

Kansas Department of Commerce, Workforce Services Division
Disability-Focused Services

Department of Commerce, Workforce services Division, provides a continuum of services designed to meet the challenges faced by job seekers with disabilities as they pursue education and employment toward self-sufficiency and independence. Further, Commerce leverages its partnerships with employers to assist with the employment placement of these customers, meeting the needs of both job seekers and employers. Through its federally funded workforce system, **KANSASWORKS**, Commerce partners with Local Workforce Investment Areas, other state agencies and postsecondary education providers to develop the skilled workforce required by our growing economy.

For example, the Kansas Department of Commerce has engaged 3 Local Workforce Investment Boards, 6 Community and Technical Colleges, 1 University, 2 state-level agencies serving individuals with disabilities and 14 employers to improve education and employment outcomes of adults with disabilities who access the state public workforce system. Through the federal Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) grant, Commerce will further engage these partners to drive systemic change to **KANSASWORKS** and its partnership with postsecondary education to promote education and training as a viable option for individuals with disabilities, modifying policies and procedures as needed to provide ease of access for job seekers with disabilities to job-driven skill training. DEI and Local Workforce Investment Board staff will also work with employers across their local areas to encourage, support and advocate for hiring individuals served through the project. Kansas will use all available state and federal resources to assist DEI participants through Integrated Resource Teams, tuition scholarships, case management, supportive services and work-based training. DEI participants may earn while they learn through paid internships, on-the-job training and other agreements, also demonstrating their qualifications to employers and improving their employment outcomes.

DEI will fund long-term work-based by Project SEARCH, in Local Areas I and III a program typically delivered to youth with disabilities. Project SEARCH in Kansas City and Salina will be modified to serve adult DEI participants.

The **KANSASWORKS** Employer Partner Incentive (KEPI), funded by the Medicaid Reform Employment Incentive, is used to provide cash incentives to employers which hire individuals with disabilities who are Medicaid eligible. Incentives are provided based on the number of hours the individual works and the length of time the individual remains employed. For fulltime positions held by an eligible individual for a full year, an employer could receive up to \$3,000.00.

In addition to the funding streams and related programs detailed above, Commerce provides technical assistance to local Workforce Investment systems, ranging from instructions on the requirements and use of adaptive equipment to training staff members on the coordination of multiple services available to individuals with disabilities. Further, Kansas' workforce system was one of only two in the US chosen for training and technical assistance provided by the LEAD Center, a national organization led by the National Disability Institute and dedicated to improving the economic advancement outcomes of people with disabilities. Assistance provided by the LEAD Center helps us assure workforce services are both physically and programmatically accessible to all job seekers, regardless of ability. As an outgrowth of this partnership, Commerce has convened the three Managed Care Organizations and six other state agencies to determine if there are cross-agency, programmatic and/or policy barriers to serving our common customers who have disabilities.