



Putting Faith To Work:

A Guide for Congregations and Communities

Connecting Job Seekers with Disabilities
to Meaningful Employment

Putting Faith To Work: A Guide for Congregations and Communities on Connecting Job Seekers with Disabilities to Meaningful Employment

A Project of the National Collaborative on Faith and Disability
www.faihanddisability.org

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Welcome to Putting Faith to Work

We invite you to consider a new way of coming alongside people with disabilities and their families to support their flourishing. It is a way that focuses on the strengths and gifts of individuals *and* their faith communities and encourages you to see your congregation from a different vantage point.

The *Putting Faith to Work (PFTW)* project empowers faith communities to support people with disabilities as they find and maintain employment aligned with their gifts, passions, and skills. This pathway to work is forged by tapping into the personal network, creativity, and commitment existing within any congregation. Faith communities have a wonderful opportunity to enhance the lives of many people with disabilities, their families, and their communities by helping people find meaningful jobs, assume valued roles, and share their talents with others.

Four University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities—through a Signature Employment Grant from the Kessler Foundation—have provided support, coaching, and encouragement to congregational teams in Kentucky, Minnesota, Tennessee, and Texas. Through our partnership with 25 diverse congregations across these four states, we have learned important lessons about the promise and possibilities of inviting people to journey alongside others on the pathway to employment. We present this practical guide outlining how a congregation can undertake this work and invest in their members with disabilities and families “the other six days of the week.”

The model builds upon shared understandings of the dignity of work, the stewardship of one’s talents or gifts, and the responsibility of the community to support those who are far too often “on the margins.” By adapting what we know about effective strategies for congregations, we sought to build upon what faith communities often do so well—addressing the gifts and needs of their members, maintaining strong community connections, and addressing real needs in their community.

For the nearly 335,000 faith communities across the United States, this manual is a practical guide that will encourage a unique way to support people well in all aspects of life—spiritually, relationally, and vocationally. It is our greatest hope that this manual will inspire and equip you to put your own faith to work.

Warmly,
The Putting Faith to Work Project
www.puttingfaithtowork.org

We want to share a quick note about the inherent limitations in developing a project replication manual such as this. We recognize that the language, teachings, structure, and functions of congregations and faith communities can vary widely. Although there may be times when you will have to adapt language or a practice outlined, it is our goal to share strategies, examples, tools, and resources that can be applied across a wide range of traditions and contexts.



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Section 1:

The Opportunity and Call

In most major religious traditions, life is viewed as a gift from God. Each person has a God-given purpose and possesses unique talents and strengths. Teachings within faith traditions encourage individuals to use their personal gifts and strengths in ways that give thanks and praise and that encourage making positive contributions in the lives of others and in the community. These efforts are often expressed through work or volunteer roles.

For most people, using their gifts and passions to do the things they care about and enjoy is fundamental to their identities. People like to be givers and make valued contributions. They aspire to make a difference to others and the world in which we live. That is true, too, for people with limitations that come in the form of what we call “disabilities.”

Many people with disabilities work, volunteer, and care for others. Many make important contributions to our society and world. However, many, many more would like a chance to do so and often encounter barriers that prevent them from entering the workplace. Yet, unemployment rates of people with disabilities are more than double those of people without disabilities (see Box 1-1).

Far too often, people with disabilities are identified by their deficits. Others often think only of what a person with a disability cannot or struggles to do. People may assume because a person has a disability, he or she must not have skills or have the ability to get and hold a job. Worse yet is the misperception that a person with a disability is really only a “receiver” or “taker” rather than a contributor.

Faith communities are ideal places to lead the way in embracing abilities, removing barriers, and helping people with disabilities find opportunities to work and serve. Most individuals find jobs through people they know, and most would rather find that support through people and networks with whom they are familiar. Each and every congregation is made up of

networks of people connected to networks of other people. Leveraging those networks to make needed employment connections for people is the foundation of the *Putting Faith to Work* Project.

“It is important for people in the congregation to help people find jobs because everybody deserves to work if they want to whether they have special needs or not. Everybody has strengths and things they are good at; even individuals with special needs.”

-PFTW Job Seeker

We use “people-first language” throughout this manual (e.g., “people with disabilities,” rather than “the disabled,” “the handicapped,” or “the blind”). Disability is a form of limitation and only one part of a person’s identity. For more information, go to www.disabilityisnatural.org.

 **BOX 1-1: Current Employment Outcomes of People with Disabilities**

According to February 2016 statistics from the Department of Labor, the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is more than double that of people without disabilities (12.5% versus 4.9%). Perhaps most striking is only 19.5% of people with disabilities participate in the labor force, versus 68.2% of people without disabilities.¹

Only 16% of young adults (ages 22-30) with a cognitive disability who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are employed, and most work hours and receive pay that is substantially lower than peers without disabilities.²

Only about one quarter (26%) of young adults with severe disabilities are employed up to two years after leaving high school. Many work in segregated work settings, make low wages, and work few hours.³

Up to six years after leaving high school, barely half of young adults with autism hold a paid job in their community *at any time* since graduation.⁴

The poverty rate for people with significant disabilities is 29%, compared to 14% for people without disabilities.⁵

Only 5% of people with disabilities who are working report they have used a state, federal, non-profit, or community-based service provider agency to assist them in finding their current job.⁶

¹ See www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t06.htm

² Sulewski, J. S., Zalewska, A., & Butterworth, J. (2012). *Indicators for improving educational, employment, and economic outcomes for youth and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities: A national report on existing data sources*. Boston, MA: Institute on Community Inclusion.

³ Carter, E. W., Austin, D., & Trainor, A. A. (2012). Predictors of postschool employment outcomes for young adults with severe disabilities. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies, 23*, 50-63. doi: 10.1177/1044207311414680

⁴ Shattuck, P. T., Narendorf, S. C., Cooper, B., Sterzing, P. R., Wagner, M., & Taylor, J. L. (2012). Postsecondary education and employment among youth with an autism spectrum disorder. *Pediatrics, 129*, 1042-1049. doi:10.1542/peds.2011-2864

⁵ Brault, M. W. (2012). *Americans with disabilities: 2010*. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

⁶ Kessler Foundation/NOD. (2010). *The ADA, 20 years later*. New York, NY: Authors.

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I think congregations need to be part of helping people with disabilities find jobs because church networks are often extensive and build on relationships of trust. People with disabilities often don't have wide networks and most of us find our jobs through networking. I also believe that faith communities play a role in helping vulnerable populations and too often people with disabilities are overlooked.

-PFTW Team Member

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What might this look like? A small group of people comes alongside and gets to know a member with a disability—or someone in the community—who wants to find meaningful work. They listen and look for the gifts, passions, and skills a person possesses. And then they reach out through the members of their congregations and beyond to find an employer in the community who needs exactly those gifts and skills in their workplace. After all, faith communities are filled with employers, employees, and others who are connected to businesses and work opportunities all throughout a community.

It's easy to think or say, “This won't work.” Some might wonder, “Aren't there agencies that are supposed to do this?” Congregations are busy places that depend on the gifts, talents, and passions of their members, which are most often provided on a volunteer basis. However, congregations can be creative in ways agencies cannot because of limited funding, policy restrictions, waiting lists, and lack of contacts. It is also very hard for agencies to provide the ongoing spiritual and emotional supports someone may need as he or she seeks to find a meaningful job. People also sometimes would much rather receive support from a congregation than an agency.

Why else might this work in a faith community? What might be the benefits for everyone involved? Some important reasons:

- Provide opportunities for members to use their gifts in service to others
- Level the playing field so opportunities are more equal
- Help people depend less on public services and live more independently
- Empower and encourage people with disabilities, who have come to believe they have no gifts to offer or that the attitudinal barriers are too high
- Help a young adult with a disability who has grown up in a congregation find a job as they leave school
- Help a veteran re-enter the community with a valued role
- Change the fact that people with disabilities often live in poverty
- Help people who are “under-employed” or stuck in jobs that neither tap their gifts nor their sense of vocation to find a job that is a better fit

It helps these individuals be known, and broaden the circle of acquaintances, aware congregants, friends, potential advocates, supporters, networkers and potential employers!

-PFTW Team Member

It is important because church congregations should be places where people already feel safe. Congregation members can get to know one another on a deep level. If someone has made a positive impression on others at church, those people are likely to speak favorably of them in other contexts as well, such as employment. Plus, a church congregation is a ready-made networking opportunity.

-PFTW Job Seeker

I am not currently a church goer, but I know faith-based organizations are a very good natural support for those who are. I also see employment as a justice issue and many churches actively work for justice.

PFTW Job Seeker

[I]t is one of the principle ways that faith communities can put their values into action. Helping people have stable and rewarding lives is very much in alignment with what I understand were the teachings of Jesus Christ.

-PFTW Job Seeker

Perhaps the biggest reason is just to hear someone say with joy, “My name is _____. (This) is my job. (This) is what I love to do. (This) is what I feel God wants me to do.”

🌿 **It Has Already Begun to Happen!**

Congregations have often taken the lead in addressing unmet needs in their communities. Why? Because many believe their faith calls them to do so. Many are committed to seeking out people in need and to addressing attitudes and stereotypes that limit, hurt, and hold them back.

What’s more, many congregations are already on the cutting edge of employment ministries and services.

- More than 5,000 job clubs exist around the country. Many meet in churches, synagogues, temples, and other spaces used by faith communities. Some are sponsored by that congregation as a ministry. The leaders of these job clubs may have never thought their proven effectiveness could work with people with disabilities. It can.
- Many employers are people of faith. Some are recognizing that hiring people with disabilities is both good business as well as a way to live out their own commitments.
- National religious groups have passed position papers on the importance of full inclusion of people with disabilities and their families in all forms of congregational and community life. Many congregations have become much more inclusive and are seeing the ways people with disabilities bring needed gifts to their faith community. Helping people find a job would be a great next step in ministry.
- More than 40 national religious groups in the Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition of the American Association of Persons with Disabilities have signed a Statement of Solidarity Around Employment for People with Disabilities (www.aapd.com) as well as developed resources for congregations to use in building awareness of ways to help people with disabilities find jobs.

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I've been surprised by: How patient and appreciative our candidates (i.e., job seeker with a disability) and their families are. How receptive and even enthusiastic potential employers are to having our candidates seek and investigate work at their business. That people in our church had not even considered employing people in our church with disabilities. It had not occurred to them. One considered it, and actually hired one of our candidates!

-PFTW Team Member

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I was surprised how many resources a faith community can establish for an individual with a disability seeking employment. Again, coming from a public vocational rehabilitation program we assume that's work for the 'professionals'. However, the impact of communities and relationships are far undervalued in the process. It was very insightful!

- PFTW Team Member

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Reasons to Begin

Perhaps you are still in need of a reason to begin. Consider the following:

- Businesses who intentionally hire people with disabilities by matching gifts with their needs end up finding employees with great commitment who also help build general employee morale and teamwork. Everyone sees that his or her work is making a new form of difference in people's lives and in the community.
- Best practices in employment services focus on integrated—rather than segregated—settings in which a job can be customized to the particular gifts and needs of an individual.
- New ideas and strategies to address unemployment among people with disabilities are needed because the traditional pathways have not and cannot meet the needs and numbers.
- This is one way faith communities can make a huge difference in the lives of individuals and families, and, in truth, surprise and inspire others by doing so.
- Increasing numbers of congregations involved in either employment ministries and/or disability ministries are saying their faith community is growing as a result...in spirit and in size.

For more on the scriptural and religious foundations of work and the role of people of faith, see Putting Faith to Work: The Call and Opportunity for Faith Communities to Transform the Lives of People with Disabilities and their Families at www.puttingfaithtowork



Congregations are creative and caring. Just like individuals, they have capacities and gifts they may have never recognized to help others find their gifts and connect to meaningful employment. In

the following sections, we outline the process for identifying team members, developing the mission, recruiting jobseekers with disabilities, discovering gifts and talents, involving employers, identifying supports, and evaluation.

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It reflects their caring concern for those in need and putting their faith into action. It provided a ‘safe’ haven for people who were ‘wounded’ because of a layoff or other type of job loss and reminded us that we were not alone. That God and other good people were there to walk beside us in what can be a long, lonely, emotional journey. It reflects well on a congregation to offer this type of compassion. Participants who appreciate this type of community outreach could consider attending the church, if they are in searching for a church home. I would, if I had that need.

-PFTW Job Seeker

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Consider the following two examples of what it looked like for congregations in our project to put their faith to work to forge a pathway to employment for people with disabilities in their community.



Congregational Story: Christ Presbyterian Church

“Nobody is ignorable. Nobody is disposable. Every person is a carrier of an everlasting soul. There are no gradations in the image of God.”

~Senior Pastor Scott Sauls

Background

Christ Presbyterian Church (CPC) is a large congregation located in a suburban neighborhood in Nashville, Tennessee. The church has an active special needs ministry that began informally when a member volunteered to care for a baby with Down syndrome during a service so the mother could worship. Over time, more families with sons and daughters with disabilities came to the church and a more formal ministry was established. Currently, the church pairs children with disabilities with adult buddies to attend their age-appropriate Sunday school classes or youth group, and children’s church (if applicable). Also, the church hosts a semi-monthly young adults fellowship group and Special Saturdays (monthly respite) for children with disabilities and their siblings, and a Very Special Bible School during the summer. The special needs ministry is housed in the church children’s ministry and includes one paid staff position and a number of member volunteers who may teach and/or serve as peer mentors or “buddies.” Church leaders are committed and supportive of the ministry.

Though the special needs ministry is supported and active within the church, staff and families were looking for a way to minister with members with disabilities and their families beyond Sunday. They also wanted to address concerns that some families had expressed about feeling isolated from the larger church community. The congregation decided to pilot the *Putting Faith to Work* project as a way to meet employment needs and to make the young adults within their ministry “better known” within the larger community.

Gathering a Team

The initial informational meeting consisted of the special needs ministry coordinator, who had extended personal invitations to staff, parents, and church members with interest or experience in working with people with disabilities. Around 25 people attended. At the meeting, an overview of the project was presented and the group held a conversation about the potential need in the church, who might benefit, and how the project might be structured. At that meeting, it was reported the project would need to be member-driven so as not to overwhelm paid staff. After the team affirmed participation in *PFTW*, a parent

of a young adult son with a disability agreed to chair the team and the special needs coordinator agreed to provide administrative support. Though the team made efforts to recruit additional team members, recurring participation over the course of the project held steady at around 15 members.

Crafting a Plan

The team decided to meet on a monthly basis. Early conversations focused on identifying members with disabilities who they believed should consider participation. Because the congregation has an established special needs ministry they decided to work, at least initially, with job seekers they already had relationships with and who attended church on a regular basis. Five candidates were identified. They decided to begin working with two and expand as initial successes were made. They also decided that team members could be involved in different ways. They polled the group to designate roles. Team members could invite job seekers, participate in the “Conversations About Work” to better understand their gifts and strengths, identify and make connections to employers, and/or provide on the job supports.

The team also developed a clear vision statement: “Our hope is that we would follow Christ in His mission of loving people, places, and things to life by assisting our teenage and adult church members and friends with disabilities build relationships within our church community and work communities.”

Christ Presbyterian Church also decided to integrate *PFTW* into the life of the church making it an established Missional Community, which focuses on making a positive difference in the greater Nashville area. This made them eligible for small internal grants to support their efforts, gave them a Web presence, and further legitimized the project within the community.

Our hope is that we would follow Christ in His mission of loving people, places, and things to life by assisting our teenage and adult church members and friends with disabilities build relationships within our church community and work communities.

-Christ Presbyterian Church vision statement

Inviting job seekers

Once the job seekers were identified, the team brainstormed about who had personal relationships with either the candidate or his or her family, and therefore would be well-situated to issue an invitation to participate. They decided the process for inviting job seekers would be to first gain permission from the parents to approach their son or daughter, and then to hold a conversation apart from the families. A team member would invite the potential candidate to coffee or lunch and asked them questions about whether they desired employment, what their goals and dreams for a perfect job would be, and if they would like the church to help them meet their goals.

A Conversation About Work

Once the candidates had agreed to participate, the team organized a time to convene the job seeker and his/her family, the team, and anyone else who was identified that could help to point out the gifts and talents of the job seeker. At CPC, the “Conversation About Work” was renamed a “party.” At the party,

EXAMPLE

the job seeker was able to select a menu and draft the invitation list. The team followed the questions provided through the *PFTW* program. The team also made the process their own by inviting a member who is an illustrator to the party to draw images of the job seeker engaging in the types of work identified through the conversation. It was a great (and fun) way for the job seeker to see the possibility of them engaging in that work.

Connecting people with employers

For CPC, this stage in the process presented the most challenges. Though many ideas emerged from the conversations (parties), after potential employers with whom the team had personal relationships were exhausted the team stalled. This could be attributed partly to newly developed methods and policies for communication to the church at large, not the traditional forms of “advertising” which are more familiar to this more mature committee (like use of bulletins or message boards or listserves). They built a Webpage on the CPC Website, developed one-page job profiles for their job seekers, and were able to share them through their missional community blog and through their natural forms of communication through email and calls to friends and acquaintances in various employment industries. Another challenge was that the team only met monthly with periodic communication between meetings. Despite the challenges, the team’s commitment kept them motivated and effective in making employment connections.



Supporting Job Seekers

Because *PFTW* is a formal Missional Community at CPC, the group was eligible for a small grant that could be used to meet project goals. The team decided that the grant could be used to provide for any work-related expenses like transportation to and from work or uniforms. Team members also went out of their way to be sure job seekers were prepared for interviews. They assisted with developing “job wanted” ads and one-page profiles that could be shared with potential employers. One job seeker was interviewing for a job with a hockey team and had never been to a hockey game before. A team member pulled a few strings and found tickets to a game so the job seeker would have some familiarity with (and hopefully develop an affinity for) the sport prior to his interview.

Reflecting on the Journey

The team reflected at monthly meetings, especially when the process of connecting job seeker to employment felt stalled. They brainstormed new ways to disseminate information, new yet relevant job sectors to explore, and/or reassigned tasks. Reflections of each stage of the *PFTW* project from team members, job seekers, and families at CPC are sprinkled throughout this manual.





PFTW Job Seeker

I became involved with the Putting Faith to Work initiative in April. Through the positive interactions with my Putting Faith to Work team, I have become more optimistic that I can work successfully in or out of my home. By nature, I am an optimistic person, but after getting my bachelor’s degree, my fears kicked in and I began to see my disability and what I lacked as opposed to my abilities and what I had to offer. The members of my Putting Faith to Work team have been helpful in pointing out to me my skills and assets, thus building my confidence.

Another way in which my perspective has changed is that my disability is no longer at the forefront of my employment plan. The members of my Putting Faith to Work team have assured me that I have skills and talents that have nothing to do with my disability. I am not “someone with a disability who is looking for employment,” but rather “someone looking for employment who happens to have a noticeable disability.” Rather than looking at job titles, my Putting Faith to Work team is looking at the skills which I can offer to meet employers’ needs, which is a far more empowering way for me to approach employment.

I have started a blog called “Looking for the Rainbows,” where I write about the positive aspects of my challenges. The idea to start a blog came directly out of a discussion with my Putting Faith to Work team. People have been inspired by my blog and I enjoy writing about positive things. When I write about a challenge I’ve had, I try to look for the good in it. I would say that the Putting Faith to Work initiative is definitely one of the rainbows in my life right now.



Getting Started

Where do you begin? The remaining sections will walk you step-by-step through the process of gathering a team, inviting participants, and forging the pathway to work.

 **Figure 1: Putting Faith to Work Overview**





Section 2: Gathering a Team

An important first step involves bringing together multiple people to form a core congregational team. New ministries, programs, and other projects within a congregation often emerge from the passion of just one—or perhaps a few—members. Someone might see an opportunity others have overlooked. Or someone may feel stirred to invest in new ways in the lives of others. But carrying out the steps described in this manual is best done in the company of others who share your passion.

You are reading this guide because someone in your congregation is intrigued by the ideas of *Putting Faith to Work*. Quite likely that person is you! But this is not the place to “go it alone.” Indeed, the power of this approach is that it brings together the connections and creativity of multiple people within a congregation in ways that multiplies what any one person could know or do. This section offers guidance on assembling a team and addresses the varied roles team members might play.

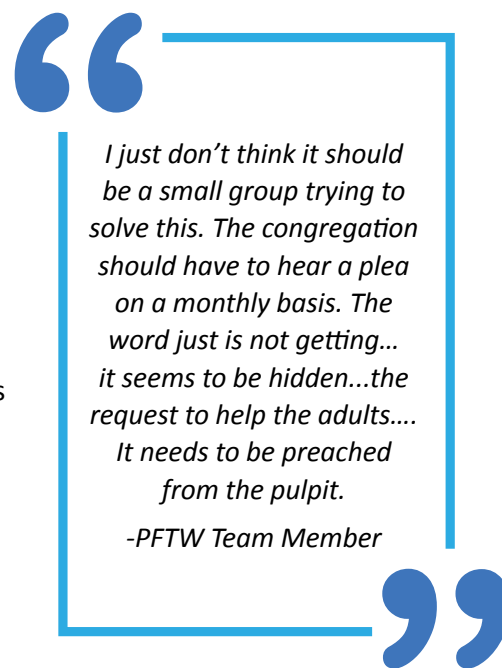


Ensuring Strong Support

Congregations can differ widely in how new ministries or programs are born. In some faith communities, they are launched at the initiative of a congregational leader. In others, it is primarily members who bring forward new ideas. If your congregation already has an active ministry with youth and adults with disabilities, or an employment ministry, this may just be a natural step in deepening and broadening your support.

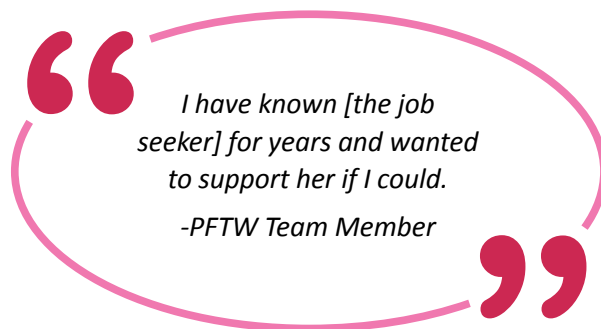
Find out which path reflects the culture of your congregation. If it is starting with you, be sure to bring your leadership into the conversation at the appropriate time. Remember that this is likely new territory for many clergy or congregational leaders. Some will quickly recognize the importance of this opportunity; others will need more information and perhaps some persuading. Anticipate how you would answer some of the following questions that might arise during your conversation:

- Why are you drawn to the *PFTW* project?
- How would *PFTW* meet a need in our congregation or broader community?



I just don't think it should be a small group trying to solve this. The congregation should have to hear a plea on a monthly basis. The word just is not getting... it seems to be hidden...the request to help the adults.... It needs to be preached from the pulpit.

-PFTW Team Member



I have known [the job seeker] for years and wanted to support her if I could.

-PFTW Team Member



- Have you identified people who would benefit?
- How does this align with our congregation's mission and vision?
- What sort of time and resources will this require of us?
- Who from our congregation will lead this effort?
- In what way(s) is our congregation currently supporting the employment needs of members?
- In what way(s) is our congregation currently supporting people with disabilities and their families?
- Are there outside agencies or other congregations we might partner with in this effort?

Although some of your answers may be tentative, it is important to offer at least an initial glimpse into what this investment might mean for the congregation. With the understanding and endorsement of your leadership, you can move forward on gathering a team with much greater confidence.

It is important to remember that not everyone will initially see the importance—or even the possibility—of employment for people with disabilities, including some family members of people with disabilities. People who are part of faith communities share many of the same attitudes and low expectations of other community members. They may have difficulty envisioning how someone with a significant disability could be a real asset to a business or be adequately supported on the job. Congregations that have adopted separate disability ministry models might inadvertently presume segregated employment settings or sheltered workshops are the preferred options for the individuals they know. In such cases, it may take time to help leaders catch a vision for why a good job in the community is not only possible, but also desirable.

One of the themes with PFTW teams has been the changing assumptions about what is desirable and possible for people with disabilities. For example, many team members, even though they were never involved in providing human services, have become so accustomed to seeing people with disabilities immersed in special ways of life, things designed for “them,” grouped with other people thought to be alike because everyone has a disability, that the idea of involvement in typical aspects of everyday life is a foreign concept. The same is true for PFTW job seekers and their family members who’ve only been offered “special.” It is challenging for them to envision participation in rich and full lives that many people take for granted. Even job seekers whose lives have not been absorbed in special/separate human services may have become persuaded by society that they have to settle for jobs that most people would not want and that they have nothing significant to contribute. Of course, these kinds of deeply rooted beliefs cannot change with one conversation. People desperately need new experiences and conversations grounded in high expectations, combined with gentle reminders that we are seeking more and better opportunities and ways that people with disabilities can take their rightful place in society as valued citizens.



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I do think it is important for congregations to help those with disabilities to find jobs because it allows the Body to be part of bringing dignity to those with disabilities through the goal of work and contributing. Our adults have much to offer, and we of faith communities should be on the forefront of seeing where they could be best serving or using the gifts God has given them.

-PFTW Team Member

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I think the leaders, the heads of the churches need to be involved - even if it is to just be informed at a few meetings convenient to their schedule, with the group...or it won't gain momentum nor will it be preached from the pulpit to the business people in the church. It sounded to me like it was a good idea to the preacher, but he didn't want to get his hands messy in attending a meeting.

-PFTW Team Member

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Identifying a Team Leader

Strong teams need good leadership. Practically speaking, someone has to schedule the meetings, reserve the room, set the agenda, and keep the team moving forward to meet goals. The structure of teams who participated in the first iteration of *PFTW* varied widely. As you consider how best to assemble, consider the following questions:

- Will your team be staff-led, member-driven, or a combination of both?
- Who comes to mind as the right person or people to lead this work?
- How much time are you asking this person to commit?
- What roles are you asking them to assume?

The teams we supported in our project took a variety of approaches. A few were led by someone on the congregation's staff. It may be that a staff member knows a broader cross-section of the congregation's members, is familiar with other programs in the congregation, or has time allocated to devote to formal projects. Other teams were instead guided by a lay member who volunteered their time. It may be that staff already have full plates or do not have a personal investment in this topic. If your goal is to simply support one or two people with disabilities find employment rather than establish a formal ministry, the active involvement of staff may not be necessary. Regardless of your approach, designating a key point person or two is quite important.

Determining the Size of Your Team

The teams we supported ranged from just a few members to more than fifteen. Much of this depends on the size of your congregation, the leadership style of the team, the number of people who get excited about this work, and the number of people with disabilities your team plans to come alongside. A small team may find it easier to schedule times to meet. They may also be more passionate about the work and more intent on moving forward rapidly. On the other hand, a smaller team may have fewer connections in their congregation and community—both to people with disabilities and to potential employers. A larger team may bring more opportunities for brainstorming job possibilities or stronger connections to employment within the congregation.

Having a larger team might also make it possible to divide up responsibilities in small chunks—some people could meet with individuals with disabilities who are interested in the ministry, others could be part of the planning meeting, others could network to find potential employers, others could contribute to brainstorming, and others could focus on getting the word out about this work. Indeed, as you invite people to be part of your team, it can be helpful to let them know the variety of ways they can get involved—from smaller one-time efforts (like attending a planning meeting) to longer-term efforts (like meeting regularly with a job seeker throughout their search process). Remember that your team hopefully has the whole congregation as a team behind you.

Identifying Team Members

You will want to be very intentional about forming a team that brings together people with diverse experiences and broad connections. People often think the most important qualification for getting involved is having disability-related expertise. But it is just as important to involve people who have a knack for thinking in creative ways, who have strong personal connections within and beyond their congregation, who are great at encouraging others, or who are great “askers.” You may identify people in your congregation who have limited experience with people with disabilities but they have particular skills that your team needs. You are inviting people out of their gifts and capacity, not what they don’t know. Possible members of a team could include:

- **Congregational staff/leadership** This person may be clergy, another member of the congregational staff, or a volunteer leader (i.e., elder, board member). Such a person is likely to have wide influence throughout the congregation, can provide strong endorsement of this work, and likely knows most of the members of the congregation.
- **Person with a disability.** This person could be a job seeker or someone who is already working. Such person may be able to speak first-hand about the potential roadblocks to securing employment, share about community supports available to job seekers with disabilities, can provide insight into how best to share this opportunity throughout the congregation.

I recommend the people on the team have a passion for people with disabilities. I also recommend the team be made up of people other than people in helping or social service-type professions.

-PFTW Team Member

As a congregation, we are designed to serve others or should be serving others.

-PFTW Team Member

- **Families of individuals with disabilities.** Parents, siblings, and other family members can suggest ideas for how best to reach out to people with disabilities and their families (within and beyond the congregation). They also can share the dreams, questions, and concerns they hold related to the employment of their family member. When your team is supporting someone with more significant disabilities, having family members as part of the team can be quite valuable.
- **Religious education staff.** These staff members may already have relationships with youth and adults with disabilities in your congregation who would be excited about pursuing employment.
- **Savvy communicators.** A key aspect of this work involves spreading the word throughout the congregation and beyond. Involving someone who is adept with social media, has an eye for graphic design, loves to make short presentations in front of groups, or is already involved in your congregation's communications efforts can be an asset when trying to convey your mission to the broader community.
- **Great connectors.** You can probably think of someone in your congregation who just seems to know everyone. Most jobs come through personal connections. And so it is helpful to involve someone on your team who is great "asker" and "connector" in your congregation. It is not important that they know much about disability or employment—others on the team can bring this perspective.
- **Employers.** Your congregation is filled with employers and employees. People who know about their own place of business and who likely have connections with other businesses similar to theirs. Having an employer perspective not only brings a rich set of connections, but this person can also share ideas for how best to approach potential employers and the issues that will likely be on their minds.
- **Employment and/or disability specialist.** Most congregation members have limited familiarity with the constellation of formal employment services and supports available to people with disabilities. But you might be surprised by who in your congregation has professional connections in this area. Perhaps you know someone who works with a disability employment provider, a vocational rehabilitation office, a school transition program, a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD; see www.aucd.org for the nearest center in your state), or some other disability organization. Such persons may have insights into programs, incentives, and supports available to people with disabilities to maintain employment—and to employers to make the hire. While such expertise is not essential, it can certainly be helpful.

Whether [you] assemble a team specifically for the Putting Faith to Work project or nestle that work under the umbrella of a committee with a broader focus, it seems like it would be helpful to recruit congregants with specific, complementary skills related to the work. For example, [you] might want someone with a healthcare and/or therapy background to understand the implications of a given job seeker's diagnoses, as well as someone who works in human relations, student development, or a similar field in which working with job applicants on promoting themselves or participating in skills-matching and/or talent acquisition helps them attend to job seekers' resumes and other application materials with insights that will help them find employment. People on [our] team had this combination of skills and expertise, and I think it was helpful.

-PFTW Team Member

“
 My field was working with people with disabilities. I have a son with Down syndrome. I am retired, but still am interested in helping people with disabilities. I am on the board of an agency that provides services for people with intellectual disabilities and on a local council for the family support program.
 -PFTW Team Member”

“
 I have a special needs grandson and cousins who have special needs. I wanted to be a part of a team that could assist [others] in obtaining gainful employment which is a challenge for them.
 -PFTW Team Member”

“
 It is difficult to get people to be enthusiastic about long-term projects that are sort of small scale, so it may take a while to assemble a core group.
 -PFTW Team Member”

Project Example

One congregation we worked with, Saint James Missionary Baptist Church, learned about PFTW through a presentation at an interfaith ministerial alliance. The minister, who routinely helps members of his congregation find employment, believed PFTW seemed like a wonderful opportunity to expand that effort as the church had several members with disabilities who were interested in employment. For his church’s team, he personally asked members who had family members with disabilities or who worked in special education.

Another congregation, Second Presbyterian Church, which has what it calls a Hospitality Committee, simply incorporated PFTW into that committee’s work. The Hospitality Committee is charged with helping the church be inclusive of all who want to participate in the life of that faith community, including those with disabilities, and the entire committee chose to include PFTW and employment as part of that call to be hospitable.

Announcing and Inviting People to Participate

Once you know who you would like to be part of the team, start extending invitations. This is where having a sense of purpose can help open doors. People who are successful at getting others to partner with them do so by announcing the organization's vision and inviting people to participate in its mission. Share your vision with those persons who can help you fulfill it (see the next Section on crafting a vision). A combination of announcements and invitations can help lead you to a team of committed partners.

- **Announcing.**

Share your vision broadly by communicating it with as many people in your congregation as possible. You never know who will step forward after hearing about this opportunity to get involved. Such announcements can happen in a variety of ways:

- Include an announcement as part of the weekly worship order (see Box 2-1).
- Write a short blurb for the bulletin and combine it with a spoken reference during the service (see Box 2-2).
- Include an article about your plans in a monthly congregational newsletter.
- Make announcements in specific religious education classes or ministry meetings.
- Use social media like Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn to spread the word to congregation members as well as to other networks beyond your faith community (see Box 2-3).
- Develop a slide presentation that explains what Putting Faith to Work is all about and how to get involved (see Box 2-4)
- Include information about your project alongside other efforts to promote general awareness around the employment of people with disabilities, such as during National Disability Employment Awareness Month each October (see Box 2-5).
- Build a webpage for the project (see Box 2-6).
- Use the Public Service Announcements, "I Am," from Disability Employment Awareness Month as a short piece in a worship service. <https://vimeo.com/108810703>

“

I wanted to be a part of building a culture at our church where everyone, even those with a disability, can be known and encouraged to pursue God's leading and calling into work in our community that is meaningful and life giving. I wanted to learn how we can best know our young adults, their interests, their skills/talents and help them investigate options that line up with these interests. And I wanted to know the process of networking for and supporting these adult friends into a sustainable work experience.

-PFTW Team Member

”

 **BOX 2-1: Example Announcement About Putting Faith to Work**

Hi, I'm [name], and I'm a [role in congregation] here at [congregation]. I want to introduce you to a new effort we are starting that is focused on providing support to youth and adults with disabilities. It is called Putting Faith to Work, and it is aimed at helping people with disabilities connect to meaningful jobs by drawing upon the personal connections and creativity within our church.

We are inviting the involvement of people with a disability who would like to work, or who have a job but want something more aligned with their skills and interests. If that describes you or someone you know, please contact us.

We are also inviting you to take part if you are an employer or make hiring decisions for your company, if you love networking, if you have a talent for helping people discern their gifts and strengths, or if you simply enjoy helping others. Experience working with people with disabilities is not required.

We believe helping people with disabilities find jobs could benefit individuals within our congregation as well as those in the community. This ministry has the potential to help us to be even more inclusive of people with disabilities every day of the week, not just on Sundays. Won't you join us in exploring this innovative effort within our church to make a difference by helping people with disabilities in our congregation and community share their strengths and talents in the workplace?

 **BOX 2-2: Example Bulletin Insert**
Be Part of Putting Faith to Work at [congregation name]!

Did you know that the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is more than double that of people without disabilities? Join efforts within our synagogue to make a difference by helping people with disabilities in our congregation and community share their strengths and talents in the workplace. *Putting Faith to Work* at [congregation name] will be helping people with disabilities connect to meaningful jobs by drawing upon the personal connections and creativity in our midst.

Are you:

- A person with a disability looking for work?
- The family member or friend of someone with a disability looking for work?

We are also inviting others in our congregation to be part of this innovative effort.

Are you someone who has...

- Strong relationships with local employers and employer networks?
- An ability to make connections among people?
- A knack for helping people to identify their gifts and callings?
- A desire to use your employment skills in service to others?
- A passion for helping others?

If any of the above describes you, check a box and place it in the offering plate. To learn more, contact [name] at [contact information].

Your name: _____ Your e-mail: _____

 **BOX 2-3: Example Social Media Posting**

Are you a person with a disability looking for work? A family member or friend of someone with a disability who is wants to share their talents in the workplace? Or an employer, a great networker, or someone who enjoys helping others? The *Putting Faith to Work* team at [congregation] wants to assist people with disabilities in finding jobs. Contact us at [contact information]!

 **BOX 2-4: Example Slides for Announcements**

 <p>Putting Faith To Work</p> <p><i>Tapping the Power of Congregations as Pathways to Employment for People with Disabilities</i></p> <p>[congregation]</p>	<p>Join us as we strive to make a difference by helping people with disabilities find a job</p> <p>Are you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A person with a disability who would like to work? ➤ A family member or a friend of an individual with a disability who would like to work? 
<p>Our team is also looking for people who have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The ability to hire or have ties with local employers ➤ An ability to network with people ➤ A knack for helping people identify their talents ➤ A passion for helping others 	 <p>Want to know more about Putting Faith to Work? Want to join our team? Contact John Smith at john.smith@yahoo.com or 616-555-5555</p> 


BOX 2-5: Example Employment Awareness Bulletin Insert from AAPD.

Expanding Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities

A generation ago, President George H.W. Bush signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA mandates equal access to employment for people with disabilities, a promise that remains unfulfilled. Today, while our country is more accessible and welcoming of people with a wide variety of disabilities than it was in 1990, two-thirds of Americans with disabilities are unemployed or underemployed. That number has not changed since the ADA's passage.

Americans of many faiths believe strongly that work brings dignity, self-respect and responsibility and that lack of employment is demoralizing, socially isolating and wasteful of a person's abilities. Poverty often accompanies disability and a lack of employment may mean that adequate food, housing and medical care are not attainable. In light of these realities, the Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition (IDAC) encourages people of faith to expand employment opportunities for people with disabilities by:

- Drawing attention to the abilities of people with disabilities and their right to be recruited, hired, promoted and retained at all levels of work;
- Hiring qualified people with disabilities to staff and support the work of your congregation;
- Offering support to members and visitors with disabilities who are out of work, including moral support, specific advice and training, supervised volunteer opportunities and introductions to those who make hiring decisions;
- Encouraging employers in your congregation and community to hire qualified people with disabilities.



Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition

For more on what you can do, visit: www.aapd.com. Working together we can improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

The Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition seeks to mobilize the religious community to speak out and take action on disability policy issues with Congress, the President and Administration, and society at large. To learn more about the work of IDAC, visit: <http://www.aapd.com/what-we-do/interfaith/>

 BOX 2-6: Sample PFTW Webpage



Working together, under the guidance of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, to find meaningful employment for people with disabilities.

Contact Information:
Margaret Spickard (see below for additional contact)
mhspickard@gmail.com

Vision: Our hope is that we would follow Christ in His mission of loving people, places, and things to life by assisting our teenage and adult church members and friends with disabilities build relationships within our church community and work communities.

What is Putting Faith to Work?
The focus of Putting Faith to Work is on equipping faith communities to address the employment needs of church members with disabilities. This group works in collaboration with the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center to connect people with disabilities to quality employment opportunities through the natural networks represented among congregation members. Working together with other local churches and similar teams in three other states (Texas, Minnesota, and Kentucky), the team at Vanderbilt will eventually take what they learn with us and develop a step-by-step manual detailing key elements of the approach for use by congregations, individuals, families, and others nationwide.

Why is it important?
Did you know that one in every three families has a member or relative with a disability? Did you know the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is more than double that of people without disabilities? In addition, the poverty rate for people with significant disabilities is 29%, compared to 14% for people without disabilities. Regardless of one's faith tradition and views on disability, these numbers are staggering and faith communities are in a unique position to help.

What is the goal of PFTW at CPC?
As a part of Putting Faith to Work at Christ Presbyterian Church, we will:

1. Assist at least two community/congregation members with disabilities to find, maintain, and/or advance in their employment and careers.
2. With the identified person(s) with disability, determine personal employment goals and steps to achieve those goals with support and resources available through Vanderbilt Kennedy Center.
3. Connect and share with other congregations involved in the Putting Faith to Work project.

How can I be involved in this missional community?
You can participate at any step of the process! The group currently meets monthly, on the second Tuesday night from 7:00 – 8:30 pm, in the Gathering Room at CPC. We welcome anyone to participate who has a desire to help our members and non-members with disabilities to discover how their abilities and talents can best be used in the context of work. We also welcome people with disabilities who desire employment.

Being a part of this exciting missional community does not involve a huge commitment, only a desire to help people with disabilities. For more information, contact Margaret Spickard at mhspickard@gmail.com or Gigi Sanders at gigisanders@gmail.com.

- Leadership Team:**
- Erik Carter - erik.carter@vanderbilt.edu
 - Carl Sanders - sciencedad@gmail.com
 - Gigi Sanders - gigisanders@gmail.com
 - Margaret Spickard - mhspickard@gmail.com
 - Courtney Taylor - courtney.taylor@vanderbilt.edu
 - CB Yoder - c.b.yoder@cpallions.org

Latest News

Putting Faith to Work Mid-Year Report

Dec 10, 2015 | **Tags:** [adults with special needs](#) [faith and work](#) [putting faith to work](#) [special needs](#) [vanderbilt kennedy center](#)

The Putting Faith to Work MC is excited to share some highlights from this past year with you...

Stories of Impact

We have had many answers to prayer. One of many examples:

We have had church members enthusiastically receive our candidates as employees in their places of work. In one instance, a church member that volunteers in the *Inspirations Class* (a Sunday School class for young adults with disabilities) was approached by our group to consider having a pioneer work in the Operations Division he oversees at a large company. It had never occurred to him to consider our members with disabilities (and unique abilities) for filling needed roles. He was thrilled with this "aha" moment and to make this connection. He hired one of our Pioneers and has been attentive to the needed details for the right placement.

New friendships have formed between those with disabilities and those without that would not have developed had we not come together as a Missional Community. Our team and many others have been "awakened" to recognize and engage more ways our friends with disabilities can enter into our church community to serve and to be better known by our whole church community.

I have known or been involved in the lives of teenagers and adults with developmental disabilities for over 20 years. I have been a follower of Jesus for over 35 years. Not until this past year did I realize how much adults with disabilities and their families are

• **Inviting.**

An announcement is not quite the same as an invitation. The latter is more personal. People love to give their time and resources to projects with which they have a personal connection. Consider the following ways to invite people to partner with you:

- Have a few people over to your house for dinner. At the end of the meal, explain your vision and invite them to participate. (Follow up with a phone call two to three days later).
- Invite someone to meet you for coffee before work one day. Use your time together to describe your vision for this work and the ways you see that person contributing to your team.
- Let people know how the experiences and connections they have are just what the team needs to be successful. People might not automatically see how their personal networks or workplace experiences are the very things that might enable someone to find their next job.

You might also consider connecting your work to a specific person. People love to help others and are more likely to give their time to a cause when they can see the impact their efforts have on a particular individual. Assuming you have talked with this individual about the congregation’s interest, a way to start would be to organize a meeting and let the person share his or her story, attempts to find employment, and dreams as a way of getting people interested and invested in helping.

You might be surprised at who emerges as excited about this work. We asked members of the teams we supported why they chose to get involved. Some had professional roles related to disability

“I believe the church is also called to help ensure the well-being of people in the larger community, one of the most important aspects of which includes making a livelihood by earning a living wage and finding meaningful employment that resonates with the individual’s gifts and strengths.... I was drawn to the [team] because their notion of hospitality goes beyond surface-level welcome—to helping equip and empower people with varied abilities to match their strengths with income-earning occupational engagement....”

-PFTW Team Member

“It was hard to get the program started because we did not advertise what we were doing enough.”

-PFTW Team Member

and saw this as a way to integrate their faith and work. Others recognized a real need in their congregation related to unemployment and wanted to be part of meeting that need. Some had personal connections to people with disabilities as a family member or friend. Others might have supported an inclusion ministry with people with disabilities from a distance, but may not have believed they had something to contribute. Others already had a relationship with the job seeker. And, finally, some members recognized this as a way of making their congregation a more welcoming and supportive community.

Assembling a creative and committed team is an important aspect of achieving your vision. Your team should be composed of a diverse group of people who can bring different gifts and connections to the collective whole. In announcing and inviting people to participate, “make it personal.” The team should have a good and unified understanding and commitment to the project’s mission.

To sum it up:

- Leaders can emerge in many different ways. One key is feeling a sense of call and passion for this project.
- *Let people know what you are looking for, and ask them to help you look.* Putting Faith to Work is built on networking. This is a way to start. They might help you find the right people and/or volunteer themselves.
- Share both stories and scriptural foundations of why this is important.
- Using personal examples is important, but don’t put people with disabilities in the position of having to do the asking. They have to do that in so many areas of their life that your advocacy with and for them will be a gift in itself.
- Be both specific and broad in your invitation. People will sometimes commit to specific, manageable tasks, others to a broad call and mission.





Section 3: Crafting a Plan for Your Team

In addition to identifying members of your congregation interested in supporting people with disabilities to find meaningful employment, it is important to determine how the work of the team fits within the congregation, to articulate the vision for this work, and to determine how the team will run administratively. This section focuses on key considerations in each of these areas.

Finding Your Home

How might the efforts of your team fit within the overall movements of the congregation? As mentioned in the previous section, some adopt a more formalized approach where by someone from their congregation's leadership or staff (e.g., pastor, youth minister) serves on or leads their team. Other congregations we have supported are led by and involve only lay members.

Likewise, some congregations embed *PFTW* within a larger formal committee or ministry—such as an existing disability ministry, employment/career ministry, outreach ministry, or hospitality ministry. Being a part of larger existing committee might provide more regular access to the congregation's leadership or make it easier to recruit others from the congregation to participate. Other congregations decided to set up a new and narrowly focused team. Having a distinct (and usually smaller) team may allow greater flexibility when finding meeting times and could ensure the focus on addressing the employment-related needs of people with disabilities does not get overshadowed amidst other areas of emphasis.

Another choice is whether to make this team a more informal effort or a separate formal ministry of the congregation. This choice may depend on the size of your congregation, how structured the congregation's hierarchy is, and whether numerous members or just a few are interested in participating. There is no single way to structure your team. It is all about finding what works best in and for your community.

Be sure it is 'bought into' by a large committee within a single congregation so the energy can build and success can be seen in steps forward.

-PFTW Team Member

Aligning the Mission

Making sure the focus of *PFTW* is consistent with your congregation's overall mission is essential. When there is a mismatch between your efforts and your congregation's mission, you are much less likely to have the support of the leadership. And when your leadership lacks sufficient investment, other congregation members may not view this work as important. Even when you have passionate team members, the absence of at least some congregational support can

Project Example

One congregation we supported, Christ Presbyterian Church, opted to establish Putting Faith to Work as a formal ministry. Under their church's policies, this formal designation enabled their team to make announcements and solicit involvement during Sunday school classes, in worship, and in the bulletin. It also allowed them to apply for a small amount of funding through a missional grant. Meeting informally might not have provided the same type of access or resources.

be discouraging, lead to burn out, and leave your team members feeling a bit isolated. In addition, if your congregation does not see PFTW as congruent with its mission, the people with disabilities you support may inadvertently assume they are not considered important within the life of the faith community.

Some congregations are drawn to PFTW because their members view this investment as a way to serve their fellow members with disabilities or demonstrate compassion within the broader community. Others see it as a way to address equity or fairness concerns.

I do think and believe the congregation's responsibility to build-up or edify all members of the congregation and community.... Everyone has value, can contribute, and productively be a part of the greater community, especially when others take the time to help them.
-PFTW Team Member

Striving to be inclusive and welcoming is part of the church's DNA, and this project just sounded like something we want to be a part of.
-PFTW Team Member

We believe that God is calling [our church] to be filled with such compassion such that people are drawn from impossible situations into a community of hope where lives are changed and love is real.
-PFTW Team Member

It's a way for congregations to promote the holistic flourishing of the neighbors whom God has called them to love. I believe this is a matter of justice and love that affirms the worth, dignity, and agency of individuals with disabilities by partnering with them in their efforts to secure gainful-and hopefully meaningful-employment.
-PFTW Team Member



For some congregations, this represents an outreach or missional opportunity. For others, it is seen as a way to reduce poverty for a segment of the community that sometimes struggles financially.

What resonates most with your congregation may be completely different from what drives another congregation. But most congregations undertaking *Putting Faith to Work* did so because it aligned well with their mission or goals.

Clarifying Your Purpose

Is your primary goal to help people with disabilities build new relationships within your congregation, to become better known to others, and experience a deeper sense of community? Is it to help people with disabilities discover their talents, strengths, gifts, and passions in the area of work? Is it to help people with disabilities find satisfying jobs that bring a good living? Is it to live more fully out of a sense of calling and vocation? Deciding what is most important to your team can bring focus and unity to your work.

To this end, your team may find it helpful to create a mission and/or vision statement. A mission statement captures your sense of purpose and summarizes what the people within the organization work to accomplish. A vision is aspirational and describes where your ministry would be if you successfully achieve your mission. Each can help your congregation and the broader community better understand why you are making this investment and what you hope to accomplish. If your congregation already has an overarching mission statement or different goals for various areas of ministry, brainstorm how the *PFTW* project fits into and helps advance this current mission.

BOX 3-1: Example Mission Statements

- Engaging members to help equip fellow members with disabilities to share their talents in the workplace as well as within the church
- Making people with disabilities known within the church while connecting them to employment outside the church
- Helping members with disabilities flourish between Sundays
- Sharing the dignity of work and engaging everyone's talents
- Connecting strengths to the workplace through personal relationships

 **Some questions to consider in drafting mission and vision statements:**

Mission:

- What do we do?
- How do we do it?
- Whom do we do it for?
- What value are we bringing to participants?
- What value are we bringing to our community?

Vision:

- What would your community look like if you achieved your goals?
- How would you know you have arrived at your destination?
- How might the employment rate for people with disabilities look different?
- How would the community be impacted?
- How would your congregation be impacted?

 **Other Decisions to Make**

In addition to settling on your structure, mission, and vision, a variety of other decisions will also need to be made by your team. Consider the following questions as you begin to form a plan for your work:

- What will you call your team (e.g., *Putting Faith to Work, Fellowship Church Employment Ministry*)?
- Do you consider it important to delineate specific roles for each of the team members?
- If so, how will that be decided or by whom?
- If you do not have a member of your congregation’s staff as part of the team, who will report back to the leadership?
- Who will serve as the primary contact person for the team and for interested congregation members?
- Who will convene the meetings?
- Who will take notes?
- Who will reserve a meeting room?
- How often will the team meet (e.g., biweekly, monthly, as needed)?
- How aspects of the work will be documented and how?
- How will meetings be structured?
- Who will help identify people with disabilities who would like support through *PFTW*?
- Who will facilitate initial “discovery” meetings work with participants with disabilities and their supporters?
- Who will recruit the possible employers?
- What other decisions need to be made?

“
It aligns with their mission and congregations are an excellent untapped resource!!
 -PFTW Team Member
”

“
Our hope is that we would follow Christ in His mission of loving people, places, and things to life by assisting our teenage and adult church members and friends with disabilities build relationships within our church community and work communities.
 -PFTW Team’s Vision
”

Your initial meetings should focus on establishing rapport among team members, clarifying your purpose, and deciding on how you will approach each step of the *PFTW* process. We have included an example agenda that you can adapt to meet the needs of your own team.

BOX 3-2: Example Agenda for an Initial Team Meeting

1. Introductions
2. Prayer and reflections on spiritual dimensions of this work
3. Discerning who else might be needed on the team
4. Determining who in the congregation might benefit
5. Strategies for sharing information about the effort
6. Strategies for discerning a person's work-related goals and talents
7. Discussing possible types of support a person might need
8. Determining the members who might be connected to employment matching the person's talents
9. Next steps and who is responsible for tasks
10. Reflection on the meeting and prayer

“

*Do it. The need is there. The 'ways and means' will evolve.
Like so many other challenges, getting started is the hardest part.*

-PFTW Team Member

”



Section 4:

Extending the Invitation to People with Disabilities

With your team assembled and your goals crafted, you are ready to begin supporting people with disabilities in moving toward meaningful employment. Perhaps your team already has several people with disabilities in mind and has already approached them about participating. If so, you are ready to begin learning more about their interests, strengths, and experiences (see Section 5). For teams still considering how best to approach people with disabilities about this opportunity, this section focuses on extending invitations in welcoming ways

Inviting People Within Your Congregation

In Section 2, we included several examples of how you might share this opportunity widely throughout your congregation. The same approaches you used for gathering a team can be used to let people with disabilities know about the supports you have available. For example, an insert or short paragraph within a bulletin or congregational newsletter is a great way to spread the word (see Box 2-2). Likewise social media posts—whether through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or other venues—have no cost and can be widely shared by members (see Box 2-3). If your congregation projects announcements on a screen or television display before worship services, or elsewhere in the building, make sure your invitation is displayed there (see Box 2-4).

Other ideas include: crafting a short email that can be sent to all congregation members, sharing information with anyone connected to other disability ministries at your congregation, creating a bulletin board, or making a flyer or brochure available at a welcome desk. Of course, a spoken announcement during a worship service or religious education class can personalize the invitation.

“
I read about
the PFTW ministry in last
Sunday’s bulletin. It was
like an answer to my prayer.
-PFTW Family
Member”

“
In many ways, the congregation is a great
place for a church member with a disability to
find support. We care about our job seeker. We
want her to succeed. She trusts us. We know
people who might be a good connection for
more meaningful and sustainable work.
-PFTW Team Member”

Inviting People Beyond Your Congregation

Some teams we supported chose to provide support to persons who were not members of their congregation. One congregation chose this option because they were unable to identify a member who needed or desired work-related support at the time. Another congregation had existing connections to individuals with disabilities and organizations elsewhere in the community. Another congregation simply saw PFTW as a unique outreach opportunity. If you decide to reach out beyond the walls of your congregation, there are several pathways through which you can extend this invitation.

According to the last U.S. Census, nearly one in three families has at least one relative with a disability. And so it is quite likely that members of your congregation are closely connected to people with disabilities beyond the walls of your congregation. Many may have friends and acquaintances with disabilities in their neighborhood or through other affinity or community groups they are part of. Let your congregation know of your desire to reach out into the broader community and encourage them to share your invitations through their own personal networks. Speak personally with those families to talk through how they might communicate this opportunity effectively.

Another approach involves sharing information with local organizations and networks that serve people with disabilities and their families. Nearly one fifth of any community identifies as having a disability. Connecting with these agencies and programs can be an effective way to let the broader community know about your ministry. We have included in Box 4-1 a list of organizations that typically have chapters or offices in communities across the country. Arrange a meeting to talk about your passion and plans for this work, as well as to discuss how the organization might contribute to your recruitment efforts. In doing so, you may discover new partners who can bring valuable expertise and connections to your ministry. For example, some disability employment providers might even be able to provide on-the-job support to some of the individuals with whom you work. Make sure your external promotional materials are clear that congregational membership is not a requirement for getting involved with your team.

Reaching out to the congregation in a meaningful way must be done without making the individuals who need jobs feel spotlighted.

-PFTW Team Member

Reaching out beyond your congregation brings both opportunity and risk. It certainly enables your congregation to address unmet needs that formal service systems often struggle to address well. And it

We are learning together how to do this when people within the church are not yet 'ready' for the support. It has been a good learning process for us, as we decided to reach out to persons outside our congregation. The process in such circumstances is very different—but we've made real progress.

-PFTW Team Member

The job-seeker is not a member of our congregation so it has been difficult to keep her search for employment in the minds of our congregation.

-PFTW Team Member



can introduce people to a new and loving community of support. But when it comes to job networking, congregation members may not have the same investment in helping someone they do not personally know or rarely see. Likewise, not every job search will be successful. And so it is important not to over-promise what the congregation can do for someone.

BOX 4-1: Examples of Community Organizations and Agencies with Connections to People with Disabilities and Families

Organization or Association*	Web site
The Arc	www.thearc.org
Association of People Supporting Employment First	www.apse.org
Autism Society of America	www.autism-society.org
Brain Injury Association of America	www.biausa.org
Center for Independent Living	www.ilru.org
Council on Developmental Disabilities	www.nacdd.org
Easter Seals	www.easterseals.com
Epilepsy Foundation	www.epilepsyfoundation.org
Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health	www.ffcmh.org
Goodwill Industries International	www.goodwill.org
Muscular Dystrophy Association	www.mdaua.org
National Association for the Dually Diagnosed	www.thenadd.org
National Disability Rights Network	www.napas.org
National Down Syndrome Society	www.ndss.org
National Muscular Sclerosis Society	www.nationalmssociety.org
Parents Helping Parents	www.php.com
People First	Local web search or telephone directory
Salvation Army	www.salvationarmyusa.org
*Locate your local chapter or affiliate office.	

Organization or Association*	Web site
Spina Bifida Association	www.sbaa.org
United Cerebral Palsy	www.ucp.org
United Way	www.unitedway.org
Your state’s University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities	www.aucd.org
*Locate your local chapter or affiliate office.	

In addition, do a local web search or consult a telephone directory for: county and state social service agencies; local disability advocacy groups; local parent support groups; local school districts; residential service providers; respite/adult day care service providers; supported employment providers; vocational rehabilitation offices; and universities with special education, rehabilitation psychology, social work, and/or related programs

Adapted from Carter, E.W. (2007). *Including people with disabilities in faith communities: A guide for service providers, families, and congregations*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

Some Considerations When Extending Invitations

As you consider the pathways through which you will connect to people with disabilities and their families, a number of questions are likely to arise.

- **When do I need to also approach parents or other family members?**

Like anyone else, people with disabilities can and should make important decisions for themselves. The concept of self-determination reminds us that people should be able to steer their own lives in ways and directions that are important to them. And so the person with a disability should be the primary person to decide on his or her own involvement—and who else in his or her life is extended an invitation. While many will choose to also involve their families in the process, others may not. However, the roles of parents and other family members can be especially important in the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism, and other developmental disabilities. Individuals with more extensive support needs often live with their parents. In some cases, parents may even have guardianship of their sons

Traditional supportive employment avenues to date had not been fruitful so when this idea had been proposed seemed like an intriguing idea and a way to think out of the box.
-PFTW Family Member

The church community is the place that accepts persons completely (or is supposed to). There is a level of trust that’s not there in the community in general.
-PFTW Family Member



and daughters who are adults. And so the perspectives, support, and connections of families can be so instrumental to a successful job search.

- **Who does the inviting?**

Decide who on your team would be in the best position to ask a particular person with a disability (or their parents) about participating. Perhaps someone on the team already knows these persons well? In some cases, the team felt the person with a disability would respond better if the invitation came directly from someone in his or her family. You might invite the person to coffee or lunch to talk about the opportunity. Or catch up with them after worship services to introduce the idea. Some teams identified two members to be part of this meeting. Others reached out individually.

- **How many people with disabilities should we invite to participate?**

Start at a level that maximizes the likelihood of success. This likely means you will focus on one person with a disability at a time. Hold an initial planning meeting, begin networking, and help forge the first job connection before moving on to the next person. Teams that found an initial success tended to move forward with great confidence and momentum. On the other hand, the job search can sometimes be an extended process that spans multiple months. For congregations wanting to support multiple people on this journey, waiting this long to add another person might be untenable. Such teams may find it helpful to hold multiple planning meetings and carry out all of their networking at once.

- **Whom do we ask first?**

Sometimes a congregation has several people in mind to support, or multiple people with disabilities have expressed an interest in getting involved. If the level of interest exceeds available support or time, you might consider some of the following questions as you determine how to proceed: How long has each person been searching for employment? Who is ready to begin working right away and has a clear sense of what they want to do? What is each person's motivation to find work at this time?

I knew that I was capable of holding down a job, but because of my learning difference and not driving, I was having trouble finding a job.

-PFTW Job Seeker

I think if you have a good support system, it can be very helpful to find that job and also have faith and not give up.

-PFTW Job Seeker

I was open to receiving help with my own vocational needs and did not want to be overly choosy about how I would allow myself to be helped. As I am aware that faith-based organizations can do some very good work I thought it would be good to be amenable to finding help through such groups.

-PFTW Job Seeker who was not part of the congregation

“

We invite someone to participate in Putting Faith to Work and they are eager to find work but it doesn't happen quickly. And in our case, it hasn't happened yet. Are church members willing to hang in for the long run and keep accompanying someone looking for a better job? It feels like a big risk to say we'll be part of this and then not be able to help the person find a better employment situation or the volunteers decide they don't have the time to invest any more. And the church member feels let down...again.

-PFTW Team Member

”

- ***How do I bring up the topic of employment without being offensive or presumptuous?***

It is wise to do your research first. Find out from the person's caregiver, friends, or others if he or she has any work experience and more importantly, a desire to have a job. Avoid making assumptions about their ability to perform certain tasks; instead, ask them about it.

- ***How do we share the project with someone who has a more significant disability?***

Consider approaching a family member or someone else who knows the person well. They might be able to guide you in how to explain the opportunity in clear ways. Consider adapting printed materials. Keep communication simple, repeating when necessary and allowing for ample response time in which the person can ask questions for clarification.

- ***What information should you share with prospective participants?***

It is helpful to explain how the process will work, what the team will do, and an approximate timeline. Make sure job seekers and families know there is no guarantee of success, but that the team will walk alongside and support them throughout their search. Some teams have been surprised at how quickly a job came about while others expressed disappointment at how slowly things progressed.

- ***How do we acknowledge someone's disability in a respectful way?***

Speaking to and about people with disabilities respectfully can seem challenging. Questions of whether to simplify language, wondering how to position oneself when speaking to someone in a wheelchair, and many other considerations are both valid and thoughtful. Consider some of the tips in Box 4-2 as a guide. The most important rule is to treat the person as you would want to be treated.

“

They were very kind. Just their presence means so much and is a message that someone believes I could do it. What a blessing to have the support of a total stranger to find my next dream job.

-PFTW Job Seeker

”



BOX 4-2: Disability Etiquette: Engaging People with Disabilities

A handshake is NOT a standard greeting for everyone. ASK the person whether he or she would like to shake hands. A smile and a spoken greeting are always appropriate.

Speak directly to the person with a disability, not just to persons who may be accompanying him or her.

Be patient and give your undivided attention, especially with someone who speaks slowly or uses a communication device.

Never pretend to understand what a person is saying. Ask the person to repeat or rephrase.

Allow the person time to respond, ask questions, and clarify your comments.

Repetition. If appropriate, repeat back any messages to confirm mutual understanding.

Guiding – When asked to guide someone, offer your arm and allow him/her to reach for you, then walk slightly ahead. Point out doors, stairs, and curbs as you approach them.

Let the person take the lead in establishing the communication mode, such as lip-reading, sign language, or writing notes.

Disability relevance – Do not refer to a person’s disability unless it is relevant.

Disability vs. handicap – The use of the word “handicap” is considered offensive, and the preferred term is “disability.” Accessible parking is the preferred term.

People first language – Say “person with a disability” rather than a “disabled person.” This emphasizes that individuals with disabilities are people first and should not be defined by their disability. However, some people with autism prefer to be called “autistic,” and this is the case for other disabilities as well. When in doubt, ask!

Relax. We all make mistakes. Offer an apology if you forget some courtesy. Keep a sense of humor and a willingness to communicate.

Adapted from Tennessee Disability Coalition. *Disability Etiquette: Engaging People with Disabilities*.2014. PDF file. www.tndisability.org/sites/default/files/Disability%20Etiquette%20Brochure_0.pdf

Engaging Faith Based Organizations that have Existing Employment Ministries

Some faith-based organizations have existing employment ministries that serve and support job seekers who may or may not have disabilities. These may come in the form of job clubs, one-on-one employment counseling, or other structured activities. These may be facilitated by paid staff or volunteers who may have experience in career development, human resources, or other related fields.

In Minnesota, there are over 15 faith-based organizations that sponsor or otherwise support employment ministries. Most have regularly scheduled job clubs or job transition groups that meet weekly or bi-weekly. These groups often have guest speakers and/or regular presentations by volunteers on all matters related to seeking employment; these can include topics like interviewing skills, using social media in a job search, resume writing, networking, and maintaining a positive attitude/being resilient. These groups also provide individual support to people who need help with cover letters, mock interviews, or networking.

Some of these employment ministries may say they do not have resources for people with disabilities and shy away from engaging them. In reality, most people with disabilities can benefit a great deal from these “natural” supports. They can use these faith based supports to supplement other services that may be available in the community already. The networks and employers in an FBO are always of value when it comes to making connections. There are a number of community organizations that would be willing to help FBO employment ministries.





Section 5: Person-Centered Conversations on Meaningful Work

Landing a job that matches one's interests, draws upon one's strengths and gifts, and aligns with one's sense of calling or vocation can be deeply satisfying. But finding such a job is not often easy. The *Putting Faith to Work* model focuses more on connecting people to personally meaningful work rather than on securing any open position. To do this well, it is important to invest time getting to know job seekers in ways that enable everyone on the team know what type of job would place them in their "sweet spot."

Many people with disabilities have participated in meetings led by educators, agency staff, and other professionals aimed at developing an individualized support plan—whether an IEP at school or an ISP within the adult service system. Too often, such meetings place an accent on the challenges a person experiences rather than on the passions, strengths, and gifts a person might have to contribute. Moreover, such meetings tend to focus too narrowly on the support agencies and other formal programs can provide rather than on the personal networks and connections so important to finding a job. Congregations should not strive to replicate these usual ways of getting to know a person and their needs. Other options are available.

This chapter offers examples of how teams might come alongside job seekers with disabilities to learn about their (a) strengths, gifts, and passions; (b) prior work-related experiences; (c) job interests; (d) possible places and personal connections; and (e) supports needed for success. While there are many ways your team might explore each of these areas as part of person-centered planning efforts (see Box 5-3), we describe a core set of issues helpful to consider as your team strives to find the right fit for a particular job seeker. We include in Box 5-1 a set of example questions that can be used as a conversation guide to elicit ideas in each of the following areas. In addition, we include in Box 5-2 an example of a worksheet that can be used to record the information shared by job seekers and the *PFTW* team. Of course, each of these should be adapted in ways that make sense for the job seeker, your team, and the congregation.

[People with disabilities] are our brothers and sisters and have a vast potential and talent that is lost because many will not do a little to unleash a great potential.

-PFTW Team Member

I think our church member is more aware of her strengths, especially the sorts of things that she does naturally which are strengths.

-PFTW Team Member

BOX 5-1: Question Guide for Person-Centered Conversations about Work

1. Strengths, Gifts, and Passions

Jobs are usually found on the basis of strengths and potential contributions. *Every person* has gifts, talents, and qualities that could benefit some business or organization in his or her community. Start the conversation by considering these potential contributions. Consider the following:

- Tell us about yourself.
- What do you love to do for fun (at home or in the community)?
- What do you love to talk about with people?
- What special interests, passions, or hobbies do you have?
- What do you consider to be some of your strengths?
- What have people complimented you on?
- What personality traits or qualities would a potential employer love to know about you?
- What are you really good at (or becoming good at)?
- Are there skills or talents you have that no one really knows about?

2. Work-Related Experiences

Prior work experience can be really helpful. But it *isn't essential*. Everyone starts somewhere. Talk about any prior jobs or other experiences that might provide insight into what has worked well in the past or what jobs might be a good fit.

- Have you had any paid or unpaid jobs in the past? If yes:
 - Tell us about the job.
 - What did you love about it?
 - What did you not like about it?
 - What sort of things helped you to be successful?
 - Is there someone we could talk to who could tell us more or be a reference?
- Tell us about any volunteer or service experiences you have had.
- Tell us about any responsibilities or chores you have had at home.
- What work-related training or experiences did you have in school?
- Are there other experiences you have had in the community or at church?


BOX 5-1: Question Guide for Person-Centered Conversations about Work
3. Job Interests

When a job matches someone's interests, work can be much more motivating and enjoyable. Of course, not every job has to be a perfect fit. Think about the types of jobs that might be a good fit. Don't think about specific businesses or organizations quite yet. That comes next. For now, think about what features of a job would likely work best.

- Is there something you feel "called" to do?
- What types of jobs do you think would be really interesting?
- Are there things in the community you enjoy doing that would make a great job?
- What types of job responsibilities would be a really good fit for you?
- What types of job responsibilities should you definitely avoid?
- Think about the following features of a job. For each, are there things that are really important for us to consider?
 - Number of hours you work per week?
 - Days/hours you are scheduled during the week?
 - Location in the community?
 - Amount of pay?
 - Social nature of the job?
 - Start date?
 - Anything else?

4. Possible Places and Connections

Where in your community are there jobs that align with the interests, experiences, and preferences already discussed? Do not focus yet on which jobs are (or are not) feasible. Needed support will come next in the conversation. Be sure to include places you do not normally shop and visit. Most jobs are not in public view and often come through personal connections.

- Where are all the places in our community that have these types of jobs?
- Who attends our congregation and also works in these types of places?
- Who could we talk to in our congregation who is really connected to businesses and organizations in our community?
- Who could we talk to in our congregation who is connected to other community groups?
- Who are some of the people you already know in the community that we could talk with? For example, family members, friends, relatives, neighbors, or others.
- Are there other job possibilities that should be considered, even if they are not a close match with your interests?

BOX 5-1: Question Guide for Person-Centered Conversations about Work

5. Supports for Success

At some point, we have all needed help finding, keeping, or coping with our job. For people with disabilities, it is important to think about the supports they will need on the job in advance, *not* to limit options but to *support success*. The right support can be found for almost any job.

- Let's talk about what would help you be most successful finding and keeping a job. Which of the following support do you think you will need?
 - Help developing a resume or one-page profile
 - A mentor to help you think about the kinds of things you'd love to do
 - A mentor to help you learn about a particular type of job
 - Someone with whom to practice for an interview
 - Extra training or practice to learn job skills before finding a job
 - Someone to encourage you throughout the job search
 - Someone to help you connect to employers
 - Extra help from someone to learn the job when you first start (like a job coach)
 - Extra help from someone to help you keep the job over time (like a job coach)
 - Assistance getting to or from work
 - Modifications or changes to a job to make you more successful
 - Extra training for an employer so they know how best to support you
- For each support we think would be helpful, who do we know in our congregation who could help?
- Are there outside groups or programs we should contact to find out about these supports?

6. Our Next Steps

- What are our next steps?



 **BOX 5-2: Sample Note-Taking Form for Person-Centered Conversations about Work**

PFTW Planning Worksheet
A Conversation About Work

*Use this worksheet to record ideas, questions, and other thoughts emerging from your discussion.

Who was the focus of this planning? _____ Michael J. _____

When was the planning meeting held? _____ April 12, 2015 _____

Who was present? _____ Susan G. _____ Rebecca C. _____

_____ Matt H. _____ _____

_____ Nolan L. _____ _____

_____ Annie R. _____ _____

Strengths, Gifts, and Passions

Which strengths, gifts, and passions should we consider when thinking about possible jobs??
1. Loves to keep things organized and clean. Likes repetitive tasks.
2. Loves working with people, being outdoors, exercising.
3. Is very independent and will take initiative.
4. Likes to meet new people.
5. Keeps on task and doesn't get distracted.

Work-Related Experiences

Which prior experiences should we remember when considering possible jobs?
1. Worked on a farm.
2. Experience sorting and hanging cloths.
3.
4.

Job Interests

What types of job responsibilities might be a really great fit?
1. Wants to work on a team of people.
2. Being a greeter or other job where she/he can be around people.
3. Working at a church.
4. Bagging at the grocery store.
5.
6.

[See Appendix C for Blank Note-Taking Form](#)

 **BOX 5-2: Sample Note-Taking Form for Person-Centered Conversations about Work**

Possible Places and Connections

What are possible businesses and organizations in our community where these types of jobs exist?	
1. Publix	6.
2. Flower Mart	7.
3. Old School Farm	8.
4. YMCA	9.
5.	10.

Who should we talk to in our congregation (or beyond) who may have connections to such employers?	
Names	Who will make this contact?
1. John, a congregant, is the owner of a local flower store.	Annie, the committee chair
2. Susan knows the person who manages Old School Farm	Susan
3.	
4.	
5.	

Supports for Success

What supports do we think will be needed to promote success?		
Support	Who should we approach?	Who will make this contact?
1. Transportation	Church members	Matt
2. Job coach	Voc. Rehab., Best Buddies	Nolan
3.		
4.		
5.		

Next Steps

What are our next steps as a group?	Who will take responsibility?	By when?
1. Contact possible places and connections	(Listed above)	Next week
2. Pray for the job seeker and the process	Everyone!	
3. Make an announcement at church about our process	Rebecca	Next Sunday
4.		

[See Appendix C for Blank Note-Taking Form](#)

Strengths, Gifts, and Passions

A great starting point for your conversation involves finding out the great qualities, skills, and talents a person might bring to a workplace. Connections to a job are usually made on the basis of strengths and gifts, not deficits and challenges. Moreover, the most enjoyable work usually aligns with someone's interests and passions. Get to know the person in ways that help you understand just what the person might have to contribute within the workplace. Perhaps he or she has an outgoing personality, an incredible memory, a knack for mechanical things, the gift of encouragement, a strong work ethic, the ability to get along with just about anyone, or incredible attention to detail. These are all qualities that most employers would consider to be enviable. Your ability to communicate who the job seeker is in ways that help potential employers see their abilities and assets—instead of only their challenges—is essential. Because disability still evokes impressions of inability in throughout society, it is important to present a very different portrait of the potential employee.

Work-Related Experiences

Spend time learning about any paid or unpaid jobs a person has had in the past. This can provide insights into prior work experiences that have been a great fit (or terrible match), the supports he or she needed in the workplace, and the aspects of this work he or she most enjoyed (or definitely dreaded). In addition, knowing about these past experiences can help you refine the job seeker's resume to showcase the relevant aspects of their record. When someone is searching for their very first job, ask about the volunteer experiences they have had, their community involvement, or even the types of responsibilities they have had at home. This information can help you identify what experiences the individual enjoyed and the skills they may have picked up along the way.

Job Interests

Most people perform best and invest more in work that taps into interests. Find out what types of jobs might be an especially good fit for the person. You might be tempted to begin listing actual places of business. But it may be helpful instead to think

Congregants know the job seeker's strengths and see a person not a disability.

-PFTW Team Member

Rather than looking at job titles, my Putting Faith to Work team is looking at the skills which I can offer to meet employers' needs, which is a far more empowering way for me to approach employment.

-PFTW Job Seeker

My own eyes were opened to a different way of looking at the job process. Reading job descriptions was depressing knowing that each contained requirements that [the job seeker] could not perform. And, knowing that [she] could and would do a wonderful job in many of the other requirements.

-PFTW Family Member

“

We have been able to narrow down preferred job fields as well as helped the job seeker build confidence in her career change decision. We have assisted the job seeker with maintaining proper mental health treatment as well as developing interpersonal skills to benefit her job search.

-PFTW Team Member

”

about roles and responsibilities they would enjoy having, regardless of location. Knowing this information can be helpful when networking through members of your congregation (e.g., “Do you know of anywhere in our community where someone could ____.”). Sometimes, the job seeker may not know quite they would want to do. And so it can be helpful to find out about jobs about which they would like to learn more. You might also spend time finding out what a person definitely *does not* want to do. Learning about some of the logistics—such as how many hours per week the person wants to work, pay rate, and social nature of the job—is important here as well.

Possible Places and Connections

Once you have a strong understanding of the person’s strengths, experiences, and interests, it is much easier to identify potential jobs that align with these factors. Where in your community are there businesses and organizations where these strengths, experiences, and interests are exactly what is needed? And who in our congregation is directly or indirectly connected to these types of employers? For example, for someone interested in clerical work, you might be surprised how many people in your congregation work or do business with places where clerical work is available. When no one on your team knows someone in the congregation who has such connections, think about congregation members who are just well connected throughout the community—a chamber of commerce member, someone in a leadership role in the community, a person who is long-time resident who just knows everyone. Decide as a team who will reach out to these persons to share about PFTW.

Supports for Success

Everyone needs some type of support to find a great job and have success in the workplace. For people with disabilities, such support may need to be a bit more intentional, individualized, or intense. Every person is unique. And so it is best to avoid making presumptions about which supports will be most important for a particular person.

“

I think it is important, because people should find jobs they love and really enjoy doing what they like to do.

-PFTW Job Seeker

”

Instead, ask: What sorts of assistance or support would really help this person thrive in the workplace? The purpose of this conversation is *not* to limit a person’s options but to *support success*. Supports might include developing a resume, interview practice, or a job coach, among many others. Transportation is also a major issue for some people and could be discussed at this point. Talk about who within or outside of the congregation might be resources for supports. Sometimes, formal resources are available to a person—such as help from a job coach, vocational rehabilitation, or some other agency. Other times, the supports you identify are ones that others in the congregation have expertise in, but have never been asked to share. Assume that your congregation includes people who are great at writing resumes, who interview people for a living, who are great encouragers, who can provide a needed ride, can share what it really takes to do a particular job, or who is able to give great career advice.

“
The positivity from everyone on my team was the most helpful aspect. My team helped me to see better what I have to offer and built me up. Ideas were brought up that I had never considered before, which was very valuable.
 -PFTW Job Seeker
 ”

Other Approaches

Although we have highlighted some areas worth considering during this discussion about work and a structure for this conversation, other approaches for gathering this information also exist. We have included in Box 5-3 examples of other person-centered approaches that might be drawn upon. In addition, Box 5-4 includes examples of career-related assessments that could be incorporated into the process of identifying someone’s strengths, interests, skills, and needs. In addition, many congregations help people discern their spiritual gifts, which can be quite helpful in thinking about potential jobs.

“
The hard part of congregations helping people with disabilities find jobs is that many of us don’t know the resources that are available to assist people with disabilities. We, too, see people with disabilities as having a disability and it can be hard for us to see the strengths the church member brings. It is also slow work and requires a lot of time and commitment.
 -PFTW Team Member
 ”

 **BOX 5-3: Alternative Person-Centered Planning Approaches**

Organization or Association	Web site
Customized Employment	www.marcgold.com/Publications/White%20Papers/Customized%20Employment.pdf
Essential Lifestyle Planning	www.learningcommunity.us/elp3.html
MAPS	www.ric.edu/sherlockcenter/publications/MAPS.pdf
I Want to Work	www.personcenteredpractices.org
Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH)	www.inclusion.com/books.html

 **BOX 5-4: Example Career- and Strengths-Related Assessments**

Organization or Association	Web site
DiSC®	www.discprofile.com
Envision Your Career - A language free video career interest inventory that uses pictures to depict careers.	http://jst.emcp.com/envision-your-career.html
Gallup StrengthsFinder	www.gallupstrengthscenter.com
JobTIPS website - Social skills assessment, interests quiz, and environmental assessments	www.do2learn.com/
OASIS-3: Occupational Aptitude Survey and Interest Schedule	www.proedinc.com
O*NET OnLine	www.onetonline.org
My Next Move’s Interest Profiler	www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip
My Skills, My Future	www.myskillsmyfuture.org
PLACE Profile and Assessment Tool	www.placeministries.wazala.com/products/place-assessment-tool
Reading-Free Vocational Interest 2 - A non-reading vocational preference inventory presenting pictorial activities of individuals engaging in tasks.	www.pearsonclinical.com/talent/products/100000101/reading-free-vocational-interest-inventory-2.html
Skills Profiler	www.careerinfonet.org/skills/default.aspx?nodeid=20
Values Assessment	www.vawizard.org/wizard/value-assess

Planning the Conversation

Once you have decided on the approach you will use to identify how best to support a job seeker, it is time to schedule the conversation. Consider who should be part of this conversation. Of course, the job seeker is absolutely essential. But you might also invite family members, others who know the job seeker well, members of the PFTW team, and other individuals in the congregation who are well-connected to employment opportunities. If the job seeker already has a strong idea about what they would like to do for work, consider inviting people who are working within that industry sector to share their perspectives. Identify a date and time that works for these individuals. Determine where the meeting will take place and what type of atmosphere is desired, keeping the preferences and needs of the person with disabilities in mind (e.g., meeting in an accessible building for people with physical disabilities or visual impairments, meeting in a familiar place close to a bus stop). The teams we have supported have held these conversations in a variety of ways—with just a few people to as many as 15 people. Some have had a more formal feel, while others have felt more like a party (over dinner or snacks).

It's hard to get everyone together at one time, but it's worth the struggle.
-PFTW Family Member

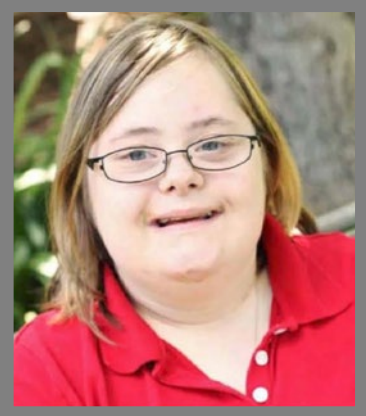
Go slow...learn from each person and their families as you serve.
-PFTW Team Member

[I liked] how it was focused on [my daughter], asking her questions and really hearing what she wanted in a job. The kindness of team members was just an overall great experience.
-PFTW Family Member

We appreciated the team taking so much time and care to learn about our son. That does not always happen. We are grateful for the special relationships that each team member has with him. Thank you for helping us begin to think about his future. We look forward to seeing how God will provide. Thanks, too, for the blessings you are to our family.
-PFTW Family Member

Some Questions to Consider

- **Do we have to figure out the right job at the initial meeting?**
Brainstorming takes time and is not limited to just this meeting! Discuss connections that can be made outside of the meeting, including ways to approach possible employers and what information to share with them (see Section 6).
- **How do we share what we learned with others?**
For some job seekers, the information can be folded into their cover letter and resume. For others, it can be helpful to create a one-page profile that summarizes the person’s skills, strengths, experiences, and support needs. We have included an example in Box 5-5.

BOX 5-5: Example One-Page Employment Profile		
<p>Skills I bring to a job:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendliness and a passion for people • Dependability • Ability to focus on the task at hand • Punctuality • Willingness to follow routines • Reading directions • Good writing skills <p>My prior work experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepping food • Sorting and folding clothes • Selling bookstore items • Doing laundry • Assembling kits and gift bags • Greeting people 	<p>Faith’s Profile</p>  <p>How people describe me: Friendly, caring, punctual, dependable, motivated, good salesperson, hard worker, sports fan, animal lover, singer</p> <p>Contact Information:</p>	<p>Supports that help my success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a written schedule of the work day • Tell me schedule/job changes ahead of time so that I can prepare • Demonstrate new tasks • Provide verbal and written directions and a chance for hands-on learning • Provide a checklist of specific tasks I need to complete • Have someone available to answer questions as they arise • Confirm my understanding even when I say “I’ve got it” • Allow time to complete tasks that I begin • Be willing to listen and to ask me to repeat myself if you don’t understand what I’ve said • Provide opportunities for me to work with other people, as I am friendly and enjoy being with others • Provide a short break daily to allow me to get a drink or sit down for a few minutes

- **What if the job seeker knows he or she will need a job coach?**
Many communities have agencies or disability organizations that can provide more information about the availability of job coaching support. These might include local employment agencies, vocational rehabilitation, the transition program at the local school system, or an area program (e.g., Best Buddies Jobs). Have a group member contact such organizations and find out more.
- **What if the person does not have transportation to work?**
Explore jobs near public transportation, consider other ride share options, or find out ways that members of the congregation might be part of carpooling.
- **What if the person needs to apply for jobs online, but lacks computer access or the necessary computer skills?**
Explore whether someone from the team or the congregation could assist in this effort.

Be sensitive to those feelings, and approach them by thanking them for being open with you, by noting that people often want to help but don't know how, and by noting people's sense of being involved as a way of living out their faith.

Get Started in your Congregation

Once you get to know a little about the gifts and interests of the people you are working with, talk with them about their interest in having some form of volunteer role in your congregation as a way of living out their faith as well. They may relish the opportunity to serve others and your faith community. It will also help members of the congregation see individuals in valued roles making a contribution. That can translate to potential connections for employment. Some congregations, in fact, have ended up finding a paying role within their congregation because of the great fit.

The next step is for team members to begin making connections with possible employers. More detailed information on how to do that is found in the next section.

Personality-wise, I don't like being the center of attention. I was also uncomfortable because I felt like I was imposing on peoples' valuable time.
-PFTW Job Seeker

I was uncomfortable asking church friends to leave their homes and families to attend. Everyone is so busy these days and I knew it was inconvenient. I also knew those that attended were happy to help [my daughter].
-PFTW Family Member



Section 6: Connecting People with Employers

Once your team has helped to identify the strengths and skills of the jobseeker that have informed your list of job possibilities, the next step is to begin networking. For some people, networking comes naturally, but for others it is an intimidating prospect. Networking with potential employers is a great role for team members who enjoy being involved in the life of the community and who thrive on making connections and forging relationships. Networking within *PFTW* is focused on identifying where the jobseekers' needs meet the potential employers' needs. There are a number of ways to engage employers in the effort. This section aims to lay out the process for navigating and networking within congregations.

Networking Within the Congregation

Congregations are overflowing with business owners, employers, and other members who are connected to other people who also possess the capability to make hiring decisions. Start with who you know. Use the list of possible jobs and people you have identified and make those personal connections first. Decide who will contact each person and how. Will you approach someone after the service and briefly introduce the idea to them? Will you call or email and invite them to coffee to discuss? Make assignments, set deadlines, and keep track of contact efforts.

There are many contacts within congregations that could be leveraged for finding compassionate, creative people that could give people an opportunity for a first job!

-PFTW Team Member

Having navigated traditional avenues in finding a job for someone with special needs, we found it extremely difficult. It took someone's relationship to open a door for our son.

-PFTW Family Member

Our congregation has so many more connections and personal relationships with other people and businesses that I could never dream to establish. It is just finding those and making the most of them.

-PFTW Team Member

“ Talking to potential employers can be intimidating. Something that helped me was remembering that I was approaching them not asking for a job, but asking them if they knew of anyone who might be a good fit for the needs of the jobseeker I was working with. It took the pressure off of both of us to know that we were both trying to make a connection.
-PFTW Team Member ”

“ My job came more from volunteering at church during the time that I was meeting with the team. We got the interview through the pastor and the facilities manager at the church. Jenny went with me to interview.
-PFTW Job Seeker ”

“ You have no idea what resources you have until you start talking to people and realizing how many things (occupations, professionals) are connected to the church. Sometimes it's knowing someone who knows someone.
-PFTW Job Seeker ”

“ My supervisor goes to my church and she knew I didn't have a job so she told me I should apply for the job I am at now.
-PFTW Job Seeker ”

“ Do not be timid about networking with congregation members. Personal contact with members seems to work better than broadcast announcements.
-PFTW Team Member ”

“ The [PFTW team] brainstormed ideas, called business owners they had connections with on my daughter's behalf, they queried other congregants for marketing and networking support.
-PFTW Family Member ”

“ It has been more difficult than expected to communicate with our congregation and get them invested in the process.
-PFTW Team Member ”

After exhausting who you know, think about how you can find out about others you may not yet know. Does your congregation have a directory of members that offers information about what they do for a living? Is there a staff person within the faith community who has access to or knowledge of this information? Knowing members' livelihoods is certainly a convenient way of identifying who to approach, but this information is not something most faith communities readily have available. You may need to be creative and reach members who are a good fit in other ways.

One way that congregations have connected with potential employers is by creating "job wanted ads" (see Box 6-1). Ads like these can introduce the jobseeker to the community, briefly highlight their skills and experiences, and explicitly state what types of jobs are desired. Ads can then be shared through the congregation's usual methods of communication with members. Weekly newsletters, emails, congregation websites, and social media accounts are some of the ways congregations have made employment connections.

 **BOX 6-1: Example "Job Wanted" Ad**

Seeking Part-Time Employment

My name is Kate and I'm a member of Christ Presbyterian Church. You may recognize me as I currently greet people at the door on Sunday mornings!

I am looking for a job.

I'm 41 years old, have completed high school, and have a variety of work experiences that will help me to do a good job. I am eager to work. My previous work experience includes assembling traffic light fixtures, preparing and serving food, cleaning and organizing, doing farm tasks, gardening, and decorating and designing greeting cards. I am at my best when I am part of a team and working with a partner. I am friendly, compassionate, dependable, motivated, able to focus on the task at hand, and very happy to follow a routine.

I am interested in working one day a week in a job that would allow me to work with people. I am open to learning new skills, and I look forward to hearing from you.

If you are a business owner or are in a position to hire, I would appreciate an opportunity to demonstrate my skills and my willingness to work. God bless.

Kate is seeking a job with assistance from Putting Faith To Work (PFTW) @ Christ Presbyterian and the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center. PFTW enables churches to address the employment needs of some of their members, by connecting people with disabilities to quality employment opportunities through the natural networks represented by congregational members.



Kate
Phone: (615) xxx-xxxx
Residence: Nashville, TN
Email address:

How people describe me:
 Determined, caring, hard worker, enjoys working with people, friendly, curious, organized, likes consistency, attentive, team player



“

I do think it is important because networking is a primary way people find jobs. People with disabilities typically have fewer personal networks so it is even more important that their congregations play a role in this.

-PFTW Team Member

”

Project Example

One PFTW team was having challenges making appropriate job connections for a job seeker who was interested in gardening. After several months of no possibilities, the idea to connect with a church member who worked in facilities maintenance at a local university arose. It turned out that the person identified knew the job seeker from his time volunteering in their special needs ministry, and that in addition to maintenance he also managed the grounds keeping department. When he was approached about the job seeker, he was instantly open to exploring the possibility of part-time employment, and eventually found the perfect fit for her and made the hire.

 **Networking Beyond the Congregation**

Sometimes the individual’s desired field of employment is not already represented in the faith community. This may be true if the congregation is particularly small. Begin thinking about who can use their connections with other organizations, such as the Rotary Club or the Chamber of Commerce. It is likely that each person in your congregation is part of several other networks or associations in their community. Invite them to share the need, or to make connections for you so that you may share the need through these networks.

Who makes those connections? This will vary from congregation to congregation. For some, the networking efforts, either inside the faith community or out, will be made by members of the PFTW team. For others, the team may choose to use the skills and talents of others in the congregation who might be willing to assist periodically, but who are not willing to commit to meeting as a team on a regular basis.

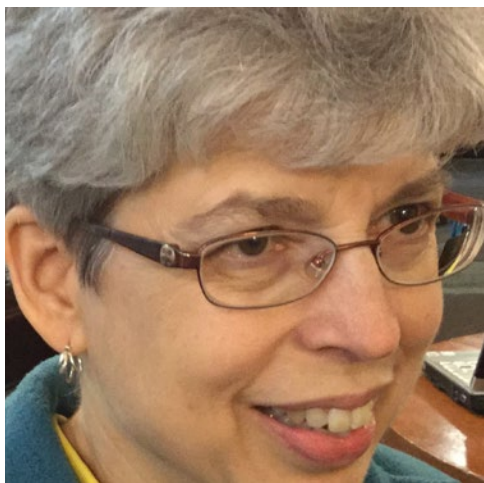
Maybe the congregation has a staff member who knows most members and who could and would be willing to make those connections.

“

Some team members seemed to have lost interest during the exploration phase of assisting the job seeker. Initially people were enthusiastic and readily available to help. After several months of seemingly stagnant meetings people quit volunteering to assist as much. However, after a job preference was selected group members are experiencing a rejuvenation for the process.

-PFTW Team Member

”



Job Search Article

Sue Singer, LSW

Leaving my job in September of 2013 was a difficult decision. I was a social worker in a nursing facility. I had been there many years and, in many ways, was quite comfortable. But changes in the organization and changes with my mobility as I age (I have cerebral palsy) made it clear that it was time to move on. I naively thought I would take a couple months off to sell my home, move to a townhome, and then would be back full time in the workforce. Little did I know how my life how hard a job search could be.

A friend told me about a job transitions support group held weekly at the Unity Unitarian Church. I was not a member of that faith community but was told that didn't matter. Everyone was welcome. I was hesitant to go, but when the group began with the lighting of a candle and a short spiritual reading, I immediately felt at home, grateful to see the job search process acknowledged as a journey of faith. I continued to attend regularly (Monday mornings at 9:00), feeling supported by the practical assistance and sense of community the group offered. It was there, that I was introduced to staff from the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota. I was told about "Putting Faith to Work" which worked with faith-based job support groups to assist people with disabilities to find employment.

Over the months their staff person and I had several meetings to talk about my skills, my challenges and the job seeking (and life) journey. When the group at Unity Church ended, I moved to group held at the Dayton Avenue United Methodist Church. Over the several months I was unemployed, I applied for many positions and had a number of interviews. Eventually with the support of the group, I applied and was hired for the position I currently have as an Options Counselor at the Disability Linkage Line.

After being hired, the really hard work began. I was totally overwhelmed by the amount of new learning required and particularly struggled with the technology. ICI staff continued to follow my progress, did a functional job analysis, and helped me find suggested a job coach through Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

I am now proud to say that I have been at my job for almost 8 months I am gaining competence and confidence. And I am very grateful that the "Putting Faith to Work" program was there for me and for many others.

Connecting Employers and Job Seekers

Sharing the individual's resume or one-page profile with the potential employer is often the starting point. Then, if the employer has limited experience in hiring people with disabilities, additional information may need to be provided on the possible benefits to the company and resources for possible accommodations. See Box 6-2 and Box 6-3 for a list of benefits. If the employer is interested, he or she may simply contact the individual, and the process may go on as any other routine hire. Or the employer may wish to meet with the individual and one or more of the team members to discuss job possibilities. For some individuals with disabilities, the standard application and screening process can be daunting, and they may wish to have *PFTW* team member, friend, or family member accompany them to assist during the process.



Being courageous to pursue weak ties to people that could help with a job or information about jobs for our candidates.

-PFTW Team Member



One thing that may be useful to share with potential employers is that companies that have made hiring people with disabilities a priority have found the typical hiring/interview process often does not allow them to find the best people for the job. In fact, their usual screening processes often lead them to overlook great job candidates who happen to have disabilities.

BOX 6-2: Faith-Based Reasons to Hire a Person with a Disability

1. *Putting Faith into Action.* Most faiths include a tenet of the value of helping others, particularly individuals who have been marginalized, and employing people with disabilities is one way of providing that help. This is older than politics. Wherever you see yourselves on the conservative-liberal continuum, the call to help everyone use their talents in service to God and others is present.
2. *Recognizing Each Person has Gifts to Share.* Too often people with disabilities have found their talents yet have not been valued in the workplace; as an employer, you can change this.
3. *Applying the "Golden Rule".* If you like being able to work, you would want to help others who want to work find a job that fits them.
4. *Extending Hospitality Beyond the Congregation's Walls.* Welcoming people with disabilities into your workplace creates for a more diverse workforce.
5. *Creating an Opportunity for Fellowship.* If you are hiring a member of your faith community, you may have a chance to get to know a fellow member better.
6. *Offering Hope of a Fuller, Richer Life.* A good job allows people with disabilities a much greater chance of living above the poverty level and expands their circle of friends and acquaintances.]

BOX 6-3: Business Reasons to Hire a Person with a Disability

1. *Market Research.* People with disabilities account for 19.8% of the U.S. population and command \$220 billion in spending power.
2. *Performance & Safety Ratings.* Employers report equal or better safety records, turnover and absentee rates, job performance ratings, job assignment flexibility, and equal amount of supervision required for employees with disabilities as compared to their peers without disabilities.
3. *Employee Engagement.* Employers report hiring employees with disabilities contributes to improved morale and productivity throughout the company.
4. *Customer Loyalty.* 92% of consumers reflect favorably on businesses known to hire people with disabilities, and 87% prefer to do business with these same companies.
5. *Government Grants.* Direct government payments can total up to \$20,000 annually for each qualified employee through programs such as Ticket-To-Work and the Work Opportunity Act of 2007.
6. *Qualified Applicants.* Employers must prepare to accommodate and retain experienced and knowledgeable employees. It is estimated that 1 in 3 people between the ages of 35 and 65 become disabled. Employees with disabilities are already in the workforce.
7. *Tax Incentives.* Tax incentives such as the Small Business Tax Credit, the annual Disabled Access Credit, and Architectural/Transportation Barrier Removal Tax Deduction may apply.
8. *Return on Investment.* For each \$1 spent on reasonable accommodations, businesses reap \$10 - \$35 in benefits.
9. *Accommodation Myth.* Approximately 72% of employees with disabilities do not require accommodations. Costs for those who do need accommodations average between \$300- \$600.
10. *Health Care Savings.* In certain cases, employees with disabilities carry Medicare/Medicaid and do not require employer-sponsored health insurance.

This information is provided by Mosaic, a faith-based organization serving people with intellectual disability: www.mosaicinfo.org

It is important to remember that a job search takes time. Very few people find a job on the first day, week, or even during the first month of a job search. In fact, employment professionals say that a job search should be a full-time job. Spending 40 hours a week isn't likely an option for PFTW teams, but it is important to be realistic and optimistic as the process unfolds and to not overpromise. Let the job seeker know that it may take time.

Your team should consider keeping track of all efforts related to networking. If a search is taking more time than anticipated or if the team feels stuck, it can sometimes help to look back over what has been done and where certain tasks may have fallen through the cracks. It can also help to revisit the lists of strengths and skills of the job seeker. Sometimes, revisiting can spark new ideas and new approaches.

[The PFTW team] brainstormed with me and gave me suggestions. They pointed out my strengths and best attributes. Two people checked with the companies where they work about openings for someone with my skills.

-PFTW Job Seeker

We invite someone to participate in Putting Faith to Work and they are eager to find work but it doesn't happen quickly and in our case, it hasn't happened yet. Are church members willing to hang in for the long run and keep accompanying someone looking for a better job? It feels like a big risk to say we'll be part of this and then not be able to help the person find a better employment situation or the volunteers decide they don't have the time to invest any more. And the church member feels let down...again.

-PFTW Team Member



Have information to present to those who may have business connections for them to share the benefits of employing individuals with disabilities. Have open and honest conversations to break down barriers to employers being willing to employ those with disabilities, as well as to assist the person with the disability in self-advocating for potential accommodations needed and presenting their expertise and skills to potential employers.

-PFTW Team Member

“Our team wanted successes to come quickly and we sometimes failed to see value in the process.”
 -PFTW Team Member

In sum,

Remember that you are helping a person, known by his or name, to find a job. For example, it’s about “helping Terry Ginsberg to find a job,” not helping “that paralyzed lady find a job.”

The Golden Rule of Networking: Six Degrees of Separation. Ask others “Who do you know who knows about ____? Can you help us ask? In theory, through six degrees of separation, your congregation knows everyone in the world.

 **BOX 6-4: Questions About Liability**

Research with human resource professionals found these are the top reasons given for not hiring people with disabilities. The principal barriers to employing workers with disabilities are lack of awareness of disability and accommodation issues, concern over costs, and fear of legal liability.

1. 81% said they are worried about the cost of providing reasonable accommodations so workers can do their jobs.
2. 81% said they don’t know how to handle the needs of a worker with a disability on the job. (*Fear of the unknown and a reluctance to ask.*)
3. 80% said they are afraid they won’t be able to discipline or fire a worker with a disability for poor performance, because of potential lawsuits. (*In 2014, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission reported 28.4 percent of its complaints involved disability vs. 35 percent over racial discrimination and 29.3 percent over sexual discrimination.*)
4. 73% said they can’t ask about a job applicant’s disability, making it hard to assess whether the person can do the job. (*An employer can ask if the person can perform the duties of the job with or without reasonable accommodation, and can ask the person to describe or to demonstrate how, with or without reasonable accommodation, he or she will perform the duties of the job.*)

“Why Don’t Employers Hire and Retain Workers with Disabilities?”
 H. Stephen Kaye, Lita H. Jans, and Erica C. Jones , 2011
www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3217147/

Resources for employers
 The National Organization on Disability partnered with the Kessler Foundation and Harris Interactive to produce the 2010 Survey of Employment of Americans with Disabilities. The findings help explain the large employment gap between people with and without disabilities.
http://nod.org/assets/downloads/01-2011_Exec_Summary.pdf

If you have questions about workplace accommodations, the Americans with Disabilities Act, or related legislation, the Job Accommodation Network can help.
<https://askjan.org/>



Section 7: Supporting Job Seekers Along the Way

If you are reading this section it may be that you have secured employment for the job seeker(s) with whom you are working. Congratulations! Your hard work and dedication has made a real difference. Now, what’s next? How can your faith community continue to support employees as they enter the workplace?

“What I really appreciate is being there for Kate in the long run even after she is employed.”
-PFTW Family Member

After helping someone find a job, the best thing your team can do is to maintain the relationships fostered throughout the *Putting Faith to Work* experience. In addition, you can help both the job seeker and their employer understand their legal rights and identify necessary supports and accommodations.

Helping Employees with Disabilities Understand Their Rights

Individuals with disabilities have some protection when it comes to discrimination in hiring practices. Title I of The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was written to prohibit discrimination in hiring practices. To start, employers with over 75 employees cannot ask about a person’s disability during a job interview. They can ask questions about whether an individual could do a particular job or task (e.g., “Can you lift 75 pounds?”), but they cannot ask directly about a disabling condition.

Individuals do not have to disclose a disability during an interview if the disability does not impact their ability to do a job. After a job has been offered, it is up to the individual to disclose disability information and to tell the employer what supports may be needed (see Box 7-1).

Employers are required to provide “reasonable” accommodations. But “reasonable” is up to interpretation. Employees with disabilities expect and need the same kinds of supports as their co-workers without disabilities. They also may need additional supports—“accommodations”—that are designed to alleviate the effects of the disability.

“It is important. We can walk with them on the journey. It also can be a place where people feel comfortable to come and ask for help.”
-PFTW Team Member

Accommodations may include simple things like focused lighting, lever door handles, wheelchair ramps, modifying desk height, training materials in large print or on tape, and intercom systems for communication. Accommodations may also include more complex (and more costly) things like computer systems that include Braille and speech output, Sign Language interpreters, modified vans or cars, and elevators added to older buildings.

BOX 7-1: Disability Disclosure

When Do I Disclose my Disability?

There is no one “right” time or place to disclose your disability. Select a confidential place in which to disclose, and allow enough time for the person to ask questions. Do not dwell on any limitations of your disability. Weigh the pros and cons of disclosure at each point of the job search, recruitment, and hiring process, and then make the decision to discuss your disability when it is appropriate for you. Consider the following stages:

- In a letter of application or cover letter
- Before an interview
- At the interview
- In a third-party phone call or reference
- Before any drug testing for illegal drugs
- After you have a job offer
- During your course of employment
- Never

How Do I Disclose my Disability?

Preparation is essential for disclosing your disability. Effective disclosure requires that you discuss your needs and provide practical suggestions for reasonable job accommodations, if they are needed. One way to become comfortable with discussing your disability is to find someone you trust and practice the disclosure discussion with that person. The two of you can put together a disclosure script. It should contain relevant disability information and weave in your strengths. Always keep it positive!

What Should I Share?

There is no required information to share about your disability. In fact, it will be different for everyone. For example, if you have an apparent disability, it is often beneficial to address how you plan to accomplish tasks required by the job. This can affirm to the employer that you are suited for the position. Additionally, by demonstrating your own ease and comfort with the job requirements, you can relay to employers other traits that are desirable in an applicant. Conversely, a person with a disability not immediately apparent to others will first need to decide whether to disclose the disability and subsequently what information to share about the disability. Generally, if you choose to disclose, it is most helpful to share the following:

- General information about your disability
- Why you are disclosing your disability
- How your disability affects your ability to perform key job tasks
- Types of accommodations that have worked for you in the past
- Types of accommodations you anticipate needing in the workplace

From the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy
www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/ydw.htm

Employers often do not know the best (or most cost-effective) way to accommodate individuals with disabilities; they also may be reluctant to hire someone with a disability because they believe their bottom line will be negatively affected. For this reason, it is critical that prospective employees have an understanding of their needed accommodations and be able to explain how an accommodation can be put in place.

A wonderful resource for employees and employers is the Job Accommodation Network website, which can be accessed at askjan.org.

Approaches for On-the-Job Supports

- **Employer Supports**

To the fullest extent possible, it is important for new employees with disabilities to receive instruction and support from people typically instructing all new employees. Because it makes use of already existing, typical, or natural ways, this approach is sometimes referred to as “natural supports.”

Answers to everyday questions provide the starting place: How does a new employee typically learn these tasks? Who provides instruction? What’s the range of duration for individual mentoring? Who answers work-related questions? How are new employees introduced to existing employees and established as team members? In addition to day-to-day operations, it’s important to note that most employees require workplace considerations or negotiations from time to time. For example, if there were a situation where an employee was unable to take notes at a meeting, then what would be a typical response? Likewise, if an employee had difficulty reaching items on the top shelf in the stock room, then what would others do?

There are many benefits to honoring what is already in place including: 1) It maintains the integrity of the business’ culture/ways of doing things, and as a result 2) builds on worker commonalities rather than emphasizing differences, and therefore 3) provides experience and confidence with the business owning the impact of the employee’s disability, while 4) providing expert instruction by a worker who knows and performs the tasks, and most important 5) sets the stage for the new employee with a disability being accepted and authentically known as a fellow employee.

“Don’t preach, just offer help with no strings attached.”
-PFTW Job Seeker

“I believe this follow-up [from PFTW Team Member] has been critical to my ability to adjust to/ succeed at my job. My ability to keep this job is still a work in progress.”
-PFTW Job Seeker

“I believe the job seeker feels supported by us. She knows we are praying for her and we are trying to help her secure meaningful employment.”
-PFTW Team Member

• **Congregational Supports**

Since faith-based employment projects are just developing in many places, there is no specific list of how congregations can support individuals with disabilities in employment settings. It may be important for the employer and the employee to know that you stand ready to help as needed. Our experience has shown that congregations can provide supports depending on the circumstances. For example:

- A congregation member (who happens to work at the same company) serves as a mentor to a new employee with a disability. This can happen at any company, regardless of size.
- A congregation member may be able to assist with transportation or the congregation may help with bus passes, if transportation barriers exist for the employee.
- A congregation member or the team may be able to help if the employee is encountering any social or interpersonal challenges at work.

“
[I]t helps to have others pray for me as part of my support.
 -PFTW Job Seeker



“
There were individuals invited to be on my team who were unable to come to any meetings. Things may have gone better if my team had been larger.
 -PFTW Job Seeker

“
Having a regular place to go to each week and connecting with people who were going through the same thing I was. The leaders were positive and uplifting, but realistic in the challenges of finding a job in a difficult job market. They offered a brief prayer to start off the session...a gentle reminder that we were not alone in our search and that we were still great people, even though we might not feel that way after our job loss.
 -PFTW Job Seeker”

“

Our family is so thankful to have had the opportunity to participate in the Putting Faith to Work Project. Not only was this a good experience in meeting kind and caring individuals, the program worked in securing a job for our son. It is through creative initiatives like this that other individuals with disabilities will be able to secure employment opportunities that otherwise might not be an option for them. We are not members of the congregation that helped our son, but because it was such a good experience for our family, I plan to stay involved on the team as a way of giving back.

-PFTW Team Member and Parent

”

After helping someone find a job or other ways to make a contribution in your community, the best thing your team can do is simply to stay in touch and see how things are going. Let the person know they can come to you if they have questions or concerns. Let the employer know the same. By doing so, both the person in the job and those around them know there is a community of people behind this individual who wants to do whatever is necessary to help them be successful.

Last but not least, your congregation can also help by celebrating new and successful opportunities. Having the emotional and spiritual support of the congregation as well as the practical help in finding a job can be crucial for anyone, regardless of whether they have a disability. Include the employer and other employees who are helping in celebrations; they will appreciate receiving recognition and gratitude for doors they helped to open.

Service System Supports

Some individuals with disabilities may need supplemental supports either when beginning a job or in rare instances, for the duration of a job. A “job coach,” or “employment specialist,” is an employee of a human service organization that specializes in negotiating jobs where the talents and interests of a job seeker with a disability intersect with an employer’s needs. He or she devotes time learning how new workers typically learn their jobs, and honoring the ways of the company to the fullest extent possible. Then, only as needed, job coaches will support or assist the typical mentor/instructor with supplemental instructional strategies. For example, the job coach or employment specialist may assist with job instruction for the employee with a disability, or assist with defining accommodations or with an employee learning to use assistive technology (like a Braille printer). Others may need a Sign Language interpreter, or a personal care assistant. Funding for these services will likely come from an outside source.



- **Some sources of formal supports are:**

- State departments of intellectual and developmental disability services and/or Medicaid Waiver services, which are the primary sources of long-term funding and service coordination for those with intellectual or developmental disabilities. These departments provide, fund, and monitor a wide range of services, including employment supports and community integration services. But there are often long waiting lists to access these services.
- State vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies, which assist individuals with disabilities to prepare for, get, keep, or regain employment and provide a range of services to achieve the goal of employment. Some states have limited VR funds and may use an “order of selection” to prioritize assistance to those individuals most in need of help.
- One-stop Career Centers, which are designed to provide a full range of assistance to any job seeker under one roof. Established under the Workforce Investment Act, the centers offer training referrals, career counseling, job listings, and similar employment-related services.
- Goodwill, Best Buddies Jobs, and other job training programs.

BOX 7-2: Negotiating an Accommodation

According to Nolo—Law for All, there are five parts to negotiating with an employer:

- Analyze the job you want and isolate its essential functions.
- Write down precisely what job-related limitations your condition imposes and note how they can be overcome by accommodations.
- Identify potential accommodations and assess how effective each would be in allowing you to perform the job.
- Estimate how long each accommodation could be used before a change would be required.
- Document all aspects of the accommodation—including cost and availability.

www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/free-books/employee-rights-book/section7-8.html



Section 8: Reflecting on this Journey

As your team walks alongside people with disabilities on the pathway toward meaningful work, reflecting on the journey and your progress is important. Knowing whether the steps you are taking are leading toward the desired destination puts you in the best position to make needed course corrections—or to continue forward with full confidence. Strong teams invest time considering how they might refine their process to ensure they have a deep and lasting impact—on the people they are supporting, within their congregation, and throughout the broader community. Consider the following ideas for ways you might gauge what is going well and determine what might make things work even better.

Reflecting on the Process

Each of the steps we have already addressed in this guide is worthy for reflection—your efforts to recruit the involvement of congregation members, the ways you work as a team, the approaches you use to learn about people’s passions and gifts, the networking you do within and beyond your congregation, the supports you provide to job seekers, and the ways in which you work with employers or agencies. In each of these areas you may recognize opportunities to strengthen your approach or pursue new ideas (see Box 8-1). The following questions—adapted from Forest and Pearpoint—can be helpful in guiding your team’s reflection.

What are we doing really well right now?

Begin by celebrating the aspects of this work that have gone well and where you have seen success. Perhaps you enjoy strong support from your congregation’s leadership and others in your faith community. Maybe the meetings you have with job seekers are helping them become known to others in the congregation in new and transformative ways. Or perhaps you have found strong allies in your congregation who are excited about helping you make connections to employers. The things that are working well are the things you want to keep doing and not let go of.

What could we be doing better or more of?

Identify the aspects of your work that could benefit from further improvements. You may be engaging only a very narrow slice of your congregation in helping people make connections to the workplace. Perhaps there are important perspectives missing from your team and additional members should be recruited. Maybe you need better ideas for finding and approaching prospective employers. Focus on ways of strengthening the things you already are doing.

I don’t think we hardly scratched the surface of the potential for this type of project.

PFTW Team Member

 **Box 8-1: A Guide for Reflecting on Your Efforts**

Reflect on your team’s efforts in each of the areas below and (a) what you are doing well and (b) what you could be doing better or differently in these areas. Then identify one or more next steps needed to strengthen your effectiveness.

	What are we doing well right now in this area?	What could we do better or differently in this area?
Securing support from congregational leaders		
Promoting awareness of this work		
Assembling a strong ministry team		
Finding interested people with disabilities		
Learning about people’s work-related interests and strengths		
Networking within and beyond our congregation		
Connecting people to meaningful jobs		
Partnering with employers and other service providers		
Supporting people as they navigate their new job		
Working together as a team to carry out all of these steps		
Telling the story of this work to others		

What are the next steps we should take to do things better or differently?

What might we want to do entirely differently?

Be willing to let go of things that simply are not working. You may find that the busy schedules of your team members require you to explore new ways of meeting. You might discover the ways your invitations are not reaching people with disabilities. You may learn that you need to invite in new expertise from the service system to help get you unstuck.

What could we start doing right away to move us forward?

It is quite likely that this reflection process will produce many ideas for things you could do better or differently. Focus on the one or two ideas that are most doable and are likely to have the biggest impact. This might include inviting new team members, developing new partnership beyond the congregation, or learning more about available community supports.

These questions can be answered in a variety of ways. For example, you could embed these four questions into the agenda for each meeting or periodically devote an entire team meeting to a time of group reflection. You could meet individually with people who are directly involved in this work to ask them for their input. Or you could invite them to share their thoughts on a written survey or by email. Finally, you can use Form 8-1 to compile the answers you hear.

Remember that multiple perspectives should be sought when reflecting on your approach. Different people may see things in quite different ways. The insights of people with disabilities and their families are especially important to prioritize. After all, they are the main reason you are undertaking this work. In addition, invite input from the employers with whom you are working, leaders within your congregation, and others who have in some way been connected to this work.

What are we learning about our faith and faith tradition?

Think through how both the successes and the problems in your work together might be addressed in light of your faith tradition, its scriptures, and beliefs. What are stories from your tradition, or insights from its leaders, that can be drawn on for reflection, learning, and inspiration. Set some time with your faith leaders to reflect spiritually on your work together. Something someone says, a success, a problem...all might relate to stories and beliefs in your tradition which can be tapped to bring new learning and deeper understanding. Some of those stories and reflections, to use a clergy term, will preach, i.e., may be very good for sermon illustrations for a variety of topics.

Project Example

One PFTW team in Tennessee, found that it had difficulty getting other members (and possible employers) involved in its efforts. So, this team decided to personally invite 10 to 12 members who were connected to the health care industry to meet with their job seeker who was looking for a health-care-related job. The team asked those members to review the job seeker's resume and brainstorm with her about good answers to tough interview questions. That meeting yielded a much stronger resume and a job seeker who felt better equipped to go on interviews. Another way this team sought to involve more people was to request prayers for its job seekers each week during Sunday worship.

“
Good idea. Good beginning. But so much more to be done.
 -PFTW Team Member
 ”

Reflecting on the Impact

You have poured yourself into this work because you want to make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities in your community. Documenting the impact of your efforts—on people with disabilities, their families, members of the team, other congregation members, and the broader community—will enable you tell this story well.

If you are working with multiple people over time, it is valuable to be able to say how many people with disabilities found jobs, the degree to which those jobs match their interests and strengths, and the extent to which they provide the wages, schedule, and benefits that meet the needs of the individual. Each of these employment elements can be easily summarized over time (see Box 8-2). For example, one congregation in our project successfully connected 35 people with disabilities to full- or part-time jobs through their existing employment ministry. Another congregation helped two young adults with intellectual disability find part-time jobs (between 5-20 hours/week) that aligned with their interests and helped further build their resumes.

Whether people with disabilities obtain jobs may be the primary focus of your efforts, but many of the congregations in our project talked about other important areas of impact that extend well beyond employment outcomes. For example, some saw that people with disabilities became more involved in other aspects of congregational life, such as serving on a ministry team, attending social events, or joining a small group. Others found that new friendships were formed and people with disabilities became more widely “known” throughout their community. Some noticed that attitudes and expectations about people with disabilities were starting to change in their congregation. And others witnessed a real transformation in how people with disabilities came to see themselves and viewed their futures as a result of finding a first job. These more qualitative dimensions of impact are well worth documenting.

To learn more about the full impact of this work, it can be helpful to solicit the perspectives of all of the various people who have been involved in some way since you began this work. Below, we provide examples of questions you



“

Although we don't have an actual placement yet, I feel it has been a success to see my—and others'—views change on how we can ask a variety of people if they know people that we can keep asking/connecting our friends with disabilities towards meaningful work. Seeing this process from a spiritual view, and not getting jobs for only a job sake.

-PFTW Team Member

”

might pose to each of these different stakeholders. They explore people’s motivations for getting involved, their views of the process, their recommendations for improvement, the benefits they have personally experienced, and the impact they have noticed. Most questions are repeated, which can help you discern how people align or diverge in their answers. Appendix A includes these same questions in the form of written surveys so they can be distributed more readily.

- **Job Seekers with Disabilities**

Although many job seekers will be able to answer these questions on their own, it may be helpful to simplify these questions for individuals with more complex communication or cognitive challenges.

- What made you first want to be part of this program?
- Of all of the ways we supported you, what did you find to be most helpful?
- What could we be doing that would be even more helpful?
- What did you like about the meeting where we learned about your experiences, strengths, and interests?
- Did they meeting help others learn about you and the type of job you most want?
- What could we do to improve these meetings?
- Have you been successful in finding a job?
- Do you have the support you need to be successful in your job?
- Is there other support you would like from us?
- How have you benefitted from being part of this program?
- Why do you think it is important for our congregation to be involved in helping people find jobs?
- Would you recommend to others that they become part of this program?
- Is there anything else you want to tell us about your experiences?

I am very pleased with the process and feel as though the individuals I worked with helped me grow both personally and professionally.
-PFTW Job Seeker

- **Family Members of Job Seekers**

Some job seekers—particularly those with intellectual and developmental disabilities—may have parents, siblings, or other relatives who are closely involved in supporting their pathway to work. Those relatives may want to share their perspectives.

- What made you first want to have your family member be part of this program?
- Of all of the ways we supported your family member to connect to a job, which did you find to be most helpful?
- What could we be doing that would be even more helpful?
- What did you like about the meeting where we learned about family member’s experiences, strengths, and interests?

It helped me to think out of the box and not to hesitate to ask within my faith community for help and support specifically for my daughter versus solely relying on agencies.
-PFTW Family Member

- To what extent did it provide you new insights into your family member?
- Did you feel like the right people were at that meeting? If not, who else should have been invited?
- What could we do to improve these meetings?
- Does your family member have the support he or she needs to be successful on the job?
- Is there other support you or your family member would like from our congregation beyond the area of employment?
- How has your family benefitted from being part of this program?
- Do you think it is important for our congregation to be involved in helping people find jobs? Why or why not?
- Would you recommend to other families that they become part of this program?
- Is there anything else you want to tell us about your experiences?

• **Members of the Congregational Team**

Your team likely includes people who have been involved in widely varied ways—from organizing the initial group, to attending a planning meeting with the job seeker, to helping make a job connection, or all of the above. Select questions that make the most sense given each person’s involvement.

- What made you first want to be part of this team?
- Thinking about how our team meets, communicates, and works together, what would you say has gone really well? What could be better?
- What did you like about the meeting where we learned about the experiences, strengths, and interests of the job seeker?

“
What did we find most helpful? That others have learned about the need for meaningful work for adults with disabilities, the challenges to finding such work, and to have a meaningful connection of exploration with a person with intellectual disabilities and their family as they share faith and real life challenges.
 -PFTW Family Member”

“
My son found employment that is a perfect fit for his skill level and temperament.
 -PFTW Family Member”

“
Loving all people to their potential is the most exciting feeling and to know another’s heart to help is priceless.
 -PFTW Team Member”

“
It really affirmed [my daughter] as a person.
 -PFTW Family Member”

“

How much I have learned about myself and my own weaknesses (and strengths). How exciting it is to help someone find a job and what a blessing it is for our congregation to take small steps toward including and getting to know people who may have made them uncomfortable in the past because they didn't know what to say.

-PFTW Team Member

”

“

Helping anyone find meaningful employment is a worthy pursuit. The PFTW program helps your congregation develop systems that could be implemented for others with or without disabilities. It is a small amount of work that could have a big impact.

-PFTW Team Member

”

- What could we do to improve how we learn this information?
- How can we best support your continued involvement in this work?
- How have you personally benefitted from being part of this team?
- How have you seen the job seeker benefit from being involved in this program?
- How have you seen our congregation impacted because of this program?
- Would you recommend to other congregations that they also invest in this work?
- Is there anything else you want to tell us about your experiences?

• **Congregation Leaders**

The extent to which congregation leaders are part of—or aware of—your efforts in the area of employment can vary widely. But it can be helpful to seek out the perspectives of these leaders on the program's broader reach and impact.

- What has been the impact of our efforts to support people with disabilities on you and other leaders of the congregation?
- How have you seen the broader congregation impacted because of this work?
- Is there information or resources about disability we could share with you that would support you in your leadership role?
- Would you recommend to other congregations that they also invest in this work?
- Is there anything else you want to tell us about your experiences?

“

Some challenges included facing my own fears of talking with people, crossing some hurdles with communication about needs at our church, trying to figure out meaningful ways for our friends with disabilities to volunteer and serve at our church, navigating the waters of respecting family member’s wishes about employment and learning how to be okay with taking things at their pace (not ours). In other words, learning how to be comfortable with the process and not push quickly for an ‘end result.’

-PFTW Team Member

”

“

People with disabilities also have so much to offer to congregations and this work helps us focus on the reciprocity of hospitality.

-PFTW Team Member

”

• **Employers**

Employers should only be approached when they have had direct involvement with the project and with permission from the job seeker.

- What made you first want to be partner with our congregation?
- Are there ways in which we could improve how our team approaches and communicates with employers?
- What could we do as a team to support the continued success of the person you hired?
- How have you personally benefitted from having the chance to work with this person?
- How have seen this person benefit from working at your place of business?
- Would you recommend to other employers that they also partner with congregations?
- Is there anything else you want to tell us about your experiences?

Remember:

The ideas we have shared in this guide are not always easy to implement. It is challenging work, and also deeply rewarding. Celebrate successes while also remembering people simply appreciate your support over time. The investment you are making on behalf of people with disabilities will surely have a ripple effect beyond what you may directly see yourself. Invest time capturing this impact. People will hear about what you are doing and trying to do. Share it also with other faith communities in your faith tradition. The information you learn will both strengthen your efforts and become a source of encouragement as you journey forward.



 **Box 8-2: Documenting the Impact of a Formal Program**

If you have established a formal ministry or program that will be supporting multiple people with disabilities to find work, the following process and outcome metrics could help you summarize the overall impact of this work:

- How many people with disabilities have you served?
- What are the demographics of these individuals (e.g., age, gender, race/ethnicity)?
- What types of disabilities do they identify as having?
- How many are members of your congregation?
- How many people have obtained jobs?
- For how many people is it their very first job?
- What types of jobs have people found?
- How many jobs are part-time versus full-time?
- How many hours per week are people working?
- What are their hourly wages?
- What types of benefits are people receiving?
- How well do these jobs align with their interests and strengths?
- How satisfied are people with their jobs?
- How long do they maintain their jobs?
- In what ways are you supporting people to find their jobs?
- In what ways are you supporting people to maintain their jobs?
- How satisfied are people with the supports you provide?



Epilogue



You have just read, or worked your way through, a manual. A manual can be likened to a cairn, a pile of stones built by the side of a path, marking a place on a journey and signaling that others have been this way before. It is not necessarily a road map, because you may have gotten here from many different directions and you also may have taken this project into directions we never considered. We are just glad you are here.

The *Putting Faith to Work* project has been an extraordinary journey. For more than three years, we have been putting our vision into words, first by writing up a trip plan otherwise known as a grant proposal to the Kessler Foundation. Minnesota was the first of four states given a green light to scout out the path for the rest of us. A year later Tennessee, Texas, and Kentucky also received the starting signal. Like any journey, it involved starts and stops, going fast and going slow, detours, accidents, tunnels that sometimes seemed to go on forever before the light appeared, and many bridges that had to be crossed. Thankfully, no one got totally lost and we all finally got here...recording our trip in this manual. There have been unexpected adventures, but the greatest part of the trip has been to work with extraordinary people. The people who walked on this journey with us are extraordinary not because of their fame, fortune or power, but because of their commitment expressed in hundreds of acts of hope, faith, love, and trust that all comprised the work of helping others find meaningful work.

“

*Jump in! It will
be a blessing for
all concerned!
Congregations can grow
in their understanding
and appreciation of
those with disabilities,
and gain a bigger view of
God's design and love.
-PFTW Team Member*

”

This manual is partly about how we think things can get done, either because we did them, or because we should have. It is not so much about the why as it is about the how, when, where, and what that may need doing. The truth is that there are multiple whys inherent in both the beliefs and practices of every faith tradition and in the typical journeys toward employment experienced by people with disabilities. You may start this work with some whys we have shared, but also with your own. Putting Faith to Work is neither a copyrighted nor proprietary project. We believe it started a long time ago, and you will find ways to improve upon what has been done.

Why? Because we know that living out purpose, call, and both individual and social responsibility are fundamental to who we are as human beings. The greatest disability is the one of not being able to participate in life as most are able to do. Surely people of faith can find the imagination, conviction, and creativity to help everyone use their particular gifts in service to themselves, others, the communities in which we live, and the God whom we follow.



About the Authors

This manual is based on a two-year project coordinated by four University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) and National Collaborative on Faith and Disability partners. Funding was provided by the Kessler Foundation.

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Appendix A

 EVALUATION SURVEY: FAMILY MEMBERS

What made you first want to have your family member be part of this program?

In what ways did people from the congregation/program help your family member look for or get a job?

What did you consider to be most helpful about the process?

What could people have done to be even more helpful to you or your family member?

Did you participate in some type of planning meeting with people from the congregation?

- Yes (answer a - e)
- No (skip a - e)

 EVALUATION SURVEY: FAMILY MEMBERS

a. What did you *like* about the meeting?

b. What did you *not like* about the meeting?

c. To what extent were you involved in inviting people to the meeting?

- Very involved
- Somewhat involved
- Not at all involved

d. Did you feel like the meeting helped people learn about your family member, their gifts and strengths, and the jobs that would be a good fit?

- Very much
- Somewhat
- Not at all

e. Overall, how satisfied were you with the meeting?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Not at all satisfied

Is there other help you or your family member need from this congregation?

In what ways has your family member benefitted from being part of this program?

 EVALUATION SURVEY: FAMILY MEMBERS

Overall, how satisfied are you with the program?

- Very satisfied
- A little satisfied
- Not at all satisfied

How likely would you be to recommend this program to another family?

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not at all likely

How likely would you be to recommend this program to another congregation?

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not at all likely

Why do/don't you think it is important for congregations to be part of helping people with disabilities find jobs?

What would be your advice to other congregations considering pursuing this type of ministry?

Is there any other feedback you have about your experience or this program?

Thank you for filling out our survey and for being part of *Putting Faith to Work*. We appreciate you!

 EVALUATION SURVEY: JOB SEEKERS

What made you first want to be part of the “Putting Faith to Work” program?

In what ways did people from the congregation/program help you look for or get a job?

What did you find to be most helpful?

What could people have done to be even more helpful?

Did you participate in some type of planning meeting with people from the congregation?

- Yes (answer a, b, c, and d)
- No (skip a, b, c, and d)

a. What did you *like* about the meeting?

b. What did you *not like* about the meeting?

 EVALUATION SURVEY: JOB SEEKERS

c. Did you feel like the meeting helped people learn about you and what you want?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

d. Overall, how happy were you with the meeting?

- Very happy
- A little happy
- Not at all happy

Have you been successful in finding a job?

- Yes (answer a, b, c, and d)
- No (skip a, b, c, and d)

a. Where are you working?

b. How much do you make per hour? _____

c. How many hours do you work per week? _____

d. Overall, how happy are you with this job?

- Very happy
- A little happy
- Not at all happy

Is there other help you would like from this program?

 EVALUATION SURVEY: JOB SEEKERS

Overall, how satisfied are you with your involvement in this program?

- Very happy
- A little happy
- Not at all happy

Would you tell others to be part of this program?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Why is it important for congregations to help people find jobs?

Is there anything else you want to tell us about this program?

Thank you for filling out our survey and for being part of
Putting Faith to Work. We appreciate you!

 EVALUATION SURVEY: TEAM MEMBERS

What made you first want to be part of this congregation team?

Did you participate in some type of planning meeting for any job seeker with a disability?

- Yes (answer a – d)
- No (skip a - d)

a. What did you *like* about the meeting?

b. What about the meeting could have been strengthened?

c. Did you feel like the meeting helped people learn about the person, his/her strengths, and the jobs that would be a good fit?

- Very much
- Somewhat
- Not at all

d. Overall, how satisfied were you with the meeting?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Not at all satisfied

Did you have any other involvement in the efforts of this congregation (e.g., attending additional team meetings)?

- Yes (answer a - f)
- No (skip a - f)

 **EVALUATION SURVEY: TEAM MEMBERS**

a. In what ways have you been involved on this team?

b. Describe any successes your team has experienced.

c. Describe any challenges your team has experienced.

d. What surprised you most about this work?

Why do/don't you think it is important for congregations to be part of helping people with disabilities find jobs?

What would be your advice to other congregations considering pursuing this type of ministry?

Overall, how satisfied are you with your involvement in this program?

- Very satisfied
- A little satisfied
- Not at all satisfied

 **EVALUATION SURVEY: TEAM MEMBERS**

How likely would you be to recommend this program to another congregation?

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not at all likely

Is there any other feedback you have about your experience or this program?

Thank you for filling out our survey and for being part of
Putting Faith to Work. We appreciate you!



Appendix B

A CONVERSATION ABOUT WORK PLANNING GUIDE

(Instructions: Each person should have a copy of the PFTW Planning Guide and one or two people should have a copy of the worksheet. This document is merely a guide, not a script. The interviewer may want to focus on selected questions rather than asking each one. Any member of the team is welcome to provide input.)

1. Strengths, Gifts, and Passions

Jobs are usually found on the basis of strengths and potential contributions. *Every person* has gifts, talents, and qualities that could benefit some business or organization in his or her community. Start the conversation by considering these potential contributions. Consider the following:

- Tell us about yourself.
- What do you enjoy doing (at home or in the community)?
- What do you love to talk about with people?
- What special interests, passions, or hobbies do you have?
- What do you consider to be some of your strengths?
- What have people complimented you on?
- What personality traits or personal qualities would a potential employer love to know about you?
- What are you really good at (or becoming good at)?
- Are there skills you have that no one really knows about?

2. Work-Related Experiences

Prior work experience can be helpful. But *it isn't essential*. Everyone starts somewhere. Talk about any prior jobs or experiences that might provide insight into what has worked well or what jobs might be a good fit.

- Have you had any paid or unpaid jobs in the past? If yes:
 - Tell us about the job.
 - What did you love about it?
 - What did you not like about it?
 - What sort of things helped you to be successful?
 - Is there someone we could talk to who could tell us more or be a reference?

- Tell us about any volunteer or service experiences you have had.
- Tell us about any responsibilities or chores you have had at home.
- What work-related training or experiences did you have in school?
- Are there other experiences you have had in the community or at church?

3. Job Interests

When a job matches someone's interests, work can be much more motivating and enjoyable. Of course, not every job has to be a perfect fit. Think about the types of jobs that might be a good fit. Don't think about specific businesses or organizations quite yet. That comes next. For now, think about what features of a job would likely work best.

- Is there something you feel "called" to do?
- What types of jobs do you think would be really interesting?
- Are there things in the community you enjoy doing that would make a great job?
- What types of job responsibilities would be a really good fit for you?
- What types of job responsibilities should you definitely avoid?
- Think about these features of a job. For each, are there things that are vital for us to consider?
 - Number of hours you work per week?
 - Days/hours you are scheduled during the week?
 - Location in the community?
 - Amount of pay?
 - Social nature of the job?
 - Start date?
 - Anything else?

4. Possible Places and Connections

Where in your community are there jobs that match the interests, experiences, and preferences already discussed? Do not focus yet on which jobs are (or are not) feasible. Needed support will come next in the conversation. Be sure to include places you do not normally shop and visit. Most jobs are not in public view and often come through personal connections.

- Where are all the places in our community that have these types of jobs?
- Who attends our congregation and also works in these types of places?
- Who could we talk to in our congregation who is connected to businesses and organizations in our community?
- Who could we talk to in our congregation who is connected to other community groups?
- Who are some of the people you already know in the community that we could talk with? For example, family members, friends, relatives, neighbors, or others.
- Are there other job possibilities that should be considered, even if they aren't a close match with your interests?

5. Supports for Success

At some point, we have all needed help finding, keeping, or coping with our job. For people with disabilities, it is important to think about the supports they will need on the job in advance, not to limit options but to *support success*. The right support can be found for almost any job.

- Let's talk about what would help you be most successful finding and keeping a job. Which of the following types of support do you think you will need? [All of these do not need to be read aloud.]
 - Help developing a resume or one-page profile
 - A mentor to help you think about the kinds of things you'd love to do
 - A mentor to help you learn about a particular type of job
 - Someone with whom to practice for an interview
 - Extra training or practice to learn job skills before finding a job
 - Someone to encourage you throughout the job search
 - Someone to help you connect to employers
 - Extra help from someone to learn the job when you first start (like a job coach)
 - Extra help from someone to help you keep the job over time (like a job coach)
 - Assistance getting to or from work
 - Modifications or changes to a job to make you more successful
 - Extra training for an employer so they know how best to support you
- For each of the supports we think would be helpful, who do we know in our congregation who could help?
- Are there outside groups or programs we should contact to find out about these supports?

6. Our Next Steps

- What are our next steps?
- What questions do we have for the PTFW support team?



Appendix C

BLANK NOTE-TAKING FORM FOR PERSON-CENTERED CONVERSATIONS ABOUT WORK

**Use this worksheet to record ideas, questions, and other thoughts emerging from your discussion.*

Who was the focus of this planning? _____

When was the planning meeting held? _____

Who was present? _____

Strengths, Gifts, and Passions

Which strengths, gifts, and passions should we consider when thinking about possible jobs??
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Work-Related Experiences

Which prior experiences should we remember when considering possible jobs?
1.
2.
3.
4.

 **BLANK NOTE-TAKING FORM FOR PERSON-CENTERED CONVERSATIONS ABOUT WORK**

Job Interests

What types of job responsibilities might be a really great fit?
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

Possible Places and Connections

What are possible businesses and organizations in our community where these types of jobs exist?	
1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

Who should we talk to in our congregation (or beyond) who may have connections to such employers?	
Names	Who will make this contact?
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

 **BLANK NOTE-TAKING FORM FOR PERSON-CENTERED CONVERSATIONS ABOUT WORK**

Supports for Success

What supports do we think will be needed to promote success?		
Support	Who should we approach?	Who will make this contact?
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Next Steps

What are our next steps as a group?	Who will take responsibility?	By when?
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		



Putting Faith To Work

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