

## Division of Vocational Rehabilitation – Creative Workforce Solutions

### Program Overview

Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS) is an initiative of the Agency of Human Services (AHS) that offers a consolidated and coordinated approach to employment services and provides equal access to meaningful work in the competitive job market. CWS offers the business community a simplified staffing service that helps them access qualified candidates to meet their staffing needs. All services are free to businesses in Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and New York.

CWS Employment Consultants and Business Account Managers (BAMs) are available to employers statewide to review business needs, offer qualified candidates, and develop training plans for job candidates. The goal of CWS is to provide a streamlined recruitment and retention service for Vermont businesses while also offering training and support to Vermonters who find entering, or re-entering the workforce challenging.

### Staff and Partners

Creative Workforce Solutions is staffed by 10 BAMs covering all 12 AHS Districts. BAMs convene local CWS Employment Teams, where programs can share business contacts, problem-solve difficult cases, and hear directly from Hiring Managers. In addition to the BAMs, CWS also includes Employment Consultants who are contracted through various organizations including the Designated Agencies, the Vermont Association of Business, Industry & Rehabilitation (VABIR), the Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and a variety of specialized employment programs.

As an initiative of the Agency of Human Services, Creative Workforce Solutions represents candidates and individuals served by the following partners:

- Economic Services Division, Reach Up
- Department of Corrections
- Department of Mental Health
- Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living
- Vermont Veterans
- New Americans/Refugees
- Vermont’s Recovery Center Network
- Office of Child Support
- At-risk youth service organizations

### Recent Developments and Accomplishments

The State as a Model Employer – On March 23, 2016, Governor Shumlin signed an Executive Order establishing a “Disability Employment Working Group” comprised of representatives from DAIL, the Department of Human Resources, and members

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of the Governor’s Workforce Equity and Diversity Committee. They were charged with developing a model to help State agencies recruit, train and retain workers with disabilities to both diversify and meet the needs of Vermont’s “greying” workforce. In 2017, CWS piloted the model in the Barre-Berlin-Montpelier corridor before launching statewide, and information sessions were held for 10 groups of Hiring Managers and Supervisors from across the state.

### Future Directions

Creative Workforce Solutions has ongoing relationships with over 3,000 businesses across Vermont and adjoining counties in NY, MA and NH. Business Account Managers are now working with their local communities to develop training “pipelines” into various sectors of the economy. Recent training programs have been established to prepare individuals for careers in:

- Healthcare
- Hospitality
- Commercial driving
- Customer service/cashier
- State Government
- Food Preparation and delivery

We see this demand-driven model as the key to meeting the needs of employers who are struggling to find workers. In developing training programs, the starting point is always with the businesses in a community, the ultimate “end users” of our employment services. By taking the time to understand the staffing needs of businesses, we can better craft trainings that meet their needs while also offering the skill development that may be lacking for job candidates. Through collaborations with adult education programs, training providers, Tech Centers and other community partners, CWS can build customized training that aligns with higher-wage jobs in a wide range of economic sectors.

### Results

All CWS business engagement activities are recorded in Salesforce. The three elements below are used to track the business outreach activities of the CWS employment teams statewide in SFY 2017 (July 2016 through June 2017):

- New Contacts: 1,680 Contacts identified in 1,192 businesses
- New Opportunities identified: 4,459
- Activities with business: 5,295 in 1,645 distinct businesses