



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES**

# Inclusion Works Strategic Plan

May 2, 2025



# Agenda

- Inclusion Works Strategic Plan Development
- Contributing Factors and Identified Concerns
- Focused Areas and Goals to Address
- Objectives and Strategies



# Where We Are

**Over the past decade, North Carolina has worked to transform services and systems to support people with disabilities as fully included members of their communities. However, North Carolinians with disabilities remain less likely to be employed in the community than their peers without disabilities. The North Carolina Office of State Human Resources reported in 2022 that only 35 percent of working age North Carolinians with disabilities are employed as compared to 76 percent of North Carolinians without disabilities.**

# OUR COMMITMENT

We support individuals, regardless of disability status, to have the opportunity to work in the community in competitive integrated employment (CIE) if they choose to do so.

We support the rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) to choose their own pathways.

Our mission is to drive innovation and positive change, promote access to services, self-directed lives, recovery, and a supported workforce.

Our key values include equity, inclusivity, and a focus on lived experience and partnerships.

We are dedicated to improving access to services.

We want to ensure that more people can access a variety of quality services that meet their needs, making sure people know how to access these resources.

# Inclusion Works



# Competitive Integrated Employment in North Carolina

- ✓ **2021: Cross-Divisional Team Forms**
  - **Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Use Services**
  - **Employment and Independence for People with Disabilities (formerly VR)**
  - **Division of Health Benefits**
  - **LME/MCOS**
  
- ✓ **2023: Program Rebranded to **INCLUSION WORKS****
  
- ✓ **2023-2024: Landscape Assessment and Gap Analysis is completed**
  
- ✓ **2025: Comprehensive Five-Year Plan is launched**



# Progress and Milestones

- **1915i Services**
- **Medicaid Expansion**
- **Launch of Tailored Plans**
- **Launch of Inclusion Connects**
- **Launch of DB101**



# Steps Along the Way

**Inclusion Works  
contracts with  
Work Together NC**

**Inclusion Works  
welcomes WISE**

**Provider  
Stakeholders meet  
Monthly**

**Stakeholders from  
the Tailored Plans  
meet Monthly**

**Advisory  
Committee meets  
Monthly**

**Community  
Advisory Group  
meets Quarterly**

**Data is collected  
and updated both  
monthly and  
quarterly**

**Standardized  
Employment  
Assessments are  
completed**

**A Comprehensive  
Landscape  
Assessment with  
Gap Analysis is  
completed**







# Strategic Plan Projected Timeline

**Strategic Plan  
Published 6/16**

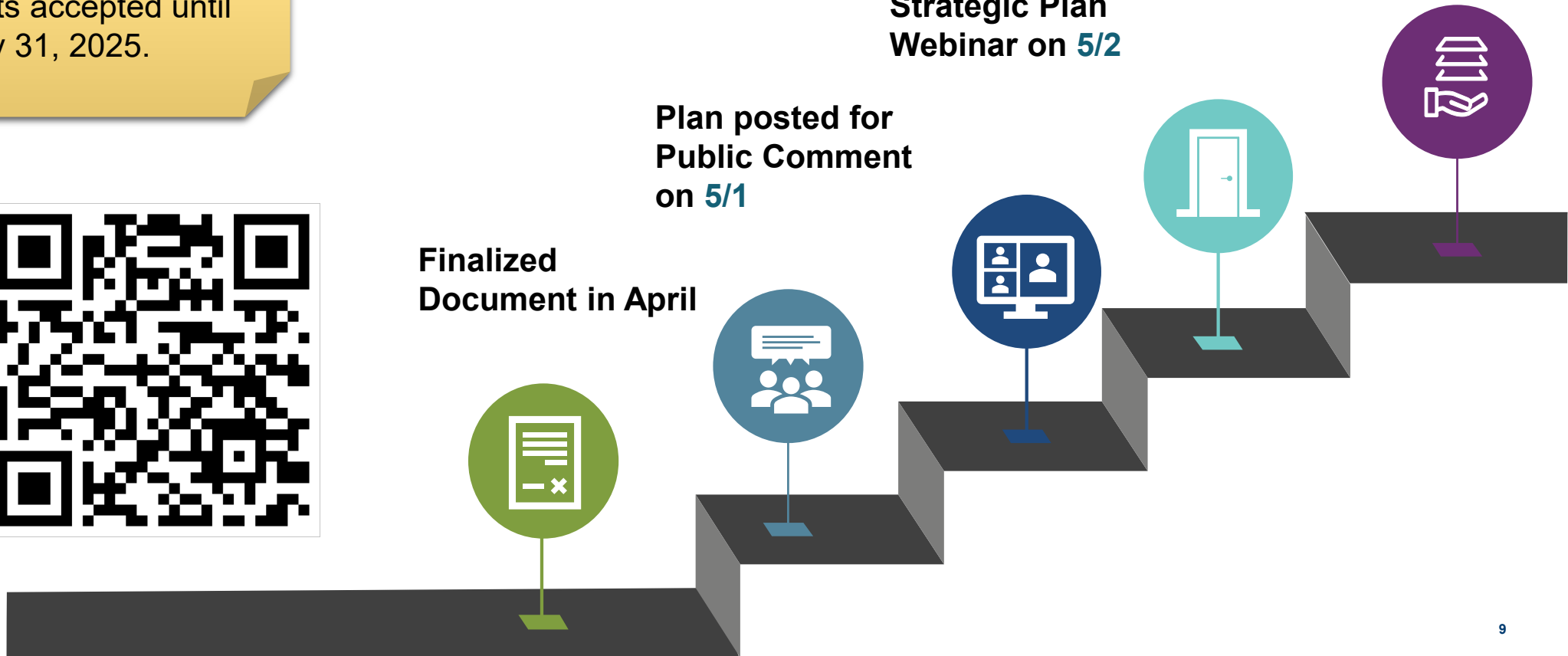
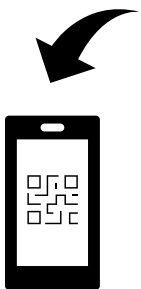
The Strategic Plan is now  
Posted for Public Comment.  
Comments accepted until  
May 31, 2025.

**Closing Public  
Comment by 6/1**

**Strategic Plan  
Webinar on 5/2**

**Plan posted for  
Public Comment  
on 5/1**

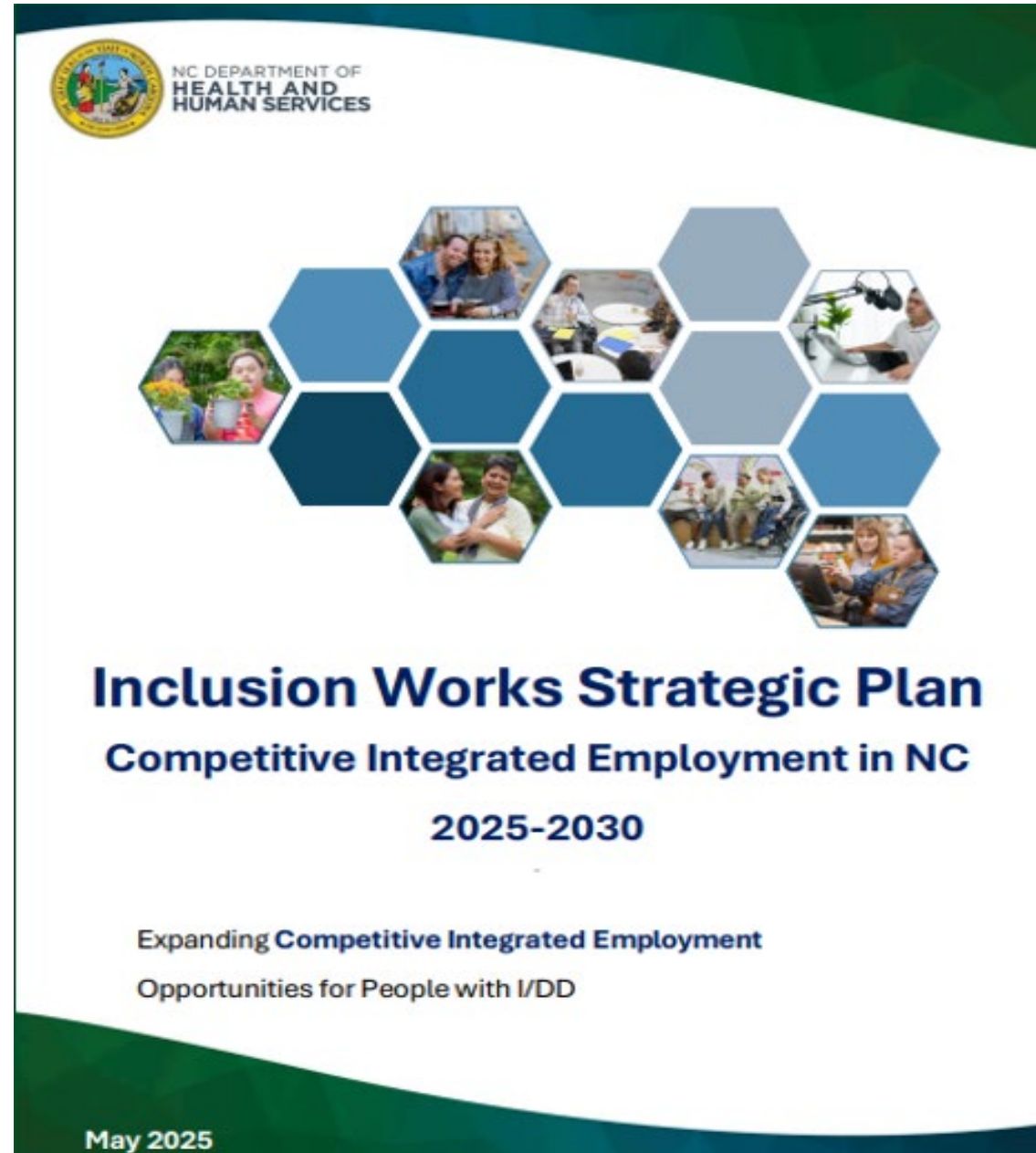
**Finalized  
Document in April**



# Strategic Plan

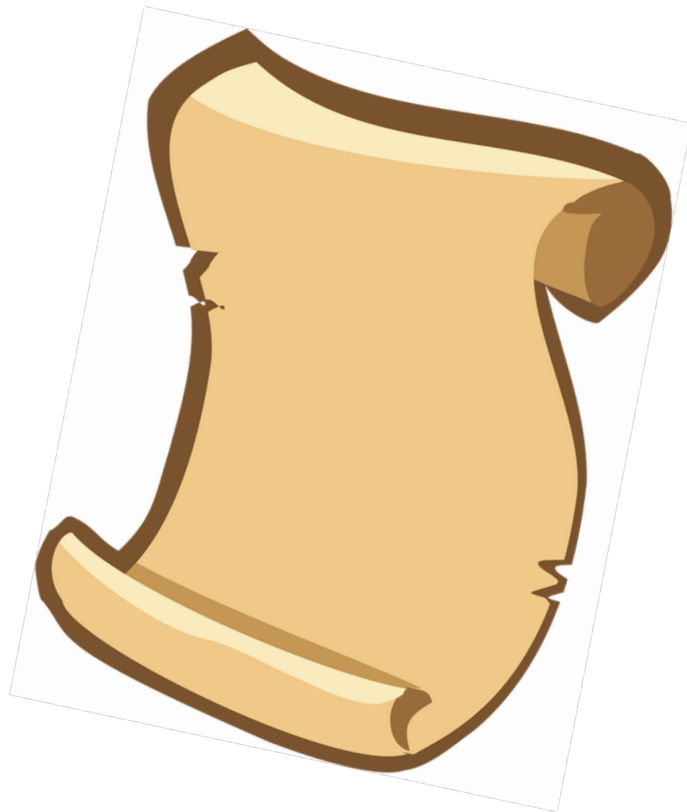


# Strategic Plan for CIE



# Strategic Plan for CIE

The Strategic Plan outlines the vision for improving CIE opportunities and outcomes in North Carolina.



This document establishes **Goals and Objectives** for NCDHHS to expand CIE opportunities for people with I/DD and sets specific **Strategies** to meet those desired outcomes.

## Key Features of Strategic Plan:

- Informed by community feedback
- Incorporates analysis from Landscape Study responses
- Focus on expanding opportunities and removing barriers to employment

# Five Core Inclusion Works Goals

The Inclusion Works Strategic Plan is organized by outlining the **Goals, Objectives, and Strategies** that DHHS will employ to increase Competitive Integrated Employment for people with I/DD.



**Informed  
Choice**



**Quality I/DD  
Services**



**Community  
Outreach**



**Workforce  
Development**



**Employer  
Connection**

# 1. INFORMED CHOICE

Goal 1: Provide people with I/DD the opportunity to pursue competitive integrated employment if that is their choice

Objective 1:

An informed choice process will be followed to empower people with I/DD to make decisions based on a complete understanding of employment options

- ❖ **Strategy 1.1:** Develop a process for individuals to make an Informed Choice about their employment options. This process will be person-centered with a focus on engaging the individual in an approach that matches their style of learning to lead to a complete understanding of employment options. This must occur at a pace that matches the individual's learning style. People trusted by the individual should be part of the person-centered approach along with service provider and case management team members.
- ❖ **Strategy 1.2:** Work with identified individuals to complete Employment Assessments and co-create Career Development Plans when consent is provided to do so.
- ❖ **Strategy 1.3:** For individuals interested in competitive integrated employment, offer additional skills assessments and observation opportunities. Through this process, individuals can explore different job opportunities to inform and reach their desired employment outcomes.
- ❖ **Strategy 1.4:** Periodically revisit individuals and conduct re-assessments as needed to confirm informed choice regarding employment



## 2. QUALITY I/DD SERVICES

Expand and improve service options for people with I/DD to help reach employment goals.

- **Objective 1: Increase participation in Supported Employment Services**
- **Objective 2: Increase the number of people with I/DD participating in EIPD Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services**
- **Objective 3: Assist people with I/DD with effective transportation planning to help overcome this persistent barrier to CIE.**
- **Objective 4: Maintain a comprehensive system of support with wraparound services for people with I/DD, including ADVP/ILOS, HCBS, and residential services**



# Measurable Strategies



### **Objective 1: Increase participation in Supported Employment Services**

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- ❖ **Strategy 1.1:** Increase participation in Medicaid-funded SE Services for Medicaid-eligible individuals
- ❖ **Strategy 1.2:** Increase participation in State-Funded SE services for individuals who are not eligible for Medicaid options.
- ❖ **Strategy 1.3** – Support individuals working in CIE to maintain and advance their career with long-term vocational supports (LTVS).

### **Objective 2: Increase the number of people with I/DD participating in EIPD Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services**

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- ❖ **Strategy 2.1:** Individuals in non-CIE employment who make an informed decision to pursue CIE following the new Employment Assessment process will be referred to EIPD as part of their Career Development Plans.
- ❖ **Strategy 2.2:** Increase monitoring and support for students with I/DD through the provision of Pre-ETS services, Internships and Project Search.
- ❖ **Strategy 2.3:** Provide increased support for people with I/DD seeking CIE through the Project Spark grant program at select Provider agencies.
- ❖ **Strategy 2.4:** Broaden post-secondary education opportunities by partnering with colleges and universities to offer employment-related supports for students with I/DD
- ❖ **Strategy 2.5:** Help to educate Tailored Care Managers and other professionals on the process of achieving CIE through EIPD.
- ❖ **Strategy 2.6:** Provide additional supports for people with I/DD who are considering CIE with CIE Outreach Case Managers (OCM) who can support them to apply and engage in VR services through an IPE, connect them with certified Benefits Counselors, and provide other resources to obtain ongoing support for CIE.

**Objective 3: Assist people with I/DD with effective transportation planning to help overcome this persistent barrier to CIE.**

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- ❖ **Strategy 3.1:** Evaluate state policy options to develop and expand transportation services. Determine feasibility of coverage for pick-up and drop-off services and explore alternative solutions including rideshare services and local community transportation options.
  - ❖ **Strategy 3.2:** As appropriate, support individuals to explore the possibility of independent travel to work and to navigate the NCDMV and public transportation systems.
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**Objective 4: Maintain a comprehensive system of support with wraparound services for people with I/DD, including ADVP/ILOS, HCBS, and residential services**

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- ❖ **Strategy 4.1:** Explore service models for meaningful day opportunities in the community that include locally developed programs and nationally recognized models meeting Home and Community-Based Services standards set forth by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).
- ❖ **Strategy 4.2:** Support Tailored Care Management model to include Community Navigator services. Promote Tailored Care Management extender roles that establish partnerships with community organizations to support greater community participation.
- ❖ **Strategy 4.3:** Provide training and professional development for Care Managers and Employment Service Providers to utilize community mapping as a tool to identify and build partnerships with an array of community organizations and resources.

### **3. COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

**Increase proactive communication and engagement with all community partners to provide accessible information about CIE options and resources**

**Objective 1: Communicate and promote information about Inclusion Works across multiple media platforms and languages to reach targeted audiences**

**Objective 2: Engage with community stakeholders to inform policies and programs related to I/DD Employment**

## 4. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**Develop the NC workforce for Employment Service Professional to increase staff capabilities and enhance service delivery**

- **Objective 1:** Build a workforce with well-trained, competent professionals to educate and prepare people with I/DD to achieve CIE
- **Objective 2:** Support Providers and LME/MCOs to operationalize and implement best practices for CIE through Innovation Programs and other funding opportunities

**Objective 1: Build a workforce with well-trained, competent professionals to educate and prepare people with I/DD to achieve CIE**

- ❖ **Strategy 1.1:** Provide training events and tools for Employment Service Providers and Care Managers in designed to add to their knowledge, skills, and abilities to deliver quality employment services.
- ❖ **Strategy 1.2:** Provide Technical Assistance and support to Provider agencies adopting new processes for Employment Services Delivery.
- ❖ **Strategy 1.3:** Create a CIE Learning Collaborative that includes programmatic staff, executive leadership, and direct support professionals at Provider Agencies. Provider Agencies in the CIE Learning Collaborative will serve as peer mentor sites for other Providers who are interested in transforming their current models of employment services.
- ❖ **Strategy 1.4:** Increase the number of employment professionals with professional certifications by funding training courses from accredited organizations.

**Objective 2: Support Providers and LME/MCOs to operationalize and implement best practices for CIE through Innovation Programs and other funding opportunities**

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- ❖ **Strategy 2.1:** Launch the Inclusion Works Provider Innovation Program to support North Carolina Provider agencies in transforming their business and service delivery models to increase CIE.
- ❖ **Strategy 2.2:** Implement a CIE Incentive Program to reward Providers who provide services that lead to CIE for people with I/DD.
- ❖ **Strategy 2.3:** Support capacity building at LME/MCOs by adding CIE Coordinator positions that will work with people with I/DD and their families to provide linkages to services that enable individuals to explore and achieve CIE.
- ❖ **Strategy 2.4:** Project Spark will support Providers at select pilot locations to provide comprehensive support for members to achieve CIE.
- ❖ **Strategy 2.5:** Provide funding for capacity building at Provider agencies through grant opportunities such as the Direct Support Professional (DSP) Provider Incentives.

# Is it Working?

# How We Measure Success

## Measuring Progress

We will track progress towards this Goal with the following metrics:

Metric	Desired Outcome
Number of NC Employment Provider staff completing Wise Online Academy Courses	↑
Number of CIE Incentive Program payments made to providers	↑
Number of NC Employment Provider staff acquiring Work Incentive Practitioner Certifications for Benefits Counseling	↑
Number of NC Employment Providers completing Inclusion Works Provider Innovation Program	↑



## 5. EMPLOYER CONNECTION

**Promote an increase in employment opportunities through building employer capacity.**

- **Objective 1: Provide employers with training, resources, and connections to other inclusive employers**
- **Objective 2: Establish events to support connection among employers, service providers, and adults with I/DD**

**Objective 1: Provide employers with training, resources, and connections to other inclusive employers**

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- ❖ **Strategy 1.1:** Provide EIPD Windmills training to private businesses and public organizations across the state
- ❖ **Strategy 1.2:** Partner with the North Carolina Chamber of Commerce, NC Works, EIPD, and local organizations to identify CIE employers with inclusive hiring principles and practices.
- ❖ **Strategy 1.5:** Develop additional employer resources on the benefits of hiring qualified workers with disabilities such as: access to a skilled talent pool, improved company culture, tax incentives, and enhanced public image, while also contributing to a more inclusive and diverse workplace.
- ❖ **Strategy 1.6:** Develop partnerships with professional Human Resources organizations to provide information and disseminate resources related to CIE

**Objective 2: Establish events to support connection among employers, service providers, and adults with I/DD**

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- ❖ **Strategy 2.1:** Host job networking events across the state to connect people with I/DD and potential employers.
- ❖ **Strategy 2.2:** Work with employers to inform them about paid internship opportunities to match their job needs with future workers with disabilities.
- ❖ **Strategy 2.4:** Launch a career training program to prepare I/DD Peer Mentors to be qualified to enter employment in human service occupations.



# Inclusion Works Updates



# Provider Innovation Program



**Inclusion Works Provider Innovation Program** will be open soon for Providers to apply

**Program Goal:** The program will select and support **4 NC Providers** to expand competitive integrated employment for their members

**Benefits of Program (all at no cost):**

- Organizational assessment
- Strategic Change Plan
- Personalized Training Content
- Ongoing Technical Assistance
- Financial Incentives - \$ for participating in program

**Next Steps: Applications open in early May!** Look for an email from NCDHHS with an invitation to apply



**INCLUSION WORKS**

***Provider  
Innovation  
Program***



# PROJECT STRATEGIES



## Jobs

Each provider will be supported to obtain new CIE jobs over the course of the project



## Training & TA

Providers actively engage in training and technical assistance opportunities



## Provider Innovation

Each provider will be supported to complete a Provider Innovation Training & Technical Assistance Plan to expand CIE



## Jobs Info

Jobs Info will be collected & shared confidentially.

## IMPACT

North Carolina is committed to individuals with disabilities receiving quality Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) services.

Be one of the first 2 providers (this year) to be selected from across NC to participate in training and receive support to innovate services.

## INNOVATION

Provider agencies will be supported to assess and evaluate their organization and current services and receive support to develop a customized innovation plan to incorporate or expand competitive integrated employment.

## TRAINING & TA

Provider agency leadership and employment team staff will receive training & technical assistance (TA) funded through the Inclusion Works project. Topic areas include but are not limited to:

- Customized Employment
- Professional Employment
- Self-Employment
- Train-the-trainer

## INCENTIVE

We recognize that organizational change and quality training takes time and effort which is often difficult to invest. Participating providers will receive financial incentive for participating in the Inclusion Works project to help offset the costs incurred by the organization.

DETAILS TBD

# CIE Incentive Program

## Current Plan:



**We are planning to sunset this current program and replace with new incentive model in FY26**

**We would like your input** on designing a new system to incentivize Providers to increase CIE in NC

Please **REACH OUT** to [@claire.colligan@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:@claire.colligan@dhhs.nc.gov) to provide input and participate.

# Want to get connected? Check out these opportunities

## Inclusion Works Advisory Committee

**Purpose:** To provide a forum to hear the perspectives and opinions of individuals, families, advocates, and providers around the updates and implementation of the Strategic Plan for CIE in North Carolina

**Meeting Time:** Third Tuesday of every 3 months at 11:00am. **Next Meeting on June 17, 2025.**

Interested in joining?

**Email: [Claire.Colligan@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Claire.Colligan@dhhs.nc.gov)**



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receive bi-monthly community  
updates



## Directions:

- 1) Open the camera app on your phone to scan the QR code
- 2) Hold down the screen over the QR code you would like to access
- 3) Get transferred to web landing

# Questions?