



PROGRESSIVE EMPLOYMENT IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

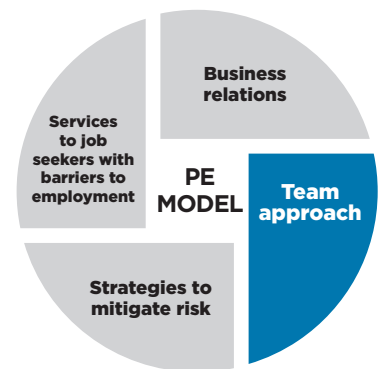
The Progressive Employment Team Approach: Understanding Jobsville

By Cecilia Gandolfo and Hugh Bradshaw

Progressive Employment (PE) is a dual-customer, service delivery model that uses work-based learning strategies (activities in real workplaces) to introduce job seekers to businesses and meet their collective needs. Progressive Employment rapidly engages job seekers in work settings to aid informed choice as they develop their career goal. The Progressive Employment model offers businesses a variety of options for meeting, interacting with, and trying out a new pool of potential job applicants. The underlying premise is that “everyone is ready for something.” In 2009, Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation developed Progressive Employment and numerous states across the US have since adopted it.

There are four components of Progressive Employment:

1. Services to job seekers with significant barriers to employment
2. Business relations
- 3. The team approach**
4. Strategies to mitigate risk



In this Implementation Guide, we examine the third component of Progressive Employment: **the team approach**. The Progressive Employment model requires a strong team approach and consistent communication and collaboration among professionals. An agency implementing Progressive Employment as a service model can work alone or in partnership with other entities. For example, most of the early Progressive Employment adopters were vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies, like the Vermont agency that developed the model. In many cases, VR agencies have included external partners or community rehabilitation providers (CRPs) in their Progressive Employment teams.

One of the most critical components of the Progressive Employment model is the team meeting. “Jobsville” is the name that Vermont coined for regularly scheduled meetings of professionals on the Progressive Employment team who work with job seekers and businesses. During Jobsville meetings, the team discusses job seekers who may be good candidates for Progressive Employment services. The team also identifies who will be assisting each job seeker with the pursuit of worksite activities.

Progressive Employment teams hold regular Jobsville meetings that follow a set agenda: new cases, updates on existing cases, brainstorming on challenging situations, sharing labor market intelligence, and celebrating successes. Jobsville meetings are the primary mechanism for communication among the team members. All team members are expected to attend and participate actively in Jobsville.

During Jobsville meetings, team members present information about new job seekers. Then, the team discusses worksite activity options that might be a good match. In addition, the team talks about possible businesses to approach and shares contacts for those businesses.

Following the discussion, the team selects a member to take the job seeker through the next steps in the process. This team member may be a staff person from a CRP or other external partner, depending on their interest, knowledge of the community, and contacts. For agencies not working with other partners/CRPs, the person who brings the case to the team may do the follow-up. There are many ways for this to happen in Jobsville, and each agency must find what works best for their teams. Then, the identified team member will interact with the business contact and the job seeker to facilitate solid matches and clear communication.

A willingness to share information and contacts openly is an important element for success in these Jobsville meetings. Another important element for success is a willingness to share responsibilities for working with new cases in a manner that no individual or organization bears the brunt of the work. In Jobsville, all team members should also get equal opportunity to work with individuals of interest to them.

Naming Your Jobsville

Jobsville is the name that Vermont VR originally gave to these meetings. However, some states may opt to rename the team meeting. For example, in Nebraska, the VR agency chose to call it their “WIN” meeting, which stands for Work in Nebraska.

How Does Jobsville Use Labor Market Intelligence to Help the Dual Customers?

Jobsville provides a mechanism for the team to share labor market intelligence. What is labor market intelligence? Labor market intelligence helps job seekers learn about employment opportunities but is different from traditional Labor Market Information (LMI):

Labor Market Intelligence	Traditional Labor Market Information (LMI)
Gathered through interactions with people representing businesses. These interactions may occur in formal meetings or at networking events with business organizations, such as chambers of commerce, or they may occur in social gatherings.	Available online through other workforce agencies or sources
Includes qualitative information gathered from employers about opportunities and challenges of hiring for different positions, expected changes in employment, and positions that require specialized skills	Includes a broad range of quantitative and qualitative data from federal, state, and local data sets that describes current economic conditions within a given geographic area, like current employment levels, projected employment growth, unemployment rates, average wages, minimum education requirements, industry trends, and workforce demographics
More timely; can assist a job seeker in learning about employment opportunities before openings have been posted	Less timely; can help employment providers learn about ongoing trends from reports that are published periodically

Who Should Attend Jobsville Meetings?

All Jobsville team members should attend Jobsville meetings. This includes people serving in the following specific roles:

- » **Business-facing staff:** These positions have many titles depending on the agency, but some examples include business account managers (BAMs), employment consultants, job developers, and job placement staff. The key is that they spend most of their time developing and maintaining relationships with business.
- » **Job seeker-facing staff:** These staff can support both the job seeker and business before, during, and after worksite activities to ensure the dual-customer needs are met. Depending on the agency, this can include VR counselors, employment specialists, job coaches, rehabilitation techs, vocational evaluation staff, assistive technology specialists, and others.
- » **Staff introducing new cases:** In a typical Jobsville meeting, staff who have a working knowledge of the job seeker and their barriers to employment, skills, interests, job, or career aspirations introduce new cases to the team. While virtually anyone can do this on the Jobsville team, it is most commonly a case manager, community partner, or VR counselor who brings the new cases to the team.
- » **Facilitator:** Jobsville requires good meeting facilitation skills. Typically, the lead agency implementing the Progressive Employment model identifies the Jobsville facilitator. The facilitator must set and maintain a positive tone in the meeting, keep the group on topic, and identify items to be discussed at a different time (items for the “parking lot”). Ideally, the facilitator also uses a tracking system, so the group hears status reports regarding previously presented job seekers for continued brainstorming to help that individual progress.
- » **Other staff support:** The facilitator may identify other team members to support the Jobsville meeting to help with timekeeping, note-taking, handling scheduling and communication logistics, and parking-lot topic management.

Timing of Jobsville Meetings

Jobsville meetings should have a set time, frequency, duration, and location (virtual, in-person, or hybrid). These meetings can occur weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly, depending on the needs of the job seekers served and the capacity of the team to attend. Meetings typically last 1–2 hours (the less frequent the meetings, the longer they may last in duration). Because the labor market is very fluid in nature, it is important that the frequency of meetings enable the team to be responsive to and aware of changing business needs. The ideal frequency of Jobsville meetings is every two weeks.

The Jobsville facilitator also communicates with the team between meetings, as needed. This may include sending information about upcoming job seeker referrals or pressing labor market needs. This enables the team to come prepared to engage in the discussion most effectively.

What Does the Progressive Employment Team Talk about at Jobsville Meetings?

The Jobsville meeting focuses on new and previously discussed cases. For Jobsville to work, all team members should attend and participate actively in the sharing, brainstorming, and discussions. Here is an outline of a Jobsville meeting agenda:

- » **Introducing New Cases:** Typically, team members introduce new cases in each Jobsville meeting. Who brings the new cases can vary by agency. In a typical VR agency, it is likely the

VR counselor will introduce information about the new case. In other agencies, it may be a case manager, other support staff, or service provider staff who introduce a new case to the team.

- » **Providing Updates on Existing Progressive Employment Job seekers:** Staff members working with job seekers share information and updates on how worksite activities are progressing for each participant in Progressive Employment services. Frequently, the team will have further discussions regarding the next logical steps for each person, including brainstorming new ideas and contacts to pursue.
- » **Discussing Challenging Progressive Employment Situations:** Sometimes, job seekers may be “stuck,” and a team member may bring this situation back to discuss in the Jobsville meeting. The team can help brainstorm ideas for how to help the job seeker progress.
- » **Sharing Success Stories:** Any team member can share stories of job seekers or businesses who have experienced successes through Progressive Employment. Ideally, this is a situation that ends with a successful career match for the individual and a beneficial hire for the business. However, the team can share other successes as well, including progression to next steps for either a job seeker or a business.
- » **Sharing Labor Market Intelligence:** Every team member is expected to share information about any business interactions that yield insights that cannot be discovered through traditional online LMI. Labor market intelligence is information gleaned from direct conversations and interactions with business owners, managers, and/or supervisors. This labor market intelligence shared in Jobsville can also help to inform conversations with job seekers about what opportunities exist. Labor market intelligence keeps the team more current on labor trends that are not readily available elsewhere. Occasionally, this sharing includes discussing business engagement challenges in hopes that the team can brainstorm contacts to help open the doors for opportunities.

Structuring Your Jobsville

The specifics and rollout of Jobsville meetings can vary by agency according to what works best for the agency staff, culture, and capacity. Your agency may want to customize the Jobsville agenda order, facilitator, venue, frequency, duration, and participants.

Conclusion

The Progressive Employment Jobsville meeting helps ensure that communication and coordination happen regularly and in a timely manner. The team gathers to share real-time labor market intelligence about employment opportunities, industry trends, and in-demand skills for their local labor markets. These meetings are critical to the success of Progressive Employment model implementation and helping job seekers with barriers to employment succeed in their desired career fields. Holding Jobsville meetings consistently is key to addressing the needs of the dual customers (job seekers and businesses).

This is a poster that hangs in the conference room in every regional office of the Nebraska VR agency. The poster lists their WIN (Jobsville) meeting agenda items.

VR
NEBRASKA

SUCCESSES
NEW CASES
UPDATE ON EXISTING CASES
LABOR MARKET REPORT
CHALLENGING CASES

WIN MEETING AGENDA

WORK IN NEBRASKA (WIN) MEETINGS ARE REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETINGS AND IT IS THE INTENT THAT EVERYONE ON THE TEAM ATTENDS. THE MEETINGS ARE STRUCTURED SO THAT THEY ARE EFFICIENT, RELATIVELY QUICK, AND ADDRESS INFORMATION VITAL TO THE SUCCESS OF CLIENTS.

★★★★★
"WIN Meetings
are one of the most important components
that make the Meet You Where you Are
Model so successful..."
– Lots of People



For more information on the Progressive Employment model:

www.explorevr.org/progressive-employment

ABOUT

The Scale-Up Progressive Employment Project is a 3-year field-initiated development project of ExploreVR at the Institute for Community Inclusion, UMass Boston. ExploreVR offers VR agencies easy and convenient access to a range of VR research, related data, training and tools for planning, evaluation, and decision-making.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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