

## **CECY Brief #5: Working with WIB Funds to Support Employment of People with ID/DD**

\*Information in this brief is gleaned from the April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013 ANTM/Let's Go To Work Committee TA Call. ANTM/Let's Go To Work is a committee within the California Employment Consortium for Youth (CECY). Information is taken from a presentation and worksheet delivered by Tom Heinz, Executive Director of East Bay Innovations.

### **Summary**

East Bay Innovations, a service provider in Oakland, CA, has explored several ways to use Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds to develop internship/training programs for people with ID/DD as well as provide additional resources to agencies providing employment services.

### **Two Methods for Supporting Individuals with ID/DD in Employment**

*Individual Training Accounts (ITA's)* are one method for supporting job-training programs. Those individuals deemed qualified, can receive WIA funds to pay for short term training programs that lead to greater employability in a particular occupation. Individual Workforce Investment Boards (WIB) determine the funds made available, amounts can be \$4,000 to \$5,000 or much higher per individual.

*On-The-Job-Training (OJT)* funds are the second method for supporting employment services. When an employer hires a WIA eligible individual, they (the employer) can apply for OJT funds through their local One Stop Center. This pot of funds will reimburse the employer for the cost of initial training for the new hire. OJT funds can be as high as \$5,000 per individual but specific limits are set by the local WIB. The amount can also depend on the wage and number of hours of initial training.

### **Structure of the Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs)**

The Department of Labor funds Workforce Investment Boards (WIB) throughout the state. Each WIB has its own catchment area (geographic region in which it provides services.) The WIB funds one or more One Stop Centers—typically distributed around the catchment area in a way that makes it as convenient as possible for job seekers to access services. One Stop Centers help job seekers become marketable in their desired occupation. They have several tools to accomplish this goal, including Individual Training Accounts (ITA) and On-the-Job-Training (OJT) funds. In order to receive these services, individuals must be Workforce Investment Act (WIA) eligible. Eligible individuals

## **CECY Brief #5: Working with WIB Funds to Support Employment of People with ID/DD**

typically include regional center clients and the unemployed. Individuals do not need to be previously employed or in the labor force, to receive funds.

### **How It Works in Practice: Individual Training Accounts (ITAs)**

#### ***For Individuals:***

East Bay Innovation helped their Project Search interns sign up for WIA services. Once eligibility was established, East Bay proceeded to identify career goals of each participant that were linked to the Project Search experience.

ITA funds cannot be used for general post secondary education. They must be used to fund training experiences that are directly tied to a career outcome--- such as going to truck driving school to become a truck driver.

Once accepted into the program, individuals can search the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), through a website portal. Individuals can search by area, zip code or profession to find training providers in their desired location and topic area (e.g. Truck Driving schools in Oakland). The website provides additional information on each training provider, including the amount of tuition and other details. ITA funds can be used to pay for tuition.

*How could this be used to assist someone with ID/DD to obtain employment?  
Here's an example:*

And individual with ID/DD wants a job in the healthcare sector and seems to have the basic ability to do medical records filing, but needs training. The healthcare employer has a relationship with the supported employment provider that serves the individual. However, the employer is hesitant to hire the individual because they are not convinced they can do the job. They would be open to hiring if the person can demonstrate that they can do the job.

The supported employment provider lists a healthcare internship course on the ETPL. The employer agree to start the individual starting as an unpaid intern, for three months, performing tasks similar to medical record filing in their office.

The supported employment provider assists the individual to sign up for WIA services at the local One Stop Center. One Stop authorizes ITA funds to go to the supported employment provider. The provider uses funding to pay for job coaching services to the individual while they are interning. The internship is successful and the individual is hired as a Medical Records Clerk.

## **CECY Brief #5: Working with WIB Funds to Support Employment of People with ID/DD**

### ***For a Provider Agency Wanting to Support Individuals with ID/DD in Employment>:***

For an organization to be eligible to receive ITA funding, the organization needs to:

- Be accredited by California Department of Education or Chancellor's Office of California Community Colleges or the Bureau of Private Postsecondary Vocational Employment (BPPVE) or receive an exemption from BPPVE accreditation.

Organizations, such as supported employment provider agencies receiving funding from Department of Rehabilitation, may be eligible for exemption from BPPVE accreditation.

- Complete an application and receive approval to be placed on EDD's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).
- As part of the ETPL application the training organization must establish an amount for tuition.
- With the One Stop's approval, ITA funds can pay the tuition for an individual to receive training.

Most service provider agencies will want to apply for an exemption from BPPVE accreditation. However, there can be a long waiting time to have that application processed (6 months in some instances) so be sure to account for this waiting period.

Once an agency receives an exemption they can apply for the WIB's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) by sending an application to the local One Stop Center. In East Bay Innovation's case, after they were accepted to the ETPL, they listed themselves as a training provider in health care, enrolled their Project Search interns into the WIA system, and communicated with the One Stop centers about the interns wishes to be trained for the healthcare sector. WIA funds were used to support Project Search internship experiences.

### **How it Works in Practice: OJT Funds**

## **CECY Brief #5: Working with WIB Funds to Support Employment of People with ID/DD**

On-The-Job-Training (OJT) funds are a great resource for service providers, who want to incentivize employers to hire individuals with ID/DD. Employers can receive reimbursement for the training they provide to a WIA eligible hire, and that could be a person with ID/DD.

East Bay Innovations, for example, wanted to place a Project Search graduate into a position at the Lifelong Medical Clinic. East Bay helped the clinic complete the paperwork for OJT funds and come up with a training plan. This training plan included topics, estimated number of hours for training, and the standard hourly wage for the position. The clinic hired the Project Search graduate, and received 50% reimbursement of hourly wages for the time period during which the intensive training took place.

East Bay Innovation helped the clinic complete monthly reimbursement forms. East Bay recommends that supported employment providers be “hands on” assisting employers, as many may find the paperwork a cumbersome disincentive. The required paperwork should, on the other hand, be familiar for service providers who are accustomed to completing billing forms and progress reports.

Supported employment providers can also sign up with the One Stop Center to receive OJT funding as an employer. Many times when hiring supported employment staff, a new hire can be a person who is WIA eligible. The supported employment provider can draw OJT funds to offset the cost of training the new staff person. This revenue then can free up existing DOR or regional center funds to help with job development.

### **Potential Problems and Their Solutions**

Historically, WIBs envisioned their clientele as displaced workers, not people with ID/DD. WIBs are individually managed and many may still not be interested in providing many services to people with ID/DD. Even those WIBs that do want to service people with ID/DD may have specific ideas of how to achieve that goal.

East Bay Innovation did extensive education to their WIB, explaining that individuals with ID/DD often needed different accommodations than individuals with physical disabilities (e.g. computer equipment adaptation.) Job seekers with ID/DD often need intensive training to develop marketable job skills and experience. Job coaching that is embedded in a host employment site is often the most valuable accommodation.

It's also important to demonstrate good placement outcomes (high placement rates and high wages) so that a local WIB will trust a supported employment provider as a high performing training program. Individual WIB's may have a

## **CECY Brief #5: Working with WIB Funds to Support Employment of People with ID/DD**

limited budget for ITA's, so it's important to get on line early.

### **Benefits to This Practice**

- ❖ Funding for job development is often insufficient. ITA and OJT funds can complement existing job development funding streams, and support identification of high quality, high paying jobs.
- ❖ OJT funds can support training of new hires (within supported employment agencies) and free up funds for job development and other valuable services.