



### COLORADO – Addressing Programmatic Access

**The Challenge:** In Colorado, American Job Centers (AJCs) were focused primarily on ensuring physical accessibility, but were not sure how to strengthen programmatic accessibility as outlined in Section 188 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

**Background:** In the winter of 2019, the Colorado WIOA partners, through the Job Seeker Services Alignment Accessibility Team (Accessibility Team), reviewed the updated [Promising Practices In Achieving Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity: A Section 188 Disability Reference Guide](#). A decision was made to develop training materials to assist and support the WIOA Core Program Partners. The team believed it was vital that staff members not only understand programmatic access as defined by WIOA Section 188, but also have resources to reference for implementation.

**The Strategy:** Based on the need to increase knowledge surrounding programmatic accessibility, the Accessibility Team consulted with Colorado's Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) stakeholders and decided that an online course would be an effective way to educate and train Colorado's workforce system statewide. The goal for this training was to provide information related to WIOA Section 188, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the Rehabilitation Act. The Accessibility Team also implemented a second phase that incorporated a [Programmatic Accessibility Self-Evaluation Toolkit](#) designed for WIOA partners to evaluate progress on accessibility in their local areas. The Accessibility Team believed that by creating this course and the accompanying self-evaluation toolkit, it would help fulfill the vision of WIOA with systems alignment and strengthen accessibility.

**The Implementation Plan:** This effort was led by the project lead from Colorado's DEI Round VIII project, Steven Gold, who worked with WIOA partners to create the self-paced, online course. DEI funds were used to help make the course both robust and responsive to disability employment needs. Key partners in the online development included The Rocky Mountain ADA Center, under the direction of Dana Barton, who shared guidance throughout the development of the course. Technical assistance was also provided by Gaye Horne from Colorado's Adult Education Initiatives. Together, they worked with each state WIOA office on the formation of the content based on their respective policies and procedures to develop an online learning platform. Danielle Ongart, WIOA Title II Director for the Colorado Department of Education, was also instrumental by ensuring the posting of the course on the "state WIOA Moodle site" to help maximize visibility of the online tool within the state.

The online course includes four chapters with each chapter ending with a knowledge check to help reinforce learning. The overall course objective was to ensure programmatic access of workforce centers and partner agencies for customers with disabilities using the services. The course culminates with a certificate of completion for those who score 80 percent or higher. There is no limit to how many times one can complete the course.

The *Programmatic Accessibility Self-Evaluation Toolkit* provides guidance for workforce systems to strengthen accessibility. It was designed to assist Colorado's AJCs fulfill the objectives in their [WIOA State Plan for 2020-2023](#) related to serving customers with disabilities. The toolkit includes a checklist to gauge where accessible services should not be overlooked in the AJC combined with detailed explanations and recommendations on how to resolve any discrepancies. A few of the policies covered in this checklist include program access, non-discrimination, reasonable accommodations, effective communication, transportation access, and marketing plans.

Best practices and strategies learned from DEI have been incorporated throughout the self-evaluation, such as the Integrated Resource Team (IRT), work-based learning, financial literacy education, work incentives, and Ticket to Work. The toolkit also includes templates and examples of policy language that AJCs can adopt. Additional attachments in this toolkit consist of checklists for creating accessible documents, events, and presentations.

## **OUTCOMES**

Between the period of October 2019 and February 2020, the course was completed by more than 200 professionals of Colorado's workforce system. Other state offices, partners, non-profits, and businesses have requested permission to have access to the course. In response to popular demand, the online course was subsequently made available to the public in March 2020 at The Rocky Mountain ADA Center's [website](#).

Colorado workforce professionals who had taken this course gave an overwhelming amount of positive feedback. A post-course survey found that the online training has helped Colorado's workforce system by providing a common language, a clear understanding of the law, and further aligned state systems who serve individuals with disabilities. Survey respondents also remarked that this course was "...very detailed, exceeded expectations, and introduced new information to them." Participants surveyed also valued the best practices surrounding data collection, engagement with the disability community, ADA compliance for facilities and events, and procedures to ensure maximum inclusion in Title I and II programs. This course was viewed by Colorado's workforce staff as an innovative choice to strengthen accessibility across WIOA programs. As one respondent put it, "Finally there is a course that will help us understand the world of disabilities."

The self-evaluation toolkit is intended to be a helpful follow up to the online course. Steven Gold, who spearheaded this project recognizes that it's going to take time for all American Job Centers in Colorado to be fully accessible. Steven shared the intended impact by noting, "Hopefully (by providing the online course and self-evaluation toolkit), we have given these AJCs the right tools to make it happen."

### **Key Career Pathway Elements:**

- Design Education and Training Programs
- Build Cross-Agency Partnerships and Clarify Roles
- Align Policies and Programs

### **Additional Resources on this Topic:**

- [Programmatic Accessibility for Colorado WIOA Partners](#)  
This course helps to inform what Programmatic Accessibility in the Workforce System includes. To access course registration, go to the [WIOA Colorado Expert Learning Moodle Site](#). First time users will need to create a new account and then click on the “Programmatic Accessibility for Colorado WIOA Partners” link to self-enroll in the course. You also have the option to login as a guest. While there is state specific information as part of the course, it does include information that is applicable to any state and or workforce area.

A public link to the site is accessible via The Rocky Mountain ADA Center’s [website](#).

- [Programmatic Accessibility Self-Evaluation Toolkit](#)  
This toolkit has been developed for the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment and the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) Grant so that Workforce Areas in the State of Colorado can evaluate their Programmatic Accessibility. In addition, Workforce Areas will have a clear outline for how to reach full Programmatic Accessibility using this written guidance, checklists, resources and recommendations.
- [Promising Practices In Achieving Nondiscrimination And Equal Opportunity: A Section 188 Disability Reference Guide](#)  
A Reference Guide developed by the U.S. Department of Labor to assist AJC programs by providing promising practices that correlate with specific nondiscrimination and equal opportunity requirements in Section 188 of WIOA and the regulations implementing Section 188 of WIOA.
- [WorkforceGPS Disability and Employment Community](#)  
An online resource destination for the American Job Center network, people with disabilities, and employers. In addition, this is a resource for all key stakeholders who partner with the workforce system to provide services and programs to people with disabilities and other barriers to employment.
  - [Workforce Innovation Accessibility Cohort](#): Check out the tools and resources identified by the Accessibility Team to address the following challenge question: How might we further maximize physical and programmatic access for customers with disabilities using the services of an American Job Center?
- [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\) National Network](#): The Network provides information, guidance and training on how to implement the ADA to “assure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities.” The network consists of 10 Regional Centers located throughout the United States and an ADA Act Knowledge Translation Center.