



What Can States Do? Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work National Online Dialogue

**July 19, 2016 – August 12, 2016
Final Report**



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Introduction

The following report outlines the results of the “[What Can States Do? Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work](#)” ePolicyWorks online dialogue. Hosted by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) Policy Collaborative, this virtual event was held from Monday, July 18, 2016 through Friday, August 12, 2016. The online dialogue invited key stakeholders to a virtual conversation to share feedback on suggested steps that states can take to help workers keep their jobs after an injury, illness, or disability

Ideas and insights were solicited on six policy recommendations intended to increase retention and re-employment among these workers. Participants were encouraged to post new and innovative ideas and comment and vote on those posted by others.

The six ideas posted prior to the beginning of the online dialogue included the following:

1. Employment and accommodation subsidies in workers’ compensation
2. Enhance EAP benefits for state employees
3. Pilot-test the COHE model for non-occupational cases
4. Enhance state vocational rehab agencies’ job-retention services
5. Enhance disability insurance programs for state employees
6. Enhance states’ short-term disability insurance programs

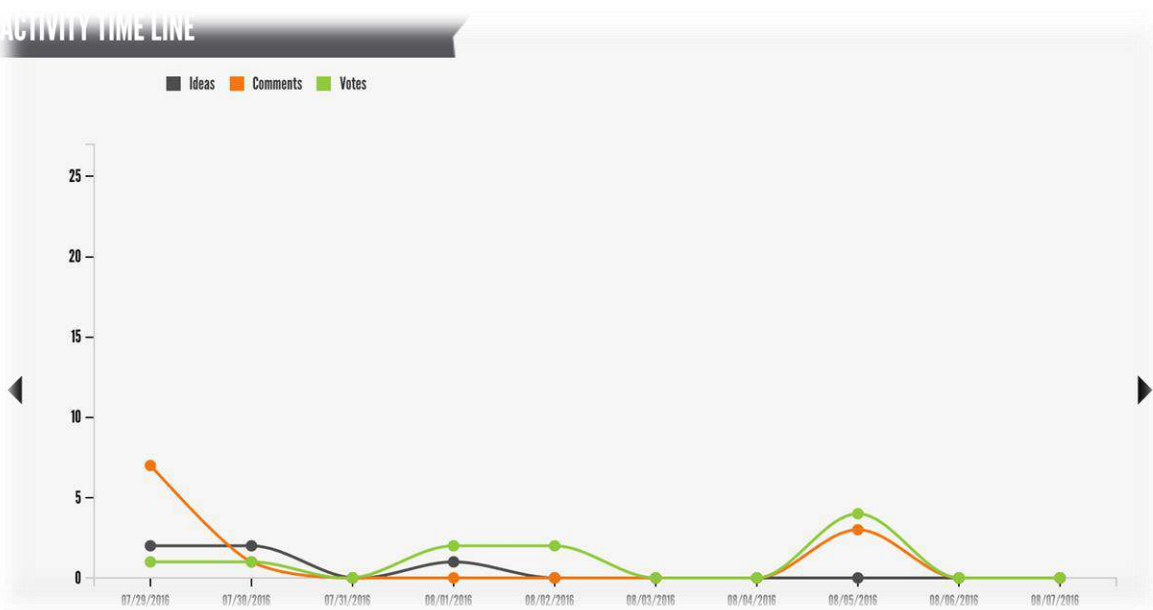
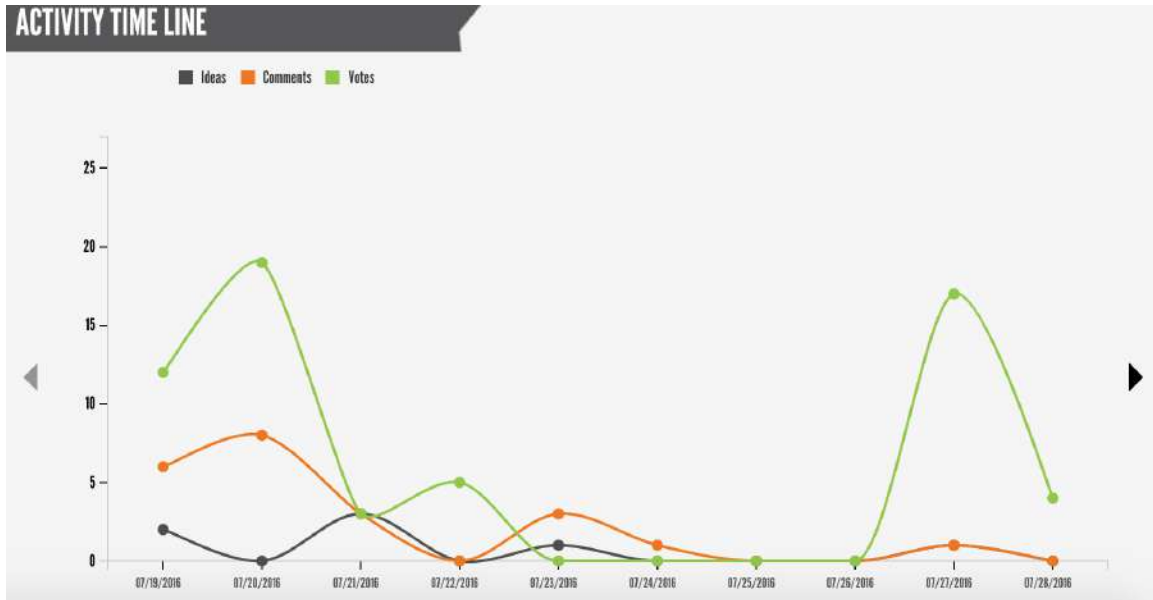
To promote the sharing of insights regarding these ideas and to gather new ideas, the dialogue posed the following question to participants:

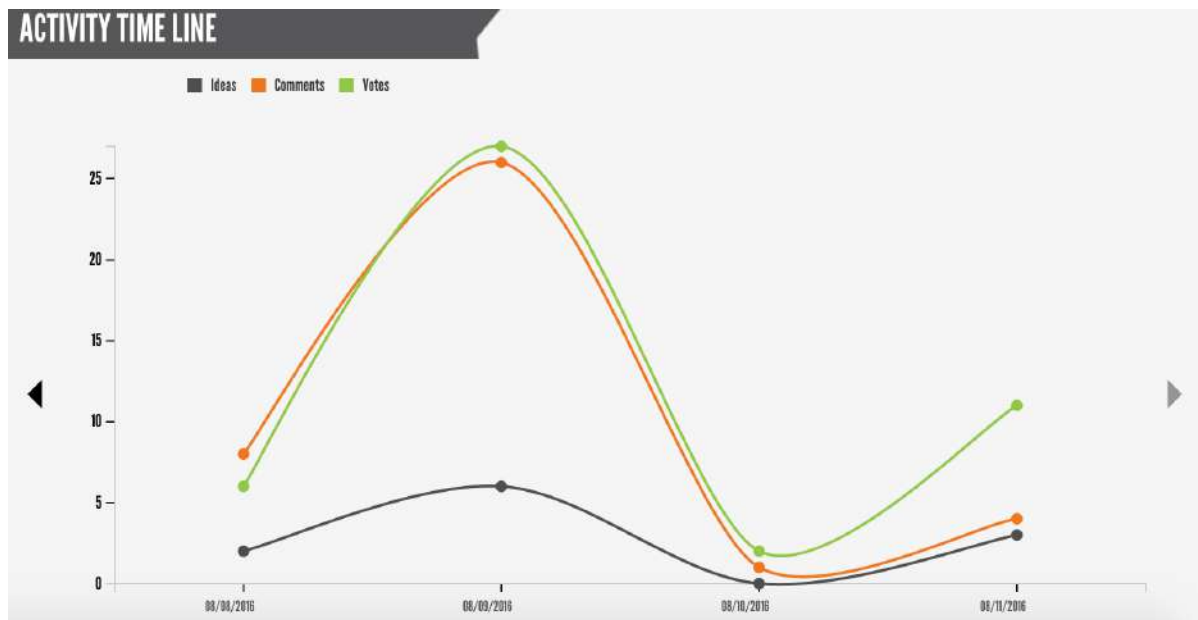
1. Which state agencies are in the best position to help workers keep their jobs after an injury, illness, or disability?
2. What specific types of strategies can these agencies consider?

Included in this report are the top posts contributed by and voted on by participants. An archive of the complete dialogue is available for viewing at <http://StateInput.ePolicyWorks.org/>.

Dialogue Participation Timeline

The following graphs 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 an online dialogue, ePolicyWorks conducts strategic outreach by sending a series of targeted emails. At the start of this dialogue, an initial outreach email was sent to experts and key stakeholders relevant to the dialogue topic, as well as to general ePolicyWorks contacts, which includes previous online dialogue participants and ePolicyWorks eWorkGroup members. To focus the conversation for this dialogue, ePolicyWorks researched and reached out to additional targets, including state healthcare, human resources, veterans' affairs, and vocational rehabilitation agencies, state departments of labor, state senators and representatives, and governors.

Throughout the dialogue, ePolicyWorks sent follow-up reminder emails to ensure that everyone who wanted to participate in the online dialogue had the chance to do so during the four weeks the dialogue was open. At the conclusion of the dialogue, a thank you email was sent to all participants with an invitation to stay tuned for future dialogues. The ePolicyWorks 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. During the dialogue, @ePolicyWorks posted 17 original tweets promoting the dialogue, as well as retweeted three tweets from DOL and others that highlighted the dialogue. This strategic 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. In total, **17.5%** of new visitors reached the dialogue through social media.

Dialogue Outreach Emails

Initial Announcement Email to ePolicyWorks Contact List – 7/19/16

This email announcing the start of the dialogue and personally inviting participants was sent to key stakeholders, ePolicyWorks workgroup members, and previous ePolicyWorks dialogue participants.

- Emails Delivered – 8,590
- Emails Opened – 1,948
- Total number of clicks on links in email (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 185

Initial Announcement Email to Past SAW/RTW Dialogue Registrants – 7/19/16

This email announcing the start of the dialogue and personally inviting participants was sent to people who previously participated in SAW/RTW dialogues.

- Emails Delivered – 374
- Emails Opened – 145
- Total number of clicks on links in email (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 37

Dialogue Extension Email to Targeted State Contacts– 8/2/16

This email announcing the start of the dialogue was sent to key stakeholders including state legislators' chief of staff or legislative directors, governors, state agency contacts, state department of labor contacts, state health care agency contacts, state human resource agency contacts, vocational rehab contacts, as well KidneyWorks stakeholder meeting attendees.

- Emails Delivered – 910
- Emails Opened – 114
- Total number of clicks on links in email (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 22

Dialogue Participation Reminder Email to Targeted State Contacts and Past SAW/RTW Dialogue Registrants– 8/8/16

This email was sent to key stakeholders and participants from previous SAW/RTW dialogues to encourage them to participate during the final week of the dialogue.

- Emails Delivered – 1,848

- Emails Opened – 303
- Total number of clicks on links in email (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 60

Dialogue Participation Reminder Email to the Current Dialogue Registrants – 8/8/16

This email was sent to dialogue registrants to encourage them to return to the dialogue and comment and vote on the posted ideas.

- Emails Delivered – 53
- Emails Opened – 17
- Total number of clicks on links in email (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 3

Last Day of Dialogue Reminder Email to all Stakeholders and SAW/RTW Dialogue Registrants – 8/12/16

This email was sent to key stakeholders and previous SAW/RTW dialogue participants to encourage participation in the dialogue before closing.

- Emails Delivered – 1,775
- Emails Opened – 258
- Total number of clicks on links in email (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 21

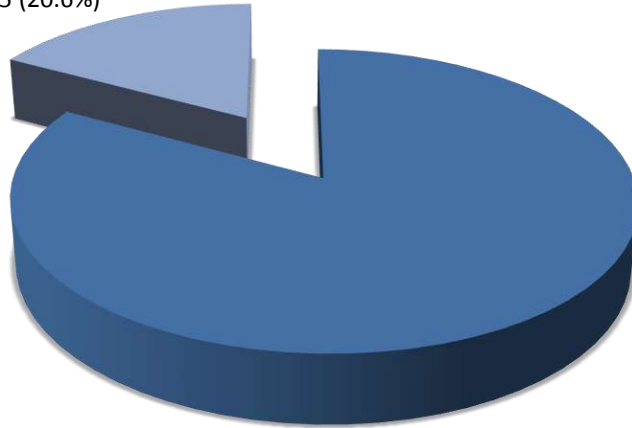
Total Dialogue Outreach Emails

- Email Delivered – 13,550
- Emails Opened 2,785 – (20.6% open rate)
- Total number of clicks on links in emails (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 328

With a combined 2,785 dialogue-related emails opened, ePolicyWorks had a strong open rate of 20.6%, directly impacting the success of the online dialogue. Links to the dialogue included in the emails were clicked a total of 328 times, contributing to the number of registrants and participation in the conversation.

Total Dialogue-Related Emails Opened

Emails Opened -
2,785 (20.6%)

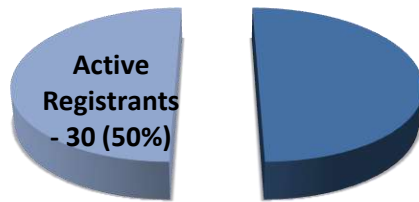


Note: The following section outlines the key metrics from the online dialogue and provides a snapshot of the participation results.

Dialogue Participation Summary

- Dialogue opened on Monday, July 18, 2016 at 8:00 am ET
- Dialogue closed on Friday August 12, 2016 at 11:59 pm ET
- Total Ideas: 24
- Total Comments: 61
- Total Votes: 113
- Unique Visitors: 526
- Total Registrants: 60 (42.66% of unique visitors)
 - Completed Registration: 51 (85% of total registrants)
 - Active Registrants (submitted ideas, voted or commented): 30 (50% of total registrants)

Dialogue Registrant Participation



Breakdown of Registrants emails:

- .com addresses: 28 (47%)
- .org addresses: 10 (17%)
- .gov or .us addresses: 18 (30%)
- .edu addresses: 2 (3%)
- .net/other addresses: 2 (3%)

COMMUNITY INFO



 **24**
IDEAS POSTED

 **113**
VOTES

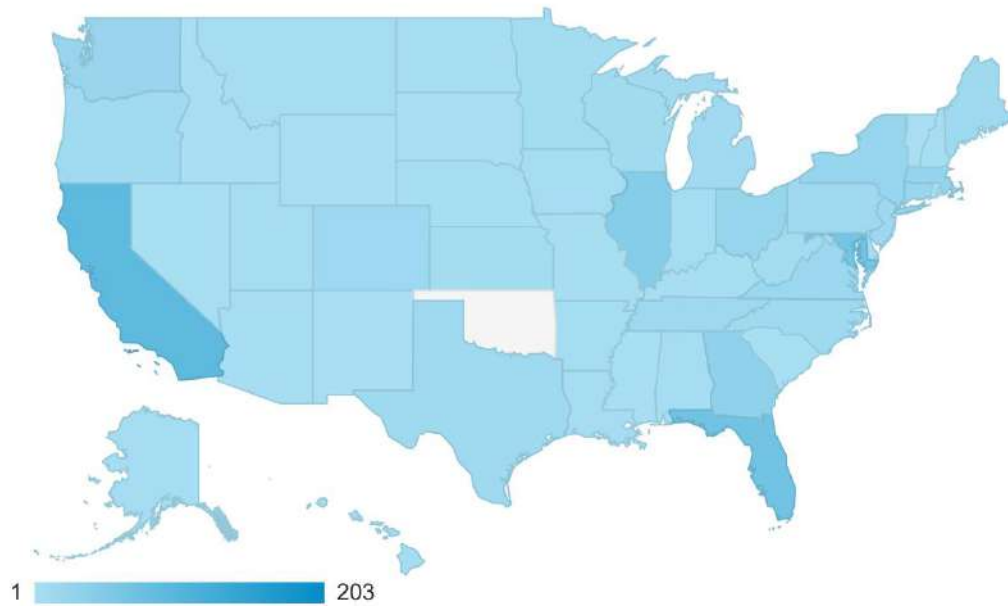
 **61**
COMMENTS

 **60**
USERS

Visits during the Dialogue (7/19/16 – 8/12/16)

- Total visits: 907
- Unique visitors: 526
- Total page views: 3,123
- Average pages per visit: 3.44
- Average visit duration: 4:39
- Returning visitors: 43.2%
- Bounce rate (percentage of participants who leave after viewing the first page of the dialogue): 55.79%

Map of Demographics of United States Visits



Visits by State

State	Visits
Washington, D.C.	203
California	93
Florida	70
Maryland	66
Illinois	45
Georgia	33
Massachusetts	26
New York	24
Ohio	23
Washington	22
Connecticut	20
Virginia	18
Colorado	17
Tennessee	16
New Jersey	15
Pennsylvania	14
Texas	14

State	Visits
Maine	13
North Carolina	13
Oregon	12
Michigan	11
Wisconsin	10
Kansas	8
Minnesota	8
West Virginia	8
Arkansas	7
Hawaii	7
Indiana	7
Alaska	6
Iowa	6
Montana	6
Alabama	5
Louisiana	5
Utah	5

State	Visits
Kentucky	4
Missouri	4
North Dakota	4
New Hampshire	4
Arizona	3
Delaware	3
Nebraska	3
Mississippi	2
Nevada	2
South Carolina	2
Idaho	1
New Mexico	1
Rhode Island	1
South Dakota	1
Vermont	1
Wyoming	1

Registration Metrics

Total registrants: 60

Total number of registrants that completed the registration process: 51

As part of the dialogue registration process, registrants were asked to share the following information:

- Name of Organization or Agency
- State of Residence
- Stakeholder Group
- Geographic Interest

Following is a breakdown of responses. A detailed list of responses can be found in the attached excel spreadsheet.

1. Name of Organization or Agency

Alaska DOL
America's Health Insurance Plans
American Association of Kidney Patients

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services
Behavioral Health & Wellness
California Department of Human Resources
CDC
childleftbehind
City of San Diego
Core Change Work Consulting
Core Change Work Consulting
CT General Assembly
CT State Department of Education
Dallas Transplant Institute
Department of Rehabilitation
Eastern Alliance
Epiphany Consulting LLC
Georgia Department of Transportation
Georgia State Board of Workers' Compensation
Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency
Iowa Dept. of Human Services
Kessler Foundation
lane independent living alliance
Lane Independent Living Alliance
Liberty Mutual
Mathematica Policy Research
Mathematica Policy Research
MS support group
Name of Organization or Agency
National Utilities Diversity Council
OhioHealth
PsychTrax
Public Employee Claims Division, Arkansas Insurance Department
Raytheon (retired)
RespectAbility
self
Self
Self
Southern Indiana Center for Independent Living
Spine Foundation
State of Tennessee Treasury Department Division of Risk Management and Claims Administration
UDDC
United Way Services of Geauga County, ADRC
USFSP
UWM
Vocation Rehabilitation Services
Vocational Alternatives
Walton Options

Witten and Associates, LLC
WLA VA Greater Los Angeles Health Care System

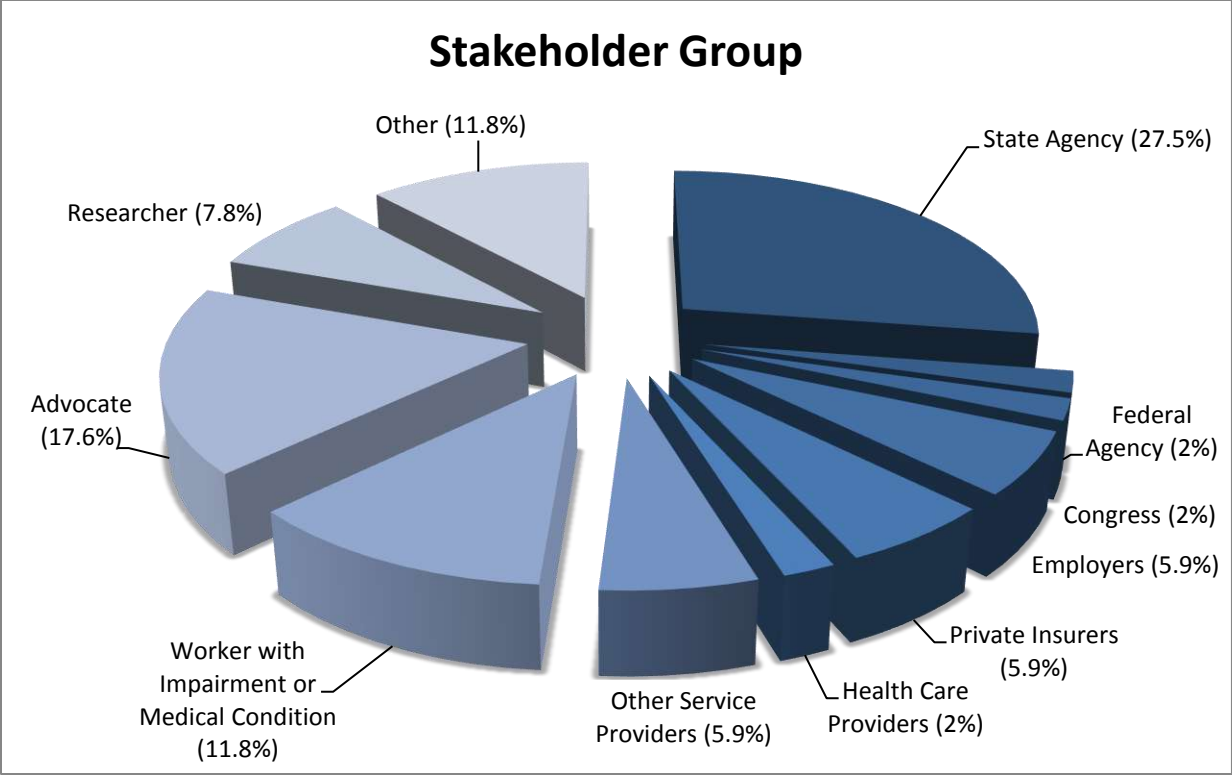
2. State of Residence

State	Registrants
Alaska	2
Arkansas	3
California	8
Connecticut	2
Washington, D.C.	2
Florida	3
Georgia	4
Illinois	1
Indiana	1
Iowa	1
Kansas	1
Maryland	1
Massachusetts	2

State	Registrants
Minnesota	1
New Jersey	15
Ohio	2
Oregon	3
Pennsylvania	2
South Carolina	1
Texas	2
Utah	1
Pennsylvania	2
Virginia	3
Washington	3
Wisconsin	1

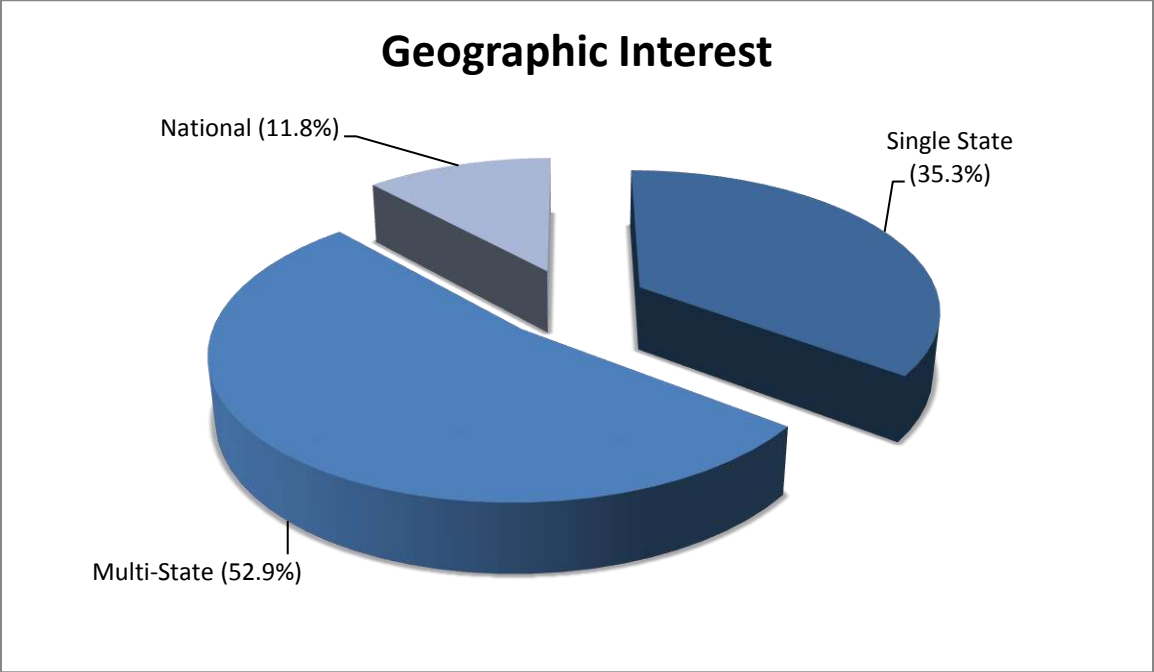
3. Stakeholder Group

- State Agency – 14 (27.5%)
- Federal Agency – 1 (2%)
- Congress – 1 (2%)
- Employers – 3 (5.9%)
- Private Insurers – 3 (5.9%)
- Health Care Providers – 1 (2%)
- Other Service Providers – 3 (5.9%)
- Worker with Impairment or Medical Condition – 6 (11.8%)
- Advocate – 9 (17.6%)
- Researcher – 4 (7.8%)
- Other – 6 (11.8%)



4. Geographic Interest

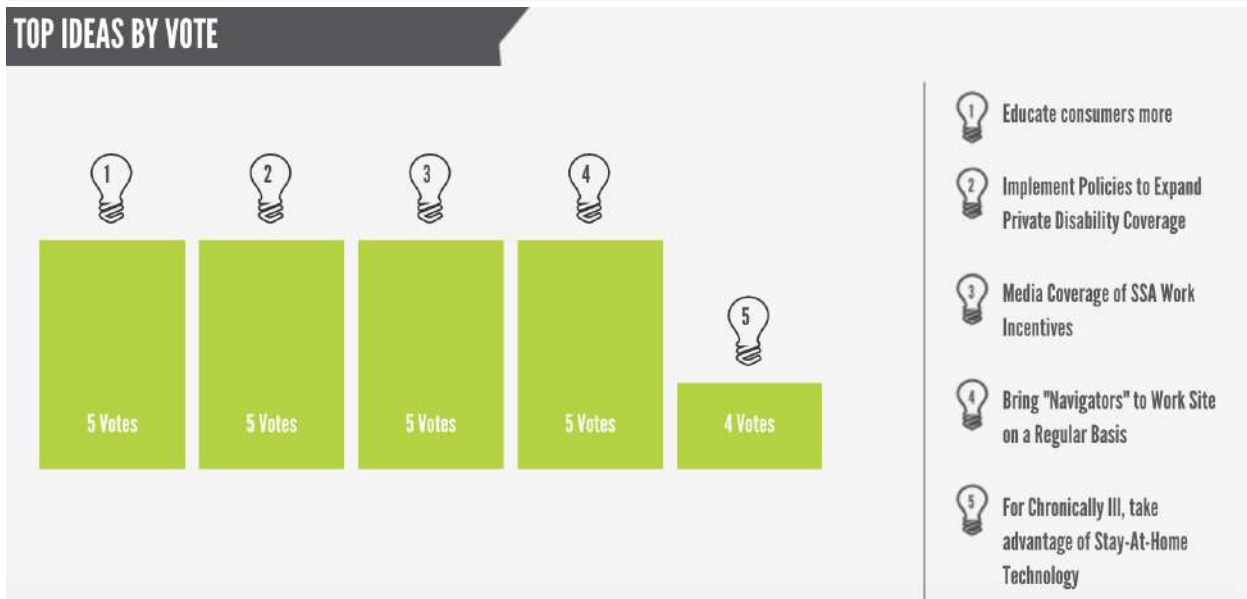
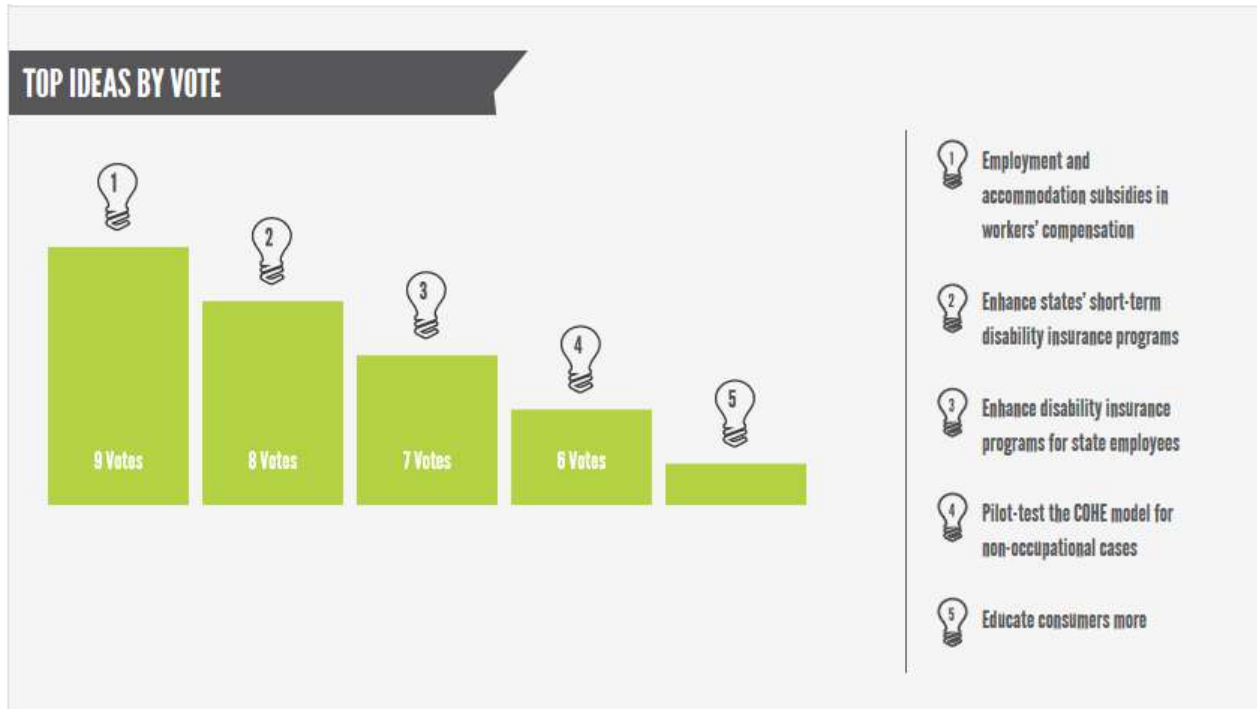
- Single State – 18 (35.3%)
- Multi-State – 27 (52.9%)
- National – 6 (11.8%)



Infographics Depicting Popular Ideas Contributed by Dialogue Participants

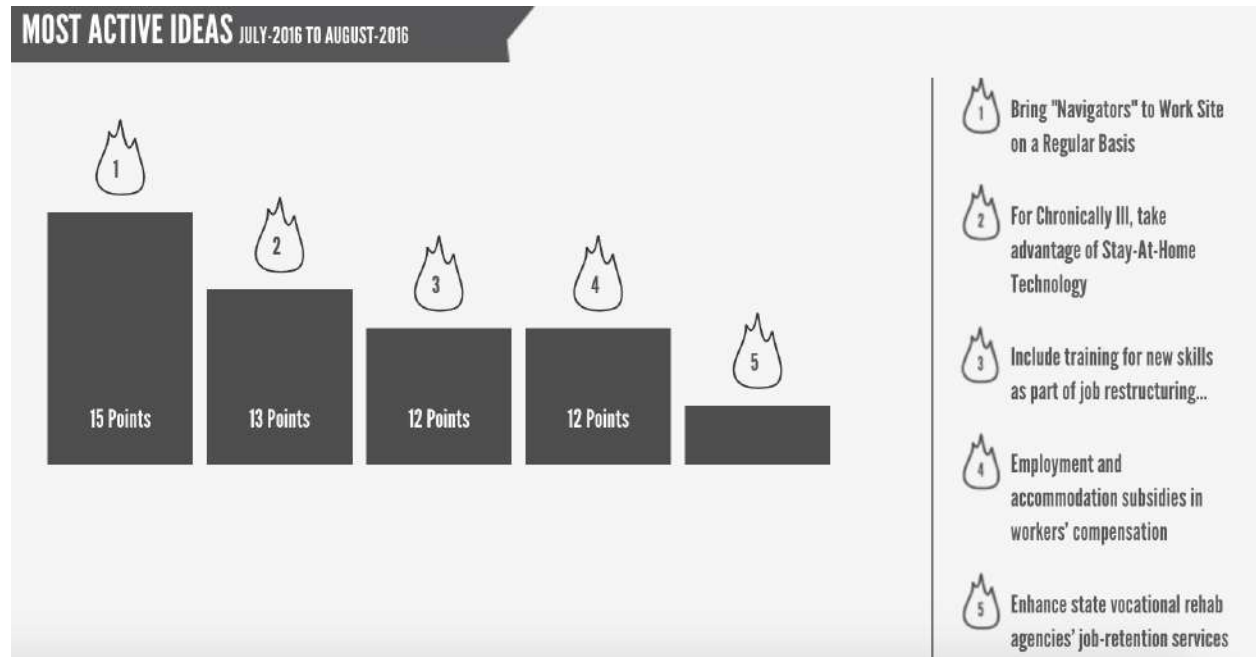
Top Ideas by Vote

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.



Top 5 Overall Ideas

Top Idea #1: Employment and accommodation subsidies in workers' compensation

9 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 9 Net Votes

Background & Examples: Employment and accommodation subsidies, such as those provided in Washington's and Oregon's workers' compensation systems, help reduce employers' costs, whether by compensating them for reduced productivity or for the costs of providing accommodations that can help optimize productivity. Washington's Stay at Work program (<http://www.lni.wa.gov/main/stayatwork/>) incentivizes employers by paying them 50 percent of an injured workers' base wages (up to a \$10,000 cap) and by covering the costs of certain accommodations. Similarly, Oregon's Employer-at-Injury Program (<http://wcd.oregon.gov/rtw/Pages/eaip.aspx>) gives employers wage subsidies, reimburses them for worksite modifications, and otherwise helps them meet the costs of accommodations that help workers stay on the job. Recommendation: State workers' compensation systems that do not already offer employment and accommodation subsidies could introduce programs like those in Washington and Oregon.

Top Idea #2: Enhance states' short-term disability insurance programs

8 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 8 Net Votes

Background: Five states have mandatory short-term disability insurance (STDI) programs, which make it possible to identify and engage with affected workers early on because workers must file a claim in order to receive cash benefits. In Hawaii and New York, non-exempt employers are required to provide STDI benefits for their employees, either by purchasing private insurance or self-insuring. California, New Jersey, and Rhode Island have public STDI programs that cover the vast majority of the workforce and are administered by their state workforce agencies. Example: Rhode Island has made important strides toward better job retention outcomes through its Temporary Disability Insurance program. For example, a Partial Return to Work Program allows Temporary Disability Insurance claimants in Rhode Island to collect partial payments when they return to work on a part-time basis. The program also uses medical disability duration guidelines to determine the appropriate duration of benefits for each claimant based on his or her specific illness or injury. Recommendation: New Jersey's Temporary Disability Insurance and New York's Disability Benefits programs are natural candidates for pilot-testing a partial-return-to-work program—ideally, before legislating a statewide program. The New Jersey program has much in common with the Rhode Island program and could potentially replicate, perhaps with some adjustments, the partial-return-to-work program that the latter state has already implemented. The New York Disability Benefits program differs from those in New Jersey and Rhode Island because employers are required to purchase an insurance policy from a private disability insurer or to self-insure their employees. Although this complicates the piloting of a partial-return-to-work program in New York, it is still theoretically feasible to do so, potentially by requiring that DB policies provide a partial-return-to-work option. Recommendation: All five states with STDI programs could pilot-test proactive case coordination and behavioral interventions. Proactive case coordination can take

many forms, with the common understanding that some level of coordination between various parties can facilitate a more rapid recovery and return to work for workers after injury, illness, or disability. Behavioral interventions draw from psychology and other social sciences to alter the environment in which decisions are made to help stakeholders such as workers, employers, physicians, and insurers avoid common pitfalls that result in unnecessary time off from work or even job loss. Recommendation: The other 45 states and the District of Columbia could introduce an STDI program in their state. Such programs, whether financed by workers, employers, or a combination of the two, could give states more claims-based tools (such as partial-return-to-work and proactive case-management) in their quest to promote better job-retention outcomes.

Top Idea #3: Enhance disability insurance programs for state employees

7 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 7 Net Votes

Background & Example: States and localities can intervene early on in a disability affecting one of their own employees through their administration of health insurance, disability insurance, and other benefits. A substantial minority of state and local employees (23 percent and 34 percent, respectively, in 2007) have short- and long-term disability insurance coverage. To our knowledge, Delaware is the only state to have either (1) a legislated return-to-work program for state employees, or (2) an appointed return-to-work coordinator within the statewide benefits office. This person works with insurance carrier staff, physicians, and supervisors to help affected employees return to work. Delaware, and any other state that gives its employees disability insurance coverage, could pilot-test any or all of the following options, among others: a partial-return-to-work program, which gives qualified workers an incentive to return to work sooner than they would have in the absence of such benefits; proactive case-coordination, like that used in Delaware; and the implementation of disability duration guidelines, which help employers determine appropriate return-to-work dates. Recommendation: The state governments that do not currently provide disability insurance coverage to their employees—the majority—can offer such coverage, which can be funded through employee or employer contributions or some combination of the two. States that obtain disability insurance coverage for their employees will be able to consider claims-based intervention options in coordination with their disability insurance carrier, as Delaware has done.

Top Idea #4: Pilot-test the COHE model for non-occupational cases

7 Up Votes | 1 Down Votes | 6 Net Votes

Background & Example: Washington's Centers of Occupational Health and Education (COHE) program (<http://www.lni.wa.gov/claimsins/providers/projresearchcomm/ohs/>) is a promising job retention initiative for workers with job-related conditions (that is, they are covered by workers' compensation). The COHEs are independent, community-based entities affiliated with health care delivery organizations. The COHEs are contracted by the state to work with medical providers, employers, and injured workers in the first three months after injury (or for six months, if needed) to improve medical and return-to-work outcomes and reduce costs. The COHEs train physicians, provide financial and other incentives for them to follow best practices, and assign care coordinators who are available by

telephone to help the physicians with care planning and return-to-work communications for their patients, and to provide ready access to board-certified occupational medicine consultants. The COHE model was first implemented as a pilot in western Washington and rolled out to the entire state after the pilot's success. COHE patients were 20 percent less likely to be off work and on disability 12 months after filing a claim (Wickizer et al. 2011). A COHE-like intervention for off-the-job injuries and illnesses would operate primarily through the state's health care system. Any outreach would first target physicians to recruit them for the COHE network; the physicians would in turn refer their patients who need help to other COHE service providers who would work with the physicians, employers, and workers to maximize the chances of job retention for the workers. Recommendation: All states can consider pilot-testing the COHE approach—adapted for off-the-job cases—within their health care systems.

Top Idea #5: Educate consumers more

5 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 5 Net Votes

I think that the concept of educating individuals regarding the SSA incentives is a critical one. Often there are a variety of benefit payors involved in a person's experience, with varying criteria for RTW, benefits, and services and they can be inconsistent. Individuals can qualify for SSDI while still not meeting the definition of disability in LTD. This is confusing to them. Criteria affect their monies and there needs to be more education in how various benefits can actually work together instead of against each other.

Conclusion

Through the “[What Can States Do? Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work Online Dialogue](#),” ODEP’s Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work Policy Collaborative successfully leveraged leading-edge crowdsourcing tools to engage key stakeholders in a virtual conversation about steps that states can take to prevent people with illness, injury, or disability from needlessly exiting from the workforce.

In summary, the online event attracted 526 visitors, of which 60 registered. In total, there were 24 ideas, 61 comments and 113 votes. Participation in this dialogue was well above average with visitors from 48 states and the District of Columbia.

The input and responses of the participants are now being analyzed in an effort to inform federal policymaking decisions. These results will help ODEP augment, develop and further enhance the collaborative’s policy recommendations.