

**Kessler Foundation Funded:
Best Practice Examples to Increase Employment for People with Disabilities
Completed and Ongoing Examples**

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Public/Private Partnership Model-Distribution Sector

Completed

National Organization on Disability, (New York, NY) – “Bridges to Business” expanded hiring initiatives in three distribution centers for Lowe’s – Pittston, PA; Findlay, Ohio; and Statesville, North Carolina. This pilot project (2010-2012) expanded Lowe’s corporate disability employment program and created a local pipeline of workers with disabilities through partnerships with local agencies and vocational rehabilitation. More than 120 individuals hired: **\$250,000**. (Disability and Work Research Brief available - [Strategies to Support Employer-Driven Initiatives to Recruit and Retain Employees with Disabilities](#) / Evaluation report available upon request)

Ongoing

Association for Supporting Employment First (APSE), (Rockville, MD) - Partnership with OfficeMax to create 4 sites for job training in their distribution or retail operations for individuals with significant disabilities that will employ a minimum of 60 people over two years in Columbus, OH; Las Vegas, NV; and Chicago, IL. Collaborations are with local nonprofit partners and state vocational rehabilitation agencies. In year two - [training centers](#) open in Chicago and Columbus: **\$323,333**. ([Kessler Foundation Awards \\$323,333 to APSE to Improve Employment Outcomes for People with Disabilities](#))

Collaborative Funding Model - Public/Private Partnership Model – Distribution Sector Ability Beyond, (Bethel, CT) - Began January 2014. Launches PepsiCo Americas Beverages (division of PepsiCo) Pepsi ACT (Achieving Change Together) corporate initiative to hire approximately 2,000 individuals nationally within 8 identified regions. This 5-year project is supported by a group of funders pooling funds collaboratively in support of project – Kessler Foundation (**\$450,000**), Poses Family Foundation (**\$450,000**), Autism Speaks and NY Collaborates for Autism (**\$200,000**).

Social Enterprise

Ongoing

The Center for Head Injury Services (CHIS), (St. Louis, MO) - Launched “[Destination Desserts](#)” (DD), a social enterprise business, to provide vocational training and placement for persons with head injuries and other neurological impairments. A **\$500,000** grant award in 2013 to facilitate business

expansion followed a **\$50,000** planning grant test phase. This past April, CHIS purchased and customized a 14-foot box truck to sell coffee, latte, cupcakes, breakfast pastries, cookies and brownies at office parks and public events. Although DD is still in its start-up phase, it employs 22 people and is projected to gross \$100,000 in 2013. (www.destinationdesserts.org / [Watch the video](#))

Hudson Community Enterprises, (Jersey City, NJ) – Operates a family of social enterprises – including digital mail management, document imaging, document archiving, and document shredding. Start-up funding **\$736,000** (**\$250,000** no-interest loan in 2013) was provided by Kessler Foundation during 2005-2010. [HCE](#), which provides job training and advancement, currently employs 150 people in this business with revenues of \$4 million in 2013. (www.hudsoncommunity.org / [Watch the video](#))

Easter Seals Greater Washington Baltimore Virginia Region, (Silver Spring, MD) - Startup funding (January 2014) for the Veteran Staffing Network (VSN), a social enterprise temporary staffing business, for veterans, wounded warriors, National Guard/Reserves, and their spouses. Goal to employ 250 wounded warriors by year 2 for our funding, (totally project has other employment goals based on funding from other partners): **\$412,000**. (www.veteranstaffing.org)

National Telecommuting Institute, (Boston, MA) - A project to scale a national telework project in collaboration with employers committed to hiring [home-based individuals with disabilities](#) in customer service industry “Telework Options for People with Severe Mobility Impairments” (2012): **\$250,000**. (www.nticentral.org)

Education and Training

Completed

AHEDD, (Camp Hill, PA) - Through its “Promoting Employment through Work Incentive Counseling Among Transition Aged Youth with Disabilities” (2010-2012), AHEDD collaborated with schools in the Southeast PA region to establish work-incentive counseling as a standard practice among young adults receiving SSA benefits, and trained job development staff to be certified workforce incentive counselors (CWICS). Financial counseling was also provided via subcontractor. There were 128 young adults placed in employment: **\$474,394**.

National Disability Institute, (Washington, DC) - “BEST Employees: An Employment Model for People with Disabilities in Credit Unions and Banks in New Jersey” (2010). In collaboration with National Federation of Community Development Credit Unions and Allies, Inc. piloted and tested over two years an employment and career advancement model in the Financial Services sector (credit unions): **\$497,897**. ([Kessler Foundation funds BEST Internship Program for People with Disabilities](#))

Ongoing

National Disability Institute, (Washington, DC) - “BEST Employees NY” is a two-year scaled-up project and replication of pilot in NJ in financial services sector that facilitates connection between

employers and qualified job seeker with disability through the use of applicant training and certification, Vocational Rehabilitation Work-Try-Out and On-The-Job training funding, and capacity-building to ensure project sustainability post-funding (2013): **\$484,452**. ([Kessler Foundation Awards \\$484,452 Grant to the National Disability Institute to Improve Employment in the Financial Industry for People with Disabilities](#))

San Diego State University Research Foundation, (San Diego, CA) - Supports an innovative and engaging professional workplace-skills curriculum for college students with disabilities "Bridging the Gap from College to Careers", combining career-oriented work experience and internships, peer and professional mentorships, and placement assistance. This project began in January 2014 and will be piloted at 3 universities: San Diego State, and University of California-Berkeley, California State University-Fullerton. Collaborators include Policy Works, USBLN, WID, and California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR): **\$437,888**.

University of Hawaii, (Honolulu, HI) - [EmployAble: A World Without Barriers](#) (2012) supports a two-year project to build a model Virtual Employment Orientation and Support Center, using the VR platform 'Second Life', to provide skills training in a real-time environment for people with diverse disabilities. Encompasses networking, mentoring, and employment resources for both persons with disabilities and employers: **\$425,000**. (<http://www.cds.hawaii.edu/employable/>)

Faith-Based Networks to Facilitate Employment

Ongoing

Vanderbilt University Kennedy Center, (Nashville, TN) - This project ,which began January 2014 replicates and scales-up a Kessler Community Employment 2013 pilot in Minnesota, using partners of the National Collaborative on Disability, Religion, and Inclusive Spiritual Supports, a program of the University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (UCEDD). Besides Vanderbilt, project partners are the Universities of Kentucky, Minnesota and Texas-Austin. The collaboration will build the capacity of congregations to expand, refine, and evaluate customized processes that equip faith communities to support employment for members with disabilities. There is huge potential for replication as a low-cost way to increase employment for individuals with disabilities: **\$449,961**.

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**Elaine Katz and Rodger DeRose, president and chief executive officer of Kessler Foundation, are available for interview. For more information or to arrange an interview with the Foundation's experts, contact:

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