



# TICKET *to* Work

## Bridges to Employment Summit Report

**Social Security Administration**  
November 17-18, 2021

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## Executive Summary

On November 17-18, 2021, Social Security hosted the *Bridges to Employment Summit*, an online, virtual event. The purpose of the summit was to identify linkages between employers and Ticket to Work employment support service providers working with job-ready individuals with disabilities. The goal of these efforts is to increase the number of individuals with disabilities entering the workforce. Representatives from Employment Networks (EN), State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies, employers, job placement and technical assistance organizations, and representatives from federal and state government agencies participated in the summit. More than 200 participants attended the two-day event.

The summit consisted of four roundtable sessions:

1. Successful/Unsuccessful Job Placement from the Beneficiary (also known as Ticketholder), Job Placement Specialist, VR, and EN Perspectives
2. Employer Roundtable on Hiring Individuals with Disabilities
3. Federal Incentives for Disability Employment and Tools for Removing Supply-side Barriers
4. Important Takeaways, Recommendations, and Next Steps

This summary report shares identified recommendations and opportunities to enhance EN and State VR agencies' efforts to access job opportunities and improve employment outcomes for Ticketholders. The identified recommendations and opportunities, explored more throughout this report, include:

- Support ENs and State VR agencies' efforts to develop relationships with employers and third-party job placement/technical assistance experts.
- Expand efforts to link ENs and State VR agencies more closely together through Partnership Plus to provide more personalized supports for Ticketholders.
- Facilitate free 1-year EN access to the CSAVR/disABLEDperson Inc. Talent Acquisition Portal, potentially linking ENs to over 400,000 jobs.
- Promote access to employment tools and resources like the Talent Acquisition Portal, DirectEmployers Association's recruitment site, and the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment website.
- Develop a national portal for employers to post jobs, connect with ENs, State VR agencies, and other service providers.
- Increase access to benefits planning information and the number of Benefits Counselors, so beneficiaries understand how work and earnings impact benefits.
- Develop a dedicated EN webpage on the University of Wisconsin's Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment with tools for building relationships with employers.

- Facilitate EN access to Abilities to Careers Technical Virtual Academy (ACT), providing up to 100 training licenses for beneficiaries to receive free Virtual IT training.

Putting these types of strategies and activities into action will help us leverage improved linkages and relationships to enhance employment outcomes and Ticket to Work Program results. The graphic below displays how Ticketholders engage with the Choose Work website, Help Line, Outreach and social media platforms, and our Work Incentive Seminar Event (WISE) webinars to connect with ENs and VRs to find work and achieve self-sufficiency through employment. While we will continue to focus on these important tools and services, the collaboration, connection and training discussed during the summit is also critical to support ENs and VRs in their work with employers toward increasing the numbers of Ticketholders who are working.

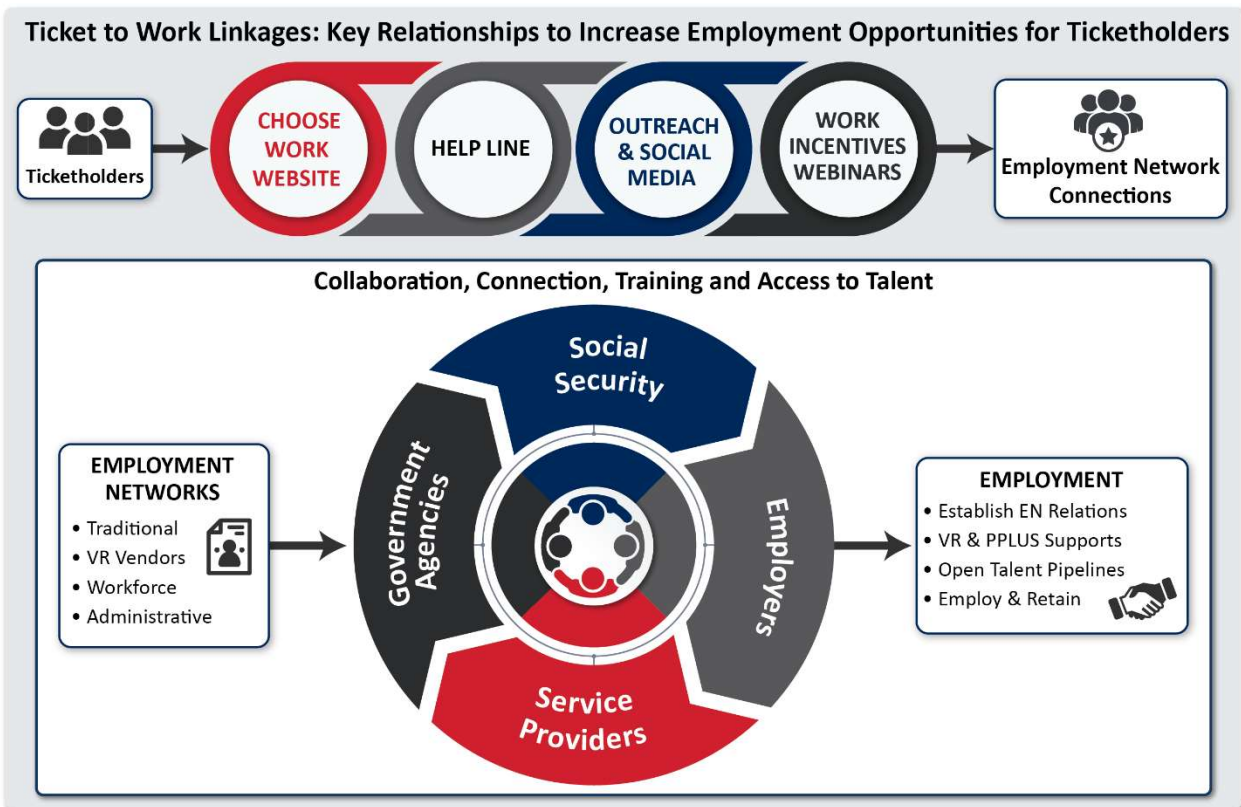


Figure 1: Ticket to Work Linkages: Key Relationships to Increase Employment Opportunities for Ticketholders

Social Security, along with our partners at other government agencies, service providers and employers, will continue to collaborate and implement the recommendations identified in this report to lead to more employment opportunities for Ticketholders. These outcomes will be possible because employers will be more aware and connected to ENs, State VR agencies, and the Partnership Plus continuum of services, increasing the number of qualified candidates with disabilities in employer talent pipelines.

The balance of this report details the summit discussions and our next planned activities.

## Bridges to Employment

### *Welcoming Remarks*

The summit started with remarks from Dr. Kilolo Kijakazi, Acting Commissioner of the Social Security Administration. Dr. Kijakazi set the foundation for the summit by encouraging participants to consider structural barriers to successful labor force participation and how Social Security and its partners must do more to ensure the jobs beneficiaries seek are truly accessible. Further, Dr. Kijakazi indicated the goal for the summit was “to identify ways we can improve our engagement with employers to remove structural barriers and facilitate greater access to employment for our beneficiaries.”

Next, Stephen Evangelista, Acting Deputy Commissioner for Retirement and Disability Policy, spoke about Social Security’s desire “to link our individuals with disabilities to employers with employment needs. This is the first time we’ve systematically considered how to engage employers programmatically and we hope that this information shared will be useful to as many stakeholders as possible given the nature of the pandemic’s impact on the economy and the significant demand for labor as witnessed by higher wages and staffing shortages in many areas.”

Susan Wilschke, Associate Commissioner, Office of Research, Demonstration and Employment Support, also provided final introductory remarks, welcoming the attendees to two afternoons of conversation and learning to help move employment connections and collaborations forward.

### ***Session 1: Unsuccessful or successful job placement from the beneficiary, VR, and EN perspective***

This session covered the experiences and perspectives of individuals receiving employment support services and the organizations engaged in their journey to financial independence. Three panelists with disabilities who successfully returned to work shared their stories, each highlighting their experiences.

#### **Panelist success story #1**

The first panelist was a Ticketholder from Virginia who benefited from both VR and EN services. First, the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) helped with tuition, personal care services, financial planning, and reasonable accommodations to help her navigate to successful case closure.

Next, about a year after receiving her master's degree, the panelist connected with The Choice Group, an EN that helped her learn how to request reasonable accommodations for the interview process.

Now successfully employed in two part-time positions, she is working toward her clinical residency to become a licensed professional counselor. The Partnership Plus model made this possible and allowed a relationship between the VR agency providing initial services and supports, and the EN offering extended support, to help start her career.

Partnership Plus is an initiative developed by SSA connecting VR agencies to ENs so that the VR client at case closure may be referred to the EN to provide specialized, ongoing services and supports. VRs may enter into formal or non-formal agreements with ENs under Partnership Plus and ENs and VRs may share Ticket revenue under a Partnership Plus agreement. There are currently 35 state VRs that have entered into Partnership Plus agreements with ENs. For more information, please visit the [Choose Work Partnership Plus page](#).

### Partnership Plus

If a Ticketholder finds a job, a State VR agency may close the case approximately 90 days after they start working. When State VR services end, many people find that they need continuing support to help them keep their job and increase their earnings over time. That's why State VR agencies often partner with ENs that provide job retention services and other types of ongoing support. This arrangement, known as [Partnership Plus](#), gives Ticket Program participants continued access to individualized employment services, if needed.

Panelist #1 concluded:

*"Thanks to collaboration with The Choice Group and continued collaboration with DARS (Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitation Services) for a little while, I was able to learn how to identify reasonable accommodations within the interview process, as well as make sure my accommodations were documented appropriately when I proceeded to work. So, I have been successfully employed!"*

*"I was able to learn how to identify reasonable accommodations within the interview process....  
So, I have been successfully employed!"*

David Leon, from Virginia DARS, also commented:

*“We will always try to figure out a way to help someone be as successful as they want and can be. And so, I just wanted to add, (referring to panelist #1), thank you for your perseverance and motivation. It is a great example, and we are very fortunate to have many groups like The Choice Group who are fantastic providers, Employment Networks, and are open to that give and take and to figure out what will work best for an individual.”*

Partnership Plus, or the coordinated collaboration between Virginia DARS and The Choice Group, made collaborative services possible, making her successful employment possible!

### Panelist success story #2

The second individual, also a Ticketholder, shared his story as an Air Force veteran who was unemployed for over four years until he reached out to an EN. He spoke of his doubts during the summit, referring to how he didn't see himself returning to work. *“I had a lot of questions ... what does it look like for a service member with disabilities to re-enter the workforce?”*

He received benefits counseling services from his EN, The Choice Group, utilizing [SSA's Work Incentives](#), including the Trial Work Period (TWP) and the Extended Period of Eligibility. During a TWP, a beneficiary receiving Social Security disability benefits may test their ability to work for at least nine months and receive full SSDI benefit payments, no matter how much they earn.

Once panelist 2 completed his TWP, he became eligible for a 36-month safety net called the Extended Period of Eligibility (EPE). During the EPE, Social Security looked at what he earned in a month to decide if the work was "Substantial Gainful Activity" (SGA). The term [substantial gainful activity](#) is used to describe a level of work activity and earnings SSA uses to decide if someone is eligible for disability benefits.

## Trial Work Period and Extended Period of Eligibility

**Trial Work Period:** The TWP lets someone test their ability to work or run a business for at least 9 months and receive full Social Security Disability Insurance benefits if they report their work activity, and their impairment does not improve. Learn More: [TWP Fact Sheet](#)

**Extended Period of Eligibility:** A consecutive 36-month period that follows someone's TWP. During their EPE, they may still receive payments depending on how much they work and earn. Social Security can pay them disability benefits during their EPE if all these apply:

- Their condition is still disabling.
- Their work is not SGA.
- Their benefits will end if their work is substantial after the end of their EPE.

*“In this journey of the Ticket to Work Program...I completed The Trial Work Period and the Extended Period of Eligibility and have been employed for the last four years or so. During my time with The Choice Group, they helped me to navigate all the rules and questions. Rachel Hoffman (of The Choice Group), I mean, just a blessing to have her around and able to always walk me through the questions. She and her team reiterated that if the Ticket Program did not work for me, that I would have options to fall back to. They assisted me in obtaining training and certifications to advance my career and I have been employed as a DoD contractor since 2017.”*

*“[The Choice Group] assisted me in obtaining training and certifications to advance my career and I have been employed... since 2017!”*

Rachel Hoffmann, from The Choice Group, also shared these remarks in recognition of the second panelist’s successful journey to re-employment:

*“I will say the other thing that was really cool was that he started his career and then went back to school, and we helped with that. And he advanced his career from there to ‘how can I continue to increase my earnings to take care of my family?’ And the other thing that I really love is he used this as a platform with other veterans to say, hey guys, there are these resources and services out there that you may not know are available. And so, he really does a lot of good work and sharing information about Ticket to Work services with folks who may not know that they have those free services available to them, so thank you.”*

For panelist 2, the Ticket to Work Program offered a chance for a second career and a path to self-sufficiency and great pride he has in caring for his family. For more information on how Ticket to Work can help veterans, access the [Ticket to Work for America’s Veterans page](#).

*The Ticket to Work Program offered a chance for a second career and a path to self-sufficiency.*

### Panelist success story #3

The final panelist shared his story as a struggling student with dyslexia who received support services



from his North Carolina VR agency representative. He discussed how accommodations were a key tool that helped him complete his college education. As a result of the services and supports he received, he stopped thinking about entry-level positions and started mapping out his journey to becoming an entrepreneur. He is now the leader of a company with over 1,600 employees.

During the panel, panelist #3 reported on the importance of the supports he received along the way: *“The biggest thing that Vocational Rehabilitation did for me is that it really encouraged me to stay in school and helped me to stay in school.”*

Lindsey Braciale of Advocations, an EN in the Charlotte, N.C. area, then provided several key reflections while working with panelist #3:

*“I think one of the reasons you're so successful in business is that you break the mold in a really unique way. But I think being able to apply that now to creating job opportunities for people with disabilities because you're able to see that you know you've got work that needs to get done, and there's a lot of people out there that you know may not fit that traditional square peg square hole.”*

As reported at the end of the two-day event, these real-life stories were highlights and reinforced the potential for individuals with disabilities to enter or return to work and ultimately achieve self-sufficiency through the services and supports available through the Ticket to Work Program.

Session 1 then introduced the following service providers and job placement and technical assistance organization representatives:

- Scott Brouillette, Chief Executive Officer InReturn Strategies
- Michael Corso, President disABLEDperson, Inc., Talent Acquisition Portal
- Shannon Offord, Vice President, Strategic Partnerships and Alliances DirectEmployers Association
- Dr. Timothy Tansey, Professor and Principal Investigator, University of Wisconsin, VR Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment (VRTAQ-QE)
- Pam Walker, President & CEO, Alliance Professional Services, and Board Chair National Employment Network Association (NENA)
- Amy Wallish, Chief Executive Officer, Full Circle
- Kathy West-Evans, Director of Business Relations, Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR)
- Diane Winarski, Director, Allsup Employment Services

These presenters emphasized a variety of key points, including:

- Businesses are including disability as part of their diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, but not all businesses take this approach.
- Beneficiaries seeking to return to work should build career pathways that intersect with employer needs.
- Benefits planners are critical to employment success because they help Ticketholders understand SSA's Work Incentives and how work and earnings impact benefits.
- Job placement and technical assistance organizations should seek out participation from business, including human resources, diversity, equity and inclusion, and compliance departments.
- Businesses should leverage technology to access desired talent and build more inclusive service provider networks.
- Everyone should tap into available disability inclusion and accessibility training and technical assistance resources, including the training and evaluation resources from the [VR Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment \(VRTAC-QE\)](#). The VRTAC-QE's goal is to increase the knowledge and skills of State VR agencies and community partners that help people with disabilities achieve quality employment and career advancement, with emphasis on competitive integrated employment.
- Partnership and collaboration help each organization reach better employment and transition outcomes for Ticketholders. One example of this is SSA's Partnership Plus as noted above.
- Vocational case managers are helping remove job search fear by helping Ticketholders understand modern technologies.
- Consider having Ticketholders work up the career ladder through internships or apprenticeships.
- The key for job placement organization's successful collaboration with employers is that they ensure that the candidates sent to the employer are fully vetted and qualified, saving the employer time and resources on their HR side.

After a robust exchange with most of the panelists, Shannon Offord of [DirectEmployers Association](#), provided a detailed review of their offer for ENs and State VR agencies to connect with their paid business members. DirectEmployers is a nonprofit member-owned and managed association formed in 2001 by 14 Fortune 500 companies searching for a way to reduce recruiting costs. Mr. Offord reported that while *"employers pay a membership fee to belong to DirectEmployers, there's no cost at all to any EN or VR seeking to place their clients into employment. We want to partner with as many organizations as we can because we want to make sure that our business members have access to those individuals and to the contacts that they might want to reach out to..."* DirectEmployers offers both a community messaging platform along with a disability diversity recruitment and connection specialty. Mr. Offord also noted that [EmployReward Solutions \(ERS\)](#), a

national EN, partners with DirectEmployers and has successfully worked with 10-15 of their employer members to date.

*“We want to partner with as many organizations as we can because we want to make sure that our business members have access to those individuals [with disabilities]....”*

During the session, Robert Pfaff, Director of the Office of Employment Support, also announced that Michael Corso from [disABLEDperson, Inc.](#) was offering ENs free one- year access to the [Talent Acquisition Portal \(TAP\)](#), an online system that includes both a national talent pool of candidates looking for employment and a job posting system for businesses looking to hire individuals with disabilities.

*“Let's get out there and let's work together. Let's develop that trust with business. Let's answer their questions and be part of the solution and bring great talent, because we work with great talent.”*

- Kathy West-Evans, CSAVR The NET

### ***Session 2: Employer roundtable on hiring individuals with disabilities***

This session covered the needs of employers in making successful job placements for individuals with disabilities. There was a robust exchange from a variety of employers, ranging from large national employers to more regional or local employers. Specifically, the employer roundtable’s participants included the following individuals:

- Sherina Barnes, Diversity Coordinator Sodexo
- Vincent Bianca, Director Onsites, Retail/Consumer Goods Vertical Adecco
- Debbie Deissroth, Chief Navigation Specialist, DD Coaching and Consulting
- Carl A. Donato, Jr., Store Operations Regional Recruiter, Wawa Inc.

- Dayna Fladhammer, Director, Ig Community Support Team, Takeda
- Merrill Friedman, Regional Vice President, Inclusive Policy & Advocacy Anthem Inc.
- Amanda Rhine, Vice President of Client Strategies, J.Lodge
- Duane Rohr, Senior Advisor, Workforce Initiatives, CVS Health
- Reggie Willis, Chief Diversity Officer, Ally Bank

Key to this discussion were the ENs and VR agencies that partner with these employers and how those relationships were established. Takeaways and recommendations from the panelists included the following:

- According to Merrill Friedman at Anthem, it is important to provide disability inclusion training throughout the organization to change the culture toward employees with disabilities.

*“Inclusive jobs for people with disabilities are successful when they have inclusive communities like everybody else. So, I think... that just is a really big part of it, and we value these relationships so much because it's success for everybody.”*

- Merrill Friedman, Anthem

- At CVS, Duane Lohr described how they established a Workplace Initiatives team of 50 individuals to focus on communities through a social justice and equity lens, including the disability community. This work includes training hiring managers and collectively working to improve both hiring and retention rates of employees with disabilities.
- Several panelists identified the importance of establishing partnerships between talent acquisition departments, ENs, State VR agencies, service providers, and employer associations to increase employment of individuals with disabilities.
- Sherina Barnes explained how Sodexo seeks to staff its food services and facilities management client sites with populations as diverse as the communities around them. Sodexo partners with national organizations with a local reach that helps them reach out,

connect, and learn what they can do via collaboration to strengthen partnerships and improve the talent pipeline in the long-term.

- For DD Coaching and Consulting, Debbie Deissroth explained that there's never been a better time to open this door and create opportunities for people with disabilities. With 50 people in their programs in the past six years, it's the seed that's beginning to be planted in the state of New Jersey for employment above minimum wage. Ms. Deissroth concluded by saying, "We have found at our workplace the culture was significantly enhanced by opening up these opportunities to people with disabilities."
- Next, Reggie Willis from Ally contributed to the discussion by emphasizing the importance of creating accessible and welcoming position descriptions to be more attractive to candidates with disabilities. Reggie stated, "I think equally as important is you've got to think about how are you writing your job descriptions? Are they accessible? Do they seem welcoming? It's one thing you know, working for a financial institution we continuously are asked by regulators to follow rules. Just being adherent to the rules and compliant isn't necessarily welcoming. So how do you take it to that next step where you're welcoming and not just compliant?"
- Building on the idea of creating welcoming space and changing cultures, Lyndsey Braciale of Advocations and Reggie Willis both commented on the importance of hiring and placing people with disabilities as subject matter experts to help change practices and help shift narratives. Examples included having employees with disabilities for user testing, product design, training content, and customer-facing accessibility needs, such as closed captioning.
- Provide more accessible and inclusive experiences by building customer-facing teams with disabled talent.
- Several speakers noted that businesses should utilize inclusive tools and practices, such as closed captioning, audio description, and alternative formats, such as audio, Braille, or large print versions of printed materials. These inclusive tactics will assist when engaging both individuals with disabilities in the public and for materials provided to employees with disabilities.
- Dayna Fladhammer, speaking as a person living with a disability who leads an employee resource group at Takeda and who has team members living with disabilities and people who are immunocompromised, identified that people with disabilities are leaving the workforce because they're not being accommodated. She added that working from home is becoming easier because of the pandemic and rethinking what is normal and how reasonable accommodation can be normalized now to help retain these individuals.

Toward the end of the panel, discussion focused on several more themes, including:

- Connecting employees with disabilities to employee resource groups and diversity networks to increase retention and advancement of disabled talent and help inform inclusive business practices; and

- Having businesses implement and update reasonable accommodation policies and procedures and provide training to employees on the policies and procedures.

After the second session ended, Susan Wilschke offered closing remarks for the first day's panel discussions:

*"Congratulations and my thanks to our 3 panelists who were successful in their return to work journeys. Employment support programs are voluntary, and they're really meant to provide support for options for our beneficiaries who are interested in working. So, when we think about how we can make changes to make improvements to the program, it's really important that we hear from participants and that we understand your experiences. So, all the good news stories that we heard are really helpful for us.*

*We also certainly appreciate all the different perspectives that were shared today from the VRs and ENs, and various technical assistance and job placement organizations. I think we've heard some really great examples about collaboration that could serve as successful models.*

*"[W]e've heard some really great examples about collaboration that could serve as successful models."*

*Thank you to our employers for the second session. I think we heard a lot about the role of the diversity programs in providing accommodations and the innovative work that's being done, a lot of which I think is really about changing mindsets.*

*In closing, a couple of really quick reflections. We certainly heard multiple times the importance of building relationships among the various stakeholder groups. You know, we all share the kind of the common goal of successful employment outcomes and just need to make sure that everyone's needs are reflected. Collaboration and communication came up over and over again and we definitely heard plugs for Partnership Plus, so hopefully there'll be more conversations around that and how we can help job seekers."*

### **Session 3: Federal incentives for disability employment and tools for removing supply-side barriers**

Discussion included the role of State Workforce Agencies, Workforce Development Boards and Centers for Independent Living in job assistance and job placement; incentives such as the [Work Opportunity Tax Credit \(WOTC\)](#) – a federal tax credit available to employers who invest in American job seekers who have consistently faced barriers to employment; and the [Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended](#) – a law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs conducted by

federal agencies including programs receiving federal financial assistance and in the employment practices of federal contractors. Topics also included training and apprenticeship programs; and other programs, supports, and incentives for employers hiring individuals with disabilities.

First, Jonide Corbin, Branch Chief of Regulatory, Legislative and Policy Development at the [Office of Federal Contractor Compliance Programs \(OFCCP\)](#) at the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), provided an overview of their anti-discrimination enforcement work, including descriptions of compliance reviews and complaint investigations to determine if federal contractors are meeting their affirmative action requirements. Further, she described OFCCP's outreach and technical assistance services in support of [Section 503](#), a law that prohibits federal contractors and subcontractors from discriminating in employment against individuals with disabilities and requires employers to take affirmative action to recruit, hire, promote, and retain these individuals. Ms. Corbin also provided details regarding Affirmative Action Plans and OFCCP requirements for federal contractors to establish 7 percent hiring goals for employment of people with disabilities. In closing, Ms. Corbin also provided [OFCCP compliance assistance resources](#) to assist federal contractors.

Next, Steven Rietzke, Division Chief for National Programs, Tools and Technical Assistance for the Department of Labor's [Office of Workforce Investment in the Employment and Training Administration \(ETA\)](#), described how ETA provides oversight and support of the State Workforce Development Boards and American Job Centers (AJC).

Workforce Development Boards are local bodies of volunteers who supervise the allocation of federal funding to strengthen the skills of the local workforce. The Board is led by local business owners and includes public partners, educators, labor leadership and community-based organizations.

American Job Centers are local organizations offering training referrals, career counseling, job listings, and similar employment-related services. Customers can visit a center in person or connect to the center's information online or through kiosk remote access.

ETA partners with other organizations and programs, including the adult and dislocated worker programs funded under the [Workforce, Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\)](#), the landmark legislation designed to strengthen and improve the nation's public workforce system and help get Americans, including youth and those with significant barriers to employment, into high-quality jobs and careers and help employers hire and retain skilled workers. Additionally, ETA also partners with adult education programs and vocational rehabilitation that work together to provide the integrated services needed to make successful employment matches.

A second ETA representative, Yufanyi Nshom, Workforce Analyst, presented on the Federal Bonding Program and the WOTC, including their referral and certification processes. [The Federal Bonding Program](#) was created by the U.S. Department of Labor in 1966 to provide Fidelity Bonds for "at-risk," hard-to-place job seekers. The bonds cover the first six months of employment at no cost to the job

applicant or the employer. The program is a unique hiring incentive tool that successfully targets individuals whose backgrounds can pose significant barriers to securing or retaining employment.

Next, Ms. Nshom explained the WOTC federal tax credit, including how employers must apply for and receive a certification verifying the new hire is a member of a [targeted group](#) before they can claim the tax credit. An example of a targeted group is a Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipient who is receiving disability benefits. A tax credit is available to employers within 60 days of the date the SSI recipient is hired and began receiving benefits.

Additionally, a targeted WOTC group may also be a VR referral, A “vocational rehabilitation referral” is a person who has a physical or mental disability and has been referred to the employer while receiving or upon completion of rehabilitative services pursuant to:

- A state plan approved under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, or
- An Employment Network Plan under the Ticket to Work Program, or
- A program carried out under the Department of Veteran Affairs.

After the required certification is secured, taxable employers claim the WOTC as a general business credit against their income taxes, and tax-exempt employers claim the WOTC against their payroll taxes.

Finally, the ETA representatives provided an overview of WorkforceGPS resources and training modules as a toolkit for all attendees. [WorkforceGPS](#) is an online technical assistance website created to help build the capacity of America's public workforce investment system. The site was developed specifically for workforce professionals, educators, and business leaders and offers a variety of [Disability and Employment Community resources](#), a robust general [Resources Portal](#), and a page for featured [webinars and events](#).

The next speaker was David Jones, the Director of the Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (OIDD) and Acting Director of the Office of Disability Services Innovation (ODSI) at the [Administration for Community Living \(ACL\)](#), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The ACL aims to increase community support for all Americans while focusing attention and resources on the unique needs of older Americans and people with disabilities. Each year, the ACL [Aging and Disability Network](#) serves over 10 million people through networks composed of more than 20,000 community-based organizations. Mr. Jones provided details on the [American Business Challenge Competition](#), [Centers for Independent Living grant program](#), the [State Councils on Developmental Disabilities](#), and the [Developmental Disabilities Network grant program](#) and how collaborations with ENs, VRs and other federally-funded programs are common across the nation.

Following the DOL and ACL panelists, the next presenter was Billy W. Wright, National Employment Coordinator from the Veteran’s Benefits Administration, [Veteran Readiness and Employment \(VR&E\)](#)



at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. In describing VR&E services, the panelist reviewed available job training, employment accommodations, resume development and job-seeking skills coaching. He also provided details about the [five support-and-services tracks](#) assisting veterans for reemployment, rapid access to employment, self-employment, long-term services track, and the independent living track for those who are severely disabled.

Two representatives from DOL's [Office of Disability Employment Policy \(ODEP\)](#), a non-regulatory agency conducting research and identifying best practices in the workplace followed the VR&E panelist. Louis Orslene, Director of the Employer and Workplace Policy Team, reviewed the agency's current focus on utilizing the COVID response and recovery to improve inclusion models and shifting individuals from sub-minimum wages to competitive integrated employment. Mr. Orslene also provided an overview of ODEP's technical assistance centers, including the [Job Accommodation Network](#), the [Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion](#) and the [Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology](#).

The next portion of the panel highlighted the connection between ODEP's youth transition work and the New Jersey Workforce Development Board's implementation of policies and practices. Kirk Lew, an ODEP Supervisory Policy Advisor for Youth Policy, and Tammy Molinelli, the Executive Director of the [Workforce Development Board of Bergen County New Jersey](#), co-presented on successful youth transition strategies. By developing relationships with local Chambers of Commerce and nonprofit organizations, the workforce board attracted employers now operating internship programs for young adults with disabilities. After six years in operation, the internship programs are now successfully transitioning interns into full-time employees – creating permanent employment opportunities for this talent pipeline of people with disabilities.

For more information on the above programs and resources, and the slide decks used during the event, please review the resources section later in this report.

### **Session 4: Building bridges to employment – Summit takeaways for Social Security implementation of programmatic employment linkages, conduits, tools for stakeholders, employers, and beneficiaries**

This session focused on the important takeaways, recommendations and next steps for Social Security and others to build on to provide access to job opportunities to EN and VR agencies to help increase employment outcomes for Ticketholders.

The panel started off with James Smith, Policy Manager from Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, providing recommendations for bringing VR, ENs and employers closer together in finding solutions that work for employer needs. Specially, Mr. Smith said: "It's incumbent on ENs and VR agencies to have stronger relationships ... with our local business communities and have direct, ongoing connections with our business community, so we so we can know what they need."

Next, Rachel Hoffman, Ticket to Work Manager at The Choice Group, an EN, reinforced the importance of listening to beneficiaries and using their success stories to make others aware of what employment success looks like and what is possible. Ms. Hoffman's points connected back to the stories of the panelists who successfully returned to work from the first panel presentation and recommended Social Security continue sharing success stories through blogs and social media posts and to share what individuals are achieving in terms of employment and self-sufficiency.

A discussion between several panelists, including David Leon, Rachel Hoffmann, and Lyndsey Braciale, identified the needs to find and employ more vocational case managers and others qualified to support and serve Ticketholders.

Kathy West-Evans spoke about requesting more collaboration between federal partners in using the current national partnerships and lessons learned to work across systems and find win-win solutions for both common customers.

As the dialogue continued, other ideas that that summit panelists recommended included:

- Encourage ENs, State VR agencies and other service providers to develop and expand relationships with employers.
- Encourage collaboration by producing and sharing more documented stories of service providers working together to improve community offerings, including their employer relationships.
- Share and utilize tools like the Talent Acquisition Portal, DirectEmployers, and InReturn Strategies to connect beneficiaries to more job opportunities.
- Develop and operate a national portal for employers to post jobs, connect with ENs and State VR agencies, and connect with a talent pipeline of candidates with disabilities.
- Coordinate with the Rehabilitation Services Administration to increase participation in the Cost Reimbursement and Ticket Programs, including Partnership Plus collaboration.
- Increase access to benefits planning information and the number of Benefits Counselors.<sup>1</sup>
- Operate an ongoing collaboration space for more consistent connection, dialogue, and engagement.
- Increase awareness of the requirements of Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act.
- Create ongoing interaction and engagement within the employer community through collaboration opportunities, including more events, webinars, and social media.
- Develop and support strategies that help ENs, VR agencies and job placement organizations both serve more clients and spend more time building linkages and collaborations.
- Support training initiatives for VRs and ENs to produce a workforce to meet service demands.

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<sup>1</sup> To learn more, visit the [Community Work Incentives Coordinator \(CWIC\) and Community Partner Initial Training and Certification site](#) designed for professionals who will deliver individualized work incentives counseling services to Social Security disability beneficiaries on a regular basis.

### ***Moving Forward: Collaboration, Connection, Training and Access to Talent***

The following section contains recommendations offered during panel deliberations for Social Security's consideration. Because these activities are pulled from the above panel summaries, there is repetition in the content. Any plans to undertake recommendations in this section are subject to the availability of resources.

#### **Short-term activities – requires few to no additional resources; limited coordination with other components, etc.:**

- Facilitate free EN access to the CSAVR/disABLEDperson Inc. Talent Acquisition Portal.
  - *Initiated December 2021*
- Facilitate EN access to Abilities to Careers Technical Virtual Academy (ACT) for up to 100 training licenses for beneficiaries to receive free Virtual IT training.
  - *Initiated December 2021*
- Facilitate development of a dedicated EN webpage on VRTAC-QE's website for ENs to access tools for building relationships with employers.
  - Establish a Social Security and VRTAC-QE working team to identify content needs and establish a new webpage. *Initiated April 2022*
- Support ENs and State VR agencies in developing relationships with employers and create ongoing engagement with the employer community:
  - Create a communications network connecting stakeholders with monthly news, resources and employment tools.
  - Partner with employers and employer associations to increase awareness and access to EN and VR employment-ready clients.
  - Facilitate access through available communication channels to [NENA's employer engagement guidance](#).
- Expand efforts increasing ENs and State VR agencies' collaboration through Partnership Plus to provide more personalized supports available to Ticketholders.
  - Leverage communication channels through RSA, CSAVR and NENA, to the EN and VR communities on the benefits of Partnership Plus participation.

- Continue identifying and expanding access to employment tools and resources like the Talent Acquisition Portal, the DirectEmployers Association’s recruitment site, and the VRTAC-QE website to connect service providers to more job opportunities.
  - Create a robust, consistently updated toolkit for Social Security to push new tools, technology, resources, blogs, and training opportunities to service providers seeking to establish more beneficiary linkages to employment while helping create new employer relationships.
  - Continue summit discussions through webinars hosted by summit participants and other stakeholders, identifying common objectives and strategies for increasing employment.
- Increase access to benefits planning information and expand the number of benefits counselors.
  - Expand access to Work Incentives Seminar Events (WISE) webinars, emphasizing benefits planning information and accessing and services from benefits planners. [Visit the WISE web page](#) for registration and on-demand access.
  - Invite summit participants to participate in WISE webinars, including employers, to elevate their desire to hire talent with disabilities.

### **Intermediate initiatives – requires coordination with other components; additional resources; development of plans and timelines; etc.:**

- Leverage success stories and beneficiary perspectives in designing successful services and supporting tools for beneficiaries.
  - Identify beneficiaries, ENs, VRs and employers for participation in new employment success stories in print and video.
  - Produce more documented stories of service providers working together to improve community offerings.
- Expand the number of high-quality ENs.
  - Support current ENs with enhanced technical assistance to improve their operational models and increase linkages with beneficiaries and connections to employers.
- Integrate DOL’s [labor market index information](#) into training and technical assistance support services, helping to build talent pipelines for current and projected vacancies. The index provides a wealth of state and local employment and economic data – most of it free – from government and private sector sources.

- Increase awareness of federal contractor requirements, including [Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act](#), and connect those receiving training to ENs and State VR agencies.
  - Collaborate with OFCCP to enhance awareness of ENs and VRs as talent pipeline partners.

**Long-term initiatives – may require research; coordination with other agencies/components; resources; etc.:**

- Consider developing and operating a national internet portal for employers to post jobs, connecting with ENs and State VR agencies and other service providers to connect with job seekers with disabilities.
- Facilitate opportunities for ongoing collaboration by summit stakeholders.

### Participant List

#### ***Social Security***

- **Dr. Kilolo Kijakazi**, *Acting Commissioner*
- **Stephen Evangelista**, *Acting Deputy Commissioner Retirement and Disability Policy*
- **Susan Wilschke**, *Associate Commissioner, Office of Research, Demonstration, and Employment Support*
- **Jeffrey Hemmeter**, *Acting Deputy Associate Commissioner, Office of Research, Demonstration, and Employment Support*
- **Robert Pfaff**, *Director, Office of Employment Support*
- **Michael Anzick**, *Senior Advisor, Office of Employment Support*

#### ***Federal Partners***

- **Jonide Corbin**, *Director of Regional Operations, Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs  
Department of Labor*
- **David Jones**, *Director, Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Acting Director  
Office of Disability Services Innovation Administration for Community Living  
Department of Health and Human Services*
- **Kirk Lew**, *Supervisory Policy Advisor, Office of Disability Employment Policy Department of Labor*
- **Yufanyi Nshom**, *Workforce Analyst, Employment and Training  
Department of Labor*
- **Louis Orslene**, *Director of the Employer and Workplace Policy Team, Office of Disability  
Employment Policy, Department of Labor*
- **Steven Rietzke**, *Division Chief, Employment and Training Administration  
Department of Labor*
- **Billy W. Wright**, *National Employment Coordinator, Vocational Readiness and Employment  
Department of Veterans Affairs*

#### ***Employment Networks***

- **Lindsey Braciale**, *Chief Executive Officer, Advocations*
- **Frank Chisholm**, *Chief Executive Officer, EmployReward Solutions*
- **Rachel Hoffman**, *Ticket to Work Manager, The Choice Group*
- **LeighAnn Jarry**, *Assistant Vice President, Allsup Employment Services*
- **Kevin Nickerson**, *Co-Director, American Dream Employment Network*
- **Matthew Silverstein**, *Director of Public Affairs, AmericaWorks*
- **Pam Walker**, *President & CEO, Alliance Professional Services, and Board Chair  
National Employment Network Association*
- **Amy Wallish**, *Chief Executive Officer, Full Circle*

- **Diane Winarski**, Director, Allsup Employment Services

### ***Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce System Entities***

- **David Leon**, Deputy Director Workforce Programs, Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services
- **Donna Osburn**, Social Security Coordinator, Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
- **James Smith**, Policy Manager, Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- **Cheryl Vail**, Program Planning and Development Specialist, New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- **Jennifer Veneziani**, Program Planning and Development Consultant, New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development
- **Tammy Molinelli**, Executive Director, Bergen County Workforce Development Board

### ***Employers***

- **Sherina Barnes**, Diversity Coordinator, Sodexo
- **Vincent Bianca**, Director Onsites Retail/Consumer Goods Vertical, Adecco
- **Debbie Deissroth**, Chief Navigation Specialist, DD Coaching and Consulting
- **Carl A. Donato, Jr.**, Store Operations Regional Recruiter, Wawa Inc.
- **Dayna Fladhammer**, Director, Ig Community Support Team, Takeda
- **Merrill Friedman**, Regional Vice President Inclusive Policy & Advocacy, Anthem Inc.
- **Amanda Rhine**, Vice President of Client Strategies, J.Lodge
- **Duane Rohr**, Senior Advisor, Workforce Initiatives, CVS Health
- **Reggie Willis**, Chief Diversity Officer, Ally Bank

### ***Job Placement/Technical Assistance Organizations***

- **Scott Brouillette**, Chief Executive Officer, InReturn Strategies
- **Michael Corso**, President, DisABLEDperson Inc., Talent Acquisition Portal
- **Shannon Offord**, Vice President, Strategic Partnerships and Alliances, DirectEmployers Association
- **Dr. Timothy Tansey**, Professor and Principal Investigator, University of Wisconsin, VR Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment
- **Kathy West-Evans**, Director of Business Relations, Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, Talent Acquisition Portal

### ***Other Stakeholders***

- **Jocelyn Greenidge**, Ticket Program Manager Project Director, Cognosante

## Agenda

### Day 1: November 17, 2021

#### Welcome/Summit Overview

- Introduction of Acting Commissioner, Susan Wilschke, Associate Commissioner, Office of Research, Demonstration, and Employment Support, Social Security
- Dr. Kilolo Kijakazi, Acting Commissioner, Social Security
- Stephen Evangelista, Acting Deputy Commissioner for Retirement and Disability Policy, Social Security
- Jocelyn Greenidge, Ticket Program Manager Project Director, Cognosante

#### Session 1: Unsuccessful/Successful Job Placement from the Beneficiary, Technical Assistance/Job Placement Organization Perspective, and Employment Support Service Provider Perspective

This session will discuss the experience and perspective of clients receiving employment support services and the third-party organizations engaged in technical assistance and job-placement supports. Discussion will include how EN and VR organizations interact with these entities, where applicable, to assist with job placement.

#### Discussion Questions

1. What did it take for the beneficiary to find a job and go back to work as identified by:
  - Job placement supports and tools
  - Employer engagement and accommodations
  - Other factors
2. For clients not successfully placed, what were the factors identified in the unsuccessful placement? What mitigations strategies were attempted or otherwise needed but unavailable?

#### Session 2: Employer Roundtable on Hiring Individuals with Disabilities

This session covers the needs of employers in making successful job placement for individuals with disabilities. Discussion will include topics such as workplace accommodations, staff training, collaboration with EN/VR organizations, use of job/training/internship programs, etc.

#### Discussion Questions

1. What are employer needs for hiring individuals with disabilities?
2. What diversity hiring programs do they offer or participate in?
3. How do they identify/hire individuals with disabilities, including collaborations with third-parties?
4. What are the associated benefits in hiring individuals with disabilities?

#### Closing Remarks

Susan Wilschke, Acting Associate Commissioner, Office of Research, Demonstration, and Employment Support, Social Security



## ***Day 2: November 18, 2021***

### **Welcome**

Robert Pfaff - Social Security, Director, Office of Employment Support

### **Session 3: Federal Incentives on Disability Employment and Tools for Removing Supply-side Barriers**

Discussion will include the role of State Workforce Agencies/Workforce Development Boards and Centers for Independent Living in job assistance and job placement; the Work Opportunity Tax Credit; training and apprenticeship programs; and other programs, supports and incentives for hiring individuals with disabilities.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What tools, programs and incentives are available to employers to incentivize the hiring of individuals with disabilities?
2. How can employers access these tools?

### **Session 4: Building Bridges to Employment: Summit Takeaways for Social Security Implementation of Programmatic Employment Linkages/Conduits/Tools for Stakeholders, Employers, and Beneficiaries.**

### **Discussion Questions**

1. From your perspective, what were the important takeaways you identified during the three sessions?
2. What are your recommended next steps for Social Security or others to build on the discussions and information provided during the sessions?
3. How can Social Security provide access to job opportunities to Employment Networks and Vocational Rehabilitation agencies to help increase employment outcomes for disabled beneficiaries?

### **Closing Remarks**

Susan Wilschke, Acting Associate Commissioner  
Office of Research, Demonstration, and Employment Support, Social Security

Jeffrey Hemmeter, Acting Deputy Associate Commissioner  
Office of Research, Demonstration and Employment Support, Social Security

### Resources

#### *Social Security*

##### ***Ticket to Work Program, Office of Employment Support***

Social Security's [Ticket to Work Program](#) supports career development for Social Security disability beneficiaries ages 18 through 64 who want to work. The Ticket Program is free and voluntary and helps people with disabilities progress toward financial independence. Individuals who receive Social Security benefits because of a disability and are age 18 through 64 probably already qualify for the program.

Social Security invites community partners to share resources, including upcoming [Work Incentive Seminar Event](#) (WISE) webinars, [blog posts](#), [success stories](#) and [fact sheets](#). Social Security also encourages community partners to follow Choose Work on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#).

Organizations can access the [Service Provider Toolkit](#) for information on how to integrate the Ticket Program into your marketing campaign. For specific communications and outreach questions or to make suggestions, please contact [TPMCommunications@Cognosante.com](mailto:TPMCommunications@Cognosante.com).

Beneficiaries can visit the [Choose Work website](#), attend a monthly [WISE webinar](#) or use the [Find Help Tool](#) to locate an EN, VR, Benefits Counselor or other support service provider. Beneficiaries can contact the Ticket to Work Help Line at 1-866-968-7842 or 1-866-833-2967 (TTY).

Service providers interested in becoming an EN can visit the [Employment Networks page](#) to learn more about qualifications and how to apply.

#### ***Federal Partners***

##### **Rehabilitation Services Administration, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education**

The [Rehabilitation Services Administration \(RSA\)](#) provides leadership and resources to assist state and other agencies in providing vocational rehabilitation and other services to individuals with disabilities to maximize their employment, independence and integration into the community and the competitive labor market. RSA provides formula grants to State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Agencies to administer the [State VR Services](#), [State Supported Employment Services](#), and [Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who Are Blind](#) programs in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and 4 Territories. Visit [RSA's State VR Directory](#) to locate a specific program. RSA also funds two technical assistance centers, listed below.

### **National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative**

The [National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative \(NTACT:C\)](#) provides information, tools, and supports to assist multiple stakeholders in delivering effective services and instruction for secondary students and out of school youth with disabilities. The NTACT:C provides [training and technical assistance](#) on a variety of topical areas, including [employment](#), [Pre-Employment Transition Services](#) and [VR Transition Services](#).

### **Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment**

The [Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment \(VRTAC-QE\)](#)'s goal is to increase the knowledge and skills of State VR agencies and community partners that help people with disabilities achieve quality employment and career advancement, with emphasis on competitive integrated employment. The VRTAC-QE provides [technical assistance](#), shares updates and industry practices and shares findings, outcomes and project evaluation data.

### **Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services**

The [Administration for Community Living \(ACL\)](#) was created around the fundamental principle that older adults and people of all ages with disabilities should be able to live where they choose, with the people they choose and with the ability to participate fully in their communities. By funding services and supports provided primarily by networks of community-based organizations, and with investments in research, education, and innovation, ACL helps make this principle a reality for millions of Americans. In many states, [Aging and Disability Resource Centers](#) can act as a gateway to a broad range of services and supports for older adults and people with disabilities. For people with disabilities of all ages, [Centers for Independent Living](#) (CILs) are a great first stop. These community-based centers are run by and for people with disabilities and offer a broad range of services to empower and enable people to stay in the community. Visit the [CILs Directory](#) to find a CIL in a specific location.

The [Administration on Disabilities](#) oversees both the Office of Independent Living Programs and the Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disability, which administers the 56 [State Councils on Developmental Disabilities](#) and 68 [University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities](#) that receive federal grants.

### **Employment and Training Administration, Department of Labor**

The mission of the [Employment and Training Administration \(ETA\)](#) is to contribute to the more efficient functioning of the U.S. labor market by providing high-quality job training, employment, labor market information and income maintenance services primarily through state and local workforce development systems. The ETA oversees the nation's Employment Service offices, which are located in approximately 2,400 [American Job Centers](#) nationwide. The ETA [programs and](#)

[initiatives for job seekers with disabilities](#) mission is to facilitate programmatic and physical

accessibility through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The ETA also administers an inclusive national [Apprenticeship Program](#).

The ETA also provides guidance on the [Work Opportunity Tax Credit \(WOTC\)](#), a federal tax credit available to employers who invest in American job seekers who have consistently faced barriers to employment. The Internal Revenue Service provides the [targeted group descriptions](#), including VR referrals and recipients of Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Review this Department of Labor "[Employers Blog](#)" to learn more.

ETA also operates [WorkforceGPS](#), an online technical assistance website created to help build the capacity of America's public workforce investment system. The site hosts curated communities of interest, webinars and other training resources, promising workforce development practices, and relevant evidence-based research. WorkforceGPS includes the [Disability and Employment Community](#), an online resource destination for the American Job Center network, people with disabilities, and employers.

### **Office of Disability Employment Policy, Department of Labor**

The [Office of Disability Employment Policy \(ODEP\)](#) is the only non-regulatory federal agency that promotes policies and coordinates with employers and all levels of government to increase workplace success for people with disabilities. ODEP's mission is to develop and influence policies and practices that increase the number and quality of employment opportunities for people with disabilities. To develop and influence disability employment-related policies and practices, ODEP sponsors the following five policy and technical assistance centers:

#### **Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology**

The [Partnership on Employment & Accessible Technology \(PEAT\)](#) promotes the employment, retention, and career advancement of people with disabilities through the development, adoption, and promotion of accessible technology policy. PEAT brings together employers, technology developers, accessibility thought leaders, government policy makers and consumers that provide a mix of resources, outreach and collaboration, to serve as a catalyst for innovation and policy development related to accessible technology in the workplace.

#### **Job Accommodation Network**

The [Job Accommodation Network \(JAN\)](#) provides free, expert and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations to employers as well as employees, job seekers, family members and service providers. Beyond accommodations, JAN provides information and assistance to individuals with disabilities who may find that self-employment is their best career choice. It also provides easy to understand technical assistance and [training](#) to employers on the Americans with Disabilities Act and other disability employment related laws and regulations.

JAN has a [robust online accommodations database](#) and annually responds to more than 40,000 individual requests for assistance via phone, email and chat services.

### **Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion**

The [Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion \(EARN\)](#) helps employers recruit, hire, retain and advance people with disabilities by responding to their need for effective and innovative strategies to optimize their workforce. EARN analyzes policies, practices and existing research on disability employment; conducts its own research on effective employer engagement; and provides technical assistance to employers including private sector businesses of all sizes, federal contractors, federal and state governments. EARN provides [technical assistance and resources](#) to thousands of employers through [webinars](#), in-person training and the EARN website.

### **National Center on Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities (LEAD Center)**

The [National Center on Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities \(LEAD Center\)](#) promotes employment of people with disabilities by conducting policy development to ensure they receive effective services under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA). Areas of focus for the LEAD Center include nondiscrimination and equal opportunity, financial literacy, health care and apprenticeship.

### **The Center for Advancing Policy on Employment for Youth**

The [Center for Advancing Policy on Employment for Youth \(CAPE-Youth\)](#) improves employment outcomes for youth and young adults with disabilities by helping states build capacity in their youth service delivery and workforce systems. Its work includes conducting research on new and existing innovative policy and practice approaches to improving transition and employment-related outcomes of youth and young adults with disabilities; developing strategic partnerships between national, state and local workforce systems; sharing best practices among key stakeholders from individuals and families to state legislators and beyond; and helping states identify opportunities to expand career pathways, work-based learning, strategic partnerships, systems coordination and professional development for youth and young adults.

### **Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, Department of Labor**

The [Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs \(OFFCP\)](#) is responsible for ensuring that employers doing business with the federal government comply with the laws and regulations requiring nondiscrimination. This mission is based on the underlying principle that employment opportunities generated by federal dollars should be available to all Americans on an equitable and fair basis. OFFCP's oversight includes requirements related to Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (as amended) and the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974. Access the OFFCP [Disability and Veterans Community Resources Directory](#) to search for providers and the

[Section 503 Focused Reviews Website](#) to learn more about the Regulations, Sample Affirmative Action Plans, Voluntary Self-ID Form, best practice and other resources.

### **Veteran Readiness and Employment, Veterans Benefits Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs**

The [Veteran Readiness and Employment \(VR&E\) program](#) is for veterans with a service-connected disability that limits their ability to work or prevents them from working. The VR&E program helps veterans explore employment options and address education or training needs. With [5 support-and-services tracks](#), the VR&E program has options for disabled veterans to access training and education, find and keep a job and live as independently as possible.

### ***Job Placement/Technical Assistance Providers***

#### **Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation**

The [Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation \(CSAVR\)](#) is composed of the chief administrators of the public rehabilitation agencies serving individuals with physical and mental disabilities in the United States, the District of Columbia and the territories. These agencies constitute the state partners in the State-Federal program of rehabilitation services provided under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The Council's members supervise the rehabilitation of some 1.2 million persons with disabilities.

CSAVR also operates the [National Employment Team \(The NET\)](#), a network of 78 public VR programs with a united approach to working with business customers. The 78 VR Directors have each named a business consultant that functions as the designated point of contact for their agency. These 78 points of contact, through CSAVR leadership and support, form The NET, specialized in employer development, business consulting and corporate relations.

CSAVR and The NET also support the [Talent Acquisition Portal® \(TAP\)](#), an online system that includes both a national talent pool of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) candidates, agencies that serve individuals with disabilities looking for employment and a job posting system for businesses looking to hire individuals with disabilities.

#### **DirectEmployers Association**

[DirectEmployers](#) is a nonprofit member-owned and -managed association formed in 2001 by 14 leading Fortune 500 companies searching for a way to reduce recruiting costs while regaining ownership of their recruitment brand. Through collaboration with employers, DirectEmployers operates a federal contractor compliance solution that assists with the VEVRAA mandatory listing requirements and Section 503 regulations. Now with around 900 members, benefits include [online recruiting solutions](#), the Partner Relationship Manager, networking and educational opportunities.

### **disABLEDperson, Inc.**

[disABLEDperson, Inc.](http://www.disABLEDperson.com) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization whose mission is to reduce the high unemployment rate of individuals with disabilities. Accomplished by primarily two national job boards, [www.disABLEDperson.com](http://www.disABLEDperson.com) for individuals with disabilities in the general population and Job Opportunities for Disabled American Veterans or [www.JOFDAV.com](http://www.JOFDAV.com) for disabled veterans. When employers post jobs to disABLEDperson.com, the jobs are also automatically added to the [Talent Acquisition Portal®](#). Both job boards also offer automated feed posting through API, activity reports, single job posts routed to Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn and banner logo placement.

### **National Employment Network Association**

The [National Employment Network Association \(NENA\)](#) supports the needs of all EN organizations and partners in working with Social Security's Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program. NENA provides members with information and resources to create more effective and successful ENs.

### **Project SEARCH**

[Project SEARCH](#) is a unique, business-led, one-year employment preparation program that takes place entirely at the workplace. The goal for each transition-to-work program participant is competitive employment. The goal for each program participant is competitive employment. To reach that goal, the program provides real-life work experience combined with training in employability and independent-living skills to help young people with significant intellectual and developmental disabilities make successful transitions to productive adult life. Based at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, an administrative team oversees a large international network of Project SEARCH program sites and maintains an active, ongoing program of technical assistance, program evaluation, program development, and continuous improvement.

Please visit the Ticket Program Manager website to [access the Bridges to Employment Summit slide deck](#).