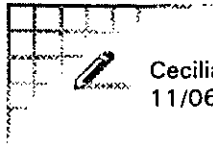


**NLWJC - Kagan**

**DPC - Box 012 - Folder 018**

**Disabilities - BRIDGE Program**



Cecilia E. Rouse  
11/06/98 12:31:40 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Sally Katzen/OPD/EOP, Elena Kagan/OPD/EOP, Cynthia A. Rice/OPD/EOP  
cc: Shannon Mason/OPD/EOP, Laura Emmett/WHO/EOP  
Subject: BRIDGE

FYI from DOL regarding yet another option under the "interagency process."

-- Ceci

----- Forwarded by Cecilia E. Rouse/OPD/EOP on 11/06/98 12:32 PM -----



**harris-seth @ dol.gov**  
11/06/98 09:33:00 AM

Record Type: Record

To: Cecilia E. Rouse  
cc:  
Subject: BRIDGE

Since I haven't heard anything since Monday, I thought I would check in with you to find out where we stand on a BRIDGE deputies' meeting.

I also wanted to let you know that Kitty has asked us to develop a compromise on the "Interagency Process" issue that strikes a balance between Option #1 (interagency board) and Option #2 (DOL administers in consultation with everybody). The compromise would be (1) DOL/ETA administers the program and the grants, (2) ETA borrows staff from other involved agencies who would help in the application review process, and (3) the Task Force serves as a "Steering Committee" helping ETA with program design issues. Let me know what you think.

October 28, 1998

MEMORANDUM FOR NEC-DPC DEPUTIES

FROM: "BRIDGE" WORKING GROUP

SUBJECT: The Proposed BRIDGE Program

On March 13, 1998 the President issued Executive Order 13078 directing the federal agencies to create a coordinated and aggressive national policy to increase employment of adults with disabilities. The "Building Resources for Individuals with Disabilities to Gain Employment" ("BRIDGE") program is one of several new proposals to grow out of this effort. BRIDGE is a competitive grant program designed to increase the employment rate of adults with disabilities by fostering integration at the local level of employment-related services and support services to adults with disabilities.

The purpose of this meeting is to: 1) review the overall structure of the BRIDGE program developed by the interagency working group; 2) consider how to create a strong federal interagency coordinating process; and 3) decide which state and local agencies should be required members of the applicant consortium and to what extent, if any, that requirement can be waived.

**I. Program Need**

According to the 1998 Harris Survey of Americans with Disabilities, 66% of individuals with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 64 are not working. Only 30% of working-age adults with disabilities are employed full or part-time. Seventy-five percent of those non-employed adults with disabilities have indicated that they would prefer to be working (Harris Survey, 1998). The vast majority of these individuals receive income support and other services through federal, state, and local programs. Many face a myriad of barriers to employment including discrimination and lack of health care, transportation, housing, and personal assistance services. Those services that do exist are fragmented and difficult to access.

**II. Proposed BRIDGE Program Structure**

BRIDGE will encourage states and localities to address barriers created by the lack of a seamless service system for adults with disabilities seeking to find and keep jobs. Every adult with a disability should be able learn about, receive advice about, and gain access to all of the necessary services with the least effort possible, preferably with a single call or office visit. Each of the services provided should be sufficiently integrated with others so that they collectively accomplish the common goal of long-term employment and permanent attachment to the workforce. The expectation is that these efforts will ultimately inform statewide systems change in policies designed to help individuals with disabilities go to work. These efforts may require federal and/or state policy changes, including possible legislation.

BRIDGE will build on current demonstration grant programs funded by the SSA, Labor, Education, and HHS which are designed to address barriers to employment and increase program coordination for people with disabilities, and will enhance the new workforce system infrastructure being expanded under the Workforce Investment Act's One-Stop system.

BRIDGE funds will be available on a competitive basis to consortia of state and local agencies

serving individuals with mental and/or physical disabilities. Grant proposals will enhance service delivery with expanded wrap-around counseling, provision of information that can maximize resources and employment outcomes, and other approaches that address barriers to employment by integrated and coordinated service delivery. While the program is designed primarily to encourage state and local efforts to assist all people with disabilities, efforts can also focus on specific groups, e.g., young adults and mentally ill.

BRIDGE grants would be awarded from a national account of \$150 million in FY 2000. Grants would last for up to five years with funding beyond the first year contingent upon subsequent appropriations. Up to 5 percent of the grant amount would be reserved for rigorous evaluation. Current funding for traditional disability employment programs would not be supplanted by this initiative.

### **III. Program Design Issues to Consider**

#### **A. Interagency Structure**

Agency representatives involved in the working group consider it critically important that this new program be a true interagency effort. Reasons include: 1) the federal government can and should set an example; 2) multi-program expertise is essential for judging each proposal's quality and in helping the consortia access needed federal assistance. Options include:

- (1) Use an inter-agency board to review applications and provide on-going policy guidance and technical assistance, but fund the program through one agency. The current Task Force could potentially serve as the inter-agency board, at least through 2002 (the life of the Task Force); or
- (2) Fund the program through one agency, but require the Secretary of that agency to make the BRIDGE grants in consultation with the Secretaries (or Commissioners/Directors) of the other agencies; or
- (3) Fund several agencies and require them to work together and with other agencies to review applications and provide on-going policy guidance and technical assistance.

If funding is provided solely to one agency, the Department of Labor is the working group's consensus choice. If some funds are allocated to other agencies as well, then the Department of Education and SSA would also want to be considered for funding. The BRIDGE program will need to be coordinated with implementation of the Kennedy-Jeffords legislation to improve health care access for people with disabilities who work.

#### **B. Mandatory Members of the Applicant Consortia**

Staff agree that there are many local and state agencies serving adults with disabilities that should integrate their employment-related services. Staff also agree that there are some agencies that should be included in every effort to integrate services in order for those efforts to succeed; thus, only applications including those agencies would be funded. Other agencies should be included, and staff agree that applicants including those agencies would be given additional points in the selection process. In deciding the number and type of mandatory consortium members, there is a need to

balance providing as much flexibility to local and state applicants as possible while assuring that core services for adults with disabilities are included in every effort at service integration and coordination.

There are six agencies that have been proposed as possible mandatory agencies:

- Local and/or district offices of SSA
- Medicaid/state medical assistance agencies
- State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies
- Local Workforce Investment Boards/One-Stop Centers
- State TANF agencies
- State education agencies (either K-12 or post-secondary)

Some believe that because a significant proportion of individuals with disabilities also receive TANF, the state TANF agency should be a required agency. Similarly, many believe that because education is so critical to labor market success, education agencies must be involved. Others, however, believe that neither TANF nor education agencies should be required participants because they will skew the distribution of applicants to those aiming to serve individuals on TANF or youth which is not the primary goal of the BRIDGE program nor the Task Force.

#### Which of the Six Agencies Should be Mandatory

Options include:

- (1) Include all six agencies, including TANF and education, as mandatory participants.
- (2) Include five agencies, including TANF or education, as mandatory participants.
- \* → (3) Include only Medicaid, Voc Rehab, One-Stops, and SSA as mandatory agencies.
- (4) Include only Medicaid, Voc Rehab, and One-Stops as mandatory agencies.

Substantial additional points would be provided for those agencies that are not mandatory.

#### Is Any Opt Out Allowed

An additional, but related, decision is whether any exceptions to the mandatory list would be allowed. For example, would an applicant be permitted to exclude one (or more) of the required agencies if they can demonstrate in their application that the excluded agency (or agencies) would not help achieve the stated goal of the proposed consortium? In this instance, the burden of proof would be on the applicant to demonstrate why a "mandatory" agency should not be mandatory. While some believe that there should be no opting out because that goes against the purpose of the program; others believe that if numerous agencies are made "mandatory," then there should be some flexibility to allow innovative applicants to be eligible.

Allow opt-out

## Appendix of "Non-Controversial" Program Design Issues

### Eligible Applicants

Each applicant must be a consortium of state and/or local agencies that provide or could provide a range of supports and services to adults with disabilities which lead to finding and keeping employment. The agencies must have the legal authority to provide the services they propose. Consortia may include not-for-profit providers of employment, assistive technology, health and other related services to adults with disabilities.

To be successful, applicants would need to demonstrate that they have identified the means to integrate and coordinate the services provided across agencies and to remove barriers to employment for adults with disabilities. Further, they would need to demonstrate that they consulted with diverse elements within their community of adults with disabilities in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the project. In addition, to be successful, applicants would need to demonstrate that they will match BRIDGE funds with appropriate federal, state, and/or local funds or in-kind services. Finally, preference will be given to applicants that demonstrate how they would ensure the continuation of health care coverage to persons with disabilities after the return to work.

### *To be considered for a BRIDGE grant:*

- Depending on the decision made at the deputies meeting, applicant consortia must include all (or some) of these "mandatory" agencies: Medicaid/state medical assistance, state vocational rehabilitation, state TANF, state or local education (either K-12 or post-secondary), local workforce investment board/One-Stop Center, and local and/or district office of SSA. All mandatory agencies would be required to contribute resources to the work of their consortia over
- Applications will be given additional credit in the selection process if the consortium includes any of the following entities either through a demonstrated commitment of resources to the work of the consortium or a through formal agreement (such as an MOU): Vocational Rehabilitation and Counseling (Department of Veterans of Affairs), independent Living Centers, state developmental disability agencies, state mental retardation agencies, state mental health agencies, vocational rehabilitation centers for the blind and deaf, state/local transportation agencies, public transit authorities, metropolitan planning organizations, consumer organizations, economic development agencies, labor organizations, private non-profit service providers, protection advocacy agencies, public housing authorities, small business administration offices and/or small business development centers.

### Allowable Activities

Allowable activities include those needed to achieve program integration and improved coordination of existing local, state and federal programs in the delivery of services to adults with disabilities and their achievement of self-sustaining employment and economic independence. Allowable activities include:

- Planning, development and implementation of cooperative agreements, including service system planning, and development, planning and creation of core services structures;
- Establishing partnerships among entities to provide integrated income assistance, health and other benefits, job training and placement, and other employment-related services, such as transportation assistance and self-employment/entrepreneurial training;
- Providing training among consortium partners and required partners under the Workforce Investment Act to increase knowledge and awareness of incentives, available services, and health care waiver provisions, and to promote equal opportunity for the effective participation of individuals with disabilities in the workforce investment system;
- Providing comprehensive pre-service assistance, including counseling on benefits and incentives under the Social Security Act and information on the array of services available to individuals with disabilities that increase the ability to obtain and retain employment;
- Developing and implementing procedures that promote a “single point of entry” or “one-stop service delivery” such as common intake, coordination of customer databases, customer service hotlines, and access to information resources through technology or staff assistance;
- Establishing linkages of consortium partners with services provided through One-Stop Center system, under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, to ensure comprehensive and coordinated delivery of employment-related services to individuals with disabilities;
- Establishing linkages with other providers of services that people with disabilities may need to find and keep gainful employment, including local public agencies, not-for-profit service providers, community based organizations, and educational institutions;
- Implementing accessible information technology linkages between programs and infrastructures, such as provided in One-Stop Centers that provide labor market, skill requirements, job listings and available training providers. Funding available for information technology infrastructure development and implementation will be limited to 20% by the consortia’s grant, with any additional support funded by respective consortium partners; and
- Evaluating programs or activities funded by BRIDGE grants.

With the exception of pre-service assistance, BRIDGE funds cannot be used for direct services and direct services must be provided by the local, state and/or federally funded program available for that purpose.