



Provider Transformation Manual 2.0

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Introduction

[The Office of Disability Employment Policy](#) (ODEP) of the Department of Labor (DOL) initiated [the Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program](#) (EFSLMP) in 2012 in support of the nationwide Employment First movement. ODEP describes Employment First as a framework for systems change that is centered on the premise that **all** individuals, including individuals with significant disabilities, are capable of full participation in competitive integrated employment and community life. ODEP leadership recognized that Employment First implementation would require technical support to publicly financed systems within states to “align policies, service delivery practices, and reimbursement structures” and increase their capacity to achieve these objectives. They further understood that provider agencies within states would require support to embrace the tenets of Employment First, gain the skills necessary to implement competitive integrated employment (CIE) and develop the expertise to transform their agencies.

The EFSLMP started with technical support to just four protégé states six years ago. As of today, the EFSLMP has provided technical assistance to 23 states and large numbers of provider agencies within their networks in areas of policy, capacity building, school to work transition, employment engagement and provider transformation. Through its provider transformation work, over 32 subject matter experts have worked directly with provider agencies to assess their strengths and challenges and guide them as they take the first steps toward transformation. The EFSLMP also provides additional opportunities for technical support beyond the direct support provided to state agencies and providers. It also invites providers to join a monthly [National Community of Practice](#) event, providing webinars by the country’s foremost subject matter experts knowledgeable in all aspects of Employment First and provider transformation, free of charge to participants.

So that this growing body of knowledge would be accessible to a wider audience, in written form, the EFSLMP project developed the [Provider Transformation Manual Pilot Version](#) offering providers an overview of fundamental strategies and best practices underlying effective transformation. The Pilot Version was launched through a series of six [Provider Transformation Webinars](#) to highlight key strategies, offer stories to illustrate these strategies, and elicit feedback from providers to determine what additional knowledge and expertise they needed in their transformation work.

Providers who are partway down the road to transformation also seek more advanced knowledge to help them tackle issues they encounter along the way. These agencies include agencies well down the path to conversion, those recently engaged in the effort, but also those who launched an earlier effort that stalled for a variety of reasons. This Provider Transformation Manual 2.0 will support these providers in the midst of transformation with modules that offer an in depth look at specific areas of organizational change that are central to transformation. The strategies and best practices described here have been developed through the efforts of numerous providers who have been transforming their agencies as part of the nationwide Employment First movement. We hope that organizations who have completed transformation, and designed their services around CIE and community inclusion, also will

find this a useful source for new strategies or small gems of information that will help them more effectively operate their community-based services.

Providers who are just beginning this journey may want to spend time first with the [Provider Transformation Manual Pilot Version](#), referenced above, which provides an overview of best practices that will help them start and proceed down this road. They may want to use this more advanced manual in tandem with the first provider transformation manual to take a deeper dive into particular areas of interest and challenge.

This Provider Transformation Manual 2.0 includes modules that describe:

- **Module 1. Redesigning Your Organization: Structure, Processes and People**
(Authors: Karen Lee, M.Ed., CESP and Thomas Wilds, M.A.)
- **Module 2. Staff Development, Recruitment, Restructuring**
(Authors: Gail Fanjoy, M.A. and Dale Verstegen, M.B.A.)
- **Module 3. Staff Training Specifics**
(Authors: Gail Fanjoy, M.A., and Genni Sasnett, M.A.)
- **Module 4. Effective Stakeholder Engagement**
(Authors: Pat Rogan, Ph.D. and Sean Roy, M.S.)
- **Module 5. The Importance of Effective Advocacy for Better Policy: Collaboration, Coalitions, Communities of Practice, and Capacity Building at the Local Level**
(Authors: Karen Lee, M.Ed., CESP and Rachel Pollock, J.D.)
- **Module 6. Financial planning for Transformational Change**
(Authors: Rachel Pollock, J.D. and Genni Sasnett, M.A.)

Each module describes promising practices, illustrates the practices with examples from providers around the nation, offers some rural perspectives, and answers some typical questions providers may have as they read through the module. Each of these modules was drafted after subject matter experts presented key parts of the content through another series of companion [2.0 Provider Transformation Webinars](#). Providers may want to view these free webinars as they review the various modules.

Organizational change is exciting, with victories and challenges along the way. While each provider has a unique vision and circumstances, sharing knowledge and experience, can make the journey more successful, help generate the ultimate outcome of CIE more quickly, and help avoid mistakes through lessons learned by other providers. We hope providers will enjoy and learn from the practices and examples in this manual, and will in turn, share their successes.

Module 1. Redesigning Your Organization: Structure, Process & People

Key Words:

Administration

Leadership

Strategic Plans

Departments

Finance

Human Resources

Knowledge Management

Communications

Information Technology

Introduction

Organizational transformation requires innovation on many fronts. When planning for transformation, leadership will want to consider the impact of change on the programmatic side of an organization, but also on the agency's administrative structure and functions. With the transformation of our service delivery model to CIE and community-based services and outcomes, providers will need to operate at a new level of complexity. A solid strategic or transformation plan, visionary leadership, qualified professionals and efficient processes are all critical to bring agencies into the future as they, embrace and implement the principals of Employment First.

In this module, we take a closer look at specific strategies for developing administrative structures and expertise which will effectively support emerging community-based service delivery models. The purpose is to take providers engaged in transformation to the next level of implementation.

Providers, of course, already have structures, processes and personnel in place to address the current administrative needs of their traditional service delivery model. However, they will need to reevaluate each function to determine if it needs to be re-organized or enhanced to better support the new transformation agenda. They will want to identify the competencies required and assess the skills and capabilities of current administrative staff. Based on this assessment, an agency may determine it needs to help existing administrative staff develop new skills or recruit new staff who bring essential skills sets.

To support service providers in assessing their administrative structures and creating innovative strategies, we offer strategies and examples in a number of key areas of operation:

- Overall Administrative Structure
- Finance
- Technology
- Communications, Marketing, Public Relations, Advocacy and Fundraising
- Human Resources
- Knowledge Management and Quality Enhancement

Promising Practices

Overall Administrative Structure: Evaluate need for new functions, determine agency's capabilities and develop strategies needed

Service delivery agencies across the country are at various stages in the transformation process. Because each agency is different, they have unique qualities, challenges, and paths to change.

Many agencies supporting people with disabilities are moving quickly to a more decentralized community-based operational structure. Agencies both rural and urban are grappling with funding the transformation process itself and looking for sustainability strategies. Regardless of where an agency is in the process, transformation is the ideal time for reviewing the administrative needs of the company, determining whether functions are adequate or require enhancement or restructuring. It is also a good

time to identify needed efficiencies of staff skills and competencies that are necessary to meet the changing mission and goals of the organization. Some restructuring needs may be identified during the initial Strategic Planning process. Other restructuring needs will be identified as transformation progresses. Organizations can discover opportunities to make helpful changes in structures, functions, as well as staff roles and responsibilities through creating an effective leadership team and developing processes for collecting, analyzing and reviewing relevant data.

Listed below are two key strategies to assist providers to channel resources in a direction that support agency change and redesign.

Strategy 1: Assess current staff and work towards building a vibrant team

Developing an effective administrative team is key to your company's success in its transition. Key team members need to be selected based on the function the agency is addressing. All team members need basic training on strategic planning and team problem solving. From there the team needs to develop plans to guide them in the issues they are tackling. An important part of plan development should be determining new strategies to accommodate changing conditions. Another essential task is determining which skills staff need to implement these strategies. Once those skills are identified, it is time to assess the skills and competencies of current staff. Then, training can be identified along with the need to recruit new staff or reorganize the current staff.

Example for Strategy 1:

Having initiated training in team problem solving, St. John's Community Services, a multi-state non-profit agency, pulled together the appropriate administrative and program team members to address the need for a timekeeping system that would accommodate 100% field-based staff. The team decided that a more efficient method was needed to address the key issue of getting staff paid accurately and timely, as staff no longer started and ended their day at the agency office. The agency was using a paper system originally developed for its center-based staff. The data submitted often had errors and required much supervisor and payroll staff time. After identifying and studying a number of options, the interdisciplinary team determined a telephonic system would work best. Once they selected the system they hired staff with knowledge and experience with the system they had selected. This staff was also familiar with the agency's payroll system which interfaced with the timekeeping system. As a result of the new system and expertise of new staff, the agency found fewer accounting staff were needed, many fewer payroll errors occurred, program staff were much more satisfied, and it saved time for everyone. In the long run this efficiency paid for itself.

Strategy 2: Develop an overall corporate structure that will support critical new strategies and specialized staff

Agencies may not have the financial resources to add new departments, strategies or specialty staff at the onset of the transformation process. Strategic planning can focus on ways to enable the company to secure additional resources. Here are some examples of overall corporate structures and strategies for increased resource development:

- Achieve increased overhead capacity through growth in services. Agencies can grow and diversify funding, for example, by expanding the numbers served in current programs, diversifying the population served, or adding new services to the menu of services offered. Agencies may identify their core competencies, like employment services, and use those competencies expertise to serve to new target populations.
- Secure private dollars or grants to support the transformation process. It's important to remember, however, that while grants are a viable option in the initial stages of transformation, most grant funding sources will require the agency to have a plan to sustain the transformation after the grant period ends. Provider agencies may want to use these grants to support the startup of administrative restructuring to support services expansion.
- Use consultants to fill critical administrative areas temporarily. Consultants may be less expensive, and agencies can use them on a time limited basis until the organization secures additional resources through growth, efficiencies or redesign.
- Consider mergers with other service providers. A residential provider and a day services provider, for example, can merge to create a larger, more diversified and administratively streamlined agency and can take advantage of economies of scale.
- Some agencies have developed affiliations to merge and restructure administrative functions. These affiliates maintain their agency identity while benefiting from shared administrative functions that provide cost saving and increased efficiency.
- Create management agreements. Management agreements can be a cost saving method in some circumstances. Using already established outside expertise can provide access to resources and expand agency's goodwill in the community by supporting other local businesses, e.g., outsource all or some of the accounting, HR functions or IT functions.
- Purchase or sell administrative services. Some agencies purchase administrative services like timekeeping, payroll or benefits management from other agencies with expertise and capacity. This approach can benefit both parties, with the purchaser of services achieving savings and the provider of administrative services earning extra income using already existing systems.
- Evaluate administrative processes to ensure efficient operations. Creating efficiencies in administrative processes not only sharpens the agency's capabilities but can lower its operating cost. Identify processes to be reviewed and develop teams composed of staff who do the work and those who benefit from the work being done. Direct the team to study ways in which to make the identified processes more efficient with better outcomes.
- Introduce technology that can decrease the hours of staff time spent on administrative processes, freeing up resources that can be directed toward new functions. Some areas in which technology can achieve efficiency might be timekeeping, payroll, billing, financial accounting, human resource data collection, and communication. Technology can also allow staff to telecommute when appropriate, possibly reducing the need for office space, travel and related cost.

Examples for Strategy 2:

- ABC Corp, an agency in a rural county in Tennessee, which was suffering financially and had few resources to continue providing services, merged with a much larger agency from outside of the area. ABC's staff quickly introduced the larger agency's CEO and CFO, to the local bank. The bank created a new line of credit for the merged organization once the CEO communicated a vision for transformation and efficient operation of ABC. This line of credit financed a new wave of expansion and technology advancements while many of ABC's administrative functions such as accounting, timekeeping, payroll, human resources, IT and fundraising, were absorbed by the larger organization. Some of ABC's assets, which were no longer needed, were liquidated. The loans were repaid using the proceeds of these sales.
 - An agency was offered the opportunity to merge with another smaller agency to achieve economies of scale and to expand its reach into another state. The smaller agency had some financial issues that made the larger agency hesitate. Instead of walking away from the deal, the two agencies created a management agreement where the larger one was responsible for all administrative functions for a year and a half while it conducted a due diligence review. After the management agreement terminated, both agencies knew exactly what the benefits and challenges would be for a merger. They did merge and the smaller agency became a valuable asset to the continued success of the new combined agency.
-

Finance: Build Expertise across the agency in budgeting, financial processes and analysis of costs and revenues

With transformation, providers will need to become adept at developing and implementing a variety of new funding sources. As transformation continues, and Federal and State policies align with the principles of Employment First, local policy changes may result in new funding mechanisms designed to support people to get and keep jobs. Some of these mechanisms are already in place and providers will need to understand how to maximize their use to sustain new CIE and community-based services.

In Module 6, we take a close look at the financial planning and implementation providers will engage in, but here we want to emphasize the importance of developing expertise across the agency to respond to these changes. Program and fiscal staff will need to have the expertise to understand and utilize diverse funding streams and new funding mechanisms. We provide in Figure 1 below an overview of the types of funding strategies staff may be required to track and analyze.

In some organizations, finance departments exclusively deal with all functions related to finances: budgeting, billing, creation and analysis of monthly financial reports, and creating and monitoring internal controls are solely the responsibility of the finance department. Changes in the structure and diversity of funding may require a new model with greater communication and collaboration between program staff and financial staff.

Figure 1: Funding Strategies

| Funding Terms | Funding Definition |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Braided Funding | Two or more funding sources are coordinated to cover the total cost of the service. Cost allocations are tracked to ensure there is no duplicated funding of any part of the service. |
| Blended Funding | Blending refers to combining funds from two or more funding sources together to fund a specific part of a program or initiative. Costs are not usually allocated and tracked by individual funding source. This could be used to fund some of the job development time which often requires more funding than is allotted by a single funding source. |
| Outcome Payments | Payments are made for pre-agreed upon results (e.g., achieving a job placement, locating a job of at least 20 hours a week, developing a job at or above \$10.00 an hour) |
| Milestone Payments | Payments are made based on specified steps (milestones) toward a specific goal or outcome. In the case of customized employment, payments for discovery may be broken out in three milestone payments, the initial meeting, the completion of discovery documents and the job development meeting. |

Developing and implementing accurate and realistic budgets, maximizing revenues and ensuring cost-effective operations should be seen as the role of all personnel in an agency. If this is a change in your agency practices, leadership will need to take an active role in encouraging ongoing teamwork between the fiscal staff and other departments, including program managers and direct support professionals. This collaboration may not only yield new efficient practices, but also increase morale and teamwork as staff gain a mutual understanding of objectives and outcomes, as they learn about their colleagues' work.

Examples:

- An organization in Maryland began diversifying their funding by using Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) funds for supported employment services. Employment Specialists working for the agency secured purchase orders for job development services for the job seekers with whom they were working. The services were provided, and jobs were secured, but the purchase orders were left unfilled and funds were never secured. When the district manager for VR contacted the agency's executive director to inquire about the unfilled purchase orders, they traced the documents to two specific employment specialists. They learned that the two employment specialists didn't realize they needed to turn the purchase orders over to the finance department for billing. Because the finance department and the employment department didn't need to work collaboratively in their use of other funding sources, no process was in place for these departments to collaborate. The agency reviewed the program and found that there was a significant amount of money in open purchase orders that had not been billed for. This discovery led the organization to review all of their processes and work interdepartmentally in the future and access additional funding sources.

- An agency in D.C. routinely provided free lunches for participants because program managers assumed that food costs were included in the rate as it had been in the rate for its center-based services. As a team tackling cost savings, the program and financial staff requested information about the regulations and the structure of the current rates from the district. The team determined that this service, i.e., meals, was no longer covered by the rate or required in the regulations. The agency was able to use this information to reframe the expectations of program managers, families and participants. Now program participants, like their peers without disabilities, bring their lunches and eat in the community where they are engaged in work or other activities. This team effort saved resources, e.g., food, cafeteria staff and facilities that could be reallocated.

Technology: Utilize technology to communicate and create administrative efficiencies

The use of technology for traditional administrative functions is nothing new in agencies supporting people with disabilities. As organizations transition from center-based to community-based supports, and business functions become decentralized, the need to increase the use of technology for day to day operations increases. When an agency's workforce is not connected through bricks and mortar, the need to create a connection through technology is even more critical. The investment in state-of-the-art technology for information sharing often quickly yields a substantial programmatic and financial return on this investment.

Ensuring that current technology (hardware and software) meets the needs of the agency requires designated personnel, either on staff or through consultation to conduct assessments of need, create a plan, secure bids and pricing for products, and conduct ongoing updating and maintenance of the technology. In traditional service models, when supports were provided within a single building, the need for high quality technology was limited to the administrative portion of the organization. Paper and pencil documentation, time clocks, and face to face communication were often sufficient. Listed in the table below are the departments discussed in this chapter with considerations for how technology can be used to enhance each department's functions as we transition from center-based to community-based supports.

Use of technology may not be in the skillset of current or potential employees, or they may be comfortable with technology but unfamiliar with your agency's systems. In order to assess job candidate's skill and comfort levels with technology you may include some questions or activities in the recruitment process that will surface this information. Note that while it is advantageous to hire staff with these skills, you may have great employees on staff already or encounter promising candidates who do not have these skills. Agencies need to be prepared to provide training on use of your technology to these staff.

Figure 2: Technological Supports

| Department | Technology Consideration |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Overall Agency | <p>Computers, tablets, video conferencing or smart phones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct online agency meetings through portals such as GoToMeeting, Zoom or Adobe. Cost savings that can be deducted from the cost of technology can come from savings realized in decreased travel time, reimbursement of mileage and costly meeting expenses such as? (Conference room? Coffee?). • Departments and teams can conduct daily roll calls using text, e-mail or apps such as GroupMe or Basecamp • Sharing of electronic calendars allows teams to schedule meetings or just understand where people are during their work day. • Using cost free tools such as Doodle polls, Survey Monkey, and Mentimeter |
| Communications, Marketing and Public Relations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule regular posts to the agency website and social media to share success stories, advertise agency events and secure donations. • Use Software such as Salsa Engage or Constant Contact to track information, and communicate with families, staff and donors and advertise special events. • Create blogs, newsletters and other communication on the progress of the transformation. • Use email and texts to create direct communication between family members, people supported and direct support staff. |
| Human Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of a time and attendance product to schedule and record time worked. • Use of HR software to track training, HR documentation, and communicate with employees. • Use of benefit portals to ensure employees working remotely from headquarters have access to benefit information. • Recruit new staff through online forums such as Indeed or LinkedIn |
| Finance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget preparation documents that can be created and shared across the agency. • Interdepartmental communications for sharing purchase orders, reports and attendance for outcome billing. • Communication with Board of Directors and finance committee. |
| Knowledge Management, Quality Enhancement and Research and Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracking agency workflows, processes and patterns of communication and assets to determine lost efficiencies through knowledge mapping. • Conduct training or access external webinars • Track data on programmatic progress through software such as Therap, SetWorks, or Penelope. • Analyze data for programs and recommend changes based on analysis. |

Example:

When Everyone Works closed their facility-based program, they recognized their infrastructure that relied on paper timesheets, manual data collection forms and face to face communications, didn't meet the needs of the new service model. Shortly after their transition to community-based services, they added technologies such as online payroll systems, and email to communicate with all staff. Many staff were already skilled in the use of these technologies, but others struggled. After an initial attempt to implement new technologies agency-wide failed, the agency developed a technology strategic plan. The strategic plan had goals to assess current software and hardware, write grants to purchase software and hardware needed and to create a technology skills test for all current and incoming staff. As part of the plan, the agency adopted a new hiring protocol, competency-based training modules were developed and implemented, and the agency created an information technology department.

Now the agency's use of technology has become integral to the efficiency of the organization. In the beginning of transformation, an off the shelf data system was used. Now the provider is using a customized system and all staff have access to track demographics, attendance, individual's progress and the system communicates with the billing system in the state. This efficient system requires less management time and the agency has been able to eliminate two middle level manager positions. Funds for these positions were redirected to other agency needs.

Communications: Evaluate Capability and Create Capacity

In some traditional service delivery organizations, communications, marketing, public relations, advocacy, and fundraising, are handled by a single department or person who serves as a generalist in these areas. As the organization transforms, a new communication strategy will be needed to highlight the agency's new role in supporting people in jobs and as part of their communities. To implement the communication strategy, functions such as marketing, public relations, fundraising and advocacy require specialized skills and may become more discrete functions. Agencies may focus on grant development, special event fundraising and corporate sponsorships to access the type of start-up funding needed during transformation and to help cover expenses during a transition period when the agency may be simultaneously providing traditional facility-based services and community-based services. A communication plan, leadership and public relation skills will be essential.

As providers review their communication functions, they will want to seek out tools that can help streamline the work. Software applications can house the names, email addresses and relationships you have with donors, family members and government contacts, as well as tracking community volunteer and employment sites. These integrated software packages will also allow for mass on-line communications, website hosting, and even help in fundraising and registration for special events.

After an internal assessment, providers may recognize the need to hire staff or engage consultants with expertise in several areas including: using social media, obtaining grants, connecting to local community

media, building community relationships, writing, and speaking publicly. You will want to ensure current staff and those hired fully understand, embrace, and can articulate the agency’s Employment First vision, mission and core values. The organization’s outward facing messaging starts with these professionals.

The chart below illustrates strategies for effective communications, e.g., marketing, public relations, fundraising and advocacy functions.

Figure 3: Communication Functions and Strategies

| Function | Strategies |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Communications | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use social media to promote successes, impart information • Recognize the different ways people prefer to communicate • Create an annual plan for timed releases of information • Use multiple types of media, e.g., online ads, radio, local newspaper • Use images and stories to promote your message • Create an elevator speech and train everyone to use it • Make the Employment First and community engagement mission highly visible • Use the language and communication modes of the target audience |
| Marketing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share stories and successful partnerships on social media • Review your website to ensure it sends the message you want portrayed, e.g., participants as contributing valued community members • Make sure your name and logo are consistent with your mission • Use free or low-cost online tools to share your message e.g., Conva, Piktochart or Word clouds • Review all publicity material to ensure it is consistent with your new values and mission • Identify different markets for different purposes • Create a library of pictures of people you support who are actively engaged in CIE and community activities • Ensure all marketing materials, e.g., email responses, business cards, correspondence, brochures, websites, etc. have your contact information (don’t make people search for you) |
| Public Relations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routinely use press releases and media (stories and pictures) to promote your successes • Determine the various outlets to distribute your press releases (list servs, social media, local papers, radio stations, etc.) • Develop relationships with local media proactively • Take advantage of national campaigns like National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), World Down Syndrome Day, Disability Awareness Month, etc. • Create opportunities for public figures to support your work like “Take your Legislator to Work” Day |

Advocacy

- Identify your unmet transformation needs and challenges
 - Develop and present data to substantiate your case
 - Become a leader within your state provider association
 - Educate and organize your board, staff, families and participants
 - Create an advocacy plan
 - Conduct educational briefings and site visits for legislators and decision makers at all levels
-

Example:

The People First agency reviewed their agency brochures, website, newsletters and photos decorating their offices and realized that the images they routinely used often showed the people they supported with staff or in large groups, posing and not engaged in meaningful activities. Often the people in the pictures were in facility settings or at gatherings that were clearly not integrated into the community. The agency recognized that if their mission was to assist people to have CIE and to become truly included in their communities, they needed images depicting them actively participating with co-workers at community integrated jobs or engaging in their community with non-disabled peers rather than pictures that communicated the opposite.

After developing a new mission statement, an agency in the District of Columbia followed up with an eight-point statement of their comparative advantage (the positive attributes of this agency). From that team process, a less than one-page elevator speech was developed. Direct service staff practiced this speech and used it in the community to describe their work and obtain employment and other community integration opportunities. The fundraising staff used the elevator speech as the boilerplate for grant applications to local civic agencies, e.g., Kiwanis, Civitan, Lions, philanthropic groups, churches, etc.

Human Resources: Finding the Right People and Creating Efficiencies

Human Resources (HR) play a critical role in the transformation process. Moving from center-based services, where staff are almost always within the line of sight of their supervisor to decentralized services where staff are dispersed throughout the community necessitates many changes. Agencies need to find new ways to create updated job descriptions for direct support staff featuring new skills, recruit candidates who have the competencies, qualities and characteristics needed, and train and supervise new and existing staff to work within a decentralized service delivery model. In-depth discussions of these strategies can be found in Modules 2 and 3.

As direct support staff roles change, so does the role of supervisory staff. Administrative support staff must devote time to be in the community observing and interacting with direct support staff and participants. This administrative engagement in the front-line work will help direct support staff feel valued while revealing potential avenues for achieving efficiency and more effective services to management level staff.

Technology will play an important role in communication between administrative and direct support staff. Because the use of some technology will itself be a new professional skill for many staff, providers will want to include use of technology in any new plans.

HR departments can use technology to track the company's needs and achieve efficiencies. Technology to track staff turnover and monitor success in recruitment will be critical. Simple changes can include how we recruit using web-based options and on-line applications, how we connect with job candidates using services Skype or Zoom; and how we use data management systems for tracking training and managing staff benefits. Staff time and attendance through a cloud-based system such as Automatic Data Processing (ADP) or Paychex will be critical for staff based off-site to track their work schedules and time. Information from these cloud-based services can feed directly into payroll. Because it is automated, there may be a savings as it cuts down on payroll errors and crisis check writing on payday. Requiring all staff to use direct deposit also eliminates costly processing and mailing expenses. Consider hiring expertise with certification from the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and with the specific software experience the agency has selected. You may also want to consider contracting this function to an outside agency with this identified expertise.

Example:

Since most staff already have personal cell phones, one agency made owning a cell phone a requirement for hiring. They paid staff a small stipend each month and made it a part of their payroll check automatically to decrease administrative effort. Support staff were then available by phone anytime and anywhere they were on duty. The agency also created a policy that limited personal calls to defined emergencies. Travel time and related expenses for agency meetings was reduced. There are other options as well. SEEC in Maryland purchases iPhones for each staff member. Staff are trained and expected to use their phones and apps as well as attend some meetings and provide drop-in employment coaching by Skype.

Knowledge Management: Use Strategies that Can Support Sharing Information to Reach Corporate Goals

Most of us are familiar with the adage "knowledge is power" and there is never a greater need for knowledge than during transformation. Knowledge Management or KM is how we collect, analyze, store, share and use the knowledge we have. During transformation knowledge is needed not only by agency leadership but by all stakeholders. Providers who gather, analyze, store and use the knowledge available to them, will have an advantage as they pursue the transformation objectives of CIE and community-based supports. Figure 4 offers a variety of ways in which Knowledge Management strategies can be used to advance transformation.

Figure 4: Strategies for Use of Knowledge Management

| Department | KM Tool | Outcome |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Organizational Structure | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Surveys 2. Process Maps 3. “Lessons Learned” events | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gathering information on effectiveness 2. Creating efficiencies, learning what is missing, streamlining agency processes 3. Creating a cycle of learning so we don’t repeat the same errors |
| Communications, Marketing and Public Relations | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Donor Data Base 2. E-Communication systems like Constant Contact or Salsa | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Track and analyze donor giving patterns, relationships to the agency and predict future giving. Examples are Donor Pro and Blackbaud. 2. Allows for mass communication to all stakeholders including information regarding the “open rate” of communication. |
| Finance | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cloud Based budget/accounting system 2. Analysis of current rate regulations and structures | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Used to create agency/department/location/unit budgets, track spending patterns, analyze performance and make changes based on accurate information. 2. Comparing what your actual expenses are to the components that make up a rate offers real information and a possible opportunity to influence a rate change |
| Human Resources | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recruitment Data Collection 2. Exit Interviews | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tracking the method of recruitment, the number of hires per method, and longevity of staff aids in determining if that specific recruitment method is cost effective. 2. Conducting exit interviews, sharing the information and making organizational/departmental changes as a result of the data collected can save thousands of dollars for each organizational position in the future. |
| Information Technology | Technology Use Testing | Evaluating training needs by assessing staff skills in the use of technology such as updating software, running security updates, and saving information to the correct place. Effective training can save the agency time and money. |
| Quality Assurance | Cloud based data management systems | Collecting and evaluating outcome data on an ongoing basis to determine the need to modify practices in order to achieve goals; collecting information about resources to better share and make use of contacts and productive partnerships, such as employer contacts and community partners; and tracking the status of individuals’ supports and services to ensure that their needs and goals are being met and to aide in staff supervision. |

Example:

Workforce development is an ongoing process. Agencies can utilize knowledge sharing on an ongoing basis to support staff development, build trust and encourage engagement with the agency, thereby increasing morale and decreasing turnover. One agency developed questionnaires to evaluate staff satisfaction as well as elicit concerns and suggestions. They used the company Survey Connect (www.surveymconnect.com) to design their survey tool (The Gallup Q 12 is another tool already normed and benchmarked that anyone can access). The survey allowed staff to assess six important areas: wage and benefits, communication, training, supervision, morale and management. The agency offered each staff member a \$10 gift certificate as an incentive to complete the survey. The surveys were completed anonymously and processed out of state to ensure confidentiality.

The survey report analyzed the results in numerous ways including by job title, by service provided, by age, by longevity and location among many other factors. Volunteer staff teams were developed to review the data, identify areas for improvement and develop recommendations to be considered by senior management. Through this process the agency changed many procedures and made operations more efficient and staff friendly. Staff, especially direct service staff, felt valued and appreciated and had a vested interest in the solutions. The process created a better relationship between direct service staff and managers. The agency celebrated the teams by treating them to lunch with the CEO and recognizing them on the agency website and in electronic newsletters. The agency used this technique to design and revise procedures as the need arose.

Rural Perspectives

Capitalizing on existing resources in rural areas can be the key to solving challenging problems. The example below illustrates how a local resource was engaged to help an agency become known and accepted in a local rural economy and community.

Example:

Community Services, Inc. was asked to manage a financially struggling but much beloved facility-based agency that provided services across six large counties in rural Tennessee. Community Services management was aware it was going to encounter a demoralized staff and a community reluctant to welcome a new agency, especially one known to provide only community-based services. Through mutual friends, Community Services was introduced to an influential community gatekeeper, a trusted local radio station owner. The radio station owner invited them to speak live on a popular, after-church, Sunday talk show that was a mainstay of the community. This provided the agency an opportunity to communicate its mission, vision and values as well as its plans for the future.

Through the support of this gatekeeper and this communication tool, the local radio show, the agency began to win over individuals supported, staff, families and the community as a whole. The station owner bought into the agency's message and hired two job seekers to demonstrate

his support. He now holds two fundraisers to benefit the agency annually and has helped establish other employment opportunities for people served by the agency. Three years later, the agency's workshop and day program have closed. Everyone is supported within his or her local community, either working or engaged in meaningful integrated activities.

Questions

How can an agency engage its Board of Directors to support the transformation process?

An informed Board Member is usually supportive of agency initiatives. Educating board members so they are aware of changes in best practices, customer expectations, service delivery models and funder priorities is an on-going effort. It starts with recruitment. Providers need to identify the expertise, values, and experience they desire in board members to support them through the change process. Leadership should provide a comprehensive orientation that includes an overview of the agency's mission, vision, comparative advantage, elevator speech, strategic plan or transformation plan, important federal and state regulations and definitions, current agency budget and financial reports, recent board meeting minutes, and a copy of the Board of Directors and Officers insurance. During orientation, the leadership team should go over the expectations for board members and provide an opportunity for them to meet some of the people the agency supports as they are receiving the supports the agency provides.

It will be important for board members to see services being delivered in the community to fully appreciate the change in service delivery. Including managers at board meetings to talk about their accomplishment and allowing them to answer questions the members may have can raise the confidence of the board in the direction the agency is proposing to take. It can be useful to invite direct support professionals and the people they support to attend board meetings to share the agency's work and success stories. It is important to keep up with the rigor of including the board in difficult discussions and dialogues, even after the transition has begun.

Does the size of an agency impact transformation?

Every agency is unique and will have its own journey through transformation. ODEP's [Provider Transformation Manual, Pilot Version](#) provides a roadmap for the process which is essential for agencies of any size. Size is a factor that may influence the process, but not necessarily. A larger agency may have more resources and expertise to effectively plan and implement the process but also may have more complex operations to transform. A smaller agency may have fewer resources but a simpler path to change. A great deal will depend on the agency's leadership, resources and circumstances. Keys to success are thoughtful and inclusive planning, effective use of available expertise collaboration with funding partners and determination.

Resources

Hunter, B. N. (2016). *The Power of KM: Harnessing the Extraordinary Value of Knowledge Management: Business, Personal, Global*. San Francisco, CA: Spirit Rising Productions.

Leistner, F. (2010). *Mastering Organizational Knowledge Flow: How to Make Knowledge Sharing Work*. John Wiley & Sons.

Martin, K., & Osterling, M. (2014). *Value Stream Mapping: How to Visualize Process and Align People for Organizational Transformation Using Lean Business Practices to Transform Office and Service Environments*. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.

Module 2: Staff Development, Recruitment, Restructuring

Key Words:

Care/Support Role

Talent Acquisition

Staff Qualities and Characteristics

Staff Certification

Staff Development

Organizational Redesign

Introduction

The key to successful transformation is through organizational redesign; staffing structure and staff development are central to accomplishing this goal. To date, the move toward community employment, has been accomplished primarily by addition rather than redesign. Agencies have created departments to provide new services while providing their traditional services at the same level of activity and staffing.

Transformation, however, requires a shift away from these traditional segregated services. New staff roles are critical in broadening the horizons of people supported, discovering their gifts and talents, exposing them to people and places where their interests can be developed, and connecting them to opportunities where they can work competitively, and/or become engaged in their local community.

Recruiting staff for these new positions will require providers to develop new methods of talent acquisition – understanding who to look for (qualities and characteristics as well as competencies), and where to look. Leadership need strategies to identify and develop candidates into quality staff. Training and supporting staff to learn new skills that match the new roles and job duties is also a necessary step in the transformation process.

This module will provide examples of staff roles in personalized service delivery, recruitment, competency-based training, and components of staff development that cut across all positions. Promising practices that describe staff redeployment and the integration of staff development, performance management and organizational redesign are provided.

Promising Practices

Shifting Staff from Care to Support Roles

Changes in societal expectations for persons with a disability are pushing community rehabilitation providers in exciting and challenging directions that offer new roles for managers and staff. However, providers who are in the midst of transformation, may still be experiencing the push and pull between segregated and community-based services. At the heart of this tension, are the important concepts of care versus support that underlie the services we provide.

Leadership must understand these differing roles to encourage staff to take on new responsibilities as transformation continues. Providers must redefine the role of their staff-- from one focused only on care to one that encompasses support of individuals' desires, interests and abilities. Care services may be defined as those activities which address daily personal care or self-help needs. Care services are often measured in hours of service. Support services may be defined as social support and assistance as part of a person's integration in the social network. Support can come from many sources such as family, friends, pets, neighbors, coworkers, organizations, etc. as well as from paid staff. Support services tend to be measured in outcomes achieved.

With transformation, care for persons with disabilities, while still needed, is not the ultimate outcome. Staff must learn people’s desires, interests and abilities and support them to participate in community life. With the new focus on competitive integrated employment (CIE) and community, the challenge for provider organizations is to deliver this new and different “support” component, while maintaining a satisfactory level of care. This requires different strategies for staff recruitment, staffing structures, staff development and performance management.

Recruit to Attract Staff with the Talents that Support Community-Based Work

The key to staff recruitment is knowing who to look for and where to look. Prior experience, certain skills and competencies, certifications and degrees, and demographics are important considerations, but no more important than the qualities and characteristics a potential staff person possesses. If we want staff to support people with disabilities in competitive integrated employment (CIE) and meaningful community engagement, they need to be connected to the community themselves. Characteristics that potential staff either possess or could be developed over time include:

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ➤ Self-directed and organized | ➤ Committed advocate |
| ➤ Innovative | ➤ Professional personal presentation |
| ➤ Strong personal work ethic | ➤ Ability to negotiate/compromise |
| ➤ Good communication skills, including listening | ➤ Able to teach and train in functional settings |
| ➤ Ability to engage and “draw out” others | ➤ Understanding of how to provide support from “behind the scenes” |
| ➤ Decision-making ability | ➤ Connected in his/her community |
| ➤ Crisis management skills | ➤ Comfortable meeting new people |

Knowing where to look and what kind of image to present to the community and prospective candidates is also important. Using respectful person-first language, including value statements, focusing on important qualities and characteristics, telling someone’s story, and appealing to people’s sense of social and economic justice are important considerations in job advertisement that may appear in:

- National job search websites (Indeed, Monster, CareerBuilder, Craigslist, etc.)
- Regional and state job search websites
- Local newspaper ads
- Social Media
- College campus flyers

Peer to peer recruitment may be the most effective strategy. Current staff are in a unique position to talk about their job and the satisfaction it brings. Effective peer recruitment strategies should include staff bonuses for finding other successful staff.

And finally, there is networking or word of mouth. People supported, their families, friends, and coworker connections are great sources of potential staff.

Ads written in the first person and from the person's perspective are powerful ways of listening to what's important to and for a person with a disability. These ads enable prospective staff to see themselves in the support role.

Example: Recruiting for Laura

Laura is a young woman who lives in her own apartment in southern Maine. Her provider agency is seeking an additional staff to fill out her team. Laura's supports can be classified in the



following ways: supporting her with daily living tasks such as personal care and homemaking, searching out ways and providing supports which will enable her and her friends to participate as adventurers in the life of the community, and supporting her with an upcoming job opportunity. Below is the ad developed for Laura:

I am a woman living in my own home in Portland. Although I hate cold Maine winters, I do love getting out. I just got back from a skiing trip to Sugarloaf. In addition to skiing I love riding bikes, relaxing at the beach and going dancing (Eighties music is my favorite.). I have two cats, and a wonderful extended family in the area. I also have lots of friends who I like to go out on the town with or just sit and talk about life. I use a wheelchair to get around, but I ride in regular vehicles – just throw the chair in the back! With the help of my team I am able to do more and more on my own. My staff support me with daily tasks like getting dressed, preparing and eating meals, shopping and keeping house. But more importantly, they help me envision the bigger possibilities for my life and make them happen! How? They support me with my upcoming job, volunteering, making new friends, scouting out local events and gatherings, and they encourage me to participate fully in community life. If you have a terrific sense of humor, are a cat lover, like to be on the go, and aren't afraid to try new things, perhaps you are a fit for my team! Weekday and some weekend hours available.

Rural Perspective

Rural sections of the country may offer advantages in hiring staff to support people in CIE and meaningful community engagement. Word of mouth is often a very successful strategy for recruiting staff. In small rural towns, people tend to know more about their neighbors and engage in networking with fellow citizens. This leads to rich connections with people who can open doors to employment, community membership, and relationships. However, it can be a two-edged sword. It's extremely

important that staff understand that they are ambassadors for the agency and present themselves in a way that reflects the agency and its values.

Targeted ads in small town newspapers are also an effective strategy used in recruitment (see the job ad for Laura above). Ads that grab people's attention and which might target a certain population segment, such as retired community members, ads that tell a person's story, or ads which describe the qualities and characteristics of a successful applicant are winning combinations.

Staff Development and Training Strategies that Support Community-Based Services

The goal of initial and ongoing staff development is to create and maintain high performing teams that bring people together to provide support, solve problems and create community.

Orientation for new staff should provide a philosophical grounding for community-based supports. It is important for all staff, especially new staff, to understand that the people they will be supporting have been devalued by our society. Human services agencies have often reinforced those stereotypes by providing congregated (with their own kind) and segregated (away from society) services. One agency, for example, spends at least a half day teaching new staff about negative consequences of devaluation and how they can counteract society's negative perceptions by supporting people to establish and maintain socially valued roles. The agency shares many stories and images of people in both valued and devalued roles so the new staff can be inspired as well as informed about their own role in supporting people to have a good quality of life.

Once hired, the initial process of staff development can use a variety of formats to provide the tools for community-based work: online learning platforms (College of Direct Support, College of Employment Supports, Relias Learning, Open Futures Learning); face-to-face dynamic learning: job shadowing; and on the job training. Meaningful staff development is an ongoing and long-term strategy that includes training in skill development and agency culture, field-based mentoring, performance evaluation based upon real outcomes and competencies, and reward.

Staff training and development focuses on competencies important for all staff supporting people in community settings: interviewing and spending time with intention; writing; designing activities to discover emerging talents, interests, and skills of people supported; and interacting and negotiating with members of the community whether it be employers or people who can help people develop or maintain valued roles and build social capital.

The Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) and APSE's Certified Employment Support Professionals (CESP) offer National Certificates for Employment Staff based on a common set of competencies for employment work. The ACRE National Certificate ensures that the recipient has received a minimum of 40 hours of instruction on a nationally recognized set of competencies. The ACRE Certificate also prepares Employment Staff to take the CESP exam which tests them on these common set of competencies. More and more funding and referral agencies want provider staff to have one of

these national certificates to demonstrate their qualifications to provide effective employment services and outcomes.

Staff training is not the same thing as staff development. Training sessions, in person or on-line, can provide knowledge, resources and can conceptualize the skills and tasks that staff need to have. However, the application of knowledge and the development of skills happen only as staff do their jobs. An organization's commitment to developing staffs' skills and ability to deliver effective community-based supports and achieve more and better community integration and employment outcomes includes the following components:

- Identification of competencies and skill sets that staff need to have
- Training that supports the development of those competencies and skill sets
- Supervisors and managers who understand and can develop those competencies and skill sets through on the job mentoring.
- Staff and program goals that support and require development of those competencies and skill sets
- An evaluation process and, ideally, incentives for staff that achieve programmatic goals and develop the skills necessary to achieve these goals

The competencies necessary to provide effective employment services are many of the same skills and abilities necessary to provide effective community integration services. Agencies will want to consider providing the ACRE training, or sections of the ACRE training, to all direct support staff.

Examples:

- **Comprehensive Agency-Wide ACRE Competencies:** The Executive Director, of Southern Indiana Resource Solutions (SIRS), has been leading an organizational transformation effort for over 20 years. Even though the majority of SIRS services are community-based, the Executive Director felt that there was too much separation of residential, day habilitation and employment services and that all staff needed to be more accountable for integration and employment outcomes on behalf of those they support. SIRS made a commitment to have all staff receive competency-based training and obtain certification from the Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE). SIRS managers were trained to offer ACRE training to their staff on an ongoing basis. SIRS changed their job descriptions to reflect the ACRE competencies they are being trained on. The agency is developing a performance management and evaluation process that tracks the skills and service outcomes that are expected of staff over time. Through the training and organizational redesign, staff, now appreciate the need to collaborate across residential, day habilitation and employment services to achieve consumer goals and outcomes.
- **Michigan's Employment First "Train the Trainer" Initiative:** Over the last four years, Michigan has received technical assistance and training from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy's Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP). Since then, the Michigan legislature passed a state appropriation to sustain and expand their Employment first programs. This appropriation is being used in part to fund a "train the trainer" initiative that will give managers of provider agencies the

tools and expertise to train their own staff to receive ACRE National Certificates on an ongoing basis. Provider organizations will be less dependent on external or out of state training to develop the skills required of staff providing community-based services.

This “train the trainer” model can also be used by provider collaborations to jointly prepare managers to train and supervise their staff. See Module 5.

Staff who are from small towns and who work in their small town to help people become included into the fabric of the community, may tend to stay in their jobs longer than staff in more urban areas. Anecdotally, according to KFI’s 2017 outcome statistics, staff from the small rural towns of northern Maine have a 20% less turnover rate than their counterparts working for the same agency in Maine’s largest city of Portland.

Because staff, who work in their small town may tend to stay in their jobs longer, provider organizations don’t have to train new staff on a regular basis and have the opportunity to develop community employment and integration skills over a more extended period of time.

Organize Staffing Around Individual Needs and Geography

Organizational redesign will support the organization’s provider transformation vision and plan. Traditional structures tend to be designed based on funding sources and services provided. When a new program is added, a new manager and staff are hired, and a new box is added to the organizational chart. Staff tend not to work across programs and services offered through their organization. The consumers of those programs and services tend to stay with an assigned program or there are “hand-offs” between programs when a consumer receives services from more than one program.

When an agency is able to move away from these silos, supports can be customized around individuals’ jobs and community activities instead. As the silos continue to blur, teams of staff will be designed around a group of individuals, based on geography or interest.

These new teams, whether configured geographically or around a particular person with multiple and intensive needs, can provide dynamic supports in an ever-changing pattern based upon the support needs of the individuals. Direct support staff duties are assigned around their interests, connections, and talents and matched to the best extent possible to the people they support. The services they provide are around the identified needs and desires of the people they support and are not delivered during a static period of the daytime.

Depending on financial and staffing constraints, one staff may provide supports to a small number of people at the same time. Those shared supports are based upon shared interests and activities and they may not be paired for the entire day.

Supports may wrap around jobs, and so need to be flexible to respond to changes in people’s employment. It is useful for direct support staff to be cross-trained and certified as job coaches and employment specialists so there need not be a “hand off” to another team or staff in order to provide those employment-related supports.

It is ideal for supports to begin and end in people’s homes rather than at an artificial environment such as a day program, since staff may be called upon to provide supports to people in multiple locations – at a job, in various community settings, or at the person’s home. If a building is still being used, it should be a place located in the mainstream of the community for staff to check into at the beginning and ending of their day and for people supported to use as a base from which to access community settings.

Examples: KFI Staffing Redeployment and Southern Indiana Resource Solutions (SIRS) Redesign

- (KFI) transformed from facility-based services to a community-based program centered around the employment and community activities of the individuals it supports. The redeployment of existing employment and day program staff required both staff and people supported to redefine what their day looked like. Service delivery silos of day program staff and employment staff and often residential staff blurred as people’s supports were customized around a competitive job and a meaningful life.

KFI is now organized around geographic based teams of staff providing people with disabilities a variety of supports including: employment supports ranging from discovery activities, job coaching, and follow-along; community supports such as connecting to typical community resources (banks, grocery stores, libraries, etc.), relationship facilitation, support to join churches, clubs or to take classes; and supports to people in their homes such as routine household tasks, personal care routines, hobbies, etc.

- As described in the section on staff development, Southern Indiana Resource Solutions decided that there was too much separation of residential, day habilitation and employment services, and committed to having all staff receive ACRE based competency trainings and began to organize supports around individual needs rather than departments.

The previous organizational chart for Southern Indiana Resource Solutions (SIRS) listed below shows how separate and discrete sets of services and staff are provided while consumers jump from one set of services and staff to another set of services and staff. The past organization design is based on services offered. The second current organizational chart for SIRS listed below shows how the services and staff wrap around a specific set of consumers based on the community they live in. The new organizational design is based on an array of services that are structured to meet the support needs of the consumers in their community. The old organization chart is based on a program development model and the new organizational chart is based on a community development model.

Figure 5: SIRS Past Organization Chart

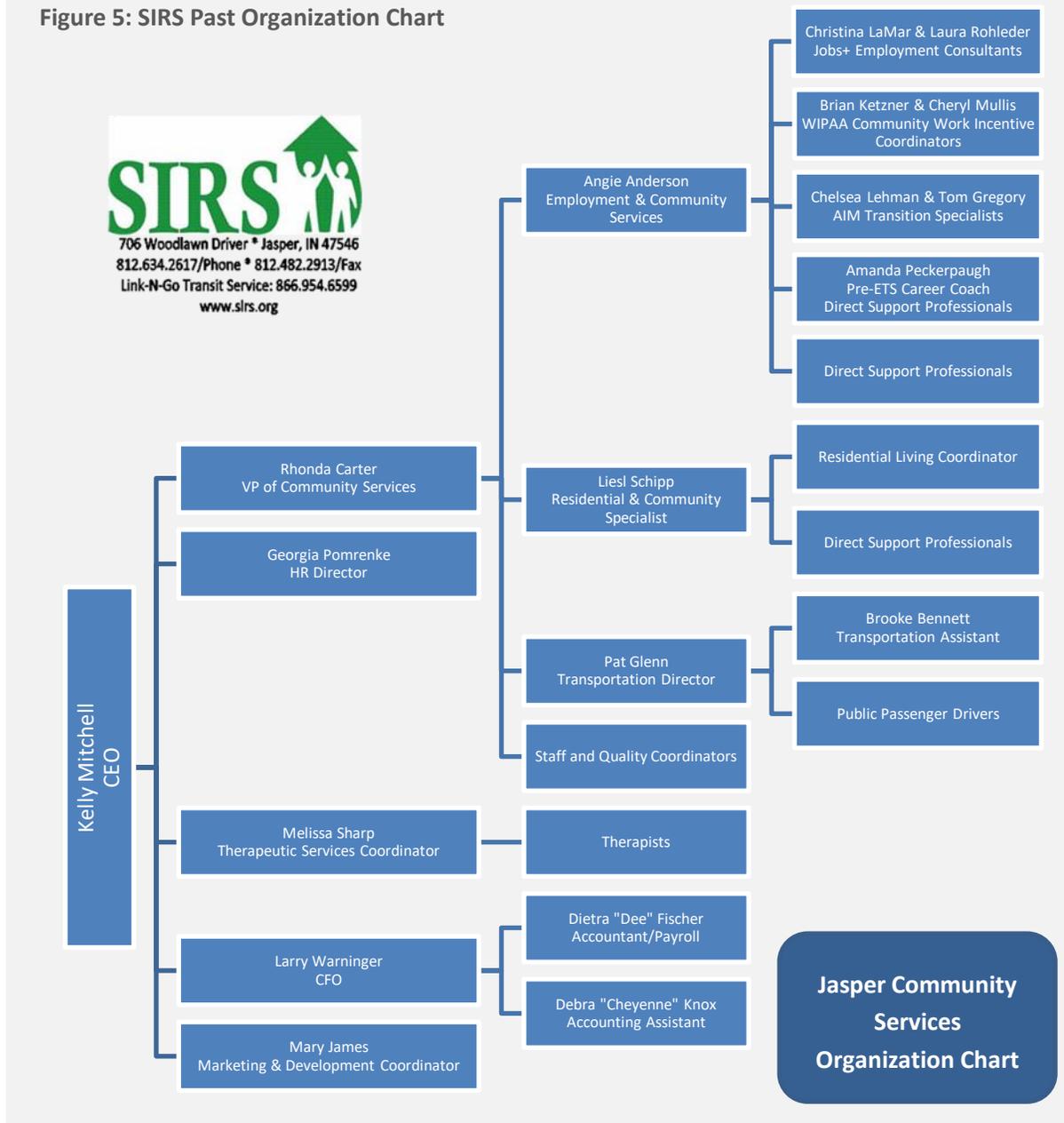
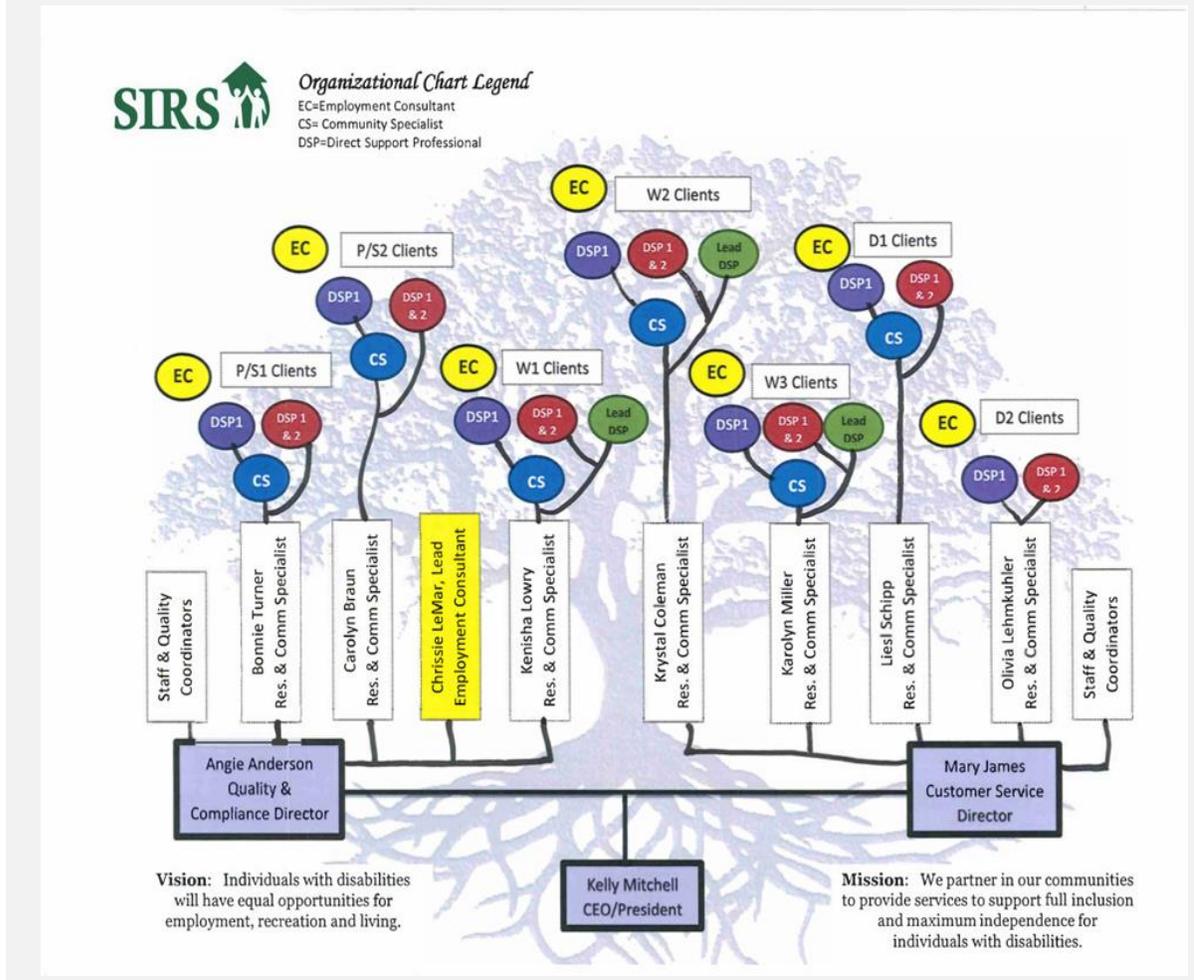


Figure 6: SIRS New Organization Chart



Rural Perspective

In rural areas, the size of provider organizations tends to be smaller. When reorganizing to offer more community-based services, a smaller sized organization may find it easier to restructure staff responsibilities and integrate residential, day and employment services. In smaller sized organizations in rural areas, staff are more likely to work across programs making it easier to shift to a person centered, community-based organizational structure.

Because of the collegial nature of citizens living in small towns and rural settings, they may be particularly attentive to the lives of people with disabilities. There is an abundance of “casual contact” and “incidental interactions” with citizens in small communities that can be nurtured into friendships and can open doors to opportunity for people supported.

Robert’s story provides an excellent example of a small geographic team of staff in a rural area who work together to provide “whole life” supports in a seamless and fluid fashion enabling him to attain many valued roles, including employee, build social capital, and live a typical life as an engaged community member.

Example: Robert’s Personalized Supports and Services

Robert is a man in his early 40’s who was referred to KFI for support right after high school. Initially, Robert received approximately 40 hours of paid supports from Maine’s Waiver program and was connected to Vocational Rehabilitation which funded job development.

Coming out of an unstable living situation, Robert needed to set up a home before he could look for a job and build a life in his community. The KFI team helped him find and rent an apartment of his choosing in the small community of Millinocket. Robert’s staff were chosen from a team of direct support staff from Millinocket and he was connected to a KFI employment specialist who worked closely with the team and helped him find his first job. His supports were delivered primarily by two direct support staff and were spread over the week; no two days looked alike.

Over the last two decades Robert’s paid supports under the Medicaid Waiver dropped to 25 hours per week. His direct support staff help him in his home with household tasks such as cooking and balancing his checkbook, but he also spends a fair amount of time alone in his apartment and in community settings.

Robert’s supports enabled him to buy his own home and hold a number of competitive jobs – both wage and self-employment jobs. He currently works in a small manufacturing company. In addition, he volunteers his time for several non-profits, works out five days a week, attends the Catholic Church (which led to his induction into the Knights of Columbus), and takes three adult education classes. Robert’s two staff are certified in three areas: direct support professional, job coaching, and employment specialist. They are able to provide flexible supports in his home, community, and work. Robert makes sure his jobs do not interfere with important aspects of his life such as church and his volunteer work.

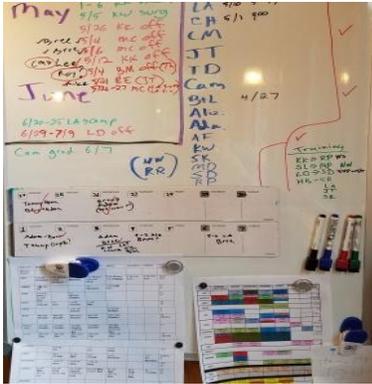
Questions

What is the capacity within your organization to train and develop the skills your staff need to provide community-based outcomes and supports?

Regardless of where your organization goes to get training for your staff, your staff will only be able to develop the skills they need to achieve community- based outcomes and effective supports when managers and supervisors are trained themselves and can model effective practices and support the development of their required skills over time. Your managers and supervisors need to have the necessary skills in order to effectively train and supervise their staff.

Could you share one of those messy schedules with us?

The actual schedule of supports is shown in the bottom right of the picture. The white board represents a sampling of changes to that schedule due to staff vacations, staff vacancies, new jobs, volunteer



opportunities, an operation, summer camp for people supported, appointments that fall outside of scheduled time and assorted other reasons that can and do mandate changes to staff schedules and people’s customized home, community, and employment supports.

Would you be able to share an example of a sample actual daily schedule for a staff or individual supported?

Examples of individual staff and person supported schedules can be found in the next chapter. Below is a partial weekly schedule for a geographic area which provides home supports to 10 people ranging

from five hours/week to 50 hours/week; community supports for nine people ranging from three hours/week to 20 hours/week; and employment supports (job coaching) for four people ranging from two hours/week to 16 hours/week. This schedule employs nine staff – six full-time and three part-time.

Figure 7: Schedule

| | TORREY 40 | KARL 26 | PATTI 23.5 | LANA 39 | LYNN 39 | KIMBERLY 39 |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| M O N | 8:30-11:30 Lauren (2WS1CS) 11:30-12 lunch 12-4 Marco WS 4-6:30 Chris home | 8-11:30 Marco (home) 11:30-12 support time 12-12:30 lunch 12:30-1 Ricky 1-3 Dave K & Ricky 3-5:30 Ricky | 9-11 Erin 11-12 Melissa & Erin 12-3 Melissa | 1:30-3 Jerry 3-6:30 Dave S | OFF | 7:45-10 Drew WS 10-10:30 Drew 10:30-12:30 Charles & Richard 12:30-2:30 Charles & Henry 2:30-4 Drew & Henry 4-4:30 Henry |
| T U E | 9:30-11:30 Charles & Richard (UMO campus) 11:30-12 travel 12-4 Marco WS 4-6:30 Chris | 5-8 (home support) Marco | 9-10 Erin 10-12 Erin & Melissa volunteer at Ronald McDonald House 12-1 lunch & class prep 1-2:30 Emp. 1st w/Kimberly 2:30-3:30 support time | 8-11:30 Marco (home) 11:30-12 lunch 12-1 Melissa transport to Emp 1st 12:30-1 Ricky transport to Emp. 1st 1-1:30 support time 1:30-5 Erin | 9-1 Patricia/ home & AA) 1-2:30 break 2:30-5:30 Melissa | 10-12:30 Lauren 12:30-1 travel 1-2:30 Emp 1st w/Patti Melissa, Ricky Charles, Jennifer, John 2:30-5 Ricky & John YMCA |

Resources

Online Learning Platforms:

- College of Direct Support: www.directcourseonline.com/direct-support/
- College of Employment Supports: www.directcourseonline.com/employment-services/
- Relias Learning: www.relias.com/
Open Futures Learning: www.openfuturelearning.org/

National Certifications for Employment Staff:

- The Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE): www.acreducators.org/
- Certified Employment Support Professionals (CESP): www.apse.org/certified-employment-support-professional/

Module 3. Staff Training Specifics

Key Words:

Job Descriptions

Internal Trainers

Meaningful Day Integration

Supporting from Behind

Flexible Scheduling

Transportation

Teamwork

Introduction

As the concepts and practices of the Employment First movement are being adopted across our country, we are rapidly moving to a different way of viewing support to people with disabilities. There is an increased emphasis on recognizing people with disabilities as individuals who have personal goals and know how they want to live their lives. There is a strong focus on competitive integrated employment (CIE), true community inclusion and the exercise of full civil rights. These changes impact the type of supports provided, the ways they are provided and the people who provide them. Staff are being called upon to play a significant role in advancing the status of people with disabilities in society, a complex task that requires insight, skill and judgment. Because the role we are asking staff to assume is more complicated, we are more thoughtfully examining who we are recruiting and hiring as staff.

We are also challenged to think about the best preparation and support that we can provide staff, so they can perform their work successfully. When we are effective, the supports provided are interwoven, not siloed, and provided in an appropriate amount at the times they are needed. This approach challenges us to take a fresh look at what constitutes a truly meaningful life for someone. It also causes us to consider specific skill sets; beyond those required to facilitate the acquisition of CIE, staff need to support people in the new paradigm. This module will address promising practices for the development of sound job descriptions, a critical starting place. It will also address developing internal trainers and discuss some key areas for specific training for staff including:

- Identifying best practices
- Facilitating meaningful day integration
- Scheduling community-based supports
- Discovering transportation options

Promising Practices

Guide Staff Development through Job Descriptions Imbued with the Agency's Philosophy and Include Essential Elements of the Position

A well-crafted job description is the starting point for the provider agency's relationship with staff. A great deal of thought and care should be given to the development of good job descriptions. Module 6 of the [Provider Transformation Manual Pilot Version](#) notes that job descriptions will naturally change as the duties and required competencies for staff evolve. Staff orientation should include a review of the job description and a discussion of the expectations for performance. A good job description should provide the basis for staff performance evaluations as well.

A useful job description for community-based staff will include the following important elements, as illustrated in the sample job description found at the end of the module cited above.

Job Summary Overview - A brief narrative statement describing the role. This section provides an opportunity to speak directly to the philosophy undergirding the type of support the job addresses.

Example: Makes sound matches between the work aspirations and skills of people supported and the employer’s personnel needs.

General Information - Include important information that defines expectations and conditions of the jobs. This information will include:

- **Job title** – titles should be short and representative of the duties of the employee but should avoid stigmatizing or medicalized terms.
- **Job classification** – exempt or non-exempt status, per the Fair Labor Standards Act.
- **Worksite location** – this element is critical in field-based work. It provides an opportunity to make very clear that worksites will not be static; staff will likely move around to various locations
- **Supervision/supervisory responsibilities**—indicate who the employee reports to and whether the employee has people who report to them and who they are by title.

Tasks - Describe the tasks of the job. Break down the tasks into concise, descriptive steps beginning with action verbs. Focus on the aspects of the job that differentiate the work from traditional facility-based care and support activities. Remember to include a *Disclaimer* such as, “Other duties as assigned” or “new responsibilities may be assigned by management as needed”.

Example: Conduct a discovery process with assigned job seekers. Participate in the development and implementation of job search plans. Facilitate the development of natural supports.

Skills - Identify the knowledge, skills and competencies required for the job. Refer to resources for staff competencies in the Resources section at the end of this module. Be sure to include general computer literacy and skill with programs or applications, if required.

Experience - Include any specific educational levels required or preferred, type and amount or experience required or preferred, and any professional certifications such as CESP, or AMAP. The job description should note if equivalents will be accepted if person doesn’t have qualifications that match the specific educational or experiential requirements.

Work Conditions - Include expectations about work hours, work environment and travel/transportation that is specific to community-based work. If the expectation is for staff to work a flexible and variable schedule the job description should indicate that. If the staff are going to be traveling around the community a great deal, it is important to include that in the job description. The same is true if the staff are expected to use his or her own vehicle. If staff also are expected to have auto insurance, include those conditions. If staff are going to be supporting people in various workplaces or in community life, include a statement to clarify that work locations may change frequently and be in businesses other than the agency employing them. If staff are expected to have cell phones, indicate that, and if reimbursement is available, state that as well.

Compensation - Include information about pay, fringe benefits, bonuses, and/or finder’s fees for locating community jobs or activities.

Provide Staff Training that Focuses on Meaningful Day Integration as an Effective Pathway to Employment

Historically, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and those with serious mental illness, have been excluded from the mainstream of society. This segregation has serious consequences. People who spend most of their time in segregated settings miss out on targeted skill development and critical incidental learning opportunities that can only occur in the community. They are unable to observe and learn the fundamentals of social expectations and behavior as well as the options for different types of work and living arrangements. Segregation deprives people of access to many important aspects of effective preparation for CIE.

Providers will want to offer staff training that helps them to truly understand the importance of their jobs and their key role as supporters, facilitators and connectors in the community. Staff need training that will prepare them to use the community effectively to teach and train the people they support to gain new skills, pursue their interests and connect with others. Community-based pre-employment training can be effectively done when the staff are taught to see the activities they are engaged in as optimal, real-life training and assessment opportunities for work.

Example:

In Massachusetts, the Department of Developmental Services supports the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts, Boston to provide statewide training and individual agency technical support that emphasizes community-based day services as a “pathway to employment”.

The training and technical assistance focuses on the following:

- Philosophical foundations – history of services, rationale for change, the importance of CIE in acquisition of civil rights,
- Important terms and definitions - Employment First, competitive integrated employment, state or local definitions for the service
- Community mapping – identifying meaningful activities, volunteer opportunities, classes, cultural experiences
- Personal profile development and enhancement – identification of interests, preferences, job aspirations, non-negotiables for work. Expanding the profile as experiences occur and new information is learned
- Staff roles and responsibilities – focus on “change agent” role, meaningful involvement in the community to change perceptions of people with disabilities, teaching and training opportunistically in natural environments, using volunteerism to observe people performing different tasks and displaying appropriate work behavior, opportunities the people to try out possible future job tasks
- Critical interface between community integration and employment staff to prevent “siloeing” and ensure people move swiftly to CIE
- Scheduling and logistics
- Field-based staff support from supervisors
- Documentation – using community experiences as assessment opportunities

Provide Staff Training in Strategies that Promote Independence and Inclusion such as “Supporting from Behind” and Encouraging Self-Advocacy

“Supporting from Behind”

This means staying more in the background when supporting someone in the community rather than always initiating greetings and becoming involved in interactions between the person and community members unnecessarily. Staff must learn how to allow people to take the lead in initiating encounters with community members and making decisions about what they want to do. Many curricula, like that of the College of Direct Support, offer lessons in developing natural supports, the direct support staff role in supporting inclusion, supporting the expression of rights, and facilitating choice-making, all of which help staff understand the concept of “supporting from behind”.

Example:

Adam is a young man with a goal to become more included in his community such as using community resources, increasing opportunities for relationships, and growing in valued roles. Every Wednesday, Adam frequented the same sandwich shop and ordered the same sandwich. He didn't have any understanding of money and carried what money he had in a pencil box which also contains army men and other age inappropriate items. His support staff did encourage Adam to pay for his own sandwich. However, because Adam didn't understand money, he simply opened his pencil box and handed the whole thing to the clerk.

Adam was at risk for being viewed as incompetent or dependent in the sandwich shop when he paid for his food. His provider agency focused on how to provide staff with strategies that would help the community see Adam as an adult. The dilemma his provider agency faced was what actions could support staff take to project Adam as a competent adult. First, the agency supported Adam to buy a men's wallet. Without trying to teach Adam money skills, it was decided that the act of buying a sandwich could still be presented in a way to give Adam the “appearance of competence” and remove staff supports outside of the sandwich shop.

Second, Adam's foster mother was asked to provide a \$5 bill every Wednesday. Before going into the sandwich shop, staff set Adam up for success by ensuring that only the \$5 bill is in his wallet. His order never exceeds \$5. Because Adam can order his sandwich without support, there is now no need for the direct support worker to go into the store with him. Thus, staff support him from behind. Now when Adam orders his sandwich, he pulls out his wallet, and hands the clerk a \$5 bill. No one observing this situation knows that Adam doesn't understand money. Adam can navigate buying a sandwich without any negative stereotypes and project an “appearance of competence”.

Encouraging Self Advocacy

Staff require training on how to support people to advocate for themselves. Staff too often speak for the people they support when the individuals can speak for themselves. Staff training should include an emphasis on always asking individuals what is important to them and what they prefer, listening

carefully and respectfully to what they say and encouraging them to speak up and express their opinions and choices. People learn to speak out and speak up for themselves through practice. Staff should be trained to always redirect questions posed to them about people they support when the person is present and capable of answering themselves. Frequently asking someone their opinion or preference builds their confidence in both their ability to speak up and knowing that what they have to say matters.

People who cannot speak can still express their opinions and preferences. Staff may even be more inclined to speak for these non-verbal individuals without taking time to consult with them and make sure they know when people want them to communicate on their behalf. Extra staff training in this area is warranted. That training should focus on the alternative methods of communication that allows non-linguistic people to express themselves effectively in community settings.

Train Staff in How to Create and Manage Responsive, Flexible Schedules

Supports provided to people with disabilities have become much more individualized and responsive, as described in Module 2. This is an exciting development which tells us we are doing well supporting people to have the same full and complex lives as the rest of society. Scheduling for people who work in CIE and who engage fully in meaningful community integrated opportunities can be challenging for the staff with responsibility for coordinating services.

Staff require training on how to create and manage these complex schedules and scheduling. As mentioned earlier, flexibility will be required of staff who may support people who have variable work schedules. Those individuals may also have interests they want to pursue when they are not working and require some support to pursue those interests.

Scheduling support is commonly done within a geographic area and is driven by people's person-centered plans. If people are paired for supports outside of employment, it is for short amounts of time to share the same interest, like working out at the gym; or volunteering their time at the same place, such as an animal shelter; or they may participate in the same community activity with typical citizens like a club meeting. In all instances, staff must be familiar with the person/people they are supporting, the places and people they may encounter, and have the skill to facilitate relationships and opportunities that enable people to gain valued roles. Schedules change frequently because people's lives continue to change and grow. Staff may support several people who get a job, increase hours on a job, or lose a job which will impact their schedule of wrap-around community supports.

Provide staff with sample community schedules, such as the following, to help them master this new skill.

Example:**Shirley's Schedule of Supports**

Monday:

- 9:00 – 11:30 Self-advocacy group
- 11:30 – 2:30 Hospital volunteer job, lunch with co-workers at hospital, hobbies

Tuesday:

- 11:00 – 3:00 Hospital volunteer job

Thursday:

- 11:00 – 12:00 Lunch with co-workers at hospital (paired with Carolyn)
- 12:00 – 2:00 Work at office
- 2:00 – 4:00 Hospital volunteer job

Friday:

- 9:30 – 3:30 Product development & research for entrepreneurial business
-

Train and Support Staff to Use Teamwork as They Provide Responsive, Flexible Scheduling

Managing scheduling can be challenging and is not something staff innately know how to do. The same is true of working in teams. Exceptional teams are person-centered; they believe in the person AND the community. They envision possibilities, build capacity, see the big picture; they are thinkers and doers and value each other's contributions. They are empowered to make independent decisions and know the importance of communicating. Most importantly, they have each other's backs.

When providing orientation to staff it will be helpful to review a sample staffing schedule, such as the one just below, that demonstrates the value of team work to support people with their goals.

Example:**Staff Schedule of Supports for Shirley: Using Teamwork for Creative Scheduling**

Monday:

- Wanda & Adria facilitate self-advocacy group (9:00 – 11:30)
- Teri supports volunteer job, lunch with hospital co-workers, community errands, and hobbies

Tuesday:

- Amanda supports hospital volunteer job

Thursday:

- Wanda supports lunch with co-workers at hospital and shredding job at office
- Amanda supports hospital volunteer job

Friday:

- Amanda supports self-employment research and product development

Note: All the staff who support Shirley support other people as well. For example, Wanda works 36.5 hours/week with a variety of people in a variety of settings – in their homes, in community locations such as the YMCA, and in businesses as a job coach.

Provide Staff Training that Includes Strategies on How to Access Transportation Options and Support People to Travel as Independently as Possible

Accessible transportation to work and community activities is almost universally considered to be a significant challenge for people with disabilities. Urban areas generally have public transportation, which should be used whenever possible. If an agency supports people in an area with fixed route public transportation, staff need training to provide safe and effective travel training to the people they support. Staff may not be public transit users themselves and may need training in all aspects of using public transportation systems.

Staff providing pre-employment and employment supports need to receive training on the many different travel options that may be available in a community and how to possibly braid some options together to get the transportation outcomes needed. Then they can teach people about possible travel options and how to problem solve transportation issues. Even in those areas with good access, paratransit transportation providers struggle to provide timely and responsive service. Staff should also be trained to support job seekers on how to manage paratransit services, if they are likely to use them. Refer to the Resources section at the end of this module for additional resources on transportation strategies and options.

The challenges are often even greater in rural areas than those in urban areas. Many smaller communities do not have public transportation options. Staff should be trained to be innovative and explore creative options such as:

- leveraging other area assisted transportation like that for seniors or veterans
- carpooling,
- ride sharing,
- volunteer driver programs,
- taxis,
- Uber or Lyft,
- biking,
- walking, and
- use of social capital and natural supports

Example:

Mike is a person who aged out of high school with very little ambition and expectations for a job or a life outside of living with his parents. He lives in a small town where people who knew him largely had the same low expectations of Mike. Mike got connected to KFI a community service provider who worked to discover his interests and talents. Today, Mike is a homeowner, a small engine repair business owner, a woodworking hobbyist, a church member, a licensed driver, and a dog owner. Mike is currently exploring a new interest in welding, but the nearest class is 20 miles from his home. Mike is not confident enough to drive himself to the class. His support staff had expertise in the use of natural supports, tapped into Mike's community and found someone who signed up for the welding course who was more than happy to give Mike a ride to the class.

Developing Internal Trainers and Mentors to Provide Ongoing Training to Staff

Staff should be supported to understand their role as civil rights advocates, change agents and supporters of the aspirations of the people they serve. As mentioned before, the role of staff has changed, therefore, so should the training and staff development process for agencies. One challenge agencies face when they are hiring many new staff, converting staff to new positions or experiencing high turnover, is making needed training available quickly. While there are many good on-line training courses, certain topics, like Customized Employment, are best done face-to-face with field-based follow-up mentoring. It is extremely helpful for agencies to develop and support highly competent internal trainers.

Mentorship also plays a significant role in staff development. Many agencies use seasoned staff to mentor new staff or staff performing new duties. This approach provides many advantages. The new staff gets hands-on follow up on training they have received from an experienced peer. The new staff have a “go to” peer who may continue to provide support to them as they become more competent in their performance of job duties. Finally, this approach shows provides acknowledgment of the seasoned staff’s knowledge, experience and competence.

Examples:

- As noted in the example cited in Module 2, Michigan’s Employment First “train the trainer initiative”, provided a “train the trainer” ACRE training to managers from agencies engaged in the EFSLMP transformation process. The Associate Director of Community Enterprises of St. Clair County attended the training and developed competence in providing training to others. Subsequently, she was able to provide training to staff internal to her agency. She provided a lesson each week at their staff meeting. This allowed a large number of staff to receive the training over a period of time from someone who was also in an excellent position as a mentor to the staff that received the training.
- A subject matter expert (SME) with expertise in provider transformation provided both training and technical assistance in Massachusetts for a number of years using funds provided by the state. The training was focused on both CIE and the use of Community-based Day Supports as a pathway to employment. After working with several agencies for an extended period, the SME began to offer a train-the-trainer curriculum to select supervisors at each agency on the some of the training protocols she had been using. The supervisors who received the training were then able to provide key training to large numbers of existing staff as well as “on demand” to new staff soon after they were hired.
- Customized Employment staff are scattered throughout a wide geographic area in one provider agency in Maine. Although their initial training was provided face-to-face by expert consultants, the customized employment staff that received that training now spend three hours every other month mentoring each other through discussion of successes and “snags” encountered in their pursuit of customized jobs. They act as peer mentors to one another and provide resources, ideas, and positive feedback in what can be an isolating job.

Rural Perspectives

Finding, training, and deploying staff in support of people with disabilities in and meaningful community engagement in rural sections of the country has its advantages. Word of mouth is often the most effective recruiting practice and small towns provide a more intimate and knowledgeable platform from which to operate. Rural Americans tend to be more self-sufficient, but because they don't have all the necessities at their fingertips, they rely upon their neighbors, family, and friends. Staff who live and provide supports to people living in the same community have a greater comfort level making community connections because of their own familiarity and personal connections. A job developer is often a customer of the employer with whom he's speaking. A direct support staff person is more likely to be a neighbor, friend, or family member of one or more members of the church or club or group that a person supported shares an interest in.

Questions

How does the idea of blurred lines of responsibility dovetail with the best practice of systems that foster expertise?

Staff who provide an array of supports in the person's home, community, and at work must have proper training and certifications that go along with all those roles. For example, direct support staff can be trained and certified in all aspects of employment – as career planners, job developers, and/or job coaches. Foremost, staff can be “experts” in the people they support yet trained and ready to provide whatever the most compelling support needs are.

Do you have any recommendations for training supervisors to be effective mentors?

The best advice is to serve as a great mentor yourself to those people who will be future mentors. People identified as having potential for being effective mentors are good listeners who lead people to discover answers to their own questions. They are interested and curious about alternative ways of accomplishing tasks. They are not afraid to get out of their comfort zone and are always ready to help others. Serving as a good role model for future mentors and giving them opportunities to support other staff, first on a small scale, while providing constructive feedback are effective strategies.

Resources

Staff Competency Resources:

- ODEP Customized Employment <https://www.dol.gov/odep/pdf/2011cecm.pdf>
- APSE/CESP <https://vimeo.com/226478025>
- ACRE <http://www.acreducators.org/competencies>

Transportation resources:

Building Awareness in Accessible Transportation: Transit Assessment Guide for Students, Families and Educators <http://www.nadtc.org/wp-content/uploads/NADTC-Building-Awareness-in-Accessible-Transportation-for-Students.pdf>

Checklist for Assessing the Accessibility of Transportation and Mobility
<http://www.nadtc.org/resources-publications/checklist-for-assessing-the-accessibility-of-transportation-and-mobility/>

Travel Instruction – Familiarization, Orientation and Travel Training <http://www.nadtc.org/wp-content/uploads/Module-4-NADTC-link-version.pdf>

Mentoring Resources:

“Corporate Mentoring Tips: 7 Habits of Highly Successful Mentors & Mentorees,” retrieved from <https://www.management-mentors.com/resources/june-2010-mentor-mentoree-habits>

Job Description Resources:

“What are the key elements for a good Job Description?,” retrieved from <https://jobdescriptionimc.wordpress.com/2012/11/01/what-are-the-key-elements-for-a-good-job-description/>

Module 4. Effective Stakeholder Engagement

Key Words:

Self-Advocates

Family and Caregivers

Board of Directors

Staff Communication

Stakeholder Satisfaction

WIOA

Introduction

Organizational transformation cannot take place in a vacuum. It requires input and involvement from multiple stakeholders in order to obtain their buy-in and ongoing support. The more buy-in and support you have the less resistance organizations will face. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) recognizes the value of stakeholder engagement and specifically addresses it in this legislation.

There are multiple stakeholders who are key to the success of an organizational shift from sheltered to competitive integrated employment (CIE). The purpose of this module is to discuss promising practices for engaging various stakeholder groups, including self-advocates, family members, staff, board members, funders, policy makers, and advocacy organizations. Although the module does not address partnerships with employers and the business community, this stakeholder group is “half of the equation” of CIE and, therefore, will be intricately involved.

By thoughtfully and respectfully engaging various stakeholders, organizations communicate that individuals in these groups are valued as partners whose input and involvement is not only desired, but critical to their success. Given that the decisions and actions of an organization will directly impact their lives, their jobs, and/or their agendas, it is imperative to have key stakeholders involved. As a result of stakeholder involvement, an organization’s services are more likely to meet the expectations of various stakeholders, leading to customer satisfaction. Finally, by facilitating broad and authentic engagement among stakeholders, organizations build a collective voice that can serve to leverage needed changes in local and state policies and practices.

Promising Practices

When to Engage Stakeholders

Have you ever been invited to participate in a decision or event *after* the plans or decisions have been made? If you have a stake in the decision(s), how would this situation make you feel? Would you be more or less apt to buy-in to the plans? Stakeholder engagement has often been addressed later in the provider transformation process, rather than right from the start. It is wise to take time to plan for stakeholder engagement as an organization undertakes their transformation efforts so that engagement activities can be intentionally connected with specific aspects of the changeover process.

Engage How?

Who do you need and want to inform you and assist you in your organizational transformation efforts? Who may support and who may impede your efforts? The chart below provides an example of a planning process that can be used to identify individuals, organizations and/or groups that are or could be involved and identify the desired roles they might play in your organizational transformation process. This is known as a stakeholder analysis. The analysis leads to identifying engagement strategies: How might you engage each person, organization, and group in order to move the change effort forward? Finally, you will want to collect feedback from each stakeholder group and use their feedback to

determine if and how the stakeholders will continue to be involved, as well as their level of satisfaction with their engagement.

Figure 8: Stakeholder Engagement Plan

| Stakeholder Engagement Plan | | | |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Program issue | Proposed activity | Date | |
| Stakeholder organization, group, or individual | Potential role in the activity | Engagement strategy How will you engage this stakeholder in the activity? | Follow-up strategy Plans for feedback or continued involvement |
| | | | |

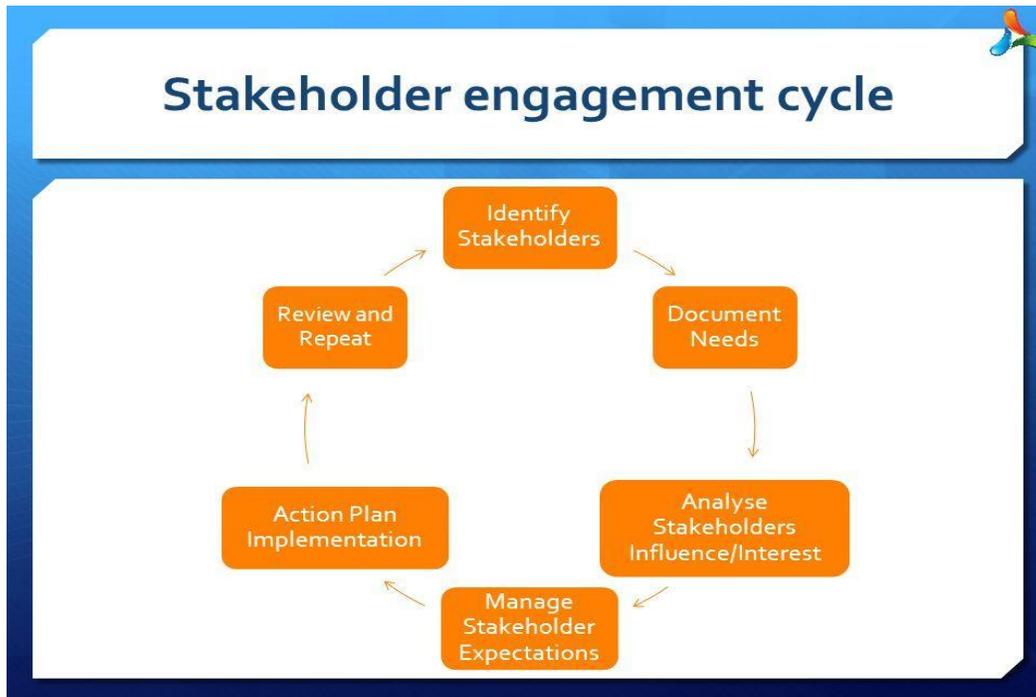


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For example, if you target parents and caregivers as one of your priority stakeholder groups, you can identify many potential roles they might take in your change efforts, including serving as spokespersons for change with other parents, providing information about their son or daughter as a member of person-centered planning teams, participating on the board of directors, advocating to state personnel, etc. Through your interactions with parents and caregivers, you can plan for roles and responsibilities that each is interested and willing to assume. The process is cyclic, as depicted in the graphic below.

Figure 9: Stakeholder Engagement Cycle



Source:

<https://www.google.com/search?q=stakeholder+engagement+cycle+image&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj69LXj-dXbAhUMy1MKHac7ByEQ7AKIQg&biw=1231&bih=553#imgrc=Aon1MNqtdZdZgM:>

In summary, your organization must define the desired scope and context of stakeholder engagement, determine who will be involved and how, develop ongoing communication strategies for maintaining contact, and plan how to support and evaluate their involvement.

Individuals with disabilities, or self-advocates, are your primary stakeholder group. They must be front and center as plans are made that directly affect their lives. We will begin by discussing this stakeholder group, followed by sections devoted to family members, staff, board members, funders and policy makers, and advocacy organizations.

Engaging Self-Advocates

“People don’t treat self-advocates as serious guides, so we miss out on all the messages they give us. They can mentor us, but not in the way we are used to getting mentored. Submit to them and take instruction from them, even if they communicate in vastly different ways.”

-- Michael Kendrick, Kendrick Consulting International

Traditionally, self-advocates have not been given a voice in the types of services they can access, who provides the services, or the quality of those services. However, there are some compelling reasons to engage self-advocates as the primary stakeholder in provider transformation efforts. For example, doing so signals a shift away from the old “care” model (the view that services are here to *take care* of people

with disabilities) to the more inclusive “support” model which views the primary role of employment services as supporting the employment goals of the job seeker. This also aligns nicely with the core values of Employment First. In addition, including self-advocates in the transformation effort ensures that changes in services are informed by those who use them. Finally, if self-advocates are the face of the provider change, they can help secure buy-in from families and other partners.

This is not to say that providers won’t experience challenges when attempting to engage self-advocates in a different way. Low expectations for what people with significant disabilities can achieve means that long-standing attitudes will need to be addressed, even those of agency staff. Also, engaging those with high support needs (e.g., significant intellectual, communication, mental health, and/or behavioral barriers) takes sustained effort and staff time. In an environment where resources are stretched thin, finding time to engage self-advocates in a meaningful way may be a challenge. Ultimately, making self-advocates the main driver of their own services is a key aspect of provider transformation. Below are some strategies to consider.

Make it a priority: Going through an agency-wide transformation is a major undertaking that will likely put a strain on administrator and staff time, as well as on resources. Involving self-advocates may be viewed as a benefit but investing the time and effort to meaningfully involve individuals may not occur. Investing the time and effort, however, is very much worth the time. Consider allocating staff time and designating resources for a small pilot and expand from there.

Share stories: Few things are as powerful for conveying the life-changing impact of competitive integrated employment as hearing stories directly from self-advocates. Self-advocate testimonials can help peers envision a new path, assist families to see possibilities, communicate the positive impact of allocated resources to funders, and inform the community in general to see people in a different light.

Utilize self-advocacy groups and Centers for Independent Living: Employment providers may find it challenging to separate the provision of career development services and self-advocate engagement. This may be due to limited staff resources or lack of capacity and experience among staff members. If so, it would be beneficial to partner with outside advocacy groups. Common partners include local self-advocacy organizations, Centers for Independent Living, and local chapters of The Arc.

Engage self-advocates as peer mentors: Self-advocates can be a valuable asset to help mentor other job seekers and spread the word regarding the benefits of community employment. This goes beyond telling stories to using personal relationships to assist job seekers to make the decision to explore community-based employment options. Peer mentoring has been shown to improve skills such as building friendships, motivation, conflict resolution, and resiliency.¹ Employment providers are encouraged to designate an “advocate coach” or “mentoring coordinator” to facilitate this process.

Walk the walk: The ultimate expression of self-advocate engagement would be a direct hire onto staff. This is not to say that people should be hired solely because they have a disability so a “box can be

¹ The Power of Peer Mentoring retrieved from <http://www2.waisman.wisc.edu/cedd/wrc/pdf/pubs/PPM.pdf>

checked”. However, if the community employment provider field is working towards breaking down the barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities, it should look inward to ask if opportunities are present within their own agencies.

Example: Meet Sylvia

Sylvia is 48 years old and has an intellectual disability. For years she worked within a sheltered workshop at a medium sized employment provider. Eight years ago, Sylvia’s provider decided to close the sheltered workshop and transform its services to community-based employment. As Sylvia’s employment staff began to prepare her to move to a job in the community, they realized that she had demonstrated skills associated with being a peer mentor and self-advocate. This sparked an idea to have Sylvia work directly for the provider. Over time she was given the opportunity to participate in new customer and family orientation sessions, and to give presentations on the importance of employment in her life. Today Sylvia is the Advocacy and Outreach Coordinator for the agency, having been hired directly as a staff member. She is often called upon to speak to groups about Employment First and the benefits of community employment. Her direct supervisor stated that, “Sylvia has an abundance of skills and passion. It took us a while to see how she could teach us, but once we did we became a better agency all around. Her voice is crucial to our success.”

Engaging Families and Caregivers

Strong consideration needs to be paid to the impact of provider transformation on the families and caregivers of individuals who are receiving services. Often, families struggle for years to fashion a set of day services and supports that provide supervision for their son or daughter while allowing the parents to work and earn a living. Any suggested change to this delicate balance is likely to be met with questions and apprehension. The core question will be “how does this affect me and my family?” If providers have not built trusting relationships and effectively communicated intentions, they run the risk of creating detractors instead of champions.

Families and caregivers are usually the gatekeepers for whatever happens in the life of a job seeker with a significant disability. When first faced with the idea of shifting from a sheltered work setting to community employment, there may be multiple fears that come into play – e.g., “What if my son or daughter cannot work 40 hours a week?”, “My child is too vulnerable to use public transportation.”, “My sister is too disabled for what you are talking about doing.”, and “I worked so hard to get her on SSI, and now you want to do this?” are all potential concerns. Providers should understand that these fears come from a real place and are based on multiple factors, not the least of which are experiences with service systems that often fail them.

The good news is that families want what is best for their son or daughter, including having a fulfilling life. Increasingly, families are recognizing that a component of a fulfilling life is meaningful employment. Therefore, it is incumbent upon employment providers to communicate the benefits of community-based employment to families. This also involves acknowledging their fears and taking steps to address

those fears in a respectful way based on a partnership. If providers are successful at doing this, they may be able to tap into families and caregivers as significant champions for the transformation process. Here are some strategies to achieve positive partnerships with families.

Establish a clear communication and regular feedback loop: Providers should strive to establish communication as early as possible with families and caregivers. Provide clear answers to these core questions: 1) Why are we doing this?; 2) What services will change for your son or daughter?; 3) What services will remain the same?; 4) What are the major decisions you as a parent must make, or help your son or daughter make?; and 5) What is the timeline for various aspects of the change in priorities?² In addition, opportunities for regular conversations with families and caregivers should be scheduled, including for example, focus groups or listening sessions with families.

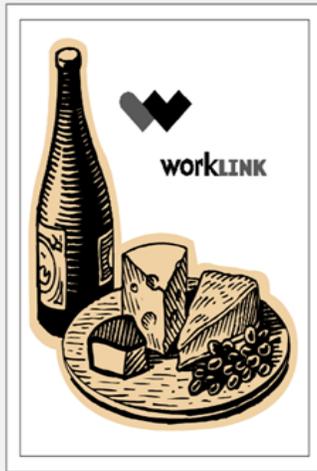
Prepare staff to partner with families, including those from diverse communities: Most disability employment programs do not include training on partnering with families during new staff orientation or ongoing staff development. To partner with families effectively, staff should have the ability to view situations from a place of empathy, respect apprehension, negotiate risk so progress can be made, and navigate other systems (including Social Security benefits) so families get help with service coordination. Specific attention should be paid to working with families from diverse communities - those who may not have experience with “systems” or who view disability expectations in unique ways. If your staff is not culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD), yet they work with CLD families, it is imperative that they not only gain cultural competence, but also explore their own implicit biases. This type of training will result in staff who are skilled at building trusting and productive partnerships with families.

Partner on parent information sessions: Sessions aimed at providing families and caregivers with accurate information and examples of success stories have proven to be a positive outreach strategy. They are particularly effective in reaching families of youth in transition from school to adult life and those with questions about community-based employment. Providers should contact their state’s Parent Training and Information Center or local chapter of The Arc to partner. Partnering with a trusted neutral source of advocacy and information brings credibility to the session.

Utilize committed families and caregivers as your champions: In provider transformation, rallying people who believe in and support the change is crucial. Families tend to listen to other families. Building positive word of mouth through parent champions can help an agency reach more people. Families and caregivers are also a powerful force for change, having great influence with funders and policy makers. They can give impactful testimony and public comment about the need for additional resources and policies related to community employment options.

² Adapted from LEAD Center webinar Service Provider Transformation: From Policy to Opportunity, retrieved from <http://www.leadcenter.org/webinars/service-provider-transformation-policy-opportunity>

Example:



You are invited to WorkLink's

Whine-n-Cheese Night

We need your input to help us to make our program services better.
Please come- bring your thinking caps. Refreshments will be provided.

Monday, March 9th, 2016, 6:00-7:30
WorkLink office, 785 Market Street, Suite 670
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415)979-9520
Call Sara for more information.

WorkLink, a small employment provider in the San Francisco area, hosts an annual Whine and Cheese focus group with families. It gives the agency an opportunity to get feedback on services and generate new ideas on programs. The focus group is facilitated by a neutral party (not WorkLink staff) and conducted in a welcoming atmosphere that encourages a safe and open sharing of experiences and suggestions. “We get much better feedback from our focus group than we do with surveys, which we find to generate a low response rate”, says Sara Murphy, WorkLink Program Director. The last Whine and Cheese event revealed that families appreciated the customized placement approach which resulted in “great jobs” but requested that WorkLink communicate about positive as well as negative events.

Staff as Stakeholders and Preparing Your Staff to Engage Stakeholders

“Once you have committed to provider transformation, you need to understand just how valuable your staff are to its success. They essentially become the bricks and mortar of your organization. They act as an agency’s ambassador to every stakeholder group. They should be professional, positive, discreet when necessary, and hold the internal belief that people with disabilities have the right to live good lives in their communities.”

Gail Fanjoy, CEO, KFI (rural Maine)

For agencies going through a transformation process, it is important that all staff, from the CEO level down to volunteers, understand why change is taking place, and be able to speak to stakeholders about the reasons and benefits. Here are some tips to build a staff team that is prepared to represent your agency during your transformation:

Top-down and bottom-up communication: Let’s face it, some agencies might struggle with maintaining effective top down communication. For example, is what is discussed during board meetings and leadership huddles being conveyed to direct service staff? Many problems arise when key elements of mission, values, and procedures are not communicated to all staff. Make sure to take the time to

develop an ongoing communication loop to gain staff input and clearly communicate reasons for change, staff roles during change, and expectations of staff.

Tie to job descriptions: Modify staff job descriptions to reflect a focus on community employment and stakeholder engagement. Staff tend to refer to job descriptions when there is uncertainty in roles and expectations. Consider including duties such as communicating with families, empowering self-advocates, and collaborating with community partners.

Find those who excel: As with any skill or talent, not every staff person in an agency is going to be good at engaging stakeholders. Find those on your staff who seem to be great at helping self-advocates have their voices heard, or who effectively present the agency's Employment First mission and goals. Give those staff specific responsibilities for engagement activities and have them train other staff as well.

Inform staff about the role of other stakeholders: Community employment programs should have staff that are aware of the responsibilities of other employment stakeholders. Consider bringing in outside speakers from vocational rehabilitation, county social service agencies, Centers for Independent Living, high school transition programs, local Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWICs) and employer groups. Provide opportunities, as well, for staff to learn about the agency's board, work groups, and advisory bodies.

Share the history of the disability rights movement: *Being a part of something bigger:* The effort to create systems where people with all types of disabilities get equal access to community-based employment opportunities is long standing. Staff should learn about the history of the disability rights movement and the movement away from segregated services and sub-minimum wage employment. Staff may then begin to see themselves as part of something bigger – as part of a movement designed to eliminate barriers to choice and self-directed lives. Creating this personal connection to the mission will help staff engage stakeholders towards a common goal.

Engaging Advocacy Groups

Advocacy groups play a key role in promoting equal opportunity for people with disabilities. They include disability specific groups such as the National Down Syndrome Society or Autism Society, constituent-specific groups like Parent Training and Information Centers or self-advocacy groups, including groups operated by people with disabilities themselves, or more general organizations like chapters of The Arc or the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). They can be highly influential in driving and shaping policy. They can also be a partner in getting accurate information to their constituents, fighting for additional funding, and helping service providers maintain a focus on equal access to integrated employment opportunities. Advocacy groups can also have an impact on how a service provider that is not changing with the times and embracing best practices is perceived by the community of individuals and their families. Below are some ideas to help engage advocacy groups effectively.

Respect their role: Advocacy groups have a responsibility to identify issues and needs, express views on funding and policy priorities, translate information, help constituents with navigation of services, and

fight for attitudinal and practice changes that lead to equal access and opportunity for people with disabilities.³ Some of these responsibilities may create tension with employment service providers working under old models or with limited funding resources. Advocacy groups and employment providers can make great partners in driving change, but both sides must respect each other’s roles. Finding points of mutual interest, such as improving transportation options or creating informational videos for a website, is a good place to start.

Utilize expertise for staff training: Advocacy groups can offer training expertise to employment providers. For example, the state Developmental Disabilities Council might provide staff professional development about current and pending legislation impacting disability employment, or the Parent Training Center could provide training on effective communication with families. Taking advantage of these available experts can also help build relationships with advocacy organizations. Don’t forget to reciprocate by offering to present on employment or community-based service strategies.

Outreach to disconnected populations: Providers face a challenge in communicating with all the people who may need information on inclusive employment and the transformation of services. Some populations are traditionally hard to reach. These may be people without reliable internet access or people for whom English is not their primary language. Advocacy groups may be able to help providers reach those who are hard to reach. For example, many communities have culturally-specific organizations with deep connections into an area’s diverse populations.

Example:

Work is Possible!

Understanding the Emerging Landscape of Competitive Integrated Employment

**Sauk Rapids, Minnesota
June 28, 2016**

MN APSE
Kaposia, Inc.
PACER
Dakota County
ARC MN
MN Disability Law Center
MN Olmstead Implementation Office

Minnesota APSE wanted a way to better engage families of youth and young adults with disabilities and promote the benefits of competitive integrated employment in the community. Their provider members had reported interacting with families who were not considering employment as an option due to having youth with high support needs or for fear of losing Social Security benefits. Kaposia Inc., a Minnesota employment provider and APSE member, spearheaded a partnership with several Minnesota advocacy organizations, county offices, and state department to create a parent training workshop.

³ Adapted from Independent Living Institute’s paper The Role of Organizations of Disabled People, retrieved from <https://www.independentliving.org/docs5/RoleofOrgDisPeople.html>

The workshop, titled “Work Is Possible: Understanding the Emerging Landscape of Employment” was designed to provide families with accurate information about, and real examples of, people with significant disabilities in employment. The workshop was such a success that it continues as an ongoing effort. The involvement of an employment provider was vital to the effectiveness of the partnership and resulting parent training. It positioned Kaposia not only as an expert in supporting people to get and keep employment in the eyes of participating advocacy groups, but as a valuable collaborator and champion for Employment First.

Engaging Board Members

An organization’s board of directors may be comprised of founding members of the organization, parents of people being served, and others with a deep commitment to the status quo. The following positive practices have been used reliably to shift the composition, attitudes and beliefs, and decisions of a board.

Help board members develop a shared vision of current best practices: For many, seeing is believing, so a great practice is to visit other providers who support people in CIE, including those with high support needs. Visits, including observations and opportunities to speak to peer board members, have converted naysayers and bred strong supporters in a matter of one day.

Invest in their learning: Staff and self-advocates who have moved from the facility to CIE can share stories with the board. Board members can be provided articles and other resources about Employment First, relevant federal laws, customized employment, and more in order to bring them up to speed.

Bring in outside experts: Consider inviting state or nationally recognized expert to share information with your board. Such experts may help resistant board members to better understand that Employment First is a national initiative and people with significant disabilities are successfully employed throughout the nation and world.

Set board term limits and bring in new blood: Ultimately, if board members do not ‘get on board’, it makes sense to end their involvement at the end of their term, and selectively recruit new board members with the attitudes, beliefs, and expertise that you need.

“We spent a year with the board - brought in outside experts, brought in the state, had a day long retreat, read articles, and made visits to other organizations. When we started transformation, knowing mistakes will happen, it was so important to have our board behind us. If you haven’t brought your board along, you’re on an island. You not only have to pick up the pieces, but you also have to build the trust.”

Karen Lee, CEO, SEEC in Maryland

Engaging Funders and Policy Makers

Funders and policy makers include state agencies (e.g., Vocational Rehabilitation, Developmental Disabilities, Mental Health), as well as state legislators and other government officials. They can make or

break the success of a service provider. They need to know what a provider is doing and why, what barriers a provider is facing, and what the agency needs to be successful. Thus, organizations must be at the table advocating for beneficial changes. Frequent communication and data sharing will assist state agencies and state decision makers to make informed decisions on behalf of service providers undertaking transformation. For more guidance on working with funders see Module 6 of this manual.

Given turnover in state agency personnel, those in decision making positions may not be current in their knowledge. Providers will want to educate state leadership on an ongoing basis about national efforts, cutting edge employment practices, and progressive initiatives undertaken within the state and in other states.

Assessing Stakeholder Satisfaction

What has been the reaction of various stakeholder groups to organizational transformation? Responses may range from “Over my dead body” to “It’s about time!” For example, organizations typically find family members and caregivers who are champions and others who are adamantly opposed (and go underground to resist, or go public – e.g., with a petition). The good news is that this range of reactions is common, and other organizations have moved forward despite some resistance. Organizations can allay some concerns and promote positive attitudes by regularly assessing stakeholder satisfaction. This component should be part of your plan for stakeholder engagement from the start. Key questions to guide an assessment of stakeholder satisfaction include:

- What information do you want to collect?
- What is the best way to collect this information?
- Who will collect this information?
- When will this information be collected?
- How will the information be used to inform decisions and actions?
- What feedback will be provided to stakeholders?

Approaches for assessing stakeholder satisfaction should be customized to each stakeholder group. Some organizations conduct an annual survey (annually may not be regular enough) and focus groups to solicit feedback, similar to WorkLink’s Whine and Cheese Night. Many rely on ongoing communication with individuals via phone calls, emails, and face-to-face conversations.

Rural Perspective

Stakeholder engagement in rural areas requires thoughtfulness and pre-planning, especially as it relates to stakeholder participation in transformation-related meetings and activities. Consider the following suggestions:

If you serve a large geographical area, consider rotating the location of board and advisory committee meetings so that self-advocates and/or parents from various regions can attend. Whenever possible, use technology (e.g., Skype, Zoom, conference calls) to engage stakeholders, rather than only face-to-face interactions.

Explore creating cross-agency disability employment consortia (which can include providers, educators, funders and advocacy groups) to promote brainstorming and service collaboration on individual cases.

This module has highlighted promising practices for engaging various stakeholder groups, including self-advocates, family members, staff, Board members, funders, policy makers, and advocacy organizations. Organizations in transformation need to plan for stakeholder engagement from the start and systematically support and assess their involvement. Such investment will result in greater buy-in from each stakeholder group, increased alignment of services with the desires of those receiving services, and better outcomes and overall satisfaction.

Questions

How do you convince individuals in the 45-60-year-old age range that community-based employment is for them, especially when they are comfortable in their current routine?

Start with those who want to work and allow reluctant participants to learn about work from those who are getting jobs. As more and more individuals leave the workshop, older workshop participants may express interest in at least leaving the workshop for part of the day or week for various community activities. Person-centered Planning can be a great tool for pulling together those who love and support the self-advocate, and identifying gifts, talents, interests, and support needs. Ultimately, the question that this team must answer is “When we no longer need a facility, how do you want to spend your day from the time you get up until the time you go to bed – doing what and with whom?”

As we evaluate stakeholder satisfaction surveys what are effective strategies for responding to negative feedback, and how do we respond when different stakeholders have very differing responses to steps we are taking as a provider

It’s most effective to evaluate and respond to each stakeholder group and each concern separately. Explore with the specific stakeholder or group of stakeholders to fully understand their concerns and issues, where the apprehensions or concerns come from, and engage in problem solving and negotiations to pinpoint areas of mutual agreement. For example, if they are concerned about transportation, you might present scenarios to determine what steps might make them more comfortable. We encourage executive directors and other senior leadership to reach out to stakeholders, through personal phone calls, to assure stakeholders that their voices are being heard and to obtain further input and mutually beneficial problem solving.

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Resources

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Module 5. The Importance of Effective Advocacy for Better Policy: Collaboration, Coalitions, Communities of Practice, and Capacity Building at the Local Level

Key Words:

Collaboration

Advocacy

Public Policy

Best Practices

Community of Practice

Stakeholders

Introduction

This module will guide leaders engaged in transformation to accomplish systems change through effective collaboration in public policy and best practice.

Transformation is exciting but challenging. With so much to accomplish, leadership may be tempted to focus all of its energy on understanding the new landscape and working with internal management to set and pursue achievable goals. However, joining forces with colleagues who share goals and perspectives may be the most efficient and effective way to accomplish these objectives.

As important policy decisions are made about Employment First and how it will be implemented, providers, as key stakeholders, must have a seat at the table. When providers work together with self-advocates, government, and community partners, they can shape the emerging system in a way that ensures both best practice and sustainability.

Providers also can better advance their work by joining with colleagues to share resources and to advance best practices through shared knowledge. While providers located in a geographic area may be competitors for funding and referrals, during times of systems change, everyone benefits from joint learning and practice.

Collaboration takes many forms. It may take the form of a coalition of people who come together informally to work together on furthering a common agenda. Coalitions can be time limited or ongoing and tend to be focused on a specific set of issues and concerns. A collaboration may take the form of a community of practice (CoP) through which a group of people who share a craft and/or a profession exchange information and knowledge on an ongoing basis. A CoP can evolve naturally because of the members' common interest in a particular domain or area, or it can be created deliberately with the goal of gaining knowledge related to a specific field. A collaboration might also take the form of a more formal association to advance joint work such as a consortium.

This module will offer promising practices and examples of collaboration in two major areas: 1) collaboration to achieve policy changes including both a broad policy agenda and specific funding and regulatory changes; and 2) collaboration to share resources and knowledge.

Collaboration works! We offer here multiple examples in which Employment First policy objectives were only achieved through effective provider collaboration, which included sharing of resources, and expertise.

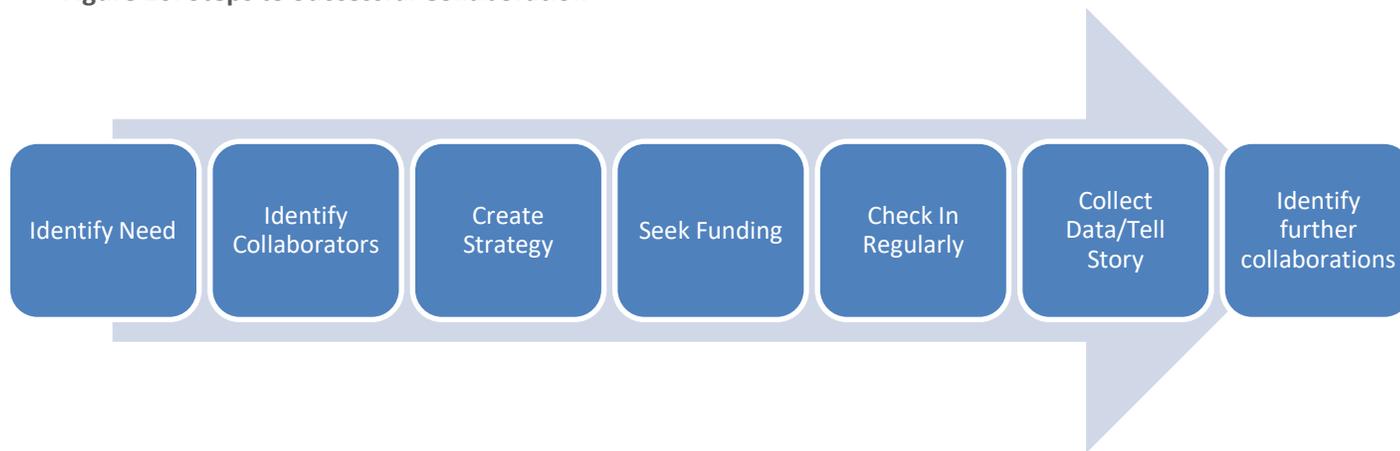
Promising Practices

Key Steps to Successful Collaboration

Collaborating toward policy or practice goals takes careful planning. It is important to carefully think through goals and plans so that all partners agree on what they are trying to achieve, how they are going to achieve it, and what each member's role will be. It is equally important to put clear processes in

place for moving the work forward and monitoring the work. We lay out here basic steps that can lead to successful collaboration.

Figure 10: Steps to Successful Collaboration



Identifying the Need for Collaborations: An agency will want to determine if collaboration is a useful tool for moving forward its agenda. This requires evaluating agency needs, strengths and resources to determine if the agency can accomplish its goals effectively without joining forces with other providers. Potential collaborators also will want to evaluate whether collaboration in a particular area will be cost-effective and efficient.

Identify Collaborators: Initiate a dialogue with potential collaborators who may be experiencing similar issues. Leaders may begin these discussions at conferences, provider association meetings, trainings, or during informal meetings and phone calls with colleagues.

Create a strategy for addressing the issue: Each collaboration will require its own strategy but there are some basic considerations in developing collaborative strategies. Collaborators will want to pinpoint the most important issues to tackle and define very specifically what they are requesting from government, policy makers, or funders. They will want to determine where research is needed to support advocacy or to implement specific plans for a community of practice or other project.

As with any transformation effort, it's useful to research similar ventures to help flesh out plans and learn from others' experiences. Talking with colleagues from other counties, cities and states about similar collaborations is helpful. Internet research can provide an abundance of leads. Look for similar collaborations in the disability field, but also in other employment work, such as work with ex-offenders, seniors, or youth. Consulting with subject matter experts can be an efficient way to develop a plan.

Seeking funding if needed: Some collaborations can sustain themselves through resources that already exist. Advocacy efforts or a community of practice may be sustainable by members sharing coordination responsibilities. However, additional funds may be needed if partners have neither time nor the specific expertise to make the effort effective. Funding can also enable a community of practice to bring in outside consultants to facilitate the group and share their knowledge. Experts in the policy arena may be

of use since they are familiar with legislative processes and rule-making procedures. They often have important contacts to capitalize upon as well.

Keep on Track with Scheduled Meetings and/or Check Ins: Members of a collaborative are usually very busy, so it's easy for them to drift away from the group and then momentum is lost. Setting regular meeting times such as a conference call the first Friday of the month, scheduled in advance, is important to ensure a collaboration is sustained. It may be important to set deadlines or milestones to achieve and share them with all collaborators. Even if collaborators are not sure how long it will take to achieve a step in a project, it is better to set a deadline and move it back than to keep it open-ended.

Collect data and tell the stories: Tracking results can easily be put on the back burner when collaborators are busy operating core programs at their agencies. Designating one member to take responsibility for gathering data, or to remind members to input data on a shared tracking sheet or system can be a useful strategy. This responsibility can be rotated, if no agency is funded to take the lead role in the collaboration.



Evaluate opportunities for further collaboration: Providers and other stakeholders will want to capitalize on successful collaborations to expand their Employment First efforts. Collaboration in one policy area may lead to thoughtful discussions around a related issue. A collaboration geared to training could incorporate ongoing mutual support and mentoring. Collaborators may find that a policy issue, e.g., assistive technology or transportation, emerges as a joint area of concern, and a consortium initially designed for training or practice, could begin to focus on policy issues.

Collaborations may look different when providers work together on advocacy for policy compared to when they are developing consortiums to implement best practices. The order may be different depending on the context and the issue or need being addressed. Still, in order to obtain an effective result through collaboration, providers will want to step back and take a thoughtful look at how to effectively structure and move this joint work forward.

Collaboration in Public Policy

Public policy is defined as any rule that can lead to action by government. Legislation, Regulations, and Memorandums of Understanding are all examples of public policy. Public policy supporting Employment First comes in many forms. Some states have issued Employment First Executive Orders, or Memorandums of Understanding, while others have created legislation and strategic plans to implement Employment First. The style of public policy has made less difference than the content of the policy. In some states, legislation simply states that people with disabilities should be given an opportunity to work, where in others, the funding and steps to support the work is specifically spelled out. In states where the Employment First public policy lacks implementation details, the opportunity for collaboration to create these details exists.

Collaboration during the systems change process such as creating or editing regulations, recommending collaboration across multiple systems or proposing legislation brings people together who have different perspectives and networks. In anticipation of collaboration, providers will want to review current federal and state policy and legislation, a selection of which are highlighted in the resource section below. We suggest following the pertinent steps in Key Steps to Collaboration, described above, when working with colleagues to implement or change Employment First policies. Below are potential areas for collaboration to advance Employment First public policy goals.

Figure 11: Examples of Public Policy Collaboration

| Alignment of Policies | Streamline Policies | Change Policies | Creation of New Policies | New Funding Paradigms |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process in various systems • Policies in various systems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlining opposing policies • Processes in one system that are inconsistent with another | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate change in policies as a result of evidence-based practices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New policies that support Employment First practices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding that supports best practice paradigm • Funding that allows for everyone to work |

Alignment of Policies: Local education, vocational rehabilitation, provider, and developmental disabilities agencies can collaborate on the process for students to transition from school to employment. An example of such collaboration may be an agreed upon discovery process or shared format for a visual resume.

Streamlining Processes: Agencies may spend a great deal of time sharing information about themselves and conducting the intake process with no fiscal outlay for this complex process. Agencies in a local jurisdiction could create a proposed streamlined process and share it with the funding sources to utilize.

Change Policies: Many states still have in place a funding and documentation process for supported employment but not customized employment. Collaborators could present proposed changes to existing processes that are reflective of these customized employment practices.

Creation of New Policies: With the changes presented in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), states are required to create an implementation plan. This is an opportunity for collaboration with state and local leaders that work within the workforce system.

Examples: Maryland Legislation and New York Rates

- In 2016, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Ken Capone Equal Employment Act. This law phases out the use of subminimum wage certificates in Maryland by the year 2020. The process of moving this priority into law took significant collaboration, focus, and visionary leadership.

People On the Go of Maryland (POG), the premier self-advocacy group in Maryland, began discussions with its membership and peers about the need to eliminate the use of 14(c) certificates in Maryland two years prior to the introduction of the legislation. POG sought out two strong legislators in the Maryland General Assembly who agreed to sponsor the bill. POG then sought out other advocates to join their campaign. The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) of Maryland, Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN), the Maryland chapter of The Association of Persons Supporting Employment First (APSE), the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, and Maryland Works (a provider network) all were early joiners to the consortium. These primary consortium members worked with legislators to compose a bill that would end the payment of subminimum wages to people with disabilities in Maryland. After the legislation was drafted, consortium members advocated with their unique network of legislators to get a wider expanse of co-sponsors.

After legislation was introduced, the initial coalition widened its membership bringing in statewide provider and advocacy organizations, not all who were initially supportive of the legislation. Significant negotiations about key provisions to the legislation began. Since this was a “hot topic”, the group needed to be thoughtful about how they aired their differences, especially during meetings with sponsoring legislators. By negotiating differences of opinion away from legislators, the broadened coalition was able to publicly demonstrate a united front, which strengthened their position. During the legislative session, the legislators heard from constituents who did not support the legislation and suggested it be tabled for a year and turned over to a workgroup for study. The coalition quickly responded with a commitment to work with those voicing concerns. The coalition also invited anyone who had a difference in opinion about the legislation to join the group where they could air their concerns. As often seen in such coalitions especially with such a lofty goal, leadership for the group was questioned, but the original members steadfastly maintained that leadership must remain with People on the Go.

Ultimately, the Maryland General Assembly heard the bill in committee where there was opposition by a few provider agencies, but coalition members testified in favor. The bill passed with some compromises that emerged during negotiations. What is difficult to document in this manual is the amount of collaboration and negotiation which occurred during this six-month process. Phase out of subminimum wages moved from an idea into law through the continued vision, and commitment by all members of the group to negotiate an acceptable outcome for everyone.

- In 2014, New York State’s Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) began restructuring supported employment service funding from a monthly tiered payment to billing based on 15-minute increments. After OPWDD presented the new proposed structure to provider associations, several providers, experienced in supported employment services, recognized that the proposed rates were inadequate and saw the need to educate provider associations and government partners. A group of providers joined together to review both government and provider association analyses, analyze sample cost data, survey staff of provider agencies to chart non-billable time, and present suggested changes to service definitions.

These agency leaders followed the key steps described in Section 1. Collaboration emerged through informal discussions following provider association committee meetings. Leaders negotiated differences and arrived at positions upon which all providers could agree. Providers developed surveys to gather data, divided up the research into rates in other States, and set timeframes for collecting and analyzing data. The leaders developed a joint strategy, agreeing to

funnel information to provider agencies, while requesting a separate voice, as experienced providers, within the larger advocacy effort.

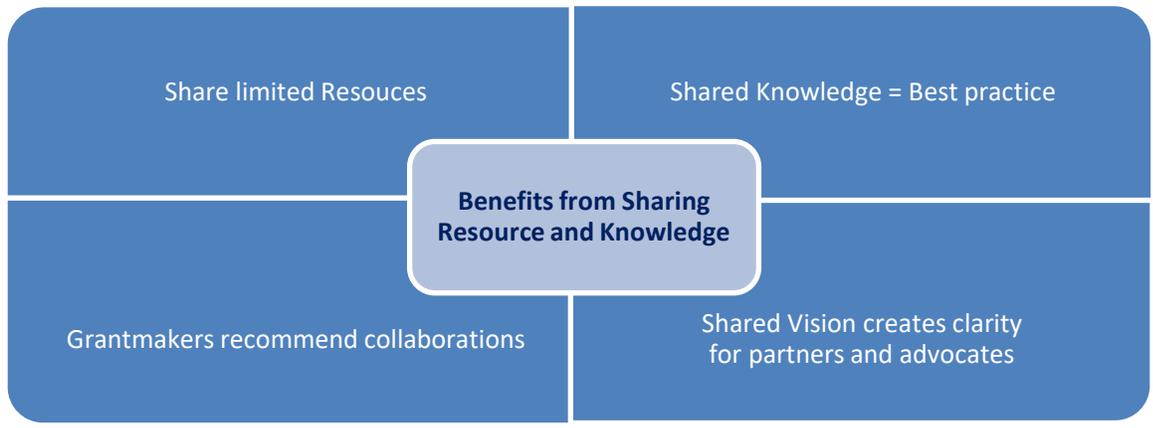
The data and analysis presented to government partners had a significant impact on both the hourly rate for services and the service definitions. The rate that was developed reflected the costs of providing quality services.

Collaboration to Share Resources and Knowledge

Provider transformation requires investments in a myriad of areas: learning best practices; maintaining ongoing training; developing partnerships with businesses, communities, schools and other stakeholders; reaching out to individuals and families; developing safe community-based standard operating procedures; and expanding funding. Joint investments through collaboration may be cost-efficient and result in more effective and innovative work.

There are four very important benefits in collaboration to share resources and advance providers' knowledge as illustrated, in Figure 14. First, it enables collaborators to make the most of limited resources by sharing these resources. Second, it promotes best practices by ensuring that providers share successful ideas and strategies. This shared knowledge can range from a specific support or communication strategy that worked for a specific individual and might work for other individuals, or a general strategy, e.g., the use of social media platforms for job development. Third, collaboration can result in more coordinated and effective outreach to stakeholders including community partners. Fourth, funders, particularly foundations, appreciate collaboration and partnerships. Adding in a collaborative element to a grant proposal, may well be what gets providers the funding to advance important parts of their Employment First work.

Figure 12: Benefits from Collaboration that Share Resources and Knowledge



Potential Areas for Collaboration

Providers’ experience reveals that certain objectives are ideal to accomplish through collaboration. A collaborative might focus on one or several objectives.

Figure 13: Areas for Collaboration Examples

| Practice | Examples |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Learning new and emerging Practices | The best way to learn about new practices is face-to-face from practitioners and consultants who have pioneered this work, often in other geographic locations. By combining resources, staff from a number of agencies can learn these emerging practices together and support each other as they begin to put these practices into action. |
| Costly Training and Mentoring of Staff | Ongoing workforce development is expensive for an existing or new practice. As states roll out new training requirements, providers benefit by sharing the cost of bringing a trainer into their local area or by identifying a local experienced provider who can train staff at multiple agencies. |
| Communities of Practice for Shared Learning | A community of practice (CoP) enables a group of providers committed to expanding competitive integrated employment opportunities to share their ever-increasing expertise. Managers can meet regularly to discuss supervisory strategies. Employment specialists and job developers can share their success and challenges as they take individuals through the discovery process of customized employment or develop jobs |
| Research to support change | Providers can work together to become knowledgeable about the current landscape, policy initiatives in other locales, and to think together about what policy changes would enable them to do better work or achieve sustainability. |
| Transformation strategies | When attending conferences, workshops, or webinars that focus on transformation, leaders should keep antennae out for others who are thinking about the same issues as they are tackling and consider developing a community of practice around these issues. |
| Employer Engagement | Collaborations around outreach to employers have been successful. Employers complain about the numbers of job developers who are knocking on their door and are looking for reliable single points of contact through which they can access a variety of job candidates. Collaboration in this area requires careful planning to minimize confusion for the employers, individuals, and job coaches. See example below. |
| Transition and Internship Projects | New vocational rehabilitation funding for work readiness, paid work experiences, and internships, provide excellent opportunities for collaborations. Providers, in numerous States, are reporting successful partnerships with local school districts, employers, and community colleges |
| Writing Grants | Foundations and government funders recognize that their funding may have a greater reach if multiple partners participate in the objectives. Providers can work together, with community partners, with provider associations, and/or with schools to develop grant proposals aimed to achieving Employment First objectives. Grants are an excellent way to get new pilots up and running. |
| Technology | Providers can collaborate in the purchase or development of software, or in accessing expertise to learn effective ways to use technology. We know that technology can be an effective tool in helping us deliver community-based services. (See Module 1 for the importance of technology) |

Building Community Capacity

Creative collaborations with community partners, and/or other providers can create vibrant opportunities for community engagement. In New York City, two provider agencies are partnering with multiple community groups in Harlem. Opportunities include: tending a community garden, stewarding little libraries in the park, co-sponsoring a community festival, and attending local art classes.

Making Collaboration Work

Collaboration will benefit from attention to the Key Steps to Successful Collaboration described in Section 1. Collaborators, seeking to work jointly to share resources and knowledge, may want to focus particularly in these areas:

Evaluate whether funding is needed to sustain the work: Collaborators will want to evaluate whether extensive coordination is required above and beyond what individual members can provide. A community of practice may be able to rely on an active membership to sustain itself. A collaboration for resource development, employer engagement, or program development, however, may require paid staff. A training collaboration may need funding to pay SME’s fees and travel expenses.

Assign facilitator and tracking roles: In collaborations without paid staff, assign specific people to schedule meetings and events and to track outcomes. To minimize the impact on any one person, it is advisable to divide up duties and rotate among members.

Establish ground rules: In any ongoing collaboration, set ground rules to ensure that collaborators respect colleagues’ ideas and work, and do not, impinge upon others’ businesses, violate confidentiality or create confusion for community partners. This is particularly important for a coalition focused on developing resources (e.g., employer engagement, internships) or sharing resources (training, technology).

Examples: New York City Consortium for Customized Employment and Maryland Consortium for Direct Support

- Job Path Inc., a practitioner in customized employment, was concerned that it could not respond to the demand and hoped to engage more agencies in customized work. The agency also observed agencies had difficulty maintaining staff trained in customized employment techniques due to turnover. Finally, Job Path wanted to expand the business community’s understanding of customized employment and offer employers a single point of contact for customized job development.

With these three needs in mind, Job Path reached out to fellow providers to gauge their interest in a consortium that could be the focal point for work on these mutual interests. Ten agencies expressed interest, including several providers who had launched their own small pilot efforts in customized employment and needed support to sustain their efforts. Job Path approached a foundation that had expressed interest in funding employment work. This consortium required funding to support the training component of the project and to hire staff to lead employer engagement collaboration.

The agency constructed a clear plan for the consortium with specific targeted outcomes. The consortium would have 10 provider partners and would reach out and develop employer partners committed to customized employment. Job Path, as lead agency, would offer trainings, offer follow up one-to-one mentoring, and facilitate learning forums. A full-time director would schedule trainings, track data, reach out to employers on behalf of the coalition members, and encourage collaboration among members.

The consortium has now been in operation for five years. Ten agencies are now well versed in customized employment strategies. The consortium offers at least 12 trainings and forums each year, has 30 business partners and achieves at least 35 placements a year. Job Path provides ongoing training to new staff of these agencies but is now able to tap into the expertise of experienced staff at three other agencies. Consistent with the key steps for successful collaboration, the consortium tracks trainings, forums, business partnerships and placements, and tells its story.

- Employment outcomes in Maryland had become stagnant, and little professional development around customized employment was available. Two executive directors came together and conducted research to find out what other states were doing about the lack of workforce development opportunities. The executive directors identified a model of customized employment training being conducted through a collaboration with the Arc of Pennsylvania and Marc Gold and Associates that was showing promising results. By combining classroom training with follow along mentoring for training in Discovery, Job Development, and Systematic Instruction, the model offered more comprehensive training in the process of customized employment than any existing training available.

Seeking money to pay for this intense comprehensive training was the next step. After searching through an online foundation source, the two leaders identified the Kessler Foundation as a good match and the team began the application process. They recognized that to have a lasting impact on state policies and practices around training and to achieve greater provider community buy in, they needed to add more colleagues to the consortium. Three other agencies were ultimately included in the process forming the Maryland Customized Employment Consortium. A total of five provider agencies and the state Development Disabilities Administration (DDA) made up the consortium. The grant was awarded, and the training and mentoring began. Because of the training, the five partner agencies had an average of 12% increase in CIE outcomes over the course of the two years of the grant. Due to the success of the partnership and outcomes, the consortium, along with a new partner, have begun to work with the Maryland DDA to pilot additional competency training models for direct support staff working in all domains in Maryland.

Rural Perspectives

Most of the promising practices mentioned in this chapter are applicable in urban, suburban or rural settings. In a rural area, there may be a smaller number of providers in the disability field with whom to collaborate or you may have limited contact because they are operating in a location far distant from your headquarters. Here are some suggestions for expanding the opportunities for collaboration:

- Partner with other workforce focused, non-disability agencies such as the Veterans Administration, Welfare-to-Work programs, local high school or college career placement offices.
- On some issues, you may benefit from partnering with for-profit businesses in the area. If focusing on workforce issues (such as passage of a minimum wage increase or paid sick leave), recognize that this issue will impact these other businesses as well. Find businesses with shared concerns through local chamber, community meetings or through personal networks.
- Reach out to colleagues associated with professional organizations such as ANCOR, APSE, TASH and AAIDD who are also working in the rural area. In addition, connect with the [Rural Institute at the University of Montana](#) to identify others that may have experienced the same issues and learn from their work.

Questions

How can providers successfully establish trust and negotiate differences, since they may also be competitors?

Creating ground rules or guidelines for collaboration with others in your collaborative in advance is key to establishing trust. It is advisable to memorialize these guidelines in writing. Trust can break down over time as new agency representatives become engaged who may not have been parties to an original informal non-written agreement. It's also advisable to create a short orientation to the collaboration for new representatives and a more formal orientation for any new members. Acknowledge from the very start that there will be differing issues. In advocacy efforts, as data is collected and policy positions developed, collaborators need to create opportunities for honest discussion of differing perspectives. Collaborators will want to discuss their differing needs but also recognize that they may agree on some key issues and differ on others. Make time to discuss these differences as advocacy efforts continue and those differences may be diminished.

How critical is it to include self-advocates in the public policy process?

Lawmakers appreciate receiving information in a concise manner that gives them the resources they need to make decisions. Having that information presented by people who are impacted by the public policies is even more powerful. As seen in Maryland's subminimum wage law, having the issue brought to legislators by self-advocates is a very effective way to get legislators' attention and respect. Finding a way to partner with self-advocacy groups or include self-advocates in collaborations to impact policy change is a win-win for all involved.

How can employers be involved in collaboratives?

One possible way to include employers is as members of a local Business Advisory Council (BAC), which can assist employment professionals in providing contacts, developing relationships and sharing ways to network within specific industries. The employers gain access to a pool of qualified employees and networking opportunities with other employers. Your local area may already have a collaborative formed. Your Chamber of Commerce may also be willing to take the lead on such a collaborative. Using existing resources and organizations will streamline the process.

References:

[Ken Capone Equal Employment Act, 2016 \(MD\)](#)

Resources:

Federal and State Policy and Legislation

- [Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services Settings Rule](#)
- [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#)
- [Olmstead Act](#)
- [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#)
- [State Transition Plan for Settings Rule](#)
- [American Job Centers](#)
- [State HCBS Waivers](#)

Organizations Listed for Collaboration

- [American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#)
- [American Network of Community Options and Resources \(ANCOR\)](#)
- [Association of People Supporting Employment First \(APSE\)](#)
- [TASH](#)

Module 6. Financial Planning for Transformative Change

Key Words:

Financial Planning Team

Financial Reports

Agency Budgets

Forecasting

Rates

Piloting

Braiding and Blending Funding

Service Definitions

Provider Manuals

Costs

Facility Based Contracts

Advocacy

Introduction

It quickly becomes clear to provider agencies that truly embrace transformation that it touches every part of their organization. Mission, vision and guiding principles can and often do change and drive the process of transformation. The service delivery array may change, as may some of the customers receiving support. Transformation will have an impact on the staff that agencies hire, as well as the preparation and supervision provided to them. Schedules for people receiving support will become more individualized and flexible. Desired outcomes will be focused on competitive integrated employment (CIE) and services and supports directed toward achieving that outcome. Addressing all of these variables will take considerable time and effort. Interwoven into everything else is the biggest undertaking for most agencies, financial planning during a period of change and uncertainty. In this module, the authors will explore promising practices in financial planning for agencies engaged in transformation.

Leadership will want to base financial planning on well thought out long term and short-term transformation goals, pull together a financial planning team composed of both fiscal and program managers, and ensure that the team has the financial data necessary to forecast financial results and accomplish effective planning. The team can then develop a financial plan that evaluates all potential funding sources, pinpoints a strategy for expanding funding based on CIE and community-based services, and charts out a sustainable phase out of facility-based contracts. We stress another aspect of thoughtful financial planning; planning helps a provider define the need for advocacy around funding issues and can support advocacy efforts with cost data and financial research.

This dynamic financial planning process we describe here will support programmatic change and enable the team to push forward its transformation agenda.

Promising Practices

Develop a Transformation Plan to Provide a Clear Path to the Future and a Framework for Financial Planning

Establish Long-term Transformation Goals

Strategic or transformation planning is discussed in depth in the [Provider Transformation Manual, Pilot Version](#), Module 2. Agencies that do not yet have such a plan should review that module and the corresponding webinars for guidance in developing plans. For others who already have plans, hopefully long-term transformation goals were developed as a part of that process. These long-term goals should be bold and visionary. Establishing these goals helps the entire agency and all stakeholders clearly keep in mind where the agency is headed. Providers must be thoughtful in establishing these goals. They are what the agency will return to time and again to keep the momentum going and all stakeholders in sync.

Example:

The Arc of Tuscaloosa, Alabama Long-Term Transformation Goals:

- Individuals have jobs in competitive integrated employment.
 - Individuals receive pre-employment training in the community, outside of a facility.
 - Individuals are independent and actively participating in all aspects of society.
-

Develop Short-term Objectives

While the long-term transformation goals are visionary and will take some time to accomplish, there are many more specific and actionable short-term objectives agencies will begin to pursue almost immediately. Implementing these short-term objectives may have an impact on the agency's finances. To prepare for this impact, agencies must engage in financial planning as a part of the strategic or transformation planning process. Agencies will continue to adjust financial plans as they learn more about options, become more skilled at providing new services, and find additional opportunities. This process tends to be a dynamic one, requiring movement back and forth between developing, implementing, and modifying financial plans.

Example: Community Enterprises in St. Clair County, Michigan

Community Enterprises of St. Clair County, Michigan established short-term objectives that would facilitate the transition of the agency from facility-based services to CIE and meaningful community involvement. Since transitioning people out of the workshop who had been there many years was an issue they were grappling with, they decided to implement a new admissions policy. Their short-term goal was "closing the front door" to new referrals to facility-based services. It was clearly stated as, "CESCC will cease accepting referrals to facility-based services as of X date". Implementing this goal had obvious financial implications for the agency. CESCC started aggressively seeking new referrals for competitive integrated employment from their vocational rehabilitation agency to offset the impact.

Create a Robust Financial Planning Team and Process

Development of the financial plan is best done using a team process. Often, financial planning in agencies is done from the top down without the direct involvement of the managers who must adhere to the plans given to them. Best practice requires the involvement of managers who know what is happening in the day-to-day operation of their programs and departments. If they are involved, they have much greater ownership and commitment to accomplishing the outcomes laid out in the financial plans developed. A forward thinking will ensure that administrative or finance staff learn about the new services or the expansion of existing services their program staff want to pursue and why. Correspondingly, program staff are provided with financial training so they can better understand and monitor financial performance in their area of responsibility and can play an effective role in financial planning for the agency.

Examples: St. John's Community Services, Washington, DC and Mid-Michigan Industries' Story of Transformation, Part I

- St. John's Community Services, headquartered in Washington, DC, made a commitment to educate the agency's finance department staff about the services the agency provided and their program operations staff about finance and the functions of the finance department. New finance department staff were required to go into the community and observe the services being provided as a part of their new employee orientation. Correspondingly, new program management staff were required to meet with key finance department staff to learn about their roles and expectations as a part of their orientation. Key members of both the finance department and program operations also attended quarterly day-long training and problem-solving meetings together. Some of the training and discussion topics were operations oriented while others focused on financial topics such as the use of excel workbooks in budgeting, developing accurate budget projections, and monitoring financial performance using monthly financial reports. This approach helped everyone feel a part of the team and effectively diminished the development of any "us versus them" attitudes.

It is important to note that the financial planning process in transformation will inevitably be a dynamic one. As agencies begin to envision where they want to be in the future, assess where they are today, and develop a roadmap to achieve new outcomes, they will inevitably discover their current resources and aspirations do not match up. Agencies must stay flexible in the planning process and be willing to amend plans to meet their current situations, look for new opportunities, engage in grant writing and fundraising activities to acquire additional funds, and develop advocacy plans to seek the funding they require from their funders.

- The new executive director of Mid-Michigan Industries spearheaded a comprehensive strategic planning process that incorporated multiple financial strategies. Financial planning began with a vision and operational plan. The agency had adopted a process to systematically move people from the facility-based workshop into either a CIE pathway or community-based day programs. Staff would work with those individuals who chose the pathway to CIE, in small groups and individually to explore vocational interests. Specific staff were selected to be Employment Champions to engage in this discovery process. Senior leadership reviewed funding to develop a financial plan that would sustain this work.

Composition of a Financial Planning Team

Effective financial planning in an agency requires a balanced and committed financial planning team. Who should sit on the planning team? The CEO, COO, CFO or their equivalents must be involved and provide leadership and guidance through the process. It is good practice to involve other key staff who will serve different roles in planning and may come in and out of the process. As noted above, key staff like the program directors managing the agency's services, are essential to the process. Directors of Human Resources can also be important members of the team. They will know the status of staff recruitment, staff turnover, salary scales, benefits and other important personnel related information. Directors of Information Technology should also be involved at some point since the agency will inevitably experience some level of decentralization and require new means of communication, data

collection, etc. Smart agencies that also provide residential supports, include Directors of Residential Supports in the planning process. Residential supports are often highly impacted by people working. Those impacts are often financial, so it is good to have them at the financial planning table from the start. The same is true for Directors of Transportation at agencies that provide transportation to some or all of the people they support.

Have the Correct Information Available for Financial Planning

Key Financial Planning Information

The planning team needs certain materials before attempting to develop new plans. Most agencies budget based on historical budgeting and financial performance information. That approach works well when an agency is remaining stable in the types of services it provides, the people it supports, and the conditions under which those supports are being provided. Agencies can extrapolate from performance data to budget for new growth in an existing service area. Figure 16 describes the types of financial reports and data the team will need to develop a financial plan that supports transformation.

Figure 14: Financial Planning Information

| Item | Description | Purpose |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Agency budgets | Both current (with year to date actual performance vs budget) and prior year budgets (end of year actual performance vs budget) | To identify costs and revenue Assess agency's financial performance currently and in the recent past, identify trends (positive and negative) |
| Monthly financial reports | Monthly report comparing actual financial performance to current budget | Analyze the performance of individual programs or services against budget projections |
| Strategic or transformation planning documents | Documents that detail extended plans for the agency which will involve some change in the way services will be provided | Identify changes that will be made, services that may remain the same and activities that will be undertaken to achieve the agency's transformation goals |
| Timelines for implementation | A timeline developed as a companion to the strategic or transformation plan | Indicates when activities will initiate, and/or new resources or reallocation of current resources will be required |
| Pilot information | Results from pilots, both financial and qualitative | Information on operations, program costs, needed funding levels and optimal size to cover costs |
| Rates (with any restrictions) | Current rates, anticipated rate adjustments and restrictions on units of service, like annual caps on service, if any Rate composition information | Rate information is needed to project revenue. If a mid-year rate adjustment is planned by the funder, it will be important to include that adjustment in the projections |
| Rules and regulations | Current service definitions, contract requirements, over-arching service requirements | Define the parameters within which services can be provided |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Referral information and staff performance data | Numbers of referrals received by service and funder | Understand the flow of referrals to specific services, including the months of the fiscal year they are received, helps predict revenue flow. Staff productivity information can help project referrals needed to support staffing and to ensure that staff costs do not exceed revenue |
| | Data on staff productivity | |

Forecasting

As noted above, often budgeting is done using historical data. However, if an agency has no history or very little history providing certain services, then they must rely on financial forecasting. [Provider Transformation Manual, Pilot Version](#), Module 3, discusses the benefits of piloting new services. Please refer to that document for a comprehensive explanation about the importance of conducting pilots. One of the most important objectives of piloting is to gain an understanding of the resources that will be required to provide the services being piloted. If an agency has the opportunity to actually try out providing a new service, it will gain insight into costs such as appropriate staffing levels, amount of management needed, travel or transportation costs, communication and other IT costs, as well as necessary revenue and required levels of staff productivity to cover costs. Since pilots rarely cover their costs completely due to the lack of a sufficient scale to fully cover indirect costs, financial planners will also want to forecast the rate of growth needed to achieve appropriate economies of scale.

Develop a Financial Plan Based on Comprehensive Analysis of All Current and Potential Sources of Funding

Engaging your team in ongoing exploration and analysis of both current and potential funding sources is key to developing a sustainable financial plan for transformation. As providers, we are very busy overseeing current operations; as transforming organizations, however, we need to step back and ensure that we do not miss funding opportunities that will enable us to sustain new community-based operations. Leadership will want to encourage *all* levels of staff to research new potential sources of funding, but also to review current funding streams to maximize revenue and provide more individualized community-based services.

Analyze Current Service Definitions and Contracts

Providers of facility-based services are well schooled in using current contracts to support this facility-based work. They may not be as knowledgeable about how their current funding can be used to support the movement toward competitive integrated employment and community inclusion. Agencies will want to revisit current funding sources to see how those funding streams can support discovery, job development and support for people in its facility as well as for the young people, transitioning from school.

- A careful look at their current funding, has often revealed to providers that far more can be covered than initially thought. For example:

- A provider in Michigan reviewed its contract with the local managed care agency and found that ongoing job coaching was already included in its contract.
- Providers in Pennsylvania consulted with SMEs and recognized that they could use day funding to engage in discovery with individuals while they waited for a determination of eligibility from the VR agency.
- Employment staff at an agency in Maryland was pulling individuals out of the agency's day programs to work on pre-vocational activities such as resume development and interviewing skills. The staff were not billing any funding source during this time. When questioned why they were doing this, they realized that they could bill these activities to pre-vocational funding.

Research Additional Funding Sources

Provider Transformation Manual, Pilot Version, Module 4, details numerous funding streams that are used to support competitive integrated employment and community-based supports which can be a guide for taking an inventory of possible new funding sources. Attached to Module 4 as well is the inventory of possible funding sources compiled in the Employment First Technical Brief 3 which can also be accessed through the Lead Center at http://www.leadcenter.org/system/files/resource/downloadable_version/Employment_First_Technical_Brief_3_0.pdf.

Providers can use these resources as a launching off point for additional research. It's a good idea to carefully read State's service definitions and accompanying provider manuals to learn what each funding stream might cover. Program managers will want to take the time to discuss funding with colleagues, government funders and consultants familiar with federal, State and local sources. Agencies should not assume, however, that the way in which colleagues have so far used a funding source is the only way to use that funding or that the guidance local government liaisons provide is the last word about the scope of a service definition or contract provision. Leadership may want to reach out to regional and state coordinators, as well, to ask whether a funding stream can be used in a new and innovative way. Knowledge and ideas do not always trickle down from the State to the local level. In addition, official interpretations can change but are not always communicated to local government staff. Remember, government leaders are also very busy.

Example:

Some years ago, New York State rolled out an employment training program, under which the State's DD agency would pay people's wages for internships, and fund on-the-job support, for an internship period when potential employers had a good faith belief that after a successful training period, they could move the person onto their payroll. One provider in New York City was unable to take advantage of the program because there was no funding to support its employment specialists to reach out to potential employers on a consistent basis. The agency could only take advantage of the program if its staff happened to find a likely business, through VR funding that could not immediately hire a job candidate but thought they could hire down the road. In a conversation, the State DD Regional coordinator, made a casual comment suggesting that the State DD agency might

be authorizing supported employment funding for provider job development and outreach to potential internship site. After thinking about the comment, the agency staff reached out again to the Regional Coordinator with pointed follow up questions and learned that indeed this funding was now available.

Braiding Funding

Providers will want to think about how to weave together several services from a single funding agency or services from several funding agencies to create sufficient revenues to support their work. There are many examples of braiding different funding streams in [Provider Transformation Manual, Pilot Version](#), Module 4.

Project the Phase Out of Facility-Based Contracts

Providers may have difficulty determining how they will make the shift from reliance on the income from facility-based contracts to the income generated from community-based services with very different revenues, expenses and margins. While there is no single way to make this shift, the principal remains the same. As contract revenue is being reduced, revenue for CIE and other community-based services must be increased. Providers must include timelines for various activities in their transformation and financial plans. These timelines should indicate when facility-based contracts will begin phasing out and eventually cease and when the revenue generated from them will begin to diminish and ultimately be lost. Agencies must be prepared in advance with the capacity to provide CIE, community-based pre-employment and community-based wrap-around services for the people previously working on those contracts. They should have procedures in place for promptly making referrals to the new services for these people and processing the referrals they receive in a timely manner so people supported don't experience a gap in service and the agency has new revenue flowing in immediately.

Sometimes, the new CIE and other community-based services are not yet developed to scale when the transitions occur and therefore may not yet be profitable. In addition to providing new services to the people shifting off of the facility-based contracts, agencies may seek to increase referrals of people for CIE and other community-based services their agencies have not previously served, assuming the agency has the capacity to absorb these new customers. This may improve profitability and generate sufficient funds to cover some of the cost of starting up the new services and offset the loss of contract revenue. An agency may also seek new streams of funds for services they have not tapped into before but could easily provide without significant investment. It may also be necessary to raise some funds through grants or fundraising activities to provide more revenue during the transitional period.

Ultimately, most agencies find themselves faced with the challenge of reducing costs incurred to provide facility-based services in order to shift resources to community-based activities. It is important to emphasize that any new or expanded services should not be facility-based, or no progress may be made on transformation. Once people start moving from facility-based work, agencies should avoid "backfilling", meaning moving new people into facility-based services or having people employed part-

time going back to the facility when they are not working in CIE. If an agency chooses to do this, they may not be able to reduce expenses on the facility-based side. Many transforming agencies review facility requirements and if less space is going to be required, they may choose to lease space in their facility, sell it and become facility-free or move to a smaller space to cut costs. Other cost reduction strategies include finding efficiencies in operations, streamlining administrative services and partnering with sister agencies to share expenses like staff training, timekeeping and payroll processing.

Example: Mid-Michigan Industries’ Story of Transformation, Part II

As MMI was beginning to redirect the agency’s efforts towards transitioning the people served by the agency in facility-based work to CIE or other community-based supports, the leadership team recognized that continued expansion of its pre-employment transition services would advance employment for more students and generate revenues to help sustain the agency’s transformation of its sheltered facility. Resources were channeled into expansion of these programs. The leadership team also reviewed capital assets and realized they could lease out a section of their offices. They anticipate that the lease will cover the full remaining capital costs.

Advocate for Enhanced Funding with Well-Researched Proposals

An agency’s financial planning may reveal that better government funding is necessary in order to accomplish transformation effectively. Government has many competing priorities and providers may need to make a compelling case for the type and level of funding required to successfully find jobs, and support people to have fully inclusive lives.

Example: Mid-Michigan Industries’ Story of Transformation, Part III

MMI recognized the need to advocate with the community mental health agency (CMH) for funding to support its transformation agenda. The agency successfully advocated for and was granted funding for ongoing job coaching funding. It was more challenging to obtain funding to support career exploration and discovery. The agency’s current rate for people (based on a 1:12 ratio) was inadequate to support more individualized career exploration and discovery. The agency advocated with its CMH for a rate based on a 1:4 funding ratio. The CMH has not yet approved the proposal, skeptical of the efficacy of more individualized career exploration. MMI decided to support people at the lower 1:4 ratio and to renew its request once it had shown results. Increased revenues generated from the pre-employment transition services funding enabled MMI to make this investment. MMI also modified the request for enhanced pilot funding for four individuals to test out and demonstrate the efficacy of the model. Eventually that pilot funding was granted.

Providers will want to prepare for advocacy through focus on the following issues.

Understanding the Benefits of Funding Mechanisms

Funding mechanisms impact both the kinds of services providers can offer and the populations they serve. There are three basic funding mechanisms now in use that may be used separately or in tandem. Fee for service, (monthly, daily, hourly or quarter hour billing) is still used in many day and residential services, and for many employment services. Milestone funding rewards providers for reaching various stages in a process, with 90-day retention receiving the highest payment. Both fee for service and milestone payments have recently been coupled with outcome payments that offer providers additional payments for achieving certain level of outcomes. For example, providers may receive additional or larger payments for placements of people who work more hours, or at higher wages.

Providers may consider how well current funding mechanisms match the type of programming they offer, and advocate for a system that will better support that work. A milestone system that rewards placements may not provide an incentive to work with individuals with the most significant disabilities. On the other hand, a provider might appreciate the flexibility that milestones offer for staffing. In milestones, revenue doesn't depend on the number of staff hours used enabling providers to achieve outcomes through fewer job developers paid at higher wages. A provider might suggest supplementing the milestones with job coaching hours for individuals with significant disabilities. Outcome payments may disadvantage providers working with people with complex disabilities. Providers might seek separate enhanced funding mechanisms for that group of individuals.

Analyze the Current Rates' Ability to Cover the Costs of Providing Quality Services

Providers can benefit from a forthright exchange of information with their funders so they can evaluate if components of current rates adequately capture the cost of doing business. They will want to encourage their government partners to share this information with them, highlighting the desire to work together to ensure a rate that can support the CIE outcomes that both government and providers want.

It's even more important for providers to clearly present their costs to government partners.

The basic cost components in developing any rate, whether hourly, milestone (or combined with outcomes) is detailed in Figure 17.

Figure 15: Cost Components of Rate Development

| Cost Component | Definition |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Direct Support Cost | Calculate direct support costs by looking at appropriate average wage and fringe for the staff people doing the day to day work. |
| Program Management | Allocate costs for coordinators, managers who train and supervise the day to day staff. These costs should include salary and fringe for middle level and senior program managers. |
| Other than Personnel Services (OTPS) | Non-personnel costs required to deliver the service. (e.g., office rent, utilities, telephone, tablets) |
| Agency Administration | Overall administrative costs allocated to this program. |

In analyzing costs, keep in mind some guidelines that will help ensure a meaningful rate that will adequately support the work.

Adequate Direct Support Wage Current funding may not enable a provider to pay direct support staff a wage that is high enough to recruit effective staff. In that case use a suggested wage rather than the current insufficient wage in analyzing costs. The direct wage should average the wages of all levels of staff participating in the work. For example, if employment work includes discovery, development, and job coaching, calculate the average wage based on all levels of staff, or if staff with degrees or certification are paid at a higher rate.

Program Management Costs Rates have not always adequately reflected the cost of the middle-level managers who supervise staff. We now know that staff who engage in discovery, develop jobs, support people with complex disabilities on jobs, interface with employers, and develop community-based day supports need experienced managers to train and guide them. Providers new to this work can consult with successful and/or experienced providers or consultants to project program management costs.

OTPS Field based staff will need the tools to keep in touch with their managers, employers and the individuals they support including cell phones, tablets and electronic records software. Do not forget to include the cost of these tools in the cost analysis.

Capturing unbillable time Employment services involves significant amounts of non-face to face time that may not be billable under current service definitions. This may include job development, phone calls with employers to resolve problems, discussions with families to resolve challenges, and travel between different worksites. There are also administrative tasks associated with the work, required staff meetings, supervision time, vacation and sick time and some inevitable loss of productivity during each day. These are legitimate costs that should be accounted for in the rate.

Research and Collect Data

To prepare for rate negotiation, providers may want to gather information from colleagues about their costs. They also will want to compare their proposed rate with rates in other regions or States to illustrate that the proposed rate is not an outlier. Research on rates in other States can start with information compiled at <http://drivedisabilityemployment.org/home>. This site provides information by State, including VR rates, and a separate compilation of HCBS rates. This information will also show the variety of mechanisms through which States fund employment and community-based day supports. This can inform both provider analysis and the proposal developed for negotiations with funders.

Educate Funders

It may be important to educate funders about how CIE and community-based opportunities are developed and sustained. Funders, particularly those who are crunching numbers and developing rates, may not understand how much time staff spend traveling between work sites, how much time is spent on the phone with employers and families, and how important guidance is from program managers in order to obtain and sustain outcomes. It also is useful to illustrate how much lower the cost per individual is when a person is working, even if rates are higher, because the number of hours of support

are significantly lower and will fade over time. (Preparing a Presentation to Funders, [Provider Transformation Manual, Pilot Version](#), Module 4).

Understand Funder's Agendas

Knowledge about the pressures and objectives of government partners can help focus negotiations on key points of agreement between a provider and the funder. Through informal discussions, provider association meetings, formal state plans and presentations providers have access to the concerns of these partners. If decentralization of facilities is the primary goal, illustrate how rates and flexibility will help achieve that goal more quickly. If low job retention has been a State or regional issue, illustrate the effectiveness of customized job development and job coaching when accomplished by well-trained and supervised staff. If cost is an over-riding concern, focus the presentation on a comparison of full-time facility-based supports and periodic supports by employment staff.

Advocacy requires research, persuasion and persistence. It is an ongoing process. We encourage providers to develop ongoing discussions with government partners, taking every opportunity to meet with them informally and formally. It's important to keep up the discussions even if the first attempts to expand or enhance funding are not successful. It's also useful for providers to keep government partners abreast of achievements and progress. This can influence future discussions, bolsters credibility and predispose government funders to listen more sympathetically to provider concerns.

Each agency will want to consider the usefulness of these suggested financial planning strategies and focus on those that will best support its own strategic plan. As noted at the beginning of this module, starting with the strategic or transformation plan is essential. Evaluating resources, analyzing funding streams, and advocacy are all key to moving the agenda forward.

Example: Mid-Michigan Industries' Story of Transformation, Part IV

MMI's executive director is carefully measuring results to demonstrate to their funder that career development in small groups and through discovery will result in referrals to the VR agency and employment outcomes. They are tracking referrals from their enclaves and facility-based program to their employment team, and also tracking individual's ability to identify jobs in which they are interested and self-exploration of interests, strengths and skills. After only eight months, the number of people from these programs now enrolled in the employment program has increased dramatically from no enrollees to 14 individuals. Over the next months, MMI will continue to track these results as well as number of job placements. MMI has had a good year both financially and programmatically. Through careful analysis of funding sources, advocacy, and review of capital assets, it has been able to both sustain operations and implement a program model that is encouraging the flow of people into CIE.

Rural Perspectives

Providers in rural areas may have particular issues to think about as they develop a sustainable financial plan.

Providers who cover a large rural area may have a number of funding partners who may offer different rates and funding definitions. It will be important to look at each of these funding sources to evaluate the best opportunities for investing staff and resources. One geographic region may offer better funding and be a better place to focus expansion efforts. These expansion efforts may help support work in less well funded areas and provide data and results to obtain better funding in other regions.

Decisions about downsizing capital costs need to be developed with an eye to the particular challenges of providing community-based supports in large geographic areas with limited public transportation. In some cases, a community hub may be helpful as a central place for people to meet before they begin a day out in the community. Often hubs can be developed in public spaces like recreation centers, churches or shopping centers with little or no cost. In some cases, space may need to be leased. If that is deemed necessary, it is important to ensure the locations are in the mainstream of community activity rather than isolated from it. In other cases, a hub will not be useful, and the agency will want to rely on local staff, with cars, auto insurance, licenses and proof of driver safety credentials, to pick up individuals and accompany them to local community-based activities.

In preparing cost information for funders, rural agencies will want to capture any significant Other than Personnel Services (OTPS) costs related to meeting these transportation challenges. This will include, for example, reimbursement of staff for gas and mileage, lease of neighborhood space, the cost of driver safety classes.

Questions

Our HCBS waiver funder tells us that there is no money available to increase our rates but our costs keep going up. What can we do?

There is no magic bullet and providers will want to work on multiple fronts to influence the conversation. You may want to create partnerships with other providers, families, and self-advocates to advocate together with a local government entity or to reach out and educate state legislators. Alternatively, you may want to suggest a pilot that will provide a higher individualized rate for an enhanced level of service for a smaller group of more complex group of individuals. You may want to suggest a workgroup of government and provider partners to explore funding mechanisms that will help providers perform the work more cost effectively.

Our Vocational Rehabilitation agency seems to have pigeon-holed our agency as one that only serves people with the most complex challenges to employment. We want to branch out and provide employment services to a broader population of people with disabilities. How can we get them to make these referrals?

It is not uncommon for this to occur. Counselors sometimes come to see agencies as having different kinds of expertise and make referrals accordingly. It's important to reach out to the counselors and share employment success stories you have had with people of varying abilities and barriers to work. Make clear that you think you can do a good job with a diversity of job seekers and perhaps share some of the strategies you will use. If you succeed in getting them to give you an opportunity, make sure you do a great job and offer excellent customer service. Market your success back to that counselor and others if you work with different counselors or VR offices. If you achieve the outcomes they expect in a reasonable timeframe, they will begin to view your capabilities differently and hopefully begin to refer a more diverse group of job seekers to your agency.