

**2003 INNOVATIONS AWARDS PROGRAM
Application Form**

1. Program Name

Partners for Inclusive Employment Job Match and Fair

2. Administering Agency

Bureau of Accessibility and Safety Systems (BASS)
Office of Compliance, Access and Workplace Safety (CAWS)
IL Department of Human Services (DHS)

3. Contact Person (Name and Title)

Audrey McCrimon
Assistant to the Secretary
IL Department of Human Services

4. Address

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5. Telephone Number

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8. **Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.**

In April and July, 2002, based on a partnership approach, a three stage strategy was implemented to 1) educate employers about how to use the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as a tool to assist their business, 2) pre-screen both employers (for jobs and job descriptions) and job applicants with disabilities (for skill sets and job readiness skills) to create an employment match and 3) host a Job Match Fair that would bring both job applicants with disabilities and employers together to generate positive employment outcomes.

9. **How long has this program been operational (month and year)?**

Partners for Inclusive Employment was organized in March, 2001.

10. **Why was the program created? (What problem[s] or issues[s] was it designed to address?)**

Illinoisans with disabilities face many challenges in terms of locating employment, housing and transportation. Based on national findings from the "First Report of the Presidential Task Force on Employment of People with Disabilities," among people with disabilities ages 16 to 54 who are not employed, seven out of 10 said they would prefer to be working.

Currently, in Illinois, the unemployment rate among working-age persons with disabilities is 67.8% or more than 488,000 people according to the Illinois Bureau of the Budget and the Department of Human Services. For persons of color with disabilities, the unemployment rate increases to 85%. If the Presidential Task Force figures of seven out of 10 is correct, more than 342,000 working-age Illinoisans with disabilities want to work. Connecting unemployed people with employers serves to combat an escalating unemployment rate. Illinois must take the lead and necessary steps to reduce the unemployment level of people with disabilities.

11. **Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.**

In 1997, a group of agencies formed an informal alliance to tackle problems of unfair employment practices. The Westside Jobs Collaborative evolved to become an information clearinghouse and mutual support network for groups that train and place job seekers located on the west-side of Chicago. Over 35 groups participate in this collaboration regularly and have been instrumental in establishing two part job fairs that pre-match job seekers with specific employers and support agencies. The Westside Jobs Collaborative has pioneered the concept of "niche" job fairs for groups not often reached by traditional fairs, specifically at-risk men and ex-offenders.

In March, 2001, the collaborative was asked to dialogue with the University of Illinois Chicago's (UIC) Institute on Disability and Human Development. The goal of the collaboration is to apply best practices in partnership with UIC in developing a "job match" strategy for people with disabilities. For the first time, state agencies, along with

representatives from the academic community, advocacy groups and social service agencies collaborated on addressing the high unemployment rate of persons with disabilities in Illinois to form the *Partners for Inclusive Employment (PIE)*. One outcome from the collaboration included a job fair hosted by PIE at UIC in April, 2002. In tracking the results from the job event, it was found that 33% of those persons with disabilities who participated in the Job Match Fair reported earnings through October, 2002.

A three stage strategy was developed by PIE:

1. Educate employers about how they can use the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as a tool to assist their businesses. In January 25, 2002 an Employer Breakfast was held at the University of Illinois Chicago Institute on Disability and Human Development attended by nearly 50+ employers. Information was disseminated on hiring resources as well as information to assist businesses in compliance with the ADA.
2. Pre-screen both employers (for jobs and job descriptions) and job applicants with disabilities (for skill sets and job readiness skills) to create an employment match. On April 16, 2002, 60 volunteers from agencies that comprise the collaboration named PIE interviewed 179 potential job applicants with disabilities. Job Readiness Workshops were conducted by representatives from United Health Care and 175 participants were given invitations to attend the Job Match Fair on April 24, 2002.
3. Hold a Job Match Fair that would bring both the job applicants with disabilities and employers together to generate positive employment outcomes. On April 24, 2002, 169 job applicants with disabilities returned to be interviewed by 16 employers and to receive interview appointments with 80 additional employers connected through the Internet provided by Marianjoy Rehabilitation Hospital "AbilityLinks" program. In addition, access to the Illinois Department of Employment Security's "Illinois Job Link" program was made available to participants to register their skills to match with employers. Within the first two weeks following the event, agencies reported that 17 attendees were working during the first weeks of May, 2002. Based on tracking information retained on job applicants, at least 33% of those who attended the Job Match Fair reported earnings through October, 2002. A similar event was held as part of the state's July, 2002 Americans with Disabilities Act Celebration. Based on information retained on job applicants, an outcome of 24% of those who attended the Job Match Fair reported earnings through October, 2002.

12. **Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?**

This is the first program of its nature that involves state government as a partner to strategically address the increasing unemployment rate of persons with disabilities. The impetus of the program is: 1) to demonstrate that collaboration among agencies leads to the development of an information clearinghouse and mutual support network for organizations that train and place job seekers with disabilities, 2) to tackle the problem of "cattle call" job fairs that do not generate positive employment outcomes, 3) to promote opportunities to a group with a high unemployment rate and 4) to increase and enhance the marketing skills of people with disabilities.

13. **What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide detail about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)**

\$5,000

Employer Breakfast

Job Pre-Screening Event

Job Match Fair Event

Includes:

Mailing costs for Job Match events

Accommodation costs (braille, sign language interpreters)

Food for Employer Breakfast

Space rental fee - University of IL Chicago

Transportation costs for job applicants with disabilities

Staffing

Volunteers donated time based on agencies represented in Partners for Inclusive Employment

(60 volunteers recruited for Job Match Fair)

14. **What are the program's annual operational costs?**

\$5,000

Employer Breakfast

Job Pre-Screening Event

Job Match Fair Event

15. **How is the program funded?**

Funds are raised based on agency donations from those participating in Partners for Inclusive Employment. Grant applications have been submitted to Amerigroup Foundation as well as the U.S. Department of Education to support continuing costs.

16. **Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.**

No.

17. **What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?**

Use of personal computer systems are used to generate printed materials, and maintain customer and employer database.

18. **To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address and telephone number.**

This program did originate in our state. The innovator's name: Kevin McCauley (retired employee of the Illinois Department of Human Services), Easter Seals of Metropolitan Chicago, 120 West Madison Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60302; (708) 524-7800 (voice).

19. **Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If Yes, which ones and how does this program differ?**

No

20. **Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?**

No. The Partners for Inclusive Employment continues to meet to plan for an annual Job Match Fair to be held in April, 2003. In addition, there are evaluation activities underway to determine the common skill sets of job applicants with disabilities to allow for a greater target group of employers to participate in the upcoming Job Match Fairs. Finally, certain service protocols are under development to ensure that participating job placement providers are identifying individuals with disabilities who are job ready for participation in upcoming activities.

21. **Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined program[s] or issue[s].**

The job model promoted by PIE has been innovative in terms of tackling the problem of "cattle call" job fairs. "Cattle call" job fairs typically generate significant participation by both employers and job applicants, but result in few employment outcomes. PIE has pioneered the concept of "niche job fairs" for groups who experience high unemployment rates and often are not reached by traditional fairs. The job events have provided job seekers with a more meaningful structure to bolster their job marketing skills.

Persons with disabilities have been directly involved in shaping the employment activities undertaken by PIE. The group includes a multi-cultural, cross disability representation of consumers who serve as a resource to inform PIE's job event planning.

The model includes tracking the rates of placement based on employer and job seeker participation. In the first year, it was determined that at least 33% of those who participated in the Job Match Fair reported earnings through October, 2002.

22. **How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?**

Given the collaborations developed by PIE, the network has served to address common myths about persons with disabilities (particularly with employers), to increase knowledge about available work accommodations (by using demonstrations by UIC Assistive Technology Unit) and to assist individuals with disabilities those who are

seeking employment (over 200 individuals).

It has forged a partnership between 35 non-traditional groups who meet regularly representing state and local government, rehabilitation service providers, federal employment One-Stop agencies, academic institutions, welfare-related organizations, advocacy agencies, and consumers with disabilities.

23. **What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this programs?**

Initially, it was difficult to forge a collaboration among the variety of groups given they serve different populations, held varying attitudes about individuals with disabilities and limited knowledge of available work accommodations. Building on the job model put forward by the Westside Jobs Collaborative, representative agencies were able to identify overlapping job placement issues of that extended beyond their specific populations to build a mutual support network for those groups that train and place job seekers. The job fair model was originally designed and proven effective to serve hard to place populations (ex-offenders and at-risk men). The unknown in the first year was how the collaborative model would work to address the high unemployment rate of persons with disabilities.