

# Bringing a Local Success Story to Scale:

## A Local Transition-to-Work Program Influencing Statewide Systems Change Efforts

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March 12, 2013

AUCD TA Institute

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# A Little History:

- ❑ New York late to an employment first philosophy
- ❑ Rochester, NY
- ❑ Institute for Innovative Transition
- ❑ Erin Riehle
- ❑ Project SEARCH™ at URMC

# Background: Employment options

Sheltered workshops  
Work activity centers

Individual or group  
supported employment

Competitive  
employment

Fully supported  
work environment

Independent  
work environment

# Project SEARCH™: Key concepts

- Business led collaboration with education, rehabilitation and long term support
- Braided funding
- Immersion and impact
- Training in real work settings
- Low risk, low cost for business
- Hiring students who are “good fit”

# Project SEARCH™: Goals and outcomes

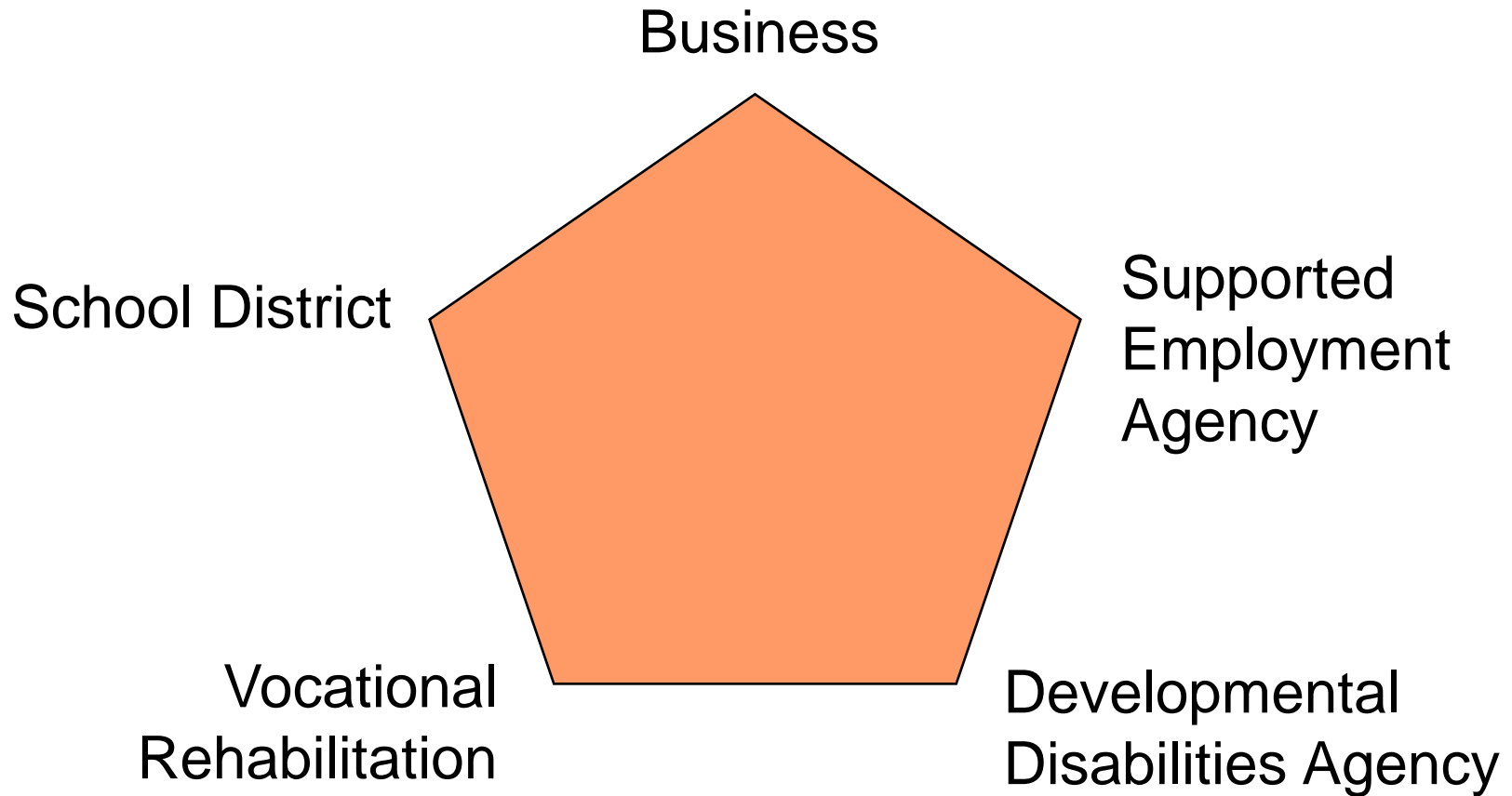
Provide employability skills training to students with significant disabilities through on-site immersion in a business.

- Project SEARCH™ participants obtain and maintain competitive employment in the business or like business in the community.

Provide supports to the business to encourage the hiring of individuals with disabilities

- The business will give consideration for employment to individuals with significant disabilities.

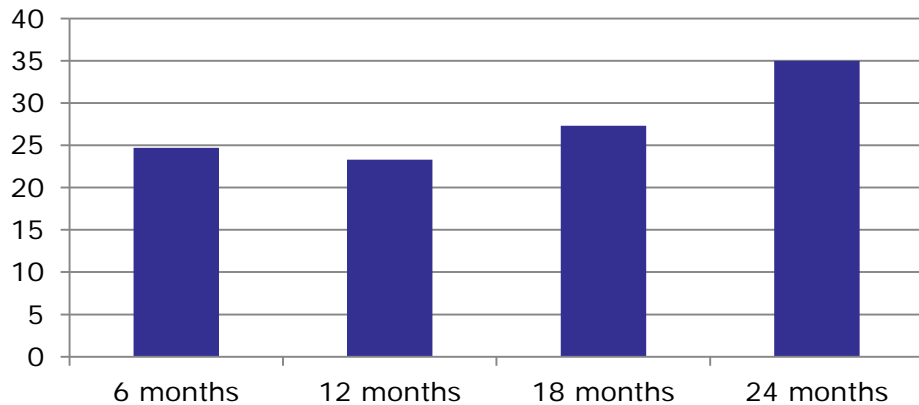
# Project SEARCH™: Collaboration model



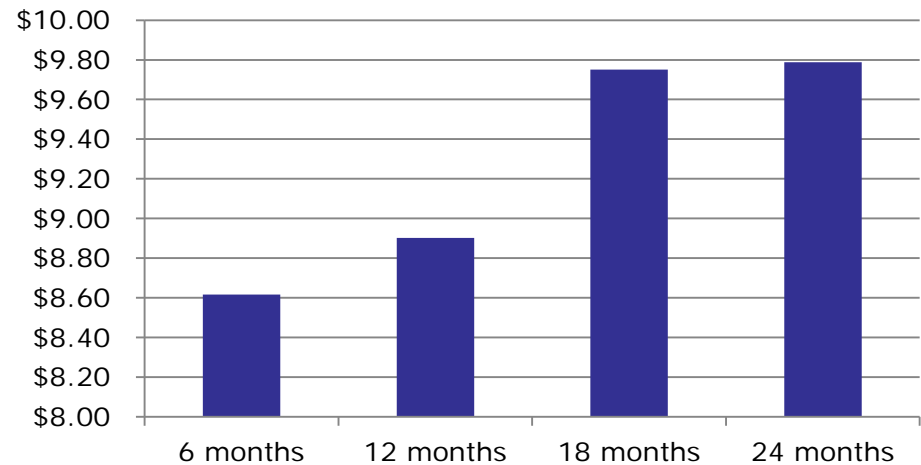
# Summary: Outcome evaluation

- Graduates who maintain employment are growing in their positions

### Avg. # Hours per Week Employed



### Avg. Rate per Hour Earned



# Summary: Outcome evaluation

- Promising results in first three years
  - 74 participants
  - Completion rate: 80%
- 85% of program graduates transitioned into competitive, integrated employment
  - 70% hired by partner host business
- Graduates work an average of 23 hours per week at \$8.52/hour at hire (range: \$7.25 - \$12.19)



## AIDD's Charge

There is an opportunity and expectation through these grants to encourage states to:

- ❑ ensure leadership that is going to support collaboration;
- ❑ strategically use policy, funding, training and service delivery, and data in a coordinated manner;
- ❑ innovate to address identified challenges.

**The ultimate goal is to better prepare students and young adults with I/DD for competitive, integrated employment when transitioning out of secondary or postsecondary services.**

# Focus on Collaboration

Mandated partners:

- ❑ State DD agency
- ❑ VR
- ❑ Special Education
- ❑ DD Planning Council

# Success at local level leading to change at NYS level

Implementation of Project SEARCH™ led to:



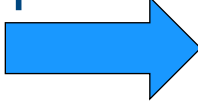
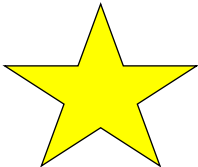
- ❑ Increased conversation and group learning across systems
- ❑ Earlier referrals to VR and DD
- ❑ Informed readiness to work curriculum in transition classrooms
- ❑ Challenged traditional approach to work study programs
- ❑ Improved connection between adult agencies and area businesses

# Bringing collaboration to scale:

- ❑ **Employment First-** belief that employment is attainable for all
- ❑ Need to assess for and train towards least restrictive employment options
- ❑ Integrated, competitive employment as Gold Standard:
  - 20+ hours per week at prevailing wage
  - Fully integrated within work environment, utilizing natural supports

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# Informing statewide systems change

- ❑ Success of local programs 
- ❑ Statewide recognition 
- ❑ Collaboration of NYS agencies to develop AIDD employment systems change proposal 
- ❑ Working together to implement NYS's Employment First policy- challenging relationships 

# What Have We Learned?

- ❑ Change is hard especially when your governor wants to be President and CMS is saying your state owes them billions of dollars
- ❑ Some people don't like it when you take away services, i.e. sheltered workshops
- ❑ In a state as large and diverse as New York regional efforts are more likely to be successful
- ❑ Success breeds success
- ❑ State agencies actually can work together

# Changes in New York:

- ❑ Our DD agency is working to close the door to new enrollment in sheltered workshops
- ❑ Our VR agency is increasing access to funding for agencies to provide job coaching for transition age youth
- ❑ Our Office of Special Education is beginning to see their role in encouraging and supported integrated, competitive employment through the Transition Plan
- ❑ New curriculum and new programs throughout the state



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