

**ESBLN** Eastern Shore Business Leadership Network  
Putting Ability to Work [www.esbln.org](http://www.esbln.org)  
By Jackie Gast, Director

I believe less is more when it comes to government. I admit, I have criticized government spending on more than one occasion, to say the least. The sustainability of the stimulus or recovery package concerns me quite a bit and it is my hope that those who are responsible for dispersing funds will ask for some kind of sustainability factor from those receiving funds.

Having said that, the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) and the Maryland Department of Labor Licensing and Regulation (DLLR), both government entities, recently funded intensive workshops for job seekers with disabilities that, in my opinion, was and is an excellent use of funds (these were not stimulus funds). The workshops called No Spare Marylander were held in One-Stop Career Centers in Hagerstown, Baltimore City, Salisbury, and Prince Georges County serving an average of about twenty job seekers per location.

This full day training was a collaborative effort between the staff of The One-Stop Job Market, The Eastern Shore Business Leadership Network, state-wide Disability Program Navigators, The Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce, The Division of Rehabilitation Services, The Lower Shore Workforce Alliance, Telamon, other agencies within the One-Stop, and business professionals from K & L Microwave, PRMC, TTY Mobility Products, Mimir Marketing and Quality Staffing Services. MDOD Secretary Raggio presented in the morning session that included personal discussions with each of the participants. Jade Gingerich, Director of Employment Policy for MDOD led an interactive discussion about the history of disability law. A panel consisting of local agency leaders talked about services for people with disabilities within their agencies as well as a brief summary of economic employment outlook. Following the panel, three employed individuals with disabilities shared their success stories with the group.

The afternoon was broken into breakout sessions on resume preparation in which each candidate took home a finished resume, job application education and tips, mock interviews and a session on benefits for people with disabilities who want to work while still maintaining health benefits.

Sustainability is one of the best indicators of whether or not government funds are well spent. From the No Spare Marylander initiative, at least sixty individuals will have learned how to job search independently. By securing employment, many who may be currently collecting government benefits may be able to reduce and eventually eliminate their dependence on government assistance. Interestingly, out of the twenty two people with disabilities enrolled in the Salisbury workshop, one third was not receiving any government assistance at all.

This state-wide program not only trained approximately eighty individuals about job seeking skills, it also created a venue for agencies and businesses in their locales to learn more about how they can work together for the common purpose of workforce development. There has been a state-wide effort to blend funding between the government agencies from which there have been successes. The more programs that encourage collaboration, the more opportunities will arise for efficient, effective and sustainable use of our tax dollars.