

Employment & Inclusion Conference 2026: The Power of Expectations

March 24, 2026

10:15 AM

Breakout Session A-1

Raising and Supporting Employer Expectations

The Utah State Office of Rehabilitation Business Relations team has been working to increase access and opportunity in employment by Raising and Supporting Employer Expectations statewide. Drawing on a track record of elevating employer engagement, the presentation will offer actionable strategies for disability service providers and direct support professionals to effectively guide employers to not only understand the value of individuals with disabilities, but to actively build accessible and understanding work cultures.

Attendees will learn how to transition employer perspectives from compliance and charity to a mindset that fosters environments where accessible employment opportunities become business as usual. Walk away with practical tools to become a stronger partner to the businesses you partner with.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this keynote, participants will be able to:

1. Identify three specific strategies for shifting employer mindsets from a compliance-based approach to a value-driven approach for disability employment.
2. Develop a framework for creating strategic partnerships with businesses that lead to sustained, high-expectation employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.



Leah Lobato is the Coordinator of Business Relations with the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation a Division of the Department of Workforce Services, she is also a Certified ADA Coordinator (ADAC). The mission of this position is to help promote the employment and retention of individuals with disabilities in competitive employment by promoting public and private partnerships and efforts. She networks, connects with and trains state, regional and national employers. She has a BS degree from the University of Utah and is a Certified Public Manager. Leah has worked with individuals with disabilities in varying areas of services. She is an advisor to the board of Utah's Chapter of Job Placement and Development, a member of the National Rehabilitation Association, Utah Rehabilitation Association, Salt Lake City Accessibility and Disability Commission, Disability:IN Utah Steering Committee, 2024 40 Over 40 Recipient, and on the board of Yoga Forward. She is a certified yoga teacher with 500-hours of training and currently leads yoga practices in the Utah State Correctional Facility.

Leah Lobato

USOR Business Relations



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Josh Rodeback is a Business Relations Specialist and Supervisor with the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation. Since 2012, he has worked as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and Supervisor. Josh is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor with a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. He is also a Certified Public Manager, Windmills Certified Trainer, and a Master Remote Work Leader. Josh helps people of all abilities reach their employment goals and assists employers in finding qualified candidates. He provides ADA support and guidance..

Josh Rodeback
USOR Business Relations



Ben Baldonado is a Business Relations Supervisor for the Utah Office of Rehabilitation, a division of the Department of Workforce Services (DWS). He has a Master's in Marriage and Family Therapy from Amridge University and is a Licensed Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. After serving 7 years in the United States Military, Ben transitioned to employment with the state of Utah where he has served the public as an Employment Counselor, Operational Manager, and now with the Business Relations team. In his current role, Ben supports accessibility within the workforce across 20 counties by engaging businesses and community partners in promoting meaningful employment for individuals with disabilities. His passion for collaboration and community are hallmarked by his leadership in establishing the first One-Stop Employment Center in Southern Utah. Ben enjoys bringing people together to discover and achieve goals on common ground which has led to the development of local Job Developers Groups and Economic Committees.