

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 Project SEARCH™ and is intended to reflect the PIE State Profiles and Final Evaluation Report for the 2011 and 2012 grantees.

What is Project SEARCH™?

Project SEARCH™ is a one-year school-to-work program that connects high school students with disabilities to real-life work experiences.ⁱⁱ During the one-year program, participants receive classroom instruction, on-the-job training, and participate in job rotations. Participants must be paid at least minimum wage for their work. Common Project SEARCH™ sites include hospitals, hotels, grocery stores, retail stores, colleges, distribution centers, movie theaters, and state and federal government institutions. Towards the end of the program, students receive assistance with job placements. The goal for each Project SEARCH™ student is to obtain competitive integrated employment upon completion of the program.

Several PIE state consortia supported Project SEARCH™ as a strategy to improve competitive integrated employment outcomes for individuals with I/DD. New York’s consortium in particular adopted the Project SEARCH™ model to implement the model demonstration sites required by the PIE grant for the 2011 grantees. Other state consortia, including those in Alaska, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Wisconsin provided technical assistance to or supported the expansion of Project SEARCH™ sites in their states.

How did PIE states contribute to Project SEARCH™?

Alaska

Alaska's Integrated Employment Initiative provided support and technical assistance to four Alaska Project SEARCH™ sites, located at hospitals statewide, by attending committee meetings, participating in program events, growing its Business Advisory Council, collecting data, and connecting the Alaska Project SEARCH™ sites with the national Project SEARCH™ program. For example, in 2016, the AIEI staff facilitated day-long technical assistance site visits with the National Director of Project SEARCH™. The National Project SEARCH™ director visited each of the four Project SEARCH™ sites – Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kenai, and Mat-Su. Site visits included meetings with Project SEARCH™ teachers, interns, job coaches, and steering committees. Site visit participants discussed plans to expand Project SEARCH™ sites. The Governor expressed support for AIEI's effort to expand Project SEARCH™ sites beyond the four current sites, and in 2017, AIEI reported hosting additional meetings with the Project SEARCH™ national director to plan for two additional sites: one in Juneau and a second in Anchorage.

Additionally, Peer Power, the state self-advocacy group, worked with AIEI staff at the Anchorage Project SEARCH™ site to start a job club for program interns. The job club began in 2016 and meets monthly.

Mississippi

The Mississippi Partnerships for Employment (MSPE) supported the creation and implementation of a Project SEARCH™ site in Mississippi. Mississippi's Developmental Disabilities Council funded a Project SEARCH™ site at the University of Southern Mississippi (USM). MSPE's Stakeholder Group had an advisory role in supporting the site. For example, in November 2015, the Stakeholder Group members attended the Project SEARCH™ Southern Mississippi Open House at USM. The Stakeholder Group focused on advocacy work for the site and training parents and families. In 2015, MSPE also attended the Project SEARCH™ Southern Mississippi Career Fair where 82 individuals participated in 151 mock interviews.

Additionally, MSPE established the Business Advisory Council to facilitate job opportunities and serve as another advisor to Mississippi's Project SEARCH™ site.

New York

New York State Partnerships in Employment (NYS PIE) supported state Project SEARCH™ sites, created new sites as part of NYS PIE, tracked data for Project SEARCH™, connected New York Project SEARCH™ with the national Project SEARCH™ program, and expanded Project SEARCH™ sites in New York.

New York State Partnerships in Employment's Project SEARCH™ sites: Unlike the other 2011 PIE consortia that were also required to create model demonstration projects, NYS PIE funded a total of seven new Project SEARCH™ sites in New York, where additional Project SEARCH™ sites already existed. NYS PIE took this approach in part because as an already established model in the state, Project SEARCH™ was tested and known among stakeholders as an "evidence-based model." Additionally, since previous New York pilots from other grants ended when their grant funding ended, NYS PIE chose an established model to ensure that this project would be sustainable.

The lead entity for NYS PIE, the Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) at the University of Rochester Medical Center, is also the statewide coordinator for New York's Project SEARCH™ sites. As the statewide coordinator, SCDD collects and tracks outcome data for all of the state's 15 Project SEARCH™ sites, including the seven sites funded by NYS PIE.

From 2012 to 2016, the number of New York State Project SEARCH™ participants increased from 5 to 55. Data collected in January 2016 indicated that the employment rate of 2015 Project SEARCH graduates was 60 percent. By September 2016, 25 of 55 Project SEARCH™ participants obtained CIE. At the time, 20 of the 25 participants in CIE worked over 20 hours per week. Sixteen host businesses had partnered with Project SEARCH™ pilot sites by the end of 2016. Though not all of these Project SEARCH™ pilots were affiliated with NYS PIE, all seven NYS PIE Project SEARCH™ pilot programs included a host business partner.

During the PIE grant, all Project SEARCH™ programs participated in quarterly meetings via webinar. Meeting topics were often determined by the programs, and included technical assistance and project-chosen topics of interest.

National Project SEARCH™ involvement: To support Project SEARCH™ in New York, NYS PIE brought a national Project SEARCH™ Program Specialist to New

York to provide technical assistance to each Project SEARCH™ program. Full day technical assistance sessions were offered throughout New York and targeted new staff or underperforming programs. Sessions included re-orienting teams to the Project SEARCH™ model, successful strategies for job development, and individualized technical assistance.

Additionally the National Project SEARCH™ Office approached New York to partner and pilot a Project SEARCH™ Workshop-to-Work program to move young adults out of sheltered workshops. This program, which includes Project SEARCH™ sites that were established independently of NYS PIE, launched in June 2015 and graduated its first cohort in May 2016. As of the end of NYS PIE's grant funding, the Workshop-to-Work program operates as a traditional adult program, recruiting individuals from sheltered employment and day habilitation services.

Piloting alternative curricula: SCDD also piloted a peer-to-peer health literacy program, Health Messages Curriculum, within three of the Project SEARCH™ programs. The pilot identified best practice strategies for incorporating health transition content within transition-to-work programs. SCDD also planned to pilot a Self-Advocacy Curriculum with active Project SEARCH™ sites during the 2016-2017 school year. The curriculum includes eight units on subjects such as disclosure, employee rights, supports and accommodations. The sessions include academic instruction and activities that emphasize skills practice.

NYS PIE Partners' involvement: Other NYS PIE partners were also involved in Project SEARCH™. The New York Adult Career, and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) participated in Project SEARCH™ sites to better understand the impact of collaborative work between New York agencies on serving people with I/DD. ACCES-VR sought to understand how referrals between agencies could improve and how the state could develop policies and procedures related to Project SEARCH™ work. In 2016, ACCES-VR, RochesterWorks!, and SCDD partnered to host a Project SEARCH™ job fair. Eleven businesses and 35 job seekers attended the fair.

NYESS Tracking Tab: NYS PIE also created and funded the development of a Project SEARCH™ tracking tab in New York State Employment Services System (NYESS) to encourage Project SEARCH™-related agencies to use the system and allow New York to track Project SEARCH™ outcomes over time. Employment services providers contracting with ACCES-VR and Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) are required to use the system for reporting purposes, but compliance across the state has varied. The NYESS team trained Project SEARCH™-affiliated staff to use NYESS and the Project SEARCH™ tab in August 2016. The 15 sites with 2015-2016 employment outcomes were asked to add data into the system, and the SCDD reported that they will encourage sites to use the NYESS site moving forward.

Project SEARCH™ after PIE: At the final NYS PIE Statewide Consortium meeting in September 2016, SCDD committed to hosting NYS Project SEARCH™ quarterly meetings after grant funding ends. In August 2017, NYS PIE reported that five additional Project SEARCH™ sites are planned to begin in 2018, bringing the total number of New York Project SEARCH™ sites to 20 sites.

Tennessee

TennesseeWorks partner agencies provided support to nine Project SEARCH™ sites in Tennessee. Project SEARCH™ also expanded to additional regions of the state and to non-medical professions.

PIE Project SEARCH™ Promising Practices

As several of the PIE consortia pursued strategies to support their states' Project SEARCH™ sites, or create new Project SEARCH™ sites, several promising practices emerged.ⁱⁱⁱ Some of these are listed below:

- Connect state Project SEARCH™ sites with the National Project SEARCH™ program to share your state's promising practices and learn about other states' promising practices.
- Track employment data from Project SEARCH™ sites to more easily report and market findings.

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

ⁱⁱ Project SEARCH™. Retrieved from <https://www.projectsearch.us>

ⁱⁱⁱ Wisconsin also had Project SEARCH™ sites, however sufficient information was lacking to include it in this summary.



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