

For ACICIEID Panel March 24, 2015

By

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I have a state implementation perspective, both as partner and as lead in grants designed to increase workforce access for job seekers with disabilities. I've been co-director on a number of DOL Workforce Investment Grants (WIG), Disability Program Navigator (DPN), and Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) grants was co-director on Virginia's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG).

I don't see the workforce system as the main driver for creating Competitive Integrated Employment opportunities, but they do have a role.

For me, the overarching theme is Enlightened Self Interest for systems and partners with an emphasis on Enlightened... and TRUST, both among partners and from job seekers with disabilities

A. Systems Change for System Change:

Identification of similar priorities across grants:

- An approach to systems change, as we did with grants such as the Disability Program Navigator, identifying similar priorities across grants.
- The overlapping objectives of various DOL grants strengthened involvements, allowing various agencies to approach those objectives in different ways, while maintaining momentum.
- The alignment of systems and of grants determines how overlapping objectives can strength involvement.
- With overlapping grant objectives, resources can be concentrated towards common priorities. Examples are MIG and DPN having a focus on increase use of work incentives.

Employment Networks

- A focus on creating Employment Networks in a one-stop. At the end of DEI Round 2 we had six ENs with 271 tickets and \$422k in revenue. 12 people left the SSA roles. One of these WIBs is leading an effort to seek WIPA grant in one part of VA going in with three other WIBs; all were WIG, DPN, or DEI or a mixture. I am not sure if they will be successful, but they see the importance.

Including job seekers with disabilities in the discussion

- Using DOL grants to get the Workforce Investment Board Committee (WIB) chair, the Community College Vice President for Workforce Development and the state Economic Director together to discuss the value of job seekers with disabilities in a diverse workforce.

- Some of the training initiated through the DEI grant became part of the Workforce system's training modules.

B. Collaborations on Policy at state level:

The Workforce System and ADA:

- Created a statewide policy to ensure an American Job Center is ADA accessible before it can be as a comprehensive one-stop. Common projects within Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), the MIG, WIG, DPN and DEI grants and Workforce System worked together. It was important to think of organizational readiness and whether the workforce system was able to provide services to job seekers with disabilities.
- Universal Design/Assistive Technology:
Used Universal Design as a way to conceptualize our way forward, with common sense applications such as lowering a portion of the counter to provide access for persons in wheelchairs and organizing client better flow for all. Disability etiquette training can help staff understand why materials need to be placed at lowered counter height, and how to make staff comfortable interacting with clients with disabilities. Job seekers with disabilities will not come nor readily disclose their disabilities if they do not feel welcome or understood.
- Assistive Technology (AT) in one-stops and supported staff training on its use. This was part of MIG and in all DOL grants and is an ongoing issue. We use experts from VR system to be a part of the solution and to provide training to workforce center staff.

Collaboration with our Executive Management Committee:

The Executive Management Committee, initiated with the WIG and MIG grants, is made up of WIB Executive Directors and state agency program staff as well as advocates to advise on implementation and strategy. This group has stayed together through all of our DOL grants. The continuity of membership demonstrates the value of the group to its members as a forum for policy discussion as well as an exchange for information they would not hear elsewhere.

C .Business Engagement across systems as an example of enlightened self interest

Champions events

- VR, WIA, Economic Development, Vet Services, and DPN were all involved in a successful Champions event. We were able to attract 60 businesses to Champion's event in one DPN site. Two years later under DEI, we were able to attract 120 attendees of which 85% were businesses. The keynote speaker was a major employer of persons with disabilities.

D. Trust:

- The system and its clients have to trust that each partner will do its share. Examples:
 - In DEI, we were able to get beyond funds of last resort to first dollar down. We used a common focus on creating a successful job seeker to get partner buy in. We increase number of individuals disclosing their disability in several grant location from 3% to 15 % We were able to increase participation in the state for new participants from 3.3% to 5.6%. We increased active participants for persons with disabilities 3.1 to 4.9%. Exiters increased by 2%.

- Our Common Screening Tool is an example of trust across systems and was developed through MIG, DPN, and DEI grants and involved the Virginia Community College system, Virginia Employment Commission, and the WIB Directors.

- Creating a Support Structure for SSA Beneficiaries included the following:
 - The certification of Work Incentive Specialists Advocates(WISA) and vending their services
 - The development of our WorkWORLD work incentives benefit analysis web-based tool
 - Training and incorporating DRCs as part of the WISA services out of one-stops

E. Finally: Policy issues at Federal Level

If we are to be creative and innovative, please be sure to tell monitors and fiscal/audit staff that this is the expectation. Provide flexibility for use of funds, such as our “First Dollar Down. Give states access to better data. Encourage data sharing across state lines.