



Inclusive Employment

Grant: The Beacon Group (Beacon) Encore Project

Request for Year 2 Funding: \$70,265.96 ADDPC, \$23,421.99 match

Year 2 Contract Period: 11/01/2020 – 10/31/2021

The Beacon Group's Encore pilot project is dedicated to customized opportunities for underserved, transition-aged youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities (TAYIDD) moving into employment in Pima County. Encore utilizes Customized Employment (CE) as a process designed to personalize the employment relationship between a job seeker and an employer in a way that meets the needs of both. Encore will work with 15 TAYIDD who are currently not receiving services from state or federal funding sources. Each TAYIDD will obtain employment working in a competitive, integrated environment working at least 20 hours per week for at least minimum wage. Through customized employment planning, the Beacon Encore Specialist (BES) will create a best fit for each job seeker and the employer. Beacon Encore will use an evaluation period of ninety days to help assess the success of each placement. Partners for the project are five local high schools and school districts in Pima County. The school partners provide referrals for the Encore project. The Beacon Encore Specialist has completed the Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) certification through Griffin-Hammis and received the Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP) credential. Over the course of the first grant year Beacon witnessed examples of self-advocacy improvements among participants, improved skills when conversing with employers – in both interview and during day-to-day job performance settings, improved social skills displayed while relating to co-workers and customers, and in the ability to identify when and how to request additional supports.

The Encore project provided services to 12 of the 15 intended participants. There are currently 5 participants employed of the 8 who have completed the Discovery Phase, and 4 participants actively participating in the Discovery Phase. Of the 5 currently employed members, 3 have achieved the target of working 20 hours per week, and all five have met the target of being employed for 90+ days. Participants served have taken part in all aspects of the CE process including vocational trainings, counseling sessions, informational-interviews, and trial-work experiences. All phases of the CE

process have proven to be beneficial to participants' motivation and skill growth.

Year 1 feedback has been generally very positive regarding the Encore project. Referral sources have expressed excitement about new job development processes presented by CE. And educators and counselors believe CE can be helpful to youth who had previously been falling through the cracks. Beacon has used feedback in real time, to individualize the CE process for each participant, which in turn has helped increase positive placement outcomes. Beacon is developing materials, including hand-outs and videos, targeting specific groups, such as educators, parents, and employers, to educate community members about CE.

Beacon estimates the number of people trained and/or educated through Encore activities and outreach to average at least 9, for everyone who has at least finished the Discovery phase of CE. Beacon expects that as more individuals are placed in employment, the community will be educated through data sharing and marketing of success stories.

In the second year of funding, the goal of Encore will be to serve 12 new job seekers, 2 at a time for two months, with a goal to reach at least 10 hours of work per week initially, building to 20 hours per week post-high school. The adjustments will give participants more time in Discovery and Informational Interviewing phases of CE, allowing jobseekers an opportunity to take advantage of activities which increase self-advocacy skills and lead to better job placement outcomes. This will also allow the BES to develop a thorough employment plan that meets the participants' abilities and given supports. Once the plan is established, the BES can more efficiently determine the best environmental considerations for employment outcome.

Originally, Encore planned to allow each participant up to 30 hours of Discovery over a 3-week period, followed by up to 30 hours of Informational Interviewing, over a 3-week period. This proved to be a difficult task with many participants enrolled in school full time. In Year 2, Beacon will extend the 2 phases to approximately 30 days each. Encore estimates that most participants will require 15-30 hours in each phase. Encore will be flexible and allow an extension of time for any participant within any phase of the CE process. Encore intends to serve at least 12 new TAYIDD participants, with or without ALTCS, seeking at least 10 work hours per week, by the end of the 2020-21 grant year.

Encore will collaborate with other Beacon Transition programs to establish additional staff supports and to further the expansion of the Discovery Phase's key activities. Encore will also extend supports for job retention to beyond the initial 90 days of employment, by continuing to follow-up on participant's progress at the 6 month and annual date of employment. The BES will provide vocation-

counseling on accommodation needs and/or ongoing educational needs related to the CE process. Beacon believes that making these adjustments will ensure that participants are more likely to develop strong natural supports and maintain job security. Beacon also plans to increase outreach to the small business community which are more likely to offer work opportunities to CE participants.

Beacon will add an additional administrative staff to allow the BES more time needed to develop the personalized employment plan.

Beacon is currently negotiating with VR regarding a contract of service for Career Exploration, which will make use of CE models and techniques. Beacon is committed to raising community awareness of CE, and in developing best practices. Beacon is using its membership in First Local AZ and maintaining marketing efforts to foster deeper relationships with small businesses and local community members to help grow CE in Pima County and Arizona.

ADDPC requested clarification from Beacon on the use of the Griffin-Hammis Customized Employment model and maintaining fidelity; maintaining CE practices documentation for each participant; strategies to be used to increase work hours to at least 20; development of a sustainability plan, and a Covid-19 Plan for Encore participants. ADDPC staff were satisfied with the information and assurances received from Beacon.

