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Employer Involvement in Office of Disability Employment (ODEP) Demonstration Programs

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Employer Involvement in Office of Disability Employment (ODEP) Demonstration Programs

Abstract

[Excerpt] As part of the independent evaluation of ODEP's demonstration program being conducted by Westat, the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) asked Westat to provide in-depth analysis of three issues that were identified at site visits and in Quarterly Reports during Phase II of the evaluation. This report provides in-depth analysis on the first issue—employer involvement in adult demonstration programs.

Keywords

disability, Office of Disability Employment Policy, ODEP, employment, workforce development

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Evaluation of Disability Employment Policy Demonstration Programs

Task 10. Employer Involvement in Office of
Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)
Demonstration Programs

In-Depth Issue Analysis

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December 2005

Prepared for:

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Policy
U.S. Department of Labor
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The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the funding agency.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

As part of the independent evaluation of ODEP's demonstration program being conducted by Westat, the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) asked Westat to provide in-depth analysis of three issues that were identified at site visits and in Quarterly Reports during Phase II of the evaluation. This report provides in-depth analysis on the first issue—employer involvement in adult demonstration programs.¹

The ODEP demonstration program consists of a variety of initiatives targeted at both adults and youth with disabilities. Whereas all demonstration projects funded under this program are expected to implement and evaluate different methods for building the capacity of the workforce development system to better serve people with disabilities, adult demonstration projects have several things in common. All are expected to serve individuals who are not typically served by other agencies (e.g., people with limited employment history who are the most difficult to place in employment). All are required to incorporate strategies for delivering customized employment services. And all must be able to serve the needs of the job seeker and employer and to involve employers in the process.

The issue of employer involvement seeks to understand how adult demonstration programs can more effectively involve employers in their projects—as part of their planning and implementation process and in employer negotiations in the customized employment process.

In an effort to examine, understand, and improve employer involvement in adult demonstration programs, Westat addressed the following questions:

1. What are ODEP's expectations with regard to employer involvement in adult demonstration programs?
2. How are demonstration projects currently involving employers to assist them in planning, implementation, and job placement and to achieve their project goals regarding implementation of customized employment services at One-Stop Career Centers?

¹ The second issue examined the role of receiving Social Security Administration benefits in program customers' decisions on employment, and the third issue concerns the role of intermediaries in ODEP youth demonstration programs.

3. What are the barriers to involving employers in demonstration programs and how are sites overcoming these barriers?
4. What are the factors most amenable to involving employers in demonstration programs?

To answer these questions, Westat designed a three-part methodology consisting of the following: (1) review of solicitations for grant applications (SGAs); (2) review of findings from Phase II of the external evaluation (including site visit reports, Quarterly Reports, and findings from the Employment Outcome Analysis Project (EOAP)); and (3) conduct of in-depth site visits to sites selected for their apparent success with employer involvement.

SGAs for each adult demonstration program were examined to gauge ODEP's expectations regarding the role of employers in demonstration programs. In addition, information was extracted from Westat's interim progress reports for Fiscal Years 2001, 2002, and 2003 programs and preliminary findings from the EOAP. Although information on employer involvement had been collected during Phase II, an attempt was also made to identify those sites that appeared to have resolved some of the barriers related to involving employers in their projects and might be able to provide examples of potential promising practices. Therefore, in consultation with the National Center on Workforce and Disability/Adult (NCWD/A) and Training and Technical Assistance for Providers (T-TAP), Westat selected three ODEP demonstration projects and conducted site visits to explore the issue of employer involvement in depth. The in-depth analysis of employer involvement consisted of three site visits within the Customized Employment (CE) program priority area awarded in Fiscal Years 2001 and 2002. The following sites received an in-depth site visit lasting 2 days each:²

- Indianapolis Private Council, Inc. (IPIC), Indianapolis, IN (CE02)
- Tennessee Customized Employment Partnership (TCEP), Knoxville, TN (CE01)
- Partners for Employment Project (PEP), Richmond, VA (CE02)

Review of Published Literature

To assist in guiding our research questions, research design, and methodology, Westat initially conducted a review of the published literature to examine employer involvement in hiring people

² A description of the site selection process is located in Section 3.3.1 (Site Selection and Contact).

with disabilities. The purpose was to ascertain whether the published literature could provide any insights into two questions: (1) whether employer involvement in programs such as ODEP's demonstration programs was useful; and, if so (2) what methods were used for engaging employers in demonstration programs.

In searching for relevant published literature that addresses employer involvement with organizations that serve people with disabilities, we found articles that address employer compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the misconceptions that often discourage employers from hiring people with disabilities, and employer incentives for hiring people with disabilities. We experienced difficulty, however, locating well-designed studies that specifically address the concept of partnerships or collaborations between organizations and employers to work together toward increasing the employment of people with disabilities.

The published literature shows that employers themselves report a number of advantages to hiring people with disabilities, but there are also various barriers preventing some employers from hiring people with disabilities. Highest on the list of advantages is the perception that hiring people with disabilities is a good business decision. Employers report that people with disabilities are loyal and hardworking employees who remain in their position for long periods of time (thereby reducing turnover rates, which incur training and other costs). Moreover, employers report that hiring people with disabilities can enhance their corporate image and is seen as the socially responsible thing to do.

Barriers to hiring people with disabilities often relate to employers' stereotypical assumptions about people with disabilities, as well as concern about a job applicant's lack of related experience or required skills and how to make accommodations. Costs for training, supervision, and accommodation did not appear to be a major concern. To overcome these barriers, the literature suggests that senior management commitment is the most effective approach. Although some disability employment research suggests that a partnership model between employers and agencies that serve people with disabilities (e.g., vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies) is effective, such studies are based on surveys of perceptions and case examples. We were unable to uncover any research that examined the use of an intermediary organization (as so many ODEP projects are) on specific employment outcomes such as increases in employment placements.

Findings and Conclusions

ODEP's Expectations

Although not necessarily supported in the published literature, there appears to be a clear need for employer involvement in demonstration programs both at the macro level (where employers are involved in a demonstration project's planning and implementation) and micro level (where negotiation with employers as part of the delivery of customized employment services takes place). SGAs were clear about demonstration programs incorporating such involvement into program activities but were less clear about the nature of employer involvement they expect programs to incorporate. Nevertheless, it appears that employer involvement is consistent with ODEP's goals of capacity building and widespread use of customized employment services. However, there still appears to be barriers at the macro level for involvement of employers in project planning and implementation.

Findings from in-depth site visits are relatively consistent with the published literature on reasons for employer involvement. The literature suggests that most employers become involved in demonstration projects for one of three reasons: (1) because of a personal connection to a person(s) with disabilities; (2) to meet pressing staffing needs; or (3) to address a company policy to employ people with disabilities and/or increase workforce diversity. Whereas these three reasons may be driving factors for an employer to become involved with ODEP demonstration programs, project staff at three demonstration project sites discussed several approaches they use to engage and solicit interest from employers. These approaches encompass macro- and micro-level employer involvement.

Macro-level Employer Involvement

Macro-level employer involvement ideally consists of participation in a demonstration project's planning and implementation. At the macro level, employer members of advisory committees, Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), Business Leadership Networks (BLNs), or Business Advisory Committees (BACs) are in a perfect position to provide projects with the employer perspective, spread the word to other employers about the project and advantages to hiring people with disabilities, and increase the pool of employers who might be able to provide work trials and employment placements.

The three project sites we visited were making inroads into employer involvement at the macro level with attempts to strengthen BLNs or BACs. However, none had managed to integrate these employer organizations into facilitating and contributing to the customized employment process by using the contacts of members of these employer organizations as a source of potential employment placements. On the other hand, some progress has been made in working with One-Stop Career Centers.³ As a result of the ODEP demonstration projects,⁴ the capacity to serve people with disabilities has been improved, with the net result that One-Stop Career Center staff are now providing information to employers on hiring people with disabilities. Customized employment services, however, are still not integrated into One-Stop Career Center services and still mostly remain the responsibility of the demonstration project.

Micro-level Employer Involvement

Micro-level employer involvement consists of case-by-case interaction between employers and specific program customers, with project staff acting as the intermediary between the two players in the job negotiation process. Based on our findings from in-depth site visits, employers seem amenable to job negotiators that take an exploratory or informational approach to the initial contact, explaining the program, the services it provides, and the benefits to hiring people with disabilities. Employers also respond positively to a no- or low-risk proposal from the job negotiators, such as providing the program customer with a trial work period or a work-experience placement (thus giving the employer an “out” at the end of the specified term). Finally, employers value the idea that program customers will receive ongoing support (e.g., job coaching, transportation, training) in some form for a specified time from the demonstration project. Employers also appreciate that ongoing support is available to themselves as well, such as in situations where job negotiators encourage employers to call them if there are problems with a program customer. Ultimately, the job negotiators will assist in the termination process of a program customer if necessary.

Employers respond positively to proposals from job negotiators when the arrangement involves little to no risk to the employer and/or little to no initial commitment. For example, employers seem to be open to offering program customers opportunities to gain work experience or to have a job

³ One-Stop Career Centers (funded by the Department of Labor) are resources for job seekers to find employment and employers to find qualified employees.

⁴ In order to increase the capacity of the One-Stop system to provide service delivery to people with disabilities, ODEP initiated a demonstration program consisting of grants and cooperative agreements.

trial with a probationary period and no commitment to hire. These arrangements give the employer an opportunity to “test” the program customer and give the program customer an opportunity to obtain valuable work experience.

Employers also appear to be more comfortable starting with a few hours weekly and increasing the number of hours gradually as they and their new employee become comfortable with the arrangement. Although some job seekers we talked to on site visits were hoping to increase their hours, none were expecting to work full time. It is likely that full-time expectations would present a greater challenge to job negotiators, although the process of starting with a few hours of work initially and gradually increasing the number of hours appears to be a useful negotiation strategy.

Finally, employers value the concept of having outside supports if needed when hiring a program customer. For example, employers reported that the inclusion of a job coach for their employed program customer alleviated any extra work supervisors would have to do in terms of training and monitoring. In addition, employers felt supported by job negotiators who assured them that they were available and willing to assist the employers handle any difficult situations that might arise, such as termination of employment.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on our findings from the published literature, Phase II site visits, and the three in-depth site visits that were conducted. The recommendations are divided into three categories—those related to employer involvement with demonstration project planning and implementation; employer involvement with job negotiation; and direct employer involvement with the One-Stop Career Center.

Employer Involvement in Demonstration Project Planning and Implementation

Employer involvement in demonstration project planning and implementation is a clear ODEP requirement. Grantees are expected to engage employers and business service organizations in their projects and develop ongoing linkages with the goals of strengthening ties to employers and marketing the abilities of people with disabilities. However, realizing these goals has been difficult for

demonstration project sites, as they point to a general lack of interest on the part of employers. Our visits to demonstration project sites where these barriers are being addressed with some success suggest there are actions that can be taken to enhance employer involvement at the macro level in project planning and implementation. Those actions include the following:

1. **Focus efforts to identify and involve employers who have a strong commitment (separate from the project) to working with people with disabilities.** Findings from the in-depth site visits suggest that some of the more committed employers include those with a personal connection to the disability community. It may be beneficial to demonstration projects to identify and try to build relationships with those employers in the community who are already involved with people with disabilities.
2. **Coordinate employer-driven BLNs and BACs.** The sites we visited have approached the issue of employer involvement by concentrating on building a BLN or BAC. Those that have been most successful have tried to make these groups employer-driven and focused on meeting the needs of the employers (and also serving people with disabilities). Suggested methods for becoming more employer-driven include: surveying employers to determine what their education, information, and training needs are in reference to people with disabilities; asking employers to assist with specific tasks, events, or activities rather than just asking them to get involved in general; creating a situation where the employers feel that their personnel needs can easily be met by being involved with the employer groups; and providing employers with business incentives for being involved with people with disabilities (rather than humanitarian incentives).
3. **Integrate (involve) employer organizations into customized employment activities.** Employer organizations have the potential capacity to provide useful input on employer needs, successful approaches, and credibility with other employers and sources of job placements. Project sites need to ensure that BACs, BLNs, and other employer groups, such as local small business groups and employer networks, are fully integrated into the goals of the project.

Employer Involvement in Job Negotiations

Customized employment strategies include negotiation with employers on job tasks, hours, and accommodations. Findings from in-depth site visits reveal that projects have been most successful in engaging employers in negotiation when they concentrate on the business needs of the employer (in addition to those of the job seeker), offer a low-risk situation to the employer, and work to refute the

misconceptions employers may have about hiring people with disabilities. The following are recommendations on some specific actions that can be taken in job negotiations:

1. **When preparing to negotiate specific jobs, identify specific tax incentives for the employer.** Site visit findings show that most project staff believe that the tax credits and other advantages to employers who hire people with disabilities do not provide an incentive for employers. However, Westat learned that this is not always the case. Especially among smaller employers (e.g., small businesses, family-owned businesses), we found that employers may be attracted to financial incentives and may be more receptive to overtures after learning about the financial incentives. Therefore, it would seem advantageous for job negotiators to continue to mention financial incentives despite the perception that the tax credits do not provide incentive to employers.
2. **Prepare clear, factual informational materials for employers about the advantages of hiring people with disabilities.** The published literature (confirmed by demonstration project staff) reports that employers in the community continue to operate under serious misconceptions regarding employment of people with disabilities. However, it appears that employers are also amenable to listening to an alternate explanation if supported by data and real life examples. Therefore, in response to the wide range of misconceptions that some employers have about hiring people with disabilities, project staff (particularly job negotiators) should be armed with data, research, fact sheets, and success stories that provide the employers with objective evidence to contradict the misconceptions. The NCWD/A can be (and has been) extremely helpful in this regard.
3. **When negotiating specific jobs, offer employers options for easing into the placement.** Projects have been successful in engaging employers in negotiation when they concentrate on the business needs of the employer (in addition to those of the job seeker), provide the employer with a tryout option, negotiate a gradual increase in hours, and provide followup support to both the program customer and the employer. These approaches may be useful in all project sites, and we recommend such approaches be tried.

Direct Employer Involvement with One-Stop Career Centers

An important ODEP goal for all adult demonstration programs is to incorporate customized employment services into the available menu of One-Stop Career Center services. To do so, however,

requires more integration of project activities into One-Stop Career Center employer involvement. The following recommendation suggests some actions that can be taken.

Integrate customized employment strategies into the One-Stop Career Center menu of services. Despite some improvements in the capacity of One-Stop Career Center staff to serve people with disabilities, One-Stop Career Centers have not yet integrated customized employment services (including job negotiation) into their menu of services. Nevertheless, some One-Stop Career Centers connected with demonstration projects are increasing their own capacity to serve people with disabilities. By doing so, they are also changing the way One-Stop Career Centers work with employers by providing training and information on people with disabilities to their employer customers. Such approaches need to be incorporated into the practices of all One-Stop Career Centers partnering with ODEP demonstration projects.

Contents of Report

After summarizing our findings from a review of the published literature, this report describes the methodology used to answer the above questions raised on employer involvement. We then summarize our findings from a review of SGAs (to determine ODEP's expectations with regard to employer involvement), Phase II findings on employer involvement, and in-depth site visits conducted between June and August 2005. We also discuss and synthesize our findings and make conclusions and recommendations to ODEP within the context of the three objectives of the independent evaluation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As part of the independent evaluation being conducted by Westat, the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) has asked Westat to provide in-depth analysis of three issues that were identified at site visits and in Quarterly Reports during Phase II of the evaluation. Two issues are specifically related to the adult demonstration programs—employer involvement in adult demonstration programs and the role of receiving Social Security Administration (SSA) benefits in the decision to seek part-time versus full-time employment—and one issue is geared toward youth demonstration programs—i.e., the role of intermediaries. This report provides in-depth analysis on the first adult program issue, employer involvement in adult demonstration programs.

The issue of employer involvement seeks to understand how adult demonstration programs can most effectively involve employers in their projects, as part of their planning and implementation process and in employer negotiations in the customized employment process. Employers, both individually and as members of employer organizations such as the Business Leadership Network (BLN) and the Business Advisory Council (BAC), are considered by ODEP to be key stakeholders in demonstration programs. Yet, in visiting project sites during Phase II of the independent evaluation, Westat found that employers were rarely involved as collaborators in projects and that project sites were often at a loss to know how best to involve employers in demonstration projects to help them to achieve their goals. Moreover, few details were provided at site visits on the process of negotiation with employers as part of the delivery of customized employment services.

In an effort to examine, understand, and improve employer involvement in adult demonstration programs, Westat addressed the following questions:

1. What are ODEP's expectations with regard to employer involvement in adult demonstration programs?
2. How are demonstration projects currently involving employers to assist them in planning, implementation, and job placement and to achieve their project goals regarding implementation of customized employment services at One-Stop Career Centers?
3. What are the barriers to involving employers in demonstration programs, and how are sites overcoming these barriers?

4. What are the environmental factors most amenable to involving employers in demonstration programs?

After summarizing our findings from a review of the published literature, this report describes the methodology used to answer the above questions. We then summarize our findings from a review of solicitations for grant applications (SGAs) (to determine ODEP's expectations with regard to employer involvement), Phase II findings on employer involvement, and in-depth site visits conducted between June and August 2005. We also discuss and synthesize our findings and make conclusions and recommendations to ODEP within the context of the three objectives of the independent evaluation.

2. REVIEW OF PUBLISHED LITERATURE

To assist in guiding our research questions, research design, and methodology, we initially conducted a review of the published literature to examine employer involvement in hiring people with disabilities. The purpose was to ascertain whether the published literature could provide any insights into two questions: (1) whether employer involvement in programs such as ODEP's demonstration programs were useful; and, if so (2) what methods were used for engaging employers in demonstration programs. The search for relevant published literature included an extensive search through multiple online databases including: Medline, PubMed, and APA online. In addition, Westat received access to listings from the ODEP database of references. We also searched reference libraries and web-sites from organizations such as the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the National Center of Workforce and Disability/Adult (NCWD/A) and the Employer Assistance and Recruiting Network (EARN).⁵ Terms used in this search included *employer involvement, disability employment, employer, employer disability, hiring disabled, and disabled job.*

2.1 Advantages to Hiring People with Disabilities

There is significant literature that discusses the various reasons why hiring people with disabilities may be beneficial to an employer. In general, employer benefits of hiring people with disabilities appear to fall into one of three categories: (1) benefits that directly relate to business objectives, such as hiring people with disabilities to meet the organization's business needs; (2) benefits that indirectly relate to business objectives, such as hiring people with disabilities to enhance corporate image; and (3) benefits that relate to organizational values, such as hiring people with disabilities because it is seen as the socially responsible thing to do (NCWD/A, 2005c).

In research cited by the EARN, interviews with employers suggest that those who hire people with disabilities report the workforce to be loyal and instrumental in reducing turnover (EARN, 2005). In fact, hiring people with disabilities is thought to be one of the "most economical solutions to high turnover" (EARN, 2005). In qualitative interviews conducted by EARN, employers of people with disabilities reported them to be committed and more likely to stay in a position for a longer period of

⁵ EARN is national toll-free telephone and electronic information referral service designed to assist employers in locating and recruiting qualified workers with disabilities. It is a service of ODEP.

time, thus decreasing turnover rates. In addition, employers surveyed by Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) reported being satisfied with the job performance of employees with disabilities (EARN, 2005).

In addition to benefits such as low turnover rates and high job performance levels, there are several financial incentives available to employers who hire people with disabilities. The three primary tax incentives available to employers who hire people with disabilities are: ADA Small Business Tax Credit; Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC); and the Welfare-to-Work Tax Credit (WtW) (NCWD/A, 2005a; GAO, 2002). The ADA Small Business Tax Credit, available to businesses with 30 or fewer employees or \$1,000,000 or less in revenue a year, is a tax credit for the cost of accommodations (up to \$5,000) provided to an employee with a disability. The WOTC is a tax credit available to employers who hire individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, including all recipients of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and all clients of state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies. The tax credit is worth up to \$2,400 per employee. The WtW tax credit is available to employers who hire an individual with a disability who receives Temporary Aid to Needy Families. The maximum value of the WtW tax credit is \$8,500 per employee (NCWD/A, 2005b).

2.2 Perceived Barriers to Hiring People with Disabilities

Despite the various financial and organizational benefits to employing people with disabilities, many employers still report significant barriers. A 2003 Rutgers University survey of private businesses found that 20 percent of employers said that the greatest barrier to people with disabilities finding employment is discrimination, prejudice, or employer reluctance to hire them (Schur et al., 2005). In telephone surveys conducted with 800 private and 400 federal employees in 1998 and 1999, Bruyere (2000) and her colleagues examined the employer-perceived barriers to the employment and advancement of people with disabilities. The survey found that, for both federal and private-sector employers, the *least* significant barriers included the cost of training, supervision, and accommodations for the job applicant. In comparison, the barriers that were rated as the *most* significant included a job applicant's lack of related experience, lack of required skills, knowledge of how to make accommodations, and attitudes and stereotypes toward people with disabilities.

In a series of qualitative interviews with federal agency officials and private business representatives conducted by the GAO (2002), respondents were asked about their knowledge and use of

the tax incentives available to employers to hire people with disabilities. Respondents indicated that businesses are frequently unaware of the tax incentives available, and if they are aware of the incentives, perceptions are that qualification for the incentives requires significant effort and that the dollar amount of the tax credit is not worth the work involved to receive it. In fact, those employers interviewed who had taken advantage of the tax incentives indicated that the hiring decisions were based on job skills and abilities of the applicants, not on the disability or tax incentives (GAO, 2002).

2.3 Reducing Barriers to Hiring People with Disabilities

When asked to rate the effectiveness of the listed methods of reducing the barriers, respondents indicated that the *most* effective method is visible top management commitment to the employment of people with disabilities, and the *least* effective method is the provision of tax incentives. Research shows that there are ways to reduce barriers identified by the employer. For example, Bruyere's (2000) qualitative interviews also found that the most effective means to reducing the barriers is an evident top management commitment to the employment of people with disabilities. The interviews suggested that a top-level commitment to the issue would likely result in a trickle-down effect, helping to decrease or eliminate misconceptions that may exist about hiring people with disabilities.

Disability employment research suggests that a partnership model between employers and agencies that serve people with disabilities is an effective method for reducing the barriers to and facilitating employment of people with disabilities (Bruyere et al., 2000; U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2002; Cook & Burke, 2002; Hagner & Cooney, 2003). In a 2001 survey, Buys and Rennie (2001) collected qualitative data using semi-structured interviews with employers and VR agencies to examine the factors important to creating partnerships between employers and VR agencies. Findings from the survey suggest that partnership or collaboration with disability programs is a key factor for employment success.

Qualitative interviews with employers have shown that forging a partnership between employers and organizations that serve people with disabilities can be advantageous to both parties. For the employers, the partnership could assist in identifying and recruiting qualified candidates for job placement, provide disability consultation or trainings, increase organizational comfort levels and decrease stereotypes and misconceptions about the employment of people with disabilities (Bruyere et al., 2000; U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2002). For the organizations that serve people with disabilities, a

partnership with employers could provide access to job opportunities, increase employer awareness of the benefits of employing people with disabilities, facilitate negotiations on job matching, and create an atmosphere where accommodations are easily agreed upon and obtained (Bruyere et al., 2000; Cook & Burke, 2002).

An additional study (Baer et al., 1994) presented a tri-lateral approach to employer collaboration, positing that the bi-lateral approach of an employer partnered with an organization that serves people with disabilities is not as effective as a tri-lateral approach, including the job seekers, would be. The authors conducted a case study that was developed over a 3-year time period. The case study consisted of a model for collaboration with employers in an effort to improve outcomes for individuals with disabilities. According to the model, the employers, providers, and consumers all contributed distinctly to the collaboration. The employers were charged with recruiting the core membership, developing the mission of the collaboration, and conducting job market research. Service providers worked to develop and prioritize the concerns of providers about finding employment for people with disabilities, recruit experts to address these concerns for the group, and develop an interagency team focused on employer collaboration. The job seekers were charged with identifying and prioritizing their employment concerns, recruiting a representative for the collaboration, and serving on the relevant subcommittees to provide expertise and perspective. Researchers concluded that a tri-lateral approach to collaboration can be effective in maintaining the sustainability of the partnerships, given the appropriate amount of time necessary to build the collaboration.

2.4 Summary

In searching for relevant published literature that addresses employer involvement with organizations that serve people with disabilities, we found articles that address employer compliance with ADA, the misconceptions that often discourage employers from hiring people with disabilities, and employer incentives for hiring people with disabilities. We experienced difficulty, however, locating articles that specifically address the concept of partnerships or collaborations between organizations and employers to work together toward increasing the employment of people with disabilities.

The published literature we uncovered shows that employers themselves report a number of advantages to hiring people with disabilities, but there are also various barriers keeping some employers from hiring people with disabilities. Highest on the list of advantages is the perception that hiring people

with disabilities is a good business decision. Employers report that people with disabilities are loyal and hardworking employees who stay in their position for longer periods of time (thereby reducing turnover rates, which incur training and other costs). Moreover, employers report that hiring people with disabilities can enhance their corporate image and is seen as the socially responsible thing to do.

Barriers to hiring people with disabilities often relate to employers' stereotypical assumptions about people with disabilities, as well as concern about a job applicant's lack of related experience or required skills and how to make accommodations. Costs for training, supervision, and accommodation did not appear to be a major concern. To overcome these barriers, it is suggested that senior management commitment is the most effective approach. Although some disability employment research suggests that a partnership model between employers and agencies that serve people with disabilities (e.g., VR agencies), such studies are based on surveys of perceptions and case examples. We were unable to uncover any research that examined the use of an intermediary organization (as so many ODEP programs do) on specific employment outcomes such as increases in employment placements.

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3. METHODOLOGY OF IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

We designed a three-part methodology to answer the four research questions: (1) review of SGAs; (2) review of findings from Phase II of the external evaluation (including site visit reports, Quarterly Reports, and findings from the Employment Outcome Analysis Project (EOAP)); and (3) the conduct of in-depth site visits to sites selected for their perceived success with employer involvement. The following is a description of each part of the methodology.

3.1 Review of SGAs

SGAs were considered to be a written and public explanation of ODEP's expectations regarding the role of employers in all demonstration programs. Consequently, for this issue analysis, we examined the SGA for each adult demonstration program (Customized Employment (CE); WorkFORCE Action; and Chronic Homelessness) in each year the SGA was issued (Fiscal Years 2001–2003 for the CE program; Fiscal Years 2002 and 2003 for WorkFORCE Action; and Fiscal Year 2003 for Chronic Homelessness). Searching on the word “employer” we located and recorded every section of the SGA that described ODEP's expectations regarding the role of employers in each demonstration program in each fiscal year. Findings from this review are located in Section 4.1 (Employer Involvement Found in SGAs).

3.2 Review of Phase II Findings

In order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of employer involvement for all adult program sites, Westat's interim progress reports for Fiscal Years 2001, 2002, and 2003 were searched for information relevant to employer involvement. Additionally, information was extracted from the EOAP report (Phase II), grantee Quarterly Reports, and site visit transcripts. Search terms included *employer*, *business*, *Job Accommodation Network* or *JAN*,⁶ and *Employer Assistance and Recruiting Network* or *EARN*. Exhibit 3.1 lists the demonstration programs and project sites covered by this review, as well as

⁶ Operated by ODEP, JAN is a toll-free information and referral service on job accommodations for people with disabilities, on the employment provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and on resources for technical assistance, funding, education, and services related to the employment of people with disabilities. In addition, JAN analyzes trends and statistical data related to the technical assistance it provides.

Exhibit 3.1. Project sites in each adult demonstration program by fiscal year and type of site visit received in Phase II of evaluation

Customized employment			WorkForce action		Chronic homelessness
Fiscal year 2001*	Fiscal year 2002**	Fiscal year 2003**	Fiscal year 2002**	Fiscal year 2003**	Fiscal year 2003**
Malden, MA	Hempstead, NY	Chicago, IL	Boston, MA	Nashville, TN	Portland, OR
Anoka, MN	Richmond, VA	Rockville, MD	Peoria, IL	Vancouver, WA	Boston, MA
Knoxville, TN	Kennewick, WA	Utica, NY	Athens, GA	Frederick, MD	San Francisco, CA
Marietta, GA	Montgomery, AL	Flint, MI			Indianapolis, IN
Fairfax County, VA	Detroit, MI	Helena, MT			Los Angeles, CA
Napa, CA	El Paso, TX				
San Diego, CA	Indianapolis, IN				
	Anchorage, AK				

* Followup site visit

**Initial site visit

the type of site visit (initial or followup) each project site received. Findings from this review are located in Section 4.2 (Phase II Findings on Employer Involvement).

3.3 Conduct of In-depth Site Visits

Although information on employer involvement had been collected during Phase II, an attempt was also made to identify those sites that appeared to have resolved some of the barriers related to involving employers in their projects and might be able to provide examples of potential promising practices. Therefore, in consultation with the NCWD/A and T-TAP, Westat selected three ODEP demonstration projects and conducted site visits to explore the issue of employer involvement in depth. This section describes the method of site selection, preparation for in-depth site visits, and the nature of the site visits.

3.3.1 Site Selection and Contact

Using our own experience from Phase II site visits, Westat staff first made a preliminary list of adult sites that, in our estimation, appeared to be involving employers in innovative ways (e.g., using BLNs and other employer groups) and had a record of successful negotiation as part of the customized employment process. It was also important to ODEP that at least one site was focusing on youth in transition. Once these sites were identified, we asked the two adult technical assistance (TA) projects, the NCWD/A and T-TAP, to provide their input into the selection process. An email was sent to the director of the TA projects (Appendix A); followup telephone calls and emails were also used to obtain input.

Once sites were selected, each project director was sent an email similar to the one contained in Appendix B. With telephone calls and additional emails, we were able to further explain the rationale for and nature of the in-depth site visit and how each site was selected.

3.3.2 Preparation for Site Visits

In preparation for the site visits, Westat reviewed Phase II data on the issue of employer involvement (described above) and used that information to help develop interview protocols to be used as a guide to key informant interviews. Protocols were developed for the project director, the career specialists or job developers (who were most involved in employer negotiation), One-Stop Career Center representative(s), the employer organization representative(s), employers who hired program customers, and program customers/job seekers (Appendix C). The protocol instruments were semi-structured and designed to collect information specific to the issue of employer involvement in the project. The project director protocol guide was organized around the following topic areas: perception of employer involvement; overview of employer involvement in the project; specific interactions between employers (or employer groups) and the project; specific examples of employer involvement/job negotiations with employers; strategies for engaging employer interest; and expectations/perceived barriers regarding hiring people with disabilities. The interview was meant to be a free-flowing exchange of ideas, so questions were not administered the same way for all key informants, and not all topic areas were necessarily relevant to each key informant interviewed. The content of the remaining protocols is described in Section 3.3.4.

Westat staff contacted each project director or program coordinator to arrange for a 2-day site visit during June, July, or August 2005. Two Westat staff then traveled to each site to conduct the site visits and collect relevant materials and other data about the demonstration project in reference to the topic of employer involvement. Prior to the arrival at each site, Westat staff reviewed the grant applications, Quarterly Reports, and reports from previous site visits to become familiar with the unique goals and objectives of each demonstration project. Westat also sent a copy of the protocols to each site prior to arriving for the site visit to help the sites prepare for the visit.

3.3.3 Data Collection

Westat employed a two-level approach to collecting data during the site visits. The first tier of data (macro-level data) was collected by interviewing project directors, project staff, One-Stop Career Center staff, and other individuals as appropriate (e.g., members of a BLN collaborating with the project). Project directors and staff were queried on their experiences with employer involvement in their projects, barriers to employer involvement in project planning and implementation and in the negotiation process, strategies the project has used for overcoming barriers, and recommendations to ODEP on how employers should be involved in demonstration programs. One-Stop Career Center staff were asked about the specific employer programs they had prior to the demonstration project and the nature and extent to which the demonstration project has influenced any changes to employer involvement at the One-Stop Career Center, their perception of the barriers to employer involvement in the project and in future One-Stop Career Center activities, strategies they have used for overcoming barriers, and recommendations to ODEP on how employers could be involved in future One-Stop Career Center activities, particularly as they relate to a more individualized approach to the provision of employment services. The same types of questions were asked of employers who are members of a BLN.

The second tier of data (micro-level data) was collected by concentrating on three employment placements at each project to determine the nature and extent of employer involvement and negotiation details in the provision of customized employment services. We asked each site to select up to three employment placements for which negotiated customized employment services took place. Relevant parties associated with the placement were interviewed (e.g., project or One-Stop Career Center staff who were involved in working with the program customer; the program customer; and employers). Job development staff members were questioned on the process used to negotiate with employers. Program customers were interviewed on their experiences with regard to the negotiation process, their satisfaction

with the process, and their perceptions of their relationship with their employer and co-workers. Employers themselves were also interviewed to validate information received from project staff and customers, to obtain an employer perspective on the negotiation process, and to receive feedback on their satisfaction with the negotiation process and placement.

3.3.4 Description of Site Visits

The in-depth analysis of employer involvement consisted of three site visits within the CE program priority area awarded in Fiscal Years 2001 and 2002. The following sites received an in-depth site visit lasting 2 days each:

- Indianapolis Private Council, Inc. (IPIC), Indianapolis, IN (CE02)
- Tennessee Customized Employment Partnership (TCEP), Knoxville, TN (CE01)
- Partners for Employment Project (PEP), Richmond, VA (CE02)

The Knoxville, Tennessee, project, Tennessee Customized Employment Partnership (TCEP), is held by the Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee's (CAC) Workforce Connections, the designated administrative entity for the Local Workforce Investment Board (LWIB) for the state of Tennessee. The project director is an employee of Workforce Connections.

In Indianapolis, the grant is held by the Indianapolis Private Industry Council (IPIC) (the Marion County WIB). The project director is a consultant to the IPIC and devotes half time to the project. The program coordinator, whom we interviewed on our in-depth site visit, works full time on the project.

The Richmond, Virginia, project, entitled "Partners for Employment Project" (PEP), is held by the City of Richmond's WIB. All of Richmond's One-Stop Career Centers are operated by Training and Development Corporation (TDC), a not-for-profit organization. The project director is an employee of TDC. The target group for this project is youth in transition.

All three sites are targeting individuals who receive SSI and/or SSDI and other individuals with disabilities who meet the qualifying criteria of target groups described in the Customized Employment SGA.

Westat evaluation staff worked with each site in advance to create a written agenda for the site visits. Each of the three visits began with a 1½ hour interview with the project director or the project coordinator. The remainder of the site visit agenda varied by site depending on the availability of other staff, employers, and program collaborators and customers.

The project director or coordinator interview began with questions about the perception of employer involvement in the CE program generally and the project in particular. The project director or coordinator was then asked to give an overview of employer involvement in his or her project and provide a detailed synopsis of how the project interacts with employer groups, such as the BLN. Following the overview, project directors or coordinators were asked to provide Westat with some specific examples of employer involvement in aspects of their project such as, planning, implementation, or job negotiation. Next, project directors or coordinators were asked about their strategies for engaging employer interest and establishing a relationship with employers.

In order to generate a free-flowing discussion containing stories and examples, interviews with the career specialists/job negotiators were mostly conducted in group settings. The career specialists/job negotiators were primarily asked questions about specific job negotiations that had taken place on behalf of a program customer. First, the career specialists/job negotiators were asked to provide some background information on the work history, disability, services received for the selected program customer. Then, they were asked to provide a thorough, step-by-step description of the individualized negotiation process and the outcome of the process. Finally, they were asked to discuss their previous experience with job negotiation and any training they may have received.

Program customers interviewed during these site visits were asked to provide a history of their work experience, a description of the employment planning process and other services they may have received from the ODEP demonstration project. Following their history, program customers were asked to describe the job negotiation process including specific information about the current job placement, the job interview, and the nature of the placement. Westat also interviewed many of the employers of the program customers. Employers were asked to describe their company/workplace and any expectations about and previous experience hiring people with disabilities. Employers were asked about their connection to the ODEP demonstration project and their reason for originally meeting with a career specialist/job developer. Finally, they were asked to describe the job negotiation process and explain why they hired the particular program customer.

The interviews with the One-Stop Career Center representatives focused on whether and how the ODEP demonstration project changed employer interaction at the One-Stop Career Center. The One-Stop Career Center representatives were asked to describe typical employer involvement at the One-Stop Career Center and then comment on any difference they perceived since the ODEP demonstration project began. They were asked about their previous experience with working to find employment for people with disabilities and the expectations of the One-Stop Career Center in terms of employers hiring people with disabilities. In addition, they were asked about the One-Stop Career Center's relationship to the ODEP demonstration project.

According to SGAs (see Section 4.1 Employer Involvement Found in SGAs), the ODEP demonstration projects were expected to build relationships with employer networks in order to increase employer participation in planning, implementation, and job negotiation. Employer organization representatives were asked to explain their role in and connection to the ODEP demonstration project and the One-Stop Career Centers. They were then asked about their expectations regarding hiring people with disabilities and any previous experience they had with hiring people with disabilities. Representatives were asked to describe methods for getting other employers involved in the ODEP demonstration project and for getting employers interested in hiring people with disabilities. This included a discussion of barriers and strategies to overcome those barriers

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4. RESULTS

Results are organized around the three parts of the methodology—employer involvement found in the review of SGAs, review of Phase II findings, and the conduct of in-depth site visits to selected sites.

4.1 Employer Involvement Found in SGAs

Throughout the CE, WorkFORCE, and Chronic Homelessness SGAs, there are many references to employers and the roles ODEP would like employers to play in the demonstration projects.

ODEP solicited grant applications for the CE program in Fiscal Years 2001, 2002, and 2003. Similar wording regarding the involvement of employers was used in all CE SGAs. As part of the CE program, ODEP stressed a need for “a sustained and coordinated initiative to build competency within One-Stop Centers and their partners, including service providers and employers, about the use of such customized employment strategies” (USDOL, 2002a). In the 2002 and 2003 SGA, ODEP also expressed a need to “develop ongoing linkages with employers, professional and business service organizations, and trade associations and market to employers the abilities of people with disabilities to work in a variety of jobs” (USDOL, 2002a; USDOL, 2003a).

Fiscal Years 2002 and 2003 WorkFORCE Action SGAs both specify that the proposed project will be evaluated on the extent to which the project will be coordinated, including obtaining support from key organizations, employers, and other agencies (USDOL, 2002b; 2003b). Of “particular importance” in the 2003 SGA was the “extent to which the methods of evaluation measure in both quantitative and qualitative terms, program results and satisfaction of customers, both people with disabilities and employers” (USDOL, 2003b).

There is one generation of Chronic Homelessness demonstration projects (Fiscal Year 2003). In the Fiscal Year 2003 Chronic Homelessness SGA (USDOL, 2003c), awardees were encouraged to involve as partners chambers of commerce, small business development centers, and employers. It also recommended that Chronic Homelessness project sites establish relationships with employers, ensure customer service and satisfaction for the employer and the person who is chronically homeless, as well as

provide followup services to ensure job retention. The SGA also recommended that grantees, “educate relevant stakeholders and systems personnel about changes needed to increase customized community employment outcomes for persons who are chronically homeless” (USDOL, 2003c).

In addition to the above language, the Fiscal Year 2003 adult demonstration programs were required to develop methodologies for coordinating efforts with employers; forge and develop relationships with employers; establish connections and collaborations with employers; track and respond to customer service and satisfaction among employers; and agree to actively utilize JAN and EARN. The specific language pertaining to employer involvement requirements in each SGA is provided in Appendix D. Bold italics were added.

4.2 Phase II Findings on Employer Involvement

Phase II findings include a summary of employment involvement in planning and implantation (Section 4.2.1) and job negotiations with employers as part of the customized employment process (Section 4.2.2). Each is discussed below.

4.2.1 Planning and Implementation

During site visits conducted in Phase II of the independent evaluation, Westat found that adult demonstration programs (CE, WorkFORCE, and Chronic Homelessness) made efforts to include employers in their projects in a variety of ways. For example, the Rockville and Richmond Fiscal Year 2002 CE sites partnered with their local BLN. As stated in a previous report, “The BLN is a nonprofit organization that engages the leadership and participation of companies to hire qualified job candidates with disabilities. The projects are able to use this network as a resource for training opportunities, employer outreach and marketing, information sharing, and employment opportunities” (Riley et al., 2004). CE project sites in Anoka, Minnesota, (Fiscal Year 2001) and El Paso, Texas, (Fiscal Year 2002) and the WorkFORCE project in, Athens, Georgia, (Fiscal Year 2002) worked with their local chambers of commerce, and the CE site in Knoxville, Tennessee, (Fiscal Year 2001) site worked with a BAC. All sites reported that they actively tried to develop relationships with employers in the community in order to make job carving and employer negotiations more feasible.

Demonstration sites tried to make these connections in several ways. Sites did extensive marketing and outreach to employers. CE projects in El Paso, Texas, (Fiscal Year 2002), Indianapolis, Indiana, (Fiscal Year 2002), Anoka, Minnesota, (Fiscal Year 2001), and Knoxville, Tennessee, (Fiscal Year 2001) invited employers to participate in job fairs. In other CE projects (Chicago, IL, Fiscal Year 2003; Flint, MI, Fiscal Year 2003; Anchorage, AK, Fiscal Year 2002; and Napa, CA, Fiscal Year 2001), employer focus groups were held and employer surveys were conducted. The information learned through surveys and focus groups was used to improve the services offered to employers and individuals with disabilities. Employers were also invited to attend disability awareness training to help them understand the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. In a few instances, sites held employer networking luncheons where employers could talk to other employers about their experiences hiring people with disabilities.

Employers were seen as the primary means for providing jobs for program participants. Therefore, many sites focused on marketing to employers and building relationships with them. Although many sites conducted employer outreach and marketing, few sites included employers in the planning and implementation of their demonstration projects. According to the Fiscal Year 2001 report, all of the 2001 customized employment sites included employers in strategic planning and implementation. All of the 2001 customized employment sites included employers in strategic planning and implementation. In the Fiscal Year 2002 and 2003 reports, however, it was noted that sites reported that they needed to have their project up and running before they could involve employers. Only a few employers attended planning meetings at any of the sites. Most sites said they planned to involve employers but were not ready at the time. Sites also concluded that employers were not as interested in being involved at the beginning stages. According to one project director, “employers want to get something done. They are not going to come to three meetings where you talk about the intake process” (Elinson et al., 2004).

Overall, the employer outreach and marketing activities, which included mailings, trainings, job fairs, and other activities, resulted in many people with disabilities obtaining jobs, though, according to Westat’s site visit findings, there was not “a clear emphasis on delivery of customized employment services” (Elinson, Kruger, and Frey, 2004). Program participants often received assistance in applying for existing, low-paying, part-time jobs. In addition, sites made numerous referrals to the ODEP-sponsored JAN and EARN programs. Based on numbers reported in all CE, Chronic Homelessness, and WorkFORCE Quarterly Reports received by Westat for Fiscal Years 2001-2004, projects referred

approximately 145 individuals to JAN and approximately 54⁷ to EARN. There was no mention of any job placements as a result of the referrals.

4.2.2 Customized Employment Services – Job Negotiation

Negotiation services include negotiation of job description using tasks from exiting jobs, job carving and restructuring, job sharing, creation of new job description, supported entrepreneurship, and supportive services/accommodations negotiated with the employer (NCWD/A, 2005a). According to findings from the Phase II Employment Outcomes Analysis Project, 23.5 percent (n=345) reported that they provided customized employment services consisting of negotiating a job description using tasks from an existing job (McCoy, Frey, and Elinson, 2004). About 19 percent reported customized employment services consisting of job carving and restructuring of jobs, while 2.3 percent negotiated with employers about job sharing, and 5.2 percent negotiated to create a new job description.

At Phase II site visits, some of the sites reported that they were successful in carving out jobs for their customers. For example, at the Anoka Fiscal Year 2001 CE project site, “a job development specialist worked with a local employer to carve out a job for a project customer with a developmental disability. A small local bakery had an open position for a cake decorator. The project customer had an interest in cooking and baking but could not perform all job functions of the cake decorator position. The job development specialist negotiated with the employer to carve out a position in which she does all of the work to prepare the cakes for decorating (e.g., putting the cakes on a decorating stand; preparing the decorating materials). The project customer was hired on a temporary basis for a 6-week on-the-job training and then hired permanently after the 6-week trial period” (Riley et al., 2004). In Anoka (Fiscal Year 2001 CE), three project customers participated in that project’s wage subsidy program. Students were hired by the employer and put on the company payroll, and the company was reimbursed by the project at the end of each month. All three students were eventually hired by the employers.

This site also worked to establish a wage subsidy program with a heating and air conditioning company. The project would pay for the first 6 weeks of employment, and then students who successfully completed the first 6 weeks would be hired. They would receive a raise after the first 90 days of employment to \$9.00 per hour (Riley et al., 2004).

⁷ One site was omitted from the total because the number of referrals reported was greater than the number of customers served.

At the Kennewick Fiscal Year 2002 CE site, the project worked with hospitals to rearrange job tasks so that licensed practical nurses (LPNs) could do the more skilled jobs in the hospitals and less skilled staff could perform jobs that require little training (e.g., preparing surgical trays). People with disabilities were hired at these hospitals to perform the low-skill jobs. In addition, the project coordinator in Kennewick contacted a local employer with a carpet cleaning business that expanded his business to do renovations. The employer expressed a willingness to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to place 5 to 10 clients with disabilities in this business and train them (Elinson, Kruger, and Frey, 2004). At the time of the site visit, one customer had been placed with this employer. In Athens, Georgia, (Fiscal Year 2002 WorkFORCE) a coffee shop owner agreed to let a program customer use the coffee shop as a venue for establishing a book-selling business (Elinson, Kruger, and Frey, 2004).

4.2.3 Barriers and Solutions

Demonstration project sites reported several barriers that prevented them from involving employers more effectively. First, the sites did not actively try to recruit employers for participation in the planning and implementation of the demonstration. Sites did not feel ready to include them and felt that employers would become disinterested in working on the project. Employers were not always willing to take time away from their businesses to attend meetings, especially when the meeting topics did not directly pertain to them. During Phase II site visits, sites also reported that employers continue to be misinformed about hiring people with disabilities. According to project staff, some employers feared hiring people with disabilities might cost them money or leave them vulnerable to various legal actions in the future.

The demonstration sites used a variety of methods to dispel misconceptions about hiring people with disabilities. Disability awareness training for employers was held by demonstration project sites in Richmond, Virginia, (Fiscal Year 2002 CE), Peoria, Illinois, (Fiscal Year 2002 WorkFORCE), and Malden, Mississippi, (Fiscal Year 2001 CE). Training topics included the process of hiring and working with people with disabilities and psychiatric disabilities. The Malden Fiscal Year 2001 CE site teamed with Massachusetts General Hospital to develop a program for National Disability Mentoring Day. Hospital employees with disabilities participated and spoke with individuals about their employment experience at the hospital to show that it is a good place for people with disabilities to work. This program resulted in one applicant obtaining employment at the hospital as a patient care associate. Several sites held employer networking activities where employers could talk to each other about their experiences.

Detroit (Fiscal Year 2002 CE) held an employer forum to better understand employers' perception of employment barriers for individuals with disabilities and inform employers of available resources that can assist them in hiring individuals with disabilities. In El Paso (Fiscal Year 2002 CE), several employers agreed to participate on a panel and speak about their experiences with customized employment. The BAC at the CE project site in Knoxville (Fiscal Year 2001) held quarterly luncheons, and the Fiscal Year 2001 CE project site in San Diego planned to have an employer breakfast or retreat to include employers in the program. The CE demonstration project sites in Anoka, Minnesota, (Fiscal Year 2001), Indianapolis, Indiana, (Fiscal Year 2002), Fairfax, Virginia, (Fiscal Year 2001), and El Paso, Texas, (Fiscal Year 2002) held job fairs to bring employers and people with disabilities together.

4.3 In-depth Site Visits

In this section we summarize findings from in-depth site visits to three CE sites. We begin with a description of the sites' reports of their perception of employer involvement, and then describe reports of planning and implementation with employers, employer involvement at the One-Stop Career Center, negotiation with employers (from the perspective of the job developer, job seeker, and employer), and barriers to involvement with employers and their solutions.

4.3.1 Sites' Perception of Employer Involvement

Prior to asking questions about how employers are currently involved in the demonstration projects, Westat interviewers asked site project directors for their perception of ideal employer involvement in the demonstration programs.

According to the project director in Knoxville, the Knoxville site's goal for employer involvement is to meet the needs of the individual job seeker (i.e., find employment based on their interests, skill sets, and strengths) and meet the legitimate needs of an employer. Employers are seen as playing a valuable role by the Knoxville project site because they provide the opportunity for employment to the program customers. The Knoxville project director emphasized the importance of being able to create an employer-driven arrangement (i.e., one in which employers identify their needs and the demonstration project helps meet those needs) for employer involvement in the demonstration programs, thereby increasing the likelihood of employer commitment and sustainability of the involvement.

The Indianapolis project envisions a system that would be more employer-demand driven than the current system. In order to sustain employer interest and involvement in an organization such as the BLN, the system needs to meet employer needs quickly without a lot of work on the employer side. Employers need to know what their role is, what kind of control they have, what is expected of them, and most importantly, what they stand to gain from joining the BLN. The local BLN would need to be revitalized significantly and include a larger pool of employers than it currently does. The BLN should provide education and training programs for employers (relevant to people with disabilities) and host information gathering meetings for employers.

Project staff in Indianapolis noted that they would like to “market” the project’s services and the concept of customized employment to employers before having a program customer in mind for a specific job. Staff also stated that they would like to have employers involved in developing strategies for the project site to avoid being perceived by employers as aggressive and interested only in finding jobs for people with disabilities. Finally, the Indianapolis site feels it will be important to involve employers who are well-regarded in the community, thereby lending credibility to the program. When planning activities in the community, having these employers involved might encourage other employers to become involved. Alternatively, if it is Department of Rehabilitation Services or the WorkOne Center involved, employers may feel the activity has ulterior motives (to push hiring people with disabilities).

In Richmond, project staff perceives employer involvement as having employers involved in the strategic planning of the project and also in the day-to-day operations of the program. Employers need to be integrated into the goals of the program, shifting some of the focus to building relationships with employers rather than strictly meeting the needs of the program customer. In addition, employers should be involved in or represented on advisory boards.

4.3.2 Planning and Implementation with Employers

In Knoxville, employers are involved in the ODEP demonstration project in a few different ways. Employers are members of the BAC. They also negotiate with career specialists for jobs for program customers, and they partner with the One-Stop Career Center to recruit qualified employees.

The Knoxville sites’ BAC originated with a grant received by the Cerebral Palsy (CP) Center (a partner to the project) from the Developmental Disabilities Council to look at ways to link

service providers and employers. The project worked with the CP Center to foster employer interest in the BAC by inviting employers to luncheons and informational meetings where employers could learn about employment of people with disabilities, become educated about the opportunities for employers who do hire people with disabilities and address needs, questions, and concerns that employers may have about hiring people with disabilities. The project was able to involve members of the LWIB with the BAC, and ultimately, the BAC became a subcommittee of the LWIB.

The mission of the BAC in Knoxville is to inform employers about employing people with disabilities, link employers with service providers who can help employers meet their human resource needs, and also inform and increase awareness about issues around the employment of people with disabilities. Employer membership grew with the assistance of the local service providers who invited employers with whom they had a relationship to join the BAC. The project has struggled to maintain a consistent number of BAC members and to sustain employer interest by ensuring that the meetings provide information and education needed by the employers. The BAC in Knoxville also works to educate service providers about the type of employee and employee skills businesses in Knoxville are looking for and how employers prefer to be approached about employment opportunities. BAC employers offered feedback to service providers that some of the job coaches and job developers from other programs or organizations who come to their places of business do not always have a businesslike approach (e.g., they wear jeans and a t-shirt to meetings, sip a soda, and talk on their cell phone during meetings).

The primary activity of the Knoxville BAC consists of quarterly meetings that include luncheons, presentations, and provision of information. Topics of the meetings in the past have included assistive technology, the ADA, and local employer success stories about hiring people with disabilities. Presentations are given by service providers, employers, and people with disabilities. According to the project coordinator, the Knoxville BAC makes every attempt to include employers in planning meetings so the group focuses on the needs of the employers.

The BLN is the key employer group at the Indianapolis site, but it is struggling to build a membership of employers. Project staff members have been involved in attempts to revitalize the BLN through conducting research on BLN best-practices and supporting meetings. Project staff also expressed a desire to develop a marketing strategy for contacting and engaging employers in order to build a network of employers for job negotiation but is too busy with day-to-day responsibilities to find the time.

As part of the BLN revitalization, the BLN had a kick-off luncheon and information summit in 2002. Initial activities of the BLN included disability awareness for employers, a job fair, and a disability mentoring day. Currently, the BLN has a core membership of five to six employers. Representatives from the Mayor's Office of Disability Affairs are working to ensure the sustainability of the BLN by trying to get commitment from CEOs and other upper management staff. Part of the recruitment process is being facilitated by the Indianapolis Private Industry Council (IPIC) (which holds the ODEP demonstration program grant).

The IPIC is contributing to the BLN revitalization with two staff members who are working to recruit employers who have a genuine interest in working with people with disabilities. The IPIC staff has been meeting with different employers in the areas trying to determine how the BLN could be of value and service to employers. IPIC developed a list of the things that employers are looking for from a BLN. One of the things BLN representatives hope to do is develop a resource directory for the community that links employers with service providers. Another desired activity is to develop a method for sharing best practices among employers to work with people with disabilities. Another activity suggested by BLN representatives was to establish a parent group for employees who have a child with a disability.

Project staff are trying to stimulate the BLN in Indianapolis by looking to other BLNs for "best practices" for building a strong and successful BLN. One approach they plan to use is to ask employers for more specific types of involvement. One strategy is to ask them to sponsor a luncheon, attend a job fair, or take part in Mentoring Day. According to project staff, the BLN is lacking a mission statement from which employers can learn from the beginning what the goals of the BLN are and what is available to them through the BLN (e.g., training). According to a representative from the BLN, however, there is a mission statement, which is to promote disability awareness from the perspective of the employer and to create opportunities for people with disabilities.

Although the IPIC is assisting in the revitalization of the BLN in Indianapolis, interviewees reported that there was little interaction between the BLN and the CE project site. On the other hand, the vehicle for planning and implementation at the Indianapolis CE site is the Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee for the Indianapolis project does not currently include any employers, but the plan is to add employers to its membership. The project is working toward developing a marketing strategy for employers to make them aware of the services available to them, including disability awareness training sessions and educational seminars on employment of people with disabilities. The planned approach is to

have someone from the management team approach employers so the contact is not made about a program customer but the program itself. Using this approach, project management hopes to build a network of employers by meeting with them to inform them about the One-Stop Career Center and the demonstration program and the services available to employers. Then, when there is a program customer suitable for employment with an employer in the network, the job developer would contact the employer.

In Richmond, the project is working to integrate more employers into the project. At the time of the in-depth site visit, there was limited employer involvement. As described by project staff, the main focus of the project has been on the program customer. Building relationships with employers has not been emphasized until recently. Whereas the BLN in Richmond seems to be strong and has a large employer membership, the integration between the BLN and the project is not strong, thereby limiting employer involvement.

In Richmond, the ODEP demonstration project supports the business manager liaison position for the Virginia BLN. The position was created to support employers by providing disability awareness and etiquette training, information sessions about services available through the ODEP demonstration program and the One-Stop Career Center, and developing a database of businesses that are “disability friendly.” According to the project director, the business manager liaison has been instrumental in developing relationships with employers that provide placements for the Summer Youth Employment Program.

The BLN liaison to the Richmond project is housed at a large financial institution that, according to the project director, is instrumental to the BLN in Virginia. The financial institution has made hiring people with disabilities a recruitment priority, and therefore, has become a leader in the Virginia BLN. This arrangement is beneficial to the project because the liaison is integrated into the business community. According to the liaison, it lends credibility to her efforts when she is able to tell potential employers that she is with the Virginia BLN and is housed at a large corporation rather than the Richmond Career Advancement Center (RCAC). As she explained, most employers are unfamiliar with RCAC and One-Stop Career Centers.

The Virginia BLN works to educate people on the value of hiring people with disabilities. It sponsors an annual survey of employers and uses that data to select topics of interest to employers. According to the BLN’s business liaison, employers do not know where to go to locate qualified employees with disabilities; they are fearful of what hiring a person with a disability entails, and they

think accommodations will be costly and intrusive. The BLN has provided employers with training on topics such as interviewing people with disabilities, assistive technology, and working with the human resources manager or other co-workers to allay fears about hiring people with disabilities.

The BLN liaison for the Richmond site also worked with the RCAC to develop a Youth Workforce Investment Network that serves youth and develops youth programs such as work-based mentoring, education, and youth development. The BLN liaison has contacts from organizations and previous work experience to assist in finding employers to assist with the mentoring program. She noted that there is a dearth of young people with disabilities looking for employment at the RCAC and in Richmond overall.

In addition to working with the Virginia BLN, the Richmond WIB has on staff a business services administrator whose primary goal is to develop relationships with employers and create a more employer-driven approach to job negotiation. This person meets with employers and tries to determine how the project can help them rather than approaching employers and asking for something from them (e.g., job placements). This person also makes contact with new businesses in the area and arranges small-scale job fairs that take place in the RCAC.

Project staff in Richmond also reported working with an employer group called Commonwealth Workforce Networks (CWNs), sponsored by the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services (VR). The CWNs are an alliance of workforce development professionals (private and public) designed to enhance partnerships with the business community and provide businesses with access to applicants with disabilities. The RCAC attends the CWN's monthly meetings and has access to all job leads posted with the CWN. In addition, a staff member from the project serves on the CWN steering committee.

4.3.3 Employer Involvement at the One-Stop Career Center

One-Stop Career Centers typically respond to two customers—job seekers and employers. An important issue in examining employer involvement as part of the evaluation of ODEP demonstration programs is to determine whether employer involvement at One-Stop Career Centers has changed as a result of ODEP programs.

One-Stop Career Center staff explained that they had to engage in an aggressive marketing campaign to increase awareness of the One-Stop Career Center in Knoxville. According to interviewees, the One-Stop Career Center is large and is continuing to grow. The center has developed partnerships with several staffing agencies and employers conduct job recruiting fairs at the centers. The One-Stop Career Center has made efforts to involve more employers in the center and is also working with other organizations (e.g., the Knoxville Chamber of Commerce) to try to bring employers to the Knoxville area. The One-Stop Career Center is working with the Empowerment Center in Knoxville using U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding to increase the number of employers and people employed within a 20-mile radius of Knoxville. Employers are offered special tax incentives to keep businesses in the specified area and to employ people from that area. The One-Stop Career Center staff work to inform employers about the tax incentives and has also helped employers develop job descriptions, polish interview techniques, and hire a workforce.

One-Stop Career Center staff work with employers to assist them with hiring qualified employees. At the time of the interview, the One-Stop Career Center was working with a large health care provider in Knoxville, trying to facilitate recruitment of qualified job candidates for job openings. One-Stop Career Center staff met with employment managers and department managers from the health care provider to discuss strategies for locating people to fill the jobs and how the One-Stop Career Center could help fill the positions. Other examples of working with large employers include a relationship the One-Stop Career Center has with a large hardware chain store. The One-Stop Career Center is working with that chain in Knoxville to help them fulfill two initiatives: one to employ older workers, and the other to employ veterans of the war in Iraq.

According to One-Stop Career Center staff, it was not until the ODEP demonstration project was funded that they realized how little training and experience they had in working with people with disabilities. Following ODEP funding, One-Stop Career Center staff took part in training and workshops designed for working with people with disabilities. Since the demonstration project started, One-Stop Career Center staff have worked to inform employers of the benefits to and services available for hiring people with disabilities. In addition, they work with selected employers in making the workplace more accessible.

The Indianapolis One-Stop Career Center works closely with the ODEP demonstration project to share information about job leads and employers. The One-Stop Career Center has a customer base that includes employers (they place job orders through the labor exchange component), and the

center shares those job orders with the employment consultants in the demonstration project. One-Stop Career Center staff encourage the employment consultants to register program customers in the job seeker database at the One-Stop Career Center. That way, the program customers are included in the pool of potential matches when a job opening is received at the One-Stop Career Center. Customized employment is a new concept to One-Stop Career Center staff but, according to the One-Stop manager, ultimately they would like to integrate the process into their catalog of services. However, One-Stop Career Center staff have not yet received any training on customized employment.

One-Stop Career Center staff in Richmond work to develop relationships with employers so that employers view the One-Stop Career Center as a place to meet their employment needs. The One-Stop Career Center has recently started to involve more employers by establishing a business services unit consisting of a team of One-Stop Career Center staff dedicated to building an employer network. Project staff work to identify new businesses that locate in the area and contact them to offer assistance with recruiting their workforce. Project staff also contact businesses that are expanding and offer assistance with workforce needs. They also have conducted focus groups with employers to identify needs of employers.

According to One-Stop Career Center staff, the ODEP demonstration project has had a significant impact on the One-Stop Career Center. The program has facilitated relationships with various agencies and organizations that have proved beneficial for the One-Stop Career Center. For example, the One-Stop Career Center now has access to a VR staff person who can provide screening and testing for program customers who possibly have unidentified disabilities. In addition, One-Stop Career Center staff have started asking employers about working with people with disabilities and trying to educate them about the advantages and benefits if doing so.

4.3.4 Negotiation with Employers

In addition to involvement in planning and implementation, employers are also involved in micro-level (operational) project activities, most notably in job negotiation activities that are part of the provision of customized employment services for specific program customers.

4.3.4.1 Description of the Job Negotiation Process

Each project site we visited for an in-depth visit described a slightly different approach to the job negotiation process.

Knoxville

Program customers in Knoxville go through a discovery process with a career specialist during which they are encouraged to explore their job interests. For some program customers, the action plan resulting from the discovery process may include volunteer work, unpaid work experience placements, or other placements that provide the customer with some work experience and help to identify skill sets and abilities of the program customer along with any behavior issues. Following the discovery process, career specialists set up site assessments that entail both the job seeker and career specialist visiting a job site. The visit permits the job seeker to develop skills specific to the job (e.g., running the facsimile machine, photocopying, answering the telephone, or stuffing envelopes). According to the career specialist, by asking an employer for a site assessment only, the career specialist limits the employer's obligation, liability, and involvement, and the employer is often more amenable to the visit. The career specialists have developed a core network of employers that are generally open to such site assessments.

Once the program customer has completed the discovery process and any work experience site assessments needed and available, the career specialists begin to identify potential placements for the program customers. Career specialists in Knoxville have different methods for finding job leads or openings for program customers. Most times, the approach is more of a "cold-call" to a business. For example, if a customer is interested in working for a pizza delivery business, the career specialist will visit pizza delivery businesses in the vicinity and talk to managers about the services the demonstration project provides.

In Knoxville, one of the first steps of the job negotiation process is for the staff to call an employer and try to set up a tour. The purpose of the tour is to make contact with the employer and arrange for the job seeker to observe the tasks, activities, and responsibilities that exist at the place of employment. According to the project director, experienced project staff have developed a "trained eye" for identifying "gaps" (e.g., tasks not being completed on a regular basis) in productivity when visiting an

employer. These gaps often provide project staff with the building blocks for later customization when the career specialist returns with a specific program customer ready to take on employment. In addition, the tour provides the staff an opportunity to describe the services provided by the One-Step Center as well as the specific services provided by the ODEP demonstration program. This secondary goal is to provide the employer with useful information so they do not perceive the tour to have been a waste of their time.

After identifying a potential placement, the career specialist calls the employer or contact person to set up an information appointment about the One-Stop Career Center and the services it provides. During that meeting, the career specialist queries the contact person about possible job openings or tasks that are not being completed regularly. If a need is identified, the career specialist explains that there is an individual who may be able to meet that need and offers to bring that individual to the job site for a “trial run” with no obligation.

Next, the career specialist and the program customer go to the job site for what they call a “working interview.” The working interview involves the program customer performing the actual job while the career specialist and job site contact observe. According to career specialists, this process is advantageous because it allows the employer to see skills that the program customer may otherwise be unable to articulate.

At the Knoxville site, most of the program customers have severe cognitive impairments and are typically not looking for full-time or even half-time employment. According to the career specialists in Knoxville, the fact that they are almost always looking only for part-time work of a few hours a week is a selling point for employers, making them more open to the idea of creating a position for the program customer. Following the working interview, career specialists in Knoxville work with the employer to carve out a position for the program customer; often this position is limited to several hours a week. The career specialist works with the employer to ensure that any necessary accommodations are made. Most accommodations thus far have been minimal (e.g., writing a list of tasks to be completed for the day for the program customer). A specific example of the negotiation process at the Knoxville site can be found in Exhibit 4.1.

Exhibit 4.1. Example of job negotiation process in Knoxville.

Knoxville Program Customer “Julie”*

Julie was referred from the Cerebral Palsy Center day program (a partner of the program) to the Seamless Transition Project, a youth component of the demonstration program in Knoxville. She is 33 years old, lives at home with her mother, and has no previous work experience. Julie was selected to enter the Seamless Transition Project because she had expressed an interest in having a job with the goal of moving out of her parents’ house.

Upon conducting the discovery process with Julie, the job negotiator learned that Julie was interested in working in an office setting. Based on that knowledge, the job negotiator arranged site assessments for Julie at several different offices where she learned how to use the copy machine, fax machine, and other office machinery. The offices Julie visited had been approached by project staff before to be used as assessment sites and had previously agreed to do so. Therefore, a rapport was already established, and the assessments were easily arranged.

During these assessments, the job negotiator was able to assess Julie’s skills and also determine what she liked and did not like. The job negotiator noticed that Julie exhibited some behavior issues that might preclude her from working in an office setting and began exploring other options with Julie. Part of that exploration involved taking Julie out into the community (e.g., shopping, exercising, going to the movies) and showing her different types of jobs in the community.

At the same time, the job negotiator was trying to find a housekeeping position for another program customer. She had been “cold-calling” assisted living centers and providing them with information about the One-Stop Career Center. One assisted living center housekeeping manager agreed to an appointment; the job negotiator met with her and told her about the program and the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. The job negotiator explained that the program customers wanted to work a few hours a week. The job negotiator asked questions such as, “Is there anything here that isn’t getting done at the end of the day? What’s getting shoved to the end because your other duties are taking over?” In response to those questions, the employer explained that her head housekeeper was overworked and could use some limited assistance. The employer agreed to a site assessment, and the job negotiator brought another program customer (not Julie) to the site.

The site assessment with this other program customer did not work out. However, the employer was open to having another program customer come in for an assessment. The job negotiator brought Julie, and Julie worked with her potential supervisor, completing the tasks that would be included in her job (e.g., cleaning toilets, dusting hand rails, mopping floors).

Julie was offered the job based on her performance during the site assessment, and the employer and job negotiator worked together to meet the necessary accommodations. Julie’s hours were scheduled around her other activities in the community. She started with only a few hours per week with the intent of increasing the number as she learned the job. Since Julie seemed to have some difficulty recalling all the tasks required on a given day at the job site, the supervisor agreed to provide Julie with a daily list that enumerates her responsibilities. That way, Julie knows what she has to do each day. She can also cross out each task as it is completed. Finally, the job negotiator arranged to be on site with Julie for several weeks or until she was comfortable that Julie was ready to be alone on the job. The negotiator also assured the employer and supervisor that she and the other project staff were available to them for whatever supports were necessary.

* For purposes of confidentiality, the name of the program customer has been changed.

The Knoxville site also recently began a high school transition project called the Seamless Transition Project. The objective of this project is to work with youth with disabilities in their last year of high school to create a seamless transition from school to adult life. This transition involves community involvement, volunteer work, paid employment, and independent living skills training. The process for identifying and negotiating with employers in the Seamless Transition Project is the same as it is for the adult program customers.

Indianapolis

In Indianapolis, employment consultants work to provide program customers with carved jobs, self-employment, or resource ownership opportunities. An example of self-employment is ownership of a vending machine by a program customer. The project purchases the vending machine with project funds, and the business consists of identifying locations for the vending machine, purchasing the contents of the vending machine, and filling the machine. Resource ownership is slightly different in that the program customer receives a salary from a particular company (e.g., a local fitness center). The demonstration project purchases a resource that will enable the program customer to work for an employer (e.g., a washer and dryer). The program customer then uses the resource to provide a service for the employer's business. The service is what is negotiated with the employer.

When program customers enter the program, employment consultants first determine their employment interests and develop a program customer profile. During these person-centered planning meetings, employment consultants talk about the employment options available to the customer: job carving (hired by an employer), resource ownership, or self-employment. In addition to working with the program customer, employment consultants have "brainstorming sessions" with one another during which they exchange ideas, contacts, job leads, and market research to assist each other with program customers.

After building a program customer profile, the employment consultant will arrange job trials to determine the kinds of jobs the program customer likes and assess the program customer's skill level. The project has a database of employers available for job trials, and employment consultants also use their own personal contacts from previous positions for job trials. The approach taken by employment consultants is to explain that they have a program customer with little or no work experience that they would like to bring to the job site for skills assessment. The employment consultants assure the employers that it is just for a couple of hours, and there is no expectation that the program customer will be hired.

Following one or more job trials, the employment consultant and the program customer have a better understanding of the customer's skills and interests. Based on that understanding, the employment consultant discusses different employment options with the customer. If a customer is interested in being employed by an employer (rather than being self-employed or taking the resource ownership option) the employment consultant begins to contact employers.

The employment consultants visit employers to talk to them about the project and to obtain some information about their industry and organization. During this visit, employment consultants also begin to ask questions and make observations to identify gaps that may exist in the flow of responsibility and productivity at the employer's organization. These identified gaps can be translated into needs and then into negotiated jobs at a later date. At this point, there is no discussion of a particular program customer or a job opening. This information is collected and kept on file so it can be used when assisting another program customer find employment at a later date. Most employment consultants report using personal contacts and the contacts of other employment consultants first. The project site also has access to job leads received by the One-Stop Career Center.

According to career specialists, when an employment consultant meets with a potential employer, they work diligently and quickly to discuss different jobs that could be created for the program customer. Often the employment consultant will bring photographs depicting the program customer working at a job trial. If necessary, the employment consultant will also conduct a brief disability awareness session, explaining the different approaches to accommodating certain disabilities. The goal is to provide the employer with evidence that the program customer is capable of doing the job and there are benefits to hiring people with disabilities.

If a program customer is interested in self-employment, the project staff conducts market research prior to developing a business plan. Part of this research includes a survey that they send to businesses in the targeted industry. The survey has a cover letter that explains the purpose of the survey (to obtain information about the market and the industry, not to solicit employment). Taking advantage of the project's partnership with the Small Business Administration (SBA), employment consultants and program customers meet with an SBA representative to develop a business plan. In addition, employment consultants will contact businesses similar to the planned business and garner information about being in that particular business. Self-employment opportunities are often derived from hobbies and interests of program customers. For example, one program customer enjoyed woodworking and had developed a

talent for it. His employment consultant worked with him to develop a plan for a woodworking business and now he has a booth at the local craft mall. The program provides assistance to program customers interested in self-employment with startup costs. For example, the program purchased the first inventory of goods for a program customer's vending machine. The program customer's family purchased the vending machine.

Once the connection is made with the employer, a business agreement is developed and signed by a project representative and the employer (see Appendix E for an example of a business agreement).

If a program customer has an interest in resource ownership, employment consultants conduct market outreach to employers in the industry of interest. This outreach involves either a letter or a face-to-face visit to the employer. The employment consultant describes the program to the employer and then asks specific questions designed to determine whether a specific need is being met for the employer. For example, a program customer who was trained to operate a steam press for a laundry or dry cleaning service decided she wanted to be involved in resource ownership. The employment consultant began calling and visiting laundry and dry cleaning establishments, asking if a steam press service was needed and then explaining the arrangement the project could provide (the project would provide the steam press and the employer would pay the program customer for her time to operate it).

The project site reports high levels of involvement and support from family members of program customers. Accommodations made for program customers in Indianapolis often include a reward system that involves the program customer's parents. The employment consultant develops a chart that lists all responsibilities and tasks for each day. It is the program customer's responsibility to have the manager sign the chart each day and comment on whether the tasks were completed. At the end of the week, the program customer takes the chart to his/her parents and if it is satisfactory to the parent, the program customer receives a reward. Other accommodations made by employers include limiting job descriptions to one or two tasks, providing flexible hours, and giving instructions in ways that are easy to understand by the program customer. A specific example of the negotiation process at the Indianapolis site can be found in Exhibit 4.2.

Exhibit 4.2. Example of job negotiation process in Indianapolis

Indianapolis Program Customer “Joe”*

Joe came to the Customized Employment project in Indianapolis when he completed the school for the blind. Joe lives alone in an apartment and also seems to have a strong familial support system. He had no previous work experience, with the exception of a sheltered workshop, and was not sure what he wanted to do in terms of employment. He and his employment consultant completed some person-centered planning and PATH exploration.

During this discovery period, Joe’s employment consultant discovered that Joe loves sports. Based on that knowledge, the employment consultant arranged for job trials for Joe at local radio and television stations that have sports programming. Joe and the employment consultant went on these job trials but were unable to identify an employment opportunity for Joe. They therefore went back to the person-centered planning and discovery process to learn about other jobs that might interest Joe.

During one meeting with the employment consultant, Joe mentioned that he had gumball machines when he was a child and enjoyed having them. The employment consultant suggested that Joe consider starting his own business with quarter vending machines. Joe and his employment consultant conducted some market research by visiting local businesses and asking them if they have vending machines and, if not, would they be interested in having vending machines. Joe and his employment consultant had the idea to ask the local county offices if Joe could place vending machines in their offices. Together, they wrote a proposal and attended a meeting and were approved to place vending machines in the offices.

Currently, Joe owns 20 vending machines. The machines were purchased for him by VR. The ODEP demonstration project purchased the first batch of inventory for the vending machines (candy) but now Joe purchases the rest of the inventory. Joe’s responsibilities include cleaning and replenishing the machines, taking the money out of the machines, and fixing any jammed machines. Joe’s father drives him to each of the vending machine locations, and Joe goes inside and completes all of his responsibilities.

Joe is currently in the process of creating a visual profile for his business. The profile consists of photographs of the places where his vending machines are located. He will use this profile when trying to grow his business by meeting with business owners. In addition, Joe and his employment consultant developed a business plan that includes a plan to eventually purchase dollar vending machines and hire a driver.

* For purposes of confidentiality, the name of the program customer has been changed.

Richmond

In Richmond, job negotiators work with youth in transition to provide them with mentoring, work experience, and employment. Typically, a job negotiator starts working with a youth before graduation and develops a customized plan for the youth based on any assessments, work adjustments, or work experience the youth may have received. The plan usually involves providing the youth with skill development (through training provided by WIA), arranging for work experience opportunities, and ultimately locating a job placement for the youth. Completion of high school is an aspect of the plan that is emphasized heavily.

The training provided to program customers serves as an incentive to employers because training can be designed to address specific occupational skill sets. Providing training for program customers also helps to sustain relationships with employers. Job negotiators fear that if they send a program customer to a job with little or no training or experience, the relationship with that employer might be damaged.

Job negotiators maintained that work experience opportunities for youth are beneficial both to the youth and the employer. The youth gains valuable work experience and learns new skills, and the employer has a chance to observe what the youth's capabilities are and the opportunity to hire the youth. In addition, job negotiators are able to see firsthand what type of accommodations may be needed for the program customer. Work experiences can last from 3 to 6 months and are considered a trial work period. By specifying it as a trial work period, the job negotiator provides the employer with an "out" at the end of the term, if needed.

Job leads and information about interested employers are obtained from the business services unit of the One-Stop Career Center at RCAC. Job negotiators meet with business services unit staff to discuss the interests and skills of the program customer. Based on that information, potential employers and job leads are identified. Once the potential employers are identified, job negotiators make contact with them.

In Richmond, the general approach to job negotiation is to market everyone to potential employers, not just people with disabilities. Included in the model are questions about how an employer could accommodate people with disabilities. Job negotiators in Richmond typically do not mention a program customer's disability; nor do they explain that the project's focus is on people with disabilities.

Instead, job developers explain to employers that they can provide support services to a hired program customer for up to 12 months to ensure that the individual meets the expectations of the employer. This support is seen as a benefit by employers. These support services include things such as child care and transportation.

Job negotiators will try to arrange an appointment with employers to take a tour of the facility and talk to the employer about the services available through RCAC. The tour gives the job negotiators an opportunity to determine if the necessary accommodations for the program customer could be met by the employer and also allows the negotiator to talk to the employer about job prospects for youth. If the employer is amenable, an interview is arranged for the program customer, and the job negotiator typically accompanies the customer.

Accommodations made for program customers include allowing extra breaks at specific times so an individual may take medication, flexible hours to accommodate school, and job coaching. One of the job negotiators in Richmond worked closely with an employer to obtain a waiver allowing the program customers to bypass the corporate online application and have a face-to-face interview. A specific example of the negotiation process at the Richmond site can be found in Exhibit 4.3.

4.3.4.2 Project Staff Experience

According to some of our interviewees, the strategy for engaging employer interest in the Knoxville demonstration project site is to determine what will appeal to the particular employer and what that employer's need is. The job developers present themselves to employers as people who can assist the employers in meeting some of their needs. Generally, this approach helps the job developers get their foot in the door. The staff typically will then go to the employer for a tour. Based on the tour and discussions during the tour, they discern if there are needs that can be met by the project. As one job developer explained, telling the employer that it is an exploratory meeting will often take some of the pressure off. In addition, job developers at the Knoxville project site are typically looking for part-time jobs, sometimes only 2 hours a day. According to the job developers, employers respond to the idea that the placement would be minimal and perceive that a minimal placement is a low-risk investment in a new employee and one without significant burden or disruption to the place of work.

Exhibit 4.3. Example of job negotiation process in Richmond

Richmond Program Customer “Sean”*

Sean was referred to the Customized Employment program in Richmond by the Transition Coordinator for the public school system when Sean was a junior in high school. Sean had not completed the required Standards of Learning (SOLs) for graduation and was therefore scheduled to receive a certificate of completion rather than a diploma. Project staff worked with Sean and the school system to customize an education plan that would allow Sean to receive a special diploma indicating that the student has fulfilled all school requirements for graduation but not the state’s requirements (SOLs).

During his senior year (before graduation), career specialists from the project met with Sean about his post-graduation plan. The first objective of the plan was to help Sean gain some work experience. Career specialists met with Goodwill Industries and arranged for Sean (and a few other customers) to go to Goodwill Industries for a work adjustment assessment, a chance to obtain work experience. Sean worked at Goodwill for the summer after graduation and was paid a piece wage (i.e., paid per completed task). The work adjustment assessment allowed Sean to gain some skills and experience working and also allowed the career specialists to identify Sean’s skills, strengths and weaknesses, and his capacity for work (due to his disability, they were concerned a full-time job would be too tiring for Sean).

Based on what they learned about Sean during the work adjustment assessment and also Sean’s identified interests, the career specialists developed an employment plan for Sean. The plan highlighted his strengths and skills and also described his limitations and any accommodations that would be necessary for Sean. Based on the plan, career specialists decided to approach Home Depot for a job placement. Home Depot had previously participated in a job fair sponsored by the One-Stop Career Center and the career specialist had met the human resources (HR) representative (who used to be employed by VR) at the fair.

When the career specialist approached the HR representative from Home Depot, she learned that Sean would first need to complete an online application. All applicants to Home Depot are required to do so. However, Sean tried and was unable to complete the application. According to the career specialist, the application is lengthy and difficult to complete and she felt that Sean and others with disabilities should not be required to complete the application. To bolster her case, she had project staff try to complete the application and many were unable to do so.

With this information, the career specialist met with the Home Depot HR representative. She explained that Sean could not complete the application and asked that he still be given the opportunity to apply for a position. The HR representative agreed to meet with Sean for an interview. Sean went to the meeting and, according to the HR representative at Home Depot, represented himself professionally and convinced the representative to grant a waiver for Sean relinquishing him from having to complete the online application and allowing him to have a job interview. Because Home Depot is a large corporation, the HR representative needed to submit paperwork to prove that Sean was a person with a disability and could be exempt from the online application.

Sean had a job interview at Home Depot and will begin working soon. He is scheduled to work as a lot attendant first because he does not have skills specific to any of the departments such as lumber, electronics, etc.

* For purposes of confidentiality, the name of the program customer has been changed

Project staff in Knoxville received job negotiation training from their partner, TransCen. Training session topics have included strategies for approaching employers, getting a foot in the door, approaching employers in a business-friendly manner, and conducting research on an employer. In addition, the job developers state that they have learned a great deal from each other. Often, job developers will have different approaches to finding and securing employment for program customers. Observing and talking to each other about what works and what does not work is, according to the job developers, a valuable tool for honing the negotiation skill set. As one job developer in Knoxville stated, “it is also trial and error...the more we listen to what employers are saying, what their hesitations are, the more we can try to customize our approach with them.”

Employment consultants in Indianapolis have been trained by a consumer advocate in how to speak to employers in a language to which they will respond. As one interviewee explained, “it’s very difficult sometimes for individuals who have a social service background to really approach an employer and really talk in a language that...is meaningful to them.” Much of the training received by project staff in Indianapolis is provided by the adult technical assistance program. Training sessions with staff have covered topics such as person-centered planning, benefits planning, employment specialist techniques, and job negotiation.

Job negotiators in Richmond have received training on how to market people with disabilities to employers and how to approach employers. Additional training sessions have included information on adaptive technology, negotiation accommodations with employers, and disability awareness. Much of the training is provided by VCU.

4.3.4.3 Job Seeker Experience

Program customers in Knoxville seemed excited about their job placements and happy to be working. They talked a little about the accommodations that were made for them. For example, one program customer explained that she told her employer that she could not work on Fridays, and the employer agreed to that. The customer also described how the employer provides her with a list of tasks that she needs to complete each day and how she likes to check things off the list.

All program customers in Knoxville work with a job coach (full time or part time). One program customer described an experience in which his job coach/career specialist helped him find a new job because he did not like the way the current employer was treating him.

Program customers in Indianapolis reported working closely with their employment consultants to explore interests and find employment options. One program customer explained that he had very specific and limited hours that he was willing to work. His employment consultant worked with him to find a self-employment opportunity (vending machines) that allows him to work only the specified hours. This program customer also reported being very excited about the process of developing his business plan and working toward his goal of hiring a driver to take him to the different vending machine sites (currently his father drives him).

Program customers in Richmond described the different work experience arrangements that they had been involved in, including unloading trucks at Goodwill Industries, food preparation at a restaurant dedicated to providing people with disabilities work experience, and answering the telephone for the City of Richmond. The program customers expressed appreciation for the opportunities that the Richmond project had made available to them (e.g., training, work experience, and ultimately job placements).

4.3.4.4 Employer Experience

The third part of all negotiation triads is the employer. To obtain the employer perspective in the job negotiation process, we spoke with business owners, business managers, department heads, and direct supervisors of program customers who had been placed in employment. They provided us with examples of the job negotiation process and described some of the incentives that initially made them interested in the process.

Examples of job negotiation

Employers in Knoxville were asked to describe the negotiation process they engaged in with career specialists from the demonstration project. A manager of a franchised pizza shop told us he was approached by a career specialist about hiring a program customer with a disability. The career specialist

described the tax incentives available to employers who hire people with disabilities and then explained that a job coach would accompany the program customer at the job site. The career specialist suggested the specific job task the program customer could perform (fold pizza boxes for delivery) and worked with the employer to coordinate the program customer's time constraints and the employer's needs. This employer found the arrangement to be so successful that he hired another program customer at his pizza shop and has started talking to other pizza shop managers that are part of the same franchise about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities.

A second employer in Knoxville described the working interview process that she had with a program customer. The career specialist brought the program customer to the job site, and the employer showed the program customer the tasks that would make up her job (e.g., dusting, mopping, emptying garbage, vacuuming). The program customer conducted all tasks while the employer and career specialist observed. At the end of the working interview the employer and career specialist discussed the program customer's functional limitations, specifically the trouble that she has remembering all the tasks that need to be done. The employer agreed to accommodate the program customer by starting each work day with a list of tasks that the program customer needs to complete. The employer hired the program customer for 6 hours each week, and, based on the program customer's progress, agreed to increase hours and responsibilities over time. This employer noted that she appreciated the fact that the career specialist was not aggressive in her approach about hiring the program customer but, instead, presented the advantages and potential disadvantages to hiring a person with disabilities and then left it up to the employer.

In Indianapolis, one of the employers interviewed initially learned about the ODEP demonstration project through the mother of a program customer who also happened to be a friend. When the employer expressed interest in learning more about the services available, the program customer's mother asked an employment consultant to contact the employer and provide her with some information. This particular program customer was interested in providing a resource ownership service to the employer (vending machine) and also being employed by the employer. According to the employer, the employment consultant was dynamic and positive in her attitude and flexible with the employer. The employer agreed to hire the program customer for a few hours a week with the understanding that, as the business grows and as the program customer becomes more comfortable with her responsibilities, the employer would increase her hours and responsibilities. The employer reported that she was reassured by the fact that the employment consultant would be on site as a job coach for a limited amount of time and would also be available to the employer should any problems arise.

A second employer interviewee in Indianapolis represented a corporation that makes an effort to hire a diverse workforce. This interviewee recalled her first contact with the employment consultant from the project. She noted that the employment consultant was open, flexible, and informative and was not pushy about the program. The employer representative responded well to this approach. Because of her company hiring policy, the interviewee was open to learning more about the program customer and meeting with the employment consultant. In negotiating with the employment consultant, the employer reported that she was reassured to learn that the program customer would be supervised by a job coach for several weeks, alleviating pressure from the other managers. The employer agreed to start the program customer at several hours a week with the understanding that hours would be added as things progressed.

An employer in Richmond described working closely with job negotiators to secure waivers for program customers with disabilities so they did not have to complete the extensive online application for the corporation. This particular employer reported that he was open to hiring people with disabilities primarily because he had a previous work experience working with VR and used to promote and advocate hiring people with disabilities. In addition, his corporation makes a strong effort to hire a diverse workforce, including people with disabilities. When project staff contacted him, he agreed to come to the One-Stop Career Center and do a presentation on his company and opportunities for employment. When the job negotiator contacted him about a qualified program customer, he agreed to interview the customer and ultimately worked with the program customer and job negotiator to find a job that was appropriate for the individual.

Employer Incentives

An employer in Knoxville told us that he initially thought that hiring a person with a disability would not meet his company's productivity needs. However, once he learned that the program customer would be working with a job coach who would be able to observe the productivity level the program customer was able to achieve, his concerns were allayed. This employer also said that he would be unlikely to hire the program customers if the job coach were not available because, according to the employer, the job coach helps the program customers maintain a level of productivity and focus.

A second employer in Knoxville explained that she has a close relative who has a disability and therefore felt compelled to learn more about the ODEP demonstration program and hiring people

with disabilities. She explained that her organization had not hired people with disabilities before, but at the time of the site visit, was in the process of hiring a second person with disabilities as a result of the positive experience with the ODEP demonstration program.

A third employer in Knoxville had previous experience working in supportive employment and knew how beneficial a program such as the ODEP demonstration program could be. In developing the staffing plan for her organization, she told us she thought it was important to give back to the community. One way to do that was to employ people with disabilities.

An employer in Indianapolis had previously hired another program customer through the Indianapolis project and therefore was open to the employment consultant when she returned with another program customer looking for employment. Another employer in Indianapolis had many years of experience working in the education field and, therefore, was experienced working with people with disabilities. Because of her background, she did not have any misconceptions or reluctance about hiring people with disabilities.

An employer in Richmond worked for a corporation that emphasizes the importance of a diverse workforce and encourages hiring people with disabilities. This employer had already hired people with disabilities. In addition, this employer had worked previously with VR to advocate for the employment of people with disabilities. He reported that he had no negative preconceptions about hiring people with disabilities. He went on to say that he expects that an employee will notify him when he/she cannot perform a task, and until then, he will assume that the employee is capable.

In Knoxville, interviewees had some theories as to why employers become involved in the demonstration project. It was suggested that most employers become involved to meet pressing human resource needs, to address a company policy designed to emphasize the employment of people with disabilities, and to increase their workforce diversity. In addition, some employers become involved in the project due to a personal connection to people with disabilities (e.g., a relative or friend with a disability).

An interviewee in Knoxville provided Westat with a specific example of why one particular employer became involved in the project. The Director of Employment Services at a large hospital in the area became aware of a person with a disability who was working at one of the hospital's facilities. The Director noticed that this person was an asset to the company and decided to become involved in the BAC to further her company's commitment to hiring people with disabilities.

A member of the BAC in Knoxville described her reasons for becoming involved with the ODEP demonstration program as twofold: primarily to fill open positions at her organization, but secondarily for “humanitarian” reasons. According to the interviewee, her organization focuses on working with and for the community, but there was never a focus on employing people with disabilities. She decided to become involved with the BAC because it was a concentrated group of providers that could make meeting her employment needs easier; she also felt that hiring a diverse workforce, such as people with disabilities, could be seen as giving back to the community.

When asked if the tax credits and other related federal programs offer an incentive to employers to become involved in the program, the Knoxville project explained that the BAC has presented information about the tax incentive programs, but their impression is that the tax credits act more as a “bonus” and less as an “incentive” for employers. However, one employer in Knoxville stated that it was the financial benefit to his company that initially peaked his interest to become involved with the project. He described being uncertain whether a person with a disability would be able to perform certain tasks but was convinced after watching the program customer work with the job coach. Another employer in Knoxville felt that being involved with the ODEP demonstration program helps an organization create a good image for itself in the community because they are supporting people with disabilities.

According to the IPIC staff working with employers to revitalize the BLN, employers become involved with the disability community for personal reasons. One company that is involved in the BLN has a diversity initiative and the person who is leading that initiative has a child with a disability. Another company owner involved with the BLN has two children who are hearing impaired.

In Indianapolis, it is the experience of the employment consultants that the tax incentives available to employers do not serve as an incentive for hiring people with disabilities. However, one employer in Indianapolis explained that the reasons she hired a program customer were both financial and personal. She has a personal connection to the family of the program customer, but she was also interested in learning about the different services resource ownership could provide her new business. Having just opened her business, she was reluctant to invest in too many services at once, but the possibility of engaging in resource ownership with the program was very attractive to the employer.

In Richmond, an employer member of the BLN explained that the reason her corporation is involved in the disability community and the BLN came from a personal story to which her CEO responded. Apparently, one of the employees at the corporation began to use sign language with customers who were hard of hearing or hearing impaired. The corporation managers decided it was important to market their services as being accessible to people with disabilities, and that marketing campaign led to a shift toward hiring people with disabilities. The company currently has a diversity initiative that stresses the importance of hiring people with disabilities.

Richmond project staff have found that a strong incentive for employers to hire a program customer is the fact that project staff can and will provide that program customer with support services (e.g., a job coach) for up to 12 months following a job placement. These support services alleviate some of the concerns that an employer may have about hiring an individual with little to no work experience and a disability.

4.3.5 Barriers and Solutions

This section describes the reported barriers to involving employers in the ODEP adult demonstration programs—both at the macro and micro levels—and the ways project sites have tried to overcome these barriers.

4.3.5.1 Macro-level Involvement

Typical barriers at all project sites pertained primarily to the challenge of engaging employers' interest and the misconceptions held by many employers with regard to hiring people with disabilities. The BAC in Knoxville attempts to maintain employer interest by providing information that is useful to employers for meeting their human resources needs in an efficient and effective manner. They conducted a survey at one of their meetings to collect information from the employers about the topics and discussion areas in which they have the most interest. In addition, the Knoxville BAC holds roundtable discussions with employers to try to involve them in the planning and direction of the BAC so it becomes more employer-driven and focused on the needs of employers. The Knoxville site attempts to allay concerns of employers about hiring people with disabilities by presenting them with actual success stories of employers local to the area. According to interviewees, these success stories often change the

way employers think about people with disabilities by dispelling common myths and misconceptions about hiring a person with a disability.

According to a survey conducted by the BLN in Richmond, employers do not know where to go to locate qualified employees with disabilities, they are fearful of what hiring a person with a disability entails, and they think accommodations will be costly and intrusive. Employers are fearful that they will “say the wrong thing” when interviewing a person with disabilities, they think that they will not be able to fire a person with disabilities, they believe people with disabilities cannot be as productive as others, and they assume training needs are greater for a person with a disability.

The BLN representatives feel strongly that the way to combat these barriers is to provide employers with data to discount these myths and barriers to hiring people with disabilities. Employers will respond more positively to research studies showing proof of success than they would to a job counselor trying to convince them to hire a program customer. In addition, the BLN has a relationship with VCU that provides them with VCU’s research about employing people with disabilities that the BLN then takes and puts into practical terms for employers.

Richmond project staff explained that they are still learning how to approach employers about becoming involved in the project and, therefore, are facing various challenges ranging from how to get a foot in the door with an employer to the issue of whether to disclose information about a program customer’s disability. Because their program customers typically have more “hidden” disabilities, it is not apparent that they have a disability and, therefore, a potential employer may be unaware.

4.3.5.2 Micro-level Involvement

One of the barriers to providing a customized employment experience reported at the Knoxville in-depth site visit is the corporate structure of some of the employers. In some corporations, job descriptions are corporate-wide and rigid in nature, making it difficult to customize jobs. Approaching and developing a relationship with these employers takes a longer time than for smaller companies. It was also reported that the Knoxville site does not have a clear message from the WIB about workforce development and integrating people with disabilities into the workforce. Knoxville hopes that the project’s BAC will influence a change with respect to making the WIB more strategic about approaching the community with information.

A barrier that job developers face in Knoxville is the employer misconception that a person with a disability cannot be fired from a job without liability for litigation. According to interviews, this is a common fear among employers and is a reason some do not want to hire people with disabilities. The Knoxville project's approach is to simply tell them that it is okay to fire a person with a disability, given there are grounds for dismissal. Employers are also told that the project will support the employer if or when it is necessary (e.g., job developers offer to attend dismissals of program customers to assist). By presenting themselves as advocates for the employer as well as the program customer, job developers report that they are able to allay some concerns employers have about hiring people with disabilities.

One employer in Knoxville explained that one barrier many employers feel about hiring people with disabilities is the idea that a person with a disability will create more work for the employer and will require more time to learn the job responsibilities. Employers are also reluctant to make accommodations for people with disabilities because of the perceived cost. In addition, the idea of negotiating a job for a potential employee is foreign to most employers, and many are averse to changing a pre-existing job structure complete with job descriptions and salary levels.

According to interviewees at the Indianapolis site, it is difficult to convince employers of the merits of creating positions for people with disabilities rather than just filling pre-existing positions. Employers view creating a job as a costly venture because, from their perspective, they are paying someone to do a job that did not exist before. In Indianapolis, project staff feel that the larger companies are more difficult to engage because they are less likely to respond to the financial incentives of hiring a person with a disability. Employment consultants in Indianapolis feel that employers in the area hold many misconceptions about employing people with disabilities. Employers believe that people with disabilities are unable to accomplish what a person without disabilities is able to accomplish. They believe that hiring a person with a disability increases their liability and the risk of injury on the job. In addition, according to interviewees, employers are sometimes fearful of mental illness and have many misconceptions about people diagnosed with mental illness.

In response to the many objections employment consultants hear when trying to talk to employers about becoming involved in the project, Indianapolis project staff are developing a list of responses for each objection. This list will provide employment consultants with an important tool that can be used when talking with employers. As one interviewee explained, it is often difficult for people with more of a social-service mind set and approach to switch to a business or salesperson approach. The

list of responses will include statistics, facts, and success stories that will help employment consultants sell the services that the program can provide.

When project staff in Indianapolis visit employers to talk to them about possible job negotiations, they have learned to talk to the front-line managers rather than the human resources managers. Employment consultants report that the human resources managers are more likely to be concerned with the liability of hiring a person with a disability than the front-line managers. Employment consultants also work diligently to explain the program in the simplest of terms to avoid confusing and ultimately discouraging employers. They have found that face-to-face contact is the best method for getting a foot in the door with an employer.

According to project staff in Indianapolis, employers often question whether a person with a disability can perform a particular job, especially if they have little to no job experience. One way employment consultants reassure employers is to tell them about the job trials that program customers participate in before searching for a job. The employment consultants also explain to employers that the burden is on the program to make sure the job placement is successful. Employment consultants serve as job coaches for their program customers until additional supervision is no longer needed and help them learn the job and make relationships with co-workers so natural supports are established.

With regard to misconceptions about disabilities, project staff in Indianapolis report that employers experience the most difficulty understanding how a person with a visual impairment will be productive in the workplace. In response to that misconception, employment consultants work to convince employers that assistive technology is available and adaptable to most work environments.

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5. DISCUSSION

To further the objectives of the independent evaluation of ODEP's Demonstration Program,⁸ Westat identified three issues that required in-depth analysis. The issue of employer involvement in demonstration programs is the first of these three issues.

The ODEP Demonstration Program consists of a variety of initiatives targeted at both adults and youth with disabilities. Whereas all demonstration projects funded under this program are expected to implement and evaluate different methods for building the capacity of the workforce development system to better serve people with disabilities, adult demonstration projects have several things in common. All are expected to serve individuals who are not typically served by other agencies (e.g., people with limited employment history who are the most difficult to place in employment). All are required to incorporate strategies for delivering customized employment services. And all must be able to serve the needs of the job seeker and employer and to involve employers in the process.

Using a review of the published literature, ODEP demonstration program SGAs, findings from Phase II site visits and the Employment Outcomes Analysis Project, and findings from in-depth site visits to selected sites, we attempted to determine: (1) ODEP's expectations with regard to employer involvement in adult demonstration programs; (2) How demonstration projects currently involve employers; (3) Barriers to involving employers in demonstration programs and overcoming these barriers; and (4) Factors that assist in involving employers in demonstration programs. Each of these is discussed below.

5.1 ODEP Expectations for Employer Involvement

By reviewing the published literature, Westat was hoping to uncover a documented rationale for employer involvement in demonstration programs, as well as a methodology for implementing such involvement. Instead, we were able to identify considerable literature on employer perceptions of hiring

⁸ The objectives of the independent evaluation are: (1) to provide ODEP with reliable and valid indicators of program effectiveness; (2) to determine the extent to which each program priority area is effective in building workforce development system capacity; and (3) to document local, regional, and/or state systems change that supports program effectiveness. In addition to these three objectives, the evaluation has two more objectives: (4) to establish a framework for determining the effectiveness of the ODEP program priority areas; and (5) to provide background information for determining whether ODEP GPRA goals are being met. These two objectives (#4 and #5) are not the focus of this report.

people with disabilities and the perceived advantages and disadvantages. However, we were unable to identify studies with a strong design that indicated the usefulness of employer involvement in programs to increase employment rates of people with disabilities or methods for improving employer involvement.

Nevertheless, given the emphasis on customized employment in adult demonstration programs, it is not surprising that ODEP made very clear its expectations for involving employers in these programs. The language in the SGAs from ODEP made many references to the collaborative role employers would play in the ODEP demonstration programs. Programs were charged with coordinating and obtaining sustainable support from employers and developing linkages and partnerships with employers and employer organizations.

These partnerships and linkages imply employer involvement at the macro level, consisting of participation in strategic planning and implementation of project activities. Although SGAs were not specific in how employers might be involved at the macro level, it appears that employers and members of employer organizations could be useful in speaking with other employers to dispel misconceptions of people with disabilities, providing accurate and firsthand information on the advantages and incentives for hiring people with disabilities, and identifying employers and companies that would be open to a customized employment approach.

The wording in SGAs also reveals that ODEP envisioned micro-level involvement with employers through the process of providing customized employment services. Like the One-Stop Career Center which focuses on two customer groups (job seekers and employers), the process of providing customized employment services also serves these same customers. In the case of customized employment, the process is geared toward the individual interests, skills, and needs of the job seeker, while still ensuring that the business needs of the employer are taken into account. Ensuring that the individual needs of the job seeker are addressed, while at the same time addressing the employer's business needs, is a challenge that ODEP has made to all demonstration programs. Demonstration programs are expected to meet such a challenge at the macro level through linkages with employers and employer groups and participation in the project, as well as at the micro-level through negotiation with employers on job duties, terms of employment, supports, and accommodations. As defined by ODEP in SGAs, these negotiations are part of the expected process for delivering customized employment services.

5.2 Employer Involvement at the Macro Level

Employer involvement at the macro level consists of engaging employers in planning and implementation of the demonstration project (e.g., sitting on advisory committees, working with BLNs, participating in the organization of job fairs or job trials). We discovered at Phase II site visits that sites were struggling with macro-level employer involvement. Some sites had difficulty identifying and recruiting employers to sit on and participate in advisory committees, while others were unclear about how best to use employers in planning and implementation of their projects.

In an attempt to identify sites that had achieved a certain amount of success in employer involvement at the macro level, we conducted site visits to obtain details of these sites' experiences. We learned that even these sites are struggling with many of the same employer-related issues noted at all other sites. Nevertheless, the in-depth site visits to adult CE demonstration projects provided Westat with three different detailed examinations of employer involvement.

At these three sites, macro-level employer involvement is mostly achieved through the establishment of BACs and BLNs that include employer members. In one project site where the BLN was particularly active, the BLN advocated and promoted the employment of people with disabilities, and other employers were invited to presentations on disability awareness and accommodation. The relationship between this BLN and the demonstration project, however, seemed undeveloped and the project did not appear to be benefiting from the well-established BLN. The BLN associated with another demonstration program was struggling to recruit and maintain an active membership and had seemingly all but folded until a recent drive to revitalize it. At the third project site, the BAC also struggles to maintain active members and interest in working with the demonstration project toward meeting its goals. Even at what were considered to be the most advanced sites in involving employers at a macro level, engaging and sustaining employer interest is a challenge.

Employer involvement at the macro level appears to depend heavily on providing a strong enough incentive to employers to sustain interest and commitment. The project sites attempt to develop employer groups that are employer-driven and therefore address the needs of employers. However, in some cases, the local employer organizations (e.g., the WIB, BAC, or BLN) lacked a clear message to employers about the importance of integrating people with disabilities into workforce development efforts.

5.3 Barriers to Employer Involvement

Demonstration projects have described a number of barriers to involving employers at both the macro and micro level. There is a general level of misinformation and misconception about hiring people with disabilities. As a result, employers are often reluctant to become involved with the project, even on a macro level. In addition, when employers are asked to become involved with the project at the planning and implementation level, they often do not know exactly what “becoming involved” means in real terms. The description they are given of being involved in the project can be somewhat general, often because, in the beginning stages, project sites are unclear themselves about what constitutes employer involvement. This lack of clear expectations is a barrier for employers to become involved. Finally, some employers are interested in becoming involved with projects from which they stand to gain something. If employers are unsure about the advantages to becoming involved, they are less likely to become involved, even at the macro level.

The perceived barriers to negotiation with employers for job placement services were numerous and similar across most project sites. As gleaned from our literature review and Phase II and in-depth site visits, the following are some common misconceptions that employers have about hiring people with disabilities: once hired, a person with a disability cannot be fired; a person with a disability is unable to perform tasks or meet responsibilities as well as a person without a disability could; hiring a person with a disability will create more work for the employer; people with disabilities take more time and are more costly to train; employing people with disabilities increases an employer’s liability; accommodations are costly and intrusive; and interviewing a person with a disability is risky because an employer could unknowingly say or ask something illegal.

Another common barrier to employer involvement in job negotiation is an employer’s limited understanding of job customization and unwillingness or inability to engage in customization. Large corporations and rigid corporate structures are often significant barriers to engaging employers’ involvement in job negotiations. Employers sometimes view creating or customizing a job as a costly and unnecessary venture (why create a job and pay someone to do that job?), and the financial incentives to hiring people with disabilities generally do not appeal to large companies. As described by project staff, employers from large companies typically have a more conservative approach to hiring employees and want to fill pre-existing job openings rather than create new jobs. Other employers come from rigid corporate structures where job descriptions and wages are inflexible, creating a culture where job customization and carving would be difficult to negotiate. Project sites did not have a clear strategy for

addressing these two barriers. Often, these employers are viewed as unapproachable, and project staff does not go to great length to engage them in the project.

5.4 Employer Involvement at the Micro Level

Perhaps the most useful aspect of our in-depth site visits was the detail we obtained on the negotiation process with employers at the micro level. By speaking with a job developer, job seeker/program customer, and the employer who hired the program customer, we were able to focus on specific case examples and obtain the perspective of each member of the triad. We discovered several useful strategies to gaining initial cooperation of employers, negotiating with employers to obtain an individualized customized job placement, and following up with the employer and program customer once the program customer began working.

There were a variety of reasons why employers were willing to become involved in the process of a negotiated individualized approach to employment, although the majority seemed to be motivated by a personal relationship with a person with a disability (e.g., a relative or a friend or work colleague with a relative with a disability). Other employers are involved in job placement because their employers or corporations have made diversity in the workforce a primary or major emphasis among hiring managers. Sometimes the drive to hire people with disabilities (among other diverse populations) stems from a desire to have a workforce that reflects and gives back to the community. Finally, other employers providing job placements for people with disabilities seem to be involved in the project because of past positive experience working with and/or hiring people with disabilities.

One strategy that seems to be useful in involving employers in job negotiations is to describe the project as providing a service that meets the needs of and is an asset to employers. Job negotiators work to develop relationships with employers based on the idea that the job negotiators will help fill workforce needs for employers and provide the necessary support for the employees (e.g., as a job coach). Job negotiators often reassure employers by detailing the extent of support available to the employer and the employee. For example, at one project site, job negotiators assured employers that, should an employee need to be fired, the job negotiator would support and assist in the process.

While such assurances may be helpful in negotiating short-term trials and part-time employment, these supports may not be sustainable once the project ends. Projects that provide such

followup support, clearly key to engaging the support of employers, need to ensure that followup support continues beyond the life of the project, if required.

Another “bargaining chip” used by project job negotiators is the fact that most job seekers only want (or are able) to work a small number of hours per week.⁹ Employers appear to be more comfortable with starting with a few hours weekly and increasing the number of hours gradually as they and their new employee become comfortable with the arrangement. Although some of the job seekers we talked to on our site visits were hoping to increase their hours, none were expecting to work full time.¹⁰ It is likely that full-time expectations would present a greater challenge to job negotiators, although the process of starting with a few hours of work initially and gradually increasing the number of hours appears to be a useful negotiation strategy.

5.5 Factors that Help to Overcome Barriers

Project sites have employed various strategies to overcome some of the barriers to involving employers at the macro level. For example, one project site asks employers to become involved by being responsible for specific aspects of the project, thereby defining the expectation as well as the level of commitment necessary. The project sites work hard to create a situation where the employer truly stands to gain from being involved in the project. Employers are offered training and seminars on disability awareness and assistive technology and are given access to referral networks and resource guides for employers who hire people with disabilities. Another example of meeting the needs of employers is found at one project site where employers were surveyed about their fears and barriers to hiring people with disabilities. The project intends to address all of those concerns through training and presentations. Finally, another strategy being used to combat the barriers to employer involvement at the macro-level is researching the best practices of successful BLNs.

The common strategy to dispel employers’ misconceptions about hiring people with disabilities is to provide the employer with evidence to the contrary and assurance that any true risk or burden will fall to the project and not the employer. It was the belief of many project staff interviewed that employers respond positively to success stories, data, and facts about hiring people with disabilities.

⁹ The second in-depth issue analysis conducted by Westat examined the impact of SSA benefits on program customers’ employment decisions.

¹⁰ Westat attempted to identify an appropriate negotiated full-time example subsequent to our site visits but was unable to do so.

Project sites seem to have developed their versions of a rebuttal to the misconceptions and use this rebuttal to try to convince employers to see things another way. However, this approach comes with its own challenges. In essence, project staff are asked to act as salespeople, selling the idea that employing people with disabilities can be beneficial to the employer. Many of the project staff members come from social service backgrounds and do not have a business acumen or sales experience. It can be a challenging shift for staff to learn the nuances of selling something (albeit a service). On the other hand, those who appear to be most successful have enthusiastically taken up the challenge by focusing on employer needs as well as the needs of the job seeker.

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6. CONCLUSIONS

Although not necessarily supported in the published literature, there appears to be a clear need for employer involvement in demonstration programs both at the macro and micro level. SGAs were clear about demonstration programs incorporating such involvement into program activities but were less clear about the nature of employer involvement they expect programs to incorporate. Nevertheless, it appears that employer involvement is consistent with ODEP's goals of capacity building and widespread use of customized employment services, although there still appears to be barriers at the macro level for involvement of employers in project planning and implementation.

Findings from in-depth site visits are relatively consistent with the published literature on reasons for employer involvement. The literature suggests that most employers become involved with people with disabilities for one of three reasons: (1) because of a personal connection to a person(s) with disabilities; (2) to meet pressing staffing needs; or (3) to address a company policy to employ people with disabilities and/or increase workforce diversity. Whereas these three reasons may be driving factors for an employer to become involved with ODEP demonstration projects, project staff at three demonstration project sites discussed several approaches they use to engage and solicit interest from employers. These approaches encompass macro- and micro-level employer involvement.

6.1 Macro-level Employer Involvement

Macro-level employer involvement ideally consists of participation in a demonstration project's planning and implementation. At the macro level, employer members of advisory committees, WIBs, BLNs, or BACs are in a perfect position to provide projects with the employer perspective, spread the word to other employers about the project and advantages to hiring people with disabilities, and increase the pool of employers who might be able to provide work trials and employment placements.

The three projects sites we visited were making inroads into employer involvement at the macro level with attempts to strengthen BLNs or BACs. However, none had managed to integrate these employer organizations into facilitating and contributing to the customized employment process by using the contacts of members of these employer organizations as a source of potential employment placements. On the other hand, some progress has been made in working with One-Stop Career Centers. As a result of

the ODEP demonstration projects, the capacity to serve people with disabilities has been improved, with the net result that One-Stop Career Center staff are now providing information to employers on hiring people with disabilities. Customized employment services are still not integrated into One-Stop Career Center services and still mostly remain the responsibility of the demonstration project.

6.2 Micro-level Employer Involvement

Micro-level employer involvement consists of case-by-case interaction of employers with specific program customers, with project staff acting as the intermediary between the two players in the job negotiation process. There was some consensus among project staff from all three demonstration project sites we visited about the most effective ways to approach and engage employers at the micro level. Employers seem amenable to job negotiators that take an exploratory or informational approach to the initial contact, explaining the program, the services it provides, and the benefits to hiring people with disabilities. Employers also respond positively to a no- or low-risk proposal from the job negotiators, such as providing the program customer with a trial work period or a work-experience placement (thus giving the employer an “out” at the end of the specified term). Finally, employers value the idea that program customers will receive ongoing support (e.g., job coaching, transportation, training) in some form for a specified time from the demonstration project. Employers also appreciate that the ongoing support is available to themselves as well, such as situations where job negotiators encourage employers to call them if there are problems with a program customer and ultimately will assist in the termination process of a program customer if necessary.

Employers also seemed to appreciate a gradual approach to the number of hours program customers would work for them. However, none of the sites we visited provided an example of job negotiation on behalf of a job seeker who was interested in full-time employment. Although we expect the dynamics to be quite different when negotiating a full-time job, the gradual approach to the number of hours appears to be a useful strategy.

Employers respond positively to proposals from job negotiators when the arrangement involves little to no risk to the employer and/or little to no initial commitment from the employer. For example, employers seem to be open to offering program customers opportunities to gain work experience or to have a job trial with a probationary period and no commitment to hire. These

arrangements give the employer an opportunity to “test” the program customer and give the program customer an opportunity to obtain valuable work experience.

Employers value the concept of having outside support if needed when hiring a program customer. For example, employers reported that the inclusion of a job coach for their employed program customer alleviated any extra work supervisors would have to do in terms of training and monitoring. In addition, employers felt supported by job negotiators who assured them that they were available and willing to assist the employers handle any difficult situations that may arise such as, termination of employment.

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7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on our findings from the published literature, Phase II site visits, and the three in-depth site visits. The recommendations are divided into three categories—those related to employer involvement with demonstration project planning and implementation; employer involvement with job negotiation; and direct employer involvement with the One-Stop Career Center.

7.1 Employer Involvement in Demonstration Project Planning and Implementation

Employer involvement in demonstration project planning and implementation is a clear ODEP requirement. Grantees are expected to engage employers and business service organizations in their grants and develop ongoing linkages with the goals of strengthening ties to employers and marketing the abilities of people with disabilities. However, realizing these goals has been difficult for demonstration projects, as they point to a general lack of interest on the part of employers. Our site visits to demonstration project sites where these barriers are being addressed with some success suggest there are actions that can be taken to enhance employer involvement at the macro level in project planning and implementation. Those actions include the following:

1. **Focus efforts to identify and involve employers who have a strong commitment (separate from the project) to working with people with disabilities.** Findings from the in-depth site visits suggest that some of the more committed employers include those with a personal connection to the disability community. It may be beneficial to demonstration projects to identify and try to build relationships with those employers in the community who are already involved with people with disabilities.
2. **Coordinate employer-driven BLNs and BACs.** The sites we visited have approached the issue of employer involvement by concentrating on building a BLN or BAC. Those that have been most successful have tried to make these groups employer-driven and focused on meeting the needs of the employers (and also serving people with disabilities). Suggested methods for becoming more employer-driven include: surveying employers to determine what their education, information, and training needs are in reference to people with disabilities; asking employers to assist with specific tasks, events, or activities rather than just asking them to get involved in general; creating a situation where the employers feel that their personnel needs can easily be met by being involved with the employer groups; providing employers with

business incentives for being involved with people with disabilities (rather than humanitarian incentives).

3. **Integrate (involve) employer organizations into customized employment activities.** Employer organizations have the potential capacity to provide useful input on employer needs, successful approaches, and credibility with other employers and sources of job placements. Project sites need to ensure that BACs, BLNs, and other employer groups are fully integrated into the goals of the project.

7.2 Employer Involvement in Job Negotiations

Customized employment strategies include negotiation with employers on job tasks, hours, and accommodations. Findings from in-depth site visits reveal that projects have been most successful in engaging employers in negotiation when they concentrate on the business needs of the employer (in addition to those of the job seeker), offer a low-risk situation to the employer, and work to refute the misconceptions employers may have about hiring people with disabilities. The following are recommendations on some specific actions that can be taken in job negotiations:

1. **When preparing to negotiate specific jobs, identify specific tax incentives for the employer.** Site visit findings show that most project staff believe that the tax credits and other advantages to employers who hire people with disabilities do not provide an incentive for employers. However, Westat learned that this is not always the case. Especially among smaller employers (e.g., small businesses, family-owned businesses), we found that employers may be attracted to financial incentives and may be more receptive to overtures after learning about the financial incentives. Therefore, it would seem advantageous for job negotiators to continue to mention financial incentives, despite the perception that the tax credits do not provide incentive to employers.
2. **Prepare clear factual informational materials for employers about the advantages of hiring people with disabilities.** The published literature (confirmed by demonstration project staff) reports that employers in the community continue to operate under serious misconceptions regarding employment of people with disabilities. However, it appears that employers are also amenable to listening to an alternate explanation if supported by data and real life examples. Therefore, in response to the wide range of misconceptions that some employers have about hiring people with disabilities, project staff (particularly job negotiators) should be armed with data, research, fact sheets, and success stories that provide the employers with objective evidence to contradict the misconceptions. The Adult TA Center can be (and has been) extremely helpful in this regard.
3. **When negotiating specific jobs, offer employers options for easing into the placement.** Projects have been successful in engaging employers in negotiation when

they concentrate on the business needs of the employer (in addition to those of the job seeker), provide the employer with a tryout option, negotiate a gradual increase in hours, and provide followup support to both the program customer and the employer. These approaches may be useful in all project sites, and we recommend such approaches be tried.

7.3. Direct Employer Involvement with One-Stop Career Centers

An important ODEP goal for all adult demonstration programs is to incorporate customized employment services into the available menu of One-Stop Career Center services. To do so, however, requires more integration of employer involvement into project activities at One-Stop Career Centers. The following recommendation suggests some actions that can be taken.

Integrate customized employment strategies into the One-Stop Career Center menu of services. Despite some improvements in the capacity of One-Stop Career Center staff to serve people with disabilities, One-Stop Career Centers have not yet integrated customized employment services (including job negotiation) into their menu of services. Nevertheless, some One-Stop Career Centers connected with demonstration projects are increasing their own capacity to serve people with disabilities. By doing so, they are also changing the way One-Stop Career Centers work with employers by providing training and information on people with disabilities to their employer customers. Such approaches need to be incorporated into the practices of all One-Stop Career Centers partnering with ODEP demonstration projects.

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APPENDIX A

**EMAIL TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
WORKFORCE AND DISABILITY/ADULT AND
TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR PROVIDERS**

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Dear ...:

As you know, Westat is conducting an independent evaluation of the ODEP Demonstration Program. As part of that evaluation, ODEP has asked Westat to analyze certain issues that were identified during site visits and in Quarterly Reports. Part of that analysis would include collecting data at specific adult demonstration project sites. The purpose of this email is to ask the National Center on Workforce and Disability/Adult to help us to identify the sites that would be appropriate to visit for each of the issues we have identified.

Westat has identified two in-depth issues that are geared toward adult demonstration programs:

- Involvement of employers in adult demonstration programs; and
- Part-time versus full-time work and the role of Social Security benefits.

The issue on the involvement of employers seeks to understand how adult demonstration projects can most effectively involve employers in their projects – as part of their planning and implementation process and in employer negotiations in the customized employment process. The issue on part-time versus full-time work arose at site visits when many key informants told us that program customers do not want to obtain full-time work out of fear of losing their Social Security benefits. We will examine the feasibility of ODEP’s goal of full-time employment for all program customers and the strategies demonstration projects are using to help program customers to obtain full-time employment without prematurely losing their benefits. A detailed description of these issues is attached to this email.

As described in the methodology for analysis of each of these issues, evaluation project staff will be visiting selected sites to obtain in-depth information. We hope to visit only those sites that can provide useful information specific to each issue. The following criteria have been set to identify the most appropriate sites:

Issue	Criteria for site selection	Possible project sites
1. Successful employer involvement (in planning and negotiation and as part of customized employment process)	■ Mostly adult demonstration projects with at least 1 that focuses on youth in transition	
	■ Appears to be involving employers in innovative ways (e.g., BLNs and other employer groups) ■ Has a record of successful negotiation as part of the customized employment process	■ CE2001-Marietta, GA ■ CE2001-Knoxville, TN ■ CE2001-Malden, MA ■ CE2001-Anoka, MN
2. Part-time vs. full-time work and the role of SSA disability benefits	■ Adult program ■ Is cognizant of benefits issue and full-time employment	
	■ Has attempted to address the issue in innovative manner ■ Uses services of Disability Navigator and/or Benefits Planning, Assistance, and Outreach (BPAO) project	■ CE2001-Fairfax, VA ■ WF2002-Peoria, IL ■ CE2003-Helena, MT

We have identified some tentative sites based on our own experiences on site visits (third column) but would very much appreciate your input on whether these sites truly meet our criteria and whether there are additional sites that also should be included. We recognize that you and your staff and partners in the NCWD/A have had considerable interaction with ODEP demonstration projects, and we anticipate that your input will be extremely helpful.

Our plan is to begin organizing these site visits by the middle of May, so we would appreciate your feedback as soon as possible. I invite you or any of your staff to call me if you would like to discuss these issues or the methodology we will be using, and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Lynn Elinson, Ph.D.
Project Director

Bill Frey, Ph.D. – Principal Investigator

APPENDIX B

INITIAL CONTACT EMAIL TO SITE PROJECT DIRECTOR

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Dear ...:

As you know, Westat is conducting an independent evaluation of the ODEP Demonstration Program. As part of that evaluation, ODEP has asked Westat to conduct in-depth analyses of certain issues that were identified during previous site visits and in Quarterly Reports. One of those issues is related to the involvement of employers in adult demonstration programs. To further analyze that issue, the Westat evaluation team, with assistance from the National Center on Workforce and Disability/Adult (NCWD/A), has been identifying those adult project sites that appear to be involving employers in their project in innovative ways and have a record of successful negotiation as part of the customized employment process. We have identified your project site as meeting both those criteria and would appreciate exploring some of the details of your interactions with employers as part of a site visit to your demonstration project.

The purpose of in-depth analysis of the issue on the involvement of employers is to understand how adult demonstration projects can most effectively involve employers in their projects – as part of their planning and implementation process and in employer negotiations in the customized employment process. We are attempting to address the following issues:

- What is the definition of effective employer involvement?
- How can employers and One-Stop Centers mutually benefit from the involvement of employers?
- What is ODEP's vision of effective employer involvement? and
- What is considered to be effective negotiation?

Part of our methodology, approved by ODEP, is to conduct key informant interviews with project and One-Stop Center staff on employer involvement and to select and review three or more employment placements at selected project sites. The purpose of reviewing employment placements is to learn about the details of the negotiation process from the perspective of the job developer, employer, and program customer.

Our plan is to begin organizing site visits with project directors in the middle of May, so I will be calling you in the next few days so we can discuss the best approach to use for meeting our evaluation objectives without placing too much burden on you and your staff. In the meantime, please feel free to call me at (412) 421-8610 or email me if you have any questions.

I look forward to talking to you soon.

Sincerely,

Lynn Elinson, Ph.D.
Project Director

Bill Frey, Ph.D. – Principal Investigator

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APPENDIX C

IN-DEPTH SITE VISIT PROTOCOL GUIDES

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**OFFICE OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT POLICY (ODEP)
TASK ORDER: EVALUATION OF DISABILITY
EMPLOYMENT POLICY GRANTS
PHASE III**

In-depth Issue Analysis:

Employer Involvement

Protocol Guides

June – August, 2005

Employer Involvement – Project Director

The SGAs for the Customized Employment programs all imply that employer involvement is an important aspect of each project’s activities. However, many project sites appear to be unclear or hesitant about involving employers in their plans.

Your site, on the other hand, has been recognized as one that has a good grasp of the usefulness of employers in developing systems capacity to improve services for people with disabilities. So the purpose of this visit is to gain an understanding from the different people we speak to of how your project perceives employer involvement and what you’re doing, both at the planning and implementation level and also during job negotiations to involve employers. We’d like to start with you to give us some background and an overview on this issue before we meet with others.

1. Perception of “employer involvement”
 - Let us start by asking you how you perceive employer involvement in the Customized Employment program generally.
 - How did you perceive the role of employers in your project, and what things are you doing to make that perception become a reality?
2. Overview of employer involvement in project (e.g., Advisory Committee, planning, implementation, mentoring, training, ad hoc placements, job negotiations)
 - I understand that your project has a BAC to interact with employers/does some interesting things with employers on the Advisory Committee [BLN, individual companies]. Could you talk a little bit about employers’ involvement on the advisory committee?
 - What’s the purpose of the BAC/employer organization?
 - How are employers involved? How many?
 - How did they become involved?
 - What do they do? Do they participate in project planning, implementation, mentoring, training, job placements, attracting other employers to the project? Please describe.

3. Specific interactions with employer groups (e.g., BLN)
 - In what other ways are employers involved in your project?
 - How are you making use of employers in your project?
 - Which people on the project have the most interaction with employers? Job developer [career specialist]/One-Stop Center staff?
 - What do employers do?
 - How often do employers communicate/meet with the project planners/project staff?
 - Where, if at all, does the One-Stop Center fit in? How?

4. Specific examples of employer involvement
 - Can you give us some examples of employer involvement on your project (at least 3 examples)? Obtain specific details – Who? What? When? Where? Why? Problems? Ways of overcoming problems? Successes?
 - How do you use employers for planning, implementation, job negotiation?
 - Did your project face any barriers in attempting to involve employers? How did you overcome them?
 - Were you aware of employers in your community who were misinformed about hiring people with disabilities?
 - Do you feel that some of the myths regarding employment of people with disabilities have been dispelled? Do you think the employers you've been working with are in a position to now help other employers in dispelling those myths? How?
 - Has your project made any specific efforts to dispel these myths among employers that you can tell us about?

5. Strategies for engaging employer interest
 - Some sites reported to us that it was hard to know how to use employers on the project; that employers didn't like to sit around planning, but they were happy to help on specific tasks. What has been your experience?
 - You seem to be successful in involving employers. Why do you think that's the case? What are you doing that seems to be working? What have you had trouble with?
 - How was contact initiated between the project and employers?

- Do you do any marketing to employers? What shape does that take?
- How long does it take to establish a relationship with employers? How do you go about it?
- In your opinion, what are the incentive(s) for the employer group/individual employers to become involved with your project?
- Does staff get any sort of training on working with employers? Please describe (from whom? What kind? Feedback from staff?)
- Where does the TA Center fit in?

Employer Involvement – Career Specialist/Job Developer Interview

We are trying to understand the process that you, as a career specialist/job developer, go through to negotiate with employers on behalf of people with disabilities. We're also interested in your perceptions of the success or problems of negotiating with employers and your satisfaction with the process. Most of what I'd like to talk to you about is related to your specific experiences with one person for whom you negotiated a job through the ___ project. His/her name is _____, and you negotiated with _____ [employer] for the position.

1. Background on _____ [program customer].
 - Tell us a little about _____. What is his/her primary disability? Are there any other disabilities that would have an impact on functioning at work?
 - What has been the involvement of family members?
 - Did you perceive that there was a need for any sort of supervision? How did you arrive at that perception (e.g., talking with customer, family member)?
 - What type of supervision? For how long?
 - Had _____ been previously employed? If yes:
 - Type of job setting?
 - Full time/part time?
 - Was job negotiated?
 - Was supervision required?

- What accommodations were required?
- Why is ____ no longer employed there?
- What types of services was the job seeker receiving/eligible for?
- As part of providing customized employment services, a person-centered plan is typically developed for the program customer. Would you talk about that process in this project and the resulting plan? Tell us about _____'s job requirements and requests.
 - Preparation
 - Accommodations
 - Particular interests
 - Supervision required
 - Other services required

2. Previous services provided to _____.

- Can you tell us a little about the services that were provided for _____ before s/he obtained this current job placement?
 - Person-centered planning
 - Representing customer
 - Obtaining job coach
 - Obtaining accommodations
- In your opinion, how did those services prepare _____ for this job?

3. Description of negotiation process.

- Now I would like to talk specifically about the job negotiation that you facilitated for _____. Please take us through the process. How did you start the process, what did you do first?
- How did you decide which employer(s) you would approach?
- How did you get an appointment in the first place?

- What type of company is it (what it does/size)?
- Who were you dealing with in the company (Human Resources, owner, CEO)?
- What did you tell the employer to get his/her interest?
- What kind of information did you obtain on the company prior to approaching the employer?
- How did you go about obtaining information on the company?
- Was there a particular job available that you knew about or were you hoping to carve out a job for ____ with the employer?
- How did you go about determining the specific tasks the job seeker might be able to do for the company?
- How did you convince the employer that he/she should hire _____? What was in it for the employer? What exactly did you tell the employer?
- What kinds of things did you have to negotiate (i.e. hours, work location, accommodations) for _____?
- What kinds of barriers or challenges did you face when negotiating with this employer? How did you overcome those barriers?
- How successful do you feel this job negotiation was? Explain.
- What would you have done differently?

4. Job seeker's outcome?

- What happened to the job seeker?
- Is s/he still on the job?
- Why/why not?
- How does s/he like the job?
- Is there a job coach? How is that working out?
- What kind of followup is there?

5. Previous experience in job negotiation.
 - What kind of experience have you had negotiating jobs for people with disabilities in the past?
 - In your past experience, what roles have employers and employer groups played in the negotiation process?

6. Job negotiation training received.
 - Describe for us any training that you received to prepare you for negotiating with employers.
 - Who provided the training?
 - How did the training address job negotiation for people with disabilities?
 - Were employers or employer groups involved in the training?
 - What activities were used during the training (e.g., role playing)?
 - How did the training prepare you to negotiate with employers or employer groups?
 - Which aspects of the training prepared you well for job negotiation for people with disabilities? Which aspects were least effective in preparing you?

7. Comfort level with employer-involved job negotiation.
 - You've talked about the process of negotiating a job with an employer for people with disabilities and you've also talked about the training that you received to assist you in this process. Can you please talk to us about how comfortable you feel in engaging with employers during job negotiation?
 - What are your biggest concerns?
 - What would you advise others who have to do it? Is there any special preparation you need to do; any particular things you need to think about going into the negotiation process with employers?

Employer Involvement – One Stop Center Representative

As we understand the way One-Stop Centers generally work, employers are a key ingredient to the work of the One-Stop Center. However, we know that all One-Stop Centers approach employers in different ways and also that many One-Stop Centers are not necessarily prepared or willing to assist in a customized employment approach to placing people with disabilities in jobs.

We understand that this One-Stop Center may be different than that, and today we'd like to get an idea of how that's the case. We'd like to talk with you today about the specific issue of how you interact with employers generally in helping people to obtain jobs – what you did in the past and what you are doing now since the ODEP demonstration project.

1. Description of usual employer interaction at the One-Stop Center
 - What are the different ways the One-Stop Center interacts with employers?
 - Describe for us any special programs that the One-Stop Center may have for interacting with employers.
 - Tell us about any positions here at the One-Stop Center that are meant to interact with employers. Are any of the positions specific to people with disabilities?
 - Describe the relationship that the One-Stop Center had with employers prior to the ODEP project:
 - How were the relationships built?
 - How often and with whom did the employers have contact?
 - Can you give some examples of employer involvement in the One-Stop Center before the ODEP project (e.g., planning, training sessions, mentoring)?
 - How successful were these relationships in securing jobs for people with disabilities? Please describe.

2. Previous experience finding jobs for people with disabilities
 - Can you tell us a little about the experience that this One-Stop Center has had in locating job placements for people with disabilities?
 - Have you had many successful job placements for people with disabilities? Please describe.

- In your opinion, what elements are necessary for securing job placements for people with disabilities?
 - Are these elements hard to achieve? Why/why not? What is this One-Stop Center doing to achieve these elements?
3. Relationship to ODEP project
- Describe for us the relationship that this One-Stop Center has with the ODEP project.
 - How involved has this One-Stop Center been in planning, training, and implementing the ODEP project? Please provide examples.
4. Expectations regarding employers hiring people with disabilities
- One of the goals of the ODEP demonstration program is to improve the capacity of One-Stop Center staff to deliver customized employment services to people with disabilities (and other populations with specific barriers to employment). One aspect of the delivery of customized employment services is negotiation with employers on such job aspects as hours, tasks, and location of work (e.g., working from home).
 - How would you describe your initial expectations about One-Stop Center staff conducting job negotiation for people with disabilities?
 - Why did you feel that way?
 - Have these initial expectations changed at all? In what ways?
 - To what do you attribute these changes?
 - Do you have any remaining concerns? What are they?
5. Description of employer interaction since ODEP project
- Since the ODEP project started, has the One-Stop Center changed in any ways with regard to interaction with employers? What are some examples?
 - In regard to job negotiation with employers for people with disabilities, what, if anything, has the One-Stop Center been doing differently since the ODEP project started? Can you give us some examples?
 - Have any new employers become involved in the One-Stop Center since the ODEP project started? Which ones? Why did they become involved? How have they become involved?

- How has the ODEP project had an impact on this One-Stop Center's ability to find employment for people with disabilities?
 - Do you think this will be lasting after the project ends? Why/why not?
6. Changes in policies, procedures related to employers put in place since ODEP project
- Since the ODEP project started, has this One-Stop Center made any changes in policies or procedures related to employers? Please describe.

Employer Involvement – Employer Organization Representative/Employers

We'd like to talk to you about your involvement in the employer organization associated with the _____ project.

1. Role in ODEP project
- Who is your primary reference group – employers, specific company or people with disabilities?
 - Please describe for us your role (your organization's role) in the ODEP project.
 - What are some of the project issues with which you are involved (e.g., planning, training, mentoring, implementing job fair, conference)?
 - How often do you meet/communicate with the project? With whom?
 - What are your goals or objectives for being involved with the project? Are you achieving them?
 - What are some of the benefits for you (your organization) for participating in the project? Are there any disadvantages?
2. Expectations regarding hiring people with disabilities
- How did you become involved with the ODEP project?
 - When you (your organization) were first approached by the _____ project about becoming involved, what did you think?
 - How interested was your organization in becoming involved in the _____ project?
 - Did your initial expectations change? What changed them?

3. Previous experience in hiring people with disabilities
 - In the past, what kind of experience did you and your organization have with hiring people with disabilities?
 - What kinds of jobs have been given to people with disabilities at your organization?
 - How were the job placements arranged – through regular channels (e.g., newspaper ad, One-Stop Center) or a special program or situation?
 - In your opinion, how did these job placements work out?
 - Does your organization have policies or procedures in place for hiring people with disabilities? Tell us about them.

4. Connection to ODEP project
 - When were you (your organization) first approached about becoming involved with the project?
 - Who approached you?
 - Why do you think you were approached?
 - Did you have any previous experience or relationship working with the _____ project or any of the project partners?
 - What made you decide to become involved with the project?
 - What, if any, were your reservations about becoming involved? How did you overcome those?

5. Examples of activities involved in since project initiation
 - Give us some examples of the activities that you have been involved with on this project.
 - Were you involved in any job negotiations for people with disabilities? Can you describe your involvement?

6. Methods used for getting other employers involved in ODEP project
 - Have you or your organization been able to engage other employers to become involved in the project?

- How do you decide whom to approach?
 - What do you say?
 - What kinds of barriers have you faced in trying to get other employers involved in the project? How did you overcome those barriers?
 - Tell us about the successes that you have had in engaging other employers. What made these attempts work?
7. Methods used for getting other employers interested in hiring people with disabilities
- How do you approach other employers to get them interested in hiring people with disabilities?
 - Whom do you contact? Why?
 - What do you say?
 - Tell us about the successes that you have had in getting other employers interested in hiring people with disabilities. What made these attempts work?
8. Barriers to engaging other employers in the issue of hiring people with disabilities
- What kinds of barriers have you faced in trying to get other employers involved in hiring people with disabilities?
 - How did you overcome those barriers?
9. Perceived barriers to employers hiring people with disabilities
- In your opinion, what are some of the common perceptions that employers have about hiring people with disabilities? Probe: accommodations are costly, people with disabilities would make co-workers uncomfortable, makes company vulnerable to litigation, training and supervision needs would increase drastically.
10. Steps project is taking to overcome these barriers
- Have you had success in changing employers' perceived barriers to hiring people with disabilities?
 - How have you or how would you recommend others address misconceptions about hiring people with disabilities?

- Prior to becoming involved in the project, would you say that your organization had some of these perceptions about hiring people with disabilities? What changed them?

Employer Involvement – Program Customer/Job Seeker

We understand that the staff here at _____ helped you in the process of getting your current job. We would like to talk with you a little bit about the services that you have received here at _____ as well as the steps that you and the staff here went through to help you obtain your current job.

1. Description of previous work experience and other background

- Tell us a little bit about any jobs that you have had before your current job.
 - What kind of jobs did you have?
 - Part-time or full-time?
 - Were accommodations provided?
 - Did the project staff or any other program assist you in getting the job?
 - Why did you leave the job?
- Can you describe for us the primary thing that makes it hard for you to work?
- What type, if any, of accommodation did you need?
- Did anyone stay with you on the job to help you out? Who was it? What did s/he help you to do?

2. Previous planning and other services received

- What kinds of services do you receive here at the _____ project?
- Did you meet with someone here at _____ project to talk about the type of job you wanted?
 - What kinds of things did you discuss (e.g., goals, preferences, talents, interests)?
 - Tell us about the plan that you and the staff person here at _____ project created for getting you a job.
 - How well do you feel you followed that plan? Was it helpful?

- How did the services here at _____ project prepare you for getting a job?
 - How do the services here at _____ project assist you now that you have a job?
3. Expectations regarding working at this company
- When you learned that you had been hired by _____, how did you feel?
 - What did you expect the job would be like?
 - How much did you know about the job before you started?
4. Information on current job
- Are you working now?
 - Where?
 - What do you do?
 - Did _____ help you to get the job? How?
5. Descriptive details on the specific negotiation process
- Who was involved in assisting you to get the job at _____?
 - What did those people do (e.g. interview role-play)?
 - How were you involved in the process of getting the job at _____?
6. Description of job interview
- Can you describe for us the interview that you had with _____ before you were hired?
 - How did the staff here at _____ project help prepare you for the interview?
 - Did anyone from the _____ project go with you to the interview?
 - What was the interview like? Can you describe it?
 - What kinds of questions did the interviewer ask you?

- Did you have to do anything (e.g., show the interviewer that you could do some of the job tasks)?
- How did you feel when you were answering the questions/performing some of the job tasks?
- How did you feel when you left the interview?

7. Nature of employment (“deal made”)

- Tell us about your current job. What do you do?
- How often do you work? (How many days a week and how many hours a day?)
- What types of accommodations have been made for your disability, if any?
- Does anyone go with you to the job to help you (job coach)? Who? How is that working out?
- Are you enjoying your job? Why or why not?
- Do you think you’ll stay there for a while?
- What are your co-workers like? Who do you work with most?
- Do you feel comfortable at the job? Please explain.
- What do you especially like about working at ___?
- Is there anything that you would change about your current job?

Employer Involvement – Employer Interview

We are trying to understand the reasons employers agree to hire people with disabilities and the reasons they may be hesitant. Most of what we’d like to talk to you about is related to your specific experiences with one person that you’ve hired through the ___ project. His/her name is _____.

We’d also like to have a good understanding of the process ___ used [the career specialist/job developer] and the way both of you identified the best job and set of tasks for ___ [job seeker] to do in your company.

1. Description of company
 - What company do you work for?
 - What type of company is it?
 - What is your job in the company?

2. Previous experience in hiring people with disabilities
 - What kind of experience have you had in the past in hiring people with disabilities?
 - What was the situation(s)? Was it through regular channels (e.g., newspaper ad, One-Stop Center, word-of-mouth), or was there a special program or situation?
 - What kinds of jobs did they hold? Give specific examples.
 - Accommodations?
 - How did it work out? Positives/negatives

3. Expectations regarding hiring people with disabilities
 - When you were first approached by the ___ project, what did you think?
 - Were you originally positively disposed to cooperating with the project by hiring [more] people with disabilities?
 - Why/why not?

4. Connection to ODEP project (why approached)
 - How were you first approached for this project?
 - Did you receive any materials by mail or email? What were they? What were your thoughts when you saw these materials?
 - Who first approached you for the ___ project?
 - Why do you think you were approached?

5. Reasons for originally meeting with the Career Specialist/Job Developer?
 - What was it that convinced you to meet with the Career Specialist/Job Developer initially?
 - Was there anything s/he said that caught your interest? What was it?
 - Are there specific company policies that tend to support hiring people with disabilities? What are they?

6. Approach used by Career Specialist/Job Developer

Let's talk about ____.

 - What exactly happened?
 - Were discussions with the Career Specialist/Job Developer general at first or did s/he contact you about a specific individual or a specific job?
 - What did the job developer tell you? Could you describe your early conversations?
 - What was most resonating to you?

7. Descriptive details on the specific negotiation process
 - Staff at the ____ project has given us the name of individuals placed in employment as part of this project. One of them now works for you [used to work for you].
 - What was the nature of the “negotiation” you had with the career specialist/job developer? Please describe in as much detail as you can remember.
 - Did s/he have to do any convincing?
 - What did s/he say? What kinds of things were convincing to you/not so convincing (e.g., tryouts, tax incentives, payment for accommodations, advice on accommodations)?

8. Nature of employment (“deal” made)
 - What does ____ do for your company?
 - How many hours per day does s/he work? How many days per week?
 - What type of accommodations (if any) did you have to make for ____?

- Did you have to talk to anyone in your company to be able to hire ____? With whom? What did you tell him/her?
 - Was there a cost involved? How much? Were you able to take advantage of any tax incentives? If accommodations needed to be made, where did the money come from?
9. Reasons for agreeing to hire program customer
- Did you feel it was a negotiation process?
 - What were you getting/giving?
 - What convinced you?
10. Satisfaction with hire (e.g., performance, feedback from co-workers, feedback from supervisor, costs).
- How is ____ doing?
 - What have you heard from his supervisor?
 - What about co-workers? What kind of feedback have you been getting?
 - Does ____ have a job coach at the workplace? How often? How does this work out?
 - Would you do this again?
 - Why/why not?
 - What things might you do differently?

APPENDIX D

**REQUIREMENTS FOR EMPLOYER INVOLVEMENT
IN SOLICITATIONS FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS**

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Customized Employment

Fiscal Year 2001:

- Grantees must:
 - Demonstrate collaborative activities across relevant stakeholder groups, including both required and non-required One-Stop partners, persons with disabilities, their parents and other family members, advocates, *employers*, community rehabilitation agencies, and others as appropriate.
 - Organize services and supports in ways that provide informed choice and promote self-determination. In addition, grantees must establish *employer* involvement; track and respond to customer service and satisfaction for both persons with disabilities and *employers*; and provide services, including follow-up services to ensure job retention and career development.
- Activities may include:

Establishing connections to and collaborating with other entities, including *employers*, lending and financial institutions, foundations, faith-based organizations, institutions of higher education, consumer and family organizations, small business development centers and others, as appropriate, to further customized employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in local communities.
- The Local Board may coordinate numerous partnerships with other public and private entities, consistent with proposed activities of the grant and applicable administrative requirements. The U.S. Department of Labor encourages Local Boards to join with other State/local entities and public/private non-profit organizations. Such entities and organizations could include state programs for Vocational Rehabilitation, Mental Health, Medicaid, Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities, Housing and/or Transportation; State Councils on Developmental Disabilities; Protection and Advocacy Programs; University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities; institutions of higher education; Centers for Independent Living (CIL's); disability advocacy and provider organizations; organizations of parents; federally-funded disability grant entities; Small Business Development Centers; cooperatives and micro-enterprises; lending and financial institutions; training programs; media and marketing agencies; *employers*; foundations; grass roots community, industry, and faith-based programs; and other organizations or programs which provide or support services and/or advocacy for people with disabilities.
- Applicants must include in their proposed plan the following items:
 - The plan for gaining support and assistance of area *employers*
 - Demonstrations of support from area *employers* and *employer* organizations and evidence of their interest in participating in this effort.

Fiscal Year 2002:

- Grantees must:
 - Demonstrate collaborative activities across relevant stakeholder groups, including both required and non-required One-Stop partners, persons with disabilities, their parents and other family members, advocates, *employers*, community rehabilitation agencies, and others as appropriate.
 - Organize services and supports in ways that provide informed choice and promote self-determination. In addition, grantees must establish *employer* involvement; track and respond to customer service and satisfaction for both persons with disabilities and *employers*; and provide services, including follow-up services to ensure job retention and career development.
 - Develop ongoing linkages with *employers*, and their professional business and service organizations and trade associations as appropriate.
- Activities may include:

Establishing connections to and collaborating with other entities, including *employers*, lending and financial institutions, foundations, faith-based organizations, institutions of higher education, consumer and family organizations, small business development centers and others, as appropriate, to further customized employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in local communities.
- The Local Board may coordinate numerous partnerships with other public and private entities, consistent with proposed activities of the grant and applicable administrative requirements. The U.S. Department of Labor encourages Local Boards to join with other State/local entities and public/private non-profit organizations. Such entities and organizations could include state programs for Vocational Rehabilitation, Mental Health, Medicaid, Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities, Housing and/or Transportation; State Councils on Developmental Disabilities; Protection and Advocacy Programs; University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities; institutions of higher education; Centers for Independent Living (CIL's); disability advocacy and provider organizations; organizations of parents; federally-funded disability grant entities; Small Business Development Centers; cooperatives and micro-enterprises; lending and financial institutions; training programs; media and marketing agencies; *employers*; foundations; grass roots community, industry, and faith-based programs; and other organizations or programs which provide or support services and/or advocacy for people with disabilities.
- Applicants must include in their proposed plan the following items:
 - The plan for gaining support and assistance of area *employers*
 - Demonstrations of support from area *employers* and *employer* organizations and evidence of their interest in participating in this effort.

- The plan for marketing to and involving *employers*, and professional and business service organizations, and trade associations as appropriate.

Fiscal Year 2003:

- As Local Boards, through their local One-Stop Center are required to coordinate and to form partnerships with other state and local entities and public and private non-profit organizations, grant applications must include proposed methods for coordinating efforts with a wide variety of state agencies or entities. Some of the agencies and organizations that should be considered for inclusion are:
 - State programs for Vocational Rehabilitation;
 - Mental Health, Medicaid, Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities,
 - Housing and/or Transportation;
 - State Councils on Developmental Disabilities;
 - Protection and Advocacy Programs;
 - University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities
 - Institutions for higher education;
 - Centers for Independent Living (CIL);
 - Disability advocacy and provider organizations;
 - Organizations of parents;
 - Federally-funded disability grant entities;
 - Small Business Development Centers;
 - Cooperatives and micro-enterprises;
 - Training programs;
 - Media and marketing agencies;
 - *Employers;*
 - Foundations;
 - Grass roots, industry, and faith-based and community organizations;

- As well as other organizations or programs that provide or support services and/or advocacy for people with disabilities.
- The Project Design must:
 - Develop employment opportunities in a variety of jobs, industries and at a variety of levels, including self-employment and entrepreneurship, based on the strengths, needs and desires of the individual with a disability as well as creating and cultivating demand for these opportunities by forging and developing relationships with *employers*. The design must organize services and supports in ways that provide informed choice and promote self-determination and provide services, including follow-up services to ensure job retention and career development.
 - Establish connections to and collaborate with other entities, including *employers*, persons with disabilities, their parents and other family members, community rehabilitation agencies, lending and financial institutions, foundations, faith-based and community organizations, institutions of higher education, small business development centers and others, as appropriate, to further customized employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in local communities. These partners may become a subgroup or an advisory group of the Local Board. They may be specifically charged with coordinating funding, resources and expertise to increase customized employment for people with disabilities in the community and may involve grant design and implementation; and service organizations and trade associations, as appropriate.
 - Market and develop ongoing linkages with *employers*, and their professional, business and service organizations and trade associations as appropriate.
 - Track and respond to customer service and satisfaction for both persons with disabilities and *employers*.
 - Grantees must agree to actively utilize the programs sponsored by the ODEP, including the Job Accommodation Network, (<http://www.jan.wvu.edu>), and the *Employer* Assistance Referral Network (<http://www.earnworks.com>).
- Evaluation criteria:
 - The extent to which the proposed project will be coordinated, including demonstrated support and commitment from key organizations, *employers*, and agencies, including faith-based and community organizations;
 - The extent to which the methods of evaluation measure in both quantitative and qualitative terms, program results and satisfaction of customers, both people with disabilities and *employers*.

WorkFORCE (Action)

Fiscal Year 2002:

- Grant applications must include proposed methods for coordinating efforts with a wide variety of state agencies or entities. Some of the agencies that should be included are:
 - Employment and training agencies
 - *Employer*
- Grantees must:

Establish employer involvement; track and respond to customer service and satisfaction for both persons with disabilities and *employers*; and provide services, including follow-up services, to ensure job retention and career development.

Fiscal Year 2003:

- Grant applications must include evidence of current collaboration and partnerships with a wide variety of state agencies, entities and individuals. Some of the agencies and organizations that should be considered for inclusion are:
 - Employment and training agencies
 - Small Business Development Centers
 - Family members, consumers, *employers*, and any other key agencies or constituencies needed to offer a comprehensive service delivery model
- The Project Design must:
 - Establish *employer* involvement; track and respond to customer service and satisfaction for both persons with disabilities and employers; and provide services, including follow-up services, to ensure job retention and career development.
 - Grantees must agree to actively utilize the programs sponsored by the ODEP, including the Job Accommodation Network, (<http://www.jan.wvu.edu>), and the *Employer* Assistance Referral Network (<http://www.earnworks.com>).

Chronic Homelessness (Fiscal Year 2003)

Awardees must agree to actively utilize the programs sponsored by the ODEP, including the Job Accommodation Network, (www.jan.wvu.edu), and the *Employer* Assistance Referral Network (www.earnworks.com).

APPENDIX E

EXAMPLE OF BUSINESS AGREEMENT

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EXAMPLE BUSINESS AGREEMENT

This business agreement is entered into by John P. and Fishers YMCA of Indiana as part of the Indianapolis Customized Employment Project's rehabilitative employment program and shall be monitored by agents of the project.

1. John P. will be allowed to install and access his jukebox in the teen center at the Fishers YMCA located at 9012 East 126th St., Fishers, Indiana 46038.
2. John P. will receive 100% of the profits from the use of his jukebox.
3. John P. agrees to carry insurance to cover theft or damage to his jukebox. John P. will be responsible for filing an insurance claim and shall have the unit replaced or repaired with no cost to the YMCA, if a problem should arise. Therefore, the Fishers YMCA will not be liable for theft or damage of the unit.
4. If John P. or the Fishers YMCA closes their business, for any reason, the unit will be returned to him, unless the YMCA would like to purchase the unit for fair market value.

Agreement agreed to on this date by:

P. Jones
Indianapolis Customized Employment Project

L. Morgan
Petersville YMCA

Date: _____

Date: _____