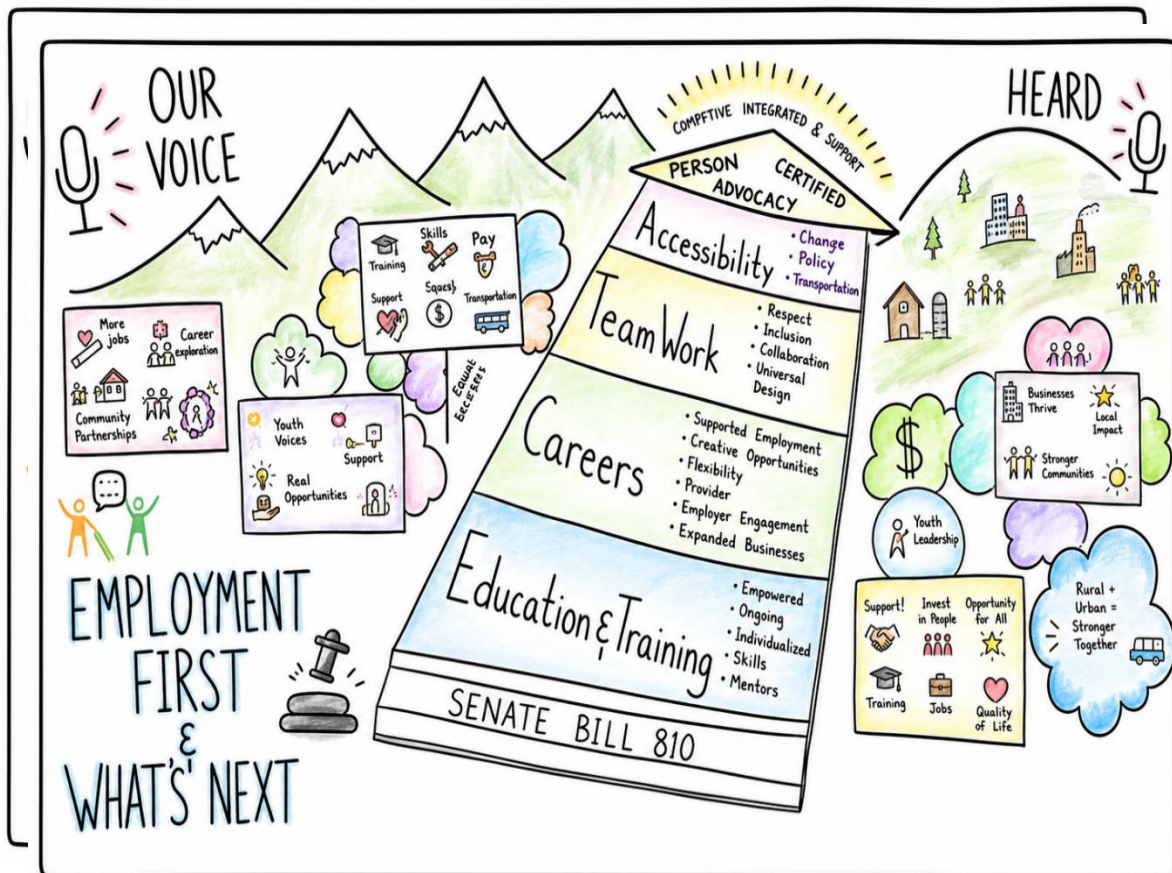


July 1, 2026

Oregon's Employment First Four Year Strategic Plan: 2026-30



Caption:

This illustration was made as a visual representation of Oregon's Employment First Strategic Plan during Oregon's 2025 Employment First Summit.

Background

The Employment First Strategic Plan guides Oregon's work to help people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) get and maintain jobs and advance in their careers.

A strategic plan is required by Senate Bill 810. The Office of Developmental Disabilities Services (ODDS) created the plan using feedback from the public in several ways, including:

- Listening sessions to help identify priority areas.
- Oregon's Employment First Summit, which included presentations on progress and a strategic planning session. You can watch the [Employment First Summit highlight video](#) and view the [Flickr photo album](#) for more information.
- A follow-up survey to gather more feedback and ideas.

Goals and strategies

1. Strengthen Employment First partnerships across Oregon

Build a strong and coordinated Employment First system across Oregon so agencies, regions and partners work toward shared goals.

Strategies

- a. Update and maintain the Employment First Advisory Workgroup Charter to reflect Senate Bill 810 and other laws and policies.
- b. Recruit and support members for the Employment First Advisory Workgroup and its subcommittees.
- c. Make sure self-advocates can participate in statewide, regional and subcommittee workgroups.
- d. Build stronger collaboration with self-advocate groups.
- e. Help regional Employment First teams keep their charters, bylaws, agreements and contact information current and aligned with SB 810.
- f. Provide recommendations to help shape Oregon's Combined State Plan to ensure the entire workforce system better serves job seekers with disabilities.
- g. Create a process for organizing a statewide Employment First Summit on a regular basis.
- h. Update Oregon's Employment First communications plan to support the goals in this plan.

2. Expand provider capacity and system expertise, with a focus on people with the highest support needs

Help providers build the skills, knowledge and tools they need to deliver strong employment services across Oregon.

Strategies

- a. Provide more statewide technical assistance on ODDS job coaching rates and service expectations.
- b. Implement ODDS job coaching rates from the wage and rate study along with the CMS 2026 updates for contact time.



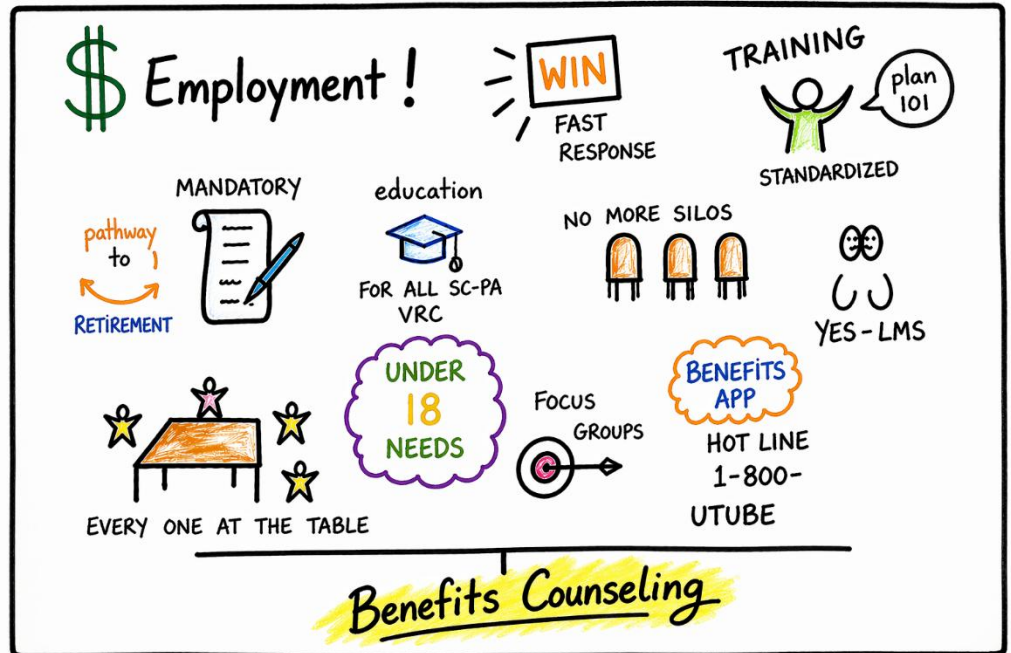
- c. Expand training and practical tools to better support people with higher support needs in reaching competitive integrated employment.
- d. Increase access to workforce programs and higher education for people with I/DD.
- e. Improve language access.
- f. Evaluate opportunities to implement a job coaching apprenticeship program.

3. Expand access to benefits counseling

Strategies

Help people with disabilities make informed decisions about working by expanding access to benefits counseling. Improve financial literacy supports through coordinated policy, training and referrals.

Aligned with NEON and National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) State Team Priorities.



Strategies

- a. Hold a short-term work group to find ways to improve access to benefits counseling.
- b. Review the ODDS Individual Support Plan (ISP) process to find ways to improve referrals to benefits counseling.
- c. Find ways to promote referrals for benefits counseling starting at age 16.
- d. Explore policy options to ensure referrals are offered consistently.
- e. Develop process for people to become credentialed in benefits counseling that complements national certification models, such as the Work Incentives Network (WIN) and related training. NEON technical assistance supports this work.
- f. Increase access to financial literacy education.
- g. Expand access to information about ways people can work and save while keeping important healthcare benefits, including ABLE savings accounts and the Employed Persons with Disabilities (EPD) program.

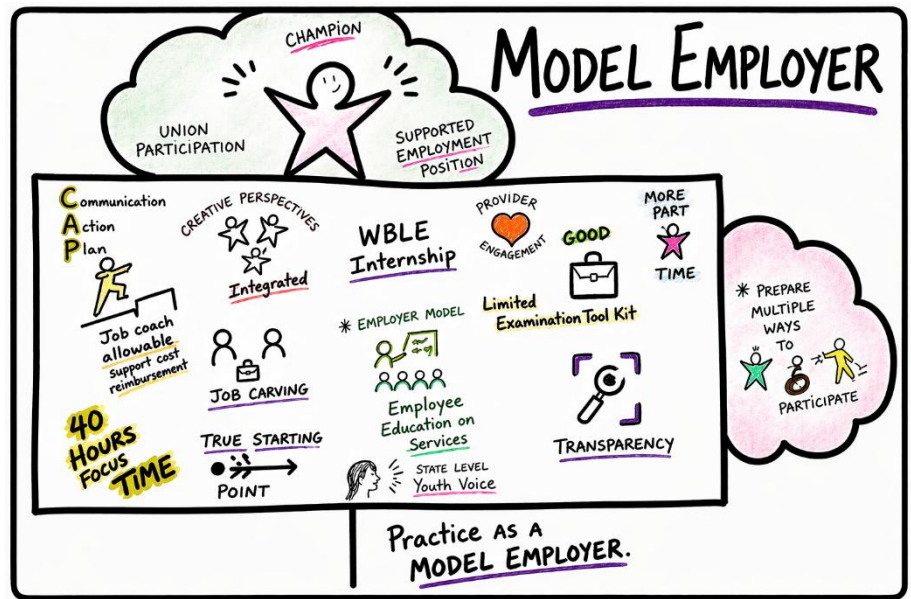
4. Advance inclusive and accessible hiring in state and local government

Strengthen Oregon's role as a model employer by expanding inclusive and accessible hiring for people with disabilities in state government positions.

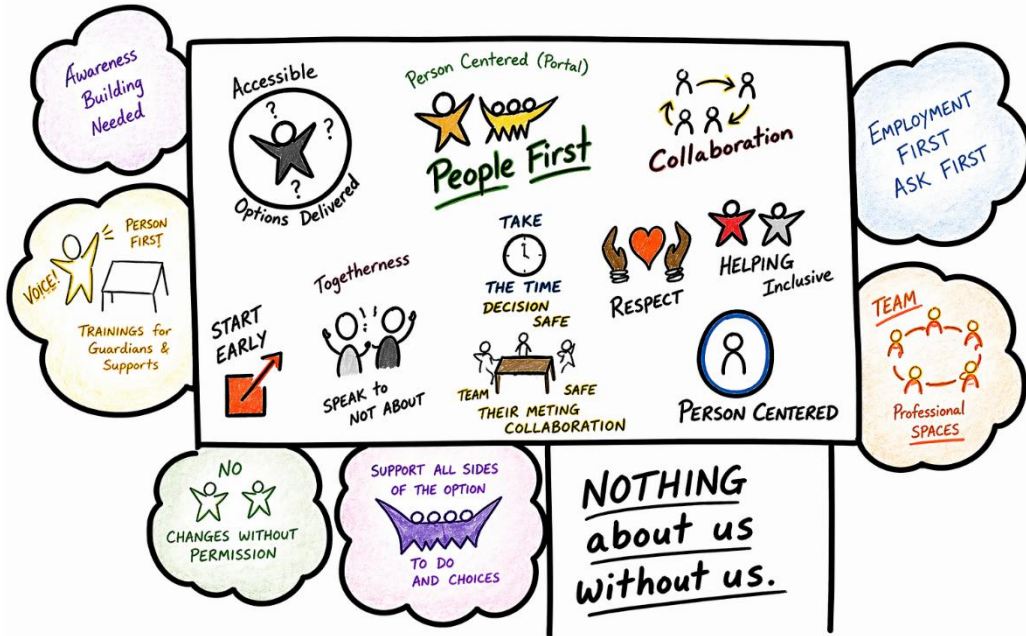
This goal is aligned with the WIOA Combined Workforce Plan and State as a Model Employer strategies.

Strategies

- a. Create a State as a Model Employer subcommittee to report out to the Statewide Employment First Advisory Workgroup.
- b. Subcommittee to develop implementation strategies to carry out statewide plan to move strategies forward.
- c. Review current hiring practices across state government to understand what is working well and where improvements are needed. Gather information from other states and the national community of practice.
- d. Build on the Developmental Disabilities Council's inclusive hiring toolkit to support hiring managers and identify gaps in the system.
- e. Develop tools that highlight existing Department of Administrative Services (DAS) hiring policies that support employment opportunities for people with disabilities and make recommendations for needed changes.
- f. Support hiring a permanent ODHS Program Analyst (PA3 or higher) with lived experience accessing ODDS services.
- g. Promote employer outreach through the Employment First Communications Plan and recognize organizations that demonstrate strong inclusive hiring practices.



5. Strengthen partnerships with self-advocates and youth leaders



Work with self-advocates and youth leaders to help shape employment policies and improve services across Oregon.

Strategies

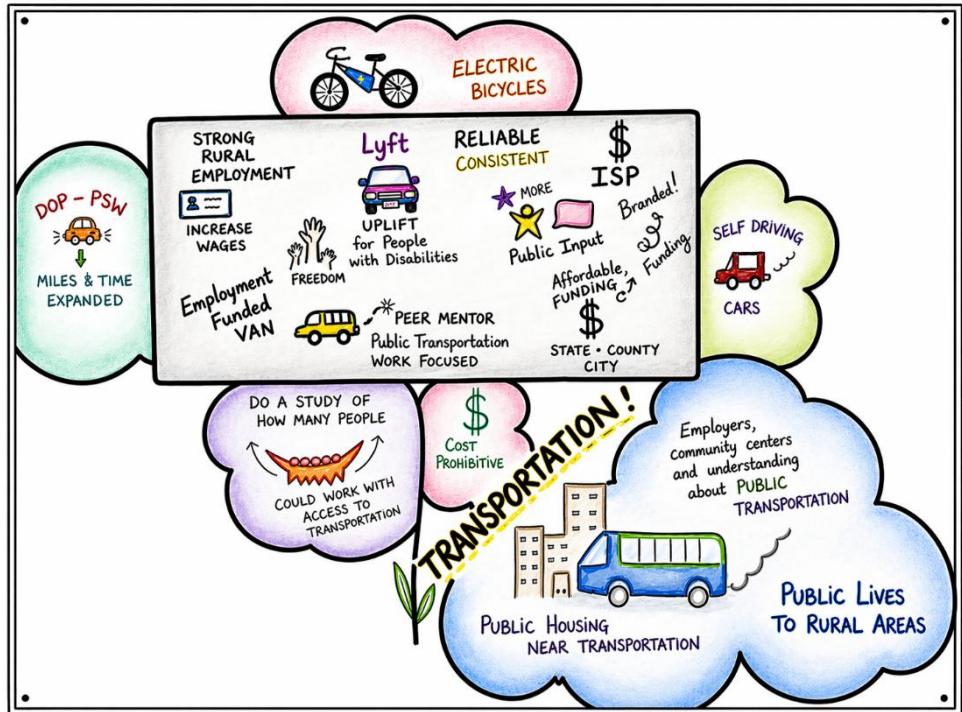
- a. Increase collaboration between statewide and regional self-advocate representatives and Employment First workgroups.
- b. Coordinate with the Oregon Health & Science University, University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Youth Advisory Council.
- c. Support youth leaders to collaborate with the NTACT state team.
- d. Expand peer mentoring as an ODDS employment service to focus on mentoring for employment, career growth and decision-making skills.
- e. Support peer mentors in leading presentations and trainings at youth and student events.

6. Transportation

Improve transportation options and guidance to make it easier for people to get to work.

Strategies

- a. Improve transportation options and provide clear guidance so people can get to work more easily.
- b. Clarify policy guidance on how rideshare platforms, such as Uber and Lyft, can be used for support to get to work.
- c. Identify promising transportation practices through the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN), NEON, and other national technical assistance partners.
- d. Explore ways to expand flexible transportation options.



7. Community engagement supports that improve access to employment

Support community engagement to help people build skills, connect with others, and move toward employment and career development.

Strategies

- a. Support community activities that lead to employment
 - i. Improve how ODDS tracks community engagement.
 - ii. Explore creating a DSA-specific endorsement for providers.
 - iii. Update statewide rules and use clear, shared language to describe community engagement and DSA.
 - iv. Clarify conflict-of-interest expectations.
 - v. Support learning groups and partnerships to share best practices for day supports.
 - vi. Improve how DSA complements and supports employment goals.
- b. Advance informed choice and employment planning:

Redesign ISP to better support employment outcomes, including:

- i. Start ISP meetings by talking about work and the person's future goals, then build the plan around those goals.
- ii. Invite the employment provider to the ISP meeting. If the person specifically states they do not want the provider present, hold a separate meeting for employment planning.
- iii. Make sure annual person-centered planning includes an accessible conversation about employment, based on the presumption of competitive integrated

employment. Document the person's informed choice — whether they choose to work or not — and make clear they know they can revisit the decision at any time.

c. Expand Supported Employment communities of practice

Start a Community of Practice that focuses on helping people use assistive technology to be successful at work.

Appendix

Glossary

ABLE Account

A tax advantaged savings account for people with disabilities. It allows people to save money without losing important benefits like Medicaid.

Advisory Workgroup / Subcommittee

A group of people who meet regularly to give advice, identify needs, and guide projects. Subcommittees focus on specific topics.

Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE)

Jobs where people with disabilities work in the community, earn at least minimum wage, and have the same opportunities as coworkers without disabilities.

Combined State Plan

Oregon's statewide workforce plan that explains how multiple agencies work together to support workers and businesses through employment and training programs.

Conflict of Interest

A situation where someone might have competing interests that could influence their decisions. For example, when a provider helps someone choose services they also sell.

DAS – Department of Administrative Services

The state agency that manages human resources, statewide policies, and hiring processes for Oregon state government.

Day Support Activities (DSA)

Community activities that help people build skills, connect with others, and move toward employment. These activities are not jobs, but they support employment goals.

EPD – Employed Persons with Disabilities Program

A Medicaid program that allows people with disabilities to keep their health insurance while working.

Employment First

Oregon's commitment that employment in the community should be the first and preferred option for people with disabilities.

Employment First Advisory Workgroup

A statewide group that provides guidance and recommendations on Oregon's Employment First efforts.

ISP – Individual Support Plan

A yearly plan that outlines the services and supports a person with disabilities will receive. It includes goals for work, community participation, and daily support.

Job Coaching

One-on-one support that helps a person learn job tasks, adjust to the workplace, and build independence.

NEON – National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network

A U.S. Department of Labor initiative that provides states with technical assistance to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

NTACT – National Technical Assistance Center on Transition

A national organization that helps states support students with disabilities as they transition from school to adulthood and employment.

ODDS – Office of Developmental Disabilities Services

A division of the Oregon Department of Human Services that provides services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

ODHS – Oregon Department of Human Services

The state agency that provides services including disability services, child welfare, self-sufficiency, and aging and disability supports.

OHSU UCEDD – Oregon Health & Science University, University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities

A federally funded center that supports research, training, and community programs related to disabilities.

Peer Mentor

Someone with lived experience who helps others by sharing their knowledge, offering support, and providing guidance—often around jobs, self-advocacy, or decision-making.

Presumption of Employability

The expectation that everyone, including people with disabilities, can work in the community with the right support.

SB 810 – Senate Bill 810 (2025)

Oregon legislation that requires ODDS to create an Employment First strategic plan and update certain workgroup processes.

SELN – State Employment Leadership Network

A partnership that helps states improve employment policies and outcomes for people with disabilities.

Self-Advocate

A person with a disability who speaks up for themselves and participates in decisions about their life.

State as a Model Employer

An initiative aimed at improving hiring and workplace practices in state government so that Oregon becomes a leader in employing people with disabilities.

Supported Employment

A service that helps people with disabilities find and keep competitive integrated jobs. It may include job coaching, planning, and ongoing support.

Technical Assistance

Expert help, guidance, or training from specialists to improve programs or services.

WIN – Work Incentives Network

A program that helps people with disabilities understand how working and earning money may affect their benefits.

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Email employment.first@odhs.oregon.gov or call 503-945-5811. We accept all relay calls.



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