Kansas Employment First Grant Steering Committee

Monday, November 16, 2026
2pm – 4pm CT

Agenda

- Introductions
- Project Overview
- Kansas Employment First Project Highlight: Easter Seals Midwest
- Grant Partner Updates
- Discussion from the Steering Committee
- Next Steps

Introductions

- Please put your name and the organization you represent into the chat
- Remember that private messages are recorded in the final chat transcript
- *We utilize Zoom AI Companion to help with notetaking
- *This meeting is being record to be shared on our website

Prior Steering Committee Materials

- Website is hosted by KUCD
  - KansasEmploymentFirst.org
- Steering Committee materials can be access at this website
  - Steering Committee

Project Overview

Statewide initiative led by:

- Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services
- Kansas University Center on Disabilities (KUCD)
- Washington Initiative for Supported Employment (WISE)
- Institute for Community Inclusion, UMASS Boston (ICI)

Focuses on expanding Employment First pilot project to capacity for competitive integrated employment (CIE)

Provides Technical Assistance to providers not in the pilot

Pilots Data Collection and Visualization tool

Key Components of Phase 2



Grant Pilot Expansion



Training & Technical Assistance



Data & Policy Monitoring

Phase 2 of Pilot

- Launch Event - January 2026
- Technical Assistance: Mentors in Specific Areas of Need
- Training – KS ACRE 100, Project to Placement
- Set Goals
  - 7 CIE Jobs each
- Complete Organizational Self - Assessment
- Create Action Plan
- Submit to Data Dashboard

- 7 Providers Over 1 Year
  - COF Training Services Inc.
  - Easter Seals Midwest
  - Good Life
  - Hetlinger Developmental Services, Inc.
  - Inclusion Connections
  - Journeys, Inc.
  - TARC

Phase 2 Project Highlight



easterseals
Midwest

easterseals Midwest

ESMW Senior Leadership



Abbie Whitney



Adam Christensen



Clay Berry



Marion Loveless



easterseals Midwest

Easterseals Midwest was selected to participate in Kansas's Employment First Phase 2 Provider Pilot Initiative

Reinforcing our commitment to expanding competitive integrated employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



easterseals Midwest

Leading the way to 100% equity, inclusion, and access for people with disabilities, families, and communities.

Empower
Support individuals to realize their potential.

Connect
Build relationships and create belonging.

Innovate
Embrace creativity and better ways to deliver person-centered services.

Advocate
Champion the rights, voices, and opportunities of people with disabilities.

Employment Services at ESMW

Southeast Kansas Employment Services

14 Individuals Supported

Counties Served: Cherokee, Crawford, Labette, Montgomery

Job placement, Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), job preparation, vocational assessments, and community-based work assessments.

Northeast Kansas Employment Services

85 Individuals Supported

Counties Served: Atchison, Douglas, Johnson, Leavenworth, Miami, Shawnee, Wyandotte.

Vocational assessment, community-based work assessment, community-based job try out, customized placement, Pre-ETS – Work-Based Learning (WBL), and job coaching.

Employment Services History & Capacity

A longstanding history of providing comprehensive employment services that empower individuals with disabilities to achieve meaningful, competitive, integrated employment, including an Employment First designation in Missouri.

781 Individuals Supported

130 New Job Placements

52 New Business Partners



easterseals Midwest

Leading the way to 100% equity, inclusion, and access for people with disabilities, families, and communities.

Northeast Kansas Employment Services

A strong foundation, proven capacity, and the infrastructure to continue growing employment opportunities across Northeast Kansas.

Proven Experience & Growth

The NEKS team is building upon a well-established Employment Services team and service delivery model with more than **10 years of experience** in Northwest Missouri. Over the past eight years, Employment Services in NWMO has grown its service capacity by **400%**, demonstrating our ability to expand services while maintaining quality and effective service delivery.

Expertise, Tools & Best Practices

Our team brings foundational training in **Customized Employment** and access to an extensive collection of resources, tools, and best-practice strategies that support Employment Specialists in delivering individualized, person-centered services. Our established model has produced strong employment outcomes and provides a proven framework for continued growth.

Infrastructure & Operational Capacity

We have the infrastructure, workforce development, and operational processes necessary to support sustainable expansion into Northeast Kansas. All full-time Employment Specialists are held to an **80% productivity expectation**, and caseloads are developed and managed accordingly to ensure an appropriate balance of service delivery, individual support needs, and operational capacity.

NE Kansas at a Glance

85 Individuals Supported

Range of Services

Vocational Assessment • Community-Based Work Assessment
Community-Based Job Tryout • Customized Placement
Pre-ETS – Work-Based Learning (WBL) • Job Coaching

Counties Served

Atchison, Douglas, Johnson, Leavenworth, Miami, Shawnee, Wyandotte



easterseals Midwest

Leading the way to 100% equity, inclusion, and access for people with disabilities, families, and communities.

Southeast Kansas Employment Services

A growing rural program with early momentum, meaningful employment outcomes, and continued expansion across Southeast Kansas and neighboring communities.

Emerging Program & Rural Reach

The Southeast Kansas team is a relatively young team serving a more rural region. The program has been in place for a little over a year and began taking Employment Services referrals in November 2025.

Current Impact & Early Outcomes

The team is currently supporting **70 clients** across Kansas and Missouri. Early employment outcomes include placements at the casino in Pittsburg, Chicken Mary's, a marina in Orange Beach, Alabama, Cash Saver in Parsons, and Big Top Day Care in Baxter Springs.

Growth & Opportunity

The team continues to build momentum through individualized employment supports and Pre-Employment Transition Services. One Pre-ETS student was hired before completing the full program, and the team is preparing to expand into Bourbon County based on recent need reports.

SE Kansas at a Glance

70 Clients Supported

Program Started: November 2025

Sample Job Placements:
Casino in Pittsburg • Chicken Mary's • Cash Saver • Big Top Day Care • Marina in Orange Beach, AL

Current/Planned Service Area:
Cherokee • Crawford • Labette • Montgomery • Expanding to Bourbon County

easterseals Midwest

Leading the way to 100% equity, inclusion, and access for people with disabilities, families, and communities.

Why ESMW Participated & What We Learned

Kansas Employment First Phase 2 Provider Pilot Initiative

Why We Participated

- **Advance Our Mission:** Strengthen opportunities for individuals with disabilities to achieve greater independence, economic empowerment, and meaningful community inclusion.
- **Expand Employment Opportunities:** Support Kansas's Employment First vision by promoting competitive, integrated employment as a preferred outcome.
- **Strengthen Provider Capacity:** Enhance staff knowledge, professional competencies, and organizational practices through specialized training, technical assistance, and collaboration.
- **Improve Service Delivery:** Evaluate and refine our employment services to support more effective career exploration, job development, placement, and long-term employment success.
- **Support Regional Growth:** Build a stronger foundation for sustainable employment services across Northeast and Southeast Kansas.

Regional Observations / What We've Learned

There is a need for continuing education and greater standardization of VRC trainings.
In more rural areas, VR Counselors have not always been trained on all services they provide. In many instances, the service provider is helping inform VRCs about available VR services, service codes, and rates.



easterseals Midwest

Leading the way to 100% equity, inclusion, and access for people with disabilities, families, and communities.

Employment Services Approach

Challenges & Process



Challenges

- One challenge is establishing the first connection and completing required Easterseals intake and consent paperwork with each referral, especially when DCF or VR does not facilitate an intake meeting.

Our Process

- Our process and approach is individualized, intentional, and rooted in Customized Employment principles.
- We begin by investing time in getting to know each individual through intake meetings and vocational assessments to identify strengths, skills, interests, support needs, and employment goals.
- Using this information, Employment Specialists work alongside each individual to identify meaningful employment opportunities that align with their unique abilities and desires.
- This includes online job research and applications, community mapping, and exploring local businesses and employment opportunities in person.

Our goal is not simply to find someone a job, but to build the foundation for meaningful, successful, and sustainable long-term employment.

easterseals Midwest

Leading the way to 100% equity, inclusion, and access for people with disabilities, families, and communities.



How Are We Building Capacity for Competitive Integrated Employment?

Adaptation to Kansas Funding Requirements

We have adjusted existing processes and workflows to align with Kansas funder expectations, including intake procedures, consent documentation, and service delivery requirements.

Strengthened Job Development & Community Outreach

We have placed a greater emphasis on proactively building employer relationships and extablishing brand recognition in Kansas. This has included developing informational materials for employers, conducting intentional community outreach, and actively identifying opportunities to build local business partnerships.

While our NWMO team has historically benefited from an established network of employer relationships, our Kansas expansion has required a more intentional, grassroots approach to developing those connections.

The Result: A stronger, more sustainable foundation for competitive, integrated employment opportunities across Kansas.



easterseals Midwest

Leading the way to 100% equity, inclusion, and access for people with disabilities, families, and communities.

Our Commitment Moving Forward

Committed to Our Mission

We remain dedicated to creating and expanding opportunities for individuals with disabilities to achieve greater independence, economic empowerment, and meaningful community inclusion through employment.

Partnering with Kansas

We value our partnership with the State of Kansas and are committed to continued collaboration, alignment, and innovation to strengthen employment services and expand opportunities across the state.

Maintaining an Employment First Philosophy

We will continue to champion Employment First — prioritizing competitive, integrated employment as the preferred and expected outcome for the individuals we support.

***Thank You** for Partnering with Easterseals Midwest.*

Questions for Easter Seals Midwest?

Grant Partner Updates

- Wise
- ICI
- KUCD

Grant Partner Update: Capacity Building



Kansas Employment First Phase 2 Provider Pilot

Robyn Slocom, Wise

Cohort Sessions

Since Last Meeting

- Cultural Change/ Everyone is a Job Developer
- CIE Strategic Planning/ Sustainability After the Project
- Informed Choice

Remaining

Celebration – Share Your Big Wins

Technical Assistance

- Wrapping up & preparing to celebrate
- Those who haven’t met goals – targeted CIE job attainment
- All – shifting to sustainability

Phase 2 Milestones & Bonuses

1 ($20K)
- Organizational Self-Assessment
- Launch Event
- Initial Meeting w/Mentors/Coaches

ALL

2 ($20K)
- Action Plan Developed & Mentor Meetings Begun
- Coaching for Navigating Financial Implications Begun
- Training on Data Dashboard System

ALL

3 ($20K)
- Participate in Organizational Learning Community of Practice
- Complete Mentorship/Coaching
- Compete Data Dashboard Tracking on those targeted for CIE

4 ($20K)
- Support 7 People to obtain new CIE jobs

4

BONUS

14(c) ($10K)

1

60% of new CIE jobs are transitions from sheltered work

No14(c) ($10K)

1

60% of new CIE jobs are people classified as Tier 1 Support needs

ANY ($10K)

5

Provider reports on all individuals in their employment & day services

CIE Jobs

4 of 7 Providers have exceeded their 7 CIE Jobs goal

8-16 jobs each

Remaining 3 Providers

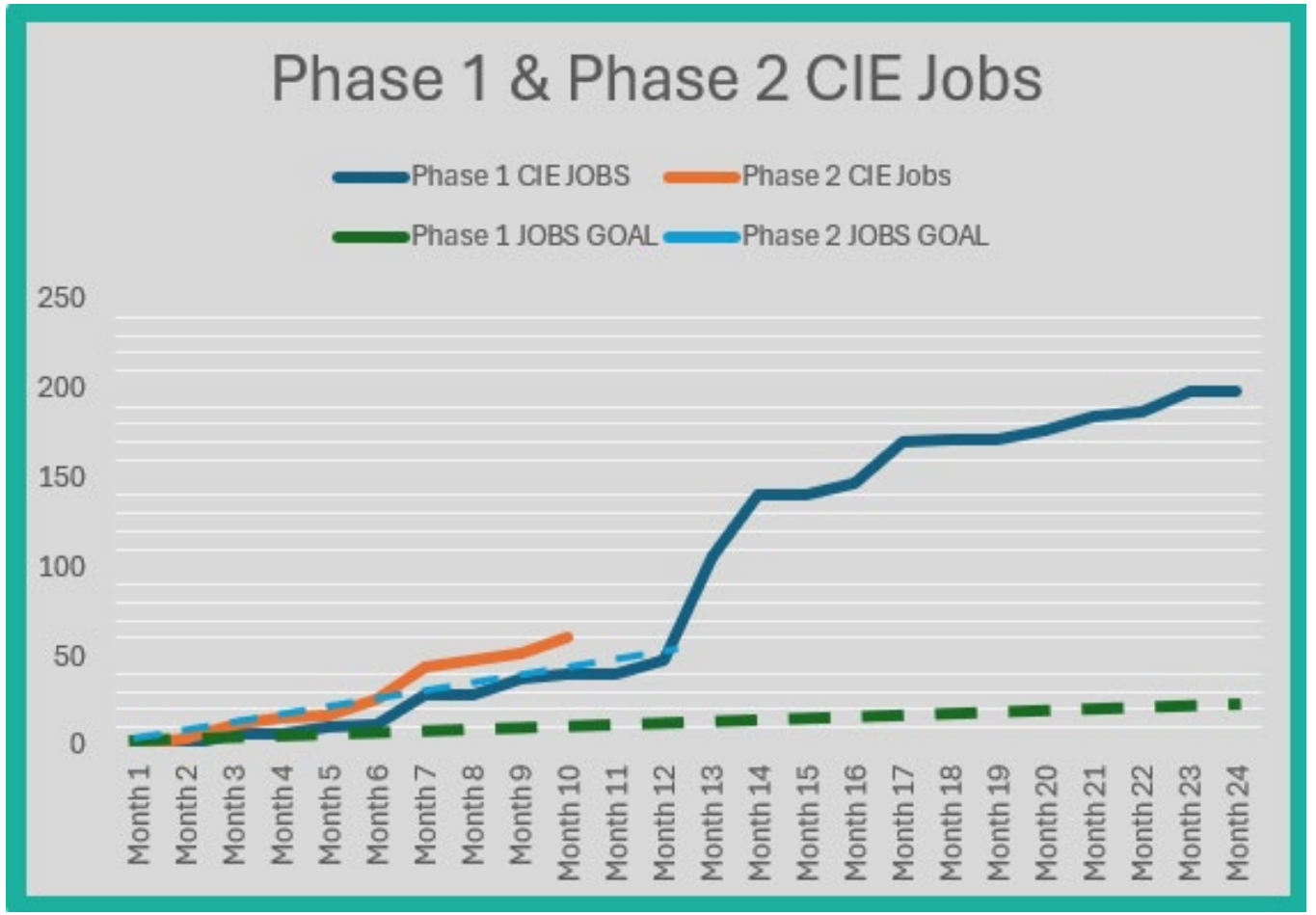
2-6 jobs each

8 from 14(c) & 6 from Tier 1

Total of 60 CIE Jobs so far!

Goal was 49 total!

CIE Jobs Graph



What about the Jobs?

Range
$7.25 - $37.00/hour

Range
1-40+ hours/week

Average
$13.20/hour

Average
15 hours/week

Grant Partner Update: Policy Analysis and Recommendations

ICI

ThinkWork!

UMASS BOSTON • ICI

Grant Partner Update: Stakeholder Engagement



Kansas Employment First Training and Technical Assistance Center

Purpose:

1. To support the development of a highly trained and networked employment support system across Kansas by providing coordinated and comprehensive training and technical assistance

2. Develop and pilot a data tracking tool to track CIE outcomes in Kansas

wise

Kansas University Center on Disabilities

Kansas Employment First Technical Assistance Team

DOWN SYNDROME INNOVATIONS



Amanda Myers



Brindi Stables

STARKEY



Doug Berryman

Kansas University Center on Disabilities KUCD



Jason Crippen

WHAT'S NEXT



Kendra Krier

CCCK inc.

KUCD Kansas University Center on Disabilities

Kansas Employment First Training and TA Initiative

Current Technical Assistance Initiatives

- Increasing the number of VR vendors and assisting with VR Process
- Increasing the number of Working Healthy, WORK and STEPS providers
- Working with new providers and mentoring

ACRE
ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY REHABILITATION EDUCATORS

wise

KUCD
Kansas University
Center on Disabilities

Kansas Employment First Training and TA Initiative

Kansas ACRE 100 Training

- Cohort 1 finished with 18 ACRE certificates issued
- Cohort 2 is finished with 42 ACRE certificates issues
- Cohort 3 through December 2026
  - Current enrollment 29
- Cohort 4 - January 2027 to May 2027
  - Registration begins November 16

ACRE
ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY REHABILITATION EDUCATORS

wise

KUCD
Kansas University
Center on Disabilities

Kansas Employment First Training and TA Initiative

Who is being trained in Kansas ACRE 100?

- I/DD service provider – 20
- I/DD service provider with I/DD waiver – 18
- I/DD service provider with I/DD waiver and 14c – 11
- Center for Independent Living – 1
- Managed Care Organization – 1
- Community-based disability services – 1
- Behavioral health services – 1
- Vocational Rehabilitation Vendor – 3
- KANSASWORKS Workforce Center – 2
- KDADS – 1
- KUCD – 1

Kansas Counties served by providers trained in WOA 100 and Kansas ACRE 100

ACRE
ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY REHABILITATION EDUCATORS

wise

KUCD
Kansas University
Center on Disabilities

Sharing Success Stories





Kansas University
Center on Disabilities

Steering Committee Discussion

- Are there any questions and/or topics you would like to discuss today?

Proposed 2027 Meetings

- Quarterly Meetings in 2027
  - Wednesday February 10, 2027
  - Wednesday May 12, 2027
- Invites and materials will come from ksemployment1st@ku.edu

Next Steps

- Next meeting date for the Steering Committee has been rescheduled for **Wednesday, February 10th, 2027 at 2pm CT.**
- Meeting agenda, recording, and materials can be found at kansasemploymentfirst.org
- Please email ksemployment1st@ku.edu if you have any questions or concerns



Thank you!