

Employment First

Capacity Building and Training and Technical Assistance Strategic Plan

2014-2015

Introduction

The Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), along with its many partners and stakeholders, strives to support the choices of individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families within local communities by promoting and providing services that are person-centered, self-directed, flexible, inclusive and supportive of the discovery and development of each individual's unique gifts, talents and abilities.

On April 16, 2013, Governor Kitzhaber signed Executive Order 13-04, recognizing Oregon's Employment First Policy adopted by the Department of Human Services (DHS) in 2008. The Employment First Policy makes integrated employment the goal for all Oregonians with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It further states,

“While the state cannot guarantee a job to any Oregonian, the state can and should consistently work to continue to improve its provision of employment services to provide the best possible opportunities for success and choice for individuals receiving those services. This requires new approaches and partnerships with government, the non-profit services sector, and potential employers in the business community.”

Oregon is committed to working towards enhancing employment service delivery capacity to ensure individuals with I/DD have the opportunity within their communities to live lives that are fulfilling and meaningful with the employment supports they need, including having available qualified employment providers, skilled and trained professionals, and ongoing opportunities for employment providers, case management professionals, educators, VR counselors, families and individuals to learn evidence based or promising best practices.

The Capacity Building and Training & Technical Assistance Strategic Plan outlines strategies for the 2014-2015 fiscal year that will help Oregon meet this commitment toward enhancing employment service delivery capacity, as well as the stated objectives below. This plan is not intended to include the total training and technical assistance efforts being provided by ODE and DHS. This plan will be reviewed and updated as needed, but at minimum annually.

Mission:

To improve Oregon's delivery of employment services, with the goal of achieving integrated employment for individuals experiencing IDD, consistent with their abilities and choices.

To improve Oregon's employment services through innovation, best practices, and increased capacity, with the outcome of achieving integrated employment services for all individuals experiencing intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

Purpose/Objective:

Per Section VI(6) of the Executive Order 13-04, Training Requires:

By January 1, 2014, ODDS and OVRS will establish competencies for the provision of Employment Services, and will adopt and implement competency-based training standards for career development plans, job creation, job development, job coaching, and coordination of those services.

By July 1, 2016, ODDS and OVRS will purchase Employment Services for people with I/DD only from agencies or individual providers that are licensed, certified, credentialed or otherwise qualified as required by Oregon Administrative Rule. Such requirements for the provision of Employment Services will be competency-based and may include, as applicable, such national credentialing programs as the APSE Certified Employment Support Professional exam or a substantial equivalent.

Per Section VIII (8) of the Executive Order 13-04, Provider Capacity:

State agencies will make good faith efforts, within available budgetary resources, to ensure that there are a sufficient number of qualified employment providers to deliver the services and supports necessary for individuals in the ODDS/OVRS Target Population to receive Employment Services consistent with the terms of this Order.

Per Section IX (9) of the Executive Order 13-04, STATE AGENCY ACTIONS

By January 1, 2014, DHS will support new or existing technical assistance provider(s) or use other available training resources to provide leadership, training and technical assistance to employment providers and to provider, county, support services brokerage, and vocational rehabilitation staff to support the performance of this Order.

Acronyms:

“Brokerages” means Support Services Brokerages

“CDDP” means Community Developmental Disability Program

“I/DD” means individual with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

“ODDS” means the office of Developmental Disabilities Services under the Department of human Services.

“ODE” means the Oregon Department of Education

“PA” means Personal Agent who works for a Support Services Brokerage.

“SC” means Service Coordinator who works for a Community Developmental Disability Program.

“VR” means the Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program (also referred to as OVRS)

Capacity Building

Capacity Building is an integral strategy to meeting and exceeding the goals set forth in Executive Order 13-04, but more importantly, is necessary to provide sufficient resources, a range of employment service choices, and employment opportunities across the State of Oregon in frontier, rural and urban communities that can meet the diverse needs and goals of individuals experiencing I/DD. It should be noted that capacity building includes both increasing the number of available resources, as well as enhancing professional standards and overall professional skill capacity of the employment service resources.

The intent of this section is to identify initial strategies for capacity building that will become a foundation for DHS and ODE to build upon in the future.

Target Audience:

- 1) Employment Professionals (includes provider organizations and independent contractors)
 - a. Discovery providers
 - b. Job Developers
 - c. Job Coaches (including PSW Job Coaches)
- 2) Case management professionals (includes Service Coordinators, Personal Agents, and VR Counselors)
- 3) Employers and Business Community
- 4) Community partner agencies
- 5) Transition Network Facilitators

Strategies:

I. Identify common qualification standards for employment professionals

It is priority of the DHS to ensure qualified and skilled employment professionals are available to provide employment support for individuals with IDD throughout the ODDS and VR service system. To meet this objective, and in accordance with the Executive Order 13-04, ODDS and VR must establish both competency based training standards for employment professionals as well as evidence based or best practice credentialing standards.

- a. **Core Competency Standards** – As per the Executive Order 13-04, ODDS and VR must establish competencies for the provision of Employment Services, and adopt and implement competency-based training standards for career development plans, discovery, job creation, job development, job coaching, and coordination of those services. This includes competency standards for employment professionals (i.e., job coach, discovery provider, job developer) and case management entities such as

Active Strategies: (1) Core competencies for employment professionals were adopted by DHS January 1, 2014. These core competencies reflect widely recognized employment professional competencies taught to in national credentialing programs like Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE), Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI), Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), Highline Community College Employment Program, Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE)

- b. **Credential Standards** – By July 1, 2016, ODDS and VR will purchase Employment Services for people with I/DD only from agencies or individual providers that are licensed, certified, credentialed or otherwise qualified as required by Oregon Administrative Rule. Such requirements for the provision of Employment Services must be competency-based and may include, as applicable, such national credentialing programs as the APSE Certified Employment Support Professional exam or a substantial equivalent.

Proposed Strategies: Training and Technical Assistance Work stream to recommend to Employment First Steering Committee nationally recognized credentialing standards and requirements by January 1, 2015, to permit employment providers sufficient time to meet standards by July 1, 2016.

II. Identify innovative strategies to increase the capacity of the community based employment support service delivery system for individuals with IDD

- a. **Provider Transformation** – Oregon has several provider organizations that currently only or primarily provide Employment Path Facility services. These provider organizations include sheltered workshops, where individuals are receiving employment services in a facility and may receive compensation for employment activities, but do not have access to non disabled individuals, health benefits, or other social benefits that may be otherwise available to individuals in an individualized integrated employment setting.

Oregon seeks to provide opportunities and support to assist provider agencies who wish to transform their existing business model of sheltered workshop to a community based employment service provider model.

Proposed Innovative Strategy: DHS has identified the innovative strategy of sponsoring a \$6.75 million Request for Proposal to assist over the course of two years, a total of thirty (30) DHS Developmental Disability certified employment provider agencies to transform from sheltered workshops to community employment provider agencies. This project will engage one or more training and technical assistance entities with expertise in organizational change, supporting individuals with IDD, and demonstrated successful experience in the area of community based employment services.

The RFP was posted publicly in August 2014, with tentative anticipation of awards being made no later than Dec. 1, 2014.

- b. ***Expanding an Employment Provider's Existing Capacity*** – Oregon has employment provider agencies with a varying range of capacity to support individuals experiencing IDD in community based employment services. DHS has an interest in assisting existing employment provider organizations in expanding their service capacity to support more individuals with IDD in individualized integrated employment.

Proposed Innovative Strategy: DHS provides grants to provider organizations interested in expanding their community based employment services, with particular preference given to providers willing and interested in developing in the frontier or rural communities of Oregon.

- c. ***Building New Provider Capacity*** – Although Oregon has a number of employment provider agencies, DHS believes there is value in enhancing the number of employment providers across Oregon in order to better ensure individuals with IDD needing community based employment supports will have availability of employment service providers, as well as opportunity to choose from multiple employment service providers within his/her community. Specifically, expanding the employment provider service capacity in the frontier and rural areas of Oregon is a priority.

Proposed Innovative Strategy: (1) DHS provides grants to encourage out of state employment service provider organizations to develop in Oregon, or encourages new start ups for provider organizations

or Independent Contractors, with particular preference given to providers willing and interested in developing in the frontier or rural communities of Oregon. (2) DHS pays for training and credentialing costs associated with meeting the Oregon employment provider qualification standards for both ODDS and VR. (3) DHS provides

- d. ***Frontier and Rural Capacity Development*** – Provider capacity in the frontier and rural communities across Oregon, such as Eastern Oregon and the Coastal communities, is extremely limited to non-existent. It is a priority of DHS and ODE to increase the number of employment service providers in these communities to ensure availability and choice for individuals with IDD needing employment supports to obtain or maintain integrated employment. Additional common barriers to having sufficient qualified employment provider capacity includes limited transportation resources for individuals seeking employment services; travel distance between communities; generally smaller pool of educated professionals in the community; and limited access to training.

Proposed Innovative Strategies: (1) Provide priority or extra points to employment providers who express interest and willingness to expand into frontier and rural communities. (2) Provide travel stipends or training scholarships to employment professionals to facilitate attendance to trainings. (3) Identify training and technical assistance provider(s) willing to work in targeted areas to develop and build capacity. (4) Create a rural community building and training task force to identify and recommend training and capacity building strategies for frontier and rural community. (5) Consider a modification of qualification standards for employment professionals of Discovery, Job Development and Job Coaching in frontier and rural areas.

III. Build local community capacity to support employment first.

- a. ***Local Community Capacity*** – DHS and ODE recognize that it takes a lot of local collaboration between key agencies, local businesses, families, employment service providers and the individual to help maximize an individual’s success in achieving his/her employment outcomes. DHS and ODE wish to support innovative strategies that will support and promote local collaborations and capacity building within the community to better meet individuals’ employment needs.

Active and Proposed Innovative Strategies: (1) Local Employment First Teams- DHS currently funds technical assistance support through Washington Initiative for Supported Employment (WISE) for 12 local Employment First teams across the state to build local leadership in the area of Employment First.

- b. **Mentorship** – As capacity expands within local communities throughout the state as well as amongst employment service providers, DHS and ODE values the importance of sharing and exchanging innovative ideas; having a forum to discuss identified best practices, local challenges and solutions; and a forum for providing brief training and technical assistance information in an efficient way to multiple providers or local communities.

Proposed Innovative Strategy: (1) Facilitate or contract with a training and technical assistance entity to facilitate virtual Community of Practice forums for such groups as employment providers, case management, EF teams, VR Counselors; and Transition Network Educators. (2) Create and Support a Provider Organization Leadership Mentoring network matching recognized employment provider leaders and new employment providers who could benefit from mentoring. (3) Create and support Peer to Peer Mentoring program for self-advocates seeking individual integrated employment.

- c. **Cultivate Local Subject Matter Experts (SME's)** – DHS and ODE value the importance of supporting and cultivating local talent and expertise. Being able to access local SME's aligns with Oregon's value of supporting local businesses. Additionally, using local SME's can have more credibility and be more effective when the SME has a fundamental understanding of Oregon's Administrative Rules, regulations, service system, and community needs, challenges, and strengths.

Proposed Innovative Strategies: (1) Create an Employment Provider Leadership institute where employment professionals who have been identified as leaders or rising leaders in a particular subject area such as Discovery, Customized Employment, Job Coaching techniques, etc.

IV. Increase the employment services system's capacity to meet the needs of transition aged students exiting secondary education.

- a. ***Seamless Transition for Transition Aged Individuals*** – In accordance with the Executive Order 13-04 and the Memorandum of Understanding on Transitions Students with Disabilities to the Workforce between ODDS, ODE, VR, and OCDD (2013), it is a priority of DHS and ODE to align policies and practices across agencies, including streamlining when and where possible; improve local cross agency collaborations; improve post secondary outcomes of transitioned aged students with IDD, including increasing the number of transition aged students who are able to experience a seamless transition from school to individual integrated employment or post secondary education plan as a path to employment; and better strategies for early parent and student engagement.

Active and Proposed Innovative Strategies: (1) Employment First Seamless Transition Pilots- DHS with funding support from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Employment Disability Policy (ODEP) has been sponsoring four Employment First Seamless Transition Pilots (EFSTP) since September 2013. Sites include: Washington County, Multnomah County, Umatilla County, and Clackamas County. The EFSTP's provides opportunity to pilot an evidence based Seamless Transition model at the local community level to identify how this model or components of it may be taken to statewide scale; identify strategies or best practices for local interagency collaborations specific to transition aged students; and identify strengths, needs and barriers in existing state policy and practices that may be impeding or facilitating the seamless transition process.

- b. ***Internships and Summer Youth Experiences*** – Research indicates that students who have an opportunity to engage in an internship or summer work experience prior to exiting school are much more likely to seek and maintain competitive integrated employment shortly after exiting high school.

Proposed Innovative Strategies: (1) Coordinate with local Work Incentive Network Boards to identify summer work experience opportunities and funding support for individuals with more significant disabilities, including I/DD. (2) Establish statewide summer youth

experience standards, procedures and forms for local communities and teams to implement. (3) Create a student internship model for employers to adopt.

V. Develop and expand supported employment emerging or best practices

- a. **Self-Employment** – National data suggests individuals with IDD are selecting self-employment as a preferred career path for integrated individualized employment. DHS acknowledges that there are different and specific skills required of employment professionals to support individuals in self-employment, including but not limited to helping the individual develop their business plan, strategize around taxes, identifying how to secure business loan, and developing a marketing plan. DHS prioritizes the need to increase the capacity of qualified employment professionals who can meet the support needs of individuals with IDD who choose self-employment as a career path.

Proposed Innovative Strategies: (1) Clarify and solidify partnership with VR around self-employment expertise. If an individual is eligible for VR services, s/he can identify self-employment as an employment goal for their Individual Employment Plan (IPE). (2) Contract with a Subject Matter Expert entity who can provide technical assistance with VR and ODDS to enhance the expertise of local employment professionals using best practices and evidence based practices in self-employment.

Training & Technical Assistance

DHS and ODE value professional development and the need to ensure professionals and stakeholders have ongoing opportunities to develop skills, learn about current evidence or best practices, and learn about current employment policies and procedures. Additionally, it is a priority of DHS and ODE to provide training and technical assistance to enhance the knowledge and skills of consumers, families, and other community partners to be able to navigate the employment service system. As one considers the training and technical assistance needs, the identified strategies take into consideration maximizing collaborative approach across agency partners and stakeholder, and the unique challenges in rural verses urban communities.

Target Audience:

- 1) Self -Advocates
- 2) Families and Guardians
- 3) CDDP Managers and Services Coordinators
- 4) Brokerage Executive Directors & Personal Agents
- 5) VR Counselors
- 6) YTP Counselors/Educators
- 7) Special Education Directors and Teachers
- 8) Transition Network Coordinators
- 9) Employment Professionals (includes provider organizations and independent contractors)
 - a. Discovery providers
 - b. Job Developers
 - c. Job Coaches (including PSW Job Coaches)
- 10) Facility based Employment Provider Organizations
- 11) Residential Providers
- 12) PSW's Supporting individuals in home or community
- 13) Employers and Business Community
- 14) Community partner agencies

Objectives:

- I. **Provide Training and Technical Assistance resources to help employment service providers meet established core competency standards and ODDS/VR credentialing standards, with the goal of increasing the number of employment service providers as well as employment service provider skills and capacity to achieve individualized integrated employment outcomes for individuals with I/DD.**

II. Improve Case Management (SC/PA, VR Counselor, Educator) skills and competencies to assist and support individuals with I/DD in achieving integrated individualized employment goals/outcomes.

III. Increase Self-Advocate and Parent engagement

Strategies:

I. Support and promote collaborative approaches to training

In an effort to further support and strengthen state and local level cross agency collaboration and learning, DHS and ODE value and prioritize collaborative approaches to training. Additionally, a collaborative approach promotes fiscal stewardship of public funds, and reduces the fiscal impact on stakeholders, families, and individuals who will benefit from trainings.

Proposed Innovative Strategies – (1) DHS, ODE will collaborate to identify and provide opportunities for cross agency training. This will include engaging other state and local agency partners and stakeholders such as provider associations, Work Force Incentive Network, local CDDPs/ Brokerages, local school districts, to assist with trainings. Suggested opportunities for cross agency collaboration include:

- a. Meet at the Mountain in Spring 2015
- b. Employment First Conference in Spring 2015
- c. Annual Conference for Oregon Special Education Administrators 2014 & 2015
- d. Annual Services Coordinator/Personal Agent Conference Summer 2015
- e. Annual Youth Transition Program Conference Summer 2015

(2) Establish Community of Practices for providers, case managers, self-advocates, etc.

II. Identify innovative strategies to meet Frontier and Rural training needs

It is a priority of DHS and ODE to ensure access to training and technical

assistance resources in all geographic areas of the state, including frontier and rural communities.

Training in frontier and rural communities across Oregon face significant challenges for employment professionals, case management professionals, VR counselors, educators, stakeholders, families and individuals trying to access training. In frontier and rural areas across Oregon, there is limited access to trainings that will help professionals meet the minimum training requirements for professionals and obtain or maintain qualifications. Trainings are most frequently provided in more populated metropolitan areas such as Portland, Salem, Eugene, Medford, Bend and Pendleton. Additionally, families and individuals with IDD do not often have the opportunities to ever attend a training that may help inform them about best practices, new policies, or services. Travel, time and lodging to training can therefore be a significant hardship on professionals, their respective agencies, and on families or individuals. In addition to the hardship and limited access to training, there is rarely the technical assistance resources and expertise available in local communities to help with local capacity building and training.

Proposed Innovative Strategies: (1) Create a rural community building task force to identify and recommend capacity building and training strategies for frontier and rural community. (2) Conduct training using the collaborative agency training approach in order to maximize resources and minimize need for travel to trainings.

III. Sponsor employment service Core Competency training for:

- a. Employment Professionals, including PSW Job Coaches
- b. SC/PA's
- c. VR Counselors
- d. Transition Network Facilitators and educators (as applicable)

As per the Executive Order, the above named professionals must meet core competency established standards for the provision of employment services. The cost to meet new core competency standards may be a significant burden for individual providers, provider organizations and local government or not for profit agencies.

Proposed Innovative Strategies: To help offset the burden of expenses for providers, DHS and ODE will engage different strategies to limit cost associated with obtaining core competencies. Strategies will include (1) contracting with one or more training and TA entities to develop On-Demand training modules, and conduct trainings at low or no cost to participants; (2) DHS/ODE may conduct trainings (when able) itself to help professionals meet the core comp. established standards through such venues as the Educator Institute, Regional Trainings, and planned conferences.

IV. Sponsor training to meet state adopted credentialing standards, including resource list

- a. Discovery/Career Exploration
- b. Job Development
- c. Job Coaching

As per the Executive Order, the above named professionals must meet established certification or credentialing standards for the provision of employment services. The cost to meet new credentialing standards may be a significant burden for individual providers, provider organizations.

Proposed Strategies: To help offset the burden of expenses for providers, DHS will contract with one or more training and TA entities to conduct trainings toward helping providers meet core competencies and credentialing standards. (2) DHS will seek innovative strategies to help defray the cost of the actual credential exam(s), such as grants and scholarships.

V. Provide training and technical assistance to support new, innovative, emerging or determined evidence based/best practices in employment service supports including but not limited to Career Development Planning, Discovery, Supported-Self Employment, Internships/Summer Youth Experiences, benefits planning, application and use of technology in employment.

The field of supported employment is evolving. New practices are emerging to enhance the skills and service options to support individuals to seek, obtain, and maintain integrated individualized employment. It is important to provide or make available training and technical support for employment providers, case management professionals, families and self advocates so they are competent in and can capably implement or apply current evidence based, best or emerging practices.

Proposed Innovative Strategies: (1) contract with a training and technical assistance entity to provide current state of the art training and TA. (2) Where possible establish a train the trainer model where local SME's could be developed and support the capacity building efforts.

VI. Consider innovative training strategies to engage self-advocates and families toward a goal of individualized integrated employment.

Self-advocates and families want and need to understand the Employment First initiative. Furthermore, they need to better understand their role and responsibilities in identifying and meeting their individualized integrated employment goals. However, given the multiple demands on families, and barriers for both self advocates and families to get to trainings, it is necessary to consider innovative approaches to training that will be most effective and meaningful.

Proposed Innovative Strategies: (1) Contract with FACT to provide parent training and information; (2) Coordinate with the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities and the family to family networks to establish family mentoring relationships; (3) contract with Oregon Self Advocate Coalition (OSAC) to create self-advocate mentoring program; (4) provide family and self advocate tracks at statewide conferences; (5) provide financial support through grants or scholarships for families and self advocates to attend trainings.

Training and TA BUDGET

The Training and Technical Assistance Workstream has \$500,000 (General Fund) available to meet the above objectives and implement strategies for the remainder 2013-2015 biennium.

Training and TA Priorities	General Funds	Fed Funds	Total Funds
I. Employment Service Provider Capacity Building 1. Core Competencies 2. Credentialing 3. Start-up and expansion	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$600,000
II. Case Management and Field Professionals (VR, SC/PA, and Educators) Training 1. Employment Core Competencies 2. Career Development Planning 3. Informed Choice 4. Other	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$200,000
III. Self Advocate & Family Engagement 1. training 2. peer to peer and family mentoring	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$50,000
IV. Innovations 1. Leadership mentoring 2. Community of Practices 3. Local SME development 4. Frontier and Rural development	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$150,000
TOTAL	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$1,000,000



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