

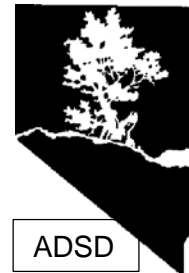


# Nevada's Strategic Plan on Integrated Employment

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Developed by the Governor's  
Taskforce on Integrated Employment  
2015

*Prepared by: Social Entrepreneurs, Inc. under contract with:*



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## INTRODUCTION

## MISSION, VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### Mission

The Taskforce mission is to develop and implement a sustainable system for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) to achieve competitive, integrated employment in the setting of their choice.

### Values

We believe:

1. Our job is to increase opportunities and decrease barriers
2. All individuals, schools, families and businesses must raise their expectations
3. People will be hired because of their ability not because they have a disability
4. Employment is a win/win for everybody
5. People are healthier, safer and happiest with meaningful work of their choosing

### Guiding Principles

Nevada is making competitive, integrated employment happen by:

**Changing Expectations:** Everyone can contribute and participate in meaningful and competitive employment.

**Strengthening Partnerships:** Agencies and programs work toward the same outcome and work effectively with each other.

**Promoting Choice:** Individuals have the right to informed choice through community experience.

**Embracing Diversity:** Respect and support people of all color, gender, and disability.

**Valuing Efficiency:** Strive to meet the needs of our community, economy, employers, and workers.

**Ensuring Quality:** Continually monitor the education, training, employment services, and consumer satisfaction.

### Philosophy

The prevailing philosophy that guides all aspects of this plan is that Nevada will be strengthened by promoting competitive, integrated employment where persons with intellectual and or developmental disabilities are employed at or above the state minimum wage.

## CURRENT SITUATION

From December 2014 to March 2015, the Taskforce on Integrated Employment guided a number of activities to understand the current situation in Nevada. This included research and outreach across the state. A number of themes emerged from an analysis of the outreach. Some themes were cross-cutting and applied to the overall population of people living with I/DD in Nevada. Other needs were specific to target populations such as those living in northern, southern, and rural/frontier areas of Nevada. Understanding and addressing these themes is essential to the success of Nevada's strategic plan.



*Shared Definition and Vision:* There is a lack of a shared definition of what competitive, integrated employment is, what should be measured, and what it means to provide choice or options. Consumer surveys clearly identify three areas of priority for individuals with I/DD. They include: working in a job they like, having access to job training resources, and having the opportunity to earn a wage that is fair for the work they do.

*Government as a Model and Leader:* Key informants and focus group participants both identified the critical role the state can play in implementing competitive, integrated employment. The state could play a tremendous leadership role by employing individuals with I/DD and using innovative approaches such as job carving and job sharing. This would also afford the state the vocabulary to speak with employers knowledgeably about what works and how best to integrate individuals with I/DD into their workforce. Key informants noted that the bureaucracy and risk management constraints at the state often are barriers to the state's ability to employ persons with I/DD.

**"IT'S NOT OUR KIDS WITH I/DD THAT ARE THE BARRIER. IT'S THE WHOLE COMMUNITY OF PEOPLE RAISED HERE THAT HAVE HAD LITTLE TO NO EXPOSURE TO PEOPLE WITH I/DD AND THEIR FEARS, INTOLERANCE, AND POOR UNDERSTANDING. EXPOSE THE NEXT GENERATION OF "TYPICALS" TO THOSE WITH I/DD AT A VERY YOUNG AGE AND IN 20 YEARS YOU WILL HAVE A GREATER ACCEPTANCE IN THE WORK FORCE."**

**Survey Respondent**

*Community Awareness:* More community awareness and understanding is needed for individuals, families, providers, employers, and community members to create an environment where competitive, integrated employment can be successful.

*Collaboration and Coordination:*

Collaboration and coordination is needed between schools and the state agencies serving individuals with I/DD in terms of resources, data sharing, eligibility processes, and transition planning and implementation. Collaboration is occurring at the state level but needs to be pushed down culturally to the local level. In addition, transportation is a key factor in success and transportation must be seen as a partner and collaborator rather than a resource to improve. Finally, no collaboration will work if it doesn't include individuals with I/DD and their family members at every level of the discussion.



*Employer Engagement:* A lack of

sufficient opportunities for meaningful work was identified repeatedly by key informants, focus group participants, and in stakeholder surveys. More large, small, and entrepreneurial business engagement is needed across the state. The state could play a tremendous leadership role by modeling approaches to setting goals and employing individuals with I/DD, and engaging employers in conversations about how the state overcomes barriers that employers are also likely to face.

*Resource Development and Sustainability:* A lack of sufficient resources

and the need for sustainable funding strategies threatens the success of any plan or system developed by Nevada. Funding, coupled with the need to overhaul the rate setting process is essential to the success of integrated employment in Nevada. Sufficient resources or the lack thereof was mentioned in every focus group and by every key informant in some context. Therefore, ensuring sufficient resources for the services that promote competitive, integrated employment is a critical issue to many stakeholders.

*Changing Landscape:* The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) has

been adopted but final rules have not been published. Ongoing coordination and identification of the implications of WIOA is essential during planning and implementation of any system changes. In addition, Nevada's education system is currently undergoing substantive changes with the likelihood of more to follow. Ensuring that individuals with I/DD don't get further lost or left behind while schools implement the Common Core or adjust to other changes enacted by the 2015 legislature will be critical. Ensuring schools are actively at the table in all implementation discussions is essential.



## Results Per Executive Order

Key informant interviews, focus group discussions, surveys, results from a State Scorecard rating and Taskforce input provided information on key issues outlined for examination in the Executive Order. Key findings include:

**STUDENT SERVICES:** Students with I/DD are most often identified prior to kindergarten entry, frequently through parent initiated assessments, and in coordination with ChildFind and/or Nevada Early Intervention Services (NEIS). While school districts do identify students with I/DD, there are no consistent assessment tools utilized across school districts, and resources (including transitional supports) available post-identification are insufficient to meet students' needs.

Existing methods for identifying students with intellectual/developmental disabilities, the implementation of vocational assessments, and the delivery of employment-related planning and training services are not consistent or sufficient across the state. Proactive engagement of individuals to identify interests and match their interests to training opportunities are needed. Earlier intervention, access to more options, and opportunities and better transitions through collaboration, coordination, and shared resources are needed.

### WAGE SETTING PRACTICES:

The current practice of paying individual's with I/DD less than a living wage was identified as a barrier to achieving meaningful employment practices. The impact of wages earned on an individual's SSI benefits exacerbates the challenge as those that acquire employment risk losing access to necessary supports which cannot be acquired on the wages typically earned. Achieving competitive wages, and implementing strategies to address and achieve placements that are in the highest and best interest of the individual requires a shared definition of competitive, integrated



**I WANT MY CHILD TO HAVE OPTIONS AND A CHANCE TO MAKE MINIMUM WAGE. I WANT A FUTURE FOR MY CHILD. I WILL NOT ENCOURAGE MY CHILD TO EXPERIENCE SERVITUDE ENVIRONMENTS THAT DO NOT ALLOW FOR HER TO GAIN NEW SKILLS OR EXPERIENCE GROWTH. WE NEED TO CHANGE THE ATTITUDE OF MANY SERVICE PROVIDERS AND TEACH THEM ABOUT HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES. PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES HAVE A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT TO SHARE WITH THE COMMUNITY. THEY SHOULD NOT BE HIDDEN AWAY IN INSTITUTIONAL TYPE SETTINGS.**

Survey Comment

employment. It also requires education and supports for individuals, families, schools, providers and employers. Finally, a pool of employers to provide choices for jobs is needed.

Proactive engagement of businesses is critical for competitive, integrated employment. Job carving and job sharing are two approaches that can achieve placements in the highest and best interest, but in all cases, the focus must fit with the individuals' interests and skills, as well as the employers' needs. Current rates for providers are based on an outdated formula, using ratios that can act as a disincentive to promoting employment and achieving the outcomes sought in the Executive Order. The rate setting process as it currently exists is not adequate and needs to be overhauled.

**WE NEED WORK. WHEN WE WORK WE FEEL BETTER, WHEN WE FEEL LIKE PRODUCTIVE MEMBERS OF SOCIETY WE HAVE LESS HEALTH ISSUES. GET COMPANIES TO HIRE US.**

**SURVEY COMMENT**

**COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS:** Collaborations at the state level were noted as a strength by a majority of key informants. However, focus groups indicated that these collaborations often don't exist at the local level. Focus group participants felt that parents, educational institutions, state agencies and community partners do not work in partnership for the benefit of consumers. More opportunities for shared assessments, communications, and resources are needed and could be addressed through effective collaboration. Nevada has many examples of positive collaborations but has few resources to take those collaborations or resulting pilot projects to scale in a way that would have a statewide impact.

Key informants also stated that employers and individuals with I/DD need to be at the table consistently. Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) are needed between school systems (districts and higher education), Voc Rehab, Regional Centers, transportation, and providers to outline roles, responsibilities and agreements. Transportation was often not included in suggestions for collaboration but came up in every discussion and is a natural and necessary partner for any collaboration to be successful in achieving integrated employment outcomes.



**FUNDING MECHANISMS:** Nevada doesn't have sufficient resources to implement competitive, integrated employment and many are concerned that state and federal funds are not being utilized to their fullest potential. In addition, many key informants agreed there is a tremendous need to develop alternative funding options. A minority of key informants were very concerned that the integrated employment plan would result in a loss of resources for those most vulnerable and in their opinion, unable to work.

Sustainability was a recurring theme when key informants discussed goals, policies or programs. There is a need to support additional services and individualized supports within the educational system, and this is even more pronounced within the adult service systems. While at least one school district is leveraging federal matching funds to support employment and transitional supports, this is not being utilized throughout the state.

**ACCESS TO INFORMATION:**

Information is not widely available to families in their search for services and supports. School districts, community-based providers, and state agencies' staff are not fully aware of resources themselves, leaving parents and consumers with the responsibility of finding out what is available and how to access care. There was consensus that neither individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities, nor their families, are provided sufficient information to make informed decisions concerning training, services and employment opportunities. Access to information was identified as a key concern at every level of the system, from individuals and families, to communities and statewide systems.

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*I think it's very important to open many doors available to individuals with I/DD in our community. Education is definitely key for community businesses. I also think it's extremely important to find jobs that focus on individual interest and abilities which is not always the case. If we did more of this it would promote longevity with jobs.*

*Survey Comment*

**DAY HABILITATION SERVICES:** There was considerable concern from many key informants about the effectiveness, demand, and long-term need for "day habilitation" and sheltered workshops in community training centers. At the same time, parents in focus groups and on surveys expressed concern about the need for day habilitation services and more funding for them, particularly in rural areas. Key informants felt that day habilitation should be included in options for individuals with I/DD but voiced concern that they are sometimes provided as the only viable option, rather than competitive, integrated employment being the first option offered. Day habilitation settings were often not seen as a resource that supports employment preparedness due to a perceived lack of opportunities for skill development.

Day habilitation settings can offer ways for individuals to contribute to their community and add value in some way. Others noted that they are often staffed by a low skilled workforce. Key informants felt the structure of these settings could be enhanced or reconfigured to support temporary placement based on individualized and progressive skill development for consumers.

Truly promoting these services as training centers for assessment and skill acquisition was identified by multiple key informants as a way to enhance the service delivery system. Focus group members and key informants felt this will only be possible if these services are supported by highly qualified, skilled, and consistent staffing levels.

#### TRANSITIONAL SUPPORTS:

Transitional supports for individuals are often insufficient to prepare individuals with I/DD beyond their high school experience. Within the educational system, transitional plans are often established too late and include only rudimentary goals. Additionally, staffing, such as transitional officers are not always available to families. Within the adult serving system (Voc Rehab and Regional Centers), services are not often initiated prior to the age of 18, and when they are, few resources exist to offer students. Current approaches and opportunities to allow families to plan for transition services in the K-12 setting are not consistent across the state and were not

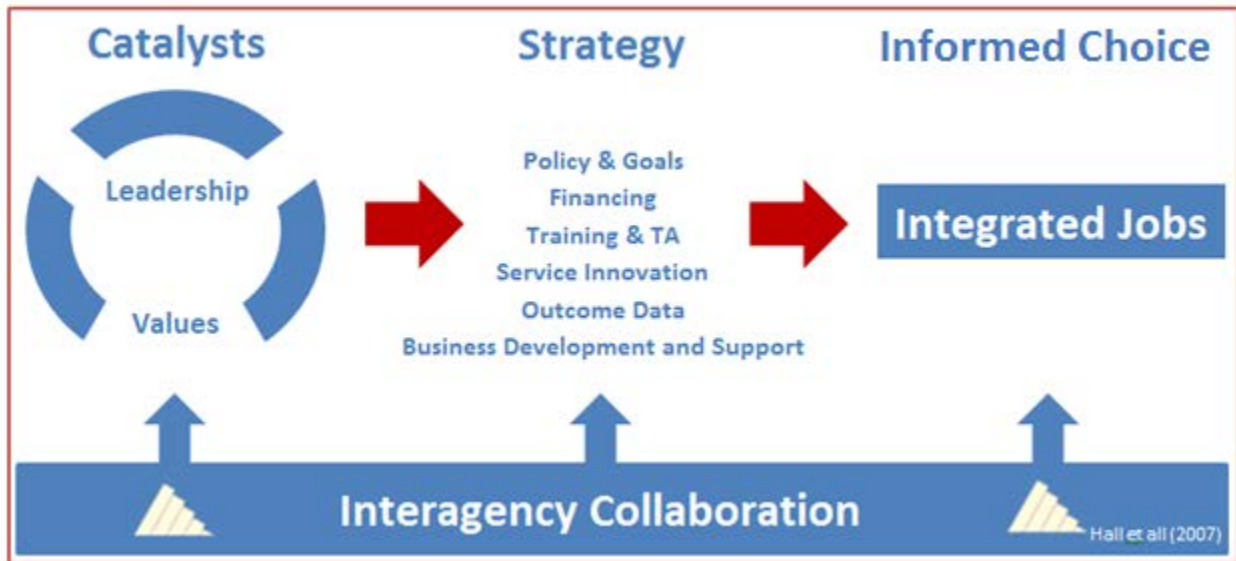


seen as sufficient by the majority of key informants. This issue was frequently cross-referenced with the lack of access to information, particularly about programs and options. Providing transition supports earlier in a person's life was mentioned by a majority of key informants. Consumer surveys clearly identified five areas that were most important to individuals with I/DD. They include: working in a job they like, having access to job training resources, having the opportunity to earn a wage that is fair for the work they do, having choices in applying for jobs, and having the opportunity to earn minimum wage or higher.

**TRANSPORTATION:** Transportation to and from work, school, and doctor's appointments is not widely available to individuals with I/DD, or difficult to navigate due to their condition. Issues cited included a lack of sufficient routes, hours of operation, bus driver consistency, and timeliness of the service. Alternative transportation options and training supports are needed, especially in the rural areas of the state. A number of barriers and needed improvements were identified as essential to support transportation for consumers to individual work places. Barriers include the cost, the areas served, the hours of operation, the treatment of consumers by some drivers, the regular rotation of drivers on a route as a disruption, lack of reliability to be at work on time and general concerns about treatment and safety. Transportation to attend appointments for services and general transportation were identified as top services needed by surveys in Carson City and surveys from the rural counties.

### Nevada's Proposed High Performance Model

In examining efforts across the nation, Nevada reviewed best practices and developed a revised version of a national model for competitive, integrated employment. Nevada's model is:



Nevada's plan addresses the key components of the model and sets goals to achieve competitive, integrated employment.

## CRITICAL ISSUES

The following critical issues were identified to be the focal point for a successful plan for competitive, integrated employment in Nevada.

*Government as a Leader and Model Employer:* Government can assume a leader's role, act as a model employer for people with I/DD and set the path for the business community in competitive, integrated employment. This includes:

***Outcomes Measurement and Review Process:*** It is important to set and measure progress toward employment goals and the return on investment of disability employment programs. Information on progress can be used to improve programs and encourage others to participate in them.

***Employer Engagement, Development and Support:*** More large, small, and entrepreneurial business engagement is needed across the state. The state could play a tremendous leadership role by modeling approaches to setting goals and employing individuals with I/DD, and engaging employers in conversations about how the state overcomes barriers that employers are also likely to face.

*Resource Development and Sustainability:* Nevada doesn't have sufficient resources to implement competitive, integrated employment and many are concerned that state and federal funds are not being utilized to their fullest potential. A lack of sufficient resources and the need for sustainable funding strategies threatens the success of any plan or system developed by Nevada. Funding, coupled with the need to overhaul the rate setting process is essential to the success of integrated employment in Nevada. Ensuring sufficient resources for the services that promote competitive, integrated employment is critical.

*Collaboration and Coordination:* Collaboration and coordination is needed between schools and the state agencies serving individuals with I/DD in terms of resources, data sharing, eligibility processes, transition planning and implementation. Nevada has many examples of positive collaborations but has few resources to take those collaborations or resulting pilot projects to scale in a way that would have a statewide impact. Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) are needed between school systems (districts and higher education), Voc Rehab, Regional Centers, transportation, and providers to outline roles, responsibilities and agreements.

*Workforce Development:* Appropriate assistance is needed for both Direct Service Professionals (DSPs) and Job Developers to improve outcomes for job seekers with I/DD. DSPs can benefit from consistent use of best and promising practices. Professional development focused on more training would help DSPs address the needs of people with I/DD by finding job openings, engaging employers to hire, and negotiating job responsibilities with an employer.

Promoting best practices for person-centered career planning, customized employment, job creation, and self-employment is needed.

### *Early and Timely School Assessment and Planning for*

*Transitions:* Transition and career-readiness services for youth with I/DD should be provided from middle school on to begin shifting expectations toward work and a career. Commonly these services start at high school, but research suggests that starting earlier leads to better outcomes.

*Transportation:* Transportation to and from work, school, and doctor's appointments is not widely available to individuals with I/DD, or is difficult to navigate. Alternative transportation options and training supports are needed, especially in the rural areas of the state. Barriers that must be addressed include the cost, areas served, hours of operation, treatment of consumers, and general concerns about reliability, treatment and safety.

## GOALS

The goals for competitive, integrated employment in Nevada, to address the critical issues identified in this plan include:

### 2015-18

#### *Resource Development and Sustainability*

1. Systems within Nevada will increase resources and funding for competitive, integrated employment
2. Systems within Nevada will review, define, revise, implement and enforce a reimbursement structure for service providers that increases competitive, integrated employment of persons with I/DD

#### *Collaboration and Coordination*

3. Nevada will develop effective partnership to implement competitive, integrated employment State agencies, school districts and service providers collaborate effectively to implement competitive, integrated employment

### 2015-20

#### *Workforce Development*

4. Nevada invests in the funding, development, training, and maintenance of a strong, competent workforce, building the skills of job coaches and developers, supervisors, and key staff working with professionals that helps individuals with I/DD attain complete, integrated employment

#### *Transportation*

5. Expand and enhance transportation options for persons with I/DD in all regions of Nevada

### 2015-25

#### *Government as a Leader and Model Employer*

6. A minimum of 7% of those employed by the State of Nevada including the university system and by local governments will include persons with I/DD with a target of 2% including individuals with I/DD
  - a. Target of 1.5 % I/DD year 1
  - b. Target of 4% I/DD year 3
7. The State of Nevada supports policies, regulations and practices that increase opportunities, foster innovation, reduce barriers, and promote choice



8. Comprehensive data systems are used to measure progress, benchmark performance, and document outcomes. Information is gathered on key indicators across employment and other related systems and is used to evaluate and track results, inform policy, and improve provider contracts and service agreements
9. There are measurable increases in employment of Nevadans with I/DD within the general workforce, earning minimum wage or higher with benefits

## 2020-25

### *Early and Timely School Assessment and Planning for Transitions*

10. Young people with I/DD have work experiences that are typical of other teenagers and young adults
11. Every individual with I/DD attending a school in Nevada will participate in an assessment process to identify their interest and capacity, and be provided training supports and placement that match those attributes

## Implementation Plan

## Terms and Definitions

**ADSD**—Aging and Disability Services Division

**Competitive, Integrated Employment**—Work in the competitive labor market that is performed on a full-time or part-time basis in an integrated setting and for which the individual is compensated at or above minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and levels of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled.

**Developmental Disability**— The definition used by the Nevada Governor’s Council on Developmental Disability, means a severe, chronic disability of an individual that—is attributable to mental or physical impairments or a combination of mental and physical impairments; is manifested before age 22; is likely to continue indefinitely. This disability must result in substantial functional limitations in 3 or more of the following areas of major life activity: self-care; receptive and expressive language; learning; mobility ; self-direction; capacity for independent living; economic self- sufficiency In addition reflect the individual's need for a combination and sequence of special, interdisciplinary, or generic services. Individual supports or other forms of assistance that are life-long or extended duration and are individually planned and coordinated.

**DETR**—Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation

**DSPs**—Direct Service Professionals

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**—IDEA was originally enacted by Congress in 1975 to ensure that children with disabilities have the opportunity to receive a free appropriate public education, just like other children. The law has been revised many times over the years. The most recent amendments were passed by Congress in December 2004, with final regulations published in August 2006 (Part B for school-aged children) and in September 2011 (Part C, for babies and toddlers).

**(I/DD)** — Individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disability

**Informed Choice**—Informed choice is the process of choosing from options based on accurate information and knowledge. These options are developed by a partnership consisting of the consumer and the counselor that will empower the consumer to make decisions resulting in a successful vocational rehabilitation outcome.

**Intellectual Disability**— this Nevada Administrative Code indicates Mental Retardation, the NAC has been revised to Intellectual Disability. School districts across the State of Nevada are required to follow this statute when initially determining eligibility for special education. NAC 388.055 “Mental retardation” defined. (NRS 385.080) “Mental retardation” means a condition that:

1. Is characterized by intellectual functioning at a level that is significantly below average, and which exists concurrently with related limitations in two or more of the following adaptive skill areas:

- (a) Communication skills;
- (b) Self-care;
- (c) Home living;
- (d) Social skills;
- (e) Use of the community;
- (f) Self-direction;
- (g) Health and safety;
- (h) Functional academics;
- (i) Leisure; and
- (j) Work;

2. Manifests before the age of 18 years; and

3. Adversely affects the educational performance of a pupil.

(Added to NAC by Bd. of Education, eff. 7-14-88; A 11-23-93; R085-99, 2-16-2000)

**NGCDD**—Nevada Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities

**NEIS**—Nevada Early Intervention Services

**SSI**—Social Security Insurance

**Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**—WIOA was signed into law by President Obama on July 22, 2014 to help job seekers — including those with disabilities — access the services they need to succeed in employment and match employers with skilled workers.

