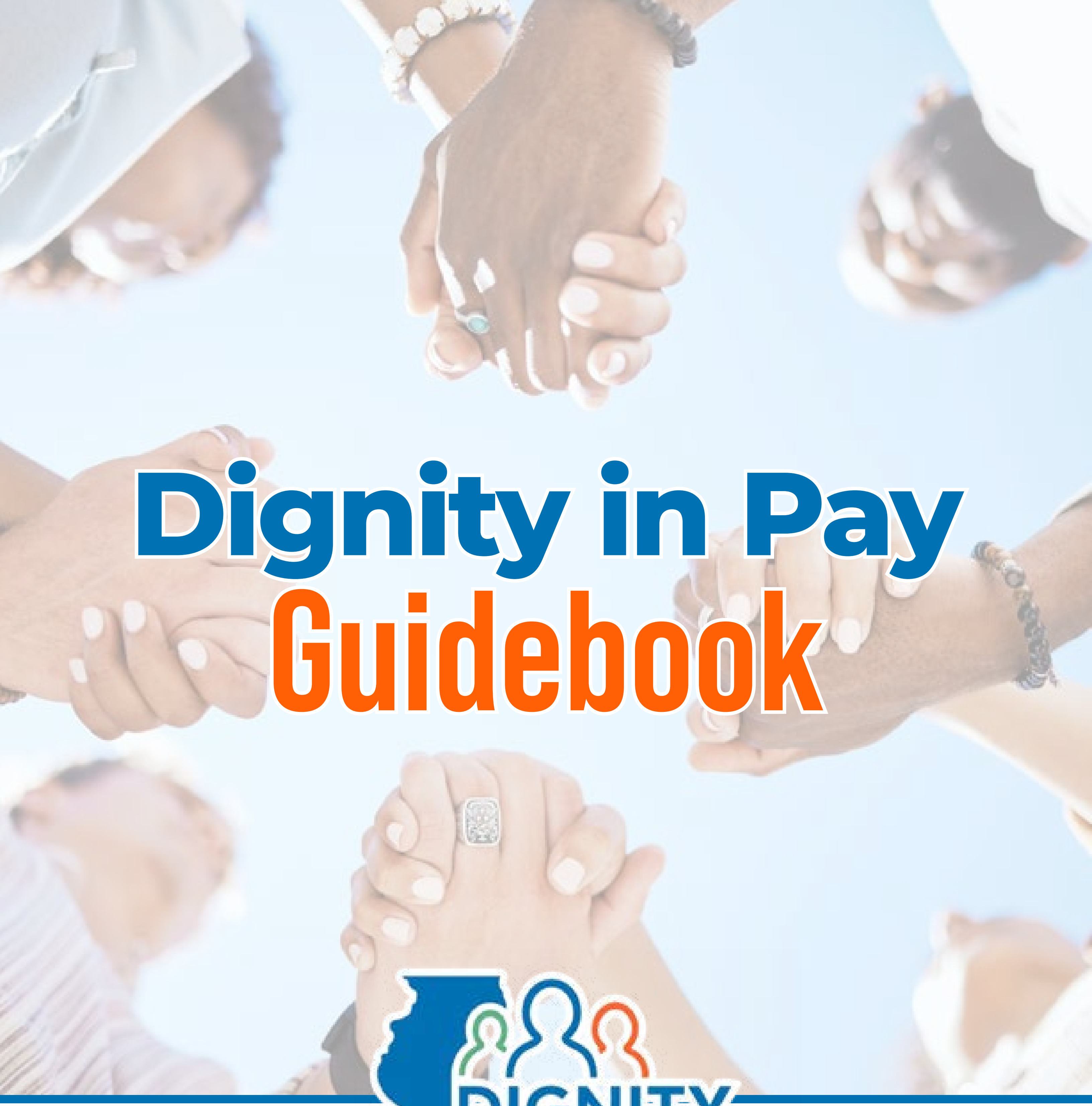

# Dignity in Pay
# Guidebook

DIGNITY IN PAY ACT

EQUAL WORTH · EQUITABLE PAY

Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities

Illinois Institute for Rehabilitation and Employment Research
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

IDHS
ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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# Introduction

The Dignity in Pay (DiP) Handbook is a hands-on tool to help leaders, managers, and staff as they sunset 14(c) subminimum wage activities as required by the Illinois Dignity in Pay Act. These changes mean providers must think in new ways about their services, jobs, and workplaces. The goal is to support **fair pay, community jobs, and meaningful day activities**.

## How to Use this Guide

The DiP Handbook helps providers make changes to necessary to sunset 14c, subminimum wage work, and expand meaningful work opportunities for the individuals they serve. The handbook provides clear **strategies, tools, and decision-making frameworks** and explains that real change takes planning, teamwork, and action—not just good intentions or small changes.

The guide is made for different roles:

- **Leaders** will learn how to match their mission and goals with Dignity in Pay and community integrated activities, including work.
- **Managers and supervisors** will find tools to help staff through change and set new expectations.
- **Direct support and field staff** will get clear, practical ideas for their daily work. These ideas show how their work helps individuals earn fair pay, be part of the community, and find jobs.

The handbook also understands that change looks different in different places. Rural, suburban, and urban areas have different jobs, transportation options, and community supports. The DiP Handbook helps providers think about what will work best where they live while stressing clear and accessible communication, working together, celebrating small successes, and being honest about challenges.

The DiP Handbook is not meant to sit on a shelf. It is **meant to be used, revisited, and adapted** as providers move through the Dignity in Pay transition. The guide helps build systems that value individuals with disabilities, support strong communities, and lead to long-term success in community jobs and meaningful participation.

# Guiding Concepts

## Work and Well-Being

As humans, we all want to move about this world feeling **fulfilled, happy, and important**. Many factors contribute to our sense of worth, such as our relationships, holding a valued role (often through work), rituals and routines (both personal and cultural), pace of life (not too fast or with too many challenges, not too slow and not enough challenge), things to do and places to go, and things to have. Many of these human factors can be fostered and developed through **meaningful work**.

Work is any activity that requires effort and skill, which can be **paid or unpaid**. While **all employment is work, not all work is employment**.

### No Work

- Decreased mental and physical health
- Increased mortality
- Long lasting physical and psychological effects
- Negative impacts on family

### With Work

- Improved health
- Autonomy
- Personal growth
- Positive relationships
- Purpose in life
- Self-acceptance

We know **those who do not engage in meaningful work experience decreased mental and physical health**, they die sooner, they experience long-lasting effects, and their families feel negative impacts (financial strain, unstable relationships). We also know that individuals who work experience improved health (less illness, more compliant with treatment of medical conditions, **more likely to engage in wellness**—diet, exercise, and are safer). Individuals who work have a sense of autonomy (being their own person), **experience personal growth and positive relationships, and feel an overall purpose in life**.

# Presumed Competence

Presumed competence means we believe a person can learn, contribute, communicate, and work even if we cannot see these skills right away. Presumed competence starts with believing that a person can learn, contribute, communicate, and regardless of their label, test scores, or past struggles. Presumed competence is an ethical stance, one that sets high expectations for individuals and understands when given appropriate supports, growth and success is possible.

Presumed competence does not assume success without time to learn or adapt. We focus on how to help someone succeed, not on whether they can. Work becomes something we expect and support, not something only a few individuals are allowed to try.

**Why this matters**: Presumed competence is important because it opens doors. When we believe in individuals, we give them chances instead of leaving them out.

# DIGNITY IN PAY ACT

The Dignity in Pay Act (P.A. 103-1060) requires the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities (ICDD), and the Illinois Department of Labor to lead a responsible and gradual 5-year process to expand employment options for people with disabilities and phase out 14(c) subminimum wage authorizations in Illinois, with the goal of eliminating the practice entirely by the end of 2029.

In addition to ending subminimum wage, the legislation provides supportive measures such as transition funding, technical assistance, and initiatives to expand competitive integrated employment (CIE). Together, these efforts aim to ensure that individuals with disabilities have access to meaningful employment and receive full, equitable compensation for their work.

# Acknowledgements


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**Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)**

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### Resources

Additional resources are listed in the appendix and can be accessed on the Dignity in Pay website **https://icdd.illinois.gov/dignity-in-pay-act.html**.

# Key Acronyms

**ADA**: Americans with Disabilities Act

**CARF**: Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities

**CMS**: Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services

**DiP**: Dignity in Pay

**DoL**: Department of Labor

**DCEO**: Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

**DDD**: Division on Developmental Disabilities

**DHS**: Department of Health Services

**DRS**: Division of Rehabilitation Services

**ES**: Employment Specialist

**HCBS**: Home and Community-Based Services

**ICDD**: Illinois Council for Developmental Disabilities

**IIRER**: Illinois Institute for Rehabilitation and Employment Research

**ISBE**: Illinois State Board of Education

**SOP**: Standard Operating Procedure

# Organizational Change for Provider Transformation

Moving from facility-based 14(c) Subminimum Wage Employment model to a community-based model requires providers to change their approach to planning and operations. **Strategic planning** helps set long-term goals and direction, while business and **operations planning** make sure daily work and finances support those goals. This guide combines both types of planning, so agencies can align their mission, staff, finances, and community partnerships to make meaningful organizational changes.

## Key Concepts

### Strategic Planning

**Long-term** (3-5yrs) plan that outlines an organization's mission, vision, and high-level goals. Strategic plans are typically developed by top-level management (including board members) and **focus on the direction of the organization**.

### Operational Planning

**Short-term** (12-36 months) plan focusing on specific actions and tasks required to achieve the objectives set out in the strategic plan. Operational plans **focus on day-to-day operations** and are typically developed and implemented by middle management.

**Organizational change** is the process of transforming a business's structure, processes, and culture. Transformation requires guiding the organization from awareness to adoption and may involve the integration of new service delivery models. There are two types of changes 14c providers need to prepare for as they evolve: ***adaptive*** and ***transformational changes.***

## Adaptive changes

***Doing the same work, better.***

Gradual changes that an organization undertakes to evolve its products, processes, workflows, and strategies over time (e.g. modifying the process of supporting participants seeking CIE).

- ✓ Update staff roles, schedules, or training
- ✓ Improve workflows, documentation, or data tracking
- ✓ Increase community activities within existing programs
- ✓ Strengthen employer outreach or partnerships
- ✓ Adjust staffing ratios or supports

## Transformational changes

***Becoming a different kind of organization.***

Changes larger in scale and scope and often signify a departure from the status quo (e.g., introducing or eliminating a service being provided at an organization).

- ✓ End subminimum wage and exit 14(c)
- ✓ Shift from facility-based programs to community-based employment
- ✓ Redesign services around individualized CIE outcomes
- ✓ Change staff roles and organizational identity
- ✓ Update mission, funding models, and success measures

# Impacts and Challenges

Organizational change can be positive for all involved, but it can also create challenges. When change is well planned, it helps organizations perform better and support people more effectively. At the same time, change takes time, effort, and support from key stakeholders (e.g., participants, staff, families, and partners).

| | |
|---|---|
| **Impacts** | • Gives the organization clear direction and focus<br>• Improves daily operations and how work gets done<br>• Aligns the mission, resources, and goals<br>• Supports financial stability and long-term planning<br>• Builds organizational trust, inclusion, and accountability |
| **Challenges** | • Getting buy-in and support from staff and stakeholders<br>• Limited funding, time, and staff capacity<br>• Uncertainty about new ways of working<br>• Disruptions to daily operations during transitions<br>• Staffing shortages, burnout, and morale concerns |

# Addressing Challenges: Real Solutions

Organizational change often presents challenges that can affect staff, operations, and morale if not addressed. By identifying common barriers and planning practical solutions, organizations can reduce disruption and support staff through the transition. The table below outlines common challenges and effective ways to respond to them.

| Challenge | ★ Practical Solutions ★ |
|---|---|
| **Getting buy-in from staff and stakeholders** | • Inform staff about what change will occur, and how it will impact them<br>• Clearly explain why the change is needed and how it helps<br>• Share small wins and success stories to build confidence<br>• Provide staff with opportunities to participate in operational planning |
| **Limited funding, time, and staff capacity** | • Prioritize changes that have the biggest impact on funding first<br>• Phase changes over time instead of doing everything at once<br>• Look for braided funding, grants, or shared resources |
| **Uncertainty about next steps from staff and stakeholders** | • Provide clear, consistent communication: about what is changing and what is not<br>• Describe what is changing and what is not<br>• Create safe spaces for questions, feedback, and concerns |
| **Disruptions to daily operations during transitions** | • Use pilot programs to test changes before full rollout<br>• Maintain backup plans for staffing, transportation, & schedules<br>• Adjust timelines when needed to avoid overwhelming staff |
| **Staffing shortages, burnout, and morale concerns** | • Offer flexible schedules and cross-training<br>• Recognize staff efforts and celebrate progress<br>• Provide coaching, peer support, and wellness resources<br>• Communicate clear goals aligned with strategic and operational plans |

# Geographical Considerations

As agencies respond to Dignity in Pay, they must consider their location within the state, their physical buildings, and whether services are provided in facilities or in the community. An important consideration is what to do with space as strategic and operational plans are being implemented. For example, as facility-based program changes or phases out subminimum wage employment, that space can be repurposed or released, with a clear shift toward integrated, community-based services.

| Region | Barriers | Opportunities | Strategies |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Rural** | • Fewer employers and services<br>• Long travel distances<br>• Limited transportation | • Strong local relationships<br>• Community loyalty<br>• Less job competition in some areas | • Build deep employer relationships<br>• Use flexible scheduling and transportation<br>• Focus on customized employment |
| **Suburban** | • Spread-out geography<br>• Inconsistent public transportation | • Growing employer base<br>• Mix of industries<br>• Some transit options | • Update community maps often<br>• Target growing business areas<br>• Use blended facility/ community services |
| **Urban** | • High job competition<br>• Safety and congestion concerns<br>• Complex systems | • Large number of employers<br>• Strong public transit<br>• Diverse industries | • Develop sector-based employer strategies<br>• Provide travel training and safety supports<br>• Coordinate with workforce partners |
| **Facility-Based Programs** | • Segregated settings<br>• High operating costs<br>• Limited community exposure | • Centralized staffing<br>• Existing infrastructure<br>• Predictable routines | • Reduce time spent in facilities<br>• Repurpose or downsize buildings<br>• Use facilities as training or launch points |
| **Community-Based Programs** | • Transportation coordination<br>• Variable environments<br>• Higher planning needs | • Real-world skill building<br>• Greater inclusion and choice<br>• Better employment outcomes | • Individualize schedules and supports<br>• Strengthen community partnerships<br>• Track outcomes to guide improvements |

# How to Implement

## Part 1: How to Implement - Strategic Planning

Organizational change requires sound strategic and operational plans that are clearly communicated to stakeholders. Transformation requires leadership commitment, stakeholder buy-in, and mechanisms for ongoing feedback. This section will discuss how to implement an effective strategic plan.

1. Engage Stakeholders
2. Update or Develop a Strategic Plan
3. Develop a Communication Strategy
4. Foster Leadership and Culture Change
5. Phased Implementation
6. Continuous Improvement

## 1. Engage Stakeholders

Meaningful stakeholder engagement helps people feel that organizational change is happening **with them, not to them**. It ensures that staff, participants, families, employers, and community **partners have a voice** in the organizational change. When stakeholders are included and empowered, trust grows, resistance decreases, and people better understand the purpose of the organizational change. Identifying "change champions" who model new practices and support others makes change more likely to last.

| Stakeholder Group | Engagement Activities | Information Needs | Role in Transformation |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Staff** | Trainings, listening sessions, feedback surveys | Role changes, program redesign, available training and supports | Implementers and culture change agents |
| **Participants** | Person-centered planning, input sessions | Service options, employment pathways | Co-creators of programs |
| **Families** | Webinars, FAQs, family advisory groups | How changes will impact services provided | Supporters and advocates |
| **Employers** | Collaborative meetings, site visits | Benefits of inclusive hiring, disability awareness | Employment partners |

## Stakeholder Best Practices

- ✓ Identify "champions" among staff and families.
- ✓ Use listening sessions to gather concerns and ideas
- ✓ Offer multiple ways to participate (virtual, in-person, small group)
- ✓ Share how stakeholder feedback shaped your decisions
- ✓ Maintain open, ongoing communication

# 2. Update or Develop a Strategic Plan

## Examine Your Current Strategic Plan

**Mission Statement.** A strong mission statement should ***reflect what your organization does today and where it is going next***. During organizational change, your mission statement may need to change. **Ask yourself**: What does our mission statement tell staff, individuals served, and families? Does it still explain what we do, who we serve, and why our work matters?

**Vision Statement.** Your vision statement ***describes where you want to be in the next 3–5 years and what success looks like***. Stakeholders, like staff, individuals, and partners, need to know where the organization is headed, so they do not feel left behind. Plainly describe the future you are working toward, including your commitment to community integration and CIE.

## Strategies when Developing a New Strategic Plan

**Keep it Simple**. Your strategic plan should be clear and easy to use. Focus on your mission and vision statements to develop your top four organizational priorities. A simple plan helps guide decisions, keeps everyone accountable, and stays meaningful to staff and stakeholders.

**Establishing SMART Goals.** Use SMART goals that are *specific, measurable, realistic, important, and time-based* to inform both the strategic and operational plans. Create clear ways to track progress and set timelines you can realistically meet. New SMART Goals should align and affirm your mission and vision statements.

**Assess your resources.** Look at your relationships and community connections to support change and build trust (**Social capital**). Review your culture, shared values, and partnerships that drive your organization's growth (**Cultural capital**). Examine your buildings, vehicles, and other physical resources to determine what can be sold, leased, or used (**Physical capital**). Finally, review your workforce by examining retention, vacancies, and turnover. Also identify staff who can champion change and those who may need extra support (**Human capital**).

## 3. Develop a Communication Strategy

Clear and consistent communication is the basis of any successful change. Different groups of people need information shared in different ways, so communication should be planned with each audience in mind. A strategic plan demands a complementary communication strategy. A logical communication strategy explains what information will be shared, who will receive it, and when and how it will be delivered. Communication should be honest, easy to understand, collaborative, and shared with empathy.

## Communication Best Practices

- ✓ Identify “champions” among staff and families.
- ✓ Use listening sessions to gather concerns and ideas
- ✓ Offer multiple ways to participate (virtual, in-person, small group)
- ✓ Share how stakeholder feedback shaped your decisions
- ✓ Maintain open, ongoing communication

| Communication Goal | Audience | Format | Frequency | Key Message |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Increase awareness of organizational change timeline** | Staff | Staff meetings, email updates | Weekly | Why we are transitioning and upcoming milestones |
| **Explain what, how and why services are changing** | Families | Newsletters, webinars, text alerts | Biweekly | What to expect and how families will be supported |
| **Develop partnerships that lead to CIE or community integration** | Employers | Collaborative Meetings, Promotional Materials | Monthly | New opportunities for inclusive hiring |
| **Reduce misinformation** | Individuals, families, employers, & Community | Social media, FAQs, press releases | As needed | What 14(c) phase-out means: myths vs. facts |

## 4. Foster Leadership and Culture Change

### Model and Reinforce the New Vision

Culture change begins at the top. Leaders must consistently model Employment First values in their decisions, communication, budgeting, and performance expectations.

When executives and managers align policies, incentives, and recognition systems with community employment outcomes, they signal that the transformation is real and permanent. **What leadership prioritizes, measures, and celebrates becomes part of the organizational culture.**

### Align Systems, Accountability, and Data

Lasting culture change requires more than inspiration—it requires structure. Agencies must update policies, performance reviews, supervision practices, and compensation systems to reflect the new service model.

Sharing clear data dashboards and outcome measures builds transparency and accountability. **When staff see that success is defined by competitive employment and quality outcomes, behaviors begin to shift.**

### Build Leadership Capacity at All Levels

Transformation cannot depend on executive leadership alone. **Middle managers and frontline supervisors must be equipped to coach, mentor, and reinforce new practices daily.**

Investing in leadership development, cross-department collaboration, and shared problem-solving builds ownership across the organization. Distributed leadership strengthens resilience and sustains change over time.

Align staff roles, responsibilities, and daily work with the strategic and operational plans. Foster a strong culture that retains staff, recruits and trains qualified new employees and offers opportunities for meaningful professional growth. **Cultivating a new culture may require changes to job descriptions, training, and support for staff.**

## Retention

- Update and **clarify roles** and job descriptions.
- Create **career paths** for DSPs (i.e. DSP → Lead DSP → Trainer → Supervisor).
- Support **staff wellness** (i.e. peer support programs) to reduce turnover.
- Provide **training opportunities** to upskill/reskill staff (i.e. ACRE, CESP certification).

## Recruitment

- Demand a **living wage** salary for all employees.
- Promote jobs as **purpose-driven** and community-focused (not just "caregiver jobs").
- Build **hiring pipelines** with schools and training programs (i.e. colleges, universities, DSP training programs).
- Offer **flexible schedules** and referral incentives.
- **Collaborate** with competitors (nursing homes/hospitals) on shared recruitment fairs to reduce competition and broaden applicant pools.

## General

- **Crosstrain staff** and explore shared roles when possible.
- **Review caseloads** and staffing ratios to meet local needs.
- **Prepare teams** for change through training, support, and regular supervision.
- **Maximize talents**, explore DSPs working in joint roles (part-time DSP/part-time CNA).
- **Review current contracts** and alter service delivery to maximize contract utilization.

## Create Trust Through Engagement and Support

Change creates uncertainty, and culture shifts only happen when people feel safe and included. **Structured listening sessions, open communication, and meaningful stakeholder engagement build trust and reduce resistance.** Providing emotional support, peer collaboration, and professional growth opportunities helps staff adapt without burnout. When people feel the change is happening **with them—not to them**—they are more likely to commit to the long-term vision.

## 5. Phased Implementation

Phased implementation gives time to try new ideas, gather information, and make improvements before moving forward. This approach lowers risk, builds confidence, and helps new systems and expectations last over time.

| Phase | Description | Activities | Success Indicators |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Preparation** | Builds foundation | Staff training, communication plan, updated policies | Staff Readiness, clear expectations |
| **Pilot** | Test small-scale implementation | Job coaching pilots, community engagement | Participant progress, pilot evaluation |
| **Expansion** | Scale successful practices | Expand staffing, refine workflows | Increased CIE placements, family satisfaction |
| **Full Implementation** | Embed changes | Policy adoption, documentation templates | Sustained performance outcomes |

## Phased Implementation

1. **Start small with pilot sites or pilot teams**
2. **Collect real-time data during each phase**
3. **Adjust workflows before expanding**
4. **Celebrate and communicate wins**
5. **Establish ways to review lessons learned**

## 6. Continuous Improvement

A continuous improvement mindset means that **learning and change happen all the time, not just once**. Organizations use tools to check what is working, see what needs to change, and make improvements as the service system changes. This approach helps progress last, solves problems early, and keeps services responsive to people's needs, funding rules, and best practices.

## Evaluation and Risk Mitigation

Continuous improvement helps keep transformation on track and focused on results. **Collecting and reviewing data helps organizations spot risks early, make informed decisions, and stay stable during change.** Using data keeps decisions grounded in facts rather than assumptions and supports smart risk management throughout the process.

| Risk | Impact | Mitigation |
|---|---|---|
| **Resistance to change** | Delays and morale issues | Transparent communication and ambassador (champion) programs |
| **Financial shortfalls** | Service disruption | Diversify funding and track contract performance |
| **Staff burnout** | Decreased productivity | Supportive supervision and workload balance |
| **Community misconceptions** | Loss of trust | Proactive storytelling and myth-busting |
| **Data gaps** | Poor decision making | Establish reliable data systems and accountability processes |

## Monitor, celebrate and adjust

Review data often, share success stories, and make changes when needed. Check regularly to see if goals are being met, what barriers exist, and what is working well. **When something works, look for ways to repeat or expand it so the organization continues to learn and grow.**

Corrective action should be used to improve processes and support best practices, not to punish. When framed as learning opportunities, corrective actions help staff feel supported and open to change. Celebrating success is also important because change asks people to learn new skills and let go of old habits. ***Recognizing small wins keeps motivation high, builds confidence, and helps people feel ready for the next step.***

# Roles and Responsibilities in Strategic Planning

### Executive Staff

- **Set** the overall **vision** and direction
- **Approve** goals, priorities, and resources
- **Communicate** why change is needed
- **Remove barriers** and support leaders
- **Track progress** and adjust strategy

### Middle Managers

- Turn strategy into **daily plans**
- **Guide and support** staff through change
- **Monitor progress** and report challenges
- Provide **coaching**, training, and feedback
- Help **solve problems** and improve processes

### Field Staff

- Carry out **daily work** aligned with the plan
- **Share feedback** on what is working and what is not
- **Try new practices** and provide input
- **Track and report** data accurately
- **Support** individuals through changes

### Advisory Boards

- Provide **strategic guidance** and community perspective
- **Review progress** and hold leadership accountable
- **Advocate** for resources and partnerships
- Offer **feedback** on mission, vision, and priorities
- **Support** long-term sustainability and public trust

## Tips for Positive Corrective Action

- ✓ Involve the staff closest to the issue
- ✓ Solutions-based, problem-solving focus
- ✓ Create clear, time-bound action plans
- ✓ Provide coaching and support
- ✓ Follow up

# Part 2: How to Implement Operational Planning

An operations plan is important because it turns big goals into clear actions. Strategy shows where the organization wants to go, and operations explain how it will get there. An operations plan outlines the steps to take, who is responsible, and the resources needed.

During times of change—such as moving away from 14(c) or expanding community-based services—an operations plan helps maintain stability. It explains what will change, when it will happen, and how staff and individuals will be supported. It also helps the organization track progress and make improvements along the way.

1. Update or Create an Operations Plan
2. Define Clear Operational Goals
3. Develop Implementation Plan
4. Communicate, Train, and Support
5. Monitor, Evaluate, and Adjust

## 1. Update or Create an Operations Plan

An operations plan explains how daily work will happen, so goals can be reached. It shows **who will do the work, what will be done, when it will happen, and what resources are needed**. The plan should connect to the strategic plan, include clear goals and timelines, and explain how progress will be tracked.

Key parts of an operations plan include **leadership roles, programs and services, staffing and training, buildings and technology, finances, work processes, partnerships, data tracking, and communication**. Together, these pieces help keep the organization focused, organized, and moving in the same direction during change.

## Getting Started

Start by understanding how things work now and what needs to be improved. Decide where the organization wants to go and what success looks like. Involve staff, leaders, and partners in planning, so change feels shared. **Set clear tasks, assign responsibility, plan needed resources, write simple steps, communicate often, provide training, and celebrate progress**.

# Operations Plan: Getting Started

### Understand where you are now

- ✓How do things currently work?
- ✓What is going well?
- ✓What needs to improve?
- ✓Gather input from stakeholders.

### Decide where you want to go

- ✓Describe goals for the future.
- ✓Do the goals fit the mission and strategic plan?
- ✓What does success l ook like?

### Involve the people who do the work

- ✓Include staff, leadership, and partners to design the plan.
- ✓Ask for feedback and ideas.
- ✓Make people a part of the change.

### Set clear tasks & responsibilities

- ✓What needs to be done?
- ✓Assign who is responsible for each task.
- ✓Set realistic and achievable deadlines.

### Plan the resources

- ✓Staff, funding, equipment and time.
- ✓Do resources match goals?
- ✓Look for gaps and plan solutions.

### Write down the steps

- ✓Create a checklist or roadmap.
- ✓Organize tasks by first, next, and later.
- ✓Keep it clear and easy to follow.

### Communicate and train

- ✓Explain the plan.
- ✓Provide training.
- ✓Offer support.
- ✓Answer questions.

### Monitor and celebrate

- ✓Are tasks getting done?
- ✓What does the data and feedback say?
- ✓Adjust the plan.
- ✓Recognize and share progress and small wins.

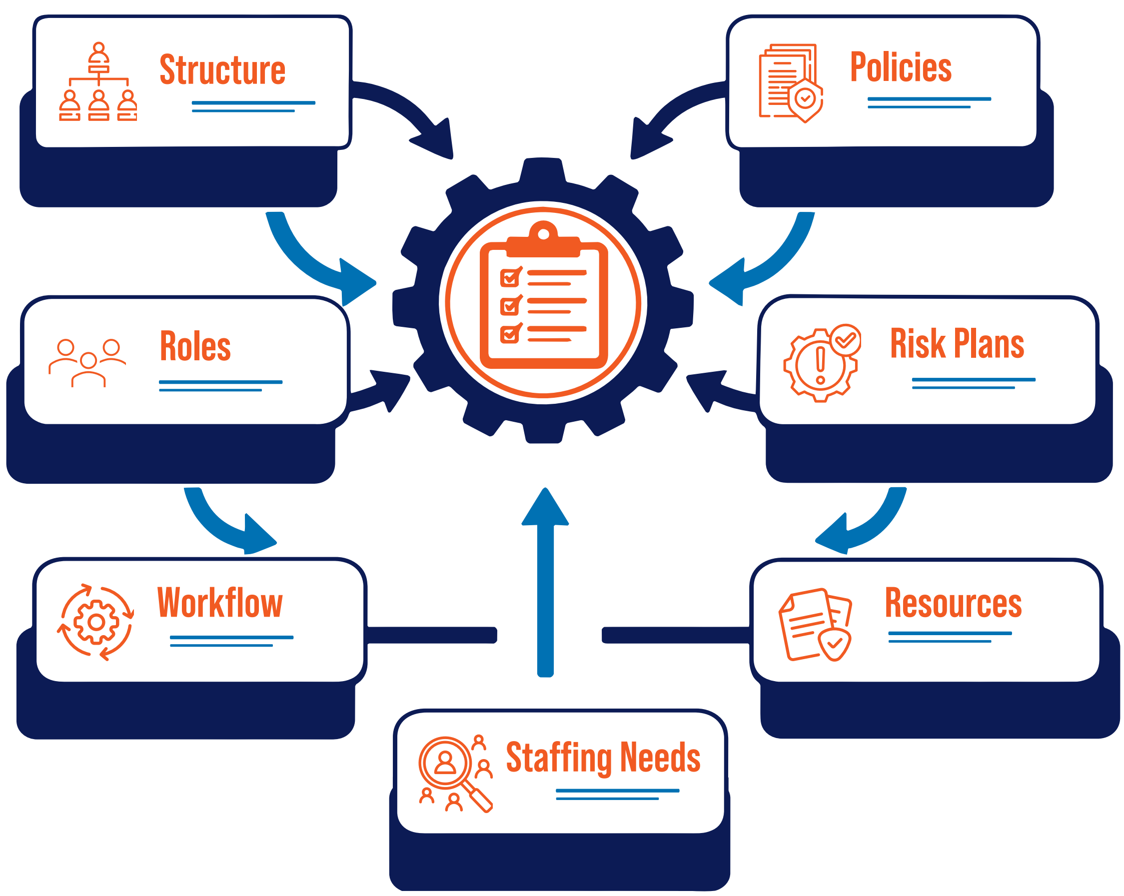
## 2. Define Clear Operational Goals

Clear goals help everyone understand what needs to happen next. Turn big ideas into **SMART** goals that are ***specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-based***. Use a few key performance indicators (KPIs) to track progress, such as community participation, staff training completion, or employment outcomes.

Make sure goals are aligned across programs and departments, so everyone is working toward the same results. Goals should also align with funding and compliance requirements and be included in departmental work plans.

## 3. Develop Implementation Plan

An implementation plan breaks goals into clear tasks and steps. It shows the order of activities, who is responsible, and what support is needed. An operational framework helps by clearly defining structure, roles, workflows, staffing needs, policies, resources, and risk plans.



## Design the Operational Framework

| Component | Key Question | Documentation |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Organizational Structure** | Do roles and reporting lines support the new model? | Updated org chart, revised job descriptions, supervisory structure |
| **Roles & Responsibilities** | Does each role clearly support daily operations and change goals? | Responsibilities by position, expectations for each team, cross-training needs |
| **Core Process and Workflows** | Do staff know how work should be done from start to finish? | Intake, scheduling, service delivery steps, billing, documentation, transportation coordination |
| **Staffing and Training Needs** | Do we have enough staff, with the right skills, in the right places? | Staffing levels, competency list, Training calendar, evaluation process |
| **Policies and Procedures** | Are policies aligned with new practices and compliance rules? | Procedures, safety rules, documentation standards, compliance guidance |
| **Resources and Supports** | Do staff have what they need to do their jobs effectively? | Technology systems, equipment, transportation, scheduling & communication tools |
| **Risk Mitigation and Problem-solving** | Do we know what might cause problems and how to respond? | Risk–impact–mitigation sheet, escalation processes, backup plans |

## Create an actionable road map

Create an **actionable roadmap** with short-, mid-, and long-term timelines. Plan for staffing, funding, equipment, and partnerships, and identify risks early so delays can be avoided.

A well-designed implementation plan also includes **timeline development**, often using a Gantt chart or phased calendar to show short-term (0–6 months), mid-term (6–18 months), and long-term (18–36 months) actions. Timelines should be realistic and flexible enough to adjust when unexpected challenges arise.

## Evaluate financial planning and funding strategies

Resource planning is an important part of making a plan work. For each task, the plan should list the staff, training, funding, equipment, technology, and partners needed. Planning ahead helps avoid delays caused by missing resources. The plan should also point out possible risks, like staff shortages or funding delays, and explain how the organization will respond. ***Funding Your Transformation section of the manual.***

## 4. Communicate, Train, and Support

Clear communication is built into the operations plan. **Leaders should share updates, collect feedback, and hold regular check-ins so everyone stays informed**. Staff training ensures employees have the skills and confidence needed for new expectations.

Supporting staff means listening to concerns, offering hands-on training, and providing coaching or peer support. **When staff feel supported, they are more likely to accept change and succeed**.

## 5. Monitor, Evaluate, and Adjust

Use data to understand what is working and what needs to change. Track key information about staffing, services, employment outcomes, finances, quality, efficiency, and partnerships. **Review data regularly to make informed decisions, reduce risk, and improve services**.

# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN OPERATIONS PLANNING

## Executive Staff

- **Set** the overall **direction** and priorities
- **Approve** goals, budgets, and timelines
- **Communicate** the vision and reason for change
- **Remove barriers** and support managers
- **Review progress** and adjust plans as needed

## Middle Managers

- Turn strategic goals into **daily work plans**
- **Support** and **guide** staff through changes
- **Track progress** and report challenges
- Provide training, **coaching**, and feedback
- Help **solve problems** and improve processes

## Field Staff

- Carry out **daily tasks** aligned with the plan
- **Share feedback** on what is working or not
- **Collect and report** data accurately
- **Try new practices** and suggest improvements
- **Support** individuals through changes

## Advisory Boards

- Provide **strategic guidance** and oversight
- **Represent** stakeholder voices
- **Review data** and monitor progress
- **Champion** the change publicly

# Data-Driven Decision Making

Monitoring progress, adjusting plans, and sharing successes help changes last and keep the organization focused on meaningful outcomes.

Data collection and analysis enable providers to make informed decisions, identify service gaps, and demonstrate measurable outcomes.

| Category | What to Track |
|---|---|
| **Staffing & Workforce** | • Staff levels and vacancies<br>• Turnover and training completion |
| **Service Delivery** | • Services provided<br>• Community vs. facility hours<br>• Staff ratios |
| **Employment Outcomes** | • CIE placements<br>• Job retention<br>• Wages and hours |
| **Financial Data** | • Revenue and expenses<br>• Cost per service<br>• Contract use |
| **Quality & Compliance** | • Case notes<br>• Incidents<br>• Audit results |
| **Customer Engagement** | • Satisfaction feedback<br>• Complaints |
| **Operational Efficiency** | • Transportation use<br>• Paperwork time<br>• Tech issues |
| **Community & Employer Engagement** | • Employer and community partners<br>• Outreach activities |

| Why It Matters | How to Use the Data | Example Tools |
|---|---|---|
| Shows if there are enough trained staff and signs of burnout. | • Plan hiring and retention<br>• Adjust schedules<br>• Plan training | HR systems, training records, staff surveys |
| Shows if services are consistent and moving into the community. | • Improve schedules and staffing<br>• Fix service gaps | Billing systems, service logs, schedules |
| Shows progress toward Employment First goals. | • Improve job supports<br>• Strengthen employer partnerships | Employment trackers, CRM, job coach notes |
| Shows if programs are financially stable. | • Adjust budgets<br>• Identify cost issues | Accounting software, finance reports |
| Helps keep people safe and meet rules. | • Improve training<br>• Update policies | QA reviews, compliance checklists |
| Shows how people feel about services. | • Improve supports<br>• Strengthen communication | Surveys, meetings, focus groups |
| Shows where work is slow or costly. | • Redesign workflows<br>• Improve tools | Transportation logs, IT tickets |
| Shows growth of community and job options. | • Expand partnerships<br>• Improve outreach | Partnership trackers, community maps |

# Agency Personnel Transition

The most important part of any business change is how it affects staff. Clear and steady communication from leaders is very important. Staff need to understand why the change is happening, how their jobs may change, how the agency will support their training and growth, and how the change can be a good thing.

## Key Concepts

### Build
**the Right Workforce**

Staff need the right skills to support people in real jobs in the community. This includes training in person-centered planning, supported decision-making, job coaching, employer engagement, and understanding how work affects benefits. **Clear job roles, good supervision, and ongoing training help staff feel confident and ready for change.**

### Organize
**Community-Based Work**

Community employment works best when staff have enough time to give individual support. This means smaller caseloads, flexible schedules, and clear job descriptions that focus on helping people find and keep jobs. Staffing plans should match both the number of people served and the level of support they need. **Good planning also helps reduce stress, travel time, and service gaps.**

### Support
**Staff Through Change**

Change can be stressful, especially when roles and routines shift. Agencies must communicate clearly, listen to concerns, and involve staff in planning to build trust and buy-in. **Providing supportive supervision, fair pay, growth opportunities, and emotional support helps prevent burnout and supports long-term success.**

# Impacts and Challenges

Moving from sheltered work to community jobs is a big change for agencies, staff, and the people they support. This transition can bring many positive results, but it also comes with real challenges that must be planned for.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Impacts** | • Better trained and more skilled staff<br>• Improved job and life outcomes for individuals<br>• Stronger staff skills and confidence<br>• More complete and personalized supports for individuals<br>• More flexible staff and more efficient use of resources |
| **Challenges** | • Limited funding for training & system updates<br>• Resistance to change and staff burnout<br>• Disruptions to daily operations<br>• Time needed to train staff and adjust schedules<br>• Difficulty hiring and keeping qualified employment staff |

*Understanding both the benefits and the challenges helps agencies prepare, support their workforce, and build a strong path forward.*

# Addressing Challenges: Real Solutions

Challenges are common when agencies change how they support people to work in the community. The table below shares simple, practical solutions that providers can use to support staff and keep services running during the transition.

### 1 Limited funding for training and system updates

**Practical Solutions:**
Use free or low-cost online training options. Apply for grants. Reinvest savings from closing or downsizing facility-based programs into staff training and tools.

### 2 Resistance to change and staff burnout

**Practical Solutions:**
Share clear and honest information about why change is happening. Involve staff in planning and pilot projects so they feel heard. Offer peer support, recognition, and time to adjust.

### 3 Disruptions to daily operations

**Practical Solutions:**
Make changes in phases instead of all at once. Pilot new approaches with a small team before expanding. Cross-train staff.

### 4 Time needed to train staff and adjust schedules

**Practical Solutions:**
Spread training over time using short sessions instead of long blocks. Use flexible scheduling and stagger training days. Allow staff to practice new skills while still doing some familiar work.

### 5 Difficulty hiring and keeping qualified employment staff

**Practical Solutions:**
Write job postings that focus on purpose and impact, not just duties. Offer clear growth paths, ongoing training, and supportive supervision. Recognize staff contributions and successes.

### 6 Workforce shortages and slow hiring processes

**Practical Solutions:**
Develop “grow-your-own” staff by training current employees for new roles. Partner with colleges, workforce programs, and community organizations. Simplify hiring steps when possible, to reduce delays.

# Geographical Considerations

This table highlights how staffing challenges and solutions can look different depending on location and service model. Understanding these differences helps providers plan better, support staff, and choose strategies that fit their community.

| Area | Barriers | Opportunities | Strategies |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Rural** | • Small labor pools<br>• Long travel distances<br>• Limited professional development access | • Strong community ties<br>• Mission-driven candidates<br>• Cross-role flexibility | • Hire locally<br>• Offer mileage/flexible schedules<br>• Cross-train and upskill current staff |
| **Suburban** | • Competition for talent<br>• Geographic sprawl<br>• Inconsistent transit access | • Expanding labor markets<br>• Emerging industries<br>• Regional recruitment reach | • Target recruitment by zone<br>• Offer hybrid/flexible work<br>• Create clear career pathways |
| **Urban** | • High salary competition<br>• Burnout risk<br>• Cost-of-living pressures | • Large, diverse talent pools<br>• Strong transit<br>• University partnerships | • Strengthen compensation/ incentives<br>• Build college pipelines<br>• Provide structured supervision and wellness supports |
| **Facility-Based** | • Group-focused roles<br>• Limited employer exposure<br>• Role rigidity | • Predictable schedules<br>• Experienced supervisory staff<br>• Operational stability | • Retrain for community roles<br>• Job shadowing<br>• Communicate expectations clearly |
| **Community-Based** | • Travel fatigue<br>• Flexible schedules<br>• Individualized caseload demands | • Professional autonomy<br>• Direct employer engagement<br>• Outcome-driven work | • Support travel planning/mileage<br>• Use scheduling tools<br>• Provide coaching and performance support |

# HOW TO IMPLEMENT

## Personnel Transformation

Successful staff change works best when it happens in clear steps over time. The seven steps below help agencies understand their current staff capacity, redefine roles, manage workloads, and build a strong team ready to support people in community-based services.

### Step 1: Conduct Staff Assessments

Just like the Discovery process used with individuals, staff planning should focus on ***each staff member's strengths, skills, and interests.*** Staff assessments, such as the transition readiness scale, help identify what staff already do well and what training they need, such as job development or person-centered planning. These assessments also show where there are gaps in your workforce.

### Step 2: Redefine Roles

Moving from facility-based work to community-based services means ***staff roles must change***. New job descriptions should match the agency's new mission and Employment First approach. Clearly explain expectations, goals, and new skills, and plan for cross-training so staff can work together across roles.

### Step 3: Examine Staffing Ratios and Caseload Management Policies

Community-based work brings ***new workload expectations***. Agencies may need to hire more staff, adjust staff-to-person ratios, and allow more time for building relationships with individuals and employers. ***Balanced caseloads*** should reflect the number of people served and the level of support needed, including time for job searching and on-the-job coaching. Employment specialists and job coaches will need ***flexible scheduling*** to adapt work hours to support clients on evening and weekends.

## Step 4: Develop Staff Recruitment and Retention Plans

Job postings should ***highlight meaningful, mission-driven work in the community***. Partner with colleges and training programs to find new staff and build a supportive team culture. Money Talks! Paying competitive wages, offering training opportunities, recognizing staff, and creating career paths all help keep good staff.

## Step 5: Mitigate Risks

Change can cause worry about job security and role changes. Agencies should ***anticipate and listen*** to staff concerns, ***communicate*** clear and regular updates, and ***involve staff*** in planning and pilot projects. ***Sharing success stories*** and reinforcing Employment First values helps build trust and support.


## Step 6: Train, Supervise, and Measure for Outcomes

Performance should be ***measured by real outcomes***, like people getting and keeping jobs, job satisfaction, and community inclusion. Supervisors should ***meet regularly*** with staff to give feedback, set goals, and support growth. ***Clear expectations***, documentation, and fair accountability help staff succeed.

> ***Tip:*** *Plan ahead. Give staff time to talk, reflect, and get support. This can include access to mental health help, employee support programs, peer support groups, and supervisors.*

Supervisors should be trained to coach and support staff through role changes to build content-based, interpersonal, and managerial competencies. **All staff and board members should learn about Employment First, person-centered planning, and supported decision-making**. Ongoing training helps everyone stay aligned and confident in the new service model.

## Training Topics

1. Person-centered planning and thinking
2. Supported and customized employment models
3. Benefits planning and financial literacy
4. Assistive technology and accommodations
5. Motivational interviewing
6. Cultural competence and trauma informed care
7. ADA, WIPA, HCBS compliance

## Training Methods

1. Online modules
2. In-person work shops
3. On-the-job coaching and mentorship
4. Peer learning communities

## Credential Opportunities

1. ACRE Certification
2. Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP)
3. Community Work Incentives Coordinator (CWIC)
4. Certified Nonprofit Professional (CNP)
5. SHRM Certified Professional (Society for Human Resources)

# Roles and Responsibilities in Personnel Planning

This breakdown explains how different staff roles support personnel planning during the transition to community-based employment services. When everyone understands their responsibilities, the agency can work together more smoothly and support staff through change.

## Executive Staff

- **Set the vision** for change and clearly explain why the transition is happening.
- **Make decisions** about funding, staffing levels, and long-term planning.
- **Support staff** by investing in training, communication, and leadership development.

## Middle Managers

- Turn the agency's **vision into daily practice**.
- **Balance caseloads** and monitor workload sustainability.
- **Support and coach** staff through role changes, manage schedules and caseloads, and track performance.
- **Share staff feedback** with leadership and help solve problems as they come up.
- **Manage** schedules and caseloads and **track** performance.

## Field Staff

- **Embrace new roles** focused on employer engagement and individualized supports.
- **Participate actively** in training and credentialing opportunities.
- **Communicate** challenges and successes with supervisors.
- **Support peers** through collaboration and shared problem-solving.

## Advisory Boards

- **Reinforce** Employment First values and workforce sustainability priorities.
- **Advocate** for competitive compensation and resource investment.
- **Monitor** workforce data and organizational outcomes.
- **Support** partnerships that strengthen recruitment pipelines.

# DATA-DRIVEN DECISIONS

Good financial planning for staff changes depends on **using data to make smart decisions**.

Data helps agencies track progress, show results, and decide where to spend money on training and support.

With a simple tracking system, agencies can see what is working, identify problems early, and make changes as needed.

The following table presents critical focus areas, including what to track, why it matters, and how to utilize the collected data.

| Category | What to Track |
|---|---|
| **Staffing & Workforce** | • Staff levels and vacancies<br>• Turnover and training completion |
| **Service Delivery** | • Services provided<br>• Community vs. facility hours<br>• Staff ratios |
| **Employment Outcomes** | • CIE placements<br>• Job retention<br>• Wages and hours |
| **Financial Data** | • Revenue and expenses<br>• Cost per service<br>• Contract use |
| **Quality & Compliance** | • Case notes<br>• Incidents<br>• Audit results |
| **Customer Engagement** | • Satisfaction feedback<br>• Complaints |
| **Operational Efficiency** | • Transportation use<br>• Paperwork time<br>• Tech issues |
| **Community & Employer Engagement** | • Employer and community partners<br>• Outreach activities |

| Why It Matters | How to Use the Data | Example Tools |
|---|---|---|
| Shows if there are enough trained staff and signs of burnout. | • Plan hiring and retention<br>• Adjust schedules<br>• Plan training | HR systems, training records, staff surveys |
| Shows if services are consistent and moving into the community. | • Improve schedules and staffing<br>• Fix service gaps | Billing systems, service logs, schedules |
| Shows progress toward Employment First goals. | • Improve job supports<br>• Strengthen employer partnerships | Employment trackers, job coach notes |
| Shows if programs are financially stable. | • Adjust budgets<br>• Identify cost issues | Accounting software, finance reports |
| Helps keep people safe and meet rules. | • Improve training<br>• Update policies | QA reviews, compliance checklists |
| Shows how people feel about services. | • Improve supports<br>• Strengthen communication | Surveys, meetings, focus groups |
| Shows where work is slow or costly. | • Redesign workflows<br>• Improve tools | Transportation logs, IT tickets |
| Shows growth of community and job options. | • Expand partnerships<br>• Improve outreach | Partnership trackers, community maps |

# Transformation

In addition to changing programs, moving away from 14(c) requires a clear understanding of how services are funded, regulated, and paid for by state and federal systems. The success and stability of services depend on reliable funding that can support people over time.

As subminimum wage workshops close, organizations will lose income that once came from contracts. To stay strong, providers must plan ahead and build new, long-term funding sources that are stable, diverse, and follow the rules. These **funding models should support real jobs and meaningful community employment.**

## Key Concepts

### Braided Funding

Braided funding means using more than one funding source to pay for services. For example, an agency might use VR, Medicaid waiver, and grant funds together to support job coaching or community activities. This helps cover more needs without relying on just one program.

### Contract Utilization

Contract utilization means making sure all available funding in a contract is being used. When contracts are underused, agencies may lose money or future funding. Tracking services carefully helps ensure funding supports people as intended.

### Community-Based Services

Community-based services happen in places like businesses, neighborhoods, and community centers. These services help people learn skills where they will actually use them. This makes learning more meaningful and supports inclusion.

## Return on Investment (ROI)

Return on investment means looking at how funding choices lead to better results. For example, spending money on job development may lead to higher wages and fewer long-term supports. ROI helps leaders decide where money makes the biggest difference.

## Cost Rebalancing

Cost rebalancing means shifting money away from facility buildings and toward community supports. This might include spending more on staff time, transportation, or job coaching. Over time, this helps funding better match employment goals.

## Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE)

Competitive Integrated Employment means a person works in a community integrated job and earns at least minimum wage. They work alongside people without disabilities and have the same chances for advancement. CIE supports independence, choice, and dignity.

# Impacts and Challenges

Changes to funding affect how services are planned, staffed, and delivered. Understanding both the positive impacts and the challenges helps organizations prepare for change and avoid surprises. Through planning, providers can strengthen their services while managing risks during the transition.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Impacts** | • Earn more money by billing correctly<br>• Use multiple funding sources to lower risk and reduce reliance on old contracts<br>• Make better decisions about staffing, caseloads, and services<br>• Build stronger community partnerships with steady funding<br>• Improves sustainable, quality, and innovative services |
| **Challenges** | • Replacing money that once came from production contracts<br>• Training staff to understand what activities can be billed<br>• Spending more time on paperwork and compliance<br>• Managing risk while changing service models<br>• Coordinating across finance, operations, and program teams |

# Addressing Challenges: Real Solutions

The challenges of funding change can feel overwhelming, but they can be managed with clear planning and practical steps. The table below shows real solutions providers can use to address common funding challenges during the transition to community and employment-focused services.

| Challenge | ★ Practical Solutions ★ |
|---|---|
| **Replacing 14(c) revenue** | • Expand billing for community-based and employment services<br>• Use VR & HCBS waiver funding together to support job development<br>• Gradually reduce facility costs and reinvest savings into employment supports |
| **Training staff on billable activities** | • Train staff on what activities can be billed & how to document<br>• Create simple billing cheat sheets and examples<br>• Review billing regularly and give staff feedback |
| **Time management-documentation and compliance** | • Use standard templates and checklists for documentation<br>• Build documentation time into staff schedules ww<br>• Use electronic systems to reduce duplicate paperwork |
| **Reducing risk** | • Start with small pilots before making big changes<br>• Track costs and outcomes monthly to catch problems early<br>• Share progress and lessons learned with staff and leadership |
| **Cross-Team Coordination** | • Hold regular cross-team meetings to review funding & service data<br>• Use shared goals tied to employment outcomes<br>• Assign clear roles for budgeting, billing, and service delivery |
| **Multiple funding sources** | • Map out funding sources and allowable activities in one place<br>• Assign a funding lead or point person<br>• Train supervisors on how to blend funding correctly |
| **Managing risk during the transition** | • Create a transition budget that includes backup plans<br>• Phase changes over time instead of all at once<br>• Monitor cash flow and contract use closely |
| **Community questions and concerns** | • Share clear, simple messages about why changes are happening<br>• Highlight success stories from community employment<br>• Offer meetings and updates for families and partners |

# Geographical Considerations

Funding options and costs can look very different depending on where services are provided. Understanding how public, private, and community funding work in each setting helps providers plan services that are both effective and sustainable. Public funding can provide the largest and most stable funding stream for organizations to directly support CIE activities like job development, coaching, and community integration.

## Illinois Funding Landscape

### Public Funding (State & Federal)

Public funding is the main source of support for employment and community services in Illinois.

- **Illinois Division of Developmental Disabilities**
- **Illinois Division of Rehabilitation Services**
- **Illinois Department of Human Services**
- **Social Security Work Incentives**

### Private Funding

Private funding can support innovatior pilots, and expanded services.

- **Employer partnerships**
- **Private foundations**
- **Corporate social responsibility programs**

### Community Funding

Community funding helps fill gaps and strengthen local partnerships.

- **Local grants and community foundations**
- **Municipal and workforce development funds**
- **Community organizations and faith-based groups**
- **United Way and local fundraising efforts**

## Why This Matters

Using a mix of public, private, and community funding helps Illinois providers **reduce risk** and **build stable, long-term services**. When funding is diversified, organizations are better prepared to support CIE as facility-based models phase out.

Providers can maximize funding opportunities by providing services in "service deserts". Entering underserved areas to provide employment services can:

- ✓ Open new funding streams
- ✓ Fill unmet community needs
- ✓ Strengthen organizational visibility and value
- ✓ Support workforce expansion

## Funding Crosswalk

Funding for employment services in Illinois comes from **several systems that must work together**. Understanding how DDD, DRS, and employer funding connect helps providers plan services, avoid overlap, and use each funding source at the right time. The table shows how these funding streams can be coordinated to support CIE.

| Service or Support |
|---|
| Discovery & Career Exploration |
| Job Development |
| Job Coaching (Early) |
| Job Coaching (Ongoing) |
| Workplace Accommodations |
| Transportation & Community Access |
| Skill Building & Training |
| Retention & Advancement |
| Program Sustainability |

| Illinois DDD | Illinois DRS | Employer Funding / Support |
|---|---|---|
| Supports person-centered planning and community-based day services | Funds discovery, assessment, and career exploration | Job shadowing, informational interviews |
| May support staff time through community or employment services | Primary funder for job development and placement | Employer time for interviews and onboarding |
| Can support ongoing job supports through waiver services | Funds short-term job coaching and stabilization | On-the-job training, coworker mentoring |
| Primary funder for long-term supports as needed | Steps down once job is stable | Natural supports, supervision |
| Supports assistive technology and individualized supports | May fund initial accommodations tied to employment | Provides reasonable accommodations |
| Supports transportation tied to day or employment services | May support travel during job development | Work schedules aligned to transit options |
| Community-based skill development | Employment-focused training | Employer-provided training |
| Long-term employment supports | Follow-up and case closure supports | Raises, promotions, skill growth |
| Ongoing waiver funding | Milestone-based payments | Reduced turnover, productivity gains |

# How to Implement

## Modernizing Funding Models

Building a modernized, sustainable funding model requires maximizing current revenue streams, developing new revenue streams, leveraging community resources, and building internal strategies. This section describes the primary steps providers may use to fund CIE service delivery, including how to leverage Fee-for-Service (FFS) reimbursement, optimize contract utilization, and build diversified revenue streams.

1. Maximize Current Revenue Streams
2. Develop New Revenue Streams
3. Leverage Community Resources
4. Build Internal Strategies

### 1. Maximize Current Revenue Streams

Before looking for new money, it is important to **fully use the funding you already have**. Many organizations lose revenue simply because services are not billed correctly, or contracts are not fully used.

Providers should review all current contracts, service codes, and billing practices. Staff should understand which activities are billable and how to document them correctly. **When current funding is used well, organizations can increase revenue without adding new programs**.

#### Key actions:

- Review DDD and DRS contracts regularly
- Focus programs on high-value services (job development, coaching, & retention supports)
- Create a funding map showing which services match each contract
- Track contract utilization monthly
- Train staff on billable activities and documentation
- Fix gaps where services are provided but not billed

## 2. Develop New Revenue

As facility-based work and production contracts end, organizations must replace that lost income. **New funding should support community inclusion and employment, not outdated service models**.

New income may come from expanded employment services, customized employment, supported employment, grants, or pilot projects. **Diversifying funding lowers risk and creates more stability during change**.

### Key actions:

- Expand employment-focused services
- Explore grants and pilot funding
- Partner with employers for paid work experiences
- Avoid relying on a single funding source

## 3. Leverage Free/Low-Cost Community Resources

Not all support has to be paid for through formal contracts. Communities offer resources that can lower costs and strengthen services when used well.

Community partners may provide training space, transportation help, job connections, or shared services. These **partnerships stretch funding and improve real-world outcomes**.

### Key actions:

- Build relationships with local employers
- Partner with community organizations and faith groups
- Use workforce boards and local initiatives
- Share resources instead of duplicating services

## 4. Build Internal Strategies

**Strong funding depends on strong internal systems**. Clear roles, good communication, and shared goals help funding work across the organization.

**Finance, operations, and program staff must work together**. Leaders should use data to guide decisions and plan for long-term sustainability instead of short-term fixes.

### Key actions:

- Align finance, operations, and program teams
- Use data to track costs and outcomes
- Create clear billing and documentation systems
- Plan gradual changes to reduce risk

## Key Takeaway

**Modernizing your funding model is not one big change—it is a series of smart steps. When providers maximize what they have, grow new funding, use community supports, and strengthen internal systems, they build services that last and support meaningful employment.**

# Roles and Responsibilities

Clear roles help funding and services work smoothly during times of change. When executive staff, middle managers, and field staff understand their responsibilities, organizations can reduce confusion, manage risk, and support quality community and employment services.

## Executive Staff

- **Set the vision** and funding priorities
- **Approve** budgets and major changes
- **Manage** financial risk and long-term sustainability
- **Support** staff through the transition

## Middle Managers

- Turn funding rules into **daily practice**
- **Monitor** billing, staffing, and service delivery
- **Support and coach** field staff
- **Identify problems** and suggest solutions

## Field Staff

- **Provide** services in the community
- **Document** work accurately and on time
- **Follow** billing and service guidelines
- **Share feedback** about what works and what does not

## Advisory Boards

- **Provide governance** and financial oversight
- **Ask strategic questions** about sustainability and risk
- **Support** mission-aligned fiscal modernization
- **Advocate** for diversified funding and community partnerships

# Data-Driven Decisions

Making good funding decisions depends on using clear and reliable data. Tracking the right information helps organizations understand what is working, where changes are needed, and how to use funding wisely. The chart below shows key focus areas and how data can guide better decisions during the transition.

| Focus Area | What to Track | Why It Matters | How to Use the Data | Example Tools or Methods |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Contract Utilization** | Hours billed vs. hours allowed by contract | Shows if funding is being fully used | Adjust schedules and services to avoid lost revenue | Contract tracking spreadsheet, monthly reports |
| **Staff Time & Productivity** | Billable vs. non-billable staff hours | Helps ensure staff time supports funded services | Shift duties, retrain staff, improve scheduling | Time studies, staff logs |
| **Service Mix** | Facility-based vs. community-based services | Shows progress toward integrated services | Plan program changes and reduce facility costs | Service tracking dashboard |
| **Employment Outcomes** | Job placements, hours worked, wages | Shows if services lead to real jobs | Improve job development and coaching strategies | Outcome tracker, quarterly reviews |
| **Cost per Participant** | Cost of services per person | Helps manage budgets and sustainability | Identify high-cost areas and improve efficiency | Budget analysis spreadsheet |
| **Revenue by Funding Source** | DDD, DRS, employer, grants | Reduces risk from relying on one source | Balance funding and plan future growth | Revenue summary reports |
| **Staff Training & Capacity** | Training completed and skill gaps | Ensures staff can deliver new services | Plan future training and hiring | Training logs, needs assessments |
| **Compliance & Documentation** | Missing or late documentation | Reduces audit and funding risk | Improve documentation practices | Compliance checklists |
| **Transition Progress** | Reduction in workshop services over time | Tracks movement away from 14(c) models | Adjust transition timelines and budgets | Multi-year transition plan |

# Data Driven Decision Making

## From Data to Action

Data-driven decision making is the **connective tissue between executive strategy and frontline practice** during the transition away from 14(c) and toward CIE.

Data-driven decision making **only works when data leads to action**. Executives use aggregated data to set priorities, redesign programs, and invest resources. Field staff use data to improve daily practice, refine supports, and strengthen relationships with individuals and employers.

Together, these **decisions create a continuous improvement cycle** where progress is measured, lessons are learned, and strategies are adjusted in real time.

By **aligning executive-level planning data with frontline service data, organizations can confidently navigate** the **transition to CIE**—ensuring compliance, financial sustainability, workforce readiness, and meaningful outcomes for people served.

## Why This Matters

**Data collection is not paperwork—it is decision-making power.** Field staff influence staffing, training, programs, and funding through the data they generate every day. Executives use that data to remove barriers, invest resources, and create conditions for success. Transformation only works when both sides act on the same information

## When Data is Missing

**Missing data does not mean nothing is happening—it means leadership cannot see it.**

When data is incomplete or inaccurate:

- **Good work becomes invisible**
- **Risk increases**
- **Decisions are made with assumptions instead of evidence**

Accurate data protects staff, strengthens services, and supports a successful transition to CIE.

**To learn more about how field data drives Executive Decisions, check out our Data-to-Action Framework on the Dignity in pay website**.

# Key Concepts

## Data Connects Daily Work to Decisions

The information staff collect every day helps leaders make decisions about programs, staffing, training, and funding. When data is accurate, leaders can see what is working and what needs to change.

## Everyone Is Responsible for Data

Field staff, supervisors, and leaders all play a role in data quality.

Field staff collect and document information, supervisors check it, and leaders use it to guide the organization.

Missing data makes decisions harder and less effective.

## Data Reduces Risk and Guessing

Using real data lowers the chance of mistakes and bases decisions on facts, not assumptions.

Data helps leaders spot problems early, stay in compliance, and plan changes instead of reacting to crises.

## Data Must Lead to Action

Collecting data only matters if it leads to change. Data should be used to improve services, adjust supports, invest in training, and strengthen employment outcomes. When data leads to action, services improve, and staff see the value of their work.

## Impacts and Challenges

Collecting good data helps organizations make smart decisions during the move to CIE. It shows what is working, what needs to change, and how to use resources wisely. The table below explains the main benefits and challenges of data collection.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Impacts** | • Supports better decisions based on real information, not guesses<br>• Helps leaders spot and fix problems early<br>• Shows compliance and reduces legal and funding risk<br>• Makes staff work visible and supports fair staffing decisions<br>• Improves service quality & employment outcomes |
| **Challenges** | • Takes extra time and can feel like paperwork<br>• Staff may be unsure what data matters or how to record it<br>• Inconsistent or missing data limits its usefulness<br>• Limited training or tools can lower data quality<br>• If data is not used, staff may lose motivation to collect it. |

# Addressing Challenges: Real Solutions

Collecting good data can be difficult, especially during times of change. These challenges are common and do not mean staff are doing something wrong. The table below shares simple, practical solutions that organizations can use to **improve data collection, reduce frustration, and make sure data leads to real decisions and better outcomes**.

| Challenge | ★ Practical Solutions ★ |
|---|---|
| **Time intensive** | • Use simple checklists instead of long narratives<br>• Build data collection into daily routines (end of shift, after visits)<br>• Remove data fields that are not used for decisions |
| **Staff knowledge and awareness** | • Clearly explain what data is required and why it matters<br>• Provide examples of "good documentation"<br>• Use quick-reference guides or laminated cheat sheets |
| **Inconsistent or missing data** | • Standardize documentation expectations across teams<br>• Have supervisors review data regularly and give feedback<br>• Address gaps early instead of waiting for audits |
| **Limited training or tools** | • Train staff on data collection as part of onboarding and refreshers<br>• Use simple, mobile-friendly tools when possible<br>• Offer coaching instead of discipline when errors happen |
| **Staff commitment** | • Share how data led to decisions (staffing, training, programs)<br>• Close the loop by reporting back outcomes to staff<br>• Recognize teams that consistently provide strong data |

# How to Implement

## 1 Decide What Data Matters Right Now

Start small and focus only on the data needed to support the transition away from 14(c). This usually includes ***where*** services are happening (community vs. facility), ***how*** staff time is spent, contract ***utilization***, and progress toward CIE. Avoid collecting extra data that is not being used for decisions.

### Why this matters:

Too much data creates confusion. A short, focused data list **helps staff understand priorities and reduces documentation burden**.

## 2 Align Data Collection with Daily Work

**Build data collection into what staff already do** instead of adding new tasks. Use checkboxes, short notes, or simple tracking tools tied to service delivery, employer outreach, and billing. Make sure expectations are the same across teams.

### Why this matters:

When data fits naturally into daily routines, **accuracy improves, and resistance drops**.

## 3 Review Data Regularly—Not Just for Compliance

Set a simple schedule (weekly or monthly) to review data with supervisors and managers. **Look for patterns**: where services are still facility-based, where staff are stretched thin, and where community employment efforts are growing.

### Why this matters:

Regular **review turns data into a planning tool** instead of an audit-only requirement.

## 4 Use Data to Make One Visible Decision

Early on, use data to **make at least one clear decision**—such as adjusting caseloads, changing schedules to support community work, investing in training, or shifting resources away from 14(c)-related activities. Share this decision with staff and explain which data informed it.

### Why this matters:

When staff see **data lead to action**, they **understand the value** of collecting it.

## 5 Close the Loop with Staff and Stakeholders

Communicate what the data shows, what decisions were made, and what will happen next. Invite feedback and adjust as needed. This keeps everyone aligned and **reinforces that data is a shared responsibility**, not a top-down control tool.

### Why this matters:

Closing the loop **builds trust, improves data quality**, and **supports** long-term **change**.

***Data-driven decision making does not require perfect systems—it requires consistent focus.***

*By starting small, using existing routines, and acting on what the data shows, organizations can reduce risk, support staff, and move confidently away from 14(c) toward sustainable, community-based employment models.*


**REDUCE RISK • SUPPORT STAFF • SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT**

# Roles and Responsibilities
# In Data-Driven Decision Making

**Clear roles help data turn into action**. Field staff collect accurate information, middle managers review and guide practice, and executives use the data to make decisions about services, staffing, and funding. When each role is aligned, data supports a smooth transition away from 14(c) and toward CIE.

## Executive Staff

Review dashboards and reports; shift resources toward CIE; approve training investments; explain how data informed major decisions

- **Set vision** and priorities for moving away from 14(c)
- **Decide** what data matters most
- Use data to **guide** funding, staffing, and program changes
- **Manage risk** and compliance
- **Communicate** decisions clearly

## Middle Management

Monitor caseloads and service settings; give staff feedback on data quality; flag risks early; recommend adjustments to leadership

- Turn executive priorities into **daily expectations**
- **Review data** regularly for trends and gaps
- **Coach staff** on documentation and practice
- **Identify barriers** and solutions
- **Share feedback** up and down

## Field Staff

Record community-based activities; track skill progress and employer contacts; report workload concerns; apply feedback to improve practice

- Collect accurate, timely data through **daily work**
- **Document** services, supports, and outcomes
- **Share challenges** and successes
- Use data to **adjust** supports for individuals

## Advisory Boards

Review dashboards and reports Ask accountability questions about risk, funding, and sustainability

- **Review** high-level outcome data and transition progress
- **Provide strategic guidance** aligned with CIE goals
- **Advocate** for transparency and community trust during transformation

# Data-Driven Decisions

## Data-to-Action Framework

The Data-to-Action Framework shows how daily work turns into real decisions. As organizations move away from subminimum wage and toward CIE, **leaders must use accurate data—not guesses—to make choices about staffing, training, funding, and services.**

Field staff create this data through their everyday work with people, employers, and the community. Leaders use the data to plan, fix problems, and support staff. When data is missing, good work cannot be seen, and decisions may be made the wrong way.

# Interagency Collaboration

Effective interagency collaboration may improve employment services for people with disabilities, especially for those with more significant support needs. Research suggests that having clear roles and responsibilities, deliberate practices, and unifying goals improve collaborations. There are noted structural and personal challenges that hinder collaboration. This section will seek to provide practical advice to improve collaborative programs.

## Key Concepts

### Shared Goals

Shared goals mean **all agencies agree on what success looks like** and are **working toward the same outcomes**. Shared goals help teams make consistent decisions, reduce mixed messages, and keep people moving forward rather than getting stuck between systems. Collaboration works best when partners are aligned around a clear, shared goal. That goal becomes the reason for the partnership and a common reference point that keeps collaborators oriented during both progress and setbacks.

### Clear Roles and Responsibilities

**Establish a convener**, the person or agency who establishes, guides and legitimizes a collaboration. In practice, the convener **brings partners together, guides discussions, and verifies** that partners follow through on action steps. Conveners also play a key part in establishing roles and responsibilities within the context of the collaboration. Research supports the importance of **clear roles** and responsibilities in strengthen collaborations because it **reinforces expectations** and makes certain that the collaboration is focused on the **shared goal**.

## Communication and Trust

Communication is how agencies share updates, concerns, and progress. Regular, open communication builds trust between agencies. Trust makes problem-solving easier and strengthens long-term partnerships. **Strong communication and trust make it easier to work through challenges and maintain collaboration even when systems change or staff** turnover occurs.

## Coordination and Follow-Through

Coordination is how agencies align timelines, services, and supports so they work together smoothly. Follow-through means completing agreed-upon actions and checking back on progress. Together, **high quality coordination and consistent follow-through empowers collaborations to reach their shared goals**.

# Impacts and Challenges

Interagency collaboration is **key to helping people with disabilities get the right supports at the right time**. When agencies work together, services are better, transitions are smoother, and people are less likely to fall through the cracks. Strong collaboration takes effort, but when done effectively, it leads to better outcomes for individuals, families, and service systems.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Impacts** | • Agencies work together to give people more complete services<br>• Makes it easier to support people with high or complex needs<br>• Improves the move from high school services to adult services<br>• Reduces gaps and duplication between agencies<br>• Creates clearer paths to employment and community support |
| **Challenges** | • Agency rules and systems limit time and resources<br>• Staff turnover makes it hard to keep strong partnerships<br>• Roles and responsibilities are often unclear<br>• Trust between agencies can be weak or slow to build<br>• No clear convener to establish, guide and legitimize the work |

# Addressing Challenges: Real Solutions

Interagency collaboration works best when challenges are met with clear, practical solutions. This table shows simple actions agencies can take to reduce barriers, strengthen partnerships, and stay focused on shared goals. These solutions are designed to support smoother coordination and better outcomes for people with disabilities.

| Challenge | ★ Practical Solutions ★ |
|---|---|
| **Agency rules and systems limit time and resources** | • Expand billing for community-based and employment services<br>• Use VR & HCBS waiver funding together to support job development<br>• Gradually reduce facility costs and reinvest savings into employment supports |
| **Staff turnover makes partnerships unstable** | • Train staff on what activities can be billed & how to document<br>• Create simple billing cheat sheets and examples<br>• Review billing regularly and give staff feedback |
| **Unclear roles and responsibilities** | • Use standard templates and checklists for documentation<br>• Build documentation time into staff schedules ww<br>• Use electronic systems to reduce duplicate paperwork |
| **Limited trust between agencies** | • Start with small pilots before making big changes<br>• Track costs and outcomes monthly to catch problems early<br>• Share progress and lessons learned with staff and leadership |
| **No clear convener to lead collaboration** | • Hold regular cross-team meetings to review funding & service data<br>• Use shared goals tied to employment outcomes<br>• Assign clear roles for budgeting, billing, and service delivery |

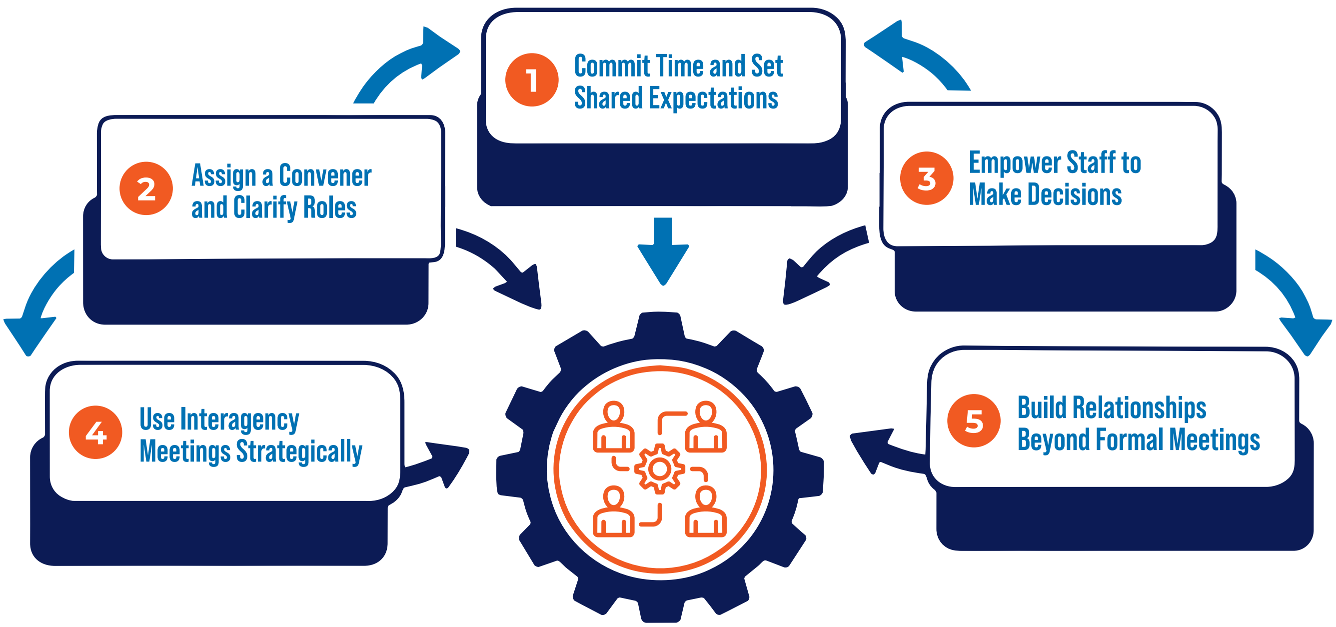
# Geographical Considerations

Where services are provided greatly affects how agencies work together. Geography shapes access to partners, transportation, communication, and available resources. This table highlights common barriers and opportunities across regions and service settings to help agencies plan stronger, more effective collaboration.

| Region | Barriers | Opportunities | Strategies |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Rural** | • Fewer agencies and partners<br>• Long travel distances<br>• Limited staff capacity<br>• Fewer service options | • Strong personal relationships<br>• High community trust<br>• Agencies know families well | • Use virtual meetings to reduce travel<br>• Build multi-role partnerships across agencies<br>• Share staff, training, and resources when possible |
| **Suburban** | • Agencies spread across large areas<br>• Changing service boundaries<br>• Inconsistent communication | • Growing service networks<br>• More employment and service options<br>• Mix of urban and rural strengths | • Clearly define service areas and roles<br>• Schedule regular coordination check-ins<br>• Update partner lists as communities change |
| **Urban** | • Many agencies with overlapping roles<br>• Competition for resources<br>• Harder to build trust at scale | • More specialized services<br>• Larger workforce and employer base<br>• Greater access to transportation | • Assign a clear convener to lead coordination<br>• Use shared referral and data systems<br>• Focus collaboration on shared outcomes |
| **Facility-Based Programs** | • Services often operate in silos<br>• Limited outside partnerships<br>• Less exposure to other systems | • Predictable schedules<br>• Easier coordination within one location | • Intentionally invite outside partners in<br>• Schedule joint planning meetings on-site<br>• Plan transitions from facility to community together |
| **Community Based Programs** | • Coordination happens across many locations<br>• More scheduling complexity<br>• Communication gaps | • Services occur in integrated community settings<br>• Strong links to employers and supports | • Use shared calendars and communication tools<br>• Coordinate services around community routines<br>• Align agency roles to support employment goals |

# How to Implement

## Effective Interagency Collaboration




### 1 Commit Time and Set Shared Expectations

Strong collaboration takes time and cannot be rushed. Agencies must agree that **working together is part of the job**—not an extra task—and set clear, shared goals focused on CIE. This commitment helps prevent collaboration from falling apart when workloads increase.

#### Why it matters:

When time is protected, collaboration does not disappear during busy periods. **Shared expectations keep agencies focused** on employment and shared goals.

### 2 Assign a Convener and Clarify Roles

Identify a lead convener to organize meetings, guide the work, and keep partners aligned on the shared goal. Clearly define each agency's role, decision-making authority, and responsibilities related to CIE, policy, and regulatory requirements. **When roles and responsibilities are clear, collaboration becomes more efficient and accountable**.

#### Why it matters:

Clear leadership and **roles reduce confusion and delays**. Everyone knows who is responsible, which helps work move faster and more smoothly.

## 3 Empower Staff to Make Decisions

Staff involved in collaboration must be **trusted and empowered to make decisions** related to the partnership. This includes adjusting supports, coordinating services, and solving problems together without unnecessary approval delays. Empowered staff can respond faster and keep services person-centered and employment-focused.

### Why it matters:

Empowered staff can **respond quickly to challenges and opportunities**. This helps services stay person-centered and focused on real progress.

## 4 Use Interagency Meetings Strategically

Hold regular interagency meetings with a clear purpose. Effective meetings reinforce shared goals, clarify roles, address system barriers, and track progress toward the shared goals (e.g., CIE outcomes). These meetings should **focus on problem-solving, coordination, and compliance**—not just information sharing.

### Why it matters:

Well-run meetings keep agencies **aligned and focused on results**. They help teams spot problems early and work together to fix them.

## 5 Build Relationships Beyond Formal Meetings

Strong collaboration **grows through relationships**, not just schedules. Informal check-ins, joint planning sessions, and relationship-building conversations help build **trust and creativity**.

These connections support better brainstorming, smoother coordination, and improved service delivery for individuals pursuing CIE.

### Why it matters:

Strong relationships **improve teamwork and problem-solving**.

Trust between agencies leads to **better coordination and stronger outcomes** for the people being supported.

# Roles and Responsibilities In Interagency Collaboration

Strong interagency collaboration depends on everyone knowing their role. Executives, middle managers, and field staff each play a different but connected part in making partnerships work. This section shows how responsibilities fit together to support coordination, problem-solving, and better outcomes.

## Executive Staff

- **Set clear expectations** that collaboration is a priority
- Assign or approve a convener to **lead partnerships**
- **Align collaboration** with mission, funding, and strategy
- **Remove** high-level barriers that slow progress
- **Support** a culture of trust and shared accountability

## Middle Management

- Turn leadership expectations into **daily practice**
- **Coordinate** interagency meetings and follow-up actions
- **Clarify** roles, workflows, and decision-making authority
- **Support staff** problem-solving across agencies
- **Monitor progress** and adjust strategies as needed

## Field Staff

- **Build** day-to-day working **relationships** with partners
- **Share information** and coordinate supports in real time
- **Participate actively** in meetings and planning
- **Identify barriers** and suggest solutions
- Keep services **person-centered and goal-focused**

## Advisory Boards

- Make certain the **collaboration is accountable** to the shared goals
- **Provide a perspective** on how resources are being allocated and utilized.
- **Provide resources** around potential trainings or professional develop that may enhance the collaboration (e.g., ACRE certification opportunities)

# Data-Driven Decision Making

Data-driven decision making helps teams move from good intentions to real results. When agencies collect and use the right data, they can spot problems early, adjust services, and stay focused on employment and community outcomes. This table shows what data to track, why it matters, and how to use it.

| Focus Area | Data to Collect | What It Tells You | The Data |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Collaboration Activity** | • Number of interagency meetings<br>• Attendance by agency | How often agencies are working together | Adjust meeting frequency, participation, or format |
| **Roles & Follow-Through** | • Assigned action items<br>• Completion rates | Whether responsibilities are clear and acted on | Clarify roles and address gaps in follow-through |
| **Service Coordination** | • Referral timelines<br>• Service start delays | Where coordination breaks down | Fix handoffs and reduce delays in services |
| **Employment Progress** | • Job exploration activities<br>• Job placements and retention | Whether collaboration supports real work outcomes | Shift strategies toward activities that lead to jobs |
| **Staff Capacity** | • Staff caseloads<br>• Time spent on coordination | Whether staff have time to collaborate effectively | Adjust staffing, workloads, or priorities |
| **Barriers Identified** | • Reported challenges<br>• Repeated issues | Common system or communication problems | Target problem-solving and system changes |
| **Outcomes Over Time** | • Trends across months or quarters | If changes are improving results | Decide what to continue, change, or stop |

# Appendix

## Resources

### Organizational Change for Provider Transformation

1. Updating Mission Statement
2. Celebrating Success Table
3. Operational Plan Components
4. Operational Dashboard
5. Operational Planning
6. Timeline Checklist

### Agency Personnel Transition

1. Personnel Transition Readiness Assessment
2. Personnel Transition Timeline

### Funding Your Transformation

1. HCBS DDD Checklist
2. DRS Contract Utilization Checklist
3. Illinois Employment Funding Map
4. DRS Provider Manuals (PECT and CRP)
5. IDHS: DDD Rate Table

### Data Driven Decision Making

1. Data to Action Framework: How Field
2. Data Drives Executive Decisions
3. Tracking Actionable Data

### Interagency Collaboration

1. Data to Action Framework: How Field
2. Data Drives Executive Decisions
3. Tracking Actionable Data

***You can find these resources and more on the Dignity in Pay Act website: https://icdd.illinois.gov/dignity-in-pay-act/general-resources.html***

# Appendix

# Glossary

**14(c):** A section of the Fair Labor Standards Act that authorizes employers to pay subminimum wage to workers with disabilities – except in 16 states that have passed legislation to eliminate or phase out subminimum wage practices.

**Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) Certification:** Employment Services credential with three levels of certification (Basic Employment Services, Customized Employment Services, and Professional Level Services).

**Credentialed Employment Support Professional (CESP):** Employment services credential through the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE).

**Community Assets:** Resources that are readily available within the community. This can include social services, businesses, public institutions, etc.

**Community-Based Learning:** An educational approach that connects learners with real-world experiences in their communities. (Ex. Reading community signs to navigate public transportation, reading price tags/shelf labels during an outing at a department store, etc.).

**Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE):** Full- or part-time work for individuals with disabilities that pays at or above minimum wage, provides benefits comparable to non-disabled peers, and occurs in integrated community settings

**Corporate Social Responsibility**: An organization's commitment to operate in an ethical, sustainable, and socially responsible manner – going beyond legal requirements to positively impact society, environment, and the economy.

**Demand-Side Factors:** Employer-related conditions, attitudes, practices, needs, preferences, and organizational characteristics that influence whether and how individuals with disabilities are hired, retained, and advanced in the workplace.

**Dignity in Pay Act (DiP):** Legislation passed in Illinois to expand employment opportunities for people with disabilities while phasing out subminimum wage.

**Dignity in Risk:** The right of individuals, particularly those with disabilities, to make their own informed choices and take reasonable risks to foster personal growth, self-esteem, and quality of life.

**Direct Support Personnel (DSP):** A paid professional who works directly with individuals with disabilities and possesses specific training in order to do so.

**Employment First:** A national initiative that enforces the idea that individuals with disabilities are capable of participating in employment.

**Employment Specialist:** A person who helps and supports individuals with disabilities to get and keep employment.

**Experiential Learning:** The process of learning through a hands-on approach; learning by doing. (Ex. Situational assessments, practicing first-aid and CPR skills through hands-on training, job shadowing, internship, work-based learning experiences, etc.).

**Formal Assessment:** Standardized tests that compare results to a larger group. These give objective scores on skills or abilities.

**Functional, Transferable Skills:** Skills that can be used across many different job settings such as communication, problem-solving, and workplace behaviors.

**Geographic Information:** Rural, urban, and/or suburban areas, which are reflective of available resources.

**Generalization of Skills:** The ability to apply learned knowledge or skills across different contexts, situations, and workspaces. (Ex. Making purchases and counting money in a variety of settings; grocery stores, restaurants, movie theaters, etc.)

**Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS):** Personalized Medicaid-funded programs that provide medical, social, and functional support to individuals with disabilities, chronic conditions, or aging-related limitations. These services allow individuals to remain in their homes or community settings rather than institutions like nursing homes.

**Individualized and Person-Centered Services:** Person's strengths, interests, and goals guide the training they receive.

**Informal Assessment:** Non-standardized, flexible methods such as interviews, checklists, or observations.

**Key Performance Indicators (KPI):** A quantifiable measure used to evaluate the success of an organization, employee, etc. in meeting objectives for performance.

**Memorandums of Understanding (MoU):** An agreement between two or more organizations that usually outlines shared responsibilities and goals.

**Person Centered Planning:** The collaborative and individualized approach to assist and support those with disabilities pursue their personal goals, preferences, and needs in areas such as employment, housing, health care, and community life.

**Pre-ETS:** Pre-Employment Transition Services; Pursuing federally mandated transition services designed for students with disabilities aged 14-22 transitioning from school to post-school life. Pre-ETS include Job exploration counseling, Work-based learning experiences, Workplace readiness training, Instruction in self-advocacy, Counseling on Post-Secondary Education

**Return on Investment (ROI):** Financial performance measure used to evaluate the efficiency or profitability of an investment. It expresses the amount of benefits gained from the investment relative to its cost.

**Situational Assessment**: A type of informal assessment done in real-world settings—like the community or workplace—to see how a person performs everyday tasks.

**Social Capital:** Using a personal network to your benefit.

**Stakeholder:** An individual/program/agency that has a shared goal and vision.

**Subminimum Wage:** A rate of pay that is under the federal minimum wage or state minimum wage, specifically for people with disabilities.

**Vocational Rehabilitation (VR):** Federal and state programming specifically for individuals with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment.

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