



The Marketing Association for Rehabilitation Centers

The Marketing Association of Rehabilitation Centers (MARC) is a catalyst for socially innovative practices and collaboration among 14 non-profit Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) in the 21-counties of Western North Carolina. MARC member organizations provide best-practice education and life skills training, along with effective employment training that includes evaluation to identify strengths and talents, work training to teach good work habits and job skills, and job coaching and supported employment to build success for both employee and employer. By forming MARC more than 33 years ago, members created an organization that has evolved into a unique and synergetic collaborative; enabling them to plan and deploy socially innovative initiatives that achieve “mission” far beyond what any one organization could or would have achieved on their own.

MARC helps raise the quality of life and contribution to society of people with intellectual/developmental disabilities and physical and mental challenges. In support of member organizations, MARC works to:

- Increase entrepreneurial capacity of members in order to sustain and improve vocational rehabilitation, developmental services and employment opportunities,
- Develop meaningful, productive work as the primary training medium to learn useful and marketable vocational skills,
- Help member organizations expand and upgrade supplementary services and community supports that foster independence and employability.



MARC and its members recognize that we are responsible for our own sustainability, through profitable activities in support of our mission. To help organizations succeed with their respective business activities, MARC provides:

- Expertise and peer support for product development, work set-up and quality system development and management,

- Assistance to strengthen the ability of member organizations to promote and sell their goods, products and services, and
- National marketing to secure for profit partnerships from within and beyond the region.
- Socially innovative programs that embed “Business Accelerator” concepts into MARC’s model of collaborative social entrepreneurship. Aiding members growth in:
 - ISO registered Quality Management Systems
 - Lean Manufacturing
 - Website Marketing
 - Marketing and Business Development Coaching

LEADING THE WAY IN TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

“One size fits one,” that is, each person has a unique path for bringing out their full potential has long been MARC members’ approach to services. Thus, we are committed to providing the fullest possible range of options for individual development. Strong vocational rehabilitation and training, a menu of intellectual, developmental and support programs, and promoting social entrepreneurial development are the hallmark of MARC’s member services.



MARC measures its success by the success of its members. Fiscal year 2009-2010 was an incredible growth year. MARC organizations grew in direct employment from 1,058 to 1127 people. Many of these employees are people with a disability whose needs are best met in the supportive environment of our facilities. MARC members also realized exponential growth vocational training, developmental support services or social enrichment programs; increasing from serving 1,775 people with a disability each weekday to 3,403. Last year MARC members placed 926 people with a disability or disadvantage into competitive jobs within their respective communities. Our “one-size-fits-one,” philosophy supports the principle that individuals with disabilities can become employed, receive vocational training, development or enrichment services, or other integrated community-based programming.

MARC members’ integrated workforce of people with and without disabilities is involved in manufacturing custom disposable medical drapes and other healthcare products, commercial sewing, thermoforming and packaging, dry food blending and packaging, and manufacturing and assembly. MARC’s approach is to train people for entry into real world jobs; to promote jobs that enable people with disabilities to earn good wages; to work in a supportive yet challenging atmosphere-and succeed in their jobs.

MARC’s viewpoint of offering the widest variety of options has led to successful outcomes across the 21 county region. In March 2009 Western Carolina University’s College of Business completed an Economic Impact Study of MARC member organizations. The study determined that in the region served by MARC, there is a **50.1% higher occurrence of people with disabilities in our regional workforce** than the national average.

SIGNATURE INNOVATIONS

MARC serves as a “think tank” for socially innovative and collaborative ideas. The synergy from this ethos enables MARC to plan and deploy “mission centered” strategies designed to strengthen member community rehabilitation programs across our region.

On an ongoing basis, MARC provides training and networking for member organizations in program development, accounting, human resources, operations and supervisory staff, social enterprise development, quality systems development and management, and Department of Labor and OSHA compliance.



Signature innovations that demonstrate the strength and promise of the MARC model:

OutSource (1997): a national program that markets the manufacturing capabilities of members. Currently nine of MARC’s 14 members participate in our OutSource Program. OutSource is fully self sustained from annual sales of \$2.3MM and supports the employment of 144 people with and without disabilities.

MARC Benefits Program (1997): provides pooled purchasing of insurance benefits. Members pool their purchasing strength through a Broker/Third Party Administrator to obtain substantial discounts on insurance. Initially, ten members joined the program insuring more than 400 employees and dependants. Today, MARC’s pooled insurance program provides health care benefits for 12 member organizations, insuring nearly 900 employees plus dependents. Employee Benefits include health care insurance, dental insurance, life and disability insurance, wellness and flu-shots. Since 1999, member savings have exceeded \$3 million in insurance premiums (compared to the amount that would have been paid to carriers individually). These savings account for a significant portion of members achieving sustainability plus the ability to fund quality programs for adults with developmental disabilities.



MARC Custom Medical Products (MCMP): a regional social enterprise platform launched in July 2006 to manufacture custom disposable medical products and other devices used in the health care industry. This partnership among six MARC members is now the largest manufacturer of custom disposable surgical drapes in the U.S. The key deliverable of this venture was to create or retain 250 manufacturing jobs that target full time jobs with benefits for people with a disability or other employment barrier. MCMP exceeded this goal by achieving 373 employment outcomes in three years. Now in its fifth year, MCMP is fully sustained from \$21.2 in annual sales and has created or retained 420 jobs. Of these 420 employment outcomes, 186 are filled by people with a disability or disadvantage. MCMP was chosen by the Lodestar Foundation’s 2011 Collaboration Prize as one of the 20 semifinalist among 807 entrants nationwide. (www.thecollaborationprize.org).

MARC Quality and Business Development (MQ&B) is a thirty month program launched in January 2009 to assist members with expanding their manufacturing base in order to create sustainable jobs for people with and without disabilities in an integrated work environment. This initiative builds upon the lessons learned in all MARC programs: MCMP, OutSource, Health Benefits Program and various informal partnerships among members over the last 30+ years. Key elements of MQ&B is to assist members with achieving ISO registered Quality Management Systems and to develop strategic plans in order to expand their manufacturing base and create sustainable jobs for people with and without disabilities.

The **MARC Parity Initiative (MPI)** launched in 2010 is a two-year program designed to increase parity between MARC's larger members and those with emerging manufacturing strategies as well as wages and social status for historically low-wage earners with and without disabilities. During the two year period, seven MPI member participants will engage in the following tactical business growth activities: Market Analysis, Marketing and Social Media and Website Development, and Sales Strategy. MPI's goal for the two-year program is to create \$1.5MM in additional revenues that will provide a stable economic base for 20 new jobs. These jobs will pay \$10 an hour or more and provide full benefits thus establishing a sustainable platform for financial and social parity.

Conclusion

MARC leads by example in its practice of social innovation and collaboration. Of the many commonalities among members, three, shared mission and vision, sustainability, and the challenges of being located in rural communities provide the importance that draws members together. Over time we learned how to harness ideas and plan strategies in order to create a culture of success among our members and within the people we serve. Our growth, high expectations and success creates strong morale and alignment among ourselves and in our communities. Finally, through the collaborative leadership we have engaged in and the resultant successes we have achieved, we have repositioned Community Rehabilitation Programs across our region as crucial community assets, rather than community liabilities. In our organizations, as in our people, we work to develop abilities beyond the disabilities.



MARC succeeds because of an unwavering commitment to mission and because of the collaborative culture and trust of member organizations. It has been said that “MARC exemplifies what can be achieved when trust, collaboration, selflessness and social responsibility inspire ideas and innovation.”

Today and in the future, we want to share what we have learned about working together to raise the quality of life and contribution to society of people with disabilities through meaningful work and effective rehabilitation, habilitation, and enrichment programs.

To learn more about MARC and its member organizations, please contact Noel Watts, Executive Director, MARC, Inc. 1-866-807-6210 noel@marcinc.com. Information is also available at the website www.marcinc.com.