

Since 2010, the US Department of Labor (DOL) has awarded over \$123 million to forty-nine projects in twenty-eight states under the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) to expand the capacity of American Job Centers (AJCs) to improve education, training, and employment outcomes of three population focus areas: 1) adults (ages 18 and older) with visible and non-visible disabilities, including those who have acquired disabilities in adulthood; 2) youth (ages 14-24) with visible and non-visible disabilities, including those who have chronic health conditions; and 3) individuals (ages 14 and older) with significant disabilities. The DEI is jointly funded by the DOL's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) and the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP).

DEI projects build upon the Disability Program Navigator initiative by hiring staff with expertise in workforce and disability to serve as Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs). Starting in 2014, DEI grantees will increase the participation of adults and youth with disabilities (including individuals with significant disabilities) in career pathways systems and successful existing programs in the public workforce system in partnership with vocational rehabilitation, community colleges and other education, human service, and business partners. The DEI cooperative agreements will be vehicles for driving implementation of several of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act's (WIOA) disability-related provisions, and provide effective strategies for the public workforce system/AJC network to promote competitive, integrated employment of individuals with disabilities.

### DEI Overview

- ✦ DOL has entered into three-year cooperative agreements with 28 states to implement exemplary employment services to individuals with disabilities (including significant disabilities) in the workforce system. Funded in:
  - **2010**—Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, New Jersey, New York and Virginia
  - **2011**—California, Hawaii, Ohio, South Dakota, Tennessee, Washington and Wisconsin
  - **2012**—Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota and Rhode Island
  - **2013**—Alabama, Alaska, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Maine, New York and Virginia
  - **2014**—California, Illinois, Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota and South Dakota
  - **2015**—Alaska, Georgia, Hawaii, Iowa, New York and Washington
  - **2016**—California, Connecticut, Idaho, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Minnesota
- ✦ Projects replicate or expand effective practices throughout the state's public workforce system.
- ✦ DRCs are hired at the local workforce development level.
- ✦ Independent evaluation will be conducted using quantitative and qualitative data from grantees.

### DEI Strategic Approaches

- ✦ All DEI Projects focus on:
  - Developing collaborative partnerships at the state and local levels across multiple service delivery systems;
  - Supporting job-driven approaches in career pathway systems and programs to equip individuals with disabilities with the skills, competencies, and credentials necessary to help them obtain in-demand jobs, increase earnings, and advance their careers;
  - Promoting physical, programmatic and communication access for individuals with disabilities;
  - Blending and braiding of funds and leveraging of resources to promote the participation of individuals with disabilities;
  - Providing flexible approaches to designing and providing training, supportive services, and innovative workplace strategies;
  - Expanding the public workforce development system's capacity to become an Employment Network for beneficiaries under the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work program; and
  - Creating systemic change.