



New York **Makes Work Pay**

Developing a path to employment for New Yorkers with disabilities

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Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) Brief

Lessons Learned from the New York Disability Program Navigator Project

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INTRODUCTION

This Issues Brief: “Lessons Learned from the New York State Disability Program Navigator (DPN) Project” provides a background and overview of the national DPN initiative and successes and challenges experienced by New York State in implementing the project. It identifies a number of effective, promising practices that have resulted from deploying Disability Program Navigators (referenced in this document as “DPNs” or “Navigators”) throughout the state including those that: 1). Build the capacity of employment service providers to provide equal access to employment and employment related services to New Yorkers with disabilities, and 2). Build the capacity of the business community in New York State to train, hire, accommodate, and promote qualified New Yorkers with disabilities along their chosen employment path. This Issues Brief also identifies ways to capitalize on the strong established infrastructure and effective practices of the New York DPN Project wherever they exist. Through the support of the New York Medicaid Infrastructure Grant “New York Makes Work Pay” (NYMWP) Navigators are engaged and encouraged to continue to bring their services to scale across the entire New York workforce system for the benefit of New Yorkers with disabilities.

Understanding how DPNs can continue to be an important resource for job-seekers with disabilities and for employers begins by first understanding the infrastructure that has been established within the One-Stop Career Centers supporting the work of Navigators since the New York DPN Project began in 2003. Further context is provided by describing the national DPN Initiative and its intent and aims and how the New York State DPN Project worked within and beyond that structure. While the New York State DPN project has achieved significant outcomes across a range of indicators, challenges exist that may affect the success of DPNs to help One-Stop Career Centers increase employment outcomes for job seekers with disabilities in the future.

Since 2003, significant improvements in infrastructure and a number of effective practices have been developed by DPNs (aka “Navigators”) across the state that have increased physical, programmatic and attitudinal access to One-Stop Career Center services for job seekers with disabilities and their Local Workforce Investment Areas (LWIAs). In a number of areas a strong understanding and high level of support exists for the unique role of the Navigator. These select New York Navigators and their LWIAs mirror in many ways other progressive statewide DPN Projects and/or local level Navigators and their LWIAs across the country.

This Issues Brief will identify the following elements that might be considered as New York State and its Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council (MISCC) and NYMWP develops strategies to build upon the experiences and expertise of Navigators to make comprehensive and sustainable improvements in the rate, quality and sustainability of employment among New Yorkers with disabilities:

- Improved understanding of the DPN role within the One-Stop system that would benefit from further study and possible replication.

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- Results of online surveys, phone interviews, and a two day New York State DPN Training Forum sponsored by NYMWP and the observations and recommendations for improving and sustaining DPN services.
- This paper will also provide analysis of some of the issues related to the national DPN Initiative that are relevant to the goals of the New York DPN Project to establish seamless access to workforce development tools and supports to job seekers with disabilities. This analysis will include recommendations for next steps during NYMWP project year 2010, including opportunities for partnership and recommendations for restructuring the project to maximize the utility of existing infrastructure.

BACKGROUND: NEW YORK MAKES WORK PAY

New York State's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG), *New York Makes Work Pay* (NYMWP) is a statewide initiative intended to dramatically improve the rate of employment among people with disabilities. It is funded by the Center for Medicaid Services for calendar years 2009 and 2010 and overseen by New York State's Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council (MISCC). The New York State Office of Mental Health and Research Foundation for Mental Hygiene are the state's designated project management and fiscal agent and Syracuse University's Burton Blatt Institute and Cornell University's Employment and Disability Institute are responsible for project implementation.

The goals of *New York Makes Work Pay* (NYMWP) are to:

- Remove barriers to employment and a better economic future
- Improve cross-agency sustainable, coordinated systems of supports and services
- Engage the business community in collaboration with government and employment service providers to recruit, hire, retain and advance workers with disabilities

NYMWP will accomplish these goals by implementing its comprehensive strategic work plan with activities transcending improvements in employment policy, practice and through research and materials development and dissemination. NYMWP emphasizes participation of people with disabilities and their families and advocates, employers and disability services providers and other stakeholders to identify best practices, implement strategies consistent with its mission and evaluate the success of those activities.

BACKGROUND: NATIONAL DPN INITIATIVE

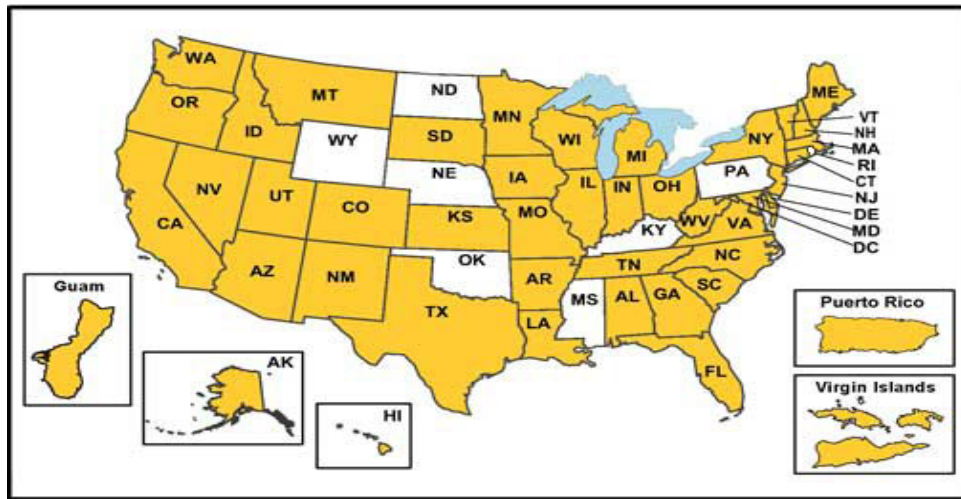
(*the following information is taken from the DPN national technical assistance and training provider's website at: <http://DPNavigator.net>)

Under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (DOLETA) directed funds and resources to improve workforce services for individuals with disabilities, including those with psychiatric and other non-visible

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disabilities. Funding for the Disability Program Navigator (DPN) Initiative was in response to barriers to One-Stop services including physical and program accessibility, and meaningful and effective participation of job seekers in the workforce investment system.

Since 2003, approximately \$125 million has been spent by DOLETA along with \$12 million from the Social Security Administration (SSA) to jointly fund, implement, pilot, and evaluate the DPN Initiative within the state level workforce system. Currently, 42 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico are implementing DPN projects (see map below – DPN projects are represented in yellow).



The DPN Initiative focuses on developing new and ongoing partnerships to achieve seamless, comprehensive, and integrated access to services, creating systemic change, and expanding the workforce investment system's capacity to serve customers with disabilities and employers.

Complex rules surrounding entitlement programs, along with fear of losing cash assistance and health benefits, can often discourage people with disabilities from working. In order to address these concerns, DOLETA and SSA established the DPN Initiative to help people with disabilities “navigate” through the enormous challenges of seeking employment. A Navigator will do this by:

- Guiding One-Stop staff in helping people with disabilities access and navigate the complex provisions of various programs that impact their ability to gain/retain employment.
- Developing linkages and collaborating on an ongoing basis with employers to facilitate employment for persons with disabilities.
- Developing partnerships to achieve integrated services, systemic change, and expand the capacity of the One-Stop Career Center to serve customers with disabilities.
- Facilitating the transition of in- or out-of-school youth with disabilities to obtain employment and economic self-sufficiency.

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- Conducting outreach to agencies/organizations that serve people with disabilities.
- Serving as resources on SSA's: work incentives/employment support programs through its Work Incentives, Planning, and Assistance (WIPA) program; Protection and Advocacy systems (P&As); and employment-related demonstration projects.
- Serving as resources on programs that impact the ability of persons with disabilities to enter and remain in the workforce.

The myriad activities a Navigator might initiate and/or engage in while fulfilling his/her duties has evolved over time. However, the operational definition of the Navigator has remained consistent over the past seven years with only minor alterations from the national DPN program office at the U.S. DOLETA. That role is defined as follows:

What a Disability Program Navigator (DPN) IS ...

- A Systems Change Agent. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 1. Improved access to One-Stop services through readily available assistive technology.
 2. Development and implementation of a reasonable accommodation policy and procedure.
 3. Change in relationship with a specific collaborator, including negotiation of co-location and/or MOU.
 4. Increased access & use of Individual Training Accounts by job seekers with disabilities.
 5. Training on serving customers with disabilities as part of One-Stop new-hire orientation.
- A Problem Solver. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 1. Identifying appropriate community resources for job seekers with disabilities to remove barriers to employment (i.e., training, transportation, housing, assistive technology, etc.).
 2. Working together with the CWIC Specialist to show customers how to use work incentives to reach employment goals.
 3. Finding the answers to questions that One-Stop staff have regarding the ADA or other disability-related topics.
 4. Providing consultation to employers on providing reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities.
- A Relationship Builder. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 1. Coordinating One-Stop orientations, tours, and Open Houses targeting the disability community.
 2. Regularly participating in community events, resource fairs and business roundtables as a One-Stop representative.
 3. Consulting with mandated and non-mandated partners regularly about accessibility, accommodations and other disability-related topics.
 4. Organizing or joining an interagency collaboration which focuses on accessibility, sharing of resources and/or improving employment outcomes for persons with disabilities.

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- A Resource. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 1. Being available to answer questions staff have on serving job seekers with disabilities.
 2. Offering guidelines to One-Stop staff on interacting with people with a wide range of disabilities.
 3. Presenting orientations on WIA and One-Stop services to a wide variety of community service providers.
 4. Coordinating workshops in One-Stops on disclosure, reasonable accommodations, work incentives and job seekers' rights and responsibilities under the ADA.
 5. Offering information to the business community on hiring/retaining individuals with disabilities.

- A Facilitator. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 1. Bringing together multiple partners who are working with one individual to foster a collaborative effort.
 2. Coordinating staff training on a variety of disability-related topics.
 3. Improving communication between the One-Stop and partners by educating both about their systems.
 4. Bridging the gaps between the business and human service communities by organizing forums for discussion.

What a Disability Program Navigator (DPN) IS NOT ...

- A Case Manager.
- A Front-Line Staff Person in a One-Stop Career Center.
- A Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor/Specialist.
- A SSA Community Work Incentive Coordinator (CWIC)

Due to the high numbers of customers with disabilities that seek services at One-Stop Career Centers that also receive some form of Social Security benefit, the Social Security Administration (SSA) stepped forward to provide initial support in the form of a \$12 million contribution to this demonstration project. In the years that have followed, SSA has continued to support the DPN Initiative and has pursued and promoted strategies for supporting the DPN position within the One-Stop Career Center through the use of the Ticket to Work program and Employment Networks. This unique federal level partnership is one example, out of many, in which the DPN Initiative has proven to be an innovative approach to addressing the multiple barriers to employment experienced by individuals with disabilities.

BACKGROUND: NEW YORK DPN PROJECT

In New York State there are currently 82 comprehensive and affiliate One-Stop Career Centers. According to information from New York State's Department of Labor, in Program Year 2008 New York's One Stop Career Centers served over 1.3 million individuals in both Wagner-Peyser core and intensive services and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) related training services. Of that number just over 60,000 individuals, or 4.6% of the total number of individuals accessing One-Stop Career Center services, disclosed a disability. Since many individuals with a disability

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may choose not to disclose, the actual number of people with disabilities served by One-Stop Career Centers is likely to be much higher.

The U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (DOLETA) allocated funding to states to implement the DPN Initiative over a number of years beginning in 2003. New York State was one of seventeen states that received the funding in Round 1. The grant was awarded to the New York State Department of Labor (NYS DOL), which has oversight for the grant. New York State currently has 52 full and part-time Navigators, who are currently working within the state's local One-Stop Career Centers.

When the New York DPN Project first began, the focus for the Navigator position was rooted in the systems change model as it was envisioned by the national U.S. DOLETA. The strong focus on systems change was enhanced and supported by state level technical assistance for the first two years of the New York DPN Project, under separate contract. New York State's decision to fund Navigators through Federal and State sources and to provide technical assistance and training through state contract was intended to build both capacity and sustainability and help improve the capacity of the One-Stop Career Centers to better serve individuals with disabilities. Although their role was envisioned as change agents, trainers and facilitators, over the years since the DPN project was implemented, a number of factors gradually led to a shift in the role of many New York Navigators away from these activities into a more direct service model. In addition, changes in NYS DOL leadership as well as the end of the state level technical assistance contract after approximately 2 years, together with the uncertainty of continued federal funding for the DPN Initiative, contributed to increased turnover of DPN project staff. Consequently, although New York State leads the nation in the number of Navigators it deploys across the state, the future role and future funding for DPNs is unclear.

Since 2008, the New York DPN Project has been led by Elaine Kost within NYS DOL, who is assigned at 50% FTE on the New York DPN Project in addition to serving as the Federal Bond Coordinator and coordinating Re-entry Programs for NYS DOL for her remaining time. Under Ms. Kost's leadership, and with assistance from NDI Consulting, Inc. the national training and technical assistance provider to the DPN Initiative and the New York Makes Work Pay (NYMWP) Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, a renewed effort has been underway since late 2009 to provide clarity of focus, consistency of vision, and a higher degree of coordination of disability and employment related activities within the New York DPN Project and among its partners at both the state and local levels. NYMWP views Navigators as a key component in assisting people with disabilities to use mainstream employment services to obtain jobs.

The value that DPNs can bring to One-Stop Career Centers as a vital resource on employment and disability issues has been recognized by other state agencies, and in 2009 a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between New York State Department of Labor (NYS DOL) and New York's Vocational & Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) to help sustain the DPN project through Program Year (PY) 2010, or June 30th of 2011. This MOU includes a financial contribution to the New York DPN Project in the amount of \$1.2 million dollars, or the equivalent of eight full-time DPN positions over the course of two program years. Acquisition of VESID funding did not change the role of the Navigator into a Vocational

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Rehabilitation (VR) counselor. Instead it opens the door to a stronger partnership between NYS DOL and VESID in serving people with disabilities through the One-Stop Career Centers. VESID appointed a Vocational Rehabilitation Manager to work directly with the DPN State Lead to insure that both agencies are working together to insure the integrity of the MOU. VESID leadership participates in the monthly New York State DPN conference calls. This close collaboration has enabled both agencies to be pro-active on behalf of mutual customers with disabilities. Communication between both agencies has improved. The Navigators now benefit from a direct connection to VESID along with a clear vision of VESID policies and procedures and how these policies and procedures impact job seekers with disabilities served by both agencies.

LESSONS LEARNED

In December 2009, BBI conducted a series of online surveys and phone interviews of New York Navigators and selected DPNs from other state DPN projects to gather baseline information about their role and their challenges and successes in assisting people with disabilities to access and use One-Stop Career Center services. This information was augmented by a two day Learning Community, sponsored by the New York Makes Work Pay (NY MWP) Medicaid Infrastructure Grant and entitled “New York DPN Training Forum”, held in December 2009. This event was attended by a majority of New York State Navigators, to exchange information and obtain their insights into ways to support DPNs throughout the state. Key highlights of this information gathering effort are presented below:

Methodology

Twenty-nine of the fifty-two New York Navigators participated in the *New York Makes Work Pay* (NY MWP) DPN Online Survey in August and September of 2009, with twenty-two Navigators completing the survey. Ten New York Navigators participated in follow up phone interviews with staff of the Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University. Additional information was gathered from New York State DPNs at the December 2009 two day Learning Community. The information contained in this “Lessons Learned” section is generated by both new and mature Navigators perceptions and experiences over the past seven years of the New York DPN Project. This information has been augmented with input from the New York DPN Project Lead and national technical assistance liaisons.

1. Defining the role of the Disability Program Navigator (DPN)

As can be seen in the “Background: National DPN Initiative” section of this paper the DPN, or “Navigator”, position covers a broad range of activities in which the Navigator is expected to engage with the local level workforce system and its mandated and non-mandated partners to bring about positive systems change and increased access to employment and other related services for job seekers with disabilities. The following factors very quickly emerged through the survey and interview process as being significant challenges to New York Navigators in effectively implementing the role of the DPN:

- 1) The all encompassing nature of the position as envisioned by U.S. DOLETA and its expectation of far-reaching impact.

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- 2) The accompanying confusion on the part of many local level contractors hiring and supervising this position on how to interpret this position and incorporate it into the local One-Stop system structure.
- 3) The lack of a baseline and benchmarks against which to measure the impact of the position.

Many Navigators interviewed expressed either their frustration with these issues and/or resignation that they are powerless to improve the situation. While all DPNs reported working on employment issues for people with disabilities, the level at which they worked differed widely with the majority of those we talked with (approximately 60%) worked in a one-on-one capacity with the individual with disabilities, primarily providing information and referral services. Of this 60% of Navigators who solely provide direct services to individual consumers; it appears that half of these DPNs understand that their role is intended to work at a more strategic systems level. The majority of New York Navigators who work directly with consumers and without the involvement of other One-Stop staff work in one of two capacities, either as information and referral or as a job coach/job developer. Comments like those below are reflective of most of those we received:

Ms. Kost, the New York DPN Project Lead offered that *“Many of the Navigators feel that they want to be considered a “team player” and hesitate to reinforce the original intent of the program.”*

Following are some of the comments related to providing one-on-one direct service to individual job seekers with disabilities accessing the One-Stop Career Centers that were made by New York Navigators during one-on-one phone interviews.

“I do my own little thing here. I let them (One-Stop staff) know, if there is someone with a disability send them to me.”

“Whenever someone fills out the form (application for services at the One-Stop Career Center) and marks “disability” I make sure I get that form sent to me. I will take it and do a follow up call to see if they could use any services, find out what disability they have. Many could use VESID services.”

“Sometimes they call me to do a little job-coaching.”

“I don’t write resumes for people. I do information and referral.”

“For high functioning consumers with disabilities they can go about the task on their own, or I tell them about VESID. That is really it with the high functioning consumers unless there is another problem. Sometimes I get a consumer who used to have a career but finds themselves unemployed with no familial supports and needs a place to live. There are a lot of housing issues. I try to give them some referrals to appropriate agencies that can help them find housing. For lower functioning consumers I help them put a resume together, because most of

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the time those consumers are not even able to go to the resume writing workshop. A few have tried the workshops at the One-Stop but it is too fast paced. For lower functioning consumers I refer them to VESID.”

“For a lot of the higher functioning consumers who have resumes and work experiences and maybe are recently unemployed these are people who are capable of going to an interview workshop and resume writing workshop and going online and searching for jobs. They can look for work on their own, and I don’t have to worry about those consumers so much. The consumers I worry about are the lower functioning consumers who cannot find work on their own. I had a consumer who had worked for years and was placed in a job by a vendor of VESID, even after all these years she is not able to find work on her own, and she had a job coach originally. She needs VESID services again (a job coach) to help her find work someplace else.”

As can be seen by these comments, the DPN position has been interpreted and accepted by a number of New York Navigators and/or their local level supervisors within the LWIAs as being one that provides direct one-on-one service to individual jobseekers, as opposed to being a position that builds the capacity of the One-Stop Career Center as a whole to be able to successfully serve this targeted population. In fact, the use of the term “targeted population” when discussing those who experience “disability” could be called into question as it seems to imply that disability is a stand-alone demographic within the One-Stop environment, like veterans or youth, when in reality disability is an issue that effects and has ramifications within all demographics being served within the workforce investment system.

2. Leadership and Buy-In

National Level Considerations

At the national level, the national DPN Program Office within U.S. DOLETA can be credited with creating and sustaining this innovative initiative despite threats to funding levels. The DPN Initiative was originally designed to be a two-year demonstration project. However, because of the broad scope of the work and the strong buy-in from the local, state and national level, the funding stream was extended year by year with fluctuations in the amount of federal level funding being offset by state and local contributions from 2005 through 2009. There have been many challenges in taking a two-year demonstration project and continuing it over the course of four additional years. The premise of the two-year demonstration project was to provide states with an opportunity to innovate and develop the DPN position within the local level One-Stop Career Centers with general guidance provided by the national level. Implementation details were left to the local operating authority. U.S. DOLETA has relied upon states to provide information on defining the role of their Navigators, while at the same time states have been looking to the national level for details on what this position is designed to do and how to implement the theory into practice. This ambiguity has not yet been adequately resolved.

Initially the language from U.S. DOLETA describing the DPN position stated that among its other activities that the DPN position would, “assist people with disabilities in navigating the

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One-Stop system". This language was widely interpreted by many states to mean that the Navigator position itself would provide direct one-on-one service to individual job seekers with disabilities entering the One-Stop Career Centers. While this language has been modified in recent years to read that the DPN position will be responsible for, "*guiding One-Stop staff in assisting people with disabilities in navigating the services of the One-Stop system*" to more accurately reflect the systems level role the DPN position is meant to perform, this updated language has not made its way onto the Round 1 New York DPN Project's language as can be seen reflected on the New York State Department of Labor (NYS DOL) website or New York State DPN Brochure.

The NYS DOL web-page on the New York DPN Project stated as of 1/21/10:

"New York State is participating in a national pilot to support dedicated Disability Program Navigator (DPN) positions in local One-Stop Centers. Under this initiative, DPNs serve as disability resource specialists to help individuals with disabilities "navigate" through available programs and services in the local One-Stop system (italics added for emphasis). The DPNs work to increase employment opportunities and the self-sufficiency of persons with disabilities by linking them to employers to achieve successful entry or re-entry into the workforce."

In late 2009, the national DPN Program Office sent out a request asking state and territory DPN Project Leads for the number of people with disabilities served by Navigators in order to "measure" the impact of the DPN position. This request created some confusion among states that were following the DPN as systems change model by appearing to link success of state DPN Projects to the provision of direct services.

U.S. DOLETA provided general guidance to states on issues that local Workforce Investment Areas (LWIAs) could feasibly attempt to address in coordination with their Navigators and provided opportunities for LWIAs to exercise creativity in implementing their initiatives. This flexibility also provided opportunities for the national office to learn from the innovations undertaken by state demonstration projects. However, this strategy also led to variations of interpretation around how to implement the DPN position across states. DPN Project Leads were required to report on their state's progress in addressing barriers to employment for people with disabilities in the One-Stop system. Since Navigators might spend their time working on a variety of issues across a broad spectrum in addition to meeting individually with customers, performance reporting that would indicate success in any or all of these areas proved not only difficult to quantify, but also difficult to track in a uniform way.

In the past four years the national training and technical assistance provider has developed the practice of hiring top performing Navigators and state leads to provide guidance, training, materials and technical assistance directly to DPN Project Leads and local level Navigators. This has been recognized as a best practice at the national level and has resulted in major gains in efficiency and effectiveness of the subsequent rounds of DPN Projects (Rounds 2, 3, and 4) who have accessed this resource. However, among Round 1 DPN Projects such as New York this resource has been vastly under-utilized.

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State Level Considerations

The New York DPN Project receives a great deal of support from the New York State Department of Labor (NYS DOL). In addition, it receives recognition by other state partners for its important role in assisting people with disabilities in accessing One-Stop services. For example, 1.2 million dollars or the equivalent of eight DPN positions in the One-Stop Career Centers has been contributed by Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) for two years of New York DPN funding (PY 2009 and PY 2010). Changes over the years in state level leadership for the New York DPN Project has made maintaining a consistent contact and vision for the DPN Initiative and providing consistent direction to both local and state levels quite challenging. New York Navigators expressed appreciation for the monthly conference calls, one-on-one technical assistance, guidance, resources and feedback that Ms. Kost has provided over the past 18 months.

Under the process developed by NYS DOL, local Workforce Investment Boards, County Employment & Training Departments, and local Human Service Agencies were given authority either through funding allocations or contracts to hire Navigators within their regions. Navigators were in place in each LWIA and brought a wide range of skills and experiences to their positions. They were given a four page job description with supporting materials describing their roles based upon U.S. DOLETA's direction with input from management within each One-Stop Career Center. From the beginning of this initiative, the role of the Navigator has continued to evolve, and across New York State the functions of the Navigator vary greatly. This is largely due to the lack of clarity around the role of the Navigator for the reasons cited earlier and the flexibility each LWIA was given in implementing this position. Some Navigators spent a majority of their time providing direct services within the One-Stop Career Centers, while other Navigators were directed to address more broad and systemic issues to increase employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities accessing One-Stop services.

For example, DPNs use a customer tracking log that was developed at the inception of the Round 1 New York DPN Project that records direct service delivery that can contradict what a Navigator understands their role to be as a systems change agent. Navigators complete this customer tracking log as a part of a required monthly report sent to NYS DOL. While the Navigator quoted below has developed a 'work around' that satisfies reporting requirements while maintaining their systems focus, ambiguities remain:

"In terms of the monthly report at the state level, the customer tracking log that includes initial date of contact with the customer, and the system building tracking...my question is "Why do I get this?". I feel like I get a lot of mixed messages from the state DPN monthly calls. For example on the state monthly call they will say "When you are working with a customer that has X you should do Y". I don't work one on one with customers so I use this customer tracking form to monitor how I work with my One-Stop staff around serving people with disabilities."

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Local Level Considerations

At the local level, One-Stop Career Centers received funding and guidance from New York State to incorporate Disability Program Navigators into their staffing structure. Local Workforce Investment Board (LWIB) Directors were provided the same direction that each Round 1 DPN Project state received about the multiple goals that Navigators were tasked with addressing, and based on this, hired or contracted Navigators. While most One-Stop Career Centers embraced the idea of additional staffing in their centers, the specific job duties that resulted for each Navigator were greatly influenced by the needs of individual One-Stop Career Centers, and the perceived function local managers felt the Navigator should fulfill. From the original concept imparted by the national office, the fiscal, logistical and technical assistance provided by the State, and the local interpretation of the Navigator initiative, each Navigator position was implemented. Based on lessons learned from the New York State DPN Initiative, it is clear that the reason behind such wide discrepancies in the way individual Navigators implemented their position in the various local One-Stop Career Centers to which they were assigned can be attributed to the multiple layers of interpretation that took place at each stage of the process in defining the role of the DPN.

Conclusion

The DPN Initiative has benefited from strong leadership and buy-in at all levels, which explains its continued existence and funding well beyond the life of the original two-year demonstration funding from U.S. DOLETA. However, it is clear that there has been confusion from the top down regarding the specific role of the Navigator. It is also equally clear, even without uniform measures of performance, that the influence of the DPN Initiative has been a positive one. During a recent Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Reauthorization Listening Session held in October, 2009, several questions were asked to be addressed by those that provided testimony, including, *“What is working well in WIA, and should therefore be continued?”* Many individuals took this opportunity to speak out about the improvements to access and inclusion made on behalf of individuals with disabilities through the efforts of the national DPN Initiative. Mr. Randal Wier, Vice President, Quality Systems, Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas summed it up in his statement, *“The Disability Navigator initiative provides resources that have transformed the workforce system by expanding opportunities available to persons with disabilities for all programs in the one-stop system”*.

While the commitment to the ideals of the DPN Initiative exists on the part of national, state and local leadership there have been challenges in providing consistent guidance and feedback to Navigators from all three of these levels. The broad systems level approach to solving accessibility issues has caused confusion for some Navigators and their local workforce investment areas. However, the ambiguity in the language defining the DPN role has conversely allowed others the freedom to innovate and achieve systems level results.

3. Technical Assistance

Targeted, consistent and ongoing technical assistance was identified by both the New York Navigators and their DPN Project Lead as being a vital component for imbuing local level

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Navigators with the ability to understand and effectively implement their role within the local workforce investment system.

When funding began for the round 1 New York DPN Project the New York State Department of Labor (NYS DOL) set up a contract to provide technical assistance, which was awarded to Advocates for Human Potential Inc., a technical assistance consulting firm with offices in Albany, NY. New York Navigators who were interviewed and who experienced the two years of technical assistance provided by this contractor unanimously agreed that this level of targeted support in the beginning of the project was a significant factor in the New York DPN Project's initial success. Once this level of technical assistance was withdrawn, an event that was accompanied by shifts in leadership at the state level, a change in course among newly hired Navigators and their local level supervisors resulted in the transition away from addressing training of staff and increasing general and broad-based programmatic and physical access to the One-Stops and towards a more one-on-one referral and/or job development role of the DPN.

While technical assistance has been offered throughout the course of Round 1 New York's DPN Project by a national technical assistance and training provider contracted by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (DOLETA), first through the University of Iowa's Law, Health Policy and Disability Center and more recently through NDI Consulting, Inc., this resource has been utilized only by a very small percentage of New York Navigators. At the two day New York State Training Forum hosted by the New York Medicaid Infrastructure Grant only five New York Navigators out of the total number of forty-five New York Navigators assembled raised their hand in the affirmative in response to the question "Have you used DPNavigator.net?" While this does not reflect the number of Navigators accessing another useful tool available to all workforce personnel on disability and employment related topics (OneStopToolkit.org), it does reflect a disconnect to up to date technical assistance that is directly targeted and meant to benefit individual Navigators in the field. The DPNavigator.net website is a streamlined clearinghouse of DPN related information that includes targeted resources, DPN Frequently Asked Questions and Promising Practices, etc... While only five New York Navigators indicated they had utilized this online, national resource, those five individuals indicated that this website in particular was extremely helpful to them in understanding and fulfilling their role as a Disability Program Navigator in their local areas.

The most oft-cited reasoning by New York Navigators for their lack of utilization of this existing resource and other technical assistance opportunities (e.g. webinar trainings on promising practices offered by NDI Consulting, Inc.) was identified through both phone surveys and at the NYS DPN Training Forum as primarily a lack of time on the part of Navigators. Navigators, including both those with a clear understanding of their role as defined by the national DPN program office and who enjoy local area buy-in and support and those Navigators whose areas differ in their interpretations of the DPN role and function, were united in citing this "lack of time" although for varying reasons. The first group stated a lack of time due to the heavy workload involved in addressing systems level access issues for job seekers with disabilities and also indicated that as a round 1 DPN Project. This group also shared that they were unsure that the information provided by the national technical assistance provider would be useful to them. The second group reported that they did not find the information shared by the national technical

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assistance and training provider to be germane to the way in which the DPN position was perceived by their local level leadership (and in some cases the Navigator themselves) and/or how the Navigator functioned in their area.

4. Replicating Effective and Promising Practices

Effective and Promising Practices that have been established in select Local Workforce Investment Areas (LWIAs) and across the country amid other DPN Projects need to be promoted and replicated in a consistent manner, that meets the differing geographic and economic needs of various local level One-Stop Career Systems. Building awareness of these practices and developing strategies for replication lies within the realm of technical assistance (see above). Replicating and/or modifying these practices to accommodate local level needs would be a function of local level leadership that would require a comprehensive understanding of the role of the Disability Program Navigator along with buy-in to the vision of increasing access to seamless employment services and supports for individuals with disabilities.

One effective practice utilized by a majority of New York Navigators is the “30-Second Training” concept. Two Navigators from Round 1 DPN Projects in California and New York developed the practice of using 30-Second Trainings and they are now being used by Navigators across the country. These PowerPoint trainings center on disability and employment related topics to educate a potential audience ranging from One-Stop staff, partners, employers and individuals with disabilities by using a “quiz show” format of right/wrong or best/worst answers and are easy to use by Navigators. These trainings have been developed in coordination with the national technical assistance and training provider and all that is required by the Navigator is that they input their own contact information on the final slide of the training and send it out to an appropriate audience via e-mail and/or listserv. A number of New York Navigators, including both those who work at a systems level and those who perform primarily information and referral or one-on-one services with individuals, stated that they found these trainings an effective tool for sharing important disability and employment related information with their busy One-Stop staff and partners. In some cases, these 30-Second Trainings were the only way in which New York Navigators were able to serve as a “Resource” to their One-Stop staff and partners.

The Integrated Resource Team (IRT) is an example of collaboration in action at the direct service level that has been identified as another promising practice. The IRT, as modeled by the Disability Program Navigator, brings together multiple stakeholders from myriad programs in the One-Stop and/or partner agencies and Community and Faith-Based Organizations in the community who are providing direct services to the same individual job seeker. The IRT process facilitates the development of an employment plan that will address how each participating agency will financially and programmatically support the needs and goals of the individual job seeker as they seek to increase their level of self-sufficiency and reduce their reliance on public benefits through meaningful and sustainable employment. It is important to note that this process is intended to promote and support a more careful communication among stakeholders regarding the individual job seeker’s expressed and desired employment outcome. The IRT is one example of true collaboration because it requires agency and service providers to partner to blend and braid their resources and talents towards a mutually beneficial outcome

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for the individual job seeker, the stakeholders, and the employer. Once this team approach is established, whether it be formally or informally, each team member within the IRT, along with the agency/program they represent, is then accountable for contributing to the shared outcome. The IRT concept was formally presented and shared in-depth at the two-day New York State DPN Training Forum in December of 2009. By late January 2010 reports started coming in to the DPN Project Lead that New York Navigators have either introduced for the first time or increased their utilization of this concept and plan to continue implementing it as an effective practice as they move forward with work in their areas.

Another example of collaboration that a number of New York Navigators and their Local Workforce Investment Areas have been involved in is becoming established as Employment Networks, operating through the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work program. Employment Networks (ENs) are private or governmental agencies that assist individuals who receive SSI or SSDI benefits, or "Ticket holders", in the return to gainful employment. ENs often work collectively with other agencies to provide a more full array of services in order to attract a larger pool of perspective Ticket holders they might serve. Maximus, the Ticket to Work Program Manager, has recognized the distinct value of collaboration and has created an "Ambassadors Bureau", in order to share programmatic knowledge from one EN to another. ENs are oftentimes made up of collaborative partnerships at the local and/or state level among private non-profit human service providers, One-Stop Career Centers and other governmental organizations.

While the New York Disability Program Navigators more frequently collaborate on an individual basis to bring systems together through the use of IRTs, ENs collaborate on a program/system level, with the goal of better serving groups of individuals with disabilities in the return to work. Although the principles of collaboration may seem elementary, there are different approaches that can be utilized at varying levels of collaboration (e.g. individual versus system level). In order to bring about systems change for individuals with disabilities these types of collaborative efforts need to be brought to scale within local workforce investment areas and across the state.

5. Impact on Employment Service Providers and Employers

According to Ms. Kost, data that indicates the direct effect of the Disability Program Navigators on the One-Stop Career Center's capacity to serve individuals with disabilities is not available. Ms. Kost stated that *"This is difficult for me to judge, I have anecdotal information. Assistive technology is in place, but we need to look at updates due to new technology."* Similarly, when asked about the impact of the New York DPN Project on improved rates of employment among individuals with disabilities Ms. Kost offered that, *"There is anecdotal information along with some best practices. Our statistics do not fully represent the job seekers with disabilities since many hesitate to self disclose."*

New York Navigators responded to the question, "What are 2 areas in which you feel you have been the most successful or had the most impact in your role as Disability Program Navigator?" with examples of ways they had addressed the needs of job seekers with disabilities. Three out of the ten New York Navigators interviewed by phone referenced working with employers, although each of these Navigators stated that they would not refer to their work as being

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necessarily a best practice. The New York Navigator interviewed who spent the most time on activities directly related to work with employers and the business community shared that he spent no more than twenty percent of his time on these activities and had no yardstick by which to determine the true impact that this involvement with employers might have for job seekers with disabilities in his community. Those interviewed were consistent in expressing uncertainty around whether these activities were truly successful in terms of creating a long term change within the system. Since there were no objective baselines or benchmarks to guide them, Navigators were unsure of how to measure or evaluate the impact of the activities they were engaged in. One Navigator offered in two short sentences a sentiment that was shared by many of his fellow New York Navigators, *“I don’t know what is impactful. A lot of what you do (as a DPN) you don’t even know what it is you have done in terms of impact.”*

In reviewing the data collected through the *New York Makes Work Pay* (NY MWP) online New York DPN survey that was sent out to all fifty-two New York Navigators in fall of 2009 the response from the 29 Navigators who took the survey to the question about critical access issues that exist within New York’s One-Stop Career Centers was very revealing. It is evident after reviewing their responses that after seven years of the New York DPN Project many basic access issues still exist within One-Stop Career Centers.

Survey Results and Implications

In answer to the question, “What are the three most critical issues at your One Stop that should be addressed to enhance access to employment services for individuals with disabilities?” New York Navigators provided the following responses that have been divided into one or more of the following categories:

- 1) Policies, Practices & Procedures
- 2) Training
- 3) Physical Access & Accommodations
- 4) Collaboration & Coordination
- 5) Outreach & Marketing

1. Policies, Practices & Procedures

- “Better assessment process to be used to evaluate career choices not only for individuals with disabilities, but for all customers.”
- “I feel that some individuals with hidden disabilities do not disclose and thereby are not informed about available work incentives and programs.”
- “Lack of a working procedure for funded deaf interpretation services. (NOTE: Also under Physical Access & Accommodations)”
- “TOO MUCH RELIANCE ON DPN FOR CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES” (NOTE: Also under Training for One-Stop & Partner staff)
- “Access to WIA training funds without screening individuals out that might be eligible for State VR funds for training” (NOTE: Also under Training for One-Stop & Partner staff).
- “VESID having to work short staffed”

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- “I would like to see federal mandate requiring all employers to provide employment opportunities to a specific number of ex-felons per year”

2. Training

- “Awareness of Disability related issues (One-Stop Staff)”
- “One Stop Staff training”
- “DISABILITY SENSITIVITY OF STAFF”
- “Increased Education about the DPN, Ticket to Work and Employment Networks (for One-Stop Staff)”
- “More localized staff training on services & programs available for individuals’ w/disabilities. This would save time & money and allow more staff to attend.”
- “Training of staff of other agencies about One-Stop services”
- “TOO MUCH RELIANCE ON DPN FOR CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES”
- “Number of referrals to navigator by One-Stop personnel”
- “Training for One-Stop staff on providing services to individuals with disabilities and appropriate referral sources for additional services outside of the One Stop”
- “Access to WIA training funds without screening individuals out that might be eligible for State VR funds for training”
- “Lack of funding for training - all current funds have been completely exhausted”
- “More trainings. Right now we have only one class on resumes”
- “training for today’s labor market”
- “job search skills”
- “Specific Training targeted and available to people with disabilities”

3. Physical Access & Accommodations

- “Lack of a working procedure for funded deaf interpretation services.”
- “Money to provide interpreters for the deaf”
- “Large print materials should be available for visually impaired consumers”
- “Knowing how to use special equipment in office for people with disabilities.”
- “Publicize that we have accessible technology and materials - keep them updated”
- “Transportation”
- “Additional parking for disabled consumers on second floor”
- “Access on first floor for disabled consumers who do not drive”
- “Lack of marked handicapped parking - many staff members have a disability and thereby take the closest spots, so spots aren't available for clients who need them.”
- “PHYSICAL PLANT ISSUES”
- “We are lumped with Social Services and our waiting room is often noisy, crowded and unpleasant.”
- “Confidentiality. The One-Stop is very open, counselors’ desks are right next to each other and privacy is limited.”
- “Our front door is locked and someone has to go get the person and escort them out”

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4. Collaboration & Coordination

- “Increased collaboration (regular meetings?) to help identify and coordinate services.”
- “Blending of funding to enable more individuals with disabilities for training.”
- “Collaboration & coordination of VESID services”
- “Common data base for case notes & activities with customers.”
- “More collaboration of the DPN working with staff”
- “Increased Collaboration of One-Stop Staff and DPN”
- “Service Collaboration between One-Stop Staff and Partners”
- “Common employment plans, intake, consent, referral forms as well as utilizing assessments done by other agencies.”
- “Access to supportive services so individuals with disabilities can be successful in chosen career goals.”
- “Much quicker response by VESID in opening cases for employment services, as well as better coordination with One Stop services.”
- “In October of 2009, the One-Stop will partner with various human service agencies to provide the first Diversity Job Fair (for individuals with disabilities).”
- “Access to information regarding services available to individuals with disabilities.”
- “Integrate services within all departments. Allow more options for people with disabilities with all staff.”
- “Local programs have been given cuts, which is reducing needs being met in a timely manner.”
- “Training for One-Stop staff on providing services to individuals with disabilities and appropriate referral sources for additional services outside of the One Stop” (Note: DUPLICATED UNDER TRAINING).

5. Outreach & Marketing

- “Employer outreach”
- “Letting employers know of DPN services--getting the word out.”
- “More advertising of the One Stop & services available”
- “Explanation of disability accommodations to employers”
- “Lack of "marketing" of the One-Stop by the On-Stop”
- “Marketing of services/incentives to businesses”
- “Lack of use of services by individuals w/ disabilities”

RECOMMENDATIONS

In mid-January of 2010 the national DPN program office within the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (DOLETA) shared with the national DPN Projects that congress has zeroed out federal funding for the DPN Initiative in the 2010 budget. This could mean that there will be no renewal of funding for any statewide DPN Projects beyond the existing funding that ends most projects at the end of June 2010. A small subset of projects may have carry-over funds that can be utilized beyond that timeframe. New York is exploring the possibility of accessing carry-over funds to continue the New York DPN Project through

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September 2010. Additionally, the four Round 4 DPN Projects (Nevada, Arkansas, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands) have funding through June 2011 since their initial two years of funding began in July of 2009. In order for the state of New York to maintain the progress that has been made through the work of the New York DPN Project, implement effective strategies to increase the utility of these positions, and take effective and promising practices to scale within the New York Workforce Investment system and among its partners, the following sequence of strategies and activities are recommended:

Proposed Strategies to Sustain and Maximize DPN Role and Function in New York State

1. *Pursue utilizing other Workforce dollars to fund existing DPN positions.*

If the 2010 WIA reauthorization language includes opportunities for local workforce investment areas to access WIA and/or Wagner-Peyser dollars to continue funding DPN-like positions in the One-Stop Career Center, and if local areas deem their existing DPN positions to be a value-added resource to their centers, this would be one avenue to pursue to continue these positions. In many cases this would mean bringing these positions in-house to the One-Stop Career Center where approximately half of these positions had previously been outsourced to a subcontractor (i.e. Independent Living Center, etc...). If this action takes place in some or all of the LWIAs this continuance of a DPN-like positions could be supplemented by a number of the other recommendations that follow. Recommended NY MWP Action: Assist NYS DOL in promoting this option to LWIAs by providing examples of specific language from previous Training and Employment Guidance Directives that have come out of U.S. DOLETA along with any new language that might be forthcoming in the WIA reauthorization providing guidance to LWIAs on ways in which they can use their WIA dollars to support DPN-like positions. Following is one example of language supporting a designated staff person to work on disability and employment issues in the One-Stop system from the Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933, as amended by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 http://www.doleta.gov/Programs/w-pact_amended98.cfm

Section 8: Any State desiring to receive assistance under this Act shall submit to the Secretary, as part of the State plan submitted under section 112 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, detailed plans for carrying out the provisions of this Act within such state.

(b) Such plans shall include provisions for the promotion and development of employment opportunities for handicapped persons and for job counseling and placement of such persons, and for the designation of at least one person in each State or Federal employment office, whose duties shall include the effectuation of such purposes. In those States where a State board, department, or agency exists which is charged with the administration of State laws for vocational rehabilitation of physically handicapped persons, such plans shall include provision for cooperation between such board, department, or agency and the agency designated to cooperate with the United States Employment Service under this Act.

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2. Access Employment Network (EN) funds to continue funding for existing DPN positions.

LWIAs that are already set up as Employment Networks under the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work could use their proceeds from this program (if sufficient) to contribute to, or outright pay for the continuance of the Disability Program Navigator or similar position in their area. Funding the position in this way creates an opportunity for the DPN position to be redefined to possibly include managing the plans and payments for Tickets being taken by the EN, to lead and/or model the Integrated Resource Team (IRT) concept of blending and braiding employment related services and funding across programs and agencies around the individual job seeker with a disability. Again, this continuance of the DPN position would be best if augmented by any or all of the other recommendations that follow.

Recommended NY MWP Action: In coordination with NYS DOL, identify current LWIAs that are established as ENs and explore with them the possibility of using this funding stream to support in whole or part DPN-like positions. Assist NYS DOL in examining LWIAs that have implemented EN services in their One-Stop Career Centers where Ticket holders have been served successfully, and based on those successful models, provide guidance to LWIAs that have not yet become EN's in order to educate and encourage participation in the Ticket Program, proceeds of which could be used to assist in funding DPN-like positions.

3. Continue to fund identified systems change DPN positions.

Navigators should continue to be funded in order to maintain hard won progress gained in those LWIAs that have utilized their DPNs as systems change agents and have demonstrated their capacity in helping One-Stop staff and partners to effectively serve job seekers with disabilities. Funding this targeted group of New York 'systems change-oriented' Navigators offers an opportunity to explore what it is that these DPNs are doing right in order to identify and break down how they are implementing this position for possible replication across the state. This includes what it is about those LWIAs that enable these Navigators to function effectively in this role. The utility of continuing funding for these positions would be maximized if done in conjunction with additional recommendations listed. If the first two recommendations above 1. Pursuing other Workforce dollars, or 2. Accessing EN payments are not available as sources for funding these identified systems change DPN positions in all areas where this designation would apply, another viable option would be accessing Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID). VESID has seen the value of the DPN position already and has shown itself to be a true partner through its funding of the equivalent of eight DPN positions in Program Years 2009 and 2010 to the tune of \$1.2 million.

Recommended NY MWP Action: Work with NYS DOL to develop criteria for identifying systems change DPN positions and measures to assess positive outcomes attributable to their work. Continued funding of these identified systems change DPN positions will reflect most appropriately the type of positions that ETA and ODEP are likely to support in the future post July 1, 2010 with FY2010 federal funding. Establish the framework to focus

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DPNs on systems change and establish a cross agency work group (VESID, OMH, OMRDD, and DOL) to plan a collaborative systems change approach that prepares New York State for the upcoming federal competition.

4. *Re-structure the statewide DPN project in New York.*

In cases where, as mentioned in the first two recommendations above, LWIAs have continued to fund DPN-like positions a clear sense of priorities must be established to build on effective knowledge dissemination and translation of cross system collaboration, effective and promising practices, while also creating a source for hands-on technical assistance and support to those DPN-like positions. Alternatively, if no DPN-like position continues within the One-Stop Career Centers at the local level then other grant funding should be pursued, potentially through the proposed ETA and ODEP funding of \$24 million in competitive grants starting in Program Year 2010. A system change focus to set direction clearly articulated by NYS DOL is critical to LWIA and all funded positions. This includes a clear vision with measurable outcomes that better utilizes and augments existing infrastructure to build upon previous efforts and brings to scale those promising practices within the top-performing systems level DPN positions. Information gleaned from the New York Navigators indicate that a renewed focus on technical assistance and replication and development of effective promising practices from the New York DPN Project as well as other DPN Projects across the country would create “the most bang for the buck” in terms of funding dollars. A systems change focus would benefit from the following elements:

- a. Refined/Revised Vision: Disability is often perceived as a specific demographic when in reality it is a part of every demographic. There needs to be a conscious effort at the state, and local levels to change the focus from a **disability** resource to a resource focused on **access** to employment services for all demographics (e.g. veterans, youth, individuals with criminal backgrounds, older workers, etc...). This shift in framing would lead to a much deeper involvement with One-Stop staff and partners around problem solving and resource coordination. The ability to increase access for job seekers with disability will enhance the ability of staff and partners to see disability as an access issue, something they can be trained to address, rather than a special population issue that requires either a disability-silo approach within the One-Stop system or is reliant solely on outsourcing to Vocational Rehabilitation (VESID).
- b. Project Lead: Continue the role of a state level project lead responsible for promoting a restructured project, building and maintaining strategic partnerships and managing overall communications strategies and providing leadership at the state level. Additional responsibilities will include managing the administrative and financial reporting duties of the grant.
- c. Regional Access Coordinators: Develop ten Regional Access Coordinator (AC) positions. These ten positions would be assigned to the ten Local Workforce Investment Boards covering the state of New York and would be responsible for working with Local Workforce Investment Areas (LWIAs) to build the capacity of the One-Stop Career Centers to serve job seekers with disabilities and others with

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- multiple barriers to employment to promote desirable employment opportunities and sustained employment outcomes for this population in their regions. As the Regional Access Coordinator works on a specific physical, programmatic or communication issues in their region they will communicate, coordinate and collaborate with their fellow Regional Access Coordinators and the state Technical Assistance Lead (see below) to develop and implement the best product, service or policy while also accessing and utilizing the DPN positions referred to in recommendations #1, #2, and/or #3. The Regional Access Coordinator will support those local level DPN positions in their role by providing guidance, additional trainings, resources and promoting disability and employment related promising practices. Regional Access Coordinator positions will be state level or contracted positions directly supervised by the project lead in coordination with the Training and Technical Assistance Lead(s). It is essential that these Regional Access Coordinator positions be assigned to candidates who have shown through past work and life experience an ability to see the bigger picture and effect change: a demonstrated ability that will translate to effectively addressing issues that include increasing systems level access, coordination, and communication in working with job seekers with disabilities and others with barriers to employment among multiple partners, the business community, advocates and service providers. These Regional Access Coordinators will be required to set ambitious goals for themselves and their workforce investment area(s) and will need to be able to re-calibrate their efforts on a regular basis to maximize their effectiveness in achieving these goals. Funding for these positions could potentially come through ETA and ODEP funding, the New York Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, or other state agency funding (i.e. NYS DOL, VESID, Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped – CBVH, etc...). Funding for these positions would need to include competitive compensation in order to ensure the best possible candidates. An initial suggested salary for these Regional Access Coordinator positions should be in the range of \$50 - \$65k, not including benefits.
- d. Technical Assistance Lead(s): A designated training and technical assistance professional or a team of two such individuals should be designated to work alongside the project lead. This position(s) would be responsible for assisting in developing the Regional Access Coordinator position description, hiring and training the Regional Access Coordinators and offering ongoing and targeted guidance and mentoring to the ten Regional Access Coordinator positions. Additionally, for those continuing DPN-like positions (see recommendations #1, #2, and #3) the Technical Assistance Lead(s) would serve as a vital resource and support. For more information on technical assistance please see recommendation #5 below.
 - e. Measurement: The state, technical assistance and regional positions listed above will be responsible for researching and/or developing a plan to measure and evaluate their progress and the progress of their designated LWIAs and/or local level DPN-like positions (see recommendations #1, #2, and #3) in bringing about increased access to the workforce development system and increased quality employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. This plan for measurement and evaluation will be subject to input and approval from the LWIA, partnering agencies, and funders. It will

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include the development of baselines for assessing current levels of physical and programmatic access along with benchmarks and timelines to achieve higher levels of access. The goal will be to include this information in the continuous improvement plans, annual plans, and five-year plans of the Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIB) and create buy-in within the LWIB for achieving these benchmarks.

Recommended NY MWP Action: Assist NYS DOL in responding to the ODEP/ETA Competitive SGA using information and recommendations from NY DPN Lessons Learned.

5. Provide targeted training and technical assistance support to a restructured project.

High level support to the aforementioned Regional Access Coordinator positions in New York's restructured project is essential to the success of this endeavor. New York Makes Work Pay (NY MWP) could follow the model established by a small number of other states with Medicaid Infrastructure Grants (e.g. Minnesota, Wisconsin, Massachusetts) by providing a training and technical assistance leader (or a team of two) to augment the work done by the Project Lead working out of the NYS DOL office. This individual or two-person team would provide hands-on training and technical assistance to the regional Access Coordinators through monthly phone calls, quarterly meetings, and individual phone and e-mail support. This technical assistance lead or two-person technical assistance team would be in charge of facilitating the development of a strategic plan and outcome measurements with the Access Coordinators and the Project Lead with input from NY MWP partners.

Recommended NY MWP Action: Identify opportunities to address NYS DOL need for Training and Technical Assistance positions to work with the state level project lead to implement a refined/revised vision of the NY DPN Project.

6. Enhance the EEOC Officer role within the One-Stop Career Centers.

The thirty-three EEO Officers currently assigned to New York's Local Workforce Investment Areas would benefit from additional training that could augment their existing role, support in fulfilling a more pro-active role, and tools to assist them in performing these additional duties. In those few areas that have a DPN serving in a dual EEO/DPN role there is a need to untangle these two positions and have them operating separately but in concert. This will take the DPN out of the monitoring role. Since these EEO positions are assigned to existing staff within the One-Stop Career Centers whose primary duties lie elsewhere, and this would be asking for an expanded set of work responsibilities the recommendation would be to provide incentives (see #8 below), including compensation to fulfill these additional duties and augment the restructure of the statewide project, performing in the capacity of a true partner on the ground in increasing the accessibility of the One-Stop Career Centers. In particular, if there is no longer a local level DPN-like position on the ground within the specific One-Stop Career Center(s) this EEO Officer can be tapped to assist in addressing capacity building issues in concert with the Regional Access Coordinator.

Recommended NY MWP Action: Assist NYS DOL in pursuing the competitive SGA from ODEP/ETA to access additional funds for training and capacity building for EEO Officers.

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7. Transition DPN positions that have been providing direct services to individuals with disabilities into Benefits Planners.

The New York Makes Work Pay (NY MWP) Medicaid Infrastructure Grant has already paid for complete benefits training (and in many cases certification) for all of New York's DPNs to become Level 1 Benefits Planners. For those Navigators who are serving as straightforward direct services (i.e. providing referrals, meeting one-on-one with individuals with disabilities in the One-Stops and assisting with resume writing, job search, etc...) this would be a way to maintain that investment of time and training on benefits planning provided by NY MWP. This will be especially useful in those areas that do not choose to access WIA, Wagner-Peyser dollars to continue their direct service Navigators. A number of those direct service Navigators who are hired by the One-Stop Career Center (and not subcontracted out) could then either become full-time benefits planners within the One-Stop Environment, or more likely take on another role at the One-Stop (i.e. WIA case manager, Employment Specialist, etc...) and then be able to use a percentage of their time to provide benefits planning services to individuals with disabilities accessing the centers.

Recommended NY MWP Action: Assist NYS DOL in working with LWIAs to find ways in which to incorporate the benefits planning training that staff received into the new positions and roles that they might be transferred into once the national DPN funding is exhausted. Encourage current Navigators to work with their local centers to become qualified benefits planners under VESID's Unified Contract Services (UCS) contract since they may meet the VESID criteria as Level I Work Incentive Information Network (WIIN) members. This would produce revenue to cover portions of their position. Additionally, since this is a re-application year for Work Incentive Planning Assistance (WIPA) programs, NY MWP should work with NYS DOL to assist Level I WIIN Navigators and their LWIAs in reaching out to their local WIPA programs to secure subcontracts as providers and/or consider competing to secure WIPA resources.

8. Provide incentives for improved access and employment outcomes to LWIAs in New York.

Generating buy-in at the local level to serve individuals with disabilities has been to date solely at the discretion and pleasure of local level leadership. While some LWIAs and One-Stop Career Centers have taken strides to improve access and follow both the letter and the spirit of the Disability Checklist Section 188 of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), a majority of LWIAs and One-Stop Career Centers have not. In order to achieve parity for individuals with disabilities in line with their non-disabled peers in the One-Stop Career Center, an incentive system rewarding measurable progress needs to be put in place. These incentives could be as simple and straightforward as setting up monetary or other rewards for the following: 1. Reaching benchmarks for physical and programmatic accessibility, 2. Achieving a set number of employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities through the utilization of effective and promising practices (e.g. using the Integrated Resource Team (IRT) concept), and 3. Becoming an Employment Network (EN) under Social Security's Ticket to Work program.

To learn more go to <http://www.nymakesworkpay.org>

Recommended NY MWP Action: Assist NYS DOL to identify possible sources of matching funds if required by the competitive ODEP/ETA SGA.

CONCLUSION

Both challenges and opportunities exist when the current federal allocation for the DPN Initiative is scheduled to end. New York State, because of its heavy commitment to the DPN initiative, should be able to take the lessons learned from the New York DPN Project and bring promising and/or effective DPN practices to scale statewide to improve employment outcomes for New Yorkers with disabilities. Prior to the end of current U.S. DOLETA DPN funding, alternative funding sources should be identified. An NYS DOL led cross-agency work group needs to plan together to design an appropriate collaborative and integrated resource model to enable New York to be ready for the new ETA-ODEP competition. The value and sustainability of Disability Program Navigators should be embedded in New York State policy as well as practices. A renewed vision accompanied by a comprehensive plan for the future as outlined in the above recommendations, which is well-coordinated and executed and that maximizes upon existing resources, is the best course of action to bring about positive, meaningful and measurable change in the level and quality of employment outcomes for New Yorkers with disabilities.

www.NYMakesWorkPay.org

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