

State Director CoP—Notes

Facilitator: Derek Shields and Leslie Dawson

Session 2: Begin With the End in Mind: Sustainability

June 8, 2022

The second State Directors CoP session kicked off with a brief welcome from the facilitator who welcomed participants and recapped the purpose of the State Director CoP. The facilitator also presented the topic of today's CoP: program sustainability after the RETAIN grant ends. The facilitator said participants have worked hard to get where they are and for their hard work to continue beyond the grant, they need to make sure they are on path toward sustainability.

Afterward, the CoP group engaged in a Jamboard session during which they shared ideas on what a brochure of their program would look like in 5 years. The facilitator told participants to keep in mind things for the brochure like audience, where the program resides, and how the program is being funded.

Participants' Jamboard responses regarding what a brochure would look like in 5 years

- Same as current brochure, minus incentive information
- Sustainable success
- Plenty of success stories
- Representative of our cultural communities
- Helping your workers engage and support your company
- Goal for next five years with data of success
- RETAIN as one of several wraparound supports available for folks
- Investing in your workers to invest in their communities, companies, and industry

Further Jamboard discussion

- The facilitator asked participants to go on camera and talk more about what they would include in the brochure.
 - One participant mentioned they would share the systematic change they would have achieved through policy support and how they have increased their capacity through their RTW work certificate. In terms of recruitment, this state helps people understand RETAIN's success by giving them a glimpse on what the RTW coordinators have achieved.

- Another participant said they need success stories to share and market the program to make sure people understand its impact.
- The facilitator asked participants about what they feel drives their RETAIN program success (i.e., employers, medical providers, direct services).
 - One participant said it is a collaboration internally with the team as well as externally with partner employer organizations, healthcare providers, and other partners. It is about making sure that everyone is working together, collaborating, listening to different perspectives, and communicating in a way that they speak to one another from a service provision perspective.
- The facilitator asked participants: If they were to develop a sustainability gap analysis, what internal and external partnerships are doing well and which ones need to be improved? What data is needed to show that?
 - A participant said their sustainability model is twofold. There is a statewide sustainability model and a healthcare one. The relationship that needs more focus is the medical partner–employer relationship. That is the area that needs the most focus for RETAIN to have the most bang for its buck.
- The facilitator then asked this participant what an outcome would look like for improved partnerships?
 - A participant replied that, in an ideal world, the provider would pick up the phone and call the employer. This participant’s state is pursuing integration of RTWC in the healthcare setting post-2025 to bridge that gap with providers.
 - The facilitator asked this participant if they need a different team in place to achieve that outcome than the one they have in place now?
 - The participant replied that they expect the quantity of staff to remain the same or even expand post-2025, but did not see the need for positions focused on the research component of RETAIN.
 - Another participant said they believe the brochure would not even exist, but would be something virtual that led to a website. They said they are not where they need to be in terms of sustainability, but their program is available throughout the state and involves multiple medical and workforce systems. In 5 years, this participant sees employers supporting the program since it is mainly benefiting their employees.

The CoP group then engaged in another Jamboard session where they shared ideas about how their program fits within the workforce system. The facilitator asked participants to think about what value RETAIN brings to state partners and to the WIOA state plan, and where RETAIN resides within state law.

Participants' Jamboard responses regarding where their program fits within the workforce system

- The program partners with the workforce investments boards, vocational rehabilitation, and other entities such as community partners that support SAW/RTW providing services.
- This should just be a part of the system; it should be second nature for employers and medical providers to involve workforce as well. We should all be working together.
- Within the state system, one possibility would be for RETAIN to become an early intervention program through VRS, rather than through the WIOA Adult/DW Team.

Further Jamboard discussion

- One participant said they partner in different ways depending on the entity, and that they have tried hard to complement and align with entities that provide similar services. For example, if a patient is already receiving services from vocational rehab but need RETAIN to help in other ways, then RETAIN helps fill those gaps.
- Another participant said a process must be in place to make referrals easier, and there is a need to make workforce board investment groups and other groups aware of RETAIN from a systems level. There needs to be awareness activities and a process to make sure everyone is working well together.
- A participant said one of the focuses in their state is to develop a multigenerational approach to providing services and filling the gaps on the intersection between the healthcare system and workforce system. They said they are trying to build a bridge with the department of human services and thinking about where RETAIN can land with the on-ramps and off-ramps into the system.
- The facilitator asked if participants have had discussions about getting RETAIN incorporated into WIOA state plans?
- One state mentioned that long-term sustainability plans are being worked on at the state level. Their state has large multibillion-dollar surpluses in the state budget. They believe the WIOA state plan is a conversation they can have with their partners.
- The facilitator said workforce development is not just about bringing in new workers, but also about retaining workers with knowledgeable skills, which states can convey to workforce partners to help them see how RETAIN can enhance their WIOA measurement requirements.

The CoP group then engaged in a third Jamboard session during which they shared ideas on where policy comes into play in their program. The facilitator asked participants to think about what state policies are in place that support RTW/SAW, whether there is any additional state legislation around accommodations, whether their state has its own disability act, and how the data collected from the research can be used to inform policy.

Participants' Jamboard responses regarding where policy comes into play in their program

- Employment first.
- RETAIN's eligibility criteria are less restrictive than WIOA DW, one way we could use our data would be to compare outcomes for participants that access workforce/training services versus our DW customers.
- Healthcare, state disability acts, state as a model employer, supplier diversity, "Schedule A" in a state, governor's letter to all state departments and departments of commerce or economic development "cabinet" communications.

Further Jamboard discussion

- One participant said their work–health leadership network brings together leaders in healthcare and government to help make policy changes that would build upon the momentum of employer first. This network is working on defining inclusive workforce and eventually will provide reports and recommendations to the state government that will help create and sustain policy changes. This network includes people from the Human Development Institute and people who have experience in policy. They are identifying who is missing from the table to expand this group. They are also keeping the governor's office informed of the work along the way.
- One participant said a priority of WIOA and the dislocated worker team is to reduce as many barriers as possible to participation for eligible folks. RETAIN has a less restrictive eligibility criteria. It will be interesting to see if there are any differences in the demographics between the dislocated worker team and RETAIN after sifting through the data.
- The facilitator said it is important to show the benefits of RETAIN for the individuals helped by the program (i.e., dislocated workers, underserved populations) to WIOA partners and how that enhances their workforce.
- In Phase 2, one participant's state has been working with the governor's office and they made a pledge that RETAIN would be introduced to all state departments. Every state employee will be able to access RETAIN and be knowledgeable of it. However, they acknowledged they do not know the longevity of this state partnership as there could be a new governor down the road.
- Going back to the sustainability brochure, the facilitator asked participants heard something they were not focused on, but would like to be more focused on?
- One participant said there is a need to look at how they speak to their patients while adapting to technology changes and workforce changes. It is a matter of how they can continue to speak to everyone they want to share information with.

- Another participant said since writing the RETAIN proposal their message has changed due to the changes in society in the last couple of years. The things this state would have shared in a brochure before those societal changes would be very different now. Because of this, they are not sure what they would include in a brochure five years from now, but they are working on getting there.

Closeout

- The facilitator said they will pull out areas mentioned in this CoP as possible topics for future CoPs. This could include a CoP on healthcare or using data to inform policy. The facilitator also reminded participants that they have office hours coming up if they want to discuss in more detail anything brought up in today's CoP.
- The next CoP meeting will discuss engagement August 2 at 2 p.m. ET.