

Project Summary

Massachusetts Commission for the Blind Disability as a Qualification for Employment

The Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB) is interested in learning more about the type and number of employment opportunities for which having a disability would help make a job candidate qualified. MCB is partnering with Work Without Limits, an initiative of Commonwealth Medicine, the consulting and operations services division of the University of Massachusetts Medical School, to collect this information through **focus groups and interviews**.

The goal of the MCB Disability as a Qualification for Employment (DQE) project is to develop a **Business Case for Individuals with Disabilities**, which will answer the question - how can individuals leverage their disability to help them stand out in the labor market and secure and succeed in employment?

This business case will bring to light the many reasons employers want to include people with disabilities in their workplaces and tell the story of how individuals who are successfully working have leveraged their disability to contribute to their employers and advance their careers. It will help educate and inform individuals with disabilities of the following:

- why employers value them
- that their voices and life experiences are essential in any workplace

It will also replace the traditionally detrimental stigma that surrounds individuals with disabilities with a persuasive argument for **Disability as a Qualification for Employment**.

Work Without Limits will conduct focus groups and interviews with disability-inclusive employers and successfully employed individuals with disabilities, combine these unique perspectives and provide information

to MCB that will educate and inform job seeking candidates with disabilities of the value they bring to the workplace. Below are the key facts of this project:

Project Goals

- Gain the perspectives of employers and employed individuals with disabilities
- Develop the business case for individuals with disabilities
- Provide a resource for MCB and other vocational rehabilitation professionals
- Educate, inform and empower job seeking individuals with disabilities

Key Stakeholders to be Engaged During this Project

- Disability-inclusive employers
- Employed individuals with disabilities
- Employed individuals with visual impairments
- Former and current consumers of MCB vocational rehabilitation services

Benefits of Participating in a Focus Group or Interview

- Provide a rich understanding of the opinions and beliefs of employers and employees with disabilities
- Educate, inform and empower vocational rehabilitation professionals and job seeking candidates with disabilities for years to come

Project Outputs

- A resource that educates, informs and empowers job seeking candidates with disabilities of the value they bring to the workplace
- Estimated to be available in October 2020

Data Collection and Engagement Modes

- Focus groups and interviews conducted virtually via Zoom and/or by phone
- Outreach by Work Without Limits and MCB staff and providers

Focus Groups and Interviews Timeframe

- Focus Group for Individuals with Disabilities: August 19, 2020 from 12:00-1:00 PM
- Focus Group for Employers: August 20, 2020 from 11:00 AM-12:00 PM
- Interviews will be scheduled the week of August 24-28, 2020

Sign up today!

To participate in a focus group or interview, sign up using the registration form:

<https://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/5740913/MCBDQE2020>

Questions?

If you have any questions about this project, please reach out to Nathan Skrocki, MCB, 413-781-1290 x7817203 or nathan.w.skrocki@mass.gov OR Kathy Muhr, Work Without Limits, Director of Community Engagement at Kathy.Muhr@umassmed.edu or 508-856-3533.