Work Matters
A Framework for States on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS AND
NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES
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With this report, the National Task Force on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities plays an impactful role in providing states and their leaders with the knowledge needed to achieve greater economic vitality and place many more Americans on a path to success in the global economy.

Under the leadership of Delaware Gov. Jack Markell and Nebraska state Sen. Beau McCoy, the National Task Force studied the best practices and innovative strategies states have implemented to improve employment opportunities and outcomes for people with disabilities.

Gov. Markell is a nationally recognized leader in disability employment policy and has a proven legacy in this arena from his state initiatives like Project SEARCH, a jobs training program to put businesses in touch with potential employees with disabilities, to his National Governors Association Chair’s Initiative, A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities.

Sen. McCoy spent his career in the Nebraska Legislature advocating for improving educational opportunities for all students and creating and maintaining workforce development for all citizens. He chose disability employment policy as his CSG National Chair’s initiative and has followed through with strong leadership of the task force in partnership with Gov. Markell.

It is our hope that this framework will provide the guide for how states can best meet the needs of each of their citizens. We encourage your feedback on the contents of this report and your help in learning even more about the success stories in your state. Please contact us and let us know your thoughts. We know CSG, NCSL and other state leaders can benefit from your perspective.

We would like to thank those who served on the National Task Force on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities; the Career Readiness & Employability Subcommittee; the Entrepreneurship, Tax Incentives & Procurement Subcommittee; the Hiring, Retention & Reentry Subcommittee; and the Transportation, Technology & Other Employment Supports Subcommittee. The many contributions of these individuals, in the form of policy options resources and guidance, served as the foundation for this report. We also thank the advisers and members of the State Exchange on Employment and Disability and the U.S. Department of Labor/Office of Disability Employment Policy’s State Exchange on Employment and Disability for their generous support and research assistance.

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National Task Force on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities
Approaching Disability Employment Policy as a State Official
Convening the
National Task Force

The Council of State Governments, or CSG, in partnership with the National Conference of State Legislatures, or NCSL, convened a National Task Force on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities (henceforth referred to as the National Task Force). As leading associations representing state policymakers, CSG and NCSL are uniquely poised to highlight the issue of disability employment at the state level.

Founded in 1933, CSG is the nation’s only nonpartisan, not-for-profit organization serving all three branches of state government. It is nationally recognized as an impartial convener of state officials, a provider of training and technical assistance, and a primary source of educational policy information, which positions CSG to collaborate with the U.S. Department of Labor, or DOL, in its efforts to foster a nationwide workforce more inclusive of people with disabilities.

Created in 1975, the bipartisan NCSL serves as an advocate for state legislatures, helping them remain strong by giving them the tools, information and resources to craft the best legislative policy solutions to a host of difficult problems—including those related to workforce development and disability employment. NCSL brings dedicated disability employment policy research and technical assistance resources to bear in supporting the efforts of the National Task Force and its subcommittees.

The National Task Force was led by CSG president, Delaware Gov. Jack Markell, and CSG chair, Nebraska state Sen. Beau McCoy. In turn, each subcommittee was led by two co-chairs. These subcommittee leaders—eight total—along with the two National Task Force co-chairs, constituted the National Task Force.

The four subcommittees took a deeper dive into the employment and workforce issues specific to their policy areas as described below:

**Career Readiness & Employability**

This subcommittee’s focus centered on K-12 and young adult education and transition to employment, exploring such issues as person-centered education and career-readiness planning; non-traditional educational opportunities (e.g., online classes, certificate programs, etc.); work- and community-based learning; and collaboration with educational institutions, vocational rehabilitation, the workforce development system and the business community. This subcommittee

six non-voting external advisers representing the private sector, key stakeholders and/or academia.

To this end, the National Task Force oversaw the work of four subcommittees, each focusing on a unique policy area impacting the employment of people with disabilities: 1) Career Readiness & Employability; 2) Hiring, Retention & Reentry; 3) Entrepreneurship, Tax Incentives & Procurement; and 4) Transportation, Technology & Other Employment Supports. Each subcommittee comprised 10-12 state leaders and four to
Development of the Policy Framework

As the National Task Force members convened to address workforce development and employment issues for people with disabilities, a number of guiding principles and overarching considerations emerged that would serve as a foundation for the crafting of this policy framework.
State policymakers should consider:

» Leading by example and “walk the talk”—ensuring that state agencies become model employers and use state financial resources to support model employers in the private sector. This includes requiring state contractors to proactively employ people with disabilities, offering financial incentives to businesses to hire persons with disabilities and providing ongoing supports to businesses to help them retain employees who may acquire disabilities.

» Including external and internal focus on disability awareness, including disability etiquette, in all state government policies, programs, practices and disability employment initiatives.

» Adopting robust reporting efforts, including establishing performance goals, metrics for measurement and data collection processes, to help inform policymaking. States also should consider developing strategies to encourage individuals with disabilities to self-identify and voluntarily disclose disability status to employers and service providers.

» Increasing coordination, blending and braiding of services and funding across agencies and levels of government to ensure successful employment of people with disabilities. Policy should be designed to eliminate service delivery silos and facilitate cooperation and coordination across all relevant state agencies and systems.

» Requiring accountability from the highest levels of government. States can identify high-level officials or departments responsible for providing oversight on policy implementation and reporting, as well as addressing the concerns of people with disabilities.

» Including universal design principles, which seek to ensure accessibility and usability to the greatest extent possible for all people, in the earliest development phases of all state government policies, programs and practices, rather than retrofitting the policy after the fact.

Policy In-Depth: Universal Design

What is Universal Design? Universal design, or UD, is a set of accessibility and usability principles guiding physical space, product, technology and programmatic design. UD seeks to guarantee access and usability for all individuals regardless of age or ability. UD also goes beyond the accessibility movement and barrier-free design initiatives by emphasizing the aesthetic side of design and ensuring that accessibility and usability principles are incorporated at the earliest stages of the design process.

Why implement UD principles? While the application of UD principles promises to increase accessibility and community inclusion for people with disabilities, it has the potential to positively impact the quality of life of all people.
Policy Options Identified by the National Task Force

The work of the National Task Force culminated in the development of a policy framework states can use to address workforce development barriers for people with disabilities. What follows is a thematic overview of the policy options developed by the subcommittees, organized into five categories: Laying the Groundwork, Preparing for Work, Getting to and Accessing Work Opportunities, Staying at Work, and Supporting Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship.

**Laying the Groundwork**

1. States are encouraged to be model employers of people with disabilities, enacting policies that increase disability inclusion in the civil-sector workforce and serving as an example for private-sector employers to follow.

2. States can build capacity of private- and nonprofit-sector employers to engage in disability inclusion efforts. States can adopt policies that incentivize hiring of workers with disabilities and provide financial supports and technical assistance.

3. States are encouraged to have an external and internal focus on disability awareness, including disability etiquette. In developing awareness around disabilities, the focus should be cross-disability and include both visible and hidden disabilities.

4. States can implement policies that optimize resources and services through interagency coordination, collaboration, and blending/braiding of funding and implementation of robust performance measures.

**Preparing for Work**

5. States can promote education and career-readiness policies and strategies that expect and prepare all youth, including those with disabilities, to enter the workforce.

6. States can facilitate skill development and job exploration opportunities—such as work-based learning—for youth and young adults, including those with disabilities, that align with education and career development planning and meet businesses’ predicated workforce needs.

7. States can promote meaningful family engagement throughout the education and career-development process for youth and young adults, including those with disabilities.
Laying the Groundwork
The following policy options can be grouped into four thematic goals—leading by example as a model employer of people with disabilities, maximizing workforce development by engaging with employers, having both an internal and external focus on disability awareness, and optimizing agency services and resources.

States are encouraged to be model employers of people with disabilities, enacting policies that increase disability inclusion in the civil-sector workforce and serving as an example for private-sector employers to follow.

Governors and state legislatures increasingly recognize the role state government can play in advancing the recruitment, hiring, retention and advancement of people with disabilities through their own employment policies. This policy framework highlights the human capital development and human resources management strategies that many states are adopting in their quest to become model employers of people with disabilities. The policies described below address public-sector strategies aimed at employing people with disabilities, emphasizing that the hiring, retention, advancement, professional development and training of others in the workplace are important to the state becoming and maintaining its status as a model employer.

A Use formal mechanisms to enact policies committing states to be model employers of people with disabilities. These may include executive orders, legislation or both.
and developing strategies to create an inclusive work environment in state government, consists of members from various state agencies, including members from the Governor’s Council on Disabilities and Special Education, the State Division of Personnel and Labor Relations, the State ADA Coordinator’s office, and the State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

**Washington** Gov. Jay Inslee issued an executive order directing the Office of Financial Management to convene a task force for the purpose of assisting state agencies with recruitment and retention of persons with disabilities. The task force is to provide: (1) policy options on how to achieve the employment targets established in the executive order; and (2) guidance and other support to agencies and institutions of higher education on recruitment, retention, accommodation and accessibility for people with disabilities. The task force also will engage model private-sector companies to share strategies, exchange best practices and provide technical assistance to boost the employment of people with disabilities in all sectors.

In **New Mexico**, the Governor’s Commission on Disability “serves as a liaison and advisor to the governor and legislature on disability issues.” The commission comprises statutory and appointed members and is supported by staff members.

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**Maryland: Targeting Disability at the Highest Levels of Government**

In 2004, the Maryland General Assembly passed Senate Bill 188, elevating the state agency Office for Individuals with Disabilities to the cabinet-level Maryland Department of Disabilities, or MDOD. With Gov. Robert Ehrlich’s approval of the bill, Maryland became the first and only state in the nation to establish a cabinet-level department representing cross-disability interests at the highest levels of state government. The legislation charges MDOD with coordinating and improving the delivery of services to individuals with disabilities throughout the state of Maryland.

MDOD coordinates government services for people with disabilities through required collaboration with all of its sister state agencies and oversees the development of a state disabilities plan to ensure consistent disability policy development across all state departments. The department reviews and refocuses budget priorities and regulatory provisions governing services to people with disabilities, implements performance outcomes and assists state agencies in securing public and private disability-related grant funding.

MDOD also supports agency efforts to identify and remove policy and program barriers preventing full inclusion of Marylanders with disabilities into various aspects of community life. MDOD currently targets its community inclusion efforts at programs and policies dealing with accessible housing, employment, transitioning youth, community living, technology assistance, barrier free living, and transportation access. Recent MDOD successes include a pilot effort to provide four-year post-secondary educational opportunities to individuals with intellectual disabilities and a program allowing working individuals with disabilities to purchase Medicaid at a substantially reduced rate and with expanded asset and income eligibility limits.

In addition to its collaborative role within the Administration, it works closely with the Maryland General Assembly in reviewing proposed bills and fiscal notes and serves as a non-partisan source of technical assistance and outreach for the state’s 141 delegates and 47 state senators. Since its creation, MDOD has served as a source of content expertise for the Administration and the General Assembly on a range of disability-related issues, greatly increasing efficiencies and consistencies in policy development efforts between Maryland’s executive branch and legislative branch and encouraging a more unified state response to the needs of its citizens with disabilities.
**Washington** Gov. Jay Inslee, recognizing that state government is one of the largest employers in the state, issued an executive order setting the goal that by June 30, 2017, 5 percent of the state’s workforce will be people with disabilities. Under the order, each cabinet-level agency must develop an annual employment plan to address the underrepresentation of people with disabilities in their agency and report progress.

**Survey and Reporting Mechanisms**

Alaska, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota and Washington have reporting mechanisms in place.

The **Alaska** Governor’s Council on Disabilities and Special Education conducted a survey of state workers in 2011 in order to continue to monitor the representation of employees with disabilities in Alaska state government and solicit recommendations for improvement. Survey findings revealed important information on the state’s efforts related to increasing the employment of persons with disabilities, including that they are in fact appropriately represented in the state’s workforce. Recommendations offered by the council include: increasing training on the ADA for managers and supervisors, increasing flexibility through variable work schedules and job-sharing opportunities, improving workplace accessibility, developing targeted recruitment and retention programs for individuals with disabilities, and offering health and wellness benefits and programs.

**Illinois**’ departments of Human Rights, Human Services and Central Management Services, and the Interagency Committee on Employees with Disabilities and other state agencies conduct an ongoing online work disability survey. The purpose of the survey is to give employees with disabilities an opportunity to self-identify and determine for whom emergency evacuation assistance may be necessary.

**Kansas**’ 2010 Executive Order 10-10 requires the collection of baseline data on people with disabilities followed by annual reporting on the numbers of persons employed and their fiscal impact on the state.

**In Maine**, a 2006 executive order requires a survey of employees to better understand the prevalence of employees with disabilities in state government. Survey findings revealed that more employees with disabilities were working in state government compared with other employed adults with disabilities. Of these, more than half had requested job accommodations—mostly adjustments to the work schedule and/or a flexible work schedule or location—80 percent of whom received them. Additional supports reported by respondents included special equipment and a supportive employer and co-workers.

In an effort to collect better baseline data on current employees with disabilities, **Massachusetts** surveyed participants regarding self-identification, disclosure and reasonable accommodation, the employment pipeline, and agency culture.

**Minnesota**’s Executive Order 14-14 to increase state government employment of people with disabilities requires state agencies to submit an affirmative action plan with: a policy statement; assignment of affirmative action/equal employment opportunity responsibilities, including a workforce analysis, goals, objectives and timetable for completion; and measures to facilitate implementation and development of internal audit and reporting systems. Technical assistance is provided to each state agency to develop the plans.

**Washington** enacted House Bill 1636 in 2015, requiring all state agencies with 100 or more employees to provide an annual report to the legislature with data related to the percentage of individuals with disabilities in the agency’s workforce, including the number of new hires employed from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation services or the Department of Services for the Blind. The legislation also requires that each covered agency report to the legislature regarding opportunities for internships that would have the possibility of leading to permanent placement in entry-level positions.
Illinois offers an Accommodated Testing Program to ensure that applicants with disabilities can access the exams necessary for state government positions. The Accommodated Testing Program provides individuals with disabilities access to a number of on-site examination accommodations at state assessment centers. The Successful Disability, or SD, Opportunity Program establishes an alternative examination process for individuals with disabilities who are consumers of the state’s Division of Rehabilitation Services. The SD program provides the applicant with an SD score that replaces standard scoring on civil service exams, places the individual on an SD program list and qualifies the individual for agency hiring considerations when the SD program list is requested. The Alternative Employment Program establishes a reassignment process for state employees on temporary leave for a disability and who can no longer perform the requirements of their current assignment. Employees on temporary disability leave may request to be reassigned to another state position for which they are qualified to perform a six-month probationary assessment. All three programs are facilitated by Central Management Services and established under statutory language of Illinois Public Act 96-0078 of 1996.

New York operates the Governor’s Program to Hire Individuals and Veterans with Disabilities. Through Section 55-b of the New York State Civil Service Law, up to 1,200 competitive civil service positions can be reserved for appointment of certified and qualified individuals with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities interested in consideration for Section 55-b appointments can seek eligibility certification with the Employee Health Service of the New York Department of Civil Service. Eligibility is determined by employment history and degree of functional limitation caused by the disability condition and may require a physical examination by a department physician. Once certified, qualified individuals may express interest in entry-level positions directly to agencies and be considered based on qualifications and interviews, forgoing civil service examinations.

Oklahoma’s Optional Program for Hiring Applicants with Disabilities, administered by the state’s Human Capital Management, or HCM, division, provides for an alternative certification process for civil service. Under Oklahoma Statute §74-840-4.12, individuals with disabilities may seek certification from the state Department of Rehabilitation Services, thereby waiving all tests related to civil service eligibility. Upon successful certification, individuals with disabilities may apply to job classifications of interest. HCM then makes eligibility determinations and adds the individual to eligibility lists for the corresponding job classifications, from which agencies can request referrals. Applicants hired through this program are eligible for permanent status in the classified service upon successful completion of a probationary period.

Utah established the Alternative State Application Program, or ASAP, for individuals with disabilities in 2010 through House Bill 17, allowing for on-the-job examinations in lieu of civil service testing. Utah administrative guidance allows for almost all competitive job postings in state government positions to be eligible for ASAP appointment. Interested individuals with disabilities can receive certification by providing documentation of disability and meeting the minimum qualifications of the job posting. Interested individuals are responsible for identifying eligible
become certified for participation in the provisional hiring program through Alaska's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, which ensures that the individual meets the minimum qualifications of the position and the requirements for being severely disabled. The provisional hire program does not establish a hiring preference for individuals with severe disabilities, and the hiring manager can elect to interview the qualified individual before beginning the provisional hire process and stop the provisional hire process at any time.

In Delaware, a modest number of positions are dedicated to people with disabilities throughout the state, enabling agencies to provide paid training and work opportunities for applicants seeking the experience and learning that comes with employment. Some of these are short term, limited to a year, while others are longer term and enable a person with a disability to attach to individual state agencies.

In Illinois, applicants with severe disabilities may be eligible for supported employment during a trial work period, with the possibility of permanent employment thereafter.

Maine offers a trial work period of up to one year for candidates certified by vocational rehabilitation. Mandatory interviews can also help otherwise-qualified applicants with disabilities “get a foot in the door” in state government.

Maryland has established the Quality, Understanding, Excellence, Success and Training Program, or Quest, which provides internships in state government for students with disabilities. These internships generally last three months, are voluntary and pay a stipend.

Utah has established the Alternative State Application Program, or ASAP, under which qualified candidates with disabilities may be appointed to fill vacant positions for a six-month trial examination period. Upon completion of the examination period, the worker would then be in the position during the state’s customary probation period.

Mandatory Interviews
The state of Vermont operates a mandatory interview process for state employment, available to any “qualified individual with a disability” as conforming to the ADA definition. Applicants may complete a short form indicating their impairment, how their impairment substantially limits major life activities and providing documentation of impairment(s) and substantial limitations from a doctor, other medical professional or vocational rehabilitation counselor. Upon verification and approval from the state’s Department of Human Resources, a qualified individual with a disability will then be granted mandatory interview status. When an applicant with mandatory interview status meets the minimum qualification standards for a posting and applies to that posting, their name is automatically added to the candidate referral list and the hiring authority is required to offer an interview.

Formal Certification Period
State vocational rehabilitation agencies, public educational institutions and other agencies within state government already are working with skilled youth and adults seeking to enter or re-enter the workforce. State human resources agencies can make sure they have formalized partnerships with these entities to maximize their pool of potential workers. One step in this direction is ensuring that staff and recipients of vocational rehabilitation services are proficient in the application process for state government jobs.

Some states, such as Illinois and Maine, have more formal partnerships with vocational rehabilitation, in which vocational rehabilitation certifies trained and work-ready candidates for trial work periods, civil service exam exemption or special appointment lists. These partnerships can also support human resource professionals in creating inclusive job announcements and qualification standards that encourage applicants with disabilities to apply.
Oklahoma passed House Bill 2062 in 2013 to enact a statewide telework program and included language requiring the development of policies and guidance on the use of telework as a workplace accommodation for employees with disabilities.

Vermont utilizes a rigorous and streamlined Request for Reasonable Accommodation process for state employee accommodation requests. Vermont’s process involves a review committee for accommodations exceeding $500 and when there is a disagreement between department and employee on the reasonable accommodation offered or denial of a request at the department level.

E Implement Stay-at-Work, Return-to-Work programs, policies and practices for state employment. Disabilities may develop and vary in effects throughout a state employee’s tenure. As a model employer, the state should recognize that disabilities may change in their impact over time, or develop suddenly as a result of illness or injury. States can intervene early through stay-at-work and return-to-work programs with their own employees through the administration of health insurance, disability insurance and other benefits such as employee assistance programs, or EAPs.

Note: A substantial minority of state and local employees have short-and long-term disability insurance—23 and 34 percent in 2007, respectively. [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2008].

F Provide training and information to state personnel. While states may have robust policies and procedures to attract and retain employees with disabilities, it is important to offer training to direct supervisors and other employees regarding these policies to maximize implementation. Train supervisors, managers and other employees regarding policies and procedures pertaining to applicants and employees with disabilities (e.g., reasonable accommodation procedures and disability etiquette).

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Delaware has enacted legislation establishing a return-to-work program for its state employees and appointed a return-to-work coordinator tasked with helping state workers stay at work or return to work after injury or illness.

Vermont’s Invest EAP program includes help with disability-related accommodations.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

All staff in Massachusetts state agencies must attend two levels of awareness training; the first involves diversity awareness and is completed in the first six months of employment, and the second—disability awareness—is completed within the first year of being hired.
A Provide technical assistance to and engage with businesses interested in employing individuals with disabilities. Expertise in private sector-specific challenges and opportunities should be developed and then communicated in a business-friendly manner. With the goal of increasing shared knowledge and collaboration, states should establish and/or reinforce connection points for businesses with public servants supporting those individuals with disabilities.

**Suggested Strategies**

i Written resources, including best practices, should be developed for and by those with business experience.

ii Dedicate staff with business expertise.

iii Provide a single point of contact to interact with the business sector who can help businesses navigate state agencies that support the employment of individuals with disabilities.

Note: The national network of the 80 state vocational rehabilitation programs supports a united or “one company” approach to working with business customers. As part of this, each state vocational rehabilitation, or VR, director has named a business consultant who functions as the designated point of contact for their agency. These 80 points of contact, through Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation—or CSAVR—leadership and support, form the National Employment Team, or NET. The NET’s vision statement is: To create a coordinated approach to serving business customers through a national VR team that specialized in employer development, business consulting and corporate relations.

iv Establish, expand and improve governor’s committees/commissions/boards that work for businesses interested in employing people with disabilities.

v Engage in a public awareness and education campaign highlighting success stories of businesses hiring people with disabilities.

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**Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities**

Ohio's Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities "works with partners in business, education and nonprofit organizations to facilitate customized employment plans for Ohioans with disabilities; help Ohio companies recruit and retain employees with disabilities; and is the sole agency administering the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs in Ohio." There are three bureaus under the OOD that work on services, vocational rehabilitation and disability determination. The program also emphasizes business engagement. The Annual Report showcases DisAbility Job Fairs, employers’ trainings, and fostering a peer-to-peer business organization.

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**EXAMPLES IN ACTION**

The Florida Governor’s Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities has established an employer help desk within the Abilities Work web portal, part of the Employ Florida Marketplace, to provide a single point of contact to assist employers in navigating state and federal disability support systems.

South Dakota’s Ability for Hire campaign, an initiative of the South Dakota Department of Human Services, provides links to critical resources and video testimonials from business owners on their own experiences and realized benefits of hiring people with disabilities. It should be noted that South Dakota is the state with the highest employment rate of people with disabilities.
The Microsoft Autism Hiring Program

The software company has created a program with the goal of increasing the percentage of its employees with disabilities. This particular program for individuals with autism begins with a two-week “academy” which allows candidates to work on projects in teams and show off their abilities in place of a more traditional interview process. Microsoft worked with other businesses and experts to develop their program.

D Explore convening a task force or summit bringing public and private interests together to discuss state disability employment issues. Utilize the task force or summit as an opportunity to identify business champions. Formalizing public-private conversations on this workforce development goal can increase buy in and ownership across sectors.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

In South Dakota, the Employment Works Task Force focused on strategies to specifically engage businesses. The task force included business community members, individuals with disabilities and family members, legislators, healthcare providers, nonprofit representatives, and staff from state government. The group identified successful strategies and actionable next steps to enhance employment.

The governor of Washington issued an executive order directing the Office of Financial Management to convene a task force for the purpose of assisting state agencies with recruitment and retention of people with disabilities. Because the state is one among many employers in Washington, the task force is engaging model private-sector companies to share strategies, exchange best practices and provide technical assistance to boost the employment of people with disabilities in all sectors.
F Use tax incentive policies to encourage businesses to increase disability inclusion. States have implemented a number of strategies to this end, including iterations of employment tax credits for firms hiring individuals with disabilities.

### EXAMPLES IN ACTION

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<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Employee Eligibility</th>
<th>Employer Income Tax Credit</th>
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<td><strong>Maryland</strong></td>
<td>• Veteran status&lt;br&gt;• Has disability according to ADA definition</td>
<td>Up to $2,700/year for two years for wages per qualifying employee&lt;br&gt;Additional $900/year for:&lt;br&gt;• Transportation&lt;br&gt;• Child care costs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modified: HB 473</td>
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<td><strong>New York</strong></td>
<td>• Receiving vocational rehabilitation services (with a written plan) from the state&lt;br&gt;• Or those who qualify for a (first year) federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit</td>
<td>Up to $2,100/person for the second year of employment (35 percent of first $6,000 wages)</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Tennessee</strong></td>
<td>• Persons with disabilities who are receiving state services directly related to their disability</td>
<td>One-time amounts of $2,000 (part-time) or $5,000 (full-time)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Iowa</strong></td>
<td>• Persons with disabilities</td>
<td>65 percent of wages paid in the first 12 months, up to $20,000 per employee</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Louisiana</strong></td>
<td>• People with intellectual and developmental disabilities&lt;br&gt;• Pilot program included 50 youth and 50 veterans</td>
<td>Up to 50 percent of gross wages during first four months of employment; subsequently, 30 percent of gross wages for following months</td>
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States are encouraged to have an external and internal focus on disability awareness, including disability etiquette. In developing awareness around disabilities, the focus should be cross-disability and include both visible and non-obvious disabilities.

State outreach and education related to disability should take a two-pronged approach—public awareness and professional development. The two strategies to consider below cover both of these areas.

**A States are encouraged to have an external and internal focus on disability awareness.**

Disability can be confusing, especially for people who don’t have a personal connection to it. Disability inclusion efforts might include etiquette training that teaches how to respectfully interact with individuals with disabilities or awareness initiatives communicating that disability is a natural and normal part of the human experience that in no way diminishes a person’s right to fully participate in all aspects of society. States can lead the way in promoting disability awareness both within their own state agencies as well as to the wider public. States should have an internal focus on disability awareness of all types of disabilities, including visible and non-obvious disabilities.

**Suggested Strategies**

i. State agencies should develop a disability awareness, etiquette and inclusion training and require all state employees to complete the training.

ii. Disability awareness should be embedded in all HR training and policy development efforts from the earliest design phases.

iii. States should leverage existing resources and networks to develop disability awareness, including working with their larger disability organizations on external communication and public awareness.

iv. States should require future legislation language to conform to terminology used in the ADA and subsequent federal policies.

**EXAMPLES IN ACTION**

A number of states, including Arizona, Indiana, Louisiana, North Dakota and Wyoming, have enacted legislation to change statutory language related to outdated or insensitive terminology referring to people with disabilities. Some states, including Alabama, Colorado, Idaho, Mississippi and Texas, have enacted legislation outlining a legislative intent for terminology use in bill language, with the legislation sometimes authorizing a state authority to update and conform existing statutes and regulations to the terminology guidance found in the bill.

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**Indiana Hosts Disability Awareness Month**

Every March since 1989, the Indiana Governor’s Council for People with Disabilities has hosted a statewide disability awareness month. Each year’s theme is unique, the latest one being “Inclusion is within Everybody’s Ability.” The 2016 calendar of activities included choir concerts, school fundraisers and awareness programs, library events, supportive service events and more.
States can implement policies that optimize resources and services through interagency coordination, collaboration and blending/braiding of funding, and implementation of robust performance measures.

While there are numerous state-operated programs and services available to support individuals with disabilities in their efforts to become and remain employed, they are too often uncoordinated and work in silos. Service providers are often supported by funding streams that have varying goals, priorities, outcome expectations and requirements. In order to achieve job seeker employment goals and respond to employer hiring needs, it is often necessary to access funds from more than one program, agency or funding stream. State agencies are faced with the challenge of developing effective strategies to blend and braid funding and services from these different programs and funding sources to help individuals with disabilities prepare for, secure and retain employment.

In addition to addressing the challenges regarding funding of services and programs, many states are facing the challenge of gathering and using data to measure programs’ achievement of employment goals.

Support policy alignment, collaboration, coordination and blending/blending of funding and services across all relevant state systems to facilitate competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities, including individuals with the most significant disabilities, through Employment First initiatives adopted through legislation and/or executive orders.

In order to best utilize the public supports aimed at producing positive employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, states must develop and implement practices and policies that maximize resources and combat duplication and complexity. Through policy alignment, collaboration, coordination and the braiding/blending of funds and services across applicable and relevant state agencies and systems—vocational rehabilitation, workforce development, Medicaid, commerce, developmental disabilities, mental health, small business development centers, education departments, others as appropriate—states will reduce complexity, more effectively provide supports, more efficiently utilize funds and resources, and ultimately better serve jobseekers with disabilities.

Note: Since 2011, the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy, or ODEP, has supported state governments in implementing systems-change efforts to adopt Employment First principles, an approach that urges publicly financed systems to align policies, service delivery practices and reimbursement structures to commit to competitive integrated employment as the priority option for youth and adults with disabilities. In order to better inform these efforts, ODEP launched the National Employment First Online Data & Policy website (http://employmentfirst.leadcenter.org), which shares information on state policies, practices, technical assistance initiatives and outcomes that are focused directly or indirectly on the employment of individuals with disabilities.

The Coalition for Workforce Diversity

UPS is a co-founder of the Coalition for Workforce Diversity, or CWD. Based out of Louisville, Kentucky, the CWD works to match workers with disabilities with more than 30 employers and 40 agencies, both governmental and nonprofit, to “provide individuals with disabilities an opportunity to work and prosper.” The Coalition doesn’t just help employers find employees; they also provide supportive services and resources, such as transportation, job training assistance and more to both potential employees and employers. The organizations with which the CWD partners include the public school district, nonprofit community organizations and a counseling service.
Blending pools dollars from multiple sources and makes them in some ways indistinguishable. Blended monies can be used to fund activities that frequently cannot be adequately funded from just one source.

Braiding is a funding and resource allocation strategy that taps into existing categorical funding streams to support unified initiatives. Funding streams remain visible and are used in common to produce greater strength, efficiency and/or effectiveness.

B Enhance cooperation and collaboration among state human resources and state agencies that work with people with disabilities by formalizing partnerships (e.g., review and refresh memoranda of understanding between vocational rehabilitation agencies and education, Medicaid, mental health and intellectual disabilities agencies, as required by Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended by the WIOA). Individuals with disabilities are frequently receiving supports and services through a number of state programs, often being administered through multiple state agencies and departments. The complexity of navigating these various programs can be cumbersome and prevent effective service delivery and positive outcomes for jobseekers with disabilities. Ensuring cooperation and collaboration among the various state agencies that provide supports and services for people with disabilities can act to mitigate these complexities and yield more favorable outcomes.

Note: All state vocational rehabilitation agencies are required by Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and implementing regulations [34 CFR 361.24] to enter into cooperative agreements with agencies administering home and community-based services programs and state agencies providing services to individuals with intellectual and development disabilities. State VR agencies are also required to enter into collaborative agreements with other public agencies to assist in the provision of supported employment services and extended services. [34 CFR 363.50]

EXAMPLES IN ACTION
Ohio has undertaken efforts to enhance collaboration: “In FY 2013, OOD, in partnership with the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD), established a dual certification program as part of the Employment First Partnership Agreement. This dual certification program is designed to ensure continuity of services and allow for more successful transition from time-limited to long-term supports.”
Preparing for Work
States can promote education and career readiness policies and strategies that expect and prepare all youth, including those with disabilities, to enter the workforce.

Today’s youth with disabilities have grown up in a world of increased opportunities and expectations of access under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA and ADA. Despite the opportunities provided through these federal laws, however, youth with disabilities are still less likely than their nondisabled peers to graduate from high school, enroll in college, graduate from college and enter the workforce. To address the need to support the future employability of all youth, including youth with disabilities, nearly all states have embraced college and career readiness, or CCR, as a primary goal for all high school students and adopted some form of CCR programming in their public school curriculum. Many states have worked to make their college and career readiness programs more inclusive of students with disabilities.

Like earlier educational policy trends designed to promote greater integration of students with disabilities into general classrooms with their non-disabled peers, state CCR curricula can advance disability inclusion efforts by ensuring the accessibility of in-school programming, the opportunity to explore career paths in inclusive settings, and the coordination and alignment of Individual Education Programs or IEPs with CCR planning services. Some states are addressing CCR for their students with disabilities by precluding or limiting the use of alternative graduation credential options like certificates of completion and modified diplomas that often do not meet the entrance standards of institutions of higher education and do not communicate job readiness to employers.

A Promote comprehensive education and career development plans that capitalize on youths’ skills, abilities, and career and academic goals. Upon graduation, these comprehensive plans should result in the conferring of meaningful credentials that provide access to and prepare youth for their post-secondary education or career goals.

Note: Currently, 44 states and the District of Columbia require or strongly encourage schools to implement Individualized Learning Plans or ILPs as a means of facilitating college and career readiness among youth with and without disabilities.

Note: The NCWD/Y has prepared a guide entitled, “Designing Statewide Career Development Strategies and Programs,” that highlights state initiatives and provides details and links to resources in numerous states. The guide is designed to support states in their efforts to increase college and career readiness among all youth, including youth with disabilities, by providing functional and pragmatic guidance on implementing quality comprehensive systems of career development. The guide consists of two parts. Part one serves as a primer to quality youth career development

The Specialists

Through his experiences with his own son who has autism, a Danish man started a company called Specialisterne (that’s Danish for “specialists”) that employs and trains mostly individuals with autism. The founder saw the unique, untapped talent pool; his company consults on IT projects. The company has come to the USA in the form of a foundation that has worked with household names in the technology sector. In the United States, the organization has a high school program. The Young Innovators Program “introduce[s] students [with autism] to the Specialisterne 4-Week Training program which has prepared adults with autism for jobs in four states in the US and 12 countries.”
of the child under the applicable components of the child's IEP that focus on the child’s course of study." The transition services plan resulting from this IEP and ILP alignment must be reviewed and updated annually.

**Rhode Island** provides that the ILP must coordinate with IEPs, 504s, PLPs, and ELL programs. The ILP supports changes in instructional placements and key transitions including middle level to high school, high school to post-secondary placement, and transfer across schools and districts.

**Coordinated, Person-Centered Career Readiness Approaches**

In 2005, the **South Carolina** General Assembly passed the Education and Economic Development Act, requiring all public school districts to develop a curriculum that is organized around personal pathways to success for all students. The state developed the law to provide students with strong academic and real-world problem-solving skills. Schools are required to organize curricula around a minimum of three career clusters and establish individual graduation plans for all students. Career readiness efforts are built into every phase of the student’s education, with career awareness and exploration activities in grades one through five, career cluster selection and graduation plan development in grades six through eight, and career counseling and declaration of academic focus in high school.

**Oregon** focuses on a person-centered planning model that is embedded throughout their public education, workforce and social services systems. Oregon, as part of its Secondary Transition planning manual, includes person-centered planning guidance and resources to teachers.

Several states have developed “toolkits” and/or comprehensive guidance for career development, including **Colorado, Connecticut,** and **Minnesota.**

**Kentucky** has developed a Unified Strategy for College and Career Readiness to implement Senate Bill 1 (2009).
EXAMPLES IN ACTION

**Arizona** Department of Education Board Rule R7-2-302.05 requires schools to develop and annually review an Education and Career Action Plan or ECAP for all students grades 9–12. This ECAP requirement includes students with disabilities, and the Arizona Department of Education has published an ECAP and IEP crosswalk document, providing guidance to teachers, parents and students on how to effectively coordinate career readiness and special education planning activities.

**Colorado**’s Board of Education promulgates and updates rules, 1 CCR 301-81, on Individual Career and Academic Plan or ICAP requirements, as required in Senate Bill 256, passed in 2009. The Colorado Department of Education has clearly communicated that ICAPs are required for all students in grades 9–12, including students receiving special education services.

The **Connecticut** Department of Education’s Bureau of Special Education released guidance on Student Success Plans or SSPs that clearly indicates students with disabilities should be included in the state’s career readiness programming and that SSP delivery should be accessible. The Department of Education suggests that SSP documents be attached to IEPs and that the SSP should help inform to annual review and updating of the IEP.

**Delaware**, through 14 DE Admin Code 925, ensures that every IEP transition plan includes “[t]he child’s strengths, interests, and postsecondary preferences, and plans to make application to high school and career technical educational programs.” The administrative regulations also require that IEP teams include the student’s career technical education teacher or coordinator when that student is actively or planning to be involved in career and technical education programming.

**Wisconsin**, through Department of Public Instruction administrative rule Chapter 26, provides that, “If a pupil is a child with a disability, the pupil’s academic and career plan shall be made available to the pupil’s individual education program team. The pupil’s individualized education program team may, if appropriate, take the pupil’s academic and career plan into account when developing the pupil’s transition services.”

**Colorado, Delaware, Kentucky** and **Wisconsin** have statutory or regulatory language allowing transition planning efforts to begin earlier than age 16 (the maximum age under the IDEA).

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C Strengthen the capacity of education and career development professionals to design and implement evidence-based, inclusive programs and strategies.

**Suggested Strategies**

1. Provide statewide professional development opportunities on family engagement and person-centered career planning for professionals serving youth.

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**EXAMPLES IN ACTION**

In **Arizona**, the Department of Education’s Secondary Transition team provides in-person trainings to educators, parents, students and other relevant individuals on various components of the IEP process and its relationship to college and career readiness efforts, including how to fully utilize the ECAP and the Arizona Career Information System or AzCIS.

**Alaska** and **Illinois** have statewide initiatives to train educators in family engagement.
Pennsylvania Prioritizes Work Experiences

Pennsylvania has passed a law making work experience a priority for students with disabilities and allocating more resources to that end. According to a press release, “The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, with 15 district offices across the state, partners with local agencies, educators and employers to establish work experiences that meet the needs of both student and business.” The office will work with schools and businesses to facilitate professional development and job placement.

A Expand the availability of inclusive work-based learning experiences where eligibility is not contingent on enrollment or participation in an educational program or institution. States can encourage businesses to offer work-based learning.

Suggested Strategies

i Foster the establishment of business-led advisory groups to guide development of inclusive work-based learning experiences that are attractive to both businesses and youth/young adults.

ii Provide incentives for business intermediaries to offer guidance (i.e., technical assistance) around the ADA, Fair Labor Standards Act, or FLSA and other laws, to businesses participating in work based learning experiences.

iii Support public-private partnerships that facilitate employer recruitment and student placement in meaningful, work-based learning opportunities.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Illinois has implemented a career development process with the three phases of Exploring, Planning, and Transitioning. Helping students access work-based learning opportunities is an important part of the Transition stage that begins in 10th grade.

Kentucky’s Department of Education released a guide for schools to use when implementing high-quality work-based learning initiatives. In the state, work-based learning is outlined in 704 KAR 3:305, Minimum Requirements for High School Graduation, which encourages schools to build their capacity to engage the disengaged and stretch the learning of every student through credit-bearing work-based learning.

South Carolina’s career readiness program has an emphasis on internships, job shadowing, mentoring, and work-based learning and related classroom instruction.

In the early 1990s, Wisconsin implemented a youth apprenticeship program that is now the largest apprenticeship opportunity for high school students in the United States. The program consists of two years in which juniors and seniors participate in work-based learning and related coursework, often with college credit.

Learning the Ropes with CVS

CVS Health partnered with the commonwealth of Virginia to create a mock CVS pharmacy in the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center, which is used to teach youth with disabilities essential skills for working in retail.
States can promote meaningful family engagement throughout the education and career development process for youth and young adults, including those with disabilities.

Many states are implementing family engagement initiatives, recognizing their positive outcomes for students, including increased motivation, reduced behavioral problems and improved social-emotional adjustment. All students benefit from family engagement, but it can be an especially crucial part of ensuring that students with disabilities are receiving access to the same opportunities as their non-disabled peers. Improving family engagement in the career development process also raises families’ awareness of students’ postsecondary goals, enabling families to support their students’ career and life goals more effectively, identify critical college and career planning and management skills and evaluate postsecondary training and education options for their children.

Starbucks Supports Families with Children with Disabilities

Starbucks provides benefits for employees that are parents of children with disabilities, which includes an “autism assist program.” They’ve removed age limits for behavioral therapy for children, as well.

While evidence suggests that parents of a student with a disability are as likely to be engaged in school activities and more likely to provide homework support than parents of a student without a disability, many families of a student with a disability report expectations for employment and educational achievement far below average work and graduation outcomes for the disability population. State policymakers can look to harness these high expectations and robust family engagement to cultivate parents that are well-informed and well-prepared advocates for their child’s future educational and career success. These capacity-building activities can include promoting greater involvement in the IEP and career exploration and workforce development planning process, providing extensive training and technical assistance to parents on career and college readiness skills and navigating workforce and higher education systems.

A Encourage the development and adoption of comprehensive training for parents and families that provides them with the appropriate knowledge to support youth with disabilities in navigating the education and career development process.

Suggested Strategies

i Use data to encourage on-time high school completion, encourage parental advocacy to facilitate student success, and provide coursework strategies that promote pathways to college or career readiness.

ii Develop materials for individuals, families and guardians that are free of jargon, easy to understand, culturally sensitive and not overly reliant on technology that may not be available to all.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Examples of states that provide training and have developed materials for families and guardians in family engagement include Alaska, Illinois, Kentucky, Pennsylvania and South Carolina.

Nevada has trained parents to use data to monitor high schools students for on time graduation.
B Afford families, including families with children with disabilities, opportunities to serve as advisers in the design of career and workforce development programs and strategies.

Note: Engaging Families in Education, a July 2015 policy brief from NCSL, highlights multiple state level efforts to engage families in education.

C Engage families in education and career development planning to increase their capacity to better assist youth in navigating the career development process and maximize learning opportunities.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION
States with family engagement frameworks include Alaska, California and Illinois.

The states below have family engagement strategies through enacted legislation:

» Nevada SB 474 provides training for teachers and paraprofessionals on working with parent liaisons in public schools to carry out strategies and practices for effective parental involvement and family engagement.

» Utah HB 403 amends provisions related to the state’s pilot online school survey program and includes a survey for parents to evaluate their children’s schools and administrators, including whether the school or administrators solicit parent involvement in the school.
Getting to and Accessing Work Opportunities
Policy Options

The Task Force identified three keys to success that inform the policy options focused on supporting individuals with disabilities as they navigate the logistics of getting to work. Accessibility in transportation, technology and the built environment are fundamental to any workforce development effort targeting people with disabilities.

States are encouraged to ensure that transportation is widely available, reliable, affordable and accessible to people with disabilities in order to support access to the workplace.

Government, businesses and the community can work with individuals and their families to overcome barriers to transportation and accessibility challenges posed by disability by leveraging transportation programs, community planning and accommodating assistive device needs in vehicles and physical transit station sites.

A States are encouraged to adopt policies that prioritize transportation options that are reliable and accessible for individuals with disabilities, as well as alternative strategies that address and mitigate challenges for people with disabilities. For example, states could consider policies that enable individuals with disabilities to work remotely, when appropriate, thereby circumventing existing transportation barriers.

Suggested Strategies

i Ensuring that the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities are met through timely, reliable, accessible and affordable solutions that adequately address both rural and urban transportation requirements.

ii Enacting policies that enable remote workplace participation, where appropriate, by increasing the use of technologies such as telework, telemedicine, online self-serve government and online education.

iii Implementing strategies to ensure that emerging transportation technologies like autonomous vehicles, way-finding and navigation are accessible and inclusive of the needs of people with disabilities.

iv Facilitating communities and transportation providers to partner with taxi, rideshare and TNCs, etc. to help expand transportation options for people with disabilities.

v Ensuring that state and local transportation systems maintain or create coordination strategies to increase transportation accessibility and availability. Implement transportation coordination councils at the appropriate levels of government to encourage greater coordination of local transportation resources and creating mechanisms for communicating those resources to riders.

vi Eliciting participation from people with disabilities to advise transportation advisory bodies during decision-making processes.
EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Idaho uses two statewide coordinating council groups to advise the state’s public transportation efforts. The Idaho Interagency Working Group comprises the state Transportation Department and other executive branch agency representatives, with the responsibility to “advise and assist the department in analyzing public transportation needs, identifying areas for coordination, and developing strategies for eliminating procedural and regulatory barriers to coordination at the state level.” The Idaho Public Transportation Advisory Council comprises representatives from wide ranging stakeholder groups.

Wyoming addresses statewide and rural transportation access needs for workers with disabilities through regional transportation voucher programs. These regional voucher programs are operated by Wyoming independent living centers, Wyoming Independent Living Rehabilitation and Wyoming Services for Independent Living, with funding support by the state.


Georgia, Maryland (Md. State Personnel and Pensions Code §2-308) and Oklahoma (Okla. Stat. tit. 62, § 34.11.7) have implemented telework programs or pilot studies for state agency employees.

Georgia implemented the Work Away telework program for state agencies. The Work Away telework program manual provides guidance and screening criteria to managers on the kinds of work and qualifications of workers best suited to benefit from and be productive in telework situations. The program also includes telework work-space safety and ergonomic requirements for the employee.

Maryland state agencies, under state law established in House Bill 136 (2013), have a goal of 15 percent employee telework program participation.

The Oklahoma telework pilot program requires state agencies requesting leasing or purchase of additional office space to obtain certification from the State Governmental Technology Applications Review Board that the physical office space is necessary and telework has been eliminated as a viable alternative. The Oklahoma Office of Management and Enterprise Services, responsible for overseeing the telework pilot program, has recently formalized a statewide agency telework policy.

Numerous Transit Authorities are considering partnerships with taxis and TNCs to provide supplemental paratransit services, including Boston’s Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority, or MBTA; Washington, D.C.’s Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, or MATA; and New York City’s Metropolitan Transit Authority, or MTA.

Boston’s MBTA is currently operating a taxi paratransit pilot study in the hopes of increasing service quality to riders and cost-savings to the Boston paratransit program, known as The Ride. MBTA recently indicated that TNCs, including Uber and Lyft, will be included in the taxi paratransit initiative and anticipate significant cost savings to the paratransit program as a result of the new initiative.

Alaska, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Washington and West Virginia all have formal policies requiring disability representation on transportation advisory or coordinating councils.
States can adopt policies that support accessibility in the workplace, particularly related to accessible information and communication technologies, or ICT, and assistive technologies.

In the employment context, inaccessible technology limits opportunities for people with disabilities to get hired and diminishes career success and advancement possibilities when they can’t access basic workplace tools.

Accessible ICT and assistive technology are critical factors in ensuring fuller participation by people with disabilities in the workforce, both in terms of getting to a job and in succeeding once in the workplace. Public policies that foster accessible ICT solutions and the availability of assistive technology in the workplace can positively impact states’ budgets, economies and workforce development efforts by increasing the employability of people with disabilities.

Encourage employers to take steps to level the playing field for employees with disabilities by ensuring the adoption of accessible ICT technology and supporting the use of assistive technology including, but not limited to, personalized assistive technology.

Accessibility and Internal and External Focus at IBM

IBM has a chief accessibility officer, who works both on accessibility in their technology products, but also internally on HR questions. In an interview with the Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology, IBM’s CAO Frances West describes their efforts: “One of the solutions we helped develop is an online tool called Accessible Workplace Connection. It’s a web-based, global workplace accommodation management solution that provides employees and their managers with a streamlined process of requesting reasonable accommodations to enable them to be optimally productive in their jobs. This one-stop resource for employees with permanent or temporary disabilities or medical conditions is designed so accommodations can be requested, delivered, changed, supported and maintained effectively and efficiently.”

Maine Funds Loans for Assistive Devices

mPower, an organization in Maine, provides a loan program that is funded through two bond issues that were approved by state voters. According to the organization, “This makes mPower the only citizen-funded type loan program in the country.” They report that their loans, which are made to individuals and businesses to purchase assistive devices, have totaled more than $20 million over the course of 23 years.

Suggested Strategies

- Accelerating efforts to expand high-speed broadband networks and similar advanced and emerging communication infrastructure into underserved areas to enable individuals with disabilities to use the technology they need.

- Requiring the standardization of job application programs at state agencies to make the application process more accessible for all applicants, and encouraging private employers to do the same.

- Promoting digital literacy and accessible technology options that can increase workplace participation for individuals with disabilities.
Elevate the importance of accessibility as a primary policy and program consideration in the design, development and procurement of technology systems. Where technical standards for accessibility do not exist, adopt user-centered functional performance criteria for all disability types.

**EXAMPLES IN ACTION**

**Alabama**'s IT Universal Accessibility Standard specifies that “Just as environmental obstacles can inhibit individuals with certain disabilities, Internet use can also present obstacles for persons with certain disabilities.” The object of the policy is to “to advise agencies on the use of the minimum requirements for online accessibility for all State of Alabama web sites that comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.”

**Arizona**, through state statute, recognizes the need to improve accessibility of ICT in order to “increase the successful employment and access to government services” for individuals with disabilities. The statute directs each budget unit of the state to ensure that any information technology developed, procured, maintained or used by the budget unit provides accessibility comparable to and in line with the accessibility standards of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.

**California**'s IT accessibility policy explains that “it is the policy of the State of California that information and services within State Government, and provided via electronic and information technology, be accessible to people with disabilities.” The policy directs state agencies to comply with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination against individuals with disabilities, including laws outlining accessibility requirements for electronic and information technologies. State agencies must ensure that “their agency/state entity public Web sites are accessible to both the general public and that their internal agency/state entity electronic and IT systems are accessible by state employees, including persons with disabilities.” The policy requires all electronic or information technologies developed, purchased, maintained or used by state agencies comply with the accessibility requirements Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. The policy also extends these compliance requirements to state contractors.

**Kentucky** recognizes the relationship between full participation in the workplace and community and the need to ensure accessible ICT, legislating that individuals with disabilities have a right to full participation of life in the commonwealth, which includes the use of advanced technology by employees, program participants and members of the public.

**Maine**'s State Web Accessibility and Usability Policy reasserts the state’s commitment to the “Guiding Principles of Universal Access to Information” for all Maine’s state government web sites.

**New York** explains the benefits of accessible ICT: “The benefits of the policy [establishing minimum accessibility requirements] will be a more fully inclusive state workforce and increased availability of governmental services to all members of the public.”

**New Hampshire**’s Web Accessibility Initiative requires all state agencies to develop and maintain web and mobile sites that follow universal access standards that conform to regulations from Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. The New Hampshire initiative also applies to all web and mobile state job applications, seeking to remove barriers to application and hiring for individuals with disabilities.
EXAMPLES IN ACTION

**Indiana**'s boilerplate for state contractors includes a provision requiring all contractors to ensure that their hardware, software and services adhere to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and IC §4-13.1-3. The state is permitted to terminate a contract with any contractor that fails to comply with these requirements.

**Kentucky**'s access clause specifies that all alternative and nonvisual access standards must include the following minimum specifications:

- Effective, interactive control and use of technology, including the operating system, applications programs and format of the data, shall be readily achievable by alternative and nonvisual means;

- The technology equipped for alternative and nonvisual access must be compatible with IT used by other individuals with whom the individual with a disability must interact;

- Alternative and nonvisual access technology must be integrated into networks used to share communications among employees, program participants and the public; and

- The technology for alternative or nonvisual access must be able to provide equal access to telecommunications or other interconnected network services used by persons who are not disabled.

**Massachusetts** provides accessibility contract language required in any solicitations issued by executive department agencies for new systems or major upgrades of existing systems. The language includes:

- Mandatory vendor compliance with the state's Enterprise Information Technology Accessibility standards and MassIT Web Accessibility Standards, Version 2;
information dissemination methods, will comply with the [Nebraska Technology Access Clause] to the greatest extent possible. The clause requires:

» Availability of effective, interactive control and use of technology, including applications programs, for individuals with disabilities; and

» All accessible IT is compatible with technology used by other individuals with whom the individual with a disability must interact, able to be integrated into communications networks, and capable of providing equivalent access to interconnected network services used by the general population.

**Policy-Driven Adoption for Accessibility, or PDAA**

Minnesota is launching a PDAA pilot program, asking a number of vendors to complete a self-evaluation and use the feedback to analyze the model and determine next steps.

The Texas Department of Information Resources has developed a comprehensive framework and project plan to guide the organization’s IT accessibility program and initiatives and new Request for Offers using the PDAA tool (PDAA Additional Information Request).

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10 **States can enact policies that support worker access to the built environment, including housing, public transportation, infrastructure and physical design.**

A key aspect of entering and remaining in the workforce for people with disabilities is the design of the built environment, including the availability of accessible housing. A full range of potential barriers in the built environment exist, manifesting themselves differently depending on geographic location, available services and infrastructure arrangements. Without accessible built environments, including housing near jobs or accessible public transportation, otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities cannot benefit from the employment opportunities in their communities. Furthermore, accessible housing can allow individuals with disabilities to work from home successfully.

A **Enact policies that facilitate complete streets, livable communities, mixed-use development, transit-oriented development, shared mobility, mobility on demand, travel demand management and “Smart Cities” in order to reduce barriers to accessibility and promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in travel.** Work with local governments, economic development interests, and metropolitan and rural planning organizations to encourage businesses and residential living facilities to locate in areas with access to transit.

According to Smart Growth America, 31 state governments and the District of Columbia have adopted complete streets policies through some combination of legislation, executive order and agency directive.

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**Google Foundation Funds New Ideas**

The Google Foundation has awarded $20 million in grants through the Google Impact Challenge: Disabilities program to nonprofit organizations "with big ideas that use technology to expand opportunity and independence for people with disabilities."

The awardees are focusing their efforts on issues in accessibility across the globe. The projects range from affordable prosthetic technologies to improving methods of information sharing.
Staying at Work
Policy Options

The policy ideas for increasing retention of people with disabilities in the workplace generated by the task force revolve around one key concept—disability is not static. State SAW/RTW policies can be designed to support workers experiencing disability at any stage of life and/or adjusting to changes in disability throughout their lives.

1. States can develop policies to support employee retention in the event of injury, illness or a change in status of an individual's disability. Stay-at-work and return-to-work policies can support all workers as they continue in their careers and as new challenges present themselves.

A. Adopt SAW/RTW programs in the private and public sectors. As mentioned in a previous section, these programs can positively impact retention. States have crafted a variety of programs based on these policy concepts, both for state employees and more generally for all workers in the state.

Suggested Strategies

i. Expand the provision of retention services for workers with medical conditions by state VR agencies.

ii. Improve state employees’ access to evidence-based SAW/RTW services.

iii. Provide SAW/RTW services and incentives to short-term disability insurance, or STDI, claimants in states with mandatory STDI.

iv. Make regulatory, process or service changes to improve SAW/RTW services and incentives for workers with job-related conditions (e.g., in workers' compensation systems).

Supporting Life Changes at Work

Many companies have return-to-work policies and programs that support employees as they adapt to new situations or recover from life altering events. Some firms, such as Waste Management as reported by the Society for Human Resource Management, take a “comprehensive approach” to manage these transitions. Others also have implemented flexible work options—at Kraft Foods, manufacturing employees can use the “Fast Adapt” program to switch out shifts or share jobs to balance needs at home.

Washington State’s Policy Solution

In Washington, the Department of Labor and Industries has coordinated Centers of Occupational Health and Education, which take an interdisciplinary approach by coordinating services with not only employers and workers, but also health care providers, through this community-based program.
nervous system lupus left her paralyzed from the waist down in her mid-20s, necessary medications affected her ability to work full time in a classroom. For several years she tutored part time before embarking on a new career as a peer mentor at the ENDependence Center of Northern Virginia, or ECNV. In this role, she still uses her teaching talents, but in a slightly different manner—working with adults and helping them with life skills.

When Kumar became paralyzed, she was discharged from the hospital without learning many of the skills she needed to live independently. She credits her husband (then fiancée), who also uses a wheelchair, with being her role model and mentor; he encouraged her to gain those skills and reengage in work and the community.

Things Kumar regretfully had to learn the hard way, such as how to apply for disability benefits, or how to transfer into a wheelchair, is what she now teaches others. “Working as a peer mentor has been the best job I’ve had, because I am able to share what I know,” she says. “Many of my consumers are dealing with the things I dealt with years ago.”

Shortly after Kumar was hired by ECNV, she had surgery for a pressure ulcer. Both before and after the surgery, ECNV let her work from home as an accommodation. While recuperating, Kumar called in to meetings, which allowed her to remain part of the team and, more importantly, helped her keep a positive mindset while hospitalized.

In fact, much of Kumar’s job at ECNV can be done remotely, and she finds that she often gets more accomplished from home. “A lot of my job,” explains Kumar, “is doing research on the computer and helping people apply for different jobs or benefits, helping with resumes or interview skills, and peer counseling, which I can do over the phone.”

B Help businesses and individuals with disabilities navigate the complexities of benefits.

Note: The federal Work Incentives Planning and Assistance, or WIPA, grants provide states with resources that enable people with disabilities to know their options for maintaining SSI and SSDI benefits while working. The Social Security Administration has awarded 95 cooperative agreements throughout every state, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories of American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Some states, including Arizona, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, Virginia and Wisconsin, provide a state funding source to expand benefits and counseling to include individuals who currently are not on the SSI or SSDI rolls but are considering whether to apply for benefits or receive employment-related services and supports and choose to work.
Supporting Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship
Policy Options

The policy options centered on supporting self-employment and entrepreneurship strategies for people with disabilities through two key strategies—strengthening the viability of entrepreneurship/self-employment and including disability-owned businesses in state procurement, certification and financial support policies.

12 States are encouraged to ensure that state workforce development systems support entrepreneurship and self-employment as viable employment options for people with disabilities.

For individuals with disabilities, self-employment/entrepreneurship may provide greater work customizability and may even provide income that is equal to or greater than wages in traditional job placements. However, state workforce development systems often do not offer robust training in business ownership or lack the staff capacity and expertise to support self-employment as a placement strategy. States can include self-employment/entrepreneurship as an explicit element of the state workforce development strategy, thereby building agency capacity and providing another avenue for economic self-sufficiency for their clients with disabilities. States also benefit from stronger economies by preparing individuals with disabilities to be business owners and potential employers of other individuals with disabilities.

A Formalize entrepreneurship and self-employment as a viable employment strategy for individuals with disabilities in state workforce service delivery. A robust workforce development strategy for individuals with disabilities should include entrepreneurship and self-employment. States can support these options for individuals with disabilities by streamlining services and earmarking funding specifically for the professional development and training of entrepreneurs with disabilities.

Suggested Strategies

i Direct disability-specific (VR and workforce development, Medicaid, developmental disability, mental health) state agency services and funding to target entrepreneurship and self-employment training/supports and promote greater focus of entrepreneurship/self-employment in general state agency services.

• Set goals for entrepreneurship/self-employment funding and training. States can consider tying annual funding goals and training/placement goals to the national disability entrepreneurship rate.

• Report performance measurements and outcomes.

ii Establish entrepreneurship and self-employment as competitive, integrated employment in the language of employment-first policies.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Alaska, Florida and New York participated in DOL/ODEP’s START-UP demonstration project, which explored opportunities to coordinate state workforce agencies and community organizations in delivering customized employment discovery strategies targeting self-employment for people with disabilities.

California, Maine, Oklahoma, Rhode Island and Utah have established entrepreneurship and/or self-employment as competitive employment placements in statute or regulatory language.
In **Maryland**, the Department of Education’s Division of Rehabilitation Services, or DORS, administers the Reach Independence Through Self-Employment, or RISE, program. Started in 1997, the RISE program’s mission is “to present self-employment as a realistic and viable vocational option to individuals with significant disabilities who are eligible to receive DORS services.” RISE consumers are eligible, upon DORS approval of the consumer’s business plan, for a one-time investment—typically capped at $15,000—for the purchase of goods and services needed to successfully launch a new for-profit business or acquire/expand an existing business. The DORS RISE investment does not need to be paid back, but consumers must contribute a percentage of total costs in order to receive the investment award.

**Washington’s** Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, or DVR, has implemented a comprehensive assessment process through which individuals interested in self-employment DVR services must undergo a feasibility study and submit a detailed business plan for evaluation and acceptance before being provided with self-employment services. DVR contracts with business development professionals to support various elements of the DVR client’s self-employment training process.

### Walmart’s Supplier Diversity Mentoring Program

From its handbook: “The Supplier Diversity program aims to expand and advance our current pool of more than 3,000 diverse suppliers through education and mentoring. Our goal is to support capacity building for minority and women owned businesses. We aspire to create prosperity through empowerment. As part of our efforts to stay connected to the best and brightest of diverse suppliers, we partner with the National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC), Women’s Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC), USBLN Disability Supplier Diversity Program (DSDP), U.S. Pan Asian American Chamber of Commerce (USPAACC) and several other organizations across the country to identify potential suppliers."

Joe Steffy is an entrepreneur with Down syndrome, autism and is non-verbal. He owns Poppin’ Joe’s Gourmet Kettle Korn, which is part of Walmart’s supplier diversity program.

### States can include disability-owned businesses in targeted state procurement, certification and financial incentive policies.

States can support established and nascent disability-owned businesses by expanding state economic development policies targeted at socially and economically disadvantaged populations to include entrepreneurs with disabilities. Like minority, women and veteran business owners, individuals with disabilities experience multiple barriers and economic challenges to owning and operating a business. In particular, entrepreneurs with disabilities may have very limited access to start-up capital due to disability benefit asset-limits and may benefit from targeted mentorship programs and dedicated training and supports in order to be successful in entrepreneurial efforts. States can include disability-owned businesses in state procurement, certification and financial support systems and thereby connect entrepreneurs with disabilities to a wide range of existing supports and resources intended to strengthen the state’s small businesses.
2 percent for disability-owned businesses. (Statutory Authority: Ill. Rev. Stat. ch. 30, §575)

The Iowa Targeted Small Business Procurement Act requires all state agencies and departments to set annual procurement goals from certified targeted small businesses, which include disability-owned businesses. It also requires community colleges, area education agencies and school districts to establish a procurement goal from such businesses of at least 10 percent of their annual procurement budget, including construction but not utility services. Of these total procurement goals, an additional goal must be set to procure at least 40 percent from service-disabled veteran-owned businesses.

Under 2015 Massachusetts' Executive Order 565, disability-owned businesses are identified as one of the new supplier diversity program, or SDP, targets and included in full participation in the procurement efforts of all state agencies. State agencies are required to meet or exceed forthcoming SDP target spending benchmarks as well as participate in reporting activities established by the Office of Supplier Diversity.

The Ohio Encouraging Diversity, Growth, and Equity, or EDGE, program is open to Ohio small businesses that can demonstrate both social disadvantage—including physical and mental disability—as well as economic disadvantage—based on the wealth of the business seeking certification. EDGE is marketed as both a set-aside and an assistance program for these small businesses. A directive from the Department of Administrative Services sets initial EDGE procurement set-aside goals at 5 percent of all contracts for supplies, services, information technology and construction. (Statutory Authority: Ohio Rev. Code §123.152; Administrative Regulation: Ohio Admin. Code Chapter 123:2-16)

In Rhode Island, the Governor's Commission on Disabilities sets formulas for awarding contracts to disability-owned businesses. The commission requires the Division of Purchasing to submit an annual report on state purchasing activities specifically to disability-owned businesses, including the number and value of awards, outreach activities undertaken by the division, and the number of disability-owned business that were rejected during the procurement process. The commission receives it statutory authority from the Disability Business Enterprise Act, which also requires state agencies and the Division of Purchasing to periodically conduct meetings with such businesses, as appropriate, to inform them of procurement opportunities.

Alaska, Minnesota and Maryland have procurement preferences in place.

In Alaska, the Alaskans with Disabilities Preference (Alaska Stat. §36.30.321(d)) provides that if a qualified Alaska bidder or offeror is a business owner with a disability, a 10 percent preference shall be applied to their price in the bid or proposal. Under Minnesota's targeted group business price preference program, small businesses that are majority-owned by women, racial minorities or persons with a substantial physical disability can apply for state certification and be eligible for a state procurement preference up to 6 percent price preference in bidding on goods and/or services. (Statutory Authority: Minn. Stat. §16C.16). Maryland requires all state and state aided or controlled agencies to exhaust a procurement preference priority list for the purchase of supplies and services before engaging in procurement from general business. The preference priority list, recently altered through House Bill 1537, requires purchasing from designated programs if they provide the required supplies or services, moving down the list in the following order: Maryland Correctional Enterprises; Blind Industries and Services Maryland; community service providers or disability-owned businesses. (Statutory Authority: Md. State Finance and Procurement Code §14-103)
C Explore tax and financial incentive structures to support disability entrepreneurship start-up and/or growth. Increasing gainful employment for people with disabilities should include programs to enhance entrepreneurial activity. These programs could mirror programs increasing access to capital for under-represented groups, such as minorities and women. States have taken other approaches to complement tax credits for private disability-owned businesses, including low-interest loan programs and on-the-job supports for owners and employees with disabilities working in the private sector.

Suggested Strategies:

i Targeting loans/funding for socially and economically disadvantaged groups to people with disabilities.

ii Offering low-interest revolving loan funds and funding/incentivizing private organizations to offer loans to disability-owned businesses.

iii Implementing grants targeting new disability-owned entrepreneurial efforts to overcome initial capital fundraising challenges. States can also look to adapt existing entrepreneurship grant programs to include entrepreneurs with disabilities.

iv Providing tax credits or deductions for “angel investor” contributions.

v Offering microenterprise grants to encourage individuals with disabilities to start or expand a business and transition away from benefits.

vi Setting aside agency funds to support on-the-job training, job coaching and long-term follow-along/extended supported employment services.

Note: State vocational rehabilitation agencies provide time-limited (24 months) supported employment through federal Rehabilitation Services Agency, or RSA, formula grants authorized by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Longer-term extended supported employment or follow-along services are not funded by RSA grants but rather through state funding.

vii Providing technical assistance and mentoring programs for business owners with disabilities.
Appendix
Disability-owned business enterprise category
Public procurement entities, such as states and local governments, may define business categories by which procurement policy is specified. For instance, an enterprise category specifically for businesses owned by people with disabilities may be used to offer preferential consideration in a bidding process.

U.S. Department of Labor, or DOL
The U.S. Department of Labor serves the United States through a variety of offices and bureaus, including the Office of Disability Employment Policy, or ODEP. The department’s missions is “to foster, promote, and develop the welfare of the wage earners, job seekers, and retirees of the United States; improve working conditions; advance opportunities for profitable employment; and assure work-related benefits and rights.”

Entrepreneurship v. self-employment
While both an entrepreneur and someone who is self-employed may own their own businesses, there are differences in the two. Self-employment implies that the individual’s output, whether it be a product or a service, is so integral to the enterprise that it is synonymous with it. An example of a self-employed person would be a business consultant who sells their expertise with clients. An entrepreneur, on the other hand, starts a business and plans to manage its operations and output. For more information about the differences between these two flavors of employment visit www.disability.gov/resource/entrepreneurship-frequently-asked-questions.

Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA
Signed into law in 2015, ESSA succeeds the No Child Left Behind Act. The legislation sets standards for college and career readiness, assessments, performance and school ratings, and accountability, and leaves room for innovation in education.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA
According to the U.S. Department of Education, this legislation “governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities.”

Individualized education plan, or IEP
The individualized education plan is similar to the ILP in that it is a document tailored to a student’s personal goals and needs. IEPs are maintained for students in special education programs. An IEP typically includes an evaluation and identification of needs and documents progress toward goals. The IEP is reviewed and updated on a regular basis for students with disabilities.

Individualized learning plan, or ILP
An individualized learning plan (ILP) is both a document and a process that students use—with support from school counselors, teachers, and parents—to define their career goals and postsecondary plans in order to inform the student’s decisions about their courses and activities throughout high school.

Many states have adopted policies that require all middle and/or high school students to develop and maintain an individualized learning plan in order to make schools more personalized and improve student outcomes.

Inclusive information and communication technologies
Computer systems and processes that are designed to be accessible to those with sensory disabilities and impairments, such as blindness or deafness.

Model employer
In reference to the state, the idea that government should set the example for other employers in how employees with disabilities should be recruited and retained. The government should lead by example.

National Employment Team, or NET
The NET comprises representatives from vocational rehabilitation centers across the country and facilitates communication with business partners to meet employment needs. You can read more about the NET at www.rehabnetwork.org/customers-2/business.
Smart cities
Generally refers to metropolitan areas that utilize technology to automate and streamline data collection from multiple sectors, including infrastructure, transportation and utilities, for the purposes of understanding usage and improving function. To get a sense of the scope of efforts, review the White House initiative for smart cities at www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/09/14/fact-sheet-administration-announces-new-smart-cities-initiative-help.

SSI, SSDI
Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance are both administered by the Social Security Administration for people with disabilities. SSI provides benefits to those who meet a threshold for financial need, and SSDI provides benefits for individuals with disabilities and their families if they have worked for a certain period of time.

Stay at work, return to work
Disabilities and severe illness can strike at any time. SAW/RTW policies recognize these unexpected events and offer employers and employees flexible tools to keep employees working through changes and/or returning to work after an absence related to a disability or illness. You can read more about the Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy’s efforts in this policy area at www.dol.gov/odep/topics/Stay-at-Work-Return-to-Work.htm.

Short-term disability insurance, or STDI
STDI can be purchased on the market from insurance companies. The payout is typically a percentage of the policyholder’s income over a particular time period during which an individual cannot work due to illness or injury.

Talent Acquisition Portal
Also known as TAP, the portal is an electronic database of people seeking jobs that have disabilities and employers with openings. You may visit their website at tapability.org.

Universal design principles
A set of concepts that guide the design of spaces, tools and processes with a focus on accessibility for all people. For example, physical spaces should be accessible and usable for people with varying abilities and tools should be designed to be used in a multitude of ways. These principles can be used in computer science, education, manufacturing, architecture and more. For more information about universal design, visit the North Carolina State University Center for Universal Design (www.ncsu.edu/ncsu/design/cud/about_ud/udprinciples.htm) and the University of Washington DO-IT’s “Universal Design: Process, Principles, and Applications.” (www.washington.edu/doit/universal-design-process-principles-and-applications)

U.S. Business Leadership Network, or USBLN
A nonprofit business entity, the USBLN provides third-party business certification for disability-owned firms and other peer-to-peer community services.

Vocational rehabilitation program, or VR
A partnership between the federal and state government, the program’s goal is to support people with disabilities in finding and keeping employment. Funding is administered by the U.S. Department of Education to each state to provide services.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, or WIOA
Signed in 2014, WIOA replaces the Workforce Investment Act. WIOA programs are implemented across several organizations, including the U.S. departments of Labor, Education, Health and Human Services, and state governments. Initiatives support youth, those working and individuals seeking work.
About SEED

As states strive to promote workforce inclusion, people with disabilities—including veterans with service connected disabilities—are a key part of the solution. Recognizing this, the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy launched the State Exchange on Employment & Disability, or SEED. SEED is a collaborative effort with state intermediary organizations, including the National Conference of State Legislatures, the Council of State Governments, and the Women in Government to help state legislators effectively address policy barriers that may hinder the employment of people with disabilities. Through these partnerships, the SEED collaborative is dedicated to ensuring that state policymakers have the tools and resources they need to develop and disseminate meaningful polices related to disability-inclusive workforce development.