



Florida Center for INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Everyone Can Work! Customized Employment

Customized Employment is a strategy that provides persons with disabilities with an alternative to traditional, competitive jobs. This approach to individualized employment offers the promise of welcoming all job seekers with disabilities into the generic employment system and into a job that fits their needs. It also defines the critical role of vocational rehabilitation services to support both the individual with a disability and the workforce to make employment a viable option for people once thought to be unemployable (Mark Gold & Associates).

Customized Employment relies on a negotiated rather than competitive approach to employers and the generic workforce. The focus of this strategy is to determine the ideal conditions for wage Employment and/or self employment and how that information is translated into options for job seekers, potential business owners and entrepreneurs.

What Works?

Individualized

Customized employment means:

- ◇ Individualizing the employment relationship between wage earning employees and employers in ways that meet the needs of both; and/or
- ◇ Creating small business opportunities (micro-enterprises) for potential business owners.

Both approaches are based on an individualized determination of the interests, abilities, strengths, and needs of the individual with a disability.

Person Centered

Customized employment is a person centered approach to economic self sufficiency which may include wage employment developed through job carving or other job development strategies that result in job responsibilities being modified and individually negotiated to fit the needs of employees as well as employers. Self employment support potential business owners with disabilities to own and operate their own businesses.

Center for Self-Employment

The Florida Center for Inclusive Communities houses the Center for Self-Employment(CSE), which is responsible for self-employment supports for the state of Florida. The Center engages in three core areas of service in order to deliver self-employment supports and build capacity within the stated.

1. **Direct Service:** The Center receives referrals from Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors regarding eligible VR customers who are interested in pursuing self-employment. The Center provides training and support so VR customers to develop a business design team and a viable business plan.

2. **Capacity Building:** The Center conducts an application process and identifies potential providers of self-employment supports. The CSE then provides direct training and technical assistance for the providers. Capacity building is addressed in two ways: 1) technical assistance during direct self-employment (customer) support, and 2) development of a Self-Employment Network that will build quality community-based self employment options for eligible VR customers.
 3. **Material Development and Dissemination:** The Center is developing self-employment related materials and resources, which will be in accessible electronically and hard-copy formats. Materials and resources will include the following: informational papers: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), case studies directly related to self-employment, and technical assistance directly related to Social Security and work incentives.
 4. **Evaluation:** The Center will implement an evaluation system, which will be used to improve the training, technical assistance, ongoing supports and resource development. The evaluation system will include the measurement of VR customer satisfaction, effectiveness of the training, technical assistance and ongoing supports, the accessing of Center resources, and the usefulness of the resources.
- ◇ **Micro-Enterprise Training and Technical Assistance Project(METTA):** This is a training and technical assistance project, funded by the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, that focuses on supporting individuals with developmental disabilities to develop their own businesses.
 - ◇ **Start-Up Florida/Self-Employment for Adults and Youth with Disabilities:** The Agency for Workforce Innovation, Vocational Rehabilitation, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities and USF has been awarded a collaborative grant from the US Department of Labor/ODEP. USF has been included in this grant as a major partner for the purpose of the expansion and evaluation of METTA, as well as capacity building within the One-Stop system. www.start-up-usa.biz

Resources

- ◇ *The Customized Employment Process: A series of training sessions for customizing employment outcomes for job seekers with significant disabilities;* (Michael Callahan, Mark Gold & Associates).
- ◇ Griffin, C., Hammis, D. *Making Self-Employment Work for People with Disabilities.* Baltimore, Maryland: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc.
- ◇ Doyel, A.W. *No More Job Interviews! Self-Employment Strategies for People with Disabilities.* St. Augustine, FL: Training Resource Network, Inc.

FCIC Related Projects

- ◇ **Supported, Integrated, Employment, Team Training Project:** This training and technical assistance project focuses on the capacity building within community rehabilitation provider community and other key employment stakeholders to support customized employment for individuals with developmental disabilities. It is funded by a Florida Developmental Disabilities Council grant.