

## Concept Paper - Paid Apprenticeship Model

**Need.** According to the US DOL's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP): " *Only one-third working-age people with disabilities were employed on average in the 2010-2012 period, compared to over two-thirds (72.7%) of people without disabilities.*" Furthermore, individuals with disabilities who are employed are over represented in low-paying, slower growth occupations. Because of their low participation in the workforce, many businesses are still not aware of the untapped labor potential of individuals with I/DD, autism, physical or other disabilities. Without focused, business-led career training, tailored to their specific needs, young people with disabilities face a life time of poverty and long term dependence on public assistance such as SSSI, SSDI, Medicaid, etc.

**Plan.** HDC proposes to implement a paid apprenticeships pilot in collaboration Delgado Community College (DCC) and LSU Hospital using an innovative "supported apprenticeship" model. Our approach, begins with identifying their career interests; incorporates features of the "Business ACTS<sup>®</sup>" model and combines learning opportunities at DCC and includes customized/supported employment services provided at employer sponsored job sites that feature high-demand jobs that comport with the career interests of participants. Job seekers will begin by taking classes at DCC which provide opportunities for job seekers to learn valuable skills for community participation (e.g., time management, smart phone and public transportation use) as well as DCC courses related to their career interests. At the end of the paid supported apprenticeship the partner employer (LSU Hospital) will hire a fully qualified employee.

Over the last 20 years, it has been demonstrated that individuals with substantial disabilities can be employed successfully in the general workforce through the provision of training supports and accommodations that customize and enhance the employer's general training systems. The American Job Training Executive Action, developed by the US Department of Labor in July 2014, is designed to reform secondary education and workforce development. This initiative promotes apprenticeships for the general workforce, and youth with disabilities, as one of the preferred vehicles for developing a skilled workforce. Our approach incorporates features of the Business ACTS<sup>®</sup> model to enhance the employment outcomes youth and adults with disabilities. The model is scalable and sustainable as it is built on partnerships with agencies and organizations that will blend funding sought herein with existing resources provided by each partner agency. Once we have demonstrated positive outcomes from this model, we hope to recruit additional support to bring the model to scale with agencies as: LA Community and Technical College System, LRS, Louisiana Workforce Commission, and LA DOE.

**Expected Outcome.** Typically, Employment Support Professionals (ESPs) offer employers assistance to customize training of new employees with disabilities as well as technical support to identify and provide disability related accommodations at the work site. ESPs also support the new employee with disabilities and provide hands on training to that individual to augment industry-provided training. Despite evidence that validates the success of customized, supported employment the growth of sheltered workshops and segregated day programs has grown much faster, with three people entering sheltered workshops each year for every person getting integrated employment (ICI, 2013). HDC will provide training to ESPs and LSU Hospital staff, especially preceptors/mentors in each department that hosts an apprentice. As this is a business-focused initiative HDC will build on the hospital's experience with leading preceptor/mentor programs. To uphold the stringent training and safety requirements of the medical environments, each department will interview and select both their ESPs and apprentices.

**Possible Partners.** LSU Hospital, DCC, LRS, Workforce Investment Board, and managed care organization.

**Estimated Funding.** \$60,000.