

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY
BRIDGE TO SUCCESS PILOT PROGRAM
Submitted by: Human Resources Department



SECTION I: PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Bridge to Success (BTS) program is an alternative employment process for persons with developmental disabilities. It is designed to minimize the adverse impact of the traditional selection process by providing an alternate means of assessing the qualifications and skills of job applicants with disabilities. The BTS program will be launched as a two-year pilot on January 1, 2017. During the pilot, Human Resources (HR) and Risk Management will evaluate the program and make recommendations for its future.

The Human Resources Department will act as lead for the program and will designate a BTS Coordinator to oversee its implementation and provide assistance to County departments and applicants. BTS outreach, within the County and to community partners, will be led by the EEO Officer within Risk Management.

Positions in the BTS Program are non-Merit System positions within Contra Costa County (the County). These positions are classified as Exempt and Project positions. Project positions are governed by Administrative Bulletin 416.3 (attached). Candidates filling the BTS positions are subject to a one-year evaluation period. If assigned to a project position and if the candidate performs the essential functions of the job satisfactorily during the evaluation period, he or she may be transitioned to a permanent and classified Merit System position, following approval by the Board of Supervisors.

Most adults with developmental disabilities receive job placement and coaching services through state programs, called Supported Employment. The HR/BTS Coordinator will partner with these programs including the State of California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) and local Community-Based Organizations (CBO's) serving people with developmental disabilities. The job coach's function is to support the employee as-needed, including helping he or she master job skills and functions, as well as assisting the manager/supervisor regarding the needs of the employee. The County does not pay for the job coach; the coach is paid through the DOR or the Regional Center, the state agency that manages services for people with developmental disabilities.

The BTS Program is consistent with the County's overall commitment to equal opportunity and diversifications of our workforce by ensuring people with developmental disabilities are offered opportunities for employment. This program was modeled on similar successful programs such as in Alameda County's Step-up Program, and with input from Supported Employment experts in this field.

SECTION II: ELIGIBILITY

In order for an individual to participate in this program, the candidate must meet the definition of an “Individual with a Disability,” as defined by the Fair Employment and Housing Act (Government Code section 12926), and be certified eligible by a DOR Counselor as having a developmental disability. The DOR certification documentation must be signed by both a DOR counselor and the person seeking to participate in the program. The candidate must also meet the minimum qualifications for the classification.

SECTION III: HIRING PROCESS

The following guidelines explain the proposed selection process and program design.

A. Designation of Positions

The classifications that have been identified for the pilot program are: Institutional Services Worker and Institutional Services Aide in the Health Department, and Library Aide in the County Library. During the pilot program, two BTS project positions will be created for the Institutional Services Aide and Worker classifications and two Library Aide - Exempt positions will be also created. The positions may be filled on either a full or part-time basis. Human Resources will develop job specifications for the project classifications which are specific to the eligibility requirements of the BTS program.

If during the pilot, vacancies in these classifications become available in permanent positions, additional BTS positions may be authorized by County Administration upon request of the hiring department. However, existing permanent employees must first be given the opportunity to request reassignment to the vacant permanent positions in the same classification or in the same level of their deep classification pursuant to the appropriate Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with County employee organizations. If no permanent employee chooses to bid on the vacancies, the hiring process identified in this section may be followed for a BTS appointment.

B. Requesting Applications

When a BTS vacancy is available to be filled, HR will inform the DOR and CBO's and request that they identify any candidates who may meet the minimum qualifications, and notify the HR/BTS Coordinator. These individuals will be asked to complete a County application and submit it to the HR/BTS Coordinator within 10 business days of the notification. If no applications are received, the EEO Officer and HR/BTS Coordinator will continue outreach efforts.

C. Application Review

The HR/BTS Coordinator will screen all applicants for minimum qualifications and eligibility for participation. If more than five (5) qualified applicants are identified for a vacancy, the HR/BTS Coordinator will work with the department (and job coaches as appropriate) to determine if additional screening criteria should be applied. Departments will interview all BTS candidates referred by HR.

D. Interview Process

Interviews will be scheduled by the hiring department. Any accommodation requests from candidates should be handled in accordance with the County's ADA policy. The departments will work with the County ADA Coordinator and the departmental ADA representative to address accommodation requests, as is the current practice.

Candidates may utilize an advocate or job coach for the interview and selection process. This individual must be identified at the time of application with contact information (telephone, email address) for the HR/BTS Coordinator. The HR/BTS Coordinator will manage communication with the candidate and his or her designated advocate or job coach, and the department.

At this stage, the advocate or job coach may serve in one or more of the following ways:

- Provide interview preparation assistance
- Be present and provide "moral" support to the applicant during the interview process
- Ask for clarification of questions from the panel members
- Re-state interview question(s) to better assist the applicant in answering
- Prompt the candidate to respond as appropriate and necessary.

The BTS candidates, along with their identified advocate or job coach, will be provided with interview questions at least one day prior to the interview. This provides the candidate time to prepare for the interview, working with their job coach or advocate, as needed.

After the completion of scheduled interviews, departments may select a qualified candidate and will advise the HR/BTS Coordinator who will assist the departmental Personnel Officer in notifying candidates who were not selected. Since this is a project position specifically created for the BTS pilot, if not filled, the department will maintain the opening until a suitable BTS candidate is found.

E. Placement

The department will make an offer of employment to the selected candidate and inform

the HR/BTS Coordinator who will assist in facilitating any accommodation needs for the candidate with the County and department ADA Coordinators as needed.

SECTION IV: EMPLOYMENT STATUS

All individuals selected for the Institutional Service Aide or Worker classification under this program will be appointed to positions as project employees. The project appointment status will last for the duration of the evaluation period, which is one year unless ended sooner if the appointment is not deemed successful by County standards. During the evaluation period, BTS employees will receive the same salary and benefits as any other similarly situated project employee.

Candidates who are selected for the Library Aide - Exempt classification will be designated as permanent; however they will have an evaluation period, which is one year unless ended sooner if the appointment is not deemed successful by County standards. BTS employees will receive the same salary as any other similarly situated Library Aide - Exempt employee; however, these positions may not be eligible for benefits.

If the BTS employee successfully passes his or her evaluation period, the project position will be converted to a classified Merit System position. If a permanent position vacancy does not exist at that time for this purpose, the department will request approval from the Board of Supervisors to convert the project position under the BTS program to a permanent position.

SECTION V: EVALUATION PERIOD

The purpose of the one year on-the-job performance evaluation period is to assess the knowledge, skills and abilities of individuals who have been selected for project employment. Candidates must successfully demonstrate their ability to perform the essential functions of the job, with or without a reasonable accommodation, in order to successfully complete their BTS evaluation. The HR/BTS Coordinator will work with Risk Management to create a form for this purpose.

Many BTS employees will be working with a job coach through the DOR or a CBO. The job coach will work directly with the supervisor and the employee, and may also receive assistance from the County ADA Coordinator in Risk Management.

The supervisor is responsible for monitoring the progress of the candidate during the evaluation period. The supervisor must evaluate the BTS candidate every month during the evaluation period and document this on the evaluation form. The evaluation will contain the supervisor's assessment of the candidate's performance, including skills and abilities as well as behaviors appropriate for the position such as attendance.

Problematic areas should be discussed with the candidate and the job coach who will assist the employee in understanding the nuances of the job and evaluate potential solutions. Additional training can be provided as well as needed reasonable accommodations for the employee. Job coaches can also assist departments in communicating with employees if a placement is deemed unsuccessful and will be concluded.

SECTION VI: TERMINATION PROCESS

The termination process for BTS project employees is the same as it is for other project employees pursuant to Administrative Bulletin 416.3. Terms and conditions of employment expressed in the Salary Regulations, resolution No. 2015/3 or applicable Memoranda of Understanding shall apply as the general rules of employment in project positions.

Candidates in exempt positions are at-will and the termination process is the same as it is for other employees in County exempt positions.