



# Bridging the Gap: Expanding Supported Employment for Adults with I/DD from San Francisco to Marin County

Carolyn DeVoto & Risa Harrison  
The Arc San Francisco and Project SEARCH



There are shortcomings in both the number and quality of Supported Employment programs for adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) who have exited high school and special education programs.

**The shortcomings lead to a nationwide issue of the population of adults with I/DD having high under- and unemployment rates.**

Current research and additional data gathered from the applied practice of an internship program at The Arc San Francisco (The Arc SF) will be used to demonstrate the benefits of providing highly structured training and skills development for adults with I/DD and evaluate if the organization should expand into Marin County.

**The benefits of providing highly structured training and skills development will help adults with I/DD to not only seek and secure competitive employment, but to pursue satisfying careers.**

The authors' goal is to provide The Arc SF with an evaluation of their current programs and recommendations regarding expanding their services to Marin County.

Recommendations include a compelling case and supportive materials for The Arc SF to successfully leverage their existing partnership with Project SEARCH in San Francisco to expand the program to Marin County.



A literature review was conducted and describes the successes and failures of current supported employment programs, highlighting **the need for a bridge for adults with I/DD to employment**, and preventing adults with disabilities from experiencing lifelong dependence, poverty, and dissatisfaction with their lives.

Additionally, outcomes of a pilot version of The Arc SF's partnership with Project SEARCH **to provide a workplace immersion internship program** in San Francisco were analyzed to underscore the advantages of expanding The Arc SF's services north from San Francisco into Marin County.

The literature review provided research which showed:

- 1) **Only 23% of working-age Americans with disabilities were employed in 2013** (Nord, Luecking, Mank, Kiernan, & Wray, 2013).
- 2) **Employment rates** for adults with I/DD who receive supported employment through vocational rehabilitation agencies **are consistently higher** than for those who do not receive supported employment (Wehman, Chan, Ditchman, & Kang, 2014, p. 303).
- 3) Supported Employment in state **vocational rehabilitation agencies are, "an effective mechanism of change** for young adults with I/DD" (Wehman, Chan, Ditchman, & Kang, 2014, p. 303).
- 4) **Individuals with I/DD who are not working are less satisfied in their lives, and are motivated to change their circumstances through employment**, especially younger adults (Rose, Perks, Fidan & Hurst, 2010).

The evaluation of The Arc SF's Project SEARCH nine month, full immersion internship program pilot program showed:

- 1) **Clients are getting better jobs in better companies**
- 2) **Clients are getting higher salaries**
- 3) **Clients are getting jobs with opportunities to be promoted**

In two years, The Arc SF has supported 298 clients in gaining and maintaining employment at 120 job sites, of whom 35% work full-time.

This is a **20% increase in full-time workers** compared to statistics prior to beginning the internship program.

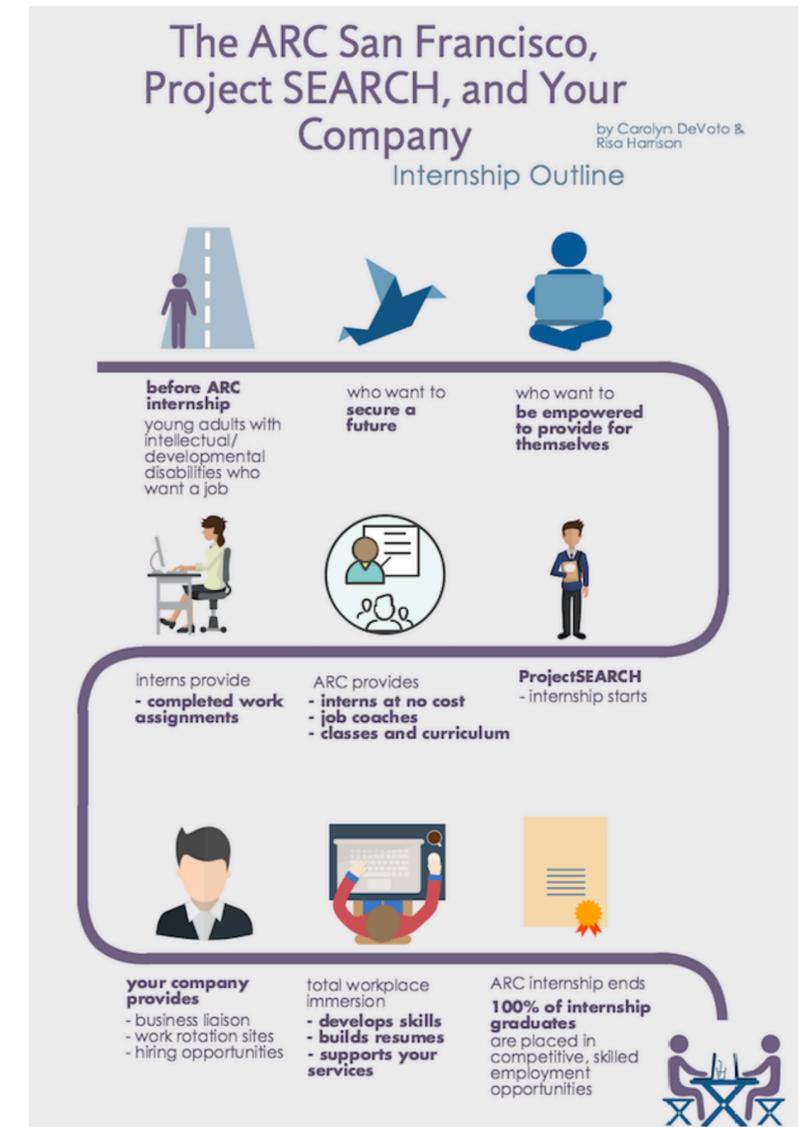
**The placement rate for interns is currently 96%, and those employed are working an average of 32 hours per week, making an average of \$18.50 per hour**, compared with non-intern graduates of supported employment who make an average of \$13.10 per hour.

Most importantly, the program has yielded more individuals with significant disabilities who are having **significantly higher self-esteem and satisfaction rates with their lives**.

- The above research underscores the positive impact and immediate need for more supported employment programs for adults with I/DD.
- Specifically, real work experiences with appropriate support structures such as a workplace immersion internship program are the most needed and yield higher self-esteem and satisfaction rates with their lives.
- The Arc SF should expand their model of supported employment and the workplace immersion internship program to Marin County to increase their social impact and performance.

- Marin County has limited supported employment programs for adults with I/DD. The Arc SF can make a large difference with the expansion of their workplace immersion internship program.

The authors of this poster have created the below infographic for The Arc SF to use in their expansion efforts in Marin County:



- Nord, D., Luecking, R., Mank, D., Kiernan, W., & Wray, C. (2013). The state of the science of employment and economic self-sufficiency for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *Intellectual And Developmental Disabilities*, 51(5), 376-384. doi:10.1352/1934-9556-51.5.376
- Rose, J., Perks, J., Fidan, M., & Hurst, M. (2010). Assessing motivation for work in people with developmental disabilities. *Journal Of Intellectual Disabilities*, 14(2), 147-155.
- Wehman, P., Chan, F., Ditchman, N., & Kang, H. (2014). Effect of supported employment on vocational rehabilitation outcomes of transition-age youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities: A case control study. *Intellectual And Developmental Disabilities*, 52(4), 296-310. doi:10.1352