

# DiscoverAbility NJ

WORK. EARN. THRIVE.



*New Jersey's  
Strategic Plan  
to Create  
a Comprehensive  
Employment  
System  
for People with  
Disabilities*



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Division of Disability Services  
Comprehensive Employment Systems

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## Executive Summary

Within the past decade, considerable scholarly and applied research reports have described the barriers to employment and economic independence faced by people with disabilities. Despite many government efforts and research that provides compelling reasons for hiring people with disabilities, the rates of employment for New Jersey residents with disabilities remain unacceptably low. In New Jersey, as in the United States as a whole, residents with disabilities are half as likely as those without disabilities to be employed. Among those individuals in the state with a disability who are employed, both earnings and household incomes are lower than their non-disabled counterparts.

To reemphasize New Jersey's concern and commitment to address these issues, New Jersey has developed ***DiscoverAbility: New Jersey's Strategic Plan to Create a Comprehensive Employment System for People with Disabilities***. This plan, which will become a core element of the state's Strategic Unified Workforce Investment Plan, provides New Jersey with a shared vision and a strategic roadmap toward building a more comprehensive system of employment services and supports for people with disabilities. The plan is meant to be visionary, directional, and ambitious yet attainable — requiring coordination and cooperation, public/private partnerships, community and consumer support as well as state leadership to achieve its goals. The plan reflects a culmination of thought, advice, input, and interest from a wide variety of stakeholders including people with disabilities and their families, employers, government agencies, community-based service providers, researchers and scholars, and others interested in employment and disability issues.

***DiscoverAbility*** builds on the state's longstanding efforts to improve the labor market participation of people with disabilities, while incorporating contemporary thinking about what is needed to increase their work opportunities and improve employment and economic outcomes. The plan is a clear roadmap to change but is also a fluid and evolving document. It puts forth a vision that reflects the desired "ideal state," and a mission that reflects what New Jersey hopes to achieve through implementation of this plan.

### Our Vision

People with disabilities are an integral part of the labor force in New Jersey and are active and valuable participants in the economic growth and vitality of the state.

### Our Mission

Recognizing the value of all people in terms of their abilities and assets, New Jersey will enhance job and career opportunities for people with disabilities, reform delivery systems, and create partnerships among people with disabilities, their families, employers, as well as the public sector and service organizations to meet New Jersey's critical workforce needs. The plan also outlines the critical values that guided its development as well as the philosophy of its contributing stakeholders that sets the tone and theme for the plan's goals and activities.

## Our Values and Philosophy

1. New Jersey believes in choice for individuals. We recognize that understanding an individual's strengths, aspirations, interests, and needs is important to affording choice and control for the individual preparing for and seeking work. Individuals have the right to choose their employment and their employer.
2. New Jersey believes that individuals with disabilities can participate fully as members of the community and achieve to their highest potential. All employment options must be available — from entry-level jobs to the most advanced occupations.
3. New Jersey values diversity in the workforce and workplace and believes that greater inclusion of people with disabilities at work is beneficial to the entire workforce, employers, and the public.
4. New Jersey believes that public policy at all levels must be aligned to promote the employment of individuals with disabilities and eliminate barriers experienced by people with disabilities.
5. New Jersey believes in collaboration, leveraging and aligning resources, and funding across systems and programs as fully as possible, and that this is critical to enhancing services and addressing barriers that prevent higher employment levels among individuals with disabilities.
6. New Jersey believes in universal access to timely, current, relevant, and understandable information about work and working for people with disabilities, their family members, service organizations, employers, and the public. Cultural, disability, and language differences may require different communication approaches.
7. New Jersey believes that individuals with disabilities should have access to high-quality services and supports so that they can best prepare for, secure, and remain in competitive employment. A universal and inclusive approach to appropriate and mainstream education and training is important to achieving long-term career and employment goals.
8. New Jersey believes that access to critical supports such as health care and transportation enhances the ability to work for all people.
9. New Jersey values direct support professionals and service providers and believes in the necessity to improve the capacity and quality of workers that directly assist people with disabilities to achieve their employment goals.
10. New Jersey believes that public and private employers should be fully aware of and welcome qualified individuals with disabilities into their workplaces. New Jersey values employers as important partners in providing employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Employers have the right to choose whom they hire.

11. New Jersey believes in using research information and data to measure progress, track outcomes, improve performance, assess what is working or what needs to be changed, and to be transparent and accountable to the public.

Consistent with New Jersey's vision, mission, values, and philosophy, the plan includes key strategic goals that respond to the consistent themes and critical issues raised throughout the strategic planning process and that reflect recommendations and ideas documented in existing state plans and research. The goals build on the incremental systems changes made in New Jersey over the past 15 years.

## **Our Strategic Goals**

- Goal 1: Increase public understanding and awareness of the employment-related assets of people with disabilities and their ability to work.
- Goal 2: Improve information and communication to, about, and for people with disabilities.
- Goal 3: Engage, educate, and assist the employer community.
- Goal 4: Provide people with disabilities with better preparation for work and offer more effective connections to jobs.
- Goal 5: Offer supports for working to people with disabilities.
- Goal 6: Increase the state's leadership, management, and coordination efforts in the employment of people with disabilities.
- Goal 7: Strengthen disability and employment research, evaluation, performance measurement, data collection, and data analysis.

For each strategic goal, the plan outlines strategic activities corresponding to the goals. It also includes a work plan for implementing and evaluating the progress of this broad and significant undertaking.

New Jersey recognizes that achieving success will require focused leadership, community buy in, a statewide commitment to systems reform, and a state environment conducive to new ideas and change. New Jersey stands to reap significant economic and social benefits from including people with disabilities as an integral part of its workforce.

## Introduction

For many years, New Jersey has been on a path to transforming its public services and supports for people with disabilities. Most recently, the state has invested resources toward the goal of creating a comprehensive employment and support system for people with disabilities who desire to go to work. Much has been accomplished toward this goal with the help of federal and state funding, new public/private partnerships, expanded research, and improvements in service delivery approaches, yet disability remains a barrier to obtaining sustainable competitive employment for thousands of New Jersey residents. People with disabilities continue to be underrepresented in the New Jersey labor market and are more likely to have lower incomes and education than other residents. Despite a stated desire and ability to work, and notwithstanding the numerous federal and state programs that have emerged over the years to increase their labor market participation, the employment rate for people with disabilities in New Jersey and across the nation remains unacceptably low.

Improving the employment and economic circumstances of people with disabilities in New Jersey will not be an easy task. Many individuals face multiple challenges, including those resulting from the nature of their disabilities, the need for uninterrupted health coverage and transportation, the fear that earnings could cause them to lose important assistance they already receive, limited expectations, and societal attitudes and discrimination. Fortunately, technological advances, legislative requirements, and other actions and initiatives have great potential to increase employment and decrease some of the barriers individuals with disabilities face. In addition, New Jersey has long developed a set of beliefs and understandings that has directed the course of its various workforce investment programs. Central to this belief system is the New Jersey's "culture of cooperation" where state agencies collaborate, state/local partnerships are established, and the public and private sectors work together. A skilled and educated workforce can only be created and maintained if workers and businesses have access to a lifelong employment, training, and education system responsive to the needs of the labor market. Indeed, the economic winners and losers of the 21st century will be largely determined by whether a skilled and educated workforce is developed and nurtured and truly satisfies employer demand.

New Jersey's vision for its workforce investment system is one in which all citizens are served through an articulated, well-integrated world-class network of training and service providers. The system is to serve *all* citizens. A central purpose of this ***DiscoverAbility NJ*** plan is to create a strategy that ensures that people with disabilities are an integral part of New Jersey's workforce system as well as a conscious priority within that system. This ***DiscoverAbility*** strategic plan builds on a solid foundation and extends it to an even broader array of programs designed to assist persons with disabilities in reaching their full potential.

Through this strategic plan, New Jersey will address these challenges — through leadership, action, and partnerships that result in putting solutions in place. This is the goal of ***DiscoverAbility: New Jersey's Strategic Plan for Creating a Comprehensive Employment System for People with Disabilities.***

## The New Jersey Labor Market and Economic Growth

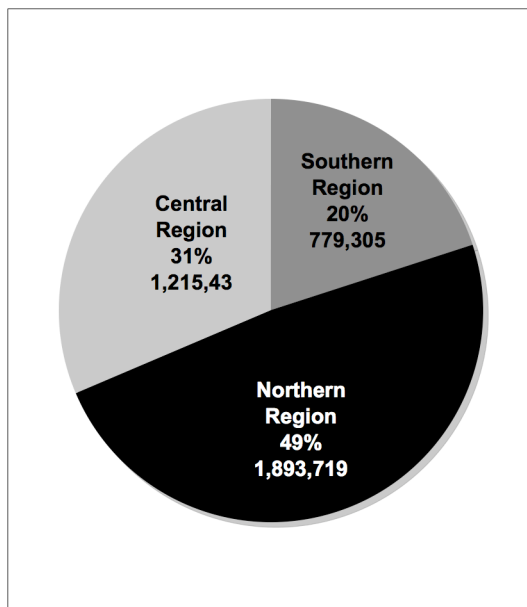
Although New Jersey is a small state by land area, it has long been an economic powerhouse. While New Jersey has seen considerable decreases in manufacturing employment, the state's economy is now quite diversified and its economy driven by knowledge industries such as life sciences, financial services, and information technology/communications. Due to the state's well-trained workforce, its proximity to the business and population centers of New York City and Philadelphia, and its strong tradition of innovation, companies in these industries continue to be concentrated in New Jersey.<sup>1</sup>

The state has distinct economic regions that contribute to its economy in unique and important ways. From the manufacturing-rich, diversifying economic force of the northern counties, to the growing knowledge industries in the central part of the state, to the heart of the state's hospitality and tourism industry in the southern part of the state, New Jersey's regions have distinct economic profiles and offer a unique array of job opportunities.

### Overall Employment

The northern region is the largest, hosting almost 1.9 million jobs, nearly half of all jobs in New Jersey (49%), while the central region has nearly one-third (31% or 1.2 million jobs), and the southern region has one-fifth (20%), or more than 779,000 jobs. (See Figure 1.)

**Figure 1. Percentage of New Jersey Employment, by Region, 2006**



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Local Employment Dynamics Data, 2007*

#### New Jersey Regions

<b>Northern Region</b>	Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Morris, Passaic, Sussex, Union, and Warren Counties
<b>Central Region</b>	Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, and Somerset Counties
<b>Southern Region</b>	Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem Counties

Source: *New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 2007*

<sup>1</sup> Governor Jon S. Corzine. State of New Jersey. *Economic Growth Strategy for the State of New Jersey 2007*.



**Table 1. Employment and Growth, by Region, 2002-2006**

<b>New Jersey Regions</b>	<b>Total Employment, 2002</b>	<b>Total Employment, 2006</b>	<b>% Growth, 2002-06</b>	<b>Number of New Hires, 2006</b>
<b>Northern Region</b>	1,877,989	1,893,719	0.8%	265,369
<b>Central Region</b>	1,170,017	1,215,433	3.9%	191,772
<b>Southern Region</b>	746,828	779,305	4.3%	174,043

*Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Local Employment Dynamics Data, 2007*

Growth was concentrated in the southern (4.3%) and central (3.9%) regions of the state than in the northern region (.8%) between 2002 and 2006. Despite representing only 20% of all jobs in the state, the southern region had 27% of all new hires for new and replacement jobs in 2006.

## Industry Employment

Given New Jersey's large population and proximity to other densely populated markets, it is not surprising that health care and social assistance, retail, and educational services are large employers in every area of the state. However, the northern, central, and southern regions of the state have distinct specialties in terms of industry employment, including a strong manufacturing presence and a growing knowledge economy in the northern region, a diverse and growing innovation-based economy in the central region, and strong hospitality, manufacturing, and farming industries in the southern region.

During the past four years, overall employment in the state has grown by only 2.5%, from 3.78 million jobs in 2002 to 3.88 million jobs in 2006.<sup>2</sup> This stable employment, however, masks a number of underlying trends. First, the manufacturing industry, long a mainstay of the state's economy, continues to decline (Table 2). From 2002 to 2006, the manufacturing industry lost over 40,000 jobs, a decline of 11%. Second, the state continues to gain in the number of jobs in knowledge industries, including professional, scientific, and technical services, which increased by 9.2% during the past four years; management of companies, which increased by 14%; and finance and insurance, which increased by 4%. Third, service industries are increasingly playing a significant role in the state's economy.

The state's largest industry, health care and social assistance, employs over half a million people in New Jersey. The industry grew by 11% during the past four years. The retail industry, while it declined by 2% during the past four years, employs 465,000 people. These two industries account for one-quarter of all jobs in the state. These industries also account for 26% of all new hires in the state. Other service industries, including educational services (5% growth), accommodation and food services (11.7% growth), and other services (9.7%) also grew during the past four years. These three industries account for 19% of the jobs in the state.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census. Local Employment Dynamics, Quarterly Workforce Indicators, 2007.

**Table 2. Employment in New Jersey, by Industry, 2002 and 2006**

NAICS	Industry	Total Employment 2002	Total Employment 2006	% Growth	Number of New Hires 2006
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	9,591	10,258	7.0%	4,007
21	Mining	1,463	1,739	18.9%	133
22	Utilities	23,484	19,852	-15.5%	634
23	Construction	157,574	154,232	-2.1%	35,298
31-33	Manufacturing	375,185	332,914	-11.3%	28,355
42	Wholesale Trade	240,437	238,063	-1.0%	25,612
44-45	Retail Trade	475,530	465,308	-2.1%	103,333
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	167,898	161,173	-4.0%	22,856
51	Information	110,175	102,933	-6.6%	10,964
52	Finance and Insurance	207,443	215,781	4.0%	19,905
53	Real Estate	59,139	65,054	10.0%	9,785
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	263,190	287,453	9.2%	37,967
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	57,214	65,361	14.2%	5,387
56	Administrative and Support	251,736	256,806	2.0%	90,467
61	Educational Services	326,954	343,154	5.0%	25,367
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	458,227	509,063	11.1%	53,150
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	50,281	54,519	8.4%	14,745
72	Accommodation and Food Services	245,877	274,688	11.7%	70,555
81	Other Services	114,921	126,046	9.7%	21,670
92	Public Administration	184,723	191,624	3.7%	11,028

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Local Employment Dynamics Data*, 2007.

These general trends, the decline of manufacturing and the rise of the knowledge and service based economy, are expected to continue in the future. The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development projects that three industry sectors will account for nearly 70% of job growth between 2004 and 2014:<sup>3</sup> health care and social assistance; professional, scientific, and business services; and leisure and hospitality.

In addition to private-sector growth, public or government employment (federal, state, and local) has grown in recent years. While New Jersey has added a significant number of private-sector jobs, the state has seen an increase in public-sector employment that is larger than seen in neighboring states.<sup>4</sup>

These trends are having important implications for the occupational opportunities available in the state. In 2004, 55% of the jobs in the state required only limited on-the-job training and no postsecondary education.<sup>5</sup> These jobs are expected to grow by 7.2%, below the overall projected growth rate of 9.5% for all occupations. Jobs that require an associate's degree or higher accounted for one-quarter of all jobs in the state in 2004. These jobs are expected to grow by 14.6% between 2004 and 2014.

Job categories with the highest level of projected growth include service occupations (17% growth), management occupations (11.6% growth), and professional occupations (15.7% growth). These three job categories accounted for 48.5% of the jobs in the state in 2004.

<sup>3</sup> New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Division of Labor Market and Demographic Research, *Projections 2014 – New Jersey Employment and Population in the 21st Century*, September 2006

<sup>4</sup> New Jersey Business and Industry Association. With cited data source: New Jersey Department of Labor. Accessed October 16, 2007 at [http://www.njbia.org/news\\_empa\\_o502.asp](http://www.njbia.org/news_empa_o502.asp).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

Production occupations, which account for only 5.4% of all jobs in the state, are expected to decrease by 10.6% from 2004 to 2014. In addition, office and administrative support occupations, which in 2004 accounted for 19% of all jobs in the state, are expected to grow by only 1.7%.

While the state's economy faces continuous challenges, it has important strategic advantages. According to the Governor's 2007 Economic Growth Strategy, New Jersey is a major business center with more than 20% of the Fortune 500 companies headquartered in or near the state. It has talented workers and is home to an extraordinarily diverse labor force. It has a strategic location, on the northeast corridor, which gives the state a critical competitive advantage. It has a strong track record of innovation, particularly in communications and pharmaceutical research. And, its economy provides for a high quality of life for most of the state's residents. New Jersey residents are among the wealthiest in the nation — the state ranks first in median household income. Its unemployment rate is the 18th lowest in the nation, and the state has the fourth lowest poverty rate in the nation with 8.7% of the state's population considered poor.<sup>6</sup> Large shares of the state's residents share in this economic prosperity. For residents with disabilities, however, the numbers of those who are reaping the benefits of the state's economic prosperity are more sobering.

## **The Employment and Economic Status of People with Disabilities in New Jersey**

Approximately 468,000 New Jerseyans of working age (21-64) have a disability, representing a little over 9% of all working-age adults in the state. In New Jersey, among the six types of disabilities identified in the U.S. Census, American Community Survey, the highest prevalence rate was for people with "physical disabilities" (5.8%), with the lowest rate for "self-care disabilities" (1.7%). While the disability prevalence rate in New Jersey is lower than the U.S. average of 12.6%, it comprises a substantial portion of the potential workforce.

The distribution of individuals with disabilities throughout the regions of the state is similar to the general employment distribution. The number and distribution of blind and disabled Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients as of December 2006 within New Jersey is as follows:

- North Jersey - 64,692 or 54%
- Central Jersey - 30,767 or 25%
- South Jersey - 25,207 or 21%

Blind and disabled SSI recipients are slightly overrepresented in the northern part of the state and underrepresented in the central part of the state. The northern and central parts of the state are primarily urban and suburban, while the southern part of the state has significant farming and rural areas. Compared to most states, New Jersey is compact and densely populated. The labor market areas are not clearly demarcated, and individuals often travel from one labor market area into another. Services are offered throughout the state in convenient locations.

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<sup>6</sup> Governor Jon S. Corzine. State of New Jersey. *Economic Growth Strategy for the State of New Jersey 2007*.

In the area of employment, people with disabilities in New Jersey are half as likely as citizens without disabilities to be employed (38.1% versus 80%). While slightly higher than the U.S. average (37.7%) and comparable to contiguous states, the rate remains unacceptably low (Table 3.)

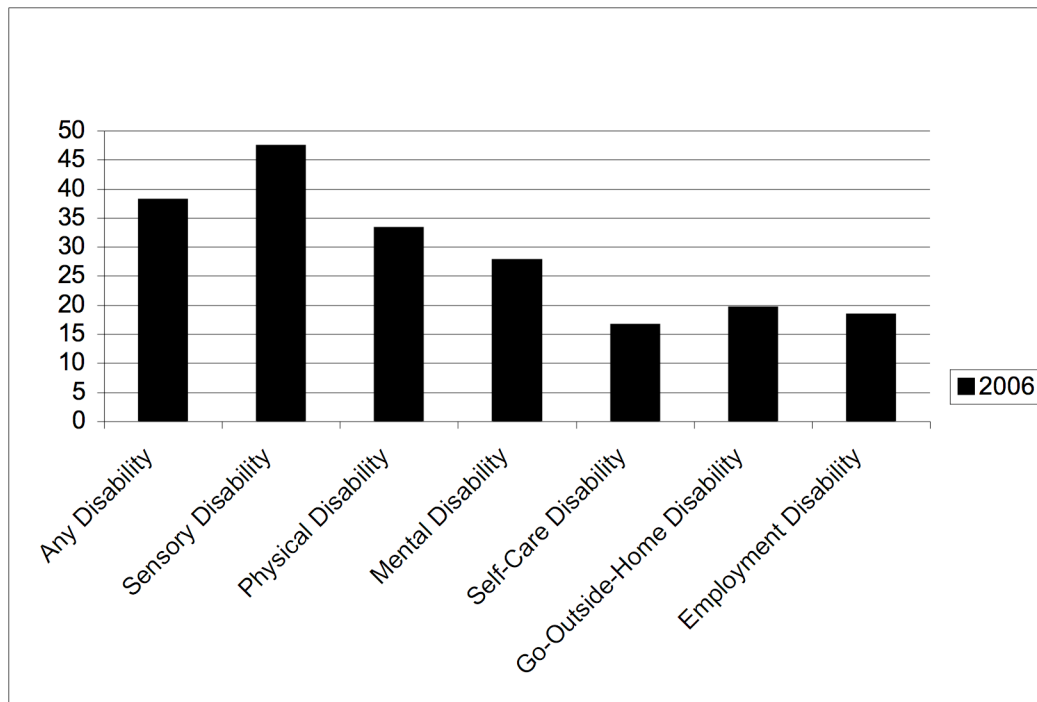
**Table 3. Employment Rates for Non-Institutionalized Working-Age Adults (Age 21-64) by Disability Status: A Comparison**

	Percentage	
	Disability	No Disability
Maryland	43.5%	82.9%
Connecticut	42.3%	81.5%
Delaware	38.7%	80.6%
New Jersey	38.1%	80.0%
<b>United States</b>	<b>37.7%</b>	<b>79.7%</b>
Pennsylvania	34.9%	80.5%
New York	33.5%	77.9%

Source: Cornell RRTC, 2006 Disability Status Reports for the United States.

Figure 2 indicates a higher rate of employment for working-age adults with sensory disabilities (47.3%) than for other disability conditions.

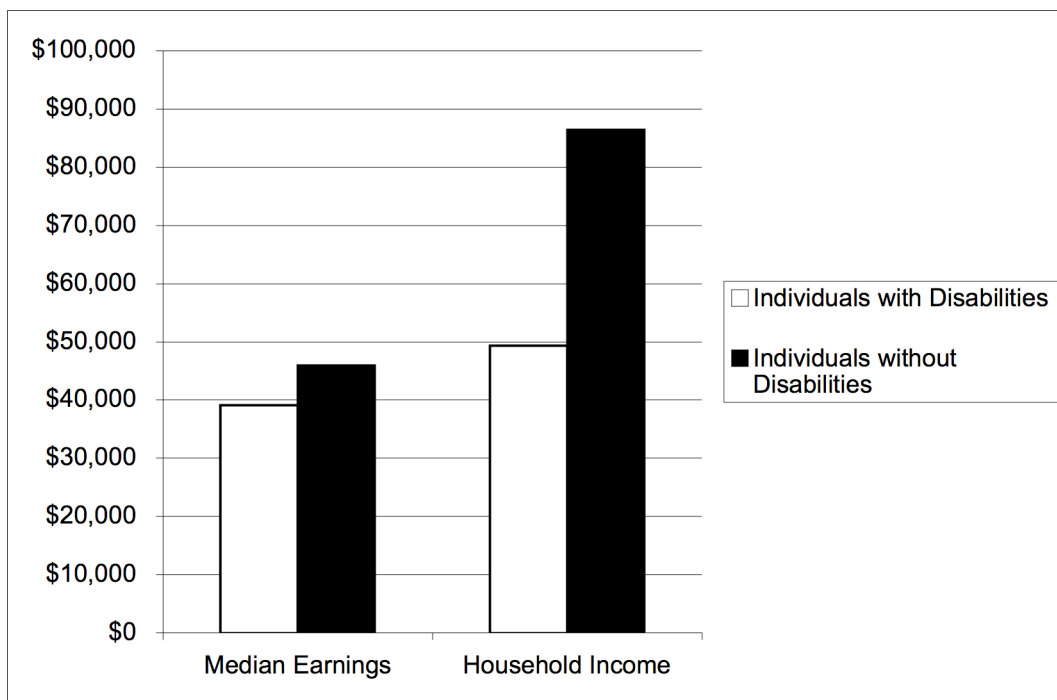
**Figure 2. Employment Rates of Non-Institutionalized Working-Age People with a Disability by Prevalence — New Jersey**



Source: Cornell RRTC, 2006 Disability Status Report for NJ,

Working-age adults in New Jersey with disabilities who are employed earn less than their non-disabled counterparts. Median, annual earnings for full-time, year-round workers without disabilities is \$45,900, compared to \$39,000 for workers with disabilities. Additionally, workers with disabilities have lower household incomes. Median annual household income of working-age people without disabilities was \$86,400 in New Jersey, compared to \$49,300 for workers with disabilities. The poverty rate for non-institutionalized working-age individuals with disabilities is 19.8% — over three times the rate of workers without disabilities (5.8%).<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 3. Median Annual Earnings and Household Income for Non-Institutionalized Working-Age Adults — New Jersey**



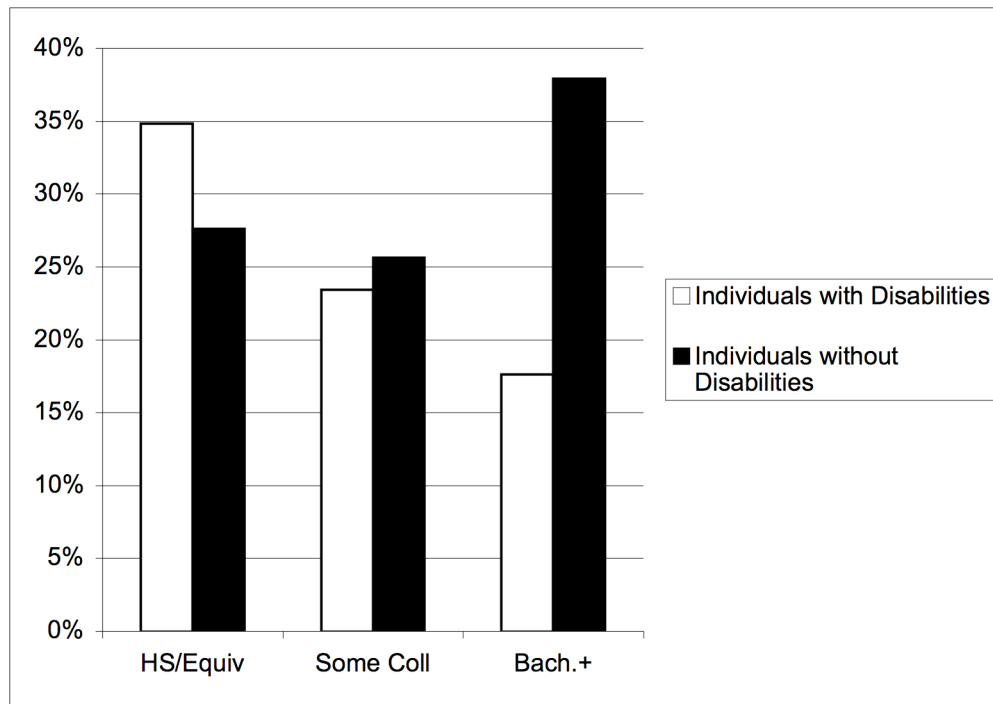
Source: Cornell RRTC, 2006 Disability Status Report for New Jersey.

There are education gaps as well. Among non-institutionalized working-age people with disabilities in New Jersey:

- 34.8 % had a high school diploma/equivalent compared to 27.6% of people without disabilities;
- 23.4% had some college or an Associate's degree compared to 25.6 % of people without disabilities; and
- 17.6 % had a Bachelor's degree or more compared to 37.9% of people without disabilities.

<sup>7</sup> Cornell University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Demographics and Statistics. 2006 Disability Status Reports - New Jersey.

**Figure 4: Education Levels for Non-Institutionalized Working-Age Adults — New Jersey**



*Source: Cornell RRTC, 2006 Disability Status Report for New Jersey.*

In summary, if you are a working-age adult with disabilities in New Jersey, you are more likely to be unemployed, poor, and have less postsecondary education compared to individuals without disabilities. The employment and earnings gaps, as well as the lower educational levels of working adults with disabilities, provides the basis for a new sense of urgency and for renewed leadership and public/private partnerships to substantially improve the employment and economic self sufficiency of people with disabilities in New Jersey.

As reflected through the listening sessions, individuals with disabilities have barriers to employment that go beyond lack of education. Chief among these barriers are:

- Fear of losing benefits, especially medical benefits;
- The need for additional access to transportation and “travel training”;
- The need for employers to be more receptive to adaptive technology and to persons with disabilities in general;
- Societal and family perspectives that do not uniformly expect and support employment for individuals with disabilities; and
- An increasingly competitive and demanding economy.

## Building on New Jersey's Strengths and Efforts

Although New Jerseyans with disabilities face challenges in accessing, maintaining, and sustaining work opportunities and in achieving economic independence, the state has numerous strengths and advantages, as well as established capacities on which to build new accomplishments. Noteworthy milestones in the state's efforts to improve the labor force participation of individuals with disabilities include:

- In 1985, New Jersey launched the Personal Assistance Services Program (PASP) as a pilot and then as a statewide program in 1998. Services under PASP enable adults with disabilities to be employed, prepare for employment, and/or support community-based independent living.
- In 1992, the State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) created the Workgroup on Persons with Disabilities with the purpose of expanding the dialogue among public officials, advocates, parents, customers, and practitioners concerning philosophical and policy differences about the appropriate role of the employment, training, and education system for people with disabilities. In 1993, the group issued its final recommendations in a report titled *Opportunity for All*. The report focused its recommendations on addressing the connections and coordination of programs and policies needed to improve the workforce readiness system and provided a series of action steps to implement them through SETC.
- In 2000 and 2001, New Jersey applied for and was awarded its first Medicaid Infrastructure Grant and launched New Jersey *WorkAbility*, the state's Medicaid Buy-In program. The program extends basic Medicaid coverage, subject to state-determined income and resource standards, to employed working-age individuals with disabilities. The grant provided resources to the state to conduct extensive education and outreach to people with disabilities, community agencies, and the public on the *WorkAbility* program. It also supported the development of a five-year transportation plan intended to identify and document transportation barriers to work for residents with disabilities and provide recommendations to address identified barriers as well as enhance transportation services throughout the state.
- In 2001, SETC officially established its Disability Issues Committee as a permanent committee, responsible for developing policies and program strategies for individuals with disabilities in the workforce investment system. The Committee's charge was to: ensure that the needs of the disabled are integrated into New Jersey's overall employment and training system, identify training needs and resources for those with disabilities, and ensure workplace education includes the disabled community in its efforts. Commensurate with this activity, each local Workforce Investment Board was expected to establish a local disability issues committee.
- In 2003, New Jersey held a statewide symposium resulting in a report titled *Toward the Accessible Workplace: Strategies for Competitive Employment Among New*

*Jerseyans with Disabilities*.<sup>8</sup> The symposium examined the barriers to the workplace that continue to exist for residents with disabilities, as well as current incentives and disincentives to work created by the public disability support system. Major themes that emerged from the sessions included continuing employer reluctance, fear by employers of the increased costs of accommodation, the presence of systemic and personal disincentives to work, the continued fragmentation of state organizations and programs, and the lack of physical and service accessibility to employment centers and mainstream employment and training programs.

- In 2003, New Jersey, through its Department of Labor and Workforce Development, was awarded a federal Employment and Training Work Incentive Grant to undertake a statewide project titled *New Jersey's Access to Career and/or Competitive Employment Services and Supports* or *Project Access*. Project Access was established with the goal of expanding employment and career development opportunities for individuals with disabilities by providing training, technical assistance, and enhanced service delivery throughout New Jersey's One-Stop Center system. The program concluded in 2005.
- In 2004, New Jersey held a summit that resulted in a report titled *New Jersey's Challenge: A Summit on Moving People with Disabilities to Work*.<sup>9</sup> The summit examined the barriers to work that continue to exist for residents with disabilities as well as the supports and services that are most critical to helping people with developmental and other disabilities enter and succeed in the workplace. Major recommendations included a need for better career education for job seekers with disabilities, better and more coordinated access to employers, the important role of service providers and disability agencies, the critical role of family and other caregivers, the lack of statewide focus on employment, fear of change and failure, and the need for public/private partnerships and collaboration.
- In 2005, New Jersey released a report titled *Meeting the Employment Transportation Needs of People with Disabilities in New Jersey*.<sup>10</sup> The report assessed the geographic relationship between transportation services and the areas of residence of New Jersey's disabled population, and provided a blueprint for the state on solutions to transportation problems for residents with disabilities. Subsequently, New Jersey launched a new website ([www.njfindaride.org](http://www.njfindaride.org)) as a resource about accessible

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<sup>8</sup> John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development. *Toward the Accessible Workplace: Strategies for Competitive Employment Among New Jerseyans with Disabilities*. Based on a symposium sponsored by the New Jersey Department of Human Services and the New Jersey Commission on National and Community Services. December 2003.

<sup>9</sup> John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development. *New Jersey's Challenge: A Summit on Moving People with Disabilities to Work*. Based on a summit sponsored by the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities. December 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center, Rutgers University. *Meeting the Employment Transportation Needs of People with Disabilities in New Jersey* (2005).



transportation options for people with disabilities and others in New Jersey that do not have easy, reliable access to private automobile transportation.

- In 2005 and 2006 New Jersey held two conferences specifically outreaching to Latinos and African Americans with disabilities and their families. The conferences used a targeted approach to provide information on employment, education, government programs to these underserved groups.
- In 2006, New Jersey introduced [www.njdb101.org](http://www.njdb101.org), an online benefits-to-work calculator designed to help people with disabilities understand how their benefits might change if they go to work.
- Also in 2006, New Jersey launched its first private-sector led Business Leadership Network in partnership with the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce and the Henry R. Kessler Foundation. The Network, operating under the leadership of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce, provides the state with a new business-led and business-driven organization, chartered by the U.S. Business Leadership Network, that assists employers with recruitment and retention of people with disabilities.
- In 2007, New Jersey held its first two-day Governor's Conference, *DiscoverAbility: Employment of People with Disabilities* in New Brunswick, NJ to a packed audience of people with disabilities, service providers, government officials, academics, and business leaders. The second day of the conference focused on business-to-business sharing of approaches to employing individuals with disabilities.

In addition to state agency activities, the State of New Jersey is home to several prominent research organizations that are nationally respected sources of information, research capacity, technical assistance, and scholars in the disability and employment area. These organizations and researchers have provided significant direction and support within New Jersey to help effect positive change for people with disabilities. These organizations include:

- **The Elizabeth M. Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ).** The Boggs Center is a federally designated University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities education, research, and services and serves as a source of innovation and capacity building for supports and services to people with disabilities and their families. It offers community and student training and technical assistance, conducts research and model demonstrations, and provides leadership in the promotion of independence, productivity, self-determination, and opportunities for the full participation of people with disabilities in the community. It has a 20-year history of efforts to secure employment for persons with disabilities.
- **The Program for Disability Research (PDR) at the Rutgers University School of Management and Labor Relations.** PDR, through Dr. Doug Kruse, produces research that advances an understanding of the socioeconomic aspects of disability. It has conducted cutting-edge, high-quality research as part of the multi-university

Disability Research Institute, coordinated a recent major report on disability and employment for the National Council on Disability, and is a key partner in current grants from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy and the National Institute of Disability and Rehabilitation Research.

- **The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University's Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy.** The Heldrich Center is a research, education, training, and economic development policy center dedicated to raising the effectiveness of the American workplace by strengthening workforce education and training programs and policies. The Center translates sound research and analysis into policy and practice to meet the challenges facing America's workers and employers. The Heldrich Center, along with the Boggs Center, PDR, and other national organizations, is currently involved in establishing a National Technical Assistance and Research Center to Promote Leadership and Employment and Economic Independence for Adults with Disabilities through a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy.
- **The Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers' Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy.** The Voorhees Center is a research organization committed to the development of innovative transportation policy. The Center's primary activities include a blend of applied and academic research, education, and training and service to the state and region on a variety of transportation planning and policy topics.

Other research institutions in New Jersey that are also conducting research and providing training and technical assistance in the disability and employment area include the New Jersey Institute of Technology, the UMDNJ School of Health Professions, the Rutgers School of Social Work, and the Mathematica Policy Research Center for Studying Disability Policy.

Decades of research, documentation, and program experience have made clear that many people with disabilities are capable of competing successfully in the labor market. However, while there are numerous public, private, and nonprofit agencies in New Jersey that have made significant contributions to increasing workforce opportunities for people with disabilities, what has been lacking — and what has held the state back from more significant achievements in this area — has been the absence of a central and shared vision and strategic plan that acts as the state's guide to innovation and progress in this area. The *DiscoverAbility* plan provides New Jersey with that shared vision and strategic roadmap.

## Strategic Plan Partners and Process

The *DiscoverAbility* strategic plan process was initiated in early 2007 with the assistance of a grant from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid to the New Jersey Department of Human Services, the Medicaid designated state agency. To provide leadership, guidance, and direction to the strategic planning process, New Jersey convened two leadership teams — a State Leadership Council to set the tone and develop the framework for the strategic planning process, and a high-level Community Leadership Council to provide broader input into the plan and help further refine the plan's goals, objectives, and strategies. Outreach to all interested groups and individuals was extensive and broad. New Jersey made every attempt to be inclusive and open.

The Strategic Plan State Leadership Council included:

- Key New Jersey public officials including the Governor's Office, Commissioners of Human Services and Labor and Workforce Development, high-level representatives from the New Jersey Department of Education, Commission on Higher Education, Department of Community Affairs, Department of Transportation, New Jersey Transit, Department of Personnel, and the Governor's Office of Economic Growth. Also included in the Leadership Council were directors of key disability-related programs such as the directors of the Division of Developmental Disabilities, Division of Mental Health Services, Division of Medicaid, Division of Family Development, Division of Disability Services, Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Division for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Division of Employment and Training, the director of the Office of Special Education Programs, and the director of the state's Workforce Investment Board (State Employment and Training Commission). Of the 32 members of this Leadership Council, 10 have visible or known disabilities.
- Directors of New Jersey's Independent Living Council, the State Council on Developmental Disabilities, and the New Jersey Association of County Offices on the Disabled.

The Strategic Plan Community Leadership Council was comprised of:

- Directors of other appropriate university-based and private advocacy and community service/provider organizations. These included the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities, Rutgers Program for Disabilities Institute, New Jersey Institute of Technology, the ARC of New Jersey, United Cerebral Palsy, the Epilepsy Foundation, the New Jersey Brain Injury Association, the New Jersey Mental Health Association, the New Jersey Association of Community Providers, the New Jersey Community Law Project, the New Jersey Center for Outreach and Services for the Autism Community, New Jersey Protection and Advocacy, Hudson Community Enterprises, and others.
- Human resource directors of selected major corporate entities in New Jersey that have demonstrated leadership and progressive policies toward individuals with disabilities,

especially those participating in the newly established New Jersey Business Leadership Network.

- Other appropriate community leaders such as those representing education and special education, business, trade associations, and/or organized labor. These included the State Chamber of Commerce, New Jersey Community College Association, local workforce investment boards and One-Stop Career Centers, New Jersey Business and Industry Association, State AFL-CIO, the Henry H. Kessler Foundation, the Christopher Reeves Foundation, and others.
- Persons with sensory, physical, mental health, and/or developmental disabilities who are actual consumers of workforce services.

See Appendices A and B for members of these strategic plan leadership councils.

All meetings were held in accessible locations. Transportation costs were reimbursed. The minutes of these meetings were available to all interested parties in accessible formats.

The Governor's Office has been an active participant in the state's strategic planning process. From the outset, the Governor's Office established that New Jersey's process should be guided by the following values:

- To set an example of active leadership by lending our time, ideas, talents, and energy to this important endeavor;
- To build on past successful efforts and partnerships that have worked to improve the employment of persons with disabilities;
- To truly listen to and learn from our public, including individuals with disabilities and the business community whose participation is important to successful outcomes for individuals;
- To be as inclusive as is practical, and as collaborative as possible; and
- To challenge ourselves to achieve substantial progress toward greater economic self-sufficiency of individuals with physical, developmental, and/or psychiatric disabilities and a higher and more reasonable standard of living, and do so with the presumption that, with appropriate supports, all individuals with physical, developmental, and/or psychiatric disabilities can work and support themselves, either fully or partially.

In addition to the State and Community Leadership Councils, New Jersey established, under the direction and guidance of the Commissioners of Human Services and Labor and Workforce Development, a state-level project steering team whose responsibility has been to guide the state's planning efforts and ensure the timely completion of the plan with maximum input and feedback. Working with assistance from the state's technical assistance partner, the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University, the Strategic Plan steering team was charged with the responsibility to:

- Act as the primary point of contact for their designated state agency/organization;
- Coordinate all program, financial, and data information necessary for completion of the plan's environment scan;
- Provide leadership in the framing and development of a coordinated outcome tracking plan and process that is required as part of the plan;
- Provide leadership in the development of the final draft Comprehensive Employment Systems strategic plan and ensure its comprehensive review within the respective state agency/organization; and
- Oversee the review and finalization of the state's Comprehensive Employment Systems strategic plan, including providing recommendations for the best methods for final state-level as well as community-level input, advice, and ownership of the plan.

State agencies involved as members of the steering team included the Governor's Office; the Commission on Higher Education; the State Employment and Training Commission; the Departments of Human Services, Labor and Workforce Development, Education, Community Affairs; and New Jersey Transit. See Appendix C for members of the State Comprehensive Employment Systems Strategic Plan Steering Team.

In addition to the development of targeted leadership councils and a steering team, information was gathered in the form of a document review of existing state-published plans that related to people with disabilities and employment. The chart below summarizes existing public documents published by state agencies and/or organizations relating to individuals with disabilities and employment.

<b>Plan</b>	<b>Employment-Related Goals, Objectives, or Priorities</b>
<b>New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities 2007-2011 Five-Year Plan</b>	<p>Overall Goal: Individuals with developmental disabilities are employed, have access to career-building activities and advancement, and participate in conventional networking groups and associations.</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive parental and professional expectations are supported and sustained within the employment, school, and service systems.</li> <li>• Non-traditional work options are explored, tested, and readily available.</li> <li>• Individuals with developmental disabilities who are employed serve as mentors to others.</li> <li>• Individuals with developmental disabilities and their families have asset-building options.</li> </ul>
<b>State of New Jersey Unified State Plan—Update 2005-2009</b>	<p>Relevant Key Activities or Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach to individuals with disabilities from unserved or underserved minority groups to include people with Hispanic/Latino heritage.</li> <li>• Outreach to individuals with Autism, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Mental Illness.</li> <li>• Outreach to TANF recipients with disabilities and to</li> </ul>

<p><i>Noted: Submitted by SETC to the U.S. Department of Labor on behalf of the State of New Jersey; updated by LWD/DVR 7/6/07</i></p>	<p>SSDI/SSI beneficiaries to make them more aware of the services of DVRS and the various work incentives and initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued promotion of services to students with disabilities in their transition from school to post-school activities such as training and employment to the state's public and private school districts.</li> <li>• Continued participation as a core participant in the One- Stop Career Centers.</li> <li>• Continued promotion of Supported Employment as a service and support for the long-term follow along in order to ensure the viability of the client's job in a competitive setting.</li> </ul>
<p><b>State Plan for Independent Living (DRAFT) 2008-2010</b></p>	<p>Goals and Objectives:</p> <p>Goal 3: Advocate for and support services to youth in transition and their families.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide information to students, families, and teachers regarding service and program options that are available after secondary education.</li> <li>• Obtain ongoing funding for transition services.</li> <li>• Provide training for SILC members to improve understanding of transition process.</li> </ul> <p>Goal 5: Enhance transportation options for people with disabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include a representative from New Jersey Transit on SILC.</li> <li>• Collaborate with state implementation of five-year transportation plan.</li> <li>• Increase consumer awareness options.</li> </ul>
<p><b>State of New Jersey Department of Human Services Division of Developmental Disabilities Olmstead Plan May 2, 2007</b></p>	<p>No specific action step solely on employment, except under: Action Step 8: Expansion of Community Supports (RFP to expand agencies qualified to provide housing, residential, employment/day medical, and behavioral supports) with outcome of 63 agencies qualified to provide employment/day supports, and Action Step 9: Identification of Independent Support Coordination Agencies with a goal of awarding support coordination contracts to six additional agencies qualified for employment/day supports.</p>
<p><b>State of New Jersey Vocational Rehabilitation State Plan July 2, 2007</b></p>	<p>Full range of employment-focused activities.</p> <p>Innovation and Expansion Activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of a new information system.</li> <li>• Professional development programs.</li> <li>• Continued operation of the State Rehabilitation Council and the Statewide Independent Living Council.</li> <li>• Outreach to TANF, SSDI, and SSI recipients with disabilities in partnership with WorkFirst New Jersey, the SSA Ticket to Work initiative, and other programs.</li> <li>• Continued promotion of transitioning in the state's public and private school districts so that all school personnel understand</li> </ul>

	<p>referral procedures and partnerships between DVRS and the schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance of a toll-free phone number (1-866-VR1STOP) to offer information and answer questions about the various work incentive programs in place.</li> <li>• Continued encouragement of NJ WINS, representing the designated Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach program.</li> <li>• Help to implement a fully coordinated One-Stop Career Center system with streamlined service delivery.</li> <li>• Dedicated funds to targeted underserved disability groups such as Hispanic/Latinos, people in more remote areas, and older workers with hearing impairments.</li> </ul>
<p><b>State of New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI) State Plan</b></p>	<p>CBVI offers a wide variety of programs and projects related to employment. For this year, major goals and objectives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing by 10% within three years the number of consumers who achieve competitive employment outcomes after completing training at the agency’s rehabilitation center (Joseph Kohn Rehabilitation Center).</li> <li>• Increasing the rate of successful outcomes (competitive employment or admittance to graduate school) for graduates of bachelor degree programs, which the agency funded as part of the consumer’s Individual Plan for Employment, by 15% over a three-year period, with yearly monitoring of progress in achieving the goal.</li> </ul> <p><i>Increasing workplace accessibility.</i> Employment Services Specialists and staff of Technological Support Services of the agency will increase the level of outreach to mid-sized to large corporations in New Jersey to assist companies to make their work systems more accessible for individuals who are blind or visually impaired who are seeking employment. CBVI will increase its outreach efforts to 10 additional employers per year, and provide follow-up efforts to current employment partners.</p>

In addition, the state reviewed current reports that were publicly available and sponsored by state agencies. These included:

<b><i>Report</i></b>	<b><i>Employment-Related Recommendations</i></b>
<p><b>Meeting the Employment Transportation Needs of People with Disabilities— Final Report January 2005</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster awareness and understanding of the employment transportation needs of people with disabilities.</li> <li>• Participate fully in the United We Ride initiative.</li> <li>• Expand resources available to improve and enhance transportation services for people with disabilities.</li> <li>• Create a more seamless community transportation system.</li> <li>• Increase the number of accessible vehicles and facilities available from service providers.</li> <li>• Develop a concierge/brokerage service demonstration project.</li> <li>• Create an Internet-based one-stop for transportation information.</li> <li>• Increase driver education and training.</li> </ul>

<p><i>Sponsored by:</i>  <i>New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Disability Services</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand the quality and availability of travel training for people with disabilities.</li> <li>• Ensure transportation service planning meets the transportation needs of people with disabilities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The New Jersey WorkAbility Evaluation February 2005</b></p> <p><i>Sponsored by:</i>  <i>New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Disability Services</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand efforts to publicize New Jersey WorkAbility, particularly to the Hispanic community and working-age persons with disabilities who are not SSDI beneficiaries.</li> <li>• Disseminate information on counseling services and vocational services.</li> <li>• Disseminate information about Medicaid programs to enrollees.</li> <li>• Standardize use of the program name, New Jersey WorkAbility.</li> <li>• Provide more outreach to manufacturing, financial, and professional sectors to employ persons with disabilities.</li> <li>• Provide outreach to former enrollees.</li> <li>• Focus future research on subgroups of enrollees regarding employment and involvement with New Jersey WorkAbility.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Governor’s Mental Health Task Force Final Report March 31, 2005</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand supportive employment opportunities for individuals with mental illness.</li> <li>• Create career education and development services to facilitate the transition into adulthood of young people with mental illness.</li> <li>• Increase awareness and utilization of the Ticket to Work program.</li> <li>• Develop and fund supported education programs to facilitate transition of individuals with mental illness into postsecondary opportunities.</li> </ul>

In addition, the state reviewed other publications, documents, and reports by various community-based organizations that contained any recommendations related to employment and/or supports necessary for employment for people with disabilities. Reports reviewed included:

- The New Jersey Center for Outreach Services for the Autism Community (COSAC). *Meeting the Needs of Adults with Autism: A Blueprint for the Future* (October 2006). Competitive and Supported Employment (pages 18-21).
- The ARC of New Jersey. *Meeting the Transportation Needs of Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in New Jersey* (October 2002).
- The Mental Health Association in New Jersey, Workforce Development Center. *Policy Paper on Employment Related Issues* (2006-2007).
- The Elizabeth M. Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities. *The New Jersey Workforce Summit: A Report and State Action Plan to Address the Needs of Direct Support Professionals in Developmental Disabilities* (2002).



In addition to reviewing documents, the state established a broader input and feedback process. During the summer and fall of 2007, a series of place-based and teleconference listening sessions were held to elicit feedback, input, and comments from people with disabilities, family members and caregivers, community-based providers, employers, and the general public. New Jersey:

- Convened four listening sessions in different parts of the state specifically designed to solicit input from consumers;
- Convened four listening sessions via teleconference (one focused on adults with disabilities, one focused on youth with disabilities, one conducted with accommodations for the deaf and hard of hearing, and one focused on adults with disabilities and conducted in both English and Spanish);
- Held two special listening sessions: one focused specifically toward community-based providers, and one focused particularly toward business and industry representatives; and
- Responded to requests from community-based organizations, advocacy groups, and other interested organizations to attend existing meetings or gatherings.

All sessions focused on asking the following general questions:

- What can we do to help young people and adults with disabilities expand their opportunities for meaningful employment?
- How can we increase expectations for individuals living with disabilities to achieve their career potential through education, training, and employment?
- What can we do to increase the recruitment, employment, and retention of people with disabilities into private businesses and/or public-sector employment in New Jersey?
- What can we do to increase entrepreneurship, self-employment, and/or home-based employment for individuals living with disabilities in New Jersey?
- What services and supports will better prepare people with disabilities to enter the competitive workforce and achieve their employment goals?

Information regarding the dates, times, and target groups for this feedback process is included as Appendix E.

Finally, in addition to the above process, the state worked closely with the American Public Human Services Association's Center for Workers with Disabilities to get an overview of national activities and progressive trends taking place across the nation in the area of disability and employment. As such, the state thoroughly reviewed the strategic plans of the 14 states that have already undertaken a strategic planning process supported by a Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, in addition to getting advice on promising practices in the areas of systems reform, organizational change, and innovative workforce practices.

All of the information gathered, especially the input from consumers, their families, and caretakers, was summarized and presented to the Project Steering Team for preliminary development of the mission, vision, and goals for this plan. The plan was presented at an open public forum on December 3, 2007 at the New Jersey Department of Human Services in Trenton,

NJ as well as posted on the state's website for the general public. The forum was widely publicized and well attended by consumers, community service providers, and state and local agencies. Reaction by the more than 100 attendees to the plan was generally positive and helpful. Many attendees were individuals with disabilities.

## Environmental Scan

In addition to the community-wide input and information gathering process, the state, with assistance from the Heldrich Center, engaged in a systematic data collection process to get a high-level picture of the depth and breadth of employment-specific programs, as well as those programs that support employment goals. The purpose of this exercise was to gather information from major state agencies/programs using key informant interviews and written surveys to get a comprehensive picture of all federal and state (and other possible major) resources that are currently in existence in the state (including specific information on funding levels, types of services offered, specific population served, and numbers served). The process was also used to gather information on the administrative data collected by these programs, such as but not limited to demographic data, disability status, service activity, and employment/education outcomes.

### The Current Inventory of Employment Services and Supports

There are several major employment-related programs currently operated by state agencies in New Jersey that serve people with disabilities. Most of these are state-funded services delivered in local offices and through community-based providers throughout the state. Many of the community-based providers have particular expertise with specific disability groups, such as those with mental health issues or developmental disabilities. Outlined below is a description of the state's programs and services:

#### ***Employment Programs***

##### **State Vocational Rehabilitation Services provided through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, within the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development**

In New Jersey, state rehabilitation services are provided through the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development. It provides the largest source of disability-specific employment-related services and supports within the state for people with disabilities.

The mission of the New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) is to enable eligible clients with disabilities to achieve employment outcomes consistent with their strengths, priorities, needs, abilities, and capabilities. As such, DVRS is the major state organization primarily focused on competitive employment of individuals with disabilities. DVRS is committed to the involvement of the consumer in decision-making and informed choice. The agency believes that the partnership between the consumer and the vocational rehabilitation counselor is the key to success. DVRS has three regions (north, central and south New Jersey) and operates out of 18 offices. Some of these are fully collocated with the One-Stop Career Centers in their areas.

DVRS operates a number of programs, all targeted exclusively to individuals with disabilities. In accordance with a Memorandum of Understanding with the Commission for the Blind and

Visually Impaired, DVRS refers all blind and visually impaired customers to the Commission but serves individuals with all other types of disabilities.

**Basic vocational rehabilitation services** are provided through Title I of the Rehabilitation Act (funded by the U.S. Department of Education with a state match). All services are focused on competitive employment as the desired outcome. Services include:

- Assessment and diagnostic evaluation;
- Individual vocational counseling and guidance;
- Job-seeking skills training and job placement services;
- Follow-up support services;
- Post-employment services;
- Physical restoration;
- Job coaching;
- Vocational, professional, or on-the-job training; and
- Transition services for high school special education students.

In addition to basic vocational rehabilitation services, DVRS operates the following programs through contracts with community-based providers, many of which specialize in providing services to specific disability groups:

- **Supported employment**, which provides pre-employment training, intensive job coaching on the job, and follow-along services. DVRS operates two supported employment programs, one funded by Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act and the other by the State of New Jersey.
- **Extended employment**, also called **sheltered employment**, which is designed to provide long-term employment through a community rehabilitation program for a consumer who is presently unable to work in the competitive labor market. Individuals are frequently paid less than minimum wage based upon time studies identifying their ability. This program is exclusively state funded.
- **Transportation services** for sheltered employment, funded by New Jersey casino revenues.

DVRS is also the primary “employment network” utilized by New Jersey’s Ticket to Work holders, under the Social Security Administration’s Ticket to Work program.

There are 12 independent living centers in New Jersey, some of which are funded by DVRS and others of which are funded directly by the federal government. These independent living centers have particular expertise in working with individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

Due to the nature of its work, over the years DVRS has entered into numerous Memoranda of Understanding and pilot programs. DVRS is the fiscal agent for the Division of Mental Health’s Supported Employment Grants. It has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs relating to transition services for high school

students. It has partnered with the Kessler Foundation to operate pilot programs. DVRS has also collaborated with other state agencies on a “Welfare to Work” project.

In total, New Jersey’s DVRS provided approximately 40,000 people with employment services last year. Funding from a combination of state and federal sources totaled over \$81 million.

According to key informant interviews, in order to increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, DVRS officials have suggested the following:

- Initiatives to increase municipal/local employment for persons with disabilities.
- Improved coordination and partnerships among directors of key agencies providing employment services to individuals with disabilities.
- The development of a common vision/mission for various disability programs.
- A communications campaign aimed at the public.
- The adoption of a more formal approach to mentors in the workplace.
- Increased resources, especially for providing transition services for youth.

### **State Vocational Rehabilitative Services provided by the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, within the New Jersey Department of Human Services**

The Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI) was established in 1910 and is one of the oldest continually operating agencies in New Jersey state government. It provides a wide range of educational services for children, vocational rehabilitation services for older teens and adults, and independent living services for people of all ages. It provides continuity of services from birth and throughout life. CBVI has field offices in five locations throughout the state: Newark, Egg Harbor Township, Camden, Toms River, and New Brunswick. In FY 2007, the Commission operates with a budget of \$26,286,000 and a staff of 330.

CBVI receives 20% of the entire state amount for vocational rehabilitation under the Rehabilitation Act. Vocational rehabilitation services are provided in the following areas:

- Preparation for competitive labor force jobs,
- Self-employment/entrepreneurship (Randolph-Shepherd Act — business enterprise program),
- Supported employment,
- Post-employment support,
- Crafters’ Association (handicrafts),
- Joseph Kohn Rehabilitation Center (New Brunswick)(16-week intensive program to develop “blindness skills”),
- Computer classes (The Bridge Program),
- Elijah’s Promise Culinary School, and
- Transition services for high school students. These services begin at the age of 14 but become more intensive at age 16. CBVI counselors help students go to college or plan for employment. They also have college counselors who assure that students’ needs are met in college.

CBVI officials state that they believe in individualized counseling/planning and “informed choice.” Counselors work with individuals to discern their interests and develop a plan. They start with the individual. Last year, approximately 10,000 individuals received services through the Commission’s vocational rehabilitation, education, and independent living units, and 2,200 people received employment services.

In order to increase employment of individuals with disabilities, CBVI officials would like state policy to build on the strength of what exists. They believe it is important to involve the Office of the Governor, especially the Office of Economic Development, in emphasizing the economic benefits to the state of greater inclusiveness of individuals with disabilities. They also believe in the need for multi-level programming — education, economic development, and access to information.

### **Generic Employment and Training Services provided through Local One-Stop Career Centers and Workforce Investment Boards under the oversight of the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development**

Generic employment and training services and supports, provided through the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) system, the Employment Service, and other partners, are available to all job seekers across the state regardless of disability.

New Jersey has 17 locally directed workforce areas and a network of 29 One-Stop Career Centers that operate in local areas across the state and provide a broad range of employment services from job search resources to training and career counseling. The One-Stop Center system emphasizes use of self-directed services such as a public access area, job listings, and tools for developing resumes. Almost all One-Stop Career Centers are located in facilities in which state Employment Service staff are co-located with staff of the WIA One-Stop operator, generally county or city employees.

Job seekers who do not need significant staff assistance are able to access what they need at the One-Stop Career Centers without having to go through a staff person. In general, WIA-funded activities include intensive and training services for individuals who may need more assistance or who require more training or education. WIA focuses on the training, education, and employment needs of an individual. Most individuals with disabilities meet the eligibility criteria for intensive services and training under WIA based on disability and/or income, and therefore are usually eligible for WIA-funded services without having to access the DVRS system.

Within the past three years, New Jersey has consolidated its WorkFirst “to-work” activities under Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the state’s General Assistance program into the One-Stop system. WorkFirst participants receive all work-related services through the One-Stop Centers.

Using state funds, the state operates the Workforce Development Partnership (WDP) program, which provides additional funds (beyond WIA) for occupational training. WDP has also financed the installation of computer labs, called Workforce Learning Links, in at least one One-Stop Center in every workforce area. These Workforce Learning Links provide computer-assisted

adult basic education, GED preparation, English as a Second Language instruction, and basic computer skills to customers in need of these services.

Some One-Stop Centers have full co-location of DVRS staff; all have some DVRS presence. New Jersey has made efforts to ensure that services in its One-Stop Career Centers are physically and programmatically accessible to people with disabilities. The Workforce Learning Links have larger screens and **Zoom** software for the visually impaired, and **Jaws** software for the hearing-impaired; there are also adaptable keyboards.

Through a federal Employment and Training Work Incentive Grant, the state established a pilot program (call **Project Access**) that provided for the purchase and installation of accessible signage, brail, tape recorders, and other assistive technology for use in the One-Stop Career Centers. Disability awareness training was conducted for One-Stop staff and a review was done of the accessibility of all One-Stop Center facilities. The program concluded in 2005.

In addition, the state established a **Disability Program Navigator** effort (funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy), a two-year grant now in its second year, built on Project Access. Every One-Stop Career Center designated a disability navigator who was trained to carry out this function. The Navigator role is designed to raise the capability of One-Stop Center staff to assist people with disabilities access all available services.

Through funding from Wagner-Peyser (the State Employment Services), WIA adult, dislocated workers and youth programs, adult education/literacy programs, and the state's Workforce Development Partnership Program, One-Stop Centers served almost 300,000 people last year, of which approximately 8,200 were reported as individuals with disabilities.

From interviews with state officials responsible for overseeing the One-Stop Career Center system, it is believed that in order to better serve individuals with disabilities, there is a need to:

- Share information among agencies working with individuals with disabilities.
- Formalize the link between supportive housing and workforce development — that a “paved road” is needed from housing to the One-Stops and DVRS so that people can be properly routed.
- Facilitate a greater understanding of this population among One-Stop staff.
- Help employers retain staff that have a disability.
- Change the performance measurement system. It is felt that a weighted system that recognizes issues related to serving individuals with disabilities in the One-Stop system would be beneficial.

### **Employment Services and Training Available through the Division of Developmental Disabilities, within the New Jersey Department of Human Services**

The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) serves more than 35,000 people with developmental disabilities. These include disabilities such as mental retardation, cerebral palsy, autism, epilepsy, spina bifida, traumatic brain injuries, and certain neurological impairments. DDD operates through four regional offices in different parts of the state. Among its offerings

are three employment-focused programs, all operated through contracts with community-based providers, which have experience and expertise with providing services to the population with these particular barriers to employment:

**Supported employment** services include on-site job coaches; crew work, in which an individual works as part of a peer group; and arrangements in which a consumer can sample different jobs to find a good “fit.” When they are ready, individuals in these programs are referred to DVRS for job placement services.

**Adult training, or day services** are offered to help individuals improve basic work-related skills, such as those needed to develop social skills, manage money, and take care of their homes.

**Extended employment or sheltered workshops** are in place for individuals to receive work-related training, such as learning how to package and assemble products, as well as job counseling and job referrals. DDD does not develop any of its own contracts for this service, but buys into contracts developed by DVRS.

Because of the need for coordination with other agencies providing similar services, DDD operates under a Memorandum of Understanding with DVRS and CBVI. This Memorandum of Understanding is currently undergoing revision.

Total funding for DDD employment-related programs for adults is \$133.7 million, which includes \$37.1 million in federal funds under the Center for Medicare and Medicaid’s Community Care Waiver, state funding grants-in-aid of \$89.2 million, and state casino revenue funding of \$7.4 million. Annually, DDD provides community services to more than 17,000 people over the age of 21, of which approximately half, or 8,500, receive employment-related services.

### **Employment Services provided by the Division of Mental Health Services, within the New Jersey Department of Human Services**

The only true employment-related program operated by the Division of Mental Health Services (DMHS) is the **Supported Employment Program**, which last year served 1,587 adults with serious and persistent mental illness. This program operates with federal and state funds under an agreement with DVRS. DMHS does not directly provide the supported employment services, but contracts for all services through the use of community (nonprofit) providers.

According to key informant interviews, the mental health community is committed to a focus on employment but feels they need the expertise of the generic workforce system to offer guidance and support as well as to provide a mainstream environment. DMHS understands mental health, but feels that mental health staff are not experts in workforce development; however, it feels that the generic workforce system needs to better understand the challenges of serving people with psychiatric disabilities and mental health problems.



### ***Public Education***

The **Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs** oversees special education in New Jersey. Special education students may be served until the age of 21. The body of law governing special education is a combination of federal and state statutes, federal and state administrative code, and local school district rules, regulations, and standards of practice. The key federal laws are the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

A requirement of IDEA is that transition from school to adult life components must be included in each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) beginning at the age of 16. New Jersey requires that transition components must be included in each student's IEP beginning at the age of 14. There are many required elements for the transition component that must be in each student's IEP.

The Office of Special Education Programs has established relationships with DVRS, CBVI, DDD, the Centers for Independent Living, college disability offices and major service provider and advocacy organizations, such as the ARC of New Jersey. DVRS and CBVI are responsible for coordinating with the high schools in transition planning for special education students. The quality and success of this effort varies by school district and county. There is a resource issue for DVRS.

In key informant interviews, the Office of Special Education Programs indicated that there is a need for enhanced collaboration between state and local agencies that will lead to greater employment opportunities for students with disabilities.

### ***Services that Support Employment***

#### **Health Care Benefits provided through the Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services, within the New Jersey Department of Human Services**

The Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services (DMAHS) oversees New Jersey's Medicaid policy, claims, and eligibility. Related to employment, DMAHS administers New Jersey's Medicaid Buy-In program, known as WorkAbility. New Jersey WorkAbility extends basic Medicaid coverage, subject to state-determined income and resource standards, to working-age individuals with disabilities who are employed. There are currently 2,000 individuals on New Jersey WorkAbility, a number that has continued to grow since the inception of the program. Although DMAHS administers this program, the bulk of the marketing and publicity have been accomplished by the New Jersey Division of Disability Services, through the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant.

#### **Supports provided through the Division of Disability Services, within the New Jersey Department of Human Services**

The Division of Disability Services (DDS) administers the **Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG)** and has done so since the first of these grants was awarded in 2000.

In support of employment, DDS administers the **Personal Assistance Services Program (PASP)**, which provides routine, non-medical assistance to adults with disabilities who are employed, preparing for employment, involved in community volunteer work, or attending school. Personal assistants help with tasks such as light housekeeping, bathing, dressing, preparing meals, shopping, driving, or using public transportation. Personal assistance services differ from traditional home health services in that they are consumer directed and supervised and are considered to be a social, rather than a health care, service. Based on 2006 data, 30% of PASP consumers were employed and 20% were attending college or receiving job training.

### **Supports provided through the Division of Deaf and Hard of Hearing, within the New Jersey Department of Human Services**

The Division of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DDHH) does not provide vocational rehabilitation services directly, but administers New Jersey's primary sign language interpreter referral service, provides assistance through an information and referral hotline, and publishes a monthly newsletter as well as other resource information. DDHH distributes Text Telephone equipment for Voice Carryover Phones to assist individuals in their daily activities.

### **Supports and Services provided through the Division of Family Development, within the New Jersey Department of Human Services**

The Division of Family Development (DFD) is responsible for administering WorkFirst New Jersey, which includes the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), New Jersey's General Assistance (GA) Program, and the Food Stamps Program. All required employment-related (or "to-work") services under these programs are provided through the One-Stop Career Centers. While no firm data is available, it is estimated that as much as 10% of the WorkFirst caseload may be individuals with disabilities. Although DFD has arrangements with the Division of Mental Health and has attempted a pilot program with DVRS, the Division believes that more can be done to assist individuals with disabilities on public assistance.

### **Transportation and Transit Services and Options for People with Disabilities Available in New Jersey**

A range of accessible transportation services are available in New Jersey, including traditional bus and rail services; AccessLink, New Jersey Transit's ADA paratransit services; community transportation services operated by counties, nongovernmental organizations, and municipal government; as well as medical transport vehicles, taxis, and livery services. A complete inventory of New Jersey-based transportation services and providers can be found in a report prepared by the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University titled *Meeting the Employment Transportation Needs of People with Disabilities in New Jersey: Final Report*. The report can be accessed at [http://policy.rutgers.edu/vtc/documents/TransEq.DDS\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://policy.rutgers.edu/vtc/documents/TransEq.DDS_Final_Report.pdf).

## **Information, Skill Training, Counseling provided through the State Independent Living Centers**

Centers for Independent Living, many of them funded through DVRS, are community-based, consumer-driven organizations in New Jersey that provide information and referral, peer counseling, skill training, and advocacy. There are 14 county-based centers that are administered by the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC).

## **Assistance and Education to Employers provided through the New Jersey Business Leadership Network**

The New Jersey Business Leadership Network (NJBLN) is an employer-led endeavor that promotes best practices and enhances competitive employment opportunities for skilled job candidates with disabilities. NJBLN is a state chapter of the U.S. Business Leadership Network and is currently operated by the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce.

Started in 2007, NJBLN offers participating employers resources for recruiting candidates with disabilities, information on disability issues/topics, recognition for best disability employment practices, and exposure to an untapped market for goods and services. It works with providers and state and local government to further their understanding of employers' needs. NJBLN also provides participating employers with networking opportunities, education and resources to effectively increase understanding and awareness on issues in the workplace, and lessons learned in recruiting, hiring, accommodating, and improving customer service for people with disabilities. NJBLN assists businesses in navigating and directly linking to government and community resources to meet their employment-related needs.<sup>11</sup>

## **Common Themes and Critical Issues Emerging from the Process and Scan**

As a result of the document and plan reviews, interviews with program directors, program scans, and statewide community listening sessions, common themes and critical issues to be addressed emerged.

### ***The Time for Critical Systems Change is Now***

There is an overwhelming and unanimous consensus that people with disabilities are falling further behind other residents economically. The feeling was that a complete paradigm shift from "I am disabled and cannot work" to "What work can I do with my abilities" is necessary to effect change across a wide spectrum of systems. To some extent, this paradigm shift has begun to occur, but must go much further.

Despite the strengths of the current system of employment supports for people with disabilities, and the best intentions, interests, and efforts by public agencies and private organizations,

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<sup>11</sup> New Jersey Chamber of Commerce. *The New Jersey Business Leadership Network Brochure* (2007).

feedback from the community revealed frustration that there has not been better progress toward greater employment and economic opportunity for people with disabilities for several reasons:

1. They believe that there has been little fundamental change to existing policies and programs across both disability and generic medical, education, workforce, support (e.g., housing/transportation) and benefits systems that center on “client choice” and “client voice”.
2. They feel there continues to exist a bias toward steering people with disabilities to disability-specific systems and programs versus adapting mainstream, generic systems to universally accommodate people with disabilities.
3. They feel there is a confusing array of programs, services, and information that increases, rather than decreases, the complexity of the current system of supports, services, and information available to people with disabilities and their parents.
4. They feel that there continue to be misconceptions, discrimination, discomfort, and stigma about people with disabilities, and their ability, desire, and capability to work in the community — this was especially felt by individuals with mental illness.
5. They believe there has been a failure — in public policy, professionals, and parents — to address the low expectations of the work capacity and potential of individuals with disabilities when accommodation and supports are provided.

### ***There is a Universal Lack of Basic, Easy-to-Understand, and Accessible Information***

Despite the proliferation over the past 20 years of programs, services, toolkits, resource guides, training, research, data, websites, and other written and online materials, people who attended the listening sessions displayed a lack of knowledge of existing programs and services — among and between state and local agencies, by people with disabilities and their parents, by direct service professionals, and by employers.

Overall, the feedback from the listening sessions indicated that the current system for identifying and obtaining career and employment services and supports to assist an individual with a disability is confusing and complicated to many. Parents, individuals with disabilities, and service professionals found it overwhelming and difficult to gain access to simple and consistent information in a manner that they could understand. In more than one session, people expressed a desire for one focal location with simple information related to careers, employment, and “to-work” supports.

There is also a significant disparity between what consumers, service providers, and state policymakers perceive employers and hiring managers want and need to hire people with disabilities, and what employers actually said they desired.

Finally, there was universal agreement that presenting profiles of real people with disabilities successfully working — at all levels of jobs, occupations, and at various workplaces — was critical to bringing comfort to and familiarity with people with disabilities to the public, co-workers, and employers. They also felt that showing success in working would act as an

inspiration and motivator to youth and their parents about the possibilities of leading a full life in the community that included work.

***There is a Significant Need for Early Intervention, as well as Integrated Services and Supports that Get People with Disabilities to Work and Support their Long-Term Employment***

There was consensus that services and supports are needed that are tailored to an individual's needs, well coordinated, encouraging of work, and easy to understand and navigate. These services and supports must be delivered by qualified professionals sensitive to the aspirations, desires, needs, cultural beliefs, and practices of the person receiving them.

Also emerging from the sessions was the necessity to offer these services and supports at a very early age, and that parents, the medical community, educators, and other professionals play a critical role in reinforcing “ability” and “independence”. Community comments emphasized that early and timely efforts — that are integrated and in mainstream settings and systems — need to be made to provide career/work exploration and other education, employment, and training services and supports that will likely lead to successful entry into the workforce for youth and adults, and the continuation of employment for people with adult-onset disabilities.

***Employers Say they are Willing to Hire and Offer a Welcoming Environment, but Reluctance Remains without Support and Assistance***

The employers that participated in the strategic planning process expressed a desire and willingness to recruit and hire people with disabilities for jobs. However, many businesses admitted they have some reluctance to hire workers with disabilities based on the following concerns:

- Fears about liability and safety issues;
- The lack of good job matching done by staff and service providers on behalf of disabled clients;
- The desire to work with trusted community partners versus government agencies that are perceived as monitoring or judging their progress;
- The difficulty of co-workers and supervisors in overcoming previous perceptions or negative experiences; and
- The importance to employers of quality preparations, job skills, job coaching, and sustainable supports for workers with disabilities.

Employers stressed that their priority is the hiring and retention of a qualified and dependable worker. They were less interested in a tax credit or incentive.

Similar to other community members, employers felt there was a lack of simple, easy-to-use information designed to address their needs. They also felt a need to demonstrate success of employment of individuals with disabilities in order to break down discomfort and reluctance at the workplace.

### ***The Need for an Extensive Public Awareness Campaign is Necessary to Complement Systems Reform Efforts***

An overwhelming consensus was the recognition that along with significant public policy efforts was the need to engage in an extensive public awareness campaign. It was felt that this effort should be designed not just to market the value of individuals with disabilities, but to seek to influence behaviors among leaders in business and government, as well as the public.

Community members expressed the desire that such a campaign dispel myths and preconceptions about the work ability of people with disabilities, and demonstrate that employing this largely under-utilized labor pool is important to the economic development of the state. Several expressed concern that such a campaign should not oversell or portray workers with disabilities as model superhuman employees.

### ***Looking for Innovation, Experimentation, Accountability, and State Leadership***

Session participants expressed a desire for public agencies to improve their programs and services as well as change their approaches in order to get different results. Examples of this included ideas to experiment with greater beneficiary control of the delivery of supports (such as self-directed accounts), offer competitively solicited incentive grants to community providers to develop partnerships with businesses or organized labor (either in industry sectors and communities), or provide seed funding to foster local telework, self employment, entrepreneurship, and/or other nontraditional work opportunities.

Additionally, the sessions revealed the imperative to track progress by collecting and analyzing basic data. There was consensus that the state should embrace a data-driven decision-making, policy-setting, and program development environment. Also requested was a need for continuous learning — whether that took the form of identifying and disseminating evidence-based best practices or systematic training of direct service professionals on many topics including expectations, person-center planning, assistive technology, accommodation, or other areas that serve to drive down change and reinforce the state's new directions.

Finally, there was an overwhelming desire among community participants for the state to lead. Examples of leading included:

- Demonstrating high-level and sustained state attention to, and interest in, the successful competitive employment of people with disabilities;
- Using organizational change techniques to drive down change;
- Redirecting resources to foster local partnerships and collaborations and provide incentives for efforts that blend, braid, and leverage existing public and private resources;
- Holding senior and mid-level managers, as well as service providers, regularly accountable for systems change;
- Identifying and changing administrative rules, regulations, and requirements that are barriers to service or disincentives to working;
- Establishing new policies that level the playing field for people with disabilities; and
- Setting an example by having New Jersey itself be a model employer for recruiting, hiring, and developing workers with disabilities in state government.

## The New Jersey Strategic Plan

This plan attempts to respond to the consistent themes and critical issues raised through the process of dialogue and discussion described. It builds on the incremental systems changes made over the past 15 years to improve the employment and economic self-sufficiency of residents with disabilities in New Jersey. The plan, outlined below, reflects a culmination of thought, advice, input, and interest from past and present public and private forums, meetings, conferences, and policy gatherings.

### Our Vision

People with disabilities are an integral part of the labor force in New Jersey and are active and valuable participants in the economic growth and vitality of the state.

### Our Mission

Recognizing the value of all people in terms of their abilities and assets, New Jersey will enhance job and career opportunities for people with disabilities, reform delivery systems, and create partnerships among people with disabilities, their families, employers, as well as the public sector and service organizations to meet New Jersey's critical workforce needs.

### Our Values and Philosophy

1. New Jersey believes in choice for individuals. We recognize that understanding an individual's strengths, aspirations, interests, and needs is important to affording choice and control for the individual preparing for and seeking work. Individuals have the right to choose their employment and their employer.
2. New Jersey believes that individuals with disabilities can participate fully as members of the community and achieve to their highest potential. All employment options must be available — from entry-level jobs to the most advanced occupations.
3. New Jersey values diversity in the workforce and workplace and believes that greater inclusion of people with disabilities at work is beneficial to the entire workforce, employers, and the public.
4. New Jersey believes that public policy at all levels must be aligned to promote the employment of individuals with disabilities and eliminate barriers experienced by people with disabilities.
5. New Jersey believes in collaboration, leveraging and aligning resources, and funding across systems and programs as fully as possible, and that this is critical to enhancing services and addressing barriers that prevent higher employment levels among individuals with disabilities.

6. New Jersey believes in universal access to timely, current, relevant, and understandable information about work and working for people with disabilities, their family members, service organizations, employers, and the public. Cultural, disability, and language differences may require different communication approaches.
7. New Jersey believes that individuals with disabilities should have access to high-quality services and supports so that they can best prepare for, secure, and remain in competitive employment. A universal and inclusive approach to appropriate and mainstream education and training is important to achieving long-term career and employment goals.
8. New Jersey believes that access to critical supports such as health care and transportation enhances the ability to work for all people.
9. New Jersey values direct support professionals and service providers and believes in the necessity to improve the capacity and quality of workers that directly assist people with disabilities to achieve their employment goals.
10. New Jersey believes that public and private employers should be fully aware of and welcome qualified individuals with disabilities into their workplaces. New Jersey values employers as important partners in providing employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Employers have the right to choose whom they hire.
11. New Jersey believes in using research information and data to measure progress, track outcomes, improve performance, assess what is working or what needs to be changed, and to be transparent and accountable to the public.

## **Our Strategic Goals**

- Goal 1: Increase public understanding and awareness of the employment-related assets of people with disabilities and their ability to work.
- Goal 2: Improve information and communication to, about, and for people with disabilities.
- Goal 3: Engage, educate, and assist the employer community.
- Goal 4: Provide people with disabilities with better preparation for work and offer more effective connections to jobs.
- Goal 5: Offer supports for working to people with disabilities.
- Goal 6: Increase the state's leadership, management, and coordination efforts in the employment of people with disabilities.
- Goal 7: Strengthen disability and employment research, evaluation, performance measurement, data collection, and data analysis.



## Our Strategic Activities

**Strategic Goal #1: Increase public understanding and awareness of the employment-related assets of individuals with disabilities and their ability to work.**

*Desired Outcomes:*

- Change public perceptions about the ability of persons with disabilities to work. Achieve a paradigm shift for individuals with disabilities from “I can’t work” to “I can work.”
- Create greater public awareness of how working in the community can benefit people with disabilities.
- Create greater understanding about the economic and social benefits to the community and to employers when more people with disabilities have the opportunity to work.
- Foster greater community support for reforms aimed at increasing the competitive employment of people with disabilities.
- Instill positive feelings and support among the general public, policymakers, lawmakers, employers, and service providers about the competitive employment of people with disabilities.

*Key Strategic Activities:*

1. Identify existing public relations campaigns and programs being conducted in other states and benchmark New Jersey efforts.
  - a. Build on successful campaigns that have been developed by other states and by national organizations (e.g. Connecticut’s [www.connect-ability.com](http://www.connect-ability.com), the American Association of Persons with Disabilities’ [www.aapd.com](http://www.aapd.com), and others).
  - b. Develop a consistent and simple message and a consistent logo and brand, and test the messages/look through targeted focus groups.
2. Develop a statewide public awareness campaign aimed at raising the awareness of and influencing behavior and attitudes about the benefits to work for people with disabilities.
  - a. Identify and profile successful participants who have attained employment from every type of program for individuals with disabilities currently operating in New Jersey.
  - b. Adopt an approach that portrays workers with disabilities as “regular” people.
  - c. Profile workers across a range of disabilities.
  - d. Working through the New Jersey Business Leadership Network, identify and profile successful employers and workers with disabilities across a range of New Jersey businesses and industries, including the public sector.
3. Conduct the campaign in a variety of formats such as television/radio, print, and video/internet.

**Strategic Goal #2: Improve information and communication to, about, and for people with disabilities.***Desired Outcomes:*

- Increase knowledge of programs and services offered by the State of New Jersey to move people with disabilities to employment and to support them when employed.
- Increase the utilization of programs and services offered by the State of New Jersey to move people with disabilities to employment and that support them when employed.
- Change the perceptions among medical, education, and direct service professionals about the employment capabilities of people with disabilities.
- Improve the professional development and quality of direct service professionals working in the generic and disability-specific employment field.

*Key Strategic Activities:*

1. Develop and maintain user-friendly and customer-focused information about existing programs, especially those relating to employment and employment supports.
  - a. Build on the printed guide, *New Jersey Resources*, developed by NJDHS, Division of Disability Services in 2007.
  - b. Ensure that information is accurate, consistent, and current; available in multiple formats and media; and accessible to a wide range of users with different abilities.
  - c. Review and revamp mainstream employment websites and materials (e.g., [www.njnextstop.org](http://www.njnextstop.org), Labor and One-Stop materials, reports, websites, etc.) and/or websites to include pictures and stories about people with disabilities working.
2. Create and maintain a single website, preferably with interactive functions, to deliver, collect, share, and link to information related to individuals with disabilities and employment in a form that meets government and/or industry standards for accessibility.
  - a. Build and promote the site as a “one-stop source” for accurate and reliable information.
  - b. The site should complement and tie into the public awareness campaign.
  - c. Key elements of the website should be available in both English and Spanish.
  - d. The website should be tested using focus groups of adults with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities, and youth with disabilities.
  - e. The site should make use of existing mainstream information and websites about employment, jobs, and career pathways (e.g., [www.njnextstop.org](http://www.njnextstop.org), [www.wnjp.in.org](http://www.wnjp.in.org)) to facilitate knowledge of work and about the availability of mainstream employment systems.
  - f. The site should serve as a repository and dissemination center for materials and effective practices.
  - g. The site should include an email inquiry system to respond to online information queries.
3. Establish a non-emergency call center to provide general information, referral, support, and consultation for people with disabilities and their parents.
  - a. Build on or use the state’s “211” community resource telephone system or DVRS’s 1-866-VR1STOP.

- b. The site should be accessible to a wide range of language speakers and people with different disabilities.
4. Expand education and communication efforts to medical, education, and direct service professionals and service organizations, as well as advocacy, self-support, and parent groups and organizations about the programs and services available to assist people with disabilities to go to school and/or work.
  - a. Establish an education and technical assistance advisory team to provide advice and input to the state on new and/or improved communication, education, and technical assistance activities necessary to improve information and education to a wide audience.
  - b. Sponsor and hold regular seminars, webinars, and/or teleconferences for direct service professionals in the public and nonprofit sectors to facilitate the sharing of promising practices and strategies on various topics related to disability and employment.
  - c. Conduct periodic web-based surveys to gather information in response to immediate and long-term communication, education, and technical assistance needs.

### **Strategic Goal #3: Engage, educate, and assist the employer community.**

#### *Desired Outcomes:*

- Reduce employer resistance to hiring individuals with disabilities.
- Increase the number of employers that hire people with disabilities.
- Improve employer and hiring manager knowledge about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities.
- Improve the level of technical support and information available to employers on issues related to hiring people with disabilities.

#### *Key Strategic Activities:*

1. Develop and launch a multimedia education and awareness campaign targeted to New Jersey employers that promotes the employment of people with disabilities and makes the business case for increasing their employment.
  - a. Include best practices that showcase positive employer practices that lead to successful work experiences for individuals with disabilities.
  - b. Profile successful relationships between community-based service providers and employers that have led to successful employment and employment retention outcomes for individuals with disabilities.
  - c. Include resources for disability etiquette training for co-workers, supervisors, and managers.
  - d. Address major issues that the business community has raised; for example, safety issues in the event of an emergency, legal issues, accommodation issues, etc.
  - e. Include education about adaptive technology available for individuals with disabilities in the workplace.

- f. Develop a speaker's bureau that can send speakers to employer organizations such as local chambers of commerce, rotary clubs, industry organizations, and human resource organizations.
  - g. Work in partnership with the New Jersey Business Leadership Network on all elements of the education and public awareness campaign; test the campaign messages and elements through focus groups with a variety of small, mid-size, and large employers.
  - h. Work with existing business groups as well as through mainstream workforce communication channels such as the Governor's Office of Economic Growth, the Commerce Commission, and the State Employment and Training Commission.
2. Develop a mechanism that makes it clear and easy for employers to find individuals with disabilities looking for employment such as creating an "employer" section on the general website developed for information purposes.
  3. Research promising demand-side activities and practices related to persons with disabilities that are taking place in other states, regions, and/or communities.

**Strategic Goal #4: Provide people with disabilities with better preparation for work and offer more effective connections to jobs.**

*Desired Outcomes:*

- Increase the number of individuals with disabilities in competitive employment.
- Decrease reliance on sheltered workshops.
- Increase high school graduation rates and postsecondary enrollment for individuals with disabilities.
- Increase access to generic workforce and education systems for people with disabilities.
- Increase coordination and collaboration within and across service delivery providers and systems.
- Increase the number of job placements, the employment rate, and the wage at placement of individuals with disabilities exiting from public programs and services.
- Increase the use of self-direction in services.
- Increase the integration of funding among and across generic and disability-specific systems.

*Key Strategic Activities:*

1. Align disability-specific employment and training resources and programs with the Governor's Economic Growth Strategy.
  - a. Develop and competitively initiate pilot sector strategies for people with disabilities in New Jersey focused on the state's identified high-growth and promising industries.
  - b. Develop and competitively initiate pilot programs that use public-private partnership to increase entrepreneurship, small business development, or other forms of non-traditional employment for persons with disabilities.

- c. Deploy a subset of funds from the state's customized training program to invest in the skill upgrade of workers with disabilities in the state's key industries.
  - d. Realign the Governor's Economic Growth Strategy (Priority #5) to include disability-owned businesses as a target of focus, expansion, and investment along with small, minority-owned, and women-owned businesses.
2. Develop a plan that assesses and make recommendations on how to incorporate self-advocacy, informed choice, and appropriate goal-setting and person-centered employment and education planning within existing service delivery processes and practices.
3. Develop a plan that reviews and makes recommendations on how to eliminate the segregation of people with disabilities into disability-specific systems and more fully integrate people with disabilities into existing generic workforce development programs and services.
4. Identify evidence-based practices (such as customized and supported employment, distance learning, training in high-growth sectors, etc.), and new innovative community strategies for helping people with disabilities obtain and maintain competitive employment and make recommendations on how to expand those strategies through the blending and/or redirection of existing resources.
5. Develop a plan to decrease reliance on sheltered workshops in New Jersey.
6. Develop programs that assist individuals with disabilities with self-employment and micro-enterprises.
7. Improve the capacity of direct service professionals who help people with disabilities get and maintain employment to perform their job duties.
  - a. Implement a "career ladder" education and training programs that offer career paths and other incentives for workers.
  - b. Reward direct service professionals who complete additional education and demonstrate new skills.
  - c. Institute distance learning and web-based training programs to improve the quality and access to training for direct service professionals.
  - d. Examine the adoption of training/certification/credentialing of job coaches.
  - e. Provide targeted training in topic areas related to employment such as labor market information, career assessment tools and techniques, etc.

*Specifically for Youth:*

1. Research and analyze data on high school graduation rates for individuals with disabilities. Analyze such factors as geography, urban/suburban/rural, demographic variables, and type of disability. Identify the factors that are correlated with higher and lower graduation rates.
2. Identify evidence-based practices and models and new innovative community strategies that increase postsecondary education and employment for youth and young adults and make recommendations on how to expand those strategies through the blending and/or redirection of existing resources.
3. Foster the initiation of work experiences and work internships for youth and young adults with disabilities in conjunction with the New Jersey Business Leadership Network, educators, and other community-based organizations.

4. Conduct a statewide education and awareness campaign targeted to education professionals and parents aimed at reinforcing “ability” and “independence” and raising work expectations, as well as focusing on the need for career/work exploration and job skill education to be part of the early education of youth and young adults.

**Strategic Goal #5: Offer supports for working to people with disabilities.**

*Desired Outcomes:*

- Increase awareness and availability of benefits information and support services to people with disabilities, their families, and direct service professionals.
- Increase the number of people who take advantage of WorkAbility (New Jersey’s Medicaid Buy-in program) benefits.
- Increase awareness and availability of support services, such as transportation and housing information and services.
- Increase the retention and career advancement of individuals with disabilities.

*Key Strategic Activities:*

1. Conduct a more rigorous and extensive education and outreach campaign to people with disabilities, their families and caregivers, and service delivery organizations about the New Jersey WorkAbility program.
2. Promote, improve, and maintain information about benefits, benefits planning, and the availability of support programs in New Jersey.
  - a. Promote and increase use of [www.njfindaride.org](http://www.njfindaride.org), which provides individuals with disabilities access to information about who provides rides in their area and permits transportation service providers to register their services in a local, county, or statewide category. Improve the site based on an evaluation of its use, relevance, and usability to consumers.
  - b. Promote and increase use of [www.njdb101.org](http://www.njdb101.org), a benefits planning tool that helps individuals see how their benefits might change if they take a job. Improve the site based on an evaluation of its use, relevance, and usability to consumers.
3. Work with the Governor’s Council on Access and Mobility to make recommendations on how to prioritize and initiate transportation improvement strategies through the blending and/or redirection of existing resources or the leveraging of new resources.
4. Continue to examine and resolve issues related to housing that affect the ability of people with disabilities to secure and maintain competitive employment, through the state’s inter-departmental housing committee and special-needs housing committee.
5. Research currently available material on workplace disability etiquette training and develop an educational campaign to foster and promote the inclusion of disability etiquette training in corporate employee orientation sessions, manager and supervisory training, and as part of the curricula of public professional development schools in New Jersey such as business schools.
6. Develop and implement a strategy to increase the current funding and use of personal support services for individuals with disabilities who are working.

7. Develop and implement strategies to promote and support assistive technology and alternative communications systems for workplace accommodations.
8. Develop and implement strategies that promote, support, and pilot flexible work options that allow individuals with disabilities to remain on the job.

**Strategic Goal #6: Increase the state’s leadership, management, and coordination efforts in the employment of people with disabilities.**

*Desired Outcomes:*

- Decrease fragmentation and increase service and resource coordination among government agencies and service providers across the state.
- Reduce state policy and practice barriers to employment for people with disabilities.
- Increase the public perception of New Jersey as a leading employer that values diversity and inclusion, including but not limited to the inclusion of people with disabilities.
- Increase the number of people with disabilities who are hired and sustain employment in both New Jersey state government as well as its vendors and contractors.
- Increase the provision of reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities who are state employees or applicants for state employment.

*Key Strategic Activities:*

1. Actively encourage, support, and reinforce the coordination, blending of existing resources, and the leveraging of new resources through public/private partnerships at all levels of state government as a means to maximize employment opportunities and services for individuals with disabilities.
  - a. Continue and build on existing interagency agreements and Memoranda of Understanding among state agencies providing services to ensure more seamless services and support to individuals with disabilities.
  - b. Identify and address gaps in state policies and programs in order to promote employment as a desirable outcome.
  - c. Analyze state policies and practices and recommend/make changes when conflicting policies create documented barriers to employment for people with disabilities.
  - d. Encourage and develop incentives to state agencies and community-based organizations to work collaboratively and leverage and blend resources and funding.
2. Establish the State of New Jersey as a model employer for people with disabilities.
  - a. Establish a “Model Employer Steering Team” to oversee the planning and implementation of activities in this area.
  - b. Research promising practices conducted by other states in the area of state employment and people with disabilities.
  - c. Develop a strategic plan outlining goals, actions, and timeframes to be undertaken by state government to implement best practices for the hiring, retention, and advancement of people with disabilities as employees in state government.

**Strategic Goal #7: Strengthen disability and employment research, evaluation, performance measurement, data collection, and data analysis.**

*Desired Outcomes:*

- Increase coordination of existing state data collection systems, analysts, and databases.
- Improve quantitative and qualitative data collection methods.
- Better analysis and tracking of employment and program outcomes, including utilization rates and costs.
- Increase awareness of employment related outcomes for people with disabilities among policymakers, lawmakers, and the general public.
- More comprehensive and available data on programs and outcomes that can shape the development of, and financial support for, more effective services and supports.
- Increase disability, workforce, and labor market research and evaluation efforts.
- Realign public funding to programs and services that have demonstrated, through monitoring and evaluation, measurable and evidence-based results in attaining competitive employment for individuals with disabilities.
- Increase the public reporting of disability and employment goals and progress.

*Key Strategic Activities:*

1. Establish a state-led “Research and Data Team” that will oversee the planning and implementation of activities in this area, and that will coordinate the design, development, and dissemination of the state’s *DiscoverAbility* performance dashboard and public reports.
  - a. Coordinate data collection and tracking across Human Services, Labor, Health and Senior Services, Transportation, New Jersey Transit, and Education.
  - b. Coordinate data analysis activities and resources in and among state agencies.
  - c. Develop a set of common outcome measures between state agencies to evaluate the effectiveness of employment services and supports provided through offices and divisions of the Departments of Labor, Human Services, Health and Senior Services, Transportation, New Jersey Transit, and Education.
  - d. Establish a process for the external evaluation of one or more of the state’s major employment services and programs for people with disabilities currently operating in New Jersey.
2. Produce an annual New Jersey *DiscoverAbility* Report Card on the progress of plan goals and activities that is available in multiple formats and widely distributed.
3. Convene a research and evaluation roundtable, involving generic and disability-specific, New Jersey-based researchers and practitioners, to provide advice and consultation to the state on priority research and evaluation goals and activities.

The required logic models that correspond to the above goals and activities are included in Appendix D. These logic models depict the resources, activities, and outcomes of the strategic plan in a brief, visual, and linear display.



## Work Plan

### State Leadership Structure, Oversight, and Accountability

New Jersey's strategic planning process was a collaborative effort with many state agencies, community-based organizations, business groups, and people with disabilities and their families engaged in the activities. It is important to New Jersey, therefore, that the state continues this collaborative engagement as part of the plan implementation process.

As such, New Jersey's Disability Issues Committee, which is an existing permanent committee of the State Employment and Training Commission, will be the primary body responsible for overseeing and directing the implementation of the strategic plan. SETC functions as the Governor appointed and designated workforce development advisory group in the state.

The central activities of the Disability Issues Committee, in relationship to the plan oversight responsibilities, will include:

- Providing general direction and oversight to the implementation of the State of New Jersey's Comprehensive Employment Systems strategic plan (*DiscoverAbility NJ*) in general, and its Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) specifically;
- Actively presenting and promoting the *DiscoverAbility NJ* plan within state government and externally to the community;
- Prioritizing plan implementation activities;
- Creating partnerships and collaborations necessary to move strategic activities forward;
- Regularly tracking progress toward goals, and overseeing the regular dissemination of information to the public about the plan's progress and its results;
- Generating support for the plan from government, private philanthropy, the community, and business partners; and
- Forming smaller topical work groups designated in the plan to implement specific plan strategic activities.

To meet the needs of the *DiscoverAbility NJ* plan, the Disability Issues Committee as currently constituted will be reorganized and expanded. Reorganization activities will include:

- Changing the chairmanship of the committee to a co-chair arrangement, with the co-chairs being external to state government. At least one co-chair will be a person with a disability and the Comprehensive Employment Systems Project Officer must sit on the Disability Issues Committee.
- Expanding the membership to include representatives from key state agencies and operational divisions including the New Jersey Department of Human Services (including but not limited to the Division of Disability Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities, the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Division for the Deaf, and the Division of Mental Health Services), the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the Department of Community Affairs, the

Department of Personnel, New Jersey Transit, and/or the Governor's Council on Access and Mobility.

- Expanding the membership to include more people with disabilities and/or their family members as well as community-based and nonprofit organizations providing employment-related services to people with disabilities.
- Expanding the membership to including at least one representative from the New Jersey Business Leadership Network, as well as other representatives of the business community (small and large) and organized labor.
- Expanding the membership to include representatives from local organizations such as One-Stop Career Centers and county offices for the disabled.
- Expanding the membership to achieve stronger ethnic and racial diversity.

In addition to this state-level function, every local Workforce Investment Board in New Jersey will have a Disability Issues Committee whose focus will be on increasing employment for individuals with disabilities within their service areas. The state-level committee will provide assistance to the local boards in forming and operating their local disability issues committees.

While the state-level Disability Issues Committee will provide overall direction for the implementation of the *DiscoverAbility NJ* plan, responsibility for the daily management of activities will be with the New Jersey Department of Human Services, specifically, the Division of Disability Services (DDS). DDS currently serves as the state-designated lead agency and grant manager for the state's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant.

In addition to the above, New Jersey will establish an executive branch *DiscoverAbility NJ* Work Group. The work group will be responsible for:

- Generating support and commitment for the plan within state government through proactive leadership, education, and awareness activities.
- Overseeing plan implementation activities specific to state agencies, monitoring their progress, and reporting on progress to the Governor's Office and other high-level state leadership.
- Driving and reinforcing systems change throughout state government agencies.
- Fostering new and sustaining existing collaborations and partnerships among state agencies as necessary to achieve the goals of the plan.
- Acting as a knowledge and information exchange as it pertains to any and all disability and employment-related activities taking place within state government.
- Coordinating all data and research activities related to the implementation of the plan.

## Sustainability Efforts

The targeted goal areas defined in this plan represent long-term changes in policy, programming, and practices. Ultimately, its success will be measured by the extent to which the strategic activities are implemented, the outcomes successful, and long-term systems reform and change realized. Overall, it is most critical that activities are sustained beyond the period of funding provided by the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid. The State of New Jersey understands that an orientation toward sustainability needs to begin early in

the implementation of this plan, and that sustainability includes, but goes beyond, issues of funding.

To this end, the State of New Jersey will pursue several approaches to build sustainability into the implementation of its Plan including:

**Developing and maintaining broad-based support for the plan and regularly engaging leaders over the long term across a wide variety of systems.** It is the state's intent to establish a representative, engaged, and broad-based *DiscoverAbility NJ* leadership group through the Disabilities Issues Committee whose responsibility, among others, is to support, promote, and move the strategic plan's goals and activities forward. Committee members will be asked to be champions and advocates for the plan's success. As such, the Disability Issues Committee will play an important role in moving the plan and its activities forward. Where possible and practical, the Disabilities Issues Committee will engage other stakeholders by convening ad hoc work groups and short-term project teams to carry out additional planning and/or coordination of specific strategic activities.

**Increasing and supporting collaborations and partnerships in order to spur innovation and better leverage public and private resources and funding.** The state recognizes the importance of increasing partnerships and collaborations among and across generic and disability-specific systems that provide employment or employment support services. These partnerships are important not only in building consensus toward systems change, but also in being able to leverage private as well as other public resources and funding across systems and programs.

**Reinforcing systems change through change management strategies and the development of new policies, rules, and practices.** Successful change must be continuously reinforced. The state recognizes that this can take many forms. Change reinforcement activities that will be implemented may include increasing education and regularly communicating both internally and externally about the change, establishing concrete expectations of performance and managing against those measures, and putting in place new policies and practices that reflect new directions. The executive branch *DiscoverAbility NJ* Work Group will play a key role in driving and reinforcing systems change.

**Regularly communicating information about the plan's progress and its results.** The state recognizes the value and importance of promoting and building on success by publicly sharing the results of its activities and outcomes. Increasing public awareness about the difficulties and challenges faced by people with disabilities in obtaining and maintaining competitive employment is an important factor in raising public interest and support for the plan's activities.

## **Plan Evaluation and Outcome Tracking**

The State of New Jersey understands the importance of documenting results and assessing the progress of its efforts. As such, the state will establish a process to routinely track progress using available Census data, as well as administrative data programs and systems submitted by key partners, including the New Jersey Departments of Human Services, Labor and Workforce

Development, Education, Health and Senior Services, and Transportation, and New Jersey Transit. The state recognizes that there is currently no comprehensive database that would allow it to integrate the tracking of services and activities across programs. Appendix G provides preliminary information regarding data items currently collected in the different programs, but these databases are not integrated at this time.

For this plan, the state will use, at a minimum, the following metrics as most critical to tracking progress and evaluating its performance under this plan (see Table 4). The state will begin its tracking using a few key data sources, and then look to expand and/or change these sources over time. All data will include baseline data and will be tracked over time (i.e., over a period of years).

**Table 4. Strategic Plan Performance Measures**

<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Area of Focus</b>
Labor force participation of adults with disabilities vs. those without disabilities	American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau	Employment
Poverty status of working-age adults with disabilities vs. those without disabilities	American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau	Economic Well Being
Median household income of working-age adults with disabilities vs. those without disabilities	American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau	Economic Well Being
Educational attainment of working-age adults with disabilities vs. those without disabilities	American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau	Economic Self-Sufficiency
Employment rate of people with disabilities and number of people employed in targeted “to-work” programs receiving services in those programs  Earned income/wage at placement of people with disabilities who entered employment after receiving employment-related services	LWD (program data): -DVRS Database -ES and WIA/OSOS Database - Unemployment Insurance Wage Records DHS (program data): -CBVI Database -MHS Database - DDD Database Department of Education follow-up surveys	Services to Employment
Employment of people with disabilities who are employed full time/part time and receiving support services	DHS (program data) - New Jersey WorkAbility Database - PASP Database	Use of Support Services by Employed Persons with Disabilities

Employment of people with disabilities in state government - Employed in state government with a disability	New Jersey EEO Data (self reported) through the New Jersey Department of Personnel	Public Employment in New Jersey
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To regularly communicate progress, the State of New Jersey will produce and disseminate through a state website on a quarterly basis a New Jersey *DiscoverAbility* Employment and Disability Dashboard Report. This report will include information on the employment of people with disabilities in New Jersey as well as data on particular populations of people with disabilities who are enrolled in select employment-related programs, such as those outlined in the plan's environmental scan. The report will be developed under the aegis of the Disabilities Issues Committee and will be compiled through the cooperation of key state agency representatives — through the *DiscoverAbility NJ* Work Group — who will be responsible for providing and verifying all state agency data included in the report. The report will not only include current data, but will look to identify and report on trends over time. As such, the report will cover the years 2002-2007 to start, and then build from there.

In addition to reporting data related to broad, high-level outcomes, the State of New Jersey will also look to evaluate the progress of its specific activities. Evaluation information will be widely disseminated to program funders and operators, consumers and their families, interest groups, businesses, and the general public. This dissemination will build on the methods used to increase public understanding and awareness of the employment-related assets of individuals with disabilities. The state will use both high-tech and low-tech means for communicating.

The state will revisit this plan as part of its monitoring and evaluation process and will update this plan as needed. The *DiscoverAbility* plan will be a living document.

Outlined in Table 5 is an overview of possible performance measures to be tracked by each of the plan's goal areas:

**Table 5. Proposed Evaluation of Activities by Plan Goal Areas**

Goal	Possible Collection Methods	Types of Performance Measures
<b>Strategic Goal #1: Increase public understanding and awareness of the employment-related assets of individuals with disabilities and their ability to work.</b>	Annual public survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- # of people more knowledgeable about the employment of people with disabilities</li> <li>- Media citations/print and web citations about the effort</li> <li>- Change in knowledge, attitude, or behavior of the public toward the employment of people with disabilities</li> </ul>

<p><b>Strategic Goal #2: Improve information and communication to, about, and for people with disabilities.</b></p>	<p>Tracking of use of new CES website; or others such as njfindaride.org; njdb101.org</p> <p>Tracking of usage of toll-free telephone numbers; track types of information/assistance requested</p> <p>Website feedback surveys Annual public survey</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Website developed</li> <li>- # of website visitors</li> <li>- # and type of information downloaded</li> <li>- Level of knowledge about comprehensive employment systems activities and work</li> <li>- Satisfaction with comprehensive employment systems materials, website format, delivery of products</li> <li>- Numbers of toll-free calls received; tracking of purpose of calls</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategic Goal #3: Engage, educate, and assist the employer community</b></p>	<p>Annual employer survey, listening sessions, focus groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase in employer participation and satisfaction</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategic Goal #4: Provide people with disabilities with better preparation for work and offer more effective connections to jobs.</b></p>	<p>State agency administrative (program) databases</p> <p>U.S. Census</p> <p>Satisfaction surveys, listening sessions, focus groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase in program job placement, employment rate, wage at placement rate, # of people with disabilities with high school education and higher</li> <li>- Satisfaction with the program benefits and service delivery</li> <li>- Focus groups of community providers, consumers, and families</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategic Goal #5: Offer supports for working to people with disabilities.</b></p>	<p>Track utilization of programs that provide supports such as personal assistance, transportation, health care coverage, housing for persons with disabilities (e.g., PASP, WorkAbility, AccessLink databases)</p> <p>Satisfaction surveys, listening sessions, focus groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase in # of people in the programs</li> <li>- Satisfaction with the program benefits and service delivery</li> </ul>

<p><b>Strategic Goal #6: Increase the state’s leadership, management, and coordination efforts in the employment of people with disabilities.</b></p>	<p>Track state human resource data by disability State EEO data, but self-reported</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase in the number of new hires with disabilities employed in state government</li> <li>- # of targeted recruitment efforts</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategic Goal #7: Strengthen disability and employment research, evaluation, performance measurement, data collection, and data analysis.</b></p>	<p>Team meeting minutes and reports Research roundtable proceedings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quarterly performance dashboard developed and disseminated with existing data</li> <li>- Annual <i>DiscoverAbility</i> report card developed and distributed</li> <li>- # of external program evaluations conducted</li> </ul>

## Appendix A. Strategic Plan State Leadership Council

Honorable Jennifer Velez, Commissioner  
New Jersey Department of Human Services

James Smith, Deputy Commissioner  
New Jersey Department of Human Services

Ann Kohler, Deputy Commissioner  
New Jersey Department of Human Services

William A. B. Ditto  
Director, Division of Disability Services  
New Jersey Department of Human Services

Diane Zompa  
Chief of Staff  
New Jersey Department of Human Services

Jeannette Page-Hawkins  
Director, Division of Family Development  
New Jersey Department of Human Services

Javier Robles (CES Project Director)  
Deputy Director, Division of Disability  
Services  
New Jersey Department of Human Services

Cynthia Mapp  
Program Manager  
Division of Disability Services  
New Jersey Department of Human Services

Kevin Martone  
Director, Division of Mental Health Services  
New Jersey Department of Human Services

Vito J. DeSantis  
Executive Director, Commission for the  
Blind and Visually Impaired  
New Jersey Department of Human Services

John R. Guhl  
Director, Division of Medical Assistance  
and Health Services  
New Jersey Department of Human Services

Honorable David J. Socolow, Commissioner  
New Jersey Department of Labor and  
Workforce Development

Lois Cuccinello  
Assistant Commissioner, Disability Services  
New Jersey Department of Labor and  
Workforce Development

Thomas Jennings  
Director, Division of Vocational  
Rehabilitation  
New Jersey Department of Labor and  
Workforce Development

Henry Plotkin  
Executive Director  
New Jersey State Employment and Training  
Commission

Barbara Gantwerk  
Acting Assistant Commissioner, Division of  
Student Services  
New Jersey Department of Education

Jen Godoski  
Chief of Staff  
New Jersey Department of Transportation

Norm Smith, Chair  
State Independent Living Council

Alison Lozano, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
New Jersey Council on Developmental  
Disabilities



Julie Kashen  
Deputy Policy Director  
Office of the Governor

Scott Elliott, Executive Director  
Heightened Independence and Progress

Leslie Summiel  
Director, Division of Local Human  
Resource Management  
New Jersey Department of Personnel

Rich Andreski  
New Jersey Transit

## Appendix B. Strategic Plan Community Leadership Council

John Sinzer, Vice President  
New Jersey Chamber of Commerce

Dana Egreczky, Vice President, Workforce  
Development  
New Jersey Chamber of Commerce

Christopher Emigholz  
Director, Education Policy  
New Jersey Business and Industry  
Association

Laurel Brennan, Secretary/Treasurer  
New Jersey State AFL-CIO

Alice Hunnicutt  
Transition from School to Adult Life  
SPAN

Sarah Mitchell, Executive Director  
New Jersey Protection and Advocacy

Barbara Geiger-Parker, Executive Director  
Brain Injury Association of New Jersey

Deborah Spitalnik, Director  
The Elizabeth M. Boggs Centers on  
Developmental Disabilities  
University of Medicine and Dentistry of  
New Jersey

Elaine Katz  
Vice President for Grant Programs and  
Special Initiatives  
The Henry H. Kessler Foundation

Harold Aguilar  
Associate Information Specialist  
Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation

Carolyn Beauchamp, Executive Director  
Mental Health Association of New Jersey

Harold B. Garwin, Esq.  
President/Executive Director  
Community Health Law Project

Thomas Baffuto  
Executive Director  
ARC of New Jersey

Debbie Hehir, PASP Coordinator  
Middlesex County Office of the Disabled

John Sobecki  
New Jersey Institute of Technology  
Continuing Professional Education

Kim Todd  
Chief Executive Officer  
New Jersey Association of Community  
Providers

Maureen Walliser, President  
Hudson Community Enterprises

Nicholas Gacos  
Colorado Café Associates

Sherlock Washington  
SW Unlimited

Scott Simkins  
Williamstown, NJ

Lydia Fecteau  
Egg Harbor City, NJ

Charles Newman  
Union County, Elizabeth, NJ

Mark Malone, Director  
Somerset County Office for the Disabled

Daniel Santo Pietro, Executive Director  
Hispanic Directors Association

Martin Glass  
Wakefern Food Corporation

Richard Martemucci  
Director, Employee Relations  
Johnson & Johnson

Kate Blisard  
Titusville, NJ

Linda Meyer, Executive Director  
COSAC

Kevin Liebke  
Legal Services of New Jersey

Dante Rieti, Director  
Cumberland/Salem Workforce Investment  
Board

Kevin Haogland  
Surrogate's Office, Middlesex County

Larry Nespoli, Executive Director  
New Jersey Community College Association

## **Appendix C. Strategic Plan State Project Steering Team**

### **Governor's Office**

Julie Kashen, Deputy Policy Director

### **New Jersey Department of Human Services**

Diane Zompa, Chief of Staff

Missy Balmir, Deputy Chief of Staff

William A. B. Ditto, Director, Division of Disability Services

Javier Robles, Deputy Director, Division of Disability Services and CES Project Director

### **New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development**

Lois Cuccinello, Assistant Commissioner

Brian Fitzgibbons, Deputy Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

### **New Jersey Department of Community Affairs**

Debbie Heinz

### **New Jersey Department of Education**

Barbara Gantwerk, Assistant Commissioner

### **Commission on Higher Education**

Jane Oates, Director

Betsi Garlatti, Deputy Director

### **State Employment and Training Commission**

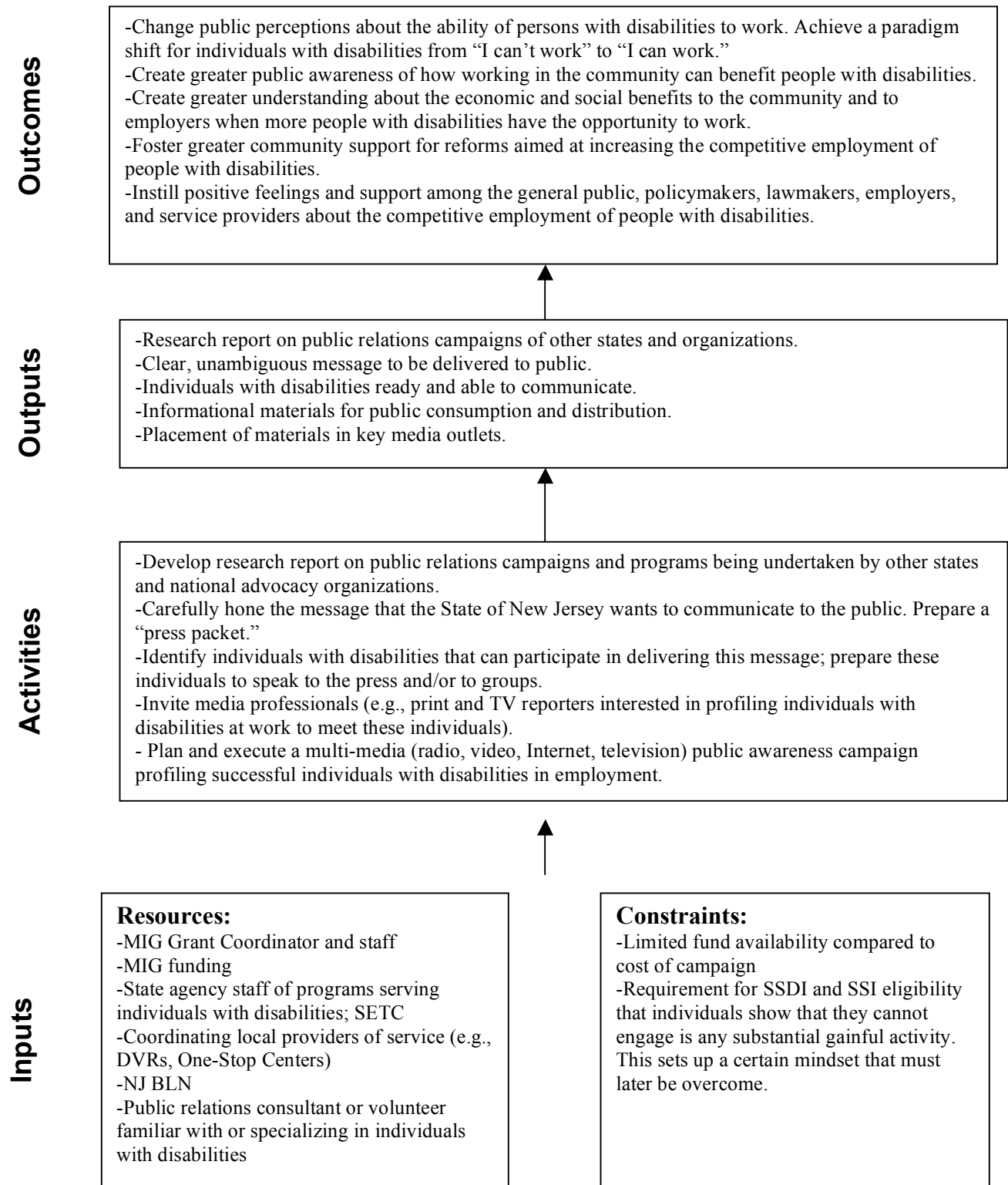
Henry Plotkin, Executive Director

### **New Jersey Transit**

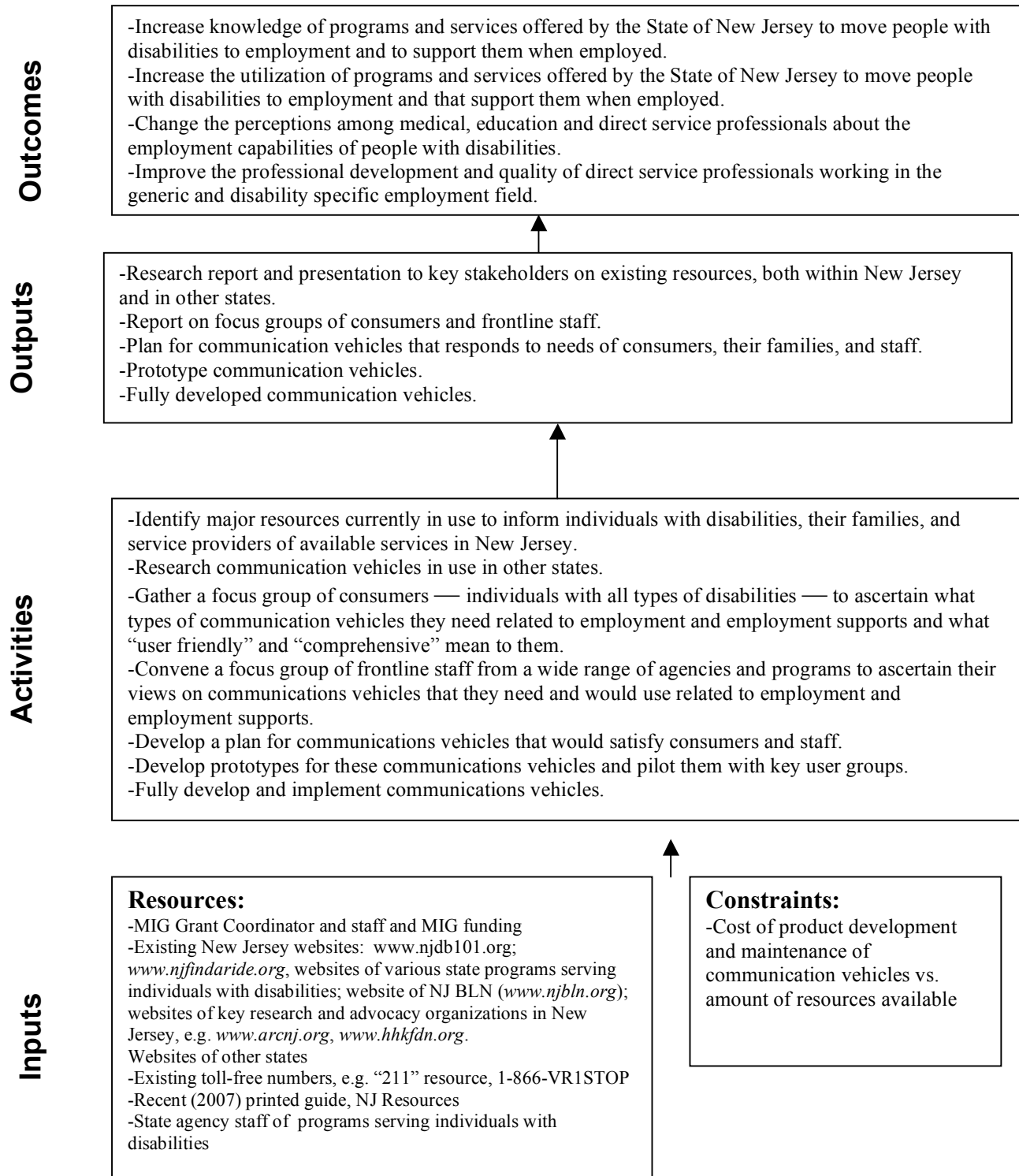
Alma Scott-Buczak

## **Appendix D. Logic Models**

**Strategic Goal # 1: Increase public understanding and awareness of the employment-related assets of individuals with disabilities and their ability to work**



**Strategic Goal #2: Improve information and communication to, about, and for people with disabilities**



**Strategic Goal #3: Engage, educate, and assist the employer community**

**Outcomes**

- Reduce employer resistance to hiring individuals with disabilities.
- Increase the number of employers who hire people with disabilities.
- Improve employer and hiring manager knowledge about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities.
- Improve the level of technical support and information available to employers on issues related to individuals with disabilities.



**Outputs**

- Report on best practices for hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities
- Profile of successful relationships between community-based service providers and employers.
- List of available resources for disability etiquette training.
- Materials for employers that address major issues of the business community
- Fully developed speakers bureau of employers with the NJBLN
- Multi-media education and awareness campaign targeted to employers
- Governor’s economic growth plan that includes individuals with disabilities
- More fully utilized NJBLN job board with more employer postings and more resume of individuals with disabilities.



**Activities**

- Identify best practices for employers hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities, both within New Jersey and in other places
- Profile successful relationships between community-based service providers and employers that have led to successful employment and retention of individuals with disabilities
- Identify resources for disability etiquette training to for co-workers, supervisors, managers
- Develop materials that address major issues that business community has, e.g. safety, legal issues, accommodation issues, adaptive technology
- Work with the NJ BLN to identify businesses that are willing to be part of a speakers’ bureau
- Use all of the above to develop and launch a multi-media education and awareness campaign targeted to employers
- Work with Governor’s Office of Economic Growth to make sure that individuals with disabilities are included in the Governor’s plans.
- Working with the NJBLN, more fully populate and utilize the national job board for individuals with disabilities.
  - Promote posting of jobs by employers
  - Promote posting of resumes by individuals and by through organizations that work with individuals with disabilities.



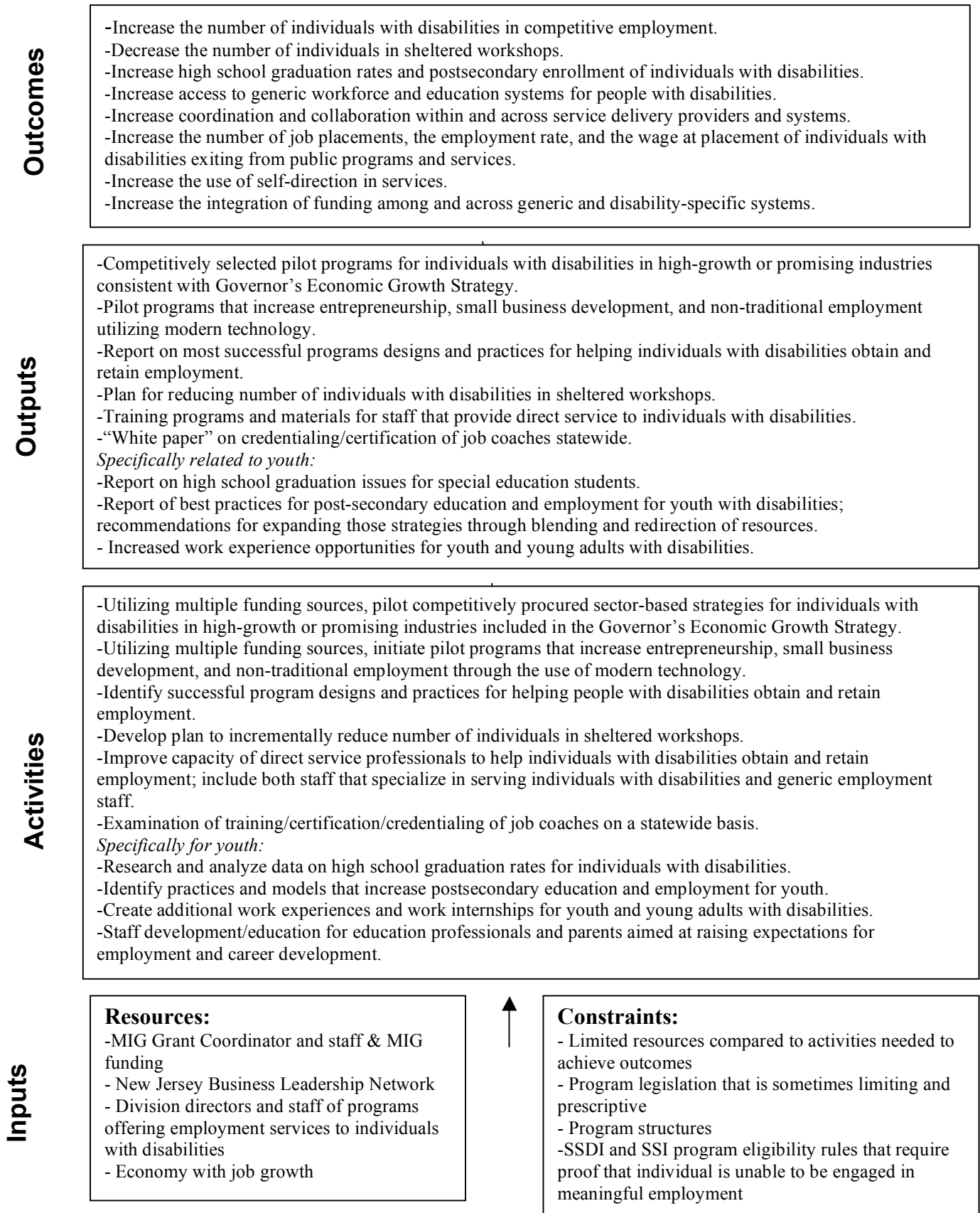
**Inputs**

- Resources:**
- MIG Grant Coordinator and staff & MIG funding
  - Business Leadership Network and its website: [www.njbln.org](http://www.njbln.org)
  - National job board for individuals with disabilities, [www.accessibleemployment.org](http://www.accessibleemployment.org)
  - Division directors and staff of programs serving individuals with disabilities

- Constraints:**
- Limited resources compared to activities needed to achieve outcomes; program structures



**Strategic Goal #4: Provide individuals with disabilities with better preparation for work and offer more effective connections to jobs**



**Strategic Goal #5: Offer supports for working to people with disabilities**

**Outcomes**

- Increase awareness and availability of benefits information and support services to people with disabilities, their families, and direct service professionals.
- Increase the number of people who take advantage of WorkAbility (NJ’s Medicaid Buy-in program) benefits.
- Increase awareness and availability of support services, such as transportation and housing information and services.
- Increase the retention and career advancement of individuals with disabilities.



**Outputs**

- Streamlined informational websites related to employment supports for individuals with disabilities
- Evaluation of use and usage issues related to *www.njfindaride.org*.
- New strategies for communicating with SSDI and SSI recipients related to supports for working.
- New strategies for communicating with disabled individuals, their families, and service providers related to supports for working.
- Prioritized recommendations from the work of the Governor’s Council on Access and Mobility.
- Plan for implementing priority areas from the Governor’s Council on Access and Mobility, with multiple funding sources.
- Report on effect of housing issues on employment for individuals with disabilities.
- Identification of successful retention and career advancement strategies for individuals with disabilities.
- Promotion of successful retention and career advancement strategies with employers, including relevant training and materials.
- Pilot programs and strategies pertaining to flexible work options for individuals with disabilities.



**Activities**

- Review existing websites and information to identify areas of overlap; streamline websites.
- Evaluate use, relevance and usability of *www.njfindaride.org*. Invest in more fully populating website with available transportation sources.
- Develop additional education and outreach strategies to inform SSDI and SSI beneficiaries of available benefits while working.
- Promote use of websites and other information about supports with disabled individuals, their families, and service providers.
- Examine the issues related to housing and competitive employment for individuals with disabilities, using existing state inter-departmental committees on housing.
- Research successful retention and career advancement strategies for individuals with disabilities in the workforce.
- Develop, pilot, and support strategies that allow flexible work options.

**Inputs**

**Resources:**

- MIG Grant Coordinator, staff & funding
- WorkAbility, NJ Medicaid Buy-in Program
- Benefits planning through *www.njwins.org*, in English and Spanish
- Benefits to work calculator, *www.njdb101.org*
- Information resource on accessible transportation options, *www.njfindaride.org*
- Governor’s Council on Access and Mobility
- State inter-departmental housing committee and DHS Special Needs Housing Committee
- Division directors and staff of programs offering support services to individuals with disabilities



**Constraints:**

- Limited resources compared to activities needed to achieve outcomes;
- Lack of coordination of resources

**Strategic Goal #6: Increase the state’s leadership, management, and coordination efforts in the employment of people with disabilities**

**Outcomes**

- Decrease fragmentation and increase service and resource coordination among government agencies and service providers across the state.
- Reduce state policy and practice barriers to employment for people with disabilities.
- Increase the public perception of New Jersey as a leading employer that values diversity and inclusion, including people with disabilities.
- Increase the number of people with disabilities who are hired and sustain employment in both New Jersey state government and State vendors and contractors.
- Increase the provision of reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities who are State employees or applicants for State employment.

**Outputs**

- New or revised interagency agreements or Memoranda of Understanding that provide for greater information sharing and coordination at both the management and service staff levels.
- New state policies that address gaps in service that work against employment as an outcome for individuals with disabilities.
- Incentives for service providers to work together and blend funding.
- Establishment of interagency steering team to oversee “State as Model Employer” initiative.
- Report on other states’ efforts to establish their state government as a model employer for individuals with disabilities.
- Strategic plan for New Jersey state government to become a model employer for persons with disabilities.

**Activities**

- Build on existing interagency agreements and Memoranda of Understanding among State agencies providing services to ensure more seamless services and support to individuals with disabilities.
- Identify and address gaps in state policies and programs in order to promote employment as a desirable outcome.
- Analyze state policies and practices and recommend/make changes when conflicting policies create documented barriers to employment for people with disabilities.
- Encourage and develop incentives to state agencies and community-based service providers to work collaboratively and leverage and blend resources and funding.
- Establish the State of New Jersey as a model employer for people with disabilities by:
  - Forming a “Model Employer Steering Team” to oversee the planning and implementation of activities in this area.
  - Researching promising practices conducted by other states that have made their state governments model employers people with disabilities.
  - Develop a strategic plan outlining goals, actions and timeframes to be undertaken by New Jersey state government to implement best practices for the hiring, retention, and advancement of people with disabilities as employees in state government.

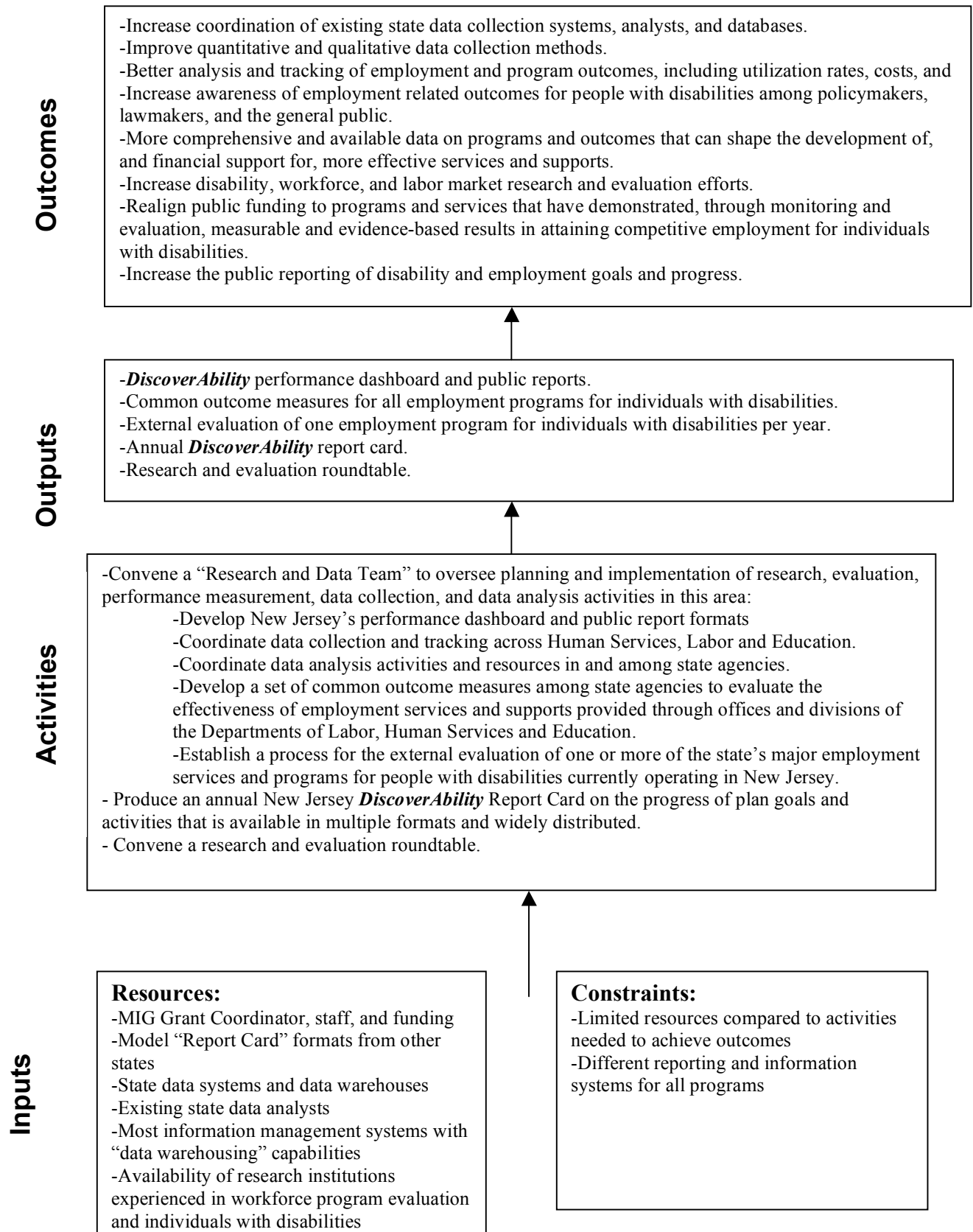
**Inputs**

- Resources:**
- MIG Grant Coordinator, staff, and funding
  - Other states that have established state government as a model employer for individuals with disabilities
  - Existing interagency agreements between DVRS, DDD, and CBVI, and between DVRS, CBVI, and Department of Education (Special Education)

**Constraints:**

- Limited resources compared to activities needed to achieve outcomes
- Legislation and federal/state program rules for program expenditures and eligibility
- Siloed federal program performance measures
- Limited or no additional state resources available

**Strategic Goal #7: Strengthen disability and employment research, evaluation, performance measurement, data collection, and data analysis**



## Appendix E. Summary of Community Input Sessions

The following chart provides information on the listening sessions that were held to solicit input from individuals with disabilities and their families; community providers, employers, and state community leaders. Individuals were not required to register for these sessions and attendance was not taken. Although each session was targeted to a particular disability group, individuals were not asked to disclose their particular disabilities. They were encouraged to speak freely and honestly.

<b>Date (2007)</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Target Group</b>	<b># of Attendees</b>
June 3	Somerset Holiday Inn (Central New Jersey)	Youth with disabilities and their parents	35-40
July 12	Heldrich Center (Central New Jersey)	Community leaders	50
July 31	Mental Health Association of New Jersey (Northern New Jersey)	Individuals with mental health disabilities	25-30
August 21	Camden County One-Stop Career Center (Southern New Jersey)	Individuals with physical disabilities	12-15
August 22	Teleconference (12:30-1:30 p.m.)	Youth with disabilities, their parents, and community service providers	Unknown
August 22	Teleconference (6-7 p.m.)	Adults with disabilities	Unknown
August 23	Senior Center, Clifton (Northern New Jersey)	Individuals with sensory, developmental, and physical disabilities	25-30
September 5	Teleconference (12:30-1:30 p.m.)	Deaf and hard-of-hearing adults, caregivers, and service providers (adaptive technology available)	Unknown
September 11	Teleconference (12:30-1:30 p.m.)	Spanish-speaking individuals with disabilities	Unknown
September 14	Ewing (Central New Jersey)	Community service providers who serve people with developmental and physical disabilities	5
September 19	Jamesburg (Central New Jersey)	Employers	12-15
October 17	DAWN Center for Independent Living (Northern New Jersey)	Individuals with developmental disabilities	35-40

## Appendix F: Proposed Timeframe of Strategic Goals and Actions

Tasks	Year 2				Year 3			
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>Goal 1: Increase public understanding and awareness of the employment-related assets of individuals with disabilities and their ability to work</b>								
1.1 Identify existing public relations campaigns								
1.2 Develop public awareness campaign								
1.3 Conduct campaign								
<b>Goal 2: Improve information and communication to, about, and for people with disabilities</b>								
2.1 Develop and maintain information about existing programs								
2.2 Create and maintain a single website								
2.3 Establish a non-emergency call center to provide information								
2.4 Expand education and communication efforts								
<b>Goal 3: Engage, educate, and assist the employer community</b>								
3.1 Develop and launch a multimedia campaign to employers								
3.2 Develop an information site for employers								
3.3 Research promising demand-side activities and practices								
<b>Goal 4: Provide people with disabilities better preparation for work and offer more effective connections to jobs</b>								
4.1 Align disability-specific employment and training resources and program with Governor's economic growth strategy								
4.2 Develop a plan to incorporate self-advocacy and person-centered planning into existing service delivery programs								



Tasks	Year 2				Year 3			
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
5.4 Examine and resolve issues related to housing								
5.5 Research existing material on workplace disability etiquette training and develop an education campaign to foster use in business								
5.6 Develop and implement a strategy to increase the current funding and use of personal support services								
5.7 Develop and implement strategies to promote and support assistive technology and alternative communications systems for workplace accommodations								
5.7 Develop and implement strategies to promote and support flexible work options								
<b>Goal 6: Increase the state's leadership, management, and coordination efforts in the employment of people with disabilities</b>								
6.1 Actively encourage, support, and reinforce the coordination, blending, and leveraging of existing resources								
6.2 Establish the State of New Jersey as a model employer for people with disabilities								
<b>Goal 7: Strengthen disability and employment research, evaluation, performance measurement, data collection and data analysis</b>								
7.1 Establish a state-led "Research and Data Team" to oversee planning and activities in this area								
7.2 Produce an annual New Jersey DiscoverAbility report card on the progress of plan goals and activities								
7.3 Convene a research and evaluation roundtable to provide advice and consultation to New Jersey on priority research and evaluation goals and activities								

**NOTE: Year 1 Activities were devoted to developing the Strategic Plan.**



## Appendix G: Data Items and Outcome Measures, Major Employment-Related Programs for Individuals with Disabilities in New Jersey

	DHS			DLWD					DOE
	DDD	DMHS	CBVI	DVRS	WIA/ES	Adult Lit	WDP	WFNJ	IDEA
<b>Demographic Information</b>									
Gender	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Date of Birth	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Race	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ethnicity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Zip Code	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	School District
<b>Disability Status</b>					yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	
Type of Disability		✓	✓	✓					✓
Severity of Disability			✓	✓					✓
Unique Client ID	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Program Enrollment Date	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Service/Activity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Program Exit Date	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Program Termination	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Outcomes</b>									
Employment Outcome		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Educational Outcome					✓	✓		✓	✓

DHS = New Jersey Department of Human Services  
 DLWD = New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development  
 DDD= Division of Developmental Disabilities  
 DMHS = Division of Mental Health Services  
 CBVI = Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired  
 DVRS = Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services  
 WIA/ES = Workforce Investment Act/Employment Service  
 WDP = Workforce Development Partnership Program (state-funded)  
 WFNJ = WorkFirst New Jersey (welfare programs)  
 IDEA = Individuals with Disabilities Education Act  
 DOE = New Jersey Department of Education