



AN INVITATION TO ACTION, A CELEBRATION OF POSSIBILITY

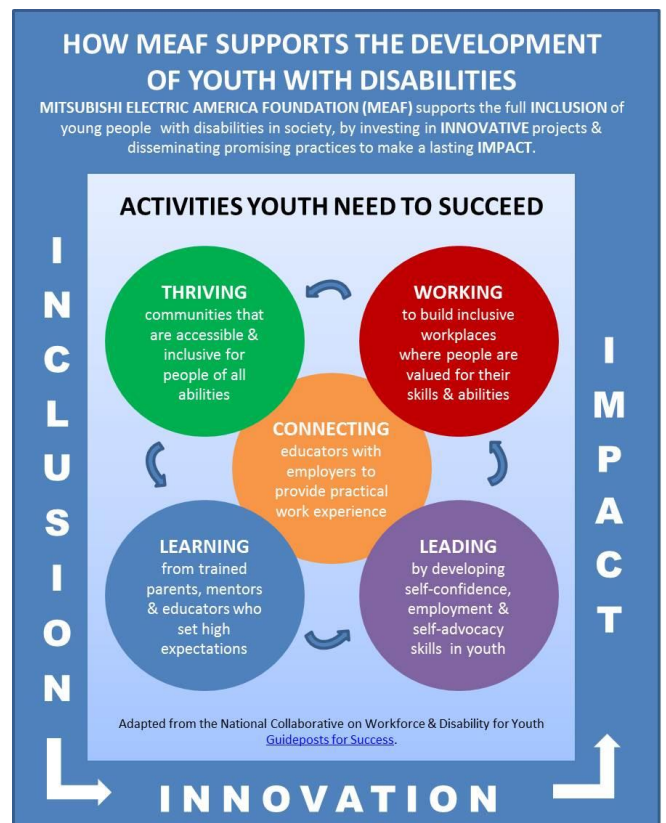
A report from the MEAF M>PWR Summit
Gallaudet University, Washington, DC
February 24 and 25, 2016

Presented by
George Tilson, EdD, Tilson Diaz Solutions, Inc. &
Kevin R. Webb, Sr. Director, Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation

This February, Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation (MEAF) board members, advisors, and employee volunteers; as well as disability, grantee, and youth leaders, gathered to celebrate 25 years of MEAF initiatives to prepare youth with disabilities for competitive, integrated employment and full inclusion in society.

Remarks recalling MEAF’s accomplishments to date were given by a number of present and past Foundation leaders, including: Mr. Katsuya Takamiya, Executive Officer, Mitsubishi Electric Corporation, and Rayna Aylward, past Executive Director of MEAF. Visit [MEAF 25th Anniversary News](#) for a dynamic presentation featuring highlights from the event.

The day following the opening events, 100 diverse stakeholders participated in a facilitated **M>PWR Summit** with the goal of tapping our collective ingenuity and insights for launching the Foundation into the next 25 years. Mr. Kiyoshi Furukawa, President and CEO, Mitsubishi Electric US, Inc. opened the summit by highlighting the successes of the past 25 years: “As a part of our corporate social responsibility goals, we have dedicated ourselves to empower young people with disabilities to lead productive lives and to help young leaders reach their potential and maximize their participation in society.” MEAF’s Sr. Director, Kevin R. Webb, shared a common sentiment: “What we know is that creating work and educational opportunities doesn’t just benefit people with disabilities. It benefits everyone.”



Cross-stakeholder teams rolled up their sleeves and shared important ideas about increasing support for youth as they expand their talents, skills and networks in five areas of youth development: **learning, connecting, leading, working, and thriving**. (NCWD/youth, [Guideposts for Success](#))

This report shares some stakeholder suggestions about ways MEAF’s approach to promoting **INCLUSION, INNOVATION, and IMPACT** can be expanded to further empower youth with disabilities, focusing on best practices that can make a big difference in the lives of youth.

INCLUSION

THE SUMMIT AFFIRMED THAT MEANINGFUL *INCLUSION* IS TRANSFORMATIVE. Creating inclusive environments that are welcoming to people of all backgrounds and abilities—in school, community and work settings—helps to elevate knowledge and change people’s perceptions of youth with disabilities (Yw/D). Stakeholder recommendations include:

1. Increase Knowledge to Understand the Capabilities of Yw/D and Set High Expectations

Low expectations limit growth, development, and opportunities for Yw/D. Inclusive environments help educators, service providers, and employers, as well as youth themselves, understand that everyone has unique abilities.

- ✓ Awareness training for parents, educators and HR professionals is the first step to developing inclusive workplaces.

2. Support Yw/D to Overcome Barriers to Access Meaningful Employment

Transportation, work demand comprehension, and social inexperience are only a few of the barriers that need to be bridged in order to help Yw/D claim a thriving adult space in the world. It’s vital to identify and address those barriers for each participant in a program.

- ✓ By partnering with an Employer Network—like *Bridges from School to Work*—employers can identify, address & reduce barriers to create a welcoming, inclusive work environment.

3. Build Mentoring Teams that Include Youth with Disabilities and Peer Mentors

“We all believe in helping these young people spark their imaginations and explore the possibilities. By diving into the action and participating in authentic work experiences, these youth can launch themselves into their passions and their livelihoods.” Dr. George Tilson, Tilson and Diaz Solutions, Inc.

- ✓ Providing quality mentoring opportunities, with trained mentors—such as the USBLN *Career Link Mentoring Program*—is key to helping Yw/D set & achieve their career goals.

LEARNING



“Transformation, what does that mean? It means that authentic, competitive, integrated job—that opportunity for a young adult, that they may never have had before.”

- Tad Asbury, VP and Executive Director
Marriott Foundation for People with Disabilities

FEATURED LEARNING RESOURCE

The HSC Foundation’s Youth Transitions Collaborative *Work Early, Work Often* video series features three educational videos for Parents / Care Givers, Youth and Employers.



INNOVATION

THE SUMMIT CELEBRATED *INNOVATION*, FUELED BY INTEGRATED SOLUTIONS ROOTED IN A “COMMUNITY APPROACH” AT EVERY LEVEL TO EMPOWER YOUTH. Programs expand new possibilities for bridging current gaps in service by engaging with national collaborations, creating leadership opportunities for youth with disabilities (Yw/D), and connecting schools to employers. Stakeholder recommendations include:

1. *Combine the Strengths of Families, Schools and Service Providers to Work with Employers.*

Identify a diverse core of community members which can support Yw/D, including peers, employees and community members with disabilities, and creating unique teams to support self-determination and problem solving.

- ✓ The Youth Transition Collaborative is an example of organizations coming together to share best practices to help youth successfully transition to jobs.

2. *Facilitate Leadership Training Opportunities for Youth with Disabilities*

Raise youth expectations and increase empowerment by developing self-confidence and self-advocacy skills to promote successful workplace integration.

- ✓ Provide self-advocacy training—such as the Autistic Self Advocacy Network’s Campus Inclusion Academy—for Yw/D, and provide opportunities to develop youth-led initiatives, like the I am Norm Inclusion Campaign.

3. *Connect Schools to Employers to Create Experiential Education Opportunities*

It is vital to include parents, schools and community organizations in assessing and encouraging Yw/D as they make the transition from school to the workforce.

- ✓ Participating in National Service Programs—like the Utah Conservation Corps—can help Yw/D learn about career options and gain practical work and leadership experience.

CONNECTING



“It’s really important to have an open line of discussion...throughout the [job] process to fully accommodate that person with a disability. I was fortunate enough to have a full-time summer internship at a software development company and I realized it was the only way I was able to succeed at the level that I did was communication with my boss, my mentor.”

- Tia Holmes, Undergraduate Student

FEATURED CONNECTING RESOURCE

Connecting youth, with and without disabilities, and empowering them to develop their own youth-led project helps all youth develop their leadership skills.

The I am Norm Inclusion Campaign is one example.



IMPACT

THE SUMMIT AFFIRMED THAT INCREASING *IMPACT* BY SCALING-UP INNOVATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE PROMISING EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES IS VITAL TO SUCCESS. Long term impact is achieved through increasing awareness, building leadership skills, and creating opportunities where youth with disabilities can demonstrate their talents and employers recognize the benefits of an inclusive workplace. Stakeholder recommendations include:

1. *Expand Employment Preparation through Supported Internships*

Empower Yw/D to be the leaders in their own lives and decision-making, to understand their own gifts and goals, and to claim a meaningful adult future that engages them fully at their highest level.

- ✓ Innovative, model programs—like Project SEARCH—provide high school internships to students with cognitive disabilities resulting in impressive employment outcomes.

2. *Create a Pipeline to Support STEM Career Inclusion & Excellence*

Introduce Yw/D to STEM career options in high-school and provide a path to pursue higher education and employment for these in-demand jobs.

- ✓ University of Washington’s DO-IT Center is one example that is creating a pipeline with accessSTEM careers.

3. *Identify Employment Opportunities Where Human Resources are Needed*

As baby-boomers age out, jobs are opening up, but a trained workforce is needed to fill these jobs. Identify these jobs and train Yw/D for these positions if they have an interest in the field.

- ✓ Specialisterne, which prepares autistic students to enter Information Technology jobs, and Advanced Inclusive Manufacturing, a vocational training program at the University of Pittsburgh, are two innovative examples of matching workforce needs to career interests.

WORKING



“Sometimes having a disability actually makes someone more qualified than somebody without a disability. We are—by [virtue of] our disabilities—problem solvers.”

- Jonathan Duvall, PhD Candidate
Human Engineering Research Laboratories
University of Pittsburgh

FEATURED WORKING RESOURCE

Learn how to prepare and accommodate Yw/D for in-demand careers in STEM fields from the DO-IT Center’s accessSTEM programs and resources.



CONCLUSION: A CALL TO ACTION

JOIN THE M>PWR INITIATIVE TO *EMPOWER* YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES TO SUCCESSFULLY TRANSITION TO THE WORKPLACE & LEAD PRODUCTIVE LIVES.

Employers, youth with disabilities (Yw/D), parents, educators, service-providers, and community volunteers all have a role to play in identifying barriers, elevating knowledge, and increasing opportunities to create and scale-up innovative approaches to creating welcoming, inclusive work environments that have a lasting impact.

1. *Provide Real-Work Opportunities*

Employers can help Yw/D gain experience by providing shadowing, mentoring, internships & on-the-job training opportunities. This also helps employers gain exposure to the capabilities of people with disabilities.

- ✓ Abandon the “charity” approach to employment and become a model employer that embraces diversity and takes advantage of the unique skills and abilities each individual brings.

2. *Build Leadership Skills*

Yw/D can prepare themselves for employment by developing their soft-skills and participating in leadership development opportunities.

- ✓ Take the initiative by learning about career options, setting high goals, networking and taking advantage of every opportunity to gain practical experience.

3. *Be a Mentor*

Parents, educators, service-providers, and volunteers can help by setting high expectations and being mentors to empower young people as they transition through school to the workforce.

- ✓ Cultivate and recruit adults with disabilities and peer youth mentors to provide support and coaching to help Yw/D set and achieve their goals.

The attached **M>PWR Checklist** features steps you can take to help reduce barriers to employment and empower youth with disabilities to lead productive lives.

LEADING

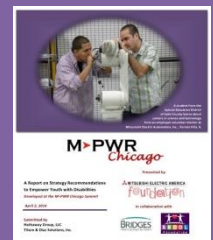


“...high expectations is really key. I think it begins with parents...then higher expectations for ourselves and then...high expectations from employers...people need to understand that people with disabilities can do a job, it might be differently, but in most cases, with the right supports, [they] do just as well as anyone else.”

- Ms. Meredith Raymond, Correspondence Analyst, Administration for Community Living, U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services





FEATURED LEADING RESOURCE

Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation’s **M>PWR Initiative** is leading the way, by connecting educators, employers and Yw/D to develop effective strategies to empower youth.



Learn more from the **M>PWR Chicago Report.**

M>PWR Checklist

IDENTIFY BARRIERS	ELEVATE KNOWLEDGE	INCREASE OPPORTUNITY	EMPOWER YOUTH
<p>Youth with disabilities face a variety of barriers in obtaining inclusive, competitive, employment.</p> 	<p>EMPLOYERS CAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Change perceptions by focusing on abilities <input type="checkbox"/> Increase awareness through employee training <input type="checkbox"/> Gain exposure by mentoring youth w/disabilities <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure workplaces are physically accessible <input type="checkbox"/> Intentionally recruit & hire people w/disabilities <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure HR forms & onboarding are accessible <input type="checkbox"/> Match skills to essential job needs at all levels <input type="checkbox"/> Create a culture of inclusion—lead by example, welcome disclosure, budget for accommodations <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in the Disability Equality Index <p>YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES CAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Get prepared for employment by increasing your knowledge & developing soft-skills <input type="checkbox"/> Increase self-confidence by seeking out leadership development training programs <input type="checkbox"/> Develop self-advocacy skills—express your needs <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate abilities with a youth-led project <input type="checkbox"/> Learn about all career opportunities—aim high! <input type="checkbox"/> Network, maintain connections & find mentors <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in a Greater Washington Internship Coalition or similar intern/mentoring program <p>PARENTS/TEACHERS/VOLUNTEERS CAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Raise expectations, encourage youth to work! <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in training; peer-to-peer supports <input type="checkbox"/> Connect educators with employers; understand what employers need & match youth interests <input type="checkbox"/> Provide experiential learning opportunities <input type="checkbox"/> Abandon “charity” model, focus on abilities <input type="checkbox"/> Recruit & serve as mentors, identify internships <input type="checkbox"/> Create culture of inclusion; lead by example <input type="checkbox"/> Find role models with disabilities for youth <input type="checkbox"/> Use Work Early, Work Often Videos for training 	<p>PROVIDE REAL-LIFE WORK EXPERIENCE!</p> <p>Shadowing, mentoring, internships & on-the-job training help youth gain experience & employers gain exposure to the capabilities of people with disabilities. Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Offer work-rotation internships like Project SEARCH <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare youth for science, technology, engineering, arts & math (STEAM) careers with job training, like Specialisterne or Advanced Inclusive Manufacturing. <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborate with service learning organizations, like GRID Alternatives, to provide practical experience <p><i>Hire youth for their unique problem-solving skills!</i></p>  <p>BUILD LEADERSHIP SKILLS!</p> <p>Participating in leadership development opportunities helps youth gain skills & change societal attitudes. Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in National Service, like UCC's Inclusive Crew Project, to gain leadership skills & experience <input type="checkbox"/> Gain self-advocacy skills by participating in projects like the ASAN Autistic Campus Inclusion Summer Academy <input type="checkbox"/> Develop & support youth-led projects to demonstrate abilities, such as the I am Norm Campaign <input type="checkbox"/> Gain leadership skills by interning with AAPD or USICD <p><i>Hold roundtables with executive leaders & opportunity fairs!</i></p> 	<p>BE A MENTOR!</p> <p>Mentoring is an effective way to empower young people as they transition through school to the workforce. Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Business professionals can mentor rising leaders through projects like USBLN® CareerLink Mentoring <input type="checkbox"/> Hosting AAPD Disability Mentoring Days at company locations introduces youth to career options <input type="checkbox"/> Provide virtual mentoring to students in science, technology, engineering & math (STEM) careers through programs like DO-IT Mentors <p><i>Learn more at www.MEAF.org</i></p> 
<p>MITSUBISHI ELECTRIC AMERICA FOUNDATION M>PWR INITIATIVE</p> <p>MITSUBISHI ELECTRIC AMERICA FOUNDATION launched the M>PWR Initiative to <i>empower</i> youth with disabilities to lead productive lives. MEAF held a series of regional summits with stakeholders who recommend elevating knowledge & increasing opportunity to help youth transition from school to work.</p>			

LEARN MORE

A NUMBER OF INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS WERE FEATURED AT THE SUMMIT. Begin exploring ways to start empowering youth with disabilities and help them thrive.

American Association of People with Disabilities
<http://www.aapd.com/>

Autistic Self Advocacy Network
<http://autisticadvocacy.org/>

Bridges from School to Work
<http://www.bridgestowork.org/>

DO-IT Center, Univ. of Washington
<http://www.washington.edu/doiit/>

Greater Washington Internship Coalition
<http://www.gwicinternships.org/>

Human Engineering Research Laboratories,
Univ. of Pittsburgh
<http://www.herl.pitt.edu/>

Institute on Disability, Univ. of New Hampshire
<http://iod.unh.edu/Home.aspx>

Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation
<http://www.meaf.org/>

National Collaborative on Workforce and
Disability/Youth <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/information-brief-11>

National Disability Mentoring Coalition:
<http://www.pyd.org/national-disability-mentoring-coalition.php>

Office of Disability Employment Policy
US Department of Labor
<https://www.dol.gov/odep/>

Project SEARCH
<http://www.projectsearch.us/>

US Business Leadership Network
<http://www.usbln.org/>

Youth Transitions Collaborative
<http://thenytc.org/aboutcollab>

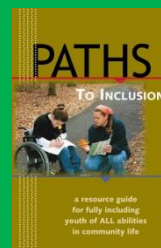
THRIVING



“Inclusion is not just a program. It's an attitude—an approach—that ensures every person regardless of ability or background can meaningfully participate in all aspects for life...”

- Ms. Andrea LaVant, Inclusion Sr. Specialist
Girl Scouts of the Nation's Capital

FEATURED THRIVING RESOURCES



Thriving is not only about working, learning, connecting, and leading but finding your place in the community – finding **Paths to Inclusion**

Empower Yw/D by developing effective mentoring programs. Learn more from the Partners for Youth with Disabilities **Best Practice Guide**

