



**Florida's Local**

BUSINESS LEADERSHIP NETWORKS  
Promoting the Employment of People with Disabilities

BLNs Funded by  
**Workforce Florida and  
The Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities**  
Through the  
**2007 Medicaid Infrastructure Grant**

BLNs Organized and Report Developed by  
**Wilson Resources, Inc.**

**2007-08  
Pre and Post BLN Member Survey**

Florida's local Business Leadership Network (BLN) members were asked to respond to a survey that assessed the impact their involvement with their local BLN had on their attitudes and actions in recruiting and hiring people with disabilities. The survey also asked BLN members the barriers they faced to hiring people with disabilities and what the BLN could do to assist them.

Surveys were provided at local BLN meetings and sent to members electronically. The surveys were completed during the months of January, February and March of 2008 following a full year of BLN participation in 2007. There were one hundred thirty-eight (138) respondents to the survey. As of the end of February 2008, there were 631 BLN members in the 10 BLNs working with Wilson Resources, Inc. (WRI). The result was a 22 percent response rate to the *Pre and Post BLN Member Survey*.

**Question 1. How many people does your business employ?**

- 13%** Less than 10
- 19%** 10-199
- 14%** 200-500
- 54%** More than 500

NOTE: One organization reported that it employs 10-199 people locally and internationally between 200-500; another reported that it employs 10-199 locally and more than 500 internationally.

**Question 2. Choose the category that BEST describes the principal activity of your business or profession (select one).**

- 1%** ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT (Examples – movie rentals, museums, sports organizations, theaters, travel)
- 11%** EDUCATION (Examples – private/technical schools, tutors)
- 6%** INFORMATION AND SUPPORT (Examples – computer technology, newspapers, magazines, professional business organizations, radio, TV)
- 4%** PRODUCTION (Examples – agriculture, construction, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, mining, technology, textile)
- 9%** SALES (Examples – clothing, construction equipment, food, hardware, marketing, pharmaceuticals, real estate)
- 41%** SERVICE (Examples – bank, broker, cable TV, health organizations, hospital, hotel, legal, restaurant, security firm, transportation, utilities)

**Question 2...continued, Choose the category that BEST describes the principle activity of your business or profession (select one).**

**28% OTHER**

Sample of 'Other' Comments:

- Government Source
- Employment
- Financing
- Workforce Development
- Distribution Center/ Pharmaceutical
- City Government
- Software for video games + assistive technology/ hardware
- Staffing firm, Recruitment
- Online Recruitment
- Employment + Training
- HR Services
- Commercial Real Estate
- State government/ health
- Software Development
- Media products + programs for the educational sector.

**Question 3. Are you a member of senior management with the responsibility for developing policies and practices related to employees with disabilities?** **41% Yes**      **59% No**

**Question 4. Are you a human resource professional?** **48% Yes**      **52% No**

**Question 5. Do you have the responsibility for hiring or supervising employees with disabilities?** **52% Yes**      **48% No**

**Question 6. Does your business have a formal policy for hiring persons with disabilities?** **62% Yes**      **38% No**

**Question 7. Has your company faced barriers in hiring people with disabilities?** **47% Yes**      **53% No**

**Question 8. If so, please indicate the type of barriers you have faced (check all that apply\*):**

- 48%** Employee attitudes/fears
- 14%** C-Level executive attitudes/fears
- 47%** Mid-Level manager attitudes/fears
- 6%** Customers' attitudes/fears
- 25%** Company's lack of information about disability employment issues
- 52%** Aligning individuals with a disability with the right job fit
- 19%** Do not know where to find qualified applicants with disabilities
- 30%** Limited pool of qualified applicants with disabilities
- 30%** Fears about costs – accommodations; insurance premiums
- 23%** Ability/know-how to make accommodations
  - 6%** Fear about termination process
  - 9%** Other

Sample of 'Other' Comments:

- Still working through Internal Process to facilitate higher employment rates.
- Many of Patient care jobs require mobility and strength to move patients.

\*Total exceeds 100 percent; respondents checked all that applied.

**Question 9: Are you or your business a member of the Florida Business Leadership Network (BLN)?**

**73%** Yes      **27%** No

**Question 10: Are you or your business a member of a local BLN Chapter?**

**91%** Yes      **9%** No

**Question 11: If YES, please indicate which chapter:**

- 5%** Bay Area BLN
- 11%** Big Bend BLN
- 12%** First Coast BLN
- 18%** Greater Orlando BLN
- 16%** Miami-Dade BLN
- 7%** Polk County BLN
- 12%** Tampa Bay Metro BLN
- 2%** Palm Beach BLN
- 9%** Gainesville
- 7%** Fort Myers

**Question 12: Have you participated in any of the following Local BLN activities (check all that apply\*)?**

- 94%** Chapter meeting
- 24%** Member Recruitment campaign
- 13%** Employer Training
- 15%** Internship program
- 34%** Disability Mentoring Day
- 15%** Hiring a Person with a Disability with the Assistance of a Service Provider
- 8%** Other:

'Other' Comments:

- Placement Committee
- Media Outreach
- Orlando Meetings, Able Trust, Career Fair
- Career fair
- USBLN
- Job Carving
- Liaison w/GMSHRM diversity program
- GMSHRM & BLN Program
- November 6th Workshop

\*Total exceeds 100 percent; respondents checked all that applied.

**Question 13: Have you utilized/participated in any of the Florida BLN resources (check all that apply\*)?**

- 24%** Connections monthly e-newsletter
- 30%** BLN website
- 28%** Member packet
- 8%** Online Disability Hiring Guide
- 10%** Employability Symposium

\*Total exceeds 100 percent; respondents checked all that applied.

**Question 14: What can your Florida or your local BLN do to help you overcome hurdles you may have faced in hiring people with disabilities (check all that apply\*)?**

- 62%** Offer training in my community to dispel myths and change attitudes
- 38%** Offer training and technical assistance at my worksite to dispel myths and change attitudes
- 45%** Provide specialized training, such as legal issues related to the hiring and firing of employees with disabilities, including information on the cost of accommodations
- 58%** Provide more opportunities for employers to share best practices on the employment of people with disabilities
- 37%** Provide written and verbal presentations on where to find qualified people with disabilities
- 39%** Provide more no-risk opportunities for employers and their employees to experience workers with disabilities at their worksites, e.g., internships or mentoring activities like Disability Mentoring Day
- 35%** Conduct an Employer Awareness Campaign in my community, media, ads, etc.
- 10%** Other

'Other' Comments

- Dismiss Fear
- A campaign with local business journal publications would reach your target business sector demographic, pushing the BLN agenda.
- Present to students with disabilities about what employers are looking for; resume interview techniques, etc.

\*Total exceeds 100 percent; respondents checked all that applied.

**Question 15: Prior to joining the BLN, how would you rate your knowledge about hiring people with disabilities (check only one)?**

- 7%** Very Poor
- 15%** Poor
- 30%** Fair
- 36%** Good
- 13%** Excellent

**Question 16: As a result of being a member of the BLN, how would you rate your knowledge about hiring people with disabilities today (check only one)?**

- 1%** Very Poor
- 2%** Poor
- 13%** Fair
- 54%** Good
- 31%** Excellent

**Question 17: As a result of the BLN's efforts, I have done the following (check all that apply\*):**

- 14%** Hired person(s) with a disability
- 14%** Created new job opportunities for people with disabilities within my Company
- 12%** Offered internship(s) to a student or adult with disabilities
- 22%** Provided mentoring opportunities to a student or adult with a disability
- 60%** Participated on the BLN
- 17%** Donated funds or professional services to the BLN
- 20%** Presented information on the BLN and employment issues through speaking engagements and presentations
- 49%** Referred a colleague to join the BLN
- 17%** Other

Comments

- POC for applicants with disabilities.
- Will be following up with possible efforts we can make toward awareness + hire.
- Passed along information to hiring authorities and senior managers.
- We hire many veterans, some disabled.
- Hosted a GOBLN Meeting.
- Benchmarked with other companies.
- Just joined.
- Disability Mentoring Day.
- Presented information to hiring authority in my company.
- As much as I can.
- Was Referred.
- Referred job seekers with disabilities to BLN members.
- Participated in Disability Mentoring Day.
- Greater Miami SHRM Partnership.
- Spreading the information to the employer.

\*Total exceeds 100 percent; respondents checked all that applied.

**Question 18: The Florida BLN is considering adding new services to its program in 2007. Please indicate any of the services you would be interested in receiving/participating (check all that apply\*)?**

- 66%** Online educational seminars on disability hiring issues
- 42%** Teleconferences on the employment of people with disabilities
- 46%** Statewide employer conference
- 42%** Student career fair
- 10%** Please list any additional activities that you are interested in seeing from the Florida BLN.

Comments

- Local employer conference
- More invites to employers. Open House
- ALL
- Educational mentoring in person.
- Developing job placement corrections. "Open Doors"
- Have a table at Resource fairs + employer recruitments + job fair
- Live workshops to educate employers on hiring & managing.
- Corporate training on disabilities/ hiring.

\*Total exceeds 100 percent; respondents checked all that applied.

**Question 19: Please indicate any disability employment subjects you are interested in learning more about through the Florida BLN activities listed above (check all that apply\*).**

- 25%** Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- 39%** Interviewing candidates with disabilities
- 40%** Recruitment
- 38%** Workplace accommodations
- 47%** Employment support services (i.e., supported employment, on-the-job training services provided by local and state disability organizations)
- 25%** Marketing to customers with disabilities
- 30%** Tax incentives for hiring people with disabilities
- 45%** Disability Etiquette
- 44%** Communicating with and about people with various types of disabilities

\*Total exceeds 100 percent; respondents checked all that applied.

### **Local Florida BLN Effectiveness**

In collaboration with The Able Trust, Wilson Resources, Inc. surveyed BLN members in the first few months of 2008 to assess the impact their local BLNs had on their attitudes and actions in recruiting and hiring people with disabilities during the previous year. The survey also asked BLN members the barriers they faced and what the BLN could do to assist them to overcome these barriers to the employment of workers with disabilities.

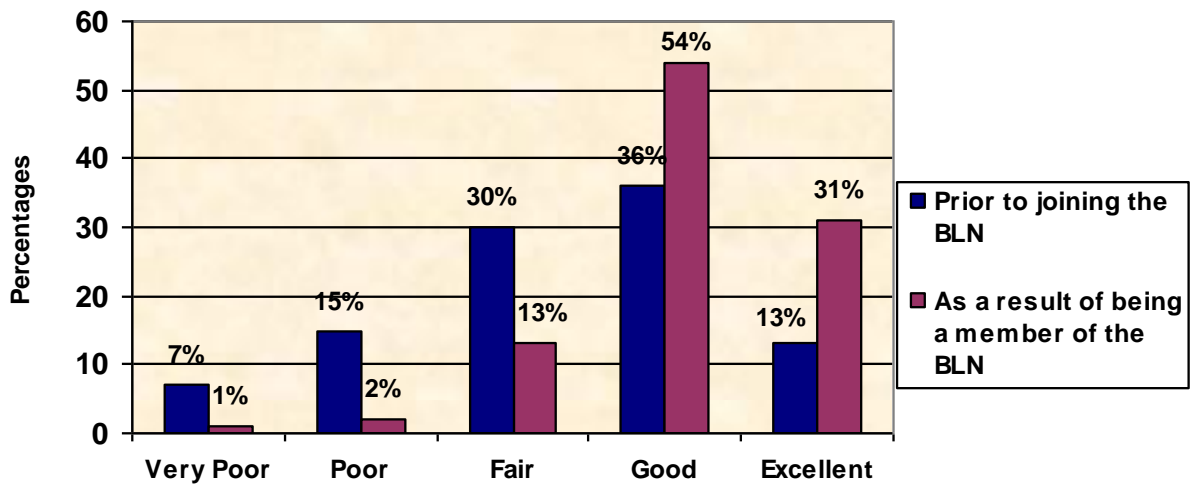
There were one hundred thirty-eight (138) respondents to the survey. As of the end of February 2008, there were 631 BLN members in the 10 BLNs working with Wilson Resources, Inc. (WRI). The result was a 22 percent response rate to the *Pre and Post BLN Member Survey*.

Most frequently, attitudes at all corporate levels were the leading barriers to the employment of people with disabilities, specifically employees' and mid-level managers' attitudes/fears. This is consistent with last year's findings. Training was most frequently cited as the solution to overcome hurdles to the employment of people with disabilities. The second leading barrier was, "Aligning individuals with a disability with the right job fit." This is good news because it shows that employers are beginning to think more about bringing people with disabilities into their workplaces as well-matched employees.

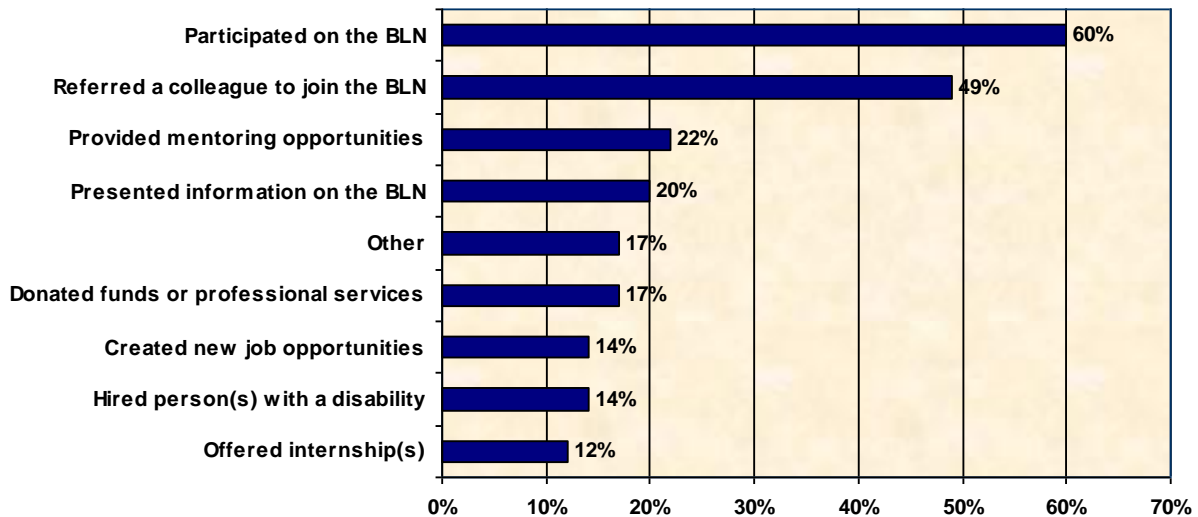
As a result of becoming a BLN member, 85 percent of the respondents rated their knowledge about hiring people with disabilities "good to excellent." The percentage of respondents knowing more about hiring people with disabilities nearly doubled, from 49 percent pre-BLN involvement to 85 percent post-BLN involvement. (Table 1) These data are nearly identical to last year's findings.

As a result of their BLN involvement in 2007-08, employers are offering more opportunities to people with disabilities: 62 percent of the responses indicated that BLN members had hired, created new job opportunities, offered internships or mentored people with disabilities. (Table 2) That percentage is up from 46 percent of the responses in 2006-07, a 16 percent increase.

**Table 1: Knowledge About Hiring People with Disabilities  
Pre-BLN and Post-BLN Participation**



**Table 2: As a result of the BLN's I have done the following:**



## Summary

These survey findings show that the local Florida BLNs are having the desired effect. In addition to educating and changing employers' attitudes about hiring people with disabilities, nearly two-out-of-three of the responses (62%) indicated the employers had taken the desired action by bringing people with disabilities into their workplaces.

Data from the Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities and Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation reflected increases in the number of people becoming employed in nearly all of the areas where the BLNs are located. Overall, there is an upswing in the employment of people with disabilities in Florida. Florida's local BLNs are contributing to this expansion.