



Case STUDY

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Pathways to Careers Employer Case Study: **Futura Industries**

INTRODUCTION

The Pathways to Careers (Pathways) program helps people with intellectual or developmental disabilities and people with a primary diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder obtain competitive integrated employment aligned with their skills, interests, strengths, and abilities. The Pathways service model is reliant on partnerships with employer organizations in the private, nonprofit, and public sectors that represent a range of career areas and will host interns and ultimately employ participants, if the internship is successful. To achieve permanent employment, employer partners must offer participants job training; ongoing employment supports, including natural supports provided by co-workers in the workplace; and a work environment that meets participants' conditions for success.¹

About the Pathways to Careers Program

The Pathways service model was developed by SourceAmerica in consultation with Marc Gold & Associates (MGA). SourceAmerica is one of two nonprofit organizations that administer the AbilityOne Program, which creates employment opportunities on federal government contracts for people with disabilities through a network of nonprofit agency partners. MGA trained Pathways staff on the key service components and provided technical assistance after the program launched. Descriptions of these five service components follow:

- 1. Discovery** is a strengths-based assessment of a participant that focuses on identifying the interests, skills, and conditions for success for each Pathways participant. Examples of ideal work conditions include the participant's work schedule, his or her commute to and from work, and the management style of his or her direct supervisor. To uncover the ideal conditions in which the participant can work, Pathways staff members observe the participant in a variety of settings, including in the participant's home and in the community, in 10 to 15 Discovery sessions, culminating in a career planning meeting with the career navigator, employer facilitator, participant, and family members to identify criteria for the ideal internship or employment match.

Futura's experience with Pathways at a glance

- **4 internships** hosted 
- **2 paid jobs** offered to interns 
- **2 interns** hired into paid jobs 
- **\$21,591** in EPTA payments received through September 2016

About the Pathways to Careers Program *(Continued)*

- 2. Expanded Discovery and paid internships** provide the opportunity to affirm or expand upon what was learned about each individual during Discovery to further identify each participant's ideal conditions for success. Paid internships allow Pathways participants to try out different job responsibilities and determine whether the job is a suitable placement for the individual. Participants can experience one or more 8 to 12-week paid internships and develop a greater experience base from which to make decisions about employment. Pathways, rather than the employer, provides salary, benefits, and employment supports (for example, job coaching or transportation). At the end of the internship, if a job offer is extended, the participant can move into employment or wait for placement in another internship.
- 3. Employment supports** (and integrated behavioral health/mental health services) are identified through the Discovery and expanded Discovery phases and a support plan is developed for each person. If needed, behavioral health and/or mental health services are coordinated with and/or identified and incorporated into the employment support plan. Together, these integrated services are meant to help each participant successfully access and maintain employment.
- 4. Employment and the employer payroll tax adjustment (EPTA)** are additional components of the Pathways model if the participant accepts an employment offer. If a Pathways participant becomes employed after a Pathways internship, a Pathways staff member will help the participant negotiate wages, work schedule, and benefits. If the participant earns at least \$750 per month, the employer is eligible to receive EPTA payments ranging from \$167 to \$583 per month per participant, depending on the participant's earnings and health plan enrollment. In Utah, Pathways will provide the EPTA for up to five years per participant.
- 5. Post-employment career support** is offered by Pathways staff members after the participant has accepted a job offer. Staff work with participants and employers to identify training, professional development and educational opportunities as well as mentors that will support their career development. Staff also help address either the participant's or the employer's concerns about the participant's success in the job.

Pathways is being implemented by the Pioneer Adult Rehabilitation Center (PARC), a community rehabilitation program in Clearfield, Utah. Pathways has since expanded to three other sites in Massachusetts, Michigan, and Virginia. SourceAmerica contracted with Mathematica Policy Research (Mathematica) to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Pathways to Career program.

In this case study, Mathematica systematically examines Futura Industries, located in Clearfield, Utah, to understand the factors that have contributed to its successful partnership with the Pathways program. We define highly successful partnerships as those in which the employer has hosted a minimum of four Pathways internships, hired at least two Pathways participants, and utilized the employer payroll tax adjustment (EPTA). Of the 93 employers that have partnered with Pathways to date, two meet these criteria: Futura and the Davis School District, which we feature in a separate case study

Building successful partnerships with employers who will host internships and employ Pathways participants is vital to the success of the Pathways initiative. Understanding the conditions under which a successful partnership is possible could shape staff's outreach efforts to prospective employers and interactions with managers during the internship and employment period. Furthermore, this case study can aid in the program's replicability as the service model expands beyond the four demonstration sites. To investigate how this employer has successfully partnered with Pathways, we interviewed four groups of respondents, described in the Data and Methods section.

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¹ Conditions for success are the conditions in the participant's work environment (such as management style of direct supervisor, familiarization with job tasks, and needed accommodations) that will contribute to a successful placement for the individual (MGA 2015).

About Futura Industries

Futura is an aluminum extruder based in Clearfield, Utah. In addition to designing, manufacturing, and selling aluminum and vinyl extrusions, Futura takes on anodizing and fabrication jobs and manufactures a wide range of products, including swimming pools, treadmills, and equipment for dental offices. High quality is at the core of the company mission, which is to provide “extraordinary value through extrusion.”

Futura is a midsize private corporation with roughly 350 employees, most of whom work full-time. The workforce is diverse in terms of race and age, with many Hispanic, African American, and Filipino workers. On average, more than 50 percent of employees have worked for the company for longer than 7 years. Employees receive a rich benefits package that includes a health reimbursement account, life insurance, short- and long-term disability insurance, and an on-site medical clinic that is free for employees and dependents. Other benefits include “lunch and learn” seminars offered to workers, spouses, and dependents on topics such as wellness and financial responsibility, and flex time that allows workers to miss a shift and make up the time on a later shift during the week. Employees can also take advantage of generous amounts of overtime and bonus pay.

Futura has been recognized as one of the best places to work in Utah for the past 17 years and for the past two years has ranked in the top 10 midsize businesses to work for in Utah by The Salt Lake Tribune. According to the company’s social media, Futura’s culture promotes teamwork, quality, and responsibility. Futura seeks out the best from both its teams and individual team members—and it acknowledges and rewards their accomplishments.

The research questions focused on understanding why the company chose to participate in Pathways, the company’s experience with the EPTA that Pathways offers, and the company’s perceptions of the Pathways program. The research questions also explored the company’s experience hosting Pathways participants as interns and its experience with the employees hired through the Pathways program, both from the employer’s and participant’s perspectives. Key lessons learned include the following:

- Paid internships and the management team’s altruistic desire to make a positive difference in the community were deciding factors to partner with Pathways.
- The accommodating and inclusive work environment helped Pathways participants integrate fully into the workplace.
- Early support from Pathways staff and open communication between Pathways participants and direct supervisors were vital to assimilating participants to their positions.

- Competitive wages and employee benefits can help Pathways participants who have secured permanent employment achieve financial independence.
- Employers should be open to the possibility of partnering with Pathways and hiring workers with disabilities because of the substantial contributions these individuals can bring to the workforce.

EARLY INVOLVEMENT WITH PATHWAYS

We asked Futura staff about their early involvement with Pathways to understand why the company chose to participate in the program. Understanding the employer’s motivations for participating in Pathways can inform the program’s employer recruitment efforts. As the program expands, it must continue to increase its network of participating employers so that internship and employment opportunities become available for the growing number of program participants.

Data and Methods

Our case study of Futura explored in-depth an employer that has successfully partnered with the Pathways to Careers program. To identify successful partnerships, we selected those employers that have hosted a minimum of four internships, hired at least two Pathways participants, and utilized the EPTA. In addition, we selected Futura based on organizational characteristics such as its status as a midsize private corporation, having an inclusive culture, and its recognition for several years as a top company to work for in Utah.

We met with several respondents to capture a wide range of perspectives on Futura's relationship with the Pathways program. We conducted semi-structured in-person interviews with a company executive and a direct supervisor at Futura who oversees the work of Pathways participants who are now full-time employees. The interviews covered the company's experience hiring workers with disabilities, motivations for partnering with Pathways, experiences with Pathways internships and employees hired through Pathways, and satisfaction with the Pathways program. We also met with a Pathways participant at two points in time, in 2014 and in 2016, to obtain his perspective on working as an intern and a permanent employee at Futura. Finally, we met with two Pathways staff who have interacted with Futura since it partnered with Pathways, including the program director who formerly served as a career navigator and the employment facilitator.

This case study synthesizes information collected from these five respondents. Descriptive statistics on service utilization are from Pathways program data. Because the employers that have partnered with Pathways are organizationally unique in terms of size, workforce, industry type, and employment sector, findings from this case study may not apply to all employer partners, and the factors contributing to a successful placement at this company will differ from the experiences of other employer partners. In addition, the supports Pathways participants received after they were hired by Futura may differ from the supports other participants who have secured employment through Pathways received due to differences in individual skills, abilities, and needs for supports on the job.



Futura's Mission

Extraordinary value through extrusion

Vision

Reliable, responsive service to ensure customers get flawless results

Values

Vision-Focus-Execution-Integrity-Trust

The management team at Futura learned about Pathways through an event hosted by the Davis County Chamber of Commerce. The Pathways project director presented about Pathways at this event, which staff from area businesses attended. Before participating in Pathways, Futura did not have any experience hiring people with significant disabilities. Initially, Futura staff viewed Pathways favorably but did not think it was feasible to implement at its worksite because of concerns about participants' safety and product quality. Futura staff work with heavy machinery and industrial materials, such as aluminum, which can be hazardous to employees if handled improperly. Although the company strives to provide a safe working environment for all employees, respondents expressed some concerns about risks to participants' safety and potential liability. Futura is also committed to

achieving manufacturing efficiency and producing high-quality products, which underlies its corporate mission. All staff and teams within the organization have daily productivity targets they strive to meet. Futura respondents noted that customers expect "very high-quality and on-time delivery," and they expressed some initial concerns that the quality of Pathways participants' work might not meet their standards and could disrupt business operations.

However, Futura ultimately chose to participate in Pathways in 2012 because the company philosophy emphasizes social responsibility, and the mission of the Pathways program fit with the corporate culture. Futura organizes volunteer opportunities for its staff to support local nonprofit organizations; Pathways was viewed as another way to make a positive difference in the community. Two members

of the management team were especially strong advocates for participating in Pathways. The mission of the program appealed to them, in part, because they have close family members with disabilities. The management team decided to partner with Pathways after meeting the first prospective intern who Futura later hired as a permanent employee.

Futura staff were also attracted to the program's paid internships. The internships enabled Futura staff to observe firsthand the participant's ability to support its product lines and the types of supports the participant would need to help him or her thrive in the workplace. The internships also revealed the degree of compatibility between the participant's interests, skills, and abilities and the requirements of the position. According to one Futura staff person, the internships "removed the fear of the unknown" and signaled to staff early on whether the internship was a suitable placement.

EXPERIENCES HOSTING PATHWAYS INTERNS AND HIRING THEM AS EMPLOYEES

Experiences hosting interns

Before Futura hosted an intern, a Pathways staff person worked for two days on the job to understand the requirements of the position, including the job duties and skills required to perform the

job duties effectively; characteristics of the work environment, such as the degree to which the intern would interact with other colleagues; and the management structure of the organization. The Pathways staff person applied what she learned to offer the internship to a Pathways participant for whom the position was a suitable fit given the individual's interests, conditions for success, and contributions revealed through the Discovery process. Since 2012, Futura has hosted three participants in four internships and extended jobs offers to two Pathways participants; one participant worked in a hybrid internship and the other worked in a standard internship at Futura (Table 1).² The internships lasted 9 to 13 weeks, although one participant completed two internships at Futura over 9 months (interning at a different employer in between). One Futura staff person attributed the successful placement of a Pathways intern to the company's willingness to make accommodations and ensure that each participant "is set up for success instead of failure." Futura highly values its employees and offers all staff accommodations to improve the workforce's well-being and help staff succeed in the workplace. The supports Futura provides to Pathways participants include on-the-job training, additional supervision, assistance from coworkers to complete certain tasks (such as operating heavy machinery), a flexible work schedule, and additional or longer breaks. According to one staff person, open and frequent communication

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² Pathways interns can participate in any of four types of internships, including standard, adapted, customized, and hybrid. Standard internships are existing jobs. Adapted internships entail the carving away of duties in an existing job that are barriers to a participant in an effort to achieve a suitable match between the job and the participant's interests and abilities. Customized internships are those in which the employer establishes a nonstandard job; job duties are defined based on Pathways staff negotiations with the employer to structure the job in ways that maximize a particular intern's productivity. Hybrid internships are non-negotiated customized jobs, meaning the employer's standard practice is to customize job tasks to maximize any employee's productivity (Livermore et al. 2016).

Table 1

Characteristics of internships and jobs obtained through Pathways

| Internship | Internship Measures | | Employment Measures | | |
|------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| | # of hours per week | # of weeks per internship | # of months at job | Monthly gross wages* | Fringe benefits |
| 1 | 24 | 12 | 11 | \$2,002 | Yes |
| 2 | 37.5 | 12 | | | |
| 3 | 48 | 13. | 38 | \$2,048 | Yes |
| 4 | 17 | 9 | | | |

Note: The same Pathways participant worked in internships 2 and 3.

*Monthly gross wages are from Pathways programmatic data submitted through November 2016, and exclude bonuses. For internship 3, the individual's monthly gross wages, including bonus pay, totaled \$3,043.

+Fringe benefits include health insurance, 401(k) plan, paid holidays, flexible spending account, paid vacation, and access to medical care through an on-site medical clinic.

was also important in the first few weeks of the internship as participants adjusted to their role, direct coworkers, and new work environment.

The support from Pathways staff was vital to successfully integrating Pathways participants whom Futura later hired. One participant was characterized as initially shy, afraid, and intimidated, and it took a while before he established trust with his direct supervisor, grew comfortable in the internship, and gained confidence in his abilities to perform the job duties. Pathways staff worked alongside participants for the first few weeks of the internship, and, according to Futura staff, this support was critical to assimilating them to the organization. For example, one intern was at risk of having seizures. The Pathways staff member educated the direct supervisor and colleagues about the signs and symptoms of a seizure and provided emergency contact information in the event the individual experienced a seizure while at work. On one occasion, the intern lost consciousness; Futura staff called the paramedics and alerted Pathways staff.

In a few instances, the internships did not go as planned and Futura did not offer individuals a job at the end of the internship. For example, one intern filled a specific position that was available, but he could not keep up with the fast pace of the workflow or the length of the shift, and no other internship options were available to explore.

EXPERIENCES HIRING PATHWAYS PARTICIPANTS

At Futura, Pathways participants have worked as interns and permanent employees on various product lines. The company has more than 100 different product lines operating at any point in time, and each product is customized to a particular client. For many jobs, the duties are technical in nature or involve operating heavy machinery. According to one staff person, production lines in which a single product is manufactured are well suited to Pathways participants because the tasks are repetitive. Other tasks that are well suited to Pathways participants are two-person jobs in which staff work together alongside each other.

Pathways participants have worked in different areas of the organization and have proven to be more versatile than some Futura staff initially expected. One staff member noted that Pathways participants will learn how to do a particular job, will do the work very well, and in some cases

can support different product lines. The optimal match reportedly occurs when a participant is placed in a job that is well suited to his or her abilities and the team is willing to make some adaptations for the placement to work.

Indeed, Futura has successfully placed two Pathways participants in permanent positions. One participant was hired in September 2013 and the other was hired in November 2015. The first individual started working at Futura 42 hours per week (a full-time schedule) and has worked at that level ever since. The second individual also started working full time upon hire. As of the end of September 2016, Futura has claimed \$21,591 in EPTA payments. Although the EPTA payments were not a deciding factor in the company's decision to move forward with participating in Pathways, Futura has used the funds to offset the costs of additional supervision for participants. The two participants also received a nominal amount of job supports from Pathways staff during their first 90 days of employment; one individual received about 17 hours of supports from Pathways staff and the other received about 6 hours of support. Both individuals have enjoyed long tenures as full-time employees with rich benefits package (Table 1). Futura staff described both participants as hard working, reliable, trustworthy, and committed; they are fully integrated into the workforce and viewed the same as other permanent employees in the company.

FUTURA STAFF'S SATISFACTION WITH PATHWAYS

We interviewed a company executive and a direct supervisor at Futura, and both respondents viewed Pathways positively. One Futura staff person commented that the employment supports from Pathways staff and the paid internships were the most positive aspects of the program. After selecting each intern, the Pathways staff person spent the first week of the internship working side by side with the participant, helping him get acquainted with coworkers and learn how to perform the job duties. The Pathways staff person then reduced his or her time on-site to three days per week for the next two weeks, and then one day per week for the following month. According to Futura staff, this level of support was critical to assimilating the interns to their respective positions and helping them integrate fully into the organization.

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"The change that... [participant]...has made with our workforce and the departments he's worked within has been very positive.... He brings out the best in people. People are more willing to help others.... If you look at [participant] and what he's achieved and learned while here, that's huge. But, if you look at what he's brought to the culture and staff [within the organization], that's even greater."

.....
—Futura staff member
.....

Futura staff described participants' positive impact on the workplace, noting that the dedication and positive attitude of one particular participant "rubs off" on all staff, and he "brings the best out of people." When speaking of this individual, the respondent noted that he has gained confidence in his abilities and established strong bonds with many of his coworkers. This staff person also noted that Futura would like to host more Pathways interns because the two individuals they hired through the program have been such strong additions to their workforce.

Overall, Futura staff believe the Pathways service model has worked well for their organization. One respondent from Futura values that Pathways staff take a customized approach in placing participants in internships and supporting them in the workplace. Futura's director of human resources contacts the Pathways program when the company launches a new product line that could potentially accommodate a Pathways intern. Futura's business model emphasizes customization in its products, and this philosophy extends to its corporate culture, which strives to accommodate the individualized needs of all employees.

A PARTICIPANT'S PERSPECTIVE

We interviewed one Pathways participant, J, who Futura hired as a permanent employee in September 2013. J was a student in the Students Transitioning for Educational and Personal Success (STEPS) program before joining Pathways. STEPS is a local school-to-work transition program for youth ages 18–22 with disabilities. J joined Pathways because he wanted to work and earn a living wage.

J completed the Discovery phase of Pathways in 2012. During Discovery, Pathways staff identified several conditions of success for J, including (1) staying active while working, (2) knowing to whom to direct questions during his shift, (3) having time to process instructions and permission to ask clarifying questions, and (4) ensuring his direct coworkers are aware of his risk of seizures and know how to respond when they occur in the workplace. Pathways staff applied this knowledge and placed J in three separate internships with two employers in the manufacturing industry. J's first internship was working as a T-slots worker at Futura for 12 weeks from November 2012 through February 2013.³ Although J performed well during the internship, at the time the department did not have

enough work available to offer him a permanent position. Soon after, J began his second internship at Zero Manufacturing. The employer was located far from J's home and he commuted to work each day with a supervisor at Zero Manufacturing who lived close to him. Although the company offered J a permanent position at the end of this 12-week internship, he did not accept the position because "the work was tough," he felt his coworkers rushed him to complete his work, and the commute was too long. For his third internship, J returned to Futura in June 2013 to work full time as a racker. At the end of his internship, Futura offered J a permanent full-time position at \$10.50 per hour. A few months after accepting the job, a position became available in the T-slots department and J transferred back there, as he enjoyed working with staff in that department during his internship.

Since becoming a permanent employee in 2013, J has thrived in his position and gained confidence in himself and his abilities to perform his job duties. When he started working at Futura, J was assigned a buddy during his shift to help him complete some tasks. His job is physically demanding; he is on his feet for his entire shift, lifts heavy items, and operates machinery. J works fairly independently now; he receives assistance only when he is operating heavy machinery or when completing a task that is by nature a two-person job. J is a dedicated worker, arriving at 5:30 a.m. each day before the start of his shift at 6. According to J, he likes his direct supervisor and spoke highly of his coworkers whom he views as friends. He feels that his coworkers respect him and is happy where he works because he is doing "a good job." J earns a gift card every 60 days that he does not have a work-related accident and often receives bonus payments. He is now contributing to his 401(k) account and is saving money so he can move out of his parents' home. He transitioned off federal disability benefits in 2013 after his earnings reached a level that made him ineligible for these benefits.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM FUTURA'S EXPERIENCE WITH PATHWAYS

When reflecting on the development of Pathways' partnership with Futura, respondents offered five lessons that might inform the program's efforts to build its networks of participating employers, which are critical to the overall success of Pathways.

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³ T-slots are structural aluminum framing systems.

Paid internships and the management team's altruistic desire to make a positive difference in the community were deciding factors to partner with Pathways.

Futura respondents noted that the paid internships were a key factor in the company's decision to partner with Pathways. The internships enabled Futura staff to observe Pathways participants' ability to support its product lines and revealed the degree of compatibility between the participant's interests, skills, and abilities and the requirements of the position at little cost to the company. The management team's desire to offer people with disabilities opportunities to gain work experience also motivated Futura to partner with Pathways. Although the EPTA was not a deciding factor in Futura's decision to partner with Pathways, the company has received \$21,591 in EPTA payments through September 2016, which Futura has used to offset the cost of additional on-the-job supervision it provides to Pathways participants.

The accommodating and inclusive work environment helped Pathways participants integrate fully into the workplace.

Futura offers its employees an accommodating workplace that includes both an on-site medical clinic with free medical care for employees and their dependents and flex time. Futura's willingness to make accommodations for Pathways participants, such as providing additional supervision and work breaks and a flexible work schedule, contributed to participants receiving the appropriate support in the workplace and being retained at the company long-term.

Early support from Pathways staff and open communication between Pathways participants and direct supervisors were vital to assimilating participants to their positions.

After selecting each intern, Pathways staff spent the first week of the internship working side by side with the participant, helping him or her become acquainted with coworkers; understand the practices and policies in the workplace (such as regarding lunch and other breaks, completing timesheets); and learn how to perform job duties. The support from Pathways staff in the early weeks of the internship was critical to assimilating the interns to their positions and ensuring each participant received support and could perform his job successfully. Frequent and open communication between Pathways participants and their direct supervisor was also vital to establish trust and make adapta-

tions to his job duties or schedule, as needed, to accommodate the participant's needs.

Competitive wages and employee benefits can help Pathways participants who have secured permanent employment achieve financial independence.

Futura extended job offers to two Pathways participants in 2013 and 2015, and both individuals have since achieved financial independence. These Pathways participants had received federal disability benefits in the past and gradually transitioned off them after their earnings reached a level that made them ineligible for these benefits.⁴ Both individuals enjoy multiple benefits at Futura, including health coverage and 401(k) plans, and both are saving and planning for their futures.

Employers should be open to the possibility of hiring workers with disabilities.

We asked a Futura staff person what he would tell other employers who are considering participating in Pathways or hiring people with disabilities. The respondent conveyed that managers "should not be afraid" about hiring workers with disabilities and to explore the possibilities within their organizations. According to Futura staff, Pathways participants have been strong additions to their company's workforce, and staff have observed many positive changes the participants' presence has had on the company's culture and its employees. Futura staff view Pathways participants as "committed, trustworthy, and hardworking" employees.

CONCLUSION

In recent years, federal policies and initiatives have emphasized integrated community employment for people with disabilities, especially those with intellectual or developmental disabilities. The Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act, signed into law in 2000, states the goals of independence, productivity, and inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all facets of community life. The 1999 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Olmstead v. L.C.* emphasizes integrated employment as the preferred outcome for individuals with severe disabilities and prohibits the unnecessary institutionalization and segregation of people with disabilities. In response to the *Olmstead* ruling, many states have expanded the capacity of their community-based service systems, have established *Olmstead* plans, and have begun to examine the role of sheltered workshops,

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⁴ Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries can take advantage of a nine-month trial work period (TWP) during which the beneficiary receives full SSDI benefits regardless of the amount of monthly earnings as long as the beneficiary reports his or her work activity and has a disability. After the beneficiary completes his or her TWP, the Social Security Administration (SSA) evaluates the beneficiary's work and earnings to determine if he or she can work at the substantial gainful activity (SGA) level. If SSA determines that substantial work is occurring, the beneficiary is not entitled to receive SSDI benefits for months in which earnings are more than the SGA level, which is \$1,170 per month in gross earnings in 2017 for a nonblind individual (SSA 2016). Pathways participants receive benefits counseling from their local work incentives planning and assistance counselor to help them understand how wages earned during an internship or permanent employment will impact their federal disability benefits or medical benefits (MGA 2015).

which often employ people with intellectual or developmental disabilities at subminimum wages in segregated settings.⁵ The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, passed by Congress in 2014, is also transforming the public workforce system and improving access to workforce services for people with disabilities and preparing them for competitive integrated employment (U.S. DOL 2014).

In addition to these federal policies, the concept of Employment First has spread to support the full inclusion of people with the most significant disabilities in the workplace and community. Under this principle, integrated employment in a community-based work setting is the first option for providing employment services to youth and adults with significant disabilities (U.S. Office of Disability Employment Policy 2013). Thirty-two states have an official Employment First policy in place tied to legislation or a policy directive making integrated employment a priority goal for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities (Butterworth et al. 2013; Hoff 2016). The remaining states have Employment First efforts and initiatives underway but no official Employment First policy (Hoff 2016).

The Pathways to Careers program provides an avenue for adults with severe disabilities to secure competitive integrated employment – a key objective of the system change efforts under Employment First. As we have observed firsthand through Pathways, not only does working increase individuals' self-confidence and self-esteem, but work that is meaningful and competitive can increase individuals' financial independence and help ensure their full inclusion in the workplace and broader community. Pathways promises to continue expanding its reach as enrollment grows in the three sites that were launched in 2015 and 2016.

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⁵ According to DOJ (2011), "an Olmstead plan is a public entity's plan for implementing its obligation to provide individuals with disabilities opportunities to live, work, and be served in integrated settings." The plan must reflect an analysis of the extent to which the public entity is providing services in the most integrated setting and must contain concrete commitments to expand integrated opportunities.

