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Executive Summary

The California State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) is pleased to present its Employment First Committee's 2023 Annual Report. The Employment First Committee (EFC) is tasked with advancing competitive integrated employment (CIE) for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

As an Employment First state, California prioritizes opportunities for competitive integrated employment for all adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In the over decade since the Employment First policy was put into place, there have been significant efforts and successes toward enhancing the employment service systems, supports, and funding to achieve this goal. However, data suggest that there are still large numbers of people with ID/D unemployed or in day programs who are capable of and may benefit from work, with state employment rates of people with ID/D showing only minimal gains from 2013-2019, that were then lost during the COVID-19 pandemic ([Reference data dashboard](#)). To address continued barriers to fulfilling the employment first mandate, legislation to establish an Employment First Office was passed.

With the creation of the Employment First Office ([Reference legislation](#)), the current Employment First Committee (EFC) housed under SCDD will no longer be operational starting July 1, 2024. A new iteration of the committee will be formed under the purview of the Employment First Office. In this report, the EFC focuses its attention on recommendations to inform and guide the new committee's development and activities. The report is divided into two main sections – first, what is needed to continue to propel progress in competitive integrated employment for people with ID/D in California, and second, what is needed to maximize the committee's effectiveness in advancing this mission.

Introduction: Competitive Integrated Employment in California

AB 1041 made California an Employment First state in 2013¹. This means that it is the policy of California that opportunities for competitive integrated employment (CIE) be given the highest priority for all working age individuals with developmental disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disabilities. To make Employment First policy a reality, California stakeholders, agencies, and the EFC have introduced many tools and strategies since 2013. We have summarized meaningful accomplishments below.

In 2017, the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR), Department of Developmental Services (DDS), California Department of Education (CDE), Disability Rights California (DRC) and others developed Blueprint for Customized Employment² which details strategies for more interagency collaboration and frameworks like the discovery process and work-based learning for increased employment outcomes. A follow up resource the

¹ <https://codes.findlaw.com/ca/welfare-and-institutions-code/wic-sect-4869.html>

² [Competitive Integrated Employment \(CIE\) - California Health and Human Services](#)

grew out of this collaborative effort, the interactive Roadmap to CIE³, helps people who have disabilities and others explore the road to employment and urges earlier introduction to employment and career concepts, so educational entities do not wait for transition or graduation to engage in work planning. As an example of another collaboration, DOR and SCDD worked together to create lasting policy change when they ended the sunset of the State Internship Program (SIP). SIP is an alternative pathway to California civil service LEAP certification upon completion of 512-hours of an internship.⁴ SIP interns receive wages during their internship through the DDS and on-the-job-supports from a Community Rehabilitation Program funded by DOR.

Legislatively, CDE continues to innovate via the introduction of Alternative Diploma Pathways⁵ in California Education Code (EC) Section 51225.31, which went into effect in 2022. The passage of SB639 in 2021 requires the phase out 14c subminimum wage in CA by 2025⁶. This legislation fast tracked changes in services, data collection, and workforce development. The first SB639 implementation report states, “Significant investments have been made to support the transition of approximately 4,000 people out of 14c programming”. Approximately 2,000 individuals have left the 14c subminimum wage program since the enactment of SB 639. They are moving onto competitive integrated Employment or their choice for a meaningful day.⁷

DDS has made significant innovations to support CIE, including introducing many changes in funding options like competitive employment outcome and Paid Internship Program (PIP) Placement incentives for regional centers to encourage employment services⁸. On the horizon, a new customized employment and career navigator pilot⁹, launching in 2024, is being designed to support 14-c transition and recent DDS grants funded innovative employment programs. Additionally, DDS is funding ACRE and CESP customized employment training certification for vocational service providers. DDS is also establishing an employment satisfaction survey to monitor quality job placements that match individual preference, skills, and abilities to employer needs.

In addressing the needs of businesses and employers, DOR has created the Demand Side Initiative¹⁰. This initiative provides support to employers throughout the employment lifecycle and a marketing campaign to help employers learn about the benefits of disability inclusive hiring. Further efforts in developing Business to Business support and consultation through Business Advisory Committees brings employers together to discuss and refine disability inclusion practices from recruitment through retention and advancement. Two of these committees are bringing employers together to share data, trends, and resources in California.

³ [Roadmap to Competitive Integrated Employment for consumers and their advocates](#)

⁴ [SIP - CA Department of Rehabilitation](#)

⁵ [A New Pathway to a High School Diploma - Laws, Regulations, & Policies \(CA Dept of Education\)](#)

⁶ [Bill Text: CA SB639 | 2023-2024 | Regular Session | Amended | LegiScan](#)

⁷ [SB 639 Annual report \(ca.gov\)](#)

⁸ [Employment - CA Department of Developmental Services : CA Department of Developmental Services](#)

⁹ [Coordinated Career Pathways \(CCP\) Services - CA Department of Developmental Services : CA Department of Developmental Services](#)

¹⁰ [DSEI - CA Department of Rehabilitation](#)

California is in its second year of participation in the Office of Disability Employment Policy's NEON grant which provides technical assistance/consultation by national subject matter experts in Employment First policy development and implementation¹¹. Subject matter experts are consulting with DOR and DDS. These experts are sharing examples of best practice in values-based purchasing in customized employment pilot design, important data collection elements, and identification of payment structures that ensure people who have more significant support needs are served successfully. Subject matter experts are also helping to educate supported employment professionals through best practice job development strategies that ensure strong job matches and highlight the business bottom line benefits of inclusive hiring. Job retention supports and job coaching skills are also being taught to service providers via the systematic instruction model. Efforts to strengthen the knowledge and skills of professionals working with people with disabilities are also represented in new resources like the Workforce Best Practice for People with Disabilities Toolkit¹². This toolkit created by the California Committee on Employment of People who have Disabilities (CCEPD) helps America's Job Centers identify best practice examples and understand how to better serve people who have disabilities.

[Need for Continued Focus on CIE](#)

Despite this progress, employment placement numbers vary significantly throughout California. Late introduction of employment exploration in some schools, lack of experience in best practice models like customized employment, low employment services rates for providers, and other challenges have negatively impacted CIE outcomes in California. Additional employer and workforce development awareness and capacity building for CIE participation is needed.

Though the policy states CIE shall be given the highest priority among working age individuals, this work requires multiple entities to support the introduction of CIE to such individuals. Historic efforts to track progress, coordinate across systems, and successfully implement Employment First policy by the Employment First Committee (EFC) and others reveal multilayered challenges. In particular, data collection and analysis are essential elements of change management. DDS provides data for the SCDD data dashboard but a time lag in release means it is not up to date¹³. Challenges in cross-agency data sharing have also impeded efforts to understand the broader landscape of employment services and outcomes over time for Californians. As discussed in a 2023 SB639 implementation report regarding DDS data collection, "Barriers to data collection include a) departments collect varying sets of data, b) the data was never collected before, and a new process needs to be created, c) the data cannot be collected due to existing individual privacy rights laws, or d) the data is in the early stages of collection and is not yet available for reporting".¹⁴

¹¹ [SB639 – CA NEON | SCDD](#)

¹² [Workforce Best Practices Toolkit \(usgovcloudapi.net\)](#)

¹³ [State of California Developmental Disabilities System Employment Data Dashboard | SCDD](#)

¹⁴ [SB 639 Annual report \(ca.gov\)](#)

In an effort to address some of the above challenges, in July of 2024, the California Health and Human Services Agency shall establish the Employment First Office (EFO) which will coordinate policy, data collection, and strategic planning to reduce redundancy and ensure access and equity in employment services for people who have intellectual and developmental disabilities¹⁵. The EFC is extremely pleased about the creation of the Employment First Office which will be a much-needed permanent home for cross-agency efforts and oversight. We are also very optimistic that the newly formed Master Plan for Developmental Disabilities [\(add link/footnote to master plan\)](#) will build upon the insights learned to help develop and enact a powerful and cohesive statewide strategy.

As the EFO is established, the EFC in its current form will be inoperative as of 7/1/24¹⁶ and the EFO shall form a new Committee as part of its mission. The Employment First Committee is eager to join the new Employment First Office in driving Employment First Policy implementation. To aid with a seamless transition, the below specific recommendations and suggestions toward the continued advancement of meaningful and gainful employment for people with disabilities are offered to the newly established Employment First Office. The recommendations were informed and developed by the current Employment First Committee members' expertise and lived experience.

Recommendations to Advance Competitive Integrated Employment in California

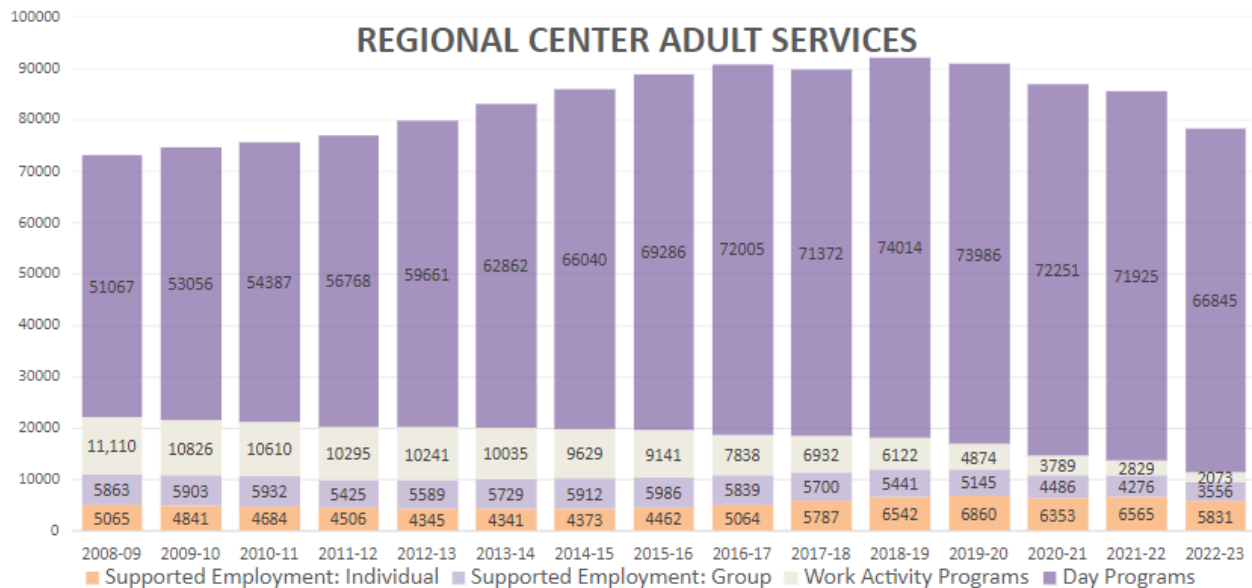
[Collect meaningful data that can inform decision-making.](#)

When examining the continued low employment rate of people with developmental and intellectual disabilities, there is a common tendency to focus on the fact that employers may not appreciate the skills and abilities of workers with disabilities and the concerns that families may have about the impact of earnings on Social Security and other benefits. While these issues clearly have an impact, it is equally important to examine and increase the effectiveness of the services and systems currently in place to assist people with developmental and intellectual disabilities to obtain competitive and integrated employment.

As information from the SCDD Data Dashboard shows, in the period between 2008 and 2023, 15,778 additional clients are now served in day programs, which are not focused on work, while only 766 new clients are receiving individual supported employment services. The continued mismatch of service orientation is a striking factor in employment rates for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

¹⁵ (Section 28 WIC 4868.5.)

¹⁶ (Section 26 WIC 4868 (f))



Information is needed to examine the causes of continued high rate of referrals to non-employment day program service, which appears to be misaligned with California’s Employment First. The following data indicators would produce actionable insights toward increased access to employment-focused services supporting CIE.

- At what age individuals and families are directed to CIE and offered employment services.
- In what context and by whom are individuals and families directed to CIE and offered employment services.
- Length of time between referral/interest in employment services to initiation of services.
- Length of time to achieving competitive integrated employment once receiving employment services.

For each of the above indicators, it would be important to also determine whether there are systematic disparities for specific demographic groups or diagnostic groups to uncover inequities and inform priorities.

In addition to realigning our service model to the Employment First mandate, our system would benefit from data that identifies and incentivizes effective employment practices. Currently, it is difficult to know which supported employment agencies are providing quality evidence-based services. Furthermore, known evidence-based strategies, such as face-to-face job development, are not incentivized within the current funding structure. The following data collection practices are recommended to address these concerns:

- Conduct research to identify predictors of and practices associated with successful employment outcomes.

- Require ongoing data collection and reporting on structure and practices used by employment service agencies.
- Require ongoing data collection and reporting of key outcomes by employment service agencies.
- Align investments and vendorization with outcome-driven, evidence-based employment practices.

Increase equity within the employment service systems.

Service systems must continually work to promote equity. In California, inequities can be perpetuated within systems when patterns of information sharing, funding, process, and service availability vary by counselor/coordinator, office, or region. For example, even when connected to Regional Center or Department of Rehabilitation, many families are not aware of what types of employment services exist or that they could access those services. As another example, supported employment providers have reported that service codes and policies are applied differently by various regional centers, allowing services in some regions to work more effectively. Recommendations to address increase equity within the employment service systems include:

- List employment services clearly as an available service on agency websites; delineate what employment services may include.
- Ensure regional center service coordinators discuss employment with all families as they prepare to transition into adult services.
- Ensure all regional centers are applying all appropriate funding codes and creating policies allowing supported employment agencies to provide effective outcomes.
- Standardize process and paperwork for vendors throughout the state.
- Introduce tiered payments that incentivize employment service agencies to serve people with higher needs (e.g., greater payment based on support needs).

Invest in workforce development and retention efforts.

Finally, there is clear evidence that employment services have difficulty attracting and retaining qualified staff for the skilled work of assisting people with developmental and intellectual disabilities find and be successful in their employment journey. To address these issues, it is recommended that Employment First Office further the following solutions:

- Create of professional career pathways for service providers with certifications, training, and degrees that are associated with enhanced wages.
- Advocate for increased federal and state investment into employment services to enable broad increases in service reimbursement rates.

Strengthen collaboration among key partners.

The CIE Blueprint represented a statewide interagency effort between the California Department of Education (CDE), Department of Rehabilitation (DOR), and Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to increase employment for Californians with ID/DD.

The Blueprint was centered on goals to 1) improve collaboration and coordination between the three departments, 2) increase opportunities for individuals to prepare for and participate in the California workforce development system and achieve CIE within existing resources, and 3) support the ability of individuals with ID/DD to make informed choices and adequately prepare for, transition to, and engage in CIE.

Blueprint implementation began in May 2017 and officially ended in June 2022. While the five-year period is over, the three Departments are committed to improving the choices and lives of those with ID/DD – especially as they strive for and achieve CIE. The CIE Blueprint leadership team continues to meet to discuss strategies to improve employment outcomes beyond year five. The Blueprint fostered many successes and advances; however, a multi-agency data sharing agreement was one of the unrealized goals of the CIE Blueprint, due to lack of legal authority for the CDE, DOR, and DDS to share educational and employment data related to individuals with disabilities. Achieving this goal of a multi-agency data sharing agreement could improve efforts to conduct data analysis, increase collaboration at the state and local-level, and support data-informed decision making.

We are extremely pleased about the creation of the Employment First Office which will be a much-needed permanent home for these cross-agency efforts. We are also very optimistic that the Master Plan for Developmental Disabilities will build upon the insights learned through the CIE Blueprint process to help develop and enact a powerful and cohesive statewide strategy. Recommendations to maintain and strengthen collaboration among key partners include:

- Support the continued cross-agency collaboration and communication between CDE, DOR, and DDS, potentially through a renewed and revisited iteration of the Blueprint plan.
- Advocate and problem-solve to achieve data-sharing systems across agencies to allow for a more accurate understanding of the population served, services received, pathways, and outcomes.
- Explore legislative pathways to ensure continued collaboration and data sharing between Blueprint partners.
- Pursue creation of an engaging, accessible, and unified system (such as an app) across agencies, empowering individuals with IDD and their families with access to their own files, plans, contacts, and information in a centralized format.

[Actively engage businesses to support achieving Employment First goals.](#)

Business remains an essential—and at times under-utilized—partner in the conversation of how best to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. As such, it is recommended that the EFO takes an invigorated approach to engaging business, with the following recommendations:

- Have business/industry partners present at and participate in key conversations with EFO, and partner agencies.

- Utilize up-to-date labor data to determine a needs analysis to identify the training, tools, and ongoing support necessary for business **and** employee success.
- Develop and disseminate trainings, tools, and systems of support for businesses, informed by data.
- Engage businesses and industry partners in the process of training development and delivery.
- Engage businesses and industry partners to showcase the benefits of inclusive employment practices and universal design, as well as to share national and state-wide success stories.
- Provide businesses with contact information for and a way to connect with agencies and institutions that can provide company-wide training, assistive technology, job coaching, and other supports for people with disabilities in their workplaces. These may include Department of Rehabilitation, regional centers, disability rights organizations, independent living agencies, colleges that have programs and services for people with ID/DD. These resources may increase comfort in and openness to hiring people with ID/DD.

Support successful transitions and remove barriers to competitive integrated employment.

Local Partnership Agreements (LPAs) remain the key collaborative infrastructure that was promoted and expanded upon through the CIE Blueprint. LPAs regularly convene key community entities, including local educational agencies (LEAs), DOR district offices, and regional centers, and other community partners, such as postsecondary education programs, to streamline service delivery, engage their communities, and increase CIE opportunities to individuals with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities (ID/DD).

The results of the CIE Blueprint indicate that these unique community partnerships were able to advance access to and awareness of community resources, connecting students, families, and communities to their local agency partners for improved local employment opportunities and outcomes. LPAs are one effective strategy for improving youth seamless and successful transitions from high school to adulthood due to strengthened connections between local school districts and other entities that can support these students both while in high school and after, such as postsecondary institutions, community organization, and DOR. Unfortunately, with the completion of the CIE Blueprint, LPAs are no longer mandated to meet – though it is highly encouraged by CDE, DDS and DOR. The following recommendations are suggested to maintain and strengthen this work:

- Pursue avenues to maintain and expand LPAs, including potential legislative options to require continued partnership and for more LPAs be developed throughout the state.
- Support increased employment opportunities in high school settings given data showing it is one of the most powerful indicators of post high school CIE success.

- Promote investment into developing postsecondary education programs, supports, and capacity to serve and prepare students with ID/DD for gainful employment.

In addition, with the passage of SB 639 and the end of subminimum wages (SMW) scheduled to go into effect January 1, 2025, DDS has identified the individuals currently earning SMW served by regional centers. In addition to people currently in SMW settings who will be transitioned, there will continue to be adults with more significant support needs exiting the high school system each year who would have previously entered SMW settings. It is essential that with the phase out of SMW settings next year, that attention is paid so these individuals and families are well supported, not forgotten. The following recommendations pertain to how the Office of Employment First can support California's successful transition from SMW:

- Collect data regarding transition outcomes of individuals currently in SMW settings.
- Gather information about the experiences and perspectives of individuals with significant support needs and their families, including those who are transitioning from SMW settings.
- Problem-solve barriers and challenges to successful transition to CIE for individuals with significant support needs.

Finally, one of the constant barriers to achieving employment reported by individuals is lack of transportation options. This is caused by a variety of reasons including transportation providers only in operation during specific business hours, long windows of waiting periods between pick up and drop off, and inaccessible vehicles by rideshare companies. It is recommended that the EFO advocate for solutions to transportation barriers to employment, including:

- Increase investment in options and availability for mobility training.
- Advocate for increasing public transit infrastructure and improved reliability of paratransit.
- Collaborate to clarify guidelines for agency partners or vendors to pay for taxis, rideshare such as Uber and Lyft, and mileage reimbursement.

[Spread awareness of employment for people with disabilities.](#)

The Employment First Committee recommends a coordinated campaign of social media and online tools to better inform the public about employment for people with disabilities. Given gaps in knowledge, it is essential to increase family knowledge about their rights and options for employment services for Californians with disabilities. All outreach efforts must be intentional to find ways to connect with and tailor outreach efforts to culturally and language distinct communities. It is also essential that inclusive companies and products are showcased to enable public support through business, dollars, and foot traffic. One advantage to hiring people with disabilities is the fact that it has the power to bring in business. People with disabilities make up a significant market

share with large purchasing power (<https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/Hidden-Market-Spending-Power-of-People-with-Disabilities-April-2018.pdf>), as do the people who are professionally and personally connected to people with disabilities, who are apt to support inclusive companies. Coordinated efforts to harness this power has the potential to create a domino effect that encourages other businesses to hire people with disabilities as well as incentivize greater business investment and involvement toward achieving CIE for all. See below for specific recommendations related to spreading information and awareness:

- Develop a unified social media presence related to Employment First to allow easy and centralized access to relevant information.
- Identify a coordinated plan of dissemination of effective pre-existing resources, such as the CIE Road Map, to reach of greater numbers of families [ADD LINK to Road Map].
- Recruit local and diverse ambassadors to help with outreach in their own communities, so people can better relate to success stories of people who share a similar background.
- Recruit employers of people with disabilities to share the ease and benefits of their hiring practices to encourage wider spread adoption.
- Publicly recognize businesses that are implementing inclusive practices and hiring people with disabilities to encourage others to support those businesses.

Concerns about the impact of employment on disability benefits continues to emerge as a huge barrier to CIE. Many individuals and families fear that if a beneficiary tries to work, they were automatically lose their benefits. Then, if the work is not sustainable, they will have a hard time reinstating disability benefits. However, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is designed to assist people experiencing poverty. Therefore, remaining on SSI will keep an individual in poverty when they could be gainfully and meaningfully employed. Furthermore, there are many work incentives built into the program which allow individuals to work a certain number of hours before losing all benefits and make it easier to reenroll, if needed, if they cannot continue working.

One critical resource for sharing information about disability benefits and employment is DB101. DB101 was first created in California to address the misinformation and fears among people with disabilities to be employed and manage their benefits. Launched in 2004, the creation of the online portal has been a public-private creation between the World Institute of Disability (WID), grants from the California Endowment, start-up and research and design grants from the DOR, and funds from the Disability Employment Initiative from the EDD. Although WID continues to maintain the tool through philanthropic funding, the State of California currently does not pay for the ongoing maintenance and operation costs. Currently, DB101 is funded for 2024 but does not have funding beyond this year. Nevertheless, because it is such a valuable program, DB101 is now available in 11 states and WID is developing DB101 in five more states. Other states fund DB101 through vocational rehabilitation program, developmental services programs, health programs, or a combination of funding. The following recommendations relate to addressing these barriers:

- Combat misconceptions or concerns families may have about employment's impact on benefits through social media, advertisements, webinars, infographics, and other avenues.
- Secure continued funding for DB 101 through a commitment from one or more agencies in California.

Employment First Committee Structure and Function

In addition to the above overview and recommendations on the state of Employment First in California, the Employment First Committee (EFC) would like to share background and recommendations to enhance efficacy of the committee to be formed in the EFO.

By way of background, EFC has been a standing committee of the California State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD), created by statute in 2009. To date, EFC has held four (4) meetings per year to collect data from stakeholders, discuss issues in the employment process, and receive updates on what agencies are doing to improve CIE.

The EFC is responsible for identifying and promoting strategies to increase the number of people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities engaging in competitive integrated employment. Specifically, the EFC is tasked with advancing CIE for People with I/DD by:

- i. Identifying the roles and responsibilities of state and local agencies to enhance employment for people with disabilities.
- ii. Employing strategies and best practices for increasing employment, which includes transition.
- iii. Identifying sources of employment data and recommended approaches for measuring progress.
- iv. Identifying demographic data that can be matched to employment outcomes.
- v. Recommending goals to measure employment participation and outcomes for various people with I/DD across service systems.

The EFC creates a venue to generate solutions and share updates on services and initiatives from Government Divisions and other stakeholders like people who have disabilities, family members, service providers and DRC, California's Protection and Advocacy Agency. Each EFC member organization interacts with diverse community partners who share service access realities, ideas, innovations, and frustrations with Employment First efforts. These ideas are elevated and shared through organized presentations and more casual community participation within the EFC.

Yearly, the EFC identifies innovations in employment services as well as barriers to employment and systems change for people who have intellectual and developmental disabilities. The EFC Annual Report also details new resources and policy changes and makes recommendations to overcome barriers.

In anticipation of the new iteration of the EFC under the Employment First Office, the committee spent time reflecting together and gathering survey data from members on the committee's process, including identifying barriers and then solutions to challenges faced in the committee process. See below for a summary of recommendations intended to enhance the potential effectiveness of the EFC to drive systems change and promote CIE for people with ID/DD.

Recommendations to Enhance Employment First Committee Structure and Function

Restructure meeting schedule of the EFC

Historically, the EFC has conducted four meetings per year, with each meeting requiring a full day commitment from 10:30 am to ~3:30 pm with a lunch break. This has presented several challenges for committee members. First, longer meetings are challenging for committee members to attend in full, with many having to arrive late or leave early. Similarly, the infrequency of meetings leads to difficulties ensuring the time is consistently available in member's schedules. The longer length and associated significant amount of content/agenda items being presented may also lead to difficulties preparing, attending, and processing information in meetings. To increase the consistency of attendance and to allow increased engagement from the public and other stakeholders, we recommend more frequent meetings of shorter length. Alternatives such as monthly meetings of 1-2 hours may be considered.

We believe changes to the committee meeting schedule will not only increase attendance and engagement but may also enhance productivity. Specifically, by having more frequent meetings, the committee will be able to act more quickly on items that need committee approval or public comment. Additionally, more frequent meetings will reduce the need for members to remind themselves of committee issues of discussion and create a built-in structure for more frequent check-ins and deadlines toward completion of actions.

Ensure voices of important stakeholders are heard and considered in EFC.

The EFO statute confirms the creation of a new EFC and specifies the inclusion of representatives of key partners, including CDE, DDS, DOR, and the three California University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities. To ensure voices of important voices are heard and considered, we recommend that the newly formed EFC include diverse stakeholders on the EFC or in the EFC processes, including:

- Adults with disabilities
- Family members/caregivers of people with disabilities
- Direct service providers
- Regional Center employees
- Postsecondary Education staff
- Employers

These stakeholders offer an invaluable perspective on the employment service system, barriers and facilitators of employment, and solutions to advance CIE. In the past, the EFC has struggled to recruit employers in particular due to the commitments associated with the work. However, if the EFO is able to implement our first recommendation of more frequent, shorter meetings, it is also possible that the meeting structure may be more feasible for these stakeholders to participate – as it would no longer require missing an almost full day of work or school several times per year. Alternatively, it also may be possible to explore creative forms of stakeholder participation outside of committee membership that further increase feasibility. For example, the EFC could identify a group of employers to serve as advisors that join specific, designated EFC meetings focused on relevant topics.

Additionally, to ensure inclusion of all members and the public in the EFC process, it is recommended that all materials and reports be in plain language with minimal jargon. It may help the committee to have dedicated staff support to ensuring accessibility and plain language standards. Annual reports would benefit from translation to other languages, including plain language.

Engage EFC members more effectively to draw upon collective expertise.

EFC members each bring different experiences, perspectives, and knowledge to this work. It is essential that the committee is structured to maximize engagement with this expertise. The following recommendations are made to enhance this engagement:

- Clarify EFC member expectations, including any roles members are expected to fulfill during committee meetings (e.g., participation) and outside of committee meetings (e.g., report writing, working on initiatives).
- Provide training to EFC members on any relevant rules when joining the committee (e.g., Bagley Keene).
- Allow for EFC member feedback on legislative priorities to inform, guide, and educate legislative development.
- Provide agendas and proposals farther in advance.
- Present information on voting items one meeting prior to holding a vote to allow EFC members to think, ask questions, do research, and convene with their agencies to inform voting.
- Ensure EFC members are given clear assignments and adequate time to complete “out-of-meeting” tasks.
- Increase opportunities for collaboration among EFC members (e.g., group brainstorming, creative communication platforms, collaborative report-writing with a unified message rather than individuals writing one section only).
- Utilize e-calendar invites to ensure members are aware of future meeting dates.

Convene EFC efforts and expertise to achieve specific initiatives rather than broad goals to move the needle.

In the years since EFC has been established within the State Council, there have been many recommendations that are repeated in multiple annual reports. The repetition suggests a need for more targeted attention and action toward making meaningful progress toward fulfilling goals outlined in the report. Starting in 2022, the EFC created a workgroup, composed of four members of the committee, intended to create SMART goals for committee actions. SMART goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound, and are an effective tool for transforming broad goals to action-oriented plans. The SMART workgroup had been effective in creating a membership nomination survey and welcome letter that outlined membership responsibilities toward expanding the committee to bring on additional representatives of diverse stakeholder groups. The implementation of these tools was paused with the passage of the EFO legislation. Although effective in some ways, the SMART workgroup often became responsible for not only generating SMART goals but also implementing them. This resulted in an uneven distribution of work and of contributing voices to workgroup tasks.

Looking forward, we recommend that SMART goals continue to be utilized to drive momentum and action. However, the new EFC under the EFO may want to consider developing SMART goals together as a full committee, then developing specific workgroups to work on and make progress toward specific goals between committee meetings. In this way, different members would be able to volunteer to support different initiatives over time.