

Boot Camp Project Narrative: Team Minnesota

The 2020-2021 Disability & Employment Boot Camp supported teams in their efforts to design and test innovative ideas in their evolving workforce landscapes; ideas that will strengthen system capacity to increase employment of Americans with disabilities.

Experience Stages



Convening Team Minnesota

- **Marci Jasper (Lead)**, State of Minnesota
- **Kay Kammen**, Governor's Workforce Development Board
- **Christen Pentek**, Performance Management
- **Joan Berning**, State of Minnesota
- **Liz Jennings**, State of Minnesota
- **Maureen McAvoy**, State of Minnesota
- **Reggie Worlds**, State of Minnesota
- **Tou Yang**, State of Minnesota

Defining the Challenge

Experience Highlights

The team completed a Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis to help clarify the challenge with current business engagement. The team identified key stakeholders.

Results

Original Challenge Statement

Lack of streamlined and coordinated effort across partners in engaging businesses, especially around promoting employment of individuals with disabilities. Within the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), we have several divisions that provide services to businesses, including our Title I, Title III, and Title IV programs. Our

biggest challenge is determining how to do our work in a concerted effort, while recognizing we each have unique funding sources and different laws and regulations. Businesses have raised the following concerns about the work we do in serving businesses: (1) Businesses don't know what services were available to them or how to access these services. (2) Businesses expressed frustration with accessing a system that to them appears disjointed. (3) Employers are seeking a streamlined process and one point of contact at DEED. (4) The same employers are the ones championing the employment of individuals with disabilities and no new employers are showing up at the table.

SWOT Analysis

Through this analysis, the team discovered possibilities for transitioning to online learning so that various peer divisions and agencies can work more collaboratively through the same tools and technology to build alignment and break down silos. Understanding that businesses may be short-staffed and lack the time to attend workshops and webinars was eye-opening yet identifying various fears and stigmas businesses have of hiring individuals with disabilities as well as their own internal challenges with turnover as potential root causes of the challenge was more telling.

STRENGTHS

- Lots of resources.
- Experience.
- Support from management.
- We have lots of staff who are on the ground with business engagement – the “meet your regional team” people – VRS, VETS, WSC, SSB, LMI, etc.
- Designated staff working with businesses.
- Common Network.
- Team collaboration, awareness of resources available within the program infrastructures across programs.
- Local partnerships to share business leads.
- DEED agenda so employers understand boundaries of what they can/cannot ask/receive.
- Overall, everyone works well together and are focused on achieving DEED's values and mission and OKRs.
- A strong business economy.
- Strong support from agency leadership.
- Streamlined documentation that has useful information.

- DEED culture has done a lot of culture work over the past year to increase positive culture and teamwork.
- Yes, to support from leadership!
- Common website: CareerForcemn.com.
- Contacts throughout the state.

WEAKNESSES

- Too many people from DEED contacting the same business.
- Not all businesses know how to navigate DEED resources.
- Not enough staff in the field who can engage businesses.
- Silos across the department; fragmented.
- So many people and teams are doing business engagement that is hard to know who is doing what and who has what contacts.
- Silos across efforts, programs, and divisions.
- Not always knowing the roles of everyone in the agency.
- Communication – takes a lot of effort to stay abreast of each other.
- Data in manual spreadsheets.
- Need for more workforce-specific coordination/alignment across divisions.
- We don't have one system that everyone uses.
- Information and resources could be overwhelming and intimidating for businesses to wrap their head around and how to tap into.
- Some stereotypes of what people with disabilities can or can't do.
- Building trust across cultural lines.
- Some supports that are not evidence-based.
- No common database that everyone uses. There is MinnesotaWorks.net; WorkforceOne; Salesforce; Cybraian, etc.
- Stigmas either about what people with disabilities can do or about trying to work with DEED/the state as a business on anything.
- Everyone promoting their "own" program.
- Building knowledge across all programs.
- Worry about funding.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Businesses are having a hard time finding candidates.
- “Growing economy.”
- DEED has a great profile in the state with all the press. Our commissioner has been receiving during COVID.
- Companies are eager for new ideas on hiring and filling open positions.
- Employers seeking insights about their industry to plan for next quarter/year’s potential of work and staffing needs.
- Having all staff who engage with businesses meet regularly to discuss needs and strategies to work with businesses.
- There is a labor shortage in many ways even though many people are out of work.
- Conversations about quality credentials; on how to screen for the skills an employer is looking for.
- High schools have been putting more funding into their career and technical education programs and facilities.
- Businesses are willing to look at part-time or alternative ways to hire just to get people in the door.
- I think workforce development at the state level could benefit from partnering more with philanthropy.
- Basic understanding of each region’s needs and employment outlooks.
- Transitions to online learning can be an opportunity for all of us across divisions or even agencies to get more on the same page (using more of the same tools/technology as an alignment-type effort).
- Having a better understanding of placing individuals with disabilities and how to present candidates with disabilities.

THREATS

- Budget cuts.
- State budget deficit.
- Overcoming stereotypes and stigmas.
- Institutional racism.
- Limited on-site work due to quarantining efforts.
- Territorial; communication or lack thereof.
- Companies’ own recruiting/HR staff turnover and then we must make a new connection and start from scratch.

- Reliable transportation.
- Offering better wages and benefits.
- Companies are short-staffed and don't have time to attend workshops, webinars.
- Lack of buy-in from key decisionmakers that would be needed to make substantive changes.
- Hiring and training new folks with limited experience or language skills.
- Misunderstanding and fear of hiring someone different.
- Candidates afraid to work due to COVID.
- Safety.

Refined Challenge Statement

There is a lack of streamlined and coordinated efforts across partners in engaging businesses, especially around promoting employment of individuals with disabilities. Businesses also don't know what services are available to them or how to access these services.

Key Stakeholders

- BCD staff
- Transition schools
- Independent Living Training Centers, e.g., MCIL, RAILS, BLIND Inc.
- Employer Navigators
- Local Economic Development authorities
- Small Business and Development Center
- Title One Partners
- Workforce Development Boards
- People with Disabilities (PWD)
- Community partners that serve IWD

Building Empathy

Experience Highlights

The team learned about the benefits and techniques for building empathy to get inspired by the employers they hope to serve. The interview technique enabled the team to listen to employers to get new ideas about how to design for them. The team synthesized their learnings to identify patterns and surprising insights to inspire new opportunities for design. The team recognized that employers are used to being approached to make a hire rather than being approached by workforce to determine what they need. Roles for the empathy interview process were designed among Boot Camp teammates who

then synthesized themes that stood out. The team interviewed 12 employers using a pre-defined list of questions. We kept our interview guide short. These were our 2 leading questions that we asked and let the conversation flow from there.

1. Have you hired a person with a disability or are you willing to hire a person with a disability?
2. If so, do you or would you change the process?

The team agreed to include empathy building as a practice going forward to consistently listen to employers' needs.

Results

Employers Interviewed

- WEC/Minnesota Energy Resources
- Tennant
- Willdan
- American National Bank
- And many others that did not want to be named.

Key Insights

1. Most employers were cautious about discussing hiring people with disabilities.
2. Businesses operate as if everyone is on a level playing field to uphold ideas of fairness among their pool of employees, regardless of a need for accommodations among any employee with a disability.
3. There's a distinguishing factor between veterans and non-veterans in terms of hiring people with disabilities.

Final Challenge Statement

There is a lack of streamlined and coordinated efforts across partners in engaging businesses, especially around promoting employment of individuals with disabilities. Businesses also don't know what services are available to them or how to access these services.

Final How Might We Statement

How might we get our staff more comfortable to talk to employers about the benefits and value of hiring people with disabilities?

Identifying a Solution

Experience Highlights

As the team conducted empathy building and convened, potential solutions were identified. The team ultimately selected a solution to prototype and test during the Boot Camp and acknowledged a desire to pursue additional solutions identified at a future date if possible. The team participated in a Peer session where they gained insights from other teams.

Results

Potential Solutions Identified

1. Developing a disability employment toolkit for businesses that need to learn more about hiring people with disabilities and providing accommodations with the help of various resources.
2. Offering training on disability employment so that businesses are better educated and equipped.
3. Developing a resource factsheet that can be shared with Career Force locations to fortify trainings centered on hiring people with disabilities.
4. Getting more of the broader staff (e.g., Employer Navigators) on board to scale disability employment, since so few facilitate disability training but so many interact with businesses.

Chosen Solution to Prototype

Develop a resource factsheet that can be shared with Employer Navigators, Career Force locations, and partners to fortify resources and trainings centered on hiring people with disabilities.

Prototyping Solution

Experience Highlights

The team selected their solution which involved getting Employer Navigators comfortable with information on and having conversations with employers on disability. This came together as a factsheet. Employer Navigators would ultimately be trained to use as a resource when engaging with employers. The factsheet provides answers to (1) the what, (2) the why, and (3) the how related to who employers may consider hiring individuals with disabilities.

Results

Resource Sheet for DEED staff that serve Business: Employment of People with Disabilities

The What:

Employers call looking for workers but people with disabilities are not the first workers that come to mind. Here are some general statistics about people with disabilities.

- People with disabilities are twice as likely to be unemployed as people without disabilities.
- According to the CDC, 1 in 4 Americans report having a disability.
- Approximately 48% of people with disabilities living in MN are employed.

The Why:

Why would employers hire people with disabilities?

- Findings show that benefits of hiring people with disabilities include improvements in profitability (e.g., profits and cost-effectiveness, turnover and retention, reliability and punctuality, employee loyalty, company image), competitive advantage (e.g., diverse customers, customer loyalty and satisfaction innovation, productivity, work ethic, safety), inclusive work culture, and ability awareness.
- Secondary benefits for people with disabilities include improved quality of life and income, enhanced self-confidence, expanded social network, and a sense of community.
- Workers with disabilities will increase diversity in the workplace.
- People with disabilities are as capable as anyone else!

The How:

How do employers start the process of hiring people with disabilities?

- Look at some Toolkits to familiarize yourself with all aspects of disability and employment.
 - Job Accommodation Network Toolkit [Here](#)
 - Small businesses Toolkit: [Here](#)
 - [USDOL Here](#)
- Start by looking through your job descriptions and make sure you are using inclusive language.
 - Inclusive Language and Job Descriptions: [Here](#)

- Contact one of our local Employment Specialists (Contacts statewide [Here](#)) who can provide you and your company in depth training on any disability related topic, walk you through interviewing resources (National Center on Disability and Journalism: [Here](#)) accommodation resources (Ask Jan-[Here](#)). [Assist you in recruiting individuals with disabilities and really help get you where you want to go.](#)
- [Here are couple success stories to get you started. Here, Here](#)

Other Resources:

Data:

- Kessler Foundation: [Here](#) Kessler provides groundbreaking rehabilitation and disability employment research and funds innovative initiatives to provide access to job opportunities.
- MN Labor Market Information [Here](#)

Training:

- Bite Size learning Modules [Here](#) (Will add once they are on CareerForce)
- Windmills Training-An Employment Specialist can provide to a business
- ODEP- [Here](#)

Legal:

- Minnesota Disability Law Center [Here](#)-
- American with Disabilities Act-[Here](#)

Hiring Incentives:

- Work Opportunity Tax credit- [Here](#) The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal tax credit available to all private sector businesses as an incentive to employers to hire workers in certain groups who consistently experience high rates of unemployment.
- Federal Bonding Program [Here](#) Fidelity Bonding is no-cost employee dishonesty insurance that protects employers against employee theft of money or property.

Other topics:

- [Training and Business Solutions for Disability Inclusion: Understood.org](#)
- [Disability Job-Driven Resources for Employer \(Workforce GPS\)](#)
- [Strategies to Meet One-Stop Career Centers' Business and Job-Seeker Customer Needs for Employment-Related Transportation Services: DOL Training & Employment Notice](#)
- [Training and Business Solutions for Disability Inclusion: Understood.org](#)
- [Business Engagement & Employer Supports: WINTAC](#)
- [Ask EARN: Inclusion at Work](#)
- [Ask EARN: Engaging Employers](#)
- [Explore VR: Business Engagement Toolkit](#)
- [Stay at Work/Return to Work Toolkit \(ODEP\)](#)
- [Project CASE: Employer Engagement Strategy](#)
- [Effective Business Engagement & Employer Supports](#)
- [National Organization on Disability: Disability Hiring](#)

Testing and Refining the Prototype

Experience Highlights

The team continues to test and refine the prototype. Several of our team members were pulled away about halfway through our project to work on a much bigger project so this was put on hold for a bit.

Results

Coming Soon!

Outlining Next Steps

Experience Highlights

The team met and captured the steps to complete the design and launch the solution.

Results

DE Boot Camp Implementation Plan:

1. DE TA Boot Camp provides initial feedback on Resource Sheet for PWD (RS4PWD) prototype
2. Facilitate testing of final-draft prototype with identified stakeholders
 - a. Lisa Snyder/Jay Carter-Liz Jennings
 - b. Noah-Marci Jasper
 - c. Garret- Tou Yang
 - d. Lena Balk-Joan Berning
 - e. Leroy-Reggie Worlds
3. Collect feedback from each stakeholder's interview
 - a. Compile feedback to create comprehensive feedback list
 - b. Evaluate feedback to consider which one to prioritize and/or implement
 - c. Install feedback updates onto prototype document, creating a version 2 final-draft
4. Review version 2 of RS4PWD
 - a. Identify and introduce version 2 to a wider range of potential stakeholders for feedback
 - b. Compile feedback to create comprehensive list
 - c. Evaluate feedback to consider which one to prioritize and/or integrate
 - d. Install feedback updates onto version 2 final-draft, creating a version 3 final-draft
5. Review version 3
 - a. Discuss with DE Boot Camp Team in revising, removing, and/or adding content to RS4PWD v3
 - b. Review formatting content for readability, accessibility
 - c. Create final copy, RS4PWD-Final

6. Develop materials to train and present Final copy of RS4PWD
 - a. Presentation Slides
 - i. Mission of Project and Reason for Existence of team
 - ii. Description of problem and Progression to current solution
 - iii. Reveal solution, RS4PWD Final
 - iv. Demonstrate RS4PWD Final to viewers, audience
 - v. Provide examples of Mock Situations to use document
 - vi. QA, Comments
 - b. Supporting documents
 - i. Process flow-chart
 - ii. DEED agency organization overview map
 - iii. Contact list for support
7. Format final copy and presentation materials for professional branding
8. Plan for presentation day
 - a. Identify date and time to present RS4PWD
 - b. Identify key presenters and assign roles
 - c. Identify intended audience and send invites to join presentation
9. Present Training Materials on Presentation Day
 - a. Users are sent a copy of RS4PWD along with supporting documents
10. Intended DEED audience starts to use document
 - a. Team provides supports as needed
11. One year later (or predetermined timeframe)
 - a. Team reconvenes to review document performance
 - b. Team makes appropriate updates and performances on maintenance on the form
 - c. Team develops a new final copy of RS4PWD, Final Version 2, or RS4PWD SFY22
 - d. Team sends updated materials to intended DEED audience
12. Repeat step 11
 - a. Update version's name to last year's name +1
13. Every 4-6 years Team may want to re-present the latest RS4PWD version to new audience
 - a. Repeat steps 6-9

Closing Commentary

It was invaluable to create a team from so many different departments and organizations to come together to work on this challenge. We embraced empathy-based design. We learned how to scope our solution to the authority, capacity, and time we had at our disposal and are proud of the factsheet being developed. We look forward to providing the training and seeing positive results to better support people with disabilities and employers seeking to hire.