**Workforce 3One**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) Lessons Learned for WIOA: The Integrated Resource Team Approach for Populations with Multiple Challenges to Employment**

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*Transcript by*

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GARY GONZALEZ: (In progress) – into the top left hand of your screen.

All right. I am going to turn things over now to Laura Ibanez. She's the unit chief for the Employment and Training Administration here at the Department of Labor. Laura, take it away.

LAURA IBANEZ: Hi, Gary. Thank you for that introduction. My name is Laura Ibanez, I'm the unit chief with Employment and Training Administration specialty national programs unit. My team and I direct programs and promote public workforce system capacity for delivery of services to targeted populations, including individuals with disabilities and migrating seasonal farm workers.

I'm so glad that you all joined us today to learn more about the integrated resource team's strategic approach, developed under the Department of Labor's Disability Employment Initiative, or as we also refer to as DEI.

DEI is jointly administered by the Department's Employment and Training Administration, and the Office of Disability Employment Policy. Since 2010, the Department of Labor has awarded almost $110 million; so that number really excites me that there is such a commitment.

But it's $110 million that has been invested, and it has been awarded to 43 projects within 27 states under the DEI to improve education, training, and employment outcomes of youth and adults with disability by refining as expanding already identifies successful workforce strategies, such as the integrated resource team – or IRT approach – that we are sharing with you today. And recently with the grantees that were awarded this round – for Round 6 – we expanded it to include individuals with significant disabilities. So we're also excited to announce that.

You'll find that the integrated resources teams are particularly aligned with the goals and objectives of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act – also known as WIOA – with its focus on partnership coordination and collaboration, individualized customer services, and serving those with greater barriers to employment.

Today, our presenters, DJ Rolston and Brian Ingram, who are truly, truly the experts on this topic, will discuss the benefits of using integrated resource teams for populations with multiple challenges to employment.

Before we start with the presentation, I'm going to hand it over to Miranda Kennedy, the director of training with the National Disability Institute's DEI technical assistance team, who is going to share more in terms of the agenda and the objectives of today's webinar, and introduce our IRT experts. Thank you all for being with us today. Miranda?

MIRANDA KENNEDY: Thank you, Laura, and hello, everyone. We're really pleased to have so many of you joining us from across the workforce system and across the country today as we share lessons that we've learned from our work on the Disability Employment Initiative.

As Laura shared, we'll be presenting on our work developing and piloting the Integrated Resource Team, or the IRT approach; which is an approach that's targeted to address the specific needs of populations with multiple challenges to employment.

What you can expect to get out of today's webinar is an overview of the integrated resource team approach; as well as examples of IRT outcomes for populations with significant barriers to employment; and we'll also be talking about the implications of the integrated resource team strategy for WIOA; and as well we're hoping that you come away with an understanding of how partnership collaboration is strengthened through integrated resource team implementation.

So during today's presentation, my colleagues on the DEI technical assistance team, DJ Rolston and Brian Ingram, are going to be providing you with a background on the integrated resource team approach; what does this look like conceptually; where did it come from; as well as an overview on how to coordinate an integrated resource team. This gets more into the nuts and bolts of what an IRT looks like and how it functions with multiple partners at the table supporting job seekers with disabilities and others with multiple barriers to employment.

DJ and Brian are then going to be covering the important intersection between the integrated resource team and the meaningful impact it had related to WIA performance and achieving outcomes in WIA.

Now, I'd like to introduce my colleagues and our presenters for today. DJ Rolston is a member of the NDI technical assistance team, and prior to joining our TA team at the national level, DJ served as a disability program navigator and as the project lead for our DPN project – which proceeded the DEI – in the great state of Alaska.

In addition to this, she also served as a WIA case manager, and is very well versed in WIA as a result. While serving in these roles at the state and local level in Alaska, DJ also completed her master's degree in rehabilitation counseling. As you can imagine, this combination of on the ground experience and academic training has helped shape her views and training focus as it relates to the opportunities and promising strategies for serving individuals with multiple challenges to employment in the workforce system.

DJ brings all of this experience into her work, serving as one of our subject matter experts – along with our colleague, Brian Ingram – on workforce access and the IRT approach.

In addition to serving as one of the TA liaisons to our DEI projects, DJ is also the lead team member supporting our DEI projects that are focusing on serving youth with disabilities through youth programs in the public workforce system.

Now let me turn it over to Brian Ingram and tell you a little bit about him. Brian is another member of our NDI technical assistance team, and similar to DJ, Brian served as both the disability program navigator and the DPN state lead – proceeding the DEI – and that was for the state of Oregon, where he worked to increase physical, programmatic, and communication access for job seekers with disabilities to services, programs, and employment outcomes through the public workforce system and its partners, is the other half of our subject matter expert team on workforce access, and the mastermind behind the IRT approach, this guy was doing IRTs way back in the last millennium.

Brian Ingram works closely with DJ and the rest of our team, the national DEI office at U.S. Department of Labor, and our DEI grantees to implement the IRT approach in the career centers that serve as our DEI pilots.

In addition to serving as a workforce access expert and as one of the technical assistance liaisons to our DEI projects, Brian even went so far as to marry into the WIA family in 2012, when he married the contract manager for our regional workforce investment board. So, talk about being committed to his work.

I tell you all of this because I think it's important for you to know that DJ and Brian really have both walked a mile in your shoes. And they bring with them a deep understanding and appreciation for the mission that you all are tasked with, both under WIA and now WIOA, related to serving people with multiple challenges. And they are here today to bring you a strategy – the IRT approach – that can help you achieve your mission.

So with that I'd like to hand it over to Brian to get us started. Brian?

BRIAN INGRAM: Thanks, Miranda. Hello, everyone. Welcome to the training today and thank you so much for taking the time to attend this presentation.

Now as you might have gleaned from that very flattering introduction you just listened to, the IRT is a topic that both DJ and I have been deeply involved with for many years. And the background and development of the strategy is actually an important piece of understanding how and why it's effective, and why it may be particularly relevant now as WIOA is implemented across the country. So why don't we take a few moments and visit the history of this strategy, why it was developed, and how it works?

OK. If you can bear with me for just a second, I'd like to take you for a walk down memory lane and talk about the disability program navigator initiative. The DPN initiative was the direct precursor of the Disability Employment Initiative, and was where the IRT strategy was initially developed in response to some very specific challenges encountered during that project.

Under the DPN, the position of navigator was funded in all participating centers. The navigator was a fulltime staff person dedicated to increasing access to center services for customers with disability and multiple challenges to employment; and as such was very well positioned to identify the challenges to access that were keeping these customers from fully participating in center services and subsequently, from accessing the outcomes associated with those services.

One of the primary challenges identified by the navigators were resource gaps. In other words, customers who are going to need access to services and resources not provided directly by the center in order to be able to benefit from the services that were. For example, a customer with unstable housing might need to have their housing gap addressed before vocational training could be seriously considered as a service; right?

So many job seekers with complex resource needs were often bounced from agency to agency with a lack of processes in place to effectively coordinate or communicate across agencies and programs. And as a result of this identified need for resource coordination at a customer level, a strategy was developed in selected DPN projects that proved effective and helped to address these multiple challenges to employment and increased access to intensive services and the outcome associated with these services for those customers.

The IRT strategy was developed to address these concerns in a way that made programmatic sense to WIA providers and supported these providers in achieving WIA performance for these customers that had been historically seen as hard to serve. And as such, it was identified as a DPN best practice.

And on that note, let's move forward towards the present. OK. Let's fast forward to 2010. The DPN initiative has ended. And the outcomes of the initiative have been examined and considered and applied to the creation of the Disability Employment Initiative – the DEI.

There were many similarities between the two initiatives. For example, if a disability resource coordinator and a disability program navigator had met each other at a party, they probably would have had a lot in common to talk about, because their roles in the job center were very, very similar. But there's also some very important differences in the two initiatives, some of which are important to our discussion today.

So as plans were laid for the DEI, successful strategies from the DPN initiative were incorporated as service delivery strategies that were intended to be standardized and applied over multiple projects over the course of the initiative. So the most successful strategies from the DPN initiative were standardized and compiled into a menu that the DEI projects would choose from for implementation, and the IRT was identified as one of those strategies.

So the IRT was included as a strategy and has indeed been selected by all 43 projects operating within 27 states for implementation, and it's become a key element in the service design of these projects. So not only was it included, but it was very popular; one could say it was universally popular, which has led to very wide implementation over all DEI projects; which means that while the DEI is an active initiative, two of five rounds have been completed. Some initial performance-related data is available and this is also very relevant to our discussion today.

All right. Enough history. I believe the stage has been well set for moving into the topic of just what an IRT is and how it works. And so to start us down this path, I would like to turn it over to my esteemed colleague, DJ. DJ?

DJ ROLSTON: Thanks, Brian. So let's start just by looking at the vision of the IRT from the round three solicitation for grant applications that went out to DEI perspective projects in 2012. As Brian had mentioned on the previous slide – and slide before that – a big focus of the DEI became about helping customers with access intensive in-training level servicers of the WIA programs, and that's reflected in the vision of this IRT.

So as we look at the vision, IRTs are organized around an individual job seeker with a disability who experiences multiple challenges to employment and who has been enrolled in WIA intensive and/or training services or is attempting to obtain enrollment in these services. The concept from the IRT has now evolved to specifically refer to job seekers with disabilities who are currently enrolled or are to be enrolled in WIA intensive and training services.

The DEI is about increasing access to all levels of service, and ensuring that people with disabilities are able to attain and maintain living wage, long-term, permanent employment. The DEI accomplishes this by increasing access to the WIA customer flow, just as it's noted in the SGA there, because they see outcomes associated with those WIA Title I programs – such as the adult dislocated worker and youth programs – that help customers to build that gap out of poverty and into middle class.

So how, you ask, do you increase access to this customer flow? Well, this is done by developing informal, systemic, and programmatic partnerships and collaborations that are based on the distinct needs of the individual.

You see, the IRT strategy is the intersection where the individual and the system meet. It is about helping the customer achieve the system's outcomes by coordinating the services of multiple providers and providing unique to the customer supports to achieve the collective goals shared by the customer and all agencies involved.

And what goal are we talking about? That long-term, living wage, permanent employment goal. If the light bulbs aren't lighting up yet, let me put it this way; the integrated resource team is a tried and true practice that can achieve the outcomes of WIOA as it is a proven strategy for bringing together multiple service providers to provide holistic, wrap-around, individualized support to a job seeker who experiences multiple challenges to employment.

And if you notice, I'm using the term, "Multiple challenges to employment," because that's the thing about the integrated resource team. This model benefits a wide array of job seekers, and not just job seekers with disabilities. This model brings systems together and programs around the needs of an individual to achieve a shared goal. In other words, the same goals and outcomes that WIOA is seeking to achieve.

So what exactly is an integrated resource team? Well, an integrated resource team is initiated on behalf of an individual who is experiencing multiple challenges to employment in order to address that one individual's specific needs. The job seeker is responsible for identifying his or her role on the IRT and contributing towards attaining that employment goal.

The IRT brings together a team of diversified service providers, including community and partner agencies in job center programs, who work together with the individual job seeker to strategize on how services can be coordinated to reach and maintain that employment goal.

So let's unpack this a bit; right? First, the integrated resource team is used to address an individual's specific challenges to achieve their identified employment goal. When you hear the "I" of "IRT," you should be thinking, "Integrated and individual."

Second, the IRT includes and is largely driven by the customer.

Third, an IRT brings together multiple service providers and their resources and the customer together to coordinate the services that facilitate the customer achieving that employment goal. Notice this – and this is really, really important – that the IRT brings together the service providers and the customer. This is not a (staffing ?) The customer is an active member of the integrated resource team with a defined role and ongoing input. It is their employment goal, after all.

The members of the integrated resource team will vary from customer to customer, and are determined by the customer's eligibility for different services, and the customer's need for specific resources based on their chosen employment goal.

This team approach can promote greater assistance collaboration, increasing cross-agency education and accountability, and all integrated resource team members may collectively gain credit for the job seeker's employment outcome.

So along these same lines, and for clarity's sake, let's take a look at what an integrated resource team is not. An IRT is not an interagency committee consisting of various community agencies that focus on systems collaboration. And the main purpose of an IRT is not resource mapping, or to assist an individual to learn about various agency resources.

As we were saying on the last slide, the integrated resource team is built around an individual customer and what services or resources that customer needs in order to obtain that individual employment goal. Another way of looking at this is that an integrated resource team is an informal, customer level team composed of multiple providers that have coordinated their services to obtain a shared employment goal.

Now, you're all thinking, "Wait. Wait. But we all have our own plans." You know what; in the integrated resource team each provider will still have their own individual service plan such as that ISS or that IPE or that IEP. They'll need to obtain the outcomes associated with those services. In other words, the IRT is an informal approach used for an individual job seeker and should be driven by that job seeker's needs. Each IRT is unique and members reflect the customer's resource needs to reach a specific employment goal and that customer's eligibility services.

This is different from collaborations that are the result of systems level agreement, in which a cohort of customers share a set menu of resources or obtain the same employment goal.

To further clarify this point, the outcome of an IRT is a specific individual employment goal for an individual customer. An interagency group that gets together to, say, maybe plan a shared event for job seekers is not an integrated resource team. A customer that was in an integrated resource team might benefit from such an event, but the process of organizing and putting on such an event falls outside of the definition of an integrated resource team.

The integrated resource team is designed to help a customer achieve their living wage/long-term employment goals. The integrated resource team is the vehicle that coordinates those services.

So some examples of different members of an integrated resource team could be members from workforce development programs; members from a local mental health community program; staff from vocational rehabilitation; parole officers; veteran services; and supported employment specialists. It could be a housing provider – a housing program. It could be the temporary assistance for needy family employment and training program. It could be advocates, job seekers, families, natural supports. In one case I actually was even working with someone who was a recovering alcoholic, and their sponsor was part of the integrated resource team that we want.

So this list is by no means meant to be exhaustive, but it's meant to give you an idea of different programs and services that may participate in an integrated resource team.

The goal of the integrated resource team is to enhance cross-agency collaboration and communications to better leverage available resources in a seamless way for an individual job seeker with multiple challenges to employment.

It's to increase enrollment in available workforce development programs and enhance the knowledge of available career options, and it's to help the workforce system and partner agencies see the benefit of resource coordination and collaboration.

You know, it's quite uncanny how closely these goals align themselves with that of the goals of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; isn't it? One might even deduct this model was formed in response to WIOA; right? Actually, it's just the opposite, and later on in our presentation I'll talk about that in a little bit more detail.

But for now, I want to hand it back over to Brian so he can discuss the coordination of an IRT.

MR. INGRAM: OK. Thank you, DJ. So we've covered where the IRT came from, we spent a little time on what an IRT is and what it isn't, so now it's time to look at how. This is important, because what sets the IRT apart from many of the other resource coordination models you could encounter out in the field is that this strategy has been formulated and developed to fit nicely into WIA service delivery models, and to help providers meet WIA outcomes for customers with disability or multiple challenges to employment.

It's because of this as well that the IRT may become an essential strategy in developing WIOA service delivery models.

So let's begin by taking a look at who an IRT might be appropriate for. OK. An IRT is a customized strategy that's implemented at a customer level, and not every customer with multiple challenges to employment is going to need to engage in an IRT process to reach their employment goal.

Now some of these questions on this slide can help determine if IRT support is appropriate. For example, if your center is the only provider that the customer is receiving services from, there's no need for an IRT. There's really nothing to coordinate; right? You've got one plan, and you're going to go forward with it.

OK. If the customer has only minimal engagement with your system – say, core services only, for example, no IRT – this customer theoretically could still need an IRT, but because your system hasn't committed resources to the customer, you're not going to be in any position to facilitate the IRT.

Now finally, if the customer themselves is not willing to participate or interested in having their service provider share information freely, then there's no need for an IRT. This can happen. I'd argue that it's almost always the result of the purpose of an IRT not being adequately communicated to the customer. But whatever the reason, if the customer isn't 100 percent behind the IRT effort, there's no reason to move forward.

OK. Once the customer's need for and willingness to participate in an IRT has been established, the customer should be properly positioned in your own system. For example, the customer should be determined eligible and enrolled in your system's services, such as the job center's intensive or training services.

Your system should have made a commitment to serve this customer, based on an employment goal that the customer has ideally developed using resources in your system. The commitment could be contingent on this customer being able to obtain additional supports, but the goal should be clear; and the customer's need for the center's resources should be clear; and the specific additional supports needed from other systems to reach that goal should be clearly defined. This is very important. Because if your system isn't willing to commit resources, other systems are not going to see the need to coordinate with you.

OK. The customer should have determined an employment goal that allows for the application of your system's resources. This works in the other direction as well; right? If a customer has an employment goal, either of their own design, or one that's been determined with the assistance of another system that doesn't allow your system to apply the resources needed to support the customer, it may not make programmatic sense for you to engage in the IRT process with that customer.

OK. The customer should be consulted and agree to all contacts with other partners, i.e., should have a clear understanding of the IRT approach and releases signed where needed. The customer is the primary driver of the IRT and as such needs to understand the whys as well as the whats of any task or contact that they need to complete or make. There are many activities involved in this strategy that only the customer themselves can facilitate, like obtaining needed releases, for example. And although staff support can help them make a customer's efforts more successful, only the customer themselves can initiate these actions. The customer needs to be a willing and empowered member of the team.

OK. So now that we have a likely subject to build an IRT around, how do you go about convening all of those identified partners? So this is a general outline of some suggested steps that could be taken to initiate contact with partners a customer may be engaged with or eligible for in order to create an IRT.

So there's the introduction. You explain the services that your customer is currently engaged with in your system. This is important, because it demonstrates the commitment that you've made to that customer. And that has all kinds of effects on other systems. The fact that somebody's coming into the system with resources attached makes it much easier for that customer – usually – to get through the eligibility processes and to access resources in another system. Think of it this way; if somebody comes into your center attached to other resources, that makes you happy; right?

Eligibility. Ask if there's anything you can do to help your customer to complete the partner's eligibility process. This is actually critical, too. Every service provider is going to have their own criteria and procedures around eligibility. And coming right out up front and saying you're going to respect that process is a really good first way to begin a partnership.

Establish partnership. Let the other service providers know that you're interested in partnering, if the customer is determined eligible for their services. So what you're saying, it's a very effective and non-threatening approach. You're saying, we're making this referral, if this customer is determined eligible – they're already working with us – we should talk.

Finally, you should track the progress. You should be willing to assist in communicating any issues or challenges the customer is experiencing during the process of going through eligibility with other systems. This is important in a couple of senses. First of all, it's very important to the customer, because a lot of times those eligibility processes are kind of challenging.

It's also important in the sense that you are kind of saying that this customer is attached to our system, again, and that we've made a commitment to him, and we care about the outcome of this eligibility process.

So these first steps are very important. So important, in fact, that we've given it its own name. We call it active resource coordination. The point of active resource coordination is to give a partner targeted support around contacting, convening, and coordinating multiple service streams and providers.

As I said before, this doesn't mean that the customer is not involved in this process. The customer actually needs to be driving it; however, the customer – being the consumer of these services – is not always in the best position to coordinate them. I don't know about you, but I've been working in this field for longer than I am willing to tell you right now, and I still get surprised by the requirements and processes involved in accessing services from various systems. A customer is almost always confused and frustrated by this process, so providing active resource coordination means that you and the customer engage in the activities listed above together, as a team. The point of it is to develop an IRT for that customer.

OK. Staff working with the customer to initiate these conversations with other providers – they're providing active resource coordination. Releases are going to need to be signed by the customer and be in place, and the customer is going to need to initiative and drive the communications between the partners, especially at the front end.

Now sometimes this level of investment in a customer at the beginning of the IRT process seems challenging to provide by the job center, or sometimes responding to referrals and sharing information between providers is seen as solely the customer's responsibility. I can't emphasize this enough – the point of providing active resource coordination is to support a customer to do those very things, and to make those things a focus of the engagement that job center staff have with that customer.

OK. Let's move on to consensus. Consensus around the three key parameters is really the beating heart of the IRT strategy. The partners in an IRT must all agree on these three things. A common employment goal. That's an employment goal that does two things; right? It's going to work for the customer, and it's also going to meet the outcome requirements of all the participating partners.

Number two, lines of communication that are established prior to the need. A lot of times it can be predicted the topics and subjects and even sometimes the timeline that communication is going to need to take during the course of an employment plan. Talking about the lines of communication up front to make sure that the team can be proactive instead of reactive and is very, very important.

Finally, it's the sequence of services. So as DJ mentioned earlier, in the IRT model each of these providers is still going to have their service plan. They're going to have individual service plans and those service plans are going to follow internal guidelines and procedures. So the idea behind the sequence of services is that all of the service plans are kind of put on the table and discussed. And possible conflicts, possible ways that the plans can support each other are discussed up front.

So once consensus has been reached around these three key parameters, the IRT is in place for that customer. We recommend a face-to-face meeting of the partners and the customer, especially if there's a lot of partners involved. But the consensus – not the meeting – is the critical piece. In some cases consensus may need to be redefined because of unanticipated developments during the implementation of a plan, but sometimes not.

The same process would be used to address the new developments. No systems-level agreements are needed, because none of the partners are being asked to deviate from standard service delivery procedures, just to coordinate them with other providers. This is why any provider can participate in an IRT, and how each IRT can be composed of exactly the right partners to support an individual customer's needs to meet that specific employment goal.

Now I've explained this strategy more times than I am going to count, and I'm going to bet that right now some of you out there are probably thinking, "This sounds great, Brian, but how on earth will I find the time and resources to implement this in my center?"

So to begin to address this very important issue – and it is important – maybe we should take a look at that customer flow, DJ; what do you think?

MS. ROLSTON: Sure thing, Brian.

MR. INGRAM: All right. There it is. Now here's a flow chart that DJ and I like, because it kind of pulls the IRT process together and inserts it into a sample WIA customer flow. Now this isn't meant to be a universal flow chart as it does include specific references to the disability resource coordinator, which is a unique position to the Disability Employment Initiative. However, this is a representation of a common flow, and it's going to be useful for our conversation today.

So let's take a look at how active resource coordination and IRT facilitation might fit in to a center's existing customer flow.

MS. ROLSTON: So hey, Brian, you've been talking for awhile; how about if I explain this flow?

MR. INGRAM: That's good. I've got to catch my breath, DJ.

MS. ROLSTON: All right. So first of all, there are three colors on this chart: blue, representing a customer activity; red, which represents a customer decision point; and green, which represents the Disability Employment Initiative support. The chart begins with registration in core services and ends with job placement. For the purposes of today's discussion, let's focus on the green bits.

The big green arrows on either side of the chart represents the ongoing work of the disability resource coordinator to make the entire center flow accessible to customers with disabilities and/or multiple challenges to employment. This is critical, because if the customer flow isn't accessible, it will be impossible to position customers to be enrolled in WIA intensive services.

Now the green boxes are in very strategic positions within this flow, and active resource coordination is provided to a customer while in core services before they are considered for intensive. And the integrated resource team – or IRT facilitation support – is provided to the customer and WIA staff after the customer has been enrolled in WIA intensive and/or training, having the effect of supporting the customer through the of the existing customer flow.

So Brian, I know –

MR. INGRAM: I've got to interrupt you.

MS. ROLSTON: – I'm going to let you kind of point out for our audience that while this might be specific to the Disability Employment Initiative and talks about the role of the disability resource coordinator, there might still be some applicabilities to this model after all.

MR. INGRAM: I think you're right, DJ. Because while you may not have a disability resource coordinator in your center, the collapse of core and intensive services proposed under WIOA may enhance the role of some American job center staff and allow them to take on the role of the coordinator, as demonstrated in this flow, since there is an increased focus on providing more intensive, hands-on service to a wide array of customers. This could also allow staff to provide active resource coordination and hopefully – eventually – to engage that customer in an IRT.

MS. ROLSTON: All right, Brian. I'm going to take over and talk a little bit about how the integrated resource team has been effective in helping to meet WIA performance. So in order to set the stage for this presentation, we discussed that the purpose of the Disability Employment Initiative is to help people with disabilities to attain and maintain long-term, living wage, permanent employment. And we've posited that the best way to help people with disabilities achieve this is to increase their access to all levels of service in the workforce development system.

And even more specifically, to increase the access to what was the former workforce investment act Title I adult dislocated worker and youth programs, because it is the performance outcomes associated with those programs that help people with disabilities and multiple challenges to employment to achieve that long-term, living wage, permanent employment. Which, in the end, is what paves that path out of poverty and into the middle class.

Additionally, we suggested – and even more importantly, found to be true – that the integrated resource team is the strategy that can help customers with disabilities or multiple challenges to employment to meet those performance measures associated with those Title I programs and achieve their identified employment goals.

So it makes sense that we should look at some of the WIA outcomes from the data; does it not? OK. So historically when looking into WIA performance data, there's a notable disparity in those being served and counted in the performance pool between people with disabilities and people without disabilities.

Honestly, I think I recall most of the WIA data sets being pretty abysmal, with the average percentage of customers with disabilities being served – again, within the performance pool – is at a national average of about 4.5 percent with the outliers being that in some states they serve as many as seven percent of that population is customers with disabilities, and in other states only one percent of the customers in the performance pool are customers with disabilities.

When you consider that one in five Americans are considered to have a disability, meaning 20 percent of the population has a disability, doesn't it seem a bit imbalanced that the national average of persons with disabilities included in the performance pool was only somewhere around 4.5 percent? I don't know about you, but it certainly seems a bit imbalanced to me.

So with that, the focus on increasing access to the services associated with the performance pool has been a large focus. And with the help of the integrated resource teams, we see results like those in the table above, where the states – in this case – use the integrated resource teams to increase access of youth with disabilities to their Title I youth programs. This state used their PY 2010 data as their baseline. And as you can see that with the DEI and use of their IRTs, they were able to increase enrollment of youth with disabilities into their Title I youth programs by almost 35 percent.

Hey, Brian, why don't you talk about the adult data we have on the next slide?

MR. INGRAM: Sure, DJ. I'd be happy to. Now this chart represents a regional WIB that participated in round two of the DEI; the city of Los Angeles workforce development department. It takes a look at the percentage of customers with disabilities enrolled in their adult services over the course of the three years of the project, 2011-2014, with 2010 included as a baseline.

The first column indicates the program year, the second column indicates the total number of enrollments across all demographics, the third is the number of enrollments of people with disability, and then the fourth column gives the percentage of the whole of customers with disability – the percentage of the total enrollments.

So let's look at this. In the baseline year there were 4,150 people enrolled. Of those people, 72 had disclosed disability, which led to a percentage of 1.7 percent of the whole being the folks with disclosed disabilities. In the first year of the project 4,278 people were enrolled, of those 106 disclosed disability, and that worked out to be 2.5 percent. In the second year of the project, 5,193 people were enrolled, 438 of those people disclosed a disability, and that worked out to be 8.4 percent. In the final year of the project, 4,008 customers were enrolled, 401 of those disclosed disability, and that worked out to be 10 percent of the whole.

So as you would expect, considering the title of this presentation, those numbers increase; right? Quite a bit. From 1.7 in the baseline year to 10 percent in the final year of the project. A few things to consider as you look at these numbers. No special consideration was given to these customers around enrollment. The decision to enroll them in adult services was made using the same criteria used for every WIA enrollee in the region.

And all of these customers engaged in the standard procedures associated with being enrolled in this region – they all went through the standard customer flow. Also, although the IRT was by no means the only DEI service delivery strategy applied on behalf of these customers, it was, very often, the first one applied, and it was the bedrock that the other ones were applied to.

OK. I can hear my representative skeptical listener in my head, saying that, "Sure. The IRT may have helped customers in these regions get enrolled in WIA services, but are these numbers reflected in the DEI projects nationally? I feel like this is a fair question. So to answer it, I'm going to turn it over to DJ. DJ, do you want to take that?

MS. ROLSTON: Oh, thanks, Brian. Leave me with the hard stuff, why don't you? So I am happy to talk about that. So the previous two examples that Brian and I both just shared actually came directly from the states themselves – so that's state reported data. And we do want to share with you some of the national level data that came from the evaluation component of the Disability Employment Initiative, but what we need to caveat that with is that this information that I'm about to share with you over the following slides is only preliminary data; which, in my mind as the ever-present optimist, shows that it's only going to get better.

But it's the preliminary data that is being shared from the year four Disability Employment Initiative census report, which has been compiled by Social Dynamics, who serves as the evaluation contractor under contract by the U.S. Department of Labor's office of disability and employment policy for the purposes of the DEI.

All right. Now that I said that mouthful and given you the caveat, let's talk a little bit about this. So as we've been discussing throughout this presentation today, the goal of the Disability Employment Initiative is accomplished by using the integrated resource team strategy as the bedrock – as Brian just mentioned – to increase access to the levels of service associated with the performance pools for the youth, adult, and dislocated worker workforce development programs.

Because the goals of those programs, again, align themselves with the purpose of the DEI. As such, the first measurement that we can take a look at, which we kind of looked at over the last couple of slides, but that we can take a look at to demonstrate the effectiveness of that integrated resource team strategy, is the enrollment rate of people with disabilities into that performance pool.

As you can see here, the evaluation team looked at the designated pilot sites where the DEI was active and the integrated resource team approach was being used, versus the control sites where the DEI was not active, there was no IRT approach used and it was business as usual.

So what do we see? Well, as you can see, we see that national enrollment rate – or service rate that I mentioned earlier in the presentation – is somewhere between four-and-a-half and five-and-a-half percent across our two pilot and control sites. But as you see, actually, and it should be noted, that in the control sites that enrollment rate of customers with disabilities was a little higher than in the pilot sites.

But as we take a look at this graph, you see that that national enrollment rate of 4.8 percent starts there and by the end of the – by seven quarters into the DEI there, it ends at 8.7 percent. So that's a pretty sizable jump in enrollment, and that's as a result of in large part the integrated resource team serving as that vehicle to help plug any resource gaps and ensure that people with disabilities and customers with multiple challenges to employment are getting access.

And as you take a look at that lower line – that blue line – that represents the control sites where the DEI and the IRT are not being utilized, it stays pretty static, actually, and in the end – if we look from beginning to end – actually goes down half a percentage.

So it really is indicative of the fact that by using something like the integrated resource team, people with disabilities and multiple challenges to employment are gaining more access to all levels of service – not just that poor service, but also that more intensive, enhanced service.

So I know, you're all thinking by now, "OK. OK. You've talked about changing the enrollment. But what about the meat and potatoes;" right? Let's talk about the actual performance measures, because that's what you're all thinking about.

So let's do that, shall we? Let's first look at the employment rate. So the question being, did pilot sites have a higher employment rate than the comparison sites by quarter after enrollment? Well, as you can see here, differences between the employment rates of the treatment, which is the pilot sites, and the comparison – or the control groups – in quarters two, three, and four after exit, where statistically significant. In every quarter except for quarter one, the pilot group outperformed the comparison group, indicating the pilot sites placed more job seekers with disabilities in employment than comparison sites.

So why is this important? Well, a couple of things. It clearly demonstrates that job seekers with disabilities are able to attain employment – one of the earmark common measures; right? And while attaining employment in the first quarter may not have been as likely as attaining employment in quarters two, three, and four after exit, it was still absolutely happening in quarters two, three, and four after exit.

And as we look forward into WIOA, what do we know about those proposed performance measures under WIOA? That they'll be looking at the employment rate when? Hopefully, you're all thinking out there that they're going to be looking at the employment rate two quarters post exit and four quarters post exit. Hm. It appears that job seekers with disabilities have accomplished that under WIA with the help of the IRT strategy; doesn't it?

Next, let's take a look at average earnings. And I think that all of you out there on the phone would agree that there's a lot that can be done when it comes to average earnings and arguably, for all customers, not just customers with disabilities. But we still want to note that the average earnings of individuals in the treatment – or pilot – sites were $5,411.09 in the first quarter, and $5,620.60 in the third quarter after exit. These figures were $728.58 higher than the comparison site mean in the first quarter, which was $4,687.51, and $715.20, or $4,905.39 higher in the third quarter.

Mean differences were statistically significant, which indicates that the DEI customers in the treatment sites earned more than their counterparts in the comparison sites.

So just a little food for thought; with the renewed focus on career pathways in WIOA, the integrated resources team – or IRT – is actually a great model to implement, because it can allow multiple service providers to coordinate a sequence of services over a larger duration – think, over the course of a pathway, perhaps – to ensure that a customer isn't utilizing all of the available services at once.

So just think about it; for example, potentially the Title I adult program could support a customer in the first part of a pathway, and vocational rehabilitation could potentially help them in the next part of the pathway. The IRT is the vehicle that allows service providers to breed (ph) funds in order to support the customer for a longer period of time, thereby allowing someone to continue their training and education to increase their earning potential, and making a greater splash in these average earnings.

OK. So we've been indirectly hinting and discussing how the Disability Employment Initiative is relevant to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, but let's make the direct connection and take a look at the new law.

All of you no doubt are very familiar with this by now, but let's look at this excerpt from the law anyway – the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act joint rule for unified and combined state plans, performance accountability and the One-Stop system joint provisions notice of proposed rulemaking.

WIOA strengthened the alignment of workforce development system's six core programs by imposing unified, strategic planning requirements, common performance accountability measures, and requirements governing the One-Stop delivery system. In doing so, WIOA placed heightened emphasis on coordination and collaboration at the federal, state, and local levels to ensure a streamlined, coordinated, service delivery system for jobseekers, including those with disabilities and employers.

So this is the part of WIOA that is very different from WIA. Wagner-Peyser, adult dislocated worker, and youth vocational rehabilitation and education now need to reach consensus around unified strategic planning and common performance and accountability measures.

I'm going to say this, although I'm pretty sure some of you – if not most of you – are already acutely aware of this. But in the past, under WIA, the roadblocks and challenges customers with disabilities and/or multiple challenges to employment faced were largely because providers didn't communicate with each other, and/or because the timelines and outlines didn't align; right?

So as you can see, this is something that WIOA is seeking to rectify, by requiring this collaborative, strategic state planning and common performance measures. However, this will still require a new way of doing business, both from a policy, but even more important from a procedural standpoint, and will need to be adapted in order to facilitate the collaboration and coordination. This is where everything we have learned from the Disability Employment Initiative can be relevant.

So program coordination standards might also include operational standards such as integrated resource teams, such as those piloted in the Disability Employment Initiative, or other methods are used to jointly fund services to meet the specific needs of individuals, resource rooms, include the high-quality, up-to-date information about the services and supportive services available to individuals.

So right there in DOL's guidance on WIOA they even go so far as to specifically cite the work of the Disability Employment Initiative and specifically the integrated resource team. The link below here, we've included it in the power point, so if you want to delve into that portion of WIOA guidance further, you can do that.

OK. So what we know about WIOA to date. We know that WIOA calls for streamlining of major programs, including the development of a unified state plan and cross system program common measures. We also know that WIOA also calls for focusing services on targeted populations, that in the past have been referred to as hard-to-serve/in greatest need, and they've been tasked with providing more wraparound services.

What does the integrated resource team – or IRT – do? Well, folks, it offers a tangible model for providing wraparound services based on the individual need of the job seeker to help the job seeker meet their employment goal – WIOA performance – without the need for formal agreements, but that as a model – at the same time – could be scaled up to inform and develop formalized agreements.

OK. So clearly I'm no longer indirectly hinting at how the IRT can be the utilitarian universal strategy employed to accomplish the goals of WIOA, and instead I'm making the bold and very emblazoned statement that this is your answer. Brian, maybe you should expand on this.

MR. INGRAM: Oh, I see. You make the statement, and I expand on it.

MS. ROLSTON: Of course; that's how this works.

MR. INGRAM: All right. Well, I'm happy to do it, DJ. You know, in our job as technical assistants to the DEI projects, DJ and I will often tell disability resource coordinators on the ground that their role requires them to be where the individual and systems-level meet. In fact, I think we told that to you, today.

This is also a great way to look at the IRT strategy. Each successful customer-level outcome attained informally can be used as an example to build consensus between WIOA partners and create shared procedures based on actual outcomes. Because no systems-level formal agreements, or shared procedures, are needed to implement the IRT strategy, outcomes can be generated while these things are being negotiated and can inform or simplify these negotiations.

Additionally, the IRT strategy is based on principles that are also reflected in WIOA. For example, the IRT strategy is customer focused, it's outcome driven, it's informal; and it's applicable through multiple outcomes.

So we think this is so important that I think we have to take a second to look at each of these bullets individually. Let's start with customer focused. So the IRT strategy is customer focused on a number of levels. The IRT embraces customer vision, represented by the customer's approval of the employment goal, and their acknowledgment that that goal is a good fit and is going to meet their long-term need for financial stability. The IRT also embraces customer participation. The customer participates in all aspects of this strategy. Not only can an IRT not be formed without the active participation of the customer, but it can't progress either. The customer's participation is the engine that generates all movement in the integrated resource team.

So the integrated resource team also embraces a specific customer's needs, and to be even more precise, the customer's needs in attaining the employment goal. That's what determines which providers participate in the IRT. No two IRTs need to be alike. Or if a lot of customers share the same resource needs they can look just like each other. There's flexibility inherent in this strategy, and that flexibility allows you to really conform with a customer's needs.

OK. So let's see if the IRT is outcome-based. And again, this is kind of a no-brainer, because the entire purpose of an integrated resource team is to assist a customer in reaching an employment goal. That makes it, by definition, outcome driven.

And as we talked about earlier, this outcome needs to be one that's going to justify the application of the needed resources – in other words, one that's going to meet the performance outcomes and not just the performance outcomes of one system, but of all the participating systems. This is why the employment goal is the first point of consensus between the members of the IRT.

It needs to work on at least two levels. It needs to meet the economic needs and be a good match for the skills of the customer, and it needs to work for each participating partner programmatically. Because of this, the IRT leads to collective outcomes. And, hopefully, outcomes that are more significant than either the customer or the participating partners would be able to come up with on their own.

OK. Let's see. Let's take a look and think about how the IRT is informal. And it is an informal strategy. It's centered on the needs of an individual customer; specifically, the needs that have been identified as critical to them reaching an employment goal. It's informal because it's based on consensus, not compulsion.

The consensus begins with the customer agreeing to the employment goal, and agreeing to authorize the coordination between the providers and all the actions that are necessary to bring that communication about, and then it expands to include all the participating partners who need to ensure that the programmatic requirements associated with their resources are being met – eligibility, outcomes, etc. There's no shortcuts. And no provider is asked to waive their requirements in order to participate. Each partner's programmatic needs are seen as equal.

This can be challenging, but it's also where much of the strength of the strategy lies. Because no one set of programmatic requirements are seen as primary, and the point of consensus begins with a discussion of how to meet all the partner's requirements, no systems-levels discussions are needed to implemented the integrated resource team for an individual. And all of the partners – including, most importantly, the customer – are able to bring many additional resources into their service plans without needing to modify their procedures.

And this actually segues into our next point quite nicely. Once the customer and the participating partners have reached consensus on an employment goal, lines of communication, and a timeline of services, a precedent has been set that in theory could be extended through multiple outcomes and service plan.

Now, DJ, I know this one's very near and dear to you. So do you have anything to add?

MS. ROLSTON: Sure. So we've talked about the philosophy, but the beauty of the integrated resource team is that it brings together multiple providers around the needs of the one specific customer, and allows for planning and for the establishment of the sequence of services.

Like I just noted, workforce can handle the first part of the pathway and DR can come in and help on the next part. And this is just one example. Just think about how an individualized learning plan could be initiated at the secondary level, or by our partners in adult basic ed and used as a roadmap to conceptualize both the short and long-term employment goals, and then be used as a cross-agency program guide in the integrated resource team to establish sequence of services.

I tell you – call me an optimist if you want – but I see the utility of the integrated resource team as infinite. I can't think of a better note to end on. So with that, Miranda, I'm going to pass it back to you to summarize what we covered today.

MS. KENNEDY: Great. Thank you, DJ; thank you, Brian. We did cover quite a bit of ground today.

And just as a quick recap of what we have covered with all of you, and broken down, we started off by providing a background on the integrated resource team, or IRT; talked about what an IRT is and what it is not; as well as how to coordinate an integrated resource team; additionally to that we shared how an IRT has been used to effectively serve and assist customers with multiple challenges to employment to system established performance outcomes, which cannot be emphasized enough. And I know we've done that a number of times throughout today's training, but it is important.

Additionally, we've talked about what the workforce innovation opportunity legislation says about the integrated resource team strategy – it's written in there. We also talked about, as we wrapped up here today, why the integrated resource team is a good fit within the context of WIOA implementation.

We want to leave you with a few things, and I'm just going to share these resources with you before turning it over to Laura to add her final comments and words from U.S. Department of Labor. But we have here for you two links that we encourage you to check out. The first is making connections for job seekers with disabilities, an integrated resource team promising practice video. I encourage you to check that out. You'll see one of our presenters today on that – a little bit younger, but breaking it down for us. It's a good video. It brings in multiple different partners and voices, as well as the individual themselves. So please do check that out; I think that will take you about 16 minutes.

We also are providing you with an integrated resource team frequently asked questions. So this is what we've learned over a number of years. And the most frequently asked question – some of which you might be asking over in the comments and questions section right now. So do, please, check that out. I think both of those – there's a lot of different materials out there, but we felt like these were the top ones we wanted to leave you with that give you some additional concrete information that's going to be useful to you in addition to today's power point and presentation.

And with that I'd like to hand it over to Laura Ibanez to give us her final comments and words on this topic. Laura?

MS. IBANEZ: Hi. Thank you, Miranda. This is Laura. So given that we all are presented an extraordinary opportunity to improve job – (inaudible) – (for an agent's workers ?) and job seekers, this presentation's timely. More now than ever we really need to look at what works and how can we build from that and expand that throughout our public workforce system.

And that's why I really appreciated Brian's part when he talked about the historical context and how this sort of stemmed out of the disability program navigator approach that we had. And from DPN we kind of saw what was missing and how we could branch off to integrated resource team approach.

And so with that, I just want to – we all know that our public workforce system serves many job seekers and workers out there, and that our workers and job seekers represent many faces; including individuals with disabilities, veterans, returning citizens, transition-age youth, farm workers, older workers with disability statuses and some without.

And so with this, it's so important that as we move forward that we think about what works and how we can build from that. And realize that because all of our workers don't fit into one category, there's multiple challenges that our workers and job seekers face, and our approach has to be meaningful.

And so that's why I really appreciated this presentation today, because it talked about how the integrated resource team approach is customer-focused, it's outcome-driven, and it focuses on what the individual needs on their short-term basis and long-term basis.

So thank you, Brian and DJ, for being here with us today. I know we had a question. And IRT, again, it stands for integrated resource team. So I just wanted to mention that. Thank you, everyone. Miranda?

MS. KENNEDY: Thank you, Laura. Yes; we have some time for questions. And I know there are some questions that have come in on the chat and the Q&A. And I don't know, Gary, if you wanted to give anyone guidance if they want to add to that. We have a few right now, but if others would like to submit their questions – Gary, could you advise folks on how to do that?

MR. GONZALEZ: Sure. At the bottom of your screen there's a chat window where you can type in any questions or comments that you might have. We'll review it, and hopefully address it for today's session. We have a little bit of time for Q&A, a good chunk, so if you haven't submitted a question yet, please feel free to do so. Again, that chat window is taking up the majority of the bottom half of your screen.

MS. KENNEDY: OK. And with that, we see there's some nice comments coming in here. We definitely want your feedback, whether it's a comment or a question. But let's go ahead and hop over to the questions. We do have a few. And this first one I'm going to go ahead and pose to DJ. And the question is, "How does WIOA strengthen assistance of employment of people with disabilities in terms of reasonable accommodations and assistive technology?"

MS. ROLSTON: OK. Thanks, Miranda. So I think one of the short answers on this one is probably actually just thinking about the bigger vision of WIOA, which is really about creating an inclusive system that is serving targeted populations. And as we mentioned today is really focused on serving those that are harder to serve.

One of the really great things about WIOA that has come out already is the Section 188 guidance. And for those of you not familiar with Section 188, Section 188 is what addresses how to best serve customers with disabilities. And I think – I'm sure that there is a link that we could probably provide in some way, shape, or form. I don't know if Laura Ibanez – Laura, I don't know if you want to talk about Section 188 at all, but I think that would be a really good resource for these folks to look to to really get a bigger picture.

MS. IBANEZ: Sure. So Section 188 in WIOA prohibits discrimination on several – and one of them is disability, age, sex. And so with that recently ODEP along with a few other folks developed the Section 188 resource guide that I'm sure we can add to the resource list if it's not there right now. Is that something we can send out to folks, Miranda?

MS. KENNEDY: Absolutely. We can work with our Maher & Maher folks to get that out to the folks who registered for today, I believe. Right; Gary?

Gary Ingram: That's 100 percent correct.

MS. IBANEZ: Sure. And something that – prior to this position I was at the Office of Disability Employment Policy. And we had always talked about Section 188 as it relates to people with disabilities. But now working here at ETA I'm seeing more and more how it works for older workers as well, how it applies to farm workers out there, how it applies to – (inaudible). So it's something that is not just for people with disabilities; it's very broad.

MS. KENNEDY: Yeah. And that is the area – Section 188 – because it does deal with discrimination it will also talk about reasonable accommodations. And one of the other things to think about is when thinking about reasonable accommodation and assistive technology is those are all about – used as ways to increase access.

So today when we talked about the integrated resource team, we were talking more specifically about how to increase programmatic access. Whereas Section 188 talks about how to increase programmatic access, but also really kind of spells out the fast ways to increase physical and communication access, which would address both of those issues of reasonable accommodation and assistive technology.

MR. INGRAM: You think you'd mind if I took one?

MS. IBANEZ: Go ahead, Brian.

MR. INGRAM: I was just going to say one of the things that we see a lot out in the field and our work around the DEI is that quite often a center, or a region, is going to put accommodating technologies into place and they're going to be in technical compliance with 188, but if there's no demand for those things, it's hard to maintain.

And I think one of the things that we've seen is – you know, we talked a little bit today about how the customers who are getting the IRT are also going through the center's customer flow. As they go through the customer flow, they create a demand for accommodation; they create a demand for assistive technology. And that really does get the whole engine working much more smoothly.

It's really hard to set this stuff and keep it running in the absence of any demand. So I just wanted to point that out.

MS. KENNEDY: Well, this starts to lend itself to the other questions that we have coming in here. And some of this we've addressed in some different ways. But I'll pose them still, because there's some good questions. And thank you, folks, for submitting those because it's clear that you're engaged and interested in this moving forward.

So I'll bring it back to you, Brian. We had a question come in that, "As a representative, what is my role in implementing WIOA for clients with disabilities and how to achieve employment goals?"

MR. INGRAM: Well, Miranda, thank you for the question. I do have to throw up a caveat, which is that I'm not quite sure what a representative is.

MS. KENNEDY: I'm not either; that's how it's submitted. So we're taking a guess here. If you want to write in and add to that and provide some further clarification in the comments, that would be great –

MR. INGRAM: I would be happy to. And I think I'm just going to view this as somebody who's a WIOA-funded staff. And in this case it would really be contingent on what your role is. If your role is a case manager and you're involved in planning, then you're somebody who can actually implement an IRT and bring those partners together and follow some of the advice that we were laying out for you.

If you're a staff member, it becomes more about access; more about access to that customer flow and making sure that customers with disability, with significant disability, with multiple challenges to employment, are able to access your services. And not just your services, but the outcomes of the services.

So if somebody who needs an ASL interpreter walks through your front door, are they going to be able to attend the resume workshop and walk out of it with a resume? Those are the things that are going to help.

So no matter what your role is in that center. That is my best shot at answering that question.

MS. KENNEDY: Did you have something, DJ?

MS. ROLSTON: I did, Miranda. All I wanted to say is, my basic answer to those types of questions is, well, what do you do for customers and what's your role for customers without disability? Because that's pretty much what you're aiming at. We're aiming to ensure that customers with disabilities or multiple challenges to employment are served in the same way that customers without disability and multiple challenges to employment are. And in order to do that, that may mean that we need to provide some reasonable accommodations, or to provide some additional support.

And using the integrated resource team is a great way to be able to provide those additional supports to ensure that customers with disabilities or multiple challenges to employment can participate in services the same way that customers without disabilities do, and reach those same objectives that customers without disabilities do.

MS. KENNEDY: Great. Thank you so much, DJ. I think that's pretty succinct and clear, and hopefully very helpful for the individual who wrote that in, and others as well.

We have two other questions, but one of them actually answered itself. We had a question come in about, "Do there exist any IRT case studies, with personally identifiable information redacted, of course, that are available for review?" And please do download the power point from today, and it's on that resource's slide. There's the case study, there's also the FAQs include information on that as well.

So the one last question it looks like we have for today that I'm going to hand over to both DJ and Brian would be, "Do you feel that the IRT model will further impact WIOA follow-up services definition?" And I don't know if Laura would like to weigh in on that as well. Laura, maybe I'll throw that to you first, and then you can hand it over to DJ and Brian as well.

MS. IBANEZ: Do you feel the IRT model will further impact the follow-up services definition? You know, I think when we provide any – let me step back. I'm thinking as we roll out WIOA and we were thinking about the guidance that we were going to provide as a department, we are definitely going to be looking to models that have worked out in the past. So I definitely see integrated resource team approach being considered as something that we can include information on. How about – what would you say, DJ?

MS. ROLSTON: Ah. Thanks, Laura. We must be channeling, because I was like, please, please, let me jump in.

So I don't know that it's so much about the IRT model actually impacting the definition of what follow up looks like, but we can say that the integrative resource team model is actually very effective in helping to ensure that the retention is there.

And if you think about that, that's because the integrative resource team can continue to meet informally as needed, as the customer progresses both through their training – if that's what they're doing – or even through their employment pathway.

And so in that sense, if you've got a team of service providers coming together around an individual, if there are any what we call hiccups that come up, and well all know how those happen; right? That may impact a customer's ability to maintain their employment, that IRT can simply come right back together at the request of the customer. And even when we talk about – people often talk about time limits, well, I'm only responsible for this long, and this long.

The one thing I will say to all of you that are operating the Title I workforce development programs; remember that there is a huge paradigm shift in that under the proposed performance measures, WIOA is more looking at long-term – they're looking at the retention – as opposed to that quick placement and exit. So this is where that integrated resource team really does come in handy. It's built around the quality employment goal and then can establish that sequence of services. And again, when you've established that line of communication, then you know as well there's a way to pull that back together.

Brian, do you want to add anything about how the IRT can be used to help with retention and keep follow up in place?

MR. INGRAM: You did a really good job, DJ. The only thing I would add is that the IRT being informal and fluid as it is, the only mandatory member is the customer; right? So the providers can change as that customer moves through multiple outcomes of a plan. At some point – at the beginning there might have been a housing provider, to go back to that example – once that customer is securely housed and paying his own rent, that housing provider might fade out of the team. But at that point you might have an office of disability at the community college join.

So this is it. When you're looking at that trim line of services, it gives you a lot more retention options than just WIOA is going to give you alone. That's what I would say.

MS. KENNEDY: Well, with that it looks like we've wrapped up with the questions. If folks continue to ponder this, we encourage you to reach out and let us know what other questions or support information we can provide to you. And with that, I think I'm going to hand it over to Gary to wrap us up.

And just say thank you again to everyone for joining us here today as we shared this information with you. We look forward to hearing about your experiences with this approach as you consider it and utilize it moving forward.

So thank you so much, and Gary, the platform's yours.

MR. GONZALEZ: Thanks, Miranda.

(END)