

Employment First Collaborative Framework Worksheet

Most states have an “Employment First” policy or initiative in place. However, systems-change cannot be realized without a strong coalition of partners, both in and outside state government, committed to improving employment of individuals with disabilities over a long period of time. Florida adopted a framework to facilitate this kind of collaboration within its Employment First policy and has experienced positive results since its inception. This worksheet highlights some of the collaborative achievements from Florida’s Employment First Initiative to assist other states in developing their own framework for systems-change.

The table below is divided into three phases of collaboration, based on the quote by Henry Ford: “Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.” Each section includes a list of questions for state leaders and stakeholders to consider in facilitating collaboration, from bringing partners together to evaluating the collective impacts. The right-hand column summarizes the approach taken by Florida’s Employment First partners in response to each of these questions. This worksheet is not intended to prescribe a specific approach; rather, it provides examples to help other states evaluate their own disability services systems and identify areas where collaboration is needed or can be improved.

Facilitating Collaboration	Questions to Consider for Your State	Florida’s Approach
<p style="text-align: center;">Coming Together Through an Employment First Initiative</p>	<p>Does your state have an established commitment to prioritize and increase employment of individuals with disabilities (i.e., legislation, executive order, administrative rule, etc.)? _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Governor Rick Scott established Florida’s Employment First policy in Executive Order 13-284 in 2013, which was codified into law (section 413.80, Florida Statutes) by the Legislature in 2016. The policy is carried out by nine state partner organizations (“Partners”) through an interagency cooperative agreement.</p>
	<p>What is (or should be) included in your state’s Employment First policy? _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Florida’s Employment First policy includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A common definition for competitive integrated employment • Specific objectives to bring about systems-change efforts

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organizations tasked with collaborating in these efforts through an interagency cooperative agreement
	<p>What organizations are critical to carry out your state's Employment First policy?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<p>Florida's Partners include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency for Persons with Disabilities – serves individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD) through Medicaid Waiver Home and Community-Based Services • Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services – serves students with disabilities in the K-12 education system • CareerSource Florida and Department of Economic Opportunity – serve individuals with disabilities in the workforce development system • Division of Blind Services – serves individuals who are blind/visually impaired • Division of Vocational Rehabilitation – serves persons with disabilities seeking to obtain/maintain employment • Substance Abuse and Mental Health Office – serves persons with mental health disorders • Florida Developmental Disabilities Council – facilitates advocacy and systems change efforts for individuals with IDD • Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities – represents day/employment providers serving individuals with disabilities throughout the state
	<p>What evidence supports the need for systems-change in your state? _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>The Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at UMass-Boston conducted research on nine states similar to Florida to identify common elements of high-performance in integrated</p>

	<p>What mechanisms are needed to ensure collaboration occurs on a long-term basis?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<p>to provide information to and gather feedback from those stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cooperative agreement, signed in 2014, ensured a five-year commitment to implement Executive Order 13-284. Passage of 2016 legislation ensured that commitment continues beyond 2019. • The Partners develop and approve an annual Strategic Action Implementation Plan that prioritizes collaborative activities. • Periodic workgroup meetings allow Partners to evaluate progress and collaborate on other initiatives. • Each Partner submits annual baseline employment outcome data, with targets, on individuals with disabilities served (directly or indirectly) by its organization. • The Partners issued a collaborative memorandum to inform their local partners of these efforts and encourage Employment First be embraced at the community level.
<p>Working Together to Achieve Collective Impact</p>	<p>How can your collaborative efforts be communicated to and encourage buy-in from state leaders and stakeholders?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interagency workgroups serve as forums to inform and receive input from stakeholders at all levels. • The Partners coordinate presentations to other stakeholder groups (e.g., self-advocate/family venues, professional development seminars, leadership forums). • The Partners produced a messaging video, including leaders from each Partner organization, highlighting the impacts of these collaborative efforts.

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How can the impacts of the state's collaborative efforts be realized (both in direct employment outcomes and system-wide changes)?

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- The Employment First Florida website provides up-to-date information on the state's collaborative efforts.
- The Partners submit an annual report to the Governor and Legislature, highlighting each Partner's achievements in employment.

- Florida has experienced an 18% increase in overall Partners' supported/competitive employment outcomes in FY 2015-16.
- The Partners assist the Dept. of Mgmt. Services (administers the state personnel system) in new affirmative action efforts to hire/retain more persons with disabilities in the state government workforce.
- Florida is prioritizing funding for employment initiatives, such as for individuals with IDD on the waitlist for Home and Community-Based Services.
- The Partners assisted the Dept. of Financial Services in developing a financial literacy program for individuals with IDD.
- The Partners support the Dept. of Economic Opportunity in administering the Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program, which recognizes employers committed to employment of individuals with disabilities.
- The Partners are evaluating/addressing training needs of employment service professionals with an Employment First Collaborative Training Toolkit.
- The state's Employment First efforts served as collaborative model to help state leaders fulfill new WIOA requirements.