

Public/Private Partnerships: Strategies for Meeting the Needs of Employers Webinar

February 2009

[Robb Sewell] Good afternoon. My name is Robb Sewell and on behalf of the NTAR Leadership Center, I would like to welcome you to the second in our series of Virtual Leadership Institute classes. The topic of today's session is *Public/Private Partnerships: Strategies for Meeting the Needs of Employers*. Before we start, I would like to take a few minutes to review some important information. For those unfamiliar with this particular webinar format, the presentation slides will appear on the right side of your screen and the chat feature on the left portion of your screen will enable you to communicate with me should you have any questions or encounter any problems. Simply type your message and click send. You will also see an option for full screen on the left portion of your display. Clicking this will maximize the area where the presentation slides appear and will minimize your chat box so that it appears as a floating window. Throughout today's presentation, I encourage you to submit questions for our presenters. To do so, click the raise hand button in the lower left hand portion of your screen or if you prefer, submit your question by using the chat feature on the left side of your screen. Simply type your question and click send. Please note that this webinar is being recorded. A direct link to the webinar materials, including audio and web content will be available on the NTAR Leadership Center Web site by 12:00 P.M. Eastern Time, Thursday, February 5th. The NTAR Web site can be accessed at www.ntarcenter.org. That is www.ntarcenter.org. And at this point I'd like to turn things over to Kathy Krepcio who is Director of the NTAR Leadership Center. Kathy?

[Kathy Krepcio] Thanks a lot Robb and good afternoon. I'm pleased to welcome you to the second of five webinar classes in the NTAR Leadership Center's Virtual Leadership Institute Series for members of our State Peer Leaders Network and our

State Leader's Institute Network members who have registered for this series. For today's session, I am happy to present to you two speakers, Leslie Wilson, who is the President and CEO of Wilson Resources, Inc., and affiliated with the Florida network of Business Leadership Networks, and Dr. Robert Rudney, an associate with Booz Allen Hamilton. Next slide please. By now, many of you are familiar with the work of the NTAR Leadership Center since all of you have participated in webinar sessions in the past. I would like to point out to you today that this Virtual Leadership Institute webinar series has been specifically designed to better help you as state leaders who are working in a wide variety of fields, from disability employment, to workforce development, to human services, better understand the complex dimensions involved as you help people with disabilities to move to employment. Next slide please. And as reflected in our center's five goals as outlined in this slide, we wish to introduce those of you who are not familiar with or have not been exposed to some tools, techniques, and strategies that are being used across the country today, such as customized employment techniques, asset building strategies, and universal design strategies that are reflected as I said earlier in our principles. By the way, I wanted to point out that our first session, which for many of you participated giving you the history of disability employment, in which we experienced some technical difficulties has been re-recorded and is available on the ntarcenter.org Web site. Next slide please. For today's session, we're going to focus on the following: one is our speakers will examine the collaborative approaches between businesses and the public sector being used to achieve increased employment. So we're going to review some of the impediments to the employment of people with disabilities from the perspective of the business community, recommendations from businesses on how to overcome these hurdles and be available to answer your questions. Our objective for today's session is to provide information about ongoing public/private employment initiatives to acquaint you with potential issues and solutions and again, to answer your questions. Next slide

please. And now I'd like to turn it over to Leslie Wilson. Leslie, welcome to the series.

[Leslie Wilson] Hello, welcome, thank you very much for having me present today. Exciting, it's also a little nerve-wracking because you can't see the audience so what I want to say is if you have a question at any time, please raise your hand and let me know because I would prefer to have more of a dialog than a monologue. Next slide please. My presentation is about working with businesses to open business's doors to people with disabilities as employees and I have this slide, I love this slide because there are five very distinctive people here with disabilities who were very successful throughout history. Some of you already know what some of these individual's disabilities are but that's really not the important thing. The important thing is that despite a disability or maybe because of, they have become famous, great people. The person on the far right is Pythagoras. He was probably the first pure mathematician. He was Greek and he had epilepsy. That's one you may not know about. In the middle is Sir Winston Churchill who had a speech impediment, worked all his life to overcome it, and yet I really believe that his voice and his speeches brought us through World War II. Of course, James Earl Jones, who had difficulty with stuttering and then Stephen Hawking who has ALS, often called Lou Gehrig's Disease, is up in the left hand corner. He is a remarkable astrophysicist. So people with disabilities have made great contributions throughout history. I started out with The Arts Pennsylvania many years ago and I'll never forget when I first started there was a poster in some of the offices that said hire people with disabilities, your grandparents did and there was a picture of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. I just thought that was always so striking and something we need to remember. Next slide. We have a terrible problem in this country of unemployment of people with disabilities. It's estimated by the American Community Survey that there are 19.8 million Americans with disabilities of working age, 21 to 64. That does not include 18 to 20 year olds and also that the

number of people with disabilities of working age will really increase with the veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. I have a friend who is a lieutenant colonel in the Marines, retired, but he still works for the Defense Department and he says that unless something is done soon, we will have more homeless veterans in this country than ever before and really a sad scenario that we are looking forward to and we really need to get employers on board to understand what they can do to help us solve the problem, but more importantly, to really recruit and hire great employees. Next slide. Now, ACS estimates that there are 62.2% of people with disabilities who are of working age are unemployed in this country. I always say, if this was any other minority group there would be people marching in the streets. That is a huge unemployment rate, 62.2%, and if anyone here on the phone can live and maybe some of you are, living on social security, disability insurance, or SSI, I don't know how you do it because it certainly is not enough money. So not only do we have people unemployed but we have people unemployed who are then poor and that's really unfortunate. Next slide. Fundamental truth number one, this is so important to me. Without employers there are no jobs and over the course of history in this field we have completely ignored employers. They are the demand side of the employment equation. Until they demand great employees with disabilities, we will have a lot of people sitting on the sidelines. I have to say in this photograph that's Barbara Torres and Robert Friedman, who is a partner with Holland and Knight Law Firm in Miami. He hired Barbara many, many years ago. Barbara always reminds him when I'm in Holland and Knights offices that she's long outlived her supervisor. She is in fact a person with a disability but she is a phenomenal employee who has stayed with the company and that brought Bob Friedman into our Business Leadership Network and in Miami I always call him the father of the BLN movement in Florida. Next slide. Secondly, for people with disabilities to be gainfully employed, there has to be demand and that's where we've got to really focus. I have to talk here quickly about the picture. This is Leigh

Ann Ferguson at Pennington Law Firm in Tallahassee, Florida. She was one of our Business Leadership Network Internship recipients and ended up getting a job at the firm as a runner so that's a great one but there has to be demand and we have to also have people ready to go on the supply side. Next slide. My company is working with 10 local Florida Business Leadership Networks around Florida. We have them everywhere. We have about 600 employers and in doing this, we have learned so much from the employers on why they aren't hiring or why they are hiring people with disabilities but I do want to emphasize that BLNs often scare people away. Many of you are sitting there thinking oh my gosh, it's so much work and, yeah, it is a lot of work. But I think there are other ways to do this. I'm working with an agency in another state. I worked with one in New Jersey not too long ago and I said to them, you can have a Business Advisory Committee which is a smaller group of business people to guide your organization in what it does. It's so amazing to me that often in this field we don't even think to say to an employer what do you think of this brochure? Would this encourage you to hire people with disabilities? And then let those employers tell you what they think. They will tell you, too. And it is one of the things I find the employers we work with really like. They like you to say what do you think, give me your comments, tell us how we should do this, what do you recommend? Because they have a lot of wisdom and knowledge and they do want to share it with us. Next slide. You've got to have your brag page. This is all of the awards that the BLNs have won since we started the first one in Miami in 2004. You can see it's a long list. Great employers involved, Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities won Partner of the Year Award for funding the local BLN several years ago, 2006. Comcast Cable, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Florida is our Statewide Champion. They have put a lot of time, effort, and money into the Business Leadership movement in Florida, really to be applauded for that. So this is done as a cooperative venture. We provide the staff support but it's our BLN members who really make it go. Next slide. This is a study some of you

might want to look up online. I've given you the Web site that talks a lot about the employment of people with disabilities in corporate culture and it talks about how we really have to work with corporate cultures to create and reinforce obstacles, that we need to pay attention to those obstacles, and there are obstacles, and how do we remove them or overcome them? Next slide. We found as they found in this study that there are significant attitudinal barriers to the employment of people with disabilities and we have to work with entire organizations to change that. Next slide. In 2002 the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council funded us to do a study in Florida of the employment needs of people and goals of people with disabilities and we interviewed 522 people, mostly in person. What we found from them is that the second leading impediment to their employment in their own opinion was employer attitudes. And just as an aside, number one was transportation. In Florida, that's a huge problem. But they are telling us look, I can't get a job. I want a job but employer attitudes are keeping me out of the workforce. Next slide. So when we started the BLNs in 2004 we started thinking, how are we going to find out from the employer members what some of the issues are? So we started surveying them annually in 2007 and 2008. And basically what we found is that the leading impediment to the employment of people with disabilities at all corporate levels was attitudes. Really amazing, isn't it, that people with disabilities are telling us and now employers of all sizes and all shapes in Florida are telling us that that's the case. Interestingly enough, the BLN employers are very motivated. They are coming to BLN meetings, they're completing the survey, they are very motivated to recruit and hire people with disabilities and they're telling us that it's a problem. In 2008, they highlighted middle managers and front-line staff as being kind of the major roadblocks so that's easy to understand. Middle managers are usually the hiring managers and they have to hire people and train them and front-line staff are of course coworkers, people who are going to work directly with people with disabilities. Next slide. So when we asked our BLN members

well, what are the concerns of your middle managers and your front-line staff? Number one is training will take too much time. You know, every company now is under pressure, the employees are under pressure to do more with less. Instead of doing one job, they're doing two, they don't have a lot of extra time to do training. They are worried about accommodations, that they'll break their division budgets. This is interesting because we work a lot with Lockheed Martin here in Florida. They have a huge presence. Roxanne MacGillivray, who I have to give so much credit to is their EEO person and she started talking to us about this whole issue of accommodations and division budgets and one of the recommendations they've made at Lockheed Martin is a corporate-wide accommodations budget. Instead of having a budget with each and in each division, so people are concerned, they moved to a corporate-wide accommodations budget. So if you need an accommodation and you're in this division, it's not going to affect that individual budget. It's really worked out quite well for them. They're really pleased with how that's going. The other thing that they say is being sued. People are scared to death that they will be sued and in big companies, and this has been reinforced by the ODEP survey that just came out, they are very concerned about, being a standard disciplinary practices, that they are afraid to use them if the employee doesn't perform. So that's another huge problem that those of us in this field have got to work with employers to understand. As we always tell them, you treat this employee just as you would any other employee. It should not be any different and sometimes when we do that with employers they'll go okay, I get it, I see that. Now I can move on. Next slide. We also ask them, of course, you're telling us that attitude is a huge problem but basically what do you recommend the BLN do to change employer attitudes? Well, number one is training. They want to see it community wide. We do it at every BLN meeting. We have quarterly BLN meetings and we train at every BLN meeting. And they want it internally. They want, for example, if Lockheed Martin sends Roxanne MacGillivray to our meetings,

that doesn't mean that people above her or the people below her are going to get that kind of training. So when we can move our training to their company, we embed champions throughout the company and that's really the way it has to go. But in order for them to do that, for example, CSX Corporation in Jacksonville brought me in to talk to their corporate-wide Diversity Council after hearing me at a Society for Human Resources Management meeting. What a great opportunity to then get in the company and talk to other people and they are really taking an active role now on our BLN and they're going to hire somebody through our internship program. Sharing of business best practices, I say that life is like high school. We all want to be with the popular people or the people who are the trendsetters or whatever the best sports person. This is so the same. If Lockheed Martin is doing something and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Florida is sitting in the room and they hear them talking, they're going to be more likely to replicate that because somebody has already been down that road and it's worked. And that works very well. We've used a lot of different companies to do the best practices. And finally, exposure to people with disabilities in their workplaces that employers are telling us, if I'm ever going to get those mid-level managers or those front-line staff people to be comfortable with people with disabilities, they have to experience with them in the worksite. They need to be alongside each other working together. We talk about inclusion in the field of disability but there's no place better to be included than at work because it is an interdisciplinary process. We're all working together to achieve a goal. So it's a great place for people to be included and accepted. Next slide. So how are we doing this? I mean, what are we doing to implement those employer's recommendations? We are training community wide and we are working with Societies for Human Resources Management and Chambers of Commerce and the Workforce Boards. Some of our topics, turning diversity into dollars, that's a favorite topic for our corporate people. They love that title because they see, wow, there is money.

There is a way. However, we also emphasize the many benefits of hiring talent with disabilities and it's very data-driven. I have a PowerPoint presentation that goes through all the data on hiring people with disabilities and how it's such a great thing using Walgreens and DuPont and some of the other big companies that have been successful. Mental health issues in the workplace, coping when life happens. We need to remember that right now we're in a significant downturn economically, and most of the companies are hiring. I was just in Jacksonville for our First Coast BLN meeting and we have a lot of large companies over there and they're very active with the BLN but other than CSX, they're not hiring. So what do we do in this time? Well, I think it's real important to say to employers we're not just here about training you how to hire people, but we're also here to help you sustain the employees that you currently have and there's a lot of angst out there right now. People are very nervous. So how do you deal with that in the workplace? And we are doing this training and we did it in Gainesville with the Chamber of Commerce and Workforce Board and several other people and was very well received. We have 50 employers in the room and they were so appreciative of having the opportunity to hear this information on what can you do when someone's being abused by a spouse? What can you do when someone is having an emotional meltdown at work and they have been a typically great employee. You don't want to let them go, you want to figure out how you can sustain them. And then the new ADA amendments, we've been doing a lot of presentations on that. It's been of great interest to our BLN members. Next slide. Before I go on, are there any questions? Can I pause for a minute and take questions? Anybody have a question? Okay, the other thing we are doing is putting -- and especially federal contractors know what the Federal Contract Compliance Program rules are. If you are a company that has a federal contract of \$50,000 or more, you're probably a covered federal contractor. Almost all the banks are covered federal contractors. Under the OFCCP rules, they have to recruit, hire,

train, and promote employees with disabilities. I recommend you go and look at these rules because when you do you'll go wow, I had no idea that there were these kind of requirements for federal contractors. In the past, there hasn't been a lot of teeth in the rules but when Neil Romano came to the Office of Disability Employment Policy he really kind of put some teeth in those. As a matter of fact, in July 2008, he came out with accessible rules for online application selection systems. So I really highly recommend that you go and take a look at these things because what you're doing when you say to a federal contractor are you aware of these rules? Here's how we can help you meet these rules, comply with them, they'll love you. Because they may have a huge federal contract and if they get audited, and there will be more audits, then they could be in trouble, they could be at risk of losing that contract. So very important. Next slide. Also, company sites, as I mentioned, we're doing a lot of training at company sites, diversity councils, affinity groups, and the other one that we've done is lunch and learn groups where companies will have someone from the BLN come in and speak to their employees during a brown bag lunch arrangement. A very good way, in an hour, to kind of impart some of this information. Some of the training topics are disability etiquette, the myths of an untapped workforce, and then our sharing our best practices. We have Blue Cross Blue Shield of Florida, Lockheed Martin, Walgreens, Walt Disney World, SunTrust Bank, and many, many others. I want to mention that SunTrust Bank is the real sponsor of the United States Business Leadership Network. And I always wondered why SunTrust Bank had gotten involved and then we had them come and present at many of our BLN meetings around the state and one of the presenters told the story about a young woman who was hearing impaired, went into a SunTrust Bank and she was having great difficulty communicating with the tellers. Suddenly, one of the tellers, a young woman, who did not have a hearing impairment, came running down and said, "Hey, I, I know sign language." So she communicated with this young woman. Well, this bank branch grew exponentially and

the president of SunTrust Bank said, "What's going on here? Why is this bank branch doing so much better than the others?" And he found out that it was because they were able to accommodate a customer with a disability and that generated goodwill and it generated a lot of new customers for the bank. So, there definitely is a business argument to be made with companies and when they hear these stories they become more likely to get on board. Next slide. So now we have exposure to people with disabilities in their workplaces. That was the third thing that the BLN members told us in the survey. How are we going to do that? So, we went to Disability Mentoring Day as a feeder for our internships and employment. I always say Disability Mentoring Day, I know I'm going to get in trouble for this but I have to say it anyway, it's like a wedding. You know, it's a big day, we spend a lot of money, but what happens next? And so I really want to see Disability Mentoring Day with the BLN program being more of a feeder for internships and employment. The local BLNs have gone to a paid internship program. Three of our BLNs now have these of the ten and they actually reimburse employers for 240 hours plus 7.65% to payroll taxes when they hire a person with a disability. Finally, full employment is obviously the ultimate dream and the internship program really plays into that. Next slide. What we've done is we're First Florida and the Florida Able Trust has funded the internship programs. It is a no-risk opportunity. At the end of the 240 hours, the employer is not required to retain that worker. It depends on whether or not they have an opening, if the person's a good corporate fit, whatever it may be. The employer pays the intern and the employer is reimbursed by the BLN. And you can see what some of the rates, pay, and so forth are. We have made it extremely simple through the on-page application and a one-page invoice. If it's difficult or complicated, employers are not going to participate. They will only do it if you make it really streamlined and very simple. Right now, the First Coast, which is Jacksonville, just started its internship program, and in a cooperative effort with the University of North Florida Disability

Center. And we have a young woman, Karen Tucker is working with us from that center and she's identifying college students and high school students with disabilities who will be great interns and then we are helping her to match them with our BLN employers and other employers in the community. We have not been able to find additional funding for the internship program, which I think is so unfortunate because it has been so effective. Next slide. Between 40% and 50% of the interns, and we've had 80, have gotten full-time jobs or part-time jobs but permanent positions as a result of the internship program. We have great references from the employers and the employees. Again, I have Leigh Ann Ferguson there, she is a person who did become employed as a result after work hunting for years for her job. Her parents were so appreciative of the BLN's efforts, which made it possible for her to work. Next slide. All right. I talk a lot about working with employers and, by the way, I didn't put this in and I should have, our BLNs, we've really made great headway with them. Last year, our last survey when we asked them have you brought people with disabilities into your workplace, the number rose to 62% from 46% the previous year. In addition, we asked them if they had a greater knowledge about hiring workers with disabilities after participating on the BLN. 85% of the respondents rated their knowledge about hiring people with disabilities good to excellent as a result of being a BLN member. Pre-BLN involvement, it was only 49%. So we are really making progress with our BLN. That's probably the most important slide and I failed to put it in but what I will do is I'll send Robb and others some of the data and some other reports that I have that you might want to take a look at. So, we have employers here and we have the supply side of the employment equation represented by our employment service providers. What I find is there's a complete breakdown in communication between the two parties. They don't speak the same language. Employment service providers talk a lot about bureaucracy and Medicaid and if you know anything about employers, they're allergic to the word Medicaid. They're allergic to bureaucracy. So they don't communicate well with

each other. As a matter of fact, at one of our BLN meetings, a board meeting, I had a job developer tell the BLN members you aren't doing your job because I'm not meeting my quota in getting people with disabilities employed. And the employers, really, their backs went up. It was like wait a minute, that's like saying I have this great vacuum cleaner. You have to buy it because I'm not hitting my quota. We have to learn to speak to employers in a way that we're marketing it to them. Next slide. And I love this next slide because it really does say it all. If you're trying to persuade people to do something or buy something, you have to speak their language, the language in which they think. And until the supply side of that employment section does speak their language, we are going to continue to have problems getting people with disabilities employed. Next slide. We started doing a training, the Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities as part of the Medicaid infrastructure grant is funding us to provide advanced training to employment specialists to bridge this gap so that our providers are speaking the same language, that they understand how to market employment of people with disabilities to employers. What's the business case? Next slide. We call it the Best Practices of the Most Effective Employment Specialists and you can see here the habits that we really hit on with the providers, the service providers to get them to think more like a business. Next slide. Basically what we have done then with the providers that we train is we go through all of these things and at the end of the second day, they have to present to an employer how they would market a given case study to an employer. And the employer, their peers, and I, evaluate that presentation and it has been so effective because the service providers hear firsthand from employers on what it is that's going to be effective and they critique them nicely. But they do critique them on their presentations. One of the things we've learned is that when people bring their materials in, we have them bring in their marketing materials; they will have a brochure that they give to employers that covers all of their services, residential, daycare, whatever it might be. And the employer is looking at this and

thinking well, how does this relate to me? So we are actually even training them how to set up their Web sites, what kind of marketing materials they need to have, giving them examples of good stuff that will be appreciated by employers. It's been really very effective and then at the end they get their evaluations and they are able to look over them and they write us really nice notes about what they're going to change in the future. So, very effective. If we, if we are going to work with employers, we've got to not only change their attitudes and open their doors, we also have to work with the supply side, being represented by service providers. Next slide. Conclusion, former Governor Jeb Bush did five BLN kickoff events for us over the course of several years. It was so powerful. It really is how we launched the BLNs in Florida. When you have someone who is a very popular governor step up and say, "I'm here, I'm presenting, and I want to challenge each and every one of you to hire people with disabilities because it's smart business," it goes a long way and has, I think, really helped us sustain the movement here. Next slide. Finally, this is a billboard from the Miami-Dade Business Leadership Network Employer Awareness Campaign. The Able Trust just purchased the rights and we will have the campaign statewide which is great and we have lovely materials, billboard, bus board, posters, ads, TV spots, you name it, we've got it. The state of Oregon, and I saw Lucy Baker was going to be on today, has bought the rights to this campaign and they have used it statewide as well so it is a beautiful campaign with a great catch phrase. It is copyrighted by Miami. If you're interested in the rights, I don't get anything from it but Miami uses the sale of it to fund their internship program. Final slide. This is my contact information. The best way to reach me is really by e-mail. I'm pretty good about that so if you have more questions or you'd like to talk about something, feel free to contact me at that e-mail address or phone number. Any questions?

[Robb Sewell] Thank you, Leslie. And we just, actually do have a couple questions that were e-mailed in. The first one, let me find it real quick -- is what funding source is used for the internships?

[Leslie Wilson] We got money from Workforce Florida. Workforce Florida is a nonprofit organization that is over what used to be our Department of Labor, it's now called the Agency for Workforce Innovation. That was last year. That money has run out and we had hoped to see more but that has not happened thus far. The other funding source is the Florida Able Trust. Three of our BLNs are not in 501 C3 non-profit organizations and they have received grants from the Able Trust for the internship programs but they will only do it one time. It's a one-time thing. Miami did their internship program and now by selling their Employer Awareness Campaign, they have raised quite a bit of money to keep that internship program going. So it's really been through private and public dollars.

[Robb Sewell] Great. We do have a second question but before I, I ask that, just to remind people that if you have any questions you have two options. One is you can send it to me via the chat feature on your screen, or you can click the raise hand button and then I will call on people in the order that people indicated that they'd like to ask a question. Our second question is can we get access to the data you referred to about the increased knowledge and comfort level of employers following involvement with the BLN?

[Leslie Wilson] Yes. Robb, should I send it to you?

[Robb Sewell] Sure. We could definitely do that and we could actually post the information on the NTAR Web site.

[Leslie Wilson] Sure. We have a survey report and we also have a press release that kind of gives you a summary, but, yes, I'll send you both of those.

[Robb Sewell] Excellent. Are there any other questions at this point? It does not appear that we have any questions so at this point what I'll do is I'll turn things over to Dr. Rudney and he'll continue our class at this point.

[Dr. Robert Rudney] Yeah, hello. Could we move to the next slide? I'd like to thank you all for joining the webcast. My presentation is going to be three pronged. First, talking about the evolution of the disability program within Booz Allen where I work and do a quick overview of those best practices that constitute its employer model. Second, I'd like to discuss briefly employee affinity groups, social networking, an internal lobbying mechanism that I think has been overlooked and could play a key role in promoting employment of people with disabilities in the future. Needless to say, I'm active in the Disability Forum, which is Booz Allen's affinity group. Finally and directly related to networking, I'd like to talk about, a bit about EXCEL which is a disability employment self-help group I co-founded which focuses specifically on job networking. So feel free to transmit questions as we go along. Just wanted to let you know that the views expressed here are my own, not Booz Allen's. Next slide, please. Okay, so who am I? By way of introduction I'd like to emphasize that I'm not a disability employment or rehabilitation professional. My educational background is in French History. My Ph.D. thesis is the study of the development of the tourism industry in the French Riviera. Arguably, tourism is one of the largest industries in the world and it does have a history. But there being no college jobs teaching history, I began working in the defense consulting business and now a member of the Intelligence Analysis Team at Booz Allen. Most of my work in the disability field has been hands-on, grass roots volunteering with EXCEL, with the Fairfax County Disability Services Board and other organizations in this area. Based on this experience, I started doing some research in this field and last year served as a Kennedy Foundation fellow in the office of Senator Bernard Sanders of Vermont. Again, I mean in this office I focused on disability policy issues

like the ADA Amendments Act. I also provided expertise in defense, foreign policy, veteran's affairs, energy, and healthcare areas. Next slide please. So a word about Booz Allen. First, to please spell it correctly. We get the wrong spelling all the time. It's an international management consulting firm. It's now about 95 years old. It's privately held. Last year, we spun off most of our commercial business and sold the majority's share of our government consulting business to Carlisle, the venture capital firm. The business is growing. It's growing quickly and we are hiring now and we have offices in many states so if you're a representative of a state agency, you might want to go to www.boozallen.com, look us up, see if we're in your state. At the bottom I've listed some of the key events that Booz Allen consultants have worked on. Most notably, I guess, is the last one, birth of the National Football League. Last Sunday was the Super Bowl and I don't know if there's anybody from Pittsburgh on the line. Congratulations. We were there when the old American Football League merged with the National Football League. We did a lot of the consulting work behind that but that was before my time, well before my time. Next slide, please. I did a little bit of research for this presentation and I discovered that Ed Booz, our founder, actually had a cleft palate and a speech impediment so maybe Booz Allen's disability commitment was pre-ordained. But the impetus now does come from the top as is often the case and it's Dr. Ralph Schrader, our Chairman and CEO, who has done so much. He has a son who has a disability. He worked extensively with a senior manager who was in an automobile accident and the two of them initiated a task force in '98, '99, studied, did a comprehensive study, top down study of everything from physical and electronic accessibility to training to hiring, made 30 recommendations, all of them were implemented. From the start, we nested the disability commitment within the larger human resources and diversity universe within the company. The message here was that people with disabilities are not special and the accommodations are not indulgences or hardships inflicted on a team budget. Leslie mentioned that

Lockheed instituted a central accommodations fund and that's what Booz Allen did in 2000. Booz Allen is also a technology company and we acquired a petting zoo of assisted technologies in our computer lab. This is both to assist employees and eventually to develop the business offering that I'll talk about in a minute. Like other consulting firms, we have a strong commitment to assisting Wounded Warriors and this continues today. Finally, as I mentioned, our focus on disability accommodations and assistive technology made us ideally suited to respond to federal agency requirements when Section 508 regulations were implemented, introducing accessibility standards for all federal information technology and we helped out a number of federal agencies in this year, again, return on investment, leveraging an investment that actually paid off. Next slide, please. Another best practice of Booz Allen is the Emerging Leaders Internship Program. It was also a recommendation of the 1999 task force. It's grown tremendously from three interns uniquely at Booz Allen in 2001 to about 20 of them in nine companies last summer. I have a list of some of the companies that participated, also includes Panasonic and Mutual of America. Emerging Leaders is now managed by the National Business and Disability Council with very, very tight Booz Allen oversight and funding. Participating companies in this program benefit from extensive screening/selection process. We create a profile of the candidate, disseminate these profiles to interested employers. That saves a lot of money and time as Leslie was saying. That is important to employers. And finally, a little quote from Dr. Schrader at the bottom which encapsulates his commitment to this program. Next slide, please. In 2006, 2007, I helped to look at employment opportunities for people with cognitive disabilities. This was for ServiceSource, which is the largest private rehabilitation provider in Northern Virginia and a participant in the JWOD AbilityOne program. I assume most of the state people know what that is. Like other private rehabilitation providers, they had a major interest in expanding their relatively small commercial business outlet but also they

were affected by the evolution away from the in-house work center that had been the tradition. We identified 13 different employment sectors where there might be an opportunity, spoke with over 80 employer representatives, government officials, disability advocates. Boiled it down to three sectors where we thought that ServiceSource should focus; healthcare, legal services, and financial services. Financial services, unfortunately, in the past year has been in the dumps but we did develop a network of large law firms led by Baker Botts which is James Baker's old firm, James Baker being the former Secretary of State. And they've been very proactive in identifying positions in law libraries, mailrooms, catering services, messenger services, really it's been a very successful program. The other area was healthcare and here we were able to serve as a callus for a really innovative partnership between ServiceSource and Inova Health System which runs most of the hospitals in Northern Virginia and actually led to a \$1.5 million project with industry grants from the Department of Education to develop healthcare positions for people with disabilities. Our emphasis, I mean, in this particular project has been, as Leslie has mentioned, need to think strategically to develop the business case. Also, to incorporate ideas from certain employee-employer-driven models like Project Search which was created at Cincinnati Children's Hospital. A nurse administrator had tremendous success in placing people with cognitive disabilities, you know, throughout the hospital. She developed the model and has disseminated it to a number of different hospitals and medical institutions and has also branched out and had success in the banking area. So, another interesting model as well. Next slide. No good deed goes unpunished and we won our share of disability awards and the point here with this list is that Booz Allen also wins its share of HR and diversity awards as well, you know, 100 Best Companies to Work For, 100 Best Places to Launch a Career. Again, it's the idea of nesting and imbedding the corporate disability commitment within the larger HR and diversity framework and this is essential. Finally, I think Charlie Zuhoski

sums it all up when he says, "Booz Allen hires the best people for the job and we don't let disability get in the way." It's been our approach. Charlie is a partner, Vice President, former POW in Vietnam and he's the partner sponsor of the Disability Forum. Next slide. The Disability Forum is the affinity group of employees with disabilities in Booz Allen. It's both an internal mechanism to produce a more accessible and positive environment for employees with disabilities but also it's an outreach vehicle, interact, network with other employers, BLNs, with disability organizations, and federal and state agencies. The list of our goals is up there. Again, purpose is to nest, imbed disability within the corporate culture and, at Booz Allen there are a number of other affinity groups that represent women, minorities, LGBT, parents, even teleworkers, so, and this is perhaps still something, the wave of the future. I think a number of very, very proactive large corporations have been focusing on affinity groups both as a way to send messages up the management chain and also as a way for management to send messages down the chain. I think it's been very effective. Next slide, please. The Disability Forum was another task force initiative in 1999. We are actively involved in internal issues like physical accessibility, employee training, accommodations, policies, etcetera. At the same time, we're pursuing outreach efforts. We've run a Disability Mentoring Day for the company. We do it on a day other than the official day so that we don't have to compete for students and last year I think we had more than 20 students come to our headquarters in Northern Virginia. And then we have a strong involvement in employment organizations, networks like the Business Leadership Network in Northern Virginia, but also in other states as we have offices in about 30 different states. Next slide. I think the Booz Allen experience is repeated with the disability affinity groups and other employers. I think the idea is spreading. A number of U.S. government agencies have initiated affinity groups. I was responsible for introducing the employee affinity group in Fairfax County as a volunteer member of the Fairfax Disability Services Board. There are a number of private

employers that have had good success, good experience with affinity groups. It's a model that needs more study, more recognition, and I think wider adoption. I think it's a useful networking opportunity. Next slide, please. So affinity groups serve to represent employees with disabilities collectively within the organization. They play a social role in validating the group within the corporate culture. Every July 26th we have an event to mark the ADA anniversary, also have the socializing, or social events. It's not all work. Another important goal is to optimize members' success in their careers, particularly for new employees with disabilities who may face challenges and it's really important for them to be able to network with other employees with disabilities. Members can reflect the views of the disabled consumer base in respect to products and services and they can provide advice to the company or to the employer on products and services and again can mean a return on investment for the employer in terms of accessibility, user friendliness, and advertising and branding messages. In employment terms, an affinity group can provide a foot in the door for interested job applicants with disabilities via a networking catalyst. And I don't think these are very well used in this respect. However, other groups like women and African Americans, you have exploited these networks extensively, I mean, their own affinity groups and I think it's important for people with disabilities to do likewise. Next slide, please. Apropos of networking, I'd like to move for a minute from the demand to the supply side and discuss the EXCEL networking group. It's an all-volunteer employment self-help group I co-founded 15 years ago. Again, it's niche centers on job search networking. It's the way 60% to 70% of jobs are found according to professional career counselors with whom we work closely I mean, people with disabilities can face obstacles in networking, be it communications problems, mobility problems, and good old self-confidence. I mean we all have issues in that respect. But EXCEL provides an informal, conducive environment where job seekers with disabilities can network with one another and with interested employer representatives.

EXCEL also responds to the empowerment model focusing on people with disabilities designing their own employment programs, not just being consumers. I hate that term, consumer, and I wish it could be excised, you know, from the rehabilitation dictionary. And we need to move away from dependencies that are inherent in the vocation and rehabilitation system as it's absolutely essential in my view for success and truly competitive employment. Next slide, please. Our mission statement emphasizes the empowerment model but it also focuses on an external educational component aimed both at employers and the public. We're trying to change attitudes by demonstrating organizational skills and competencies. So we provide monthly networking sessions with representatives of interested employers. We sponsor job search workshops with career counselors. Also about half our members are employed and perhaps they're looking for a better job or they're just, just interested in helping others. And these individuals often provide informal peer mentoring to the unemployed members. It's information, contacts, or referrals, advice, support, this is very, very important for unemployed individuals to interact with employed individuals with disabilities. Next slide. This slide describes our membership. I don't think the population is very well served by the vocational rehabilitation system. Most of our members have some college education and professional experience and the ages range from early adulthood to advanced middle age. Often, they have an adult onset disability that's knocked them out of the job market and they're trying to get back in. And VR programs just not set up to respond to the needs of these folks. A lot of programs focus on students and early entrants into the job market but this is, this population is to a certain extent an overlooked, underserved population. EXCEL is there to help out. We have 100 members but all of our programs are free so we draw in a much wider community. I mean, hundreds and hundreds of people have come through EXCEL programs over the years. As I said, we have an informal peer mentoring component. We also have strong partnerships with professional career

counselors who I think provide a more positive, proactive approach to job searches. For instance, one of the bits of advice I've heard from a counselor is that the job of the interview is not to sell himself or herself but to help to solve the problem or problems of the person sitting across the table. And this is very much a consulting strategy. It makes sense and certainly resonates with me. In a way, we are all consultants. We are all constantly networking and I think this approach, you know, has certainly its advantages. Next slide, please. So how does EXCEL work? We hold monthly meetings as I say with employee representatives. We had two February meetings. Both of them were initiated by the presenters and this shows that we're beginning to develop some traction. The disability program manager in the Department of Labor offered to provide a federal employment workshop to our members. An EEO representative in the Department of Defense offered to provide a networking session, again, for our members. I might add as a footnote that that EEO representative is a former Emerging Leader intern, so another network kicked in. Need to take a look at our Web site, there's much more information on that. As a virtual organization, our expenses our minimal so our dues are minimal and I think that's extremely important. We've got basically no overhead. Our leaders are ready to talk with employers, with agencies, with other disability organizations, professional associations. Outreach is the key and I think it's beginning to pay off. Employers are responding. The final bullet is not meant as a cop out but I think I've got to emphasize and underline that we're not a case management provider organization. Our niche is networking to provide outputs, networking leads and contacts, not to nail case closures. So it's up to our members to take the information, take the contacts that they pick up at our meetings and at our other events and to find their own competitive employment opportunities or, to nail in that job. We have acted as a catalyst in numerous success stories but it's really difficult to count our wins. Often, we hear about job offers much later. Our success stories unfortunately often drop out of the network and this is

something of a challenge for us because we want employed members to stay in the network as mentors, as people who can be utilized by job candidates with disabilities coming into our organization. Next slide. We did produce a how-to guide thanks to a grant from the Virginia Board of people with Disabilities. It serves to replicate and EXCEL-like networking organization that's not really a cookie-cutter model. It's basically practical advice on how to tailor a networking group and how it can respond to local environment. And I do admit that the Washington area is distinct with its large number of college-educated people and its reliance on the federal sector. Finally, I think it's important to take a look at what Dr. Gill has to say at the end about the need for leadership, for self development, for getting people with disabilities involved in their own decision making and it's all about empowerment and self-determination. Our next slide. So in conclusion, ODEP under Neil Romano has finally recognized the role that employers play as end users in the employment process. I think this was underscored by Leslie as well. There's a real need to draw on the best practices and the strategies of Booz Allen and other proactive employers. There's also a need to examine the efficacy and replicability of employer-driven approaches like Project Search at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital. Next, the affinity groups have a role to play internally within the corporate culture, I discussed that briefly, and externally as an outreach and networking vehicle to bring job applicants with disabilities into a company or into an organization or an agency. And, job search networking groups, organizations like EXCEL, with a self-help focus have a role to play as well. Bottom line is these are tough economic times and they present real challenges. ODEP and other disability organizations can no longer use the full-employment that people with disabilities represent one of the last pools of qualified workers in a seller's market. It's no longer a seller's market and it's not going to be one for a number of years and this is extremely distressing but it's going to require total rethinking of disability employment strategies and emphasis on job retention and networking.

Career counselors with whom we work say we have to continue networking throughout our careers and this message has to be brought home to people with disabilities who have jobs. My impression of this evidence is that people with disabilities who have jobs don't really understand how to network in order to retain their jobs and to be promoted. But we're all consultants now in a way. We're all constantly networking and applying our marketable skills to solve problems and make progress in our careers. On that note, I think I'll leave you. Last slide provides my contact information. I'd be happy to answer questions. You can contact me by email. I am going to a client site so I don't have an office number right now. However, there is my home phone number if for any reason you want to fly me out to make this presentation at your own office. Any questions? Robb?

[Robb Sewell] Thank you so much. Again, we'll open it up to see if there's any questions from our audience, both for Leslie and for Bob. Again, to ask a question you can click the raise hand button on your screen or you can just send your message to me via chat and we actually do have a question for Leslie. One of our participants was asking if you could take a few seconds to talk about your opinion on the value of customized employment.

[Leslie Wilson] Sure. Can you hear me okay?

[Robb Sewell] Yes.

[Leslie Wilson] Okay, good. Thank you, Dr. Rodney. That was excellent and hit home on so many issues with our BLN members. The idea of affinity groups are so crucial for people with disabilities within corporations and also to make sure that people with disabilities are a part of a company's diversity statement. We find so often that they aren't or if there's a diversity council, they've completely ignored people with disabilities. Some of our big employers are telling us as a BLN

member, I'm really fighting to get people with disabilities included in our diversity council. So just a few words. Thank you, that was excellent. On customized employment, we had a meeting, our BLN members and a provider started talking about customized employment and the Federal Reserve Bank, one of the VPs said, "You know, right now, this is not the time to talk about customized employment with employers." I think Dr. Rudney also hit on this. That right now, employers have very limited jobs, the jobs they do have they are not going to alter in any way. It is not as you said, it's an employer's market now, not an employee market. Secondly, one of our companies was very adamant about this, that each company, big companies especially, have policies on job creation, what will be created, what won't be created. And he said when you come to us and you start out talking about customized employment, you haven't looked at our own policies. What do our policies say about that? As a big company, somebody in the division can't just say, "Oh, marketing is going create a customized job." That wouldn't fly. It would have to go through the process that is required. So I think right now, customized employment is not a great idea to talk to employers about because they are cutting way back on the number of jobs or not hiring at all, and secondly, when the time does get better, I do think people have to start looking at what company's policies say about customization because that's going to be what they're going to look at and if you don't understand what their policy is, you kind of have egg on your face.

[Robb Sewell] Great. Do we have any other questions from our audience at this point?

[Leslie Wilson] I've got one more thing, Robb.

[Robb Sewell] Sure, sure, by all means.

[Leslie Wilson] One of the things that the businesses we're working with are telling us, yeah, it's a really bad time but now is

the time for us in this field to go and talk to HR managers and talk to people who hire because they're not as busy as they were. So when things do improve or when they start to hire, we'll be remembered. We were there when it was a bad time, understanding that they're not hiring but just let me tell you about what we do, the great people we represent, how we can help your company. So I think people listening who are service providers or working with service providers, encourage them to get out there, talk to employers now. They're not as busy as they were. When times change, they'll remember you.

[Dr. Robert Rudney] And if I just might add something. It's important to get your job coaches out talking to people they've just placed. Talk to them about job retention, about networking. I mentioned it at the end of my presentation but that's extremely important in a down economy because, you know, so, so many companies are cutting back and it's important for people with disabilities to understand job retention strategies.

[Robb Sewell] We actually do have another question that was emailed in. What can state officials do to move network groups forward?

[Leslie Wilson] Are you talking about within companies or...

[Dr. Robert Rudney] It may be addressed to me with respect to our, you know, EXCEL-like organization. It's, get the word out to your counselors. We have sort of a mixed relationship with the VR agencies in the localities where we represent people. They've got to understand what we're doing, what we're all about. It's very difficult to explain what EXCEL is doing often to a rehab counselor and I think that the other thing is to develop a dialog with professional career counselors. I think you can learn a lot from them and I think that vocational rehabilitation counselors can learn a lot from them. We certainly have and I think that they're proactive, their consulting approach is the

way to go, particularly in a down economy because they're very good at strategizing and assisting people who really need a lot of help.

[Robb Sewell] Do we have any other questions at this point? I am not noticing any but I would say that if anyone does have any questions, feel free to email them to us, and we can then relay them to both Bob and Leslie. You can email your questions to NTAR@rci.rutgers.edu. That's NTAR@rci.rutgers.edu. So, I think we'll wrap things up at this point so I want to thank both Bob and Leslie for their excellent presentations today and we're actually getting some comments from our audience thanking you, thanking both of you for your great presentations. I just want to remind our participants today that our next VLI Webinar will be held on Wednesday, April 8th, and the topic will be *The Leadership Challenge: Effective Communication and Collaboration for Achieving Systems Change*. And we'll be sending that information, a reminder about that class in the coming weeks. As I mentioned, this Webinar presentation will be uploaded to the NTAR Web site by 12:00 P.M. tomorrow. When you log out today, you will be taken to a page where you can complete a survey just to let us know your thoughts about today's presentation. So we would really love it if you could take a few minutes to fill out that questionnaire. And to close I just want to thank everyone for participating in today's class and just wish you all a happy afternoon. Thanks.