

Initiatives and Activities to Improve Integrated Employment Outcomes

Accomplishments Report
2023–2024



State Employment Leadership Network



Accomplishments Report 2023–2024

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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



“Choices are the hinges of destiny.”

—Edwin Markham

Our annual accomplishments reports come together as new membership years ramp up and plans for annual meetings take shape. This gives us an opportunity to “take the temperature” of the network member states and decide where to focus resources. An important factor is those who are new to state employment systems change activities. Turnover is to be expected and has increased dramatically across many industries including human services and state government. This presents a great opportunity for revisiting goals and choices, important in priority-setting. When a focus on employment is challenged by crises of the day and relegated to a back burner, we urge state members to wrestle with why this is happening, what choices have been made and what could be done differently. As you will see throughout this report our choices are key. Each of those decisions will either enhance opportunities or add to challenges. We must actively approach high return activities with urgency on behalf of those seeking jobs in their communities. Choose wisely – we are in your corner and always ready to assist!

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.

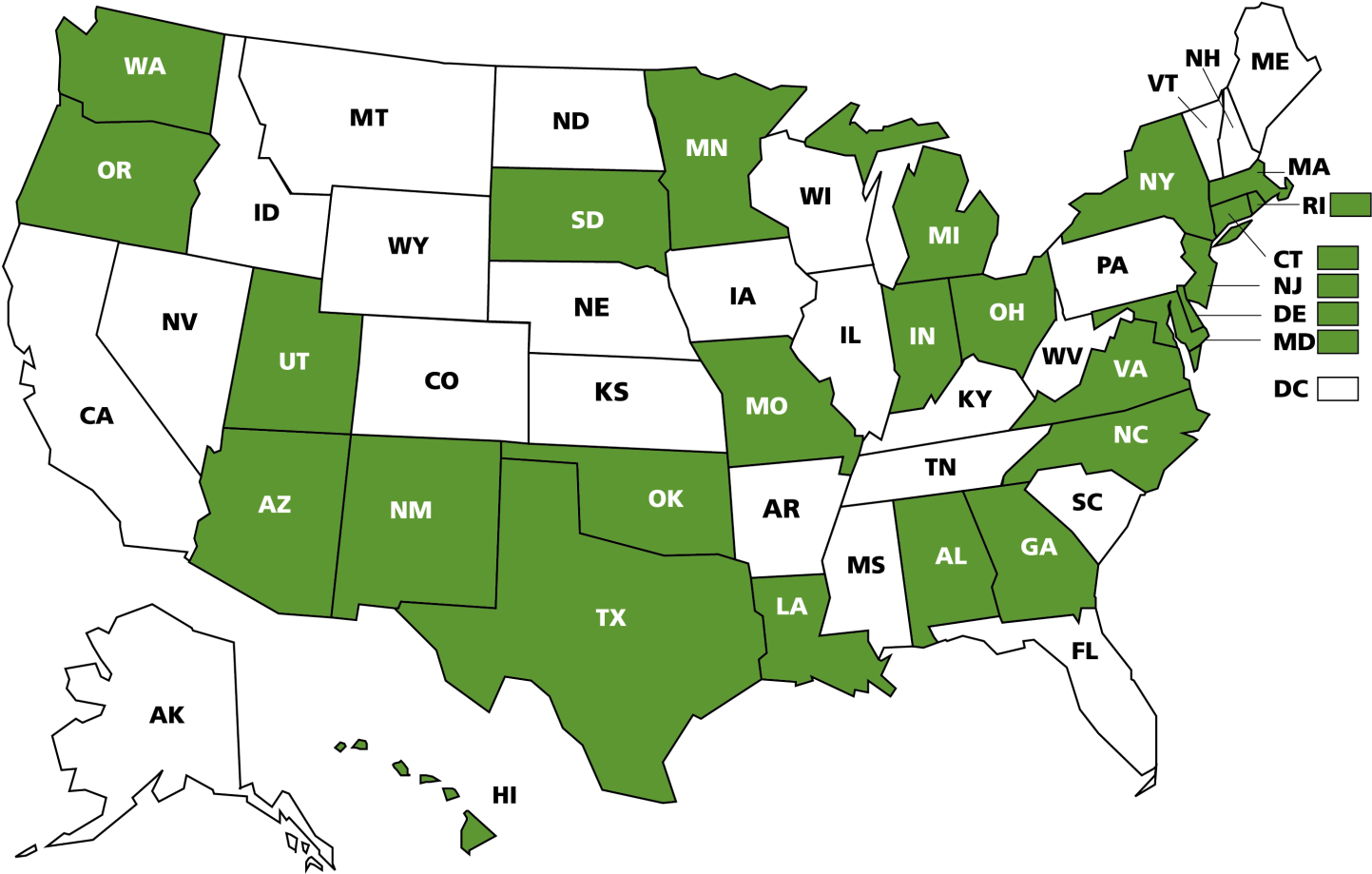
VISION

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 2023-2024

(as of 7/1/2023)



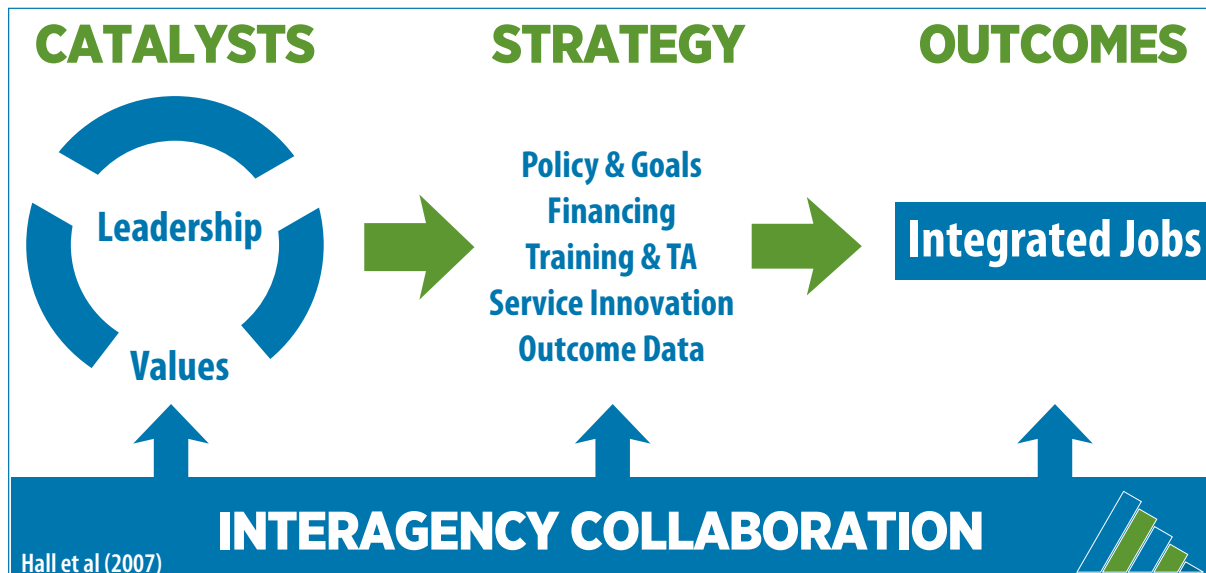
The SELN is a forum for this multi-state learning community committed to improving employment outcomes for people with IDD. To get the most out of membership, states must commit financial and staff resources to carrying out systems’ improvements. To support a state’s efforts to expand and improve integrated employment outcomes, project team members across ICI and NASDDDS assure states receive: state-specific technical assistance and coaching, Ongoing opportunities to engage with peers across the country, Access to resources through a members’-only online community, Strategic assessment tools, Work plan development, Network events, and Analysis of emerging state and federal policy and strategy.

HIGH PERFORMING STATES FRAMEWORK



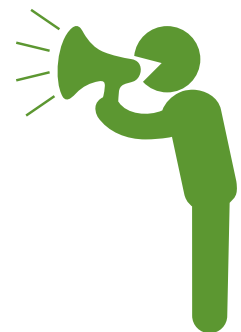
The High Performing States Framework (“Framework”), developed through extensive experience and research conducted within states, guides the SELN’s strategy for system improvements. The elements represent practices and outcomes to develop and sustain higher performing integrated employment systems. The heart of our employment systems work is represented in the graphic - the dynamic interplay between elements demonstrates the factors that, when working together, can lead to improved integrated employment outcomes. Just as no one system can produce desired outcomes alone, no one element is more important than the next. State coaching and guidance stems from discussion of the Framework elements with recognition on what is present or absent. The SELN provides guidance on how to explore the elements with states and determine where to focus resources and investments. Consistent application of these elements over time forms the opportunity for long-term systems change goals.

ELEMENTS OF HIGH PERFORMING STATES EMPLOYMENT SYSTEM



CALL TO ACTION! FOR MEMBERSHIP YEAR 2024-2025

How does your state share integrated employment goals through all levels of the system and collect feedback on progress or loss?





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 to cultivate cross-systems outcomes in each state. The fuel is the collaborative energy produced by engaged state teams across the country. Our project team's goal is to bring the highest quality content and information to member states consistently over time when it is needed. As a bonus we try to anticipate needs and provide ideas just before they are needed, too.

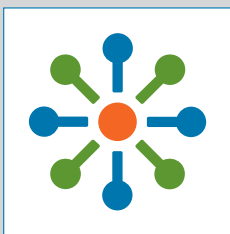
The aim of the SELN is to work with states to more effectively improve system structures and increase opportunities for individuals with IDD to enter competitive integrated employment regardless of support needs.

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.

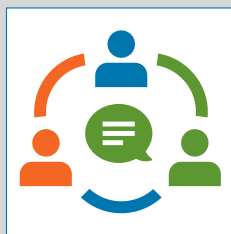
A critical aspect of providing technical assistance to SELN member states includes hosting conversations of significance. Our technical assistance focuses on sharing the knowledge and resources most needed to improve community-based integrated employment.

The following pages describe key discussions during the 2023-2024 membership year as part of overall technical assistance efforts.

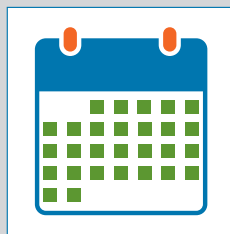
Core events and ongoing activities



BUSINESS MEETING



ANNUAL MEETING



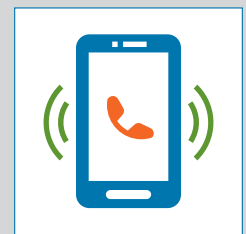
MONTHLY NETWORK MEETINGS



ONLINE COMMUNITY



WRITTEN AND ONLINE PRODUCTS



RECURRING CALLS

- » 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)

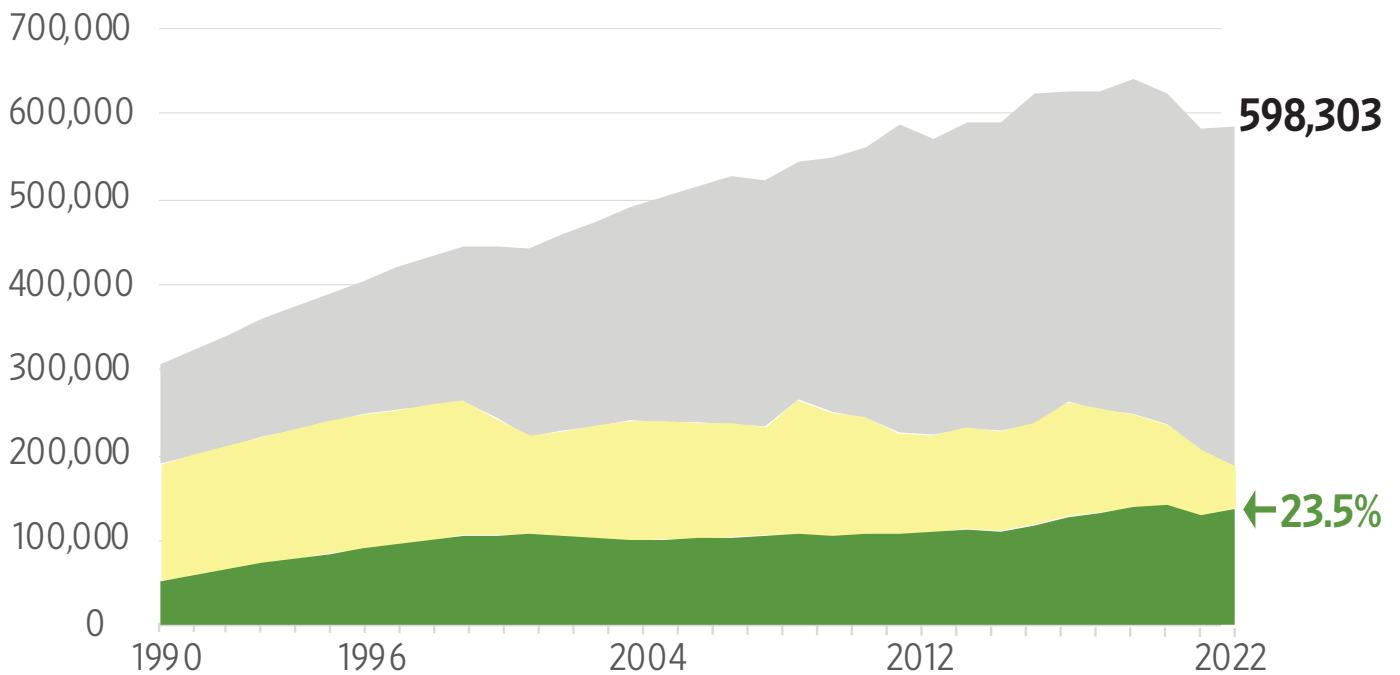


Holistic Vision of Community Life Engagement and Employment – the goal

Community life engagement (CLE) is a term describing people, with and without disabilities, involved in the community. We dialogue about CLE not as another program, but the outcomes people achieve or activities they engage in like volunteering, taking a class, participating in a faith community, and accessing public services.

Current Landscape

35 years of data collection from the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI)'s Access to Integrated Employment project on day and employment outcomes continues to show a steady increase in numbers of people in non-work day services compared to facility-based and integrated employment services.



This chart illustrates how three categories of supports continue to change over time: non-work services, facility-based work, and integrated employment. Together with member states we focus on the shifts taking place in our field. The trends serve as indicators of change and choices leading to studying the influences of changes in policy, training, organizational change, leadership, strategic goal setting, funding methodologies, and collaborative partnerships. Our research is possible only with individual and system-level data from state systems across the services reflected in this chart. **Integrated employment services have reached 23.5% of all services – the highest mark in our national survey since 2001.**

People with disabilities continue to be unemployed at rates higher than the general population. As a complement to employment goals, CLE is part of a holistic vision for a person’s whole life. CLE can present networking opportunities or a form of exploration to discover the person’s interests, strengths, and challenges. CLE can also wrap around a person’s job if they are already working, as well as retirement life for people no longer working. As states continue to better define services supporting CLE outcomes there is an opportunity to reflect on state goals and activities using the [CLE State Agency Self-Assessment](#), based on ICI’s Community Life Engagement Guideposts.



State Employment Leadership Network

Case managers support informed choice, connect people to services, and coordinate and monitor the delivery of those services. For employment, those services can include state-funded, Medicaid HCBS waivers, vocational rehabilitation, and k-12 education agencies. Coordinating across all systems drives the need for building competencies, ideally raising the confidence level in conversations about employment. With a goal of building and reinforcing needed skills, SELN member states have access to the Supporting a Vision for Employment course. Celebrating this past year’s course statistics!

“I really enjoyed this course! I loved the videos showing other individuals find their dream jobs and companies finding ways to use their skills. Overall this was an amazing course!”

—Learner from Massachusetts

“This training would be helpful to all case managers and would improve the collaboration between VR, providers and case managers.”

—Learner from Indiana

The real-life scenarios and practice scenarios were most helpful because I could see how the information given was used and implemented in those examples.”

—Learner from Utah

The format was great, very interactive, and did not seem daunting like other online courses.”

—Learner from Texas

“The course was very informative. I feel it covered what is needed to help me understand supported employment and my role as a support coordinator.”

—Learner from Georgia

485 learners

74% overall completion rate
(9% increase from previous year)

93% agreed content covered matched their learning needs

99% agreed the exercises furthered their understanding of the topics discussed

94% would recommend this training to other people



The SELN Hub online community is hosted for member state contacts and partners. This space is for states to search valuable resources, ask candid questions, sign up for SELN events, and connect with peers in other states. The SELN team curates and facilitates the SELN Hub to help members cut through the noise, keeping employment at the forefront of policy and implementation decisions. We regularly update the site with monthly network meeting materials, annual meeting reflections, and supports for the eLearning course.

**Selected Hub activity:
July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024**

Resources covered a variety of topics related to employment and systems change. Coming from diverse sources and member states, federal partners, ICI, NASDDDS and more, these resources include:

- » ICI publications: state promising practices, Think Work tools, Think College reports, and ES-Coach resources.
- » Guides, tools, fact sheets and resource libraries created by the Office of Disability Employment Policy.
- » FAQs and guides on benefits navigation such as SSI, SSDI, and ABLE accounts
- » Information on cultural competency, dual diagnosis of IDD and mental health, person-centered and language access planning.
- » Links to resources and supports for accessible transportation.

Discussions increased 20% from last year with recent discussions including:

- » State as Model Employers
- » Eliminating Documentation Redundancy Initiatives
- » Remote Learning and working from home options
- » State level Guidance on Held-Contracts
- » WIOA State Plans - Language on IDD and Medicaid Partnerships and Opportunity for Comment
- » DOJ Q&A on Application of Olmstead Integration to Day and Employment Services
- » DOL Soliciting Stakeholder Input on 14(c)
- » 14(c) Study



The SELNHub is currently going through a major refresh and will be re-launched in 2025.

Features will include a streamlined interface, state-specific resources, topical pages, and more, to make the site easier to use and find needed information!



“All you need is the plan, the road map, and the courage to press on to your destination.”

—Earl Nightingale



Our annual meeting theme, “Are We There Yet” prompted discussions on where is “there”, where are we headed, who is leading the charge, and what are we encountering along the way? (spoiler: no one felt we were “there” yet!) Captured by the graphic recorder were comments defining “where is there” in our shared work. These sentiments were consistent across attendees illustrating the wide range of opportunities for change across our systems. States are supported to regularly revisit what the goal is for integrated employment outcomes; circumstances, resources and service systems need to shift.

“WHERE IS THERE?”

EVERYONE HAS A CAREER PLAN + THE INFRASTRUCTURE IS BUILT

“THERE” WOULD BE IF THOSE NUMBERS WERE FLIPPED

A LOW PERCENT OF DOLLARS ARE GOING TOWARD INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT

\$ FOR FACILITY-BASED EMPLOYMENT
\$ FOR CIE

I DON'T HAVE A JOB BUT I WANT ONE
48% OF PEOPLE

“THERE” IS WHERE EVERYONE WHO WANTS TO WORK CAN WITHOUT BARRIERS

GRADUATE
INCLUSIVE POST-SECONDARY ED.
INTERNSHIP
WORK

HOW HAS THE PANDEMIC SHIFTED OUR THINKING ABOUT THE INVESTMENTS WE SHOULD BE MAKING?

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN THE LABOR MARKET HAVE DONE WELL POST-PANDEMIC...
...YET ARE STILL EMPLOYED AT WAY LOWER RATES THAN THOSE WITHOUT DISABILITIES

NON-WORK
FACILITY-BASED WORK
COMPETITIVE INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT

YOU CAN SEE SLOW & STEADY PROGRESS— BUT THERE'S STILL **SO FAR TO GO**

I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW DIFFERENT THESE CONSIDERATIONS WOULD BE NOW

... AS WE RETURN FROM A PERIOD OF CLOSURES

UNPAID FACILITY-BASED ACTIVITIES

UNPAID COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

THE STATE OF THE STATES

NO WORK MOUNTAIN

HOW ARE PEOPLE SPENDING THEIR DAYS?
INDIVIDUAL JOBS
COMMUNITY BUSINESS THAT EMPLOYS PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
BAKERY

GROUP-SUPPORTED JOB

LIMITING BELIEFS
HE CAN'T...
HE'LL NEVER...

NOT A VALUE AS A YOUNG PERSON = NOT A VALUE AS AN ADULT

WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE A JOB? NOPE

CHANGES IN INDUSTRIES

“SELN STATES HAVE ALWAYS OUTPERFORMED OTHER STATES.”

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Monthly Network meeting topics 2023-2024

July, 2023: Membership year kick off and annual business meeting to review key priorities.

September, 2023: Planning for the annual meeting with breakout sessions on defining leadership, measuring outcomes, and approaching change. Discussed challenges related to prevocational services, and the idea of an occupational code to standardize direct support professional work.

November, 2023: Annual meeting feedback emphasized strong member interest in sustaining connections. “Open mic” opportunity for members to describe recent accomplishments: Improved Employment First website and CLE provider study in Ohio; prevocational service discussions in Indiana and Washington.

December, 2023: Discussed progress, targets, and metrics for competitive integrated employment, emphasizing the need for innovation, collaboration, and capacity-building in employment services.

January, 2024: Discussed data from a survey of states’ policies and strategies for serving those with high support needs. One-slide challenge kicked off with Texas’ cross-agency Employment First initiatives.

February, 2024: SELN Winter Showcase

March, 2024: Ohio’s one-slide challenge on the Blueprint for Adult Day and Employment Services work group’s support for innovating community life engagement services in Ohio, and Washington’s support for students through the outreach, job foundation, job development and job support phases of transition from school to employment.

April, 2024: Rehabilitation Service Administration’s 2022 statistics on services to people with IDD, a brief “lightning” survey for SELN state leads about employment professional qualifications, and kick off supporting productive collaboration between Vocational Rehabilitation and other partners.

May, 2024: Oklahoma one-slide challenge about successfully re-engaging a strong partnership between DDS and VRS, and a presentation about the impact of implementing prevocational services on states’ employment service models.

June, 2024: Tonia Ferguson, CSAVR Director of Leg SELN Winter Showcase islative Affairs, joined to learn with and from member states addressing reasons to collaborate across the IDD and VR systems, strategies facilitating collaboration, and what each system wanted the other system to know/understand.



SELN Winter Showcase Project Presentations

- » Community Life Engagement (CLE) Projects
- » GATOR and CYVYC
- » Center on Employment and Inclusion’s (CEI) Workplace Supports Training
- » Cultural Competencies and Equity Initiatives
- » Minnesota Transformation Initiative
- » Employment Outcomes Information Systems
- » The University of Arizona Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities



Throughout our annual accomplishments reports we select a sampling of interesting discussions, notable topics, state achievements and threads on future topics to explore. Everyday state teams are faced with choices and decisions, many taking longer to make than any would like. Those delays are often unavoidable as input is gathered from a wide range of stakeholders, champions and funders. To continue these valuable conversations we need strong leadership all across our public systems of support. We celebrate those who have and who are soon to step up in these important roles. Expect the SELN to dive deeper in to leadership opportunities as we seek to grow deep competencies in all states.

LEADING FROM WHERE?

A GOOD LEADER IS SOMEONE WHO...

BREAKOUT SESSION A

- ★ **ASKS OTHERS FOR HELP**
 - YOU CAN'T MAKE DECISIONS IF YOU DON'T KNOW HOW IT WORKS
 - HAS THIS GUY EVER EVEN WRITTEN AN ISP?
- ★ **LISTENS TO PROVIDERS, STAFF, AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**
 - PROVIDER
 - ADVOCATE
 - DIRECT SUPPORT WORKER
 - PARENT
- ★ **KNOWS HOW TO NAVIGATE TO GET THINGS DONE**
 - IS A GOOD BUREAUCRAT
- ★ **CELEBRATES MILESTONES & SUCCESSSES IN ORDER TO STAY FOCUSED ON THE LONG-TERM VISION & GOAL**
 - ... CREATES AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE THINGS WILL LAST BEYOND THEIR TERM OF LEADERSHIP
 - 2023
 - 2023
- ★ **TALKS THE TALK AND WALKS THE WALK**
 - SUPPORTS W/ WORDS & IDEAS
 - WE'VE BEEN TRYING TO TELL YOU FOR 10 YEARS
 - WILLINGNESS TO PLAY HARD BALL
 - WE'RE NOT JUST HANDING OUT THESE UNITS LIKE CANDY
 - TO HOLD SELF & OTHERS ACCOUNTABLE...
 - ... & TO BE ABLE TO SAY PUBLICLY: WE'VE GOT WORK TO DO!
- ★ **UNDERSTANDS EACH ENTITY'S POINT OF VIEW**
 - "WE WERE A WAY BETTER TEAM WHEN WE HAD SOMEONE WHO CARED ABOUT THE PEOPLE."
 - NOT ONLY CONNECTS WITH PEOPLE, BUT CAN TEACH THEM TOO
 - HOW WAS YOUR WEEKEND?
 - THANK YOU SO MUCH
 - DID YOU HAVE A GOOD HOLIDAY?
 - I ALWAYS LEARN SO MUCH FROM YOU
- ★ **FEELS LIKE A HIERARCHY**
 - THERE'S VERTICAL
 - FEELS LIKE SHARED PURPOSE & RESPONSIBILITY
- ★ **FEELS LIKE HORIZONTAL LEADERSHIP**
 - WE'VE KEPT THE MOMENTUM GOING BY PASSING THE VISION FROM ONE LEADER TO THE NEXT
 - CONNECTS WITH OTHERS ON A PERSONAL LEVEL
 - BUSINESS, BUSINESS, BUSINESS

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THANK YOU TO THE 2023–2024 STATE LEADS AND DIRECTORS!



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www.selnhub.org/accomplishments

Keep your eyes open for unexpected opportunities.

—Guy Kawasaki