

2002 Leadership Challenges on Employment Policy

Audio Conference Series



WIA Coordination Strategies that Work

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Featured speakers:

Moderator: Michael Morris
Director, RRTC on Workforce Investment and Employment Policy for Persons with
Disabilities

Lisa Pote and Hazel Coleman
Nashville Career Advancement Center

Michelle Morehouse
Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Kathleen Partington (invited)
Rhode Island Human Resource Investment Council

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conference, go to the following Web address:*

http://www.its.uiowa.edu/law/events/LeadershipConf_audioseries.htm

Michael Morris: Hi everyone. This is Michael Morris and I am the Project Director for the Research and Training Center on Workforce Investment and Employment Policy for Persons with Disabilities, which is with the Law, Health Policy and Disability Center at the University of Iowa College of Law.

This audio conference today is our sixth conference call, audio conference in a series of seven. We have been having these monthly, going all the way back to January on different topics that relate to Leadership Challenges on Employment Policy. Today's call relates to the Workforce Investment Act and particularly focused on coordination strategies that work. For those of you, who have not been a part of these calls in previous months, let me say we will spend about the first hour in presentations from our panelists. We will then open up to questions and we will tell you at that point and time how you can go about queuing up to ask a question. Our interest is that you identify yourself perhaps where you are located, or if you are connected with an agency or organization, tell us a little bit about who you are and tell us whether you want to direct the question to a single panel member or the entire panel.

This call today comes at a very interesting time. The issues of the Workforce Investment Act were just discussed at length last week in Washington DC, where the US Department of Labor held a public forum on the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities seeking access and participation in the Workforce Development system. There were probably over 250 individuals who came to Washington DC and participated in the forum, which lasted approximately four hours. Many issues came up during that forum that perhaps will be topics of discussion today. Certainly key, is the issues of coordination between the many systems that tough and support persons with disabilities who are job seekers, or seeking to improve their employment status in the workplace.

The three panelist that we have brought together for you today represent three of what is now 46 Work Incentive Grants which have been funded by the Employment and Training Administration of the US Department of Labor. The first group was funded almost a year and half ago. The second group, a second set of 23 projects were funded just about a month ago and now bring these projects at a statewide level. Some are at a local or area level to activities that are focus on access; equal opportunity and systems change to promote improved services and employment outcomes for persons with disabilities in over 30 states across the county.

Let me introduce our first speaker who is from the first group of Work Incentive Grantees, Michelle Morehouse, who is with the Alaska Division of Vocation Rehabilitation. Michelle, why don't you take it away from there.

Michelle Morehouse: Ok, thanks. Hello everyone. I'd like to say a special hello to everyone who is on the line from Alaska and thank all of you for all the work that you have done, because all of the strategies that I'll be speaking about today would not have been successful without the collaboration of the different grant staff and the job center staff that have been involved from the get-go.

So, as Michael mentioned, Alaska was one of the first initial twenty-three states to receive funding for the Department of Labor Work Incentive Grant. I will talk a little bit about the grant; just initially and then get into some of the overall Workforce Investment Act collaboration strategies that we have been involved in. Our grant is better known as the WIG. So, if I refer to the WIG that is what you are hearing about.

In Alaska the grant was awarded to the state of Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, which is run through the state's Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Our WIG employs three full time staff members. I coordinate the project and then we also have two-resource specialist, Rich Sanders and Loretta Harvey work in job centers in semi-rural locations in Alaska, which are the Matanuska Valley, and in the Kenai Peninsula. Their role within the job centers to provide training and technical assistance on disability and employment issues. They are kind of like the disability specialists within the job center and then also they provide outreach and training on job center services to the disability communities, so that the disability community knows that a job center is a service that is there for them.

Our Work Incentive Grant was written with the goal of having statewide employment impact on people with all types of disabilities, which is pretty tricky in Alaska due to just the sheer size of our state. Alaska is 1/5 of the size of the combined lower 48 states and 2 1/2 times larger than Texas. Sorry Texas. But on the flip side, Alaska's population is only 622,000. So, for providing services and doing outreach, our large size and small population makes it translate into lots of people and communities who are pretty tough to reach. But, fortunately for those providing those services and outreach, well over half of Alaskans live in the three largest communities of Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau.

In trying to make some changes on a statewide level, one thing that Alaska WIG has really going for us is the collaboration with other statewide grants. Alaska first received the RSA, Rehabilitation Services Administration Systems Change grant and since then received the WIG, the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant and also the Social Security Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach Grant. So, with the Systems Change Grant, the RSA Systems Change Grant placed initially, the proposals for the rest of the grants were written to build and expand upon the efforts that had already begun there.

For instance, the RSA grant had hired a statewide business development specialist and also three resource specialists to work in job centers. One each in Fairbanks, Anchorage, and Juneau, which are our three largest communities. The WIG was written then to expand on those positions by adding resource specialists to those other two communities that I mentioned to Wasilla, which is in the Matsu Valley and in Kenai on the Kenai Peninsula. So then, when the WIG resource specialists were introduced, there was by the time a really good idea for what their roles would be in and how they would be effectively work within the job centers to enhance employment opportunities for Alaskans with disabilities.

The four grants, the Work Incentive Grant, the Systems Change, the Medicaid Infrastructure and the Social Security Benefits Planning Grant have really bonded together and we collectively call ourselves the Alaska Works Initiative, so I will refer a little bit here too. All of the grants staff use and share information via a joint Intranet site, which has been a good model for us for collaboration. Through the site, the grant staff completes summaries of the things that they are working on in their communities of their goals and action plans of the major projects they are working on. That way other grant staff are able to just log on and look at what other people are up to stimulate ideas for their own communities. We communicate all the time via e-mail and phone, collaborate all the time and try to meet at least twice a year which is tricky because we are all really far away from each other in this huge state.

Now, I guess I would just like mention a few of the major projects of the Work Incentive Grant, and then speak specifically to the topic of the WA coordination strategies that the Alaska Works Initiative staff as a whole have been involved in. We have several specific goals in the effort to enhance employment opportunities for Alaskans with disabilities and most of them really deal with the job centers. First of all we are completing a statewide assessment of the assistive technology that's available in the job centers and that's going to be resulting in recommendations for the assistive technology that should be in place for the job centers along with suggestions for implementation and training schedules for the One-Stop job centers.

Another focus is a rural economic development in Alaska. As I mentioned we have lots of people and communities that are pretty tricky to reach. So, the Work Incentive Grant is working with two of Alaska's nine Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs to encourage economic development in those areas, by awarding grants to businesses to purchase equipment they feel is necessary for the expansion of their businesses in exchange for those businesses committing to hire people with disabilities for an extended period of time. This kind of program can be really successful in some of the rural villages where people might have to travel by snow mobile, boat or airplane to get to the nearest village with a Laundromat, which is not a stretch, actually that is a true situation.

Our grant is also involved in helping to develop a system of quality assurance around statewide benefits counseling services and will be to assist in the procurement of these benefits counseling services for job seekers with disabilities who may not have an alternative source of funding to obtain benefits counseling. We'll be also publishing a reference manual for use by statewide job center and One-Stop job center staff which will contain information about local agencies that serve people with disabilities and advice about where to obtain necessary accommodations or supportive services for those people with disabilities. The reference manual is going to be disseminated to One-Stop job center staff and then we hope also to post it up on the state of Alaska website.

So, although the WIG and all the grants in the Alaska Works Initiative have a disability and employment focus for the topic of WIA coordination in specific, I'd like to speak to

the overall coordination strategies that the grant staff have been involved in. We definitely believe that increased collaboration and communication will enhance services for all job center customers including customers who experience disabilities. So, keep in mind that while grant staff are involved in these more general WIA coordination strategies, they are continually working to infuse disability and accessibility issues within these efforts. I also just need to mention that on the website where you are able to download a few pieces of information, they were listed as prepared by Michelle Morehouse. I need to give credit where credit is due because those documents were submitted by me and in part prepared by me, but also it was a collaborative effort between all the Alaska Works Initiative grants that those materials have come from. We are just a collaborating group all the time.

Ok, so I mentioned that we have staff at job centers. So, the Alaska Works Initiative staff has staff that are actually in five of our ten largest communities at the One-Stop job centers. Four of the five resource specialists are actually housed right in their community job centers and then the fifth resource specialist and also the statewide business development specialist work on a really regular basis out of the job centers. All six of the staff are really involved in different committees at their job centers and committees like the partner agency manager work groups that generally meet on the monthly basis. Several of the staff are involved in marketing committees, on training committees, and also in the local advisory committees which are made up of employers who offer guidance and counsel to the job centers in better serving the business community.

So, these different committees focus on overall job center issues that obviously vary depending on the goals of the particular committee, but some of them have grown into much larger job center efforts. Like, marketing committees have developed outstanding job fair efforts. Our resource specialists in Kenai was key in putting together a seam for the Kenai job fair at the job center and they called it the Jaws Survival Challenge to kind of be a spin-off the popular TV show Survivor. So, JAWS was job and work search. They had a little competition where people needed to complete a few things like prepare a resume, do interviews, and then visit three different employers at the job fair. If they passed off each of those job survivor challenges they were up for a prize. So, different things like that, the job center committees have definitely helped to develop.

Also, our grant staff has in some cases instigated brand new committees. The accessibility in ADA committee in the Matanuska/Sioux Valley was kind of reinstated by the resource specialist there. In those cases they have definitely been made an effort to include community people in those committees so that those committees will have a life beyond the life of the grants once the grant funding has been complete.

So, definitely the staff at the job centers and building relationships within the job centers has been really important. That helped us last fall when the first Alaska annual Workforce Investment Act Conference was held. I think in large part due to those relationships that we built, we were able to have presentations at that conference from four Alaska works initiatives staff and also nine vocational rehabilitation staff, as well as

the Kenai address from a nationally renowned disability advocate. And that was attended by 400, over 400 statewide job center staff attended that. That was really successful.

Another one that you actually have some things on that were downloadable materials is the passport training system that has been put together by the Matanuska/Sioux Valley training committee which is chaired by our resource specialist there. The Passport training program, if you have downloaded it, what you were able to download was actually the Passport itself. If you weren't able to download it, it is a tri-fold kind of brochure thing that has five different questions about the major functions of the major partner agencies involved in that job center along with a spot for a little stamp. What this is aimed at doing is to increase staff awareness of the basic information on each partner agency and also to increase inner agency communication and collaboration.

So, how this works is each staff member gets a passport and they also get an answer sheet that actually has the answers to the different questions on the passport. Then, they must make an appointment with someone from each of those partner agencies, preferably someone that they don't know well so that they can increase their knowledge of the different people in the different agencies. They meet with those people, discuss the different questions and then are able to get a stamp from that partner agency. So, once the passport has all the stamps then the training is complete. They have estimated that the training would take about 2 1/2 hours. The cool thing about this I think is that it's going to be updated every six months, so with infusion of any kind of new policies or different things that are happening at the job centers, the questions will be able to change on the passport. I would anticipate that there may be questions coming up in the next round about the Ticket to Work for the DVR portion of the passport. So, just another example of inter-agency collaboration, and training through which disability issues have definitely been infused.

Another inner agency training that has been really successful that you don't have anything to download about that has a bit of a larger focus, is the training academy. Alaska has two Workforce Investment areas. The Anchorage/Matsu Workforce Investment area, and then the balance of state, which is exactly what it sounds like, it's just the entire rest of the state. Now, within the Anchorage/Matsu Workforce Investment area, a collaborative group of partner agency staff, including Alaska Works Initiative staff developed a training for frontline staff within the One-Stop job centers of the entire area. The first of which those trainings occurred two years ago this month actually. I just looked back and found that out, so that was kind of cool. The training originated as a two-day training and it consisted of lots of networking and activities with the aim of getting people used to the philosophy of the Workforce Investment Act, the whole "no wrong door" and "seamless service" ideas. It was also a chance to provide introductions to partner agencies and their roles, who they serve and who would be really effective candidates to refer to them for service. The goal was to hold this two-day training quarterly until all frontline staff within the Anchorage/Matsu Workforce Investment area had attended. Since the training has been going on quarterly for two years, it has now transitioned a little bit--people have a pretty good idea now about

the whole WIA philosophy. So, it transitioned a little bit into incorporating some more soft skills material such as counseling skills and those types of things.

Considering the really high turnover rate for employees in the area, the plans are to continue holding the training quarterly. Also to hopefully allow for its evolution to maintain effectiveness in the needs of the staff in the job center in providing effective service for all job seekers, including those with disabilities.

The training academy has been so successful actually within the Anchorage/Matsu Workforce Investment area that the balances of state, all the rest of Alaska, have voiced an interest in expanding the training academy statewide. So, the core group has now received a grant, they have received some funding to introduce the training academy statewide through both onsite and distance consultation with job centers throughout the balance of state workforce investment area.

So, how is my time? I've got a co-worker here helping me with time.

I have one more thing I wanted to mention and that's one thing that you were also able to download some stuff on, and that's the strategic planning process that was developed in mostly by our resource specialists in the Fairbanks One-Stop job center, Jim Kretchman. Having staff working right in the job centers has been just so eye-opening.

One of the things that we've definitely noticed and something that is probably not lost on other people who work in the job centers as well is that depending on who you ask, whether you ask managers or front-line job center staff, the idea of what the issues and main concerns in the job centers will really differ along with what the good potential solutions to those concerns might be. They differ depending on who you might ask. So, noting this the resource specialist in Fairbanks brought the idea to the manager group that he would pull together a group of frontline staff to do a strategic planning session with those staff to give them a chance to really brainstorm. How is the job center working? What are things that would work better for us and how would our jobs be made easier and what are solutions to these different types of problems? What you've got on your downloadable documents are the agenda, a sample agenda that has been used and also a kind of a memo that has been sent out to the staff who attend the strategic planning session.

So, getting the buy-in, so to speak, of the managers has been really important from the get-go so that any kind of solutions and things that come forth from the strategic planning session are really met with open ears on the managers side when their presented and that has been really successful in the two places where we've put together the strategic planning session so far. When one piece, the memo that goes out to the staff that tries to help them get the feel for what this is suppose to be. One of paragraphs I think that's really helpful is that it states, "try to come to this process with an open mind, we're only creating suggestions to present to your managers, we are not writing policy. There is no need to defend your program or the status quo. No jobs will be lost and no programs discontinued." The two places where this has been held have

both been held offsite, away from the job center. At a very, well, we have all these gorgeous spots in Alaska to hold these kinds of things. One was overlooking the ocean; the other was overlooking a whole range of mountains. I don't recall if there were grizzly bears hanging out in the background or not, but they've both been a very picturesque settings and it's been very comfortable. People have generally seemed very comfortable in sharing information and thoughts about what would be, what are concerns and what would be potential solutions.

So, then once all that information has been gathered, it's presented back to the managers in hopes of looking at some real localized solutions to the issues that they've pinpointed. So far, it was pioneered in Fairbanks. It's been replicated in Juneau. There are plans to replicate the process on the Kenai Peninsula, and it's also been requested in other areas of the state because of the success that it's seen. Interestingly, the top issues of the first two sessions in Fairbanks and in Juneau. The top issues that have been vocalized by the frontline job center staff generally a group of ten or twelve have been identical. Although their solutions may be different because they are very localized solutions, a lot of the specific things are quite similar.

So, those are the things that I wanted to share. The strategic planning, the training academy, the passport training, and just the working right within the job centers and hopefully those are some hand-on things you might be able to use in your areas and welcome any questions.

Michael Morris: Thank you Michelle. That's a wonderful presentation of both strategies and some of the results from the activities in Alaska to bring people together across agencies and begins to really operationalize the opportunities for coordination and collaboration. Let me share with everyone on this audio-conference that if you have not looked at the website where Michelle mentions several of these documents are available and you can download them. It is www.its.uiowa.edu/law and that is the website for the Law, Health Policy and Disability Center. When you go to that site, you will see on the left side where you can touch on your screen, materials related to the Leadership Challenges on Employment Policy audio-conference series and that will take you to these materials that Michelle has referenced.

Michelle, I want to ask you just one question before we move along to the other speakers. People talk about coordination and collaboration and really the strategic planning agenda that you shared with us really helps get people outside, just thinking about their own agency and what they are doing and about turfs and control. The big question, and I suspect it is one that you will continue to work on during the life of this grant and well beyond it, goes beyond coordination to issues of sharing costs. Have those been discussed in the strategic planning meetings and if they are beginning to make any headway in terms of the way agencies can share in the cost to support a job seeker with a disability that's coming to the One-Stop center?

Michelle Morehouse: No.

Michael Morris: Ok.

Michelle Morehouse: The answer no has not been something that we have been discussed during the strategic planning. In Alaska they have a cost allocation kind of committee that works on those kinds of things. You are right, that is something that we will continue to work on and what we wanted to focus on the strategic planning thing for the frontline staff was things that they could offer direct solutions for and I think they feel pretty separated from those kinds of decisions.

Michael Morris: And in terms of just the process of coordination, are there at this point beginning to be some new approaches or strategies that are actually coming from those strategic planning meetings and beginning to be implemented?

Michelle Morehouse: I tell you what, we have just had the first two have been within the last four months or so, and so the information is going back to the managers. I know in Juneau, they have put it on their monthly manager work-group meeting schedule to discuss the different solutions that came up at those monthly meetings so they are actively working on implementing some of those solutions. I have information on what the actual issues that were pinpointed and some of the solutions that were generated if that is of interest to anyone.

Michael Morris: That would be great if you share it back with us, we can then put that up on the website too. The one other point, just to acknowledge again, with what you've been able to accomplish in Alaska, like in many states there are a lot of different demonstration and systems change grants that are available now. Alaska has done well in garnering these funds from, as you mentioned SSA, Social Security Administration, and RSA, as well as the Department of Labor. One other thing that you mentioned, which I think is really important is that your regular meeting and also you have the internet system online so that the key project staff, regardless of what their funding stream is, because you have common goals are regularly communicating. These are not separate activities, you are really able to keep up to date on what you are doing, even in a state the size of Alaska, and I think that that's an important strategy for other states that are participating on the call. Anything you might add about that process?

Michelle Morehouse: You know the only thing, well, we do, we communicate all the time. It's just been outstanding. One of the cool things, or in my opinion, I used to work for the RSA Systems Change Grant as a Resource Specialist before I entered into this coordinator position for the Work Incentive Grant, so it was such a smooth transition and just a surety that we would all continue to collaborate. Two weeks ago, we all met and had a three day retreat in planning and making sure that we are not duplicating efforts. It just makes things so much easier. We are planning our implementation, the different roles that we are going to be taking on for the implementation for the Ticket. Since we are a second year rollout state, and the communication we have had has just been vital to making sure that those roles make sense with each other and make for a smooth implementation of the Ticket for the customer.

Michael Morris: That's great. Let me cut off here at this point, just to make sure we get the in time with the other speakers and then we will certainly let the audience ask additional questions of you, but thank you very much for your presentation.

Let me turn next to Kathleen Partington, who is with the Rhode Island Human Resources Investment Counsel. They also were a first round Work Incentive Grantee, they are working statewide in Rhode Island. It will take us obviously moving from one part of the country perhaps this is a teleconference of extremes. You probably can go from the largest state to certainly Rhode Island as one of the smallest ones, but the issues of coordination are still there. We are pleased that you are able to join us, so Kathleen, can you share with us some of your experiences in Rhode Island?

Kathleen Partington: Absolutely. Thank you so much. Certainly it is a pleasure here in Rhode Island to join the conference. We know we have made a lot of news in the past week here in Rhode Island. It hasn't been for our grant. Hopefully our mail be utilized in the network Rhode Island system.

But first off, Michelle, your presentation was great. As different as we are as states, we have an awful lot in common, with the exception of how far you have to travel to see each other and the Internet being very important. We just have to turn here in Rhode Island and you know the person next to you. So, collaboration has been the word of the day for us too.

I thought what I would do is give a brief history of our One-Stop system and how we got to be where we are today and the impact that the grants has have on us in terms of collaboration. Then to highlight, a few of the key strategies that really emphasize that collaboration.

We received One-Stop Implementation grants back in 1997 to build our system. We built six centers. The name of our network is Network Rhode Island. Going back that far, if I can remember, collaboration was the name of the day. I think that is what we called it then, collaboration. As I sat and looked around the table, I'm not sure if it was more fighting at the time, but certainly it's growing into a lot of wonderful relationships of over the past five years.

In the beginning when we first built the system, we put together a state-wide steering committee, which was comprised of the leadership of workforce development agencies in the state came and sat around the table to design this system adhering to the federal guiding principles that were put into place. Some of the important plates are on the table with the Department of Labor and Training, who I do work for. The Human Resource Investment Counsel, as Mike mentioned, was a recipient of our grant here in Rhode Island. We have the administrative entity, and that is who I work for, the Office of Rehabilitation Services, the Department of Human Services, the Department of

Education, Economic Development, Department of Education. They all came together in a happy way to put this system together.

In addition to the steering committee, and I want to emphasize how important serving people with disabilities was right from the very beginning and important to those of us who have really never served customers with disabilities in a way that organizations like Office of Rehabilitation Services had. One of the key things the committee did in the very beginning was put together what they called the disability advisory group, who at the time, was made up of people with disabilities. They issues a report to help us build a One-Stop system that would be inclusive and welcoming to people with disabilities and that was very valuable five years ago and we used it as we wrote the Work Incentive Grant as well. They talked about things like the design of the center's customer flow, assistive technology that they would like to see in the centers. So, we really adhered to that back in the very beginning all those years ago. Each center as it was built, we have six, and as I say here in Rhode Island, to go from one center to the other only take about fifteen minutes and only takes about 45 minutes to get from one end of the state to the other.

Each state also has local site teams that guided the implementation and the site teams were made up of partner managers of each of the investing partners in Network Rhode Island. So, with all that collaboration right in the beginning we began to build our system. We had put together a plan for both job seekers, and employers, and information seekers back at that time. But, I think what happened, and I'm sure a lot of you can relate to this in building our system. Like I said, we had a plan for job seekers, we had a plan for employers, but what really happened as you respond to the customer of the day, which is the people coming through the door and job seeker. So an awful lot of focus went into that during implementation in the first years of opening our One-Stop system in addition to building the infrastructure.

In addition to using the disability advisory report, we also had input from the Governor's Commission on Disability, disabilities who did walk through of our centers and issued reports as well as what they would like to see in the centers. We provided front-line training to our staff in terms of the assistive technology and how to work with customers with disabilities. That training was done by people themselves who themselves had disabilities, which was very beneficial to all of the management and staff.

So, that's kind of our beginning, that's kind our history, but this point I'd like to highlight one of the key collaborative relationships at that time. I'd like to give an awful lot of credit here in Rhode Island to the Office of Rehabilitation Services. I talked about the Disability Advisory Report and the cooperation of the Governor's Commission on Disabilities, but it was through efforts of the Office of Rehabilitation Services, and a strong partnership with the Department of Labor and Training. Previous to that, I think that we had always worked well together, but I can see things from the Department of Labor and Training that truly didn't understand their world until we had gotten together. Now I know how to speak their language. My boss is always reminding me who I do work for, that it is not the Office of Rehabilitation Services, but the Department of Labor

and Training. But, a lot of great relationships and what we call fighting back in the beginning is now turned into an awful lot of respect as we move forward with the TWWIIA inspired grant.

Moving to the next phase, when the grants came along it was a wonderful opportunity for all of us to stop. We had all sat around the table back in the early years in the steering committee, but to get back together again and take a look at the system that we built and to take a look at a look at it of all of our customers and particularly with these grants and how we are serving customers with disabilities. What have we accomplished in the first years, what needed to be done in the future? Under the One-Stop implementation grant, it was felt that we really created a really nice system for people with disabilities as the project manager at Network Rhode Island, I was really proud of what we had done. When we finished building the system, the staff put together a pledge for each center and it was really interesting to see all this partner staff come together and use words in their pledge like "welcoming" and "acceptable", things that they probably wouldn't have done prior to these collaborative relationships. We took a look at our technology. And in the centers in general, but bottom line, as result of all the hard work that we did, were more people with disabilities using the centers? And more important than that were people with disabilities getting jobs?

As I said earlier, we focused a lot on the job seeker and as we look back, we thought now may be the perfect opportunity to start collaborate with the employer community as we looked over the system. As the ORS staff, the Officer Rehabilitation Services staff were in the centers, we also felt like Alaska, it was very interesting to listen to you speak about the Disability Resource Specialist and we have a great deal in common there. While we have ORS staff on centers, we felt we needed more expertise at the front line as people come through the door. We had a lot of assistive technology and if it is not used on a regular basis, then we need an expert in that area as well. To help our customers to maneuver, not just as a complex Workforce Development system, but as someone from the outside in the disability world, the Medicaid/Medicare system as well.

We spend a great deal of time with the steering committee as I look back for the One-Stop implementation grant, talking about marketing. Some of our more serious conversations revolved around how we were going to market a system that was universal. One of our strongest supporters of people with disabilities was Diane Cook from the Office of Rehabilitation Services who sat on the steering committee that people with disabilities should be inclusive in our marketing campaign. Well, low and behold, that didn't happen. She was the strongest supporter for that, but it didn't happen in the beginning, but it was time to look at that again under the grant and we did look at it.

The other thing is, we created the system back in the beginning for people with disabilities and we gave people with disabilities a voice in helping us to create that system. I didn't know how important that was then, but I do now. So, as we looked over the system, we want to continue to give people with the disabilities a voice as we improve on the system, but we think that it is important that they have a voice at the policy level, at the board level and at the state WIB level. So, that's even a little bit

more about our history as we move forward. I think here in Rhode Island, we are really pleased to participate in this panel particularly because collaboration has been so important to us in terms of setting up a system and then again as now we sit around the table to work on the grant.

Like Alaska, we received all four grants: the Systems Change Grant, the Work Incentives Grant, and the Benefits Planning Grants. We also received a Demonstration Grant for folks with Multiple Sclerosis, who are currently in the workforce with hopes of keeping them in the workforce. But, we are looking for backing with our state legislature and we are not being too successful at that point in that area.

So, what I would like to concentrate on now is the key strategy of the Work Incentive Grant. We entitled all four grants here in Rhode Island, the Roads to Independence Grant, capitalizing on our Rhode Island theme. Particularly with the Work Incentive Grant, being Work on the Road to Independence. I've emphasized that the partnership relationship we have had with the Office of Rehab Services and we really think that that developed over the years and we hope that will move forward and institutionalize in the network Rhode Island system. As I look out on the partner staff I think that is already happening. But we know that we need a lot more than to be truly successful in getting people with disabilities back to work.

So, one of the key strategies in the grant was what we call an Employer Service Network Plan. When we first got together as a steering committee for One-Stops, we had written a plan for employer services, but like I said earlier, that got put on the back burner while we serve the job seeker. The TWWIA inspired grant gave us the perfect opportunity to take that plan out, dust that plan off and do what we had to do to implement it. When we first sat around the table it was state agencies that, a subcommittee of our steering committee that wrote that plan. We took it out and dusted it off, we said collaboration was important then, but we need to expand that collaboration in serving the employer community. So sometime ago, probably last July or August, we put a committee together that included collaboration far more than we had envisioned when we first put One-Stops together. We didn't just include state agencies anymore; we included community rehabilitation programs, organization that I hadn't really been involved with previously. Rhode Island College and the Sherlock Disability Center were involved and other employer groups and local community based organizations, who came together to take a look at that plan. It needed a lot of dusting off and a lot of cleaning up. In fact, we rewrote it and we now call it the Employer Service Member Agreement. I do believe that we have posted that on the Iowa website as well.

What it is, is a network, it's kind of like a little club you can join. No fee at all. Members of the organization sign a document to become a member of the organization. What it is really a formal affiliation of Workforce and Economic Development professionals all offering a variety of services to these employers. The purpose of the agreement, the purpose of the organization is to add value, reduced a lot of waste and continuing proof of Rhode Islands capacity to connect people, employers, jobs, education and services.

If you take a look at what we've posted on the website, the member agreement, basically what it is that organizations agree to follow certain protocols in serving the employer community and I am sure all the states out there, much like us, even though we are tiny and we only have to walk a short distance to each employer here in Rhode Island, we have a lot of people knocking on the same door that provide employment and training services, whether it's from state agencies, or from local organizations, economic development agencies. We felt there needed to be a streamline service in serving the employer, if we were going to be successful in getting people with disabilities jobs.

So, the employer service networks are connected to the Network Rhode Island system. We have regional networks that meet on a regular basis that are connected with each center. Small groups that meet and are lead by the Department of Labor and Training Employer Service Reps.. They are comprised of job developments, professionals in that local area. They are members of the employer service network and it provides an opportunity for these local professionals who serve not only customers what disabilities, but all of our customers in the Network Rhode Island system, so that they can network together. They share job leads, which before was a big no-no here in Rhode Island, sharing those job leads, that was a tough thing to do. They hear from local employers what their employment needs are, what their hiring needs are and about professional development opportunities as well.

If you take a look at the agreement, what it does is define certain standards and protocols that if you are going to join our little club, that you have to follow when you sign on the dotted line. One, is that you agree that there will be a lead point of contact out of all those organization who will serve the employer community, represent the employer service network, represent Network Rhode Island and the member organizations as well and to know a lot about those organizations. They also will agree to standards and principals that are based on the guiding principles that we are all familiar with, universality, customer choice integration and accountability. Outlined in the agreement are ethical and professional standards to be followed by all the organizations and Network Rhode Island in general. Job and screening, job referral and screening standards and professional development opportunities.

A little bit about where we are now. We started that process in rewriting the plans sometime, I think around last July. We submitted the plans to, just that we wanted a lot of bias because we think that people with disabilities need a voice at the state and local board level so we went to those boards with this plan. It was approved by local boards and the state Human Resource Investment Counsel, then, my co-coordinator on the grant, Diana, I took it out to the community and did road shows to the various community based organizations to community rehabilitation programs, to explain what the employer service network was, to get them to sign on. So, we completed that process sometime in September then we offered what we call the two-day immersion training for job development professionals in the network and we brought in the community. We brought in community rehabilitation programs and job development professionals who work for those organizations. We conducted that training in November. It was really successful in terms of collaboration to see community groups

and state organizations sitting in the same room, meeting each other, networking, folks with disabilities did presentations and we just conducted a two-day immersion training that finishes up this afternoon about 4:00, because the first one was so successful. And getting people to agree that we had to streamline services to employers.

Right now we have 42 organizations signed on, which we are really, really proud of in such a short period of time, because we didn't push that out until sometime after the holidays, so we've been very fortunate over the past six months to see that kind of success. We currently have three employer service networks up and running, three regional groups up and running that have been very successful. They are getting back to us on how happy they are to be part of the group to be networking with each other and actually reporting that people with disabilities are getting jobs because of the fact that they share in job leads.

So, as I look back over the five years, the employer piece was an important piece that had been, not left out, but by necessity, we didn't concentrate on it in the beginning. We are really grateful to have received these grants and had the opportunity to expand our collaboration, not just among state agencies, but local organizations as well. As I said earlier, all four grants we've entitled Roads to Independence.

I would like to highlight one more, just very brief collaboration, and it's really on the four grants in general. Once again it's the steering committee that we've put together made up of the project managers of all four grants, we've brought in employers, customers with disabilities as well as the Department of Transportation here in Rhode Island, because that's such a huge issue. As small as we are, for some reason people can't get from one place to the other and we really need to help with the Department of Transportation. So, we've brought them to the table as well.

So, those are some of our key strategies as the result of receiving the Work Incentives grant. A few of the other things that we are doing under the grant very similar to Alaska. We hired four disability resource specialists that has turned out to be very successful. Hired them by the Department of Labor and Training. They work in two of our comprehensive centers here in the state and two wove around the other four centers serving our customers with disabilities.

In addition, marketing as I said earlier, has been a key piece, once again bringing partners around the table to discuss our marketing strategy. We are bringing in focus groups that are being made up of the local community organizations that serve people with disabilities and asking them what their thoughts are. We have offered to them, to take a look at their marketing materials, we've hired a marketing consultant to, not just enhance our materials, but to take a look at the marketing materials for the community based organizations and often to modify their materials and to connect them to Network Rhode Island in some fashion. So they will be working on that as well.

Another grant strategy is for us to connect to those organizations as hard to believe as it is. Some of them who don't have computers or access to the Internet that we will be

purchasing as a match to many of those organizations to provide computers and Internet access so that we can all communicate together and better connect the Network Rhode Island system.

So, in the bottom line, we really hope that we think we did a great job at the beginning creating a welcoming system, but the grants are going to help us really further the system for people with disabilities. It's amazing to see how far we've come. I think the staff, when they first wrote their pledge all those years ago and promised to create a welcoming and accessible for people with disabilities, also wrote in there that they hope that our customers, especially our customers with disabilities will find Network Rhode Island a delightful and meaningful experience. So, we are really grateful for the opportunity to participate today and for the grants as well. So, thanks Mike.

Michael Morris: Kathleen, thank you for your presentation. A question for you is with the resource specialist positions, are those individuals actually in the One-Stops?

Kathleen Partington: Yes they are.

Michael Morris: And how would a person, a potential job seeker, would they need to self identify or what would be the possible ways that they might come into play in terms of helping a job seeker with a disability?

Kathleen Partington: In many instances that's what it is, they self identify or through a partner organization in the One-Stops, they are referred to the disability resource specialist. We have also been out in our road shows talking about the fact that we have these folks in the centers and they are getting a lot of referrals from local organizations from our Community Mental Health Centers who are referring directly to the staff. We've hired the staff; they started working on Jan. 28th. They themselves, a couple of them do have experience-serving people with disabilities. We were fortunate to be able to for the first time, in a long time hire outside of our state system. They've been very successful so far. They've got a lot to learn. It is a very complicated system. But in some terms they are self-identifying and others it is referrals from partner organizations. They just participated in the immersion training that I talked about yesterday and today, so they are really just getting known by the organizations that serve people with disabilities, so we hope that a lot of referrals will come from that as well.

Michael Morris: As part of their job description, do they also have time or make part of their responsibilities going out and talking to community based groups.

Kathleen Partington: Yes, that's a very important part of their function and their important part of the marketing strategy as well for them to be out selling the Network Rhode Island system for our customers with disabilities. Explaining what we do and getting referrals in that regard as well.

Michael Morris: Great. Let me just turn to either Lisa or Hazel or Michelle, is there any question that you might want to ask at this point to Kathleen?

Lisa Pote: Yes, I have one in Nashville. This is Lisa Pote. Kathleen, is that employer network piece specifically for job seekers with disabilities or for all?

Kathleen Partington: No, I am glad you said that. That's a really, really good question. No it is really for serving the employer community in general, but what's interesting is that this grant really was the impetus to get us all back together again. And of the 42 or so organizations that have signed on, I would say almost a majority of them are organizations who serve people with disabilities. I think that is the way we started out, but it is to serve the entire employer community and job seekers as well, and not just people with disabilities. But it was the impetus to move us forward.

Michael Morris: Michelle, any questions?

Michelle Morehouse: I guess the only thing I thought of was, and I am sorry if I missed this, if you mentioned it, but how will that Employment Service Network, how was that going to play a role in the Ticket, Ticket to Work, when that rolls out. Has that rolled out in Rhode Island?

Kathleen Partington: No, no not yet. I think we are a third round state for Ticket to Work, so we haven't gotten to that point yet. An Employer Service Network is not like a network I think under the Ticket to Work. It really is a type of organization more than an identified network.

Michelle Morehouse: Sure. I just didn't know if you anticipated kind of marketing employment network as a role through the ticket with those people you are already working with.

Kathleen Partington: No, but it is a good idea Michelle.

(laughter)

Michelle Morehouse: Thank you.

Kathleen Partington: Why don't you come over so you can do that for us?

Michael Morris: Okay. Thank you very much Kathy and let me move to our third group. The first two projects you heard from were statewide projects in Alaska and Rhode Island. Our third project is working at a local Workforce Investment area level. Again, it is one of our first round Work Incentive Grantees in Nashville, TN. What we have for you are two of the lead staff in that project with the National Career Advancement Center is Lisa Pote and Hazel Coleman. Let me turn it over to you.

Hazel Coleman: Hi this is Hazel and I am going to begin the first part of the presentation. I wish to give you information on NCAC as well as our Work Incentive Grant and then Lisa will follow up reviewing the service coordination and the global coordination issues.

NCAC or the National Career Advancement Center is a metro center agency. We receive federal employment related funding and we are comprised of a four county region in Tennessee. We are responsible for three One-Stop and two satellite locations. The two satellite locations, one is located in the enterprise zone, which is located in the public housing areas and it helps us to reach out to more of our hard to serve customers. The second satellite is located in the Opry-Mill shopping mall. The Mill's mall consists of about 200 shopping centers. NCAC is the operating entity for the Work Incentive Grant, which we call Career Access Network, or CAN.

Moving on to our coordinating strategies, the one that we think is the biggest and most successful would be our Special Service Facilitators. The key to the Special Service Facilitator is actually connecting our customers with disabilities to a One-Stop center and actually having them receive the WIA services. If you get a copy of the document that's downloaded on the Internet, you would see the Special Service Facilitator and an arrow shooting out to several of the resources on the side. The first one would be the WIA career center services. The Special Service Facilitator acts as a gatekeeper to those services. It assists customers through the different services within WIAs, since WIA is a self-directed system. A lot of people with disabilities do not feel comfortable assessing the services in the WIA services.

The facilitator also acts as a resource to Voc Rehab as actually getting our customers in, scheduling appointments and usually it takes a day or two but they are in and they see Gwen, our VR specialist and go from there. They are familiar with the disability assessments. Our grant provides assessment to those individuals whose medical records are outdated. They cannot actually recommend that a customer get an assessment. That is up to the VR specialist and what she determines. They also serve as the middle persons to the benefits counselor. The customer comes in and they need more information on actually SSI or working and trying to receive federal funds at the same time. The benefits specialist is here to two days a week and she also services in that area.

The Special Service Facilitator, the facilitator gets a great deal of their work is done in the community networking with other community agencies. So, if they need other information, that is not employment related, we are able to send them out to those different kinds of agencies. The facilitators actually access the middle person with the family service counselors. They have a good rapport and its someone they need sent in the facilitator will meet and greet that person at the door and get them through the proper services. We also have a senior facilitator who is responsible for the ADA advocacy information. They provide sensitivity training and ADA training to employers as well as ADA technical assistance to those employees also.

The second diagram is actually the customer service chart and what the customer goes through and how the facilitator assists them in their pathway. I am sorry the second one is the first customer service chart. I'm not going to go to great detail with this chart, but this chart was actually developed at the beginning of the grant and it shows how everyone needs to go back and revisit their policies and procedures and evaluate and make sure that the customers are being served in an effective way. As you can see, we've made a lot of changes from the first one to the second one. The second one, whether a customer is a current customer or a new customer who is referred from a community agency or a self-referral, they go through the same process. The first person they will see would be the person at the front end. We have signs posted that say if you have a disability or a health problem, see a Special Service Facilitator. So, if they would like to see someone in our WIA Grant, the facilitators are there to help them. Once the facilitator sits down, gives them an overview of our program, a basic customer profile sheet is taken. Basic information, name, address, where they were referred from and what referrals that we made.

That information is put into a database and we are able to receive at the end of the month the customer serviced how many people went through WIA, how many people actually got assistance through our training. Once the customer assists with the facilitator, if he determines that the information he needs is not employment related, then we can refer them out. Sometimes they need information on transportation, housing, counseling, whatever it is, we are able to send them out, or refer them out to outside services. If they do have employment needs, then the facilitator will develop a path for them. We can either refer them to VR; we can refer them straight to WIA services. If a person wants to see VR and we don't think they are eligible, we still go ahead and send them to VR. The VR counselor at that time will determine if they are eligible. Maybe they need an assessment, maybe they are already eligible, but whatever she decides, but she develops a career strategy plan for there and nine times out of ten, she rolls them into the WIA services. So that's really the main reason why at least 20 to 25 of our customers are receiving the individual training, because we co-locate them in VR and WIA services.

Once they are referred to VR, if they are not eligible, then they will automatically receive the WIA core services if that's what they are wanting. They can receive the core services, the registered services or the intensive services and onto the ITA if necessary, but that is the basic flow of our customer service facilitator.

We think that is the key component in integrating our services with the WIA services and it has been highly effective. We have served over 875 people as of today and 32 are in the ITA. So, we are very proud of our facilitator.

Lisa is going to come and talk at this time and talk about some of the global and service coordination's within the grant.

Lisa Pote: I am going to go ahead and go through my part, unless you want to break in and ask Hazel questions now?

Michael Morris: No, no. Go ahead.

Lisa Pote: I get to do global, which I am much more comfortable with. Hazel obviously has her hands on the day-to-day apparatus with our program. We are the National Career Advancement Center and weren't nearly as forward thinking as Kathleen way in Rhode Island about individuals with disabilities. When we wrote for the Work Incentive Grant, we were still struggling with WIA and making that transition with WIA. So, we are familiar with the wide range, we talked about coordination and collaboration. I think that when we wrote the grant we were more around co-location. We were all learning to work and live together, all the mandated partners. We wrote for the grant because we saw that there was such a huge gap and need for the individuals that were moving throughout the system that had disabilities. Really, the way that that was indicated to us was because we really weren't seeing a whole lot of individuals with disabilities through the system.

So, if you look at the first part for me, the successful coordination piece from the systems perspective, I've outlined some very, very clear simple things that we went through when looking at how we were going to implement this grant and some things that we learned from that. First of all, when we started writing for this grant, we identified partners because we were more or less clueless about how to serve individuals with disabilities through the system. So, in terms of identifying partners as you all moved forward in implementing your grants and some of you, I'm preaching to the choir here, you've done what we've done in Nashville. You looked to the ones you know, you looked to the partners you've got. I mean first of all, if you are local Workforce Development Area, you've got mandated partners. Beyond that, you want to look to the people who are unorthodox partners because they are the ones that have the know-how. Those are the people that you bring to the table. We have some very wonderful partners in Nashville. The Center for Independent Living, the IAM Cares Organization, here the State Centers for Independent Living. We went to them first and they really helped us to create, and design and model for services through here.

One thing that we learned about that I have as a second bullet, is make sure as you move forward in your collaborative efforts that you train on the rules and regulations governing the services of your partners. You really can't establish a service coordination plan until you know how or why your partners delivered their services. I think that's critically important. I think bringing everybody to the table is really great, but I think that making sure that you know what their ultimate goals are is the best place to start. It is sort of like; everybody pulls up to the table and dumps out their pockets. We are all looking at each other and saying what do you have, what do you have, what do you have to do that will help me to understand what we have to do a little bit better. A part of that is understanding the outcomes that each of the partners are trying to reach. That really is critically important because in the end that little--I call it the devil you know, really does help you design your program services better.

There's a big difference between the foundational funding that we all have and the grant funding that tries to help us to fill the gaps of the services. In the end the foundational funding drives the car. For example, in our case Workforce Investment Act funds drive the car. Everything else on the side comes on board, but in the end, the WIA outcomes are ultimate outcomes. They are the ones we are being judged on. VR has their outcomes. All of our partners have their own outcomes. So, it's really important to understand that, otherwise you can create a wonderful system and people really won't do what they say they are going to do because they are still driving to get to another piece. You want to look at areas of integration. You want to step to the strength and weaknesses of the partner. For example, in terms of coordinating day to day with WIA, and VR or Voc Rehab system in Tennessee is on an order of selection so they cannot serve certain individuals who don't meet the criteria for order of selection. In that case what we do is, what Hazel said is true, Gwen really does refer those individuals back through the WIA system and then we get them connected with additional providers outside to provide support ongoing.

You want to formalize the processes and get things down on paper as best you possibly can. Who's job is it to do what? You'll see from what we downloaded for the presentation today that we believe whole heartedly in the flow chart process. When Hazel and I went back and reviewed the flowchart that we planned, it was very simplistic really when we wrote for the grant it has changed a great deal. We sit with our partners and we what do you do? Well, what do you do? When does that happen? Then, where do people fall out? How do people fall out? Make sure that everybody understands their part of the deal, what they are responsible for. Then you want to reinforce those with very clear contracts. And I say this, the more clarification the better. The ownership, if people don't own thing with everybody's job, they are nobody's job and things don't happen. It's really important, not just who does what, but what pays for what. Michael talked about the cost allocation process in our case. We do a lot of leveraging against each other straight on down the line. Someone's in VR, they are getting VR services. They are in WIA. WIA follows those services. We charge off according to which way the customer goes. The more clarification you can get the better.

Then ongoing, if you want to review for processes for quality, it is really critically important that you do that on a continuous basis. To look at what did you miss? I can give you an example of that. We thought all along, we had an outrageous WIA co-enrollment number. We had served at some point, 700 people and over 500 of them were co-enrolled into WIA. That wasn't in the case when we went back and looked in our numbers. What was happening was we were referring people to WIA and they were using our resource center and thinking that they were enrolled into WIA. That's a very simple process issue. That's about explaining what the next hook up point is for that person. So, it is that kind of ongoing review of the process that helps keep you sharp. Also, we want to include customers in that review. All different kinds of customers, not just the customers we serve, but also our internal referral sources, our external referrals sources. How is it working for you and for your customers?

The next page that we had up was some of the successes of our coordination. In terms of the high touch staff that we have in the front end, which many of you have already figured this into the design of your programs. That really is it. That is the winningest part of our strategy at this point. We want to make sure that we take advantage of that for as long as we possibly can. Because, not only is it the high touch in the front end, it is the intentional connections, to outside of the agency, to outside of your typical referral systems that keeps your coordination meaningful to partners outside of the Workforce Development system. For example, our connection with the Drug Corp, and with our TANF population and with our public housing residence with our Tennessee School for the Blind, with our Tennessee Rehabilitation Center. We have ongoing partnerships with the public schools. We are going to begin with our Youth in Transitional classes. While you have the funding, do the most you can with it to coordinate with outside partners as best you can. We are really starting to beef up our coordination with Youth Services as well.

In terms of the last piece for me, around the lessons learned. Don't assume for system changes. You've got to really make them happen on paper and through process. If you really think that something is going to happen, chances are it probably won't. That's the different between coordination and collaboration. That if everybody is doing what they say they are going to do it is happening for a reason. You want to reinforce that formally. I agree with something Michelle said also. I wrote down education and communication is critical between One-Stop staff and other staff, contract staff to facilitate integration. I don't know about our other panel partners today, but I have learned that our Workforce system has it's own personality. It has it's own set of personalities within that personality. So, it's really important to continue to education that comes on board from the "outside" into what that personality is. Because that keeps them included, it keeps misunderstandings from happening. It is not just about us learning about the disability community. It is about providers of services to individuals with disabilities learning about our systems so that they can access us better even after the grant is gone. We really do have to appreciate the strength and weaknesses of all the partners involved. It's really ok to pull up to a table and say, you know, I do not know how to do that. Can you explain that acronym to me? We need to work through these differences. That's really important, because then you can really get to how to best serve the customer. We really believe that's been successful for us in Nashville. It has been an ongoing learning experience going back and revisiting that.

My last and I guess final piece that I want to share in terms of the importance, of and what makes the collaborative relationship so important is that if you can find the shared vision then anything is possible. What we've learned with this funding is that in order to really create a meaningful entryway for job seekers with disabilities into our system, every partner, every typical partner, every unorthodox partner has to believe that it can be possible to do that. It has to believe in the ultimate, the ultimate belief that every job seeker, regardless of whether they have disabilities or not, must have access to the services that our public dollars pay for. That vision, if you can keep coming back to it, it will make you rise above a lot of personality stuff and a lot of integration issues. I just

think that it just calls us to good. It calls us to better. I think that doing that just helps to kind of overcome all the differences that can come about.

So, I think that's our piece Michael.

Michael Morris: Thank you Lisa and Hazel. I'm looking at the time, and I think rather than my asking questions or turning to Kathy or Michelle, I want to go back to the moderator who can explain to those listening across the country, how to be able queue up to ask a question. So, moderator can you help us?

Moderator: If you have a question at this time, please press 1 on your touch-tone phone. If your question has been answered or you wish to remove yourself from the queue, please press #. One moment for questions.

And our first question is from Susan Beavers?

Susan Beavers: Hi, my name is Susan Beavers and I work under a Workforce Investment grant that was awarded to Goodwill Pittsburgh on behalf of five area WIB boards in western Pennsylvania and the six northern counties of West Virginia.

I don't have a question, but I have two comments to make. One is, a personal comment. It may be a popular view or politically correct view, but I found this discussion very, very interesting because I feel very personally that collaboration is the key to quality services that we provide to consumers. I see a lot in our area, a lot of agencies struggling and spending a lot of time to increase their individual fundings. Whereas in the day when fundings are decreasing, that a collaborative effort, if we all as agencies collaborated and looked at services, like Lisa just talked about. Everybody brings something very positive to the table and we all have our strengths and weaknesses. If we can combine those, coming from a counseling background in the systems theory, just that the system is greater, far greater than the sum of its parts. So, for me, the idea of collaboration is the key to quality services.

My second comment is that I live in Ohio and I am a member of the Consumer Advisory Committee. As a consumer for the Division of Rehabilitation Services where the consumers are very empowered. The Consumer Advisory Committees are very well respected and very much have a part in the say of the administration of the Division of Rehabilitation Services. In our area, the southeast area of Ohio, we are taking an initiative with employers to do just basically start out with some windmills training, just to do some disability etiquette kind of training with the thought that we will progress from there. We are looking at collaborations between of course the Division of Rehabilitation Services. We are going to approach the One-Stop; I mean what better resource for employers for us. Then we are going to look at a lead employer in the area to help us establish this and get it going. Our plan is to do something to begin this in October. So, I think this is a very unique group taking an initiative and then collaborating services and I am very excited about that.

Michael Morris: Well, thank you for sharing that with all of us. Any of the panel, any comment?

Susan Beavers: And, Michelle I wanted to thank you for the idea of the passport and also the Survivor game are great. I am looking forward to using those somehow.

Michelle Morehouse: If I could just mention Michael, I also have a really groovy brochure that was put together for the job survival challenge for the job-fair that I'd be happy to e-mail out to people. So, can I get my e-mail on the web page or something?

Michael Morris: Sure, and could you also share that with us, because we would love to put that up on the website for people who will visit the site later.

Michelle Morehouse: You bet.

Lisa Pote: Hi Susan, this is Lisa in Nashville.

Susan Beavers: Hi Lisa.

Lisa Pote: One of the initiatives that our grant pays for is doing sensitivity training with employers. You probably might want to hook up with Hazel later on and we will have our contact information posted so that you can talk to her about that. We have done an employer forum. We did it earlier in the spring. Really it was to talk about fear that have come out of the ADA and experiences around hiring and to promote the hiring of individuals with disabilities and we are planning a big 'ole huge forum in the fall very similar to that. So, you may want to give her a call later offline and find out more about that.

Susan Beavers: Ok, great, thank you.

Michael Morris: Can we go moderator to the next question?

Moderator: Once again, if you do have a question, please press one. One moment for questions.

And our next question is from Richard Sanders.

Richard Sanders: Yes, hi this is Rich Sanders up in Alaska. I am with the Work Incentive Grant with Michelle. I had a question for the folks down there in Tennessee. Regarding the Special Services Facilitator. That looks like a great way of working that. One of my questions is, is that a sustainable system when the grant is done. Is there someone who has been designated to build that position or are they being trained in that. Also, has anybody expressed any concerns about being kind of shall I say, funneled to one person when they have a disability? Because I know that

was kind of a concern with some people about making it all-inclusive, all the time for everybody?

Hazel Coleman: Our Special Services Facilitator one the front end, they are there to assist the customers with disability, but we do train the staff at the front also to assist those customers too. So, when the grant is over, when someone walks in, they are able to assist those customers just as well.

Richard Sanders: That's great.

Lisa Pote: And your second question was about...?

Michael Morris: The second part of the question was, and it was a good one, once the grant is over, is there any way, or have you looked ahead as to how those positions might be permanently integrated into the service delivery system?

Lisa Pote: Ok, I think I got my first questions and my second questions mixed up. I think Hazel addresses the ongoing piece of it. There are actually two aspects of that. Our staff will be better trained. It is possible that we are going to go after United Way funding to get outside staff co-located with us ongoing to cover that front end that covers a greater variety of expertise. That's sort of on the fringes of my mind. But in terms of customers feeling like they were being taken out of the regular process coming in. As a general, we've never heard of complaints ever from somebody going to someone inside from outside of the process. I don't think that they know that they are. That's why we didn't call them disability coordinators or whatever. We've sort of build our Special Service Facilitators as someone that would help anyone with more additional needs moving through. So, I think that's part of the success of that position.

Richard Sanders: That's great thanks.

Michael Morris: Ok, we'll go back to our moderator and any other questions.

Moderator: Our next question is from Nicholas Rose.

Nicholas Rose: Hi, this is actually Pat Dowse from the New York State Rehabilitation Association. I was interested to hear from any of the presenters in respect to with the collaboration efforts that you've actually made. How much was actually done in-house vs. actual hired consultants that were brought into work with your different partners in helping them come into one vision of collaboration amongst all services?

Michael Morris: Ok, maybe we will try everyone on this. How about Michelle in Alaska first?

Michelle Morehouse: Yeah, I would have to say the bulk of it has been done in-house. There has been some larger job center wide collaboration conferences. One in

particular that I'm thinking of right now that was heard by Vocational Rehabilitation. But as far as our grant specific efforts and the different things that I talked about, those have all been things that we've been involved in in-house.

Michael Morris: How about in Rhode Island?

Kathleen Partington: What we did, under the One-Stop grant, we had hired consultants to come in when we first brought all the partners together and they worked with us for months at the steering committee level. That's what really brought us all together in the beginning, but under the TWWIIA grants, it's mostly been done in-house.

Michael Morris: Ok, in Nashville?

Lisa Pote: We never had an outside consultant come in. We own our all our mistakes. (laughter) it was just us and all of our accomplishments. We really had some really extraordinary partners and so we were fortunate to be able to just work through issues as they arose.

Michael Morris: Great, thank you. Back to the moderator.

Moderator: And I am showing no further questions at this time.

Michael Morris: Ok, well I have a few. Let me several to our panel.

First one is a topic that really didn't come up today and yet is also an area interest and engagement of One-Stop centers across the country. That has to do with youth activities. I wondered whether any of your activities or these three projects are actually working on coordination with the improved access to youth services that are being funded through the local Workforce Investment Boards.

Hazel Coleman: This is Hazel in Nashville. We have just begun to scratch the surface on that issue. Last spring we did have a group of transitional students here to do a job readiness training and we introduced them to the One-Stop and allowed them to use the computers and go through that process. We have modified our budget to actually have someone to work with youth. So, starting August, hopefully we will get them in this summer and we can do more so that we will be able to elaborate a little more on that, in that area.

Michael Morris: Great. Anything in Rhode Island or Alaska, that working on youth level activities?

Kathleen Partington: Yes, in Rhode Island, very similar to Hazel, which is scratching the surface over the last several years, we've done a lot with in school students and special education students in programs within the schools. On the steering committee of these grants, we have included a representative from the Department of Education who has been an intricate member of that group in

transitioning on in school students, transitioning them out of school and work and how we are going to coordinate the grants with that. He just did a fabulous presentation to our group yesterday. We are still learning his world too, so that's kind of where we are with that, just at the beginning.

Michael Morris: In Alaska?

Michelle Morehouse: Yeah, we've actually done several different things just on a kind of localized level, the different resources specialists were involved in last year's Disability Mentoring Day in getting folks, youth with disabilities transitions students hooked up with business to experience a day at work with them. It was a pretty good success and we're looking at ways of doing that again this year. Perhaps a little differently than we did last year, but definitely working with those youth and getting them in with business folks.

The other thing is one of the grant coordinator for the RSA Systems Change Grant has a seat on the youth council of the Anchorage Workforce Investment area of the board, of the youth council of that board so she is sure to infuse disability type issues into the overall web youth council.

We've also done on a local level with all the resource specialists a lot of outreach to the schools in encouraging the schools to come in and try out the resource room. We held a meeting of all the transition coordinators at one of the job centers so that they could be introduced to the different services that are available there. Then, also just the outreach to the schools explaining what the job center services are, explaining DBR services and that kind of thing. It has been successful.

Michael Morris: Great. Let me turn to a different area for a moment. At a local level there is, I think in increasing interest to look at ways that Individuals Training Accounts or ITA's can be used for individuals with disabilities. Particularly looking on the issue of coordination or collaboration, seeing some beginning evidence of Vocational Rehabilitation and the One-Stop system co-funding and individual. Paying for different things, but in support of a person's goals in terms of skills development and hopefully seeking employment. I was curious as to with each of your projects, do any of you have any experience with that in terms of use of the ITA's and then coordinated funding between the two partners?

Kathleen Partington: In Rhode Island Mike, we've been doing that, leveraging funds. We have ORS staff who are partner staff in the Network Rhode Island system and they have been leveraging both ORS dollars and WIA dollars for customers with disabilities. Then, whatever supportive service is the advantage there is the money that can be used from ORS for supportive service needs for disabilities in training.

Michael Morris: Great, how about in Nashville?

Lisa Pote: I don't know that we have information on that Michael. We haven't really compared the people that we know that are ITA's whether or not VR is kicking into the ones that we have in our system. We will need to check on that.

Michael Morris: And in Alaska?

Michelle Morehouse: We're also just kind of scratching the surface on that. I definitely know that on a local level there's a lot of cost sharing going on in serving people that use the job centers both with disabilities, sharing costs with VR and different agencies. AS far as specific to the ITA's, the Alaska Works Initiative recently hosted a policy summit that brought together people to talk about specific policy issues that we really need to look at. One of the things that was talked about during that policy summit in the One-Stop job center focus group was ITA's and the use of ITA's. We had a staff there from the Workforce Development program and the findings and the suggestions from that policy summit which was to make sure that folks with disabilities are able to use those ITA's will be presented in short order to a larger group of policy makers for the job centers.

Michael Morris: Let me go back to the moderator for a second. Are there any other questions lined up.

Moderator: I am showing no questions at this time.

Michael Morris: I think what we will do is come back through our panel. Perhaps I know each of your I know talked about different things that you've asked people to perhaps get in touch with you directly. So, maybe starting with Michelle, do you want to offer an e-mail address or some contact information?

Michelle Morehouse: Sure. I'll give e-mail and phone. My e-mail address is michelle_morehouse@labor.state.ak.us. Phone number is area code 907-269-3557.

Michael Morris: Ok, thank you Michelle, but probably for people on the eastern seaboard, what is the time hour difference from east to Alaska?

Michelle Morehouse: Well, although our son is coming at 4:30, I am not up then, so please don't call until we are four hours earlier than you guys.

Michael Morris: Ok, that's good for people to keep in mind. Ok, Kathleen in Rhode Island?

Kathleen Partington: Yeah, I can be reached by e-mail address. It is kpartington@dlt.state.ri.us and my telephone number is area code 401-462-8799.

Michael Morris: Great. In Nashville?

Hazel Coleman: This is Hazel, my e-mail is hazel.coleman@nashville.gov

Lisa's is the same.

Lisa Pote: So, it's lisa.pote@.

Hazel Coleman: They know that.

Lisa Pote: All right.

Hazel Coleman: Our number is 615-862-8890. My extension is 356 and Lisa's ext. is 277.

Michael Morris: Ok, thank you.

Well, let me wrap up this session. I want to thank all of our panelists for the breath and varied information. The scope of it was wonderful. I think you have given the audience a lot of ideas and strategies and I'm sure that people will be further in touch and contact with you to pursue some further details.

I want to thank the Department of Education and the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research NIDRR, as well as the Employment and Training Administration at the US Department of Labor for help on underwriting the cost of this audio-conference series.

For those of you who are interested in our last conference call in the series, it will be next month on June 25. The topic will be Medicaid buy in, current state experiences. It will be lead by Alan Jenson, who is another member of our research and training team. It will include representatives from state experiences in Connecticut, Wisconsin and Oregon. You can find out more information about how to register for that call in July. July 25, I think I may have said June 25th, July 25th by checking at the University of Iowa website www.its.uiowa.edu/law.

Again, I appreciate all of the presentations and look forward to learning more about everyone's experiences across the country about improving coordination between multiple service delivery systems and agencies, both in the public and private sector. I think this call today has given everyone some wonderful ideas or strategies that are in development. Some strategies that are already working and look forward to learning more about the successes that we are having in assisting and supporting job seekers with disabilities through the Workforce Investment System. So, thank you all and have a good afternoon.