



Federal Laboratory Consortium
for Technology Transfer

The Portal Project

A MITRE Autism at Work Initiative

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MITRE

**SOLVING PROBLEMS
FOR A SAFER WORLD**

Frequently Used Terms



Neurodiversity

The range of differences in individual brain function and behavioral traits, regarded as part of normal variation in the human population



Neurodivergent /Neurodistinct

One whose neurological development and state are atypical, usually viewed as abnormal or extreme. The term was coined in the neurodiversity movement as an opposite for "neurotypical"

Question Amnesty

Today we will assume every question asked is being asked with sincerity and with good intent. Do not hesitate to ask.

What is MITRE Doing?

The Portal Project

Most processes are exactly the same as normal intern/co-op processes, with these added supports:

- Targeted recruiting from universities with strong programs
- Targeted recruiting of willing departments
- Train participating managers and co-workers/mentors
- Onboard students – one-on-one to explain the program and supports
- Continuing support and reach-back for managers – beginning as bi-weekly
- Monthly or bi-monthly professional development Student Mixers
- Schools are asked to check in with their students weekly

What is the NFW pilot?

Leveraging well established autism hiring systems to make federal cybersecurity positions more accessible to a uniquely qualified talent pool. We are hosting 4 interns each, with two different agencies.

Pilot Components



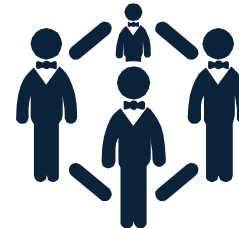
**Identify &
Prepare
Agency**



**Recruit Pilot
Candidates**



**Bootcamp -
Assess &
Train
Candidates**

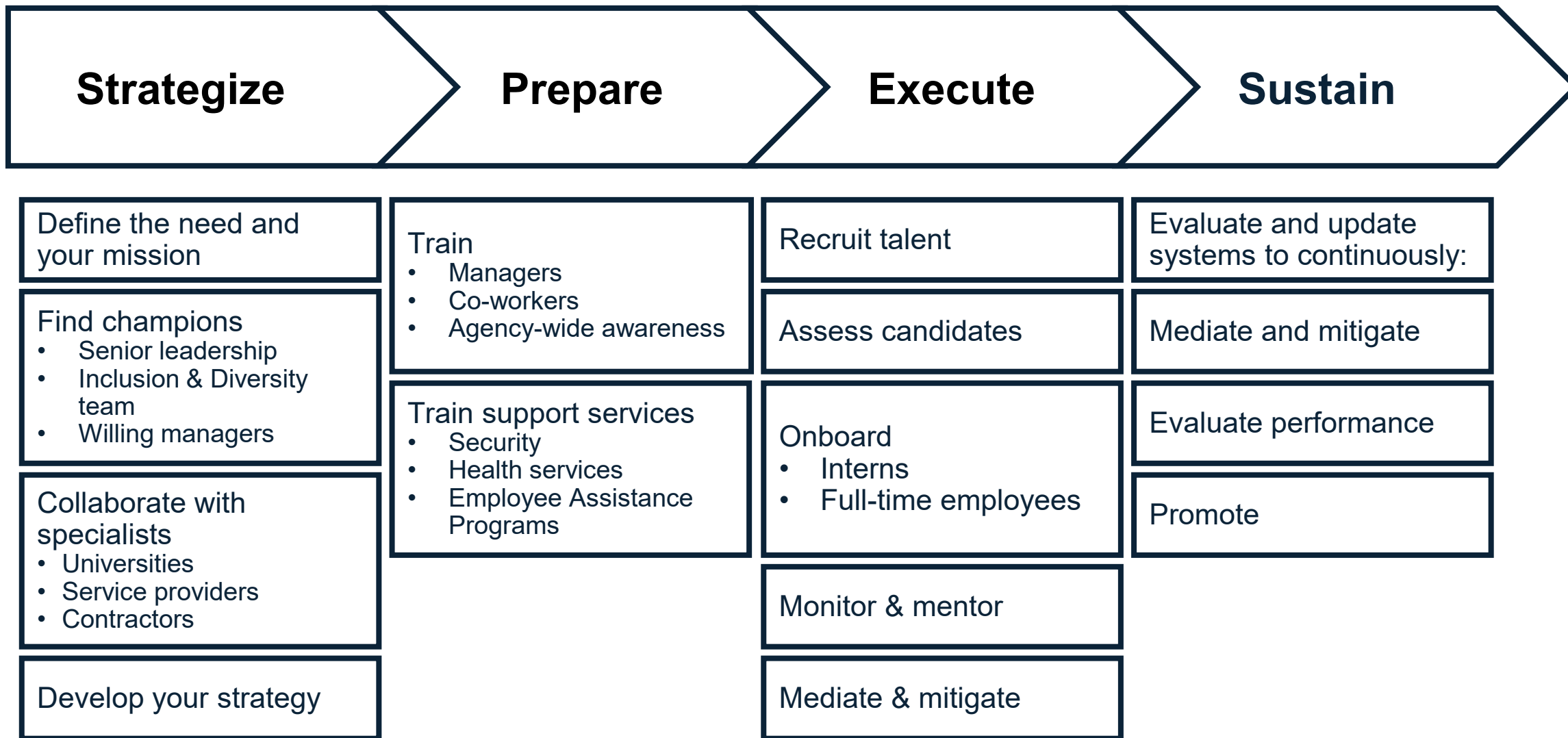


**Prepare
Pilot
Agency**



**Support
Participants**

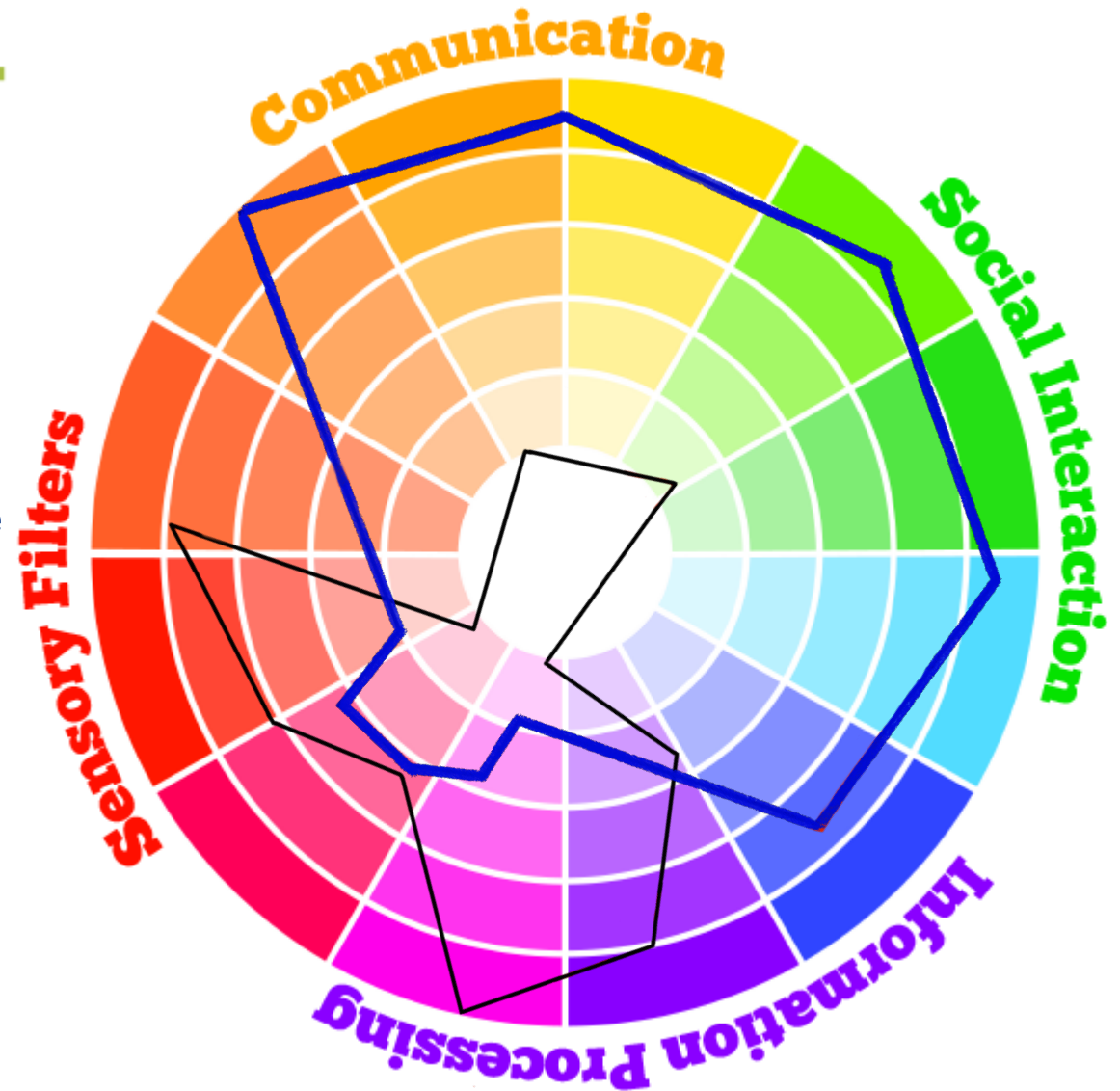
Building an Initiative



More About Autism & ADHD

The Autism Spectrum Is:

- ✓ A developmental disability that is caused by **differences in how the brain functions**. People with autism may communicate, interact, behave, and learn in different ways than neurotypicals.
- ✓ Differences in the functional areas of **executive functioning, socialization, communication and sensory/motor functioning** are viewed as the 'core' symptoms of autism for adults.
- ✓ How autism presents **varies considerably** in each individual on the autism spectrum, resulting in varying levels of support needs.



Why Do We Recruit for Autism?

Adults with autism are employed at an alarmingly low rate. Global estimates of **unemployment and underemployment** range as high as **80-90%**.

(Dew & Alan, 2007)

People on the autism spectrum solve problems

40% faster

than neurotypical peers.

Source: Harvard/Univ of Montreal Study, 2014

Candidates on the autism spectrum can be well suited for your agency for a variety of reasons:



Accelerated problem solving



Innovative approaches to challenges



Specialist knowledge and skills in areas of interest

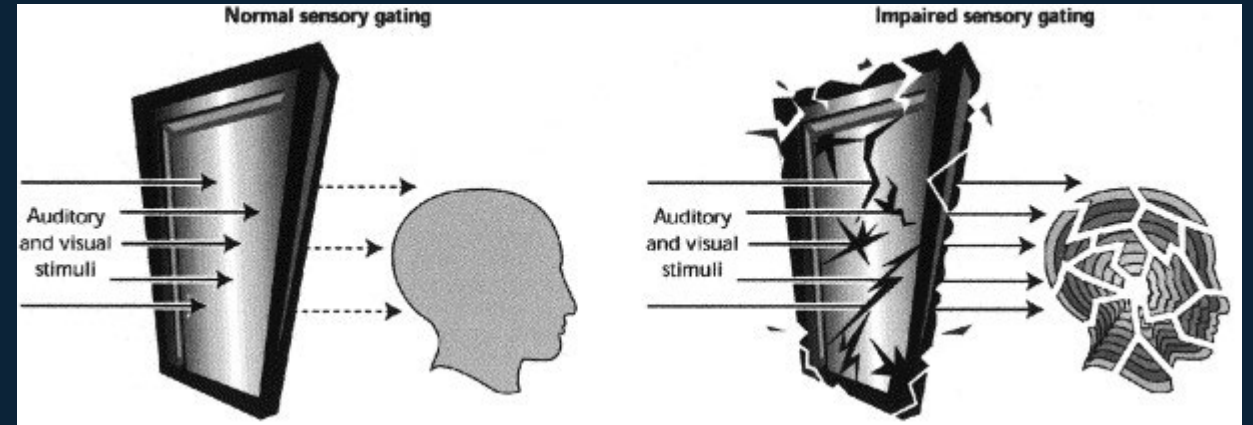


Detail orientation; follow instructions and rules very accurately

What can we do?

Understand Sensory Gating and Overload

- Sensitive to lighting / prefers to sit in the dark
- May prefer to wear baggy clothes
- Often uses headphones or noise reduction ear plugs
- Sensitive to smells, from food, bathroom soaps, perfumes/colognes, etc.
- Dislikes being touched
- May use empty office without permission
- May require to work from home more than their peers
- May internalize situations that accumulate, creating emotional reverberations that last longer than is considered typical



Be Self Aware

Be aware of situations where you are thinking:



- “I assumed that...”
- “Everyone knows that...”

“The things that are obvious to me are different from the things that are obvious to you.”

- Understand your team’s assumptions, unspoken rules and norms and be able to articulate them.
- **It helps to give explicit rules for expected behavior**, including explaining why certain behaviors could be rude or insensitive and how their colleague may feel about it.
- Appreciate your colleague’s ability to notice “obvious things” that you do not see.



Address Issues

No disability is an excuse for bad behavior – in anyone.

- Do not ignore rudeness or other issues but be kind when addressing them.
- Explain expected behavior in your workplace, why a particular behavior is “bad”, and what kinds of misunderstandings can arise as a result.
- Model good behavior/responses towards peers and junior staff.
- Reward behavior (teamwork, etc.) appropriately – like you would any other team member. Frequent praise is often very effective.
- Do NOT use the phrase, “That is not appropriate behavior” – or any other phrase you’d use primarily with 4-year-olds.

Externalize Motivation

Make it Urgent

- Iterative deadlines
- Shame-free accountability check-ins
- Timers for small tasks

Make it personally interesting

- Find something about the task that they find interesting
- Short term rewards and positive feedback

Make it New or Novel

- New locations
- New ways to do a task
- Gamify tasks



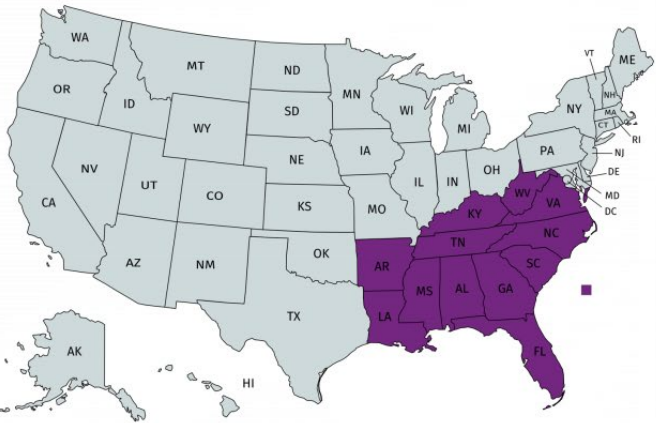
Recruiting from schools

Southeast

- Number of colleges/universities in region: 1166
- Number of states: 12
- Number of programs: 20

Region: Southeast

College/University	Program with Link	City	State	Type	College Setting
Austin Peay State University	Full Spectrum Learning (FSL)	Clarksville	TN	Public	4-year
Central Baptist College	Autism Spectrum Assistance Program (ASAP)	Conway	AR	Private, Not-for-Profit	4-year
*Christian Brothers University	Students Tackling Autism-Related Syndromes (STARS)	Memphis	TN	Private, Not-for-Profit	4-year
Clemson University	Spectrum Program	Clemson	SC	Public	4-year



<https://collegeautismnetwork.org/>



Recruiting from services

THE **SPECTRUM** CAREERS

CAI[®] Autism2Work

 **Hire Autism**
The Sandy Lankler Jobs Portal

Circa

Mentra 
Bring your neurodiversity to work


DAIVERGENT

[Workforce Recruitment Program](#)

Communicating With Your **WHOLE** Team

Accommodations that Work for Everyone

Logistical

- Environment
 - Lights, sounds, etc.
- Working Hours
- Time allotted for tasks
- Meeting agendas

Social

- Modes of communication
- Ask: video on or off?
- Frequent feedback
- Avoid Idioms
- Give very specific deadlines

Tech-based

- Screen readers
- Live transcription
- Grammar and spell check tools

Writing a Neuro-inclusive Job Description

Do



Ensure job posting is clear and free of jargon



Clearly differentiate 'must have' skills and experience from 'nice to haves'



Include a statement affirming your organization's commitment to diversity and inclusion, including who to contact for reasonable accommodations.

Don't



Just reuse old job descriptions that may include requirements that are not necessary for the role you're hiring for



Use complex fonts or colors



Publish without having someone else read and check for clarity

Manager Communication Tips & Tricks

1. Give the **overall context** and send out agenda ahead of time
2. Explain **specifically** what outputs are required, by WHEN
3. Articulate which has **priority**: on-time or perfect (80/20)
4. Have the group **repeat** back what is expected by when and ask clarifying questions
5. (if possible, have individuals **choose** the parts of the task in which they have “specialized skills”)
6. When possible - have someone type up BRIEF notes – **email** to the team
7. Allow for and welcome questions **after the briefing**

Helps you get a project done, on time and effectively with full team buy in.

Communicating with Candidates

Ensure your recruitment materials and website clearly explain your overall hiring process.

Make sure you set clear expectations. You should explain:

- The specific purpose the interview/assessment will serve
- Assessment criteria
- Who will be there
- What kind of questions might be asked (share before hand)
- How long the assessment will take
- What kind of tasks will be involved
- Logistical guidance: dress code, what to bring, where to go, etc.

Examples for Giving Clear Directions



Use Words Literally or Explain Them

Words can have a more expansive meaning to a person or group. Explain it all unless using the dictionary definition.

No Idioms, Figures of Speech, or Slang

In popular culture, varying regions, different languages there are sayings that directly make no sense. Don't use them.

No Unitless Measures

Extensive, broad, light, and improve try to indicate how much. They are rulers without lines, terms without values.

Giving Clear Directions (pt 2)

No Vague Comparisons

Saying 10X it or give 110% tells me little. How do I 10X an email or get the extra 10% above my full 100% capacity.

Give a Due Date

Saying "when you get to it" or "fit it in" doesn't provide a target to allow us to plan our time and workload.

Clearly Prioritize

Tell me what is important. Saying "this is a rush" doesn't help me know how it ranks to my existing priorities.

Explain the Desired End State

You have a picture in your mind of what you want. If I understand the picture, it is easier to do what you want.

Giving Clear Directions (pt 3)



Put it in Writing

We get requests every day. It is hard to remember the specifics. Writing or drawing keeps details from being lost.

Clearly Specify the Time/Effort

We can do amazing work & get lost making it great. Knowing the time allotted keeps us from overdoing it.

Verify Understanding of the Ask

You're a gifted communicator, but I may miss something, misunderstand, or just be checked out. Ask for my take.

Tim Goldstein, Neurodiverse Communication Specialist Materials, Training, Consulting : www.TimGoldstein.com

We Need You!

- Be a good co-worker
- Host neurodivergent university students for co-ops or internships.



Questions? Comments? Want to help?

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