

## Work Incentive Information Network 2012-2013 Funding Proposal

March 2012

### ABSTRACT

The Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) is submitting a funding proposal to the Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (AADDPC) to support the development and sustainability of a Work Incentive Information Network (WIIN). The Council's funding will support a systems change that will serve to increase the employment rate of individuals with disabilities by creating a system of service professionals who are sharing the same messages and resources to individuals with developmental and other disabilities<sup>1</sup> about employment. Upon approval of funding from the ADDPC an Interagency Service Agreement will be initiated between the ADDPC and AHCCCS. AHCCCS administers the Arizona Medicaid Infrastructure Grant-MIG (1QACMS300122) entitled the "Arizona Employment and Disability Partnership" that has supported the foundational projects, research and tools (i.e. Disability Benefits 101 online tool) that have led to the necessity for creating the WIIN. It is widely held that people with disabilities, who are recipients of cash and healthcare benefits, do not consider employment because they are afraid benefits will be withheld or terminated at the onset of employment. They are unaware some benefits can be maintained (i.e. Medicaid) while others can be incrementally reduced as part of a transition process. They hold onto commonly held myths and are uninformed about the options to transition to employment and self-sufficiency. This type of proposed tiered network is a best practice in building the capacity of the Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program (through the provision of outreach, information and referral activities) that is currently being utilized in Oregon, Utah and Wisconsin. The tiered networks help to address fears individuals with disabilities have regarding work and benefits at the point in time they express interest in employment. The network builds capacity by creating a cadre of service professionals (from benefits specialists to employment service providers) that understand varying levels of how Social Security benefits and work incentives can be used as a bridge to work and self-sufficiency. The cadre would also have the resources to direct people to depending on the phase of their transition to employment. Individuals with disabilities could get their initial questions answered regarding work and benefits without having to consult with a Community Work Incentive Coordinator of the WIPA. The proposal provides a background of former and current initiatives that have been implemented in Arizona to set the stage and foundation for the WIIN. Furthermore, the proposal outlines a needs assessment for why an initiative such as the WIIN will serve to close in the final gap (outreach, information and referral services) on this barrier that prevent people with disabilities from being informed and considering employment. Lastly, the proposal identifies the alignment of the proposed initiative with the ADDPC "Community Integrated Employment" goal, objective and activities. The funding amount requested from the Council is \$102,532.00 in 2012 and \$97,414.00 in 2013 totaling \$199,946.00. The budget outlines the required 25% non-federal match comprised from a number of budget categories totaling \$68,355.60 for a grand project total of \$268,301.60.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "individuals with developmental and other disabilities" is summarized as "individuals/persons or job candidates with disabilities" throughout the narrative

## Background

The background section of the proposal will provide information on the return to work barriers for individuals with disabilities; the role of the WIPA program; gap analysis and a needs assessment; a description of the best practices for tiered benefits planning networks and a summary of initiatives that have been already carried out to address the gap in services.

## **Barriers**

The Ticket to Work and Work Incentive Improvement Act of 1999 (Ticket Act), was instituted to provide resources to address employment barriers for people with disabilities. The primary barrier and reason people with disabilities don't go to work is the fear that healthcare benefits will be lost. The Act addressed this barrier by allowing States the opportunity to create Medicaid-Buy In (MBI) programs which allow individuals to keep Medicaid while working. In Arizona, the program is called the AHCCCS Freedom to Work program and individuals with disabilities can keep their Medicaid (both Acute and Long Term Care) as long as they earn under \$52,000 a year. The Ticket Act, for those receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) also extended Medicare coverage for us to 8 ½ years after cash benefits stop. Another barrier addressed in the aforementioned Act is the ability for people to make informed decisions and choices about going to work and the supports they would be afforded to do so. This barrier is the one proposed to be primarily addressed with the funding proposal. Even though activities have been conducted to help people make informed decisions about using benefits as a bridge to work, there is currently not a system in place neither to sustain the activities nor to help coordinate efforts across systems. For example, the two least known Social Security work incentives are those most pertinent to individuals with developmental disabilities and/or individuals with little to no work history. The Student Earned Income Exclusion allows students to try and experience work while in school by earning up to \$6840 per year (in 2012) without it counting as deductible income from their Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Similarly to the MBI program noted above, the 1619b Medicaid provision allows SSI recipients to earn up to \$2,500 a month (\$30,000 annually) and keep their Medicaid even if they are not receiving cash benefits due to earnings. The AHCCCS Freedom to Work is an additional protection for individuals who earn over the \$30,000 income threshold. Individuals must be afforded the opportunity to make informed decisions about going to work which includes understanding all of the work and healthcare incentives.

## **Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Program**

The Arizona Freedom to Work program is contracted by the Social Security Administration (SSA) to provide work incentive counseling to Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and SSI beneficiaries who want to work. The Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWICs) are trained and certified to understand Social Security rules related to employment, how employment earnings affect cash, medical and other benefits and work incentives that help beneficiaries in the transition to work. There are currently 4,5 CWICs throughout the state and over the 225,000 beneficiaries in Arizona statewide. A total of 96,000 are SSI recipients. The WIPA provides two basic services to SSDI and SSI beneficiaries.

- Written Benefits Summary and Analysis and Work Incentive Planning
- Benefits Management for beneficiaries that need ongoing help once employed

In 2010 and 2011 combined, a total of 328 beneficiaries working with the WIPA went to work. Similarly, a total of 2,370 beneficiaries received benefits management services. In addition, the WIPA provides information and referral and workshops for beneficiaries who are not yet in the position to make a determination to work. Furthermore, the WIPA has provided information and referral to 1,883 beneficiaries and training to another 2,765 in the 2010 and 2011 calendar years. These latter activities are, however, now being limited by SSA.

The SSA has placed a priority on WIPA services for individuals who have earnings goals. This means they must prioritize service to individuals who are already employed, accepted a job offer or actively pursuing employment. Given the limited human and service capacity, the WIPA is limited in providing the outreach, information and referral services to individuals who are starting to consider and plan for employment. A recent publication by the Institute for Community Inclusion asserts that the low employment rate of SSI recipients (3.7% in Arizona) is reflective of the lack of awareness of incentive programs ([http://statedata.info/datanotes/pdf/DN36\\_F.pdf](http://statedata.info/datanotes/pdf/DN36_F.pdf)). This puts the State in a precarious situation. Since the WIPA is limited on the time they can spend informing individuals and service providers about these options, how do we create another way to provide outreach, information and referral services to individuals who are starting to consider and plan for employment and the service providers working with them?

#### Gap Analysis

There is clearly a gap in the system as it pertains to outreach, information and referral for work and healthcare incentives related to employment as noted above. Another finding is that there is also a gap in the knowledge base of service professionals (benefits eligibility specialists, case managers and service providers). The work incentives are complicated and people can definitely do damage by sharing inaccurate information as they can with sharing no information. In 2010, the AZ MIG conducted an analysis of the preparation of service professionals to provide information on work and healthcare incentives. A total of 253 service professionals responded to the survey. The main findings suggest that service professionals:

- Do not understand their role in the system to conduct outreach, information and referral about work and healthcare incentives
- Do not know the information/messages they should be sharing with individuals and their families
- Do not know where to refer people to and when to refer them

Among service professionals who had some prior work incentive training, there was still an insecurity noted that prevented them from sharing the information they did know. They were not secure in their understanding and, therefore, did not want to provide inaccurate information. The results of the 2010 research analysis and the limited imposed by SSA on the outreach, information and referral services of the WIPA, provide justification of the dire need for a tiered Work Incentive Information Network (WIIN) in Arizona.

#### The Best Practice of Benefits Planning Networks

Other States have identified the need for a bifurcated approach that creates a seamless support network between professional benefits specialist and service professionals within the disability support system. This has led to innovation of States developing a comprehensive benefits planning support network in order to provide a path to seamless transitions for prospective and current workers with disabilities. Development of a benefits planning support network creates a structure by which consistent messages and strategies has been established to support the transition of beneficiaries to workers. This development creates a sustainable network of training and methodology that allows individuals to utilize a seamless process of connection to employment, regardless of the provider and program. It is a process that not only benefits the system now as it currently exists, but also streamlines the transition process for individuals in the future.

Currently three states have developed a comprehensive benefits planning network: Oregon, Utah and Wisconsin. Oregon, Utah and Wisconsin have each made significant efforts to create and support an infrastructure that addresses the needs of access to information, training and technical assistance. All three States share a few commonalities in their development. Each state's benefits planning network has coordinated services that are integrated into a number of the supportive services utilized by persons with disabilities. The benefits planning networks are a strong partner with their own state vocational rehabilitation program, community support providers, Employment Networks and in some cases asset building networks. The ability to integrate referrals for access to benefits planning services across numerous community support

programs can help facilitate a no wrong door approach and ensure access to information with a consistent message that employment is an opportunity for everyone. More detailed information on the benefits planner networks is provided as an attachment to this proposal.

### **Laying the Foundation for WIIN**

The AZ MIG, in collaboration with the WIPA and other stakeholders, has conducted a number of marketing and training initiatives to contact outreach, information and referral services for work and healthcare incentives.

- "Don't Let Fear Outshine Your Abilities" Marketing Campaign-2008 and 2009  
Television and radio commercials were provided in mainstream media encouraging people to find out about work and healthcare incentives. The advertisements featured real people with disabilities who had gone to work as the result of work and healthcare incentives. The following year, the Social Security Administration, piloted a postcard mailing campaign to beneficiaries in Arizona. In either case, individuals were provided the WIPA number to call.
- Physician Training Initiative-2008-2010  
Physicians were informed about the key role they play in supporting their patients to work and provided tools and resources to make effective employability decisions. The WIPA participated as a co-presenter for the physician training initiatives.
- Work Incentive Training-2010  
Employment Service Providers and Case Managers within the Arizona Long Term Care System were provided training on how and when to share information on work and healthcare incentives to individuals they serve.

The unfortunate limitation of these aforementioned approaches has been the fact that they result in a point in time impact. The marketing campaign or training does not create a system nor is it sustainable. It impacts the receiver at a point in time. An argument can be made the receiver of the information or training may utilize the tools or resources provided on an on-going basis. That being said, there is no system in place to help ensure the information gets reiterated and becomes part of the business practices of the field practitioner. In 2011, the AZ MIG, partnering with the Rehabilitation Services Administration, developed the Arizona Disability Benefits 101 (DB101) online portal. DB 101 ([www.db101.org](http://www.db101.org)) will go live in early 2012. This is the first step in helping to create a system of consistent messaging, information and referral points to individuals with disabilities considering employment. DB 101 is an employment planning tool and serves as a resource to help individuals with disabilities make informed decisions about work and where to go to get the assistance they need. The tool is a perfect complement to the WIIN and together the two initiatives will provide a sustainable system of outreach, information and referrals for employment and the transition to self-sufficiency.

### **Scope of Work**

The Council's funding will support a systems change that will serve to increase the employment rate of individuals with disabilities by creating system of service professionals who are sharing the same messages and resources to individuals with disabilities about employment. The development of the WIIN will help to ensure that service professionals (from benefits specialists to service providers) will have information and resources to share with individuals with disabilities at the time they express interest in employment. Furthermore, the service professionals will be able to integrate the employment discussion during various life transitional stages of individuals with disabilities to whom they come in contact. As a result, individuals with disabilities will have the opportunity to make informed decisions about work as opposed to believing

commonly held myths that have traditionally been a barrier to them considering employment or self-sufficiency. The funding will directly support two new positions for the WIPA. AHCCCS will be subcontracting with the WIPA. One position will be dedicated to training and facilitating the development of the WIIN while the other position will serve as a primary Information and Referral Specialist. The WIIN Trainer and Coordinator will provide training on work incentives using DB 101 and using those trained to create the tiered network. The I & R Specialist will create and streamline responses to questions forwarded from DB101 as well as create a centralized intake process including steps to help ensure beneficiaries have completed the intake application and provided the necessary benefit summary information. The WIPA will develop a fee-for-service program for work incentive counseling and training to sustain the positions after the duration of Council funding. This is a precedent and best practice for sustainability of the tiered benefits planning networks. It is important to note the Arizona Employment and Disability Partnership will be providing the funding for technical assistance from Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and Health and Disability Advocates (VCA). Therefore, funding is not allocated in the budget for the Council's proposal. VCU will provide technical assistance related to the development of the WIIN while HDA will provide technical assistance on the development of the training for service professionals.

The Scope of Work (for both 2012 and 2013) will be outlined in a matrix format and in accordance with the relative ADDPC five-year plan goal, objective, activities and outcomes. The first matrix outlines the ADDPC five-year plan goal, objective and activities that are pertinent to the funding proposal. The following matrix outlines that proposed Interagency Service Agreement tasks and deliverables. The final and last matrix identifies the projected outcomes that will be reported on a quarterly basis.

#### Five Year Plan Goal, Objective and Activities

<p><b>Goal #2: Community Integrated Employment</b>          In partnership with persons with developmental disabilities, their families, others who support them, and employers, advocate and expand capacity for community integrated employment.</p>
<p><b>Objective 2.1: Educate at least 30 persons with developmental disabilities, their families and others who support them about community integrated employment options, benefits, and opportunities</b></p>
<p>Activity 2.1.3: In collaboration with families, schools, and others who support persons with developmental disabilities, develop and implement programs related to Community Integrated Employment for families and others who support persons with developmental disabilities</p>
<p>Activity 2.2.4: Identify other agencies within Arizona who are supportive of and promote Community Integrated Employment; Identify opportunities for sharing lessons learned</p>
<p>Activity 2.3.2: Identify and promote best practices for Community Integrated Employment</p>

Year One (2012)	
Task	Activity
Create and hire two positions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WIIN Trainer and Coordinator</li> <li>• Information and Referral Specialist</li> </ul>	
Develop strategic plan for WIIN development, training and network meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical Assistance from Virginia Commonwealth University (Model Development)</li> <li>• Technical Assistance from Health and Disability Advocates (Training Curriculum and Strategies Development)</li> <li>• Incorporate "sector" strategies. For example, strategies to train school personnel to help inform students and parents about work and healthcare incentives</li> </ul>	2.1.3 2.2.4 2.3.2
Develop policies and procedures for the Information and referral services and the central intake unit	2.1.3 2.2.4 2.3.2
Develop model for sustainability. Options to consider for funding sustainability may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A fee for service or contractual arrangement with service providers for work incentive training</li> <li>• A fee for service or contractual arrangement with Vocational Rehabilitation for benefits counseling services for consumers</li> <li>• Exploring options to allow for Medicaid reimbursement of benefits counseling services for Medicaid Members</li> </ul>	
Participate in the quarterly Steering Committee meeting with DB 101 aimed at discussing new strategies for outreach and training and identifying new features of the tool	
Year Two (2013)	
Task	Activity
Implement the strategic plan for WIIN	
Participate in the quarterly Steering Committee meeting with DB 101 aimed at discussing new strategies for outreach and training and identifying new features of the tool	

Quarterly Report	ADDPC Outcomes
Service professionals trained by the WIIN Coordinator YR 1- 50 service professionals trained YR 2- 200 service professionals trained	EM 09: People trained in systems advocacy about employment
Service professionals engaged in WIIN YR 1-15 service professionals participating YR 2-60 service professionals participating	EM 08: People active in systems advocacy about employment
WIIN Identified and implemented new policies and practices around work and healthcare incentive outreach YR 1- 3 new practices identified and implemented YR 2- 6 new practices identified and implemented	EM 05: Employment programs/policies were created/improved
Individuals with disabilities got employed YR 1- 200 (20 individuals with developmental disabilities) YR 2- 300 (30 individuals with developmental disabilities)	EM 01: Adults have jobs of their choice through Council efforts

\*In 2013 the quarterly reporting will continue. Some additional outcomes may be recognized and added to the report as a result of the development and implementation of the strategic plan.

**Interagency Service Agreement-Roles and Responsibilities**

A two-party Interagency Service Agreement will be initiated between the ADDPC and AHCCCS. Below is an outline of the respective roles and responsibilities of each party.

ADDPC	AHCCCS
Provide funding for the initiative	Sub-Contract with the WIPA for the services outlined in the Scope of Work Oversee and monitor the implementation of the contract including the submission of quarterly reports Provide funding for the technical assistance services from both Virginia Commonwealth University and Health and Disability Advocates to support the development of the WIIN model and training materials.

### Summary of Job Responsibilities Information and Referral Specialist

The Information and Referral Specialist will create and streamline responses to questions forwarded from Disability Benefits 101 (DB 101) and the Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA) toll-free number. Additionally, the Specialist will create a centralized intake process including steps to help ensure beneficiaries have completed the intake application and provided the necessary benefits summary information.

- Answer emails and calls from the WIPA phone lines toll-free line
- Disseminate and process referral packets upon receipt
- Determine eligibility and priority status for WIPA services
- Complete initial beneficiary information and documentation including entering data into a database
- Assist in preparing the customer for the initial meeting with a Community Work Incentive Coordinator
- Develop policies and procedures for information and referral services provided through a central intake unit that incorporates new policies and procedures for responding to inquiries from DB 101
- Report outcomes including the number of individuals with disabilities employed as a result of WIPA services

### Summary of Job Responsibilities Work Incentive Information Network (WIIN) Trainer and Coordinator

The WIIN Trainer and Coordinator will provide training on work incentives, using DB 101, to service professionals and recruit the trained service professionals to participate in the tiered Work Incentive Information Network (WIIN). Furthermore, the Trainer and Coordinator will identify and recruit key personnel from employment and benefit systems that intersect with individuals with disabilities to participate in the WIIN. The WIIN will serve to create a system of consistent messaging, information and referral points to individuals with disabilities considering employment.

- Develop a strategic plan for WIIN development including strategies for training and network meetings
- Develop training materials that incorporate learning objectives for service professionals to:
  - Understand their role in the system to conduct outreach, information and referral about work and healthcare incentives
  - Know the information/messages they should be sharing with individuals and their families
  - Know where to refer people to and when to refer them
- Consult with Virginia Commonwealth University on the development of the WIIN development and Health and Disability Advocates on the training curriculum development
- Execute the training and network development strategic plan
- Report outcomes including:
  - Number of service professionals trained
  - Number of service professionals engaged in the network and network meetings
  - Number of new practices identified and implemented around work and healthcare incentive outreach

WIIN 2012 & 2013 Budget		2012	2013	Budget Total	Match Funds	Grand Total
1	Personnel					
	a. WIIN Trainer and Coordinator	40,000.00	40,000.00	80,000.00	29,100.00	109,100.00
	b. Information and Referral Specialist	35,000.00	35,000.00	70,000.00		70,000.00
	c. WIIN Network Volunteer Hours				13,845.60	13,845.60
	d. AEDP Project Director				7,000.00	7,000.00
2	Fringe Benefits	19,500.00	19,500.00	39,000.00	2,170.00	41,170.00
3	Professional and Outside Services	600.00	600.00	1,200.00	1,650.00	2,850.00
4	In State and Out of State Travel	4,832.00	1,714.00	6,546.00		6,546.00
5	Operating/Supplies	2,600.00	600.00	3,200.00	2,520.00	5,720.00
6	Rent/Office Space				12,070.00	12,070.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>102,532.00</b>	<b>97,414.00</b>	<b>199,946.00</b>	<b>68,355.60</b>	<b>268,301.60</b>

**Budget Narrative**

- 1a & b Annual salaries for the WIIN Trainer and Coordinator and the Information and Referral Specialist. The match funding is calculated at 15% of the Valley of the Sun United Way grant that provides for the salaries (and employment related expenses) for the ABIL Youth Outreach, Early Intervention and Reintegration Specialists who are going to support the project. The Specialists will help to serve the WIIN Trainer and Coordinator by identifying and educating other non-traditional key personnel on their role in conducting work incentive outreach and soliciting their participation in the WIIN.
- 1c It is projected to have an average of 15 participants actively participating in the WIIN monthly meetings for a period of two hours. The volunteer average hourly wage is calculated \$19.23 per hour. This is based on an hourly wage for an individual earning \$40,000 per year annual salary.
- 1d The match funding is 10% of the Arizona Employment and Disability Partnership's Project Director's state funded salary to monitor and oversee the project.
- 2 Calculated @ 26% of the annual salary for the WIIN Trainer and Coordinator and Information and Referral Specialist positions. The match funding is 10% of the Arizona Employment and Disability Partnership's Project Director's state funded Employment Related Expenses (31% of salary) to monitor and oversee the project.
- 3 The line item also allocates funding for costs associated with auditing fees. The match funding is the provision of sign language interpreting services for training sessions conducted by the WIIN Trainer and Coordinator.
- 4 Travel associated with the WIIN Trainer and Coordinator including travelling out of state to get the Community Work Incentive Coordinator training and subsequent certification and in-state travel to conduct training
- 5 The purchase of equipment in the first year for each position (1a & b) including two computers, headsets and filing cabinets. Additionally a total of \$600 is allocated per year for a cell phone for the WIIN Trainer and Coordinator (includes an initial purchase of the cell phone and ongoing monthly fees). The match funding is the provision of general office supplies and printing and mailing costs associated with the project.

The match includes the provision of office space for both of the positions and associated costs (utilities, landscaping, janitorial service and security) and communication support including land line, fax and Internet access

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Note

*As part of the Interagency Service Agreement, AHCCCS will provide verification from all match funding sources to include verification of non-federal funding and verification that the matching of staff time is unduplicated as a match for other projects*

**Work Incentive Information Network: The Development and Systems Change Process**

- 1) The WIIN Trainer and Coordinator develops a strategic plan aimed at identifying key stakeholder audiences of service professionals that need to be trained on work incentives and their roles and responsibilities in employment education and outreach. The strategic plan also includes strategies for creating the curriculum to train the respective audiences.
- 2) The service professional audiences are trained and a representative from each audience is asked to participate in the WIIN. Service professionals are organized into tiers depending on their prospective roles in the employment process. Each tier will have its own level of messaging and resources to share with individuals with disabilities depending on their role. The tier determines the level of training the audience needs. The tiers make referral to the next level and may also request technical assistance from the next level in the network. Examples of the tiers and their audiences may include:

<p><b>Tier One</b> Service professionals who help individuals get on benefits or help to coordinate benefits (healthcare, Social Security, Nutrition Assistance, etc.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of Economic Security Eligibility Specialists</li> <li>• Division of Developmental Disabilities Support Coordinators</li> <li>• Arizona State Health Insurance Assistance Program Counselors</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tier Two</b> Service professionals who provide direct or coordinate employment based services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Division of Developmental Disabilities Employment Specialists</li> <li>• Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors</li> <li>• Regional Behavioral Health Authorities Employment Specialists</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tier Three</b> Individuals who are certified benefits counselors who know benefit rules and how they impact individual situations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WIPA Community Work Incentive Counselors</li> <li>• Veterans Benefits Specialists</li> </ul>

- 3) The WIIN meets on a monthly basis to identify gaps in the system that result in barriers to educating people with disabilities about employment and work and healthcare incentives.
- 4) Representatives develop policies and practices to institute in their respective organizations to address gaps and the WIIN assist in providing technical assistance and training.
- 5) The I & R Specialist supports the WIIN by creating a streamlined referral process for the WIPA who will eventually provide benefits counseling services to individuals with disabilities once they are job ready. For individuals not yet job ready, the I & R Specialist supports individuals with disabilities and their families engaging in the employment planning process with the DB 101 online tool. They will answer phone call and email inquiries from the online tool. DB 101 will serve as the primary resource to educate the service professionals on work incentives as well as serve as the main resource for individuals with disabilities and their families.