

Employer and Innovation Services

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) is the state agency that empowers Ohioans with disabilities through employment, disability determinations, and independence. It is accomplished through its Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR), Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired (BSVI), and Division of Disability Determination (DDD). A fourth area is the Division of Employer and Innovation Services (EIS), which is responsible for establishing and maintaining partnerships with employers. OOD works with partners in businesses, education and non-profit organizations to facilitate customized employment plans for Ohioans with disabilities; helps Ohio companies recruit and retain employees with disabilities; and is the sole agency determining medical and vocational Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs in Ohio.

Division of Employer and Innovation Services

The Division of Employer and Innovation Services works to raise awareness of OOD's mission with employer partners, to promote a talent pool of job-ready candidates, and to support businesses in the hiring and retention of individuals with disabilities. In addition, EIS is instrumental in the development and implementation of the agency's strategic plan to ensure that client and stakeholder expectations are met, while providing value to Ohio taxpayers through efficiency, effectiveness and accountability of services.

Workforce Development Resource

The EIS business relations team identifies job opportunities that match the skill sets and experience of OOD job-seekers, and provides services and resources to employers that promote an inclusive and diverse work environment. Business relations specialists (BRS) work directly with employer partners to identify job opportunities. BRSs coordinate with OOD vocational rehabilitation talent sourcing coordinators who match the skill sets and experience of a pool of job-ready candidates to those job opportunities and facilitate the hiring and placement of candidates with employers.

Resources and Benefits for Employers

Recognizing the essential need and demand for educational resources, OOD provides free on-site trainings to educate employers on the benefits of the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace. These trainings include Disability Etiquette Training, which highlights best practices of effective communication and Windmills Training, which provides awareness of cultural diversity and biases towards people with disabilities.

OOD partners with employer groups, such as the Ohio Business Leadership Network (OHBLN), that are committed to strengthening their business members through diversity and inclusion initiatives. In addition, OOD's business relations team connects employers with best practice resources for recruiting, hiring and retaining workers with disabilities.

Tax credits are also available for employers who hire individuals with disabilities. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit program provides federal tax credits for Ohio employers who hire individuals from one of several target groups, including those served by OOD through the vocational rehabilitation program.

Programs provided by Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) are funded, in whole or in part, with federal grants awarded by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). For purposes of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program, including Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), OOD received 78.7% of its funding through the DOE VR grant. In Federal fiscal year (FFY) 2019, OOD received \$99,548,657 in federal funds. Funds appropriated by the State covered 21.3% of the total costs, or \$26,942,648. Of these federal funds, \$14,932,299 is set aside for Pre-ETS.

For purposes of the Supported Employment (SE) Program, the DOE SE grant funded 90% of the costs for the Supported Employment for Youth with a Disability Program up to the grant amount and 100% of the costs of regular Supported Employment program costs up to the grant amount. In FFY 2019, OOD received \$297,857 for SE Youth with a Disability and State appropriated funds paid a small amount more than the remaining 10% or \$33,192 of the total costs. In FFY 2019, OOD received \$297,857 in regular SE grant funds.

For purposes of the Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who are Blind (OIB) Program, the federal grant received from DOE in FFY 2019 paid 90% of the total costs incurred under the program. In FFY 2019, OOD received \$1,153,208 in federal grant funds. Funds appropriated by the State paid over the 10% required match or \$130,000 of the total costs incurred under the OIB program.

For purposes of the Independent Living (IL) Program, the federal grant received from HHS paid 90% of the total costs incurred in FFY 2019. In FFY 2019, OOD received funding of \$640,571. Funds appropriated by the State paid 10% or \$71,175 of the total costs incurred under the IL Program.

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities

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