

Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP)

PROVIDER TRANSFORMATION MANUAL

Module 2: Strategic Planning

Pilot Version

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# Introduction

This manual has been created to capture learning from, and support the continued success of, the Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP), an initiative of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP).[1](#_bookmark2) The EFSLMP is a cross-disability, cross-systems change initiative providing a platform for multi-disciplinary state teams to focus on implementing ***Employment First***[***2***](#_bookmark3)with fidelity through the alignment of policies, coordination of resources, and updating of service delivery models to facilitate increased integrated employment options for people with the most significant disabilities.

ODEP recognizes ***Employment First*** as a national movement providing a framework for systems change that is centered on the premise that all citizens, including individuals with complex disabilities, are capable of full participation in integrated employment and community life. ODEP defines ***Employment First*** as the expectation that public systems align policies, practices, and reimbursement structures to foster competitive integrated employment as the priority option in publicly-financed day and employment services for youth and adults with significant disabilities.

ODEP recognizes that the achievement of ***Employment First*** requires transformation of both public systems and service providers. To guide this two-pronged approach to Systems Change, ODEP has adopted the National Baldrige Model’s Criteria for Performance Excellence [see Exhibit 1] which includes seven key elements: Leadership; Strategic Planning; Customer Focus; Workforce Focus; Operations Focus; Results; and Ongoing Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge.

Exhibit 1. National Baldrige Model’s Criteria for Performance Excellence

Strategic

Planning

Workforce

Focus

Leadership

Results

Customer

Focus

Operations

Focus

Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management

Source: <http://www.nist.gov/baldrige>

To facilitate provider transformation using the Baldrige approach, ODEP has developed a set of *Criteria for Performance Excellence in Employment First Provider Transformation* [see Exhibit 2]. This provider transformation manual builds on the criteria that have been developed, offering significant, detailed information, advice and examples based on best practices for provider transformation developed through the

1 This edition will be used as a pilot model. Our goal is to receive feedback over the course of the EFSLMP Community of Practice (CoP) webinar series throughout the rest of the year regarding the usefulness and applicability of the manual.

2 <https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/EmploymentFirst.htm>

EFSLMP and derived from the experience and expertise of EFSLMP subject matter experts working on transformation with providers around the country.

Exhibit 2. Criteria in Performance Excellence in Employment First – Provider Transformation[3](#_bookmark5)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Leadership | * Promote ongoing professional development and mentoring of leaders within provider networks to cultivate a cadre of strong leadership capable and committed to the development of competitive, integrated employment outcomes and socioeconomic advancement for people with disabilities.
* Build in incentives for supporting, retaining, and rewarding “early adopters” of effective practices among staff.
 |
| Strategic Planning | * Infuse & embed the State’s *Employment First* vision, goals, guiding principles, & conceptual framework within the strategic planning processes, consistent with similar efforts undertaken across relevant State government agencies.
* Develop, disseminate, and make readily available the provision of effective practices that lead to competitive, integrated employment for individuals with disabilities, as well as benefits planning, financial capability, and economic advancement strategies for all clients.
* Develop operational agreements across various state publicly-financed systems and provider networks resulting in the alignment of policy, practice, and funding strategies to allow for a consistent focus on performance-based results.
 |
| Customer Focus | * Survey customers & stakeholders regularly to understand level of satisfaction & determine the areas of improvement needed.
* Review service coordination processes to determine whether key steps in the process could be strengthened in terms of being more focused on person-centered, individual strategies, and experiential informed choice.
* Expand and improve upon existing assessment processes to ensure a rich collection of data on the individual’s strengths, gifts, and preferences that can be used to leverage multiple options.
 |
| Workforce Focus: | * Realign organizational structure and standard operating procedures (SOPs) to allow the time, flexibility, and incentives required to develop professional staff in key areas critical to successful transformation.
* Ensure ongoing professional development, mentoring, coaching, and staff support promoting continued strengthening of skill sets critical for expanded business models.
* Optimize service time and ratio deployment for provision of long-term supports, crisis interventions, and new job starts within provider network.
* Consider incentives for staff to facilitate clear measurable performance outcomes for competitive, integrated employment and to effectively address individual and cultural resistance to change.
 |
| Operations Focus | * Diversify funding streams to optimize available support for competitive, integrated employment services.
* Expand the provision of services to include a stronger focus on the dissemination of effective practices that result in competitive, integrated employment outcomes.
* Promote the modernization of operational processes including IT//electronic record-keeping and decentralized staffing models to successfully meet growing demand for the provision of competitive, integrated employment strategies.
* Consider reconfiguration of service management elements within provider organizations (including, but not limited to, communication, data collection, logistics, technology, transportation, billing systems, supervision, and customer satisfaction) and infusion of “lean management” techniques.
 |
| Results | * Grow percentage of competitive, integrated employment placements over baseline, and capture length of time from start of service to placement.
* Coordinate employment efforts with other long-term supports (housing, transportation, natural supports) and benefits planning/work incentives.
* Survey customers & stakeholders regularly to understand level of satisfaction & determine the areas of improvement needed.
* Track staff development milestones, including training/TA received, credentials/certification completed, etc.
* Track impact of applying effective practices to internal daily operations and service approaches.
* Demonstrate cost-effectiveness of competitive, integrated employment supports through maximization of natural workplace supports, assistive technology, and job customization.
* Align policies, operational procedures, and funding to reflect adoption of effective practices and competitive, integrated employment service delivery.
 |
| Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management | * Create shared performance-based outcomes & corresponding metrics across various divisions of the organization to incentivize effective coordination of human & technical resources & collective action around pursuance of organizational strategic goals.
* Establish bench-marks from baseline data and collect high-impact, relevant data to help inform continued organizational restructuring, internal policy changes, operational practice updates, and development strategies.
* Translate high-impact knowledge through continued commitment to training, technical assistance, professional development and communities of practice.
 |

3 [http://www.leadcenter.org/system/files/resource/downloadable\_version/Employment\_First\_Technical\_Brief 3\_0.pdf](http://www.leadcenter.org/system/files/resource/downloadable_version/Employment_First_Technical_Brief__3_0.pdf)

The reader will note that the manual has been organized with individual modules that each focus on one element of the Baldrige model. In addition, modules on two other critical topics for success – bringing provider transformation to scale and being a mentor to other providers – are also included to round out this comprehensive manual. Readers can opt to use the manual as a comprehensive resource or to pull-out specific modules as they are needed during the process of transformation.

## More on the EFSLMP Approach to Provider Transformation

The EFSLMP has developed a unique approach to supporting provider transformation in a comprehensive way. The approach brings together the collective experiences of over thirty Subject Matter Experts from around the country, all of whom are either disability employment service providers themselves – who have shepherded

their organizations through a process of transformation - or integrated employment and community supports experts who have provided support, technical assistance and training to disability employment and day service providers from around the country who have been actively engaged in organizational transformation. ODEP’s EFSLMP Subject Matter Experts are both, by definition and by design, an eclectic group of people with tremendous breadth of experiences and knowledge. This is particularly valuable in supporting provider transformation on a national scale because:

**Transformation:**

It takes the desire to change, the determination to start, and the dedication to continue.

* Ben Timmis

**Transformation:**

It isn’t about improving, it’s about re- thinking.

* Malcolm Gladwell
	+ - No two providers’ transformation process and circumstances are the same, even if providers may operate in the same state or locality;
		- The nature of provider transformation has changed over time, both within particular states and nationally;
		- Core best practices for successful provider transformation – practices that are considered “tried and true” among those who make this topic their life’s work – can be implemented in many subtly different ways depending on a particular provider’s circumstances and challenges;
		- Effective mentoring relationships cannot be forced, and rely most heavily on “smart” matching of leaders and organizations who will “gel” in truly impactful ways;
		- Communities of practice that bring together Subject Matter Experts and diverse providers on the path of organizational transformation can enhance learning, information exchange, mutual support structures and translation of knowledge.

The EFSLMP Provider Transformation Initiative brings together many experts with a deep historical perspective on provider transformation. This has greatly enhanced the project’s ability to build on and further expand the historical knowledge base for provider transformation. In addition, one of the most important contributions of the EFSLMP Provider Transformation initiative has been to modernize, and recast as necessary, long-standing best practices into strategies that are geared toward the ***current realities- both challenges and opportunities*** facing traditional employment and day service providers across the country.

## The Case for Organizational Transformation: Why Do It and Why Now?

This manual’s publication date is 2017—twenty-seven years after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. A quarter of a century ago, a very small number of community rehabilitation providers across the country, including some facility-based day service providers were engaged in organizational transformation. At the same time, federal supported employment capacity building grants were beginning to make a positive impact in many states, demonstrating

… in the past five years (2011-2016), an evolution in thinking has taken place across the field of disabilities that has set the stage for competitive integrated employment and integrated community supports to become the primary service models for transition-age youth and working-age adults with disabilities in every state.

the valuable outcomes that supported employment could bring to individuals with significant disabilities. Yet overall, there was not any sense that a major evolution in employment and daytime support services for people with disabilities was just around the corner.

And while it’s true that the intervening years leading up to 2011 did not bring to scale, to the extent many had anticipated, the systemic momentum and best practices built in the early years of supported employment, it is hard for anyone to deny that in the past five years (2011-2016), an evolution in thinking has taken place across the field of disabilities that has

set the stage for competitive integrated employment and integrated community supports to become the primary service models for transition-age youth and working-age adults with disabilities in every state. This broad-based evolution of thinking has been ushered in through a variety of different, but coinciding federal policy initiatives, state-level reforms, legal actions, and media coverage that collectively have begun to reshape public opinion. Among the most influential developments of the past five years are the following:

* + - The June 2011 Statement of the ***Department of Justice*** on Enforcement of the Integration Mandate of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and *Olmstead v. L.C.* This Statement[4](#_bookmark8) established for the first time, an expectation that compliance with the ADA and *Olmstead* required states to have an effective working plan to address “individuals spending their days in sheltered workshops or segregated day programs” and which “must have demonstrated success in actually moving individuals to integrated settings in accordance with the plan.” Most of the *Olmstead* lawsuits and settlement agreements that came after this Statement have had a strong focus (and in the cases of Oregon and Rhode Island, an exclusive focus) on transitioning publicly funded state systems away from segregated employment and day services to individualized supported employment and integrated community supports.[5](#_bookmark9)

4 See [https://www.ada.gov/olmstead/q&a\_olmstead.htm](https://www.ada.gov/olmstead/q%26a_olmstead.htm)

5 See U.S. Department of Justice settlement agreements with the states of Georgia, Delaware, North Carolina, and Virginia, as well as the settlement agreement with the state of Oregon and the consent decree with the state of Rhode Island. See <https://www.ada.gov/olmstead/>for more information.

* + - The September 2011 Informational Bulletin[6](#_bookmark10) released by the ***Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)*** which provided strong guidance regarding employment and employment-related services in Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Waivers.[7](#_bookmark11) This guidance underscores CMS’s commitment to the importance of competitive integrated employment and self-employment opportunities for waiver participants. The guidance is now part of the Technical Guide states must follow in creating, renewing or amending HCBS Waivers, and it contains a strong expectation from CMS that states will use HCBS Waivers to increase competitive integrated employment opportunities and meaningful community integration for HCBS Waiver participants with disabilities.
		- The August 2012 report by the ***National Council on Disability***, a federal agency, calling for a phase out of sub-minimum wage.[8](#_bookmark12) This report both preceded and followed local, state and national media coverage of the use of sub-minimum wage in the employment of people with disabilities. Meanwhile, legislation to phase out and end the use of Section 14(c) special minimum wage has been introduced multiple times in ***Congress***, first in October of 2011, then in February of 2013 and most recently, in January of 2015. The current House bill (HR 188) has 69 co-sponsors from both sides of the aisle, as of June, 2016, and the Senate companion (S. 2001) is bipartisan as well. Additionally, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), passed in July of 2014, established an ***Advisory Committee to the U.S. Department of Labor*** charged in part with making recommendations regarding the future of Section 14(c). WIOA also introduced restrictions on the ability of employers to pay youth a sub-minimum wage and new requirements for state vocational rehabilitation agencies to conduct annual outreach to all state residents with disabilities being paid sub-minimum wage to offer services that would allow these individuals to obtain competitive integrated employment paying at least minimum wage. And most recently, in March of 2016, the ***AbilityOne Commission*** issued a Declaration in support of minimum wage for all people who are blind or have significant disabilities.[9](#_bookmark13)
		- The September 2013 promulgation of a new rule, by the ***U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs***, governing the implementation of Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act which prohibits federal contractors and subcontractors from discriminating in employment against individuals with disabilities and requires these employers to take affirmative action to recruit, hire, promote, and retain individuals with disabilities. The rule strengthens the affirmative action provisions of the regulations, requiring increased efforts by contractors to recruit and hire people with disabilities, and improve job opportunities for individuals with disabilities.
		- The February 2014 Executive Order 13658, signed by ***President Barack Obama***, “Establishing a Minimum Wage for Contractors,” to raise the minimum wage to $10.10 for all workers on Federal construction and service contracts, including all workers with disabilities whether covered under the Section 14(c) special minimum wage certificate program or not.

6 See <https://downloads.cms.gov/cmsgov/archived-downloads/CMCSBulletins/downloads/CIB-9-16-11.pdf>

7 Medicaid HCBS Waivers first became available in 1983 when Congress added section 1915(c) to the Social Security Act, giving States the option to receive a waiver of Medicaid rules governing institutional care. Medicaid HCBS Waivers allow a state to offer services and supports to people with disabilities, otherwise qualified for institutional care, in the community.

8 <https://www.ncd.gov/publications/2012/August232012>

9 <http://www.abilityone.gov/commission/documents/US%20AbilityOne%20Commission%20Declaration%2018March2016%20Final.pdf>

* + - The March 2014 promulgation of the Medicaid Home and Community-Based Settings Rule by the ***Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)*** which requires all HCBS settings eligible for Medicaid funding to provide opportunities for individuals to pursue employment, work in competitive integrated settings, and engage in community life. The rule further requires all HCBS settings eligible for Medicaid funding to be integrated in, and support full access to, the greater community. And finally, the rule establishes a requirement that states must offer HCBS participants an opportunity to receive HCBS services in non-disability-specific settings, thus requiring states to develop and offer integrated prevocational and day habilitation service models if the state had only facility-based prevocational and day habilitation service options prior to the implementation of the rule.[10](#_bookmark14)
		- The July 2014 passage into law of the ***Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)***, raising expectations across state workforce and vocational rehabilitation systems that competitive integrated employment be the prioritized investment and outcome for transition-age youth and adults with disabilities. WIOA ushered in the expectation that state workforce system programs achieve true programmatic accessibility for individuals with disabilities, while also introducing new requirements for state vocational rehabilitation agencies to provide pre-employment transition services to youth with disabilities enrolled in secondary education.
		- The May 2016 promulgation of new Medicaid Managed Care Rules by the ***Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)*** which requires states and managed care organizations to ensure access to, and supports for, competitive integrated employment in Medicaid Managed Long-Term Services and Supports programs that serve persons with disabilities. Prior to the issuance of these rules, numerous states moving to Medicaid Managed Care had built in expectations for increasing competitive integrated employment outcomes for enrollees with

… a number of federally funded grant and technical assistance initiatives include a focus on supporting provider transformation, extending mentoring, training, technical assistance and other key support strategies to a growing number of disability service providers across the country that are seeking such supports to evolve their organization’s services to align with changing expectations and opportunities.

disabilities.

Throughout this time, the country has also seen an array of federally funded grant and technical assistance initiatives aimed at increasing competitive integrated employment opportunities for transition-age youth and adults with disabilities, including an emphasis on facilitating systems change and implementing policies consistent with ***Employment First***. In addition to EFSLMP, a number of other federally funded grant and technical assistance initiatives include a focus on supporting provider transformation by extending mentoring,

training, technical assistance and other key support strategies to a growing number of disability service providers across the country that are seeking such supports to evolve their organization’s services to align with changing expectations and opportunities.

10 https:[//w](http://www.cms.gov/Newsroom/MediaReleaseDatabase/Fact-sheets/2014-Fact-sheets-items/2014-01-10-2.html)ww[.cms.gov/Newsroom/MediaReleaseDatabase/Fact-sheets/2014-Fact-sheets-items/2014-01-10-2.html](http://www.cms.gov/Newsroom/MediaReleaseDatabase/Fact-sheets/2014-Fact-sheets-items/2014-01-10-2.html)

At the same time, our nation’s economy is beginning to recover from one of the most serious and long- standing recessions in history. Coupled with this is the stark reality that our workforce is fundamentally changing. With baby boomers now retiring in record

Yet at the end of the day, what appears to be moving more and more disability service provider organizations to embrace sustained organizational transformation is the recognition of the benefits and possibilities that transformation brings to the people with disabilities each of these organizations serves.

numbers, most every industry and economic sector is projecting major workforce shortages in the decades to come. And there is a recognition that American workers are changing as well, with the millennials ushering in expectations for a better work-life balance and greater workplace flexibility. As employers of all kinds respond to these trends, there is a groundswell of interest in non-traditional labor pools and groups that are untapped and/or underrepresented in the current labor

market, with individuals with disabilities being a key part of these groups. Further, there is growing interest in

progressive and innovative approaches to human resource (talent) management, including Customized Employment[11](#_bookmark15) and the concept of a Teachable Fit[12](#_bookmark16) to bridge the divide between employers and the new face of America’s modern workforce. These approaches not only make room for workers with disabilities but endorse fundamental strategies that pave the way for increased hiring of workers with all kinds of disabilities into competitive integrated employment situations.

For several decades, we have seen the emergence of a research and evidence base for competitive integrated employment services, thus enabling disability service providers to fill their toolboxes with a variety of innovative and “proven to work” strategies for facilitating competitive integrated employment outcomes for individuals with various types of significant disabilities. In the last decade, research addressing the connection between competitive integrated employment and positive health and mental health outcomes has increased, as has research demonstrating the cost-effectiveness of public investments in supported employment.

As federal and state funders of disability services increase emphasis on integrated service provision and competitive integrated employment services in particular, providers of more traditional employment and day services are no doubt feeling the pressure to participate in this evolution and bring their organizations and practices into full alignment with the many developments discussed above that have come about in rapid succession in recent years. Yet at the end of the day, what appears to be moving more and more traditional employment and day service provider organizations to embrace sustained organizational transformation is the recognition of the benefits and possibilities that transformation brings to the people with disabilities each of these organizations serves. What’s more, organizations embracing transformation are also finding that staff at all levels of the organization are similarly positively affected, finding new energy, passion and satisfaction in doing new work that is changing their roles and their impact on the people with disabilities they support and

11 [https://www.accenture.com/t20150824T010002 w /us-en/\_acnmedia/Accenture/Conversion-](https://www.accenture.com/t20150824T010002__w__/us-en/_acnmedia/Accenture/Conversion-Assets/DotCom/Documents/Global/PDF/Strategy_7/Accenture-Trends-Reshaping-HR-Workforce-One.pdf) [Assets/DotCom/Documents/Global/PDF/Strategy\_7/Accenture-Trends-Reshaping-HR-Workforce-One.pdf](https://www.accenture.com/t20150824T010002__w__/us-en/_acnmedia/Accenture/Conversion-Assets/DotCom/Documents/Global/PDF/Strategy_7/Accenture-Trends-Reshaping-HR-Workforce-One.pdf) and <https://www.dol.gov/odep/documents/vignette_v3_blue_508_final.pdf> For more information on Customized Employment, also see: <https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/CustomizedEmployment.htm>and

<http://www.leadcenter.org/customized-employment>

12 <https://www.manpowergroup.com.au/documents/White-Papers/2010_Teachable-Fit-Framework.pdf>

their communities. As one thirty five-year veteran manager of employment services from a community rehabilitation provider in Wisconsin put it:

“When you have staff achieve an employment goal with someone, and you see the joy that they experience with that individual…and you have someone come into your office and say ‘Yes! I’m a working man now. I’m going to be a working man now!’ it really brings home to you why you are putting all of this effort into this.”[13](#_bookmark17)

And finally, it seems clear that organizations engaged in transformation are recognizing the positive benefits of this work on their reputation and standing in the wider community. They are finding support is increasing from the local business community and their traditional community supporters. They are also finding significantly increased support from their funding sources that are equally invested in their success. And they are finding that peer organizations, both from within the state and from other states, are now looking to them for advice, mentoring and technical assistance.

If these outcomes are the kinds of outcomes that resonate with you and your organization, then transformation is the right next step. This manual brings together in one place, the best strategies, tips, lessons learned and perspectives on provider transformation to help you and your organization get started, or if you have already started, to help you and your organization continue your efforts and ultimately achieve the best possible success with transformation.

13 To view a video on organizational transformation efforts in Wisconsin and the perspective of this and other community rehabilitation provider directors and managers, see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xd3qgUwLHbw>

**Module 2:**

**Strategic Planning**

Key Terms

*Goals Action Steps*

*Past and Present Status Resource Needs*

*Future Vision Strategic Path*

*SWOT Strategy as Simple Rules*

Resources and References for Module 2 - Strategic Planning

|  |
| --- |
| References |
| Step 5: From Strategic Planning to Implementation |
| World Cafe (p. 376: World Café Process | [www.theworldcafe.com](http://www.theworldcafe.com/) |
| Questions that your team may want to consider (p. 37): Department of Labor Internship Rules | <https://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.pdf> |
| Questions that your team may want to consider (p. 37): Department of Labor Volunteer Rules | <http://webapps.dol.gov/elaws/whd/flsa/docs/volunteers.asp> |
| Resources |
| The Association For Strategic Planning’s Website | <http://www.strategyassociation.org/> |
| Creative strategy generation: Using passionand creativity to compose business strategies that inspire action and growth | Caporale, Bob. 2015. NY: McGraw Hill. |
| The LEAD Center’s Website | <http://www.leadcenter.org/customized-employment> |
| Breaking out of the box: A descriptive account of community rehabilitation providers engaged in transformational change | Petty, D., Brickey, J., Verstegan, D., & Rutherford, K. UT-TIE Organizational Change Mentoring Project. University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee. |
| National Call for Organizational Change From Sheltered to Integrated Employment. | Rogan, P. & Rinne, S. 2011. Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 49 (4), 248-260. |

**Module 2: Strategic Planning**

Simply put, strategic planning offers a process for organizations to develop, document, and communicate their goals, articulate action steps to achieve desired outcomes, and delineate methods for assessing progress and adjusting future directions. There are many frameworks that can be used for strategic planning, and most offer a similar process. The Association for Strategic Planning (ASP) is a good resource for information. Common steps are depicted below in Exhibit 3 (Caporale, Creative Strategy Framework).

Exhibit 3. Common Steps for Strategic Planning

INPUTS: PAST

INPUTS: PRESENT

OUTPUTS: FUTURE VISION

Vision Target Customers Goals & Objectives

Capabilities Customers Competition Direction of Field

History Influences Performance Stakeholder Experiences

|  |
| --- |
| OUTPUTS: STRATEGIC PATH |
| Strategies | Execution | Resources | Evaluation |

## Step 1: Assess and Analyze the Organization’s Past and Present Status

As noted in Module 1, a thorough organizational assessment provides baseline data and becomes the foundation of transformational change. The process typically involves gathering input from stakeholders who are both internal and external to the organization via individual interviews, surveys, and focus groups in order to form a composite understanding of their views and understandings.

This assessment information should be analyzed and used to inform the strategic planning process. The analysis should shed light on common themes and areas of agreement or disagreement, as well as unique perspectives. Such information should be gathered periodically as a way to track progress toward stated goals and objectives.

## Step 2: Review Values, Vision, and Mission Statements

Module 1 provided information about articulating the organization’s values, vision, and mission as an important component of transformation. As part of the strategic planning process, these statements should be reviewed to ensure they reflect the new direction and are aligned well.

## Step 3: Analyze Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)

Some organizations find it helpful to conduct a SWOT analysis whereby they identify internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as its external opportunities and threats. Focus questions for each area include:

* + - Strengths: What does the organization do better than anyone else? What do other stakeholders see as your strengths?
		- Weaknesses: What could be improved? What do stakeholders see as weaknesses?
		- Opportunities: What opportunities can be developed by building upon strengths and addressing weaknesses? What trends are occurring that provide opportunities?
		- Threats: What obstacles do you face? What are others doing better? What internal and/or external factors are/will impact the organization?

## Step 4: Develop a Strategic Plan

After the vision and mission statements are reviewed, the assessment information is analyzed, and a SWOT analysis is conducted, the gap between the desired outcomes and the present status should be quite clear. This dichotomy provides the bookends for where your organization is now and where you want to be, and creates a healthy tension that can propel positive change.

Strategic Plans are created to identify strategies to enable the organization to achieve its goals and desired outcomes. Key questions include:

* + - What are our priority organizational goals?
		- How do we achieve our goals? What are the operational action steps?
		- Who will be involved?
		- When will we reach designated milestones and what will be the evidence or indicators?
		- What are the new staff roles that are needed and how will staff be recruited and/or redeployed and prepared for these roles?
		- What barriers must be addressed?
		- What resources are required?
		- What data will we collect? How will we evaluate our performance?

Moving from facility-based to integrated, community-based services means changing almost all major aspects of the organization: the services that are provided, staffing patterns and staff roles, relationships with external organizations, and more. This may feel overwhelming. Module 3, Making it Happen (Operations Focus), provides tips and strategies about how to get started. Don’t worry - it’s good to start small and do it right the first time. Strategic planning typically addresses the following priority issues:

* + - Realign the budget to support integrated, community-based services and plan for funding diversification.
		- Reallocate resources.
		- Revise policies and procedures to support integrated employment and individualized community supports.
		- Redesign staffing, job descriptions, wages, recruitment, training, and support structures.
		- Reshape service delivery processes to focus on integrated employment and full lives in the community.
		- Revamp the data collection and evaluation system.
		- Communicate with internal and external stakeholders.
		- Redefine the organization’s marketing plan and image in the community.

Most organizations target a one to three-year time period for their strategic plan. There are too many variables and moving parts to plan much farther ahead. Thus, the strategic plan must be revisited and revised over time. It is important to expeditiously move to action steps, rather than continue to plan. Strategic plans set in motion a think-plan-act process of continuous quality improvement.

## Step 5: From Strategic Planning to Implementation

### Identifying Resource Needs in Advance

Your strategic plan will pinpoint in broad strokes the resources you will need to launch your Employment First efforts. As you begin to implement that plan, you will want to step back and take a thoughtful look in more detail at what needs to be in place to implement your plans successfully.

This checklist might be helpful:

* + - Do you have funding for a pilot?
		- If the pilot is successful do you have a long-term funding strategy?
		- Do you have funding for job coaching and ongoing supports?
		- Do you have sufficient staff and the right staff?
		- What resources do you need to invest in order to train and mentor your team?
		- Do staff understand your transformation goals and action plan?
		- Do you have access to benefits counseling for individuals and their families?
		- What kind/amount of marketing materials/resources do you need to get started?
		- What kind of legal advice/insurance coverage will you need for community based work?
		- Are there viable modes of transportation (e.g., accessible, affordable, and efficient) that individuals can use to get to work and other meaningful activities in the community?

An example of the first year of a Strategic Plan is provided below in Exhibit 4.

Exhibit 4. An Example of a First Year Strategic Plan for Organizational Transformation

Long-term Goal: Shift our services to competitive integrated employment to meet the individual needs of people with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities.

Short-term Goal: Within one year, support 12-15 individuals from the workshop to obtain individualized and integrated jobs at minimum wage or higher that match their unique strengths, interests, and needs.

Rationale: Individuals with disabilities are unemployed and underemployed at extraordinarily high rates, yet the majority need to work, want to work, and can work. Employers have benefitted from hiring individuals from this untapped labor pool. Cost-benefit data comparing sheltered workshops to competitive integrated employment outcomes show a clear cost-benefit advantage for people with disabilities who work in real jobs for real wages, as well as for employers and taxpayers. Furthermore, over the past five years there has been a dynamic shift in the philosophy of the federal government towards sheltered workshops. Litigation in other states has resulted in rulings by the U.S. Department of Justice that have necessitated the closing of sheltered workshops based on the segregated nature of the work environment, and the use of subminimum wage certificates to pay people below minimum wage for piece rates.

We are committed to providing high quality employment opportunities in partnership with people with disabilities, employers, and other key stakeholders by: 1) shifting our service delivery model from segregated in-house services to individualized and integrated employment and community-based services; and 2) closing our sheltered workshop.

Action Steps:

1. Form a Transformational Leadership Team comprised of key stakeholders, including individuals receiving services, workshop and integrated employment staff, representative managers and administrators, and key office staff (e.g., fiscal manager).
2. Gather baseline data regarding status of the organization’s services and outcomes. Consider developing a visual timeline of the organization’s history.
3. Develop/revisit the Values, Vision, and Mission statements with key stakeholders.
4. Provide training/technical assistance to staff and board members on integrated employment best practices.
5. Support staff and board members to visit one or more service providers that are providing exemplary integrated employment services.
6. Meet individually with people in the workshop & their parents/guardians to discuss the Employment First direction of the organization. Gather information about their hopes/dreams as well as fears/concerns.
7. Meet with other key stakeholders to gather their interests, concerns, and potential support for the organizational change
8. Meet with funding agencies and potential sources of funding to discuss bridge funding, integrated employment services funding, and other funding considerations related to shifting services to the community.
9. Develop new job descriptions for integrated employment staff. Hire new staff, as needed, with desired values, vision, and skills.
10. Support staff to begin to explore community options and opportunities with the first group of individuals who would like a job in the community. Conduct discovery activities with each individual in order to know what individuals like and are good at, as well as their support needs.
11. Conduct Person-Centered Planning with each individual and those who know and love the individual, including the type of job the individual might like.
12. Form staff teams that serve a small group of individuals from the workshop. Begin job development. Team members support and back each other up for customized employment activities (job development, job training, and job follow- along support).
13. Identify and secure accessible and affordable transportation options for each individual.
14. Continue to collaborate with Vocational Rehabilitation, Developmental Disability Services, and other funding sources to ensure that adequate funding is in place to support integrated employment services.
15. Revise the marketing materials and website to reflect the integrated employment focus in partnership with area businesses.
16. Eliminate or modify staff roles as people move out of the workshop.
17. Collect and analyze satisfaction and evaluation data. Make necessary changes.
18. Communicate, communicate, communicate!
19. Celebrate your successes, one person at a time!

### Alternatives to Strategic Planning

Some organizations do not feel comfortable or well positioned to take bold action and to be forward thinking when they first undertake transformative change in their organization. They may feel too restricted by the formality and linear nature of strategic planning. These organizations are more comfortable using an ‘organic’ process that emanates from a set of guiding principles based on the articulated Values, Vision, and Mission. Each decision is referenced against the guiding principles to ensure actions are in alignment with them. This approach allows organizations to define direction without confining it and pursue opportunities that present themselves. The example in Exhibit 5 below reflects this approach.

Exhibit 5. An Example of an Alternative Approach to Strategic Planning



**Strategy as Simple Rules**

A few straightforward, hard-and-fast rules that define direction without confining it:

* + We support individuals
	+ To lead regular lives
	+ In their communities
	+ The same, not different

*We support individuals:*

KFI supports individuals and not groups. We begin by asking people what they want and need. Supports are designed to meet the individuals’ requirements; the individuals do not need to fit into a group.

*To lead regular lives:*

Our supports are to assist people to live in the same places as anyone else, in ways that fit their lifestyle, which includes respecting people’s desire to live by themselves; to have jobs in typical businesses at minimum wage or higher; to access services, recreation and community resources which are available to all citizens.

*In their communities:*

KFI recognizes the importance of community, particularly in rural sections of Maine. Our supports must help people become included into the fabric of the community, to be viewed as contributors and valuable members of it.

*The same, not different:*

People with disabilities have the same needs as any citizen and those needs must be addressed in regular, inclusive ways.

*Formally approved by KFI’s Board of Directors, January 2003; Reviewed by KFI’s Board, January 2006*

### Anticipating Possible Challenges/Thinking of Solutions

As you are getting ready to launch new initiatives, it is helpful to engage in a process to target and plan for challenges. Several team meetings might be devoted to brainstorming about the big and small issues that might slow down or stall your efforts, based on your knowledge of government oversight and funding, your stakeholders, the business community, etc.

*What kinds of issues and challenges might we want to plan for?*

Here are a number of challenges that other providers have planned for:

* Individual and family concerns about the shift to integrated employment and community-based services
* Obtaining funding authorization from your funding agency
* Ensuring that people have eligibility for long term supports as well as Vocational Rehabilitation front-end, short-term supports
* Business community’s adjustment to a new way of doing things (e.g., rather than sending subcontract work to the workshop, providing job opportunities within the business)
* Staff resistance to new responsibilities and expectations
* Relationships with a union related to reallocation of staff
* Concerns about protecting health information (HIPAA) and confidentiality in general
* Employer questions about job coaching
* Transportation issues and concerns

*How might we plan for challenges?*

Communication is key, as is involving key stakeholders from the start. No one likes be informed or brought in to the change process after the fact. One way to understand and address the concerns of various constituencies is to engage stakeholders to obtain their input and buy-in. Organizations have used informal conversations, structured interviews, focus groups, and written surveys to obtain input and address issues and challenges. Several of these approaches were described in Module 1, and several additional approaches are described here briefly.

### Informational Interviews

Your team might want to develop a structured interview process so the same questions are asked to each constituent group, or customized for each group. This could be a starting point for some of the other processes, or might stand on its own.

### Focus Groups

Focus groups engage small groups of stakeholders in conversation in order to solicit their feedback and comments in response to specific questions.

### World Café

A World Café is a structured process designed to facilitate thoughtful open conversation among a large group of individuals by breaking into smaller groups and sharing knowledge among those smaller

groups. This can be a good way to elicit ideas, uncover concerns, and/or gather input regarding solutions. For example, families, staff and funders might focus on transportation as a potential obstacle to employment in a rural community, and develop some solutions to address that issue. The World Café process[14](#_bookmark63) is as follows:

* 5-8 participants sit at tables with already established questions.
* Every table has a host who remains at the table.
* People engage in conversation, share insights, and listen for about 15-20 minutes.
* When the first round is completed everyone but the host travels to a new table.
* Participants synthesize their discoveries and sometimes a deeper question emerges.
* At the end, members share collective discoveries and insights as a whole group (called “Harvesting”)
* The result is a sense of the bigger picture and new possibilities for action emerge.

### Public Forums

Although public forums can bring together a diverse group of people and give your agency an opportunity to hear a wide spectrum of views and concerns, there are reasons to avoid using a large gathering where negative comments from one or more individuals can sway the tone and direction of the meeting away from its original intent. For example, it is not a good way to first announce your transformation agenda or first discuss your plans with individuals and families. Nevertheless, it may be a way to get feedback as you are implementing your plans.

### Avoiding Pitfalls – Keeping Your Compass Pointed Toward True Community Integration

As you move forward in your transformation efforts staff, family, business partners, community partners and your board will present you with many ideas designed, they believe, to advance the agenda of community integration. You will want to explore these ideas with an eye to whether they will further your transformation agenda and meet the guiding principles that you have established, or lead the organization in an unintended or undesired direction.

### Questions that your team may want to consider:

*Does the proposed plan lead to competitive integrated employment?*

The Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA) regulations define competitive integrated employment as work side-by-side with other employees without a disability.

*Does the proposal create enclaves or work crews within the community or at an employer worksite where people with disabilities are working as a group and/or in a separate location?*

Organizations should avoid using enclaves and work crews as a strategy for moving people out of the workshop more quickly. Such placements are rarely a good match for every person, they typically require continuous on-site supervision by a staff member from the agency, they interfere with the development of natural supports, and they congregate and segregate the workers. In the end, it takes

14 [www.theworldcafe.com](http://www.theworldcafe.com/)

more time and effort to find individual jobs for each person that was initially placed in an enclave or work crew.

*Does the proposal plan maintain people with disabilities on your payroll rather than the employer’s payroll?*

The intent of competitive integrated employment is for each job seeker to be hired by community employers: one person, one job. There may be some instances where a trial work period is deemed appropriate for a particular job seeker, and the service provider pays the person during this short training period. Your state vocational rehabilitation or workforce system may reimburse providers for wages during the trial work period. After the trial work period, people should be paid directly by the employer. If an employer typically uses a third-party employment agency, individuals with disabilities hired by the employer should be hired through the same third-party employment agency used to hire employees without disabilities.

*Are you operating your community-based day or pre-vocational programs within U.S. Department of Labor and your state’s Department of Labor wage and hour rules, including rules about volunteers and interns?*

As you look for work experiences for people, keep in mind the following considerations: If the individual performs work without pay for a for-profit employer and they are bringing value to the business through their work, or doing work that other paid employees would otherwise be doing, the experience may violate labor laws. Even if an employer thinks they are within the law, as a provider you have a responsibility to evaluate volunteer opportunities and internships through the lens of current labor laws.

See <https://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.pdf> See <http://webapps.dol.gov/elaws/whd/flsa/docs/volunteers.asp>

*Does the program you are creating comply with your State’s contractual and/or Medicaid waiver guidelines?*

Remember to make sure that you are complying with your state agencies’ regulations, contractual requirements and administrative guidelines that address the services you are providing. It’s always helpful to consult with other providers and consultants, including those who have developed programs in other states, but do ensure that you check to confirm your planned approaches meet your state’s requirements.

# Conclusion

This manual reflects best practices that have been developed over the course of the past 40 years, with an emphasis on the most up-to-date and effective practices that are relevant in today’ environment where we see a tremendous acceleration toward competitive integrated employment and inclusive community supports. The manual is a synthesis of the knowledge and experience that the authors, their colleagues and numerous provider organizations across the country have gained in transforming organizations, and the public systems that fund them, so that individuals with disabilities, including those with complex support needs, can get and keep competitive integrated employment in their communities.

Clearly, there is no one way for organizations to implement a transformational change process, but we hope that the practices described in this manual – practices that are considered “tried and true” among those who make this topic their life’s work – will assist you in your efforts. Be sure to tap the many resources cited in this document, as well as experts and mentors who can provide guidance on your journey.

We urge you to advocate for and enact positive change with a sense of urgency. Be part of the exciting Employment First movement that is underway toward true systems change and full lives in the community for all individuals with disabilities. As Margaret Mead said, “Never believe that a few caring people can’t change the world. For, indeed, that’s all who ever have.”