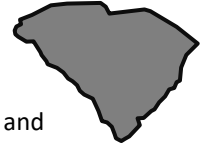


Partnerships in Employment (PIE) Systems Change Project

Developed by The Lewin Group, June 2020

South Carolina Employment First Initiative (SCEFI)



Able South Carolina (Able SC) was awarded the Partnerships in Employment (PIE) grant in September 2016 to lead SCEFI and promote competitive, integrated employment (CIE) for youth and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD).

Project Goals and Vision

Goal #1: Equip high school students and recent graduates with I/DD with the skills, awareness, and confidence needed to enter competitive employment

Increased access to career and technical education (CTE)

In 2018 and 2019, SCEFI surveyed 337 special educators, career and technical education professionals, and service providers to better understand how CTE and special education programs align to foster improved employment outcomes for youth with I/DD. Survey results were shared with the SCEFI community in a [report](#) and [report brief](#). SCEFI began working with a local school district and its CTE program in 2019. Through the partnership, SCEFI created a [three-part video series](#) to serve as a model for other school districts on how to implement a similar CTE program and a [guide for educators](#) on how to include students with I/DD in CTE programs.

Highlighted Activities

- Created a self-advocacy peer support group and implemented seven groups with nine to twelve participants each (2017, 2018, 2019, 2020)
- Implemented Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) in six school districts to 136 students (2017, 2018, 2019, 2020)
- SC's governor signed the non-diploma work readiness High School Credential into law (2018)

Goal #2: Unify and empower South Carolina education professionals, employment service providers, families, and community members towards support of Employment First principles

Highlighted Activities

- Supported the passage of and participated in the South Carolina Employment First Study Committee (2018, 2019, 2020)
- Developed and led an Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) Chapter, which has 50 members (2018, 2019, 2020)
- Held Employment First trainings for educators, service providers, schools, and employment service providers (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020)

Expanded stakeholder awareness

SCEFI, with input from an outside marketing firm, rebranded the [Hire Me SC campaign](#) and launched the updated campaign in September 2018. The rebranding launch included a new website, videos, marketing materials, and 29 billboards statewide. The rebranded campaign received 55 different media coverages, including several live television spots and an article on Carolina News and Reporter. The Hire Me SC campaign also uses social media to expand awareness, which includes a Facebook page with over 1,300 likes, an Instagram page with 347 followers, and a Twitter page with 161 followers.

Goal #3: Develop and expand supports for South Carolina-based employers who hire persons with disabilities in competitive community-based positions

Increased employer expectations

South Carolina has held four Employer Summits (October 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019). The most recent Employer Summit, held in October 2019, had 63 employers in attendance. The sponsorships for the Employer Summit have doubled each year and the 2018 and 2019 Employer Summits were fully funded through registrants' fees, vendors, and sponsorships. The Employer Summit is now a sustainable PIE initiative because it does not use PIE funding. Due to COVID-19, the 2020 Employer Summit will be held virtually.

Highlighted Activities

- Created and led Business Coalition for Employment of People with Disabilities (2017, 2018, 2019, 2020)
- Conducted over 45 employer trainings to over 580 employees (2017, 2018, 2019, 2020)

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Sustainability

SCEFI is part of the South Carolina Disability Employment Coalition (SCDEC), which was established in 2014 before the PIE grant was awarded and meets without funding. SCEFI will continue to exist through the SCDEC after the PIE grant ends. SCEFI has also leveraged partnerships with service providers and employers to fund the Employer Summit, which will decrease the amount of funding needed for conducting future Employer Summits. In addition, Able South Carolina has a fee-for-service program, Able Access, which provides accessibility assessments, disability etiquette, and sensitivity training to businesses. SCEFI has provided free employer trainings through Able Access and will continue to use Able Access as a resource after the PIE grant ends.

To fund the continuation of PIE activities, SCEFI has explored several post-PIE funding sources, including grants from the Department of Education to provide transition and technical assistance to employers recognizing the High School Credential and to increase the number of students that the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) serves. In 2019, SCEFI received funding from DVR to sustain Pre-ETS through the school-based PIE-funded pilot after the PIE grant ends and double the Able SC budget. SCEFI also submitted a proposal with the Department of Employment and Workforce to partner with South Carolina Works offices statewide during and after the PIE grant funding ends.

SCEFI Partners

- Able South Carolina (Lead Agency)
- Department of Education
- Department of Disabilities and Special Needs
- Vocational Rehabilitation Department
- Developmental Disabilities Council
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Mental Health
- University of South Carolina Center for Disability Resources
- Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities, Inc.
- Family Connection of South Carolina
- AccessAbility
- Walton Options for Independent Living
- Commission for the Blind
- Department of Employment and Workforce

What is the Partnerships in Employment Project?

5-year grant awarded to 14 states: The Administration on Disabilities (AoD) awarded funding to eight states in 2011 and 2012, and six states in 2016: *District of Columbia, Hawaii, Kentucky, Massachusetts, South Carolina, and Utah.*

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

States form consortiums: The six 2016 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, employers, providers
- ▶ **State Level:** Developmental Disabilities Agency, Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, State Education Agency, State Developmental Disabilities Council, other state agencies

AoD contractors perform project evaluation and provide technical assistance: The Lewin Group is conducting a comprehensive, longitudinal evaluation and the Youth Employment Solutions (YES)! Center is providing training and technical assistance to states.