



# **Promoting Inclusive Career Pathways National Online Dialogue**

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**October 17, 2016 – November 4, 2016**

**Final Report**



**LEAD CENTER**

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## Introduction

The following report outlines the results of the ePolicyWorks' online dialogue, "[Promoting Inclusive Career Pathways Online Dialogue](#)." Hosted by the LEAD Center, a U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) technical assistance center, this virtual event was held from Monday, October 17, 2016 through Friday, November 4, 2016. The online dialogue invited individuals and organizations interested in inclusive employment of people with disabilities—including state agency administrators, employers, human resources professionals, labor policy experts, advocates, and workers themselves—to contribute to a virtual conversation in an effort to gather insight and ideas on increasing access to inclusive career pathways for people with disabilities. Participants were encouraged to post new and innovative ideas and comment and vote on those posted by others.

To promote the sharing of ideas, the dialogue posed the following question to participants:

**What ideas do you have to increase access to career pathways for people with disabilities?**

Ideas posted to the online dialogue were organized into the following three topics, with questions provided for participants to consider for each topic:

- **Successful Strategies**

1. What positive or innovative techniques have you developed to implement inclusive career pathways for youth and/or adults who face barriers to employment, including people with disabilities?
2. How does (or how might) cross system collaboration make resources available to support inclusive career pathways? (Please provide examples if you have some.)
3. What are you doing or what would you suggest to increase awareness and outreach about career pathways programs and services so that jobseekers with disabilities can take advantage of career pathways opportunities?

- **Barriers and Challenges**

1. What barriers do service providers encounter in successfully creating and implementing career pathways programs that include individuals with disabilities?
2. What are some barriers people with disabilities face in pursuing a career and/or participating in career pathways programs?

- **Training and Technical Assistance**

1. What training and technical assistance do you think agencies need in order to successfully create and implement inclusive career pathways?

2. What supports and services would improve participation and help youth/adults with disabilities to succeed in career pathways certification and skills training programs?

Included in this report are the top posts contributed and voted on by participants. An archive of the complete dialogue is available for viewing at <http://InclusiveCareerPathways.ePolicyWorks.org/>. The multitude of ideas gathered from this dialogue illustrate that crowdsourcing ideas from key stakeholders and ongoing collaboration are imperative for the advancement and development of policies and best practices to support pathways to employment for people with disabilities. Results of this online event will be used to help the LEAD Center shape their work around inclusive career pathways initiatives and full workplace inclusion.

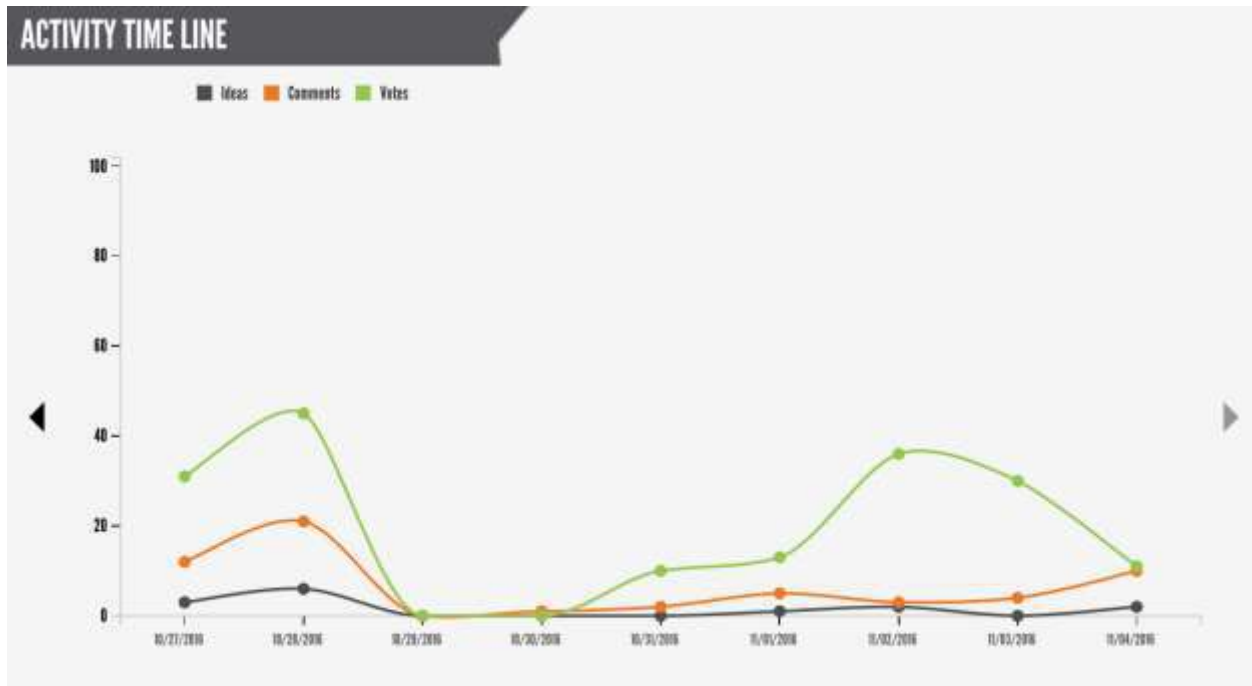
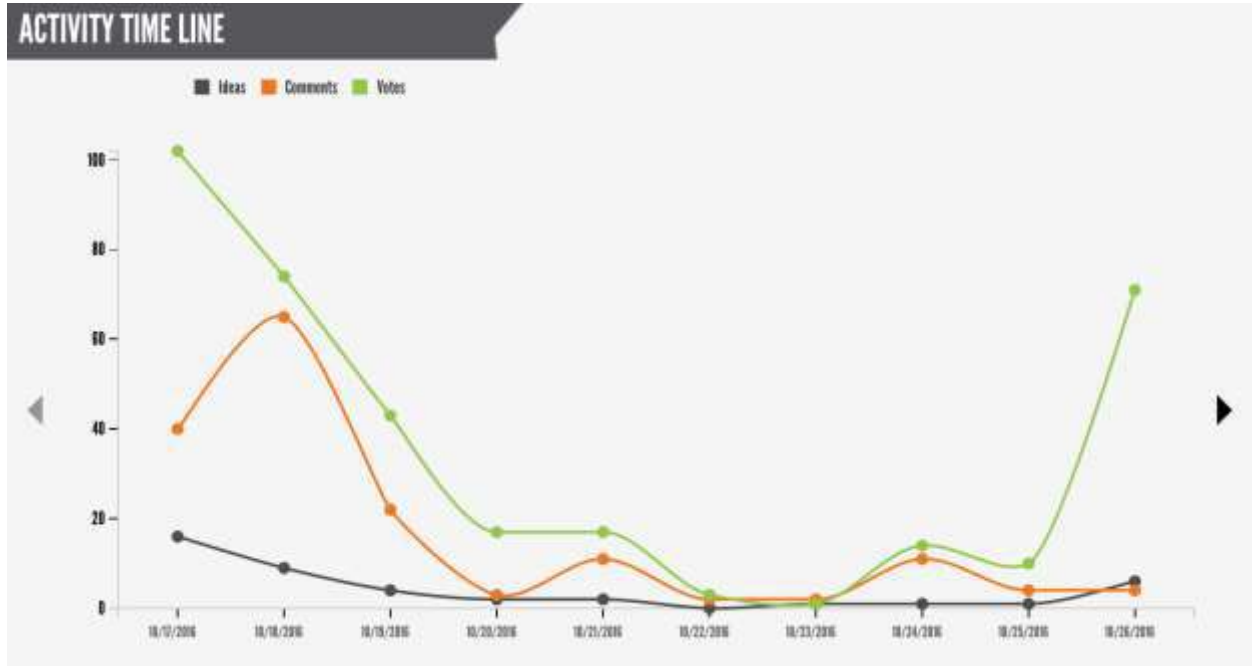
## Dialogue Key Words

The following is a word cloud containing the words most commonly used by participants throughout the dialogue. Main key words that illustrate the ideas discussed during the dialogue include: work, employers, students, help, community, programs, individuals, job, STEM, skills, and training.



## Dialogue Participation Timeline

The following graph depicts the timeline of activity that occurred during the dialogue, including the posting of ideas, comments, and votes.



## Outreach Efforts

In order to engage a broad range of participants in the ePolicyWorks online dialogues, our team engages in a multitude of strategic outreach efforts. At the start of every dialogue, initial outreach emails are sent to experts and key stakeholders relevant to the dialogue topic, as well as to the complete ePolicyWorks distribution list, which includes previous online dialogue invitees and ePolicyWorks Collaborative Workspace members.

Throughout the dialogue, the ePolicyWorks team sent follow-up reminder emails to ensure that everyone interested in participating in the online dialogue had the chance to do so before the dialogue closed. At the conclusion of the dialogue, a thank you email was sent to all participants with an invitation to stay tuned for future dialogues. Our email outreach strategy is critical to informing and shaping the conversation in every online dialogue, ensuring that the right people are brought to the table to contribute.

In addition to targeted email blasts, the ePolicyWorks team conducted outreach using social media through Twitter. Midway through the dialogue period, ePolicyWorks sent direct tweets to the prominent disability organizations and respected disability leaders listed below:

- @RudermanFdn – Ruderman Foundation
- @KesslerFdn- Kessler Foundation
- @RebeccaCokley - Rebecca Cokley
- @autselfadvocacy – Austistic Self Advocacy Network
- @SBlahov – Sarah Blahovec
- @NatCounDis – National Council on Disability
- @NCILAdvocacy – National Council on Independent Living
- @DisVisibility – Disability Visibility Project
- @AAPD – American Association of People with Disabilities
- @JobsBender – Joyce Bender
- @AndyAUCD – Andrew Imparato
- @MgmAUCD – Michael Gamel-McCormick

Throughout the duration of the dialogue, ePolicyWorks tweeted and retweeted a combined total of 10 announcements. This targeted social media outreach contributed to a significant increase of dialogue promotion on social media and by directing interested people and organizations to register for the dialogue.



## Dialogue Outreach Emails

### Initial Announcement Email – 10/17/16

This email announcing the start of the dialogue and personally inviting participants was sent to previous ePolicyWorks dialogue participants.

- Emails Delivered – 11,117
- Emails Opened – 2,599
- Total number of clicks on links in email (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 501

### Dialogue Participation Reminder Email – 10/21/16

This email was sent to all current dialogue registrants to encourage them to return to the dialogue to contribute more ideas, votes and comments.

- Emails Delivered – 170
- Emails Opened – 68
- Total number of clicks on links in email (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 25

### Dialogue Participation Reminder and Extension Announcement Email – 10/31/16

This email was sent to all past ePolicyWorks dialogue participants, as well as to current dialogue registrants to encourage them to return to the dialogue to contribute more ideas, votes and comments.

- Emails Delivered – 5,252
- Emails Opened – 1,023
- Total number of clicks on links in email (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 210

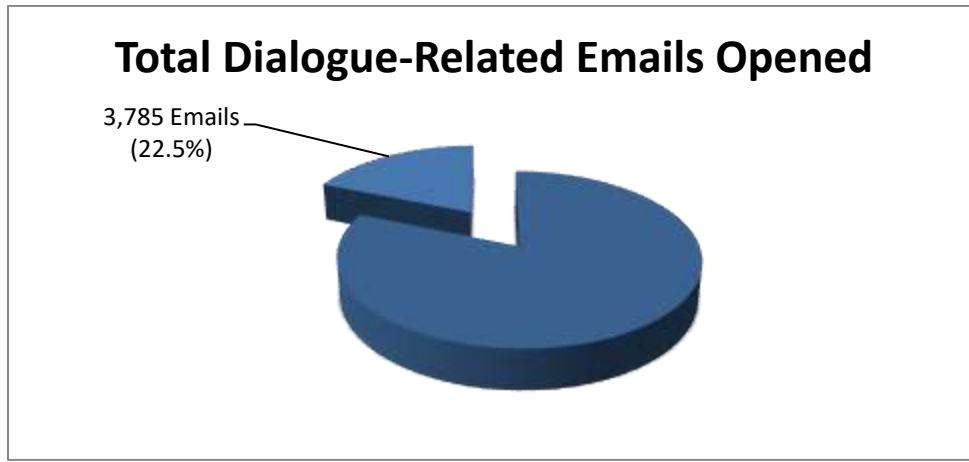
### Last Day of Dialogue Reminder Email – 11/4/16

This email was sent to dialogue registrants to encourage participation before the dialogue closed.

- Emails Delivered – 283
- Emails Opened – 95
- Total number of clicks on links in email (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 16

## Total Dialogue Outreach Emails

- Email Blasts – 4
- Emails Delivered – 16,822
- Emails Opened – 3,785 (22.5% open rate)
- Total number of clicks on links in emails (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 752

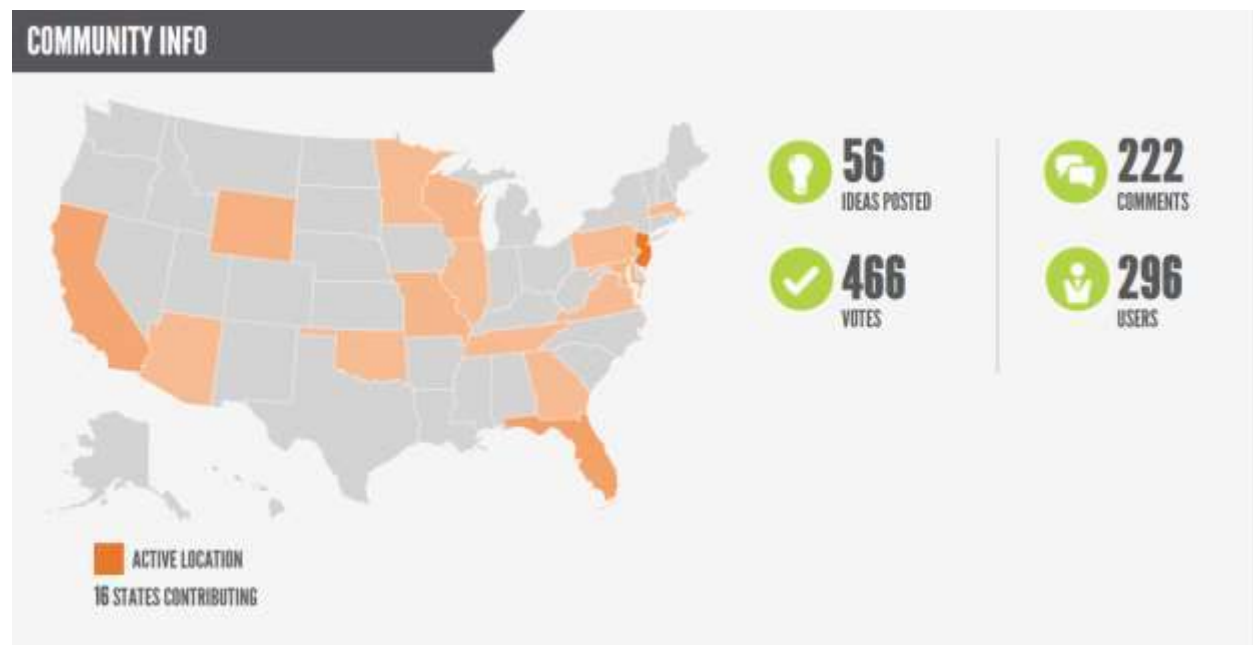


With a combined 3,785 dialogue-related emails opened, ePolicyWorks had a strong 22.5% open rate, directly impacting the success of the online dialogue. Links included in the emails were clicked a total of 752 times, leading recipients to register and get involved in the dialogue.

*Note: The following section outlines the key metrics from the online dialogue and provides a snapshot of the participation results.*

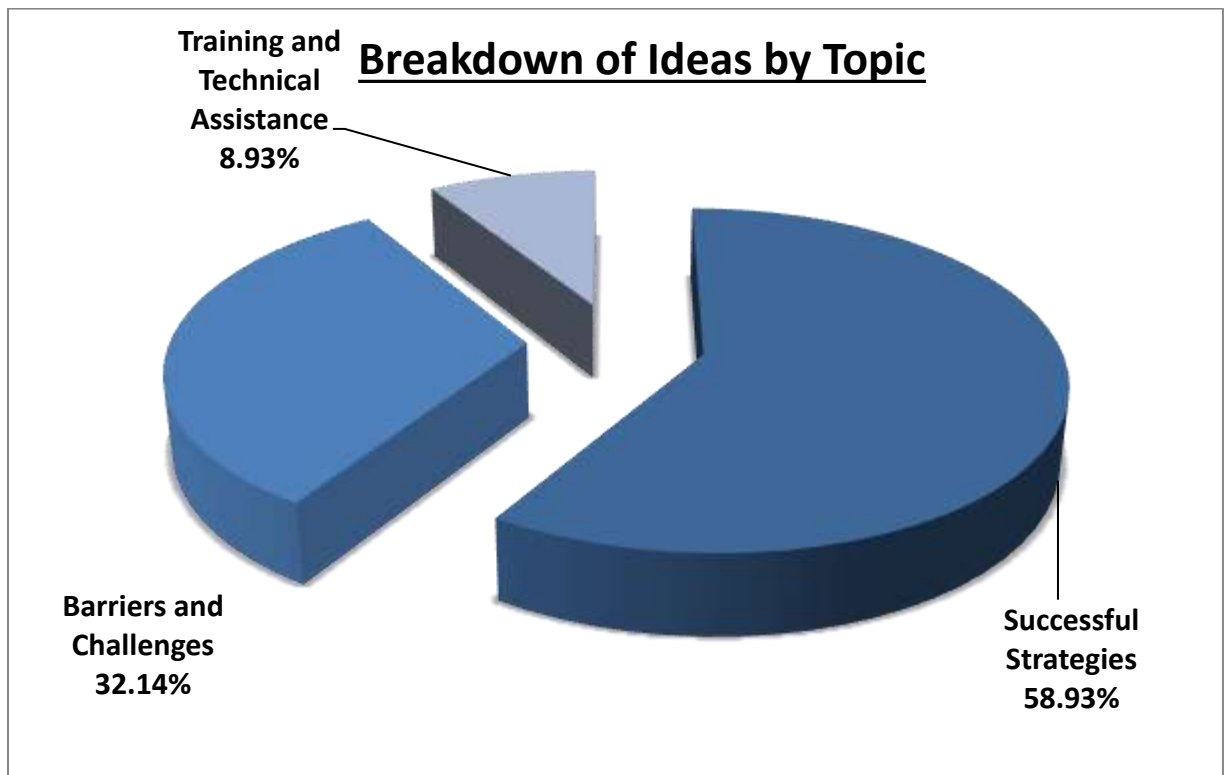
## Dialogue Participation Summary

- Dialogue opened on Monday, October 17, 2016 at 8:00 am ET
- Dialogue closed on Friday, November 4, 2016 at 11:59 pm ET
- Total Ideas: 56
- Total Comments: 222
- Total Votes: 466
- Unique Visitors: 760
- Total Registrants: 296 (39% of unique visitors)
  - Active Registrants: (submitted ideas, voted or commented): 97 (32.8% of total registrants)

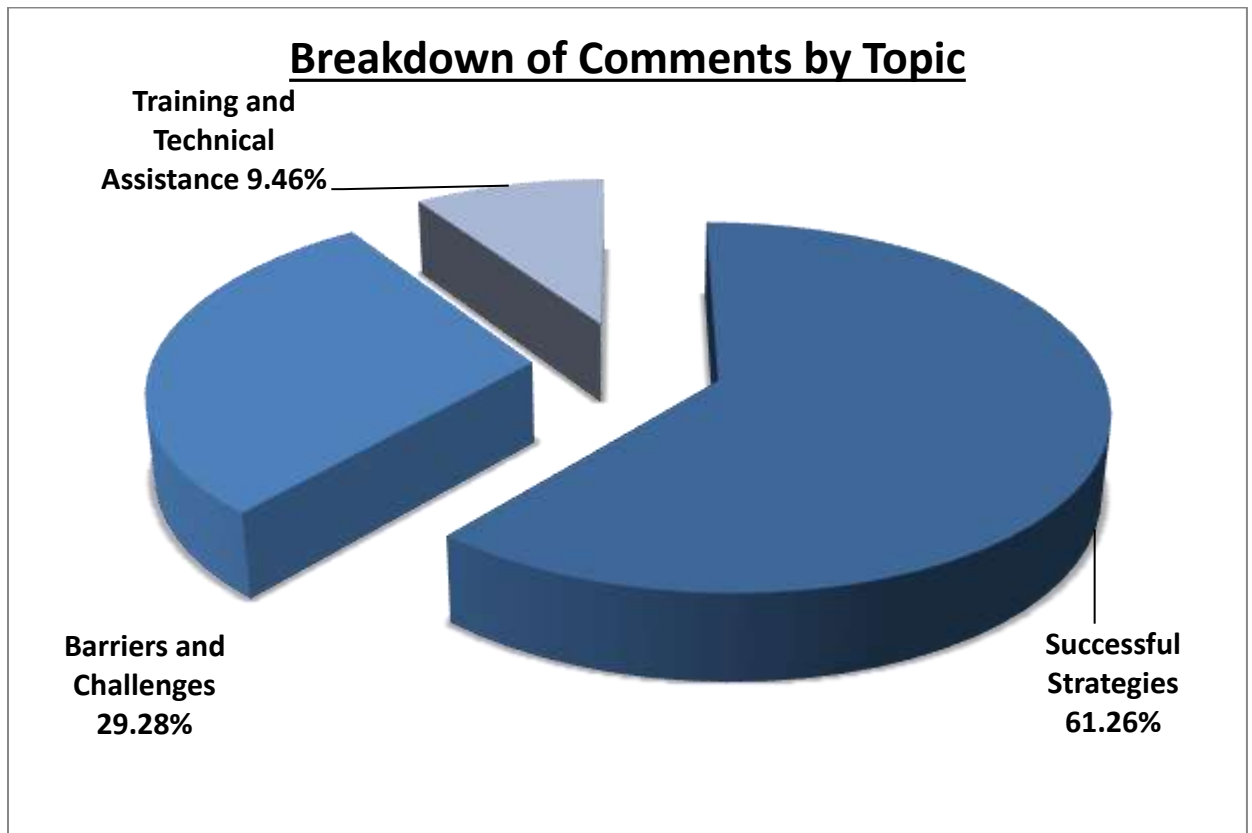


## Campaign Summary

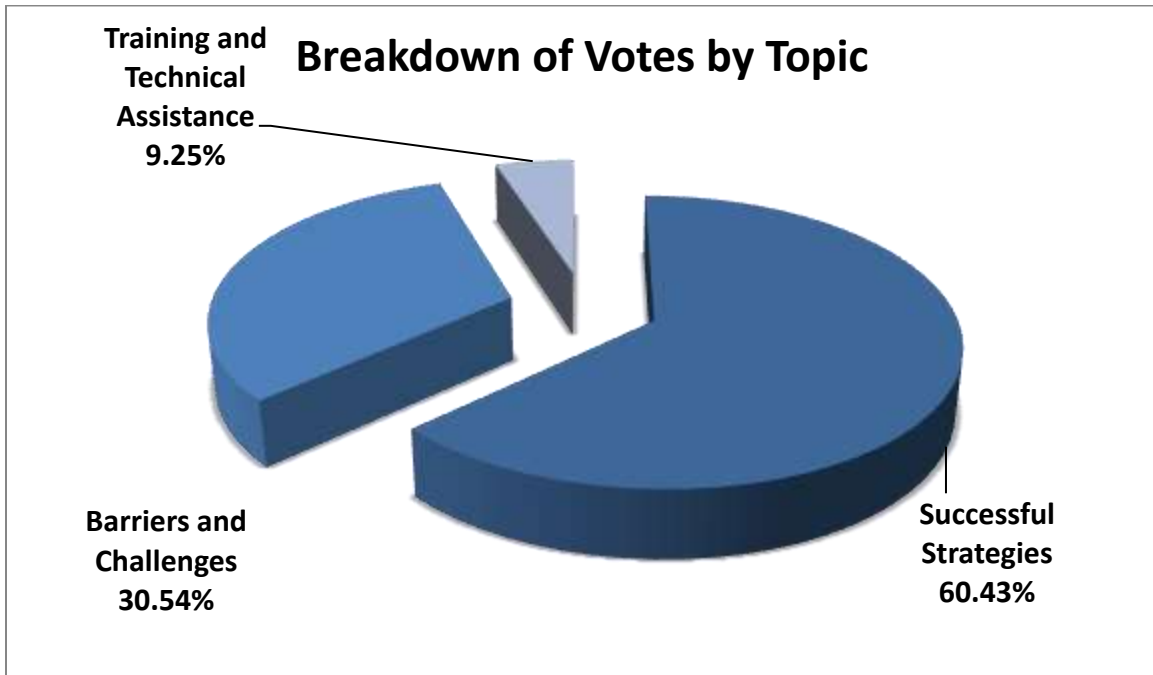
- Total number of ideas: 56
  - Successful Strategies: 33 (58.93%)
  - Barriers and Challenges: 18 (32.14%)
  - Training and Technical Assistance: 5 (8.93%)



- Total number of comments: 222
  - Successful Strategies: 136 (61.26%)
  - Barriers and Challenges: 65 (29.28%)
  - Training and Technical Assistance: 21 (9.46%)



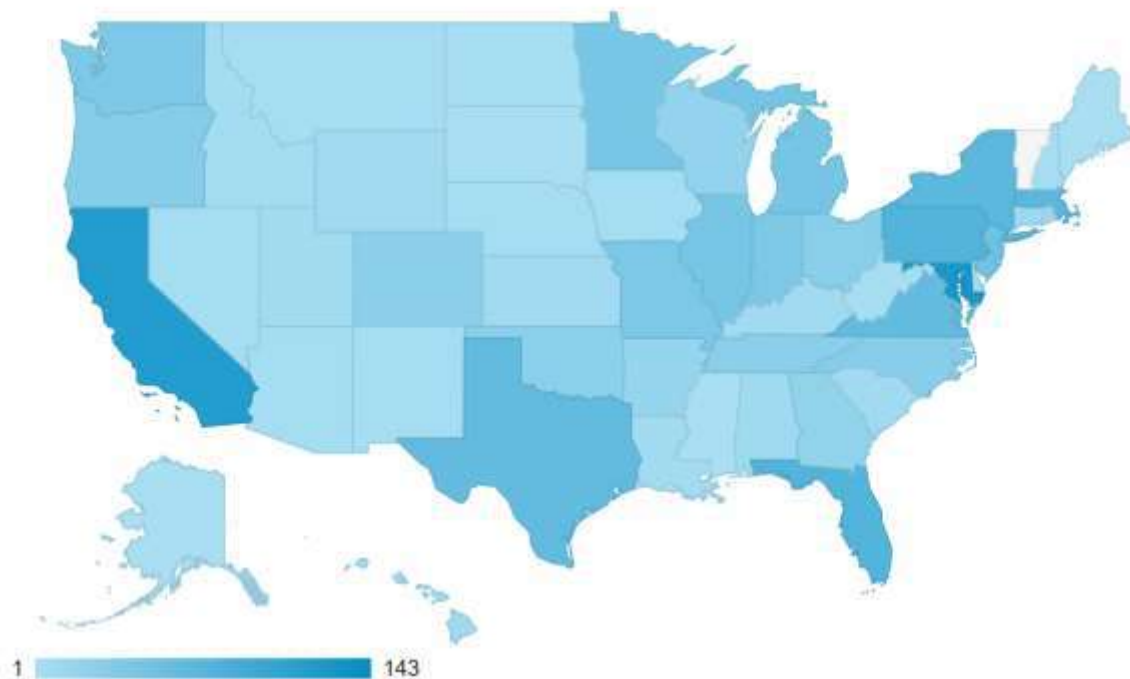
- Total number of votes: 465
  - Successful Strategies: 281 (60.43%)
  - Barriers and Challenges: 142 (30.54%)
  - Training and Technical Assistance: 43 (9.25%)



## Visits during the Dialogue (10/17/16 – 11/4/16)

- Total visits: 1,534
- Unique visitors to the URL: 957
- Total page views: 7,980
- Average pages per visit: 5.2
- Average visit duration: 6:00
- Returning visitors: 38.7%
- Bounce rate (percentage of participants who leave after viewing the first page of the dialogue): 41%

## Map of Demographics of United States Visits



## Demographics of Visits

State	Visits
District of Columbia	143
Maryland	125
California	117
Florida	76
Pennsylvania	75
Massachusetts	68
New York	68
Texas	62
Virginia	61
New Jersey	52
Michigan	46
Illinois	44
Minnesota	43
Missouri	41
Indiana	40
Washington	39
Oregon	33

State	Visits
North Carolina	30
Ohio	29
Colorado	28
Tennessee	28
Oklahoma	27
Georgia	22
Wisconsin	21
Arkansas	18
Connecticut	13
South Carolina	9
Alabama	10
Kansas	9
Rhode Island	9
Wyoming	9
Hawaii	8
Kentucky	8
South Carolina	8

State	Visits
Delaware	7
Louisiana	7
Utah	7
Idaho	6
Arizona	5
Iowa	5
Nebraska	5
Nevada	5
Montana	4
New Hampshire	4
New Mexico	4
North Dakota	3
West Virginia	3
Alaska	2
Maine	2
Mississippi	1
South Dakota	1

## Registration Metrics

*Total registrants: 298*

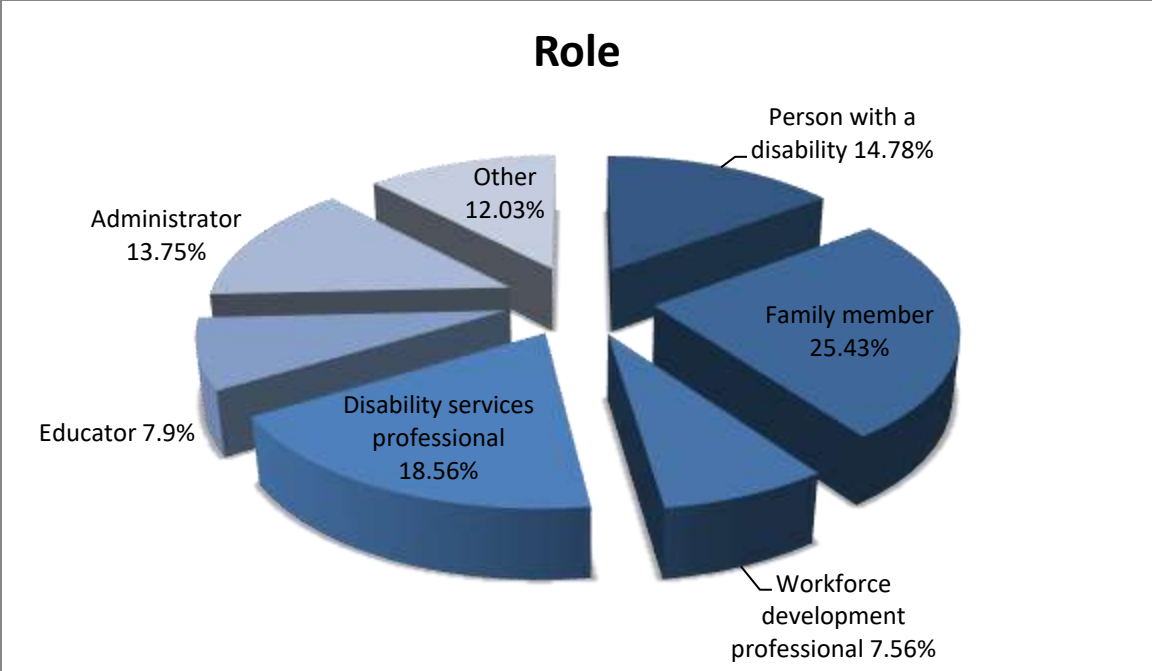
*Total number of registrants that completed the registration process:*

As part of the dialogue registration process, registrants were asked to answer a series of questions.

Registrants were asked to check off their role:

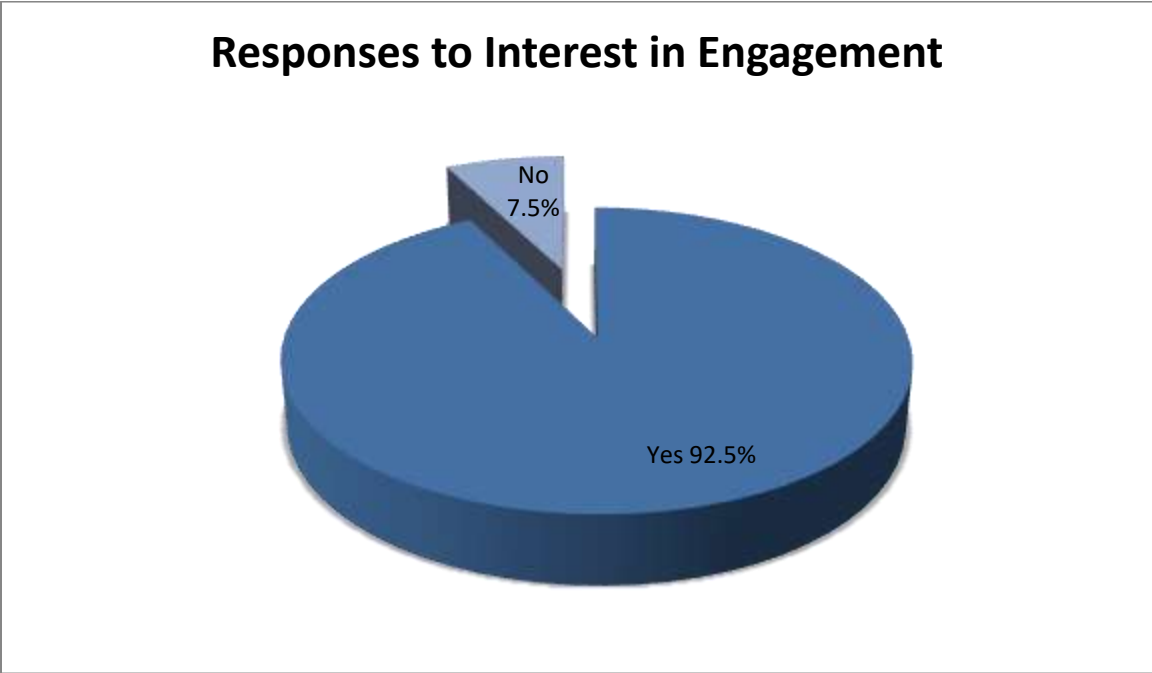
- Person with a disability: 43 (14.78%)
- Family member: 74 (25.43%)
- Workforce development professional: 22 (7.56%)
- Disability services professional: 54 (18.56%)
- Educator: 23 (7.9%)
- Administrator: 40 (13.75%)
- Other: 35 (12.03%)





Would you like to be a part of an ongoing engagement effort with the LEAD Center?

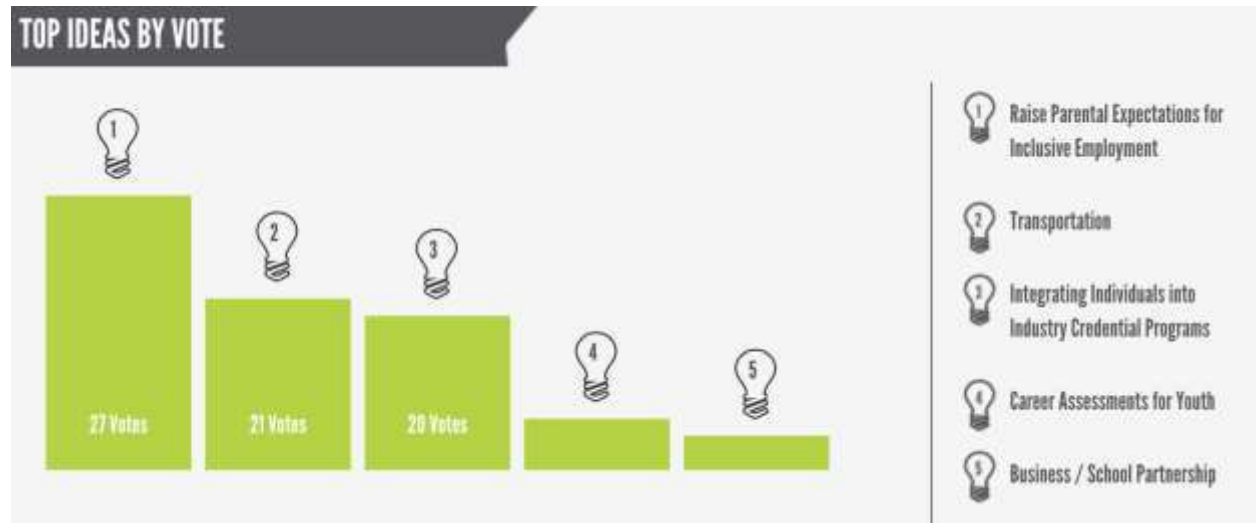
- Yes: 259 (92.5%)
- No: 21 (7.5%)



# Infographics Depicting Popular Ideas Contributed by Dialogue Participants

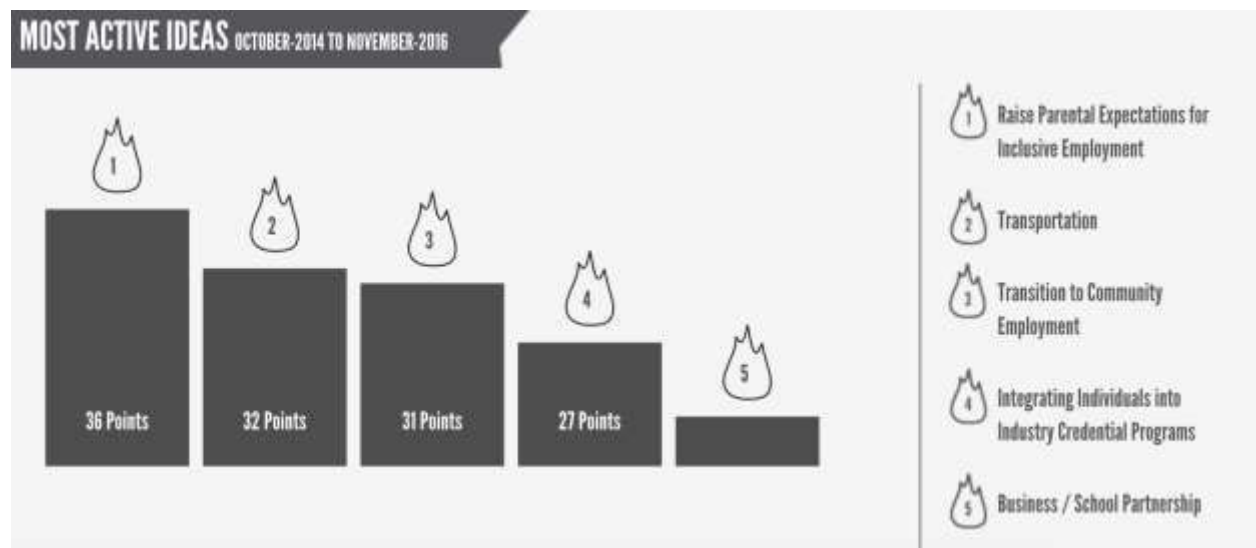
## Top Ideas by Vote

The following chart depicts top ideas submitted by participants based on the number of votes the ideas received from other participants.



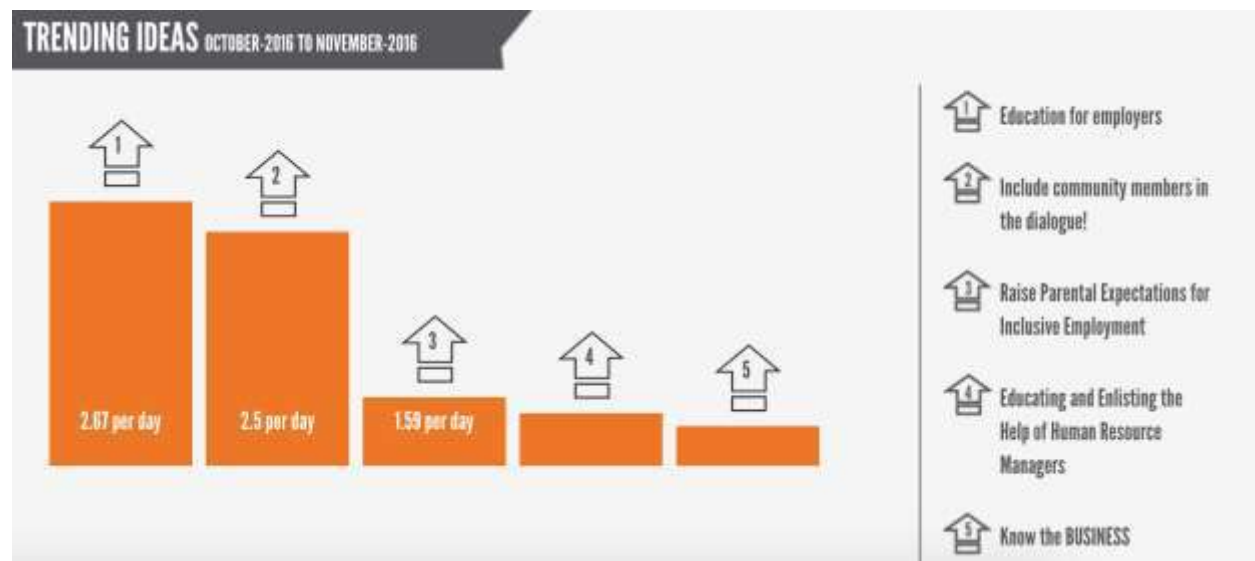
## Most Active Ideas

The following chart depicts the ideas submitted by participants that were the most commented on and voted on by other participants.



## Trending Ideas

The following chart depicts the ideas submitted by participants that were trending based on interactions from other participants.



*Note: The ideas listed in the following sections include minor typographical corrections, which have in no way impacted the substance or the intention of the revised posts.*

## Top 5 Overall Ideas

### Top Idea #1: Raise Parental Expectations for Inclusive Employment

27 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 27 Net Votes

Parents participating in this discussion have high expectations that their adult children will work in inclusive settings doing work that reflect their strengths and interests. This is NOT the case for many many families. Even if parents do have such expectations they may not have a clue about how to ensure that their son or daughter with significant disabilities receives the supports they need in the workplace. Parent training on state career pathway systems/options, the importance of work-based learning experiences for youth, and supports families can provide to build "soft" and other employment skills at home and in the community are under-employed strategies to improve inclusive employment outcomes. (No mention of family training in VR's Pre-Employment Services for example.) Federally funded parent centers and disability organizations need more resources to be able to provide relevant training and information services to families on such topics.

### Top Idea #2: Transportation

21 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 21 Net Votes

Adults/young adults who have skills sets that are marketable but lack reliable transportation miss out on opportunities.

### Top Idea #3: Integrating Individuals into Industry Credential Programs

20 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 20 Net Votes

When we talk about Career Pathways, it's critical that we focus on skill development and credentials. A strategy that I feel is under-utilized, is supporting individuals with significant disabilities in training programs that result in industry-recognized credentials in the trades, health care, and other industries. The idea is to integrate individuals into existing training programs (not create something separate), and then provide necessary accommodations and supports via partnerships with disability agencies (VR, etc.) so the individual can succeed in the training and leave with a credential. Many of these programs are funded by WIOA and other workforce funds. I'd be interested in examples that people may have where this has been successful. Similarly, I think supporting individuals with significant disabilities in Career Tech (vocational) programs while in school is underutilized. Again would be interested in hearing of examples where this has been successful.

### Top Idea #4: Career Assessments for Youth

14 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 14 Net Votes

Engaging youth and adults into completing career assessments which break down all areas of likes and dislikes (i.e. type of light, odors, environment, etc.) the individual would like or not like to work in, will assist with the discovery process. To have youth participate in job shadows in order to view the ins and outs of the "ideal" job will assist with career understanding.

### Top Idea #5: Business / School Partnership

13 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 13 Net Votes

A school could partner with a large, local business. Relationships may already exist between the business and VR. Teachers and Administrators don't have to reinvent the wheel to build one for themselves - ask VR for assistance. A business could: 1. Provide Career Mentoring for students 2. Hold a practice job fair at the business 3. Be a guest speaker in a classroom 4. Provide workplace tours 5. Practice interview skills with students 6. Have professional email exchanges with students (students could utilize voice to text app) 7. Become an internship site (remember to let employers know that competitive employment is always the ultimate goal

## Top Ideas – Successful Strategies

### Top Idea #1: Raise Parental Expectations for Inclusive Employment

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Parents participating in this discussion have high expectations that their adult children will work in inclusive settings doing work that reflect their strengths and interests. This is NOT the case for many many families. Even if parents do have such expectations they may not have a clue about how to ensure that their son or daughter with significant disabilities receives the supports they need in the workplace. Parent training on state career pathway systems/options, the importance of work-based learning experiences for youth, and supports families can provide to build "soft" and other employment skills at home and in the community are under-employed strategies to improve inclusive employment outcomes. (No mention of family training in VR's Pre-Employment Services for example.) Federally funded parent centers and disability organizations need more resources to be able to provide relevant training and information services to families on such topics.

### Top Idea #2: Integrating Individuals into Industry Credential Programs

20 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 20 Net Votes

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### Top Idea #4: Business / School Partnership

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A school could partner with a large, local business. Relationships may already exist between the business and VR. Teachers and Administrators don't have to reinvent the wheel to build one for themselves - ask VR for assistance. A business could: 1. Provide Career Mentoring for students 2. Hold a practice job fair at the business 3. Be a guest

speaker in a classroom 4. Provide workplace tours 5. Practice interview skills with students 6. Have professional email exchanges with students (students could utilize voice to text app) 7. Become an internship site (remember to let employers know that competitive employment is always the ultimate goal)

### Top Idea #5: Career Fair as way to educate employers

12 Up Votes | 1 Down Votes | 11 Net Votes

One strategy that has been successful for me with my students is attending career/job fairs. This gives the students an opportunity to practice their conversation and social skills and allows me time to network with hiring professionals and share my students' abilities and career goals. Many of my students have been able to secure jobs through this strategy.

## Top Ideas – Barriers and Challenges

### Top Idea #1: Transportation

21 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 21 Net Votes

Adults/young adults who have skills sets that are marketable but lack reliable transportation miss out on opportunities.

### Top Idea #2: Clear the red tape

10 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 10 Net Votes

VR agencies should not be backlogged. We need help now. Not in a couple years.

### Top Idea #3: Education for employers

8 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 8 Net Votes

There is such a stigma attached to this population. Employers need to be educated and informed about the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities.

### Top Idea #4: Competitive Productivity & Communicating Benefits

7 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 7 Net Votes

Some employers are hesitant to employ people with disabilities due to fears they won't be as productive as a "typical" peer. Forums to educate business leaders might include: Chambers of Commerce, annual meetings for certain professional organizations, etc. Perhaps these presentations can be done in collaboration with local colleges who offer educational programs or majors related to disabilities, business, human resources or statistical research. Colleges or universities could add such presentations into their curriculum or independent study so undergrads or grad students can make these presentations. It provides a dual benefit: employers become more knowledgeable, and the student gains knowledge they can take with them into the workforce, making them more receptive to hiring people with disabilities.

### Top Idea #5: Work with local employers

6 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 6 Net Votes

IDEA: If there is an employer in your area looking for a certain skill set, work with local schools or rehab agencies to teach job-seekers the specific skills needed for employment with that particular employer. BARRIER: Many of my clients do not want to go back to school. They feel they are done with school and should be working.

## Top Ideas – Training and Technical Assistance

### Top Idea #1: Training Ideas

10 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 10 Net Votes

To address this question: What training and technical assistance do you think agencies need in order to successfully create and implement inclusive career pathways? In my community, I would like to see my clients have the ability to be trained in: cash handling, computer skills beyond social media, Microsoft office, handyman skills like painting and simple plumbing, customer service, auto repairs, i.e.: oil change and tires. Just a few! I'd love to hear other ideas in this regard.

### Top Idea #2: Soft Skills

10 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 10 Net Votes

A person can have the most technical skill, however if s/he is lacking the ability to work with Suzy on a project s/he could be fired. There needs to be training for individuals on soft skills. I have conversations with friends without disabilities in regards to their soft skills; when I discuss their reactions in the workplace, they realize that it wasn't appropriate and there's a need to develop certain soft skills. Very rarely, if ever, do people get fired for their skill. Often times, they get fired due to lack of soft skills. More emphasis needs to be placed on soft skills through the development of technical skills.

### Top Idea #3: Appropriate Skills Training for Higher Functioning Candidates

9 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 9 Net Votes

As the rate of Autism Spectrum Disorder increases, there needs to be job training opportunities appropriate for those higher functioning individuals with disabilities. Workforce development programs are geared toward very high-functioning (ACCES-VR) and very low-functioning (NYSARC) candidates. There are many in between, who cannot participate in mainstream training programs, and have no interest in yard maintenance and bottle redemption. These individuals are bright and capable, but may NEVER develop soft skills appropriate for the workplace.

### Top Idea #4: More Post-Secondary Transition and Educational Programs

5 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 5 Net Votes

There needs to be more post-secondary transition and educational programs in our public college and university system for individuals with all types of disabilities. These programs should also be developed to include meeting the needs of each individual student or individual centered planning

### Top Idea #5: Furthering Education

5 Up Votes | 1 Down Votes | 4 Net Votes

There should be a college that accepts a child's "diploma" without it being costly for the parent(s) and or the child wanting to further his/her education. Being a mother of a child who does not have a "normal diploma" but wishes to attend college, and is being told that a GED would need to be obtained in order to attend or where it is accepted is very costly it's disappointing, and frustrating. Parents with kid(s) that have a disability tries to encourage the child letting them know that they can accomplish what they put their minds to do, yet after high school you're being told by the agencies that are supposed to help your child, that they can only put them to work. Some give a two week training, and then say that the child must now find a job. These kid(s) have a disability where some can do more than others, and they should be treated on a one on one basis not based on what seems to be rules set

forth by these agencies. I don't know what criteria's these agencies are or aren't given, however a change must be done to ensure no child is left behind who looked forward to attending college after graduating high school.

## Conclusion

Through the [Promoting Inclusive Career Pathways Online Dialogue](#), ODEP's LEAD Center successfully leveraged leading-edge crowdsourcing tools to engage individuals and organizations interested in inclusive employment of people with disabilities in a virtual conversation about ideas for inclusive career pathways and full workplace inclusion.

In summary, the online event attracted more than 950 visitors, of which 97 participated posting 56 unique ideas, 222 comments and 465 votes. This metrics report provides a summary of the online dialogue's results, and the input and responses of the participants are now being analyzed in an effort to inform how best to improve upon the effectiveness of Inclusive Career Pathways programs in order to provide career support for people with disabilities.