

Consider Implementation Science: Implementation Drivers



ACCESSIBILITY COHORT CAPSTONE

STRENGTHENING STATE & LOCAL DRIVERS OF CHANGE: A Guide to Increasing Universal Access in WIOA & Partner Systems

PURPOSE: This Guide is for state and/or local level Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) core partners (Title I, II, III, VI) and any program, organization or system that intersects with WIOA, especially American Job Centers (AJC). It is a tool for state and/or local cross-system partners to assess and strengthen their own system’s key drivers needed for change and improvement in universal access.

By walking through this National Cohort experience, other states and/or local workforce partners may consider the various pathways, strategies and pitfalls to avoid that are critical to effectively implementing universal access for a diverse population of customers. Throughout the Guide, state and/or local partners are introduced to the three main drivers of change: Leadership, Capacity and Organizational. Guiding questions, examples, and action steps may help inform other states and/or local systems to reflect on and be inspired to “*make change happen*” – just as these five states have!

COHORT PROCESS & BACKGROUND:

A Cohort consists of any group of individuals with something in common. For this Department of Labor Disability Employment Cohort, five states (Alabama, California, Massachusetts, Oregon and Virginia) joined the Accessibility Cohort to consider the main question: *How might we ensure that our policies and programs afford and inform customers with disabilities physical and programmatic accessibility?*

The Cohort, consisting of approximately 40 participants from state and local workforce, Vocational Rehabilitation, Education, AJCs, and varied partner organizations, held six virtual sessions. The first four sessions focused on learning about the Cohort process; getting to know each other's state and local systems and partnerships; discussing strengths and challenges around accessibility; understanding the tenants of Implementation Science and the three main drivers of change; and exploring how these change drivers aid in defining each state's accessibility training context.

Initial Cohort meetings led to discussion around the key topics below related to accessibility. These topic areas became the focal points of promising practices to effectively achieve universal access or areas of hindrance in reaching greater accessibility.

- ◆ Policy
- ◆ Training/Staff Development and Application
- ◆ Surveying AJCS/AJC Certification
- ◆ Cross Systems Collaboration
- ◆ Adaptive Technology
- ◆ Integrated Resource Teams
- ◆ Serving Diversity of People Across the Spectrum of Disabilities
- ◆ Understanding Current State of Accessibility
- ◆ Leadership Buy-in and Priorities

DEFINING UNIVERSAL ACCESSABILITY (UA):

A next step for the Cohort was to define a common understanding of Universal Accessibility (UA).

The Cohort collectively defined UA as:

- ◆ Ensuring that AJCs are Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 188-compliant and welcoming to all people, including people with disabilities.
- ◆ Ensuring that signage and symbols are used throughout the customer flow of an AJC to meet various communications and learning styles of customers.
- ◆ Ensuring AJC and other WIOA programming staff has had training to increase comfort with a diversity of customers, including people with disabilities.
- ◆ Streamlining processes in the AJCs and other WIOA programs to ensure all individuals are offered the same level of customer service.
- ◆ Ensuring that all AJCs have understanding of both physical and programmatic accessibility, including communication access.

IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE FRAMEWORK (See References¹):

The Cohort learned about the fundamentals of Implementation Science as the study of factors that influence the full and effective use of innovations and change processes; in short – *making it happen*. The Implementation Science framework was used to guide the Cohort teams' discussions, facilitate self-examination of strengths and challenges, and inform action-oriented planning. It further provided a common language for the group to talk about factors that influence and hinder change.

The National Implementation Research Network has studied evidenced-based practices in the implementation of change efforts. Findings show that there are specific drivers of change and stages of progression that significantly increase the successful implementation of a program or innovation. Within the Implementation Science framework, the Cohort teams reflected on measurements of success as much more than an effort to replicate another state/local model. Intentional goals, actions, and roles of partners may differ among regions, yet all key drivers of change were needed to make a significant impact.

The Cohort engaged in ongoing discussions and brainstorming on the evidence-based factors that improve and sustain an organization's system's change efforts, defined in three categories of drivers: **Competency Drivers, Organizational Drivers, and Leadership Drivers**. All are equally important for a systems level shift to occur. A weakness in one driver can be mitigated by strengths in others; however, if one driver is lacking, it will be difficult for change to happen.

CROSS-STATE FOCUS ON DRIVERS OF CHANGE

In addition to the all-state Cohort session, multiple cross-state virtual meetings were held which focused on one of the following main drivers of Implementation Science: *Capacity, Leadership, and Organizational*. These meetings involved cross-state sharing and refinement of recommended actions for enhancing state-level universal access training. These discussions were guided by questions related to each driver to help facilitate meaningful conversations and consensus as to collective and state/local examples, strategies, action steps, and pitfalls.

The five states shared their emerging state capstone action steps during the fifth cohort meeting. Teams received feedback and asked clarifying questions in order to refine their State Accessibility Capstone – UA Training. The sixth and final Cohort meeting sought state comments on the Capstone Guide, in addition to gaining stakeholder buy-in strategies for continued state planning.

Over the course of the Cohort process, each state also held multiple state-based meetings and discussions within their own teams. These meetings built a common understanding of UA from multiple stakeholder perspectives, reflected on information and strategies acquired from other states, and drafted their state-based action capstone.

¹ Blase, K., & Fixsen, D. (2018, October 10). Implementaton Stages. Retrieved from National Implementation Research Network: <https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/learn-implementation/implementation-stages>.

Fixsen, D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blase, K. A., Friedman, R. M., & Wallance, F. (2005). *Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature*. Tampa: University of South Florida.

National Implementation. (2016). *Active Implementation Practice and Science*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of NC.

UNIVERSAL ACCESS DRIVERS KEY

QUESTIONS



STRENGTH



ACTION STEPS



EXAMPLES



PITFALLS



MAKING IT HAPPEN: Implementing Drivers of Change

PURPOSEFUL vs. HOPEFUL: Cohort teams learned that Implementation Science indicates a purpose-driven mission for change or a *'make it happen'* approach. Therefore, after defining a collective agreement on a common understanding of UA, the Cohort defined their overarching purpose-driven mission as: *To increase the inclusivity of a diverse population of individuals in the workforce system and in the workforce through Universal Access training and inclusive program support.*

STATE-SPECIFIC FOCUS



Each state team then further explored how they might ensure a purposeful versus hopeful approach using the guiding questions below to define their own state-specific focus.

- ◆ What is your state's purpose in implementing UA Training?
 - ◇ Who are you training? What do you want to accomplish?
 - ◇ Is it informational or do you want a systems change and/or a behavioral change? If a systems and/or behavioral change, what are the desired results?
 - ◇ Will training be virtual and/or in-person? Will it be a multi-pronged and/or sequenced?
 - ◇ Will you use behavioral vignettes and/or opportunities to practice what was learned?
- ◆ Does your state have a specific area of UA that you want to focus on, such as AT, surveying staff training needs, leveraging cross-partnerships, or operationalizing policy into practice?
- ◆ As you narrow down your state/ team's focus as part of UA Training, consider the following:
 - ◇ What has worked in your state around training efforts and/or UA?
 - ◇ Are there success stories around training and/or UA in workforce?
 - ◇ What has been done in your state/local region that has been a positive experience around training, collaboration or other areas related to your purpose driven mission?
 - ◇ What has not been effective in training, collaboration, and/or UA?

EXAMPLES OF COHORT STATE-SPECIFIC PURPOSES



State Specific Purposes

VIRGINIA

- ◆ To continue to move systems and behavior so that Universal Access is understood and supported as a collective responsibility as part of good customer service, for example including Universal Access training as a part of the state's AJC Certification.
- ◆ To increase the number of people with disabilities served by AJCs through increased understanding, responsibility, and accountability for Universal Access across the system.
- ◆ To identify and develop curriculum materials that can be delivered and updated on-demand.

ALABAMA

- ◆ To include Universal Access training/Universal Design as a part of the state's AJC Certification.
- ◆ To gain support through Governor's memorandum with partners for inclusion.
- ◆ To link Universal Access Training/Design to the next iteration of WIOA Combined State Plan.

CALIFORNIA

- ◆ To engage statewide, regional, and local leadership in activities that will increase Universal Access, both physical and programmatic, to workforce services for individuals with disabilities.
- ◆ To break silos within the customer service delivery system to reinforce Universal Access.
- ◆ To develop and improve training that will ensure all job centers are ADA and Section 188-compliant and have the knowledge and ability to provide streamlined services to all individuals.

MASSACHUSETTS

- ◆ To embed Universal Design Principles as standard practice across all career centers.
- ◆ To increase staff awareness of how Universal Access provides more holistic services needed to support all job seekers.
- ◆ To increase customer satisfaction in accessing programs and services at the career centers.

OREGON

- ◆ To develop and operationalize Universal Access Training activities, resources and tools for WorkSource Oregon (WSO) staff - using Implementation Science framework.
- ◆ To build an advisory group, to refine and expand Universal Access curriculum, creating a robust and consistent training and resource guide to support efforts.

Shared Strengths & Challenges

After identifying an overarching purpose-driven mission and a state-specific purpose related to UA, the Cohort outlined their strengths and challenges. Implementation Science emphasizes that a weakness in one driver can be mitigated by strengths in others; therefore, it was critical for states to explore both.

SHARED STRENGTHS AMONG COHORT STATES



- ◆ Recognizing the benefits and value of participating in cross-systems workgroups to strengthen partnerships, leverage expertise, and improve access to individuals with disabilities.
- ◆ Using co-location as a strategy to maintain effective partnering and to help ensure accessibility, especially with VR and Blind agencies.
- ◆ Recognizing the significance of messaging and action provided by Governors and other leaders to increase support for individuals with disabilities in training and employment opportunities.
- ◆ Conducting surveying and continuous improvement of accessibility in the workforce system as a critical means to maintaining physical and programmatic access.
- ◆ Recognizing that the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) and other targeted grants to improve employment of people with disabilities have significantly and positively impacted the workforce system, and identifying how to leverage these promising practices statewide.

SHARED CHALLENGES AMONG COHORT STATES



- ◆ Varied levels of leadership buy-in from Governor, to state/local WIBs, to local AJC management and other core partner and community partner leadership.
- ◆ Lack of surveying established to gather data from the workforce system, both staff and customers, on needs for training and customer service satisfaction.
- ◆ Although Integrated Resource Teams are used in some regions, co-enrollment is not a regular practice in most states, and some regions still relay that people with disabilities will not use AJCs either in conjunction with VR or at all.
- ◆ While there are various training efforts underway in some states, others relay that standardized statewide training remains an extremely challenging area with little momentum.
- ◆ Serving such a wide range of people with disabilities, including blind, deaf, and/or individuals with learning disabilities, as well as maintaining Assistive Technology in the AJCs is an ongoing challenge.

Drivers of Innovation & Change

As part of the Cohort process, states took a deep dive into each of the three drivers of change to identify actions needed or activities already in place. Delineating these factors helped inform state and local teams of the actions needed to drive systemic change around UA.

Organizational Driver

Organization (System) Drivers are mechanisms to create and sustain a hospitable organizational and system environment for effective services. Factors include using data to determine action, applying technology in a deliberate way that adds value, and vigorous attention to reduce barriers and alignment across all levels of an organization.

- ◆ Decisions rely on the availability of reliable data.
- ◆ Administrative support is proactive, vigorous, and enthusiastic to reduce implementation barriers.
- ◆ Leadership and responsibility for systems intervention is clearly communicated at each level and within overall organization.

KEY TOPIC AREAS:

- ◆ Alignment of WIOA managers/leaders with staff and partners to implement purpose.
- ◆ Data and experiences in your state show need for UA training.
- ◆ Surveying of Training Needs.
- ◆ Training Topics.
- ◆ Systems Alignment from Policy to Process.

SHARED STATE ACTION STEPS: ORGANIZATIONAL DRIVER



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- ◆ Gaining support for implementing UA training from upper-level leadership, including state and local level leadership from workforce and VR.
 - ◆ Identifying training activities that are currently occurring across the state to which UA training could be connected/incorporated.
 - ◆ Embed UA Training within guidance for AJC Certification.
 - ◆ Identifying entities that could take on UA training across state (i.e., community college systems, learning centers, adult learning departments, etc.)
 - ◆ Coordinating key players and agencies for UA implementation.
 - ◆ Developing and conducting surveys of staff and customers to determine training needs, especially in areas of programmatic access.
 - ◆ Developing training activities, a training curriculum and a sustainability plan.

Capacity Driver

Capacity Drivers involve strategies that can improve and sustain an intervention to produce desired results. Factors include the selection of who will drive the implementation, training approaches, and coaching methods that actively support the change in behavior and system.

- ◆ Selection of practitioners, organization staff, staff for implementation team.
- ◆ Training approaches: Lecture/discussion, demonstration of skills, abilities, and practices, behavioral rehearsal to practice the skills, feedback on the practice.
- ◆ Coaching (TA) that is work-based, opportunistic, readily available, and reflective.

KEY TOPIC AREAS:

- ◆ Assembling a ‘Go-Team’.
- ◆ Review training efforts currently underway in a state.
- ◆ Resources/Technical Assistance (TA) available.
- ◆ Training approaches/platforms/modalities.

SHARED ACTION STEPS: CAPACITY DRIVER



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- ◆ Research current cross-partner committees to assess level of focus on accessibility and training, and diversity of partners.
 - ◆ Research the interest and need for creating a taskforce on accessibility that could commit to developing UA training.
 - ◆ Develop an online, on-demand curriculum that is updated regularly and offers exercises to help practice implementing UA.
 - ◆ Identify opportunities to provide training, such as during mandatory staff-development days when AJCs are closed.
 - ◆ Develop a cadre of trained staff to implement UA training.

Leadership Driver

Leadership Drivers focus on providing the right leadership strategies for the types of challenges that arise from the change management process needed to make decisions, provide guidance, and support organizational functioning. Factors include styles of leadership.

- ◆ Leadership style of ‘responders’ are reactive, while “managers” emphasize policies and procedures.
- ◆ Technical leaders engage, are quick to resolve issues, and have the ability to organize groups to solve problems.

- ◆ Adaptive leaders are responsive in complex situations where there is less certainty about what needs to be done and how to do it.

KEY TOPIC AREAS:

- ◆ Motivating different levels of leadership.
- ◆ Ensuring scaffolding is in place to support implementation.
- ◆ Developing different training tracks for leadership and staff/partners.
- ◆ Assessing skills pre/post training and reinforcement through coaching/TA.

SHARED ACTION STEPS: LEADERSHIP DRIVER



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- ◆ Develop a strategy to make information available to leadership that highlights AJC performance metrics and gaps revealed in serving a diverse population, including people with disabilities.
 - ◆ Use data gleaned from surveying to gain buy-in and support for funding and priority requests.
 - ◆ Address leadership from a policy standpoint and target management buy-in from all levels, not only state-level.
 - ◆ Outline the need for policy development and funding with clear UA definitions in program procedures for how effective UA can lead to better outcomes.
 - ◆ Align UA at all levels to include EO monitoring and compliance, ACJ Certification and data collection to determine impact and measure successful implementation.
 - ◆ Enhance MOU engagement and co-location to actualize greater integrated service delivery.
 - ◆ Collaborate with local partners to include UA strategies as part of their customer service flow to ensure people with disabilities are referred to and are accessing AJCs and other partner programs within the workforce system.

SHARED CHALLENGES AMONG STATES



As the states defined specific action steps for each driver, they were also realistic about the overall challenges that would need to be addressed.

- ◆ Sustainability of cross partner taskforces/committees.
- ◆ Turnover/shifting roles of leadership, local staff, and taskforce members.
- ◆ Moving the mindset beyond compliance – developing a continuous improvement culture.
- ◆ Developing clear expectations for training and gaining buy-in from WIOA leaders and implementers.
- ◆ Identifying various audiences for training.
- ◆ Spreading responsibility across systems to avoid leaning too heavily on same committees/agencies.
- ◆ Funding and prioritization – keeping the value of UA training alive in the midst of competing priorities and diminishing funds.
- ◆ Lack of standardized statewide training and customized training for local areas and continuously-updated curriculum.
- ◆ Lack of designated time to train staff.
- ◆ Ensuring UA training is part of onboarding process for new staff.
- ◆ Creating materials, accessible formats, etc.
- ◆ Identifying what exists to avoid reinventing the wheel.

MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN: Where to Start?

Implementation Science research indicates that the most crucial issues facing organizations today are not the number of innovative approaches that are put into place, but the implementation of change efforts to achieve what they were intended to do. Despite best intentions, change can be hard for any system or program; it can also be exciting, messy, creative, experimental and transformative. The challenge is to take a new idea and turn it into the status quo and into the everyday ‘way we do things’.

Every state team in this National Cohort explored, researched, brainstormed, and identified various areas of strengths and challenges in each of the three key drivers of change: *Organizational, Capacity and Leadership*. They then identified their top **DRIVER OF PRIORITY**, in addition to the 3-5 concrete **ACTION STEPS** they would take in their region to move forward. The goal for the state/local teams over the next 3-6 months and beyond is to move past the designing of the ‘perfect plan’ towards engaging in active experimentation. Read below some priority action steps each state has made as part of their state UA Capstone.

State Priority Areas & Action Steps

OREGON

Leadership Driver

1. Meet with Oregon Workforce Partnership (OWP) and the WorkSource Executive Team (WSET) - WorkSource Oregon (WSO) leadership groups to present and discuss project goals and actionable items from Accessibility Cohort. (Leadership Driver)
2. Engage OWP and WSET leadership to identify staff Subject Matter Expertise representation to the UA Work Group from WSO Core partners. Group members identified. (Leadership Driver)
3. Convene UA Work Group, identify priorities and begin mapping timeline for deliverables. (Organizational Driver)

CALIFORNIA

Organizational Driver

1. Meet with upper management to review Capstone with defined outlines for proposed next steps, and identify processes and action items.
2. Submit Executive Summary on Cohort experience and outcomes to upper management for review and sign-off.
3. Evaluate current data to support implementation and identify needs.
4. Develop materials for Town Hall meeting (leadership conference) including proposal outline, presentation, and survey.
5. Conduct Town Hall meeting with upper management, regional and local areas, and stakeholders.

VIRGINIA

Organizational Driver

1. Develop and deliver UA curriculum/training based on current state analysis that includes:
 - a. Conducting a current state analysis by surveying existing training activities and existing curriculum; surveying current needs of AJC staff and leadership; and reviewing results of recent AJC certification process.
 - b. Developing curriculum and a training delivery plan to include a suite of topics such as Section 188 and the ADA, EO, Assistive Technology, Programmatic Accessibility, and Customer Service.
 - c. Conducting statewide training, including a Beta test, and collecting feedback on product, delivery, and outcomes/impact for analysis and improvement purposes.

MASSACHUSETTS

Capacity Driver

1. Develop a TA plan to support implementation of Seven Principles of Universal Design.
2. Survey Career Centers to understand capacity and level of awareness related to UA.
3. Increase engagement and raise awareness of services and support available through Massachusetts' Assistive Technology Agency, MassMatch.
4. Conduct a cross-agency scan of existing trainings and curriculums to combine and develop into a comprehensive curriculum for staff to promote UA Awareness.
5. Include an assurance as part of Workforce Board certification that Career Centers are implementing UA principles.

ALABAMA

Organizational Driver

1. Identify a training program/curriculum or delivery entity.
 - a. Utilize findings from state-wide survey to inform design and staff needs.
2. Engage/orient State Workforce Board to share concepts and training goals to Regional and Local Workforce Boards
 - a. Connect to WIOA Combined State Plan.
3. Conduct Pilot training and collect continuous improvement information in identified AJCs including:
 - a. DEI grantee regions.
 - b. State-wide and Rural/urban.

MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN: Increasing the Chance for Successful Innovation

During the final Cohort sessions, each state/local team considered ideas and made plans to expand their Go-Team beyond Cohort membership. Part of the make it happen approach is assembling the right Go-Team, consisting of people who have a range of skills and expertise from within and outside of a system, and who represent both leadership and program perspectives. Expanding stakeholder engagement to collaboratively take action is a critical part for each of the state/local Cohort teams in moving forward to incite systems change.

While this National Cohort has ended, the work *to increase the inclusivity of a diverse population of individuals in the workforce system and in the workforce through UA training* has just begun. By sharing the journey of these five states, other state/local cross-systems partners can learn the benefits of using Implementation Science as the framework for change. This process includes defining a purpose-driven mission, identifying areas of strengths and challenges, clarifying key drivers of change, prioritizing action steps, and assembling the right Go-Team. For our Cohort teams, Virginia, Alabama, California, Oregon, and Massachusetts, Implementation Science indicates that participation in these stages of progression may significantly increase their chance for successful implementation of UA innovations.

This capstone report, the discussion guides, and drafts of state capstone plans are posted on the Disability Employment Community of Practice here:

<https://disability.workforcegps.org/resources/2018/11/12/14/39/Accessibility-Cohort>

The Employment and Training Administration would like to acknowledge the contributions and dedication provided by members of the Accessibility Team on the release of its cohort product titled, *Accessibility Cohort Capstone*. The Accessibility Team was comprised of five states who engaged in a cross-agency alliance made up of workforce programs that included WIOA core programs and other disability partners. The states represented were the following: Alabama, California, Massachusetts, Oregon, and Virginia.

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