically used for VR consumers who do not require supported employment, these funds can also be used to fund supported employment services if earmarked Supported Employment grant funds have been exhausted.

**Title VI Supported Employment Funds.** These funds will also be administered by your state Vocational Rehabilitation Agency. Supported employment is based on a place, train, and fade model in contrast to the models often used with jobseekers without disabilities, or with less complex disabilities, which train people to obtain particular skills and then place them in jobs that use the skills. Many people with complex disabilities have trouble generalizing skills and therefore will have some need to learn skills in the particular site where they will be working, even if they have participated in internship or training programs prior to obtaining a job. After assessment, discovery and/or development of a vocational profile, employment specialists assist individuals with the most complex disabilities to secure a job, learn the job tasks, workplace routines and expectations, and utilize natural workplace supports. Funding for

supported employment through VR is time limited and is available for job development and intensive job coaching.

**Customized Employment.** The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA Title IV) authorizes State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies to provide customized employment for eligible individuals. Review your contracts and talk with your funders about accessing funding for customized employment. Customized employment is a strategy of creating jobs through an individualized negotiation with employers which matches the abilities of individual job seekers with the needs of employers. This strategy is described in detail in Module 5 and is considered an essential strategy for facilitating competitive integrated employment for individuals with more complex disabilities, including many transitioning out of facility-based programs.

**Pre-Employment Transition Services.** WIOA also requires VR agencies to set aside at least 15% of their federal funds to provide pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities who are eligible or could be eligible for VR services. These funds are intended to be used in collaboration with local education authorities. Pre-employment transition services include:

- Job exploration counseling
- Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities, experiences outside of the traditional school setting, and/or internships
- Counseling regarding opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs
- Workplace training to develop social skills and independent living
- Instruction in self-advocacy

These funds are intended to support the mandates of Section 511 of the Rehabilitation Act, also enacted through WIOA, to divert young people from subminimum wage employment into competitive integrated employment. The primary requirements of Section 511<sup>15</sup> are described in the Introduction to this manual. Community rehabilitation providers in your State may be funded to provide pre-employment transition services in partnership with VR and local education boards and schools. If you are not already receiving this funding, consider looking into these funds to support students who will transition from school.

### Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services Funding

Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) funding is provided by States to support people with disabilities in the community rather than in institutional settings.<sup>16</sup> The following types of HCBS funding are available to promote and sustain competitive integrated employment and community integrated activities.

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<sup>15</sup> More information can be found at: <https://www.dol.gov/whd/workerswithdisabilities/keynews.htm>

<sup>16</sup> Medicaid HCBS funding first became available in 1983 when Congress added section 1915(c) to the Social Security Act, giving States the option to receive a waiver of Medicaid rules governing institutional care. Medicaid HCBS Waivers and a relatively new HCBS Medicaid State Plan option allow a state to offer services and supports to people with disabilities, otherwise qualified for institutional care, or at risk of becoming qualified for institutional care, in the community



**Supported Employment Funding.** These HCBS funds are available for longer term employment supports (including job coaching, personal assistance, and transportation to and from work) for people with disabilities. States may also opt to allow this funding to be used for pre-employment supports such as benefits counseling, assessment/discovery/career profile and job development. States may also permit HCBS Supported Employment funding to pay for supports for people to be self-employed or operate a microenterprise. These funds are administered by the state agencies that provide Medicaid-funded supports to specific populations of people with disabilities, e.g. Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities, Mental Health, Alcohol and Substance Abuse, Traumatic Brain Injuries, and Physical Disabilities.

**Community Pre-vocational and Day Services Funding.** These funds can be used to help people develop skills beneficial for employment as part of integrated community activities and/or provide people with opportunities for career exploration, career planning and community engagement. Community pre-vocational funding can also be used for unpaid internships, supports for paid internships (where payment for wages comes from a source other than Medicaid), volunteering in accordance with federal, state and local requirements, job shadowing, job preparation skills, interviewing skills, resume writing, etc. Day services funding can be used for career exploration and planning, and to assist people to engage in a range of meaningful community, social, recreational and volunteer activities. These funds can be used to support people while they look for jobs and to supplement part-time employment with support for participation in community activities.

**Career Planning.** States also have the option to offer time-limited Career Planning services as a stand-alone service category. Additionally, states may develop their own unique employment services that can be offered through HCBS funding with federal approval. These services can include but are not limited to Discovery, community employment exploration, career advancement, and work incentives benefits counseling. Review your state’s Medicaid State Plan and approved HCBS Waivers to see if your state has taken advantage of these options. See [https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/section-1115-demo/demonstration-and-waiver-list/waivers\\_faceted.html](https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/section-1115-demo/demonstration-and-waiver-list/waivers_faceted.html)

## **Ticket to Work**

The Ticket to Work (TTW) program, administered by the Social Security Administration, rewards providers with milestone and outcome payments when people who are eligible ticket-holders achieve employment at specified wage levels over particular periods of time. Providers and other organizations can register to be an Employment Network (EN) that provides employment services to individuals with disabilities who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability (SSDI) payments. SSI and SSDI recipients can assign their “ticket” to a registered EN. If the employer network provides services to the SSI recipient that result in employment at specified earnings levels, the employer network receives milestone payments and/or outcome payments. These milestone payments can help fund job development and can supplement other funding sources, including Medicaid HCBS funding. Some EN’s elect to focus their services primarily or exclusively on ongoing supports for people exiting from the VR system after they have achieved a successful closure and worked at least 90 days. These EN’s are called Partnership Plus EN’s. A description of the TTW program and how to register as an EN, and the current milestone and outcome payments can be found at <https://yourtickettowork.com/web/ttw/en-home>

## Education Funds – Limitations on Use of Subminimum Wage

Section 511 of WIOA places joint responsibility on school districts and VR to provide counseling and work experiences that will promote competitive integrated employment and divert young people from subminimum wage employment.<sup>17</sup> Providers can be useful partners to school districts as they fulfill these responsibilities and may be able to leverage funding from local educational authorities to assist in this work. Additionally, some school districts will contract with providers or consultants to assist them with transition planning, particularly with young people who have complex needs. Developing opportunities with the school system may also be an outgrowth of a provider's work with families who have children with complex needs or through ongoing partnerships with school districts and transition teams. Some school districts will want to engage providers as partners in operating an internship program like Project Search and school districts will sometimes contract with providers for job development/placement and coaching and/or for an 18-21-year-old program to provide services to students who opt to stay in school until age 21. It's critically important that providers engage with school districts and staff in their area, respond to their needs, and let them know how the provider could assist with ensuring successful school to work transitions for students with disabilities. With WIOA's strong emphasis on students with disabilities graduating into competitive integrated employment or post-secondary education, schools' interest in partnering with community rehabilitation providers focused on integrated rather than facility-based services should grow substantially.

## Workforce Funding

Consider reaching out to representatives of the Workforce System, including local workforce investment boards and American Job Centers (AJCs), to explore partnerships. Under WIOA the public workforce system is mandated to increase its efforts to effectively serve job seekers who face significant barriers to employment, including those with disabilities. WIOA also establishes new expectations for American Job Centers to ensure that accessibility for people with disabilities moves beyond physical accessibility to true programmatic accessibility in order to ensure job seekers with disabilities can participate in all aspects of the American Job Center's programs and services. WIOA further gives local workforce investment boards the option to establish a standing committee focused on people with disabilities.

Providers can assist the people with disabilities they serve to access and utilize the resources of their local American Job Center. Providers can also become more involved with their local workforce investment board to ensure local resources address the needs of jobseekers with disabilities. The Workforce System's American Job Centers work closely with many critical community partners, including

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<sup>17</sup> Section 511 of the Rehabilitation Act as amended by WIOA is designed to advance competitive employment opportunities by imposing limitations on employers who hold special wage certificates from hiring youth under the age of 24 at subminimum wages unless certain steps have been taken including obtaining documentation that mandated transition services have been provided. It also imposes limitations on these employers in continuing to hire people of any age unless certain services have been provided. Section 511 places specific responsibilities on State VR agencies and local educational including documenting that youth who are known to be seeking subminimum wage employment have received mandated transition services and mandates that the State VR agency ensure that all individuals with disabilities who continue in subminimum employment receive career counseling, information and referral services. See full summary in Lead Center Policy Brief at [http://www.leadcenter.org/system/files/resource/downloadable\\_version/wioa\\_title\\_IV\\_summary\\_0.pdf](http://www.leadcenter.org/system/files/resource/downloadable_version/wioa_title_IV_summary_0.pdf)

Vocational Rehabilitation, and can purchase employment services from providers for jobseekers who require intensive services to obtain competitive integrated employment.

A number of recent collaborations, spearheaded by the LEAD Center ([www.leadcenter.org](http://www.leadcenter.org)), demonstrate the advantages of combining the resources of the American Job Centers and community partners to advance employment outcomes. With support from the LEAD Center, American Job Centers have combined resources with those of community provider partners (e.g., mental health centers; Medicaid HCBS prevocational providers) to implement guided group discovery, a highly effective customized employment strategy. In these partnerships, AJC's have hosted group discovery workshops co-facilitated by AJC staff and a staff person from a community partner agency, braiding resources to maximize supports for people with disabilities. See [http://www.leadcenter.org/system/files/webinar/presentation\\_files/CE\\_Success\\_Through\\_Partnerships\\_Slides.pdf](http://www.leadcenter.org/system/files/webinar/presentation_files/CE_Success_Through_Partnerships_Slides.pdf). Also see Module 5 for a more extensive description of customized employment strategies generally and group discovery as an alternative to 1:1 facilitated discovery.

As a provider, you can also look specifically for opportunities and partnerships available as a result of the youth provisions of WIOA. Implementation of WIOA will result in increased focus by the Workforce System on in-school and out-of-school youth, creating new opportunities for partnerships with disability providers. New program elements for youth, including youth with disabilities include: (1) financial literacy; (2) entrepreneurial skills training; (3) services that provide labor market and employment information in the local area; (4) activities that help youth transition to postsecondary education and training; and (5) education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster. There will also be a strong emphasis on work experience. At least 20 percent of local youth formula funds must be used for work experiences, such as summer and year round employment, pre-apprenticeship, on-the-job training, or internships and job shadowing. WIOA also mandates a focus on dislocated workers. The youth provisions of WIOA can be found at Public Law 113-128, Sections 126-129, 29 USC 3161-3164.

The following references may be a good starting point for your exploration of potential funding partnerships in the Workforce System.

- [https://www.doleta.gov/wioa/Docs/WIOA\\_YouthProgram\\_FactSheet.pdf](https://www.doleta.gov/wioa/Docs/WIOA_YouthProgram_FactSheet.pdf)
- [https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL\\_03-15.pdf](https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL_03-15.pdf)
- <http://www.leadcenter.org/wioa-workforce-development/american-job-center-ajc-and-partners>
- <https://www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/onestop/onestopmap.cfm>
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## State Funded Services and Initiatives

State legislators and state administrative agencies may elect to fund employment services or launch initiatives designed to support competitive integrated employment and community integration for people with disabilities, for young people, for senior citizens, veterans, or other populations. Providers should stay informed about such state funding and identify opportunities for collaboration. You can also

develop and present your own proposal for a state funded initiative that can assist in supporting transformation efforts for your agency.

### WIPA Funding

In some states, the state may contract with providers to provide federally funded Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA) services to individuals. These are counseling services to promote employment by ensuring that individuals receive accurate information about work incentives. Providers can explore whether this funding is available in their state.

### County, Municipal and Local Funding

In some states, services for people with disabilities, including employment services, may be funded and/or administered by counties. Additionally, special grants or new programs from your local government can be targeted to populations that local authorities or legislators think have been underserved by the State, such as youth or adults with learning disabilities, autism spectrum disabilities, mental health and/or addiction issues, or veterans. These general local funds may be used to assist providers in developing opportunities for young people who are transitioning into the adult world. You will want to network with local government staff, but also look for announcements of Request for Proposals related to these grants. Grant contracts may be short-term, one time opportunities, or may be ongoing funding that is renewed on a periodic basis.

### Foundation Funding

While most foundation funding is time limited, foundations can be a good source of seed funding for new pilots or bridge funding. If you establish good relationships with a foundation and produce good results, the foundation may continue to work with you on an ongoing basis to channel funding in ways that will help your organization continue to innovate and achieve positive outcomes. Such ongoing innovation projects can help fund mid-level managerial staff and other priorities you may have for a successful employment program.

While there are some foundations that will fund general operating costs, most foundations are looking for innovative projects or capacity building projects. Transformation falls directly into these two areas and if you locate a foundation partner interested in disability, employment or community integration, your transformation efforts may be an ideal project for them.

The best way to locate foundation partners is through the connections you have in the community. Talk with your board, families with whom you are working, employers, and community partners. You may want to structure a pilot program in partnership with a community partner that has its own connection with a foundation but is looking for a new project to present to the foundation. Two possible ways to generate a list of potential foundations that have missions that align with yours are:

- The Foundation Center operates an extensive data base of foundation information. You can subscribe for a month to the database or you can get a yearly subscription. The cost in 2016 for one month without a contract is \$49.99. You can search by keyword, geographic location, and a range of advanced searches to pinpoint good target foundations. The list can be distributed to

your stakeholders and board to see where you might develop contacts. For more information about the Foundation Center see [www.foundationcenter.org](http://www.foundationcenter.org).

- If you know the name of a foundation, you can find out more about its trustees and the grants it has made recently through GuideStar ([www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org)).

### State Developmental Disabilities Council Funding

Each state has a Developmental Disabilities (DD) Council, a federally funded organization charged with promoting self-advocacy, self-determination and integration for people with developmental disabilities. In addition to developing a plan and working with partners throughout the State to achieve plan objectives, DD Councils also develop Requests for Proposals (RFPs) to fund initiatives that help to implement the plan. Discuss opportunities for funding to support your transformation efforts with your state DD Council. Even if particular funds are not directly related to employment, they may help advance employment through education and advocacy.

### Braiding Funding to Support Transformation

Braided funding occurs when multiple funding streams are used *simultaneously* to provide specific services that support individuals to pursue, obtain, or maintain competitive integrated employment.

### Some of the Many Ways to Braid Funding

Here are just some examples of how to braid funding:

- Use Vocational Rehabilitation funding to provide assessment and job placement services, and HCBS funding from the ID/DD system to support community-based employment skill building experiences (prevocational services) and long term job coaching (supported employment services).
- Use special education funds to support discovery and/or internships while young people are in the transition years of school, Vocational Rehabilitation funding for job placement, and HCBS funding to support long term job coaching.
- Use foundation funding or DD Council money for project start up and development of employer partners, VR funding for short term job coaching, and DD or Mental Health (MH) funding for long term supports.
- Use local city or town funding to support discovery and person-centered planning for young people transitioning from school, VR funding for job development and short term supports, and DD or MH funding for long term supports.
- Use Ticket to Work milestones to provide job development and short-term support, followed by the use of HCBS waiver funding for long-term supports.
- Use VR funding to provide job development and placement, followed by combined HCBS and Ticket to Work milestones to fund on-going supports.
- Leverage resources of American Job Center (AJC) and disability provider to guide people through group discovery and then access AJC resources to obtain employment outcomes, through Integrated Resource Team for an individual the AJC enrolls in intensive services.

## Examples of Braiding

The following are two examples in which agencies braided funding across systems to create a vibrant program that supported people to obtain and maintain employment.

### **Example 1. VR and Medicaid Community Day Funding – Transcen, San Francisco**

Transcen, a not-for-profit organization that provides supports for employment and consultant services around the nation, and developed and operates a WorkLink program that combines supports for integrated employment with wrap around community based activities. This flexible approach ensures that people with more significant disabilities can work and continue to get the supports they need when they are not at work to participate in community life. The model braids Medicaid Waiver day service funding with Vocational Rehabilitation employment resources. It is designed to respond to rapid changes in a person's situation including a sudden hire or job loss. (See full description in the following article: [http://www.worksupport.com/documents/jvr\\_transCen\\_worklink\\_program.pdf](http://www.worksupport.com/documents/jvr_transCen_worklink_program.pdf))

### **Example 2. Education, VR and Medicaid Waiver Employment Supports – Charles County, Maryland**

Since the late 1990's the public school system in Charles County, Maryland has been achieving employment outcomes for youth with developmental disabilities transitioning from school by integrating resources and funding from the education system, VR and the DD agency. First, the schools provide work experiences throughout the secondary school years to help students identify interests, skills and supports relevant to the attainment of adult employment. Second, a resource team is formed two years before the projected date for school exit. This team includes the teacher, a VR counselor, a representative of the state I/DD agency, a local community rehabilitation provider (CRP), the youth, and the youth's family. An employment service provider (CRP) staff works under contract with the school system and is paid by that system to assist the teacher locate integrated employment in the last year of school. The VR agency opens a case while the student is in school so that assistive devices, job development and short-term job coaching can be available as needed immediately upon school exit. At the same time, the state I/DD agency ensures that eligibility is confirmed and authorizations are put in place so that long-term post school employment support can begin as soon as school ends and the VR short-term support is exhausted. The CRP is also a vendor for VR and I/DD agency services so that it receives on-going reimbursement for the staff working with the transitioning youth as the youth's services are funded by the different partner agencies. The CRP receives funding from three distinct sources that are braided so that the youth makes a successful and seamless transition to employment. (Source: Mills, L. & Morris, M. (2013). LEAD Center Policy Roundtable Report found at <http://www.leadcenter.org/resources/report-brief/2013-lead-center-policy-roundtable-report-making-collaboration-real>)

The Reference section at the beginning of this section provides additional examples of braided funding across service systems.

## Integrated, Community-Based Wrap Around Supports

As you begin to place people in competitive integrated employment, some people will not have full-time jobs for a variety of reasons. These reasons may include the economy, stamina, availability of jobs that match their strengths and abilities, and/or existing state policies that may terminate vital community supports (e.g. Medicaid waiver services) if a person earns above a certain threshold. People with more complex needs may need access to “wrap-around” supports during their non-work hours. Families and individuals will be much more enthusiastic about competitive integrated employment if they know that wrap-around supports are in place for at least some of the non-work hours, or can be easily put back into place if individuals lose their job. State agencies that serve specific populations may provide funding for these wrap-around supports (e.g., State agencies that serve people with ID/DD, MH, TBI, Substance Abuse). It is vitally important that this funding is used to provide integrated, community-based wrap-around supports where people can continue to learn skills through community involvement, including orientation and navigation skills that can help them continue to be successful in competitive integrated employment. Facility-based or segregated wrap-around supports do not provide the same benefits.

## Reallocation of Existing Resources

### Adapting to revenue and resource changes

As you develop a strategic plan for transformation, one of the first things you will want to do is take a careful look at the funding you already have to identify how you can use that funding to support your transformation efforts. If your agency operates a workshop and does contract work, you may begin to lose net revenue as people begin to transition to competitive integrated employment and less contract work is performed. If this is the case, you will need to develop strategies that focus on greater efficiency, diversification of funding, expansion of services, and reallocation of existing resources to accommodate those losses. There are several strategies below that can be employed to address this issue.

- Review your services to determine which services support the acquisition of competitive integrated employment and meaningful community integration. With the agreement of existing customers who are receiving services that do not support competitive integrated employment, work with funders to get authorizations for the ones that do. Do not accept more referrals to services that do not support competitive integrated employment and gradually phase them out while marketing and growing the preferred services.
- Review staff deployment strategies - Look at each service with fresh eyes and think about how you might use the funding and staff differently to promote competitive integrated employment. Just because things have always been done a certain way previously does not mean that continues to be the best way as you transform. In transformation, all management and staff positions should be reconsidered and job descriptions may be rewritten to ensure efficient use of personnel.
- Analyze service definitions and regulations to see if you can cost effectively use the current funding you receive for competitive integrated employment. Check and obtain confirmation in writing from funders. If funding cannot be used for competitive integrated employment, advocate with funders to see if there is flexibility in the definitions and staffing ratios, and confirm in

writing. Pilot the use of the funding in the new ways and document its effectiveness in supporting transformation outcomes.

- Audit billing - It is important to audit all your service delivery to make sure that your agency is billing for every service and every hour or milestone payment to which you are entitled. This may seem evident, but often when an agency is changing to provide new services they are also changing to a new billing process. It is easy for field staff to miss recording some billable activities or accounting staff to fail to properly bill for them.
- Monitor staff efficiency – You must have highly trained and accountable staff with clear productivity goals that are reviewed frequently to maximize billing opportunities. It is possible to expend more resources than you will be able to draw down if you don't oversee productivity carefully. This is particularly true in performance based payment systems. Supervisors should have the skill to assist staff in analyzing their performance, identifying areas where improvement may be needed, and providing support and guidance.
- Improve administrative efficiency – Many agencies feel like they have accomplished all the efficiency they can. However, there may be other strategies that can help such as use of electronic time keeping systems for staff, web-based employee portals for increased involvement in management of benefits, telecommuting, and implementation of cloud based client information systems that interface with billing. Affiliations with other provider agencies to share and defray some administrative costs should be considered as well.
- Pursue growth – You should be seeking to expand the numbers of people served by the agency in competitive integrated employment. As agencies become more adept with successful job placement, that success should be used to market competitive integrated employment to individuals, families, and referral agencies.
- Diversification
  - Funding – A surprising number of agencies do not use all possible sources to fund competitive integrated employment. Earlier in this module there is extensive discussion of the many sources of funds that may be used for employment support.
  - Services – There are other complementary services that can be used to enhance the employment experience such as community based day support. This service may be used for pre-employment activities as well as wrap-around services for those who work part time.
  - Populations of people served – The competencies you and your staff have developed may be used to assist a variety of people to find work in the community. You may want to explore who those people are and how you can tap into referral sources or even insurance and private pay to provide services to them.
  - Geographic footprint – You may also want to consider broadening the areas in which you are providing services. Competitive integrated employment services do not require a great deal of physical space to provide. Many agencies expand their employment services into new areas without much investment by allowing staff to work from home or some other public location until they have enough business in the new area to merit leasing office space.



- Facilities – Downsizing facility space is discussed earlier in this module. As stated before, it is imperative that agencies make a careful assessment of their physical space needs. It may be possible that some of the space can be “repurposed” to address another agency need. When it is determined that you can lease or sell unused or underused space you should pursue that strategy.

Some providers may operate workshops that generate significant net revenue (e.g. \$100,000 or more annually) for the organization that is being applied to integrated services including supported employment, integrated community supports) and other valuable programs (e.g. birth to three). If this is the case, there may be an option, under IRS rules, to convert the workshop operation to be a separate, taxable entity of the non-profit agency. If done correctly, and with advice/counsel of an attorney with expertise in charitable law, the separate, taxable entity can achieve two very important goals for transformation:

1. As a separate entity, the organization can fully eliminate the use of workers with disabilities in the workshop without creating an obligation to pay unrelated business income tax (UBIT) and without jeopardizing the charitable status of the organization.
2. As a separate taxable entity, the workshop would need to pay tax on net revenues but the remainder (typically over 70%) could still flow to the non-profit organization to support its charitable mission and its focus on competitive integrated employment services and other services that enable people with disabilities who are served to have the best possible life as a fully participating member of their community.

For more information on this option, consult a charitable law attorney in your state or contact Scholz Non-Profit Law ([www.scholznoprofitlaw.com](http://www.scholznoprofitlaw.com)) which is a firm with experience assisting providers with this type of transformation.

Horizons Unlimited, Inc. in Emmetsburg, Iowa, was a primarily facility based agency that ran a recycling and can redemption business and a thrift shop when they began transformation to competitive integrated employment and other fully community based services. They started transformation by first closing their recycling service. Before the closure, they started ramping up competitive integrated employment placements and enhancing their relationships with local public school and the local VR office to gain additional referrals. The agency then moved to close their redemption business, thereby freeing up an entire building owned by the agency. After an audit of operations, it was determined that the thrift shop was not profitable and was transferred to an employee who was the store manager. In the interim, the agency created a community based day service which functioned as both a pre-employment training program and an employment wrap-around service. This move began to empty out more of the agency's facility. Finally, the agency's facility was placed on the market. It sold and they purchased new offices in town. At first, they were going to also purchase another facility for day services but they were so close to being 100% community based they decided to forego purchasing the second building. After their conversion, they had lost the income from the recycling businesses but gained income from the provision of new services. They also lost substantial expense by selling their facilities, purchasing an administrative office and providing all services totally in the community.

## Advocating with Your Funders

### Creating a partnership with your funders

As you develop new services, encourage your funders to be engaged partners in your transformation efforts. Negotiation and advocacy will be most successful if you keep the funders informed and communicate your positive outcomes and results. Let them know what you are piloting, even if you are piloting with private or foundation funding. Invite the funder to an onsite visit and allow them to keep abreast of your results. If you are piloting a new approach invite them to participate in the process. For example, if your agency is beginning a customized employment effort, you can invite the VR counselors to planning meetings. If you are beginning to braid funding, let the funders know why their piece of the funding is so important to the results that you aim to achieve.

### Preparing a presentation for your funders

Preparation is the key to successful advocacy around funding. Once you have defined what funding you need to move forward with transformation, determine which are the most realistic funders for particular pieces of your work and then provide information to them about your costs and why these costs are necessary for you to obtain the desired outcomes. This requires bringing your fiscal and

program staff together to evaluate costs and align those costs with desired outcomes so that you can make a compelling argument to your funders. It may be helpful to ask funders what their basic cost assumptions were in developing the current rates, if they have not shared this information with you previously. If you are piloting a project, collect, and analyze data from the pilot to support the outcomes of your transformation efforts.

Some information to collect includes:

- Current costs from the pilot project - both managerial and direct staffing costs.
- Costs to bring the project to scale, such as additional service delivery and administration costs as you expand to a full-scale project.
- Outcomes achieved at the individual and aggregate levels, and projected outcomes you intend to achieve with scaling up.
- Cost savings to the system – e.g., if people for whom you have found jobs are not using day or prevocational supports and otherwise would have, measure and document those cost savings.
- Overall current cost to the system for your facility based program compared to the long-term support costs of the supported employment program. In particular, calculate for your funders how much your proposed reimbursement(s) for supported employment services actually costs the government. It can be very helpful to compare facility-based day and prevocational services to supported employment based on the cost per hour worked and cost per dollar earned by individual participating. In developing your comparison of costs to the system, you may find it helpful to look at the research by Dr. Cimera. See <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/employment-skills/cimera.pdf>.

Here is one example of a cost comparison:

Emphasize that when people are employed in competitive integrated positions, much of the structure and oversight for employees with disabilities is provided through the supervision and oversight provided to all employees rather than through job coaches. The number of hours of support provided by a job coach, therefore, is usually far less than the number of hours of service provided in a sheltered workshop or day program. Show your funders that while your proposed hourly rate for supported employment services may be higher than the rate for support in a day program or sheltered workshop, the total cost per individual is still less than it is in a day or sheltered work program. For example, an individual may replace twenty hours of services in a sheltered workshop, at the billing rate of \$11.00 per unit of service, with twenty hours of work in a competitive integrated job receiving only 4 hours of support from a job coach at the rate of \$40 an hour. The weekly cost to the government funder for that individual for those twenty hours he is working would be \$160 an hour (4 hours x \$40 an hour) which is substantially less than the previous cost to the government funder for the sheltered workshop services of \$220 per week (\$11 x 20 hours a week.) While the hourly cost is more for employment services, the total weekly cost (and yearly cost) is far less.

## Determining Who Needs to be at the Table

Discussions with your government funders may be through individual negotiations or may be in response to a request by multiple providers (or your provider association) to state or local funders to meet with providers to review the costs and benefits of a proposed payment structure. If rates are regional or statewide, as a provider it is important to determine to what extent your services, service costs, funding needs, outcomes and return on investment are consistent with those of other providers, and to what extent your agency may be able to justify seeking higher rates in exchange for producing better outcomes and a greater return on investment for your funder(s).

## Bridge Funding

One of your challenges could be covering costs from your current facility based programs while you pilot and expand new community integrated efforts. There is a period of time when you are still fully operating the facility while ramping up competitive integrated employment services. Bridge funding can help cover costs until your organization generates sufficient revenue to downsize and reduce some of the operating costs from facility based programs. Foundation funding can be a good source of bridge funding, if the request is for the new and innovative practices you are putting in place. As noted above, state and federal funding initiatives geared at encouraging providers in their transformation efforts

should be sought, when available. These initiatives in various states have included DD Council RFP's, Benefits Information & Planning grants, and VR innovation grants as well as foundation funding initiatives.

# Module 5:

## Individualized Planning and Services (Consumer Focus)

### Key Terms

*Competitive Placement*

*Supported Employment*

*Natural Supports*

*Customized Employment*

*Group Discovery*

*Discovery*

*Medicaid Buy In*

*Work Incentives*

*Self-Guided Discovery*

*PASS Plan*

*1619(b)*

*Impairment Related Work Expenses*

## Resources and References for Module 5- Individualized Planning and Services

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Learning about the Job Seeker (p. 65): Promoting Employment Outcomes Through Partnership and Self Guided Discovery	<a href="http://www.leadcenter.org/news/promoting-employment-outcomes-through-partnerships-and-self-guided-discovery">http://www.leadcenter.org/news/promoting-employment-outcomes-through-partnerships-and-self-guided-discovery</a>
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<b>Helping Individuals and Their Families Navigate Benefits and Employment</b>	
Understanding Benefits (p. 78): Local WIPA (Work Incentives Planning and Assistance) Search	<a href="http://www.choosework.net/resource">http://www.choosework.net/resource</a>
Understanding Benefits (p. 78): Social Security Redbook	<a href="https://ssa.gov/redbook/">https://ssa.gov/redbook/</a>
Understanding Benefits (p. 78): WISE Webinar on Work Incentives	<a href="http://www.edi.cornell.edu/m-cessi-webinars.cfm">http://www.edi.cornell.edu/m-cessi-webinars.cfm</a>
Understanding Benefits (p. 79): Certified Work Incentives Counselors (CWICs) Training and Certification	<a href="http://www.vcuntc.org/training/initial.cfm">http://www.vcuntc.org/training/initial.cfm</a>
Understanding Benefits (p. 79) Certified Work Incentives Counselors (CWICs) Training and Work Incentive Courses	<a href="http://www.edionline.org/courses">http://www.edionline.org/courses</a>
<b>An Overview of Some Work-Related Benefits Strategies</b>	
1619 (b) (p. 79): Continued Medicaid Eligibility Section 1619(B)	<a href="https://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/1619b.htm">https://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/1619b.htm</a>
Plan to Achieve Self-Support: (p. 79): PASS Plan	<a href="http://www.griffinhammis.com/socialsecurity.html">http://www.griffinhammis.com/socialsecurity.html</a>
ABLE ACT Accounts (p. 80): Able Accounts Availability	<a href="http://www.ablenrc.org/">http://www.ablenrc.org/</a>



## MODULE 5: Individualized Planning and Services (Consumer Focus)

One key to achieving successful transformation is choosing or creating the right strategies and tools for your agency to help people find and keep jobs and participate in community integrated activities. Using strategies that fit your needs and implementing those strategies with fidelity through effective training is a central part of your strategic and operational planning.

### Setting the Groundwork – Making Employment Part of the Intake and Planning Process

As you move your services toward competitive integrated employment and inclusive community engagement, it pays to think through with your staff what choice means for people who have had only limited choices and opportunities in the past. As we discuss in Module 3, the choices people make can be impacted by what they are used to, what makes them feel secure, and their fears and self-perspectives. Putting in place meaningful intake and individualized service plan processes will encourage people to think about competitive integrated employment as a choice that will improve their economic well-being and bring new meaning and opportunities to their lives.

#### *What is a meaningful intake process?*

Transformation means highlighting competitive integrated employment as a preferred and achievable option for people who come to you for services. A person and their family may come to you looking for a facility based program because they have heard from teachers, vocational counselors or friends that you are operating a good quality and secure program. Ideally, the intake process will educate people about the availability of competitive integrated employment and paint a picture for people through success stories based in their local community. The intake process should explore with job seekers their dreams, what they are good at, what kinds of volunteer or work experiences they had in high school or previously, and which of these they felt good about. This can empower people to expand their horizons into the mainstream workplace.

With an **Employment First** approach, people who come to you seeking services should get a clear and enthusiastic message from your organization that competitive integrated employment is your passion and right behind that is integrated community participation that allows people to fill valued social roles. If your agency gets a referral or authorization from a funding source for a service other than supported employment; but you find that the individual really would like to explore or pursue competitive integrated employment, its vitally important that your staff communicate with the funding source to try to get a revised authorization that allows your agency to address the person's interest in or desire for competitive integrated employment. While this kind of communication may not have been typical in the past, it becomes essential for any agency engaged in transformation.

#### *Including Competitive Integrated Employment in the development of the Individualized Service Plan (ISP), Individual Education Plan (IEP), or Member-Centered Plan*

Anyone receiving Medicaid Waiver services will have an ISP. If your agency provides pre-vocational or day services to an individual, you will be invited to attend, or give input into the ISP annual planning

meeting with the individual, family and friends, and other providers. Even if an individual is not ready to include competitive integrated employment as a current goal, continuing to bring up integrated employment as an option in a way that connects with the person's interests, skills and personality is a good way to encourage everyone involved in developing a plan to think about competitive integrated employment as a next step for this individual. For example, if someone has enjoyed planting in a community garden, you might suggest developing a paid work experience with a local plant nursery. If someone takes care of a pet at home, but is reluctant to look for a job, you might suggest dog walking for neighbor or volunteering with an animal shelter as a first step toward working with pets in a pet store or grooming business. As a provider, you can play a similar role if you are involved in the development of a student's IEP, or a member centered plan (if the person is enrolled in managed care). These suggestions can lead to plans that include competitive integrated employment as a goal or open the door to career exploration and planning services as a first step.

## Competitive Integrated Employment

### Learning about the Job Seeker

Your agency may want to engage in an assessment process before a person enters job development. This maximizes the chance that the job pursued by the person, with the help of a job developer or employment specialist, is a good fit. The discovery process utilized in customized employment is an ideal way of identifying a person's strongest transferable skills and interests connected to employment and the capacities of people who, for a variety of reasons, may not perform well in a test or structured assessment, or who have interests and skills that will not be captured in standard employment and career testing. Discovery is a way of getting to know people's skills, strengths, and interests through their activities of everyday life and in the places where they are most comfortable and by talking with people who know them the best. Alternatives to facilitated one-to-one discovery include self-guided discovery with a user-friendly tool and guidance from a trained facilitator, or a group discovery in which people support each other in the discovery process through a series of group meetings, also with the assistance of a group facilitator. See resources at:

- <http://www.leadcenter.org/customized-employment/discovery> (A fuller description of discovery and these alternatives is provided in the section on customized employment below.)
- <http://www.leadcenter.org/news/promoting-employment-outcomes-through-partnerships-and-self-guided-discovery>
- [http://www.leadcenter.org/system/files/resource/downloadable\\_version/CE-and-Group-Discovery-FAQs.pdf](http://www.leadcenter.org/system/files/resource/downloadable_version/CE-and-Group-Discovery-FAQs.pdf)

Some agencies use situational assessments or vocational testing to learn more about individual's skills and interests. These approaches are often less useful for people with more complex disabilities, especially if not combined with a discovery-type process.

### Strategies to Help People Find and Keep Jobs

There are three basic strategies we use to help people find and maintain jobs – **Competitive Placement** and **Customized Employment** are two alternative strategies for helping people find employment

opportunities. **Supported Employment** is a strategy for assisting people who need ongoing support to maintain their jobs, whether job development is accomplished through **Competitive Placement** or **Customized Employment**.

### Competitive Placement

Competitive Placement is the hiring of an individual with a disability by a business for an existing job opening through traditional hiring and recruitment processes. A provider might help a job seeker with a disability draft a resume, search for appropriate job openings, fill out an application, prepare for an interview and after being hired, request accommodations. (See Employment First Technical Brief #3, <http://www.leadcenter.org/resource-center/publication/employment-first-technical-briefs>).

Some people who find jobs through competitive placement will also need follow-along job coaching on a short-term or ongoing basis. If staff anticipates that someone they are working with will need follow-along coaching beyond the short-term, they will want to put into place **Supported Employment** for that person. See description of **Supported Employment** below.

### Customized Employment

Some people you work with may have difficulty achieving employment through competitive placement into an already existing job opening or may have interests and abilities that do not match already existing jobs. For those people, customized employment is a highly effective individualized approach to developing a well-matched job. While customized employment has been particularly effective for people with complex needs, who also may need support to maintain a job after the job has been developed, it also is a useful approach for people with a range of capacities and needs. Some people need no support in a job that is customized to their strengths and needs. Others will need ongoing support. For those who need ongoing support, you will want to put **Supported Employment** in place for them (described below). It is worth noting that some people who have been competitively placed into an open job that is not a good fit with their strengths and needs may end up needing ongoing support because the job match was not good, whereas if a customized job can be developed for them, they could work without ongoing supports.

Customized Employment refers to services and supports that are provided to an individual with a disability in accordance with flexible, individualized strategies leading to a negotiated relationship with an employer that focuses on unmet needs and other specific value-added benefits to employers rather than existing open job positions. Customized employment involves a highly-individualized process of job seeker exploration, discovery, development of descriptive profile documents, customized employment planning, innovative representation methods, employer needs analysis, and representation by a job developer. For those people who need long term supports, customized employment services dovetail with supported employment services at the point of successful job negotiation with an employer and thus may evolve into services and supports provided directly at the job location, including, if necessary, ongoing supports and services. (Definition from Employment First Technical Brief #3, <http://www.leadcenter.org/resource-center/publication/employment-first-technical-briefs>).

### *Who are ideal candidates for customized employment?*

Customized employment approaches can be used with anyone. Many people without disabilities customize their own jobs. However, customized employment is particularly useful for people who have been identified as having barriers to employment. People who can particularly benefit from customized employment include:

- People with limited or no work history in mainstream employment
- People whose past work experiences have been negative and/or poor matches
- People who have difficulty fitting standardized job descriptions
- People who have difficulty with the traditional application or interviewing process
- People who have been considered unable to work in competitive integrated employment and therefore unable to benefit from employment services provided by the Vocational Rehabilitation system.

### *What does Customized Employment look like?*

All customized employment approaches have the following four steps in common:

- A discovery process through which staff learn about the individual in the settings in which they are most comfortable doing the daily tasks and activities of their own lives, and talking to the people who know them the best.
- Capturing information in a written document that can be shared with the person, job development staff, and people in the person's life.
- An analysis of employer's needs. These needs can fall into a number of categories. They can be tasks that other employees do not have time to do, tasks that other employees cannot do during particular busy parts of the day, tasks that higher paid employees are doing that would be better accomplished by the individual you are representing, or tasks now performed by someone who doesn't have the expertise or interest in doing the task and would be better taken off that person's plate. A job can be customized from just one task or bundled together with a number of tasks.
- An individual negotiation with potential employers based on the person's capacities and needs as pinpointed through the discovery process and an analysis/understanding of the employer's needs

### *We've heard the term "discovery" a lot. What is it? How is discovery different from assessment?*

Discovery is a process for getting to know a person, with a vocational lens, that utilizes already-existing information rather than information developed through formal or contrived assessment methods. The information developed through discovery guides the employment representative in customizing a job with an employer. This process takes into account the applicant's life experiences rather than single instances of performance. Discovery aims to see where the individual is at their best as a guide to customizing a position where the individual will succeed in employment. See:

- <http://www.marcgold.com/Publications/White%20Papers/Discovery%20is.pdf>

Usually discovery starts with an intake, and then a home visit with the individual and the family. The purpose of the home visit is to understand the routines of the person's life and the daily activities which will reveal the person's interests, skills, abilities and some of the conditions for employment. Following the home visit, employment staff will schedule time to observe and participate in typical activities in which the person engages. This might include volunteer work, recreational activities, chores and responsibilities, sports, or school activities, for example. Employment staff also will interview people who know the person well. These interviews might include family, neighbors, friends, teachers, and relevant professionals. From all of these interactions and interviews, employment staff can identify interests, skills and conditions for employment.

For people who do not need or want one-to-one discovery facilitated by vocational staff, there are several interesting alternatives. In self-guided discovery, people use forms and templates, and the occasional guidance of a facilitator, to move through the discovery steps on their own or with the help of their family. The Lead Center has partnered with American Job Centers (AJC's) to offer self-guided discovery to users of the workforce system, under the guidance of AJC staff. See:

- <http://www.leadcenter.org/news/promoting-employment-outcomes-through-partnerships-and-self-guided-discovery>
- <http://www.leadcenter.org/news/lead-center-and-griffin-hammis-associates-launch-new-training-self-guided-discovery>
- <http://griffinhammis.typepad.com/jobdevelopment/2014/10/facilitating-self-guided-discovery-training.html>

Group discovery is another alternative through which small groups of job seekers are guided through a discovery process by a facilitator through a series of meetings. Typically, in group discovery, individuals engage in discovery activities on their own, with the support of a network of friends or family they have identified, and then meet together in group sessions to review what they have learned about themselves and plan for the next discovery step. Group discovery offers job seekers peer support which can help job seekers stay motivated during their job search, provides networking opportunities, and alleviates the loneliness of the job search process. Group discovery also is a useful alternative when the workforce system or a community provider does not have the resources to provide one-to-one facilitated discovery. More information about group discovery generally, and its use in American Job Centers specifically, can be found at:

- [http://www.leadcenter.org/system/files/resource/downloadable\\_version/CE-and-Group-Discovery-FAQs.pdf](http://www.leadcenter.org/system/files/resource/downloadable_version/CE-and-Group-Discovery-FAQs.pdf)

*[Where can we learn more about customized employment?](#)*

You can learn more about customized employment on the ODEP and Lead Center websites.

- <http://www.leadcenter.org/customized-employment/ce-overview-principles-processes-and-practices>
- <https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/customizedemployment.htm>

There are three models of customized employment being used around the United States. Here, in alphabetical order, are links to the three organizations that have developed these models. You might want to read more about each of these to see which seems to fit your organization the best.

- Griffin Hammis Associates: <http://www.griffinhammis.com/>
- Marc Gold and Associates: <http://www.marcgold.com/>
- TransCen: <http://www.transcen.org/>

### Examples of Customized Jobs

Customized jobs are always jobs that meet employer business needs and match the abilities and conditions of employment for a particular individual. These jobs can be customized in almost any business that has a need for an employee to perform a job made up of tasks that could be effectively performed by an individual you represent. Here are examples from a range of businesses and locations.

**Customized Jobs Example 1-Colin:** Through discovery, Colin’s employment specialist observed his particular skill and interest in organizing clothing and personal items. While he could not read, he could organize items by number and color. In his planning meeting, he confirmed that he wanted to work in a retail store near his home. His team came up with a task list that included sorting clothing inventory, sorting items by size and color, and matching misplaced items. After an initial meeting with a nearby retail clothing store, Marie, his employment specialist, found that the store’s shoe department was disorganized; shoes were in the wrong boxes or not returned to the shelves after customers tired them on. The storage room was a mess. The sales staff had difficulty finding time to organize and re-organize the shoe stock. Marie worked with the manager to negotiate a customized “sales associate assistant” position in the shoe department with specific tasks reassigned from the sales associates to Colin. These tasks included: receiving and unpacking shoe shipments, sorting shoes into size categories, putting sensors and tags on shoes, delivering shoes to the proper rack, and retrieving returned shoes. As the store manager said, “Nothing beats showing me how you can make my life easier!” Colin’s employment specialist helped him negotiate a starting wage consistent with the starting hourly wage of the store’s sales clerks, and hours that met the store’s need and Colin’s availability.

*Source: [https://www.dol.gov/odep/documents/3a71dce9\\_0f04\\_4e80\\_8533\\_aeda57aa48b0.pdf](https://www.dol.gov/odep/documents/3a71dce9_0f04_4e80_8533_aeda57aa48b0.pdf)*

**Customized Jobs Example 2-Brad:** Brad was a young man who had a college degree in business information systems but intense anxiety and challenges in communicating with fellow workers. In discovery, he and his team recognized that he needed to work in a structured environment with specific tasks that used his organizational ability and knowledge of office systems. His employment team met with a partner in a small law firm that had recently merged with another firm. The partner and support staff, immediately saw that Brad could be helpful to them in managing the increased document workload. In particular, the law firm was having trouble keeping up with the need to file original documents and create digitalized copies of all important documents. Brad's employment team worked with the law firm staff to develop a full-time customized job that included creating digitalized client files, scanning documents, categorizing documents into the proper folders within client files, taking inventory of office supplies, and messengering important documents.

*Source: Job developed by Job Path Inc., New York City*

**Customized Jobs Example 3-Nathan:** Nathan grew up in Zumbrota, Minnesota, a small town outside of Rochester. He began his working years bouncing around between workshops and enclaves, as there wasn't much else available to him. Nathan knew he could do far more than that. Nathan moved to the Twin Cities in Minnesota and began to work with an employment team who introduced him to customized employment. Through a discovery process, his team learned that Nathan has strong skills in planning and organizing. He is also a strong leader and loves to teach and delegate tasks. He runs his own meetings, plans parties for his family, and writes his own speeches, which he has given to crowds in excess of 500 people. Nathan is an active member of several disability activism groups and is also an avid participant in the Special Olympics. He is also a true performer and a few of his biggest passions are dance and cheerleading.

Three themes emerged from discovery with Nathan. Planning and Organizing, Public Speaking and Instruction, and Performance Arts and Music. Nathan went on approximately 20 different informational interviews with a wide variety of local businesses. Eventually, Nathan went on his final informational interview. It was with Heather Patton, a Youth Development Specialist at the Southeast Area YMCA in Woodbury. The YMCA customized a job that used Nathan's considerable talents. Nathan was hired as a Youth Development Staff, teaching adaptive sports and cheerleading classes to children between the ages of three and twelve. Nathan is also leading a pilot program that is a partnership between the Special Olympics and the YMCA. The Young Athletes Program is for children between the ages of two and seven and is a cooperative learning experience for children both with and without disabilities. Since its launch, this program has been very successful, largely because of Nathan.

*Source: Minnesota Customized Employment, <http://mntat.org/stories/nathan.asp>*

**Customized Jobs Example 4-Drew:** When his employment team began to work with Drew, they knew from his family and support team that he was unable to focus for more than a few minutes on any one task. During Discovery his team observed that his focus improved dramatically when he was engaged in something new and different. He was fascinated by a table of magnets and spent over a half hour exploring the magnets. This proved to his team that if interested enough, Drew could focus his attention. His team also learned that he was drawn to peaceful outdoor environments. He had enjoyed living on a farm for a number of years, loved to sit outside, particularly near water, and enjoyed masculine activities and machinery. Based on this information, his employment team reached out to a family run tractor business to explore tasks that might be a good match for Drew. The employer had need for someone to stock equipment in a store room in their facility. Drew tried out this task. Despite his interest in the equipment, Drew could not tolerate the closed in environment. As discussions continued, the employer noted that the family also operated a small farm. When Drew visited the farm, he was attracted by the animals on the farm, just as he had been fascinated by the magnets during discovery. The employer identified the task of feeding the chickens as a need that Drew could fill. Over time Drew increased his work to 10 hours a week, and has expanded his work to feeding other animals on the farm.

*Source: Benchmark, New Mexico*

## Supported Employment

Supported Employment is the hiring of an individual with a disability by a business where a supported employment provider assists both the business and the individual with a disability in the early stages of the employment relationship through support during employee training, combined with as-needed coaching and consultation as the employment relationship continues. The ongoing supported employment supports necessary to maintain an individual with a disability in an integrated employment job are based on the supported employee's individualized needs and the needs of the employer. Supported employment services are intended to maximize integration of the individual within the workplace, with emphasis on facilitating the use of existing natural supports (e.g., co-workers, supervisors) supplemented only as necessary with supported employment staff paid for through public funding programs (e.g. VR, Medicaid). See Employment First Technical Brief #3, <http://www.leadcenter.org/resource-center/publication/employment-first-technical-briefs>.

Effective supported employment begins with a person-centered planning process designed to learn the individual's employment goals, strengths and needs. Often employment staff can further their knowledge through a discovery process and/or situational assessment in a community based work setting. See descriptions of individualized assessments and discovery above. Meetings with family members, teachers, and other service providers assist in the planning process. For many people, individualized job development, based on thoughtful planning, is key to a successful long term job. Job developers can work creatively with employers to "job carve" or to customize a job by combining a set of tasks into a unique position within the business, as described above. The goal of supported



employment should be to fade support to the extent possible while helping the person maintain his/her job. As you develop employment opportunities, you will want to be looking for jobs from which you can fade support. In those circumstances where people are capable of doing employment tasks, but need one to one or frequent support regardless of the job match, you may want to work with your funders to find what level of support is available. For example, a workplace personal assistant may be more appropriate than a job coach.

One strategy for providing frequent support throughout a work shift by a staff member for individuals with high support needs is to use a ***dispersed cluster approach*** to job placements, if possible. That is, individualized job placements are sought in businesses that are geographically proximal to each other (e.g., in a downtown area). A one person-one job match approach is still used, but the proximity of the job placements allows a job coach to rotate among the sites to provide regular, ongoing support.

Your state may allow and provide funding to pay the employer so that co-workers can provide supports. This is especially useful for people who require just intermittent support during their shift. See Dane County Partners with Business: <http://www.letsgettoworkwi.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Partners-With-Business-PowerPoint.pdf>

**Note to Reader:** While mobile crews and enclaves fall within the supported employment umbrella, this type of employment is not considered competitive integrated employment. As public policy and funding streams become exclusively focused on competitive integrated employment, it is not recommended that providers invest in developing mobile crews or enclaves. Mobile crew and enclaves are rarely a good match for every person, they typically require continuous on-site supervision by a staff member from the agency, they interfere with the development of natural supports, and they congregate and segregate the workers. In the end, it takes more time and effort to find individual jobs for each person that was placed in an enclave or work crew. The preferred method to get individuals into the community is by placing them in competitive integrated employment through the one person, one job approach.

### Building Natural Supports - Defining the Job Coach Role

A key skill for your employment staff will be the art of facilitating ***natural supports***, which begins from the moment staff negotiate a job with an employer. Natural supports include (but are not limited to) receiving cues and support from coworkers without disabilities. In essence, coworkers without disabilities start taking the place of job coaches naturally over time. This is similar to the idea of coworkers on the same team meeting or talking throughout the day to brainstorm, motivate and keep each other on task. If a person is going to become an integrated part of the workforce, the employer needs to see the person as her/his employee, who s/he and other employees are responsible for supporting, with additional Employment Specialist support, as needed. Natural supports are more likely if Employment Specialists serve as a resource to the employer but do not in any way replace the employer, managers and co-workers.

Visual materials and technology are great ways to build the independence of supported employees, and thus reduce the need for job coach or co-worker support. Adaptations, modifications, and technology supports might include work task checklists, pictures of tasks in the order they need to be accomplished,

labeled bins for finished and unfinished work, an iPhone set with times that certain tasks should be started, and apps developed to help people move through tasks.

## Career Advancement

In our very mobile society, few people stay in the same job all of their lives. Many people want variety, new experiences, and new challenges. As you transform your organization, think ahead so you can structure services that will support people to continue to grow.

As part of long term supports and ongoing assessment activities, your team can be checking in with people to see how they feel about their current jobs. Do they need or want to make more money? Is the job still satisfying? Do they want to develop new skills and take on more challenges? Can they accomplish those things in their current work place or do they need to look for a new or additional job? You may need to work with your funding sources to advocate for funding to help the person receive renewed job training or find a new or additional job. Keep in mind that Vocational Rehabilitation can serve people with disabilities who desire career advancement, even if they already hold a competitive integrated job. Medicaid HCBS funding for supported employment can also be used to support people to achieve career advancement, if a state adopts a definition for supported employment services that includes career advancement.

## Self-employment

For some people self-employment is a good option. For self-employment to be successful, it is important to determine a need in the community and help develop a business plan. Self-employment may be a good option when:

- A person lives in a community with few employers.
- The individual has a particular marketable skill for which there is an unmet need in the business community.
- The person has or can acquire funds to purchase equipment that is valuable to other businesses or people in the community.
- The person has many conditions for employment but can offer something of value either through skills, equipment, or ability to learn valuable tasks.
- The person has a very engaged and supportive family that is interested in assisting their family member to develop and sustain self-employment.

Self-employment can be an exciting path to fulfilling dreams and achieving independence. As your team helps people explore this option, they will want to keep in mind a number of considerations and pull in a number of resources. Questions to consider include:

- Does the individual have the wherewithal to manage the business by themselves? If not, who will assist? Just like other self-employed individuals, many individuals with disabilities will need support in navigating the small business and tax reporting requirements and some people will need help with business finances and management, and organizing the work flow and tasks. If the small business generates enough income, these supports can be purchased. If not, business partners, family or support staff will likely need to assist.

- Can you bring in a benefits counselor to help maximize the resources available for the business through incentives offered by the Social Security Administration?
- What equipment or start-up costs are there, and what are the grants available for equipment and start up?
- What are the person's transportation needs and what resources and funding are available? There can be a big difference in people's transportation needs, for example a person operating their own delivery service and a person doing data entry from home have very different transportation needs.

You can help people pursue a goal of self-employment with or without supported employment, and with or without customized employment, depending on the individual's needs. For more information about customized self-employment, see: <http://www.griffinhammis.com/selfemployment.html>

### Having a Process in Place if People Lose Their Jobs

A major concern for people, their families, and professionals who support individuals who are thinking about employment is the very practical question about what will happen if and when the person loses their job. The recent ups and downs in the economy only underscore the need to think about job replacement when structuring your services, and to advocate with your funders to respond to this concern.

People who can manage their days independently will be concerned about the financial aspects of losing their job and about finding a new job as quickly as possible. You will want to think about moving them to the top of your waiting list if VR job development services are the best way to help them find a new job. In some places, job development for people who have lost their jobs will be funded by HCBS services. In that case, if they have been receiving support services you may want to ensure that they are re-assigned to staff with job development responsibilities.

People who are less independent or less able to organize their lives may need a way to structure their days if they lose their job. As an agency, have a plan in place for if/when jobs are lost. Once again, individuals should move to the head of the line for job replacement services rather than return to the workshop or stay home. The ideal might be to have a wrap-around community based vocational program that will help the person develop additional experience, skills and contacts in the community and serve as a supplementary program for people who are working part-time. If you don't have funding for a community vocational or community based day program, you may want to advocate with your government funders to help you create such a program for people who are working part time or have lost their jobs.

### Paid internships and work try outs

Paid internships, paid work experiences and work try outs can help people gain skills, confidence, make connections, and build their resume. In many cases, the work experience itself leads to a job. In other cases, the internship can lay the ground work for a job with another business. These paid work experiences may be part of your employment program and/or your prevocational program. Funding for work try outs may be available through your State VR agency, ID/ DD agency, MH agency, or other State

agencies. Providers can also work with private donors, foundations or corporations to develop a paid internship program.

Examples of internships as a pathway to employment are included below.

**Internship Example 1-Darryl:** Darryl is a 24-year-old man who lives with his mother and father in New Jersey. In discovery, his team learned that he had developed many artistic skills and interests. He volunteered at an art gallery, enjoyed origami, and had a workshop in his basement where he had learned to use a grinder to sharpen scissors, and used a variety of other tools. Two major themes emerged from discovery – art and the use of machinery. His team based development of a paid internship on these themes. They located a machine shop that used powder coding technology to spray paint metal products. The machine shop developed a paid internship through which Darryl could learn this skill, using on the job training funds provided by VR. The paid internship has turned into a full time paid position. Darryl strips the paint off old parts and sets the powder coding machine to spray new color on the part.

*Source: The Arc, Camden, New Jersey*

**Internship Example 2-Amy:** From Not-for-Profit Internship to Paid Job at a Realty Management Firm—Amy was looking for a job for over four years. She wanted to do clerical work in a market where clerical jobs are hard to come by. Amy interned at a not-for profit that worked side by side with her provider agency to find tasks that would give Amy the opportunity to develop skills. She impressed her supervisors, who gave her a glowing recommendation. Amy was paid through VR work experience funds. She received job coaching for the first several weeks of this internship. With this addition to her resume, Amy obtained a job working 30 hours a week for a realty management firm and has now been in that job for over two years.

*Source: Job Path, New York City*

## Volunteering and unpaid internships

Volunteering and unpaid internships help everyone build skills, make connections, and build a resume. Providers should encourage business and not-for-profit partners to use the same federal and state laws, regulations and guidelines that apply to all individuals for their consumers with disabilities. Your city or town may also have local rules and ordinances for volunteering and unpaid internships. Government agencies that can provide guidance are: U.S. Department of Labor:

<http://webapps.dol.gov/elaws/whd/flsa/docs/volunteers.asp>

Also, check with your State Departments of Labor.

## Beneficial Employment Related Activities for Job Seekers

We recommend that you develop new services or reorganize current services to help people who are seeking jobs, or people who have obtained part-time jobs, to engage in community activities that will enhance their skills, build confidence, further develop interests, and give them additional opportunities to develop relationships with other members of the community.

Employment related activities can range from utilization of the resources at the local American Job Center, informational interviews with employers to short-term job shadowing, volunteering, unpaid internships, participation in community interest groups, and recreational activities that build confidence, independence and connections in the community. The goal of developing opportunities in the community is finding places and activities where people have a chance to develop their own skills and interests and their own individual interactions and relationships with community members. There is a big difference between being a “regular” versus a visitor in the community. It is not good enough to arrange for a group of people, even a relatively small group, to make isolated visits to community settings. Instead, individualized approaches must be made to match people’s interests and desires with opportunities in the community, and to facilitate engagement, membership, and natural supports.

Person-centered planning is the starting point for this work. You may want to engage in a discovery process, such as the process used for customized employment, to uncover the best way a person can make a valued contribution in the community. But remember that planning is only a first step. Putting the plan into action is what really counts. Also remember that employment related activities do not take the place of a real job, and should not be the ultimate, end-goal but rather a means to competitive integrated employment or to augment employment that may not be full-time. You will want to ensure that competitive integrated employment remains the goal for each person engaged in these employment related community based activities.

Once you have located opportunities, it is important for your staff to keep an eye out for ways that you can build natural supports and fade staff support. This increases the likelihood that people will develop professional relationships that will be helpful to them in finding a job or advancing a career. Training staff to learn how to fade supports will be a major component of any community vocational and day program. Knowing when to step back is the difference between being a bridge to the community and creating an artificial wall between the individual and the community.

How supports for these employment related community based activities look in your agency will depend on staffing, funding, potential community partnerships, and your own ingenuity. Some important elements to consider in providing such programs are:

***Learn about people’s interests*** – As part of the discovery process, team members can identify possible volunteer, social and recreational activities.

***Matching individuals into pairs or small groups based on interests, geography and support needs*** - If you do not have funding for one-to-one support, you will need to work with small groupings of individuals (e.g., 2-3 people) based on interests, level of support needs, and geographic location. Avoid taking larger groups out in the community, as doing so reinforces stigma and stereotypes and impedes natural interactions with community members. It will be important to develop a thoughtful approach to

matching individuals based on compatible personalities, interests and schedules. It is also beneficial to reach critical mass, in terms of numbers of individuals served, as soon as feasible in order to increase the options for matching individuals and thus improve the quality of the matches that are made. Remember that individuals do not have to be matched with the same people at all times. They can be matched with different individuals on different days, depending on the specific activities they will be involved in at any given time.

**Community mapping** – Scope out the people, organizations and resources in the community that you may tap into. Think about which staff live in particular neighborhoods, partnerships you already have in particular geographic areas, and new partnerships you may want to explore. Develop a way to catalogue information for future use. A searchable database can be a great resource to avoid staff duplicating prior mapping efforts. Sometimes, an agency will identify a member of staff (or volunteer) to act as a temporary or permanent community mapper, researching all of the neighborhoods, cities, towns and villages where the agency supports people.

**Creative Scheduling** - You will want organized, committed staff members to bring individual interests and needs together with community mapping to develop a schedule for each person, or if necessary, a schedule for small groups of individuals supported by staff. The success of this effort will determine whether your agency's services help individuals further develop their interests, build connections, and enhance their work experiences. Often, agencies will need to reassign an existing staff person (e.g. a program manager or assistant; a transportation coordinator, etc.) to handle scheduling as the number of people served grows.

**Ensuring sufficient oversight and supervision for direct support staff** - Direct support staff will benefit from supervision and support to locate community resources and activities and meet the needs and interests of all the individuals they support.

**Fading supports** – Like employment supports, you will want to facilitate natural supports from day one and fade paid supports for individuals in community based activities. This will look different for each person. For example, it may mean assisting with transportation to get to activities, but relying on natural supports once s/he is there. Fading supports will give people opportunities for independence and to develop their own relationships in the community. In addition, fading supports will open up staff time to serve others. Examples of community-based supports include:

- Staff accompany an individual(s) to shadow particular types of workers on a job.
- Staff work with a person to develop questions for an informational interview, but the person goes to the informational interview on their own.
- An individual volunteers with one-to-one staff support, but after an initial period, the person continues to volunteer with natural supports.
- Staff accompany several individuals to a not-for profit setting where each person volunteering is involved in unique tasks in separate areas where they develop their own relationships.
- One or two individuals join a choir with support from a staff member, who then fades after they get acclimated to expectations.

- Two people who need support to go to the movies are able to go to the movies together and provide each other with the support they need

*Resources and events for gaining creative ideas about community inclusion:*

- TASH conference ([www.tash.org](http://www.tash.org))
- Toronto Summer Institute ([www.inclusion.com/workshops.html](http://www.inclusion.com/workshops.html))
- Hoff, D., De Biase, C., Sasnett, G. Ensuring Excellence in Community-Based Day Supports: A Guide for Service Providers and Staff, at <http://www.communityinclusion.org/>
- Walker, P. & Rogan, P. (2007). Make the day matter: Promoting typical lifestyles for
- Adults with significant disabilities. Baltimore: Paul Brookes Publishing Co.
- Messenger, G. & Mills, L. (2005). Sharing Community: Strategies, Tips and Lessons Learned from Experiences of Community Building at Options. Madison, WI: Atwood Publishing. See: <http://inclusion.com/bksharingcommunity.html> or <http://www.optionsmadison.com/publications>

## Helping Individuals and Their Families Navigate Benefits and Employment

For people who receive SSI, SSDI, Medicaid or Medicare, effectively coordinating work earnings with their benefit eligibility is central to ensuring that they and their families maximize their incomes. Some people will be reluctant to start working unless they understand that they will do better economically. They will want to know that their benefits will still be there if they lose their jobs. The more people understand how the benefit system supports and encourages employment outcomes, the more likely it will be that they will be willing to pursue competitive integrated employment. The following suggestions can help people understand benefits:

- Develop an ongoing relationship with a work incentives benefits counselor. Look for a benefits counselor from your local or regional WIPA. State and not-for-profit agencies are funded as WIPA projects (Work Incentives Planning and Assistance). You can search for a local WIPA at <http://www.choosework.net/resource>
- Build staff knowledge about the relationship between benefits and work. Staff do not need to be work incentive benefits counselors to have a solid understanding of Social Security and Medicaid incentives. Good ways to build that knowledge include:
  - Start by having a work incentive benefits counselor come to talk to your staff.
  - Have your employment team and case managers (if you have case managers) read or review key sections of the Social Security Redbook. The Redbook is online at <https://ssa.gov/redbook/>. Sections to review include SSDI and SSI employment supports, SSDI only employment supports, SSI only employment supports, and Medicaid Buy-In.
  - Review web based resources about work incentives. For example, see the WISE webinar at site of Cornell Institute on Employment and Disability <http://www.edi.cornell.edu/m-cessi-webinars.cfm>
- Your team can go with people to meet work incentive benefits counselors so they can learn side by side, and help people ask questions and understand the information provided.

Virginia Commonwealth University's National Training Center offers training and certification for Certified Work Incentives Counselors (CWICs). See: <http://www.vcuntc.org/training/initial.cfm>

Cornell's Employment and Disability Institute offers courses in work incentive sand certification for Certified Work Incentives Counselors. See: <http://www.edionline.org/courses>

## An Overview of Some Work-Related Benefits Strategies

### 1619(b)

One of the biggest concerns that people have about going to work is that they will lose their Medicaid coverage, including the support services they get through Medicaid. The Social Security Act provides protection for people who have been receiving SSI and have begun to work. People can qualify for continued Medicaid coverage if they meet a number of basic requirements including:

- Have been eligible for an SSI cash payment for at least 1 month
- Still meet the disability requirement
- Still meet all other non-disability SSI requirements other than income
- Need Medicaid benefits to continue to work
- Have gross earnings that are insufficient to replace SSI, Medicaid and publicly funded attendant care services.

Each State has established a threshold income below which a person can qualify for Medicaid coverage even if their income is too high to receive SSI. If a person has gross earnings higher than this amount, the Social Security Administration can figure an individual threshold amount based on a number of considerations. For a full explanation of 1619(b), see:

<https://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/1619b.htm> and The Redbook chapter on SSI Only Employment Supports.

### Medicaid Buy-In

In many States, through the Medicaid Buy-In Program, working individuals with disabilities can maintain their Medicaid even if their income is above the Medicaid income limits. The Social Security Redbook provides a summary of this opportunity. See the Redbook chapter on Health Care for Persons with Disabilities.

### Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS Plan)

A **PASS Plan** is a method by which a person with a disability can set aside money and things he or she owns to pay for items or services that he or she needs to achieve a work goal. These items include supplies to start a business, school expenses, equipment and tools, transportation, and job coaching supports. *The result is that the income set aside is not counted when calculating the amount a person receives in SSI and is not counted toward resources.* Benefits counselors, VR counselors and others experts can help people set up a PASS plan. If your staff are knowledgeable, they can help people set up a PASS Plan. Details about how to set up a PASS plan are included in the Redbook section on SSDI and SSI Employment Supports. Griffin Hammis is a consultant agency that has expertise in using PASS plans to support employment goals. See <http://www.griffinhammis.com/socialsecurity.html>



## Impairment Related Work Expenses (IRWE)

The Social Security Administration will deduct the cost of certain *impairment related work expenses* that people need in order to work from gross earnings when determining if they are earning over the substantial gainful activity level. This can enable people to maintain their SSDI while working or continue to receive a larger portion of their SSI when working. This gives them extra income to cover items and services they need to maintain their job. To be deductible the items and services must be: 1) required for the person to be able to work; 2) required because of a mental or physical disability; 3) not reimbursable by any other source; and 4) a reasonable cost. There is a wide range of items that can be deductible so staff should become familiar with this opportunity. Items can include transportation, personal care attendants, medication, and medical equipment. A table of the items can be found in the Redbook chapter on SSDI and SSI Employment Supports.

## ABLE Act Accounts<sup>18</sup>

Be sure to check whether ABLE accounts are available in your state. ABLE Accounts are tax-advantaged savings accounts for individuals with disabilities and their families. ABLE Accounts were federally approved through the passage of the Stephen Beck Jr., Achieving a Better Life Experience Act of 2014, better known as the ABLE Act. The beneficiary of the account can be a person with a disability who acquired his/her disability before the age of 26. Income earned by the account will not be taxed. Contributions to the account made by any person (the account beneficiary, family and friends) are made using post-taxed dollars and are typically not tax deductible, although some states may allow for state income tax deductions for contribution made to an ABLE account. For the first time, eligible individuals and their families are allowed to establish ABLE savings accounts **that will not affect their eligibility for SSI, Medicaid and other public benefits**. The legislation explains further that an ABLE account will, with the private savings accrued in the account, "secure funding for disability-related expenses on behalf of designated beneficiaries with disabilities that will supplement, but not supplant, benefits provided through private insurance, Medicaid, SSI, the beneficiary's employment and other sources." This is an excellent vehicle for saving earned income while not jeopardizing the availability of critical support services available through Medicaid.

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.ablenrc.org/>

## **Module 6:**

# **Reorganizing Staff for Transformative Change**

## **Key Terms**

*Dispersed Cluster Approach*

*Self-Directed Teams*

## References and Resources for Module 6- Reorganizing Staff for Transformative Change

Recourses	
Filling Staff Positions: Recruiting, Interviewing, Orienting, Training, Evaluating, Supporting, Empowering and Retaining Staff	
Interviewing (p. 85): ODEP archived training webinars	<a href="http://www.leadcenter.org/customized-employment">http://www.leadcenter.org/customized-employment</a>
Interviewing (p. 85): Association for Community Rehabilitation Educators trainings	<a href="http://www.acreducators.org">www.acreducators.org</a>
Interviewing (p. 85): Federally Funded Regional Training and Resource Centers List	<a href="https://acl.gov/Programs/NIDILRR/Grant-Funding/Programs/rrtc/resources.aspx">https://acl.gov/Programs/NIDILRR/Grant-Funding/Programs/rrtc/resources.aspx</a>
Interviewing (p. 85): Griffin Hammis Associates training	<a href="http://www.griffinhammis.com/">http://www.griffinhammis.com/</a>
Interviewing (p. 85): Marc Gold and Associates training	<a href="http://www.marcgold.com">www.marcgold.com</a>
Interviewing (p. 85): TransCen training	<a href="http://www.transcen.org/">http://www.transcen.org/</a>
Interviewing (p. 85): Virginia Commonwealth University	<a href="http://www.directcourseonline.com">www.directcourseonline.com</a>
Interviewing (p. 85): College of Employment Services	<a href="http://www.directcourseonline.com">www.directcourseonline.com</a>
Interviewing (p. 85): Training Resource Network	<a href="https://disabilitywebtraining.com/">https://disabilitywebtraining.com/</a>
References	
Supported employment and workplace supports: A qualitative study.	Rogan, P., Banks, B., & Howard Herbein, M. (2003). <u>Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation</u> , 19 (1), 5-18.

## MODULE 6: Reorganizing Staff for Transformative Change

### Determining Staffing Needs

Agencies are accustomed to organizing personnel and operations in a manner that supports services that they have traditionally provided. They may sometimes reorganize to accommodate the addition of new services or the expansion of current services, but they rarely step back to completely rethink their structure, and the staff positions within it, to address a new focus. When an agency is transforming to support competitive integrated employment, they must take this important step and organize services and supports around people. It is a time when all positions should be reconsidered.

The focus of all staff efforts, irrespective of the funding stream or service the person is receiving, should be aimed at encouraging, preparing and enabling individuals to obtain and maintain competitive integrated employment. That may mean that in the short term, some staff stay in their current positions but have a new focus and different responsibilities. But over the longer term as the agency is moving toward more and more people working and seeking jobs in the community, increased numbers of staff positions should be allocated to your employment efforts. Some new positions may be added while others are revised, reduced or eliminated. Ultimately, the preponderance of positions should be ones that directly support competitive integrated employment, such as employment specialists and job developers.

#### *What staffing ratio should I budget for?*

While competitive integrated employment services are always delivered on a one-to-one basis, how many individuals a job coach or job developer can work with at one time will vary significantly depending on how you choose to organize your job development and job coaching functions and the support needs of the individual job seekers. It will also be impacted by the stage job seekers are in as they move through the employment process. One pitfall you will certainly want to avoid is matching people to jobs from which staff cannot fade to a reasonable extent, given the person's level of disability, in a reasonable timeframe. Poor job matches that result in little or no fading will require intensive 1:1 staffing which will consume much staff time and make it difficult to serve as many people in the ratios you have budgeted. Poor job matches can include jobs where the tasks and duties are not a good fit with the person's skills, where the environment creates too many challenges for the person to stay on task and accomplish his/her duties, or where there are no natural supports present that can provide the intermittent information and supports a person may need when a job coach fades. It's also critically important that job developers do not promise employers that job coaches will be perpetually present as an incentive to hire.

Some agencies have used a ***dispersed cluster approach*** to provide staff support to workers with disabilities who require intermittent longer term supports. In this approach, several individuals who work in geographical proximity to each other either within a large business or a couple of adjacent businesses, may be supported by a single job coach who moves among them. Such arrangements must be carefully considered to ensure that the jobs obtained are the appropriate matches for the job seekers and that they are not simply placed in jobs for agency convenience. It is also important to ensure that individuals do not work side by side but are dispersed throughout the businesses to avoid

stigmatization. Finally, the workers in the cluster must be able to work independently or with support from natural supports, at least for some periods of time.

*Does that mean that management and administrative positions should be reviewed also?*

Yes. As agencies increasingly move to competitive integrated employment, management responsibilities are impacted as much as those of direct support professionals. All management positions should be evaluated for relevance to the new direction, including qualifications and training for management positions that will continue in and beyond transformation. New staff, or existing staff that have made the change to a new position, should receive training and support that will allow them to be able to self-manage. This often results in a flattening of the organizational structure through a reduction in middle managers. This should allow for some re-direction of resources to enhance direct staff professional compensation and other transformation expenses.

## Revisiting Job Descriptions

Inevitably, the jobs of many of your staff are going to change as you move toward competitive integrated employment. The focus of staff jobs and required skill sets will be different. Job descriptions must be reviewed and revised to reflect the new responsibilities and expectations. The process of revising job descriptions provides an opportunity to identify the qualities and characteristics that are most desirable in particular roles. It also allows you to thoroughly think through the tasks of the job. It is a very good practice to get the input of staff who are currently performing the job when you are developing the new job description. They know best what important skills and abilities are required, the tasks that should be included and expectations that should be communicated. Well-developed job descriptions also provide an opportunity to communicate the mission and philosophy of the agency and to weave the agency's values throughout. An example Community Employment Specialist job description is provided at the end of this section. Keep in mind that management job descriptions should also be reviewed and revised to support transformation efforts.

## Filling Staff Positions: Recruiting, Interviewing, Orienting, Training, Evaluating, Supporting, Empowering and Retaining Staff

### Recruiting

The entire process for staff recruitment and hiring is changing as we move toward competitive integrated employment. You are looking for different qualities and characteristics in your new staff than previously. Staff are needed who have an ironclad work ethic and who are self-starters and self-managers. They need the relationship building skills to make connections with others in the community, to negotiate and compromise and to "support from behind" without overshadowing the people they support. Because of their constant interface with the public they must maintain professional behaviors and appearance. Some organizations have found that hiring new staff without experience in traditional services, who bring positive attitudes and experience working with businesses and/or in the community, helps to jump start the change efforts.

Your current recruitment efforts will likely need to change to attract the new staff that you are seeking for the future. When advertising, it is helpful to use key words and phrases that will attract people with the necessary qualities and characteristics for the job.

### **Sample Job Advertisement**

Motivated self-starter with a strong work ethic, good self-direction and organizational skills and a professional appearance who likes problem solving, enjoys people and develops relationships easily, to assist job seekers with an array of interests and abilities to find suitable employment. The candidate will develop relationships with employers to address workforce needs and with job seekers to identify work interests, preferences, and skills. Preferred candidates will have experience working in the business community and with job seekers with diverse skills, abilities, and barriers to community employment.

## Interviewing

Your interviewing approach should change to focus more on surfacing the preferred qualities and characteristics for the position. While skill and experience in supporting people with disabilities is important, having the right personality and ability to make connections with others in the community is of equal or greater importance.

Sample Interview Questions:

1. Tell me about yourself. How do you like to spend your time when you aren't working?
2. What are your interests and hobbies?
3. How are you connected with your community?
4. Do you participate in any civic organizations or activities?
5. Do you enjoy meeting new people?
6. How comfortable are you speaking in public or to people you don't know well?
7. How would you describe your personality?
8. Would you say you prefer to work more independently or with close supervision?
9. Have you ever worked in a team? Did you enjoy it?
10. Tell me about your experience with business. What did you learn?
11. Describe your experience working with job seekers? Who were they and what did you do to help them?
12. Do you believe that all people, regardless of disability, can obtain competitive integrated employment?

### *Will current staff be able to transition to new positions?*

Agencies handle the transition of existing staff to new jobs in a variety of ways. Decisions about how job transitions will occur will be dependent on the needs and culture of the agency. Some agencies decide to have all existing staff apply and interview for new employment positions. Others choose to allow staff to move into a new position without application, but provide them with training for their new position and place them in a trial employment period for the new job. *The most important thing to keep in mind as new positions are being filled is that the new jobs cannot be done well by people who do not believe that people with complex disabilities can work.*

To be successful, agencies must have staff who aren't just average employees, but passionate advocates who believe people with disabilities can and should work and that they are there to help make that a reality.

### *If after providing training, coaching, mentoring and other support the staff is still not happy with his or her new role, what can I do?*

While we want to support as many staff as possible to make the change, realistically the new job may not be a good fit for everyone. This can be difficult for both parties, the staff and the agency. But it simply must be viewed in terms of the right job match. We would not want to make a match between a job seeker with a disability and a job that was not good for them. Neither should we want staff poorly matched to their jobs. No one benefits from a poor match. So, if a match is not there for any reason, it may be best to support the staff to find a more suitable job. Some agencies have their human resources departments work with these staff as they transition to new endeavors. HR staff can help with resume development or editing, connections with employers, providing references and counseling. Though it can feel awkward, if handled correctly these transitions can be managed artfully and won't unduly stress the staff or their supervisor.

### **Staff orientation and training**

Starting off right with your new competitive integrated employment staff matters. You want to plan thoughtfully about their initial orientation and training. New staff members need to be well versed in the philosophy and values that support competitive integrated employment. Start with that foundation and build on it with training on the skills required for the job, especially if the new staff does not have those skills already. Then you can move to training on the agency's policies and procedures. But along the way don't neglect such important topics as customer service and teamwork. Often agencies partner new staff with more seasoned staff to shadow them and receive coaching and mentoring support.

### *What are the priority areas for staff training and development?*

As noted in the section above, the philosophy, history, laws, recent funding mandates and civil rights implications that undergird competitive integrated employment are important for staff to learn about and understand. They can't be successful in doing this important and sometimes challenging work without understanding *why* it is a priority and, hence, why their role is so important. Though they may not realize it, they are the real change agents who will advance this civil rights movement for people with disabilities. That is a big responsibility, but it should also be considered a privilege and an honor to

be among the leaders of change within this field. Staff can feel very inspired when they are supported to see their role from this perspective.

Staff will also require technical assistance and training to be proficient in delivering effective supported and customized employment services. With experience, we've grown more sophisticated in our knowledge of marketing, business practices and successful approaches for securing individualized jobs that match the interests and preferences of the job seeker with the needs of the employer. These strategies have improved our ability to get people with more complex disabilities into competitive integrated work, however job developers must have the proper training and support to utilize these successful practices and approaches. The training must be of good quality and highly effective. The most effective training includes not only classroom or online training but also field based mentoring by experienced staff.<sup>19</sup> Other important training such as customer service, systematic instruction, facilitating natural supports, utilizing assistive technology, teamwork and strategies for fading support should also be provided. Competency in these areas is particularly important for job coaches. And finally, a clear understanding of the procedures for record keeping and billing is essential for keeping your agency financially sound.

During transformation or any significant change in a business, the need for staff development arises and the demand for training increases substantially. As transformation plans and budgets to support them are developed, consideration must be given to the need and cost for increased staff training.

Trainings and certifications are available to help you ensure that staff have the competencies they need to advance your employment first agenda and outcomes.

- ODEP has a free subscription service open to all that provides topical webinars from experts in the field monthly. Webinars are archived and accessible to the public. To go to archived webinars, see the LEAD Center <http://www.leadcenter.org/customized-employment>
- Association for Community Rehabilitation Educators – You can go to their website [www.acreducators.org](http://www.acreducators.org) to locate trainings that provide competency-based certification. These trainings can also prepare staff to sit for the APSE exam to become a certified employment support professional (CESP).
- University based trainings – Check universities in your area or nearby states for trainings. The federal government funds several regional training and resource centers. For a list of these centers, go to: <https://acl.gov/Programs/NIDILRR/Grant-Funding/Programs/rrtc/resources.aspx>
- Griffin Hammis Associates: <http://www.griffinhammis.com/>
- Marc Gold and Associates: [www.marcgold.com](http://www.marcgold.com)
- TransCen: <http://www.transcen.org/>
- Virginia Commonwealth University: [www.worksupport.com/training/courses.cfm](http://www.worksupport.com/training/courses.cfm)
- College of Employment Services: [www.directcourseonline.com](http://www.directcourseonline.com)
- TRN: <https://disabilitywebtraining.com/>

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<sup>19</sup> <http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/learn-implementation/implementation-drivers/coaching>



*How can I get quicker access to face to face training for staff?*

Employees need access to quality training to gain and expand their skill sets and do excellent work. Agencies are often challenged to find the resources necessary to get training for staff in a timely manner. Though there are increasingly more online options for training, there is always a need for direct, face to face training and mentoring. This type of training is especially important for staff as they are called upon to perform some of the more complex strategies used to support people with disabilities in finding, obtaining and maintaining competitive integrated work. Access to external training through attendance at training sessions, conferences and workshops is important. But those opportunities do not always present themselves in the timeframes in which they are needed by staff. It is optimal to have access to online training resources offered by ODEP and some others entities that are listed above and staff within the agency who are trained as trainers in the key areas in which staff need training. Sharing training resources with other agencies is a good strategy as well. Agencies that have staff that are trainers may be willing to share that training resource, perhaps in trade for other training resources that the receiving agency may have. Agencies may also come together to purchase training for their staff. Some examples of this kind of cooperation are below:

Development of an employment roundtable attended by representatives of four northwest Iowa supported employment providers was spearheaded by ISI in Battle Creek, Iowa. The providers, ISI, Genesis, the Howard Center, and Cherokee Work Services, get together on a quarterly basis to train, share experiences and support each other. They recently invited two additional supported employment providers in their region to attend. Staff in attendance receive CEUs for participation. Their regional DD office coordinated with a state grant from the Iowa Coalition for Community Employment (ICIE) to provide two trainers at no cost to the group to work specifically on customized employment techniques.

In January 2015, five supported employment providers in Maryland, SEEC, Compass, the Arc of Howard County, the Arc of Central Chesapeake and the Spring Dell Center, collaborated to provide staff intensive training and credentialing on Discovery, Job Development and Systematic Instruction. The “Discovery Consortium”, as it became known, was funded through a grant from the Kessler Foundation.

## Evaluating staff performance

### *What are some good strategies for evaluation of staff performance?*

Training needs to be conducted to help employees learn how to successfully perform their jobs. They also need feedback on how well they are performing so they have an opportunity to improve their skills. There are many ways to provide that feedback. One approach is to observe staff as they perform their jobs to determine how well they can use the skills that they should have acquired through training. This approach makes the evaluation less personal because it is focused more on how well the training was absorbed and translated into action. If the staff member is not performing well on tasks they were trained on, then the next step is to provide additional training or other support to help the staff gain the skill they are lacking.

See also Module 7 discussion on 360-degree staff evaluations.

## Supporting staff

We have staff who are predominantly in the field and rarely at the office. How do I prepare them for this decentralization of services?

Staff who support people to work in competitive integrated employment are often primarily, if not entirely, located in the community. They may not have a permanent desk at the agency's office but instead have a desk or cubicle that they share with other employment staff. Many employment staff base themselves entirely in the community - in their car or at the local coffee shop. This has become increasingly possible as we have gained access to more portable electronic means of communicating and record keeping. These tools should be used to keep you connected to staff and to provide them assurance that assistance from management is always there if they need it. It is important to consider some type of remuneration for staff using their own electronic devices like cell phones or tablets if they are required to have and use them.

As mentioned earlier, these staff will work fairly autonomously in the community and therefore should have strong self-management skills. That does not mean that they do not need support, however. Agencies should be thoughtful in preparing staff for the impact of decentralization which can include some sense of isolation. Some ideas for how to help staff feel supported and a part of the agency are:

- Develop a routine of visiting staff in the community. Be sure to do this in a way that does not interfere or in any way stigmatize the person being supported at work. Staff appreciate having you see and understand what their job entails daily.
- When visiting, ask the staff what you can do to assist them in doing their job. If they give you some ideas, don't forget to carry through with their requests and communicate back to them.
- Schedule routine staff meetings in the community, not back at the agency's office. This reinforces the idea that the community is where our work is and shows staff that management will come to them to provide support rather than always expecting them to come to management. These meetings also provide opportunities for employment staff to share successes and challenges with each other and promote team support and problem solving.

- Develop ways to reward staff for success, e.g., newsletter features, public acknowledgement at events, recognition as employee of the month, and monetary rewards for superior performance.

### Empowering staff on the front lines

*Sounds like staff are going to be much more independent. How do I know they will make good decisions?*

Staff in decentralized organizational structures can and should be empowered to work semi-autonomously. They can often be in a position where they must decide how to address a particular situation quickly. They don't always have immediate access to supervisors and therefore need to have the trust and support of their team and their supervisor to act using their best judgment. It should not be taken for granted, however, that the staff automatically have the skill and the confidence to assume this responsibility. Judgment and decision-making are acquired skills. Training should be provided that prepares staff for the responsibility they will have and provides them with guidance on strategies for sound decision-making. The parameters of staff decision-making authority should be well defined so that everyone is clear about what kinds of decisions can and should be made autonomously by staff versus those which require input by other team members or supervisors.

### Staff retention

*How can I keep my staff when I really don't have resources to pay them as much as I think they deserve?*

Staff retention is always important in any organization. Companies spend large sums of money, time and effort on staff recruitment and training. When turnover occurs, it is very costly not just in terms of finance and effort but also in terms of consistency and quality. Agencies need to do everything possible to support and retain staff. Often wages are a concern and unfortunately one of the hardest variables to influence. There are some ways to re-allocate funds to improve staff salaries, such as administrative efficiencies, reductions in operating costs and management flattening, but these efforts alone may not completely address the problem. There are other strategies that should be considered that can help retain your staff such as:

- Leadership training and career advancement - Staff who are interested in career development should be groomed for future advancement within the agency and provided opportunities to apply for promotions. Part of the preparation for advancement is to provide opportunities for staff at any level in the agency to develop and exercise leadership skills. This kind of preparation may take many forms, like rotating facilitation of staff meetings among team members, encouraging staff to provide training and mentorship to others, supporting participation on a special project, serving as a team leader, or enrolling them in formal leadership training. Good managers identify the skills that their staff need to be able to potentially advance in the agency through the annual evaluation process and ensure that opportunities to acquire those skills are provided.
- Celebrating successes – Transformation is hard work. Finding great jobs for people with complex barriers to employment is also hard work. Your agency will benefit from developing strategies to celebrate what you have achieved through the tough work you and your staff have done. Stories of success in competitive integrated employment can accomplish many objectives. They can demonstrate to those who may have been doubtful that people with complex barriers to

employment can not only work but be successful beyond their imagination. They can also reward the workers with disabilities by acknowledging what they have achieved. They can reward the staff who have been an essential part of the employment success story. Data can also be used to demonstrate and celebrate success in fun ways. Use your teams to brainstorm how you'll recognize and celebrate success, such as the one below.

**At each team meeting, the staff of Goodwill of South East Wisconsin lists out all the people who recently got jobs and where they are now working. They take the time at the front end of the meeting to congratulate each other in person on the individuals hired for that month. Throughout the month, they also feature success stories highlighting individuals who have gotten jobs to showcase the individual, employer and the SE team members who have helped make it happen.**

## Team Building and Self-Directed Teams

### *How do we develop effective teams?*

Teamwork is essential in successful competitive integrated employment services. Everything about community employment is constantly in motion. Opportunities can arise that must be taken advantage of immediately. Schedules can change unpredictably and staff must be flexible and cooperative with each other. Employees should have a strong orientation towards customer service which means that when support is needed by either of their two main customers -- the worker with a disability or the employer -- the entire team works together as necessary to ensure that the appropriate support is provided. Teams will be developed using several considerations. Some teams are developed based on geography. This is particularly true in decentralized, geographically dispersed agencies. There are other organizing principals to consider depending on the purpose and focus of the team: like who works well together, who has a specific area of expertise, and who either excels in an area or requires additional support and mentoring.

Many agencies use self-directed teams to manage their services. Self-directed or self-managed teams are groups of staff who use their collective skill and knowledge to manage their area of responsibility within their company without the traditional amount of managerial support. Members of the team should have the skills to do their jobs independently and a willingness to coordinate and cooperate with others. Managerial support is more of a coaching nature rather than the traditional, hierarchical approach.

That sounds a little scary. How will I prepare staff to participate in self-directed teams?

Self-directed teams require thoughtful preparation and adequate management support to function optimally. There must be a significant amount of trust among the members of the team and between the team and the manager. Preparation for participation in a self-directed team should include the following training:

- Team mission and vision
- Concept and functioning of self-directed teams
- Roles and responsibilities of team members and managers
- Consensus building and conflict management
- Data-based team performance measurement
- Team member evaluation and feedback

The agency must also ensure that teams have the following support from management:

- Clear expectations
- Access to all needed information and resources
- Tolerance for mistakes
- Trust and guidance as needed

When properly developed and appropriately supported, self-directed teams can be very effective. Participation in the team can glean greater staff satisfaction and commitment to their work. That satisfaction can translate into better performance by the individuals on the team and by the team collectively. Self-directed teams are usually closer to the direct work of the agency and can identify and address issues more quickly and sometimes more innovatively than managers who may be more removed.

## Attachment to Module 6

### XXXX AGENCY

#### **JOB DESCRIPTION:**

**Mission:** *Advancing community support and opportunities for people living with disabilities*

**Core Values:** *We believe each person should:*

- *Be included, respected, and valued;*
- *Have ongoing information, experiences, and expectations from which to make choices;*
- *Have a variety of relationships;*
- *Live and participate in the communities of their choice; and*
- *Have a career, dreams for the future, and make meaningful contributions.*

**JOB TITLE:** Employment Specialist

**Grade:** 5

**FLSA:** Exempt

**Revised:** XXXX

**SUPERVISED BY:** XXXX

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**Job Summary:** Works with assigned individuals, staff and circles of support to identify the job seekers interests, skills, talents and possible support needs to facilitate community integrated employment. Works with community employers to gain an understanding of the overall functioning and personnel needs of their businesses. Makes sound matches between the work aspirations and skills of people supported and the personnel needs of employers which result in satisfactory outcomes for both parties. Develops and maintains positive relationships with people supported, colleagues, referring agencies and with employers.

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#### **Essential Functions:**

1. Collaborate with the individual job seeker, agency staff and others, as appropriate, to develop an employment profile using Discovery and other approved techniques to ascertain as much information as possible to facilitate a sound job match;
2. Ensure that the information gathered during the Discovery process is kept up to date, focuses on the interests and skills of the job seeker, is framed positively, highlights the talents of the individual, recognizes the support needs the person may have, includes both the individuals desired outcomes as well as his or her “non-negotiables” for employment and is conducted in community settings;
3. Conduct informational interviews with community employers to develop relationships and learn more about their businesses;
4. Actively participate in community business association networking and other functions;
5. Use personal informal networks and those of others to identify community jobs;
6. Develop and maintain positive relationships with community employers and referral sources;
7. Ensure that necessary information regarding jobs opportunities is communicated to the individual, his or her family or others providing support to the individual;
8. Ensure that information regarding the impact of employment on the individual’s benefits is accurate, communicated to the individual and, where appropriate, his or her family or residential provider and kept up to date;
9. Conduct analyses for jobs obtained to ensure that the individual working and staff providing support understand exactly what tasks need to be accomplished and in what order;

10. Support employers and co-workers to orient and train the worker with a disability with his or her support, develop natural supports for the individual in the work site and begin planning for fading of employment specialist's direct support as soon as possible;
  11. Coordinate activities with other staff and demonstrate ability to function as a member of the team;
  12. Maintain data on all activities and develop reports that will allow for an assessment of progress and examination of problem areas when they occur;
  13. Complete all paperwork, including billing documentation, as assigned and in a timely and professional manner;
  14. Participate in the orientation and training of other agency staff as requested;
  15. Attend and participate in all relevant agency events, workshops, training and meetings; and
  16. Perform other job related duties as assigned.
- 

**Required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:**

1. Ability to gain thorough knowledge of XXXX agency's policies and procedures;
  2. Ability to act as a positive representative of XXXX agency to the public;
  3. Thorough knowledge of discovery, customized employment, traditional job development and job analysis practices and procedures or willingness and ability to acquire such knowledge
  4. Ability to effectively communicate with individuals from diverse backgrounds;
  5. Ability to develop and maintain community relationships for the benefit of the agency and people served;
  6. Ability to research, prepare, review and maintain reports and documents;
  7. Ability to maintain confidentiality;
  8. Ability to use sound judgment when making decisions;
  9. Ability to pass a criminal background check; and
  10. Skilled in the operation of relevant computer systems, including hardware and software, and office machines.
- 

**Education and Experience:**

1. B.A./B.S. in Vocational Rehabilitation, Education, Special Education, or related field required or equivalent training and experience;
2. CESP certification required or must be acquired within one year of initiation of employment;
3. Requires two or more years related experience working with persons with disabilities;
4. Must meet XXXX agency and funding jurisdiction current requirements for criminal background/records check;
5. Valid health certificate to meet current funding jurisdiction requirements; and
6. Valid state-issued driver's license with current driving record in good standing required.

**Physical and Environmental Conditions:**

Work requires no unusual demand for physical effort.

Work environment involves risks or discomforts that require special safety precautions e.g. safely operating a motor vehicle.

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*The above job description is not intended as, nor should it be construed as, exhaustive of all responsibilities, skills, efforts, or working conditions associated with this job.*

*Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable qualified individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions of this job.*

# Module 7:

## How Are We Doing? (Results)

### Key Terms

*Individual Level Assessments*

*Organized Assessments*

*Sense of Urgency*

*360-degree Evaluation*

*Stakeholder Satisfaction*



# Resources and References for Module 7- How Are We Doing?

Resources	
Change Leaders Network's Website	<a href="http://www.changeleadersnetwork.com">www.changeleadersnetwork.com</a>
Breaking out of the box: A descriptive account of community rehabilitation providers engaged in transformational change.	Petty, D., Brickey, J., Verstegan, D., & Rutherford, K. UT-TIE Organizational Change Mentoring Project. University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee.

## Module 7: How Are We Doing? (Results)

### Why measure the change process and outcomes?

Organizations should measure and evaluate their change process, performance quality, and outcomes in order to:

- ✓ Monitor implementation and progress toward goals
- ✓ Determine whether goals have been achieved
- ✓ Determine the satisfaction of various “customers”
- ✓ Understand how goals were reached
- ✓ Identify and prioritize next steps
- ✓ Learn from successes and missteps

The adage “What you count, counts!” applies here. That is, by setting goals, targeting desired outcomes, and gathering assessment data on an ongoing basis, organizations not only hold themselves accountable for the quality of their services and outcomes, but also focus on continuous quality improvement.

Organizational assessment is a circular, ongoing process, as depicted in Exhibit 7.

Exhibit 7. Organizational Assessment Process



### Collecting Data and Tracking Outcomes

*What data should we collect and how?*

There are four levels of data that most organizations consider important: organization, unit, team, and individual, as described next. The methods used to measure performance will vary according to what is being measured. These may include:

- ✓ Organization records and documents
- ✓ Surveys/questionnaires
- ✓ Interviews

- ✓ Observations
- ✓ Focus Groups
- ✓ Open Forums
- ✓ Case Studies

For each assessment, collecting baseline data establishes the starting point for determining if and how much progress has been made.

### Organizational Level Assessment

Organizational level assessments address broad, agency-wide outcomes. Examples include the number and amount of grants and contracts that were obtained in a given period of time, and the number of business partnerships that have been developed.

### Division/Department/Unit Assessment

Examples of assessments at the division, department, or unit level (e.g., Employment Services) include the total number of employees who have obtained employment specialist training, the average hours and wages of all integrated employment placements during a one-year period, and the overall satisfaction of individuals being served by Employment Services.

### Team Level Assessment

Team level assessments focus on performance outcomes that are directly related to the work of a particular team. Examples include the number of people who were placed in jobs during each quarter, the average and range of hours, wages, and benefits of those who were placed in jobs, the number of inclusive community activities that individuals receiving services are engaged in, the credentials that team members earned through professional development during the year, and the overall satisfaction of individuals served by the team.

### Individual Level Assessment

**Individual level assessments** focus on staff member goals and performance outcomes. Learning organizations support staff members to set professional goals aimed at continuously building their skills, expertise, and effectiveness. Evaluations should align with each staff member's job description. Ideally, job descriptions address: a) the essential functions/tasks; b) the approximate time devoted for essential functions/tasks (e.g., % of time per week expected to be in the community), c) specific expected organizational behaviors (e.g., reflecting the values, vision, and mission, effective communication, team membership, etc.), and d) enhanced functions to increase skills and responsibility within the organization. Staff performance reviews should be tied to specific outcomes for people served. Thus, examples of individual level assessments include the number of job placements that each staff member obtained, the type and amount of natural supports that are in place for each individual being served, job promotion or growth opportunities that have been facilitated for those being served, and the number and type of personal connections/relationships with community members without disabilities that have been facilitated with those being served. In addition, staff performance should include the professional development activities that the staff member has engaged in to enhance their knowledge and expertise and contributions to their team.

Rather than rely solely on supervisors to conduct staff evaluations, some organizations have embraced a **360-degree evaluation** format that involves obtaining feedback from the staff member’s customers, including employers and consumers, as well as from family members, team members, and from those s/he supervises. 360-degree staff evaluations provide a multi-rater process whereby feedback is provided by peers, supervisors and customers. The staff being rated also does a self-assessment. The cumulative assessment report offers many different perspectives on the staff performance from many different levels rather than from the top down. 360-degree reviews are often used to help staff develop improved work skills or behaviors.

## Monitoring Stakeholder Satisfaction

*How can we monitor satisfaction among various stakeholders?*

It is important for organizations undertaking transformational change to gather information about the satisfaction of their staff, those receiving services, and other stakeholders (e.g., employers who have hired individuals with dis/abilities). The most commonly used methods include some form of survey or questionnaire, although interviews are also used to gather satisfaction information, especially from people receiving services. Obviously, questions must be customized for each targeted group. Two examples of Satisfaction Surveys for individuals who receive supported or customized employment services are provided below.

### **Example 1. Integrated Employment Satisfaction Survey**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Do you have a job? If ‘Yes’: What do you do? What do you like about your job?  
If ‘No’: What would you like to do?
2. Who do you know at work (co-worker(s)? Boss? Do you eat lunch or go on break with anyone?
3. Do you volunteer? What do you like about volunteering or” helping out” in your community?
4. What do you like best about your (agency) staff?
5. Is there something you *don’t* like about your staff? If ‘Yes’: What can we do to fix it?
6. What are your dreams for the future? How can staff help you to achieve them?
7. Overall, how do you feel about your services from (agency)?  
☺ Very good      Good      Just OK      Not good ☹  
If response is “Just OK” or “Not good”, ask person for reasons.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person supported (or other person interviewed)      Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of interviewer

*Adapted from KFI Satisfaction Survey 2017*

**Example 2. Guide to Gathering Information on the Annual Individual Quality Check-Up for Employment Services**

Adapted from Jay Nolan Community Services, Inc. Guide for Supported Living ([www.jaynolan.org](http://www.jaynolan.org))

**Possible questions, considerations, explanations about this section:**

<p>1. Individuals has a “good” job (e.g., good location, at least minimum wage, satisfactory hours, natural supports, etc.)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it in a safe area?</li> <li>• Is it accessible to public transportation?</li> <li>• Does the location and job make sense in terms of the person’s preferences, needs and wants?</li> <li>• Does the job offer most of the characteristics that were most important to the individual?</li> </ul>
<p>2. Provider has been effective in assisting the person to have a job that is well matched to the person’s strengths, interests, and needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did the provider help the person to have several choices of places to work?</li> <li>• Was the provider effective in helping them to find their “dream” job?</li> <li>• Did the provider involve the circle and others in the search for employment?</li> <li>• Did the provider impose any restrictions about where the person would work or make any major decisions about her/his employment separate from the focus person?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Choice and Self-Directed</b></p>	
<p>3. Does the person have a good means of communication that is used by the people around them?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the person able to express their wants and needs? How?</li> <li>• Does this mode of communication work for the person?</li> <li>• Does everybody around them use the preferred choice of communication?</li> <li>• Is there a need to find a better way for the person to communicate?</li> <li>• If the person is non-verbal, does the provider and the circle have a way for determining how the person’s needs and preferences direct their supports?</li> </ul>
<p>4. Does the person direct or control their daily work-related decisions and activities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the person choose or direct:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How to spend their paycheck?</li> <li>○ With whom to take their breaks/lunch?</li> <li>○ What to eat?</li> <li>○ What to do before/after work?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>5. Does the person have the support needed to pursue personal goals for the future/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the provider given the person an opportunity to plan out long term or big goals about what they want to do in their daily life, including their job and career?</li> <li>• Is there a written plan about how to pursue these goals (if the person wishes to pursue them)?</li> <li>• Does the person have career and/or life goals that the provider doesn’t know about?</li> <li>• Is the provider developing and implementing support for the person’s life goals as well as the day to day support needs?</li> </ul>
<p>6. Does the person control who provides their support?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did the person play a significant role in choosing who works with him or her?</li> <li>• For people who are non-verbal, does the provider have a method for finding out what the person wants in regard to who works with them?</li> </ul>
<p>7. Is the provider effective in assisting the person to direct their daytimes and manage risks?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the provider demonstrate respect for the person and their personal and cultural preferences in their life?</li> <li>• Does the provider have a method for looking at and resolving conflicts and risks with decision making in the person’s life?</li> <li>• What is the provider’s role in decision making in the person’s life? How do they exert influence over the person?</li> </ul>

## Relationships

<p>8. Does the person have a good network of co-workers, community members, friends, and family?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the person have friends to do things with and have fun with (that are not paid to be in his or her life)?</li> <li>• Does the person have as much contact with his or her family as they wish?</li> <li>• Does the person have people to call on when they need help?</li> <li>• Who celebrates with them?</li> <li>• Who does this person know at work and in the community?</li> </ul>
<p>9. Does the person have a dependable circle of support that works together as a team to assist the person to have a good life?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the person have people other than paid staff of the agency who help them sometimes?</li> <li>• Does the provider assist in helping the circle or network of support to work together?</li> <li>• Do the people in the person's life ever get together (circle meetings, celebrations, etc.)?</li> <li>• Does the provider use the circle of support to help solve problems that come up (in accordance with the focus person's wishes)?</li> </ul>
<p>10. Has the provider been effective in assisting the person to pursue relationships that enrich his/her life?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the provider actively assist the person to extend their circle of support and relationships?</li> <li>• Does the provider know what the person wants in terms of relationships with others?</li> <li>• Does the provider's relationship with the person ever get in the way of relationships with others?</li> </ul>
<p>11. Person has been able to access community and generic services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which generic resources does the person use?</li> <li>• What kind of community services does the person utilize?</li> <li>• Does the provider have a directory or information about community resources?</li> <li>• Has the provider provided advocacy with generic agencies to assist the person to get more generic services?</li> </ul>
<p>12. Does the person participate in community life (belongs to community groups, clubs, religious groups, etc.)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What clubs, community groups, religious organizations, etc. does the person belong to and/or regularly participate in?</li> <li>• What people in the community does the person regularly interact with?</li> <li>• Does the person have any ways to contribute to the community (volunteer work, community activism, etc.)?</li> </ul>
<p>13. Provider is effective in assisting the person to be a valued member of the community (in accordance with the person's wishes.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the provider assist the person to connect with people on the job and in the community?</li> <li>• How does the provider help to resolve conflicts with others?</li> <li>• Is the provider knowledgeable about how to help people connect with their community (knows clubs, organizations, etc.; is creative in finding ways that they can help people they support to use personal interests as ways to meet and get acquainted with other people?) Is the provider aware of the person's level of loneliness or isolation? Does the provider actively work to reduce it?</li> </ul>

## Flexible, tailored services and supports

<p>14. Does the person have a good written plan of services and supports that is based on his/her own wants, needs and preferences, and changes as those change?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a written support plan?</li> <li>• Does it reflect the person's wishes, personal goals, cultural/ethnic preferences?</li> <li>• Is it based on supporting the person to be who they want to be or on trying to change or control the person? (Are there objectives or goals on it that are not the idea of the person?)</li> <li>• How was it developed? Does the provider have a good method for learning who people are and what they want to do with their lives (Discovery)?</li> <li>• When the person's needs or wants changed, did the plan change?</li> <li>• What kind of control does the person have over what the support looks like?</li> </ul>
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<p>15. Is the person as safe and healthy as possible?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the provider effective in having the person take as much responsibility as possible for their own health and safety?</li> <li>• Has anything bad happened to the person in the last year? Do you think the provider should have handled it differently (either in preventing it from happening or in handling it after it happened)?</li> <li>• Does the provider have a good emergency response service? Does the person know how to use it?</li> <li>• Do you feel that the person is as safe as you'd like them to be?</li> </ul>
<p>16. Does the person have opportunities to increase abilities, confidence and quality of life?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the person have opportunities to learn new things, take classes, and have new experiences?</li> <li>• Does the provider make an effort to expand the person's world of experience?</li> <li>• Is the provider aware of the person's quality of life and do they initiate a process for making changes if the quality falls below an acceptable level?</li> <li>• Is the provider effective in assisting the person to increase their status in life?</li> </ul>
<p>17. Is the provider effective in assisting the person to plan and implement support needs?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the provider facilitate natural supports while fading direct supports and make sure that support needs are being addressed at work?</li> <li>• Does the provider document progress on the goals of the plan?</li> <li>• Is the provider creative and thoughtful about how they set up support for the person (using different approaches for different people and situations)?</li> <li>• Has the provider let the person down in a significant way in the last year?</li> <li>• Does the provider regularly check with the person to see if their support needs have changed?</li> <li>• Are staff trained and prepared for their responsibilities with the person?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Overall Satisfaction</b></p>	
<p>18. Overall, is the person happy with their employment and community engagement, as well as the supports and services received from the provider?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the provider done most of the things the person or their circle thought they should do?</li> <li>• Have there been conflicts with the provider that the person or their circle could not resolve?</li> <li>• Does the person or others involved with them feel that they have ever let the person down?</li> <li>• Would the people involved recommend this provider to someone looking for integrated employment services?</li> <li>• Would the person or their circle change anything about the person's job(s) and daily schedule?</li> <li>• Is everybody satisfied with the level of support and assistance the person receives?</li> </ul>
<p>19. <b>Person's expectations:</b> Main things I want my agency to do for me: 1. 2. 3.</p>	<p>The agency should ask the person (or their circle if the person is not able to speak for themselves) to identify the three main things they want from the service provider. They can be specific things (like "help me get another part-time job" or general things like "treat me like an adult."). Then ask the person and their circle to rate how well they are doing on those things.</p> <p>Questions to ask to elicit questions: What's the most important thing that you want your agency to do for you? What do you wish they would do for you? If you were the boss of this agency, what would you tell people to do for you?</p>
<p>General Comments:</p>	

Obviously, if individuals who receive services cannot respond to the satisfaction questions, other methods of determining satisfaction need to be used. These include observations of the individual on the job and input from employers, co-workers, staff, and family members.

### What Have We Learned? What Needs to Change?

Gathering assessment data is useless unless the data is analyzed and used to improve performance and outcomes. Learning organizations continuously strive to improve the quality of their services and results by reviewing progress toward the stated goals and using the data to inform decisions. As noted previously, the Strategic Plan should be revisited and revised periodically, using assessment data to inform next steps.

### Maintaining a Sense of Urgency

Because people's lives are being impacted every day by the decisions and actions of each service provider organization, it is crucial to strive to maintain a sense of urgency during the organizational transformation process. Far too many adults have desired real work and full lives as members of their communities while spending years in segregated facilities. Organizational leaders must strive for a balance between moving too fast or too slow, knowing that a one person at a time approach cannot be rushed, but a lackadaisical approach is not acceptable.



# Module 8:

## Beyond Transformation

### Key Terms

*Community of Practices*

*Consortium of Agencies*

*Cluster Model*

*Learning Journey*

## Module 8: Beyond Transformation

### Contemplating Expansion to Meet Broader Needs

As you support people to make a place for themselves in the economy, you will be uncovering new avenues in which you can support them, and even new sets of people who could benefit from your work. These opportunities may be consistent with your mission, make a difference in people's lives, and enable you to expand revenues and reach economies of scale.

Here are some new needs that might present themselves to you:

- Individuals who are working would like opportunities to socialize with and without people with disabilities on weekends;
- People want to further develop their careers;
- People would like to attend community college;
- People want to live on their own in the community with support;
- Unserved veterans would like to obtain your services;
- People with mental health issues who seek your services;
- Unemployed, underemployed, displaced or older workers who could benefit from your employment expertise.

You will want to evaluate these exciting opportunities through the same kind of self-assessment process – though perhaps less comprehensively – that you have used to begin your transformation work.

Through a self-assessment process, you can evaluate: 1) when is the appropriate timing for expanding your supports and services; 2) are you providing your current services as effectively as you can; 3) will the expansion further support and enhance your current services; 4) can you maintain quality or will you be spreading yourself too thin if you take on these new efforts.

Opportunities for expansion can be opportunities to reach out to foundations, and other private donors. Research and planning grants can help you evaluate these opportunities, and can provide your staff with new opportunities for creativity and leadership.

### Serving as a Mentor to Other Organizations

Once you have made substantial progress in your transformation, you may want to make mentoring and technical assistance part of your operations. This is a terrific opportunity for staff to develop leadership and public speaking abilities, think about their own work from a new perspective, and can generate some additional revenue. What follows are a few ways that you can get involved with mentoring other agencies.

#### Communities of Practice

A *Community of Practice* is a group of providers who meet together, in person or virtually, to share ideas, strategies, expertise, and training resources. The group can bring in speakers and trainers to address areas of mutual interest and concern. They also may meet periodically to support and mentor each other in ongoing employment work. You can both receive and offer advice through this community

of practice. If you are ahead of other colleagues in your state or region, spearheading a community of practice is a good strategy for mentoring other provider agencies, spreading the cost of your staff training, marketing yourself as a resource to other providers, while providing your own team with an opportunity to brainstorm with other colleagues.

### Consortiums and Collaborations

Another avenue for mentoring other employment colleagues is by developing a **consortium of agencies** that actually work together to meet their employment goals. The growth of consortiums has been a response to the advantages of reaching out to the business community in a collaborative way so that competition between providers does not undermine individual's ability to find a good match and employers need to find the right employees. Consortiums also enable providers to present a more cohesive presence to employers in a way that assures employers that the industry is designed to meet their needs, and to educate the business community in a consistent and effective way about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities.

A consortium is most sustainable if there is funding to support a coordinator for the consortium. Foundation funding is good initial funding for a consortium but you will want to consider ongoing government funding or membership fees to sustain the costs. For example, one New York City provider of customized employment has received multiple years of foundation funding to support the costs of staffing for a *Metropolitan New York Consortium for Customized Employment*. A project director schedules meetings, forums and trainings that will advance the members customized employment work, but also introduce customized employment strategies to New York metropolitan area employers on behalf of all of the members. The goal is to create a network of employers and providers committed to using customized employment. The Poses Family Foundation in collaboration with Autism Speaks, the Kessler Foundation, the New York Center for Autism, and the May and Stanley Smith Charitable Trust, has funded "clusters" of providers through its Workplace Initiative to collaborate together in a number of locations around the country. The **cluster model** has three main components: 1) Employer consortium – a consortium of employers committed to implementing or expanding programs to employ individuals with disabilities; 2) A public/private partnership to coordinate services for job seekers with disabilities with a single point of contact for employers; and 3) Connections among employers, public and private agencies, and schools to reach young adults with disabilities who are in transition from school to work, including students with learning disabilities who may not be served by traditional providers. These clusters are now in operation in: Louisville, Kentucky; St. Louis, Missouri; Atlanta, Georgia; and Columbus, Ohio.

### Hosting "Learning Journeys"

You may want to host a **learning journey** for other providers. Providers in other parts of the State may be interested in your strategies. It's a terrific way for your staff to improve their presentation skills, make connections with other employers, and think about their own work. A learning journey usually involves some time for other providers to go out in the field and see the employment opportunities, or individualized community opportunities your team has developed, and some time in your office, learning about your strategies, outcomes and what you have learned.

## Training and TA Provider

Once your team has become proficient at finding and supporting people in competitive integrated employment, you may want to offer yourselves as trainers or as consultants to provide guidance to executives and program managers of other agencies. You may also be able to provide technical assistance to schools preparing students for transition through internship and work experiences. This can be an extra source of income, can raise your profile in the community, and can offer your team opportunities to hone their presentation skills.

## Conference Presentations

If you think your agency has taken a promising new approach, or developed particularly successful partnerships, it can be a special opportunity for your staff to present their work at a conference. These conferences are attended by colleagues who will be interested in their work, and the presentations can provoke questions and ideas that may further advance your work. Conferences can be based in a state or region, such as a state or local provider association, or can be national and even international. National conferences that may focus on employment and individualized work include TASH, National APSE, ANCOR, Reinventing Quality Conference. One international institute is the Toronto Inclusion Institute whose focus is on community integration more generally.

# Conclusion

This manual reflects best practices that have been developed over the course of the past 40 years, with an emphasis on the most up-to-date and effective practices that are relevant in today' environment where we see a tremendous acceleration toward competitive integrated employment and inclusive community supports. The manual is a synthesis of the knowledge and experience that the authors, their colleagues and numerous provider organizations across the country have gained in transforming organizations, and the public systems that fund them, so that individuals with disabilities, including those with complex support needs, can get and keep competitive integrated employment in their communities.

Clearly, there is no one way for organizations to implement a transformational change process, but we hope that the practices described in this manual – practices that are considered “tried and true” among those who make this topic their life’s work – will assist you in your efforts. Be sure to tap the many resources cited in this document, as well as experts and mentors who can provide guidance on your journey.

We urge you to advocate for and enact positive change with a sense of urgency. Be part of the exciting Employment First movement that is underway toward true systems change and full lives in the community for all individuals with disabilities. As Margaret Mead said, “Never believe that a few caring people can’t change the world. For, indeed, that’s all who ever have.”