

INNOVATION AND EXPANSION PROJECT UPDATE

The Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) solicited applications through an Invitation to Negotiate (ITN). The purpose of the ITN was to seek qualified vendors to establish a contractual agreement for innovation and expansion (I & E) to be provided to VR in order to: increase employment opportunities for individuals with most significant disabilities; improve the effectiveness of VR services which will result in employment outcomes for individuals with most significant disabilities; and train individuals with most significant disabilities to promote self-sufficiency and overcome barriers to employment.

As a result of successful negotiations, VR intends to enter into a contract with the following seven vendors:

- **Abilities Inc. of Florida, Area 4** – Assist transitioning youth and their families in obtaining counseling and vocational assistance along with medical, social and behavioral health services, as needed.
- **Best Buddies of Florida, Area 6** – Provide pre-placement training, job placement, on-site training and follow along services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities transitioning from high school to integrated employment at two locations in Miami-Dade County, Zoo Miami and the City of Hialeah. Individuals will complete training at one of the two sites during an unpaid internship, prior to job placement in an integrated community setting.
- **Brain Injury Association, Areas 1, 3, and 5** – Serve customers by utilizing community employment resources and supports in order to improve employment outcomes for individuals with moderate to severe traumatic brain injury. Consumers, employers, family members, professionals, and other appropriate members of the community will be trained in various skills needed to build and sustain community employment networks.
- **Hands on Education, Areas 2, and 6** – Assist transitioning youth by providing alternative training in the culinary arts for 300 under-served students to improve their opportunities for employment.
- **United Cerebral Palsy of East Central Florida, Inc. (UCP), Area 2** – Employ Transition Specialists who will provide students enrolled in the program with training in employability skills related to the hospitality and tourism industry as well as guidance and support through work experience.
- **University of South Florida Center for Rehab, Engineering & Technology (USF), Areas 3 & 4** – Allow the vocational rehabilitation population to try various jobs, tasks, virtual environments and assistive technologies prior to entering the actual employment setting through the use of virtual reality, simulators, robotics, and feedback interfaces.
- **Wilson Resources, Inc, Areas 2, 4 and 6** – Establish 25 paid internships within Florida businesses for persons with most significant mental illnesses; educate and support select Florida businesses employing and working with employees with significant mental illness; and educate and support select service providers to establish more productive relationships with employers.

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VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AREA MAP

