Work Matters

A Framework for States on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS AND NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES

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The National Task Force on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities was convened in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy's State Exchange on Employment and Disability in its efforts to foster a nationwide workforce more inclusive of people with disabilities.

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Foreword

As co-chairs of The Council of State Governments' National Task Force on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities, it is our great pleasure to release this framework, a culmination of intensive deliberation and research on state level policies to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

The Council of State Governments, or CSG, in partnership with the National Conference of State Legislatures, or NCSL, convened the National Task Force on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities. As leading associations representing state policymakers, CSG and NCSL are uniquely poised to highlight the issue of disability employment at the state level.

The National Task Force oversaw the work of four subcommittees, each focusing on a unique policy area impacting the employment of people with disabilities: Career Readiness & Employability; Hiring, Retention & Reentry; Entrepreneurship, Tax Incentives & Procurement; and Transportation, Technology & Other Employment Supports. Each subcommittee was composed of 10 to 12 state leaders and four to six non-voting external advisors representing the private sector, key stakeholders and/or academia.

The members and leadership of the National Task Force have accomplished much in a short amount of time. In addition to the success of the task force identifying policy options to help state leaders move the needle on disability employment policy, members of the task force and subcommittees already have signaled policy movement in their states.

We explore in this work a diverse range of components that can influence the development of the workforce of people with disabilities. This report serves as a guide on each of the policy areas the task force explored, designed to assist states in improving the ways the public sector serves people with disabilities and provides state examples of innovative programs and policies. A key tenet of the framework is having people with disabilities at the table when policy decisions are made. We encourage you to read the full report for more explanation.

Sincerely,

Gov. Jack Markell
Delaware

Sen. Beau McCoy
Nebraska

A Note from CSG and NCSL

With this report, the National Task Force on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities plays an impactful role in providing states and their leaders with the knowledge needed to achieve greater economic vitality and place many more Americans on a path to success in the global economy.

Under the leadership of Delaware Gov. Jack Markell and Nebraska state Sen. Beau McCoy, the National Task Force studied the best practices and innovative strategies states have implemented to improve employment opportunities and outcomes for people with disabilities.

Gov. Markell is a nationally recognized leader in disability employment policy and has a proven legacy in this arena from his state initiatives like Project SEARCH, a jobs training program to put businesses in touch with potential employees with disabilities, to his National Governors Association Chair's Initiative, A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities.

Sen. McCoy spent his career in the Nebraska Legislature advocating for improving educational opportunities for all students and creating and maintaining workforce development for all citizens. He chose disability employment policy as his CSG National Chair's initiative and has followed through with strong leadership of the task force in partnership with Gov. Markell.

It is our hope that this framework will provide the guide for how states can best meet the needs of each of their citizens. We encourage your feedback on the contents of this report and your help in learning even more about the success stories in your state. Please contact us and let us know your thoughts. We know CSG, NCSL and other state leaders can benefit from your perspective.

We would like to thank those who served on the National Task Force on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities; the Career Readiness & Employability Subcommittee; the Entrepreneurship, Tax Incentives & Procurement Subcommittee; the Hiring, Retention & Reentry Subcommittee; and the Transportation, Technology & Other Employment Supports Subcommittee. The many contributions of these individuals, in the form of policy options resources and guidance, served as the foundation for this report. We also thank the advisers and members of the State Exchange on Employment and Disability and the U.S. Department of Labor/Office of Disability Employment Policy's State Exchange on Employment and Disability for their generous support and research assistance.

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Approaching Disability Employment Policy as a State Official

An estimated 1 in 5 Americans, nearly 56.7 million, live with a disability. While expressing an ability, desire and willingness to work in the community and contribute to the economy, many adults and youth with disabilities experience significant barriers to employment. Despite progress made since the passage of the *Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA, of 1990* and comparable equal opportunity and nondiscrimination laws passed by most states, people with disabilities still experience unemployment rates far above the national average, and the percentage of people with disabilities participating in our workforce is far below the rate for people without disabilities. According to the July 2016 Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Sex, Age, and Disability Status (not seasonally adjusted) table published by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, only 19.8 percent of people with disabilities participate in the workforce compared to 68.7 percent without disabilities, and the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is 8.7 percent, compared to 4.6 percent for people without disabilities.

Consequently, individuals with disabilities continue to experience poverty and economic insecurity in substantial numbers and disproportionately compared to individuals without disabilities. The 2014 American Community Survey indicates that 28.2 percent of non-institutionalized people with disabilities age 18–64 fall below the poverty line, compared to 13 percent of people without disabilities age 18–64. In 2013, non-institutionalized people with disabilities age 21–64 had average annual earnings of $38,300, earning on average $5,000 dollars less per year than their peers without disabilities.

Common sense as well as evidence suggests that employment is the most direct and cost-effective means to empower individuals with disabilities to achieve independence, economic self-sufficiency, and a sense of dignity and self-worth. Individuals with disabilities bring valuable skills to the workforce and represent an untapped segment of the labor pool for public, private and nonprofit sector employment. As noted in the National Governors Association report, *A Better Bottom Line: Employing People With Disabilities, Blueprint for Governors* (2012–2013 Chair's Initiative), the percentage of the U.S. population with a disability is expected to double in the next two decades. States will need to address future employment demands by a growing population with disabilities as more military veterans with disabilities enter the civilian workforce and others "age" into disability and work beyond traditional retirement age. Through policy efforts that attend to a rapidly changing workforce, states have an opportunity to identify, train and attract skilled workers with disabilities, benefitting the business community and employees alike.

How is disability defined?

The term "disability" is defined in state and federal legislation and in demographic surveys in various ways, depending on the context and purposes of the legislation or survey. For purposes of federal disability nondiscrimination laws, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, the term "disability" means, with respect to an individual: (1) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, (2) has a record of such an impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment.

Realizing that businesses might be missing a unique opportunity to improve their bottom line and that states are interested in growing their economies, state policymakers are adopting a multifaceted approach to supporting the preparation, recruitment, hiring, retention and advancement of individuals with disabilities. This approach includes strategies to support and incentivize private-sector employers, increase disability inclusion in state government employment, and support individuals with disabilities as entrepreneurs.

In sum, people with disabilities are a key factor in states' ability to build strong, inclusive workforces that translate into economic success. While state policy efforts to support increased disability employment have made an impact, many individuals with disabilities remain unemployed or under-employed. Moving the needle on this critical workforce issue will require strong public policy at the state level that systematically addresses a number of key areas.

Convening the National Task Force

The Council of State Governments, or CSG, in partnership with the National Conference of State Legislatures, or NCSL, convened a National Task Force on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities (henceforth referred to as the National Task Force). As leading associations representing state policymakers, CSG and NCSL are uniquely poised to highlight the issue of disability employment at the state level.

Founded in 1933, CSG is the nation's only nonpartisan, not-for-profit organization serving all three branches of state government. It is nationally recognized as an impartial convener of state officials, a provider of training and technical assistance, and a primary source of educational policy information, which positions CSG to collaborate with the U.S. Department of Labor, or DOL, in its efforts to foster a nationwide workforce more inclusive of people with disabilities.

Created in 1975, the bipartisan NCSL serves as an advocate for state legislatures, helping them remain strong by giving them the tools, information and resources to craft the best legislative policy solutions to a host of difficult problems—including those related to workforce development and disability employment. NCSL brings dedicated disability employment policy research and technical assistance resources to bear in supporting the efforts of the National Task Force and its subcommittees.

This National Task Force effort, implemented under the auspices of the DOL/Office of Disability Employment Policy's State Exchange on Employment and Disability, or SEED, initiative, provided the opportunity for state leaders to identify barriers to employment for people with disabilities and explore policy options to address them in order to increase the workforce participation for this population in their states.

To this end, the National Task Force oversaw the work of four subcommittees, each focusing on a unique policy area impacting the employment of people with disabilities: 1) Career Readiness & Employability; 2) Hiring, Retention & Reentry; 3) Entrepreneurship, Tax Incentives & Procurement; and 4) Transportation, Technology & Other Employment Supports. Each subcommittee comprised 10–12 state leaders and four to six non-voting external advisers representing the private sector, key stakeholders and/or academia.

The National Task Force was led by CSG president, Delaware Gov. Jack Markell, and CSG chair, Nebraska state Sen. Beau McCoy. In turn, each subcommittee was led by two co-chairs. These subcommittee leaders—eight total—along with the two National Task Force co-chairs, constituted the National Task Force.

The four subcommittees took a deeper dive into the employment and workforce issues specific to their policy areas as described below:

Career Readiness & Employability

This subcommittee's focus centered on K-12 and young adult education and transition to employment, exploring such issues as person-centered education and career-readiness planning; non-traditional educational opportunities (e.g., online classes, certificate programs, etc.); work- and community-based learning; and collaboration with educational institutions, vocational rehabilitation, the workforce development system and the business community. This subcommittee

concentrated on the individual entering the labor market, defining employability as the capacity to get and keep satisfactory work.

Hiring, Retention & Reentry

This subcommittee was tasked with identifying how state government policies, programs, funding and initiatives can increase the number and diversity of employees with disabilities in public- and private-sector workforces. Reflecting this, the subcommittee concentrated on hiring, retention, advancement and reentry strategies for private-sector employer engagement, stay-at-work/return-to-work efforts and state governments as *model employers.*

Entrepreneurship, Tax Incentives & Procurement

This subcommittee focused on how state government policies, programs, funding and initiatives can increase the number and diversity of self-employed individuals with disabilities and disability-owned businesses by examining entrepreneurship training strategies for individuals with disabilities, financial supports for established business owners with disabilities, and state procurement policies targeted to disability-owned businesses.

Transportation, Technology & Other Employment Supports

This subcommittee's work centered on employment-related supports—those elements of daily living without which work would not be possible for many people with disabilities—with a particular focus on ensuring transportation and transit system access, adoption of information and communication technology accessibility standards, provision of assistive technology and emerging technologies, as well as workplace flexibility and telework, accessible and affordable housing, and personal assistance services.

Development of the Policy Framework

As the National Task Force members convened to address workforce development and employment issues for people with disabilities, a number of guiding principles and overarching considerations emerged that would serve as a foundation for the crafting of this policy framework.

Guiding Principles

Disability is a natural part of the human experience that in no way diminishes one's right to fully participate in all aspects of community life.
As such, state disability policy should consider support of the following four goals:

- Equal opportunity, including treating people with disabilities as individuals, making assessments based on facts, objective evidence and science, and providing effective and meaningful experiences in the most integrated setting appropriate.
- Full participation in society, including enagement of people with disabilities in relevant decision-making at the individual and systems levels, self-determination, self-advocacy and informed choice.
- Economic self-sufficiency, including employment-related services and supports, financial literacy, entrepreneurship and work incentives.
- Independent living, including skills development and long-term services and supports.

Disability can develop at any point during an individual's lifetime and have varying impacts.
As such, state agencies should ensure service delivery is relevant at all ages, is inclusive of all types of disabilities, and maximizes the strengths and abilities of the individual. States should also consider providing a centralized systems navigation process so that people with disabilities and their families have a place to ask questions and get answers about rights, responsibilities, services and supports.

Successful disability policy embraces the "nothing about us without us" principle.
Individuals with disabilities, alongside families, advocates and champions from agencies, education, business and communities, should be engaged throughout the policymaking process at all levels. This includes increasing the actual participation of people with disabilities at the highest levels of state government.

People with disabilities are underutilized in our workforce and frequently experience social and economic disadvantage.
There is strong rationale for including people with disabilities in public policy efforts targeting other under-represented groups like veterans, women and minorities.

People with disabilities have valuable and unique contributions to make.
State disability employment initiatives have the best chance at success when employers are motivated to hire people with disabilities not because they have to or because it's the right thing to do, but because they recognize that disability inclusion helps boost the bottom line through increased innovation, creativity and productivity.

Overarching Policy Themes of the National Task Force

State policymakers should consider:

- Leading by example and "walk the talk"—ensuring that state agencies become model employers and use state financial resources to support model employers in the private sector. This includes requiring state contractors to proactively employ people with disabilities, offering financial incentives to businesses to hire persons with disabilities and providing ongoing supports to businesses to help them retain employees who may acquire disabilities.
- Including external and internal focus on disability awareness, including disability etiquette, in all state government policies, programs, practices and disability employment initiatives.
- Adopting robust reporting efforts, including establishing performance goals, metrics for measurement and data collection processes, to help inform policymaking. States also should consider developing strategies to encourage individuals with disabilities to self-identify and voluntarily disclose disability status to employers and service providers.
- Increasing coordination, blending and braiding of services and funding across agencies and levels of government to ensure successful employment of people with disabilities. Policy should be designed to eliminate service delivery silos and facilitate cooperation and coordination across all relevant state agencies and systems.
- Requiring accountability from the highest levels of government. States can identify high-level officials or departments responsible for providing oversight on policy implementation and reporting, as well as addressing the concerns of people with disabilities.
- Including *universal design* principles, which seek to ensure accessibility and usability to the greatest extent possible for all people, in the earliest development phases of all state government policies, programs and practices, rather than retrofitting the policy after the fact.

Policy In-Depth: Universal Design

What is Universal Design? Universal design, or UD, is a set of accessibility and usability principles guiding physical space, product, technology and programmatic design. UD seeks to guarantee access and usability for all individuals regardless of age or ability. UD also goes beyond the accessibility movement and barrier-free design initiatives by emphasizing the aesthetic side of design and ensuring that accessibility and useability principles are incorporated at the earliest stages of the design process.

Why implement UD principles? While the application of UD principles promises to increase accessibility and community inclusion for people with disabilities, it has the potential to positively impact the quality of life of all people.

Examples of Universal Design in Action:

Curb Cuts—Ramps built into sidewalks, typically at intersections, allow wheelchair users and other individuals with mobility needs to easily transition from sidewalk to street-level in order to cross streets safely and efficiently. Parents with strollers and people riding skateboards and bicycles also benefit from curb cuts.

Voice–Activated Smartphone Controls—Many smartphone and computer operating systems now include voice-activated virtual assistants that can perform various tasks and improve the usability of these devices for blind users and individuals with limited dexterity. Individuals without disabilities have also found voice-activated controls to be a beneficial design element and they are often a major selling point in product marketing materials.

» Identify low hanging fruit—policy and program efforts that have significant impact and are relatively easy to implement, including (but not limited to):

- Identifying existing state programs and systems that can be easily adapted to include people with disabilities;
- Adopting best practices and lessons learned from similar state initiatives targeting other underserved populations to inform initiatives for people with disabilities;
- Extending diversity and inclusion (affirmative action) policies applicable to race, national origin and gender to include disability for state agencies and businesses contracting with state government; and
- Using existing mentorship models to connect business champions supporting disability employment with employers interested in beginning disability hiring initiatives.

Photo courtesy of Positive Exposure and RespectAbilityUSA

Policy Options Identified by the National Task Force

The work of the National Task Force culminated in the development of a policy framework states can use to address workforce development barriers for people with disabilities. What follows is a thematic overview of the policy options developed by the subcommittees, organized into five categories: Laying the Groundwork, Preparing for Work, Getting to and Accessing Work Opportunities, Staying at Work, and Supporting Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship.

Laying the Groundwork

1. States are encouraged to be model employers of people with disabilities, enacting policies that increase disability inclusion in the civil-sector workforce and serving as an example for private-sector employers to follow.

2. States can build capacity of private- and nonprofit-sector employers to engage in disability inclusion efforts. States can adopt policies that incentivize hiring of workers with disabilities and provide financial supports and technical assistance.

3. States are encouraged to have an external and internal focus on disability awareness, including disability etiquette. In developing awareness around disabilities, the focus should be cross-disability and include both visible and hidden disabilities.

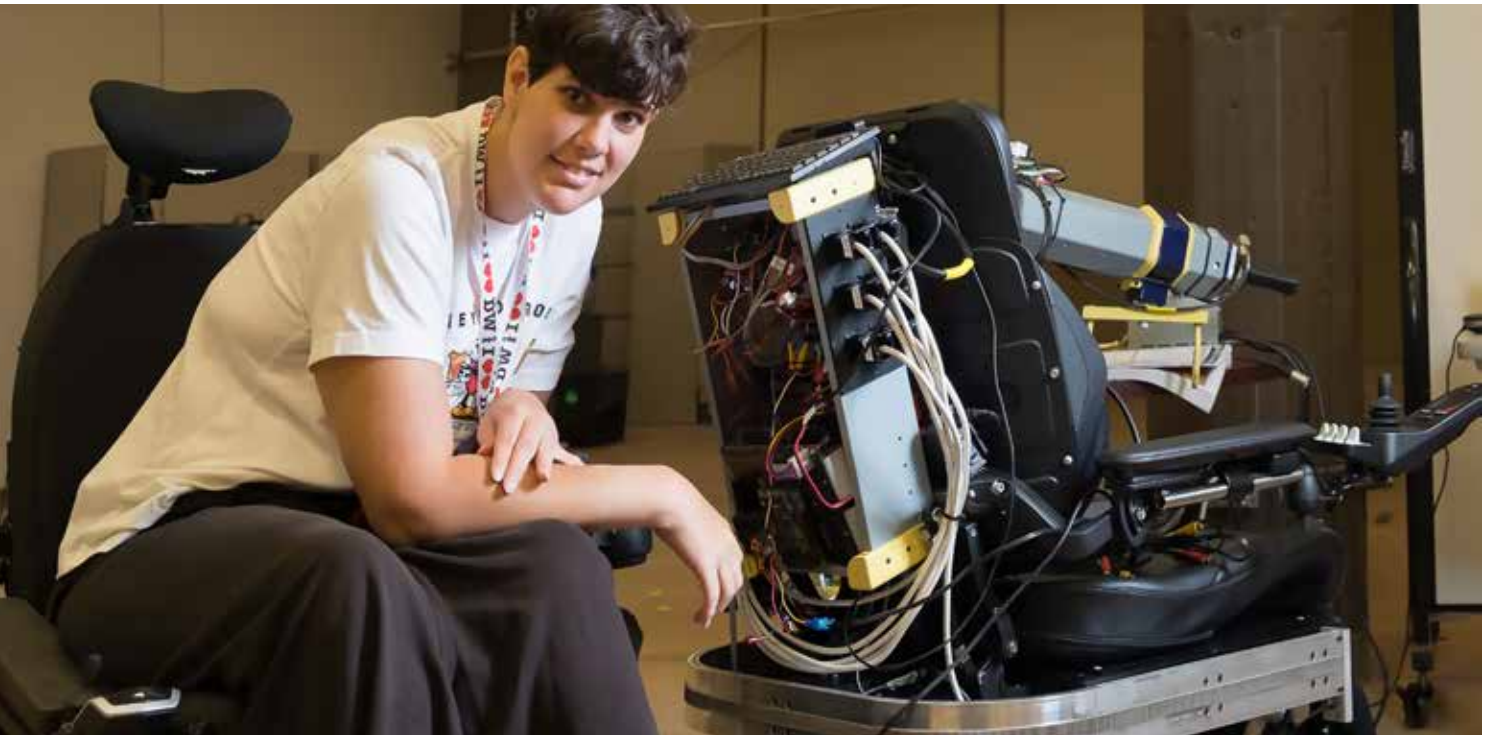
4. States can implement policies that optimize resources and services through interagency coordination, collaboration, and blending/braiding of funding and implementation of robust performance measures.

Preparing for Work

5. States can promote education and career-readiness policies and strategies that expect and prepare all youth, including those with disabilities, to enter the workforce.

6. States can facilitate skill development and job exploration opportunities—such as work-based learning—for youth and young adults, including those with disabilities, that align with education and career development planning and meet businesses' predicated workforce needs.

7. States can promote meaningful family engagement throughout the education and career-development process for youth and young adults, including those with disabilities.



Getting to and Accessing Work Opportunities

8 States are encouraged to ensure that transportation is widely available, reliable, affordable and accessible to people with disabilities in order to support access to the workplace.

9 States can adopt policies that support accessibility in the workplace, particularly related to accessible information and communication technologies, or ICT, and assistive technologies.

10 States can enact policies that support worker access to the *built environment*, including housing, public transportation, infrastructure and physical design.

Staying at Work

11 States can develop policies to support employee retention in the event of injury, illness or a change in status of an individual's disability. Stay-at-work and return-to-work policies can support all workers as they continue in their careers and as new challenges present themselves.

Supporting Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship

12 States are encouraged to ensure that state workforce development systems support entrepreneurship and self-employment as viable employment options for people with disabilities.

13 States can include disability-owned businesses in targeted state procurement, certification and financial incentive policies.

There are detailed, specific policy ideas attached to each of these main policy options. Pioneering states have used varying strategies to address these objectives and, at times, distinct flavors of similar solutions. Concrete examples are provided throughout the document.

Laying the Groundwork

In the case of public policy supporting employment of people with disabilities, adopting certain wide-ranging strategies and initiatives increases the likelihood of successful implementation of targeted disability inclusion efforts related to career readiness, employment supports, business incentives and entrepreneurship. State governments, through their employment practices, agency policies and outreach efforts to private-sector employers, have the opportunity to communicate to citizens with disabilities that the state is committed to securing and expanding employment access and community inclusion for people with disabilities.

States can send a clear message that employment of people with disabilities is a high priority first by implementing a comprehensive set of policies, practices and processes, known collectively as State as a Model Employer policies, to increase representation of people with disabilities within their own public-sector workforce. When acting as model employers, the states also have an opportunity to serve as test cases for private employers, demonstrating the economic and organizational benefits of hiring people with disabilities.

State governments can leverage their own disability inclusion work to cultivate strong working relationships with private employers and address mutual interests. Engaging the business community can provide a two-fold benefit to state workforce development efforts. According to *State Policy Options for Employing People with Disabilities*, a *LegisBrief* published by NCSL, evidence suggests that increasing disability representation in the workforce benefits both business labor needs and state priorities.

First, because businesses are always looking for highly qualified, skilled workers to enhance their productivity and improve their bottom line, governors and state lawmakers can respond by introducing businesses to workers with disabilities, who remain a largely untapped segment of the labor pool. States can act as a recruiter, providing connections between skilled workers with disabilities and employers as well as technical assistance and resource support to both parties during employment.

Second, state governments are able to lean on highly engaged businesses to help inform workforce development strategy and realize long-term budget savings as a result of private-sector hiring increases. When successful recruitment and retention occurs and workers with disabilities are no longer as dependent on cash, medical and disability benefits, state governments grow the taxpayer base while simultaneously lowering benefits administration costs.

To support public- and private-sector employment efforts, state governments can work to prepare state agencies and services to competently and efficiently meet the needs of workers and clients with disabilities. State governments can ensure that agencies are coordinating service delivery and optimizing funding streams, thereby ensuring that people with disabilities do not fall through the cracks or encounter barriers to services that are critical to their efforts to obtain, maintain and advance their careers.

Taken together, these policies signal to citizens with disabilities that their state recognizes the benefits of full disability inclusion in employment and community life. By developing and adopting these policies, state governments can implement inclusion at the ground level of policies and programs and ensure employers and disability stakeholders are at the table during the earliest stages of the policymaking process. In creating inclusive and accessible workplaces, states support individuals with disabilities in their efforts to realize their employment and social goals.

Policy Options

The following policy options can be grouped into four thematic goals—leading by example as a model employer of people with disabilities, maximizing workforce development by engaging with employers, having both an internal and external focus on disability awareness, and optimizing agency services and resources.

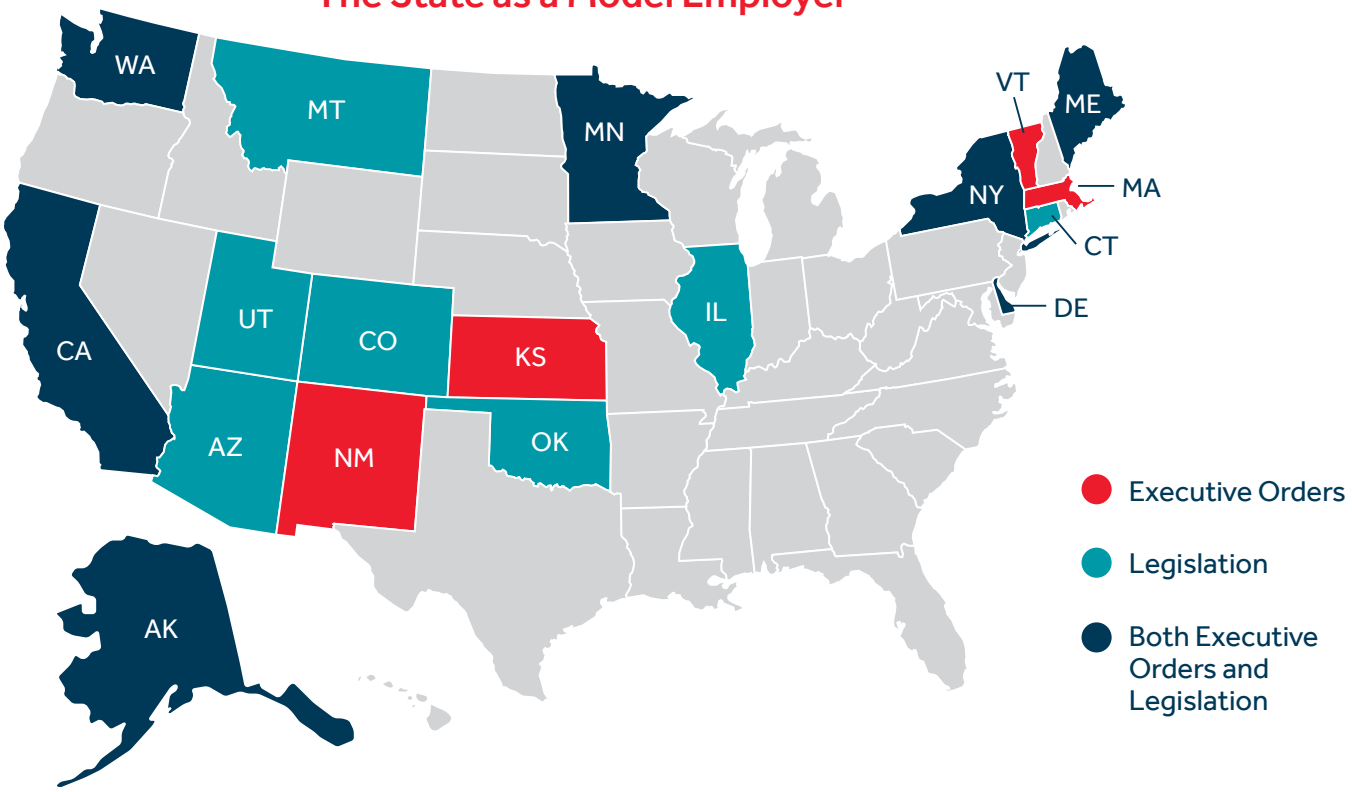
1 States are encouraged to be model employers of people with disabilities, enacting policies that increase disability inclusion in the civil-sector workforce and serving as an example for private-sector employers to follow.

Governors and state legislatures increasingly recognize the role state government can play in advancing the recruitment, hiring, retention and advancement of people with disabilities through their own employment policies. This policy framework highlights the human capital development and human resources management strategies that many states are adopting in their quest to become model employers of people with disabilities. The policies described below address public-sector strategies aimed at employing people with disabilities, emphasizing that the hiring, retention, advancement, professional development and training of others in the workplace are important to the state becoming and maintaining its status as a model employer.

A **Use formal mechanisms to enact policies committing states to be model employers of people with disabilities.** These may include executive orders, legislation or both.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

The State as a Model Employer



Washington State Leads the Way

The state is raising the bar by setting a goal. It is committed to employing people with disabilities and are working to have 5 percent of state employees be individuals with disabilities by 2017. To achieve this goal, they have created a task force with the purpose of supporting recruitment and retention of employees with disabilities in state government, requiring every cabinet-level agency to dedicate staff to the effort and put a plan in place addressing staff underrepresentation.

B Create infrastructure to maximize the likelihood that employment-related and other issues affecting people with disabilities are addressed by government agencies at the earliest stages of policy development, design, implementation and evaluation. By enhancing current state organizational structures with champions for those with disabilities, states can increase the likelihood that disability-specific considerations are incorporated into the policymaking and implementation process from the start. States have used a variety of strategies to achieve this end, including cabinet-level positions, creating accountability through strategic planning and convening interagency committees.

Suggested Strategies

i Create a cabinet-level position to act as a champion for people with disabilities.

ii Create task forces/committees/interagency workgroups to reinforce and assess efforts.

iii Adopt comprehensive government-wide strategic plans (e.g., state as model employer), including reporting to leadership on a regular basis.

iv Extend diversity and inclusion initiatives (e.g., affirmative action) applicable to state agencies and departments to include disability.

- Institute hiring goals and preferences.
- Develop employee self-identification policies.
- Implement annual reporting mechanisms and surveys.

v Include stakeholders with disabilities in the policymaking process.

vi Collect data from people with disabilities to identify barriers to workforce participation.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Cabinet-Level Position

In **Maryland**, there is a cabinet-level position for policy relating to people with disabilities. The secretary of disabilities, as head of the Maryland Department of Disabilities, sits on numerous advisory councils and task forces related to disability issues. The department also provides information and referrals to Maryland citizens with disabilities, evaluates relevant state programs, and at least quarterly consults with and advises the Maryland Commission on Disability.

Interagency Working Groups

Alaska, California, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Utah and Washington have committees, interagency working groups and/or task forces for policy issues relating to people with disabilities.

For example, in September 2012, **Alaska** Gov. Sean Parnell issued an executive order creating a State as Model Employer Task Force within the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education. The task force, which was charged with reviewing best practices

and developing strategies to create an inclusive work environment in state government, consists of members from various state agencies, including members from the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, the State Division of Personnel and Labor Relations, the State ADA Coordinator's office, and the State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee issued an executive order directing the Office of Financial Management to convene a task force for the purpose of assisting state agencies with recruitment and retention of persons with disabilities. The task force is to provide: (1) policy options on how to achieve the employment targets established in the executive order; and (2) guidance and other support to agencies and institutions of higher education on recruitment, retention, accommodation and accessibility for people with disabilities. The task force also will engage model private-sector companies to share strategies, exchange best practices and provide technical assistance to boost the employment of people with disabilities in all sectors.

In **New Mexico**, the Governor's Commission on Disability "serves as a liaison and advisor to the governor and legislature on disability issues." The commission comprises statutory and appointed members and is supported by staff members.

Maryland: Targeting Disability at the Highest Levels of Government

In 2004, the Maryland General Assembly passed Senate Bill 188, elevating the state agency Office for Individuals with Disabilities to the cabinet-level Maryland Department of Disabilities, or MDOD. With Gov. Robert Ehrlich's approval of the bill, Maryland became the first and only state in the nation to establish a cabinet-level department representing cross-disability interests at the highest levels of state government. The legislation charges MDOD with coordinating and improving the delivery of services to individuals with disabilities throughout the state of Maryland.

MDOD coordinates government services for people with disabilities through required collaboration with all of its sister state agencies and oversees the development of a state disabilities plan to ensure consistent disability policy development across all state departments. The department reviews and refocuses budget priorities and regulatory provisions governing services to people with disabilities, implements performance outcomes and assists state agencies in securing public and private disability-related grant funding.

MDOD also supports agency efforts to identify and remove policy and program barriers preventing full inclusion of Marylanders with disabilities into various aspects of community life. MDOD currently targets its community inclusion efforts at programs and policies dealing with accessible housing, employment, transitioning youth, community living, technology assistance, barrier free living, and transportation access. Recent MDOD successes include a pilot effort to provide four-year post-secondary educational opportunities to individuals with intellectual disabilities and a program allowing working individuals with disabilities to purchase Medicaid at a substantially reduced rate and with expanded asset and income eligibility limits.

In addition to its collaborative role within the Administration, it works closely with the Maryland General Assembly in reviewing proposed bills and fiscal notes and serves as a non-partisan source of technical assistance and outreach for the state's 141 delegates and 47 state senators. Since its creation, MDOD has served as a source of content expertise for the Administration and the General Assembly on a range of disability-related issues, greatly increasing efficiencies and consistencies in policy development efforts between Maryland's executive branch and legislative branch and encouraging a more unified state response to the needs of its citizens with disabilities.

Strategic Plans

Alaska, California and Massachusetts have adopted policies supporting the development of strategic plans for state employment of people with disabilities.

In **Alaska**, the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education issues a five-year state plan. The 2011–2016 publication includes goals for increasing state-as-model-employer efforts, including the expanded used of the state's provisional hire program.

California Government Code 12803.6 requires the Labor and Workforce Development and Health and Human Services agencies to coordinate in developing a comprehensive strategy to meet the employment needs of individuals with disabilities, including ensuring that California is a model employer. Section 12803.65 of the California Government Code requires the Governor's Committee on Employing People with Disabilities to perform a consulting and advisory role in the development of this comprehensive strategy on disability employment.

The **Massachusetts** strategic plan is entirely devoted to implementing state-as-model-employer policy. Elements of the plan include, but are not limited to: increased recruitment efforts, expanded state agency internship opportunities, streamlined reasonable accommodation processes, use of universal design principles in the workplace and disability awareness training for state personnel.

Hiring Goals

Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Oregon, Vermont and Washington have adopted hiring goals for people with disabilities.

Connecticut Public Act No 13-225 specifies that under the supervision of the commissioner of administrative services, each department and agency of state government shall establish an effective program of accommodation and entry-level training of persons with disabilities. Under the law, such programs must be part of required departmental and agency affirmative action programs. All departments and agencies also are required to make a range of training opportunities available to such persons. In particular, all departments and agencies of state government are mandated to establish, as part of their affirmative action plans, specific annual goals and timetables on (1) the number of jobs that are to be filled through the accommodation of persons with disabilities, and (2) entry-level training for such persons.

Massachusetts (Executive Order 478, now 526) reaffirms the executive branch's commitment to nondiscrimination, equal opportunity and diversity as guiding principles for hiring and employment. Massachusetts strengthened the order by requiring that hiring goals be incorporated in employment guidelines for the executive branch and ensured follow through by creating a Disability Task Force on Employment.

Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton's 2014 Executive Order 14-14 requires agencies to increase the hiring of employees with disabilities by 7 percent by August 2018, stating that "the percentage of state employees self-identified as having a disability declined from approximately 10 percent in 1999 to less than 4 percent in 2013" and citing to the statewide affirmative action program as required by Minnesota statutes, Section 43A.19. The order requires the development of a model for recruitment and hiring strategies to include training programs for hiring managers and clear benchmarks to ensure implementation.

Vermont Gov. Howard Dean issued Executive Order 3-43 (No. 09-02) establishing the 2002 Governor's Workforce and Equity Diversity Council, which was charged with advising the commissioner of personnel and the secretary of administration on the development and implementation of the state's affirmative action program. The council was also responsible for ongoing coordination of efforts, monitoring of activities against goals and objectives, and compliance with state and federal mandates.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee, recognizing that state government is one of the largest employers in the state, issued an executive order setting the goal that by June 30, 2017, 5 percent of the state's workforce will be people with disabilities. Under the order, each cabinet-level agency must develop an annual employment plan to address the underrepresentation of people with disabilities in their agency and report progress.

Survey and Reporting Mechanisms

Alaska, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota and Washington have reporting mechanisms in place.

The **Alaska** Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education conducted a survey of state workers in 2011 in order to continue to monitor the representation of employees with disabilities in Alaska state government and solicit recommendations for improvement. Survey findings revealed important information on the state's efforts related to increasing the employment of persons with disabilities, including that they are in fact appropriately represented in the state's workforce. Recommendations offered by the council include: increasing training on the ADA for managers and supervisors, increasing flexibility through variable work schedules and job-sharing opportunities, improving workplace accessibility, developing targeted recruitment and retention programs for individuals with disabilities, and offering health and wellness benefits and programs.

Illinois' departments of Human Rights, Human Services and Central Management Services, and the Interagency Committee on Employees with Disabilities and other state agencies conduct an ongoing online work disability survey. The purpose of the survey is to give employees with disabilities an opportunity to self-identify and determine for whom emergency evacuation assistance may be necessary.

Kansas' 2010 Executive Order 10-10 requires the collection of baseline data on people with disabilities followed by annual reporting on the numbers of persons employed and their fiscal impact on the state.

In **Maine**, a 2006 executive order requires a survey of employees to better understand the prevalence of employees with disabilities in state government. Survey findings revealed that more employees with disabilities were working in state government compared with other employed adults with disabilities. Of these, more than half had requested job accommodations—mostly adjustments to the work schedule and/or a flexible work schedule or location—80 percent of whom received them. Additional supports reported by respondents included special equipment and a supportive employer and co-workers.

In an effort to collect better baseline data on current employees with disabilities, **Massachusetts** surveyed participants regarding self-identification, disclosure and reasonable accommodation, the employment pipeline, and agency culture.

Minnesota's Executive Order 14-14 to increase state government employment of people with disabilities requires state agencies to submit an affirmative action plan with: a policy statement; assignment of affirmative action/equal employment opportunity responsibilities, including a workforce analysis, goals, objectives and timetable for completion; and measures to facilitate implementation and development of internal audit and reporting systems. Technical assistance is provided to each state agency to develop the plans.

Washington enacted House Bill 1636 in 2015, requiring all state agencies with 100 or more employees to provide an annual report to the legislature with data related to the percentage of individuals with disabilities in the agency's workforce, including the number of new hires employed from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation services or the Department of Services for the Blind. The legislation also requires that each covered agency report to the legislature regarding opportunities for internships that would have the possibility of leading to permanent placement in entry-level positions.

C **Adopt hiring systems, including fast-track hiring systems.** Steps can be taken to increase the accessibility of application processes for people with disabilities. For example, states can make modifications to civil service exams to accommodate disabilities, institutionalize hiring preferences, and offer paid internship or trial work opportunities to those with disabilities.

Suggested Strategies

i Special appointment lists for noncompetitive appointment.

Example: The federal government has adopted Schedule A excepted service hiring authority for individuals with disabilities.

ii Waiving or modifying civil service exams; offering on-site exam accommodations.

iii Hiring preferences.

iv Trial work periods, paid internships, assigning credit for work.

Example: The federal government has established the Workforce Recruitment Program for college students with disabilities as a potential model.

v Mandatory interview option, i.e., the hiring authority is required to offer a qualified individual with a disability an interview, but this does not guarantee that the individual is offered a job.

vi Formal certification processes under which a state agency, such as the state vocational rehabilitation agency, certifies trained and work-ready candidates for trial work periods, civil service exam exemption or special appointment lists.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Special Appointment Lists

Delaware and Maryland maintain special appointment lists for noncompetitive appointments.

In **Delaware**, job applicants can take advantage of the Selective Placement Program. Once eligibility is established, individuals work with program staff to identify suitable positions and apply.

Maryland's Special Options Eligible List Fast Track Program provides the opportunity to engage in training programs or internships. After successful completion of the internship or training, the individual is certified for civil service appointment. The individual is then placed on an eligibility list that state appointment managers may draw from when making hiring decisions.

Waive or Modify Civil Service Exam; Offer On-site Accommodations

People with disabilities applying for state employment may have the option of taking a modified civil service exam, or the exam may be waived altogether as it is in California, Illinois, New York, Oklahoma and Utah.

In **California**, an executive order was issued directing state agencies to fill vacancies through the Limited Examination and Appointment Program, or LEAP, designed to facilitate recruitment and hiring of qualified individuals with disabilities. LEAP is an alternative civil service examination process available to any individual with a disability who is certified through the Department of Rehabilitation. Once certified, an individual may take LEAP examinations for state positions during open testing periods. LEAP examinations consists of two stages: an initial competitive readiness examination to evaluate an individual's qualifications and skills, followed, upon successful completion of the readiness examination, by a trial on-the-job examination called the Job Evaluation Period, or JEP. Successful completion of the JEP replaces the written portion of the standard civil service examination and awards the applicant with the civil service certification appointment. In 2015, California passed Senate Bill 644, altering LEAP by providing individuals with developmental disabilities with the option to obtain civil service certification by successfully completing a 512-hour internship with a state agency in lieu of a written test or LEAP readiness examination.

Illinois offers an Accommodated Testing Program to ensure that applicants with disabilities can access the exams necessary for state government positions. The Accommodated Testing Program provides individuals with disabilities access to a number of on-site examination accommodations at state assessment centers. The Successful Disability, or SD, Opportunity Program establishes an alternative examination process for individuals with disabilities who are consumers of the state's Division of Rehabilitation Services. The SD program provides the applicant with an SD score that replaces standard scoring on civil service exams, places the individual on an SD program list and qualifies the individual for agency hiring considerations when the SD program list is requested. The Alternative Employment Program establishes a reassignment process for state employees on temporary leave for a disability and who can no longer perform the requirements of their current assignment. Employees on temporary disability leave may request to be reassigned to another state position for which they are qualified to perform a six-month probationary assessment. All three programs are facilitated by Central Management Services and established under statutory language of Illinois Public Act 96-0078 of 1996.

New York operates the Governor's Program to Hire Individuals and Veterans with Disabilities. Through Section 55-b of the New York State Civil Service Law, up to 1,200 competitive civil service positions can be reserved for appointment of certified and qualified individuals with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities interested in consideration for Section 55-b appointments can seek eligibility certification with the Employee Health Service of the New York Department of Civil Service. Eligibility is determined by employment history and degree of functional limitation caused by the disability condition and may require a physical examination by a department physician. Once certified, qualified individuals may express interest in entry-level positions directly to agencies and be considered based on qualifications and interviews, forgoing civil service examinations.

Oklahoma's Optional Program for Hiring Applicants with Disabilities, administered by the state's Human Capital Management, or HCM, division, provides for an alternative certification process for civil service. Under Oklahoma Statute §74-840-4.12, individuals with disabilities may seek certification from the state Department of Rehabilitation Services, thereby waiving all tests related to civil service eligibility. Upon successful certification, individuals with disabilities may apply to job classifications of interest. HCM then makes eligibility determinations and adds the individual to eligibility lists for the corresponding job classifications, from which agencies can request referrals. Applicants hired through this program are eligible for permanent status in the classified service upon successful completion of a probationary period.

Utah established the Alternative State Application Program, or ASAP, for individuals with disabilities in 2010 through House Bill 17, allowing for on-the-job examinations in lieu of civil service testing. Utah administrative guidance allows for almost all competitive job postings in state government positions to be eligible for ASAP appointment. Interested individuals with disabilities can receive certification by providing documentation of disability and meeting the minimum qualifications of the job posting. Interested individuals are responsible for identifying eligible

positions and then contacting the state's recruitment consultant, who in turn works with the agency hiring official to determine if they would like to interview the applicant. Those hired through the ASAP process are placed in a six-month, on-the-job examination position, whereupon successful completion leads to appointment to the position pending a one-year probationary period.

Hiring Preferences

Arizona, Kansas, Maryland and Montana have passed hiring preference policies for people with disabilities.

In **Arizona**, under Ariz. Rev. Stat. §38-492, individuals with disabilities are given a five-point preference on examinations, provided the individual would receive a passing grade without preference. Individuals with disabilities who are also veterans receive a 10-point preference.

Recently, **Kansas** Gov. Sam Brownback issued Executive Order 15-02, establishing a hiring preference for individuals with physical, cognitive and/or mental disabilities and requiring that all state executive branch agencies institute a system for giving hiring preference to individuals with disabilities. Executive Order 15-02 is so recent that it remains to be seen how state agencies implement a hiring preference.

Maryland passed HB 928/SB 818 in 2016, requiring all appointing authorities in the State Personnel Management System, or SPMS, to apply a credit of five points on a selection test for an applicant with a disability, as defined by the ADA. Appointing authorities in the executive branch that are not in SPMS must develop an equivalent hiring preference.

Trial Work Periods

People with disabilities may have the option of trial work periods, paid internships and being assigned credit for work in state agencies in Alaska, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, Maryland and Utah.

The **Alaska** Provisional Hire Program allows hiring managers to offer provisional appointment without competitive assessment to applicants with severe disabilities for up to four months with the possibility of transitioning to permanent employment. Provisional hiring into Alaska state agencies does not guarantee a permanent placement at the end of the four-month trial period, however. Eligible individuals with disabilities

Photo courtesy of Lawrence Roffee Photography

become certified for participation in the provisional hiring program through Alaska's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, which ensures that the individual meets the minimum qualifications of the position and the requirements for being severely disabled. The provisional hire program does not establish a hiring preference for individuals with severe disabilities, and the hiring manager can elect to interview the qualified individual before beginning the provisional hire process and stop the provisional hire process at any time.

In **Delaware**, a modest number of positions are dedicated to people with disabilities throughout the state, enabling agencies to provide paid training and work opportunities for applicants seeking the experience and learning that comes with employment. Some of these are short term, limited to a year, while others are longer term and enable a person with a disability to attach to individual state agencies.

In **Illinois**, applicants with severe disabilities may be eligible for supported employment during a trial work period, with the possibility of permanent employment thereafter.

Maine offers a trial work period of up to one year for candidates certified by vocational rehabilitation. Mandatory interviews can also help otherwise-qualified applicants with disabilities "get a foot in the door" in state government.

Maryland has established the Quality, Understanding, Excellence, Success and Training Program, or QUEST, which provides internships in state government for students with disabilities. These internships generally last three months, are voluntary and pay a stipend.

Utah has established the Alternative State Application Program, or ASAP, under which qualified candidates with disabilities may be appointed to fill vacant positions for a six-month trial examination period. Upon completion of the examination period, the worker would then be in the position during the state's customary probation period.

Mandatory Interviews

The state of **Vermont** operates a mandatory interview process for state employment, available to any "qualified individual with a disability" as conforming to the ADA definition. Applicants may complete a short form indicating their impairment, how their impairment substantially limits major life activities and providing documentation of impairment(s) and substantial limitations from a doctor, other medical professional or vocational rehabilitation counselor. Upon verification and approval from the state's Department of Human Resources, a qualified individual with a disability will then be granted mandatory interview status. When an applicant with mandatory interview status meets the minimum qualification standards for a posting and applies to that posting, their name is automatically added to the candidate referral list and the hiring authority is required to offer an interview.

Formal Certification Period

State vocational rehabilitation agencies, public educational institutions and other agencies within state government already are working with skilled youth and adults seeking to enter or re-enter the workforce. State human resources agencies can make sure they have formalized partnerships with these entities to maximize their pool of potential workers. One step in this direction is ensuring that staff and recipients of vocational rehabilitation services are proficient in the application process for state government jobs.

Some states, such as **Illinois** and **Maine**, have more formal partnerships with vocational rehabilitation, in which vocational rehabilitation certifies trained and work-ready candidates for trial work periods, civil service exam exemption or special appointment lists. These partnerships can also support human resource professionals in creating inclusive job announcements and qualification standards that encourage applicants with disabilities to apply.

Policy In Depth: Centralized Accommodation Funds

What is a Centralized Accommodation Fund? A centralized accommodation fund, or CAF, is a consolidated funding strategy to meet reasonable accommodation requests made by employees and applicants with disabilities, rather than requiring each state agency to pay for accommodations out of individual agency budgets.

Why establish a CAF?
By using a centralized accommodation fund to pay for requests, states can ease the administrative and financial pressure on agency hiring personnel worried about the impact of accommodations on agency budgets.

D **Adopt policies and procedures to facilitate advancement and retention.** In the spirit of continuous improvement, the state as a model employer can enhance efforts to develop professionals with disabilities through career pathways planning that might include mentorships, additional natural supports and employee satisfaction assessment tools.

Suggested Strategies

i Establish a centralized reasonable accommodation fund.

ii Centralize expertise on disability employment.

iii Provide career pathways planning, including mentorship programs.

iv Develop and encourage *natural supports.*

v Conduct "stay" and "exit" interviews and employee satisfaction surveys.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Centralized Reasonable Accommodation Fund

Massachusetts and Minnesota have established centralized funds for accommodating individuals with disabilities.

Massachusetts operates a Reasonable Accommodation Capital Reserve Account meant to supplement existing agency resources. Established in fiscal year 2009, state agencies may make requests for supplemental funding for accommodations to the Massachusetts Office of Disability and Office of Access and Opportunity, which are evaluated and funds disbursed until the reserve account is exhausted for the current fiscal year. In past years, at least $100,000 has been made available to supplement state agency budgetary resources.

The accommodation fund in **Minnesota** has two goals: 1)"to provide equal footing for applicants with disabilities during the hiring process" and 2)"to provide for a more inclusive workplace environment." The state Department of Administration can reimburse up to $1,000 for current employees' one-time expenses; there is no limit to expenses reimbursed for applicants and ongoing expenses incurred for current employees. In 2016, the legislature authorized $200,000 for the fund.

Centralized Expertise on Disability Employment

Disability employment and accommodations expertise is centralized in Alaska, Oklahoma and Vermont.

Alaska's ADA Compliance Program embeds ADA coordinators in major state agencies and assists employees with accommodation requests.

Oklahoma passed House Bill 2062 in 2013 to enact a statewide telework program and included language requiring the development of policies and guidance on the use of telework as a workplace accommodation for employees with disabilities.

Vermont utilizes a rigorous and streamlined Request for Reasonable Accommodation process for state employee accommodation requests. Vermont's process involves a review committee for accommodations exceeding $500 and when there is a disagreement between department and employee on the reasonable accommodation offered or denial of a request at the department level.

E Implement *Stay-at-Work, Return-to-Work* programs, policies and practices for state employment. Disabilities may develop and vary in effects throughout a state employee's tenure. As a model employer, the state should recognize that disabilities may change in their impact over time, or develop suddenly as a result of illness or injury. States can intervene early through stay-at-work and return-to-work programs with their own employees through the administration of health insurance, disability insurance and other benefits such as employee assistance programs, or EAPs.

Note: A substantial minority of state and local employees have short-and long-term disability insurance—23 and 34 percent in 2007, respectively. [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2008].

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Delaware has enacted legislation establishing a return-to-work program for its state employees and appointed a return-to-work coordinator tasked with helping state workers stay at work or return to work after injury or illness.

Vermont's Invest EAP program includes help with disability-related accommodations.

F Provide training and information to state personnel. While states may have robust policies and procedures to attract and retain employees with disabilities, it is important to offer training to direct supervisors and other employees regarding these policies to maximize implementation. Train supervisors, managers and other employees regarding policies and procedures pertaining to applicants and employees with disabilities (e.g., reasonable accommodation procedures and disability etiquette).

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

All staff in **Massachusetts** state agencies must attend two levels of awareness training; the first involves diversity awareness and is completed in the first six months of employment, and the second—disability awareness—is completed within the first year of being hired.

2 States can build capacity of private- and nonprofit-sector employers to engage in disability inclusion efforts. States can adopt policies that incentivize hiring of workers with disabilities and provide financial supports and technical assistance.

According to the NGA's *A Better Bottom Line* report, governors and state agencies can support businesses in their states and help improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities by ensuring that state government is a good partner for business. Many businesses emphasize that they need a good partner to be successful, a claim supported by the report *Ready and Able: Addressing Labor Market Needs and Building Productive Careers for People with Disabilities Through Collaborative Approaches*, which showed that many successful initiatives are sustained by a partnership with an intermediary that recruits individuals and either coordinates or provides outreach, assessment, training and support services from multiple agencies for prospective employees.

States can provide supports and information to employers to help them utilize the skills and expertise of an underutilized sector of the labor force by hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities. States should consider policies that provide support to employees with disabilities and employers in the private sector throughout the lifecycle of work—attracting potential employees, hiring processes, retention efforts and professional development. Effort also can be made to engage private-sector leaders in the policy decision-making and advisory process.

South Dakota: Engaging Businesses in the Policy Process

South Dakota is sending a clear message that private-sector businesses are important partners in the state's recent disability employment efforts. Through its Employment Works Task Force and Ability for Hire initiative, South Dakota is involving the private sector at the earliest stages of policy development and recognizing the positive impact made by disability-inclusive employers through public outreach campaigns.

Under the leadership of Gov. Dennis Daugaard, South Dakota created the Employment Works Task Force. The task force comprised 36 representatives from a wide range of public and private stakeholder groups, a quarter of which were employers. The two-year work of the task force culminated in 2014 with a final report providing recommendations on state programs and employer supports.

Employer representatives on the task force were able to communicate the need for streamlined technical assistance and a single point of contact with business expertise in order to best support private sector disability hiring efforts. The Ability for Hire initiative, operated by the South Dakota Department of Human Services, is a public facing online portal where businesses can find technical assistance and hiring resources and view testimonials from businesses with successful disability hiring efforts.

South Dakota's internship program is an example of a business intermediary acting on this issue. The South Dakota Retailers Association, in coordination with the Department of Human Services, is sponsoring an internship program for students with disabilities with one of its members, a grocery store.

A **Provide technical assistance to and engage with businesses interested in employing individuals with disabilities.** Expertise in private sector-specific challenges and opportunities should be developed and then communicated in a business-friendly manner. With the goal of increasing shared knowledge and collaboration, states should establish and/or reinforce connection points for businesses with public servants supporting those individuals with disabilities.

Suggested Strategies

i Written resources, including best practices, should be developed for and by those with business experience.

ii Dedicate staff with business expertise.

iii Provide a single point of contact to interact with the business sector who can help businesses navigate state agencies that support the employment of individuals with disabilities.

Note: The national network of the 80 state vocational rehabilitation programs supports a united or "one company" approach to working with business customers. As part of this, each state vocational rehabilitation, or VR, director has named a business consultant who functions as the designated point of contact for their agency. These 80 points of contact, through Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation—or CSAVR—leadership and support, form the *National Employment Team, or NET*. The NET's vision statement is: To create a coordinated approach to serving business customers through a national VR team that specialized in employer development, business consulting and corporate relations.

iv Establish, expand and improve governor's committees/commissions/boards that work for businesses interested in employing people with disabilities.

v Engage in a public awareness and education campaign highlighting success stories of businesses hiring people with disabilities.

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities

Ohio's Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities "works with partners in business, education and nonprofit organizations to facilitate customized employment plans for Ohioans with disabilities; help Ohio companies recruit and retain employees with disabilities; and is the sole agency administering the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs in Ohio." There are three bureaus under the OOD that work on services, vocational rehabilitation and disability determination. The program also emphasizes business engagement. The Annual Report showcases DisAbility Job Fairs, employers' trainings, and fostering a peer-to-peer business organization.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

The **Florida** Governor's Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities has established an employer help desk within the Abilities Work web portal, part of the Employ Florida Marketplace, to provide a single point of contact to assist employers in navigating state and federal disability support systems.

South Dakota's Ability for Hire campaign, an initiative of the South Dakota Department of Human Services, provides links to critical resources and video testimonials from business owners on their own experiences and realized benefits of hiring people with disabilities. It should be noted that South Dakota is the state with the highest employment rate of people with disabilities.

B Develop (or use existing) databases of persons with disabilities looking for employment.

Streamlining the process by which employers committed to hiring staff with disabilities are matched with potential employees is important to increasing overall employment in the private sector for people with disabilities. States can work to create and/or support platforms helping employers and potential employees can find each other in a variety of ways, including web-based programs or databases.

Note: *The Talent Acquisition Portal®*, or TAP, is led by the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation and NET in partnership with disABLEDperson Inc. TAP is an online system that includes both a national talent pool of VR candidates looking for employment and a job posting system for businesses looking to hire individuals with disabilities. The NET comprises VR business consultants in every state, territory and Washington, D.C., who can partner with and provide support services to businesses at the national, state and local levels.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Utah's PWDNET job opening program allows businesses that have undergone accommodations and disability hiring training to flag job postings on the statewide job board, thus encouraging people with disabilities to apply.

Florida's Abilities Work web portal encourages businesses to post open positions to the Employ Florida Marketplace and utilize a help desk to source candidates from the state vocational rehabilitation client lists.

C Extend diversity and inclusion (affirmative action) policies for state government contractors, including requirements to prepare plans that include utilization analysis and goals applicable to race, national origin and gender, to include disability. Expand and improve self-identification practices to ensure accurate counts of people with disabilities.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Connecticut, Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, New Jersey, Rhode Island and **Wisconsin** include disability in the list of categories covered by affirmative action requirements applicable to entities that do business with state government.

Massachusetts surveyed participants regarding self-identification, disclosure and reasonable accommodation, the employment pipeline, and agency culture. The state found that employees were not aware of the processes for self-identification or reasonable accommodation, or the difference between the two. In response, the state created a marketing campaign to reinforce the importance of disability diversity as well as mandatory training for employees and managers. Since the launch of Massachusetts' model employer effort in 2009, the share of people with disabilities working in the executive branch has increased from 2.4 percent to 2.9 percent.

The Microsoft Autism Hiring Program

The software company has created a program with the goal of increasing the percentage of its employees with disabilities. This particular program for individuals with autism begins with a two-week "academy" which allows candidates to work on projects in teams and show off their abilities in place of a more traditional interview process. Microsoft worked with other businesses and experts to develop their program.

Photo courtesy of Lawrence Roffee Photography

D Explore convening a task force or summit bringing public and private interests together to discuss state disability employment issues. Utilize the task force or summit as an opportunity to identify business champions. Formalizing public-private conversations on this workforce development goal can increase buy in and ownership across sectors.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

In **South Dakota**, the Employment Works Task Force focused on strategies to specifically engage businesses. The task force included business community members, individuals with disabilities and family members, legislators, healthcare providers, nonprofit representatives, and staff from state government. The group identified successful strategies and actionable next steps to enhance employment.

The governor of **Washington** issued an executive order directing the Office of Financial Management to convene a task force for the purpose of assisting state agencies with recruitment and retention of people with disabilities. Because the state is one among many employers in Washington, the task force is engaging model private-sector companies to share strategies, exchange best practices and provide technical assistance to boost the employment of people with disabilities in all sectors.

Photos courtesy of Positive Exposure and RespectAbilityUSA

E **Explore coordinated strategies to support business hiring efforts, lessen administrative burdens, and engage in education and outreach to increase resource utilization.** Many stakeholders and organizations work in this sphere; synchronizing initiatives to enhance employment of people with disabilities can make service delivery more efficient and effective. Some states utilize an agency to amass information for businesses to use as a resource, while others have programs to better understand and articulate the labor landscape for individuals with disabilities.

Suggested Strategies

i Identify an agency authority or collaborative to provide education and outreach to businesses on existing resources.

ii Engage the business community to determine needs and priorities.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Utah's Work Ability Utah program, headed by the Utah Department of Health, "…strives to link employers in the business community with the qualified workforce of people with disabilities. Goals include increased communication, reduction of barriers, and creation of a comprehensive system of work incentives and supports for both the employer and the individual with disabilities."

The **Rhode Island** Governor's Commission on Disability provides support to state agencies, people with disabilities, and businesses looking to increase disability hiring and inclusion. The commission offers resources to businesses on ADA compliance, reasonable accommodations and recruitment.

Ohio's Equal Opportunity Division oversees diversity inclusion in state government employment and procurement, including Encouraging Diversity, Growth and Equity, or EDGE, certification.

The U.S. Department of Labor's "Add Us In" Initiative worked with a cohort of states and cities to develop strategies "connecting small businesses with untapped talent—people with disabilities."

F Use tax incentive policies to encourage businesses to increase disability inclusion.
States have implemented a number of strategies to this end, including iterations of employment tax credits for firms hiring individuals with disabilities.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

State	Employee Eligibility	Employer Income Tax Credit
Maryland Modified: HB 473	• Veteran status • Has disability according to ADA definition	Up to $2,700/year for two years for wages per qualifying employee Additional $900/year for: • Transportation • Child care costs
New York	• Receiving vocational rehabilitation services (with a written plan) from the state • Or those who qualify for a (first year) federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit	Up to $2,100/person for the second year of employment (35 percent of first $6,000 wages)
Tennessee	• Persons with disabilities who are receiving state services directly related to their disability	One-time amounts of $2,000 (part-time) or $5,000 (full-time)
Iowa	• Persons with disabilities	65 percent of wages paid in the first 12 months, up to $20,000 per employee
Louisiana	• People with intellectual and developmental disabilities • Pilot program included 50 youth and 50 veterans	Up to 50 percent of gross wages during first four months of employment; subsequently, 30 percent of gross wages for following months

G **Explore tax credits for employment supports like physical building barrier removal, workplace accommodations, technology, transportation and child care.** To enhance hiring, retention and productivity for those with disabilities working in small businesses, states have offered a variety of tax credits to offset the financial burden of making accommodations for those with disabilities working in these settings. The task force recommends exploring additional strategies, including providing sales tax rebates in states without income taxes and creating tax incentive structures tied to an employer's successful achievement of performance and compliance metrics.

Suggested Strategies

i Utilize current tax incentive policies to influence hiring behavior by including performance goals for businesses, economic investment expectations, and requirements to target credits on new hires tied to vocational rehabilitation/workforce development referrals and unemployed individuals.

ii Explore parallel strategies to use sales tax rebates—for states without income taxes—to encourage businesses to hire people with disabilities, including rebates for accommodations, accessible technology and capital expenditures.

Photo courtesy of Lawrence Roffee Photography

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Under the **Maryland** Disability Employment Tax Credit, employers can claim $900 per year against transportation or child care costs for each qualifying employee during the first two years of employment.

Kansas legislation allows any taxpayer who makes expenditures for the purpose of making an existing facility accessible to individuals with a disability, including making all or any portion of a facility or equipment usable for the employment of individuals with a disability, to claim an income tax credit equal to 50 percent of the expenditures or $10,000, whichever is less.

The **Iowa** Assistive Device Tax Credit allows an eligible small business to claim a credit against corporate tax equal to 50 percent of the first $5,000 paid during the tax year for purchasing, renting or modifying an assistive device or making other workplace modifications for an employee with a disability.

3 States are encouraged to have an external and internal focus on disability awareness, including disability etiquette. In developing awareness around disabilities, the focus should be cross-disability and include both visible and non-obvious disabilities.

State outreach and education related to disability should take a two-pronged approach—public awareness and professional development. The two strategies to consider below cover both of these areas.

A States are encouraged to have an external and internal focus on disability awareness.
Disability can be confusing, especially for people who don't have a personal connection to it. Disability inclusion efforts might include etiquette training that teaches how to respectfully interact with individuals with disabilities or awareness initiatives communicating that disability is a natural and normal part of the human experience that in no way diminishes a person's right to fully participate in all aspects of society. States can lead the way in promoting disability awareness both within their own state agencies as well as to the wider public. States should have an internal focus on disability awareness of all types of disabilities, including visible and non-obvious disabilities.

Suggested Strategies

- **i** State agencies should develop a disability awareness, etiquette and inclusion training and require all state employees to complete the training.
- **ii** Disability awareness should be embedded in all HR training and policy development efforts from the earliest design phases.
- **iii** States should leverage existing resources and networks to develop disability awareness, including working with their larger disability organizations on external communication and public awareness.
- **iv** States should require future legislation language to conform to terminology used in the ADA and subsequent federal policies.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

A number of states, including **Arizona, Indiana, Louisiana, North Dakota** and **Wyoming**, have enacted legislation to change statutory language related to outdated or insensitive terminology referring to people with disabilities. Some states, including **Alabama, Colorado, Idaho, Mississippi** and **Texas**, have enacted legislation outlining a legislative intent for terminology use in bill language, with the legislation sometimes authorizing a state authority to update and conform existing statutes and regulations to the terminology guidance found in the bill.

Indiana Hosts Disability Awareness Month

Every March since 1989, the Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities has hosted a statewide disability awareness month. Each year's theme is unique, the latest one being "Inclusion is within Everybody's Ability." The 2016 calendar of activities included choir concerts, school fundraisers and awareness programs, library events, supportive service events and more.

Microsoft Strives for Inclusion

The software company Microsoft values diversity and is committed to an inclusive workforce. One of the ways they engage their employees is through the training all employees receive. In their own words: "Upon hiring, we deliver an individualized, disability-specific 'Just in Time' training for teams and individuals to learn how to most effectively work together. An online training, 'Working Effectively with People with Disabilities,' is also available for all employees to further the awareness of meaningful disability inclusion."

B Training and certificate programs for all those in public and private sectors who work with children, youth and adults with disabilities should require disability-related professional development elements.

Suggested Strategies

i Developing staff competencies related to disability awareness and disability etiquette.

ii Promoting understanding and the use of evidence/research-based career development strategies that enable individuals to develop self-exploration, career exploration, career planning and management skills.

iii Explaining the benefits of active student engagement and self-determination in career readiness programs and in students' identification and achievement of career and life goals.

iv Understanding the importance and encouraging the development of mentorship opportunities with caring adults, especially mentors with disabilities, for all students with disabilities.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Arizona, Colorado, Kentucky, Washington and **Wisconsin** are examples of states that include specific training and certificate programs addressing the suggested strategies A–D highlighted above.

Kentucky has established policies supporting mentorship opportunities for students with disabilities engaged in work-based learning.

4 States can implement policies that optimize resources and services through interagency coordination, collaboration and blending/braiding of funding, and implementation of robust performance measures.

While there are numerous state-operated programs and services available to support individuals with disabilities in their efforts to become and remain employed, they are too often uncoordinated and work in silos. Service providers are often supported by funding streams that have varying goals, priorities, outcome expectations and requirements. In order to achieve job seeker employment goals and respond to employer hiring needs, it is often necessary to access funds from more than one program, agency or funding stream. State agencies are faced with the challenge of developing effective strategies to blend and braid funding and services from these different programs and funding sources to help individuals with disabilities prepare for, secure and retain employment.

In addition to addressing the challenges regarding funding of services and programs, many states are facing the challenge of gathering and using data to measure programs' achievement of employment goals.

A Support policy alignment, collaboration, coordination and braiding/blending of funding and services across all relevant state systems to facilitate competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities, including individuals with the most significant disabilities, through Employment First initiatives adopted through legislation and/or executive orders.
In order to best utilize the public supports aimed at producing positive employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, states must develop and implement practices and policies that maximize resources and combat duplication and complexity. Through policy alignment, collaboration, coordination and the braiding/blending of funds and services across applicable and relevant state agencies and systems—vocational rehabilitation, workforce development, Medicaid, commerce, developmental disabilities, mental health, small business development centers, education departments, others as appropriate—states will reduce complexity, more effectively provide supports, more efficiently utilize funds and resources, and ultimately better serve jobseekers with disabilities.

Note: Since 2011, the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, or ODEP, has supported state governments in implementing systems-change efforts to adopt Employment First principles, an approach that urges publicly financed systems to align policies, service delivery practices and reimbursement structures to commit to competitive integrated employment as the priority option for youth and adults with disabilities. In order to better inform these efforts, ODEP launched the National Employment First Online Data & Policy website (*http://employmentfirst.leadcenter.org*), which shares information on state policies, practices, technical assistance initiatives and outcomes that are focused directly or indirectly on the employment of individuals with disabilities.

The Coalition for Workforce Diversity

UPS is a co-founder of the Coalition for Workforce Diversity, or CWD. Based out of Louisville, Kentucky, the CWD works to match workers with disabilities with more than 30 employers and 40 agencies, both governmental and nonprofit, to "provide individuals with disabilities an opportunity to work and prosper." The Coalition doesn't just help employers find employees; they also provide supportive services and resources, such as transportation, job training assistance and more to both potential employees and employers. The organizations with which the CWD partners include the public school district, nonprofit community organizations and a counseling service.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Interagency policy alignment, collaboration, coordination and braiding/blending

The ***Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act***, or WIOA, requires, among other things, states to develop and implement a unified or combined state plan. A unified state plan includes the state's strategic vision and operational planning elements for the core programs (e.g., vocational rehabilitation) included in the comprehensive workforce development system. The combined state plan includes optional educational or social service programs not considered core programs (e.g., state's welfare program). This unified or combined state plan should act as a blueprint to facilitate cross-agency collaboration with the goal of increasing employment outcomes for jobseekers, including those with disabilities. Led by the National Disability Institute, or NDI, with funding from the ODEP, the LEAD Center has developed materials and resources to assist states and other stakeholders in better understanding the requirements under WIOA as they relate to the unified or combined state plan. These materials and resources can be used to evaluate any state plan and help ensure it is meeting its obligation to include individuals with disabilities and promote cross-agency collaboration.

Iowa State Unified Plan

"Iowa operates under an Integrated Service Delivery model to ensure all customers are afforded a comprehensive blend of services designed to jointly place them into full-time, non-seasonal employment or upgraded agricultural employment." "Efforts to blend and braid funds, as well as establish uniform payment systems among state partners continues to be viewed as Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) priority areas going forward."

California State Unified Plan

California's state unified plan puts an emphasis on braiding resources and integrating and aligning services through the creation of 'value-added' partnerships at the state, regional, and local levels. Including, braiding resources from WIOA Title I Adult and Youth programs with WIOA Title II programs to provide supportive services to those attending basic education and skills programs so as to facilitate both course and program completion.

Florida State Unified Plan

"Collaborations such as High School/High Tech (HSHT), Project SEARCH, and postsecondary education programs engage youth in experiences that blend academics with career and technical education. They also provide hands-on career exploration and preparation activities where learned skills, attitudes, and behaviors can be applied."

The **LEAD Center** has more examples of how states have pursued these efforts in their respective state plans.

Blended Funding, the Oregon Way

The Oregon's Youth Transition Program is powered by collaboration between the University of Oregon and several agencies, including the Oregon Department of Education and the Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation Department, or OVRD. According to National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, or NCWD/Y, "This partnership was created to provide extensive transition services to youth focusing on the areas of self-determination; post-school planning; job training and placement; academic, vocational and personal-social instruction; and post-school follow-up... The OVRD pays for half of the project upkeep for any LEA that can match their contribution. The LEAs administer the blended funds that pay for community-based transition specialists. The University of Oregon continues to contribute training and technical assistance to the program."

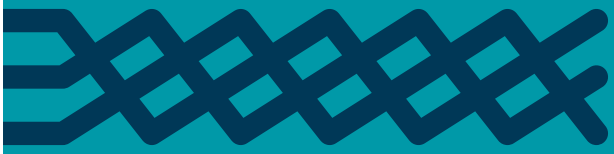
Blending

Blending pools dollars from multiple sources and makes them in some ways indistinguishable.

Blended monies can be used to fund activities that frequently cannot be adequately funded from just one source.

AND

Braiding



Braiding is a funding and resource allocation strategy that taps into existing categorical funding streams to support unified initiatives.

Funding streams remain visible and are used in common to produce greater strength, efficiency and/ or effectiveness.

B Enhance cooperation and collaboration among state human resources and state agencies that work with people with disabilities by formalizing partnerships (e.g., review and refresh memoranda of understanding between vocational rehabilitation agencies and education, Medicaid, mental health and intellectual disabilities agencies, as required by Title I of the *Rehabilitation Act*, as amended by the WIOA). Individuals with disabilities are frequently receiving supports and services through a number of state programs, often being administered through multiple state agencies and departments. The complexity of navigating these various programs can be cumbersome and prevent effective service delivery and positive outcomes for jobseekers with disabilities. Ensuring cooperation and collaboration among the various state agencies that provide supports and services for people with disabilities can act to mitigate these complexities and yield more favorable outcomes.

Note: All state vocational rehabilitation agencies are required by Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and implementing regulations [34 CFR 361.24] to enter into cooperative agreements with agencies administering home and community-based services programs and state agencies providing services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. State VR agencies are also required to enter into collaborative agreements with other public agencies to assist in the provision of supported employment services and extended services. [34 CFR 363.50]

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Ohio has untaken efforts to enhance collaboration: "In FY 2013, OOD, in partnership with the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD), established a dual certification program as part of the Employment First Partnership Agreement. This dual certification program is designed to ensure continuity of services and allow for more successful transition from time-limited to long-term supports."

Mark Trezise
County Employee

Mark Trezise is a detail-oriented employee in a detail-oriented workplace. Working at the Montgomery County, Maryland, Department of Correction and Rehabilitation's Pre-Trial Services office, Trezise's primary job responsibilities are filing and data entry. He is lauded for his attentiveness and accuracy, which are highly valued skills given the sensitive nature of the information that passes through his hands. His office works with public defendants, providing community monitoring and referral services to increase the likelihood of appearance for trial and reduce the risk of re-arrest.

Trezise obtained his position with the county through a customized employment program that works with different departments to determine their workforce needs and identify people with disabilities who have the skills to fill them. He was selected through a working interview process, though his original job description encompassed only filing. However, after quickly discovering how fast he finished his duties, it was expanded to also include data entry.

Trezise, who has multiple disabilities, receives onsite job coaching and other services through St. Coletta of Greater Washington, an organization that assists children and adults with intellectual disabilities and provides support to their families.

C Expand and improve community linkages among organizations engaged in increasing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. For example, make disability employment part of the state workforce development strategy—ensure physical and programmatic access to American Job Centers, or AJCs, as part of the state plans submitted under WIOA. Jobseekers with disabilities should be aware of, and feel comfortable using, non-disability-specific employment services available to all job seekers, such as AJCs, to supplement other disability-specific supports.

D Facilitate collaboration and coordination between federal, state and local educational agencies and state vocational rehabilitation programs, job training, workforce development systems, etc., regarding the design and implementation of career readiness and career development programs, ensuring they are person-centered and disability-inclusive (taking into consideration local control in some states).

E Support existing job coach programs and identify funding sources for expanded job coaching supports for traditional employee placements and entrepreneurial efforts.

F Developing an accessible one-call, one-click system within state governments to offer information and resources to assist and match people with disabilities with appropriate transportation and other services. Methods might include independent living centers, disability resource centers, mobility management systems, state agency councils on coordinated transportation and other "one-stop shop" coordination mechanisms. Appropriate outreach and education to people with disabilities about such a system should be conducted through a variety of methods.

G Establish or improve reporting mechanisms to measure success of program(s) and drive quality improvement.

Suggested Strategies

i Set goals for entrepreneurship/self-employment funding and training.

ii Gather program performance data (e.g., compliance rates, incentive utilization rates, procurement contract amounts) to support policy decision-making.

iii Publicize success stories to stimulate a higher level of involvement and participation among businesses and as a demonstration for other states.

Preparing for Work

While the culture of work and the nature of the workforce frequently changes (e.g., where we do work, how we do work), one constant remains: youth and young adults must develop marketable skills to get jobs and stay employed. This is particularly important for individuals with disabilities who may experience unique challenges finding and maintaining work or advancing in their careers, ranging from societal misconceptions and low expectations to inaccessible programs and services. It is essential for all youth to have opportunities to develop skills, explore potential careers and gain practical, meaningful experience.

According to the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Y), career development consists of three skill domains: 1) self-exploration, 2) career exploration, and 3) career planning and management. Work-based learning provides practical, meaningful opportunities for youth to cultivate their skills in all three of these career development domains. As such, states should promote experiences that build career readiness and employability in all youth and young adults, including those with disabilities. Work-based learning connects classroom and applied learning to increase relevancy, leads to higher secondary education completion and postsecondary enrollment rates, engages students in career pathways and owning their career goals, and engenders the development of technical and employability skills.

In addition, over the past 40 years, evidence has shown family engagement to be one of the strongest predictors of success in school and transition to employment for youth and young adults; families play pivotal roles in their children's cognitive, social, and emotional development from birth through adolescence and beyond. Families also play a key role in ensuring youth develop the skills necessary to make informed decisions, which is closely tied to successful education and career outcomes for all young people, including youth with disabilities. To be most effective, family engagement should be person-centered and include a close partnership with educators and human service professionals working on behalf of all youth, especially those with disabilities.

The task force developed three policy options to prepare youth and young adults with disabilities for the workforce—education and career readiness, skill development and job exploration opportunities and continuous meaningful family engagement.

In the 2013–14 school year

6.5 MILLION STUDENTS

or **13%** of total public school enrollment

were served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

In the 2012–13 school year

of students ages 14–21 served under IDEA, Part B, who exited school

65% graduated with regular high school diploma

14% graduated with alternative certificate.

Children and Youth with Disabilities, National Center for Education Statistics (2016).

5 States can promote education and career readiness policies and strategies that expect and prepare all youth, including those with disabilities, to enter the workforce.

Today's youth with disabilities have grown up in a world of increased opportunities and expectations of access under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* or *IDEA* and ADA. Despite the opportunities provided through these federal laws, however, youth with disabilities are still less likely than their nondisabled peers to graduate from high school, enroll in college, graduate from college and enter the workforce. To address the need to support the future employability of all youth, including youth with disabilities, nearly all states have embraced college and career readiness, or CCR, as a primary goal for all high school students and adopted some form of CCR programming in their public school curriculum. Many states have worked to make their college and career readiness programs more inclusive of students with disabilities.

Like earlier educational policy trends designed to promote greater integration of students with disabilities into general classrooms with their non-disabled peers, state CCR curricula can advance disability inclusion efforts by ensuring the accessibility of in-school programming, the opportunity to explore career paths in inclusive settings, and the coordination and alignment of *Individual Education Programs* or IEPs with CCR planning services. Some states are addressing CCR for their students with disabilities by precluding or limiting the use of alternative graduation credential options like certificates of completion and modified diplomas that often do not meet the entrance standards of institutions of higher education and do not communicate job readiness to employers.

A Promote comprehensive education and career development plans that capitalize on youths' skills, abilities, and career and academic goals.

Upon graduation, these comprehensive plans should result in the conferring of meaningful credentials that provide access to and prepare youth for their post-secondary education or career goals.

Note: Currently, 44 states and the District of Columbia require or strongly encourage schools to implement *Individualized Learning Plans* or *ILPs* as a means of facilitating college and career readiness among youth with and without disabilities.

Note: The NCWD/Y has prepared a guide entitled, *"Designing Statewide Career Development Strategies and Programs,"* that highlights state initiatives and provides details and links to resources in numerous states. The guide is designed to support states in their efforts to increase college and career readiness among all youth, including youth with disabilities, by providing functional and pragmatic guidance on implementing quality comprehensive systems of career development. The guide consists of two parts. Part one serves as a primer to quality youth career development

The Specialists

Through his experiences with his own son who has autism, a Danish man started a company called Specialisterne (that's Danish for "specialists") that employs and trains mostly individuals with autism. The founder saw the unique, untapped talent pool; his company consults on IT projects. The company has come to the USA in the form of a foundation that has worked with household names in the technology sector. In the United States, the organization has a high school program. The Young Innovators Program "introduce[s] students [with autism] to the Specialisterne 4-Week Training program which has prepared adults with autism for jobs in four states in the US and 12 countries."

"Top Ten in Ten"

The Michigan Department of Education strategic plan specifically calls out goals for children with disabilities; success in this endeavor is defined as all children have access to high quality education that prepares them for life after school. Their efforts include funding for early intervention for infants and toddlers with disabilities through an initiative called "Early On," implementing evidence-based practices to meet individual needs, and having access to Career and Technical Education opportunities.

systems. Part two serves as an implementation guide including resources, promising practices, and challenges encountered by states that have implemented career development programming in their schools.

Suggested Strategies

i Facilitate the inclusion of school and community learning opportunities in education and career development plans (e.g., IEPs, individualized learning plans or ILPs, etc.)

ii Ensure a coordinated, person-centered approach in the development and implementation of education and career development plans. This may include alignment of any IEPs, ILPs, etc., developed for youth with disabilities.

iii Encourage the development and implementation of state legislation that precludes or limits the awarding of certificates of completion in order to ensure youth are graduating with meaningful credentials that are recognized by potential employers or institutions of higher education.

iv Facilitate the implementation and adoption of inclusive design concepts for education and career development-related services and systems to ensure they are accessible to all youth. In addition, encourage the provision of appropriate supports and accommodations for youth with disabilities where necessary to ensure inclusion to the fullest extent possible.

Snapshot of Education Settings for Students with Disabilities (2013–2014)

95% of students served under IDEA were enrolled in regular schools

62% of students with disabilities spend at least 80% of their school day in general integrated classrooms.

Children and Youth with Disabilities, National Center for Education Statistics (2016).

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Alignment of IEPs and Career Development Plans

Kentucky and Rhode Island offer the most specific language regarding the ILP and transition plan within the IEP. Both include language indicating that the transition plan within the IEP should be "aligned" with the ILP, meaning the ILP career development process is an activity that complements and guides the development of the transition-focused IEP.

Kentucky, through Section 7 of 707 Kentucky Administrative Rule (KAR) 1:320, requires the transition planning process of the IEP to begin in grade eight or when the student reaches the age of 14. The administrative rule requires that, "…in alignment with the child's ILP (as required by 704 KAR 3:305), or earlier if determined appropriate by the Admissions and Release Committee or ARC, the IEP for a child with a disability shall include a statement of the transition service needs

of the child under the applicable components of the child's IEP that focus on the child's course of study." The transition services plan resulting from this IEP and ILP alignment must be reviewed and updated annually.

Rhode Island provides that the ILP must coordinate with IEPs, 504s, PLPs, and, ELL programs. The ILP supports changes in instructional placements and key transitions including middle level to high school, high school to post-secondary placement, and transfer across schools and districts."

Coordinated, Person-Centered Career Readiness Approaches

In 2005, the **South Carolina** General Assembly passed the Education and Economic Development Act, requiring all public school districts to develop a curriculum that is organized around personal pathways to success for all students. The state developed the law to provide students with strong academic and real-world problem-solving skills. Schools are required to organize curricula around a minimum of three career clusters and establish individual graduation plans for all students. Career readiness efforts are built into every phase of the student's education, with career awareness and exploration activities in grades one through five, career cluster selection and graduation plan development in grades six through eight, and career counseling and declaration of academic focus in high school.

Oregon focuses on a person-centered planning model that is embedded throughout their public education, workforce and social services systems. Oregon, as part of its Secondary Transition planning manual, includes person-centered planning guidance and resources to teachers.

Several states have developed "toolkits" and/or comprehensive guidance for career development, including **Colorado, Connecticut,** and **Minnesota**.

Kentucky has developed a Unified Strategy for College and Career Readiness to implement Senate Bill 1 (2009).

Earning Meaningful Credentials

17 states only offer the standard diploma to all high school students, with and without disabilities.

33 states and the District of Columbia offer multiple diploma options to their high school students.

The rate at which students with disabilities earn standard diplomas is related to the number of diploma options that are available in their state.

FOR EXAMPLE

In the 2010–11 school year

Nevada offers **7** diploma options

and only about 1/4 of students with disabilities earned a standard diploma.

BUT

Pennsylvania offers **2** diploma options

and 90% of students with disabilities earned a standard diploma.

Graduation Requirements for Students with Disabilities: Ensuring Meaningful Diplomas for All Students, National Center on Educational Outcomes, University of Minnesota & Achieve (2013) .

B Include youth with disabilities in a sustained, meaningful manner in the career readiness and development process, beginning at an early age.

Suggested Strategies

i Afford youth and young adults with disabilities opportunities to identify their strengths, explore interests and engage in valuable learning experiences prior to entering the workforce. People with disabilities are often sheltered from risk and not afforded the opportunity to explore career development opportunities and learning experiences.

ii Allow for continuity of services past the age of majority, which may include the provision of needed accommodations and supports.

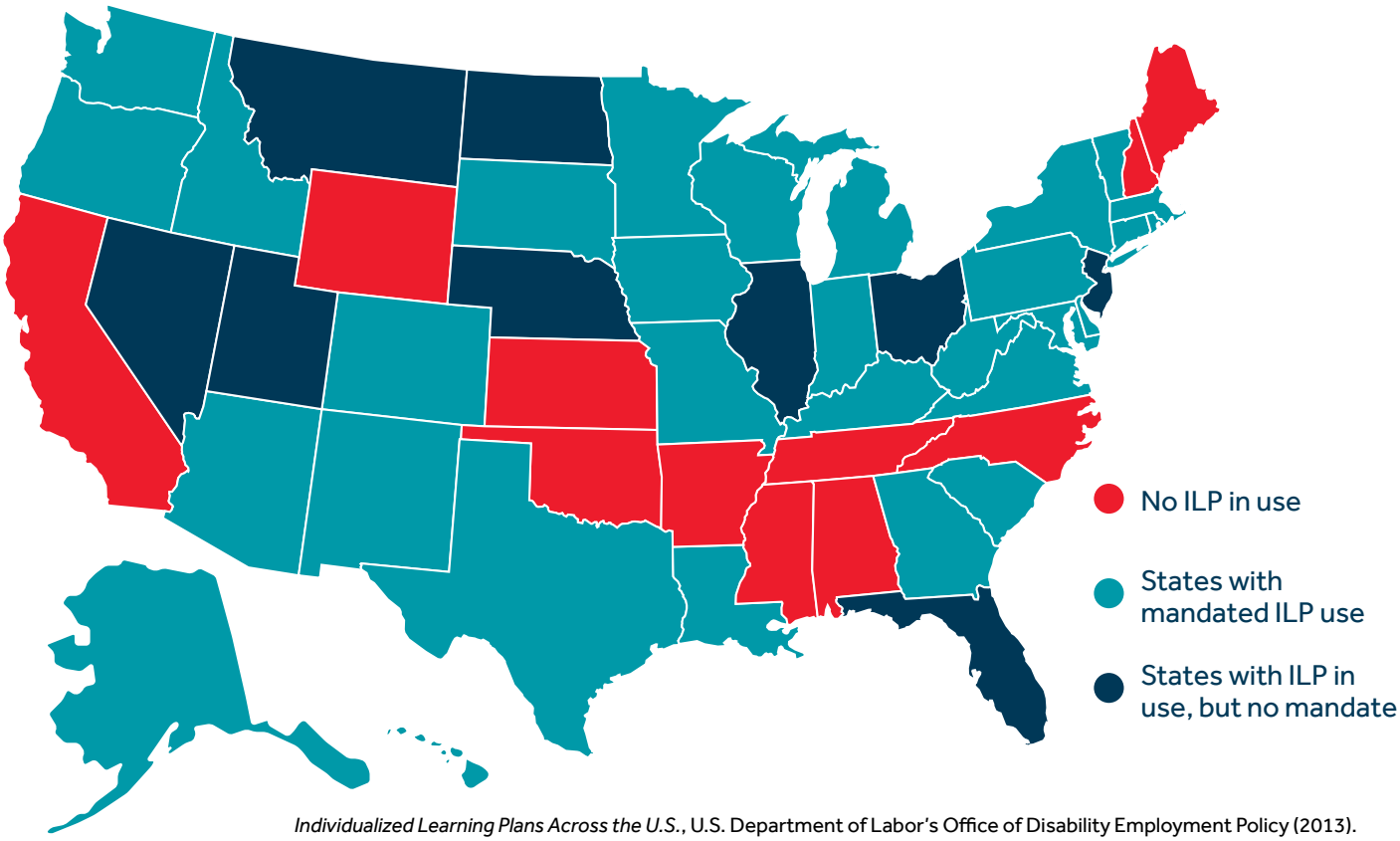
iii Initiate the career readiness process at the start of formal education (i.e., kindergarten) to expose youth to learning opportunities at an early age and empower them to make informed career development choices tied to course selection and transition planning efforts.

Note: Whether states mandate the use of education and career development plans or encourage their use as a promising practice, there is a clear trend for launching the effort no later than the middle school level.

iv Begin the transition planning process for youth with disabilities at the earliest stages of education, ideally aligned with the age or grade-level at which the student begins the career readiness and development process.

Note: Under IDEA, transition planning currently is required to begin no later than age 16.

Use of Individual Learning Plans



Individualized Learning Plans Across the U.S., U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (2013).

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Arizona Department of Education Board Rule R7-2-302.05 requires schools to develop and annually review an Education and Career Action Plan or ECAP for all students grades 9–12. This ECAP requirement includes students with disabilities, and the Arizona Department of Education has published an ECAP and IEP crosswalk document, providing guidance to teachers, parents and students on how to effectively coordinate career readiness and special education planning activities.

Colorado's Board of Education promulgates and updates rules, 1 CCR 301-81, on Individual Career and Academic Plan or ICAP requirements, as required in Senate Bill 256, passed in 2009. The Colorado Department of Education has clearly communicated that ICAPs are required for all students in grades 9–12, including students receiving special education services.

The **Connecticut** Department of Education's Bureau of Special Education released guidance on Student Success Plans or SSPs that clearly indicates students with disabilities should be included in the state's career readiness programming and that SSP delivery should be accessible. The Department of Education suggests that SSP documents be attached to IEPs and that the SSP should help inform to annual review and updating of the IEP.

Delaware, through 14 DE Admin Code 925, ensures that every IEP transition plan includes "[t]he child's strengths, interests, and postsecondary preferences, and plans to make application to high school and career technical educational programs." The administrative regulations also require that IEP teams include the student's career technical education teacher or coordinator when that student is actively or planning to be involved in career and technical education programming.

Wisconsin, through Department of Public Instruction administrative rule Chapter 26, provides that, "If a pupil is a child with a disability, the pupil's academic and career plan shall be made available to the pupil's individual education program team. The pupil's individualized education program team may, if appropriate, take the pupil's academic and career plan into account when developing the pupil's transition services."

Colorado, Delaware, Kentucky and **Wisconsin** have statutory or regulatory language allowing transition planning efforts to begin earlier than age 16 (the maximum age under the IDEA).

C Strengthen the capacity of education and career development professionals to design and implement evidence-based, inclusive programs and strategies.

Suggested Strategies

i Provide statewide professional development opportunities on family engagement and person-centered career planning for professionals serving youth.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

In **Arizona**, the Department of Education's Secondary Transition team provides in-person trainings to educators, parents, students and other relevant individuals on various components of the IEP process and its relationship to college and career readiness efforts, including how to fully utilize the ECAP and the Arizona Career Information System or AzCIS.

Alaska and **Illinois** have statewide initiatives to train educators in family engagement.

6 States can facilitate skill development and job exploration opportunities, such as work-based learning, for youth and young adults, including those with disabilities, that align with education and career development planning and meet businesses' predicted workforce needs.

Work-based learning is an essential component of career development, which should be implemented in a quality manner to produce college and career ready graduates. WIOA recognizes the importance of work-based learning as a strategy to improve employment outcomes for all disconnected youth; at least 20 percent of local youth formula funding must be spent on work-based experiences. Unfortunately, youth with disabilities, particularly those with significant disabilities, currently have less access to work-based learning even though paid employment and work experiences have been identified as one of four evidence-based predictors of success in postsecondary education, employment and independent living for youth with disabilities.

State policymakers should ensure their efforts to promote work-based learning include youth with disabilities. By offering work-based learning opportunities like service learning, internships and job shadowing with employers who are knowledgeable about disability and capable of designing experiences for and accommodating a student's individual needs, state college and career readiness programming can help prepare students with disabilities for the competitive workplace. Also, policymakers should incorporate work-based experiences into all phases of the education and career development process so that youth and young adults have opportunities to make informed career-related decisions. Work-based learning should involve a range of experiences—from site visits and job shadowing to paid and unpaid internships and service learning—and be available in both in-school and out-of-school settings.

Policy In Depth: Work-Based Learning Opportunities

What is Work-Based Learning, or WBL? WBL is an on-the-job educational and vocational training strategy where students practice career skills and apply in-classroom learning to the workplace. WBL strategies include job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships, and school-based enterprises.

What role can WBL play in a student's career and college readiness? Research from 2007-2008 suggests that roughly 72% of public high schools reported offering some form of WBL to their students. In some cases, WBL in the secondary setting might be the only opportunity for a worker to participate in career readiness and vocational training, since research from 2006 suggests that only 20% of U.S. employers feel an obligation to help train their workforce.

How can the states support WBL access for students with disabilities? Employers and WBL sites may be unfamiliar with education process and services provided to students with disabilities. States can support employers and WBL supervisors by providing increased coordination and assistance in navigating the IEP process and implementing accommodations when requested.

Photo courtesy of Positive Exposure and RespectAbilityUSA

Pennsylvania Prioritizes Work Experiences

Pennsylvania has passed a law making work experience a priority for students with disabilities and allocating more resources to that end. According to a press release, "The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, with 15 district offices across the state, partners with local agencies, educators and employers to establish work experiences that meet the needs of both student and business." The office will work with schools and businesses to facilitate professional development and job placement.

A Expand the availability of inclusive work-based learning experiences where eligibility is not contingent on enrollment or participation in an educational program or institution. States can encourage businesses to offer work-based learning.

Suggested Strategies

i Foster the establishment of business-led advisory groups to guide development of inclusive work-based learning experiences that are attractive to both businesses and youth/young adults.

ii Provide incentives for business intermediaries to offer guidance (i.e., technical assistance) around the ADA, Fair Labor Standards Act, or FLSA and other laws, to businesses participating in work based learning experiences.

iii Support public-private partnerships that facilitate employer recruitment and student placement in meaningful, work-based learning opportunities.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Illinois has implemented a career development process with the three phases of Exploring, Planning, and Transitioning. Helping students access work-based learning opportunities is an important part of the Transition stage that begins in 10th grade.

Kentucky's Department of Education released a guide for schools to use when implementing high-quality work-based learning initiatives. In the state, work-based learning is outlined in 704 KAR 3:305, Minimum Requirements for High School Graduation, which encourages schools to build their capacity to engage the disengaged and stretch the learning of every student through credit-bearing work-based learning.

South Carolina's career readiness program has an emphasis on internships, job shadowing, mentoring, and work-based learning and related classroom instruction.

In the early 1990s, **Wisconsin** implemented a youth apprenticeship program that is now the largest apprenticeship opportunity for high school students in the United States. The program consists of two years in which juniors and seniors participate in work-based learning and related coursework, often with college credit.

Learning the Ropes with CVS

CVS Health partnered with the commonwealth of Virginia to create a mock CVS pharmacy in the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center, which is used to teach youth with disabilities essential skills for working in retail.

Meghan Jones
Office Clerk

Meghan Jones is a woman on the move. When not working on her forthcoming book or doing volunteer work, the Rockville, Maryland, resident juggles two part-time jobs, one at a grocery store, where she does a variety of general duties, and the other at a nonprofit organization, where she is an office clerk. Her enthusiasm makes her a valued team member at both. So does her speed at getting things done.

Jones, who has Down syndrome, had several work experiences before finishing school, both paid and unpaid. These included volunteering in schools and working part time at Target, a Project SEARCH placement at the National Institutes of Health and an internship at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. For some of these experiences, she had the support of a job coach through Maryland's Division of Rehabilitation Services.

Jones's long-term employment goal is to work in an office full time, especially one where she can put her sign language skills to use. Although still working toward that goal, her employment path thus far clearly illustrates the importance of early work experiences. Furthermore, they demonstrate the critical role family members play in helping people with disabilities grow up expecting to work. Jones's parents set high expectations for her; in turn, she set them for herself.

B Facilitate collaboration between state and local educational, workforce development and vocational rehabilitation agencies to provide a wide range of integrated work-based learning experiences for youth with disabilities including paid internships, and leverage funding to pay for training/learning experiences or to reimburse businesses for associated costs.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

In 2014, the **California** legislature authorized the Career Pathways Trust grants to fund high-quality career pathways programs. Secondary and postsecondary institutions receiving a grant must ensure their programs lead to a degree or certificate in a high-skill, high-wage, and high-growth or emerging field. Their programs must also foster collaboration amongst stakeholders, offer articulated pathways, leverage existing funding and include a work-based learning component.

Massachusetts' Connecting Activities or CA is a Department of Elementary and Secondary Education initiative that leverages a statewide infrastructure to support "college and career readiness" for all students. The CA line item in the state budget establishes public-private partnerships through the 16 local workforce investment boards to connect schools and businesses by providing structured work-based learning experiences for students that support both their academic and employability skill attainment. CA enables staff to recruit employers, prepare and place students in brokered work-based learning opportunities, and structure those experiences through the use of the Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Plan.

7 States can promote meaningful family engagement throughout the education and career development process for youth and young adults, including those with disabilities.

Many states are implementing family engagement initiatives, recognizing their positive outcomes for students, including increased motivation, reduced behavioral problems and improved social-emotional adjustment. All students benefit from family engagement, but it can be an especially crucial part of ensuring that students with disabilities are receiving access to the same opportunities as their nondisabled peers. Improving family engagement in the career development process also raises families' awareness of students' postsecondary goals, enabling families to support their students' career and life goals more effectively, identify critical college and career planning and management skills and evaluate postsecondary training and education options for their children.

Starbucks Supports Families with Children with Disabilities

Starbucks provides benefits for employees that are parents of children with disabilities, which includes an "autism assist program." They've removed age limits for behavioral therapy for children, as well.

While evidence suggests that parents of a student with a disability are as likely to be engaged in school activities and more likely to provide homework support than parents of a student without a disability, many families of a student with a disability report expectations for employment and educational achievement far below average work and graduation outcomes for the disability population. State policymakers can look to harness these high expectations and robust family engagement to cultivate parents that are well-informed and well-prepared advocates for their child's future educational and career success. These capacity-building activities can include promoting greater involvement in the IEP and career exploration and workforce development planning process, providing extensive training and technical assistance to parents on career and college readiness skills and navigating workforce and higher education systems.

A Encourage the development and adoption of comprehensive training for parents and families that provides them with the appropriate knowledge to support youth with disabilities in navigating the education and career development process.

Suggested Strategies

i Use data to encourage on-time high school completion, encourage parental advocacy to facilitate student success, and provide coursework strategies that promote pathways to college or career readiness.

ii Develop materials for individuals, families and guardians that are free of jargon, easy to understand, culturally sensitive and not overly reliant on technology that may not be available to all.

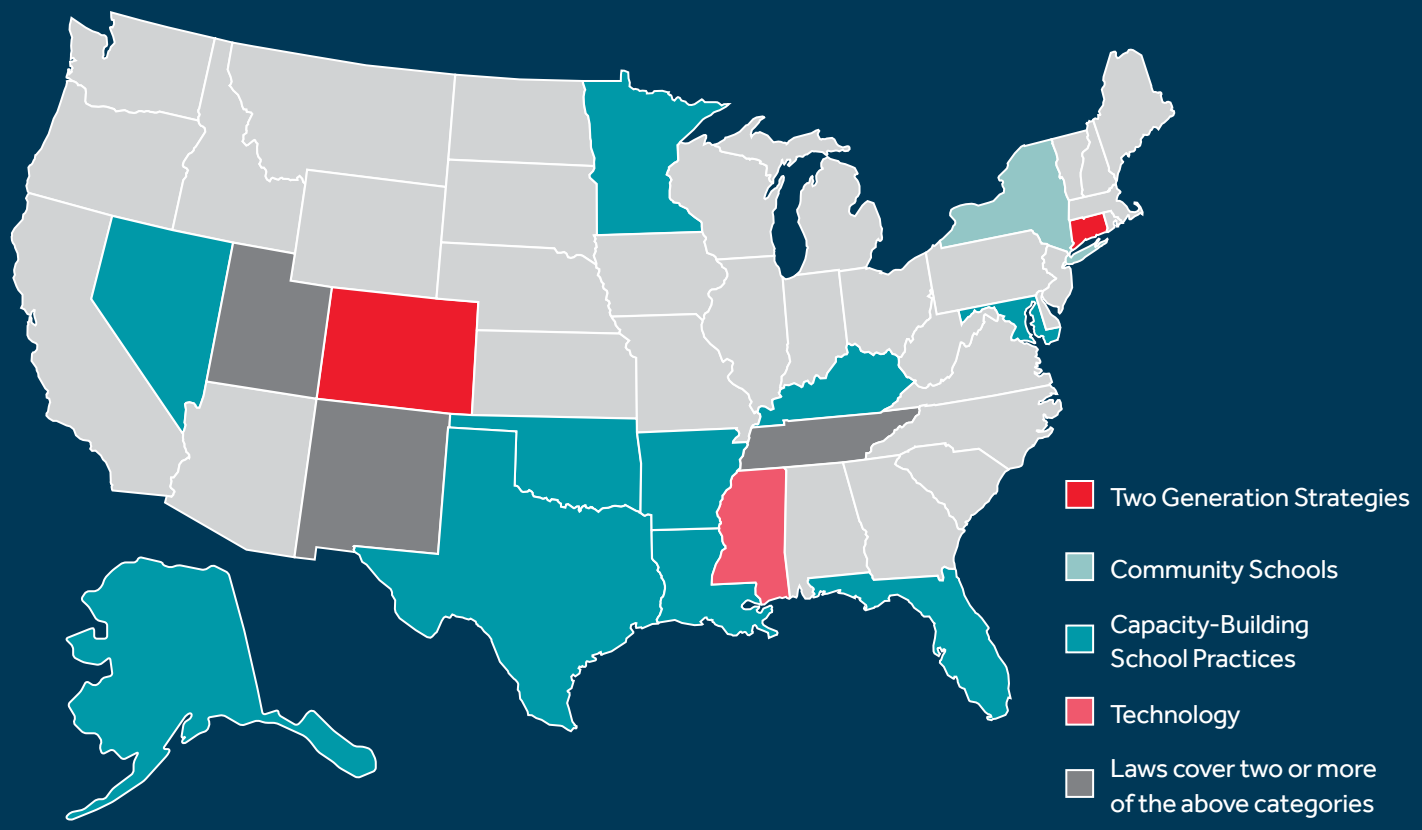
EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Examples of states that provide training and have developed materials for families and guardians in family engagement include **Alaska, Illinois, Kentucky, Pennsylvania** and **South Carolina**.

Nevada has trained parents to use data to monitor high schools students for on time graduation.

State by State Family Engagement Policies

Enacted Legislation Related to Family Engagement (2012–2015)



According to NCSL, states tackle family engagement strategies in a number of ways, including:

- Two Generation Strategies: Support families by focusing on services that target intergenerational poverty, such as early childhood education and economic/educational services for parents.
- Capacity-Building School Practices: School systems partner with members in their community, which may include universities and businesses, to execute family engagement initiatives. According to NCSL, schools may offer health screenings or parenting classes.
- Technology: Schools can increase parental engagement by increasing the touchpoints via texts, websites, blogs and alerts.

Photo courtesy of Positive Exposure and RespectAbilityUSA

B Afford families, including families with children with disabilities, opportunities to serve as advisers in the design of career and workforce development programs and strategies.

Note: *Engaging Families in Education*, a July 2015 policy brief from NCSL, highlights multiple state level efforts to engage families in education.

C Engage families in education and career development planning to increase their capacity to better assist youth in navigating the career development process and maximize learning opportunities.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

States with family engagement frameworks include **Alaska, California** and **Illinois**.

The states below have family engagement strategies through enacted legislation:

» **Nevada** SB 474 provides training for teachers and paraprofessionals on working with parent liaisons in public schools to carry out strategies and practices for effective parental involvement and family engagement.

» **Utah** HB 403 amends provisions related to the state's pilot online school survey program and includes a survey for parents to evaluate their children's schools and administrators, including whether the school or administrators solicit parent involvement in the school.

RELATED FEDERAL POLICY INCLUDES:

The Every Student Succeeds Act

The Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA, includes $10 million funding for Statewide Family Engagement Centers. Of the 1 percent of Title I funds mandated to fund family engagement, the school district now must send 90 percent of funds directly to the school and the district must establish its expectations and objectives for meaningful parent and family engagement. Additionally Title I schools must develop with parents a written policy, agreed on by parents, that describes how the school will carry out its required family engagement activities. The school district and Title schools must also work to build capacity for involvement through assisting parents in understanding the educational system and training teachers and school staff in family engagement.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, supports families participating in the education of their children through early intervention services through high school to postsecondary transition. IDEA contains requirements to include parents as part of the Individualized Education Program teams and has provisions in place to protect children's and families' rights under the statute. IDEA funds a system of parent training and information centers to help families learn about services for their children and their children's disabilities, and how they can support their children's development and education.

Child and Adolescent Family Service System Program, Health and Human Services

Family engagement and support is a standard of practice within the children mental health field. Family Support may include: (a) instruction/skill development, including parenting strategies, anger management and stress reduction techniques, (b) information and education about mental health conditions; (c) emotional and affirmational support; (d) instrumental services (e.g., transportation, respite, childcare); and (e) advocacy, including provision of information about parental rights and resources, as well as skill building to help the parent advocate for their child's services. Peer parent caregiver supports are included in some Child and Adolescent Family System Service Programs.

Nationally the U.S. Department of Education, or ED, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, or HHS, are promoting evidence-based frameworks and policy statements to ensure family engagement including the *Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework* of the Office of the Administration for Children and Families. The *Dual Capacity Framework* of the U.S. Department of Education emphasizes building high quality relationship among educators and families to support educational achievement. Recently ED and HHS released a joint Draft Policy Statement on Family Engagement which includes recommendations on systematic engagement of families in their children's development, learning and well-being throughout early childhood and elementary years.

Getting to and Accessing Work Opportunities

While reliable and accessible transportation can be understood as a direct employment support, it also serves as a connection to other, less obvious, employment supports. Beyond getting to and from work, transportation helps people with disabilities, as well as many other disadvantaged groups such as older and low-income populations, live independently, find affordable housing, get to medical appointments, and connect to other needed services and supports. In summary, transportation access supports day-to-day mobility, thereby assisting individuals in accessing and coordinating all the employment supports necessary to successfully obtain, maintain and advance their employment.

Although fairly simple to understand as a concept, transportation in practice can be extremely complex. Multiple public and private agencies provide transportation services that vary significantly in terms of eligibility requirements, scope and duration. Public transportation coverage can vary greatly by geographic location. Some paratransit services are restricted by mileage limits or county/regional boundaries. People with disabilities who live in rural regions, for example, face very different transportation challenges than do those who live in large metropolitan areas. Furthermore, emerging technologies, such as on-demand transportation network companies or TNCs, and autonomous vehicles that provide new mobility options for the public, present access challenges for users with disabilities when they do not adopt disability-inclusive design standards and provide less than full accessibility.

Despite recent efforts, people with disabilities continue to report challenges in accessing transportation services. According to a 2010 Harris Poll study conducted by the National Organization on Disability, people with disabilities are three times more likely to depend on public transportation than those without disabilities. In addition, 40 percent of rural areas lack any public transportation services at all, affecting many persons with disabilities for whom public transportation is a personal and employment-related lifeline. To address these challenges, states can consider the following policy options.

Jeffrey Krauthamer
Receptionist

Anyone who works in a busy office understands the value of a good receptionist, especially in a fast-paced, client-based business. Jeffrey Krauthamer's employer certainly does. For nearly 20 years, Krauthamer's exceptional organizational and office management skills have benefitted the attorneys and clients at a Chevy Chase, Maryland, law firm.

Put simply, it is Krauthamer's job to ensure the firm's administrative side runs smoothly. He manages the phones, fax and incoming regular and electronic correspondence, and welcomes onsite visitors. Typically, he is the first person a client speaks to when contacting the business, helping to create a positive and professional impression.

The firm specializes in the areas of wills, estates, trusts and elder law and represents individuals and families with special needs. Krauthamer, who has spina bifida and uses a wheelchair, gets to work using MetroAccess, Washington, D.C.'s shared-ride, door-to-door paratransit service for people with disabilities. Using this service allows him to be independent, something he values in both his professional and personal lives.

Policy Options

The Task Force identified three keys to success that inform the policy options focused on supporting individuals with disabilities as they navigate the logistics of getting to work. Accessibility in transportation, technology and the *built environment* are fundamental to any workforce development effort targeting people with disabilities.

8 States are encouraged to ensure that transportation is widely available, reliable, affordable and accessible to people with disabilities in order to support access to the workplace.

Government, businesses and the community can work with individuals and their families to overcome barriers to transportation and accessibility challenges posed by disability by leveraging transportation programs, community planning and accommodating assistive device needs in vehicles and physical transit station sites.

A States are encouraged to adopt policies that prioritize transportation options that are reliable and accessible for individuals with disabilities, as well as alternative strategies that address and mitigate challenges for people with disabilities. For example, states could consider policies that enable individuals with disabilities to work remotely, when appropriate, thereby circumventing existing transportation barriers.

Suggested Strategies

i Ensuring that the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities are met through timely, reliable, accessible and affordable solutions that adequately address both rural and urban transportation requirements.

ii Enacting policies that enable remote workplace participation, where appropriate, by increasing the use of technologies such as telework, telemedicine, online self-serve government and online education.

iii Implementing strategies to ensure that emerging transportation technologies like autonomous vehicles, way-finding and navigation are accessible and inclusive of the needs of people with disabilities.

iv Facilitating communities and transportation providers to partner with taxi, rideshare and TNCs, etc. to help expand transportation options for people with disabilities.

v Ensuring that state and local transportation systems maintain or create coordination strategies to increase transportation accessibility and availability. Implement transportation coordination councils at the appropriate levels of government to encourage greater coordination of local transportation resources and creating mechanisms for communicating those resources to riders.

vi Eliciting participation from people with disabilities to advise transportation advisory bodies during decision-making processes.

Florida: Ensuring Statewide Access to Transportation

Through comprehensive planning, coordination and funding efforts, Florida is working to provide reliable and accessible transportation services to its citizens with disabilities and other transportation disadvantaged populations. Florida is demonstrating its commitment to transportation access through disability representation on the seven member Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, or CTD, and dedicated transportation funding through the CTD administered Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund. Through this unique approach, Florida leverages federal, state and local resources to provide coordinated statewide transportation access to populations that rely on these services for employment, medical, education, and community living needs.

Established in 1998, the Florida CTD consists of seven voting members appointed by the governor. These members represent consumer and community interests, with at least two members being individuals with disabilities that use the transportation disadvantaged system, at least five members having business expertise, and at least one member being 65 years or older. These seven members are supported by high-ranking representatives of relevant state agencies, including the departments of Transportation, Children and Families, Economic Opportunity, Veterans' Affairs, Elderly Affairs, the Agency of Health Care Administration and the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, who serve as non-voting advisors to the commission.

As an independent state agency within the Department of Transportation, the CTD is responsible for administering the Florida Coordinated Transportation System and overseeing the coordination efforts of Metropolitan Planning Organizations and local coordination boards. Each of the 67 counties in Florida has a Community Transportation Coordinator, who is recommended by the local coordination board and then contracted by the CTD to manage state and federal funds and arrange trips for consumers. Through the Coordinated Transportation System, Florida provided 17.7 million trips to nearly 500,000 individuals in FY 14–15, at an average cost of $14.08 per trip.

The work of the CTD is supported by annual appropriations from the Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund. The trust fund appropriations, unique among state funding strategies, pay for administrative costs of the CTD and are also distributed through two grant programs, one to support local planning and coordination efforts and the other to support trip and equipment related costs related to county CTC services not otherwise funded by a federal, state or local agency program.

Combined with the dedicated trust fund, CTD's efforts ensure individuals with disabilities and other transportation disadvantaged populations have access to statewide transportation that ensures critical inclusion in employment, education and community life. Florida's coordinated transportation policies and programs have been recognized by the U.S. Departments of Transportation and Health and Human Services as a best practice model, and a 2008 Florida State University study suggested the state received an 835 percent average return on investment for funds invested into transportation programs for disadvantaged populations.

Overall, Florida invested

$372 MILLION

in **transportation disadvantaged programs** in 2007.

These funds generated benefits of

$3.2 TRILLION

which is a return of more than **8 times the original investment.**

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Idaho uses two statewide coordinating council groups to advise the state's public transportation efforts. The Idaho Interagency Working Group comprises the state Transportation Department and other executive branch agency representatives, with the responsibility to "advise and assist the department in analyzing public transportation needs, identifying areas for coordination, and developing strategies for eliminating procedural and regulatory barriers to coordination at the state level." The Idaho Public Transportation Advisory Council comprises representatives from wide ranging stakeholder groups.

Wyoming addresses statewide and rural transportation access needs for workers with disabilities through regional transportation voucher programs. These regional voucher programs are operated by Wyoming independent living centers, Wyoming Independent Living Rehabilitation and Wyoming Services for Independent Living, with funding support by the state.

Nebraska (Neb. Rev. Stat. §77-27,188) and **Virginia** (Va. Code § 58.1-439.12:07) offer tax credits to employers for telework programs.

Georgia, Maryland (Md. State Personnel and Pensions Code §2-308) and **Oklahoma** (Okla. Stat. tit. 62, § 34.11.7) have implemented telework programs or pilot studies for state agency employees.

Georgia implemented the Work Away telework program for state agencies. The Work Away telework program manual provides guidance and screening criteria to managers on the kinds of work and qualifications of workers best suited to benefit from and be productive in telework situations. The program also includes telework work-space safety and ergonomic requirements for the employee.

Maryland state agencies, under state law established in House Bill 136 (2013), have a goal of 15 percent employee telework program participation.

The **Oklahoma** telework pilot program requires state agencies requesting leasing or purchase of additional office space to obtain certification from the State Governmental Technology Applications Review Board that the physical office space is necessary and telework has been eliminated as a viable alternative. The Oklahoma Office of Management and Enterprise Services, responsible for overseeing the telework pilot program, has recently formalized a statewide agency telework policy.

Numerous Transit Authorities are considering partnerships with taxis and TNCs to provide supplemental paratransit services, including **Boston's** Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority, or MBTA; **Washington, D.C.'s** Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, or MATA; and **New York City's** Metropolitan Transit Authority, or MTA.

Boston's MBTA is currently operating a taxi paratransit pilot study in the hopes of increasing service quality to riders and cost-savings to the Boston paratransit program, known as The Ride. MBTA recently indicated that TNCs, including Uber and Lyft, will be included in the taxi paratransit initiative and anticipate significant cost savings to the paratransit program as a result of the new initiative.

Alaska, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Washington and **West Virginia** all have formal policies requiring disability representation on transportation advisory or coordinating councils.

Employer-Provided Transit

Many employers have developed commuter-assistance programs, including Apple, Best Buy and the Bluegrass Industrial Park in Louisville. These programs are all tailored to the local needs of employees, and range from vouchers and incentives to use existing public transportation options to carpooling networks and "express" buses that are often powered through partnerships with local governments.

Public Transit Stations
ADA Compliant Accessibility

99% COMPLIANT	Transit Bus Stations
88% COMPLIANT	Light Rail Train Stations
67% COMPLIANT	Commuter Rail Train Stations
53% COMPLIANT	Heavy Passenger Rail Train Stations

Figure 3-8 Stations Compliant with the Americans with Disability Act: 2000–2013, U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics (2013).

B States should encourage businesses to use government incentives and programs to offer shuttles and other transportation options for employees.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Washington operates a number of strategies to support state transportation access policy. The state distributes millions of dollars on a biennial basis to nonprofit organizations through its State Paratransit/Special Needs Competitive Grant program. Through its vanpool grant program, Washington has built the largest community vanpool fleet in the country, providing all workers, including people with disabilities, an alternative employment-related transportation option.

The **North Carolina** Assistive Technology Program (NCATP) provides services statewide to children and adults of all ages and abilities as well as those who, possibly because of age, are having difficulties with activities of daily living. Services are provided in our assistive technology centers and satellite offices, as well as in workplaces, homes, schools and communities. NCATP assists employers and employees in the public and private sectors as well as professionals in health care, education, rehabilitation and social services. Both individuals and agencies may request assistance with identifying AT resources and tools.

Paratransit, the Uber/Lyft Way

Some transit agencies are considering contracts with Uber and Lyft, which rely on apps and contract drivers to provide their services, to provide their paratransit services to citizens with disabilities, with usability and flexibility in mind.

9 States can adopt policies that support accessibility in the workplace, particularly related to accessible information and communication technologies, or ICT, and assistive technologies.

In the employment context, inaccessible technology limits opportunities for people with disabilities to get hired and diminishes career success and advancement possibilities when they can't access basic workplace tools.

Accessible ICT and assistive technology are critical factors in ensuring fuller participation by people with disabilities in the workforce, both in terms of getting to a job and in succeeding once in the workplace. Public policies that foster accessible ICT solutions and the availability of assistive technology in the workplace can positively impact states' budgets, economies and workforce development efforts by increasing the employability of people with disabilities.

A Encourage employers to take steps to level the playing field for employees with disabilities by ensuring the adoption of accessible ICT technology and supporting the use of assistive technology including, but not limited to, personalized assistive technology.

Maine Funds Loans for Assistive Devices

mPower, an organization in Maine, provides a loan program that is funded through two bond issues that were approved by state voters. According to the organization, "This makes mPower the only citizen-funded type loan program in the country." They report that their loans, which are made to individuals and businesses to purchase assistive devices, have totaled more than $20 million over the course of 23 years.

Suggested Strategies

i Accelerating efforts to expand high-speed broadband networks and similar advanced and emerging communication infrastructure into underserved areas to enable individuals with disabilities to use the technology they need.

ii Requiring the standardization of job application programs at state agencies to make the application process more accessible for all applicants, and encouraging private employers to do the same.

iii Promoting digital literacy and accessible technology options that can increase workplace participation for individuals with disabilities.

Accessibility and Internal and External Focus at IBM

IBM has a chief accessibility officer, who works both on accessibility in their technology products, but also internally on HR questions. In an interview with the Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology, IBM's CAO Frances West describes their efforts: "One of the solutions we helped develop is an online tool called Accessible Workplace Connection. It's a web-based, global workplace accommodation management solution that provides employees and their managers with a streamlined process of requesting reasonable accommodations to enable them to be optimally productive in their jobs. This one-stop resource for employees with permanent or temporary disabilities or medical conditions is designed so accommodations can be requested, delivered, changed, supported and maintained effectively and efficiently."

Helen Chang
Web Developer

Helen Chang is a self-proclaimed techie. A web developer with a multi-national technology services corporation, she spends the majority of her time writing code for computer applications. Her employer is a federal contractor, and Chang works for the company's defense division, which services the U.S. Department of Defense by developing custom websites and systems to help its various components run more efficiently from a technological perspective.

Chang first became interested in her line of work when she took a course in computer science during her freshman year at the University of Texas at Austin. She liked it so much she decided to pursue it as her major. Upon graduation, she applied for and accepted her position at her employer's facility in Falls Church, Virginia, where she has worked since May 2010.

Accompanying her to work each day is her service dog, Watkins.

By its very nature, Chang's job necessitates using cutting-edge technology. For Chang, who is blind, this includes various assistive technology tools, such as screen reader and optimal character recognition software, which enables her to review printed and scanned documents. She also uses an electronic Braille note-taking device.

The Impact of Inaccessible Online Applications

46% of individuals with disabilities said their last online job application process was "difficult or impossible" to complete.

24% required assistance

9% couldn't complete the application

Of applicants using employer-provided "technical assistance"

42% were able to complete their applications

58% were not able to complete the application

67% of individuals were asked to complete pre-employment assessments or testing online for a job opportunity.

19% required assistance

22% were unable to complete testing

2015 eRecruiting and Accessible Technology Survey, Partnership on Employment & Accessible Technology (2015).

B Elevate the importance of accessibility as a primary policy and program consideration in the design, development and procurement of technology systems. Where technical standards for accessibility do not exist, adopt user-centered functional performance criteria for all disability types.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Alabama's IT Universal Accessibility Standard specifies that "Just as environmental obstacles can inhibit individuals with certain disabilities, Internet use can also present obstacles for persons with certain disabilities." The object of the policy is to "to advise agencies on the use of the minimum requirements for online accessibility for all State of Alabama web sites that comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act."

Arizona, through state statute, recognizes the need to improve accessibility of ICT in order to "increase the successful employment and access to government services" for individuals with disabilities. The statute directs each budget unit of the state to ensure that any information technology developed, procured, maintained or used by the budget unit provides accessibility comparable to and in line with the accessibility standards of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.

California's IT accessibility policy explains that "it is the policy of the State of California that information and services within State Government, and provided via electronic and information technology, be accessible to people with disabilities." The policy directs state agencies to comply with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination against individuals with disabilities, including laws outlining accessibility requirements for electronic and information technologies. State agencies must ensure that "their agency/state entity public Web sites are accessible to both the general public and that their internal agency/state entity electronic and IT systems are accessible by state employees, including persons with disabilities." The policy requires all electronic or information technologies developed, purchased, maintained or used by state agencies comply with the accessibility requirements Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. The policy also extends these compliance requirements to state contractors.

Kentucky recognizes the relationship between full participation in the workplace and community and the need to ensure accessible ICT, legislating that individuals with disabilities have a right to full participation of life in the commonwealth, which includes the use of advanced technology by employees, program participants and members of the public.

Maine's State Web Accessibility and Usability Policy reasserts the state's commitment to the "Guiding Principles of Universal Access to Information" for all Maine's state government web sites.

New York explains the benefits of accessible ICT: "The benefits of the policy [establishing minimum accessibility requirements] will be a more fully inclusive state workforce and increased availability of governmental services to all members of the public."

New Hampshire's Web Accessibility Initiative requires all state agencies to develop and maintain web and mobile sites that follow universal access standards that conform to regulations from Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. The New Hampshire initiative also applies to all web and mobile state job applications, seeking to remove barriers to application and hiring for individuals with disabilities.

Accessibility IN THE Workplace

79% of private-sector organizations **VS** 54% of public-sector organizations

agreed their accessibility strategy helps address workplace needs of employees.

85% of private-sector organizations **VS** 69% of public-sector organizations

said it helped reach a wider pool of talent.

91% of private-sector and **87%** of public-sector organizations agree that their accessibility strategy helps them meet legal and regulatory requirements in relation to people with disabilities.

80% of private-sector and **74%** of public-sector organizations say addressing accessibility creates workforce technology solutions that help the broader, nondisabled workforce be more productive.

Assessing The Value Of Accessible Technologies For Organizations: A Total Economic Impact™ Study Commissioned By Microsoft, Forrester Consulting (2016).

C Ensure that higher education curricula for technology, engineering, design and architecture include principles of accessibility, universal design, and inclusive information and communication technologies.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

In **Washington**, the University of Washington's DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking and Technology) Center promotes universal design principles in both access to higher education and as a central component of the engineering curriculum, teaching engineering students to consider and integrate universal design principles in their work.

D Create procurement policies that ensure that all resources, services, products and technologies acquired by state and local governments are fully accessible. States should consider giving a competitive advantage to bidders who can show an implemented company accessibility policy related to their offerings and solutions.

Note: In 2015, The National Association of State Chief Information Officers, or NASCIO, established a workgroup to identify strategies for increasing the procurement by states of accessible websites, online systems and other forms of ICT. The workgroup concluded that state government procurement officials/offices are not focusing sufficient attention on encouraging/requiring vendors to adopt governance systems that facilitate the design of accessible ICT services and products. In July and August 2015, NASCIO published a two-part series identifying strategies for improving the procurement by state agencies of accessible ICT; the initiative is referred to as Policy-Driven Adoption for Accessibility, or PDAA.

- Part 1: Accessibility in IT Procurement Part 1: Issues, Challenges and a New Approach (July 2015)
- Part 2: Accessibility in IT Procurement Part 2: The PDAA Components (August 2015)

Photo courtesy of Lawrence Roffee Photography

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Indiana's boilerplate for state contractors includes a provision requiring all contractors to ensure that their hardware, software and services adhere to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and IC §4-13.1-3. The state is permitted to terminate a contract with any contractor that fails to comply with these requirements.

Kentucky's access clause specifies that all alternative and nonvisual access standards must include the following minimum specifications:

- Effective, interactive control and use of technology, including the operating system, applications programs and format of the data, shall be readily achievable by alternative and nonvisual means;
- The technology equipped for alternative and nonvisual access must be compatible with IT used by other individuals with whom the individual with a disability must interact;
- Alternative and nonvisual access technology must be integrated into networks used to share communications among employees, program participants and the public; and
- The technology for alternative or nonvisual access must be able to provide equal access to telecommunications or other interconnected network services used by persons who are not disabled.

Massachusetts provides accessibility contract language required in any solicitations issued by executive department agencies for new systems or major upgrades of existing systems. The language includes:

- Mandatory vendor compliance with the state's Enterprise Information Technology Accessibility standards and MassIT Web Accessibility Standards, Version 2;

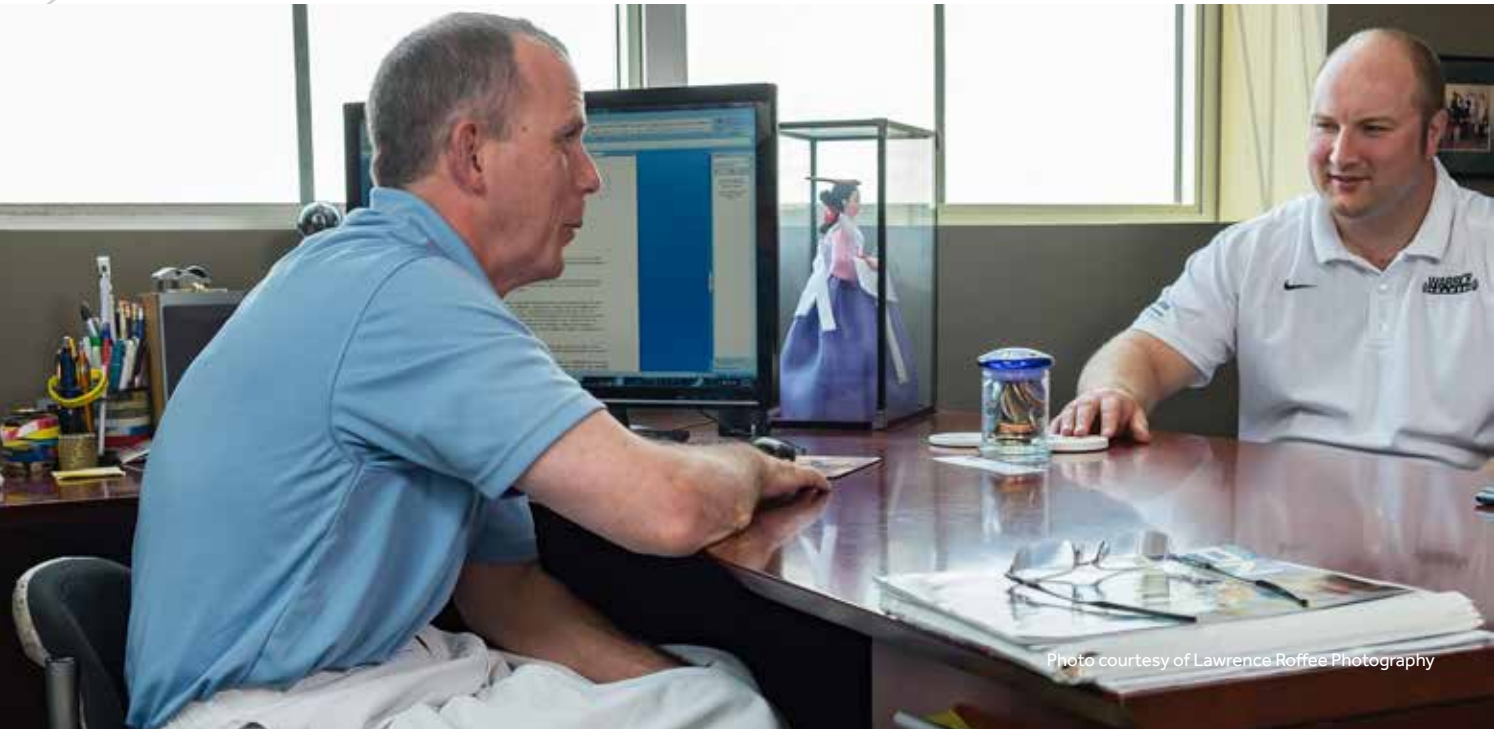


Photo courtesy of Lawrence Roffee Photography

- Coordination between a vendor and state agency in identifying and providing accommodation to "all prospective attendees at [the vendor] training" who may require accommodation;
- A list of specific assistive technology (including class, brand and version) and specific desktop configuration "against which [vendor's] deliverables will be tested under this agreement"; and
- Required cooperation between the vendor and the agency in resolving interoperability problems that arise during the term of the maintenance agreement, as qualified.
- Additionally, the program provides:
  - The Generic Assistive Technology and Information Technology Environment List, as mentioned in its accessibility contract language, outlining rules for testing specific IT devices and services;
  - Supplemental Web Accessibility Testing Criteria 1.0, which provides a checklist for vendors to submit to the procuring agency;
  - Required terms for accessibility for IT contracts, in the form of a slide show presentation outlining the required contract language and other standards for executive department agencies; and
  - MassIT-issued waiver from accessibility requirements that outlines exemptions on the basis of due diligence, cost or undue burden, or a prospective roadmap for meeting such standards in the future.

Minnesota enacted statutory language that pertains specifically to nonvisual technology access standards, to be included "in all contracts for the procurement of information technology by, or for the use of, agencies, political subdivisions, and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities."

Nebraska's Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Nebraska Information Technology Commission and the chief information officer developed a Nebraska Technology Access Clause stating all "future information technology products, systems and services, including data, voice and video technologies, as well as

information dissemination methods, will comply with the [Nebraska Technology Access Clause] to the greatest extent possible." The clause requires:

- Availability of effective, interactive control and use of technology, including applications programs, for individuals with disabilities; and
- All accessible IT is compatible with technology used by other individuals with whom the individual with a disability must interact, able to be integrated into communications networks, and capable of providing equivalent access to interconnected network services used by the general population.

Policy-Driven Adoption for Accessibility, or PDAA

Minnesota is launching a PDAA pilot program, asking a number of vendors to complete a self-evaluation and use the feedback to analyze the model and determine next steps.

The **Texas** Department of Information Resources has developed a comprehensive framework and project plan to guide the organization's IT accessibility program and initiatives and new Request for Offers using the PDAA tool (PDAA Additional Information Request).

10 States can enact policies that support worker access to the built environment, including housing, public transportation, infrastructure and physical design.

A key aspect of entering and remaining in the workforce for people with disabilities is the design of the built environment, including the availability of accessible housing. A full range of potential barriers in the built environment exist, manifesting themselves differently depending on geographic location, available services and infrastructure arrangements. Without accessible built environments, including housing near jobs or accessible public transportation, otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities cannot benefit from the employment opportunities in their communities. Furthermore, accessible housing can allow individuals with disabilities to work from home successfully.

A Enact policies that facilitate complete streets, livable communities, mixed-use development, transit-oriented development, shared mobility, mobility on demand, travel demand management and *"Smart Cities"* in order to reduce barriers to accessibility and promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in travel. Work with local governments, economic development interests, and metropolitan and rural planning organizations to encourage businesses and residential living facilities to locate in areas with access to transit. According to Smart Growth America, 31 state governments and the District of Columbia have adopted complete streets policies through some combination of legislation, executive order and agency directive.

Google Foundation Funds New Ideas

The Google Foundation has awarded $20 million in grants through the Google Impact Challenge: Disabilities program to nonprofit organizations "with big ideas that use technology to expand opportunity and independence for people with disabilities." The awardees are focusing their efforts on issues in accessibility across the globe. The projects range from affordable prosthetic technologies to improving methods of information sharing.

Housing Program in New Jersey

According to their website, "The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency and the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities have launched the Special Needs Housing Partnership Loan Program, or SNHPLP, aimed at creating affordable, supportive housing for people with developmental disabilities. This initiative aligns with the state of New Jersey's goal to help integrate people with special needs into the community...The SNHPLP will provide financing to create permanent supportive housing and community residences for individuals with developmental disabilities." Loans can be used for the rehabilitation or purchase of homes or condos.

B Enact programs to provide assistance to households that include people with disabilities in making physical and technological modifications to their homes in order to improve accessibility and promote working at home.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Massachusetts' Home Modification Loan Program provides for up to $30,000 in a low- or no-interest loan for the purposes of making accessibility modifications to a home. In some cases, the loan can be given under a deferred payment plan, through which the loan must only be repaid when the property is sold.

In **Texas**, many programs of the Department of Aging and Disability Services provide funds to make minor home modifications, defined as those home modifications that cost less than $7,500 and do not increase the square footage of the home.

New Mexico operates the Residential Accessibility Modification Program, or RAMP), for home modifications related to physical disability accessibility needs. The RAMP program functions as a "payer of last resort" after community resources are exhausted but is intended to pay the full cost of the project if approved.

Georgia, Kansas, Missouri and **Virginia** have tax credit programs for costs incurred in the purchase of a new accessible home and/or accessibility modifications of an existing home.

Staying at Work

Matthew Staton
Staff Assistant

When military personnel transition into the civilian workforce, their employers stand to benefit. The ability to adapt, learn quickly and get the job done exemplify the military experience. They also exemplify Matthew Staton, a veteran who today continues to serve his country in a civilian capacity, as staff assistant to the secretary of the Army.

Like Staton, many of today's service members return home from tours of duty with combat-related injuries that can interfere with everyday activities, including employment. Two such conditions are Traumatic Brain Injury, or TBI, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD. Staton was exposed to multiple bomb blasts in Iraq in 2003 and 2004 and was medically discharged from the Army for TBI and PTSD, as well as complications from gunshot wounds.

Upon receiving his diagnoses, Staton obtained needed medical assistance, but the non-medical help he also received has made just as significant an impact in helping him resume a successful life and career, he says. Both on and off the job, Staton struggles with short-term memory problems. To help him with this issue, he uses a variety of tools, including personal digital assistants, a digital voice recorder and other assistive technologies.

Each year, millions of U.S. workers, many with considerable job tenures, experience the onset or a change in a medical condition that challenges their ability to work. Many of these workers are at risk of leaving the labor force, especially if they do not receive timely and effective stay-at-work/return-to-work, or SAW/RTW, supports. Staying connected to the workforce has a positive effect on individual and family health and well-being, quality of life and standard of living. Conversely, when workers exit the labor force, federal and state tax revenues are lost, and public programs such as state workers' compensation programs, *Social Security Disability Insurance*, or SSDI, *Supplemental Security Income* or SSI, Medicare and Medicaid often foot the bill in terms of income support and health care services.

According to research conducted or reviewed by DOL/ODEP's SAW/RTW Policy Collaborative, the following positive outcomes are achievable when workers are able to stay in the labor force or return to work after experiencing illness or injury:

- Workers are able to continue earning money and enjoy the self-esteem and other advantages that come from employment.
- Employers can benefit from the experience of long-tenured workers, spend less money and time on hiring new workers, and potentially spend less on workers compensation benefits and premiums for private disability insurance.
- The benefits to state governments and federal government include helping workers and their families retain economic self-sufficiency and quality of life; expanding state economies and fiscal health by increasing tax revenues from wage earners; and lowering liabilities for state and federal social welfare and social security programs, including state workers' compensation programs, SSDI, SSI, Medicare and Medicaid.

There is much that states can do to help workers who acquire disabilities to remain in the workforce, and according to the SAW/RTW Policy Collaborative, some states already are acting to improve the well-being of affected workers and the states' bottom lines. Specifically, states can consider the following policy options to help people stay at work and return to work.

Policy Options

The policy ideas for increasing retention of people with disabilities in the workplace generated by the task force revolve around one key concept—disability is not static. State SAW/RTW policies can be designed to support workers experiencing disability at any stage of life and/or adjusting to changes in disability throughout their lives.

11 States can develop policies to support employee retention in the event of injury, illness or a change in status of an individual's disability. Stay-at-work and return-to-work policies can support all workers as they continue in their careers and as new challenges present themselves.

A Adopt SAW/RTW programs in the private and public sectors. As mentioned in a previous section, these programs can positively impact retention. States have crafted a variety of programs based on these policy concepts, both for state employees and more generally for all workers in the state.

Suggested Strategies

i Expand the provision of retention services for workers with medical conditions by state VR agencies.

ii Improve state employees' access to evidence-based SAW/RTW services.

iii Provide SAW/RTW services and incentives to short-term disability insurance, or STDI, claimants in states with mandatory STDI.

iv Make regulatory, process or service changes to improve SAW/RTW services and incentives for workers with job-related conditions (e.g., in workers' compensation systems).

Supporting Life Changes at Work

Many companies have return-to-work policies and programs that support employees as they adapt to new situations or recover from life altering events. Some firms, such as Waste Management as reported by the Society for Human Resource Management, take a "comprehensive approach" to manage these transitions. Others also have implemented flexible work options—at Kraft Foods, manufacturing employees can use the "Fast Adapt" program to switch out shifts or share jobs to balance needs at home.

Washington State's Policy Solution

In Washington, the Department of Labor and Industries has coordinated Centers of Occupational Health and Education, which take a interdisciplinary approach by coordinating services with not only employers and workers, but also health care providers, through this community-based program.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia and **South Carolina** have expanded the provision of retention services for workers with medical conditions by state VR agencies.

Delaware has a legislated a return-to-work program for state employees that tasks coordinators with working with disability insurance carriers, physicians and employers to ensure quick re-entry into the workforce. **Arkansas** VR plans to expand retention services for state personnel, and **Vermont** includes disability accommodation services as part of its statewide employee assistance program that is available to all state employees and some private-sector workers.

California, New Jersey and **Rhode Island** have public STDI programs administered by their state workforce agencies. In **Hawaii** and **New York**, nonexempt employers are required to provide STDI benefits to their employees. Only the **Rhode Island** STDI program has implemented changes specifically targeted at improving job retention outcomes for claimants.

Three states with exclusive state workers' compensation funds have implemented promising job-retention initiatives for workers with work-related conditions. In **Washington's** Centers for Occupational Health and Education program, trained health service coordinators work directly with medical providers, employers and injured workers to coordinate care and return-to-work activities. Washington's Stay-at-Work program pays employers 50 percent of injured workers base wages up to a $10,000 cap, as well as the costs of certain accommodations. **North Dakota's** Preferred Worker Program provides injured workers with benefits such as a work-search allowance and reimbursement for new tools and equipment. **Ohio** has two programs administered by the Ohio Bureau of Workers Compensation, the Transitional Work Grants program and the Transitional Work Bonus program, helping employers develop a worksite program that helps injured workers perform transitional work while they recover.

Oregon's Employer-at-Injury Program is similar to Washington's Stay-at-Work program and provides employers with wage subsidies, reimbursement for worksite modifications and other accommodations costs to help workers stay at work. Oregon's Preferred Worker Program is targeted to employers who hire injured workers.

Photo courtesy of Positive Exposure and RespectAbilityUSA

Elizabeth Kumar
Peer Mentor

Teaching and helping children "develop into little people" had been Elizabeth Kumar's lifelong passion, but when central nervous system lupus left her paralyzed from the waist down in her mid-20s, necessary medications affected her ability to work full time in a classroom. For several years she tutored part time before embarking on a new career as a peer mentor at the ENDependence Center of Northern Virginia, or ECNV. In this role, she still uses her teaching talents, but in a slightly different manner—working with adults and helping them with life skills.

When Kumar became paralyzed, she was discharged from the hospital without learning many of the skills she needed to live independently. She credits her husband (then fiancée), who also uses a wheelchair, with being her role model and mentor; he encouraged her to gain those skills and reengage in work and the community.

Things Kumar regrettably had to learn the hard way, such as how to apply for disability benefits, or how to transfer into a wheelchair, is what she now teaches others. "Working as a peer mentor has been the best job I've had, because I am able to share what I know," she says. "Many of my consumers are dealing with the things I dealt with years ago."

Shortly after Kumar was hired by ECNV, she had surgery for a pressure ulcer. Both before and after the surgery, ECNV let her work from home as an accommodation. While recuperating, Kumar called in to meetings, which allowed her to remain part of the team and, more importantly, helped her keep a positive mindset while hospitalized.

In fact, much of Kumar's job at ECNV can be done remotely, and she finds that she often gets more accomplished from home. "A lot of my job," explains Kumar, "is doing research on the computer and helping people apply for different jobs or benefits, helping with resumes or interview skills, and peer counseling, which I can do over the phone."

B Help businesses and individuals with disabilities navigate the complexities of benefits.

Note: The federal Work Incentives Planning and Assistance, or WIPA, grants provide states with resources that enable people with disabilities to know their options for maintaining SSI and SSDI benefits while working. The Social Security Administration has awarded 95 cooperative agreements throughout every state, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories of American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Some states, including **Arizona, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, Virginia** and **Wisconsin**, provide a state funding source to expand benefits and counseling to include individuals who currently are not on the SSI or SSDI rolls but are considering whether to apply for benefits or receive employment-related services and supports and choose to work.

C Explore opportunities to supplement existing financial incentives to target disability employment supports.

Suggested Strategies

i Adopt a state earned income tax credit to increase income supports for low-income workers with disabilities.

ii Adapt state earned income tax credits to reduce the age from 25 to 18 and enhance the credit for single filers who are Social Security beneficiaries with disabilities.

iii Allow tax deductions for a percentage of contributions to state *Achieving a Better Life Experience* accounts.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Maryland's *Achieving a Better Life Experience* program, enacted through House Bill 431 (2016), allows for a deduction on state tax liability for contributions to ABLE accounts. The bill provides for an individual return annual limit of $2,500 in subtractions to adjusted gross income, with a provision allowing the remaining balance on contributions in excess of $2,500 to be carried over to the next 10 consecutive taxable years until the balance is exhausted (with each year being subject to the $2,500 annual limit on subtractions).

Michigan enacted House Bill 4543 (2015) relating to taxation and trust accounts, which included a provision allowing a tax deduction on state tax liability for contributions to an ABLE savings account (minus qualified withdrawals from that account in that same year) not to exceed $5,000 for an individual and $10,000 for a joint return.

Montana, under Mont. Code Ann. §15-30-2110(12)(a) and §53-25-117, allows for an individual to reduce their adjusted gross income by the lesser of their total contribution or $3,000 to an ABLE account owned by the individual, the individual's spouse, or the individual's child or stepchild.

South Carolina, through S.C. Code §12-6-1140(12)(a), allows for a deduction from state income tax liability for all contributions made to any ABLE account in South Carolina or a qualifying account located in other state up to the maximum federal limit ($14,000) for ABLE account contributions.

Supporting Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship

Many individuals with disabilities have difficulty securing and maintaining traditional job placements with an employer. For some individuals with disabilities, self-employment and entrepreneurship opportunities represent alternative employment and economic self-sufficiency strategies. Current data from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates 10 percent of individuals with disabilities in the labor force are engaged in self-employment efforts, a rate substantially higher than the 6.3 percent of individuals without disabilities who are self-employed. Research suggests there are numerous benefits of self-employment for vocational rehabilitation clients, including greater customization of the job and higher wages. For others, self-employment may offer more autonomy, a stronger sense of dignity or a greater opportunity to follow career aspirations.

However, individuals with disabilities encounter a number of barriers and challenges to self-employment and entrepreneurship. Self-employment training is often not a major component of workforce development or vocational rehabilitation services, preventing individuals with disabilities from gaining critical business skills. Less than 3 percent of all vocational rehabilitation case closures nationwide are the result of a self-employment placement. Individuals with disabilities also encounter financial barriers to owning a business due to policies and practices that make building assets and attracting capital difficult. Disability benefits often set income and asset limits, and societal attitudes about disability can create challenges to acquiring loans and attracting investors. These barriers represent significant social and economic disadvantages to competing and succeeding in the business world.

Many states utilize business development policies such as financial supports, procurement targets and business certifications to support entrepreneurs of socially and economically disadvantaged groups like women, racial/ethnic minorities and veterans. States can support business owners with disabilities and individuals interested in self-employment by adapting existing business development policies and programs to be disability-inclusive. Entrepreneurs with disabilities can benefit from inclusion in these business development policies, gaining critical access to sources of capital, training and technical assistance, and opportunities to contract with state agencies for the provision of goods and services.

The Economics of Vocation Rehabilitation Self-Employment Training

Average wages in FY2012 for persons who used VR

HOURLY	WEEKLY
Self-Employment $14.46	Self-Employment $445
Status 26 $11.33	Status 26 $365

Average case service expenditure by VR agencies in FY2012:

Self-employed **$7,910** | Status 26 **$5,436**

Average time period from initiation of employment plan to closure in FY2012:

Self-employed **663 Days**
Status 26 **630 Days**

Self-Employment for People with Disabilities, U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (2013).

Policy Options

The policy options centered on supporting self-employment and entrepreneurship strategies for people with disabilities through two key strategies—strengthening the viability of entrepreneurship/self-employment and including disability-owned businesses in state procurement, certification and financial support policies.

12 States are encouraged to ensure that state workforce development systems support entrepreneurship and self-employment as viable employment options for people with disabilities.

For individuals with disabilities, self-employment/entrepreneurship may provide greater work customizability and may even provide income that is equal to or greater than wages in traditional job placements. However, state workforce development systems often do not offer robust training in business ownership or lack the staff capacity and expertise to support self-employment as a placement strategy. States can include self-employment/entrepreneurship as an explicit element of the state workforce development strategy, thereby building agency capacity and providing another avenue for economic self-sufficiency for their clients with disabilities. States also benefit from stronger economies by preparing individuals with disabilities to be business owners and potential employers of other individuals with disabilities.

A **Formalize entrepreneurship and self-employment as a viable employment strategy for individuals with disabilities in state workforce service delivery.** A robust workforce development strategy for individuals with disabilities should include entrepreneurship and self-employment. States can support these options for individuals with disabilities by streamlining services and earmarking funding specifically for the professional development and training of entrepreneurs with disabilities.

Suggested Strategies

i Direct disability-specific (VR and workforce development, Medicaid, developmental disability, mental health) state agency services and funding to target entrepreneurship and self-employment training/supports and promote greater focus of entrepreneurship/self-employment in general state agency services.

- Set goals for entrepreneurship/self-employment funding and training. States can consider tying annual funding goals and training/placement goals to the national disability entrepreneurship rate.
- Report performance measurements and outcomes.

ii Establish entrepreneurship and self-employment as competitive, integrated employment in the language of employment-first policies.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Alaska, Florida and **New York** participated in DOL/ODEP's START-UP demonstration project, which explored opportunities to coordinate state workforce agencies and community organizations in delivering customized employment discovery strategies targeting self-employment for people with disabilities.

California, Maine, Oklahoma, Rhode Island and **Utah** have established entrepreneurship and/or self-employment as competitive employment placements in statute or regulatory language.

AT&T's Global Supplier Diversity Mentoring Program

AT&T has established a mentoring initiative for businesses that are owned by service-disabled veterans, which "provides training and mentoring to a select group of qualified CEOs with the goal of improving their business operations and enhancing their ability to win corporate contracts. AT&T joined with John F. Kennedy University and helped mentor, educate and offer contract opportunities to service-disabled veteran business owners."

B Through education and outreach, position entrepreneurship and self-employment as possible career strategies for individuals with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities who would consider entrepreneurship should be aware of the services and supports available to them in their communities. States can also reduce the risk associated with starting a business by continuing to provide social benefits for entrepreneurs with disabilities.

Suggested Strategies

i Develop an awareness, education and outreach campaign on existing services and resources supporting entrepreneurship education and training for people with disabilities.

ii Provide benefits retention and navigation services during entrepreneurship and self-employment efforts.

Note: The federal Work Incentives Planning and Assistance grants provide states with resources that enable people with disabilities to know their options for maintaining SSI and SSDI benefits while recognizing self-employment and entrepreneurship as viable employment and self-sufficiency strategies.

iii Develop criteria for identifying candidates for entrepreneurship and self-employment training and determine the appropriate agency responsible for targeting services to interested candidates.

Supporting Self-Employment in Maryland

Maryland's WorkABILITY Loan program supports self-employment for individuals with disabilities. The low-interest loans are designed to be used for equipment purchases or other supports for small businesses or self-employment at home. Loans can be as little as $500 and up to $60,000.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Alaska, Maryland and Washington have developed criteria to target individuals for whom entrepreneurship and self-employment training may be a good fit.

In **Alaska**, self-employment is part of a guided "discovery" process for customized employment in state vocational rehabilitation services.

In **Maryland**, the Department of Education's Division of Rehabilitation Services, or DORS, administers the Reach Independence Through Self-Employment, or RISE, program. Started in 1997, the RISE program's mission is "to present self-employment as a realistic and viable vocational option to individuals with significant disabilities who are eligible to receive DORS services." RISE consumers are eligible, upon DORS approval of the consumer's business plan, for a one-time investment—typically capped at $15,000—for the purchase of goods and services needed to successfully launch a new for-profit business or acquire/expand an existing business. The DORS RISE investment does not need to be paid back, but consumers must contribute a percentage of total costs in order to receive the investment award.

Washington's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, or DVR, has implemented a comprehensive assessment process through which individuals interested in self-employment DVR services must undergo a feasibility study and submit a detailed business plan for evaluation and acceptance before being provided with self-employment services. DVR contracts with business development professionals to support various elements of the DVR client's self-employment training process.

Walmart's Supplier Diversity Mentoring Program

From its handbook: "The Supplier Diversity program aims to expand and advance our current pool of more than 3,000 diverse suppliers through education and mentoring. Our goal is to support capacity building for minority and women owned businesses. We aspire to create prosperity through empowerment. As part of our efforts to stay connected to the best and brightest of diverse suppliers, we partner with the National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC), Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC), USBLN Disability Supplier Diversity Program (DSDP), U.S. Pan Asian American Chamber of Commerce (USPAACC) and several other organizations across the country to identify potential suppliers."

Joe Steffy is an entrepreneur with Down syndrome, autism and is non-verbal. He owns Poppin' Joe's Gourmet Kettle Korn, which is part of Walmart's supplier diversity program.

13 States can include disability-owned businesses in targeted state procurement, certification and financial incentive policies.

States can support established and nascent disability-owned businesses by expanding state economic development policies targeted at socially and economically disadvantaged populations to include entrepreneurs with disabilities. Like minority, women and veteran business owners, individuals with disabilities experience multiple barriers and economic challenges to owning and operating a business. In particular, entrepreneurs with disabilities may have very limited access to start-up capital due to disability benefit asset-limits and may benefit from targeted mentorship programs and dedicated training and supports in order to be successful in entrepreneurial efforts. States can include disability-owned businesses in state procurement, certification and financial support systems and thereby connect entrepreneurs with disabilities to a wide range of existing supports and resources intended to strengthen the state's small businesses.

State Procurement and Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Business Owners

According to NCSL, at least 41 states operate some form of state procurement and certification of businesses owned by minorities and/or women. In many states, procurement set-asides or preferences for minority-owned and women-owned businesses have been established under the rationale that the state has a vested interest in supporting the enterprise activities of its citizens experiencing historical and current social and economic disadvantage.

Based on the criteria of social and economic disadvantage, a strong case can be made for addition of disability-owned businesses to state procurement and certification programs. Many business owners with disabilities continue to experience barriers to social inclusion, educational achievement, community accessibility, asset building and economic security. Working-age (18–64) individuals with disabilities have a poverty rate of 28.2 percent, more than double the rate of their peers without disabilities.

Currently, 10 states support disability-owned businesses through their procurement and certification processes. These states have expanded existing procurement and certification systems to include disability-owned businesses as either a new separate classification or as a new qualifying group within a minority-owned business classification. By leveraging existing expertise in business development and entrepreneurship with minorities and women to build up supports for disability-owned businesses, states are able to provide crucial support to individuals with disabilities seeking to launch or grow a business. Beyond contract preferences or set-asides, inclusion in the procurement and certification process can provide disability-owned businesses with technical assistance, business development services, and access to grants or low-interest loans.

Brown-Forman Tracks Inclusivity in Procurement

In 2012, Brown-Forman created indicators to measure its progress towards a 2020 goal of procuring 16 percent of its supplies contracts from diverse businesses, including those owned by people with disabilities. As of 2015, according to a corporate responsibility report, they had procured 5.75 percent from diverse suppliers. They have a Supplier Diversity Council that actively works on this goal through quarterly meetings.

A Explore opportunities to support disability-owned businesses through existing procurement and contracting systems.

Suggested Strategies:

i Create goals for procurement from disability-owned businesses.

ii Create contract bid preferences for disability-owned businesses.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

The **Connecticut** Supplier Diversity Program requires state agencies and political subdivisions of the state and other than municipalities that have annual contracting budgets of more than $10,000 to set aside at least 25 percent of their budgets each fiscal year for small contractors. Of this set-aside, 25 percent must be reserved for awards to minority business enterprises, including disability-owned businesses. (Statutory Authority: Conn. Gen. Stat. §4a-60g)

Under the **Illinois** set-aside program, not less than 20 percent of the total dollar amount of state contracts is established as an aspirational goal for all Business Enterprise Program eligible vendors. These represent minimum goals of 11 percent for minority-owned businesses, 7 percent for female-owned businesses and

2 percent for disability-owned businesses. (Statutory Authority: Ill. Rev. Stat. ch. 30, §575)

The **Iowa** Targeted Small Business Procurement Act requires all state agencies and departments to set annual procurement goals from certified targeted small businesses, which include disability-owned businesses. It also requires community colleges, area education agencies and school districts to establish a procurement goal from such businesses of at least 10 percent of their annual procurement budget, including construction but not utility services. Of these total procurement goals, an additional goal must be set to procure at least 40 percent from service-disabled veteran-owned businesses.

Under 2015 **Massachusetts'** Executive Order 565, disability-owned businesses are identified as one of the new supplier diversity program, or SDP, targets and included in full participation in the procurement efforts of all state agencies. State agencies are required to meet or exceed forthcoming SDP target spending benchmarks as well as participate in reporting activities established by the Office of Supplier Diversity.

The **Ohio** Encouraging Diversity, Growth, and Equity, or EDGE, program is open to Ohio small businesses that can demonstrate both social disadvantage—including physical and mental disability—as well as economic disadvantage—based on the wealth of the business seeking certification. EDGE is marketed as both a set-aside and an assistance program for these small businesses. A directive from the Department of Administrative Services sets initial EDGE procurement set-aside goals at 5 percent of all contracts for supplies, services, information technology and construction. (Statutory Authority: Ohio Rev. Code §123.152; Administrative Regulation: Ohio Admin. Code Chapter 123:2-16)

In **Rhode Island,** the Governor's Commission on Disabilities sets formulas for awarding contracts to disability-owned businesses. The commission requires the Division of Purchasing to submit an annual report on state purchasing activities specifically to disability-owned businesses, including the number and value of awards, outreach activities undertaken by the division, and the number of disability-owned business that were rejected during the procurement process. The commission receives it statutory authority from the Disability Business Enterprise Act, which also requires state agencies and the Division of Purchasing to periodically conduct meetings with such businesses, as appropriate, to inform them of procurement opportunities.

Alaska, Minnesota and **Maryland** have procurement preferences in place.

In **Alaska**, the Alaskans with Disabilities Preference (Alaska Stat. §36.30.321(d)) provides that if a qualified Alaska bidder or offeror is a business owner with a disability, a 10 percent preference shall be applied to their price in the bid or proposal. Under **Minnesota's** targeted group business price preference program, small businesses that are majority-owned by women, racial minorities or persons with a substantial physical disability can apply for state certification and be eligible for a state procurement preference up to 6 percent price preference in bidding on goods and/or services. (Statutory Authority: Minn. Stat. §16C.16). **Maryland** requires all state and state aided or controlled agencies to exhaust a procurement preference priority list for the purchase of supplies and services before engaging in procurement from general business. The preference priority list, recently altered through House Bill 1537, requires purchasing from designated programs if they provide the required supplies or services, moving down the list in the following order: Maryland Correctional Enterprises; Blind Industries and Services Maryland; community service providers or disability-owned businesses. (Statutory Authority: Md. State Finance and Procurement Code §14-103)

The City of Chicago Business Enterprises Owned by People with Disabilities Program

The Business Enterprises Owned by People with Disabilities, or BEPD, Program is a certification aimed at stimulating the use of small businesses owned and operated by persons with disabilities. Certification enables them to pursue bid opportunities to do business with the city.

Tom Prinske is a partner in T. Castro Produce, which is a BEPD business in Chicago, has been actively advocating for the inclusion of disabled-owned businesses in procurement and certification policies.

B Establish a fast-tracked certification process for disability-owned businesses to gain access contract/vender opportunities and take advantage of procurement goals.

Suggested Strategies:

i Create a Disability-Owned Business Enterprise, or DOBE, certification category.

ii Expand a Minority Business Enterprise category to include people with disabilities.

iii Use the existing *U.S. Business Leadership Network*, or USBLN, third-party certification process.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Delaware and **Rhode Island** have created a stand-alone disability-owned business enterprise certification category.

Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa and **Ohio** have expanded minority business enterprise categories.

Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker's Executive Order 565, issued in 2015, explicitly recognizes disability-owned businesses as one of the new supplier diversity program, or SDP, targets and disability-owned business enterprises are named as one of three new SDP certifications. The DOBE certification process is streamlined, using and recognizing the third party certification from USBLN as valid for SDP participation and DOBE certification. The USBLN Disability Supplier Diversity Program certification requires that eligible firms must meet the following criteria: be at least 51 percent owned, operated, managed and controlled by individual(s) with a disability, or service-disabled veteran(s) who are either U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents; exercise independence from any other non-disability-owned business enterprise; have its principal place of business headquartered in the U.S.; and have been formed as a legal entity in the U.S.

Photo courtesy of Lawrence Roffee Photography

C **Explore tax and financial incentive structures to support disability entrepreneurship start-up and/or growth.** Increasing gainful employment for people with disabilities should include programs to enhance entrepreneurial activity. These programs could mirror programs increasing access to capital for under-represented groups, such as minorities and women. States have taken other approaches to complement tax credits for private disability-owned businesses, including low-interest loan programs and on-the-job supports for owners and employees with disabilities working in the private sector.

Suggested Strategies:

i Targeting loans/funding for socially and economically disadvantaged groups to people with disabilities.

ii Offering low-interest revolving loan funds and funding/incentivizing private organizations to offer loans to disability-owned businesses.

iii Implementing grants targeting new disability-owned entrepreneurial efforts to overcome initial capital fundraising challenges. States can also look to adapt existing entrepreneurship grant programs to include entrepreneurs with disabilities.

iv Providing tax credits or deductions for "angel investor" contributions.

v Offering microenterprise grants to encourage individuals with disabilities to start or expand a business and transition away from benefits.

vi Setting aside agency funds to support on-the-job training, job coaching and long-term follow-along/extended supported employment services.

Note: State vocational rehabilitation agencies provide time-limited (24 months) supported employment through federal Rehabilitation Services Agency, or RSA, formula grants authorized by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Longer-term extended supported employment or follow-along services are not funded by RSA grants but rather through state funding.

vii Providing technical assistance and mentoring programs for business owners with disabilities.

RESPECT of Florida Microenterprise Grant

From their website: "Per Florida Statutes, RESPECT's mission is to further the policy of the state to encourage and assist blind and other severely handicapped individuals to achieve maximum personal independence through useful, productive, and gainful employment by assuring an expanded and constant market for their products and services, thereby enhancing their dignity and capacity for self-support and minimizing their dependence on welfare and need for costly institutionalization. Established in 1974 by the Florida Legislature (Sections 413.032–413.037, Florida Statutes), RESPECT of Florida is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization designated by the Florida Department of Management Services to administer Florida's State Use Program."

Moira Rossi received a grant from RESPECT of Florida to start her business, Moira's Ventures, in 2014. Her business brings into play her interest in public speaking, acting and self-advocacy. The first project for Moira's Ventures is creating self-help videos for other self-advocates.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

The **Illinois** Department of Commerce manages the Advantage Illinois program, which offers below market rate loans and revolving lines of credit to eligible small businesses, including those owned by individuals with disabilities, through its Participation Loan Program. Funding can be used for many things, including start-up costs, inventory and equipment.

Disability-owned businesses certified as an **Iowa** Targeted Small Business are eligible for microloans of up to $50,000 through the Iowa Center for Economic Success.

The **Ohio** EDGE Program requires the Development Services Agency to provide assistance and mentoring opportunities to EDGE business enterprises.

Ohio, Rhode Island and **Virginia** provide funding for job coaching and long-term supported employment programs.

Appendix

Glossary of Terms

Achieving a Better Life Experience, or ABLE, accounts

Created via the Achieving a Better Life Experience, or ABLE, Act of 2014, ABLE accounts are tax-free savings accounts for individuals with disabilities to use for expenditures resulting from their disability. The instrument behaves like a Roth IRA—the principle investments are taxed, but the earnings are not.

Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA

Federal legislation passed in 1990 barring discrimination against individuals with disabilities. You can read more about the statute and the agencies that enforce it at *www.dol.gov/general/topic/disability/ada*.

Blending and braiding

Blending and braiding strategies offer flexibility and allow providers of services to individuals, including individuals with disabilities, to focus on outcomes without the frequent restrictions that categorical funding streams impose. Both strategies allow funds to be used more easily and creatively at the point of service delivery. Blending refers to mechanisms that pool dollars from multiple sources and make them in some ways indistinguishable. For example, blended monies can be used to fund activities such as collaboration, coordination, program planning and staff development functions that frequently cannot be adequately funded from just one source. Braiding refers to a funding and resource allocation strategy that taps into existing categorical funding streams and uses them to support unified initiatives in as flexible and integrated a manner as possible. Braided funding differs from blended funding in that in braiding the funding streams remain visible and are used in common to produce greater strength, efficiency, and/ or effectiveness.

Built environment

The man-made ecosystem in which we live. This includes accessible housing, public transportation, infrastructure and physical design, for example, in the homes, public spaces and work places in cities and rural areas.

Career readiness education

A paradigm in education that focuses on career and/ or college readiness as a goal for K-12 education. Institutions may set their own definitions and metrics, but generally career readiness education models focus on preparing students to go into the workforce or further technical/career training pathways. With this goal in mind, states may work to make community college courses or internships available to high school students.

The Council of State Governments, or CSG

A nonpartisan nonprofit, CSG is the only membership organization serving all three branches of state government. As a nonprofit, CSG acts as a conduit for knowledge sharing between community members. More information is available at *www.csg.org*.

Disability

The term "disability" is defined in state and federal legislation and in demographic surveys in various ways, depending on the context and purposes of the legislation or survey. For purposes of federal disability nondiscrimination laws, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act or ADA, the term "disability" means, with respect to an individual: (1) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, (2) has a record of such an impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment.

Disability etiquette

A set of guidelines for social and professional interactions with individuals with disabilities. Generally, guidelines are in the spirit of individuality, independence and consideration of how others would like to be treated. Examples guidelines can be found on the websites for the United Spinal Association (*unitedspinal.org/pdf/DisabilityEtiquette.pdf*) and the Tennessee Disability Coalition (*www.tndisability.org/our-publications*).

Disability-owned business certification

Conducted by a third-party, certification processes verify disability-ownership status, which can be used by public procurement processes and policies to engage, encourage and stimulate disability-owned business.

Disability-owned business enterprise category

Public procurement entities, such as states and local governments, may define business categories by which procurement policy is specified. For instance, an enterprise category specifically for businesses owned by people with disabilities may be used to offer preferential consideration in a bidding process.

U.S. Department of Labor, or DOL

The U.S. Department of Labor serves the United States through a variety of offices and bureaus, including the Office of Disability Employment Policy, or ODEP. The department's missions is "to foster, promote, and develop the welfare of the wage earners, job seekers, and retirees of the United States; improve working conditions; advance opportunities for profitable employment; and assure work-related benefits and rights."

Entrepreneurship v. self-employment

While both an entrepreneur and someone who is self-employed may own their own businesses, there are differences in the two. Self-employment implies that the individual's output, whether it be a product or a service, is so integral to the enterprise that it is synonymous with it. An example of a self-employed person would be a business consultant who sells their expertise with clients. An entrepreneur, on the other hand, starts a business and plans to manage its operations and output. For more information about the differences between these two flavors of employment visit *www.disability.gov/resource/entrepreneurship-frequently-asked-questions*.

Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA

Signed into law in 2015, ESSA succeeds the No Child Left Behind Act. The legislation sets standards for college and career readiness, assessments, performance and school ratings, and accountability, and leaves room for innovation in education.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA

According to the U.S. Department of Education, this legislation "governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities."

Individualized education plan, or IEP

The individualized education plan is similar to the ILP in that it is a document tailored to a student's personal goals and needs. IEPs are maintained for students in special education programs. An IEP typically includes an evaluation and identification of needs and documents progress toward goals. The IEP is reviewed and updated on a regular basis for students with disabilities.

Individualized learning plan, or ILP

An individualized learning plan (ILP) is both a document and a process that students use—with support from school counselors, teachers, and parents—to define their career goals and postsecondary plans in order to inform the student's decisions about their courses and activities throughout high school.

Many states have adopted policies that require all middle and/or high school students to develop and maintain an individualized learning plan in order to make schools more personalized and improve student outcomes.

Inclusive information and communication technologies

Computer systems and processes that are designed to be accessible to those with sensory disabilities and impairments, such as blindness or deafness.

Model employer

In reference to the state, the idea that government should set the example for other employers in how employees with disabilities should be recruited and retained. The government should lead by example.

National Employment Team, or NET

The NET comprises representatives from vocational rehabilitation centers across the country and facilitates communication with business partners to meet employment needs. You can read more about the NET at *www.rehabnetwork.org/customers-2/business.*

National Conference of State Legislatures, or NCSL

NCSL is the national bipartisan organization representing and serving the 7,383 state legislators and 30,000-plus legislative staff across the country through sharing of best practices and advocating on Capitol Hill since 1975. NCSL provides its constituents research and information services on hundreds of legislative policy issues, technical assistance and extensive professional development opportunities. Their website is *www.ncsl.org*.

National Governors Association, or NGA

Established in 1908, NGA is "the bipartisan organization of the nation's governors. Through NGA, governors share best practices, speak with a collective voice on national policy and develop innovative solutions that improve state government and support the principles of federalism." You can learn more about their work at *www.nga.org*.

Natural supports

Natural supports include the personal associations and relationships typically developed in the community that enhance the quality of life for individuals with disabilities. Natural supports may include family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers and others in the community or organizations that serve the general public that provide voluntary support to help an individual with a disability achieve agreed upon outcomes.

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In an education setting, refers to the continuum from preschool, elementary, middle, secondary to post-secondary education.

PCP/ILP

Person-centered plans or individualized learning plans describe the document and process that schools use alongside families and students to identify goals and strategies to achieve those goals. States implement ILPs in different ways, but typically an ILP follows a student from middle school through high school and facilitates career exploration.

Procurement policy

Procedures and guidelines administered by the purchasing authority of state and local governments determining how government agencies select and purchase goods and services by suppliers and contractors. These policies can include purchasing preferential treatment for businesses owned by under-represented groups and may require businesses to have particular certifications by third parties (see: USBLN, disability-owned business certification).

Section 501 of Rehabilitation Act

The particular legislative language that "prohibits employment discrimination against individuals with disabilities in the federal sector," according to the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission.

State Exchange on Employment & Disability, or SEED

As states strive to promote workforce inclusion, people with disabilities—including veterans with service connected disabilities—are a key part of the solution. Recognizing this, the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) launched the State Exchange on Employment & Disability (SEED). SEED is a collaborative effort with state intermediary organizations, including the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), the Council of State Governments (CSG), and the Women in Government (WIG) to help state legislators effectively address policy barriers that may hinder the employment of people with disabilities. Through these partnerships, the SEED collaborative is dedicated to ensuring that state policymakers have the tools and resources they need to develop and disseminate meaningful polices related to disability-inclusive workforce development.

Smart cities
Generally refers to metropolitan areas that utilize technology to automate and streamline data collection from multiple sectors, including infrastructure, transportation and utilities, for the purposes of understanding usage and improving function. To get a sense of the scope of efforts, review the White House initiative for smart cities at *www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/09/14/fact-sheet-administration-announces-new-smart-cities-initiative-help*.

SSI, SSDI
Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance are both administered by the Social Security Administration for people with disabilities. SSI provides benefits to those who meet a threshold for financial need, and SSDI provides benefits for individuals with disabilities and their families if they have worked for a certain period of time.

Stay at work, return to work
Disabilities and severe illness can strike at any time. SAW/RTW policies recognize these unexpected events and offer employers and employees flexible tools to keep employees working through changes and/or returning to work after an absence related to a disability or illness. You can read more about the Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy's efforts in this policy area at *www.dol.gov/odep/topics/Stay-at-Work-Return-to-Work.htm*.

Short-term disability insurance, or STDI
STDI can be purchased on the market from insurance companies. The payout is typically a percentage of the policyholder's income over a particular time period during which an individual cannot work due to illness or injury.

Talent Acquisition Portal
Also known as TAP, the portal is an electronic database of people seeking jobs that have disabilities and employers with openings. You may visit their website at *tapability.org*.

Universal design principles
A set of concepts that guide the design of spaces, tools and processes with a focus on accessibility for all people. For example, physical spaces should be accessible and usable for people with varying abilities and tools should be designed to be used in a multitude of ways. These principles can be used in computer science, education, manufacturing, architecture and more. For more information about universal design, visit the North Carolina State University Center for Universal Design (*www.ncsu.edu/ncsu/design/cud/about_ud/udprinciples.htm*) and the University of Washington DO-IT's "Universal Design: Process, Principles, and Applications." (*www.washington.edu/doit/universal-design-process-principles-and-applications*)

U.S. Business Leadership Network, or USBLN
A nonprofit business entity, the USBLN provides third-party business certification for disability-owned firms and other peer-to-peer community services.

Vocational rehabilitation program, or VR
A partnership between the federal and state government, the program's goal is to support people with disabilities in finding and keeping employment. Funding is administered by the U.S. Department of Education to each state to provide services.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, or WIOA
Signed in 2014, WIOA replaces the Workforce Investment Act. WIOA programs are implemented across several organizations, including the U.S. departments of Labor, Education, Health and Human Services, and state governments. Initiatives support youth, those working and individuals seeking work.

References for Further Reading

- U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy
  "The Workforce System." *www.dol.gov/odep/topics/WorkforceSystem.htm*

  "National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth)."
  www.dol.gov/odep/resources/NCWD.htm

  "Ready and Able: Addressing Labor Market Needs and Building Productive Careers for People with Disabilities Through Collaborative Approaches." 2011. *www.dol.gov/odep/categories/workforce/readyable/readyable.pdf*

- U.S. Small Business Administration
  "People with Disabilities" resource page.
  www.sba.gov/starting-business/how-start-business/business-types/people-disabilities

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
  http://idea.ed.gov/explore/home

- National Council on Disability
  "Progress Reports." *www.ncd.gov/progress_reports*

- National Conference of State Legislatures
  "Disability Employment." *www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/disability-employment.aspx*

  "State Policy Options for Employing People with Disabilities." 2015.
  www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/state-policy-options-for-employing-people-with-disabilities.aspx

  "State Human Service Transportation Coordinating Councils: An Overview and State Profiles"
  http://www.ncsl.org/research/transportation/state-coordinating-councils-overview-and-profiles.aspx

- National Governors Association
  "A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities." 2013.
  www.nga.org/files/live/sites/NGA/files/pdf/2013/NGA_2013BetterBottomLineWeb.pdf

- The LEAD Center, Employment First
  http://employmentfirst.leadcenter.org

- ABLE National Resource Center
  http://ablenrc.org

About SEED

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