



A Roadmap to Developing a Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) Competency Training Program within your University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD)

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Introduction

People with disabilities, across the United States, are continually in pursuit of employment that is fulfilling, meaningful, and of value to themselves and the employers in their community. With the range of opportunities, unique dreams, and ever emerging needs, it is important for your state to maintain a core group of employment agencies that will be able to deliver quality employment services to meet the ongoing needs of job candidates with disabilities and employers.

There are a multitude of strategies needed to maintain a high performing employment service system in your state. One fundamental strategy is regular CIE competency training for those professionals that are tasked with delivery of CIE services in the community. As a UCEDD in your state, you are uniquely positioned to meet all or a portion of this critical training need.

We know there will continue to be an ever changing and dynamic employment landscape. We know that people with disabilities want to work. And we know employers need quality employees that can offer their unique skills to enhancing their businesses. So how can you organize a portion of your resources at the University to meet these needs?

A Starting Point – Core Competency Training

It is important to take inventory of your existing resources in the delivery of CIE training. The following questions are offered as a simple framework to get you started. Honest and detailed answers will assist in the development of a plan for the development and implementation of training needed to impact the delivery and quality in integrated competitive employment services in your state.



Key Questions for Assessing Current CIE Training Capacity in Your State

- What are the practical realities of the delivery of employment services in your state?
 - What does the community think is possible for the employment of people with the most significant disabilities?
 - What does the behavioral health, developmental disability and vocational rehabilitation leadership prioritize as services that are most important in the pursuit of autonomy and independence for those they serve?
 - Do these departments have an annual goal on increasing competitive integrated employment?
 - Is there data available to determine who is performing quality employment services for people with disabilities?
 - Is there funding and policy to support employment agencies to prioritize professional development for their staff?
- What do you as the leader of the training project value the most in the provision of the employment services?
- What are the primary factors that will affect your decisions about building your training plan in the next year?
- What capacity to provide employment training exists on your UCEDD team currently?
- What resources will you have for delivering training content in an online format?
- Are there people with disabilities in decision making positions in your department? On your team?

Building the Training Program

Next, form your internal training team and set your intention on building an amazing core competency training offer for your state. This doesn't always mean that your Center needs to be solely responsible for the effort. It means that your team will be a contributor and leader in the effort. Specifically, your UCEDD will have a plan to assure core competency training is available in your state to front-line professionals supporting individuals with disabilities in pursuing employment and career advancement. You'll leverage partners and work to dedicate resources to the training program plan. And within the year, you should expect to see more people with disabilities obtaining CIE in your state!

Getting Started

As part of your project planning work, develop actions that can be realistically obtained within three, six and 12 months. Those activities should include at least the following considerations listed on the following page:



Building a Premiere CIE Capacity Building Training Program within your UCEDD: Getting Started

- Review your current knowledge of the state of employment services and how the services are delivered – what skills do you know that are needed to deliver services?
- How are you currently sharing what you know about these services within the University setting?
- Do you have staff on the team to be the primary trainers on the project?
 - The primary trainers need to have training expertise as well as experience in the provision of the services that they are training on.
 - If not, do you have resources with which to partner to develop your training capacity?
- Will the primary trainers have dedicated and adequate time to focus on this effort?
- Do you have practice opportunities for UCEDD staff to deliver the services and relationships to partner with community providers to do so?
- A detailed outline of accomplishments in the first year that:
 - Increase access to employment
 - Emphasize values and educating the community on the impact of employment – equitable employment – and gaining ‘buy – in’
 - Develop specialized expertise to ensure that services are available to meet the range of needs (employers and job seekers)

Partners

Starting, maintaining, and growing your employment training program will require regular partnerships with a variety of key stakeholders. So, who should be at the table to support the UCEDD to actualize core training? The following stakeholders are key players in your effort:

- ***People with disabilities and employers.*** Having consistent and intentional connection to those most impacted by the quality of the services delivered will afford a current reality of the challenges and opportunities in the community. People with disabilities and employers are the experts in the outcome of competitive integrated employment services.
- A representative group of existing ***CIE employment provider leadership***, including those who have decision making authority for the organization (board members, etc.). These leaders will prove invaluable for guidance and identifying the needs of their organizations and employees.
- The ***major CIE services funding partners*** (intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental health, etc.) for the provision of CIE services hold a critical role in the availability and oversight to the services being delivered. This may seem like an obvious partner group as they have financial resources to help meet the training needs. Consider their unique ability to influence federal and state policy. As your training project matures, the training team will be able to speak to the gaps in service systems and will be a valuable resource to funding partners. Regular attention to potential system improvements can lead to efficiencies that may impact the availability of resources to be redeployed to training and professional development activities.



- The **public education system** in your state is the gateway to employment for people with disabilities and the lifeline for employees for employers. Building a strong partnership between K – 12 and post-secondary systems serves as a source of coordinated resourcing as well as builds trust in the community. This trust creates efficiencies and ensures that the effectiveness of education can be of regular value to people with disabilities, families, and employers.
- The state **vocational rehabilitation department** has a self-interest in the quality and availability of core competency training. A regular review of the outcome data serves as an organizing strategy for a training program. By understanding where performance is best and where improvements are needed, the training program can target geographical areas in the most need of increased capacity for CIE services. This practice ensures that no area of the state is left behind or limited in their ability to meet the employment needs of their community.
- Additionally, don't forget to include the state's **Workforce Development System**. While not as laser-focused on supporting job-seekers with disabilities, American Job Centers (AJCs) can also provide individuals with disabilities access to high-growth industries (HGIs), apprenticeship pathways, and numerous resources and tools for pursuing various career pathways.

Funding

Often funding is used as a barrier to actualize and maintain your core competency training program. Insist and declare that funding is not and will not become a barrier. As a training program, the training program plan must always include funding strategies. Some of those strategies will be simply about a budget to use for the delivery of the training program. Think of strategies that you could easily use to redeploy existing resources to 'fund' at least one – two staff and/or subject matter experts to be the core training team.

And next, consider the broader build out of the influence of the training program. Here are a few key considerations when thinking of funding the overall existence of this training program:

1. **Review your existing resources/connections across the entire University setting.** What subtle shifts could happen to help you to build the narrative of the value of employment for people with disabilities? This move will impact students and start to build the culture of CIE across the University system and support the development of a long-term strategy.
 - Do an inventory of what is already resourced in your university system – how is disability woven into existing curriculum of the schools of:

○ Social Work	○ Education
○ Business	○ Medical



- Computer Sciences
 - Engineering
 - Public Health
- How does your university work with employers to obtain employees? Understanding this effort can afford access to employers by your employment training team and assist in developing them as a strategic partner for your training program.
 - What curriculum uses employers and/or people with disabilities within the University now? Are there existing models of employer education and engagement that your training team could enhance or leverage to bolster your training?
 - How can you leverage and impact the broader disability community? Can your training team influence post-secondary opportunities for people with disabilities?
2. Partner with the public education system to obtain and exchange data and information on people with disabilities seeking CIE. Leverage existing data sources to save on duplication of effort and to build strategic partnerships.
 3. ***Ensure that you have at least a basic relationship with the social and health services primary departments in your state.*** The purpose is to ensure that your UCEDD has a current and relevant view of the needs of employers and people with disabilities. This also positions your project as an available resource that is available to expand as funding becomes available through the Medicaid or state tax system.
 4. ***Dedicate regular funding, annually on the pursuit of the development of CIE services.*** Utilize and prioritize existing resources at your UCEDD to meet this need. Even a small amount of money can serve as a symbolic lever to elicit other funding partners.

Lessons Learned/Tip and Tricks

There are several UCEDDs that are building their capacity to deliver CIE core competency training. Here are some lessons learned in this recent work:

- Training staff need to have a working knowledge of how to deliver the service and the quality standards expected in the state.
- If the training is to be delivered by UCEDD staff, it is ideal if the staff members have hands on experience as a provider of the CIE services. Ideally, the UCEDD team would have at least one staff member that has direct experience in CIE services in the past 5 – 10 years.

**North Dakota Center for
Persons with Disabilities:
Minot State University Center
of Excellence**



“This training challenged us to consider employment for everyone, anyone who wants to work gets the opportunity now. People we would have passed up before, we don’t do that anymore.”

-Training participant from an employment service provider



- Training staff need to have their own stories based on their experience in delivering the service.
- The training team needs to have dedicated time to focus on development and delivery of training services.
- If training staff do not have experience in the delivery of the service, they need access to opportunities to gain experience. They will need an experienced trainer to mentor and develop their training content, build their personal stories, and give feedback on their training skills.
- Training staff will need support with policy, practice, and labor policy questions.
- UCEDD leadership must have a vision for the development of a robust service system of employment supports.
- Each state needs resolute leaders to commit to a long term, sustainable plan to ensure that employment is expected in their state.
- Be willing to change what you are doing to make CIE work in your state. Part of the training work is building a culture of possibility for CIE outcomes.
- Not everyone that you think can train on this subject will be successful.
- Having people with disabilities and businesses as a key part of the training delivery is critical to the success of the training as they will be able to speak to the quality of the services and the impact those services have. They also will be able to offer insights on the impact a university program can have on the purpose and ultimate outcome of the services and supports.

Final Summary – Lead the Charge

The development of your UCEDD core competency training program is a critical step in assisting your state to advance CIE services. It will take time. It will take an unwavering commitment to the work. And the result of the commitment will be jobs that change the lives of employers, people with disabilities, and community members.

As you embark on this journey and lead your UCEDD team, here are a few things to consider:

- Align your team with like-minded individuals and partners regardless of their formal role.
- Keep striving for more outcomes and new opportunities in your services.
- Share your resources widely.
- Constantly question the status quo with your peers.
- Seek stories that demonstrate and validate your vision for employment.



- Engage the business community to facilitate and lead the conversation on the value of hiring a diverse workforce to include people with a wide range of disabilities.
- Continually engage people with disabilities to share their vision of employment for themselves and others.
- Be committed to creativity and innovation as you deepen your knowledge of core competencies in your training program.

Building core training is the bedrock of a high performing state employment service system. When the going gets tough, go back to the stories of people with disabilities and employers to remind your team of ‘why’ this training is so important and necessary. The UCEDD partners are uniquely positioned to have an enormous impact on the outcomes of CIE. We look forward to seeing UCEDDs play a larger role in employment systems-change efforts in the future.

