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March 21, 2016

RespectAbility – Public Comments – Vermont Unified State Plan

“No Vermonter should ever be defined by their challenges or their disabilities.” – [Gov. Peter Shumlin, Bill Signing Statement, March. 21, 2014.](#)

RespectAbility is pleased to submit the following comments regarding the current draft of Vermont’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.

Today, Vermont can and must do better in terms of competitive, integrated employment for people with disabilities. Currently, your state ranks 26th in the country in terms of their employment rate of people with disabilities. Only 36.2% of the approximate 48,856 working age Vermonters with disabilities are employed. However, employment rates alone do not tell the whole story of disability employment in Vermont. Indeed, **when you consider the staggering 44.2 point gap in the Labor Force Participation Rate between people with and without disabilities, Vermont drops to 42nd in the nation. Further, there are over 3,800 youth with disabilities between age 16 and 20 in Vermont. Each year a quarter of them will age out of school into an uncertain future.**

Thanks to WIOA, Vermont 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.](#) The experience of these states shows ways that Vermont can dramatically improve their outcomes. **Likewise, we are also seeing pockets of excellence around innovative youth programs designed to address disability employment in [Georgia](#), [Nevada](#), and [Kentucky](#).**

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 Vermont.** That information is attached to our comments.

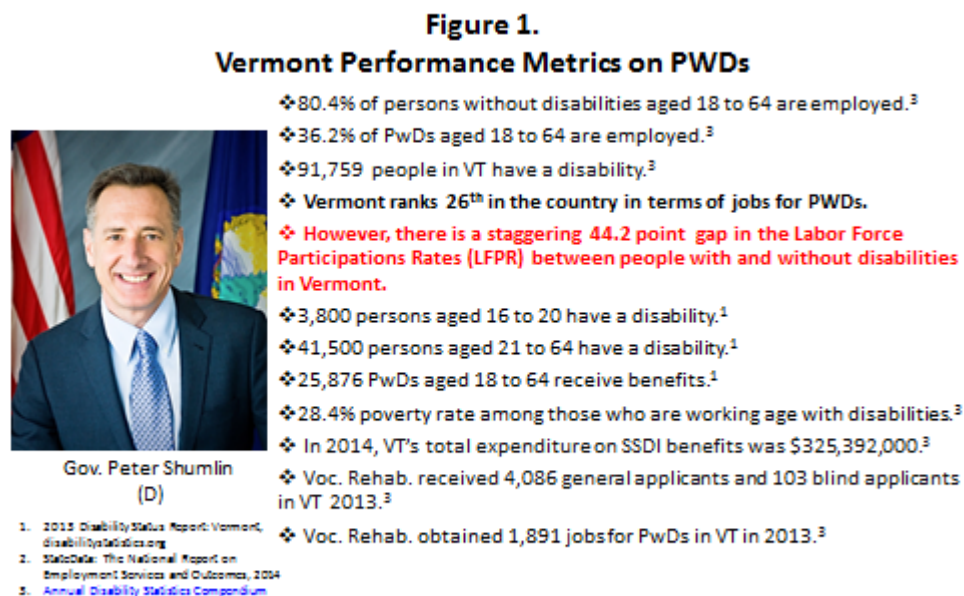
Our public comments on Vermont’s WIOA State Plan are structured around those points where greater clarity, precision, and data are needed to ensure that people with disabilities will be better equipped to pursue the American Dream. From the accessibility of the workforce system to employer engagement 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 Vermonters 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 Vermont's State Plan. We fear that this means your state leaders do not know what steps need to be taken to empower people to 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 composition of Vermont's disability community. **In fact, there are only minimal data points in the State Plan regarding people with disabilities living in Vermont. Page 20 reports in the section on "Populations with Barriers to Employment" that "82,594 Vermonters have a disability."** Such an inexact figure is basically meaningless from a workforce development perspective. This number does not reflect the critical distinctions between youth with disabilities, working age people with disabilities, and older Vermonters who will likely age into disability. Failure to make such distinctions presents an incomplete picture of the challenge. We do however see a better data point buried away on page 112 of the State Plan in the section containing the "Annual Estimate" required of VR under WIOA. 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.

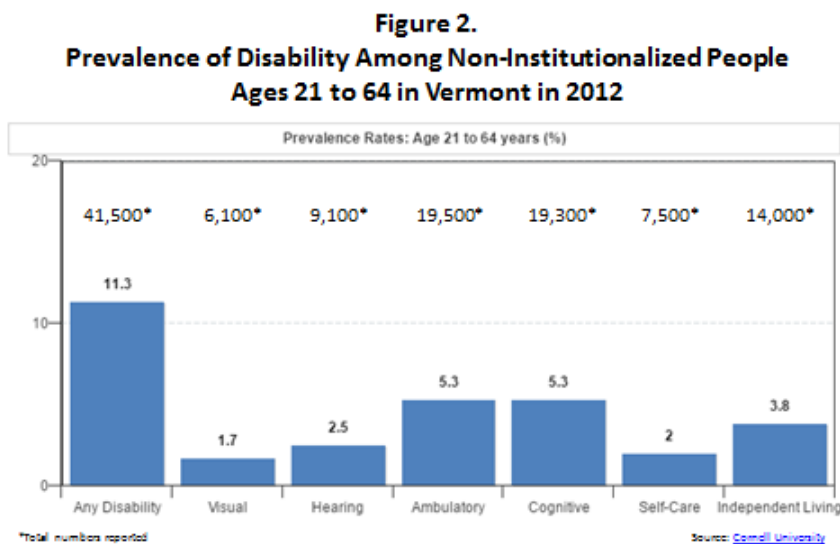
Given that this is a draft version of your State Plan, we implore you to update the draft to include several additional data points on disability and employment in Vermont. We hope the figure below will be included in the final version before you submit it to DOL.



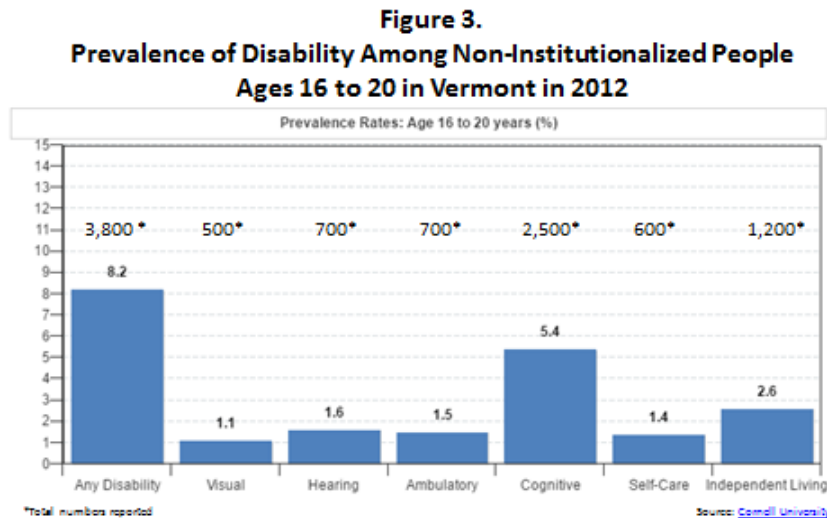
Greater precision is needed for the workforce system to evolve to tap into the labor resource that the disability community represents. More information is needed about the composition of Vermont's disability community and clearer data is needed about what types of disabilities make up the total number. Further, your state plan lacks a clear sense of how many youth have disabilities in Vermont 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. As such, we are concerned that there are no references whatsoever to the Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) in your State Plan. **This is a significant challenge because the LFPR is, from our perspective, the most important data point and performance metric for tracking employment outcomes is to look at the gap in Labor Force Participation Rates (LFPR) between people with and without disabilities.** Good data is essential for any attempt to increase the number of people with disabilities who are succeeding in competitive, integrated employment. **Below are several charts that suggest what types of data are needed in the final version of your State Plan:**

- a. **Data is needed on disability types among working age people with disabilities in Vermont (21-64).** The experience of disability is diverse and includes a wide range of differences both visible and invisible. According to the most recent available data from the Census Bureau, there are 41,500 working age Vermonters with disabilities between the ages of the ages of 21 and 64. It is critical to distinguish between working age people and those we acquire disabilities due to the aging process. The chart below shows the diverse range of disabilities experienced in your state.



- b. **Youth with disabilities who are aging in the workforce (ages 16-20).** If Vermont'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.



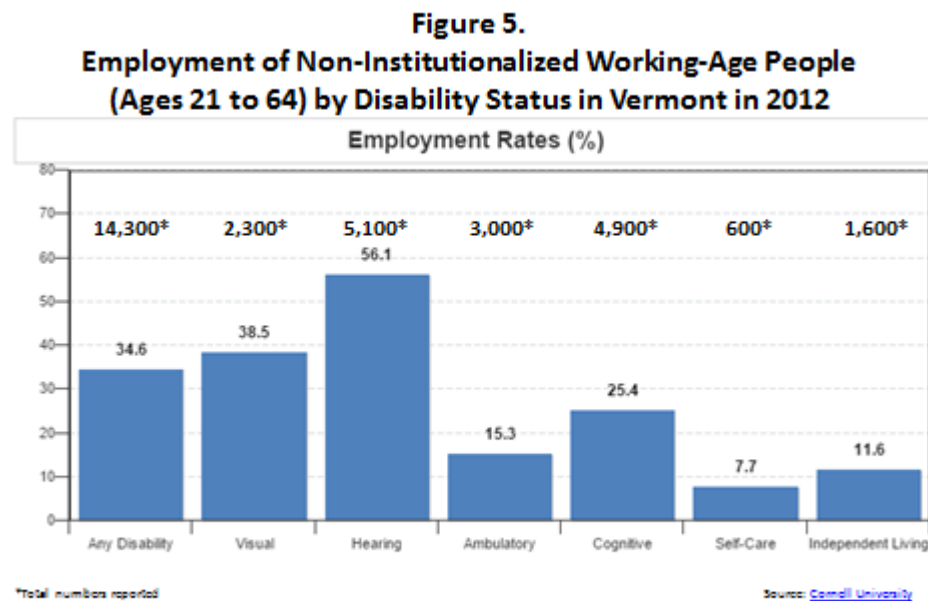
- c. **What types of disabilities do transitioning youth have?** This information is critically important because youth with vision, mobility and hearing disabilities need specific types of tools and training, but may otherwise be ready for jobs. To support youth with cognitive disabilities, it will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

Figure 4.
Ages 6 to 21 IEPs by Category VT

	2012	2013
All Disabilities	12,042	12,125
Specific Learning Disability	3,886	3,809
Speech or Language Impairment	1,282	1,261
Intellectual Disability	753	714
Emotional Disturbance	1,930	1,981
Multiple Disability	202	210
Hearing Impairment	96	84
Orthopedic Impairment	43	37
Other Health Impairment	2,036	2,124
Visual Impairment	24	24
Autism	895	941
Deaf Blindness	7	8
Traumatic Brain Injury	46	40
Developmental Delay	842	892

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. This is 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. Meanwhile, people with developmental disabilities who have cognitive differences may need significantly more training to get started. But they too can be hugely successful through programs like Project Search.



As we stated in the introduction to our public comments, looking solely at the employment rate for people with disabilities in Vermont, the Green Mountain State ranks 26th in the country. **However, a fuller story about the challenges and failures of Vermont is told when you look at the gap in the employment rate between people with and without disabilities. Looking at this measure, there is a staggering 44.2 point gap which drops Vermont to 42nd place.**

Our fundamental concerns with the lack of good data in the current draft of Vermont's WIOA plan is one of utility. **We are concerned that what little information there is about disability is not useful to the diverse elements of the workforce system to empower more Vermonters with disabilities to enter the workforce.** As such, we highly recommend that your state workforce system look closely at those people with disabilities who are contributing to the workforce in Vermont.

From the data, we find that only 38.5 percent of the 2,300 Vermont residents who are blind or have vision loss are employed while fully 56.1 percent of the 5,100 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 25.4 percent of Vermont residents 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 Vermont's workforce system expands successful school to work transition programs.** In particular models [like Project Search](#), [Bridges from School to Work](#), as well as [the cluster model of Poses Family Foundation or Kessler Foundation](#) could be part of your state sector strategies to meet growing labor market needs. Indeed, the most effective way of continuing to improve outcomes in competitive, integrated employment is by focusing on sectors that are experiencing rapid growth. **In Vermont, that means that youth with disabilities should be trained for jobs in Healthcare, STEM, and Hospitality.** The State Plan does discuss an effective model for expanding outcomes to meet these increasing talent needs. 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. We hope that this data will be used to implement the performance metrics needed to guide resource investment and workforce programs.

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.

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 these sectors offer a great opportunity for focused sector strategies sustain and build on employment outcomes being achieved among people with disabilities.

In terms of prospective employment needs, we suggest focusing on the economic forecasts and projected field growth listed in Figure 2 on page 4 of the DOL 2012-2022 Long Term Occupational Projections attachment. The charts, which show Vermont's current and projected workforce needs, offers a great starting point for improving outcomes. **Specifically, it is important to train and prepare Vermonters with disabilities to pursue careers in the fields listed, as they are most likely to grow in the immediate future and will likely have the greatest chance at success. Fields relating to healthcare and social assistance are projected to grow in Vermont, as well as certain Science, Tech, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) sectors. These are fields where people with disabilities can excel and benefit their employer's bottom line.** People with disabilities represent an untapped labor resource that, with the right training and supports, can meet the diverse talent needs of Vermont's growing job sectors. The job gains in these sectors offer a great opportunity for focused sector strategies sustain and build on employment outcomes being achieved among people with disabilities in Vermont.

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 homes. 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 job growth in fields such as “personal care and service, healthcare support, and life, physical, and social service.” **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.**

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 significantly expanded as they have done in Wisconsin, Florida and other states. 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 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.** Ensuring the accessibility of STEM careers offers Vermont a significant opportunity to innovate and lead. As the State Plan shows in Figure 4, scientific research and development services are projected to be added in the coming years. We recommend Vermont look at ways to better train people with disabilities to fill

these roles. [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.

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

Despite not being projected to have much growth compared to the rest of the United States, Vermont should look in sectors where there are high turnover rates such as accommodation and food service, as they can still be considered areas of economic development if people with disabilities are given the chance to work in them. 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. Focusing efforts on employers in growing sectors could begin to create a pipeline of talent for employers and career pathways for youth with disabilities.

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 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. [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.

d. State jobs and supplier diversity 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. This is evident in Vermont, as it is shown on page 2 of the DOL attachment that 71% of new job openings are due to people leaving the workforce.

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.](#)

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 Vermont. **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 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 Vermont’s state plan be amended to include a comprehensive, proactive communications/public relations strategy for reducing such stigmas. We are pleased to see that Vermont has already begun this process in a sense, through the method of motivational interviewing listed on page 106. By reaching out to consumers and informing employers of the benefits of hiring those with disabilities and dispelling the myths around them, as well as motivating those with disabilities to have high expectations are both extremely important. **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.**

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 be an incredible resource for your work](#). However, it should be a component of Vermont 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. Vermont needs a public relations campaign that will inspire Vermonters with disabilities to set their hopes high, as low expectations and low self-esteem are a barrier to employment. The practice of motivational interviewing has already begun this process, and it should be further expanded in order to increase outcomes.** 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.

As an example of the power and value of making the business care for hiring people with disabilities, we offer Vermont 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. Our profiles of diverse employers such as EY, AT&T, and Kwik Trip

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

Another critical opportunity that needs to be discussed in Vermont's Unified State Plan is the issue of Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act. Unfortunately, the current draft of your state plan lacks any references to the disability employment opportunities and talent challenges facing federal contractors. [Section 503 regulations have set new 7% utilization goal](#) set to recruit, hire, and retain qualified individuals with disabilities in all job categories.

Vermont should respond to these 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 Goodrich Corp, General Dynamics Corp, Longview-FedConsulting JV LLC, AECOM Technology Corp, and AFOGNAK Native Corp.** More detailed information regarding federal contracts in [Vermont 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. **This is deeply concerning for Vermont, as currently, there are no listed common assurances in the state's plan. It is absolutely necessary that these are included in the final revision of your state plan.** Additionally, it is critical that each assurance is matched up with a strategy fitted to meeting and, if possible, exceeding the requirements of the law.

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, since there is no plan that specifically identifies how the state is going to get to the commitment made in the assurance; the state 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.** We are pleased to see that Vermont has chosen to focus more on the programmatic accessibility of their services, as listed on pages 39, 54, 66, and 123. Improving virtual access to the services of one-stop centers is a critical step moving forward in the delivery of career center services. 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.](#)

At the same time 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. Creating an affiliate chapter of the US Business Leadership Network, and/or working very closely with an existing chapter, is a great tool for effectively engaging employers and reaching the right business 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 benefitted from the talents of employees with disabilities. We recognize that Vermont is making an effort to connect with business leaders, as noted on page 43 of the state plan. The DOL and VR's mission to connect with business leaders is certainly a step in the right direction in order to further opportunities for Vermonters with disabilities by making known their strengths. Business to business communication can help tear down the misconceptions and stigmas which are barriers to employment.

While it is true that currently Vermont does not have an affiliate chapter of the US Business Leadership Network (USBLN), we recommend you to look at developing one. The lack of a 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 an affiliate chapter. 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 achieve improved outcomes. Currently, VR agencies often have a network of businesses their work closely with in order to place VR clients

into jobs. These business partners would certainly benefit from tapping into the national structure of the USBLN and their resources.

It is also imperative that after creating a chapter, it is included at the WIOA table. As such, we encourage Vermont 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. We would be happy to provide Vermont'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:

As your state looks to improve these programs, we highly recommend that the workforce system seriously look at ways to make apprenticeships accessible to people with disabilities. Vermont's state plan demonstrates that they are looking to expand apprenticeships and on-the-job training programs for the general public, as noted on pages 41 and 60. Despite this, there is an omission of mentioning the opportunity of providing Vermonters with disabilities a chance to partake in apprenticeships. **Vermont should make an effort to expand this opportunity and cater apprenticeship programs specifically to 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 realizing the full promise of WIOA for people with disabilities.

Further, 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. 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.

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.

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

It is evident in the state plan that Vermont is working hard to collaborate with multiple agencies and organizations to provide pre-employment transition services. The collaborations noted between the DBVI and high schools and organizations on page 29, the partnerships with community colleges on page 41 and business leaders on page 43, and the partnerships listed on page 44 regarding education institutions that allow students to partake in not only college courses and apprenticeships are all excellent signs of collaboration. Vermont is home to some of the best educational institutions in the United States, so we encourage your state to push further for expanded partnerships with the VR, as the results can be highly beneficial. We also encourage you to follow the example set by Florida and Wisconsin by working hard to expand the number of Project SEARCH sites. However, this is not the only paradigm that you should follow. The school system, vocational rehabilitation, and local workforce boards can build creative, collaborative partnerships with companies that are leading in the disability space.

States 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 state workforce systems examine how to support disability employment efforts through establishment of public/private partnerships in local communities. 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:

There are many online and in person resources to help employers and people with disabilities come together to build success. Vermont’s state plan neglects to mention if residents are aware of the services offered, and how they are made known. This is a key issue for many states, as many would be consumers do not receive service simply because they are do know that they might be eligible or that such program exist. 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 areas of Vermont. Despite this, it’s important to ensure that online resources enhance the effort of your workforce system. It is evident that Vermont is attempting to do this, as it is mentioned on page 39 that they are working on the “development of strategies for aligning technology and data systems across One-Stop partner programs to enhance service delivery and improve efficiencies.”

Vermont 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 Policy](#), [our organization and others also offer free toolkits](#), [webinars and training opportunities](#). [Another resource is Understood.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. Lastly, as your state moves forward on disability employment projects, we also encourage you to look at resources such as [the Designing Statewide Career Development Strategies & Programs](#) guide to focus your effort around youth with disabilities.

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.** On page 49 of the state plan, it states that representatives of labor and low-income communities, as well as higher education all have spots

on the board. The disability community should have a representative as well. 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. 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.

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

We are pleased to see that Vermont is making a good effort to address the issue of transportation regarding people with disabilities, as listed on page 140 of the state plan. We are also pleased to see that the DBVI is prioritizing and strategizing to combat this issue in Vermont by increasing the number of VABVI drivers as well as offering consumers free trips, as listed on page 195. Transportation 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.

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.

14. Order of Selection, Chronic Unemployment, and the importance of investment in youth transitions a.k.a the importance employing a “Jackie Robinson Strategy” in Vermont:

It is evident that Vermont wishes to improve transition services, which we are happy to hear. We believe supporting successful transitions for youth with disabilities is the necessary condition for improving outcomes overall. It is mentioned on page 52 of the state plan that Vermont is using an order of selection when determining individuals to be eligible for VR services. VR and the workforce system only have one chance with new employers to make a good impression, so Vermont should be careful when determining how much of their budget will be spent servicing those with the most significant disabilities. It is our perspective that those individuals with disabilities who go into employment need to succeed and that if they are not the right match for the employer, it will undermine the larger, longer term goals of improving outcomes overall. We recommend using a “Jackie Robinson Strategy” to make sure that the right talent gets into the right positions so it is a beneficial opportunity for workers and employers alike. As the first African-American to play major league baseball, Robinson reduced extensive

amounts of discrimination and led the way for other talented and diverse athletes to follow. He was the talent that his employer needed, and contributed to the bottom line. The workforce system should keep such a strategy in mind when looking to place job seekers with disabilities into jobs at potential employees. Stigma and misconceptions still exist for people with disabilities in Vermont. Helping youth with disabilities to succeed will blaze the trail for people with more significant disabilities to become successfully integrated into the workforce. Once employers understand accommodations and how to maximize the use of talent, they will be more willing to hire those with more specific needs.

15. Aging workers and those who acquire disabilities must be specifically addressed:

We are pleased to see that Vermont has recognized the need to address and figure out a solution for those in the workforce that acquire disabilities through aging, as mentioned on page 109 of the state plan. Through the Needs Assessment required by WIOA, VR in Vermont has “Many of the mature workers will experience age-related disabilities” and that they need “placement services to find appropriate jobs” or “Assistive Technology to remain employed.” We are glad to see an acknowledgement of this challenge and we direct you to look to the state of Iowa for ideas around innovative best practices to support older workers.

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. We recommend looking at the work being done in Iowa to address this problem. 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.

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

We are pleased to see that Vermont will be initiating the LEAP program, which provides visually impaired adults and youth with valuable mentorship programs, as listed on page 203. **We recommend that these mentorships programs be expanded to include people with all types of disabilities, as mentorships can provide and invaluable learning experience. 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.** Vermont should have no problem with this, as it is already partnered with many non-profit organizations. 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.](#)

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

There are several points where the current draft of Vermont's Unified State Plan addresses the unique workforce challenges facing ex-offenders as they attempt to reenter society. For example, on page 34 in the section about "Strategy D" mentions recent offenders in direct connection with the "Employment and Training (E&T) grant" through SNAP. This grant is a specific partnership "between DCF, VDOL, DVR, and the Community College of Vermont to provide comprehensive return to work services." On page 94 of the State Plan, the section about "Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Development System", the needs of offenders with disabilities are explicitly mentioned. The State Plan reports that VR in Vermont specifically "serves offenders with disabilities to achieve employment." To carry out this work, "DVR has designated VR Counselors in each district office to serve as a single point of contact for the Department of Corrections" and "there is one Offender Reentry Employment Specialist based in Burlington who is dedicated to employment assistance to offenders with disabilities." **This is critically important and we are glad to see that lens of disability is being applied to the work being done to meet the requirements under section 225 of WIOA.**

[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. 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 stats to address the intersectionality of workforce, disability, and justice issues.

Conclusion:

As we stated at the beginning of our public comments, Vermont can and must do better in terms of jobs for people with disabilities. This is an issue that Vermont has the opportunity to address because of WIOA and it must be addressed through your State Plan. Failing to properly train and prepare job seekers with disabilities costs your 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

VT and Jobs for PwDs

Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, President

www.RespectAbilityUSA.org

Vermont



Gov. Peter Shumlin
(D)

- ❖ 80.4% of persons without disabilities aged 18 to 64 are employed.³
- ❖ 36.2% of PwDs aged 18 to 64 are employed.³
- ❖ 91,759 people in VT have a disability.³
- ❖ Vermont ranks 26th in the country in terms of jobs for PWDs.
- ❖ **However, there remains a 44.2 point employment gap between people with and without disabilities in Vermont.**
- ❖ 3,800 persons aged 16 to 20 have a disability.¹
- ❖ 41,500 persons aged 21 to 64 have a disability.¹
- ❖ 25,876 PwDs aged 18 to 64 receive benefits.¹
- ❖ 28.4% poverty rate among those who are working age with disabilities.³
- ❖ In 2014, VT's total expenditure on SSDI benefits was \$325,392,000.³
- ❖ Voc. Rehab. received 4,086 general applicants and 103 blind applicants in VT 2013.³
- ❖ Voc. Rehab. obtained 1,891 jobs for PwDs in VT in 2013.³

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

Vermont

		People with Disabilities (%)		People without Disabilities (%)	
		2013	2014	2013	2014
Poverty ¹	US	28.7	28.2	13.6	13.0
Ages 18-64	VT	29.2	28.4	10.2	10.1
Smoking ¹	US	25.4	24.5	16.2	15.3
Ages 18 – over	VT	23.9	22.4	14.5	14.6
Obesity ¹	US	40.1	41.1	25.0	25.2
Ages 18 – over	VT	36.6	36.8	21.3	20.8
Employment ¹	US	33.9	34.4	74.2	75.4
Ages 18 - 64	VT	33.3	36.2	79.6	80.4

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

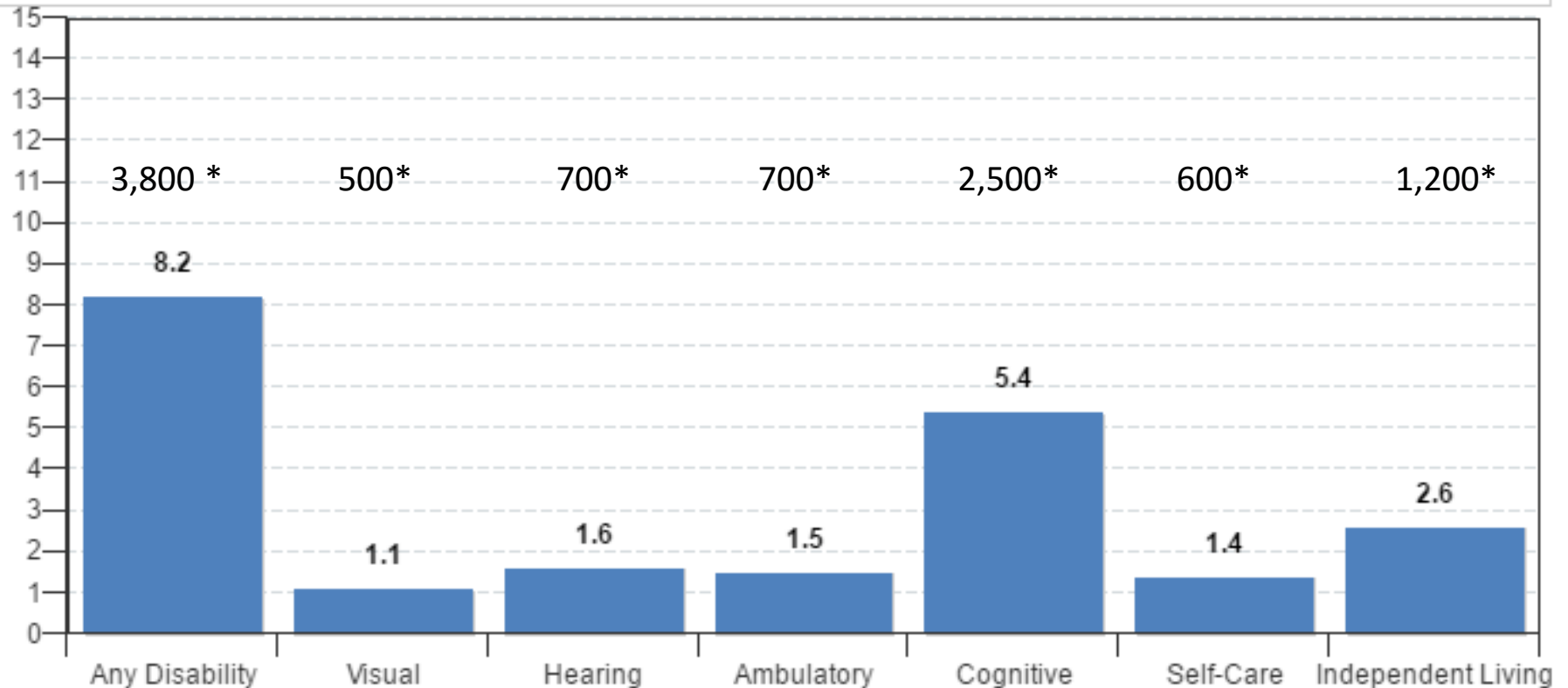
Ages 6 to 21 IEPs by Category VT

	2012	2013
All Disabilities	12,042	12,125
Specific Learning Disability	3,886	3,809
Speech or Language Impairment	1,282	1,261
Intellectual Disability	753	714
Emotional Disturbance	1,930	1,981
Multiple Disability	202	210
Hearing Impairment	96	84
Orthopedic Impairment	43	37
Other Health Impairment	2,036	2,124
Visual Impairment	24	24
Autism	895	941
Deaf Blindness	7	8
Traumatic Brain Injury	46	40
Developmental Delay	842	892

Source: [Annual Disability Statistics Compendium](#)

Prevalence of Disability Among Non-Institutionalized People Ages 16 to 20 in Vermont in 2012

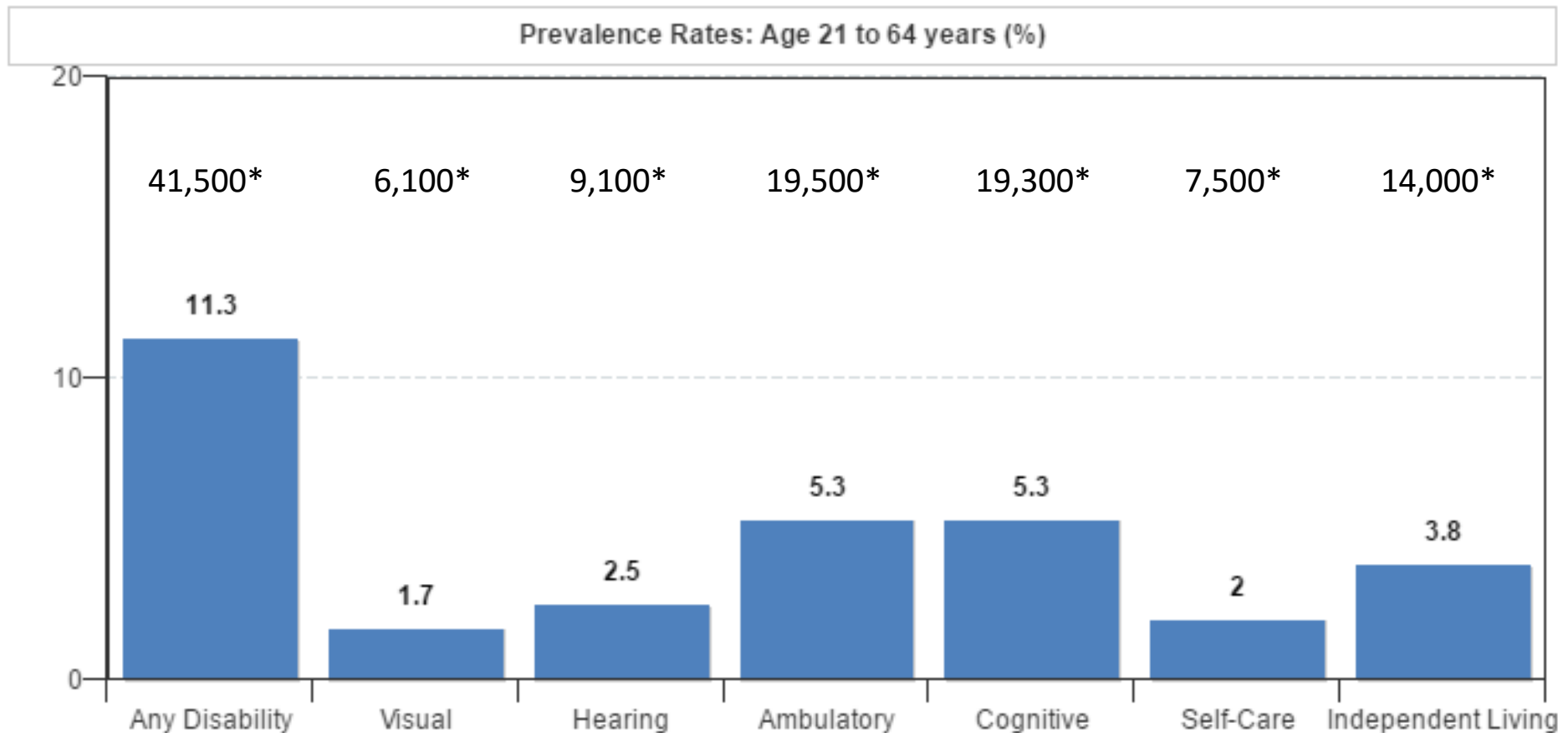
Prevalence Rates: Age 16 to 20 years (%)



*Total numbers reported

Source: [Cornell University](#)

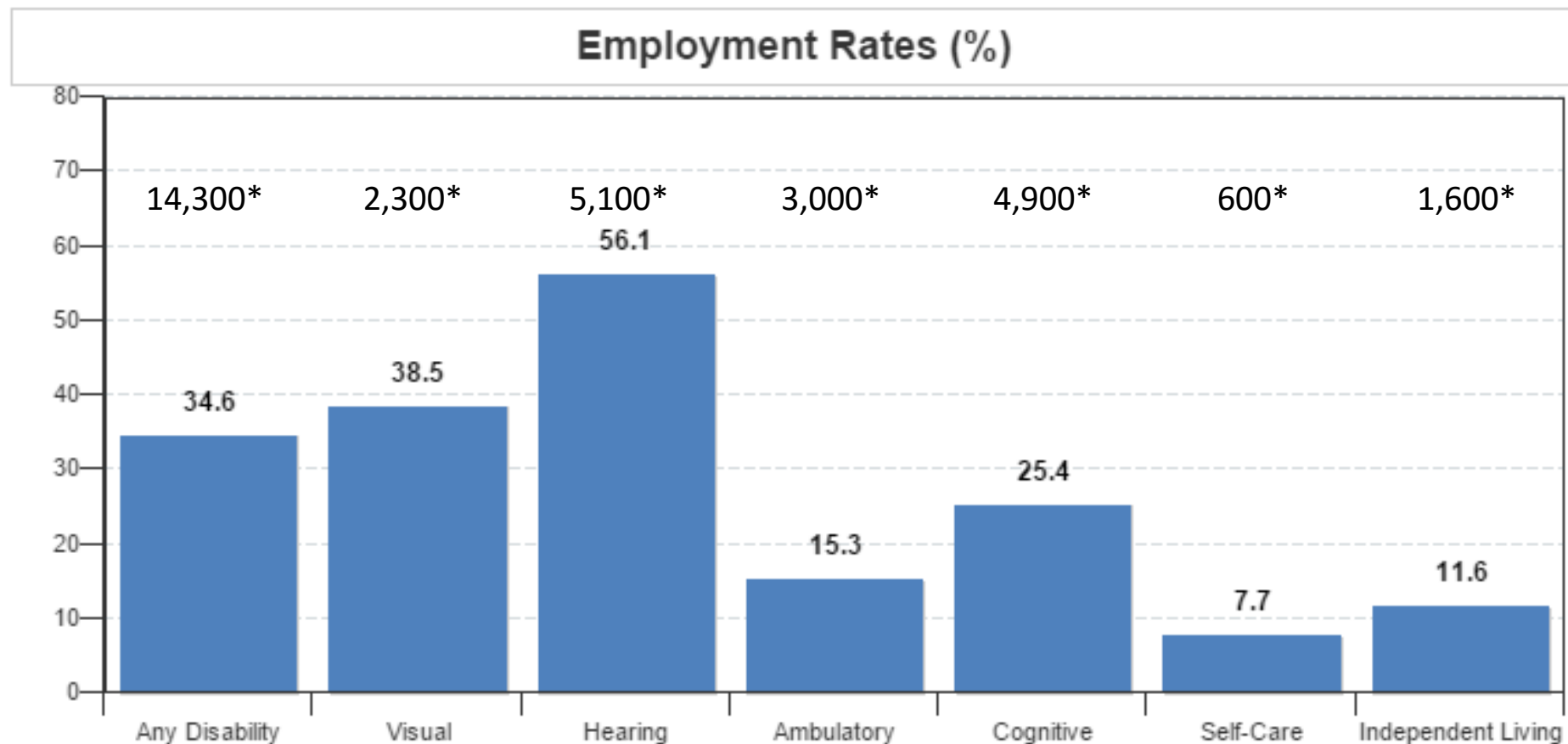
Prevalence of Disability Among Non-Institutionalized People Ages 21 to 64 in Vermont in 2012



*Total numbers reported

Source: [Cornell University](#)

Employment of Non-Institutionalized Working-Age People (Ages 21 to 64) by Disability Status in Vermont in 2012



*Total numbers reported

Source: [Cornell University](#)

Project SEARCH Sites

- ❖ Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center
(Lebanon, New Hampshire)
- ❖ The EDGE Sports and Fitness, Essex

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:

- Goodrich Corp
- General Dynamics Corp
- Longview - FedConsulting JV LLC
- AECOM Technology Corp
- AFOGNAK Native Corp

- Complete list → [fed spending website](#)

http://www.fedspending.org/fpds/fpds.php?reptype=p&detail=-1&fiscal_year=2011&sortby=f&database=fpds&datatype=T&stateCode=VT

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

https://www.fpds.gov/fpdsng_cms/index.php/en/reports/62-top-100-contractors-report3.html

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

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

Jobs in Vermont

- Despite the poor economy, many Vermont employers have difficulty finding qualified workers.
- Family supporting jobs, once available to high school graduates, now require post-secondary education.
- Although Vermont has one of the nation's highest high school graduation rates, the State ranks 26th in the percentage of students completing college.

Source: [Workforce Investment Works](http://workforceinvestmentworks.com/workforce_board_info.asp?st=VT)

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

The fastest-growing private companies in Vermont are Dealer.com, MyWebGrocer, CPA Site Solutions, Instrumart, MBA Health Group, Logic Supply

Source: [Inc.com](http://www.inc.com/inc5000/list/2013/state/vt/)

<http://www.inc.com/inc5000/list/2013/state/vt/>

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

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

❖ Click for your [Workforce Strategic Plan, 2012-2017](http://labor.vermont.gov/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Vermont-State-WIA-W-P-5-Year-Strategic-Plan.pdf)

<http://labor.vermont.gov/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Vermont-State-WIA-W-P-5-Year-Strategic-Plan.pdf>

Resources

- ❖ StateData: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes, 2014 (data from 2013)
- ❖ 2013 Disability Status Report United States, Cornell University, 2013: 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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