



Issue 15

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Two Exciting Grant Opportunities to Promote Employment for Youth and Adults with Disabilities through Partnerships and Collaborations

Disability Employment Initiative

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) recently announced the availability of grant funds for its seventh round of funding for the [Disability Employment Initiative \(DEI\)](#) program. DEI is a joint program of DOL's [Employment and Training Administration](#) and the [Office of Disability Employment Policy](#).

DOL plans to fund eight projects with grants ranging from \$1.5 to \$2.5 million each for projects that are designed to increase the participation of youth and adults with disabilities in Federally-funded education and training programs. This funding is available to state workforce agencies. As noted in the [Funding Opportunity Announcement \(FOA\)](#), the program's purpose is to expand the capacity of American Job Centers (AJCs), also known as One-Stop Centers, to improve the employment outcomes of three population focus areas: 1) adults (ages 18 and older) with visible and non-visible disabilities, including those who have acquired disabilities in adulthood; 2) youth (ages 14-24) with visible and non-visible disabilities, including those who have chronic health conditions; and 3) individuals (ages 14 and older) with significant disabilities.

Unique to this funding opportunity, the DEI initiative focuses on increasing the capacity of AJCs and their partners through participation in career pathways systems, strengthening partnerships between the public workforce system and vocational rehabilitation, community colleges and other education, human service, and business partners. This focus on career pathways models and approaches will "further equip individuals with disabilities with the skills, competencies, and credentials necessary to help them obtain in-demand jobs, increase earnings, and advance their careers."

During the past six years, DOL has awarded DEI grants to 43 state workforce agencies in 27 states, all designed to improve education, training, and employment outcomes of youth and adults with disabilities. DEI projects use flexible strategies to increase partnerships and collaboration; train AJC staff and their partners; and increase the physical and programmatic accessibility of their services.

The deadline to apply is August 1, 2016 at 4 p.m. EDT.

Partnerships in Employment Systems Change

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD) in the Administration for Community Living (ACL) announced its intent to fund Partnerships in Employment Systems Change as Projects of National Significance to create employment systems change at the state level to benefit youth and young adults with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Funds will support projects developed by consortia that collaborate to design and implement statewide model demonstration projects that stimulate and advance systems change focused on expanding competitive employment in integrated settings for youth and young adults with I/DD.

The funding announcement highlights AIDD's intent to support projects that "focus on systems change to prioritize employment as the first and preferred option for youth and young adults with I/DD..." The agency goes on to state that "AIDD envisions improving post-school outcomes, including economic self-sufficiency, independent living, and the opportunity to live a self-determined life for such youth and young adults, regardless of the intensity of their needs."

AIDD funded two previous rounds of states, which included Alaska, California, Iowa, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, Tennessee, and Wisconsin. AIDD is planning to fund six additional projects

for \$200,000-\$250,000 a year for five years.

In this third round of funding, AIDD will continue consortia that include State DD Councils, University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Protection and Advocacy systems, State Education Agencies, State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies serving individuals with I/DD, State Developmental Disabilities agencies, and State employment or employment training programs. This [Funding Opportunity Announcement \(FOA\)](#) is designed to enhance collaboration across these systems to promote collaborations that increase competitive employment outcomes for youth and young adults with I/DD, and to encourage states to adopt and implement Employment First in their state.

Proposals are due on July 26, 2016 by 11:59 p.m. EDT.

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WIOA Advisory Committee Holds Eighth Meeting

On April 27 and 28, the [Advisory Committee on Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment for Individuals with Disabilities](#) held its eighth meeting. The meeting, which took place in Washington, D.C., was its eighth meeting since members were appointed in January of 2015.

As mandated by the [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\)](#), the Committee is required to meet at least eight times during its two-year commitment and is charged with the purpose of preparing findings, conclusions and recommendations for the Secretary of Labor on:

- Ways to increase employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities or other individuals with significant disabilities in competitive integrated employment;
- The use of certificate programs carried out under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) for the employment of individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities or other individuals with significant disabilities; and
- Ways to improve oversight of the use of such certificates.

Multiple subcommittees of the Advisory Committee presented recommendations for the final report to be released at the end of September 2016. The Subcommittee on Marketplace Dynamics offered six recommendations for the final report including new efforts to be led by the Department of Transportation to expand availability of accessible transportation with special attention to rural areas; expanded attention by the Department of Labor to provide additional outreach and guidance to Federal contractors to enhance compliance with new Section 503 rules and a priority for Congress to amend and expand financial benefits to employers under the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, the Disabled Access Credit and the Architectural and Transportation Barrier Removal Act.

The Subcommittee on Capacity Building urged the development of state/local standards to adopt national standards of professional competence in providing competitive, integrated

employment services. The Transition to Careers Subcommittee urged consideration by state government to waive any requirements that make it more difficult for states to effectively use and braid funds across service delivery systems to meet individual employment objectives. A similar recommendation was made by the Complexity and Needs Subcommittee to have the Department of Labor lead a collaboration of federal agencies to develop joint guidance on braiding and blending funding streams that improve competitive, integrated employment outcomes. Additional recommendations from all of the Subcommittees are available on the [Advisory Committee web page](#) for this meeting.

Additionally, during the meeting, [testimony](#) was provided by several groups, including: ANCOR, Peckham Inc., The Arc, APSE, TASH, and others. For a complete list, please visit <https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/date/20160427-testimony.htm>.

The final meeting of the Committee will be in-person and will take place July 20-21 in Washington, D.C.

To learn more about these and other recommendations being considered by the Advisory Committee, visit the [Committee's webpage](#).

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Department of Labor Launches New Technical Assistance Website

On April 18, the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (ETA) launched [WorkforceGPS](#) - the next generation, mobile-friendly, and accessible website that gives the public workforce system, education professionals, and business leaders a platform to access technical assistance resources and engage with their peers. The new site is designed to address the new demands of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), including an increased focus on partnership and cross-agency collaboration, and is designed to make the user experience easy and uncomplicated for the community of public workforce system stakeholders.

Registered users, including those who provide services and programs to people with disabilities and/or other barriers to employment, can join Communities of Practice designed for peer-to-peer interaction related to a topic or target population, or Collections that group resources by topic or target population. For example, the [Disability and Employment Community of Practice](#) features notices about upcoming webinars, national online dialogues, and access to disability employment-related websites and resources, such as the Achieving Universal Access and Equal Opportunity - Section 188 Reference Guide.

If you are not yet registered on WorkforceGPS, visit <https://www.workforcegps.org/register> to join.

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Federal Partnership Supports Career Pathways

One of LEAD Center's priorities over the next year focuses on Promoting Inclusive Career Pathways that include youth and adults with disabilities and others who experience barriers to employment.

On April 28, 2016, 13 Federal agency leaders issued a joint "Dear Colleague" letter affirming their commitment "to promote career pathways to assist youth and adults with acquiring marketable skills and industry-recognized credentials through better alignment of education, training and employment, and human and social services among public agencies and with employers." Career pathways, as defined in the letter, offer "an efficient and customer-centered approach to training and education by connecting the necessary adult basic education, occupational training, postsecondary education, career and academic advising, and supportive services for students to prepare for, obtain, and progress in a career."

The letter also served to ensure that education, workforce development, and/or human and social service partners become aware of the Federal partners' expectations for improved collaboration and coordination across programs and funding sources.

As noted in the Dear Colleague Letter, U.S. Secretary of Labor Tom Perez launched a Skills Working Group in November 2014, which includes the White House National Economic Council, the Office of Management and Budget, and the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Justice, Labor, the Social Security Administration, Transportation, and Veterans Affairs.

The Skills Working Group coordinates activities across agencies, in part to ensure that career pathways are available to everyone. This current joint career pathways letter provides a summary of the six key elements in career pathways: to build cross-agency partnerships; identify industry sector and engage employers; design education and training programs; identify funding needs and sources; align policies and programs; and measure systems change and performance.

The April 28th letter also provides links to a wide variety of resources that have been developed by several of the partner agencies, including a Career Pathways Toolkit. Additional information on Federal career pathways initiatives can be found at <https://careerpathways.workforcegps.org/>, <https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/ofa-initiative/103>, <http://cte.ed.gov>, and on the websites of each Federal agency partner. Also, as noted in the lead article of this newsletter on Funding Opportunities, the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) grants, DEI projects are focused on increasing the capacity of American Job Centers (AJCs) and their partners through participation in career pathways systems, strengthening partnerships between the public workforce system and vocational rehabilitation, community colleges and other education, human service, and business partners.

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LEAD Center Webinar on Financial Literacy and the Workforce Development System

In recognition of Financial Capability Month in April, a LEAD Center webinar, *Financial Literacy and the Workforce Development System: Resources and Implementation Strategies*, brought together representatives from the Department of Labor (DOL) Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA), the FDIC (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation), the City of Louisville's Metro Community Services workgroup on Workforce and Financial Empowerment, and the DOL Employment and Training Administration (ETA) and Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), to share financial literacy tools and resources, as well as implementation strategies to integrate financial literacy into workforce development services. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) defines financial literacy and includes requirements to integrate financial literacy as part of youth and adult services. Furthermore, the [White House](#) has encouraged Americans to "recommit to equipping individuals with the knowledge and protections necessary to secure a stable financial future for themselves and their families."

This information-filled webinar provided workforce development professionals, including staff working for and in partnership with American Job Centers (AJCs), with knowledge and a wide array of resources to increase financial literacy, improve employment outcomes, and promote economic advancement for youth and adult job seekers, including job seekers with disabilities.

A recording of the webinar, along with the PowerPoint presentation, resources, and a transcript of the presentations and discussions, are [archived on LEAD Center's website](#).

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LEAD Center Promotes Disability Policy at Multiple National Conferences

LEAD Center staff presented at three conferences this spring, with a focus on disability policy.

Pacific Rim International Conference on Disability and Diversity

The LEAD Center's Assistant Project Director, Elizabeth Jennings, was invited to conduct two workshops at the 2016 [Pacific Rim International Conference](#) (Pac Rim) in Honolulu, Hawaii on April 25-26. Jennings shared important information on improving employment and economic advancement opportunities and services for people with disabilities at sessions focusing on *Pathways to Successful Employment* (**presentation slides: PDF | [Accessible Word](#)**) and *Promoting Employment while Complying with the HCBS Final Rule on Control of Personal Resources* (**presentation slides: PDF | [Accessible Word](#)**).

The Pacific Rim International Conference draws more than 800 participants globally. Pac Rim "encourages and respects voices from diverse perspectives across numerous areas, including: voices from people representing all disability areas; experiences of family members and supporters across all disability and diversity areas; responsiveness to diverse cultural and language differences; evidence of researchers and academics studying diversity and disability;

stories of persons providing powerful lessons; examples of program providers, and; action plans to meet human and social needs in a globalized world.”

Jennings’ sessions provided participants with useful information to promote employment outcomes through partnerships with the workforce system, and strategies and resources to support economic advancement for people with disabilities, including people receiving Medicaid-funded long-term supports and services.

National Association of Workforce Development Professionals Conference

LEAD Center staff presented and exhibited at the conference of the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP) in Orlando, FL, May 24-26. The conference was attended by nearly 1,000 people, including One-Stop Center/American Job Center (AJC) staff, job developers, Youth Build grantees, Community College representatives, Job Corps professionals, business and employer representatives, Workforce Development Board members and staff, career counselors, and more.

Rebecca Salon, LEAD Center Project Director, and Doug Keast, Project Director of National Disability Institute’s Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) Team, presented on *The Contribution of Vocational Rehabilitation to Career Pathways* (**presentation slides: [PDF](#) | [Accessible Word](#)**). The session focused on approaches for including people with disabilities in Career Pathways; the integration of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services and expertise in American Job Center (AJC) operations; ways to leverage VR resources to increase employment outcomes for people with disabilities in AJCs; how State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies, as a Core Job Center Service Provider, can contribute to the engagement of individuals with disabilities in Career Pathways; and tools and strategies demonstrated in national initiatives that enhance inclusive practices in AJCs.

Jamie Robinson, LEAD Center Manager for Financial Empowerment and Workforce, and Danielle Smith, State Equal Opportunity Officer for the Missouri Division of Workforce Development, presented on *Section 188: A Blueprint for Improving Access and Equal Opportunity* (**presentation slides: [PDF](#) | [Accessible Word](#)**). This well-attended interactive session reviewed WIOA from a disability perspective; provided information about the WIOA Section 188 Disability Reference Guide; highlighted touchpoints for serving job seekers with disabilities in the workforce system; reviewed best practices and actions that can be taken by workforce staff and leadership; and provided information about Missouri’s statewide initiative that is using the Section 188 Guide to improve equal opportunity for people with disabilities and others.

Elizabeth Jennings, LEAD Center Assistant Project Director, and Rebecca Salon, LEAD Center Project Director, offered a session on *Integrating Financial Education within Workforce Programs* (**presentation slides: [PDF](#) | [Accessible Word](#)**) to an engaged audience of workforce professionals. This session provided information on currently available curricula, best practices, and community partners to support financial education; discussed just-in-time moments to teach

people about how to manage their money; and highlighted opportunities to integrate strategies into workforce services and to improve collaboration with the financial capability community.

APSE (Association of People Supporting EmploymentFirst) Conference

The LEAD Center participated in the Association of People Supporting EmploymentFirst (APSE) National Conference in Cincinnati, Ohio, June 21-23, providing three presentations on strategies to improve the employment and economic advancement of individuals across the spectrum of disability. In addition, the LEAD Center sponsored an exhibit booth at the conference to provide information and resources designed to enhance integrated employment and promote economic advancement. The conference drew more than 1,000 attendees, including community service providers; employers; state agency employees from vocational rehabilitation, developmental disabilities and behavioral health systems; university faculty and students; researchers; school transition staff; and people with disabilities and their families.

LEAD Center presentations included:

- *The HCBS Final Rule on Control of Personal Resources: Strategies and Tools* - In this session, participants learned about the role of service providers, families, supporters, and self-advocates in strengthening a person's financial capability and how to identify just-in-time moments in the employment process to teach an individual about their money. Participants explored opportunities to integrate financial education and empowerment into service planning and delivery, and improve collaboration with non-disability financial capability partners. (**presentation slides:** [PDF](#) | [Accessible Word](#))
- *Using Guided Group Discovery and Self-Guided Discovery to Partner with the Workforce System* - In this session, LEAD Project Director, Rebecca Salon, and Project Coordinator, Brittany Taylor, introduced participants to the LEAD Center's Guided Group Discovery (GGD) and Self-Guided Discovery (SGD) approaches to promote partnerships and programmatic access to American Job Centers (AJCs) for people with disabilities and others with barriers to employment, as required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Participants learned how discovery, as part of Customized Employment, can serve as an alternative assessment in AJCs, especially when conducted in partnership with job seekers and AJC partners from vocational rehabilitation, developmental disabilities, behavioral health, independent living, etc. (**presentation slides:** [PDF](#) | [Accessible Word](#))
- *Understanding ABLE* - Since the passage of the ABLE Act, there has been a great deal of progress both at the state and federal levels, including the passage of more than 40 state ABLE-related pieces of legislation, the development of proposed regulations, several advanced notices outlining additional guidance, formal direction from the Social Security Administration, and a major amendment to the federal statute. In this session, Public Policy Director, Chris Rodriguez, highlighted the major components of ABLE to prepare and educate individuals with disabilities, their families, and the disability advocacy community about the current status of ABLE, the two ABLE account programs that were launched in Ohio and

Tennessee in June and what to expect in the months to come. (**presentation slides:** [PDF](#) | [Accessible Word](#))

Attendees who participated in the sessions reported that the information they received from LEAD staff in all three sessions was compelling and timely.

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ABLE Account Funds Could Help Individuals with Disabilities Achieve Employment Outcomes

June 2016 marked the launch of the country's first ABLE programs. As a result of the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act, qualified individuals with disabilities can now save funds in a tax advantaged savings account (an ABLE account) for the purposes of offsetting disability-related expenses. Moreover, the funds saved in the account, and dispersed for qualified disability-related expenses, will not be taken into consideration when determining eligibility for publicly-funded benefits such as Social Security and Medicaid.

Qualified disability-related expenses include those related to the beneficiary's disability and that help the beneficiary increase or maintain his or her health, independence, and/or quality of life. Additionally, funds in an ABLE account are to be used to supplement, not supplant, publicly-funded supports.

A qualified disability-related expense could very well include expenses which assist the beneficiary with obtaining and/or maintaining competitive integrated employment. The following are just some examples of employment-related expenses that could likely be paid for with funds contributed to an ABLE account:

- Job coaching or additional job coaching;
- Costs associated with certificates, accreditations, and/or job related trainings;
- Interview prep and resume development;
- Transportation to and from the beneficiary's place of employment; and
- Financial management education/assistance.

For more information related to the ABLE Act and ABLE programs in general, please visit the ABLE National Resource Center at www.ablenrc.org.

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Missouri Workforce Development Leads Equal Opportunity for Customers with Disabilities through Section 188 Training

On May 11, the LEAD Center had the opportunity to present at the [Missouri Association for Workforce Development \(MAWD\) Conference](#) in Lake Ozark, Missouri. MAWD is a state association that supports career and technical training, as well as workforce development. MAWD is made up of individuals within the training and employment community who seek to

enhance partnerships focused on developing a competitive workforce. As a pre-conference session, the LEAD Center's Training and Technical Assistance staff joined more than 30 Equal Opportunity Officers (EOO) from across the state to learn best practices in implementing Section 188, the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions of WIOA. In addition to learning about important disability-specific amendments included for the first time in WIOA, the EOs also learned about best practices in universal access in American Job Centers highlighted in the [Section 188 Disability Reference Guide](#).

In a second session open to all MAWD professionals, the LEAD Center presented again on Section 188, but with emphasis on key touchpoints of universal access for workforce customers with disabilities. Touchpoints serve as critical places along the workforce customer flow in which individuals with disabilities may or may not gain access to key services or resources. Some examples of touchpoints include the inclusion of people with disabilities on a local/state Workforce Investment Board (WIB), effective marketing and outreach to the disability community, an interactive process for job centers to provide reasonable accommodations, and coordinated services and funding with other partners to meet shared employment needs of job seekers with disabilities.

The MAWD conference sessions on Section 188 served as a precursor to a three-part webinar series for all statewide workforce development leadership, as well as another three-part webinar series geared to all workforce staff. The series kicked off in May and will continue through the summer. LEAD will continue to collaborate with the Missouri State EO Officer to provide technical assistance on the Section 188 trainings, while also helping to solicit feedback from workforce professionals on the overall impact of the training and strategies offered to ensure equal opportunity to customers with disabilities.

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LEAD PEOPLE Julie Squire, Policy Director, National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA)



Julie Squire is a Policy Director for the [National Association of State Workforce Agencies](#) (NASWA). In this position, she serves as the staff director for the Unemployment

Insurance Committee and the Equal Opportunity Committee. Her program areas include equal opportunity, unemployment insurance, and adult education. The NASWA Equal Opportunity Committee is focused on sharing best practices and helping one another improve the workforce system, which includes assisting people with disabilities and advancing implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Prior to joining NASWA, Squire worked for the State of Maryland for over 15 years. In her last position, she served as the Assistant Secretary with the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning. “That is one of the reasons I love working for NASWA,” said Squire. “I’m continuing to help states work through important policy areas and workforce development challenges.”

Squire holds a law degree from The Ohio State University. She received her bachelor’s degree from Goucher College, where she studied political science and public policy. In her free time, Squire is an avid squash player.

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LEAD PARTNERS National Association of State Workforce Agencies

Originally founded during the Great Depression, the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) brings together state administrators of the publicly-funded workforce system. The workforce system includes the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), employment services, training programs, unemployment insurance, employment statistics, and labor market and workforce information.

Today, much of NASWA’s mission remains the same from the 1930s. The organization works to enhance the state workforce agencies’ ability to accomplish their goals, statutory roles and responsibilities. NASWA also delivers policy expertise on workforce development, including unemployment insurance and other transitional support, as the voice of state workforce agencies.

There are currently eight established [NASWA committees](#) that allow members to share their knowledge on the following issues affecting state workforce agencies: Administration and Finance; Employment and Training; Equal Opportunity; Labor Market Information; Technology; Unemployment Insurance; Unemployment Insurance Interstate Benefits; and Veterans Affairs. Additionally, NASWA’s [WIOA Resource Center](#) gives state agencies and partners a place to discuss the challenges and successes of implementing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

For more information, [visit the NASWA website](#).

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WIOA Services and Performance Begins July 1st

Breaking News: Final Rules were issued for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act on June 30, 2016. For more information, please visit <https://www.doleta.gov/WIOA/>. LEAD Center will review the Final Rules and provide analysis in upcoming newsletters.

On July 22, 2014, President Obama signed into law the [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#) (WIOA). WIOA significantly advances the strategic alignment of workforce development programs, including Adult Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs; Wagner-Peyser Employment Service; Adult Education and Family Literacy Programs; and Vocational Rehabilitation. With a focus on career pathways, the goal of WIOA is more than employment outcomes. The intent of the workforce development system is to equip individuals with and without disabilities with the skills, competencies, and stackable credentials needed to assist them to meet labor market demand, increase earnings, and advance their careers and economic security. Since 2014, both the Departments of Education and Labor have issued proposed rules for public comment, provided guidance to states to develop Unified and Combined State Plans, and jointly developed aligned definitions of the primary indicators of performance.

On July 1, 2016, the [Unified and Combined State Plans](#) and the performance accountability provisions of WIOA become effective. States have been busy making modifications to their data systems to fully implement the data elements and definitions to comply with the new WIOA performance requirements. On June 29, 2016, the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), issued [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) WIOA NO. 26-15](#) to help states understand the expected levels of performance for each of six primary indicators of performance regarding achievement of unsubsidized employment during the second and fourth quarters after exit by program participants, median earnings levels, achievement of postsecondary credentials, as well as participation levels in education and training programs that are achieving measurable skill gains toward a credential or employment, and effectiveness of core programs in serving employers.

The new TEGL provides guidance to states regarding expected levels of performance and how to adjust levels of performance to be negotiated with ETA and Education for the first two years to take into account actual economic conditions in a state and the characteristics of participants served, including the number of individuals with disabilities and others with multiple barriers to employment. In addition to the state negotiated levels of performance, states must work with local workforce development areas to establish performance goals for WIOA Title I Programs.

WIOA puts an emphasis on serving a significant population of people with multiple barriers to employment including, within this definition, individuals with disabilities. For the first time, at a local level, data to be collected will identify program participants with disabilities, the services being received, and skills development and certifications, as well as employment outcomes.

States will receive the final negotiated levels of performance from ETA no later than August 15,

2016.

WIOA requires effective and meaningful participation of job seekers with disabilities in all workforce development services and supports. Local and state workforce development systems will be reporting quarterly on their performance regarding individuals with disabilities.

Learn more about WIOA services! Job seekers with disabilities and the staff who provide them with support should visit [American Job Centers in their community](#) to learn more about available training and career services to match local demand for skilled workers.

The LEAD Center will provide analyses of WIOA performance across the core indicators in future newsletters.

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Making Informed Financial Choices with the Louisville LADDER Disability and Employment Workbook

The [Louisville Alliance for Development through Diversity, Empowerment, and Resources](#) (LADDER) is the new name of the Louisville Workforce Development and Financial Empowerment Integration workgroup, led by Louisville Metro community services and Bank On Louisville, with funding from the LEAD Center. LADDER remains a collaborative of community based organizations, workforce services, and financial institutions, designed to identify opportunities for universally designed services and supports that advance financial capability related to employment goals and to improve positive financial behavior for individuals with disabilities, particularly those who use the public workforce system. With a mission to "*create a community-wide culture of financial inclusiveness and accessibility that serves the diverse Louisville metro population, LADDER offers a range of financial capability resources for both service providers and the individuals they serve.*"

Recently, LADDER worked with state and local Community Work Incentive Coordinators, with support from LEAD Center staff, to finalize the [Disability and Employment Workbook](#). The workbook is a new tool to equip individuals with disabilities who receive Social Security disability benefits with the information necessary to make informed decisions about the impact of earnings and savings on their benefits. Many individuals with disabilities who receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) believe that earnings and savings will cause a loss of cash benefits and critically needed Medicare and/or Medicaid. Social Security provides both work incentives and asset exclusions that allow individuals to earn and save money at levels that vary based on multiple factors such as the type of disability one receives and the state of residence. The [Disability and Employment Workbook](#) provides the critical information Louisville residents with disabilities need to set employment and savings goals based on accurate information and to make informed choices to improve their economic advancement.

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Important New Resources

- Policy Update: Employment, Health Care and Disability: March 2016
- LEADing to Employment Information Brief: Funding for Assistive Technology - Transitioning from Secondary School to VR and Work
- Promoting Employment and Economic Advancement: A Toolkit for CILs and AJCs
- Policy Update: Employment, Health Care and Disability: April 2016
- Bringing Employment First to Scale: Achieving Best Practice in Employment Supports: Defining Measures of Effectiveness
- Pre-Employment Transition Services FAQs
- Policy Update: Employment, Health Care and Disability: May 2016

National Autism Indicators Report: Vocational Rehabilitation

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