



# Disability Employment Technical Assistance Center

Annual Summative Evaluation: September 2024

## What is the Disability Employment Technical Assistance Center?




In September 2020, the Administration on Disabilities (AoD) within the Administration for Community Living (ACL) awarded the Lewin Group and TASH (Lewin/TASH) a five-year contract to support the establishment of the Disability Employment Technical Assistance Center (DETAC). DETAC provides evidence-based technical assistance (TA) to grantees in six AoD programs (refer to the section [Grantee Engagement](#)). DETAC offers tools, skills, and strategies for AoD grantees interested in promoting systems change to improve competitive, integrated employment (CIE) outcomes and economic advancement of individuals with disabilities.



### Annual Evaluation

Annually, DETAC conducts a summative evaluation to provide continuous feedback on TA efforts and measure progress toward outcomes. DETAC evaluates the reach and effect of its activities by analyzing data on utilization of TA activities, satisfaction, intended or actual action taken as a result of the TA, and the impact of such action. This evaluation report covers the period of August 2023 – July 2024.

Project officers, AoD grantees, and self-advocates shared information with DETAC about their greatest needs and areas of interest related to disability employment. Key themes include financial independence; leveraging assistive technology; cultural competency and diversity, equity, and inclusion; knowledge translation and diffusion; and employer engagement. DETAC addresses these needs through activities focused on systems change, innovation, and collaboration.

 <p><b>Systems Change</b> Build the competencies of professionals at all levels of the AoD grantee network within the AoD grantee entities through applied learning techniques, e-Learning communities, skills-development TA, peer-to-peer mentoring, and resource development.</p>	 <p><b>Innovation</b> Build the AoD grantee network capacity to focus on CIE and economic advancement strategies through identification, development, scalability, and sustainability of evidence-based practices.</p>	 <p><b>Collaboration</b> Leverage the unique strategic partnership development that leads to substantial improvements in CIE and economic advancement outcomes at individual and systems level.</p>
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## What does DETAC Offer?



DETAC provides TA through five channels:

A **national Community of Practice (CoP)** provides high quality TA to grantees, self-advocates, family members, subject matter experts (SME) and government officials through webinars and podcasts.

**RISE e-Learning Communities** offer small, time-limited, outcome-oriented virtual working groups focused on achieving a specific milestone to grantees. Subject matter experts, often grantees' peers, lead each interactive community.

**On-Demand TA** takes the form of online on-demand content, modularized curricula, national conferences, direct TA requests, and other modes of virtual TA and training to grantees.

**Resource development** encompasses written resources (e.g., fact sheets, briefs) on a variety of topics related to CIE, economic self-sufficiency, partnership development to AoD grantees and the public.

A **website and clearinghouse** offer TA resources and products.

**TA Delivered**  
August 2023 – July 2024

-  **2 Podcasts**
-  **10 Webinars**
-  **7 RISE Communities**
-  **4 Conferences**
-  **4 Written Resources**
-  **2 Blogs**
-  **3 Direct TA**

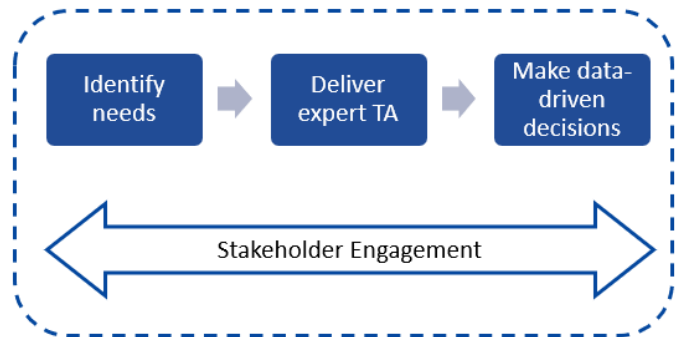
### Connections between DETAC Offerings

DETAC uses an iterative approach to deliver TA through multiple methods on topics of interest. For example, DETAC released a report titled *Employer Engagement and Outreach: How State Councils on Developmental Disabilities Can Open the Glass Door to Employment*, which was later highlighted through a podcast, *Strategies for Employer Engagement and Outreach: A DD Council Perspective*. Additionally, DETAC released a report on *Engaging Youth with Disabilities in the Delivery of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)*, and subsequently covered the topic in a RISE community.



## How does DETAC offer TA?

DETAC offers TA through an evolving process that consists of identification of needs, partnering with experts for delivery, and making data driven decisions. Stakeholder engagement is present across all three steps of the process.



### **Identify Needs**

In 2020, DETAC conducted a landscape assessment of the state of disability employment activities of AoD grantees. This assessment identified current projects and activities of the AoD programs, gaps in grantee activities, and strong examples of AoD grantees influencing employment systems-change activities. The findings from this assessment were used to inform the strategic plan, which DETAC uses to guide TA offerings.

Aside from the landscape assessment, DETAC maintains engagement with stakeholders, AoD grantee leads, and SMEs on a constant basis to identify additional needs for TA. A grantee representative work group actively engages in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of DETAC's activities. During this evaluation period, the work group met three times and provided ad hoc guidance, as needed, on TA topics and formats for written products, events, and the Learning Management System (LMS).

### **Leveraging Grantee Feedback**

The grantee representative work group provided valuable feedback on the DETAC RISE e-Learning communities, specifically requesting a durable resource after each community concludes, as well as expressing interest in more informal peer-to-peer information sharing opportunities. In response, DETAC published comprehensive one-page summaries for each RISE e-Learning community after their completion. These summaries include a brief overview of the e-Learning community, session details with recording links, action steps participants are taking based on their involvement in the community, and related resources. DETAC's *Peer Support for Centers for Independent Living Building Employment Services* e-Learning community also gave participants an opportunity for open-ended sharing on any topic of interest, thereby fostering more organic and flexible peer interactions.





## Grantee Representative Work Group Members and Affiliations

### Federally Funded Centers for Independent Living

- Sarah Michaud, New Vistas
- Cyndy Milstead Anzek, Walton Options for Independent Living Inc.
- Chamane Barrow, Houston Center for Independent Living
- Melanie Hogan, Linking Employment Abilities and Potential
- Kevin Smith, Mental Health Peer Connection/West New York Independent Living
- Kathy Kay, The Whole Person, formerly of the League of Human Dignity
- Jessica Minor, Accessibility Center for Independent Living

\*Additional representation from the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) and the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)

### State Councils on Developmental Disabilities

- Rachel London, Maryland Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Kristen Larsen, Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

### University Centers on Excellence in Developmental Disabilities in Education, Research, and Service

- Robin Jones, University of Illinois, Institute on Disability and Human Development
- Craig Knutson, Kansas University Center on Developmental Disabilities, formerly of the Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Jill Pleasant (Alternate), Northern Arizona University/Institute for Human Development

### State Protection and Advocacy Systems

- Emily Munson, Disability Rights Indiana
- Shandra Monterastelli (Alternate), Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program

### Traumatic Brain Injury State Partnership Programs

- Eileen Kelly, Minnesota Department of Human Services

### Self-Advocates

- Santa Perez, formerly of the Nevada Council on Developmental Disabilities



## Deliver Expert TA

Once TA needs are identified, DETAC partners with experts in the field to deliver TA. These SMEs represent grantees in the six AoD programs, individuals with lived experience, researchers, practitioners, and other stakeholders. DETAC frequently partners with experts to deliver webinars and RISE e-Learning communities that provide research, data, or theory and real-world application.

In addition, DETAC maintains ongoing communication with national partners to promote TA activities and cross-share resources (e.g., through their websites and newsletters).

Through regular engagement with partners, DETAC identifies emerging TA topics and areas of persistent need, discerns the most appropriate methods of TA, and identifies experts to deliver TA. Key partners include, but are not limited to, national associations (refer to graphic), the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) and the Employment & Training Administration (ETA) within the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), and ACL grantees or TA providers (e.g., National Center on Advancing Person-Centered Practices and Systems [NCAPPS], Think College, and the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management [VRTAC-QM]).

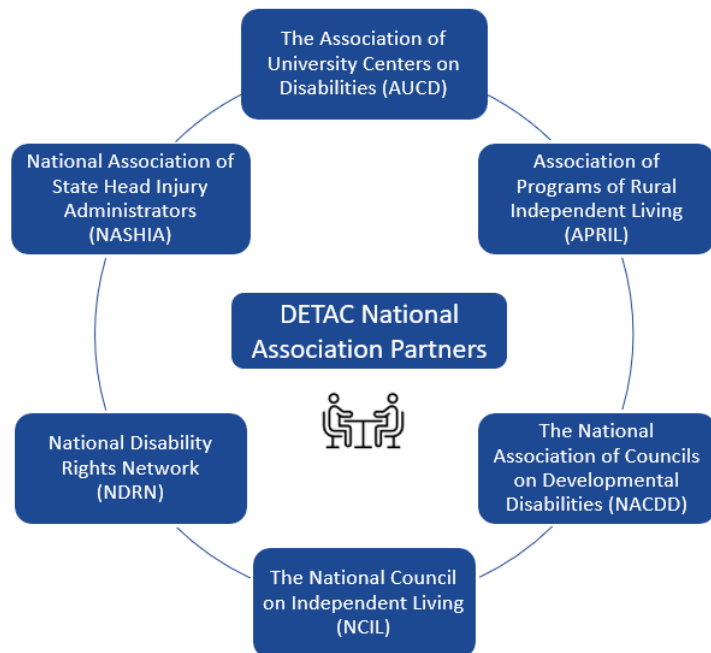
## Make Data-Driven Decisions

DETAC makes data-driven decisions on all TA activities using the following sources:

**Website metrics** provide insight into DETAC’s most viewed webinars and resources, how users reach the website (e.g., via marketing email, search engine, or link on another website), and the number of new and returning visitors. DETAC also uses LMS data to examine the number of users and their course completion rates. DETAC identified top TA resources using website metrics and outcomes from post-event data.

**Post-event data** provide quantitative and qualitative insight on webinar, RISE e-Learning communities, and direct TA.

The surveys track attendance rates, participant roles, satisfaction, change in knowledge,



willingness to share information with colleagues, and intent to apply the material to their work. Qualitative responses provide detailed insight into how participants are using the TA they received.

**Stakeholder feedback** from grantees, other partners, and TA participants on the effectiveness and impact of TA informs DETAC on an ongoing basis. The quotes below reflect feedback received from TA participants during the evaluation period.

I appreciate the meeting structure and facilitation. The most valuable resource was the presenters, especially [SME Facilitator]. Her wealth of knowledge is incredible. I only wish there had been more than four sessions.

-RISE Participant

"[This TA] charged the group to move beyond stereotypical perceptions and low expectations of individuals with disabilities, to a philosophy that sees them as capable and equal members of a diverse global employed community. [It] challenged us to move beyond seeing Supported Employment as 'a nice thing to do' to a matter of justice and human rights, providing dignity and self-worth to people with disabilities. When perceptions of Supported Employment shift from charity to equality, workplaces become more inclusive, benefiting all of society."

-Direct TA Recipient

"As a person with a disability... I was very inspired to keep working on my goals and finding other services that could help."

-CoP Webinar Participant

"I think the support that Rhode Island has provided for individuals with disabilities to start their own business is wonderful. It is exemplary for other states. Thank you for sharing."

-CoP Webinar Participant

"Thank you to the [panelists] who shared/celebrated what their loved ones have done and highlighted potential and positive outcomes. Thank you to [SME Presenter] for outlining steps that other places could take to replicate. It was a fabulous webinar! I can't wait until the recording is available so I can share/revisit."

-CoP Webinar Participant

The next day I had a meeting with a community member, and we were both discussing the state of the state of self-employment in Colorado. We shared resources, I was able to share the resources from this presentation! I am currently advocating for two people with disabilities that can benefit from the resources from this meeting.

-CoP Webinar Participant



## Grantee Engagement

DETAC provides evidence-based TA to grantees in six AoD programs: Federally Funded Centers for Independent Living (CIL), State Councils on Developmental Disabilities (Council), University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (UCEDD), State Protection and Advocacy Systems (P&A), Traumatic Brain Injury State Partnership Programs (TBI Grantee), and Community Collaborations for Employment, a Project of National Significance (CCE Grantee). DETAC delivers TA to grantees in proportion to their financial contribution to the center, but opens many TA opportunities to all grantees to maximize its reach and impact.

### CIL Highlights



DETAC offered three RISE communities specifically for CILs during the evaluation period: two cohorts of the *Past, Present, and Future of CILs Facilitating Pre-ETS* and one cohort of the *Peer Support for CILs Building Employment Services* community.



DETAC produced a written resource, *Engaging Youth with Disabilities in the Delivery of Pre-ETS*, targeted toward CILs. The brief provides grantees an overview of Pre-ETS, some lessons learned from the authors' perspective, and considerations for student engagement in Pre-ETS planning and implementation.



A self-advocate and former CIL employee presented during DETAC's June 2024 CoP webinar, *Ensuring Equal Access to Benefits Counseling to Maximize Community Inclusion*. The National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) presented during DETAC's September 2023 CoP webinar, *Let's Commemorate the Rehabilitation Act of 1973: The Power of Independent Living and Employment*.



DETAC SME Dr. Lidia Fonseca facilitated a session at the October 2023 Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) conference and was an exhibitor at the July 2024 NCIL Conference. Through these conferences DETAC increased awareness of its TA resources and events, and collected

**Case Study.** Due to overwhelming interest in the RISE e-Learning community, the *Past, Present, and Future of CILs Facilitating Pre-ETS*, DETAC expanded the RISE to two cohorts to allow maximum participation from interested CILs. DETAC also submitted a conference proposal for the 2024 TASH conference to present on the same topic.





## DD Council Highlights



DETAC published a brief (*Employer Engagement and Outreach: How State Councils on Developmental Disabilities Can Open the Glass Door to Employment*) and accompanying podcast (*Strategies for Employer Engagement and Outreach: A DD Council Perspective*) targeted towards DD Councils.



Councils presented during DETAC's February 2024 CoP webinar, *Supporting Self-Employment for Entrepreneurs with Disabilities: Family Perspectives*, and April 2024 CoP Webinar, *National Financial Capability Month: Engaging Diverse Communities through Financial Education and Empowerment*. The presenters represented the Rhode Island and Illinois DD Councils, respectively.



DETAC spotlighted the Nevada Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities in the July 2024 newsletter. This spotlight covered the council's advocacy efforts to pass historic legislation to end the subminimum wage in Nevada.



DETAC SME Dr. Tracy Rackensperger facilitated breakout sessions during the Nebraska DD Council's Employment Summit in September 2023. These sessions covered topics such as engaging individuals and families in the employment process, ensuring supported employment professionals have essential skills, improving coordination between VR and other services, enhancing public perceptions of individuals with disabilities in the workforce, and measuring success in supported employment outcomes.

**Case Study.** DETAC has worked with DD Councils to provide several TA offerings during this option year. Partners included representatives from DD Councils in Arkansas, Illinois, and Rhode Island. Topics included employer engagement, self-employment, and financial education.





## UCEDD Highlights



The Human Development Institute at the University of Kentucky presented during DETAC's October 2023 CoP webinar, *Advancing Access and Equity for People with Disabilities through Innovations in Technology*. This webinar covered how technology solutions can overcome barriers in education and advance CIE.



DETAC's May 2024 CoP webinar, *Examining How Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) Serve Students with Intellectual Disabilities in Higher Education Programs*, featured Sharon Brown, founder and former director of the first and only inclusive higher education program for students with intellectual disabilities at an HBCU. Sharon Brown and speakers from Think College—a national initiative based at the University of Massachusetts Boston's Institute for Community Inclusion, and the Southeast Post Secondary Education Alliance (SEPSEA), a regional alliance for the Think College Inclusive Higher Education Network, provided a roadmap for developing, maintaining, and expanding higher education programs for students with disabilities at HBCUs.

**Case Study.** DETAC is partnering with Elise McMillan, a retired Director of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center UCEDD, to publish a series of briefs discussing how inclusive higher education advances employment for people with disabilities, and how parent leaders across the country have started inclusive higher education programs in places where they did not previously exist. This publication was in progress at the end of the evaluation period.



## P&A Highlights



DETAC collaborated with the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) to facilitate the RISE community, *Strategies to Phase-Out 14 (C)*. The goal of this group was to share actionable strategies and facilitate peer-to-peer discussion on ending segregated employment and subminimum wage for people with disabilities under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Through presentations from SMEs and facilitated discussions, participants developed strategies they could apply in their communities to advocate for systems change.



Following the completion of the *Strategies to Phase-Out 14 (C)* RISE e-learning community, NDRN worked with DETAC to develop a one-page summary of the community for those interested in the topic. This summary included a description of the community, key takaways, and related resources for future learning.



NDRN also facilitated a session at the 2023 TASH conference, *The National Landscape of Subminimum Wage, Implications and Recommendations to Elevate CIE*.

**Case Study.** Several P&As participated in *the Bring Your Device: Tech Training RISE e-Learning Community*. One P&A participant noted that the community provided valuable insights, stating, "I am now able to specifically identify opportunities for assistive technology and device tech supports for the VR clients I represent, by implementing and innovating on the resources we received."

## CCE Highlights



DETAC facilitated a CCE all-grantee meeting in April 2024. During the meeting, the CCE Evaluation Team provided updates on the current status of the evaluation. DETAC also invited each Grant Team to share brief updates on their current work and offered space for peer-to-peer discussion on sustainability and lessons learned thus far in the project. The next CCE all-grantee meeting is scheduled for September 2024.

**Case Study.** DETAC invited Beth Swedeen, Executive Director at the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities and Principal Investigator for the Wisconsin Partnerships in Employment (PIE) and Living Well (LW) Grants to share reflections on sustainability from her experience working on the PIE and LW grants. The key strategies, successes, and lessons learned that Beth shared were directly applicable to the current experiences of CCE Grant Teams.



## TBI Grantee Highlights



DETAC partnered with the National Association of Head Injury Administrators (NASHIA) on the RISE community, *Show Me the Money: Accessing Medicaid Administrative Claiming (MAC) for Brain Injury Services and Supports*. This community aimed to educate and equip TBI grantees with the knowledge and actionable strategies to leverage MAC to expand employment opportunities and supports for people with brain injury.



DETAC supported NASHIA's presentation at the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment (VRTAC-QE) conference in May 2023. Their presentation included information about resources developed in partnership with DETAC.



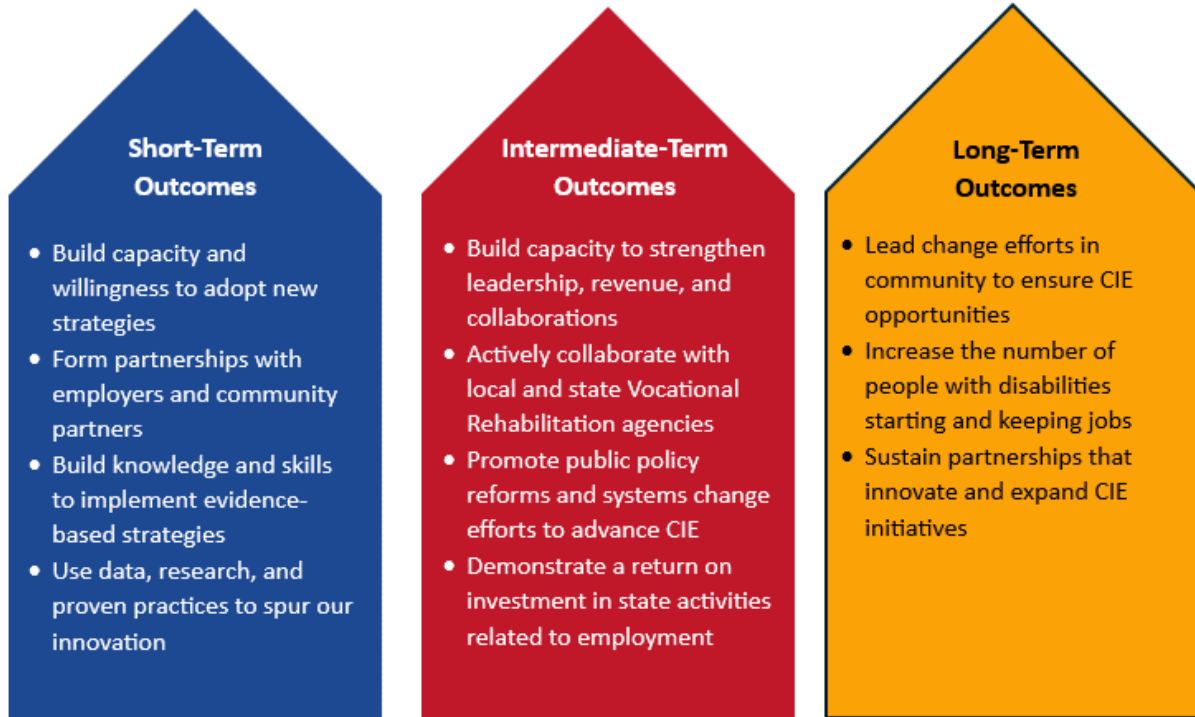
TBI Grantees served as presenters and panelists during DETAC's March 2024 CoP webinar for Developmental Disabilities (DD) and TBI Awareness Months, *Strategies to Support People with DD and BI to Achieve Goals Through Small Business Ownership*. Speakers included representatives from NASHIA, the founder of disability start-up hub Synergies Work, and entrepreneurs with DD and TBI.

**Case Study.** Nebraska VR, the state's TBI grantee, requested DETAC's assistance in exploring sustainable funding sources for their Supported Employment services for clients with acquired brain injury (ABI). NASHIA is currently working with DETAC to conduct background research, facilitate stakeholder discussions, and develop a summary of funding options and recommendations.



## How is the TA Center Advancing CIE?

AoD identified the following short, intermediate, and long-term outcomes for the TA Center.

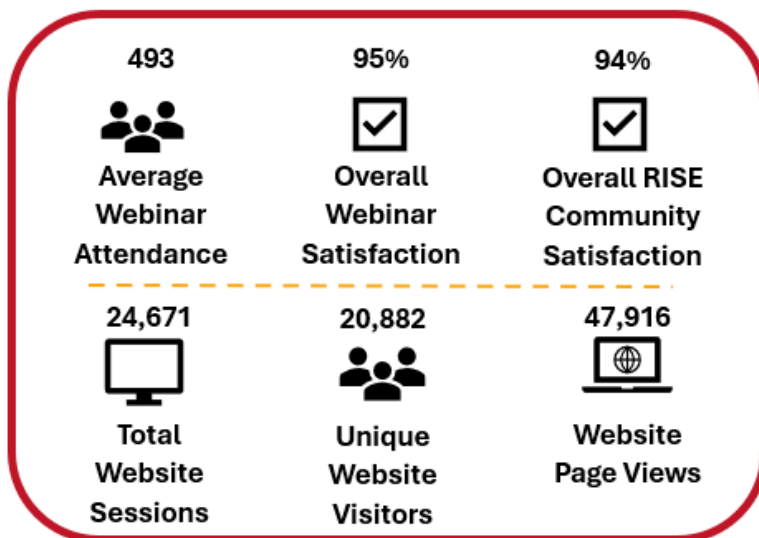


Grantees demonstrated progress toward outcomes in the following areas during this evaluation cycle.

### Short-term Outcomes



**Increased knowledge and capacity to implement evidence-based practices.** DETAC uses a multi-faceted approach to build knowledge and skill among grantees. On average, more than 1,740 people visit DETAC’s website each month, which is home to over 500 linked resources. Nearly 4,931 participants attended webinars during the year on topics such as technology innovations to support people with disabilities, job accommodations, and financial education. Web page views increased this year as compared to last evaluation year.





**Commitment to implement new strategies to advance CIE.** After engaging with DETAC, nearly all grantees expressed intention to act on what they learned. The TA Center helps translate knowledge into action by providing practical strategies from peers and subject matter experts, tailored TA opportunities, and multiple TA efforts (e.g., written resources, blogs, podcasts, webinars, RISE communities) that amplify a single topic of interest.



### Intermediate-term Outcomes

**Collaboration with partners.** During this evaluation cycle, DETAC focused on building knowledge and capacity for developing partnerships and stakeholder engagement. For example, Jonathan Taylor’s brief and podcast for DETAC addressed how DD Councils can engage with employers to achieve successful outcomes on CIE for people with disabilities. These strategies also apply for other grantees. For example, DETAC offered TA on building collaborations with other grantees to achieve successful outcomes on CIE through a RISE e-Learning community. This approach supported grantees to acquire knowledge and leverage it to develop their own strategies for engagement. Additionally, DETAC collaborated with other TA Centers and federal agencies to advance CIE.



**Collaboration with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR).** DETAC’s activities also supported grantees with strategies for collaborating with VR. For example, the RISE community, *The Past, Present, and Future of CILs Facilitating Pre-ETS* discussed what collaboration between CILs and VR has looked like in the past and could look like in the future for delivering Pre-ETS. NASHIA’s presentation at the VRTAC-QE conference also discussed how to maximize VR impact through innovations and strategies for BI support.




**Promote public policy reforms.** DETAC supports AoD grantees to enhance their policies and systems to advance CIE. In particular, DETAC provided support to grantees to phase out use of 14(c) certificates and end subminimum wage in a RISE community and conference presentation with NDRN. By linking grantees and SMEs, DETAC facilitated intensive strategy sessions to support grantees in addressing these significant policy issues.




**Commitment to share learning with colleagues.** Nearly all grantees participating in CoP webinars and RISE e-Learning communities committed to share something they learned with their colleagues. RISE sessions also provided a structured forum for teams to discuss challenges and identify strategies for implementation.



## Long-term Outcomes

 **Lead change efforts.** Direct TA is a crucial way for DETAC to assist local and state entities with leading systems change efforts. This evaluation year, grantees who participated in the *Strategies to Phase-Out 14(C)* and *The Past, Present, and Future of CILs Facilitating Pre-ETS* learned actionable strategies to apply in their organizations and communities to advocate for systems change and deepen partnerships to advance CIE.

 **Sustain national partnerships.** DETAC has made great strides in developing and sustaining partnerships with national organizations. These partnerships are critical for developing and delivering TA that is aligned to the needs of all grantees and complements the work of other federal agencies and national associations.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

In partnership with subject matter experts and guidance from a grantee workgroup, DETAC supported AoD grantees to advance CIE through written products, a website and learning management system, webinars, RISE e-Learning communities, podcasts, conference presentations, and direct TA.

### Looking Ahead



Highlights from DETAC's upcoming TA offerings include:

- Celebrating National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) in October 2024 by focusing on *The Role American Job Centers (AJCs) in Promoting Access to Good Jobs for All* during the October 2024 National CoP webinar
- Debunking myths about working and the loss of benefits
- Continuing to emphasize strategies for employer engagement to break down barriers to CIE for people with disabilities
- Engaging with CIL leaders to provide a roadmap for providing effective pre-ETS to students with disabilities and developing partnerships to build employment services
- Highlighting the importance of inclusive higher education in promoting CIE and economic advancement for students with disabilities
- Offering strategies for CILs to develop key partnerships to create or enhance employment services in their respective organizations
- Reviewing the importance of BI-informed employment services

DETAC will continue its momentum into the 2024-2025 year. Up-to-date information on all DETAC TA activities is available on the DETAC [website](#).

