Disability Employment Initiative Project Implementation and Impact Evaluation Round 5 through Round 6 Grantees

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ACRONYMS

(ABE) Adult Basic Education
(ADA) Americans with Disabilities Act
(AJC) American Job Center
(ARC) Active Resource Coordination
(AT) Assistive Technology
(BLN) Business Leadership Network
(CE) Customized Employment
(CNA) Certified Nursing Assistant
(CP) Career Pathways
(CWIC) Community Work Incentives Coordinator
(DCS) MassHire Department of Career Services
(DEA) Disability Employment Accelerator
(DEI) Disability Employment Initiative
(DLR) South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation
(DOR) California Department of Rehabilitation
(DRC) Disability Resource Coordinator
(DVR) Department of Vocational Rehabilitation
(EN) Employment Network
(ETA) Employment and Training Administration
(GED) General Education Diploma
(GWDB) Governor's Workforce Development Board
(ICI) Institute for Community Inclusion
(ILP) Individual Learning Plan
(IRT) Integrated Resource Team
(IT) Information Technology
(JSWDs) Jobseekers with Disabilities
(MCB) Massachusetts Commission for the Blind
(MCDHH) Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
(MOU) Memorandum of Understanding
(MRC) Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
(NDEAM) National Disability Employment Awareness Month
(NDI) National Disability Institute
(ODEP) Office of Disability Employment Policy
(OJT) On-the-Job Training
(PASS) Plan for Achieving Self-Support
(PIRL) Participant Individual Record Layout
(QED) Quasi-Experimental Design
(SCCS) Systems Change Coding Scheme
(SDS) Service Delivery Strategy
(SITS) Short Interrupted Time Series
(SNAP) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
(SSA) United States Social Security Administration
(SSDI) Social Security Disability Insurance
(SSI) Supplemental Security Income
(TANF) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
(TORQ) Transferable Occupation Relationship Quotient
(T/TA) Training and Technical Assistance
(TTW) Ticket to Work
(USDOL) United States Department of Labor
(VR) Vocational Rehabilitation
(WBL) Work-Based Learning
(WDA) Workforce Development Area
(WDD) Hawaii Workforce Development Division
(WIA) Workforce Investment Act
(WIOA) Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
(WIPA) Work Incentives Planning and Assistance
(WWL) Work Without Limits

I. Executive Summary

1. **The Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) Round 5 and Round 6 evaluation was conducted by Social Dynamics, LLC, and Abt Associates.** It was designed to report to the United States Department of Labor's (USDOL) Office of Disability Employment Policy and Employment and Training Administration on the implementation, outcomes, and impact of the DEI. Research questions focused on employment outcomes and the impact of the project on jobseekers with disabilities (JSWDs). Other research questions centered on service delivery strategies (SDSs) and grant requirements that were embedded within the workforce development systems of participating Workforce Development Areas (WDAs).[1]

2. **Grantees used a wide array of SDSs across treatment sites and exhibited considerable variability in the way the DEI and grant-funded leadership positions were implemented.** A primary focus on the goal of employment for JSWDs was persistent throughout. Unlike some earlier rounds, project implementation and engagement of JSWDs was exceedingly precise, with few challenges, particularly in states that had prior DEI experience. Staff turnover, retention, and contamination were not factors that, for most grantees, affected the implementation or operation of the DEI. Those that experienced these challenges were able to overcome them relatively quickly. At the same time, the level of engagement of JSWDs appeared to be robust. With respect to certain prior rounds, we characterized the DEI as a "*living laboratory of practical insight about the way JSWDs can be served through the AJCs and their partners*."[2] DEI Round 5 and Round 6 functioned with less variability than in prior rounds with clearly defined roles and a distribution of tasks. In most Round 5 and Round 6 WDAs, DEI State Leads and Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs) knew who to report to, who made key decisions, and who provided guidelines leading to project effectiveness.

3. **The DEI was designed to improve the capacity of AJCs to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities.** AJCs are primarily financed by the federal government through funding streams that provide support services to veterans, youth, dislocated workers, school dropouts, individuals in poverty, and individuals with disabilities. DEI State Leads and DRCs worked in 12 (Round 5 and Round 6) states to build capacity for the implementation of SDSs and training for staff and JSWDs and to foster opportunities for partnerships and collaborations with WIOA providers and community-based agencies to resolve barriers that inhibited access to needed services. DEI Round 5 and Round 6 grantees administered SDSs with proficiency, augmented by a plethora of services and supports, including enrollment in WIOA and Ticket to Work (TTW).

4. **The DEI included two grant-funded leadership positions.** Each grantee included a DEI State Lead and one or more DRCs for each treatment WDA. These positions provided executive leadership and expertise in workforce development, program implementation,

[1] Throughout the text of this report, we refer to both WDAs and American Job Centers (AJCs). A single WDA may include one or more AJCs that provide core, intensive, and/or Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) services.

[2] Cori DiBiase, comment, March 9, 2020.

SDSs, partnerships and collaborations, benefits counseling, TTW and Employment Network (EN) program management, organizational development, and project sustainability.

5. **The DEI State Lead provided executive leadership.** DEI State Leads were responsible for monitoring finances, developing state and local partnerships, and providing workforce development and program implementation support. They also monitored ENs, conferred with WDAs, managed the grant, and corresponded with the Federal Project Officers. DEI State Leads also provided support for the implementation of DEI projects and DRCs.

6. **DRCs were tasked with the implementation of SDSs in addition to partnership-building, benefits counseling, TTW and EN program management, organizational development, and project sustainability.** DRCs who completed Community Work Incentives Coordinator (CWIC) training provided benefits counseling to JSWDs. Other DRC tasks supporting JSWDs included employment preparation, job placement support, soft skills training, job coaching, leadership for Integrated Resource Teams and support services for JSWDs as they enrolled in community colleges to improve their basic skills in math, reading, or English prior to accepting an offer of employment. DRCs who had prior case management experiences were often recognized for their ability to understand the needs of JSWDs and respond effectively to those needs.

7. **The DEI Round 5 and Round 6 included 12 grantees.**

Round 5 2014–2019	**Round 6** 2015–2019
California (n=8,141)	Alaska (n=310)
Illinois* (n=3,120 of which 2,560 were youth)	Georgia (n=84)
Kansas (n=3,214)	Hawaii**
Massachusetts**	Iowa (n=8,936)
Minnesota (n=5,440)	New York (n=3,888)
South Dakota (n=694)	Washington**

*Youth grantee/**Grantee did not provide WIA data

Round 5

- California Employment Development Department
  # of prior DEI grants: **1= R2**
- Workforce Services Division Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
  # of prior DEI grants: **2= R1, R4**
- Kansas Department of Commerce
  # of prior DEI grants: **1= R1`**
- Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Department of Career Services
  # of prior DEI grants: **1= R3**
- Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, Division of Workforce Development
  # of prior DEI grants: **1= R3**
- South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation, Workforce Training
  # of prior DEI grants: **1= R2**

Round 6

- State of Alaska, Department of Labor and Workforce Development
  # of prior DEI grants: **2= R1, R4**
- Georgia Department of Economic Development, Workforce Division
  # of prior DEI grants: **0**
- State of Hawaii Department of Labor and Industrial Relations
  # of prior DEI grants: **1= R2**
- Iowa Workforce Development
  # of prior DEI grants: **1= R3**
- New York State Department of Labor
  # of prior DEI grants: **1= R4**
- Washington State Employment Security Department
  # of prior DEI grants: **1= R2**

8. **DEI provided coordination of integrated training and support services.** DEI training and support services provided adult and youth JSWDs with integrated workforce development systems designed to improve training and employment outcomes. Individuals in a treatment WDA who self-disclosed a disability were eligible to enroll in the DEI. The program did not require individuals to provide documentation regarding the type or severity of their disability. DEI participants received one-on-one support from a DRC. DEI participants from 12 grantees self-disclosed a disability but occasionally did not directly discuss their disability with a DRC.

9. **SDSs facilitated JSWD outreach and engagement and employer Partnerships and Collaborations.** Integrated Resource Teams, Blending and Braiding Resources, and Customized Employment were implemented with selected features of SDSs, including Active Resource Coordination, Partnerships and Collaborations, Asset Development, Work-Based Learning, Apprenticeships, Job Shadowing, and Career Pathways. While there were differences in the fidelity of SDSs, it was apparent that training such as person-centeredness and systems integration resulted in improvements in service availability and implementation. We conclude that while grantees may not have implemented each of their SDSs with fidelity, the net effect of their introduction appears to have improved Partnerships and Collaborations with employers and stakeholders and access to work incentives such as Trial Work Period, Impairment-Related Work Expenses, Plan to Achieve Self-Support, and Partnership Plus.

10. DEI Round 5 and Round 6 grantees implemented six requirements:

i. *Selection of either a youth or adult focus.*
ii. *Physical and programmatic accessibility of participating AJCs.*
iii. *Implementation of at least two DEI SDSs: Active Resource Coordination; Asset Development; Blending and Braiding Resources; Benefits Planning; Customized Employment; Guideposts for Success; Integrated Resource Teams; Partnerships and Collaborations; Work-Based Learning Opportunities; and Entrepreneurship.*
iv. *Completion of a sustainability plan for after the grant period.*
v. *Availability of CWICs for United States Social Security Administration (SSA) beneficiaries to provide benefits services.*
vi. *Implementation of TTW and access to work incentives webinars.*

11. SSA Work Incentives Planning and Assistance providers certified CWICs who provided benefits counseling to beneficiaries seeking employment. Many DRCs were CWICs who made decisions about the impact of earnings on health care and benefits. Some SSA beneficiaries enrolled in TTW to limit the effects of working on their continuing disability review,[3] which can affect health insurance coverage.

12. We identified promising practices among Round 5 and Round 6 grantees. For example, California's Traveling DRC provided 1-day trainings for AJC Employment Specialists "*to bring best practices and perspectives discovered through California's DEI and Disability Employment Accelerator to improve service delivery to individuals with disabilities in each treatment WDA*."[4] Illinois DRCs had a strong partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation that included a dedicated staff member who made referrals to Career Pathways services, enrolled individuals in WIOA services, and provided oversight of individuals who enrolled in community colleges. DRCs worked with Vocational Rehabilitation to make referrals to employment and Career Pathways training while apprenticeships and internships allowed youth to learn about employment and what it entails (e.g., receiving remuneration, working in a group environment, adhering to the requirements of a supervisor).

13. While there were no measureable impacts of DEI on wage and employment outcomes, there were consistently positive impacts of career pathways programs on the same outcomes. The DEI Round 5 and Round 6 impact evaluation included three distinct research designs, with the aim of measuring the impact of DEI on employment and wage outcomes, as well as the career pathways intervention on the same outcomes. Randomization was not used in the evaluation, but instead, quasi-experimental methods were used to determine the impact of DEI on outcomes. The evaluation team used administrative that were collected on people with disabilities who were entering DEI-funded AJCs and comparison group AJCs that were not funded as part of DEI, and used a matching procedure to help determine the impact of receiving services at a treatment AJC. The level of comparison was at the WDA level, with outcomes measured at the individual customer level. The results indicated that although there

[3] U.S. Social Security Administration. (n.d.). *Understanding Supplemental Security Income continuing disability reviews — 2019 edition*. Retrieved from https://www.ssa.gov/ssi/text-cdrs-ussi.htm
[4] IL DRC comment, March 9, 2020.

were no sustained impacts of DEI on outcomes, there were consistently positive impacts of being in a career pathways program on the same outcomes.

II. Introduction

The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) of the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) was created in 2001. Its mission is to provide national leadership by developing and influencing disability employment-related policies and practices affecting an increase in the employment of people with disabilities. Since then, ODEP has designed numerous programs and policies that support people with disabilities and the workforce development system by promoting Career Pathways training and employment, the Campaign for Disability Employment, and the Workforce Recruitment Program, which connects employers with highly motivated college students and recent graduates with disabilities. ODEP, in partnership with the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), has also implemented which focuses on Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work strategies. Other projects include the **SSI [Supplemental Security Income] Youth Recipient and Employment Transition Formative Research Project**, which identifies promising programs and policies for youth SSI recipients, and **Evaluating the Accessibility of American Job Centers for People with Disabilities**.

A. Disability and Labor Force Engagement

The median income of families living in the United States with at least one member with a disability is 72 percent of the national median, while median incomes for families with at least one member with a mental or physical disability are 66 percent and 68 percent, respectively, of the national median.[5] [6] All things being equal, age and disability are the most important predictors of labor force participation leading to employment, as older workers are more likely to leave the labor market than younger workers due to the onset of disability or social and economic factors.[7] These factors include chronic health conditions and the changing social aspects of income, education, gender, race/ethnicity, and variability in the labor market.[8] [9]

Labor force engagement tends to decline after the onset of a disability due to chronic conditions.[10] Chronic conditions have been linked to reductions in household income and increases in the likelihood of poverty, limitations in human capital, and job skill development.[11] For example, people with cerebral palsy, spinal cord injury, or rheumatoid arthritis have much higher labor force participant rates than those with visual impairments or intellectual disabilities. Working-age people with sensory, physical, and/or cognitive disabilities[12] are also at a

[5] Minkler, Fuller-Thomson, & Guralnik, 2006.
[6] Disability Statistics and Demographics Rehabilitation Research and Training Center. University of New Hampshire.
[7] Mitchell, Adkins, & Kemp, 2006; Rigg, 2005.
[8] Mitchell et al., 2006.
[9] Crimmins, Reynolds, & Saito, 1999.
[10] Mitchell et al., 2006; Young et al., 2002.
[11] Loprest & Maag, 2009.
[12] Houtenville, Erickson, & Lee, 2012.

significant disadvantage in terms of their employment and earnings when compared with working-age individuals without a disability. While age is the most important predictor of labor force participation, there are a variety of health, social, and economic factors involved in workforce participation, including long-term chronic health conditions, work history, family income, educational attainment, gender, race/ethnicity, and the vagaries of the labor market.[13] [14]

III. Description of the Program

The workforce development systems in the United States changed in 2015 with the transition from the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA replaced WIA, which used a hierarchical service delivery system that required jobseekers to enroll in core services, employment placement, and intensive services that included skills assessments and enrollment in college. Jobseekers with disabilities (JSWDs) were required to start from core and intensive services in order to allocate resources into three categories: disadvantaged adults, dislocated workers, and youth. In 2015, federal resources were provided to USDOL agencies to WDAs to support the new WIOA programs. In most WDAs, there is one comprehensive AJC and one or more satellite centers. WIOA provides three levels of services for adults and dislocated workers: basic, individualized, and follow-up services that are no longer needed because they can be accessed through WDAs; what were intensive and training services are now "individualized services" that can be coordinated through Partnerships and Collaborations.

USDOL's ETA and ODEP sought to resolve chronic unemployment and limited opportunities for people with disabilities. (WIOA) increased the capacity of WDAs to serve jobseekers whether or not they have a disability. Understanding that there is a need for further investment in JSWDs, the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) was implemented to increase the capacity of WDAs[15] and to facilitate Partnerships and Collaborations that improve access to AJC services for people with disabilities.[16]

Funding for DEI Round 5 and Round 6 was provided in 2017 and 2018, respectively, when ETA and ODEP released a Solicitation for Grant Applications that made provisions for $14,837,784.70 for Round 5 and $14,911,243.00 for Round 6 to support 12 cooperative agreements through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2010.[17] One-half of the DEI funds went to ETA for the training and technical assistance (T/TA) of DEI grantees. The other half went to ODEP for the DEI evaluation.

As with earlier rounds, Round 5 and Round 6 were required to provide services to either adults or youth participants. The age range for adult JSWDs was 21 or older, while the age range

[13] Crimmins, Reynolds, & Saito, 1999.
[14] Mitchell, Adkins, & Kemp, 2006; Rigg, 2005.
[15] Information about WDAs and their services.
[16] For detailed information on promising practices and challenges, go to page 37 for Round 5 and page 103 for Round 6 grantee narratives. For detailed information on the implementation of DEI SDSs, go to page 15.
[17] Pub. L. No. 111-117

for youth was 14–21. All but one Round 5 and Round 6 grantee did not have a prior DEI grant as the Georgia Department of Economic Development, Workforce Division, was new to the DEI in Round 6. Nonetheless, all grantees were positioned to maintain Ticket to Work (TTW) activities, as many collected resources that provided access to new service delivery strategies (SDSs) and training prior to project implementation. DEI State Leads, Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs), and AJC Employment Specialists helped grantees acclimate to the DEI and recruit Ticket holders, collaborate with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), and coordinate Ticket services under Partnership Plus arrangements.[18] [19] Grantees also had access to the following SDSs in Exhibit 1 to help JSWDs obtain credentials required for in-demand occupations.

Exhibit 1: Complete List of Service Delivery Strategies

1. Active Resource Coordination (*Selected Components*)
2. Apprenticeships/Job Shadowing (*Selected Components*)
3. Asset Development Strategies (*Selected Components*)
4. Career Pathways
5. Customized Employment (*Selected Components*)
6. Guideposts for Success (Not selected)
7. Entrepreneurship/Self-Employment (*Selected Components*)
8. Integrated Resource Teams (*Selected Components*)
9. Leveraging Resources and Services/Blending and Braiding Resources (*Selected Components*)
10. Work-Based Learning Opportunities (*Selected Components*)[20]

Most grantees used components of SDSs to provide support for JSWDs. For example, Active Resource Coordination, Integrated Resource Teams, Work-Based Learning, Apprenticeships, and Career Pathways were commonplace as they facilitated communications across WDAs and leveraged resources for transportation, training, employment opportunities, and college enrollment that supported employment goals. Some SDSs were selected in their entirety. Others were used as components of SDSs. For example, in the boxes in Exhibit 2 below, SDSs 1–4 were more likely to be selected in their entirety versus SDSs 5–8, which were used to augment specific components of an SDS.

[18] Goodley, D. (2010). *Disabilities studies: An interdisciplinary introduction*. London: Sage Publications.

[19] As the statutory-level Employment Network (EN), VR agencies could enter into Partnership Plus agreements with DEI grantees, allowing VR and AJCs to receive outcome payments through case closures. DEI grantees could also receive milestone payments for follow-up job retention services.

[20] King, C. T., Choi, J., & Cerna Rios, A. (2014). *Improving services for persons with disabilities under the Workforce Investment Act and related programs: Challenges, opportunities, and a way forward*. Retrieved from http://raymarshallcenter.org/files/2014/11/Improving-Services-for-Persons-with-Disabilities-under-the-Workforce-Investment-Act-and-Related-Programs_APPAM.pdf

Exhibit 2: Utilization of SDSs

1. Active Resource Coordination
2. Integrated Resource Teams
3. Blending and Braiding Resources
4. Career Pathways

5. Customized Employment
6. Guideposts for Success
7. Entrepreneurship
8. Leveraging Resources and Services

Of the 10 SDSs listed in Exhibit 1, we identified eight that used components of other SDSs (Active Resource Coordination, Apprenticeships/Job Shadowing, Asset Development Strategies, Career Pathways, Customized Employment, Integrated Resource Teams, Leveraging Resources and Services, and Work-Based Learning) despite grantees not having formally selected them for their projects. By scaling down the number of SDSs, grantees implemented SDS components that allowed them to introduce and scale-up a broader array of support services for JSWDs. In addition, using facile and familiar approaches to SDS implementation played a role in accommodating the frequency of *in-person* meetings between DRCs and JSWDs through Integrated Resource Teams (augmenting them when necessary with telephone and/or email meetings).

Each SDS was used to "*individualize the employment relationship*" by identifying the strengths and interests of each JSWD and utilizing a menu of customized assessments and team planning that, in optimal situations, involved AJC Employment Specialists and VR counselors. Furthermore, Round 5 and Round 6 grantees focused on systems change and improving access to services for JSWDs among multiple partners, including AJCs, and augmenting their systems change strategies by accessing resources from DEI and T/TA providers. Specific components of Customized Employment and Work-Based Learning, including on-the-job training (OJT) and internships, were available to help JSWDs obtain credentials required for in-demand occupations. SDSs were implemented concurrently and often in partnership with other entities such as USDOL Jobs for Veterans State Grants staff and local industries and employees. DRCs and related partners were also involved in systems change, aiding WDA staff and providing services for JSWDs designed to improve staff skills.

Due to their experience with prior DEI projects, Round 5 and Round 6 grantees did not have many of the same difficulties of earlier grantees, such as the implementation of TTW. While Alaska (Round 6) had some challenges throughout their grant period with SSA program requirements, other grantees mentioned resource limitations and limited access to Community Work Incentives Coordinator (CWIC) services, despite a less lengthy SSA suitability determination process as compared to DEI Round 1 through Round 4 projects, grantees were able to address these issues, and overcome them. These issues had been resolved due in large part to the considerable experience of ODEP-ETA, DEI State Leads and DRCs, and an approach to systems change that integrated employment and training into local communities with the assistance of DRCs and experienced WDA personnel. DEI knowledge of ways to address

systemic barriers was also enhanced by DOL's WorkforceGPS webinars and DEI peer-peer learning exchanges.

While it is well-known that some JSWDs had trepidations about working due to a fear of loss of SSI/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits, they generally reported that in many instances CWICs allayed their concerns. CWICs, many of whom were DRCs, provided counseling and outreach to beneficiaries who were eligible for work incentive programs. Free CWIC services ensured that individuals on SSI or SSDI could transition to employment with the help of SSA work incentives. The creation of ENs also facilitated systems change as DEI State Leads, DRCs, and SSA staff worked together to implement ENs and create expectations and working relationships that would leverage TTW resources to support AJC services for JSWDs after the grants ended.

IV. Evaluation Design

The goal of the DEI was to improve the employment outcomes of JSWDs through the application of specialized SDSs and the facilitation of systems change. The purpose of the DEI impact evaluation was to measure and assess the outcomes and impact of DEI Round 5 and Round 6. The main research questions focused on employment, employment retention, and wages of DEI participants, while other questions focused on how specific SDSs impacted participant outcomes. The source of information for the impact analysis came in the form of WIA administrative data, which had been collected on individuals who received any form of services at an AJC.

To provide context on the individuals with disabilities who received services outside of DEI-funded AJCs, a survey on employment, activities of daily living, and disability type was analyzed and reported in this evaluation. The source of information from this analysis came in the form of a novel survey that was administered via web and phone to individuals in comparison group AJCs who elected to answer questions in exchange for a $15 gift card.

The main impact analysis determined the effect of the DEI intervention on outcomes using two quasi-experimental approaches. In addition, a tertiary analysis determined the effect of Career Pathways programs on outcomes using only individuals who received services in the treatment group. To provide context for these findings, the study examined descriptive characteristics of all the individuals in the WIA data sample as well as findings on activities of daily living and disability type by individuals in only the comparison group. The overall findings suggest that although DEI as a program did not have statistically significant impacts on outcomes, Career Pathways enrollment did have impacts on outcomes even after accounting for selection bias.

We designed the primary impact analysis to measure differences in program outcomes using a quasi-experimental design (QED) that compared treatment group to the comparison group WDAs at the individual per-person level. The primary analysis included only state grantees that had both treatment and comparison WDAs. A secondary analysis using a short interrupted time series (SITS) design included treatment WDAs in order to accommodate those

states that only had a single WDA or had comparison WDAs that may have also received services funded through DEI.[21] The SITS analysis provided a baseline impact measure on how outcomes changed before and after the appearance of interventions for each round of grantees.[22]

A tertiary analysis used WIA data from only the treatment group individuals to determine whether Career Pathways programs had an impact on outcomes by delineating two groups: individuals who enrolled in Career Pathways programs and those who did not. By using a QED that compared these two groups, we determined if the participation in Career Pathways programs impacted individual-level employment, employment retention, and earnings and outcomes.

V. Program Implementation

Fundamental to DEI practices were the ways that DRCs mobilized stakeholders and resources to build strong, supportive services around the jobseeker in ways that respected their self-direction and choice. Consequently, DEI State Leads and DRCs often found themselves engaging in systems change through Partnerships and Collaborations and services on a daily basis. Partnership development also included helping state, local, and community-based agencies build capacity by training their staff in DEI SDSs. While some DEI grantees focused more on particular job and career development strategies (e.g., Career Pathways, Customized Employment, Self-Employment, Asset Development), they all involved some measure of coordinated, leveraged team support leading to employment through the use of SDSs. Each of the SDSs utilized by DEI grantees are described below in greater detail.

A. Implementation of DEI Service Delivery Strategies

As mentioned earlier, grantees used components of SDSs to operationalize Active Resource Coordination and Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs), Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeships, Career Pathways, youth in transition with disabilities, IRTs that facilitated communications across WDAs, and leveraging resources for transportation, training, employment opportunities, and college classes that supported employment goals.

[21] California and Illinois were deemed to have comparison group WDAs that may have received services or benefits from DEI funding and were excluded from the QED analysis. South Dakota (Round 5) and Alaska (Round 6) each had only one WDA and were also excluded from the QED analysis. Massachusetts (Round 5), Hawaii (Round 6), and Washington State (Round 6) did not make their data available for analysis.

[22] It should be noted that quasi-experimental approaches cannot fully eliminate selection bias, and that proper identification of the intervention effect is more difficult to determine than a randomized trial at the individual level. Identification is particularly difficult to accomplish at the WDA level, when we know that some comparison group WDAs were offering services that resembled the ones in some treatment group WDAs. Although the matching strategy helps to make sure that individuals across treatment and comparison WDAs are similar to one another, the authors acknowledge the difficulty in completely isolating the effect of DEI on outcomes. The authors have taken states out of the impact analysis completely when there is evidence that there is an abundance of contamination in the comparison group (e.g., California for the matched comparison group QED).

The figures and text below illustrate how various SDSs optimally flowed from the point of outreach and engagement to employment and supportive services. Improvements in support services were achieved when services were delivered with substantiated principles and practices. Despite the fact that over the course of the DEI Round 5 and Round 6 grants DRCs and partners had access to extensive training on SDSs, implementing them with fidelity was inconsistent.

While we found dispersion regarding the fidelity of SDSs, it was also apparent that training focusing on person-centeredness and systems integration aspects inherent to all DEI SDSs at the very least resulted in improvements in attitudes, awareness, and service availability for JSWDs being served at AJCs compared to other comparison WDAs.

"Generally, we conclude that even though many grantees did not implement each SDS with fidelity, the overall net effect of their introduction and use appears to have improved their partner agencies' employment services by providing access to SDSs and learning how they may contribute to training and employment. The following provides descriptions of each SDS implemented by DEI round and state."

Active Resource Coordination (ARC)

Round 5 (R5)	Round 6 (R6)
California – CA	Alaska – AK
Illinois – IL	Hawaii – HI
Kansas – KS	Iowa – IA
Minnesota – MN	New York – NY
South Dakota – SD	Washington – WA

Kansas: ARC occurred regularly statewide. DRCs frequently engaged other staff from the AJC and other partners with resources because "*we want everyone to get all the resources we have.*" We also heard that without DEI, ascertaining this information and resources would likely be "*pushed back to the participant*." One partner agency indicated that "*more regular meetings*" could improve ARCs, alluding to the fact that sometimes it was a difficult task to get all necessary partners to the table to better understand the resources they could collectively bring to bear for a particular individual and ARC. It was described by a DRC as "*finding the best resources to meet individuals' needs*."

South Dakota: ARC was practiced in Rapid City before enrollment as the first step of forming an IRT, as is appropriate to the definition. It involved discussing eligibility and employment goals. There was also statewide training on Active Resource Coordination.

Asset Development

Round 5 (R5)	Round 6 (R6)
Not selected by any R5 grantees	Washington – WA
	Hawaii – HI

Generally, when queried about Asset Development, most respondents appeared to equate that service with Benefits Planning. However, even though they are aligned, each is a distinct SDS. We obtained data by interviewing DEI leaders, DRCs, and partners and stakeholders to determine how extensively a full range of Asset Development services was being provided, or if grantees indicating that they focused on Asset Development were only providing benefits and work incentives planning, even if only basic personal budgeting. In this regard, the correlation between Asset Development and Benefits Planning is strong because DEI customers who received SSI/SSDI and/or veterans' benefits or other forms of public assistance needed to know how to manage their earnings from work and how they could spend and save money without jeopardizing their benefits.

Although Alaska, Hawaii, Washington, and South Dakota selected Asset Development, of these states, Alaska, Washington, and South Dakota made significant progress in creating and strengthening Asset Development partnerships.

Alaska: DRCs often worked at an individual level in terms of Asset Development by giving one-to-one advice on benefits and budgeting. One WDA indicated that a section on budgeting was included as part of the basic training program. Alaska required all DRCs to go through CWIC training for Benefits Planning. Frequently, some aspects of financial literacy were provided, as one DRC from Alaska covered budgeting after her clients got full-time jobs and advised them to be cautious of scams. She said, "*Just be aware, watch your social media. Then budgeting and saving. I do address that.*" And another DRC integrated some aspects of financial planning into her Benefits Planning work with customers by referring them to marriage and family therapy and resources from the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance service.

New York: All DRCs were trained to answer questions related to Asset Development and become familiar with the needs of their AJCs in this regard. Some DRCs attended a monthly CA$H Coalition meeting and promoted both Volunteer Income Tax Assistance at the Albany AJC.

> "*I'm a member of the CA$H Coalition. It's part of United Way here. It's creating assets, savings, and hope. It's a group that meets monthly and includes an SSA rep, which is fabulous. We get together and do outreach, attend some political kick-off type things, on behalf of our customers.*" — DRC

South Dakota: South Dakota integrated Asset Development strategies that promoted financial literacy, credit counseling, and tax assistance. There was also evidence of helping JSWDs with public assistance related to housing, child care, and transportation. A number of

examples substantiate how the DEI was networking with financial literacy resources on behalf of its customers. One WDA hosted a Wells Fargo Financial Literacy class in conjunction with a Job Search Assistance class and My Free Taxes information that was shared at the South Dakota Youth Council meeting. The WDA also hosted two Credit When Credit is Due classes, taught by a local partner of Consumer Credit Counseling of the Black Hills. We also found some evidence that local AJCs offered financial literacy classes to participants.

Washington: Washington understood the importance of integrating Asset Development and financial literacy into its services strategy. From the outset, they developed their partnership with the Northwest Area Foundation to provide financial literacy and income stability training and support to participants. While our data substantiates that a number of DEI grantees included Asset Development and financial literacy along with Social Security Benefits Planning, Washington took a statewide approach to the integration of these services by leveraging partner resources for ongoing access to expertise and training and provided a substantial number of JSWDs with financial wellness training sessions over the life of the grant.

Blending and Braiding Resources

Round 5 (R5)	Round 6 (R6)
California – CA	Alaska – AK
Illinois – IL	Georgia – GA
Kansas – KS	Hawaii – HI
Minnesota – MN	Iowa – IA
South Dakota – SD	New York – NY
	Washington – WA

Blending and Braiding Resources was frequently observed across Round 5 and 6 DEI grantees. It is a process that is integral to ARC and IRTs and is an essential component of systems change. Examples of Blending and Braiding Resources are provided below.

Alaska: Alaska embedded Blending and Braiding Resources quite effectively due to its strong partnerships and the use of IRTs to support youth with disabilities in exploring various career paths and educational opportunities. One DRC gave an example of a youth customer who needed additional help with housing and transportation. According to the DRC, "*I worked with a bunch of different agencies on that. We were able to get him into Job Corps. … And they got him in, right at the end of May, which was really nice because that's when his housing was over and then in Alaska, to do that temporary housing would have been so expensive*." The collaboration between DEI and Department of Vocational Rehabilitation's (DVR) Pre-Employment Transition Services program resulted in co-funded summer youth employment programs, institutes for youth in the criminal justice system, and shared financial support for training, transportation, and other youth employment-related services.

California: California Blended and Braided Resources both at the state and WDA levels. At the state level, the grantee combined resources from DEI and the Disability Employment

Accelerator (DEA). While working with multiple DEI projects, the DEI State Lead described how it gave the state an advantage to blend resources. The availability of such resources helped at the AJC level — in California, the state provides 50 percent of the OJT. One of the DRCs in the state noted a few success stories of the clients going through OJT and on to permanent employment. Furthermore, the strong partnership contributed to a more efficient blending and braiding approach — the regional centers they worked with provided respite care for individuals with disabilities and mental health, as well as training for ABLE accounts. As a result, the DRC learned that establishing and maintaining partnerships was a key to blending and leveraging resources. The DRC prepared a Disability Resource Guide, which listed the partner agencies they worked with, contact information, and types of services they provided.

Kansas: Kansas Round 5 used Blending and Braiding Resources. One DRC stated that he was "*putting a greater emphasis on making sure that individuals are enrolled appropriately for system-wide support. When I took over, there were many individuals that we were servicing through WIOA that had not been co-enrolled in DEI.*" Kansas also had strong collaborations with partner agencies and DRCs who utilized partnerships in Blending and Braiding Resources. DRCs often "*pick up support services so Blending and Braiding of funding, Active Resource Coordination, if you're talking about finding the best resources to meet the individuals' needs, that's occurring on a regular basis.*" In another Kansas WDA, co-enrollment was a strong factor in Blending and Braiding Resources. According to one DRC, "*We always co-enroll with DEI. We also co-enroll with our adult program, our youth program, whatever they fit into. We try and fit as many co-enrollments as we can, because it serves people better.*"

Illinois: One AJC had good success with Blending and Braiding Resources. This AJC ran into an issue serving youth, as their WIOA Youth program at the AJC could serve very limited numbers of in-school youth; the WDA resolved this problem by having access to DEI funds in the high school used to serve DEI-eligible students, while those who were out of school could be served at the AJC using WIOA funds.

Massachusetts: The DEI grantee partnered with the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission and the Department of Developmental Services to leverage resources in order to provide extended services to JSWDs. These partners also helped pay for transportation and provided job coaching for individuals once they started work. AJCs also leveraged DVR resources to pay for transportation, but Blending and Braiding of other sources of funding was limited. The grantee viewed Blending and Braiding Resources as a best practice, as one respondent noted that it was very useful in getting a client everything they needed, such as clothing or a driver's license, because different agencies could pay for different services.

South Dakota: According to the State Lead, "*We have tons of Blending and Braiding examples. Someone might provide clothing for a client who needs them in order to work, or some other needed resources. An example was a man that needed special clothing in an extra-large size and that meant having them tailored. We split the bill with another agency.*" They also split costs for training and transportation. Blending and Braiding was deemed essential to successful IRT implementation in South Dakota, and they indicated that it was very likely to continue after the grant ended because agency partnerships had been so well established.

Washington: DRCs focused on Blending and Braiding Resources. The DRC used WIOA or Basic Food Employment and Training services for school enrollment and tuition. These Basic Food funds paid for tuition, books, tools, test fees, etc. However, there seemed to be room for more active Blending and Braiding at this site because a customer noted that they still had trouble with their housing. As a DRC said, "*The big challenge would be housing. That's the whole issue. DEI is not helping with housing at all*." In another WDA, the process for Blending and Braiding seemed to be more stable. The DRC tried to utilize WIOA funds as much as possible. Additionally, when a customer's needs were not covered by WIOA, the DRC tried to find additional resources for support. For instance, a customer noted that he received interview clothes because those were not funded by WIOA, while the other customers were directed to Goodwill for additional support.

Career Pathways (CP)

Round 5	Round 6
California – CA	Alaska – AK
Illinois – IL	Hawaii – HI
Kansas – KS	Iowa – IA
Minnesota – MN	New York – NY
South Dakota – SD	Washington – WA

Illinois: Illinois made CP a major part of its service delivery strategy. One AJC developed close partnerships with its local community colleges and worked together to serve JSWDs. The AJC and community colleges referred to each other, and the colleges worked to find the best CP for each JSWD and offered job readiness courses and internships. The community colleges also did outreach to high school students and attempted to get them involved in employment and training. In addition, a local high school system made exposure to different career options a central part of its curriculum. Students could select a career-focused track that included an internship in a related career through coursework in high school and at a local community college.

Kansas: Kansas leveraged its DEI funds to support longer participation in credentialing and training programs that were more conducive to stackable credentials and career ladders. According to the DEI State Lead, the DEI was instrumental in formalizing relationships with postsecondary institutions and enhancing accommodation policies at local schools. Those who participated acquired and maintained employment for at least 6 months at a higher average hourly wage than projected.

Minnesota: A particularly robust employer engagement strategy was implemented in three treatment WDAs focused on partnering with employers to provide CP-focused credentialing, education, and apprenticeships in the career sectors of manufacturing; health care, including certified nursing assistant (CNA), cardiopulmonary resuscitation, automated external defibrillator, home health aides, personal care assistance, and medical technology; office and administrative technology; precision sheet metal; retail management, customer service, and sales;

welding; food "ServSafe;" and commercial drivers. In addition, the involvement of JSWDs in CP-focused training and employment was strengthened by opportunities to participate in peer mentor meetings where jobseekers could both obtain and provide peer support to help offset any challenges they encountered. Minnesota's CP featured a close integration between acquiring the credentials needed in a pathway and preparation for securing a job.

New York: WDAs developed health care pathways, including a certified nursing certificate, while other participants worked toward a licensed practical nurse credential. Manufacturing was another pathway that New York identified. DRCs engaged as advisors and facilitators in crafting CP approaches and braiding resources with DVR, community colleges, and community-based agencies. DRCs also leveraged resources from Pell grants.

South Dakota: South Dakota employment infrastructure was buttressed by its proximity to the region's technical school and leading adult education/supportive services provider. It also took the lead in producing and disseminating the *Building Pathways* toolkit and CP visuals to guide JSWDs with documentation on Job Shadowing for staff, clients, and employers. Statewide trainings incorporated best practices around securing accommodations for individuals with disabilities to complete a General Education Diploma (GED). Together, South Dakota, the Board of Regents, and the South Dakota Department of Education built a Career Pathways development web tool to be used by multiple partners.

"*The Career Navigator goes out to the college and meets with the students we have and talks with the instructor and student in terms of how they're doing. And then when they start their job search they meet with Career Navigators and do enhanced résumé writing to really tailor-make it to that specific job/skill set.*" — AJC Staff

Round 5 and Round 6 grantees appeared to scale-down the number of SDSs they used relative to earlier rounds. In prior grants, grantees were required to select two SDSs. Logistical challenges, however, may have led to more facile and familiar approaches to using SDSs. It is striking that two Round 5 and Round 6 DEI grantees (Georgia and Hawaii) selected Customized Employment but did not implement it in its entirety. Guideposts for Success, IRTs, Work-Based Learning Opportunities, and Self-Employment were other previously favored SDSs. Components of each of these SDSs *were* used by Round 5 and Round 6 on a less regular, informal basis by individualizing the employment relationship through job carving; better understanding the interests, strengths, and needs of each JSWD; and the use of Customized Employment's customization and negotiation strategies. Social Dynamics researchers identified DRCs who implemented IRTs, albeit in less coordinated ways than we saw in earlier rounds. DRCs speculated that IRTs would continue to be implemented with less formality by Round 5 and Round 6 grantees, as fewer incorporated the coordination of multiple services and leveraged resources arranged by the DRC in support of the jobseeker (Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3: ODEP-Suggested DEI Round 5 and Round 6 Service Delivery Strategies

Round 5							
Asset Development Strategies						0	
Blending and Braiding of Resources	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5	All Grantees
Certified Work Incentive Coordinator (CWIC) Services	Y					1	
Customized Employment			Not Selected			1	
Guideposts for Success						0	
Entrepreneurhsip/Self-Employment						0	
Integrated Resource Teams						0	
Leveraging Resources and Services						0	
Partnership and Collaboration	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5	All Grantees
Other: Systems Change	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5	All Grantees
Other: Flexible Opportunities for T/TA	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5	All Grantees
	California	**Illinois**	**Kansas**	**Masschusetts**	**South Dakota**	22	
Round 6							
Asset Development Strategies						0	
Blending and Braiding of Resources	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5	All Grantees
Certified Work Incentive Coordinator (CWIC) Services						0	
Customized Employment			Not Selected			1	
Guideposts for Success						0	
Entrepreneurhsip/Self-Employment						0	
Integrated Resource Teams						0	
Leveraging Resources and Services						0	
Partnership and Collaboration	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5	All Grantees
Other: Systems Change	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5	All Grantees
Other: Flexible Opportunities for T/TA	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5	All Grantees
	Alaska	**Georgia**	**Hawaii**	**Iowa**	**New York**	21	

Customized Employment (CE)

Round 5 (R5)	Round 6 (R6)
Not selected by any R5 grantees	Georgia – GA
	Hawaii – HI

We obtained data that indicated an uncertain level of understanding and use of CE among DEI grantees. However, to get a more complete picture of how CE elements were implemented by DEI grantees even where not specifically chosen, we scanned interview and progress report data and found that some of those grantees were in fact reporting the use of CE practices and labeling person-centered employment planning as "Customized Employment."

We found no instances of model fidelity that included CE implementation from Discovery through to customized jobs. However, we did find adoption of some CE elements, particularly Discovery, by a number of DEI grantees. Customized Support Teams are an integral part of the CE model, and IRTs appear to offer a close approximation of CE team development. Where IRTs occurred, it is reasonable to assume that they aligned with the principles, if not all the practices associated with Customized Support Teams. DEI grantees also mentioned that

Discovery and CE aligned well with WIOA Title I and DVR services as enhancements to person-centered assessments.[23]

We view the CE-related elements that DEI grantees were implementing as a promising practice because of the potential ways that they can be embedded within and reimbursed by DVR and WIOA services systems. As staff used these methods, they appeared to reduce the need for JSWDs to "impulse shop" for jobs.

Georgia and Hawaii stated in their grant applications that they intended to implement CE. Other states were found to have implemented some strategies that aligned with or were based upon CE. These are included below.

Georgia: The DEI State Lead and DRCs were trained in career mapping, a person-driven assessment process that shares many elements with CE and Discovery.

"*We do career mapping with everyone, which is a Discovery tool. We do that usually before we enroll in Title 1. It's before a DVR referral. The DRCs are good at that. After that, you do a resource planning meeting where you identify needs.*" — DRC

Georgia selected and adapted elements of CE. DRCs reported that there was improved flexibility in providing services to customers based upon their needs and preferences, although it appeared to be driven by an impulse to provide good customer service, not guided by use of a formal CE methodology. One exception was due to an employer's interest in adapting the conditions of employment in order to hire and retain people with disabilities. However, these actions were not guided by the formal components of CE, such as carving, negotiation, or job creation, but bore a greater similarity to the use of flex work, which many employers offer. "*Under flexible work arrangements, employees can change the place where their work is done — for example, by working from home or from a mobile location — or the hours when their work is done, with different work start and end times, job sharing, or flexible or compressed workweek schedules.*" DEI DRC

Hawaii: Hawaii intended to focus on CE as one of its SDSs. Its T/TA partner, the University of Hawaii, Center on Disability Services, provided numerous orientations to CE principles and practices for DRCs. However, significant DRC turnover, due in part to a change in the WIOA contractor; the part-time allocation of DRCs up until the contractor changed and increased new DRCs' time on the project; and changes in DEI leadership all contributed to uneven CE knowledge translation and significantly curtailed its use. Consequently, little evidence was found that Hawaii implemented CE as it proposed to do.

Kansas: Although Kansas did not select CE as a service implementation priority, the state had received prior training on its implementation. CE appeared to be implemented with mixed results. One DRC reported that they had success in adopting the CE Guided Group Discovery technique and embedding it into their participant assessment and career development

[23] Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act information.

process. However, some DRCs had trepidation about the match between Discovery and what AJCs were required to provide because of the time it took and the potential effect that had on achieving their performance outcomes.

"*Discovery is kind of hard for us in the workforce center. Really, Discovery is not a concept that's going to be that easily useful for us.*" — DRC

One DRC described a customized job that she had created, but the JSWD did not perform well in their position. Instead of letting him go, the employer created a position for him at another location in the business that was a better fit. This is an example of job customization without labeling the process as CE.

"*They were able to manipulate an active, open position and change the job description to fit his ability and his needs.*" — DRC

Minnesota: Minnesota also did not select CE as one of its focus areas. Minnesota received CE training in the past, and some aspects of CE were implemented for some individuals, although not across all DEI treatment WDAs.

"*There has been pretty intensive and very helpful training on CE at all three sites over the years, but CE is being implemented in components, piecemeal … with some efforts at job carving and job sharing, Discovery, on-the-job training, Job Shadowing, … and flexible scheduling.*" — DRC

California: Although not focused on CE within their Round 5 DEI grant, some elements associated with CE were used to strengthen a person-centered approach to employment development.

"*All three sites are doing a great job of highly individualized placement, really paying attention to where the individual's interest and abilities lie to finding them work that will set them on a good retention and career path, but not so much carving out or customizing employment. The DRC has done a lot with the Discovery assessment. That interview style of asking 'why does this interest you' is important.*" — DRC

New York: Although CE was not formally implemented, the methodology for working with customers suggested a more comprehensive, informal assessment process that was conceptually aligned with CE principles. The DRC would not call it "Discovery," but talked at length about getting to know each person more holistically rather than working through formal assessments and standardized intake forms that Discovery is intended to improve upon.

Guideposts for Success

Round 5 (R5)	Round 6 (R6)
Illinois – IL	Alaska – AK
	Georgia – GA

We obtained data that indicated the level of understanding and use of Guideposts for Success among Round 5 and Round 6 DEI youth-serving states. Only Illinois selected a focus on youth with disabilities in Round 5, and only Alaska and Georgia focused upon this population among Round 6 sites, although Hawaii shifted its Round 6 focus to an emphasis on youth in 2017. The following examples are representative of Guideposts implementation.

Alaska: Guideposts for Success appeared to be an important component of the Alaska DEI when developing comprehensive service plans for youth. DEI leadership described how Guideposts were central to the development of employment goals: "*When our DRC1s and* DRC2s *are working with our youth and they are creating their plans, they're going to the Guideposts. So those are their goals. They are creating their goals from their Guideposts, from the six strategies*." DRC

Illinois: Although the grantee did not report using Guideposts for Success as an SDS, a DEI-funded partner agency did make some use of the Guideposts. This partner received training from a TA provider on implementing the Guideposts and used them as a guide when producing materials to help serve students with disabilities. This partner reported that they viewed the Guideposts as a "*road map*," a useful tool that they wanted to continue to use after the grant ended to help produce materials for students with and without disabilities.

Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs)

Round 5 (R5)	Round 6 (R6)
California – CA	Alaska – AK
Illinois – IL	Georgia – GA
Kansas – KS	Hawaii – HI
Massachusetts – MA	Iowa – IA
Minnesota – MN	New York – NY
South Dakota – SD	Washington – WA

All Round 5 and Round 6 states were required to implement IRTs. Consequently, IRTs, along with Career Pathways, were among the most commonly identified and understood DEI SDSs. We found IRTs to be among the most prevalent DEI SDSs, and they were described by almost all grantees as being among the most useful SDSs in creating comprehensive, customer-centered employment plans. DRCs were often able to describe the function and intent of an IRT and how they were implementing them without specifically labeling the process as an IRT.

Alaska: DRCs in Alaska viewed the IRT as a key SDS to leverage resources to ensure that individuals entered a career path that was the right fit with all necessary supports available for success. IRTs could involve multiple players. In one WDA, an IRT was comprised of the Office of Public Advocacy, Juneau Alliance for Mental Health Inc., DVR, and Job-X. The DRC reported that as a result of a strong IRT, a customer was accepted into the Carpentry Union, and the IRT was still working on trying to obtain more Work-Based Learning experiences to build credentials for job entry.

California: Based on strong partnerships developed by each local area, the DRCs were more readily able to hold IRTs focused on the customer that engaged multiple stakeholders in ways that they had not done before. DEI staff at all pilot sites stated that they used IRTs often and found them useful.

"*One of the best things about IRTs is that, if done correctly, which all three sites are [doing], they are really coming together around one plan. And that's the difference between consecutive versus sequential services. Prior to the IRT, you'd end up with a jobseeker who might be working with multiple agencies, but each agency could have a slightly different employment plan, which pulls the jobseeker in a variety of different directions. With the IRT, having one plan really creates a focus and it gets the individual, at least I've seen, employed more quickly because everyone's on the same page.*" — DRC

Another feature of IRTs is relevant to youth JSWDs due to its value in engaging their parents:

"*Bringing the parent on to the IRT and having them see the service providers working together at the direction of their adult child has really been helpful to negate that fear that the parents have. That's been a great benefit with the IRT.*" — DRC

Illinois: Respondents at one AJC pilot site indicated that they made use of IRTs consistently with almost all their customers, and both the AJC and its major partners reported the IRTs as being a useful tool to get customers their needed resources. However, staff at another site reported not finding IRTs necessary for all customers, although they were useful in engaging and working with VR.

Kansas: All WDAs actively used IRTs. One DRC mentioned that scheduling and interacting with partner agencies on behalf of the customer was a daily task. The IRT often involved partner agencies, VR, business services, and WIOA case managers. Kansas emphasized the importance of sitting down at the table with WIOA partners to "*figure out what's going on. Maybe you have an employer I didn't think about, maybe you've got an idea that I didn't think about, and vice versa*." At the other location, the DRC was also using IRTs frequently to bring multiple perspectives focusing on the needs of the customers.

Massachusetts: DRCs managed and coordinated IRTs by building partnerships and bringing resources to the table. One WDA seemed to have a relatively strong capacity to manage and coordinate IRTs by leveraging various partnerships necessary to providing a holistic

approach to serving customers. Although a DRC at one pilot site discussed how they formed IRTs through leveraging resources, they noted that formal IRTs were rare. While the essential IRT functions were in place in Massachusetts, the IRT as implemented did not adhere to all components of the practice.

New York: A DRC in New York noted that they used IRTs on regular basis, especially when the client needed extensive assistance. In one of the pilots, the DRC noted that the employment counselors were often present during the IRT with the client. She also noted that the AJC tried to train staff to spot the individuals who might need an IRT at an early stage to prevent the clients from going through unemployment for a prolonged period.

South Dakota: South Dakota implemented IRTs and described them as core to their services on behalf of JSWDs. But, in addition to individual, customer-centered IRTs, they also developed "agency IRTs," which were held with the WIOA core programs, United Sioux Tribes who operated a Native American program, and a local transit agency and can be considered a promising practice. "*We used IRTs in all three sites … we also embraced this strategy and did trainings across the state with core and other agencies. The IRT model is going well as a management technique. We had a DVR supervisor in Rapid City ask, 'Why don't we do this for agencies and collaborate with community groups, too?'*" While IRTs can take time and be intensive based upon a person's circumstances, the DEI State Lead reported that because AJC staff were achieving better employment outcomes with IRTs than they had in the past, they believed that it was worth the effort.

Washington: Both WDAs in Washington offered that the IRT was a crucial part of their DEI. Similar to data obtained from other states, IRT-like functions were being implemented without labeling them as IRTs. As one DRC stated, "*we don't use the term but we do that all the time because it's an interdisciplinary team. We work with providers and a community rehab provider for job placement, case managers, families, etc.*" Also, customers noted in the focus groups that the DRC was helpful in finding the right services and connecting them to the right personnel using a process that included identifying their needs, employment history, and experience, and eventually forming an IRT with partner agencies that provided their particularly appropriate services.

Work-Based Learning (WBL) Opportunities

Round 5 (R5)	Round 6 (R6)
California – CA	Alaska – AK
Illinois – IL	Georgia – GA
Kansas – KS	Hawaii – HI
Minnesota – MN	Iowa – IA
South Dakota – SD	New York – NY
	Washington – WA

Work-Based Learning was most often integrated with other DEI SDSs, including the experiential aspects of goal-setting within CE, Discovery, and/or CP. The states below offer a glimpse into how they integrated WBL into their overall menu of services.

Alaska: The partnership between DEI, VR, and other provider agency partners to implement summer employment opportunities for youth was an example of integrating WBL with career exploration, goal-setting, and soft skills development. With DEI, DVR, and other braided resources, foster care youth from around the state were flown into a "*transition to employment*" experience in Anchorage, where they focused on job goal development, workplace environment soft skills, actual work experiences, and life-skills training that provided real-time/real-life employment experiences for youth with disabilities.

Massachusetts: One individual worked at a manufacturing company, but she recently started working in an internship at a local hospital that was planning to offer her a full-time job at the end of the internship. The local VR agency also partnered with a DRC to offer OJT to DEI clients as a component of assisting JSWDs to obtain and advance in their careers.

Self-Employment

Round 5 (R5)	Round 6 (R6)
Not selected by any R5 grantees	Not selected by any R6 grantees

Self-Employment was not selected as an area of focus by any Round 5 or 6 grantees. However, it did tend to emerge as a topic of discussion during interviews, particularly in states where DEI grantees served rural areas and where a relative dearth of jobs existed, but DRCs were not specific about how they assisted prospective entrepreneurs with disabilities. Overall, other than Alaska, little evidence supports the use of Self-Employment as a DEI SDS by Round 5 and Round 6 grantees.

Alaska: DEI staff and partners regarded Self-Employment as a viable employment strategy for JSWDs in areas where few opportunities for wage employment existed. DEI leadership and their partners, particularly DVR, helped JSWDs access Self-Employment training and business development resources by leveraging support among their partners. In Anchorage, they developed the *Alaska Business Week* magazine and dozens of employers participated as mentors. Youth were brought in from across the state for a weeklong business development camp and they began from the ground up to start a business.

"*Self-Employment? We actually do have it because there is a population of students who live at home and support their family. That is something unique about our region. We have business and marketing Entrepreneurship. We bring in artists, and students learn from resident experts, and we blend that training with business and marketing so they can market their arts or carving.*" — DEI Partner

B. Findings from the Social Dynamics Systems Change Coding Rubric

Social Dynamics used the same systems change analysis for the DEI Round 1 through Round 4 and Round 5 and Round 6 systems change analyses. Social Dynamics examined how each grantee used SDSs, the level of DEI stakeholder engagement, and the extent to which that engagement linked JSWDs to employment-related services and skills. Qualitative data analyses were central to the Round 5 and Round 6 evaluation, as they were in previous rounds. The implementation evaluation provided information on the roles, responsibilities, and relationships of grant-funded positions (e.g., DEI State Lead, DRC) and AJC and WIOA-mandated partners that participated. We conducted site visits and follow-up telephone interviews on an annual basis. We also prepared site visit agendas, taking into consideration reading materials produced by each grantee. Conference calls were held with stakeholders to learn their perspective on progress made. To ensure confidentiality, we did not attribute observations and comments to specific individuals nor did we reference their names, titles, or organizational affiliations in this report.

The evaluation team also trained DEI stakeholders from all 12 grantees on the requirements of the evaluation, with the principle challenge being the training and retraining of DEI State Leads and DRCs on the project's reporting requirements and evaluation. Social Dynamics created state-specific "binders" for each grantee and WDA. The binders included fact sheets outlining basic grant information, including participating WDAs, grant type (adult/youth), selection of SDSs, names, addresses, and maps of all DEI sites; confidentiality and informed consent protocols; state annual WIOA reports; WDA newsletters; a glossary of federal and state-specific terms and acronyms; and site visit questions and probes.

All site visits began with an orientation for WDA staff. We conducted interviews *annually* with 65 individual respondents across DEI Round 5 and Round 6, including DEI State Leads, DRCs, AJC managers, business services staff, Local Veterans' Employment Representatives, Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program staff, youth workforce programs and services staff, and WIOA-mandated partners. We conducted focus groups with JSWDs in all 12 WDAs. We used a purposive sampling methodology to select respondents while on site at each WDA. Site visits were conducted by teams of three trained researchers.[24] The research team relied on the opinions of "primary respondents," which included DEI State Leads and DRCs who were responsible for the implementation of the DEI in each WDA.

We used qualitative analysis to analyze the data from interviews and focus groups. It incorporates "triangulation," which involves the use of multiple data sources to produce a thorough understanding of project implementation. This component of the evaluation focused on modifications in the way the DEI State Leads and DRCs functioned, how they developed their skill sets, how SDSs were implemented, and how their use evolved over time. WIOA-mandated and non-mandated partners, communications with employers, and collection of information on the operation of TTW were other key topics of inquiry.

[24] Researchers also collected "artifacts" such as grantee quarterly reports and written descriptions of procedures or activities observed at WDAs.

C. Developing Domains and Indicators for Systems Change

DEI systems change represents an adjustment in the way WDAs coordinate and allocate resources and sustain promising practices after the grant period. Within the context of the DEI, systems change is a corollary of numerous federal, state, and local initiatives that address the needs of individuals who are members of disadvantaged and/or disenfranchised groups. Systems change is needed when improvements in the social, civic, and/or economic circumstances across WDAs are made more difficult because of a combination of prevailing attitudes, knowledge, skills, and/or resources that inhibit systems change.

To better understand the dynamics of systems change, Social Dynamics developed the Systems Change Coding Scheme (SCCS), which was revised in 2015. The SCCS measures the implementation of DEI requirements, including the implementation of SDSs and the capacity of each WDA to offer JSWDs employment and related services, including CP training; remedial classes that relate to the requirements of each Career Pathway were also available to JSWDs.

Definitions of what constitutes systems change vary. However, for our purposes, we referenced ODEP's *Criteria for Performance Excellence in Employment First State Systems Change & Provider Transformation*.[25] Though the focus of the *Criteria* is more related to the developmental disability and VR systems, its relevance in addressing changes to complex systems for individuals with disabilities correlates with the goal of the DEI. The facilitators of cross-systems change include the development or refinement of promising practices, advancements in the legal/policy landscape as they relate to accessibility, accommodations for JSWDs, and strategies that maximize efficiencies through goal alignment, resource coordination, and improvements in program performance.

The SCCS is a conceptual framework designed by Social Dynamics. It includes eight domains and indicators that operationalize systems change as it relates to individual WDAs. The coding methodology is enhanced by information from interviews and focus groups, where nuances can be observed that lend greater insight into the challenges inherent in any type of innovative, large-scale initiative. For example, although an AJC might have had assistive technology (AT) equipment, observing that it was not easily accessible, or that staff who knew how to use it were not present, or that staff had limited availability or knowledge of the technology could corroborate why a DRC may have had difficulties providing universally accessible services to JSWDs. Therefore, the objective is to achieve reliability and validity in analyzing the impact of systems change by analyzing data from interviews and observations of WDA operations using inter-rater reliability with three raters.

The SCCS coding methodology includes a four-point *Program Implementation Rubric* on the y-axis and a *Program Maturation Rubric* on the x-axis. Reliability is achieved when three coders analyze the same data and produce quantifiably consistent results. To achieve reliable

[25] U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy & LEAD Center. (n.d.). *Criteria for performance excellence in Employment First state systems change & provider transformation*. Retrieved from http://www.leadcenter.org/system/files/resource/downloadable_version/Employment_First_Technical_Brief__3_0.pdf

coding, we use mutually exclusive and clearly defined coding categories. To achieve validity, we combine discrete items into broader, clearly defined constructs. Our coding methodology focuses on developing a reliable and valid assessment of implementation and maturation or change. This process includes decision rules, a codebook, and an internal review to confirm that the data collection protocol, field experience, and observations are reliable.

System Change Indicators

The Program Implementation Rubric is a four-level ordinal scale used to determine the extent to which grantees monitor and implement the requirements of the DEI grant (y-axis).

1	2	3	4
No evidence that this indicator is being met	Some evidence that an effort is underway to implement this indicator	Evidence that implementation of this indicator is partially in place	Evidence that this indicator has been fully implemented

The *Program Maturation Rubric* is a four-level ordinal scale designed to determine the extent to which DEI grant activities achieves sustainability of DEI practices (x-axis):

Start-Up (1)	Implementation (2)	Operational (3)	Sustainable (4)
An element in the earliest planning phases, not yet formally implemented	An element that has been initially implemented, but not yet formalized beyond a trial or experimental phase	An element that has been consistently implemented, often with involvement of staff beyond the DRC	An element that will/ has persisted in the operations of the AJC/ WDA/state beyond the grant period

System Change Domains	Definitions	Key Areas of Measurement
1. Capacity to achieve integrated supported employment for JSWDs	Development of functional IRTs and resources and workforce development systems that are inclusive and change perceptions, attitudes, and understanding of the issues related to disability and employment. In addition, improvements in access to different types of resources and SDSs, designated staff with expertise supporting JSWDs, policies that facilitate access to services and employment and access to WIOA services, an experienced DEI State Lead and DRCs tasked with managing/coordinating services.	DEI State Lead involvement in systems change DRC involvement in systems change & jobseeker support EN/TTW activity Knowledge of SDSs A plan for SDS implementation
2. Coordination & integration of services	Coordination of employment services for JSWDs. Integrated workforce development systems that provide SDSs and related support services. Partnerships and Collaborations that facilitate cross-agency training, interagency partnerships, shared resources, employer cooperation and engagement, and innovative approaches to Blending and Braiding Resources.	Partnerships & Collaboration Blending & Braiding Resources IRTs Shared resources Employer outreach Asset Development training Benefits Planning
3. Customer choice	Customization of products and services to each JSWD as they make their own decisions about training and the employment process. Customer involvement is part of the design of products and services, the use of financial assistance (e.g., SSA TTW, Medicaid, Medicare, and VR services), and *targeted* training that focuses on the individual's requirements and needs.	Customer choice Services supported by system Existing subsidies/benefits used efficiently Training availability Financial literacy assistance

System Change Domains	Definitions	Key Areas of Measurement
4. Employer support & employer partnerships	Employers support the recruitment and hiring of JSWDs. WDA provides support for employers in forums to discuss their hiring needs and job candidate pool, development of position announcements, pay scales for employment opportunities, and apprenticeship opportunities and other forms of training such as OJT and Career Pathways.	Facilitate recruitment & hiring of JSWDs Opportunities to discuss hiring needs Recruitment of SSA beneficiaries Support in developing position announcements Opportunities for enrollment in CP, apprenticeships, OJT, & other supportive employment opportunities
5. Use of enhancements to existing SDSs	Identifying, developing, and/or adapting innovative practices and approaches to the use of IRTs, Customized Employment, Self-Employment, Guideposts for Success, Asset Development, and Partnerships and Collaborations.	IRTs, CE, Self-Employment, Guideposts for Success, Asset Development, & Partnerships & Collaborations with a DRC or Employment Specialist Using SDSs to facilitate the employment process
6. Dissemination of effective practices & outreach to disability & employer communities	Identifying, developing, and/or adapting practices to the use of IRTs, Customized Employment, Self-Employment, Guideposts for Success, Asset Development, and Partnerships and Collaborations. Knowledge dissemination and transfer of best practices to employers and WDA partners through webinars and other formalized methods of communication to JSWDs and employers.	IRTs, Integrated Resources, CE, Self-Employment, Guideposts for Success, Asset Development, Partnerships & Collaborations are available to JSWDs with a DRC or Employment Specialist using other SDSs to facilitate the employment process Communication strategies such as webinars, issue briefs, & in-person forums targeting key audiences: adults with disabilities, youth with disabilities, federal & state agency

System Change Domains	Definitions	Key Areas of Measurement
		partners, & support service providers
7. Universal design for learning	Provide multiple means of representation. Offer ways of customizing how information is used. Make learning more helpful with multiple representations of course content.	Provide multiple means for representation, development, & dissemination of effective practices & options for self-regulation
8. Sustainability	Sustainability achieved through system members developing access to alternative sources of funding through interagency partnerships, grants, and legislation. Ensuring that TTW ENs and DEI SDSs continue after the grant period. Policy development and policy change that leads to the sustainability of DEI strategies and activities.	Evidence of plans to sustain DEI strategies & activities: formal agreements, Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), identified sources of funding, new grants, & legislation

Program implementation and program maturation are linked to the systems change indicators. They provide information on the start-up, implementation, operation, and sustainability of each DEI grantee.

Program Implementation and Program Maturation

Program Maturation Rubric x-axis	**Program Implementation Rubric y-axis**			
	Not Implemented (1)	**Exploring (2)**	**Partially Implemented (3)**	**Fully Implemented (4)**
	No evidence that this indicator is being met	Some evidence that an effort is underway to implement this indicator	Evidence that implementation of this indicator is partially in place	Evidence that this indicator has been fully implemented
(1) Start-Up	• Grant-funded positions (e.g., DEI State Lead & DRCs) are in place • DEI State Leads are trained to administer the grant & oversee its implementation • DRCs are trained to monitor the implementation of the program, provide case management support for DEI participants, & engage in systems change activities throughout the grant period • SDSs are selected • Active outreach to WDAs begins • Information on the program is distributed to stakeholders & JSWDs • **Coordination & integration of services** • **Participant customer choice**			
(2) Implementation	• Grantees engage in a strategic process to define goals & objectives • SDSs are implemented with fidelity • DEI requirements are implemented with fidelity • DEI participants receive training, counseling, &/or job placement support • **Capacity to achieve positive employment outcomes** • **Employer engagement** • **Employer support & partnerships** • **Dissemination of effective practices & outreach to the disability community**			
(3) Operational	• DRCs collaborate with WDA staff to implement all program			

	requirements & have a clearly defined agenda that engages the employer community, JSWDs, & WDA personnel & stakeholders • WDA recruits SSA beneficiaries through TTW • WDA TTW milestone payments are received • Implementation fidelity data is used to determine why program outcomes are being/not being met • **Coordination & integration of services, customer choice, & employer support** • **Dissemination of effective practices & outreach to the disability communities** • **Employer & JSWD outreach** • **Development of new or enhancement of existing practices**
(4) Sustainable	• WDA personnel & local area agencies & support services have developed partnerships & collaborations that improve access to employment & training services for JSWDs • WDA personnel have created impactful relationships that have increased access to key supports services & employment • WDA has a realistic sustainability plan in place • WDA has resolved challenges that hinder progress to implementation & sustainability • Promising practices are sustained after the grant period • WDA outcome payments are received • **Employer partnerships & development of new or enhanced strategies** • **Employer outreach to JSWDs** • **SDSs continue after the grant period**

VI. Grant Implementation Round 5

A. State: California; Focus Area: Adults with Disabilities

i. Stated Goals and Objectives

The state's Workforce Services Branch in the Labor and Workforce Development Agency of the Employment Development Department administered the Round 5 DEI grant to achieve systemic change and expand the capacity of WDAs to serve customers with disabilities. This included significantly increasing training opportunities for JSWDs as well as for staff and employers and continuing efforts toward serving adults with disabilities with universal AJC accessibility across multiple dimensions. California planned to achieve the following objectives:

- Expand the capacity of AJCs to use core and WIOA services as a part of IRTs that serve people with disabilities;
- Continue to develop a system of state-centric T/TA to build capacity and expand the use of DEI service delivery strategies;
- Increase WDA participation in TTW and Partnership Plus;
- Provide access to Career Pathways for individuals with disabilities; and
- Continue to demonstrate that AJCs can partially fund disability programs if they complete the suitability determination application and become an EN.

California Round 5 included three WDAs that demonstrated a high capacity to serve JSWDs due in part to their experience with the Disability Program Navigator project prior to the DEI and the continuity of staff at the state and WDA levels. Prior to joining the DEI, DRCs often previously worked in related occupations, including job coaching, mental health counseling, and other occupations supporting individuals with disabilities. Some DRCs also had specific areas of expertise, including working with veterans and ex-offenders with disabilities.

Each WDA designated one or more DRCs to provide direct services and case management. California reported that they saw a lot of back injuries and carpal tunnel syndrome among JSWDs as well as "*a fair amount of individuals on the autism spectrum. Other JSWDs had problems with workplace appropriateness and mental health issues*."

An important issue for the grantee was self-disclosure, as DRCs "*were required to explain to JSWDs that disclosing a disability is about finding opportunities and accommodations*" and not about restricting access to services for individuals. DRCs created a worksheet to help JSWDs make decisions about whether to disclose a disability or not.

State leadership created a position that served under the DEI State Lead that we referred to as a "State-Level Supervisory DRC."[26] This individual had responsibilities beyond the administrative aspects of the DEI State Lead role and engaged in providing WDAs with support

[26] Social Dynamics created the term "State-Level Supervisory DRC" to distinguish between the DEI State Lead and the former's subordinate leadership position.

for program implementation, strategic planning, and training of DRCs on a quarterly basis. Two further key components of California's Round 2 grant to support DEI staff that continued into Round 5 were the peer advisory team and the Traveling DRC. The peer advisory team planned and conducted "*mentoring meetings*" with DRCs and partners to discuss the implementation of SDSs and other DEI requirements. The Traveling DRC provided oversight for each treatment WDA, offering "*interactive trainings and practical information based on successful models currently operating statewide*." One large WDA grantee created two DRC positions, one for direct service and one to coordinate and build capacity. In the smaller WDAs, a single DRC performed both of these roles.

ii. DEI Service Delivery Strategies

IRTs and Asset Development were the two SDSs of emphasis for California. IRTs strengthened partnerships and leveraged resources among a variety of partners. Asset Development focused on financial literacy combined with benefits counseling that facilitated JSWDs to assess the impact of full-time work on their benefits. California also provided a Workforce Development Manager who oversaw Community Services Block Grants and helped strengthen integrated services for an array of practical challenges to employment such as eviction notices, transportation, housing, shelter, and child care services. JSWDs were also able to access emergency services, OJT and opportunities, AARP employment and related services, and Back to Work 50+. The latter links individuals over 50 with information, support, training, and employer access needed to regain employment and advance in an occupation.

DEI Round 5 led to an increase in the use of IRTs; all JSWDS participating in the DEI also participated in an IRT. IRTs were implemented in a number of different ways, from group meetings to telephone calls with WIOA-mandated partners. All JSWDs were co-enrolled in WIOA and VR, and blending and braiding were also common practices, as was providing resources for access to transportation, child care, and housing. DRCs also provided training in résumé writing and job interviewing and information about TTW. Some JSWDs also received job coaching and case management services both before and after employment was secured.

TTW was a priority for California and reportedly implemented with much success in DEI, especially in the two largest WDAs. DRCs focused on workforce development issues and collaborated with the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) to support Partnership Plus and access to training and employment using TTW. The strengthened relationship between the AJCs and DOR helped the DEI gain access to SSA beneficiaries and collaborate to serve JSWDs enrolled in TTW. Through a partnership with DOR, a "menu" was made available so that each JSWD could select SDSs that would be most advantageous to them. The collocation of DOR and DEI in most instances within AJCs and the establishment of all three DEI WDAs as ENs strengthened the project's support for TTW. Nonetheless, state agency personnel described challenges in working with SSA that may have affected enrollment, utilization of workforce incentives, and the fidelity of their implementation, including difficulties in accessing information and support.

Another challenge was the reluctance of some JSWDs to seek full-time employment due to fears that they would lose their benefits, including SSI/SSDI, health, Medicare, Medicaid, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). To address trepidations about working,

JSWDs were provided pre-employment workshops. These were reported to get JSWDs into "*job mode: getting up, coming to the AJC, and getting their brains running again*." They were also used as a tool to figure out whether JSWDs were ready for work: "*If JSWDs cannot come every day for a workshop or they find that overwhelming, they need to talk about why it was overwhelming*."

"*There are not that many differences between SSA beneficiaries and JSWDs who are not eligible for TTW. It is always about being out of work for a long time and wanting to get back to work*." — DRC

DRCs either became CWICs or consulted with CWICs to provide information on Benefits Planning to clarify how employment income may affect a jobseeker's benefits. California instituted an online Work Incentive Coordinator certification, Disability 101, that covered the basics of how returning to work would affect benefits. JSWDs were also encouraged to seek full-time employment that included benefits. WDAs used Ticket revenue to fund staff training, staff wages, and job coaches. Job coaches were available to individuals who needed short-term, emergency resources to earn a certificate that could lead to training and long-term employment. AJCs also prepared participant maps that focused on goal development and access to technology to help individuals who would ordinarily "*walk away feeling embarrassed or illiterate*."

"*Individuals who have been out of work for a long time are hesitant about losing benefits. There is a long list to get child care benefits and there is fear that they will go back to work and lose their benefits before being able to afford to be independent. There was a lot of concern from customers about losing health benefits. In their mind, they are at risk of losing them. They know their overall existence is dependent on benefits. Therefore, the WDAs encourage customers to look at full-time jobs with benefits. They may need to start in an entry-level position, but we want to get them comfortable working full-time*." — DRC

WDAs also engaged in the identification of job candidates, development of résumés, matching jobseeker skills to employer needs, and practice interviewing. Helping to strengthen JSWDs' support systems was also an important part of California's Round 5 grant. JSWDs were encouraged to engage with family, friends, and professionals who might support their job search activities and training and employment aspirations. JSWDs were encouraged to communicate with individuals who were already employed to help them access community resources. One DRC mentioned that it "*takes a village*" to ensure that JSWDs have the resources, skills, and motivation to become employed. This approach was integrated into their CP services (see more below in the section on Career Pathways).

iii. Implementation Summary

The California DEI sponsored and organized quarterly meetings for T/TA, capacity-building, and mentoring of Employment Specialists. The grant was overseen by the DEI State Lead and DRCs. The quarterly meetings included WIOA partners, subject matter experts, DEI staff, and WDAs that were prior DEI grantees. Topics included DEI SDSs, Partnerships and Collaborations, organizational development, monitoring TTW implementation, and general

upgrading of the skills and knowledge of DRCs and Employment Specialists. The DEI State Lead also coordinated regional meetings for skills development through group trainings. The DRCs were full-time on DEI and spent their time on both building capacity of AJC Employment Specialists to serve JSWDs and providing case management and direct services to jobseekers. In the largest WDA, there were two DRCs, one for capacity-building and one for direct services.

To enhance their knowledge, DRCs received T/TA from the National Disability Institute (NDI) and the Traveling DRCs. Trainings targeted areas of local need and included topics such as DEI program implementation, disability etiquette, and JSWD counseling for Employment Specialists. DOR provided a staff member who traveled to each WDA to provide support to DOR customers. Other trainings were provided by Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) staff on a yearly basis covering employee rights, self-disclosure, hiring individuals with disabilities, access to job accommodations, and enrollment in SSA and related programs.

JSWDs felt that there should be increased access to the Limited Examination and Appointment Program for individuals who are members of AARP, as there was reportedly "*a significant amount of discrimination against people who have disabilities*." The program facilitates the recruitment and hiring of individuals with disabilities. It also provides alternative ways to demonstrate qualifications for employment rather than through aptitude tests. A workforce development manager for the Limited Examination and Appointment Program oversaw Community Services Block Grants that integrated services into the AJC to deal with challenging situations such as eviction notices, transportation to a shelter, and access to child care.

During the implementation of Round 5, each participating WDA was enhanced with upgraded physical and programmatic accessibility such as automated doors, access to transportation, disability-friendly cubicles, parking locations, and AT. These enhancements in the accessibility of AJCs and access to external resources were designed to increase participation by JSWDs in WIOA Title 1 programs during Round 5.

California's Round 5 DEI focused on multidimensional, universal AJC accessibility to serve JSWDs with a collaborative approach that included the state's Workforce Services Branch in the Employment Development Department. To achieve systemic change and increases in the availability of training for in-demand occupations, California expanded the capacity of WDAs to provide JSWDs opportunities for education, access to services, soft skills training, CP instruction, and collaborations and partnerships with employers and the WDAs. California also developed T/TA for DRCs and Employment Specialists and expanded the use of DEI SDSs such as IRTs and Asset Development, TTW, Partnership Plus, T/TA and skill-based interest assessments, and documentation of employment experience and eligibility for SSA, Medicare, Medicaid, and TANF support services.

iv. Partnerships and Collaborations

Integration and collaboration across WDAs implementing the DEI included state-level interagency cooperation, particularly between the Labor and Workforce Development Agency and DOR. These partnerships enabled consistent and productive messaging, resource leveraging,

and access to SSA beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. California also created new partnerships with local agencies. Agencies partnered with DEI by participating in T/TA, statewide conferences, and webinars and assisting in career development and job placements for JSWDs.

Other collaborations included those developed with the Department of Developmental Services and TANF, California Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, Veterans' Employment and Training Service, California Health Incentives Improvement Project, and community-based organizations and nonprofit service providers. Across the state, more than two dozen agencies were identified as partners of the DEI.

The DEI State Lead partnered with DOR to generate informational material encouraging businesses in developing alternative methods for JSWDs to apply for jobs since the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency had concerns about the use of online job application processes for JSWDs. Career Pathways road maps developed in conjunction with employers served to both visualize employment journeys and motivate JSWDs to access employment and training opportunities. Continuous supports from DRCs, AJC colleagues, and job coaches, such as motivational interviewing, were used to "*encourage aspirational discovery, self-regulation, attainable goal-setting, and persistence*." WDAs tended to be customer-centric, meaning that the employment process was individualized and driven by each individual "*that walks in the door*." Participation in the IRT process also was a source of client empowerment and choice. In addition to disability-friendly modifications to AJCs, community-based partners helped implement self-paced and multi-modal assessments, including use of AT.

California sought to educate employers about reasonable accommodations and the use of Customized Employment and training through various means. DEI worked with employers to develop strategies for employer engagement, which included collaborating with economic development agencies and local Chambers of Commerce and educating employers on topics such as tax credits, accommodations, and events such as job fairs and employer forums to increase employer awareness and employment of people with disabilities. California also engaged with the employer community through OJT sponsored by the Labor and Workforce Development Agency and supported by several employers that played a key role in the DEI Employer Engagement Community of Practice and through establishing partnerships with WIOA-mandated partners. Employer partnerships included entertainment companies that hired people with disabilities.

Employer engagement and training was also provided through the state's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant at San Diego State University and online employer human resources trainings. California has an "*employer services*" department that reached out to employers to provide training in OJT, CP, CE, and/or Entrepreneurship (Self-Employment). Through the DEA, California connected with senior living facilities to hire people with disabilities into staff positions. The Northern California Business Advisory Council included service providers and employers that hired people with disabilities and regularly advocated hiring JSWDs by upgrading their qualifications to meet the needs of employers and overcoming the fear that many JSWDs have about losing SSA benefits. They also provided access to accommodations to address employer concerns about hiring JSWDs and potentially insufficient accommodations to support long-term placements beyond temporary work experiences and OJT.

v. Career Pathways

California was one of the early implementers of Career Pathways training; it has extensive experience with providing similar services for more than 15 years. Their services include "*industry-linked programs*" and supports for JSWDs to help them gain access to in-demand occupations that could lead to economic self-sufficiency. California's long-standing effort to enroll individuals in CP training included both educational and employment-related training in partnership with local businesses and across a wide range of industries. California CP training was provided at no charge to DEI participants, as were work experiences, OJT, and internships. However, JSWDs and DRCs commented that individuals often waived CP training in order to more quickly enter employment. According to one DRC, JSWDs tended to achieve high employment placement rates by quickly accessing a job, rather than taking the time needed to go through vocational training and OJT, even though better training could mean that the job is more likely to be sustained.

"*Training is a harder sell because people do not see the benefit to putting income off*." — DRC

Although JSWDs were interested in immediate employment with only limited training, there was some basic education that was needed to get them on the path to employment. With OJT, "*we have the placement immediately, the client is getting a check, and AJCs can fill a training gap during that period. Employers are committed because it will support their workforce development needs. Through OJT, DEI participants have a $2-per-hour greater wage than clients in general employment*."

vi. Outreach and Dissemination

California conducted outreach, recruitment, and referrals for individuals with disabilities through its partner agencies, including DOR, the California Department of Developmental Services, veterans' agencies, TANF, and a wide range of community-based agencies. California also conducted outreach and recruitment in support of "*targeted populations*" such as individuals with complex employment situations. The state created linkages within WDAs to interact with local agencies that provided support services and coordinated outreach efforts, including referrals to and from partner agencies, disseminating through radio and newspaper ads, sending "email blasts," posting on social media/websites, and presenting to local community-based agencies, religious organizations, schools, and libraries. California increased the number of JSWDs entering CP programs and implementing Individual Employment Plans, OJT, and CE opportunities. Quarterly meetings were a critical component in training and disseminating information that all current and former DEI grantees (and some other non-DEI WDAs) were funded to attend by the DEA state program. Many agencies and service providers were also invited to participate in these quarterly meetings. The Traveling DRC also played an important role in disseminating effective practices across the state.

vii. Promising Practices: "*Pathways for Success*"

The Traveling DRC provided 1-day trainings for AJC Employment Specialists in separate modules "*to bring best practices and perspectives discovered through California's DEI and Disability Employment Accelerator (DEA) to improve service delivery to individuals with disabilities in each treatment WDA*."

"*Traveling DRC trainings are intended for various levels of AJC staff, management, and relevant collocated partners who have a stake in improving services to individuals with disabilities in WIOA-funded Job Centers. We would love to see some front desk staff, case managers, and anyone else who might interact with individuals with disabilities, but [we] are interested also in having supervisors, managers, and the like who can put action to some of the discussions that will occur and understand what partnership and collaboration looks like on paper*." — Traveling DRC

Round 5 Traveling DRC modules included the following:

- *One System for All and All for One — Serving People with Disabilities — All of Us Can, But Do We?*
- *To Politeness and Beyond! — Disability Awareness, Sensitivity and Etiquette*
- *Here an Acronym, There an Acronym — What is the DEI, DEA and IRT, and what do they have to do with PWD and WIOA?*
- *We Need a Driver — The Disability Resource Coordinator (DRC) Defined*
- *Workforce, WIOA and Compliance Oh my! — Coordinated and Complementary Employment and Training Services*
- *Creating an Environment of Trust and Building Rapport — Disclosure 101*
- *If We Build It…They Will Come — Examining Customer Flow and Improving Service Delivery*
- *Creating an Organization Nest Egg — Become an Employment Network (EN) and Build Discretionary Funds*

Rationale for Its Implementation

The Traveling DRC, in combination with the peer advisory team and its extant partners, addressed the need for consistent and relevant T/TA across a wide range of topics and across partners that would continue to provide services to JSWDs after the grant period. This position was advantageous to the adoption and implementation of promising practices for DRCs and Employment Specialists to implement training with fidelity.

Why the Practice Could Be Considered Promising

The Traveling DRC provided T/TA for DRCs and Employment Specialists in an effort to build staff expertise and capacity to implement disability and employment-focused services. It also provided opportunities for engagement with other agencies, such as DOR, in the use of DEI services. The Traveling DRC, when combined with a peer advisory team and its partners, had opportunities to share information and collaborate statewide. In essence, the Traveling DRC differed from a DRC who remained stationed at an AJC within a particular WDA in that it allowed DRC services to be available across a number of WDAs.

viii. Challenges and Sustainability

As the DEI State Lead noted, "*transportation is a huge problem in such areas as Sacramento*." Most WDAs and the populations they served increased markedly, yet there was little change in the state's transportation system. For JSWDs who have limited access to transportation, it may be difficult to travel to work that is outside of their metropolitan area as light rail has not been expanded to some WDAs and employer locations.

"*A lot of thought about the job goes into how to get there. Employers ask for a driver's license, even if the job does not require driving. Many people with disabilities do not have a driver's license, which [requiring a license] performs a de facto screening-out function*." — DRC

Challenges to the implementation and sustainability of the DEI are limited due to the state's access to additional resources that fund DEA through state resources. DEA focuses on partnerships between the AJCs and employers that, per the DEI State Lead, "*accelerate employment and reemployment strategies for individuals with disabilities*." The DEA is similar to the DEI as it focuses on connections with employers and engaging them in the development of job training and employment opportunities.

The DEI team believed that the conclusion of DEI funding would lead to a significant funding void and thus would mean limited resources for assessments, training, supports, and dissemination. Nevertheless, there were many signs that disability awareness and promising practices would be sustained as DEI State Leads and DRCs were intentional about integrating DEI practices and policies into WIOA processes to forge system change. A major asset is the DEA program, which funds all current and past DEI grantees to attend the state quarterly meeting for peer learning, sharing effective practices, staff mentoring, capacity-building, and sustainability.

The fruitful collaboration spurred by DEI, particularly with the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency, appears to be continuing. Consequently, there will be "*no right door or wrong door*" for JSWDs to enroll in WIOA services. The use of IRTs should also endure due to state leadership's involvement in "*cementing integration of this service delivery strategy*." DRCs will continue at their respective AJCs at DEI's end through DEA. In addition to state funds to sustain DRCs and DEI practices, stakeholders mentioned tapping into Title I, which provides WIOA services, and Title III, which authorizes Employment Service. TANF and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) allocations are also being used by California to provide access to employment and training of JSWDs. A prominent partner also suggested that statewide philanthropy can help sustain Career Pathways programming. By having DEA and TTW, DEI respondents said that DRCs "*have spread the roles out so our services are easier to sustain over time because there is overlap with other programs and because we have DEA and Ticket income, our services should be easy to sustain*."

Case management services also should continue as a key function of the grant as many individuals benefitted from collaborations spurred by DRCs and WDA leaders. Many California DRCs also became CWICs and were trained by ADA staff on employee rights, self-disclosure,

hiring, job accommodations, and enrollment in SSA and related programs. During the grant period, WDAs also upgraded their physical and programmatic accessibility while state leadership, in collaboration with the DEI State Lead and State-Level Supervisory DRC, monitored access to WIOA services and programs. Given access to state resources, including the DEA program, the state's long-time experience in and commitment to supporting individuals with disabilities, and the state's focus on workforce development, it is likely that DEI/DEA services will continue to serve JSWDs. California's DEI addressed issues across micro (individual), meso (services), and macro systems change concurrently.

B. State: Illinois; Focus Area: Adults with Disabilities

i. Stated Goals and Objectives

The Illinois Round 5 DEI proposed to achieve the following:

- Create systems change within existing Career Pathways systems to increase participation of individuals with disabilities in the information technology (IT) sector;
- Increase awareness and involvement of JSWDs in CP and related employment and training programs;
- Achieve the following individual outcomes: post-placement employment through CP completion, benefits counseling, job coaching, AT, and support services (e.g., transportation, child care, housing, etc.);
- Allow DRCs to function primarily as case managers, mentors, and program navigators who provide both employment and "life" coaching;
- Ensure options for access to information technology CP and related fields as well as training in life skills such as budgeting and soft skills; and
- Allow DEI State Leads and DRCs to enroll JSWDs in information technology Career Pathways programs through the DEI and extant training programs.

ii. DEI Service Delivery Strategies

Illinois DRCs developed IRTs and engaged in Blending and Braiding Resources to provide SSA beneficiaries and other individuals with disabilities access to WIOA and/or SSA services. IRTs were used to ensure that high school students enrolled in postsecondary education and/or employment and CP and to facilitate opportunities for social support through bridge programs that aided families in need of supportive services for their children with disabilities. For example, helping a family access medical, educational, social, or other services could assist a youth in achieving their employment goals, and coordinating multiple community-based services could address the needs of an entire family and help them better support their child's employment plans.

DRCs also facilitated the transition process from school to training and eventual employment in addition to providing outreach and marketing opportunities and ensuring students had opportunities to participate in Career Pathways and receive appropriate supports and services. Some DRCs engaged in ARC, which sometimes led to an IRT. ARC engaged jobseekers early in the intake process, which included an application and documentation of a

jobseeker's age and employment and training history, to discuss their key interests and concerns. It was also used to identify specific activities or opportunities that may assist individuals with disabilities to deal with challenges such as employment, socialization, and Asset Development. Then, an assessment process was used to determine each individual's skills and goals and if there was a match between training, an internship, or OJT that may lead to employment. When implementing ARC, DRCs used "*scripts*" for each youth to target specific activities designed to assist individuals with multiple challenges to employment by increasing access to services and supports, including DEI SDSs. While some DRCs were less familiar with benefits counseling services, the grantee did have access to these services through DRCs who completed their CWIC certification.

Illinois DRCs coordinated the employment and training process for each JSWD and were the contact persons who provided case management support and access to SDSs and IRTs. IRTs were beneficial to JSWDs because they brought together WIOA-mandated partners as well as other DEI SDSs, including financial literacy training, WBL Opportunities, CE, Asset Development training, and social support through both DRCs and Employment Specialists.

Other SDSs included Blending and Braiding Resources, Partnerships and Collaborations, flexible opportunities for T/TA, and systems change. The Computing Technology Industry Association was a key partner and "*leader in the national IT industry*" for providers of industry certifications. It provided employment opportunities for individuals with and without disabilities and offered a set of recently expanded Career Pathways. Youth with disabilities 18 years of age and older were enrolled in SSI through the DEI. DRCs let them know early in the engagement process about their eligibility and how working could be possible without affecting their beneficiary status. During Round 1, DRCs had very limited understanding of TTW. Illinois Round 5 was prepared for TTW implementation, although most youth were not old enough to enroll in the program.

Participants' assessment results may assist in determining the relevance of certain activities to employment, such as socialization with peers or opportunities to meet with employers, résumé development, mock interviews with employers, WBL, Job Shadowing, CE, and OJT. WBL and OJT were used to acclimatize jobseekers to the work environment and provide "*real-world*" wage-earning employment. For youth with disabilities, the DEI implemented Guideposts for Success together with WBL.

iii. Implementation Summary

The key components of the Illinois youth project included job training opportunities and job placement support through "*sectorial partnerships*"[27] in support of CP-oriented employment. Sectoral partnerships were comprised of the DEI and AJCs, local employers, and the state's education community, including high schools, community colleges, and 4-year colleges. Illinois

[27] National Skills Coalition. (n.d.). *Sector partnerships*. Retrieved from https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/state-policy/sector-partnerships

emphasized technology-related Career Pathways designed to help youth with disabilities obtain in-demand skills and credentials designed to help them obtain a "*living wage*" employment.[28]

While DRCs focused on systems change and universally accessible AJC services, the state implemented professional development plans for each agency partner, including WDAs and the Division of Rehabilitation Services, and improved IT focused on "*self-paced, accessible online learning and classroom-based opportunities.*" Illinois also developed an employer outreach strategy that included regional partnerships designed to facilitate enrollment in IT-based occupations from high school through college. DEI SDSs included Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), Individual Education Plans, IT-related WBL Opportunities, Job Shadowing, and CE. These were augmented by ARC, OJT, internships, and CP tailored to youth with disabilities. Other SDSs include Asset Development training, IRTs, Blending and Braiding Resources, Benefits Planning, and Partnerships and Collaborations with WIOA-mandated and non-mandated partners.

iv. Partnerships and Collaborations

Illinois Career Pathways included partnerships with the Illinois Pathway Initiative Council, the Division of Rehabilitation Services, and local and regional partners, including the Computing Technology Industry Association, local high schools, community colleges, nonprofit agencies, and participating WDAs. The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity also worked with the Division of Rehabilitation Services on "Have Dreams," which was the Illinois Task Force on Employment and Economic Opportunity for Persons with Disablities. The xpanding information technology Career Pathways project was another important component of the project The latter had representation from several state agencies that coordinated statewide services for individuals with disabilities that included "*employer-driven pathways*" in DuPage, suburban Cook County, and two Project SEARCH Transition-to-Work Programs. The latter were led by local employers that provided a workplace that included classroom instruction on soft skills and technical skills, career exploration, and worksite training.

DRCs appeared to be involved as partners with the high school transition staff "*so by the time they graduate, they'll be comfortable. There's a seamless transition from school to training or whatever. We only have relationships with some of the high schools here, but the county is big, so there are a lot of potential clients. We also focus on the community colleges because they have a lot of JSWDs, so we go and see if we can help them out too*."

DEI employment outcomes focused on job retention and wage outcomes by providing follow-along job counseling and support by engaging partner organizations. JSWDs were connected to VR services, TTW services, and DEI supports such as case management, AT, and transportation and child care assistance as needed. DRCs reported that they functioned primarily as case managers, mentors, and program navigators who provided both employment and "*life skills*."

[28] Partnership for Working Families. (n.d.). *Policy & tools: Living wage*. Retrieved from https://www.forworkingfamilies.org/resources/policy-tools-living-wage

Illinois implemented TTW and was certified by SSA as an EN after completing its Round 1 grant. As with most early grantees, Illinois Round 1 struggled with EN implementation. By Round 5, their EN was operational and provided opportunities for DRCs to enroll individuals in Benefits Planning workshops; several became CWICs who supported the implementation of TTW and collected milestone and outcome payments in Round 5. Illinois also worked closely with AJC staff and WIOA-mandated partners and CP program administrators.

v. Employer Partnership

DEI youth with disabilities shared that they appreciated help with training and employment opportunities. Youth were eager to meet and communicate about work and life with employers, DRCs, and other people who were interested in their situations. Several mentioned that developing a network of "*friends*" was an important part of employment as it provided an outlet for socialization, building a reputation, and sharing information with colleagues. As one youth beneficiary said, "*I like helping people, anything involved with getting customers napkins, sauces, etc. What I don't like about my job is that there's not enough good communication between staff and managers. They'll come in and work a shift and ask us to stay longer so we end up doing a double shift. And sometimes you tell one manager one thing, but they don't communicate with each other. So sometimes you have managers all scheduling you at different times. But that's what it is. It's sometimes a challenge to do everything*."

"*I was having trouble rounding-up the shopping carts and they noticed I was having trouble, so they worked with me. The movie theatre; I wouldn't recommend them. I ended up losing that job because I got sick and they weren't willing to be flexible because I was sick during the first 90 days, which is a rule they never told me about. The training was very sparse; they never explained how clocking in and clocking out worked, and I once had to leave work in an ambulance, which I think made them nervous*." — Youth Beneficiary

"*I worked at an ice cream shop. It was a good experience, but the pay was below minimum wage. I had to leave to get a different job at White Castle, which wasn't a good experience. They would schedule us and then send us home regularly. But I worked until I graduated high school, then left and now I work at McDonald's, which is OK*." — Youth Beneficiary

Youth received VR services for accommodations (e.g., extended time on high school tests and exams) as well as WIOA and Career Pathways training through community-based agencies located in each WDA; several Illinois youth were noted to have received extended time on reading and mathematics, automotive training and repair, and interface with local employers to provide opportunities for Apprenticeships and Work-Based Learning Opportunities. Illinois youth were dually enrolled in employer-sponsored vocational and academic training, which provided individuals with a new perspective.

"*I can get help and be supported through all of these programs. I'm enrolled and pursuing a career in early childhood education. But, there're a lot of different routes. I like that it helps you get skills that you need. I also like how there's multiple paths to the program, like there's training and education programs. Some of us are in a program doing IT*." — Youth Beneficiary

Youth also had access to funds through WIOA that supported training needs. As one youth noted, "*the DEI helped me pay for my training. It gave me a new perspective, that I can get help and support through all of these programs*." Many students pursued certifications in early childhood education, computer and information systems, software development, automotive repair, positions as teaching assistants at child care facilities, and supports such as training in public speaking and community activism.

"*I started out in the 3-week workshop. I was originally going to take an internship, but I had an issue. Not enough income. So, I changed at the last minute and am now going to college. I think what the DEI is doing is great because it helps JSWDs get a job that pays well and helps me understand finances. Going in to the workshops to get ready for college was great. I also liked that they showed a variety of career options that didn't involve academics*." — Youth Beneficiary

"*I had a job before this and another one before that, but I left them both. I worked at a movie theater making sure everything was clean, helping people get to the theater. I also worked at a union job at a grocery store, and I bagged groceries, but then I switched departments because of my health issues. My latest job was to make sure everything on the shelves looked nice and was in the right place. They were really accommodating with my disability too. I had to be in and out of the hospital, and I appreciate that they worked with me so I could do that*." — Youth Beneficiary

The grantee's employer outreach efforts included representation from several state agencies that coordinated statewide services for individuals with disabilities. Additionally, DuPage and suburban Cook County engaged school systems and community colleges with "Have Dreams," a project that provided services to individuals with autism. The project maintained relationships with employers, the Chamber of Commerce, and economic development agencies to provide work opportunities for autistic youth and adults. As a coordinated network, Have Dreams also partnered with local AJCs to identify and recruit employers that could provide mentoring support services, including WBL Opportunities. The state's WDAs also help to identify "*champion*" employers that served as mentors in identifying employment supports for information technology Career Pathways "*partnering employers*."

The grantee also implemented "Illinois Pathways," which were statewide public-private learning exchanges designed to support local and regional partnerships in each WDA. Local WDA partnership efforts included those with employers, targeted business sectors, unions, higher education agencies, and community-based agencies. When taken together, employer-focused outreach combined with individualized employment and training services for JSWDs with partners like the Computing Technology Industry Association helped employers connect with DEI participants who had acquired locally in-demand skills.

vi. Career Pathways

Career Pathways included services for youth in transition designed to develop skills in information and related sectors. [29] Available occupational sectors included health care, manufacturing, agriculture, transportation, logistics, and IT. Through various public-private partnerships, the Computing Technology Industry Association offered an IT skill development and employment system that facilitated employment soon after the completion of job training. The state's WDAs maintained task forces designed to increase opportunities for individuals with disabilities through "*employer champions*" that provided access to "*full-inclusion employment*."

Recently, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity conducted a statewide study to identify "*key practices among schools, colleges, universities, and workforce partners in job-driven, full-inclusion strategies*." Illinois also expanded its partnerships to include VR and the Department of Education with the expectation that individuals with disabilities who enrolled in Career Pathways would be equipped with soft skills, including reading, writing, workplace etiquette, and access to "*living wage employment*." There was also an IT "*boot camp*" that helped jobseekers become familiar with basic computer use and technology.

vii. Outreach and Dissemination

Youth with disabilities were referred to DEI from WIOA Youth services, teaching staff from local high schools, community-based agencies, and DRCs. Targeted outreach to youth was delivered by DRCs in schools where they conducted presentations about DEI and AJC services and supports. Learning forums that included information about career opportunities such as Apprenticeships, WBL Opportunities, and internships also helped eligible youth learn more about DEI services. DRCs used separate "scripts" when presenting to youth, covering topics related to job prospects, access to support services, ARC, and IRTs. Outreach was also done to engage youth in the process of selecting a college or technical pathway. For example, if a youth was interested in IT, they could enroll in a technology-related boot camp to familiarize themselves with the IT field prior to receiving formal training.

DRCs also engaged in outreach to youth with disabilities through presentations about DEI services, including college enrollment and CP opportunities. In addition, DRCs did outreach to enroll youth in programs that provided an array of support services, from opportunities for socialization to physical or psychological support.

[29] Illinois expanded the capacity of its workNet Centers (i.e., AJCs) to improve the employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities age 16–24. Many WIOA youth do not attend school regularly. They also may hold a high school diploma and are low income and/or basic skills deficient. Youth may also be involved in the juvenile or adult justice systems and categorized as homeless, runaway, eligible for foster care (Section 477) and/or in a designated placement (e.g., foster care, home care, juvenile program placement, etc.), pregnant/parenting, having a disability, and/or low income.

"*I was referred to the DEI from WIOA Youth services. They told me about it and that they could help me get accommodations and things I need. I like the DEI because it helps me with stuff that I have a disability with. They've helped me get extra time on tests. And I've been taking classes and doing training to get ready for work. I'm also taking automotive classes and reading and math*." — Youth Beneficiary

viii. Promising Practices: "*Pathways for Success*"

Illinois DRCs had a strong partnership with VR that included a dedicated VR staff member who made referrals to Career Pathways services, enrolled individuals in WIOA services, and provided oversight of individuals who enrolled in community college.

Rationale for Its Implementation

DRCs worked closely with VR to make referrals to employment and training opportunities, including Career Pathways. In addition to the implementation of CP, Illinois provided WBL Opportunities, including Apprenticeships and internships, that allowed youth to learn about employment and what it entailed (e.g., receiving remuneration, working in a group environment, adhering to the requirements of the leader or "boss"). The advent of CP allowed JSWDs to prepare themselves for the work environment, sample different kinds of occupations, and develop interests that could lead to long-term employment.

Why the Practice Could Be Considered Promising

DRCs organized job fairs in which JSWDs learned about new opportunities for employment and WBL Opportunities, Apprenticeships, internships, and Benefits Planning, all of which were key components of the DEI that lead to self-efficacy and transition to full- or part-time employment. "*The benefit is that youth get to go to school and get any assistance that they are eligible for from DEI or SSA, which is an important step toward developing the confidence to be self-sufficient and maintain employment and independence*."

ix. Challenges and Sustainability

Illinois leadership initially expressed concern about the structure of the DEI grant and its implementation. The grantee's original idea was to develop partnerships across the state's WDAs and provide leadership and support to AJCs and JSWDs. However, the grantor wanted the DRCs to coordinate outreach in each WDA to inform the AJCs and JSWDs of the kinds of services the DEI offered and to focus on recruitment of JSWDs and integrating the AJCs so that all services were available to both individuals with and without disabilities. The goal was a seamless, integrated system for serving all jobseekers.

"*The grant has great intentions, but all the things that require of it take away from serving JSWDs. Like meeting with all of the different agencies for the same thing, needing to report information in a very specific way, made it less productive than it could have been*."

Initially, DRCs appeared to have limited knowledge of TTW, EN implementation, milestones, outcome payments, and SSA work incentives. Although DRCs initially reported a limited understanding of TTW, beneficiary recruitment, and the overall structure of TTW, DRCs operated with limited involvement and training from the WDAs. This situation was improved with the addition of a DEI liaison who focused on TTW and EN and was the initial point of contact for individuals with disabilities. Eventually, DEI leadership successfully implemented TTW and recruited beneficiaries.

While TTW was seen as a way to sustain the DEI, many youth did not have an assigned Ticket because they were under the age of 18. DRCs commented that they had limited familiarity with TTW, with one saying that they "*know it has a goal of employment rather than receiving benefits. I don't know how it factors in with us, but I think we may pursue it. But I don't have much knowledge of it*." DRCs connected with the NDI TA center to discuss TTW and providing access to community-based service providers through a statewide EN, including milestone and outcome payments. Illinois also provided TA regarding the implementation of their EN. The relationships that were created with VR since the implementation of Round 5 grant will continue to be available after the grant period, and local colleges, such as the College of DuPage, will continue to provide academic supports. However, it does not appear that all DEI WDAs will have access to DRCs to implement TTW.

"*We'd have to work at TTW to become more familiar with it and sustain DEI in Illinois. We'd need to involve partners. It may get territorial because people don't want to give up their involvement in TTW. However, the relationships we've created through the DEI will still be around because everyone's happy to have all those resources. The relationship with the College of DuPage will be there too because we have common goals.*" — DRC

C. State: Kansas; Focus Area: Adults with Disabilities

i. Stated Goals and Objectives

Kansas Round 5 was designed to build upon the foundation of the state's Round 1 DEI grant by continuing efforts toward universal accessibility. A primary objective of Round 5 was to "*increase the percentage of JSWDs served by the public workforce development system with training services more typically available to other jobseekers*" beyond WIOA. Improving accessibility included an emphasis on cultural change within the workforce system, with an end goal of augmenting access to Career Pathways and certification for JSWDs.

The Kansas Round 5 DEI proposed to achieve the following:

- Improve the postsecondary education and training outcomes for adult customers with disabilities by:
  - Increasing the percentage of adult customers with disabilities who are referred to postsecondary education and training for existing successful Career Pathways;
  - Increasing the percentage of adult customers who receive community and technical college credentials along successful CP; and

  - Increasing the percentage of adult customers who receive paid work experience (internships, job sampling, etc.).
- Improve the employment outcomes of adult customers with disabilities who obtain and retain employment through a continuum of services to support education, training, and employment success by:
  - Convening individuals representing project partners, including community and technical college staff, VR staff, community-based organization staff, WIOA staff, and individuals from industry, to promote collaboration among multiple service providers toward relevant skill development of customers with disabilities;
  - Developing leadership training to community staff and improving and enhancing assessment, accommodation, and coaching of students with disabilities;
  - Through DRCs, training WIOA staff to establish and support OJT and other paid work-based training opportunities;
  - Through the DEI Technical Assistance Coordinator, providing a written report to the State Lead detailing a review of quarterly performance data, individual customer records, and case management documentation to ensure customers are receiving relevant, timely, and effective services;
  - Providing real-time employment and training data on JSWDs; and
  - Increasing the percentage of KANSASWORKS customers who have disabilities who are placed in OJT.

ii. DEI Service Delivery Strategies

Active Resource Coordination — or "*finding the best resources to meet individuals' needs*" — occurred regularly across treatment WDAs. ARC was the first step in the Integrated Resource Team. ARCs identified targeted activities/programs designed to assist customers with multiple challenges to employment by increasing access to services. A participant's assessment results assisted in determining such targeted activities/programs.

DRCs frequently engaged staff from other service delivery partners such as VR and community-based agencies because "*we want everyone to get all the resources we have*." Without DEI, ascertaining this information and additional resources would likely be "*pushed back to the participant*" without support from DEI and WDA personnel. One WDA partner indicated that "*more regular meetings*" could have improved ARC by providing opportunities for JSWDs to select particular programs, activities, and Career Pathways to support their specific employment needs.

IRTs were used frequently across the state. They included representatives from VR and the state's mental health system, where appropriate. Kansas reported that 160 IRTs were formed during the grant period. However, IRTs were often conducted informally due to time and resource constraints. In one WDA, a formalized meeting occurred twice because necessary parties were "*slammed*" due to other commitments. However, when they occurred, those meetings "*worked seamlessly*" and included DRCs, VR staff, WIOA case managers, job coaches, and business services. While Kansas's final quarterly report indicated IRTs were being initiated by partnering organizations on behalf of shared customers, interviewed partners in one WDA reported no involvement in IRTs.

Blending and Braiding Resources happened consistently, including WIOA co-enrollment, which helped fund certifications and support services. Combining WIOA, DEI, and VR funds also allowed for extended training. One staff member asserted that blending WIOA and DEI enabled youth programming to last 8 to 10 weeks to explore careers. Pell Grants also helped with school-to-work transitions. As a DRC testified, funding cuts elevated the importance of Blending and Braiding Resources.

While Kansas selected Self-Employment/Entrepreneurship, it was "*not a focus*" of the grant due to it being "*difficult … to get up and running*." The AJC purportedly lacked business development experience (e.g., about insurance), combined with high start-up costs, that would make the implementation of Self-Employment a challenge for the grantee and JSWDs. AJCs did refer clients interested in starting their own business to community colleges and organizations that supported business development. One DRC "*learned a little bit*" about helping clients with a Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS). DRCs also encouraged JSWDs seeking to explore Self-Employment to consider "*supplementary*" income, such as from Etsy or farmers' markets.

In terms of Asset Development, one AJC facilitated access to budgeting assistance, but it did not offer any classes focused on Asset Development, nor did it proactively promote ABLE accounts. A DRC asserted that the AJC prioritized immediate employment and training opportunities rather than long-term asset building. Another WDA focused on Asset Development that encompassed PASS plans and Individual Development Accounts. The third WDA did not do any Asset Development with JSWDs according to a DRC. A related service, Benefits Planning, was provided frequently to JSWDs.

There was evidence of TTW activity in treatment WDAs, as it was administered by the state with some resources distributed to WDAs. One WDA was still researching the process of becoming an EN, while another mainly referred TTW-eligible clients to available ENs. DRCs in one WDA critiqued TTW for being "*convoluted*" in several ways: the ambiguous relationship between employment and benefits and which clients were suitable; the delay and uncertainty in returning revenue to local areas; and it being framed as a vehicle for immediate employment. There was also uncertainty about AJC capacity to handle TTW in one WDA. Still, according to its final quarterly report, Kansas exceeded its TTW expectations with 32 beneficiaries with Ticket assignments and $79,307 in revenue.

The state's Department of Commerce trained partners on CP programs. Significant funds were directed to OJT training, internships, and apprenticeships. Project SEARCH was implemented and DEI funds were made available for training from the Cerebral Palsy Research Foundation and School of Adaptive Computer Training.

iii. Implementation Summary

Kansas's Round 5 grant was administered by its Department of Commerce, which oversaw both the workforce system and state economic development initiatives. State leadership had significant and relevant experience, including with the Disability Program Navigator and a DEI Round 1 grant. A unique feature of Kansas's service infrastructure included managed care

organizations and three state agencies directly involved in Medicaid policy, service delivery, and oversight. Round 5 included three treatment WDAs. One WDA had multiple concurrent DRCs although DRC turnover was common across sites.

To accomplish its goals, Kansas proposed creating cross-agency partnerships through the Kansas Department of Commerce, which was the linchpin of multi-agency work groups that streamlined referrals, employer outreach, and data-sharing, including the Governor's Technical Education Authority, the Kansas Commission on Disability Concerns, and the Kansas Employment First Oversight Commission.

Kansas engaged businesses in in-demand sectors, including engineering, manufacturing, IT, health care, energy generation and distribution, and construction. Education and training programs were provided, including Career Pathways with multiple levels of education so students could make progress at their own speed. In addition, their education strategy included flexible entry points and short-term credentialing that included remedial intervention and responded to labor market information where employment opportunities existed.

Kansas measured systems change and performance with postsecondary education partners to report DEI participants' progress, including grades, attendance, and accommodations. The Department of Commerce promoted CP programs, including through Family Employment Awareness Training. DRCs facilitated IRTs, including staff from managed care organizations, colleges, parole offices, and community-based organizations, and they encouraged staff to engage JSWDs with high-quality intensive, supportive, and wraparound services, including Benefits Planning, financial literacy, and career coaching along with universal accessibility through alternative assessments and trainings (e.g., hybrid learning and cohort model), ILPs, and service coordination.

Kansas implemented most features of its grant application, though there was not much evidence of a monthly reporting mechanism for IRTs or ILPs. A DRC asserted that her WDA was "*the only area*" in Kansas to implement CE. An OJT opportunity went well and an employer wanted to keep the client, but for another position. A new job description was created to "*fit his ability and needs*." However, a partner in this WDA desired more CE. Another WDA used group Discovery as a tool for Career Pathways.

iv. Partnerships and Collaborations

Coupled with WIOA, DEI strengthened the state workforce development system's collaboration with VR and fostered many new partnerships throughout treatment WDAs. As well, DRCs served on Commerce steering committees in their respective service areas. However, in one WDA, there was some "*pushback*" from providers leery that DEI was encroaching on their funding.

Heightened collaboration fomented productive cross-training — especially between the core partners, KANSASWORKS and VR — which enlightened staff about additional funding sources and services for JSWDs. Cross-training was promoted by state policy frameworks, including integrated service delivery and functional management, which included management

that maintained authority over organizational units in an agency. In the case of the DEI, it was an approach to selecting WIOA and Workforce Innovation Fund services.

DEI also helped codify linkages with postsecondary and career and technical schools. Schools became more aware of JSWDs and AJC services. WDAs also cultivated synergy with Project SEARCH through DEI, enhancing information-sharing and assistance to mutual clients. DEI strengthened bonds with Behavioral Health Services agencies, local nonprofits, and managed care organizations, which led to more AJC programming, more efficient job placement, and easier access to partners and supports for JSWDs. One DRC solidified bonds with reentry programs.

IRTs and staff meetings increased partnerships and referrals. A WDA director appreciated workforce representation at board meetings and praised core partner meetings for facilitating "*comprehensive*" service delivery, "*smooth*" referrals, and enhanced relationships with job developers and college counselors. Nonetheless, one AJC partner suggested there could be more cooperation to increase mutual awareness.

DRCs were the linchpin of expanding partnerships. DRCs connected stakeholders with "*the right person in the system*" and elucidated "*how to use different assets from different agencies*." In one WDA, multiple interviewees credited the DRC role with improving KANSASWORKS's relationship with VR. DRCs also improved rapport with referral sources. However, ongoing turnover in the DRC role frustrated relationships with some partners.

State policies and leadership encouraged collaboration. For instance, the DEI State Lead met with VR leadership to promote referrals to WDAs. A DRC valued state leadership as a "*resource*" and for "*connections*." Per the DEI State Lead, WDAs were much more involved due to WIOA's access to its services and supports. Co-enrollment — particularly for young adults but also for VR and Title I clients — expedited integration of JSWDs, while state-based projects to improve data-sharing and referrals were also underway toward the end of the grant period.

Cross-agency staff training maximized universal access, established eligibility, and provided career services to JSWDs. Support services were provided by employers, community-based agencies, and the DEI. Treatment WDAs made progress with the state in upgrading physical and communications accessibility, including installation of automatic doors, refined language for engaging JSWDs, and "*plenty of resources*" for AT. DEI also furnished resources that provided clothing for employment opportunities, trainings, and services for a broader array of employment pathways, including social work, child care, and taxidermy.

Treatment WDAs indicated that they needed more training and capacity-building in benefits counseling. JSWDs generally had access to a benefits specialist, but AJCs discussed staff becoming CWICs as well. In one WDA, DRCs expedited "*constant*" staff training, including on co-enrollment. DRCs commented that "*still more training in disability etiquette and eligibility would be beneficial across the state. One of our WDAs could use more regular trainings on serving JSWDs*."

Two of three WDAs demonstrated customer-centric qualities, such as providing information on job accommodations as JSWDs sought employment and encouraging them to articulate their employment goals. In one WDA, a participant focus group yielded mixed feedback about customer choice. Positive testimony included characterizations of staff as "v*ery friendly*" and supportive of individuals by securing internships in relevant fields. Jobseekers also appreciated vast "*networking resources*." However, there were multiple critiques from JSWDs in one WDA, including a lack of clarity about wages upon placement and long-term opportunities and a "*one-size-fits-all model*" approach to job development, including mandatory completion of unnecessary classes. By contrast, the DRC from one WDA described efforts to streamline client assessments at intake to make the process more customer-directed. She also reflected on how DEI funding allowed clients to explore more career options. Further, she encouraged enrolling clients in as many programs as possible, "*so long as it is appropriate for the customer*."

Though a DRC stated she was "*not even familiar*" with universal design, treatment WDAs exhibited several inclusive features. One AJC facilitated both in-person and online coursework through partners, depending on a client's preference. AT in treatment WDAs included Microsoft Reader and other screen-reading applications, as well as adaptations like putting programs on participants' phones or adjusting computer layouts. Collaboration with local community colleges expedited appropriate AT. Workshops were multi-modal, including PowerPoint slides, written material, videos, and interactive "*soft skills*" activities.

Goal-setting was promoted through user-friendly job-seeking platforms like O*NET OnLine and guidance on budgeting. Career exploration inventories and identification of transferrable skills reflected efforts to promote autonomy and relevance in job searching. DRCs also varied demands and resources based on a client's background, interests, and skills.

DEI built upon a state initiative that incentivized employers hiring JSWDs. DRCs were influential in rolling out the program. In one WDA, the AJC was proactive in engaging employers, with one DRC seeing his primary role as "*to reach out and educate employers*." This AJC interacted with employers through a variety of vehicles, including direct outreach, planned meetings, and job fairs. Business services also facilitated employer outreach, particularly for young adults, and a partner assisted in this endeavor. A staff member affirmed that the DRC was integral to understanding which employers were interested in hiring JSWDs. Outreach to employers involved framing JSWDs as being "*more dedicated*" than jobseekers without disabilities.

Employers confirmed this AJC's proactive engagement and depicted AJC outreach as a catalyst for relationship-building with JSWDs. The AJC also helped employers understand JSWD needs and skills and provided assistance with any issues. WDAs conducted outreach to businesses; while one DRC discussed considering an employer as "*a partner*," there was little evidence of employer involvement in AJC strategic planning.

DRCs identified several challenges to employer engagement. Securing buy-in to hire JSWDs, including through provision of OJT funds, was challenging due to uncertainty about liability, the practicality and cost of accommodations, and disability etiquette. DRCs suggested small businesses may be more receptive to outreach than larger corporations due to a greater

likelihood of engaging an individual comfortable with relating their own familiarity with someone with a disability. They also indicated employers were more open to hiring younger JSWDs. An employer identified the obstacle of needing specialized and technical skills from JSWDs. Some employers were also reluctant to get involved with OJT opportunities. Employers showed preference for paid work experiences or direct placement. Partners bemoaned confusion about establishing OJTs despite a multitude of potential worksite connections and called for additional information and training in this facet.

v. Career Pathways

DEI financing supported longer training programs than WIOA and was more conducive to stackable credentials and career ladders. In one WDA, DRCs were conversant in career assessment options, including WorkKeys, the O*NET Interest Profiler, and TABE for youth. This AJC also harnessed labor market information and job databases to provide JSWDs with pragmatic insight. According to the DEI State Lead, Round 5 was instrumental to formalizing relationships with postsecondary institutions and to enhancing accommodation policies at these schools. These improvements were crucial to supporting WBL and work experiences implemented statewide, including for youth and epitomized by Project SEARCH internships. DEI facilitated 42 Project SEARCH internships in Kansas.

According to Kansas's final quarterly report, 152 DEI participants completed classroom training leading to certification, and 138 individuals participated in paid work-based training. About half acquired Microsoft Office Specialist certifications; customer service training was also popular. Per Kansas's DEI State Lead and DRCs, enrollees acquired and maintained employment for at least 6 months at a higher rate than anticipated and at a higher average hourly wage than projected.

vi. Outreach and Dissemination

DEI state leadership helped form the Transformers Coalition. The Coalition was designed to improve access to and knowledge about transition services for youth with disabilities, including through town halls across the state. Treatment WDAs engaged in multifaceted outreach. For instance, DRCs and AJCs reached out to local nonprofits and relevant county agencies to discuss available services and employment opportunities such as WBL and OJT, as well as the potential for collaboration and resource leveraging to assist JSWDs. An "*accessibility committee*" was another venue for outreach, and DRCs promoted DEI through other committees. In one WDA, DEI was "*discussed at a board level*" to reach employers. Events like job fairs for JSWDs and the Midwest Ability Summit also enabled outreach. DRCs were proactive in engaging school districts and county governments, distributing flyers with information about DEI.

To broadcast best practices, the Department of Commerce produced video interviews exhibiting the promise of OJT. Interviews included DEI participants and employers from Kansas. The state's CP efforts through DEI were also amplified by NDI in a webinar, highlighting significant CP enrollment. Local dissemination revolved around case management for JSWDs and encouraging staff to be "*creative*" in serving this group. A partner cited the Project SEARCH

committee as another channel for information-sharing. Cross-training also allowed for dissemination beyond AJCs. In addition to productive individual relationships with employers, one AJC shared information with employers via business services and the Society for Human Resource Management.

vii. Promising Practices: "*Pathways for Success*"

One DRC developed a "Pathways for Success" curriculum in partnership with mental health providers. The curriculum emerged from IRTs and was targeted to jobseekers with multiple barriers to employment, including mental health challenges. Pathways for Success integrated elements of Discovery, CE, career exploration, résumé writing, soft skills development, mock interviews, benefits counseling, and Asset Development. Participants met biweekly with workforce and mental health staff. Several clients also developed PASS plans.

Rationale for Its Implementation

Pathways for Success precipitated other agencies and workforce regions to pursue this model. An intellectual and developmental disabilities provider adopted the model and formed two cohorts. Two DRCs also partnered to form a regional Pathways to Success group that continued to meet monthly.

Why the Practice Could Be Considered Promising

The curriculum addressed a significant gap in services for JSWDs, particularly the many who had mental health challenges and multiple barriers to employment. Without tackling each obstacle with comprehensive services and supports, the employment journey would likely be daunting.

viii. Challenges and Sustainability

Like many DEI grantees, the most trenchant challenge for Kansas was turnover in the DRC role. This prevented optimal training and collaboration. Capacity gaps also remained in benefits counseling, AT utilization, and serving JSWDs with multiple barriers. Capacity constraints were also evident in one WDA that lacked resources to regularly assemble IRTs. In addition, there was uncertainty about disability disclosure and serving individuals with severe or multiple disabilities, though there was progress in deciphering specific disability information. Multiple DRCs spoke about the challenge of navigating "*helicopter*" parents of youth with disabilities to ensure youth voiced their input. Another staff member stated, "*Our challenge is to understand their needs*" and to "*channel [programming] to their needs*." Meeting one-on-one with clients helped in this regard. There was no evidence of JSWD involvement in strategic planning for the design of products and services for JSWDs.

Several features of treatment WDAs bode well for sustaining DEI practices. Multiple DRCs had significant case management backgrounds, so they understood well the delicate balance between service provision and systems-level training and coordination. In one WDA,

DRCs "*[drew] a line with case management*" but were "*pulled back in several times*" to provide support and answer questions: "*there's always that mixing and molding*." A State Lead professed that Round 5 DRCs did "*not allow themselves to become case managers. They really are resources for the case managers and other folks in the system*." According to a quarterly report, case managers became more aware of other agencies and independently connected with partners to create IRTs for JSWDs. This was corroborated in a post-grant sustainability call.

One DRC described her role as coordinating case management between agencies. DRCs also spent much time fostering partnerships and conducting outreach to agencies; some explicitly articulated this as their primary function. The DRC role encouraged sustainability by facilitating awareness, training, and relationships. Moreover, former DRCs were integrated into AJCs — two were still called DRCs — and were accelerating adoption of IRTs. AJC and some DEI staff were also retained. Nonetheless, much turnover in the DRC role undercut long-term embedding of DEI practices, as confirmed by the DEI State Lead in a post-grant call.

In terms of financing to undergird functions of a DRC after DEI, there was mixed feedback. A staff member in one WDA suggested it would be "*very challenging*" to sustain the DRC role, a reality that would also hinder collaboration. Many strengthened partnerships could endure, such as with VR, but others could "*suffer*" without "*the glue*" of a DRC. The absence of a DRC would also jeopardize AJC proficiency in engaging JSWDs "*in an appropriate way*." On the other hand, a State Lead communicated plans to fund DRCs as an "Other Shared Cost" through partners in accordance with WIOA regulations. Reentry funds and data showcasing a DRC's impact were other potential avenues for sponsoring DRCs.

Beyond the DRC position, an interviewee from one WDA predicted that outreach and training focused on JSWDs would be sustained by KANSASWORKS. The DEI State Lead offered that JSWD engagement with Workforce continued to expand. The state's final quarterly report suggested training on DEI practices would be afforded to WDAs that were not involved in DEI. Cross-system collaboration also became a feature of Kansas's workforce development system. Moreover, IRTs were replicated statewide, including by the state's Service Guidance and Support Teams, due to training through DEI. Per the State Lead, IRTs were the most lasting legacy of DEI. OJTs continued to be promoted through television commercials and social media. Post-grant, Kansas hired a consultant group to explore customer-centered design with employers and customers. A State Lead was also charged with creating a Business Leadership Network (BLN) and connecting with employers.

Blending and Braiding Resources will continue to be crucial, especially for a treatment WDA with fewer resources and to ensure JSWDs receive both workforce and VR services. However, a DRC submitted that local momentum to become an EN will subside without DEI, restricting TTW revenue. After the grant ended, a State Lead did suggest that Kansas saw a significant increase in Ticket holders. There were multiple potential additional avenues for financing DEI practices. A State Lead indicated Pre-Employment Transition Services funding would persist through an agreement with VR. A DRC mentioned the possibility of tapping into the End Dependence Kansas grant and relying more on partners. Moreover, an AJC staff member cited a state grant to fund IRTs. A partner intimated that Project SEARCH financing was solvent through the county government. Finally, to translate DEI's local impact into an outcome-based

regional and statewide sustainability strategy, Kansas also scrutinized local DEI data to better understand customer performance and service utilization relevant to all five WIOA titles.[30]

Kansas stands out in its alignment of federal, state, and DEI policy frameworks. This synergy fostered the collaboration inherent to DEI, as exemplified by fruitful partnering, IRTs, and Blending and Braiding Resources. These processes are likely to sustain well beyond the grant's end, as they had spread statewide. DEI contributed to significant JSWD engagement with KANSASWORKS and partners, though capacity, resource, and training gaps linger. Project SEARCH and Behavioral Health Services were unique partners, and Kansas leveraged these relationships to cultivate pathways for clients with substantial hindrances. Ample employer engagement led to opportunities for Work-Based Learning, including OJT. Still, OJT presented complications that should be resolved. There were also implementation issues with TTW, and the relationship between state and local TTW administration should be addressed.

D. State: Massachusetts; Focus Area: Adults with Disabilities

i. Stated Goals and Objectives

Massachusetts's Round 5 "Pathways to Employment" project proposed to serve 165 adult JSWDs, with a focus on bettering job placement rates by increasing access to community college and Career Pathways in manufacturing, health care, and hospitality. "*Better services*" through service coordination and universal design were seen as pivotal to this goal. The state laid out seven objectives for the project:

1. Stimulate cohesion and collaboration among providers and agencies serving JSWDs;
2. Expand access to technical training and education in targeted sectors;
3. Increase the amount and diversity of employers hiring JSWDs;
4. Raise awareness among employers about the benefits of hiring JSWDs and about available support services;
5. Provide training and support to JSWDs in navigation of career development, education and training, and disability service systems;
6. Augment access to short-term subsidized work through WBL, OJT, and other direct work opportunities; and
7. Support job placement and retention in unsubsidized employment.

Five additional "systemic changes" were presented as crucial:

1. Raise awareness among providers about current CP offerings and how to integrate their services with existing initiatives;
2. Create trainings for employers, CP instructors, and AJC staff on supporting JSWDs;
3. Forge inclusivity and integration in CP programs, including by reflecting input and needs of JSWDs;

[30] WIOA includes five titles: Workforce Development Activities (Title I), Adult Education and Literacy (Title II), Amendments to the Wagner-Peyser Act (Title III), Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Title IV), and General Provisions (Title V).

4. Augment support and ENs for students who complete CP; and
5. Engage employers through a "*continuous communication loop*" with educators and trainers, "*inclusion planning*," and job development and coaching to align their needs with training and job placement strategies. Build employer bonds and translate employer information to lead to "*on-target*" training and a greater likelihood of "*pre-employment exposure*," OJT, and placement. Several strategies were proposed to engage employers:
   a. Business leaders were to present quarterly about needed skills;
   b. Information sessions for at least 30 business leaders in manufacturing, health care, and hospitality;
   c. A biannual course for employers on recruitment and hiring, job accommodations, and creating an inclusive environment resulting in an Inclusion Plan;
   d. Consulting on job carving and development, accommodations, assessments, and internships; and
   e. Training on "natural" supports to provide long-term job coaching; five co-workers to be trained to become natural support job coaches to assist in job stabilization.

ii. DEI Service Delivery Strategies

Massachusetts planned to achieve its goals and objectives through several service delivery approaches. To supervise implementation, each treatment WDA established a DEI committee that included partners and employers, such as the University of Massachusetts at Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI). In addition to setting project guidelines, the DEI committee promoted resource blending and braiding and gathering partners to participate in an annual conference. The Department of Career Services (DCS) and the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) co-enrolled JSWDs; three other agencies or grants were tapped for resource leveraging (e.g., Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training, Department of Mental Health, and Veterans' Employment and Training Service).

The WDAs featured DRCs, career counselors, and business services representatives, and they also included mental health providers in IRTs. A business services representative asserted that IRTs were essential to optimizing knowledge and resources for JSWDs, including about accommodations. In another treatment WDA, IRTs included MRC, the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB), and career development coaches from local community colleges and nonprofit providers. IRTs were implemented more formally in the third treatment WDA, which included wraparound services and training and employment opportunities.

Blending and Braiding Resources included partnering with VR, particularly for training and work experiences. In one treatment WDA, DEI funding enabled VR clients to complete trainings, primarily in access and registration. This AJC often referred JSWDs to VR to facilitate transportation assistance, including cab vouchers. Toward the end of the grant, this WDA overcame limited training funds and provided the same level of services to JSWDs by leveraging WIOA Adult funds.

Through alternative assessments in concert with career exploration and benefits counseling, the state expected to achieve "*improved assessment, matching, and referrals to*

appropriate programming with supports up-front." Available assessment tools included WorkKeys,[31] Transferable Occupation Relationship Quotient (TORQ)[32] software, and Accuplacer, which is a school readiness program.[33]

IRTs within each treatment WDA developed individualized service and career action plans and integrated these plans within existing services (including TTW). Plans involved an "*eco-map*" of existing systems and supports that outlined the role of each partner. In terms of training, strategies featured "*contextualized learning, compressed training awarding credit for prior learning, dual enrollment, hybrid learning approaches, and job carving*." Community college students also joined "*learning community clusters*" that offered small class sizes that included team projects. DEI pathways included both certificates for entry-level employment and stackable credentials.

Round 5 included a train-the-trainer approach to financial literacy through which all DEI staff could promote Asset Development services designed to help an individual purchase a car or home. Finally, Massachusetts hosted their second disability employment conference. DEI stakeholders participated and employers advertised job openings. This conference helped with replicating DEI practices throughout the state's 16 WDAs.

iii. Implementation Summary

Massachusetts Round 5 built upon a CP infrastructure incubated by the community college system in Round 3. Round 3 established the groundwork for an "*expedited start-up process*" in Round 5. In addition, Round 5 benefited from statewide collaboration around CP that germinated as a result of the state's Transformation Agenda, a systems- and industry-based approach supported by a $20 million USDOL grant. A state-level, cross-agency Coordinating Committee oversaw the DEI grant. The committee was led by the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services and included representatives from DCS, MRC, the Department of Mental Health, Veterans Services, the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH), and Developmental Services. This committee was a "*permanent component for cross-agency coordination to support … the needs of JSWDs*." Round 5 also included regional working committees to identify resources and services for JSWDs. Multiple AJC staff members, the DEI State Lead and DRCs, and employer partners were involved.

Notwithstanding much administrative restructuring and staff turnover, treatment WDAs showcased the necessary leadership and capacity to facilitate positive employment outcomes for JSWDs. Accessibility was a major focus that coincided with the state's AJCs' undergoing certification processes. Compliance with WIOA Section 188 guidelines drove much of accessibility planning, particularly in one treatment WDA. Local and national TA furnished by

[31] ACT, Inc. (n.d.). *WorkKeys assessments*. Retrieved from https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/workkeys-for-employers/assessments.html
[32] O*NET Resource Center. (n.d.). *Transferable Occupation Relationship Quotient TORQ ™ from Workforce Associates, Inc*. Retrieved from https://www.onetcenter.org/paw/entry/125
[33] College Board. (n.d.). *What is ACCUPLACER?* Retrieved from https://accuplacer.collegeboard.org/

ICI and NDI was instrumental in guiding treatment sites to alignment with Section 188, including through cross-training. Massachusetts's Office on Disability also conducted an ADA assessment and reviewed AT access at participating AJCs.

To actualize accessibility, one treatment WDA focused on training, procedures, accountability, facility upgrades, and communications. It completed three accessibility assessments, scrutinized the 188 Disability Reference Guide, and developed an action plan to remediate accessibility issues. The plan included two full-day, all-staff trainings, which were conducted with assistance from ICI and focused on best practices for universal design and services. Attendees included MRC, MCB, MCDHH, and Work Without Limits (WWL). Representatives from NDI and the LEAD Center served as trainers.

In addition to AJC signage changes to improve communications accessibility, one WDA enhanced its MassHire website to make it more inclusive, though it had insufficient funding to completely transform the site as desired. The AJC's lobby and wheelchair ramp were redesigned to better accommodate people with a mobility impairment. In another treatment WDA, the AJC was relocated during the grant period and subsequently assessed for accessibility by an ADA coordinator. The AJC also conducted Section 188 training and received accessibility guidance from NDI.

iv. Partnerships and Collaborations

Round 5 built upon collaboration and integration spurred by earlier DEI grants and access to WIOA services. In addition to serving as state partners, ICI and WWL nurtured local connections. ICI was integral to incubating partnerships in treatment WDAs, and WWL connected treatment sites to other disability initiatives in the state, including Partners for Youth with Disabilities' Campus Career Connect program and the National Organization on Disability's Campus to Careers pilot. Round 5 bolstered bonds with MRC, which is co-located in treatment AJCs at least monthly, including through co-enrollment and by treatment sites attending monthly MRC meetings to encourage referrals. Treatment WDAs also partnered with MCB, MCDHH, the Department of Developmental Services, the Department of Transitional Assistance, and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's special education unit.

Collaboration was encouraged by monthly meetings coordinated by the State Lead, which were either in-person or by teleconference and attended by DRCs, WDA leadership, ICI, WWL, and NDI. Successful placements and upcoming events were discussed, and participants also resolved difficult cases and other implementation challenges. One DRC described the meetings as "*great … I think you learn a lot from hearing what other sites do*." In between monthly meetings, DEI leadership communicated regularly with DRCs and Employment Specialists through T/TA workshops. Two treatment WDAs also partnered to facilitate internships.

At the local level, one treatment WDA established a Disability Employment Coalition since there was no existing regional collaborative like in other treatment WDAs. The coalition met regularly and grew throughout the grant, incorporating employers, schools, family assistance providers, youth transition services, Adult Basic Education (ABE), Job Corps, Easter Seals, and

other social service agencies. The coalition helped match JSWDs with available trainings and positions and expedited IRTs and referrals. In addition to the coalition, the DRC worked closely with MRC, MCB, the Department of Developmental Services, and the local community college and high schools to leverage resources, implement IRTs, co-enroll, facilitate trainings, and recruit and place candidates.

In another treatment WDA, DEI contributed to "*a much more collaborative approach*" and "*a whole lot of communication*." The AJCs and a local provider that specialized in training jobseekers with significant disabilities partnered on designing and implementing trainings and a "*referral pool*" of JSWDs and employers. For example, one AJC trained the provider's youth clients for retail jobs. AJCs also united with veterans' representatives and a mental health service provider. A DRC remarked that communicating with referring agencies was a challenge.

The third treatment WDA made deliberate efforts to ensure DEI "*was not a siloed program*." Accordingly, about "*90 to 95*" percent of DEI clients were co-enrolled in WIOA, Title I, or other programs. As conveyed by career counselors, however, a caveat to this strategy was the stringent employment outcomes required by WIOA. This WDA also fostered "*a really strong relationship*" with MRC, including through many referrals, alignment of trainings, and "*constant communication*." The DRC also presented at MRC staff meetings. Each treatment WDA also conducted cross-agency training, as well as training of provider staff that included information about JSWDs, opportunities for soft skills training, and information about TTW.

Transportation was cited as a "*huge*" barrier to physical accessibility. This dilemma was mitigated by the local staffing agency instituting a new van route. Additionally, with the support of DRCs, the WDA secured funding from a local bank to help with transportation. AJC staff also attended a statewide transportation conference as part of ongoing efforts to tap into state resources and identify transit options. In another treatment WDA, a DRC was compelled to refer JSWDs to MRC because "*we cannot provide the transportation that someone might need*," whereas MRC could supply cab vouchers. Braiding funds enabled MRC to finance transportation and the AJC to fund training. A lack of transportation access was compounded by many vulnerable jobseekers having to secure a driver's license or a vehicle; "*they may be able to go to work tomorrow if they had transportation*." The AJC also did not have accessible parking. To address these issues, DRCs worked with WDA staff to engage MassRIDES and advocated via the state's transportation committee. One WDA offered travel training for JSWDs, which provided road maps to frequently visited locations selected by JSWDs.

ICI and NDI helped with mental health and anxiety accommodations and clinical supports to facilitate programmatic accessibility. ICI also evaluated the intake process at treatment AJCs. Treatment WDAs made substantial efforts to serve all JSWDs, including those with significant additional barriers (e.g., substance abuse and criminal history). One treatment WDA featured a partner that specialized in serving JSWDs with intellectual and developmental disabilities and who needed "*more significant supports*," as well as serving referrals from MRC for the "*hardest-to-place*" individuals. A DRC from this partner indicated that AJCs struggled to serve and place jobseekers with intellectual and developmental disabilities and that such jobseekers were less likely to seek full-time employment and/or Career Pathways training due to the skill and training requirements. The DRC argued AJCs were not designed, staffed, or funded

to provide the necessary "*level of individualization*" or "*intensive one-on-one services*" to this population. Still, DEI facilitated service coordination to engage AJC staff and JSWDs.

Another treatment WDA served clients with substantial barriers to employment, including those who were deaf or hard of hearing, blind or visually impaired, and facing mental health challenges. According to the DRC, "*nobody [at the AJC] knew about MCDHH, [MCB], or working with blind and deaf individuals*" prior to DEI. MCDHH supplied interpreters and signers, and MCB collaborated with WWL and employers to implement accommodations such as JAWS screen readers. Also, MCB committed to providing additional resources for AT to the AJC while MCDHH raised awareness about AT for hard-of-hearing individuals, and both agencies offered TA on using AT. The DRCs also trained JSWDs to use JAWS to attend AJC workshops. In addition, the AJC career seminar and customer flow were transformed to be universally accessible, and the disability services planning chart was changed to reflect that of a typical jobseeker.

Another treatment WDA similarly "*mainstream[ed]*" JSWDs through all employment processes. The DRC from this WDA suggested that CP completion and placement rates for DEI clients were high because their journeys virtually mimicked the employment processes of WIOA Adult clients. To facilitate this integration, the DRC conducted staff trainings and served as a "*co-case manager*" for JSWDs to model to staff how to secure accommodations and other employment-related disability services so customers were "*suitable for training*." Co-management of cases also facilitated integration of DEI practices into WIOA services.

This site also tailored multiple workshops for persons with intellectual and learning disabilities. In terms of accommodations, the DRC arranged for a large keyboard and magnifiers/readers in every AJC room with a computer and secured captioned telephones. This AJC also installed adjustable desks and tables and lowered bathroom mirrors. The AJC did not procure JAWS, however, based on a recommendation from MCB. The DRC also expressed a desire to have AT to assist people with learning disabilities like dyslexia.

Another treatment WDA featured partners that illustrated universal design enhancements, as well as an educational partner that was convenient to public transportation and offered inclusive, student-centered trainings. Its instruction was hands-on, and JSWDs were provided much testing preparation and could audit classes. Job coaches also spent extra time with anxious trainees, many of whom had been employed for many years. The third treatment WDA involved trainers who supplied "*extra information*" and allowed JSWDs to observe classrooms to be more comfortable. Low-vision individuals were sent workshop handouts so they could absorb the information with JAWS prior to the workshop. With reference to DRC and staff capacity to serve JSWDs, the competitive rebidding of AJC management and staff turnover led to a delay in implementation and presented obstacles throughout. Two treatment WDAs transitioned to new operators during Round 5, and the other WDA saw AJCs close, staff laid-off, and "*essential workshops*" cut.

Another treatment AJC referred Ticket customers for assignment after intake. In the third treatment WDA, there were not many Ticket-eligible customers among enrollees, and those who

were eligible already assigned their Tickets. Moreover, this WDA did not have sufficient staff capacity to administer TTW, including due to turnover.

Locally, one DRC led whole-staff training "*all the time*," such as by presenting about accommodations at staff meetings. An AJC manager credited the DRC with improving disability etiquette among staff. To accomplish this, the DRC was aided by a train-the-trainer session with WWL. In another treatment WDA, a DRC joined the grant midway and received a bevy of training from NDI, ICI, WWL, and the BLN to get up to speed. She also attended trainings on the Help Wanted Online Index and TORQ systems, which facilitated advanced job search techniques that prioritized labor market information. AJC staff were also trained on nascent assistive technologies. The third treatment WDA arranged for full-day, all-staff trainings devoted to engaging JSWDs. This WDA's AJC held joint trainings delivered by ICI and another local provider, including on cultural competence. Upon transitioning to a new operator, staff were trained on serving JSWDs.

Training to buttress capacity-building was supported by the state's rich TA infrastructure, exemplified by ICI and WWL. Early in the grant period, ICI and WWL conducted trainings on serving JSWDs, TTW, and employer engagement. ICI and WWL also provided targeted assistance to sites on accommodations, employment placement and supports, self-disclosure, motivational interviewing, career assessment and pathways, universal design, and disability awareness. NDI webinars and tutelage were also pivotal for DRCs to learn about "*the world of workforce development*."

Treatment WDAs prioritized customer choice, but they also stressed pragmatic career planning. One DRC submitted that "*everything needs to be person-centered*." This AJC completed interest and skills inventories with each client, and the DRC met with JSWDs individually. If a client decided to undergo training, he or she typically took the TABE, which was used diagnostically:

> "*It's not the score you get that really matters … but you'll know whether or not you could finish a training, or that you'll struggle … so what can we do to help make your skills work for you so that you can be able to go?*" — AJC Staff

In another treatment WDA, the AJC utilized CE strategies to develop paid work experiences that reflected each individual's abilities and goals. The DRC also partnered with WWL to help JSWDs envision opportunities "*out of their comfort zone*." A JSWD confirmed he "*definitely*" led his employment search with the AJC. The DRC "*constantly*" asked him which opportunities he "*could and wanted to pursue*," including his fields of preference and willingness to travel. The DRC also regularly solicited his "*feedback on whether we were going in the right direction and reminded me I should be driving the search for my own employment*." He never felt his "*hand was being held*."

The third treatment WDA also centered on JSWD strengths, interests, and personality. At the same time, plans had to be "*goal-oriented*," prioritized, and geared toward addressing barriers. An individual career plan was formulated based on detailed assessments, which included identifying preferences in work setting (e.g., in a nursing home or hospital), type of

occupation, and work schedule. DRCs stressed client commitment and a realistic evaluation of what outcomes clients could achieve; for instance, those who could not "*comprehend a patient care plan*" were "*not a good match*" for the CNA profession. Another DRC from this WDA met frequently with a business services representative to discuss whether client profiles would match available job opportunities.

A DRC and community-based provider were proactive about accommodations during the assessment phase: "*We believe anybody can get a job. How they get there is different, and some people need more significant supports*." JSWDs with minimal work experience were especially encouraged to self-disclose "*because it makes the job coaching when they first start working much easier to negotiate*." As with most grantees, there was scant evidence of JSWD involvement in strategic planning. Nevertheless, a WDA director and DEI leader divulged being hard of hearing, "*nearly blind*," and diagnosed with diabetes and a heart condition.

DRCs balanced case management with coordination and collaboration activities. Some saw case management as their main responsibility, but they also made a concerted effort to understand and forge systemic coordination. One DRC who joined the grant midway initially saw it as "*very overwhelming. … There wasn't a full-time person so I just came in and learned all of the pieces*." Over time, however, she cultivated partnerships and built the AJC's capacity to serve JSWDs. Capacity-building was expedited by all-day staff trainings on serving JSWDs and other DRC functions, including via the "DRC I" training, some of which were open to staff beyond the AJC. During our site visit, the DRC reported that many JSWDs were served and placed without her intervention. At the same time, she advised that a DRC role should be permanently funded at 75 percent full-time equivalent to sustain expertise, partnerships, and accommodations forged during DEI. In a post-grant call, leadership from this WDA asserted that cross-training and IRTs led to other staff internalizing how to leverage resources to serve JSWDs. These leaders also approached DEI as a lever for systemic change, such as around accessibility. In another treatment WDA, the DRC approached her role with an "*exit strategy*" and strove to make "*really sustainable changes*."

DEI and its employer partners provided child care, work uniforms, and a phone that JSWDs used to communicate with employers. Employers supplied other employment support services, including practice with alternative interviewing styles and strategies to help JSWDs be "*more at ease with selling themselves*." JSWDs were prepared for OJT scenarios, including through coping strategies.[34]

Employer engagement was integral to DEI implementation across treatment WDAs, with WWL and business services as key linchpins. WWL facilitated several employer outreach functions, helped identify employers hiring JSWDs, and arranged for JSWDs to tour employers through events like Disability Mentoring Day. WWL's annual career fair featured dozens of employers and was well attended. Additionally, WWL invited two DRCs to a BLN meeting to promote DEI and job candidates. JSWDs could also access WWL's virtual employer bank and assisted with placement and sensitivity training for employers. Business services staff earmarked

[34] Centre for Studies on Human Stress. (n.d.). *Coping strategies*. Retrieved from https://humanstress.ca/stress/trick-your-stress/steps-to-instant-stress-management/

and engaged industry sector employers throughout treatment WDAs and were also central to navigating turnover within employer partners.

One treatment WDA initially invested much time in employer outreach since there was limited engagement there prior to DEI and WWL's BLN was less established there. This WDA focused on engaging businesses in manufacturing, health care, hospitality, and banking. WDA leaders also engaged a manufacturing staffing agency to explore JSWDs participating in on-site trainings and paid work experiences. The agency's director encouraged JSWDs to apply for the many local openings, especially since new transportation options emerged to a local manufacturing site. While the site typically only offered 12-hour shifts, it indicated it would consider splitting shifts for the right candidates.

DRCs engaged employers in various ways, such as inviting employers to the AJC to conduct mock interviews; attending career fairs, human resources events, and a WWL-sponsored BLN event; taking company tours, including of a manufacturing facility; and meeting with employers to deliver résumés and discuss staffing needs and candidates. A DRC also met with a local economic development director to connect with employers. Additionally, she arranged for MCB staff to meet employers and train them about accommodations and to visit and assess work sites. The WDA chairwoman and business services also engaged employers, including through presentations at career fairs and trainings.

One JSWD suggested that DEI funding for employment-related internships was helpful in persuading employers to hire JSWDs. However, he also indicated he could benefit from more assistance in reaching out to employers and leveraging his own connections; the DRC primarily sent him online applications for openings. Despite these employer engagement efforts, the DRC argued that employer bias remained a significant obstacle, particularly if an individual had a visible disability or was deaf or blind: "*I think it's a huge challenge to get some employers to see the person and not the disability*." Another hurdle was churn and restructuring within employer partners; persistence and constant networking were critical to overcoming these transitions.

In another treatment WDA, the DRC worked "*really strongly*" with WWL to incubate employer bonds. This synergy resulted in a robust partnership with a local hospital, which led to many internships and placements. This AJC's operations manager asserted that the DRC knew local employers well, worked closely with job developers, and was significantly involved with job placements. In addition, a job placement specialist from VR ran a regional employment collaborative. The collaborative met monthly, providing a venue for JSWDs to network with employers and employment service providers.

In the third treatment WDA, WWL and business services spearheaded employer engagement. This partnership coordinated multiple job fairs for JSWDs, including for health and human services and hospitality occupations, as well as one-on-one meetings with employers about candidates. Like in another treatment WDA, DEI in concert with WWL facilitated a relationship with a local medical facility that led to a fruitful Career Pathways pipeline. DEI also helped cultivate links with many other employers, such as nursing homes and Sodexo, which provides facilities management and food services for schools, universities, and hospitals.

A provider and lead partner in this WDA interacted with employers in furnishing "*placement support*" services, which included navigating disclosure, résumé development and distribution, setting up interviews, accommodations, and job coaching. The provider encouraged employers to allow its clients to attend "*regular orientation*" without accommodations, but it also conducted "*informational interviews*" to help clients practice seeking accommodations. These interviews were particularly useful for youth; the DRC argued youth may be less inclined to engage in self-advocacy with employers since they increasingly grow up in inclusive and accommodating settings: "*That's a big awakening. … They don't identify as having a disability, but some of them definitely will need extra supports at work. Most of the time when they fail it's because they didn't want to self-disclose*."

Once a client began working, employers were urged to provide specific feedback on challenges and clients were observed in action to customize job coaching. Stakeholders also discussed how it was crucial to understand employers' perspectives on accommodations, including allaying fears about confidentiality and liability and gauging their openness to on-site job coaching. One employer accommodated a trauma-affected JSWD by enabling her to work near child care. This WDA also leveraged job coaching funding from statewide employment services to furnish on-site employment supports for two autistic clients working at Sodexo. In each treatment WDA, leading employers were central to long-term strategic planning for pathways customized to JSWDs. One employer partner and BLN member was a "*vocal advocate*" for businesses to collaborate with DEI. The state's overall proficiency with engaging employers was evidenced by its leading development of a business engagement Community of Practice presentation for NDI in concert with WWL.

v. Career Pathways

Two treatment WDAs demonstrated elements of CE that helped individuals enroll in CP training. A provider and lead partner in one WDA were very active as liaisons between JSWDs and employers. This included customized job coaching based on employee needs, employer preferences regarding work opportunities, and the workplace setting. Employer suggestions for task reassignment were common, and the provider adapted its coaching to these preferences. Another treatment WDA explored flexible scheduling to enable JSWDs to apply at a manufacturer that used 12-hour shifts. This WDA also customized an internship for one individual at a café so that he could work and play music at an "*alternative*" place with a "*small community feeling*."

In another treatment WDA, the DRC described cost-sharing as "*the best way to encompass all of the services that an individual may need*." She blended and braided funds with MCB to prolong internships, as well as to assist with supports like clothing and obtaining a driver's license. The third treatment WDA leveraged resources from MRC and the Department of Developmental Services. This enabled it to offer more individualized retention services, including extending onboarding and providing transportation supports. The lead partner and provider also engaged local colleges to seek funding for individualized supports that would ensure that individuals had access to CP training. For example, a JSWD whose reading is not at an eighth-grade level will likely not flourish in a patient access and registration class. To upgrade basic skills, a DEI AJC offered a "Career Ready 101" online curriculum. The AJC was proactive

in identifying possible accommodations. Despite these tactics, treatment WDAs still faced obstacles identifying JSWDs who could commit to and complete CP training. Challenges included chronic health problems, such as terminal and mental illnesses, "*ex-offender issues*," and refugee statuses. ICI and WWL were consulted to address these hurdles and to help identify suitable candidates. Disclosure was another challenge, especially for those with mental health disabilities.

A DRC contrasted DEI with a prior system that funneled JSWDs to VR rather than "*trying to really figure out what the JSWD actually needs … Maybe they've been working with VR and it's not been a good process*." The AJC also had much more access to employers than VR, could intervene early in the job search process, and was not hamstrung by the wait time or inflexibility that characterizes VR: "*You better go to VR knowing what you want … because they're not going to open up the menu of services and tell you, 'You have this option or this option.'*" The DRC also distinguished the AJC from SSA's customer service and suggested "*it is crucial to assist JSWDs so they can avoid SSA's disincentives to work*."

JSWDs corroborated that the AJC and DRC balanced customer choice with realistic options. One was transformed from feeling "*lost*" to learning about stackable credentials and studying the local labor market and projected growth occupations to match with her skills, background, and disability. She also stated that JSWDs "*have to put some work into it too*." Another individual relayed how the DRC built upon her desire to be a nurse by encouraging her to pursue a medical internship, which opened her to "*a new world*" and "*a dream come true*." After her internship, she secured a full-time temporary job. The DRC considered the JSWD's aspirations and abilities. She was "*always positive*" and offered sound step-by-step advice. This JSWD deemed the AJC as very helpful, including its career fairs, and referred her peers to the AJC. A third participant attested that the DRC was "*ready to help me with everything I need*" and helped her secure a medical internship.

With respect to Career Pathways, treatment WDAs focused on health care (e.g., CNA, medical assistant, home health aide, sterile processing assistant, surgical technology, and central processing), culinary arts, hospitality, and manufacturing (e.g., machinists). Hospitality trainings were generally of shorter duration and led to quicker placements.

DRCs facilitated various customized assessments and utilized state-sponsored CP tools and O*NET OnLine. AJC enrollees also had to complete the state's mandatory Career Center Seminar. One DRC conveyed how CP-specific assessments could shape a JSWD's employment journey. For instance, those with developmental disabilities could struggle to pass the entrance examination for CNA trainings; following directions sequentially and being able to comprehend a patient care plan are crucial to being a CNA.

For the lead partner and provider in this WDA, individualized assessment was essential to identifying appropriate supports. Assessments occurred in a comfortable setting: "*We have their assessments, so they can do it untimed in a relaxed place*." Assessments gauged strengths and barriers to employment, informed strategies to tackle barriers, and determined whether assistance was needed "*to get fully trained*." After a series of technical and readiness assessments, individualized supports were developed. A "*commitment assessment*" helped determine how

equipped a jobseeker was to enter a pathway. Assessment also honed in on the client's ideal work situation:

"*Are they going to want to be working in a nursing home or in a hospital? Do they want to work in a home-based program as a home health aide? If they're doing culinary arts, are they interested in working in the cafeteria? Do you want to work in a restaurant? Do you want to work Monday through Friday?*" — DRC

This provider also delivered 30 hours of job readiness instruction before clients enrolled in CP. Training focused on soft skills like time management, professional etiquette (e.g., documenting absences and workplace communication), socializing at work, and dress codes. This training period also allowed clients to obtain "*extra supports*," such as for transportation.

In another treatment WDA, the DRC used various assessments to "*see where they are, where they're coming from, and where they want to be*," including the Massachusetts Career Information System, Holland Self-Directed Search, the Work Readiness Assessment, and TORQ. The DRC also arranged career development coaches to help "*calm fears*" about starting a course or taking a test.

The third treatment AJC's assessment process included a Career Directions workshop that offered interest and skills inventories, as well as TABE testing. During pathway trainings, DRCs helped request academic supports at community colleges, such as one-on-one tutoring and group sessions to prepare for certification exams. One DRC also advocated for participants to retake exams multiple times. Another DRC attended information sessions at community colleges with JSWDs to help them feel more comfortable with college staff. This WDA also met with a college's coordinator of disability services, services that included accommodations (e.g., note-taking) and services provided by the school's "Visions"[35] program. This meeting led to other connections between the AJC and the college, and some Visions attendees were trained through DEI.

One treatment WDA nurtured a fruitful partnership with a local hospital, which led to numerous successful internships, paid work experiences, and placements in patient access and registration. According to multiple data points, "*nearly anyone*" who completed an internship with this hospital quickly landed a job. Moreover, these positions were often full-time and long-term. The DEI State Lead indicated that two DEI graduates of this training were offered full-time jobs starting at $16.67 per hour; both were long unemployed and earned just above minimum wage in their last jobs. One of the individuals was a TTW beneficiary.

One WDA did not have a prosperous relationship with the CVS internship program. DEI funded retail and customer service internships through CVS. At least six participants graduated from the program, and CVS provided positive feedback, yet none were hired. The DRC and a partner opted to end the partnership with CVS. Nevertheless, this WDA exceeded grant objectives according to the DEI State Lead, as they achieved success with multiple TTW clients.

[35] Visions supports disadvantaged students to persist through graduation and helps with transferring to 4-year college institutions. The program provides a variety of services, supports, and accommodations.

One gained an associate's degree, finished a nursing program, and was considering becoming a registered nurse. She was in the interview process and withdrew from SSA and SNAP benefits.

In another treatment WDA, DRCs help JSWDs focus on "*the end product*" from the beginning; "*everything we do has to be employment-focused*." With DEI, this WDA built upon a grant from the state's Commonwealth Corporation to continue a partnership with a local community college. The state grant focused on CNA, an allied health, and culinary arts pathways. This WDA also coordinated a summer boot camp for youth interested in culinary arts or CNA pathways. The camp focused on work readiness, such as résumé writing, networking, interviewing, and learning styles.

DEI and WWL helped this WDA develop its CP infrastructure further during Round 5. WWL facilitated a meeting with a local rehabilitation hospital, and the WDA began placing CNAs there. "*The relationship grew*," and the hospital created a customized CNA training for JSWDs. With additional funding from a state grant, the hospital committed to hiring any JSWDs who completed the credentialed training. A lead partner from this WDA hoped to convince the hospital that it could recruit and train all the hospital's prospective CNAs, which would cost approximately $5,000 per participant.

The third treatment WDA was innovative in helping JSWDs pursue a variety of pathways. The WDA trained DEI participants for the same fruitful hospital pathway as another treatment area. This involved much collaboration with hospital managers, MRC, and a community college. The college offered a customer and patient service certificate program, which the WDA also suggested could be useful for banking pathways.

This WDA also cultivated a relationship with the volunteer coordinator at another local hospital. This bond enabled the AJC to refer JSWDs for volunteer opportunities, which provided access to internal openings before their broader advertisement and a reference from the coordinator. In addition, this WDA aided JSWDs in pursuing careers in health care, manufacturing, culinary arts, and IT. As well, JSWDs secured customized internships, such as at a video game store and with the United Way.

MCB was a key partner in this WDA's employment and placement strategies. Several JSWDs were co-enrolled with MCB, and MCB provided additional internship funding for clients who needed more work experience. MCB was also pivotal to ensuring that AT was compatible.

Regarding Work-Based Learning, one DRC described it as "*everything to me*" because it could "*make a huge difference*" for the long-term unemployed, those who had to change careers, and those with little experience. This DRC asserted that combining WBL with short-term training was "*really helpful*." However, this WDA did weather challenges with WBL due to Boston city requirements related to the provision of stipends that were not expected to be provided to JSWDs. Another DRC valued aspects of WBL, such as Job Shadowing and employer tours, which provided a "*hands-on feel*" and insight into a typical work day.

Multiple DRCs commented on the value of "*post-placement support*" to promote CP and job retention. One treatment provider arranged individualized supports for independent travel

and self-regulation. According to a DRC, self-regulation (e.g., being on time and working without assistance) was a primary challenge for youth JSWDs. This DRC also indicated that a "*shortfall*" of DEI was its lack of resources for ongoing support and retention. This complicated serving those with the "*most significant barriers to employment*."

Notwithstanding successful facilitation of diverse pathways, treatment WDAs endured multiple obstacles related to CP. One WDA struggled to identify candidates who could complete the CNA training. Additionally, this AJC engaged youth referrals who were trained but "*lacked the commitment to stay employed*." Conversely, an AJC director from another treatment WDA suggested that most DEI opportunities were for lower-skilled individuals and did not align with higher-skilled JSWDs in that area. Another challenge was finding appropriate trainings that were certified in TrainingPro, the state's training administration program; "*Many effective trainings were not certified, and the system's interface is insanely tedious*."

vi. Outreach and Dissemination

In terms of outreach, DEI was kicked off with a press conference featuring congressional representatives. One treatment AJC advertised DEI through email blasts from its database of jobseekers — cultivated through relationships with counselors and recruiters — as well as marketing materials and word of mouth from recent program graduates. A DRC here dubbed himself "*a marketing motor on wheels*" and plugged DEI frequently. To recruit for its boot camp, a provider and lead partner leaned on referrals from schools and local disability service providers.

In another treatment WDA, the "*lion's share*" of DEI referrals were AJC customers. In addition to also receiving clients from MRC and MCB, the DRC conducted outreach through various channels: engaging a coalition of social service agencies; attending career and veterans resource fairs and youth council meetings; and visiting high schools and providers. Job-specific recruitment posters and other dissemination materials were also distributed at Disability Employment Coalition meetings. The third treatment WDA's DRC was described by career counselors as "*very active in the community*" as she advertised DEI services to JSWDs.

With respect to dissemination of best practices, treatment WDAs primarily shared promising innovations and success stories through internal AJC trainings, monthly meetings convened by the State Lead, and written documentation. Other dissemination vehicles included videos, such as an on-the-job filming of a participant that was circulated statewide and shared with USDOL. NDI and ICI also helped Massachusetts identify promising strategies to share broadly via video and helped broadcast the state's *Access for All* manual that was produced with DEI funds.

vii. Promising Practices: "Pathways for Success"

DRCs and other DEI leadership presented about best practices and "*strategies for replication*" at WWL conferences and other events. Topics included IRTs, career assessment tools, enhanced benefits counseling, TTW, interagency collaboration, capacity-building, and employment readiness for JSWDs (including those in substance abuse recovery). The positive

reception to this latter presentation signaled that the AJC could garner referrals for JSWDs in recovery. Additionally, DEI leaders from one WDA, including the executive director of the WDA's board, presented at a National Association of Workforce Development Professionals conference.

Rationale for Its Implementation

AJC staff, DRCs, and Employment Specialists needed information on promising practices and core strategies for meeting the needs of JSWDs, such as Section 188 of WIOA, that were integrated with the needs of youth with disabilities and Career Pathways developed through cross-agency partnerships.

Why the Practice Could Be Considered Promising

DEI aided in transcending Section 188 requirements and in conceiving accessibility as a long-term, "systems change" endeavor. WDA leaders shared practices in conference calls with WDAs in other states. One DRC co-presented with MRC on panels. The state's extraordinary emphasis on dissemination was epitomized by its second DEI Best Practices Conference.

viii. Challenges and Sustainability

Massachusetts Round 5 presented multiple implementation challenges. Structural barriers included dysfunction precipitated by two treatment WDAs transitioning to new AJC operators, which led to staff turnover and layoffs as well as elimination of workshops. Insufficient resources complicated provision of accommodations and long-term supports and optimization of AT and accessibility. TTW did not supply predicted revenue to supplement a dearth of resources, and treatment AJCs struggled to overcome the complexities and resource investments associated with establishing ENs and facilitating Ticket activity.

Treatment WDAs also weathered difficulties matching JSWDs with planned pathways, including due to the inflexibility of the state's training administration program. Even with additional funding and resources, individual barriers were often too significant for treatment AJCs to facilitate completion and retention of Career Pathways training. Employer biases may have limited access to employment in some areas, especially for those with a visible disability, deafness, or blindness. Finally, though treatment WDAs were innovative in addressing transportation challenges, physical access to services and jobs remained a quandary.

In one treatment site, a DRC retired with 9 months remaining in the grant period. This WDA also experienced multiple instances of turnover in personnel responsible for grant administration and implementation. A new DRC at grant's end required training and had to rebuild trust with clients. He also suggested that JSWDs were not able to participate in training in part due to the operator's transition to another job. In another treatment WDA, there was also turnover in the DRC role and many layoffs. The DRC from the third treatment WDA was hired a few months into the grant. This DRC experienced a change in supervisor and left the position in the final grant year.

Treatment WDAs navigated numerous roadblocks in incubating TTW capacity. ICI supplied initial TA on EN creation, nurturing partnerships, Ticket recruitment and assignment, and staff training, while WWL helped with benefits counseling and employer outreach. One site was an established EN, while the other two were undertaking suitability clearance processes during the grant period. Quarterly reporting toward the end of the first grant year described access to a new TTW portal as "*time-consuming and confusing … with little guidance from Social Security*;" not all portal features were accessible. There were also delays in two treatment WDAs establishing an EN; at least one did not become an EN by grant's end. In addition, turnover in AJC operators and staff contributed to lower levels of Ticket activity than expected, prompting intervention from ICI.

One DRC suggested that successful local TTW programs in Massachusetts were in locations where there was not a strong relationship between VR and DCS. Her reasoning was that collaboration with VR led to more referrals and ceding Ticket ownership to VR rather than keeping it locally within the WDA. Most Tickets were processed centrally through the state. This AJC helped some JSWDs engage with TTW and secure employment. Toward the grant's end, the DRC offered regular office hours for work incentive counseling. However, this DRC left the grant early and the WDA's TTW clients were transferred to other providers.

Regarding practices to encourage sustainability, DRC roles ranged from primarily case management to a combination of case management and systems-level activities. One DRC preferred "*one-on-one*" engagement and operated "*like a one-stop shop … he sticks with the person all the way through*," including recruitment, intake and assessment, training, placement, and retention support.

"*We're thinking about how to make sure staff are better equipped at making sure people with disabilities are given access here, that we are a welcoming place, that we are a place that is fully available to this community.*" — DRC

To facilitate this transformation, the DRC provided TA to staff and was available as a resource for staff serving JSWDs to troubleshoot or assist with accommodations. She also co-managed cases with other staff to model service delivery for JSWDs. And, despite much attention to training and capacity-building, the DRC met one-on-one with JSWDs "*all the time*," especially those who needed "*more intensive counseling*." She was also intimately involved with job placements. According to the AJC operations manager and career counselors, staff were much more knowledgeable about engaging JSWDs and accessing accommodations and partners and not as reliant on MRC. However, counselors admitted it would be difficult to take on all DRC responsibilities. The AJC director also mentioned efforts to "*institutionalize*" DEI practices, including train-the-trainer trainings, but suggested there would be a "*gap*" without a DRC. This DRC left the grant before it ended to join NDI, but her replacement testified that staff continued to work with JSWDs. ICI furnished TA as the grant ended to expedite new staff learning DEI practices, particularly in the treatment WDAs that experienced significant turnover.

With respect to financing to prolong DEI practices, one treatment WDA garnered a 2-year state grant to continue building its health care pathways. However, a DRC from this WDA argued it was imperative to allocate funding for ongoing, long-term supports for JSWDs.

The AJC director from this WDA also lamented dwindling federal and state funding for personnel, though TTW could help with some of this void. A DRC from another WDA stated that funding to sustain DRC practices was "*in limbo*;" TTW revenue did not meet expectations. Another DEI stakeholder offered that TTW revenue could help support DRC functions or support services, but not both. Blending and braiding will persevere, especially since MRC and MCB are "*MOU partners*" with greater investment in DCS services.

Though continued funding is tenuous outside of one WDA, many DEI practices and partnerships should sustain. Accessibility enhancements and capacity-building for serving JSWDs in each treatment WDA will persist, as will the IRT model. Trainings on universal access continued through the end of the grant, and one treatment WDA's leadership reported that trainings on serving JSWDs were continuing post-grant. Relationships with MRC, MCB, and local colleges should endure and serve as a steady referral stream as multiple stakeholders attested. One DRC added that the Department of Transitional Assistance and ABE being more integrated into AJCs is another significant systems change. One WDA's Disability Employment Coalition was expected to continue meeting and networking:

"*It's more advantageous for everybody to share resources and hear what's going on. That way you can provide the most holistic experience for who you're working with. So I don't think that will just end because disability isn't going to end.*" — DRC

A post-grant call confirmed that the coalition planned to continue meeting quarterly, which will solidify bonds with employers. DEI also paved the way for internship pipelines with a local hospital, which was previously averse to new internship programs. Local banks and financial institutions and manufacturing staffing agencies are also emergent employer partners in one treatment WDA as a result of DEI.

In one treatment WDA, DEI lessons were leveraged for another grant. Moreover, ICI's model documents, policies, videos, and other dissemination materials related to DEI should help with institutionalizing promising practices. Finally, the DEI Best Practices Conference was cited as very helpful to sustaining accessibility, universal design, and other DEI features. Materials from the conference are electronically accessible.

Notwithstanding structural obstacles in each treatment WDA, Massachusetts demonstrated innovation, systems change, and promising practices. DEI implementation greatly benefitted from robust alignment between state and local leadership and among treatment WDAs. ICI and WWL also provided pivotal TA, including with accessibility, employer engagement, and TTW. Round 5 significantly bolstered collaboration with MRC, MCB, and other state agencies and also forged partnerships with local colleges, hospitals, banks, and other employers that led to placements and long-term pipelines. Treatment WDAs also exhibited promising strategies with customized assessments and job supports, outreach and partnership development, staff training for sustainability, dissemination, and employer engagement. In sum, Massachusetts is well-positioned to continue nurturing bona fide Career Pathways for JSWDs.

E. State: Minnesota; Focus Area: Adults with Disabilities

i. Stated Goals and Objectives

Minnesota's Round 5 grant was designed to transform the state's AJC and CP systems to enhance accessibility, inclusivity, and competitive employment for JSWDs through embedding "*on-demand*" supports and leadership, bolstering partnerships and leveraging resources, and developing new service capabilities through innovation and professional development. DEI was pivotal to piloting universal service models that could engage those not served by VR, including through partnering with Title III and Title IV so AJCs could offer "*more choices and no-wrong-door*" policy. Locally, these systems collaborated with employers, community-based agencies, chambers of commerce, and other entities to build more inclusion in manufacturing, health care, business, and technology. A "*Career Pathway convener*" in each treatment WDA aligned cross-agency leadership and collaboration by building on the state's *Skills @ Work* campaign, which established regional industry action teams to engage sectorial employers and integrate CP with stackable credentials. Ultimately, DEI helped to shift the CP infrastructure's emphasis from individual to system readiness to provide T/TA to each individual enrolled.[36]

These strategies were designed to engender the following outcomes:

- Engage adults with disabilities in work-based and CP training approaches;
- Increase employment and wage outcomes of JSWDs:
  - Increase the length of employment of JSWDs; and
  - Increase 6-month earnings;
- Increase credential attainment;
- Facilitate CP program completion; and
- Engage employers to provide better services and outcomes for JSWDs through existing Career Pathways systems.

ii. DEI Service Delivery Strategies

In treatment WDAs, JSWDs could access a range of trainings and pathways, including education or work-based programs. Treatment WDAs also served jobseekers with diverse disabilities, including those with traumatic brain injuries and paralysis. Correspondingly, each of our JSWD site visit focus groups was heterogeneous. Data revealed that two WDAs intentionally integrated JSWDs into workforce programs with the general AJC population.

WDAs regularly furnished AT to JSWDs. Each WDA had access to the state's System of Technology to Achieve Results, which features a lending library for individuals and employers to try out assistive technologies, as well as professional development. One WDA facilitated AJC-wide trainings by a state representative on the deaf and hard-of-hearing population, including about AT resources. Also, treatment WDAs benefitted from trainings and resources provided by PACER. In one WDA, AJC and partner staff attended a PACER livestreaming training. As with

[36] Minnesota's Round 5 project narrative.

other states, universal design was not a primary focus of Minnesota. Universal design considerations were integrated with Minnesota's plan for AJCs to be more mobile and reliant on other public spaces and partners for meeting venues.

Still, treatment WDAs demonstrated progress with universal design. Multiple learning methods were common, including audio, visual, and tactile activities. One WDA assessed learning styles to tailor instruction and utilized diverse assessment mechanisms. JSWDs from treatment WDAs reflected upon how DRCs and other staff enabled customers to proceed at their own pace and secured appropriate testing, curricula, learning accommodations, and AT. More classroom breaks and sign language interpreters also exemplified universal design for learning principles. In one WDA, JSWDs remarked about the flexibility of classroom instructors:

"*I was just excited at how the instructors understood that most of the people in the room had some type of issue and they sensed when we needed a break. It was okay to get up and walk around. They helped you with adaptive equipment.*" — JSWD

Another confirmed that instructors were "*tuned in with the class*:"

"*If you had any issues, you felt so comfortable just going and talking to them — whether it's the fan that was too cold, or you were having a hard time seeing the board, or keeping up with the materials, or whatever it was. It was just paced very well and you felt comfortable coming forward and saying, 'Hey, I'm having a hard time.'*" — JSWD

One WDA relayed how it conducted CE "*before we knew we were actually doing it*." It facilitated workplace modifications and negotiated a wheelchair user's job description to allow for job sharing and to match his skill set. Moreover, VR in this WDA utilized Discovery and received professional CE training. Another WDA customized a work experience for an enrollee with "*fairly severe*" disabilities. The DRC also consistently engaged participants and employers to customize hours and training for JSWDs.

Despite some initial staff and partner resistance regarding the use of IRTs — with some divergence from fidelity — it became an integral SDS across sites. Co-location of many AJC partners created IRTs that incubated "*pretty easily*." Per a final progress report for the quarter ending March 2018, Minnesota established 103 IRTs during Round 5, more than double its goal of 44. Quarterly reports also noted increased usage of ILPs in conjunction with IRTs; final reporting stated that DEI generated 97 ILPs, dwarfing the goal of 21.

In one treatment WDA, the DRC outlined the process of their IRT, which included a VR counselor and ABE instructor. The DRC described herself as "*the connector*" between the participant and necessary personnel in a "*very fluid process*." In one case, the team met with a participant who had completed an ILP, listened to his needs and aspirations, and then described how each team member would contribute to helping him secure ongoing supports, complete training and coursework, and get placed or have an opportunity to complete OJT. The IRT successfully helped the client finish training and obtain a full-time job paying $20 an hour. Also, a VR counselor explained how IRTs complemented the "individual placement and support" approach of VR by enabling additional training and work opportunities.

IRT meetings were focal to fostering collaboration between partners in another treatment WDA. In addition to VR and ABE representation, IRTs here included public assistance and Employment Specialists, as well as county social and financial workers. While such diverse representation could be "*a little overwhelming*," it was "*really beneficial*" for the client because it provided one space to address requirements from different service providers. Further, "*we were able to accomplish a lot more than when we work separately*." A placement specialist also valued IRTs as a "*constant informational feed*."

Similarly, the DRC from another treatment WDA characterized IRTs as the "*most useful*" SDS since they convened all relevant partners, reduced duplication, and enhanced blending and braiding. She also depicted the unfolding of an IRT, which included a case manager, VR placement coordinator, the participant's parent, and eventually an employer. DEI funded a paid work experience at a hotel, while VR handled placement and coordination of the work experience with the employer. The participant was hired after the work experience at 30 hours per week. This AJC also adapted the IRT approach to serve students with disabilities.

DEI also contributed to Blending and Braiding Resources throughout Minnesota. As a state leader attested, "*We braid money like it's our jobs here*." Notwithstanding the state's prolific coordination of resources, blending and braiding could be challenging because these processes required knowing which dollars could be integrated and with which outcomes dollars must be associated. Moreover, relevant processes and requirements tied to different funding sources had to be integrated into program design and there were not "*clear policies*" on co-enrollment. Thus, co-enrollment could be perceived as "*double-dipping*."

Despite these complications, treatment WDAs embraced co-enrollment. One WDA underspent its training funds for much of Round 5 due to having other funding streams cover training costs. In turn, DEI offered training funds in cases where WIOA case managers were not "*willing to take the risk quite yet*" with certain clients. The DRC here also described a co-enrollment with VR through which that latter aided with tuition and training while DEI supplied an internship. Another treatment WDA also harnessed braiding to finance internships and regularly co-enrolled. For one individual, DEI funds were used to fund job coaching, and VR coordinated the services.

As with other states, there was scant evidence of DEI facilitating Self-Employment opportunities in Minnesota. Minnesota's Round 5 DEI also did not move the needle much regarding Asset Development. One WDA's IRT model included specialists devoted to budgeting, and it also connected participants with community-based agencies that helped with general assistance. Another WDA tried to secure financial aid for postsecondary tuition.

Regarding TTW, one WDA was distinctive among Round 5 grantees for its expertise. In addition to the AJC serving as an EN — and considering becoming an administrative EN — it featured two "*Ticket Ambassadors*" who led a Community of Practice on TTW and CP. The DRC was also certified as a CWIC. This WDA learned about TTW during Round 3 and "*was brought in*" for Round 5. State leadership described this WDA as TTW "*leaders*" and reported how it was fielding TTW requests from customers 2 hours beyond their service area.

In addition to TTW outreach sessions, the AJC's quality assurance department periodically scanned its WIOA caseload to identify beneficiaries and engage them about assigning their Tickets. After completing a screening form and a discussion with AJC staff about employment aspirations, JSWDs were encouraged to "*make an informed choice*" and assign their Tickets if they were poised to become "*self-supporting*."

To encourage sustainability, this AJC also engaged its TTW staff with its DRC training. As of May 2018, this WDA nearly matched its TTW revenue goal of $100,000 by generating $95,000 in milestone payments. The AJC had a productive relationship with VR but had not become formally involved with Partnership Plus. Another treatment WDA became an EN during Round 5 and its DRC became a CWIC. Altogether, Minnesota assigned 51 Tickets during Round 5, more than doubling its goal of 25.

The impetus for one WDA's customized carpentry/construction training was that many JSWDs could not pass the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems examination but could still derive great benefit from CP training. This WDA's Career Navigator also spoke about adapting classes to participant backgrounds and needs.

In treatment WDAs, JSWDs were also equipped with information, services, and integrated supports to lead their goal-setting, as suggested by universal design. Job clubs, mock and motivational interviewing, holistic supports such as job coaching, and interactive activities and icebreakers were common tools for reinforcement, retention, and socialization.

In one WDA, both staff and JSWDs spoke about how "*the cohort model within the group pathway*" facilitated peer mentoring and support:

> "*We got to know each other and trust each other. We were given plenty of time to interact and be with one another and to learn that we were a whole group. We weren't just on our own at all. I never felt on my own.*" — JSWD

Some JSWDs who completed a class or program volunteered to return and help peers who were enrolled, which was "*tremendously helpful*." One JSWD admitted that without peer assistance with Excel, "*I don't think I ever would have figured it out*." Others came across job leads appropriate for their peers and shared them with the DRC and AJC staff to pass along. Cohort members also exchanged phone numbers, carpooled, and "*had our fun times*." As focus group participants attested, these universal design features combined to optimize motivation and conviction in employment aspirations and instilled the capacity to navigate adversity in job-seeking journeys.

Minnesota treatment WDAs showcased advanced proficiency in multiple SDSs, particularly TTW and CP. There was limited evidence of Customized Employment being delivered with "*full fidelity*." Each treatment WDA received "*pretty intensive*" training on CE. However, according to a state leader, Minnesota's VR was "*struggling on the whole*" with CE.

Each treatment WDA was enhanced by a DRC and other key staff proficient in serving JSWDs. State leadership highlighted one WDA's superlative "*leadership with decision-making ability*." This was evidenced by the WDA taking initiative in promoting TTW and the DRC training as well as "*transforming their whole agency*" to better serve JSWDs. This AJC also conducted an employability assessment to address high-priority needs of JSWDs.

iii. Implementation Summary

To accomplish its goals and objectives, Minnesota prioritized several strategies. In addition to strengthening state-level bonds with VR, DEI aimed to buttress links with State Services for the Blind, Minnesota Department of Human Services, Disability Services and Adult Mental Health Divisions, and the new Olmstead Implementation Office. An array of programs and funding sources were synergized (e.g., WIA Titles, Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 2006, TANF, mental health, intellectual and developmental disabilities, transportation, housing, corrections/justice, aging, registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs). Moreover, "*local CP partnership teams*" united disability providers, employers, and service systems to expand awareness of the value of hiring JSWDs and to increase their engagement with paid work-based internships, apprenticeships, and learning experiences. Through co- and dual enrollment, funds were blended and braided locally and at the state level.

DRCs coordinated the implementation of IRTs and ILPs, including provision of accommodations, alternative assessments and curricula, support services, assistive technologies, and personalized strategies. IRTs involved CP partners (e.g., Minnesota Family Investment Program/TANF employment service providers and ABE), VR counselors, supported employment providers, CWICs, county social services, financial workers, 18–21 programs, correctional probation, disability advocacy staff, community medical and mental health, veterans staff, and others. DRCs facilitated "*assertive outreach and engagement*" and "*person-centered planning*" (e.g., disability Benefits Planning, health care access issues, CE strategies) as well as advocacy services. In addition, DRCs advised about quality improvements, including the production of formal feedback surveys from JSWDs. This oversight was to complement Minnesota's role as a core partner in the Alliance for Quality Career Pathways. DRCs were also to be "*trained experts*" with TTW and promote Ticket assignments, as well as connect JSWDs to vital health care coverage, such as Medical Assistance for Employed Persons with Disabilities. The state's Disability Benefits 101 tool was also to be utilized to help JSWDs optimize benefits and health care coverage while working.

Other features included the integration of universal design principles, peer mentor supports, financial literacy education, and dual enrollment. Minnesota also improved data tracking, such as by adapting the state's Workforce One system to monitor DEI enrollees' activities and outcomes. Tracked data was to include population descriptors, service types, funding sources, utilization of CE and other specialized supports, and customer feedback. Finally, DEI sparked a CP-focused messaging campaign that provided information about training and employment.

Minnesota Round 5 was jointly spearheaded by its Department of Employment and Economic Development, WDA, and VR so as to integrate this work into state systems. DEI also built upon multiple statewide CP efforts. The Joyce Foundation's Shifting Gears Initiative, which lasted from 2008 to 2012, galvanized the state's FastTRAC Adult Career Pathways system that coalesced education, workforce, and human services systems to achieve enhanced outcomes in "*high-demand careers*" for low-skill, low-income adults. The state's CP infrastructure "*grew exponentially*" when state and local entities participated in the ETA Career Pathway Institute in 2010. These initiatives established both a state CP system and several local/regional CP systems, with buy-in from the Departments of Employment and Economic Development, Human Services, and Education, the state college and university system, and philanthropic and community partners.

Round 5 featured three treatment WDAs, one of which was a comparison site during the state's Round 3 grant. One treatment WDA was in the rural southwestern part of the state, another was in the Minneapolis metropolitan region, and another in Monticello. Minnesota's treatment WDAs exhibited high capacity to achieve positive employment outcomes. Physical and communications accessibility were monitored by the state's Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity. In addition to gauging the physical accessibility of AJCs, monitors scrutinized policies and practices and initiated a "*complaint*" procedure process. Minnesota also connected Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity and DEI leadership at the state and local levels, including through "*a series of meetings*" to discuss Section 188, AJC certification, and dissemination of common trainings and curricula around accessibility. This work included TA from NDI and the Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB).

Programmatic accessibility was also spearheaded by state leadership and initiatives, including equity grants and One-Stop operating consortia that promoted methods for universal access to living wage employment. Minnesota's WIOA plan integrated disability employment throughout. Quarterly DEI meetings involving state and local leadership included discussions about universal accessibility, such as DEI accommodations and AT policy and procedures, as well as hands-on activities like a tour of the PACER Center's Simon Technology Center.

Despite these efforts, treatment WDAs confronted barriers to physical accessibility. State leadership intimated how WIOA funding constraints made it difficult to "*sustain the bricks and mortar*" of existing facilities, stunting potential for accessibility and universal design enhancements. Moreover, a lack of access to quality public transportation, child care, and housing were cited by state and local leaders as significant obstacles. At the local level, Career Navigators and other AJC staff addressed these hurdles prior to training, such as through the provision of funds for transit, gas, automotive repair, and child care.

iv. Partnerships and Collaborations

Minnesota stands out due to a treatment WDA spearheading enhancements and dissemination of the Alaska-model "DRC 1 and 2" trainings.[37] The model provided training,

[37] The DRC training emerged from Alaska's Round 1 DEI grant. It evolved to include graduated trainings on disability awareness and effective practices for serving JSWDs and was delivered to AJC staff and other partners.

often by DRCs, to AJC Employment Specialists and other partners' staffs on the essentials of employment assistance for people with disabilities. This WDA developed four DRC training modules that covered facility awareness, disability etiquette, IRTs, CP, TTW, the Guideposts, and universal design. Not only did this understanding become "*embedded*" in this AJC, but DRC training was delivered to other Minnesota treatment WDAs, involved collaboration with employment officers, and was shared with other states as a model. In addition to assessing knowledge gained from this training, there was discussion of mandatory DRC training for new AJC staff and biannual refresher training to foster sustained awareness. There were also plans around expanding the training statewide. Further, Minnesota garnered T/TA funds from USDOL to enrich the training curriculum, including by making it virtually accessible and integrating state-specific resources. This training was also framed as a strategy for Section 188 and AJC certification. As well, this WDA received "*parent training*" and other TA from PACER, including about the Guideposts for Success.

Another treatment WDA offered training on youth transition and on harnessing AT, accommodations, and disability services in postsecondary training. Treatment WDAs also offered staff tutelage on accessibility, CP, and disability awareness. Across treatment WDAs, respondents offered that NDI T/TA was instrumental in promoting TTW, DEI implementation, and systems change. One staff member suggested she could benefit from training on engaging clients with mental illness.

Integration was galvanized by state leadership, which was "*very intentional*" about forging a "*seamless interface*" between VR and local WDAs . DEI being a "*co-managed initiative*" in Round 5 signified much progress from Minnesota's Round 3 and the Disability Program Navigator initiative, which involved "*a lot of pushback on the VR side*."

An emergent partnership with GWDB also enabled Workforce to be included on state committees regarding disability and CP. As well, DEI strengthened relationships between Workforce and State Services for the Blind.

State Leads facilitated regular calls among DRCs and separate calls with local and state leadership as well as in-person quarterly meetings. These convenings were valuable to DRCs, aided with "*constant*" communication, and helped disseminate visions of state "*senior leadership*."

Each treatment WDA featured co-location and improved collaboration with VR, which expedited co-enrollment and helped secure additional funding for training and tuition. According to one DRC, "*we really complement each other in that we find ways to help clients be successful*." Another attributed better collaboration with VR to focusing more on "*our*" customers rather than "*your*" or "*my*" customers. The third WDA spoke of "*much more integration*" between VR and CP, which built "*a nice bridge to get more access*" to supports.

Treatment AJCs also demonstrated much collaboration with ABE, local community and technical colleges, and youth transition staff. These partnerships fostered information-sharing regarding job contacts, including by engaging business services, and access to services like job coaching and English as a Second Language.

Locally, DRCs cultivated and strengthened bonds with entities within and outside the AJC, including veteran services, adult rehabilitative mental health services, manufacturers, employment and training centers for JSWDs, and community action agencies that helped with needs like housing and energy assistance. In the more rural WDA, the VR employment coordinator asserted that "*partnering is essential because we don't have a lot of resources here*." Partners provided awareness and TA, such as through presentations by college disability specialists. In turn, treatment WDA partners benefited from AJC trainings, such as PACER workshops. Two DRCs were specifically praised by VR stakeholders for their exceptional communication and collaboration, and one was noted for facilitating "*very fluid*" engagement with employers and trainers. Collaboration was also advanced via IRTs, which included as many as seven service providers.

A common theme across sites and stakeholders was "*truly meeting jobseekers where they are at*." This involved soliciting JSWD input on what supports they needed and helping them "*connect the dots*." One DRC applauded DEI's "*very individualized*" approach, which was not "*one size fits all*." JSWDs met with the DRCs if they were interested in WIOA services and/or CP training. AJC Employment Specialists were trained in motivational interviewing, which helped uncover "*what's inside of JSWDs and what motivates them*" and whether DEI services might be appropriate. Employment Specialists encouraged JSWDs to follow their "*dreams and hopes*." This "*genuineness and authenticity … allows [counselors] to move with [clients] as they move in their lives*." Customer choice was also promoted through personality and interest assessments, career exploration, and a "*job search club*," in which JSWDs selected topics to collectively probe information on employment and training opportunities. In addition, these clubs explored job search processes, from résumé and cover letter writing to interviewing.

JSWDs from this WDA underlined how "*we were here on our own accord*" with "*no shame … no judgment*." Multiple participants also reflected on how their internships were ideal fits; one proclaimed "*it brought my life back*." DRCs also connected clients with accommodations, including ergonomic desks, screen readers, and extra time to take tests, enabling them to complete coursework and job activities. In addition, evaluations during and after internships helped participants gauge their progress and areas for growth.

Leadership from another treatment WDA reflected on adjusting guidance for JSWDs "*based on their needs*" and educational backgrounds and by "*not assuming things*." This approach led to more formal or more personalized CP planning. JSWDs from this WDA discussed the benefits of peer mentoring, mock employment scenarios, and mental health counseling.

Another DRC met with customers to ascertain employment opportunities and related goals and receive assistance from Employment Specialists to secure resources necessary to attain their objectives. DRCs also helped JSWDs pursue their desired Career Pathway, which meant "*striking a balance between encouraging them to think about next steps on their employment journey and providing guidance without judgment when certain steps proved daunting*."

During our site visit, this DRC showcased her capacity to support JSWDs, including by providing direct care for an individual who experienced a seizure. Focus group participants also cited the DRC's "*excellent listening skills, supportive and resourceful nature, and ability to help them through training by securing accommodations and supports*." One JSWD submitted: "*The DRC is very interested in our lives to help us get to where we need to go*."

In another treatment WDA, the DRC coordinated the AJC's multiple "*well-integrated*" supports for JSWDs, including from Career Navigators, VR counselors, economic assistance workers, and resource room staff. This team furnished assistance such as career and college counseling, including postsecondary accommodations; résumé, soft skills, and interviewing support, such as supplying interview clothes; pro bono legal advocacy; and job coaching. Focus group JSWDs affirmed that the DRC provided pivotal reinforcement throughout their engagement with the AJC, which was key to retention and program completion. This impactful encouragement was also crucial to the training progress of JSWDs in another treatment WDA according to focus group participants. Led by the DRC and Career Navigator, JSWDs were supported throughout their training, including through mock interviews by an employer. One JSWD remarked, "*I couldn't have done this without them*."

Notwithstanding these promising capacities and developments, state leadership reported how WIOA budgetary constraints prompted layoffs and less funding for resource rooms. Also, one treatment WDA was reluctant to strive to become an EN due to insufficient capacity.

Minnesota made strides in coordinating its employer engagement efforts. It evolved from a solo approach to employer outreach, through which numerous entities would engage employers. The state streamlined the outreach process in each WDA and via a regional strategy led by WIOA regional and local boards. Despite this challenge, a Federal Project Officer commended Minnesota for targeting high-growth jobs and being responsive to employers. A quarterly report also noted that training integrated local employer input.

Locally, one treatment WDA was lauded by state leadership for its coordinated engagement that led to "*stellar*" relationships with employers. Entities like WDAs, ABE, local colleges, and the local industry council held common meetings with employers and communicated with one voice to avoid confusion. This synergy paved the way for a fruitful partnership with a local manufacturing employer and an employment and training center for adults with disabilities, which culminated in a carpentry/construction training program. Per the VR employment coordinator, DEI also enabled the AJC to offer a financial incentive to employers that was crucial to their involvement. The Career Navigator also conducted employer relations and groomed many business contacts to ensure clients would have opportunities for placement upon training completion.

In another treatment WDA, the DRC stressed the importance of nurturing relationships with workplace supervisors "*because that helps us to do placement*." The AJC was intentional in fostering employer connections that could facilitate internships with a greater likelihood of leading to long-term employment through laddering and latticing.

City, county, and state government opportunities were identified as ripe for such advancement. The DRC also created internships at a YMCA, a community college Office of Student Affairs, and a nonprofit agency devoted to ending youth homelessness. A JSWD from this WDA reflected on how the DRC "*really advocated*" to extend an internship, which was crucial to the customer landing a post-internship job. Additionally, the DRC collaborated with VR to plan a reverse job fair, though there was not significant participation from JSWDs.

Focus group participants conveyed that this AJC was effective in communicating to employers about client expectations for internships, including ensuring that internships were active, integrated, and enhancing skills. An employer interviewee also expressed much satisfaction with her intern and echoed other interviews in professing that those with disabilities can serve as extraordinary mentors once they have requisite skills and a sense of self-efficacy.

In another treatment WDA, placement specialists balanced interests of employers and consumers, such as by conducting outreach to identify employer needs and job leads before they were listed publicly. This AJC also partnered with employers to ensure job descriptions and accommodations were an apt fit. One challenge was finding employers willing to participate in OJT, work experiences, and Customized Employment.

Each WDA provided diverse internships, paid work experiences, and OJT through employer partnerships as part of its CP offerings as well as access to postsecondary education and ABE. WBL Opportunities were also available to JSWDs. Some pathways were more traditional and underwritten partially by Pathways to Prosperity grants. Some enrollees attained stackable credentials, such as advancing from a personal care attendant to CNA to trained medical aide. Others pursued interests like scuba diving, audio technology, and community interpreting. AJCs also aided individuals pursuing new careers, those who "*really just want to be employed and working*," and those seeking help just to get their "*foot in the door*" and gain skills, résumé assistance, and workplace exposure. Work experiences were fitting for these customers.

In one WDA, interests, values, and abilities were optimally aligned in planning for further training and education. Another WDA utilized the Virtual Job Shadow platform as a "*one-stop shop*" for career exploration. The platform includes interest assessments and the capabilities to identify suitable occupations and educational institutions, observe the job being performed, research potential salaries, and compose cover letters and résumés.

One WDA built upon a fruitful partnership with a local hospital, including by providing work experiences in housekeeping, laundry, and dieting. The hospital visited the AJC to conduct mock interviews with JSWDs. The DRC from this AJC also worked closely with the youth program to facilitate pathways for young adults, including by helping with tuition. In addition to helping with CNA and welding pathways for youth, the AJC facilitated a collaboration between Project SEARCH, a local high school, and VR to establish health care work experiences.

v. Career Pathways

With respect to Career Pathways, treatment WDAs forged a range of occupational, training, and education opportunities for JSWDs. DEI involvement in the state's GWDB CP committee helped with this effort. CP progress was also advanced by TA, including completion of the *Career Pathways Toolkit: Readiness Assessment Tool* in concert with CP partners. Minnesota met most CP measures including engaging SSA beneficiaries in CP. In addition, the state exceeded its objectives for its 6-month average earnings. However, reporting also indicated that the state's retention goals were elusive. Some JSWDs did not complete their CP program and therefore may not have acquired the skills and knowledge needed to pursue gainful employment.

Certifications were earned in manufacturing; health care, including CNA, automated external defibrillator, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, home health aide, personal care assistant, and medical technology; office and administrative technology; precision sheet metal; retail management, customer service, and sales; welding; food ServSafe; and commercial driver's license. Strong partnerships with local community and technical colleges and ABE were "*a huge key to CP success*" across the state.

In another treatment WDA with a history of robust CP training, most pathways began with a Career Connections Workshop. This included employer tours, job searching, and enhanced résumé writing tailored to specific jobs and skill sets. This WDA also offered specific CP workshops focused on manufacturing and health care careers and planned "*mini career camps*" for DEI clients to gain exposure in these sectors through hands-on exercises and a college tour.

Typically, a "*bridge component*" provided instruction that included basic academic subject matters and English language occupational information to help individuals earn CP credentials. DEI clients could also enroll in an accelerated, customized GED program before beginning training. Training was aligned with in-demand labor market sectors (e.g., sheet metal) based on the six key elements of CP and in concert with GWDB and employers. Upon training completion, DEI enabled paid internships. A job search club — initiated before training ended — helped ensure customers were not "*complacent*" and were constantly thinking about employment after training. "*Regular, ongoing partner meetings*," including with Youth Services, were integral to these processes.

A 2-year effort culminated in a training collaborative focused on carpentry and construction. The network relied on DEI funds and included ABE, a community and technical college, a manufacturer, and an employment and training center for adults with disabilities. ABE contracted with the employment and training center to provide bridge programming, a Career Navigator assisted with soft and basic office skills training, and a local college contracted with a former supervisor from the employer to furnish hands-on technical skills training. Enrollees were referred from the county, many of whom were unemployed and lower-functioning. The plan was to place graduates in a cabinet factory with wages of $10 per hour and benefits if full-time. This training will likely be replicated, as the WDA now has a curriculum and requisite equipment. There was also discussion of how to build out this training to enable further credentials and advancement beyond entry-level employment.

Several Career Pathways and accommodations were available to JSWDs. Accommodations were available via multiple chances to take tests, use of paper copies, and tutoring. In one WDA, the DRC assisted in establishing a more seamless application process for disability services at local community colleges, and staff were trained on AT for postsecondary learning. Career Navigators, ABE, and resource room staff also addressed barriers and helped maintain engagement, including by referring clients to support services. One WDA explored an alternative curriculum for its health care pathway to make this avenue more accessible. Despite these accommodations, one DRC stated that mental health barriers and lack of access to transportation and child care could hinder pathway completion.

Blending and braiding were leveraged to finance work experiences and other pathway opportunities. For instance, in one WDA 12 youth participants continued their paid work experience after DEI's end since they were co-enrolled in DEI and the Minnesota Youth Program. In another WDA, a grant from the Walmart Foundation helped incubate retail pathways.

vi. Outreach and Dissemination

DEI outreach and dissemination of effective practices happened through various means in Minnesota. Principally, regular DRC meetings served as critical information-sharing spaces. These convenings were a springboard for planning capacity-building trainings across grantees and beyond. Communities of Practice also functioned as dissemination vehicles, and one WDA spearheaded adoption of the DRC training across and beyond the state. The DRC training involved train-the-trainer sessions to augment its transfer and sustainability. Social media, flyers, and word of mouth were also outreach mechanisms.

At the state level, leadership was deliberate about sharing best practices with grantees: "*It's being timely about when we jump is what we've learned. Pushing too much, too fast — at the wrong time — doesn't help. Also, trying to be real strategic on when we help guide and push. It has a better impact*."

Notwithstanding this discretion in terms of promoting innovation, DEI served as a significant marketing and advocacy lever for serving JSWDs: "*Just being part of an initiative means you can push your way into things you couldn't push your way into before*." For example, the GWDB disability committee sought best practices from Minnesota Round 5 to promote statewide. The committee also engaged NDI to discuss lessons from DEI as well as how to align promising practices with WIOA implementation and Section 188 and AJC certification. DEI services were also amplified within VR, ABE, Community Transition Interagency Committees, Veterans Affairs, and Unemployment Insurance.

Treatment WDAs conducted DEI outreach and dissemination through various channels, including alternative schools and transition programs to engage more youth. In one treatment WDA, VR alerted customers on its waiting list about DEI. This AJC was also selected to present at a statewide Joint Counselor Training Conference, where it amplified innovative practices with IRTs, blending/braiding, and targeting transition-age youth.

In another treatment WDA, the DRC launched the grant with initial presentations about DEI for AJC and community partners. She also spoke about DEI at a community and technical college fast-track program. A placement specialist discussed ongoing outreach and sharing of best practices, trainings, and contacts. However, one JSWD focus group participant suggested AJC services "*should be more open to the public*" and that the AJC "*should notify JSWDs more often*."

The DRC from Minnesota's third treatment WDA initially conducted targeted DEI recruitment through the AJC, ABE, and other partners. This DRC opted to prioritize recruitment for the AJC as a whole: "*Our workforce center programs can serve people with disabilities. I don't want just to recruit for DEI because that isn't what it's all about. It's about getting everyone — people with disabilities and other people — into the workforce center, serving them. And we can serve them in all our programs, and even without DEI*." Due to this strategy, focus group participants indicated that the AJC could raise more awareness about DEI.

vii. Promising Practices: "*Peer Mentoring*"

One treatment WDA exhibited how a cohort model and peer mentoring could contribute to CP completion and retention. A job search club in concert with training facilitated an employment focus among JSWDs and helped them overcome common pitfalls. For example, cohort members assisted each other with Excel and other training components. As they built trust and solidarity, they also shared job leads, carpooled, and socialized. Some program graduates even returned and aided peers. A peer support cohort model is appropriate and effective for JSWDs since the employment search can be frustrating and isolating. The socialization aspect is critical; trust-building and interaction cultivated a sense of a collective effort in training and employment journeys rather than navigating these difficult processes independently. Also, many were learning new skills and content and could benefit from peer tutelage in this endeavor, especially from alumni.

Rationale for Its Implementation

The DEI State Lead and DRCs suggested that opportunities "*for people with disabilities to help other people with disabilities*" are integral to the sustainability and scaling of disability employment. They particularly cited "*a huge need for home health personnel*" as one gap that could be addressed for JSWDs in service to their peers. One deemed this as a potential "*game changer*" and even reported that people with disabilities have asserted that theirs peers provide the "*best services*." Moreover, this pathway is a "*great entrance*" into CP because an industry-recognized credential is not mandatory and it can offer part-time, flexible hours. State leadership is now championing this strategy across systems and CP initiatives.

Why the Practice Could Be Considered Promising

DRCs and other DEI leadership conducted presentations on best practices and "*strategies for replication*" at WWL conferences and other events, including on IRTs, career assessment tools, enhanced benefits counseling, TTW, interagency collaboration, capacity-building, and employment readiness for JSWDs (including those in substance abuse recovery). The positive

reception to this latter presentation signaled that the AJC could garner referrals for JSWDs in recovery. Additionally, DEI leaders from one WDA, including the executive director of the WDA's Board, presented at a National Association of Workforce Development Professionals conference. They focused on how DEI aided in transcending Section 188 requirements and in conceiving accessibility as a long-term, "*systems change*" endeavor. These leaders also shared practices in conference calls with WDAs in other states. One DRC co-presented with MRC on panels. The state's extraordinary emphasis on dissemination was epitomized by its second DEI Best Practices Conference.

viii. Challenges and Sustainability

There were a few roadblocks to optimal implementation. In most treatment WDAs, DRCs were pulled into case management due to insufficient staff capacity and turnover. Resource constraints also prevented realization of universal design across sites as well as ideal TTW implementation in one treatment WDA. Stakeholders also suggested that staff could benefit from more training related to the DEI SDSs to expedite an all-staff and IRT approach to serving JSWDs. Training to engage JSWDs with mental health challenges was also cited as a critical need. Minnesota was highly proficient with blending and braiding, but state leadership recommended more policy guidance on co-enrollment to prevent "*double-dipping*."

Retention struggles were one of the most trenchant obstacles in the long-term employment of JSWDs. Any hurdles along the way can lead to dropping out. Some focus group participants admitted that it would have been unlikely to complete the Excel training alone. Excel in particular is a common prerequisite, and those with little prior experience with the software can find learning it daunting. This is true of other required skills and credentials. Furthermore, transportation is a universal challenge; carpooling resulting from cohort relationship-building can be a pivotal factor in program completion.

Minnesota's Round 5 DEI bolstered the state's ongoing efforts to build a Career Pathways infrastructure for vulnerable groups. To that end, Round 5 included several promising approaches to disability employment. One treatment WDA showcased how to transcend barriers to CP via cross-systems partnerships and customized assessments, trainings, and job specifications. This WDA also featured a fruitful coordinated employer engagement approach. Another WDA exhibited the promise of a cohort and peer mentoring model for training and employment searches. The third treatment WDA was distinctive nationally as an innovator in disability employment staff training and TTW implementation. With two treatment WDAs also engaged in Round 7 and productive alignment between state and local leadership, Minnesota may continue spearheading innovation in disability workforce development. State leaders did stress DEI practices are conducive to sustainability, such as IRTs.

As Round 5 proceeded, state leaders asserted that one WDA showed the most promise in forging sustainable practices. This AJC's DRC functioned as a resource who trained staff, while other AJC staff took on more of the load of engaging JSWDs through practices like IRTs. The DRC also invested significant effort into TTW, Benefits Planning, and building upon Alaska's DRC training. The AJC's development manager suggested that TA was "*phenomenal at helping*

us shift [from a] program mentality to more of that project level." At the end of Round 5, the DRC affirmed that staff felt more comfortable serving JSWDs.

State and local leadership were intentional about bolstering the sustainability of DEI roles, relationships, and practices. State leaders also submitted that planning around the Olmstead decision promoted sustainability, including embedding CP and peer mentoring opportunities for JSWDs in workforce development. Initially, DRCs "*looked more like case managers*," according to state leadership. State leaders discouraged this by "*firmly*" advising DRCs that *"if they come out and monitor us, your files cannot look the same as the employment counselor files. … That's duplicative services. We can't pay for you and the WIOA person to do the exact same thing*."

This transformation contrasted with how this WDA approached its Round 3 grant. Despite this progress, the DRC expressed how taking a systems and supervisory approach was challenging because she enjoyed client contact and being hands-on. Sustainability was increasingly paramount for the other treatment WDAs as well, as evidenced by leadership discussions. One AJC manager described the DRC as "*a resource, not a doer*." This DRC did have her own caseload, but she mostly assisted job counselors in forming IRTs and accessing resources for JSWDs. Still, she was compelled to fulfill case management responsibilities due to staff absences.

This DRC acknowledged the need for more staff training to embed DEI ideals:

> "*It's been a constant battle to get the employment counselors to understand that I'm trying to teach them how to work with people with disabilities and how to develop these IRTs. I'm not going to always be here. This is something that you're going to do and you're going to provide to our customers. So, I realize that I really need to push and get some training done*." — DRC

DRCs straddled the line between case management and a systems-level role. The DRC role was characterized as a "*seamless connector*" who was "*interwoven*" between services and supports but also maintained close contact with JSWDs as they navigated recruitment, assessment, instruction, training, placement, and follow-up. At the end of Round 5, the DRC assumed the role of Minnesota Family Investment Program senior vocational counselor but will continue DRC functions and work intensively with JSWDs.

Regarding training other staff to engage JSWDs, one DRC suggested that Career Navigators would be most appropriate to absorb the DRC training since they have "*consistent contact [with clients] throughout*." This AJC adapted the DRC training and completed it with CP staff who will be responsible for overseeing testing and accommodations. The AJC also created a training package for new staff and an annual training for all staff, with plans for the training to be expanded county-wide. Furthermore, management committed to taking a systems approach to engaging JSWDs.

In terms of funding to sustain DEI practices, one WDA was well-positioned due to its acumen with TTW. Another WDA became an EN toward the end of Round 5. The third WDA garnered a Pathways to Prosperity grant, which includes a DRC role. A state leader reasoned

that, outside of TTW, workforce development for JSWDs would be integrated with CP programming, meaning that WDAs must either leverage WIOA dollars or apply for future dollars. A local manager mentioned that CP is incorporated into all funding sources as dedicated CP funding is limited. She also asserted that there are CP and career and technical education champions in the state legislature.

DEI practices and collaborations should be largely sustained since there is much continuity between Round 5 and Round 7 grantees in two WDAs and well-established partnerships. Round 5 also solidified robust relationships with state and local Equal Employment Opportunity personnel. IRTs were specifically cited as "*more embedded in what we do*" and crucial to avoiding duplication. To sustain best practices, one stakeholder suggested there should be financing for accessible online training and tools that can be shared widely. This would help ensure that the state's visionary work with the DRC training — and other innovations — endure and reach as many stakeholders as possible.

F. State: South Dakota; Focus Area: Adults with Disabilities

i. Stated Goals and Objectives

South Dakota's Round 5 grant was designed to enhance the capacity of AJCs to obtain better employment outcomes among adult JSWDs through Career Pathways training. Partnerships included the Departments of Labor and Regulation (DLR), Human Services, including VR services, Social Services, and Health; Western Dakota Technical Institute; the South Dakota Workforce Development Council; and the Workforce Diversity Network of the Black Hills. In addition, local industries and employers played an important role in developing opportunities for CP programs as well as providing opportunities for JSWDs to interact with employers, prepare a résumé to target certain occupations, and engage in support services such as Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeships.

Social Dakota aimed to accomplish the following outcomes:

- Improve employment outcomes of adults with disabilities and maximize their economic self-sufficiency through CP approaches, including academic and employment transitions leading to industry-recognized credentials and 2- and 4-year degrees (a minimum of 25 adults annually). Outreach presentations will help recruit JSWDs who are dislocated workers, disabled veterans, and/or part of the long-term unemployed and underemployed.

- Build on current WIOA services provided through AJCs and established CP programs to place JSWDs in high-demand, high-wage occupations (e.g., trade/transportation/utilities and health care services):
  - At least a 25 percent increase in adult education services;
  - ILPs for all participants;
  - All participants assessed in need for short-term technology skill training; and
  - By project end, 90 percent of participants were to report overall satisfaction with the "*universal design employment delivery system*."

- Create systemic change through increased partnerships across service delivery systems and via replication of proven workforce development strategies throughout the public workforce system (e.g., through a "*partnership committee consisting of agency and business representatives*" and joint disability training). This was to be measured in part through tracking agency involvement in blending and braiding and through monitoring Ticket assignment and revenue.[38]

ii. DEI Service Delivery Strategies

South Dakota served adults with disabilities, including the following subgroups: disabled veterans, individuals in need of English as a second language, dislocated workers, and long-term unemployed and underemployed individuals. South Dakota increased the use of IRTs, including through statewide training and written guidance. This effort helped establish the grantee's IRT model, which provided opportunities for leveraging resources and identifying the need for existing SDSs. In one treatment WDA, IRTs involved in-person meetings with diverse stakeholders that were described as "*really working well*" and gave clients "*power*" to direct teams based on their employment goals. Another WDA showed fidelity to the IRT model by facilitating ARC before IRTs. IRTs combined with ARC in the third treatment WDA included behavioral health professionals, parents, and other supportive individuals, including DRCs. Supports ranged from daycare to vehicle repair.

South Dakota also implemented TTW, Partnerships and Collaborations, Blending and Braiding Resources, and systems change. However, qualitative data did not suggest that all participants completed ILPs or were satisfied with universal service delivery in which individuals had opportunities accessible to as many individuals as possible.

Elements of Customized Employment were present in South Dakota, such as Discovery, negotiation with employers about job carving, and tailored job descriptions, but there were few efforts to develop long-term CE arrangements after the grant period, which was a key feature of the grant. CE was implemented in its component parts rather than its full implementation.

South Dakota conducted surveys of IRT members. In addition to gauging satisfaction with IRTs, a survey was used to measure how IRTs supported outcomes; the extent to which IRTs facilitated Blending and Braiding Resources; satisfaction with a shared employment goal; and how IRTs influenced time needed to serve a client.

Blending and braiding and co-enrollment were common DEI practices, such as VR funding a job coach and WDAs supporting work experiences. Blending also allowed for some JSWDs to have clothing for job interviews and funding for transportation.[39] Each WDA promoted Asset Development activities, including financial literacy, credit counseling (e.g., *Credit When Credit is Due* coursework), tax assistance, and guidance on accessing TANF and SNAP benefits. Help with these efforts was provided by Wells Fargo, state agency accountants,

[38] South Dakota Round 5 project narrative

[39] AJC Title I staff from one WDA discussed Self-Employment as an SDS, but there was no evidence of any DEI clients pursuing this option.

and the Black Hills Special Services Cooperative, which provides education, training, and employment support services. There was also evidence of aid for housing, child care, and transportation. DLR partnered with the Department of Social Services to include DLR informational materials in SNAP and TANF statements, as well as with energy assistance applications. In turn, AJCs distributed information about the Department of Social Services. The state also made multiple efforts to kick-start TTW activity at DEI sites but opted to leave this to VR after realizing the low volume of Ticket holders at grantee sites. Coupled with VR's expertise and foothold in this arena, state leadership reasoned TTW was "*not a good a business model*."

iii. Implementation Summary

South Dakota's Round 5 grant aimed to maximize CP approaches through forging cross-systems partnerships, Blending and Braiding Resources (including through TTW milestones), and provision of services designed to ensure that any JSWDs could access support and training services through their AJC. JSWDs had access to a range of training opportunities, from non-credentialed basic computer courses to OJT and credentialed occupational skills training. CP-focused strategies expanded utilization of IRTs, which featured career coaches and career specialists; alternative assessments; ILPs; dual enrollment, stackable credential programs, and blended learning; paid work experiences, internships, and other work-based opportunities; and intensive wraparound and support services (e.g., transportation, academic and career counseling, and financial aid). According to JSWDs, IRTs were validated through surveys and interviews of involved staff, observations, and "*post-assessment results*."

South Dakota's Round 5 grant built upon its Round 2 activities. It centered on the West River/Central area of the state. One treatment WDA was in Pierre, another was in Spearfish, and the third in Rapid City. Rapid City's implementation in particular was bolstered by the local presence of a "*regional career center*," the Black Hills Special Services Cooperative, and the Western Dakota Technical Institute. Other than the State Lead, much grant leadership emanated from this region.

WDAs demonstrated a high capacity to serve JSWDs during the grant period as each WDA enhanced both physical and programmatic accessibility, such as with automated doors; more disability-friendly cubicles, parking, and bathrooms; and AT (e.g., ZoomText). Toward the grant's end, AJCs were equipped with iPads to enable Skype access for customers seeking to connect with partners outside of their WDA. Each WDA's programmatic accessibility was enhanced by local Adult Education Literacy and supportive service providers. Accessibility enhancements led to increased participation by JSWDs in WIOA Title I programs.[40] And DakotaLink was an integral partner in maximizing utilization of AT.[41] Still, there was room

[40] Based on quarterly reporting, South Dakota reported the following: 34.7% of the 2015 WIOA Adult enrollment had a disability. This percentage increased to 42.81% in 2016, and after the first two quarters of PY 2017, it was at 48%. DEI also eclipsed its goal of expanding adult education service utilization. Only 11 such clients reported a disability in 2013; this number steadily increased to 93 in 2016. As of end of 2017, DEI was serving 25 underemployed and 14 dislocated workers and 10 veterans.

[41] Through DakotaLink, South Dakota provided AT devices and services for individuals when "*functioning is impaired due to a disability, injury, or aging*."

for improvement in physical inclusivity. For instance, in one WDA there was concern about how the "*cubicle farm*" was not conducive to confidential conversations and disclosure with JSWDs and other AJC staff.

The AJCs supplied transportation assistance for JSWDs. They also completed a proposal that provided for more accessible transportation in the metropolitan area. Statewide, there was much effort to make DLR's website and other communications accessible, including a *Job Seekers with Disabilities* resource page. The state also facilitated training on AT and the Job Accommodation Network;[42] this training was posted on the DLR website and prompted AJC changes regarding signage and basic electronic devices to assist JSWDs.

The DEI State Lead relayed that South Dakota did not approach universal design "*very well*," including being "*written up*" for not doing ADA reviews. At the same time, state leadership asserted that AJC programming was universally accessible. A State Lead partnered with VR to generate informational material encouraging businesses to have multiple ways to apply for jobs, responding to concerns about the online application process for JSWDs. Also, there is a link to ODEP's universal design page on DLR's JSWD resource page. Toward the grant's end, South Dakota prioritized streamlining access to services for JSWDs to reduce burden.

Locally, in addition to disability-friendly modifications to AJCs, AT partners such as Access Elevator and Lifts, Inc., provided self-paced and multi-modal assessment and learning programming, including with the Barton Reading and Spelling System for clients with dyslexia. One DRC furnished consistent reminders about the difficulty and length of certain Career Pathways and encouraged clients to consider avenues of varying complexity and to pace their plans to ensure that individuals have time to complete CP training while maintaining a lifestyle that meets their family and employment requirements.

In another treatment WDA, Career Pathways road maps served to both visualize employment journeys and motivate JSWDs. As one DRC stated, these visuals could be "*hung on their fridge [to] mark off what they've done, what they've completed, where they want to go. That's a big self-esteem booster as well*." This DRC's public relations background and experience serving individuals with disabilities helped her advocate for JSWDs and support them in developing self-confidence regarding their employment goals. Continuous support from DRCs, AJC colleagues, and job coaches, combined with motivational interviewing, encouraged aspirational discovery, self-regulation, attainable goal-setting, and persistence among JSWDs.

One WDA exhibited multiple elements of inclusivity. JSWDs had ready access to multiple modes for job searching and applying for employment, including a CP web tool. While assisting with several JSWDs' job searches, a DRC gauged their comfort level with IT and helped build confidence with using computers. A JSWD focus group also reflected on taking self-paced computer classes to improve their comfort with computers and learn how to prepare résumés and related documents. Some DRCs and AJC staff provided background knowledge to

[42] The Job Accommodation Network "*is the leading source of free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues*." It is sponsored by ODEP.

stimulate disclosure, such as talking about whether a JSWD had an ILP to support her education and future academic and employment plans. Finally, the AJC manager conducted mock interviews with JSWDs to cultivate a sense of self-efficacy that individuals need to enter the labor market.

Few DRCs served in a full-time role. Those serving rural areas engaged relatively fewer JSWDs than more populous WDAs. DRCs approached their roles differently in South Dakota as some provided primarily case management services while others focused on job placement. Most DRCs had the ideal background, expertise, and skills for the position. DRCs and AJC staff grew more equipped to serve JSWDs, such as with navigating self-disclosure so that JSWDs could transition into soft skills training, skill development, and, eventually, employment.

Each WDA has ample CWIC capacity, typically through Partnerships and Collaborations or VR. However, capacity challenges remained regarding serving JSWDs with mental health barriers, handling disclosure, and securing access to transportation for JSWDs.

DRCs and other AJC staff were also supported and informed by abundant and well-coordinated T/TA from state leadership. This tutelage not only raised awareness regarding serving JSWDs within AJCs, partner organizations, and the employer community, but helped overcome turnover and administrative restructuring. Staff trainings included sessions on *Access for All*, mental health first aid, IRTs, business engagement, motivational interviewing, and person-centered thinking; this aspirational thinking may lead to "*positive control and self-direction of people's own lives*."[43] AJC staff also participated in other cross-trainings, such as a disability symposium and "*scenarios*" to better understand partner agencies and their processes.

iv. Partnerships and Collaborations

Integration and collaboration across WDAs were established by a state-level interagency cooperation, particularly between DLR and VR. This partnership enabled consistent and productive messaging, resource leveraging, and cross-training. This synergy "*trickled down*" to local offices, facilitating more and higher-quality services for JSWDs as well as less fragmentation and enhanced cost-sharing. Per one DRC, the union of DEI and WIOA "*really increased our services to anyone with a disability*;" VR and AJC ending up having "*invaluable*" conversations about clients. Another DRC corroborated how VR counselors actively engaged DLR to explore shared cases and "*everyone's comfortable*."

Early struggles with interagency communication and "*silos*" were remedied by additional training on IRTs. Enhanced coordination was epitomized by "*agency IRTs*" in each WDA, a novel approach to partnership meetings. IRTs included title agencies as well as employers, United Sioux Tribes, and local transit agencies. These systems-level resource teams were most prominent and productive in one treatment WDA. Agencies also partnered in offering statewide conferences, trainings, and webinars about disability employment topics like motivational interviewing.

[43] Orthogonal. (n.d.). *Using aspirational thinking to elevate your product design*. Retrieved from https://orthogonal.io/insights/a-simple-way-to-use-aspirational-thinking-to-elevate-your-product-design/

Partnerships and Collaborations were furthered via co-location, Blending and Braiding Resources, co-enrollment, referrals, and coordinated business tours. One AJC and VR agency referred via a "*two-way street*" that allowed JSWDs to access DEI services through either agency. The Black Hills Special Services Cooperative and Western Dakota Technical Institute were noteworthy partners that contributed to DEI implementation in each WDA. One DRC characterized co-location of WIOA Title programs as "*huge*." Other DEI partners included Jobs for Veterans State Grants, the Departments of Education and Corrections, Job Corps, the Jobs for America's Graduates advisory council, Board of Regents, Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, reemployment services, and the Great Plains Tribal Chairmen's Health Board. Treatment AJCs benefitted from "*increased interaction*" with a local Career Learning Center and an adult education provider, culminating in expanded options for assessments, training, work experiences, and job coaching.

In addition to planning trainings and dissemination of promising practices, such as trainings on Job Shadowing, State Leads facilitated coordination through monthly and quarterly reports and data collection. Employers and local colleges were also involved in cross-training. DRCs fostered internal AJC communication with "*open door*" policies by valuing VR as "*the experts*," sending informational emails, and by dedicating portions of meetings to partners. However, there were challenges around data-sharing and creating "*streamlined*" referrals.

JSWDs, DRCs, AJC staff, partners, and employers all indicated that AJCs and local employers were customer-centric and the employment process was customer-driven. In one WDA, a JSWD proclaimed, "*Nobody's made any choices for me … they might steer you. … I'm not pushed*," and another echoed this sentiment, "*Same with me … I make my own choices. The DRC just steers me in the right direction*."

One DRC suggested that a collective effort helped JSWDs lead their employment journey: "*With anybody you're going to tailor the services to what their needs are. So, it's just working individually with people and determining what they need and how to get that need satisfied, or pointing them in the right direction. We've got great community resources and employers, so if we don't handle something, I can usually refer them to an agency in town that they can get services from, too*." In another treatment WDA, the DRC appeared to be very intentional in letting JSWDs know "*this is about you … We really want to give [you] that power*."

The DRC and JSWD interviewees from one WDA testified that the AJC advocated for individuals to pursue "*what they want*." JSWDs also confirmed the AJC has lessened its reliance on staff. It ultimately allowed for more independence in seeking employment among JSWDs.

Aspirational and person-centered discovery, which staff members were trained on, was balanced with pragmatic, ongoing career planning that included multiple entry and exit options. As a result, JSWDs were more engaged with diverse JSWDs through their IRTs. Stakeholder interview testimony was reinforced by evidence of customer satisfaction surveys regarding IRTs.

Nonetheless, there was scant evidence that JSWDs were involved in strategic planning despite one JSWD who successfully lobbied to make the AJC's parking more inclusive. Also, JSWDs expressed a desire for more long-term supports and individualized assessments.

South Dakota illustrated several innovative practices related to employer engagement, as reflected by its designation as an ambassador for the DEI Business Engagement Community of Practice. Like other robust facets of South Dakota's DEI, its employer engagement stemmed from state-level leadership. For example, in partnership with VR and the South Dakota Retailers Association, the state's DLR Cabinet Secretary Hultman conducted a webinar with businesses about hiring JSWDs.

At the local level, one treatment WDA most exemplified promising business engagement practices through a multipronged approach. In a "*public relations role*," the DRC regularly advocated for JSWDs with many employers to transcend "*the fear that you're going to lose money*." The DRC also coordinated business tours with "*high-demand, high-wage*" companies. One employer expressed gratitude for coordinating approaches to provide trained workers for his company. In addition, the DRC facilitated employer involvement in agency IRT meetings.

VR staff conducted most of the employer outreach in another treatment WDA. However, the DRC spearheaded statewide planning for promotional media around disability employment and National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). The AJC manager testified that such promotion "*opened up the eyes of employers*." The DRC also consistently advocated for JSWDs with employers using "*person-first*" conversations. Additionally, partners noted that employers were willing to take part in IRT meetings. However, they were not heavily involved in strategic planning at the AJC.

Another WDA maintained that consistent, productive, and personalized relationships with regional employers are essential to providing services to JSWDs. The DRC attended local job fairs and maintained contact with local schools, while the AJC manager participated in chamber meetings and WDA or state-level meetings and ceremonies. The manager also sent staff across the region to do employer outreach, which bolstered job listings at the AJC, NDEAM coordination, and OJT arrangements. Also, the DRC was mindful to keep in regular touch with employers to ensure "*they don't forget about us*." Both the DRC and AJC manager conversed with employers about individual JSWDs, their skills, the types of work for which they qualified, and possible accommodations. Notwithstanding these favorable relationships, the WDA did not furnish collaboration with employers that could guarantee long-term placements beyond temporary OJT or work experiences. This challenge was common across treatment areas. Moreover, there was no mention of employers being involved in agency IRTs. Despite these proactive engagement activities, employer biases and insufficient accommodations endured according to interviewees.

v. Career Pathways

Regarding Career Pathways, one treatment WDA stood out due to featuring the most vibrant infrastructure, buttressed by its proximity to the region's technical school and leading adult education/support services provider. This WDA also took the lead in producing and

disseminating a *Building Pathways* toolkit and CP visuals to guide JSWDs, in alignment with the technical school's pathways model. CP road maps depicted multiple entry and exit points for a variety of employment journeys and included information on suitable education and certifications, career exploration, supportive services, financial assistance, and expected wages. As well, the WDA generated documentation on Job Shadowing for staff, clients, and employers.

Statewide trainings incorporated this guidance and also promoted best practices around securing accommodations for individuals with disabilities to complete their GED. The South Dakota Workforce Development Board created a statewide joint-funded CP committee with the Department of Education, Board of Regents, and VR to develop an accessible and integrated CP system. Part of this effort was building a Career Pathways development web tool to be used by multiple partners and to track data. Webinars were conducted on using the tool, pathway information was being gathered, and JSWDs were being recruited.

The other treatment WDAs had less immediate options for Career Pathways, though jobseekers could connect with training programs beyond those areas (e.g., medical coding and pharmacy technician). One DRC indicated about a quarter of DEI clients earned additional certification through either school or online training.

Work experiences, OJT, internships, and Job Shadowing were common DEI offerings but did not guarantee long-term placements. VR and DEI often complemented wages for paid opportunities. Outside of one treatment WDA, there was not much evidence of Work-Based Learning that incorporated school-based instruction. South Dakota also featured technology training and digital literacy assessments in its CP offerings.

Altogether, 74.4 percent of DEI clients received a digital literacy assessment. Forty participants received technology training. High-demand pathway trainings included banking, network administration, computer science, welding, truck driving, CNA, auto mechanic, and electrician.

vi. Outreach and Dissemination

South Dakota Round 5 featured executive champions for JSWDs and bottom-up dissemination of promising practices. Governor Daugaard pinpointed his own family experience with disability as part of his efforts to encourage businesses to hire JSWDs, which included the Ability for Hire initiative. The state built upon its cache of promotional videos from Round 2, including videos for employees and employers on hiring, accommodations, and ADA in the Work Place.

This media was supported by a statewide "*road show*" to promulgate effective practices for serving JSWDs, including ARC, IRTs, Job Shadowing, and CP. A DRC, along with her AJC's Title I representative and partner leadership, led this effort. This exhibition was reinforced by written guidance distributed statewide and by ongoing trainings, webinars, and conferences with staff, partner, and employer involvement. NDEAM was another avenue for widespread dissemination.

One WDA epitomized the state's commitment to disseminating promising practices about serving JSWDs. In-person trainings were complemented by written documentation on IRTs, Communities of Practice, and email blasts. Dissemination also involved employers via business tours and partner meetings.

Another treatment WDA was intentional about integrating DEI services and resources with WIOA. The AJC relied on its "*very good relationship*" with VR and Access Elevator and Lifts, Inc., to recruit clients and also conducted outreach in local high schools. To promote effective practices, DEI "*success stories*" were sent to the DEI State Lead. The DRC also helped with planning for NDEAM and video production.

vii. Promising Practices: "*Employment Tours*"

The South Dakota Division of Developmental Disabilities and the state's Council on Developmental Disabilities are members of the Supporting Families Community of Practice. South Dakota is one of 11 expansion states in the national Community of Practice for Families of Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. South Dakota developed a state work plan to ensure that family networks provide family-centered case management and expand in-home services. South Dakota also created "*a comprehensive, coordinated set of person-centered and family-centered strategies*." Employment tours were designed to acclimate JSWDs to the work environment, provide information on their employment interests, and increase the employment rate for JSWDs in the state.

South Dakota focused on occupations in high-wage, high-demand industries based on data from the state's Labor Market Information Center and insight from technical institutes, the local Society for Human Resource Management chapter, and business services representatives. Prospective employees were engaged to learn about several companies through tours and interviews with staff. AJC attendees included WIOA core and "*other required*" partners (e.g., VR, TANF, and SNAP) as well as from technical institutes and the Workforce Diversity Network.

Tours and interviews included inquiries about hiring needs and qualifications, available training, compensation, and accommodations. Employment tours offered staff opportunities to "*experience the culture of the business*" and its physical layout. AJC staff devised a "*customized workforce strategy*" and shared it with prospective employers. The strategy was designed to facilitate businesses' recruitment of suitable candidates with disabilities and included a South Dakota-produced protocol on each aspect of employment and the interview process.

Rationale for Its Implementation

Employers are often approached by many entities about job openings and candidates. This was confirmed by an employer who participated in a treatment WDA's DEI partnership meetings, who also affirmed that coordinated business tours are much more productive. A standard protocol and process ensures employers are not overwhelmed and that efforts by partner agencies are not duplicated. Ultimately, this efficient approach to networking should lead to

more placements and more optimal matches between JSWDs and employers. It also improves collaboration between workforce and employers and among WIOA partners.

Why the Practice Could Be Considered Promising

Data collection revealed the same issue as had surfaced in our evaluation of the Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program. South Dakota's approach provided a template and documentation for creating synergy between workforce agencies, employers, and JSWDs. Raised awareness about business needs and JSWDs' capabilities laid the groundwork for employment matches and enhanced referrals. Indeed, a South Dakota DRC testified that "*connections*" from business interviews and tours "*have opened that door for job shadows, work experiences, and on-the-job trainings*."

viii. Challenges and Sustainability

Due to the state's rural nature, convenient access to trainings and high-demand pathways can be elusive for many JSWDs. In addition, capacity challenges complicate serving JSWDs with mental health issues, facilitating transportation access, and engaging Ticket holders. A trenchant dilemma, not unique to South Dakota, is expediting employment beyond short-term OJT, internships, or work experiences. Persistent employer biases and lack of accommodations contribute to this problem.

Notwithstanding a significant funding void with DEI's sunset, which will limit monies for assessments, training, supports, and dissemination customized to JSWDs, there were many signs that disability awareness and promising practices for serving JSWDs will be sustained in each treatment WDA. Even with the two DRCs who adopted a more case management approach — and despite each DRC serving in that role part-time — grant leaders were intentional about integrating DEI practices and policies into WIOA processes so as to forge system changes and maximize resources. One DRC asserted DEI was designed to promote "*long-lasting, big change. … This is a way to make changes, not just spend this money*." Further, at each treatment AJC, all DEI staff served JSWDs and received pertinent ongoing training. Each DRC was absorbed into their respective AJCs at DEI's end.

The fruitful collaboration spurred by DEI, particularly between DLR and VR, should persist. State and local leadership testified to this systems change accomplishment. Consequently, there will be "*no right door or wrong door*" for JSWDs to seek services. IRTs and partnerships will also endure, and the state's IRT approach should cement integration. As one DRC stated, "*I [envision] all of our relationships continuing, the IRT approach continuing. … I don't see anything for the participant changing. We're still going to have all of those services, and I may just be wearing a different hat again. It's just a different title*."

In this WDA, JSWDs will likely be enrolled into Title I programming.[44] This DRC's public relations approach also bodes well for the sustainability of awareness and promising practices related to serving JSWDs.

[44] Title I programs include job search, education, and training.

Grantees also engaged a local career learning center, technology training, and adult education providers about continuing technology assessments and trainings after DEI. Still, one DRC was concerned that there might not be a substitute for DEI funding to continue the valuable assessments and technology training provided by partners.

To garner financing for DEI practices, stakeholders mentioned tapping into Title I and III funds as well as TANF and SNAP allocations. A prominent partner also suggested that statewide philanthropy could help sustain CP programming. TTW will remain within the purview of VR.

In sum, South Dakota's implementation was exceptional when measured by its innovation in several aspects, namely via agency-level IRTs, a dissemination road show, and coordinated business engagement. As well, one region in particular showcased productive synergy between the AJC, local partners, and state leadership. This led to a solid and inclusive CP infrastructure. Moreover, disability awareness and service collaboration for JSWDs in the workforce system has been significantly elevated after two DEI Rounds. Nevertheless, accessing and maintaining long-term quality employment options for this population remains a quandary.

VII. GRANT IMPLEMENTATION ROUND 6

A. State: Alaska; Focus Area: Youth with Disabilities

i. Stated Goals and Objectives

The DEI *Alaska Youth Works* project served youth with disabilities ages 14 to 24 (including subgroups such as intellectual/developmental disabilities, adjudicated youth, homeless individuals, mental illness/substance abuse, and out-of-school youth). The project proposed building on the success of Alaska's DEI Rounds 1 and 4 grants to expand capacity of the AJCs in assisting individuals with disabilities in obtaining self-sustaining and meaningful employment. Alaska has a significant geographical reach, with its service area spanning six WDAs: Anchorage/Mat-Su, Northern, Interior, Southwest, Gulf Coast, and Southeast. Each region encompasses large geographic service areas and includes urban and rural communities.

Alaska Round 6 goals were to:

- Increase Partnerships and Collaborations to develop a cohesive approach to serving youth through partnerships with existing systems and programs as well as other providers of services to youth with disabilities.

- Build upon Alaska's Career Pathways system by increasing accessibility, retention, and successful attainment of industry-recognized credentials to include the University of Alaska system, Regional Training Centers, apprenticeship programs, school-to-work programs, and employer-based training.

- Increase employment opportunities for youth through additional business partners and provide disability awareness and accommodation training and education on the advantages of hiring youth with disabilities.

- Capitalize on Section 503 and Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act final rules by assisting federal contractors in hiring youth with disabilities and using summer youth employment, OJT, and other Work-Based Learning. Alaska DEI will:
  - Increase the number of AJCs operating as ENs from 6 to 10;
  - Create systems change within the existing CP system to increase participation of youth with disabilities; and
  - Increase family awareness and involvement in supporting youth toward independent futures.

ii. DEI Service Delivery Strategies

As a youth-serving state, Alaska was required to implement services in congruence with the principles of the Guideposts to Success. In addition, they proposed to focus on IRTs and Blending and Braiding Resources. Alaska's IRTs convened stakeholders from a wide variety of community-based programs and service providers to identify and align services and supports that contributed to a jobseeker's career goals. Alaska IRTs were most often created by DRCs, who leveraged public and private resources to improve employment outcomes. Blending and Braiding Resources was an essential component of IRTs; however, resource leveraging could occur at both the services and systems level. Blending and Braiding Resources is a financing strategy that can integrate and align multiple disability and employment grants and their funding streams to broaden the impact and reach of services provided and achieve statewide economies of scale. Therefore, Alaska's choice of prioritizing IRTs and Blending and Braiding Resources corroborated their intent to build upon the Partnerships and Collaborations that they developed during their earlier DEI Rounds.

DEI SDSs, particularly IRTs, Blending and Braiding Resources, and Benefits Planning, were firmly embedded in the Alaska DEI. This, perhaps in no small measure, was facilitated by the step-wise development and implementation of services commencing with their first adult-focused DEI grants and continuing through Round 6 with its focus on youth with disabilities. During our interviews, we found that IRTs and ARC were generally known by DRCs even if the terminology was not always articulated. However, they were occurring functionally across AJC locations by developing partnerships with each JSWD and having DRCs facilitate opportunities for training and employment. Since Alaska DRCs were certified as CWICs, attention to Benefits Planning while customers were developing job goals was also embedded into the IRTs.

DRCs provided a number of examples of direct intervention with employers on behalf of JSWDs. For example, one DRC described how an applicant was turned away because his speech was slurred and he walked with a limp — the receptionist thought that he was drunk. With follow-up and what the DRC described as "*educating employers*," the employer was made aware that the jobseeker's speech was slurred because of a stroke and the DRC reinforced why the applicant was a good job candidate. Afterwards, the interview went well and the individual was

hired. Attention to "*grassroots*" employment and case management, while maintaining a systems focus that included CP and related support services, characterized the work of Alaska DRCs.

Most DRCs appeared to have general knowledge about CP and to a lesser extent the Guideposts to Success. DRCs talked about the relationship between employment, the employment environment, and Guideposts and youth development principles even though they may not have been conversant in "Guideposts" terminology. CP approaches were most evident in the University of Alaska VR Pre-Employment Transition Services partnerships, where youth gained exposure to certificate-bearing curricula relevant to the range of Alaska growth industries. They also learned soft skills.

As reported prior to the grant end date, all WDAs implemented IRTs, Blending and Braiding Resources, some aspects of CE, Asset Development, and Guideposts when serving youth, and they implemented partnerships for Self-Employment/Entrepreneurship when necessary. They clarified how some service strategies were important tools to use when serving either youth or adults with disabilities. It is important to underscore the value of Alaska's approach to training DRC 1s and 2s as a tangible example of integrating WIOA services with the DEI. That is because training AJC Employment Specialists as DRC 1s with the training often provided by the funded DRC 2s meant that the DEI had access to internal AJC staff who engaged customers in WIOA services and linked them to DEI services.

DRC 2 duties included updating their DRC 1s on any local and state disability initiatives, including an orientation to the ABLE Act.[45] They also followed up with their offices to keep them informed on how they could help people with disabilities related to the provisions of the Act. Since DRC 2s were in charge of all assistive technologies in their region, they had the role within their AJCs of making sure their AT was working, documenting what types of AT they had in their region, and making sure that all their frontline staff were up to date and trained on the AT equipment and methods. So, although DRC 2s had a definite role as case managers in outreaching to, engaging with, and providing direct DEI services to customers, they also worked to enhance systems-wide capacity to better serve people with disabilities using AJC services.

WIOA Youth services were provided by community partners under contract. Their focus was helping to get youth into employment, and they worked with DEI DRCs and with DVR and other partners to leverage funds and knowledge and help youth get where they needed to be as they transitioned from school to work.

Alaska did an effective job of implementing ENs and TTW, facilitated by its Partnership Plus arrangement with VR. Any cross-systems partnership may have subsequent implementation challenges, but DRCs and the State Lead and the AJC and VR TTW services were working well together to resolve difficulties in obtaining and providing services to TTW enrollees. At the AJC level, Alaska Round 1 and Round 4 staff also trained JSWDs as DRC 1s, a model for other states and referenced as a promising practice. Thus, a "*no wrong door*" policy to employment was

[45] Internal Revenue Service. (2019). *ABLE accounts - Tax benefit for people with disabilities*. Retrieved from https://www.irs.gov/government-entities/federal-state-local-governments/able-accounts-tax-benefit-for-people-with-disabilities

developed that, at a practical level, supported cross-staff communication and integrated services planning. This systems-wide training effort was one of the indicators of sustainability; after DEI ended as a project, its methods are likely to remain embedded within AJCs, VR, and other partner agencies.

By the end of the third quarter of 2018, the Alaska grantee reported that they had significantly exceeded their goals: enrollment + 360 percent; CP entry + 227 percent; and entered employment: +245 percent. They nearly achieved their credential earned goal (98%) and average earnings goal (96%). Retention data was unavailable at the time of this report.

iii. Implementation Summary

Alaska is a regionally, ethnically, and economically diverse state characterized by economies and job markets that can vary extensively across regions. Site visits, focus groups, and observations corroborated that the DEI provided employment services that helped youth JSWDs obtain employment, from transition camps where youth living in mostly rural juvenile detention facilities were flown in to Nome, Alaska, for intensive 2-week life and employability skills trainings, to paid internships at AJCs and at provider agencies that, in several participants' estimations, helped them to become employed. It appeared that Alaska was "*meeting customers where they are at*" and on track to achieving positive employment outcomes for youth with disabilities.

Although Self-Employment was not selected as an area of focus by any Round 5 or 6 grantees, the geographical and economic circumstances in Alaska often substantiated support for Self-Employment/Entrepreneurship where wage-based employment was largely unavailable. These pursuits could be in arts and crafts or other cottage-type businesses, or businesses that were part of mainstream products and services.

iv. Partnerships and Collaborations

The cross-agency and cross-systems partnerships that continued their evolution from Alaska's Round 1 and Round 4 DEI grants were both evident and strengthened through the efforts of its Round 6 grant. Alaska cultivated relationships among public agencies serving JSWDs at multiple levels. At the state policy level, the DEI State Lead was a frequent attendee and advisor to state-level policy conversations regarding employment of JSWDs. A representative from the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education offered how valuable it was to have access to the DEI in developing cross-agency partnerships. The Council demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting rights and economic opportunities for people with disabilities and secured funding from multiple sources (DEI, Partnerships in Employment, Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program). Furthermore, it viewed these programs as part of a matrix of opportunities to support a comprehensive, collaborative approach to employment of people with disabilities. Alaska is also an ABLE Act state.[46] The Governor

[46] Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act (Public Law 113-295) was signed into law on December 19, 2014. The ABLE Act amends the Internal Revenue Service Code of 1986 to create tax-free savings accounts for individuals with disabilities.

signed Employment First legislation. The Governor's representative noted how DEI leadership was an important technical resource for advising on future grants and projects that contributed to a positive, mission-driven consensus on integrating services and resources supporting the health, housing, and working lives of JSWDs in both policy and practice.

When working in extremely rural communities as a resource-leveraging DEI partner, VR and its Tribal VR component had to negotiate often complex relationships among and within the governing authorities of tribes and with generic services and systems, such as public education and employment of youth with disabilities. Both DEI and VR representatives remarked on the challenges of providing services to youth with disabilities living in the most "*rural of rural communities*." In these locales, challenges were significant in connecting youth to jobs while also navigating through barriers in access to basic daily living services, poor telecommunications infrastructure and public transportation, and the impact of the state's economics contributing to a paucity of jobs. This multifaceted effort required collaboration and trust-building among diverse public, private, and tribal partners, which was evident in Alaska Round 6.

"*First thing they do is if you don't know where to start, they take interest tests and learn your strengths and your personality*." — Youth Juneau

"*Before coming to the job center, my only experience was a work readiness class, it was horrible. You write a poor résumé and look at three colleges. It is so general that it doesn't help you at all. There is a career counselor at HS but I never met with them*." — Youth Juneau

Employer engagement occurred at multiple levels. First, the business development teams located at AJCs connected with employers to link jobseekers with training and employment and were a resource to DEIs in helping youth with disabilities secure jobs. The Business Employer Services Teams were employer outreach and employer engagement programs that operated VR. Because of VR's strong interface throughout the state with DEI, they also worked on behalf of DEI customers.

Youth involved in the DEI had positive things to say about their experiences and access to AJC services and opportunities for Job Shadowing, job accommodations, WBL Opportunities, and CP training. They often said that their experiences contrasted favorably with the career guidance and development assistance they received in high school and college. Youth spoke particularly well of the support that staff and employers provided and how they were being listened to and assisted in developing their occupational goals: "*Yeah, they listen to me and I feel comfortable to have a say*." DRCs also made positive differences in the lives of youth. This may be an indication of how systems change naturally occurs; when the "program" becomes so embedded in an agency and connects with employers, it becomes indistinguishable and embedded as a routine practice that the agency "normally" provides JSWDs. It was very apparent from youth in focus groups that they felt empowered by employers, listened to by DRCs, and respected within the AJCs and in DEI.

Grant funding included the creation of internship opportunities at job centers in Juneau, Anchorage, Mat-Su, Kenai, and Fairbanks. The internship program began in November 2016. Youth had opportunities to work in office settings with customers, but also to provide their input

into ways that center services could improve accommodations and services for youth with disabilities.

"*I would say this internship program helped me exponentially, actually. It kind of gave me a direction on what I want to do with my degree in college*." — Youth, Fairbanks Alaska

"*Being at an office all day didn't seem like the greatest job in the world. I kind of steered away from that, but through my 6 weeks I would say I got more comfortable answering the phone, and I kind of enjoyed the interaction with people. I would say that was like my favorite part of my job was the interaction with people and helping them*." —Youth, Fairbanks Alaska

v. Career Pathways

Regionally, Northwest Career Technical and Training conducts Transition Boot Camps for youth in detention facilities and high school seniors to prepare for and obtain career-track development; employers in targeted growth occupations are engaged as partners and potential employers of youth who acquire credentials. The DEI developed an MOU with the University of Alaska Southeast to connect students to training, certifications, and job opportunities after completion of CP exploration courses. DEI and VR collaborated to provide summer employment opportunities, another example of outreach to employers and over 150 businesses that were participating in the Transition Boot Camp project.

VR brought together the Department of Education and Early Development, Office of Children's Services, and an organization delivering foster care services and created the first transition camp. Using VR and other braided resources, they flew 24 Office of Children's Services foster youth from around the state to the transition camp in Anchorage for employment job goal development, soft skills, work experiences, and life-skills training that expanded from 6 to 12 camps a year.

Alaska's growth industries include marine technologies, fishing, mining, and construction, among others. But the economic and employment considerations vary so dramatically across the state that flexibilities in the types of jobs and careers that youth with disabilities can access, especially after returning to their home communities, must be considered. For example, a young person may need to leave their village to learn about and gain experience in a growth sector like maritime work or health services. But that entails being separated from their community of origin and it may not be the work that is available to them when they return. Also, many rural communities engage in subsistence occupations. A young person may have career-level credentials, but they will need to work in subsistence-level hunting and fishing to help provide for their family and communities. VR and DEI understood these issues and embedded flexibilities into their services to provide maximum accommodation for youth, including foster care youth, to participate in CP training and work activities.

Youth also developed new skills like negotiating urban environments and diverse peer and social relationships while in training as positive youth development outcomes. From the sustainability interview, the close connection between the participating AJCs and DEI was evident in successfully implementing CP.

vi. Outreach and Dissemination

Alaska's outreach and dissemination strategy was multi-tiered and related to their partnership development efforts at both the state level and across the AJCs that hosted the DEI. The DEI State Lead provided briefings to the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education so that progress and challenges were known to policymakers who then had the information needed to support the project. Across regions where the DEI was located, DEI program materials were available at AJCs for participant recruitment; the DEI also used traditional (flyer, announcements, etc.) marketing materials to attract customers. But DRCs also marketed the DEI for the purposes of developing partnerships with other agencies and leveraging resources. For example, in the Mat-Su region, the DRC provided information about DEI and developed partnerships with Job Corps to take referrals of DEI participants with some interest in a specific field. In Fairbanks, the DRC communicated regularly with VR, whose counselors were placing students into training and employment. Alaska was also effectively using information-sharing not only to swell enrollment of participants, but also to build partnerships based upon mutual self-interest that strengthened and can potentially sustain the program.

vii. Promising Practices 1: *"Training DRC 1s"*

Grants are necessarily time-limited. A consequence of an end to a grant is that staff who were hired and trained to perform essential functions usually move on to other jobs. However, if new knowledge and practices are firmly embedded into systems and programs so that their staffs incorporate new ways of approaching problems and using methods that were demonstrated effective over the life of the grant, the potential for long-term sustainability is improved.

Rationale for Its Implementation

AJC staff, as well as partner agency staff who worked with the DEI, were trained from the DEI as "DRC 1s." They were trained in the fundamentals of working with JSWDs; gained familiarity with DEI employment practices; and increased their awareness of the services that other partners brought to the initiative that both embedded knowledge in generic service systems and reduced service siloing. When Alaska's DEI funding diminished in June 2018 and its employment of DRCs ended, the State Lead still had access to their statewide network of DRC 1s to continue to provide many of the services that DRC 2s provided, including enrollment into TTW.

Why the Practice Could Be Considered Promising

This systems-wide training effort (acknowledged by Alaska's DEI partners as very effective) is a significant indicator of sustainability. By not confining expertise in serving JSWDs to DRCs hired by the grant ("DRC 2s"), improved methods have the potential to become universal. By mid-2018, this strategy demonstrated its value after the Alaska DEI found itself without the funds necessary to continue to support its whole cadre of DRC 2s. The State Lead, supported by depleted DEI funds, assumed the role of a "statewide DRC" through the remainder of the project. And although the level and intensity of services provided directly to customers by

DRC 2s could not be maintained, DRC 1s across all DEI WDAs knew enough about DEI practices and partnerships that they could take on most of the direct employment support services formerly provided by DRC 2s. Consequently, through partnering activities and familiarity with the DEI grant infrastructure, counselors from VR and partner agencies know enough and are experienced enough to potentially continue the effective practices that the DEI introduced and make progress in achieving the systems change goals that Alaska envisioned. What remains to be seen is not only how DRC 1s continue DEI services, but how partner leadership steps in to support their work in the same manner — and with the same effectiveness of the Alaska DEI State Lead — after that position is no longer funded.

viii. Promising Practices 2: "*Coordinated DEI and DVR Approaches to Serving Youth with Disabilities with Criminal Justice Backgrounds*"

Rationale for Its Implementation

Division of Juvenile Justice youth with disabilities are a challenging population to engage in formalized training and employment services. Often a major impediment is that they are served by multiple systems (criminal justice, disability, VR, housing and allied services, etc.) that are unaligned and lack partnership agreements. However, the Alaska DEI Round 6 project implemented a partnership with VR, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, the Division of Juvenile Justice, and Alaska's Educational Resource Center to provide transition camps to rural Alaska and juvenile justice centers. The resource-leveraging and partnership-building strategy, combined with a merged career and life-skills curricula with an ability to draw youth with criminal justice backgrounds from their very rural home communities, is an example of resource-leveraging among partners to serve youth who not only have significant disabilities and criminal records that could hinder employment, but who may never have visited nor lived in any place outside of their very rural communities of origin.

This partnership provided the transition camps to rural Alaska and juvenile justice centers. The project also featured direct engagement of DRCs providing DEI services. For example, the DRC in Juneau worked directly with the therapeutic justice system facility where the youth were incarcerated for approximately 2 years, providing employment soft skills training and career readiness services in groups and individually, while the DRC in Kenai worked with a detention facility on work readiness skills, and, throughout, the VR Pre-Employment Transition Services program helped fund the employment readiness components of the partnership. The transition camps are not only a good example of "in-reach" to a challenging group of youth with disabilities, but also of the necessity and value of creating cross-systems partnerships to leverage knowledge and resources and overcome system barriers.

The DEI State Lead reported that "*each of the camps are unique in their schedule of activities. However, each camp included a DRC to talk about DEI and job center services. They also hear from various speakers and are able to visit local businesses. Students are asked to complete a person-centered plan that focuses on their future goals, their supports, and how they will achieve their goals. The camps also provide career exploration, work readiness training, counseling on postsecondary education, and Work-Based Learning experiences. [And during 2018,] most camps are also able to offer a college credit for attending and participating*."

Why the Practice Could Be Considered Promising

Assisting youth with disabilities who are in transition from criminal justice systems to develop good work habits and skills is a difficult challenge, and it is made more difficult when the youth reside in very rural communities where both job prospects and range of work experiences may not be prevalent. The Alaska DEI developed its strategy with the understanding that problems of that nature are best addressed by partners working together, communicating frequently, and sharing resources. How they achieved such strong partnerships and the subsequent outcomes are worthy of more exploration and explication so that other communities may learn from their experiences.

ix. Challenges and Sustainability

As discussed previously, the Alaska DEI had to address significant implementation challenges related to geography, diverse economies, and barriers that youth with disabilities faced in accessing services. They encountered gaps in Benefits Planning assistance that they met by certifying some of their DRC 2s as CWICs and found that some were more suited to the task than others. They faced the typical systems-related barriers related to fragmented work readiness and career development systems that they addressed through engagement of school districts, a close working relationship with VR, and a concerted effort to change the cultures of AJCs to become more welcoming to people with disabilities. And, they addressed attitudinal barriers that often result in preconceptions that people with disabilities are not able to work by training frontline staff at AJCs in disability awareness, the value of accommodations, and DEI service strategies. Also, transportation was a challenge, especially for JSWDs living in extremely rural areas.

The most significant challenge related to funding. The Alaska DEI reported in August 2018 that they had depleted their grant funding during the quarter; their DRC 2 staff were laid off as of June 1, 2018. However, largely due to the strength of their partnerships, this grant met or exceeded its use of selected SDSs and sustainability. Despite this significant reduction in their DEI staff, the State Lead maintained her role as a primary interface with state leadership and across the AJCs. Her work was aided by the state's DRC 1s since all their participating job center staff received DRC 1 training. Consequently, they reported that the frontline staff in the AJCs would continue to provide disability coordination even after the DEI ceased formal operations prematurely.

Despite the significant challenges noted above, the Alaska DEI made notable progress in achieving systems change that supported the education and employment of youth with disabilities. A key to implementing their planned, strategic approach to sustainability was their strategy of cross-agency partnering to implement services (particularly with VR Pre-Employment Transition Services and the AJCs in each of their regions). The Round 6 DEI continued its Round 1 and Round 4 efforts to universally train AJC staff as "DRC 1s" on the fundamental aspects of serving people with disabilities so that a "no wrong door" to employment culture and climate was developed across participating AJCs. This approach ensured that after

DEI funding ended, the continuation of many DEI service components (particularly ARC, IRTs, and TTW) and services to youth with disabilities adhered to DEI principles and practices.

The partnership with VR is continuing although some aspects of the resource-sharing had to be curtailed due to the lack of DEI funding since the DEI paid for 30 percent of the Pre-Employment Transition Services program for serving youth. They also indicated that some of the Career Pathways are sustaining operations due to ongoing partnerships with education and training entities developed through DEI. Internships at the AJCs, where youth would gain job experience and soft skills as well as provide recommendations for improvements at the Centers for serving JSWDs, were discontinued although they had about 30 youth who went through the program over the grant period, most of whom continued their education or went on to employment.

The DRCs in their original role at the AJCs are gone, and TTW is no longer sustainable since there are no DRCs to manage the program. Per leadership, almost 170 SSA beneficiaries were served during the Round 6 grant period and almost $500,000 in TTW revenue was generated. More than half of the DRCs from Round 6 continue to work with the same treatment WDA after the grant period and are available to provide their disability-related expertise to AJC staff. For example, there is one in Kenai who is working with TANF services. One who works in Fairbanks is now the WIOA person. In Wassila, Alaska, the former DRC is now a VR counselor. The impact of the DEI and the DRC 1 training continues to be felt at the AJCs.

"*The DRC level-1 training is mandated for job center staff. The stark contrast is that before we refined it in our own way, when they were approaching persons with visible disabilities, they were uncomfortable and would automatically send the clients to VR. After they had the training on disability etiquette, DRCs helped with the needs of each client to find whatever services might be needed. Looking at the population of JSWDs, I think we can now provide them with much better help all around*." — DRC

Regarding TTW, by the end of the third quarter 26 active Tickets were assigned. Of those, 57 percent were employed and 38 percent were working full-time at or above substantial gainful activity level. To date, Alaska generated $487,756 in total Ticket revenue. However, they reported that by the end of the third quarter, the $5,880 in Ticket revenue was a decrease ascribed to the length of time that it took SSA to catch up on payments.

During the sustainability interview, DEI leadership offered some very insightful reflections on the DEI. As part of that conversation, they offered that while the concept of universal access to AJCs for all jobseekers was laudable, the time-limited nature of a grant and promotion of the universal access concept alone could not hit the mark that dedicated programs with ongoing funding to attract and serve jobseekers with disadvantages can do. They compared DEI to the Jobs for Veterans State Grants that are allocated to states on an ongoing basis and provide dedicated Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives who are located within Centers and whose job very much mirrors what DRCs were doing, but specifically for veterans. One stated that, in embedding services for all JSWDs at AJCs, "*Frontline staff can help anyone that comes in the door and that is good. But there should be specialized staff, too. They can handle things that other staff can't*." Disabled Veterans'

Outreach Programs and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives even have an ongoing training institute that the DEI incorporated into its national initiative, but under a separate contract, not on an ongoing basis. To paraphrase the Alaska leadership's recommendations: "*If the DEI is to be an incubator for systems and services change serving JSWDs, then it is best followed by a nationally administered categorical funding arrangement similar to [Jobs for Veterans State Grants] that fully incorporates and sustains improved outreach, access, and services for JSWDs within AJCs across the country. That's what's needed. It's not siloed. It creates 'ownership' of the mission*."

While it is unfortunate that Alaska DEI funds were depleted prematurely, there is evidence that the initiative made progress at the systems and services levels. With strategic foresight by training AJC and partner staff in disability awareness and DEI service delivery methods and creating a statewide culture of collaboration, strengthened in many cases by MOUs, the Alaska DEI contributed to improving access to WIOA services for youth with disabilities. They engaged hundreds of employers and made significant inroads into collaborations with high schools and postsecondary colleges and certificate-issuing CP programs. They were respectful of the cultures of various Native American tribes and worked with and through their tribal leadership to reach adjudicated youth with disabilities who might never have had access to education and employment and training programs. They evidenced creativity and flexibility in their approaches to services and partnerships, realizing that conditions "on the ground" in rural and urban communities can greatly affect implementation. That most services and partnerships continued statewide, even on a reduced basis, with only the DEI State Lead picking up when the former DRCs had to leave, is in itself a commendable achievement. Obviously, the number of TTW enrollments, sustaining the level of partner involvement, and the numbers of youth who could be served across its WDAs were adversely affected when the statewide DEI team was reduced from six to one. However, the foundation appears to be well established and the essential features of the Alaska grantee appear to remain and be sustained, only awaiting other funding opportunities to rekindle their efforts.

B. State: Georgia; Focus Area: Youth with Disabilities

i. Stated Goals and Objectives

The Georgia DEI Customized Career Pathways Project addressed the employment needs of youth and adults with significant disabilities. The grantee implemented their project with a focus on Career Pathways by customizing access to credential-based education and training offered through the community and technical college system in agriculture, health care, hospitality, and logistics. Their project privileged the creation and sustainability of cross-sector partnerships and infused evidence-based and promising practices for JSWD employment. Georgia's Round 6 goals were to:

- Facilitate and strengthen partnerships with a CP focus between VR, the state WDA, disability and employment providers, and the community and technical college system;
- Provide expanded access to career technical training and education resources in identified industry sectors by using AJC services in coordination and collaboration with disability-specific resources to increase participation in existing CP, and by designing education

and training programs that are customizable and accessible for jobseekers with significant disabilities;
- Increase the diversity of job and employer types participating in CP and infusing CE methods into job placement, including the use of job carving;
- Use IRTs to align policies and programs, including through the use of customized support while navigating among various collaborative stakeholders;
- Expand access to short-term subsidized work through strategies including WBL Opportunities, OJT, and other direct work experiences; and
- Provide customized and paid internships rooted in Blended and Braided Resources.

ii. DEI Service Delivery Strategies

DEI SDSs — particularly IRTs and elements of CE and WBL with an intention of alignment with CP — were incorporated in the Georgia DEI. We heard much about the use of IRTs. From listening to monthly DEI administrative and TA calls and from grantee interviews, we found that the concepts and processes associated with IRTs were being absorbed by DRCs and also by co-funded VR staff.

DRCs were most often viewed as the point person for convening IRTs. But because of the benefit of having VR staff who also received training in DEI practices — and since VR staff were co-located with DEI at one AJC — there was a greater likelihood of including VR at the beginning of the IRT process rather than after the planning ended. DRCs received training and support from NDI on the essentials of ARC and IRTs as well as on the foundational elements of Discovery, including individual and group career mapping. CE was not generally implemented with model fidelity. However, its principles were embraced by DRCs and their VR partners and aligned with person-centered planning approaches.[47]

Acknowledging that CE could be difficult to use with employers, one VR partner offered: "*It can be hard to find employers that are willing to do Customized Employment or supported employment. Some clients need that. You can train them and some will be ready, but some need extra support, so you need to get employer buy-in around that*."

The career-mapping approach to Discovery was not only gaining traction within the new Atlanta WDA, but it was becoming aligned with employment services provided by the AJC: "*Group career mappings are now being provided in conjunction with WIOA services in the Augusta DOL Career Center — a great partnership! This means that Title I, III, and IV under WIOA are working together in serving Georgians with disabilities*." Other evidence also indicated that Discovery-based CE elements were being used.

Georgia also implemented TTW and ENs and tried to recruit beneficiaries into TTW. Georgia created an EN within 6 months and engaged in Partnership Plus as the DEI/VR relationship helped to better collaborate with and recruit TTW beneficiaries. Georgia reported

[1] "Person-centered planning" refers to methods that privilege the decisions of the participant and engages them directly in the establishment of their employment goal and development plan. This is in contrast to planning that is administered and under the control of staff.

steady growth in Ticket assignments and had 40 percent of their goal of 30 Ticket assignments. They also began to plan and deliver TTW outreach events. The addition of the Atlanta WDA also meant expansion of TTW to additional counties. The grantee expected the reimbursement amount to continue to grow, especially after the implementation of SSA outreach events in WDAs that implemented DEI. Although the TTW program progressed well, DEI leadership allowed that more needed to be done to better inform DEI staff and partners about when to offer it to participants: "*It's been successful in that we could get the EN up earlier in the project, but the EN needs more support within DEI I think*."

DEI SDSs were provided with evidence of implementation across some WDAs. Some participants enrolled in WBL and eventually acquired jobs. Other participants participated in CE and Discovery, with an emphasis on the use of career mapping. However, we do not have data confirming that every participant received Discovery as a required service. IRTs seemed to have evolved organically from Georgia's efforts at bringing VR and other partners to the table. Georgia delivered the DEI SDSs that it proposed, and its service delivery efforts were augmented by facilitating cross-systems partnerships.

iii. Implementation Summary

Georgia prioritized the development of sustainable cross-sector agency linkages as a necessary ingredient for creating job opportunities for JSWDs in occupational fields that aligned with the state's plans for economic growth, as well as with CP that coincided with the Governor's High Demand Career Initiative. The state proposed to better prepare customers for success in CP-focused jobs and careers by utilizing IRTs, Discovery, person-centered career planning and ILPs, supported education, and customized apprenticeships and paid internships that used CE techniques, including job creation and job carving. Georgia's approach to implementing cross-sector partnerships and on-the-job work experiences prioritizing CE aligned with supported education to achieve CP outcomes.

Georgia began by targeting two WDAs that covered a total of 16 counties. Georgia's focus was to create opportunities for JSWDs by customizing Career Pathways in high-demand industries and by facilitating cross-system collaboration and expansion of the capacity of AJCs to serve customers with significant disabilities. Two variables had to be addressed in achieving these goals. First, targeting high-demand industries (particularly the focus areas of agriculture, health care, hospitality, and logistics) meant that the state would need to be successful in partnering with the technical college system, continuing education institutions, and relevant credential-delivering entities, and it would need to develop an understanding of the hiring needs of high-demand industries that it hoped to engage in the program.

Georgia Round 6 also addressed a number of supply-side variables that affected the CP pipelines, the range of direct services available that aligned with the state's intent to use CE-driven methods, and systems-related issues that impeded JSWDs' access to and use of these services. For example, all DRCs were certified to provide benefits counseling, and all participants were offered these services. Georgia addressed the systems-related impediments to achieving those goals while working to improve JSWD access to AJCs operating in these

counties and to improve the training and employment services that JSWDs need to support their CP job and career goals.

In Georgia, coordination at the services level between VR and AJC staff historically happened infrequently. Georgia's approach was not only to engage VR as a strategic partner, but also to negotiate an arrangement to jointly fund one full-time and one part-time VR counselor to serve as a bridge between VR and DEI. This created fertile ground for leveraging partners' resources, including Title I resources and TTW. By the end of the project, this coordinated approach was working well enough for Georgia to request a contract amendment expanding the DEI to co-hire a second VR counselor to serve the Atlanta Metro area and two additional counties. Furthermore, Georgia hoped that facilitating familiarity with each partner's service approaches and requirements would mean long-term improvements in the services and supports needed by JSWDs.

Although we did not find evidence that the project was successful in penetrating high-demand industries, partners including AJC managers, community providers, and VR representatives acknowledged that the presence of DEI strengthened the capacity of systems to support JSWDs. Georgia did succeed in aligning services and improving systems capacity to help participants with disabilities prepare for training and employment.

iv. Partnerships and Collaborations

The Georgia Round 6 grant intended to develop and grow the collaboration between DEI, Title I, and VR to address issues of service coordination. The DEI State Lead asserted that cross-agency service integration was crucial to enabling long-term support and sharing service burdens, including CP. Typically, there are many "*hoops to jump through*" to realize collaboration between Title I and Title IV, systems that "*don't know each other*." DEI provided an avenue to spur a "*beautiful marriage*" between Workforce, VR, and CP; "*it was like magic happening*" with "*profound*" benefits. The most common shared services included vocational counseling and guidance, Title I case management services, Discovery career exploration, assistive work technology evaluation, equipment, and job development and placement services.

The DEI State Lead and DRCs were acknowledged for their leadership in creating and nurturing partnerships with WDAs. One AJC manager offered that the "*DRCs have made a lot of effort to grow partnerships*." As well, the WDA manager made the observation that the DRCs did much to strengthen rapport and trust between VR and the AJC, including overcoming misconceptions that the DEI was duplicative of VR services. Partners also had positive things to say about the DEI, such as the Salvation Army and ARK. Both partners provided referrals to the program and AJC WIOA teams with which the DRCs interfaced.

The DEI/VR partnership and co-funding of two VR counselors was a potentially replicable best practice to overcoming service silos that occur between VR and workforce programs. Georgia's efforts to develop Partnerships and Collaborations was one of the strongest aspects of its project, and data demonstrates that the initiative succeeded in this critical component of systems change. One AJC manager offered corroboration of the effective DEI/AJC relationship: "*People refer to the DRC all the time. The other thing with the DRC is*

that she shows me the contacts she's made and the partnerships developed, and we have a tracking spreadsheet for all of our customers that indicate if they're DEI. I'm not in the dark."

We heard from WIOA and VR respondents that both systems could do a better job of employer engagement and of coordinating their respective business development services so JSWDs can have an equal shot at getting a job. The methods for engaging employers through AJCs — where treatment WDAs would promote their job candidates with disabilities — appeared to be through job fairs, brochures, and internet marketing. One VR representative suggested that DEI contributed to more robust employer engagement.

> "*In VR, we use employment consultants, and there's a new division that focuses just on that. I know that WIOA people in DEI do more business outreach. Now we have the benefit of both of those [resources] because there are two teams looking for employment opportunities*." — VR Representative

As of Georgia's final quarter of the grant, promising steps were made in connecting JSWDs with training and in linking employers with qualified applicants. The state noted that a number of (unspecified) participants received on-the-job work experiences and that most of them were expected to move into permanent unsubsidized employment at the end of their trainings. Five participants in the newest Atlanta site were in the process of obtaining eligibility for WIOA Title I training, and in Augusta one participant was being considered to start training in the new Cyber Security Training Center. One employer who DEI partnered with to customize a job for a client with a significant disability requested more referrals, including from VR. It was also noted that it was more difficult to engage participants, partners, and employers in the rural areas that the project served. Georgia Round 6 made a good effort to implement employer partnerships and assisted participants in obtaining jobs that privileged CP.

Individuals who participated in the DEI had positive things to say about their involvement with employers and the type and level of services they received. There appeared to be a consensus on staff responsiveness to the needs and interests of JSWDs and on the attempts to accommodate the impacts of their disabilities on their training and employment. One JSWD testified: "*When we first talked, I had a lot of interests, and she acted like everything I said mattered. She made it all about me. She has her requirements she has to follow, but they're helping me pursue what I want to pursue*."

However, one customer expressed some dissatisfaction with the pace of service delivery and suggested that the DEI could do better by increasing its staffing level and strengthening partnerships with employers: "*The process can be slow. It could be faster. Maybe they need more employees. I feel like I'm a month behind. And there's occasionally a disconnect between employers and JSWDs. They don't always follow equal opportunity stuff*."

There was positive indication that JSWDs were productively accommodated. One customer relayed that a DRC secured an adjustable chair with a footrest and headrest to help JSWDs sit more comfortably in an AJC. Georgia Round 6 also largely implemented the intended SDSs with a customer focus, particularly regarding the implementation of IRTs. Less evidence supports the use of the full range of CE (e.g., job carving, negotiating, and job creation with full

employer participation in the process). However, DRCs were conversant in the principles and practices associated with Discovery, which is quintessentially a customer-focused assessment and planning method. Participants submitted that in the early stages of goal-setting, JSWDs engaged in planning and job development to a great degree and their preferences for employment and training were respected.

v. Career Pathways

A CP job development focus required Georgia Round 6 to connect JSWDs to college and credentialing programs that provided them with the qualifications to compete effectively for jobs in high-demand industries. At the other end of the pipeline, we searched for evidence that the DEI was engaging those high-demand industry employers and facilitating their interest in hiring qualified JSWDs. We found some evidence that those goals were being met, although perhaps not on the scale that was envisioned.

Although the complete CP continuum that was presented in Georgia's proposal was not in evidence across the three DEI WDAs, we found a promising general orientation toward CP services with the majority of the customers served by the DEI. There is also evidence that Georgia's DEI leadership remains committed to focusing their CP development efforts on segments of the labor market that included high-demand occupations.

> "*Both [treatment] WDAs have received sector strategy development grants from our office in the past 7 months. Both of them picked manufacturing, which is handy because we identified that in the DEI grant, so there's potential for integration. They'll work with employers in those areas to develop those pathways*." — WDA Staff

In addition, there is evidence that the DEI and its AJC partners worked to strengthen collaborations with technical education schools to better prepare participants to attain credentials associated with high-demand occupations. One partner proclaimed, "*Our partnership with the tech school is helpful. We send out the curricula and are open to tweaking them for the employer's needs*."

vi. Outreach and Dissemination

Georgia DRCs may continue to use DEI strategies and be involved in communication with external partners and potential referral sources through presentations, signs, banners, and other methods. Partners who were aware of the DEI were anxious to refer customers to it. In part, this was because DEI had easily accessible resources for training and support and that the DRCs were highly regarded in the WDAs.

Individuals with disabilities entering the AJC were referred by Employment Specialists to the DRC when appropriate. By co-funding two counselors with VR, the DEI effectively opened a line of communication within VR from which referrals to the project could flow. However, it appeared from the perspectives of some of the partners that we interviewed that the DEI could be among the state's "*best kept secrets*." More needs to be done to advertise DEI services after the grant period.

vii. Promising Practices "Pathways for Success"

Rationale for Its Implementation

Prior to DEI, a customer with a disability typically received an automatic VR referral. Workforce and VR systems tended to operate independently, where JSWDs were likely to be the responsibility of VR only rather than integrated in a universal employment services system. Furthermore, it was not a given that VR counselors would receive training in emerging effective practices like IRTs or CE.

Of particular significance was the DEI's and VR's co-funding and supporting of initially one — and later two — VR counselors who traveled between WDAs to work with customers. This was a significant innovation since historically many state disability initiatives nationwide have had difficulties engaging VR as a contributing partner. Not only did the jointly funded counselor assist jobseekers to take advantage of opportunities that the DEI, AJCs, and VR had to offer, the jointly supported staff took on the role of bridging systems and as a translator to help facilitate increased understanding of each partner's culture and services.

Why the Practice Could Be Considered Promising

By training co-funded counselors on these techniques — coupled with the training they usually received as VR counselors in using supported employment methods — the Georgia DEI filled a gap in cross-agency training. VR and WIOA staff and the DRCs endorsed the co-funded VR counselor as contributing to the nascent development of a more collaborative, seamless approach that bodes well for sustainable collaboration.

However, even though having a co-funded VR staff assisted in reducing silos and facilitating local systems change, the state-level relationship between VR and the workforce system was challenged by significant turnover among VR senior staff. Nevertheless, by working diligently at the state level to sustain communication and collaboration in part through senior-level meetings and presentations, Georgia drew the two systems together to achieve systems change. The State Lead attested that Georgia was "*sharing the load and expertise across systems and getting a lot of benefit*." In the meantime, at the local level, the co-funded VR counselor helped to demonstrate how the VR and WIOA systems could align in ways that provide direct benefits to VR and WIOA co-enrolled customers. In addition, staff from DEI, WIOA, and VR agreed that they would explore how to sustain the position before grant funds ended.

viii. Challenges and Sustainability

The Georgia DEI sustained some turnover at the DEI leadership level, and for a time the DEI State Lead was away on leave. NDI training, as well as our planned site visit, was put on hiatus for a number of months in 2017. Regular TA and administrative teleconference calls resumed in 2018, and our site visit occurred in April 2018. Although the program took some time to build momentum and increase staff knowledge and capacity, after stabilizing it generated momentum and appeared to make good progress in almost all areas. As referenced above, it appears to us from available data that the hoped-for intensive focus on CP and on building employer partnerships did not occur at the pace that Georgia anticipated. Therefore, it appears

that Georgia Round 6 was more heavily weighted on the supply side (participant preparation) of the employment equation than on the demand side (strategic and implementation involvement of employers). Also, the state's amount of TTW revenue, while expected to increase, may be insufficient for the DEI to continue to co-fund the two VR counselors after the grant period. In essence, Georgia's challenges were not unlike those of many DEI grantees in that they were slow to start during the first year, made progress in the second year, and gained good traction by the time the 3-year grant ended.

As referenced above, there are three elements of Georgia Round 6 that bode well for sustainability: (1) the strength of AJC and VR partnerships implied that both systems were becoming more informed of DEI practices and could do a better job serving JSWDs; (2) co-funded VR counselors embedded DEI practices within the operations of VR, which can help sustain services even in the absence of DRCs; and (3) the stream of TTW revenue, although modest during the grant period, could be a source for potentially sustaining co-funded VR counselors if it continues to increase.

The DEI State Lead confirmed that TTW activity will continue after the grant period, including by facilitating more local areas in becoming ENs. The DEI State Lead was also hired in a new "Disability State Lead" role and is charged with expanding DEI strategies, such as IRTs, accommodations, and AT statewide through developing a "*robust technical assistance system*." Toward the grant's end, AT partners created webinars on serving JSWDs and harnessing AT. State leadership also created an "online academy" for local workforce areas, which will include guidance on serving JSWDs. In addition, the DEI State Lead, VR, and the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center are planning a demonstration grant to promote IRTs in local areas that were not DEI treatment sites. As well, Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) services will be expanded in one treatment WDA where demand was high. Finally, the Georgia State Lead desires to expand Project SEARCH across the state. Two Round 6 DRCs were hired by Title I at grant's end; one is continuing DRC responsibilities and the other is focusing on employment services. The full-time co-funded VR counselor was hired by VR to work with clients with developmental and mental health disabilities.

There is much to commend the Georgia DEI Round 6 project for, including its strong leadership, productive partnerships, and the strength of the employment preparation services it provided to JSWDs. While more needs to be done to align job preparation and placement functions with high-demand occupations as well as to improve employer engagement, we believe that the state has these goals in its sight. Georgia's challenge will be how to keep momentum going for months and years after their grant period.

C. State: Hawaii; Focus Area: Individuals with Significant Disabilities

i. Stated Goals and Objectives

Hawaii Round 6 specified the following goals and objectives:

1. Increase AJC staff competencies to provide critical local resources by providing training on Disability 101, Customized Employment, Career Pathway systems, job accommodations, Asset Development, ILPs, and Benefits Planning.

2. Leverage funding and resources across public workforce development systems from partners to provide additional services to individuals with significant disabilities, including IRTs, Asset Development, and Partnerships and Collaborations.

3. Expand AJC capacity to effectively serve individuals with significant disabilities. Hawaii will employ a direct mail strategy via social media to recruit individuals with significant disabilities to utilize AJC services. In addition, AJCs will strengthen relationships with disability-serving agencies to allow for multi-point entry/exit.

4. Utilize CP strategies to complement AJC services with flexible accommodations for individuals with significant disabilities.

ii. DEI Service Delivery Strategies

The pre-transition DRCs prioritized IRTs, Blending and Braiding Resources, CE, and Asset Development. Blending and braiding funds and leveraging resources, including TTW, were implemented to a greater or lesser extent on all of the islands during Round 6. Because of DRC turnover and the difficulty in convening the first cadre of part-time DRCs, both new and old DRCs required retraining, which primarily focused on methods associated with Discovery, including career mapping principles. However, we did not hear or see that CE was being used with fidelity, and there is no information in quarterly reports that provide an indication of the quality of SDS implementation. Likewise, for Blending and Braiding Resources, we did not obtain data about Partnership Plus relationships with VR, and since VR was not on an Order of Selection, we suspect that any progress in that area was stalled. And, we have no indication that Asset Development services were being offered, although the Center on Disability Services conducted Benefits Planning training in early 2018 and one on Asset Development was reported in April to be held soon. Generally, we found an interest in, and some examples of, Hawaii using some aspects of IRTs and CE but without the scale that they had intended.

Ramping up ENs and TTW services was a challenge for Hawaii. Prior to the departure of the previous State Lead, there had been one DRC who was cleared for suitability determination. But, since the loss of the statewide lead for the grant, the new DEI leadership expected that Hawaii would, for the second time, have to obtain clearance for the TTW program before they could reestablish services. In April 2018, we heard that income from Tickets was being generated, and on Maui they recently received their first milestone payment. Otherwise, our data indicates that more progress was needed to reenergize the TTW program.

During the final year of the project, Hawaii's request to amend the Scope of Services to provide DEI participants with (1) paid work experience; (2) OJT; and (3) supportive services was approved by USDOL. Outreach and engaging customers appeared to be a challenge for the first cohort of Round 6 DRCs. A contributing factor was that they had limited time allocated to the program that was more than filled by working directly with customers who came to the Center or who had been referred by VR or other sources. It was apparent that DRCs were struggling with the most effective way to get the word out, and we heard that even when it came to publicizing the program to obtain referrals, the cultural nuances of working in Hawaii had to be honored. And, even more recently, we heard through follow-up interviews that appropriate and effective methods of outreach and dissemination continued to be a challenge that many DRCs faced.

"*Outreach — but you need to go out. Ads and marketing don't work. You need to go out. It's word of mouth. That's part of our culture*." — DRC

Our overall assessment related to SDSs is that there is not enough evidence to confirm that Hawaii's Round 6 DEI was using the DEI strategies that they proposed to use to build sustainable systems-wide capacity for serving JSWDs in AJCs, nor can we state with certainty that the project met the individual outcome goals that the state identified when they applied for the grant, primarily due to the constraints described above. Evidence tends to corroborate that AJC JSWDs received employment services from their DRCs and accommodations were available, although AT equipment was not always accessible to customers at some AJCs. Capacity-building also includes how well the program institutes and maintains an effective outreach, referral, and dissemination plan. Despite these challenges and concerns, the capacity for the DEI to increase the numbers of individuals it served appeared to grow.

iii. Implementation Summary

Hawaii Round 6 was implemented in four WDAs: Hawaii (Big Island), Oahu, Maui, and Kauai. Hawaii and Maui had the clearest orientation to DEI practices and Partnerships and Collaborations, which may be related to their prior experience implementing their Round 2 DEI grant. While staff turnover and the predominance of part-time DRCs challenged each of the WDAs, an understanding of core DEI practices was particularly less developed on Oahu and Kauai. The economies and also the infrastructure (transportation, access to AJC services, employer commitment to hiring people with disabilities, access to skills training and VR services, etc.) for creating job opportunities also varied across the islands. For example, Kauai obtained a large solar grant where JSWDs enrolled in solar training, which led to job opportunities at solar farms. Health care opportunities, including registered nurse certifications and related allied credentialing, were also available.

The state has three population centers, which creates a challenge for JSWDs to access training and employment opportunities if they live too far north because most job opportunities are located on the east side of the island. Transportation options are generally more available on Oahu, facilitating access to jobs, and the dispersion and extensiveness of the tourist, health care, and retail industries offer a great variety of potential training and career options for JSWDs than are available on the other islands.

In late 2017, the contract for WIOA services and AJC operations that the Workforce Development Division (WDD) had was let to another contractor. On Hawaii, WDD is no longer the AJC operator or the Title I provider; the county is providing both functions. On Maui, WDD has an extended contract for providing WIOA Title I services, but the county operates the AJC. The youth provider is Maui Community College. The DEI does not have a staff person in Maui. On Kauai, WDD is the WIOA Title I provider and the county operates the AJC. The transition did not affect Oahu, which is the provider of adult and youth services. It also runs the AJC. The change in contractors precipitated a significant turnover of DRCs when those who were not retained by the new contractor were laid off.

Hawaii presents a unique situation. When Hawaii received a Round 8 DEI youth grant in late 2018, their DRCs were a mix of in-place Round 6 DRCs and new DRCs. All past and newly hired DRCs were assigned to work with both Round 6 and Round 8 JSWDs. Hawaii renegotiated their regional DEI contracts to ensure that the DRCs in place were not impacted by the uncertainty of the regional and center-level Title I contracts to assist in continuity.

TA providers and the University of Hawaii met with the DEI State Lead in March 2016 and TA activities were eventually resumed. TA providers worked with the DEI State Lead to develop a new customer flow for participating WDAs and engaged with newly hired DRCs in April and May of 2018 to bring them up to speed on DEI implementation and the use of SDSs. Also in 2018, the long-tenured state VR Director retired and the progress that had been made to that point in creating better cross-systems partnerships was significantly slowed and had to be regenerated by his replacement and a new DEI State Lead. VR went to an Order of Selection as well, which significantly narrowed their doorway to accept new applicants. TA ended when the national DEI training contract was assigned to another vendor during the year. That left the University, new DEI leadership, and a mostly new cadre of DRCs to essentially complete the work of Round 6. Hawaii determined to make the best of the situation and essentially picked up capacity-building with an almost-fresh start. The University began to provide fundamental T/TA to the new DRCs, who were then doing "double duty" serving customers from Round 6.

Much of the training they gave to the first cadre of DRCs had to be retaught to the new group. Refresher training to the DRCs who were still with the project was also necessary. They were allocated to the project with 0.25–0.5 full-time equivalent per person. The new cadre was allocated to the project at a greater full-time equivalent (average of .42% among six DRCs) than their predecessors, allowing them to focus their time more heavily on DEI. However, capacity-building is a function of how well staff remain with the project and develop and transmit "*institutional knowledge*" to promote sustainability. Regarding the impact of staff turnover on sustainability, DEI leadership was asked if any of the Round 6 DRCs stayed on past the end of that grant and were therefore available to contribute their knowledge to future other AJCs: "*The Oahu people are the same. On the Big Island things turned over. Maui turned over, too. There are none on Kauai. On all of the Islands we only had three–four DRCs*." Thus, Hawaii had to revisit many staff capacity-building activities midstream with new staff.

Data is limited in analyzing how well capacity-building occurred since the changeover because some of the more knowledgeable DRCs and DEI State Leads are no longer with the

project. Nonetheless, Hawaii regained some of the ground it lost for its Round 6 project. The DEI State Lead was also involved in Round 6 and had a position of authority within the Hawaii Department of Labor. This provided a level of leadership continuity that could benefit the program and contribute to its ability to partner with other state agencies, including VR. Acquiring a Round 8 grant gave Hawaii the opportunity of having the Round 6 DRCs allocated at substantially higher full-time equivalents, which may have been beneficial to JSWDs served through Round 6.

T/TA was provided through limited on-site and distance learning methods. While these two training entities established a dialogue and preliminarily agreed to provide complementary and non-duplicative training, this did not begin to gain traction until well into the second year of the grant. By that time, disruptions to the program were already beginning to occur, including major DRC turnover due to a change in the AJC contractor described above. The staff turnover made it difficult for both providers to deliver any training with regularity and comprehensiveness. While the University trained DRCs, its Center on Disability Services remained the primary DEI training entity. Since a number of DRCs who had received training had left the program and new ones took their place, a significant amount of training on previously trained topics also had to be repeated.

"*The DRC funding allocation was part-time, and getting the attention of jobseekers was difficult. Even small things, like getting a manager's approval for training was an issue. Once we were awarded DEI R8 (which included some Round 6 DRCs), we reallocated staff. Now, we don't really have part-time staff. All the R6 DRCs are full-time from now on, and those that aren't will be blended/braided to focus on VR-related activities or other things that relate to disability*." — DEI Partner Representative

Another capacity-building challenge was the amount of time that the first cadre of Round 6 DRCs could spend on DEI-related responsibilities. Since the majority of their time was devoted to AJC-related obligations outside of the DEI project, the DEI State Lead encountered resistance from stakeholders who objected to the time demands placed on the DRCs for participating in training sessions. This made it difficult for them to not only absorb but gain experience applying their training while working with JSWDs. Some DRCs indicated that the full-time equivalent allocation issue and staff turnover at AJCs were not new challenges and that staff typically needed to perform a number of job roles.

Hawaii Round 6 intended to enhance the capacities of participating AJCs to improve employment outcomes by providing a program specifically focused upon outreach and service delivery for JSWDs, privileging the use of DEI services, including IRTs, ARC, and CE. IRTs were implemented on the Big Island and Oahu and to a more limited extent on the other two islands. In essence, across all treatment sites the DEI could be seen as a "*lightning rod*" attracting JSWDs to AJCs, but with the potential for developing strong Employment Specialist-customer relationships and employment support services in ways that people with disabilities may not have experienced at AJCs prior to DEI. With the caveat that we have no present evidence indicating that AJC cultural change continued with the transition to the new WIOA contractor, some level of DEI-AJC cultural change was beginning to occur prior to the transition.

Although customers we interviewed were almost always unaware that the services they were receiving were specifically from the DEI rather than from an "*improved*" AJC, it appears that the presence of a DRC was important in helping them get jobs. The most frequent indication of AJC capacity-building to support JSWDs was participants' expression of satisfaction that they were getting the types of hands-on, supportive services they needed to succeed in employment.

"*[The DRC] is just one person, so it's hard for her to provide all of these services. I guess I don't see a difference? She provided these services to me a while ago. I've known her for a while. I like my services from [the DRC]. There's no other staff, just her. She checks in with me, makes sure I'm going to class, and asks if I need any more services. She emails me or calls me. She keeps me in the loop. I would say she contacts me two or three times a month. She's helped me look for a job. She helped me apply for state positions*." — DEI Participant

iv. Partnerships and Collaborations

When describing the genesis of cross-agency partnerships in Hawaii, it is important to underscore the influence of the state's culture as a contributing factor. Data obtained from interviews with DRCs, DEI leadership, and partner agencies corroborated the importance of the value that Hawaiians place on developing personal relationships and a sense of community. We heard on a number of occasions how a DRC, a DEI leader, or an AJC manager knew a leader or staff from another agency because they knew their family, or went to school with them, or some other friendship-related association. Relationship-based partnerships, while often challenged by partner self-interest or administrative challenges, were nonetheless both necessary and culturally compatible and a critical element in Hawaii's attempts to build systems and service capacity.

VR partnered with DEI leadership and DRCs. VR representatives acknowledged that the partnership was sometimes difficult, with role differentiation concerns expressed by both partners. DEI leadership met with the new administrator, who expressed willingness to coordinate services. With VR on Order of Selection, which increased the difficulty that people with disabilities had in accessing VR services, having the DEI work with jobseekers and with WIOA opened up opportunities to discuss how to partner. Initially, VR was reluctant to partner with DEI on summer youth programs, but the new VR administrator recognized the need, especially for Pre-Employment Transition Services. The DEI and VR partnership on summer youth employment programs continued throughout the grant period, but because they increased their full-time equivalent allocation for their Round 6/8 DRCs, these projects were accelerated as DRCs had more time to work on them.

"*When I heard about the DEI, I just thought of it as another case manager. I didn't really know how well it works*." — VR Representative

Other partners included the Department of Developmental Disabilities, Adult Education, Developmental Disabilities Council, Department of Mental Health, and Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services. On Maui, the DEI connected with the Developmental Disabilities Council coordinator. This was characterized as a relationship that helped the DEI serve more

individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Anecdotally (and particularly relevant as the DEI focuses on youth with Round 8), they needed to connect with education, and that connection was described as challenging. Although we heard that they had not made great progress on Oahu, they connected with the high schools in Kona. They reported that the DEI had success in expanding its partnership with Waipahu.

The DEI State Lead and DRCs also coordinated and participated in meetings to link WIOA Youth and Adult programs in an attempt to braid resources from the various agencies to provide youth with wraparound services. The DRCs assisted in the process by providing information about accommodations, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace. WIOA Youth and Adult programs provided information about the possibility of placing youth in "*work experiences*" to help them explore various occupations while having opportunities to learn and practice the necessary soft skills to succeed in employment.

Although JSWDs may not have associated the services they were receiving specifically with DEI, a number of them praised the services and supports they received from their own DRC. Most typically, they talked about getting access to workshops on résumé writing and developing career choices, but much less about managing their benefits while working and had little to no familiarity with TTW. JSWDs drew positive associations between the help they were getting and a particular DRC's knowledge, expertise, and willingness to listen to them and encourage their input into their employment plan. When one customer was asked whether he felt that he had a say in his training and employment plan, the customer replied:

> "*Definitely, and they come up with ideas I never thought of too. This is a great office. The DRC is great; she doesn't give up. This is probably the best office I've been in. I was in another for about 1 week.*" — DEI Participant

There may be a plausible reason why Hawaii DEI JSWDs across the four participating islands' AJCs did not easily equate the services they were receiving as generated by the DEI. All pre-contract transition DRCs spent most of their time on other non-DEI tasks at the employment center as Employment Specialists, and in many cases had been employed there for a long time. They simply did not have enough time allocated to engage in disseminating information about the program to their communities and constituents. While the DEI was operating, it is easy to see that customers were likely to regard services as just better, but not as having been created by a new and distinct program.

Hawaii implemented AJC job fairs to reach out to employers. DRCs also designed and implemented reverse job fairs in which individuals interested in employment set up booths to showcase their employment credentials, including a résumé, education and training, and recommendations from prior employers. This occurred while employers and recruiters walked around the job fair and asked job candidates to discuss their skills and interests. A recent reverse job fair in Hawaii was attended by 154 employers, legislators, and college and high school students. DRCs reported that approximately eight students were successfully placed in employment and three students received job offers. Access to JSWDs through employer participation in AJC job fairs was also corroborated by the employer we interviewed. And

although the employer representative indicated that his company hired two people with disabilities, he was unclear about whether or not they were served through the DEI or were referred through regular AJC channels: "*I don't really know what the DEI is, besides the acronym. I make all the hiring/firing decisions at my company/branch. I don't look at if they're in a program, just whether they fit the job*." Hawaii employers may have a willingness to consider job applicants with disabilities who meet their hiring needs, but a more strategic approach to engaging employers is necessary, including one that focuses upon Career Pathways.

v. Career Pathways

With Hawaii partner the University of Hawaii, Center on Disability Services, as the primary T/TA entity, the grantee continued to provide new training content to DRCs, including web training on the six Career Pathways available in Hawaii: Natural Resources, Health Services, Business, Public and Human Services, Industrial and Engineering Technology, and Arts and Communication. In March 2019, the DRCs attended WWL training conducted by a national expert to enhance their understanding of how best to work with youth with disabilities and prepare them for working with summer youth participants. In addition, the DRCs attended the Job Accommodation Network training to gain knowledge that could assist them in working with employers to provide on-the-job supports for employees with disabilities.

However, we found no compelling evidence that Hawaii's Round 6 DEI had implemented and sustained partnerships with community colleges or credential-issuing technical schools in support of a CP approach, although jobseekers appear to have been provided information about the types of jobs employers were seeking to fill in their regions.

vi. Outreach and Dissemination

As discussed earlier, getting the word out about the unique services of the DEI was a challenge, particularly with very part-time staff. Some partner agencies also appeared to be unclear about the DEI. But another challenge was that, by design, all outreach was supposed to be done by direct mail from the SSA list given to the EN. However, when they got the TTW clearance, SSA told them that they stopped giving out that mailing list. Although we heard that a request for clarification and advice was sent to SSA and ODEP, Hawaii did not hear back. It meant that the first cadre of DRCs would have to do unanticipated work regarding outreach when it had not been written into their grant proposal. It is unclear if improved dissemination practices were proposed in their Round 8 proposal that could have been used in the remaining months of Round 6 since we do not have access to Round 8 materials. Also, since ramping up the TTW initiative created difficulties discussed in Section IV, accessing SSA lists would be problematic even if it proved possible.

vii. Promising Practices

We are unable to identify a particular promising practice designed by Hawaii Round 6. We have identified a characteristic of the grantee that may be instructive for other DEIs: resilience of staff and partners in their efforts to overcome significant structural challenges and deliver services to as many JSWDs as they could after they dealt with staff and leadership disruptions. Despite disappointment that so many obstacles occurred, the leadership and partners we talked with always evidenced optimism that over time Round 6 would achieve success even though they may not have been able to meet their performance targets. That they persevered while salvaging and moving forward with their Round 6 grant speaks well of their determination to improve competitive, integrated employment opportunities.

viii. Challenges and Sustainability

Hawaii Round 6 encountered a number of challenges in building the capacity of their DEI and WDAs to achieve their stated goals and improve services for JSWDs. The first relates to the DEI's ability to train, support, and sustain its DRCs, thereby ensuring continuity of DEI SDSs on behalf of its customers. The project was implemented with two training providers whose training offerings often overlapped. The Center on Disability Services continued its association with DEI as a training provider from the time of their Round 4 grant. The Center on Disability Services, DEI partners and collaborations, and DRCs regularly made trips to meet with staff on all islands and maintain consistent, responsive communication for problem-solving and knowledge exchange.

Hawaii Round 6 challenges were administrative, structural, and service related, but perhaps a valid observation was that they encountered barriers that were cultural as well. We heard time and again that it was difficult convening people and that scheduling events was a challenge, attributable to an island culture that has a different orientation to time than on the mainland. On a number of occasions, our scheduled interviews just did not happen because a person never made it to the location even though transportation had been arranged. But cultural influences may even affect job applicant skill sets as this employer referenced.

Other challenges emerged that are in many respects similar to those faced by JSWDs. These included lack of transportation, lack of market-relevant skills, fear of losing health care benefits, and perceptions of people with disabilities as not "employment ready." During the final sustainability interview, leadership noted that another challenge associated with Round 6 was how the DEI was perceived by participating AJCs: "*The DEI program is supposed to connect all the systems that are in place. It's not in isolation. Instead, the DEI was seen as a program rather than a system-building situation*."

When asked during the final sustainability interview about the services that were of greater importance and impact in addressing their DEI Round 6 goals, the DEI State Lead responded that blending and braiding was very helpful, and to some extent the IRTs as well, noting that the IRTs were where the blending/braiding happened. They also offered that blending/braiding was harder after VR went to Order of Selection; they could not offer resources beyond what they had available under those restrictions.

Evaluating the Hawaii Round 6 DEI is difficult because of the myriad challenges and changes that the program underwent as well as the long period of time when we were unsuccessful in gathering current information through either attendance at regular DRC teleconferences that were suspended or through review of quarterly reports, where insufficient detail was available to us to accurately report on their continued progress across all Systems Change Coding Scheme domains. In addition, we were unsuccessful in extracting and analyzing Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) data to substantiate individual outcomes attributable to the project. Although we conducted follow-up remote training for the new DRC cadre on the purpose and process of the independent evaluation, including a tutorial on entering data into the Participant Tracking System, our contact with and information about the progress of DRCs was limited.

Despite these considerations, there is much to commend and also to be appreciated in the Hawaii DEI effort. They addressed their lack of full-time equivalent DRCs by creatively co-tasking DRCs with both Round 8 and Round 6 responsibilities at higher full-time equivalents. Their partner, the Center on Disability Services at the University of Hawaii, has been with DEI since Round 2, is well-respected for its expertise in CE and other DEI practices, and makes its team accessible across the islands with regular site visits. It is also a T/TA team that understands how the pace of life and the importance of role relationships on the islands can affect the culture of work and thereby nuance the delivery of formal training. DEI leadership noted that their Round 6 grant was a game-changer and that they expected that, because of the introduction of DEI SDSs at participating AJCs and the partnerships they developed, IRTs and blending and braiding will continue. "*With all the changes and bringing in partners and the blending and braiding, we have WIOA funding and VR for those persons who qualify. For youth we have DEI Round 8. If we can find apprenticeships programs, that would be good. We have summer youth programs from grants*."

While the project did not develop a strong familiarity and working knowledge of CE, leadership noted that using some elements of CE helped catalyze a more person-centered approach to serving people with disabilities at their AJCs. As one leader offered, "*We want to get into a less intense kind of Customized Employment. Everyone is supposed to be doing assessment and 'Discovery' is assessing. Maybe we don't understand Customized Employment fully*."

Although by most objective standards it may seem that Hawaii Round 6 was not as successful as they had hoped, it is apparent that some significant gains were made despite their implementation challenges. Perhaps the impact of the Hawaii Round 6 DEI is best expressed by a member of its leadership team who said: "*It was a valuable program. It extended awareness of a talent pool that people didn't know about. That generated more interest in our work. It increased awareness. We're sold on it. The governor's office is sold on it, too. We have a connection with that. Without the DEI grants, we wouldn't have this awareness of employment of JSWDs. It takes ongoing persistent work and effort to make people aware of the situation*."

D. State: Iowa; Focus Area: Adults with Disabilities

i. Stated Goals and Objectives

Iowa has been active with each of its DEI grants, including collaborating with operations managers, supervisors, employers and WIOA partners. DRCs report limited access to education and training for JSWDs and *"many stigmas"* that hinder their hiring. DRCs and Employment Specialists focus job seekers' skills and access to accommodations. Individuals interested in employment and/or training meet first with a DRC to discuss available support services and potential barriers that may include limited literacy, employment experience and/or outstanding adjudication and/or fines. Some job seekers are transferred to VR to prepare for work or to retain employment through job coaching, while others may enroll in internships and/or work-based learning opportunities to acclimate to new work environments. A lot of what happens when individuals enroll in DEI depends on where each job seeker is in the workforce development system. Some job seekers enter the workforce development system through Iowa Works where they go through an integration process that includes registering with the AJC and determining what level and type of service each individual requires.

Many Iowa job seekers connect with local community colleges to engage in academic and/or Career Pathways services. Individuals with blindness or autism, for example, may receive instruction on desktop technology such as operating printers. Others may learn soft-skills to engage with colleagues and function within a certain work environment. DRCs play a leadership role in this process by helping JSWDs find employment and training. Their role is to collaborate with job seekers to determine their level of interest in employment and training services and help them reach their goals of employment, housing and/or transportation.

All Iowa DRCs are Certified Work Incentive Counselors (CWICs) that meet with WDA leaders once per month to discuss the influx of JSWDs and their employment and training needs. Some DRCs prepare quarterly reports to state workforce agencies, Title I Adult Dislocated workers and youth operations managers in the three Iowa WDAs. While one Supervisory DRC oversees the project, all of the DRCs and Employment Specialists serve JSWDs. The latter is more of a subject matter expert that oversees the intake, training and job placement processes for a given WDA, than a Case Management oriented DRC. Iowa also implements WIOA services across the state through a referral system that uses multiple AJCs and their core partners. The services that are provided depend primarily on the type of disability and level of severity of each JSWDs, as well as their career plans and interests. DRCs also collaborate *"on how to help JSWDs"* depending on their stated needs and concerns while concerns related to compliance and accessibility depend on the needs of each job seeker with support from a DRC or Employment Specialist.

DRCs also review partner locations to ensure that they are accessible, both physically and programmatically. Communications with partners within the treatment WDAs are monitored to ensure that they are available to all JSWDs and avoid duplication of staff and services. Partners include WILA Adult and WILA Youth services for the blind, Youth Development Services,

Adult Education and Literacy, the Department of Collections and WIOA mandated partners. Iowa provides full-day training for job seekers, including tours of local businesses and occupational role-playing related to workplace accessibility and etiquette.

Iowa collaborates with the local prison system where incarcerated individuals with disabilities comprise over 80% of all inmates in the state. In order to identify these individuals before they are released, DRCs and community service providers discuss each job seeker's employment related interests as well as barriers to employment, which provides information that can help individuals prepare for employment. During this process, job seekers may attend job fairs, practice interviewing skills and prepare to answer specific questions about their background and work experience for employers. DRCs facilitate this process by meeting with each job seeker that enrolls in a WDA to discuss their employment backgrounds and interests.

ii. Proposed Service Delivery Strategies

DRCs focus on systems change by creating universally accessible opportunities for job training and employment. As an adult-serving state, Iowa implements services that are supportive of Career Pathways training and TTW. Iowa's Service Delivery Strategies (SDS) includes IRTs, Asset Development and Blending/Braiding of Resources. IRTs are used to convene DRCs, Employment Specialists and WIOA partners to identify and align services and supports for JSWDs and leverage public and private resources. Blending/braiding of resources is another essential component of this process that includes leveraging resources for Benefits Planning, Partnerships and Collaborations with WIOA mandated partners, and training on Financial Literacy and Asset Development strategies. These SDS are integrated and aligned with multiple disability and employment grants and their funding streams to broaden the impact and reach of DEI and WIOA services. Iowa also has created a region-wide team whose tasks is to discuss business service issues from job training to job placement, soft skills, employment opportunities and enrollment in TTW.

Most Iowa WDAs provide pre-employment classes at Correctional facilities that include mock interviews, connections with employers for enrollment in work release programs, access to mini-job fairs including reverse job fairs in which job seekers provide information to prospective employers. Having access to a DRC helps employers and HR directors develop training programs on disability etiquette, soft-skills and building relationships with Correctional facility staff that eventually engage with the WDA to provide employment and related services.

Initially, there was some resistance to the idea of a Correctional facility work release program through the DEI. However, WDA and correctional facility leaders became more open to the idea "*and walls kind of came-down."* The program was inspired by a partnership of both agencies, despite initial push-back. More recently, the program expanded to include integrated industry teams with community support services divided up into sectors to promote the employment of JSWDs, connect them with local employers and determine their needs with regard to employee skills and interests. Along with the WDAs, *"we kind of jump started what is now established through the Workforce Development Board by partnering with our WIOA partners, Correctional Facilities and community-based agencies."*

Iowa also helps job seekers develop Reverse Career Fairs through its Business Engagement staff. Reverse Career Fairs allow job seekers to develop informational documents to share with employers as they peruse fair booths to learn about each job candidate, their occupational interests and employment background. Job seekers also have opportunities to attend business tours and discussions about the hiring process, accommodations, work environment and wages. This information is collected and used in job search classes for individuals that come to an AJC interested in employment.

"In our office, we have a great staff that is willing to support our JSWDs as people just walk in and ask for information from the administrative staff. They then make an appointment to meet with us. A number of people come in right off the street and we're very well-versed in how to begin the process that eventually leads to employment."

"You know, the thing about our region is that we have a large area, and so because of that, with the barriers that some of our clients have, we have to be out of the office quite a bit. I think that makes the staff equipped, trained and ready to help people who walk in the door, because we're not always going to be here."

iii. Proposed Outcomes:

- Partnerships and collaborations include adjudicated individuals, blind individuals, individuals with psychiatric diagnoses and former sex offenders.
- Increased awareness and involvement in supporting JSWDs toward independent futures;
- Achieve the following individual outcomes: access to benefits counseling, job coaching, support services (e.g. transportation, child care, housing etc.), access to community-based agencies, soft-skills development;
- Reverse employment fairs in which individuals provide information to employers regarding their skills, interests and work experience.
- DRCs function as systems change agents, case managers, facilitators and mentors;
- A collaboratively engaged approach to workforce development that includes a collaboration of DRCs and Employment Specialists, numerous partners from WIOA mandated partners to links to programs for incarcerated individuals with disabilities, sex offenders and individuals with psychiatric diagnoses.

iv. Partnerships and Collaborations:

DRCs receive and distribute information for job seekers through the AJCs. Individuals may have questions about their unemployment support or budgeting that determine the kinds of services and supports that are available to them. By collaboratively engaging with staff throughout the WDA, including DRCs and Employment Specialists, Iowa has access to numerous partners that *"come to the table at the same time to figure out who can best meet the needs of our JSWDs and how we can bring resources from each partner to the table to add value. That's been a huge benefit."* Iowa accesses WIOA and related services through various

partners. This process is facilitated through a referral system that is accessible without visiting an AJC, and as a result, expedites the receipt of services for individuals that have mobility issues, limited transportation and/or other barriers to employment and training.

Iowa also operates a region-wide DAC that includes multiple partners. A standing committee was formed in 2017 to focus on macro-level issues such as job availability, in-demand jobs, Career Pathways training and support services provided by community-based agencies. A subcommittee of the DAC also provides outreach to partners and individual job seekers when they complete an application that enrolls them in the WDA and ensures that the AJC has up to date information on their employment status. Business services teams, which are tasked with outreach to local employers, use Title I adult/youth, dislocated worker, Wagner-Peyser, VR services, Adult Basic Education and Department for the Blind resources. These services include accommodations such as accessible work-spaces and software.

Iowa also identifies JSWDs through entities that serve individuals with disabilities from residential to day treatment programs that provide support to sex offenders, SSA beneficiaries, TANF recipients and other individuals that have barriers to employment and training. Business services teams focus on employee skills, training opportunities and managing or retaining employees with disabilities that may benefit from customized employment strategies such as job sharing and task reassignment. Through a customized employment process, job seekers, in collaboration with an employer, establish employment conditions that are necessary for their success.

DRCs acknowledged that there are numerous opportunities for collaborations through both WIOA mandated and non-managed partners. DRCs often facilitate new partnerships and collaborations by *"First, recommending a certain need for a given customer. Who can provide or meet this job seekers' need at this time?"* Partners then have an opportunity to discuss what a tailored plan for a given job seeker might look like. In some instances, a job seeker may not be eligible for one program, but would be eligible for another program; *"We look at the big picture needs of each job seeker and figure out with all the entities involved who can contribute funds to the services this job seeker needs."* Co-enrollment is necessary in many situations because job seekers are often in more than one program and may require multiple services. It also allows DRCs to work bring all partners to the table. DRCs commented that *"it's ultimately the key to any job seeker's success."*

Access to WIOA has effectively expanded the availability of services. DRCs emphasize planning services locally through the WDA and bringing WIOA mandated partners into the discussion as they arrange resources and supports for each JSWD. According to several DRCs, initially, with the Disability Program Navigator it seemed to be a separate initiative that functioned autonomously. DEI and WIOA however, are now very integrated into the package of available services. *"That's definitely the biggest change we've encountered."*

Iowa however, does not always rely on its DRCs as the subject matter experts. When Employment Specialists or other staff needs information on how to assist an individual, *"that's when we go to the DRC. It's not at all immediately.*" They place many individuals with disabilities into employment without ever getting to a DRC. This process expedites access to

employment and subject matter experts such as DRCs can be part of the process, but only when they are needed for discussions about specific accommodations and/or suggestions for training or enrollment in TTW. Etiquette is another issue that is reviewed with staff on a continuous basis to make the AJC environment *"comfortable and inviting to all JSWDs."*

v. Employer Partnerships:

Iowa partners with local colleges and community-based agencies. There's an extensive list of about 30 individuals along with a county coordinating agency for service providers (CPS) that addresses issues from DEI grant expenditures to flexible spending accounts, TTW and the specific needs of a given WDA. Iowa has also created outreach materials such as brochures that advertise employer events and meetings that resonate with the business community with the goal of creating more collaborative relationships with the DEI and AJCs. Iowa is also supportive of the business community and when any member of the DEI or AJC community goes out and speaks with employers, they present information on behalf of the entire workforce development system to increase the number of partners involved in the development and implementation of services; *"that's an ever-growing aspect of how we do business services in the region."*

However, partnerships with the various WIOA partners, has been mixed. According to some DRCs, core partners understand that they are expected to collaborate with DEI and WIOA. However, there are some partners who feel as if their services are too multi-faceted that providing information on all of the available WIOA services would be too much information for employers. Iowa's WIOA referral system coordinates each individual's specific needs. Sometimes it's a meeting with one job seeker or multiple job seekers that engage with local employers at the AJC to identify employment opportunities that fit their skills and interests.

Employers don't want to be *"bombarded with 20 people at one time asking for information about employment opportunities and hiring issues."* In most cases, employers want to know that they can work collaboratively with each AJC and WIOA partner to ensure that job seekers are placed in an appropriate training and employment situation. Iowa is focused on getting people into training and employment that can build their repertoire of skills and services in a way that meets the needs of local employers. Iowa is focused on Career Pathways training which includes partnerships with WIOA service providers and businesses that lead to the development of skill-based programs that train job seekers to do a certain job and develop soft skills that help them acclimate to their new employment situation.

The implementation of Career Pathways training varies for most job seekers. Initially, there tends to be barriers to getting a job seeker to engage in the employment process, including the selection of an appropriate training program. Iowa facilitates this process by involving additional WIOA and non-WIOA partners in an IRT to obtain basic services and resources such as transportation, childcare and access to community-based agencies. Needless to say, Iowa DRCs and job seekers meet barriers during this process. Disability is always a factor as DRCs often discuss physical and/or psychiatric challenges to employment and/or career futures. Equipped with more resources through an IRT, partners tend to get more involved in the process of identifying and providing resources; *by putting more heads together, we can do a better job of supporting JSWDs."*

"We're going to have to stay more general, define each employer's needs and then bring in the partners that can provide more specific information. We need to max-out all the training opportunities we have. But one thing that is often missing is Work-Based learning opportunities, like on the job training and apprenticeships. That needs to be added."

With regard to Career Pathways training, most DRCs agreed it is necessary to have access to *"on and off ramps"* to ensure that each job seeker has *"temporary pathways"* that allows them to have entry points where they can begin the training process and take a respite from it. Initially, Iowa was focused on two year programs but recognized the need for short-term training opportunities, work-based learning and on-ramps and off-ramps that allow job seekers to meet both their personal and career goals.

"I would just add also that there's a lot of hand-holding. Job seekers can potentially need a basic level of support as far as confidence to get started. I think there should be a good one on one talk with each job seeker. It's face to face at times and there's definitely hand-holding involved in helping them along the way."

"We gained a lot of knowledge from NDI technical assistance. My only feedback is that sometimes the training is not as localized as we would have liked. Some of the materials could have been maybe more geared towards Iowa. Otherwise, they were very helpful. That would be my feedback of the technical assistance."

vi. DEI Services:

Case management is a primary component of DEI. It appears to be a more important component of the employment process then a job placement or enrollment in a Career Pathways. Case management with a ticket holder includes a considerable amount of support before focusing on work incentives and employment. DRCs often use a modified Discovery process which is an evidence-based alternative to standardized assessments and evaluations and is closely aligned with person centered planning that involves getting to know an individual before supporting them in developing a plan for employment.

Initially, Iowa used automatic ticket assignment to identify TTW beneficiaries. However, this approach did not take into consideration that not all beneficiaries are eager to transition to full-time. Currently, Iowa is focused on working with individuals *"who want to better their situation and/or seek additional or new employment opportunities."* DRCs engage individuals in the process of Discovery which begins with case management and WIOA services that may be needed by newly enrolled job seekers. For example, Benefits Planning and IRTs are central to the process of employment as some TTW beneficiaries and JSWDs have not worked in many years and may need basic support services as well as an understanding of how their benefits will be affected if they return to work. Beneficiaries that are interested in TTW also have access to presentations and one-on-one discussions with DRCs and/or Employment Specialists who can explain the benefits of the program and discuss specific SSA guidelines. For Iowa, success with TTW includes strategic support services designed to help one individual at a time access DEI services and service delivery strategies, instead of many individuals engaged in a group setting.

Iowa DEI service delivery strategies emphasize IRTs and Asset Development Services. The latter were combined to include services from DRCs, Human Immune Deficiency (HIV) service providers and the National Working Positive Coalition to engage individuals in Career Pathways training. Some DRCs also focus on systems change designed to improve AJC accessibility, upgrade the skills of Employment Specialists, and provide case management services, benefits planning, job training and work incentives for SSA beneficiaries. DRCs also train Employment Specialists to provide better access to WIOA services following a protocol that collects information on each participant's employment and related skills and career plans. Some JSWDs also engage in a detailed career planning process to identify their key interests, create a career portfolio, enroll in literacy skills assessments and expose individuals with limited employment histories to a wide-range of training opportunities leading to employment.

Blending and braiding of resources is an opportunity for JSWDs and their DRCs "to be at the table" to review each individual's options from DEI services to VR, Title I Adult Services, Dislocated Worker services "or whatever it might be, we all have rules and regulations that govern our programs. We also have opportunities with all of our partners where multiple partners can find a particular service for an individual."

"We actually hold their hand. We're involved, intensively as case managers and maybe that one other person that could be way more beneficial not only to them, but to us. She could be a family member, maybe a DRC or an Employment Specialist. She could be an individual that has successfully enrolled in TTW. As an EN, in the future, we've learned that it's way more important to be able to help a TTW beneficiary. It's not about quantity. It's about quality, I guess."

At one point, we had about 265 people that were ticket eligible. Of that, we had about 70 that were heavily engaged and interested in TTW. The rest were individuals that didn't remain in contact. We didn't know their current status and couldn't get them to respond to us so we were spinning our wheels constantly on those individuals who weren't actively engaged enough to work with us.

In Iowa, TTW beneficiaries sign an employment plan with the WDA that describes a path that includes individuals that are *"on the same route to employment"*. Using the automatic ticket assignment process was less effective than using intensive case management in which DRCs and Employment Specialists identify individuals that appear to be ready to work and reduce or discontinue their SSA benefits. Partnership Plus is a vehicle for accessing ticket beneficiaries during the 90 day waiting period. At the end of the 90-day waiting period, tickets can be transferred to another EN, such as a DEI EN, to access milestone and outcome payments and receive job coaching and/or support services.

"When you're working in TTW partnership and finding is involved, you really need a very, very strong partnership to make that work smoothly, without any hiccups."

Active Resource Coordination brings together resources that are available throughout the WDA for individual clients. IRTs access resources through WIOA mandated and non-mandated partners and DRCs and their clients. Often, job seekers have numerous partners from VR to mental health services to TTW and other local support services. They may also receive support through local colleges that have Disability Program Navigators that provide oversight and support universal access to resources and provide training on disability topics. *"Iowa employment initiative group" merged with its local leadership team comprised of several counselors. As part of the big picture group, customized employment is an integral part of what we do."*

vii. Capacity-Building: DRCs and WIOA Services:

DRCs are encouraged to inquire about family members and friends to establish trust and a willingness to communicate with DRCs and Employment Specialists through Discovery. This process often includes pieces of customized employment (CE) arranged through a team that meets on a quarterly basis to strategize on the implementation of service delivery strategies. Self-employment was implemented at local colleges as well, and local small business development centers collaborated with Title I services to provide entrepreneurial skills that support the development of new businesses. Iowa's Asset Development services cover various approaches to saving or investing in resources, purchasing a home or car, or developing new employment related skills. While these activities are not necessarily primary components of the Iowa DEI, they have been successfully adopted by job seekers interested in accruing resources and skills and enrolling in education and Career Pathways training. Benefits counseling is a key component of employment for SSA beneficiaries. It is provided through certified CWICs that provide information to SSA beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries interested in developing resources through Asset Development and access to support services such as transportation, housing and access to community-based agencies.

Iowa also created integrated industry teams that include five sectors: manufacturing, retail, hospitality, healthcare and construction trades. Job seekers have access to business tours during which they ask questions about hiring, training, accommodations, and the work environment. DRCs have done presentations on Adult Education Literacy and personality assessments and have accessed a program called New Beginnings, which provides counseling for individuals interested in acclimating to the work environment. Iowa also provided presentations at National Youth Symposia that covered Youth Sexual Offender Treatment Programs and a pre-employment training that includes business networking, business relationships and skills for connecting with other job seekers and employers. Iowa reportedly has a high sex offender population and as a result, difficulty finding appropriate housing and employment for these individuals is an impediment. One potential setback is job availability in Iowa's rural areas which continues to be a barrier for all JSWDs.

viii. Promising Practices

Iowa has a partnership with VR. The two agencies have developed working relationships in which they share information, resources and expertise so that there are few gaps in services

and that job seekers have access to employment and training services that will best meet their needs. Customized employment is a promising practice that includes a specific set of strategies that incorporates individualized planning and negotiated employment. Discovery is a component of Customized Employment. It is a strength-based approach that collects information about an individual's interests, skills and employment goals. It is designed to help job seekers develop opportunities for employment that meet their financial and social needs. Job carving, self-employment, job restructuring, and negotiated job descriptions are all components of Customized Employment that are used by DRCs to increase the likelihood of long-term employment. Iowa JSWDs have been self-employed, employed as office assistants, support for the culinary/hospitality industry and assistants in variety stores, pharmacies and school systems.

ix. Sustainability

Iowa leadership has focused on sustainability for the future of the DEI by integrating DEI services and strategies into the AJC. Given the focus towards work-based learning, Career Pathways and case management, most job seekers eventually find employment that's sustainable. Iowa also sustained some of its DRCs through TTW resources which have been focus of the state's TTW activities; *"building sustainability once the grant's gone and to be able to keep the DRCs region-wide is a key goal."*

Most Iowa TTW revenue is used to sustain the DRCs through TTW revenue. Iowa had three DRCs which was reportedly a very important resource for participating WDAs. If Career Pathways training becomes unavailable due to limited resources, opportunities abound through on the job training and/or employer-partnerships that provide direct employment or apprenticeship opportunities. Iowa has also prepared an updated regional strategic plan that incorporates business services, career and skill development systems, and collaborations across WDAs. Another focus is experiential work-based learning, which is a process through which individual job seekers explore and observe how employees engage in certain occupations and how they function throughout a typical work day. Iowa is expected to sustain assistive technology, work experiences and on-the-job training for individuals *"now that they have a core vision of how to easily talk with AJC staff."*

IRTs continue to be frequently used to access resources for job seekers enrolling in DEI. The majority of job seekers are VR clients and/or receiving services from community-based agencies. There is also a sizeable population of Veterans with disabilities that benefit from the use of an IRTs to access WIOA mandated partners and community-based agencies.

Iowa also collaborates with the public transportation system in Iowa which has been a barrier to job seekers returning to work. Because the transportation system has limited availability and limited accessibility and limited access on weekends, Iowa DRCs met with transportation management and allowed them to provide training opportunities for job seekers who need help with the transportation system to travel from home to work. Training on the Iowa transportation system was provided by DRCs. It includes information on fare changes, routes specific to the needs of DEI job seekers, and best practices for accessing local bus and train routes.

E. State: New York; Focus Area: Adults with Disabilities

i. Stated Goals and Objectives

New York was the recipient of DEI Rounds 1 and 4 grants, with each grant focusing on asset development, IRTs, and blending and braiding resources. New York's Round 6 "Pathways to Employment" grant sought to build upon the successes of its prior Rounds and its existing Career Pathways (CP) programs for low-income adults by adapting these programs in high-growth regions that include New York's two participating workforce development areas (WDAs): Herkimer/Madison/Oneida (HMO) and the Capital Region. Integrated services—including IRTs and individual learning plans (ILPs)—were to assist JSWDs to obtain CP- and industry-focused employment in the growth sectors of health care, technology and manufacturing, and to enhance basic occupational skills.

In addition, the NY Round 6 grant intended to strengthen and sustain coordination across systems by embedding Universal Design (e.g., alternative assessments), accommodations, assistive technologies (AT), support services, and productive partnerships within workforce development and CP systems. New York proposed to serve 300 JSWDs over the life of the project, improving the job placement outcomes for 185 of these individuals who complete their CP in combination with stackable credential-based education offered through the community college system. Job seekers who are Veterans with disabilities were to receive service priority. Engaging employers was also a priority and the workforce needs of businesses were incorporated via labor market analyses. New York also noted in their application that its Round 6 grant was strengthened by investment in a robust, cross-system data management platform— NY State Employment Services System (NYESS))—allowing tracking of employment outcomes of jobseekers served through the workforce development system.

Fundamentally, NY proposed addressing systems change for JSWDs by strengthening cross-agency partnerships that improve CP outcomes for JSWDs. Participating AJCs and their DRCs would partner with existing CP partners including TANF Employment Service providers, school districts, community colleges, and Adult Basic Education, and also recruit new partners, such as vocational rehabilitation counselors, supported employment providers, and certified work incentive coordinators (CWICs). Employers were closely involved in sector-based strategies by the DEI's implementation of employer engagement strategies. DEI practices were intended to be sustained through institutionalization of IRTs and disability service provision awareness within AJCs; bolstering of partnerships; dissemination of best practices statewide through media, conferences, and knowledge-sharing products (e.g., about developing Memoranda of Understanding and staff development plans); integration of WIOA, Wagner Peyser, and TTW; and CP-focused state and other funding.[48]

Consistent with ETA's guidance, NY Round 6's "Pathways" project proposed to achieve six major goals to create improved systems serving JSWDs:

[48] NY DEI Round 6 proposal

- **Build cross-agency partnerships and clarify roles** by "embedding essential leadership, expertise, resources, and supports from the WIOA, Wagner Peyser and Title IV/Vocational Rehabilitation agencies" at both the state and local levels;
- **Identify sector or industry and engage employers** by "expanding strategies for engaging businesses around hiring disparities in the disability population and developing collaborative plans driven by business needs";
- **Design education and training programs** with emphasis on "embedding Universal Design within workforce development and career pathways systems," and "developing coordinated, flexible systems accessible to the greatest number of users";
- **Identify funding needs and sources** by blending and braiding funds at the state and local level, including "identifying and leveraging the funding sources that come with each individual participant (including TTW) to both stretch grant funds and to leverage formula funds through co-enrollment strategies that build system capacity to continue career pathway work";
- **Align policies and programs** by integrating, "developing, and deploying financial resources augmented by improved leadership, goal-setting, and shared accountability to support the state's education and training systems that measurably increase inclusive career pathways program development, delivery, and student completion," as well as through a large-scale outreach and "messaging campaign" that harnesses social, digital, and traditional media to nurture "disability diversity confidence"; and
- **Measure systems change and performance** by cultivating cross-systems "data pipelines" that facilitate "quality data collection and analysis, resulting in both qualitative and quantitative reports on systems change."[49]

DEI state agency partners include Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) and its advisory council, the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, the Office for Mental Health, the Mental Health Association, the Olmstead Cabinet, New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB), and the WIOA Accessibility Workgroup. DEI local agency partners include WIOA partners, AJC Business Services, WIBs, community colleges, chambers of commerce, training providers, hospitals and long-term care agencies, community-based disability-services organizations, Departments of Social Services (DSS), advocacy groups, and economic development agencies.

ii. Proposed Service Delivery Strategies

At the services level, the NY Round 6 DEI intended to:

- Increase JSWD access to WIOA core services (including employee recruitments and industry-connected job fairs) and support services, such as post-placement counseling, benefits counseling, job coaching, student services (e.g., financial aid, tutoring, and life skills), and transportation, childcare, and housing assistance
- Guarantee that AJCs are accessible in full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), with the most up-to-date AT and availability of individual rooms for privacy when conducting assessments

[49] NY DEI Round 6 Proposal pg. 6

- Furnish AJC and partner staff training on strategies for individuals with learning, cognitive and physical disabilities
- Based on an individualized "eco-map," DRCs and IRTs would implement accessible curricula and an ILP that form the basis for an Individual, strengths-based Work Plan, and addresses key retention issues (e.g., emergency planning, building a support network, budgeting, and coping)
- Ensure that DRCs function as case managers, facilitators, mentors, and service navigators for each participant; coordinate with appropriate agencies, services, and referrals based on JSWD barriers (including via Partnership Plus); and train AJC staff to assist JSWDs.
- Assign community college students to suitable Learning Community Clusters, which involve contextualized learning
- Use braided resources for individual job education, training and employment support by supplementing training costs payable through DEI and TTW, as well as WIOA Title I funds[50]

Ultimately, systems and services level improvements and coordination were designed so that JSWDs could optimize training and skills enhancement to earn stackable credentials that enable them to advance along multiple career ladders (e.g., from Certified Nurses' Aide/Assistant to Licensed Practical Nurse), earn living wages, and achieve economic independence.

To achieve their systems and individual-level outcomes, DRCs in each WDA were to function as both systems change facilitators and case managers, including through leveraging DEI and/or Individual Training Accounts and VR resources. New York also has a robust TTW program, where the state as the lead entity retains twenty percent of TTW revenue for management, with the remainder reallocated to WDAs for service enhancements and program sustainability. Blending and braiding of resources was another essential component, which included leveraging resources for benefits planning, partnerships and collaboration with WIOA-mandated partners, and training on financial literacy and asset development. These processes were integrated and aligned with multiple disability and employment grants and their funding streams to broaden the impact and reach of DEI and WIOA services. The below participant testimony illustrates the life-changing impact of such synergy:

I don't know where I'd be without [the DRC and DEI]. My belongings were in the driveway. I went into the AJC and asked for help. They got me a place to stay. I was willing to sleep in my car at the AJC. And they were going to help me because I wanted their help. Anything I needed they were there for me.

iii. Proposed Outcomes

[50]NY State Employment Services System (NYESS) administers TTW for NYS: https://nyess.ny.gov › docs › nyessbrochure .

New York's Round 6 targeted individual outcome goals were specified in their proposal as below. According to a progress report for the quarter ending December 31, 2018, the NY Round 6 DEI attained the following individual outcomes relative to their stated performance goals

iv. Implementation Summary

v. Capacity-Building: The Context for Capacity Building

New York has considerable experience from implementing DEI Round 1 and Round 4, which provided a foundation for Round 6. The state was also a pioneer of TTW implementation prior to the implementation of DEI; New York was certified by SSA as a state lead entity for Employment Network creation during the early years of TTW. In addition, the state boasted one of the largest cadres of Disability Program Navigators among all states participating in that federally-sponsored initiative. As a result, New York became a mentor to several DEI grantees, providing information on EN applications, benefits planning, CWIC credentialing, and milestone and outcome payments.

vi. Capacity-Building: DRCs and WIOA Services

To enhance capacity during Round 6, New York established a Project Council that included Workforce Development Board directors, AJC Managers, and representatives from NYSCB, ACCES-VR, and the Independent Living Centers (ILCs). In terms of DEI-sponsored trainings, DRCs arranged tutelage for staff and partners about universal services, ADA, reasonable accommodations, disability etiquette, assistive technology (AT), and TTW. All DRCs were also trained in benefits counseling.

Instead of sending all JSWDs to DRCs, New York created a universal access platform, including larger chairs and screens, specialized keyboards, accessible software, screen readers, and adjustable work stations. One of the participating AJCs saw customers—who were also clients with the State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB)—visit specifically to utilize its video magnifier and closed-circuit television system. Statewide AT updates that occurred during Round 6 were beneficial. NYSCB in particular regarded the upgrades as "really helpful," including by making AJCs "more welcoming" and facilitating job searches. A DRC was also tapped by the Employee Assistance Program to help employees with disabilities at Albany Medical Center with accommodations and community resources. The Technology Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities (TRAID) Program was also utilized to help JSWDs.

Some DRCs also focused on systems change designed to improve AJC accessibility. DRCs trained AJC employment specialists to provide better access to WIOA services, following a protocol that collected information on each participant's employment and related skills and career plans. DRCs also upgraded the skills of employment specialists, provided case management services, and expedited access to benefits planning counseling, job training and work incentives support for SSA beneficiaries. Some JSWDs also engaged in career planning to identify participants' interests, create a career portfolio, enroll in literacy skills assessments, and expose individuals with limited employment histories to a wide range of training opportunities leading to employment.

AJC staff and partners were also trained on engaging JSWDs living with HIV/AIDS (e.g., disclosure and confidentiality), and on data entry. Moreover, there was ample cross-training with ACCES-VR, NYSCB, ILCs and organizations offering support for JSWDs with HIV/AIDS. As well, ACCES-VR offers weekly service orientations on disability employment topics at AJCs.

In a final call, one DRC mentioned how he was overextended during the grant, suggesting that New York could build more capacity to serve JSWDs in treatment regions.

vii. DEI Services

Throughout the grant period, DRCs worked with AJC staff and partner agencies to identify, recruit, and enroll JSWDs into CP programs and TTW, including through referrals from ACCES-VR, local service agencies, colleges, and schools. DRCs developed IRTs and engaged in blending and braiding of resources—often with ACCES-VR—to provide CP training and access to WIOA services for SSA beneficiaries and other individuals with disabilities. DRCs were able to leverage many community resources, cultivated positive relationships with partners, and took advantage of DEI's flexible structure to generate innovative strategies.

On a regular basis, DRCs communicated directly with JSWDs by telephone or in person to discuss the benefits of TTW and CP programs. DRCs also conducted assessments of aptitude and/or literacy and numeracy, reviewed employment histories, and accessed benefits planning services. AJCs also provided bus passes to JSWDs with transportation barriers, and helped some clients obtain driver's licenses. In concert, all of these elements enabled DRCs to successfully serve clients with significant barriers (e.g., mental health issues and criminal justice involvement) and very little paid work experience.

Mandated partners accessed WIOA services and partner programs such as Career and Technical Education services through local community colleges, and also worked with the Alpine Rehabilitation and Nursing Center in Herkimer County and an AJC to establish a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training at Alpine's facility. TANF—a required WIOA partner—provided employment supports for individuals returning to work.

Local areas had considerable flexibility in how they utilized their training and related resources. In some cases, JSWDs pursued available job opportunities that required limited training and offered minimum wages. Others opted for more robust training and services, including support in employment preparation and acquisition through IRTs, and in leveraging supportive resources such as CA$H (Creating Assets, Savings and Hope), an asset development program that helps individuals with financial literacy, tax preparation, and asset-building.

New York also facilitated systems change by cultivating a level of comfort among partner agencies in serving people with significant barriers, including obstacles related to language, poverty and/or disability. DRCs were tasked with addressing systems change and case management support for individuals with visual, psychiatric, and physical disabilities. New York Round 6 was also unique in prioritizing JSWDs living with HIV/AIDS, and was able to successfully place multiple JSWDs with significant barriers (e.g., substance abuse and criminal justice involvement).

Other service delivery strategies included asset development, ILPs, work-based learning opportunities and apprenticeships. Asset development included utilization of a "Hand on Banking" tool, support from Volunteer Income Tax Assistance and MyFreeTaxes, and workshops on TTW. Apprenticeships involved placement assistance from DRCs and support from HIV service providers. Further, the National Working Positive Coalition was pivotal in engaging individuals in CP training. Regarding customized employment (CE), the state lead emphasized the role of business services in conducting customized recruitment and matching JSWDs' needs with openings. Otherwise, there was not significant activity with CE, nor was there with self-employment.While there is evidence DRCs are helping to build better linkages through systems, the balance between DRCs' attention to systems and direct services is more heavily weighted towards directly assisting program participants. Based on conversations with the DRCs, AJC staff, and partners, it was apparent that the DRC-led systems change activities related primarily to partnership building and to training staff and coordinating cross-trainings. DRCs offered that it will be challenging for AJC employment specialists to sustain the level of individual attention that they provide to DEI participants. However, it is apparent that DRCs are modeling what it takes to serve JSWDs successfully, and participants are demonstrating that with proper supports and the use of DEI practices they can succeed in career education, training, and employment.

With respect to TTW, treatment regions are under contract with the statewide administrative EN. Two DRCs had limited experience with TTW, while others provided CWIC services at ACCES-VR. DRCs were instructed to focus on "quality and not quantity" for Ticket assignments. One DRC also attended monthly meetings about Partnership Plus. According to December 2018 NYESS reports, treatment regions each generated more than $177,000 in TTW revenue.

We did not find much evidence that a systemic approach to integrating Universal Design (UD) was being implemented as the grantee proposed. One example of New York's intent to test and demonstrate UD principles was development of a customized AJC workshop for a blind customer at an AJC. However, despite New York's intentions to integrate more UD in each pilot site—such as utilizing SMART Boards to enable multi-sensory workshops—the state was hindered by DOL/ETA and DEI regulations (i.e., prior approval was needed to make AT purchases over $5,000, and equipment purchases could not be made in the last year of DEI). Consequently, we find that systemic training on UD principles and targeted application of its practices were not implemented during the grant period.

viii. Partnerships and Collaborations

As described in a quarterly report, New York's core mission of the Round 6 DEI project was to implement systems change through building cross-agency partnerships, clarifying roles, and engaging employers. New York made significant efforts to engage partners serving JSWDs.

The grantee bolstered its collaborative arrangement with ACCES-VR. Through a partnership with ACCES-VR and DEI WDAs that began in Round 1, State Leads and DRCs developed working relationships with SSA personnel. By the end of Round 6, ACCES-VR counselors were present within treatment AJCs at least twice monthly.

Partnership development also focused on engaging NYSCB to better serve its customers through DEI; on collaborating with the Office of Temporary Disability Assistance to serve TANF recipients who meet DEI criteria; and on serving customers of ACCES-VR and ILCs. In concert with these partners, DRCs developed jobseeker groups that led to benefits planning sessions and monthly meetings. These events helped "people with visual impairments feel comfortable to come [to AJCs]…meet the staff, and eventually get them registered" for services. Individuals with visual impairments described AJC managers as "very supportive." However, one DRC suggested in a final call that his connection with NYSCB could be stronger; he indicated the same about the local ILC.

Nonetheless, the state lead asserted that enhanced collaboration with ACCES-VR and NYSCB resulted in much improved experiences and opportunities for JSWDs:

[AJCs] knew about ACCES-VR. They knew about NYSCB. But now [those agencies] are actually coming to the AJCs and we are working together for these participants. So [JSWDs] are feeling more comfortable and welcomed. And we're getting them jobs quicker, with more opportunities.

The Northeast Association for the Blind was also a crucial partner, helping to improve access to DEI services for JSWDs who are blind or visually impaired.

In addition, The DEI State Lead and DRCs worked with the Department of Health and the AIDS Institute to provide a train-the-trainer opportunity designed to serve people with HIV/AIDS. The training involved material intended to allay the concerns that people living with HIV may have when considering employment. The training also offered guidance on providing trauma-informed services for people living with HIV. Other training topics included health maintenance services, self-disclosure and confidentiality issues, identification of gaps in work histories, concerns about discrimination by employers, and access to health care coverage and other benefits.

DRCs from one region connected with the Damien Center, a local agency that supports those living with AIDS and HIV through counseling, food preparation, and access to medication. One participant commented:

"It's great! The Damien Center, a local agency, is a partner and they're not WIOA-mandated."

DRCs also sought partnerships after finding that AJC staff were less well-informed about recognizing and accommodating hidden disabilities within their Centers. The DRC located at the Herkimer/Madison/Oneida AJC co-facilitated a training on trauma-informed care with the local area Psychiatric Center to assist employment specialists to better understand the impact of those disabilities on employment success.

The Legal Aid Society (LAS) also became a DEI partner. A LAS liaison helped JSWDs fill out Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) applications, building off a TANF-DEI collaboration. As well, a LAS lawyer attended DEI meetings to help individuals with HIV/AIDS with SSA periodic medical review requirements.

Referrals from Northeast Career Planning for the Disabled, Inc. also helped to place several JSWDs into employment. A CNA program partnered with healthcare facilities through a "Workforce Collaboration" facilitated by the Director of Training and Programs at Empowered Pathways to help develop career pathways. This effort also included collaboration between Oneida County Workforce programs and Oneida County Department of Social Services to help local agencies serve JSWDs in the community. In addition, one treatment site partnered with the Veterans Administration by inviting veterans' employment specialists to tour an AJC, and suggesting collaboration on TTW and AT.

A DRC elaborated on the fruits of DEI training facilitated by a partnership between an AJC and a local community college:

We have a lot of JSWDs in training. We have 9 who have completed or nearly completed job training. There's a program between Onondaga Community College and the center. The AJC did CNC training for 10 people for free and also got employers involved in the process. The customers chose the employer and the latter decided what they wanted in an employee. Now they're doing apprenticeships. One in particular has been a huge success. We have Healthcare classroom training. Manufacturing is an employer here.

There are also more practical needs that are fulfilled by partners—such as the Department of Social Services—including clothing, furniture, transportation, housing, and childcare. WDA staff also attended business council meetings, in which business services representatives discussed opportunities for training and employment and events like employment fairs and asset development summits.

DRCs reflected during their interviews upon how Round 6 strengthened connections, which led to better information-sharing with staff and customers, enhanced access to services like benefits planning and community resources, and productive relationships with other agencies, training providers, and employers. Likewise, ACCES-VR reported more exposure and contacts within AJCs, facilitated by the presence of DRCs. In a post-grant call, the state lead pinpointed improved communication and referral processes between AJCs and community agencies as one of the grant's defining achievements.

The development of partnerships is a strong feature of the NYS DEI across both treatment sites. Linkages are primarily facilitated through efforts of DRCs, and most are informal rather than formalized relationships. The next step of joint participation in resource allocation (e.g., braiding funds) and developing memoranda of understanding to formalize roles and buy-in has not yet taken place. While New York's DEI partnerships achieved the purpose of implementing DEI services and contributed to achievement of its benchmarks—and are noteworthy by reaching out to agencies serving people with HIV/AIDS—the lack of formalized

cross-systems collaboration does raise questions about how well the arrangements will sustain after the DEI ends.

ix. Customer Focus

We conducted a participant focus group at each of the two treatment sites. Individuals who participated in these sessions had positive comments about their experiences in the program and about using AJC services. Some participants referenced the help they were receiving in accessing education and training leading to a career path. Most commented on how the DRCs treated them with respect and followed up quickly and consistently with communication and direct assistance. The below quote from a participant is representative:

I am very excited because things are working so well in my life. I am able to work around my own schedule. As soon as I pass my RN, I can bring my Ticket anywhere. [In terms of] moral support, the DRC is my biggest cheerleader. Her direction—with me coming into the office and writing letters and proofreading—not that I need to be told what to say, but I needed that guidance to become more professional. She helped me to coordinate with all these people

DRCs were a key resource for AJCs, working directly with customers with diverse barriers to employment who accessed AJCs and disclosed a disability. One DRC described the process of working directly with JSWDs as below:

Any person who comes in the center who discloses any disability will speak to me. I can help those who are interested in healthcare with trying to get a job or get retrained for that field. I also work with ex-offenders. With the Round 6 funding, I've worked more with ACCES-VR to help customers get training and reach career goals. I also work with the local community college. They refer students who have special needs or problems and other people who need help.

DRCs offered more than systems and services knowledge; they were empathetic listeners, allowing DEI participants to relate their own self-assessment of strengths and needs and their own hopes and goals for future employment. One DRC testified, "It's good to hear their story too. You don't just need to go straight down the questionnaire, sometimes you just let them talk and tell their story."

DRCs' personal attention and customer focus were acknowledged and much appreciated by DEI participants in focus groups. Among the endorsements they provided were the following:

There were hurdles to jump through and the DRC has been very knowledgeable and helpful. She guided me through all the roadblocks I had, [and was] very knowledgeable and empathetic. She goes another mile with me all the time. She makes it work.

DRCs also facilitated meetings with jobseekers to provide group benefits planning sessions for individuals with visual impairments. This allowed individuals to meet DEI staff, and to eventually enroll in DEI and WIOA services. Our data suggests NY Round 6 did well advocating for and supporting AJC customers and other persons with disabilities who were

referred to the project. Data also indicated that AJC managers and staff valued the presence of DRCs at their AJCs. One partner stated:

I think the fact that staff are aware of an individual who can provide more in-depth assistance to these individuals is a big help—someone who can spend more time with these individuals compared to what other staff can spend. It allows that person to meet with someone more in-depth in discussing what their needs are and what services are available for them, compared to a normally scheduled appointment.

x. Employer Partnerships

New York held business council meetings with WDA Boards to build familiarity with and potentially sustain DEI practices. DRCs leaned on Business Service Representatives to facilitate reaching out to local employers to discuss job and on-the-job training (OJT) opportunities, client matches, and tax credits for hiring JSWDs. One treatment region sponsored a reverse job fair, the first such event in the state. Twelve businesses attended, and three JSWDs were engaged for interviews. Additionally, National Disability Employment Awareness Month events proved to be fruitful for engaging employers and promoting the hiring of JSWDs.

At the systems level, robust efforts were made to engage businesses. DEI representatives attended the National Apprenticeship Partner Roundtable in Rome, NY—organized by the American Apprenticeship Initiative—which included 50 local business representatives and a wide range of stakeholders to learn about such topics as the benefits of hosting or becoming an apprenticeship partner, information on tax incentives and funding for OJT opportunities. The Madison County Business Service Representatives provided information on hiring individuals with disabilities and on identifying resources, funding, and support services for individuals with disabilities and their prospective employers.

Although the NY Round 6 proposal indicated the state's employer engagement would result in participants acquiring jobs, evidence suggests the primary outcome from business outreach is that familiarity and collaboration with the DEI is positively affecting some employers' perceptions about people with disabilities in the workplace. Multiple employers talked about how they identified qualified job candidates by connecting with DRCs. One employer looked within its business to determine how it could best retain talent among employees with disabilities already on staff:

At the base of our decision-making to pursue this is we have quality employees with longevity in the system now. Handicapped or not—and I don't mean to sound callous on that either—why would we not invest in them, knowing that they are our future, because they're already invested in us?

xi. Career Pathways

New York's Career Pathways program is organized as a sequence of steps, each of which is associated with a specific credential or job advancement opportunity. The program is designed to enable participants to increase their job skills—including soft skills—and earn a credential

recognized by employers within targeted industries. Support also includes basic literacy and math skills training linked to industry skill standards, and certifications and/or licensing requirements that lead to in-demand jobs. Traditional classroom instruction is combined with other activities, such as contextualized learning, work experiences and internships. Developing partnerships with community colleges and employers is critical to achieving CP goals.

One CP college partner offered that the collaborative relationship between the college and DEI was mutually beneficial, and another example of braiding resources for career-focused education:

The students who come to me want to further their education but they don't know how to do it. I guided them to the DRCs who are great. They helped the students. One got a partial scholarship through his work, but couldn't afford the rest; the DRC was able to help him get money for the rest.

In one treatment region, the DRC nurtured a strong relationship with the nursing coordinator of a Board of Cooperative Educational Services to facilitate CNA training. This site also partnered with a local rehabilitation and nursing center to establish a CNA training.

A DRC from the other treatment region cited DEI training funds as a huge linchpin for successful healthcare pathway completion for JSWDs. This region also explored community health worker internships for DEI enrollees. Another DRC was proud that DEI facilitated JSWDs progressing from working in "Burger King" to working in hospitals.

In addition, New York developed a "soft skills job club" utilizing TTW revenue. New York also was able to fund OJT opportunities at up to ninety percent through DEI, including in manufacturing. All customers we spoke with very involved in their CP process. Though there were a limited range of possible choices—due to the focus on healthcare and manufacturing—the customers seemed all to be very happy with where they were, where they were going, and the process in which they were supported to arrive there.

Altogether, data suggests the NY Round 6 DEI made strong inroads with cross-agency CP partnerships. Consequently, DEI forged increased access for customers with disabilities to credentialing programs that could qualify them for career-level employment within the health care and manufacturing occupational sectors, and potentially other occupations where skills and credentials may be transferable. Moreover, DEI's progress in braiding VR, DEI, AJC, and financial aid funding directed towards CP outcomes appears to suggest that a diversity of JSWDs entering AJCs should have a greater likelihood of obtaining support for credentialed jobs with career potential, rather than entry-level, low wage employment.

xii. Dissemination

Sharing of best practices occurred primarily via conference calls, passing along success stories, and hearing from guest speakers (e.g., from ILCs, the Positive Working Coalition, the Empire Justice Center, and the National Disability Institute [NDI]). Also, both DRCs and AJC partners were proactive in their communication to external partners and potential referral

sources. Partners who became aware of the DEI were eager to refer customers to it. In part, this may be due to the fact that DEI provided easily accessible resources for training and support.

The DEI also contributed to information-sharing on service to youth for an in-state conference, and on creating asset coalitions. One treatment region presented its financial assessment tool during an NDI Community of Practice webinar, and NDI requested information on New York Round 6's curriculum and trauma-informed training for engaging those living with HIV/AIDS and LGBTQIA populations. DRCs also presented on panels with partners, such as on career exploration for students with disabilities at local schools. In essence, the DRCs and AJCs did well to get the word out about DEI and how it can benefit JSWDs. However, we found no evidence of a proactive plan of dissemination aligned with strategic goals for any particular project component (e.g., sustainability, capacity, or employer participation in project leadership). Going forward, associate business services representatives will be key to disseminating practices related to serving and hiring JSWDs, according to the state lead.

xiii. Promising Practices

Description

Admittedly, DEI grantees should incorporate cross-systems partnerships into their strategies as a matter of course.. Nonetheless, it is significant that NY Round 6 opened a wider doorway for potential AJC customers by seeking out referral partners that serve people who are blind, ex-offenders and living with HIV/AIDS. The state also addressed AJCs' difficulties serving people with mental illnesses and other hidden disabilities through training and technical assistance. The DRCs proved capable in providing direct services for people who are often underserved at AJCs, and AJC staff were more comfortable referring this clientele to DRCs. One DRC asserted:

I always say that we help people with some kind of barrier, whether it's language, poverty, disability, etc. I think sometimes by virtue that I'm the DRC, they would just send them to me, and wouldn't even register them like everyone else. It's all about universal access.

A. Essentially, through a determined effort to establish partnerships with agencies whose customers generally did not have success accessing and using AJC services—and augmenting the effort with awareness-building and training to reduce AJC staff anxiety and help them better serve these customers—the DEI laid the groundwork for AJCs to better serve jobseekers with hidden disabilities and those who are blind.

Rationale for its Implementation

AJC staff and DRCs commented that jobseekers with hidden disabilities and those who are blind could be better served if AJC staff understood more about these disabilities, the impact of those disabilities on employment, and strategies for serving such jobseekers effectively. Since the DEI's primary objective is to assist JSWDs in achieving economic self-sufficiency and employment by engaging AJCs, it made sense to prioritize working with agency partners serving various disability demographics, especially populations who confront stigmas like JSWDs do. As

well, Project Council members already had connections with the Damien Center and the New York Aids Coalition.

There is also value to the DEI tapping into the knowledge and partnerships other agencies have developed to facilitate creation of more seamless service systems. For example, seven WDAs across the state provide support services, job training, volunteer opportunities and CP services, including those implemented by NYSCB. NYSCB also offers loans for employment-related items and an independent living program that provides mobility services, rehabilitation teaching, low vision services and devices, social casework and adaptive equipment. Partnering with NYSCB potentially opens the doorway to new resource braiding opportunities. Bringing other partners into alignment with the DEI and AJCs can benefit the partnering organizations as well. DEI's outreach and engagement with agencies serving people who are blind and those with HIV/AIDS means that those jobseekers can potentially benefit from IRTs, CP, and other DEI service delivery strategies.

Why the Practice Could be Considered Promising

Developing partnerships is fundamental for any DEI grantee. However, the focus and energy the NY Round 6 DEI brought to partnership development to widen its reach to JSWDs served by other agencies—who might not otherwise receive such services—is a promising approach with the potential for longer-lasting impact. One DRC described how partnerships could have a direct impact on JSWDs:

There was a flyer that I forwarded to Computers for the Blind. They told me that it wasn't readable. I talked to the DEI State Lead and she ran it up the chain, and that's a change that will hopefully be happening. The Legal Aid Society in this area has become a partner with the WDAs. We now have a liaison that will help JSWDs fill out SNAP applications and send them in. There's a lawyer also who attends meetings with the WDAs. She helps people with HIV/AIDS with the SSA medical review. There are smaller [partnerships] for getting people clothing or furniture. Whenever I meet [a potential partner], I try to let the manager know about them.

A DRC also discussed building upon established partnerships to increase understanding of employment of people with disabilities, such as by conducting disability-related trainings for AmeriCorps and the housing/homeless coalition. One training included discussion of the link between poverty, disability, and employment with social services groups Community Action and Circles Oneida County. There was also a cross-training with Legal Services of NY. As referenced earlier, engaging trainers from a Psychiatric Center to present to AJC staff on the effects of trauma helped AJC employment specialists gain a better appreciation of support needs. One employment specialist reflected on the value of cross-training:

Further, the work that DRCs did with partners helped ensure smoothly coordinated services between partners and the AJC. Outside partners also indicated a significant increase in their knowledge of the AJCs as a consequence of the connecting work of the DRCs, and therefore a greater inclination to actively partner with the workforce development system.

xiv. Challenges

Key challenges included developing trustful, working relationships with JSWDs with significant visual, psychiatric and physical impairments to engage them in services and mentor their progress, while at the same time working to help sensitize AJC staff to JSWDs' particular needs.

Resource constraints also thwarted optimal implementation of DEI practices. One DRC remarked about being overextended in providing both direct and systems-focused work. AJCs have their own constraints; in one instance, CP enrollment had to be curtailed due to a lack of AJC capacity to do career assessment. Despite promising gains made in developing cross-agency collaborations, stakeholders suggested the challenge of losing the DRC role. One partner explained:

JSWDs need someone to believe they can do it. Without someone doing the individual work, people looking for DEI or WIOA services may not get it. I don't think anyone at the Center would really take it over and facilitate the process. But I would at least like to see someone here from a partner agency for a couple days a week that could do benefits planning.

Concerns were also aired about sustaining TTW efforts. Some DRCs worried that beneficiary outreach and demonstrating how TTW can assist employers may dissipate after the grant ends due to the relatively small group of engaged employers. The implication is that developing TTW partnerships can take a lot of time that AJC staff may not have. One AJC staff commented on the need to have more resources dedicated to engaging TTW customers:

I market to agencies and staff to tell them to invite clients on SSI/SSDI, and I talk about benefits, work incentives, etc. Without a point person for it, though, I don't know that anyone could take it over. I often will look around, and realize that I'm the only one…I don't think they realize the funds and the benefit that TTW can provide.

Notwithstanding significant investment in and attention to assistive technology, treatment AJCs also struggled to access or fully optimize AT. Multiple stakeholders expressed a desire for more accessible furniture (e.g., adjustable desks), and issues remain with visual accessibility. Equipment was available in one AJC, but a DRC needed appropriate software to activate this AT. One DRC experienced challenges in engaging partners to resolve these issues.

In a post-grant call, the state lead revealed how DRCs were initially "very frustrated" with the amount of effort needed to identify and establish relationships with existing career pathways systems. DRCs had to spend significant time forming and integrating pathways, including by cultivating relationships with businesses. Still, once connections were made, the CP strategy was effective.

Another impediment to optimal implementation was that one treatment region did not have a partner that serves those living with HIV/AIDS. As a result, this WDA had less engagement with this population.

xv. Sustainability

Perhaps a DEI partner we interviewed framed DEI aptly by saying it is a "project, not a program." AJC staff were leaning on DRC support much less frequently as the project came to an end, indicating that DEI was successful in changing staff attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, the state lead asserted that DRCs were effective in training AJC managers and staff and partners in the IRT model so that it became "common practice." She mentioned how IRTs would continue without DRCs as evidence of systems change, and that the IRT process was instrumental in aligning resources on behalf of JSWDs. Blending and braiding with ACCES-VR and CP systems should also endure.

One Round 6 DRC is assuming the role of employment systems manager at the Damien Center, continuing her trajectory as a systems and services change agent; she was a DRC since Round 1 and a Disability Program Navigator. Thus, the connection between AJCs and JSWDs living with HIV/AIDS should solidify. A train-the-trainer curriculum for engaging JSWDs living with HIV/AIDS—which will involve an employment counselor from all 85 AJCs statewide—will also help institutionalize this service within AJCs. One session was conducted in June 2019 with partner staff, including the Damien Center, ACCES-VR, NYSCB, and an ILC.

One other DRC will remain employed in the Capital region through TTW funds, while the two DRCs from HMO will not. The state lead reported that the last few months of the grant were dedicated to ensuring remaining staff can fulfill DEI roles, including understanding relevant resources, referrals, and partners. She also emphasized how every AJC in the state provides universal access, regardless of the presence of a grant like DEI, and that AJC managers were "extremely on board" with continuing DEI practices.

Regarding sustainable financing for DEI practices, a successful TTW program may contribute to sustainability if revenue targets are met.. However, according to several DRCs, constant staff training and recruitment are necessary to maintain a sufficient number of Ticket holders and job placements. Towards the end of the grant period, each treatment WDA had several Ticket-eligible beneficiaries who had yet to connect with a local AJC. We heard from DRCs that some participants need prodding to engage in what could be a lengthy process of hard and soft skill development to avert the cycle of job loss they may have experienced in the past.

One AJC employment specialist reflected on the importance of TTW to sustaining DEI practices, in addition to collaboration:

We've talked in the past year about putting out another RFP because we believe in the TTW program. It can help with sustainability. Training is ongoing because we have a partnership with several agencies. That's what's great about my role. I can reach out, introduce people to the manager, and make sure the partnerships continue on. That's my hope for sustainability.

Although New York is hopeful about leveraging funds from TTW and braiding resources from community colleges and other grants to sustain DEI practices, there is trepidation that those efforts take time and staff resources that may not be available to AJCs after the grant ends. The partnerships New York established will be pivotal to continuing DEI practices... Close connections with ACCES-VR, NYSCB, and DSS should lead to more shared customers and more demand for AJC services; before DEI, many of these individuals did not visit AJCs.

Partnerships with ILCs have also augmented benefits counseling capacity in treatment areas. Lastly, linkages created with the healthcare sector—including with hospitals and small businesses to hire JSWDs—should persist. Altogether, the state lead was confident that most DEI practices and trainings will be accessible due to newly forged and strengthened partnerships.

In a final project call, one DRC asserted that treatment AJCs are "poised to be accessible" to JSWDs, particularly those with visual impairments. DEI and partner staff discussed how New York Round 6's emphasis on assistive technology access through collaboration and training could serve as a model for AJCs statewide. Technical assistance is planned to push this approach forward, including a webinar on equal access and section 188. In addition, after the grant ended, state leadership disseminated AT how-to "cheat sheets" to AJCs, as well as surveys to assess whether staff were trained on AT since historically equipment has "collected dust" due to lack of technical staff awareness.

Project staff also offered that New York is also now well-positioned to capitalize on momentum around apprenticeships for JSWDs. AJC managers will continue to engage with the American Apprenticeship Initiative.

While it is difficult to determine if practices from NY Round 6 DEI will be sustained–with an equivalent level of resources to support DEI's systems and services structure—there is reason to believe that a number of DEI innovations on behalf of JSWDs will be embedded in each AJC's operations in the future.

xvi. Summary

The New York Round 6 DEI implemented much that is commendable. It built upon the robust NYESS data management and reporting system to better track DEI employment outcomes; sustained and developed new partnerships; harnessed assistive technology, training, and collaboration to engage diverse JSWDs; and continued to strengthen its TTW program.. According to the state lead, New York exceeded each of its grant goals (e.g., number of individuals served/receiving core services/entering CP).

In addition to TTW, Partnership Plus is a potential avenue for accessing Ticket holders and generating resources. Cross-agency partnerships fostered through DEI should endure and contribute to accessible AJCs capable of serving a range of JSWDs, including those with significant additional barriers.

However, the totality of data suggest that NY could have done more to train AJC staff in DEI practices so that they are knowledgeable and skilled in using DEI strategies to serve JSWDs. New York's dilemma for the future is determining who will continue the forward momentum of the systems and services progress that DEI made. But, if TTW revenue to support DRC-like functions combines with new habits, outside partnerships, and training that assist AJCs to better serve customers with significant employment barriers, NY will have a positive outlook for building upon the lessons learned from implementing its DEI Round 6 project.

F. State: Washington State; Focus Area: Youth and Adults with Disabilities

i. Stated Goals and Objectives

The Washington Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) Career Pathways Project proposed to address the employment needs of youth and adults ages 18 and older, with disabilities across the Seattle-King County and Snohomish County LWIAs by building upon its nationally recognized career pathways program Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST). The I-BEST operates in all of the 34 community colleges across the state and has been proven successful with other populations that have significant barriers to employment. Washington DEI Round 6 proposed to demonstrate how it could also be an effective approach for students with disabilities, especially when combined with the additional outreach, expertise, resources, Integrated Resource Teams, and greater business/employer participation that the DEI would bring to the partnership. Washington proposed a systems and services change approach with a focus on transforming I-BEST from "*systems that were serving people with disabilities inadvertently, with no particular focus of effort or coordination of resources, into cultures that embrace IRTs as an established habit of work, and organizations committed to sustaining a dedicated capacity to focus coordinated efforts to leverage, blend and braid among multiple partners in support of increased access and better outcomes for people with disabilities*[51]". Their Round 6 goals include:

- Assist the Seattle-King County and Snohomish County LWIBs in adopting the use of IRTs as a person- centered method for collaborating across multiple service systems to serve job-seekers with disabilities (JSWDs);
- DRCs and AmeriCorps members will convene and facilitate the IRTs for students with disabilities participating in career pathways programs;
- Encourage and support hosting IRT meetings on college campuses, and mentor career pathways personnel and other college faculty and staff in how to recognize how IRTs could help them to identify and apply knowledge, services or other resources that would improve the ability of a student with a disability to participate and succeed in their class or program;
- The Coordinating Committee will facilitate collaboration at the systems level by identifying emerging issues and potential problems and developing collaborative solutions;
- Establish Wi-Fi hotspots covering one AJC in each of the participating LWIAs. The AmeriCorps members in each area will identify all of the documents and forms, paper or electronic, and all of the products currently used with or by jobseekers, and with assistance from the Washington State Department of Services for the Blind (DSB), work to ensure that as much as possible of the information and functionality provided by the AJC is available through the Wi-Fi connection in accessible formats;

[51] Excerpted from the Washington Round 6 DEI Project Proposal Narrative (pg.6)

- Provide group and individual financial education and counseling to improve credit, lower debt and increase savings, while improving their ability to make more informed financial decisions;
- Ensure that working-age Social Security beneficiaries who participate in this program are provided complete, accurate and reliable benefits counseling and individual benefits plans;
- Recruit, coordinate and manage active participation of businesses and trade associations that are committed to using career pathways and WIOA programs and services to improve their access to qualified working-age applicants with disabilities.

ii. Proposed Service Delivery Strategies

Building upon the systems and services accomplishments of its Round 2 DEI grant, Washington's proposed Round 6 strategy prioritized the acquisition of Career Pathways jobs for participants, predicated on close partnerships with academic and credentialing institutions and with employers. Their project privileges the use of IRTs and Blending/Braiding augmented by Ticket to Work enrollments with the intent to build upon their I-BEST initiative that features strongly favors customer-driven services, integrated team planning and resource leveraging. "*I-BEST project is a thoroughly integrated system of curricula connecting ABE, occupational skills and academic tracks, that students can enter and exit at any point, depending on their individual needs. These resources include career counseling child care, transportation, financial supports through TANF, financial aid or other resources*[52]."

iii. Implementation Summary

iv. Capacity-Building: DRCs and WIOA Services

The Context for Capacity Building

Washington was the recipient of a DEI Round 2 grant, with participation by the Workforce Development Council of Seattle King County, and Workforce Snohomish, that are also their Round 6 sites. Their Round 6 project proposed to build upon the expertise, culture of disability inclusion and programmatic infrastructure within these two WDAs to develop Career Pathways programs that are more inclusive and effective in serving jobseekers with disabilities. Their project was also facilitated by the systems-level knowledge of the DEI State Lead whose participation the Governor's Task Force on the Employment of People with Disabilities, participation in state policy decision-making on Medicaid issues, and ability in leveraging partners' resources was an asset to a project with such a strong emphasis on systems change. The Governor's Task Force has a good track record in securing funding to support a comprehensive approach to employment of people with disabilities, including the DEI, Partnerships in Employment, and Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program.

v. DEI Services

[52] Excerpted from the Washington Round 6 DEI Project Proposal Narrative (pg. 5).

The Washington DEI Round 6 focus areas were Career Pathways, IRTs, and Blending and Braiding Resources. Their progress in implementing Career Pathways and Blending and Braiding Resources is further described in sections of this report specifically addressing Partnerships and Collaborations and Promising Practices. This section focuses on the perspectives of interview respondents and the data that was supplied in their Quarterly Reports that are particularly related to IRTs and Blending and Braiding as well as Ticket to Work. IRTs are a specific DEI implementation strategy with established methods and criteria and AJC staff and managers appeared to be conversant in their application, if not their specific terminology. So, for example when queried about the Worksource center's knowledge and use of IRTs an AJC partner offered that: "*We just don't call it IRT. It is mainly people understanding, sitting together to work together, not giving mixed messages, that's just how we do business*". And, from the perspective of a DVR partner-their counselors have long adopted an interdisciplinary approach to assisting JSWDs:

"We don't use the term, but we do that all the time because it's an interdisciplinary team. We work with providers and community rehab provider for job placement, case managers, families, etc."

Another AJC partner offered: "*How do you develop IRT? I don't know, conceptually I do, but not really. We have functional teams at systems insight level. Workshops, job clubs, group services. Mostly workshops. The last one is integrated service delivery*". DRCs acknowledged that it could be time-consuming to form IRTs, but they were an integral part of their approach to assisting JSWDs. Customers did not necessarily know that they are receiving IRTs, but some do acknowledge that they are benefitting from a Worksource team approach to job development:

"I thought the business solutions team has been helpful. So, it's not just the DRC but all kinds of teams here. the whole office. Resume building, job searching, benefits planning with the employment specialist, it's nice to have the DRC as a directory. Getting me the right information and what to do".

IRT development appeared to be successfully implemented by DRCs across the two pilot sites. While available data does not support the assumption that IRTs meeting the established definition were initiated on behalf of JSWDs by other staff in addition to the DRC, the Washington Round 6 DEI reported that they coordinated and facilitated for 220 IRTs since October 2015.[53] Their target was to conduct 680 IRTs over the life of the grant. While they were on track towards achieving only approximately 1/3 of their expected outcomes, we find that the IRT strategy was being firmly embedded within the fabric of the DEI service delivery implementation plan. In fact, according to leadership responses to their Sustainability Interview held on 6/25/19, IRTs have become firmly embedded as a method of practice within both WorkSource Center and were deemed one of the most effective outcomes of DEI:

[53] DEI Quarterly Report October-December, 2018 (pg. 1)

"*With the IRTs, it's effective because it's powerful for everyone to work together so that all of the resources are together to help the client. For example, if they're working with a housing group that can help the client along with other services"*

At the AJC level, data supports the progress that DRCs made in providing training and employment services to participants. In the estimation of a number of participants participating in focus groups, the DEI's presence at WorkSource Centers and their attention to individual needs, familiarity with partner agencies for supportive services and relationships with employers resulted in better services than they previously had experienced. DRCs appear to be involved in both direct employment services and individual case management, but also systems-level activities where they most frequently identify and convene partner agency staff for participation in a JSWD's IRT. We found that in King County, where the DEI is administered through a private contract, a concerted effort is being made by the DRC to conduct in-reach to homeless services agencies with the intent of assisting people in transition from homelessness that meet DEI criteria to participate in the program. In similar fashion, the Snohomish site that is Department of Labor-administered, has established a relationship with a homeless services agency to access wrap-around and housing services for DEI customers experiencing homelessness. Since JSWDs transitioning from homelessness can be among the most challenging clientele served through the workforce development system, these efforts by the DEI to engage individuals with significant employment barriers who are served by homeless services systems can be viewed as an effort to improve cross-systems partnerships.

Another feature of capacity building is to improve accessibility at AJCs with the use of technology including the promotion of W-Fi and Apps for users to better access services. The DRCs' efforts in this regard were augmented by AmeriCorps staff, partially funded through the grant initially, and later using TTW revenue. It would appear that while gains were made, the DEI still encountered challenges in achieving the level of accessibility that they had hoped to reach.

"This office used to be a disability room. I thought it was required. It's a good requirement. Actually, it's not and we were the only one in the state to have a dedicated room. We had assistive technology in here, but that got dismantled. DEI came in and made it happen. The equipment was here and the room was here. Not a lot of action and not much demand and not much staff to run the stuff. DEI upgraded TTY to video phone".

But technology is just one part of an accessibility assessment. How customers are being regarded and helped is also an indication of an AJC's capacity to serve JSWDs. We conducted two customer focus groups and responses about the level of customer-focused services between the two pilot sites and the positive influence of DRCs were similar. Participants in both focus group, strongly endorsed and expressed their appreciation for the attention and services they receive from their DRC. But they also expressed strong opinions about the capacity of that AJC to provide them with the assistance they required:

"There are people but no signs where you can get help. If they can have things posted, it would be helpful rather than a calendar where…etc. It's discouraging".

Participants offered that the help they receive through Worksource greatly improved when the DRCs came on board. Nonetheless, these participants also wished that the DRC wasn't stretched so thinly.

"I didn't get much help before. I would wander around and would come to the WorkSource center, but there would be computers around for me to use, but not much other help. Things changed when the DRC came on board".

"I think the DRC is excellent. It's just a complicated system. One person can be wonderful, but getting a job is hard enough."

"The one word I can describe as the difference between before and after DEI is "result." But there is more than that. There is compassion and caring. WorkSource and WIOA don't really care. You are a number. But the DRC cares. He drove all the way to meet me. I didn't even know that was an option. You need to come here all the way, drive an hour and a half, to drop your insurance information, come back tomorrow to pick up your vouchers."

Another feature of capacity – building is the extent to which WIOA enrollment occurs with DEI customers so that multiple resources are available to meet the person's training and employment needs and project resources can be effectively and more efficiently leveraged. It appears that positive efforts are underway to leverage WIOA resources on behalf of DEI participants:

"We enroll them with WIOA first, funding pieces in place. WIOA people will help with the school enrollment too. I usually make them enrolled at WIOA at that point. All the tuitions are supported by WIOA or BFET (Basic Food Employment and Training)"

DEI leadership had another perspective on leveraging WIOA services. While DRCs focused on its efficacy in meeting individuals' training and employment needs, leadership viewed it as an important element of systems change: "*It is really a balance between direct service vs. systems change. They are there to be the resource and facilitate services for people with disabilities. We've been helped by WIOA on serving people with disabilities. We would have to tell them (Worksource centers) that they are part of the people they serve"*.

"With WIOA enrollment, we have integrated service delivery here. So, everyone who use the resource room will get WIOA services"

Data suggests that the presence of DRCs at the Worksource pilot sites has a positive, direct impact among those they serve. AJC Managers were pleased to have DRCs on their team and readily acknowledged that they were contributing to a more disability-friendly environment.

In that regard, the DRCs have much in common with the Disability Navigators (DPNs) who came before them. Like the DPNs, the DRCs are raising the profile of the AJCs as resources where JSWDs can get the support and assistance that they need. However, it is less clear that the consistency and individual attention that they get from DRCs could be provided by AJC staff, absent the presence of the DRC. This is not to suggest that the DRCs are siloed individuals within the Center, or that their service methods and approaches are not recognized, endorsed, or even used by AJC employment specialists. It's that the multi-functional aspects of a DRC's job are significantly broad undertakings for one individual. It is unclear to us that the range of services provided by DRCs, from generating referrals; to hands-on employment services; to creating partnerships from which flow IRTs; to working with employers on behalf of individual job-seekers, and; to helping to disseminate what they do and have accomplished both within the AJC and to external audiences, will be assumed in whole or in part by AJC employment specialists after the project ends. Research supports that systems and services change take time, and we heard as much from many DEI staff. It was unsurprising that when we asked participants what should be done to improve the DEI and employment services that they receive, the unanimous response was to give their DRCs more time and more help.

"Nobody really helped me before meeting the DRC. No one really wanted to cooperate. I've always felt that he understands my needs generally. He absolutely does not use the cookie-cutter approach".

Initially access to benefits planning was provided by a sub-contracted partner. But later, the 3 DRCs were trained as CWICs and their presence at the AJCs and ability to directly provide benefits counseling a s they were working with JSWDs on job development became a strong feature of the program. According to DEI leadership: "*For me the Benefits Planning was a standout. We hadn't been able to do that before. Having the expertise really helped people move past the belief that once they had benefits, they couldn't go to work because they would lose them*".

Ticket to Work: The two pilot sites approached TTW enrollment (as well as enrollment in WIOA) differently. Seattle-King made TTW enrollment the first option of participants when they enroll in the DEI although an AJC partner told us that TTW was not required. "*TTW isn't required. We always co-enroll with WIOA, so trying to maximize what we have, like transportation, food stamps…etc. Try to co-enroll them*". However, some of the DEI customers who participated in the focus group termed the DEI as the 'Ticket to Work Program'. Meanwhile, the Snohomish site considered TTW enrollment more strategically and offered it only when a customer appeared motivated to work and willing to follow through. "*Job readiness defines the ticket assignment. You cannot assign ticket to everyone who comes into the door because it's unmanageable. They are really focused on utilizing tickets. 30 tickets are assigned in this round and about 20 or so have been employed, and generated about $60,000 of revenue"*. Their approach to WIOA enrollment used similar criteria. TTW was a viable program revenue source and according to leadership the DEI generated almost $400,000 and served approximately 250 SSA beneficiaries were served in TTW over the life of the grant.

vi. Partnerships and Collaborations

The success of the Washington Round 6 DEI owes much to the value ascribed and the efforts made in developing partnerships. As described below in the 'Best and Promising Practices' section, their CP focus depends upon partnerships with credential-issuing institutions and with employers. Their September 2018 self-report that 109 people received CP services and 139 people were employed through DEI over the life of the grant, would suggest that these two vital links in the CP continuum were being established. As described in the 'Best and Promising Practices' section below, partnerships between the DEI and the Northwest Access Fund (NWAF) are proving fruitful in leveraging the resources needed to add financial literacy and asset building training and support to the DEI's mix of services. While these are important examples of Washington's efforts to build partnerships, data on the emergence of a mutually beneficial partnership between the DEI and DVR after that entity implemented the Order of Selection (OOS), suggests that positive outcomes may be developed in challenging situations if communication is present.

DVR began accepting only clients with severe mobility disabilities and/or people with Social Security Medicaid who are on the employment waiver when they went to OOS in 2018. As an alternative to wait-listing, customers who didn't meet these new DVR service requirements were referred to either the Seattle- King or Snohomish County DEIs. Collaborating this way on program referrals benefits both DVR and the DEI. When a person is ineligible for DVR OOS services and meet the DEI eligibility criteria, DVR can refer them to DEI. And, even although there is no Partnership Plus arrangement, DVR and DEI have agreed that the DEI Round 6 can sign their Ticket to Work. And that also means that a person can benefit from DEI-initiated wrap-around services like training or certification and blending and braiding services like WIOA, TTW, (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), paratransit assistance, Section 8 housing, or other programs. In essence, DEI utilized is being used as DVR's "Plan B" for people who would otherwise not be served in those the counties. The result is an increase in the number of new DEI participants and another example of braiding of services. The Washington DEI Round 6 project self-reported in their July-September 2018 Quarterly Report that over 200 DEI participants entered into employment, as of that date[54].

vii. Customer Focus

Customers were generally enthusiastic in their praise of the services they get directly from their DRC, but less so from their prior experiences at Worksource Centers. When analyzing the presence or lack of a strong customer focus in DEI, our evaluation protocol probes not only for customer satisfaction, but also for corroboration from customers, DEI staff, and partners that customers are at the center of the process and driving the types and range of employment services they prefer. An AJC partner described how they view providing services to JSWDs, suggesting that while the customer is the focus throughout the process, the orientation of the DEI and the AJC were parallel, distinct, and mutually reinforcing:

"If we focus on DEI, what (the DRC) could do differently is to help us to be reminded that

[54] DEI Quarterly Report July-Sept, 2018 (pg.1)

employers have a hard time and don't want to hire PWDs. Because it comes up every time. The DRC is very customer-focused, we are business-focused".

We obtained a significant amount of data from the participant focus groups that confirms that the Washington DEI Round 6 has a strong focus on customer needs. While most talked about the help that they were receiving from their DRC to develop resumes and search for a job, the responses suggest that the DRCs are providing valuable assistance as knowledgeable navigators within and across systems. One participant underscored how important it was that the DRCs have systems as well as services knowledge and that they helped job seekers not only to get a job, but also to get a job with a future.

"As far as, I am not sure what other services are available. I am still continuing my education. But the DRC really wanted me to go through WIOA and that is the reason why I did. WIOA denied me, so I talked to him, he talked to them, then WIOA called me back and I was approved. He has the magic wand. I've been trying for six months". JSWDs

"I was trying to figure out TTW, the DRC led me through it. It's to the point that they would give me a minimum wage and I would work. Sure, but how can I support myself and my son? I work hard for what I've done. They would try to get me jobs that are just above the minimum wage. And the DRC is trying to get me a job that is more solid work. I don't have schooling. He helps you and he has a positive attitude, so he's been the true beam of light in this whole process." JSWDs

It appears that both pilot sites are doing well in focusing on customer needs, in ways that participants generally did not experience in prior involvement at their AJCs. DRCs themselves provided examples of how they helped JSWDs overcome obstacles to employment when in the past, those challenges were unable to be surmounted. From the customer standpoint, DRCs appear to be regarded as invaluable resources for navigating systems and getting jobs, although they say that the *"Worksource Centers need more staff like them."*

viii. Employer Partnerships

The DEI Round 6 employer development strategy was well-conceived, and if it had succeeded, could have been an example of a DEI Promising Practice. The DEI contracted with Washington Business Association (WaBA) and their consultant who is also a well-regarded businessman who can speak the language of business when he meets with human resource staff of some of the area's major employers to better secure career pathways opportunities for DEI customers. "WaBA contracted to partner with DEI to achieve three outcomes: recruit and secure commitments from 10 businesses and two industry associations; facilitate and coordinate with business employment by creating curricula, credentials, and certification; and secure and manage business commitments to participate in training and provide work-based training opportunities like internships[55]". This employer-responsive strategy was intended to be augmented by other, concurrent employer engagement practices, including the Worksource business development teams; the DRCs' own job development efforts; and the business development efforts

[55] DEI Quarterly Report April-June, 2018 (pg.4)

implemented through the State VR agency. By relying on a business owner/consultant as the liaison between the DEI and employers, who speaks the language of business through direct experience; is familiar with the business and economic forces that affect hiring; and is welcomed into the meetings and forums that businesses typically attend, the business case for hiring people with disabilities can be made more strongly than through traditional employer partnership arrangements. The WaBA's consultant also uses a wheelchair and the DEI team agreed that having a mobility-related disability might also be a powerful portrayal to employers on how a disability need not be a barrier to job success. Unfortunately, two factors combined that undermined the potential success of this proposed innovation. First, the DEI pilot sites did not come up to speed with serving customers and preparing them for career pathways jobs at the pace that the consultant was outreaching and engaging potential employers. So, even if some employers were initially receptive, the pipeline of job candidates was not built. The consultant also ran up against employer reluctance to hire persons with disabilities.

"I misjudged the companies. I thought they would have open arms for PWDs. But that was not the case. It's getting them on board and recapitalizing it. I was targeting mid-level companies, even when I knew someone there. I got stalemated".

The second challenge proved to be insurmountable for the DEI, when the sub-contract was discontinued before the end of the project due to staff cuts and the unavailability of the consultant due to prolonged medical leave. Consequently, rather than having a statewide employer partnership resource pointed towards securing work experiences and placements in career pathways jobs for JSWDs, each pilot site relied upon their more traditional methods of DRC-initiated employer engagement including Worksource business development teams and AJC Job Fairs to match participants with their preferred jobs. Nonetheless, we suggest that the concept of developing CP jobs through the WaBA partnership with a business-business orientation was potentially promising and could have had significant job development outcomes if circumstances were different.

ix. Career Pathways

Career Pathways are described in detail within the Partnerships and Collaborations and Promising Practices sections. Their July-September Quarterly Report indicates that 109 DEI participants during the life of the grant in Snohomish County entered training of some kind and in King County, 186 DEI participants entered a vocational training program and that 56 DEI customers would earn a credential during the life of the grant[56]. We know from available Participant Tracking System (PTS) data that participants are being entered into Career Pathways. However, the PTS Report for the period ending February 26, 2019 only indicated that 72 of 402 participants received CP services. Consequently, we cannot determine whether or not the DEI met their targeted completion outcomes, from among participants who were enrolled in CP-focused services.

[56] DEI Quarterly Report July-September, 2018 (pg. 1)

x. Dissemination

The WA Round 6 project dissemination progress was analyzed according to three criteria: 1) How well is the project making its services known to jobseekers with disabilities, and promoting their referral and enrollment? 2) is the project effectively disseminating its mission and services to partners, including employers to increase their awareness of the DEI? 3) Is the project disseminating its successes through various media, including presentations, papers, etc.? It appears from interview data that the project could do more to make its services known to customers and partners and to convey their progress and successes. One DRC offered that dissemination was primarily being done informally and that: *"We don't really do much community-facing marketing. We don't have resource fairs. We'll talk to housing group or downtown emergency center, and the homeless shelter"*. From AJC leadership we obtained disparate responses:

Referrals also from community groups. I get invited to different meeting doing presentations and meeting housing partners. I talk about what DEI does and what we can do for their CWDs. AJC partner Outreach for DEI? Word of mouth."

Participants in the Renton area focus group tended to equate their DEI as the TTW program. Hearing about, and enrolling in TTW was their first exposure to the DEI. *"I think someone verbally mentioned TTW and I wasn't sure what it was. The DRC was great, she followed up, was there to help, and I am very thankful for her.",* and a DRC offered that hearing about TTW and how it may help a person to get a job often led to the connection to the DEI if the need for its services was established. "*No one really comes to get enrolled in DEI, but come here to get a job. Unless they come for DEI services and need some kind of financial support. Then, those will come specifically for DEI*". Outreach to employers was a planned strategy with WaBA as the broker for those relationships although that initiative ended during the course of the grant. A member of WorkSource leadership reported that they regularly reach out to employers, but that they were unsure about how well the DEI as doing that on their own:

For this grant, I haven't heard of any employers. I think I heard there were a couple job fairs, encouraging people to hire PWDs. I haven't gotten a list of employers or anything."

While the DEI itself, at both locations appeared to struggle with designing and implementing a dissemination strategy, it must be noted that strong DEI state leadership regularly promoted the initiative at the state level, including its accomplishments and challenges as a way to enhance its profile and keep the issue of addressing the needs of jobseekers with disabilities high on the state leadership agenda. This is a significant accomplishment that potentially creates a platform for the development of related disability and employment efforts linked to the WorkSource system in the future.

xi. Promising Practices *Blending and Braiding Resources*

Description

From the outset of their project, the Washington DEI Round 6 recognized the necessity of building strong partnerships that would result in resource leveraging in order to address the

complexity of needs of their participants. Their strategy was comprehensive and they understood that an employment initiative focused on Career Pathways required participation by academic and credentialing institutions at 'one end of the pipeline' and employers at the other end of the pipeline' who were engaged as partners who would be incentivized to hire qualified JSWDs. In both King and Snohomish Counties, resource leveraging with a number of career preparation entities was implemented. According to their July-September 2018 Quarterly Report, 295 DEI participants entered a vocational or educational program in their career pathway[57], appearing to substantiate their success in engaging these entities in their project. The diversity of career preparation tracks is also impressive and speaks well for the person-centered career development focus of their project. They reported in their April-June 2018 report that "*Clients were enrolled or received accreditation or certification from programs like iCATCH, Edmonds Community College hospitality certification program, substitute teacher refresher classes, Everett Community College Western Washington University classes and certification workshops, Masters esthetics, El Centro de la Raza Latino's Finance training program (http://www.elcentrodelaraza.org/what-we-do/education-and-asset-building/), South Seattle College's medical office, technical trades and welding programs, YWCA Career Work$ (https://www.ywcaworks.org/programs), Lake Washington Technical College (https://www.lwtech.edu/academics/), and Seattle Central Community College's Business Technology program"*[58].

A second successful blending and braiding strategy is demonstrated by their partnership with the Northwest Access Fund (NWAF) to provide financial literacy and income stability training and support to participants. Washington recognized that getting a job is only one part (although a necessary part) of the income self-sufficiency process. People seeking to escape poverty also need help in managing their assets, credit, and financial planning. Although we find that a number of DEI states include blending and braiding resources as one of their services delivery strategies and many offer Social Security benefits planning, Washington State augments these services by leveraging partner resources to provide financial literacy and asset development consultations for job-seekers with disabilities. Through individual interviews and document review, we find that the Washington DEI financial literacy partnership is a potentially model practice whose elements might be demonstrated in other locations that serve individuals with barriers to employment. They report that their pilot sites referred over 90 DEI clients to their asset development partner NWAF for financial wellness training sessions and the total number of asset development and financial wellness training sessions is 187 over the three-year life of the grant[59].

Rationale for its Implementation

Resource leveraging is a critical factor in sustaining DEI services after the grant ends. The Washington DEI Round 6 focused efforts not only on income generation through Ticket to Work, but tackled the problem of the difficulties that JSWDs often have in connecting to accredited and business and industry-relevant education and training programs and an often-

[57] DEI Quarterly Report July-September, 2018 (pg. 1)
[58] DEI Quarterly Report April-June, 2018. (pp. 1-2)
[59] DEI Quarterly Report October-December, 2018. (pg. 2)

overlooked concurrent problem when JSWDs start earning money, but lack the skills needed to manage their finances and grow their assets.

Why the Practice Could be Considered Promising

Two factors were apparent in assessing the importance of Washington's DEI resource leveraging strategies that other DEIs could consider. The first is addressing multiple converging interests. This includes recognizing that Washington State's growth industries in a low-unemployment economy are interested in hiring qualified job candidates. It also includes recognizing that the interests of JSWDs and the DEI is to help secure credentials and access to jobs with a future, rather than entry-level, low-wage employment. By leveraging CP training partnerships, it would appear that the interests of all parties can be met. The second factor are the DEI's congruent approaches to address poverty among JSWDs. Their DEI leadership recognized that benefits planning and re-entry into employment is not enough to help people break the cycle of poverty and that helping JSWDs manage their finances and accumulate assets through their NWAF partnership is needed as well for their participants' long-term financial stability. And, with NAWF's role as both a service provider, and as an initial point of entry for customers that can later be referred to DEI, job-seekers with disabilities have the opportunity to learn about, and plan for financial wellness even before they start their job search.

xii. Challenges

We suggest that the Washington DEI Round 6 has encountered, and may continue to face a number of significant challenges. One of these is how to better embed the knowledge, skills and participant trust that DRCs appear to have created into the Worksource sites so that 'everyone becomes a DRC' when it comes to serving JSWDs. We also note that great impetus for the development of the DEI, particularly for the level of integration with the state's other disability-focused efforts is greatly attributable to the leadership of the DEI State Lead, who passed away in 2018. Consequently, the DEI during its final year, and for sustainability of its services and integration of those services into the state's fabric of disability-related services must address ways to seamlessly continue strong, systems change-oriented leadership. Revenue generation is also a challenge and at this point, and we do not know how much TTW or leveraged revenue has been acquired by the end of the project and how it will be used to continue DEI's progress after the grant ends.

xiii. Sustainability

One measure of sustainability is the success of a DEI to establish employment networks and generate sufficient TTW revenue to support employment of DRCs after the grant ends. Another factor in determining sustainability is to validate that partners, including AJCs, have learned DEI practices and have embedded those within their own systems so that, even in the absence of having specific DRC-designated staff, DEI practices are continued and JSWDs have improved access and use of mainstream as well as other disability employment services resources. All DRCs and project leadership staff were incorporated into the state's RETAIN grant, ensuring that DEI perspectives, partnerships and skills would continue in both AJCs.

According to DEI leadership: "*The benefits planning will be used in Snohomish. The Career Pathways as well. It was excellent. I think we're talking about sustainable. Ticket to Work will be kept. We used Ticket to Work to bring in an AmeriCorps worker and train him in Benefits Planning. Co-planning that is using IRTs has become much more the norm in the system then when the program first began*". According to information provided at the Sustainability Interview, TTW revenue was saved until the DEI grant was over and will be used to get a staff member to work on Ticket to Work on a continued basis and also develop services for youth. And, TTW revenue is braided with RETAIN to support 2 of the DRCs that are now RETAIN Return To Work Coordinators who are funded 50/50 on Return to Work and Ticket to Work and therefore at least 50% of their time is directly working with Social Security beneficiaries.

xiv. Summary

Our data analysis suggests that there is much to commend regarding the progress that the Washington Round 6 DEI made over the life of its grant. There is little doubt, from our perspective that DEI customers feel that they are receiving better services now that they have DRCs to assist them. DVR, despite its Order of Selection limitations, appears to regard the DEI as one alternative to serving customers who would otherwise languish on a waiting list. And, we found ample evidence that DRCs and DEI leadership are both skilled and committed to sustaining the intent of the program and will continue to incorporate its strategies into the two WorkSource Centers with their RETAIN grant and in their WIOA services when serving JSWDs. We offer that the Washington Round 6 DEI has succeeded in achieving significant systems and services change.

VIII. EVALUATION

The DEI Round 5 and Round 6 impact evaluation included three distinct research designs. The first was a matched comparison group design, with the treatment and comparison groups designated at the WDA level. Treatment WDAs were selected by the grantees as having the capacity to implement the Rounds 5–6 DEI intervention. The research team selected the comparison group WDAs to align with the demographic and economic characteristics of the treatment WDAs. Discussions with each grantee about their possible comparison WDAs were used to finalize the list of comparison WDAs.[60] In this primary analysis, a matched comparison group of individuals with disabilities provided the counterfactual so that there were no systematic differences between the two groups of participants that may have influenced program outcomes. The three outcomes were: (1) employment in the first quarter after AJC exit, (2) employment retention within the three quarters after AJC exit, and (3) total wages in the second and third quarters after AJC exit, per participant.[61]

[60] See Appendices 2 and 3 for the full list of treatment and comparison WDAs for each state that the research team included in the QED analysis.

[61] The first two outcomes use employment information and have the same number of observations. The third outcome uses wage information and has fewer observations with non-missing information.

The secondary impact analysis featured a short interrupted time series (SITS), and the sample consisted of only participants in treatment WDAs. We used this as a baseline impact measure on how outcomes changed before and after the appearance of interventions for each round. This analysis was particularly important in instances in which states implemented DEI-funded interventions across the entire state, which resulted in the contamination of these interventions for evaluation purposes. This analysis was also necessary when the grantee state was comprised of a single WDA, in which case there was no comparison group within the state to match and compare the treatment group with.

A tertiary analysis featured an additional quasi-experimental design (QED) that measured the impact of the specific Career Pathways component that was part of the Rounds 5–6 intervention. The sample consisted of only participants who were enrolled in treatment WDAs. In this design, we matched participants enrolled in a CP program with similar participants who did not. These participants who did not enroll in a CP program may have enrolled in other programs and services, such as staff-assisted core, intensive, or training services.

A. Matched Comparison Group Analysis When Comparison Groups Exist

The first QED examined the overall impact of the Rounds 5–6 DEI interventions on individual-level outcomes. To measure the overall impact of these interventions, we created a treatment group that consisted of the grantee WDAs, and a comparison group of demographically similar WDAs that were within the same state. We defined treatment customers as those who self-disclosed a disability and participated in the Rounds 5–6 interventions in the treatment WDAs. Observations were at the individual level, and by using demographic information from WIA administrative data,[62] we matched individuals from the treatment WDAs with similar individuals in the comparison WDAs.

Any QED should minimize systematic observable or unobservable differences between WDAs in the treatment and comparison groups except for the availability of DEI services. We used a multilevel model regression analysis to determine the impact of the DEI services in order to account for the fact that the level of inference was at the WDA level (i.e., the differentiation of DEI interventions was at the WDA level) and to control WDA-level and participant-level characteristics.

Each set of regressions also accounted for variations in inherent demographic and economic characteristics across WDAs and states using multilevel mixed effects. This type of fixed effects analysis accounted for the nested nature of WDAs within states.

The analysis used the model below:

$$(1)\ y_{ijk} = \alpha + \beta_1 T_{jk} + \beta_2 \text{Baseline}_{ijk} + \beta_3 \text{Participant}_{ijk} + \beta_4 \text{WDA}_{jk} + \beta_5 \text{State}_k + d_{jk} + e_k + \varepsilon_{ijk}$$

[62] The administrative data used in the impact evaluation changed from WIA to PIRL during the time of the evaluation. The research team cross-walked all relevant variables from WIA to PIRL, thereby creating one dataset that had a uniform set of variables for analysis.

Where

y_{ijk} = the outcome for participant *i* in WDA *j* in state *k*

α = covariate-adjusted mean participant outcome for comparison WDAs

β_1 = impact of DEI (i.e., the difference between the mean outcome for treatment WDAs and the mean outcome for comparison WDAs)

T_{jk} = 1 for treatment WDA and 0 for comparison WDA

β_2 = parameter estimate for the contribution of the participant-level baseline measure

$Baseline_{ijk}$ = pre-intervention measure for each participant *i* in WDA *j* in state *k*[63]

β_3 = a vector of parameter estimates for the contributions of participant-level covariates, in WDA *j* in state *k*

$Participant_{ijk}$ = a vector of baseline covariates for each participant *i* in WDA *j* in state *k*

β_4 = parameter estimate for the contribution of WDA-level covariates

WDA_{jk} = WDA-level baseline covariates for each WDA *j* in state *k*

β_5 = parameter estimate for the contribution of state-level covariates

$State_k$ = state-level baseline covariates for each state *k*

d_{jk} = a random intercept for WDA *j* in state *k*

e_k = a random intercept for state *k*

ε_{ijk} = a random error term for participant *i* in WDA *j* in state *k*

We estimated impacts using a three-level model with the treatment impact estimated at the WDA level.[64] We accounted for inherent differences between the WDAs and states by comparing their characteristics through a multilevel fixed and random effects model. The impact of the DEI intervention is represented by the WDA-level parameter estimate, β_1. The parameter estimate quantified the difference in the participant outcome for treatment WDAs compared to the outcome for "business-as-usual" comparison WDAs. If the p-value for the parameter estimate was less than 0.05, we concluded that there was a statistically significant impact of the DEI intervention on the given participant outcome.

B. Matching Using Treatment and Comparison Group Individuals' Characteristics

To take full advantage of the individual-level data characteristics that we had obtained through the WIA data system, we used demographic and employment characteristics to help create the match between participants in the treatment and comparison sites. We anticipated that there would be enough variation at the individual level for the evaluation to create fine-grained propensity scores, which was confirmed by the resulting balance across the treatment and

[63] These are parameters that were captured at the time of entry, which could have changed during the time that individuals exited the AJC (e.g., education level).

[64] The Stata command "mixed" was used for all regression analyses to account for WDA and state fixed effects, as well as random effects.

comparison groups. Matching participants across different states did not occur during the propensity score matching process.

The propensity score matching analysis involved multiple iterations of the matching process to ensure that our final match across the treatment and comparison groups was well-aligned. As we matched all eligible individuals from the treatment WDAs to all eligible individuals from comparison WDAs, we estimated the average treatment effect of DEI on outcomes.

After each cycle of the matching process, we determined if the treatment and comparison groups were equivalent at baseline; that is, equivalent in their characteristics prior to the start of their enrollment services at the AJC, within 0.25 standard deviation of each other. If equivalence was not demonstrated, then the propensity score model was modified to make equivalence more likely at the next iteration.

As the services were provided through an AJC (as opposed to a community or technical college), we acknowledged that participants enrolled in services at different points in time. To help determine whether participants were roughly starting at the same time, we matched treatment and comparison participants using their date of first enrollment at the AJC. This helped offset any time-dependent biases that may have been present if we matched participants who received services at very different points in time.

C. Short Interrupted Time Series (SITS) Analysis When No Comparison Groups Exist

In the evaluation of the impact of a program using a matched comparison design, the methods necessitate the use of a comparison group to match the treatment group based on characteristics that are available in the data. However, there are some instances in which a viable comparison group is unavailable or simply does not exist. In the case of the DEI evaluation, there were several states in which there were no viable comparison WDAs (e.g., South Dakota in Round 5 and Alaska in Round 6). In these instances, we looked toward another methodological approach that does not require a comparison group — a SITS approach.

In our evaluation, we used SITS for all grantee sites to measure a baseline impact estimate of DEI by comparing the pre-intervention time trend on participants' outcomes to post-intervention outcomes.

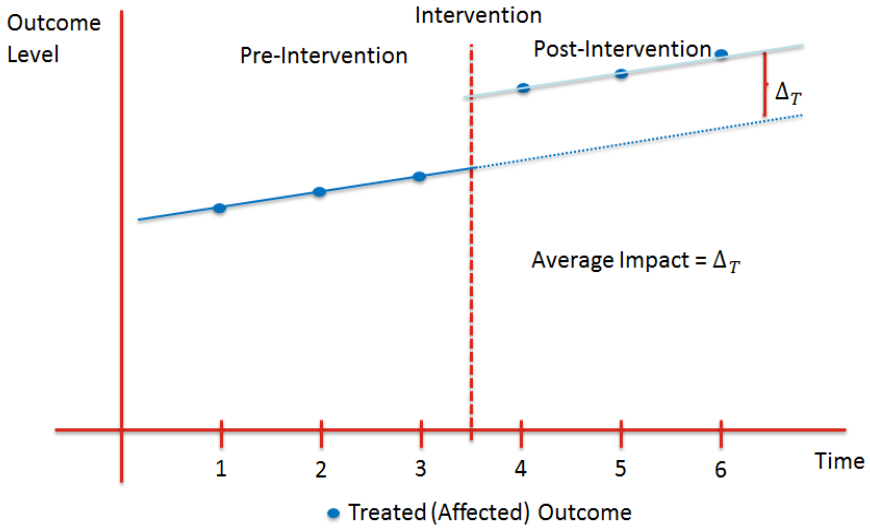
The SITS design measured the intervention impact as a departure from the expected levels of the outcome measure (e.g., employment, employment retention, and earnings) when projected forward in time as an estimate of what would likely happen were the treatment not introduced at all (see Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002; Bloom, 2003). The SITS design entailed: (1) generating a counterfactual for the outcome measure (which was the expected level of the outcome in the post-intervention period in the absence of the treatment as the projected trend) by using pre-intervention observations of the outcome measure, and (2) modeling the treatment impact as a deviation of actual post-intervention outcomes from this counterfactual.

SITS necessitates the use of multiple pre-intervention data points to form a linear counterfactual trend of the outcome variables by extrapolating the pre-intervention trend information into the post-intervention period. If we found a departure from this counterfactual, the multiple post-intervention data points represented the impact of the intervention on outcomes.

Exhibit 4 demonstrates a scenario in which there are three time points prior to the start of the intervention and three time points after the start of the intervention. For SITS to be viable in the DEI evaluation for the states that did not have a comparison group, we needed at least two time points prior to the start of the intervention and two time points after the start of the intervention. However, we ultimately used five time points both before and after the start of the intervention for greater accuracy in measuring time trends.

Prior to the intervention, a trend line (solid blue line) is created using the three pre-intervention time points. The dotted blue line represents the counterfactual measure as the projected trend using pre-intervention observations. The average impact is measured by Δ_T, which is the deviation between the counterfactual measure and the observed post-intervention measure (solid gray line).

Exhibit 4: Pre- and Post-Intervention Trend Lines to Measure the Impact of an Intervention



The analysis used the model below:

(2) $y_{tij} = \alpha + \beta_1 t + \beta_2 \text{Post Intervention}_t + \beta_3 \text{Participant}_{ijk} + \beta_4 \text{WDA}_{jk} + \beta_5 \text{State}_k + d_{jk} + e_k + \varepsilon_{tijk}$

Where

y_{tij} = the outcome for participant *i* in WDA *j* at time *t*

α = covariate-adjusted mean participant outcome for the counterfactual at t = 0

β_1 = the time trend over all time periods

t = the counter for observations, and t = 1, 2, and 3 denote the three pre-intervention time periods; t = 4, 5, and 6 denote the three post-intervention time periods

β_2 = covariate-adjusted impact of DEI (i.e., the difference between the outcome for the observed post-intervention trend versus the counterfactual trend)

$\text{Post Intervention}_t$ = 1 if t = 4, 5, or 6; otherwise 0

β_3 = a vector of parameter estimates for the contributions of participant-level covariates

Participant_{ij} = a vector of covariates for each participant *i* in WDA *j* in state *k*

β_4 = parameter estimate for the contribution of WDA-level covariates

WDA_j = WDA-level covariate for each WDA *j* in state *k*

β_5 = parameter estimate for the contribution of state-level covariates

State_k = state-level baseline covariates for each state *k*

d_{jk} = a random intercept for WDA *j* in state *k*

e_k = a random intercept for state *k*

ε_{tijk} = a random error term for participant *i* in WDA *j* in state *k* at time *t*

D. Measuring the Impact of the Career Pathways Component

An additional QED examined the impact of the specific CP interventions on participant-level outcomes. We implemented this QED on all grantee sites since all grantees had a CP component as part of their DEI interventions. While the primary analysis determined the impact of the overall Rounds 5–6 interventions on customer outcomes, we believed that it was also important to isolate the impact of the CP training on outcomes. Career Pathways comprise an important bundle of interventions being used by USDOL and other federal agencies and is expressly different from the previous Rounds 1–4 DEI interventions.

Much like the primary analysis, we used our available demographic information to match customers according to their propensity scores in this QED. Although there is a self-selection issue here in that customers who were more motivated to learn and get a job in a particular field may have opted into a CP program, this is not uncommon among QEDs in postsecondary research. As long as the treatment and comparison groups could demonstrate baseline equivalence, measurements were taken at the same points in time across both groups, and outcomes were consistently defined and collected across both groups, this type of QED would receive a moderate causal evidence rating according to federal guidelines (e.g., CLEAR, What Works Clearinghouse).

The analysis used the model below:

(3) $y_{ijk} = \alpha + \beta_1 T_{ik} + \beta_2 \text{Baseline}_{ijk} + \beta_3 \text{Participant}_{ijk} + \beta_4 \text{WDA}_{jk} + \beta_5 \text{State}_k + d_{jk} + e_k + \varepsilon_{ijk}$

Where

y_{ijk} = the outcome for participant *i* in WDA *j* in state *k*

α = covariate-adjusted mean participant outcome for the comparison group

β_1 = impact of Career Pathways (i.e., the difference between the mean outcome for participants and the mean outcome for non-participants)

T_{ik} = 1 for Career Pathways enrollment and 0 if not

β_2 = parameter estimate for the contribution of the participant-level baseline measure

Baseline_{ijk} = pre-intervention measure for each participant *i* in WDA *j* in state *k*

β_3 = a vector of parameter estimates for the contributions of participant-level covariates, in WDA *j* in state *k*

Participant_{ijk} = a vector of covariates for each participant *i* in WDA *j* in state *k*

β_4 = parameter estimate for the average contribution of WDA-level covariates

WDA_{jk} = WDA-level covariate for each WDA *j* in state *k*

β_5 = parameter estimate for the average impact of state-level covariates

State_k = state-level covariate for each state *k*

d_{jk} = a random intercept for WDA *j* in state *k*

e_k = a random intercept for state *k*

ε_{ijk} = a random error term for participant *i* in WDA *j* in state *k*

We estimated impacts using a three-level model with the treatment impact estimated at the participant level. The impact of the CP intervention is represented by β_1. The parameter estimate quantified the difference in the participant outcome for CP participants compared to the outcome for those who do not participate in CP services. If the p-value for the parameter estimate was less than 0.05, we concluded that there was a statistically significant impact of the CP services on the given participant outcome.

E. Treatment and Comparison Group Individuals in the Career Pathways Analysis

Enrollment in CP was determined by the AJC DRC or employment counselor. AJCs conducted assessments of the training needs of each DEI participant to determine if they were candidates for CP or other services (e.g., core, staff-assisted core, and intensive). As such, the treatment group consisted of individuals in treatment WDAs who elected to enroll in one of the four conditions: (1) core services + CP, (2) staff-assisted core + CP, (3) intensive services + CP, or (4) AJC training + CP. The comparison group consisted of individuals in the same WDA as treatment individuals who did not enroll in CP services.

Much like the primary analysis, we used demographic and employment characteristics in this QED. The matches took place within the grantee WDA sites, and as we demonstrate, there was enough individual-level variation to make accurate matches across the treatment and comparison groups.

IX. IMPACT ANALYSIS

The main impact analysis determined the effect of the DEI intervention on outcomes by using two quasi-experimental approaches. A tertiary analysis determined the effect of CP programs on outcomes, using only individuals who received services in the treatment group AJCs. To provide context for these findings, the study also examined descriptive characteristics of all the individuals in the WIA data sample, as well as findings on activities of daily living and disability type by individuals in only the comparison group. The overall findings suggest that although DEI as a program did not have whole-scale impacts on outcomes, CP enrollment did have impacts on outcomes even after accounting for selection bias.

A. Descriptive Statistics

Each of the regression analyses used the same set of variables as control variables in an effort to control for individuals' varying characteristics as captured in the WIA data. These variables represented the most complete information captured in the intake process at AJCs and provided a representation of demographic characteristics, disability status, and previous employment characteristics. The characteristics were not mutually exclusive and were meant to be comprehensive descriptors of the participants in our sample.

The control variables included gender, using a binary indicator if the individual was female. Binary variables also indicated race and veteran status at the time of intake. There are several mutually-exclusive categories for race including Hispanic as opposed to a separate

indicator for ethnicity. Disability status was self-disclosed at the individual level, with indicators for physical, mental, or both physical and mental disabilities, though most persons did not indicate their specific disability. Control variables also included previous employment, college attainment, and two measures of need: (1) low-income status (as indicated by a series of measures of federal, state, or local support) and (2) receipt of TANF, SSI, SSDI, or any other type of cash assistance. Lastly, a series of binary variables indicated limited English proficiency, whether the individual was ever homeless, was ever a criminal offender, or was a single parent.

Prior to controlling for individuals' characteristics in a regression analysis, we found that there were statistically significant differences between the treatment and comparison groups for employment and wage outcomes. Exhibit 5 shows the average outcomes and descriptive characteristics of the analysis sample for the comparison group QED for both the treatment and comparison groups. Almost all characteristics were different across the two groups, with some of the largest differences in race, disability type, college attendance, low-income status, and public assistance receipt.

Exhibit 5: DEI Comparison Group QED Raw Sample Characteristics — Unmatched

CHARACTERISTICS	Treatment Group Mean	Comparison Group Mean	Difference[65]
Female	44.2%	43.1%	1.1pp
Hispanic	12.5%	10.4%	2.1pp***
Black	19.7%	21.2%	-1.5pp***
Asian	2.1%	3.4%	-1.2pp***
White	62.3%	60.6%	1.7pp**
Veteran	11.9%	14.6%	-2.7pp***
Physical disability	11.9%	15.6%	-3.7pp***
Mental disability	17.4%	12.1%	5.3pp***
Physical and mental disability	2.3%	3.1%	-0.8pp***
Previously employed	14.8%	15.6%	-0.8pp
Attended college	35.3%	40.2%	-4.9pp***
Low-income status	34.2%	25.6%	8.6pp***
Received any public assistance	15.2%	12.5%	2.7pp***
Homeless	1.6%	1.6%	0.0pp
Criminal offender	1.9%	2.6%	-0.7pp***
Limited English proficiency	0.3%	0.9%	-0.6pp***
Single parent	3.0%	4.4%	-1.4pp***
Number of observations	12,776	8,193	

Source: Rounds 5 and 6 WIA data.
Two-tailed t-tests used for statistical significance.
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

[65] Differences in percentage points are listed as "pp" in this and subsequent exhibits.

B. Employment/Retention/Earnings Outcomes

Exhibit 6 shows the outcomes of the Round 5 and Round 6 individuals across treatment and comparison groups. Approximately one-quarter of the individuals were employed in the first quarter after AJC exit, with the treatment group having a 3.6 percentage-point advantage over the comparison group. Employment retention over the first three quarters after AJC exit dropped to below 15 percent, with the treatment group again having a higher level of sustained employment. There were, however, no noticeable differences in wages across the second and third quarters after AJC exit between the two groups.

Exhibit 6: DEI Comparison Group QED Raw Sample Outcomes — Unmatched

OUTCOMES	Treatment Group Mean	Comparison Group Mean	Difference
Employed first quarter after AJC exit	27.1%	23.5%	3.6pp***
Retained employment three quarters after AJC	14.9%	12.3%	2.6pp***
Total wages in the second and third quarters after AJC, per participant ($)	2,429.25	2,312.77	116.48
Number of observations	12,776	8,193	

Source: Rounds 5 and 6 WIA data.
Two-tailed t-tests used for statistical significance.
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

C. Survey to Collect Information on Activities of Daily Living and Disability Type in Comparison Group Sites

Our ability to provide context surrounding individuals with disabilities and how they progress through their day depended on the information collected on activities of daily living and disability type. The treatment WDAs collected this information through the Participant Tracking System, and the comparison WDAs collected the same information through a novel comparison group survey. Both data collection instruments were administered upon entry at the AJC for any customer who disclosed a disability to the AJC representative.

For the comparison group survey, individuals who shared that they had a disability and were 18 years of age or older were surveyed at the AJCs that: (1) did not receive DEI funding, (2) were selected by the research team to be part of the comparison group, and (3) agreed to implement the survey. The survey itself was conducted from June 9, 2017, through March 29, 2019, in English and Spanish. Staff members from these AJCs determined study eligibility and asked eligible individuals if they were interested in completing a short survey. After signing up online at the AJC, respondents had the option to complete the survey over the web or over the phone with an interviewer at a later time. A gift card of $15 was provided to each respondent who completed the survey.

A total of 176 individuals completed the survey during this time frame, and their responses are shown in Exhibit 7.[66] Over a quarter of the respondents indicated that they were currently employed, while just under 49 percent of respondents indicated that their disability kept them from finding a job. Nearly a quarter indicated that their disability affected their ability to go shopping, which appeared to be the activity most affected by a disability. A smaller portion of respondents indicated that their disability affected their ability to prepare their own meals, drive, or dress themselves. Over 44 percent of respondents indicated that they took care of another family member, while just under 30 percent indicated that they needed special reminders to attend to their daily activities or chores.

Exhibit 7: Survey Characteristics of Individuals in Comparison Sites

Questions	Replied "Yes"
Current Employment	
Are you currently employed?	27.8%
Did your disability keep you from finding a job?	48.8%
Activities of Daily Living	
Does your disability affect your ability to prepare your own meals?	17.0%
Does your disability affect your ability to go shopping?	23.3%
Does your disability affect your ability to drive a car?	14.8%
Does your disability affect your ability to dress?	9.1%
Do you take care of anyone else such as a spouse, children, or grandchildren?	44.3%
Do you need any special reminders to attend to your daily activities or chores?	29.6%
Disabilities[67]	
Attention deficit or hyperactivity disorders	10.2%
Blindness or low vision	4.0%
Brain injuries	10.2%
Deaf or hard-of-hearing	8.0%
Learning disabilities	16.5%
Medical disabilities	25.6%
Physical disabilities	36.9%
Psychiatric disabilities	25.6%
Speech and language disabilities	2.8%
Developmental and intellectual disabilities	2.3%
Autism	1.1%
Number of observations	176

Source: Abt Associates survey on activities of daily living and disability type.

When asked about disability type, the most common among the respondents was some form of physical disability. This was followed by medical and psychiatric disabilities, with over a quarter of the respondents indicating that they had either disability. This was followed by

[66] Activities of daily living and disability type response categories were not mutually exclusive.
[67] As shared at some point with the point of contact when receiving services at the AJC.

learning disabilities, brain injuries, and attention deficit or hyperactivity disorders, in which at least 10 percent of the respondents indicated that they had some form of these disabilities.

D. Impact Estimates for Matched Comparison Group Analysis

The comparison group QED examined the overall impact of the Round 5 DEI interventions on individual-level outcomes. To measure the overall impact of DEI, we used a treatment group that consisted of the grantee WDAs and a comparison group of demographically similar WDAs that were within the same state. We defined treatment individuals as those who self-disclosed a disability and enrolled in one of the treatment WDAs. The sample in this analysis only consisted of individuals with a disability who enrolled at an AJC after April 1, 2015, for Round 5 or after April 1, 2016, for Round 6.

Individuals from Alaska and South Dakota were dropped from this analysis, as each state was comprised of a single WDA. Individuals from Illinois and California were also excluded in this analysis due to issues with setting up appropriate comparison conditions in these states. Data from Massachusetts, Hawaii, and Washington State were unavailable for both the QED and SITS analyses.

The results indicate that there was no statistically significant impact of the DEI on the three outcomes once we control for individuals' characteristics. The coefficients in the top row of Exhibit 8 show the regression results from the comparison group QED analysis. Impact estimates across each of the three outcomes are displayed on the top row of results.

Exhibit 8: DEI Comparison Group QED Impact Results and Control Variable Coefficients — Unmatched

VARIABLES	Employed first quarter after AJC exit	Retained employment three quarters after AJC exit	Wages in the second and third quarters after AJC exit ($)
Treatment WDA Enrollment (Impact)	-0.003	-0.009	-36.014
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(191.327)
Female	0.006	0.001	-205.533**
	(0.005)	(0.004)	(98.351)
Hispanic	0.027***	0.009	-122.609
	(0.008)	(0.007)	(159.565)
Black	-0.001	-0.011	-544.673***
	(0.008)	(0.007)	(158.464)
Asian	-0.012	-0.002	132.503
	(0.016)	(0.014)	(321.853)
White	0.008	0.013**	19.672
	(0.007)	(0.006)	(134.840)
Veteran	0.001	-0.003	816.528***
	(0.008)	(0.007)	(150.130)
Physical disability	0.013	0.001	19.427
	(0.009)	(0.008)	(163.922)
Mental disability	0.069***	0.040***	355.730**
	(0.009)	(0.008)	(170.366)
Physical and mental disability	0.006	0.004	-209.271
	(0.016)	(0.014)	(298.214)
Previously employed	0.158***	0.103***	2,078.546***
	(0.007)	(0.006)	(131.769)
Attended college	0.036***	0.017***	1,429.792***
	(0.006)	(0.005)	(112.775)
Low-income status	0.077***	0.043***	-191.087
	(0.009)	(0.007)	(152.356)
Received any public assistance	-0.021**	-0.011	386.583**
	(0.009)	(0.008)	(158.686)
Homeless	-0.084***	-0.036**	-1,241.746***
	(0.020)	(0.017)	(367.438)
Criminal offender	-0.002	-0.007	36.483
	(0.018)	(0.015)	(310.997)
Limited English proficiency	0.027	0.030	279.511
	(0.034)	(0.029)	(585.998)
Single parent	-0.047***	-0.020*	-155.579
	(0.014)	(0.012)	(241.753)
Number of observations	20,969	20,969	17,118

Source: Rounds 5 and 6 WIA data.
Standard errors in parentheses.
Two-tailed t-tests used for statistical significance.
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Veteran status was associated with positive gains in wages, and previous employment at the time of AJC enrollment had a strong positive association with all three outcomes. Some time spent in college was also positively associated with all three outcomes. Low-income status was positively associated with both employment and retention. However, having received any public assistance was negatively associated with employment, while homelessness was negatively associated with all three outcomes, with statistical significance at either the 5 or 1 percent levels. Being a single parent had a negative association with employment at the 1 percent level.

E. Overall Impact of DEI, with Matching

In the next set of regressions, we used the same regression framework to determine the overall impact of the DEI on outcomes, but we incorporated a matching strategy between the treatment and comparison groups. For every individual in the treatment group, one individual in the comparison group who matched most closely according to the information in WIA was kept in the new matched sample. Because there were more treatment individuals than comparison individuals in the sample, approximately 15 percent of the treatment group was dropped from the original sample, leaving behind only individuals who were matched well with participants in their comparison group counterpart. The matching strategy used a logit regression and performed a 1-to-1 nearest neighbor match without replacement, matching on the logarithm of the odds ratio of the propensity score.[68]

Exhibit 9 shows that after the matching process, there were statistically significant differences in the first two outcomes, with the treatment group having higher employment and retention outcomes than the comparison group. This indicates that prior to controlling for individuals' characteristics by using a regression analysis, the raw outcomes indicate that the treatment group fared better in all three outcomes.

Only two variables out of 17 total variables were now statistically significantly different across the treatment and comparison groups, indicating appropriate balance as a result of the matching process. This imbalance is within the realm of random chance, and we are confident that the matched treatment and comparison groups were similar to each other.

[68] Guidance on 1-to-1 matching is provided in Ho, D., Imai, K., King, G., & Stuart, E. A. (2011). MatchIt: Nonparametric Preprocessing for Parametric Causal Inference. *Journal of Statistical Software, 42*(8). For guidance on the addition of covariates using a theory-driven approach, see Thoemmes, F. J., & Kim, E. S. (2011). A systematic review of propensity score methods in the social sciences. *Multivariate Behavioral Research, 46*(1). Lastly, technical advice on matching is provided in Caliendo, M., & Kopeinig, S. (2008). Some practical guidance for the implementation of propensity score matching. *Journal of Economic Surveys, 22*(1).

Exhibit 9: DEI Comparison Group QED Raw Sample Characteristics — Matched

OUTCOMES AND CHARACTERISTICS	Treatment Group Mean	Comparison Group Mean	Difference
Outcomes			
Employed first quarter after AJC exit	26.5%	23.5%	3.0pp***
Retained employment three quarters after AJC	14.0%	12.3%	1.7pp***
Wages in the second and third quarters after AJC ($)	2,762.41	2,313.46	448.95***
Control Variables			
Female	43.3%	43.1%	0.1pp
Hispanic	10.1%	10.4%	0.3pp
Black	20.8%	21.2%	-0.4pp
Asian	2.9%	3.4%	-0.4pp
White	61.6%	60.6%	1.0pp
Veteran	13.7%	14.6%	-0.9pp*
Physical disability	15.1%	15.6%	-0.5pp
Mental disability	11.9%	12.1%	-0.2pp
Physical and mental disability	2.6%	3.1%	-0.5pp*
Previously employed	15.0%	15.6%	-0.6pp
Attended college	39.9%	40.2%	-0.3pp
Low-income status	25.5%	25.6%	-0.1pp
Received any public assistance	12.5%	12.5%	0.0pp
Homeless	1.3%	1.6%	-0.3pp*
Criminal offender	2.2%	2.6%	-0.4pp*
Limited English proficiency	0.4%	0.9%	-0.5pp***
Single parent	3.7%	4.4%	-0.7pp**
Number of observations	7,948	8,193	

Source: Rounds 5 and 6 WIA data.
Two-tailed t-tests used for significance.
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

The impact of the DEI intervention was again represented by the WDA-level parameter estimate, "being enrolled in a treatment WDA." The parameter estimate quantified the difference in the participant outcome for treatment WDAs compared to the outcome for "business-as-usual" comparison WDAs.

We found that there was no impact of being in a treatment WDA on all three outcomes. The matched results in the top row of Exhibit 10 largely mirror the unmatched findings from Exhibit 8, with all three coefficients being close to zero and not statistically significant.

Exhibit 10: DEI Comparison Group QED Impact Results and Control Variable Coefficients — Matched

VARIABLES	Employed first quarter after AJC exit	Retained employment three quarters after AJC exit	Wages in the second and third quarters after AJC exit ($)
Treatment WDA Enrollment (Impact)	-0.002	-0.007	33.038
	(0.010)	(0.009)	(225.707)
Female	0.010*	0.002	-115.334
	(0.006)	(0.005)	(121.965)
Hispanic	0.028***	0.000	-327.788
	(0.010)	(0.008)	(210.912)
Black	-0.004	-0.016**	-743.863***
	(0.009)	(0.008)	(193.134)
Asian	-0.015	-0.004	83.109
	(0.017)	(0.014)	(364.056)
White	0.006	0.009	-79.461
	(0.008)	(0.007)	(166.620)
Veteran	0.003	0.004	905.153***
	(0.009)	(0.007)	(177.452)
Physical disability	0.018*	0.004	52.112
	(0.010)	(0.009)	(198.249)
Mental disability	0.074***	0.050***	402.742*
	(0.011)	(0.010)	(221.737)
Physical and mental disability	0.004	0.007	-93.127
	(0.018)	(0.015)	(348.568)
Previously employed	0.175***	0.107***	2,430.757***
	(0.008)	(0.007)	(161.012)
Attended college	0.030***	0.015***	1,440.799***
	(0.007)	(0.006)	(135.318)
Low-income status	0.095***	0.051***	-6.060
	(0.011)	(0.009)	(200.441)
Received any public assistance	-0.021*	-0.014	313.355
	(0.011)	(0.009)	(207.198)
Homeless	-0.091***	-0.043**	-1,671.314***
	(0.025)	(0.021)	(483.158)
Criminal offender	-0.007	-0.003	97.598
	(0.020)	(0.017)	(365.780)
Limited English proficiency	0.032	0.034	417.043
	(0.036)	(0.031)	(657.577)
Single parent	-0.049***	-0.020	-124.348
	(0.015)	(0.013)	(279.105)
Number of observations	16,141	16,141	12,879

Source: Rounds 5 and 6 WIA data.
Standard errors in parentheses.
Two-tailed t-tests used for significance.
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

The coefficients on the control variables paint a similar story to the findings from the non-matched analysis, with positive outcome associations for individuals who were previously employed and went to college. Homelessness was again negatively associated with all three outcomes.[69]

The impact estimates from the regression results will differ from the raw differences in means between the treatment and comparison groups, as shown in Exhibits 9 and 10. This occurs even when the matched groups are similar in demographic characteristics, as the regression estimates incorporate fixed effects at the state and WDA levels. The differences across states and WDAs are accounted for in the regression-adjusted fixed effects models, which are not in the raw differences in means. As a result, when the differences in means are relatively small, it is possible for this perceived impact to disappear altogether after regression adjustments are made.

Finally, we note that in addition to measuring outcomes using information from the WIA and PIRL administrative data, we also analyzed outcomes using the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH).[70] This served as a robustness check for the regression results in Exhibit 10, as the NDNH information provides another view of employment and wage information. By using NDNH, individuals who are living and working across state lines are more accurately captured using these data, as compared to other administrative data sources. The mean differences on all three outcomes between treatment and comparison groups were not statistically significant, providing more evidence against a consistent and detectable impact of DEI on outcomes.

F. Impact Estimates for Short Interrupted Time Series (SITS) Analysis

In our evaluation, we used a SITS for all grantee sites to measure a baseline impact estimate of DEI on employment outcomes. We accomplished this by comparing the pre-intervention time trend on participants' outcomes to post-intervention levels. For states with a comparison group, we used both SITS and a QED. SITS was used to measure the longitudinal impact of DEI before and after the treatment sites, while the QED was used as a comparison measure between the treatment and comparison sites. For states without a comparison group, SITS was the sole DEI impact analysis. In this analysis, only three states were excluded due to the unavailability of data from each state: Massachusetts, Washington, and Hawaii.

Prior to conducting the regression analysis, we completed a descriptive analysis that determined average outcomes as well as average characteristics of the analysis sample used for SITS. In Exhibit 11, we see that about 29 percent of jobseekers were employed in the first quarter after AJC exit, and 18 percent retained employment three quarters after exit. Average wages in the second and third quarters after exit were about $2,775. Less than half of the sample was female, with the majority of the sample being white. More individuals indicated that they

[69] All variables that were used in the regression analysis are listed in Exhibit 10.
[70] The NDNH analysis used a sample of 9.769 individuals and calculated the same variables as measured in the WIA and PIRL data. The data only include employment covered by Unemployment Insurance, and excludes off-the-books or informal work. All differences in outcomes between the treatment and comparison groups had p-values of over 0.35, indicating that the differences were not close to being statistically significant at even the 10 percent level.

had a mental disability as compared to a physical disability, more than a third had attended some college, and about a third indicated that they were low income.

Exhibit 11: SITS Sample Characteristics (Individuals in Treatment WDAs, Pre- and Post-DEI)

OUTCOMES AND CHARACTERISTICS	Mean
Outcomes	
Employed first quarter after AJC exit	29.2%
Retained employment three quarters after AJC exit	17.9%
Wages in the second and third quarters after AJC ($)	2,775.14
Control Variables	
Female	48.2%
Hispanic	11.8%
Black	18.8%
Asian	2.2%
White	63.2%
Veteran	12.0%
Physical disability	9.0%
Mental disability	14.3%
Physical and mental disability	2.0%
Previously employed	14.4%
Attended college	34.9%
Low-income status	33.1%
Received any public assistance	18.0%
Homeless	1.8%
Criminal offender	1.6%
Limited English proficiency	0.2%
Single parent	2.3%
Number of observations	20,538

Source: Rounds 5 and 6 WIA data.

SITS necessitates the use of multiple pre-intervention data points to form a linear counterfactual trend of the outcome variables by estimating the pre-intervention trend information into the post-intervention period. With the abundance of information in quarters of enrollment in the WIA data, we used five quarters of individuals' data prior to the start of DEI on April 1, 2015, for Round 5, and 10 quarters prior to the start of DEI on April 1, 2016, for Round 6. For information post-treatment, we used data from 10 quarters after the start of DEI for Round 5 and 5 quarters after the start of DEI for Round 6. The impact of the intervention on outcomes is represented by a departure from this counterfactual on multiple post-intervention data points.

The parameter estimate quantified the difference in the participant outcome for individuals in DEI-funded AJCs who enrolled after the start of DEI compared to the outcome for individuals in those same AJCs who enrolled prior to the start of DEI. The SITS results indicate that while there was no DEI impact on first-quarter employment, there was a positive impact on employment retention for those who were employed. The results in the top row of Exhibit 12 show that individuals who enrolled in a DEI-funded AJC after DEI implementation were 11.4

percentage points more likely to retain their employment and earned over $900 more when compared to individuals who enrolled in one of these same AJCs prior to that date.[71]

[71] The sample sizes for the first two columns are the same since all individuals in our analysis had outcome information for three quarters after they exited their AJC.

Exhibit 12: DEI SITS Impact Results and Control Variable Coefficients

VARIABLES	Employed first quarter after AJC exit	Retained employment three quarters after AJC exit	Wages in the second and third quarters after AJC exit ($)
3 Post-Round 5 Enrollment (Impact)	0.021*	0.114***	937.490***
	(0.011)	(0.010)	(191.278)
Time (quarters)	-0.012***	-0.033***	-198.770***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(26.509)
Female	0.001	-0.009*	-358.955***
	(0.006)	(0.005)	(103.259)
Hispanic	0.029***	0.014*	93.128
	(0.009)	(0.008)	(161.838)
Black	-0.003	-0.023***	-513.690***
	(0.009)	(0.008)	(164.768)
Asian	-0.018	-0.023	261.859
	(0.019)	(0.017)	(348.607)
White	0.010	0.000	96.728
	(0.008)	(0.007)	(136.637)
Veteran	-0.013	-0.009	1,059.565***
	(0.009)	(0.008)	(159.975)
Physical disability	0.041***	0.019*	356.785*
	(0.012)	(0.011)	(208.138)
Mental disability	0.094***	0.050***	447.886**
	(0.012)	(0.010)	(205.945)
Physical and mental disability	0.026	-0.007	-269.522
	(0.021)	(0.018)	(363.083)
Previously employed	0.187***	0.136***	2,185.864***
	(0.008)	(0.007)	(139.735)
Attended college	0.085***	0.041***	1,871.019***
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(117.126)
Low-income status	0.053***	0.046***	-464.344***
	(0.009)	(0.008)	(161.049)
Received any public assistance	-0.027***	-0.030***	450.980***
	(0.010)	(0.009)	(173.069)
Homeless	-0.058***	-0.048***	-873.784**
	(0.021)	(0.018)	(366.486)
Criminal offender	0.068***	0.028	712.454*
	(0.023)	(0.020)	(384.120)
Limited English proficiency	0.057	0.033	-66.681
	(0.055)	(0.048)	(906.301)
Single parent	0.017	0.058***	703.613**
	(0.019)	(0.017)	(320.045)
Number of observations	20,538	20,538	17,685

Source: Rounds 5 and 6 WIA data.
Standard errors in parentheses.
Two-tailed t-tests used for statistical significance.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

There was a strong positive association between all three outcomes and previous employment at the time of AJC enrollment. College attendance was also positively associated with all three outcomes. Low-income status was positively associated to the employment and retention outcomes at the 1 percent level, but negatively associated with wages. Receiving any type of public assistance was negatively associated with the employment and retention outcomes, but positively associated with wages. Once again, homelessness was strongly negatively associated with all three outcomes. However, in this analysis, single parents were more likely to retain employment and earn higher wages.

Although these findings suggest positive DEI impacts on some outcomes, it is important to keep in mind the contrasts in the SITS analysis when compared to the QED analysis. While the previous QED analysis compared individuals in treatment AJCs to individuals in comparison AJCs after the implementation of DEI, the SITS analysis compared individuals in treatment AJCs after implementation to individuals in those same AJCs prior to implementation. The SITS analysis also included states that were not in the QED analysis, such as California and Illinois. As the comparison groups and the composition of those groups were both different, we would expect some difference in impacts across the two analyses. The SITS findings suggest that within DEI-funded AJCs, there may have existed impacts in employment retention and earnings that can be attributed to the appearance of DEI programming. But, these findings are still inconclusive given the robust QED findings that show that there were no impacts on outcomes.

G. Impact of Career Pathways

A second comparison group QED examined the impact of the specific CP interventions on participant-level outcomes. Because all grantees had a CP component as part of their DEI interventions, the sample consisted of individuals with a disability who enrolled in an AJC after April 1, 2015, for Round 5 or after April 1, 2016, for Round 6. Per the information provided by the AJCs through the WIA data, we define CP enrollment as having enrolled in one of the following services: OJT, skill upgrading, customized training, other occupational skills training, and apprenticeship training.

The demographic characteristics indicated that CP enrollees were much more likely to be employed in the first quarter after AJC exit, retain employment for three quarters after exit, and earn greater wages compared to their non-enrollee counterparts in the same DEI-funded AJCs. Exhibit 13 shows the average outcomes and characteristics of the CP enrollees (treatment group) and the CP non-enrollees (comparison group). Prior to matching, we found that there were large differences across the two groups. These differences were most pronounced in disability types, low-income status, public assistance receipt, and having been a criminal offender.

Exhibit 13: Career Pathways Comparison Group QED Raw Sample Characteristics — Unmatched

OUTCOMES AND CHARACTERISTICS	Treatment Group Mean	Comparison Group Mean	Difference
Outcomes			
Employed first quarter after AJC exit	42.3%	26.3%	16.0pp***
Retained employment three quarters after AJC	23.8%	14.5%	9.3pp***
Wages in the second and third quarters after AJC ($)	3,862.77	2,352.26	1,510.51***
Control Variables			
Female	40.5%	44.4%	-3.9pp*
Hispanic	12.7%	12.5%	0.2pp
Black	26.1%	19.4%	6.7pp***
Asian	2.5%	2.1%	0.4pp
White	61.0%	62.3%	-1.4pp
Veteran	16.7%	11.7%	5.0pp***
Physical disability	16.0%	11.7%	4.4pp**
Mental disability	33.4%	16.6%	16.8pp***
Physical and mental disability	2.6%	2.3%	0.3pp
Previously employed	15.4%	14.8%	0.6pp
Attended college	31.2%	35.5%	-4.2pp**
Low-income status	76.9%	32.1%	44.8pp***
Received any public assistance	35.9%	14.2%	21.7pp***
Homeless	5.0%	1.5%	3.5pp***
Criminal offender	10.7%	1.5%	9.3pp***
Limited English proficiency	1.3%	0.3%	1.0pp***
Single parent	10.9%	2.6%	8.3pp***
Number of observations	605	12,171	

Source: Rounds 5 and 6 WIA data.
Two-tailed t-tests used for statistical significance.
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Upon running the regression analysis, the results in the top row of Exhibit 14 indicate that CP enrollment was positively associated with all three outcomes at the 1 percent level of statistical significance. Individuals who were enrolled in CP were over 13 percentage points more likely to be employed, 5.5 percentage points more likely to retain employment, and earned over $1,840 more than individuals over two quarters when compared to those who did not enroll in Career Pathways.

Exhibit 14: Career Pathways Comparison Group QED Impact Results and Control Variable Coefficients — Unmatched

VARIABLES	Employed first quarter after AJC exit	Retained employment three quarters after AJC exit	Wages in the second and third quarters after AJC exit ($)
Career Pathways Enrollment (Impact)	0.134***	0.055***	1,840.777***
	(0.016)	(0.014)	(281.810)
Female	-0.001	-0.004	-295.933**
	(0.007)	(0.006)	(122.564)
Hispanic	0.028***	0.008	-21.885
	(0.010)	(0.009)	(193.245)
Black	-0.001	-0.018*	-350.960*
	(0.011)	(0.009)	(200.810)
Asian	-0.017	-0.013	379.815
	(0.023)	(0.020)	(436.406)
White	0.013	0.009	231.884
	(0.009)	(0.008)	(169.519)
Veteran	-0.010	-0.009	730.320***
	(0.011)	(0.009)	(194.981)
Physical disability	0.018	0.001	128.877
	(0.012)	(0.011)	(213.907)
Mental disability	0.061***	0.031***	136.587
	(0.012)	(0.011)	(212.517)
Physical and mental disability	0.019	-0.006	-277.963
	(0.022)	(0.019)	(397.807)
Previously employed	0.156***	0.101***	1,881.128***
	(0.009)	(0.008)	(167.623)
Attended college	0.050***	0.018***	1,596.531***
	(0.008)	(0.007)	(144.539)
Low-income status	0.047***	0.022**	-686.532***
	(0.011)	(0.009)	(187.587)
Received any public assistance	-0.028**	-0.012	473.607**
	(0.011)	(0.010)	(192.392)
Homeless	-0.109***	-0.060***	-1,238.887***
	(0.026)	(0.022)	(453.290)
Criminal offender	0.005	-0.013	-17.413
	(0.024)	(0.021)	(418.221)
Limited English proficiency	0.066	0.059	246.755
	(0.057)	(0.049)	(939.703)
Single parent	-0.058***	-0.026	-324.099
	(0.019)	(0.017)	(328.436)
Number of observations	12,776	12,776	

Source: Rounds 5 and 6 WIA data.
Standard errors in parentheses.
Two-tailed t-tests used for statistical significance.
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

The coefficients on the control variables indicate that veteran status was again positively associated with wages among this sample of DEI-funded AJC enrollees. There were positive associations with previous employment and college attendance on all three outcomes at the 1 percent level of statistical significance. Low-income status was positively associated with employment and retention outcomes but negatively associated with wages.

Receiving any public assistance was negatively associated with employment and retention outcomes, while homelessness was strongly negatively associated with all three outcomes. Limited English proficiency was strongly positively associated with employment and retention outcomes, while being a single parent was negatively associated with only employment.

H. Impact of Career Pathways, with Matching

In the final set of regressions, we incorporated a matching strategy between the treatment (CP enrollees) and comparison (CP non-enrollees) groups. Because there were many more comparison group individuals for every treatment group individual within the AJCs, we incorporated a 1:2 nearest neighbor match. For every individual in the treatment group, two individuals in the comparison group who matched most closely according to the information in WIA were kept in the new matched sample. The matching strategy used a logit regression and performed a nearest neighbor match without replacement, again matching on the logarithm of the odds ratio of the propensity score.

Exhibit 15 shows that all variables were not statistically significant at the 5 percent level across the treatment and comparison groups, indicating a high level of balance. After matching, we find that there are statistically significant differences in all three outcomes between the treatment and comparison groups. This indicates that prior to controlling for individuals' characteristics using a regression analysis, individuals who enrolled in CP programs at DEI-funded AJCs fared better than matched individuals who did not enroll in these programs.

Exhibit 15: Career Pathways Comparison Group QED Raw Sample Characteristics — Matched

OUTCOMES AND CHARACTERISTICS	Treatment Group Mean	Comparison Group Mean	Difference
Outcomes			
Employed first quarter after AJC exit	42.3%	29.4%	12.9pp***
Retained employment three quarters after AJC	23.8%	17.6%	6.2pp**
Wages in the second and third quarters after AJC ($)	3,862.77	2,438.78	1,423.99***
Control Variables			
Female	40.5%	41.8%	-1.3pp
Hispanic	12.7%	10.8%	1.9pp
Black	26.1%	25.8%	0.3pp
Asian	2.5%	1.7%	0.8pp
White	61.0%	64.7%	-3.7pp
Veteran	16.7%	15.2%	1.5pp
Physical disability	16.0%	18.2%	-2.1pp
Mental disability	33.4%	36.7%	-3.3pp
Physical and mental disability	2.6%	3.1%	-0.4pp
Previously employed	15.4%	16.6%	-1.3pp
Attended college	31.2%	29.4%	1.8pp
Low-income status	76.9%	78.4%	-1.5pp
Received any public assistance	35.9%	36.4%	-0.5pp
Homeless	5.0%	3.3%	1.6pp*
Criminal offender	10.7%	9.5%	1.2pp
Limited English proficiency	1.3%	0.6%	0.7pp
Single parent	10.9%	10.5%	0.4pp
Number of observations	605	1,166	

Source: Rounds 5 and 6 WIA data.
Two-tailed t-tests used for statistical significance.
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

The impact of the CP intervention is represented by the individual-level parameter estimate, "being enrolled in a Career Pathways program." The parameter estimate quantifies the difference in the participant outcome for individuals with disabilities who entered CP training compared to the outcome for those who did not.

The results in the top row of Exhibit 16 indicate consistently positive impacts of CP enrollment on all three outcomes at the 1 percent level of statistical significance. An individual with a disability who was enrolled in CP was 16 percentage points more likely to be employed, 4.7 percentage points more likely to retain employment, and earned over $1,700 more over two quarters compared to a similar individual with a disability in a treatment WDA who did not enroll in CP.

Exhibit 16: Career Pathways Comparison Group QED Impact Results and Control Variable Coefficients — Matched

VARIABLES	Employed first quarter after AJC exit	Retained employment three quarters after AJC exit	Wages in the second and third quarters after AJC exit
Career Pathways Enrollment (Impact)	0.161***	0.047**	1,701.396***
	(0.021)	(0.018)	(378.122)
Female	-0.025	-0.006	822.383**
	(0.021)	(0.018)	(388.467)
Hispanic	0.032	0.027	-314.186
	(0.030)	(0.026)	(556.435)
Black	-0.075**	-0.017	-856.831
	(0.033)	(0.029)	(617.755)
Asian	-0.039	-0.011	-977.783
	(0.070)	(0.061)	(1,319.979)
White	-0.011	-0.001	72.854
	(0.030)	(0.026)	(557.350)
Veteran	-0.121***	-0.054**	1,145.127**
	(0.029)	(0.025)	(527.610)
Physical disability	0.086***	0.016	830.197
	(0.030)	(0.026)	(550.436)
Mental disability	0.049*	-0.018	-612.759
	(0.027)	(0.023)	(509.464)
Physical and mental disability	0.063	-0.013	-799.283
	(0.057)	(0.049)	(1,019.651)
Previously employed	0.094***	0.087***	665.106
	(0.026)	(0.023)	(466.668)
Attended college	0.025	-0.013	272.032
	(0.023)	(0.020)	(424.029)
Low-income status	0.055**	0.009	-1,655.346***
	(0.028)	(0.024)	(490.050)
Received any public assistance	-0.041*	-0.052***	136.222
	(0.023)	(0.020)	(430.450)
Homeless	-0.157***	-0.081*	-802.113
	(0.048)	(0.042)	(919.816)
Criminal offender	-0.007	-0.009	305.039
	(0.033)	(0.029)	(585.008)
Limited English proficiency	0.010	-0.050	-1,145.713
	(0.101)	(0.088)	(1,710.139)
Single parent	-0.108***	-0.038	-772.110
	(0.032)	(0.028)	(576.071)
Number of observations	1,771	1,771	

Source: Rounds 5 and 6 WIA data.
Standard errors in parentheses.
Two-tailed t-tests used for statistical significance.
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Among this group of individuals who enrolled in DEI-funded WDAs, the coefficients on the control variables tell a similar story compared to the previous regression results, with a few exceptions. Being female was now associated with positive outcomes in employment and retention at the 5 percent level of statistical significance. Individuals who were previously employed were more likely to have positive outcomes, but there was no relationship between college attendance and outcomes. Low-income status was still positively associated with employment but had a negative impact with earnings. Having received any public assistance was negatively associated with employment retention at the 1 percent level of statistical significance.

X. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The impact estimates of both DEI as a program as well as the impact of Career Pathways enrollment within DEI-funded AJCs were conducted using WIA information on individuals with disabilities that the states provided on a regular basis. Using information spanning multiple years and two rounds of the program, we were able to use two non-experimental methods, a SITS and a comparison group QED, to determine these impacts.

The findings suggest that there were no consistently positive and statistically significant impacts of DEI on employment, employment retention, or wage outcomes once we controlled for individuals' characteristics using a regression analysis and used propensity score matching to further account for differences across the treatment and comparison groups. While the QED analysis to determine overall DEI impacts had null findings, we did find positive impacts on employment retention and wages using a SITS analysis. As the comparison groups differed between the QED and SITS analyses, as did the general composition of the groups due to the inclusion of California and Illinois in the SITS analysis, the impact estimates are not directly comparable. However, the positive estimates using SITS indicate there may have existed impacts in employment retention and earnings that can be attributed to the appearance of DEI programming.

There were consistently positive and statistically significant impacts of enrolling in CP programs within DEI-funded AJCs even after a matching strategy to keep only those individuals who were statistically similar to each other. The measurable impacts were large enough to warrant some further exploration in the future on what combinations of CP services and training receipt might provide the greatest returns on outcomes. This exploration could come in the form of a principal components analysis or a clustering analysis using machine learning techniques, which could help uncover which parts of the DEI program were more likely to lead to successful outcomes.

The qualitative implementation analysis included the collection of information on systems change, assessments of SDSs, and documentation of project challenges. We used qualitative data to assess the context in which each DEI grant was implemented, as well as how systems changes may have affected project performance. Through the collection of qualitative data (e.g., site visits, interviews, and focus groups) and research on promising practices in disability employment, we developed domains and indicators to measure systems changes in WDAs. This process began with creating a USDOL-approved DEI protocol, which we used to

collect information from state officials, DEI State Leads, WDAs, DRCs, and DEI participants. Site visits included the collection of information on grantee start-up issues, implementation of grant requirements, and utilization of SDSs.

Analyses of site visits, telephone interviews, and focus groups provided descriptions of participating WDAs, including partnerships and collaborative initiatives for JSWDs, the status of existing cross-agency/organizational partnerships, and the leaders who influenced disability employment in each WDA. In addition, data captured the social and political context of each WDA, such as system members, existing interagency agreements, MOUs, the degree of inclusiveness of JSWDs, and the current level of service integration. We also collected information on the structure and organization of the DEI in each state.

The study's qualitative research questions (Exhibit 17) investigated the staffing of DEI grantees as well as adoption of SDSs, perceived challenges to implementation, DEI grant requirements, TTW implementation, Partnerships and Collaborations, and the sustainability of DEI practices. The quantitative research questions analyzed the number of customers with disabilities served, the extent to which DEI grants affected the number and types of customers with disabilities, and the outcomes and impacts of the DEI project.

Exhibit 17: Qualitative Research Questions

Qualitative Research Questions
What staffing infrastructure did grantees develop for the DEI?
How did grantees implement optional DEI service delivery strategies?
What were the perceived challenges and successes of implementing TTW activities?
What were the requirements of the DEI?
To what extent did DEI grantees coordinate with state VR and other partners?
How did grantees use TTW revenues and other resources to fund DRCs?
To what extent were DEI activities sustained when grant funding expired?

A. Potential Areas for Future Research

The goal of the DEI was to improve the employment outcomes of JSWDs through the application of specialized SDSs and the facilitation of systems change. The impact evaluation measured and assessed the outcomes and impact of the DEI. To provide context on the individuals with disabilities who received services outside of DEI-funded AJCs, a survey on employment, activities of daily living, and disability type was analyzed and reported in this evaluation. The source of information from this analysis came in the form of a novel survey that was administered via web and phone to individuals in comparison group AJCs who elected to answer questions in exchange for a gift card. The comparison site survey included newly formed data elements that were not part of WIA/PIRL data collection and, as a result, garnered a relatively small sample of comparison and treatment group individuals. Due to the challenges of on-the-ground data collection and limited support from WDA personnel due to their own workloads, the comparison group survey provided useful information that was limited by a small subset of comparison group individuals across participating WDAs. Future research that compares treatment to comparison groups should include specific PIRL addenda that allow for the inclusion of additional data elements that are required for certain groups such as DEI participants, WDA staff, and/or youth with disabilities.

B. DEI Evaluation Logic Model

The DEI Round 5 through Round 6 logic model (Exhibit 18) conveys an understanding of the relationships among the inputs, outputs, and expected outcomes of the DEI evaluation. It was developed in five phases. As we collected information through site visits, interviews, and focus groups; program documentation; and WIOA data, changes to the logic model were made to illustrate the program's design and its evolution for the DEI Round 5 and Round 6 grantees. As the DEI project matured, project developers provided detailed explanations of the design, purpose, and utilization of each SDS, as well as training designed to help DRCs and other DEI stakeholders understand the relationships among various DEI resources and the systems changes that were expected to occur during the project period.

The DEI logic model specifies relationships among situations/priorities, inputs, outputs, and outcomes at the JSWD and systems levels as well as the challenges and facilitators of program implementation. The logic model has five components:

1. Inputs: Investments in the DEI. These include staff knowledge, experience, and skills; T/TA; DEI grant resources, including grant-funded positions; SDSs; partnerships; providers; TTW and EN activities; and WIOA services and data.

2. Outputs: Products and services provided to JSWDs. Individual-level outputs include SDSs, grant-funded positions (e.g., DEI State Leads and DRCs), TTW implementation, and internal staff trainings. Systems-level outputs include WDA engagement, outreach to JSWDs and employers, and partnerships, both internal and external, including WIOA-mandated partners, child care, transportation, housing, WIPA services, and CP.

3. Outcomes: Changes in the circumstances (e.g., employment, wages, and job retention) of JSWDs that can be attributed to the DEI. Individual-level outcomes include increases in the number of JSWDs served by AJCs, the employment rate of JSWDs, the disability self-disclosure rate, SSI/SSDI beneficiary enrollment rate, SSI/SSDI beneficiary public assistance termination rate that is replaced by employment, CP training completion, and wages. Systems-level outcomes include increases in partner, provider, and employer engagement, as well as systems change, including integration of resources through Blending and Braiding Funds and Partnerships and Collaborations.

4. Program Impact: A primary goal of the DEI evaluation is to identify the impact of DEI activities on employment-related outcomes. To accomplish this, we used a clustered randomized selection procedure to assign WDAs to serve as treatment sites or as pilot sites.[72]

[72] Social Dynamics collected the same information that ETA received on a quarterly basis from each DEI grantee. It was decided in 2010 by USDOL that the DEI evaluation would focus only on customers who received WIOA intensive and/or training services and self-disclosed a disability.

5. Challenges and Facilitators: These are either exogenous or endogenous factors that affect program inputs, outputs, and outcomes. Exogenous factors are external to the DEI. For example, a state hiring freeze that delays the hiring of DEI State Leads and/or DRCs and the discontinuation of the WIPA program are exogenous factors that may have affected program outcomes. Another exogenous factor is whether a VR agency is under Order of Selection in a particular state, which may result in constraints on engaging VR as a DEI partner. Other exogenous factors include WDA unemployment rates, types of industries and jobs available in each WDA, quality of local transportation systems and availability of other support services, population density, local politics, and institutions.

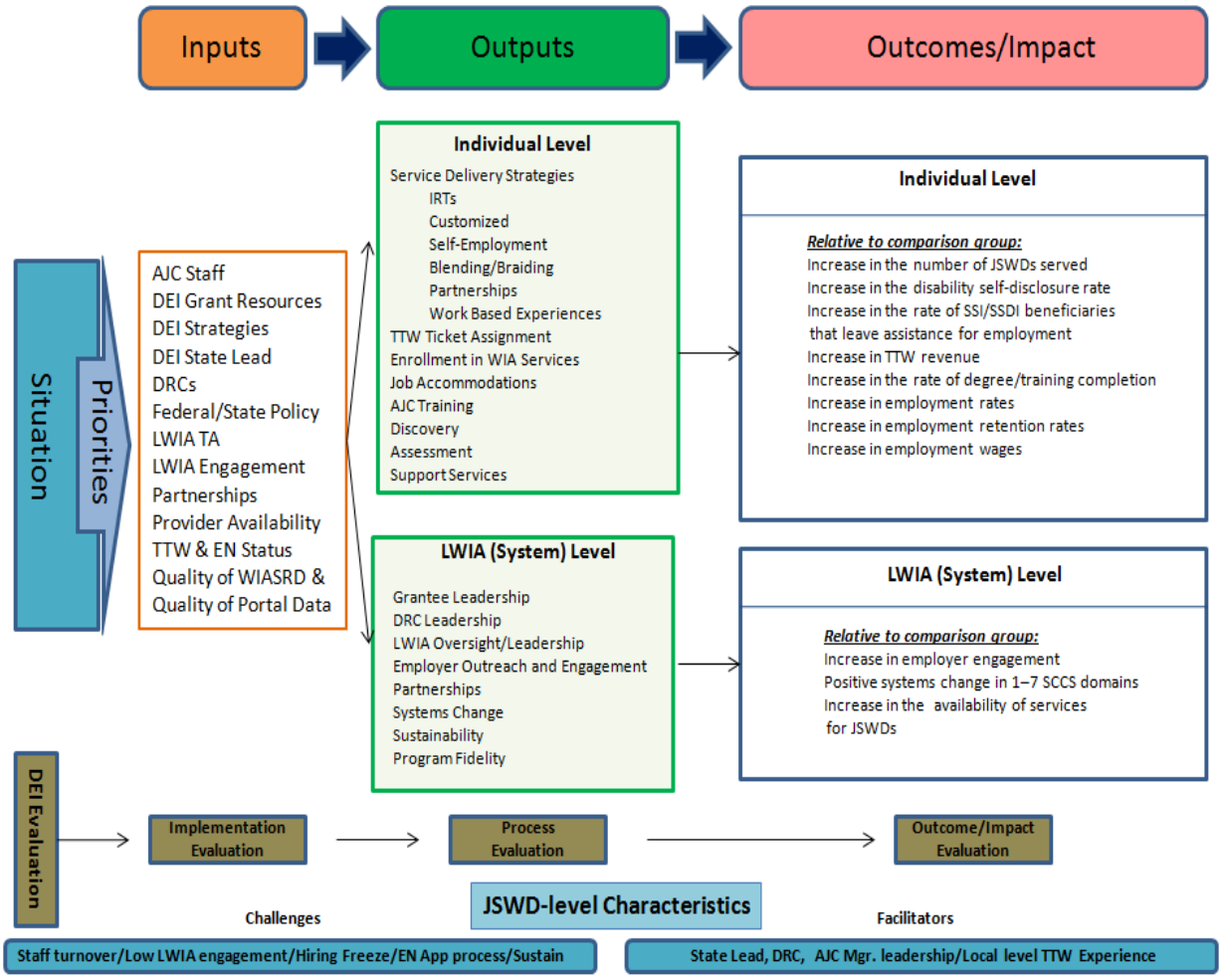
   Conversely, endogenous factors are dependent variables that change due to a relationship within the model. One of the most important endogenous factors is the capacity of participating WDAs to implement all of the DEI requirements. Capacity is defined as having the appropriate staff expertise, coordination, and management systems in place at the time of the commencement of the grant. Another critical endogenous factor is DEI State Lead and/or DRC expertise and turnover of these positions. These factors may generate ripple effects throughout the DEI that lead to staff retraining, reestablishing partnerships, dealing with the new staff "learning curve," and JSWD attrition during the final two quarters of the DEI.

The program theory for the DEI is based on the assumption that each grantee utilized two grant-funded positions (e.g., DEI State Lead and DRC) and that selected SDSs were implemented according to the way they were designed by the program developers with some variation to adapt SDSs for JSWDs. For example, IRTs are designed to provide "*diversified service systems, coordinating services and leveraging funding in order to meet the needs of an individual jobseeker with a disability.*"[73] Likewise, WBL Opportunities were implemented "*in order to develop*" jobseeker "*aspirations, make informed choices about careers*," and engage in "*training designed to improve job-seeking and workplace skills.*"[74] The expectation was that access to DEI State Leads and DRCs, the two positions that were funded by the DEI, combined with the implementation of SDSs, would improve the employment, job retention, and earnings of DEI participants.

[73] WorkforceGPS. (2017). *Integrated resource team FAQs*. Retrieved from https://disability.workforcegps.org/resources/2016/04/13/14/02/Integrated_Resource_Team_FAQs

[74] U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy. (n.d.). *Career preparation and work-based learning experiences*. Retrieved from https://www.dol.gov/odep/categories/youth/career.htm

Exhibit 18: DEI Logic Model



Revised 3-2015

Within the context of the DEI, systems change was an adjustment in the way WDAs made decisions about their policies, programs, and allocation of resources. The purpose of systems change was to maximize each WDA's ability to offer JSWD services that improved the access and availability of job training and employment services by resolving systemic inefficiencies, which may have included identifying JSWDs and enrolling them in training that led to employment. The DEI Round 5 through Round 6 systems change analysis focused on the implementation of DEI grant requirements in addition to the structure of the system (e.g., WDAs), including changes in its individual and organizational members and leadership.

Social Dynamics also observed the daily operations of AJCs and collected relevant documentation on intake activities, service coordination activities, and the availability of and access to employment-related services and training. Observations of state and local meetings, WDA, and AJC levels also informed the systems in each WDA rated on a four-point ordinal scale that includes eight domains. The objectives of the Systems Change Coding Scheme were to

provide a system for coding interviews and focus groups, beginning with a review of the indicator descriptions associated with each change component of the DEI evaluation.[75]

The analysis of DEI implementation included qualitative data analysis designed to expand the breadth and nuance of enquiry. The qualitative research component focused on how WDAs affected systems change.[76] Qualitative data was coded by researchers and aggregated across stakeholder categories. Systems change was determined by the eight sub-domains by searching for information in interview and focus group transcripts.

Approach:

- Create a system for coding DEI interviews by hand based on the attached SCCS;
- Develop a process that can be easily translated into MAXQDA for increased productivity; and
- Ensure that the process has inter-rater/-coder reliability.

Data:

Systems Change Coding Scheme (SCCS)
Final interview protocols
Interview transcripts
SCCS
Protocol
Transcripts

SCCS Transcript Coding Instructions

1) Review all indicator descriptions associated with each sub-domain; indicator descriptions are to the right of each sub-domain. You will find that rows 1–4 and columns A–B are frozen to improve navigation of the SCCS. The indicators should be attached in columnar format by domain for easier reading and scrolling.

2) Search for and find information in the transcripts. Highlight and color-code the information as indicated for the domain. Only highlight portions with fewer than 10 words such that it can be coded as a search term for MAXQDA.

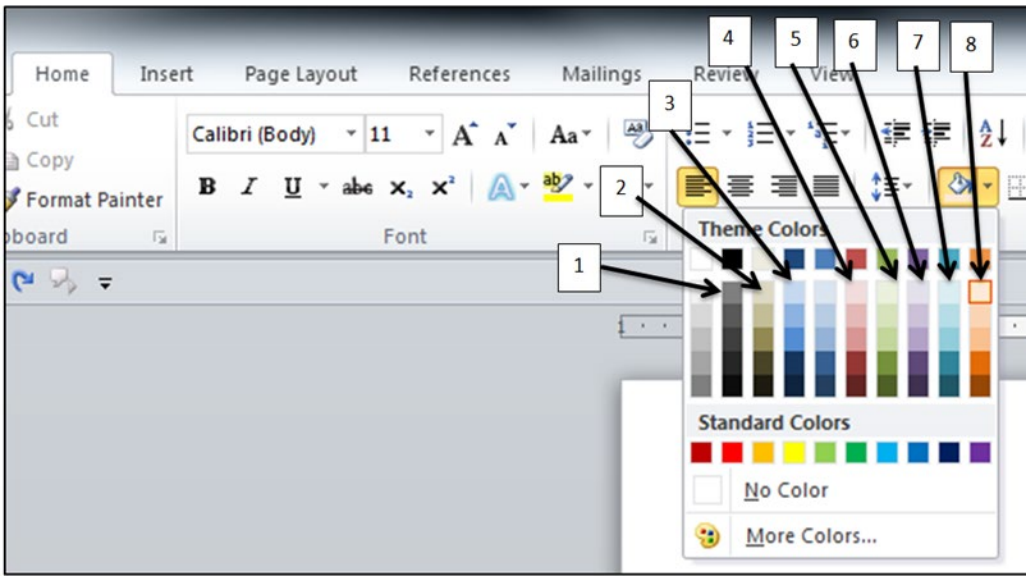
[75] Previous USDOL programs designed to improve the employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities through systems change included ETA's Work Incentive Grants, the Disability Program Navigator initiative, and employment service models, such as ODEP's Customized Employment, Workforce Action (Olmstead), START-UP USA (Self-Employment), and State Intermediary Youth grants.

[76] Kaufman, N. J., Castrucci, B. C., Pearsol, J., Leider, J. P., Sellers, K., Kaufman, I. R., … Sprague, J. B. (2014). Thinking beyond the silos: Emerging priorities in workforce development for state and local government public health agencies. *Journal of Public Health Management & Practice, 20*(6): 557–565.

3) Use the color scheme below to color-code text that addresses each of the eight domains:

Domain	Color Code
1. Capacity	
2. Coordination/Integration	
3. Customer Choice	
4. Employer Support	
5. Service Delivery Strategies	
6. Dissemination	
7. Universal Design	
8. Sustainability	

Select color set from the Home Tab in MS Word using the paint bucket as presented in the image below.



Simply mark the text with you cursor, go to Home, right click paint bucket on the button, and choose the appropriate color for the domain.

4) Insert comments to identify the sub-domains that you are coding after highlighting the color associated with the broader domain. For example, if you have highlighted in **orange** the text associated with sustainability, and those highlighted portions refer to sub-domain "8A," then insert a comment on that portion of text with the alphanumeric "8A" only. If, however, the segment of the interview refers to more than one domain, please identify all relevant sub domains in the same comment section.

5) Highlight a segment of text and code as an indicator, copy the text, and place it into the associated row of the SCCS spreadsheet in column "Z". This step allows you to compile

quoted language from interview transcripts that can be used to design a coding system for MAXQDA that is informed by the data.

6) Do not insert comments other than naming the sub-domain in the color-coded transcript. If you have comments on the transcript itself, compile all of your concerns in a separate document starting with "On page #, lines #–# of [Interviewee's] transcript" and provide the appropriate information.

7) Numerous instances of the same DEI element may be distracting as they often pile up on the document. If you do not want to see them while reading a transcript, go to the review tab above MS Word, select the drop-down menu for Show Markup, and deselect "Comments."

8) After you have exhausted your search and coding of the information in the transcript that aligns with the indicator descriptions for a particular sub-domain based on the information from the transcripts, make a decision as to the level of implementation of the sub-domain. You should review the coded portions for the sub-domain you identify based on the excerpt from the SCCS below and rate what level of implementation is suggested by the coded content.

9) Please enter your implementation ratings in merged cells in columns D–G of the SCCS. The rating scale includes the following four levels: Not Implemented (1), Active Planning for Implementation (2), Partially Implemented (3), and Fully Implemented (4). The SCCS provides further guidance and criteria for your rating decisions. As shown in the graphic above, the SCCS provides an explanation for each rating score. For example, "Not Implemented" with a rating of 1 is described as "There is little to no evidence that this sub-domain is being met. No effort is being made to implement this sub-domain." Cells D4–G4 in the SCCS provide similar guidance and criteria for each implementation rating decision.

10) If the interview transcript suggests there is clearly "No Intention to Implement," please note that information in column C with "NI." If you do not have enough information to make an" NI" or a scored implementation rating, please note that with an "X" in column H.

11) Start with Domain 1, "Capacity to achieve positive employment outcomes for customers with disabilities (PWD)," and its associated sub-domains. A tab was created in Excel that lists the domains, sub-domains, and indicators in each column, as shown below, for those who prefer to read them in that layout.

1. Capacity to achieve positive employment outcomes for customers with disabilities (PWD).
1C
WDA communications are inclusive and sufficient. 4.2, 39, 40, 42
1. WDA and/or its AJC policy requires that all communication in all media (print, audio, visual, web-based, etc.) is universally accessible.
2. The AJC's communications, and information including Internet websites, are accessible (e.g. use of section 508 requirements).
3. Communications from the WDA and One Stop staff use appropriate language when discussing individuals with disabilities / disability issues.
4. One Stops staff in this WDA have received training on effective strategies for communicating with PWD.
5. Materials are available in formats that account for a variety of learning styles, and are also accessible to people who have limited or no reading skills (e.g., pictures, videos, audio-tapes)
6. As part of its efforts to provide universal accessibility, the AJC Center does outreach to people with disabilities, as required by WIA regulations. For example: the AJC holds Job Fairs, school-based events for youth, and/or disseminates information via brochures and social media.
7. Customers perceive the AJC communications as accessible. Data for this indicator will come from the Focus Groups.
8. AJC communications are accessible for PWD with different kinds of disabilities.
9. AJC communications directed towards employers use common language/methods that are approopriate to employer needs

12) Code one of the eight domains at a time while working across transcripts; you will finish in eight cycles and will likely become more adept at coding a particular domain as you work from one transcript to another.

13) In the end you will have:
    a. A series of marked-up transcripts that are color-coded to describe domains and are noted with comments that detail the alphanumeric identifier of the sub-domain for the portion of text you have color-coded;
    b. Use an Excel workbook of completed rating sheets that report your implementation score for each sub-domain for a given interview — one interview per tab; and
    c. An edited version of the SCCS where you have copied text that is 10 words in length and is descriptive of each sub-domain in column Z of the SCCS [Please save and name this file with your initials].

14) The next step in the process is to bring the group of coders together to discuss your scores. We will begin with an overall inter-rater reliability score. If the score is determined to be reliable, no additional information is needed. If the score is determined to be unreliable, coders will discuss the issues that led to their scores and make decisions on how to resolve differences across coders.

15) The SCCS Rating Sheet is excerpted from the SCCS and is designed for you to record your various implementation ratings in one workbook; indicator information is not listed in the rating sheets. In each tab, use cell B3 to identify the interviewee(s) and their position title (e.g., DRC, State Lead, Employment Counselor, Partner, etc.), and use cell B4 to identify the WDA by adding the WDA name, number, and location. As you make your ratings, please add notes and comments to describe your thinking in the column next to your ratings labeled "Comments and rationale for ratings." Keep in mind that one of the next steps is to resolve inconsistency among raters. Having a shared understanding of each coder's reasoning for a particular rating is essential to that task.

16) Start with Domain 1, "Capacity to achieve positive employment outcomes for customers with disabilities (PWD)," and its associated sub-domains. An MS Word document was created that lists the domains, sub-domains, and indicators in columns.

17) After you have completed coding of an interview transcript, save the file with your initials added and place it in the "SCCS Coding Team" folder named "Coded Interviews." Put your implementation ratings workbook in the folder named "Implementation Ratings (with rater ID)" in the same location. Please update the saved workbook on the drive as you add completed implementation ratings worksheets to the workbook.

18) In the end, for each state you will have the following: (1) A series of marked-up transcripts that are color-coded to indicate reference to domains and noted with comments that detail the alphanumeric identifier of the sub-domain for the portion of text you have coded. (2) An Excel workbook of completed rating sheets that report your implementation scores for each sub-domain for each given state interviewee. This workbook should be updated as you progress through the individual interview ratings, which will be aggregated to describe the WDA. (3) An edited version of the SCCS where you have copied phrases from interviews into the SCCS (column Z); the phrases should be 10 or fewer words and descriptive of the sub-domain next to the inserted text. Please save and name this file with your initials. This compilation may, alternatively, be created through a shared file that will be placed on the G-drive rather than documents created by each individual coder.

19) The next step in the process is to bring the group of coders together to discuss scores. We will begin with an overall inter-rater reliability score on the implementation scale, fidelity scales, and checklist. If the scores are determined to be reliable, no additional information is needed. If the scores are determined to be unreliable, coders will discuss the issues that led to their scores and make decisions on how to resolve differences across coders. Our goal is 80 percent or higher reliability/agreement across three coders.

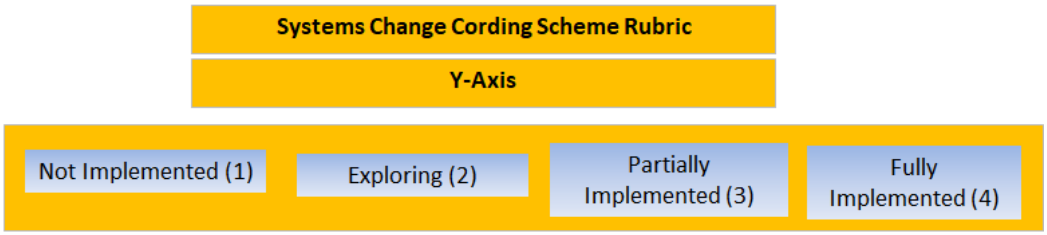
Researchers collected information 3–6 months after the expiration of each grant period to determine the extent to which grantees sustained their DEI practices; *sustainability findings are subject to change and should be revised annually.* Each synopsis includes information from grantee leaderships, AJC staff, WDA leaders, WIOA-mandated partners, staff from community-based agencies, and individuals who enrolled in DEI.

Systems Change Coding Scheme Results

A. Systems Change Coding Scheme Results

To what extent did DEI implemented their Round 5 and Round 6 projects?

California Round 5



A. START-UP			
DEI State Lead			CA-R5
DRCs Trained			CA-R5
Selected SDS			CA-R5
Active Outreach			CA-R5
Info. On Programs			CA-R5
B. IMPLEMENTATION			
Strategic Planning			CA-R5
SDS implemented			
DEI requirements implemented			CA-R5
DEI participants receive services			
C. OPERATIONAL			
DRCs collaborate with WDA			CA-R5
Recruitment of SSA beneficiaries			CA-R5
TTW milestone payments			
Implementation fidelity			
D. SUSTAINABILITY			
WDA engages in partnerships.			CA-R5
WDA has sustainability plan		CA-R5	
WDA has resolved challenges			CA-R5
Promising practices sustained			CA-R5

Kansas Round 5

Systems Change Cording Scheme Rubric

Y-Axis

	Not Implemented (1)	Exploring (2)	Partially Implemented (3)	Fully Implemented (4)
A. START-UP				
DEI State Lead				KS-R5
DRCs Trained				KS-R5
Selected SDS				KS-R5
Active Outreach			KS-R5	
Info. On Programs				KS-R5
B. IMPLEMENTATION				
Strategic Planning			KS-R5	
SDS implemented				
DEI requirements implemented				KS-R5
DEI participants receive services				KS-R5
C. OPERATIONAL				
DRCs collaborate with WDA				KS-R5
Recruitment of SSA beneficiaries				KS-R5
TTW milestone payments			KS-R5	KS-R5
Implementation fidelity		KS-R5	KS-R5	
D. SUSTAINABILITY				
WDA engages in partnerships.				KS-R5
WDA has sustainability plan		KS-R5		
WDA has resolved challenges			KS-R5	
Promising practices sustained			KS-R5	

Massachusetts Round 5

Systems Change Cording Scheme Rubric

Y-Axis

	Not Implemented (1)	Exploring (2)	Partially Implemented (3)	Fully Implemented (4)
A. START-UP				
DEI State Lead			MA-R5	
DRCs Trained				MA-R5
Selected SDS				MA-R5
Active Outreach		MA-R5		
Info. On Programs				MA-R5
B. IMPLEMENTATION				
Strategic Planning			MA-R5	
SDS implemented				MA-R5
DEI requirements implemented				MA-R5
DEI participants receive services				MA-R5
C. OPERATIONAL				
DRCs collaborate with WDA			MA-R5	MA-R5
Recruitment of SSA beneficiaries				MA-R5
TTW milestone payments			MA-R5	
Implementation fidelity			MA-R5	
D. SUSTAINABILITY				
WDA engages in partnerships.		MA-R5		MA-R5
WDA has sustainability plan		MA-R5	MA-R5	
WDA has resolved challenges				
Promising practices sustained			MA-R5	

Minnesota Round 5

Systems Change Cording Scheme Rubric

Y-Axis

	Not Implemented (1)	Exploring (2)	Partially Implemented (3)	Fully Implemented (4)
A. START-UP			MN-R5	
DEI State Lead				MN-R5
DRCs Trained				MN-R5
Selected SDS		MN-R5		
Active Outreach				MN-R5
Info. On Programs				
B. IMPLEMENTATION				
Strategic Planning			MN-R5	
SDS implemented				MN-R5
DEI requirements implemented				MN-R5
DEI participants receive services				MN-R5
C. OPERATIONAL				
DRCs collaborate with WDA			MN-R5	
Recruitment of SSA beneficiaries				MN-R5
TTW milestone payments			MN-R5	
Implementation fidelity			MN-R5	
D. SUSTAINABILITY				
WDA engages in partnerships.		MN-R5		MN-R5
WDA has sustainability plan		MN-R5		
WDA has resolved challenges			MN-R5	
Promising practices sustained			MN-R5	

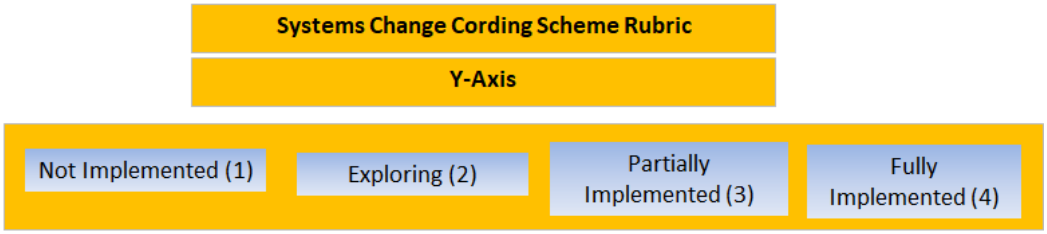
South Dakota Round 5

Systems Change Cording Scheme Rubric

Y-Axis

	Not Implemented (1)	Exploring (2)	Partially Implemented (3)	Fully Implemented (4)
A. START-UP			SD-R5	
DEI State Lead				SD-R5
DRCs Trained				SD-R5
Selected SDS		SD-R5		
Active Outreach				SD-R5
Info. On Programs				
B. IMPLEMENTATION				
Strategic Planning			SD-R5	
SDS implemented				SD-R5
DEI requirements implemented				SD-R5
DEI participants receive services				SD-R5
C. OPERATIONAL				SD-R5
DRCs collaborate with WDA			SD-R5	
Recruitment of SSA beneficiaries			SD-R5	
TTW milestone payments			SD-R5	
Implementation fidelity			SD-R5	
D. SUSTAINABILITY				
WDA engages in partnerships.			SD-R5	SD-R5
WDA has sustainability plan	SD-R5			
WDA has resolved challenges			SD-R5	
Promising practices sustained			SD-R5	

Alaska Round 6



A. START-UP	
DEI State Lead	AK-R6
DRCs Trained	AK-R6
Selected AKS	AK-R6
Active Outreach	AK-R6
Info. On Programs	AK-R6
B. IMPLEMENTATION	
Strategic Planning	AK-R6
AKS implemented	AK-R6
DEI requirements implemented	AK-R6
DEI participants receive services	AK-R6
C. OPERATIONAL	
DRCs collaborate with WDA	AK-R6
Recruitment of SSA beneficiaries	AK-R6
TTW milestone payments	AK-R6
Implementation fidelity	AK-R6
D. SUSTAINABILITY	AK-R6
WDA engages in partnerships.	AK-R6
WDA has sustainability plan	AK-R6
WDA has resolved challenges	AK-R6
Promising practices sustained	AK-R6

Georgia Round 6

Systems Change Cording Scheme Rubric

Y-Axis

	Not Implemented (1)	Exploring (2)	Partially Implemented (3)	Fully Implemented (4)
A. START-UP				
DEI State Lead				GA-R5
DRCs Trained				GA-R5
Selected SDS				GA-R5
Active Outreach			GA-R5	
Info. On Programs				GA-R5
B. IMPLEMENTATION				
Strategic Planning			GA-R5	
SDS implemented			GA-R5	
DEI requirements implemented				GA-R5
DEI participants receive services				GA-R5
C. OPERATIONAL				
DRCs collaborate with WDA			GA-R5	
Recruitment of SSA beneficiaries				GA-R5
TTW milestone payments			GA-R5	
Implementation fidelity			GA-R5	
D. SUSTAINABILITY				
WDA engages in partnerships.			GA-R5	
WDA has sustainability plan	GA-R5			
WDA has resolved challenges			GA-R5	
Promising practices sustained		GA-R5		

Hawaii Round 6

Systems Change Cording Scheme Rubric

Y-Axis

	Not Implemented (1)	Exploring (2)	Partially Implemented (3)	Fully Implemented (4)
A. START-UP				
DEI State Lead			HI-R5	
DRCs Trained			HI-R5	
Selected SDS		HI-R5		
Active Outreach			HI-R5	
Info. On Programs			HI-R5	
B. IMPLEMENTATION				
Strategic Planning			HI-R5	
SDS implemented			HI-R5	
DEI requirements implemented			HI-R5	
DEI participants receive services			HI-R5	
C. OPERATIONAL				
DRCs collaborate with WDA			HI-R5	
Recruitment of SSA beneficiaries		HI-R5		
TTW milestone payments		HI-R5		
Implementation fidelity		HI-R5		
D. SUSTAINABILITY				
WDA engages in partnerships.			HI-R5	
WDA has sustainability plan	HI-R5			
WDA has resolved challenges		HI-R5		
Promising practices sustained		HI-R5		

Iowa Round 6

Systems Change Cording Scheme Rubric

Y-Axis

	Not Implemented (1)	Exploring (2)	Partially Implemented (3)	Fully Implemented (4)
A. START-UP				
DEI State Lead				IA-R5
DRCs Trained				IA-R5
Selected SDS				IA-R5
Active Outreach				IA-R5
Info. On Programs				IA-R5
B. IMPLEMENTATION				
Strategic Planning			IA-R5	
SDS implemented				IA-R5
DEI requirements implemented				IA-R5
DEI participants receive services				IA-R5
C. OPERATIONAL				
DRCs collaborate with WDA				IA-R5
Recruitment of SSA beneficiaries				IA-R5
TTW milestone payments				IA-R5
Implementation fidelity			IA-R5	
D. SUSTAINABILITY				
WDA engages in partnerships.				IA-R5
WDA has sustainability plan			IA-R5	
WDA has resolved challenges				IA-R5
Promising practices sustained				IA-R5

Washington Round 6

Systems Change Cording Scheme Rubric

Y-Axis

	Not Implemented (1)	Exploring (2)	Partially Implemented (3)	Fully Implemented (4)
A. START-UP				
DEI State Lead			WA-R5	
DRCs Trained				WA-R5
Selected SDS				WA-R5
Active Outreach			WA-R5	
Info. On Programs				WA-R5
B. IMPLEMENTATION				
Strategic Planning			WA-R5	
SDS implemented				WA-R5
DEI requirements implemented				WA-R5
DEI participants receive services				WA-R5
C. OPERATIONAL				
DRCs collaborate with WDA				WA-R5
Recruitment of SSA beneficiaries				WA-R5
TTW milestone payments				WA-R5
Implementation fidelity			WA-R5	
D. SUSTAINABILITY				
WDA engages in partnerships.				WA-R5
WDA has sustainability plan		WA-R5		
WDA has resolved challenges				WA-R5
Promising practices sustained			WA-R5	

B. Sustainability Findings

To what extent were DEI activities sustained when grant funding expired?

DEI grantees were asked to discuss the sustainability of their DEI project to determine the extent to which DEI State Leads and DRCs coordinated and continued TTW and EN implementation and training, use of SDSs, continued availability of DRCs, and the overall sustainability of the project. We conducted 31 interviews within 6 months of the end of the grant period with DEI State Leads and DRCs to determine if DEI Round 1 through Round 4 grantees sustained their selected DEI practices. At the beginning of each call, we asked DEI State Leads to confirm their selected SDSs, treatment and control WDAs, and service populations (i.e., adults or youth). We then proceeded to discuss the sustainability of the DEI, including the continued use of SDSs, DRCs or similar support role, TTW, and, finally, challenges and recommendations for the project. Each DEI State Lead discussed their programs freely. Probing questions were guided by background information collected from grantee abstracts, site visit reports, quarterly narrative reports, and DEI quarterly report summaries.

DEI Grantees by Round

California Round 5

Service Delivery Strategies	Sustained Service Delivery Strategies
Service Delivery Strategies	
Asset Development	*Sustained in certain locations*
Blending and Braiding Funds	*Sustained*
Career Pathways Training	*Sustained*
Customized Employment	*Selected components used*
Integrated Resource Teams	*Sustained*
Partnerships and Collaborations[77]	*Sustained in certain locations*
DEI Services	
CWIC Services	*Sustained in certain locations*
DRC and Traveling DRC Availability	*Sustained in certain locations*
Employment Networks	*Sustained*
Sustainability Score: 4 out of 5 ***Confirmed by Grantee***	

Illinois Round 5

Service Delivery Strategies	Sustained Service Delivery Strategies
Service Delivery Strategies	
Asset Development	*Sustained in certain locations*
Blending and Braiding Funds	*Sustained in certain locations*
Career Pathways Training	*Sustained*
Customized Employment	*Selected components used*
Integrated Resource Teams	*Sustained in certain locations*
DEI Services	
CWIC Services	*Not sustained*
DRC Availability	*Sustained in certain locations*

[77] California Round 5 continued to operate both the DEI and DEA. The DEA will continue after the DEI grant period.

Employment Networks	*Sustained*
Partnerships and Collaboration	*Sustained in certain locations*
Sustainability Score: 4 out of 5	
Confirmed by grantee	

Kansas Round 5

Service Delivery Strategies	**Sustained Service Delivery Strategies**
Service Delivery Strategies	
Blending and Braiding Funds	*Sustained*
Career Pathways Training	*Sustained in certain locations*
Cultural Change in WDAs	*Sustained in certain locations*
Customized Employment	*Selected components used*
DEI Services	
CWIC Services	*Sustained*
DRC Availability	*Not sustained*
Employment Networks	*Sustained*
Integrated Resource Teams	*Sustained in certain locations*
Partnerships and Collaboration	*Sustained in certain locations*
Sustainability Score: 3 out of 5	
Confirmed by grantee	

Massachusetts Round 5

Service Delivery Strategies	**Sustained Service Delivery Strategies**
Service Delivery Strategies	
Blending and Braiding Funds	*Not sustained*
Customized Employment	*Selected components used*
CWIC Services	*Not sustained*
DRC Availability	*Not sustained*
Employment Networks	*Not sustained*
DEI Services	
Integrated Resource Teams	*Sustained in Certain Locations*
Health Care pathways	*Sustained*
Partnerships and Collaboration	*Sustained in Certain Locations*
Sustainability Score: 2 out of 5	
No response from grantee	

Minnesota Round 5

Service Delivery Strategies	**Sustained Service Delivery Strategies**
Service Delivery Strategies	
Blending and Braiding Funds	*Sustained in certain locations*
Career Pathways Training	*Sustained in certain locations*
Cultural Change in WDAs	*Sustained in certain locations*
Customized Employment	*Selected components used*
DEI Services	
CWIC	*Sustained in certain locations*
DRC Availability	*Sustained in certain locations*
Employment Networks	*Sustained*
Integrated Resource Teams	*Sustained in certain locations*
Partnerships and Collaboration	*Sustained in certain locations*
Universal design	*Sustained in certain locations*
Sustainability Score: 4 out of 5	
Confirmed by grantee	

South Dakota Round 5

Service Delivery Strategies	Sustained Service Delivery Strategies
Service Delivery Strategies	
Blending and Braiding Funds	*Sustained in certain locations*
Career Pathways Training/Academic Employment Transitions	*Sustained*[78]
Cultural Change in WDAs	*Sustained in certain locations*
Customized Employment	*Selected components used*
DEI Services	
CWIC Services	*Sustained*
DRC Availability	*Sustained in certain locations*
Employment Networks	*Sustained*
Integrated Resource Teams	*Sustained in certain locations*
Partnerships and Collaboration	*Sustained in certain locations*
Universal designed	*Sustained in certain locations*
Sustainability Score: 3 out of 5 ***Confirmed by Grantee***	

Alaska Round 6

Service Delivery Strategies	Sustained Service Delivery Strategies
Service Delivery Strategies	
Blending and Braiding Funds	*Sustained*
Business/Employer Partnerships	*Sustained*
Career Pathways Training/Academic Employment Transitions, OJT-WBL	*Sustained*
Customized Employment	*Selected components used*
Cultural Change in WDAs	*Sustained*
DEI Services	
CWIC Services	*Sustained*
DRC Availability	*Sustained*[79]
Integrated Resource Teams	*Sustained in certain locations*
Partnerships and Collaboration	*Sustained*
Universal Design	*Sustained*
Sustainability Score: 5 out of 5 ***Confirmed by grantee***	

Georgia Round 6

Service Delivery Strategies	Sustained Service Delivery Strategies
Service Delivery Strategies	
Blending and Braiding Funds	*Sustained in certain locations*
Business/Employer Partnerships	*Sustained in certain locations*
Career Pathways Training (agriculture, hospitality, logistics	*Sustained*
Customized Employment, OJT, Customized Service Delivery[80]	*Selected components used*
DEI Services	

[78] JSWDs expressed concern that some employment opportunities did not provide appropriate CP training that would lead to increases in wages and employment status.
[79] Includes individuals with mental illness, substance abuse, and intellectual and developmental disabilities.
[80] Georgia Round 6 includes Discovery, customized apprenticeships, and evidence-based practices.

CWIC Services	*Sustained*
DRC Availability	*Sustained in certain locations*
Employment Networks	*Sustained*
Integrated Resource Teams	*Sustained in certain locations*
Partnerships and Collaboration[81]	*Sustained in certain locations*
Universal designed	*Sustained in certain locations*
Sustainability Score: 4 out of 5 ***Confirmed by grantee***	

Hawaii Round 6

Service Delivery Strategies	Sustained Service Delivery Strategies
Service Delivery Strategies	
Blending and Braiding Funds	*Limited in certain locations*
Business/Employer Partnerships	*Limited in certain locations*
Career Pathways Training (agriculture, hospitality, logistics)	*Available sustained, limited use.*[82]
Cultural Change in WDAs	*Sustained in certain locations*
Customized Employment	*Selected components used*
DEI Services	
CWIC Services	*Not sustained*
DRC Availability[83]	*Not sustained*
Employment Networks	*Sustained with limited use*
Integrated Resource Teams	*Limited use in certain locations*
Partnerships and Collaboration	*Limited use in certain locations*
Universal designed SDS	
Sustainability Score: 2 out of 5 ***Confirmed by grantee***	

Iowa Round 6

Service Delivery Strategies	Sustained Service Delivery Strategies
Service Delivery Strategies	
Blending and Braiding Funds	*Sustained*
Business/Employer Partnerships	*Sustained*
Career Pathways Training/ Apprenticeships (agriculture, hospitality, logistics)	*Sustained*
Cultural Change in WDAs	*Sustained in certain locations*
Customized Employment	*Selected components used*
DEI Services	
CWIC Services	*Sustained*
DRC Availability	*Sustained in certain locations*
Employment Networks	*Sustained*
Integrated Resource Teams	*Sustained*
Partnerships and Collaboration[84]	*Sustained*

[81] Grantees accessed community and technical college services and support systems.
[82] JSWDs expressed concern that some employment opportunities did not provide appropriate CP training that would lead to increases in wages and employment status.
[83] Hawaii Round 6 co-tasked DRCs with both Round 8 and Round 6 responsibilities. It also sustained the Round 6 DRCs when they transitioned to Round 8.
[84] Community and technical college services and support systems were included in the DEI.

Universal designed SDS	*Sustained in certain locations*
Sustainability Score: 5 out of 5 ***Confirmed by grantee***	

New York Round 6

Service Delivery Strategies	Sustained Service Delivery Strategies
Service Delivery Strategies	
Blending and Braiding Funds	*Sustained*
Business/Employer Partnerships	*Sustained in certain locations*
Career Pathways Training/Apprenticeships/WBL (agriculture, hospitality, logistics)	*Sustained*
Cultural Change in WDAs	*Sustained in certain locations*
Customized Employment	*Selected components used*
DEI Strategies	
CWIC Services	*Sustained in certain areas*
Cultural Change in WDAs	*Sustained in certain locations*
Employment Networks	*Sustained*
Integrated Resource Teams	*Sustained in certain locations/Certain components used*
Partnerships and Collaboration[85]	*Sustained in certain locations*
Universally designed SDS	*Sustained in certain locations*
Sustainability Score: 5 out of 5 ***Confirmed by grantee***	

Washington Round 6

Service Delivery Strategies	Sustained Service Delivery Strategies
Service Delivery Strategies	
Blending and Braiding Funds	*Sustained in certain locations*
Business/Employer Partnerships	*Sustained in certain locations*
Career Pathways Training/Apprenticeships/WBL (agriculture, hospitality, logistics)	*Sustained in certain locations*
Customized Employment	*Sustained in certain locations*
Cultural Change in WDAs	*Sustained in certain locations*
DEI Services	
CWIC Services	*Sustained in certain locations*
DRC Availability	*Sustained in certain locations*
Employment Networks	*Sustained*
Integrated Resource Teams	*Sustained in certain locations*
Partnerships and Collaboration	*Sustained in certain locations*
Universally designed SDS	*Not sustained*
Sustainability Score: 4 out of 5 ***Confirmed by grantee***	

[85] Community and technical college services and support systems were available to youth with disabilities.

Appendix 1: American Job Center Survey

American Job Center Survey

Setting the stage for the future

Dear Job Seeker,

The U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) has contracted with Social Dynamics and Abt Associates to conduct a survey of the employment services available to job seekers with disabilities at American Job Centers (AJC) (formerly known as One-Stops). By participating in the survey, you are helping ODEP improve AJC services. The survey will take about 8 minutes to complete. If you complete the survey, you will receive a $15 gift card. This survey is for job seekers with disabilities who are 18 years of age or older.

We'd like to encourage you to complete the online survey (survey internet link below) about your daily activities and employment situation.

PLEASE RESPOND TO THE SURVEY THROUGH THE FOLLOWING SURVEY INTERNET LINK: www.MYajcsurvey.com

When you visit this survey internet link, you will need to enter your Workforce Development Area # and your unique Participant ID Number.

State: **KS** Workforce Development Area #: **20-010**

Participant ID Number: ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___-___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

To respond online, please access the survey by typing the survey internet link address (see above) into your browser's address bar (not your "search" box). Then enter your Workforce Development Area # and your unique Participant ID Number (see above), then follow the prompts. If you prefer to complete the survey over the telephone, please call us toll-free at 1-866-725-5641.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary, you will have the same access to AJC services whether or not you participate in the survey. If you decide to participate, you are not required to enroll in AJC services and you may skip any question in the survey that you don't want to answer.

Survey responses will be kept private and will only be available to the research team. The research team has procedures in place to protect your confidentiality and minimize risk. Your answers will be combined with those from hundreds of other job seekers and no names will be used.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Senior Project Director, Jodi Walton, at AJCSurvey@abtassoc.com or toll-free at 1-866-725-5641. This survey is approved by the Abt Associates Institutional Review Board (IRB). For questions about your rights as a participant in this survey, please call the Abt Associates IRB Administrator, toll-free, at 1-877-520-6835. Thank you for helping us with this important survey. Your participation in this survey is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Jodi Walton, Senior Project Director
Abt Associates

SOCIAL DYNAMICS
Bringing Complex Issues into Focus

Abt

Appendix 2: DEI Round 5 and Round 6 WDAs

Grantee	**DEI Round 5** - California Treatment and Comparison LWIAs	
# of LWIAs	3 Treatment Sites 6170 Sacramento City/County 6090 Merced County 6280 SELACO-Southeast Los Angeles Consortium	3 Comparison Sites 6115 Solano County 6175 San Joaquin County 6015 Long Beach (city)
Grantee	**DEI Round 5** - Illinois Treatment and Comparison LWIAs	
# of LWIAs	2 Treatment Sites 17035 Cook County, Balance of - Area 7 17030 Dupage County	2 Comparison Sites 17025 Kane/Dekalb/Kendall Counties 17050 Will County
Grantee	**DEI Round 5** - Kansas Treatment and Comparison LWIAs	
# of LWIAs	2 Treatment Sites 20005 Area 1 20015 Area 3	2 Comparison Sites 20010 Area 2 20025 Area 5
Grantee	**DEI Round 5** - Massachusetts Treatment and Comparison LWIAs	
# of LWIAs	3 Treatment Sites 25020 North Central Mass 25030 Metro North 25025 Central Mass	3 Comparison Sites 25035 Brockton 25070 Metro South/West 25055 Merrimack Valley
Grantee	**DEI Round 5** - Minnesota Treatment and Comparison LWIAs	
# of LWIAs	3 Treatment Sites 27085 ANOKA County Council 27105 Central Minnesota 27055 Southwest Minnesota	2 Comparison Sites 27030 South Central Minnesota 27115 Ramsey
Grantee	**DEI Round 6** - Georgia Treatment and Comparison LWIAs	
# of LWIAs	2 Treatment Sites 13275 Northeast Georgia 13195 Richmond-Burke	2 Comparison Sites 13225 West Central Georgia 13110 Lower Chattahoochee

DEI Rounds 5-6 LWIAs		
Grantee	**DEI Round 6** - Iowa Treatment and Comparison LWIAs	
# of LWIAs	5 Treatment Sites 19160 Spencer (Regions 3 and 4) 19120 Waterloo (Region 7) 19135 Des Moines (Region 11) 19140 Sioux City (Region 12) 19080 Burlington (Region 16)	5 Comparison Sites 19155 Carroll (Region 8) 19095 Mason City (Region 2) 19130 Iowa City (Region 10) 19030 Marshalltown (Region 6) 19075 Ottumwa (Region 15)
Grantee	**DEI Round 6** - New York Treatment and Comparison LWIAs	
# of LWIAs	3 Treatment Sites 36090 HMO: Herkimer, Madison, and Oneida 36005 Capital Region: Albany, Rensselaer, and Schenectady 36155 CDO: Chenango, Delaware, and Otsego	5 Comparison Sites 36185 Onondaga 36220 Broome/Tioga 36150Clinton/Essex/Franklin/ Hamilton 36195 Cayuga/Cortland 36100 Oswego County
Grantee	**DEI Round 6** - Washington Treatment and Comparison LWIAs	
# of LWIAs	2 Treatment Sites 53025 Seattle/King County 53030 Snohomish County	4 Comparison Sites 53015 Pacific Mountain Consortium 53005 Southwest Washington 53040 Tacoma/Pierce Consortium 53045 North Central Washington

Appendix 3: Round 5 Treatment and Comparison Sites for QED Analysis

Kansas

WDA Identifier	WDA Name	Treatment/Comparison
20005	Area 1	Treatment
20015	Area 3	Treatment
20010	Area 2	Comparison
20025	Area 5	Comparison

Minnesota

WDA Identifier	WDA Name	Treatment/Comparison
27085	ANOKA County Council	Treatment
27105	Central Minnesota	Treatment
27055	Southwest Minnesota	Treatment
27030	South Central Minnesota	Comparison
27115	Ramsey	Comparison

Appendix 4: Round 6 Treatment and Comparison Sites for QED Analysis

Georgia

WDA Identifier	WDA Name	Treatment/Comparison
13275	Northeast Georgia	Treatment
13195	Richmond-Burke	Treatment
13225	West Central Georgia	Comparison
13110	Lower Chattahoochee	Comparison

Iowa

WDA Identifier	WDA Name	Treatment/Comparison
19160	Spencer (Regions 3 and 4)	Treatment
19120	Waterloo (Region 7)	Treatment
19135	Des Moines (Region 11)	Treatment
19140	Sioux City (Region 12)	Treatment
19080	Burlington (Region 16)	Treatment
19155	Carroll (Region 8)	Comparison
19095	Mason City (Region 2)	Comparison
19130	Iowa City (Region 10)	Comparison
19030	Marshalltown (Region 6)	Comparison
19075	Ottumwa (Region 15)	Comparison

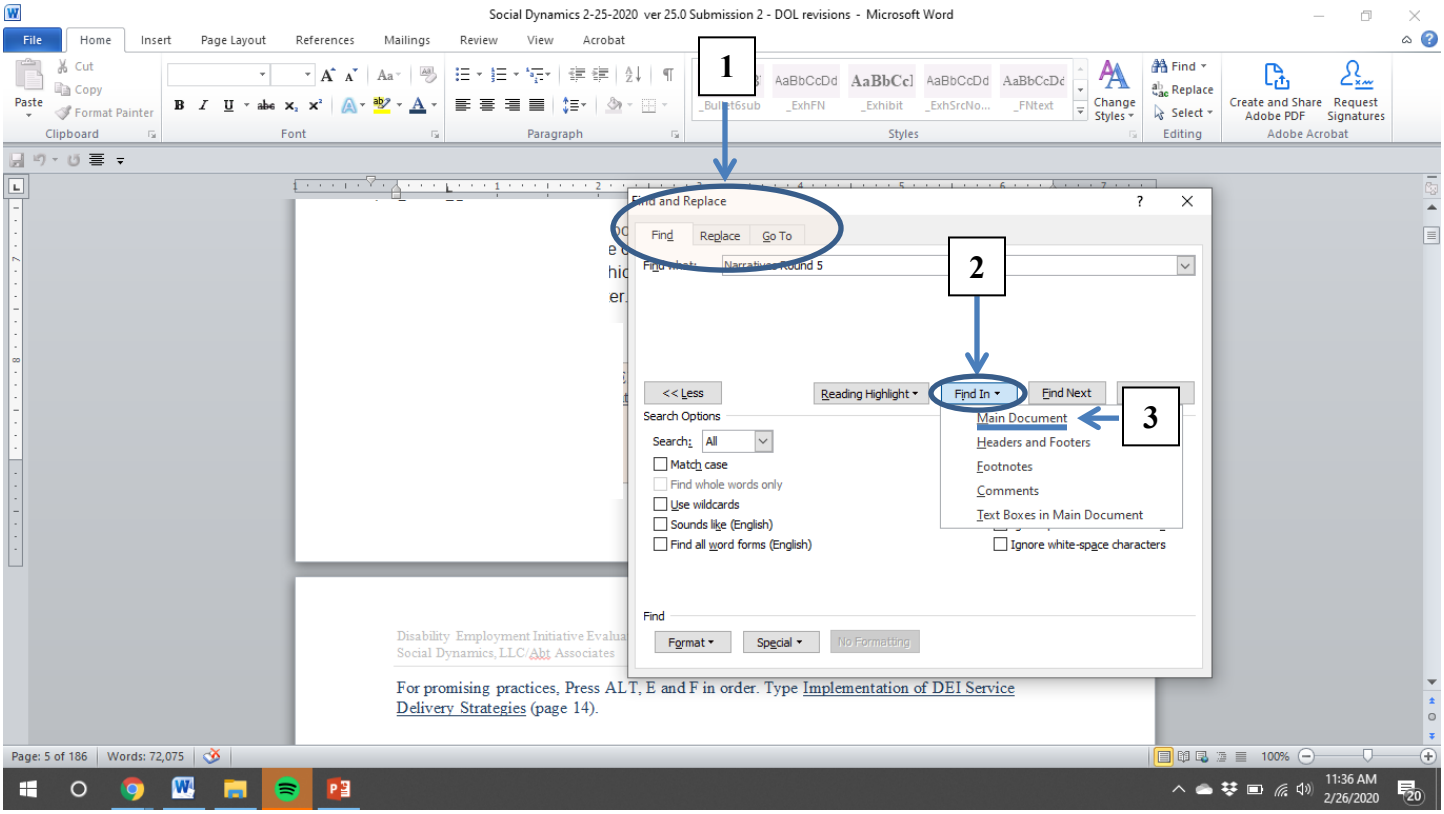
New York

WDA Identifier	WDA Name	Treatment/Comparison
36090	HMO: Herkimer, Madison, and Oneida	Treatment
36005	Capital Region: Albany, Rensselaer, and Schenectady	Treatment
36155	CDO: Chenango, Delaware, and Otsego	Comparison
36185	Onondaga	Comparison
36220	Broome/Tioga	Comparison
36150	Clinton/Essex/Franklin/Hamilton	Comparison
36195	Cayuga/Cortland	Comparison
36100	Oswego County	Comparison

APPENDIX 5: Navigation Instructions

Navigate to the information you want:

1. Type Alt-E-F on your computer to navigate to the Find and Replace dialog box.
2. Press Find in.
3. Press Main Document.
4. Highlight text1 >: **Executive Summary**
5. Highlight text2 >: **Description of the Program**
6. Highlight text3>: **Exhibit 1: Complete List of Service Delivery Strategies**
7. Add Highlights as necessary.
8. www.socialdynamicsllc.com for technical assistance



Acknowledgements

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