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March 21, 2016

RespectAbility – Public Comments – West Virginia Unified State Plan

RespectAbility is pleased to submit the following comments regarding the current draft of West Virginia's Unified State Plan as required under Section 102 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). We are pleased to have this opportunity to offer our comments, raise our questions, and provide our suggestions about the content of the state plan.

To state the challenge directly, West Virginia has the lowest employment rate for people with disabilities of any state in the country. **Currently, the Mountain State ranks 50th in the nation as measured by jobs for people with disabilities and only 25.6% of the approximately 199,707 working age West Virginians with disabilities are employed. Further, there are 7,700 youth ages 16-20 with disabilities. Each year a quarter of them will age out of school into an uncertain future.**

We know that West Virginia faces significant barriers in terms of encouraging more people with disabilities to pursue employment. We know that some want the meager amount of money that comes from benefit checks and that there have been instances of fraud where people have claimed a functional impairment in order to get on disability. **For some people, dependency on government has become a way of life.** West Virginia has many challenges including significant problems around substance abuse of both prescription and illegal drugs. From reviewing your Unified State Plan, we know that West Virginia also faces significant economic challenges as manufacturing, mining, and farming decline.

However, thanks to WIOA, West Virginia to move the needle and empower your citizens with disability. Further, there are cost effective models that are easily replicable and can empowering youth with disabilities to succeed in a variety of fields. Other states like the Dakotas, Iowa, and Wyoming have overcome significant barriers by investing in best practices and focusing on opportunities for youth with disabilities. The results are clear. [People with disabilities in those states are employed at a rate twice that of West Virginia.](#) The experience of these states shows ways that West Virginia can dramatically improve their outcomes.

To help the states succeed in this [process we developed a resource called the Disability Employment First Planning Tool.](#) This document details best practices and effective models. This toolkit contains models that are proven to work, be cost effective to implement, and be successful. **We have developed an extensive collection of data on disability and employment in [West Virginia.](#)** That information is also attached to our comments.

Our public comments on West Virginia's WIOA State Plan are structured around those points where greater clarity, precision, and data are needed to ensure that people with disabilities will be equipped to pursue the American Dream. From the accessibility of the workforce system to employer engagement to investing in transition programs for youth with disabilities, our comments are intended to help your state push hard to see improved integrated employment outcomes for West Virginians with disabilities.

1. Make sure that the best disability data points, especially those around youth with disabilities as well as the gap in Labor Force Participation Rates (LFPRs) between people with and without disabilities, are included in your Workforce Analysis:

From our review of the current draft of West Virginia's Unified State Plan we know that you have access to the right data to drive decision making. Tracking unemployment information (which only reflects people actively looking for jobs) and job placements (which only monitors people who interface directly with the workforce system) is necessary, but not sufficient to drive true performance metrics that will create success.

We appreciate the inclusion of information lifted directly from Annual Compendium of Disability Statistics starting on page 35 of your State Plan. This section goes on in great detail regarding the number of working age West Virginians. Of particular note is the attention this section gives to the lack of educational attainment and endemic poverty which define the experience of disability for many West Virginians. However, this data is not structured in a way that that would be useful to the different elements of West Virginia's workforce system. We hope the Unified State Plan be revised to include information on the specific types of disabilities among youth with disabilities and working age people with disabilities as well as more detailed information on the labor force participation rates of people with and with disabilities. It is essential that the number of youth with disabilities be listed so that the workforce system has a clear view of the challenge moving forward.

Further, your Unified State Plan looks very closely at the challenge of declining Labor Force Participation Rates (LFPR) in West Virginia. Starting on page 39, the State Plan reports that the "labor force participation rate (LFPR) in West Virginia has been declining since 2008, mirroring the national trend." However, the current draft of the Unified State Plan does not apply this critical lens to looking at your citizens with disabilities. As you can see from the figure below, there is a 44.9 percentage point gap in the Labor Force Participation Rates (LFPR) between people with and without disabilities. This gap is one of the most important data points and it needs to be included in your Unified State Plan. Further, this data it needs to drive the development of your performance metrics. Closing this gap will require the energy and effort.

Figure 1.

West Virginia Performance Metrics on Jobs for PWDs



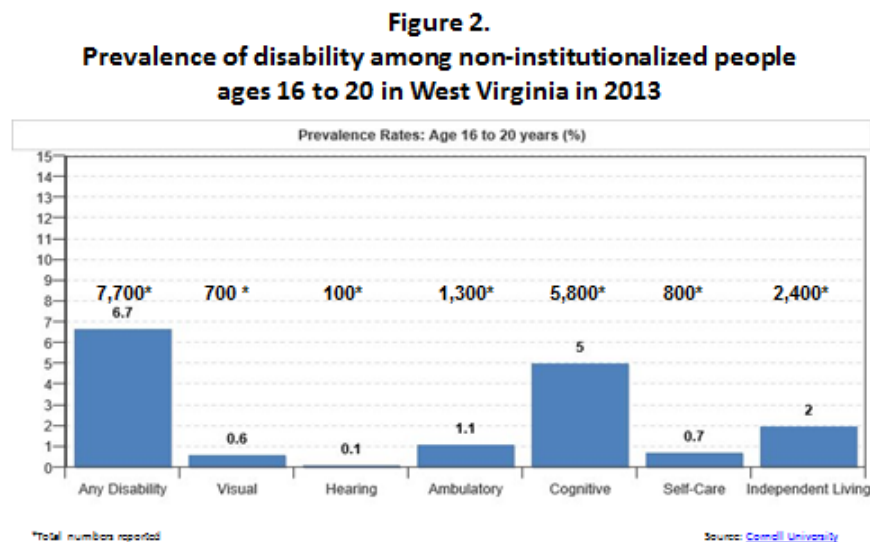
Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin (D)

- ❖ 70.5% of persons without disabilities aged 18 to 64 are employed.³
- ❖ 25.6% of PwDs aged 18 to 64 are employed.³
- ❖ W. Virginia ranks 50th in the country in terms of jobs of PWDs.
- ❖ **There is a 44.9 percentage point gap on the Labor Force Participation Rates (LFPR) between people with and without disabilities.**
- ❖ 362,447 people in WV have a disability.³
- ❖ 7,700 persons aged 16 to 20 have a disability.¹
- ❖ 202,900 persons aged 21 to 64 have a disability.¹
- ❖ 45,400 PwDs aged 18 to 64 receive benefits.¹
- ❖ In 2014, WV's total expenditure on SSDI benefits was \$1,469,184,000.³
- ❖ Voc. Rehab. received 9,906 general applicants in WV 2013.³
- ❖ Voc. Rehab. obtained 3,141 jobs for PwDs in WV in 2013.³

1. 2013 Disability Status Report: West Virginia, disabilitydata.org
2. StateData: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes, 2013
3. [Annual Disability Statistics Compendium](#)

We want to help your state to begin moving in the right direction. Moving the needle at all in West Virginia will require hard work and concrete action. As it stands now, West Virginia is the worst state in the nation in terms of job opportunities for people with disabilities. Your state can and must do better. Good data is essential for any attempt to increase the number of people with disabilities who are succeeding in competitive, integrated employment. **As an example of the data that is needed, below are several charts which show the challenge in your state.**

- A. Youth with disabilities who are aging in the workforce (ages 16-20).** If West Virginia's workforce system is to seriously deliver on the promise of improving school to work transitions for youth, it is critical to know how many youth with disabilities will be aging out of school.



- B. What types of disabilities does transitioning youth have?** This information is critical important because youth with vision, mobility and hearing disabilities need specific types of tools and training, but may otherwise be ready for jobs. To support youth with cognitive disabilities, it will be critical to provide early work experiences.

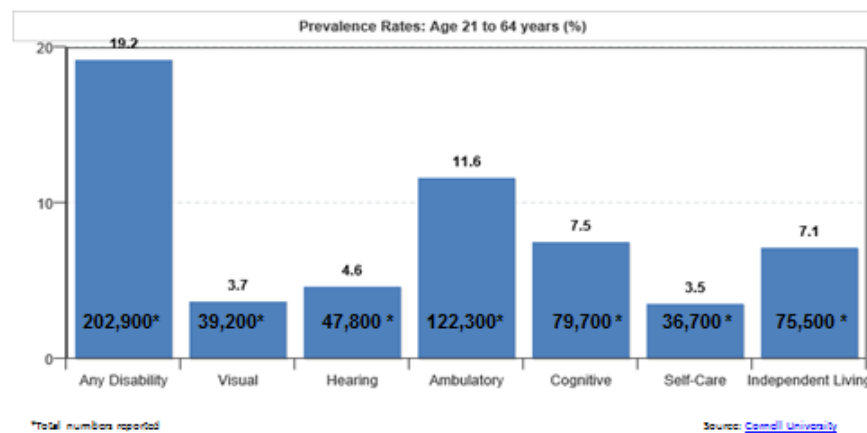
Figure 3.
Ages 6 to 21 IEPs by Category WV

	2012	2013
All Disabilities	39,004	39,004
Specific Learning Disability	11,923	12,156
Speech or Language Impairment	10,787	10,406
Intellectual Disability	6,852	6,749
Emotional Disturbance	1,479	1,356
Multiple Disability	0	0
Hearing Impairment	398	397
Orthopedic Impairment	123	111
Other Health Impairment	5,553	5,811
Visual Impairment	252	250
Autism	1,530	1,667
Deaf Blindness	10	10
Traumatic Brain Injury	97	99
Developmental Delay	0	0

Source: [Annual Disability Statistics Compendium](#)

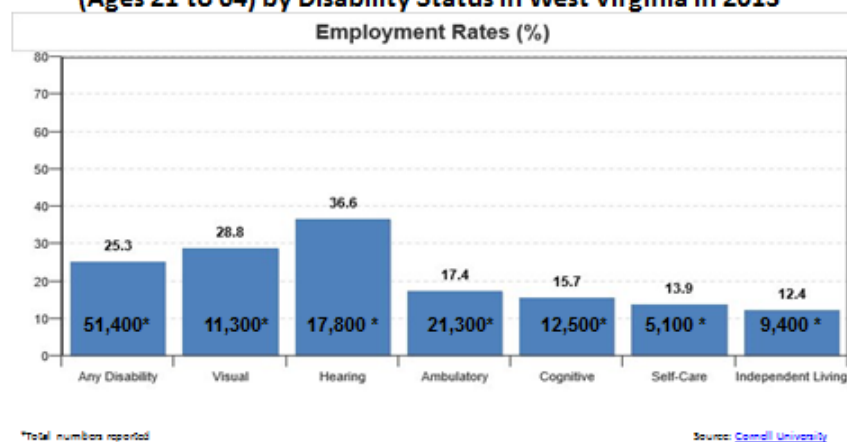
- C. Greater clarity around working age people with disabilities (ages 21-64).** The experience of disability is diverse and includes a wide range of differences both visible and invisible. As such, West Virginia's Unified State Plan needs to include clearer information regarding the types of disability that people are experiencing.

Figure . 4
Prevalence of Disability Among Non-Institutionalized People
Ages 21 to 64 in West Virginia in 2013



- D. Labor Force Participation Rates broken down by disability type.** From the data, we often find that people who are blind or have vision loss are employed at higher rates than people with self-care or independent living disabilities. Similarly, we find that people with hearing differences are also employed at higher rates than are people with intellectual or developmental disabilities

Figure 5.
Employment of Non-Institutionalized Working-Age People
(Ages 21 to 64) by Disability Status in West Virginia in 2013



Additionally, while West Virginia rank 50th in the nation in terms of the employment rate for people with disabilities, it is still illustrative to look at the experience of those with disabilities who are succeeding in the world of work. **From the data, we find that only 28.8**

percent of the 35,000 West Virginians who are blind or have vision loss are employed while 36.6 percent of the 47,800 with hearing differences are also employed. Given the flexibility and availability of assistive technology solutions, the employment rate for this subgroup should be much higher. Many people who are blind or deaf have incredible talent potential that can be unleashed by something as simple as a smartphone.

Sadly, we also see that only 15.7% of West Virginians with intellectual or developmental disabilities are employed. For this demographic, workforce solutions may take more time and resources. **However, there will be a considerable return on investment if West Virginia's workforce system expands successful school to work transition programs.** The State Plan does, discuss an effective model for expanding outcomes for this subpopulation. However, the challenge is not addressed with anywhere near enough ambition to move the needle on employment outcomes. We have more to say on this point later in our comments.

This data will be essential as West Virginia's state leaders move forward with WIOA, because there are unique barriers to employment for peoples with disabilities. We hope that this data will be used to develop and implement the performance metrics needed to guide resource investment and workforce programs.

2. Strong Sector Strategies need to be part of your state's approach to expanding employment opportunities for West Virginians with disabilities:

As required by WIOA Sec. 102(b)(1)(A), State Plans must include a detailed analysis of the economic sectors of the state economy that are growing and are forecasted to grow in the future. The success of WIOA depends on being an employer driven paradigm shift. Expanding opportunities for people with barriers to employment such as disability requires strong partnerships with employers in those sectors which are rapidly expanding.

The Economic, Workforce, and Workforce Development Activities Analysis section of your Unified State Plan does much to describe the significant economic challenges facing West Virginia. As the State Plan directly states on page 15 of the current draft, of the "11 major sectors" that compose West Virginia's economy, "many of these sectors will see strong employment declines, while others will experience intense growth." The economic picture painted in this section is mixed overall. Even so, opportunities to train young people with disabilities to become successful in growing industries exist. For example, page 16 expects that "The information sector should see employment growth in both Data Processing services, and Broadcasting (except internet)." While the "leisure and hospitality sector is expecting minimal growth" in some job categories, "Museums, Historical Sites, and Similar Institutions. Food Services and Drinking Places are expecting more sizeable growth."

The most important growth sector involves the "health services sector" first discussed on page 16 and discussed in greater detail on page 26. "In 2015" alone, the State Plan reports that job growth in this sector "Healthcare occupations the hottest demand occupation group in West Virginia currently." The State Plan anticipated significant job growth in "Ambulatory Health Care services, followed by Social Assistance, Nursing and Residential Care Facilities, and Hospitals." An aging population "solidifies the need for more health care workers."

We submit to you that people with disabilities can be outstanding employees in any of these sectors and directly benefit the bottom line of these categories of employers. As we stated at the beginning of our comments, West Virginia has some of the worst employment outcomes of any state in the country. Our nation was founded on the principle that anyone who works hard should be able to get ahead in life. People with disabilities deserve to be able to work to achieve the American dream, just like anyone else. Nationally, the data shows that many people with

disabilities are striving for work. We know from speaking with leaders and community members in West Virginia that is not true of everyone and sometimes that is not the case at the local level. Indeed for many they have only ever known lives of endemic poverty and government benefits and not work. However, West Virginia will see a big return on investment by working hard to create pathways for youth with disabilities to be trained for jobs in the sectors discussed above.

There are 7,700 youth with disabilities in West Virginia and one quarter of them will exit the school system every year. Instead of allowing them to be trapped into dependency on government, West Virginia should be looking at way to prepare this untapped labor resource to become a pipeline of talent to your state's talent needs. The bottom line is that expanding job opportunities for people with disabilities is a win-win for employers and taxpayers. It is good for employers in healthcare, food preparation, and computers because the loyalty, talent, and skills of workers with disabilities contribute to the bottom line. It is good for taxpayers who should not have to pay for government benefits for people who would rather be working. The job gains in these sectors offer a great opportunity for focused sector strategies sustain and build on employment outcomes. Here are our thoughts on how West Virginia can do just that:

a. Health Care and Social Assistance:

Health Services, to include “Ambulatory Health Care services, followed by Social Assistance, Nursing and Residential Care Facilities, and Hospitals” is clearly a sector of growing importance to West Virginia's economy. It is a sector with rapidly growing talent needs and people with disabilities can be part of the solution. The rapid emerging talent needs in health care represent both a challenge and an opportunity for the nation's workforce system. It is challenge propelled by an aging population resulting in increasing demand for qualified workers ready to fill the talent needs of hospitals, assisted living centers, and nursing home. It is opportunity to channel the incredible talents of people with disabilities into the workforce. This is a topic that needs to be examined closely and has implications for people with disabilities who want to work.

People with disabilities can and should be part of the solution to this critical demand in the labor market. A 2014 report from the [Office of Disability Employment Policy](#) (ODEP) captured this opportunity clearly, saying that “[people with disabilities] not only represent an untapped talent pool, but also offer significant value and insight” in the field of healthcare. It is important for healthcare institutions to reflect their customers, and people with disabilities interface more with the healthcare system. There are [numerous examples of young people with disabilities doing incredible work in the fields of healthcare, elder care, and in assisted living](#). **Employers working in health and elder care can greatly benefit from the loyalty, dedication, and retention rates of employees with disabilities.**

However, despite these clear examples, West Virginia's State Plan neglects one of the most cost-effective ways of training youth with disabilities to become outstanding employees in health care. The talent needs of health care employers are such that West Virginia should be expanding Project Search as has been done in Wisconsin and Florida.

Nationally, each year approximately 2,700 such young people, spread out in 45 states, do a nine month, school-to-work program that takes place entirely at the workplace. This innovative, business-led model features total workplace immersion, which facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and worksite-based training and support. Nationally, Project Search sites overall have been achieving outstanding results for people with disabilities, employers, and taxpayers alike. For example, [the first longitudinal study of the program found “a 68% success rate in transitioning students from high school into competitive employment” and “Project SEARCH sites in Upstate New York that have an](#)

[impressive 83% success rate overall.”](#) The goal for each program participant is competitive employment. We suggest that you look to follow the example set by the state of Wisconsin where they started with three Project Search sites and are expanding to twenty seven sites in total.

Governor Scott Walker has become a champion of the Project Search model because it is so effective in producing outstanding employees and cost-effective to implement. Wisconsin is a living example of the return on investment that comes from empowering youth with disabilities through the transformative power of a job. As such, we seriously encourage state leaders in West Virginia to learn from the experiences of the dedicated state officials, VR counselors, workforce professionals, and special educators who have increased Wisconsin’s Project Search programs. Thinking long-term, investments in Project Search and other such programs will save big money for taxpayers while also strengthening the talent pool for employers.

b. High Turnover Jobs: Hospitality/Accommodations, Food Service, Retail Trade:

Millions of dollars are lost each year due to employee turnover. [For all jobs earning less than \\$50,000 per year, the average cost of replacing one employee is between \\$6,000 and \\$20,000.](#) Research shows that employees with disabilities, when their interests and abilities are aligned with the needs of employers, are more productive and loyal than their non-disabled peers. Company records show that even when the relatively more expensive accommodations were factored in, the overall costs of disability accommodations were far outweighed by the low turnover rates and better tenures of the employees with disabilities.

A great example of an employment sector where employees with disabilities can be tremendously successful is the hospitality industry. Accommodations and food service are extremely high turnover jobs and numerous studies show that people with disabilities can be outstanding in those fields and have significantly higher employer loyalty.

An outstanding example of the type of work needed is found in Missouri. As part of the Poses Family Foundation’s Workplace Initiative, a coalition of employment service providers has launched a successful training and placement program with the hospitality sector in St. Louis. This training runs for up to 12 weeks, and takes place on site at the hotel; all participants are paid by the hotel for the duration of training. Since the summer of 2015, two cohorts of trainees have completed training at the Hyatt Regency. Trainees have gone on to permanent employment at the Hyatt and other hotel partners in a range of departments—culinary; auditing; and customer service. This type of training and Poses’ Workplace Initiative could easily be part of your overall Sector Strategies. Likewise, in other states, [hotels and other hospitality employers have found Project SEARCH to be an amazing source of talent. The work down by David Scott at the Embassy Suites in Omaha, Nebraska](#) is a clear example of [how to develop training opportunities and improve employment outcomes](#) for people with disabilities in a specific sector like hospitality. Your State Board, along with other components of the workforce system, should connect with employers to begin figuring out how to benefit from these models.

Another sector with high turnover and big potential is retail trade. Many companies, including [UPS, Wal-Mart, and OfficeMax have proven records of success. Wal-Mart, which is the largest private employer in West Virginia, has taken some critical steps forwards](#) towards becoming an inclusive employer and benefiting from the talents of employees with disabilities. Likewise, [Walgreens has demonstrated that workers with disabilities in their distribution centers are as productive, safer, and turn over less when compared to peers without disabilities.](#) These efforts have taken the logistics sector by storm with [Lowe’s, OfficeMax, Pepsi,](#) as well as [P&G](#) are all launching their own successful disability hiring initiatives. For example, [as reported by the National Organization on Disability, “Lowe’s hired more than 150 new workers with](#)

[disabilities in the first year, and an additional 250 workers in the following 18-month period.”](#)

They can be outstanding partners for disability employment as these industries suffer from high turnover rates and people with disabilities are proven to have significantly higher retention rates. It is important to identify more specific opportunities with employers and to cite them inside the plan, as well as the criteria by which to continue and to expand such partnerships in the future.

c. Science, Tech, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and The Autism Advantage:

Even though other sectors are driving the growth of West Virginia’s economy, it is still important to look at the issue of preparing workers for careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). **As has been documented in many cases, there can be an “Autism Advantage” in the STEM space. Indeed, some people on the Autism spectrum can have the very best skills in science, math and engineering.** [Microsoft, SAP, and Specialisterne](#) have committed themselves to “[provide employment opportunities for people on the autism spectrum in roles such as software testers, programmers, system administrators, and data quality assurance specialists.](#)” [The Israeli Defense Forces recruits and trains their citizens on the Autism spectrum for work in their elite intelligence unit.](#)

Delaware’s Governor Jack Markell is partnering with companies to employ more people on the Autism spectrum in STEM jobs. Such examples need to be implemented by other states. This issue of STEM and access for student with disabilities is a natural point of partnership between the workforce system and the educational system. That work needs to start young, be matched with high expectations for success, and designed to ensure people with disabilities have the chance to become future scientists, engineers, doctors and mathematicians. **(Ensuring the Accessibility of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Programs and Careers for People with Disabilities, especially Students with IEPs, is vital.** As Carol Glazer of the National Organization on Disabilities wrote in *Huffington Post*, “[America is already lagging when it comes to STEM-skilled workers. The U.S. will have more than 1.2 million job openings in STEM fields by 2018.](#)” Governors in other states have looked at STEM needs and begun to develop solutions. For example, [in New York State Governor Cuomo has ensured that magnet schools for STEM are located near IBM, a major STEM employer in their state.](#) West Virginia could look at ways to follow this model. Together, state workforce system and educational system can look to supported-employment programs such as Project Search, Specialisterne, and [the Marriot Foundation's Bridges to Work Program](#) as models for developing a systematic approach to providing the supports necessary for our students on the autism spectrum to excel in STEM.

d. State jobs and state contracting can also be sources of opportunity:

While the focus of our comments on the State Plans are around aligning the workforce system to create opportunities for people with disabilities in the private sector, public sector employment should not be neglected. This is especially important because the workforce of your state government will likely be impacted by the cresting wave of Baby Boomers retiring just as other sectors are being shaken. As such, people with disabilities should be part of the solution.

The importance of such hiring efforts was first discussed in Governor Markell’s *Better Bottom Line* Initiative. In Governor Markell’s own words, “[One key action is to set a state goal for hiring people with disabilities through an executive order and hold agencies accountable for achieving that goal.](#)”

This is an issue that Governors both Republican and Democrat have taken action address. In many different states, Governors have worked hard to expand the recruitment and retention of

people with disabilities for jobs in state government. [Governor Asa Hutchinson](#) has recently committed his state government to hiring more people with disabilities for jobs in state government. As he said in a Memorandum launching the effort: “a coordinated effort by the state is needed to reduce dependence on public benefits and to increase economic opportunities for Arkansans with disabilities.” “It is important,” he said, “that our state government set the example of this commitment.”

A further step that could be taken to expand such opportunities would be to look at state contracting as another potential avenue of opportunity. For example, we would encourage South Carolina to learn from the experiences of Nevada and Massachusetts. [The Bay State recently launched an interesting Supplier Diversity Program \(SDP\)](#). This is a rare example where Massachusetts is actually leading the nation in terms of innovative efforts to expand opportunities for people with disabilities rather than simply relying on the perception of success.

Likewise, in Nevada, [“the Preferred Purchase Program”](#) allows “agencies to bypass the competitive bid process and purchase goods and services from registered community training centers which employ people with disabilities.” Both efforts could be replicated in West Virginia. **We make this recommendation because the untapped potential of people with disabilities is such that a full-spectrum, all-of-the-above-and-more approach is needed.**

3. Busting Stigmas Should Be a Key Part of West Virginia’s Workforce Strategy:

Low expectations and misconceptions are critical barriers to employment for people with disabilities. [A Princeton study shows that while people with disabilities are seen as warm, they are not seen as competent](#). Similarly, [a study published by Cornell Hospitality Quarterly found that companies share a concern that people with disabilities cannot adequately do the work required of their employees](#).

As such, we recommend that West Virginia’s Plan be amended to include a comprehensive, proactive communications/public relations strategy for reducing such stigmas. The best way to fight stigmas is to let employers see the facts from other employers who are already succeeding by hiring people with disabilities. **In order to ensure that such efforts have the biggest possible impact, it needs to be supported by a serious, systematic and ongoing communications campaign that highlights the benefits of inclusive hiring.**

One of the necessary first steps is to have key state leaders who understood the value that employees with disabilities possess and who know how to communicate the business imperative for hiring diverse talent. Two great examples of how this work can be done come from leaders in Wisconsin and Michigan. [In Wisconsin, Governor Walker has actively championed the growth of Project Search and conducted regular site visits to model employers](#). [In Michigan, Lieutenant Governor Caley and Justice Bernstein have lead what they call “Hidden Talent Tours” that showcase the benefits to the bottom line that come from hiring people with disabilities](#). Both of the example offer valuable insights in work that can be done in West Virginia.

In terms of potential employer partners, we encourage your state plan to look at [Disability Equality Index that assesses the inclusion and hiring efforts of major employers](#). It was put together by the United States Business Leadership Network (USBLN) which operates [a network of affiliates across the country that can and has been before, through OFB partnerships \(page 181, collaborative agreements\), an incredible resource for your work](#). However, it should be a component of West Virginia’s planning and implementation of a serious business-to-business PR effort. The companies which scored 100% in the USBLN index can be a great resource. These are Ameren Corporation, AT&T, Booz Allen Hamilton Inc., Capital One Financial Corporation, Comcast, NBC Universal, Ernst & Young LLP, Florida Blue, Freddie

Mac, Highmark Health, JPMorgan Chase & Co., Lockheed Martin Corporation, Northrop Grumman Corporation, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC), Procter & Gamble, Qualcomm Incorporated, Sprint Corporation, Starbucks Coffee Company, and TD Bank N.A.

Polls and focus groups show that there are three types of messages and audiences that are needed to expand employment for people with disabilities. Serious communications campaigns are needed for all three:

- A. CEOs/business leaders need to understand the value proposition/business case for their specific company as to why they should focus on putting people with disabilities into their talent pipelines.** This is best done through business-to-business success stories. People with disabilities can work successfully in hotels, healthcare, tend our parks and facilities, assist aging seniors, and they can be super talents in developing computer software and engineering solutions. CEOs and business leaders need to know that people with disabilities can be the BEST people to get a job done.
- B. Human resources professionals and on-the-ground supervisors need to understand that hiring people with disabilities is generally easy and inexpensive, and that any costs incurred are more than offset from increased loyalty.** Hiring managers and supervisors are key players who can turn high minded policy and business goals into action at the ground level. However, studies show that many are uninformed about people with disabilities. They are afraid of potential legal action, costs, or other failures. They need supports that will empower them to overcome their own fears and to excel at recruiting, hiring, supervising, or working with teammates who have disabilities. VR staff and community agencies can fully support human resources professionals and managers in dealing with their own specific fears and stigmas surrounding hiring people with disabilities, and should do so, given that they are one of the few states who have opted to go for a dual-customer approach at their program centers. Moreover, online and in-person training is readily available to help from a variety of sources. RespectAbility has online webinars, as [does ASKJAN.org](#), USDOL and others. Partners like [the Poses Family Foundation Workplace Initiative](#) can provide training to the workforce staff and volunteers systems-wide as well as to community agencies in supporting companies through messaging efforts around related to fear and stigma. [The National Organization on Disability](#) and [the U.S. Business Leadership Network](#) offer strong resources as well.
- C. People with disabilities and their families need high expectations. From the time of diagnosis, education for high expectation must begin. West Virginia needs a public relations campaign that will inspire West Virginians with disabilities to set their hopes high, as low expectations and low self-esteem are a barrier to employment.** For example, Virgin Airways founder Sir Richard Branson and finance wizard Charles Schwab are also dyslexic. Scientist Stephen Hawking and multi-billionaire businessman Sheldon Adelson, like Gov. Greg Abbott of Texas and President Franklin D. Roosevelt before them, are wheelchair/mobility device users. The CEO of Wynn Casinos, Steve Wynn, is legally blind. Arthur Young, co-founder of the giant EY (formerly Ernst & Young) was deaf. Success sells success and that is something the workforce system should utilize in order to motivate and inspire in an intentional manner moving forward.

As an example of the power and value of making the business care for hiring people with disabilities, we offer West Virginia the insights gained from our [#RespectTheAbility](#) campaign. The campaign focuses on how hiring people with disabilities can make organizations stronger and more successful. It highlights the benefits to employers that look beyond the disability and imagine the possibility when hiring talented employees with disabilities.

4. Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act and Federal Contractors offer states the chance to innovate, collaborate, and expand opportunity:

Almost all of the state plans that we have reviewed have neglected to mention important rules surrounding the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Most State Plans lack references to the employment opportunities and talent challenges created by the recently implemented Section 503 regulations regarding federal contractors and subcontractors. Your State Plan does not discuss [the new 7% utilization goal set for companies](#) to recruit, hire, and retain qualified individuals with disabilities in all job categories.

West Virginia should respond to these newly enacted regulations by adopting a strategy focused on competitive advantage, not just compliance. These regulations and requirements entail far more than just new rules for businesses to play by. Section 503 is an opportunity that could potentially have a broad impact on the employer engagement work of the entire workforce system. The companies who must comply with Section 503 have an opportunity to teach companies not impacted by the regulations how to effectively employ, engage, and retain workers or customers with disabilities. Specific companies that should be included in your outreach efforts include Digital Management INC., URS Corporation, ACE Info Solutions INC., Rolling Bay L.L.C., and Alliant Techsystems INC.. More detailed information regarding federal contracts in [West Virginia can be found here](#).

5. Ensure that the Assurances in Your WIOA Checklist are matched up to a strategy to fully implement them and be successful:

The Common Assurances required of the entire workforce system and the program specific Assurances outlined in the West Virginia Unified State Plan on page 170 are critical factors in the overall implementation and ultimate success of WIOA. **As such, it is critical that each assurance is matched up with a strategy fitted to meeting and, if possible, exceeding the requirements of the law.**

For example, it is critical that the assurances listed on page 216 for Title 1-B Programs are matched up to specific strategies to achieve the “delivery of career and training services to individuals.” Further, the Wagner-Peyser Assurances on page 236 need careful implementation efforts as do the Adult Basic Education Assurances listed on page 280 and the VR assurances on pages 409 through 415.

As a good example of the level of detail needed here, consider WIOA Section 188. The anti-discriminatory rules originally outlined under WIA need to be updated to reflect the steps needed towards making universal access a reality. For example, in seeking to meeting Common Assurance #7 listed in the State Plan, we are directing states to consider the resources made available from the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP.) [They have recently released a guide that digs deep into what universal accessibility will mean for the workforce system.](#) Further, Common Assurance #10 affirms each state plan’s commitment to meeting the requirement that “one-stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one-stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.” However, merely meeting legal requirements should not be the end of this process. Indeed, looking at

physical and programmatic accessibility can be an opportunity to invest in a more proactive workforce system very actively committed to collaboration and partnerships. However, if there is no plan that specifically identifies how the state is going to get to the commitment made in the assurance, then West Virginia is facing a serious problem.

6. Avoid the Opportunity Costs of Focusing Too Much on One-Stop Centers. Programmatic and Database Accessibility and Privacy is Critically Important:

Public policy is about the allocation of scarce resources to meet infinite needs. It is vital to invest resources on those points where they can have the greatest effect. **One challenge that we have seen in many states WIOA plan has been the prioritization of expensive bricks and mortar One-Stops as the primary access point for programs and services under WIOA.** Focusing exhaustively on One-Stop Centers, physical infrastructure, and co-locating services comes at the opportunity cost of losing the chance to improve supports and increase outcomes.

On page 168 of West Virginia's Unified State Plan, we find the full summary of the Mountain State's efforts to ensure the accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System. We are particularly glad to see that West Virginia will be using [ODEP's Section 188 guides](#) as "a boilerplate in assuring compliance with Section 188 of WIOA." This document provides key guidance around best practices and we know it will help your system evolve. However, we take a different view of how to move the workforce system forward.

The workforce needs of state economies are evolving rapidly thanks to technology and globalization. Investing excessive resources on physical locations at the expense of improving online delivery of workforce services and supports is an example of looking backwards, not forwards. Moreover, [the District of Columbia and others have successfully moved much of their one-stop services to trained staff with laptops that go to schools, hospitals, and community organizations where they are better able to serve the public.](#)

With that said, there are other signs that West Virginia's workforce system is evolving in the right direction. We are glad to see the "Mid Atlantic Career Consortium (MACC) system" mentioned on 80. This "integrated case management, referral, and federal reporting system" that it provides and how it "supports WIOA, Wagner-Peyser, TAA, NEG, and Rapid Response programs" is an incredible asset for your workforce system. Further, starting on page 156, the State Plan discusses how West Virginia is moving towards "Data Alignment and Integration." Specifically, the State Plan states that "Going forward, partners will add interfaces to their information systems that will allow the real time exchange of information between all systems."

This is important work and has significant implications for West Virginians with disabilities. We would reiterate the critical importance of ensuring that all of these systems and databases must be fully accessible to people with disabilities who use screen readers or who need captions to understand videos that explain how to use the system. Lastly, a critical element of the applying the disability lens to this effort is the importance of ensuring privacy protections is in place in this new platform. Disability status, should not be shared where it is not needed and appropriate.

7. Establishing an affiliate chapter of the US Business Leadership Network in West Virginia will be a great tool for effectively engaging employers and reaching the right audience:

As we stated previously about communicating the business case for hiring people with disabilities, effective employer engagement is a necessary component of achieving improved employment outcomes. One of the most effective means of carrying that message forward is to

have a network of engaged businesses whose bottom line has benefited from the talents of employees with disabilities. Business to business communication can help tear down the misconceptions and stigmas which are barriers to employment.

From our review of the current draft of your Unified State Plan, we believe that you have many of the essential ingredients needed to capitalize on this type of effort. From our perspective, West Virginia's "Employer Partnership Programs", detailed on page 129, and is an example of the close collaborations needed to get more business to understand the competitive advantage of hiring people with disabilities. We would specifically encourage West Virginia to work with your employer partners in order to establish an affiliate chapter of the US Business Leadership Network (USBLN). You already have great employer partners and your successes would only be enhanced by connecting to the critical work being done by the BLNs in many states.

Establishing a BLN Chapter in does would help to organize the "knowledge of community outreach, recruiting and interviewing, the accommodation process and barriers" needed to sustain and expand the employment outcomes Nevada has already achieved.

Therefore we suggest that Nevada look to the successes achieved in Wyoming, which possesses one of the most effective affiliate chapters in the country. The Wyoming BLN, despite the challenges of a largely rural population and limited resources, has been achieving outstanding employment outcomes. We would be happy to provide Nevada's WIOA team with an introduction to Lynn Kirkbride the USBLN's Director of Affiliate Relations. She is an incredible asset and has extensive experience around overcoming barriers to employment. Her email is lynn@usbln.org and she can be reached by phone at (307) 631-0894. Her efforts, and those of the Wyoming BLN, offer profound insights into how to effectively engage employers around the business case for hiring people with disabilities.

8. Ensure that Apprenticeship Programs are Fully Accessible and Actively Recruiting Young People with Disabilities, Especially with Government Contractors:

The West Virginia State Plan does much to emphasize the critical important of apprenticeship programs. In particular, that emphasis directly references training opportunities for West Virginians with disabilities. On page 91 of the State Plan, the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services reports that it "is already providing services that will allow individuals with disabilities to avail themselves of work-based learning." As reported on page 107 of the State Plan, workforce development professional in West Virginia will leverage "business-education partnerships", including apprenticeship programs, in order to "identify common workforce needs of businesses." Further in Strategy 2.4 on page 109, the Unified State Plan commits to "promote the development of Registered Apprenticeship programs, with a focus on non-traditional industries and occupations." The Office of Apprenticeship will be responsible for this effort and "will provide technical assistance to grantees and will promote the creation and growth of apprenticeship programs beyond the grantees." Far too often people with disabilities are excluded from such training system or employment opportunities. However, the signs discussed above suggest that the lens of disability is being applied to these types of programs so that Kentuckians with disabilities, especially youth, can benefit from this type of training

As your partner agencies endeavor to turn these commitments into realities, we hope your workforce system will make full use of the best available resources to ensuring the accessibility of apprenticeships. At the federal level, the Office of Disability Employment Policy has worked hard to generate resources which can open up these exciting programs to "youth and young adults with a full range of disabilities." The regulations related to apprenticeship which have

recently come out of the Department of Labor provide states the flexibility they need to refine and design training programs that maximally inclusive of people with diverse talents. [We encourage you to invest time and energy to understand the best practices contained in ODEP's apprenticeship toolkit.](#)

Next, we have some thoughts on potential employer partners whom you could work with to create new “apprenticeship opportunities for students and youth with disabilities.” We would suggest that there is a critical opportunity to look at Section 503 and federal contractors as a partner in expanding apprenticeship programs. Funding to cover training costs could be a very attractive selling point for federal contractors looking to meet their 503 requirement. Further, we would also recommend looking at the intersection of apprenticeships and sector strategies. Not only can apprenticeships be set up in traditional fields such as construction, but they can also be incredibly useful in health care and computer jobs. Look at the successes achieved by Project Search at a wide range of employers in different sectors across the country. As such, we recommend that key leaders in West Virginia's workforce system and members of your State Board investigate how and to create apprenticeship opportunities in new career fields as well.

9. Overcome the gap between disability services and career services in Post-Secondary Education:

There is a fundamental disconnect in most post-secondary education programs between disability services and careers. This is not a new issue and it is one that other organizations have raised in the past. However, with the priorities put into place by the implementation of WIOA, there is a historic opportunity to bridge this gap and to improve career and technical education for young people with and without differences. As formulated by the National Organization on Disability, at most educational institutions, “the career services office, which assists students in preparing for” the workforce [“lack a strong—or any—connection to the office of disabled student services, which ensures proper accessibility and accommodations on campus for students with disabilities.”](#)

The result is a price we pay as a society is twofold. First, it costs employers who are unable to find qualified job candidates. Second, it costs students with disabilities who may be able to graduate with a degree thanks to accommodations but will go on to struggle to succeed in the working world. Nationally, there are 1.3 million young Americans ages 16-20 with disabilities. [They have high expectations to go into the workforce but currently only 53% of college graduates with disabilities are employed](#) as opposed to 84% of graduates with no disability. In total, only about 7% of people with disabilities will earn a college degree and less than half of the 2.3 million with a degree are employed.

[Due to the mandate created by Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act, federal contractors now have a utilization goal to make sure that 7% of their employees across all job groups be qualified people with disabilities.](#) This regulation is actually a huge opportunity because companies are actively looking to hire recent graduates with disabilities. The first place for new recruits is college and campus recruiting. Your state has the chance to demonstrate to business that college students with disabilities are on campuses and that they should be actively targeting those with disabilities just as they do all other diversity recruiting on college campuses.

While the statistics cited above are national ones, they have bearing on the work that needs to be done through your community college system. Beyond just WIOA, community colleges are uniquely positioned to innovate in order to expand opportunity. Community colleges are very closely connected to the working world and the specific training requirements of employers. A great discussion of this opportunity is found on page 129 of your Unified State

Plan. In this section, the State Plan reports that “Through its employer partnership programs, West Virginia’s community and technical colleges can provide the training an individual needs while leveraging a company’s training dollars to maximize worker productivity.” This is exciting work and we hope that the career services and work readiness needs of students with disabilities in West Virginia community college system will be fully addressed.

10. Getting Out the Word on Free and Accessible Services and Resources:

There are many online and in person resources to help employers and people with disabilities come together to build success. However, all the stakeholders need to be educated to know that these resources exist, and that they are free and user-friendly. These resources must also all be accessible. We know that broadband access is a huge issue in rural states. However, it’s important to ensure that online resources enhance the effort of your workforce system.

Your state needs to make an effort to demonstrate to employers and prospective employees that these services exist. Doing so by coordinating it with the possible public relations campaign is one way to go about this. Also, your state should be careful not to waste money trying to re-invent the wheel in creating online resources as ASKJAN.org, [the US Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment](http://theUSDepartmentofLabor’sOfficeofDisabilityEmployment) Policy, [our organization and](http://ourorganizationand) [others also offer free toolkits](http://othersalsoofferfreetoolkits), [webinars and training opportunities](http://webinarsandtrainingopportunities). [Another resource is Understood.org](http://AnotherresourceisUnderstood.org). This is a comprehensive resource to help families and individuals with learning and attention issues build their educational and career plans. It will be helpful to collaborate with those groups however to ensure that the best tools are created to fit the training and information needs on these issues.

11. Nothing About Us Without Us:

“Nothing About Us without Us” has long been a rallying cry for the one-in-five Americans who have a disability and it has implications for the workforce system. Section 107 of WIOA dictates the establishment, criteria, and membership for the Local Workforce Development Boards that are crucial implementers of each state’s overall workforce strategy. **As such, we feel there is a critical need to ensure that people with disabilities are represented on such local boards and make their voices heard.** Section 107(b)(2)(A)(iii) of WIOA specifically states that “community-based organizations that have demonstrated experience and expertise in addressing the employment needs of individuals with barriers to employment” may be represented on the boards and this includes “organizations....that provide or support competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities.”

Even a non-voting, ex-officio member of a WIB can bring critical perspectives that improve the WIB’s efforts overall. As such, we recommend that states look for ways to recruit local community organizations or self-advocates for inclusion on their local boards. Among the requirements set in WIOA is that “Where an alternative entity takes the place of a State Board, the State has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership.” Perhaps this could be a natural point of partnership for Independent Living Centers across the country that do crucial work supporting employment and independence for people with a wide range of disabilities.

12. Transportation is a vital component and it must be addressed directly:

One significant reservation that we have regarding many of the state plans that we have reviewed has been the limited attention given to the issue of transportation. This issue is

critically important for both people with disabilities and other low-income communities. Many people with disabilities do not drive. Others cannot afford private transportation.

Transportation as a barrier to employment is mentioned several times in different sections of the current draft of West Virginia's WIOA State Plan. On page 95, the current draft identifies "State Plan Policies." Among these policies are "Supportive services" which include "providing ancillary services like childcare, transportation, and counseling to facilitate program completion by those enrolled in training and education courses." Likewise in the section about "Core Program Activities to Implement State Strategy" on page 118, "transportation to enable eligible individuals to work or participate in employment and training activities" is listed among key "'wrap around' support services" intended to empower "those most in need and those with disabilities." Further, transportation is discussed as a critical barrier to employment on page 226 of the Unified State Plan. In this section about "agricultural employers" lack of "transportation to the job site" is highlighted a challenge in terms of recruiting "U. S. workers in WV" for farm jobs. Lastly, the clearest statement of this challenge is on page 289 of the State Plan in the dialogue between the State Rehab Council and the Department of Rehabilitation Services. "Observation 6" rightly reports that "Transportation issues continue to be a state and national concern", that a lack of "personal and public transportation has been a repeated challenge", and that "WV DRS offers varying opportunities for instruction in learning to drive when barriers are present." The Council's comments add to this where they recommend that DRS "counselors stress the IPE include driver's education training for students with disabilities." In their response to the Council, DRS reports that "In FY 2014, DRS provided transportation services to 1,330 consumers with the goal of increasing the number of consumers year after year." We are glad to see that VR in West Virginia has been working hard on this issue. Such efforts are critical because people with disabilities need transportation solutions.

Public transportation need not be the only solution. In places where it is not possible to coordinate a bus route, states could look at partnering with Uber, Lyft, or other new transportation solutions. For people with disabilities who do drive, [such companies as Uber and Lyft can also provide a way to enter into the workforce with flexible hours](#), so a state could also look at developing partnerships with these sorts of companies.

Public sector employers and federal contractors who have Section 503 obligations are key places for apprenticeships and internships and onboarding of talent. It is important for them to play a key role in planning for public transportation as well.

13. Aging workers and those who acquire disabilities need to be specifically addressed:

Attention should start BEFORE aging workers and those with recently acquired disabilities lose their job due to aging and/or a newly acquired disability. Many people who have been in the workforce for decades find that before full retirement age they cannot keep up with the physical demands of their jobs. It is vital to start working with them BEFORE they lose their jobs.

As such, we were disappointed to find that aging or older workers only received oblique references in the current draft of West Virginia's Unified State Plan. For example, on page 74, the State Plan mentions the "Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP)" as a partner participating in your state's "shared electronic referral system." Lastly, DRS includes "Seniors" when it comes to "its efforts to recruit and advance employees of traditionally under-represented groups" on page 325. There is critical work to be done as workers get older and before they exit the workforce. However, there is a unique chance to address this challenge and

we would encourage your state to look to the state of Iowa for ideas around innovative best practices to support older workers.

In Iowa, IVRS works with a major employer, Unity Point Hospital to “re-home” employees to other jobs within the same company when good workers can no longer do physical jobs and need a new assignment. They find that Emergency Room nurses, for example, come to a point where they can no longer keep up with the physical demands of that job. They have a department that works to “re-home” talented and valued employees who either age into a disability or acquire a disability through accident or illness. Empowering youth with disabilities to enter the workforce should be your highest priority, but keeping aging workers in the workforce until retirement age is also important. This will take a specific strategy and effort so that you don’t have massive numbers of people going onto disability rolls and out of the workplace prematurely.

14. Strategic Engagement to Build a Mentor System for Customers of the Workforce System:

Government can’t and shouldn’t do everything. There is a massive role that can be played by volunteers who are willing to help people with barriers to work, including people with disabilities, find and keep jobs. There is a critical, cooperative role for non-profits and faith-based organizations to play. Local workforce development areas, for example, could be encouraged to recruit volunteers from local faith communities or local non-profits. However, much more can and should be done to work with parents of teens and young adults with disabilities, and to create volunteer mentorships for people with disabilities who are looking for work or need supports to stay employed and/or grow their careers.

Faith-based organizations and many others can fill massive gaps. [There is a terrific booklet, Clearing Obstacles to Work, put out by the Philanthropy Roundtable that is rich with potential partners and proven programs.](#) This is a huge missed opportunity as you will see in the booklet we just mentioned above. It’s all about teaching people to fish (helping them get and keep a job) rather than just giving them fish. It is also important to note in terms of the SNAP and TANF programs that too many faith-based programs focus on giving out food without giving out the volunteer support to help people sustain themselves through gainful employment. [In looking to rethinking policies around SNAP funding, we suggest looking at the innovative efforts of the Seattle Jobs Initiative \(SJI\) to realign that funding into more productive, employment outcomes.](#)

15. The disability issues of people involved in the corrections system must be addressed:

There are several points where the current draft of West Virginia’s Unified State Plan addresses the unique workforce challenges facing ex-offenders as they attempt to reenter society. For example, on page 121 in the section about “Alignment of Activities outside the Plan”, the State Plan reports a commitment to “identify best practices to support” the work being done between “The office of Adult Education” as well as “the Office of Institutional Educational Programs (OIEP), the WV Department of Corrections (DOL) and other education stakeholders.” Likewise on that same page, the State Plan mentions that VR in West Virginia “continues to build new and strengthen existing partnerships with the Department of Correction” with a particular focus on “re-entry employment training to assist individuals with disabilities in the correctional system.” We are very glad to see these elements in your State Plan. Far too often, states have not been adding the **lens of disability to the work being done to meet the requirements under section 225 of WIOA.** The importance of this type of work is clear.

[According to recently published data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, “An estimated 32% of prisoners and 40% of jail inmates reported having at least one disability.”](#) This issue is a serious one and it needs to be addressed at the state level. Frequently people are involved in the criminal justice system because they have disability issues, including learning differences, ADHD, executive function, and mental health issues that went undiagnosed and/or unaddressed through childhood and into the school years.

Given these statistics from the BJS, it is vital that states identify how many of the individuals in the corrections system and in the ex-offender pipeline have disabilities. There are two related challenges here. First, there is a need to identify potential disability issues among inmates during the intake process and ensure their needs can be met. Ideally, this type of assessment could be done within the first thirty days of their sentence. Clearly from the State Plan, OFB has been working to address the needs of “consumers with visual disabilities who are offenders.” However, what about prisoners with other types of disabilities? Second, are the issues related to preparing inmates for their release and reintegration into society? Whether it is mental health supports or learning accommodations helping ex-offenders to find employ when they are home is a critical workforce development challenge. It is a challenge that only grows more complicated when a disability remains unaddressed. The price paid for ignoring these issue are higher rates of recidivism and greater costs to society. Addressing these issues at the beginning and at the end of the corrections process will have downstream effects and hopefully will enable states to address these workforce, disability, and justice issues.

Conclusion:

Looking solely at the employment rates among people with disabilities, West Virginia has the worst outcomes of any state in the country. Simply put, it can and must do better. This is an issue that West Virginia has the opportunity to address because of WIOA and it must be addressed through the State Plan. Failing to properly train and prepare job seekers with disabilities costs our state’s economy incredible talent and shatters the aspirations of so many people with disabilities who want to pursue the American Dream, just like everyone else.

The bottom line is that expanding job opportunities for people with disabilities is a win-win-win for employers, taxpayers and people with disabilities alike. It is good for employers because the loyalty, talent, and skills of workers with disabilities contribute to the employers’ bottom line. It is good for the workforce system because improving services and supports for job seeker with disabilities will benefit others with different barriers to employment. It is good for people with disabilities who want the dignity, pride, friendships, independence and income that work provides. We are happy to answer any questions you have and to help in any way.

Below are two data tables that provide detailed information ranking the states in terms of employment rates for people with disabilities as well as the employment gap between people with and without disabilities. This has been added to show you where each state ranks nationally.

APPENDIX – Ranking 50 States by Employment Rates and Employment Gap

Data Source- Chart 1: Table 2.1: Employment—Civilians with Disabilities Ages 18 to 64 Years Living in the Community for the United States and States: 2014 from the Annual Disability Statistics Compendium

Disability Employment Rate by State, 2014														
	State	%		State	%		State	%		State	%		State	%
1	South Dakota	50.1	12	Montana	40.5	23	Oklahoma	36.4	34	California	33.3	45	Arkansas	29.2
2	North Dakota	49.9	13	Connecticut	40.2	24	Oregon	36.4	35	Arizona	32.8	46	South Carolina	29.0
3	Iowa	46.5	14	New Hampshire	40.0	25	Indiana	36.2	36	Missouri	32.8	47	Mississippi	27.4
4	Nebraska	46.0	15	Kansas	39.8	26	Vermont	36.2	37	Maine	32.5	48	Kentucky	27.3
5	Wyoming	45.2	16	Wisconsin	39.8	27	Illinois	35.7	38	Louisiana	32.1	49	Alabama	27.2
6	Minnesota	44.4	17	New Jersey	39.2	28	Delaware	35.6	39	North Carolina	31.3	50	West Virginia	25.6
7	Utah	44.0	18	Maryland	39.1	29	Massachusetts	35.5	40	New Mexico	30.4		Washington D.C.	30.3
8	Hawaii	42.4	19	Idaho	38.8	30	Ohio	34.6	41	Florida	30.1			
9	Colorado	41.6	20	Texas	38.0	31	Pennsylvania	34.5	42	Tennessee	29.9		Source: Annual Disability Statistics Compendium	
10	Nevada	40.9	21	Washington	37.7	32	Rhode Island	33.9	43	Georgia	29.6			
11	Alaska	40.8	22	Virginia	37.6	33	New York	33.6	44	Michigan	29.6		United States	34.4

Data Source-Chart 2: Table 2.9: Employment Gap—Civilians Ages 18 to 64 Years Living in the Community for the United States and States, by Disability Status: 2014 Disability Statistics Compendium

The Difference in the Employment Gap Between Disabled and Non Disabled Adults 2014														
	State	Gap		State	Gap		State	Gap		State	Gap		State	Gap
50	Maine	47.4	39	Mass.	43.5	28	Delaware	40.7	17	Minnesota	38.5	6	Alaska	35.3
49	Kentucky	47.1	38	Georgia	43.5	27	New York	40.4	16	Washington	38.3	5	Hawaii	34.2
48	South Carolina	45	37	Florida	43.3	26	Louisiana	40.3	15	Nebraska	37.9	4	South Dakota	33.6
47	Michigan	45	36	Mississippi	43.1	25	Virginia	40	14	Connecticut	37.7	3	Utah	33.5
46	West Virginia	44.9	35	N. Carolina	43	24	Illinois	40	13	Colorado	37.4	2	Nevada	33.4
45	Arkansas	44.6	34	Ohio	42.5	23	Kansas	39.9	12	Texas	37.3	1	North Dakota	32.1
44	Tennessee	44.5	33	Pennsylvania	42	22	Arizona	39.7	11	New Jersey	37.3		Washington DC	45.2
43	Missouri	44.4	32	Wisconsin	41.4	21	Oklahoma	39.2	10	Montana	37.3			
42	Vermont	44.2	31	New Hampshire	41.3	20	Maryland	39.1	9	Idaho	37			
41	Alabama	44.1	30	New Mexico	40.8	19	California	38.9	8	Wyoming	35.9			
40	Rhode Island	43.8	29	Indiana	40.7	18	Oregon	38.5	7	Iowa	35.7			
													USA	40.3



RESPECTABILITY

WV and Jobs for PwDs

Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, President

www.RespectAbilityUSA.org

West Virginia



Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin (D)

- ❖ 70.5% of persons without disabilities aged 18 to 64 are employed.³
- ❖ 25.6% of PwDs aged 18 to 64 are employed.³
- ❖ **W. Virginia ranks 50th in the country in terms of jobs of PWDs.**
- ❖ **There is a 44.9 percentage point gap on the Labor Force Participation Rates (LFPR) between people with and without disabilities.**
- ❖ 362,447 people in WV have a disability.³
- ❖ 7,700 persons aged 16 to 20 have a disability.¹
- ❖ 202,900 persons aged 21 to 64 have a disability.¹
- ❖ 45,400 PwDs aged 18 to 64 receive benefits.¹
- ❖ In 2014, WV's total expenditure on SSDI benefits was \$1,469,184,000.³
- ❖ Voc. Rehab. received 9,906 general applicants in WV 2013.³
- ❖ Voc. Rehab. obtained 3,141 jobs for PwDs in WV in 2013.³

1. 2013 Disability Status Report: West Virginia, disabilitystatistics.org

2. StateData: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes, 2013

3. [Annual Disability Statistics Compendium](#)

West Virginia

		People with Disabilities (%)		People without Disabilities (%)	
		2013	2014	2013	2014
Poverty ¹	US	28.7	28.2	13.6	13
	WV	31.4	27	15.2	15.6
Smoking ¹	US	25.4	24.5	16.2	15.3
	WV	33.1	31.5	24.8	24.4
Obesity ¹	US	40.1	41.1	25.0	25.2
	WV	42.8	45.1	31.4	31.2
Employment ¹	US	33.9	34.4	74.2	75.4
	WV	25.3	25.6	70.6	70.5

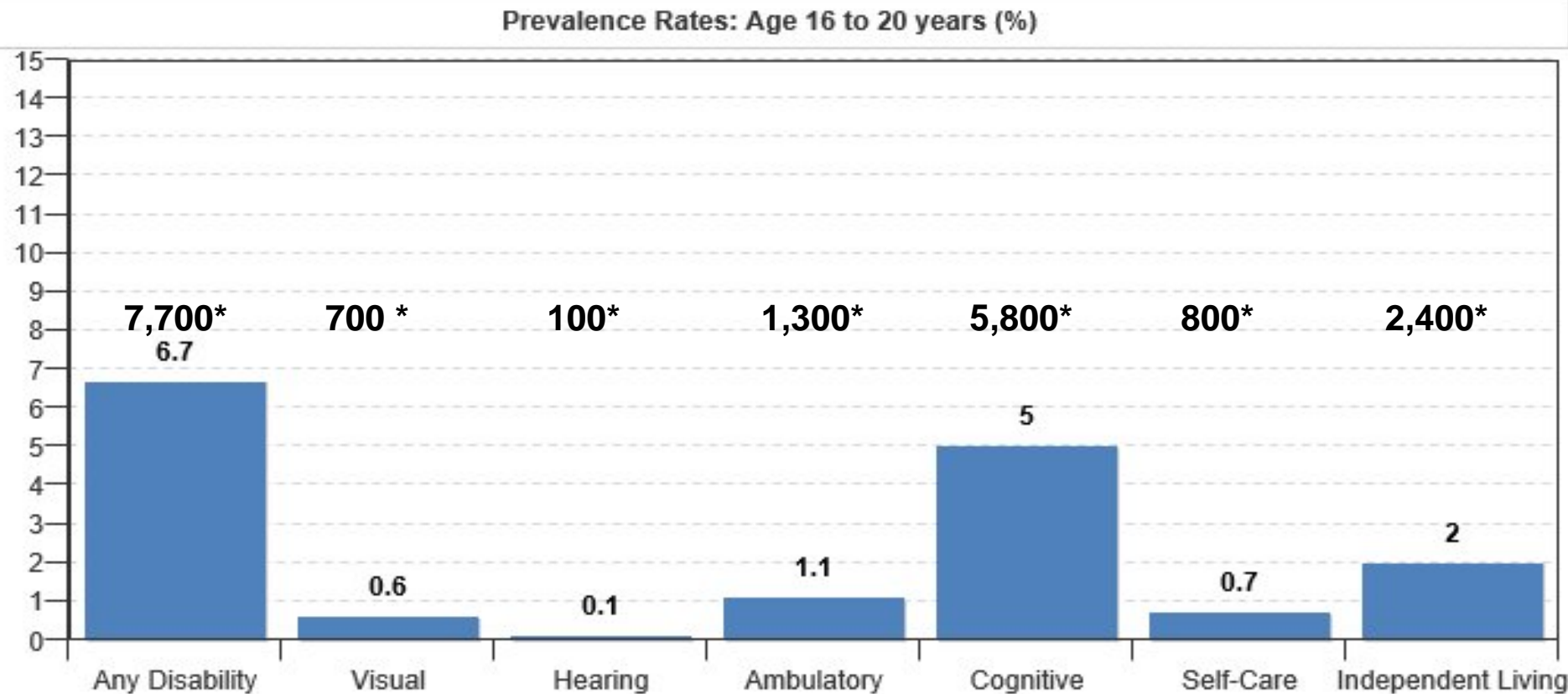
[1. Annual Disability Statistics Compendium.](#)

Ages 6 to 21 IEPs by Category WV

	2012	2013
All Disabilities	39,004	39,004
Specific Learning Disability	11,923	12,156
Speech or Language Impairment	10,787	10,406
Intellectual Disability	6,852	6,749
Emotional Disturbance	1,479	1,356
Multiple Disability	0	0
Hearing Impairment	398	397
Orthopedic Impairment	123	111
Other Health Impairment	5,553	5,811
Visual Impairment	252	250
Autism	1,530	1,667
Deaf Blindness	10	10
Traumatic Brain Injury	97	99
Developmental Delay	0	0

Source: [Annual Disability Statistics Compendium](#)

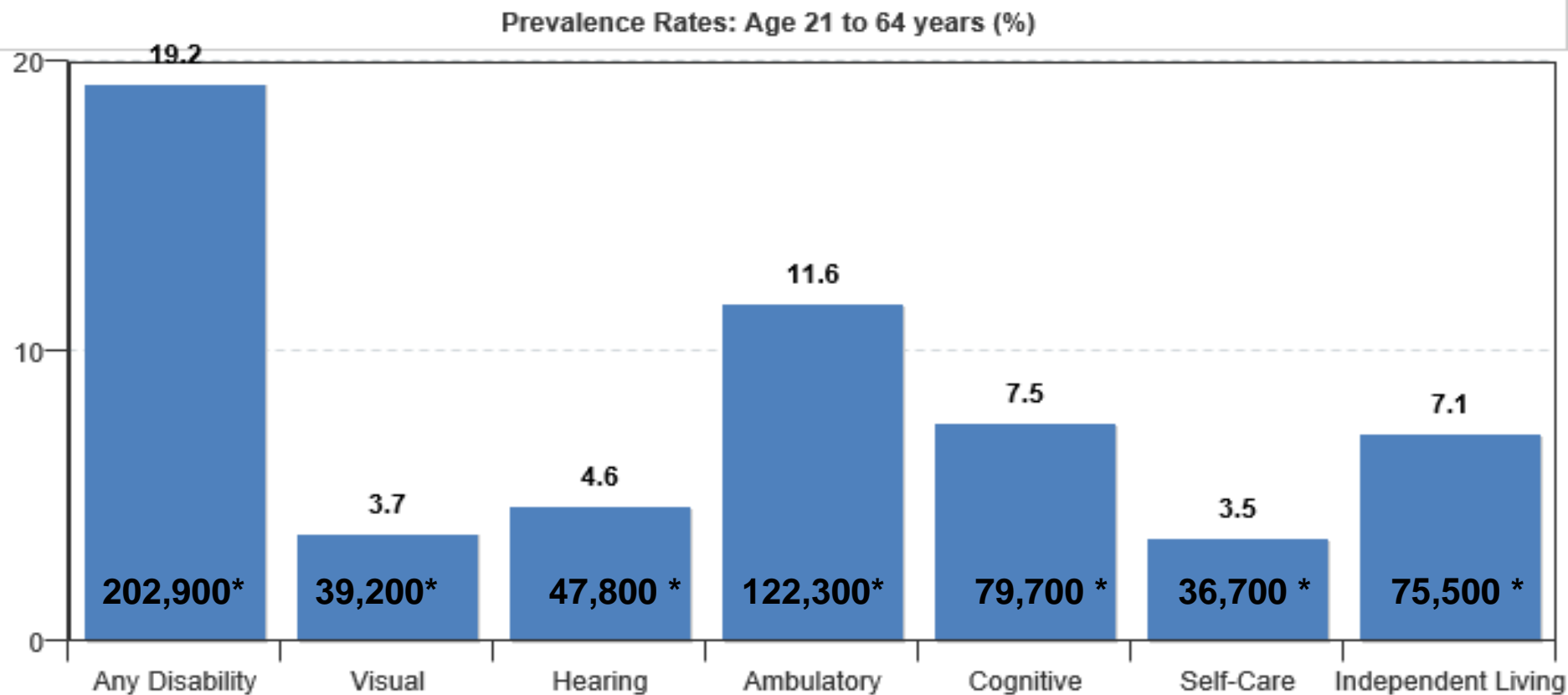
Prevalence of disability among non-institutionalized people ages 16 to 20 in West Virginia in 2013



*Total numbers reported

Source: [Cornell University](#)

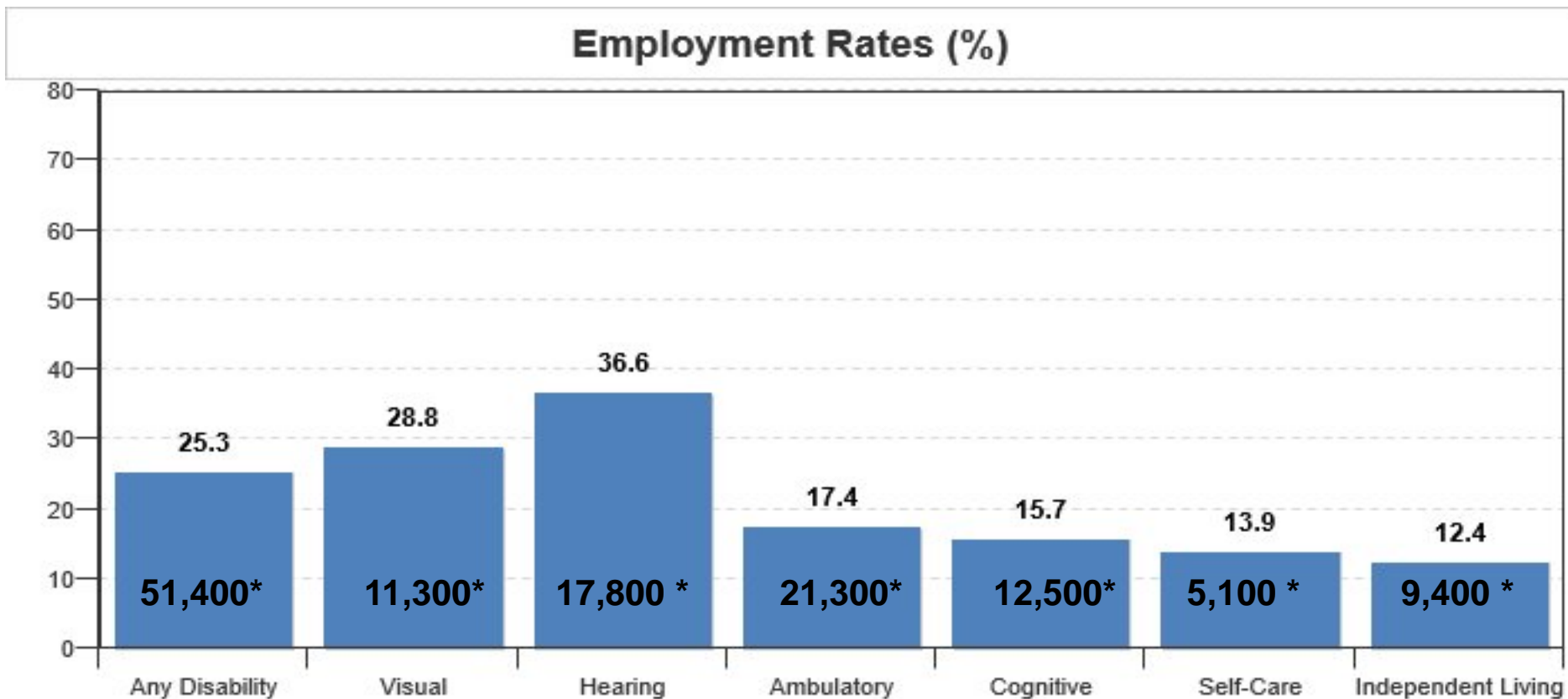
Prevalence of Disability Among Non-Institutionalized People Ages 21 to 64 in West Virginia in 2013



*Total numbers reported

Source: [Cornell University](#)

Employment of Non-Institutionalized Working-Age People (Ages 21 to 64) by Disability Status in West Virginia in 2013



*Total numbers reported

Source: [Cornell University](#)

Project SEARCH: Program Description

- ❖ One school year or 9 months.
- ❖ 10 – 12 young adults with a variety of intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- ❖ Instructor and job coaches.
- ❖ Immersed in host business culture.
- ❖ Rotations through unpaid internships with continual feedback.
- ❖ Outcome of employment in the community.

Project SEARCH: HUGE \$ SAVER!

The Project SEARCH
Definition of a Successful
Outcome:

- ❖ Competitive employment in an integrated setting.
- ❖ Year-round work.
- ❖ 16 hours per week or more.
- ❖ Minimum wage or higher.

- ❖ 273 programs in 44 states.
- ❖ 2500 young people per year.
- ❖ 60% healthcare, 40% broad mix of business types.
- ❖ 68% employment.
- ❖ 88% employee benefit eligible.
 - 35% take employee benefits, usually at 5 years.
 - Benefits alone save roughly 1 million dollars over a lifetime.
 - Family involvement curriculum to drive familial change in attitude.

Contact Project SEARCH

Project SEARCH: www.projectsearch.us

Contact Erin Riehle at Erin.Riehle@cchmc.org

Which Employers in Your State Must Meet 503 Rules (Hire PwDs)?

❖ Top contractors:

- Digital Management INC.
- URS Corporation
- ACE Info Solutions INC.
- Rolling Bay L.L.C.
- Alliant Techsystems INC.

See the complete list on the [fed spending website](http://www.fedspending.org/fpds/fpds.php?stateCode=WV&sortp=r&detail=-1&datatype=T&reptype=p&database=fpds&fiscal_year=2012&submit=GO)

http://www.fedspending.org/fpds/fpds.php?stateCode=WV&sortp=r&detail=-1&datatype=T&reptype=p&database=fpds&fiscal_year=2012&submit=GO

How to get started: Job Accommodation Network → <https://askjan.org/>

US Business Leadership Network → <http://usbln.org/>

Jobs in West Virginia

- ❖ Over the next decade, many health-related industries are expected to grow, including ambulatory health care services, hospitals, nursing and residential care facilities, and health and personal care stores. Not surprisingly, registered nurses dominate openings in the health care industry, but other health sector occupations are expected to post significant growth also.
- ❖ Projecting moderate to substantial growth will also be seen throughout leisure and hospitality and will include such industries as food services and drinking places, accommodation, and amusement, gambling, and recreation facilities.
- ❖ Some manufacturing is expected to grow, including wood products and transportation equipment.
- ❖ Highly technical occupations experiencing high demand include computer systems analysts, network systems and data communications analysts, and computer software engineers.
- ❖ The coal miner sector continues to mine the same amount of coal or more than it did a decade ago, but with far fewer workers. The technological advance of this industry has produced sophisticated machinery that requires considerable knowledge and experience from its workers.

http://workforceinvestmentworks.com/workforce_board_info.asp?st=WV

- ❖ Click for [Your Workforce Development Board](http://workforceinvestmentworks.com/workforce_board_info.asp?st=WV)

http://workforceinvestmentworks.com/workforce_board_info.asp?st=WV

- ❖ Click for West Virginia's [Workforce Strategic Plan, 2012-2016](http://www.wvcommerce.org/App_Media/assets/doc/businessandworkforce/workforcewv/publicnotices/West_Virginia's_Five_Year_Plan_Final_3.7.2013.pdf)

http://www.wvcommerce.org/App_Media/assets/doc/businessandworkforce/workforcewv/publicnotices/West_Virginia's_Five_Year_Plan_Final_3.7.2013.pdf

Resources

- ❖ StateData: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes, 2013 (data from 2012)
- ❖ 2012 Disability Status Report United States, Cornell University, 2012: www.disabilitystatistics.org
- ❖ Fedspending: www.fedspending.org
- ❖ Project SEARCH: www.projectsearch.us
- ❖ Job Accommodation Network: <https://askjan.org/>
- ❖ State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency:
http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/Programs/EROD/org_list.cfm?category_cd=SVR
- ❖ RespectAbilityUSA: www.respectabilityusa.org

Let Us Know If We Can Help!

We have many resources for policy makers and employers on our website and are ready to help!

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