



# Rehabilitation Services Commission

## Attachment B Cover Sheet

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>ASCEND: Assisting and Strengthening Corporations to Employ and eNable People with Disabilities</b>
<b>Project Contractor</b>	<b>Marion County Board of Developmental Disabilities</b> Local or State Government Entity, Local or State Education Agency
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<b>Tax ID Number</b>	<b>31-6400076</b> Employer Identification Number
<b>OAKS ID Number</b>	<b>56174</b> State of Ohio Vendor Number
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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** The participating agencies from the three Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission regions, pursuant to the RSC administrative model, will work with James Emmett and Al Hublar of DisAbution, Inc., to Assist and Strengthen Corporations to Employ and eNable People with Disabilities: ASCEND. We will focus on corporations and businesses that have had a closed-door approach to the employment of people with disabilities. ASCEND will help them build “internal capacity” to successfully recruit, hire, train, support, retain and promote workers with the most significant disabilities, focusing on creation of career track employment opportunities and reducing or eliminating barriers to their employment. Replication by the employment services staff of each participating agency will be an essential part of ASCEND. Expansion to more agencies will be offered in the second year of the grant.

For each of two corporations on average per agency, we will select initially at least five youth and adults (ages 18 and over) with most significant disabilities, eligible for applicable services from the participating agencies and Ohio Rehabilitation Services, and who desire to work at each corporation. An equal number will be selected for employment under the replication phase. We plan to provide employment outcomes for at least 69 individuals with the most significant disabilities in the first year of the project. Our goal is to assist at least 34 of these individuals in acquiring employment and working at twenty-five or more hours per week (part-time) and the other 35 individuals at thirty-five hours or more per week (full-time) at minimum wage or higher and sustained for a year or more. We will also do comprehensive benefit planning with each individual. Comprehensive assessments to measure employment outcomes and impacts for the individuals and changes in corporate attitudes, policies and practices will be evaluated.

**II. PRIORITY GROUPS:** The priority for the ASCEND proposal will be sustainable employment for youth ages 18 and over and adults with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible for CBDD, public schools and RSC services and supports. “Most Significant Disability” (MSD) is defined as an individual who has a physical, mental or cognitive disability that seriously limits three or more functional capacities (such as mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, and work skills) in terms of an employment outcome: and who is expected to need multiple vocational rehabilitation services”. The group will include a minimum of 75% of the participants, and up to 25% of participants who might not be county board eligible but would meet ORSC eligibility criteria. We will target individuals who are transitioning from educational settings and those adults who desire to work but are currently served in adult day habilitation or sheltered settings.

ASCEND will actively collaborate with RSC staff to identify additional eligible individuals who desire employment within the targeted corporations. We may facilitate employment through expanding career path opportunities to those currently underemployed. We will also work to ensure that the target group of individuals includes minority groups proportionate to their representation in each participating agency. We will coordinate our efforts and actions in selection of participants with other RSC programs that each agency is working with such as but not limited to: Bridges, LifeWorks and other VRP3 initiatives. ASCEND is complementary to and not in competition with these programs.

**III. MANAGEMENT PLAN:** The participating public agencies in this proposal are the following: Marion County Board of DD (project lead agency), Allen CBDD, Columbus

City Schools, Crawford CBDD, the Educational Service Center of Central Ohio, Logan CBDD, Ross CBDD, Southwestern City Schools, and Tuscarawas CBDD. These agencies shall collectively be called “participating agencies” within this proposal.

**A. Orientation for Participating Staff.** Each agency shall choose one to two persons as lead agents and they will participate in an organizational meeting during the second week of January with ASCEND consultants. All participating agencies’ staff will receive an individualized orientation meeting on all aspects of the ASCEND project, its goals and projected outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities and the projected corporations. This briefing meeting will be scheduled and separately conducted with each participating agency within its offices. All participants from the participating agencies and its contractors will also complete required RSC training.

**B. Corporate Selection, Strategic Planning, and Needs Analyses.** We will select companies with whom each agency staff has found significant obstacles to assisting youth and adults with the most significant disabilities to acquire and sustain employment. The Lead Person in each agency with advice and recommendations of the consultants shall select such businesses, companies and industries, with at least an average of two such entities per agency and sixteen corporations in total over two years. Mr. Emmett, Mr. Hublar and their staff will work with the selected corporate entities to orient corporate management staff to ASCEND, gain their support and active participation, assist them to understand the benefits of hiring people with the most significant disabilities from a variety of perspectives and create corporate plans that contain individualized strategies to meet their needs including profitability within ASCEND and

thereafter. We will work with the corporations to modify existing marketing materials to be specific to the target industries and companies.

ASCEND will provide support for all initial components of business partnerships with the companies including marketing collaboration, job training, reduction or elimination of employment barriers, and development of systems for recruiting, hiring, job accommodations, and follow along support that are non-discriminatory toward people with most significant disabilities. ASCEND will create and implement a candidate screening and fulfillment system with each participating agency to provide the best job matches from the individuals with the most significant disabilities who have elected to participate in this project. The planned deliverables will be: Company Specific Strategic Plans and Marketing Plans, Marketing Materials, Work Group Notes/Minutes.

**C. Candidate Screening and Fulfillment Process:** Each of the participating youth and adults will be offered opportunities to acquire employment consistent with their informed choices. An individualized vocational plan will be developed with the assistance of applicable staff identifying particular goals on a short and long term basis, defined employment outcomes, and supports that the individual needs to successfully acquire and sustain employment. The plan will include corporate accommodations, transportation accommodations, specialized job training, paid and natural supports and any related conditions necessary to ensure health, safety and overall well being of these employees. Business Partnership Reports, Needs Assessment Results, Business Service Plans, the individual job selection/matching results and the individualized vocational plans will be the primary deliverables.

**D. Employment Supports Staff Training in Corporate Development.** ASCEND will provide training to participating agencies on all aspects of working proactively with corporate partners. RSC Counselors will be invited and welcome to participate. Most of the training will focus on real life results obtained from the corporations. Training programs will focus on supporting each specific business partner as well as individualized career assessment, social communication, job development, business partnerships, job coaching, and natural support development. The intention of ASCEND is to develop competency within the employment staff of each agency to replicate the project through a demonstration after first successful implementation with one or more corporations. Our deliverables will include Training Summaries and Attendance, Collaborative Groups Notes/Minutes and Demonstrated Replication.

**E. Additional ASCEND Corporate Services.** ASCEND services that will also help companies create a Business Outreach Program targeting the developmental disabilities community include:

***Disability Community Recruiting*** – ASCEND will assist recruiting and hiring systems internal to each company that source candidates through corporate locations as well as RSC, advocacy groups, community organizations, schools, and grass root organizations in the developmental disabilities community.

***Incentive Planning*** – ASCEND will promote an active funding development program with the company that taps all potential local, city, state, and federal grants as well as available tax credits and Ticket-to-Work dollars.

***Specialized Public Relations Support***- in collaboration with companies' management and public relations team, ASCEND will assist in creating a public relations plan that

informs the public of corporate efforts to collaborate with the developmental disabilities community, public and private agency participants and Ohio RSC.

***Natural Supports Initiative*** - ASCEND will work with the management team to build long-term supports that focus on retention and promotion of individuals with most significant disabilities including the creation of supervision by paid corporate staff, job aids and accommodations and disability awareness training for management and co-workers.

***Liaison Training Program*** – ASCEND and each business will select 1-3 team members per company location to serve as project liaisons. These individuals will be responsible, in addition to doing their jobs, to serve as supporters and problem solvers to employees with significant developmental disabilities (a specialized training and oversight program).

**Project Marketing**– ASCEND will partner with each company’s marketing and sales departments to strategically tap the rapidly growing customer market of people with developmental disabilities (including families, friends, advocates, & supporters).

**E. Benefits Analysis, Work Incentives and Asset Development Planning:** Janet Miller of Lifestart, Inc. of Franklin County and Ron Swaine of the Fairfield County Board of Developmental Disabilities will assist the participating agencies to develop the capacity to ensure that participating youth and adults will have access to benefits analysis, planning and management services and asset development. Our goal is to improve understanding of the impact earning income will have on their benefits, and how work incentives can aid them in maximizing their income and assets. Far too often individuals with disabilities and staff who are supporting them lack an understanding of the array of benefit programs and the complex rules governing them. This lack of information can

lead staff to set arbitrary income limits and limits on the number of hours an individual can work, or discourage work altogether. In fact, nearly all people with disabilities can earn and save more using work incentives. Access to good information can open the doors to the earning potential of people with disabilities and aid them in having discretionary income that they can use in ways that enhance their lives.

ASCEND will use an Advanced Referral System modeled after Indiana's nationally-recognized Benefits Information Network where employment support personnel work in concert with the WIPA to obtain a good benefits plan and follow through on implementation. Employment support personnel will work with participants to gather initial information about their benefits and status with Social Security. This information is then forwarded to Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) for development of a work incentives plan. Participating agency staff and WIPA work together to review the plan with the individual and develop implementation strategies with monitoring and follow-along provided at the local level by the support staff. This model ensures that staff, who are closest to individuals, are fully aware of each individual's benefits, the work incentives they are using and are most likely to learn about issues as they arise.

Each participating agency will designate a lead person on benefits counseling, who will serve as the agency's key contact person and internal expert and will participate in a three-day in-depth training on benefits, work incentives and benefits management. Ms. Miller and Mr. Swaine will provide this training under "Work Incentives for Successful Employment" curriculum developed by United Cerebral Palsy of Ohio previously under a grant from the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council. This

curriculum expands the typical work incentives training to include information on asset development strategies for people with disabilities. The goal of work for people with the most significant disabilities is to have increased financial resources to invest in their lives. This in-depth training will address how earned income affects Social Security disability benefits (SSI and SSDI), the work incentives that can be used with each of these programs (also different), eligibility for health care (especially the impact of earned income on Medicare and Medicaid and use of Ohio's Medicaid Buy-In program), and the way earned income affects other benefits used by people with disabilities.

Each participant will be provided with a comprehensive resource manual on asset strategies, such as financial education, individual development accounts and matched savings programs have been used for many years to help people with low-incomes find avenues to lift themselves out of poverty. Few, if any, of these strategies have been used by people with disabilities or among staff that work in disability programs.

Ms. Miller and Mr. Swaine will develop and provide a two-hour training program to provide individuals with disabilities, families, representative payees and authorized representatives with information. Ms. Miller and Mr. Swaine will assist participating agencies in developing the initial information packet and developing relationships with the WIPA, Social Security and Medicaid. Ms. Miller and Mr. Swaine will be available to answer individual questions through phone, written information and on-site visits. Ms. Miller and Mr. Swaine will also sponsor a monthly meeting of all the lead benefits experts in the counties to ensure they stay up-to-date with recent benefit changes, current benefit issues, help staff upgrade their skills and problem solving. Ms. Miller and Mr. Swaine will also provide technical assistance to counties to become Benefit Bank sites and

explore participation in the Voluntary Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. The VITA program is particularly useful in ensuring that individuals receive the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

**IV. KEY PERSONNEL:** The participating agencies have extensive experience in promoting and advancing supported and competitive employment opportunities for individuals with most significant disabilities. All of the agencies are approved vendors of the Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission and are Council on the Accreditation of Rehabilitation Services (CARF) certified. RSC counselors and related staff will be invited to participate in all trainings and related activities with the agencies in which they have responsibilities and all group trainings. The county boards of dd, the ESC of Central Ohio, and the public schools collaborate actively on school to work transition.

**Project Director: Stephen Pleasnick** is President of Georgetown, Midwest and Pacific Consulting, a management services company for the past six years. Mr. Pleasnick also served as superintendent of the Franklin County Board of DD for twenty-eight years. He has actively worked with all of the participating agencies and the Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission throughout his career and has promoted integration and inclusion through supported living and employment services for people with disabilities. Mr. Pleasnick has a master's degree from The Ohio State University in educational administration.

**Public Agency Partners: ASCEND Key Contact and Marion CBDD Project**

**Coordinator: Deb Combs** has served as Marion County DD's Director of Adult Services since 1999. She coordinates the agency's community employment services, and serves as chair of the compliance committee for Marion County DD's accreditation by the

Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). Deb joined Marion County DD in 1986 as a program manager in the habilitation department, and later served as manager of the department for six years. Deb has a bachelor's degree in education from The Ohio State University.

**Educational Service Center of Ohio: Lynn Brannon** has served as Director of Student Services for the past three years and seven years with the ESC. Ms. Brannon supervises five transition specialists working with over fifty youth on employment supports and coordinates with twenty-three school districts in Franklin, Delaware and Union counties on school to work transition issues for youth with disabilities including those with most significant disabilities. Ms. Brannon has a bachelor's degree from Purdue and a master's degree from the Ohio State University in speech language pathology.

**Logan CBDD Project Coordinator: Tonya Reed** has a bachelor degree in rehabilitation services from Wright State University. With over 15 years of experience in the vocational rehabilitation field, she supervises employment services for the Logan CBDD and RTC Employment Services and has been in this role since 2001. Ms. Reed is involved in coordinating a local Project SEARCH program, supervises Bridges to Transition program in Logan, Champaign, and Miami Counties, and will begin supervision for a VRP3 program for Logan County this October.

**Ross CBDD Project Coordinator: John D. Hocker** has worked for 30 years serving individuals with developmental disabilities and is currently the Director of Community Services for Ross CBDD. He received his Associate and Bachelor degrees from Ohio University. He has a Master of Arts in Theology from Life Christian University. John

**Tuscarawas CBDD Project Coordinator: Cassie Elvin** is the Adult Services

Director for the Tuscarawas County Board of Developmental Disabilities. Cassie has over 30 years experience in the field of disabilities with emphasis in the employment-related areas, experience working with Rehabilitation Services Commission, and transition services for school to work, and adults and in coordination of services among other community agencies and work sites including private and public entities. She has a Master's Degree in Special Education and a Master's Degree in Administration.

**ASCEND Principal Consultants: James Emmett** is a national leader in development of employment services for persons with individuals with developmental disabilities as well as in assisting corporations in creation of outreach efforts to the disability community. He is an individual with a disability and a parent of three daughters with disabilities. James currently serves as the President of DisAbution Inc., as a Director of the newly created APSE Human Resource Institute on Diversity and Disability and leads a corporate development project for the state of Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation Services. James recently completed 18 months working as the Disability Program Manager for Walgreens helping set up the company's national disability initiative in their distribution center in Anderson, South Carolina with the integrated employment of two hundred people with disabilities out of a 700-person work force, ([www.walgreensoutreach.com](http://www.walgreensoutreach.com)). James graduated with a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from the Illinois Institute of Technology.

**Al Hublar** is President of Hublar Associates Inc. - a consulting firm dedicated to helping business management to improve their operational and financial performance while providing career oriented employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. He has held management positions with General Motors, Corning Glass, and

General Electric and top management positions with several manufacturing and distribution companies. He also has worked extensively with Walmart to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Educational achievements include a BS Degree in Industrial Education from Purdue University and an MBA Degree from Indiana University. Mr. Hublar has four sons, one with a disability who is employed at Walmart.

### **Benefit Planning, Work Incentives and Asset Development Consultants**

**Janet Miller** is with Lifestart, Inc., has worked for the United Cerebral Palsy of Ohio for the past ten years and has responsibilities include project coordination, training and technical assistance on benefits, work incentives, and access to health care for people with disabilities to people with disabilities, families and professionals. She has a bachelor of arts in social work and has worked for a variety of central Ohio governmental and private agencies performing disability services and supports.

Ron Swaine has worked for over twenty years in benefits planning and is newly hired in this capacity for the Fairfield County Board of DD.

**V. SERVICES:** Pursuant to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 103: Vocational Rehabilitation Services, this proposal addresses the following two services:

**(4) Job-related services, including job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up services, and follow-along services.**

The major goal of ASCEND and this proposal is to provide effective job development within corporations through the building of internal capacity for corporate management and its employees to reduce or eliminate any barriers or obstacles to the employment of youth and adults with most significant disabilities. ASCEND is a new, innovative,

redesigned and unique way of doing job development that changes the focus away from employment services staff looking for jobs to the creation of corporate cultural changes inside the business that facilitate corporate initiatives to promote and advance the employment, retention and promotion of individuals within the business on a long-term and career enhancing basis. Key participants are the corporate management and staff, that ASCEND will work with to create the foundation for future job development, placement services and retention services in collaboration with the participating agencies.

**(2) Counseling and guidance, including information and support services to assist an individual in exercising informed choice consistent with the provisions of section 102(d);** Throughout this project, ASCEND will work actively with the youth and adults with most significant disabilities who want gainful employment to gain their understanding and participation in ASCEND and in the processes for individual work plan development, job screening, job selection, job acquisition, and job retention. Since the vast majority of youth and adults participating in this project need benefits provided by state and federal governmental sources and a major obstacle to their gainful employment at higher earning levels is the fear of loss of these benefits, we are incorporating benefits planning, use of work incentives and ways to effectively develop assets within ASCEND. This benefit planning is an expanded service and redesigned service offering.

All staff from participating agencies will be involved in all aspects of ASCEND through regular at least monthly meetings with the consultants and through work directly with corporations and participating youth and adults with most significant disabilities. Group meetings of the participating agencies may be held by web-in airs or other

electronic means. ASCEND job development will be individualized to each public agency and corporation with the advice and consent of the public agencies. The project director will provide monitoring, evaluation of outcomes and technical assistance at least quarterly and will complete required submittals to RSC on a six-month and annual basis.

**VI. COLLABORATION:** Employment Services staff of each participating agency will work with their assigned RSC Counselors to ensure employment outcomes for individuals are met. The process for referral, service delivery and case closure will work as follows:

1. RSC Counselors and the project staff from each participating agency will collaboratively identify eligible youth and adults with most significant disabilities and who desire employment.
2. RSC Counselors will determine eligibility for RSC services. If the individual is not yet eligible, the agency staff will work to determine eligibility for its services.
3. RSC Counselors will be responsible for making all referrals of project participants who meet the target population requirements. RSC Counselors will continue to “manage” the case and develop the plan, with significant input from the employment/transition services staff in each agency.
4. Once the individual is referred to *ASCEND*, the employment/transition services staff from each participating agency will be responsible for all service delivery, starting from ASCEND orientation, job development, job selection and acquisition, job accommodations, follow-along and retention services. Ongoing communication will be maintained by the employment/transition services staff with each respective RSC Counselor

5. Once the individual has successfully achieved the proposed employment outcomes and maintained employment for 90 days, the RSC Counselor will complete a successful case closure.
6. After closure by RSC, the agency staff will assume responsibility for future individual needs through the follow along services that will be provided.

**Integration with OSCAR:** Because this is a non-traditional administrative services project that does not include the hiring of project VR Counselors, RSC Counselors will continue to enter information into the OSCAR system as required. Project staff will work closely with RSC Counselors to ensure that all needed information is collected and provided in a timely manner.

**Project Sustainability** It is anticipated that job development and benefit planning components of this project will be sustained after completion of the project as follows:

1. Through planned replications of ASCEND, a viable model for job development, job acquisition and job retention will be sustained improving the employment and transition services staff performance and capabilities to expand employment opportunities and outcomes for individuals with most significant disabilities.
2. Employment/ Transition services staff with traditional follow-along and retention services will support all individuals who acquire employment. Should a problem arise on the job, staff will increase assistance to the individual in retaining employment through appropriate corporate practices created under ASCEND. Finding a new job will only be considered in extreme cases and where the individual desires to make such a change. The employment or transition services staff would provide all of these services.

3. It is intended that the partner public agency collaborations will continue through cooperative sharing of corporate employment practices and disability accommodations, and best-practices employment strategies. The enhanced relationships with RSC Counselors that are expected to come from this project will continue and grow so that mutually and RSC only eligible individuals will continue to be served in the future.
4. The participating agencies will continue to work effectively to provide support for RSC Counselors in working with individuals with most significant disabilities.

### **Past Collaboration of Project Partners**

The ESC of Central Ohio, Columbus City and Southwestern City Schools and other affiliated school districts have a long, proactive and continuing, positive working relationship with the county boards of developmental disabilities especially on school to work transition, educational services for children and youth with most significant disabilities and in general advocacy for improvements thereto including programs and funding. The six county boards of DD are all continuing members of the Ohio Association of County Boards of DD and are all members of the Ohio Association of Adult Services. They have jointly and routinely participated in conferences and other professional development activities centering on employment services. Several of the partners attended a joint briefing session on July 8, 2010 with Mr. Emmett and Mr. Hublar and have enthusiastically bought into ASCEND and the potential benefits of it to facilitate employment of individuals with most significant disabilities. All of the lead personnel in this project bring positive, proactive, focused, flexible and organized

approaches that will be conducive to building an effective working and collaborative relationship among the partners.

Through this collaboration, ASCEND will provide opportunities to share information, policies, practices and ideas obtained within the project and joint learning especially centered on the job development activities, understanding how to overcome corporate barriers and other results from the corporations. We also will work toward improved ways of implementing employment/transition services especially job development through continued collaboration across agency and county lines with corporations. We also believe that that joint training on benefits planning, work incentives and asset development will result in improved understandings, practices and information reducing this fundamental barrier to employment.

**VII. PROJECT EVALUATION:** The project evaluation for ASCEND will center on the youth and adults with developmental disabilities desiring employment as well as the participating corporations. The key goal of ASCEND is to improve employment outcomes for people with most significant disabilities. At the outset of the project, the ASCEND Team will design and implement a data management system for reporting information that reflects the activities, level and type of services provided, and outcomes. Pertinent data fields and frequency of data collection will be specified. We will work with The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation Services and other human resource partners for assistance in developing and identifying appropriate assessments, instruments and measures for the assessments in this section.

We project there will be a positive difference between the number of individuals exiting the VR program who achieved an employment outcome during the current

performance period and the number of individuals exiting the VR program who achieved an employment outcome during the previous performance period. We project that the percentage of individuals exiting the program during the performance period who have achieved an employment outcome after participating in this ASCEND project will be at or above sixty percent.

ASCEND will only promote employment in integrated settings with or without ongoing support services, with hourly rate of earnings equivalent to at least the federal or state minimum wage rate, whichever is higher, based on all the individuals exiting the program who have achieved an employment outcome after receiving services. The ratio of the average hourly earnings of all individuals in competitive employment to the average hourly earnings of all employed individuals in the state will be at or above .52. The difference in the percentage of individuals who at program entry reported their income as the largest single source of support, and the percentage that reported their personal income as the largest single source of support at program exit will be fifty percent. The ratio of the percent of individuals with a minority background to the percent of individuals without a minority background exiting the program who received VR services will be at least .60.

ASCEND will construct pre and post assessments to measure attitudes of the youth and adult participants related to employment and their perception of any obstacles to employment and how we can overcome them. ASCEND will conduct structured interviews for each participant on their preferences and desires for employment before and after hiring to measure the degree we were able to accommodate their needs. Comparisons will be made of the employment outcomes of youth and adults who acquire

employment pursuant to ASCEND versus an average of employees for each corporation who are not disabled for similar positions, with measures of work performance, access to comparable wages and benefits, basic adherence to corporate policies, dismissal rates, longevity and other comparable factors that contribute to the profitability of each corporation. We will use this information with both the corporations and adult employment agencies for future initiatives and course corrections.

Lifestart and the Fairfield CBDD will provide quality assurance by reviewing and monitoring implementation of the benefits plans. Data will be collected on the use of Social Security work incentives, participation in the Medicaid Buy-In for Workers with Disabilities, earning levels and increased assets to measure the impact of the benefits counseling and management strategies that have been employed.

On the corporate side, ASCEND will assess the attitudes of key corporate members before the ASCEND interventions are made prior to any hiring of youth and adults with disabilities and post hiring after a year or so to adjudge the changes in attitudes and practices thereafter. Structured interviews and other assessments will be made with identification on how changes were made to policies and practices. Measures will also be made of any obstacles to employment within the corporation such as physical structures, electronic applications, interviews and other such barriers, which may have been initially present and ways accommodations through universal design and other methods were made and their relative cost to the corporations.

We will compile the information and the results of these assessments and produce reports for the participating agencies and the Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission to analyze, establish significant findings and make course corrections to the project design.

We plan to assess the degree to which ASCEND, as designed, is an effective strategy to increase the connections between youth and adults with the most significant disabilities and corporations on employment resulting in profitable outcomes for both.