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# Evaluation of Disability Employment Policy Demonstration Programs

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# Evaluation of Disability Employment Policy Demonstration Programs

## **Abstract**

[Excerpt] Since 2001, the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) has awarded more than \$65 million in grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements. Of this, more than \$38 million has been awarded to projects under the ODEP Demonstration Program, with about 2 percent directed toward an independent evaluation.

The ODEP Demonstration Program consists of a variety of initiatives targeted at both adults and youth with disabilities. All demonstration projects funded under these initiatives are expected to implement and evaluate methods for building the capacity of the workforce development system to better serve people with disabilities. ODEP contracted with Westat, a private research company, to conduct an independent evaluation of its demonstration program. The purpose of the independent evaluation is to provide ODEP with data and information about system change that can be used to assist policy development, decisions, and recommendations, as well as track progress in meeting ODEP's goals under the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA). The independent evaluation has three objectives:

1. To provide ODEP with reliable and valid indicators of program effectiveness;
2. To determine the extent to which each program priority area is effective in building workforce development system capacity; and
3. To document local, regional, and/or state systems change that supports program effectiveness.

This paper summarizes the issues and accomplishments identified by the evaluation to date in the context of these three objectives.

## **Keywords**

Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, disability, employment, public policy, workforce development

## **Comments**

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# Evaluation of Disability Employment Policy Demonstration Programs

Task 10: Interim Report on ODEP Demonstration  
Programs: Accomplishments and Issues Identified  
by the Independent Evaluation

## **Interim Progress Report**

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The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the funding agency.

**June 2005**

**Prepared for:**

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**INTERIM REPORT ON ODEP DEMONSTRATION PROGRAMS:  
ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE INDEPENDENT EVALUATION**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Since 2001, the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) has awarded more than \$65 million in grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements. Of this, more than \$38 million has been awarded to projects under the ODEP Demonstration Program, with about 2 percent directed toward an independent evaluation.

The ODEP Demonstration Program consists of a variety of initiatives targeted at both adults and youth with disabilities.<sup>1</sup> All demonstration projects funded under these initiatives are expected to implement and evaluate methods for building the capacity of the workforce development system to better serve people with disabilities. ODEP contracted with Westat, a private research company, to conduct an independent evaluation of its demonstration program. The purpose of the independent evaluation is to provide ODEP with data and information about system change that can be used to assist policy development, decisions, and recommendations, as well as track progress in meeting ODEP's goals under the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA). The independent evaluation has three objectives:

1. To provide ODEP with reliable and valid indicators of program effectiveness;
2. To determine the extent to which each program priority area is effective in building workforce development system capacity; and
3. To document local, regional, and/or state systems change that supports program effectiveness.

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<sup>1</sup> Fiscal Year 2001 – Customized Employment (CE) and Innovative Demonstration Grants for Youth with Disabilities (IGs); Fiscal Year 2002 – Customized Employment, WorkFORCE (Action) Grant Initiative, Innovative Demonstration Grants for Youth with Disabilities, and High School/High Tech State Grants; Fiscal Year 2003 – Customized Employment, Working for Freedom, Opportunity and Real Choice through Community Employment (Workforce) Action Initiative, Ending Chronic Homelessness Through Employment and Housing, Innovative State Alignment Grants for Improving Transition Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities Through the Use of Intermediaries, High School/High Tech State Development and Implementation Grants, and Intermediary Grants for Mentoring Youth with Disabilities; and Technical Assistance Cooperative Agreements - National Center on Workforce and Disability/Adult (NCWD/A), National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Y), and Training and Technical Assistance for Providers (T-TAP); Fiscal Year 2004 – Telework/Telecommuting Pilot Research, Chronic Homelessness Employment Technical Assistance (CHETA) Initiative

This paper summarizes the issues and accomplishments identified by the evaluation to date in the context of these three objectives.

## **2. INDICATORS OF PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS**

An important objective of this evaluation activity is to measure progress toward systems change among all demonstration programs. Six systems change areas were identified on which to focus, including the following:

1. Capacity,
2. Coordination
3. Customization
4. Development/adaptation/evaluation of new practices
5. Dissemination of effective practice, and
6. Sustainability.

Westat identified the indicators and methodology for measuring systems change within each of these areas. These indicators have guided all data collection and analysis efforts throughout the evaluation. Table 1 describes each of the systems change focus areas identified by ODEP for which key indicators were developed. Indicators for each focus area are contained in Appendix A.

## **3. EFFECTIVENESS OF PROGRAM PRIORITY AREAS IN BUILDING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM CAPACITY**

This section summarizes the progress made by demonstration programs in building workforce development system capacity. We first examine the accomplishments of the demonstration programs identified in the evaluation and then summarize several of the issues that have been identified during site visits, in Quarterly Reports, and through further synthesis of evaluation findings.

### **3.1 Accomplishments Identified by the Independent Evaluation**

The independent evaluation is structured to collect information on inputs (resources needed to set processes in motion), processes (events and arrangement of resources needed to achieve intended

Table 1. Description of systems change focus areas\*

Focus area	Description
Capacity-building	Developing and improving systems within the workforce development system to achieve positive workforce outcomes (e.g., changing perceptions, attitudes, and understanding issues related to disability and improving access and availability of people with disabilities to different types of resources).
Coordination	Developing and improving systems, processes, and services within the workforce development system to breakdown barriers and separate “silos” so the workforce development system can better serve people with disabilities.
Customization	Developing and improving systems within the workforce development system to achieve individualized person-centered planning that will assist people with disabilities in seeking, obtaining, retaining employment, and/or achieving educational goals and will also support employers in meeting their employment needs and providing appropriate supports and accommodations (e.g., workplace accommodations, job restructuring) for people with disabilities.
Development/Adaptation/Evaluation of New Practices	The foundation of the ODEP Demonstration Program is the identification of practices that are effective and adaptable to a wide variety of circumstances. Demonstration projects are expected to test evidence-based best practices (e.g., customized employment strategies) in their own environment so these practices can be disseminated and used throughout the workforce development system.
Dissemination of Effective Practice	The dissemination of effective practices addresses the propagation of new programs, practices, and processes throughout the workforce development system that work.
Sustainability	A gradual process in which systems are put in place so that improved capacity, coordination, and adaptation of effective practices can be maintained after ODEP funding ceases.

SOURCE: Westat. Evaluation of selected ODEP grant and project efforts progress report. Task 2: Evaluation Work Plan – Phase 2, November 2003.

\*Key indicators for measuring systems changes are listed in Appendix A.

results), outputs (i.e., the “products,” or “units” produced by processes, such as the number of staff trained to use particular strategies targeted at meeting the employment needs of people with disabilities), and outcomes (intended results of creating certain outputs or products such as systems change or more adults with disability in competitive employment) (Figure 1).

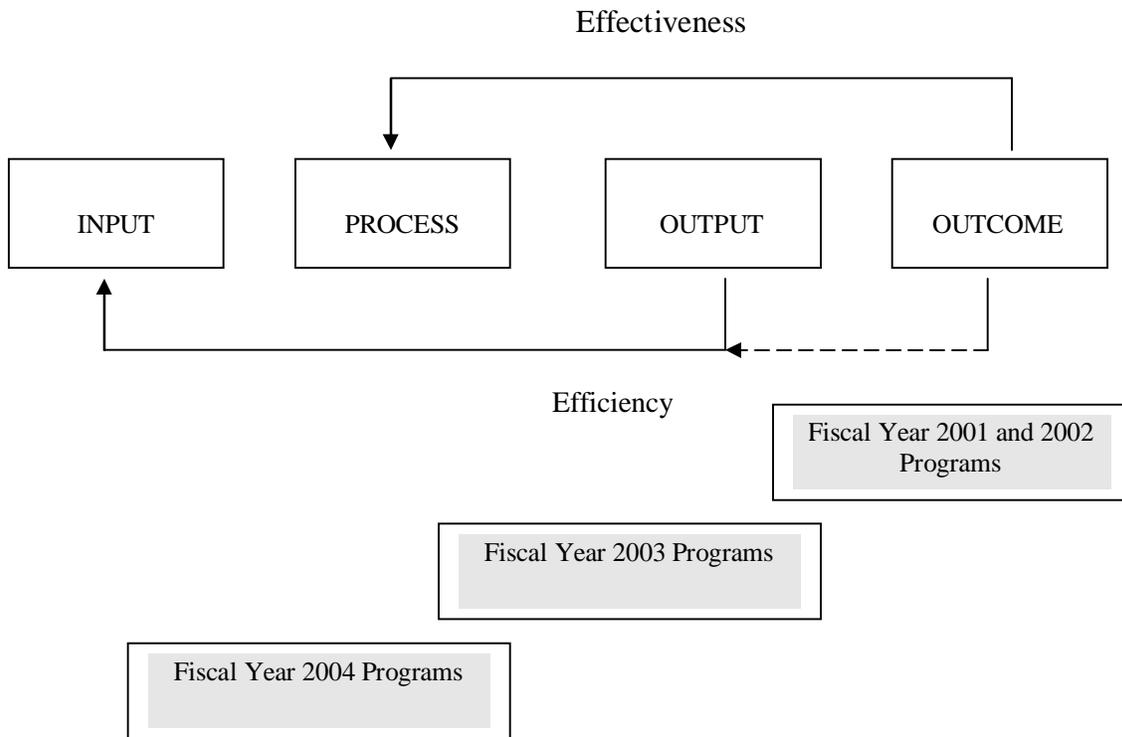


Figure 1. Open systems model of the evaluation

The evaluation has found that as each generation of demonstration program moves toward the demonstration program end, it is also moving along the path from inputs and processes to outputs and outcomes. This path is characterized by efforts in capacity building, implementation of processes, achievement of intended outcomes, and sustainability. Thus, programs funded in 2004 are expected to be “gearing up” with organizing and developing capacity to deliver services. At the same time, 2003 funded programs are expected to begin producing outputs following their organizing and capacity building activities, and 2002 and 2001 funded programs will be well on their way to achieving the outcomes anticipated in their proposals.

### 3.1.1 Capacity Building

One of the most important objectives of the evaluation is to provide information to ODEP on the effectiveness of demonstration programs in building the capacity of the workforce development system. ODEP has learned from the evaluation that all demonstration programs have achieved successes in their capacity building efforts. For example,

- Demonstration programs are improving both physical and programmatic accessibility of their One-Stop Centers. As a result, people with disabilities are able to access services through new “disability-friendly” orientations, assistive technology and adaptive equipment, and informed staff. Many One-Stop Centers have also hired a Disability Navigator and have used the Workforce Incentive Grants to blend and leverage funding to improve accessibility in their facilities. Previously, people with disabilities were referred elsewhere, away from the One-Stop Center.
- Demonstration project sites have also instituted or have begun to institute training programs (including formal training and technical assistance) for their staff, partners and collaborators. One of the greatest deterrents to serving people with disabilities is the lack of knowledge and understanding of One-Stop Center staff about how to assist these individuals. Some innovative and exemplary practices, curricula, and competency requirements have been developed through the demonstration programs.
- All youth projects are attempting to take into account the four evidence-based design features (i.e., preparatory experiences, connecting activities, work-based experiences, and leadership development activities)<sup>2</sup> when they conduct planning and implement activities on behalf of their youth customers.

### 3.1.2 Implementation

Having developed strategic planning and implementation teams that consist of a variety of service provider partners, demonstration projects awarded in Fiscal Year 2001, 2002, and even 2003 are developing and implementing activities that achieve greater efficiency through increased collaboration with WIA mandated and non-mandated agencies and organizations, increased coordination, person-centered planning, and customized employment services.

- Services are more efficiently (and effectively) delivered through coordinated efforts and leveraging of resources among partners and collaborators.

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<sup>2</sup> Evidence-based design features include: (1) Preparatory experiences (e.g., career interest and vocational assessments, information about careers, work-relatedness skills including computer skills); (2) 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); (3) Work-based experiences (e.g., site visits, job shadowing, internships, entrepreneurial ventures, paid employment activities building up to on-the-job experiences); and (4) Leadership development activities (e.g., informal/formal and individual/group (peer and adult) mentoring situations and activities that build self-esteem, interpersonal skills, self-advocacy skills, and teaming).

- Customized employment services are now available at many sites due to improved coordination with workforce development system partners, enhanced One-Stop Center capacity, and new expertise that was needed to broaden their service capabilities.
- Many promising practices have been identified at demonstration project sites – in the areas of strategic planning, needs assessment, customized employment and micro-enterprises, self-advocacy approaches for youth with disabilities, and establishment and maintenance of high program standards.

### **3.1.3 Achievement of Outcomes**

The independent evaluation is also examining both intermediate and final outcomes. Intermediate outcomes are the system changes that demonstration projects are seeking to achieve through implementation of their grants. Final outcomes represent overarching goals such as increased employment of people with disabilities and increased earning levels.

Using data obtained from the evaluation’s Employment Outcomes Analysis Project (EOAP) to better understand the employment placements from demonstration programs, findings indicate that demonstration projects are achieving many important outcomes, including placing customers with some of the most difficult challenges (e.g., psychiatric illness or mental retardation) into competitive employment. The results have been to place customers in high quality jobs (i.e., jobs paying above minimum wage that also include the offer of fringe benefits and potential career development) and to move them off the SSA disability roles. The EOAP found the following:

- The top-ranked self-disclosed disabilities among the sample of program customers who were placed in competitive employment were psychiatric or emotional disturbance (42.9 percent), mental retardation (27.3 percent), a physical or mobility disability (20.9 percent), or a learning disability (15.7 percent).
- Of the 345 individuals sampled, nearly 43 percent had no previous work experience, while 22 percent had been engaged in sheltered employment and 12 percent in “casual” employment.
- At the time of intake to the program, 4.4 percent were receiving TANF benefits, 2.3 percent received state assistance, and 48.1 percent and 27.5 percent were receiving SSI and/or SSDI benefits, respectively. At the time of the EOAP survey, the percentage of customers on benefits had declined in every category but subsidized housing. After having received services from demonstration projects, the percent of TANF recipients declined by 72.7 percent, food stamp holders by 24.5 percent, and SSI and SSDI beneficiaries by 28.3 and 32.6 percent, respectively. The number and percent in subsidized housing increased by 14.3 percent, as might be expected due to the Chronic Homelessness program.

- All customers contained in the sample were earning at or above the minimum wage (\$5.15) in jobs they obtained during participation in the demonstration project. Of those sampled customers earning more than minimum wage, over one-third (35.0 percent) were earning more than \$8.15 an hour.
- More than 20 percent were offered at least one fringe benefit by their employer (e.g., health insurance, paid sick time, paid vacation time, pension or retirement), and 73 percent obtained a job with potential career advancement.
- ODEP demonstration projects have also had a positive effect on the day environment of project customers. For example, at the time of intake, 15.4 percent of sampled customers were in a segregated day environment, 7.8 percent were in a residential or treatment institution, and 2.9 percent were homeless. Subsequent to receiving services through one of the ODEP demonstration projects, 5.2 percent were in a segregated day environment (a decline of 66.0 percent), 5.5 percent were in a residential or treatment institution (a 29.6 percent decline), and 0.6 percent were homeless (an 80.0 percent decline).

### **3.1.4 Sustainability**

ODEP's ultimate goal for the adult demonstration programs is systems change in the forms of successful and sustainable policies, procedures and practices that are put in place to improve access to high quality services for people with disabilities. For the youth demonstration programs, sustainability will be achieved when WIA Youth Councils and the provider community recognize the complex needs of youth with disabilities and address these needs with changes to planning, policies, procedures, and services.

Some sustainability can already be seen in new and stronger partnerships among service providers, integrated training curricula in state or local school systems, and greater attention to physical and program accessibility at One-Stop Centers for people with disability.

### **3.2 Issues Identified by the Independent Evaluation**

Despite the positive results the ODEP Demonstration Programs are beginning to achieve, the independent evaluation has identified several issues that require ODEP's attention to ensure the purpose and objectives of the Demonstration Programs will be met. These issues fall into the following categories: Strategic planning; physical and program accessibility; financial incentives; coordination of

services and resources; WIA performance measures; evaluation and dissemination, customized employment services; sustainability; Chronic Homelessness issues; all youth programs; High School/High Tech State programs; Faith-based Mentoring program; and Technical Assistance Collaboratives.

### **3.2.1 Strategic Planning**

- Although many projects did an excellent job of establishing advisory committees with a wide variety of committed members, there was great variation in the level of commitment from certain members of these committees (e.g., vocational rehabilitation and WIA representatives).
- Sites often had difficulty including people with disabilities on these committees (adults and youth), primarily for reasons related to the timing of meetings or lack of transportation. In addition, employers were rarely included

### **3.2.2 Physical and Program Accessibility**

- Customized Employment (CE) projects, which are held by local Workforce Investment Boards or their representatives, have been the most successful thus far in improving accessibility at One-Stop Centers.
- Any limited success in improving accessibility at the One-Stop Center may be related to the funded project's relationship to the WIA system. That is, youth projects and some WORKFORCE projects outside the WIA system have little influence on the accessibility of their One-Stop Centers.

### **3.2.3 Information, Training, and Technical Assistance**

- Despite having developed many exemplary training programs, the quality of training sessions was found to be variable. Some training sessions were solely informational and not associated with any particular competencies, training objectives, or hands-on experience. Others were more rigorous, involved assessments, written competencies, and resulted in certificates of completion.
- Because there may be a large turnover in WIA service provider organizations and there is no guarantee that WIA service provider organizations whose staff was trained will have their contract renewed with the One-Stop Center, it is necessary to ensure that training programs are repeated and available after the demonstration program has ended. Sites have been thinking about this issue (e.g., by developing training programs that include a wide variety of agency partnerships; planning to post training modules on the project web site; and making training a requirement of employment).

### **3.2.4 Financial Incentives**

- Fear of losing benefits continues to be a strong disincentive to full-time employment for people on social security benefits. At nearly all sites where customers were being served, it was noted that customers on SSI or SSDI did not want to obtain full-time employment for fear of losing their benefits (especially medical benefits).
- It was noted that providing program participants with the ability to control their own budget to purchase training, services, and other resources reinforces independence and is a necessary condition for finding and retaining employment for some customers.

### **3.2.5 Coordination of Services and Resources**

- In all demonstration programs, coordination of services has begun with extensive collaboration, and in many cases, has transitioned to the leveraging of resources among partners and collaborators. The next crucial step in the coordination of services is the establishment of formal agreements (e.g., memoranda of understanding) so that these leveraged resources can be sustained once the program has ended.

### **3.2.6 WIA Performance Measures**

- Almost universally – at site visits, in Quarterly Reports, or both – projects have reported that the current indicators of performance for workforce investment activities under WIA are a disincentive to serving customers with disabilities.
- Several project sites noted that state and federal policies, such as WIA performance measures, impede the One-Stop Center’s ability to provide needed services to “harder-to-serve” populations.
- Not only are sites reluctant to enroll program participants in the WIA system, but members of the WIA system (e.g., local WIBs, One-Stop Centers) are sometimes reluctant to fully participate in projects for fear that their staff will be required to take on time-consuming responsibilities and be accountable for what they perceive will negatively affect their performance.
- Sites are either not enrolling any program participants in WIA or only enrolling those participants that they gauge will be successful in finding employment. Many sites are keeping “shadow” information systems.
- Employment services (not yet customized in most cases) are being provided by project staff instead of One-Stop Center staff.

### 3.2.7 Customized Employment Services

- The key elements of customized employment services are: individualization, representation, ongoing support, and negotiation. Westat encountered numerous examples of project sites implementing the key element of *individualization* (e.g., percent-centered planning). There was some evidence of *representation* and *ongoing support* at project sites. However, there was little evidence thus far of progress with the key element of *negotiation*.
- The employer side of the customized employment services equation appears to be weaker than the person-centered side, and there was no strong employer development emphasis to any CE project.

### 3.2.8 Sustainability

- Although some Fiscal Year 2001 CE and IG projects appear to have been successful at transforming project collaborations and procedures into formalized arrangements that bode well for sustainability, more sites need to pay attention to facilitating the establishment of memoranda of understanding (MOUs) between agencies that provide resources to people with disabilities and One-Stop Centers. It is also important to create formal policies and procedures that help to ensure sustainability, for example, by establishing MOUs that describe specific resources that will be provided.
- At the time of the site visits, sustainability of direct services was not yet a high priority in any program in any fiscal year. Fiscal Year 2003 programs were still in the process of setting up their projects, identifying additional collaborators, sorting out roles with partners, and designing workflow. Fiscal Year 2001 programs, and to a large extent 2002 programs, are focused on providing services to program participants.
- Although VR and other agencies use similar funding pools to assist clients, these funds often have strict limitations and can only be used for specific services. Hence, many of the project sites specifically set aside money in their budgets for direct service provision. For sustainability, it will be critical to find ways to access other funds.
- Many sites are using project staff or sub-contractors to provide customized employment and other services. These functions and activities will need to be incorporated into the WIA system, either at the One-Stop Centers or through formal partnerships with mandated and non-mandated partners once the demonstration program ends. It will be these formal partnerships and changes in policies and procedures at the end of program that will indicate whether sustainability has been achieved.

### **3.2.9 Chronic Homelessness Issues**

- The Chronic Homelessness program initiative has two primary criteria for customer entry – determination of long-term homelessness and disability. In order to be considered chronically homeless, a project applicant must have been continuously homeless for a year or more or had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. In addition, the applicant must be an unaccompanied individual with a disabling condition (which is defined as a diagnosable substance use disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability, or chronic physical illness or disability including the co-occurrence of two or more of these conditions). The disabling condition also must limit the individual's ability to work or perform one or more activities of daily living. Project sites have reported barriers to documenting that a person meets these criteria.
- The definition of disability is different for the Chronic Homelessness sites and programs that potentially will be providing services to Chronic Homelessness program customers (e.g., SSA or VR). Therefore, when program participants attempt to obtain resources from these other programs, they may not meet the eligibility requirements. This issue bears watching in the next phase of the evaluation.
- Engaging Chronic Homelessness program customers in sustained and meaningful work activity using customized employment strategies will be a significant challenge, and intermediate steps may be necessary before achieving customized employment outcomes.
- It will be necessary for ODEP to be somewhat flexible in its early expectations as the projects sort through the various housing and employment issues.

### **3.2.10 All Youth Programs**

- Despite the numerous and diverse services being provided to customers in youth programs (particularly the IGs and HS/HT demonstration programs), it appears that many of these activities are operating outside the WIA system
- Sites vary in their success in involving the workforce development system in their programs. Those sites with previous contact with the WIA system appear to be better integrated with the WIA system than those with no previous experience, suggesting that in the future, ODEP may want to require existing MOUs or other formal agreements as part of the RFP process.
- The Fiscal Year 2003 youth programs are shifting to an intermediary approach in which demonstration projects identify intermediary organizations that will be aligning and brokering multiple services across institutional and funding sources. At the time of site visits, these projects were in the process of scanning the environment and identifying appropriate intermediary groups. The next phase of the evaluation will further examine the processes and impacts of intermediaries.

### **3.2.11 High School/High Tech Program**

- There is wide variation in each HS/HT project's progress toward meeting these expectations, and the reason may be related to the nature and extent of previous experience with the HS/HT program.

### **3.2.12 Faith-Based Mentoring**

- All sites have expressed difficulty in recruiting or working with faith-based sub-awardees.
- The most common reason cited was strict eligibility requirements for applying to be a sub-awardee.
- Small organizations that met the size requirement lacked the capacity to apply for and/or execute the sub-award.
- Some faith-based organizations indicated that they would not apply due to concerns over meeting ADA requirements, as well as their perception of the amount of government bureaucracy that would be necessary to meet all oversight requirements.
- Non-faith-based organizations expressed resistance to work with faith-based organizations.

### **3.2.13 Technical Assistance Collaboratives**

- As a result of the re-focus of priorities, some previously produced products had not yet been approved by ODEP, and at the time of the site visit, few products had been disseminated.
- As several demonstration projects head toward completion and new ones begin their implementation phase, the NCWD/A and NCWD/Y have the particular responsibility of providing TA that is targeted toward the needs of project sites and is effective in helping them to achieve their goals and objectives. Such TA will need to focus on the topic areas identified by many demonstration projects— implementation of customized employment services; provision of services to people with psychiatric disabilities; and provision of information to program participants on financial issues and work incentive programs.
- Other topics requiring additional TA consist of integration of project activities into the WIA system, sustainability, and capacity-building among WIA service providers. Moreover, as requested by project sites, TA will need to pay more attention to solving specific problems using one-on-one techniques instead of group lectures.

- The other key responsibility of adult and youth TA collaboratives will be in assisting project sites in identifying promising practices and evaluating them. For those practices that are found to be effective, Westat has recommended that the TA collaboratives not only act as a clearinghouse for effective promising practices (as required by the SGA) but also develop a strategy for the dissemination of effective practices throughout the workforce development system.
- Branching out from the impressive progress made by T-TAP thus far, the TA project needs to set its sights on identifying effective practices that can be used by its wider target audience – service providers in community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) and other organizations that use the “Special Minimum Wage” program established under Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, 29 U.S.C. 214 (c).
- Promising practices (e.g., those used for selected TA sites, as well as the long distance learning approaches), need to be evaluated to determine whether they are effective in achieving their objectives. In addition, the T-TAP will also need to pay attention to formulating a dissemination strategy for the practices it finds to be effective.

#### **4. LOCAL, REGIONAL, AND/OR STATE SYSTEMS CHANGE THAT SUPPORTS PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS**

The entire premise of the ODEP demonstration program is to identify those practices that are effective in producing systems change so they can be disseminated and implemented on a widespread basis. The evaluation has determined that:

- Despite some promising practices, thus far the evaluation has identified few changes to formal policies, procedures, and staff in any of the project sites, local WIBs, or collaborating One-Stop Centers or changes to infrastructure that would facilitate systems change.
- All project sites are heavily concentrating on building infrastructure and providing services. Most sites reported that sustainability of services and formal system changes will be a major focus of project activities during the final years of the project (i.e., years 4 and 5 for 5-year programs).

The final phase of the evaluation for each program will closely examine the nature and extent of local, regional, and/or state formalized system changes.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

The independent evaluation has been moving forward in meeting the three key evaluation objectives. As a guide for measuring demonstration program effectiveness, Westat developed key indicators for each of the systems change focus areas identified by ODEP. As a next stage, the evaluation examined the inputs and processes developed by all demonstration programs, and have found that demonstration programs have moved from building capacity to implementing a wide range of activities aimed at making systems change. The evaluation has also found that those programs that are heading toward the end of their life are now directing their efforts toward improving processes to achieve improved outputs (e.g., more staff trained to implement high quality customized employment services), as well as engaging in activities that will sustain their efforts. With assistance from Technical Assistance Collaboratives, the older generation of programs is paving the way for the younger generation (Fiscal Year 2003 and Fiscal Year 2004) to move more quickly toward their outcome goals of an improved capacity of a workforce development system to meet the employment and service needs of people with disabilities.

The next stage of the evaluation will examine the self-evaluation efforts of project sites to identify effective local, regional, and/or state systems change efforts to build a sustained capacity to better serve youths and adults with disabilities in achieving improved employment and education outcomes.

**APPENDIX A**

**SYSTEM CHANGE AS A COMPONENT OF THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE  
OFFICE OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT POLICY (ODEP) DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM**

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## **System Change as a Component of the External Evaluation of the Office of Disability Employment Policy Demonstration Program**

### **Focus Area Definitions**

As part of the external evaluation, Westat will examine changes to the workforce development system in six focus areas: (1) Capacity, (2) Coordination, (3) Customization (consumer choice and employer support), (4) Development/Adaptation/Evaluation of new practices, (5) Dissemination of effective practice, and (6) Sustainability of effective program elements.<sup>3</sup>

#### **1. Capacity**

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 established a national workforce preparation and employment system to meet the needs of businesses, job seekers and those who want to further their careers through One-Stop single-entry access to job training, education, and employment services. While universal access is a guiding principle of the WIA, the One-Stop system and its staff often lack the capacity to provide coordinated, seamless service delivery to people with disabilities for the many programs and services which typically impact their entry or retention in the workforce. An overall objective of the ODEP Demonstration Program is to improve capacity throughout the entire workforce development system in order to increase employment and retention of people with disabilities.

The capacity to achieve positive workforce 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 several different types of resources (e.g., funds, staff, time, resources, policies, procedures) and services. When examining system change within the category of capacity, the external evaluation will seek to determine whether there have been changes in:

- The number and type of staff in the program
- Staff background and training received
- The ability of staff to work with disabled clients (i.e., can staff communicate with clients and do they have experience working with them?)

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<sup>3</sup> Note: Service delivery is another important component of the external evaluation and will be covered in other aspects of the evaluation (e.g., through extraction of data from Quarterly Reports).

- The number, nature, target (e.g., staff, people with disabilities, family members, employers), and type of training programs offered
- The number of training classes and number of people attending classes
- Perceptions of stakeholders in the workforce development community (e.g., employers, business leaders, teachers, state officials) regarding the hiring of people with disabilities
- Methods used to educate relevant stakeholders and One-Stop system personnel about delivering employment outcomes for people with disabilities
- Sources of referrals for program services
- Perceived barriers to employment in the community (e.g., outdated stereotypes and attitudes, lack of information) by people with disabilities and their families

## **2. Coordination**

One of the barriers to positive employment outcomes among people with disabilities has been the lack of coordinated employment services for disabled people (i.e., services that are well-integrated). Instead, services have existed in separate “silos” where the disabled person has traditionally had to move from one silo to another to obtain information and apply for and obtain services. The evaluation will seek to determine whether demonstration programs have changed the system in such a way that it is able to provide coordinated programs, processes, and services. Examples of variables that will be assessed for changes in coordination include:

- Nature and extent of non-mandated partnerships
- Number and nature of local partnerships formed (employers, workforce agencies)
- Extent to which cross-agency training occurs
- Extent to which inter-agency teams exist
- Extent of interactions with other entities (e.g., employer groups, different levels of government, other non-profit organizations)
- Roles, commitments, contributions (e.g., experience, funds, etc.) of each partner
- Barriers to being able to fulfill commitments
- Nature and extent of employer cooperation (e.g., type of occupations and industries available through grantee programs)
- Nature of relationship and interaction among partners (formal/informal; in person/telephone; regular meetings/conferences)
- Legislation/regulations/policies/practices of each partnering agency that impact on employment of people with disabilities

- Sharing, leveraging, and exploitation of expertise and funds among partners and team members with local One-Stop Career Centers
- Policies and procedures for coordinating funding, staffing, and grant activities with One-Stop Career Centers (e.g., flexible funding within and across the system) and access to other partners' services (e.g., accommodations, technology)
- Perceived barriers to employment in the community (e.g., transportation; lack of information) by people with disabilities and their families
- Impact of performance measurement systems on outcomes for people with disabilities

### **3. Customization (Consumer Choice and Employer Support)**

Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach, demonstration programs 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. Customization also applies to an employer's approach to the placement of workers with disabilities, including workplace accommodations and job restructuring. The extent to which such customization has occurred is another focus of system change in the external evaluation. Factors that will explore customization include:

- Involvement of the customer (e.g., people with disabilities, family members and potential employers), advocacy organizations, and other agencies in the planning stages of new or revised programs and/or service
- The number and nature of new or revised programs and/or services and the extent to which such programs are customized
- Use of such services and resources as SSI, SSDI, Ticket-to-Work, Medicaid, vocational rehabilitation, substance use counseling
- Number and nature of different career choices available to people with disabilities through work-based experiences and career exploratory activities
- The type of practices and services that have been developed/adapted (e.g., person-centered planning, personal budgeting, employment networks, eligible training providers, individual training accounts, vouchers, employment followup services)
- Policies and procedures available to ensure customer choice and self-determination

- Policies and procedures available to assist employers with customized employment options for people with disabilities.
- Outreach to and communication with local employers to learn about their concerns and adapt services and programs to their needs
- Ways in which programs address physical and programmatic accessibility (e.g., location, transportation, intake forms)
- Procedures for tracking satisfaction of customers, employers, state and local officials, families, providers
- Reported satisfaction with programs and services among people with disabilities, family members, employers, and others

#### **4. Development/Adaptation/Evaluation of New Practices**

ODEP wishes to ensure that its funding is being used to develop or adapt and evaluate new practices that are transportable to a variety of agencies and programs (as appropriate). The two important aspects to this focus area are: (a) developing or adapting innovative practices; and (b) determining whether they are effective. The external evaluation will be looking for changes in the system that are related to:

- The type of practices and services that have been developed/adapted
- Ways in which programs are delivered
- The nature of self-evaluation techniques conducted by the demonstration program to identify effective practices
- Ways in which information from self-evaluation has been used by the demonstration programs
- Procedures for tracking satisfaction of customers, employers, state and local officials, families, providers
- Reported satisfaction with programs and services

#### **5. Dissemination of effective practices**

The dissemination of effective practices addresses the propagation of new programs, practices, and processes throughout the workforce development system that work. The external evaluation will determine whether system elements have been changed for disseminating effective practices and whether dissemination has occurred. Indicators for examining dissemination include:

- Promotion activities conducted by demonstration programs
- Contents of websites
- Use of the media and public forums
- Networking and communications with other organizations
- Use of alternative and accessible formats
- Methods used to educate relevant stakeholders and One-Stop system personnel about delivering employment outcomes for people with disabilities

## **6. Sustainability**

Once the capacity and coordination of the system have improved, new practices are being developed/adapted and evaluated, and effective practices are being disseminated, the logical outcome is expected to be a new, effective, and sustainable workforce development system. Sustainability is a gradual process that is not expected to occur immediately. Therefore, ODEP is interested in examining changes in the workforce development system that signal that sustainability is beginning to occur.

Examples are changes in the:

- Nature, extent, and sources of funding
- Number and purpose of funding sources
- Sharing, leveraging, and exploitation of expertise and funds from a variety of sources
- Local and statewide legislation, regulations, policies and procedures that ensure that demonstration programs become part of the menu of services within the One-Stop
- Changes in the local and state levels that help improve the situation for people with disabilities