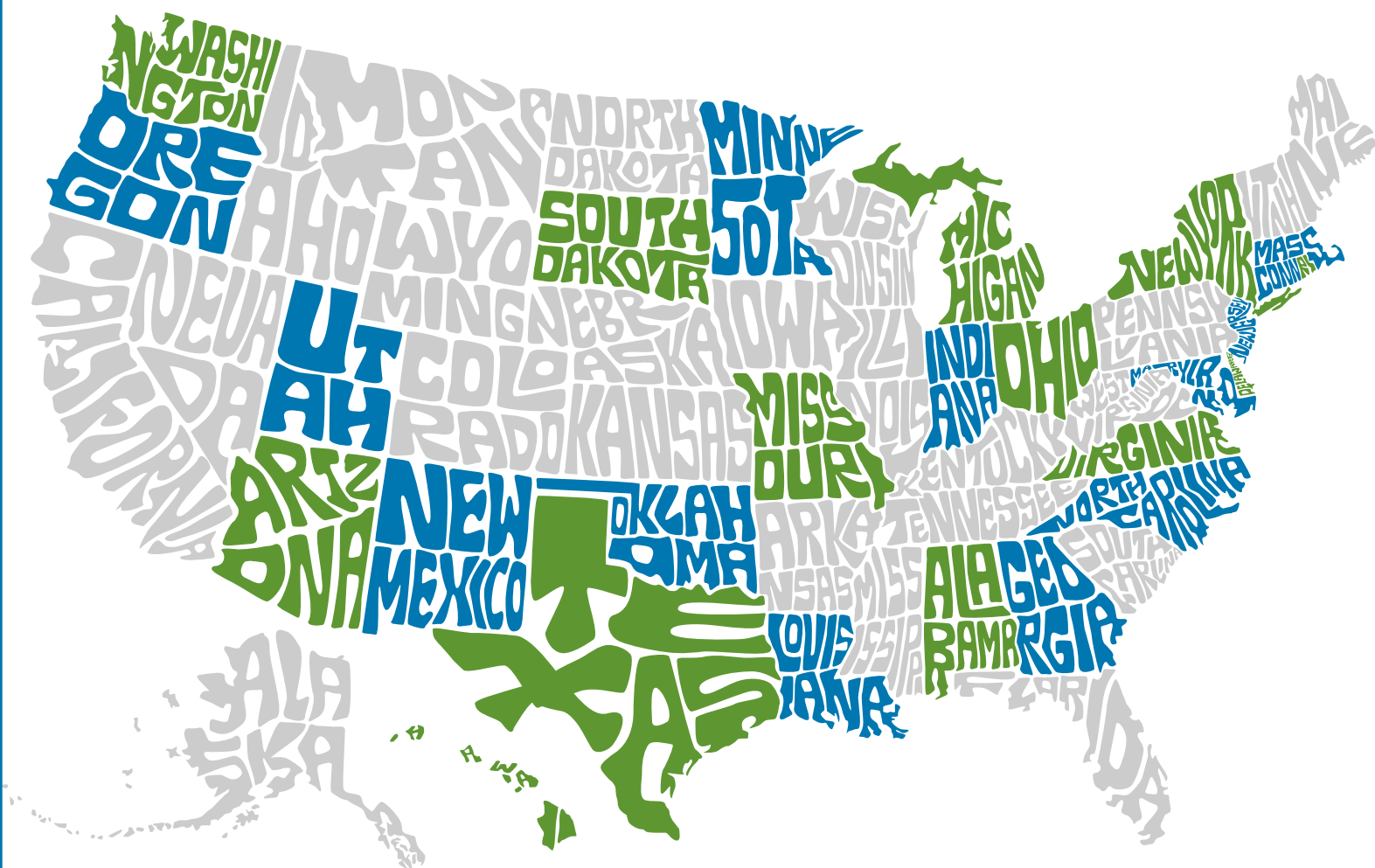


# Initiatives and Activities to Improve Integrated Employment Outcomes

Accomplishments Report  
2022–2023



State Employment  
Leadership Network



# Accomplishments Report 2022–2023

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## State Employment Leadership Network

The SELN is a place for states to connect, collaborate, and create cross-community support regarding pressing employment-related issues at state and federal levels for individuals with developmental disabilities.

The SELN was launched in 2006 as a joint program of the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services and the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston.

UMass  
Boston



NASDDDS

National Association of State Directors  
of  
Developmental Disabilities Services

[www.selnhub.org](http://www.selnhub.org)





***“The power of imagination makes us infinite.”***

***—John Muir***

As we close year 17 of the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) membership we do so with thanksgiving. Many valuable practices in our day-to-day work have returned – our annual meeting occurred in person, we resumed travel to many states, and individuals across the country thrived in community-based activities.

The recent pandemic, rife with restrictions and closures, forced our IDD system at all levels and across all roles, to devise creative, new approaches. Temporary practices served to plug difficult gaps but were not originally intended for long-term adoption.

The return to normalcy, a story repeated in societies all across the world, is playing out in our country’s IDD field as well. The decades of foundational efforts offer state systems a stability to fall back in to for the short-term. But the disruptive experiences have created a unique opportunity to regroup. Our path forward will now be based on how well our public systems of support apply the last few years of lessons learned, not how well they repeat old ways of doing business.

It is a story worth telling, and we are proud to share a small portion of that valuable tale in these pages. We would love to hear what you think!

Suzanne Freeze, ICI

Wesley Anderson, NASDDDS

## MISSION

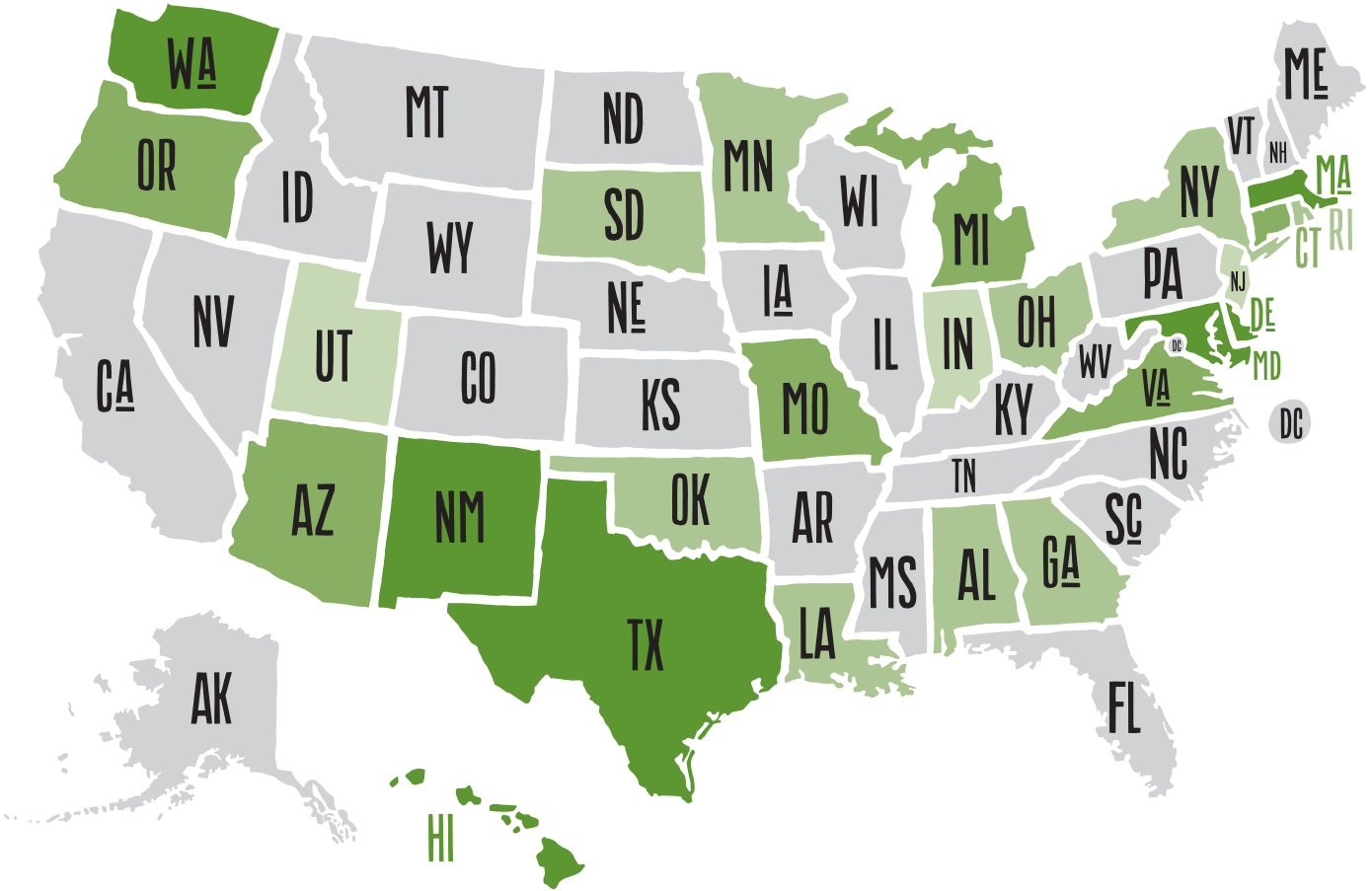
In coalition with state IDD agencies, the SELN seeks to transform employment policy, strategy, and expectations to increase the number of individuals with IDD engaged in their communities and working in competitive integrated jobs in the general workforce.

## VISION

SELN will be a catalyst for systems change to ensure opportunities and access to competitive integrated employment and community engagement for all individuals with IDD.



# SELN MEMBER STATES—CURRENT



**7**  
states  
16+ years

**6**  
states  
13–15 years

**9**  
states  
9–12 years

**3**  
states  
5–8 years

Delaware  
Hawaii  
Maryland  
Massachusetts  
New Mexico  
Texas  
Washington

Arizona  
Connecticut  
Michigan  
Missouri  
Oregon  
Virginia

Alabama  
Georgia  
Louisiana  
Minnesota  
New York  
Ohio  
Oklahoma  
Rhode Island  
South Dakota

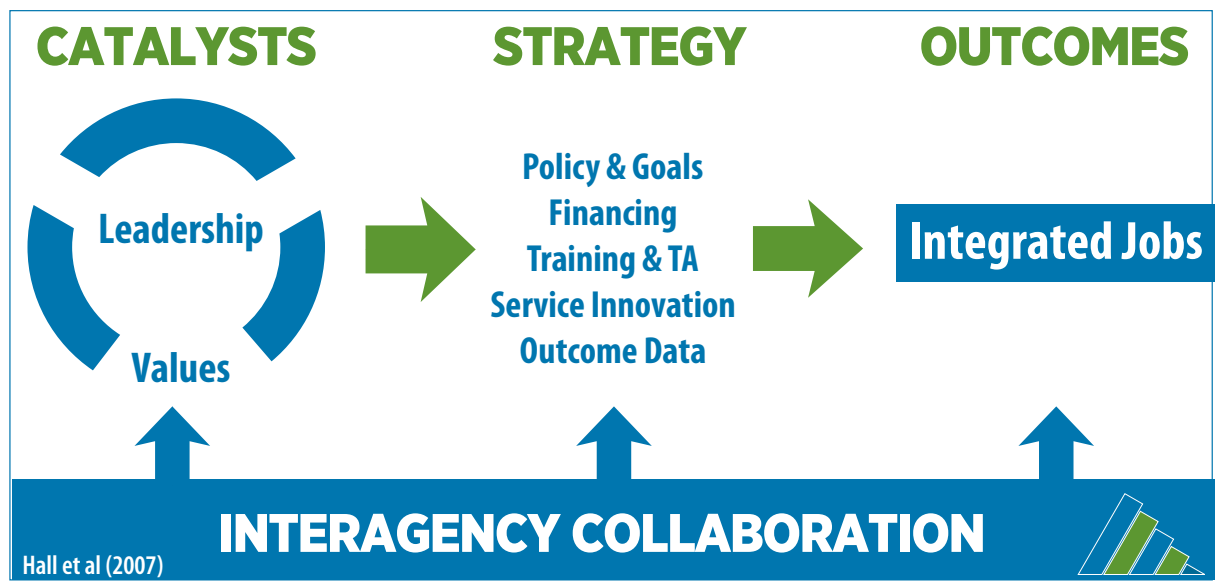
Indiana  
New Jersey  
Utah



# HIGH PERFORMING STATES FRAMEWORK



The High Performing States Framework, developed through extensive experience and research conducted within states, is used to guide the SELN’s strategy for system improvements. The elements represent practices and outcomes to develop and sustain high performing integrated employment systems. This graphic demonstrates the factors that, when working together, can lead to better integrated employment outcomes. It is the dynamic interplay of all the elements that leads to long-term systems change.



## ELEMENTS OF HIGH PERFORMING STATES EMPLOYMENT SYSTEM

### Leadership.

Clear and unambiguous commitment to employment in individual community jobs, from top leadership through all levels in the system. Local and state-level administrators are identifiable as champions for employment.

### Strategic Goals and Operating Policies.

Employment is identified as the preferred outcome in state IDD policy, and is supported by program goals and operating practices that are clearly designed to achieve that objective.

### Financing and Contracting Methods.

The outcome of employment in integrated community jobs is emphasized and supported through the state’s resource allocation formulas, reimbursement methods, and rate-setting practices.

### Training and Technical Assistance.

Investment in the development and maintenance of a strong, competent workforce. Skill-building emphasizes an expectation for employment across job coaches and developers, supervisors, key employment staff, case managers, job seekers including young adults who are still in school, and families.

### Interagency Collaboration and Partnership.

Building relationships with advocates, families, businesses, civic groups, and key state and local agency partners (vocational rehabilitation, education, mental health, state Medicaid agency), with the goal of removing barriers to employment supports.

### Services and Service Innovation.

Service definitions and support strategies are structured and aligned to facilitate the delivery of employment supports to all individuals with IDD regardless of the intensity of their needs. Non-work supports encourage individuals to become involved in typical adult life activities, building employment skills, such as community service and volunteering opportunities.

### Performance Measurement and Data Management.

Comprehensive data systems are used to measure progress, benchmark performance, and document outcomes. Information is gathered on key indicators across employment and other related systems and is used to evaluate and track results, inform policy, and improve provider contracts and service agreements. Data are shared with other state agencies to report results and improve quality.





A key benefit of SELN membership is the opportunity for state IDD systems to explore issues beyond their state boundaries, to network, and to exchange informational resources. The SELN provides a platform, as the engine of change, to cultivate cross-systems outcomes. The aim of the SELN is to work with states to more effectively improve system structures and increase opportunities for individuals with IDD to enter competitive integrated employment regardless of support needs. The SELN serves as a trusted advisor, sharing advice and guidance on key strategic decisions to improve employment outcomes and increase community-based options for individuals during their non-work time.

A critical aspect of providing technical assistance to SELN member states includes hosting conversations of significance. Our technical assistance focuses on sharing the knowledge and resources most needed to improve community-based integrated employment. What follows is a brief description of key discussions during the 2022-2023 membership year as part of our overall technical assistance efforts.

### Core events and ongoing activities



- » Annual business meeting with state leads to set upcoming membership year agenda
- » Annual meeting with member states to network and explore systems change
- » Monthly network meetings to share relevant and timely discussions and resources
- » SELN Hub online community to access active dialogue and posted materials
- » Routine development of written and online products
- » Recurring calls with member state teams on strategic priorities (typically monthly)

## CALL TO ACTION! FOR MEMBERSHIP YEAR 2023-2024

***What are your state's top employment priorities and plans to reach those goals?***



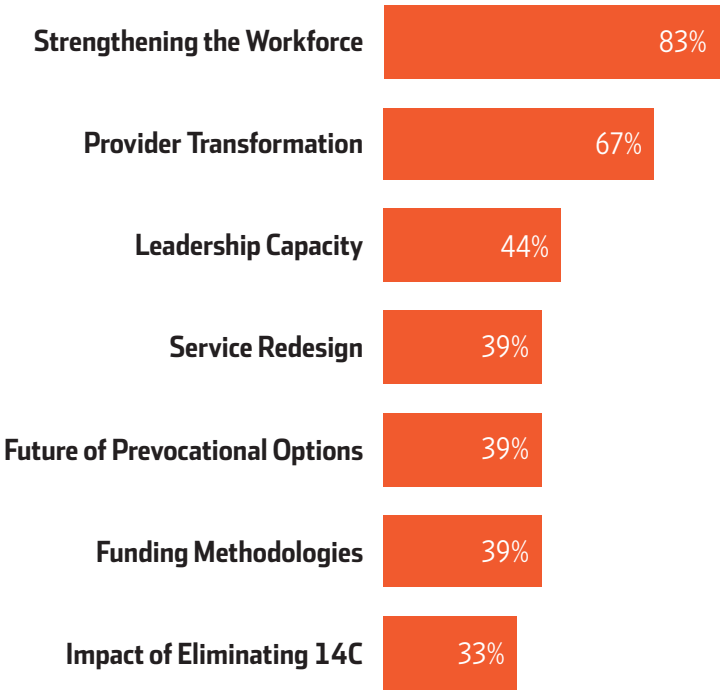




Topical Priorities

At the start of each membership year the SELN hosts a July business meeting for employment leads. The primary purpose is a kick-off for the following twelve months’ activities to be driven by state member interests and needs. Participants provide input on the information and resources requested to achieve employment and community life engagement goals; the feedback guides development of the SELN action agenda. Attendees have opportunities to communicate and discuss ideas, existing issues, and possible future steps. The SELN action agenda is driven by members and must evolve along with state systems. The SELN project team at ICI and NASDDDS proactively seeks to recognize developing trends, understand the disruptive and innovative forces affecting state systems, and provide a steady guide to navigating new terrain. The priority topics polled during the July 2022 business meeting are reflected in the results shared at right.

RANKING OF HIGH PRIORITIES



Individuals With a Cognitive Disability Are Less Likely to Work and More Likely to Live in Poverty (2021 data)

WORK



People with no disability



People with any disability



People with a cognitive disability

POVERTY



People with no disability



People with any disability



People with a cognitive disability

Data Source: American Community Survey, 2021





## September 2022 Annual meeting prep

- » Strategizing on federal partners' questions including topics such as: HCBS' Settings Rule, Heightened Scrutiny reviews, Role of ACL in supporting states' employment systems change.

## November 2022 Shining a light on provider networks

- » Key strategies state agencies could use toward a robust and competent provider network with capacity to support competitive integrated employment and community life engagement outcomes.

## December 2022 Shining a light on provider networks, part 2

- » States' roles in supporting provider transformation through key strategies across the Higher Performing States Framework.

## January 2023 Member states' open floor discussion

- » First member open floor meeting and states pitched "hot topics" and challenges to discuss with other network members. Top interests: SELN eLearning course implementation, collaborating with other agencies to support transition age youth, and defining community integration for service providers.

## February 2023 Winter Showcase

- » The second annual Winter Showcase highlighted ten projects to expand member state awareness and spark ideas for continued systems change.

## March 2023 Final Settings Rule and Corrective Action Plans

- » Explored next phase of employment and day services' systems change with conclusion of HCBS Settings Final Rule transition period. States wrestled with the question of whether the Settings Rule had the desired impact on policy and services.

## April 2023 Member states' open floor discussion

- » Quarterly open floor for member state discussion with particular interest on perspectives of prevocational services and how to define, measure, and monitor success.

## May 2023 Embedding employment in person-centered planning processes

- » Joint discussion with National Center on Advancing Person-centered Practices and Systems (NCAPPS) on strategies to enhance employment in person-centered processes and systems.

## June 2023 Transition from College to Careers and Employment

- » With Think College partners, information spotlight on several programs illustrating options for relationship-building and preparations to ease transition for individuals and families out of the post-secondary education world in to careers and employment pathways.

## October 2022 Annual Meeting focused on:

- » Role of state IDD systems in provider transformation
- » Future of prevocational services
- » Alternative funding options including value-based payments
- » Direct Support Professional staffing challenges
- » State Promising Practices' highlights (Alabama, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas)
- » Federal partner discussions

### Employment: The Path Forward

Annual Meeting | October 4-6, 2022

HILTON ALEXANDRIA OLD TOWN • 1767 KING STREET • ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA, 22314 • 703-837-0440



State Employment  
Leadership Network







The SELN Hub is a closed, online community hosted for member state contacts and partners. Hub users talk candidly, building relationships and strengthening the overall network. The Hub continues to be a central engagement point for member states, discussing important issues, promoting SELN events, building network contacts across the country, and sharing timely resources.

Relevant and timely resources are shared to keep employment front and center. A variety of sources are used and new resources include:

- » Blending, Braiding and Sequencing: Federal Joint Communication and FAQs
- » The State as a Model Employer of People with Disabilities
- » Reports on how states are using ARPA funding to support competitive integrated employment, direct support professional workforce, and expanding access through enabling technology.
- » Many state resources including: eliminating subminimum wage, enhancing person-centered planning, apprenticeship programs, benefits planning, VR referral processes, etc.

Discussion boards offer:

- » Space to ask questions and see what others are interested in,
- » Share ideas across states and the entire network, and
- » See where answers are not yet known or more research is needed.

Recent discussions include:

- » Developing training resources for people with disabilities that will introduce them to employment options and self-advocacy.
- » Training material for job coaches or employment specialists to quickly learn to write effective case notes.
- » Evidence-based training for new job coaches with little to no experience.
- » Developing quality day habilitation programming that will support people on their pathway to employment.
- » Formalizing Employment First policy with leadership support and accountability.



**116**  
active users

**All 25**  
member states  
represented

## HUBGROUPSPACES

Hub Group Spaces within the larger Hub community where users engage in targeted conversations on a specific topic or activity in one location rather than dispersed throughout the main Hub.

- » **Monthly network meetings:** recordings, materials, summaries and forums for continued discussion of the meeting topics.
- » **Annual meeting:** recordings, summaries, and materials for each session are archived for later use in the SELN action agenda.
- » **SELN eLearning course:** implementation strategies, post questions toward learner engagement, larger competency development initiatives.





SUPPORTING A VISION FOR EMPLOYMENT ELEARNING COURSE

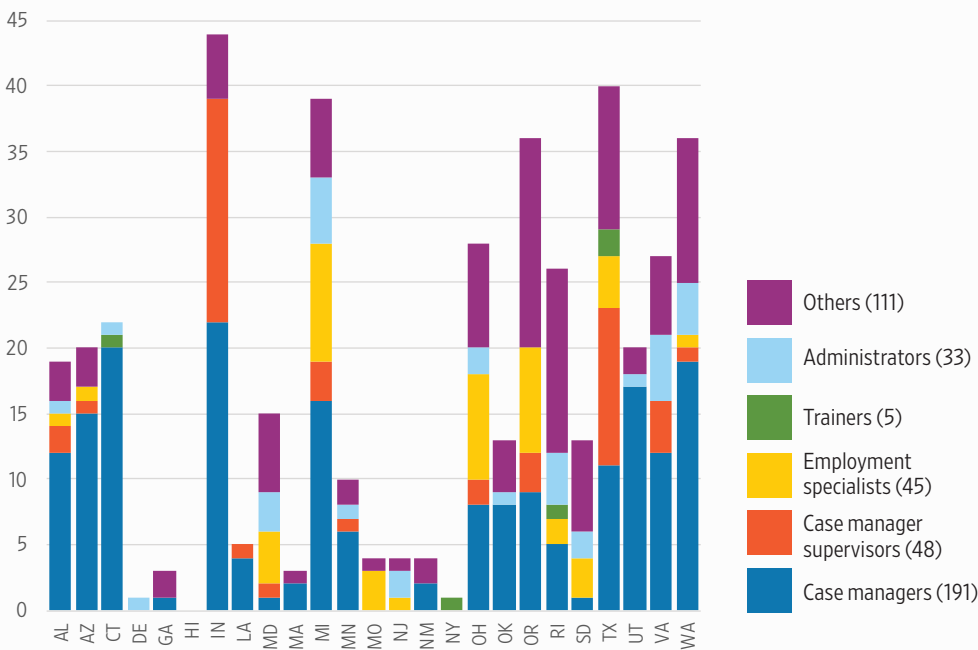


Course intent

Support case managers and those in similar roles responsible for advising, assisting, and advocating for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to increase both competencies and capacity to support those individuals on an employment journey.

*“I have been in this field for over 15 years and this course has been the most engaging. The information given is vital for success regardless of the state offering the services.”*  
—Learner from Delaware

TYPES OF LEARNERS TAKING THE COURSE



65% overall completion rate

78% of learners that enroll start the course and...

89% of learners that start the course complete it

*“I absolutely loved how this course was put together. The video clips, the material/resources to download and refer back to when needed, the ability to see how far I was moving along in each module, etc. It kept me engaged the whole time without getting bored and the “real life” scenarios were awesome to see first and...especially the assistive technology to drive and have a lawncare business.”*  
—Learner from Georgia

592 course participants from 24 states



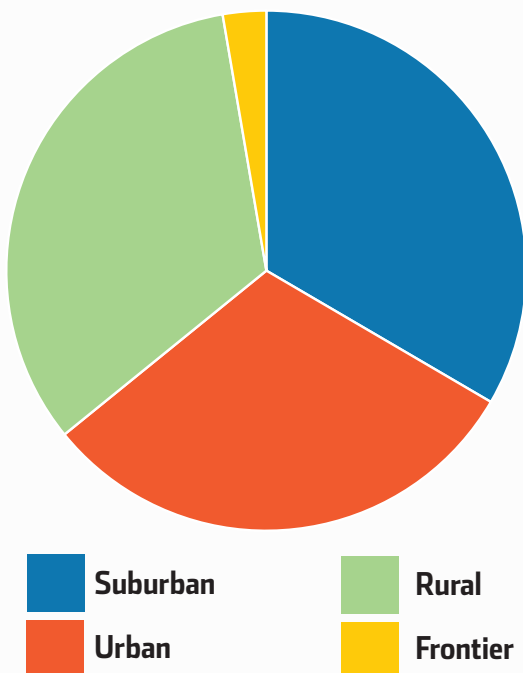


Each state has engaged learners and implemented use of the course content in ways unique to the needs of their state. Here are some of their approach strategies:

- » Internal team including leadership takes the course to have a clear idea of the benefits, commitments, and outcomes of the course.
- » Provide technical assistance to learners to enroll, engage, and complete the course.
- » Support learners to discuss how they will implement the course.
- » Reach out to early adapters first and take a gradual approach to engaging learners.
- » Use the course as the foundation for implementing a current employment initiative.
- » Engage learners in surveys or in person focus groups to understand the impact of the course on their work.

*“The most engaging aspect was hearing the person’s story and seeing what to do to support them to be successful. Understanding that everyone can work empowers the person to be confident in their ability to move forward with a career. This training has been enlightening and makes me want to go out and encourage persons with disability to follow their dreams.”*  
—Learner from Virginia

### TYPES OF AREAS LEARNERS WORK IN



**89%**  
of learners agreed that the content covered matched their learning needs

*“I really learned additional things I didn’t know about, and this would be very useful to any Case Manager.”*  
—Learner from Texas

**94%** of learners would recommend this training to other people





### Prioritizing State Activities

As states' post-pandemic activities emerge, they remain focused on improving employment outcomes and recognizing the pivotal role employment plays in the lives of people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD). States must make ongoing systems-change decisions about resource investments throughout the membership year. In the following pages, we share some examples illustrating the wide range of states' unique approaches. Our discussions strengthen states' efforts and expand the SELN project team's capacity to support other states.

#### Strategic Goals and Action

**Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) and Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA)** collaborated on a Rehabilitation Services Administration's (RSA) Sub-minimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment (SWTCIE) grant. This funding supports both agencies and technical assistance partners to transform 14c sheltered workshop providers to organizations promoting competitive integrated employment (CIE). Over half of the 14c holders have already ended their subminimum wage certificates and have increased income to minimum wage. Both DBHDD and GVRA's goal is to increase community-based work training activities. Georgia is also using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to conduct a Supported Employment pilot program with a target group of individuals aged 18–26 on the waiver planning list with additional support needs in the areas of transportation, assistive work technology, and/or enhanced supports. Using GVRA's benchmark initial payment structure and an extended services rate structure that is tiered based on support needs, a flat rate is paid if the individual is working, and then either a basic or enhanced unit rate for support time over one hour each month. The unit rate is based on a combination of the needs assessment score and information identified in the Discovery Profile. The goal is to gather information to inform future rate methodologies and systems change.

**Indiana Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services (DDRS)** has embarked on systems-wide transformation to enhance and increase CIE outcomes for Hoosiers with disabilities through refocusing existing IDD waiver services to prioritize employment outcomes and create a flexible employment service array facilitating CIE. As part of the initiative, DDRS's IDD waiver program is improving collaboration with the state's vocational rehabilitation (VR), Department of Education, Department of Workforce Development, and other state systems to identify barriers to CIE. Additional efforts include:

- » data tracking tools to monitor transitions of individuals out of facility-based prevocational services
- » strengthened case management conversations prioritizing CIE goals
- » Innovation Pilot Project grants supporting waiver services and supports including new employment service models
- » RSA Disability Innovation Fund grant model demonstration project transitioning individuals out of subminimum wage to CIE
- » enhanced person-centered transition planning with Department of Education with school staff, Pre-employment transition services providers, and state VR and waiver systems

**Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS)** completed and released the Blueprint for Success: V2 Moving Forward. This exciting effort highlights the valued roles for all individuals as contributing members of their communities. Key elements include:

- » phasing out subminimum wage payments in any DDS funded employment setting by Oct. 2024
- » using a new Without Walls service model





- » increasing the number of individuals accessing employment throughout their lifetime
- » providing resources on community mapping, business engagement, and staff as community facilitators and job coaches
- » enhancing expertise of staff through comprehensive training opportunities
- » providing organizational technical assistance for strategic systems change

**Minnesota Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)** strategically prioritized three main activities:

1. DDD and ICI launched Missouri Talent Acquisition Pathways (MO TAP) as a 2,000-hour statewide Certified Direct Support Professional (CDSP) registered apprenticeship program designed to recruit and retain a highly skilled and dedicated direct care workforce. Seventeen (17) community-based organizations employed 240 apprentices in the first year with a 26% increase in staff retention and graduates receiving, on average, a 20% raise in wages.
2. DDD established a priority of coordinating quality care and funding support strategies that improve individual outcomes and reward those who facilitate quality outcomes. Value Based Payments (VBP) started in January 2023 for any employment service contractor of certain services who completes quarterly reporting of data elements for future VBP benchmarking. Currently, 29 providers have submitted 1,045 reporting episodes.
3. DDD prioritized the addition of Virtual Delivery of Supports (VDS) as a modality in each of the 1915c employment services. Service providers must demonstrate compliance with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) policies and include policies and procedures to effectively benefit from this service modality.

**Oklahoma Human Services' True North Initiative** establishes a strong connection between the state system's priorities and the governor's "Top 10 State" campaign to make Oklahoma a better place to live, work, and play across a common set of categories, including the economy, education, and health care. An extraordinary step forward is eliminating the waiting list for services. In 2022, Oklahoma started a plan to eliminate the 13+ year waitlist and provide services to all individuals with IDD. With the support of legislators, state leaders, providers, and numerous community partners, Department of Developmental Services (DDS) remains on track for all applications received through May 2022 to be processed by March 2024. To address this significant number of individuals entering services, DDS prioritized improving collaboration with the Department of Rehabilitation Services and exploring technology options for remote supports.

In 2022, **Washington**, passed a [law](#) that repealed the prohibition of concurrent employment and community inclusion services. Beginning in January 2023, eligible working age clients can now access both community inclusion and employment services. **Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)** invested in capacity building efforts for providers that included payments for new community inclusion support staff and new community inclusion referrals. Washington delivered over 20 trainings to DDA case managers, providers, and stakeholders to impart best practices with concurrent services. As of July 2023, 377 individuals are accessing concurrent services. **Washington's Job Foundation Project** goal is to complete a [report](#) identifying strengths and supports for success to provide students with actionable next steps to achieve their employment goals. Twenty of the 39 counties agreed to participate in the project, completing 184 reports the first year and 188 the second year. Job Foundation has successfully placed 107 students in in community jobs to date. Thirty-one counties participate in this project.

**The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHS)** tackled numerous projects to increase the number of providers that support CIE across the state. Some projects include the Vocational Apprenticeship Program expansion, Electronic Tablet Program, Transition to





Competitive/Integrated Employment Tool Kit, Employment First/ Employment Services Provider Training, Family Focused Integrated Employment Guide, expansion of SELN eLearning training opportunities, and the Vocational Apprenticeship Program Video. HHS staff conducted 25 on-site Employment First and employment services trainings throughout the state of Texas to approximately 1,000 participants. Given the overwhelming success, HHS is hoping to continue conducting these trainings to educate new participants in the workforce and encourage additional outreach of the Employment First philosophy. The Vocational Apprenticeship Program grew from five to 16 of the 39 Local Authorities in Texas. Each Local Authority receives funding for provider services staffing, wages for apprentices, travel, apprentice transportation, and supplies working with host employers to secure paid job training opportunities focusing on 12 hours of work each week and five hours of classroom activity. HHS has also purchased additional SELN eLearning slots to strategically increase staff competencies and to conduct ongoing monitoring and outreach with feedback from the field embracing Employment First principles and implementation.

### Capacity-Building and Increased Competencies

**Hawaii's Competitive Integrated Employment Project** is designed to target ongoing concerns with the system's capacity to achieve improved employment outcomes. Using federal ARPA funds in alignment with project goals, the **Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)** supports several organizational change initiatives to advance CIE for key constituencies. Many of the activities are assisting provider agencies to objectively assess operations and programs leading to targeted strategic plans to strengthen CIE efforts, including:

- » training and technical assistance to deliver Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver-funded services, including benefits counseling
- » job development and job coaching
- » community of practice for current day providers to address cultural hesitations toward work, person centered job placement, and reallocation of resources
- » strategic planning with partner systems, such as education and VR partners
- » informational sessions for parents and families to learn about the role of employment for people with IDD
- » business engagement, connecting an underrepresented segment of workforce with numerous unfilled positions

**Maryland's partnership** with ICI continues to provide technical assistance and training to Meaningful Day service providers. These efforts target enhancing service designs and programs, employment supports, and organizational change goals. Provider organizations have established a range of goals, such as providing person-driven job development, establishing clearer employment support procedures like targeted job development, expanding and retaining employer partnerships, and reconfiguring services for community-based options independent of physical structures.

**Minnesota** continues investing in building out a provider technical assistance center — [Minnesota Transformation Initiative](#) — to support providers in transforming business models toward competitive integrated employment outcomes and inclusive day services. In the first year, MTI reduced the number of people earning subminimum wage in eight targeted agencies by 47%.

[The Impact Oregon project](#), funded by **Office of Developmental Disabilities Services (ODDS)**, is dedicated to helping providers, case management entities, and others recruit talented staff to the developmental disabilities field. Oregon created the Supported Employment Curriculum to educate staff on how supported employment services are provided and what IDD services are





available across the state. Colleges are showing interest in offering the curriculum to their students and other Oregon partners want to offer this curriculum to build local capacity. Also, ODDS received approximately \$160 million in ARPA funds, and when matched with the Oregon General Fund, roughly \$390 million has been allocated for one-time expenditures in response to COVID recovery needs. Oregon prioritized two grants focused on Capacity Restoration and Capacity and Infrastructure Funding for Contracted Case Management Entities to assist systems change efforts.

**Rhode Island's Consent Decree Action Plan** identified funding to build capacity to address compliance issues. The Division of Developmental Disabilities granted this funding through Transformation Awards after 11 providers submitted proposals for employment-related services. Funds disbursed in August 2023 cover a range of activities, including:

- » business engagement training to all providers and staff
- » monthly coaching and mentoring meetings to share opportunities and job leads across organizations
- » support for a cohort of learners for a training program designed to better use Discovery and technology
- » community mapping and customizing employment, leading to 83% of individuals supported becoming employed

**Utah's Division of Services for People with Disabilities (DSPD)** completed an overhaul of the case management person-centered planning software system through years of work with internal and external partners. DSPD has taken a continuous quality improvement approach to the software, providing technical assistance for all case managers, and continuing to accept feedback and suggestions for software updates. The DSPD team was invited to present on this innovative software at three national conferences. The DSPD Employment Pathway Tool has been available since 2021 to document informed choice conversations around employment (required at least annually) with tracking at a state level to monitor for change.

### Financing, Funding, and Contracting

Through an ongoing direct support professional worker shortage, **Alabama Department of Mental Health/Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)** recognized the need to complete an in-depth rate study. Alabama worked with HMA Burns to review current rate methodologies across three HCBS waivers. The study provided recommendations for implementing findings and incorporating best practices using more appropriate rate structures toward service delivery outcomes. DDD received increased funding from the state legislature to address direct support professional wages. These recommendations have been instrumental in guiding policy decisions relative to the rate increases. Alabama expects a significant number of permanent rate increases for waiver services in FY24.

**The South Dakota Department of Human Services (DHS)** conducted a comprehensive rate modeling analysis on the Medicaid HCBS service delivery landscape to drive the rate methodology revision process. DHS made changes to waiver service definitions and rates with a goal of implementing a new rate methodology in conjunction with CHOICES waiver renewal in June 2023. The updated CHOICES waiver employment services' structure, implementation of individual supported employment staff qualifications, and the addition of assistive technology as a waiver service brought huge changes to services and supports for individuals with IDD. Also, DHS created a single "front door" to Department of Developmental Disabilities services. This change has moved our system from having the point of entry at the provider level, which required families to make multiple applications, to having one point of entry at the state level.





### Interagency Partnerships

**Minnesota's E1MN interagency partnership** works to build a seamless and timely employment support system through key achievements, including the [Youth in Transition](#) Framework and Toolkit, which define high-quality transition options for youth. E1MN's Employment Capacity Building Cohort (ECBC) piloted both resources. The ECBC is made up of by practitioners from schools, vocational rehabilitation, and county staff.

**Maryland's Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) and Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)** have committed to strengthening new partnerships through quarterly joint training sessions to educate providers, community service coordinators, and staff from both systems. In 2023, Maryland completed two joint sessions, and is planning additional sessions this year. Nearly 1,000 participants have attended to learn more about essential functions – eligibility determinations, available services (funded by both systems), self-direction, pre-employment services, dual funding without redundancy, and provider field service engagement.

- » **New Jersey's Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD/Division)** focused efforts on interagency relationships and collaborations through partnerships with the **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) and Department of Education (DOE)**. These efforts included:
- » delivering professional development presentations to school administrators, community members, and individuals and families
- » working with DOE on a centralized location for employment-centered information to raise awareness and understanding of available services and supports
- » offering the SELN eLearning course, Supporting a Vision for Employment
- » continuing to partner with DVRS to explore NJ's Career Pathways Navigation Model to increase individual CIE outcomes

### Services and Service Innovation

**Connecticut's Customized Employment (CE) investments** included a review of rates and deliverables like alignment with the VR system for coordinated services. Through an interagency CE community of practice, all parties can regularly gather to identify challenges and discuss problem-solving activities. **The Department of Developmental Services and Bureau of Rehabilitation Services** also implemented a work-based learning pilot for students 17-19. Through informed choice and decision-making, the goal is to expand the number of people with IDD exiting school directly into CIE.

**Louisiana** focused efforts on examining and unwinding the exceptions implemented in Medicaid HCBS waivers during the public health emergency (PHE). Changes included adjusting rules and policies and adopting exceptions valued by individuals and families, such as allowing family members who live in the home to be a paid caregiver, quarterly virtual visit delivery with support coordinators, and sharing staff supports across waivers. Working with stakeholders to identify systems changes have led Louisiana to add several key services in the adult HCBS waivers, including:

- » community life engagement career planning
- » community life engagement development
- » virtual delivery of day habilitation
- » prevocational services
- » individual supported employment
- » monitored in-home caregiving
- » remote supports





**New Mexico's Developmental Disabilities Supports Division's (DDSD) Community Inclusion team** launched the Want to Work Project, identifying over 500 people not currently working who want to work. VR has received 50% more monthly referrals on average each who are expected to need waiver services. Additionally, **Partners for Employment (PFE)** continued to grow capacity through improved competencies for CIE services and outcomes. PFE is a statewide collaborative between the **DDSD, New Mexico Division of VR, and the University of New Mexico Center for Development and Disability**. Many joint activities are building capacity by providing training, certification, technical assistance, and opportunities for networking and collaboration statewide for all direct support professionals.

### Performance Measurement and Data Management

**Arizona** implemented an operations unit in late 2022 within Support Coordination to provide statewide oversight through tracking trends and problem-solving, ensuring individuals are receiving high-quality, person-centered services. Additionally, the employment team developed an individual performance metric requiring each of the seven statewide employment specialists to attend at least five member meetings per week and to start collecting data on barriers to employment. This visibility led to 70% of the 600 meetings including discussion about and development of employment goals. This has also increased the number of VR referrals by 46% compared to the previous year. Together, the VR staff and Department of Developmental Disabilities employment team have revised processes to track referral status and immediately address barriers to CIE.

**Michigan** implemented publicly accessible employment outcome data reporting in 2021. The intentional use of data hosted on the [Michigan State Data website](#) throughout the past year is raising expectations and informing new conversations that all individuals can work. The data variables capture whether individuals are or are not working in the labor force and highlight new considerations to impact those conversations. Nearly 70% of the time, respondents selected “current disability symptoms prevents individual from working” when reporting a primary activity. Michigan will review a simple change to the ordering of responses, offering those that emphasize employment options first, to see if any change occurs across the state, such as staff awareness or individuals' interest.

**Ohio's [Outcome Tracking System \(OTS\)](#)** application captures how people who receive developmental disabilities services are spending their days. OTS provides valuable data to better understand what is happening for people with developmental disabilities in Ohio with questions about:

- » employment, such as are they placed on the path to community employment and their job type, average wages per hour/average hours per week, benefits, and transportation
- » community-based non-work services (hours spent in the community)
- » facility-based non-work services (hours spent in a facility)

The information in OTS will allow the **Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD)** to align policies, procedures, and legislation that will help improve how people live, work, play, and thrive in their communities. Trends and patterns are now available after three years of recording data, including the impact of the pandemic and recovery. Ohio has seen a statewide employment completion rate of 72% in reporting period 2021, which is a 1% decrease from reporting period 2020. To read more about reporting period 2021, select the data category of interest from the main navigation pane on the OTS website.



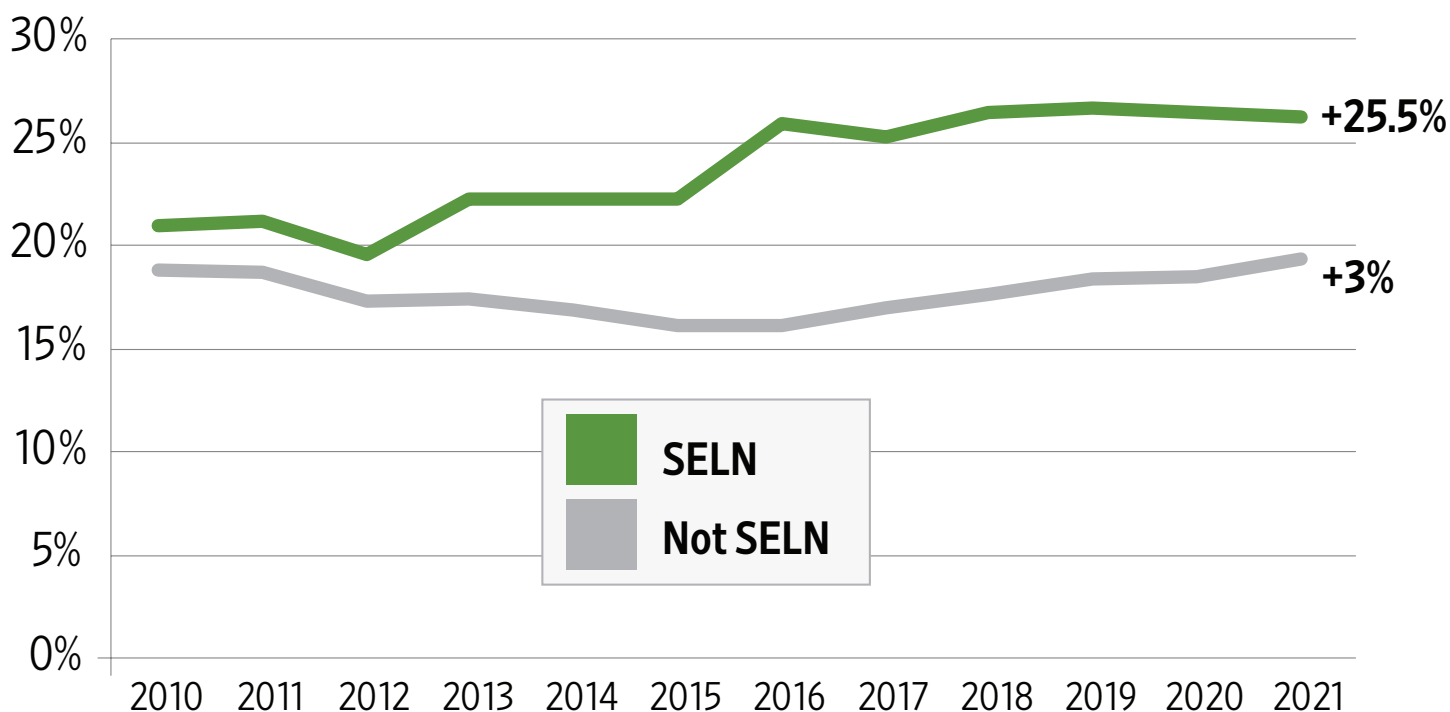


## Chart 1: SELN member states' progress

This chart illustrates changes in the percent of people receiving all integrated employment services in states across the country. The comparison reflects states submitting data to the annual ICI National Survey of Employment and Day Services ([www.thinkwork.org/statedata](http://www.thinkwork.org/statedata)). Data is collected annually on the total count of individuals who received integrated employment services funded or monitored by the state IDD agency. Integrated employment services primarily capture services to maintain paid integrated employment (including job training, job coaching (both individual and group), ongoing supports, and services for self-employment), and also include job development services funded by the state IDD agency (including discovery and career planning as part of a job development process) that are intended to result in paid integrated employment.

SELN member states (green line) show an overall improvement trend across the 11-year picture. By comparison, states with complete data but not SELN members (gray line), show a greater period of decline in the percent of people receiving employment services and overall, a lower percentage of improvement. The upward trends are important for both categories in our country. The natural variation or peaks and valleys is due in large part to the quality of data reporting as well, an important discussion with member states throughout the year. Our network members benefit from synergistic learning and sharing across states to address common policy and practice questions so often associated with employment systems change.

The previous pages of state activities is a meaningful reflection of where policy and implementation efforts are targeted to address strategic priorities. These vary across the country and we encourage all readers to reach out to member states to learn more and take a deeper dive into the details behind these important actions toward tangible and actionable improvements.



Source: ICI National Survey of State IDD Agency Day and Employment Services

States with complete data for 2010-2020 | SELN Members n=16, Non-SELN Members n=25





Our October 2022 annual meeting theme, “The Path Forward” reflected the network’s drive toward the future. Through discussions we see new expectations and tensions have emerged after experiencing the last few years marked by restrictions and modified service options. Our network members often talk of the need to make forward progress on specific priority changes at a pace that meets the needs of a wide variety of stakeholders. The pace has rapidly quickened.

The lens on our service system at national, state and local levels continues to sharpen focus. We look at practices started in the middle of the twentieth century and realize some are no longer well suited for the IDD population. The practices have far outlived their usefulness in many respects.

Subminimum wage is one of those examples. Originally intended for veterans returning from war seeking employment after injuries and other disabling experiences, its use grew to other populations such as those with IDD. The belief in the 1930’s was to support those considered to have less than full capacity performing particular tasks. While very logical, with our push for community inclusion, self determination and person-centered thinking, subminimum wage is out of sync with our beliefs.

Many people had and may have no idea of its use in our field. People started to realize what this practice inferred about the value of workers with disabilities. And communities started developing other ways to help people match their capacity with needed tasks.

Change can simultaneously seem to be moving both at a snail’s pace and like a rocket ship depending on the day. In our field it is common to feel we are lagging behind as new innovations emerge daily while outdated practices are sustained in our current programs. In the face of these extremes, how do states gain a sense of control? Through deliberate and customized strategies.

The SELN supports states to:

- » Define “forward” and what we are moving toward.
- » Identify not just critical data elements but how to tell a story and if systems change efforts are making a difference.
- » Gain knowledge about hiring and serving diverse populations to achieve high performing outcomes.
- » Illustrate where technology can fill unmet needs and help people thrive.

The truth is, change does happen whether we want it to or not, and often more slowly than we like. While crafting our new path forward, we see systems craving stability act in the face of difficult decisions. The shifts away from segregated options or congregate settings are testing our goals and vision. Utilizing an option such as prevocational services is being examined to determine whether it is working at odds to our goals. We can say what employment first means but are we ready to both give up outdated practices and embrace new habits and routines? Are we ready to stand by the commitments we say in public? Are we ready to recommit to the difficult changes that need to be made?

**Time will tell. The SELN is here to support states along the way.**



# THANK YOU TO THE 2022–2023 STATE LEADS AND DIRECTORS!



## ALABAMA

### Department of Mental Health

Bryon White, SELN Lead Contact

[byron.white@mh.alabama.gov](mailto:byron.white@mh.alabama.gov)

Terry Pezent, Associate Commissioner,

Division of Developmental Disabilities

## ARIZONA

### Department of Economic Security

Kelly Thomas, SELN lead contact

[KellyThomas@azdes.gov](mailto:KellyThomas@azdes.gov)

Zane Garcia Ramadan, Assistant Director,

Division of Developmental Disabilities

## CONNECTICUT

### Department of Developmental Services

Amber Carter, SELN lead contact

[amber.carter@ct.gov](mailto:amber.carter@ct.gov)

Elisa Velardo, SELN lead contact

[Elisa.Velardo@ct.gov](mailto:Elisa.Velardo@ct.gov)

Jordan Scheff, Commissioner,

Department of Developmental Services

## DELAWARE

### Health and Social Services

Ramona Savage, SELN lead contact

[Ramona.Savage@delaware.gov](mailto:Ramona.Savage@delaware.gov)

Jody Roberts, Director, Developmental Disabilities Services

## GEORGIA

### Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities

Christine Gudgin, SELN lead contact

[Christine.Gudgin@dbhdd.ga.gov](mailto:Christine.Gudgin@dbhdd.ga.gov)

Ronald Wakefield, Director, Division of Developmental Disabilities

## HAWAII

### Department of Health

Wendie Lino, SELN lead contact

[Wendie.lino@doh.hawaii.gov](mailto:Wendie.lino@doh.hawaii.gov)

Michele Tong, SELN lead contact

[michele.tong@doh.hawaii.gov](mailto:michele.tong@doh.hawaii.gov)

Mary Brogan, Administrator, Developmental Disabilities Division

## INDIANA

### Family & Social Services Administration

Kyle Ingraham, SELN lead contact

[Kyle.Ingram@fssa.IN.gov](mailto:Kyle.Ingram@fssa.IN.gov)

Kelly Mitchell, Director, Disability & Rehabilitative Services

## LOUISIANA

### Department of Health

Rosemary Morales, SELN lead contact

[rosemary.morales@la.gov](mailto:rosemary.morales@la.gov)

Julie Foster Hagan, Assistant Secretary,

Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities

## MARYLAND

### Department of Health

Stephanie Jones, SELN lead contact

[stephanie.jones2@maryland.gov](mailto:stephanie.jones2@maryland.gov)

Kasey Venn, SELN lead contact

[kasey.venn@maryland.gov](mailto:kasey.venn@maryland.gov)

Bernie Simons, Deputy Secretary,

Developmental Disabilities Administration

## MASSACHUSETTS

### Department of Developmental Services

Kathleen Walker, SELN lead contact

[kathleen.walker2@state.ma.us](mailto:kathleen.walker2@state.ma.us)

Liz Sandblom, SELN lead contact

[elizabeth.sandblom@mass.gov](mailto:elizabeth.sandblom@mass.gov)

Jane Ryder, Commissioner,

Department of Developmental Services

## MICHIGAN

### Department of Health and Human Services

Joe Longcor, SELN lead contact

[longcorj@michigan.gov](mailto:longcorj@michigan.gov)

Farah Hanley, Chief Deputy Director for Health, Behavioral and Physical Health and Aging Services Administration (BPHSA)

## MINNESOTA

### Department of Human Services

Ryan Merz, SELN lead contact

[ryan.merz@state.mn.us](mailto:ryan.merz@state.mn.us)

Lesli Kerkhoff, SELN lead contact

[lesli.kerkhoff@state.mn.us](mailto:lesli.kerkhoff@state.mn.us)

Heidi Hamilton, Director, Disability Services Division

## MISSOURI

### Department of Mental Health

Duane Shumate, SELN lead contact

[duane.shumate@dmh.mo.gov](mailto:duane.shumate@dmh.mo.gov)

Jessica Bax, Director, Division of Developmental Disabilities



# THANK YOU TO THE 2022–2023 STATE LEADS AND DIRECTORS!



## NEW JERSEY

### Department of Human Services

Nkechi Okoli, SELN lead contact

[Nkechi.Okoli@dhs.nj.gov](mailto:Nkechi.Okoli@dhs.nj.gov)

Jonathan Seifried, Assistant Commissioner,  
Division of Developmental Disabilities

## NEW MEXICO

### Developmental Disabilities Supports Division

#### Department of Health

Frank Gaona, SELN lead contact

[frank.gaona@doh.nm.gov](mailto:frank.gaona@doh.nm.gov)

Scott Doan, Deputy Director, Developmental Disabilities Supports

## NEW YORK

### Office for People with Developmental Disabilities

Julia Kelly, SELN lead contact

[julia.a.kelly@opwdd.ny.gov](mailto:julia.a.kelly@opwdd.ny.gov)

Kerri E. Neifeld, Commissioner,  
Office for People with Developmental Disabilities

## OHIO

### Department of Developmental Disabilities

Keith Banner, SELN lead contact

[Keith.banner@dodd.ohio.gov](mailto:Keith.banner@dodd.ohio.gov)

Kim Hauck, Director, Department of Developmental Disabilities

## OKLAHOMA

### Department of Human Services

Christopher Hobbs, SELN lead contact

[Christopher.Hobbs@okdhs.org](mailto:Christopher.Hobbs@okdhs.org)

Melissa Gituma, SELN lead contact

[melissa.gituma@okdhs.org](mailto:melissa.gituma@okdhs.org)

Beth Scrutchins, Director, Developmental Disabilities Services

## OREGON

### Department of Human Services

Acacia McGuire Anderson, SELN lead contact

[acacia.mcguireanderson@odhs.oregon.gov](mailto:acacia.mcguireanderson@odhs.oregon.gov)

Anna Lansky, Interim Director, Developmental Disabilities Services

## RHODE ISLAND

### Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals

Jay Mackay, SELN lead contact

[Gerard.MacKay@bhddh.ri.gov](mailto:Gerard.MacKay@bhddh.ri.gov)

Kevin Salvage, Interim Director,  
Division of Developmental Disabilities

## SOUTH DAKOTA

### Department of Human Services

Barb Hemmelman, SELN lead contact

[Barb.Hemmelman@state.sd.us](mailto:Barb.Hemmelman@state.sd.us)

Joey Younie, Director, Division of Developmental Disabilities

## TEXAS

### Health and Human Services

Donnie Wilson, SELN lead contact

[donnie.wilson@hhs.texas.gov](mailto:donnie.wilson@hhs.texas.gov)

Haley Turner, Associate Commissioner of IDD Services

## UTAH

### Department of Health and Human Services

Bryn Peterson, SELN lead contact

[brynpeterson@utah.gov](mailto:brynpeterson@utah.gov)

Angella Pinna, Director, Services for People with Disabilities

## VIRGINIA

### Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services

Stephanie Subedi, SELN lead contact

[stephanie.subedi@dbhds.virginia.gov](mailto:stephanie.subedi@dbhds.virginia.gov)

Heather Norton, Acting Deputy Commissioner,  
Division of Developmental Services

## WASHINGTON

### Department of Social and Health Services

Branda Matson, SELN lead contact

[MatsoBK@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:MatsoBK@dshs.wa.gov)

Tonik Joseph, Interim Assistant Secretary,  
DD Services Administration

For current contacts, visit  
[www.selnhub.org/state-contacts](http://www.selnhub.org/state-contacts)





## SELN PROJECT DIRECTORS

**Suzanne Freeze**

[suzanne.freeze@umb.edu](mailto:suzanne.freeze@umb.edu)

**Wesley Anderson**

[wanderson@nasddds.org](mailto:wanderson@nasddds.org)

## SELN PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS

### ICI/UMass Boston

John Butterworth

David Hoff

Amy Huppi

Staci Jones

Nancy Nickolaus

Cindy Thomas

Jean Winsor

### NASDDDS

Mary Sowers

Teja Stokes

Jeanine Zlockie

## NASDDDS SUPPORT TEAM

Dan Berland—federal policy technical assistance

Stephanie Mote—policy analysis

Carrie McGraw—communications and events

Nicole Orellana—administrative service

Megan Rose Sierra—fiscal administration

Regina Sisneros—DEI initiatives

Karol Snyder—administrative service

Laura Vegas—National Core Indicators

## ICI SUPPORT TEAM

Quinn Barbour—outreach, social media

Jen Bose—state promising practices

Jeff Edelstein—data analysis

Pam McFarland—survey development

Caitlin McGovern—fiscal administration

Alberto Migliore —ES-Coach app

Julie Reposa—web services

Kate Sambuco—online technology and learning

David Temelini—marketing strategy, design

Alvaro Tobar—online technology and learning

Ryan Wedeking—data analysis

Agnes Zalewska —ICI annual national survey





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