



# **Employing People with Disabilities: Lessons from Kessler Foundation's Signature Employment Grants**

A White Paper

For Professionals  
in Grant making,  
Workforce Development,  
Disability Employment,  
and Human Resources

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# Abstract

Since 2004, Kessler Foundation has provided more than \$41.5 million in support initiatives that expand opportunities for people with disabilities. This White Paper assesses the diverse grants supported under the Foundation's Signature Employment Grant (SEG) program from 2009-2015. The SEG program funds pilot initiatives, demonstration projects, and social ventures that generate new models to address the employment gap between people with and without disabilities. Based on the independent external evaluations of more than 20 SE grants by experts at the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University, five strategic elements were identified as common to successful projects. The paper details illustrative examples of the contributions of these elements to the success of selected SE grantees, namely, 1) A focus on changing attitudes about people with disabilities and their ability to work, 2) A person-centered approach to employment, 3) Technological platforms or model documentation, 4) Strong community partnerships, and 5) Wraparound services. The markers for success were increased employment of people with disabilities, employer and program participant satisfaction, and model replicability. These lessons learned from Kessler Foundation's experiences in grant making are important considerations for all who seek greater inclusion of individuals with disabilities in our workplaces.

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# Executive Summary

Despite decades of state and federal policy making and funding for vocational rehabilitation, the employment outcomes for people with disabilities remain disappointingly weak. In 2016, the employment gap was 40.9 percent between adults of working age, with and without disabilities. Underlying these employment outcomes are the myriad challenges faced by people with disabilities including negative social norms, transportation, and critical healthcare and federal benefits that are potentially lost when employment is found.

At the same time, technology, federal efforts, nonprofit advocacy and novel approaches have the potential to address these barriers and improve inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce. Understanding which approaches best support employment for people with disabilities is both an economic and social imperative for continued growth and community inclusion.

This White Paper assesses the diverse grants supported under Kessler Foundation's Signature Employment Grant (SEG) program from 2009-2015. The SEG program funds pilot initiatives, demonstration projects, or social ventures that generate new models to address the high unemployment and underemployment of individuals with disabilities. The paper identifies five best practices across a range of projects, bringing into one place the outstanding work of Kessler Foundation grantees and synthesizing learning from external grant evaluations. "Success" is defined by positive employment of people with disabilities, employer and program participant satisfaction, and model replicability. Indeed, more than 3,000 people with disabilities found work through these Kessler-funded projects.

In assessing more than 20 SE grants, five strategic elements emerged as success factors in employment programs for people with disabilities:

- A focus on changing attitudes about people with disabilities and their ability to work
- A person-centered approach to employment
- Technological platforms or model documentation
- Strong community partnerships
- Wraparound services

Efforts to change attitudes are particularly important for people with disabilities seeking employment, as negative social norms are often internalized, leading to low self-confidence and limited hope for employment prospects.

Several of Kessler's most successful grant projects used a person-centered approach. Person-centered approaches help job seekers identify the jobs and careers they are most interested in, rather than skills and limitations he or she may have and what jobs might be available. Confronting and discrediting myths and stereotypes about the limitations of persons with disabilities vis-à-vis employment is key for employers and participants alike.

# Executive Summary (continued)

Several of Kessler’s SE grants developed innovative approaches to ensure that their models, if successful, could expand beyond the originally funded sites. For some, the collaborative nature of the partners (see below) was a key leverage point. The strongest grants, however, also developed customized technology platforms or resource guides that fundamentally allowed for greater ease of replicability and customization by others. New technology, however, could also prove challenging to implement.

Some grantees have deep experience developing innovative models and identifying and sharing best practices in the field using partners. In addition, strong partnerships are key to job development and placement. Several projects that needed to build such relationships found that a two-year project timeline was insufficient. Those organizations, however, that developed bridges between the disability and employer community achieved greater success. Oftentimes this was done through strong partnerships with local vocational rehabilitation offices or other nonprofit employment agencies for people with disabilities. However, some of the models also established specific staff roles to support both employees with disabilities as well as employers.

# Introduction

Despite recent improvement in economic indicators, the employment rate for people with disabilities remains persistently lower than that of people without disabilities<sup>1</sup>. In 2016, the employment rate was 35.9 percent among individuals with disabilities ages 18 to 64 living in the community. In contrast, the employment rate was 76.8 percent for individuals without disabilities ages 18 to 64 who were living in the community<sup>2</sup>. This employment gap of 40.9 percent remains high despite decades of state and federal policy making and funding for vocational rehabilitation. Underlying the employment gap are the myriad challenges faced by people with disabilities in accessing employment including negative social norms about disability that limit people’s potential, transportation, and a complex web of critical healthcare and federal benefits potentially lost when employment is found.

Although the employment gap remains significant, there are positive signs that indicate that people with disabilities are making progress in the labor market. The majority of people with disabilities are striving to work and demonstrating the willingness and the ability to overcome barriers to achieving success in the workplace, according to Kessler Foundation’s 2015 national survey<sup>3</sup>. Technology, federal efforts, nonprofit advocacy and novel approaches have the potential to address these barriers and increase employment. Private resources, such as those provided by Kessler Foundation and other philanthropic organizations, are key to leveraging this potential by supporting experimentation and new models<sup>4</sup>.

During the past two years, the major economic indicators have shown steady improvement in employment for people with disabilities, bringing them closer to their pre-Great Recession employment levels. Moreover, the US Department of Labor sees “substantial potential” over the coming decade for job growth among people with disabilities in well-paying jobs<sup>5</sup>. Despite this good news, much work needs to be done before people with disabilities achieve employment parity with their nondisabled peers. Understanding what approaches best support employment for people with disabilities is both an economic and social imperative for continued growth and community inclusion.

The central goal of this White Paper (the Paper) is to identify best practices across a range of projects supported by Kessler Foundation’s Signature Employment Grant (SEG) program and share lessons learned with other donors and actors in the field about employment of people with disabilities. This analysis reflects SE grants made by Kessler Foundation from 2009-2015, though results remain

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1 Carolann Murphy, “NTIDE March 2018 Jobs Report: Job Growth for Americans with Disabilities Reaches Two-Year Milestone,” Kessler Foundation, 6 Apr. 2018, 20 Apr. 2018, <<https://kesslerfoundation.org/content/ntide-march-2018-jobs-report-job-growth-americans-disabilities-reaches-two-year-milestone>>.

2 Andrew Houtenville and Eric Lauer, “2017 Annual Compendium of Disability Statistics: Section 2,” Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire, Institute on Disability, 2017, 27 Apr. 2018, <<https://disabilitycompendium.org/compendium/2017-annual-disability-statistics-compendium?page=7>>.

3 The 2015 Kessler Foundation National Employment and Disability Survey was the first nationally validated survey of the workplace experiences of people with disabilities (>3,000 respondents). See Houtenville, Sundar, Keirns, Smith, Philips, Katz, and O’Neill.

4 Krepcio, Kathy, Heidkamp, Maria, and Harrington, Laurie, “Strategies to Increase the Employment of People with Disabilities: An Analysis of the Transition to Work Grant Program,” The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, Apr. 2009. Unpublished, available upon request.

5 “Economic Picture of the Disability Community Project; Key points on Disability and Occupational Projections Tables,” Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor and White House Council of Economic Advisors, 2014, 5 Jan. 2018, <<https://www.dol.gov/odep/pdf/20141022-KeyPoints.pdf>>.

# Introduction (continued)

preliminary for work supported in 2015<sup>6</sup>. The research to inform this paper was obtained through document and website reviews, primarily comprehensive interim and final evaluations of the SE grants undertaken by the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey<sup>7</sup>. Looking across diverse project models, the Paper assesses the grants as a cohort to identify tactics that led to success, defined as employment of people with disabilities, employer and program participant satisfaction, and model replicability. Overall, these projects have supported more than 3,000 people with disabilities to find meaningful employment.

The Paper seeks to bring into one place the outstanding work of Kessler Foundation grantees and synthesize learning from the Heldrich Center's evaluations of these grants. Looking across diverse project models, the Paper assesses the grants as a cohort to identify tactics that led to success. While funded by Kessler, the Heldrich Center conducted the evaluations<sup>8</sup> independently. Depending on the data available, the Heldrich Center used a variety of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, including site visits, surveys of participants, analyses of participant data and outcomes, and interviews with program staff and external stakeholders.

Kessler Foundation has an impressive record of disability funding in New Jersey along with a growing reputation nationally. Over the past 13 years, the Foundation has invested \$41.5 million in job training, employment and community programs for individuals with disabilities through its Signature, Community Employment and Special Initiative Grants. To support its efforts to strengthen the employment outcomes of people with disabilities, Kessler has sought to share its knowledge about employment for people with disabilities with its grantees and other donors, as well as national and state policymakers. Knowledge is shared in various ways, through communications, publications, and presentations, as well as events. For example, the Foundation's annual grantee symposium features leaders in the field addressing the latest developments and innovative approaches to strengthen the employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

This Paper seeks to address a key recommendation from the Heldrich Center that Kessler Foundation "step up efforts to document and publish lessons learned in an effort to share with the public, policymakers, and future grantees important practices and solutions that the Foundation is learning from its grantees<sup>9</sup>." It also supports Kessler's overall goal of the SEG program to stimulate ideas from the field that spark approaches to employment that can be replicated and scaled as models for policy change.

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix I for list of grants reviewed for this report. Not all SE grants during this timeframe are included.

<sup>7</sup> The Heldrich Center is dedicated to improving employment and educational opportunities for people with disabilities by providing policymakers and program leaders with information about how to implement more effective disability employment policies and programs. It has conducted more than thirty process evaluations of disability employment programs and has also partnered with state and federal government entities to research, identify and test strategies to increase the hiring and retention of people with disabilities.

<sup>8</sup> The final evaluations of the projects included in this paper are available on request from [info@kesslerfoundation.org](mailto:info@kesslerfoundation.org)

<sup>9</sup> Krepcio, Heidkamp, and Harrington, Apr. 2009.

## Overview of Signature Employment Grants program

Kessler Foundation's SEG program funds pilot initiatives, demonstration projects, and social ventures that generate new models to address the high unemployment and underemployment of individuals with disabilities. Organizations may apply for up to two years of funding with annual support ranging from \$100,000 to \$250,000. To help grantees increase their funding base and replicate their project models, Kessler requires grantees to secure 15 percent of the total project funding with matching funds.

Kessler prioritizes applicant organizations that employ staff members who self-identify as disabled, have a track record with collaborative partnerships, and propose cost-effective interventions that advance competitive employment or overcome employment barriers related to dependence on public assistance. Applicant organizations must have operating budgets greater than \$3,000,000.

Kessler Foundation values several other attributes of potential projects:

- Bold, innovative employment models with the potential for adaptation by public and private institutions to change the job market for Americans with disabilities;
- Collaborative or leveraged grant funding, especially funding sources less likely to support disability, such as community or economic development funds; and
- Capacity to implement new conceptual ideas to address employment barriers.

Kessler's SEG program offers a diverse sample of models to address the employment of people with disabilities. Over the years, SE grants have engaged a range of partners including educational agencies, service providers, advocacy organizations, employers and businesses, government agencies, places of worship and workforce development agencies. This Paper will not attempt to analyze successful approaches tailored to specific types of agencies, such as a 2012 research brief by Kessler entitled, "Strategies to Support Employer-Driven Initiatives to Recruit and Retain Employees with Disabilities".<sup>10</sup>

Rather, it will look across these approaches to identify tactics that support success across program models. For a listing of the grants and program categories reviewed in this Paper, see Table 1. Appendix I provides fuller descriptions of the grants.

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<sup>10</sup> Elaine Katz, Meg O'Connell, and Robert Nicholas, "Strategies to Support Employer-Driven Initiatives to Recruit and Retain Employees with Disabilities," The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development and Kessler Foundation, Jun. 2012, 27 Apr. 2018, <[http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/products/uploads/Employer\\_Driven\\_Initiatives\\_Final.pdf](http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/products/uploads/Employer_Driven_Initiatives_Final.pdf)>.



## Findings

After analyzing more than five years of grant making by Kessler Foundation's national SEG program, several key lessons emerged about elements of success that transcended program model focus. Success was broadly defined by improving the employment outcomes of persons with disabilities, participants' and employer satisfaction with the program, and potential for model replication. Due to data limitations, it was not possible to apply a cost-benefit analysis or not to compare the number of jobs created. The Paper was based on qualitative methods of assessment focused on the program elements related to employment within the SEG projects and relied on the Heldrich Center evaluations as an objective gauge of overall project success and identification of project characteristics that supported this success.

In assessing more than 20 grants, five strategic elements emerged as key factors for success in projects supporting disability employment:

1. **A focus on changing attitudes** about people with disabilities and their ability to work.
2. **A person-centered approach to employment.**
3. **Technological platforms or model documentation** that facilitated program sharing and/or replication.
4. **Strong community partnerships** either leveraging current partnerships or building partnerships to strengthen connections between disability and employment communities.
5. **Wraparound services** to ensure that factors relevant to success in the workplace, such as transportation needs, did not impede employment efforts.

Each SEG grant targets different populations of people with disabilities in different geographies and varies in terms of project lifetime. At times, Kessler supported organizations that had just begun to test an innovative approach and other times, the project had already launched its model before receiving funding. Employment models for people with disabilities would benefit from longer-term funding and evaluation to capture the myriad benefits accrued to participants, family members and employers, and to identify the most cost-effective approaches. Many of these programs are still at the early stages of implementation and longer-term assessment is needed to assess sustainability of results and to understand the duration of start-up funding, needed in order to achieve success.

The Paper provides qualitative assessments across SEG grants, using the data provided to highlight the high-level lessons from Kessler's grants program. Most of the examples included here were identified as the 'best of the best' and corroborated by the Heldrich Center evaluations and Kessler's internal assessments. Some examples shared demonstrate strength in one or more of the approaches, but may not have delivered the same employment outcomes or overall success. Nonetheless, the strong aspects of their model are shared here to provide additional tangible examples of how these approaches can be implemented in diverse employment program models. An effort was also made to include examples of projects that lacked these strategic elements, or explanations when organizations struggled with execution.

## Findings (continued)

Many of the organizations leading SE grants have well-established leadership, staffing, collaborative community relationships, reliable funding and long-standing reputations, which are also key to program success. It is important to note that these organizational strengths fueled project success, and Kessler staff assessed such elements during the grant proposal process. Table 2, Organizational Elements of Success, explores these fundamentals of organizational strength in more detail.

### Seek to change attitudes about people with disabilities

In order to support employees with disabilities, their families, service providers and employers, some of the most successful SE grants included a specific focus on shifting negative attitudes about the abilities and employability of people with disabilities. Confronting and discrediting myths and stereotypes about the limitations of persons with disabilities vis-à-vis employment is key for employers and participants alike.

Efforts to change attitudes are particularly important for people with disabilities seeking employment, as negative social norms are often internalized, leading to low self-confidence and limited potential for employment prospects. San Diego State University's Bridging the Gap from College to Careers (C2C) seeks to dismantle those barriers before they can impede the careers of students with disability. A partnership of San Diego State University's Interwork Institute, PolicyWorks, University of California at Berkeley, San Diego State University, and California State University, C2C builds on a pioneering college-level course, "Professional Development and Disability," created at Berkeley to provide a comprehensive array of experiences around the curriculum, including peer mentoring, internships, and placement services.

Students earn college credit for this course, which improves students' understanding of self-presentation and self-esteem and strengthens positive attitudes, beliefs and expectations of their employment prospects. The Heldrich Center's evaluation of C2C noted that:

*the program helped to instill in them confidence and self-esteem that is often lacking in individuals with disabilities with regard to work and careers. The Professional Development and Disability course dispelled traditional stereotypes about people with disabilities.... Program staff believe that the program has been highly empowering to participants and should be rolled out more widely to other colleges and possibly other settings beyond higher education.<sup>11</sup>*

The C2C curriculum focuses on helping students overcome the fear and lack of confidence related to work. This is accomplished through practical exercises, such as mock interviews, through the

<sup>11</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all quotes come from Heldrich Center evaluations of the projects.

Some of the most successful SE grants included a specific focus on shifting negative attitudes about the abilities and employability of people with disabilities.

## Seek to change attitudes about people with disabilities (continued)

curriculum readings and discussions, and through peer mentors. As recent graduates with disabilities or current college students with disabilities, the mentors provide peer advice to help students confidently chart and navigate their career paths. Given their own college and work experiences as people with disabilities, many established trust and rapport in guiding students through issues that are often very personal and private.

Initial surveys showed that the majority of students had serious concerns about stigma and employer attitudes toward people with disabilities. Results from pre/post-test surveys revealed dramatic improvements in attitudes and perceptions about work and their ability to compete successfully in the marketplace. One Berkeley student noted, "It was transformational. I'll never be the same. I'll always be proud and confident."<sup>12</sup> The program seemed to help students overcome internalized ableism (systemic discrimination or prejudice against people with disabilities).

A student at Fullerton shared that, "Some people might be focused on their own disability and how stigmatized they feel while golden opportunities pass them by. *This class tackles our ideas about disability and changes how we view our own disability ...* I felt more confident about going out and networking and taking steps to get the job that I wanted – not the one that will have me."<sup>13</sup>

AHEDD's MY BEST program educated individuals with disabilities on the benefits of employment and introduced them to the work incentive programs that allow individuals with disabilities to work and still maintain critical public benefits. The Heldrich Center evaluation found that MY BEST, "was highly successful and effective." Ultimately, 238 individuals found employment and 79 took advantage of work incentives. MY BEST staff noted that an ongoing challenge was "re-programming long-held beliefs about their own capabilities and debunking notions about participants' inability to work that had been drilled into them for most of their educational careers." In focus groups, many expressed concerns that their disability made them unemployable and incompetent in the eyes of employers. They were also concerned that earning income would cause them to lose public benefits.

With the support of MY BEST staff, participants were able to build confidence and prove to themselves that they could handle a job. Some participants were uncertain that they would be able to handle day-to-day issues such as navigating public transportation and managing a work day with few breaks. With the help of their employment coordinators, participants said they learned that they could perform most of the tasks that would be expected of them, and with minor accommodations, be just as successful on the job as their able-bodied co-workers.

Similarly, Access Living's Realizing Education and Advancement for Disabled Youth (READY) program helps students with disabilities build pride in their identity. Access Living is an independent living center focused on enabling Chicagoans with disabilities to live fully engaged and self-directed lives. Supported by Kessler in 2015, READY uses a person-centered model to support youth with disabilities transitioning out of the Chicago public high school system to gain access to college or employment. It addresses the barriers beyond high school and provides tools and resources for youth with disabilities that build a foundation for success in college and the work force. As one

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<sup>12</sup> Kessler Foundation internal report from SE grantee (C2C).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

## Seek to change attitudes about people with disabilities (continued)

READY staff member described, the curriculum and the program, empower students to “... own who they are and battle the stigma of disability.”

One noteworthy strength of the READY program is that many of its school and office staff have disabilities and can relate to the participants' challenges. They provide a real-life example of the possibilities for individuals with disabilities in the workforce and in higher education. In surveys, participants noted that the staff with disabilities embodied the skills and success they were seeking, thus motivating and building confidence in students. Access Living also offers its business partners disability awareness and accommodation training, anticipating that “these organizations will improve their disability awareness and aptitude, making it easier for people with disabilities to be placed in employment in the future.”

As READY staff identified, support is also needed to change the attitudes of employers and family members alike, who might have limited experience working with people with disabilities or engaging in the competitive job market, respectively. For example, in 2013 Kessler supported the Easter Seals of Greater Washington Baltimore Region to expand its Veterans Staffing Network (VSN), a social enterprise staffing agency dedicated to getting US veterans, reservists, wounded warriors and spouses into the civilian workforce. The program focuses on three primary elements: providing job coaching, identifying job opportunities and recruiting job seekers. The goal was not to simply get veterans jobs in a cost-effective manner, but to support self-sufficiency, meaningful careers, and community integration.

VSN educates both employers and veterans about the potential of people with disabilities and families. Its website debunks misperceptions about wounded warriors and shares the many contributions and assets veterans can bring to an employer, such as integrity, respect for procedure and strength and determination in addressing adversity. VSN also explains the importance of disability pride, self-advocacy, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Understanding that a disability is not a barrier to employment helps ensure that veterans and employers can understand and work well with one another. At the same time, VSN seeks out and develops partnerships with companies that already see the value in hiring veterans, and emphasizes the long-term benefits of hiring veterans who often have the characteristics they are looking for (disciplined, team oriented, hard worker, etc.), even if they lack the desired background or certification needed.

Similarly, the Putting Faith to Work (PFTW) project shared that staff and congregations spent significant time and energy shifting attitudes about people with disabilities. The project, a replication and scaling of a Kessler Community Employment pilot grant in Minnesota, brought together four University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (Kentucky, Minnesota, Tennessee, and Texas) that are members of the National Collaborative on Faith and Disability, to partner with local faith-based communities in each state. The project strengthened the ability of 27 congregations to support people with disabilities as they find and maintain employment aligned with their gifts, passions, and skills. The model is grounded with person-centered planning, such as support for resume writing and interview skills, and is implemented through identification of job opportunities and community support for job seekers.

## Seek to change attitudes about people with disabilities (continued)

It was important to address the low expectations that communities and people with disabilities had about employment prospects. The project often needed to challenge assumptions about what was desired and possible, shifting expectations from sheltered and segregated work settings to a wider set of job opportunities within the community. Many congregations came to the realization that people with disabilities can have fulfilling, successful employment experiences. Parents also gained a greater awareness about the employment and post-secondary educational opportunities for their children with disabilities. Overall, congregations were struck by the ways in which this was much more than just getting people jobs, but also about helping people discover and share their gifts, experience belonging, and develop new relationships. Fundamentally, the project helped shift attitudes from 'we should help' these members find employment to a fundamental appreciation of the contributions that people with disabilities can make in the workplace and faith communities.

Yet, such attitude change remained a challenge for PFTW as well as other projects. The Heldrich Center evaluation found that families were often protective and hesitant to expose family members to the challenge of a competitive workplace, a common obstacle for workforce development programs for people with disabilities. PFTW staff sought to provide congregations with new ways of looking at such barriers. As opposed to assuming that disability accommodations and discrimination precluded employment prospects, the staff helped congregations and families see them as 'something to be figured out' and provided the tools to do so. In other projects, the societal norms that limit the potential of people with disabilities hindered their search for paid work or the family support needed to facilitate it. Without significant efforts to break down these barriers, employment success was more limited.

## Implement a person-centered approach to employment

Complementing efforts to combat stigma, there is increasing momentum to utilize a person-centered approach to employment for people with disabilities. Many traditional employment programs for people with disabilities seek to identify employment opportunities and then support people with disabilities to develop the skills and experiences to compete for these jobs and obtain the needed accommodations.

In contrast, person-centered approaches help job seekers identify the jobs and careers they are most interested in, rather than the skills and limitations he or she may have and what jobs might be available. The Institute for Community Inclusion defines person-centered planning as an approach to career planning that "uses job seekers' dreams, goals, personal preferences, interests, and needs as the cornerstone of the career planning process."<sup>14</sup> Helen Sanderson opines that "It is based on a completely different way of seeing and working with people with disabilities which is fundamentally about sharing power and community inclusion."<sup>15</sup> Fundamentally, person-centered approaches focus on strengths and abilities, respect for the aspirations of individuals with disabilities and a longer-term vision of a career, rather than job placement.<sup>16</sup>

14 Colleen Condon, Kristen Fichera, and Danielle Dreilinger, "More Than Just a Job: Person-Centered Career Planning," Institute for Community Inclusion, Oct. 2003, 11 Jan. 2018, <[http://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article\\_id=16](http://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=16)>.

15 "Exploring and Implementing Person Centered Approaches," NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, 2009, 5 Apr. 2018, <[https://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/file/0005/228290/DADHC\\_PersonCentred201208.pdf](https://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/file/0005/228290/DADHC_PersonCentred201208.pdf)>.

16 Bruce Menchetti, "Creating a Personal Career Plan," Brain Injury Association of Florida, Inc., 2005, 10 Apr. 2018, <<http://www.byyourside.org/documents/Creating-a-Personal-Career-Plan.pdf>>.

## Implement a person-centered approach to employment (continued)

Several of Kessler's most successful grant projects used a person-centered approach. While Putting Faith to Work (PFTW) provides a flexible model for congregations to approach employment for people with disabilities, an individualized, person-centered approach is central to its model and how partners supported job seekers. Congregations were committed to individualized service, which started with the planning meeting, involving the job seeker, family members, and other important support people in the job seeker's life. One staff member described the approach as, "Getting to the bottom of who they are and what they can and want to do, and getting them to visualize themselves in the world of work, was most important."

Rather than having a bank of jobs to fill, congregations sought out the best job match for members with disabilities. As one participant noted, "my disability is no longer at the forefront of my employment plan.... I am not "someone with a disability who is looking for employment," but rather "someone looking for employment who happens to have a noticeable disability."<sup>17</sup>

Congregational teams focused on the job seekers' strengths and interests, rather than deficits. PFTW supported congregations to identify the best job match for each participant given their strengths and passions. Congregations could then use their social networks to identify job opportunities or other supports for job seekers. Courtney Evans Taylor, site coordinator of the Tennessee location, noted that "Members with disabilities are being introduced to their congregation in ways that focus on their strengths instead of their deficits. They are becoming better known in their own communities, and families have a support system that they can count on."<sup>18</sup> Critical to using a strength-based approach, however, was also changing attitudes, as noted above.

In 2015, Kessler provided a SE grant to the Supported Employment Enterprise Corporation (SEEC). Through a consortium of five supported employment providers (SEEC, Compass, Inc., Arc of Howard County, Arc of Central Chesapeake, and the Spring Dell Center) and Maryland's Developmental Disabilities Administration and Department of Disabilities, the project seeks to effect systemic and policy changes throughout the state by addressing the core barriers to employment for people with developmental disabilities. Central to these changes is the requirement that the partner organizations provide comprehensive training on customized employment. As the Heldrich Center report reiterates,

*The traditional model for organizations providing support to individuals with disabilities sought to mold job seekers to fit current job openings. Customized employment, however, takes a person-centered approach. Customized employment takes place over three stages — discovery, job development, and systematic instruction — to explore job seekers' interests and create the job that works for them.*

The SEEC project focused intensely on staff capacity to support job-seekers through a person-centered approach throughout the employment process. Service providers attended a three-day training program presented by Marc Gold & Associates,<sup>19</sup> and then gained practical experience with

<sup>17</sup> Putting Faith to Work: A Guide for Congregations and Communities," Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, Vanderbilt University, 2016, 20 Apr. 2018, <<https://ici.umn.edu/index.php?products/view/938>>.

<sup>18</sup> Kessler Foundation internal report from SE grantee (PFTW).

<sup>19</sup> Marc Gold & Associates provides training and technical assistance to systems, agencies, and families interested in complete community participation of people with significant disabilities.



## Implement a person-centered approach to employment (continued)

the approach to earn certification in customized employment. Staff began by undertaking an intense discovery process, meeting with the job seeker and their personal and professional network to understand their goals, skills and interests. During job development, staff targets potential employers that align with the job seekers' interests to identify and shape job opportunities based on their skills and business needs. Finally, the staff supported job seekers to learn their job responsibilities and receive systematic instruction on the job. This approach, coupled with customized benefits planning, provided comprehensive support for each job seeker.

The evaluation findings affirmed the strength of a person-centered approach. Participants increased their confidence, ability to articulate their desires and dislikes, and control over their day-to-day schedules. Rather than settling for any job, the process encouraged job seekers with disabilities to find work about which they could be passionate. Exemplifying the shift is one participant in the SEEC project who had received services for nine years, but not found employment. Using a person-centered process helped staff more thoroughly understand the participant's interests and identify an employment placement that the participant enthusiastically accepted. To implement this shift, the Heldrich Center found that local service providers made several changes including "hiring additional staff, creating new departments, changing job requirements, and revising staff roles."

Access Living's READY program also uses a person-centered approach. READY helps students identify their postsecondary goals to develop personal advancement plans with a clear and precise strategy for attaining their goals. Students elaborate their future education or employment goals and develop a plan to achieve them. READY coordinators track the completion of those tasks and objectives, and help participants stay on track. Importantly, students can choose either a vocational or postsecondary educational track — a model that moves beyond the 'vocational for all' model typically offered to students with disabilities. Providing this choice, in itself, is part of a person-centered approach. READY staff provide workplace readiness and independent living skills training, one-on-one transition planning, and ongoing coaching by dedicated READY coordinators whose foremost goal is ensuring that individuals continue making progress toward their personal employment plans and overcoming barriers to success.

The program also highlights one of the challenges to person-centered approaches. Vital to READY's model, its coordinators provide participants with customized, intensive services on an ongoing basis. The Heldrich Center's evaluation noted that as the model seeks to expand, it may be difficult to serve greater numbers of students and schools unless it can expand program staff and maintain its intense level of personal support and services.

In 2011, Kessler Foundation supported New York Employment Solutions (NYES), a program of the New York Epilepsy Coalition comprised of four New York Epilepsy Foundation agencies: Western New York, Rochester/Syracuse Binghamton, Metropolitan New York, and Southern New York New York. While the model struggled due to other issues, the Heldrich Center's evaluation found strength in its person-centered focus. Interviews with staff and participants demonstrated the effectiveness of the person-centered model in helping participants achieve employment outcomes that best met their needs, personal challenges and desires.

The Heldrich Center found that the person-centered model increased the likelihood that individuals'

## Implement a person-centered approach to employment (continued)

work situations matched their aspirations. By using person-centered planning, employment specialists had the opportunity to know their clients in greater depth, understand their long-term goals and address their needs in a broader way, which inevitably made placements more suitable and successful. For example, one participant needed additional training to achieve her longer-term goals. The specialist helped her obtain financial aid for the training and a part-time job in the industry. Not only did she gain entrée into her desired field, she positioned herself for a better job in the future.

Similarly, employment coordinators within the MY BEST project believed that their job search and retention services were effective simply because they were personal and hands-on. At intake, an AHEDD employment coordinator worked with participants to collect basic demographic information and background, and understand the type of employment in which the person was interested. The employment coordinator explained work incentives and sought to “dispel the participant’s fear of employment and outline the benefits of work versus dependence on public assistance.” Coordinators worked closely with participants to develop Work Incentive Plans and Benefits Summary Analyses tailored to each participant based on their disability, current public assistance, different employment and earnings scenarios, and overall financial situation. In focus groups, several participants explained how they had underestimated their capabilities. MY BEST staff sought to build their confidence and helped job seekers see that their skills and experience qualified them for work.

MY BEST program participants rated the job search process and retention as two of the most effective aspects of the program. Participants identified employment opportunities and were able to stay employed. Indeed, the Heldrich Center evaluation found that of the 128 individuals placed into employment 88 (69 percent) remained employed six months later. It noted that the retention was likely high since the majority of participants had received job coaching services. Coaches advocated for participants with employers, alleviating their fears of hiring individuals with a disability and supported participants with problem solving when needed. In focus groups done by the Heldrich Center to evaluate AHEDD’s MY BEST program, participants consistently noted how supported they felt. They described staff as “having their back,” as “someone they can turn to,” and who “lets me know that I am not alone.”

These project examples address a challenge documented by the 2009 Kessler report on “Strategies to Increase the Employment of People with Disabilities.” It noted that persons with disabilities may be hesitant to work and recommended that “the jobseeker be actively engaged in what they want to do (re: training and work) and that it fits with what they feel they can do and like.”<sup>20</sup> Some of the SEG projects that struggled did so because the models centered on the hiring needs of a single business or social enterprise. One such project had a person-centered approach but lacked the scale to hire

<sup>20</sup> Krepcio, Heidkamp, and Harrington, Apr. 2009.

The Heldrich Center found that the person-centered model increased the likelihood that individuals’ work situations matched their aspirations.



## Implement a person-centered approach to employment (continued)

sufficient numbers of persons with disabilities. Others struggled with sufficient partnerships. Those models that changed attitudes, used person-centered approaches, and began their program with an approach designed and developed to be tested and replicated, achieved the most sustainable and scalable results.

## Develop technological platforms or model documentation for replication

One of the most important goals of Kessler Foundation is to support models of employment that can be replicated and scaled. Strong employment outcomes alone might not translate into a model that has a structure that can be replicated. Several of Kessler's SE grantees developed innovative approaches to ensure that their models, if successful, could expand beyond the originally funded sites. For some, the collaborative nature of the partners (see below) was a key leverage point. The strongest grants, however, also developed customized technology platforms or resource guides that allowed for greater ease of replicability and customization by others. New technology, however, could also prove challenging to implement.

The PFTW project is perhaps the strongest example of documentation for replicability within the cohort of grants. PFTW developed "Putting Faith to Work: A Guide for Congregations and Communities on Connecting Job Seekers with Disabilities to Meaningful Employment,"<sup>21</sup> documenting its model along the way to support replication. The comprehensive guide has the potential to meaningfully affect how local faith-based communities can support individuals with disabilities in seeking employment and strengthening community connections. The guide demonstrates how the PFTW model can be flexible and customized not only for job seekers with disabilities but to each congregation. For example, the work in Kentucky required relatively more time to address negative attitudes about people with disabilities and to advocate for ministries that did not segregate people with disabilities. The experience in Kentucky also reaffirms the importance tackling the stigma noted above and highlighted how these elements reinforce one other to support project success.

The 96-page PFTW manual provides step-by-step instructions for gathering a team, holding person-centered conversations to assess strengths and skills, and reaching out through the members of the congregation and beyond to find an employer in the community who is seeking those strengths and skills. The guide is practical, containing conversation guides, worksheets for planning, guidance on how to assemble a congregational team, illustrative examples and honest reflections. As a self-directed technical assistance guide, faith-based communities around the country can draw upon the relevant sections to assist members with disabilities in their own ways, but grounded in this proven model.

Similarly, Access Living's READY program is designed to be adaptable and scalable so other cities and organizations around the country can use READY as a model to implement their own programs. In particular, READY program can serve as a model for the 400 Centers for Independent Living across the country. Beginning in 2016, all independent living centers were required to offer services that "facilitate transition of youth to postsecondary life."<sup>22</sup> READY provides a ready-made solution

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21 Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, 2016.

22 Rehabilitation Act of 1973, United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of the Secretary, Office for Civil Rights, 1973, 2 Apr. 2018, <<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/leg/rehab/rehabilitation-act-of-1973-amended-by-wioa.pdf>>.

## Develop technological platforms or model documentation for replication (continued)

to this mandate with a piloted model and documented initial success.

READY staff have conducted webinars for the Independent Living Research Utilization (ILRU) and the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) and have shared the model at conferences, such as the 2017 NCIL Annual Conference. The conference brings together more than 1,000 people from around the country, including grassroots advocates, members of Congress, government officials, and activists from other organizations that work for justice and equity for people with disabilities.

At the outset of San Diego's C2C, the program was committed to replication and duplication. In just a few years, the C2C project has demonstrated the potential to evolve into a scalable model that is sustainable both within individual institutions and throughout state university systems. Indeed, Kessler Foundation funded the Florida Atlantic University Foundation to expand the C2C project in Florida. The program is highly regarded beyond the initial sites, with dozens of colleges and other organizations across the nation and the world now offering the course or planning to do so. Central to the ability to scale was the production of an online Toolkit<sup>23</sup> containing resources for instructors, staff and students. The Toolkit contains the project curriculum and an associated teaching guide, information on workplace skills, benefits planning and asset development, professional presentation skills, and case studies on the influence of family support and employer perspectives. The project team offers technical assistance to those seeking to adapt the curriculum to their university or community.

C2C has also had requests for use of the Toolkit outside the educational system, including non-profit organizations, state agencies, private sector companies and the IRS. The private sector and IRS are using the Toolkit to better understand how to work with employees with disabilities. One student explained the power of the model: "It definitely inspired a new level of confidence in me so that I am able to consider myself as not only employable, but the sort of people that a company WANTS to hire. The entire class was helpful. I find myself referring back to the worksheets and books we were given many times as I move forward in my career."<sup>24</sup>

Technology can also support scaling and replication and become a powerful tool to reinforce a person-centered approach, allowing staff to more efficiently provide one-on-one support. VSN's e-learning became key to scaling its model and allowed the program to focus resources where they were most needed and to support a larger number of job seekers. Counselors' time was 'freed up' to provide more customized support. Initial assessments indicated that the system holds promise for providing more targeted, efficient workforce development assistance for both job seekers and career coaches.

An example of the power of VSN's job coaching in practice is Erin N., a US Air Force veteran. She became desperate to find a job after months of searching that drained her financial and emotional resources. With experience in intelligence and surveillance, her VSN job coach, Sin, helped to redirect

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<sup>23</sup> C2C+Bridging the Gap from College to Careers Transition Project, University of California, Berkeley, San Diego State University, 27 Apr. 2018, <<https://interwork.sdsu.edu/c2c>>.

<sup>24</sup> Kessler Foundation internal report from SE grantee (C2C).

## Develop technological platforms or model documentation for replication (continued)

her search to jobs that better matched her skills set. Sin consistently went beyond the role of career coach, offering the support and encouragement Erin needed to regain her confidence. As Erin noted, “She helped me prepare for all interviews, but it was more than that. When I was down after not hearing any responses from jobs for a while, she would talk me through it.” Sin prepared her to translate her military skills to a civilian role within a police department and focused on building her confidence. “It was encouraging to have that motivation and support,” said Erin. Erin then moved to a new position as a Crime Analyst at the Fairfax County Police Department where she applied her intelligence background to analyzing police reports looking for crime patterns.

At the same time, some projects also discovered the challenges of technological solutions, particularly when building new websites and processes. While VSN was ultimately successful and was expert in the development of substantive content for its e-learning website, it had less experience managing a technology project with multiple external consultants. VSN underestimated the timeline necessary for this work and the need for clear communication about deadlines. The value-add of the technology within the project took more time and resources than originally planned.

In 2011, a Kessler SE grant supported the University of Hawaii to develop a virtual employment orientation and support center called EmployAble. It aimed to facilitate access to and provision of training, networking, mentoring, and employment resources for people with disabilities and employers. While participants took advantage of the resources on the website and reported that certain content was very valuable (i.e., interview practice, informational module and mentoring component), parts of the technical model were intimidating. Many did not have the necessary equipment or interest to participate in activities in the virtual employment center. The EmployAble team addressed this challenge by using scaffolding strategies that provide initial support, which was slowly removed allowing participants to learn independently. It also learned that those with low to moderate technology skills might need more time to absorb how to use technology tools. At the same time, staff felt that this learning and exposure to technology could have significant indirect benefits given the strong link between use of technology and today’s employment market.

A grant to the National Telecommuting Institute (NTI) for its Telework Options for People with Severe Mobility Impairments program also encountered technical challenges. NTI serves as a virtual staffing agency that trains individuals with disabilities to work as home-based virtual customer service representatives. NTI provided some online technical training, but was not able to provide individualized technical support. Based on feedback from NTI clients, the Heldrich Center evaluation recommended that NTI should consider more advanced computer training for participants or refer individuals in need of these skills to other sources. Participants with visual impairments also noted some accessibility challenges.

Clearly, technology models do not, in and of themselves, lead to successful employment programs for people with disabilities. Yet, technology offers significant promise for scaling projects by reaching people with disabilities in diverse geographic areas, and for fostering the development of competitive technology skills for people with disabilities. These examples demonstrate how technology and documentation can support a model’s efficacy and replicability, but also serve as a

## Develop technological platforms or model documentation for replication (continued)

reminder that they can require upfront costs and individualized training that need to be factored into the project cycle.

### Build strong community partnerships

As noted above, linked to the potential of technology platforms and model documentation is the strength of partnerships and nature of the collaborative/organizations running the project. As part of the selection process, Kessler looks at an organization's track record of collaborative partnerships. Several grantees are part of a larger network of organizations through which there are existing processes for sharing information and scaling successful employment models. Some have deep experience developing innovative models and using partners to identify and share best practices in the field. In addition, strong partnerships are key to job development and placement. Several projects that needed to build such relationships found that a two-year project timeline was insufficient. Those organizations, however, that developed bridges between the disability and employer community achieved greater success. Oftentimes this was done through strong partnerships with local vocational rehabilitation offices or other nonprofit employment agencies for people with disabilities. However, some of the models also established specific staff roles to support both employees with disabilities as well as employers.

For demand-driven models and staffing agencies, identifying qualified and interested employees with disabilities (or potential employers) is essential to achieving scale and meeting competitive employment demands. The most successful SEG projects invested in building and nurturing these relationships to develop sustainable partnerships. During its Kessler grant, VSN strengthened and expanded employer engagement in a systematic and strategic way, resulting in abundant job postings for veterans and their spouses. It nurtured relationships with veterans' agencies as well as private employers such as Marriott, but also became an official federal government contractor helping other government contractors meet requirements for hiring veterans and individuals with disabilities. Because VSN identifies employers who prioritize hiring veterans, job seekers are well positioned for placement through the VSN. At the same time, VSN helps employers see the long-term value in hiring veterans — disciplined, team-oriented, hard-working individuals.

Its work with Marriott exemplifies the symbiotic relationship VSN developed with many employers. For VSN, Marriott seeks staff for many positions and promotes internally, providing not just jobs, but career paths. For Marriott, "the VSN guarantees that their referrals have good soft skills." This enables Marriott to quickly find qualified job candidates, and avoid an upfront investment for those who might not work out by using the temporary-to-permanent placement option.

Kessler's grant to the National Organization on Disability (NOD) for its "Bridges to Business" program had similar success in sourcing qualified job seekers with disabilities due to strong relationships. As Carol Glazer, President of NOD, noted, "We believe the Bridges model, which starts with employers' labor force needs and then moves into finding the right sourcing partner, can increase employment prospects for people with disabilities while improving employers' bottom line. It's a win, win."<sup>25</sup> Key to this model, however, is a sufficient pipeline of job seekers with disabilities.

<sup>25</sup> Katz, O'Connell, and Nicholas, Jun. 2012.

## Build strong community partnerships (continued)

NOD worked with Lowe's to provide competitive employment opportunities for people with disabilities at three of Lowe's distribution centers (Statesville, North Carolina, Findlay, Ohio, and Rockford, Illinois). NOD helped the sites launch the disability employment program, identify local partners and establish a network of service providers that worked together as a team for Lowe's to refer and support job seekers with disabilities. Lowe's had tried to implement a disability outreach program on its own, but encountered difficulty, in part, because its local managers were unfamiliar with local community organizations with which they could partner. NOD was able to foster these critical relationships for Lowe's, but also address the negative preconceptions of Lowe's employees through sensitivity training to generate buy-in among Lowe's personnel to hire people with disabilities. Again, the elements of success noted in this Paper often reinforce one another; changing attitudes was a key contribution of Lowe's partnerships.

For each distribution center, NOD selected one local service provider as the primary point of contact for Lowe's and local referral agencies. That lead agency worked directly with Lowe's and other partners to deliver a consistent pipeline of individuals with a wide variety of disabilities to Lowe's and to support program participants. In addition to the lead agencies, NOD facilitated access to other service providers such as vocational rehabilitation agencies, developmental disability agencies, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and local high schools, to ensure the largest pool of available candidates.

The service providers served as the primary liaison between Lowe's and the local disability community and played a vital role in providing access to clients, including screening them for opportunities with Lowe's. The service providers' employment consultants also provide personalized support, as needed, to program participants. The Heldrich Center noted that, "Good screening of candidates with disabilities by a dedicated lead service provider that is familiar with the jobs at the Lowe's regional distribution center has contributed to this success." The Heldrich Center's evaluation found that NOD's expertise with 'demand-driven' disability employment strategies contributed to its success in selecting quality service providers."

Maintaining strong partnerships can be challenging. Another grantee used a similar model to NOD's, but the program struggled when the corporation needed to manage community relationships on its own. As the evaluation noted, "despite the enormous goodwill articulated by all involved in the program, the amount of commitment and attention required ... and the low hiring results to date, call into question the long-term sustainability of the model (at least in the manufacturing and warehousing sites) without some operational changes." The partnership development was simply too much work to be sustainable for just one employer. Other programs that struggled with identifying job seekers, often did so because they lacked the scale of relationships or strength of relationships with critical community partners working with people with disabilities. In many cases, the local Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) is one of those critical players. Many grantees leveraged their strong relationships with the DVRS agencies to identify and match adequate numbers of qualified job seekers with job opportunities.

In 2011, Kessler supported Hudson Community Enterprises (HCE) to expand a social enterprise offering content management services while employing people with disabilities. HCE's goal was to

## Build strong community partnerships (continued)

move people with disabilities away from sheltered workshops into market-driven positions with benefits and opportunities for advancement. The HCE model included a training program as well as a robust employee assistance program (EAP) to support workers' lives both inside and outside of work. Traditionally, HCE had heavily relied on New Jersey's DVRS as its main source of referrals and developed a strong partnership.

As HCE's business grew, however, it recognized that the bureaucracy and slow speed of a state agency would hinder its own progress. It expanded its recruitment of job seekers with disabilities beyond the DVRS to several other agencies including Jewish Vocational Services, Covenant House, and Integrity House. The Heldrich Center's evaluation noted how critical such partnerships would be to future expansion of the model. An added benefit of these new relationships is that HCE has been able to incorporate additional resources and wraparound services through these partners.

Access Living has been building relationships with other local service providers to enhance services to program participants, including job placements and referrals and job coaching after high school.

For Access Living's READY project, its close relationship with the Chicago Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities was a key driver of success. Gaining access to the Chicago Public schools and sources of employment could have been a serious challenge. Yet, READY's program manager noted that the Mayor's Office was instrumental in raising awareness about the program, bestowing its imprimatur, and encouraging schools to integrate the program into their curriculum. The support of the Mayor's Office and the credibility of its endorsement was likely an essential element in encouraging schools' receptivity to the program. Importantly, this support was likely not only the result of the READY project's sound model, but years of work by Access Living to cultivate this relationship and advance its broad range of work in Chicago. In addition to this relationship, Access Living has been building relationships with other local service providers to enhance services to program participants, including job placements and referrals and job coaching after high school.

Rather than relying on external disability expertise, one program sought to develop that expertise internally to build relationships directly. The United Way of Allegheny County's 21 and Able initiative sought to build the capacity of the private sector to hire and retain young people with disabilities. 21 and Able uses embedded career transition professionals (ECP) to connect employers to agencies that provide qualified individuals ready to work in a competitive environment. As experts in job readiness and coaching, ECPs support human resources and facilitate communication between the corporate world and the disability community. One of the roles of the ECP is to provide information about hiring individuals with disabilities, including frequently asked questions about the ADA and common misconceptions.

The Heldrich Center found that the model was both replicable and scalable within corporations of various sizes. By building capacity within employers, 21 and Able reduces the need for external support, placement, and training services for employees with disabilities, and instead shifts the



## Build strong community partnerships (continued)

Participant satisfaction with 21 and Able is also high, and the program has been able to recruit large numbers of participants and obtain employment for many.

center of support and retention to the employer (as is the case in most competitive employment models). Participant satisfaction with 21 and Able is also high, and the program has been able to recruit large numbers of participants and obtain employment for many. By arming large employers with the proper staff, training, and tools, the program is building a bridge to employment for youth with disabilities. The ECP role is the pillar of that bridge.

The importance of building strong collaborative relationships reaffirms the finding from the 2009 Kessler report “Strategies to Increase the Employment of People with Disabilities” that to ensure adequate referrals and recruitment of persons with disabilities, programs need “to develop partnerships and relationships with major government referral agencies such as the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and/or the Division of Developmental Disabilities before project start-up.”<sup>26</sup>

## Offer wraparound services

All projects supported by Kessler seek to achieve employment outcomes and address barriers to employment for people with disabilities. These barriers vary depending on the program model, target community or geographic area, among other conditions. While many of the solutions to overcome these barriers form the heart of a program’s approach, such as skills training, employment coaching and job development, some are indirectly related to employment, but nonetheless can be critical obstacles to employment for people with disabilities. Projects that addressed these barriers either directly or through partnerships with other service providers were better able to address concerns of participants and their families and provide them with the skills and connections to address such barriers in the future.

For example, HCE has a robust Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that provides critical wraparound services. All employees, with and without disabilities, meet monthly with a counselor. According to the evaluation by the Heldrich Center, counselors have been particularly helpful in fostering stability for employees with mental health and substance abuse issues. HCE’s EAP counselors provide employees with a range of support and services to ensure employee success and retention. The difference this support can make is illustrated by Louise’s experience. When Louise was given new work that required security clearances, her EAP counselor was able to help her expunge an old criminal charge that would have otherwise threatened her employment.

As noted above, to attract a broader range of job seekers, HCE expanded its relationships with a range of partners to identify qualified candidates. Those partners, such as the Urban League, are now sharing other wraparound resources. The Urban League provides ancillary services to

<sup>26</sup> Krepcio, Heidkamp, and Harrington, Apr. 2009.

## Offer wraparound services (continued)

employees, such as on-site enrollment in Affordable Care Act plans, and training in leadership and time management. Access to these wraparound services from external partners is a great example of the dividends that strong partnerships can yield.

While HCE relied on professional service-providers, the PFTW model provided wraparound services by leveraging the resources within the faith congregations. This also demonstrates how the success of a person-centered model is often linked with the provision of wraparound services. PFTW congregations focused on the individual barriers faced by job seekers. The PFTW is grounded in person-centered planning and community support for job seekers. Given this focus, some congregations focused on emotional and spiritual support, while others provided money for uniforms or transportation until the job seekers could afford the cost. The spiritual and personal support was often as important to the individual as getting the job. Involving the person as much as possible in the life of the congregation created a greater sense of community and fellowship, benefiting both the individual and the entire congregation.

Similar to PFTW, the VSN's person-centered approach embedded the provision of wraparound services into its model. The Heldrich Center evaluation found that "With comprehensive wraparound services, such as referrals to benefits programs, education in financial literacy, and translations of skills to the civilian workforce, VSN offers participants customized support within a financially sustainable business model." It noted how wraparound services strengthen a person-centered approach by recognizing the impediments that related barriers, such as transportation, can present for people with disabilities seeking employment. VSN's location at Easter Seals also provided a comprehensive array of supports that participants could access, including childcare, housing assistance and health and wellness programs that are separate from the VSN program, but easily accessible and integrated into the Easter Seals family of services for people with disabilities.

Transportation is a common barrier to employment and some of the lessons learned from SE grants highlight the importance of considering transportation at the outset. For example, the evaluation of the NY Epilepsy Coalition project found that transportation remained a challenge for participants, particularly at program sites where public transportation was less robust (Buffalo and Syracuse/ Rochester). It was noted that, "Providing temporary wraparound services, such as transportation, could help participants obtain valuable employment experiences while searching for more permanent solutions to their employment challenges." Similarly, a lesson learned from a financial services internship program run by the National Disability Institute found that considering travel distance, accessibility and the overall challenge of transportation when matching interns to employer sites, could strengthen the program.

Since wraparound services are largely seen as complementary to employment models, more

Lessons learned from Kessler Foundation's SE grants ...provide rich material for designing successful programs, particularly given the comprehensive evaluations conducted by the Heldrich Center.



## Offer wraparound services (continued)

research is warranted to assess whether aggregating support for persons with disabilities should be a core component of any employment program, and how smaller scale efforts can connect with diverse services in a cost-effective manner.

## Conclusion

This White Paper sought to extract lessons learned from Kessler Foundation's SE grants. While not necessarily representative of the field of employment for people with disabilities, the models provide rich material for designing successful programs, particularly given the comprehensive evaluations conducted by the Heldrich Center. Across models, five elements of success characterized the most successful SE programs:

- A focus on changing attitudes about people with disabilities and their ability to work.
- A person-centered approach to employment.
- Technological platforms or model documentation that facilitated program sharing and/or replication.
- Strong community partnerships either leveraging current partnerships or building partnerships to strengthen connections between disability and employment communities.
- Wraparound services to ensure that barriers outside the workplace didn't impede employment efforts.

Significantly more research is needed to understand how best to support and sustain employment models supporting people with disabilities. This Paper demonstrates many of the most crucial elements of success and ways that they reinforce and complement one another. Kessler Foundation looks forward to continued learning from the field and philanthropic partners to assess the impact of these approaches and refine these lessons. There is also a need to develop approaches that can evaluate both cost and impact over the longer-term. In some industries, the low turnover of staff impeded the hiring of people with disabilities. In other models, the pipeline of workers with disabilities remained a challenge, in part due to the negative attitudes of employers, employees and families alike. In others, placement organizations lacked the capacity to respond in a timely manner to meet the market needs of employers.

Addressing these challenges is not just a technical imperative, but a moral one. To create communities that are truly inclusive, including at work, people with disabilities must have the opportunities to move from the margins to the middle. Kessler Foundation remains committed to leveraging its philanthropic practice to ensure that people with disabilities can lead more productive, independent, and fulfilling lives.

## Acknowledgment

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<sup>27</sup> See Appendix III for author biographies.

# Glossary

**2015 Kessler Foundation National Employment and Disability Survey** - The first national survey to examine the workplace experiences of people with disabilities and identify successful strategies that people with disabilities have used to find and maintain employment.

**2017 Kessler Foundation National Employment and Disability Survey: Supervisor Perspectives** - The first national survey to look at the effectiveness of the practices that employers use to recruit, hire, train, and retain people with disabilities in their organizations, from the unique perspective of supervisors of employees with and without disabilities.

**ACT** - Achieving Change Together

**ADA** - The Americans with Disabilities Act enacted in 1990, gives civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities, expanding on the rights provided to individuals on the basis of race, sex, national origin, and religion. The ADA guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in employment, public accommodations, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications.

**APSE** - Association of People Supporting Employment First is an organization that supports and facilitates the full inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace and community.

**C2C** - College to Careers

**Disability** - US Department of Justice defines a person with a disability as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual, or has a record of such an impairment or is regarded as having such an impairment.

**DVRS** - Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (e.g. NJ DVRS)

**EAP** - Employee Assistance Program - A work-based intervention program designed to identify and assist employees in resolving personal problems (e.g., marital, financial or emotional problems; family issues; substance/alcohol abuse) that may be adversely affecting the employee performance.

**ECP** - Embedded Career Transition Professionals –ECPs work with school districts and corporations to match qualified students with open positions, and provide support to the job candidates, their families, schools, and prospective employers.

**HCE** - Hudson Community Enterprises – a non-profit organization based in Jersey City, New Jersey. HCE offers a range of education, training, and employment services for youth with disabilities, adults with disabilities in its vocational rehabilitation programs, as well as community residents facing other barriers to employment (e.g. welfare).

**ILRU** - Independent Living Research Utilization

John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, Rutgers University - A university-based research and policy center dedicated to raising the effectiveness of the American workplace by strengthening workforce education, placement and training programs, and policies and has earned a reputation as one of the nation's leading research centers for workforce development.

**NCIL** - National Council on Independent Living – The longest-running national cross-disability, grassroots organization run by and for people with disabilities. NCIL represents thousands of organizations and individuals including: individuals with disabilities, Centers for Independent Living, Statewide Independent Living Councils, and other organizations that advocate for the human and civil rights of people with disabilities throughout the United States.

# Glossary (continued)

**NDI** - National Disability Institute – A 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. NDI works with federal agencies, major corporations, financial institutions and nonprofit organizations to advance a better economic future for individuals with disabilities.

**NOD** - National Organization on Disability – A private, non-profit organization that promotes the full participation and contributions of people with disabilities in all aspects of life.

**NTI** - National Telecommuting Institute – A Boston, MA-based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization focused on placing Americans with disabilities, including veterans, in jobs that accommodate working from home.

**NYES** - New York Employment Solutions

**Person-Centered Planning** - A set of approaches designed to assist someone to plan their life and supports. Often used as a life-planning model to enable individuals with disabilities to plan for employment or secure other supports to increase their personal self-determination and independence.

**PFTW** - Putting Faith to Work

**Providers** - Also known as community providers. Community-based organizations offering various services to people with disabilities, including employment placement and supported employment.

**SEEC** - Supported Employment Enterprise Corporation

**SEG** - Signature Employment Grants–Kessler Foundation’s largest grants–are awarded annually to fund new pilot initiatives, demonstration projects, or social ventures that lead to the generation of new ideas to solve the high unemployment and underemployment of individuals with disabilities.

**Sheltered Workshop** - Settings that are authorized to employ individuals with disabilities at sub-minimum wages in a controlled work environment in order to provide some work experience and skill development. The term has generally been used to describe facilities that employ people with disabilities exclusively.

**Supported Employment** - A unique type of employment service for individuals with significant disabilities who require ongoing support services to succeed in competitive employment; often provided through job coaches or person-centered approaches.

**Transition** - Coordinated set of activities for students with disabilities that facilitates movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated/supported employment, independent living

**VSN** - Veteran Staffing Network

**Wraparound Services** - An innovative approach to vocational rehabilitation which provides comprehensive supports (e.g. financial, transportation, legal, behavioral) for people with disabilities to maintain employment or community integration.

**Table 1: Grants reviewed by program category**

<p><b>Program Category - Industry-specific job training and placement</b></p> <p><b>Grantees</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ability Beyond Disability (Achieving Change Together, ACT, Pepsi)</li> <li>2. APSE (Maxing Out Diversity – Office Max)</li> <li>3. National Disability Institute (Building Economic Strength Together – BEST Employee program)</li> <li>4. National Organization on Disability (Bridges to Business - Lowes)</li> </ol>
<p><b>Program Category - Social business enterprises</b></p> <p><b>Grantees</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Center for Head Injury Services (Destination Desserts)</li> <li>6. Northwest New Jersey Community Action (Arthur &amp; Friends)</li> <li>7. Hudson Community Enterprises (Operation Hope)</li> <li>8. Easter Seals Greater Washington Baltimore Region (Veteran Staffing Network)</li> </ol>
<p><b>Program Category - Youth transitions/ Educational support</b></p> <p><b>Grantees</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Access Living (READY program)</li> <li>10. Florida Atlantic University Program (Florida College to Careers)</li> <li>11. San Diego State Interwork Institute (Bridging the Gap: College to Careers)</li> <li>12. United Way of Allegheny County (21 and Able)</li> </ol>
<p><b>Program Category - Alternative work arrangements</b></p> <p><b>Grantees</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13. National Telecommuting Institute (Telework Options for People with Severe Mobility Impairments)</li> </ol>
<p><b>Program Category - Faith-based efforts</b></p> <p><b>Grantees</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14. Vanderbilt University Kennedy Center (Putting Faith to Work)</li> </ol>
<p><b>Program Category - Career Preparation</b></p> <p><b>Grantees</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15. Brain Injury Association of Florida (Project RESULTS)</li> <li>16. Epilepsy Association of Greater Rochester, Inc (New York Employment Solutions)</li> <li>17. Jewish Employment and Vocational Services (Project Connect)</li> <li>18. ServiceSource (Warrior Bridge)</li> <li>19. University of Hawaii (EmployAble)</li> </ol>
<p><b>Program Category - Improving service delivery</b></p> <p><b>Grantees</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20. Supported Employment Enterprise Corporation (Maryland Customized Employment Project)</li> <li>21. AHEDD (MY BEST)</li> </ol>
<p><b>Program Category - Entrepreneurship</b></p> <p><b>Grantees</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>22. University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Human Development (BrainWorks Customized Self-Employment Model)</li> </ol>

## Table 2: Organizational elements of success

While this paper focuses on programmatic elements of success in employment programs for people with disabilities, model success is also highly dependent on organizational strength. Several organization fundamentals integral to program implementation include 1) diverse funding; 2) the skill and stability of staff and management; and 2) the extent to which organizations had already built collaborative relationships.

### **Diverse funding sources**

Given that projects are only funded for two-years, it is critical that grantee organizations can leverage resources both to launch the programs in a timely manner and to sustain successful programs as Kessler funding ends and other funding sources are tapped or approached. Importantly, Kessler requires all SEG applicants to have operating budgets greater than \$3,000,000. For Kessler, its primary purpose is to ensure that grantees have diversified their funding. The criterion also serves as a proxy for other areas of organization strength including staff size, stability and fundraising capacity. Fundraising success is, of course, determined by a complicated mix of strong leadership, past success, available funding and project success, among other factors.

Support from diverse donors, however, fuels both greater resources and sustainability. For example, three funders supported the Veterans Staffing Network – the Capital One Human Capital Innovation Fund, the Call of Duty Endowment, and the Kessler Foundation, within a model that also sought to be self-financing. In this way, Kessler’s approach ensures that when it “lays the egg” with SEG grant support, other funders will help it “hatch”.

### **Leadership and staff**

The quality and stability of staff are integral to successful project implementation. When launching new program models, staffing becomes even more important. One project struggled with hiring staff and differences in site implementation due to lack of staff knowledge and buy-in into the employment model. Organizations that experienced significant staff turnover often struggled to meet the project timelines, making evaluation difficult. For some projects, staff members lacked experience working with people with disabilities similarly slowing or impeding progress.

On the other hand, due to the strength and positioning of the Executive Director of Supported Employment Enterprise Corporation, the Maryland Customized Employment Project achieved significant policy goals in a short amount of time. Similarly, the Heldrich Center found that the AHEDD MY BEST program staff was competent, thorough and highly motivated for their clients to achieve success – a critical ingredient for the model’s success.

### **Collaborative partnerships**

As noted in this paper, projects’ ability to build strong, collaborative partnerships were shared by the most successful models. Yet, many grantees developed these partnerships over many years of work in the field and leveraged them to fuel success under Kessler’s funding. Similar to funding, one of Kessler Foundation’s criteria for funding is a track record in building community partnerships. Partnerships are key to ensuring that organizations connect with an ample number of well-qualified employees with disabilities, can provide integral wraparound services, and share learning across a range of organizations working with people with disabilities.

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# Appendix I

## Kessler Foundation Signature Employment Grants Included in Analysis (Alphabetical)

**Ability Beyond Disability Inc.** (Bethel, CT) - The Pepsi Achieving Change Together (ACT) program is a corporate disability and inclusion project designed to increase the number of employees with disabilities working for PepsiCo North American Beverage throughout its US facilities. In partnership with Disability Solutions@Ability Beyond (ABD), it developed and tested strategies that seek to enhance the recruiting, sourcing, work readiness, hiring, retention, and advancement of job seekers with disabilities for employment at Pepsi as well as meet the company's workforce needs: \$450,000.

**Access Living of Metropolitan Chicago** (Chicago, IL) – The Realizing Education and Advancement for Disabled Youth (READY) program uses a person-centered model to support youth with disabilities transitioning out of high school to gain access to college or employment. It addresses the barriers beyond high school and provides tools and resources for youth with disabilities that build a foundation for success in college and the work force: \$500,000.

**AHEDD** (Camp Hill, PA) – The MY BEST program collaborated with schools in Southeast PA region to educate individuals with disabilities on the benefits of employment and introduce them to the work incentive programs that allow individuals with disabilities to work and maintain public benefits. The program also focused on financial literacy, job development and job placement assistance and trained special education transition staff in high schools in the Greater Philadelphia region: \$473,394.

**APSE** (Rockville, MD) – The Maxis Out Diversity program operated in four geographical locations: Las Vegas, Nevada; Chicago, Illinois; Dallas, Texas; and Columbus, Ohio and provided soft-skills training for individuals with disabilities interested in employment with OfficeMax. Following the class-room-based training, Office Max provided individuals with paid hands-on, on-the-job training in either retail or distribution settings with the potential for longer-term employment: \$323,333.

**Brain Injury Association of Florida, Inc.** (Tallahassee, FL) – The Project RESULTS program used person-centered planning techniques to support individuals with traumatic brain injury to find and maintain employment. Local community advocacy teams, made up of a resource facilitation coordinator, family members, and service providers, identified participants' needs and job leads, and provided support in the first 90 days of employment: \$350,000.

**Epilepsy Association of Greater Rochester, Inc.,** (Rochester, NY) – The New York Employment Solutions (NYES) program was a coalition of four branches of the New York Epilepsy Foundation: Buffalo, New York City-Metro, Syracuse/Rochester, and West Nyack to support transitioning from school to work, a career change, or other barriers to employment. NYES was designed to prepare individuals with epilepsy, traumatic brain injury, and other neurological disabilities for employment, provide job skills training to participants when needed, and support individuals during the job search and after they found employment: \$455,000.

## Appendix I (continued)

**Easter Seals Greater Washington Baltimore Region** (Silver Spring, MD) – The Veterans Staffing Network (VSN) is social enterprise staffing agency dedicated to getting US veterans, reservists, wounded warriors and spouses into the civilian workforce. The program focuses on three primary elements: providing job coaching, identifying job opportunities and recruiting job seekers. The goal is not to simply get veterans jobs in a cost-effective manner, but to support self-sufficiency, meaningful careers, and community integration: \$412,000.

**Florida Atlantic University Foundation** (Boca Raton, FL) – This project seeks to replicate the successful College to Careers (C2C): Bridging the Gap program in Florida. That program is based on a professional workplace curriculum offered for credit to college students with disabilities with complimentary career plan services, work experience and internships, mentorships, and placement assistance: \$407,468.

**Hudson Community Enterprises** (Jersey City, NJ) – “Operation Hope” sought to expand its profitable Enterprise Content Management (ECM) business and employ people with disabilities. Operation Hope is built on a social enterprise business model with the goal to move people with disabilities away from sheltered workshops into market-driven positions with benefits and opportunities for advancement. Operation Hope’s model includes a training program as well as a robust employee assistance program to support workers’ lives both inside and outside of work: \$250,000.

**Jewish Employment and Vocational Service** (Philadelphia, PA) – The Project Connect program, an innovative partnership between two vocational service agencies and a new veterans’ organization, was designed to engage military service personnel with disabilities at the point of discharge from service and assist them with job training and obtaining civilian employment: \$400,000.

**National Disability Institute**, (Washington, D.C.) – The BEST employee program sought to prepare New Jersey residents with disabilities for careers in financial services by partnering with the National Federation of Community Development Credit Unions and Allies, Inc. The program offered a paid two-week training course followed by a six-week internship a local credit union: \$497,897.

**National Organization on Disability** (New York, NY) – Through the Bridges to Business program, NOD worked with Lowe’s to provide competitive employment opportunities for people with disabilities. NOD developed relationships between local organizations that serve people with disabilities and three of Lowe’s regional distribution centers (Findlay, Ohio, Statesville, North Carolina, and Rockford, Illinois) to refer job seekers with disabilities to the program: \$250,000.

**National Telecommuting Institute, Inc.** (Boston, MA) – The Telework Options for People with Severe Mobility Impairments project sought to serve as a virtual staffing agency, training individuals with disabilities to work as home-based virtual customer service representatives. After NTI training and support, participants could gain either direct employment or employment with NTI in a co-employment arrangement with different call center companies: \$250,000.

# Appendix I (continued)

**Northwest New Jersey Community Action, Inc.**, (Phillipsburg, NJ) – The Arthur and Friends program sought to expand a pilot greenhouse located in Sussex County, New Jersey to two new sites (Hackettstown and Bridgeton). The Arthur and Friends program trains individuals with disabilities in hydroponic farming and supports their general career development: \$500,000.

**San Diego State University Research Foundation** (San Diego, CA) – The Bridging the Gap College to Careers (C2C) program uses a professional workplace-skills curriculum for college students with disabilities, combined with career-oriented work experience and internships, mentorships, and placement assistance implemented at the University of California at Berkeley, San Diego State University and California State University, Fullerton. The program builds a comprehensive array of experiences around the curriculum, including peer mentoring, internships, and placement services: \$437,888

**ServiceSource** (Clearwater, FL) – The Warrior Bridge program aimed to re-integrate veterans with traumatic brain injuries into the civilian workforce through an incremental process of community integration, vocational preparation, and employment placement. The program used the Acquired Brain Injury Life (ABIL) clubhouse model through which individuals can be contributing members of the community with other individuals with similar disabilities, and develop skills and independence and prepare for competitive employment: \$339,000.

**Supported Employment Enterprise Corporation** (Silver Spring, MD) – Through a consortium of five supported employment providers and Maryland’s Developmental Disabilities Administration and Department of Disabilities, this project addresses the core barriers to employment for people with developmental disabilities in an effort to effect systemic and policy changes throughout the state: \$282,000.

**The Center for Head Injury Services** (St. Louis, MO) – Destination Desserts sought to provide competitive employment in the baking industry for individuals with disabilities. The social enterprise provided training on the fundamentals of baking and cake decorating, along with kitchen cleaning and management, basic customer service, and food retail. During training, individuals obtained on-the-job experience with the opportunity for employment with the enterprise: \$500,000.

**University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Human Development** (Anchorage, AK) – The Brain-Works Customized Self-Employment Model provided individualized training and assistance to Alaskan residents with traumatic brain injury to develop and launch small businesses at three program sites. The program supported participants through a person-centered discovery process, business plan development, mentoring, and benefits analysis: \$425,000.

**University of Hawaii** (Honolulu, HI) – EmployAble is a virtual employment orientation and support center for people with diverse disabilities, with a focus on veterans and those with traumatic brain injuries. The employment center is housed in a three-dimensional virtual environment called Second Life. EmployAble facilitates training, networking, mentoring, and access to employment resources for both persons with disabilities and employers: \$425,000.

## Appendix I (continued)

**United Way of Allegheny County** (Pittsburgh, PA) – 21 and Able seeks to build the capacity of the private sector to hire and retain young people with disabilities. Using embedded career transition professionals, the program mobilizes private-sector leadership to eliminate barriers such as reluctance and lack of infrastructure for employing people with disabilities by arming large employers with the proper staff, training, and tools, thus building a bridge to employment for youth with disabilities: \$378,300.

**Vanderbilt University Kennedy Center** (Nashville, TN) – Putting Faith to Work (PFTW) replicates and scales-up a Kessler Community Employment pilot in Minnesota by partnering with members of the National Collaborative on Faith and Disability (four University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (Kentucky, Minnesota, Tennessee, and Texas). The collaboration seeks to strengthen the ability of 27 congregations to connect members with disabilities to employment and provide individualized support: \$449,961.

# Appendix II

## **Heldrich Center Evaluation Reports of Kessler Foundation Signature Employment Grants**

### **Ability Beyond Disability**

An Evaluation of the Pepsi ACT (Achieving Change Together)

Program: Year 1: (2014-2015) by Kathy Krepcio and Laurie Harrington | December 2015

### **Final Evaluation of the Pepsi ACT (Achieving Change Together) Program: 2014-2016**

by Kathy Krepcio and Laurie Harrington | February 2017

### **Access Living of Metropolitan Chicago**

*Evaluation of Year 1 of the Realizing Education and Advancement for Disabled Youth Program* by Laurie Harrington | June 2017

### **AHEDD**

*Evaluation of the MY BEST Program: Final Report*

by Laurie Harrington and William F. Mabe, Jr, PhD | April 2013

### **APSE**

*Evaluation of Maxing Out Diversity Program: Interim Report: (2013-2015)*

by Laurie Harrington | August 2015

### **Brain Injury Association of Florida (The)**

*First Year Evaluation of the Project RESULTS Program* by Charyl S. Yarbrough, PhD | October 2013

### **Year 2 Evaluation of the Project RESULTS Program** by Charyl Yarbrough, PhD | August 2014

### **Center for Head Injury Services**

*Year 1 Evaluation of the Destination Desserts Program*

by Laurie M. Harrington and William F. Mabe, Jr, PhD | July 2014

*Year 2 Evaluation of the Destination Desserts Program* by Laurie Harrington | August 2015

### **Easter Seals Serving DC\MD\VA**

*Evaluation of Year 1 of the Veteran Staffing Network Program* by Laurie Harrington | August 2015

### **Final Evaluation Report of the Veteran Staffing Network Program** by Laurie Harrington | September 2016

### **Epilepsy Foundation of Greater Rochester-Syracuse-Binghamton**

*An Evaluation of the New York Epilepsy Coalition's New York Employment Solutions Program*

by Laurie Harrington | August 2012

*Evaluation of the New York Employment Solutions Program: Final Report* by Laurie M. Harrington and William F. Mabe Jr, PhD | August 2013

## Appendix II (continued)

### **Florida Atlantic University Foundation**

*Florida Bridging the Gap from College to Careers: Interim Report* by Stephanie Holcomb | May 2017

### **Hudson Community Enterprises**

*Year 1 Evaluation of Hudson Community Enterprises' Operation Hope* by Maria Heidkamp | July 2013

*Evaluation of Hudson Community Enterprises' Operation Hope: Final Evaluation Report*

by Maria Heidkamp | August 2014

### **JEVS**

*Year One Evaluation of Project Connect* by Laurie Harrington | June 2012

*Evaluation of Project Connect: Final Report* by Laurie M. Harrington and William F. Mabe Jr, PhD | July 2013.

### **National Disability Institute**

*An Evaluation of the Building Economic Strength Together Employee Program*

by William F. Mabe Jr, PhD, and Dr. Charyl Staci Yarbrough with research assistance from Daniel McGruther | 2011

*Year 2 Evaluation Report for the Building Economic Strength Together Employee Program* by Charyl Staci Yarbrough, PhD | August 2012

### **National Organization on Disability**

*An Evaluation of the Bridges to Business Program: Dr. William F. Mabe Jr, PhD, and Dr. Charyl Staci Yarbrough with research assistance from Daniel McGruther | 2011*

*Evaluation of the Bridges to Business Program: Final Report:*

by William F. Mabe Jr, PhD, Maria Heidkamp, and Charyl Staci Yarbrough, PhD | February 2012

### **National Telecommuting Institute**

*Year 1 Evaluation of the National Telecommuting Institute's Telework Options for People with Severe Mobility Impairments Project* by Maria Heidkamp | September 2013

*Evaluation of the National Telecommuting Institute's Telework Options for People with Severe Mobility Impairments Program: Final Evaluation Report* by Maria Heidkamp | September 2013

### **Northwest New Jersey Community Action**

*An Evaluation of Arthur & Friends Greenhouse Project: [first report]* by William F. Mabe Jr, PhD, and Dr. Charyl Staci Yarbrough with research assistance from Daniel McGruther | 2011

*An Evaluation of Arthur & Friends Greenhouse Program: [second report]*

by Charyl Staci Yarbrough, PhD and William F. Mabe Jr, PhD | May 2013

## Appendix II (continued)

### **San Diego State University Research Foundation**

*Evaluation of Year 1 of the Bridging the Gap from College to Careers Program*

by Tony Giordano and Laurie Harrington | May 2015

*Bridging the Gap from College to Careers Program: Year Two Evaluation*

by Tony Giordano | December 2016

### **ServiceSource**

*Warrior Bridge Brain Injury Demonstration Project: Interim Evaluation* by Laurie Harrington | December 2016

### **Supported Employment Enterprise Corporation**

*Maryland Customized Employment Project: Interim Evaluation* by Stephanie Holcomb | April 2017

### **United Way of Allegheny County**

*Year One Evaluation of the 21 and Able Employment/Career Transition Program*

by Tony Giordano | November 2016

*Year Two Evaluation of the 21 and Able Employment/Career Transition Program*

by Tony Giordano | March 2017

### **University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Human Development**

*Evaluation of the BrainWorks Customized Self-Employment Model*

by William F. Mabe, Jr, PhD, Tony Giordano, and Laurie Harrington | February 2015

### **University of Hawaii**

*Year 1 Evaluation of the EmployAble: World without Barriers Program*

by Charyl Staci Yarbrough, PhD | June 2013

*Year 2 Evaluation of the EmployAble: World without Barriers Program*

by Charyl Yarbrough, PhD | September 2014

### **Vanderbilt University Kennedy Center**

*Evaluation of the Putting Faith to Work Program: Year One* by Laurie M. Harrington | December 2015

*Final Evaluation Report of the Putting Faith to Work Program* by Laurie Harrington | September 2016



## Appendix III

### **Laurie Harrington, MPAP**

Laurie Harrington is a senior researcher at the Heldrich Center and responsible for the center's work on secondary career and technical education, education and career awareness, and the health care sector employment. Harrington is also responsible for developing and managing the Center's secondary and postsecondary career education and information initiatives, as well as health care and disability employment initiatives. She has extensive knowledge of workforce development policy, sectoral demand analysis, qualitative program and policy evaluation, work-based welfare policies, school-to-work, disability employment and the public workforce development and education systems. In addition, Harrington works on a number of career education projects for persons with disabilities and evaluations of workforce programs.

### **Catherine Hyde Townsend, MA**

With over twenty years of experience, Catherine Hyde Townsend serves as an independent consultant and advisor on disability inclusion to private donors, UN agencies, and NGOs. From 2006 until 2017, Catherine worked at Wellspring Advisors where she launched one of the first grantmaking portfolios focused on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. For more than a decade, she has led private donor advocacy and learning around disability inclusion with a focus on gender, and intersectional identities. She co-chairs the Board of Directors for the Disability Rights Fund, a participatory grantmaking fund she helped launch, and serves as a member of the Board of Directors of Women Enabled International. Prior to Wellspring, Catherine coordinated programming for the International Human Rights Funders Group and worked at the Mertz Gilmore Foundation. She began her career working for JP Morgan in several offices around the world. Catherine holds an M.A. from Yale University and a B.A. from Hamilton College.

### **Elaine E. Katz, MS, CCC-SLP**

Elaine E. Katz is senior vice president of Grants and Communications at Kessler Foundation. Katz oversees the Foundation's comprehensive grant making program and its communications department. During her tenure, the Foundation has awarded more than \$41.5 million in grant support for national and community-based employment programs. For more than 25 years, Katz has worked with non-profit organizations in the areas of board development, fundraising, marketing, and business development. Katz often speaks about innovative practices for employing people with disabilities, and is the author/co-author of articles and papers on related topics. She currently serves on the board of directors of JESPY House, New Jersey Association of People Supporting Employment First (NJAPSE), Essex/Newark Disabilities Issues Committee, and on the program committee of the Council of NJ Grantmakers. Elaine served as a member of the Human and Children Services Transition Advisory Committee for Governor-elect Phil Murphy. She is also an appointed member of Empower NYC Advisory Board and the NJ Veterans and Community Collaborative Network (VCCN). She is the 2016 recipient of the Jackson Drysdale Civilian of the Year Award from the GI Go Fund and the 2015 Betty Pendler Award for improving the lives of persons with disabilities from Community Options, Inc

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