

**Deliverable #4**  
**Submitted to: Florida Developmental Disabilities Council**  
**Submitted by: Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston**  
**Contract #: 835EM11**

**Executive Summary**

**1. Employment First State comparisons**

- 1.1. The document review included an analysis of current policies and activities within the states based on internet research, review of current policies and legislation, previous ICI case study work, and ICI/NASDDS State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) project activities and site visits. Information gleaned from the document review was compared against quantitative data for each of the states that is available through ICI's State Data website. Available data sources included: RSA, SSA, ACS, and ICI's national survey of IDD agencies. This data provided an opportunity to review a state's employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities that may be concurrent with policy changes or initiatives.
- 1.2. Nine states were included in the in-depth comparisons. Data from these comparisons came from telephone interviews, and extensive document review. Project staff reached out to stakeholders in these states and conducted initial interviews; more interviews are pending. Several of the states were also SELN states, where project team members and colleagues have provided or were providing ongoing technical assistance around employment. Discussions with SELN TA providers in each of these states yielded preliminary information and a "jumping off" point for further in depth interviews.
- 1.3. Mini state profiles for each state were prepared and submitted. Based on feedback from the Advisory Board, mini state profiles replaced an expanded comparison matrix, as it was determined that the profiles would be more accessible and easier to digest in narrative form.
- 1.4. A draft introduction, detailing the background and history of the national Employment First movement was developed and provides a backdrop to the state profiles. The final product from this effort was the *Cross State Summary Report*.

**2. Florida data collection**

- 2.1. *Town hall style forums*. Approximately 150 Floridians participated in town-hall style, in-person forums. These forums were held in July, 2012 in Pensacola, Jacksonville, Tallahassee, Sarasota, Orlando and Ft. Lauderdale. APD staff were instrumental in supporting the organization of the forums. Attendees included persons with disabilities, family members, community rehabilitation providers, state APD and DVR staff, and members of the education community. Summaries of the forums were submitted to the FDDC. In addition, accessible summaries were created for self-advocates.
- 2.2. *In-person focus groups with self-advocates*. In addition to the larger in-person forums, 3 focus groups were conducted with self-advocates. In total 15 self-advocates participated in discussions in Tallahassee, Orlando, and Ft. Lauderdale.
- 2.3. *In-person discussions with key stakeholders*. During the site visit, ICI staff facilitated discussions with key personnel from APD, DVR, FDDC, and the Governor's Commission on Employment for Persons with Disabilities.

- 2.4. *Web-based forum.* To ensure that the greatest amount of representation of Florida stakeholders, in August we conducted a web-based forum. The content mirrored that of the in-person meetings. Participants had the opportunity to listen to a short presentation, and then engage in discussion through voice or through chat boxes. In total, 36 people participated.
- 2.5. *Online survey.* Over the summer, we launched an online survey aimed at a wide range of individuals including individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, families, schools staff, employment service provider staff, and state personnel. The assessment's focus was on the impact that state policies and practices have on the ability of individual job seekers to obtain an individual job in the community. The questions were designed to get a snapshot of Florida on key topics that influence the state's effectiveness. In total, 65 individuals responded to the survey.

### 3. **Involvement of Advisory Board**

- 3.1. Advisory Board meetings were held via webinar in February, 2012; June, 2012; October, 2012; December, 2012; and January, 2013. Meeting minutes from each webinar were submitted to the FDDC.
- 3.2. In addition, ICI staff had the opportunity to meet in-person with many of the Advisory Board members during the July, 2012 site visits.
- 3.3. Ashley Wolfe, a project staff person and self-advocate, has been actively involved in establishing a mentoring relationship with the self-advocates on the board. Ashley provided the members with an orientation to the project, and facilitates monthly mentoring meetings over the phone with self-advocate Advisory Board members. Re-occurring agenda items for these meetings include: going over documents to ensure accessibility, scheduling and attendance; and planning for ongoing self-advocate involvement and perspective.

### 4. **Product development**

- 4.1 *The Cross State Summary.* This review includes a wide range of approaches to Employment First across the country. Analysis for this report was conducted in two phases. A first level analysis of states that have Employment First policies or initiatives was conducted. This initial analysis consisted of document review of policies, regulations, and data on state employment outcomes. The review included current state policies and legislation, previous ICI case study work, and ICI/NASDDS project activities and site visits. Based upon the first level analysis of Employment First initiatives and policies, a subset of eight states was selected for more in depth study. The criteria used for the selection of the subset was: the presence of an established policy, employment outcomes (high levels of and/or growth in integrated employment outcomes), state characteristics: (identification of state-level factors such as state size, demographics, state agency structure that are comparable to Florida, and the basis for the initiative (e.g. grass roots initiative, state level initiative or both). The subset of states was: Connecticut (CT), Delaware (DE), Kansas (KS), Massachusetts (MA), Minnesota (MN), Missouri (MO), Pennsylvania (PA), Tennessee (TN), and Washington (WA).
- 4.2 *The Florida Findings Report.* This report presents findings from a comprehensive review of Florida's policy, strategy, and experiences supporting integrated employment outcomes that occurred in the Spring and Summer of 2012. An online survey was used to

gather input from a wide stakeholder group about the state's infrastructure for achieving integrated employment outcomes among persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities receiving publicly-financed support. Using the High Performing States Model (Hall, 2007) as a guide, the project team conducted onsite visits with key state agency officials, regional, county, and local leaders; providers; advocacy groups, families and individuals receiving services and other identified stakeholders. Information gathered through the online Employment Assessment and site visits (which included in-person town-hall style forums across the state, focus groups specifically held for self-advocates, key stakeholder interviews, and an online forum) is summarized in report.

- 4.3 *The Florida Findings Report- Accessible Version*. ICI staff and the Advisory Board self-advocates developed a short, accessible version as a companion to the Florida Findings Report.
- 4.4 *The Comparison Report*. The goal of this report is to translate the lessons learned from the Employment First states (presented in the Cross-State Summary Report) into strategies for effective implementation of an Employment First initiative in Florida. This report includes recommendations for Florida in the following areas: messaging through communications and policy; data and performance measurement; a continued focus on transition age students; collaboration across agencies; financing strategies that support employment as the preferred outcome; staff development; and stakeholder input.
- 4.5 *Implementation Plan*. The implementation plan contains recommendations based on our findings in Florida and lessons learned from the review of Employment First states. The Implementation Plan reflects activities within each of the seven elements that comprise the *High Performing States* framework (Hall et al, 2007).
- 4.6 *Marketing Framework*. The marketing framework contains an overview of communication strategies to further an Employment First initiative in Florida.

## 5. Recommendations for the next project year

- 5.1. Please see the Implementation Plan and Marketing Framework for recommendations that frame the activities of the next project year.