

Governor's Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities



2012 Report

**Presented to Governor Rick Scott
July 26, 2012**

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Executive Summary

During his 2012 State of the State Address, Governor Rick Scott stated his top priority is “ensuring that Floridians are able to gain employment.” This priority encompasses all Floridians, including individuals with disabilities, who are able and willing to work. However, there is a demonstrable disparity between job opportunities available for individuals with disabilities and others without disabilities seeking employment. State and national figures strongly suggest that persons with disabilities are confronted by unique barriers negatively impacting their ability to participate in the workforce and compete for jobs. The barriers confronting persons with disabilities represent lost opportunities for employers in this state. Many employers are struggling to find qualified candidates to fill positions within their companies. In order to improve job creation, Governor Scott stated the role of state government is to create a “level playing field” for businesses to compete in the private sector. Concurrently, Floridians with disabilities face barriers that prevent them from competing in the workforce; thereby, creating a mostly untapped resource for employers in this state to meet their talent needs.

It is for this reason Governor Scott issued Executive Order 11-161 to create the Governor’s Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities “to provide public policy solutions and strategies to the Governor and state policymakers” that will advance job and employment opportunities for Floridians with disabilities. The Commission has been charged with identifying the barriers, and proposing solutions that will help Floridians with disabilities better compete for job opportunities in this state. The Commission can approach these barriers in two ways: 1) develop public policy solutions that will help level the playing field for persons with disabilities in the workforce; and 2) recommend strategies to assist businesses in this state to establish a corporate culture that is amenable to employing qualified persons with disabilities.

The 2012 Commission Report provides three recommendations to serve as initial steps to help level the playing field for persons with disabilities who are looking to work, assist employers in meeting their business needs, and promote private sector solutions to remedy the disconnect between these two groups:

- 1. The Commission recommends streamlining information and identifying a single-point of contact for employers so they can easily navigate the disability system and expand their pool of qualified candidates. In order to address the systematic barriers preventing employers from recruiting, hiring, and retaining persons with disabilities, the Commission finds there is much room for improvement for the state to streamline and organize existing services and programs to make it easier for employers to learn about and utilize such resources as is possible. The Commission can assist in the development and implementation of a plan (with the assistance of businesses and other stakeholders) to streamline information and identify a single-point of contact. Such reform would free and empower employers to fully consider qualified candidates with disabilities.**

- 2. The Commission recommends the development of a long-term communications plan for the state to promote awareness among employers in order to address misperceptions of persons with disabilities. The plan should accomplish the following objectives: 1) As the state works to streamline information and identify a single-point of contact for employers, it should notify the business community of these informational resources in order to better assist employers in navigating the disability support system; 2) state government leaders need to raise awareness among employers on ways to overcoming existing barriers to hiring persons with disabilities; and 3) the communications plan should highlight the potential benefits and return on investment persons with disabilities offer employers and Florida's economy.**
- 3. The Commission determined persons with disabilities need to be given as many firsthand experiences as possible to participate and compete in the workforce. In order to effectively correct misperceptions and change the current outcome, the Commission believes internships and similar work experience programs maximize firsthand opportunities for these individuals to have direct exposure to the workplace, to acquire skills and become competitive, and for employers to have more direct experience in working with them before committing to hire on a full-time basis. Therefore, the Commission recommends state policymakers, business leaders, and community partners promote and utilize internship and work experience opportunities for individuals with disabilities as a key tool to improving perceptions and addressing the employment disparity confronting these individuals.**

The Commission intends to continue its mission to provide public policy recommendations to the Governor and policymakers to tackle the barriers confronting Floridians with disabilities seeking employment. The Commission will hold periodic meetings around the state to seek input from employers in order to better understand how the state can assist businesses in establishing a corporate culture that is amenable to hiring persons with disabilities. During this process, the Commission will work to develop and implement the recommendations in this report, as well as identify strategies to address additional barriers that were discussed by the Commission. The report concludes the Commission will stay steadfast in its efforts to inform and educate employers on the opportunities persons with disabilities bring to their businesses and Florida's economy, and fulfill Governor Scott's priority to ensure these individuals are able to gain employment.

Present Situation

The impetus behind the creation of the Governor's Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities was to address the demonstrable disparity in employment for persons with disabilities relative to the general population. The apparent lack of employment opportunities confronting persons with disabilities was approached by the Commission as an outcome stemming from deeper problems. Because the problems were viewed as obstacles to employing persons with disabilities, the Commission commonly referred to them as "barriers" throughout its work. This section discusses some of the barriers confronting persons with disabilities within the workforce, as well as some of the hiring challenges facing employers who seek qualified candidates.

Barriers and Perverse Incentives Confronting Persons with Disabilities

National figures demonstrate a considerable disparity in both the labor force participation and employment rates between persons with a disability and the rest of the population. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that "a large proportion of persons with a disability – about 8 in 10 – were not in the labor force in 2011, compared with about 3 in 10 of those with no disability." Among those in the nation's workforce in 2011, the unemployment rate for persons with a disability was 15 percent, while the unemployment rate for persons with no disability was 8.7 percent. Across all age groups and education levels, "persons with a disability were much less likely to be employed than were their counterparts with no disability."¹

Similar statistics specific to Florida are available through the 2010 American Community Survey (see Table 1). These statewide figures from the U.S. Census Bureau's ongoing decennial survey were given to the Commission by the Labor Market Statistics Center at the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity. According to this data, about 6 in 10 Floridians with a disability were not in the workforce in 2010, compared with about 2 in 10 Floridians with no disability. Among those in the state's workforce in 2010, the unemployment rate for persons with a disability was 24.8 percent, while the unemployment rate for persons with no disability was 12.5 percent.

¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Persons with a Disability: Labor Force Characteristics—2011." June 8, 2012; Available online at: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/disabl_06082012.htm>.

**Table 1. Florida Labor Force Statistics and Unemployment Rates
Persons With and Without Disabilities**

General Population	Number
In the Labor Force	8,637,228
Employed	7,497,839
Unemployed	1,139,389
Not in the Labor Force	2,698,051
Persons with a Disability	
In the Labor Force	458,852
Employed	345,137
Unemployed	113,715
Not in the Labor Force	655,783
Persons with no Disability	
In the Labor Force	8,178,376
Employed	7,152,702
Unemployed	1,025,674
Not in the Labor Force	2,042,268

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey, 1 Year Estimates

Prepared by: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Labor Market Statistics Center

The state and national figures above strongly suggest that persons with disabilities are confronted by unique challenges negatively impacting their ability to compete for jobs on a level playing field. The Able Trust conducted a study in 2011 through Florida State University to help address such barriers by identifying key factors employers consider when recruiting, interviewing, hiring, and retaining people with disabilities. The study posed a 78-question survey with decision-makers in companies in Florida (i.e. chairmen, CEOs, managers, etc.). Participants of the survey were asked questions about their perceptions of how various factors pose a barrier to the employment of persons with disabilities. The respondents indicated the top three barriers to be: 1) employees with disabilities have physical and/or stamina restrictions on their assigned job duties; 2) there are health and safety concerns with hiring persons with disabilities within this organization; and 3) cost increases attributable to extending health, life, and/or disability coverage are too high (see Table 2). The majority of the barriers that were identified by the study qualify as perceptions on the limitations of persons with disabilities.

Table 2. Perceptions of Barriers to Hiring Persons with Disabilities (PWD)

Potential Barrier	Mean Score*
Employees with Disabilities have physical and/or stamina restrictions on their assigned job duties	3.000
There are health and safety concerns with hiring PWDs in this organization	2.957
Cost increases attributable to extending health, life, and/or disability coverage are too high	2.936
Type of work in this organization is unsuitable for PWDs	2.894
Organization lacks access/facilities/equipment suitable for PWDs	2.823
Cost of accommodations for PWDs is too high	2.816
PWDs lack the specific job-related experience required of job applicants for this organization	2.766
Employees with disabilities require additional management and supervisory time	2.752
Cost of training PWDs is too high	2.738
Employees with disabilities lack the ability to travel for work	2.638
PWDs lack the requisite skills and training of job applicants for this organization	2.631
Employees with disabilities lack the ability to work under great time pressure and stress	2.624
Employees with disabilities create additional workload for the HR staff	2.596
Employees with disabilities tend to be less productive	2.454
Organization is concerned about potential negative reactions from clients and customers	2.390
Employees with disabilities tend to have poor attendance and punctuality records	2.348
Staff may feel uncomfortable if asked to work with a PWD	2.298

*Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 indicates "strongly disagree" and 5 indicates "strongly agree") to rate their perception of each of these barriers. The results show an average score per barrier sorted from high to low.

Source: Born, Patty and Randy Dumm. "Key Factors that Assist Employers to Recruit, Interview, Hire and Retain People with Disabilities." Prepared for The Able Trust through Florida State University, June 2011. p.8

Barriers to entering the workforce encourage persons with disabilities to seek benefits from state and federal programs. These programs can discourage workforce participation depending on how they are structured. Of the approximately 17.5 million working age people with disabilities in the United States, nearly 7 in 10 of them receive benefits from public programs.² Despite the continued support and funding for these programs, the employment outcomes remain dismal for persons with disabilities. In a January 2012 issue brief, Mathematica's Center for Studying Disability Policy stated one of the problems is individuals who seek benefits from Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) must demonstrate complete inability to work: "By making complete inability to work a criterion for support, these programs create work disincentives among applicants and beneficiaries, erode work capacity, foster long-term dependence, and increase poverty among the very people they are intended to help."³

Barriers to employment on the one hand, coupled with perverse incentives in disability support programs on the other hand, reinforce one another to create an existing scenario where people with disabilities are largely discouraged from participating in the workforce and competing for jobs.

² Houtenville, Andrew J., and Debra Brucker. "Safety Net Programs for Working-Age Persons with Disabilities." Presented at the June 8, 2001, Policy Forum of the Center for Studying Disability Policy, Mathematica Policy Research. Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire, 2011.

³ Mann, David and David Stapleton. "A Roadmap to a 21st-Century Disability Policy." Mathematica Policy Research. January 2012. p.1; Available online at: <http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/pdfs/disability/roadmap_ib.pdf>.

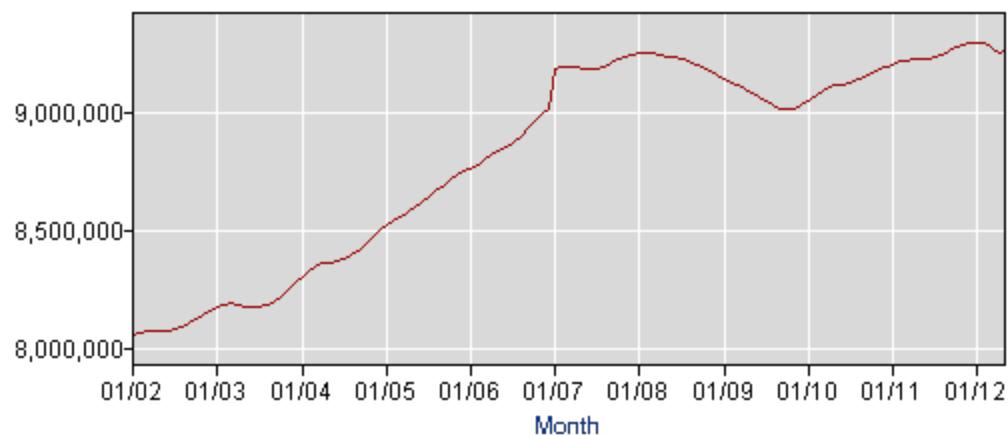
Challenges Facing Employers

Every economic transaction in a free market, including the hiring of an individual for a job, is designed to be a “win-win” scenario for both sides. In this sense, barriers to employment for persons with disabilities represent lost opportunities for employers as well. Also, in a free market, jobs are created not by entitlement but through a combination of supply and demand of labor. There is mounting evidence as of late that employers’ demand for labor is outpacing supply. For instance, ManpowerGroup recently released the results of its 2012 Talent Shortage Survey, which reported 49 percent of U.S. employers are having trouble filling important positions within their companies. When asked to explain the reasons behind this talent shortage, 55 percent of U.S. employers stated the problem was the “overall lack of available applicants.”⁴

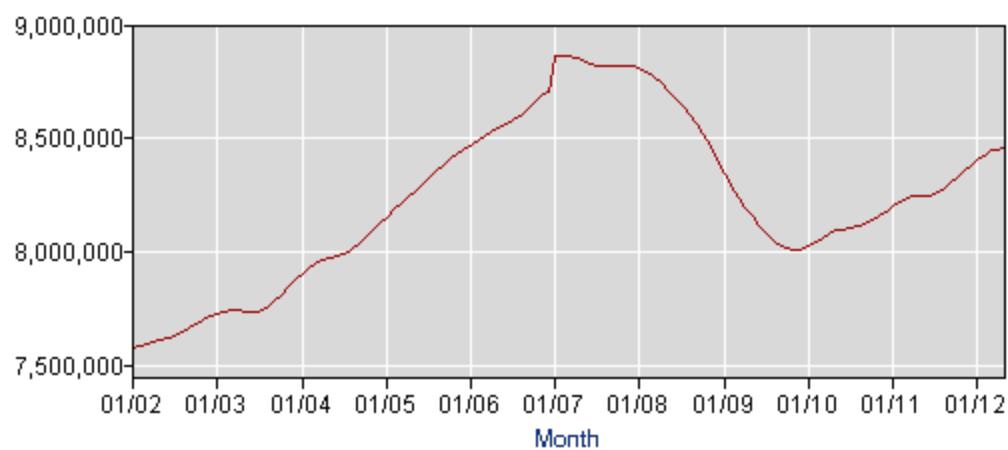
Economic growth can be achieved by expanding the workforce or increasing average worker productivity. Going by the figures from the 2010 American Community Survey, if Floridians with a disability participated in the workforce at the same rate as their counterparts without a disability, Florida employers would see the state's workforce grow more than 433,000 individuals, or more than 5 percent. Further, if the unemployment rate for Floridians with a disability then receded to that of their counterparts with no disability at 12.5 percent, then the number of employed Floridians would increase by just fewer than 435,000, or almost 6 percent. To offer perspective, monthly figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (see charts below) show it has been more than six years since Florida's workforce grew more than 5 percent, and more than eight years since the number employed grew almost 6 percent. Despite slight variations between the data sets, overall the figures still effectively demonstrate the enormous untapped potential of persons with disabilities to contribute to Florida's economic growth.

⁴ “2012 Talent Shortage Survey.” Manpower Group. p.13; Available online: <http://www.manpowergroup.us/campaigns/talent-shortage-2012/pdf/2012_Talent_Shortage_Survey_Results_US_FINALFINAL.pdf>.

labor force



employment



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor

Available online at: <http://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LASST12000005?data_tool=XGtable>

During his 2012 State of the State Address, Governor Rick Scott stated: "Private businesses create productive and enduring jobs, not government." In order to improve job creation, Governor Scott said state government can create a "level playing field" for businesses to compete in the private sector. Concurrently, Floridians with disabilities face barriers that prevent them from competing in the workforce; thereby, creating a mostly untapped resource for employers in this state to meet their talent needs.

The Role of the Commission

Governor Rick Scott issued Executive Order 11-161 creating the Governor's Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities on July 26, 2011. The present situation demonstrates there is serious need to develop strategies that can address the disparity in employment opportunities confronting persons with disabilities compared with the general population. Governor Scott charged the Commission to identify and propose public policy solutions to overcome these barriers with the ultimate goal of improving the outcome. The Commission approached this mission in two ways: 1) develop public policy solutions that will help level the playing field for persons with disabilities in the workforce; and 2) recommend strategies to assist businesses in this state to establish a corporate culture that is amenable to employing qualified persons with disabilities.

Vision and Mission of the Commission

Executive Order 11-161 outlines the mission and responsibilities of the Commission (see Appendix A). The vision of the Commission is to advance job and employment opportunities for Floridians with disabilities in order to help those individuals achieve greater independence. The mission of the Commission is to provide public policy solutions and strategies to the Governor and state policymakers. The Commission's responsibilities include: a) identifying and recommending strategies to cultivate job opportunities for Floridians with disabilities; b) identifying barriers in state and local programs that hinder individuals with disabilities from gaining employment, and proposing solutions to mitigate those barriers; and c) developing and leveraging state and community resources to advance service delivery.

To assist in fulfilling the mission and responsibilities pursuant to Executive Order 11-161, the Commission adopted a "mission document" at its first meeting on January 6, 2012 in Tallahassee (see Appendix B). The mission document serves as a foundation for the Commission to conduct its work and craft recommendations. The document provides three benchmarks for the Commission: 1) identify the objectives that address barriers confronting Floridians with disabilities who seek employment; 2) develop solutions and strategies to tackle the identified barriers; and 3) provide public policy recommendations to the Governor, to advance the solutions and strategies as identified by the Commission. The Commission continually referred to this document throughout its discussions.

Membership of the Commission

Governor Scott appointed fourteen members to serve on the Commission. The membership consists of representatives of individuals with disabilities, employers in the state, the state college and university system, service provider organizations, and state agencies that serve persons with disabilities. The members include:

- Dr. Susanne Homant, President and CEO of The Able Trust, and appointed Chair of the Commission;
- Dr. Steven Wallace, President of Florida State College at Jacksonville, and elected Vice-Chair of the Commission;
- Jack Felts, District Manager of Publix Supermarkets, Inc.;
- Michael “Mike” Hansen, Director of the Agency for Persons with Disabilities;
- Suzanne “Suzy” Hutcheson, President and CEO of Helping People Succeed;
- Jordan Knab, Director of Project 10 STING RAY (Students Transitioning Into the Next Generation, Recognizing Alternatives for Youth) at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg;
- Scot LaFerte’, Vice President of Human Resources of Universal Orlando;
- James “Jim” Landsberg, Equal Opportunity Officer of the Department of Economic Opportunity;
- Robert Lynn, represents persons with disabilities;
- Russell Otway, represents wounded veterans;
- Aleisa McKinlay, Director of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation;
- Julio Suárez, Director of Diversity Outreach of Darden Restaurants;
- Marvin Tanck, President and CEO of Gulfstream Goodwill Industries; and
- David Darm, appointed Executive Director of the Commission.

Structure of the Commission

To enhance focus on developing specific strategies, the mission document directed the Commission to divide and conduct the bulk of its work through three subcommittees. The subcommittees include:

- **Access to Employment Opportunities** – This committee focused on developing strategies to improve access to job opportunities for persons with disabilities.
- **Employment Readiness and Services** – This committee focused on supports and services to help persons with disabilities become better employees and more competitive in the job market.
- **Employer Outreach** – This committee focused on promoting awareness among employers to improve their willingness to employ persons with disabilities in the State of Florida.

Each of the subcommittees convened through a series of telephone conferences, and periodically presented findings and recommended strategies to the full Commission. These initial agreed upon strategies are included in the recommendations of the report.

The Commission’s Approach to the Barriers

At the inaugural meeting on January 6, Lieutenant Governor Jennifer Carroll encouraged the Commission to “go out and seek information from employers as to what they see could be a benefit of hiring individuals with disabilities, or what they see as

barriers.” The Commission made an effort to hold its business meetings in metropolitan cities around the state to seek the input from employers within those communities. The Commission facilitated two discussions with employers in Jacksonville and Orlando on their hiring practices and barriers they have experienced in employing persons with disabilities (see Appendix C for the list of meetings). These discussions were designed for the Commission to learn about the factors creating gaps between employers and persons with disabilities.

The Commission learned that despite the efforts made by many companies to lower perceptions of barriers and promote positive characteristics in the workplace, employers are still struggling to recruit, hire, and retain persons with disabilities in the workforce. Though there are numerous factors and circumstances that bring about these outcomes, the Commission identified two categorical barriers creating these gaps: 1) **systematic barriers** preventing employers from effectively recruiting, hiring and retaining persons with disabilities that will require public policy changes; and 2) **perception barriers** creating a disconnect between these two groups that will require education and firsthand experiences to correct misperceptions. The Commission provides three recommendations as initial steps to tackle these barriers.

Recommendations

The Governor's Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities has developed three recommendations intended to improve information for employers to better navigate the disability support system, demonstrate the value employees with disabilities offer to businesses through awareness, and promote opportunities for individuals with disabilities to have direct exposure to a workplace through internships and other work experience programs. The Commission believes these recommendations are important initial steps to help level the playing field for persons with disabilities who are looking to work, assist employers in meeting their business needs, and promote private sector solutions to remedy the disconnect between these two groups. The action plan to implement these recommendations is included in the "Next Steps..." of this report.

Recommendation 1 – Streamline Information for Employers

The Commission recommends streamlining information and identifying a single-point of contact for employers so they can easily navigate the disability system and expand their pool of qualified candidates. In order to address the systematic barriers preventing employers from recruiting, hiring, and retaining persons with disabilities, the Commission finds there is much room for improvement for the state to streamline and organize existing services and programs to make it easier for employers to learn about and utilize such resources as is possible. The Commission can assist in the development and implementation of a plan (with the assistance of businesses and other stakeholders) to streamline information and identify a single-point of contact. Such reform would free and empower employers to fully consider qualified candidates with disabilities.

Employers interested in hiring or actively recruiting a person with a disability into their organization report having been overwhelmed by the amount of information, provider organizations, and resources within the disability support system. Employers do not have a centralized or single-point of contact within the disability support system whom they can turn to for providing supports and assistive services (assistive technology, transportation, etc.) for their employees. It is unrealistic to expect employers to commit the time and resources to learn and navigate the intricacies of state government systems in order to find qualified candidates and provide reasonable accommodations for their employees. Therefore, the Commission recommends the development of a plan to streamline information and identify a single-point of contact within the disability support system in order to assist employers to recruit, hire, and retain persons with disabilities in the workforce. The Commission can facilitate this effort by soliciting members of the business community and other stakeholders to assist in the development and execution of the plan (see p. 16).

The plan should identify ways to streamline information at the state and community levels on the services and supports that assist persons with disabilities in the workforce, and should specifically address how employers can access the part of the workforce

made up of people with disabilities for recruitment and hiring purposes. The plan should prioritize information that employers would need to find qualified candidates, such as resumes, job skills, work experience, etc. In regards to supports and services, such information should include (but not be limited to): information on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), what are considered “reasonable” accommodations, assistive technology resources, transportation services available within the community, job coaching and workforce training resources, veteran support services, and internship and work experience programs. This information should be easy to understand and accessible to employers at a centralized resource (such as a website). In addition to streamlining information, the plan should identify an entity either within state government or an organization familiar with workforce systems to serve as a single-point of contact for employers to assist them in navigating the system to find qualified candidates with disabilities and provide reasonable accommodations. The entity would offer “business counseling” to help employers make informed hiring decisions. The intended outcome of this plan is to bring about ease on employers to improve their willingness to recruit, hire and retain persons with disabilities in the workforce, and expand their pool of potential employees.

Recommendation 2 – Develop and Implement a Communications Plan

The Commission recommends the development of a long-term communications plan for the state to promote awareness among employers in order to address misperceptions of persons with disabilities. The plan should accomplish the following objectives: 1) As the state works to streamline information and identify a single-point of contact for employers, it should notify the business community of these informational resources in order to better assist employers in navigating the disability support system; 2) state government leaders need to raise awareness among employers on ways to overcoming existing barriers to hiring persons with disabilities; and 3) the communications plan should highlight the potential benefits and return on investment persons with disabilities offer employers and Florida’s economy.

The Commission discussed two approaches to address perception barriers: 1) promote education and awareness of the value and untapped talent persons with disabilities offer businesses; and 2) provide firsthand opportunities where persons with disabilities have direct exposure to a workplace. A communications plan would serve as a tool for the first approach by providing informational material to employers (the second approach is discussed in the Commission’s third recommendation). The Commission recommends the development of a communications plan to promote awareness among employers to address misperceptions of persons with disabilities and highlight the opportunities these individuals offer Florida’s economy.

In order to maximize effectiveness of the first recommendation, a communications strategy should direct employers to the streamlined information resource. A communications plan can identify the specific perception barriers in order to develop an

effective message to correct misperceptions. For example, there may be a perception that a person with a disability cannot fulfill the responsibilities of a leadership position within the company due to his or her physical limitations. This misperception can be discredited by highlighting individuals with disabilities who are serving in an executive position within an organization. As misperceptions are identified, a communications plan should highlight success stories of both persons with disabilities (in a variety of positions) in the workforce and businesses (across a variety of industries) that have been successful in recruiting, hiring, and retaining these individuals. The intended outcome of these success stories is to highlight the benefit and return on investment persons with disabilities offer employers and Florida's economy. This plan should be a comprehensive approach that encompasses all forms of communications (state government leaders, media, websites, mailings, social media, etc.) and specifically messages businesses. This communications strategy must go beyond one day or month in the year in order to have a long-term impact on perceptions.

Recommendation 3 – Promote Internship and Work Experience Opportunities

The Commission determined persons with disabilities need to be given as many firsthand experiences as possible to participate and compete in the workforce. In order to effectively correct misperceptions and change the current outcome, the Commission believes internships and similar work experience programs maximize firsthand opportunities for these individuals to have direct exposure to the workplace, to acquire skills and become competitive, and for employers to have more direct experience in working with them before committing to hire on a full-time basis. Therefore, the Commission recommends state policymakers, business leaders, and community partners promote and utilize internship and work experience opportunities for individuals with disabilities as a key tool to improving perceptions and addressing the employment disparity confronting these individuals.

It is becoming ever more common for companies and organizations to use internship programs so that they may evaluate the “fit” of an individual to perform the essential functions of a job before committing to hire on a full-time basis. In recognizing this trend, the second approach to change perceptions about the population is to maximize the opportunities for employers to have direct exposure to individuals with disabilities performing in a job. There is perhaps no more efficient means of changing perceptions than through firsthand experiences. Internships and similar work experience programs are among the best avenues for an employer to hire an individual with a disability on a temporary basis, while allowing the individual an opportunity to acquire skills and better compete for the position (or similar positions in the workforce).

Existing research indicates one of the factors inhibiting persons with disabilities from achieving employment is an employer's concern that there is a *risk* the individual will not

be able to perform the essential functions of the position.⁵ Another concern among employers is if they commit to hire individuals with disabilities on a full-time basis, it will be more difficult to terminate if the employee does not work out. The study commissioned by The Able Trust stated: "The internship thus has the potential not only to alleviate employers' hesitancy in committing to hiring [persons with disabilities], but may help to change corporate culture regarding the eligibility of [persons with disabilities] for job openings."⁶ The study also provides empirical evidence in support of this strategy. It found a strong correlation between companies that offer internships to persons with disabilities and the number of individuals hired: "companies that offer internships to persons with disabilities are twice as likely to hire at least one [individual] in the past two years."

The Commission recommends state policymakers, business leaders, and community partners promote and utilize internship and work experience opportunities for individuals with disabilities as a key tool to improving perceptions and addressing the employment disparity confronting these individuals by: 1) expanding entry-point into the workforce; 2) establishing a foundational skill set; and 3) improving their long-term prospects in the workforce. For purposes of this report, "internship" is an inclusive term that encompasses opportunities that provide a meaningful work experience on a temporary and noncommittal basis for both the individual and employer (see Table 3). For the individual, the internship allows him or her to acquire valuable experience and build a resume, as well as the chance to be evaluated. For the employer, the internship provides the opportunity to meet an immediate business need with minimal risk, and to expand the pool of candidates to address the talent shortage. Internships can be facilitated by the employer, or developed through a collaboration of community partners (such as a school district, vocational rehabilitation organization, or business leadership network). Some of these programs offer financial incentives to companies that participate in internship opportunities, such as reimbursement for the payroll cost. For employers interested in facilitating internship opportunities for individuals with disabilities, the single-point of contact could serve as an additional, or even primary, resource to developing these programs within their companies.

Table 3. Shared Benefits of Internship Opportunities	
Individual with a Disability	Employer
Meaningful Work Experience	Non-Threatening, Low Risk
Develop Work-Related Skills	Chance to Try a Candidate Out
Build a Resume	Expands the Pool of Candidates
Earn a Paycheck (if Paid Internship)	Popular during Tough Economic Times
Opportunity to Compete for Full-Time Position OR Other Positions in the Company	Improve Perceptions of the Individual's Abilities to Perform the Essential Functions of the Job

⁵ Peck, B. and L.T. Kirkbride, 2001, "Why Businesses Don't Employ People with Disabilities," *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation* 16: 71-75.

⁶ Born, Patty and Randy Dumm. "Key Factors that Assist Employers to Recruit, Interview, Hire and Retain People with Disabilities." Prepared for The Able Trust through Florida State University, June 2011. p.18

Next Steps...

The Commission intends to continue its mission to recommend public policy solutions to the Governor and policymakers to tackle the barriers confronting Floridians with disabilities seeking employment. The Commission is holding periodic meetings around the state to seek input from employers in order to better understand how the state can assist businesses in establishing a corporate culture that is amenable to hiring persons with disabilities. During this process, the Commission will work to develop and implement the recommendations in this report, as well as identify strategies to address additional issues discussed in this section.

Action Plan to Accomplish Recommendations

The Commission believes these recommendations are important initial steps to change the present situation confronting persons with disabilities. The Commission intends to oversee the accomplishment of these recommendations. The following action plan will examine strategies to utilize resources to support these initiatives, identify entities to be responsible for implementation, provide the expected timeframe for completion, and the specific methodologies to accomplish the recommendations.

Action Plan to Streamline Information and Identify a Single-Point of Contact

To accomplish the effort to streamline information and identify a single-point of contact for employers, the Commission is interested in facilitating the development of the plan and its implementation. The Commission would need to develop the plan with the assistance of members from the business community and other stakeholders in order to effectively address the concerns and needs of employers. The Commission would seek input from policymakers, human resource experts/consultants, and persons with disabilities who have attempted to navigate the current system. The Commission will develop a structured process and identify benchmarks for the implementation of the plan. The Commission will need to host meetings in communities around the state. As the plan is being developed, the Commission will need to consider current information resources, organizations currently providing services and their limitations, and where services are duplicated or are deemed to have little demand. Through this process, the Commission should identify those resources that positively assist employers, those that present barriers, and determine which of the many services are useful to businesses that are hiring, for purposes of cataloging the useful resources and making the information available from a single site. The Commission and participants of these discussions should work together to identify a qualified entity to be responsible for housing and updating the information and responding to employers that request assistance. The responsible entity could be a state agency or department, or a private organization, identified through a state-approved procurement process.

Strategy to Develop a Communications Plan

This plan is designed to reinforce the effectiveness of the first recommendation. The Commission intends to seek expertise in the field of communications to assist in the development of the plan. The Commission will also collaborate with state agencies and other organizations that are providing communications. In order to address the costs that are associated with this strategy, the Commission will examine funding sources (both governmental and nongovernmental) to meet the objectives of the plan. The Commission will identify entities that will likely be responsible for executing the plan. The Commission will work to develop benchmarks on the expected timetable for the implementation of the plan.

Improve the Effort to Promote Internship and Work Experiences Opportunities

The Commission determined there is a wide array of internship and work experience opportunities currently available for persons with disabilities, whether through the state or through partnerships within communities. However, many of these opportunities are relatively underutilized or unknown. The Commission intends to find ways state policymakers, business leaders, and community partners can better promote and utilize these opportunities. The Commission intends to coordinate this effort with the implementation of the other recommendations in this report.

Additional Issues

In addition to overseeing the progress of the current recommendations, the Commission intends to discuss, research, and report on the following issues in the future:

- **Examine the Effects of Government Medical Benefits on Employment** – The Commission is discussing the impact medical benefits have on an individual's decision to pursue employment. Individuals with disabilities who receive medical benefits from the government can be confronted with the difficult choice to either pursue gainful employment and risk losing their benefits or not pursue employment in order to maintain their benefits. For many individuals and families, the latter option is too often the better choice. The Commission intends to examine policies and best practices the state could take to address the perverse incentives within these public programs. During this process, the Commission will examine the effects of federal policies (such as the Affordable Care Act) that impact health insurance coverage of individuals with disabilities in the workforce.
- **Develop Strategies to Create a Seamless Transition from Education to Employment** – Executive Order 11-161 charges the Commission to "create a seamless transition between education and employment by partnering with community colleges and universities to provide transitional programs." For the general population, readiness to enter the workforce is commonly seen to be reflective of academic preparation. The Commission is discussing the extent to which the disparity in employment opportunities might reflect a disparity in educational opportunities between persons with disabilities and the general public. In addition to the need to promote work experience opportunities (such as

internships), individuals with disabilities must be adequately prepared with relevant skills in order to better compete in the workforce. Employers are increasingly looking for higher skilled candidates to meet their immediate and future talent needs. In order to fulfill this responsibility, the Commission will examine the school and college systems, and identify programs and strategies that can improve employment readiness and facilitate a seamless transition from education to employment.

- **Further Improve the Communication Breakdown** – Building on the recommendations to streamline information and develop a communications plan, employers and stakeholders are looking to improve understanding of each others' needs. Placement agencies and provider organizations must appreciate the responsibilities required of a position so they can be more efficient in matching a client's skills with an employer's needs. At the same time, Employers should look to benefit from the skills such individuals offer their companies, and the incentives available to participate in a partnership with provider/placement agencies. The Commission intends to continue reaching out to employers and stakeholders to better understand these communication gaps, and help translate expectations.

As the Commission oversees the progress of the current recommendations and works to develop strategies to address the above issues, it intends to also find ways to measure success. The Commission will identify a baseline level of performance in the marketplace, and develop a goal to improve the statistical disparity between persons with disabilities in the workforce and the general population.

Conclusion

During the inaugural Commission meeting, Lieutenant Governor Jennifer Carroll stated: "By recognizing the opportunities individuals with disabilities bring to the workforce, you will have helped individuals achieve greater independence and discover new opportunities within their own lives." She encouraged the Commission to "stay steadfast" in its efforts to inform and educate employers on the opportunities persons with disabilities bring to their businesses and Florida's economy. The recommendations of the 2012 Commission Report are intended to serve as important initial steps in accomplishing these goals. Moving forward, the Commission intends to continue its work in seeking input from employers, and developing public policy strategies that will help Governor Rick Scott fulfill his top priority to ensure Floridians, including persons with disabilities, gain employment.

Appendix A



STATE OF FLORIDA

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBER 11-161

(Creation of Governor's Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities)

WHEREAS, more than one million Floridians, roughly twelve percent of our state's working-age population, live daily with some form of physical or mental disability; and

WHEREAS, on July 26, 1990, President George H.W. Bush signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act (the "ADA"), which provides for the elimination of discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities in access to employment, transportation, telecommunications, state and local services, and public accommodations; and

WHEREAS, by Executive Order 93-166, Governor Lawton Chiles created the Florida Coordinating Council for the Americans with Disabilities Act to encourage a cooperative effort between state and local governments, the education community, the private sector, and the disability community with respect to implementing the ADA; and

WHEREAS, by Executive Order 97-56, Governor Chiles dissolved the Florida Coordinating Council and created the Americans with Disabilities Act Working Group (the "Working Group") in order to refocus Florida's efforts in the implementation of the ADA by serving as a clearinghouse of information for state agencies and consumers; and

WHEREAS, by Executive Order 99-80, Governor Jeb Bush expanded the Working Group to provide information, referrals, education, and recommendations for compliance and implementation of the ADA in order to increase the independence and quality of life of Floridians with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, by Executive Order 07-148, Governor Charlie Crist dissolved the Working Group and created the Governor's Commission on Disabilities (the "Commission") to advance public policy for the disability community, to provide a forum for advocates representing groups within the disability community, and to develop and voice unified concerns and recommendations to address the issues facing the disability community; and

WHEREAS, it is in the interest of Floridians with disabilities, and the public as a whole, that a Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities be created to advance employment and job opportunities for persons with disabilities in order to maximize their independence and

quality of life, to indentify government inefficiencies that burden individuals with disabilities seeking necessary services, and to leverage state and community resources to advance service delivery and create incentives for individuals with disabilities to achieve their independence; and

WHEREAS, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, between October 2008 and June 2011, the rate of job loss among workers with disabilities far exceeded that of workers without disabilities, with the proportion of employed U.S. workers identified as having a disability declining by 9 percent; and

WHEREAS, according to the American Community Survey, from 2005 to 2007 only 38.3 percent of working-age Floridians with disabilities were employed, while 78.7 percent of working-age Floridians without a disability were employed;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RICK SCOTT, as Governor of Florida, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the laws and Constitution of the State of Florida, do hereby promulgate the following Executive Order, effective immediately:

Section 1.

The Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities (hereinafter referred to as the "Commission") is hereby created. The vision of the Commission shall be to advance job and employment opportunities for Floridians with disabilities in order to help those Floridians achieve greater independence. The mission of the Commission will be to provide public policy solutions and strategies to the Governor and state policymakers to fulfill this vision.

Section 2.

The responsibilities of the Commission shall include, but not be limited to:

- a. Identifying and recommending strategies to cultivate job opportunities for persons with disabilities in the State of Florida. The Commission shall:
 1. Utilize existing resources and service providers to enhance employment readiness for persons with disabilities.
 2. Continue efforts made by the Governor's Commission on Disabilities to create a seamless transition between education and employment by partnering with community colleges and universities to provide transition programs.
 3. Build partnerships with the business community to cultivate private-sector jobs and fulfill the Administration's 7-7-7 Job Creation Plan.
- b. Identifying barriers in state and local programs that hinder individuals with disabilities from gaining employment and proposing solutions to mitigate those barriers. The Commission shall:

1. Develop policy recommendations to streamline state and local programs that serve Floridians with disabilities and make them more accessible to consumers.
 2. Identify unnecessary regulations and/or bureaucratic processes that restrict or delay access to employment and employment training services.
- c. Developing and leveraging state and community resources to advance service delivery. The Commission shall:
1. Increase coordination of resources to breakdown silos and maximize funding opportunities.
 2. Provide community-based solutions that incorporate resources within the community, such as family networks, schools and educational programs, businesses, service providers, community centers, and state and local governments.

Section 3.

The Commission shall, no later than July 26, 2012, and on July 26 of every subsequent year until the Commission's expiration, provide a written report to the Governor outlining the accomplishments during the previous twelve months. The report shall address the following:

- a. Recommendations regarding changes to Florida statutes, administrative rules, policies, and procedures of the State in reference to all duties outlined above;
- b. Accomplishments in creating jobs and employment opportunities for Floridians with disabilities; and
- c. Progress regarding collaborative efforts with stakeholders to accomplish the duties outlined above.

The Commission may also provide interim reports as deemed necessary by the Commission or as requested by the Governor.

Section 4.

The Commission shall consist of thirteen members appointed by the Governor. Members shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor. The members shall represent the following groups, organizations, and agencies:

- a. Two individual Florida citizens representing persons with physical and/or developmental disabilities;
- b. Four individuals representing the business community, who have personal experience in creating private-sector jobs;
- c. Two individuals representing the state community college system, who have experience in education-to-employment transition programs;
- d. One individual who has a background in employment recruitment and/or experience in job training for persons with disabilities;

- e. One representative from the Able Trust;
- f. One representative from the Division of Vocation Rehabilitation;
- g. One representative from the Agency for Persons with Disabilities; and
- h. One representative from the Agency for Workforce Innovation.

The Governor shall select the Chair from the Commission's membership, and shall appoint an Executive Director. All employees of the Commission shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor. The Governor may suspend or remove the Executive Director or any Member of the Commission with or without cause, and the Governor may fill any vacancy that may arise. The Commission shall be located within the Executive Office of the Governor. The Commission shall meet at least quarterly. A majority of the Commission's current members constitutes a quorum. A quorum must be met in order for the Commission to vote on any proposed action or recommendation. The Commission shall function according to the guidelines set forth by Robert's Rules of Order, unless other procedural guidelines are adopted by the Commission.

Section 5.

The Commission is authorized to call upon any State agency, department, division, or office to supply data, reports, or other information the Commission deems reasonably necessary to achieve its objectives. Each agency, department, division, or office of the State under the purview of the Governor is authorized and directed, and all other agencies are requested, to cooperate with the Commission and provide it with such information, personnel, and assistance as necessary to accomplish the purposes of this Executive Order. Universities within the State University System are encouraged to provide the Commission with assistance in performing research necessary to accomplish the purposes of the Commission.

Section 6.

Members of the Commission shall serve without compensation, but may receive per diem and travel expenses to the extent allowed by chapter 112, Florida Statutes, and to the extent that funds are available. Per diem and travel expenses shall be paid in accordance with chapter 112, Florida Statutes, and reasonable accommodations shall be made for members on the Commission with disabilities in accordance with the ADA. Members of the Commission who are public officers and employees of state agencies shall be reimbursed for per diem and travel expenses by their respective agencies. All other members of the Commission shall be reimbursed for per diem and travel expenses by the Executive Office of the Governor.

Section 7.

The meetings of the Commission shall be noticed and open to the public, and shall be conducted in accordance with Chapter 286, Florida Statutes. Florida's public records law, chapter 119, Florida Statutes, shall apply.

Section 8.

The Commission shall continue in existence until superseded by subsequent Executive Order. This Executive Order supersedes Executive Order 07-148, as amended by Executive Order 08-193.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Florida to be affixed, at Tallahassee, this 26th day of July, 2011.



GOVERNOR

ATTEST:



SECRETARY OF STATE

2011 JUL 26 PM 5:20
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

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Appendix B

The Mission



Governor's Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities: The Mission of the Commission

The Governor's Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities (the Commission) is created by Executive Order 11-161. The vision of the Commission is to advance job and employment opportunities for Floridians with disabilities in order to help those Floridians achieve greater independence. The mission of the Commission will be to provide public policy solutions and strategies to the Governor and state policymakers.

The purpose of this document is to help guide the Commission in fulfilling its mission. The Commission should focus on the following areas: 1) identify the objectives that address barriers confronting Floridians with disabilities who seek employment; 2) develop solutions and strategies to tackle the identified barriers; and 3) provide public policy recommendations to the Governor, to advance the solutions and strategies as identified by the Commission.

Identify Objectives to Address Barriers

The Commission must first address the problems that have prevented persons with disabilities from experiencing the same status in the workforce as individuals without disabilities. The lack of employment opportunities confronting persons with disabilities is the outcome of the problems. Despite major efforts made by policymakers to provide equal opportunities to persons with disabilities (such as the Americans with Disabilities Act), access to employment remains one of the greatest challenges facing these individuals. The Commission is directed to help change this outcome by developing public policy solutions and strategies that break down the barriers to employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

In order to tackle the barriers to employment, the Commission must focus on the following objectives:

- Identify and correct misperceptions that persons with disabilities are not as valuable to the workforce as employees without disabilities.
- Provide information that demonstrates to employers that employees with disabilities produce positive results for businesses and contribute to the “bottom line.”
- Enhance communication between employers, who are looking for talented workers, and disability service organizations, which are looking for opportunities to help persons with disabilities achieve greater independence.
- Identify and establish sufficient supports and services to assist persons with disabilities in the workplace.
- Reverse possible disincentives concerning the employment of persons with disabilities, including (but not limited to):
 - The perceived costs associated to recruit, train, hire, and retain employees with disabilities;
 - The legal ramifications to accommodate the employees' needs to perform the tasks required by the job;

- The impact employees with disabilities have on other employees; and
 - The daunting task for employers to learn the intricacies of the workforce and disability service systems.
- Identify and develop incentives within state-funded programs to encourage persons with disabilities to seek employment opportunities.
- Facilitate partnerships and collaborations among employers, economic development agencies, disability service organizations, and other stakeholder groups to better coordinate employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

By meeting these objectives, the Commission can fulfill its mission and reach the intended outcome.

Develop Solutions and Strategies through Subcommittees

The objectives will serve as a framework for the Commission to develop strategies to improve access to employment for persons with disabilities. The Commission can accomplish this by dividing into subcommittees that each focus on: 1) addressing the specific objectives identified above; 2) developing and prioritizing specific strategies to tackle the barriers to employment; and 3) making policy recommendations to advance those strategies in the Commission's annual report to the Governor. The committee membership should consist of individuals who are familiar with the subject matter (e.g. there should be at least one employer on the committee responsible for developing a business-to-business marketing strategy to promote the value of persons with disabilities as employees).

The Commission shall do its work through subcommittees based on the following issue areas:

- **Access to Employment Opportunities** – The committee will focus on developing strategies to improve access to job opportunities for persons with disabilities. The strategies should include:
 - Developing a plan to create a single-point of contact for employers, economic development agencies, disability service organizations, and other stakeholder groups to improve coordination of job opportunities for persons with disabilities;
 - Identifying effective recruitment strategies for employers and service organizations to communicate available opportunities to persons with disabilities; and
 - Creating incentives within state-funded programs to encourage persons with disabilities to seek employment opportunities in the State of Florida.
- **Employment Readiness and Services** – This committee should focus on supports and services that help persons with disabilities become better employees and more competitive in the job market. The strategies should include:

- Developing training programs and services that prepare persons with disabilities for the workforce, and enhancing existing training programs for further statewide availability;
 - Identifying assessment tools for job placement based on individual's talents and skills; and
 - Assisting employers and disability service organizations in developing services and supports for employees with disabilities to help them succeed in the workplace.
- **Employer Outreach** – The committee should focus on promoting awareness among employers to improve their willingness to employ persons with disabilities in the State of Florida. The strategies should include:
 - Developing a business-to-business marketing plan that demonstrates the value of employees with disabilities and how they positively contribute to the success of the business;
 - Providing information to employers seeking to hire persons with disabilities and reporting on successful experiences; and
 - Examining incentives that relate to employers hiring and retaining employees with disabilities.

The committees will present the findings and recommended strategies to the full Commission. These strategies should be included in the policy recommendations that will be submitted in the Commission's annual report to the Governor.

Provide Public Policy Recommendations

The Commission is required to submit an annual report to the Governor by July 26, 2012, and each July 26 thereafter, which outlines the accomplishments made during the previous twelve months. The report must include: 1) recommendations regarding changes to state policies (Florida Statutes, Administrative Rules, etc.); 2) accomplishments in creating job and employment opportunities for Floridians with disabilities; and 3) progress regarding collaborative efforts with stakeholders to accomplish the Commission's duties.

Appendix C

**Sum
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Summary of 2012 Commission Business Meetings and Discussions

The Governor's Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities convened five business meetings and several subcommittee telephone conferences prior to the publication of this report. The following list provides a summary of the business meetings, the presentations that took place, and the purpose of those discussions.

January 6 Meeting in Tallahassee – The inaugural meeting provided the newly appointed commissioners direction on the mission of the Commission, an overview of their responsibilities, and presentations on some the state agencies that provide supports and services for persons with disabilities. The Commission adopted its mission document during this event. The following individuals and organizations participated:

- Lieutenant Governor Jennifer Carroll provided the welcome address;
- Patricia Gleason, Special Counsel for Open Government within the Office of the Attorney General, provided the Commission with an overview of the Government in the Sunshine Law;
- The following state agencies provided the Commission an overview of their programs and services:
 - The Agency for Persons with Disabilities presented by Steve Dunaway;
 - The Department of Economic Opportunity presented by Diane Vacca and Paul Furbush;
 - The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation presented by Aleisa McKinlay;
 - The Division of Blind Services presented by Joyce Hildreth and Antionette Williams; and
 - The Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program presented by Thom Delilla.

March 2 Meeting in Tallahassee – The Commission received presentations from organizations that provide various resources and services to employers and persons with disabilities. This was also the first opportunity for the Commission to begin its deliberations in developing recommendations.

- Karen Somerset from the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged provided a presentation on its role in coordinating transportation services for people with disabilities;
- Steve Howells from the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology provided a presentation on the various assistive technology resources that are available to employers and persons with disabilities;
- Steve LaLabour from Enable America provided a presentation about the services and business models his organization provides to employers to successfully hire and retain wounded veterans and persons with disabilities; and
- Dr. Dale Brill from the Florida Chamber Foundation provided a presentation on an economic perspective on employment, particularly in regards to persons with disabilities; the purpose of this presentation was to assist the Commission in understanding the laws of economics that apply to businesses in order to develop win-win situations with businesses and persons with disabilities.

April 27 Meeting in Jacksonville – This was the first opportunity for the Commission to receive input from employers on the benefits and barriers to hiring persons with disabilities. The meeting was facilitated by Florida State College at Jacksonville. The following individuals and organizations participated in the employer discussions:

- Chris Oakley from the First Coast Business Leadership Network and the Jacksonville branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta;
- Kathleen Miller from Florida Blue (formerly Blue Cross Blue Shield of Florida); and
- Lisa Rountree from State Farm.

June 8 Meeting in Orlando – This meeting was facilitated by the University of Central Florida. The following activities took place during this event:

- The Commission received an assistive technology demonstration from Dr. Jennifer Kent-Walsh from the Atlantic Regional Assistive Technology Demonstration Center (located in the University of Central Florida Communications Disorders Clinic);
- The Commission facilitated a discussion on the impact of health benefits on employment for persons with disabilities;
- The Commission held its second discussion with employers on the benefits and barriers to hiring persons with disabilities. The following individuals and organizations participated:
 - Scot LaFerte', Amber Jackson, and Angela Lagos from Universal Orlando; and
 - Lisa Hancock from Manpower Group.
- The Commission received a presentation from Sarah Goldman, a student at the University of Central Florida, on the challenges she experienced as a person with a disability to pursue independence; and
- The Commission finalized its subcommittee recommendations to include in the 2012 Report.

July 12 Meeting in Tallahassee – The Commission discussed the draft 2012 Report.

In addition to these meetings, the Commission's subcommittees held a series of telephone conferences. The following individuals and groups participated in these discussions:

- Dr. Randy Dumm and Dr. Patty Born from Florida State University discussed the study that was commissioned by The Able Trust;
- Bob Bromberg from the Miami-Dade Business Leadership Network discussed the internship opportunities that are offered by his organization; and
- Michael Kiser from the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council discussed the work experience program facilitated by his organization called Project SEARCH.