



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER JUNE 2023 | ISSUE 1

This is a project of the RI Cross Disability Coalition

RI WINS (Workforce Investment & New Solutions)" is the name utilized by the RI Cross Disability Coalition for our DD Transformation Grant in collaboration with the RI Developmental Disabilities Council (RIDDC) and Skills for RI's Future. This newsletter provides information on the status of implementation of the goal areas within the project and efforts to educate and provide support to people with disabilities, staff from community agencies, and RI employers on creating sustainable change for meaningful and inclusive lives for individuals with disabilities.



Goal 1: Peer and Family Education and Empowerment Network

The network launched as a statewide resource to educate individuals and families about opportunities, choices for supports leading to living meaningful and inclusive lives, and how to prepare to be a contributing member within RI's workforce.

The RI Cross Disability Coalition's 3-person Peer Education Director Team recruited 18 people with disabilities to be part of the Speakers Bureau. They began presentations in March, with scheduled dates continuing through July. Among the outreach efforts (Listed below):



Completed/Past Presentations:

- “Let’s Talk about Money” - West Bay
- “Let’s Talk About Money” - Warwick Public Library, Perspectives Self Advocacy Group
- “Building Self Esteem for Living the Best Life”
- “Life is Good” – RI Food Bank
- “Person Centered Planning” - East Greenwich School Committee Meeting
- “Let’s Talk about Money” - Re-Focus Inc
- “Self-Employment”- President’s Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities (PCPID)
- “Self-Employment”- Advocates in Action Annual Conference
- “Building Self Esteem for Living the Best Life” - Avatar Avavoice Self-Advocacy Group
- “Self-Employment” - Governor’s Workforce Board

Scheduled/Upcoming Presentations:

- **6/7 at 12:45pm:** “Building Self Esteem for Living the Best Life” at ReFocus
- **6/16 at 10:00am** “Let’s Talk about Money” Warwick Career & Technical Center
- **7/5 at 12:45pm:** “Healthy Relationships” at ReFocus



Goal 2: Workforce Development

Staff Professional Development and Support for Self-Employment Business Owners

As we’ve rounded out Q1 of 2023 we’re reflecting on the success of our current Employer Engagement Trainings. Staff from Skills for RI’s Future, RIDDC, RI Cross Disability Coalition, Developmental Disabilities staff and other providers have joined together to learn and build skills to effectively conduct informational interviews with employers and RI businesses, as well as create and nurture relationships with industry partners, with the ultimate goal of building opportunities for job seekers such as internships, wage-paying jobs, or small business (within a business).

Current Initiatives

Our primary goal is to identify various businesses and to build relationships with employers ultimately to assist them with their workforce and economic development needs through solutions including actions to promote their businesses, providing information to them on business development resources including tax incentives and accessibility grants, referrals of job candidates for open positions, internships, or business-within-a business opportunities. A major focus of our work is to continue to mentor employment coaches and job developers from various agencies through monthly meetings to help them successfully engage with employers.

The group is recognizing some promising successes now that stakeholders are attending the Monthly Coaching Call in a building community of practice and sharing their business leads and developed opportunities. Additionally, Skills for RI’s Future maintains an active database of employers and the entire team then works to identify and recommend job seekers that may fit the employers’ needs via a daily updated Teams channel.

Prior to the initiative's collaborative effort, agency employment staff would have developed an opportunity or supported a job seeker for an interview with an employer only to discover that there was not an ideal fit. Now, if a job remains open or unfilled, the information is shared with the team at SkillRI and posted on the channel, and is available to all 50 agency employment staff who went through training, and to all those whom they serve. That coordinated approach and information sharing is an important first within the state – a significant time-saving benefit to everyone, from staff to job seeker to employer.

Doug Crandell's Training

Doug's program has so far trained fifteen teams (over 50 people statewide from over 20 DD provider agencies) and conducted fifteen employer interviews during three rigorous - yet fun! - sessions in September, December, and March.



(L) Planners L-R, Sue Babin, Doug Crandell, and Danna Spencer / (R) Classroom Day 3 Presentation by each group interviewing various businesses

Additional training to enhance the sustainability of employer engagement are scheduled.

Progress

Our teams remain committed to conducting additional employer interviews throughout the year to maintain the program's continuity. Thus far we've had four professional development sessions with coaches.

- Initially planned for 12 employer engagement sessions, ultimately 23 sessions educating 37 individuals with businesses were completed by the end of April. These included 1:1 and group sessions with hiring personnel to work on customized and supportive employment.
- Average attendance on coaching calls: 15 coaches on monthly calls, directors of employment programs 10 or 11
- 39 employers outreached. Of those 11 added to CRM, have committed to hiring (even if they haven't hired yet).

Placements

We've had promising outcomes with our programs thus far, including being able to collaborate with partner agencies and businesses to refer candidates and assist job seekers.

- **Apple Cinema:** Onboarded candidate following tour and information interview
- **Feast and Fettle:** Hired 1 person after a completed internship and currently have another participant in an internship
- **Atria Senior Living:** After meeting with a variety of candidates, hired 1 individual in a dishwasher role
- **Thielsch Engineering.** A customized role that was created to assist their lab chemists cleaning glassware. The candidate was one of 3 workABILITY candidates interviewed.



Goal 3: Employer Engagement Roadmap

Creating an Inclusive Workforce

While training staff as well as job seekers, the project also focuses on training employers to understand the benefits to them of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in their workforce.

A 3-part series for employer education is currently being developed in conjunction with the RI Secretary of State's office, a central resource for ongoing business information and services.

The topics scheduled for June are:

- Part 1: Demystify Diversity - What It Means? Is It Good For Business?
- Part 2: Existing Businesses - How Did Diversity Change/Improve Your Workforce?
- Part 3: What Resources Are Available? What If You Have Job Openings? Information about Grants and Tax Credits

Committee Members

- Kristen Cordeiro, Deputy Director of Business Services, RI Department of State
- Maureen Ewing, Director of Business Series, RI Department of State
- Tina Pederson, Director, Real Access Motivates Progress (RAMP)
- Omar Reyes, Director of Adult Programs, RI Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (RIOPC)
- Kevin Matta, President, Diversity And Inclusion Professionals (DAIP) and Chief HR and Diversity Officer, Amos House
- Jeannine Pavlak, Director, Arts Equity RI
- Donna Rofino, Marketing and Events Director, Providence Business News (PBN)
- Mike Mello, Editor, Providence Business News (PBN)
- Patricia Martinez, Chief Equity and Empowerment Officer, Central Falls School District
- Paul Ouellette, Business Consultant, RI Cross Disability Coalition
- Olivia Byron, Director of Employer Workforce Programs, Department of Labor and Training (DLT)
- Sue Babin, Special Projects Coordinator, RI Developmental Disabilities Council (RIDDC)



Goal 4: Transformation Among Stakeholders

Collaboration, Initiatives, New Challenges and Opportunities

Jeannine Pavlak, Executive Director, New England Business Associates (NEBA) is coordinating the activities under this goal area. In early February 2023 a meeting was convened inviting all Grantees who received funding from DD for Transformation Grants. Approximately 20 Grantees attended the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to share information on the status of implementation of various grants, identify potential opportunities for collaboration, discuss major highlights relating to integration and customized employment as well as identify challenges faced by Grantees.

The group will work collaboratively to learn from one another and to continue to share successes and challenges. Jeannine will identify national experts who will participate in future meetings to address challenges and provide guidance and support to Grantees.

Grantees are working in a variety of areas including:

- Family Education and Support
- Community Integration, Membership and Customized Life Supports
- Staff Recruitment, Retention, Incentives and Bonuses/Performance Payments
- Redefining DSP roles to "Community Connections Specialists"/"Community Navigators"
- Education for People with Disabilities on Community Integration and Customized Employment/Self-Employment
- Customized Employment
- Connections with RI Employers and Businesses
- Employer Education and Engagement
- DSP and Front Line Supervisor Training
- Person Centered Planning
- Technology Support
- Shared Living for People living in Group Homes
- Major challenges identified by Grantees included the following:
 - Difficulty with Workforce Recruitment... people are not applying, don't show up for interviews, or not qualified
 - Time Commitment involved with various Grants and back work to get projects organized
 - Not many referrals of People with Disabilities for Employment Supports from BHDDH
 - Transportation
 - Documentation and Tracking of Information
 - Family Concerns re: Loss of SSI/SSDI Benefits for People involved with Employment
 - Questions on Sustainability

The next meeting will be convened in July 2023.

This is a collaborative project with the Rhode Island Cross Disability Coalition, RI Developmental Disabilities Council and Skills for RI's Future funded as one of the State Developmental Disability Transformation Grants.