

What is the Partnerships in Employment project?

Multi-year project: Over the course of ten years, the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD) awarded five-year grants to grantees in 14 states.

- ▶ **2011 to 2016:** California, Iowa, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, and Wisconsin
- ▶ **2012 to 2017:** Alaska and Tennessee
- ▶ **2016 to 2021:** District of Columbia, Hawaii, Kentucky, Massachusetts, South Carolina, and Utah

Focus on competitive integrated employment (CIE) for youth with I/DD: The project promotes cross-systems and cross-agency collaboration to improve CIE outcomes for youth and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). *Competitive integrated employment* is when “individuals with disabilities earn wages consistent with wages paid to workers without disabilities in the community performing the same or similar work.”ⁱ

States form consortia: All Partnerships in Employment states formed a consortium or coalition of stakeholders that include—

- ▶ **Individual Level:** Individuals with I/DD, family members
- ▶ **Community Level:** Pilot sites, school administrators, businesses, employers, service providers
- ▶ **State Level:** Developmental Disabilities Agency, Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, State Education Agency, State Developmental Disabilities Council, other state agencies

AIDD contractors evaluate and review grantee progress: The Lewin Group is conducting a comprehensive evaluation for all grantees and the Institute for Community Inclusion provided technical assistance to the 2011 and 2012 grantees. The YES! Center provides technical assistance to the 2016 grantees.

PIE State Consortia

Project Period: 2011 to 2016

- ▶ California Consortium on the Employment of Youth and Young Adults with I/DD (CECY)
- ▶ Iowa Coalition for Integrated Employment (ICIE)
- ▶ Mississippi Partnerships for Employment (MSPE)
- ▶ Missouri Show-Me-Careers
- ▶ New York State Partnerships in Employment (NYS PIE)
- ▶ Wisconsin Let’s Get to Work

Project Period: 2012 to 2017

- ▶ Alaska Integrated Employment Initiative (AIEI)
- ▶ TennesseeWorks Partnership

Project Overview

Between October 2011 and August 2017, the eight 2011 and 2012 Partnerships in Employment (PIE) states conducted systems change activities related to PIE project objectives – developing or changing policies, removing systemic barriers, building cross-system and cross-agency collaborations, and implementing strategies and promising practices to support competitive integrated employment.

This fact sheet provides an overview of the cross-state activities related to employer engagement and is intended to reflect the PIE State Profiles and Final Evaluation Report for the 2011 and 2012 grantees.

Why is employer engagement important?

There is a high unemployment rate among youth and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) compared to individuals without disabilities. At the beginning of the PIE project in 2011, the national employment rate in the United States for working-age adults (16 to 64 years old) with a disability was 32.6 percent (22.3 percent with a cognitive disability) compared to 70.7 percent for a person without a disability.ⁱⁱ Facility-based and non-work experiences continue to make up the largest percentage of individuals with I/DD served by state I/DD agencies.ⁱⁱⁱ Within the I/DD population, participation in integrated employment has remained constant around 19 percent from 2011 to 2014.^{iv} Engaging employers is a critical step to increasing the number of youth and young adults with I/DD engaged in competitive integrated employment. In the state PIE grant applications, states reported several barriers to increasing the number of employers hiring individuals with disabilities, including the following:

- Employers do not have broad access and support to information or training that would encourage the development of more inclusive workplaces;
- Employers are unaware of the benefits of hiring an individual with a disability;
- Employers have never hired an individual with a disability before;

- Employers have concerns about the retention of employees with disabilities;
- Employers are unaware of how to recruit and hire individuals with disabilities;
- Employers have not heard success stories from other employers about hiring employees with disabilities.

In addition to providing employment opportunities to young adults, employers can assist with skill development to build a career. Many PIE states have engaged employers and increased the number of employers hiring employees with disabilities. For example, consortia held job fairs (in all states), created employer engagement groups such as Business Leadership Networks (in Alaska, New York, and Missouri) or engaged employer organizations (in Alaska and Wisconsin), conducted trainings for employers (in New York, Tennessee, and Wisconsin), engaged employers through model demonstration projects (in California, Missouri, and Wisconsin), and created resources for employers hiring people with disabilities (in California, Mississippi, and Wisconsin). The following sections will explain how PIE states engaged employers further.

How have PIE states engaged employers?

Alaska

From 2014 to 2017, Alaska's Integrated Employment Initiative (AIEI) staff engaged employers at partner events, including at the State Chamber of Commerce Conference, Anchorage Chamber Academy, SHRM Conference, and Alaska Processing Industry Careers Consortium (APICC) Conference.

Starting in 2014, AIEI worked with the State as a Model Employer (SAME) Task Force to plan and lead the Office of Federal Contract Compliance (OFCCP) Workshop and State Agency Networking Session with 35 federal contractors. AIEI also worked with SAME to increase the number of provisional hires in the state government, which resulted in the requirement for all hiring managers in Alaska to sign off that DVR's Provisional Hire option was considered before posting state positions with Human Resources. In March 2016, AIEI members developed a Provisional Hire program step-

by-step guide and reported an increase in the number of provisional hires in state government.

AIEI planned and collaborated with partners on several job fairs, including the 2014 and 2015 Diversity Job Fair with the Alaska Department of Labor, Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, and Job Centers. AIEI also helped plan and participated in the Veterans Job Fair in 2014 and 2015.

In 2015, AIEI created the Business Employment Services Team (BEST), a collaboration between the state Department of Labor and Workforce Development and Department of Health and Social Services. The group's goal is to improve hiring for individuals with disabilities and veterans to serve state business needs. BEST learned about employers' needs and educated businesses on the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities. To engage employers, BEST held monthly events including trainings, as well as annual job fairs. In 2016, BEST hosted its first annual Employment First Job Fair (Job Fair) with 1,146 job seekers and 85 employers in attendance. Employers reported approximately 167 new hires from the 2016 Job Fair. BEST held another Job Fair in 2017 and hosted 718 job seekers and 49 employers. A Job Fair survey determined that employers extended 47 provisional job offers, and extended eight job offers. The majority of employers rated the job fair as good or outstanding and responded that job seekers generally met employer expectations. BEST reported plans to hold another Job Fair in 2018.

California

California's Consortium on the Employment of Youth and Young Adults with I/DD (CECY) engaged employers primarily through Local Employment Collaborative Teams (LECTs) and Community Conversations. CECY selected the LECTs to serve as the consortium's model demonstration site. LECTs were high school, community colleges, and community programs chosen for showing notable CIE outcomes for people with I/DD, and their identified promising practices.

Each LECT developed a Community Conversation to engage stakeholders. The Community Conversation model is based on the World Café Model, which is a problem solving meeting that brings stakeholders with diverse perspectives together to brainstorm ideas around a particular issue.^v Between October 2014 and February 2015, 87 employers attended five of the seven Community Conversations and offered a wide range of

perspectives on hiring practices and jobs available in each community. During one Community Conversation, employers who had already hired individuals with I/DD encouraged others to do the same. Other strategies to engage employers included trying to recruit new business partners through a CECY member-developed five-minute video called “Hire Value” highlighting five businesses who have employed individuals with I/DD in paid positions.

Mississippi

In 2014, the Mississippi Partnerships for Employment (MSPE) issued a Policy Brief titled “Hiring People with Disabilities is Good Business.” The brief provided employment facts and examined ways in which Mississippi employers can benefit from hiring youth and young adults with I/DD. The MSPE Stakeholder Group also attended the Project SEARCH™ Southern Mississippi Career Fair in 2015. In 2015, 82 individuals participated in 151 mock interviews with business representatives. MSPE also established the Business Advisory Council to facilitate job opportunities and serve as an advisor to the first Project SEARCH™ site in Mississippi. In addition, a staff member from a MSPE partner agency joined the Pine Belt Business Advisory Board, which meets quarterly to promote employment opportunities for people with I/DD. From 2014 to 2016, Mississippi’s Department of Employment Security and the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, two MSPE partner agencies, co-sponsored three annual EmployAbility Job Fairs. MSPE disseminated materials at the job fairs and hosted seven youth with disabilities in 2015. A total of 228 job offers resulted from the EmployAbility Job Fairs (60 in 2014, 33 in 2015, and 88 in 2016).

Missouri

To improve business partnerships, Missouri’s Show-Me-Careers project leveraged partnerships with Business Leadership Networks and local business groups. Pilot Communities partnered with local business leaders, such as the City Manager and the local Chamber of Commerce, to host business roundtable discussions. Some school districts collaborated and created a shared employment database. Teams in eight Pilot Communities also received training and technical assistance to support the development of employer-driven partnerships.

State-level strategies included funding from the DD Council to the Business Leadership Network of Greater Kansas City (BLN-GKC) to develop a web-based Business Resource Toolkit and a foundation grant to implement KC@Work. The Business Leadership Network also started at least four initiatives to engage local businesses to support disability inclusion in employment.

In addition, Missouri Show-Me-Careers also engaged employers by providing trainings to local businesses by pilot community teams, including the “Accommodations for Success” seminars, “Reaching Qualified Applicants with Disabilities” training, and “Enhancing Employee Performance through Reasonable Accommodations” training.

Show-Me-Careers also developed five videos for their project website. One of the videos focused on engaging employers.

New York

In 2016, New York developed eleven videos featuring businesses and business leaders explaining the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. The series has been viewed a total of 7,937 times. A New York PIE partner agency, also established the New York Business Leadership Network, a statewide network of businesses interested in employing people with disabilities. The New York Business Leadership Network holds educational events and webinars, has an online job portal, holds virtual job fairs, and is involved in policy advocacy for employment for individuals with disabilities. The New York Developmental Disabilities Planning Council planned to provide enhanced funding to the Business Leadership Network to further encourage businesses to hire people with I/DD.

Tennessee

TennesseeWorks engaged employers through community and business outreach. In 2015, as part of the Employer Outreach Initiative, TennesseeWorks developed a business case presentation for employers that outlined “why employers should invest in hiring people with disabilities.” TennesseeWorks developed four products focused on the needs of businesses hiring people with disabilities, including fact sheets on a business case, federal tax incentives, Tennessee tax incentives, and OFCCP Section 503 guidelines. Through the Employer Outreach Initiative, TennesseeWorks provided trainings to project partners on how to

educate employers on hiring individuals with disabilities and the related benefits. Between 2014 and 2017, TennesseeWorks conducted 58 presentations to a total of 1,753 attendees.

TennesseeWorks also held a series of Community Conversations between 2013 and 2015. The Community Conversations used the Department of Labor and Workforce Development's local contacts to build an employer-network that focused on employer outreach and employer needs. Between October 2015 and March 2016, TennesseeWorks partners also provided professional development on the Occupational Diploma and the Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Master Assessment (SKEMA) to the Tennessee Society of Human Resource Managers. The training focused on preparing large employers for hiring students with Occupational Diplomas. The Occupational Diploma and the SKEMA were newly developed and employers and Human Resource Managers were unfamiliar with them.

Wisconsin

In 2014, Wisconsin's Let's Get to Work (LGTW) program representatives attended the Governor's Small Business Summit. LGTW provided information on hiring people with disabilities to employers, the Governor highlighted a disability employment video, and the Department of Workforce Development trained employers on the Wisconsin Fast Forward Worker Training grants.^{vi} The Fast Forward Worker Training grants provide funds to businesses to provide customized skills trainings to current or prospective employees, including individuals with I/DD.

In 2015, LGTW's policy coordinator facilitated a meeting with county business officials and a large employer to discuss potential areas for development and collaboration including job developer positions and job coaching.

LGTW also had pilot communities that held Community Conversations to engage stakeholders, including employers. Community Conversations engaged employers on topics related to competitive integrated employment for youth and young adults.

In 2014, a 90-second video of one of the LGTW pilot students working at American Family Insurance was created and disseminated to 10,000 American Family Insurance employees. After viewing the video, American Family wrote a supporting article including background on the student and the agency that supported the

individual. LGTW embedded this video on several websites and in three employment trainings for Aging and Disability Resource Center staff, for the Wisconsin Statewide Parent Educator Initiative's parent trainings, and the statewide Transition Improvement Grant trainings. LGTW also completed a video of a student working at Best Buy, a student working at a video game store, and a student who makes jewelry for a local bead store that features the use of natural supports in the workplace. The videos are available on the LGTW website:

<http://www.letsgettoworkwi.org/index.php/stories/videos/>

Employer Engagement Promising Practices

As the consortia pursued various strategies to engage employers, several promising practices emerged. Some of these promising practices are listed below:

- Partnering with existing employer organizations to build off their established networks and programs;
- Providing easily accessible trainings to educate employers about employing people with disabilities;
- Leveraging federal and state requirements or tax incentives to encourage employers to hire individuals with disabilities;
- Holding Community Conversations to engage employers with other community level stakeholders;
- Developing and sharing videos of businesses highlighting their experiences of hiring individuals with disabilities.

ⁱ Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act, Public Law 113-128 (29 U.S.C. Sec. 3101, et seq.).

ⁱⁱ Erickson, W., Lee, C., von Schrader, S. (2016). Disability Statistics from the American Community Survey (ACS). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Yang-Tan Institute (YTI). Retrieved from Cornell University Disability Statistics website www.disabilitystatistics.org

ⁱⁱⁱ Butterworth, J., Winsor, J., Smith, F. A., Migliore, A., Domin, D., Ciulla Timmons, J., & Hall, A.C. (2015). StateData: The national report on employment services and outcomes. Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Boston,

Institute for Community Inclusion. Retrieved from <https://www.statedata.info/>

^{iv} Statedata.info. (2016). State IDD Agencies. U.S. Total: Integrated employment percentage.

Retrieved from <http://www.statedata.info/data/showchart/452419>

^v The World Café. (2018). World Café Method. Retrieved from <http://www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/>

^{vi} State of Wisconsin. (n.d.). Wisconsin Fast Forward Grants. Retrieved from http://wisconsinfastforward.com/wff_standard.htm



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