

Creative Involvement of Community-Based Disability Organizations at One-Stop Career Centers

INTRODUCTION

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) facilitates partnerships among organizations for more coordinated service delivery to all job seekers. Although the state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agency is the only disability agency or program that is a mandated partner under WIA, community-based disability organizations (CBOs) can also work with One-Stop Career Centers to enhance their capacity to support customers with disabilities.

Through case study research, the Institute for Community Inclusion identified several models of involvement between CBOs and One-Stops. These models illustrate that organizations can be creative in developing their partner roles to meet the needs of both their staff and their customers.

THE CRITICAL ROLE OF CBOS

Community-based disability organizations can be critical to the success of job seekers with disabilities using the One-Stop system. They are often instrumental in equipping One-Stop staff with the skills and resources they need to better serve this customer group.

This brief is part of a series of products offering practical solutions for Local Workforce Investment Boards and One-Stop Career Centers as they strive to serve all customers, including those with disabilities. Topics covered in other briefs include fiscal issues, strategies for maximizing staff competencies, and partnerships with Vocational Rehabilitation. The source of the information presented in this brief is from case studies conducted in Los Angeles, California; Colorado Springs, Colorado; Wilmington, Delaware; New Orleans, Louisiana; Utica, New York; and Clark County, Washington. These case studies were conducted by researchers at the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston.

A Win-Win Situation

CBOs can offer One-Stops:

- Expertise identifying and contacting additional local resources such as support, advocacy, and self-help groups
- Training on disability issues and how best to access resources
- Consultation on accommodations, accessibility, assistive technology, and post-employment supports
- Assistance with marketing and outreach efforts to the disability community
- Access to individuals who can meet employer needs
- Access to employers who may be interested in hiring job seekers with disabilities

One-Stops can offer CBOs:

- A wide array of job search services for their clients (job listings, on-site employer interviews, information sessions, employer contacts)
- Access to a variety of workshops for their clients, such as resume development and interviewing skills
- The opportunity to develop job leads, either in conjunction with the client or independently
- Access to space and other resources of the One-Stop through partnership agreements

MODELS OF CBO INVOLVEMENT

Community-based disability organizations can be involved with the One-Stops in many different ways. Each model of involvement brings particular characteristics and innovations to the collaboration.

Model #1: Disability organizations as One-Stop operators

Los Angeles, CA and New Orleans, LA

Goodwill Industries was a One-Stop operator in both Los Angeles and New Orleans. Goodwill Industries International serves people with workplace disadvantages and disabilities by providing job training, job placement opportunities, and post-employment support. The role of One-Stop operators can vary and ranges from coordinating service providers within the One-Stop to being the primary provider of services at the One-Stop (WIA sec. 121[d]). Prior to becoming a One-Stop operator in Los Angeles, Goodwill Industries was a small provider offering employment services to people with significant barriers to employment. When One-Stops were introduced in California, Goodwill became a satellite (specialized off-site location), later expanding to a full-service center.

Model #2: Disability organizations as co-located partners

New Orleans, LA

In New Orleans, several staff members from the Louisiana Business Leadership Network (LBLN) were co-located at the New Orleans Adult Career Center. LBLN, an organization of business leaders, received a U.S. Department of Labor grant to improve job options for people with disabilities. Three employment specialists funded through this grant worked at the One-Stop four afternoons per week, carrying a caseload of approximately 15–20 individuals each. LBLN staff offered training and technical assistance to other One-Stop staff who worked with people with disabilities. LBLN staff also focused on developing relationships with businesses, ensuring that they were familiar with the benefits of hiring workers with disabilities.

Utica, NY

The Resource Center for Independent Living (RCIL) is an organization that supports the rights and integration of people with disabilities into local communities. From the time of WIA's implementation, RCIL worked closely with the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) to reorganize the workforce investment system and increase its accessibility. The organization had regularly scheduled staff at the One-Stops, ensuring total integration. RCIL staff provided training on accessibility and ordered adaptive equipment in addition to working with individual job seekers. At the time of ICI's research, RCIL had recently developed a grant proposal with One-Stop staff that put together a consumer team to work with all the One-Stops.

Model #3: Disability organizations as partners in federal grant activities

Colorado Springs, CO

Like the U.S. Department of Labor grant that enabled New Orleans One-Stop and LBLN staff to work together, the Colorado Springs One-Stop was also the site of a grant designed to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. The Pikes Peak One-Stop in Colorado housed a State Partnership Systems Change Initiative grant. This initiative, entitled Project WIN and administered by JFK Partners at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, created two disability resource specialists ("consumer navigators") who helped guide individuals

with disabilities through the One-Stop Career Center system. Consumer navigators worked directly with One-Stop customers seeking employment in the local community to ensure that customers had access to the required services and benefits and learned how to "navigate themselves" through the systems. Other services navigators offered included providing resource information (including linkages for specific services), troubleshooting problems, and conducting outreach to underserved groups.

Model #4: Disability organizations as self-service and satellite centers

Some One-Stop systems allow agencies and organizations to become self-service and satellite centers. Satellite centers provide more limited or specialized services than comprehensive centers. Self-service sites are usually computer workstations or kiosks where individuals can access One-Stop services without staff assistance. Typically these self-service sites are in public libraries, government offices, or shopping malls. The existence of satellite centers and self-service sites varies greatly from state to state and within states. By becoming a self-service or satellite center an agency can receive benefits such as funding or additional services. The following are examples of disability organizations that have pursued this option.

Clark County, WA: Van Tech

Off-site locations enable One-Stop services to be more accessible to nontraditional customers. For instance, Van Tech, a community rehabilitation provider that offered day and employment services for individuals with disabilities, housed a self-service site to the One-Stop system. Although the self-service site did not have the full array of One-Stop resources, it provided an introduction to community-based employment and One-Stop services for individuals with significant disabilities.

Clark County, WA: Clearview Employment Services

Clearview Employment Services, the vocational program within Columbia River Mental Health Services, had collaborated informally with the One-Stops for many years. Some of the partnership strategies undertaken included training on mental health issues at the One-

Stops and assisting individuals with mental illness who were homeless to use One-Stop services. This grant project ultimately resulted in the program applying to become a self-service site within the One-Stop system.

MODELS AND BENEFITS OF INVOLVING COMMUNITY-BASED DISABILITY ORGANIZATIONS

Model #5: Disability organizations as external collaborators

Los Angeles, CA

Three disability organizations were prominent partners in Los Angeles acting as external collaborators. The Los Angeles Department on Disability provided ADA compliance training and established an ADA fund to support city departments in obtaining assistive technology. The Braille Institute developed a job readiness and preparation program that allowed students with visual impairments to job shadow One-Stop Center staff. Students obtained a sense of what it was like to both use and work at a One-Stop Center, and One-Stop staff got the opportunity to interact with individuals with disabilities and enhance their assistive technology skills. AIDS Project Los Angeles, one of the nation’s largest AIDS service organizations, actively participated in planning and implementing One-Stop services for this population.

STRATEGIES FOR INVOLVING COMMUNITY-BASED DISABILITY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE ONE-STOPS

- Use VR to facilitate linkage-building.
- Contact state/local mental retardation/developmental disabilities and mental health agencies, and invite them to identify potential CBOs and develop strategies for partnership.
- Establish an agency roundtable as a medium for networking, brainstorming, developing creative resource-sharing options, and creating mutually beneficial relationships.
- Invite staff from CBOs to present and describe services during clearly scheduled meetings or training sessions. Visit CBOs to increase familiarity.
- Compile comprehensive resource lists for frontline staff that include service descriptions and contact information such as phone and email. (See www.theworksource.org/1general/employmentresourceguide.html for an excellent example.)
- Identify a point of contact to act as a liaison to the organization.
- Consider all possible funding and alternative resources (e.g., fiscal, planning, staffing) to support your efforts.

Model	Benefits
One-Stop operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings disability expertise to the operator role, strengthening the ability of the One-Stop to meet the needs of people with disabilities • Expands expertise on working with individuals with disabilities to other populations with employment challenges • Keeps the WIB more in tune with disability issues
Co-located partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates close proximity that facilitates formal and informal training, consultation, and technical assistance to those less familiar with disability issues • Expands menu of service options available to One-Stop customers
Partners in federal grant activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a leadership position for CBOs, giving them the latitude to create highly visible services and drive the change process
Satellite and self-service centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can open the door to competitive employment for those in non-competitive employment programs • Allows those who find comprehensive One-Stops overwhelming the option of job searching in a more familiar location • Puts all the electronic resources of the One-Stop system at the disposal of the CBO and its clients, making it easier for them to access rather than having to physically go to the comprehensive One-Stop • Expands the capacity of the One-Stop system to meet the needs of more customers
External collaborators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infuses disability issues into training and service delivery without working directly with job seekers • Keeps disability issues in the forefront when strategizing, planning, and implementing services

CONCLUSION

Creating successful partnerships with community-based disability organizations allows One-Stop partners to access their expertise. Likewise, job search and placement resources are available to individuals served by the CBO. No matter what type of involvement, such collaboration can only positively affect service design and delivery for job seekers with disabilities. Ultimately, such linkages allow entities to capitalize on each other's strengths and resources and reinforce the commitment to provide better supports for One-Stop customers with disabilities.



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This is a publication of the Center on State Systems and Employment (RRTC) at the Institute for Community Inclusion. This center is funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research of the U.S. Department of Education (grant #H133B980037). This research was also supported by the Academy for Educational Development through a subcontract from the Office of Disability Employment Policy/U.S. Department of Labor. The opinions contained in this publication are those of the grantees and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of Labor or the U.S. Department of Education.



The authors would like to thank the individuals who were interviewed at each site for their time and openness in sharing their experiences and suggestions as part of this research. We would also like to thank Allison Cohen, Cori DiBiase, Danielle Dreilinger, Sheila Fesko, Doris Hamner, David Hoff, and Elena Varney for their editorial assistance.

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