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Evaluation of Disability Employment Policy Demonstration Programs

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Evaluation of Disability Employment Policy Demonstration Programs

Abstract

[Excerpt] Having characterized the intermediary approach from published literature, as well as impressions of those who are using this approach in their demonstration projects, and reviewed ODEP's requirements regarding implementation of the intermediary approach, Westat determined that the intermediary approaches required in the SGAs for the State Intermediary and Faith-based Mentoring demonstration programs have much in common with other ODEP demonstration programs. Other ODEP programs require demonstration projects to partner and collaborate with businesses and business organizations, government, transportation systems, and health and other service providers. They also have goals for ensuring quality and impact and promoting policies to sustain effective practices. The difference, however, is that the State Intermediary and Faith-based mentoring SGAs specifically identified the intermediary approach as the strategy to use. The State Intermediary SGA went even further by delineating specific steps as part of the intermediary process (resource mapping and development of a state plan).

Our literature review uncovered a wide variety of examples in which the intermediary approach has achieved useful outcomes on behalf of youth with disabilities. However, all literature we found was descriptive and did not address questions on effectiveness or the most appropriate strategies. Therefore, it is not known whether the intermediary approach is the most fruitful approach for achieving systems change, whether there are some intermediary approaches that are better than others, or whether those approaches would be repeatable and adaptable to other environments.

Nevertheless, at our three site visits, we were able to uncover a variety of examples of activities that are consistent with intermediary strategic and operational functions identified in the literature and appear to bode well for success in achieving systems change. Further review of Quarterly Reports and findings from site visits also revealed some systems change already taking place in the systems change focus areas of capacity-building, coordination, consumer choice and employer support, and evaluation of new practices. Subsequent site visits in Phase IV of the independent evaluation are likely to uncover additional examples of intermediary processes, outputs, and outcomes, as well as those practices that appear to be most successful in achieving systems change.

Keywords

disability, employment, labor market, Department of Labor, intermediary approach

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Evaluation of Disability Employment Policy Demonstration Programs

Task 10. In-depth Issue Analysis: Role of
Intermediaries in ODEP Youth
Demonstration Programs

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

All Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) demonstration programs use aspects of an intermediary approach to connect organizations and agencies at all levels in meeting educational and employment goals on behalf of people with disabilities. As part of Phase III of the independent evaluation of ODEP demonstration programs, ODEP asked Westat to conduct an in-depth analysis of the role of intermediaries in building sustained capacity and integration of services of the workforce development system to better serve youth with disabilities.

The overriding question in the context of this issue analysis is whether, to what extent, and how the intermediary approach is being used in youth demonstration programs and whether it is effective in creating systems change to better serve youth with disabilities. The following questions were addressed:

- What characterizes the intermediary approach?
- What are ODEP's requirements with regard to the use of an intermediary approach by demonstration programs?
- What are demonstration project sites' experiences in using an intermediary approach?
- What can be said to date on the effectiveness of using an intermediary approach, particularly with regard to systems change?

We designed a four-part methodology to answer the above questions. First, we examined the published literature in journals and through the Internet to understand the characteristics of intermediaries, intermediary models, and practices. We next examined Solicitations for Grant Applications (SGAs) for two Fiscal Year 2003 youth demonstration programs: the Innovative State Alignment Grants for Improving Transition Outcomes for Youth With Disabilities Through the Use of Intermediaries (or the State Intermediary demonstration program) and the Intermediary Grants for Mentoring Youth with Disabilities Initiative (or the Faith-based Mentoring demonstration program) to determine the requirements of each program with regard to intermediaries.

Westat staff then reviewed quantitative and qualitative data from Quarterly Reports, demonstration project products and materials provided to Westat at site visits, and the original grant applications for information relevant to understanding and describing the role of intermediaries in youth projects. Finally, Westat staff conducted in-depth site visits on selected sites to explore the issue of the role of intermediaries in youth demonstration programs. Data were collected from interviews with key informants during site visits, telephone interviews, and email communication subsequent to site visits.

Characterization of the Intermediary Approach

A number of sources provided a characterization of intermediaries and the intermediary approach. SGAs—and by extension, ODEP—described intermediaries as convening and brokering agents. The groups they convene for the purpose of the ODEP demonstration programs consist of a variety of organizations and agencies, including those related to business, vocational rehabilitation (VR) and other workplace partners, government, transportation, and health and other service providers. Intermediaries can be public, private, faith-based, secular, educational, or business-oriented. The only requirement is that intermediary organizations support the goals of youth with disabilities and the business community.

INet, an organization that assists in and fosters the use of intermediaries (available: www.intermediarynetwork.org), characterizes intermediaries as organizations committed and structured to support collaboration among community resources that are dedicated to promoting opportunities for youth with disabilities. The goal of intermediaries, according to Wills and Leucking (2003), is to connect job seekers and job providers. Instead of creating additional community resources, however, these authors support the use of intermediaries to identify the community resources that already exist and bring them together in a coordinated fashion.

In much of the literature describing intermediaries and the intermediary approach, there appears to be agreement on the two types of intermediary functions—strategic and operational (The Intermediary Guide, 2000; NCWD/Y, 2004). Those intermediaries working at the strategic level address four key activities: (1) convening local leadership; (2) brokering and/or providing services to key stakeholders; (3) ensuring quality and impact; and (4) promoting policies to sustain effective practices. Operationally, functions have been identified for four key stakeholders: (1) employers/workplace partners to create demand for working with youth and provide services to address the needs of the partners; (2)

schools and youth-serving organizations to build staff awareness and buy-in and provide services to support school involvement; (3) youth to connect them to appropriate quality experiences and improve the quality of work-based learning; and (4) all partners to provide the communications link among partners and create a system focused on quality and continuous improvement. All activities in an intermediary approach—whether they are successful practices described in the published literature or findings from our site visits—are geared toward carrying out activities within these strategic and operational functions.

Staff and partners at the three demonstration projects we visited also had their own characterizations of intermediaries and the intermediary approach. Phrases we heard were:

- Raise awareness;
- Bring local issues to the attention of state-level decisionmakers;
- Are open to working with different community partners;
- Do not have narrow special interests;
- Focus on common goals;
- Are partnerships in action;
- Help to define roles and responsibilities within a partnership;
- Play the “in-between” role;
- Collect and distribute information; and
- Provide organizations with a network of other like-minded providers.

These characterizations extend strategically and operationally to a variety of partners at the state and local levels.

ODEP’s Requirements

SGAs for the two intermediary-related youth programs not only defined the term “intermediary,” but also specifically set out some of the strategic and operational requirements that are consistent with the intermediary literature. For example, State Intermediary projects were required to conduct resource mapping to assess their youth service delivery infrastructure in light of evidence-based

operating principles on transition¹ (DOL, 2003b). A second requirement was to develop a 5-year cross-agency plan addressing transition outcomes for youth with disabilities through the use of blending and/or braiding of Federal, state, and community resources, as well as local intermediary organizations. Although all State Intermediary demonstration projects chose to conduct their resource mapping differently, the result was much the same. The resource mapping process that was used helped each project to determine the nature and extent of all available assets and services available at the state and local level for the purpose of assisting youth with disabilities to achieve educational and employment outcomes. The development of state plans helped to identify common goals for all stakeholders and identify activities that would facilitate making these goals operational.

The Faith-based Mentoring demonstration program is the epitome of the intermediary approach itself. The grant recipient of each Faith-based Mentoring project is considered the key strategic intermediary that will identify and convene leadership at the state and local levels, broker and provide services, ensure the quality and impact of local efforts, and promote policies of sustainability. The key purpose of this program is to “build the capacity and knowledge of faith-based and community organizations to better meet the needs of young people with disabilities through mentoring” (DOL, 2003a); the strategy for fulfilling this purpose is an intermediary approach.

During Westat site visits, Westat found that each of the demonstration project sites had made significant progress meeting ODEP’s intermediary requirements. The two State Intermediary demonstration sites in Vermont and Colorado subawarded a substantial portion of its funds to intermediary organizations. These intermediaries were also meeting the key strategic functions identified in the literature by assisting the site on both the state and local levels in assessing and evaluating the performance and impact of pilot demonstration project activities and providing necessary information and training. As directed by the SGA, these two sites had also made significant progress in conducting resource mapping to assess their youth service delivery infrastructure, developing a statewide plan, and identifying and implementing local pilot demonstration projects. Though it was somewhat early in the demonstration program for significant sustainability progress to be seen, both sites also have begun to work toward leveraged Federal, state, and local public sector resources to sustain demonstration project activities.

¹ Now referred to by ODEP as “Guideposts for Success.”

According to the SGA for the Faith-based Mentoring demonstration project, the intermediary was required to subaward a large portion of the ODEP funds to local faith-based and other community organizations. During our site visit, we learned that the Maine demonstration project, awarded to Maine Mentoring Program (MMP), had subawarded funds to four local organizations to conduct mentoring activities. In compliance with the SGA, MMP has provided both technical and administrative support for subawardees. MMP is also functioning as an intermediary by building the capacity and knowledge of faith-based and other community organizations to provide mentoring services to youth with disabilities (using training most often to do so), and helping these organizations establish strong linkages with local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) and other local Workforce Investment Act (WIA)-funded programs.

Other than outlining these general program elements, ODEP's SGAs left the specific intermediary approaches that could be used up to each project. In our review of State Intermediary and Faith-based Mentoring demonstration projects over the past 2 years, we observed each of the demonstration sites approaching the selection and utilization of intermediaries in a variety of ways. Some sites had already decided who their intermediaries would be by the time their project was funded. Other sites were a year or more into project implementation before defining what the role of the intermediaries would be. Some sites have intermediaries that focus primarily on state-level work, and some focus primarily on local-level work. Some are working with only one or two intermediary organizations in their program; others have many. The types of organizations selected to serve as intermediaries include state agencies, Youth Councils, local WIBs, transition councils, nonprofit national and state-wide organizations, and local community and faith-based organizations.

Experiences with the Intermediary Approach Thus Far

Interviews at site visits have provided numerous examples of experiences with the intermediary approach. These examples demonstrate a clear understanding of the intermediary approach, both at the strategic and operational level, at these three demonstration projects.

At the strategic level, these demonstration projects are using an intermediary approach to:

- Bring together youth transition stakeholders at both the state and local level to plan and implement project activities;

- Broker and provide training to project and system partners, youth with disabilities and their parents, and family members on such topics as resource mapping, evidence-based principles such as Guideposts for Success,² state plan development, needs of youth and employers, transition, mentoring youth, the One-Stop system, and building collaborations;
- Provide oversight to ensure a high level of quality and impact by requiring an approved strategic plan, meeting with pilot demonstration projects in person on a regular basis, collecting data on individual outcomes of students, and requiring quarterly progress reports; and
- Develop and implement practices that will sustain project activities through expanding the number of project partners, obtaining additional funding, and advocating for legislation that provides grant awards to local mentoring providers.

On an operational, day-to-day level, most project activities are taking place locally—with employers and other workplace partners, schools and youth-serving organizations, youth, and all partners together. In the context of working with employers and other workplace partners, pilot demonstration sites (in the State Intermediary projects) and subawardees (in the Faith-based Mentoring project) are showing creativity by providing employers with incentives for hiring youth with disabilities, developing a marketing video for local WIBs, developing a checklist for employers to use to evaluate youth at the end of internships and bringing employers together to provide them with useful information on mentoring and honoring them for their efforts.

All three demonstration projects are working at the local level to improve transition activities at schools. Moreover, their work with youth shows a strong appreciation for the Guideposts for Success (NCWD/Y, 2005) that were endorsed by ODEP. Youth participants in these three projects are given:

- School-based preparatory experiences, including work readiness training, academic tutoring, mentoring, workplace visits, and instruction in conflict resolution;
- Career preparation and work-based learning experiences, consisting of internships; a transition, employment, and mentoring club to develop employability skills and provide peer support; and a small nonresidential center that provides recreation, computer training, and employment programs for youth participants;
- Youth development and leadership for youth with disabilities through a wide variety of approaches to adult and peer mentoring;

² Through the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Y), Guideposts for Success have been developed and are being tested in ODEP's youth programs. The "Guideposts" are based on research that has identified educational and career development interventions that can make positive effects in the quality of transition services for youth. There are five guideposts: (1) school-based preparatory experiences; (2) career preparation and work-based learning experiences; (3) youth development and leadership; (4) connecting activities; and (5) family involvement and supports (NCWD/Y, 2005).

- Connecting activities that provide youth participants with a 10-week independent living course, individualized and joint-agency transition plans, and transportation through the local mental health center; and
- Family involvement consisting of training sessions on preparation of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), transition, and community resources, as well as parent focus groups and regularly scheduled home visits.

These examples are testimony to the wide variety of strategies that can be implemented within an intermediary approach.

Effectiveness of the Intermediary Approach

Although there is extensive published literature on descriptions of intermediaries and recommendations for success, Westat’s review of the intermediary literature was unable to identify studies that evaluated the effectiveness of the intermediary approach or tested hypotheses on effective intermediary models. Nevertheless, several literature sources identified examples of outputs and outcomes derived from an intermediary approach, and our own site visits identified intermediary processes and some outputs and outcomes that bode well for systems change.³

Using the systems change focus areas identified by Westat in Phase II of the independent evaluation (Westat, 2003), Westat staff noted several examples of systems change in State Intermediary and Faith-based Mentoring demonstration projects. These are described below.

Building Capacity. The capacity to achieve positive educational and employment outcomes includes changing perceptions, attitudes, and understanding of the issues related to disability, as well as improving the access and availability of people with disabilities to different types of resources (e.g., funds, staff, time, resources, policies, procedures) and services (Westat, 2003). Even after only a year and a half of operation, a number of capacity-building outcomes could be identified at site visits.

- All three demonstration projects have brokered and provided training to state-level and local intermediaries on a variety of important topic areas (e.g., resource mapping,

³ The independent evaluation is being guided by an “open systems model” that consists of four basic components—inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes (Westat, 2003). *Inputs* are those resources needed to set processes in motion and keep them running. *Processes* are those event sequences and arrangements of staff, services, and resources needed to achieve the intended result(s). *Outputs*, often referred to as “products,” are the “units” produced by processes supported by given inputs (e.g., the number of staff trained to use particular strategies targeted at meeting the employment needs of people with disabilities). *Outcomes* refer to the intended results of creating certain outputs or products.

data collection methods, evidence-based principles, e-mentoring). This training has enabled many organizations and individuals, including youth with disabilities and their parents, to become knowledgeable about services and resources available to youth with disabilities as they transition from school to work. Many provider organizations who received this training are now serving youth with disabilities, where previously they had not. By learning about the Guideposts for Success, both state and local agencies are now more aware of the support youth with disabilities need for a successful transition.

- Under these demonstration projects, pre-existing high-school-based transition and mentoring programs have been expanded to more schools and educational programs and are serving a larger number of youth with disabilities as a result. The Lake Champlain Career Start pilot demonstration project in Vermont and Maine's Region V Advisory Council on Transition's mentoring programs are examples of these efforts.

Coordination. One of the barriers to positive employment outcomes among people with disabilities has been the lack of coordinated employment services for people with disabilities (i.e., services that are well-integrated) (Westat, 2003). At the three demonstration projects we visited, there was accumulating evidence of some of these barriers being broken down.

- The three demonstration sites have convened organizations on both the state and local level to begin more efficiently and effectively to coordinate services for youth with disabilities. One major result of this improved coordination has been the development of a cross-agency multiyear state plan to improve transition outcomes for youth with disabilities in Colorado and Vermont. These plans are also being used to support broader educational, VR, and workforce development plans, such as in Colorado where the activities and priorities of its state plan have been blended into the WIA 2-year state plan. Colorado is also coordinating demonstration project activities with other transition and disability-related initiatives at the state level to blend and braid resources for the benefit of youth with disabilities.
- Rather than to simply use the resource mapping task as a data collection exercise, both Colorado and Vermont used the resource mapping task to further build relationships within their state and to communicate with customers and stakeholders. Focus groups were held with both youth and employer customers in Colorado as part of their resource mapping work. The Vermont site convened the leadership of youth provider organizations at each of the local WIBs to conduct the resource mapping, facilitating greater communication and coordination of services for youth with disabilities.
- The ODEP demonstration projects have brought together two major systems—the education system and the One-Stop/WIA system—to better serve youth with disabilities in the future. On the state level, for example, the Vermont Department of Education (DOE) has been approved for funds for a State Program Improvement Grant for Children with Disabilities, and the ODEP demonstration staff are working with DOE on how to use these funds to support transition activities, including those for youth with disabilities. On the local level, examples of coordination include Boulder, Colorado, where the One-Stop Career Center is now working with the local

high schools to provide internships for youth with disabilities. In Maine, a strong relationship has also developed between Youth Mentors, Inc., a high school-based mentoring program, and the local One-Stop Career Center. Youth Mentors, Inc. holds meetings at the One-Stop Career Center, and the youth have learned about other services provided by the center.

- New organizations have been created to better serve youth with disabilities, such as in the Tri-County area in Colorado, which has established a transition subcommittee within the Youth Council to support the activities of the pilot demonstration activities and related initiatives.

Consumer Choice and Employer Support. Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach, demonstration projects are being encouraged to customize (i.e., individualize) their programs and services in ways that will assist people with disabilities in advancing in school and seeking, obtaining, and retaining employment, while at the same time supporting the needs of the business community (Westat, 2003). Individualized transition approaches in collaboration with the employer community, resulting in positive transition outcomes for youth with disabilities, are taking place at all youth demonstration projects. For example,

- As of June 30, 2005 (the end date of Quarterly Reports we reviewed), many youth with disabilities who had not previously received transition services through One-Stop Career Centers and other providers have been provided such services. This includes:
 - Colorado, which has provided services to 23 youth, including 12 who have obtained part-time employment through internships or other positions;
 - Vermont, which has served 48 youth with disabilities with work readiness training, academic tutoring, mentoring, and workplace visits; and
 - Maine, where the subawardees continue to provide mentoring opportunities for youth. A total of 139 youth with disabilities have been matched in one-to-one mentoring relationships (103 peer mentors and 36 with trained and screened adult mentors).

Each of the demonstration sites has also worked to involve both employers and youth customers in other workforce development activities so that their needs can be better understood and addressed. At the Colorado site, for example, youth and their parents have joined program advisory groups, and the Boulder pilot site has surveyed employers to learn more about the qualities they deem essential for potential youth employees.

Evaluation of New Practices. An important hallmark of a demonstration program is the testing and evaluation of new ideas so they can be disseminated more widely. The following are some examples of evaluation tapped from project Quarterly Reports and site visits.

- All sites are using a variety of evaluation methods within their programs so that they can create a system of continuous improvement for services for youth with disabilities. For example, to evaluate local activities, the Maine site requires monthly reports from its subawardees and also meets with subawardees periodically in person and by telephone and email. The local Maine subawardees also collect feedback from participants on the quality of the training they have received on mentoring and orientation for youth and adults. The Vermont project steering committee requires each pilot demonstration site to have a local oversight committee, and the project director conducts regular visits to each of the sites.
- The State Intermediary sites have also contracted with an external evaluator to examine all aspects of their programs at both the state and local levels. At the time of our site visits and review of Quarterly Reports, none of the sites had obtained results from their evaluations.

Conclusions

Having characterized the intermediary approach from published literature, as well as impressions of those who are using this approach in their demonstration projects, and reviewed ODEP's requirements regarding implementation of the intermediary approach, Westat determined that the intermediary approaches required in the SGAs for the State Intermediary and Faith-based Mentoring demonstration programs have much in common with other ODEP demonstration programs. Other ODEP programs require demonstration projects to partner and collaborate with businesses and business organizations, government, transportation systems, and health and other service providers. They also have goals for ensuring quality and impact and promoting policies to sustain effective practices. The difference, however, is that the State Intermediary and Faith-based mentoring SGAs specifically identified the intermediary approach as the strategy to use. The State Intermediary SGA went even further by delineating specific steps as part of the intermediary process (resource mapping and development of a state plan).

Our literature review uncovered a wide variety of examples in which the intermediary approach has achieved useful outcomes on behalf of youth with disabilities. However, all literature we found was descriptive and did not address questions on effectiveness or the most appropriate strategies.

Therefore, it is not known whether the intermediary approach is the most fruitful approach for achieving systems change, whether there are some intermediary approaches that are better than others, or whether those approaches would be repeatable and adaptable to other environments.

Nevertheless, at our three site visits, we were able to uncover a variety of examples of activities that are consistent with intermediary strategic and operational functions identified in the literature and appear to bode well for success in achieving systems change. Further review of Quarterly Reports and findings from site visits also revealed some systems change already taking place in the systems change focus areas of capacity-building, coordination, consumer choice and employer support, and evaluation of new practices. Subsequent site visits in Phase IV of the independent evaluation are likely to uncover additional examples of intermediary processes, outputs, and outcomes, as well as those practices that appear to be most successful in achieving systems change.

Outline of the Report

This report begins with a description of the intermediary approach from the published literature (Section 2). The next section describes the two youth demonstration programs and basic requirements detailed in each program SGA (Section 3). Section 4 presents demonstration projects' experiences to date with the intermediary approach (including findings from Phase II site visits, Quarterly Reports, and site visits conducted in Phase III of the independent evaluation). Our findings are discussed in Section 5, and finally, we end with conclusions in Section 6.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As part of the independent evaluation of the Office of Disability Employment Policy's (ODEP's) demonstration programs, ODEP asked Westat to conduct in-depth analyses of three issues. These issues were identified during site visits and in Quarterly Reports during Phase II of the evaluation. Two of the issues are specifically related to adult demonstration programs, namely employer involvement in adult demonstration programs and the role of receiving Social Security Administration (SSA) benefits in program customers' employment decisions. The third issue addresses the role of intermediaries in building sustained capacity and integration of services of the workforce development system to better serve youth with disabilities. This report provides in-depth analysis on the third issue.

Two of ODEP's demonstration programs for youth utilize intermediaries to better serve youth with disabilities: (1) Innovative State Alignment Grants for Improving Transition Outcomes for Youth With Disabilities Through the Use of Intermediaries (the State Intermediary demonstration program); and (2) Intermediary Grants for Mentoring Youth with Disabilities Initiative (the Faith-based Mentoring demonstration program). ODEP is funding eight Fiscal Year 2003 State Intermediary and six Fiscal Year 2003 Faith-based Mentoring demonstration projects.

The goals of this in-depth analysis was to better understand the intermediary approach and its evidentiary underpinnings; identify promising models and practices that can be valuable in using intermediaries in the workforce development system to better serve youth with disabilities; and examine the potential effectiveness of intermediaries to increase capacity and coordination, foster promising practices, and realize systems change. The following questions were addressed:

- What characterizes the intermediary approach?
- What are ODEP's requirements with regard to the use of an intermediary approach by demonstration programs?
- What are demonstration project sites' experiences in using an intermediary approach?
- What can be said to date on the effectiveness of using an intermediary approach, particularly with regard to systems change?

We designed a four-part methodology to answer the above research questions. First, we examined the published literature in journals and through the Internet to understand the characteristics of

intermediaries, intermediary models, and practices. We next examined Solicitations for Grant Applications (SGAs) for two Fiscal Year 2003 youth demonstration programs (State Intermediary and Faith-based Mentoring) to determine the requirements of each program with regard to intermediaries.

Westat staff then reviewed quantitative and qualitative data from Quarterly Reports, and demonstration project products and materials provided to Westat at site visits. We also reviewed the original grant applications for information relevant to understanding and describing the role of intermediaries in youth programs. Quarterly Reports, obtained from ODEP, contained qualitative information on progress made during the quarter, policy issues, technical assistance needs, acquired resources, media contacts, collaborative partners and results of collaboration, training, and disseminated materials.

Finally, Westat staff conducted in-depth site visits to selected sites to explore the issue of the role of intermediaries in youth demonstration programs. Data were collected from interviews with key informants during site visits, telephone interviews, and email communication subsequent to site visits.

This report begins with a description of the intermediary approach from the published literature (Section 2). The next section describes the two youth demonstration programs and basic requirements detailed in each program SGA (Section 3). Section 4 presents demonstration projects' experiences to date with the intermediary approach (including findings from Phase II site visits, Quarterly Reports, and in-depth site visits conducted in Phase II of the independent evaluation). Our findings are discussed in Section 5, and finally, we end with conclusions in Section 6.

2. BACKGROUND ON THE INTERMEDIARY APPROACH

This section presents a summary of our review of the published literature on the intermediary approach. The purpose of this review was to gain an understanding of intermediaries (what they are and how they function), as well as to determine the evidence base underlying their use. Much of the literature we found describes intermediaries and how they function, and summarizes apparently successful characteristics and practices. However, we were unable to identify any studies that address the issue of the effectiveness of intermediaries or specific intermediary approaches. Most articles were descriptive; none posed or tested any evaluative or research questions.

The literature search was initiated with the assistance of Westat's Information Resources Center, which maintains an extensive library of hard-copy materials as well as web-based public use databases and data sets. Some of the literature was located through WesCat, Westat's on-line library catalog that contains information about books, journals, data sets, and additional resources available in-house. We also used FirstSearch, a web-based, on-line information service that provides access to approximately 60 bibliographic and full-text databases in all subject disciplines, and the University of Miami database (Academic Search Alumni Edition), which provides full text for nearly 1,350 publications as well as indexing and abstracting for nearly 8,000 publications. We searched these databases using keywords such as "intermediary," "workforce intermediary," "youth with disabilities," and "workforce." As relevant abstracts, articles, and books were located through this search, we downloaded the literature or asked the Information Resources Center to order the hard copies for further review. We also used some of the references that were listed in the articles and books that were identified electronically.

To ensure that the most recent literature on the topic of intermediaries was identified, Westat also conducted keyword searches on the Internet using search engines such as WesInfo and Google. Relevant articles and other materials were then downloaded from various websites, such as those maintained by the Intermediary Network (<http://www.intermediarynetwork.org>), the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Y) (<http://www.ncwd-youth.info>), and Jobs for the Future (<http://www.iff.org>).

The following section defines and describes intermediaries and provides examples of the two major types of intermediary functions—strategic and operational. We also summarize the published

literature on intermediaries and employers, and sustainability of intermediary organizations, and provide examples of some promising practices and outcomes described in the literature.

2.1 What is an Intermediary?

The Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA) for the State Intermediary demonstration program (DOL, 2003b) defines an intermediary as an agent that “convenes local leadership and brokers relationships with multiple partners across multiple funding streams; and brings together workforce development systems, vocational rehabilitation providers, businesses, labor unions, educational institutions, social service organizations, transportation entities, health providers, and other Federal, State, and community resources which youth with disabilities need to transition to employment successfully.” Possible intermediaries listed in the SGA were community-based nonprofit organizations, faith-based and community organizations, employer organizations, community colleges, and community rehabilitation programs.

The SGA for the Faith-based Mentoring demonstration program (DOL, 2003a) described intermediaries as “non-profit, community, and/or faith-based organizations with existing connections within the community, and a demonstrated ability to connect smaller faith and community-based organizations and the people they serve to youth services funded under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-220, 29 U.S.C. 2801 et seq.) (WIA) and to other youth services available in their local communities.”

The Intermediary Network, or INet (Available: www.intermediarynetwork.org), is a national association of leading education and workforce development organizations working in local communities to ensure the success of youth. INet describes the need for intermediary organizations as follows:

In many communities, new partnerships have emerged to promote young people’s self-confidence about their abilities, increase their connections to adults and opportunities outside the classroom, and foster the academic and work-related competencies that are needed to succeed. However, education – community relationships do not develop automatically; nor can they be sustained without significant commitments of time and resources. To do so requires organizations prepared to play an intermediary role—committed, structured, and staffed to creating and supporting effective, efficient collaborations.

In other words, according to INet, intermediaries are organizations committed and structured to support collaboration among community resources that are dedicated to promoting opportunities for youth with disabilities.

2.2 Historical Perspective

According to the State Intermediary demonstration program SGA (DOL, 2003b), the School-to-Work (STW) Opportunities Act of 1994 provided a major impetus to the growth of youth services intermediary organizations.

Jointly administered by the United States Departments of Education and Labor, School-to-Work brought together parents, teachers, and business leaders to create courses to prepare students both academically and practically for the world of work. The intent of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 was to provide a national framework and venture capital to allow all states to create a universal statewide transition system that offered all young Americans access to performance-based training...

In place for 7 years (expired on October 1, 2001), the STW Opportunities Act of 1994 encouraged state and local organizations to develop innovative programs and collaborative relationships to better share and distribute resources for youth. In an issue brief on the STW Opportunities Act of 1994, Spera and Williams (2000) cited three crucial steps that school-to-work intermediaries should take to improve outreach to all students:

1. Identify potential allies and partners and determine which local organizations and programs serve these populations.
2. Reach out and engage allies and partners. Determine what strategies can establish ongoing, effective channels of communication with organizations and programs serving specific populations.
3. Align resources through a community collaboration that serves young people. Determine what youth-focused resources are flowing into the community, and what are the most promising opportunities to integrate categorical funding streams and programs into an overall effort to link schools, employers, and other community resources.

In recognition of the increasing role that intermediary organizations are playing within the workforce development system, The American Assembly at Columbia University conducted a conference

on intermediaries in 2003. Though recommendations were not specifically focused on youth or youth with disabilities, The Assembly identified three key goals of workforce intermediaries (Kazis, 2005):

- To bring workers with disabilities into the American mainstream;
- To increase business efficiency and productivity; and
- To enhance regional competitiveness.

Kazis (2005) noted that success means that workers are employed in jobs that offer the promise of financial stability. In addition, organizations are equally concerned with serving employers' needs and helping businesses become increasingly productive. Kazis concluded that business and worker success are interdependent, and the health of regional economies affects the ability to advance workers and strengthen business.

The report from The Assembly noted that the number of intermediary efforts has risen from a handful in the early 1990s to several hundred (including ODEP's Fiscal Year 2003 youth demonstration programs). Although all intermediary organizations approach their tasks in different ways, the report noted that successful intermediary organizations bring together key partners and functions to advance careers for all workers (recognizing the special needs of low-skilled, low-wage workers) to increase business productivity and to improve regional competitiveness. In order to develop an effective workforce intermediary policy for business, workers, and regions, the report recommended the following (Kazis, 2005):

- Broaden the focus of public workforce development to provide all workers with the skills-training needed to stay competitive and advance in their careers;
- Provide incentives aimed at encouraging business investment to hiring, training, and advancing low-wage workers. Incentives need to be simple to receive, administer, and address the needs of employers and workers;
- Support industry-specific workforce development strategies that engage key stakeholders within a particular industry and help to organize a complex web of public and private resources into effective workforce development programs;
- Create strategic economic development initiatives in states, regions, and localities that fully integrate workforce and economic development;
- Redesign educational financing and regulations to support workforce development;

- Maintain and enhance adequate work supports that enable workers to succeed and business to increase retention;
- Align performance measures required by diverse funding streams to obtain real accountability while supporting career advancement goals; and
- Develop new ways to capture the effects of workforce interventions on business, workers, and labor markets.

In a paper prepared by the NCWD/Y (Wills & Luecking, 2003), the authors noted that intermediaries have continued to emerge over the past decade as effective organizations to connect job seekers and job providers. The problem of connecting youth with disabilities to job providers, however, has been more difficult. Though significant resources have been dedicated to improving workforce opportunities for youth with disabilities, these youth have continued to experience high unemployment as well as insufficient opportunities to obtain competitive employment with the potential of career growth. The authors indicated that this lack of progress cannot be attributed simply to a lack of money and resources. Rather, critical disconnections exist between and among community institutions. According to the authors, “the goal of improving educational and employment outcomes for youth with disabilities would be better served by focusing on the strategic and coordinated use of the resources currently available within a state’s education and workforce development systems.” They noted that intermediary organizations can serve in this vital coordinating function (Wills & Luecking, 2003).

2.3 Intermediary Functions

The Intermediary Network outlines specific functions of youth intermediaries into two broad categories—strategic and operational (The Intermediary Guidebook, 2000).

Strategic intermediary functions include:

- Convening local leadership;
- Brokering and/or providing services to workplace partners, educational institutions, young people, and the youth-serving system;
- Ensuring the quality and impact of local efforts; and
- Promoting policies to sustain effective practices.

Operational intermediary functions incorporate the key, day-to-day functions in the community, such as working with (The Intermediary Guidebook, 2000):

- Employers/workplace partners to create demand for working with youth and provide services to address the needs of the partners;
- Schools and youth-serving organizations to build staff awareness and buy-in, and provide services to support school involvement;
- Youth to connect them to appropriate quality experiences and improve the quality of work-based learning; and
- All partners to provide the communications link among partners and create a system focused on quality and continuous improvement.

Exhibits 2-1 and 2-2, adapted from the INet website, further describe strategic and operational intermediary functions.

2.4 Intermediaries and Employers

The characteristic that most distinguishes workforce intermediaries is the focus on serving two customers—current and future workers and employers (NCWD/Y, 2004). Most youth organizations have concentrated on meeting the needs of current and future workers, while little has been done to ensure that the needs of employers are also being met.

Exhibit 2-3 lists several customer service strategies that intermediaries can follow in order to meet employer expectations (Luecking, 2004). These strategies fall within four major categories: (1) Competent and convenient assistance in receiving youth referrals; (2) Matching youth skills and interests to job tasks; (3) Support in training and monitoring youth; and (4) Formal and informal disability awareness.

Exhibit 2-1. Strategic intermediary functions

1. Promote Policies to Sustain Effective Practices

- Generate public awareness and support
- Influence programmatic, local and state policies
- Connect to and align with other systems
- Represent labor market interests of workplace partners
- Generate Resources
- Promote the long-term commitment to education

2. Convene Local Leadership:

- Identify and engage local leaders
- Convene the local leadership body
- Build a common vision among stakeholders
- Create a forum for system-building

3. Ensure Quality and Impact of Local Efforts:

- Set goals and measure success
- Use data to improve performance
- Conduct regular and formal reviews
- Commission or conduct external evaluations
- Share information, strategies, findings, and results

4. Broker and Provide Services:

- Create demand and build awareness
- Provide services to address needs and support involvement
- Connect all youth to appropriate experiences
- Promote quality work-based learning
- Provide the communications link
- Create a quality system

*Adapted from the INet website (Available: www.intermediarynetwork.org/pdffiles/Strategic_Lo-Res.PDF)

Exhibit 2-2. Operational intermediary functions

- 1. Systems**
 - Create a system focused on quality and continuous improvement
 - Provide the communications link
- 2. Employers and Workplace Partners**
 - Provide services to address workplace partner needs
- 3. Schools and Youth Organizations**
 - Provide services to support involvement
 - Build awareness and buy-in
- 4. Youth**
 - Connect all youth to appropriate quality experiences
 - Promote and improve the quality of work-based learning

*Adapted from the INet website (Available: www.intermediarynetwork.org/pdffiles/Operational_Lo-Res.PDF)

Exhibit 2-3. Customer service strategies to address employer expectations*

| Employer expectations | Customer service strategies |
|--|---|
| Competent and convenient assistance in receiving youth referrals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conduct informational interviews ■ Use business language ■ Establish a single point of contact ■ Maintain professional and responsive contact ■ Under-promise and over-deliver |
| Matching of youth skills and interests to job tasks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Know both the youth's capabilities and interests and the employer's circumstance thoroughly ■ Identify tasks that are important to both the youth and the employer ■ Customize assignments as necessary ■ Propose and negotiate task assignments |
| Support in training and monitoring the youth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Clarify employer expectations about job training, coaching, and followup ■ Follow through on agreed-upon followup procedures ■ Solicit employers' feedback on service with the intermediary ■ Adjust support and service to employers based on their feedback |
| Formal and informal disability awareness (only when youth choose to disclose disability) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Deliver information about specific accommodations required by youth ■ Ask employers what further information they want in order to be comfortable supporting and accommodating youth ■ Model interaction and support appropriate for youth ■ Be prepared to give employers more guidance and information as needed |

*Adapted from Luecking, 2004

2.5 Sustainability of Intermediary Organizations

In youth demonstration programs that identify and collaborate with intermediary organizations, a key issue is whether intermediary functions can be sustained once ODEP funding ceases. In a publication by Grobe (2002), the author reported the results of a survey of 21 intermediary organizations that had received funding from the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994. The survey identified the characteristics of organizations most successful in sustaining their programs once funding from the 1994 legislation had ended. These characteristics consisted of (1) development of multiple funding streams; (2) flexibility and adaptability; and (3) existence prior to the 1994 School-to-Work Act. The author also identified three primary sustainability models: (1) a comprehensive system; (2) organizations that design and broker quality services; and (3) organizations that have a narrow focus or a special niche.

Intermediaries that follow the first model (creating a comprehensive system) to sustain their activities are organizations that “seek to position themselves as the regional organization that brings employers, educators, community leaders, and other stakeholders to the table for joint activities. These organizations undertake the convening function not just for the sake of better programming but in order to lead community-wide efforts that build more comprehensive systems linking schools and outside resources for the benefit of young people” (Grobe, 2002). Grobe identified The Workplace Learning Connection (TWLC), a regional intermediary serving 33 Iowa school districts, as an example of an organization seeking to sustain itself using this model. Established in 1998, TWLC has built ongoing financial support into the budgets of its partners, which include Kirkwood Community College, Grant Wood Area Education Agency, area Chambers of Commerce, local school districts, Iowa Workforce Development, and local businesses and industry.

TWLC instituted the following rules of thumb:

- Be a “Single Point of Contact” for schools and employers.
- Implement services for all students, staff and districts.
- Use common language.
- Develop work-based capacity with employers.
- Support efforts to “grow our own workforce.”

- Integrate needed workplace skills into the curriculum.
- Provide communication and coordination.
- Start with core services, student job shadowing, student internships, teacher tours, student tours, and Teacher @ Work—expand as needs develop.

TWLC negotiated a 10 cents-per-pupil fee with six school districts to pay for some of the organization’s ongoing brokering functions and to bring government into partnerships. Through these agreements, county boards of supervisors support school-to-career efforts based on a “closing the skills gap” rationale. TWLC provides several core services to schools, including job shadows, internships, tours, and speakers. Schools generate a needs-based plan in the spring, involving key administrative, guidance, and teaching staff. The intermediary then brokers or provides the services during the next school year. More than 225 businesses participate in the internship program each year. These internships are not paid positions, but students earn academic credit through their high school. In October 2005, TWLC organized several group Job Shadow days throughout the region, including Trades Day, University of Iowa Engineering Day, Legal Day, Health Care Day, and Emerging Career Day. State legislation was passed in Iowa in 2004 to develop a statewide network of intermediaries similar to TWLC; however, action is on hold waiting for a funding source.

Grobe identified one of the pilot sites from the ODEP-funded Vermont State Intermediary demonstration project, Linking Learning to Life, as utilizing the second intermediary model (organizations that design and broker quality services) to sustain its activities. Grobe stated that such organizations “have sustained efforts by expanding the number of partners they serve and brokering high-quality school-based and work-based learning services for young people.” The Vermont pilot site, Linking Learning to Life in Burlington, Vermont, began in October 1997 as a partnership of the Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Burlington School District, and the University of Vermont. Its initial charge was to develop school-to-career opportunities for all students within the Burlington school system. At the same time, the Lake Champlain Regional School-to-Work Collaborative, managed by the Lake Champlain Regional Chamber, was developing career related programs and services with other schools throughout the rest of Chittenden County. These organizations merged in October 2002 to form Linking Learning to Life. Since that time, the project has obtained revenue streams from more than 20 Federal, state, and local government partner organizations (including ODEP funds), foundation grants, and other leveraged funds.

An example of the third model (narrow focus or special niche) was identified in an STW Intermediary Project Issue Brief (Miller & Fleegler, 2000), where the authors discussed selected state-level strategies for sustaining STW practices and priorities as observed in STW programs in Maryland, New Jersey, West Virginia, Michigan, Iowa, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, and California. The authors highlighted efforts in Massachusetts and Wisconsin where the approach was to target specific STW practices that were valuable and popular, yet were unlikely to be sustained without state support. This targeting strategy sought to sustain progress that had already been made in engaging employers to promote workplace learning and school – employer connections. This strategy was thought to be especially useful for local organizations that serve as intermediaries, convening and connecting key partners in workplaces and schools.

For example, the Massachusetts Regional Employment Board and other STW advocates targeted employer groups by creating the Massachusetts School-to-Work Connecting Activities Act, enacted in 1997. Knowing that Federal STW funds would soon disappear, these advocates created the 1997 state legislation in order to sustain intermediary activities that connected employers and schools to create work-based learning for youth. The state contributed up to 1 dollar for every 2 dollars from private sector employers to pay youth for structured work based learning. In 2005, \$5 million was allocated by the state.

2.6 Promising Practices in the Literature

In the final report entitled “Understanding the Role of Intermediaries Under WIA” submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration by Berkeley Policy Associates in 2003 (Macro, Almandsmith, Hague, 2003), the authors indicated that little was known about the role that intermediaries played under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). The reason noted was that intermediaries were relatively new and still evolving in their roles and functions. Similarly, in another 2004 report on intermediaries (Jobs for the Future, 2004), which was part of a series of reports from Jobs for the Future⁴ on advancement for low wage works, the authors emphasized that there is no current dominant workforce intermediary model. They also discouraged the notion of “one size fits all” approach to financing workforce intermediaries. Together these two reports suggest that local and state government agencies are still learning how to best implement the intermediary model. Nonetheless,

⁴ Jobs for the Future is a nonprofit research, consulting, and advocacy organization.

projects have generated relevant and useful descriptive information about intermediaries and their practices and accomplishments.

In a literature review of intermediaries that focus on out-of-school time (OST) youth activities (Community Matters & Breslin, 2003), the authors note several promising practices in each of the core functions intermediaries serve (convening and networking; knowledge development and dissemination; information sharing; standards identification and setting; training development and coordination; provision of technical assistance and consultation; management assistance; raising and regrating funds; accountability; and advocacy and representation. These promising practices are summarized in Appendix A. Appendix B contains a list of promising practices that address intermediary challenges such as role tensions, defining and demonstrating outcomes, and funding. This includes specific practices to address challenges such as using regrating and requests for proposals (RFPs) as a way to inform practitioners and engage organizations in specific improvement efforts; employing a number of indicators to demonstrate net added value of intermediaries; and encouraging funders and policymakers to reserve a percentage of grant funds typically used for direct service to instead support intermediary organizations (Community Matters & Breslin, 2003).

Kazis (2004) describes four important characteristics or practices of successful intermediaries: (1) Pursuance of a “dual customer” approach; (2) Organization of multiple partners and funding streams toward common goals; (3) Provision of and/or brokering labor market services to individuals and employers that include, but go beyond, job matching; and (4) Projection of a vision that motivates and guides its partnerships and activities. Fischer (2005) used these four traits to present findings on the effectiveness of three distinct intermediary organizations supported by the Annie Casey Foundation’s Jobs Initiative. The Jobs Initiative was a 9-year, six-city, \$30 million effort to reform local labor markets and help connect low-income, low skilled young people to good jobs. The initiative, which was implemented during the 1990s, sought to demonstrate to the field what a workforce intermediary effort could achieve with adequate and sustained support. When the project formally ended in 2004, several of the workforce intermediaries supported through the project were found to have made significant progress in each of the four above-mentioned practices.

An example of the second practice, organization of multiple partners and funding streams toward common goals, is The Reinvestment Fund (TRF), a social-purpose lender and financier of community and economic revitalization in Philadelphia (Fischer, 2005). TRF served as a workforce intermediary in the Jobs Initiative. In its dual customer approach, TRF sought to convince Philadelphia-

area employers that it was good business sense for them to incorporate human resources practices that support low-skilled entry level workers. In 2003, the organization secured \$128,000 in public job training grants for three of its partner companies. Moreover, TRF's human resources group supports employers in expanding recruitment, building careers, and developing human resources infrastructure within companies. These efforts enabled the workforce intermediary to work toward providing stable, family-sustaining jobs for individuals, as well as long term growth for the companies. TRF partnered with Jewish Educational and Vocational Services and the National Retail Federation Foundation to train individuals for customer service jobs. These jobs were in different industries that had certain core competencies in common. The training program included a course of instruction leading to certification in specific core competencies. Moreover, TRF sought regular feedback from employers across sectors regarding the training and maintained their buy-in to receive recognition for the certification credential. As a result, many employers pledged to hire from the program (Fischer, 2005).⁵

An example of the third intermediary practice, providing labor market services to individuals and employers beyond job matching, is the Seattle Jobs Initiative (Kazis, 2004). It is an intermediary agency that began its operations within Seattle's city government and later reconstituted itself as an independent nonprofit organization. The Seattle Jobs Initiative works with both employees and employers after placement because their focus is on retention. They begin by working with job seekers on workplace rules and continue followup activities for more than a year after placement. Followup activities include regular communication, financial tutoring, setting up bank accounts, and further training as needed. With the employers, the Seattle Jobs Initiative continues to receive feedback on improving the program's training content and emphasis, as well as retention strategies.

2.7 Summary

Our research uncovered much relevant and useful descriptive information about intermediaries and their practices and accomplishments, as well as some descriptions of promising intermediary models, programs, and practices that have been implemented in recent years. However, there is little hard evidence about which intermediary model or models have proved most effective with respect to transition—especially for youth with disabilities. Intermediaries are relatively new and still evolving in their roles and functions, and there is no “one size fits all” intermediary approach as yet identified in the

⁵ Due to the economic downturn in 2001, many employers that pledged to hire from the program were unable to do so. Thus, TRF and its partners made some changes to the program to access additional resources and support.

literature that the workforce system should implement to serve youth with disabilities. Moreover, it is evident that workforce intermediaries need to be flexible and creative according to the specific needs and characteristics of the community or locality they serve. Despite the lack of evidence regarding which model is most effective, it is clear that in recent years the intermediary approach has been widely applied throughout the United States to improve workforce services both for employers and workers.

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3. SGA REQUIREMENTS

Although all ODEP demonstration programs require certain intermediary functions, the Fiscal Year 2003 Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGAs) for the State Intermediary and Faith-based Mentoring demonstration programs specifically lay out a number of intermediary functions identified and described in the literature. The SGA for the Fiscal Year 2003 State Intermediary demonstration program specifically addresses the role of intermediaries as connectors and facilitators among job seekers, employers, and service providers in local communities (DOL, 2003b). For example, in the State Intermediary demonstration program, each demonstration site was required to subaward a substantial portion of its funds to intermediary organizations, and the SGA suggested the specific intermediary candidates (e.g., community-based nonprofit organizations). The SGA further noted that “intermediary organizations can assist the state in assessing and evaluating the performance and impact of its efforts related to these grant activities, and in providing necessary information and training in areas such as benefits planning, universal access, reasonable accommodation, mental health, housing, transportation, health maintenance (including Medicare and Medicaid), and other self-sufficiency issues” (Department of Labor, 2003a).

The State Intermediary demonstration program is intended to assist states in designing, implementing, and evaluating state-operated demonstration projects in coordination with the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), aiming to improve transition outcomes for youth with disabilities at the local level (DOL, 2003b). Demonstration projects are expected to assist states in (1) conducting resource mapping to assess their youth service delivery infrastructure in light of the Guideposts for Success⁶; (2) developing, implementing, and evaluating a cross-agency multiyear state plan to improve transition outcomes for youth with disabilities through blending and/or braiding⁷ of Federal, state, and community resources and the use of local intermediary organizations; (3) conducting local pilot demonstrations to determine how, through community partnerships, intermediary organizations can best be used to ensure that youth with disabilities obtain transition services consistent with evidence-based transition operating principles; and

⁶ Through the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Y), Guideposts for Success have been developed and are being tested in ODEP’s youth programs. The “Guideposts” are based on research that has identified educational and career development interventions that can make positive effects in the quality of transition services for youth. There are five guideposts: (1) school-based preparatory experiences; (2) career preparation and work-based learning experiences; (3) youth development and leadership; (4) connecting activities; and (5) family involvement and supports (NCWD/Y, 2005).

⁷ The term “blended funding” is used to describe mechanisms that pool dollars from multiple sources and make them in some ways indistinguishable. “Braided funding” uses similar mechanisms, but the funding streams remain visible and are used in common to produce greater strength, efficiency, and/or effectiveness.

(4) demonstrating, through leveraging Federal, state, and local public sector resources, concrete evidence of the likelihood of sustainability of efforts within the state.

The SGA for the Fiscal Year 2003 Faith-based Mentoring demonstration program lays out an approach in which it is the intermediary organization that holds ODEP funding (as opposed to the State Intermediary demonstration program sites that select their own intermediaries after funding is awarded) (DOL, 2003a). The Faith-based Mentoring demonstration program seeks to build the capacity and knowledge of faith-based and other community organizations to provide and sustain mentoring services to youth with disabilities. In achieving this purpose, the intermediaries are expected to competitively subaward a substantial portion of ODEP funds to local faith-based and community organizations to conduct mentoring activities (e.g., adult and peer mentoring, e-mentoring, tutoring, job-shadowing, service learning, leadership development, and youth development) and are expected to serve as both a technical and administrative resource for the organizations that receive the subawards. In addition, projects are required to establish strong linkages with the local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) in the area to be served by the activities of the grant so the local WIB can assist the intermediary in connecting to the One-Stop Career Center system and other community-based youth service providers receiving WIA funding.

4. DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM EXPERIENCE WITH INTERMEDIARIES

This section summarizes experiences with the intermediary approach for all demonstration projects in the State Intermediary and Faith-based Mentoring programs. The first subsection summarizes findings from Phase II initial site visits and Fiscal Year 2005 Quarterly Reports. The second subsection relies on data collected at in-depth site visits to three demonstration projects recognized as having a good grasp of the intermediary approach.

4.1 Findings from Phase II Site Visits and Quarterly Reports

At the time of initial site visits, most youth demonstration projects in the State Intermediary and Faith-based Mentoring programs were in the early stages of the project. However, extraction of information from recent Quarterly Reports indicates that all of these youth project sites have been making progress in utilizing an intermediary approach. The following is a summary of demonstration project site progress based primarily on feedback from initial site visits and Quarterly Reports for State Intermediary demonstration projects and Faith-based Mentoring projects.

4.1.1 State Intermediary Demonstration Program

ODEP awarded State Intermediary demonstration program funding to eight states: Alaska, California, Colorado, Iowa, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, and Vermont. All projects began with resource mapping and development of a coordinated state plan and then moved on to setting up processes to select pilot/demonstration projects that would become intermediaries.

4.1.1.1 Resource Mapping

The State Intermediary Solicitation Grant Applications (SGA) required that all sites begin with a resource mapping process⁸ to determine the state's current youth service infrastructure and develop a cross-agency multiyear plan addressing transition outcomes for youth with disabilities. At our initial site visits, all sites were in the process of conducting their resource mapping exercise. The Westat Fiscal Year 2003 report (Elinson, et al., 2005) summarized project sites' progress in the resource mapping process:

- Resource mapping is a tool already being utilized on the state and local level at the demonstration sites to develop new relationships and collect information. Though it was early in the program, the resource mapping work was already having an impact at most of the sites. Some of the sites approached the resource mapping task, especially the state-level resource mapping work, primarily as an information collection exercise, but some used the process itself as a way to build relationships and to communicate with individuals and groups with which they traditionally would not interact. The focus groups conducted in Colorado were a particularly unique example of this. Some other sites, such as the Alaska site, also chose to include resources in their resource mapping work that would not “traditionally” be considered resources for youth with disabilities. The mapping process has facilitated a great deal of discussion and uncovered much surprising information about gaps and overlaps in services. Solutions to these problems are already being discussed among agencies even before the state plans have been written. The Vermont site is utilizing the results of its resource mapping to structure the RFPs that will be distributed to identify local pilot sites.
- **The approach to the resource mapping task has been different at each site because of a state's size and other factors.** In this program there are two states at the opposite end of the spectrum from the perspective of size—California and Vermont—and their approach to resource mapping is going to be quite different because of this. California will focus most of its resource mapping work on the state level (except for pilot demonstration sites), and Vermont plans to do resource mapping only at the local level. Some states also found that some resource mapping has already been done in some areas (in specific cities or counties) or for some groups (general youth or adults with disabilities), so they will be concentrating their efforts to “fill in the gaps” with other information for services for youth with disabilities. One of the sites also chose to conduct several focus groups around the state as part of state-wide resource mapping efforts. The sites are also utilizing a variety of software packages to collect and analyze their resource map data.

⁸ According to the SGA (DOL, 2003a), resource mapping (also known as asset mapping, asset analysis, and environmental scan) for the purposes of this demonstration program involves the identification of available assets and resources within the states' youth service delivery infrastructure and an evaluation as to whether and/or to what extent that system is currently serving youth with disabilities consistent with the evidence-based operative principles discussed previously.

4.1.1.2 Selecting Intermediaries

As with the process of conducting a resource mapping, project sites have put their singular touch on the methods they use for selecting intermediaries.

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Division of Business Partnerships Youth Program is serving as an intermediary at the state level. The request for proposal (RFP) for the local intermediaries/pilot sites was released in late winter 2005 and had seven applicants. Four intermediaries/pilot projects were funded: (1) The One-Stop Career Center in Fairbanks; (2) Nine Star, Anchorage (a nonprofit organization that provides services to adolescents and adults in preemployment, job seeking, and postemployment skills training); (3) a regional independent living center that serves youth and adults in the Kenai, Homer, and Seward areas; and (4) Southeast Alaska Independent Living (SAIL), another nonprofit organization that provides employment or postsecondary education for youth in Juneau, Sitka, and Ketchikan. Intensive training in benefits analysis and vocational rehabilitation, foster care, youth offenders, and university and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) systems were provided to these sites. All pilots include WIA partners, and the process of WIA co-enrollment for youth with disabilities has started.

In California, the site subcontracted the task of selecting intermediaries to New Ways to Work, a consulting organization that provides research, training, and technical assistance to communities, schools, and service providers. The California Independent Living Council, the Crossroads Employment Agency, and the Department of Rehabilitation were selected as state-level intermediaries. The three pilot demonstration sites have also been selected and are serving as local intermediaries: (1) Ventura County – Work Training Programs, Inc.; (2) Jewish Vocational Services (JVS)/San Francisco; and (3) Shasta – Shasta School to Career (STC). The state WIB, New Ways to Work, and Sonoma State California Institute on Human Service (CIHS) provide technical assistance to the three pilot sites to improve their development as local intermediaries.

The Colorado State Intermediary project advisory group and the State Youth Council act as state-level intermediaries for the Transition Program for Youth with Disabilities (described in detail in Section 4.2 below). Other organizations, such as the Colorado WIA Youth Program Operators Group, are also state-level intermediaries. The State Youth Council reported that Colorado's 2005 - 2007 WIA State Plan is infused with the goals and implementation strategies of the ODEP demonstration program. The local Youth Councils, serving as local intermediaries, are now operating within the six original

prototype/demonstration sites. Each intermediary organization (Youth Council and/or transition interagency team designee) assisted demonstration sites with resource mapping and other project tasks. Additional local intermediaries have been identified within each of the prototype/demonstration sites.

At the time of the site visit to the State Intermediary site in Iowa, the project had identified the Iowa Collaborative for Youth Development (ICYD) as a potential state-level intermediary (the Iowa project director serves on the ICYD work group). The site believed that local communities would identify potential local intermediaries in their response to the pilot demonstration site RFP. Some of these potential local intermediaries attended the resource mapping workshops, thus potentially preparing them to take on the role of a local intermediary.

At least 12 state-level intermediaries are now collaborating with the Iowa site, including the State of Iowa Public Health Department, the state WIB, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services, Department of Education, Division of Persons with Disabilities Youth Leadership Forum and College Leadership Forum, the University of Iowa Center for Developmental Disabilities, and the Iowa Department for the Blind. Three demonstration/pilot sites have been selected and each site has identified several local intermediaries with which they are working, including local high schools, alternative schools, community colleges, universities, local VR, and other WIA-funded agencies. The Henry County pilot site has identified at least 12 local intermediaries; West Sioux has identified at least seven; and Council Bluffs has identified at least two other local intermediaries.

Two state-level intermediaries were selected at the outset from the Boston demonstration project: the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) and the Commonwealth Corporation (CC). ICI and CC continue to serve as the state-level intermediaries in the Massachusetts Youth Partnership for Transition in Boston, Massachusetts. Local WIBs are serving as local intermediaries for each of the four pilot demonstration sites (i.e., the Brockton Area WIB; North Shore WIB; Merrimack Valley WIB; and Hamden County WIB).

PACER Center was also selected at the outset as the sole state-level intermediary for Connecting Youth to Communities and Careers (“C-Cubed”) in St. Paul, Minnesota. Project C-Cubed anticipated that some local intermediaries would also be identified as the project moves forward. PACER Center continues as the primary subcontracted intermediary organization for C-Cubed. Three local workforce service areas (City of Minneapolis, Ramsey County, and Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services) were selected as the pilot demonstration sites. Each pilot site has an agency that coordinates its

youth programming, and those agencies act in the role of an intermediary to broker and coordinate resources to meet the individual service needs of youth. Project C-Cubed is also focusing on improving service referral and transition outcomes of other local intermediaries such as Community Transition Interagency Committees (CTICs), WIA Youth Councils, the Business Leadership Network, and local school transition programs. A major goal of C-Cubed is to build the capacity of intermediary organizations to serve youth with disabilities. The project's efforts to improve capacity have included providing training to youth-serving organizations, facilitating collaboration, disseminating information, and providing technical assistance.

Because the state is small, the New Hampshire State Intermediary demonstration project determined that intermediaries would be working at the local and regional levels, as opposed to statewide level. Staff hoped that the results of resource mapping would help structure the intermediary RFP. The awardee of record for the Concord, New Hampshire Intermediary Alignment Project site is the New Hampshire Workforce Opportunity Council. The Council contracts with the Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC) to manage the project. The DDC has now contracted with four pilot demonstration sites to serve as local intermediaries. These pilot sites are Monadnock Developmental Services, Administrative Unit #35, The North Country Educational Services, and Strafford Learning Center. These sites have in turn developed collaborations with other local intermediary organizations in their region, including family services, vocational rehabilitation, developmental services, Division of Youth and Family Services, New Hampshire Works and the Chamber of Commerce, Northern New Hampshire Mental Health and Disability Services, CARE-NH (a 5-year Federal grant administered through the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Behavioral Health to support a process of systems change for inclusionary, community based, coordinated services for children and youth with serious emotional disabilities and their families), and local high schools.

Similarly, because the state is small, the Vermont demonstration site determined that intermediaries would be working at the local and regional levels as well. Vermont's state WIB is the state intermediary for Career Start in Montpelier, Vermont (described in detail in Section 4.2). The state's 11 local WIBs are serving as local intermediaries. This has included involvement as facilitators and/or members of the local Community Oversight Team (advisory group) in each project area; attendance at the Peer Learning Network; taking the lead in a marketing awareness campaign; exploring new collaborations and partnerships through project implementation; and acting as the local contact point. Local WIB coordinators were required members of teams attending the pilot demonstration site Bidder's Conferences

and were required partners in applying to become a pilot demonstration project. Each of the selected four pilot demonstration sites will work closely with its local WIB.

4.1.2 Faith-based Mentoring Demonstration Program

At the time of the initial site visit, Maine Mentoring Partnership (MMP) in Augusta had secured one faith-based subawardee through Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (described in detail in Section 4.2). Youth Outreach Ministries (YOM) holds the faith-based subaward in Augusta with Big Brothers Big Sisters of America as its subcontractor. In addition to YOM, three other subawardees have now been selected: (1) Region V Advisory Council on Transition (formerly named Andrews Council on Transition); (2) Ethel's Tree of Life; and (3) Downeast Regional Transition Board.

The Illinois project site in Chicago partnered with two faith-based organizations—the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs and the Catholic Office of the Deaf—to attract potential faith-based subawardees. In spite of intensive recruitment efforts, no faith-based organizations applied for a subaward, and no subawards had been made at the time of our site visit. The site has subsequently awarded funds to three community-based organizations: (1) Options Center for Independent Living; (2) BOLD Chicago (an organization in the Chicago area that emphasizes service learning and leadership development, and encourages young people to be actively involved in their schools and communities); and (3) Beyondmedia Education (a Chicago organization dedicated to using the media and workshops to increase the understanding of women's issues).

The California Faith-based Mentoring project experienced prior success working with faith-based organizations, so in addition to widespread dissemination to community-based organizations, the project director also sent the RFP to church leaders that she and the coordinator knew personally. The site received a total of seven applications, all of which were awarded funding. Two subawardees are faith-based organizations and five are other types of community-based organizations. The faith-based awardees are Impact Urban America and Ivey Ranch Child Development Center. The remaining are Working Against Cancer; Turning Hearts Center; NEEDS Outreach; Blind Community Center; and Disabled Businesspersons Association.

The Massachusetts Faith-based Mentoring demonstration project is developing a national mentoring model and expanding new mentoring programs nationwide. To disseminate the subawardee

RFP, the Massachusetts Faith-based Mentoring project used contacts of those members of the National Disability Mentoring Council who had experience collaborating with faith-based organizations. As a result of its extensive advertising of the RFP, the site received 73 proposals from organizations across the country, including Alaska and Hawaii. From this group, six subawards have been made—to Emanuel Gospel Center (EGC); Holly Community, Inc. (HCI); DC Public Charter School Cooperative (DCPCSC); Mayors Youth Empowerment Program (MYEP); Lake County Center for Independent Living (LCCIL); and North County Center for Independence (NCCI). EGC is the only faith-based organization.

Like the Massachusetts project, the main goal of the Oregon Faith-based Mentoring demonstration is to implement a web-based mentoring program that is national in scope. At the time of our initial site visit, this site had given a subaward to the South Dakota Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities (SDCCD). Four subawards were made to e-mentoring organizations: (1) Diversity Initiatives, Oregon; (2) Imagine Enterprises, Texas; (3) Alaska Youth and Family Network (AYFN); and (4) SDCCD. None of these organizations are faith-based. In order to better concentrate resources for the subawardees, this site's goal was reduced in 2005 in collaboration with ODEP from eight to four states, and the number of sites with which they are working in 2005 has been reduced from four to two (Diversity Initiatives in Oregon and Imagine Enterprises in Texas).

In Coos Bay, Oregon, one out of five subawardees the site selected is faith-based—the Coquille Praise Center. The remaining four selected are Curry Prevention Services – Coos Bay; Curry Prevention Services – Curry; Bridges Advocacy; and South Coast Independent Living Services (SCILS). No new subawardees have been added since the Westat initial site visit in 2004.

4.2 In-depth Site Visits

In-depth site visits were conducted to explore the issue of the role of intermediaries in youth demonstration programs. This section provides a description of the site selection process, preparation for in-depth site visits, and site visits themselves. We then summarize in-depth site visit findings related to each site's perception of the intermediary approach and the functions, processes, and activities implemented thus far.

4.2.1 Site Selection and Contact

Using our own experience from Phase II site visits, Westat staff first made a preliminary list of youth sites that, in our estimation, appeared to have a good grasp of the role and functioning of intermediaries and were showing promise in being effective in practices with intermediary groups. We then consulted the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Y) for input on appropriate youth sites to visit. An email was sent to the director of the NCWD/Y (Appendix C); followup telephone calls and emails also took place to obtain input. We then selected two sites from the State Intermediary demonstration program (the Transition Program for Youth with Disabilities in Denver, Colorado; and Career Start in Montpelier, Vermont) and a Faith-based Mentoring demonstration project site (Transition Mentoring Program for Maine Youth in Augusta, Maine).

Once sites were selected, each project director was sent an email similar to the one contained in Appendix D. With telephone calls and additional emails, we further explained the rationale for and nature of the in-depth site visit and how each site was selected.

4.2.2 Preparation for Site Visits

In preparation for the in-depth site visits, Westat staff worked with project directors to organize the site visit day by arranging for people to be interviewed and providing a tentative site visit agenda. Westat worked with the site to finalize the agenda.

Protocols for the in-depth site visits were developed to focus solely on the function of intermediaries at each of the demonstration sites and were not intended to collect information about other elements of the demonstration program, as was done during our initial site visits. A separate protocol instrument was written for each of the four types of key informants: the project director, staff working in intermediary organizations, employers/service providers, and youth and their families (Appendix E).

Protocol instruments for project directors assessed four major elements: (1) Perception of intermediaries; (2) the strategic functions that project intermediaries performed; (3) the operational functions intermediaries performed; and 4) and the outcomes observed thus far, particularly in terms of systems change and sustainability as a result of intermediary activities within each project. Other protocol

guides contained questions on the types of services received, problems encountered, and satisfaction with services.

Westat staff contacted each project director to arrange a 2-day site visit. Site visits were conducted during July and August, 2005. Prior to arrival at each site, Westat staff reviewed the grant applications and Quarterly reports to become familiar with the unique goals and objectives of the intermediaries at each demonstration project. Westat also sent a copy of the protocols to each site prior to arriving for the site visit to help the sites prepare for the visit.

4.2.3 Description of Site Visits

Westat staff worked with each site in advance to create a written agenda for site visits. All visits began with an interview with the project director (1½ to 2 hours), with key demonstration project staff participating. The remainder of the site visit agenda varied by site depending upon the availability of other staff, collaborators, and program customers. Some interviews were conducted by telephone. The interviews with intermediaries, from both the local and state level, lasted approximately 1 to 2 hours. One-hour individual interviews were conducted with employers or staff from service providers who were collaborating on program activities. Individual and group interviews were conducted with youth with disabilities (along with their mentors or job coaches in some cases). These interviews usually lasted 15 to 30 minutes. Exhibit 4-1 provides a list of the individuals interviewed during each of the three in-depth site visits.

4.2.4 Overview of Intermediary Models

The three demonstration project sites we visited represented a large state (Colorado), a small state (Vermont), rural locations (Maine, Vermont, and parts of Colorado), large cities (Colorado), the State Intermediary demonstration program (Colorado and Vermont), and the Faith-based Mentoring demonstration program (Maine). Such diversity, even among only three projects, has yielded the three different intermediary models discussed below.

Exhibit 4-1. List of interviewees for in-depth site visits

| Site | Interviewees | |
|--|---|---|
| Transition Program for Youth with Disabilities (TPYD) (Denver, Colorado) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Project Coordinator, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation ■ Transition Specialist, Colorado Department of Education ■ Coordinator, Workforce Development/Colorado Community College System ■ Site Coordinator, Tri-County Workforce Area ■ Tri-County Workforce Area Staff Members ■ Site Coordinator, Boulder Demonstration Program ■ Case Worker, Boulder School System ■ Vocational Support Specialist ■ Vocational Rehabilitation Staff Member | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Jefferson County Mental Health/The Road Youth Center Staff Member ■ Activities Specialist, The Road Youth Center ■ Jefferson County Schools/High School-High Tech Program Staff Member ■ School to Work Alliance Program Staff Member ■ Office of Workforce Development Staff Members ■ Colorado Workforce Development Council Member ■ Youth Council Members ■ Youth customers ■ Disability Program Navigator ■ WIN Partners (evaluators) |
| Career Start (Montpelier, Vermont) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Project Director, Career Start ■ Special Assistant to the Vermont Department of Labor Commissioner ■ Steering Committee Members ■ Advisory Board Members ■ Director of Vermont’s statewide WIB ■ Vocational Rehabilitation Department Director | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Vocational Rehabilitation Department Program Service Chief ■ WIB Coordinator ■ Demonstration Site Lead Contacts, Directors and Project Coordinators ■ Occupational Training Coordinator ■ Youth Customers |
| Transition Mentoring Program for Maine Youth (Augusta, Maine) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Project Director, Maine Mentoring Partnership, Inc. ■ Project Coordinator, Downeast Regional Transition Board ■ Project Support Team Member, Downeast Regional Transition Board ■ Youth Mentees, Downeast Regional Transition Board ■ Adult Mentor to Peer Mentors, Downeast Regional Transition Board ■ Executive Director and Project Coordinator, Ethel’s Tree of Life ■ Region V Advisory Council Members, ■ Board Chair, Region V Advisory Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Youth Customers Youth Peer Mentor ■ Adult Mentors WIA Youth Services Staff Member ■ Executive Director, Youth Outreach Ministries/His Place Teens Center ■ Youth Outreach Ministries Board member ■ Youth Development Director, Child Health/Big Brothers Big Sisters ■ Executive Director, Child Health/Big Brothers Big Sisters ■ Adult anchor (small group mentor) and teacher at Jay High School |

4.2.4.1 Transition Program for Youth with Disabilities (TPYD) (Denver, Colorado)

The Colorado demonstration project awardee and primary state-level intermediary is the Colorado Office of Workforce Development. The site has selected a core team to serve as the advisory body for its demonstration project. This team and the State Youth Council (which is a subcommittee of the Colorado Workforce Development Council (WDC)) function as state-level intermediaries on the demonstration project. Other state-level intermediaries are the Youth Transition Grant Advisory Group; the Project Train Consortium; the Colorado WIA Youth Program Operators Group; the Workforce Incentive Grant Executive Director's Advisory Group (EDAG); and the State Workforce Investment System (SWIS) committee of the WDC.

The Office of Workforce Development selected Youth Councils to serve as local intermediaries for the demonstration project. The Councils assisted the pilot demonstration sites with resource mapping, as well as other key project activities. The pilot demonstration sites themselves are also considered to be intermediaries. The sites are:

- Boulder Workforce Development Region
- Tri-County Workforce Development Region
- Southcentral Subregion – Colorado Rural Consortium
- Arapahoe/Douglas Works! Workforce Region
- Denver Workforce Region
- Weld Workforce Region

The project director reported that the pilot demonstration sites were awarded in phases, with Boulder, Tri-County and Southcentral receiving awards within the first phase. This was done so that the core team would have time to assess the progress of the first three sites, identify any problems, and then apply lessons learned to the next group of pilot sites.

Several staff who were working on pilot demonstration sites were simultaneously serving on the Youth Councils (the local intermediaries on the project). In addition, all pilot demonstration sites served as local intermediaries in a variety of strategic and operational capacities.

Many other local intermediaries were identified within each of the pilot demonstration sites. As just one example, Tri-County's local intermediaries include the Youth Council, Human Services, The ROAD (a youth drop-in center), Jefferson Hills residential treatment center, the ODEP-funded High School/High Tech demonstration program, Junior Achievement, Red Rocks Community College, McLain Adult High School, the local school district, and the Central Area Health Education Center.

4.2.4.2 Career Start (Montpelier, Vermont)

The Advisory Board for the Vermont demonstration site is serving as the primary state level intermediary. Members of the board include representatives from the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Employment and Training, Disability Law Project, Vermont Parent Information Center, Human Resources Investment Council (HRIC), Department of Education, Rutland City School District, and the Vermont Coalition of Disability Rights. Vermont is a small state; thus, the Advisory Board decided that intermediaries would work best at a local (as opposed to a statewide) level. The state's 11 local WIBs serve as local intermediaries.

Since our initial site visit, the Vermont site modified its plans for the pilot demonstration sites. Instead of five sites, four pilot demonstration sites were chosen in September 2004, and six smaller 1-year demonstration projects were also funded. The four pilot sites are:

- Lake Champlain Career Start Prototype Demonstration Project, Burlington
- Three River Valley LWIB Career Start Prototype Demonstration Project, Waterbury
- Bennington LWIB Transition Project
- Randolph Transition Initiative

The six 1-year demonstration projects are:

- River Bend Career Week, Bradford
- Transition Skills Group Project, Franklin County
- Northeast Kingdom Learning Services (NEKLS)/Local WIB Career Start Pilot Project, Northeast Kingdom
- GATEWAY, Lamoille/Orleans County

- Community Practice Lab, Washington Central/Montpelier
- Workplace Readiness Assessment and Transitional Planning Enhancement Project, Windham County

4.2.4.3 Transition Mentoring Program for Maine Youth (Augusta, Maine)

The recipient of ODEP Faith-based Mentoring demonstration program funds is the Maine Mentoring Partnership, Inc. (MMP). MMP is a partnership of government, mentoring program providers, funders, and supporters from both the public and private sectors and is an initiative of Maine Children’s Cabinet. MMP has always functioned as an intermediary organization in the state of Maine, primarily on the strategic level. As opposed to the organizations leading the other ODEP Faith-based Mentoring demonstration projects, MMP’s expertise is in mentoring, not youth with disabilities. Thus, this project is a collaboration between MMP, the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Region III local WIB of Maine.

The intent of MMP, as the intermediary, was to identify faith-based and/or community organizations to deliver mentoring programs to youth with disabilities. MMP selected four subawardees to carry out this objective: (1) YOM; (2) Region V Advisory Council on Transition; (3) Downeast Regional Transition Board; and 4) Ethel’s Tree of Life. These subawardees are also functioning as intermediaries within their local areas.

4.2.5 Project Sites’ Description of Intermediaries

During our in-depth visits, we began by asking key project staff to define and describe an intermediary and an intermediary approach.

Independent evaluators hired by the Colorado demonstration site indicated that an important function of an intermediary is to raise awareness within each community of the existence of the many providers and services available, as well as raise awareness of the needs of youth with disabilities and how youth can access needed services. The evaluators also noted that local intermediaries (particularly in such a large, diverse state as Colorado) are particularly valuable in that they are able to bring local issues to the attention of state-level decisionmakers. Without the intermediaries, concerns of smaller, isolated

towns and rural communities might never be articulated to the right decisionmakers. They noted that local intermediaries also can bring resources up to the state level that may otherwise be difficult to identify. As noted by a representative from the Office of Workforce Development, for example, the State Youth Council was having difficulties in finding someone from youth corrections to join the council. They had a member of the State Patrol on the council for a brief period until she changed jobs and left the State Patrol. The state Youth Council has since turned to the local intermediary in Tri-County where representatives from two different levels of youth corrections serve on the local Youth Council. These youth corrections staff were asked to assist in identifying someone on the state level to serve on the State Youth Council.

The Colorado project's evaluators also indicated that intermediaries must be individuals or organizations that are open to working with different community partners, are flexible in working with different systems, and are creative in how they address problems. We asked them if they thought it was always important that an intermediary have a long history within a community, as the literature suggests and other interviewees had noted. The evaluators indicated that a long history would not necessarily be useful if an organization was not open to understanding and working with other organizations. It was explained that "sometimes there's an advantage for an intermediary that comes in to sort of be from outside the system, and in that sense you don't have some of the bias, or some of the ownership issues. An outside entity can come in and sort of help facilitate new ideas, new partnerships, things like that."

The executive director of the Colorado Workforce Development Council echoed a similar theme. He explained that an intermediary must be able to "converse with a disparate group of people without domination; to create what I call safe harbors of conversation so that people can trust them, so that people will share their experience, their expertise, and their knowledge, and their interests, and their successes, and their failures, freely and openly..." He also noted that "one of the other things is to not have a 'dog in the fight,' and by that I mean not to have a narrow special interest that they are trying to serve, but to be focused on the war, on the total systemic objective..."

The project director for the Colorado demonstration project defined intermediaries as having both a strategic and operational function. She explained that if "you picture an equation with employers on one side, and youth on the other side, the intermediary is the entity within the middle that can extend the links down and make sure that employment outcomes and community outcomes happen."

She also noted that just because an organization has been labeled as an intermediary, this does not necessarily mean that they actually function as one. Though her site designated the Youth Councils to serve as local intermediaries, she has since discovered that within some local areas there are other entities that are effective intermediaries. In the Tri-County region, for example, the project found a subcommittee of the local Youth Council that had functioned as a transition team for years; this group is now serving as the local intermediary for this region. In the south central subregion, a local transition team called TIGERS had been active for several years. This transition team is now functioning as a pilot site and as the primary local intermediary in this area for the Colorado demonstration project.

During our in-depth visit to the Vermont demonstration site, we also asked key program staff members about their definition of an “intermediary.” A representative from the Vermont Department of Labor, who had been involved in the initial planning of the demonstration program, indicated that interest in the State Intermediary project grew out of earlier Workforce Incentive Grants and School-to-Work initiatives within the state, where contributors learned the importance of partnering across all state agencies to better serve youth with disabilities. He explained that the ODEP demonstration project has redefined these partnerships, in that partnering has become far more of an “action verb.” He posited that “I’m a partner here at this table, but if I’m an intermediary, I’m presumably doing something a little bit more than just sitting here. And I think that’s one of the developmental aspects of [the ODEP demonstration project] ...Partnership is being redefined in more active terms and expectations...” Intermediaries, therefore, are “partnerships in action.”

From his viewpoint, intermediaries are also important in that they help to better define roles and responsibilities within a partnership. If a partnership is a passive structure, then each agency’s role may never be articulated and little may be achieved. In order to function well, an intermediary’s role must be clearly and uniquely defined, depending upon what the needs are within the state and local community. For example, one of the WIB’s most important jobs as a “macro level” intermediary in Vermont has been to provide training, education, and technical assistance on critical transition issues. On a more “micro” intermediary level, a transition specialist’s job within a local school district is to then connect a student with an actual job experience. Because both of these intermediaries know what they are supposed to do, as well as what other players within the system are supposed to be doing, this helps to prevent overlap and duplication of effort within the workforce development system. As the Department of Labor representative concluded, “partnership in action and articulation of function are two distinct outcomes and benefits of using intermediaries.”

A representative from one of the Vermont local WIBs noted that articulation of roles and responsibilities and use of intermediaries has been especially important in connecting with employers. He noted that:

... if you were to get a group of high school teachers together and ask them about the purposes of education, 'preparing youth for employment' very often won't even show up on the list of things that they think they're empowered to try to accomplish, whereas if you go to the business community and say, you know, what's the purpose of public education, certainly one of the things on their list is going to be, 'prepare people for an economic role in the community to be able to... support themselves'. So right there you've got the makings of a real mismatch, and so basically that means kind of trying to bring people around on both sides of those perspectives to some sort of middle ground in which some educators are able to achieve without an intermediary, and some businesses are able to achieve without an intermediary, but to get it going on a scale across the state it usually requires somebody playing the in-between role.

He viewed his role at the local WIB as the "in-between" role. In addition to teachers and employers having differing perspectives on the purposes of education, the local WIB representative noted that they often also speak quite different "languages" and have different decisionmaking processes. Even though their final goals and objectives may be similar, such as increasing the number of students with disabilities who go on to higher education and training, the cultural differences between educators and employers may make working together difficult at times. The LWIB representative noted that an intermediary is useful in bridging this gap, perhaps by meeting with these groups separately at first to define workforce system goals and then slowly bringing them together as common goals are identified.

During our interview with the Vermont project director, she used the word "ombudsman" to describe her concept of an intermediary. She described a process in which the intermediary serves as a collector and distributor of information from the pilot demonstration projects, to their advisory committee, up to state-level policymakers, and then back down to their demonstration projects again. The intermediary is also instrumental in deciding at what level (or levels) issues could be addressed and problems resolved.

As an example of this process, the project director described an issue that had arisen within one of the pilot demonstration projects regarding access to a local technology center. The Vermont Department of Education has established 64 career and technical education programs that are offered in 15 regional technical centers and six comprehensive high schools around the state. These programs are

open to high school students, as well as adults and provide career training in a variety of areas, such as information services, CADD/engineering design, industrial mechanics, video production, graphic arts, health careers, automotive technology, cosmetology, and hospitality, and food and beverage services. The pilot demonstration site had proposed developing a special program at the local technology center that would be accessible to youth with disabilities. After the pilot demonstration funding was obtained, staff members at the technology center changed their mind about wanting to accommodate these youth. The project director worked with the pilot demonstration site to develop additional resources so that youth with disabilities could be accommodated at the technology center. However, it became clear during these discussions that all technology centers in Vermont were equally inaccessible to youth with disabilities and that this problem would need to be addressed at the state level. The steering committee for the Vermont demonstration project has had further discussions about technology center accessibility and has scheduled a meeting with the Department of Education to begin working on this issue statewide.

The project director for the MMP envisioned her organization's role as an intermediary on this demonstration project to be very similar in scope to the role MMP has always played in the state—specifically, that MMP would serve primarily as a strategic intermediary, providing technical assistance, training, support, vision, and whatever else subawardees and other youth providers needed to better serve youth with disabilities.

The project director added that the MMP's responsibility was to help other provider organizations network with each other so that they could share lessons learned, new ideas, and resources, as well as provide mutual support. She reported that many small provider organizations in Maine often feel isolated and without much support. By providing these organizations a network of other like-minded providers, they can become more connected, productive and effective. MMP staff indicated that it was also important as an intermediary to be able to provide “personalized” technical assistance to each youth provider within the project. They indicated that they have provided assistance to four subawardees thus far, and each approach has been unique. For example, some subawardees had experience in Federal financial and programmatic reporting and others did not. Therefore, MMP staff provided those without experience extra assistance in this area.

4.2.6 Intermediary Functions and Activities

As previously noted in Section 2.3, there are two primary types of intermediary functions: strategic and operational. This section will describe the strategic and operational activities we learned about at each in-depth site visit within each type of function.

4.2.6.1 Strategic Intermediary Activities

Strategic intermediary functions include (1) convening local leadership; (2) brokering and/or providing services to workplace partners, educational institutions, young people, and the youth-serving system; (3) ensuring the quality and impact of local efforts; and (4) promoting policies to sustain effective practices (The Intermediary Guidebook, 2000). We learned during our in-depth visits to each of the sites that both the state and local intermediaries are performing strategic functions. The following are examples of activities taking place within each type of strategic intermediary function at each of the sites.

Convening Local Leadership

An important function of intermediaries is that they are able to bring key leaders together and provide a forum for ongoing discussion and decisionmaking about common goals and concerns (The Intermediary Guidebook, 2000). We found at our in-depth site visits that demonstration projects are convening leadership both at the state and local level. Convening leadership is a crucial function on the state level, as agencies that may have the common goal of serving youth with disabilities are often “siloesd” and disconnected from one another. The same is often true at the local level, where leaders of schools, other youth providers, and employers may function in isolation.

The Colorado demonstration project awardee and primary intermediary at the state level, the Colorado Office of Workforce Development, has convened a core team as the advisory body for the demonstration project. The team includes representatives from the Colorado Community College System, the Office of Workforce Development, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the University of Colorado Health Science Center’s JFK Partners/Project WIN. The team meets at least monthly, or sometimes weekly if an important event such as a training session is being planned.

This team operates within a dense network of other state agency partners and projects. The Colorado Office of Workforce Development operates within the Colorado Workforce Incentive Grant Executive Director's Advisory Group (EDAG). The EDAG has created one umbrella entity (WIG III's Project TRAIN Coalition) to oversee, advise, and track all disability-related activities, endeavors, and projects that are taking place within the workforce development system in Colorado, including the ODEP demonstration project. The TRAIN Coalition meets on a quarterly basis and ODEP demonstration project staff members attend these meetings.

In addition to linking to disability-related initiatives, the Colorado demonstration site also has created a connection to all transition-related initiatives in Colorado. These transition initiatives include the Colorado National Leadership Summit team, which is led by the Department of Education at the state level and the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) nationally; the Social Security Administration (SSA) Demonstration Project which is led by WIN Partners locally; the Colorado Youth Forum, which is led by the Colorado Departments of Education and Labor and by DOL (ETA) nationally; the Colorado Youth Transition Coalition which is led by the Colorado Health Department locally and by Maternal and Child Health nationally, and the Systems of Care Task Force and Mental Health Transition Work Groups, led by the Colorado Mental Health and Family Services systems.

One of the primary benefits thus far of linking to this network has been the input demonstration project staff have received from key organizations in the development of the state plan (as required by the ODEP SGA for this program). In early 2005, the final draft of the plan was submitted for approval to the Colorado State Youth Council, the state workforce development system Committee of the Colorado WDC, and the Colorado Workforce Development Council. All organizations have approved the plan, and efforts have now begun to implement the plan at the state level.

With the assistance of local Youth Councils, the project's three pilot demonstration sites also have developed local plans using the same process as the state level used. Sites submitted their strategic plan to the core team and the Office of Workforce Development for approval and have now begun implementation of their plan.

The Vermont site has convened a "Steering Committee" that is also functioning as the primary state level intermediary for this demonstration. Members of the board include representatives from the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Employment and Training, Disability Law Project, Vermont Parent Information Center, Human Resources Investment Council, Department of

Education, Rutland City School District, and the Vermont Coalition of Disability Rights. The committee meets monthly and has approved a draft State Plan, as well as a Data and Evaluation Plan. The committee participated in a day-long meeting on September 6, 2005 and is reviewing project progress and plans for the upcoming year to begin to focus on sustainability.

Vermont's 11 local WIBs, designated as local intermediaries, have served a variety of strategic intermediary leadership functions, including serving as the facilitators and/or members of the local Community Oversight Team (advisory group) in each pilot project area and exploring new collaborations and partnerships through project implementation. The Vermont site utilized the resource mapping task for the demonstration not only as a data collection task, but also as an opportunity to convene stakeholders at each of the 11 local WIBs to complete the task as a group. Hundreds of workforce professionals, educators, and other youth services providers from across each local WIB region attended these day-long resource mapping meetings.

Because it was already functioning as an intermediary and partnering with other key organizations around the state, MMP was able to enlist several of these key partners for the ODEP Faith-based Mentoring demonstration project. These partners include Communities for Children, Rotary International, Maine Department of Education, Maine Department of Labor, and the Maine WIB. Since our initial site visit, MMP has also sponsored two conferences on mentoring youth with disabilities. Conference invitations were sent to 1,408 individuals and organizations around the state, including faith-based organizations, existing mentoring providers, Children's Cabinet members, state senators and representatives, VR offices, and schools. Workshops included Disability Awareness, Developing Mentoring Programs Inclusive of Youth with Disabilities and Elements of Effective Practice, Developing Successful Grant Proposals, and Building Collaborative Partnerships. Maine Mentoring Day on March 18, 2005 was celebrated at the state capitol and included a proclamation by Governor John Baldacci. The ODEP demonstration project and other MMP funding were formally announced.

Each of the subawardees for the Maine demonstration project has also worked to convene local leadership in order to implement project activities. For example, the Region V Advisory Council on Transition has convened many local individuals and organizations to serve on its board to work on transition issues for youth with disabilities. The board now includes five transition counselors from VR, as well as representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education, other special education directors and special education teachers, private community-based organizations, mental health facilities, housing institutions, and transportation services. A VR counselor

for the Division of Blind and Visually Impaired, as well as a representative from Alpha One,⁹ an accessibility agency, have also recently joined the board.

Brokering and/or Providing Services and Training

Brokering or providing services, particularly training, is a key intermediary function that is instrumental in building capacity of all stakeholders and collaborators. The Colorado core team, with the assistance of both local and state-level intermediaries, has organized and presented workshops and training sessions to intermediaries and pilot demonstration sites on a variety of subjects, including resource mapping, data collection methods, evidence-based principles, and state plan development. The local pilot demonstration sites have also provided training for parents and youth, workforce staff, and other partners on topics such as transition, mental health, disability awareness, and assistive technology.

The Vermont advisory committee held two Bidder's Conferences in July 2004 for the pilot demonstration RFP. All eleven regions brought teams that included WIBs, school personnel and other local community agency staff. At the Bidder's Conference, the RFP was reviewed and best practices were discussed including presentations on the needs of youth and employers; preliminary data collection information; transition web sites and other technical assistance; and "guideposts" from the NCWD/Y publication "Making the Connections" (NCWD/Y, 2005). In addition, Vermont created a website (<http://www.dad.state.vt.us/dvr/CareerStart/>) to share various details about the project, listed additional resources and contacts on transition issues, and provided a catalogue of project forms and other documents that project pilot demonstration sites and other partners can download as needed.

MMP has held several workshops and retreats for subaward program coordinators and key staff, as well as for adult mentors on topics such as mentoring youth, the One-Stop system, effective practices, and building collaborations. The subawardees also provide local mentoring training and orientation for both youth and adults.

⁹ Alpha One is a Center for Independent Living that offers independent living services such as information and referral, outreach, advocacy, one-to-one and group peer support, consumer-directed personal assistance services, assistive technology financing, access design, resume workshops, and independent living skills instruction. Alpha One also has an adapted driver assessment and education service that enables people to learn to drive using adaptive equipment (www.alpha-one.org).

In April, 2005 MMP met with Partners for Youth with Disabilities (the Boston, Massachusetts intermediary) to discuss collaboration for partner online training and implementation of e-mentoring for Maine youth served by the ODEP Faith-based Mentoring demonstration project.

Ensuring the Quality and Impact of Local Efforts

Ensuring the quality and impact of local efforts requires intermediaries to set goals, use data, regularly review local efforts, conduct or arrange for the conduct of evaluations, and share findings and results (The Intermediary Guidebook, 2000). Demonstration projects have instituted a variety of practices for ensuring quality and impact at the local level.

To foster quality at the local level, the core team at the Colorado site requires that each pilot demonstration site work with the local Youth Council to submit a strategic plan to the core team and the Office of Workforce Development for approval. In addition, each pilot site must enter into a contractual agreement to implement the approved plan. Each of these local plans has been modeled after the state-wide plan.

In Vermont, the Steering Committee requires each pilot demonstration site to have a local oversight committee consisting of, at minimum, the local WIB and representatives from local special education departments. The project director regularly conducts a site visit at each of the four pilot demonstration projects. During the full-day visits, the director meets with the local oversight team, local project intermediary, and coordinator.

As part of its demonstration evaluation plan, the Vermont site has also worked with VR's Planning and Evaluation Unit (PEU) to create a database in order to enter individual student-level data received from pilot demonstration projects. Using forms created by PEU, the pilot demonstration sites are reporting both quantitatively about the youth participants and qualitatively about other key elements of their projects. To supplement this information, administrative data sharing agreements are in place with the Vermont Department of Labor (DOL) and the Department of Prevention, Assistance, Transition, and Health Access (PATH). The Vermont site has also scheduled meetings with the Department of Corrections and the Department of Children and Families, and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) are being drafted as necessary.

At the Maine site, MMP meets with subawardees approximately every 6 weeks, in addition to frequent telephone and email contact. MMP also provides training to all subawardees on quality control topics such as programmatic and fiscal reporting, the process for application for continued funding, and data collection and tracking. When providing local mentoring training and orientation for youth and adults, local subawardees collect feedback from participants on the quality of the training they have received. Each subawardee provides quarterly progress reports to MMP on the number of customers served and the types of services provided.

Promoting Policies to Sustain Effective Practices

Perhaps one of the most important functions of intermediaries is promoting policies that will sustain effective practices once ODEP funding has ceased. Colorado demonstration site staff have been able to blend the activities and priorities of the state plan into the WIA 2-year plan in Colorado. This was achieved because one of the state intermediaries, the State Youth Council (with its mission and direction assigned by the WDC), has significant influence over the youth component of the WIA 2-year plan.

Vermont staff wrote the RFP for pilot demonstration projects that included requirements that applicants address the issue of sustainability. One of the pilot sites, Linking Learning to Life in Burlington (described in Section 2.5) has used a strategy of designing and brokering quality services for several other partners to sustain its activities. Such organizations have begun sustained efforts by expanding the number of partners they serve.

On the state level, the Vermont Department of Education (DOE) has been approved for funds for a State Program Improvement Grant for Children with Disabilities, and the ODEP demonstration project staff members are working with DOE on how to use these funds to support transition activities, including professional development, data collection, and increased post-secondary options for youth with disabilities. The DOE initiative will provide complementary opportunities to additional school districts to enhance and broaden the impact of the ODEP demonstration project. The intent is to offer new funds and opportunities to districts that did not receive the ODEP demonstration funds. The transition outcomes and data collection to be funded by the State Improvement Grant are parallel to, and are expected to enhance, the ODEP demonstration project.

MMP has worked with state legislators in Maine to fund youth mentoring programs. On March 31, 2005, Bill LD979 was presented to the state legislature. Youth mentors, mentoring program coordinators, and business representatives have spoken in support of the bill. If passed, the bill would provide \$500,000 to establish grant awards of \$1,000 - \$75,000 to local mentoring providers in Maine.

4.2.6.2 Operational Intermediary Activities

Operational intermediary functions incorporate the key, day-to-day functions in local communities such as working with (1) employers/workplace partners to create demand for working with youth and provide services to address the needs of the partners; (2) schools and youth-serving organizations to build staff awareness and buy-in and provide services to support school involvement; (3) youth to connect them to appropriate quality experiences and improve the quality of work-based learning; and (4) all partners to provide the communications link among partners and create a system focused on quality and continuous improvement (The Intermediary Guidebook, 2000). During our in-depth site visits we learned that these operational functions are primarily being performed by the local intermediaries, pilot demonstration sites, or subawardees at each of the demonstration projects. The following are examples of operational intermediary activities that are being performed at the three sites we visited for each of the four target audiences.

Working with Employers and Other Workplace Partners

Each pilot demonstration site in Colorado is working with employers and local businesses to become more involved with youth with disabilities. For example, Boulder has a strategic plan goal of enhancing partnerships across the workforce development system. To this end, the team has developed and surveyed community employers to determine what they view as soft skills and hard skills that employers deem essential; benefits and challenges to employers of hiring youth with disabilities; and what would prevent and/or motivate them to hire youth with disabilities. Tri-County has employers involved with the local Youth Council's planning efforts, including efforts related to ODEP demonstration project activities. The intermediary has recently worked with a large local company, Asphalt Technician, to customize local training programs and three career camps.

Tri-County has also implemented a “Grow Your Own” campaign to promote paid and unpaid work experience programs as a hiring incentive for employers. This capacity-building strategy encourages employers to find and retain qualified employees by developing the job skills of youth with disabilities from within their own companies. Depending on which WIA-funded program the youth is enrolled under—On the Job Training (OJT) or Work Training Experience (WTE)—the employer receives several benefits. The youth’s salary may be 50 to 100 percent subsidized for a period of 1 to 3 months, which is usually enough time for the youth to receive training for a position and/or receive a certificate in specific job skills. The employer also can rely on Tri-County for job coaching or other assistance for the youth should problems arise during this training period. Tri-County also assists the employer in applying for benefits, such as bonding or tax credits, to which the employer may be entitled for employing youth with disabilities. In addition to being able to train an employee for little or no cost, the employer is not obligated to hire the youth after this training period is concluded.

The Vermont demonstration project awarded a \$5,000 grant to each of the 11 local WIBs to market transition ideas and programs for youth with disabilities to employers and other community organizations. The project developed a marketing video to help each of the local WIBs in these marketing efforts. The Three River Valley local WIB coordinator in Vermont reported that he is focused on connecting more employers and local businesses with youth with disabilities. His goal is not to simply place youth in jobs or internships but to work with employers to ensure youth obtain general job readiness skills that will be transferable to many types of jobs (e.g., reliability, problem-solving, interpersonal skills). He has developed a two-page checklist (Appendix F) of these skills and is asking employers to use the checklist to coach youth workers in these specific job readiness skills and to evaluate the youth at the end of their internship according to specific skills obtained.

In Maine, Big Brothers Big Sisters and YOM have recruited 40 adult mentors from Rotary International Clubs, Chambers of Commerce, a county Sheriff’s Department, several local police departments, and area businesses. Each of the other Maine subawardees are also involving employers and local businesses in demonstration project activities, including mentoring. For example, one subawardee is holding early morning “power breakfasts” for Chamber of Commerce members, employers, educators, police officers, and others. The breakfasts last about an hour and a quarter, and pilot demonstration project staff provide information on mentoring programs, the process of mentoring youth with disabilities, and how to become a mentor. The Region V Advisory Council on Transition pilot site held an awards breakfast to honor employers and educators who had been involved in the pilot project. Youth mentees

and their parents also attended, and the youth presented five area employers with plaques to thank them for serving as mentors. The pilot site plans to hold the awards breakfast twice yearly.

Also in Maine, the Executive Director of Ethel's Tree of Life (another subawardee) reported that local businesses have been very involved in her program. They raised money for a 15-passenger van, and one local business provided a new windshield. Other businesses are providing mechanical work, body repairs, and painting for the van. The Executive Director has made additional presentations to local Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs, Kiwanis Clubs, and other local businesses to encourage them to become involved with her program as mentors. For example, she recently recruited four people from Liberty Mutual Insurance Company for her next round of mentor training.

Working with Schools and Youth-serving Organizations

Each of the demonstration sites has made significant efforts to reach out to schools and other community organizations to become more involved in serving youth with disabilities. For example, the Boulder, Colorado pilot demonstration site's plan includes extensive outreach to the school system. A current concern the pilot site is addressing is that the local high schools, which are able to arrange some work experiences and internships to youth with disabilities during the academic year, lose contact with youth during summer months. The schools have asked the Boulder site to provide paid internships through the demonstration project, although recruitment of youth participants is still done through the transition program at Boulder Valley Schools. The Boulder pilot project has also established a partnership with the ODEP-funded High School/High Tech program at Boulder Valley Schools.

All pilot demonstration sites in Vermont are also working so that schools and other community organizations will become more involved in serving youth with disabilities. For example, the Lake Champlain Career Start pilot demonstration project in Burlington has 17 partners within the local demonstration project, including high schools, colleges, and other community based organizations. The project has expanded a pre-existing high-school-based transition program called Linking Learning to Life and plans to further expand its school-based VR model to three other local high schools. The project also has subcontracted for some vocational training services with "Recycle North," an agency similar to Goodwill that has a retail outlet and provides jobs and training to persons with special needs, including youth with disabilities.

We were told that subawardees within the Maine demonstration project have made significant efforts to reach out to schools and their local communities. For example, the Region V Advisory Council on Transition has made progress in obtaining buy-in from public schools for mentoring programs for youth with disabilities. Having started a mentoring program in one school, the Region V Advisory Council has now expanded the mentoring program to 11 other high schools within their tri-county area.

Working with Youth

In addition to building capacity in the community with employers, schools, and other service-providing organizations, all three demonstration projects we visited are working operationally as intermediaries to provide services directly to youth within the five Guideposts for Success (NCWD/Y, 2005) that have been endorsed by ODEP. The following are examples of the services that these demonstration projects are providing to youth with disabilities within each of the Guideposts: School-Based Preparatory Experiences; Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences; Youth Development and Leadership; Connecting Activities; and Family Involvement and Supports.

School-Based Preparatory Experiences. The first Guidepost—School-Based Preparatory Experiences—acknowledges the importance of all youth participating in “education programs that are grounded in standards, clear performance expectations, and graduation exit options” (NCWD/Y, 2005). Within each of the three-state intermediary projects we visited, transition specialists and special educators are working with youth with disabilities to provide a wide variety of school-to-career and technical education programs and services. For example, as of June 30, 2005, 48 youth with disabilities in Vermont had received services including work readiness training, academic tutoring, mentoring, and workplace visits. The Three River Valley Career Start pilot demonstration project in Vermont is targeting students age 16 with emotional and behavioral challenges. The goal is to move from a case management model to one of service coordination where youth with disabilities and their families have a single contact to identify supports, have access to sufficient services, feel included in planning, and experience self-determination. River Valley Career Start is piloting this service coordination model of implementing transition plans in four high schools and one technical center. The pilot site has hired a fulltime service coordinator to work with schools on transition planning, better coordinate regional youth services, and provide benefits and other assistance advice and planning to youth and their families. The pilot has also contracted with Vermont Adult Learning to deliver a curriculum entitled “Learning to Make a Livable

Wage.” All youth in the Three River pilot project will have a mentor, and their families will be offered the services of a family resource consultant.

The Randolph pilot site in Vermont is focusing on youth with emotional and behavioral disturbances. The decision to focus on this group came from the resource mapping work done within the community and is supported by State Act 264, passed in Vermont in 1988. This law directed the development of a comprehensive, integrated system of care for children and adolescents experiencing severe emotional disturbance and their families. It mandates and implements principles of interagency collaboration, coordination, and parent involvement at all levels of decisionmaking. In addition to providing a definition of severe emotional disturbance, it mandates the establishment of state and local interagency teams and includes an advisory committee to advise the commissioners of the Department of Education, the Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, and the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services on the development of a comprehensive, integrated system of care. In compliance with these mandates, Randolph County established an intra-agency team of partners to serve adolescents with severe emotional disturbance and their families. The county also recently established an alternative school for youth with severe emotional disturbance that included a vocational component. Through the pilot demonstration, the Randolph site plans to expand this alternative educational and vocational program to all high schools within the district.

A 1-year project based in Springfield, Vermont, is also focusing on youth with emotional and behavioral disabilities. Because of what was learned through resource mapping, staff decided to create a program for these youth at the local technology center. The program includes work on career planning and training, job readiness skills, and conflict resolution. Approximately 12 youth are enrolled in the program each academic year and then are moved into summer employment.

Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences. Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences (Guidepost Number 2) consists of career assessment, structured exposure to postsecondary education and other life-long learning opportunities, exposure to career opportunities that lead to a living wage (including site visits, job shadowing, on-the-job training experiences that are paid and unpaid), training in “soft skills” (i.e., job-seeking and basic workplace skills) (NCWD/Y, 2005).

A primary focus of the State Intermediary pilot demonstration sites has been to provide career preparation and work-based learning experiences for youth with disabilities. For example, as of

June 30, 2005, 23 youth with disabilities in Colorado had received services through the pilot demonstration sites, including 12 who have obtained part-time employment through internships or other positions. As previously mentioned, several internships were made through the Boulder Workforce Development Region pilot demonstration site. This internship program is a partnership between the local Youth Council and the local school district. As part of the internship program, youth received structured soft skills training. According to interviewees, through this initiative, the Boulder pilot demonstration site has developed a strong relationship with the school district's special education program. Staff follow up each intern's progress, provide documentation regarding the intern's experience, and make recommendations for the youth's "next steps."

The Bennington pilot demonstration site in Vermont has created TEAM, a Transition Employment and Mentoring club of students aged 19-22 who meet weekly to develop their employability skills and provide peer support. In addition, the pilot site created a Transition Academy that will offer community-based worksite training opportunities for students who are learning impaired, learning disabled, emotionally disturbed, and/or health-impaired, culminating with sustained job placement in their senior year.

The Community Practice Lab (Washington Central/Montpelier), a 1-year pilot demonstration project in Vermont, is a small nonresidential center for youth with severe cognitive disabilities. The lab was provided funding to add recreational, computer training, and employment programs for youth participants. We were told that these new programs were so well-received that the local school board has decided to fund them at the center next year.

Youth Development and Leadership. According to the third Guidepost for Success (NCWD/Y, 2005), specific activities are required so that all youth (including those with disabilities) will be able "to control and direct their own lives based on informed decisions." Such activities include mentoring (with adults and peers), exposure to role models in a variety of situations, self-advocacy and conflict resolution training, exposure to personal leadership and youth development activities, and opportunities to use leadership skills and build self-esteem.

The Maine Faith-based Mentoring demonstration project is providing a wide variety of youth development and leadership activities through the adult and peer-to-peer mentoring programs offered by its four subawardees. As of June 30, 2005, 139 youth with disabilities have been matched in

one-to-one mentoring relationships through the Maine demonstration project (103 youth are in peer mentoring relationships, and 36 youth have been matched with trained and screened adult mentors).

As noted above, one subawardee has developed an arrangement between Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) of Oxford and Androscoggin Counties and Youth Outreach Ministries, Inc. (YOM) in Oxford County. YOM, a faith-based organization, received the subaward and subcontracted with BBBS as a mentoring consultant for services including recruitment, screening, matching, and training of both adult mentors and youth mentees.

YOM operates His Place, a nonprofit 501(c) 3 multid denominational youth center and is recruiting youth mentees with disabilities ages 16-24 for the demonstration project. BBBS recruits mentors for the demonstration project from area businesses and the community at large. Mentees are recruited from His Place, high schools in the three-county service area, and the community. BBBS is on the YOM Board of Directors.

The Executive Director of YOM reported that his organization has always been involved in mentoring activities, although he never used the word “mentoring” to describe what they do. Rather, he simply described this activity as “building relationships” with youth. He noted that his philosophy is “rules without relationships lead to rebellion” and that it is not useful for adults to try to work with youth on job readiness or other transition issues without first creating an overall atmosphere of trust and understanding.

During our site visit, staff from both BBBS and YOM described the ways in which each organization made use of the other’s expertise. YOM staff reported that the subaward has helped the organization to expand its mentoring and work readiness programs. YOM is using BBBS’s extensive experience in recruitment, screening, matching, and training of both adult mentors and youth mentees. Because BBBS is well-known in the community, both BBBS and YOM staff indicated that this provided additional credibility to the demonstration project mentee and mentor recruiting efforts. Through YOM, BBBS has been able to expand its expertise in working with youth with disabilities and faith-based organizations, and BBBS said that it is now more likely to recruit youth with disabilities into its program.

Sharing of mentee and mentor candidates has begun to occur between the two organizations. BBBS reported that its own attempts to recruit mentors for the demonstration project from the faith-based community were not very successful during the first year and it, therefore, relied on YOM in this area.

BBBS reported that it has been much more successful recruiting mentors within other community agencies and organizations, such as the police and sheriff’s departments and the Chamber of Commerce. Approximately 40 mentors were recruited by BBBS within the first year. BBBS staff members reported that their success in recruiting mentors actually became a bit of a problem because there were not enough youth right away to whom they could be matched. Many of the mentors subsequently waited for a mentee to be matched to them.

BBBS typically serves younger youth ages 6-14, but permission was obtained from its leadership to serve older youth for the demonstration project. Almost all staff we interviewed during the in-depth site visit indicated that the ODEP mentoring program should have targeted youth much younger, even as young as 11 or 12 years of age. Interviewees reported that it is much more effective to begin mentoring youth in their preteen years, before they have solidified their social networks or have begun to experience the many difficulties of adolescence and early adulthood. According to interviewees, in later years, these youth will, unfortunately, be less receptive to working with a mentor and, therefore, less likely to receive needed support and guidance from adults in their community.

In addition to the Friday evening program at His Place, YOM holds a separate Group Mentoring meeting every Thursday night where mentors and mentees can share a meal, participate in light recreation, and work on work readiness skills. One of the first tasks on which the mentees and mentors worked together was a weekly discussion, chapter by chapter, of the book “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People” by Stephen R. Covey. The local One-Stop Career Center has also helped YOM to install Choices[®] software¹⁰ on the computers at His Place, which youth are using to explore career interests and search for jobs. YOM has also collaborated with another subawardee—Region V Advisory Council on Transition—on some activities. YOM, for example, showed youth with disabilities in Region V how to raise money selling pizzas.

The second Maine subawardee, Region V Advisory Council on Transition, is one of six regional boards in Maine serving as an advisory council on transition planning for youth with disabilities. Under the umbrella of the Maine Committee on Transition/Maine Transition Network, each of the six regional boards is charged with implementing a network of transition planning coordination services for youth with disabilities, age 14-26, who are in transition from school to community. Such transition services for students with disabilities are required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

¹⁰Education and career planning software (www.bridges.com).

(IDEA) and are to be a part of every student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), beginning at age 14.

Region V Advisory Council on Transition has 20 high schools within its local area, as well as other private and home schools. During our initial site visit, we learned that Region V began its work on the demonstration project with a key program already in place, Youth Mentors, Inc. This program was begun by a group of 13 youth who wanted to work together to mentor each other on progress with their IEPs and other transition issues. Through the ODEP Faith-based Mentoring demonstration project, the Region V program has grown so that 11 schools now have incorporated the program. The program approaches mentoring youth with disabilities on three levels. Adults are recruited as program anchors in each of the participating high schools and serve as small group mentors to youth with disabilities within the school. These youth form the "center tier" of the program as both mentees and fully screened and trained peer mentors to other youth with disabilities, ages 16-24. Mentors and mentees are recruited from a number of high schools throughout the three-county service area and from the communities at large.

Adult anchors are paid a stipend of \$50 a month. The adults provide at least one hour of peer mentoring per week, as well as transportation and chaperoning of youth to larger monthly events on transition issues and career planning. To ensure youth safety, most of the adult anchors have had a prior connection with the school system as a teacher, therapist, or other professional, and have had a background check. Other adults have been referred through the VR system.

Region V staff reported that each of the 11 schools that have incorporated the mentoring program are implementing it in different ways. Some use it as an after-school program; some use it during the school day when youth are working on their career portfolios with their peer advisor or as part of their Life Skills curriculum class; and some have made the program more casual so that mentors and mentees meet informally in study hall or in their job clubs. Region V staff explained that the key to getting the schools more involved was to be flexible and allow each school to incorporate the mentoring program in the way it best works for the school.

During our site visit, we interviewed a Department of Labor/Vocational Rehabilitation transition counselor, as well as the coordinator for the Region V Advisory Council on Transition (who had moved to the council from her previous position as the WIB State Youth Transition Coordinator). The Department of Labor/Vocational Rehabilitation is a strong partner of Youth Mentor's, Inc. and was instrumental in beginning the program. The agency was interested in the ODEP Mentoring demonstration

program because it wanted to expand mentoring services from the original 13 youth members to all high schools in Region V. According to our interviewees, a strong relationship has also developed between Youth Mentors, Inc. and the One-Stop Career Center, as VR is co-located in the One-Stop Career Center. Youth Mentors, Inc. holds meetings at the One-Stop Career Center and youth are familiar with other services provided by the center.

We also interviewed staff from the third subawardee, the Downeast Regional Transition Board. Downeast received its subaward in January 2005 and, at the time of our site visit approximately 7 months later, it had enrolled about 28 youth mentees and 15 mentors into the program. Like the Region V Advisory Council on Transition, Downeast is also a regional organization of the Maine Committee on Transition and provides technical support to school systems on transition issues. This subawardee created the Downeast Youth Leadership group that works with youth in leadership, self-advocacy, and transition skills. According to those we interviewed, the subaward was particularly important to the Downeast region because it has allowed the organization to extend mentoring services to many more rural youth. Some youth live more than 100 miles away from their mentors and are without transportation. The subaward has allowed the subawardee to pay travel expenses for some of these youth, as well as stipends to adult mentors who also provide transportation to youth mentees.

Most of the youth were recruited through special education programs in the high schools. Mentors were recruited through a wide variety of community contacts. Because the communities in this region are small and close-knit, we were told that some of the mentor candidates did not understand the need for going through the security and background checks required in order to become a mentor. However, it was also noted that this concern did not prevent candidates from agreeing to be mentors.

In addition to working with schools, the Downeast Regional Transition Board collaborates with other organizations such as Jobs for Maine Graduates and the Department of Health and Human Services Foster Care Program, which also has a youth leadership advisory group. The Board's offices are located in the local One-Stop Career Center, which has become a partner of this subawardee as well. The One-Stop Career Center recently collaborated with the board to present a personal budgeting workshop to youth in area high schools. For youth who have graduated from the high school mentoring program, the Board has created an additional mentoring program at Washington County Community College.

The fourth Maine subawardee is Ethel's Tree of Life, an educational center located in the town of Eliot that provides transition, work skills, and life skills to youth and young adults with special

needs and/or disabilities. Ethel's Tree of Life was founded in January 2003 and received 501(c) 3 status with the IRS in May, 2004. The subawardee obtains most of its funding from grassroots fundraisers. Most members on the Board of Directors are familiar with transition issues for youth with disabilities. Some members have children with special needs or disabilities, and some have educational background in these same areas.

The Executive Director reported that mentor candidates are first invited to orientation meetings in order to learn more about the mentoring program and how they might be able to be matched with a youth. Potential mentors are also fingerprinted and pay \$18.00 for a background check. After the background check is complete and the mentor has attended about six mentor meetings, the mentor is then allowed to participate in community-based activities with mentees who have obtained parental permission. Staff members talk to or email each mentor every week in order to monitor activities and discuss any problems that may have occurred. In all, 16 youth are being mentored through this program.

Connecting Activities. Connecting activities are those activities that enable youth to be connected to services and supports that will help them “gain access to chosen post-school options” (e.g., mental and physical health services; transportation; tutoring; financial planning and management; post-program supports) (NCWD/Y, 2005). The State Intermediary pilot demonstration sites are working with youth with disabilities to connect them to such programs, services, activities, and supports.

For example, the Tri-County Workforce Development Region pilot demonstration site in Colorado has implemented a 10-week independent living course for youth with disabilities in partnership with the local community college, the schools, the Health Education Center, and Junior Achievement. Instruction included job readiness, career exploration, and job placement.

Pilot demonstration staff members at the Southcentral Subregion – Colorado Rural Consortium site are also implementing individualized and joint-agency transition plans for youth through the local TIGERS team. The pilot project is using blending and braiding of resources and eliminating duplication of services for the San Luis Valley's programs on transitioning youth with disabilities. The Southcentral Subregion – Colorado Rural Consortium is reaching out to youth with disabilities and is working to ensure these youth receive all needed services without duplication of effort from various local providers.

The Bennington pilot demonstration site in Vermont has developed a College Start Program that includes a three-course program to encourage post-secondary education for students with learning and other cognitive disabilities, as well as a Skills Certificate Program that offers basic skills competencies for students with learning and emotional disabilities who cannot enroll in regular programs at the local Career Development Center.

Transportation, a vital issue identified at several demonstration projects (Elinson et al., 2005), is being addressed at the Southcentral Subregion – Colorado Rural Consortium pilot demonstration in Colorado by obtaining in-kind resources from the local mental health center to assist youth with transportation. We were told that agency practitioners and family members are now having to do much less travel to acquire services for youth in the Southcentral Subregion – Colorado Rural Consortium region. However, all ODEP demonstration projects reported difficulties regarding transportation, especially since many of the pilot demonstration project activities are taking place in rural and semirural areas where public transport and other transportation services were not available. For example, the Maine demonstration site reported that transportation continues to be the second major concern, after funding, for its subawardees. Interviewees reported that most mentees or peer mentors have working parents who cannot bring them to activities. Late route buses are not an option in all school districts. Allowing mentors to transport mentees adds additional liability risks to the program and incurs the additional cost of driving record checks. Public transport is limited, and transportation coordinated through services such as United We Ride are usually limited to regular business hours. For those programs using peer mentors, we were told that it is very expensive and time consuming to coordinate youth participants who are not in the public school systems (e.g., home scholars). Rising fuel costs have further contributed to these problems.

Family Involvement and Supports. To ensure that all youth have knowledgeable parents, family members, and other caring adults taking an active role in post-school outcomes, the fifth Guidepost for Success calls for activities consisting of provision of information on the youth's disability; knowledge of rights and responsibilities under various disability-related legislation; knowledge and access to programs, services, supports, and accommodations; and an understanding of how individualized planning tools can help youth in achieving their goals and objectives for transition (NCWD/Y, 2005). We were told at in-depth site visits that pilot demonstration projects are involving parents, family members, and other caring adults of youth with disabilities in several aspects of their projects.

The Maine site has provided training to parents, such as a training session on how to prepare IEPs for the most academically challenged youth. The Maine site is also regularly collecting feedback

from parents, as well as youth mentees and mentors, about its program. The Maine site is using the Transition Mentoring Program for Maine Youth feedback tools to collect this information, and this feedback will be used to improve mentoring programs.

Colorado has involved parents in an advisory capacity, as well as in other activities. Parents participated in focus groups that were part of this site's statewide resource mapping tasks. Focus groups were also held with state and local agency staff, youth, and employer representatives. The demonstration site advisory group used the findings from focus groups to develop its state plan. Parents have since joined the project advisory group. Parents were also asked to become members of the Colorado National Leadership Summit Team (led by the state Department of Education and the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET)). The Colorado demonstration project is working closely with this team, (which is using the results of the resource mapping in the development of its own action plan), to align efforts and ensure there is no duplication of efforts between the two plans.

Some of the Colorado pilot demonstration sites, including the Southcentral Subregion – Colorado Rural Consortium, have provided training to parents on transition and community resources. Project staff have also made other presentations and distributed packets of information regarding transition services available for youth with disabilities to parents and youth, including foster care parents.

As part of the response to its pilot demonstration site RFP, Vermont project staff asked bidders to indicate what gaps in services were identified as a result of resource mapping. Among several gaps, the Bennington pilot demonstration site noted that there were no programs in the region for parents on transition issues for youth with disabilities. Likewise, at the Springfield pilot demonstration site, it was reported that parents of youth with disabilities receive little support, especially parents of youth with severe emotional and behavioral disabilities.

To provide more support to both youth and their families, the Springfield pilot project's local Project Coordinator now participates in IEP meetings, and individual transition plans are then revised. The Project Coordinator also makes regularly scheduled home visits and referrals to appropriate services as needed.

All System Partners

The above sections provided examples of operational activities targeted at employers, schools, youth-serving organizations, and youth (within the five Guideposts for Success). The final target of operational intermediary activities concentrates on the system as a whole in order to “foster a system that focuses on quality and continuous improvement” (The Intermediary Guidebook, 2000).

At the Colorado site, the project evaluators have provided technical assistance to pilot demonstration sites to ensure that they have a strategic plan and an evaluation plan in place. Each pilot site meets monthly with its partners and reports on progress. When the pilot sites provide training to parents or other stakeholders, the participants are asked to complete an evaluation form.

The Lake Champlain Career Start Demonstration project in Burlington, Vermont, meets monthly with all partners to “collectively talk about what works, what doesn’t, how to fix it, how to make it better...”. The pilot demonstration project also regularly provides technical assistance to its partners on a variety of matters, including labor law, disability awareness, and documenting project progress.

The Maine demonstration project has developed a customer feedback form, and the subawardees have distributed this form to program youth, their parents/guardians, and adult mentors to complete. Once all forms are returned and the data are summarized, this feedback will be used to improve the Maine Mentoring demonstration project and its efforts.

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5. DISCUSSION

All Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) demonstration programs use aspects of an intermediary approach to connect organizations and agencies at all levels in meeting educational and employment goals on behalf of people with disabilities. The overriding question in the context of this issue analysis is whether, to what extent, and how the intermediary approach is being used in youth demonstration programs and whether it is effective in creating systems change to better serve youth with disabilities.

We posed four questions this issue analysis would address:

- What characterizes the intermediary approach?
- What are ODEP's requirements with regard to the use of an intermediary approach by demonstration programs?
- What are demonstration project sites' experiences thus far in using an intermediary approach?
- What can be said to date on the effectiveness of using an intermediary approach, particularly with regard to systems change?

The following sections provide a discussion of these questions.

5.1 Characterization of the Intermediary Approach

A number of sources provided a characterization of intermediaries and the intermediary approach. Solicitations for Grant Applications (SGAs)—and by extension, ODEP—described intermediaries as convening and brokering agents. The groups they convene for the purpose of the ODEP demonstration programs consist of a variety of organizations and agencies, including those related to business, vocational rehabilitation (VR) and other workplace partners, government, transportation, and health and other service providers. Intermediaries can be public, private, faith-based, secular, educational, or business-oriented. The only requirement is that intermediary organizations support the goals of youth with disabilities and the business community.

INet, an organization that assists in and fosters the use of intermediaries, characterizes intermediaries as organizations committed and structured to support collaboration among community resources that are dedicated to promoting opportunities for youth with disabilities. The goal of intermediaries, according to Wills and Leucking (2003), is to connect job seekers and job providers. Instead of creating additional community resources, however, these authors support the use of intermediaries to identify the community resources that already exist and bring them together in a coordinated fashion.

In much of the literature describing intermediaries and the intermediary approach, there appears to be agreement on the two types of intermediary functions—strategic and operational. Those intermediaries working at the strategic level address four key activities: (1) convening local leadership; (2) brokering and/or providing services to key stakeholders; (3) ensuring quality and impact; and (4) promoting policies to sustain effective practices. Operationally, four key stakeholders have been identified for four key stakeholders: (1) employers/workplace partners to create demand for working with youth and provide services to address the needs of the partners; (2) educational institutions to build staff awareness and buy-in and provide services to support school involvement; (3) youth to connect them to appropriate quality experiences and improve the quality of work-based learning; and (4) the youth-serving system to provide the communications link among partners and create a system focused on quality and continuous improvement. All activities in an intermediary approach—whether they are successful practices described in the published literature or findings from our in-depth site visits—are geared toward carrying out activities within these strategic and operational functions.

Staff and partners at the three demonstration projects we visited also had their own characterizations of intermediaries and the intermediary approach. Phrases we heard were:

- Raise awareness;
- Bring local issues to the attention of state-level decisionmakers;
- Are open to working with different community partners;
- Do not have narrow special interests;
- Focus on common goals;
- Are partnerships in action;
- Help to define roles and responsibilities within a partnership;

- Play the “in-between” role;
- Collect and distribute information; and
- Provide organizations with a network of other like-minded providers.

These characterizations extend strategically and operationally to a variety of partners at the state and local levels.

5.2 ODEP’s Requirements

SGAs for the two intermediary-related youth programs not only defined the term “intermediary,” but also specifically set out some of the strategic and operational functional requirements that are consistent with the intermediary literature. For example, State Intermediary projects were required to conduct resource mapping to assess their youth service delivery infrastructure in light of evidence-based operating principles on transition (DOL, 2003b). A second requirement was to develop a 5-year cross-agency plan addressing transition outcomes for youth with disabilities through the use of blending and/or braiding of Federal, state, and community resources, as well as local intermediary organizations. Although all State Intermediary demonstration projects chose to conduct their resource mapping differently, the result was much the same for each project. The resource mapping process that was used helped each project to determine the nature and extent of all available assets and services at the state and local level for the purpose of assisting youth with disabilities to achieve educational and employment outcomes. The development of state plans helped to identify common goals for all stakeholders and identify activities that would facilitate making these goals operational.

The Faith-based Mentoring demonstration program is the epitome of the intermediary approach itself. The grant recipient of each Faith-based Mentoring project is considered the key strategic intermediary that will identify and convene leadership at the state and local levels, broker and provide services, ensure the quality and impact of local efforts, and promote policies of sustainability. The key purpose of this program is to “build the capacity and knowledge of faith-based and community organizations to better meet the needs of young people with disabilities through mentoring” (DOL, 2003a), and the strategy for fulfilling this purpose is an intermediary approach.

During in-depth site visits, we found that each of the demonstration project sites had made significant progress meeting ODEP’s intermediary requirements. The two State Intermediary program

sites in Vermont and Colorado subawarded a substantial portion of their funds to intermediary organizations. These intermediaries were also meeting the key strategic functions identified in the literature by assisting the site on both the state and local level in assessing and evaluating the performance and impact of demonstration site activities and providing necessary information and training. As directed by the SGA, these two sites also had made significant progress in conducting resource mapping to assess their youth service delivery infrastructure, developing a statewide plan, and identifying and implementing local pilot demonstration projects. Though it is somewhat early in the demonstration program for significant sustainability progress to be seen, both sites have also begun to work toward leveraged Federal, state, and local public sector resources to sustain demonstration project activities.

According to the SGA for the Faith-based Mentoring demonstration project, the intermediary was required to subaward a large portion of the ODEP funds to local faith-based and other community organizations. During our in-depth site visit, we learned that the Maine demonstration project had subawarded funds to four local organizations to conduct mentoring activities. In compliance with the SGA, the Maine intermediary, MMP, has provided both technical and administrative support for the subawardees. MMP is also functioning as an intermediary by building the capacity and knowledge of faith-based and other community organizations to provide mentoring services to youth with disabilities (using training most often to do so), and helping these organizations establish strong linkages with local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) and other Workforce Investment Act- (WIA-) funded programs.

Other than outlining these general program elements, ODEP's SGAs left the specific intermediary approaches that could be used up to each project. In our review of these projects over the past 2 years, we have, therefore, observed each of the demonstration sites approaching the selection and utilization of intermediaries in a variety of ways. As described in Section 4.1.1.2 of this report, some sites had already decided who their intermediaries would be by the time their project was funded. Other sites were a year or more into project implementation before defining what the role of the intermediaries would be. Some sites have intermediaries that focus primarily on state-level work, and some focus primarily on local-level work. Some are working with only one or two intermediary organizations in their program; others have many. The types of organizations selected to serve as intermediaries include state agencies, Youth Councils, local WIBs, transition councils, nonprofit national and state-wide organizations, and local community and faith-based organizations.

5.3 Experiences in the Intermediary Approach Thus Far

Interviews at in-depth site visits have provided numerous examples of experiences with the intermediary approach. These examples demonstrate a clear understanding of the intermediary approach, both at the strategic and operational level, at these three demonstration projects.

At the strategic level, these demonstration projects are using an intermediary approach to:

- Bring together youth transition stakeholders at both the state and local level to plan and implement project activities;
- Broker and provide training to project and system partners, youth with disabilities, and their parents and family members on such topic areas as resource mapping, evidence-based principles, state plan development, needs of youth and employers, Guideposts for Success, transition, mentoring youth, the One-Stop Career Center system, and building collaborations;
- Provide oversight to ensure a high level of quality and impact by requiring an approved strategic plan, meeting with pilot demonstration projects in person on a regular basis, collecting data on individual outcomes of students, and requiring quarterly progress reports; and
- Develop and implement practices that will sustain project activities through expanding the number of project partners, obtaining additional funding, and advocating for legislation that provides grant awards to local mentoring providers.

On an operational, day-to-day level, most project activities are taking place locally—with employers and other workplace partners, schools and youth-serving organizations, youth, and all partners together. In the context of working with employers and other workplace partners, pilot demonstration sites (in the State Intermediary projects) and subawardees (in the Faith-based Mentoring project) are showing creativity by providing employers with incentives for hiring youth with disabilities, developing a marketing video for local WIBs, developing a checklist for employers to use to evaluate youth at the end of internships; and bringing employers together to provide them with useful information on mentoring and honor them for their efforts.

All three demonstration projects are working at the local level to improve transition activities at schools. Moreover, work with youth shows a strong appreciation for the Guideposts for Success (NCWD/Y, 2005) that were endorsed by ODEP. Youth participants in these three projects are given:

- School-based preparatory experiences, including work readiness training, academic tutoring, mentoring, workplace visits, and instruction in conflict resolution;
- Career preparation and work-based learning experiences, consisting of internships; a transition, employment, and mentoring club to develop employability skills and provide peer support; and a small nonresidential center that provides recreation, computer training, and employment programs for youth participants;
- Youth development and leadership for youth with disabilities through a wide variety of approaches to adult and peer mentoring;
- Connecting activities that provide youth participants with a 10-week independent living course, individualized and joint-agency transition plans, and transportation through the local mental health center; and
- Family involvement consisting of training sessions on preparation of Individual Education Plans (IEPs), transition, and community resources; parent focus groups, and regularly scheduled home visits.

These examples are testimony to the wide variety of strategies that can be implemented within an intermediary approach.

5.4 Effectiveness of the Intermediary Approach

Although there is extensive published literature on descriptions of intermediaries and recommendations for success, Westat's review of the intermediary literature was unable to identify studies that evaluated the effectiveness of the intermediary approach or tested hypotheses on effective intermediary models. Nevertheless, several literature sources identified examples of outputs and outcomes derived from an intermediary approach (Section 2.6), and our own in-depth site visits identified intermediary processes and some outputs and outcomes that bode well for systems change.

The following are some examples of systems change reported on at in-depth site visits within the systems change focus areas of building capacity, coordination, consumer choice and employer support, and evaluation of new practices (Westat, 2003).

5.4.1 Building Capacity

The capacity to achieve positive educational and employment outcomes includes changing perceptions, attitudes, and understanding of the issues related to disability, as well as improving the access and availability of people with disabilities to different types of resources (e.g., funds, staff, time, resources, policies, procedures) and services (Westat, 2003). Even after only a year and a half of operation, a number of capacity-building outcomes could be identified at in-depth site visits.

- All three demonstration projects have brokered and provided training to state-level and local intermediaries on a variety of important topic areas (e.g., resource mapping, data collection methods, evidence-based principles, e-mentoring). This training has enabled many organizations and individuals, including youth with disabilities and their parents, to become knowledgeable about services and resources available to youth with disabilities as they transition from school to work. Many provider organizations who received this training are now serving youth with disabilities, where previously they had not. By learning about the Guideposts for Success, both state and local agencies are now more aware of the support youth with disabilities need for a successful transition.
- Under these demonstration programs, pre-existing high-school-based transition and mentoring programs have been expanded to more schools and educational programs and are serving a larger number of youth with disabilities as a result. The Lake Champlain Career Start pilot demonstration project in Vermont and Maine's Region V Advisory Council on Transition's mentoring programs are important examples of these efforts.

5.4.2 Coordination

One of the barriers to positive employment outcomes among people with disabilities has been the lack of coordinated employment services for people with disabilities (i.e., services that are well-integrated) (Westat, 2003). At the three demonstration projects we visited, there was accumulating evidence of some of these barriers being broken down.

- The three demonstration sites have convened key organizations on both the state and local level to begin more efficiently and effectively to coordinate services for youth with disabilities. One major result of this improved coordination has been the development of a cross-agency multiyear state plan to improve transition outcomes for youth with disabilities in Colorado and Vermont. These plans are also being used to support broader educational, vocational rehabilitation, and workforce development

plans, such as in Colorado where the activities and priorities of its state plan have been blended into the WIA 2-year state plan. Colorado is also coordinating demonstration project activities with other transition and disability-related initiatives at the state level to blend and braid resources for the benefit of youth with disabilities.

- Rather than to simply use the resource mapping task as a data collection exercise, both Colorado and Vermont used the resource mapping task to further build relationships within their state and to communicate with customers and stakeholders. Focus groups were held with both youth customers and employer customers in Colorado as part of their resource mapping work. The Vermont site convened the leadership of youth provider organizations at each of the LWIBs to conduct the resource mapping, facilitating greater communication and coordination of services for youth with disabilities.
- The ODEP demonstration projects have brought together two major systems—the education system and the One-Stop/WIA system—to better serve youth with disabilities in the future. On the state level, for example, the Vermont Department of Education (DOE) has been approved for funds for a State Program Improvement Grant for Children with Disabilities, and ODEP demonstration staff members are working with DOE on how to use these funds to support transition activities, including those for youth with disabilities. On the local level, examples of coordination include Boulder, Colorado, where the One-Stop Career Center is now working with the local high schools to provide internships for youth with disabilities. In Maine, a strong relationship has also developed between Youth Mentors, Inc., a high school-based mentoring program, and the local One-Stop Career Center. Youth Mentors, Inc. holds meetings at the One-Stop Career Center and the youth have learned about other services provided by the center.
- New organizations have been created to better serve youth with disabilities, such as in the Tri-County area in Colorado, which has established a transition subcommittee within the Youth Council to support the activities of the pilot demonstration activities and related initiatives.

5.4.3 Consumer Choice and Employer Support

Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach, demonstration projects are being encouraged to customize (i.e., individualize) their programs and services in ways that will assist people with disabilities in seeking, obtaining, and retaining employment, while at the same time supporting the needs of the business community (Westat, 2003). Individualized transition approaches in collaboration with the employer community are taking place at all youth demonstration projects.

For example,

- As of June 30, 2005 (the end date of Quarterly Reports we reviewed), many youth with disabilities who had not previously received transition services through One-Stop Career Centers and other providers have been provided such services. This includes:
 - Colorado, which has provided services to 23 youth, including 12 who have obtained part-time employment through internships or other positions;
 - Vermont, which has served 48 youth with disabilities with work readiness training, academic tutoring, mentoring, and workplace visits; and
 - Maine, where the subawardees continue to provide mentoring opportunities for youth. A total of 139 youth with disabilities have been matched in one-to-one mentoring relationships (103 peer mentors and 36 with trained and screened adult mentors).
- Each of the demonstration sites has also worked to involve both employers and youth customers in other workforce development activities so that their needs can be better understood and addressed. At the Colorado site, for example, youth and their parents have joined program advisory groups, and the Boulder pilot site has surveyed employers to learn more about the qualities they deem essential for potential youth employees.

5.4.4 Evaluation of New Practices

An important hallmark of a demonstration program is the testing and evaluation of new ideas so they can be disseminated more widely. The following are some examples of evaluation tapped from project Quarterly Reports and in-depth site visits.

- All sites are using a variety of evaluation methods within their programs so that they can create a system of continuous improvement for services for youth with disabilities. For example, to evaluate local activities, the Maine site requires monthly reports from its subawardees and also meets with subawardees periodically in person and by telephone and email. The local Maine subawardees also collect feedback from participants on the quality of the training they have received on mentoring and orientation for youth and adults. The Vermont project steering committee requires each pilot demonstration site to have a local oversight committee, and the project director conducts regular visits to each of the sites.
- The State Intermediary sites have also contracted with an external evaluator to examine all aspects of their programs at both the state and local levels. At the time of our site visits and review of Quarterly reports, none of the sites had obtained results from their evaluations.

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6. CONCLUSIONS

In the context of the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) youth demonstration programs, intermediaries are defined as convening and brokering agents that exist for the purpose of improving educational and employment outcomes for youth with disabilities while at the same time advancing the goals of the business community. Intermediaries convene and broker with a variety of organizations and agencies at the local, state, and Federal level, including businesses and business organizations, vocational rehabilitation and other workplace partners, government, transportation systems, and health and other service providers. Intermediaries fulfill four basic strategic functions (convening local leadership, brokering and/or providing services to key stakeholders, ensuring quality and impact, and promoting policies to sustain effective practices). Operationally, intermediaries have four key target audiences: workplace partners, educational institutions, youth, and the youth-serving system.

The intermediary approaches required in the Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGAs) for the State Intermediary and Faith-based Mentoring demonstration programs have much in common with other ODEP demonstration programs. Other ODEP programs require demonstration projects to partner and collaborate with businesses and business organizations, government, transportation systems, and health and other service providers. They also have goals for ensuring quality and impact and promoting policies to sustain effective practices. The difference, however, is that the State Intermediary and Faith-based mentoring SGAs specifically identified the intermediary approach as the strategy to use. The State Intermediary SGA went even further by delineating specific steps as part of the intermediary process (resource mapping and development of a state plan).

Our literature review uncovered a wide variety of examples in which the intermediary approach has achieved useful outcomes on behalf of youth with disabilities. However, all literature we found was descriptive and did not address questions on effectiveness or the most appropriate strategies. Therefore, it is not known whether the intermediary approach is the most fruitful approach for achieving systems change, whether there are some intermediary approaches that are better than others, and whether those approaches would be repeatable and adaptable to other environments.

Nevertheless, at our three in-depth site visits, we were able to uncover a variety of examples of activities that are consistent with the intermediary strategic and operational functions identified in the literature and appear to bode well for success in achieving systems change. Further review of quarterly

reports and findings from in-depth site visits also revealed some systems change already taking place in the focus areas of capacity-building, coordination, consumer choice and employer support, and evaluation of new practices. Subsequent site visits in Phase IV of the independent evaluation are likely to uncover additional examples of intermediary processes, outputs, and outcomes, as well as barriers of intermediary models and those practices that appear to be most successful in achieving systems change.

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Appendix A

Examples of Promising Practices in Each Core Function from the Literature

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APPENDIX A. EXAMPLES OF PROMISING PRACTICES IN EACH CORE FUNCTION FROM THE LITERATURE*

CONVENING AND NETWORKING

- Host regular, monthly meetings for networking and professional exchange among practitioners and youth-serving agencies. This strategy has been implemented with great success in a number of cities around the country.
- Convene funders, policy makers, executive directors, practitioners, youth, families, and other stakeholders to discuss opportunities and obstacles common across programs and inform thinking about useful strategies for addressing systemic constraints.
- Host regular meetings for executive directors to explore management topics in-depth.
- Between meetings, have participants implement new practices and bring back ideas and challenges to share at the next meeting.

KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT AND DISSEMINATION

- Help shape a vision and framework that defines the field.
- Develop training, curricula, assessment tools, and other materials and make them broadly available.
- Write position statements about major issues in the field and distribute broadly.

INFORMATION SHARING

- Broker access to existing resources (e.g., funding, technical assistance, and training).
- Create regular newsletters to share latest research, best practices, and available resources.
- Establish resources (e.g., guides, hotlines) to help youth and families find available programming.

* Source: Community Matters & Breslin. (2003).

STANDARDS IDENTIFICATION AND SETTING

- Work with youth, families, practitioners, and other stakeholders to identify best practices, relevant staff competencies, and resulting outcomes for youth.
- Host community forums to gain widespread input.
- Hold focus groups and/or interviews with key funders and policy makers to incorporate their ideas.
- Adapt existing standards from national organizations or citywide initiatives to local needs and interests.

TRAINING DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATION

- Identify existing professional development opportunities and link organizations and practitioners with these opportunities. Establish a guide or web site that includes trainings for practitioners of all levels and experience.
- Share materials from national youth development and OST intermediaries.
- Develop and provide trainings and materials. Trainings may include conferences, periodic forums, ongoing seminars, or workshops.
- Work with higher education institutions (including community colleges, four-year universities) to develop for-credit, classroom-based training and degrees.
- Host trainings of trainers to develop leadership within the field and expand the cohort of trainers.

PROVISION OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND CONSULTATION

- Link technical assistance to trainings and/or funding to help organizations implement new ideas and strategies.
- Provide consultation as needed based on individual program requests.

MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE

- Provide regular information on funding opportunities.

- Host a web site where organizations can post information about their programs and services (or create a link to organizational websites), track data on client use, etc.
- Perform management functions (e.g., payroll, accounting, and legal assistance).
- Provide organizational development assistance (e.g., board development, financial, facilities management, and information technology).

RAISING AND REGRANTING FUNDS

- Create a Request for Proposal process to disseminate funding.
- Engage practitioners and stakeholders as members of the review committees.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- Help develop assessment guides (both for self-assessment and external evaluators).
- Develop monitoring processes.
- Participate in program documentation.
- Provide evaluation oversight and management.

ADVOCACY AND REPRESENTATION

- Represent the field's contributions and needs to government, private funders, and other stakeholders on issues including funding, policy formation, legislation, and partnerships.
- Sponsor a public campaign to raise awareness about the field.
- Work with radio, television, and newspapers to keep relevant stories and issues in the press.

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Appendix B

Examples of Promising Practices to Meet Common Challenges from the Literature

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APPENDIX B. EXAMPLES OF PROMISING PRACTICES TO MEET COMMON CHALLENGES FROM THE LITERATURE*

ROLE TENSIONS

- Grantmaking and capacity-building – Use regranting and Requests for Proposals as a way to inform practitioners, disseminate new information or standards, and engage organizations in specific improvement efforts.
- Standard setting and monitoring – Help funders, providers, and the public understand what resources are needed to help programs meet standards
- Competition with constituency – Engage youth-serving organizations in the work. As more youth-serving programs and organizations buy in to the intermediary’s work and feel ownership for its agenda, the intermediary will both attract more funding and reduce potential feelings of competition and resentment.

DEFINING AND DEMONSTRATING OUTCOMES

- Specify the nature and magnitude of intermediary impacts with associated time frames
- Use a number of indicators to demonstrate net added value:
 - Performance Options – number and types of events or processes intermediary provides (trainings conducted, network meetings organized)
 - Participation – measure of agency and staff engagement (e.g., number of agencies involved, youth workers trained)
 - Penetration – measure of intermediaries’ reach (e.g., counts and percentage of field engaged by intermediaries)
 - Representation, Advocacy, & Policy Impact – advocacy & policy functions (e.g., securing increased funding, legislative initiatives)
 - Impacts on Field Practices and Performance – measure of capacity-building (e.g., organizational stability, quality of programs, percentage of youth reached)

* Community Matters & Breslin. (2003).

FUNDING

- Increase program grants to youth-serving organizations by a percentage designated for use for training, technical assistance, or other forms of intermediary assistance.
- Encourage funders and policymakers to reserve a percentage of grants typically used for direct service to instead support intermediary organizations.

Appendix C

Email to the Director of the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth

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**APPENDIX C. EMAIL TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL
COLLABORATIVE ON WORKFORCE AND DISABILITY FOR YOUTH**

Letter to NCWD/Y

As you know, Westat is conducting an independent evaluation of the ODEP Demonstration Program. As part of that evaluation, ODEP has asked Westat to analyze certain issues that were identified during site visits and in Quarterly Reports. Part of that analysis would include collecting data at specific youth demonstration project sites. The purpose of this email is to ask the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability/Youth (NCWD/Y) to help us to identify the sites that would be appropriate to visit for the issue we have identified on ODEP youth programs.

The issue Westat has identified on ODEP youth programs is related to the use of intermediaries. It appears to be well-recognized that organizations and practices are needed to bridge the gap between the supply and demand sides of the equation for building capacity of the workforce development system to better serve youth with disabilities. The purpose of examining this issue is to determine which intermediary models and practices will ultimately prove to be most effective in bringing about the integration of services for youth with disabilities. A detailed description of this issue is attached to this email.

As described in the methodology for analysis of this issue, evaluation project staff will be visiting three to four selected sites from Fiscal Year 2003 ODEP youth programs to obtain in-depth information. We hope to visit only those sites that can provide useful information specific to the issue. We are not necessarily interested in covering all types of programs; what is more important is identifying the sites that will provide us with the most useful information. The following criteria have been established to identify the most appropriate sites:

| Criteria for Selection | Possible Project Sites |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Has a good grasp of the concept of intermediaries▪ Has made progress in the use of intermediaries▪ Is showing promise of being effective in practices with intermediaries▪ Has developed innovative practices regarding use of intermediaries | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ FY2003 State Intermediary – Sacramento, CA▪ FY2003 State Intermediary – Denver, CO▪ FY2003 State Intermediary - Des Moines, IO▪ Faith-Based Mentoring – Portland, OR▪ Faith-Based Mentoring – Augusta, ME |

We have identified some possible sites based on our own experiences on site visits (second column) but would very much appreciate your input on whether these sites truly meet our criteria and whether there are additional sites that also should be included. We recognize that you and your staff and partners in the NCWD/Y have had considerable interaction with ODEP demonstration projects, and we anticipate that your input will be extremely helpful.

Our plan is to begin organizing these site visits by the middle of May, so we would appreciate your feedback as soon as possible. I invite you or any of your staff to call me if you would like to discuss the issue or the methodology we will be using, and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Lynn Elinson, Ph.D.
Project Director

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Appendix D

Initial Contact Email to Site Project Directors

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APPENDIX D. INITIAL CONTACT EMAIL TO SITE PROJECT DIRECTORS

Dear:

As you know, Westat is conducting an independent evaluation of the ODEP Demonstration Program. As part of that evaluation, ODEP has asked Westat to conduct in-depth analyses of certain issues that were identified during site visits and in Quarterly Reports. One of those issues is related to the role of intermediaries in building sustained capacity of the workforce development system to better serve youth with disabilities. To further analyze this issue, the Westat evaluation team, in consultation with the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Y), has been identifying adult project sites that appear to have a good grasp of this issue and are showing promise of being effective in practices with intermediaries. We have identified your project site as meeting both criteria and would appreciate exploring some of the details of your experiences with this issue with another visit to your demonstration project.

The purpose of the in-depth analysis of this issue is to examine which intermediary models and practices will ultimately prove to be most effective in bringing about the integration of services for youth with disabilities. We are attempting to address the following questions with demonstration project sites:

1. What are the different intermediary models demonstration projects are using?
2. What are the goals, characteristics, practices, and activities of intermediaries at project sites that appear to have a good understanding of the role of intermediaries?
3. How do these models connect to local, state, and national organizations and agencies?
4. What barriers have been encountered in implementing these models and in bringing about the integration of services for youth with disabilities through the use of intermediaries?
5. How have project sites overcome these barriers?

Part of our methodology, approved by ODEP, is to conduct key informant interviews with project staff and sub-awardees, as well as others that might be able to shed light on these questions (e.g., One-Stop Center staff, project customers). Our plan is to begin organizing site visits with project directors for June or July, so I will be calling you in the next few days to discuss the best approach to use for meeting our evaluation objectives without placing too much burden on you, your staff, and project partners and customers. In the meantime, please feel free to call me at (412) 421-8610 or email me if you have any questions.

I look forward to talking to you soon.

Sincerely,

Lynn Elinson, Ph.D.
Project Director

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APPENDIX E

In-depth Site Visit Protocol Guides

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ODEP DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM

In-depth Issue Analysis:

Role of Intermediaries in Building Sustained Capacity to
Serve Youth with Disabilities

State Intermediary and Faith-Based Mentoring Programs

PROTOCOL GUIDES

July/August, 2005

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PROJECT DIRECTOR

As you know, Westat is conducting an independent evaluation of the ODEP Demonstration Programs. As part of that evaluation, ODEP has asked Westat to conduct in-depth analyses of certain issues that were identified during our initial site visits in 2004 and in Quarterly Reports. One of those issues is the role of intermediaries in building sustained capacity of the workforce development system to better serve youth with disabilities. To further examine this issue, we will be speaking with youth demonstration projects that appear to have a good grasp of the issue of intermediaries and are showing promise of being effective in practices with intermediaries.

With the help of the Youth Technical Assistance (TA) Collaborative, we have identified your project site as meeting both criteria. We would like to learn more about the intermediary models and practices you have implemented for your ODEP project and how these practices have been working to integrate services for youth with disabilities.

We'd like to start with asking you a few questions that will give us a background and overview on this issue before we meet with others.

1. Perception of “intermediaries”

- How would you describe an intermediary? What is their purpose? What do they do?
- When developing the proposal for your demonstration project, how did you perceive the role of intermediaries in general? How did you envision them working?
- What specific problems or issues in your state, region, or local community were you hoping to address through the use of intermediaries?
- Were you previously involved with intermediary organizations? If so, please describe. With which organizations were you involved?
- How is your project set up to make use of intermediaries? Please describe.
- Are you involved in INet, the national intermediary organization? If yes, for how long and in what activities have you been involved?

2. Role of intermediaries

Strategic Intermediary Functions

The literature on intermediaries describes two types of intermediary functions – strategic and operational. Strategic functions include aligning services and service delivery to better meet the needs of youth, employers or youth service providers. Please describe how your project’s intermediaries are involved in the following strategic functions:

- Convening local/state leadership;
- Brokering and/or providing services to workplace partners, educational institutions, youth with disabilities, and the youth-serving system;
- Brokering and/or providing training and TA to workplace partners, educational institutions, youth with disabilities, and the youth-serving system;
- Ensuring the quality and impact of local efforts; and
- Promoting policies to sustain effective practices.

Operational Intermediary Functions

Operational functions consist of implementing processes or a series of actions for achieving a specific result. Please describe how your project’s intermediaries are functioning operationally. Are they:

- Working with employers/workplace partners to create demand for working with youth? How?
- Providing training and TA to address the needs of project partners? Please describe.
- Providing services to address the needs of project partners? Please describe.
- Working with schools and youth-serving organizations to build staff awareness and buy-in? How?
- Providing services to support school involvement? Please describe.
- Working with youth with disabilities to connect them to appropriate quality experiences (e.g., job tryouts, mentoring) and improve the quality of work-based learning? Please describe.
- Working with youth with disabilities to connect them to appropriate services/benefits (e.g., benefits planning, VR, WIA)? Please describe.
- Creating a system focused on quality and continuous improvement? How?

3. Outcomes of intermediary process

Please describe the outcomes of the intermediary processes achieved thus far in your demonstration project.

- How are you determining the effectiveness of your intermediary approach and practices (evaluation)?
- Is there any particular intermediary – or group of intermediaries - that appear to be especially successful in your demonstration project thus far? Why do you think this is so? What are they doing?
- Is there any particular intermediary – or group of intermediaries - that appear to be struggling in your demonstration project thus far? Please describe. Why do you think this is so?
- Have you had to make any changes to your plans for intermediaries in your project? Why? Please describe the change(s).
- If you were able to go back and redesign your plans for the use of intermediaries, how would you change the plan? Why?
- Have you seen any improvements in systems capacity to meet the educational and employment needs of youth with disabilities? Please describe? In your view, how has the intermediary process contributed to these improvements?
- What other systems changes have occurred to the workforce development system -- on a macro- or micro-level? Why do you think these changes have occurred? In your view, to what extent can these changes be attributed to the intermediary process?
- What plans are in place to make systems changes? Please describe.
- What plans are in place to sustain your intermediaries?
 - Have any funds or other resources been set aside to fund your intermediaries once the project has ended?
 - Have any laws been passed by state or local legislators to formalize their role as intermediaries?
 - Has the Governor of your state – or local officials -- established any of your intermediaries as permanent organizations? Please describe.
 - Have any organizations, panels, councils, or other permanent structures been created to support your intermediaries in the future?

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INTERMEDIARY ORGANIZATIONS

As you know, Westat is conducting an independent evaluation of the ODEP Demonstration Programs. As part of that evaluation, ODEP has asked Westat to conduct in-depth analyses of certain issues that were identified during our initial visits in 2004. One of those issues is related to the role of intermediaries in building sustained capacity of the workforce development system to better serve youth with disabilities.

With the help of the Youth Technical Assistance (TA) Collaborative, we have identified this demonstration project site as having a good grasp of the concept of intermediaries and showing promise of being effective in practices with intermediaries. We understand that you are an intermediary in this effort, and we would like to learn more today about your organization's role in the intermediary process, both at the strategic and operational level.

1. Background on organization
 - What organization do you work for?
 - Please describe your role in that organization.
 - What is your organization's role in the project? Please describe.
 - How did your organization become involved in the project?
2. Perceptions of the concept of "intermediaries"
 - How would you describe an intermediary? What is their purpose? What do they do?
 - What specific problems or other issues in your state, region, or local community were you hoping to address by serving as an intermediary?
 - Have you served as an intermediary organization in the past? If so, what issues did you address and with which organizations did you work?
 - What expertise or background did your organization have that qualified you to serve as an intermediary organization on this project?
 - Are you involved in INet, the national intermediary organization? If yes, for how long and in what activities have you been involved?

3. Role in project

- How does (will) your organization operate as an intermediary in this project? Please describe.
- What do you consider to be your organization's primary intermediary responsibilities on this project?
- Have you been (or do you expect to be) involved in any of the following specific activities? Please describe.
 - Developing a state plan for serving youth with disabilities
 - Conducting or planning for resource mapping tasks
 - Serving as a pilot demonstration site/subawardee on this project
 - Selecting or planning for the pilot demonstration sites/subawardees
 - Training project staff and/or collaborators
 - Serving on the demonstration project Advisory Committee

4. Role of intermediaries

Strategic Intermediary Functions

The literature on intermediaries describes two types of intermediary functions – strategic and operational. Strategic functions include aligning services and service delivery to better meet the needs of youth, employers or youth service providers. Please describe how your organization is involved in the following strategic functions:

- Convening local/state leadership
- Brokering and/or providing services to workplace partners, educational institutions, youth with disabilities, and the youth-serving system
- Brokering and/or providing training and TA to workplace partners, educational institutions, youth with disabilities, and the youth-serving system
- Ensuring the quality and impact of local efforts
- Promoting policies to sustain effective practices

Operational Intermediary Functions

Operational functions consist of implementing processes or a series of actions for achieving a specific result. Please describe how your organization is functioning operationally. Are you:

- Working with employers/workplace partners to create demand for working with youth? How?
- Providing training and TA to address the needs of project partners? Please describe.
- Providing services to address the needs of project partners? Please describe.
- Working with schools and youth-serving organizations to build staff awareness and buy-in? How?
- Providing services to support school involvement? Please describe.
- Working with youth with disabilities to connect them to appropriate quality experiences (e.g., job tryouts, mentoring) and improve the quality of work-based learning? Please describe.
- Working with youth with disabilities to connect them to appropriate services/benefits (e.g., benefits planning, VR, WIA)? Please describe.
- Creating a system focused on quality and continuous improvement? How?

6. Outcomes of intermediary process

Please describe the outcomes of the intermediary process in which your organization/agency takes part.

- How are you determining the effectiveness of your models and practices (evaluation)?
- Are there any particular strategies or practices you have implemented as an intermediary that appear to be especially successful thus far? Please describe. Why do you think they are successful?
- Are there any particular strategies or practices you have implemented as an intermediary that appear not to be especially successful thus far? Why do you think this is so?
- If you were able to go back to the beginning of this project and redesign your role as an intermediary, how would you change the plan? Why?
- Have you seen any improvements in systems capacity to meet the educational and employment needs of youth with disabilities? Please describe. How has the

intermediary process contributed to these improvements? Do you anticipate any improvements? If so, what improvements?

- What other system changes have occurred to the workforce development system in your state, region, or local community -- either on a macro or micro level? Please describe. Why do you think these changes have occurred? In your view, to what extent can these changes be attributed to the intermediary process?
- What plans are in place to make systems changes? Please describe.
- What plans are in place to sustain your intermediary activities once this demonstration project ends?
 - Have any funds or other resources been set aside to fund your intermediaries once the project has ended?
 - Have any laws been passed by state or local legislators to formalize their role as an intermediary?
 - Has the Governor of your state – or local officials – established any of your intermediaries as permanent organizations? Please describe.
 - Have any organizations, panels, councils, or other permanent structures been created to support your intermediaries in the future?

YOUTH CUSTOMERS AND/OR FAMILY MEMBERS

Hello and thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. My name is [INTERVIEWER NAME], and I work for Westat, a research firm located in Rockville, Maryland. We understand that you have been involved with the _____ project, so we want to ask you a few questions about your experiences.

1. Project involvement

- How did you learn about this project (e.g., at school, at some other agency, from family or friends, word of mouth, radio, TV, etc.)?
- What did you hear? Why did you decide to come here? What help were you hoping to receive?
- Did anything need to be done to give you access to the activities and services you were involved with? What needed to be done? Do you know who did it? Do you know how it got arranged?

2. Use of project services and activities

- Did someone in this project refer you to any new services or activities? Which ones?
- Had you tried to obtain these services before but were unsuccessful? What happened?
- What did this project do that was different?
- What kind of services/assistance/mentoring have you received from this project? Probe for the following features and details about each one:
 - Preparatory experiences (e.g., career interest and vocational assessments, information about careers, work-relatedness skills including computer skills)
 - Connecting activities (e.g., academic tutoring, exposure to supportive peer and adult mentors, helping youth explore self-sufficiency issues like assistive technology, transportation, benefits planning, health maintenance)
 - Work-based experiences (e.g., site visits, job shadowing, internships, entrepreneurial ventures, paid employment activities building up to on-the job experiences)
 - Leadership development activities (e.g., informal/formal and individual/group mentoring situations and activities that build self-esteem, self-advocacy, interpersonal skills, and teaming)

3. Job-related activities

- Was one of the reasons you came to this program to find a job?
- Before you came to this project, what experience did you have looking for or working at a job? Were they good or bad experiences? What overall opinion did you have about jobs or a career before you came here?
- Before you came to this program, did you try to get help from any other place for a job or for job training? Tell me about it.
- Have you been to training? Where was that? How was that arranged?
- Did the people here help you find a job or set up your own business? Tell me about it.
- Are you currently working for pay or earning money in your own business now? What do you think about your current job/business? Is this something you plan to do for a long time or will do something else in the future? What do you think it will be? Will you come back here for help?

4. Receipt of services/benefits

- Have the people in this project helped you to apply for or receive certain services to make it easier for you to go to school, look for a job, or work (e.g., SSA/VR benefits, WIA benefits, job coaching, on-the-job training)?
- What did they do?
- Was it helpful?
- Are you currently receiving services/benefits you were never receiving before?
- Why do you think you never received these services/benefits before?

5. School- (educationally-) related activities

- What (else) are you doing now? Are you going to school?
- Since coming to this project, how do you think you have changed? In particular, how have you changed in the following ways:
 - As an employee or as a potential employee
 - As a student
 - With your friends and other people your own age
 - With people who are older than you

- Why do you think you have changed?

6. Satisfaction with services

- Do you like coming here/being part of this project? Why?
- Has it been worth your time? Do you feel that the people here have good ideas about how to help you?
- How easy has it been to get help - is it easy, hard, takes a lot of time?
- Did you ever ask for any help or services that the people here were not able to provide? Please describe.
- What things are different in this project from your previous experiences?
- What things have you done through this project that you liked the best and/or you think were most helpful to you?
- What things have you done through this project that you really did not like very much and/or did not find very helpful to you?
- If this project had not been available, what would you have done? What would you do if this project were no longer available?
- Can you think of any ways to improve this project? Are there any services they have not been able to provide that would have been helpful to you?
- In general, are you satisfied with your experiences in this project? If you could give them a grade, what would you give them on a scale of A through F (with F being "Failed")?

7. Final comments

- Do you have any other final comments to make about this project? Is there anything that I did not ask about that you wanted to tell me about this project?

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EMPLOYERS/SERVICE PROVIDERS

Hello, my name is ____, and I work for Westat, a private research company in Rockville, MD. The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) has asked Westat to conduct an independent evaluation of its demonstration programs, and since the ____ project is part of that program, we're here to speak with people who have been involved with the project. What we're trying to learn from you are your experiences with the project and particularly your involvement with organizations in the project that made it easier for you to become involved with youth with disabilities.

1. Past involvement with youth with disabilities

- Prior to this project, what interaction/involvement did you have with youth with disabilities? What did you do? If no involvement, were there any barriers that discouraged you from being involved with youth with disabilities?
- Did you rely on other agencies/organizations to put you in contact with youth with disabilities, or did you contact youth directly/on your own? If you relied on other agencies/organizations, what were they, and how did they help you?
- Prior to this project, did you or your company/organization have any interaction with the State Workforce Investment Board, the Local Workforce Investment Board, or the local One-Stop Career Center? What sort of interaction? Please describe.
- If yes:
 - How were you made aware of the services of the One-Stop Centers (e.g., through community forums such as newsletters, job fairs, etc.)?
 - What type of services have you used in the local One-Stop Center?
 - Have you been satisfied with the services provided? Would you like to see more services for employers or different types of services? Please describe.
 - Did you employ youth with disabilities or provide any other services to youth with disabilities as a result of your contact with the One Stop?

2. Role in the project

- Who first contacted you – or who did you first contact – to become involved with this project?
- Why did you decide to become involved?

- What are the organization(s)/agencies with which you have been working most frequently on this project?
- How do you interact/stay in touch with these organizations and keep informed about their activities (e.g., meetings, email, phone calls, websites etc.)? How often are you in contact with them? How easy or difficult is it to stay in touch?
- How would you characterize your involvement in this project? Are you primarily working with or employing youth with disabilities, or are you involved in other aspects of this demonstration project (e.g., mentoring, job tryouts, providing information on benefits)? Please describe.
- Have you been involved in any of the following project planning or implementation activities? Please describe.
 - Developing a state plan for serving youth with disabilities
 - Conducting or planning for resource mapping tasks
 - Selecting or planning for pilot demonstration sites/subawardees
 - Training project staff and/or collaborators
 - Serving on the demonstration project Advisory Committee
 - Project evaluation
 - Recruitment of other employers or organizations to be involved in project activities for youth
- Have you provided any of the following services to youth with disabilities? Please describe.
 - Preparatory experiences (e.g., career interest and vocational assessments, information about careers, work-relatedness skills including computer skills)
 - Connecting activities (e.g., academic tutoring, exposure to supportive peer and adult mentors, helping youth explore self-sufficiency issues like assistive technology, transportation, benefits planning, health maintenance)
 - Work-based experiences (e.g., site visits, job shadowing, internships, entrepreneurial ventures, paid employment activities building up to on-the job experiences)
 - Leadership development activities (e.g., informal/formal and individual/group mentoring situations and activities that build self-esteem, self-advocacy, interpersonal skills, and teaming)

3. Job or work experience

If you have provided jobs or other work experiences for youth with disabilities in your place of employment:

- Please tell me about the youths with disabilities you employed. What sort of job/employment experience did you provide?
- What organization(s)/agencies referred these youth to you or put you in touch with them?
- Have these organizations been useful to the young people who were placed? Have they been useful to your company/organization? Please describe and give examples.
- Have you needed any support related to hiring youth with disabilities, providing work experiences for youth with disabilities, or mentoring youth with disabilities? What type of support did you need?
 - Identification of needs for workplace accommodation and methods of supplying it
 - Job coaching
 - Ongoing post-placement follow up with students and employers
 - Understanding and management of job-related disability issues (e.g., disclosure, reasonable accommodation needs, etc.)
 - Disability and diversity awareness training for supervisors and co-workers
- Where did you go for this support?
- Do you think this project will help you and other employers/service providers/mentors to find the support that you need to hire/provide services to people with disabilities? Please explain.
- What has been done (or is being planned) to ensure that young people with disabilities have physical access to facilities in your workplace/organization? Give examples.
- What has been done (or is being planned) to incorporate accessibility into policies, personnel, practices, and performance criteria for your workplace/organization? Give examples.
- Will you continue to employ or work with these youth – or employ other youths with disabilities once this project has ended? Why or why not?
- How will you obtain the support you might need?

4. Project Outcomes

- Has it been worth your while being involved in this project? Please explain. How could things be improved?
- What about your involvement in this project thus far has been the most successful? Why?
- What are the problems, if any, that you have encountered while being involved with this project? How did you address them?
- What changes have occurred, if any, at your company/organization as a result of your involvement in this project?
- What plans do you have in continuing to be involved with youth with disabilities once this project has ended? What are the possible barriers to your continued involvement?
- What comments or suggestions do you have for improving this project?

Appendix F

**Three River Valley (Vermont) Local Workforce Investment
Board Checklist**

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APPENDIX F. THREE RIVER VALLEY (VERMONT) LOCAL WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD CHECKLIST

Name of Career Start Student: _____
 Dates of Employment and/or Career Work Experience: _____
 Worksite: _____

Core Competencies

Retail – Food Service (Local Market)

Provide feedback for the student by checking the appropriate line to indicate the degree of competency. The rating for each task should reflect workplace readiness.

Feedback Scale:

- 1 Needs Improvement
- 2 Shows Improvement
- 3 Meets Standard
- 4 Exceeds Standard

1 2 3 4

| | A. | Workplace Readiness |
|-------|--------|---|
| _____ | A. 001 | Demonstrates reliability by showing up for work on time |
| _____ | A. 002 | Maintains acceptable attendance record |
| _____ | A. 003 | Keeps supervisor informed of work progress or changes in schedule |
| _____ | A. 004 | Listens attentively, follows work instructions, and asks questions |
| _____ | A. 005 | Persists and resolves differences of opinions in a reasoned and calm manner |
| _____ | A. 006 | Solves problems using critical thinking |
| _____ | A. 007 | Follows through on all work assignments |
| _____ | A. 008 | Upon completion of work assignment takes initiative to request additional responsibilities |
| _____ | A. 009 | Accepts responsibility for own success in the store |
| _____ | A.010 | Accepts positive and constructive feedback, and uses the information to improve work performance. |
| _____ | A. 011 | Completes projects in a timely manner |
| _____ | A. 012 | Is willing to learn new tasks |
| _____ | A. 013 | Uses appropriate language |
| _____ | A. 014 | Adheres to worksite standards, policies, and rules to ensure quality of work |
| _____ | A. 015 | Appropriately cares for personal dress, grooming, and hygiene |
| _____ | A. 016 | Demonstrates respect for all members of the team. |
| _____ | A. 017 | Cooperates and assists other co-workers |
| _____ | A. 018 | Follows store practices in resolving difficulties with fellow employees. |
| _____ | A. 019 | Represents the store in a positive light when in public |
| _____ | A. 020 | Initiates discussions with supervisor about a decision made in trying to resolve a problem, with the intention of learning from it. |

Feedback Scale:

- 0 No Exposure
- 1 Introduced – the student has been exposed through non-participatory instruction or explanation (e.g. there was no hands-on instruction or engagement – just illustration)
- 2 Practiced – the student can perform the task after “Job Instruction Training” and with direct supervision
- 3 Entry-Level Competency – the student can perform the task with limited supervision and/or does not perform the task to standard (a typical entry-level performance expectation)
- 4 Competency – the student consistently performs task to standard with no supervision (on at least two occasions or at supervisor’s option).

0 1 2 3 4

B. Orientation to Retailing / Food Service

0 1 2 3 4

C. Safety and Health

- _____ C. 001 Practices proper lifting procedures.
- _____ C. 002 Responds to potential safety issues on the floor.
- _____ C. 003 Practices all safety procedures resulting from spillage.
- _____ C. 004 Practices all safety practices during power outages – especially in work areas when store is dark.
- _____ C. 005 Is aware and practices all safety & health procedures when working as a food handler

0 1 2 3 4

D. Customer Relations

- _____ D. 001 Welcomes customers (by name if possible) with a smile, a hello, and good eye contact
- _____ D. 002 Politely asks customers if they need help when it seems appropriate.
- _____ D. 003 Demonstrates an awareness of multiple points of customer contact
- _____ D. 004 Refrains from discussions of fellow employee behaviors or store practices in the presence of customers.
- _____ D. 005 Maintains a positive attitude around customers and fellow employees.
- _____ D. 006 Demonstrates appropriate balance between task accomplishment and making customers feel welcomed

0 1 2 3 4

E. Floor Work

- _____ E. 001 Consistently "fixes" shelves
- _____ F. 002 Keeps floor area clean and neat
- _____ E. 003 Keeps floor space cleared for high volume traffic and handicap access
- _____ F. 004 Works effectively with manager in maintaining proper stocking of shelves and inventory levels.
- _____ E. 005 Within scope of responsibilities, anticipates and responds to potential problems

0 1 2 3 4

F. Cashier Work

- _____ F.001 Keeps work space around register clean and neat
- _____ F.002 Asks if customers got everything they needed
- _____ F. 003 Takes responsibility to alert manager of amount of money in register
- _____ F. 004 Counts back change accurately.
- _____ F. 005 Operates register accurately
- _____ F. 006 Thinks like a customer when cashing out big orders
- _____ F. 007 Calls for back-up if needed
- _____ F. 008 Handles customer challenges with respect and courtesy
- _____ F. 009 Anticipates shortage of receipt tape

0 1 2 3 4

G. Loss Prevention

- _____ G. 001 Recognizes behaviors of customers and associates that lead to theft
- _____ G. 002 Recognizes evidence of potential loss (empty boxes, etc)
- _____ G. 003 Spot checks high risk areas
- _____ G. 004 Follows store procedures when suspected theft is in progress