



# National Funders Collaborate to Support Groundbreaking Work in Disability & Employment

Published: October 29th, 2014

New York, N.Y. (October 29, 2014) **Autism Speaks, Kessler Foundation, May and Stanley Smith Charitable Trust, New York Collaborates for Autism and Poses Family Foundation**, have collectively committed almost \$7.5 million to support groundbreaking work in disability and inclusion in employment in 2014 and 2015. The funders joined forces with leaders across sectors to pursue a new collaborative strategy that seeks to expand employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities and accelerate the adoption of disability inclusion initiatives. The increased capacity provided by this collective funding allows private companies, non-profit organizations, schools and universities and public agencies to work together in new and innovative ways.

The collaboration supports the Pepsi ACT (Achieving Change Together) initiative, created in partnership between PepsiCo and Disability Solutions @Ability Beyond in 2013. Pepsi ACT, a national, multi-year project will expand the number of people with disabilities that are employed by PepsiCo in all career and experience levels. To date, the Pepsi ACT project has launched in three U.S. cities, including 2 pilot sites, with each site resulting in successful employment for people with disabilities and veterans with disabilities. Pepsi ACT will continue expansion in PepsiCo Americas Beverages' North American regions in multiple cities in 2015. PepsiCo and Disability Solutions @Ability Beyond believe that Pepsi ACT will inspire other corporations to create sustainable hiring initiatives based on the successes of Pepsi ACT model.

The collaboration also supports disability and inclusion employment efforts through establishment of public/private partnerships in local communities. This cluster model, started by Poses Family Foundation, has three main components:

- **Employer consortium:** A consortium of employers committed to implement or expand programs to employ individuals with disabilities, agreeing to share ownership of the cluster initiative, accountability for hiring goals, and regular communication to share best practices.
- **Community partnership:** A public/private partnership to coordinate services for job-seekers with disabilities, with a single point of contact for employers.
- **Talent pool:** Connections among employers, public and private agencies, and schools to reach young adults with disabilities who are in transition from school to work, including students with learning and attention issues who are often not reached by traditional agencies.

- In addition, the collaboration supports the US Business Leadership Network® (USBLN®) “Going for the Gold” project, which uses an innovative cohort model to facilitate the efforts of six national employers to ignite and aggressively implement high-impact disability and inclusion efforts.

Starting later this year, the funder collaborative will also distribute an Employer’s Guide to Disability and Inclusion Programs to corporations around the U.S. This guide will serve as a toolkit to inform employers on the steps needed to create greater disability inclusion. The funders agree that the unemployment rate of adults with disabilities is far too high. The goal in funding the development of a self-sustaining profitable business model is ultimately to expand employment opportunities for these individuals who have the capacity to significantly contribute to productivity and the work environment. By engaging a range of stakeholders to achieve high-impact inclusive employment goals, the initiative is uniquely positioned to have influence beyond the life of the initial funding. We invite other funders interested in joining this collaborative to contact James Emmett at [jemmett@posesfamilyfoundation.org](mailto:jemmett@posesfamilyfoundation.org).

### **About Autism Speaks**

Autism Speaks is the world’s leading autism science and advocacy organization. It is dedicated to funding research into the causes, prevention, treatments and a cure for autism; increasing awareness of autism spectrum disorders; and advocating for the needs of individuals with autism and their families. Autism Speaks was founded in February 2005 by Suzanne and Bob Wright, the grandparents of a child with autism. Mr. Wright is the former vice chairman of General Electric and chief executive officer of NBC and NBC Universal. Since its inception, Autism Speaks has committed more than \$500 million to its mission, the majority in science and medical research. Each year Walk Now for Autism Speaks events are held in more than 100 cities across North America. On the global front, Autism Speaks has established partnerships in more than 60 countries on five continents to foster international research, services and awareness. To learn more about Autism Speaks, please visit [AutismSpeaks.org](http://AutismSpeaks.org).

### **About Kessler Foundation**

Kessler Foundation, a major nonprofit organization in the field of disability, is a global leader in rehabilitation research that seeks to improve cognition, mobility and long-term outcomes, including employment, for people with neurological disabilities caused by diseases and injuries of the brain and spinal cord. Kessler Foundation leads the nation in funding innovative programs that expand opportunities for employment for people with disabilities. For more information, visit [www.kesslerfoundation.org](http://www.kesslerfoundation.org).

### **About the May and Stanley Smith Charitable Trust**

Created in 1989, the May and Stanley Smith Charitable Trust (the Trust) is an independent foundation that stewards the charitable intentions of May and Stanley Smith beyond their lifetimes. The Trust is guided by the belief that every individual possesses an innate dignity; a capacity to overcome adversity, hardship, or missteps; and a potential for transformation that, when accompanied by motivation and effort, compel support from the community. Funding supports organizations that offer opportunities to People with Disabilities, Foster Youth, Elders, and Veterans. Grant making benefits these populations living in the Western Region of the United States and British Columbia, Canada. <http://www.adminitrustllc.com/may-and-stanley-smith-charitable-trust/>.

### **About NYCA**

New York Collaborates for Autism (NYCA) is a non-profit organization founded in 2003 dedicated to creating innovative replicable programs that address the needs of individuals and families living with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) right now. NYCA accelerates change in the way autism services are provided by identifying national leaders to help shape state-of-the-art programs, partnering with leading community-based

organizations, providing technical expertise, assisting in early stage management and raising seed money for these initiatives. NYCA develops comprehensive, evidence-based community services and resources that are nationally recognized. NYCA is responsible for the creation of the NYCA Charter School, Hunter College Autism Research, Practice and Policy Center, BOOST! after school programs, Project SEARCH Collaborates for Autism and the Center for Autism and the Developing Brain, a collaboration with NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital and its affiliated medical schools of Columbia and Weill Cornell. NYCA sees the possibilities for people with ASD and creates the path to achieve them.

[www.nyc4a.org](http://www.nyc4a.org)

### **About Poses Family Foundation**

Poses Family Foundation (PFF) is a New York City-based foundation that supports organizations in five different focus areas. The Foundation is particularly passionate about and deeply committed to improving the lives of people with learning and attention issues. PFF launched its Workplace Initiative as part of a portfolio of high impact work. The Workplace Initiative is designed to create thousands of sustainable jobs for people with all types of disabilities, while ensuring that the initiative addresses individuals who have learning and attention issues because they are often overlooked in jobs programs.

### **About Disability Solutions @Ability Beyond**

Ability Beyond is a non-profit organization with more than 60 years experience providing innovative solutions to increase successful employment opportunities for jobseekers with disabilities based in Bethel, Connecticut. In 2012, Ability Beyond created a business focused consulting division, Disability Solutions @Ability Beyond. The consulting group works directly with national and regional businesses on improving strategy and implementation for sustainable, company led hiring and retention initiatives for jobseekers with disabilities. Ability Beyond believes that the work of Disability Solutions will have exponential impact on the employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities nationally. To learn more about Ability Beyond, please visit us at [www.abilitybeyond.org](http://www.abilitybeyond.org) or for more information about Disability Solutions @Ability Beyond visit: [www.disabilitysolutionsatwork.org](http://www.disabilitysolutionsatwork.org).

### **About the US Business Leadership Network® (USBLN®)**

The US Business Leadership Network® (USBLN®) is a national non-profit that helps business drive performance by leveraging disability inclusion in the workplace, supply chain, and marketplace. The USBLN® serves as the collective voice of over 50 Business Leadership Network affiliates across the United States, representing over 5,000 businesses. Additionally, the USBLN® Disability Supplier Diversity Program® (DSDP) is the nation's leading third party certification program for disability-owned businesses, including businesses owned by service-disabled veterans. [www.usbln.org](http://www.usbln.org).

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