

Interview with Dr. Carl Van Horn
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**Co-author of the NTAR Leadership Center Issue Brief: “Leveraging State Economic
Development Resources to Create Job Opportunities for People with Disabilities”**

[**Announcer**] This Podcast is presented by the NTAR Leadership Center helping state leaders help adults with disabilities to employment and better economic opportunities through collaboration, innovation and transformation.

[**Music**]

[**Laurie Harrington**] Welcome to “Research in Brief,” a future Podcast of the NTAR Leadership Center. I'm your host Laurie Harrington. State economic development agencies can play a valuable role in state and local efforts to expand employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The key to establishing an effective partnership with the state EDA begins with understanding the basic tools and techniques they use to enhance job creation and improve access to employment opportunities. Dr. Carl Van Horn is a Professor of Public Policy at Rutgers University and the Director of the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development. He is also the current Chairman of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority. He joins us today to talk about his recent NTAR Leadership Center issue brief on leveraging state economic development resources to create job opportunities for people with disabilities. Welcome to our Podcast, Dr. Van Horn.

[**Dr. Van Horn**] Hi Lori.

[**Laurie Harrington**] Dr. Van Horn I'll start with how would you suggest companies approach economic development agencies if they're trying to put together a financial package of incentives to promote employment of people with disabilities?

[**Dr. Van Horn**] Well I think the first thing to recognize is that most economic development agencies don't specifically target the employment of people with disabilities but they are interested in job creation with viable businesses in their states. And economic development agencies have a whole host of tools that are available to businesses of just about any size. So the first thing is really to either contact them or go on their website of the state agency and see what they have available, and if it's confusing to go ahead and make a meeting and get it fully explained.

[**Laurie Harrington**] What does a successful disability partnership between state, local and regional economic development officials look like? Should government incentives target companies in certain industries or certain sectors that have a history of hiring people with disabilities?

[**Dr. Van Horn**] I think most, as I said, most economic development agencies are not inclined to do that, there are some exceptions. But they're interested really in three kinds of targeting. First is, they tend to focus on either rural or urban areas that have been historically economically

challenged. Secondly, they may focus on particular industries whether it's finance, pharmaceutical, agriculture, tourism, whatever. And third they're usually interested in industries which they think are likely to grow in the coming year so they're going to focus on those as well that will reflect state priorities. So, again, a good strategy is to look at the criteria and then see how you can fit into their needs. I think that hiring people with economic -- with disabilities or economic disadvantages is although it may not be a specific priority it is certainly something that a lot of states are interested in. And the most important thing is that they want to help a business succeed. And if a business says that hiring people with disabilities is a way to be successful then the economic development agency's certainly going to be supportive.

[Laurie Harrington] The issue brief describes the end power adaptive loan fund and main. Could you say a word or two about that program?

[Dr. Van Horn] Well this is a program that targets people with disabilities by providing loans to businesses in order to make changes in their workplace to make them more accessible to employees or to customers. And the main loans range from a very small amount \$250 up to \$100,000. And they make decisions very quickly on loans that are less than \$5,000 and the idea behind this, of course, is to create a revolving loan fund that will enable businesses to have an accessible workplace either for employees or for customers.

[Laurie Harrington] What's the most important thing a business should keep in mind when approaching a state, local or regional economic development authority?

[Dr. Van Horn] Well I think the most important thing is to remember that their objective overall is to get people hired and to expand the state's economy. And in the issue brief that I prepared with Allison Kopicki and Kathy Krepcio of the Heldrich Center, what we do is try to provide an overview of the different kinds of tools that are used by economic development agencies around the country and then we highlight a couple of examples. And these range from tax incentives and low interest loans and bonds and technical assistance to businesses. And bear in mind also that the businesses may be for profit or non-profit. In many states non-profit agencies are also eligible to participate in these programs.

[Laurie Harrington] Thank you Dr. Van Horn for speaking with us today. I've been talking today with the Heldrich Center's Dr. Carl Van Horn about tapping the resources of state, local and regional economic development agencies to expand job opportunities for people with disabilities. This is Laurie Harrington for Research in Brief with the NTAR Leadership Center. For more information about the NTAR Leadership Center and its' research activities visit www.ntarcenter.org.

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