

Page: General Information

Provide information about the company to be considered for the award. If you will be nominating an individual, specify the nominee's employer.

Name of Organization/Company

Buckeye Innovation and VocFit

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Additional Contacts

I would also like to have others receive emails about the disposition of our entries.

Page: Entry Information

Entry Title

VocFit Vocational Fit Assessment Tool

Category

F06. New Service of the Year - Assistive Technology

New Service Submission Format

Written Answers

a. Briefly describe the organization that developed the nominated new service: its history and past performance (up to 200 words). Required

Buckeye Innovation is a web engineering and design company dedicated to building technology that matters. Since 2009, we've supported nonprofits, education institutions, and small businesses with transformative digital solutions. One of our most meaningful partnerships is with the VocFit team, led by Dr. Andy Persch and Dr. Dennis Cleary, who have spent years improving employment outcomes for people with developmental disabilities (DD) through the Vocational Fit Assessment (VFA).

VocFit, originally developed as part of academic research at The Ohio State University, has supported over 20,000 individuals to date by providing structured assessments of work readiness and compatibility. When we began our collaboration in the fall of 2023, the VocFit platform was functional but outdated; it supported only about 30 job matches and lacked modern UX, accessibility, and scalability features. Buckeye Innovation took on the challenge of rebuilding the platform from the ground up, supported by a grant from the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD).

We are submitting this nomination on behalf of both our team at Buckeye Innovation and our partners at VocFit, because this transformative technology would not be possible without collaboration between our organizations.

b. Specify the date on which this nominated service was introduced to the marketplace. Outline the nominated service's features, functions, benefits and novelty (up to 250 words). Required

The revamped VocFit assessment was introduced in August of 2024, and we have continued to make improvements to the platform since then.

Buckeye Innovation and the VocFit team have delivered a transformative upgrade to the platform, launching a fully redesigned site in August 2024 that integrates powerful new tools for employment planning.

Key improvements include:

-Expanded Job Bank from 35 to 230+ job roles, leveraging U.S. Department of Labor "My Next Move" data. Each role includes plain-language descriptions, employment outlooks, and video previews.

-AI-Powered Job Matching that creates a new "Best Fit Job Report," using AI to recommend top job matches based on user input and evaluations.

-Stakeholder-Specific Reports, including Employment Plan Reports, Volunteer Match Reports, Family-Friendly Summaries, and Cohort Reports for group tracking.

-Improved UX/UI, including modern navigation, responsive design, embedded help text, tutorial videos, improved accessibility, and enhanced security.

-Cohort Reporting Tools for educators and service providers to assess group outcomes and measure skill development over time.

-Volunteer Matching Option for individuals who may not be ready or choose not to pursue paid employment.

-AI Assistant to help users identify skills needed for specific roles, recommending action plans, and providing resources.

These features address the employment planning gaps identified in a five-year NIH-funded study. Hundreds of users—job seekers with DD, families, and providers—participated in this research, shaping these improvements.

c. Explain why the nominated service is unique or significant. If possible compare the service to competitors' offerings and/or to the organization's other or past products (up to 250 words). Required

VocFit is extremely unique in the employment services and assistive technology space. Most tools in this field rely on interest inventories, which generate potential job matches based on a user's interests and skills. However, these inventories have significant limitations; they do not offer clear pathways to specific, desired jobs, and they don't identify areas of improvement to reach employment goals. VocFit, on the other hand, evaluates observable behaviors and skills that predict job success.

VocFit is the only known tool that:

-Offers a validated, skill-based assessment tailored for people with developmental disabilities.

-Provides detailed reporting to track progress in skill areas over time.

-Provides AI-driven recommendations and structured learning paths.

-Serves as a free, widely accessible resource across schools, Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, and community providers

-Provides links to real, local job openings for users to investigate

-Integrates with Department of Labor statistics to present job data in plain language

Its audience includes:

-Schools (ages 14–22): students, families, special educators, therapists, counselors, and transition specialists.

-Adult Services (ages 23+): Vocational Rehabilitation staff, job developers, and certified rehabilitation providers.

-Families: who may access VocFit independently to better understand and support their loved ones' career goals.

The platform also solves a systemic problem: the lack of common language and structure across employment services. By providing measurable skill gain reports, editable job coaching plans, and progress tracking tools, VocFit enables schools, agencies, and job seekers to make data-driven decisions and document outcomes for funding and accountability.

d. Reference any attachments of supporting materials throughout this nomination and how they provide evidence of the claims you have made in this nomination (up to 250 words). Optional

The attached materials provide substantial evidence of the VocFit project's innovation, impact, and user-centered design.

Our links demonstrate the functionality of the platform:

-Link 1: The VocFit website serves as a central hub, showcasing the platform's core functions and resources.

-Link 2: Our VocFit Impact Story published by Buckeye Innovation outlines the collaborative development process and the measurable success of our work.

-Link 3: VocFit 2.0 Video provides a visual overview of the entire revamped platform.

-Links 5-9: A suite of brief video demonstrations—including Job Seeker Assessment, Job Seeker Reports, Cohort Management, MyNextMove Integrations, Staff/Site Management, and AI Assistant—provides visual, real-time evidence of specific features and usability improvements made in response to user feedback.

Our supporting documents outline deliverables and progress in accordance with grant requirements:

-Doc 1: The VocFit How-To Guide (PDF) offers a comprehensive walkthrough of the system's current functionality, training users in navigating the updated platform.

-Doc 2: The VocFit Narrative (which was submitted as a grant proposal) details the project's strategic objectives, including Buckeye Innovation's lead role and the collaborative structure enabling delivery across partner organizations.

-Docs 3-7: Quarterly reports from Q1 through Q5 demonstrate consistent progress on deliverables and illustrate our commitment to transparency, continuous improvement, and stakeholder engagement. These materials collectively verify our claims of real-world impact, rigorous development, and a highly adaptive, inclusive technology solution.

-Doc 8: We have also included our Job List document, which highlights all current possible results from taking the assessment (although we are in the process of adding about 50 more).

Webpage Link

[REDACTED FOR PUBLICATION]

Would you like to add an additional webpage link?

Yes

[REDACTED]

A horizontal bar chart with ten bars of varying lengths. The bars are black and set against a light gray background with horizontal grid lines. The lengths of the bars decrease from top to bottom.

Bar Index	Approximate Length (pixels)
1	450
2	10
3	150
4	550
5	10
6	350
7	10
8	150
9	250
10	100

Would you like to add an additional supporting document?

Yes

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Would you like to add an additional supporting document?

Yes

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Would you like to add an additional supporting document?

No

By your submission of this entry to The Stevie Awards, you verify that you have read and agreed to abide by the regulations, terms and conditions of the competition (<https://www.asia.stevieawards.com/rules-and-terms-conditions-competition>).

Terms and Conditions

I Agree