

# The 5 C's for a Successful Partnership between Disability Agency and Employer

20% of people with disabilities are served by disability employment service programs. One very effective method for outreach to the disability community, is through partnerships with local disability agencies. These partnerships can be very productive and useful in filling open positions with skilled candidates with disabilities. However, not everyone approaches these with a strategic approach. After helping hundreds of agencies and companies connect to create a disability inclusive pipeline for hiring, we have found that several aspects of the partnership are key:



**Common Ground**– Both sides need to understand the needs of each other. It is imperative that these partnerships are based on everyone getting something valuable. This comes from understanding what each party needs: for agencies the primary need is to serve their client by facilitate securing a job; for business the primary need is to find reliable employees who can do the job and meet the standards of performance. Both parties need to be clear on each other's needs, which helps ensure reality and priority and limits miscommunications and failed expectations.

**Commitment** – both sides need to commit to a successful outcome. After recognizing that the needs of each are not exactly the same, both sides can to commit to working together despite the different needs. This means an investment in developing the relationship and ensuring it is maintained. Just like all other business relationships, there will be a period of adjustment in learning how it will exactly work but both need to be committed to finding that common ground.

**Clarity** – Agencies want to help people find jobs, businesses want to hire good employees – determine where those dreams meet and create a vision that both can agree to. The hour or less it will take to construct a shared vision, will ensure that everyone in the boat is rowing in the same direction. Although organizations' primary missions may differ, clarifying what the two are trying to accomplish together will go a long way to ensure that efforts are expended in a useful manner.

**Communication** – Almost every relationship is dependent on communication. Take a moment to define clearly 1 or 2 key people on each side who will be responsible for ensuring communication goes to appropriate person within each organization discuss what is acceptable for response times and what times of the day/week/month are best and when are times to not expect an immediate call back.

**Collaboration** – recognizing that both groups share similar needs and understanding how to work together can pave a path that can serve beyond the initial shared vision. When a company becomes as frustrated as an agency at the lack of funding for a needed service, the company can become an advocate for change at a higher level and when a company receives bad press, the agency can communicate with the community how valuable the company truly is.