



MaxAbility Employment Taskforce started as a grassroots conversation among employers, job coaches, non-profits and educators. The individuals who gathered at that table saw an opportunity to grow competitive employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Given the energy and projected workforce growth attached to DMC (with an intentional and deliberate effort) we could grow competitive employment opportunities for people with disabilities which would in turn improve their overall life experiences...and while doing so...we are helping employers to fill jobs with needed workforce talent.

Mission of MaxAbility: To maximize career success for people with employment barriers and develop opportunities for businesses to meet hiring needs.

To fulfill that mission, MaxAbility has created 4 strategies:

- **Marketing.** We have a team working to grow awareness of MaxAbility and SMDEN as well as the need for the journey.
- **Career Connections.** This is an annual event that pulls together education and a job fair for people with disabilities. Typically happens in late September or early October
- **Southern MN Disability Employment Network.** This is our quarterly network meeting for employers, job coaches, educators and non-profits to learn together, to network together and to work together as we grow competitive employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
- **Employer Engagement.** Our new subgroup...we need to engage employers to make sure they are aware of this journey and to engage them to be an active member of this journey. Bottom line...this does not work unless employers are engaged and supporting.
- We are connecting with employers to ask them to engage in this journey by being a regular attendee to the 4 SMDEN Network Meetings, the annual Career Connections (Education and Job Fair) and the Annual December Employer Training.

Career Connections, our annual Job Fair focused specifically on differently abled individuals, is an opportunity for employers to network, receive further education in an engaging manner and to visit with local talent interested in employment.

This journey is connected to the Olmstead Plan expectations as well as other expectations and goals overseen by MN DEED and the Federal Government.

Taskforce Activity:

In 2016 MaxAbility hosted 4 educational sessions/networking sessions and an educational event and career fair. These events engaged 500+ businesses, service organizations, and job seekers. Members of the taskforce are extremely engaged and enthusiasm and energy continues to grow. Considering the tight labor market, employer survey responses from the 2016 Career Connections Fair found that an impressive 100% of employers were satisfied with the number of job seekers present. Educational sessions held in 2017 included: Person Centered Approach Workshop on Feb. 22; Disclosure, Accommodations, Employee Retention on Apr. 26; Mental Illness on Jun. 28; Success Stories on Aug. 16; and a Career Fair on Oct. 5.