

## RDA Proposal

### Developing an Employment Website for Working Age Person with Disabilities

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#### Introduction and Context

Adults between 16 and 64 years of age with disabilities that affect their ability to work are a significant and growing part of the state's population, as Table 1 below shows. This is also mirrored in the national data.

People aged 16 to 64 with an Employment Disability	In Washington State		In the United States	
	1990	2000	1990	2000
Number	279,705	402,370	12.8 million	17.2 million
As a percent of the civilian, non-institutionalized Population	9.1%	10.6%	8.2%	9.9%

Source: U.S. Census for 1990 and 2000.

These increases are partly related to the aging "Baby Boomers", who are still under 65 in 2000 but have reached the age where disabilities increase. It may also be related to changes in family income assistance programs from AFDC to TANF. The requirement to improve work participation among TANF parents gave states the incentive to encourage TANF parents who had disabling health conditions to apply for employment disability programs like GA and SSI.

Many of these adult consumers with disabilities are receiving government subsidies in the form of grants, food stamps, housing subsidies and medical insurance that are conditioned on their continued low income status and presumed inability to work. For example, in 2000, there were 135,684 "working age adults" (18 -64) who received DSHS medical assistance associated with formal disability or incapacity criteria (e.g. Medicaid Disabled, GA-U, and ADATSA). Other sources of similar benefits include the Veteran's Administration, Social Security Administration, and private pensions. These benefits can create substantial disincentives and barriers to paid employment. Eliminating those benefit-related disincentives to paid employment is, of course, the prime rationale for the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) program.

Despite the disincentives, many people of working age with disabilities **want** to work. Work is one of the key tasks of adult life, increasing personal independence and income, and structuring life around meaningful shared tasks. However, it can be difficult for these consumers to find work that is meaningful and that they can perform well while still maintaining their health. And their job search may be hampered by stigma - other people's reactions and fear of their disabilities. For that reason, it is also important for government to assist persons with disabilities in their career planning, work search, and perhaps initial job performance. And it may be important to work generally on reducing stigma and other employer-generated barriers.

This proposal involves designing, building and testing website containing local information that will assist Washington residents in these tasks: helping consumers and their families assess the impact of working and earning on their benefits; assisting those who decide to work with their job search and career planning; and perhaps providing some education for employers by way of local examples of persons with disabilities working in their region.

#### Web-Enabled Information

Increasingly, people search for information of use to their daily lives on the Internet, including information on jobs and career management (see <http://www.monster.com/>). There are some websites being developed on services and legal issues around employment for persons with disabilities (see <http://www.ablejobseekers.wa.gov/>). However, there is not much Internet information on locally-

based career management tools and information for Washington residents with disabilities and their networks.

This website would be focused on the consumer with disabilities. It is based on the sequential steps which consumers with disabilities, their families and friends, and their professional helpers must go through: deciding to work, making a work plan, finding a job, working, and advancing along a career path. Each step requires different sorts of information and assistance.

1. Deciding whether to choose to work (this decision includes evaluating the risks of paid work in relation to federal and state benefit reduction and the gains in terms of income, independence, life satisfaction and contribution to society).
2. Preparing for work and planning a career path (learning about different kinds of jobs and careers, learning about the "culture" of working and the important habits of working, getting training, finding out what you can and cannot learn on the job).
3. Finding a job (practical help with resumes, job search skills, attention to self-presentation and overcoming stigma, links to jobs, resume matching services).
4. Keeping the job, or, if one loses that job, figuring out why. (Learning about the culture of work; learning why people lose jobs).
5. Advancing down a career path

Possible layers for this website, targeted to the five steps above, are shown in Appendix 1. However, this list should not be considered definitive; it needs to be expanded and then prioritized through conversations and focus groups with all the relevant audiences - consumers, families, and providers.

#### Tasks and Timelines

**Months 1 through 3: Literature/Website Review and Initial Concepts for Website Layers.** Write and illustrate a brief literature/website review on barriers and decisions for persons with disabilities. Use this review to further refine the steps and potential website layers. Include examples of relevant websites from other areas.

**Months 4 through 6: Get User Feedback on Possible Layers:** Talk to the potential users about their website information needs. Show them conceptual versions of the website layers we have already thought of and see how they react to them - how would they rank those ideas; what others would they suggest? Write a report summarizing those conversations.

- Develop a focus group interview script and mockups of potential website data layers. Begin with open-ended questions about information needs the participants see. End with a series of potential layers that could be built, ask people to evaluate the possible usefulness of those layers. Two types of focus groups: one for providers (e.g. community rehab providers, employment networks, VR and Work Source staff) and one for SSI-related and GA consumers interested in working.
- Both types of focus groups should be held in several parts of the state, so that possible rural/urban differences and East-West differences are covered.

**Months 7 through 10: Design (Conceptually) and Propose Website Layers:** Use the focus group reports to design and propose potential layers answering the different possible questions. Proposal should be conceptual and include costs for detailed design, implementation of test sites, testing and refinement based on user feedback.

**Months 11 and 12: Decide Which Website Layers to Fund and Build:** Use the existing project administrative structure to decide what to build. Develop an advisory process including key players, stakeholders, providers and consumers. Key questions: where will the website be housed, both when it is under development and after? What about sustainability and content updating?

**Subsequent Years:** Once these decisions are made, the project moves to decisions about who will do the work, detailed design, implementation, feedback, testing, final “go live” processes, and eventual maintenance and updating.

### Budget Summary

Total cost for the first ten months of the project (which includes lit and website reviews, the development of conceptual data layer illustrations, user feedback, and design and costing of proposed website layers) is \$84,580 and 5.7 person months (FTE-months). These costs are divided into two time periods: July 15<sup>th</sup> through Dec 31st (\$50,819 and 2.8 person months) and Jan 1 through May 15<sup>th</sup> (\$33,761 and 2.9 person months). Additional costs thereafter will depend on what website layers the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (or MIG)? decides to purchase.

### Budget and Staffing Justification for Months 1 through 10

**In-Kind Support and Management:** This project will be managed within RDA by *Liz Kohlenberg*, who will be contributing 10% of her time in-kind.

There will be an internal in-kind RDA “Advisory Committee and Brain Trust” involved in thinking about possible website layers and approaches and designing the focus group scripts and mockups. The RDA Internal Advisory Committee includes:

- *Boqing Wang*, 10%, (labor economist focused on employment issues)
- *David Mancuso*, 5% (health economist focused on disabled and aging clients)
- *Deron Ferguson*, 5% (geographer and regional economist)
- *Ted Lamb*, 10% (employment data base director)
- *Jane Zerbe*, 5% (Geographic information systems and local government)

**Project Funded Positions:** The following RDA staff have the technical, management and communications expertise t needed to carry out this project. To involve them, the MIG will need to buy their time back from their existing projects. They include:

- *Chad Zhu*, 10% for first six months; 25% for last four (Enterprise systems architect): Chad will be involved in the “brain trust” for the first few months; later, he will be the chief architect and planner for the website data layers and database design.
- *Hakan Axelsson*, 20% (Communication, Marketing and Web Design): Hakan will develop the mockups for the focus groups, and probably assist in costing some of the desired web layers.
- *Becky Boutiller*, 10% (Manager of the DSHS Client Registry): Becky will contribute management expertise and knowledge of the disabled clients and providers in the DSHS environment. If RDA implements some layers, she would be a likely manager for that work.

**Contracts:** Additionally, we will need two contracts:

- Focus Group contract with Gilmore (\$30,000 to \$35,000 to do 6 focus groups, 4 on the West side of the state and 2 on the East side. Includes \$50 payments to focus group participants, arranging the sample from a DSHS list, facilitating the groups from an RDA-provided script, travel, transcripts, and a report on key themes). \$25,000 of this will be paid in 2006; the remaining \$10,000 in early 2007.
- Barb Felver, Communications and Policy Lead (\$7691 - 10% time for 10 months) for report and website design.

**Other Expenses:** These include

- Cost recovery for the RDA staff
- Travel for 2 people to Seattle and Spokane and 2 overnights in Spokane to observe focus groups

**Employment Website for Persons of Disability**  
**July 15, 2006 - Dec 31, 2006 (5.5 months)**  
**Jan 1, 2007 - March 15, 2007 (4.5 months)**

	Year 2006 (5.5 mo) Time Period		Year 2007 (4.5 mo) Time Period	
	Person months	\$	Person months	\$
<b>Positions Salary</b>				
WMS 2 Zhu (\$6116 @ 10% / 25%)	0.6	3,364	1.1	6,422
WMS 1 Axelsson (\$4314 @ 20%)	1.1	4,745	0.9	3,883
WMS 2 Boutillier (\$6050 @ 10%)	0.6	3,328	0.5	2,723
Admin Support (\$3128 @ 10%)	0.6	1,720	0.5	1,408
<b>Benefits</b>				
Zhu		807		1,541
Axelsson		1,139		932
Boutillier		799		653
Admin Support		413		338
<b>Salary / Benefit Total</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>16,315</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>17,899</b>
<b>Miscellaneous</b>				
Focus Group Contract (Gilmore)		25,000		10,000
Contractor (Felver \$6122 @ 10%)		4,175		3,416
Travel Seattle / Spokane		2,892		
Cost Recovery / Admin Overhead		2,437		2,447
<b>Total Project</b>		<b>\$50,819</b>		<b>\$33,761</b>
<b>RDA In-Kind Contribution</b>				
<i>Project Manager (Liz Kohlenberg)</i> 10%	0.55	4,887	0.45	3,999
<i>Boqing Wang</i> 10%	0.55	4,183	0.45	3,422
<i>Ted Lamb</i> 10%	0.55	3,726	0.45	3,049
<i>David Mancuso</i> 5%	0.28	2,144	0.23	1,754
<i>Deron Ferguson</i> 5%	0.28	2,091	0.23	1,711
<i>Jane Zerbe</i> 5%	0.28	1,765	0.23	1,444
<i>Total In-kind</i>	2.48	\$18,797	2.03	\$15,379

\*Salaries have a 1.6% increase.

## **APPENDIX ONE: Possible Layers for a Website Supporting the Employment Process for Working Age People with Disabilities**

The following layers would contain information targeted to different points in the person's decisions and actions.

### **Step 1: Decision to Seek Paid Work**

1. Some sort of "benefit calculator" (like Wisconsin's) that would allow individual to enter their own information, to determine roughly what their benefit situation might be if they earned various levels of income.
2. Discussion about the Benefits and Costs of Working: Maybe some filmed consumer interviews?

### **Step 2: Preparing for Work and Planning a Career Path**

3. Data based on each local area that shows what sorts of jobs people with disabilities have, what sorts of earnings they have, how many hours they work, what sorts of tenure in those positions - and a host of other job-related questions. These data will probably be displayed in tables or fact sheets to begin with. Eventually it might be useful to include a user-friendly on-line "query" capability for providers and consumers, as long as we could build in confidentiality protection.
4. Discussion of the local labor market and its growth areas and limits, particularly those aspects that are relevant to types of work people with disabilities are performing.
5. Discussion about the Culture of Work: Discussion of the unspoken "rules" of work behavior - again filmed consumer interviews would be a good way to talk about this.

### **Step 3: Finding a Job**

6. Data on local services intended to help clients remove barriers to working and find work. Should include peer support services and clubhouses as well as formal employment counselors and VR counselors. Include maps of where provider offices are located. Should include a public transportation layer!
7. Hiring Employees with Disabilities: Maybe some filmed employer interviews. Maybe some education on supporting employees with disabilities and what help is out there (supported employment, etc).
8. Maybe a local "Match.com" for jobs and people - or at least a list of local employers where resumes could be sent.

### **Step 4: Keeping A Job**

9. Discussion about the Why People Lose Jobs: Maybe filmed interviews with employers.

### **Step 5: Advancing Down a Career Path:**

10. This may loop back to Layers 3, 4, 5 and 6 or it may require separate information.