

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 the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and is intended to reflect the PIE State Profiles and Final Evaluation Report for the 2011 and 2012 grantees.

What is WIOA?

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is a federal law enacted in 2014 to improve employment services and assist job seekers with obtaining employment and gaining skills necessary to obtain employment. With the passage of WIOA, Congress replaced the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and updated the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 through 2020. WIOA is designed to “help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need.”ⁱⁱ

One section of WIOA is dedicated to improving access to workforce services and competitive integrated employment opportunities for individuals with I/DD. For example, the law requires all state vocational rehabilitation agencies to allocate 15 percent of its federal match to pre-employment services. These services include job counseling, work-based learning experiences, post-school opportunities, workplace readiness training, and self-advocacy training. In addition, vocational rehabilitation agencies must also engage employers, job centers must provide physical and programmatic accessibility to employment and training services, and youth with disabilities must receive pre-employment transition services.

WIOA was passed in 2014, which was after all of the PIE states had set their project goals and began activities. All states had to ensure that their projects promoted WIOA requirements. WIOA required states to develop and submit four-year strategies to realign their workforce development programs. In response, states – including the PIE grantee states – began work to better coordinate employment and training services to help job seekers gain skills that employers look for in employees. Since the PIE project goals aligned with WIOA’s goals, Partnerships in Employment state consortia or consortium partners supported their states’ efforts to comply with WIOA. For example, consortia or consortium partners distributed materials and educated stakeholders on WIOA (in Alaska, Iowa, Mississippi, and Wisconsin), monitored WIOA implementation within their states (all consortia), provided input on state WIOA implementation (in Alaska, California, Tennessee, and Wisconsin), and used WIOA to fund new programs (in Missouri and New York). In some cases, consortia also re-aligned their PIE activities to align with WIOA (in Alaska and California).

The sections below provide examples of how PIE grantee states supported WIOA.

How did states promote WIOA?

Alaska

In 2014, Alaska’s Integrated Employment Initiative (AIEI) leaders disseminated information on WIOA at a consortium meeting. In 2015, AIEI’s Policy and Regulation Team revised the Employment Services Options Matrix to align with the WIOA Unified State Plan. Changes included clarifying differences in pre-employment services between the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services (DSDS) and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) regarding service utilization rates by age group. AIEI also reviewed federal WIOA guidance to comment on the Alaska Unified State Plan and WIOA implementation with support for Ticket-to-Work program expansion efforts.

In 2016, AIEI leaders led the effort in Alaska to provide comments to the Advisory Committee on Increasing Competitive and Integrated Employment for Individuals with Disabilities about considering funding for WIOA. In 2016, AIEI also collaborated with the Protection and Advocacy Group and University Centers for Excellence

in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), and other partners to meet with a U.S. Senator to discuss current state and federal policies, including the impacts of WIOA on state policy.

California

In 2014, CECY reported that the WIOA transition requirements led to discussions with Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) in the areas of funding structures and interagency agreements. Efforts included developing a shared definition on integrated competitive employment and expanded data sharing.

In 2014, the California Departments of Education, Rehabilitation, and Developmental Services, in collaboration with Disability Rights California established a California State Blueprint for Competitive Integrated Employment (Blueprint) to build upon WIOA requirements. CECY worked with the Blueprint Workgroup to create a draft of the Blueprint, which includes products and policy recommendations from CECY. CECY’s Policy Change Artists Workgroup also completed a policy brief on cross-departmental collaborations with the Blueprint Workgroup. Additionally, CECY developed a paper on outcome-based funding for the Blueprint Workgroup to consider. The developed Blueprint contains a directive from each department to employees and partners to prioritize CIE, establish measurable goals and objectives, delineate state and local agency roles and responsibilities, inform families and individuals annually, make recommendations for policy and regulatory changes, and create an informal resolution process.

Iowa

In 2016, the Iowa Coalition for Integrated Employment (ICIE) worked closely with all partners engaged in implementing WIOA. Each ICIE meeting featured WIOA-related discussions, and ICIE facilitated Community of Practice webinars for Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Iowa Client Assistance Program staff about the impact of WIOA on the delivery of employment services. ICIE also hosted meetings with state partners and representatives from Iowa’s Managed Care Organizations to discuss the expectations and requirements of WIOA. Additionally, ICIE collaborated to provide trainings and community conversations about WIOA regulations. ICIE also conducted outreach to individuals, families, and providers under Section 511

requirements to provide services to those earning subminimum wages. ICIE conducted this outreach after noting that some stakeholders reported not receiving enough information related to WIOA.

Mississippi

Through the Mississippi Partnerships for Employment (MSPE) Listserv, Mississippi disseminated information on WIOA. In 2016, MSPE partnered with the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services to hold the “Mississippi Initiative: What are the Necessary Knowledge, Skills and Abilities for State Agencies and Providers in the Era of WIOA, Employment First and the HCBS Settings Rule?” training. This training was held in August 2016 with 20 attendees. In September 2016, The Arc of Mississippi assembled 50 key stakeholders to learn strategies for improved services and supports under WIOA and other initiatives.

Missouri

In response to WIOA’s implementation in 2014, the Missouri Division of Workforce Development outlined early plans to develop stronger partnerships at the community level with both Workforce Development staff and centers in PIE pilot communities.

Through WIOA, the Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation Agency was able to fund the Pre-Employment Transition Services Initiative. Beginning in 2015, the Pre-Employment Transition Services offered work-related supports to public school students in Missouri who were not yet eligible for similar services through the Vocational Rehabilitation Agency.

New York

In 2014, the New York State PIE Steering Committee reviewed implications of WIOA and opportunities to engage the New York State Department of Labor in discussions. WIOA also triggered responses in New York state agencies. For example, in response to WIOA, the New York Adult Career and Continuing Education Services—Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) issued a Request for Proposal for Core Rehabilitation Services (CRS) 2.0 in 2016. The Request for Proposal updates the current five-year CRS contract to meet the needs of an increasing number of applications. This update will add providers to certain regions of New York, modify rates and services definitions, and align services with WIOA.

Tennessee

From 2014 to 2015, the TennesseeWorks Policy Group participated in group activities to support WIOA implementation, develop agreements required by WIOA, and review barriers preventing a successful WIOA implementation.

In 2015, TennesseeWorks collaborated with the WIOA Strategy Group to develop and comment on the Tennessee Combined Plan. TennesseeWorks partners also discussed the WIOA Combined State Plan and considered public comments on the document. In 2016, TennesseeWorks agencies developed a WIOA Combined State Plan.

Wisconsin

In 2014, Wisconsin’s Let’s Get to Work (LGTW) policy team provided comments on WIOA during the public comment period and developed a set of Frequently Asked Questions regarding WIOA. LGTW also met with the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) to discuss WIOA and offered assistance to help with any assistance changes. LGTW also held a focus group on WIOA with two LGTW school pilot sites.

In January 2015, the LGTW policy coordinator was appointed to the WIOA Advisory Committee on Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment for Individuals with Disabilities, was appointed co-chair of the Transition Sub-Committee, and was also a member of the President’s Committee for People with Disabilities. The policy coordinator collects information from the LGTW Policy Group before each meeting so all LGTW members were able to provide input to the WIOA Advisory Committee. For example, the policy coordinator shared information on the Wisconsin Partners with Business bill and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) reauthorization recommendations with the federal WIOA Advisory Committee.

In 2016, LGTW provided recommendations and language on WIOA Section 511 to the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development’s Equal Rights Division. The Department of Workforce Development used LGTW’s recommendations and language verbatim.

WIOA Promising Practices

It can be a challenge for both impacted agencies and stakeholders when new legislation, such as WIOA, passes in the middle of a grant period. All states had to shift their strategies and align their activities with WIOA requirements. Many promising practices emerged that could help future states adapt to new legislation passing during a fixed grant period.

- 1) Providing trainings and creating materials on new legislation can help stakeholders understand how the legislation affects themselves and their organizations.
- 2) New legislation gives team members influential opportunities to serve as subject matter experts and provide recommendations on state implementation.
- 3) New legislation can provide additional funding opportunities to help support related initiatives
- 4) Incorporating new legislation into grant and agency activities promotes sustainability after funding ends.

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

ⁱⁱ The United States Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. November 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.doleta.gov/wioa/>



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