Disability Employment Initiative (DEI)

Round VIII Grantees Orientation Webinar Transcript

Thursday, November 16, 2017

>> This is Laura Gleneck with the NDI technical assistance team. I want to welcome you to the orientation for the new round eight projects. Some of you are not new to this. You are either currently operating another project under a different round, or you have done so in a previous round. Two projects are new to DEI and we welcome you.

Today, I am going to start with a roll call and this is what we typically do during our bimonthly administrative project calls. I will do that and then go over the agenda and then I will turn it to our presenters today for the orientation. They will include David Jones with the national DEI program office. We have Chris Button with the Office of Disability Employment Policy, also with the national program office, who will give a welcome and we will hear from Jimmie Curtis from the Office of Grants Management and my colleague, Miranda Kennedy, with the NDI technical assistance team.

[This transcript will begin after the roll call.]

>> Laura Gleneck: I will go over the agenda with you today. We are going to begin with Jimmy Curtis from the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Grants Management -- There is important information and reminders related to your grant that he will be sharing. Due to Jimmie 's schedule, he will start first. Then we will transition to David Jones with the national DEI Program Office. He will give the big picture and overview to help you understand how it works within the current national landscape and how it builds on the work done and your DEI rounds and how our work collectively fits in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act also known as WILA.

Then we will have a welcome from Chris Button, Office of Disability Employment Policy and then transition to my colleague, Miranda Kennedy with the NDI DEI technical assistance team. She will look at some of the start-up challenges during the startup phase with the hopes that you can avoid the same mistakes. I know that when we operated the Disability Program Navigator initiative, that this information that the new projects said were beneficial. Lessons learned from peers. Then we will look at the key players that will be working with you. During that time, David will highlight the role of the regional project officers. Miranda will give an overview of technical assistance provided by the NDI team. Then we will save time and open the floor for questions and answers. Also you have the opportunity throughout the presentation to submit any questions that you might have into the chat in the Q&A box. With that, Jimmie, I will turn the presentation over to you.

OFFICE OF GRANTS MANAGEMENT

>> Jimmie Curtis: Thank you so much, Laura. Let me first start off by saying congratulations to all of the Round VIII awardees. We are super excited to get this project started. And, the Office of Grants Management presentation is pretty short and straightforward. When we send out awards, we usually include the grantee orientation pamphlet as well as the welcome letter and a system letter. As you are aware, there are a lot of terms and conditions and guidance within the actual award document itself. So, I will just give a brief overview of what our function is. First, as grant officer, I perform official grant duties, which include maintaining official grant documents and modifications. So any modifications of the grant award have to be approved also. There are no cost extensions included in that. If you get to the end of the project and for whatever reason, a legitimate reason obviously, for you to get a no-cost extension, that would need to be approved also. Whether it be by myself or one of the regional officers. Next, we also approve any equipment purposes -- purchases over $5000. The purchases are in your actual document.

So, speaking of the grant award package again. You all received the grant award letter. It talks about the performance and how much funding you have. Some of the grant letters included a condition of award page for the grantees. A condition of award is any condition that we actually added when reviewing your narratives or your actual budget. Those will be follow-up request in terms of additional information that we need that will clarify either your budget or your actual project narrative. In turn -- the terms of conditions are clearly there. If you have questions, please feel free to reach out to myself or to Erica. I will give the contact information a little later. Your budget is there, your statement of work and if you have a change of cost that would be in your grant package.

So, as I said before, we actually include a payment management system letter on how to initiate that process. A lot of you are grantees and you have received funds from other government agencies. This should be pretty straightforward. I won't go into that too much. And then the ETA 9130 and past DEI grantees know that we use the ETA 9130. There is a website as far as those forms and you also have access to that system and information on how to access it is included in the email that we sent.

So, I will briefly go over equipment purchases. It is somewhat applicable to the DEI grants. So any equipment purchase with a per-unit acquisition cost of $5000 or more. We get questions about purchasing two pieces of equipment and the total is $5000. We want to clarify that it is only purchases per each piece of equipment that is $5000 or more. You need prior approvals. You can contact your federal project officer if you know that you have a list of equipment you plan to purchase. Run that by them to coordinate how that needs to be approved. If you want approval for all equipment purchases in one shot, it will help to make the process more efficient. We call the federal project officers FPO's. It will be submitted for our review. If we approve that, we will actually go ahead and issue a modification that is formally in the grant file. If we do not approve it initially, we will reach back and request one. How and whether or not the purchase of equipment will actually be needed in the performance of the grant.

So, I think one of the things we try to do early on after the grant awards are made is to define all of the things to keep an eye on and we go over the terms and conditions. The Department of Labor has specific conditions. Also just in terms of the process whether it be a modification or a number change, or whatever the case. We have a grant network. If you have questions around that, please feel free to contact myself and Erica via email or reach out to us by phone call and we are happy to answer. I will wrap up here. Again, you can reach out to myself or to Erika and our contact information is right there.

DEI NATIONAL OVERVIEW

>>David Jones: Hello everyone. My name is David Jones and I serve as the ETA project lead for this initiative. Congratulations again on being named for Round VIII of the DEI. We look forward to working with all of you as we work on a shared mission. A little bit about myself. I actually joined ETA a few years ago after monitoring state VR agencies for seven years with the Rehabilitation Services Administration. It is exciting to be at DOL as we continue to implement the provisions of WIOA through DEI. For today's call, we have two new grantees and it is important that I set the stage for them for the national overview. For reoccurring grantees, I hope you still learn something new.

So, this is not an electoral map - it is our DEI map. When you look at the nation as a whole, there are key statistics that I want to share. We have across the country 4,200 American Job Centers. They served 13 million Americans last year. We serve a broad range of people that includes veterans. Approximately 156,000 people with disabilities found work using the services of an American Job Center. During today's call, I will refer to the American Job Center as an AJC and I want to make you aware of that in case I use it. DOL has awarded $139 million to 55 projects in 30 states. They are shaded as you see. For those implementing DEI strategies, we have learned from evaluators that it has led to an increase in the number of people enrolled with disabilities at the American Job Center. DEI projects are jointly funded by ETA and ODEP to serve the Americans with disabilities population. The money goes from the federal level to the state workforce agencies with resources going to the local workforce development area. This reaches down to the Disability Resource Coordinators who are the critical players on the front line. I believe in our nation right now that we have about 75 Disability Resource Coordinators. Now, at the end of the day, our ultimate goal is for the DEI grant funds to implement sustainability of the practices after the grant funds have ceded. When the grant ends, we would like to see what is nurtured during the process to continue on.

In late September, DOL awarded 6 grants to the Round VIII grantees. They include four grantees focused on adult disability populations. They are Cherokee Nation, Colorado, Rhode Island and Virginia. Two grantees will focus on youth with disabilities populations and they include Hawaii and New York.

Round VIII will be the last round for DEI funding. You are a special class because you stand on the shoulders of many states and projects that came before you. That includes me. I am standing on the shoulders of Randee Chafkin, who was in place for DEI Rounds 1-6 and I know she is missed by many. Just wanted to briefly acknowledge her leadership. Today I am pleased that we have two new grantees joining the DEI family. They include the Cherokee Nation and the state of Colorado. Again, welcome. For other grantees, two have been awarded the second time and those include Hawaii and Rhode Island. Welcome back. Two grantees are what I like to jokingly call the Triple Crown winners. They include Virginia and New York, unfortunately, there is no trophy, and I do not have a lei of roses for you. Again, welcome back. You can see that we have various levels of experience in our team and hopefully we can learn from each other through networking and peer exchange throughout the performance of this grant.

I want to briefly share some key areas on how DEI evolved over the years. One is performance. The performance period for DEI fluctuated over the years. For example, Rounds 1-3 had 36 month performance periods. On round 4, three years four months. Rounds 5-7 is three years six months. And now on Round VIII, it is 36 months. This is because of the type of discretionary grant that DEI as outlined in WIOA. Because it is 36 months, we strongly encourage you to be proactive during these next few months to get the wheels in motion. I have been briefed about startup challenges from prior rounds and delays by key personnel decisions. Hopefully, that will not be a barrier for you. Now, one thing I have established in the round VII FOA that continued on to Round VIII is that applicants were required to submit a detailed work plan. As you begin to get the wheels in motion, please refer to your work plan and let that be your guiding force as you make decisions over the coming months. That will really get you from point A to point B. As it relates to significant disability populations, we did have a Round VI and VII significant disability population focus for DEI. I do want to acknowledge the effort of Chris Button for her leadership in that area. Also, DEI Round V introduced career pathways. For Round VIII, it's a more targeted career pathway focus, and it includes the work around apprenticeship. I wanted to share some of this historical evolution as a reference.

Let's dig deeper into career pathways. The definition is long and cumbersome and I want you to know that the definition at the top is the definition that I commonly reference. As you know from your FOA submission, the key thing to remember is there are six elements for career pathways. Now the DEI team has developed resources and they will be working with you over the coming weeks on understanding career pathways more. Again, Apprenticeship is an important part of the career pathway model. We do have several webinars lined up in which we will address career pathways. Miranda, later on today's call, will highlight when they will occur.

So, I think sometimes when we talk it is important to actually pause and take a step back for a moment. We should ask ourselves, what is the big picture? We have all of these requirements as Jimmie mentioned. I am telling you about the history. I just wanted to take a moment to give you remarks as you think about DEI moving forward. Oftentimes I remind folks that DEI is a pilot initiative. It is not a program. We are simply in the business of testing what works and what does not work. Unlike other typical programs in government, I like to think our style is more of a contrarian approach to how we do business. With that approach, sure, there will be increased risk. From my perspective, failure is okay as long as you are implementing something innovative, taking risks, being bold, and breaking down barriers for the greater good. And, it is through this continued innovation, our goal is to learn from your DEI projects and transfer the knowledge of strategies to be duplicated nationally. DEI is a bottom-up approach and not top-down. This is largely based on the proposals that you submitted for your grant funds. There is no cookie-cutter approach on how DEI funds must be used in the state and we want you to be innovative and think big throughout the project. You know, there is an old quote that I often to refer to about DEI. I think it reflects the essence of what DEI is all about. It is from FDR and he said, “It is common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something.” I think that captures the spirit of what we do in this business of DEI. I wanted to mention that as we go on to talk about the next slide.

That next slide is related to WIOA, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. What I wanted to do is to build a connection between what we do and the larger vision, which is important. You will not see DEI referenced directly in WIOA or in a specific regulatory commission. I do want to illustrate how DEI is a part of the WIOA implementation. The big question is the following, how do WIOA reforms improve service delivery to individuals with disabilities? Number one is it promotes physical and programmatic aspects. Two, strategically aligns the WIOA programs. And number three is it clarifies competitive integrated employment. On the next slides, I will talk about each of these in more detail. But I want to make sure you are aware of these links to the TEGLs (training and employment guidance letters). I wanted you to be familiar with that acronym. I encourage you to review these sites because it captures in layman's terms of what we do and helps remind me of the path that we are on. I encourage you to go to these links when you have a moment.

So, in reference to the first one, we promote physical and programmatic access. I want you to be aware of an important provision in WIOA, which is Section 188. Basically Section 188 of WIOA emphasizes the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provision of the law. To support the law, the joint rules recommend that all affiliated sites must be programmatically and physically accessible. I like to think of it as lowering the drawbridge so as many individuals with disabilities have access to the American Job Center. DOL published guidance surrounding this provision. This resource outlines what we mean by physical and programmatic accessibility. And provides clarification of the requirement in develop in standards and the roles and the responsibilities of the state and local boards. Chris can elaborate further as ODEP is in the process of updating the 188 guide and it is something for you to keep an eye on over the coming weeks.

Now, this slide is focused on universal design. A leading charge for the American Job Center is to have a seamless focused delivery model that is more streamlined for customers. That is important and always something to remember and how we deliver our services. Are we making it seamless for them? Before the regulations become final the two Labor Rules and Joint Rules, the word “customer” was referenced 143 times and this is a big shift from the prior WIA law that focused more on a systems approach. I never had a chance to go back and count the number of times that customer was referenced again, but I know the focus on the customer continues to be a high priority at the DOL today. It supports the principles of universal design. This means a design for all. And to learn more about that, DOL has had four Customer Design Centered Design Initiative Challenges to increase awareness of this important to maintain the momentum of WIOA. Through the leadership of Virginia Hamilton the administrator for Region 6 of CA, this is a sample question that some teams address. She led this effort within the DOL. One thing that we collectively worked together on is addressing the following question- How might we work with our partners to design services that are physically and programmatically accessible to individuals with disabilities?

The other thing that I want to mention is to please visit that link on WorkforceGPS. It does give an overview of universal design and customer centered design and how the two interconnect. We did something innovative called the webcast, which is only like two minutes and 30 seconds. Hopefully you can visit that. The thing I want you to be mindful of is that we are collectively in the business of serving people. To do that, we use empathy to understand the needs of our customers. I hope that is something we all share in the work we do. I know we do.

The second way that we all promote service delivery to individuals with disabilities is by strategically aligning across programs. That is through the submission of the state plan, which is an important document that I hope you can integrate with your everyday work. Of the 57 state plans submitted (including territories) last spring, 27 were submitted as Unified State Plans and 30 were submitted as Combined State plans. A Unified State Plan is including the six programs. Again, they would be Title I for adults, the adult dislocated worker and youth formula administered by DOL. Title II is the Adult Ed program administered by Education. Title III, Wagner Peyser, is administered by DOL. Title IV is the Vocational Rehabilitation program administered by Education. We have a six core programs. When you hear the term core program that is the four titles of the law and something to be mindful of. It is only those parties, if it is only them, it is considered unified. Whereas a combined state plan is including those program partners plus one or more of the state plan partner programs. That could be the Social Security Administration or any other required partner. So, it is more expansive than a Unified State Plan might be.

Once you put together your DEI project, your state plan should be a key resource to know how you connect with the larger state plan and strategy. The state plan will include strategies related to career pathways, apprenticeship, partnerships and in addition the state plan must describe how they will comply with the nondiscrimination requirements of section 188 that we talked about earlier.

One critical partnership is with Social Security Administration on the Ticket to Work program. As you know there is a provision that by accepting DEI grant funds, the project must be an EN or apply with SSA to be an EN within 60 days after receiving DEI funds. I recognize there is confusion at the front lines about the mission of Ticket to Work. We are working to address those issues. ODEP has been tasked with leading the charge at the national level. You do have TA support from NDI as you work through that.

Now, I want to make you aware of additional resources. Technology is the wave of the future and we hope that you can rely on the computers to get the resources that you need.

I am pleased to say that we have been making great improvements in this area that will be more user-friendly for you. The first one I want to highlight is the DEI workforce page which is the first link. This will be your resource in carrying out day-to-day activities. This site will be undergoing a major change over the next two weeks. When we have our December 12 call, we are going to do a walk-through so that you will know exactly where you can find the different things on your DEI page. We want to make it efficient for you so that you can focus on the work of serving the people and not focus on trying to find the different information that we provide at the national level. So stay tuned, you will have additional information. The next site looks pretty good and I hope you have a chance to check it out. What we have done is we have tried to be strategic and helping you connect the pieces. There are three key elements. You have the American Job Center with two customers, the employer and the individual with the disability. We have designed resources for each of the pieces and I hope that you have a chance to check it out. During our December 12 call, we will walk through that as well. And then we have the Innovation and Opportunity Network and the website link is there. Think of this website as more of what is related to the implementation of the WIA law across the six core programs. This will be high level about how we implement WIOA collectively across the agencies. It could be a good resource. Finally, we have the Office of Disability Employment Policy. We have placed their link there as well. There will be an opportunity as I answer questions at the end. At this moment, I would like to transition over to my friend, Chris Button.

WELCOME FOR OFFICE OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT POLICY

>> Chris Button: David, thank you for the overview and thanks to Laura and the whole team for convening this orientation call and to Jimmie for the information from the grants office earlier. I will just say a couple of things on behalf of ODEP. We are thrilled to welcome this new group of grantees. We appreciate working with David and the ETA team to work with you guys to try to really identify strategies for the future. You are our tentacles to the real world. I don't know how many of you think that Washington, DC is the seat of knowledge, but we are here to tell you we are not. You guys are the inner fighters -- the innovators and the change agents. You are the ones that are validating system change strategies at your sites. We can then take that national, as David said. After we have documented the effectiveness through your work.

Now, I am reminded of one of my favorite quotes from 1866 and a fellow by the name of Samuel Gridley Howe who was the father of special education. He was quoted in the book called, The Origin And Nature Of Our Institutional Models. In this book, he said the following, as men and women unwittingly and sometimes unwillingly reveal their character and even their secret motives of action by the sort of language they use, so that generations reveal the prevailing ideas of the men who have lived in them by the works, which they leave behind them. When you think about that WIOA, the works are not just architecture and building and great works of art and literature, it is policy and programs. What are the great works that we are going to be leaving behind as a result of this disability employment initiative activity? It is making sure that our programs and services that are provided are welcoming and inclusive of youth and adults with disabilities.

That people with disabilities have the opportunity to work and participate in all of the benefits that we have here in the United States of America of being able to be a full participating member of our communities. And, employment is the key. What you are doing at the American Job Centers with your DEI activities is essential to helping us bring all of the pieces together, as David was describing. So that youth and adults with disabilities, including those with significant disabilities, will have those opportunities.

I want to highlight some of the things David mentioned. The Section 188 guide is a reference guide that provides many examples of what can be done to implement the regulatory requirements of the nondiscrimination provisions of section 188. We are in the process of updating it and we hope to have it out early in the year. But here is a perfect example of how the DEI activities have helped inform policy nationally. Because when you look through the plethora of activities that are listed in that 188 guide, the overwhelming majority have come from our DEI partners. You all have provided the examples, many of the examples that are included in that guide. As we update it now and focus on some of the newer requirements of the WIOA such as certification and memoranda. We thank you for that from a national perspective. That will inform everyone across the country once the updated guide gets out.

David also mentioned the importance of the state plans. I cannot reiterate how important they are. We do have on one of the ODEP technical websites, Data and Resources to Inspire a Vision of Employment (DRIVE) -- [http://drivedisabilityemployment.org/](http://drivedisabilityemployment.org/%22%20%5Co%20%22Data%20and%20Resources%20to%20Inspire%20a%20Vision%20of%20Employment%20dot%20org) - that has done an analysis of each estate plan. We went through and we pulled out particular examples relating to disabilities included in the plan. What does it say about financial literacy? What does it say about customized employment? What does it say about competitive integrated employment? We have pulled out the words, across the states, the words from the plans. You can go in and click on it and see the analysis of 10 or 12 areas about what your state plan says. Then of course there is a link to your full, complete plan so you can look at the entire thing. When you access the link to the website, it will pull up a map and you can click on your state. I want to reiterate David's welcome. We are thrilled to click off this new round of grantees and we look forward to working with you.

DEI FRONT LINE OVERVIEW: TOP START-UP & IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

>>Laura Gleneck: Thank you Chris. I am going to turn it over to my colleague, Miranda Kennedy. She will talk about the front line and how you can move forward. With that, Miranda I turn it over to you.

>> Miranda Kennedy: Hi everyone, it is great to be here today and I want to congratulate you as well on your DEI award. We are happy you are joining us in this great work. Coming in at Round VIII is a good move, since we have learned a great deal even since Round VII started last fall.

Just a quick note about my background for those of you who have not met me before. Like the rest of the technical assistance team, I came from the field and I have worked in the state and local workforce system working on increasing access to the employment system to get better employment outcomes for people with disabilities. Now I am with the DEI TA team and it has been a pleasure to work with the DEI since its start in 2010. Our team works closely with our projects and we learn a great deal from them that we share with the national office and across projects and the workforce system.

One of my favorite DEI quotes that I share is this, the measure of success isn't whether you have a difficult problem, but whether it is the same problem you had last year. That is from John Foster Dulles. We are experiencing success. In large part because we have addressed some of the old problems. We want to give you a leg up on what some of those issues have been with this section.

Let's talk about start up implementation. I don’t want to just give you challenges though. I also want to give you some strategies to address those challenges. We are sharing this because as Laura mentioned at the beginning, we have learned from past projects that it is good to hear lessons learned from projects that preceded them. I am going to cover the types of things that your peers wanted to know more about or what they wish they had on their radar at the point where you are now. This is not all-inclusive list and some of these touch on each other, but it will give you a running start of things to consider with the kinds of issues you will face out of the gate and how you will address these effectively for long-term success, which is what we want.

So, let's take a look at the first two. We have five total we will go through. Communication infrastructure is pretty straightforward out of the gate. Setting up an effective communication infrastructure such as project calls including technical assistance liaisons. That's an important part along with other partners from the national level. Also reporting and requesting information on how to handle that. Emails and so forth. How are you going to be working with and among the various DEI stakeholders at the national, state and local level? Figuring out the communication of the structure out of the gate. We can certainly support and help you with that. That is part of what today's call is about.

Looking at the operationalizing strategy, David touched on this. The workplan that exists and the proposal. The role that will require more of a strategy. Of course, that is taking place early on and many of you are already engaged in that. We do want to let you know, and it will be reiterated, this process can significantly be assisted by consulting with your national technical assistance provider. You will have a liaison and we will go through that and the roles later in the presentation. Working with our team to help you with that and to share what has worked with others to give you insights. We are not telling you what to do, but you can benefit from what we have to offer. So, that is really something to consider and to keep in mind. You know, we have all come from the field at the state and local level. Your TA team is familiar with operationalizing in a concrete and tangible way. We are not just an in theory TA provider. We have walked that walk and we want to keep that in mind for you.

So another common challenge at the beginning is infrastructure. There could be delays and we have seen this before and setting up subcontracts and DRCs with pilot regions. That is something to take into account as well. David touched on that at the beginning and your TA can support you with that. Along those lines, you know, we have really seen where there is an infrastructure default. That is this impulse to market the DEI out of the gate to job seekers with disabilities in the business community. Even in your thinking at this point in the process, at the very beginning. We advise against that. Marking the DEI risks turning your DEI into a silo’d program. The DEI is term limited and not a program. It is an enhancement to the workforce system. As you know, the DEI goal is to increase access to existing programs by building the capacity of the system and programs specifically existing. Career pathways programs that better assist people with disabilities. You know, your peers and other rounds have talked about the DEI as being a blueprint for WIOA and how it works across titles. This is an enhancement and not a program that can be behind the scenes. So, as you move forward, marketing the accessibility of your job centers and career centers, that's what it is about. Not marketing the DEI. We encourage that.

We are going to talk about partnership challenges. So, one of the challenges that your peers have seen, and you might see as well, hopefully not. If you are, you are in good company. One of the common challenges is not identifying partner roles from the beginning. Of course that results in problems with coordination and understanding and achieving the grant goals. That goes along with the default of what this is about and having a clear understanding of that. This opportunity with WIOA and how these partnerships can align more closely goes hand in hand with the DEI. It can make things mutually beneficial if you align with that. It has been said earlier in today's presentation.

Local pilots higher Disability Resource Coordinators before they fully understand the DEI objectives and the role that the DRC can play. They have the job description, but we have seen time and again where they have tapped the existing case manager not realizing the role is more than that. One of the tools we have developed is the Tale of 2 DRCs. It is a disability planning project. I want to give an example from round VII. Just a month or a month and a half ago we were in Massachusetts, which has a round DEI VII project. We have Richard who was a navigator and he came up in one style. Where the DEI was conceived as an employment program and they acknowledged that. However, after having done this work for a number of years, it was successful but not in a capacity building and sustainable way. We have come in and shared the Tale of 2 DRCs process with Richard and it provided a framework to shift over and change their strategy. We have seen an “Ah Hah!” moment with job center leadership. As I have said, we have learned much even since round VII of how to convey this message effectively to the field. Definitely, we ask you to discuss with your TA liaison about using this tool with your Workforce staff before they hire their DRC. It is food for thought. It gives information but does not tell them what to do. It informs their more fully about what we can be achieving and how that might look.

DEI Fundamentals of Knowledge: This ties it together, really. Back to what we talked about before. When operationalizing projects, one thing that has occurred in the past is that we want to get up and running and we have a timeframe to adhere to. It is important that before we do that that we take the time to have a good lay of the land and have a good comprehensive understanding of the project components. So, we are really customizing trainings and timelines to meet the individual needs of project staff before they began DEI implementation. The project staff are operationalizing that service delivery before understanding, it presents challenges down the road, and you have to back up. Again, that ties into the understanding of what the DEI is about and the DRC's on the call have this. We want to make sure the field at the local level really does.

One specific example that I am going to cite here and we have many to choose from, this will be on your radar if you are not already set up as a workforce employment network. It is the DEI component of becoming a workforce employment network. We encourage projects to work closely with your workforce with how to operate your EN before applying and registering. We are doing this to give you a really better sense and vision of what you are signing up for and what your local areas may be signing up for at the state level, or if you join a national EN before you go through the paperwork to become an EN. Taking that time with your TA and our subject matter expert on this can really leave any concerns that you may have about the significant impact of becoming an EN. It gives meaningful information that empowers you to make choices. We do this in a meaningful fashion to meet your local areas that are pilot sites long-term needs. It will ultimately lead to more sustainable outcomes beyond the grant funding. So, those really are some of our key takeaways. We have spelled it out on the slide so you can take it with you. We hope you will work with your TA liaisons to dive more deeply into this.

CLARIFYING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

# Federal Project Officers

>> David Jones: I want to first off give clarification about the role of ETA before we go into the Federal Project Officer (FPO). ETA takes the lead on developing the solicitation for the DEI grants. Some are sad that DEI will not move forward, but the good news is that I will be more available now because historically, at this time of year, I would be starting the planning stage for the next round of grants. I feel in some ways there is a silver lining that I can be more engaged at this moment and working with the DEI grantees and not thinking a year in advance. So, in some ways, it's a good thing. I will have that opportunity to be working more closely with you. I am happy about that. The other thing that ETA does is that we oversee the technical assistance from NDI and we oversee the federal project officers, which is where we are now.

So basically these are your FPO's. That is the acronym for federal project officer and every grant is assigned a regional federal project officer and I am sure you have connected already. There are six across the country and they conduct on-site monitoring and they serve as the primary federal contact. They are our antenna for the headquarter office and for your purposes, they are the people you should contact should you need to make a modification with your budget or statement of work. To give you a heads up, I meet with the team quarterly with the FPOs. One of the first things we do every meeting is we look at the drawdown of funds. It is something that we monitor because we want to make sure that you draw down the funds as intended. We do not want to see a situation where there is so much money at the end of the grant and then you are seeking a no-cost extension. We work with the FPOs to be a little tough on you guys to make sure that you spend the money.

Also with the FPOs, they receive your quarterly reporting: the quarterly narratives and the ETA Form 9130. I did a webinar a while back and this is the link to that webinar that outlines what we would like to see in the narratives. For the newer class, that may be helpful. The key thing to remember when you do these narratives is to make it concise and focused. For me, less is more. If you can give a few good examples rather than a lot of bad examples, you know, I'm much happier with a few good examples. I can relay that to our leadership and to what we report to Congress. These are good things. A few good examples is great. The good examples are usually ones with a story that has a beginning, middle and end. The beginning is what the problem was and the middle is how it was addressed. The ending is what was the outcome? That is what we want to see in terms of those narratives. Hopefully that will help you. But, less is more and concise, good examples is what we are looking for. Of course, the FPOs review the financial status reports for the DEI. Work with your FPO to figure out what is due for the next reporting period for a lot of the older grantees; I know they have a submission deadline of February 14. You should be working with them to figure out what you need to submit even though you are still in the startup phase.

# Technical Assistance Team

>>Miranda Kennedy: We are going to talk about the technical assistance that is provided by NDI Consulting, Inc. We have been contracted to provide training and technical assistance (TA) to the national office and to the regional project officers and to the DEI grantees on the call with us. Also the DEI project staff and the workforce development system with what we are learning around the DEI outcomes and the strategies and what has been effective in terms of getting people with disabilities into career paths and the outcomes.

So our team members include Michael Morris who is our project director and Laura Gleneck who is the project manager. You will get a lot of information from Laura Gleneck. If you are not, let us know because you should be. We also have our technical assistance liaisons. We wear different hats as well, just like most folks in the workforce system. There is myself, I am the DEI director of training and technical assistance. We have Brian Ingram with the workforce access and Integrated Resource Team approach. We have David Mayer who is the career pathways subject matter expert. We also have Nikki Powis, who is the DEI youth and business engagement subject matter expert. Hopefully, you will learn more about how the liaisons connect in a couple of slides. I have mentioned Kevin Nickerson before and Nanette Goodman. Kevin is the subject matter expert on Ticket to Work and workforce EN. He had a nationally recognized successful EN and has learned a lot from the field. He is supported by the Nanette, who is our data analyst. They will help to track and support all of the Ticket to Work that you are engaged in. Don't feel like you have to figure it out by yourself, we have a lot of support. We also have Alexandra Kielty and Jayson Gleneck. You may remember Alexandra from the DPN initiative. We are thrilled to have her on our team as well as the rest of the team. They're working closely with David right now on WorkforceGPS with Laura. So, that is the team members you will be hearing from and working with. We all come from the field and we have worked at the state and local level among your TA liaisons in the Job Centers, as was mentioned before. We get out to the field regularly and try to stay in regular communication. That makes us relevant on how we can connect with each other.

Really we do provide information and we host a listserv to compile and disseminate resources and training information. We also use that to collect information from you. We do maintain, as well, a DEI collection site and Disability community of practice. You will be well acquainted with that. David is working closely with Laura and Jayson to make them more efficient and easier to find our great resources. So the technical assistance, again you will be assigned a TA liaison to work closely with you. They are available for anything you need. One-on-one discussions, problem-solving or strategic planning. Really, we are here to support the implementation of the DEI within the workforce development system. We are not just hitting the numbers, but we are building capacity and focused on the sustainability from the beginning.

So, start up and implementation. I just talked about some of the challenges, but we have, and you've seen already, the suite of TA and training tools. We look at responding to needs and we want to be tailored in our approach. We have updated those for you so you're benefiting from this last round of DEI. It has been pretty finessed and hopefully we will be able to execute some great technical assistance and support that meets all of you where you are at.

So the grantee/TA on-site visits. It provides what we do with our TA visits. This is an opportunity for us to provide support directly with you. We can come in observe and analyze and identify strengths and challenges within your project. We do pre-site planning activities with DEI project leadership along with your project officer and the national office. We want to make sure that we come together in a way that you get the benefit from all of our perspectives.

And FPO's and the national office and liaisons will be extended opportunities to be part of that agenda development to make sure things are included from their perspective that might be helpful at the state or local level. And, certainly join us where that is possible. We also have some post site activities that are listed here. We do post site visit surveys and we write reports and we highlight that information. There is a lot we learn from being on the ground with all of you. It may not just be a meeting at the state level. We certainly take the show on the road and go to local areas and meet with local sites. That is a new practice we have done and we can be flexible with how we do this. Whatever meets your needs. We want to be effective with our site visits and with peers who are similar in scope and size and responding to the types of needs that you might have.

>> So, we have our NDI/TA contact information here for you. We are all very much looking forward to working with you and learning from you. Because we still have things to learn and figure out. That is part of the beauty.

GRANTEE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

>>Laura Gleneck: Thank you Miranda. I will do this quickly because we do want to open to questions and answers. So the TA team has been around for a long time. Miraculously, we started with the Work Incentives Grants. We have grown and learned with all of you and that is part of the great journey that we have all taken. So, we are just really glad to be here with the new grantees. As Miranda said, you all should be on the listserv and you should have already received a calendar invite. If you are not on the listserv and you have not received a calendar invite, please send something to Miranda or myself so we can get you caught up.

The national DEI office holds a bimonthly project leads administrative meeting. The next one takes place December 12. And, the calendar is already set through June. These are mandatory meetings. So, we request that somebody from your team is on this call. Sometimes there are meetings that have schedule conflicts that come up. So a senior DRC may participate in your place. During these meetings, we have a presentation and you receive updates from the national office and other teams as appropriate. The calendar invite for the December 12th meeting should have been shared already. Please let us know if you have not received it.

We also have a grantee learning opportunity that is taking place next week, November 28 starting at 3:00. We start grantee learning opportunities/webinars at 3:00 PM Eastern Time to take into consideration the vast time zones. Round V was the first project that implemented career pathways even before WIOA was on the ground and running. Over the years, we have learned a lot about the DEI projects and working at the state and local level. Dave Mayer is our subject matter expert and he will work with Miranda to present part one of the three-part series, Integrating DEI and Career Pathways Strategies to Improve Inclusivity. That is really what the DEI is all about. Increasing access and participation of individuals with disabilities. We do request that you register for each of the trainings and there is a link here. You should have already received the invite separately. We will share this PowerPoint after we are done. I will include in the email a link that Chris Button referred to with the DRIVE website and specifically the information about WIOA. I went over that quickly because I wanted to turn it back to David Jones if we have time for questions and answers. David.

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

>>David Jones: Thank you Laura. I do want to mention this is a team effort on the ETA side and there contact information is on this slide should I not be available. I would like to open to questions and answers. Are there any questions I can answer?

>>Laura Gleneck: David, I have one that was in the chat box and I will raise that while everyone is getting ready. The question was, when does the Department of Labor plan to negotiate outcomes with grantees?

>>David Jones: That's a good question. I don't know if it is DEI specific, or a different program. But if it is targeted, I will have to look into this question. We are an initiative and we have different ways of doing business. That is a great question. Laura, if you could track down the name, I will double check. I don't think it is applicable to DEI compared to other programs because we are an initiative and no memo came my way about negotiation for outcomes of the DEI. I would like to verify it and I will get back to that person to confirm.

>>Joe Ashley: Hello, this is Joe Ashley from Virginia. I would just like to say this was well done and well organized as an orientation. I learned a lot today. I have been around these things a few years and this continues to be excellent technical assistance. I really do appreciate you taking the time to put together something that is really useful. I appreciate it.

>> Marie Valenzuela: This is Marie in Colorado. Hi. If the outcomes of the targets are not applicable because this is an initiative, can we not have statements of work as initiatives in our plan?

>>David Jones: This is something where you need to work with your FPO. Basically what you have submitted as part of your grant application are the goals in which we are holding you accountable to. But in terms of a separate initiative with outcomes, I am not aware of a separate reporting requirement beyond what we have already established in this webinar with the quarterly narratives and the 9130. So, this is something that I want to verify with our FPOs to make sure we are consistent across the country and how we are monitoring that. Let me look into this a little more. You know, again, we are not a program and we are an initiative. We are not as rigid, is what I want to say, as maybe a formalized DOL program. We are a pilot. Let me look into this in terms of negotiation for outcomes. I want to make sure that it isn't something that should be occurring. Let me look into it more.

>>Laura Gleneck: David, this is Laura and I remember that it does indicate in the FOA that grantees were to identify their proposed targeted outcomes and then upon receiving awards, those would be negotiated.

>>David Jones: Right. That would be with the FPO in terms of what you are targeting. What we have found historically is that if you don't set a goal, you're not going to work towards it. Sometimes people go through the motions. What we want to see is you establish a goal you are working towards. Then we want to know you are making an effort to go in that direction and that you are being transparent and letting your FPO know what goals you are working toward. We want to make sure that the FPOs are aware of that and that they can work with you in getting there. Even the TA team can work with you and being transparent and what your objective is.

>>Joe Ashley: This is Joe again and I would echo the concept that you did say we would negotiate those goals are targets. I would also say David, that I like you the way you framed it as a pilot. I want to be sure that the regional FPOs come along on that ride with what they understand as the concept as you presented it. That would be very helpful.

>>David Jones: Sure, will do. We will close the loop on this and make sure we are consistent.

>>Laura Gleneck: If we don't have any more questions, I will say a few words and turn it back to David. On behalf of the technical assistance team, we are excited to be working with you. Colorado, while new to the DEI is not new to these initiatives. You have played an integral part under the DPN initiative. We are glad to have you back. We actually got Miranda from the Colorado project. And the Cherokee Nation, we are excited to welcome you to the initiative and help you as you move forward. With that, David I will turn it back to you for closing remarks.

>>David Jones: Sure. I want to thank everyone for your time and again congratulations for being an awardee for this round. I think as you do your work that it will be hard and difficult at times and you will hit a lot of barriers. I encourage you to be bold and forge ahead and you are doing good things for others that need your leadership. So, thank you again. I am here to support you, as well the TA team, the FPO or my friends at ODEP, thank you for all you do and good luck.