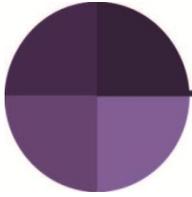# The DISC Locator/Scaling Tool for Employer Resource Networks

Guidebook for Dialogue and Assessment

About Disc

Disruptive Innovations for Social Change

How we do it: We work with leaders and apply the principles of disruptive innovation to create lasting change.

What we mean by disruptive innovation: It involves introducing change to a system on a small scale, then perfecting and expanding the change to create a new system that delivers far better results.

Our work helps: Workers gain economic self-sufficiency for themselves and their families. Employers retain an engaged and skilled workforce. Public agencies and nonprofits get better outcomes from programs that advance economic independence. Community colleges add students and build closer ties to area businesses.

Three things to know about DISC: We are a social enterprise. We apply business practices to achieve goals that communities define as vital to their well-being. We facilitate cross-sector partnerships. We make it easy for corporations, governments, community colleges and nonprofits to do more together. We work with ideas and action. We are a think tank, incubator and implementer focused on innovative practice that transforms results.

Why does it work? We catalyze the development of community-wide social capital both within and across sectors, professions, organizations and individuals.

Contact Information:

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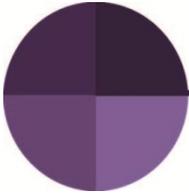http://www.disc-l3c.com/

http://www.ERN-USA.com

What is the ERN?

The DISC Employer Resource Network Model

The Employer Resource Network (ERN) model is a new approach to workforce development that was initiated in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 2008. As of November 2015, the model has been adopted and implemented at 9 sites within ten different counties in the state of Michigan with 77 employers involved. Other regions seeking innovative ways to blend the efforts of businesses, social service and workforce development agencies have expressed interest in learning more about how to launch an ERN initiative in their own communities.

- Employer Resource Networks are employer-based, with the Employer as an investor, not a just customer.
- They usually include six to ten small-to mid-sized companies interested in forming a network to create economies of scale in accessing resources that benefit employees and by extension their own bottom lines.
- ERNs pull together job retention services, work supports, and education and training.
- While the focus is on entry-level and low wage employees, the services are available to all who work for ERN member companies.
- Because the target employees may be receiving or eligible for public assistance, ERNs also include strong partnerships with community service providers such as social service agencies, workforce development groups, chambers of commerce and economic development groups and community and technical colleges or other training institutions.

Please Contact us to see if there is an ERN being explored near you

What is the ERN?

The DISC Employer Resource Network Model

small to mid-sized companies

large companies with a cadre of low wage/entry workers

low-wage

entry-level

businesses

employees

ERN

healthcare
hospitality
manufacturing
retail
food services

employees experiencing barriers to wrk

community
partners

community colleges

nonprofit organizations

government agencies

community and technical training institutions

Benefits

| Employers	Employees	Providers
Employers benefit from ERNs when job turnover rates and the cost of skill building and training decrease and productivity increases. ERN member businesses average 150-334% return on their investment following the initial startup period.	When entry-level wages are insufficient or there are barriers to consistent and successful job performance, employees get help accessing public benefits, ongoing skills training and counseling to overcome challenges to a successful and productive life.	Community Colleges, public agencies and nonprofit organizations benefit from the ERN when local businesses appreciate and support the services they offer. They also grow the population of people they serve due to ERN participants, which may result in additional grant funding.

Employer Resource Network Drivers

Determining community readiness for an ERN

What drives a community to consider an Employer Resource Network? Consider these questions:

1. What would the barriers be to establishing an ERN in your community?

2. What are the assets your community would leverage to establish an ERN?

3. Would the DISC Model for Employer Resource Networks be something your community would support?

4. Where do these issues "rate" in your community? Are they a priority? Do they current receive funding and support?

5. Are they covered in local media and discussed in political arenas?

6. To what degree are personal and family challenges contributing to job turnover among low-wage and entry-level workers in your community?

7. Is employee retention an issue with small to mid-sized businesses in your community?
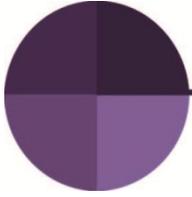
The Locator Tool

Determining community readiness for an ERN

The Locator is a tool designed to help communities assess their capacity and readiness for an ERN and is a prelude to the DISC Employer Resource Network Model which includes:

- A collaborative network of 6-10 small- to mid-sized businesses, often in retail, hospitality, manufacturing or healthcare
- A focus on successful employment for low-wage, entry-level workers
- Partnerships with community service providers

The Locator Tool includes five elements - a core and four components:

1. The core consisting of a theory of change and a set of competencies and capacity-building activities
2. Champions – those who promote, encourage, prod and support the development of the ERN.
3. Community Assets – resources, skills and capacities that enable achievement of community vision for the ERN.
4. Corporate Commitment – the ability for businesses to find opportunities and manage their operations such that they sustain themselves and are valued in the community.
5. Collaborative Skills – the ability to form coalitions and learn and work together.

The ERN Locator Tool asks a series of dialogue questions for each of its five elements. Each element can be discussed and scored by the community members interested in assessing readiness for an ERN. The Locator is a framework developed by Dr. Lynn Wooten, from the University of Michigan business school and based on the experiences of the DISC team in developing the six ERN sites to date.

DISC has contracted Professor Lynn Perry Wooten, University of Michigan Business School with product design assistance from Barbara Demarest to conceive of and develop the Locator Tool. This work is supported by the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research with funding from the Ford Foundation.

The Locator Tool was designed for group discussion. The purpose of the Locator Tool is to:

- Understand where the workforce issues of a community may be addressed via this new approach called an Employer Resource Network.
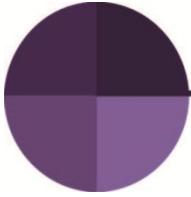
The Locator Tool

Determining community readiness for an ERN

- Identify areas of strength and readiness for an ERN as well as those components that are in need of development or improvement in order for an ERN to be successful.
- Offer a way to measure, over time, changes in a community's capacity for hosting an ERN.
- Point out where differences of opinion and information lie within the group interested in addressing workforce development issues in a given community.
- Begin the process of coalition building in support of an ERN and to identify potential Champions

The Locator Tool is not a scientific diagnostic. It is a tool for supporting organized dialogue and discussion and catalyzing decisions and action. It is extremely difficult and subjective to ascertain readiness and capacity. The Locator Tool score sheet is meant to help provide general direction and reminders, not to be an exact science. It is understood that the Locator Tool will be used in a variety of contexts and stages of readiness. It is meant to be a starting point only. We encourage you to adapt and add to the Locator Tool to make it work more effectively in your community.

Instructions

First determine who will be a part of the dialogue about workforce development in your community. Then, for each element of the Locator Tool, answer the related dialogue questions. You can have individuals read through the questions and answer them on their own as pre-work or you can choose to gather a group and share the tool without pre-reading. Ideally, the people you gather for dialogue should have the knowledge, experience and connections in the community to engage in a lively and informed discussion. We do provide a score sheet to help capture an assessment.

There are ten questions for each element of The Locator Tool. Each question is scored on a scale from: not at all (0) to some (1) to definitely (2). The total number of points for each element that can be scored is 20 and the Locator total score that can be achieved is 100. Because some questions may not be applicable to your community or to the goals you have for workforce development, there is an option on the score sheet to check N/A for not applicable. In addition, the consensus of those involved may be that they do not have the knowledge to make a judgment. There is also a box that can be checked for these questions.

Use the score sheet to determine whether your group sees your community as having no capacity, some capacity or definite capacity for each question. Then tally up the scores of the five elements of the Locator Tool. In the summary section of the score sheet note totals for each element and then the sum of all elements for a final score.
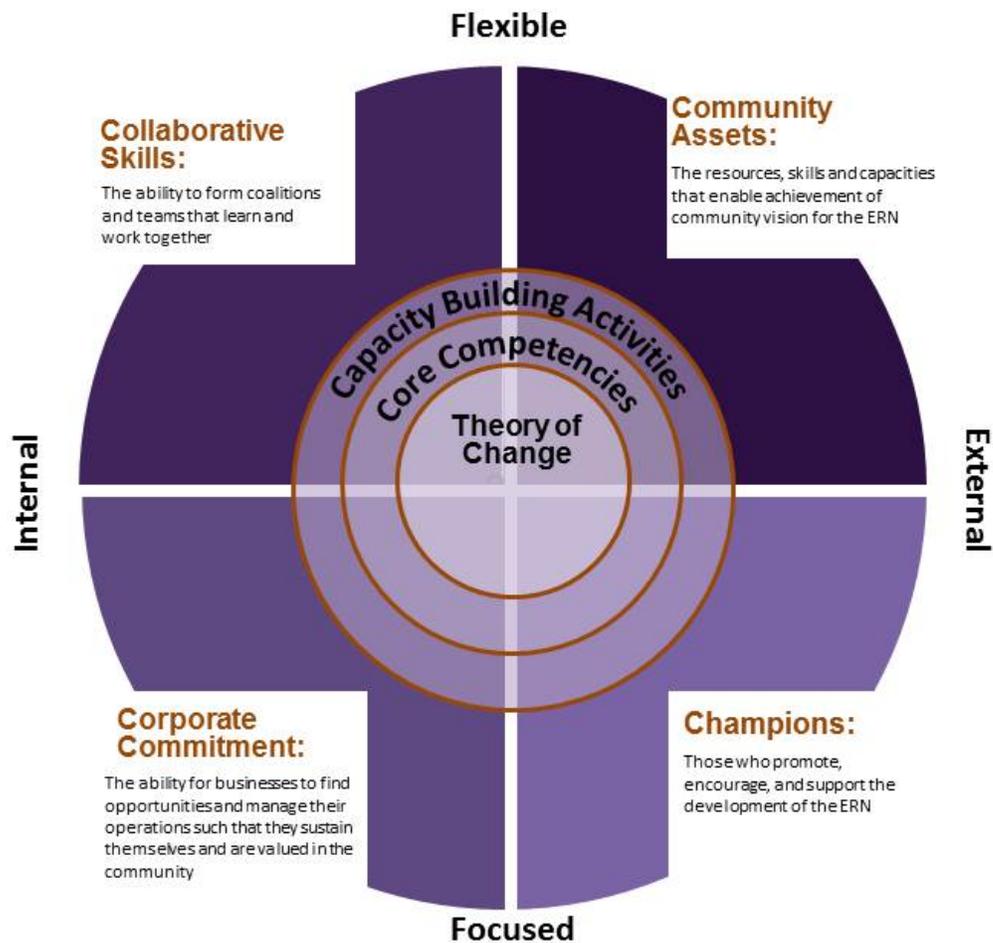
In addition to the total score which will range between 0 and 100, it is important to note which questions are not applicable and which questions are flagged as needing to get more information.
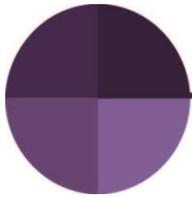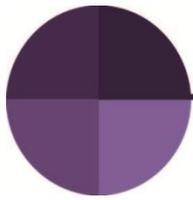
The Locator Tool

Determining community readiness for an ERN

Interpret the questions broadly and do not get caught up in splitting hairs over language. The questions are primarily intended to assist in discussions about workforce development and readiness for an ERN, they are not meant to be a challenge to the process. Using numerical scoring is less about "grading" your community and more about capturing the tone and tenor of the discussion.

Flexible

Collaborative Skills:
The ability to form coalitions and teams that learn and work together

Community Assets:
The resources, skills and capacities that enable achievement of community vision for the ERN

Capacity Building Activities
Core Competencies
Theory of Change

Internal

External

Corporate Commitment:
The ability for businesses to find opportunities and manage their operations such that they sustain themselves and are valued in the community

Champions:
Those who promote, encourage, and support the development of the ERN

Focused

The Locator Tool

Determining community readiness for an ERN

The Locator Core consists of:

| Theory of Change:	
The process that will result in productivity and job retention improvements for low-wage and entry-level workers in ERN member organizations.	
Core Competencies	**Capacity Building Activities**
The collective strengths and talents of the ERN that will transform resources into processes, services, and products to achieve improvements in job retention and productivity.	Activities that strengthen the ERN and help it better fulfill its mission.
Organizing ERN board meetings **Identifying community resources** **Organizing training** **Fundraising** **Retention specialists available onsite at employers** **Managing 150-250 employee cases at any given time** **Helping eligible employees connect with social services** **Assisting in resolving personal and motivational barriers to work** **Offering free or reduced-fee basic education and industry-specific training** **Providing health and wellness services and support** **Providing social supports such as financial literacy, housing assistance and domestic violence counseling**	- Create an administrative infrastructure - Create a customized service model - Decide whether to outsource or share responsibility among ERN members for administrative infrastructure and service model - Map which services will be delivered at a central, convenient location and which services will be delivered onsite with ERN member organizations - Calculate return on investment fee structure to determine how much ERN members will contribute annually to the initiative - Use job retention statistics, collaborative share-seat training fees and the cost of direct support to make the contribution calculation - Base on how much and what types of services employees use - Create an ERN design that is flexible enough to respond to the changing economic conditions and employer needs
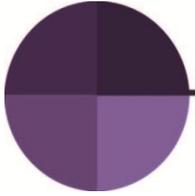
The Locator Core

Dialogue Questions

Discuss each question using the right hand side of the page to capture notes. There is space for you to score the question: not at all (0) maybe (1) definitely (2) or to note that the question is not applicable (n/a). If you don't have the information or knowledge to respond, note as n/k. You may also want to transfer your scores to the separate score sheet as you complete each question set.

	notes	score
Will having an ERN create a stronger relationship among businesses and between the public and government sector partners?		
Will an ERN result in more efficient use of resources because they are shared across multiple businesses?		
Will belonging to an ERN and leveraging its resources and services result in lower job turnover rates and increased productivity for its members?		
Will community partners who are providing services to the ERN see increases in volume that allow them to offer discounts?		
Will community partners see an increase in grant dollars due to expanded services provided to the ERN?		
Will belonging to an ERN result in employees alleviating family stress, gaining access to public assistance or finding short-term financial help?		
Will healthcare costs be better controlled via an ERN?		
Will case management by job retention specialists / success coaches resolve personal, family and financial issues resulting in employees focusing on work productivity and development?		
Will an ERN result in increased staff morale, improved job satisfaction and a		

|		
better reputation in the community for member organizations?		
Will employees of ERN organizations be more competitive and employable with up to date training and skills?		
Additional notes:		
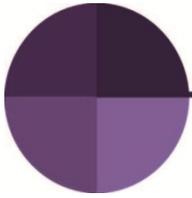
Champions

Dialogue Questions

Champions are those who promote, encourage, prod and support the development of the ERN. Champions need to reflect the diversity of the community's assets and include community leaders, corporate executives, and Human Resources managers. Champions have the following characteristics:

- Confidence and enthusiasm about the ERN and the ability to market the initiative and influence others to participate.
- Persistence in the face of adversity.
- The ability to enlist and connect key stakeholders, assets and knowledge.

Discuss each question using the right hand side of the page for notes. There is space for you to score each question: not at all (0) maybe (1) definitely (2) or to note that the question is not applicable (n/a). If you do not have the information or knowledge to respond note your score as n/k. You may also want to transfer your scores to the separate score sheet as you complete each question set.

	notes	score
Can you identify the good networkers and connectors in your community -- people who as individuals or because of their roles have relationships across or within business, nonprofit, government, academic and social sectors?		
Can you identify people who can help further assess the community's assets and help determine readiness for and interest in an ERN?		
Can you identify influential community innovators who are open to experimentation and a forward vision?		
Can you identify 2 to 3 individuals who are in a position to identify and recruit additional champions interested in improving job retention and productivity for low-wage and entry-level workers in the community?		
Can you identify the local employers, education and training providers, government organizations, and community based agencies willing to		

|		
help solve the workforce retention and development issue?		
Can you get the support of local media and influential community leaders to embrace the vision of the ERN?		
Can you identify a diverse set of champions who can take ownership and help implement the ERN?		
How many Community Leaders can you identify who will: · Identify and bring together stakeholders · Endorse, explain, and promote the ERN concept to influential members of the community · Create the community of practice that will support ERNs · Help acquire the resources needed to support ERNs		
How many CEOs or Corporate Executives can you identify who will: · Embrace the ERN model · Endorse ERNs as part of their corporate social responsibility · See the value proposition and return on investment ROI of ERNs · Believe in the strategic benefit of job retention and training and develop resources in an ERN		
How many Human Resource Managers can you identify who will: · Assist in designing the ERN infrastructure · Work with community support agencies · Implement the practices necessary to operate the ERN		
Additional notes:		
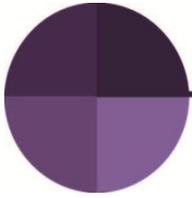
Community Assets

Dialogue Questions

Community Assets are the resources, skills and capacities that enable achievement of the community's vision for the Employer Resource Network. Discuss each question using the right hand side of the page to capture notes. There is space for you to score the question: not at all (0) maybe (1) definitely (2) or to note that the question is not applicable (n/a). If you don't have the information or knowledge to respond, note as n/k. You may also want to transfer your scores to the separate score sheet as you complete each question set.

	notes	score
Does the community value workforce development and sustainable employment?		
Does trust exist between citizens and local government, business, educational and social service institutions?		
Do people in the community have a history of working together to solve problems, create opportunities and get things done?		
Has the community provided financial support for improvement efforts?		
Are their existing processes and policies that support new community improvement projects?		
Are there any organizations currently working on the low wage / entry level retention and skill building issues in your community?		
Does the community have nonprofits, public agencies, and community and technical colleges that provide services related to workforce development and family, personal and financial support?		
Do employees have access to skill building opportunities that will keep them employed in the community? And where are they located in relation to		

|		
potential ERN members?		
Do you have a mix of small, mid-sized and large companies with low-wage or entry-level employees in retail, healthcare, manufacturing or hospitality who are geographically close enough to each other to form an ERN?		
Are there employers who are not in direct competition with each other, but who share some similar workforce retention and training needs?		
Additional notes:		
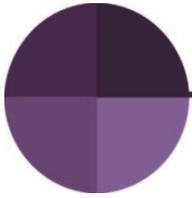
Collaborative Skills

Dialogue Questions

	notes	score
Does the community embrace the vision of an ERN governed and supported by consortia of local businesses in collaboration with public agencies and community partners?		
Are the government and nonprofit sectors in your community competitive or collaborative? Will they be willing to work collaboratively in support of the ERN?		
Are the business, nonprofit, government, and educational members of the community willing to establish public/private partnerships? Have they established them in the past?		
Are businesses willing to collaborate with each other to address job retention and workforce development challenges?		
Are potential ERN businesses willing to create a collaborative governing board to shape the mission, goals, and types of services offered by the ERN?		
Are public and nonprofit human service agencies willing to engage directly with businesses and their employees to provide support and connection to resources?		
Will service providers and the ERN businesses be willing to customize the service model		
Are there partnership opportunities with local government organizations or with workforce partners to support salaries and benefits of job retention specialists/success coaches who provide		

|		
key services in the ERN?		
Can existing resources be pooled to provide job retention services, access to additional work supports, and job advancement opportunities for new and incumbent ERN members?		
Can the community work together to create a financial model where 25% of the first year costs of the ERN come from businesses and 75% from grants and then move toward a reverse ratio when the ERN is up and running (within 4 years)?		
Additional notes:		
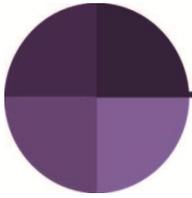
Corporate Commitment

Dialogue Questions

Corporate Commitment is businesses finding opportunities and managing their operations such that they build the skills and sustainability of the community, the business, the nonprofit and the government sectors

Discuss each question using the right hand side of the page to capture notes. There is space for you to score the question: not at all (0) maybe (1) definitely (2) or to note that the question is not applicable (n/a). If you don't have the information or knowledge to respond, note as n/k. You may also want to transfer your scores to the separate score sheet as you complete each question set.

	notes	score
What are the specific barriers to productivity, retention, skill development and advancement for local businesses? Will committing to an ERN overcome these barriers?		
Are employers willing to fund shared staff or resources to increase efficiency?		
Are there businesses in your community with employees who are receiving public assistance such as TANF, SNAP, Medicaid, or childcare assistance who will find value in committing to an ERN?		
Are there companies within a common business sector interested in sharing the cost of similar training needs and taking advantage of the economies of scale of an ERN?		
Are there Human Resource Managers or Administrators available to serve on a governing board for the ERN?		
Do employers see the training provided by community and technical colleges as targeted and specific to the job skills they need their employees to have? Will committing to an ERN help address this need?		
How many CEOs / Executives / Businesses will make a corporate		

commitment to the ERN? • Will they invest money in the ERN? • Will they assign / loan an executive to the ERN?		
Will a return on investment of 150-334 percent (after initial start-up period) attract CEOs and business leaders in your community?		
Do CEOs / businesses seek to have individual employees be more productive and less distracted in their daily work? Will committing to an ERN reduce turnover and lower training costs for its members?		
Are there enough businesses in your community committed to corporate social responsibility to create an ERN?		
Additional notes:		
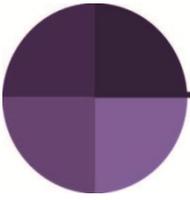
The Locator Tool Score Sheet

The Locator Core

	N/A	N/K	0	1	2
1.	●	●	●	●	●
2.	●	●	●	●	●
3.	●	●	●	●	●
4.	●	●	●	●	●
5.	●	●	●	●	●
6.	●	●	●	●	●
7.	●	●	●	●	●
8.	●	●	●	●	●
9.	●	●	●	●	●
10.	●	●	●	●	●

Total _____

Champions

	N/A	N/K	0	1	2
1.	●	●	●	●	●
2.	●	●	●	●	●
3.	●	●	●	●	●
4.	●	●	●	●	●
5.	●	●	●	●	●
6.	●	●	●	●	●
7.	●	●	●	●	●
8.	●	●	●	●	●
9.	●	●	●	●	●
10.	●	●	●	●	●

Total _____

Community Assets

	N/A	N/K	0	1	2
1.	●	●	●	●	●
2.	●	●	●	●	●
3.	●	●	●	●	●
4.	●	●	●	●	●
5.	●	●	●	●	●
6.	●	●	●	●	●
7.	●	●	●	●	●
8.	●	●	●	●	●
9.	●	●	●	●	●
10.	●	●	●	●	●

Total _____

Corporate Commitment

	N/A	N/K	0	1	2
1.	●	●	●	●	●
2.	●	●	●	●	●
3.	●	●	●	●	●
4.	●	●	●	●	●
5.	●	●	●	●	●
6.	●	●	●	●	●
7.	●	●	●	●	●
8.	●	●	●	●	●
9.	●	●	●	●	●
10.	●	●	●	●	●

Total _____

Collaborative Skills

	N/A	N/K	0	1	2
1.	●	●	●	●	●
2.	●	●	●	●	●
3.	●	●	●	●	●
4.	●	●	●	●	●
5.	●	●	●	●	●
6.	●	●	●	●	●
7.	●	●	●	●	●
8.	●	●	●	●	●
9.	●	●	●	●	●
10.	●	●	●	●	●

Total _____

The Locator Core_____

Champions_____

Community Assets_____

Corporate Commitment_____

Collaborative Skills_____

Total_____