

Event ID: 2263115

Event Started: 12/17/2013 2:53:31 PM ET

Please stand by for realtime captions.

All participant, please standby. Your call will begin shortly. Thank you for your patience.

Welcome to the NDRN three NDRN 3.tran23 conference call. I name is Heather, and on the operator for the call. At this time, all participants are in the small minority. Later we will conduct a question and answer session. I'll now turn the call over to Cheryl Bates Harris. Cheryl, you may begin.

Thank you everyone for joining us this afternoon and let me start by wishing everybody happy holidays. We appreciate the fact that your taken time out of this busy time of year to join us for this important phone call. This is actually the 13th or 14th employment initiative call, and we have two dynamic speakers with us today. From Source America, formally known as the AbilityOne program, formally known as the JWOD program, Martin Gary, who many of you remember worked at the Social Security Administration and is probably the person responsible for getting me on the Ticket To Work panel those years ago. He's now managing executive director of, and I forgot the name of Institute at Source America, and with him he has his senior research manager, Therese Simeon. I'm going to turn it over to them and if you have a question or comment, you can type it in the chat box, but we will be taking questions and answers at the end. So, Teresa and Martin, thank you very much for joining us today.

Thank you very much, Cheryl. And it's a pleasure to be on the call, and perhaps I should start by saying the name of the organization that we represent here at Source America, it's called the Institute for economic empowerment.

Thank you.

And briefly, my background, the Institute was created about seven years ago. I was the first director of the Institute, and its goal is to advance employment opportunities for people with the most significant disabilities. It is not linked directly to the JWOD or to the AbilityOne program, per se, even though it is funded by Source America. As you can see, in talking about the pathways to careers program, I wanted to start off by just talking about the overall goal, which is to create a situation in which all youth and adults with significant disabilities have both informed choice of competitive employment options across a broad range of community settings, and access to ongoing career support. So, there really are three key ideas there. One is that they have an informed choice, not just an illusory choice, or even a technical choice. That is that people really have an understanding of what they are choosing. The second idea is that the choice has to be real. So, it is not a choice, hypothetically, of a particular type of employment or employment setting, is a real choice. And finally, that we are not just concerned about jobs, we are concerned about careers. And so, part of what our goal would be is to expand this concept of integrated community employment across an entire community, which would include progression and changes in employment over that time.

Right now, the number of different jobs that the adverse person -- average person holds has been increasing rapidly. Let me begin in terms of talking about the design of the pathways program by identifying three important strategic objectives that we were trying to pursue as we developed the design of the program. And by we, let me say that we have been in a very active partnership with Mark bold and Associates, and specifically with Mike Callahan from the beginning, and the design of the project was very much a collaborative effort with them. We have also, from the beginning, been involved with Mathematica Policy Research and the structuring of the overall research design that we are pursuing, and I will talk more about that later.

But the three observations I could say that we started with was that if we were going to significantly expand informed choice for people with intellectual and develop mental disabilities and integrated employment, we had to pursue three objectives at the same time. Had to increase worker availability and productivity, and by that, although productivity increases are something that we do a fair amount of

work with in terms of assistive technology and other strategies, the availability of workers has probably more to do with some of the structural disincentives that are built into the Social Security programs themselves, and also into the Medicaid programs that go with them. So that we needed to look at those barriers and disincentives. That we needed to do something important about employer demand. The Janus Walker wrote a program actually requires a certain percentage of people with significant disabilities be employed. But, that program reaches right now about 45,000 people a year. There are 14 million adults of working age on SSI and SSD I. So in order to create a real expansion of employment opportunities, it seemed important for us to create and certainly to increase employer demand. I think right now, there are some wonderful, he wrote companies that have moved out into this area, but the number of people that they have actually ended up employee is a very small percentage of the number of people who might want to have a choice of integrated, competitive employment.

And finally, we identified as a third objective, something that is more subtle, which is to improve and expand employment support. And here, we are looking at the infrastructure that is not there for a lot of individuals with disabilities that they want to work. But, it is also an infrastructure of support that might not be easily built by either the employer or the employee. Transportation is a good example, particularly in areas, in rural America, and in the West, and will talk about Utah, that's a good example. And that is one example of a situation where a transportation system is not necessarily systems that can be controlled by an individual employer, or by an individual and all youth with disabilities.

Or even the availability of an infrastructure of support services. And here, one of the best examples of the mental health support services. The truth of the matter is there are very few communities in America that have a range of readily available mental health services for a variety of different types of people with serious mental wellness. So that their infrastructure issues that do need to be addressed, if you're really going to dramatically expand.

So in designing the overall approach that we will talk about in the next few minutes, we wanted to effectively respond to each of these objectives and make significant progress. Let me move to the Utah product overview. And I'm going to turn this over to trace. -- To Therese, the project director in Utah. We will go back and forth, but she is much more familiar with the day to day operations of the project than I am, although I improved from time to time.

All right. So again, I wanted to second the appreciation of your being on the phone here in giving us the opportunity to talk about the pathways to careers programs. We did select our private site to be just

north of Salt Lake City in Clearfield, Utah. The location is one of our nonprofit agencies that is an affiliate of ours through source America and they were picked about two and half years ago through a competitive process. We sent out an RFI to all of our affiliates across the program requesting information on skills and expertise in their area of customized implement and customize job development. And, you know, essentially, information on the partnerships with other state agencies and businesses and the Chamber of Commerce.

The Utah site is out of the organization and margin is going to talk to you more about how we are expanding to additional sites. But our initial focus in Utah is on individuals with or for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The grant funding is to support 60 individuals and likely maybe even some more as we are, you know, getting our expertise in building capacity. But, what we are doing is actually recruiting individuals from three different areas. The first is as listed here, from the special education transition students ages 18 to 22, and the school district where the nonprofit is located. It is the Davis school district.

The second largest school district in Utah.

That's right, second to salt lake city. The second group of people eligible that we are recruiting participants through is folks who are on the Utah Medicaid waiver waiting list, waiting for services and have indicated some interest in employment. And thirdly, actually, employees at Park, a nonprofit agency, currently working on their facilities. Right now they are in facility-based employment want to do something different. And from that group, those applicants were actually doing a random selection of applicants to achieve the number of 60. And, that gets us to the last concept here, which is critical as one of our core values in the project, that this would be zero exclusions. And by volunteers and participants, we mean that people apply from these different. Participants. They apply to participate in the than from those who apply, we are selecting the applicant for participant, rather, and our model and our value, then, is that every person who applies, and is interested in integrated, competitive employment, we will do everything we can to support them in achieving success.

And zero exclusions really means that whoever we randomize and select space in the brought until completion.

Exactly.

So there are no people who drop out for extraneous reasons or have concept of severity or problems.

Right, they were not making some subjective determination as to whether or not they really are employable or not.

As we talk about people who work early in the project, you will see it has a significant range of people. Let me say, it really is a highlight of the project, and Mike Callahan and I, I do charting on something called Visio which is really trying a model. I will show you a chart in a few minutes. But, we really want to fit the project to the people. So this isn't a demonstration project. That would imply that we know how to do that. We really wanted to learn from this project, and we have been learning from this project. What an inclusive project would look like if we really were going to have zero exclusions and serve everybody in the population. So, the project has been evolving as we have been going, and that reflects a philosophy of fitting the project to the people, not the people into the project.

There are four key elements, core strategies, in the project. We will talk about each one of these in a minute. But, it's important to just start with kind of the overview. The first is the idea of expanded discovery. Now, many of you may be familiar with the idea of discovery. It's an idea, actually, that Mike Callahan and Mark Goldman and Associates pioneered many years ago, and it has evolved over time, and it involves, obviously, really trying to acquire a real understanding of the interest, skills, abilities, desires of the like characteristics of an individual come to try to make an effective match with that individual to a job. It is not a rabid placement model or a model that tries to fit people into existing jobs, it's really the opposite. It's trying to understand what kind of job would best fit the individual. Expanded discovery is a new term that did not exist before the Utah project and is one that has come out of the relationship between discovery in the second box below it, which are paid internships, which the project offers. We have an unlimited number of internships, but we offer paid internships for reuse the discovery strategy to try to match people up with an appropriate job. So, we go out and try to find a job that matches the people. We don't start with a preselected group of jobs and try to fit the people into them. We start with the people and then go out to a variety of employers. We have some are between 18 and 25 right now. With a lot of different kinds of jobs. We try to figure out where that exists.

The value of the internships, there are several values. But, one of them is to significantly enrich the discovery process. Because it allows us to see how the person reacts to the actual work setting, they are paid minimum wage, they receive benefits. They're basically doing a job that really exists with the employer. And, in job, by the way, that the employer actually intends to hire someone in in the next year. And, of course, is the internship is not successful, then there may be an offer of employment and ultimately an acceptance. If it is not successful, there is a learning benefit to that that really goes back into the discovery approach.

So what this means is that the discovery is expanded and also ongoing. That we keep discovering as we go. The employment support plan, which was mentioned in the Boxing Day is an important ingredient, because that lays out the specific services and supports that individual needs in order to do the job successfully on an ongoing basis. And it also actually includes an estimate of the cost of those services and supports, because the internships will last anywhere from 80 to 12 weeks, give us an opportunity to figure out what kind of supports are needed, and what the cost might look like.

So, that plan is part of that step. The employer payroll tax adjustment is something that basically provides, if the employer offers a job, and the individual accepts it, that provides the employer with an ongoing cash it is really, in concept, supposed to be a reduction of the payroll tax, but as we are doing it, if the quarterly payment. Which the employer can use, to provide the ongoing employment support. And, the employer has to agree to provide the supports on an ongoing basis in order to qualify for the payroll tax adjustment. And finally, we are concerned both with the employer and outside of the employer, with providing ongoing support to the worker, now the employee, in terms of career opportunities, both inside and outside of the employer settings.

Do you want to talk about the expansion of discovery more?

Yeah, and Martin, you've touched on it quite a bit. The team, Utah, as Martin had mentioned, was trained by the MPNA staff so they're working with every individual in the project in the initial discovery part, and depending on their interests, again, that's very person driven in 100% of the people coming to Arena have opted into internships that if they chose not to, we actually go right into job development. But, that is what discovery is all about. Giving us the information and helping us understand what kinds of conditions the individual needs to be successful in employment.

At the end of the initial discovery phase that leads into the internship, we have a decision point which is what we call the discovery meeting or the internship planning meeting where we decide with the individual, their parents, or, you know, whoever they want to have included in this meeting, what they are going to opt into. What types of internships that we may have already had a sense of, we've been bad -- been out building towards that or if we need to go out into the field and create entirely new opportunity for them to intern. And so that conversation takes place at the end of the initial discovery period and may go into the internships and feed back then information to the expanded discovery project into the discovery profile.

All of that information creates this chart of, you know, information about the characteristics of the individual and what is going to work for them.

The next slide as I put it up here is about the internships. Just a few points that we have not mentioned. First, every job that we are looking at is a job that is in integrated competitive employment and the wage level is at or above the federal minimum wage. In most cases, these jobs are well above minimum wage. As trees indicated, the jobs are identified during the discovery meeting and there are multiple pathways and I will show you what those look like in a minute.

I mentioned the 8 to 12 weeks. The safety net is important, the last bullet, which is that if individuals want to stop the process and go back to where they started, they can do that. And, I think what we are finding, what we're going to find, we've had two people now who have indicated, and actually it's not even in one instance the individual, the family members to become nervous about some external consideration, primarily around benefit eligibility, and we spent a lot of time -- we can talk about that as well, the time working on that. The cost is somebody didn't want to drop out. We've actually had two people out of the 30 that have reached that point. But there is a safety net.

And so, to Martin's point, where it was necessary, we went in negotiating with state agencies, for example, for folks on the Medicaid waiting waiver list. We worked with the state agencies in Utah to talk about what it would mean if an individual went off into the pathways program and for the time that they're actually a participant in pathways, their cases are not reevaluated, which essentially means they don't drop their place on the waiting list. Right. And so, that is one of the aspects of the safety net that

we are putting out there, so that people can feel assured that they take this opportunity, take this chance, if you will, and if it does not work out for them, they can opt back into where they are before.

I'm not sure if I promise this or threatened it, but this is one of these pathways charts that we have been working on. The key here is that the chart is grown, but the boxes of the pink or red are standard drops and descriptions. These are jobs as they were originally structured by the employers for real jobs in the workforces of the employers that they are out looking for people. So, these are not customized jobs in that sense. They are the regular jobs the employer is seeking someone to fill. The Orange line call adopted internships, and that is where we work with the employer to change the Red Sox job somewhat in order to accommodate a particular need of a worker with a significant disability. It's still the basic job, the basic job is still there. But, we negotiated a way, probably some element, we may have replaced that element with another. So, it's a little bit of restructuring.

The yellow boxes, that line, is truly customized employment, rather than starting with an existing regular job in the work force, this is the model that pioneers another. Where you start in discussion with the employer about what kind of work the employer needs to have done. Is there a way of building or creating a job? That is the yellow line. And finally at the bottom, the Brown or tan, or self-employment. We have not yet had anybody off into self-employment. But, that is another type of internship where we are looking at, as an option, and all of this is driven by the expanded discovery process. What works for the individual?

And I won't read these. These are the summaries of the types of internships we just went over. This gives you an idea, and Therese, you may want to talk about this. These are the actual internships and employers that are participating in the project right now.

This is a snapshot from a couple of months back that came out in Utah. All kinds of data, empirical data on every aspect of what is happening in folks, both in terms of where they are working, line of business, categorization of internships, as Martin was talking about previously. The job titles, start and end date, for the internship, obviously it is minimum wage, and then as we track into jobs, we are tracking their wages on the actual, you know, with the employers.

And what we did was to create this matrix, if you will, of diverse employers, lines of business, we went with the 16 career clusters and the team went out and identified and building relationships or has built relationships with employers that have clusters but also secondary lines of business. Even though your primary line of business might be education, for example a university, secondarily, you'll have a multitude of diversity of other jobs that will make up what has to happen for education to take place at a university.

So, they are tracking that as well and this is just an example of where folks are. We have all businesses, large vision says, public and private businesses in our employer partners, and, you know, I think the connection to the individuals through the internships and then the idea that we are helping the employer map out with the team, to get to know the individual, they have the opportunity to get this payroll tax adjustment that seems to be really working well with employers. And, we are seeing a great deal of pickup and interest in what we are doing.

Them moved to the payroll tax adjustment. And sort of try to explain the background and the detail of what we are talking about here. First, as I mentioned, there are about 14 million people of working age who currently are receiving SSI Medicaid and SSD I Medicare benefits. About one half of 1% of these working aged adults [Indiscernible] work each year. I'm sure you're all familiar with this. The first one, intellectual and mental disabilities and serious mental illness make up the majority of these working age adults. So in terms of who's out there, at least on benefits, certainly the two groups of people we will be talking about today make up the majority of close to 50%.

The annual federal expenditures beginning of this year exceeded about \$600 billion for those programs, and I think it's safe to predict that they are going to reach close to 1 trillion by the year 2020. So, it is not an inexpensive proposition to pay people benefits, even though the benefit amounts are not great. As most of you know, the average SSI benefit amount was somewhere around \$600. So, we are not talking about people living the high life on these benefits, but the active total amount of benefits is a substantial figure.

What started us down the road to the payroll tax adjustment was really a trip that I made when I was in Social Security. To MetLife, which was one of the larger private disability insurances. And, in talking with them about how they run their business, and they sell group disability insurance to employers, that is their market. What they explained is that they use the traditional risk management model that really is at the heart of insurance, which is, they tried, of course, not to pay out the benefits that they ensure, I

guess. And what they are insuring against his people can't work as a result of disability. And, what they then do is to adjust the premium that is paid by the employer, based on the employer's behavior, in terms of employee and continuing to employ people who have disabilities and want to work. Or, hiring people who are being paid benefits by MetLife, but want to go back to work. And, as a result of that, they lower the premiums to the insurer because they don't have to continue to pay benefits out of the same level. So, that started us down the line. When I first came here, which was about seven years ago, with MathematicaPolicyResearch, to ask them to do a study of what does the government they wanted individual who is on SSI or SSD I goes to work.

Now one of the key principles of this study was that we were not assuming that people would leave the benefit role. Social Security for years has tried to run programs that assume people will leave the benefit rolls for work, and they have succeeded almost not at all.

So we started with the opposite assumption. And interestingly, as we will talk about some of the individuals in the project, we found two individuals who want to leave the benefit of all, that we started with the office of assumptions. That people would manage the benefits to the best interests. That they would stay on benefits for eligible for benefits to the greatest extent possible for themselves.

We also wanted to take a look at food stamps as well as the core programs I mentioned, SSI, SSD I, Medicaid and Medicare. So, we asked Mathematica to calculate effectively what with the savings be on an annual basis if people who are on the roles went to work in integrated competitive employment and maintain their benefit eligibility.

Have a result of that is that we created what I'll call a pay-as-you-go model, that basically gives the employer a payroll tax adjustment, based on the employment of people who are or have been on the roles. And if that continues as long as the person is employed, and it continues at a level, and you'll see the amounts listed on the chart, it depends on the number of hours a week the individual worked, and whether or not the individual received that. We will be updating some of these estimates based on the affordable care act and the change in eligibility that are coming out of this. But right now in Utah, for example, for a person who accepts the job of 30 hours or more per week of work, with health benefits, we repay the employer a payroll tax adjustment annually of \$7000, or quarterly of a quarter amount of that. And, that payroll tax adjustment reflects a savings to the government. That is, the government saves more than the \$7000. One of the research questions we have asked Mathematica to look at, and I will show you the research design in a minute, is whether or not the savings to the government can pay

for the entire model, from expanded discovery to paid internships, and including the payroll tax adjustments.

I think it can. We will collect the data and see if it does. So, the budget impact of the payroll tax adjustment is present -- budget positive to the federal treasury. The treasury literally is not going to pay out a dollar until it saves more than a dollar in terms of reductions in benefit payments. And we have vetted this with OMB, Corporal, -- CBL, and are comfortable at this point that we have technology with Mathematica that will stand up to close scrutiny. The evaluation being conducted by Mathematica Policy Research has these five major areas. Again, I won't read these. But the key points here are trying to understand what happens. That is, what's the process? And again, the process has been changed. This is an evolving model. Hopefully at some point it will crystallize, but we are committed to keeping it any thought model as long as we need to do that to effectively serve one or more people who are selected for the project.

And the second, obviously, is to understand who's in the project. Who makes up the population of people? That is the participation analysis. The keys here are the next two, the outcome analysis, what happens in terms of outcomes, and we will talk a little bit about what has happened, and what we are doing in this model is running the model actively for 60 people for three years, and then we are evaluating for five additional years. And we are paying the payroll tax adjustment during those five years, as long as the person remains employed. And we are continuing to provide case management and continuing to evaluate what happens to people after the three-year, sort of, active base of the project.

Cost savings is pretty much self-explanatory, although one of the things I didn't mention is that there are significant cost savings at the state level and something that we have been increasing asked to calculate. Obviously, advocate is a 40% better state-funded program. For people on assets I, and obviously the majority -- for people on SSI, and obviously the majority of people with intellectual abilities are on SSI, not SSDI, there are significant state savings if the employer provides health insurance separate from Medicaid.

And an assistant change analysis is really to understand what it took to get where we ended up. What kind of changes do we need to make in the system? Are they sustainable, are they replicable? And that is part of the fifth area. This is just a brief overview of costs, it's not the dollar values, but, we have divided cost into three different categories and are showing you here, right as the project was initiated, who bore what cost.

So, there are sunken costs, which we put him in a design year, and we're doing that in another project which I'll discuss any minute. But we did that in Utah for a year. In the start up cost which is what does it take to get the project going. Particularly, the training of staff, which we devoted quite a bit of time and a lot of talent to. And finally, steady-state cost, which is that as the project also long, what is the ongoing cost? How long does it take to do expanded discovery, how many hours are needed from staff to do that?

So this gives you an idea. I pretty much gone over these time frames I mentioned, the three years in the five years. Right now, we are talking at length with the state of Utah, serendipitously, we had nothing to do with the Utah Path in employment first statute, almost a day that we started the project. And, we have become something of a model for that employment first expansion in this state. So, one of the things the state is looking at what you're doing, trying to help and look at the evaluation results, I think I'm a we are going to be introducing a population of people with serious mental wellness in the third year of the project or 2015.

We are designing that expansion of our model in another sign, Boston, which I will explain in a minute. But, the idea is to run the model ultimately for people with both intellectual and development disabilities and people with serious mental mess. We are already involved in Utah with people with autism and found only autism spectrum disorder, but with a range of behavioral problems for dual diagnoses. So, it's a continuing failure kind of moving further out. As a practical matter, those two populations that we defined that make up the vast majority of people actually goes on the SSI and SSDI caseload and are the people who have had the most difficulty finding sustaining employment.

These are partner sites that we identified during our first selection of the process that Therese described. This type at the bottom is the site of our second major project activity. We have been working with the national alliance of mental illness, NAMI, for three or four years and trying to develop a project that would effectively serve people with serious mental illness. They have slowly kind of evolved a model of employment as a major step in recovery or an indicator of recovery. When we are working with in Boston is the task of figuring out what changes we have to make for the design that we are using Utah if you're going to serve people probably that would include people with dysthymia, mood and affective disorder and posttraumatic stress disorder, the categories that we have been focused on. This expansion increases the complexity pretty significantly. Obviously, we have people with episodic recurring disabilities, and you don't know when their occurrence is going to occur, and when they -- the

occurrence of the disability involve significant avenues for employment, there are a set of public issues that we're going to have to figure out how to design to stabilize employment for people in that category.

At the current estimate from the [Indiscernible] Corporation, there are probably at least 1 million returning veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq who are going to be people experiencing posttraumatic stress disorder over the next 5 to 10 years, and I don't think that at this point we've given enough attention, not to employment of those people, but to how we are going to deal with retention in employment, when an episode occurs in a break in employment occurs.

Do you want to pick up the stories your -- the stories here? Sure, Boston, our second site, and are bringing to additional rights, [Indiscernible], and the other one is Detroit, they will roll out the complete model for people with intellectual and development disabilities, as well as for individuals with serious mental illness. Beginning in fiscal year 20 oh -- 2014, and on the previous site, as I mentioned, of a manual that we are developing that would be available for these expansions, and then we're also going to put together something that is more, I guess, not as explicit whereas prescriptive, but captures some of the best practices in some of the things that we have learned is we are going, and I think that would be more broadly available to folks around the four key components of the project, and outcomes in what is working, and, I imagine that we forget about maybe the next 6 to 8 months.

That will also include some insights in the funding. We've learned a couple of interesting lessons in Utah, rather than asking for money up front, from some of the obvious potential funding screens, the issue, we decided to go ahead and do the initial funding ourselves and get the project up and running. What we've learned is that as the project has been running, operating, and has been perceived to be successful in the local community, the state agencies have stepped forward and found money to help pay for significant portions of the cost of this project. So, we're learning quite a bit more about where some of that money could come from.

And with others, but, for covering the cost of the initial discovery phase, to covering expenses, obviously, for people, while bearing internship, and in need of job coaches or as we call them internship facilitators, as well as some of the cost for the wage of the interns, as Martin mentioned, the project is paying the wages of the interns, and so you know, we're coming up with ways to bring in funding or identify funding for that. And on into the employment phase, you know, there we are still there will explicitly to the first book -- 90 days and can assist the employer as needed. And obviously, the ETCA kicks in and the employer can utilize that to supply resources. One thing that was mentioned, the

evaluation process, we are all looking at how birds can use that fund, whether they decide to actually build capacity within their own organizations or if they want to go back to the service provider that brought the interns in.

Or to another service provider.

Right.

There's no restriction on how they provide the support.

A couple of things we haven't mentioned. One, we devoted a lot of time to the families in decision-making and benefits counseling, specifically in trying to help families and individuals understand that the implications of some of the decisions are on benefits. We actually spend time and hired a consultant to work with the Social Security field offices in Utah, so that we would avoid the overpayment promise, which of course as you all know, comes automatically when anybody on SSI goes to work. Now we've even included it in the internships, so that we have the field offices up and ready to respond quickly and not accumulate overpayments.

We spent quite a bit of time working with employers, because the goal in working with employers was to get an understanding of the range of job that they had, not to identify specific jobs that we would fit people in. So, right now, we have a pretty broad range of public and private employers. We just bought a couple of those employers into our board meeting recently to talk about their experiences. I've been, you know, having been around some of these issues for a long time, pretty amazed at the creativity and the positive way in which a lot of the employers are really reacting to this.

We've had a couple of internships, for example, where the first internship returned he was -- with an employer they did not recover for any reason or the other and we certainly learned something from

that. But I can think of one of those examples where the employer undertook to find a better fit for the intern and ultimately hire them in a full-time job which better fit the position.

And that kind of interest and investment I think quite unusual. But, I think it has to do with the personal connection that develops between the employee and the employer, and particularly coworkers and supervisors. And the paid internship has helped create that. Now we talked about the expansion, and these are the modest systems change goals that we wanted to mention. I grew up in an era with dominated by sin. -- Senator. Daniel Patrick Moynihan. In the middle of the night occasionally, I would like a frightened by the question that I would be asked about the data being collected in the valuation, or the hard questions about, well, now that you have learned this, what do you want to do with it?

What this plays out is a set of changes to the Internal Revenue Code, the workforce investment act, and others, that I think would be necessary if you wanted to make permanent, what is the ultimate? And we are not there, yet. But the ultimate model. Because that's what we are looking for. We are looking for systems change, we are looking for permanent systems change, particularly around the heart funding of these long-term supports, and of the other services that we think are crucially important, so that there really is an informed choice of integrated competitive employment.

So Cheryl, that completes our discussion. I guess I'm supposed to turn it back over to the operator who is going to give participants some instructions on how they can ask us questions.

Thank you. You'll now begin a question and answer session. If you have a question, please press star than one on your touchtone phone. If you wish to be removed from the queue, please press the pound or hash key. There will be a delay before the first question is announced. If you are using a speakerphone, you may need to pick up the handset first before pressing the numbers. Once again, if you have a question, please press star one on your touchtone phone.

We do have a question from Brian, go ahead with your question.

Hi, this is actually Chris Rodriguez sitting here with Brian. I think the presentation was very helpful and innovative and I had a question about the scalability, and I don't know if you're going to be able to answer this. When you look at Utah's first made this of legislation that have been set in place that make the program, perhaps, more successful. As an example, I would imagine that a program like this might be more successful in a state that implemented Medicaid buy-in programs, rather than a state that hasn't. But, I don't know if there's other unique things to the state of Utah that makes the project is on better footing.

That's a good question. I don't think it's so much a question of state law, but I do think the economic situation in Utah has been helpful. Utah has a surplus. When a massive surplus, but it is a surplus. So, in terms of the passage of their employment first law, which I mentioned, and also the potential for them to expand, and I should say that there has been some interest expressed to us about expanding the current project well beyond the 60 people, that certainly economically would be easier in a state like Utah that has a surplus. In picking Boston, maybe even more radically Detroit, we have certainly offset that factor. And, we want to test out the approaches that we are using in a variety of different types of settings, to see to what extent there may be unique characteristics of Utah that we have not picked up. But, I think the big one I would mention is that there is a generally healthier economy in Utah than a lot of other states. That's probably the best answer.

I think the employment first legislation helped us develop it in the sense that there is a big of a push to have different outcomes for people and the language is at least out there and the conversations taking place within the state agencies. I don't think it is the most, you know, unique or progressive legislation.

No, it's clearly not.

It helps us open doors and have a conversation and create partnerships that might otherwise not -- Mac one thing we did not mention is that we did start out from the beginning discussing this with advocacy organizations and paired organizations in the state, and we did that in a very open set of discussions and also with state agencies at the same time. So, in that sense, there was a willingness for everybody to kind of get together behind trying to solve this larger problem.

Right, the DD Council was totally supportive, completely on board and helped us open doors for us and a lot of things to facilitate access to people. So, I think that was important.

I would have to add that Utah is a state that has some of the same silo issues and some of the same structural problems that you find in most states. I think, you know, by the time we work our way through Massachusetts and Michigan and Virginia, we will have a pretty good cross-section.

All right, thank you.

Thank you.

Once again, for any audio questions, please press star one on your touchtone phone. Cheryl, do we have any more questions?

, No, no questions have come into the chat box. Thomas people online have questions.

Well, if anybody wants any updates, we would be happy to keep you posted. We do have an Institute website, in which we do have updates on the pathways program. And, we are excited about it but we are in a learning mode. And I think every six months, we will know a lot more than we did before.

Well, Martin, if you would like to add me to your update list, I certainly share all of my information with the network. So, I could be the central updater, so to speak.

Great, we be happy to do that.

We would appreciate that. For those of you on the call, as I'm sure that you are aware, we are in the throes of any and all conference in June, and economic empowerment and increased employment of people with disabilities is hearing and dear to my heart, and certainly a central theme to the PNA work. So we have invited Martin and Therese to do some follow-up, work with us at June so you can look forward to that peer operator, has anybody else queued up for question?

At this time, we have no questions.

Well, I would like to thank Martin and Therese for taking their time and putting this together in explaining it to us. And I'm not sure that I fully digested it all, so I may have questions later. They know how to get a hold of you. And, I would like to thank everybody on the line for participating and just remind everybody that it is important that you take a minute or two to complete the evaluation onSurveyGizmo, not only so that we can give us feedback to the speakers, but also so that we have feedback for whether or not we are meeting your needs for information.

So I'd like to thank you all very much, and tell you to have a good, safe evening. So, thank you very much, Martin and Teresa, and --

Thank you very much, we've enjoyed it.

Talk to you all soon, have a good afternoon.

Goodbye.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. This concludes the conference. Think you for participating. You may now disconnect.

Actions