

## **Non-Profit Organization Grant Template**

### **Mission Statement**

We empower adults with disabilities so they can achieve their maximum potential and lead fulfilling lives within our community.

### **History**

We opened our doors fifty-three years ago as The Special Care School to provide education and training for children with (what was called at the time) “mental retardation” to prove that children and young adults with disabilities could grow and learn. Through the hard work and innovative thinking of our founders and many like them across the country, laws changed and opportunities have since evolved for people with disabilities (PWD). Likewise, our programs have grown with the changing times, and our agency has been at the forefront of challenging the prevailing myths and prejudices. When Texas public schools began accepting children with disabilities, the school became Special Care and Career Services, providing Supported Employment and Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) programs. Supported Employment began in 1982, and by 1987, we were a recognized leader in the state of Texas in the field of disability hiring. We served ECI babies and families for over 30 years up until August 2014. We have since transitioned our ECI program to other agencies who focus on children’s medical and educational services. Our commitment to independence and growth remains as our programs have evolved to specialize in training and career development – where the largest gap in opportunities still exist.

In October 2010, we began the Organization Academy, a specialized, pre-job training program hosted at a large employer site. The goal was to prepare people with disabilities for employment in growing industries that offer more career opportunities and stability. Collaborating with University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas, and AT&T, it was one of the first programs of its kind anywhere in the country. In January 2015, Organization opened its fourth Academy location at Office Depot/Max. With each new Academy location, we expose our clients to new and even more exciting career possibilities. In the fall of 2015, we have adapted the program to include a partnership with area public schools in order to offer the opportunities to young adults (age 18-22) before they move from special education programs instead of just after their transition. This allows us to reduce costs through partnership and enable a smoother transition for those PWDs entering the workforce.

### **Need**

Thanks to better medical care and more thorough assimilation into society, people with disabilities are now outliving their parents. In order to support themselves and avoid the poverty spiral, these adults need to find and maintain regular employment. In 2012, The US Census estimated there were approximately 120,500 adults with disabilities between the ages of 18 to 64 in Dallas County alone, of which only 36% were employed and 27% lived at or below the poverty line. By comparison, there were 1,400,000 adults without disabilities in Dallas County between the ages of 18 to 64. Of that group, 74% were employed and only 15% lived at or below the poverty line. (US Census, American Community Survey, 2012). We aim to reverse these unfair statistics by making it possible for our clients to obtain good jobs with career opportunities.

Our clients have been professionally diagnosed with cognitive disabilities such as such as Autism, Down syndrome, severe learning disorders, or traumatic brain injury. Increasingly, we also serve clients with a wider array of disabilities such as physical or mental health challenges and visual or hearing impairments. But it is not their disAbility (or what we like to call Diverse Abilities) that keeps them from working. They often lack the understanding and knowledge on how to search for jobs and often lack training necessary to be competitive in

today's workforce. But, the other main barrier that keeps our clients out of the job market is employer perception. In spite of the gains made by landmark federal laws like IDEA and ADA in the last 25 years, many hiring managers simply are afraid to hire people with diverse abilities. Supported Employment (SE) provides employers the expertise they need to hire our clients and provides our clients with one-on-one, customized support to help them find jobs that are consistent with their abilities. Our Academy program trains students that are just finishing high school for positions that interest them and helps to build their resume while establishing references and a certificate from renowned employers. The message we send to the community is that our clients aren't looking for a handout. Just a hand up. We build economic empowerment.

## **Our Programs**

### Supported Employment

Supported Employment (SE) provides clients with one-on-one, customized support to help them find jobs that are consistent with their abilities and not their disabilities. SE placement depends on a strong match between the client's skill set and the employer's needs. The extra care we take for the full individualized process from intake to independence on the job leads to better job matches and corresponds to long retention. Clients who are not a good fit for the Academy – because of the group process or because of the large corporate setting or specific jobs available – can be served by SE. The Supported Employment program includes:

1. **Intensive Assessment** is conducted by an Organization Employment Consultant resulting in an individualized career plan. Understanding clients' unique abilities and challenges is critical to making strong placements. This process involves task assessments, interests and general skills inventories in a variety of settings. We recently added group assessments to better evaluate social skills and increase training opportunities prior to employment. This phase takes 4-6 weeks.
2. **Job Development and Placement** is conducted by an Employment Consultant specializing in Job Development; this phase includes job-matching analysis, cold-calling, networking, support completing online applications, resume building, interview training (including encouraging employers to utilize on-the-job interviews), negotiation of salary and hours, and job duties. Our job search targets positions that meet each client's capabilities. Many of our clients also rely on public transit; therefore, transportation needs are also taken into account. This phase takes 6-12 months.

Increasingly included in this phase are clients whose needs require less on the job coaching time. For example, we are seeing higher numbers of clients on the Autism spectrum whose needs are largely social rather than functional; requiring less time for on the job coaching. Therefore, working with them in advance to support soft skills on the job is critical.

3. **Job Training** by a Organization Job Coach supports the employer and client on site to ensure full independence on the job. The Job Coach provides transportation planning, trains on job tasks, reinforces corporate culture and develops training adjustments with the employer when necessary. The Job Coach works the entire shift with the client in the beginning and gradually fades out as the client gains proficiency. This phase takes up to 4 months.

### The Academy

The Academy is a specialized, pre-job training program for PWD. The Academy partners with local school districts to serve young adults graduating from high school special education transition programs (ages 18 to 22). These clients frequently have little to no work experience and The Academy provides an opportunity to ease their transition from school to work. The Academy is a good fit for those who can learn both in a group setting combined with one-on-one mentorship.

The Academy is hosted at a large employer site to prepare PWD for employment in growing industries that offer career opportunities and stability. Many jobs in large companies (housekeeping, food service, stocking) are great fits for PWD, yet due to industry complexities, our clients need specific training before employment. They often lack basic understanding of specialty concerns (infection control or security issues) and industry-specific terminology (like *HIPAA*) that other workers understand with a basic explanation.

During the year, each 5-6 week training session rotates departments to increase opportunities for post-training employment. Training departments include Financial & Environmental Services, HR, Radiology, Nutrition & Central Supply. Each session, two job coaches (one from LA and one from the school district) support company employees who mentor each of the four trainees on specific job duties. One hour of formal daily classroom instruction led by the LA team bridges the knowledge gap that PWD have with others competing for the same job. The LA-designed curriculum not only includes industry-specific topics, company policies, but also integrates employment and social skills (called “soft skills”) that are transferrable to any job. Giving and receiving constructive criticism, self-evaluation and disclosing disabilities are critical to any employee’s success.

The Academy has successfully completed three years at UT Southwestern Medical Center, two years at BlueCross and BlueShield of Texas, one year at AT&T, and one session at Office Depot / Max. Experience shows us that roughly 50% of the clients are hired by the host company upon graduation. Clients not hired by the host company leave the program with the experience necessary to gain a more competitive job faster when looking for a job with their school district team. That experience is validated by a graduation certificate from the host company and Organization.

#### Continued Support

Continued Support for the life of the job is key to long-term job stability and retention for clients in both our Academy and Supported Employment programs. We offer Continued Support to all clients no matter which phase of the process they begin or which program (Supported Employment or The Academy) they enter. All clients are contacted at least annually. Many clients utilize monthly or bimonthly visits. When possible, they pay a small portion cost per visit to show their commitment to the process.

#### Additional Services

**Outreach:** Many families are unaware of the opportunities for their children with disabilities. Therefore, we participate in special needs community events to educate them on preparing for adulthood. By networking, collaborating with current employers and public speaking to groups like Dallas HR or Rotaries, we expose employers to the untapped potential of PWDs. Our employers often join us to give their testimony. We also collaborate with special education programs in area schools & refer to other agencies in order to address the full continuum of needs our clients may have such as medical assistance, mental health support & benefits training.

**Transition Services** is a new program component that will offer specialized individual and group services for students (and their families) transitioning from high school to employment or college. As a result of our outreach, we have discovered ongoing staff reductions in public schools for this needed service. Therefore, Organization will provide a qualified staff person to provide assessments, training, referrals and other transitional services for students and families who are determining the best fit for their child's abilities. The program will be offered on a fee-for-service basis (sliding scale fee) until the model is proven and we can secure scholarships for those unable to afford these critical services.

**Person Centered Assessments (PCA)** focus on the person and their needs by putting them in charge of defining the path for their future. PCA's unique group process is an innovative way to involve caregivers, teachers, friends and other key individuals in their lives defining the assessment and plan for the future while still keeping the person at the center of the discovery.

**Autism Services and Social Skills Training** – One of the primary characteristics of Autism is difficulty navigating social situations, particularly in the workplace. Resources in the community to help adults with Autism address these challenges are scarce. Drawing on our team's Autism expertise, LA is offering specialized soft (or "social") skills training that will enable individuals to better manage communication and relationships in both the community and in the workplace. Additionally, our staff is one of a select few service providers who are certified with DARS to perform services for DARS clients specifically designed for those with Autism.

We are completing research on a specific program for **VETERANS WITH DISABILITIES**. While there are many supports for Veterans who are "job-ready", we see a gap in job supports for those who have had traumatic injuries. We are working with community partners including United Way to ensure we are not duplicative.

### **Collaborations**

Truly, every job placement is a partnership between LA, the employer, the families, DARS, & other supports (such as group homes). We value the collaboration with each of our employers and cultivate these relationships to encourage communication about current placements, repeat hires to other jobs and referrals to other companies.

Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) is our strongest coordinated partnership. DARS provides referrals for qualified clients and partial program funding. We work together as a team to with DARS, clients and their families to develop plans as well as to design appropriate services.

Our most important **collaborative** partnerships are:

UT Southwestern, AT&T, Blue Cross Blue Shield and Office Depot all collaborate with us as Academy host sites, they each provide:

- a classroom location,
- an HR liaison on site to determine department placements, oversee company specific training, and onboard new hires,
- an employee mentor and on the job training for each trainee, and
- an executive to sponsor the program, 3 of the 4 serve on the LA board.

Highland Park ISD (and later this year, Richardson, Dallas and Coppell ISDs) also work jointly with us to implement the Academy program just before clients leave the school system. We still serve clients aged 18-22 but because of these collaborations, we catch these students while they are still under the fold of the school system in order

to make their transition into adulthood seamless. ISDs provide a job coach on site with the LA staff and jointly we select the students to enter the program.

Bank of America (BOA) is our strongest Employer-partnership. Through a unique collaborative effort, BOA provides their own staff to interview, hire and complete on-site job coaching and training. LA works in conjunction with BOA staff to support clients to fulfill any HR and onboarding needs (benefits registration, family coordination and communication, etc.)

### **Benefits of Our Programs**

Our program provides our clients with the tools, training, coaching, and opportunity necessary to help them become more self-sufficient. Yes, it is an intense, individualized process. But, our countless success stories tell us it is well worth it. Of clients who were employed at the end of FY2015, 88% have been on the job for more than one year, 34% for more than five years, and 18% for over ten years.

In spite of this long-term success, the funding gap for Supported Employment services from the state continues to increase. Our average cost per client is \$12,000 - \$15,000. Yet the state only funds us between \$3,750 and \$8,750 per client in spite of the fact that, from their own data, they note that every dollar spent on vocational rehabilitation for PWD, generates more than \$9 in personal taxable income through the remainder of their work lives. By retirement, the average rehabilitated individual will have repaid the cost of services at least four times through taxes paid. (Annual Report 2012, Texas Division of Rehabilitative Services)

The fact of the matter remains, our clients simply want to work, but they need support to do so. No other organization in North Texas focuses on Supported Employment of Academy programs for people with cognitive disabilities like Organization has done and continues to do. While it costs some on the front end, the benefits are life-long for the person who simply wants to contribute. Furthermore, our employers will tell you that our clients change their workforce. It may take our clients a little longer to learn their jobs but once they do, they are consistent, dedicated, loyal and hardworking. They are nothing short of an inspiration to all those who have the honor and privilege to call them co-workers.

### **Implementation/Client Flow**

Clients and their families learn about us through our community outreach efforts, by referral from the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), and from public and private schools. Many families are unaware of the opportunities for their children with disabilities. Therefore, we participate in special needs community events to educate them beginning as early as elementary school on preparing for employment. We like to say, "It's never too early or too late to plan for independence."

By networking, collaborating with current employers, and public speaking to groups like Dallas HR or Rotaries, we expose employers to the untapped potential of PWDs. Our employers often join us to give their testimony. We also collaborate with special education programs in area schools and refer to other agencies in order to address the full continuum of needs our clients may have such as medical assistance, mental health support and benefits training.

Once a client has expressed interest and completed an intake form, their basic skills, interests and abilities are evaluated by our trained staff and the client is placed on either the Supported Employment (with substantial job coaching) or Job Placement and Training track (typically a shorter job coaching timeframe.) If a client is not coming through DARS, a PCA may be utilized as the formal assessment.

If placed in Supportive Employment, the client is provided with one-on-one services that their skills require, including individualized assessments, placement and training. The Employment Consultant (EC) builds their

resume, completes applications, performs traditional recruiting services to find job opportunities, provides interview support and job negotiation. The clients participate to the best of their abilities. Once the client has secured employment, a Job Coach provides one-one-one support for both the client and employer. The job coach teaches staff how to best work with the client due to their cognitive disability and provides the client with additional training (beyond the standard training by the employer). The job coach reduces contact with the client (fading) until the client is fully independent on the job.

If placed in the Job Placement and Training track, the client is provided with support in assessment process, support in the job search by resume review, application assistance and interview support. Once the client has secured a job, job coaching is typically shorter than the in the Supported Employment track.

If placed in The Academy, the client spends six weeks on location at a partner company. They attend one hour of formal daily classroom instruction and participate in on the job training. Upon completion of the program, approximately 50% of the clients are hired by the host company.

Whether the client gained employment through The Academy or through the Job Placement and Training track, they are provided continued support for as long as they need. This phase lasts the life of the job for our clients and our employer-partners, and some of our clients have been on the job more than 30 years and still utilize the continued support component.

Our clients simply want to work. They aren't looking for a handout but a helping hand up. While training and support costs are not insubstantial on the front end, the benefits are life-long for the person who simply wants to contribute and improve his or her quality of life. It may take our clients a little longer to learn their jobs, but once they do, they are consistent, dedicated, loyal and hardworking. They are nothing short of an inspiration to all those who have the honor and privilege to call them co-workers. Nearly every employer who hires one of our clients tells us the same thing: "Hiring Organization clients makes the company a better place to work. And makes me a better boss as well as a better person."

### **Best Practices**

Our approach to service delivery uses program quality indicators created by Virginia Commonwealth University's Rehabilitation & Research Center. These quality indicators establish best-practices for SE programs (Brooke, V. & Revell, G. <http://www.worksupport.com/research/viewContent.cfm/631>) and include:

1. Use of Benefits Planning
2. Individualization of the Job Goal
3. Quality of Competitive Job
4. Consistency of Job Status with Co-Workers
5. Employment in an Integrated Job Setting
6. Quality of Job Site Supports & Fading
7. Presence of Ongoing Support Services for Job Retention & Career Development

(#1, 2) During assessment, we engage the client as a partner to develop job goals and an individual job plan. We collaborate with Easter Seals for clients needing benefit planning.

(#3, 4, 6) We place all of our clients in competitive jobs. We ensure that clients are treated as equals by managers and co-workers, receive the same pay/benefits and do not receive special consideration because of their disabilities. Additionally, we offer sensitivity training to partnering companies in order to facilitate successful job site supports (also called: natural supports).

(#5, 6) To further facilitate strong natural supports, the employer trains the client directly. Our job coaches teach staff how to best work with the client due to the cognitive disability and trains the client beyond the standard training by the employer. The job coach reduces contact with the client (fading) until the client is fully independent on the job.

Two studies by Robert Cimera, PhD found that agencies that used natural support strategies reduced the cost of training supported employees by 57.6%. (Cimera, R.E. *Research & Practice...* (2007c). Utilizing natural supports to reduce the costs of supported employment and increased the length of time supported employees kept their jobs by 12.4 months over four years. (Cimera, R.E. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies* (2001).

(#7) We provide ongoing support for each of our clients. Our 30-year experience confirms the evidence that continued support (CS) is a defining factor in long-term job retention. In spite of CS's value to protect the investment in SE, it is not covered by DARS funding.

### **Outcomes and Outputs**

#### **Program: Supported Employment**

**GOAL: Improve our client's quality of life, economic self-sufficiency and independence through employment to support them in being productive, contributing members of society.**

#### **OUTPUTS:**

Provide Supported Employment services to 190 clients.

Place 36 clients in new jobs.

#### **OUTCOMES**

- Improve lives, increase independence and/or increase confidence of 32 clients (90% of 36) newly employed as evidenced by confirmation through survey of clients and/or their families after at least 3 months' employment.
- 131 of 146 (90%) employed clients will increase economic self-sufficiency by maintaining employment for one year.
- 40 new potential employers will have a better understanding and exposure to the unique value diversity and those with disabilities add to their workforce as evidenced by participating in a workforce assessment meeting, client interview and/or sensitivity training.

#### **Program: Academy**

**GOAL: Increase our client's self-sufficiency, work / social skills, self-esteem, and understanding of possibilities for their career path.**

**OUTPUTS:** 24 clients will attend The Academy vocational training program

#### **OUTCOMES**

- 98% (23) of clients will have increased social skills and have a better understanding of workforce requirements and best options for their career path as a result of attending the Academy evidenced by instructor and self-evaluations.
- 85% (20) will improve their work skills, confidence and understanding of their career paths by successfully completing the Academy training program.

- 100% of 6 host-companies will have a better understanding and exposure to the unique value diversity and those with disabilities add to their workforce as evidenced by survey of executive sponsor and/or trainee supervisors.

### **Program: Transition Services**

**GOAL: Increase understanding and expectations of and improve planning for people with disabilities and their families about opportunities and building independence in adulthood.**

### **OUTPUTS**

- Provide 12 Person Centered Assessments
- Conduct 8 Information Sessions (via Webinar or Group Meetings) to 50 Youth with Special Needs and their Families
- Provide Individualized Transition Services to 24 Youth with Special Needs and their Families

### **OUTCOMES**

94% (80 of 86) of participants will have an increased sense of hope, improved understanding about options for the future, or better understanding of skills and experience needed to be more independent in adulthood as evidenced by post-service survey.

### **PROGRAM: IT Training Program for People with Autism**

**GOAL: Create opportunities for people with Autism to gain self-sufficiency and develop robust careers that suit their capabilities in the technology industry.**

**OUTPUTS:** Conduct 2 Training Courses of 7 Trainees each

### **OUTCOMES**

- 12 individuals with Autism (90%) will improve independence, gain new skills and career options by completing the training program.
- Reduce the void in the workforce and fill the need for by employers in North Texas evidenced by 11 graduates securing employment in the area for which they were trained.
- 11 graduates will advance their careers by gaining new or improved employment within 6 months in technology as a result of the training program.

### **Evaluation**

To evaluate our success, we input all client data activity, placement and retention information into our SalesForce (SF) database. In addition, staff conducts surveys of our employers and self-evaluations of our clients to collect data and information on qualitative outcomes of our programs.

We are required by DARS to give detailed assessment reports at pre-determined benchmark dates, weekly job development reports and daily on-the-job training notes. We are audited bi-annually on these processes. We use the same process for our private pay clients. **Data from SF** is exported to Excel for use in the other tools, including the **Job Placement Tracking** form, the **Academy Tracking** sheet, and **Board Metrics**. We use SFf reports to calculate placements and all retention outcomes (for Common Measures and annual statistics). We report **updated metrics to the board** every meeting and report more **detailed activity to the Board Program Committee** monthly.

For clients in Supported Employment, our Program Director is responsible for management of the tools, and:



- Tracks the number of placements and compiles monthly placement data
- Reviews SF reports and monitors monthly team activity
- Compiles retention data

For clients in the Academy, the Manager:

- Tracks daily and weekly progress and reports to supervisors, DARS and families during the sessions
- Tracks the number of clients that attend, graduate and are placed each session
- Compiles referral, graduation and placement data for the program annually

For all clients who have been placed in jobs, the team member completes the **Continued Support form** at each check (monthly, quarterly or annually as determined for each client) and updates SF on the retention status of each client.

**Future Support**

Each year, Organization plans and implements a robust fundraising effort. This includes an annual giving campaign, special event fundraisers, major gift cultivation, and grant seeking. Our current fiscal year and most recently completed fiscal year income budget is as follows:

	Most Recent Completed Fiscal Year		Current Fiscal Year Projected	
Source of Funds				
Individual Cash Contributions	4.6%	\$ 62,980	6%	\$ 84,000
Foundation Grants	33.6%	\$ 456,733	34%	\$ 476,000
United Way	13.3%	\$ 181,417	10%	\$ 140,000
Fundraising / Special Events	33.2%	\$ 451,399	35%	\$ 490,000
Government Funding	12.3%	\$ 167,242	10%	\$ 140,000
Earned Income - Program Services	1.2%	\$ 15,974	2%	\$ 28,000
Investment Income	0.5%	\$ 6,849	0.5%	\$ 7,000
Other Sources	1.4%	\$ 18,607	2.5%	\$ 35,000
		\$ 1,361,200		\$ 1,400,000