

# **Employees with Disabilities: Recruitment, Hiring and Training**

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Good afternoon and welcome to Employees With Disabilities Recruitment Hiring and Training. This is the second webinar in a two-part series introducing the Demand Side Employment Models project tool kits. This is recorded and archived on the project website. My name is William Myhill. I'm the Project Director for the Demand Side Employment Models grant. I'll be serving as the moderator for today's session.

This webinar will explore innovative strategies to successfully recruit, hire and train people with disabilities. Inclusive culture values all employees, individual

differences and needs. Likewise, the key to generated qualified, productive, loyal employees with disabilities, requires a commitment to making all aspects of the employment process, open, flexible and accessible.

Our panelists will explore these strategies and resources in detail. Our objective for today are to learn about the importance of accessibility in the recruitment, hiring, and training of employs with disabilities. To identify people central to and the resources available for an effective recruitment strategy, to understand the role of vocational services in the hiring and training of employees and to identify best practices in the recruitment, hiring and training of employees with disabilities.

Today's guest speakers are Dr. Meera Adya, Garry Houghton and Jill Shaheen. Meera oversees all the offices. Jill is the Organizational Development Specialist. She's working to recruit and build partnerships with Vocational Rehabilitation agencies and employment service providers. Additionally, she's leading an effort to develop and implement diversity disability supplier program.

Gary Shaheen is the Senior Vice President of the Burton Blatt Institute. He's an expert in rehabilitation, he's provided expertise to state mental health authorities throughout the country. He teaches a course on inclusive entrepreneurship at Syracuse University.

Before we get started, I want to share some information and answer frequently asked questions about our webinars. Today's webinar is being conducted use Blackboard collaborate, a system that is accessible to everybody, regardless of disability. This can be access from just about any computer with a web browser. Participants are able to listen to this session using a phone connection for audio. If you're using a phone connection, please put your phone on mute. Additionally,

this session is being captioned. To turn on captioning, please click on the CC icon in the upper toolbar to open a window with captioning.

Today call is being recorded for future use. You'll be sent a link after the session. The first session is also available.

I will point it out to you towards the end of our presentation today. At this time, we are unable to troubleshoot any technical issues. We recommend you close all other applications running on your computer. They may interfere with your successful experience. Also, tap the spacebar just to let the blip in our system know you are still there. Participants may submit questions by typing them into the chat area at the bottom left of the screen. Questions will be asked during an open forum at the end of today's presentation. We will now begin the panel discussion.

Our first guess is Meera Adya. Meera, are you there? Would you give us a brief introduction?

Meera: Absolutely. Can everyone hear me? Give me a green check to make sure my audio's working well? Wonderful, thank you. William, you introduced me well, I'm the Director of Research at the Burton Blatt Institute. I'm excited to discuss the issues on the agenda today. We've done research here connecting case studies with large fortune 100 and 500 organizations looking at their inclusive culture, their practices and understanding how that impacts the recruitment, hiring and training of individuals with disabilities, as well as downstream along the employment spectrum, the accommodation, the promotion, the retention and the advancement of individuals with disabilities as well. And, while I'll definitely keep a focus on recruitment, hiring and training, I think this is an area that sets up the stage with employment experience across

the board for one's employees and has relevance to that. I'll pay homage to those issues a little bit too.

William: So to get us started, how does accessibility in the recruitment, hiring and training of employees and abilities affect business's bottom line?

Meera: I think across the board it has significant capacity to affect the bottom line of an organization. And really the most obvious way in which that takes place is when you don't have an accessible recruiting process and you aren't able to bring in the best candidate. You're missing out on the challenge and the value that exists within the potential workforce and not turning them into a realization for your actual workforce. This way, the leading candidate can go on to become employed as a computer. But across the board, they just won't be a part of your organization.

If someone is able to overcome the barriers to accessible challenges, there's a lack of accessibility here for them and they're likely not to be as disclosing about the disability as they continue through their employment experience and as their individually trying to manage that, and that might cause some other impacts along the way. It doesn't allow them to reach their full potential.

One of the things that we've paid attention to in our prior webinars and will continue to have relevance here, many of the things we can do to be accessible and inclusive at all stages of the employment process, but including the hiring and training side of things, is that, there's a universal component to it. If you involve, implement a solution for one group of individuals, it tends to work for multiple groups of individuals and it definitely lends an atmosphere to the workplace of inclusion in a positive culture that can affect things.

William: Thank you. That's very insightful and common sense to many of

us, but it's important for employers to become aware of these issues to help their bottom line. Tell us about recruitment in hiring and training employees with disabilities.

Meera: If you're looking at your hiring and recruitment processes, you can think about all the different pieces that go into it. You're crafting your job description and you're listing all of the skills, the certifications, the added value components that someone can bring to the workplace, you're advertising it in a certain manner, you are promoting certain aspects of your business in a tiny little blurb. In all pieces, you can examine what it is you're communicating and how you're making opportunities available and make sure they wouldn't inadvertently pose any barriers and they communicate that your organization is one that's committed to inclusion and that's committed to diversity.

In our past webinar, when we discussed culture at large, we noted the importance that a diversity statement that explicitly articulates all of the different groups that are included in your organization can set a great tone. That's one place where you can start to make that communication to the public and say, this is a company that has these values. We welcome applicants from all of these different targeted groups.

Look at the way in which you're posting that and what groups it's likely to reach, in addition to going to your usual suspects, your job boards, or your pipe lines, think about specific targeted pipe lines that may be more likely to reach individuals with disabilities. Other professional networking sites, professional organizations, Vocational Rehabilitation pipe lines, so again, all across the board, I'd say in terms of the method that you use, and in terms of the substance and the information that you're putting out, there are multiple opportunities to make

sure that you're accessible and make sure you're inclusive. Moving a little further down the chain, when someone sees the advertisement and determines that they are, that they are eligible for the particular employment opportunities that you're advertising, how is it that they're able to then apply for that job? Or communicate to your organization that they want to be considered? Most sites these days, most companies are moving to online mechanisms and as we'll discuss a little bit ahead, the online systems need to be accessible, fully and completely throughout the process. They can be tested by users, they can be tested by the company and there are technical guidelines that can support us to make sure that inadvertently, we're not having that system pose any barriers.

William: That's an excellent segue into an area of research I know you're undertaking with regards to these types of web portals. What then is the role of an employer's web portal with regard to recruitment and hiring?

Meera: We're working, we're fortunate to be working with a professor at Tosen University [phonetic], evaluating systems for a variety of entities, determining whether or not from a user experience perspective, they meet accessibility, sort of standards, if you will. There's certainly, there are, the worldwide web, content, accessibility guidelines that are available and posted for everyone to examine and make sure that all of their online systems meet usability, accessibility standards. There's also section 508 that dictates accessibility guidelines and standards that should be met. These should be accessed and your IT department and your company should be conversant. All your web portals should meet these standards. Absolutely we'd say your recruitment, your online hiring systems should.

The other thing you can do, you could have individuals try to test the system and access it and this is what we're working on in our research with a professor from Tosen University. We've had him go into the online hiring systems of 16 different companies with 16 co-researchers who are individuals who are blind. And have screen readers and are able to work online as long as the online system that they're interfacing with has been designed in a way to be accessible.

These 16 individuals applied for two jobs each. We had 32 applications and tests of whether the system would work and be accessible. Out of 32 of these attempts, only nine of them were able to be conducted in a way where there were no problems and they could function independently and submit an application.

And that's a 28% success rate. So, across the board, he has done this research, for example, with airline ticketing systems. When you purchase tickets online and he's found similar results. There are many systems that are just designed in a standard routine way using general best practices, but they can inadvertently send out small systems that are barriers. You can't press a button, you can't get a preview, you can't upload using the screen reader and these are all of the key components of being able to submit your resume and make sure you have a successful application.

Fortunately, the way to overcome this is really simple. And it just involves digging into these additional accessibility guidelines and making sure that all your systems are compatible with screen readers. The next phase of our research which I'd hope to report on in the future will involve conducting case studies with companies where we can do the evaluation of their system and then work with them to improve it and document what the steps were that were necessary so

very common issues can be documented and the common solutions implemented.

If anybody, today, who is listening, would want to learn more about this or participate, you're more than welcome to contact me. I'll type in my e-mail address so you can reach out to me and be excited for that collaboration.

William: Thank you very much, Meera. We'll go ahead and move onto our next speaker, but if you have questions for Meera or other speakers, you're welcome to put them into the text box. We'll hold those until our question-and-answer, or answer them on the spot. It depends on where our sequence with the panelist is.

We'll move to our next panelist. Jill Houghton. Would you like to check in and say an introduction, please?

Jill: Thanks, William. Well, I think you introduced me in the beginning and I do work on the Southeast TACE project. I also serve as the Executive Director of the U.S. Business Leadership Network. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

William: Thank you very much, I'm glad you mentioned that. As we move along in this discussion of hiring and recruitment, training and advancement issues for people with disabilities. Talking back to our last webinar, where we talked about different walls of persons in the employment culture, and how they play a role in being supportive or posing barriers to whether or not people have these opportunities, what can you tell us about the roles that management personnel have in facilitating the effective hiring and training opportunities for employees with disabilities.

Jill: Well, I think one of the things we talked about, on the last webinar is

really key to, to point out again. Which is that from a management standpoint, that you know, it's one thing for management to support and be a champion of diversity, it's another thing for them to, to kind of move beyond that, and to be a champion of inclusion. Because diversity is something that exists, regardless, but inclusion is something that you have to make a conscious decision that you're going to create. And so, in terms of the roles that management play, in facilitating the effective hiring and training for individuals with disabilities, A, they have to be really committed towards creating an inclusive culture. And, and get that message out loud and clear.

So you know, some of the things that, that they need to champion, and drive throughout the company are things like making accessibility a priority. So, you know, not just thinking about it from the access of like how does the applicant get in the front door, but thinking about it wholistically, in terms of the workplace. So whether that's looking at it through a Universal Design lens and, um, looking at the Universal Design and the access to things, where things are on shelf, like if they need to access the copy paper and the copy room or you know, thinking about doors to bathrooms, thinking about the, the, um, physical side of it, but also thinking about the ergonomic side of it. As our workplace changes and as folks, perhaps are beginning to telecommute and work in hoteling environments, et cetera. Thinking about it from an ergonomics and health and wellness standpoint and factoring in disability and thinking about being inclusive, as well as looking at it from the technology standpoint.

So, through their, their online applications, to how an employee accesses the intranet to perhaps how an employee accesses, perhaps they do training videos, right? On their intranet and maybe a person has deafness, are things captioned?

Looking wholistically at the three legs of the stool and making sure it's priority and they're championing an inclusive environment.

Something we all talk about, it's one thing for management to be that champion. Pushing down that information and getting mid-level managers invested and bought in, making sure they have the knowledge they need so that, for example, somebody does request an accommodation, they know the process, but you know, instead of just pointing fingers like, that's not my job or I don't know whose budget that comes out of, they don't know what to do, but really, empowering the mid-level managers with, with training and with information. And you know, focusing on just creating that environment where there's an opportunity for open dialogue between management and between individuals with disabilities and management should be including people with disabilities. So that's kind of a holistic viewpoint, William.

William: That's excellent. One of the trends that seems to be evolving is, is for Peer Mentoring and affinity groups that sort of serve to meet different interests or [indiscernible] in the company. Are these things, placeable for people with disabilities in the workforce. (?).

Jill: You know, absolutely, I think that what we've learned or what we're learning in this space is that many companies are beginning to start, perhaps they have an affinity group or perhaps they're looking at starting one. They're called a lot of different things. Sometimes they call them an affinity group, sometimes they call them an employee-resource group. More recently, we're hearing about companies calling them business resource groups. But absolutely, I think that the groups, for women, perhaps for minorities, perhaps for the LGBT community have been further developed, but absolutely, corporate America

have ERDs that are alive and well and doing a lot of great work in terms of supporting employees with disabilities.

I think that, in our space, to begin with, they were created to create awareness within our companies and create an opportunity to be supportive of the employees. Create a place where people can share information with each other, perhaps, um, find somebody that they can talk to about their particular disability or their particular situation, talk about situations that they've encountered and how they've overcome them. I think that business is, it's starting to, you know, need to look at these groups from a bottom line perspective and, and wanting to use these groups to reach new markets. So, through disability, employee resource groups, use them to, to help them reach the disability markets, to help them develop new products and services. To help the company come up with the next big idea that's going to impact the bottom line.

You know, they can also use these employee resource groups as an effective recruitment tool to, to bring them qualified job applicants with disabilities into their organization. And certainly, for those companies that are, that are federal contractors and they're looking at these proposed 503 regulatory proposed rules that are out there. I think that a lot of businesses are starting to look at their ERGs and talk with their Employee Resource Groups to help them find candidates.

William: Tell us what resources do you recommend for training employees with disabilities?

Jill: There's lots of sources out there. A couple that I'd highlight, the leadership network works closely with EARN. Employer Assistance and Resource Network. The office of disability and employment policy. Cornell University [\[ \]](#) runs the EARN program. You can find out more information through their

website. [WWW.askEARN.org](http://WWW.askEARN.org). That's certainly one resource. [ ] Another resource that we work closely with is through the national employment team, which is essentially each state has a Vocational Rehabilitation agency that's there to help people with disabilities go to work. It's there to assist business in getting direct access to a pool of qualified applicants. The national employment team has a point of contact within each of those agencies and a woman by the name of Kathy [indiscernible] leads the national employment team and I'd strongly recommend you know, a lot of businesses that have worked very closely with and call themselves The Net. They've worked closely with The Net. Kathy can be reached at 206-999-9455 and is an incredible resource to help business navigate all those, the myriad of agencies. And then of course, the folks at the Job Accommodation Network, I think we talked about them on the last webinar. They are an incredible resource, Job Accommodation Network. They're funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Public Employment Policy. Their website is [www.askJan.org](http://www.askJan.org). It's an incredible resource.

And then there's a lot of additional resources out there, folks like Centers for Independent Living, the workforce system, obviously. So I mean, we'd always encourage business to get out there and, and talk with folks and find the right partner because who works with one partner in one community, may not be a good partner in another community. You have to get out there and find what works best to meet your needs. Certainly the three courses I just mentioned, I know many businesses have worked closely with them and had great success.

William: Thank you so much, Jill. We put a few of those links on the text box for folks. Jill, feel free to add other ones if you'd like to suggest are helpful.

We'll go ahead and turn now over to our closing Gary Shaheen. Would you like to introduce yourself.

Gary: Can you hear me okay?

William: Yes, just fine.

Gary: Okay, great. Hi, everybody. I'm Gary Shaheen. I work at the Burton Blatt Institute. Primarily the work I do is concentrating on evidence-based practices, things like supported employment, customized employment, but increasingly here at BBI, we have initiated projects to build collaborations and develop local, state and national partnerships around entrepreneurship. While this call is, is concerned in most aspects about ways that employers can hire people into their businesses as wage earners, some of the on the things that we'll get around to in the course of the call is how do employers also encourage through diversity contracting or other kinds of mechanisms, developing products and services by entrepreneurs with disabilities and what could providers do to support entrepreneurships.

So, so as William indicated early on, we do a lot of training, a lot of technical assistance in all of those regards. William, over to you, I imagine you have questions.

William: Gary, as time permits, I'd like to ask you more about those things you mentioned. Um, if you draw from your training experience, Gary and different agencies and systems you've worked with, how do vocational services help employers hire and train employs with disabilities?

Gary: State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies are available into all the territories actually. Their purpose is to connect folks with diverse disabilities to jobs and we often run business services programs, they do, they conduct

partnerships with business associations, they get the word out, but I think probably some of the most effective work of the Vocational Rehabilitation agencies has really big been to make the case that there is really a business bottom line that could be achieved by hiring qualified folks with disabilities. And with their strong networks to employment programs and their communities and their networks to business and the fact that the Vocational Rehabilitation agencies are also mandated partners in need to get work with employment networks, it puts them right at the center of the game, if you will, between folks with disabilities and job seekers and employers looking to, to hire and increase the diversity of their workforce.

So, those are among the, among the capabilities of the VR system. To that, I'll add that the, through the VR system, employers could take advantage of hiring incentives, things like the Work Opportunity Tax Credit that helps to pay a portion of an employ's wage. The Working Employee's Tax Credit. . There are a number of economic incentives that through our agencies and their assistants, both employers can benefit from and job developars might be able to reference that. Along with that, I'm also going to offer a caveat. For the job developers out there, typically what we'd like to say is, you don't need these tax credits, these kind of economic incentives. You know, the best selling points for individuals with disabilities who are actually self representing in the job search, or for employment specialists is that we're making the best case, but that individual is qualified for the job. Able to produce, and able to contribute to the employer's bottom line. These tax credits and incentives are sweeteners if you will, for the employer to consider as they're making a hiring decision.

So, VR agencies can be very important but it's also extremely important to understand what some of their limitations might be. There's a time limit in nature to VR services. They have, as many folks on the line know, what is termed as closure requirement. It's 90 days in the job that afterwards, the VR counselor can, can, not always, but really close that case. They do have benchmarks to achieve and you know, like so many of the government systems these days, VR offices are stretched with you know, limited resources, folks have high numbers of individuals they have to serve. They have to be an expert on all disabilities, and oftentimes VR staff might need extra training to more effectively serve folks with perhaps more complex needs, folks with psychiatric disabilities, folks with co-occurring disorders, mental health issues and folks transitioning out of homelessness, for instance. Including many of the Veterans that are coming back from current conflicts. We have a variety of disabilities that need to be accommodated.

So, wrapping that all together, some VRs are very, very good at collaborating and partnering. Others might not be as good. Just as the provider networks have that same type of you know, distinction, I suppose.

So, William, I think that for folks out there, the employers understanding who the VR agency is, as a gateway to a source of workers could be an extremely important resource for employers.

William: Thank you, Gary. Appreciate you getting our discussion going with that kind of coverage of how our VR system can work for us in this way. We had discussion about diversity issues as well as inclusivity. Jill has helped us a great deal with understanding how we may look at diversity in the workforce, what can you tell us about the role of diversity policies? Or diversity policy

specifically regarding training and retention and advancement issues for employees with disabilities?

Gary: The way I look at it, William, is that, and again, and Jill got us started in this area is that diversity training, diversity hiring, just makes good bottom line sense. And I'd like to look at it as sort of the workplace equivalent of the curb cut, if you would. So we all know that curb cuts were put in place through the advocacy of the disability community to make life that much easier and improve accessibility for folks with disabilities, but we're all using them. And in the same way, effective hiring and retention strategies that accommodate, in the workplace, folks with disabilities, are also just a great benefit to the general workforce.

So if you look at the fundamental principles associated with diversity practices and why they also make good human resource practices, you come up with things like increased cooperation and respect and planning that puts in place clear lines of authority so people understand what types of tasks are required of them. The kind of accommodations that increase productivity, workplace flexibility, all of those have meaning for folks who may not have a disability in the workplace. So, as employers reach out to folks with disabilities in a proactive way to increase their diversity in the workplace I think it's a great opportunity for them to look internally and say "how have these diversity, hiring, operational practices really helped us achieve a better bottom line in our business?" And then, what can we do to make sure they're fully integrated and sustained within that business?

The other part of diversity hiring and workplace diversity is that it sends a message, it sends a message to the buying public, you know, all of us, we go to the grocery store, pick up salad dressing, that Newman's Own Salad Dressing and

see a certain amount of profits from this go to charities. It might be more inclined to buy it because that company is sending a message that they have a double bottom line. Their bottom line isn't only selling you the salad dressing, but also contributing, giving back to the communities.

So when employers have a visibility, viable diversity hiring policy. They also send a message to their communities that they are not only looking to increase their financial bottom line, but they want to give back to the community. They want to diversify their workforce for all the purposes that you've all talked about, but that it just makes good community sense. In, in the civil society to do that. So, so those are a few things I think think of off the top of my head, William, that really contribute to employers looking at hiring and diversity as contributing to their bottom line.

Jill mentioned the EARN website. The other day I got on that website and looked around, sort of looked around that website to see if there were any examples that really cut to how do you actually quantify an accessibility, diversity policy in terms of a real return on investment. They had an interesting study there that folks may be interested in hearing. There was a, um, it was actually happening in the U.K., a financial services company that asked for help in increasing their web accessibility capability. And, just like I mentioned, the company came to this, to this design agency and said, you know, we have a moral obligation to be inclusive. We want to look out and better [indiscernible] the market if you would, we want to position ourselves better with our competition. We're very sensitive that increasingly we want to be good citizens.

So, they contracted with this design company and improved the accessibility on their website and had a good moral obligation to do this, but after that they

found there were real financial returns on their investment. Some of these were that the take-up of some of the financial products they were offering increased by 300%. So by using this new accessible website, 300% in new orders, the maintenance costs were reduced by 66 percent. You see the curb cut analogy I mentioned. The bottom line here is that when you diversify, when you make things accessible. You just have a great potential to improve the visibility and the viability of the businesses.

William: Thank you, Gary. I'd like to turn it towards an area you've been working in the last few years. The area of entrepreneurship. In particular, is that a viable option for people with disabilities?

Gary: Absolutely. Here's the problem. Oftentimes as we celebrate choice, individual choice, people are never asked the question, do you want to be an employee in a wage-paying job or do you want to work for yourself. In fact, what we know of now, many people value a career as a small business owner or a wage employment. Many people might have operated in [indiscernible] skills, discarded a small business at some point in their lives. Another fact about entrepreneurship that's valuable and what we hear from folks. When you're a business owner, you have control over your economic future. They want to be the person in control and also, the end result in a perceptual change, from the role of a person who might be a client or a program participant or consumer. Somebody who was actually a small business owner on Main Street. So a little bit about how we've come to this, we, as you know, we're one of three states given a U.S. Department of Labor grant a number of years ago to test and demonstrate models for entrepreneurship. For that first year of development, we didn't deliberately serve one person.

That of course, you know, got us in a little bit of trouble with our federal partners, but they knew where we were going. They knew enough about our model to know that we'd accelerate. We certainly did. The reason that we determine not to serve anybody is that we wanted to build and all of our partners on this call talked about this. A strong set of collaborations. We wanted to ensure that at the local level, we understood the economics, what interests were. We wanted to bring the art to the table. The small business development center. We wanted to develop a consensus-driven model for entrepreneurship.

After that first year, we went into high gear and we started serving folks and by the end of the grant we were supposed to have served, trained 150 people, with diverse disability by the way in entrepreneurship and started 30 small businesses. By the end of that initial project, we trained well over 225 people with diverse disabilities, helped to establish 60 small businesses, most of which are still going today and the income per month is anywhere from a few hundred dollars to some thousands of dollars. And we implemented the class where my students actually are business consultants to these entrepreneurs. We generated Individual Development Accounts, financial assistance where individuals deposit \$1,000 in the credit union and they get it matched. \$1,000 for starting the business. We now have 61 of these people, these credit union Individual Development Accounts going. It's the highest in the nation for folks with disabilities. So the long way around your question is this. If we offered individuals an opportunity for choice, it should also be offered that they may want to start their own business. And at that point, it's really pulling together the partners in the community, including the business entities that can help with business planning and so on, to make sure that folks get the right training, the

right support and there'll be plenty of publications on this. We called it Start Up New York in the beginning. It now offers more than the original grant offered.

William: Thank you very much, Gary. That is amazing to me, I don't think we have much general knowledge of, of thinking of employee disabilities in this entrepreneurial fashion. What you're telling us is your work where it's really showing that these are viable options for people with disabilities. Would you like to add a little something about your more specific work with Veterans?

Gary: Yeah, absolutely. Here at Syracuse University, [indiscernible] recently created through their endowment, institute on governance and military families, we worked closely with them. Many folks on the line might have heard of the entrepreneurship boot camp for employees with disabilities. That started at Syracuse. We were a partner in that from the very beginning. We used methods for developing entrepreneurial awareness and start-up that we use with our start-up New York project and introducing that to the -- providing training and support to Veterans with disabilities in starting their own business. Now, so while we partnered with the Institute for Veterans and military families. This initiative, I also have to say that we are beginning to see Veterans coming into those programs. Our Syracuse program to serve Veterans right from the beginning. What tends to change for Veterans is perhaps some of the mechanisms of support. In Start-up New York, we integrated peer support meetings, monthly networking lunches and those types of things so people with disabilities who are entrepreneurs can network and share information. Well, with Veterans, there's very strong cohesion among the Veterans community. We have to make sure that Veterans have opportunities to network among themselves and help each other. How they start their business. But you know, beyond that, it's

still a lot of the staple. It's developing good business planning and training. It's working with your small business development center and your VA, Vocational Rehabilitation, as well as your local Vocational Rehabilitation and finding financing.

We tend to focus so much on the business plan. And I'm not going to say that the business plan isn't important, but it is not the first thing in the process. We have found over time that the first thing in the process is for folks to develop a very informed self employment choice and to test them and to do the research and develop their own team to assist them in fully identifying the pros and the cons and the market viability so that before you develop a business plan, whether it's a Veteran or not, what you want to develop is a good self employment goal that is fully informed that builds upon your strengths and your interests and your skills and identifies the market potential. And then a business feasibility. Will this business have market viability, as well as personal viability. State departments of Vocational Rehabilitation can offer a lot of resources and rely on a well thought out plan to make a determination. Business plans, you have to keep revisiting them, constantly. And whether or not you're a Veteran or a non-Veteran. Many of these same things hold true.

We continue to do this work at BBI, assisting Veterans throughout the country and entrepreneurship is one of our key training and technical assistance offerings here.

William: Thank you again, Gary. That's fantastic. Thank you for sharing that information with us. We have some time to take questions from participants in the audience and while we wait for folks to type in questions. I will just take us

around to a couple of the resources that we have available on the project website.

So, I brought up the main page to the project, that provides an introduction to our webinar today and I believe if I go to the learn more section, then, we can find a link on here to, where we can view the inclusive culture and workplace archive webinar from last, from the last webinar. You can click that to, to watch that particular webinar. And at the top, if you click on employer resources, I want to point out a couple additional resources we have at the bottom as we populate this tool kit more. The very last item is the workforce development resources, state and federal funding opportunities for employers. This is a comprehensive list of different size grant funds available from state and federal entities, to help private businesses hire people, sometimes specifically with disabilities, and in other cases, just to hire persons for their workforce. These are available to a wide variety of businesses and we keep this particular resource up to date, so, take a look at this. Perhaps you'll find some funds on here that could support your hiring of persons with disabilities to help increase the capacity of your workforce. All right...backing up to where we've come from. We don't have a question right yet, so, what I'll do is, I'd like to pass this back to our panelists to see if you have any particular comments you'd like to add to this discussion or if there are things you'd like to more specifically reiterate, that you talked about that you feel are of particular importance with this topic. Give you a moment and, Meera, why don't I pass it back to you, if there are any things you'd like to bring out or highlight for us before we finish today.

Meera: You know, I think I covered the key aspects at this webinar and the last webinar. Nothing significant to add, but happy to take questions. If I

had to reiterate a point, I'd just say it's really important to make sure that you look at your processes seamlessly from beginning to end and consider all aspects both in terms of methods that you're using when you recruit folks and when you're working with them, as well as the communications that you're making when you describe your company or describe the opportunities both in the print medium or the online medium as well as in your attractions.

William: Thank you, Meera. And we do have a question from Michael Glisson. It reads: We have started a business in which we exclusively hire those on the Autism Spectrum to serve customers. It is a coffee shop setting. We want to change the face of autism, do you have any specific resources that can help?

Gary: One of my entrepreneurs that we worked with was a young man with spectrum autism. You have to deal with the business metrics, it's not only employing folks, but you know, what's the economic viability of that coffee shop, over time, how do you diversify your markets? Financial accounting procedures and all those other types of things. All that business stuff aside, the other thing is, let's make sure we allow folks to negotiate, to navigate, to work within that setting, to the best of their abilities and whatever accommodations might be necessary. So for instance, a great example of that was the student team that I supervised that worked with that young gentleman I mentioned. One of them was an engineering student and as part of their deliverables, they have to provide deliverables to the engineer. The engineering student took on renegotiating the workplace so he could take on these tasks in the furniture manufacturing business and also have a better way of managing orders.

So I think we can change the face of autism, just like we can change the face of so many other disability and self employment, working in an enterprise is one

way to do that. But feel free to send us an e-mail and look at our website, BBI website and see a lot of information about that. What we're doing in that area.

William: Thank you, Gary. I've taken us to the homepage of BBI. If you go to staff on our page, you can find links to contact any of us on this particular panel right now.

While we're waiting on any other comments, Jill, can I pass it back to you, if there are any things you'd like to reiterate or feel we've missed out on?

Jill: The one thing I'd just add is that I touched on this on the last webinar at the very end, Gary, in talking about inclusive entrepreneurship, I think it's important from the corporate side, that if you are a business, that we are working with corporate America to be inclusive of visibility on businesses and employer programs. Typically business has been focused on including women and minority of businesses and purchasing and procurement practices. Certification needs nothing if it's just a piece of paper for a business to become certified. It comes to life as these businesses begin to get business.

So, one of the things that has to happen is as corporate America is rounding out their diversity and inclusive practices, to look at what are you doing around procurement and in your supplier diversity program to include service-disabled Veterans and people with disabilities. So you can find out more information about that program by visiting the [indiscernible] website and learn more about the program. It's the new kid on the block, but some day it won't be.

Gary: That's great. Also, maybe folks want to look at the BBI website under projects. There's the page for start-up New York and inclusive entrepreneurship. We've been talking about those tools and metrics we use and

so on.

William: Thank you, Gary and thank you very much Jill and thank you Meera for your time and insight in sharing your experiences both into the research and through the teaching and through the training and all fantastic work.

Just a reminder to folks, you can come to the websites and you can find the links for downloading the versions from the last time. You'll receive an e-mail link to the address that you used to register for this webinar in your mailbox. Will give you a direct link to the archive of this particular one for today.

And, take your time to peruse the employer tool kit. We'll continue to populate that with more resources. Let me encourage you to try out and share with your colleagues. Thank you everybody for an excellent discussion today and that's all we have.

Thank you, take care, everybody.

Thank you.

[Recording stopped].

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