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March 30, 2016

RespectAbility – Public Comments – Louisiana WIOA Combined State Plan

RespectAbility is pleased to submit the following comments regarding the current draft of Louisiana's Combined 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.

Louisiana has the opportunity to work hard to improve outcomes in terms of competitive, integrated employment for people with disabilities. **Your state ranks 38th in the country in terms of the employment rate of people with disabilities. Only 32.1% of the approximate 366,981 working age Louisianans with disabilities are employed. Further, there are over 23,100 youth ages 16-20 with disabilities and each year a quarter of them will age out of school into an uncertain future.**

Thanks to WIOA, Louisiana has the chance to invest resources in successful models and implement best practices to expand job opportunities for people with disabilities. Your state has much to learn from other states that have worked hard to achieve improved employment outcomes. Other states have higher than 50% employment rates for their citizens with disabilities. [States like the Dakotas, Alaska, and Wyoming have achieved increase results by putting best practices into places.](#) We think Louisiana can do the same. The experience of these states shows ways that Louisiana can dramatically improve their outcomes.

To help 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 Louisiana.** That information is attached to our comments.

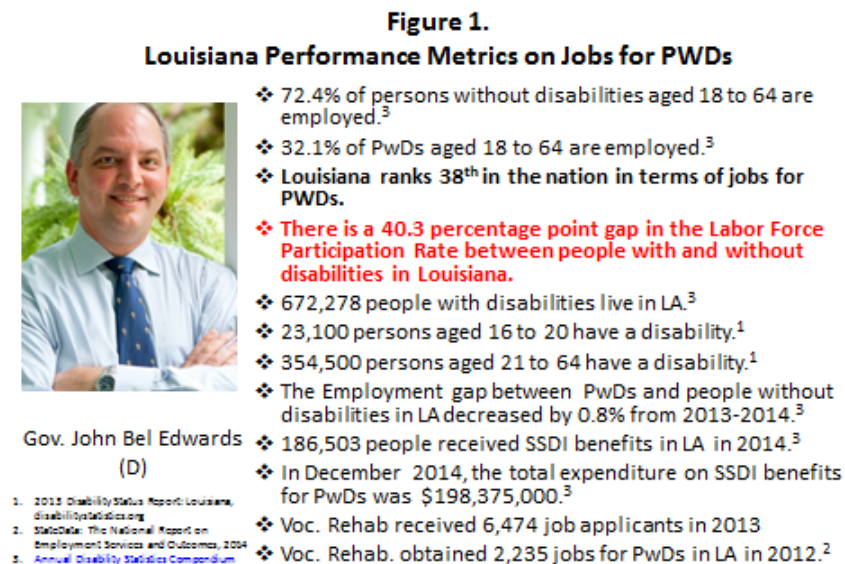
We know that Louisiana faces significant barriers in terms of empowering more people with disabilities to pursue employment. **For example, since 2008, your state has returned over \$100 million dollars of vocational rehabilitation funding to Washington D.C. that would have been better spent empowering Louisianans with disabilities to enter the workforce.** However, your state recently had an election and with a new Administration come new opportunities. Empowering more people with disabilities to succeed in the world of work requires committed leaders and in many states, Governors are real champions on this issue. We hope that Governor Edwards will push hard and make jobs for his state's citizens with disabilities a priority. Fortunately, there are many elements of your Combined State Plan that will help this effort. Louisiana's emphasis on cooperation among agencies, and the desire to improve and self-evaluate, are all very encouraging and should be commended. However, no Plan is perfect. There are certain areas where Louisiana must create a more focused strategy for people with disabilities, and other areas where Louisiana must apply an already effective strategy to people with disabilities. In particular, better data on the disability community is needed.

From data points on Louisianans with disabilities 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 Louisianans 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

Having reviewed your State Plan, we are critically concerned about the lack of good data points on disability in the current draft of Louisiana's State Plan. We fear that this means your state leaders do not know what steps need to be taken to support people as they overcome barriers to employment. **What gets measured gets done – and you are not measuring important performance metrics nor do you include enough detail on disability.**

Having reviewed the current draft of your State Plan, we are deeply concerned about the lack of good data points regarding the size and composition of Louisiana's disability community. **In fact, there are only minimal data points in the State Plan regarding people with disabilities living in Louisiana and what information your Plan does include are buried away in the section on VR. Given that this is a draft version of your State Plan, we implore you to update the draft to include several additional data points on disability and employment in Louisiana before you submit it to the Department of Labor.**

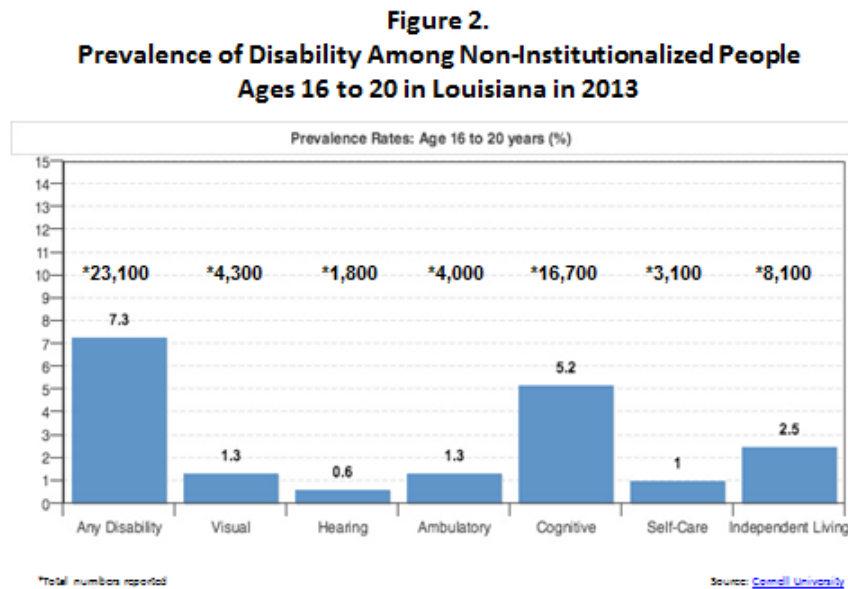


Greater precision is needed for the workforce system to evolve to tap into the labor resource that the disability community represents. More information is needed about the composition of Louisiana's disability community and clearer data is needed about what types of disabilities make up the total number. Further, your state plan lacks a clear sense of how many youth have disabilities in Louisiana and thereby it will be more difficult for your state to focus on empowering them. Lastly, we are concerned the current draft of your State Plan does not satisfy the specific requirements of Section 3 of WIOA that "must include an analysis of the current workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment."

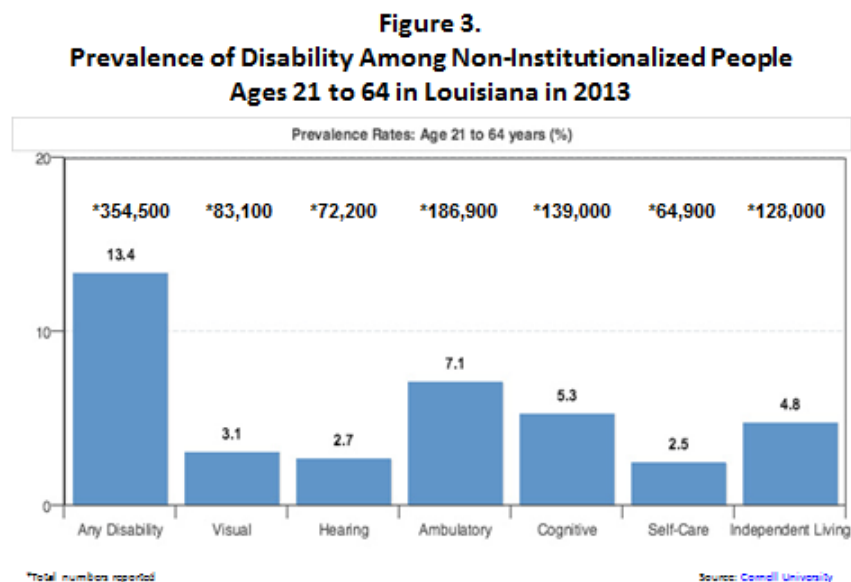
Tracking unemployment information (which only reflects people actively looking for jobs) and job placements (which only monitors people who interface directly with the workforce system) is necessary, but not sufficient to drive true performance metrics that will create success. From Figure 5 on page 14 of your State Plan to the national and state trends detailed on page 16, it is clear that your state has access to solid data on trends in the labor force participation rate (LFPR). This is a critical piece of puzzle because the LFPR is, from our perspective, the most

important data point. As such, it is critical that the final version of your State Plan include the LFPR for people with and without disabilities. Further, we also hope that the LFPR drive the design of your state performance metrics. **Below are the key data points we feel are needed:**

- A. Those who are aging into the workforce (ages 16-20).** If your state's workforce system is to be fully successful at improving transitions to work for youth with disabilities in Louisiana, then it is imperative your system have good data on youth who are aging into the workforce.



- B. Data is needed on disability types among working age people with disabilities.** The experience of disability is diverse and includes a wide range of differences both visible and invisible. According to the most recent data, there are 354,000 working age people with disabilities between the ages of 21 and 64. It is critical to distinguish between working age people and people who age into disability.



C. What types of disabilities do youth have who are transitioning into the workforce?

This type of 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 high skill, high wage jobs. To support the success of youth with cognitive disabilities, it will be critical for Louisiana to provide early work experiences and skill training.

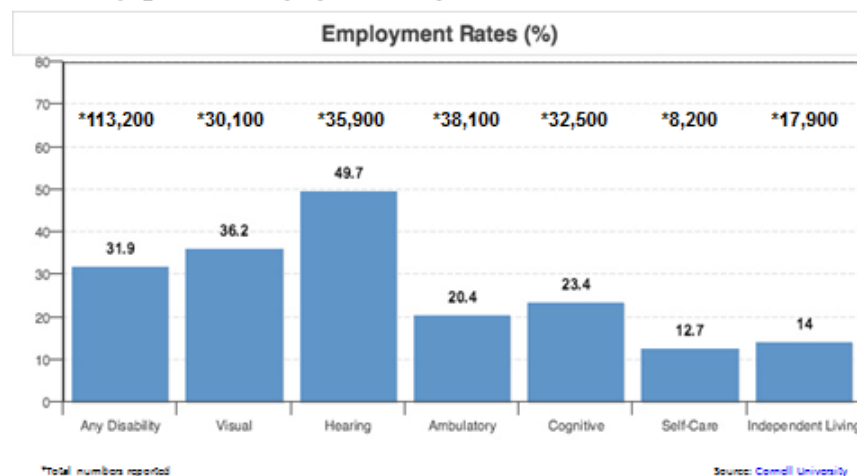
Figure 4.
Ages 6 to 21 IEPs by Category in LA

	2012	2013
All Disabilities	70,029	68,883
Specific Learning Disability	23,196	23,307
Speech or Language Impairment	14,931	13,137
Intellectual Disability	7,185	7,108
Emotional Disturbance	1,756	1,734
Multiple Disability	944	922
Hearing Impairment	1,148	1,124
Orthopedic Impairment	1,066	1,019
Other Health Impairment	9,553	9,548
Visual Impairment	477	469
Autism	3,683	3,970
Deaf Blindness	5	3
Traumatic Brain Injury	228	229
Developmental Delay	5,857	6,313

Source: [Annual Disability Statistics Compendium](#)

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 Louisiana in 2013



All this data is already readily available, but is missing from most WIOA plans and strategies. Each state needs to have the right tools and training to fit their population and the

labor demands of their employers. **As an example of the data that is needed, we have submitted with our comments, a copy of the presentation our organization has compiled about employment for people with disabilities in Louisiana**

Louisiana's Plan shows an impressive commitment to using and sharing data to best achieve its goals. We commend your emphasis on the use performance metrics in program evaluation. We simply want to ensure that Louisiana is using the best, most representative data available in measuring its performance. We are very pleased to see Louisiana include the Labor Force Participation Rate in its Plan beginning on page 6. **However, we recommend that the Labor Force Participation Rates, especially the gap between people with and without disabilities in the workforce, be included as a performance metric.** It is far more representative of the barriers people with disabilities are facing and is the best performance metric for monitoring their employment. This gap should be included in your "Assessment and Evaluation Section" beginning on page 94, and also in Appendix 1: Performance Goals for the Core Programs.

Furthermore, we recommend that disability status be included in your breakdown of employment status among various populations beginning on page 17 in Table 10 and continuing on page 18 in Table 11. Race, gender, and age are included but disability status is not.

2. Strong Sector Strategies- The need for strategic alignment of workforce development and economic development to expand employment for people 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.

We find the clearest statement of these opportunities beginning on page 7 of the Combined State Plan in the section entitled: "Economic Analysis." This section clearly states where talent needs have been growing in Louisiana's economy and where sectors have been losing ground. As noted on page 10 in Figure 1, **Louisiana projects the leading industry sectors in 2022 to be Health Care and Social Assistance, Retail Trade, and Accommodation and Food Services.** These are all industries where people with disabilities can contribute. Furthermore, as stated on page 14, 67% of job vacancies in Louisiana require a high school degree or less, and over 80% do not require a college degree. People with disabilities should have plenty of opportunities to participate in the workforce, as many of them do not have a college degree. As Louisiana's workforce system looks for strategies to create a talent pipeline to meet these demands in both the agriculture and "nonfarm" industry sectors, we seriously encourage you to include people with disabilities in your thinking process. **People with disabilities represent an untapped labor resource that can meet the diverse talent needs of our nation's growing job sectors.** The job gains in the sectors discussed above offer a great opportunity for focused sector strategies to achieve improved outcomes.

a. Health and Elder Care:

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.

The State Plan projects continued growth in the field of “Health Care and Social Assistance.” **People with disabilities can and should be part of the solution to this demand in the labor market.** To quote [a 2014 report from the Office of Disability Employment Policy \(ODEP\)](#), “[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.**

These examples all reflect how the Project SEARCH model is well suited to meeting the growing talent needs in health care across the many states. As such, we recommend that Project SEARCH be utilized and expanded in Louisiana’s WIOA Plan. Unfortunately, there are no Project SEARCH sites in Louisiana. However, this gives the State, under Governor Edwards’ leadership, a great opportunity to partner with Project SEARCH to establish sites in Louisiana. 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. **Project SEARCH should be included in Louisiana’s Pre-Employment Transition Services, and ultimately the Plan should be amended to include it as Project SEARCH enters Louisiana.** 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 27. The experiences of the dedicated state officials, VR counselors, workforce professionals, and special educators who have increased Wisconsin’s Project Search programs offer profound insights in the steps necessary to make rapid expansion a reality. 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. Science, Tech, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and The Autism Advantage:

Exciting opportunities for improving employment outcomes for people with disabilities lay in the fields related to STEM jobs. **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.** This could be a very powerful resource for Louisiana. **As listed in Table 6 on page 10, the “Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services” sector is expected to grow by 22.6%, adding 19,614 new jobs between now and 2022.** STEM-related jobs are the future and can greatly strengthen Louisiana’s economy.

Companies including [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.](#) Other states should be looking 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. **When a student’s IEP and/or Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) are being formulated, STEM-related jobs should be considered.**

c. 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. **Louisiana has projected the “Accommodation and food services” industry to add 25,745 jobs between now and 2022.**

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 done by Embassy](#)

[Suites and David Scott](#) in Omaha, Nebraska offers [valuable lessons states as they look to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities](#). State Boards, along with other components of the workforce system, including the Regional Business Service Teams, should connect with employers in the hospitality sector 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. Given the prevalence of Fortune 500 companies headquartered in Louisiana, including Walmart, there are plenty of employment opportunities available for people with disabilities in retail. These companies 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.

d. Jobs with state government 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. In the year ahead, the workforce of many state governments is likely to be impacted by the cresting wave of Baby Boomers retiring just as other sectors are being shaken.

As such, adopting affirmative actions to hire people with disabilities could be a solution to this coming challenge. Other states have adopted such steps as an opportunity measure in their state hiring policies. This was first discussed in Governor Markell's *Better Bottom Line* Initiative and later in RespectAbility's *Disability Employment First Planning* Toolkit. 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.](#)"

More state governments should explore the feasibility of Affirmative Action hiring of people with disabilities for jobs in state government plus expanding state contracting obligations similar to the model we see in Section 503 for Federal contractors. [Governor Inslee in Washington State](#) and [Governor Dayton in Minnesota](#) have been working to implement such measures for people with disabilities through executive orders. [Likewise, we are also seeing great success with governmental hiring of people with disabilities at the local level in Montgomery County Maryland.](#) The untapped potential of people with disabilities is such that a full-spectrum, all-of-the-above-and-more approach is needed. While our priority is on seeing the talents of people with disabilities channeled into the private sector, employment opportunities in the public sectors shouldn't be over looked as part of the state's overall workforce strategy.

e. Agriculture:

For states like Louisiana where agriculture is a key industry, [there is an opportunity to replicate the success of TIAA-CREF's Fruits of Employment project that provides internships and job training to workers with disabilities to prep them for careers in competitive agriculture. Farmers in Georgia have already had success with a program designed to reduce barriers persons with disability face in agricultural fields.](#) People with disabilities should be included in your Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP), as detailed beginning on page 128. **Given that agriculture contributed \$7 billion to Louisiana's economy,** it is critical that people with disabilities be included in consideration for jobs in agriculture.

3. Busting Stigmas, Myths, and Misconceptions Should Be a Key Part of 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 Louisiana’s Combined 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.** Louisiana’s Plan demonstrates a commitment to overcoming the barriers facing people with disabilities. However, it is important to understand that the barriers to gaining employment are not only physical. Attitudinal barriers can be just as detrimental as physical inaccessibility. Indeed, the stigmas, myths, misconceptions, and stereotypes that Louisianans with disabilities face are serious barriers that your workforce system needs to address.

The need for a proactive strategy should be included on page 173 in the Plan’s section titled “Section J: Statewide Needs Assessment.” This marketing strategy should not be limited to increasing awareness of the litany of services provided by Vocational Rehabilitation. It should also include a communications campaign that will break down the barriers people with disabilities face when seeking employment. **A systematic PR Campaign will also help to reduce the amount of money spent on benefits as people with disabilities gain employment and it will help create a more seamless transition path.**

A great example of what we have in mind comes from South Dakota, which currently has the highest employment rate for people with disabilities of any state in the nation. [Governor Dugaard recently launched](#) something called the “[Ability for Hire Campaign](#)” which aims for fight stigma by showcasing the incredible value that employees with disabilities bring to the work place. This is a model that Louisiana should seriously study and replicate. As we will reiterate multiple times in our comments, getting employers engaged and talking about how employees with disabilities benefit the bottom line of their companies is the necessary step for achieving improved outcomes.

In terms of potential employer partners to help with this campaign, 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 be an incredible resource for your work.](#)

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. We are pleased to see Louisiana's focus on and appreciate for developing strong business partnerships. These partnerships can be utilized in this PR strategy.
- 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](https://www.asjkjan.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. Louisiana needs a public relations campaign that will inspire Louisianans 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 seriously utilize in order to motivate and inspire in an intentional manner moving forward. We are pleased to see that Louisiana understands this and has included it in their plan in its goal to increase collaboration with businesses and to begin youth employment plans in as early as possible.

4. Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act and Federal Contractors offer Louisiana 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. With very few exceptions, the state plans do not discuss at all the new 7% utilization goal set for companies to recruit, hire, and retain qualified individuals with disabilities in all job categories. **Unfortunately, the current draft of Louisiana’s Combined State Plan lacks any references to the disability employment opportunities and talent challenges facing federal contractors.**

Louisiana 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 Textron Inc., Computer Sciences Corp., Clark/McCarthy Healthcare Partners a Joint Venture, Gulf Intracoastal Constructors a Joint Venture, and Placid Refining Company. More detailed information regarding federal contracts in [Louisiana 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 State Plan 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.

We are glad to see Louisiana acknowledge the importance of WIOA’s Common Assurances. We commend Louisiana for addressing each Common Assurance and each program-specific Assurance individually and referring readers to the proper section/authority. However, **beginning on page 108, we would like to see more detail provided in terms of a focused strategy for implementing those common assurances.** This could mean providing focused strategies within this “Section V-Common Assurances” section, or, the Plan could include the individual common assurance in other places in the Plan where they might be better addressed and easier to organize.

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 on page 74, 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.

6. Avoid the Opportunity Costs of Focusing Too Much on One-Stop Centers. Programmatic and Database Accessibility and Privacy Are 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 brick 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.

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.](#) Page 66 of the Plan discusses mobile workforce units. This is an excellent initiative by the state of Louisiana and could easily be applied to helping people with disabilities gain successful employment, in conjunction with Louisiana's Business Service Units and/or Regional Business Service Teams. It would allow career coaches to work with people with disabilities without requiring the use of a physical one-stop center.

Louisiana has numerous other progressive initiatives, including Louisiana Career Pathways, Star Jobs, and "My life. My way"...just to name a few. Making one-stop centers available via remote access, as described on page 62, is an excellent initiative. But are they fully accessible for people with disabilities? Does it include specific disability issues? This goes back to the importance of using a "disability lens." Louisiana has conveyed some excellent programs; we just want to make sure a disability lens is used to view these programs so that people with disabilities have access to them. **This should all be included in the Plan's "Addressing Accessibility" section beginning on page 103.**

We simply want to capitalize on these excellent programs and ensure that these programs are inclusive of people with disabilities and are programmatically and technologically accessible.

Additionally, considerable thought needs to take place around the creation of a unified intake system for the workforce system and government benefits programs. Those shared 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. Thought also needs to go into privacy issues, as private disability issues should not be shared where it is not needed and appropriate.

7. Effective employer engagement depends on fully bringing your state's affiliate chapter of the US Business Leadership Network to the WIOA table:

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 benefitted from the talents of employees with disabilities. Business to business communication can help tear down the misconceptions and stigmas which are barriers to employment.

Because Louisiana does have a state chapter of the US Business Leadership Network, we are recommending that you include them in your Plan. We are pleased that Louisiana has a Business Services Unit and that the Louisiana has a Job Corps with three sites, as mentioned on

page 33. However, the lack of a US BLN chapter limits the flexibility and capability of states to engage employers around hiring people with disabilities. As such, we highly recommend that the appropriate staff both in the workforce system and VR work with the employer partners to formalize their intersections through the establishment of a formal relationship with the Louisiana chapter. Including the Louisiana BLN Chapter in the Plan would help to organize the “knowledge of community outreach, recruiting and interviewing, the accommodation process and barriers” needed to achieve improved outcomes. **Louisiana’s business partnerships would certainly benefit from tapping into the national structure of the USBLN and their resources.**

It is also imperative that Louisiana’s BLN chapter is included at the WIOA table. **The State Board roster on page 92 should be amended to include a representative from Louisiana’s USBLN chapter.** We encourage Louisiana to look at the successes achieved in Wyoming, which possesses one of the most effective, engaged, and active 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. **Larry Dale is the director of the Louisiana Business Leadership Network. His e-mail is larry@lbnl.org.** More information about [Louisiana’s chapter can be found at here](#).

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

One of the often-neglected opportunities for people with disabilities is the training opportunities offered by apprenticeship programs. We are pleased to see that Louisiana values apprenticeship programs, referring to them in its Plan on page 33, as well as in its efforts to form and maintain partnerships with employers. This is critical work and it is work that needs to be viewed through the lens of disability.

As your state looks to improve apprenticeship programs, **we highly recommend that the workforce system seriously look at ways to make apprenticeships more accessible to people with disabilities.** For example, programs like the Registered Apprenticeship (RA) Program, as described on page 69, should be amended to specifically include and target people with disabilities. Additionally, the **Louisiana Jump Start Initiative, detailed on page 68, should be amended to include people with disabilities.** 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. Further, we would also highly recommend that VR staff connect and collaborate with the Federal officer responsible for apprenticeship programs in your state or region.](#) Such innovative partnerships and improved accessibility are essential elements of realization the full promise of WIOA for people with disabilities.

We would also like to see more active recruitment of people with disabilities. Your Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation beginning on page 147 should be amended to include the RA Program, and other opportunities for apprenticeships for people with disabilities.

Further, we would also 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. As such, we recommend that the workforce system and the State Board investigate how to both open apprenticeship programs to people with disabilities 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.

Page 26, in the Economic Analysis section, reads: “Our education system should not be one-size-fits-all. It must be better aligned to prepare students for both college and the workplace.” We absolutely agree and are encouraged the Louisiana appreciates this. This is why career services in Post-Secondary Education must be aligned with disability services. The partnership between LWC and the Louisiana Technical and Community College System, as described on page 49, should be utilized to improve disability and career services.

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. The transition committee of the WIOA Roundtable that Louisiana formed would be a great group to lead this initiative.

10. Supporting Pre-Employment Transition Services through the Development of Public-Private Partnerships:

We are encouraging states to follow the example set by Florida and Wisconsin by working hard to expand the number of Project SEARCH sites. **Louisiana does not yet have any Project SEARCH sites. Louisiana would benefit from partnering with Project SEARCH, so we highly recommend that State Board reach out to them and include a potential partnership in its Plan.** Louisiana should reach out to Project SEARCH's Linda Emery at linda.emery@cchmc.org. Given the Plan's description of Louisiana's Jump Start Initiative on page 68, the implementation of Project SEARCH would be a logical step in Louisiana's workforce efforts.

However, this is not the only paradigm that you should follow. Your school system, vocational rehabilitation, and local workforce boards can build creative, collaborative partnerships with companies that are leading in the disability space.

Louisiana would benefit greatly by looking at other models of innovation that are showing great potential to fundamentally improve employment outcomes. To begin with, **we would highly recommend that Louisiana's workforce system examine how to support disability employment efforts through establishment of public/private partnerships in local communities.** Louisiana has already demonstrated a strong commitment to delegating duties to local and regional business teams. These local groups are vital in forming strong business partnerships, and should be utilized accordingly.

These types of partnerships could focus on the "cluster" model, started by Poses Family Foundation that is having tremendous success in diverse states as Nevada, Georgia, and Ohio. [This model depends on "consortium of employers committed to implement or expand programs", "a public/private partnership to coordinate services for job-seekers with disabilities, with a single point of contact for employers", and "Connections among employers, public and private agencies, and schools to reach young adults with disabilities who are in transition from school to work."](#)

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

We are encouraged that Louisiana appreciates the need for outreach and education about available services, as seen in its thorough self-assessment and evaluation of its programs. However, the Plan needs more.

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 areas. However, it's important to ensure that online resources enhance the effort of your workforce system.

Louisiana 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. For example, the Plan says on page 155, that VR counselors will conduct outreach to identify students with disabilities. These same counselors can also let Louisianans with disabilities know about the resources available to them. These resources are free to use, and they don't cost taxpayers any money.

Louisiana should be careful not to waste money trying to re-invent the wheel in creating online resources because [ASKJAN.org](#), [the US Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment](#), [our organization](#) and others also offer free toolkits, [webinars](#) and [training](#)

[opportunities](#). **Doing so will aid Louisiana in achieving its goal of reducing waste, all while helping people with disabilities.** It would also be helpful to collaborate with these groups however to ensure that the best tools are created to fit the training and information needs on these issues. Since you already “receive technical assistance” from ODEP, and they have good resources available, **you could look into collaborating with them directly to disseminate the free resources they have available.**

12. 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.”

We are pleased by the Louisiana State Board’s diverse membership, as documented on page 92, but we recommend the inclusion of a disability community representative(s) on this board. We also think the inclusion of a disability community representative on the Workforce Investment Council roster, as listed on page 93, would be incredibly impactful. We also recommend the inclusion of a disability community representative on the Regional Business Service Teams on page 84. Even a non-voting, advising member of a workforce/WIOA board can bring critical perspectives that improve the workforce’s efforts overall. As such, we also recommend that Louisiana look for ways to recruit local community organizations or self-advocates for inclusion on their boards.

13. 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. For example, how will people with disabilities get to the One-Stop centers? This is of critical importance not only for people with disabilities but also other members of low-income communities. Many people with disabilities do not drive. Others cannot afford private transportation. It is vital to work with public transportation to ensure that there are bus routes to places where there are internships, apprenticeships and other work opportunities for people with disabilities. We appreciate the need Louisiana has for providing employment-related transportation services to elderly people, but we would like to see more attention paid to transportation for people with disabilities. As such, **your “Transportation Initiative” section on page 214 should be amended to include your department of transportation and/or private transportation organizations.**

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. The establishment of a database for regional members to find transportation

services, as described on page 214, is an excellent initiative. This database should be expanded to include more transportation services for more people with disabilities.

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.

14. Aging workers and those with recently acquired disabilities must 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. This addition could be made in your Senior Community Service Employment Program section beginning on page 34. 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.

15. 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.](#)

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

The work being done with this population needs to be viewed through the lens of disability. While we are pleased to see the Louisiana Department of Corrections included in the Plan on page 70 by preparing inmates for re-entry, we urge Louisiana to focus on people with disabilities involved in the Correctional System.

We commend Louisiana for recognizing that inmates, with the proper training and resources, can be a valuable contribution to the economy upon their release. Many states omit this from their plans completely. However, this section needs to be amended to include people with disabilities. [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. Serving people in the corrections system and ex-offenders is a critical workforce development challenge and one that can only increase when disability is a factor and it is not addressed appropriately. The price paid for ignoring this issue are higher rates of recidivism and greater costs to society. **Assessment tools are needed to identify disability issues as people enter the prison system and supports are needed as they exit the system back into society. Doing so would create opportunities for states to address those issues productively and proactively.**

Conclusion:

The bottom line is that expanding job opportunities for people with disabilities is beneficial to all. 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 people 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. And it is good for taxpayers, because it reduces the amount of funding spent on SSDI and other disability programs in the long run.

In all of our work around WIOA, we have emphasized the fact that this new law represents the intersection of hope and history for people with disabilities. Louisiana’s WIOA State Plan demonstrates some of the hard work, dedicated effort, and specific policies needed to realize those hopes. People with disabilities want to pursue the American Dream, just like everyone else. Making sure there are pathways for their talents to meet employer talent needs is a win-win-win for people with disabilities, taxpayers, and businesses alike. We are happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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

	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

Source: [Annual Disability Statistics Compendium](#)

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			
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		Source: Annual Disability Statistics Compendium	
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

Source: [Annual Disability Statistics Compendium](#)



RESPECTABILITY

LA and Jobs for PwDs

Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, President

www.RespectAbilityUSA.org

Louisiana



Gov. John Bel Edwards
(D)

- ❖ 72.4% of persons without disabilities aged 18 to 64 are employed.³
- ❖ 32.1% of PwDs aged 18 to 64 are employed.³
- ❖ **Louisiana ranks 38th in the nation in terms of jobs for PWDs.**
- ❖ **There is a 40.3 percentage point gap in the Labor Force Participation Rate between people with and without disabilities in Louisiana.**
- ❖ 672,278 people with disabilities live in LA.³
- ❖ 23,100 persons aged 16 to 20 have a disability.¹
- ❖ 354,500 persons aged 21 to 64 have a disability.¹
- ❖ The Employment gap between PwDs and people without disabilities in LA decreased by 0.8% from 2013-2014.³
- ❖ 186,503 people received SSDI benefits in LA in 2014.³
- ❖ In December 2014, the total expenditure on SSDI benefits for PwDs was \$198,375,000.³
- ❖ Voc. Rehab received 6,474 job applicants in 2013
- ❖ Voc. Rehab. obtained 2,235 jobs for PwDs in LA in 2012.²

1. 2013 Disability Status Report: LA, disabilitystatistics.org
2. StateData: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes, 2014
3. [Annual Disability Statistics Compendium](#)

Louisiana Data

		People with Disabilities (%)		People without Disabilities (%)	
		2013 ¹	2014 ²	2013 ¹	2014 ²
Poverty	US	28.7	28.2	13.6	13.0
	LA	30.4	30.8	16.3	16.4
Smoking	US	25.4	24.5	16.2	15.3
	LA	28.0	30.1	22.0	21.9
Obesity	US	40.1	41.1	25.0	25.2
	LA	45.3	44.8	28.0	31.3
Employment	US	33.9	34.4	74.2	75.4
	LA	31.3	32.1	72.4	72.4

1. [Annual Disability Statistics Compendium, 2014](#)

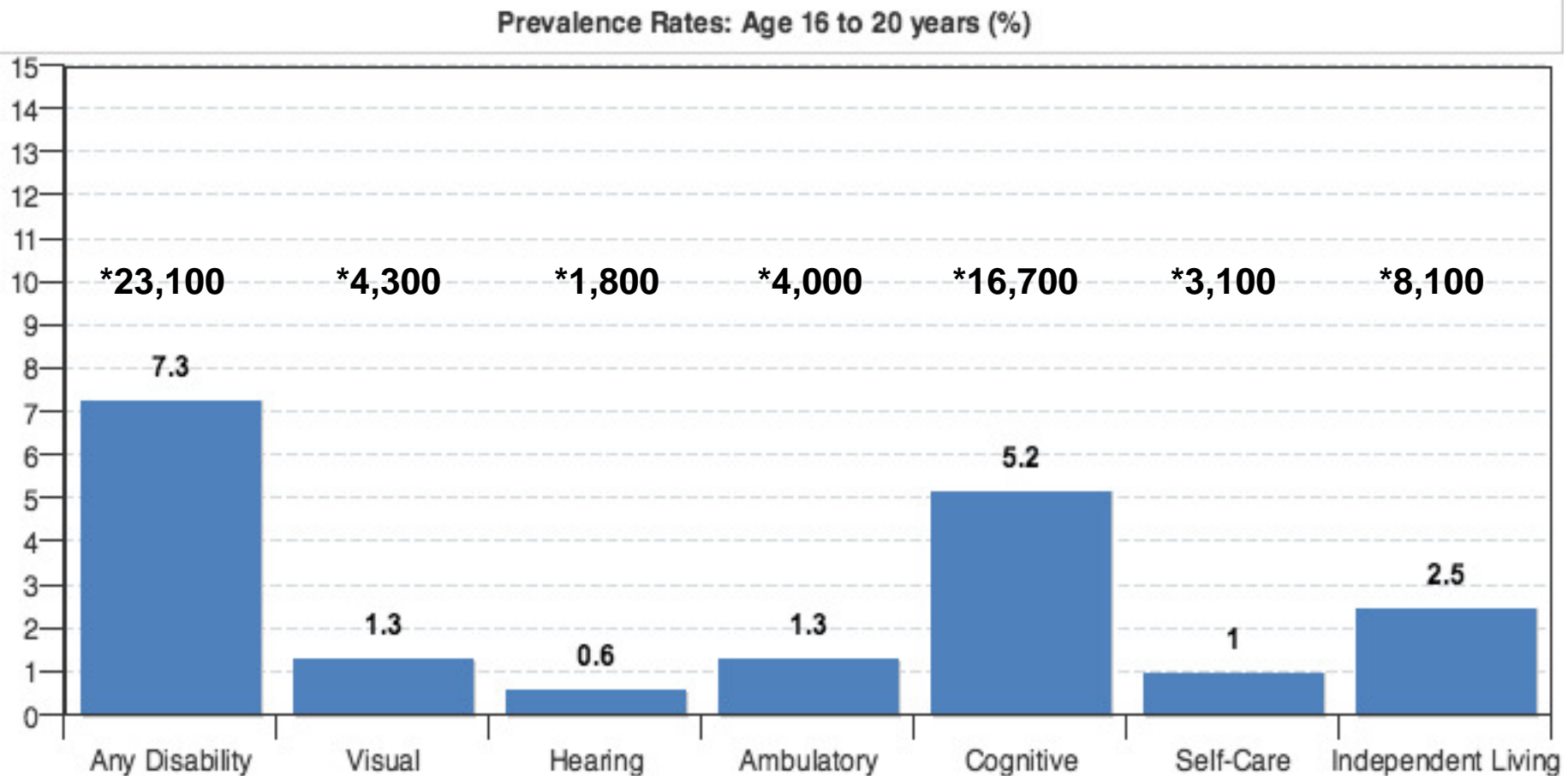
2. [Annual Disability Statistics Compendium, 2015](#)

Ages 6 to 21 IEPs by Category in LA

	2012	2013
All Disabilities	70,029	68,883
Specific Learning Disability	23,196	23,307
Speech or Language Impairment	14,931	13,137
Intellectual Disability	7,185	7,108
Emotional Disturbance	1,756	1,734
Multiple Disability	944	922
Hearing Impairment	1,148	1,124
Orthopedic Impairment	1,066	1,019
Other Health Impairment	9,553	9,548
Visual Impairment	477	469
Autism	3,683	3,970
Deaf Blindness	5	3
Traumatic Brain Injury	228	229
Developmental Delay	5,857	6,313

Source: [Annual Disability Statistics Compendium](#)

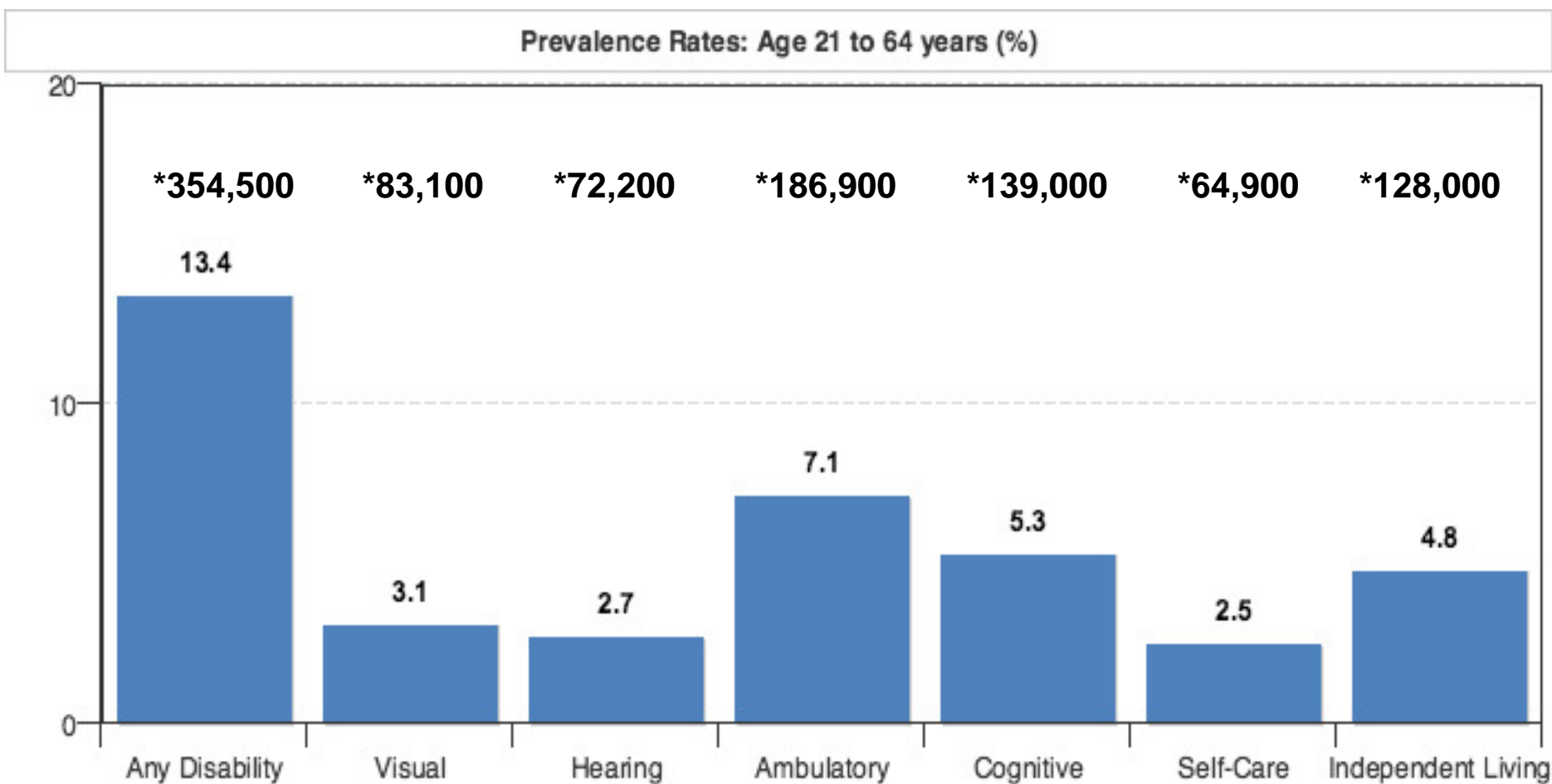
Prevalence of Disability Among Non-Institutionalized People Ages 16 to 20 in Louisiana in 2013



*Total numbers reported

Source: [Cornell University](#)

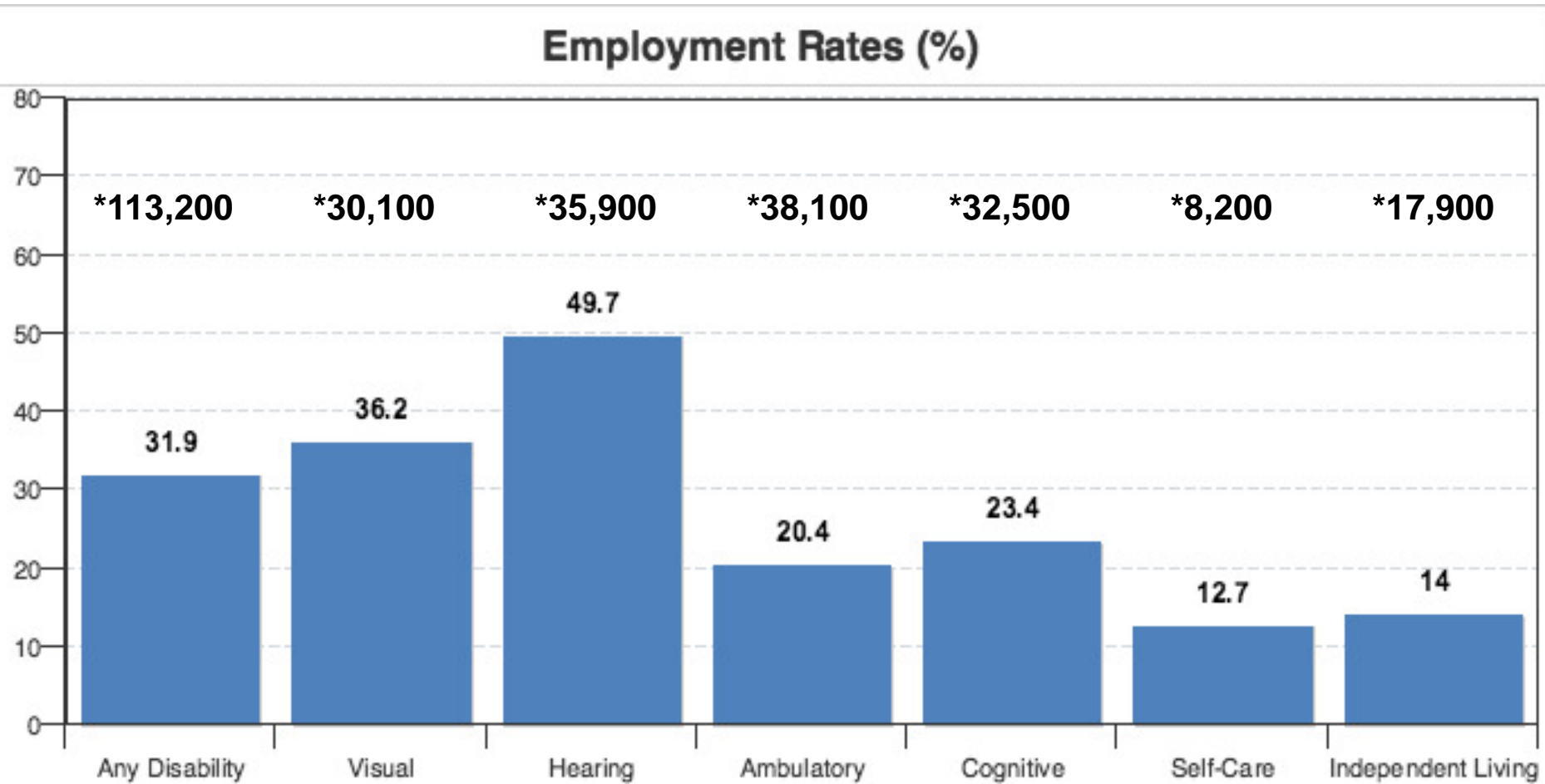
Prevalence of Disability Among Non-Institutionalized People Ages 21 to 64 in Louisiana in 2013



*Total numbers reported

Source: [Cornell University](#)

Employment of Non-Institutionalized Working-Age People (Ages 21 to 64) by Disability Status in Louisiana 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 Linda Emery at linda.emery@cchmc.org to get started now!

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

❖ Top contractors:

- Textron Inc.
- Computer Sciences Corp.
- Clark/McCarthy Healthcare Partners a Joint Venture
- Gulf Intracoastal Constructors a Joint Venture
- Placid Refining Company

See the entire list on the [Fedspending website](#)¹

Complete federal lists of 2006-2014 → [Federal Procurement Data System website](#)²

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

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

Jobs in Louisiana

- ❖ Louisiana's top industries are oil production, natural gas production, agriculture, chemical production, health care and social assistance, retail trade, and Accommodation and food services
- ❖ Click for your [Workforce Development Board](#)¹
- ❖ Click for your state [Workforce Development Plan](#)²

Resources

- ❖ Annual Disability Statistics Compendium, 2015:
http://www.disabilitycompendium.org/docs/default-source/2015-compendium/compendium_2015_final.pdf
- ❖ StateData: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes, 2014 (data from 2013):
<http://www.statedata.info/bbstates/Louisiana.pdf>
- ❖ 2013 Disability Status Report United States, Cornell University:
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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