

“America works best when we field a full team, and that means making sure that everyone has access to opportunity in our dynamic economy. The grants we are awarding today will help to strengthen partnerships that ensure employers know that it is what people with disabilities CAN do that matters most.”

— US Secretary of Labor
Thomas E. Perez

Background...

To develop America’s talent to meet the recruitment and retention needs for the 21st century workforce, the public workforce system must include individuals with disabilities in its strategies to serve both of its customers: job seekers and businesses. Individuals with disabilities continue to be disproportionately long-term unemployed, underemployed, and living in poverty. Through a variety of pilot projects, the public workforce system has worked to more systematically address this issue.

These successful strategies provide great potential to assist Americans with disabilities in finding gainful employment to improve their quality of life, reduce their need for supplemental government supports and, ultimately, allow them to strengthen and improve the workforce by becoming a more active part of it. A joint effort of the Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration (ETA) and Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) supports these efforts by refining and replicating promising practices throughout the public workforce system.

The DEI Design

The DEI comprises three primary components: cooperative agreements, technical assistance to the grantees and the public workforce system, and evaluation of the grantees’ activities to measure their outcomes and impact on both the individuals and the system. The goal of the DEI is to improve the education, training, and employment opportunities and outcomes of youth and adults with disabilities (including individuals with significant disabilities) who are unemployed, underemployed, and/or receiving Social Security disability benefits.

DEI Grantees

- Alabama (Round 4)
- Alaska (Rounds 1, 4 and 6)
- Arkansas (Round 1)
- California (Rounds 2, 5 and 7)
- Connecticut (Rounds 4 and 7)
- Delaware (Round 1)
- Florida (Round 3)
- Georgia (Round 6)
- Hawaii (Rounds 2 and 6)
- Idaho (Rounds 4 and 7)
- Illinois (Rounds 1, 4 and 5)
- Indiana (Round 3)
- Iowa (Rounds 3 and 6)
- Kansas (Rounds 1 and 5)
- Louisiana (Round 3)
- Maine (Rounds 1 and 4)
- Maryland (Round 7)
- Massachusetts (Rounds 3, 5 and 7)
- Minnesota (Rounds 3, 5 and 7)
- New Jersey (Round 1)
- New York (Rounds 1, 4 and 6)
- Ohio (Round 2)
- Rhode Island (Round 3)
- South Dakota (Rounds 2 and 5)
- Tennessee (Round 2)
- Virginia (Rounds 1 and 4)
- Washington (Rounds 2 and 6)
- Wisconsin (Round 2)



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Disability and Employment

Job Driven Strategies Connecting Pieces of the Employment Puzzle



On July 22, 2014, President Obama signed into law the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Pub. L. 113-128. A number of provisions in WIOA emphasize and increase the requirements for the general workforce development system and the American Job Centers (AJC) to meet the needs of job seekers with disabilities, increase their access to high-quality workforce services, and to prepare them for competitive integrated employment leading to economic self-sufficiency. DEI cooperative agreements will be vehicles for driving implementation of several of WIOA's disability-related principles, and provide effective strategies for the public workforce system/AJC network to promote competitive, integrated employment of individuals with disabilities, including those with significant disabilities.

Since 2010, seven rounds of projects have been funded for three-year periods to implement strategies to promote the employment of youth (ages 14-24) and adults (ages 18 and older) with disabilities, and individuals (ages 14 and over) with significant disabilities. Round One (nine) in 2010 at \$22 million; Round Two (seven) in 2011 at \$21 million; Round Three (seven) in 2012 at \$20 million; Round Four (eight) in 2013 at \$18 million; Round Five (six) in 2014 at \$15 million; Round Six (six) in 2015 at \$15 million; and a seventh round (six) funded in 2016 at \$15 million.

The DEI “will improve the accessibility and accountability of the public workforce development system for individuals with disabilities [and]...continue promising practices implemented by disability program navigators, including effective deployment of staff in selected States to...better serve individuals with disabilities and improve employment outcomes.”

- The Appropriation Committee Senate Report 111-66 on H.R. 3292