

Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP)

PROVIDER TRANSFORMATION MANUAL

**Module 3: Making It Happen (Operations Focus)**

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 3:**

**Making It Happen (Operations Focus)**

**Key Terms**

*Piloting Best Practices Bringing to Scale Sustainability Decentralized Teams Closing the Shop Door Community Partners*

Resources and References for Module 3- Making It Happen

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| References | |
| Keep Learning, Exploring and Sharing | |
| Professional Development Opportunities (p. 46): Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) | [www.apse.org](http://www.apse.org/) |
| Professional Development Opportunities (p. 46): American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR) | [www.ancor.org](http://www.ancor.org/) |
| Professional Development Opportunities (p. 46): TASH | [www.tash.org](http://www.tash.org/) |
| Professional Development Opportunities (p. 46): Toronto Summer Institute | [www.inclusion.com/workshops.html](http://www.inclusion.com/workshops.html) |
| Professional Development Opportunities (p. 46): Reinventing Quality Conference | [www.reinventingquality.org](http://www.reinventingquality.org/) |
| Professional Development Opportunities (p.  46): Marc Gold and Associates Annual Discovery Retreat | [www.marcgold.com](http://www.marcgold.com/) |
| Professional Development Opportunities (p.  46): National Organizational Change Network Conferences | <http://apse.org/conferences-training/> |
| Certification Courses (p. 46): Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) | <http://www.acreducators.org/> |
| Certification Courses (p. 46): Employment Support Professional Certification (APSE) | <http://apse.org/certified-employment-support-professional/> |
| Certification Courses (p. 46): Griffin Hammis online certification | <http://www.marcgold.com/Publications/certification.html> |
| Certification Courses (p. 46): Marc Gold & Associates certification process | <http://www.marcgold.com/Publications/certification.html> |
| Certification Courses (p. 46): Training Resource Network | [http://www.trn-store.com.](http://www.trn-store.com/) |

**MODULE 3: Making It Happen (Operations Focus)**

## How to Begin: Start Small and Do It Right from the Start

Now that the strategic or transformation plan has been developed you can move to the implementation phase. The first thing to note is that transformation cannot be done all at once. You should start small, ensuring that all of the foundations for transformation are well established and tested before you move forward.

## Learning About and Investing in Best Practices

### Incorporating Best Practices

You may feel under pressure to create competitive integrated employment and community integrated activities quickly. It is important to remember, however, that meaningful and long lasting outcomes for people require thoughtful work, on an individualized basis. If you take the time to incorporate best practices that have a track record of bringing people into the workforce and into their communities, your work will result in outcomes that make a real difference in people’s lives. This does not mean that you won’t also create your own innovations and strategies especially suitable for your community and economy as you move along. However, there is no reason to re-invent the wheel. You can lose valuable time experimenting, when there are already best practices out there that can help you.

Invest some of your management staff’s time in learning about current best practices. It’s essential that those supervising direct service staff understand the best practices that direct service staff are trying to implement. These practices may include: customized employment strategies; the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model of supported employment; other proven job development strategies; person- centered planning processes; systematic instruction; job coaching and support strategies including positive behavioral supports, social stories, strategies for building natural supports, the use of technology and visual tools to fade supports in the workplace and in the community; and specific strategies for supporting people with particular needs (i.e., traumatic brain injury, substance abuse issues, autism, visual impairments, deafness, criminal justice system backgrounds). We have included a description of some of these best practices in Module 5 of this manual as well as lists of resources and references. You will want to develop your own list of possible resources and research what these resources can offer your team.

As a provider, you will need to determine how much you can invest in training and mentoring your staff. On-line courses can be very helpful. However, there is nothing like sending your staff to a face to face direct training. And if you can afford it, it is ideal to bring in experts to work directly with your staff, onsite, in your own community. When you bring in your own trainers, they can respond to the particular issues with which you are grappling and respond to individual cases.

## Trying It Out - Piloting New Practices

Many agencies start with pilot projects to test out new approaches. These projects allow you to develop and test strategies and procedures that will support your staff as they move into broader implementation.

### What is a pilot project?

Pilot projects are small projects conducted with fidelity to a model or plan you are considering using on a broader scale. If you are doing a customized employment pilot, for example, every step in the process should be followed. Data should be taken and analyzed to help the team see what has worked and what has not. The pilot is your opportunity to make mistakes and achieve your successes on a small scale. You want to learn from your pilot and use that information to improve how you are carrying out your implementation. It is critical to start off correctly and with high quality. That will set the stage for the scaling up of your efforts.

### Why pilot?

Transformation requires thoughtful, careful program development. That is why piloting or prototyping employment first programs is an effective approach. The goal for a pilot is to learn how to get results, create a core staff who have learned key tools and strategies, develop initial useful partnerships, address issues and challenges, revise strategies, project staffing and program requirements based on your findings, evaluate current costs and funding, and make projections of anticipated costs and funding for a full-scale project.

A pilot can also be a means to demonstrate results to funders and stakeholders. You might show a funder that a particular approach will get them the results they are looking for. Also, a pilot effort, with good results, might be just what you need to encourage hesitant individuals and families to give employment a try. Good outcomes and testimonials for employers may jump start community integrated employment in your community.

### Who are good candidates with which to start a pilot?

Begin with those people who are already expressing interest in work. You will have some people for whom the transition to competitive integrated employment may be a significant challenge. They may have worked in facility-based employment for an extended period and the change is very daunting for them. You do not want to forget those people, but they may not be the best candidates with whom to start. Start with those who are eager. Achieve success with them and then use that success to market the opportunity back to those more reluctant individuals.

*Does that mean that I should start with the people that appear to be easiest to get jobs?*

No. Starting with those people expressing interest in work does not mean starting with those with the fewest barriers to employment. In fact, it is very important to include people with higher support needs in your first job placements. Staff and other stakeholders need to see that you can be successful with competitive integrated job placements for people with varying degrees of challenges to employment. If you start off including this population in the job placement effort from the beginning, you will minimize the inclination to focus on the job seekers who are considered the easiest to place and to neglect of others.

### Take the time to learn from your pilot—revise your initial plans

Your pilot should have given you a lot of valuable information and answered important questions. Do you need to revise your staffing pattern? How much management time does the work require? What

additional procedures do you need to support staff and work effectively with individuals? Are you getting outcomes you anticipated? If not, what were the challenges you encountered? Are there structural or staffing changes that can help you overcome those challenges?

## Ensuring Sustainability

As you construct your model, you will want to project its sustainability past the pilot stage. Questions you will want to ask are: If we have temporary pilot funding, do we have a possible funding source for our ongoing work? Can we project that the proportion of management costs to direct support costs will go down as we learn techniques and begin to achieve outcomes? How do we plan to reallocate costs as we decentralize our services?

As you begin to implement your programs, you will want to review your results, costs and funding to evaluate the sustainability of the model you have created.

## Think Big, Start Small, Scale Quickly

Plan on evaluating your pilot every quarter, and as soon as you are getting solid results that you have reason to think are replicable, start bringing the project to scale as quickly as your funding will allow. Bringing to scale as quickly as possible is advisable for a variety of reasons. First, you will help many more people find employment and a place in their community. Second, you will spread program management and administrative costs in a way that a pilot effort cannot accomplish. Third, you will gain credibility with your funders, stakeholders and business partners when they see that the program is moving forward and expanding.

### Chart out how you can effectively bring competitive integrated employment to scale

Ask yourselves; are there additional investments you need to make as you move from a pilot to a full- scale program that can place and support increasing numbers of people into competitive integrated employment? Ask yourselves what investments in staff you may need. There may be a need to increase your management capability before your revenue increases. What do you need to demonstrate to your board in order to justify that investment? What technology do you need to manage a full-scale staff engaged in finding and maintaining employment opportunities for people? How will you offer trainings to larger numbers of staff?

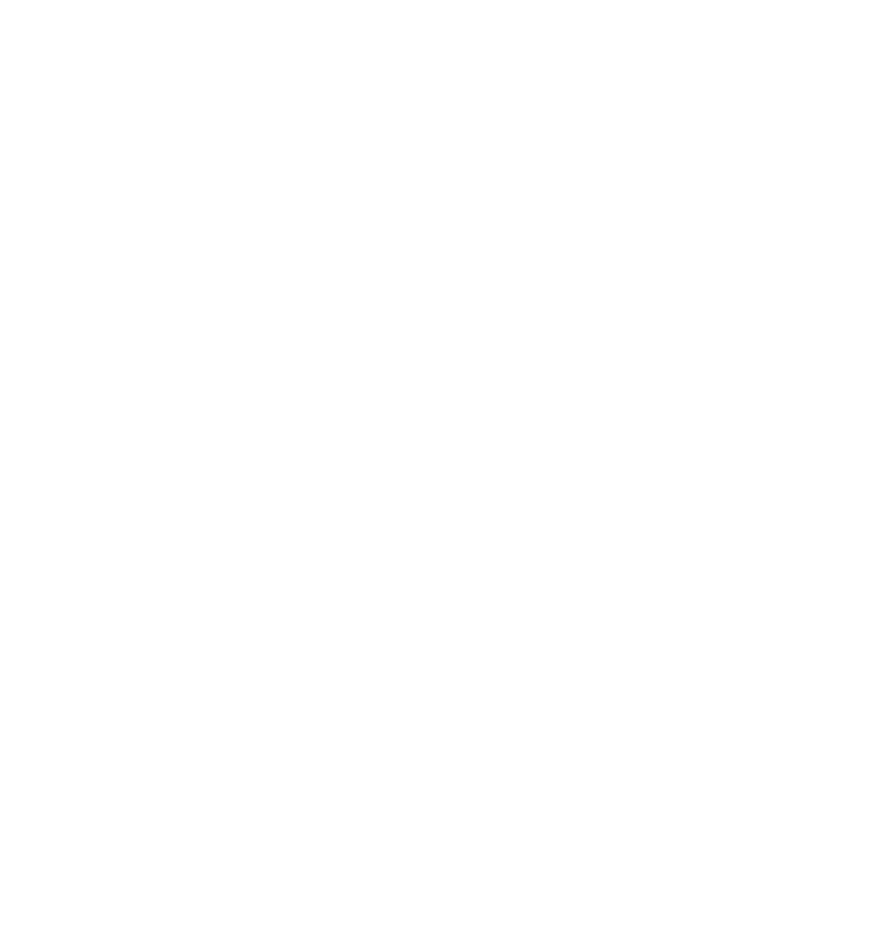
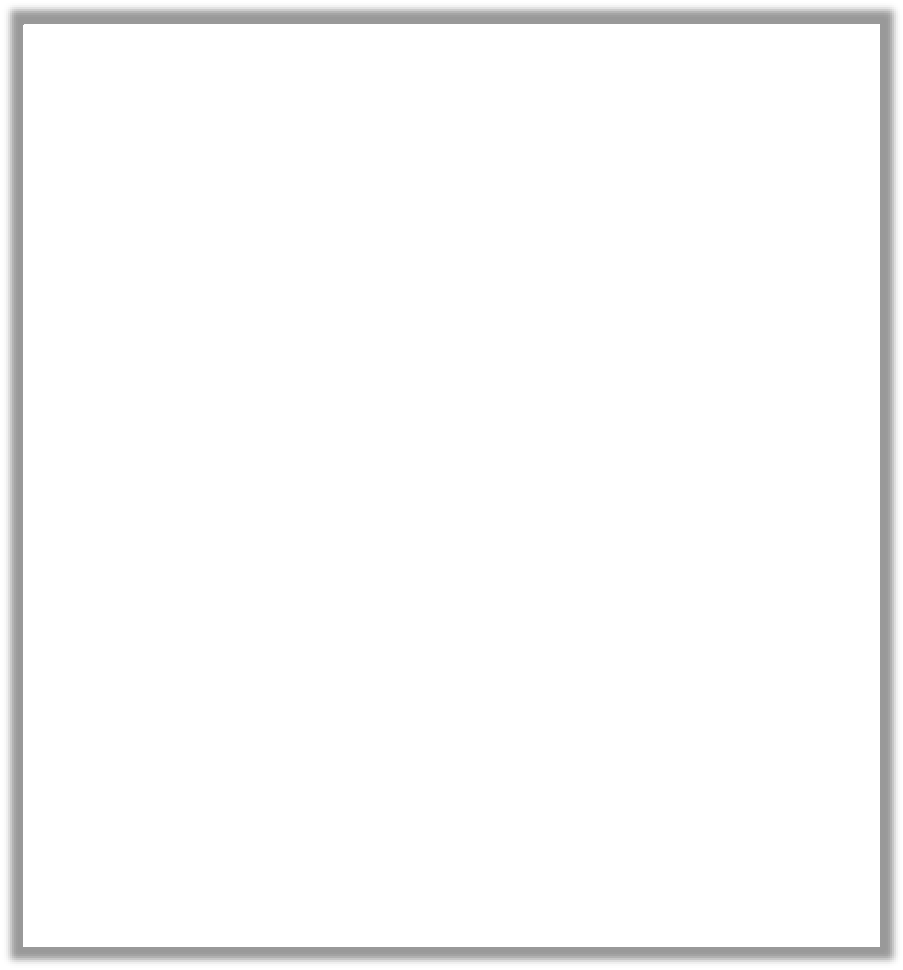
### Continue to project how your revenues and expenses will grow as you move to scale

As you continue to grow, you will be projecting how your revenues will continue to grow in comparison to your expenses. You will want to factor in all of the revenue and expenses that you achieve as a result of your competitive integrated employment services. For example, you may be using VR funding to develop jobs, but then add in long term support funding from Medicaid waivers or other sources, once people have been in jobs for a period of time. A small shortfall in VR funding may be balanced out by somewhat larger revenues from funding for long term supports. Similarly, if long term support funding is inadequate to cover the costs of the early stages of job coaching, net revenue from VR may offset this.

### Advocate with your funders for appropriate funding

This is where the outcomes from your pilot are so important. If the funding you initially used is not sufficient, but your results are good, you will want to negotiate with your funders to obtain a rate that will sustain the program. If the rates are set on a statewide or regional basis, you will want to work with other providers in your region or state. Your data may be just what a provider association needs to make the case for more sustainable rates. If the rates are specifically negotiated by contract with each provider, you may want to bring your board of directors into the process. Key to effective negotiations is thorough preparation based on solid data on both your costs and your outcomes. Your funders will want to see costs, understand why those costs are necessary to obtaining your outcomes, and will want to see concrete outcomes that meet their mission and goals (See Module 4 ).

**From Pilot to Full Scale: One Provider’s Story**



In 2010, Penn-Mar Human Services, a provider agency based in Maryland and Pennsylvania, began its transformation journey by piloting Customized Employment practices. The goal of the pilot was to find jobs through Customized Employment for 25 people in the sheltered work program. Penn-Mar hired a job developer for the project. A program manager was assigned to supervise and work alongside the job developer. Penn- Mar also invested some funds to bring in consultants from two organizations that train agencies in Customized Employment.

Penn-Mar staff followed the Customized Employment model including the consultant’s suggestions that the job developer have responsibility for all aspects of the Customized Employment process. They analyzed the project results periodically. After an initial pilot period in which the job developer was not achieving the outcomes they anticipated, they revised their process and decided to focus the job developer on networking with employers. They reallocated discovery and job coaching to staff working in the sheltered work program.

The revised pilot was successful. By 2012, the project had achieved 30 placements and the agency was ready to make the full-scale journey away from sheltered work. Penn-Mar set a goal to transition everyone from sheltered work into community based employment. The success stories from their pilot was key to persuading Penn-Mar’s Board of Directors, staff and families that discontinuing sheltered work was desirable. Sheltered work was discontinued, increasing numbers of people were placed in jobs, and any facility based time was converted to development of specific skills that would be helpful for community employment. In 2014, Penn-Mar revised its strategic plan and set a new goal that 80% of people’s time should be in community based employment and other community integrated activities by 2020.

## Enacting an Employment First Approach: Key Considerations as You Move to Scale

### Teamwork in decentralized organizations: Practical considerations for making it happen

You will find that teamwork is more important than ever in highly decentralized, competitive integrated employment services. The effort to get to know job seekers and support them to determine what work they may like and be good at, learn about and develop relationships with community businesses, make excellent job matches that benefit both parties, ensure that just the right support is provided to workers as they transition into their jobs and to fade support to the maximum degree possible takes a great deal of effort. Because this process is often taking place with multiple people simultaneously and with different staff potentially playing different roles, it is important that the staff work cooperatively together to achieve the desired outcomes.

*What should I consider as I develop decentralized teams?*

It’s important to think about the *role* of the team first. Because your agency is becoming more decentralized, teams inevitably become more autonomous in function. That means that they should be more empowered to make decisions at the “front line”. This has many implications for the agency and should allow for a flattening of the organization’s structure. Often this can mean a reduction in middle management. As a result, more funding can be applied to service delivery, rather than administrative costs. It certainly means that careful consideration of team composition, structure and function must be made.

*How will teams be composed and structured?*

Teams may be structured by role, with teams composed of staff playing different roles in the employment process. Team development may also be influenced by geography, with staff living in and providing support to individuals in a geographic area. Membership can shift as teams form to support a particular person. Job seekers may also be assigned to teams based on relationships they may have already established with a team member or the skills of a particular team.

Teams require *structure* to function optimally. It is important to know how the members are going to work together. Since these teams are decentralized, meaning their work is primarily if not exclusively in the community, they need to be as autonomous and self-directed as possible. Self-directed teams are discussed in greater detail in Module 6.

Good *communication* among team members and between the team and managers is what will make the team function optimally. Decentralized teams are almost always in the community and often the members do not see each other daily. The protocols for communication should be clearly established so that everyone stays informed and has a clear idea of their assignments and responsibilities. The methods and tools for communication must be determined as well. It is also important to have the team meet routinely to coordinate their efforts, solve problems, receive training, plan, and develop relationships with each other.

*What are management’s responsibilities in a decentralized structure?*

While teams should function more autonomously in a decentralized structure, if one or more manager positions have been retained, their role should shift to more of a community focus. That is where the work is being done. The role of the manager should become more of a coach and mentor to teams and to individual staff. Managers have responsibility for supporting the teams to function well, serving as a liaison between teams and to stay focused on the agency’s mission. However, teams can still function well without managers. That is, teams can designate a team leader or rotate the role among team members once they gel as a high performing, self-directed team.

## Just Do it! Closing the Shop/Facility Front Door

*Where is a good place to begin downsizing facility-based employment services?*

The first step in closing facility-based employment services is to stop accepting new referrals to this service. Almost every agency attempting to transform identifies transitioning people from the workshop into competitive integrated work as one of their biggest challenges. Many people have been told that the workshop is the best and possibly only option for them and they have been working there for many, many years. If you continue to accept new referrals into the workshop, you perpetuate this problem.

You also continue to pour attention and resources into this part of your agency, rather than beginning to re-direct those resources into competitive integrated employment.

*How do I plan for unloading ‘sunk costs’ (equipment, building, etc.)?*

Every provider agency engaged in transformation must do its own careful analysis of assets and costs to determine just the right time to convert the capital assets that were a necessary part of facility-based operations into the staffing and additional management resources that are key to decentralized employment and day supports.

Another starting point is to recognize that the capital costs now in your budget are costs that at some point you will no longer need to sustain your operations. As you project your funding needs, it is important to plan for selling, leasing or sub-letting capital assets and redirecting the income to community integrated services. These assets include property owned or leased from which you operate your facility based program, equipment used in production, and vans used for transportation. As you downsize your production facilities, you may have less use for space and less need for equipment. As you decentralize your operations, you may be able to convert your transportation fleet into a more flexible array of transportation resources including smaller passenger vehicles if needed.

You will want to conduct and update assessments of the cost savings that are realistically achievable as you downsize these operations. Questions you will ask are: How much space will we need for program operations when transformation is complete? How much could we generate from selling property? Is there a market for the property we own? How much will we save by giving up some of our leased space? How can we support people’s transportation needs without vans?

*What to do with contract work?*

Plenty of advance notification should be given to businesses for whom you perform contract work about your intention to cease accepting new work after a specific date. Plans should be made to return excess

inventory and any tools or equipment that may belong to the company. Often these businesses have been long term partners and it is important to maintain positive relationships with them. If there are individuals who enjoy the work they have been doing and would like to continue as employees of the company, you should develop a proposal for the company to hire and pay them directly. What should be avoided, however, is simply moving the contract into the company’s building and maintaining the same relationship that existed before. If the company does not what to hire people directly, the individuals can be supported to form a limited liability company (LLC) that could contract with the company.

*How can I begin creating pathways for new referrals to competitive integrated employment?*

Building robust integrated, community-based pre-employment training, assessment and job placement services are important steps in moving away from facility-based employment models. If you are no longer accepting referrals to facility based work, you should be focused on developing the capability to place people, who know what work they would enjoy and be good at, into jobs as soon as possible. You also need the capacity to conduct discovery with others and develop community-based strategies to assist people who need some time to explore different kinds of jobs and try out work options. These strategies will be discussed in more detail in Module 5.

How can we create these pathways for collaboration and referral during the important school-to-work transition years?

Every effort should be made to develop relationships with local schools, Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, Intellectual/Developmental Disability agencies, and other partners to facilitate school-to-work transition for youth with disabilities. Working age students should be receiving integrated, community based job training while still in school. Your agency should seek agreements with your local school districts to provide some of this integrated, community based training and preparation. Ideally, transitioning youth supported by your agency should be leaving school and going directly into competitive integrated employment. If you are able to be involved with the youth well before their school careers end, this should be achievable. If that goal is not achieved, they should not go into facility-based work or facility-based employment readiness programs. It is especially important to continue their pre-employment preparation in the community as competitive integrated work is sought.

## Keep Learning, Exploring and Sharing

In the section on leadership, we emphasized sending staff and board members to conferences to help them envision change. As you implement your transformation agenda, your team will want to continue to take opportunities to keep learning and sharing with others in the field.

The field keeps changing, and you will want to keep your finger on the pulse of these changes so that your team can take advantage of other people’s innovations. And, of course, you will want to share your own developing strategies. A good way to do this is through membership in and/or attendance at conferences, symposium, certifications and online courses. These include national and state conferences, certifications available throughout the country, and training available at state conferences and institutes. A list of some of the best national professional development opportunities are listed below.

* APSE (See www.apse.org)
* ANCOR (See www.ancor.org)
* TASH (See www.tash.org)
* Toronto Summer Institute (See [www.](http://www/) inclusion.com)
* Reinventing Quality Conference (See www.reinventingquality.org)
* Marc Gold and Associates Annual Discovery Retreat ([www.marcgold.com](http://www.marcgold.com/))
* National Organizational Change Network Conferences (in partnership with National APSE) Certification courses you might consider include:
* ACRE – Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (<http://www.acreducators.org/>)
* APSE – Employment Support Professional Certification ([http://apse.org/certified-employment- support-professional/](http://apse.org/certified-employment-support-professional/))
* Griffin Hammis online certification (See<http://www.griffinhammis.com/acrecertificatetraining.html>
* Marc Gold & Associates certification process (See<http://www.marcgold.com/Publications/certification.html>
* Training Resource Network ([www.trn-store.com](http://www.trn-store.com/))

## Developing and Redesigning Relationships with Your Business Community

If your team sits down and brainstorms for even a few minutes, existing partnerships and potential collaborations will come to mind quite quickly. You will want to reach out to these partners and share your enthusiasm for your transformation plans. These partnerships may lead to jobs. Most important, they give you a network to tap into for resources that you may need as your work becomes more decentralized.

If a business has been partnering with you within your existing model – whether contracting with you to complete overflow work in your facility or contracting with you to provide a work crew to perform work at their offices or plant- you will need to help them change their framework in a gradual, congenial, and informative way. This may require the participation of your most senior managers and even members of your board, who may have greater connections and a higher profile in your community.

When developing new business partners, do bring your board into the process. You will want to encourage your board to talk with their friends and colleagues about your work and plans. It’s helpful to provide board members with a low key elevator speech and a lot of stories that will come to their mind as they talk to friends, colleagues, and even acquaintances they happen to meet. One organization has a separate board meeting each year devoted to having staff share highlights of their work and the people they serve with their board. Another organization devotes a section of each board meeting to one or two individual success stories and the exciting work that is underway.

Executive staff can meet individually with board members to explore their networks and connections, as well as ways to develop partnerships with members of the business community in a low pressure manner. The goal is to try to come out of each meeting with at least several connections to pursue and a

plan to have lunch or coffee, along with a board member to meet those people. Eventually the agency’s network of business partners will multiply, but in the beginning you will want to use every contact you can to build your profile in the community. Competitive integrated employment depends on a large number of employers who will each be hiring only one or a small number of employees.

Other important contacts include the professional organizations and communities that bring business leaders and professionals together. Associations to explore might include:

* The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) has membership chapters for human resource professionals. Your community may have other round tables of human resource managers specific to particular industries. It’s ideal to get to know these groups informally by becoming a presence at chapter meetings. You may want to ask for the opportunity to tell some inspiring stories illustrating your work, and talk about the employers that have hired some of the persons supported by your agency.
* Research Business Leadership Networks that are in your state or nearby, that may have local members in your community.
* Local Chambers of Commerce host events and are a good way to network in the business community.
* In a larger city, there will be cross-business associations that share knowledge and expertise. For example, there are national associations of federal contractors that have state and/or regional meetings. Regional trade associations may be able to put you in touch with local members who may have their own formal or informal network in your community.
* Meet with the local Workforce Development staff and board and explore partnerships, resources and contacts that they can share.
* Local and State economic development councils and agencies
* Don’t forget your vendors. People who supply you with items that you need and value your business may have connections and colleagues that can help with your mission. They may be interested in hiring someone who can make a positive and needed contribution to their operation. It is important to educate them about your work.

## Developing Relationships with Community Partners

*Why are these relationships so important?*

If your goal is to assist people to become active participants in their communities through paid work and other meaningful activities, you will want to find community partners who can help make this happen. Each individual you support will have their own specific interests, style, contributions and needs. If your team is steeped in your community, and continues to meet and brainstorm with community leaders and organizations, you are likely to be able to help people build work and non-work connections in your community.

Beyond the impact of these partnerships for individuals, community partners may join with you in projects which may create funding opportunities. A local community center, for example, may have a connection with a foundation or corporate sponsor that you do not have, but you may have resources

and expertise that they need. An education-focused not-for-profit or school might want to partner with you in person-centered planning work with young people graduating from high school, with funding available for this purpose. A parent resource center might be interested in co-creating a transportation pool using parents of children with disabilities as sources of travel assistance for adults in your employment program, while the staff and vans of your agency could be used to transport children home from after school activities. New ideas and ventures don’t develop in a vacuum. They emerge from ongoing “win-win” relationships with people who know and respect each other and are excited by the ways in which their work overlaps.

*What types of organizations should we reach out to?*

The following are examples of community organizations and the role they might play as your partners.

* *Not for profit organizations –* These may be places that can offer paid work opportunities, volunteer opportunities, and social/recreational activities. They also may be good partners for grants as described above.
* *Community colleges –* You can work with community colleges to modify or customize curriculum so that training programs geared to particular industries that can incorporate the people with whom you work. You can establish collaborations with community colleges to provide supports for people who can matriculate in classes as part of your wrap around/day supports. Community colleges may be good partners for grant proposals in these areas. Partnerships with professors and staff at community colleges may be useful for recruitment of staff or board members. Community college students who are interested in working with people with disabilities might make good interns, and could potentially help job coaches or provide support to other staff members.
* *Schools* – As the new mandates in the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) roll out, high schools will be partners as you develop transition services to move young adults into competitive integrated employment. Transition staff might partner with you in the discovery process (see description of customized employment in Module 5), and as part of their overall design and development of middle and high school transition services. Administrators, teachers, transition staff, and guidance counselors can partner on outreach and education with individuals and families, referrals to Vocational Rehabilitation, eligibility for services, and more.
* *Residential Support Providers* – Getting residential support providers on board is also be key to successful employment for those also receiving residential supports. They can help you understand the conditions that need to be in place for an individual to succeed in employment and can help make connections in the community for both paid work and community integrated activities. It’s also important for residential providers to understand the role of work in people’s lives. For example, a good partnership with providers can ensure that doctor’s and other appointments are scheduled, when at all possible, during non-work hours, and ensure that people have the supports to get to work on time.
* *Foundations –* Ongoing relationships with foundations can provide funding to pilot new programs, or support expanding new programs while you downsize more traditional programs. See Module 4 for additional information. Foundation program officers may also introduce you to community

partners. For example, a foundation introduced one agency to another not-for-profit that needed technical assistance. A foundation might suggest a partner who can work with you on a joint grant proposal.

* *Transportation providers/networks –* Particularly in rural environments, you will want to work creatively with current and new providers to develop a system that has the flexibility to help people get to work. Collaborating with generic community services, such as those serving senior citizens, has proven beneficial. In one rural community, local businesses took turns sponsoring the cost of van services for seniors and people with disabilities for a month each. During the month of their sponsorship, the business name was displayed prominently on the outside of the van.
* *Advocacy Organizations/Anti-Poverty Groups –* Advocacy organizations, including anti-poverty groups can partner with you and the people you support to obtain funding for the supports they need, for benefits counseling, and to help with non-work issues, such as housing, that can impact people’s work lives. Establishing ongoing relationships will ensure that you can get access to these important resources when you need them.

# 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.”