

Nebraska Supported Employment Summit- Action Plan



Introduction:

On September 20, 2023, the multiple agencies named above brought people together from across Nebraska to host a Supported Employment Summit. The overarching theme of the Summit was focused on: *Working Together to Change the Way Nebraska Does Supported Employment*. The primary goal of the Summit was to **Increase Employment Opportunities and Outcomes for Nebraskans Who Can Benefit from Supported Employment**.

Lieutenant Governor Jim Kelly welcomed everyone to the Summit and stressed his and the Governor's support of Nebraskans with disabilities having the opportunity and support to join the state's workforce. There were more than 100 participants from around the state and from the sponsoring agencies. The participants were engaged as part of active listening sessions, where they were asked to define solutions for multiple key questions and identify what actions they and the organization they represented could commit to, in order to achieve the goal of **Increasing Employment Opportunities and Outcomes for Nebraskans Who Can Benefit from Supported Employment**.

A rough draft Action Plan was created after the Summit and over the last nine months, this draft Plan was reviewed with all of the key partners who co-sponsored the Summit. **Outlined within this document is the resulting Action Plan** that highlights the key solutions and actions that were identified by participants, along with the key partners/organizations that are committed to the actions described.

All partners have indicated a willingness to work collaboratively on the implementation of this Action Plan. They are set to begin meeting together to address implementation, attaching timelines and resources where needed, to reflect the priorities that can most drive positive change. DHHS (DDD/DBH) is focused on a coordinated approach to providing extended supports for competitive integrated employment. VR wishes to focus on the parts of this Action Plan that align well with their WIOA State Plan. The state Office of Special Education is interested in partnering with others on their Journey to Inclusion initiative and getting more information to schools. The DD Act Partners are embracing the roles they can each uniquely play. NASP is interested in ensuring enough well-trained employment service professionals exist. The interests and commitments of other key partners who attended the Summit are also included in this Action Plan. **By working together, and being open to change, there is no doubt that positive change will happen.** If you want to be involved, please contact Kristen Larsen: Kristen.Larsen@nebraska.gov or 402-471-0143.

Nebraska Supported Employment Summit- Action Plan

ACRONYMS:

ACRE:	Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators	OSE:	State Office of Special Education
ADRC:	Aging and Disability Resource Center	SE:	Supported Employment
APSE:	Association of People Supporting Employment First	SME:	Subject Matter Expert
CESP:	Certified Employment Support Professional	TBD:	To Be Determined
CIE:	Competitive Integrated Employment	UNMC:	University of Nebraska Medical Center
CoP:	Community of Practice	VR:	Vocational Rehabilitation
DBH:	Division of Behavioral Health	WIOA:	Workforce Innovation and Investment Act
DRNE:	Disability Rights Nebraska		
IDD:	Intellectual / Developmental Disabilities		
IPE:	Individualized Plan for Employment		
IPS:	Individual Placement and Support		
DDD:	Division of Developmental Disabilities		
DHHS:	Department of Health and Human Services		
FY:	Fiscal Year		
LMS:	Learning Management System		
MMI:	Munroe-Meyer Institute		
MOU:	Memorandum of Understanding		
NASP:	Nebraska Association of Service Providers		
NCDD:	Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities		
NEON:	National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network		

Nebraska Supported Employment Summit- Action Plan

Promote and expect employment as natural part of high school transition and adulthood.		
Solutions	Actions	Highest Priorities
<p><i>Cross-Agency Partnerships to Engage and Educate Stakeholders</i></p>	<p>GOAL: Simplify the information and the processes related to going to work and working in competitive integrated employment so they are easier for everyone to understand.</p> <p>DBH-DDD-DVR will collaborate to provide easy-to-understand information in various formats to ensure high school special education/504 students and their families understand adult systems and what they can each offer to support competitive integrated employment for students as they move through transition to adulthood and adult services.</p> <p>Easy-to-understand: <i>What can DBH, DDD, VR do for me?</i> At each age, describe the services to support exploring, seeking obtaining and maintaining competitive integrated employment that each agency can provide. In all information, promote the value of competitive integrated employment and the fact the adult service system operates on the expectation that those who receive adult services are capable of, and will benefit from, working in competitive integrated employment.</p> <p>Information should all be available in one place where everyone knows to go for it. An online home that has owner who can take responsibility for ongoing updating and management of the online home. Engage with owners of “Answers 4 Families” or “211” (Nebraska ADRC) to explore possibilities. Ensure many other websites people visit (e.g. Nebraska Transition Website) have prominent links to the online home for Nebraska information on competitive integrated employment for Nebraskans with disabilities (named “Think Work Nebraska” or something similar).</p> <p>DBH-DDD-VR will work together to increase in-person presentations of the information around the state. Strengthen partnership between DDD-DBH-VR and Nebraska Educational Service Units (ESUs) located across the state. DBH-DDD-VR collaborate on, and understand, each other’s content enough to be able to present for each other and answer basic questions. This will allow more presentations to be done each year.</p>	

Nebraska Supported Employment Summit- Action Plan

	<p>Prioritize western side of the state initially. All partners will help publicize these sessions. NCDD and APSE will help supply supported employees to participate.</p>	
	<p>Develop a different way to introduce VR to families and students/adults with IDD/Autism. Supports VR’s goal to increase the number of transition-age students applying for adult VR services.</p> <p>People with IDD and Autism (and their families/guardians) need to have a fuller understanding of all that VR does. VR marketing team will develop ways to increase marketing of what they can do to people with IDD and Autism. DDD to provide training to VR marketing team on people with IDD/Autism, and their needs related to exploring, pursuing, obtaining and maintaining competitive integrated employment.</p> <p>VR marketing team will work to embed targeted VR marketing resources into the one place online that all resources will be available, and which is promoted as the one-stop for information on employment (e.g. “Answers 4 Families” or “211” Nebraska ADRC). Also embed on DDD website. Work with DDD trainer (Joyful) to beef up employment content in presentations she does, using VR targeted marketing information).</p>	
	<p>NCDD will update their Along the Way guides. Make employment stand out prominently in these guides and get VR marketing information in the updated versions.</p>	
	<p>State Office of Special Education will send communication to regional facilitators planning regional trainings (replacing statewide transition conference). The communication will encourage facilitators to address post-secondary competitive integrated employment outcomes as part of Indicator 13 overall compliance and will encourage facilitators to tap into competitive integrated employment training resources for their regional training events. A list of resources they can tap into will be provided by NCDD and included in the communication. One resource is “Elevating Family Expectations Train-the-Trainer trainings.”</p>	

Nebraska Supported Employment Summit- Action Plan

	<p>State Office of Special Education will explore how to obtain Indicator 14 data (measuring how many high school special education graduates have competitive integrated employment one year after graduation) to share with regional training facilitators and ESUs.</p>	
	<p>State Office of Special Education will collaborate with VR and NE APSE to send joint communication to high schools, letting them know that NE APSE members from their area is available to do face-to-face meetings with the high school’s teachers, aides, transition staff, guidance counselor and/or administration to provide information on how competitive integrated employment (CIE) services work and how supported employment providers can supports schools and students to increase employment outcomes for special education/504 students they serve. Requests will be received and coordinated by NE APSE. DBH-DDD-VR can provide content for providers to use related to accessing services through each of their programs. NE APSE will have a standard brochure/flyer from all of its supported employment providers serving the area where each high school is located. The NE APSE members doing the presentation will share information on all supported employment providers in the area, so youth and families understand their options.</p>	
	<p>Continue and/or expand the transition conference for students in Northeast Nebraska called “Holy Cow What Now?”. Sponsors will reach out to DDD, DBH, NE APSE to include them. OSE and VR already have a presence at this conference.</p>	
	<p>Office of Special Education (OSE) will coordinate with MMI to engage partners to explore ways all partners can embrace and advance the philosophical approach of their “Journey to Inclusion” initiative. OSE will meet with MMI to explore possible grant opportunities for this, including how to develop a community-centric approach to inclusive education. JOURNEY TO INCLUSION PROJECT – Nebraska Department of Education</p>	

Nebraska Supported Employment Summit- Action Plan

<p><i>Develop Single Resource and Brief Resource Packet that Includes Much of the Important Information People Need to Know</i></p>	<p>Co-sponsors of SE Summit identify pro-bono designer to create a map or flow chart or infographic that shows competitive integrated employment options, typical steps to achieving competitive integrated employment, and a checklist for people to follow to navigate the process.</p>	
	<p>DDD and VR will identify consistent, brief, easy-to-understand “take-a-way” information they can give to individuals/families to take home and read after the one-hour waiver or VR intake meetings.</p>	
<p><i>Cross-Agency Policy Statements and Related Collaborative Cross-Agency Efforts to Demonstrate Joint Commitment to Prioritizing and Improving Competitive Integrated Employment Opportunities and Outcomes</i></p>	<p>Supporting a Governor’s Initiative for Nebraska to Become a Technology and Employment First State: <u>Plan announced by DHHS:</u></p> <p>August 2024 – March 2025/2026:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a baseline for technology use, including Assistive Technology and Remote Supports. • Establish a baseline for Competitive Integrated Employment. • Set goals for each. • Develop provider sites willing to pilot new technology approaches. <p>In March 2025/2026 (DD Awareness Month): DDD plans to propose Governor sign a proclamation and declare Nebraska a Technology and Employment-First State.</p> <p>DHHS will involve VR and OSE and will coordinate in supporting the Governor’s pending Executive Order or Proclamation addressing this.</p> <p>State agencies (VR, DBH, DDD, OSE) will jointly explore the possibility of issuing a joint policy statement to support the Governor’s Executive Order or Proclamation.</p> <p>Goal Across Nebraska Disability Service Systems: To ensure that ALL engaged with people served in ALL contexts bring up and share/discuss value of employment in person’s overall health and quality of life, and ALL know where to refer people if they express interest in exploring or pursuing competitive integrated employment.</p>	

Nebraska Supported Employment Summit- Action Plan

	<p>State agency partners will meet to fully consider pursuing NEON Initiative Core State status for 2025. A representative from USDOL will present an overview of NEON. National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network (NEON) U.S. Department of Labor (dol.gov) If state agency partners decide to pursue this, assistance (as needed) will be provided by knowledgeable personnel from the NCDD.</p>	
	<p>OSE, VR, and Department of Labor (DOL) work together to submit applications for federal grants that can be used to improve CIE outcomes among Nebraskans with disabilities. DDD-DBH will be consulted in developing these federal grant applications to if their populations are targeted.</p> <p>Possible areas of focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closer linkages between OSE, VR and career and technical education offered by DOL. • Provision of coordinated youth apprenticeships, youth summer work experiences for youth with disabilities. • Aligning initiatives with WIOA State Plan goals. <p>Munro-Meyer Institute (MMI: Nebraska’s UCEDD) has interest and can assist with grant applications and grant-funded initiatives. OSE, VR and DOL will engage with MMI if assistance is needed with grant opportunities.</p>	
<p><i>Engagement of Parents and Families (and Guardians)</i></p>	<p>Provide work incentives benefit analysis resources to reduce concerns related to loss of eligibility and unearned income.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NE APSE and NASP work together to develop and post public directory of who provides work incentives benefits analysis. • NE APSE and NASP work together to evaluate capacity against demand on an ongoing basis and take steps, if necessary, to increase available capacity. Steps include engaging with SE Summit co-sponsors. 	

Nebraska Supported Employment Summit- Action Plan

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SE Summit co-sponsors and NE APSE collaborate to develop strategy for leveraging existing work incentives benefits analysis providers to work with parents and families to educate them on why their family member receive what they receive and how working in CIE and using work incentives could potentially increase income without loss of eligibility. Strategy includes developing a way to offer this service free-of-charge to youth in transition/their parents as well as adults/their parent & guardians, holding back on pursuing competitive integrated employment because of concerns regarding loss of benefits and program eligibility. • Look at offering school-based and adult provider-based programs to educate parents/guardians in group format about adult service programs, discuss SSA, and make parents/guardians aware of work incentives that can help an individual with a disability work without losing access to adult programs or having less income. <i>Start these sessions using NCDD's "Elevating Family Expectations" opportunity and approach into this effort wherever possible.</i> 	
	<p>DHHS partner agencies in conjunction with VR will request meeting with Nebraska Medicaid to review Nebraska's Medicaid Buy-In and identify ways to improve utilization as a work incentive, including (if needed) increased awareness/education, consideration of adoption of one or more strategies from other states to increase utilization. DHHS will coordinate with VR to ensure maximized benefit for individuals with disabilities.</p>	
	<p>DDD-DBH will ensure current person-centered planning processes tackle employment (including concerns/hesitations) directly and start the conversations around employment earlier (as soon as someone is enrolled in waiver), recognizing that the first person-centered planning process upon entering a waiver is critical.</p> <p>Enhance DDD Service Coordinators' (and BH system equivalents') ability to engage/educate families, guardians and participants about their rights, opportunities and options around competitive integrated employment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DDD will continue to address through Charting the Life Course. Specific strategies to address guardians will be developed and implemented. 	

Nebraska Supported Employment Summit- Action Plan

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other co-sponsors and participants in SE Summit will be ready to assist if DDD needs assistance with this effort, including training and tools for Service Coordinators to specifically address guardian concerns. • DBH offers a variety of services all of which can have a role in employment. DBH will ensure all DBH-funded service providers understand the expectation they address employment and how they can do it within the services they provide. DBH will clarify what provider agencies are expected to ensure in terms of opportunities and supports, encouragement. DBH will embed employment in everything they do. As part of this effort, DBH will increase collaboration with the Nebraska Department of Labor. Other co-sponsors and participants in SE Summit will be ready to assist if DBH needs assistance with this effort. 	
	<p>Expand Disability Rights Nebraska Lay Advocacy Program to include a focus on transition-age youth securing transition services during high school to achieve post-secondary competitive integrated employment. The Disability Rights Nebraska Lay Advocacy Program currently helps school-age individuals and families become aware of their rights and educating them on how to secure inclusive educational services. DRNE (Pat Cottingham) will get assistance from the Nebraska Client Assistance Program (Director Jodi Bodnar) to develop this capacity.</p>	
<p><i>Advance a Peer-to-Peer Engagement Model</i></p>	<p>NE APSE, People First of Nebraska and MMI will work together to engage people working in CIE in small focus groups to learn from lived experience of peers who have obtained and are working in CIE, and to explore their interest in being peer mentors/engagers for people not yet working in CIE. This team will share information on their efforts with VR, DDD, DBH and ask them to assist with sending invitations to participate in the small groups to those they serve who are working in CIE.</p>	
	<p>From focus group work (see above), MMI will develop a Peer speakers directory for people with IDD/Autism working in CIE to be able to speak with high school students and families/guardians, as well as adults not yet working in CIE (and their families/guardians).</p>	

Nebraska Supported Employment Summit- Action Plan

	<p>State Office of Special Education will collaborate with MMI to send joint communication to high schools, letting them know that these Peer speakers are available and willing to come and speak with high school students and families/guardians about their experiences with working in CIE.</p> <p>DDD and NASP will collaborate with MMI to send joint communication to day service providers, letting them know that these Peer speakers are available and willing to come and speak with those they service not yet working in CIE (and families/guardians) about their experiences with working in CIE.</p>	
	VR, DDD, NCDD, NE APSE and NASP will explore together how they can support People First of Nebraska to start offering Self-Advocacy in the Workplace training again.	
	NCDD will continue implementing “Elevating Family Expectations” project in FY24 which is addressing peer-to-peer engagement around CIE.	
	DBH already has Peer Specialists. DBH will work to ensure they are focusing on employment as part of what they do. DBH has one peer-run SE program who may be able to help train other Peer Specialists to address employment. The focus should really be showcasing the fact that people can and do work – they are employed around us all the time. Goal is to make it the norm.	

Ensure Supported Employment Professionals are Equipped with the Key Skills and Competencies Necessary for Success.

Solutions	Actions	Highest Priorities
<i>Building Consistent Training and Credentialing Across the State</i>	<p>With SME assistance, funding partner agencies and SE providers should collaboratively define the core competencies.</p> <p>The NE VR Supported and Customized Employment training series was released to current and prospective providers in February, 2024. The training focuses on providing</p>	

Nebraska Supported Employment Summit- Action Plan

	<p>information on key SE concepts, best practices and VR processes for delivering supported and customized employment services.</p> <p>DDD or DBH may see value in developing additional training specific to the populations they serve, focused on how to engage people around SE/CIE (pre-VR) and how to provide extended support using best practices (post-VR).</p>	
	<p>Partners to review and consider competency/certification models that already exist to meet the defined competencies: ACRE training, CESP, APSE, Club House etc. and compare to development of new, unique model for Nebraska to determine best way forward. Leverage training models that are evidence based.</p> <p>Align training/credentialing requirements across contracts to ensure consistency across the systems.</p> <p>Make sure curriculum serves universal need – we have SE providers working for DDD, DBH, VR. Buy-in and commitment from all parties that what is adopted meets purposes of what training/credentialing should be. Not applicable only to one system. Better the overall system and work in partnership toward that goal. Need to get agencies and providers together on this.</p> <p>MMI willing to explore hosting the training on its LMS platform.</p>	
	<p>NASP and NE APSE to coordinate review of existing SE provider hiring practices with National APSE and national direct service workforce expert(s) to identify new/untapped hiring strategies that can attract the best possible candidates who are most likely to stay in the job, bringing adequate return on the investment in onboarding and training/certification/credentialing.</p>	
	<p>DDD will provide VR staff with more training on working with people who have IDD/Autism to increase knowledge and positive attitudes within VR about the IDD/Autism populations. DDD will help VR staff better understand the needs of people with IDD/Autism in the context of exploring, pursuing, obtaining and maintaining competitive integrated employment.</p>	

Nebraska Supported Employment Summit- Action Plan

Ensure Access to Required Training, Certification or Credentialing that can Increase Competence	Provide online and low-cost trainings to meet training, certification, credentialing requirements. VR-DBH-DDD will meet with MMI to explore. MMI has LMS and is interested in supporting if possible.	
	NASP to test out interest in one-day, regional professional development and recognition conferences for Direct Support Professionals involved in CIE service provision. These have been well-received in the past. NASP to invite VR-DDD-DBH to participate in co-sponsoring and or providing content. <i>Note: DBH providers have IPS fidelity reviews and access to IPS center.</i>	
Build Out a Community of Practice Model	NE APSE and NASP will work together and develop a model similar to certified benefits planners, where Job Coaches have a network of peers to meet with and share best practices, and resources. Start by learning more about the CoP for benefits planners, and exploring how effective CoPs are run to ensure it is effective. Invite VR-DDD-DBH to participate in co-sponsoring and or providing content.	
	NE APSE and NASP will work together and establish quarterly meetings for Employment Specialists (or Employment Service Providers in general) to keep up to date on best practices, resources, research, success stories, peer experiences and partnerships. VR-DDD-DBH to participate in co-sponsoring and or providing content. Quarterly at first to gauge interest. Employment Specialists do want to know how to do their job better.	
Regulatory and Funding Changes to Advance Supported Employment Professionals' Core Competencies	NASP spearheading national advocacy for federal Department of Labor to define direct support professionals (DSPs) including Supported Employment professionals as a distinct BLS job classification to help build a career path. Federal legislation is getting good bipartisan support this year: https://www.ancor.org/capitol-correspondence/bill-to-establish-occupational-classification-for-dsps-reintroduced-in-congress/	
	Ensure that the overall funding supports the cost of any newly required training and certification/credentialing. MMI looking at this topic and is willing to be engaged to assist.	

Nebraska Supported Employment Summit- Action Plan

	Ensure rate methodologies for Supported Employment services include productivity adjustment for training/certification/credentialing time as well as factor for training/registration costs.	
Ensure Connecting People with VR happens Quickly and Successfully.		
Solutions	Actions	Highest Priorities
<i>Streamline the Process</i>	<p>Review the current processes and build out a new process that includes:</p> <p>#1. How to ensure warm hand-off replaces traditional referral to ensure connection is made. Verification in some way that VR received/accepted referral and is actively planning to engage with person. VR will support new strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When a Provider or Waiver Service Coordinator meets with person to fill out VR referral form, the Provider or Waiver Service Coordinator can/should assist person to call and set up appointment at the same time. This way, the referring Provider or Waiver Service Coordinator knows when appointment is scheduled so they can help person get there. • On the referral, list the name(s) of the Provider staff or Waiver Service Coordinator making the referral and any others who can assist VR if VR is unable to contact. <p>#2. How can eligibility determination be done more quickly?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provider or Waiver Service Coordinator can help to speed up eligibility determination by sending documentation supporting eligibility determination (and signed release from person giving them permission to send this information) with the referral. VR will post on their website and circulate a list of helpful documentation. <i>Note: Person will also need to sign VR release once engaged with VR.</i> • VR application will usually be signed at initial meeting after discussion with VR counselor. Peers recruited for focus group noted above, or willing applicants, can be asked to review current paperwork process and give feedback to VR to ensure information that is provided is clear and easy to understand. 	

Nebraska Supported Employment Summit- Action Plan

- Presumptive eligibility exists for SSA recipients – VR eligibility currently taking about 25-28 days (federal maximum timeframe is 60 days). VR has put in place a method to track individual staff on how quickly they are doing eligibility and IPEs. VR is open to breaking out data by Behavioral Health and IDD to share this with DBH/DDD given these agencies need to be able to determine what happens with the VR referrals they or their providers are making.
- VR identifying situations where expedited eligibility determination can be used (e.g., person determined eligible for VR in recent past). VR has no defined policy on how old documentation used for eligibility can be. Only SSA record must be within 60 days. Other documentation that is older may be accepted. If re-using documentation, a person's priority could change.)
- VR willing to explore benefits of expedited eligibility versus risks of not performing eligibility determination correctly.

#3. How to keep people engaged in the VR process as it progresses?

- VR seeking to identify and implement proactive steps to keep people engaged while eligibility determination is made, between eligibility determination and development of IPE and after IPE if any wait for services to begin.
- Identify gaps in process where all parties are assuming someone is helping person move forward but no one is. Determine together best way to correct this.

#4. How to track referrals of individuals with behavioral health needs and individuals with IDD through the entire VR and extended services process?

- VR offices implemented (1/1/24) monthly updates to IPS/BH providers on referrals they have made.
- Data sharing between VR and DBH/DDD is needed to include progress in employment services, employment outcomes and investments by partner agencies. Providers do not have all of the information that is needed. State agency data is also needed, including data sharing on spending. VR already has an MOU with DBH and separate one with DDD. The agencies are willing to discuss adding details for data sharing to these MOUs, including specific data elements

Nebraska Supported Employment Summit- Action Plan

	<p>that would be shared. Fiscal impacts of any needed data system changes must be considered but data sharing that leads to better fiscal accountability may well be worth the investment in the data systems.</p> <p>#5. Getting people the employment services they need quickly. DDD-DBH will issue guidance that can be used to authorize DDD or DBH funded Supported Employment extended services if it's clear, the typical VR process and services are not needed. VR will support this because policy interpretation for extended supports being done by the funding sources for extended supports: DDD and DBH. Guidance will explain how to determine extended supports is the appropriate service rather than VR services. Examples will be included in the guidance.</p>	
<p><i>Funding Model Changes to Ensure Connecting People with VR Happens Quickly and Successfully</i></p>	<p>VR will continue to evaluate the implementation of the current funding model to most effectively support rapid engagement and key principles of Progressive Employment and Individual Placement and Support (IPS).</p>	
<p>Ensure a Seamless Transition of Funding from VR to DBH or DDD so the Individual and Employer Doesn't Even Notice</p>		
<p>Solutions</p>	<p>Actions</p>	<p>Highest Priorities</p>
<p><i>Better Partnerships, Collaboration and Coordination</i></p>	<p>Ensure process supports a smooth transition that is not disruptive to the employer.</p> <p>Extended services start day after VR services stop, while VR keeps the case open 90 days after transition to extended services. The VR Job Stability Plan/Report includes important information for the authorization of extended supports. VR-DBH-DDD will continue to work together to prevent gap in services, particularly when the extended services provider does not have staff immediately available or if there is a change in provider at the point of transition to extended services.</p>	

Nebraska Supported Employment Summit- Action Plan

	<p>VR interested in receiving more information and/or training on DBH Wellness and Relapse Prevention Program because some individuals exiting VR may be referred to this program for extended support if appropriate. DBH willing to provide this.</p>	
Ensure the Funding Administered by VR, DBH and DDD is Used to Support and Incentivize Best Practices in Supported Employment Service Provision.		
Solutions	Actions	Highest Priorities
<p><i>Consensus on Best Practices</i></p>	<p>Co-sponsors of Summit and NE APSE jointly develop a common understanding of what the Best Practices are in Supported Employment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review other states for generally accepted best practice models and strategies for achieving quality and efficiency. • Consider the need to establish some population-specific best practices, in addition to universal best practices. • Determine how IPS and Customized Employment fit in. <p>Align funding to what is expected/taught in training, certification/credentialing.</p>	
<p><i>Funding Model Changes</i></p>	<p>Adopt funding model(s) to drive use of best practices:</p> <p><u>Services to Obtain CIE:</u> Compare milestone payment outcomes to best practices and make adjustments as needed.</p> <p>VR will explore funding for self-employment outcomes, using a definition of self-employment that meets definition of CIE.</p>	

Nebraska Supported Employment Summit- Action Plan

With collaboration from VR, DDD-DBH will explore and decide what training/credentialing is needed for extended support of self-employment that meets the definition of CIE.

Extended Supports Funding:

Go to a funding model for extended supports that is based on titrated down supports that aren't zeroed out but continue to pay based on continued job stability in CIE.

DBH-DDD working on coordinated approach to paying for extended supports post-VR services.

DBH rolling out their payment methodology 7/1/24 to align with VR payment methodology and continue to pay based on hours worked by the supported employee. VR Job Stability Report will be signed by the VR Counselor and provided to DBH by the provider. This report includes the information DBH needs to authorize extended supports.

DDD identifying changes and timeframe that would be necessary to adopt methodology similar to DBH-DDD, as well as provider perspective on payment methodology change.

Removing Disincentives for Competitive Integrated Employment:

DDD will consider how other states that use individual budgets have addressed the inherent disincentive to choose to pursue competitive integrated employment and use individualized Supported Employment services, including the impact on outcomes and the fiscal impacts. Consultation with HMA-Burns/HSRI can be arranged by NCDD for DDD to get this information without undue burden.

Nebraska Supported Employment Summit- Action Plan

<i>Engage Policymakers to Increase Funding Targeted to Growing and Sustaining Best Practice Supported Employment in Nebraska</i>	<p>NCDD will identify key partners and focus on setting up meetings for individuals and/or individuals with their parents who are working successfully in SE to talk to policymakers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCDD will consider using “Take Your Legislator to Work Day” model or similar approach. Involve Governor/Lt. Governor as well. <p>Co-Sponsors will be brought together by DHHS to collaborate and work together to support the Governor declaring Nebraska as an Employment First State in March 2025 (Also mentioned above).</p> <p>NE APSE, Arc of Nebraska, NASP, People First of Nebraska and other stakeholders will work together to identify gubernatorial or legislative support to establish a dedicated Employment First appropriation to support VR, DDD and DBH in carrying out changes to advance Employment First.</p>	
Ensure the General Public and Employers See People with IDD and Behavioral Health Needs as Capable of Being Valued Members of the State’s Workforce.		
Solutions	Actions	Highest Priorities
<i>Start with Public Officials and Public Figures</i>	<p>NCDD will identify key partners and focus on setting up meetings for individuals and/or individuals with their parents who are working successfully in SE to talk to policymakers. (Also mentioned above.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCDD will consider using “Take Your Legislator to Work Day” model or similar approach. Involve Governor/Lt. Governor as well. • Leverage media coverage 	

Nebraska Supported Employment Summit- Action Plan

<p><i>Education and Marketing Targeted to the General Public</i></p>	<p>MMI will assist NCDD to identify and pursue grant opportunities to develop a marketing campaign targeting the general public with the message that people with IDD and behavioral health needs can be capable and valued members of the state’s workforce.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build out videos similar to the one put out by CHI Health, NASP’s “Inclusive Economy” film or video success stories on the IPS center website (The IPS Employment Center – Research, Dissemination, Training, and Consultation (ipsworks.org)). • Include success stories from both the employee and employer point of view. • Feature some national/larger employers who have a broad presence in Nebraska (e.g. Hyvee) • Take advantage of Husker fever. Marketing during football season; college sports season. Can reach 90,000 people in one day. • Prior example that could be used again: NCDD worked with N&R Publications to get an insert added to papers throughout the state. 	
<p><i>Engage Businesses and Other Employers in Intentional Way</i></p>	<p>Develop a focused approach to engage businesses in both urban and rural communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue VR/partner job fairs, bringing in different employers. • Have a regular tour of businesses (that are doing this well) available for other interested businesses (including recorded tour that can be viewed online). (WHO: TBD) • Develop educational materials (WHO: TBD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Complete an interim study that provides the data to educate the public and employers on the benefits of an inclusive workforce. ○ Look at the approach taken in Norfolk 	

Nebraska Supported Employment Summit- Action Plan

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop platform to promote awareness for business and trade centers. Address how SE works and the benefits to an inclusive work force. (WHO: TBD) • Look at other states for effective strategies 	
	NE APSE and NASP members will join Chambers of Commerce in various cities across Nebraska.	
	SE Summit Partners will develop a proposal for an effective approach to publicly recognizing inclusive businesses on a regular basis. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider involving the governor and/or legislature. • Formal event with media coverage Done in conjunction with Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry	
	SE Summit Partners will consider how and when to continue to have Employment Summits. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider a Summit that focuses on bringing a diverse coalition together to talk about employer needs, emerging job opportunities, and effective ways to diversify the workforce. 	

Ensure the Data that Best Measures Our Success is Available, Accurate and Shared with All Stakeholders.

Solutions	Actions	Highest Priorities
<i>Develop a Consistent and Standardized Data Set to Measure and Illustrate Our Success on On-Going Basis</i>	VR-DDD-DBH will review currently available data and establish a standardized data set that can be drawn from currently collected/available data. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current NCI data points • Ensure the data set illustrates the return on investment (ROI) • Need to include process measures that are associated with successful/high-quality outcomes (e.g. timeframe to get a job) • Outcome measures that are important: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ length of time consistently employed ○ hours worked 	

Nebraska Supported Employment Summit- Action Plan

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ wage level ○ contributions to FICA ○ reduction in use of income support (SSI; SSDI) ○ use of Medicaid Buy-In and/or other work incentives ○ contribution of earned income to personal savings or retirement accounts 	
	<p>VR-DDD-DBH will explore how to establish a data warehouse with direct interface that allows for data to be gathered and inputted consistently.</p>	
<p><i>Develop Mediums to Share the Data</i></p>	<p>MMI will work with VR-DDD-DBH to develop a plan for a public facing dashboard that shares the data in formats that are accessible to stakeholders. The goal is an interactive dashboard that has user-friendly guide to understand the information.</p>	
<p><i>Develop and Share Real-life Stories</i></p>	<p>NE APSE and NASP will work together to create a dedicated set of resources that allow for the sharing of real-life stories and impact (e.g. an annual success stories online and print publication)</p>	

SOME ADDITIONAL EXISTING ONLINE RESOURCES:

<http://www.vr.nebraska.gov/resources/pdfs/DDTransitionBooklet.pdf>

<http://www.vr.nebraska.gov/students/index.html>

http://www.vr.nebraska.gov/students/for_schools.html

<http://www.vr.nebraska.gov/videos/>