

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 statewide model demonstration sites and is intended to reflect the PIE State Profiles and Final Evaluation Report for the 2011 and 2012 grantees.

Statewide Model Demonstration Sites

In six of the eight PIE projects, grantees implemented model demonstration sites (also referred to as pilot sites), providing students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) opportunities to gain job experience and receive training aimed at obtaining employment. These pilot sites varied in their approaches:

- California selected sites based on their existing achievement of employment outcomes for individuals with I/DD.
- Mississippi, Missouri, and Wisconsin issued requests for proposals from potential pilot sites.
- New York worked with Project SEARCH™, a one year school-to-work program that provides classroom instruction and on-the-job training, and Employment Training Program (ETP) models.
- Iowa had two different model demonstration projects, one recruited high performing school districts and the other worked with provider organizations already participating in the consortium.
- Although Alaska and Tennessee were not required to implement model demonstration projects as part of their 2012 PIE grant, the consortia supported individuals seeking employment and non-PIE pilots, such as Project SEARCH™.

The 50 project sites in the six states served as demonstration programs that focused on local impact and future scalability, and also identified barriers to competitive integrated employment and policy change. Though the funding for most pilot sites ended in different project years, many states continue to build on work previously completed by pilots. This fact sheet serves to provide more detail on each state's pilot demonstration sites. A summary table of the pilots, number of sites, and years active is provided at the end of this document.

California

Seven Local Employment Collaborative Teams (LECTs)

In 2011, the Consortium on the Employment of Youth and Young Adults with I/DD (CECY) began work with a mission of increasing the ability of the state's systems and communities to support young people with I/DD seeking and gaining employment. Between 2012 and 2014, CECY supported the documentation and dissemination of selected promising practices in the state. CECY received 20 best practice proposals and selected seven Local Employment Collaborative Teams (LECTs) sites - four high schools, one community college, and two community programs.

The LECTs were selected for their existing achievements with competitive integrated employment outcomes for people with I/DD. As CECY model demonstration sites, LECTS would continue their promising practices, share data from their work, and analyze the promising practices that each site was using. The LECTs also agreed to share information and learn from one another's experiences. LECTs offered participants the chance to develop the skills necessary to gain and keep a job. Each LECT worked with CECY to develop a Community Conversation to engage local stakeholders and employers representing a variety of workplace settings, including retail, entertainment, grocery stores, restaurants, government, health care, childcare, and banking.

Outcome data from the majority of LECTs demonstrated higher rates of employment and earnings in competitive integrated employment compared to both state and national averages. As of September 2014, CECY discontinued tracking outcome data for the LECTs and created a one-page summary of the work each LECT

completed. In 2015 and 2016, CECY drafted spotlights highlighting activities and efforts from each LECTs' first and second years of work. More information on LECT outcomes and accomplishments can be found on the [Products and Resources page of the CECY website](#).

Iowa

The Iowa Coalition for Integrated Employment (ICIE) supported two pilot projects: 1) Model Employment Transition Sites (METS) that concentrated schools' efforts on building and refining transition programs to prepare students with disabilities for paid employment; and 2) Community Rehabilitation Service Provider (CRP) pilots that worked on transforming facility-based services to integrated employment services, partnering with schools, and building strong integrated employment service teams.

Five Model Employment Transition Sites (METS)

ICIE selected the five pilot Model Employment Transition Sites (METS) based on their Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) and Department of Education performance data. The goal of the pilots was to develop a replicable framework that school teams throughout the state could use to build transition programs that prepared students with disabilities for paid employment. To aid these efforts, ICIE developed a state-level technical assistance team that met with METS pilot sites on a quarterly basis. This team worked with each site to develop curriculum mapping at the district level as well as build pilot site staff capacity to offer paid work experiences to students. Another focus area was determining where gaps in the curriculum existed, how these gaps could be remediated, and what community members felt students needed to be successful in employment. Each ICIE METS pilot site also incorporated a Positive Personal Profile, a tool designed to promote discussion between education and adult service providers. IVRS adopted the Positive Personal Profile into its required documentation for service provision. One ICIE pilot site even collaborated with a middle school to incorporate career-based skills into its curriculum in several classes.

Across the five METS pilot sites, the number of pilot participants showed a net overall increase of approximately 57 percent between 2012 and 2014. Each METS site reported that paid work experiences

had increased, and working relationships were created with community partners including Community Rehabilitation Service Providers. Hourly wages increased by \$1.72 on average over the two-year period with average hours worked remaining constant. In 2016, ICIE created a design team to identify METS best practices and develop a framework which METS could use to continue its work after the grant.

Seven Community Rehabilitation Service Providers (CRPs)

In addition to METS, seven CRPs participated in the ICIE pilot projects. CRPs worked with ICIE Core Team and Coalition members to expand successful strategies to other providers as well as to develop other professional skills. ICIE also collaborated with the Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP) on the CRP pilot to recruit subject matter experts to build capacity on transformation efforts. For example, in 2015, ICIE held trainings to provide virtual mentoring to CRPs. The number of CRP participants increased from 14 to 30, with 16 additional providers volunteering to collect outcome data and take part in site visits with subject matter experts. CRPs continued receiving technical assistance and worked to support transformation efforts in 2016. The hands on training, technical assistance, and application of the principles of customized employment from subject matter experts led to increased community employment. At the end of the project, 15 people remained employed in the community. Additionally, CRP pilot data guided IVRS and Iowa Medicaid Systems in identifying new services and an improved employment service rate structure. Policies have been modified at the state level based on what was shared from local communities. In addition, job descriptions within agencies and districts were refined to support integrated employment services.

Mississippi

Three school- and community-based pilot projects

MSPE established pilot programs by issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP). MSPE also provided funding to the four MSPE pilot sites by issuing RFPs. Three of the pilot sites were active from 2012 to 2015. For the duration of the pilots, the Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities provided administrative oversight to pilot

projects. Two of the pilot projects were school-based and one was community-based.

These projects demonstrated how schools can improve transition services, provide students with employment experiences, and help students find competitive employment in the community. For example, one of MSPE's school-based pilot sites helped 30 students find employment at a community-based coffee shop where students with disabilities learned work and social skills. Another program, called BOLTS: Building Opportunities for Learning and Transition Success, included a high school-based training program with greenhouse and pottery activities, and community-based training with internships which allowed students to move into full- or part-time employment. Over the three years of the project, BOLTS assisted 52 students to find employment in the community. For the third program, MSPE worked closely with the Arc of Mississippi to create a network of employment providers to increase the development of customized employment. This program sought to improve the reimbursement system used by the Home and Community-Based Waiver to reimburse workshops that provide training in customized employment.

At the end of pilot site funding, three pilot sites had trained 70 students in employment skills training programs and had assisted 55 students to find employment from 25 employers. Though funding for the pilots ended in 2015, MSPE continued to work with two school districts to develop an implementation guide for statewide distribution that described how to replicate pilot sites.

Missouri

Eight Show-Me-Careers Pilot Communities

To begin model demonstration project work, Show-Me-Careers project staff held nine pre-RFP meetings for 168 individuals from 105 organizations in 2012. Project staff disseminated an RFP in fall 2012 and eight sites began work in winter 2013. The leadership consortia also selected a set of six Guiding Principles – including employer engagement and business partnerships, family involvement, integration of systems, and post-secondary education and training – to guide the pilot site and project work. The purpose of the Guiding Principles was to provide a framework through which to identify, expand, and share effective school to work practices.

Show-Me-Careers provided Pilot Communities with technical assistance related to the project's Guiding Principles. This support enabled Pilot Communities to complete a Guiding Principles survey that the state evaluator shared with Pilot Community members to reflect on changes impacting their communities.

Throughout the project, Pilot Communities engaged community members in a variety of ways. Examples of Pilot Communities' activities across the state include: a Transition Night for parents at a local school district, job clubs during school hours, summer leadership academies, business outreach events co-hosted by local employers and disability partners, community classes on self-determination and employment skills, and the creation of Community Data Profiles to support planning and program improvement.

In fall 2014, Show-Me-Careers also worked with two Pilot Communities to develop and implement community level plans to improve family engagement. Show-Me-Careers collaborated with the Missouri Family-to-Family Resource Center and the National Supporting Families Community of Practice to develop family support resources called LifeCourse Tools. In 2014, one of the tools, the Daily Life and Employment Packet, was tested in two Pilot Communities. This Packet assists families and individuals with disabilities as they navigate the transition process. Show-Me-Careers and the Missouri Family-to-Family Resource Center collectively disseminated 6,180 copies of the Packet since its completion in September 2015. In fall 2014, Show-Me-Careers also worked with two Pilot Communities to develop and implement community level plans to improve family engagement practice and policy. In 2016, Missouri Family-to-Family provided assistance to Pilot Communities planning to implement the tools and resources provided in the Packets, and trained 20 special education coordinators on implementation.

The Show-Me-Careers Pilot Communities partnered with local business leaders such as the City Manager and the local Chamber of Commerce to host business roundtable discussions, and school districts created a shared employer database. The Show-Me-Careers Pilot Communities also received training and technical assistance to support the development of employer-driven partnerships.

Initially, the sites reported that 142 individuals were involved with either paid or unpaid work prior to graduation. As of 2013, Pilot Communities tracked 229 individuals in the pilot program engaged in paid or unpaid work, with 49 individuals no longer involved in the program. The number of individuals tracked by pilot programs increased over threefold between January 2013 and September 2014. By the end of the project, Show-Me-Careers reported that data was collected on 429 pilot participants.

At the end of the project, the Show-Me-Careers Director conducted focus groups in each Pilot Community to determine how the Communities' activities have supported the transition of students with I/DD and improved employment outcomes. Show-Me-Careers reported that the eight Show-Me-Careers Pilot Communities increased the number of employment opportunities for individuals with I/DD and the number of businesses engaged. Pilot Communities also reported average increases in employment length and participation in pre-employment programs for participants.

New York

Seven Project SEARCH™ and four Employment Training Program (ETP) pilots New York State Partnerships in Employment (NYS PIE) took a different approach compared to other states' consortia in that the state's two pilot models were based on pre-existing frameworks, including the Employment Training Program and Project SEARCH™. NYS PIE leveraged Project SEARCH™'s pre-existing framework to explore and expand on ways to provide critical job experience and training through a one-year transition services program. NYS PIE took this approach in part because as an already established model, Project SEARCH™ was tested and known among stakeholders. The NYS PIE lead entity, the Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities at the University of Rochester Medical Center, is also the statewide coordinator for Project SEARCH™, and thus collected and tracked longitudinal outcome data for the seven NYS PIE Project SEARCH™ pilot sites alongside the original New York State Project SEARCH™ sites. Preliminary analysis of statewide Project SEARCH™ data collected in January 2016 indicated that the employment rate of 2015 graduates was approximately

60 percent. Approximately half (25 of 55) of Project SEARCH™ participants obtained competitive employment in 2016. As of August 2017, one year after NYS PIE funding ended, all of the state's 15 Project SEARCH™ sites, including the seven NYS PIE sites, all continued to sustain work. Additionally, five additional sites are planned to begin in 2018, bringing the total number of Project SEARCH™ sites to 20.

The New York Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), a NYS PIE partner, also expanded the high school Employment Training Program (ETP) to four additional sites as part of NYS PIE. The Employment Training Program focused on work-readiness school-based curriculum along with paid internship opportunities paid for by OPWDD within the community. As of September 2016, 19 students had participated in paid community-based internships with an average of \$150 bi-weekly earnings.

Wisconsin

Nine Lets-Get-To-Work pilot schools

Wisconsin's consortium, Let's Get to Work (LGTW), also established pilot sites through an RFP. LGTW established five Round 1 pilot sites and four Round 2 pilot sites in 2012. There were a total of nine pilot sites that represented 12 schools. LGTW pilot schools received training from two coaches to help plan their interventions, collect baseline data, and identify their current strengths and areas for improvement. The coaching team drew upon their experiences to create a comprehensive, user-friendly set of tools and strategies called the [LGTW Quick Guide on Transition to Employment](#). The guide provides best practices, strategies, tips, and resources to help schools increase their employment and overall transition outcomes. Most of the topics were created because the coaching team found these areas to be particularly challenging. Each school site also implemented at least one Community Conversation where people from various vantage points talked about increasing employment opportunities for youth with disabilities in their community. Schools were provided with an implementation guide and training on hosting a Community Conversation. The result of these conversations was increased awareness and expectations of employment opportunities for individuals with I/DD. In addition to coordinating Community Conversations, the LGTW project hosted a

parent training on the transition from high school to adulthood for youth with disabilities.

At the end of the project, LGTW pilot sites' accomplishments included tripling the number of LGTW students with paid jobs in their community after one year from five to 18 students, increasing the percentage of LGTW students working in paid positions after three years to 66 percent, and doubling the number of employers hiring LGTW students. The pilots' best practices also proved to be scalable, as the success of LGTW pilots led Wisconsin's Promoting Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income (PROMISE) project team to adopt the LGTW Quick Guide and promising practices from the pilot sites. Additionally, Wisconsin's Transition Improvement Grant (TIG) schools, which had some of the same partners and coaches as the LGTW pilot sites, also shared the LGTW Quick Guide and committed to using LGTW promising practices.

LGTW also conducted further best-practice dissemination activities, including co-hosting a Community Based Integrated Employment Summit in 2015 that included LGTW pilot school sites. This Summit was an opportunity to help the five new TIG schools get started on improving their transition outcomes. Teachers, parents, students, and administrators from the LGTW pilot school sites shared their experiences participating in the project, including how they achieved outcomes and how their schools have changed their culture and improved competitive integrated employment. LGTW coaches also shared the LGTW Quick Guide with TIG schools and other LGTW consortium members.

Despite the end of funding for pilot school sites, LGTW coaches expanded their reach to include providing practical mentoring to high schools not included in the pilots. Nine new schools were matched with and will receive mentoring from LGTW pilots.

Promising Practices

Although the pilots differed in their approaches and strategies, all had the same goal of supporting individuals with I/DD to achieve CIE. Many pilots faced similar challenges, including undefined roles for pilot partners, funding, and training opportunities. As states continued to develop their pilot programs, promising practices emerged. Several cross-state promising practices are listed below:

- Recognize each community is at a different starting point and build a program that meets the unique needs and capabilities of individual communities.
- Begin pilot studies with a clear purpose and a focus on sustainability activities right from the start.
- Initiate person-centered planning by involving individuals with I/DD and their families in the planning, implementation, and sustainability activities.
- Document successes using qualitative and quantitative data. Regular evaluation efforts for individual pilots help with reflection and refinement.
- Increase collaboration at both the state and local level. For example, Community Conversations were implemented by multiple states, proved to be very beneficial, and uncovered promising avenues for expanding employment opportunities in local communities.
- Training and technical assistance are needed to support educators and service agency staff in implementing state and local employment first policies.
- A team approach is necessary. Realize that capacity building is an important component and that resources and experts will be needed to help grow local work to the state level. State-level decision makers are valuable partners to include and support pilot work, and they can use what is being learned to help shape state systems.
- Develop materials to promote replication of services in other districts and areas of the state.
- Strive for sustainability from the moment of launch.

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



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