



From Mission to Action: Moving from Mission Statement to Positive Change

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Introduction

As organizations and individuals promoting the viewpoint that people with disabilities can and should participate in all aspects of their community, specifically employment, we too often confront policies and practices that are barriers to that vision. The idea of transforming these policies and practices to help more people with disabilities access jobs is daunting and may feel unachievable. However, by working strategically to alter current policies and implement promising practices that promote or even mandate an increase in opportunities for competitive integrated employment (CIE) for people with disabilities, we can realize change once and for all. To achieve these outcomes on a national, state, or local level these policy and practice changes must be implemented in an intentional and strategic way. Starting with small projects that can be built upon until meaningful change has occurred and can be maintained is a sure way to realize the desired outcome of employment for all.

Too often, entities in the Administration on Disabilities (AoD) grantee network have the will to impact policies and practices but lack the way to progress forward in this endeavor. This paper will assist advocates and advocacy organizations in thinking through how to move from a vision statement to an actionable project to eliminate barriers and build policies and practices for people with disabilities to contribute to the workforce through competitive integrated employment.

Turning Mission into Action: Creation of a Project

AoD grantees rarely lack ideas for what changes should be made. The abundance or overabundance of ideas rather than lack of ideas is often a downfall to successful transformation. Moving from vision to action in a strategic way will ensure missions and visions are not doomed to a future that looks remarkably like the present or even the past. Honing this skill of executing a mission or vision statement in an actionable way could be the first step to ensuring success in moving the needle on employment for people with disabilities.



When creating a mission-driven project, advocates should start with an already existing charge from the organization. Starting with existing statements not only saves times but also ensures the organization is committed to the project. Agency mission statements and core values have been vetted through Boards of Directors or Councils as well as executive leadership and therefore are already supported by the agency. Some tips to consider when launching a mission-driven project include:

- No matter the size of the project, keeping the steps manageable will be the key to success. If the project becomes so overwhelming and little progress is made, it is difficult to keep stakeholders engaged.
- Do not start a project unless your team has the bandwidth to devote the time needed to this project. For each project you begin and are unable to finish, you lose credibility and future projects may not be allowed.
- Use already existing visions, tools, and processes your organization has adopted. Creating a new tool at the same time you are attempting to make a change can double the workload.
- Your project should fit the scope of work your organization is already doing. Spreading your resources too thin endangers the likelihood of success.
- Ensure you have a team of stakeholders to support your actions. People who have interest and influence will help to keep the project on track.
- Always follow an organizational change model when implementing a new project:
 - Create an outcome for the project (use SMART goals format).¹
 - Gather a group of stakeholders to assist in creating the project.
 - Create a plan using a planning tool your company already uses or identify a planning tool.
 - Pilot the project with a few people to test it before you scale.
 - Collect and analyze the data to know if the project achieved the intended outcome.
 - Make changes as necessary to the project to achieve your outcome.
 - Tell everyone about the project; celebrate, post on social media, and include information in literature.

Following are examples of three AoD grantees' mission and action statements. The table shows the name and mission of the AoD grantee and their action statement and possible mission-driven projects that could be conducted. While these are just examples, review of similar AoD grantees show shared core values in their mission and action statements that are similar.

¹ More information about Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART) goals are available on the following [webpage](#).



The Mission	The Action Statement	Possible Projects
<p>The Washington Developmental Disabilities Council's mission² is to advocate, promote and implement policies and practices to create pathways to meaningful, integrated and productive lives for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities over the life course.</p>	<p>(The Council) works to develop public policy recommendations, which promote the values of self-determination, independence, inclusion, integration, and productivity for people with developmental disabilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the developing public policy and productivity portion of the statement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Form a self-advocacy network to advise the council on services currently available in the state and where improvements can be made. ▪ Collect data on the number of people working in CIE and create a legislative guide for policy makers on CIE and policy steps the state could take to increase CIE. • Create a Council Committee that will plan and host a “Take your Legislator to Work Day” so legislators can meet people who are impacted by these policies.
<p>Independence Now³ advocates and embodies independence and equality for all people with disabilities.</p>	<p>Our vision is that with disabilities live people independent and fully inclusive lives and are recognized by society as equal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the living independent and fully inclusive life and advocates portion of the statements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a member task force to survey members to determine what employment-related supports they cannot access but most need to achieve their employment goals. ▪ Use previous data when creating the agency strategic plan. • Create a task force to review other centers’ for independent living (CIL) employment-related services and recommend expanded services and resources.
<p>Disability Rights New Jersey⁴ is the state’s designated Protection and Advocacy agency under federal law. We advance the human, civil, and legal rights of persons with disabilities and promote their self-determination, independence, productivity, and integration into all facets of community life.</p>	<p>We fight for freedom from abuse, neglect, and discrimination wherever people with disabilities live, work, study, and play. Our work is rooted in a shared belief in the inherent value of all people and their right to self-determination, choice, and full participation in society.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the self-determination and work aspect of the impact statement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a public relations material to share with self-advocates about options for employment using simple language writing, pictures, and videos that can be posted on social media. ▪ Form a committee of advocates, self-advocates, professionals practicing best practices to guide and advise the public relations campaign.

While the previous table exemplifies three clear mission and vision statements, the next table describes core values found in AoD grantee organizations. The first column shares the purpose or core actions of typical AoD grantee organizations, and the second column offers ideas of potential projects that can be derived from the core values of the organization. Some organizations may

² Council, W. D. (2021). *About Us*. Retrieved from Washington Developmental Disabilities Council’s [About Us page](#)
³ Now, I. (2021). *About*. Retrieved from Independence Now’s [homepage](#)
⁴ Jersey, D. R. (2021). *Impact Statement*. Retrieved from Disability Rights New Jersey’s [homepage](#)



already have this vision as a part of their daily work, or perhaps a new department or project is being added. No matter your reasons for creating a mission-driven project, starting small with an achievable project that can be built upon will get you closer to the finish line of systems-change.

See the examples below:

Core Function or Value	Sample of Potential Outcome
Create or recommend policy development to increase competitive integrated employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a task force to review current policies and current data. Ensure all state/local and local policies promote employment supports. • Create a public relations campaign and implementation strategy to include stories and pictures of people working aimed at ensuring appropriate levels of funding be available for people wanting to participate in CIE. • Facilitate a meeting with policy and funding partners to create memorandums of understanding to encourage partner collaboration for smooth transitions for students moving into adulthood. • Create a short film with self-advocates sharing their work experience that can be emailed to policy makers and legislators. • Create a “take your legislator to work” day to be repeated every year. • Create a chest of stories about people working that can be shared on social media for legislators to see people working and the impact in their life.
Deliver employment services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a steering committee to survey and review data to identify if there is a need to increase capacity to provide competitive integrated employment supports. • Create a training program for staff on Customized Employment, Individual Placement and Support (IPS), or Supported Employment. • Review data to determine the amount of time it takes to help someone get a job in local organizations. • Host a job fair aimed at hiring for people with disabilities. • Create a resource list of provider agencies and their success rate for helping people get jobs. • Become involved in your state APSE (Association of Person’s Supporting Employment First). • Assess the supply and demand for employment services in your community. • Create a school to transition model with partners in education, adult supports and vocational rehabilitation.
Train providers, self-advocates, or family members about employment best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete a national scan of the competency-based training for employment professionals and offer an already developed curriculum along with mentoring and ongoing support for providers. • Pilot a parent and self-advocate training program on getting and keeping a job. • Create a monthly webinar series for employment professionals to network and learn about best practices. • Create a Request for Proposals and fund a project that assists people to move from center-based services to CIE.



Core Function or Value	Sample of Potential Outcome
Provide advocacy and legal support for people who want to work or are working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a hotline (phone and email) where people with disabilities can contact an attorney or representative to discuss an incident, which they believe may have violated their rights, using self-advocacy networks in the state. Create a plain language guide and presentations, as well as a one click access on the agency website. • Create a “know your rights” seminar that can be shared with self-advocates via video or in person at conferences and gatherings. • Create a steering committee to review state and local legislation and policies to ensure there are no restrictions in people asking for assistance to work.
Ensure there is a collaboration between self-advocates, provider agencies, state funding agencies, and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather a steering committee to host a policy round table to discuss stories of employment success and barriers and brainstorm solutions for inclusion in a strategic plan. • Host a round table on employer engagement with employers, providers, self-advocates, and state workforce leadership. • Create a statewide National Disability Employment Awareness award opportunity with state workforce and commerce as partners.

While this list is not meant to be the exclusive list of possible projects, it can serve as an example or tool in a brainstorming gathering. These ideas can be added into strategic plans, annual operating budgets, or collaborations with other like-minded organizations. Please see below additional resources to help in your project planning process.

Resources and References:

- Using the [DICE](#) model created by the Boston Consulting Group will assist your team in outsizing the project.
- Tools such as a [Gantt chart](#) will help the team organize the processes and steps needed to be successful.
- Organizational Change Model, like [Leading Change](#) by John Kotter, can also help your organization methodically start the inward work necessary to building the various components needed to effectively initiate a new project.

