

Vendor name	AbilityFirst
Vendor number(s)	HX0200
Primary regional center	South Central Los Angeles Regional Center (SCLARC)
Service type(s)	Rehab Work Activity Program
Service code(s)	#954
Number of consumers currently serving and current staff to consumer ratio.	67 being served currently; staff-to-participant ratio 1:17.
Have you or the organization you work with been a past recipient of HCBS Funding?	Yes. We received funding from SCLARC in 2017 and 2018 to support the salary of one job developer; AbilityFirst also received funding from Eastern Los Angeles, Lanterman, and Westside Regional Centers, primarily to support expert-led training for staff, program participants, and families on the HCBS rules and person-centered planning.
Please provide a brief description of the service/setting that includes what a typical day consists of and how services are currently provided; include barriers to compliance with the HCBS rules.	<p>The current design and structure of the Work Activity Program (WAP) presents significant barriers to compliance with the HCBS rules, including: limited opportunities for choice, pre-determined range of options for work, established location, etc. While goals and outcomes are specific to the individual, they are still limited to the overall framework of the WAP in terms of the type of work that is performed, the hours of operation, and where the program takes place. Because of this program structure, where a large number of individuals are served at one physical location with a pre-determined program design, we are transitioning from the WAP to a person-centered programming model that provides our participants the fullest access possible to their communities with a target effective date of January 2020. We have informed our participants and families about the impact of the HCBS rules and our plans to make our programs person-centered, and have provided opportunities for them to ask questions, make suggestions, and express their thoughts and concerns. We have attempted to make our new and planned programs responsive both to their wishes and the requirements of the HCBS rules.</p> <p>Another significant barrier is that community-focused, person-centered program models require lower staff ratios, yet we already have great difficulty recruiting and retaining</p>

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	<p>highly qualified staff. The upcoming increases in minimum wage in our service area will continue to exacerbate this problem, which stems from an inadequate reimbursement structure that does not fully cover the cost of providing services.</p> <p>By 2020, our resources will be allocated away from the WAP model to new and existing programs, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported employment;</li> <li>• AbilityFirst College to Career program;</li> <li>• DiscoverAbility, a time-limited exploratory program that helps individuals identify and explore their personal interests and priorities;</li> <li>• ExploreAbility, community-based programs incorporating paid or volunteer work, other community activities, and skill-building using a small-group model; and</li> <li>• A new community-based PossAbility program, using small groups and staffing ratios of 1:2 (and 1:1 where needed).</li> </ul> <p>We are requesting funding to develop and implement PossAbility in the SCLARC catchment area. The core values of the program are potential, possibility, individual choice, and independence. We have operated PossAbility as a pilot program in the Pasadena area during 2018 and are requesting funding now to expand it to include individuals in the area served by the L.L. Frank Work Center in South Los Angeles. HCBS compliance funding will help us launch the new program and mitigate some of the financial burden of transitioning from the WAP 1:17 staffing ratio to a community-based program with much lower ratios and richer opportunities for participation and engagement.</p>
<p>Identify which HCBS federal requirements this concept addresses that are currently out of compliance.</p>	<p>This concept will help us continue our progress toward achieving compliance with HCBS Requirements 1, 2, &amp; 4. The PossAbility program will address the requirements in which the WAP is not in compliance by offering choice-based community-based programming based on individuals' needs, preferences, and abilities that corresponds to their person-centered plans and goals.</p> <p>In anticipation of the closure of the WAP programs, we are continuing to assist individuals to develop their person-centered plans and explore community opportunities that</p>

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	<p>meet their interests and goals. These plans will form the basis of new, individualized ISPs that incorporate what is important to the individuals as well as what is important for each one to be able to achieve his or her goals.</p>
<p>Narrative/description of the concept; include justification for the funding request and explain how the concept would achieve proposed outcomes.</p>	<p>The PossAbility program is a community-based integration program designed to empower adults to develop skills and autonomy and participate in their communities. It incorporates the following crucial elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued and enhanced person-centered planning;</li> <li>• Exploratory and discovery activities to help individuals explore and identify their interests and goals</li> <li>• Identification, cultivation, and stewardship of appropriate mainstream community resources;</li> <li>• Direct support staff to implement the program;</li> <li>• Transportation (using public and private options, including AbilityFirst vehicles).</li> </ul> <p>The person-centered program incorporates small groups and staffing ratios of 1:2 (and 1:1 where needed). The program's core values are potential, possibility, individual choice, and independence. An individual's unique interests, needs, and goals are the paramount drivers of the activities he or she pursues in the program, alongside others who share similar interests and goals. The PossAbility program is completely community-based. Primary overall program outcomes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased access to and participation in the community;</li> <li>• Broader community experiences and expanded awareness of community opportunities;</li> <li>• Enhanced skills in the areas of job readiness and employment, communication, socialization, independent living, and healthy living skills; and</li> <li>• Greater community engagement, participation, and volunteerism.</li> </ul> <p>Each individual will have a person-centered plan (PCP) built upon the elements of the Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) or Essential Lifestyle planning models. The project includes funding for a PCP facilitator. Most WAP participants have had very limited opportunities to learn about what is important to them or to develop the social, vocational, advocacy, and community access skills</p>

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	<p>needed to succeed at work and in the community. Therefore, some will benefit from additional personal discovery before they are able to make informed choices during the PCP process. The DiscoverAbility case manager will assist them on a 1:1 basis. Discovery activities may include community exploration, job shadowing, interest assessment, social observation, and interviews with members of the circle of support, to help the individual discover what is important to him or her. The discovery process will seek to explore vocational and personal interests, social capital and community integration needs, and community navigation skills.</p> <p>Individuals will be matched with others in the program who share similar goals and interests for small-group activities with a staff member (ideally one who shares those interests, and is able to provide additional insight into the scheduled activities). For example, individuals who have an interest in working in retail may shadow employees in a workplace, or volunteer to gain experience interacting with members of the public. Other possible areas of shared interest include museums, gardening, working with animals, cooking, and others that might lead to volunteer or employment opportunities.</p> <p>Program delivery is individualized and focuses on target objectives. The individual drives the plan and the program, utilizing community activities and resources that best address his or her interests. Because the program relies extensively on existing community resources, we will hire a full-time resource developer who will be responsible for identifying, locating, evaluating, and maintaining relationships with those resources, and create pathways through employment readiness training and discovery programs that match an individual's skills and interests to facilitate a transition to community employment. The resource developer also will work closely with individuals and their case managers to develop resource lists and identify potential partnerships that will support an individual's goals for community participation.</p> <p>Access to community activities will be in small, staff-facilitated groups, as individuals become familiar with the neighborhoods and public transportation options. We may use the WAP location as a meeting place, utilizing current</p>
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	<p>transportation options. The project budget includes funding for transportation and activities.</p> <p>To transition from the staff-to-participant ratio in the WAP to the highly personalized PossAbility model (with a 1:2 ratio), we will hire additional direct service staff incrementally as the program moves forward. Some staff may transition from the work center to PossAbility as WAP participants leave that program.</p> <p>The budget includes funding for the first 9 months of the program (approximately April-December 2019):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PCP facilitator (.5 FTE)</li> <li>• Discoverability case manager (1 FTE)</li> <li>• Resource developer (1 FTE)</li> <li>• Direct service staff (2.5 FTE)</li> <li>• One-time start-up costs, including technology (laptops, tablets)</li> <li>• Transportation and venue costs</li> </ul> <p>The proposed grant will provide the flexibility and financial resources to implement an effective, meaningful community-based program that is person-centered and enhances choices, rights, and opportunities for integration.</p>
<p>Please describe your person-centered approach<sup>1</sup> in the concept development process; how did you involve the individuals for whom you provide services?</p>	<p>Even before we began formally incorporating person-centered thinking and planning into our planning and program, we relied on feedback from participants and families/caregivers in developing and implementing programs. The actions we are taking to come into compliance with the HCBS Rules are consistent with responses to our most recent WAP participant surveys, in which 60% expressed interest in job clubs, 43% in community volunteering, 36% in the College to Career program, 31% in internships, and 25% in pre-vocational assessment and exploration (DiscoverAbility). This project reflects and directly addresses those concerns and builds on our earlier efforts to prepare for and implement the HCBS Rules.</p>

<sup>1</sup> A person-centered approach emphasizes what is important to the individual who receives services and focuses on personal preferences, satisfaction, and choice of supports in accessing the full benefits of community living. For more information regarding person-centered practices, please visit [www.nasddds.org/resource-library/person-centered-practices](http://www.nasddds.org/resource-library/person-centered-practices).

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<p>Does the concept address unmet service needs or service disparities? If so, how?</p>	<p>The project represents a bridge from the previously-funded person-centered planning training for staff, participants, and families, to implementation of person-centered plans and greater community integration for participants. It addresses the need for continued engagement by a PCP facilitator, the need to identify more and varied community resources to fully implement participants' goals in their person-centered plans/ISPs, and the need for additional direct service staff to deliver the program.</p>
<p>Estimated budget and timeline; identify all major costs and benchmarks — attachments are acceptable.</p>	<p>.5 FTE PCP facilitator (wages and benefits) - \$26,416          1 FTE DiscoverAbility case manager (wages and benefits) - \$48,428          1 FTE community resource developer (wages and benefits) - \$40,605          2.5 FTE direct service staff (wages and benefits) - \$80,145          Technology, program supplies, and transportation \$14,355 (includes start-up expenses for computers, phones, etc.)          Administrative cost (15% of \$195,324 wages and benefits) - \$29,298          Total Request (9 months): \$239,247</p> <p>Goals by December 2019:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% of SCLARC WAP participants will complete person-centered plans</li> <li>• 100% of SCLARC WAP participants will receive DiscoverAbility services to explore their personal and vocational skills and interests, identify potential volunteer opportunities, and participate in community activities</li> <li>• 100% of SCLARC WAP participants will transition to community integrated programs or employment</li> </ul>
<p>Total requested amount.</p>	<p>\$ 239,247</p>
<p>What is your plan for sustaining the benefits, value, and success of your project at the conclusion of 2018-19 HCBS Funding?</p>	<p>AbilityFirst has developed and is implementing a comprehensive fundraising plan to ensure that we continue to secure the resources needed to address the growing needs of individuals with developmental disabilities into the future.</p> <p>AbilityFirst receives revenue for its programs through vendor contracts with state-funded Regional Centers that coordinate services for people with developmental disabilities in California and the state Department of Rehabilitation. We have been successful to date in negotiating higher fees that more closely reflect the cost of delivering our new community-</p>



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	<p>focused programs with lower staff-to-participant ratios than those we have received for the older WAP programs. (These higher fees will partially, but not completely, offset the increased staffing costs.) The balance of AbilityFirst program support comes from a diverse revenue stream that includes individual, foundation, and corporate donations, special events, bequests, investment income, and facility rentals. In addition to increasing revenue and reducing reliance on Regional Centers, our strategy also calls for increasing cost effectiveness in all areas of operation and generating additional income through facilities rentals and private pay revenue for programs that do not receive Regional Center funding.</p>
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