



ExploreVR 

SCALE-UP PROGRESSIVE EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY INCLUSION, UMASS BOSTON

LEARNING COLLABORATIVE REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION

Application Due: May 17, 2021

The Scale-Up Progressive Employment (PE) Development Project housed at the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston, is designed to promote vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency adoption of the PE model to improve employment outcomes for jobseekers with disabilities. The PE Learning Collaborative was established in 2015, co-led by the founders of the PE model in Vermont DVR, with member agencies Nebraska VR, Maine DVR, and Oregon Commission for the Blind. The Scale-Up PE grant will support the addition of 3-4 VR agencies to implement PE. We intend to bring the new participating VR agencies into the PE Learning Collaborative in June 2021!

PE LEARNING COLLABORATIVE

The Learning Collaborative is a peer-to-peer knowledge exchange model (notably used in public health) that will allow VR agencies to collaborate with one another to identify and apply practice-based solutions. We are using the learning collaborative as a vehicle for bringing multiple VR agencies together to support implementation of the PE model. Each VR agency will work the ICI team to develop an implementation plan and customize the approach to PE implementation and evaluation in their state. The PE model is expected to positively impact the agency's ability to provide effective dual-customer VR services and achieve increased employment outcomes, particularly for VR customers with significant barriers to work.

The basic components of the Learning Collaborative include:

- » One in-person meeting in years 2 and 3 (conducted based on safety measures/comfort level/travel restrictions) and regularly scheduled telephone/videoconferences as needed
- » On-site and online guidance from Scale-Up PE staff
- » Wrap around evaluation embedded in activities

PARTICIPATING

The Scale-Up PE project is releasing this request for participation in the PE Learning Collaborative to all VR agencies. VR agencies interested in participating must complete an online application form to be considered. The PE Learning Collaborative provides an infrastructure to encourage cross-state practical solutions, "space to innovate," and peer-based learning. Learning Collaborative participants will also receive guidance from Scale-Up PE staff on program implementation and use of the VR Program Evaluation Coach.

Agencies selected to participate in the learning collaborative will receive guidance from ICI's PE Subject Matter Experts on the following:

- » Policies and procedures related to PE including but not limited to team approach, communication strategies, liability insurance and workers' compensation coverage;
- » Messaging to businesses/employers and jobseekers on low-risk work-based learning activities;
- » Identification of potential partners and facilitation of planning meetings;
- » Drafting implementation plans; and
- » Establishing outcome metrics, identifying data collection measures, and using the VR Program Evaluation Coach to evaluate efforts.

There is no cost to participate in the Learning Collaborative.

TIMELINE AND KEY PROJECT DATES

- » Request for Participation in the PE Learning Collaborative Information Released: **April 22, 2021**
- » Electronic Request for Participation Application Due Date: **May 17, 2021**
- » Review and Follow up Period: ICI staff will review submitted materials and may request clarification or additional information of VR agencies during the period of **May 18-May 27, 2021**.
- » Notification of selection to participate in the PE Learning Collaborative: **May 28, 2021**
- » Learning Collaborative Start Date: **June 1, 2021**

INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLICATION

The electronic application is available at

https://umassboston.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5vYrpyji7LpGF14

The application has four sections:

- » Agency and Demographic Information
- » Letter of Commitment
- » Narrative
- » Staff Roster

The Letter of Commitment (LOC) should be 1-2 pages long, on official letterhead with the director's signature. The LOC should indicate firm commitment for the VR agency to adopt and implement the Progressive Employment model, join the Learning Collaborative for a 26-month period and for support to complete activities as defined in the narrative. The Narrative section includes eight open-ended questions (150 to 500 word maximum per question) about the VR agency's proposed plan to implement the PE Model. You will be asked to describe your agency's current structure (staffing, case management system) and data tracking capacity and rationale for adopting the Progressive Employment model. The Staff Roster is a list of agency personnel who are participating in the project and their contact information. The electronic form must be submitted using the Qualtrics platform by pushing the submit button on the last page, by 5pm Eastern Time on May 17, 2021 to be considered.

For technical support with the electronic form, contact Julisa Cully at Julisa.Cully@umb.edu.

SELECTION CRITERIA

This Request for Participation in the PE Learning Collaborative is extended to all state VR agencies in the United States and territories, including blind/general/combined agencies and American Indian VR programs.

VR agencies interested in participating in the PE Learning Collaborative must:

- » Agree to implement the PE model;
- » Have (or can assign) business engagement staff who will work with businesses;
- » Have (or can develop) a data tracking tool and agree to use the VR Program Evaluation Coach to evaluate the program. In addition, agree to complete brief quarterly progress reports.
- » Agree to participate in virtual and in-person Learning Collaborative meetings and act as peer consultants to other members of the learning collaborative by suggesting solutions, identifying experts both within the VR agencies and networks, and describing experiences in implementing the PE model.

VR agencies that complete all required components of the Request for Participation form will be considered. The Scale-Up PE team will consider VR agencies' responses to the narrative questions in the application to assess the agency capacity to implement the PE model. Any additional publicly available data about the VR agency may be consulted by the Scale-Up PE team to inform the selection process.

Notification of selection to participate in the PE Learning Collaborative will be made by May 28, 2021.

Funding

The Scale-Up Progressive Employment Project is funded by National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) Grant # 90IFDV0019.

For more information

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