

# **Employment Support Professional (ESPro) Competencies Evaluation Tool**

A Practical Guide for Organizations and Professionals  
Providing Employment Supports to Citizens with  
Disabilities

Specifically Designed for Use Evaluating Job  
Skills and Performance of  
Employment Support Professionals

# **EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS COMPETENCIES EVALUATION TOOL**

## **Components of the Evaluation Tool:**

- **Introduction & Glossary of Terms**
- **Evaluation Tool**
- **Competency Levels Chart**

## **Rationale for developing the Employment Support Professional Competencies**

There is currently a wide range of training and mentoring provided to employment support professionals (e.g., employment consultants/specialist, job developers, job coaches, etc.) working to assist citizens with disabilities to seek and obtain employment. As a result, there is also inconsistent knowledge and job competency among the body of employment support professionals working in the field. At present, there is no nationally recognized and approved certification for assessing competency for employment support professionals to ensure they are adequately trained to have the skills necessary to be successful in achieving employment outcomes for job seekers with disabilities. This tool, including common terminology, proposal of employment specialist professional competency levels, and the guide for means of gaining critical skills, is intended to be a practical resource for the field of employment supports. The information contained in this manual will assist individual employment support professionals, their employers, and the job seekers with whom they work, to better understand the skills needed to be successful at different levels of competency within the full scope of the job and consider ways to assess and increase competency in the four designated areas ultimately leading to increased employment outcomes for job seekers with disabilities.

Thus, a number of needs in the field of employment supports can be met through a certification process. These include:

- **The need to standardize the set of skills required in employment support professionals work**
- **The need to provide clear expectations and feedback to employment support professionals on their job and performance to move toward increased employment outcomes for job seekers**

- **The need to provide vocational agencies, school districts, and businesses with a framework to determine the set of skills pertinent to the job of employment support professional and a way to evaluate the development of those skills for their workforce**
- **The need to bring additional recognition to employment support professional as a skilled career choice**
- **The need to provide leadership as a state toward a national certification process for employment support professionals**

## **Glossary of Terminology**

### **Benefits Counseling and Benefits Analysis**

Services provided to assist an individual in understanding the options and possibilities in order to make an informed choice about going to work. These services result in a report that reviews a person's assets and income to make an informed choice about employment.

### **Business Proposals (Job Carving)**

The process of listing the key components of jobs and employment needs to develop a written proposal for an employer on how those needs can be met. A proposal typically includes language identifying job tasks for increased work efficiencies and the matching of an individual's skills with workplace needs. This process can result in either job restructuring or job creation. (ODEP)

### **Career Seeker Portfolio**

A job-hunting tool that developed to provide employers a complete picture of the job seekers experience, education, accomplishments, skill sets, and potential.

[http://www.quintcareers.com/job\\_search\\_portfolio.html](http://www.quintcareers.com/job_search_portfolio.html)

## **Employment**

Competitive employment is work performed in the integrated labor market in which the individual is compensated at or above minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and benefits paid for the same or similar work performed by individuals who do not have a disability. (Idaho DVR Field service Manual, 2008)

## **Employment First**

The philosophy that presumes employability of all people in the community regardless of disability. Components include:

- Being the first and preferred outcome for working-age youth and adults with disabilities, including those with complex and significant disabilities, for whom working in the past has been limited, or has not traditionally occurred,
- Using typical or customized employment techniques to secure membership in the workforce, where employees with disabilities are included on the payroll of a competitive business or industry or are self-employed business owners,
- Where the assigned work tasks offer at least minimum or prevailing wages and benefits,
- And where typical opportunities exist for integration and interactions with co-workers without disabilities, with customers, and/or the general public.

## **Employment Supports**

A set of services that are used to introduce, prepare, monitor, and facilitate individuals with disabilities to seek and maintain employment. (Washington State Department of Social and Health Services Research and Data Analysis Division, 2007). These may also include supports provided to or by an employer.

## **Employment Support Professional (ESPro)**

A professional who assists individuals in obtaining and maintaining integrated employment by meeting the needs of businesses in the community. There are three levels of certification to become an ESPro.

### **Job Developer**

Professional who matches employers to employees through pairing targeted business needs with an individual's transferable skills.

### **Job Trainer/Job Coach**

A professional who provides necessary supports during the initial employment period to assist the employee to perform their job tasks to the employer's specifications and then facilitates the transition to natural workplace supports while reducing his or her role. (ODEP)

### **Natural Supports**

Support from supervisors and co-workers occurring in the workplace to assist employees with disabilities to perform their jobs, including supports already provided by employers for all employees. These natural supports may be both formal and informal, and include mentoring, supervision (ongoing feedback on job performance), training (learning a new job skill with a co-worker) and co-workers socializing with employees with disabilities at breaks or after work. (ODEP)

### **Person-Centered Planning**

Person Centered Planning is an ongoing problem-solving process used to help people with disabilities plan for their future. In person centered planning, groups of people focus on an individual and that person's vision of what they would like to do in the future. This "person-centered" team meets to identify opportunities for the focus person to develop personal relationships, participate in their community, increase control over their own lives, and develop the skills and abilities needed to achieve these goals. Person Centered Planning depends on the commitment of a team of individuals who care about the focus person. These individuals take action to make sure that the strategies discussed in planning meetings are implemented.

<http://www.pacer.org/tatra/resources/personal.asp>

### **People First Language**

People First Language (PFL) represents more respectful, accurate ways of communicating. People with disabilities are not their diagnoses or disabilities; they are people, first.

[www.Disabilityisnatural.com](http://www.Disabilityisnatural.com)

### **Systematic Instruction**

Materials and instruction are organized to follow the logical order of the language. The sequence of the instruction proceeds methodically from the easiest and most basic elements to more difficult and complex material.

[www.readingassist.org/glossary.htm](http://www.readingassist.org/glossary.htm)

### **Task Analysis**

The process of breaking down a job into smaller steps for the purpose of teaching the job tasks to an employee in achievable parts over time.

### **Vocational Assessment**

Formal and informal processes used to explore an individual's interests, abilities, and aptitudes in order to identify vocational assets, barriers, support needs and career potential. <http://www.eri-wi.org/EmploymentToolkit/Assessment.htm>

### **Workplace Culture**

Workplace culture can be defined as the "way of life" for those in a particular workplace. This has many elements including: laws, language, fashion, authorities, power relationships, conventions, conflict management processes, dispute resolution processes.

<http://www.mediate.com/articles/donaisB3.cfm>

# Employment Support Professional (ESPro) Competencies Evaluation Tool

This tool presents the range of skills important in the role of Employment Support Professional working to assist citizens with disabilities in accomplishing their career goals. The competency areas are divided into four distinct sections: 1) Foundations, 2) Planning, 3) Business Relationships, and 4) Workplace Supports. Each of these four sections contains 10 key skills needed for optimal success as an Employment Support Professional. Through use of the rating system, this evaluation tool can be utilized for identifying strengths and progress in skill acquisition as well as allocation of performance incentives. This tool can also provide guidance in determining areas for additional practice and professional development opportunities.

For each skill, a rating of 1 (Basic), 2 (Intermediate), or 3 (Advanced) is given by the Employment Support Professional and their supervisor and/or mentor.

## **Rating Scale:**

**1 = BASIC** Need for additional development of the skill. Limited Proficiency and/or Experience with the Skill. (Employment Support Professional has not been on the job long, has not had more than a few hours of formal training yet, and has not had much opportunity to practice the skill)

**2 = INTERMEDIATE:** Satisfactory competence with the skill. Moderate Proficiency and/or Experience with the Skill (Employment Support Professional has been on the job for several months or longer, has had several opportunities to attend formal training and learn from experts in the field, has had numerous direct opportunities to practice the skill and feels fairly comfortable doing it)

**3 = ADVANCED:** Highly effective with the skill. Extensive Proficiency and/or Experience with the Skill (Employment Support Professional has typically been on the job for at least one year or longer, has had many opportunities to attend professional development offerings, has had significant practice with the skill and feel comfortable training others on that skill)

Scoring for each section (Foundations, Planning, Business Relationships, and Job Site Supports) allows Employment Support Professionals to determine their current level of proficiency within each. All sections have a scoring range of 10-30. The intent of the tool is to provide both an opportunity for self-evaluation, evaluation by a job seeker, and feedback from a supervisor/mentor, thus it is recommended that all three parties complete the tool and then meet to discuss ratings.

## 1. Foundations - the basis for positive contributions

Expresses and conveys the message to others that all people have the right to work and are entitled to equal access to employment in the general work force

Uses "*people first*" language and *disability etiquette* as part of everyday language and practice

Spends time in the community with individuals with various types of disabilities

Describes individuals with disabilities in terms of strengths, interests, and talents

Maintains confidentiality at all times

Learns and respects unique communication styles and supports the use of alternative communication when needed

Adapts materials to match individual learning styles and performance levels

Gathers information from job seekers and includes individual preferences as a critical factor of employment

Actively seeks opportunities to gain pertinent job related knowledge and skills

Completes required paperwork in a professional and timely manner

**SECTION RATING TOTAL**



## 2.Planning – skills to help individuals set career goals

Spends time with job seekers in various community settings during the assessment process

Uses information from various sources, including direct observations and experiences with job seekers to determine job-related aptitudes and interests

Talks with and listens to job seekers and others important to them throughout the assessment and goal setting process

Exhibits a basic knowledge and understanding of Social Security Administration processes, Work Incentives, and Benefits Protection Programs in order to make referrals as needed

Helps individuals identify career goals and secure employment through the use of formal and informal person-centered planning methods

Creates written plans for support that incorporate information from person-centered planning processes

Assists job seekers to access community resources and services to maximize success

Develops job seeker portfolios and resumes

Facilitates employment success by considering transportation, documentation, individual's schedules, and medical necessities

Collaborates with partners in the employment planning process through person-centered support teams

**SECTION RATING TOTAL**

### 3. Business Relationships – skills for job development

Displays an understanding of and respect for business practices and policies

Identifies employers and local business contacts in order to obtain employment (target market) and maintains a system of employer contacts

Displays confidence and effectiveness in initial meetings with businesses (e.g. an effective *elevator speech and/or program introduction*)

Uses networking to identify and create personal connections with employers

Accurately describes and effectively promotes job seekers to prospective employers

Engages employers in conversations regarding the needs of their business

Communicates to employers the scope of services and supports to be provided by the agency (i.e. – employee training, workplace supports, adaptations, work incentives)

Follows professional courtesy among co-workers as well as with other vocational providers when contacting current and future employers

Writes and presents business proposals to create new employment opportunities (i.e. – job carving or creation)

Negotiates job duties, schedule, and expectations in advance of employment starting

**SECTION RATING TOTAL**

## 4. Workplace Supports – skills for job training

Follows orientation and training procedures of businesses

Develops clear written protocols of the job and workplace expectations for the employee

Creates a written job analysis based on the job description and business training procedures

Identifies and develops adaptations with employer input

Identifies individual learning styles and utilizes systematic instruction to assist employee to increase independence

Develops and implements ongoing data collection systems to insure high quality of work

Develops and implements plans for fading paid supports in collaboration with the employee and employer

Assists employee to recognize and understand workplace culture to promote full inclusion

Facilitates co-worker relationships and workplace connections

Responds promptly to employer feedback and demonstrates effective problem-solving and conflict resolution skills

**SECTION RATING TOTAL**

## SUMMARY OF EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL EVALUATION

Employee Overall Rating: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Overall Rating: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Rating on Section 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Rating on Section 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Rating on Section 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Rating on Section 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Rating on Section 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Rating on Section 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Rating on Section 4: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Rating on Section 4: \_\_\_\_\_

**AREAS OF STRENGTH:**

**AREAS REQUIRING ADDITIONAL TRAINING AND PRACTICE:**

**ACTION PLAN FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:**

**EMPLOYEE COMMENTS:**

**SUPERVISOR/MENTOR COMMENTS:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Employee Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Supervisor Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date**

\*Scoring may also be used to determine the current overall Employment Support Professional Level:

**Level I - BASIC** Employment Support Professional – overall rating of 40-79

**Level II - INTERMEDIATE** Employment Support Professional – overall rating of 80-109

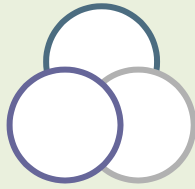
**Level III - ADVANCED** Employment Support Professional – overall rating of 110-120

## Employment Support Professional (ESPro) Competency Levels Chart

	<b>Competency Level Descriptions</b>		
<b>Support Categories</b>	<b>Level I</b> (newer to field – limited experience – still in skill development phase)	<b>Level II</b> (typically 1+ years experience on the job and some experience with training and mentoring other employment specialists)	<b>Level III</b> (typically 2+ years on the job with advanced training and notable success in job development, job coaching and mentoring other employment specialists)
<b>Foundational Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Developing an understanding of Employment First philosophy</li> <li>▪ Learning to use People First language</li> <li>▪ Gaining comfort with tasks and community inclusion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Generally using People First language</li> <li>▪ Expressing a work purpose of helping everyone to attain their person career goals</li> <li>▪ Working toward individualized, community employment for all.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Actively engaging in Employment First Philosophy</li> <li>▪ Consistently uses People First language</li> <li>▪ Understands and articulates the purpose of the work as being community employment for everyone through individualized supports</li> <li>▪ Conveys information to others in a constructive manner.</li> </ul>
<b>Employment Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Learning to conduct person-centered assessment/Discovery</li> <li>▪ Gaining an understanding of planning tools, approaches and purpose.</li> <li>▪ Gaining experience on employment planning teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conducting person-centered vocational assessments regularly</li> <li>▪ Actively participating in team and planning meetings Assisting individuals to consider their personal employment goals</li> <li>▪ Supporting people to express their goals during meetings and other components of the planning process</li> <li>▪ Writing person-centered vocational plans to help people achieve their goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conducting timely and accurate person-centered vocational assessments consistently</li> <li>▪ Creating effective individualized vocational plans in conjunction with job seekers and their support teams</li> <li>▪ Implementing employment support plans to assist individuals to reach their career goals</li> <li>▪ Taking actions to help people secure and maintain employment</li> </ul>

<p><b>Business Relationships</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gaining comfort contacting and meeting with employers</li> <li>▪ Expanding vision of possible employment opportunities</li> <li>▪ Learning to provide clear, positive and accurate information during the job development phase</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Typically comfortable talking with employers</li> <li>▪ Has developed a set of “elevator speeches” for various situations</li> <li>▪ Can identify potential job leads and matches for specific job seekers</li> <li>▪ Has experienced several or more successes in matching a job seeker to an individualized community job</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Has had extensive experience working with a variety of employers and business types with ongoing positive relationships</li> <li>▪ Has developed a strong network of community connections</li> <li>▪ Delivers articulate and persuasive elevator speeches</li> <li>▪ Has had numerous successes in job matching successes</li> <li>▪ Can help other employment specialists with tricky job seeker situations</li> </ul>
<p><b>Workplace Supports</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In the process of learning to teach job tasks</li> <li>▪ Gaining an understanding of Task Analysis and Systematic Instruction</li> <li>▪ Beginning to coordinate job expectations with employers and supported employees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Understands basic teaching techniques for job skills</li> <li>▪ Uses Task Analysis and Systematic Instruction methods as appropriate. Coordinates work tasks and schedules in accordance with employer requests.</li> <li>▪ Sets goals for reducing direct supports.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develops and implements job training methods in line with individual learning styles</li> <li>▪ Utilizes Task Analysis and Systematic Instruction while working through employer provided job description and expectations</li> <li>▪ Seeks creative solutions, including use of technology, to fade supports and helps supported employees work toward the highest possible degree of independence in their jobs</li> </ul>

**\*The Employment Specialist Competency Evaluation Tool includes skill indicators and rating scale for Employment Specialist Competency Level determination.**



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Funded by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Medicaid Infrastructure Grant-CFDA No. 93.768,  
Wisconsin Department of Health Services/Pathways to Independence