



Wise Annual Report

Innovation, training and technical assistance.

July 2023-2024

Executive Director: Cesilee Coulson

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Frequently Used Terms & Acronyms

Acronyms

- CI: Community Inclusion
- CIE: Competitive Integrated Employment
- I/DD: Intellectual & Developmental Disability
- PBS: Positive Behavior Support
- PCP: Person-Centered Planning
- SSI: Supplemental Security Income

Wise Terms

- PFW: Partners for Work
- PTP: Plan to Placement
- RCR: Recruit, Cultivate & Retain
- WLC: Wise Learning Center
- WOA: Wise Online Academy

National Organizations & Accreditations

- [ACRE](#): Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators
- [APSE](#): Association of People Supporting Employment First
- [CESP](#): Credentialed Employment Support Professional

State Partners

- DDA: Developmental Disability Administration
- DBHDD: Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
- DVR: Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- KDADS: Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services
- KUCDD: Kansas University Center on Developmental Disabilities
- OSPI: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

About Wise

Wise was established in 1985 with funding from one of the first supported employment state change grants issued by the federal Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. Since 1991, Wise has been a 501 (c) 3 organization, based in Washington state. Through the early years of operation, Wise assisted the state of Washington and supported employment organizations with promoting, training, and ensuring the promise of employment for all. Wise has since expanded these efforts to additional states and countries.

Innovation, partnerships and our core values are central to our work in expanding competitive integrated employment (CIE) of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Our core values are rooted in the belief that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are vital to the community, to the economy, and to the workplace.

Our Vision: All people are full community members recognized for their contributions.

Our Mission: Promoting equitable employment for people with developmental disabilities through innovation, training, and technical assistance.

A Message from the Director

The 2024-25 fiscal year was truly transformative for Wise. The depth of our accomplishments, driven by the dedication of Wise staff, associates, and a wide array of national, state, and local partners, was exceptional. As you peruse our annual report, you will encounter narratives, data, and images that highlight our innovative projects, training, and technical assistance efforts aimed at advancing competitive integrated employment.

Several key themes emerged during this pivotal year for our organization. We experienced heightened engagement in our training programs, evidenced by increased attendance and expanded geographical reach. The integration of technology continues to revolutionize our partnerships, enabling us to leverage expertise on a global scale. Notably, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are assuming leadership roles and contributing as subject matter experts in our training, technical assistance, and community events. Moreover, emerging technologies are presenting new opportunities for Wise to enhance its infrastructure and support similar advancements in partner organizations.

Programmatically, the growth of the Wise Learning Center has been remarkable. We are thrilled to introduce our new TEAMS offering, inviting employment service organizations to join our learning center and establish their own tailored training platforms. These platforms

can seamlessly integrate an organization's existing training content with Wise's extensive library of on-demand resources, fostering a customizable learning environment that enhances staff development and promotes improved employment outcomes.

Throughout the year, Wise remained steadfast in our commitment to guiding facility-based organizations towards adopting business models that prioritize community-integrated employment. We provided unwavering leadership to multiple states and counties, helping them align policies, practices, systems, and resources to remove systemic barriers and advance Employment First.

Internally, Wise has experienced significant growth, prompting adjustments to our organizational structure to better meet current demands. We have invested heavily in enhancing accessibility tools and refining our methodologies to ensure leadership in accessibility standards. Furthermore, we have prioritized engaging individuals with lived experience to lead and teach, laying the foundation for an organizational structure that harnesses both cutting-edge technologies and the expertise of those with lived experience.

As we reflect on the achievements of the past year, we are energized by the momentum and inspired by the possibilities that lie ahead. Together with our partners and stakeholders, we look forward to continuing our mission of promoting equitable employment through innovation, training and technical assistance.

Thank you for your continued support and collaboration!

- *Cesilee Coulson, Executive Director*

Organizational Priorities

Two Wise strategic priority areas are to hire people with disabilities to lead and teach, and to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). These priorities are woven across all of our projects and services.

Hiring People with Disabilities to Lead & Teach

Wise is dedicated to creating opportunities for people with disabilities to lead initiatives and share their expertise as hired trainers, facilitators, and associates.

This year, we celebrate the passage of Washington State's House Bill 1541, a significant achievement made possible by advocates across the state. This legislation codifies the principle of "Nothing about us without us," ensuring that individuals with lived experience

are actively included in task forces, work groups, and advisory committees that directly impact underrepresented populations.

[View a list of Wise featured Training Partners](#)

Fostering Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Internally, each staff member is part of an ongoing team working toward specific DEI goals.

These teams include:

- Expanding Access & Engagement
- Fostering Community Relationships
- Funding, Policy & Advocacy
- Reviewing & Improving Training Content
- Continuing Internal Learning & Processes

One of Wise's primary goals during the 2023-2024 year was to improve accessibility across all services. Strategies included improving language access, updating our website, ensuring accessibility for in-person events, and improving our internal processes. Moving forward, we will staff an internal Accessibility Team to continue to focus on and advance our accessibility features and practices.

Introducing: The Wise Stream Studio

This year, Wise launched a state-of-the-art video production facility, which debuted at the Dan Thompson Employment Rallies. The new WiseStream Studio is a cutting-edge multimedia studio designed for live streaming and recording content, ideal for training, social media, live event broadcasts, promotions, and collaborations with our partners. The studio enhances live events, making them more engaging for viewers. Its creative capabilities include enhanced graphics, multi-layer displays, music and sound effects, seamless transitions, in-the-field correspondents, remote interviews, and live event broadcasting.

At the heart of this studio's mission is providing a professional platform for people with disabilities to share their stories. By amplifying their voices, we aim to promote inclusion and awareness through diverse and compelling content.

[Watch a Highlight from the Studio](#)

Board of Directors

A Message from the Board Chair

As we approach the 40th anniversary of Wise's creation, it is a time to reflect on how far we have come in promoting equitable employment for people with disabilities. The highly skilled and dedicated Wise team continues to provide state-of-the-art training and technical assistance both in person and online, and our work has expanded to many other states and abroad. The annual report highlights many of the accomplishments that have occurred over the last year. Each of these events would not be possible without the strong partnerships with our Washington State funding partners, consultants, Wise staff, and the individuals who are at the center of everything we do—individuals with disabilities. Thank you for joining us on this decades-long journey.

- *Paula Johnson, Board Chair*

Board members

- Paula Johnson, Board Chair
- David Mank, Vice Chair
- Karen Williams, Board Member
- Katherine Carol, Board Member
- Santa Perez, Board Member
- Zack Siddeek, Board Member
- Cherly Mitchell, Board Member
- Amy Gonzalez, Board Member
- Margaret-Lee Thompson, Board Member

Staff

- Cesilee Coulson, Executive Director
- Susan Harrell, Assistant Executive Director
- Jim Corey, Program Development Director
- Jeanne Yunker, Finance Director
- Monica Zumach, Director of Training & Technical Assistance

- Jaimie Laitinen, Director of Training & Technical Assistance
- Emily Harris, Senior Training & Technical Assistance Manager
- Jenny Crook, Senior Training & Technical Assistance Manager
- Debbie Moore, Senior Training & Technical Assistance Manager
- Dan Rutten, Senior Training & Technical Assistance Manager
- Robyn Slocum, Senior Training & Technical Assistance Manager
- Katherine Titus, Senior Training & Technical Assistance Manager
- Charly Walters, Senior Training & Technical Assistance Manager
- Shaun Wood, Senior Training & Technical Assistance Manager
- Angela Dirk, Senior Benefits Planner
- Scott Leonard, Project Coordinator & Systems Analyst
- Anthony Contreras-Sanchez, Training & Technical Assistance Manager
- Alison DeYoung, Training & Technical Assistance Manager
- Anne-Marie Lake, Training & Technical Assistance Manager
- David Murahashi, Training & Technical Assistance Manager
- Heather Evans, Training & Technical Assistance Manager
- Moe Cain, Systems & Contracts Coordinator
- Beth Mckenney, Communications Specialist
- Stefanie Folkerts, Operations & Communications Coordinator
- Tanya Morrow, Admin Assistant
- Ryan Riggs, Digital Media Developer
- Rob Van Oss, Digital Content Manager
- Rebecca Roybal, Learning Management System Administrator
- Bryant Phillips, Finance & Data Analyst
- Tyler Talcott, IT & Project Assistant

Innovative Training & Technical Assistance: School to Work

Job Foundation Community of Practice

Connecting students to employment and adult services.

In partnership with DDA, Wise hosts a community of practice for those involved in Job Foundation. This initiative engages students earlier in targeted employment planning and connects them to the adult service system. Community-based employment providers gather essential information about job-related skills and support, working with school staff to leverage vocational, academic, and life skill preparation. The goal is for students and their teams to have actionable steps for employment or secondary education upon completing the Job Foundation.

Clark County Family Training Series

Equipping families and educators with information and resources to support students transitioning from school to adult life.

This initiative is a collaborative effort involving the Clark County Developmental Disabilities Program, PEACE NW, ESD 112, and the Vancouver, Camas, and Evergreen School Districts. The series is designed to meet diverse community needs through various formats, including in-person sessions, online components, and multiple languages. New for 2023-24, the series introduced simultaneous student workshops during family and educator sessions. The series runs from October to April and wraps up with a community resource fair. Attendees benefit by gaining knowledge of local resources, strategies for navigating service systems, and developing a vision for an individualized and attainable post-graduation life.

Website Portfolios

Empowering transition educators and employment specialists with tools and strategies to support students transitioning from school to work.

This course helps educators guide students in creating personalized websites that showcase their skills and achievements, enhancing employability and confidence. The comprehensive curriculum covers all aspects of website creation, offering hands-on training with web development tools, customizable templates, graphics, and AI. Participants receive step-by-step tutorials, personalized feedback, and one-on-one

coaching tailored to their learning environment. The course also includes opportunities for peer collaboration, portfolio development, and final presentations for feedback and celebration. The Website Portfolio Course elevates services for students and individuals with disabilities, equipping participants with valuable web development skills and enhancing professional networking and development.

18 graduates Complete Inaugural Website Portfolio Course in 2023-2024.

"I'm excited to share all I've learned with my team! I will definitely be using website portfolios for all my students in job development as a way to get to know them better, build rapport, and create an awesome website to show employers."

Innovative Training & Technical Assistance: Employers

HireAbility Spokane

Promoting inclusive hiring and support systems for businesses in Spokane.

HireAbility Spokane aims to foster the adoption of Supported Employment in the Spokane business community, creating a more diverse workforce with opportunities for job seekers with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

HireAbility Spokane offers personalized consultation services to businesses, guiding them in creating inclusive hiring processes and support systems for employees with disabilities. HireAbility organizes events such as job fairs, learning events, and networking opportunities to connect employers, job seekers, and service providers. It collaborates with local agencies to provide comprehensive support and resources for businesses. Through targeted marketing campaigns and outreach efforts, HireAbility raises awareness about the benefits of inclusive hiring. Additionally, ongoing technical assistance is provided to businesses throughout the hiring process and beyond. This initiative aims to increase inclusivity and diversity in the Spokane workforce, enhance community engagement, and secure long-term employment for people with disabilities.

Partners for Work

Connecting job seekers, students, agency personnel, and Rotarian business representatives, offering employers confidence in hiring individuals with disabilities and preparing job seekers for competitive employment.

Partners for Work (PFW) is an employer engagement resource in King County, engaging Rotarians to employ persons with disabilities and build inclusive communities. Job seekers

benefit from interactions with employers, business site tours, interview practice, and resources like the Wise Website Portfolio course. Two Rotary clubs have provided scholarships to Transition graduates, and school districts value the soft skill training. PFW hosts multi-club events offering interview practice and networking, resulting in several competitive jobs. Approximately half of the district clubs participate, with regular employer referrals and new club collaborations securing grants for expanding student participation in the Website Portfolio course. Inclusion efforts include engaging high school students through Rotary Youth Leadership Awards for skill-building and community engagement.

175 jobs created since 2008.

Innovative Training & Technical Assistance: Service Providers

Recruit, Cultivate and Retain (RCR)

Developing leadership and management skills.

The RCR series equips managers with practical skills to enhance job satisfaction for their teams and advance their own careers. It covers key areas such as recruiting, hiring, onboarding, conflict management, and culture development. Benefits include improved staff retention, networking with industry managers, career advancement planning, fostering a culture of growth, and developing future leaders.

“I just wanted to thank you for the opportunity to send another staff through the [RCR] training. Paula just sent me an email thanking me for sending her and said she has never gotten so much out of one training before. Keeping in mind she’s been with WVS for over 25 years, that is high praise! I’ve never heard her so energized and just wanted to share her appreciation.”

Say YES!

Expanding Supported Employment Recruitment.

Say YES! is an initiative focused on raising awareness of Supported Employment careers to streamline recruitment for provider agencies. The program equips provider leadership with specialized training in cutting-edge recruitment and hiring practices, ensuring they attract a diverse and skilled workforce. Strategic insights on recruitment marketing enhance the candidate pool, facilitating efficient hiring processes that maintain high standards. By expanding the quantity and quality of applicants, Say YES! enriches the talent pool

available to provider agencies while promoting community engagement and broader recognition of Supported Employment within local communities.

Plan to Placement

Providing essential tools for successful employment.

Plan to Placement integrates person-centered planning with job development, providing participants with essential tools for successful job placement. Through hands-on training, participants work directly with job seekers from their caseloads, receiving practical guidance throughout. The program utilizes PCP tools to identify strengths and interests, aligning job development efforts accordingly. Participants earn credits in Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) and Credentialed Employment Support Professional™ (CESP).

Plan to Placement course supports 15+ job seekers in securing Competitive Integrated Employment

Person-Centered Planning Facilitator Training

Developing and elevating the skills of Person-Centered Planning facilitators.

This training equips participants with core facilitation principles and a tailored process to meet individual needs. It emphasizes forming collaborative teams, valuing contributions, and employing graphic recording and deep listening to gather information. Participants gain hands-on experience in strengths-based planning, enhancing collaboration with individuals and their support teams, integrating diverse perspectives, and fostering creativity through storytelling. The training focuses on documenting and developing the individual's strengths and strategies for success, ultimately empowering facilitators to create impactful person-centered plans.

56 Educators and Agency Personnel Trained in Person-Centered Plan Facilitation in 2023-2024.

"Thank you so much for the Person-Centered training you provided. The process you taught is so practical and engaging. I appreciated all the real-world tips and strategies you gave along the way. I'm looking forward to incorporating this process into my own practice."

Wise Online Academy (WOA) 100

Providing employment professionals with training, knowledge, and skills to deliver quality services.

The Wise Online Academy (WOA) 100 ACRE Series is a comprehensive online training focused on customized employment core competencies to equip employment professionals with essential skills to provide quality services to individuals with disabilities. The program features instructor-led live training, self-paced modules, collaborative community practice, and interactive activities. Endorsed by ACRE, WOA 100 awards a National, Basic Certificate of Achievement in Employment Services with an emphasis on Customized Employment upon completion. The training provides practical strategies for immediate use, keeps professionals updated on the latest practices, enhances competence in the field, and fosters networking opportunities among peers.

- **324 Students Enroll in WOA 100 Series for 2023-24;**
- **182 Achieve ACRE Certification in 2024-25**

Attendance from Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, New Mexico, Colorado, North Dakota, Georgia, Hawaii, Wisconsin, Washington D.C., Arizona, Kansas and New Zealand

Introducing “The Owl”: Student’s now have access to the WOA alumni newsletter, designed to facilitate and maintain connections, amplify student voices, share ideas, and collaborate on enhancing employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Wise Online Academy (WOA) 200

Catering to experienced employment professionals with specialized CIE training.

The Wise Online Academy (WOA) 200 Series is a specialized training, catering to experienced employment professionals. Endorsed by ACRE, WOA 200 completion results in an exclusive, ACRE Professional Customized Employment certificate, recognized as the standard in CE training. Features include mentorship by cohort leads, instructors with lived experience, and student cohorts. Participants engage in collaborative learning experiences within student cohorts, fostering peer support.

First WOA 200 Series Cohort Earns Professional ACRE Certificate in CIE: 31 Students from Georgia, Ohio, Oregon, Kansas, and Washington!

39 job placements recorded from students during the series.

Community Inclusion Bootcamps

Teaching best practices for increased community connection and contribution.

The Community Inclusion (CI) Bootcamp is a three-day intensive training in CI, focusing on person-centered planning, community mapping, informational interviewing, and plan development. The bootcamp helps individuals and their teams define their vision for increased community involvement, discover opportunities, and formulate actionable plans. Features include pre-bootcamp training on CI values and strategies, 22 hours of in-person training, and participation in a monthly statewide cohort of CI providers for resource exchange and networking.

45 Participants from around the state, including direct service providers, managers, county coordinators, and family members, attended two Community Inclusion Bootcamps.

Wise Learning Center

Providing a vast array of continuing education.

The Wise Learning Center is an innovative learning platform offering over 350 courses tailored for employment agencies. This service provides convenient, 24/7 access to high-quality training. Addressing the industry's high turnover rate and complex work nature, the Wise Learning Center is an affordable solution that bridges the skills gap for employment agencies.

Features:

- 24/7 access to quality training
- Courses on relevant topics providing practical job tools
- Presenters with disabilities, field experience and diverse backgrounds
- Centralized storage for training certificates and records
- Mobile app for on-the-go learning
- Pre-approved courses for CESP credits
- Accessibility features like video transcripts, ASL interpretation, and adjustable playback speed

Benefits:

- On-demand training for new staff and continuing education that fits individual schedules
- Timely, relevant training with practical job tools
- Enhanced staff support and empowerment, reducing turnover and increasing job placements
- Cost-effective staff training, fostering a culture of inclusion and learning
- Accessible training for all staff members

1495 New Users Signed Up

2174 active logins

“The Wise Learning Center has been an amazing tool to help provide additional training to our staff and keep them up to date on their Continuing Education Credits. It's an easy platform to use, has content that you aren't able to get anywhere else, and provides real time solutions for the field. There is no other Learning Management System I've found that delivers this type of value!”

TEAM Training Solutions

Supported Employment agency training sites.

TEAM offers professional training solutions for affordable access via the WLC. With a TEAM site, agencies can customize the look and feel of their agency specific site, tap into the extensive Wise training library, create agency specific training modules, and access centralized storage for training records retention. These features streamline training processes, enhancing overall service quality and efficiency.

There has been growth in the number of agencies using TEAM as their internal training solution:

- 20 agencies in Washington
- 7 agencies in Oregon

Wise Webinar Series

Enhancing professional development in an inclusive learning environment.

The Wise Webinar Series is funded by WA State Developmental Disabilities Administration and offered free to the public. The series delivers enriching new content to the Wise Learning Center. These webinars provide unique and accessible learning experiences

focused on employment and community inclusion services. Featuring diverse presenters from across the United States and beyond, each webinar offers valuable information, resources, and ideas. Accessibility is prioritized with ASL interpretation and accessible content provided for every session. Participants benefit from learning, sharing insights, and earning credits for attendance, enhancing their professional development in an inclusive learning environment.

36 new webinars to the Wise Learning Center

Positive Behavior Support (PBS)

Offering PBS training for professional support staff.

PBS Playbook:

Provides ongoing intermediate-level training, PBS Playbook builds on foundational knowledge and offers continuous learning opportunities for professionals seeking to deepen their understanding and application of Positive Behavior Support strategies.

PBS Specialization (PBSS):

Targeted at experienced professionals, the PBSS course is for those who wish to become specialists in Positive Behavior Support. This course provides advanced training, incorporating diverse service delivery modalities and perspectives from individuals with disabilities to enhance ethical and effective community services.

Wise PBS offerings are unique in incorporating feedback from people with disabilities on how they want to be served. They feature diverse trainers and service delivery modalities, ensuring relevance and applicability to a broad audience. The flexible specialization program accommodates participants' professional development needs, promoting ethical and effective community service. This enriched training content includes insights from behavior analysis, lived experiences, and occupational therapy, extending the reach and impact of positive behavior supports.

“Before taking this class, I would offer my opinion on why I think a specific behavior was occurring, or what I think the next step should be in helping either a client or an EC, but I never felt super confident that what I was sharing was anything useful or even accurate. I now know that both myself and the individual I am working with trust what I say, and I think that is the biggest benefit of taking this course.”

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT WISE TRAININGS

“Using the Wise Learning Center allowed me to fill in the gaps at times with my understanding on how to do something or how to do something in a new way, especially with learning how to talk with people in the community.”

-Carolynne R. on the WLC

“I was inspired during the Wise course to implement new ideas for better supporting people in employment. Not only that, but I have begun coaching a job coach in Albania as he is paving the way for Supported Employment in their country. Thanks to the training from Wise, lives around the world are being amplified as Supported Employment is enhanced.”

-Caroline K. on WOA 100

“I'm excited to share all I've learned with my team! I will definitely be using website portfolios for all my students in job development as a way to get to know them better, build rapport, and create an awesome website to show employers.”

-Attendee on the Website Portfolio course

“Excited to announce that I have successfully completed the National Certificate Achievement in Employment Services Professional Level. The past six months spent with best practice practitioners have been incredibly rewarding and gratifying.”

-Jan D. on WOA 200

Direct Services

BenefitU

Navigating benefits with confidence.

BenefitU is a benefits planning service and website that provides people with essential information about their disability benefits. It offers online resources and training, personalized benefits planning support, and referrals to vital services. BenefitU collaborates with a network of benefit planners and experts to improve public benefits systems in Washington State and supports direct service professionals in a holistic approach to career development and benefits management.

The service provides vital information to dispel myths about public benefits, clarify benefits information, and explain the impact of employment on benefits. It also helps explore savings strategies, manage overpayments, and anticipate major life changes.

223 customers served

“We appreciate you... assisting us on all the ups and downs and round and rounds with this ‘benefits thing’! To say it is overwhelming would be an understatement!! My son has continued to blossom and grow through the years because of people like you that have come alongside him. With your guidance & direction he will be able to build a better, more independent lifestyle. Thank you for your help and expertise as we establish & customize the best Benefits package for him.”

Person-Centered Planning

Empowering individuals in decision-making, tailoring services to their needs, and increasing independence by building on strengths.

Person-Centered Planning (PCP) is a best practice for creating positive futures for individuals with developmental disabilities. Wise continues to offer PCP through Individual Technical Assistance (ITA) and Technical Assistance (TA). This approach focuses on each person's unique skills, talents, and goals, involving a collaborative process with input from the individual, their family, friends, and professionals. It is strengths-based, highlighting the individual's contributions and capacities, and considers all aspects of their life. The flexible approach adapts to changing needs and circumstances.

The benefits of PCP include empowering individuals in decision-making, enhancing quality of life by tailoring services to their needs, increasing independence by building on strengths, and promoting community inclusion through meaningful connections. A Person-Centered Plan is a comprehensive graphic and written report synthesizing this information.

Wise received 17 Referrals for person-centered planning in the 2023-2024 calendar year.

Positive Behavior Support

Supporting individuals with nuanced communication needs through person-centered consultation services.

To support partners in serving individuals historically excluded from services due to challenging behavioral communication, Wise offers customized and individualized consultation with a person-centered approach. Features include regular open office hours and a unique framework incorporating trauma-informed practice, DDA guiding values, PBS principles, and supported employment expertise. This customized approach quickly meets individual needs, helping customers achieve their goals faster. Person-centered

approaches focus on skills important to the individual, allowing them to direct their service.

Events

Community Summit: Embracing the Challenge: Together We Thrive

A welcoming place for everyone.

The Summit, sponsored by DSHS/DDA, unites self-advocates, families, friends, allies, and partners from the public and private sectors to share stories, experiences, and hopes for the future. This event ensures diverse voices are heard and that everyone can access the services they need. We are committed to expanding access to transportation, employment opportunities, and housing, enabling people to live in the communities of their choice. Our goal is to support individuals in living the life they want. Together, we can face challenges and thrive.

The 2024 Community Summit Featured:

- **25** virtual sessions and **42** in-person sessions
- More than **100** national and local presenters.
- Keynotes delivered by individuals with lived experience and I/DD.
- The Innovation & Resource Technology Expo showcased state-wide resources, technology exhibitions, and demonstrations.
- Social events included a Film Festival featuring individuals with lived experience or I/DD and a Red-Carpet photo event and Decade of Dance.

Attendees could choose from general sessions, technology exhibits and demonstrations, and films focused on community building, social justice, and disability awareness. Whether it was a first-time experience or a tenth, the Summit Community offered a welcoming place for everyone.

The Summit's second year back in Wenatchee doubled attendance with 939 in-person & 115 virtual attendees.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month Celebrations: Lewis County

Celebrating inclusive hiring practices and creating momentum for job opportunities.

Lewis County hosted its first NDEAM celebration with an employer community breakfast to promote an inclusive workforce by highlighting stories and businesses that hire people with disabilities. The event celebrated inclusive hiring practices, built community support, and created momentum for more job opportunities for people with disabilities. The breakfast saw attendance from local employers and community partners and received coverage in the local newspaper.

Lewis County hosts 50 local employers for inaugural NDEAM celebration.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month Celebrations: Clark County

Highlighting workforce diversity and contributions of individuals with disabilities.

The Clark County Celebration of NDEAM aims to celebrate community progress and raise awareness about the valuable contributions of individuals with disabilities to workforce diversity. In partnership with the Clark County Developmental Disability Advisory Board (DDBA), Clark County, and other community partners, the 2023 event at Clark Community College attracted a diverse group of employers, employees, families, educators, students, government and county officials, and community members. The event featured awards for exemplary employers and employees, a keynote address by Bryce Johnson of Microsoft, and a panel of community leaders. Attendees were encouraged to reflect on their role in promoting employment equity and heard inspiring employment stories representing a diverse workforce. This event was offered in three simultaneous languages.

175 in-person and

65 virtual attendees

Dan Thompson Employment Rallies

Gathering to learn, grow, and set goals to advance employment.

The Dan Thompson Employment Rallies aimed to bring together Washington State's employment community after a prolonged period without in-person gatherings due to the

pandemic. This initiative blended traditional learning with remote services to ensure inclusivity, especially for marginalized groups typically underrepresented in such forums. The series was comprised of six regional events and one statewide event, accommodating both online and in-person attendance. A significant focus was on equipping individuals with disabilities with technology to enable their active participation alongside professionals and government representatives.

The rallies featured:

- Paid Emcees and presenters with lived I/DD experience.
- A culminating statewide event hosted at an accessible venue, also accessible virtually.
- Focus on supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) in achieving employment success through resources, tools, networking, and collaboration.
- Emphasis on community-building and envisioning the future of employment post-pandemic.
- DDA Guiding Values used as the basis for planning and discussions.
- Showcased employment success stories and amplified the voices of those served by the I/DD system.

671 total attendees

The rallies reinvigorated enthusiasm within the I/DD community for employment, featuring professional hosts who shared their lived experiences, inspiring attendees with personal stories. These events underscored Washington State's leadership in I/DD employment and engaged county and state leaders in strategic discussions to advance employment initiatives. Outdoor rallies infused advocacy for universal employment opportunities, resonating through vibrant social media engagement.

The Statewide Rally culminated in a pivotal dialogue on inclusivity, setting the stage for ongoing efforts toward comprehensive inclusiveness under the banner of "All Means All."

[Watch a highlight reel from the Rallies.](#)

Lewis County Transition Resource Fair

Highlighting community resources and fostering networking opportunities for employment and transition services.

In collaboration with Lewis County, DVR, local employment vendors, schools, and DDA, a resource fair was organized to support educators, transition-aged students, and families. The event featured 20 community resource vendors, offering opportunities for networking and a panel where individuals shared their personal employment journeys. The fair aimed to highlight available community resources and foster valuable networking opportunities among attendees, promoting awareness and collaboration in supporting employment and transition services.

9 schools represented, 20 community partners, and 150 attendees at Lewis County's first Resource Fair!

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT WISE EVENTS

"I had no idea there were so many organizations available to help my daughter! I found out about it through her high school e-flyer and we're very grateful to have had the opportunity to attend."

-Attendee on the Clark County Transition Resource Fair

"The event helped me feel more connected to the work I do and people I serve. It helped me see a potential for growth in my current role and show different perspectives and ways I can support my clients."

-Attendee on the 2024 Community Summit

"Wonderful networking - loved the timeline exercise of the history of SE throughout the years. Made people think of what inspired them to go down this path"

-Attendee on the Dan Thompson Rallies

State Work: Expanding Our Efforts

Kansas

Supporting provider and employer champions to pave the way for CIE.

Wise is partnering with the Kansas Department for Aging and Developmental Disabilities (KDADS) and the Kansas University Center on Developmental Disability (KUCDD) to train

and support four pilot providers in implementing Employment First, aiming for competitive integrated employment for people with disabilities. The project includes training seats, technical assistance, and mentorship to enhance provider skills, expand service access, and foster employer champions. The project aims for each participating provider to secure five competitive jobs (20 total) and develop three employer champions (12 total) by December 2025. As of June 2024, **21** competitive integrated employment positions have been obtained!

"I am very appreciative of all that you do in assisting Kansas in 'moving the needle.'"

- Mark G. Dietzler, KDADS

New Mexico

Celebrating an ongoing partnership.

Wise continued its ongoing partnership with the University of New Mexico's Partners for Employment. Together, the team designed and implemented a three-part, nine-webinar series focusing on various elements of Customized Employment, aimed at building capacity in the state of New Mexico.

Colorado

Increasing the capacity to deliver customized employment services.

Colorado leaders identified a need for more employment professionals and agency leaders to increase the capacity to deliver customized employment services. To address this, training seats were provided in WOA 100, Plan to Placement and Say YES! programs, which included skill-building practice, assessment, and mentorship. These initiatives equipped providers with the skills to identify transferable skills and secure employment for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in customized positions. Additionally, organizations gained knowledge and skills to attract and retain quality employees who are a good fit for their needs.

Georgia

Concluding 5-year partnership with DBHDD.

To support Georgia in expanding Competitive Integrated Employment for individuals with disabilities, a comprehensive initiative was launched in 2018. Training, technical assistance, virtual collaboration events, accessible tools, leadership development and mentorship are all key features in the Georgia project. Our approach to state capacity building aims to develop skilled and knowledgeable providers, enhance partnership,

develop leaders, remove policy barriers, bolster data collection and support jobseekers and employees with disabilities. Additionally, we focus on educating families and people with disabilities, ensuring they receive consistent information and access to services from system navigators. These efforts collectively contribute to a more inclusive and supportive employment environment in Georgia.

Conferences

Wise staff here, there, and everywhere.

Project SEARCH

Milwaukee, Wisconsin - July 11-13, 2023

Wise attended the 16th annual Project SEARCH Conference, where Ali DeYoung and Sheila King-Mitchell from Seattle Children's Hospital presented their partnership on the Website Portfolio Pilot Project.

Pacific Northwest APSE Employment Forum

Salem, Oregon - October 2-4, 2023

Nine Wise staff attended the PNWEF, where they presented, hosted an exhibitor table, and conducted field interviews for the Say YES project, promoting supported employment.

Congratulations to David Murahashi who received the 2023 Employee Advocate Award!

TASH

Baltimore, Maryland - Nov 20 - Dec 2, 2023

Cesilee Coulson, Jaimie Laitinen, Katherine Titus, Beth Mckenney, and Ali DeYoung attended the 2023 TASH conference. Wise sponsored the Employment Reception on Thursday evening, providing a great opportunity to connect and celebrate with employment champions from around the world. Alex Hubbard, aka Fantasy A, and three members of his Dr. Clean Productions team also attended. Fantasy A's latest film, "Fantasy A Gets a Mattress - The Movie," was featured at the 2023 TASH Film Festival. We were excited to support this group in sharing their work with a new audience.

World Supported Employment Conference

Tarragona, Spain - June 5-7, 2024

Emily Harris and Jenny Crook attended the 15th European Supported Employment Conference. They co-facilitated a day of learning with collaborators from Oslo Metropolitan University in Norway. Emily also co-presented a session with Tonje Sannes and Ane Stø on the intersectionality and overlaps of inclusive employment practices across cultures and the value of global collaboration for collective change.

National APSE

Charlotte, North Carolina - June 17-20, 2024

Four staff members attended the National APSE conference, where they hosted an exhibitor table and presented two sessions. In "Know and Grow," Jaimie Laitinen, Katherine Titus, and Robyn Slocom joined leaders from Minot State University, KUCDD, and the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities to share state examples of expanding Employment First actions. In "Strategies and Tools to Deliver Effective Employment Services," Jaimie Laitinen and Robyn Slocom collaborated with the Institute for Community Inclusion from UMass Boston to present strategies and tools for best practices in supported and customized employment.

Global Leadership Exchange

Utrecht, Netherlands - June 24-28, 2024

Cesilee Coulson and Jim Corey attended the Global Leadership Exchange. This event brought together leaders in mental health, disability, and substance use to share knowledge and experiences to foster a more inclusive world. Before the main conference, Coulson and Corey hosted a two-day workshop called the "Equally Working Match" in Heiloo, Netherlands, focusing on innovations in disability employment. Participants from the UK, Netherlands, and Australia attended this workshop.

Thank you to Our Funders

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- Clark County
- Service Alternatives Inc.
- Dan Thompson Memorial Account: BenefitU

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- University of New Mexico
- Grays Harbor County
- Washington Developmental Disabilities Council
- University of Mass. Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion
- Asotin County

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