

Expanding Training and Education to Improve Employment Outcomes

Submitted by the Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities

Year Two Proposal

October 22, 2021

Overview

The Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities aimed to begin addressing the identified need for training of employment support professionals through its year one funding provided by the Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council. A series of three training sessions were proposed focused on knowledge gains, resource sharing, problem solving, and intensive skill development related to implementation of supported and customized employment services. As a result of COVID-19, a significant shift in training delivery was required converting content and format to a virtual platform. To date, session one trainings were conducted providing an overview of supported and customized employment for a diverse audience of participants representing provider organizations, vocational rehabilitation, and education personnel. Session two and three trainings are currently scheduled for the last quarter of the project.

Throughout the trainings several key points became evident: 1) There is a tremendous need for information regarding practical "how to" strategies on implementing employment services, 2) Training employment support professionals is only part of the need as everyone who is connected to people interested in or receiving employment services need similar information in order to support their efforts, 3) Multiple systemic issues are impacting employment practices that need demonstrations to inform and drive data-based decision-making for impactful change, and 4) There is great passion and commitment across stakeholder groups to work together and improve employment outcomes in the state. Feedback from participants indicated that the trainings were well-received and need to be continued and expanded to offer a platform for shared learning, capacity building, problem solving, and individual support.

In response to the anecdotal and data evidence, the following activities are proposed for year two.

1. Job Coach Training: Expanding year one trainings to make available to a larger audience. Modify the trainings from three-two day sessions to include one-three day training that combines an overview with hands on training on assessment/discovery, job development, job training, and topical issues related to implementation. This will increase the number of people who receive the information in a consolidated format covering topics of greatest interest. Ideally these will include six trainings conducted in-person in Phoenix X 2, Tucson X 2, Yuma, and Flagstaff. If current circumstances prohibit in-person trainings then a

virtual format will be used as in year one with half to full day schedules across a sequence of four to six weeks each. Estimated number of participants = 40 per session X 6 = 240 people.

2. Topical Trainings: Conduct topical trainings and focus group discussions via webinar format that would be between a half and full day for each specific audience providing an overview of supported and customized employment with specific emphasis on their role and contributions in the service delivery process. Targeted audiences include support coordinators, vocational rehabilitation counselors, and provider organization staff (e.g., residential, direct support personnel). Two sessions will be provided for each audience using a virtual format. Estimated number of participants - 50 to 75 per session X 6 sessions = 300 to 450 people.
3. Employment Toolkit: Develop an online employment toolkit for use by multiple audiences that highlights key components of best practice approaches leading to raised expectations and competitive employment outcomes. The toolkit will be created with input and feedback from different stakeholder groups who will share their successes, questions, concerns, and experiences during trainings above to inform the design, including content and format, and useability. Anticipated product = 1 toolkit with resources targeting direct employment support professionals and related personnel who impact services and outcomes.
4. Technical Assistance: Provide technical assistance to two provider organizations representing an urban and rural community to assist them with transitioning from non-competitive employment activities such as center-based vocational, day programs, and group supported employment services to individual competitive employment outcomes. The focus will be on building community capacity through training staff who provide employment services as well as all staff within the organization and community partners outside the organization. One-on-one assistance will be provided to address questions, identify challenges, provide support, and connect to resources. Efforts will focus on bringing a community stakeholder team together to define roles and contributions that build on the strengths of that community and utilize those assets in a way that enhance practice and improve outcomes. Real time technical assistance will be provided using technology and if circumstances allow on-site visits and in-person individualized assistance will be available. Information will be gathered to guide the development of resources, such as FAQ and helpful tips, for use by other providers and communities. It is anticipated that this pilot technical assistance project with an emphasis on transitioning services for adults currently in day and center-based programs will contribute to initial model development that could be a foundation for future exploration and testing. Anticipated product – 2 provider organizations increase their capacity and outcomes for competitive employment,

1 technical assistance model to support provider organization employment expansion, 2 resources for community stakeholder teams.

Year 1 Accomplishments

- Converted Session I Overview in-person training to a virtual format.
- Conducted four Session I trainings for 103 participant zoom links.
- Developing Session II Assessment/Discovery & Job Development and Session III Job Training hands-on trainings in a virtual format.
- Four Session II and III trainings will be conducted in November and December.
- Participants received certificates of completion.
- Participants received information to prepare them for taking the CESP (certified employment support professional credential).
- Data assessing participant competency gains were collected.
- Data assessing satisfaction and impact were collected.

Satisfaction Survey (N = 46)

1. The training provided information relevant to my needs.
92.24% Strongly Agree/Agree
2. The training I received improved my professional knowledge and skill about effective professional practice and strategies in this subject/topical area.
100% Strongly Agree/Agree
3. The training will increase the frequency that I implement the strategies, tools and practices presented during this training.
96.43% Strongly Agree/Agree
4. The information and resources I received with this training are useful and will be applied in my work.
98.08% Strongly Agree/Agree
5. The training is likely to result in better outcomes for persons with disabilities and/or the families that I serve.
96.29% Strongly Agree/Agree
6. I would recommend this training to a colleague or organization.
98.22% Strongly Agree/Agree

Comments

- All areas were covered with professionalism and knowledge.
- Additional comparable benefits for vocational rehabilitation clients.
- The information was very well covered and informative.
- I would like information on job fairs virtual/in person
- This was a great training and I really appreciate the knowledge that the facilitators possessed. Thank you!

- Would love to have training in person but I understand.
- I would like to see a training similar to this about job development strictly and developing relationships with employers to go more in depth.
- With the current Covid-19 situation, maybe have a section on how to job coach remotely.
- Customized Employment.
- Creative accommodations.
- Further task analysis of specific tasks maybe?
- It was perfect!
- I thought you all did great!
- Additional videos or video modeling of some of the job coaching elements reviewed.
- Explaining the difference of Job Coaching thru Vocational Rehabilitation and DDD employment services (ESA, GSE, ISE)
- I think the following sessions will be more what I am looking for! I think job coaching is rather broad role and looks so different for all of us/in all different companies (for example, I don't have a role where I reach out to possible employers, someone else does that in our company). It is hard to make this training perfect for everyone. But, I enjoyed the thought and care in this training. You were all awesome! And I greatly appreciate the landing page of materials.
- Additional advanced training.
- Additional Job!
- This training was very thorough and exactly what I needed. Perhaps explain how vendors can use interagency collaboration to help our clients achieve their employment and independence goals in a future training. Thank you!

Pre and Post Competency Data

Preliminary results indicate knowledge gains.

Success Outcomes

A rehabilitation counselor and provider who participated in the training are using the tools and strategies to expand their employment services to include shifting group supported employment and center-based programs. They have reached out and regular meetings are being conducted with the rehabilitation counselor, employment manager, employment specialist, CEO and Sonoran Center staff.

Issues, such as reimbursement procedures, regulation guidelines, staffing, "word on the street" information, and implementation challenges, creating restrictions that interfere with supported and customized employment services began being identified through training questions and discussions. The Sonoran Center has begun work to address these issues and plans to incorporate these topics in the future trainings.

Year 2 Timeline

January to March, 2021

Coordinate Job Coach and Topical trainings

Conduct Topical trainings X 2

Select Provider participants

Develop Provider Technical Assistance plans

April to June, 2021

Conduct Job Coach training X2

Conduct Topical trainings X 2

Provide Provider Technical Assistance

July to September, 2021

Conduct Job Coach training X 2

Conduct Topical trainings X 2

Develop Employment Toolkit

Provide Provider Technical Assistance

October to December, 2021

Conduct Job Coach training X 2

Finalize Employment Toolkit

Finalize Provider Resources

Key Personnel

Wendy Parent-Johnson, PhD, Principle Investigator will oversee the project, supervise personnel, complete progress and final reports, lead training content development, provide training and technical assistance. Only 10% FTE is billed to the project.

Susan Voirol, MSW, Project Director will manage the day-to-day activities of the project, conduct outreach and recruitment, lead resource product development, provide training and technical assistance. Only 10% FTE is billed to the project.

Heather Wolff, Project Coordinator will coordinate the trainings, technical assistance, and product development. She will assist with developing the training materials and activities and conducting the events. FTE = 20%

Jeff Javier, Virtual Event Coordinator will oversee development of virtual events, recruitment materials, and products and resources. He will provide IT support for all virtual activities and ensure accessibility. FTE = 20%

TBH, Training Associate currently in the process of beginning employment with the UCEDD will assist with trainings and be the liaison for participating providers leading technical assistance support. FTE = 25%

Budget

Principle Investigator and Content Expert @ 10%

Project Director and Content Expert @ 10%

Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator @ 20%

Virtual Event Coordinator @ 20%

Training Associate @ 25%

Salaries = \$59,300

Benefits = \$18,620

Total Personnel = \$77,920

Supplies for Products and In Person Trainings = \$3,000

Travel for In Person Trainings/TA = \$850

Indirects @ 10% = \$8,177

Total Funds Requested = \$89,947

Collaborative Partners

Department of Vocational Rehabilitation

Division of Developmental Disabilities

AAPPD Provider Organization