

Best Practices Guide *for* Supported Employment Program Management

Developed by Wisconsin APSE and the WI Board for People with Developmental Disabilities



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I. Introduction

Purpose of this Guide:

This guide was developed for Supported Employment Program Managers/ Supervisors. It contains strategies and essential resources your agency can use to increase competitive integrated employment (CIE) outcomes. WI APSE and WI Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (WI BPDD) believe everyone has strengths and gifts to contribute to the competitive labor force. To capitalize on these strengths and gifts, we must invest in our employment service staff so that they embody the values and skills needed to support people with disabilities in CIE. We hope this guide helps agencies across Wisconsin identify areas for improvement and implement new strategies and best practices that will result in more people with disabilities working in CIE.



How this Guide Was Created:

This guide was developed by WI APSE Board members and subject matter experts in Supported Employment through a series of focus groups, interviews and meetings with agencies across Wisconsin. Their creative strategies, best practices and essential resources are featured throughout these pages. Authors include Beth Lohmann, Craig Poshepny, Jenny Felty, Rose White, Shannon Webb, and Tammy Hofmeister.

How to Use this Guide:

Each section of the Guide contains best practice strategies and essential resources to achieve CIE outcomes. You do not have to use all the strategies to achieve success. Use what strategies will work within your agency and your community. To apply the information, in each section, there is a reflection and planning activity to increase your ability to generalize and apply the knowledge being discussed. This opportunity provides a way for you to evaluate your agency's status, choose your priorities, and set action steps for improvement within your agency.

About WI APSE:

The Association for People Supporting Employment First (APSE) is the only national organization with an exclusive focus on competitive integrated employment and career advancement opportunities for individuals with disabilities. APSE is a 3,000+ growing national non-profit membership organization founded in 1988. Our members include individuals with disabilities, families, disability professionals, and businesses.



APSE members recognize that everyone has abilities to contribute, and their work should be recognized and rewarded with fair pay, creating inclusive workplaces. Employment enriches and adds meaning to every life, and workplaces and communities are enhanced when they embrace diversity.

Jenny Felty – Co President, WI APSE
Beth Lohmann – Co President, WI APSE

Competitive Integrated Employment Definition:

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) defines competitive integrated employment as work that is performed on a full-time or part-time basis for which an individual is:

- (a) compensated at or above minimum wage and comparable to the customary rate paid by the employer to employees without disabilities performing similar duties and with similar training and experience
- (b) receiving the same level of benefits provided to other employees without disabilities in similar positions
- (c) at a location where the employee interacts with other individuals without disabilities, and
- (d) presented opportunities for advancement similar to other employees without disabilities in similar positions.

Benefits of Competitive Integrated Employment:

CIE is important for people with disabilities not just because it provides income, it also provides meaning, structure, and social connections. Research has shown CIE is associated with positive psychological and physical health outcomes, as well as increased self-determination, independence, and quality of life for people with significant disabilities (Taylor, et al., 2021).

Hiring people with disabilities has clear benefits for employers. A 2018 study by Accenture, in partnership with the American Association of People with Disabilities and Disability:IN, indicates that businesses that actively seek to employ people with disabilities outperform businesses that do not. Their revenues were 28% higher, net income was two times more, and profit margins were higher by 30%. Additionally, the US Department of Labor found that employers who embraced disability saw a 90% increase in employee retention. Hiring people with disabilities is an important part of company diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts.

Employment First in Wisconsin:

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DWD - DVR), the Department of Health Services (DHS), and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) have each affirmed their commitment to CIE outcomes. As part of Wisconsin's Employment First law (Wisconsin Act 178, signed into law in 2017), these partners collaborate to prioritize policies, procedures, and practices for CIE and ensure they are implemented successfully statewide. Although each individual agency has their own guiding principles regarding CIE, they have a shared vision: *Empower individuals with disabilities to prepare for, participate in, and advance in CIE.*



Additionally, under Wisconsin's Employment First law, the three State agencies must develop and report on shared performance improvement targets and cross-agency objectives. For more in-depth information regarding their guiding principles and implementation standards, visit: <https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/partners/cie/>.

II. Creating an Organizational Culture to Support CIE

High performing employment service programs have established an organizational culture and philosophy that everyone can work and that all people with disabilities have strengths and gifts to contribute to the competitive labor force. Leaders play a vital role in fostering this positive organizational culture. Effective leaders do this by ensuring their job development and job coaching staff are provided adequate training, resources, and time to implement best practices in their day-to-day work.

Leadership Perspectives on Organizational Culture

“ I really believe that anyone, including anyone with any disability, can work in the community with the right job match and the right support. I believe this because I’ve seen it over and over again. For many of us, work brings meaning to our lives, and it’s no different for people with disabilities. **Work provides us with basic things like income, but it also provides structure to our day, social connections and access to a world beyond what we experience in our homes.** This is why I’m so committed to supporting our staff at Aptiv to provide the best support we can to the people with disabilities we serve, which includes helping them to find jobs in the community that they love, and that brings meaning to their lives.”

Jenny Felty, President/CEO Aptiv, Inc.

“ One of the keys to long term competitive integrated community employment success comes down to the simple concept of developing and fostering good partnerships. Positive, trusting, and reliable partnerships at all levels in the process. Partnerships between the local business owners and managers that are willing to hire the individuals you help support is also vital for CIE. **One of the most important partnerships is between the job seeker and employment specialist/job developer.** Developing the rapport, mutual understanding, and respect of what is needed and desired to achieve a positive and successful employment outcome.”

*Craig Poshepny,
Executive Director, VIP Services, Inc.*

Best Practices to Foster an Organizational Culture that Prioritizes CIE

- **Review your organization’s vision, mission, and core values to ensure it supports inclusion, positive thinking, learning, creativity, innovation, and quality improvement.** Instill the belief across your organization that “everyone can work.” Announce and celebrate each time a job seeker gets a job. Regularly share stories about people working in the community at staff meetings, in newsletters, through social media, at events, etc. High performing agencies make it a priority to share and celebrate each CIE success.

- **Nurture and invest in staff talent.** Mission-focused staff are an invaluable resource. Recognize your staff as your greatest asset. Identify and provide the best sources of training and professional development for your staff. Make available the opportunity to attend regular training to acquire and improve upon the essential competencies needed to do their work. Develop your staff to see themselves as employment champions.
- **Emphasize continuous quality improvement in practices and processes.** Dedicating time and energy to analyze and reflect on your agency’s processes and practices is a critical ingredient for success. Be transparent with staff about their involvement in continuous quality improvement. Empower staff to speak up if something is not working well. Actively seek input and ideas from staff to improve services. Gather and analyze qualitative and quantitative information to determine data-driven organizational goals and decisions. 
- **Ensure that management staff understand their role in believing and reinforcing the organization’s mission, values, and goals.** Agency management should be knowledgeable of evidence-based, research-based and best practices for CIE. Managers, especially those who are hired from within or promoted to their positions, should be provided professional development opportunities to be effective in communicating organizational, mission, values, and goals. High performing agencies ensure managers develop the qualities necessary to be good leaders, listeners, and supporters of their teams.
- **Help everyone in your organization realize they play a part in advancing your CIE organization’s goals.** Staff at all levels of the agency should be able to give feedback on practices or processes that are not aligned with the agency’s mission. All agency staff should believe and share with others that everyone, regardless of their disability, can work in the community. Everyone in the agency should be looking for employment opportunities and networking with each other to use community connections to obtain CIE. Staff should be expected to tap into their personal networks to provide job developers with warm leads. All staff play a part in increasing CIE outcomes!
- **Role of Leadership:** Organizational culture starts at the top with leadership. Leaders share their vision and philosophy by “walking the talk” to drive CIE success to completion. They clearly set organizational direction and purpose. They display and reflect the unique strengths, culture, value, beliefs, and direction of the organization. They inspire enthusiasm, commitment, and help employees believe they are part of something bigger than their daily work. Leaders set the course and hire the supervisors that guide service delivery and support staff. Effective leaders care about and bring out the best in others through coaching, mentoring, and listening.
- **Role of Supervisors:** Supervisors are responsible for setting clear expectations and developing goals that are in alignment with the organizational strategic plan. They are the ones who reinforce the mission/values/vision developed by leadership. Supervisors are the linchpins of quality services. They communicate organizational needs, oversee employee performance and training, provide guidance, support, and manage the shared relationship between the employee and the organization so that each is successful.
- **Role of Direct Line Staff:** An organization’s services are only as great as the direct line staff providing the services. Direct line staff are responsible for maintaining a healthy work culture through adherence to organizational policies and procedures, through teamwork and collaboration, taking ownership, and active engagement in supporting the organizational mission and values. 

Direct line staff should be empowered to manage their daily schedules and tasks with minimal need for supervision. They should display confidence and assertiveness in contributing their ideas to further grow the organization as well as their own professional development. It is important for direct line staff to accept constructive feedback and strive for continuous quality improvement in their day-to-day performance with job seekers.

- **Use person-centered planning (PCP) strategies to focus on the dreams, strengths, and preferences of the people being supported.** Person-centered thinking, planning, and process should be the cornerstone training for staff. Your agency should use a range of PCP tools to get to know people well and honor their preferences. High performing agencies use a team-based approach to ensure people with disabilities are at the center of everything they do and are in control of their own services.
- **Become knowledgeable of evidence-based practices that support competitive integrated employment outcomes.** Frameworks for [Supported Employment](#) core values and quality indicators have been well-established for decades. [Individual Placement and Support](#) (IPS) and [Customized Employment](#) (CE) are well-researched, proven methods for achieving CIE with people with complex needs. [Motivational Interviewing](#) is also a well-researched strategy for engaging people in important conversations about their goals. [Project SEARCH](#) programs have outstanding success rates for youth and adults in Wisconsin. [Work-Based Learning](#) in high school and [Internships/Temporary Work Experience](#) lead to greater success in employment. [Partners With Business](#) paid coworker support offers agencies and businesses a creative way to support people on the job.
- **Become knowledgeable of research-based practices that support competitive integrated employment outcomes.** Internship experiences, post-secondary education, apprenticeships, interagency collaboration are a few research-based practices that support CIE. Keep up to date with emerging promising practices by subscribing to national resource centers, joining national trade associations, and attending national webinars and conferences. Some entities to subscribe to include: [Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center](#) (WINTAC), the [LEAD Center](#), [Disability Employment Technical Assistance Center](#) to name a few. There are many more to consider.

Essential Resources:

[How to Create a Strength-Based Company Culture](#) – Understand why creating a strengths-based company culture is important and the steps you can take to create it in your agency.

[The 4 Disciplines of Execution](#)[®] is a simple and effective framework for creating a culture of high performance and executing an organization's most important priorities. [Watch this video](#) to learn more about using 4DX.

[Competitive Employment: Has it Become the “First Choice” Yet?](#) – Learn the core values, quality indicators, and examples of functional measures for Supported Employment services.

[A Roadmap to Competitive Integrated Employment: Strategies for Provider Transformation](#) – Consider the implementation strategies used by providers who successfully closed sheltered workshops and transformed to competitive integrated employment (CIE).

[Person-Centered Practices Self-Assessment](#) - Use the Person-Centered Practices Self-Assessment developed by the National Center on Advancing Person-Centered Practices and Systems to see how your program is doing at being person-centered.

[Wisconsin Person Centered Planning Practice Profile](#) – Review the core components of Person-Centered Planning to determine how your service delivery measures up.

Reflection Activity:

Agency Best-Practice	Great Extent	Some-what	Not at all
Our agency's vision, mission, and core values support inclusion, positive thinking, learning, creativity, innovation, and quality improvement.			
Our agency shares the message that "everyone can work."			
Our agency announces and celebrates each time a job seeker gets a job.			
Our agency regularly shares stories about people working in the community.			
Our agency has identified the best sources of training and professional development.			
Our agency has competency-based training plans in place for staff at all levels.			
Staff are afforded the opportunity to attend regular training to acquire and improve upon the essential competencies needed for their work.			
Our agency gathers and analyzes qualitative and quantitative information to make data-driven organizational goals and decisions.			
Our agency is transparent with staff about their involvement in continuous quality improvement.			
Staff at all levels know they can give feedback on practices or processes that are not aligned with the agency's mission.			
Our agency seeks input from direct line staff and empowers them to speak up if something is not working well.			
Professional development opportunities are provided to managers to be effective leaders and supervisors.			
All staff are continually messaging to community members that all people can work.			
All staff are looking for employment opportunities for the people we support.			
Staff are tapping into their personal networks to provide job developers warm leads.			
Our agency provides training to staff in PCP philosophy and strategies.			
Our agency uses PCP tools to ensure staff are getting to know people well and honoring their preferences.			
Management ensures staff are being fully person-centered in their approach with every person.			
We have incorporated a variety of evidence-based, research-based, and best practices in our work.			

Our Agency's Plan for Improvement:

Priority Area for Improvement	Action Step(s)	Due Date



III. Hiring Employment Service Staff

Creating an organizational culture that supports CIE begins with the recruitment of employment service staff. Finding employees that are diverse, involved in their community, and committed to CIE will help your organization and the job seekers achieve CIE outcomes. Hiring decisions should consider the qualities and personality traits of a candidate, recognizing that skills and “know how” can be taught.

Finding the right kind of people for the job is critical for improving CIE outcomes for people with disabilities. Employment service staff that are curious, open minded, solution focused, and critical thinkers often make strong job developers and job coaches. Be cautious of candidates that consider themselves caretakers or caregivers of people with disabilities; they may not challenge job seekers to be independent and may unintentionally hold them back by over-protecting or doing-for the job seeker.

Best Practices to Find the Right Candidates:

Use the [APSE Universal Employment Competencies](#) to share the core values and practices of the job. This will convey what the position entails and will help you select the candidates with the best knowledge of CIE values and practices.

- **Establish both full and part-time positions.** There are benefits to having both full and part-time staff. You may find a retiree looking for part time work who could bring a vast amount of experience and business connections to your organization or a college student who is available to coach evenings and weekends. To meet the needs of job seekers, you must maintain flexibility as you build your team.
- **Develop a diverse, well-rounded team.** People with diverse backgrounds, experience, and education will enhance an agency’s ability to support a diverse group of job seekers. Look for people with related experience in education/teaching, sales, marketing, community organizing, and/or customer service. A diverse team can also be helpful when approaching employers. For example, a person with experience in hospitality management may have an advantage when job developing with local employers in the hospitality industry because they have valuable knowledge about and understand this industry.
- **Do not rule out candidates without experience in human services.** Qualities and related knowledge can matter more than direct human service experience. Remember that your other customer is the business community. You should find candidates who are able to engage with a wide variety of people, in a wide variety of businesses.
- **Learn what educational requirements are necessary.** Some funding sources and services have educational requirements. If you do not have those constraints, you can widen your candidate pool by considering the qualities and competencies you are looking for, over educational experience.
- **Consider how and where you post your job openings.** Develop job postings that include the qualities you are looking for. Make sure the posting is not full of jargon and appeals to people who have not had direct job development or job coaching experience. Post in a variety of areas including Indeed, Jobs That Help, University and College job boards,

Tips for Working with Interns:
Interns provide diversity and a unique experience for your team. Interns can pick up some of the workload and provide you with an opportunity to meet people who may be a great fit for your agency in the future.

- Design interview questions to determine if an intern will be a good fit.
- Have a list of potential projects that interns could do.
- Work with your staff to ensure that they are comfortable supporting an intern.
- Do not overload your agency with interns – this diminishes the value they bring.

Community Centers and Libraries, local business associations or Chambers of Commerce, and social media (i.e. LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.).

- **Some job coaches make really good job developers.** Job coaches have experience working with employers and see the employment process when someone is hired. You may have job coaches who are looking for career advancement. Provide training and mentoring that supports them to advance. Organizations that offer career advancement retain their employees longer.

Best Practice Strategies for Interviewing:

- **Consider your questions.** Your interview questions should help you learn the qualities of the candidate. Situational, open-ended, and behavioral-based questions are more effective than knowledge-based questions. Use the interview conversation to get to know the candidate as well as an indicator of their ability to build relationships with you, the job seekers, and businesses. You can also use the conversation to gauge the candidate's beliefs about people with disabilities and whether they view their role as a caregiver or, ideally, as a skill builder and connector.



Add these or similar questions to your interview questions:

- What are your greatest accomplishments?
 - What are things you struggle with? How have you worked to overcome your struggles?
 - How did you find this position?
 - What do you feel job seekers with disabilities bring to the workforce?
 - To what extent does your motivation, commitment, and accomplishment of tasks or projects drive your persistence? Provide an example.
- **Make the second interview a job shadow.** Using a job shadow for the second interview will help the candidate understand the job they are applying for. Asking the candidate to conduct a job shadow with a peer will also help you see if they will fit into the team.



Employment Team Structure Considerations:

Supported Employment agencies vary in their program models and how they structure job coaching and job development positions. The table below represents models that are used across Wisconsin.

Type of Structure	Description	Pros	Cons
Standard Structure	Job Developer and Job Coach positions are distinct from one another. They each do their respective tasks with their caseloads.	<p>This is the most common structure for agencies. This structure allows Job Developers and Job Coaches to specialize in their respective roles and focus on their strengths.</p> <p>Allows Job Developers to focus their time on building relationships with businesses, rather than providing on-site Job Coaching.</p>	<p>Job seekers have multiple people assisting them. The initial staff that assessed them (Job Developer) may not end up supporting them on the job.</p> <p>Businesses may also have to work with different/more people from the employment agency. This may lead to confusion and the business not knowing who to contact for what need.</p>
Co-Job Development	Two staff work together on one caseload and do all components of the job (i.e., both Job Development and Job Coaching)	<p>This structure can allow more people to be assisted at one time.</p> <p>It can play to staff strengths as they work as a team.</p> <p>More staff are available to support the job seeker.</p>	<p>Accountability – may be unclear who oversees the the employment process, writes the report, etc.</p>
Business Developer	One staff who focuses solely on building relationships with employers but does not have a caseload. Feeds leads to job developers within the agency.	<p>More intentional contacts with businesses.</p> <p>Job developers spend more time meeting with receptive employers.</p>	<p>Difficult to know how to distribute leads.</p> <p>May be challenging for Business Developer to cover a large area.</p> <p>May be a more expensive model that smaller agencies cannot afford.</p>

Independent Contractors	Agency contracts with self-employed person(s) or another organization to perform job development and/or job coaching functions.	Independent Contractors can work as little or as much as they like depending on their revenue goals. Agency does not have to maintain consistent job seeker referrals needed to directly employ full time job developer(s) or job coach(es).	Staff are not employees of the agency so there is increased HIPAA considerations. The agency has less control over the person's philosophy, quality of work, and schedule.
Commission-Based Salaries	Job Developers and Job Coaches are employees of the agency but receive payments based on outcomes or performance benchmarks.	Offers incentives to hit job development or job coach fading targets.	To make it work, may need to have all employment services staff on the commission structure.

Essential Resources:

[Realistic Job Preview - Employment Specialist in Community Treatment](#) – Videos give applicants a glimpse into a position's responsibilities. Watch this example video from North Central Health Care.

[Structured Behavioral Interviews](#) - check this out for an interview guide to increase staff retention.

[Supporting Individuals with Significant Disabilities - The Role of A Job Coach](#) – Use this document to describe the qualities and expectations of successful job coaches.

[APSE Universal Employment Competencies](#) – Develop your postings, job descriptions, and interview questions with these well-established, nationally recognized core competencies.

[Customized Employment Competency Model](#) – Expect job developers to understand how to negotiate and customize opportunities with employers. Customized Employment is a nationally recognized, evidence-based practice for achieving CIE with job seekers with complex barriers. Agencies that believe everyone can work embrace CE principles and practices.

[Staff Recruitment, Retention, & Training Strategies for Community Human Services Organizations](#)

– This guide helps organizations to select and implement strategies that address the challenges of recruiting, retaining, and training Direct Support Professionals.

[Promising Recruitment and Retention Strategies](#) – Explores service provider strategies to increase recruitment and retention of direct support professionals.

[Strengthening the Direct Care Workforce in Rural Areas](#) – Summarizes workforce challenges in rural areas and strategies that rural stakeholders can use to deliver high-quality services.

[Rural Routes: Promising Supported Employment Practices in America's Frontier](#) and [IPS Supported Employment in Rural and Frontier Areas](#) offer insights and strategies for services in rural communities.

Reflection Activity:

Agency Best-Practice	Great Extent	Some-what	Not at all
My agency uses nationally recognized competency models to develop job descriptions.			
We have both full and part-time positions.			
Our team is well-rounded and diverse.			
We consider candidates without human service experience.			
We are knowledgeable and effective in hiring people with diverse backgrounds.			
We have clearly identified the qualities we are looking for in each position.			
Our job postings use language to convey the qualities we are looking for.			
We place our job postings in a wide variety of areas.			
We offer opportunities for career advancement.			
Our interview questions are designed to understand people's qualities and how they will effectively build relationships.			
Our recruitment and interview process provides a realistic picture of what the position includes.			
The structure of our employment services team is effective for the size of our agency.			

Our Agency's Plan for Improvement:

Priority Area for Improvement	Action Step(s)	Due Date

IV. Onboarding & Ongoing Training for Employment Services Staff

Onboarding new staff takes time. New hires take three to twelve months to fully understand all the components of their job. Training staff doesn't end after onboarding. On-going professional development for staff is just as important as initial training. High performing agencies manage their financial resources to invest heavily in staff development. As noted in an earlier section: an agency's services are only as great as the staff who provide them. When training and professional development is done well, staff feel more confident and satisfied in their jobs. On-going training creates opportunities for internal promotion, enhances self-worth, and leads to better retention.

Staff Training Return on Investment

- Increased job satisfaction and morale
- Increased staff motivation
- Increased efficiencies in processes
- Increased innovation
- Increased productivity
- Increased employee retention

Best Practice Strategies for New Employee Onboarding:

- **Develop an onboarding timeline before assigning a full caseload.** A new employee's knowledge and skills should be developed before "dumping" job seekers on them. Be thoughtful about introducing responsibilities. Too many people too soon can be overwhelming, however, too few may not allow for adequate learning. Be careful not to assign new staff to complex situations. Communicate often with the new staff to gauge how they are feeling about their increasing responsibilities.
- **Use peer mentoring.** Assign an existing staff to be the "go-to" person to show a new staff the ropes and answer their questions. Make sure expectations are clearly laid out for the peer mentor and the new staff so they know the scope of their work, how much time to spend together, and ways to focus their discussions.

When recruiting a peer mentor, consider:

- Has the person been with the organization at least a year?
 - Have they had success in their role?
 - Do they have a passion for the work they are doing?
 - Do they have good communication and listening skills? Can they break things down in ways people understand?
 - Are they flexible and able to navigate the "good days" and "bad days" on the job?
- **Use field mentoring.** Employment services staff primarily work in the field networking with employers and supporting people with disabilities on the job. Direct training, mentoring, and constructive feedback in the field is essential for learning the job the right way. Field mentoring is especially important if a staff is struggling with job development or job seeker engagement.
 - **Provide accurate, consistent training.** Keep your training materials up to date. Use only trusted or nationally recognized sources for information and training. Even if new staff have experience, do not assume that they have complete knowledge of CIE best practices or person-centered approaches.

Onboarding Training Timeline Example:

Day One	Week One	Week Two	Within 30 Days	Within 90 Days
Training Topics				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization culture and philosophy • Values and 'Big Picture' of CIE • Discuss expectations of position • Privacy and Confidentiality • Review agency policies and procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability Awareness (I/DD, physical, mental health; co-occurring disabilities) • Time management and organization • Philosophy of CIE and expectations of their role • DVR initial training • Introduction to DVR Technical Specifications - website access • Introduction to Documentation • Systematic Instruction/ Fading • Inclusion • Professionalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Development & the Three Cups of Tea approach to building business relationships • Discovery & Assessment • Person-Centered Planning • Customer service • Communication with job seekers • Partnerships with funders • Communication with stakeholders • Collaboration - being responsive, communicating, be open, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DVR Specifications & Service Details • Employment outcome expectations • DVR reporting requirements • Agency, program, and individual goals • Customized Employment • Documentation • Reporting requirements for agency and long-term care • Transportation resources • Family involvement • Networking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of job seeker's employment goals • Job accommodations • Assistive Technology • Braiding funding • Introduction to community resources • Field mentoring • Introduction to local committees • Data collection responsibilities
Activities				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet the team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shadowing • Employer contacts • Job seeker conversation • Documentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate employer contacts • Start to document demonstration of Systematic Instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shadow peers doing report writing and billing • Job coach • Making employer contacts weekly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate documentation/ report writing
Caseload Size				
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced to caseload 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5-10 individual caseload 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ¾ of a typical caseload
Competencies				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open to accept what you do not know 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to accept continuous learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to forge a relationship with people we serve and their support team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfortable building relationships with new contacts

Best Practice Strategies for Ongoing Training:

- **Develop individualized ongoing training plans.** Effective supervisors develop individualized training plans with staff based on what they need to learn to be competent in their job, as well as what they want to learn to broaden their skill set or advance in their career. In addition to skill development, training plans should also include topics that promote emotional well-being and compassion resiliency. Training plans should reflect both agency and professional goals. Supervisors should understand each staff's learning style when developing a training plan.
- **Use a variety of training methods.** The best training plans involve a variety of methods beyond attending virtual and in-person trainings. Conferences are great way for staff to network and bring back new resources and fresh ideas, but they can be expensive and may not offer in-depth opportunities to improve competencies. Additional training methods include:
 - Hosting regular information sessions with outside presenters or resource partners
 - Developing internal trainers by enlisting staff to present or mentor on a particular area in which they have specialized knowledge, skills, or interest
 - Cross training staff in different positions or departments to provide them with a broader skill set and perspective of the array of services your agency offers
 - Showing how-to or impactful videos during a staff meeting and engaging staff in a reflection on philosophy and practices
 - Using a “book club” approach by assigning reading materials and discussing them each week
 - Watching archived webinars together and creating plans to implement the new strategies staff learn
- **Ensure staff implement what they learn from training.** Supervisors are responsible for ensuring staff are implementing what they learn in training. Supervisors do this by consistently checking in with staff to find out how they are changing or improving their practices.
- **Invest in staff certification.** Certification demonstrates to your staff and your funders that your agency is committed to providing evidence-based services. The most regarded certifications for employment consultants are ACRE (Association of Certified Rehabilitation Educators) certification in Supported Employment and Customized Employment, APSE's Certified Employment Support Professional, and Motivational Interviewing.
- **Adopt “Group Supervision” practices from the Individualized Placement and Support Service Model.** The Group Supervision Process is a way to keep an employment team focused on strengths-based, creative approaches to services by reviewing job seeker situations together. Each session involves a team review of 4-5 job seeker situations over a 2-hour period.
- **Model curiosity, open-mindedness, and ongoing learning.** An ideal supervisor is inherently curious, open-minded, motivated, and invested in developing staffs' skills to help them reach their potential. They are committed to learning and are constantly working to improve their own skills and competencies. They foster an environment that encourages staff to expand their learning and gain new skills.
- **Develop a staff training budget.** Prioritize and define the financial resources available for staff. Budgets should cover staff time, training registrations, presenter costs, materials, technology, and travel costs. Budgets can be calculated in various ways, including using a percentage of each staff's salary (usually 1-3%) to establish an annual training allotment for each staff or pre-determine departmental training needs during annual agency budget development.

Essential Resources:

[APSE Online Learning](#) - APSE is the organization to turn to for reliable information and perspectives on Employment First. APSE's vast network taps into expertise on everything from navigating policy to the implementation of placement and support models.

[WI APSE](#) - Wisconsin's APSE chapter hosts the annual WI Employment First Conference, the Job Developer Connection, and the APSE Listen and Share. Become a WI APSE Member to receive information on service provider training and learning collaboratives.

[Open Future Learning](#) - An affordable, effective online learning platform dedicated to the field of developmental disabilities. The learning modules and videos challenge learners to examine the beliefs and attitudes they hold about people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Topics range from Person-Centered Approaches, Thinking and Planning to Challenging Behavior to Supported Employment and beyond.

[SELN Systematic Instruction Series with Teri Johnson](#) - With systematic instruction, individuals with disabilities can improve job performance and increase their autonomy. Research has supported systematic instruction as an effective teaching tool that uses task analysis preparation, design, and strategies. In this 3-part series, Teri describes each of these components using video, picture examples, stories, and hands-on exercises.

[Systematic Instruction](#) - This recorded webinar with Janet Estervig of the Attainment Company, will give staff the basics for systematic instruction and teaching job skills.

[TransCen Online](#) - TransCen offers on-demand/pre-recorded and live webinars at low cost. Topics include self-determination, Transition, Customized Employment, Workplace Supports, Building Meaningful Days, and more.

[WorkSupport](#) - WorkSupport offers online courses and webcasts (live and recorded) on a wide array of topics related to Supported Employment and Customized Employment.

[IPS Employment Center](#) - This center is hosted by a multidisciplinary team of researchers and trainers who conduct research studies, disseminate findings, prepare training and educational materials, and provide training and consultation services. The IPS Employment Center's activities focus on employment for people with serious mental illnesses.

[Group Supervision Process Description](#) - This resource lays out the six steps in the process to make the Group Supervision process successful.

[Field Mentoring Log](#) for job development.

[Field Mentoring Log](#) for job seeker engagement.

[Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators \(ACRE\)](#) - ACRE-approved training is offered by educators, who are current ACRE organizational members. Their curriculum has gone through a rigorous curriculum review process. ACRE training is available in several formats: Face-to-face, online, and hybrid (combination of in person & online).

[LEAD Center](#) Visit the Employment Strategies Section on the LEAD Center’s website to find creative approaches to promote Customized Employment, get information on career pathways, learn about available technical assistance and training, and more.

[International Journal for Direct Support Professionals](#) - Easy to-read, practical articles for Direct Support Professionals on a variety of topics that are pertinent to their role in supporting people with intellectual disabilities. Every year VITA publishes 12 issues of The International Journal for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). Newsletters are archived on their website, and you can sign up to receive them by email.

[Motivational Interviewing](#) - The Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers (MINT) is an international organization of trainers in motivational interviewing. The trainers come from diverse backgrounds and apply MI in a variety of settings. The training tab has a calendar of training events and contact information for available trainers.

There are many more sources for on-line training and best practice reading material for Supported Employment agencies. Additional sources include but are not limited to **[Marc Gold and Associates](#)**, **[Griffin-Hammis Associates](#)**, **[WINTAC](#)**, **[Job Accommodation Network](#)**, **[Disability Employment TA Center](#)**, and the **[Institute for Community Inclusion](#)**.



Reflection Activity:

Agency Best-Practice	Great Extent	Some-what	Not at all
My agency uses nationally recognized competency models to develop job descriptions.			
We use peer mentoring strategies for new staff to feel supported.			
We mentor and supervise new staff in the field as they perform their work.			
Supervisors and/or mentors use mentoring logs.			
Supervisors and/or mentors feel comfortable providing constructive feedback to new staff.			
Our agency's new staff training materials are well designed and based on trusted/recognized sources.			
We develop individualized training plans with staff based on what they need and want to learn.			
Our agency uses a variety of methods to support staff learning and development (e.g., reading materials, videos, staff meetings/discussion, on-line learning, in-person learning, conferences, etc.).			
We follow up with staff regularly to ensure they are implementing what they learn from training.			
We use the Group Supervision process or a similar approach to review client situations as a team to focus on strengths and spur creative problem solving.			
We embrace a continuous learning philosophy and our managers model this for staff.			
Our agency invests in certification for our staff (e.g., ACRE, CESP).			
Our agency has a budget in place for staff training.			

Our Agency's Plan for Improvement:

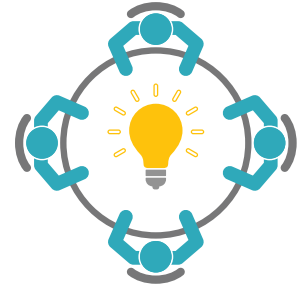
Priority Area for Improvement	Action Step(s)	Due Date

V. Collaboration and Building Partnerships

Collaboration that combines a variety of resources, funding, and expertise is known to contribute to successful CIE opportunities. These resources may be through formal systems such as providers, funders (including long-term care organizations), state agencies (e.g., Division of Vocational Rehabilitation), schools, as well as through informal sources such as friends, family, community members, and community organizations.

Collaborations that are helpful for Supported Employment agencies include:

- Family members
- Schools and teachers
- Transportation providers
- Aging and Disability Resource Centers
- Independent Living Centers
- Job Center programs
- Colleges
- Other service providers in the area, including other employment service providers
- Funding agencies like DVR, Managed Care Organizations, IRIS Consultant Agencies and County staff
- CCoTs (County Communities on Transition)
- Local business associations and service clubs



Consistency and approachability help build successful relationships with job seekers, stakeholders, and community partners. Maintaining a knowledgeable, dependable, and caring team of employment specialists who are actively involved in a variety of local collaborations will increase cohesion and trust. Leaning into stellar customer service, diversity and inclusion, effective communication, and maintaining a visible presence in the community solidifies good working relationships with important partners.

Best Practice Strategies for Collaboration:

- **Fine tune your messaging.** Support your staff to develop their elevator speeches for different audiences (e.g., referral sources, job seekers, businesses). Ensure it speaks to the benefits your agency and employees with disabilities bring to these partners. Lean on the strong business case and data for hiring people with disabilities not on charity or “it’s the right thing to do” sentiments. Develop short and effective introductory/marketing handouts. Ensure all staff have their own business cards, email, and mobile communication devices.
- **Build your understanding of customer service, diversity, equity, and inclusion.** Customer service involves empathy, listening, self-control, and positive communication. Learning about diversity, equity, and inclusion helps address unconscious bias and fosters respectful, inclusive relationships. These skills are essential for developing strong partnerships and for fostering welcoming workplaces. Agencies should make training available to improve skills in these areas.
- **Get your team involved in a variety of groups.** Identify opportunities for staff to lead or participate in external workgroups, associations, committees, and events. These offer opportunities to build relationships, share resources, and collaborate around shared priorities. Encourage staff to participate with local community foundations, churches, Chamber of Commerce, service clubs, cultural and civic organizations, and other workgroups or committees related to disability and non-disability services. Whenever possible, have an informational table or materials at resource fairs, hiring events, and other community events.

- **Attend County Communities on Transition (CCoT) meetings.** Most counties in WI have a CCoT. CCoTs are a group of stakeholders who have made the commitment to collaborate around identifying barriers to transition planning, to organize the supports needed and to develop solutions for youth with disabilities in the local county they serve. Most CCoTs meet monthly and work together to plan outreach and events.
- **Keep up to date on important news affecting people with disabilities and service providers.** Join a disability service association such as APSE, DSPN, and/or the Survival Coalition to receive newsletters, updates and meeting announcements. Subscribe to WI BPDD's e-newsletter and communications to stay informed on what's happening at the Capitol and find events and trainings in your area.
- **Relationships, relationships, relationships.** Focus on building strong relationships with referral sources as well as area school districts' special education departments, transition leads local Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, care managers, IRIS consultants, county service coordinators, and businesses. Be responsive, transparent and demonstrate that your services meet, and exceed, expectations.

Essential Resources:

APSE – The Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) is a national membership organization focused exclusively on Employment First to facilitate the full inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace and community.

WI APSE – WI APSE is the state chapter of APSE. By joining national APSE, agencies automatically become a member of the state chapter. WI APSE hosts regular training and information opportunities as well as the annual WI Employment First Conference. Chapter members have the opportunity to be elected to the Board of Directors, which is a great way to collaborate with agencies across the state.

Disability Service Provider Network - DSPN is a trade association for organizations that provide support to people with disabilities. DSPN represents the interests of disability service providers that provide both residential and non-residential services that enable people with disabilities and economic disadvantages to live and work in their local communities.

The Survival Coalition - The Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations is a cross-disability coalition of state and local organizations and groups. For more than 20 years, Survival has been focused on changing and improving policies and practices that support people with disabilities of all ages to be full participants in community life. Any local, regional or state organization or coalition that supports and acts in a manner consistent with the Vision and Mission Statements and the Principles of the Survival Coalition will be welcomed as a member organization of the Survival Coalition.

WI Board for People with Developmental Disabilities - WI BPDD was established by the national Developmental Disabilities Act of 1970. WI BPDD is charged with bringing people together to solve problems, remove barriers, and create statewide change for the developmental disability community. WI BPDD provides grant funding to agencies, has monthly newsletters with important information related to disability policy and advocacy, and many other tools and resources for self-advocates and service providers.

Disability:IN Wisconsin - Disability:IN Wisconsin is a state chapter of the United States Disability:IN. Disability:IN Wisconsin offers participating employers resources for recruiting candidates with disabilities, information on disability issues/topics, recognition for best disability employment practices, and exposure to an untapped market for goods and services.

Job Centers of Wisconsin - Wisconsin Job Centers help bring employers and job seekers together. A variety of partner agencies work together to make Wisconsin Job Centers possible. The specific mix of partners can vary. Partners usually include not-for-profit community organizations and agencies of Wisconsin's state and county government.

African American Chamber of Commerce of WI – The African American Chamber of Commerce champions the growth and sustainability of African American owned businesses by providing access to capital, education, and advocacy through capacity building and strategic partnerships.

Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of WI - For nearly 50-years, the HCCW has partnered with thousands of underserved entrepreneurs and program participants in search of opportunity and advancement. Exciting new programs and services are constantly emerging at the HCCW to meet the growing demand as a result of high-growth and ever evolving Hispanic markets.

WI LGBT Chamber of Commerce of WI - The WI LGBT Chamber of Commerce works to create a fully inclusive state by promoting economic growth and opportunities among LGBT owned and allied businesses, corporations, and professionals in Wisconsin. Representing its members, the Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce serves as the business advocate and the link between business and government in an effort to promote equality and fairness for all.

County Communities on Transition – Find information about your local CCoT by visiting this website or by contacting your Transition Improvement Grant Coordinator.



Reflection Activity:

Agency Best-Practice	Great Extent	Some-what	Not at all
Our staff have “elevator speeches” that include the benefits our service brings to various stakeholders.			
Our marketing materials are succinct and compelling. They clearly explain the benefits of our services from the customer’s perspective.			
We provide excellent customer service to all of our partners and job seekers.			
Our staff understand and use diversity and inclusion strategies.			
Managers and employment specialists are involved in a variety of workgroups, associations, committees, etc.			
Employment specialists are given the time to attend networking events.			
We have developed strong partnerships with our referral sources.			
We have developed strong partnerships with local school districts.			
We are an active member of our local CCoT.			
We belong to an association or regularly receive information and updates about disability and employment service-related news, policies, advocacy, etc.			
Our managers and employment specialists are well connected to local partners at the job centers, independent living centers, transportation agencies, and other disability service providers.			

Our Agency’s Plan for Improvement:

Priority Area for Improvement	Action Step(s)	Due Date

VI. Quality Assurance Practices (Measurement & Tracking)

All Supported Employment programs should have quality assurance systems in place. Quality assurance involves collecting, organizing, and analyzing data. Both qualitative and quantitative data can be used to improve program performance and customer satisfaction.

Quality assurance systems should measure two components:

1. Process measures: how services are provided and fidelity to processes that result in identified outcomes
2. Outcome measures: program results

Quality assurance methods include:

- Benchmarking
- KPIs (Key Performance Indicators)
- Logic models
- Balanced Scorecard
- Operational analysis
- Standard operating procedures or standard of work
- Cost-benefit analysis
- Fidelity monitoring tools
- Statistical sampling
- Quality management methodologies e.g., Six Sigma, Lean Manufacturing



Managers and leaders within your organization should be knowledgeable about some of these methods. There should be a team with designated responsibilities for leading the development and implementation of quality assurance plans.

Best Practices for Quality Assurance:

Identify data points that can be collected. Supported Employment agency data includes:

- Referrals from High School/LTC Programs
- Referrals made to DVR (High School and/or LTC Programs) – include referral date
- Number of people enrolled with DVR and LTC (identify LTC organization for each person and their care manager/consultant contact information)
- Number of people in Discovery/Assessment/Career Profile phase
- Number of people in Trial Work Experience
- Number of people in Job Development phase (include start date)
- Number of people in Job Placement (include date of employment, employer, job title, job location, supervisor, hourly wage, hours worked per week)
- Average time (weeks, months, etc.) from DVR referral to date of CIE hire
- Number of people in CIE receiving Supported Employment - include date of employment, employer, job title, job location, supervisor, hourly wage, hours worked per week
 - Number of people working In CIE independently without a job coach
 - Number of people in CIE receiving job coaching services including average hours job coaching support provided per week, and fading status/plan to fade
 - Number of people who have transitioned to LTC funding source (name of LTC organization, care manager/consultant contact information, date of transition)

- Number of people in CIE Customized Employment positions - include date of employment, employer, job title, job location, supervisor, hourly wage, hours worked per week
 - Number of people working in CIE independently without a job coach
 - Number of people working in CIE receiving job coach services and fading status/plan to fade
 - Number of people working in CIE that transitioned to LTC funding source (name of LTC organization, care manager contact information, date of transition)
- Number of people working in CIE and who receive benefits from work and number who receive the following benefits:
 - Health/dental
 - PTO or vacation/sick time if offered as a separate benefit
 - Retirement and/or profit sharing
 - Other (specify what other is)
- Average months of job retention
- Number of people who have achieved career advancement (e.g., more responsibility/duties, more hours, different job with more pay or responsibilities)
- Job satisfaction rating (survey individuals every six months)

Analyze qualitative and quantitative data to determine priority areas for improvement. In addition to the data points listed above, qualitative data should be gathered as well. This can be done through surveys, case studies, documentation review, interviews, and/or focus groups.

Determine root causes. Root Cause Analysis, using the [5 Why's exercise](#), helps teams create more effective solutions for problems by going deeper to determine the underlying or systemic issues contributing to the problem. It is easier to rely on quick fixes, but these only deal with symptoms of a problem and not the root cause of a problem.

Develop SMART Goals. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time Bound. Your Supported Employment program goals should be SMART goals. SMART goals will enable your agency to more quickly achieve and build upon success.

Use Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles. Keep your quality improvement efforts moving forward with PDSA cycles. Getting into the habit of using PDSA cycles will help you engage in and analyze rapid tests of change. Agencies who use PDSA cycles learn more quickly what works and doesn't work so they can scale up or stop practices that are not contributing to their mission and quality improvement efforts.

Individual Tracking Form Example

Name	John Doe
Date of Hire	6/1/2020
Type of Service	Supported Employment
Employer Name	ABC, Inc
Employer Location	Anywhere, WI
Job Title	Sales Associate
Hours Worked Per Week	15
Hourly Wage	\$11.50
Employee Benefits	Paid Vacation
Opportunity for Advancement/Growth	Yes
Job Coaching Hours Per Month	10
Long Term Care Organization	WI Care
Long Term Care Contact Name	Jane Smith
Long Term Care Contact Phone	555-555-1234

Example Fading Schedule

Month	Hours Worked per Week	Job Coach Hours per Week	% of Job Coach Support at Work per Week
1 July 2020	15	15	100%
2 August 2020	15	10	67%
3 September 2020	15	7.5	50%
4 October 2020	15	7.5	50%
5 November 2020	15	5	34%
6 December 2020	15	4	27%
9 March 2021	15	1	7%
12 June 2021	15	0	0% (transitioned to natural support)
18			
24			

Essential Resources:

HCBS Business Acumen Toolkit - Business Acumen describes an organization's ability to understand and address business conditions in a way that leads to the organization's desired financial and operational outcomes. For community-based organizations (CBOs) serving people with disabilities, strong business acumen will improve the organization's ability to sustain or even grow their programs. The HCBS Business Acumen Center is devoted to providing resources to disability-focused CBOs to facilitate successful business practices. The Disability Network business strategies roadmap is one such resource. Module 5 of the Business Acumen Toolkit provides in-depth information about quality assurance and program evaluation.

Evaluating Your Program - Evaluating Your Program is part of the Supported Employment Evidence-Based Practices KIT. It shows quality assurance team members how to evaluate the effectiveness of their IPS Supported Employment program. It contains instructions for conducting assessments and tips on how to use the data to improve a program. While this is an IPS resource, it provides good insights and information for any employment service provider.

5 Why's Exercise - Before you and your team begin to make changes, it is important to dig deeper and explore the factors that are impacting the outcome you seek to change. Problems may be defined as identified issues in individual or agency practice or they may be opportunities to build and expand on successes. Your team will want to understand the two types of factors that are impacting practice outcomes: contributing factors and root causes. One well-known and simple technique for exploring contributing factors and root causes is the 5 Why's method. This resource provides a step-by-step guide for teams to use the 5 Why's.

Assessing the Quality of Supported Employment Services - This assessment tool is based upon 18 quality indicators of supported employment as described by Nisbet and Callahan (1987). These indicators were developed during the implementation of a model demonstration effort and are based upon field research, literature reviews, input from practitioners, and a national validation study. It is designed to be used by persons who are in the process of developing and implementing individualized supported employment models.

NIATx Process Improvement - This simple, evidence-based process improvement model is based on 20 years of research at the University of Wisconsin. While originally developed by behavioral health agencies, this model of process improvement can be used to support organizational change and implementation strategies in any agency, region or state.

Comprehensive Assessment of Supported Employment Service - This user friendly organizational tool for Supported Employment managers can unlock the hidden potential of data and illustrate how effective your Supported Employment program is by showing trends in placement rates, job matching, job retention and more.



Reflection Activity:

Agency Best-Practice	Great Extent	Some-what	Not at all
There are people within our organization that know about and guide quality assurance planning.			
Our quality assurance systems include both process measures and outcome measures.			
We gather and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data to set priorities and make decisions.			
Managers regularly engage in the 5 Why's or other activities to conduct root cause analysis to determine effective solutions to problems.			
Our quality improvement plans contain SMART goals.			
Our agency regularly engages in PDSA cycles. Outcomes are reviewed regularly by all levels within the agency.			
All staff are supported to set and achieve their own improvement goals.			

Our Agency's Plan for Improvement:

Priority Area for Improvement	Action Step(s)	Due Date

Developed by Wisconsin APSE and the WI Board for People with Developmental Disabilities

