Forming and Sustaining Partnerships to Improve Employment of People with Disabilities

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Presenters

Ellice Switzer, MA

Workplace Disability Inclusion Associate, EARN
Extension Associate, Yang-Tan Institute on
Employment and Disability, Cornell University

Ashley Bryant PhD, CRC

EARN Extension Associate, Yang-Tan Institute
on Employment and Disability, Cornell
University

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Overview

- Learn the basics of public and nonprofit workforce services systems, how to connect to them, and how they can help

- Review recommendations for developing an 8-step process to engage with external partners for the purposes of disability employment

- Learn about examples of exemplary business-led partnerships to support employment of people with disabilities

Poll

When it comes to connecting with community partners to support disability hiring objectives, I feel:

A. Lost. I don't know where to begin.

B. I know what I need to do, I'm just not sure what the next steps are.

C. I have some partnerships, but I would like to expand and/or reevaluate them.

Who can I partner with, and how can I find them?

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State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

Characteristics:

- Federal and state funded agencies that help people with disabilities prepare for and become gainfully employed

- Located in every state

- Access to candidates with disabilities with a wide range of skills and training

Limitations:

- Limited funding results in waiting lists

- Large caseloads

How to connect with VR

- Use the Rehabilitation Services Administration directory of [State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies](#)

- Ask to attend staff meetings

- Invite VR to speak at hiring events

- Develop a contact person within VR

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Community-based agencies

Characteristics:

- Usually nonprofit
- Sometimes very local, sometimes broader reach
- Variety of supports include: candidate referral, accommodations assistance, training & technical assistance, job coaching, travel training and/or transportation

Limitations:

- Limited candidate pipeline (some serve very specific populations)
- Service quality can vary greatly
- High turnover of personnel

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How to connect with community-based agencies

- Use contacts at state VR agencies to assist with locating agencies and agency consortia

- Ask for assistance and a "warm hand-off" from other workforce development partners

- Use the OFCCP Employment Resource Referral Directory

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Centers for Independent Living (CILs or ILCs)

Characteristics:

- A type of nonprofit organization authorized by the Rehabilitation Act
- Founded by and for people with disabilities, based on the [principles of independent living](#)
- Serves anyone, with any type of disability, through a variety of core services
- Can provide "wrap-around" assistance that may be lacking from other supports and services

Limitations:

- The type and quality of services can vary greatly
- Not all ILCs are equipped to provide comprehensive employment supports

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How to connect with CILs/ILCs

- Use contacts at state VR agencies to assist with locating agencies and agency consortia

- Ask for assistance and a "warm hand-off" from other workforce development partners

- Use the [Directory of Centers for Independent Living (CILs) and Associations](#)

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Workforce development

- State workforce development systems partner with disability service systems

- Sometimes have personnel (disability resource coordinators) in regional One-Stops (American Job Centers)

- Make sure they understand your intention to include qualified people with disabilities in talent pipelines

Partnerships: steps to success

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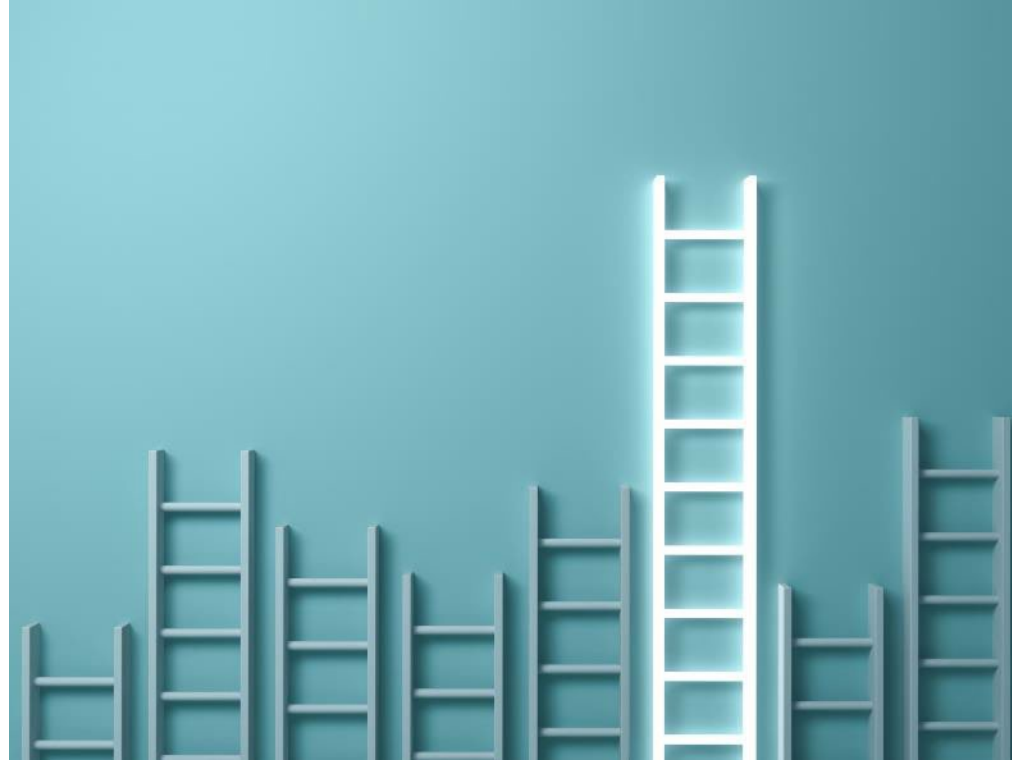
Get involved

- Conduct outreach
- Learn about the systems, organizations and services already in place to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities

Invite collaboration

- Find partners able to assist in all locations where candidates will be recruited and trained

- Embed personnel in regions where recruiting takes place, for the express purpose of understanding local and regional disability workforce partners and initiatives

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- Evaluate potential collaborators to ensure shared values and objectives

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Dedicate resources

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- Dedicate resources to the relationship development
- Expect it to take time

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Identify gaps

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- Use strategic relationships to fill gaps in internal processes
- Leverage partnerships to increase capacity to implement hiring initiatives

Co-create objectives

- Ensure partners are able to meet your workforce needs for a diverse candidate pipeline, training or supportive services as defined by company objectives
- Potential partners will also have criteria for outcomes that they will need to have met, and that must be negotiated

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Measure progress

- Define success
- Create metrics to analyze progress
- Celebrate "small wins"

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Evaluate and refine

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- Regularly evaluate outcomes
- Make changes as needed to ensure that investments in workforce partnerships are yielding results

Partnership examples

- FALA Technologies: https://askearn.org/employerprofile/fala-technologies-manufacturing-career-opportunities

- CVS Health, Abilities in Abundance: https://askearn.org/employerprofile/cvs-health-a-playbook-for-success

- Missouri Employment Collaborative (Nexus): https://mo-rehab.org/pdf/NEXUS%20PowerPoint%20for%20MRA.pdf

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Questions

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EARN resources

[Neurodiversity Hiring Initiatives & Partnerships](#)

Partnerships can help ensure a talent pipeline for neurodivergent candidates

[Partnerships to Build Your Talent Pipeline](#) (PDF)

Learn about the important role partnerships play in identifying candidates with disabilities and how to collaborate effectively with key community organizations

[Review of Community College-Employer Partnerships and Initiatives: Expanding Opportunities for Job Seekers with Disabilities](#) (PDF)

This report reviews federal, regional and local efforts to support community college partnerships with employers

[Build the Pipeline: Outreach & Recruitment](#)

Building a pipeline of applicants with disabilities is key to inclusive outreach and recruitment

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