

**Solano County**  
**Local Plan PY 2017-21 – Two Year Modifications**

**Partnership Agreement Pertaining to Competitive Integrated Employment**

*Needs of Individuals with ID/DD*

In FY2018, 612 individuals with disabilities (equating to 6% of individuals) accessed the America's Job Centers of California (AJCC) system in Solano County. Of the 433 individuals receiving Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) Title I services through Adult, Dislocated Worker, or Youth programs, 18 individuals had a disability (equating to 4%), none of whom had an Intellectual Disability or Developmental Disability (ID/DD). In order to expand services to individuals with ID/DD, staff need a strong understanding of the needs of job seekers with ID/DD and to be knowledgeable about the programs and resources that can aid in the success of the individual.

The Workforce Development Board (WDB) of Solano County has begun the process of building staff capacity to work with individuals with disabilities through California Workforce Association's (CWA)/Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) professional development opportunities. Staff participated in Windmill Training and will be attending additional CWA-sponsored trainings in the coming year. In addition, through the WDB's Disability Employment Accelerator (DEA) grant from the California Employment Development Department (EDD), staff is receiving training on topics relevant to serving individuals with disabilities. As part of this training, the WDB will partner with DOR and the North Bay Regional Center (NBRC) to identify and develop trainings specific to ID/DD needs. Finally, through the DEA partner meetings and its Integrated Resource Team (IRT), staff will receive technical assistance from the Disability Resource Coordinator and partners working with ID/DD to develop strategies and resources available for employment services. This expansion of joint information sharing will enhance the service delivery system for individuals with disabilities, particularly those with ID/DD.

*Supportive Services and Earn and Learn Strategies to Increase Opportunities for CIE*

Supportive service connections and earn and learn strategies are key to increasing opportunities for CIE. The WDB has connected with the DOR field staff in Solano, as well as the NBRC and community-based organizations serving individuals with disabilities to develop strategies for supportive services and earn and learn strategies. These organizations are also partners on the WDB's DEA grant, designed to create systemic changes to how the WDB and Solano stakeholders provide employment services to individuals with disabilities.

Significant supportive services beyond WDB staff capacity are needed to aid in the success of individuals with disabilities, particularly those with ID/DD. The WDB will leverage services such as disability advocacy, job coaching, transportation assistance, and other supportive services provided by DOR and community-based organizations in the area. To create linkages for supportive services, the WDB created an IRT of disability partners to effectively leverage capabilities across organizations. Aligning individual employment plans across partners is a key element to successfully linking services for individuals with disabilities. Partners will co-enroll participants in programs across organizations as appropriate to best leverage resources.

Individuals with disabilities, especially those with ID/DD often lack basic employment/job search skills and have little to no employment experience. In addition, many individuals with disabilities need guidance on how to effectively advocate for their accommodation needs and other self-advocacy skills, and are not often aware of the resources available and how to access them. Once connected to work, additional lack of awareness of asset and benefit resources, such as Social Security Administration (SSA)

benefits counseling and work incentives, can further impede individuals with disabilities. As such, resource awareness building and connection to supportive services will be a focus of the WDB and its partners, as well as customized supports on work sites to combat workplace barriers.

The WDB's DEA grant is also focused on developing and enhancing earn and learn strategies for individuals with disabilities. Employers often look for experience and essential skills, and often rely heavily on the interview process to select employees. Individuals with disabilities, especially those with ID/DD can be at a disadvantage; earn and learn strategies can help candidates build that experience. Work and learn opportunities also help individuals with disabilities connect directly to employers, often bypassing the interview process that can stigmatize disabilities and downplay the technical and essential skills they bring to the workplace.

The WDB and partners will provide opportunities for work experience. Earn and learn provides great entrance into high-demand industries with career pathways, as well as builds practical hands-on experience. Partners will expand opportunities for individuals with disabilities, including those with ID/DD by building upon existing earn and learn structures and developing new methods to customize options. Partners currently provide a range of earn and learn strategies, but utilize different methodology and approaches. The WDB offers paid work experiences for youth and On-the-Job Training (OJT). The Solano County Office of Education (SCOE) and DOR have significant experience customizing work experience placements with individuals with disabilities and businesses. NBRC offers the Paid Internship Program (PIP) through contractors for ID/DD individuals. The WDB will help expand the reach of these programs, while disability partners will help strengthen customization strategies for individuals with disabilities engaged in earn and learn strategies.

Employers will also be educated on the multiple work and learn opportunities offered through project partners. These agency-supported paid work programs will allow for individuals with disabilities to demonstrate their abilities without risk to an employer/business. Employers will be provided ongoing education on accommodations, modifications, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and tax incentive programs. The WDB and partners will follow up with the business on an ongoing basis to ensure challenges are being addressed early on during the training and to integrate and provide accommodations for individuals with disabilities, especially those with ID/DD as needed.

#### *Employer Engagement Strategies to Increase CIE Opportunities*

In FY2018, the WDB engaged over 400 businesses in Solano County and surrounding areas. During the stakeholder engagement session, it was determined that the WDB can provide significant support to the county's disability partners in the area of employer engagement. Identification of CIE opportunities has been a focal point for the WDB's Business Service Representatives. Connecting a new candidate pool to CIE opportunities will provide value to area businesses, particularly in a time of low unemployment.

During the stakeholder engagement session, one area of opportunity was expanding employer interest and connection to individuals with disabilities that the partners are working with. The WDB understands CIE and employer engagement, while the disability partners understand the employment needs of individuals with disabilities, particularly those with ID/DD. Together, the partners will develop a strategy and process for connecting businesses with individuals with disabilities.

The WDB will work with disability partners, including DOR, NBRC, and community-based organizations to develop a Business Taskforce to increase employer engagement in hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities. Many of the disability partners have staff that engage employers for work and learn and employment opportunities. The Business Taskforce will provide a forum for business-facing staff to

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share leads, best practices, and challenges in engaging businesses. Through this forum, the WDB will connect employment opportunities available through their business contacts with participants supported by the disability partners.

In particular, the WDB will work with Marlyn Karrasch, the Field Manager for DOR in Fairfield. Marlyn serves as the Business Liaison for the DOR Greater East Bay District. Together, DOR and the WDB will connect on outreach to employers and share information on CIE opportunities for individuals with ID/DD to achieve CIE. The WDB and DOR will build upon the WDB's relationships with businesses, and DOR's experience educating businesses on hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities, particularly those with ID/DD.

Solano County employers are interested in expanding their candidate pool, but have concerns about hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities, especially individuals with ID/DD. Stereotypes and stigma of workplace capabilities for individuals with disabilities, particularly those with ID/DD, in addition to unintended obstacles in the recruitment process can be additional barriers to employment. Many businesses simply lack the knowledge and experience in working with individuals with disabilities. Large employers are more likely than smaller employers to proactively recruit individuals with disabilities and are more likely to have disability management programs. Smaller employers typically do not have the bandwidth or knowledge to effectively support hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities, particularly those with ID/DD. This is a common gap in Solano County, where 79% of our businesses have less than 10 employees. The WDB and its disability partners will facilitate training for employers to better understand the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities, particularly those with ID/DD, as well as educating them on their rights and of those of the individual.

The WDB and partners will leverage their work on the DEA grant and focus efforts on business education and awareness building relating to hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities. As such, an education and awareness campaign for the business community will be a key function of our business service staff. In addition, the WDB will leverage its Employer Advisory Council through the DEA grant. The Advisory Council is made up of businesses either working with, or open to working with, individuals with disabilities. This Advisory Council partnership will help business service representatives better promote individuals with disabilities and identify ways to support smaller businesses in hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities.