

A Roadmap to Inclusive Career Pathways: Promoting DEIA Through Cross-System Partnerships

Presentation Transcript

Laura Gleneck: On behalf of the LEAD Center, I would like to welcome everyone, we're so glad that you have joined us today, to learn about A Roadmap to Inclusive Career Pathways: Promoting DEIA through Cross-System Partnerships

Today's webinar is hosted by the Center on Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities, also known as LEAD Center; we are a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Policy Development Center. The LEAD Center is led by National Disability Institute and Social Policy Research Associates, and is funded by the Office of Disability Employment Policy, at the U.S. Department of Labor.

And together, we facilitate the adoption, and integration of inclusive WIOA programs, policies and practices through research, technical assistance, and demonstration projects.

My name is Laura Gleneck, and I serve as the codirector of the LEAD Center.

And represent National Disability Institute. And will be serving as your moderator today.

I go by the pronouns, she/her. I am a white woman with medium long brown hair, and wear glasses, and today, I'm wearing a Navy blue shirt.

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>> Laura Gleneck: To ensure everyone can participate fully in today's webinar, we would like to take a moment to share some captioning, and housekeeping tips.

Today's webinar, is live-captioned, and the captions appear below the slide deck.

You also, have the option to open the captioning Web Page in a new browser, and the

links have been posted in the chat, or will be, momentarily.

Once the captioning window opens on your own system, you can adjust the background color, the text color; and the fonts, using the drop-down menus at the top of the browser window.

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>> Laura Gleneck: We really do encourage you to ask any questions, that you might have about the content we covered today, at any point, you can click the Q&A button that's located on the webinar's menu bar, and this will bring up a Q&A panel.

Or a window in which you can type questions for our presenters, we'll save time at the end for question-and-answer period.

Please use the chatbox, if you're experiencing any technical issues, or have questions for the technical support team.

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>> Laura Gleneck: To kickoff our presentation today, we would like to welcome Anupa Iyer Geevarghese, who is the Chief of Staff at the Office of Disability Employment Policy, also known as ODEP at the U.S. Department of Labor.

As Chief of Staff, for the Office of Disability Employment Policy, she collaborates closely with ODEP's assistant secretary and other U.S. Department of Labor Leaders, to identify, and implement strategies, for increasing the number, and quality of employment opportunities, for people with disabilities.

And in so doing, the Chief of Staff draws on years of legal experience, in both the public, and nonprofit sectors.

She came to the Department of Labor, from the U.S. Department of Defense, where she

served as a subject matter expert and senior policy advisor, for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility initiatives.

Prior to that work she worked for seven years at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or EEOC, Office of Federal Operations where she was instrumental in implementing updates, strengthening Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Before joining the EEOC's office of federal operations Chief of Staff Geevarghese was a confidential assistant to the EEOC Commissioner, a position, for which she played a leading role in the agency's curb cuts to the middle class initiative.

And innovated federal cross-agency effort to increase employment, and economic self-sufficiency for people with disabilities,

And before beginning federal service, she worked for various nonprofit organizations, among them, the mental disability advocacy center, and served as a union organizer for the service employees international union.

Chief of Staff Geevarghese holds a JD from Seattle University School of Law and a Bachelor of Arts in political science, from the University of California, Los Angeles; and I would now like to turn it over to the Chief of Staff, to provide a welcome, thank you for joining us!

CHIEF OF STAFF Anupa Iyer Geevarghese: Thank you, so much, Laura, good afternoon, everyone, my name is Anupa Geevarghese, I am a brown woman with longish Black hair, wearing red glasses and matching red lipstick.

First off I just want to wish everybody a happy new year, and welcome to LEAD's first webinar of the calendar year!

As Laura said, my name is Anupa Geevarghese, and I am the Chief of Staff for the Office of Disability Employment Policy.

As many of you know, ODEP's mission is to develop, and influence policies and practices, that increase the number and quality of employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Given that is our Mission, we are really excited to report, a positive trend in the employment of people with disabilities as we move towards a post COVID workplace.

Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, indicates the employment rates of people with disabilities, in 2022, now exceeds preCOVID-19 levels and actually even Pregreat Recession levels.

And while there is great reason for optimism, it should be noted, that the unemployment rate for people with disabilities, is still, unfortunately, much higher, than those without disabilities. And there still exists a significant gap in the labor force participation rate, between people with, and without disabilities. And there are even greater disparities among Black and Brown people with disabilities.

>> Chief of Staff: So there is still considerable work for all of us, to do, to ensure our workplaces are disability-inclusive.

>> and one way to increase employment rates is to ensure that career pathways are diverse, equitable, inclusive, and, accessible to people with disabilities; and that's why webinars, such as today's, is so important.

Now, as we know, data, helps us measure progress, and that's why we, at ODEP, are so excited to announce that in December, our research and evaluation team, released an interactive map that visualizes, how employment rates, or employment population ratios, vary by state to state, and between different race and ethnic groups within working-age adults with disabilities. And this map shows data from the period of 2016, to 2020. We believe that this map will help bring value to those of you, who are members of diversity,

equity, inclusion, and accessibility initiatives.

>> CHIEF OF STAFF Anupa Iyer Geevarghese: A couple of other exciting ODEP announcements I wanted to share: One is from last week, 1), ODEP announced the 11 states participating in our National expansion of employment opportunities network, or NEON initiative, so congratulations to California, Colorado, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Hawai'i , Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, New York, Rhode Island, and Tennessee!

These states will be working with subject-matter experts to develop policy to increase competitive, integrated employment for people with disabilities. And specifically, they will be working in areas such as blending, braiding, and sequencing data collection in states strategic planning. I also wanted to alert folks that January 26th was National Thank You to your Mentor day, and in honor of national mentoring month, ODEP released a blog called "honoring the impact of mentoring today and every day" we really encourage you to check that out.

And finally in a preview of our activities -- in 2023, we are celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Rehab Act is the foundational piece of civil rights legislation, all disability rights legislation is built upon.

It is the touchstone for full inclusion of people with disabilities in higher education, employment, government, and the private sector.

The Department of Labor is planning activities to commemorate the Rehab Act, and we will be sure to share that information with you, through the LEAD Center.

>> CHIEF OF STAFF Anupa Iyer Geevarghese: We are really grateful for your participation in today's webinar; and I especially would like to thank the LEAD Center for hosting the webinar.

And also, want to thank our speakers from D.C. that you will be hearing from.

I really look forward to hearing more about all the great work that you're doing to advance DEIA.

Thank you, and back to Laura!

Next slide.

>> Laura Gleneck: Great, thank you, Chief of Staff Geevarghese, for your welcome and introduction, and helping to set the stage, for today's wonderful discussion, and, she mentioned that there is still a lot of work to be done, and we're excited that we are going to learn about some of this great work today.

I'm really delighted to be serving as moderator for today's webinar. I am joined by my colleagues Shajira Brown who is also part of the LEAD Center, and serves as National Disability Institute's director of equity and inclusion. Shajira will be introducing our four guest panelists, from the District of Columbia, a little later in the presentation, and leading them in a panel discussion.

DIRECTOR GLENECK: So let's get started!

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Through today's presentation, you will gain a broad understanding of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act's vision for career pathways, to promote workforce development, and equal opportunity.

Explore options for strategic career pathways, partnerships, and opportunities to leverage resources across systems, and improve engagement of underserved populations.

Discover opportunities for systems coordination, to improve employment, and career outcomes, for underserved populations including youth, and adults with disabilities, and, learn about resources to engage businesses, leverage partnerships; promote

career-based learning; advance DEIA and support Youth all through an interactive, online, inclusive career pathways, tool.

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>> DIRECTOR GLENECK: So let's start by providing some context: The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, has a primary focus on creating career pathways, for job-seekers, to achieve their desired employment goal and to assist them in advancing economically.

Inclusive career pathways, are programs and approaches designed to support people whose career options have been limited because they lack the academic, and/or technical skills necessary, to complete the credentialing requirements of many key high-growth career opportunities.

Creating career pathways, to competitive, integrated employment is one of three priorities of LEAD Center's activities.

And, finally, inclusive career pathways promote cross-agency leveraging of resources, which we're going to learn more about, from our panel discussion.

Next slide.

>> Laura Gleneck: The LEAD Center developed an interactive, online tool, called "the roadmap to inclusive career pathways", to provide workforce professionals with resources, to help people with disabilities achieve employment and economic self-sufficiency.

It includes curated best practices based on key focus areas, and strategies, that support the workforce system. and these are strategies and practices that promote inclusive workforce practices through a diversity, and inclusion lens. And today, I'm going to provide a cursory overview of the roadmap.

So, let's check it out!

>> DIRECTOR GLENECK: (After a pause).

You will note that on the LEAD Center Web site, you can find a roadmap under the "navigation tab", employment strategies, click on it, and scroll down to Roadmap to Inclusive Career Pathways.

The curated best practices, are broken down into five key areas, each containing subtopics.

These five areas, align with the applicable 6 key career pathway elements.

WIOA, and disability and employment best practices, and include leverage -- leveraging partnerships, and collaboration. where you will learn how to build effective community partnerships, and collaborations, that align public and private resources, to improve the inclusion of people from underserved groups, including individuals with disabilities, and career pathways programs.

Engaging businesses, learn how to promote, active engagement, with the business sector, to identify the skills, and support that workers need to grow, in a career pathway.

Designing career-based learning, where you'll learn how to provide diverse, job-driven training opportunities, for individuals with disabilities, including workplace training approaches such as on-the-job training; summer youth employment.

Registered apprenticeships, internships, and other paid work experiences.

Advancing compliance and inclusion, learn about tools and resources that build capacity, to increase access to services, and outcomes for all people. including job skills for people with disabilities, and people of color and those who have been historically underserved in the public workforce system, and then, finally, serving youth with disabilities. where you will learn about tools, and resources, to help increase, the participation of youth, with

disabilities in existing career pathways systems and programs.

>> DIRECTOR GLENECK: the inclusive career pathways tool, includes frequently-asked questions, for each subtopic, that fall within the five key areas, these frequently-asked questions are meant to highlight a resource or two, they focus on common questions that we know that American Job Center staff may have, and they highlight a variety of different strategies, practices, target populations, and resource mediums, for example -- tools, Web sites, briefs, resources, et cetera -- that are available, within the roadmap.

Each subtopic includes a resource list of best practices, so let's see how this looks.

I'm going to click on Designing career-based learning.

You're going to notice, (demonstrating) that it includes, starts with an introduction, tells you what you're going to learn in this section, and then you're going to find the subcategories that are part of this key area.

For each subcategory, you are going to have a list of frequently-asked questions and then a list of resources.

So, why don't we choose....

"Inclusive career pathways design strategies" and see an example of the frequently-asked question.

How can you design a work-based learning experiences so they are inclusive of job-seekers with disabilities?

And then it will lead you to a resource -- and share how you might use it.

In this case, learn how community colleges develop and provide inclusive work-based learning experiences, to provide students with disabilities, to join the workforce.

(A pause), and then you'll see, resources, include the same subtopic areas, and here, we're going to choose diversity, and inclusion.

And, under each sup topic you'll see an annotated list of the curated resources, under this category, you'll see a resource, for disability disclosure, for returning citizens with disabilities; you'll find a link, directly to the resource, and then, an annotated description of what it is and how you may be able to use it.

Each of the five steps along the roadmap, include the same layout, this is just a very cursory overview.

I hope that it gives you a nice glimpse and that you will all visit it, later as a go-to-tool as you increase inclusive career pathways.

So with that, we're going to go back to the PowerPoint.

And, I am going to stop sharing the presentation, thank you, and, I am going to now turn it over to my colleague, Shajira Brown, who is going to start by talking about intersecting identities, and then she'll introduce our wonderful Panel today, and, facilitate the panel discussion.

so, Shajira, I'll turn it over to you.

>> Shajira Brown:

Thank you, Laura, for introducing me.

Hi, everyone, I am Shajira Brown.

And, my pronouns are she/her.

I am a Black Woman, I am wearing a white button-down shirt with a Navy blue blazer sitting in a Black chair, and I'm so delighted to be facilitating the panel portion of today's webinar.

Before I engage with the Panel, I wanted to share a few words regarding intersecting identities:

Intersecting identities is the concept that an individual's identity consists of multiple intersecting factors, including but not limited to, their disability, gender identity, gender expression, their race, ethnicity, Social class, religious belief, sexual identity, and sexual expression. In essence, we want to acknowledge an individual as their whole self, not just single out parts of their identity.

>> Shajira Brown: For career pathways programs to be fully-inclusive, career pathway partners must build cultural and linguistic competence so that everyone is equipped to include people with intersecting identities.

(After a pause), we've brought together a panel of people who have been implementing strategies for many years, for effective outreach and engagement of people from underserved communities, to engage them in employment.

They represent workforce development, vocational rehabilitation, Adult education. And a community partner who has a family member with a disability.

>> Shajira Brown: (Continuing) and now the time has come for me to introduce our panel, and I will begin by sharing their brief bios.

Next slide, please.

(A pause), first up, I'm going to introduce is Mark Agosto.

Who is the Supervisor of Intake and Outreach for the D.C. Department on Disability Services, and, the cochair of Bridging Aging and Disability Networks, and Racial Equity Community of Practice through this role Mark works to ensure that D.C. residents, have streamlined, and easy access to services and supports for both the state DD, and Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies.

Next is Ms. Alison Whyte, who serves people with disabilities, and their families in the

District of Columbia, As the Executive Director of the D.C. developmental disabilities council. In this role, Alison leads grassroots efforts to build an inclusive D.C. community through policy, advocacy, and program development that promotes self-determination, integration, and social justice. Alison also serves as the cochair of Bridging Aging and Disability Networks, and Racial Equity Community of practice.

>> Shajira Brown: Now we have Madeline Levy Cruz who is Associate Dean of Workforce Development and lifelong learning at the University of the District of Columbia. Ms. Madeline Levy Cruz has been working in post-secondary education for over 20 years, with a focus on occupational training, Her work has included being a Campus President, a Dean, and leading the WIOA programs in Pennsylvania.

>> Shajira Brown: Last, but certainly not least -- there is Azeb Adere, the founder, and president of the Ethiopian Eritrean, special needs community, she is the community rights Advocate who works with D.C., and Maryland Developmental Disability Council, to advocate for the rights of people with developmental disabilities. And their access to necessary services.

So I just want to say, welcome to all of our presenters!

With that, I am going to jump in to the first question, next slide, please.

We know, D.C. has a long-standing cross-system cultural, and linguistic competence also known as CLC working group and has integrated learning and principles from that group into systems change, and daily practices. D.C. continues this work through the bridging aging, and disability networks, and racial equity community of practice.

Mark, and Alison, can you tell us how this trajectory has supported employment outcomes for people with disabilities?

DIRECTOR WHYTE: Sure, Hi, everyone, this is Alison Whyte, my pronouns are she/her,

I am white. I have chin-length brown hair, I've got my teal and orange earrings on today and my office background has some colorful stickers and green plants behind me. Very happy to be here today, Shajira, thanks for this question.

>> DIRECTOR WHYTE: Our work on cultural linguistic competence and using that as a framework for our employment efforts began in earnest in 2013, with the Supporting Families Community of Practice; and, the launch of person-centered thinking training across all levels of the service system, for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

We started asking who is here? And who are we missing? So that we could identify communities that we weren't reaching. So, with that, we established some practices, that could help us reach more people, including offering stipends for community members who contributed to systems change work. So, people who were coming to our meetings, were asking for their emotional and mental labor to tell us their stories, and tell us how we could do our work better. Compensating those folks, we realized was a really important part of launching this work.

>> Mark Agosto: Good afternoon, everyone, my name is Mark Agosto, and I go by the pronouns, he/his and I'm a brown skinned male with very short Black hair and Black glasses, today, I'm wearing a blue blazer, with a Black sweater and a white-patterned shirt.

So really continuing our work, in 2014, we utilized a federal no wrong door systems change grant with the goal of improving district residents' experience with accessing long-term services and supports, through this grant we were able to expand person-centered thinking beyond, the Department of disability services.

And create a cultural and linguistic competence subcommittee that worked on building

CLC capacity, throughout the 6 district partner agencies, through this work, we learned

that you cannot be person-centered without first, understanding the cultural, and linguistic context of the person.

>> Mark Agosto: One of our strategies to build capacity, in this area was to braid CLC into various strategic initiatives such as our partnership and employment grant which strongly focused on family engagement, person-centered discovery, and embedded CLC in various activities.

>> Alison Whyte: Then in 2017, we continue our journey, with the cultural and linguistic competence community of practice, so we formed that group, with a lot of the same people we have been working with. And, focused on building trust within our community of practice with our group. And then, also, with D.C.'s diverse cultural linguistic communities, we started focusing most intentionally, on engaging with the LatinX community in D.C. Because we already had some connections in that community, and we wanted to build on that.

We always kind of say, you know, start where you are.

And that was a place, where, we felt like we could make an impact, more immediately.

So now, we -- or five years later we have an annual conference, all in Spanish, that provides information and resources to D.C.'s LatinX community, and our theme, in 2022, was all about employment. So we had our whole conference all in Spanish, all about employment.

>> Mark Agosto: And we are now leading the bridging aging and disability networks, and racial equity community of practice, and are continuing to push forward, systems change, using cultural and linguistic competence and racial equity as a guide.

So that's a little bit of our story. And how we got to where we're at currently.

>> Shajira Brown: Wow! Those are some amazing employment outcomes that you shared with us. We all know that outcomes are great but the part that's crucial is getting individuals to participate, and at times, can – and at times, that can be challenging.

Mark and Alison, can you tell us, about how you have worked together, to improve outreach and engagement of people with disabilities? And families from underserved communities? And also, sharing, where did you start?

And next slide, please.

>> Mark Agosto: So I'll start. So first, and foremost, I am super grateful for our partnership with Alison and the Developmental Disability Council. The department on disability services and the DD council, have a long-standing, positive working relationship, And we maintain a steadfast commitment to cultural and linguistic competence and racial equity in all of our work together.

We share contacts and work to build relationships as a team. For activities and events we plan together we collaborate, and share resources, to ensure language interpretation is provided; disability accommodations are readily-available; stipends are available for community members who need them; and when possible, we provide paid work-based learning opportunities for youth with disabilities.

>> Alison Whyte: Yeah, and I -- I agree, Mark I -- I think it's worth saying that some of this work happens so seamlessly and successfully because, Mark and I have developed such a positive relationship working together. So, I -- I think that that -- that can't be understated. Sometimes just finding, the people you click with, to -- to be those thought partners, and push the work forward. So, we've -- we've focused a lot on building partnerships, So that we can expand our outreach, and develop mutually-beneficial relationships, (gesturing) where we can work with organizations and support them to learn

about disability inclusion, and Access; and then we can also learn from them about cultural norms, or unique community strengths and needs.

So for example: Through our engagement with the LatinX Community, we developed Vamos D.C.! Which is a committee of 13 partner agencies, focused on engaging LatinX people with disabilities; and, we're always incorporating listening sessions, into our events, so that we can share feedback with agency leaders.

Mark Agosto: And I just want to add a little bit about Vamos D.C.! The 13 agencies represent the life span so we have agencies from early intervention to our dormant on aging and community living we have other organizations who work to share the word and really build capacity, and engage LatinX people with disabilities.

Shajira Brown: Thank you, I heard so many things there, I heard building partnerships, providing support, and resources, when needed, to the communities, to make it easier, for them, to participate. We're going to go on to the next question, so next slide, please, so this question, is going to be directed to Mark, and Alison, as well as joining, Azeb.

What have you done, specifically, with the LatinX, and Ethiopian Eritrean communities?

>> Mark Agosto: So I'll start, so with the LatinX community the first step was to gather information, we looked at our data, and noticed that LatinX people made up 11% of D.C.'s population. But only 2% of people we were serving. That was a huge disparity.

We also noticed a lack of representation of the community at stakeholder meetings and activities. As part of our learning, we held one of our cultural linguistic competency community of practice in a D.C. neighborhood where many LatinX families and businesses live and spoke with the librarian who grew up in the neighborhood. He helped us identify some barriers to engagement. Including, service systems not having enough accurate information in Spanish; not having staff who reflect the community; legitimate

fear of government. And so forth. These barriers have been confirmed, in the various listening sessions we have held since.

>> Alison Whyte: And because of this, we come back to building partnerships, and focusing on building trust with our community through partnerships, getting leadership buy-in, with this work; and, developing consistent ongoing programming in Spanish, really showing the community that, we're -- we're committed to offering this, on a regular basis, and committed to listening. So, we worked with other organizations, that already had built relationships, in the LatinX community, and started cohosting events with them, and this comes back to the idea of, we were also helping them learn about disability access and inclusion, which they found a lot of value in, so building those mutually-beneficial relationships.

And then we had a lot of ongoing program over the last five years, on various topics, all in Spanish -- including 1) financial education and literacy 2) employment has come up again and again 3) mental health and interesting intersection there with mental health and employment, we talked about that at our last LatinX conference, 4) and then general community resources and services. So our first conference all in Spanish, was in 2019, and -organizational leaders at that time committed to doing it annually.

>> Mark Agosto: We also looked at internal capacity to serve Spanish speakers, it's one thing to say, "Oh! We want to serve this community." Do you have the capacity to serve them? And that's a question that we should all be asking our agencies and ourselves. And we realize we needed to hire more Spanish speakers within our agencies. We changed job descriptions, and postings to reach more bilingual applicants, we learned from listening to people, that being able to speak to someone directly in Spanish, was absolutely necessary for building trust.

We have reviewed and modified existing policies related to language access, intake, and engagement, using the lens of cultural and linguistic competence.

>> Alison Whyte: And now we've been so fortunate to meet Azeb last year, who has generously given her time to help us learn about the Ethiopian and Eritrean communities in D.C., and cohosted events with us, kind of, the similar process that we tried to do with the LatinX community, cohosting these events so that we can listen and we can learn and we can provide information, to the community about supports and services.

So this year, the DD council is supporting some parent cafes that Azeb's organization has been organizing, and, we're continuing to work together -- to think about other engagements we can do; and, our goal (a pause), in engaging with any cultural -- or linguistic community -- is to listen and learn, enough, to understand, what the community needs and wants; and then, fit our priorities and resources, into that.

Rather than the other way around.

DIRECTOR WHYTE: So, Azeb, I -- I think everyone, has a -- a ton to learn from you, and so I want to toss it over to you and see what you want to add.

>> (a pause).

>> AZEB ATARO ADERE: Sorry about that.

My name is Azeb Ataro adere, I go by the pronouns she and her, I have dark skin and curly hair, wearing a golden ear loop right now and wearing a blue sweater.

I tend to smile when I talk, I'm from the Ethiopian and Eritrean community and founder president of the Ethiopian Eritrean Special Needs Community, mainly what we do is we support, people with disabilities, and their families, get information, and -- and advocate for their needs, that's what we do. So, how did we work with Mark and -- and work with recently worked with Mark and Alison?

Is, like, we were -- a life trajectory families and individuals with disabilities, were, like, in the bottom here, they have some information including me, but I don't know how to access that's information. To get to the good life, we see that as trajectory we are here, (indicating) and the good life is here, (gesturing), huge -- gap in between.

So what the DD council did for us, tried to know our needs. And, address our needs. So that, each individual gets to -- gets to their full potential; and also, the families get supported at the same time, so access to information. Access to resources. Access to goods and services.

These are all -- we learned after we meet Alison and Mark, mainly, I'm the one who communicate with them. And, they wanted to reach out to the community, which is the next question so you can go ahead and ask the next question, and I will answer that.

>> Shajira Brown: Awesome.

Thank you.

Azeb, you all did so much to develop trust, gathering data, brought services, and -- and events to the communities, conducted listening sessions, to help with buy-in, and sharing information -- in the individual's primary language. And also revisiting, internal capacity, Azeb, I'm going to stay with you for this next question, what did that outreach mean to the Ethiopian, and Eritrean communities?

>> Azeb Ataro Adere: That outreach, really brought, life to the Ethiopian and Eritrean communities, they came out and reached out to us, and that brought us out to life to the community leaders, to government agencies service providers, how did they do that? They did a listening session last March; and they invited all our group members, and, D.C. -- providers, government agencies, attended the meetings, the meeting was held in our own language, materials prepared in our own language, which is Amharic, and that

means a lot to us, we are heard, someone is open to listen to us, it means a lot.

There was that gap (gesturing), oh, DD council, who are they?

Those how are we going to reach them, the application process that is very hard, who is going to help us from that agency?

Our intention was, like, they would never talk to us, like, who are we?

But not that like, they turned around and they wanted to listen to us, they wanted to give us good information and resources.

Alison mentioned it earlier: Parents cafe, is one of them, we have about five programs every month for the parents, and parent cafe is one of them. And all the programs are run by volunteers, and no funding. So for the first time, Alison -- and Mark, talked about it, and they decided, for us to ask for funding and we're in the process and that's a big light and that can go on, can continue, we can continue the service, if you have the funding and also the information -- like yesterday Mark called -- the transportation training. And your community might benefit from it. Please contact this person. And that was amazing.

Something that we didn't have before. So that outreach, really when I say brought light to the Ethiopian and Eritrean community, it's really there, because now it's waking up the Maryland people, Maryland DD, and Virginia, Maryland contacted us because of that. So, we're serving the DMV area people, and, having those resources, understanding learning, and having a direct access to them, means a lot to the Ethiopian, and Eritrean communities, and I really would like to thank, Alison and Mark going out of their way, beyond -- above and beyond that, so we're grateful for that.

>> Mark Agosto: We are grateful for Azeb, and -- I just wanted to share that one of our core values, when hosting presentations, is that we will only conduct these programming, in the native language of the community. That is -- we have received many requests from

people, to say, "Oh, I would love to present, but I -- I don't speak Spanish or I don't speak Amharic", and unfortunately we decline, because it's one of our core values that people should get information in their native language, and then additionally, what this has helped is we also provide ASL interpretation and interpretation into English; so, our English-speakers for the first time, have to -- sort of -- understand what it feels like, to get information secondhand. And with a delay, and you don't understand how people have really come to understand, the nature of interpretation and how sometimes it's just not the best thing to use.

So I -- we stress this as one of our core values.

Shajira Brown: Thank you, Azeb, and Mark, you know, the listening sessions, that is really important, really exciting, to know that, other states are now receptive and are thinking to, you know, do the same, so, really, exciting, thank you, for sharing.

Madeline, I'm going to turn this over to you, the next QUESTION:

Which is, what role did the University of the District of Columbia's division of workforce development, and lifelong learning play in those events and how does that connect people to career pathways partners?

>> Madeline Levy Cruz: Hello. I'm Madeline Levy Cruz, my pronouns are she/her/and Ella, LatinX woman with white melanin short cropped hair, tortoise shell glasses silver dangling earrings and a Black and white checkered sweater, I tend to talk with my hands, so if you see them flying around -- (laughing), that's me.

>> Madeline Levy Cruz: So, I'm the associate Dean for workforce development, and lifelong learning, and, we are, actually, the workforce -- we're part of the workforce council for all of D.C. We kind of have the privilege of being both part of the university, and part of the D.C. workforce investment council. And so, that gives us a really unique opportunity to

work with partners like Mark, and Alison and with all the other partners that are here

today, and really show the community what is available, to them through workforce

investment. So I -- my participation in this was I was one of the Spanish-language

panelists on one of the panels (an electronic tone) that was held and it was fantastic to be

able, to share with the community. All the different resources that we have available for

them, at UDC, but also, all the career pathways, that we, actually, do certification training

for within the workforce development center here at UDC.

>> dean Madeline Levy Cruz: It was a great partnership and I think it's going to lead to a

lot of other things and it's also opened my perception as to what else we need to do here.

To improve accessibility, and, also, to open it up to all the different sectors in D.C.

Madeline Levy Cruz: So, I think that answers that first part, and I know the next one

asked a little bit about our pathways. But, I don't know if you want to move on to that one.

So, yeah,.

>> Madeline Levy Cruz: So we actually, as the workforce development center for D.C.,

here, we have five pathways that offer no-cost-training certification training for folks

looking to upskill, who are under-or unemployed in the District, so any District Resident is

able to apply, to our Center, and -- and, actually, take certification courses, in information

technology. In healthcare, including direct-care, and administrative care, in

early-childhood education. In hospitality, and we have general education courses as well.

And I want to say that one of the things that we're working towards, particularly after kind

of listening to -- to the community, and what's out there, is bringing what some of

our -- programs into Spanish-language -- so that we can reach, more folks in the District.

And allow them to understand that this is available for them as well.

>> Madeline Levy Cruz: The other thing that's really fantastic about being part of

the -- the University of the District of Columbia is that all the resources, that the University has are also available to our students, even though, we are a workforce program. So we have the university's accessibility resource center. That provides a myriad of Accessibility accommodations. And -- and resources for all the students, at the university. And is open as well to any person who wants to do certification training at our workforce development center.

(Concludes remarks), I hope that answers the question.

>> Shajira Brown: It sure does, and thank you, so much, Madeline, for sharing that there's no-cost training for certification courses in several fields for D.C. residents, like, that's amazing.

Next slide....

and the next question is going to be for Mark, can you share any initiatives that promote intake staff for different agencies working together?

>> Mark Agosto: Sure, so as part of the no wrong door initiative -- hold on, let me put my video on, sorry everyone. As part of the no wrong door initiative in our attempt to improve district residents' experience when accessing long-term services and supports -- a front-door manager's work group was created. With the purpose of increasing collaboration among the front-door of the 6 partner health and human service agencies. During these meetings participants learned more about the services and supports of their sister agencies, develop models for warm referrals and learned about additional resources to support district residents. Currently, our one-stop operator works with our WIOA partners to ensure enhanced collaboration, increase knowledge of resources, and

effective coordination of referrals.

(A pause),

And... I can answer the second part.

Has it led to a joint intake approaches?

Yes, so currently our -- our state workforce agency has developed an electronic system that allows residents, to access, the various WIOA partners -- partner services that are being conducted at our American job centers the system allows residents to schedule intakes as well as career services, and I think Madeline could speak to our data vault system as well.

>> dean Cruz: Absolutely, and I have my camera on, but I can't see myself so I don't know if it's working, but, absolutely! Through the data vault system, all the partners -- the AJC partners are able to refer to one another, and also, to kind of move -- see what the services are, that are available at every other partner location.

So I know from my -- for myself, we have been getting referrals from some of our internal partners, that we've had for many years that are now also on data vault but we're also using data vault to refer our students out. For some of the services that we don't have resources for. So for example: Housing --

You know, if there is any kind of issue, with one of our students, where they need information on that, we can put them into data vault. They can refer to the housing Authority; and, they may be able to assist them with that. And that's huge. One of the biggest barriers to continuing your education, or to getting certified, is being able to meet those basic needs, right? So, most of our students, report that they have issues with housing. Transportation, with childcare, with food insecurity, and having something like data vault through the AJC and through the workforce investment council.

Take all of our partners and put them in one place, really provides that wrap-around service for our students and our clients.

(A pause),

Shajira Brown: Thank you so much, again, thank you to all of our panelists for your amazing work in the community, and focusing on diversity, equity, inclusion, and Accessibility.

We have Q&A, so I'm going to turn it over to my colleague, Laura.

>> DIRECTOR GLENECK:

Thank you, to my colleague, Shajira, and our wonderful guest presenters from the District of Columbia, Mark, Alison, Azeb, and Madeline - for sharing and allowing us to learn how you have thoughtfully broadened your understanding and capacity to reach into underserved communities to create inclusive career pathways and how that is leading to systems change. I want to quote something that Alison said early on -- something that we all can learn by. She said "we listen and learn to understand what the community needs and wants, and then based on that, decide how they're going to put in" wonderful presentation and a wonderful example and we have great questions that have come from that.

So we do have a few minutes for questions so I think, Alison, and Mark, I'm going to start with you, and ask you, how have your activities and partnerships, built trust with underserved communities? So that they are informed about, and engaged in employment and career pathways services?

Mark Agosto: Hi, I'm sorry, so -- our activities have, so -- trust is ever-going, right?

So, before we get to how these activities have, sort of, impacted, I think, one of the things we want to talk about is some of our learning lessons, as it relates to building trust, and I

think, that's where we start, so some of the things that we've learned is that trust takes time, relationships, are essential. Understanding your community's needs and strengths, is paramount. Self-assessing your policies, procedures, and internal capacities and data -- is something that need to happen on an ongoing basis, taking time to listen, listen, and listen more.

I think, the -- to us, those are -- some of our learning lessons. We've -- we've been able to -- to have -- to get from this opportunity, really building trust. Alison, you want to talk a little bit about how that shaped our activities? Have shaped that?

>> Alison Whyte: Yeah, I think that starting with -- I think the most important point here is that it takes time, and it -- and it takes consistency. And, and the community needs to see that consistency and see that you're actually committed in order to maintain the trust. I think some of it is also related to how we structure our staff.

So, we mentioned both, department on disability services and the D.C. developmental disabilities council, we have increased our number of Spanish-speaking staff and for the DD council we now have Spanish speakers that serve on the council, for people who -- some of you might know how councils are structured. It's a body that's appointed by the Governor in a lot of states, in D.C., appointed by the mayor. And, the council members provide the strategic direction, for the work.

And we now have Spanish-speaking council members, who are at the decision making table, so it's building the trust, was kind of the first part; and, then, engaging more with people --

(A pause), once that trust is built, helps them be at the decision-making table, and influencing how the work is actually happening. So that you can maintain that trust.

I think, a lot of this, when I think about outcomes led to our employment-first Summit, that

was -- it was the first summit of its kind that we did back in October. And, it was -- we -- it was a big event, in English, Spanish, amharic and American sign language, so we -- we tried to make sure we had information, for our whole community, in multiple languages. And, were able to connect with a lot of folks with disabilities, and their families, to talk about employment, and what works and what doesn't work, and that family engagement piece, I think, is another really important lesson that we've learned through building trust with some of these communities, and -- and seeing how a family structure, like thinking about services and supports, in terms of families, not just one person, Receiving a service, is -- a really important approach.

>> Mark Agosto: And I just want to add that, you know, -- because of our efforts, we've -- we have some real outcomes, and I want to share some of those, like, in the last four years, our vocational rehabilitation program has increased its percentage of LatinX persons served from 2%, what it was when we started, to current day 5%, so we've increased the number of LatinX people in our vocational rehabilitation program.

Also, our LatinX conference on Disabilities, is annual. We are preparing our fifth annual conference this year. And, we have multiple sponsoring agencies, that now plan for the program every year. We connect with about 150 members of the community every year during this conference.

And, through that, through these listening sessions we've been able to develop additional programming, one, was our direct-service professional academy.

Which is -- which is a certification program that trains people with disabilities, to becoming DSP -- DSPs. Because of the feedback we got at one of our conferences, we were able to host the first bilingual Spanish, DSP academy. With the goal of increasing the number of Spanish-speaking DSPs in the community. Because the community said, they would like

people -- they would like to be able to communicate with the people who come into their homes so these are -- based on the activities we've done these are ways we build trust with the community and continue to build trust because we listen to what they're saying and always try to be as truthful and consistent as possible with them so we don't break that trust, because it's easy to make trust, it's easy to start trust, but it's very easy -- I'm sorry, it's very hard to sort of build the trust, but it's easy to break.

Laura Gleneck: Thank you, both, Mark and Alison, we have about a minute left but I think it's great what Mark and Alison said.

And Azeb, I'm going to ask you, in a minute or less -- what contributed to trust for you? I think it's great, hearing it from the side of the agencies that reached out.

But what did build the trust for you in this whole process?

>> Azeb Ataro Adere:

(No response).

>> Laura Gleneck: Azeb, I'm not sure, if you are able to answer.

I'm going to, actually, move forward.

Just before we close out.

But, I -- I think that what Mark and Alison and what all of you -- shared, we could create a checklist here for everything that you put together.

So, if we can go to the next slide.

We have some wonderful resources, that were shared by both our presenters, Azeb, so you can learn more about the Ethiopian community, and, more about the workforce, and lifelong environment that was shared by Madeline.

We also have LEAD Center resources, which will include a link to the Roadmap for Inclusive Career Pathways so if we could go by those.

and if we can go to...The LEAD Center Web site.

So, be sure to check out the LEAD Center's Web site where you can find this event's recording and transcript at the end of next week, plus a very robust library of resources.

We also encourage you to sign-up for our newsletter, as it will give you more information about future and past events and promising practices from the field.

And I should say -- I'm sorry for that. Under the list of LEAD resources, we just published a new resource, a new newsletter, which is devoted to Inclusive Career Pathways; so learn more about the Roadmap, learn about some activities that are taking place, in New York, and learn about a success story.

The next slide, please:

And then other ways that you can follow the LEAD Center on social media, we have our social media handles here. If you see a tweet you like, please retweet. Please share posts with your networks and encourage them to follow the LEAD Center.

-- final slide... and thank you!

To all of you, who joined this Presentation today.

We hope that the resources, strategies, and experiences shared today, will provide you with practical ways to create inclusive career pathways, and broadening your reach to underserved communities with us.

Thank you, everyone, and enjoy the rest of your day.