

# Public/private partnerships and employment of people with disabilities: Preliminary evidence from a pilot project

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**Abstract.** While many people with disabilities and employment service organizations struggle to find jobs and develop strong relationships with businesses, supplemental staffing companies are becoming an important resource for linking qualified applicants with disabilities to competitive employment careers. Yet, there exists a huge disconnect between supplemental staffing companies recruiting qualified applicants to fill client-employer work orders, people with disabilities who are seeking employment, professionals with state rehabilitation agencies and community rehabilitation programs (CRP's) who assist them with their job searches. This article reports on two public/private demonstration projects in Virginia, primarily serving individuals with developmental disabilities. One demonstration project was conducted in an urban setting working exclusively with MANPOWER with the second demonstration site occurring in a rural area with Kelly Services and MANPOWER. The two demonstrations give promise for a public/private collaboration that could increase the employment of people with disabilities.

**Keywords:** Supported employment, customized employment, people with significant disabilities, developmental disabilities

## 1. Introduction

For years thousands of rehabilitation agencies, service providers, and educational organizations across the country have supported people with disabilities to secure competitive employment by representing one job applicant at a time and contacting one employer regarding a single job vacancy. While this approached demonstrated a great deal of promise early on, the unemployment rate of persons with disabilities in 1986 was approximately 65% and is reported to have remained virtually unchanged in the following eighteen years [16]. Clearly these data call for a new approach and over the past decade there has been an increased awareness that if we are to ever truly assist large numbers of people with disabilities with entering the work-

force then the one-to-one approach used by employment support organizations and agencies needs to be broadened to include a clear focus on building long term relationships and partnerships with the businesses community. These long term business partnerships will ultimately be vital to support the millions of people in the United States with mental, physical, sensory and health related disabilities who are interested in accessing the labor force [16].

When President George H. W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) into law in 1990 there were high hopes for great improvements in the civil rights for individuals with disabilities [4]. Many Americans with disabilities dreamed that one of the major benefits of the ADA was the promise of competitive employment yet; this major benefit has not come to fruition. One major reason limiting ADA benefits is due to a lack of knowledge on the part of local/state organizations and businesses about the work skill and capacity of people with disabilities and people with disabilities are becoming extremely vocal about their

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frustration with the lack of full implementation of the ADA [6].

Despite the fact that there has not been a major advancement of people with disabilities into the labor force it is important to determine if other environmental factors are changing. For example, is the business community making a concentrated effort to create open and welcoming environments for people with disabilities? Is there an increased understanding that people with disabilities represent a huge untapped pool of talent for companies interested in growing their business or to meet their regular labor demands? Are employers interested in developing public-private partnerships designed to increase the employment rate of people with disabilities? While we do not have the answers to all of these questions we do know that increasingly CEO's and other business leaders are speaking out on the subject of hiring people with disabilities. In the spring of 2003, the US Chamber of Commerce, Center for Workforce Preparation, hosted a business summit entitled: *Creating a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Workforce for Business*. Wes Jurey, President and CEO of the Arlington Texas Chamber of Commerce signaled that a sea of change may have already occurred when he reported to his audience that he had more "ships" than anyone in the room and his "ships" were bigger and better than most people's when he was referencing his many business relationships and partnerships [13]. He directed the audience to go back to their communities and to begin building partnerships and strong relationships for recruiting people with disabilities as a labor force and ultimately address the large unemployment rate of people with disabilities in America.

Further evidence of increasing employer support for hiring workers with disabilities is found in a 1998 survey of human resource professionals at 35 companies, conducted jointly by the UNUM/Provident insurance company and the Washington Business Group on Health. The vast majority of the survey respondents (78) reported that their efforts to accommodate workers with disabilities were greater than in the past. The survey also found a five percent increase in written return to work policies for workers with disabilities since the previous year's survey. This is significant because return to work policies and other disability-related policies have been linked to better work environments for workers with disabilities [9].

In another survey Unger [28] had similar findings when she conducted a major investigation regarding the attitudes of 255 supervisors, within 43 large businesses toward people with disabilities. The participating

businesses were diverse in terms of types of industry. The supervisors were asked to rate the employee with a disability on a scale from 1 (extremely dissatisfied) to 5 (extremely satisfied) on items such as, timeliness of arrival and departure, punctuality, attendance, task consistency, and work speed. The 255 supervisors indicated they were satisfied with the work performance of the worker with a disability in the areas of timeliness of arrival and departure, punctuality, attendance, and consistency in task [28]. The supervisors then ranked the employee work performance in relation to their nondisabled co-worker. Unger [28] found in the areas of punctuality, attendance, work quality, task consistency, and overall proficiency, supervisors rated the work performance of employees with disabilities the same or better than coworkers. This research is significant because it helps to dispel the myths and misconceptions many employers have regarding hiring individuals with disabilities.

The growing body of evidence that supports a change in employer attitudes and a increase openness to viewing people with disabilities as viable job candidates may be coming just in time, as the private sector develops new business strategies for addressing the projected labor shortage of an estimated 10 million employees in 2010 [11]. Clearly people with disabilities and employment support programs need to position themselves to support business as they attempt to address the huge demand for labor.

## **2. Promoting public-private partnerships**

One of the leading organizations promoting private-public partnerships is the US Business Leadership Networks (USBLN), which consist of employers, corporate representatives, state and federal agencies, and community rehabilitation providers [15]. Currently there are 43 BLN chapters in 32 states including the District of Columbia, with a growing interest within the business community for developing new chapters. The primary focus of a BLN is to promote the best practices in hiring, retaining, and marketing of people with disabilities. BLNs view people with disabilities as the largest source of untapped talent and they are confident that they can help businesses effectively access this talent pool through introduction and education.

There are existing public-private partnerships, dedicated to promoting the employment of people with disabilities, in different stages of development all across the country. Rehabilitation professionals are strength-

ening their relationships with businesses, which in turn are increasing the number of competitive job opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The national network for the public Vocational Rehabilitation programs recognizes the importance of business as a customer and has recently created a national VR-business network to expand their partnerships through the support of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation [27]. Key to this public-private partnership is developing a coordinated approach to serving business customers through a national VR team that specializes in employer development, business consulting, and corporate relations.

Supplemental staffing companies are another leading force in the development of public-private partnerships. Staffing companies provide excellent job opportunities for their applicants because they fill 80% of all information technology positions and 50% of all other positions [5]. Egan [5], states that a quality service requires establishing a relationship between a supplemental staffing company and agencies that specialize in returning people to work. The people and agencies that specialize in helping individuals with disabilities find employment also bring a key component of awareness training to the client-employers of the staffing company.

On the surface the challenge for developing new or expanding existing public-private partnerships looks easy, but it is important to realize that these relationships are not created over night or through a single contact [8]. There are strong held myths and fears regarding a job candidate with a disability as well as how a supplemental staffing organization operates. The following table addresses many of the myths with direct communication that will be critical for the development of partnership.

A strong and successful association is created by developing open and honest communication where both parties feel at ease to ask sensitive questions. Further, recognizing a common need or purpose and together developing strategies that will transform ideas into an organized approach and ultimately success for both parties is a great basis for growing a partnership. Over time these positive fundamental alliances are turning into strong trusting relationships and partnerships that hold great promise for increasing the employment rate and advancement of people with disabilities.

### **3. Development of a public-private sector model for employment in an urban community**

In July 2002, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in Richmond, Virginia received funding to facilitate the development of model public-private collaboration for placement of persons with developmental disabilities into the workforce. VCU chose to partner with a supplemental staffing company because people with disabilities and employment service organizations struggle with how to find jobs and the flexibility that is necessary for developing strong relationships with businesses. Staffing companies, on the other hand, are growing their companies because of their strong business relationship with companies in search of a qualified workforce. High quality staffing companies have a proven track record of experience in linking qualified people to a variety of employment options to include: temporary jobs, temporary-to-permanent employment, and/or direct hires. Yet, the full power of supplemental staffing organizations has not been realized. There exists a huge disconnect between staffing companies recruiting qualified applicants to fill client-employer work orders, people with disabilities who are seeking employment, and employment service organizations (ESOs) who assist people with disabilities with their job searches.

The VCU Public-Private Partnership model was designed to address this disconnect by creating a strong business relationship among supplemental staffing professionals, Virginian's with disabilities, and Virginia ESO's. While Virginia has several supplemental staffing companies, MANPOWER Inc was selected because they are the world's largest employer. MANPOWER International has 400,000 customers worldwide which includes 99 of the Fortune 100 US companies and 95% of the Fortune 500 companies. More than 400,000 businesses look to MANPOWER for their workforce solutions and approximately 800,000 people work for MANPOWER in North America. Roughly 40% of their employees are hired by their customers who are employers. On a local level, MANPOWER is the largest employer in the Richmond area. Each week MANPOWER places over 2,500 individuals into jobs. The Richmond MANPOWER office brings a powerful resource to the table both in terms of the volume of their business as well as their philosophy which directs their team members to focus on what people can do and not what they can't do. Both nationally and locally, MANPOWER has demonstrated that they are able to move people with disabilities from temporary

Table 1  
Communication to Strengthen Public-Private Partnerships

| Addressing Employment Related Myths   |  |
|---|--|
| Facts on Supplemental Staffing Companies  | Fact on Hiring People with Disabilities  |
| <i>Myth:</i> It is difficult to find a staffing company in most communities across the country.   | <i>Myth:</i> Persons with disabilities are unable to meet industry performance standards.  |
| <i>Fact:</i> American Staffing Association (2006) recognizes 6,000 companies with approximately 20,000 offices across the country.  | <i>Fact:</i> Unger [28] found employees with disabilities as capable and productive in terms of timelines, punctuality, task consistency and speed as employees without disabilities.  |
| <i>Myth:</i> Staffing companies will charge a fee to the job candidate when they find an employment position.   | <i>Myth:</i> Accommodations to workers with disabilities is tremendously expensive.  |
| <i>Fact:</i> There is no fee charged to the job candidate who obtains employment. Staffing companies generally have a contract with a company to fill a certain number of positions.  | <i>Fact:</i> Most employees require little or no accommodation with Job Accommodation Network (JAN) reporting 15% cost nothing, 51% cost \$1 to \$500, 12% cost between \$501 and \$1,000 and 22% over \$1,000.  |
| <i>Myth:</i> Staffing companies typically address day labor position not position that can grow and advance into careers.   | <i>Myth:</i> Roughly 40% of all employers report that it is difficult to provide accommodations.   |
| <i>Fact:</i> Staffing companies cover the full range of employment opportunities from day labor to CEO positions and everything in between.   | <i>Fact:</i> The vast majority of employers (73%) have not made any accommodation with \$500 representing the average cost among those who have made accommodations were required.   |
| <i>Myth:</i> Staffing companies only find temporary employment and once the job comes to an end the person is out of work.  | <i>Myth:</i> Employees with disabilities will have more accidents and cause company insurance rates to go up.  |
| <i>Fact:</i> Staffing companies offer a wide range of employment services to include temporary and contract staffing, recruitment and permanent placement, outsourcing, outplacement, training and human resource consulting, recruitment and permanent staffing. | <i>Fact:</i> Unger [28] report that employee with disabilities do not have accidents at a different rate than workers without disabilities. Additionally, workers compensation rates do not increase based upon a single worker; rather, they are set by the total number of accidents across a particular industry. |
| <i>Myth:</i> Staffing companies do not pay benefits.  | <i>Myth:</i> Employees with disabilities use more sick time and won't be productive.   |
| <i>Fact:</i> Most staffing companies offer highly competitive wages, often including health insurance, vacations and holiday pay and retirement.  | <i>Fact:</i> Employees with disabilities have the same absentee and sick rates as employees without disabilities.  |

to permanent positions at approximately the same rate as people without disabilities.

MANPOWER, Inc. board member, Terry Hueneker stated that "temporary work can help people with disabilities assess opportunities and help potential employers make work places accessible" (referenced). MANPOWER has taken a national leadership role in showing how the staffing industry can facilitate placements of persons with disabilities in the nation's labor force. In 2003 MANPOWER Inc was recognized by the US Secretary of Labor's New Freedom Initiative Awards as an exemplary public-private partnership dedicated to increasing the employment opportunities for youth and adults with disabilities.

The second essential part of this collaborative model was the community rehabilitation programs (CRPs). The CRPs consist of a variety of community organizations that assist individuals with disabilities in obtaining and maintaining competitive employment. For an CRP to accomplish this mission they must be well integrated into their community. While many CRPs, across the state of Virginia, have started to develop these business relationships, they have excluded staffing companies as a viable business partner. Generally speaking, many staffing companies are known to community

members as "temporary employment" agencies. While MANPOWER does offer temporary employment as an option, it only represents a single option across a full range of services. A major goal of this demonstration project was to support CRPs in gaining accurate information on the business model of supplemental staffing organizations; specifically how to identify high quality staffing companies, what to do when making a referral, and how to fulfill responsibilities when working with a staffing company.

A staffing specialist was hired to oversee the development of the project. In the initial month of the grant a letter was sent to all CRPs in the greater Richmond area to introduce the new project, request their participation in a pre-assessment survey, and inform them of training opportunities that would be customized to them and this project. Once the pre-assessment survey was developed it was posted online for easy access. The function of the pre-assessment survey was to test the knowledge of CRPs regarding the operation of a supplemental staffing company. It consisted of questions such as; how familiar are you with staffing companies, do staffing companies mainly offer temporary work, do staffing companies regularly place people with disabilities, and can an employment specialist can still pro-

vide job site training for persons with disabilities who have been placed by a staffing company? The results of the survey were used primarily to develop training for CRPs that would dispel their misconceptions of the supplemental staffing business.

A second survey was developed and administered to the Richmond MANPOWER offices. Eleven staff members from MANPOWER participated in this survey. The participants included managers, senior staffing specialist, and staffing specialists who had been with MANPOWER between one and sixteen years. The function of the survey was to assess their knowledge of ESOs as well as job seekers with disabilities. The survey consisted of questions such as; are you aware of the functions of a CRP, have you ever worked with a CRP, are you familiar with assistive technology devices, are you familiar with job coaches, and what can job coaches offer to staffing companies. The results of this survey were also used to develop training curriculum and materials for the MANPOWER employees.

## 4. Method

The primary objective for this model was to design a referral process to assist a minimum of 25 adults with developmental disabilities to secure employment, with a minimum of 15 individuals maintaining employment for at least 180 days. While the primary objective was increased competitive employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities it could not be achieved without an ongoing educational component. Consequently, another objective of the model was to educate the respective sectors on the benefits of collaboration.

### 4.1. Planning

The university staffing specialist collaborated with Manpower to develop a referral form, which would help them track and ultimately successfully place individuals with disabilities in competitive employment. The referral form required information pertaining to an individual's disability, but more importantly focused on that individual's skills and abilities. Once the referral form and process had been developed a database was created for reporting purposes.

### 4.2. Procedure for implementation

In order to implement a project of this nature, meetings were held with local ESOs to share details on the grant and the referral process. Prior to the meetings a fact sheet was developed that highlighted the grant and demonstrated the benefits of working with MANPOWER Inc. Individual meetings were conducted with all of the area CRPs. At each meeting the staff members were given a packet which included a MANPOWER information sheet identifying all the area locations, the referral form, MANPOWER's pre-registration form, and the project brochure. A key agenda item during these project kick-off meetings was facilitating a group discussion regarding CRPs past experiences with staffing companies. A small number of people reported that they had tried to access employment for their clients through a variety of local staffing company and while there were some positive results, the overwhelming experience by participants had been negative. One major problem reported by group members was that the staffing company had not been receptive to working with a job coach. The CRPs were assured that the project would address this concern through a series of training programs directed to all of the local MANPOWER staffing specialists and managers. These trainings would be designed to improve their understanding about the role of the job coach and strategies for how to sell the job coach to their business-customer.

A second issue for CRPs was when and how to disclose an individual's disability to MANPOWER staff. Most members believed that it was against the organizations rules of confidentiality and therefore felt that they did not have the authority to disclose a disability. Each CRP dealt with this issue internally and ultimately developed internal assurances that their customers with disabilities gave them permission to disclose their disability to MANPOWER staff. The CRPs quickly began to realize that in order for MANPOWER to be a partner in supporting a good job match, they needed to have some background information and functional information about a person's disability and include their strengths and interests. The final concern about confidentiality related to how MANPOWER handled disability-specific information after they received it. MANPOWER assured all project participants that this information would only be used for the purposes of job matching and would not be disclosed to a business-customer.

Throughout the course of the project CRP staff members and MANPOWER supplemental staffing special-

ists would receive regular disability awareness training. These events would address such topics as sensitivity training, information on specific disabilities, job accommodations, and the role of a job coach. Often these trainings ended up addressing questions and misconceptions that MANPOWER staff had regarding the abilities of people with disabilities. Partners in these training events included the Virginia Departments for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DDHH) who shared resources and information on these two specific disabilities and common accommodations.

#### *4.3. Source of referral*

Once the local MANPOWER offices started to receive referrals from the ESOs the project office received multiple complaints that the applications were incomplete. Information concerning an individual's disability and accommodations were vague and reported to be inadequate. Further, discussions with CRP staff members and their customers' revealed that they did not trust MANPOWER and ultimately felt that they would discriminate against their customers. An additional trust issue was revealed to the project staff when MANPOWER started to report that job coaches were attending the application and interview meetings with their consumers, even when their assistance was not necessary. To address these issues, face-to-face meetings were scheduled between MANPOWER and CRP managers. One of the strongest contributions to these meetings was MANPOWER's area sales manager sharing her personal experiences working with people with disabilities. These stories built confidence and new excitement regarding the potential impact of the project.

### **5. Results of urban demonstration**

Interpersonal relationships and communication clearly proved to be the key elements to making the three components of this collaborative partnership work effectively over the 24 months of this project. During this project period a total of 140 individuals with disabilities were referred to MANPOWER with 85% of those individuals representing individuals with developmental disabilities. Ultimately 39 individuals secured competitive employment, 21 individuals with developmental disabilities and 18 people with acquired disabilities. The following two tables provide a description of project participants who secured employ-

ment through this model demonstration project. Table 2 provides a description of those participants who maintained availability to work and completed the MANPOWER requirements to successfully secure employment include such personal data as age, disability, activity prior to referral, and employment goal. Table 3 reviews the same individuals and shares the title of employment position that was secured, wage, hours worked, a determination of the position matching the stated career goal at referral, and total number of months worked.

Of the 39 individuals who obtained employment in the urban demonstration project 56% or 23 individuals were female and 46% or 16 individuals were males. These individuals ranged in age from 18 to 57 years of age and crossed a variety of occupations to include such careers as file clerk, production worker, inventory clerk, administrative assistant, loan operator, and mail clerk. All participants received above minimum wage with an hourly pay ranging from \$7.50 an hour up to \$22.00 per hour, achieving a mean hourly rate of \$9.06 per hour. Fulltime employment, which is considered by MANPOWER as  $\geq$  to 30 hours per week, was secured by 44% or 17 participants with the remaining 56% or 22 individuals working  $< 30$  but a minimum of 20 hours. Months worked data were tracked on all participants by MANPOWER and at the end of 24 months of project funding, participants had employment records that ranged from 22 months to 1 month. Of the 39 individuals with disabilities who achieved employment, 59% or 23 individuals achieved continuous employment for  $> 180$  days. It is significant to report that MANPOWER was able to match 87% of all successful participants with positions that corresponded to their stated career goals. All individuals who were active with MANPOWER at the close of the grant will remain active clients for as long as they are interested.

### **6. Replicating the public-private sector model for employment in a rural area**

Based upon the lessons learned from the MANPOWER demonstration project it was the expressed interest of the Board for the Right of Virginias with Disabilities to replicate the project in a rural setting. Roanoke, Virginia located in the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains was selected as the replication site for two reasons: 1) its close proximity to the original site and thereby simplifying management issues, and 2) Roanoke, VA presented an entirely different economic market

Table 2  
 Characteristics of Successful Urban Participants Prior to Securing Employment

| Applicant Name | Age | Primary Disability | Activity Prior to Referral | Career Goal      |
|----------------|-----|--------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| Giac           | 31  | Sensory            | employed                   | Clerk            |
| Neverett       | 45  | Brain Injury       | volunteering               | Clerical         |
| Linda          | 44  | Psychiatric        | volunteering               | Office/clerk     |
| Hilmer         | 50  | Mobility           | training                   | Clerical         |
| Donna          | 55  | Psychiatric        | volunteering               | Customer Service |
| Larry          | 43  | Mobility           | school                     | Office Clerk     |
| Tabitha        | 24  | Cognitive          | training                   | Customer Service |
| Charles        | 37  | Sensory            | unemployed                 | Clerk            |
| Adrienne       | 55  | Health             | unemployed                 | Data entry       |
| Michelle       | 29  | Mobility           | employed (PT)              | Date Entry       |
| Joel           | 37  | Psychiatric        | employed (PT)              | Bookkeeping      |
| Daisy          | 54  | Psychiatric        | unemployed                 | Customer Service |
| Sophia         | 21  | Health             | employed                   | Data Entry       |
| Jamal          | 28  | Cognitive          | unemployed                 | Industrial       |
| Sediqua        | 25  | Health             | training                   | Customer Service |
| Kristen        | 24  | Psychiatric        | employed                   | Data Entry       |
| Margaret       | 49  | Sensory            | employed                   | Data Entry       |
| Teresa         | 38  | Sensory            | school                     | Warehouse        |
| James          | 38  | Psychiatric        | employed                   | Warehouse        |
| Thaxton        | 31  | Sensory            | employed                   | Production       |
| Adelle         | 48  | Health             | employed                   | Factory          |
| Clarence       | 44  | Health             | unemployed                 | Clerical         |
| Martha         | 49  | Mobility           | unemployed                 | Clerical         |
| Pauline        | 57  | Health             | unemployed                 | Customer service |
| Latrice        | 25  | Sensory            | unemployed                 | Clerical         |
| Ann            | 24  | Cognitive          | unemployed                 | Clerical         |
| Richard        | 38  | Epilepsy           | unemployed                 | Clerical         |
| Stacy          | 20  | Cognitive          | unemployed                 | Clerical         |
| Linda          | 50  | Psychiatric        | unemployed                 | Service worker   |
| Rebecca        | 37  | Psychiatric        | unemployed                 | Production       |
| Pamela         | 34  | Psychiatric        | unemployed                 | Administrative   |
| Mark           | 41  | Psychiatric        | unemployed                 | Industrial       |
| Jeanne         | 38  | Psychiatric        | unemployed                 | Warehouse        |
| Byron          | 22  | Psychiatric        | unemployd                  | Industrial       |
| Roberta        | 32  | Mobility           | unemployed                 | Clerical         |
| Andrew         | 42  | Sensory            | unemployed                 | Data Entry       |
| Jennifer       | 26  | Psychiatric        | training                   | Administrative   |
| Howard         | 23  | Sensory            | unemployed                 | Data Entry       |
| Julie          | 36  | Mobility           | unemployed                 | Clerical         |

The names used are fictitious names.

when contrasted with the urban community of Richmond, VA. Although Roanoke is part of the South both geographically and culturally, its economy developed around the railroad and heavy manufacturing industries. Roanoke's economy has more in common with cities in the northern "Rust Belt" than the "Sun Belt" of Richmond. The communities surrounding Roanoke are dependent on textiles and furniture manufacturing, which have lost a great many jobs to foreign competition and technological change. Some parts of this southwestern Virginia area are reliant on coal mining which has also suffered a reduction in jobs because the mines are employing fewer workers than in the past. The immediate Roanoke area has a low employment

rate with underemployment often cited as an explanation.

During the original demonstration project with MANPOWER a formal relationship was developed with the American Staffing Association (ASA), MANPOWER International, and Kelly Services. Because MANPOWER and Kelly Services are both well represented in the Roanoke area the project developed a formal relationship with both companies. Like MANPOWER, Kelly Services is internationally recognized for providing successful staffing and HR solutions to multinational companies. Kelly Services provides successful staffing solutions to businesses around the world including 95% of Fortune 500 companies. The

Table 3  
Employment Record for Successful Urban Partnership Participants

| Applicant Name | Position              | Wage and Hours      | Position Match Career Goal | Months Worked |
|----------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| Giac           | Title Clerk           | \$9.09 – full-time  | Yes                        | 22            |
| Neverett       | File Clerk            | \$9.34 – full-time  | Yes                        | 11            |
| Linda          | Production Worker     | \$7.50 – full-time  | No                         | 3             |
| Hilmer         | Office Clerical       | \$8.00 – full-time  | Yes                        | 8             |
| Donna          | Receptionist          | \$8.00 – part-time  | Yes                        | 2             |
| Larry          | Imaging               | \$9.35 – part-time  | Yes                        | 11            |
| Tabitha        | Admin. Assistance     | \$9.34 – full-time  | Yes                        | 14            |
| Charles        | Clerical Receptionist | \$8.55 – full-time  | Yes                        | 6             |
| Adrienne       | Clerical              | \$9.00 – part-time  | Yes                        | 7             |
| Michelle       | Clerical              | \$8.55 – full-time  | Yes                        | 5             |
| Joel           | Loan Specialist       | \$10.15 – full-time | Yes                        | 5             |
| Daisy          | Imaging               | \$10.15 – part-time | Yes                        | 5             |
| Sophia         | Loan Specialist       | \$7.49 – part-time  | Yes                        | 1             |
| Jamal          | Inventory Specialist  | \$9.50 – part-time  | Yes                        | 1             |
| Sediqua        | Clerk                 | \$8.00 – part-time  | No                         | 13            |
| Kristen        | File Clerk            | \$8.00 – part-time  | Yes                        | 1             |
| Margaret       | Data Entry            | \$9.50 – part-time  | Yes                        | 1             |
| Teresa         | Loan Specialist       | \$10.15 – part-time | Yes                        | 8             |
| James          | Forklift Operator     | \$9.00 – part-time  | No                         | 8             |
| Thaxton        | Production Worker     | \$8.00 – full-time  | Yes                        | 9             |
| Adelle         | Production            | \$7.75 – Full-time  | Yes                        | 5             |
| Clarence       | Production            | \$7.50 – full-time  | Yes                        | 3             |
| Martha         | Admin Assistant       | \$10.51 – full-time | No                         | 4             |
| Pauline        | Sales                 | \$10.00 – full-time | Yes                        | 3             |
| Latrice        | Imaging               | \$10.15 – full-time | Yes                        | 2             |
| Ann            | Clerk                 | \$8.78 – part-time  | Yes                        | 1             |
| Richard        | Clerical              | \$9.00 – part-time  | Yes                        | 6             |
| Stacy          | Inventory Specialist  | \$9.50 – part-time  | Yes                        | 3             |
| Linda          | Data Entry            | \$9.50 – full-time  | Yes                        | 3             |
| Rebecca        | Production            | \$7.50 – full-time  | No                         | 3             |
| Pamela         | Sales/Clerk           | \$10.15 – part-time | Yes                        | 3             |
| Mark           | Forklift Operator     | \$9.00- part-time   | Yes                        | 3             |
| Jeanne         | Inventory Specialist  | \$9.50 – part-time  | Yes                        | 3             |
| Byron          | Forklift Operator     | \$9.00- part-time   | Yes                        | 3             |
| Roberta        | Admin. Assistant      | \$10.51 – full-time | Yes                        | 3             |
| Andrew         | Data Entry            | \$10.15 – part-time | Yes                        | 3             |
| Jennifer       | Clerical              | \$9.00 – part-time  | Yes                        | 2             |
| Howard         | Data Entry            | \$9.50 – part-time  | Yes                        | 2             |
| Julie          | Clerical              | \$9.50 – part-time  | Yes                        | 2             |

The names used are fictitious names.

company is headquartered in Troy, Michigan., offering staffing solutions that include temporary services, staff leasing, outsourcing, vendor on-site and full-time placement. Kelly Services serves 200,000 customers through 2,500 company-owned and operated offices in 26 countries. They provide employment for nearly 700,000 employees annually, with skills including office services, accounting, engineering, information technology, law, science, marketing, light industrial, education, health care and home care. Corporate revenue in 2003 exceeded \$4.3 billion. Additionally, they are known as the premier promoter of the national Workforce Development program and through that program they have developed strong alliance with business

partners at the US Chamber of Commerce Center for Workforce Preparation.

The project was implemented using the same process that was developed from the Richmond project. The Roanoke regional managers with Kelly Services and MANPOWER reviewed the referral process established during the initial project and decided not to make any significant changes to the design. Meetings were conducted with the staff of MANPOWER and Kelly Services and the local CRPs to kick off the project and review how local programs could take advantage of this new resource. A new staffing specialist was assigned to the project, taking responsibility for ensuring that referrals were being made and that relationships were being built between the staffing company profession-

Table 4  
 Characteristics of Successful Rural Participants Prior to Securing Employment

| Name       | Age | Primary Disability                              | Activity Prior to Employment | Career Goal   |
|------------|-----|---|------------------------------|---|
| Katie      | 24  | Learning Disability                             | unemployed                   | Food Service  |
| Sharon     | 57  | Mental Illness & Orthopedic                     | unemployed                   | Office Assistant, Data Entry                        |
| Deepak     | 21  | Learning Disability                             | unemployed                   | Maintenance & Stocking                              |
| Casey      | 21  | Cognitive Disability                            | unemployed                   | Production  |
| Marquis    | 28  | Cognitive Disability                            | unemployed                   | Production  |
| Travis     | 19  | Learning Disability                             | unemployed                   | Production, Grounds Keeping, or Materials Handler   |
| Tracy      | 33  | Mental Illness                                  | unemployed                   | Spanish Interpreter, Office, or Customer Service    |
| Jacqueline | 20  | Learning Disability                             | unemployed                   | Production  |
| Deborah    | 49  | Arthritis & Repertory                           | unemployed                   | Production or Packer                                |
| Elizabeth  | 56  | Neck Injury                                     | unemployed                   | Historical Preservation or Office Management        |
| Sherrod    | 24  | Drug and Alcohol Addiction                      | unemployed                   | Production  |
| Dexter     | 42  | Drug and Alcohol Addiction                      | unemployed                   | Production, Customer Service, or Warehouse          |
| Paul       | 50  | Mental Illness                                  | employed                     | Call Center or Customer Service Representative      |
| Lester     | 50  | Mental Illness                                  | unemployed                   | Janitorial  |
| John       | 42  | Blind   | unemployed                   | Customer Service or Assembly                        |
| Natarska   | 34  | Mental Illness                                  | unemployed                   | Warehouse or Production                             |
| Rebecca    | 24  | Learning Disabilities                           | unemployed                   | Office Assistant                                    |
| Ashley     | 23  | Cognitive Disability and Mental Illness         | unemployed                   | Production  |
| John       | 42  | Paralysis in lower extremities; limited English | unemployed                   | Greeter, Office Work, Light Production, or Assembly |
| Stephanie  | 35  | Blind   | unemployed                   | Computer Office Work                                |

The names used are fictitious names.

als, the CRP staff, and people with disabilities seeking employment.

## 7. Results of rural demonstration

Like the original demonstration project, the rural replication project was funded for an 18 month period. However, with project start-up issues the project did not begin to accept program referrals for the first four months, resulting in 14 months of active placements. Over the course of the grant a total of 75 individuals with disabilities were referred to both Kelly Services and MANPOWER supplemental staffing companies with 90% of those individuals representing persons with developmental disabilities. Ultimately 20 individuals secured competitive employment through the project. Tables 4 and 5 share employment report data to include: age, disability, activity prior to referral, career goal, employment position, wage, hours worked, match to career goal, and total number of months worked.

As can be seen in Table 4, of the twenty individuals who achieved employment half were females and half were males. These participants ranged in age from 20 to 57 years of age and crossed a variety of occupations to include such careers as file clerk, production worker, inventory clerk, administrative assistant, loan operator, and mail clerk. All participants received above minimum wage with an hourly pay ranging from \$6.25

an hour up to \$9.00 per hour. The mean hourly wage for the rural partnership project was \$7.83. Fulltime employment of 30 hours or > was achieved by 75% of participants (15) and the remaining 25% (5) earning part-time employment of < 30 hours but greater than 20 hours. Months worked data were tracked on all participants by Kelley Services and MANPOWER and at the end of project funding period participants had employment records that ranged from 15 months to 1 month. Of the total number of individuals who achieved employment, 45% or 9 individuals achieved continuous employment for greater than 180 days. Together, Kelley Services and MANPOWER were able to match 65% of all successful participants with positions that corresponded to their stated career goals. Like the original demonstration project, despite the grant project coming to an end, both Kelley and MANPOWER will keep all 20 individuals as active client accounts interested in maintaining employment.

## 8. Public/private partnership results

The results described above provide information on disability; career goals, wage, hours worked and months employed. Despite the fact that the total number of project participants is limited to 59 individuals it is useful to compare these project data with national and state employment outcomes to begin to assess the success of

Table 5  
Employment Record for Successful Rural Partnership Participants

| Participant Name | Position                | Wage and Hour      | Position Match Career Goal | Months Worked |
|------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| Katie            | Food Services           | \$7.00 – full-time | Yes                        | 15 months     |
| Sharon           | Book Binder             | \$8.50 – part-time | Yes                        | 11 months     |
| Deepak           | Production/Assembly     | \$6.65 – full-time | Yes                        | 10 months     |
| Casey            | Janitorial              | \$8.00 – full-time | No                         | 15 months     |
| Marquis          | Food Production         | \$6.50 part-time   | Yes                        | 14 months     |
| Travis           | Assembly Work           | \$7.00 – full-time | No                         | 4 months      |
| Tracy            | Pack Worker             | \$7.50 – full-time | Yes                        | 2 months      |
| Jacqueline       | Production/Assembly     | N/A- full-time     | Yes                        | 1 months      |
| Deborah          | Handwork                | \$8.50 – full-time | Yes                        | 1 months      |
| Elizabeth        | Data Entry              | \$9.50 – full-time | Yes                        | 9 months      |
| Sherrod          | General Labor           | \$7.30 – full-time | No                         | 1 months      |
| Dexter           | Janitorial              | \$7.50 – full-time | No                         | 1 months      |
| Paul             | Telemarketer            | \$9.00 – full-time | Yes                        | 2 months      |
| Lester           | Food Handler            | \$9.00 – full-time | No                         | 1 months      |
| John             | Interviewer/Surveyor    | \$7.85 – part-time | Yes                        | 1 months      |
| Natarska         | Food Processor          | \$7.75 – part-time | No                         | 8 months      |
| Rebecca          | Receptionist            | \$9.25 – full-time | Yes                        | 8 months      |
| Ashley           | Book-Binder; Production | \$8.50 – part-time | Yes                        | 7 months      |
| John             | Production              | \$6.25 – full-time | Yes                        | 5 months      |
| Stephanie        | Filing                  | \$8.50 – full-time | Yes                        | 1 months      |

The names used are fictitious names.

these public-private partnerships. The primary intent of this project was to direct grant resources to ensure that individuals with developmental disabilities had access to employment. This goal was achieved with both partnerships with 85% of urban demonstration project and 60% of the rural project supporting persons with developmental disabilities in competitive employment. This population would most closely resemble a supported employment caseload with individuals typically receiving employment supports from a community rehabilitation provider (CRP) and a state vocation rehabilitation agency.

The Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) in Boston conducted a series of national studies, funded by the US Administration on Developmental Disabilities and the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) with the US Department of Education, which focused on employment and non-work service for providers and people with developmental disabilities [3]. This national survey covered the FY2004–2005 period and collected information from randomly chosen CRPs that provide employment services to individuals with disabilities. The ICI survey asked respondents to use a one-week snapshot to report employment outcomes for five individuals with developmental disabilities who had entered integrated or competitive job within the last two years (2003–2005) with support from the organization, and had been employed in the job for at least 90 days. When these national employment outcomes are contrasted

with project data we can see that individuals with developmental disabilities served by a CRP project report an average hourly wage of \$7.03 vs. \$8.64 for individuals served through the public/private partnership. Additionally, CRP's reported that approximately 60% of those who obtained an individual competitive job they were employed as part-time employment obtaining an average of 23 hours per week. The public/private partnership secured fulltime employment for over half of all participants or 54% with none of the participants working less than 20 hours per week.

ICI conducted a similar national survey of state agency vocational rehabilitation agency data which revealed that at the time of closure in 2005, supported employment employees were earning an average hourly wage of \$7.41 and Virginia supported employment constituents were earning a slightly higher wage of \$7.70. These data are contrasted with the Virginia public-private partnerships noting an average hourly wage across both demonstrations projects earning \$8.64. Further, these same data reveal that nationally supported employment employees work on average 23.49 hours per week compared with individuals in Virginia supported employment programs who work 26.15 hours each week. While the project only collected part-time vs. fulltime employment data, we do know that over half or 54% of the pilot participants achieved fulltime employment.

## 9. Discussion

It is notable that 100% of all applicants receive some kind of Soft Skills Training when they register with either MANPOWER or Kelly Services. This Soft Skills Training covered topics such as quality service, exceeding expectations, handling problem situations, customer requirements, telephone skills, dealing with harassment in the workplace and quality concepts. In most cases job coach support was provided to assist participants in completing these on-line programs. It is important to examine the placements made through MANPOWER and Kelly Services and the employment goals of participants. Both companies were enormously successful in matching employment goals and careers for participants. Much of this success was achieved through a process that MANPOWER describes as the "reverse funnel approach". The reverse funnel approach means that each individual worker enters the small end of the funnel, completes a skills assessment and training process, then emerges with the ability to perform and be considered for many jobs. The reverse funnel screens individuals into a variety of job opportunities, rather than screening out multiple applicants for a single job. They have also accomplished successful job matches by developing a comprehensive picture of each job assignment provided by their business customer.

Another very important partner in the accomplishment of these employment outcomes are the CRPs. One counselor stated that this whole process is a change in the way CRPs were trained to think. They were always taught the rules of confidentiality and through this partnership they were learning how an individual with a disability could expand the employment team. Staff members with the CRPs were open to this new way of thinking and began openly communicating with MANPOWER. This open communication and disclosure has been very important in achieving these results.

Finally, the educational component of this project has been essential in achieving collaboration and results. In the early stages of project a great deal of time was spent on the roles and function of each organization and then comparing and contrasting how the public and private sectors are similar and perhaps more importantly how they are different in their missions. There were many rough periods where staff would not execute partnership model in a timely or appropriate manner. Components of the process were routinely changed in order to make the overall goals of referral and employment achievable for people with disabilities. In the end both

the public and private sectors participated in a process that would ensure successful employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Everyone involved invested themselves in this partnership in a way that far exceeds other business relationships and ultimately are achieving real results.

## 10. Critical force of vocational rehabilitation and community rehabilitation programs

The rehabilitation professional is the key developer in public-private partnerships. They must acknowledge the employer as a customer and demonstrate how their resources and clients can meet the needs of the business [1]. Accessing employers and obtaining their investment in partnerships is not always an easy task. Rehabilitation professionals must research the companies they are approaching so they can market to that company's needs, ultimately affecting the return on investment for all associated partners. Through active development, companies from Microsoft to McDonalds are collaborating with the public sector and establishing initiatives to hire people with disabilities [5]. These partnerships are developing because of the increased knowledge and awareness between the two sectors and the understanding of mutual benefits.

Futurist researchers at the Herman Group have reported that the private sector is facing an estimated 10 million-employee labor shortage in 2010 and they need to actively recruit from untapped talent pools [11]. Currently, the most untapped talent pools are individuals with disabilities. Employers are realizing that hiring people with disabilities is good business. For example, since 1985, the Chicago Marriott has trained and hired more than 100 individuals with disabilities through a partnership with a non-profit organization [14]. The benefits to the hotel are lower turnover, free labor while the students are in training and increased management skills [14]. Employers report that while hiring people with disabilities makes good business sense, they often do not know how to tap into this labor force. Furthermore, training programs such as ones like MANPOWER has developed are not widely available in many industries. The rehabilitation provider allows the employer the opportunity to save time and money in recruiting, hiring, and retaining valuable workers with disabilities [1]. On the other side, the primary objective of the public sector, such as rehabilitation providers, is employment. Through partnerships with the private sector the public sector gains competitive employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

## 11. Critical forces of the private sector

One of the leading organizations promoting private-public partnerships is the Business Leadership Network (BLN) consisting of employers, corporate representatives, state and federal agencies, and community rehabilitation providers. The President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities established the BLN as an employer-led coalition promoting opportunities which benefit businesses and people with disabilities [15]. In order for the BLN to exist effectively they have to have the participation of employers and businesses. Therefore, the BLN focuses primarily on meeting the interests and needs of the employer. Lieshout [15] recognized that although there is a primary focus on employers the payoff comes to the public sector when the employers get more done than the provider may have been capable of accomplishing on their own. The BLN understands that partnerships between the public and private sector can expand opportunities and resources for both sectors and they work on demonstrating the benefits of a partnership to their members. People with disabilities are recognized by the BLN as the largest source of untapped talent and they are confident that they can help businesses effectively access this talent pool through introduction and education. The BLN has proven to be a successful partnership organization because of the success that job seekers and the employers have attained.

Another leading force in the development of public-private partnerships is supplemental staffing companies. Staffing companies have immense job opportunities for their applicants because they fill eighty-percent of all information technology positions and fifty-percent of all other positions [5]. HirePotential realized their capacity to place people with disabilities in good jobs. Staffing companies must discover the talents that people with disabilities have to offer an employer. If pre-employment training is key to the future success of an applicant, then a high quality staffing company can coordinate it with an outside facility, or do it themselves in-house [5]. Egan [5] states that a quality service requires establishing a relationship between a staffing company, like HirePotential, and the people and agencies that specialize in returning people to work. The people and agencies that specialize in helping individuals with disabilities find employment also bring a key component of awareness training to the client employers of the staffing company. Hire Potential found that the hardest part of employing people with disabilities was selling the concept to their client

employers because of the fears and misconceptions of how an individual with a disability might fit into their corporate environment. The training and information from agencies that support individuals with disabilities can help staffing companies dispel the myths and fears of their client employers. Egan [5] recognized that HirePotential and other staffing companies interested in employing people with disabilities needed to receive additional training on reasonable accommodations so they can inform and recommend accommodations and potential costs to their client employers. Favorable outcomes have occurred because of HirePotential's willingness to collaborate with vocational rehabilitation providers, social services, and other state and local agencies that specialize in the employment of people with disabilities and their good working relationship with large corporations and government agencies interested in hiring people with disabilities. They now experience approximately a thirty-percent success rate for assisting individuals from this untapped workforce in obtaining permanent positions within client-companies [5].

Finally, a number of businesses are getting involved with local schools and students with disabilities are obtaining business internships programs and ultimately achieving employment. These companies are recognizing that not only do they need to focus on recruiting from untapped talent pools, they also need to begin recruiting from students within that untapped pool of talent.

## 12. Conclusion

The outcome from this employment project provides preliminary evidence that the collaborations between CRP's and large corporations like MANPOWER or Kelly Services can be highly effective. Further efforts should include how to use a supplemental staffing company to assist people with disabilities in advancing their careers. The majority of the participants in this project were either unemployed or underemployed at the time they initiated a contract with MANPOWER and Kelly Services. Another way to maximize this relationship with a supplemental staffing company would be to identify individuals who are underemployed and are ready for career advancement.

Based upon the experience with these two demonstration projects, NIDRR with the US Department of Education funded a research project to test the effects of a Public-Private Partnership Program on Employment

Retention of Persons with Significant Disabilities. The purpose of this research project is to evaluate the differential effects of a private sector plus public sector employment intervention versus public sector intervention only on the employment outcomes of persons with significant disabilities. MANPOWER, Inc., the largest supplemental staffing company in the world, will partner with community rehabilitation programs in five different cities (Atlanta, Dallas, Huntsville, Miami, and Norfolk) to support the employment and job retention and support of individuals with significant disabilities. This intervention will be compared with a CRP intervention alone condition in a prospective randomized experimental-control group design [21]. To the best of our knowledge, no experimental evaluation of the efficacy of a public-private sector partnership has been performed, especially with a supplemental staffing company involved with persons who have significant disabilities.

Additionally, the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD) determined that the full power of supplemental staffing organizations had not been realized in Virginia because there remains a huge disconnect between staffing companies recruiting qualified applicants to fill client-employer work orders, people with disabilities who are seeking employment, professionals with state rehabilitation agencies and CRPs who assist job seekers with disabilities. VCU-RRTC along with the VA Governor Tim Kaine, VA Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS), VA Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired, VA Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and VA Association of Community Rehabilitation Programs (VaACSES) will work together to support the development of a *State Government Initiative Promoting Partnerships and Employment for Virginia's with Disabilities*. The goal of this partnership is to address this disconnect with a competitive employment model that creates a strong business relationship among state-contracted supplemental staffing organizations, Virginians with disabilities, and Virginia CRPs. This innovative personnel training and employment demonstration model will have national implications and assist supplemental staffing organizations in tapping into this existing pool of labor and ultimately increase the employment of people with disabilities.

Clearly, public-private partnerships are developing and have proven to be beneficial to all parties involved. Rehabilitation professionals are strengthening their relationships with businesses, which in turn is increasing the number of competitive job opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Finally, companies are real-

izing that the state Vocational Rehabilitation program and local CRPs can be an extremely valuable resource and employing individuals with disabilities and having a positive effect on their bottom line. The literature suggests that there has never been a better time that the present to develop these mutually beneficial public-private partnerships.

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