



Community Collaborations for Employment Evaluation



Grant Context and Purpose

Among transition-age youth with disabilities, employment is associated with improved health outcomes, increased quality of life, enhanced opportunities for socialization and relationship development, and a greater sense of belonging.¹ Yet, many students and youth with disabilities do not have the same opportunities as their peers without disabilities to pursue higher education, training, and careers. For example, only 25 percent of young adults ages 18 to 24 with disabilities enroll in higher education compared to 41 percent of young adults without disabilities. Further, youth and young adults with disabilities are 17 percent less likely to be employed than their peers without disabilities.² Once they reach working age, competitive integrated employment (CIE) rates for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) remain alarmingly low. According to the National Core Indicators 2021-2022 Survey, only 16 percent of working-age adults supported by state ID/DD agencies were employed in a paid job in the community. Yet, 47 percent of working-age adults supported by state ID/DD agencies reported not having a job in the community and wanting one.³

To address these disparities, the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Administration on Disabilities (AoD) issued the Community Collaborations for Employment (CCE) grants to increase and enhance collaborations across existing local systems to maximize a seamless experience and outcome of youth with ID/DD as they transition between school and work in the community.⁴ Specifically, AoD funded the grants as demonstration projects to design and test effective transition services and activities to increase the number of youth with ID/DD:

- Finding and keeping long-term, career-focused CIE;
- Graduating from post-secondary education programs; and
- Living and participating fully in their communities.

¹ Castruita Rios, Y., Park, S., Chen, X., & Tansey, T. N. (2023). Collaborations to Support Employment Outcomes of Youth with Disabilities. *Rehabilitation Counselors and Educators Journal*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.52017/001c.72655>

² Cheng, L., & Shaewitz, D. (2019). The 2019 Youth Transition Report: Outcomes for Youth and Young Adults with Disabilities. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership. Retrieved from <https://iel.org/2019-youth-transition-report-outcomes-youth-and-young-adults-disabilities/>.

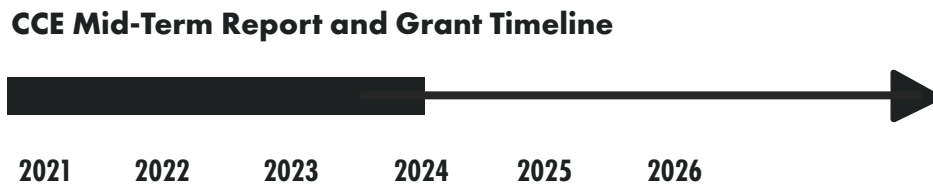
³ HSRI and NASDDDS. (2023). National Core Indicators IDD: National Report 2021-2022, Employment. Retrieved from https://idd.nationalcoreindicators.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/IPS-21-22-Employment_FINAL.pdf.

⁴ Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Community Collaborations for Employment Program, HHS-2021-ACL-AOD-DNCE-0098.



ACL awarded the five-year CCE grants through its [Projects of National Significance program](#), building on existing and prior ACL initiatives. These include the Partnerships in Employment (PIE) Systems Change grants, the [AoD Disability Employment Technical Assistance Center](#), the [Center on Youth Voice Youth Choice](#), the [Center for Transition to Adult Health Care for Youth with Disabilities](#), University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (UCEDD) [Community-Based Partnership Training grants](#) focused on transitions to employment, and the [ACL employment longitudinal study](#). The CCE grants address multiple ACL and AoD priorities, including advancing economic security and mobility and ensuring quality community living. The seven CCE grants began in September 2021 and run through September 2026. This mid-term report summarizes grant activity through early February 2024 (**Exhibit 1**).

Exhibit 1. CCE Mid-Term Grant Timeline



GRANT DESIGN AND FOUR KEY GRANT STAGES

ACL required all CCE grant recipients, hereafter referred to as “recipients,” to incorporate four key grant stages: establish and maintain a community collaboration pilot, conduct a community landscape analysis, develop a community collaboration employment transition plan, and implement the community collaboration employment transition plan.⁵ This cross-site analysis combines discussion of developing the community collaboration employment transition plan and implementing the plan to reflect that most recipients incorporated these grant stages in fluid, often iterative, rather than discrete steps. Throughout their grants, recipients also conduct process and summative evaluations to assess their progress, adjust their approach, and measure grant impacts on intended outcomes.

► Community Collaboration Pilot (Community Collaborative)

A broad range of diverse community partners (e.g., Centers for Independent Living (CIL), local offices of the state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency, students with ID/DD and their families) involved in all aspects of the grant.

⁵ Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Community Collaborations for Employment Program, HHS-2021-ACL-AOD-DNCE-0098.



▶ Landscape Analysis

An assessment of the community's existing resources, strengths, needs, and gaps that describe the community's capacity to provide consistent and seamless services for youth with ID/DD and their families that facilitate opportunities for CIE, post-secondary education, and independent living.

▶ Transition Plan

A plan for how the community collaborative, informed by the landscape analysis, will address the needs of youth with ID/DD, including developing the plan and implementing innovative strategies to achieve the intended outcomes.

▶ Evaluation

Ongoing process and summative evaluation methods to assess delivery of project activities and determine success in meeting intended project outcomes.

CROSS-SITE EVALUATION

In September 2022, ACL awarded The Lewin Group (Lewin) a five-year contract for the CCE cross-site evaluation. Lewin collected data from the CCE recipients beginning in November 2022 through a series of virtual interviews, virtual site visits, and a review of written reports submitted by the grant teams to ACL. Lewin analyzed these data to determine how CCE recipients are implementing grant activities and what factors promote or impede implementation. While recipients are still collecting data on intended outcomes and refining their evaluation plans at the halfway point of their grants, Lewin also analyzed how recipients plan to measure the intended outcomes of the CCE grant. This report summarizes themes across all seven CCE recipients. A complementary series of grant profiles also comprise this mid-term report. **Appendix A** describes the evaluation methodology and timeline.



CCE Grants Overview

COMMUNITIES OF FOCUS

A defining characteristic of the CCE grants is the community-based approach, with recipients taking varied approaches to how and why they identified their communities of focus. While some recipients selected the pilot/target communities before or at the beginning of their grants, others started with one or more initial communities and aim to expand throughout the grant period. Some recipients are already planning to expand their CCE model beyond the grant period through different funding sources, as they plan for sustaining their efforts.

ACL intentionally structured the CCE grant opportunity to focus on diverse and marginalized communities,⁶ and this diversity is reflected in the CCE recipients' communities of focus (**Exhibit 2**). Most recipients defined their communities of focus around school districts or cities, although the sizes range from school districts with a few hundred students to cities with over 400,000 residents. Most recipients also further focused their target populations within those communities, emphasizing specific racial or ethnic populations, geographic locations (e.g., rural, urban), populations with primary languages other than English, or specific types of disabilities among participating youth (e.g., youth with intensive support needs). While many recipients focus on youth who are high school students, some recipients are engaging younger elementary and middle school students and their families as well.

⁶ Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Community Collaborations for Employment Program, HHS-2021-ACL-AOD-DNCE-0098.



Exhibit 2. CCE Recipients and Communities of Focus⁷ (as of February 2024)

RECIPIENT	Communities of Focus	Setting and Characteristics
Arizona Board of Regents, University of Arizona (Arizona)	Three pilot communities in three distinct Tribal Nations ⁸	The three pilot communities vary in size, location (urban/rural), and in the languages spoken by the people in the community.
University of Kansas Center for Research, Inc. (Kansas)	Three current pilot communities in Garden City, Parsons, and Kansas City	Garden City is a rural and agricultural community located on the southwestern side of the state, Parsons is a rural community in southeastern Kansas, and Kansas City is a large urban area.
University of Massachusetts, Boston (Massachusetts)	One target community in Lawrence, Massachusetts	Lawrence is a diverse community located about 30 miles north of Boston, with a large immigrant population.
Regents of the University of Minnesota (Minnesota)	Four pilot partner school districts: Minneapolis Public Schools, Rosemount, Apple Valley, Eagan Public Schools (ISD-196), Northern Lights Special Education Cooperative, Benton Stearns School District	Minneapolis Public Schools is the largest metropolitan area in the state with the largest representation of racial and ethnic diversity. Rosemount, Apple Valley, Eagan Public Schools (ISD-196), is a large school district located in the southern suburbs of Minneapolis-St. Paul. The Northern Lights Special Education Cooperative and the Benton Stearns School District are two smaller school districts.
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (North Carolina)	Beginning their pilot in the Triangle and Triad regions of North Carolina	Currently identifying potential school districts that could serve as pilot sites.
LifePath Systems (Texas)	One target community centered in Plano Independent School District in Collin County	Plano Independent School District is located in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Approximately one-third of students within the district are considered economically disadvantaged and approximately one-fifth are bilingual or receive English as a Second Language education.
Virginia Commonwealth University (Virginia)	Two target communities centered in the school districts of Richmond and Colonial Heights	Both communities are in Central Virginia; Colonial Heights is a smaller, suburban community, while Richmond is the capital of Virginia and is more racially and ethnically diverse; Richmond serves as a central hub for many transition employment services, supports, and programs that are also available across Virginia.

⁷ As reported by CCE recipients.

⁸ In alignment with the University of Arizona’s [Tribal Consultation Policy](#), the Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities does not disclose Tribal Names and locations unless permission is provided by the Tribal Nations.



CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

Each CCE recipient designed their project within their local and state contexts, and evolving environmental factors in their communities and states shape the design, implementation, and outcomes of each grant. These contextual factors influenced recipients’ approaches to their grant activities, and findings from their landscape analyses often reflected these contextual factors. Understanding the local context is key to designing activities tailored to meet the needs of the community, while leveraging community strengths and honoring its culture. Some contextual factors are consistent, such as geographic barriers in rural areas, whereas others are more fluid throughout the grant, such as turnover within specific roles or agencies among grant partners.

Geographic factors

A key factor for all CCE grants is the geographic location and characteristics of each of the communities in which they are working. Rural, urban, and suburban contexts influence how recipients bring together partners in their community collaboratives, how they collect data for their landscape analyses, and how they partner to develop and implement their transition plans. Several recipients, including Kansas, Minnesota, and Virginia, intentionally chose two or more communities that vary in their size and geography to explore the differences in implementing their programs in these communities.

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Across the three [communities], I think one of the exciting things is that we’re partnering with different organizations, different types of organizations in each of these towns as a way to really test out and just look at how the collaborations look differently depending on where that partnership is coming from.
— Kansas CCE Grant Team”

Cultural and demographic factors

The CCE grants target underserved populations, including people who are racial or ethnic minorities, have limited English proficiency, and those of the greatest economic and social need. For example, the Arizona CCE team is working with three Tribal Nations and aims to develop an Indigenous transition model that can be used by the 22 federally recognized Tribal Nations in Arizona as well. Relationship building with Tribal Nations is especially important; when turnover occurs, it is critical to rebuild the relationship before proceeding with grant activities. Tailoring data collection to reflect Tribal values is



also an important consideration for the Arizona CCE grant. The Massachusetts CCE team is working specifically with the Latinx community in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Garnering buy-in and trust with community members is foundational to developing culturally and linguistically competent transition plan activities that the community wants and needs. Additionally, the CCE grants focus on underserved communities in which preexisting barriers are present, such as limited time, financial instability, and lack of transportation.

Education and employment factors

In seeking to improve programs and services for youth transitioning into CIE and post-secondary education, recipients must contend with the specific educational factors (at both the secondary and post-secondary levels) and employment factors within their target communities. For example, recipients that seek to implement new tools and resources within schools must adapt to teacher shortages and demanding workloads, which limit teachers' capacity to participate in trainings and implement new practices. Several grant recipients adapted to these challenges by aligning with or incorporating their interventions into existing transition programs.

State-level educational factors also play a role; for example, in Minnesota, the state Departments of Employment and Economic Development, Education and Human Services are in the process of developing and implementing a new transition framework for youth. The Minnesota CCE team is partnering with the state as an evaluator for this new framework, which allows them to carefully plan their CCE activities around this context. At the same time, the Minnesota CCE team has to balance any new requests of teachers related to the grant with changes related to the new state framework. Within schools, students with disabilities often face low expectations of them, which negatively impact their opportunities for experiences to grow employment and independent living skills. For example, while work-based learning opportunities are designed for students of all disabilities, in practice many students with higher support needs are left out of opportunities, and many transition programs are highly segregated from other school programs.



The local and state employment contexts also impact grant implementation. For example, some communities lack sufficient employment opportunities (so-called “employer deserts”). Transportation to potential employment is also a factor impacting many recipients; students cannot achieve employment outcomes if they cannot get to their employment site. The state-level context around disability employment also impacts grants; for example, many states enact [Employment First](#) regulations or policies, a national systems-change framework rooted in the premise that all individuals, including those individuals with the most significant disabilities, are capable of full participation in CIE and community life. This commitment establishes employment as a priority; however, even in Employment First states, subminimum wage work through sheltered workshops persists⁹, as do low rates of CIE among youth who wish to work.¹⁰ As they seek to shift attitudes to raise expectations about the potential for CIE among youth with ID/DD, recipients also align with other efforts aimed at reducing subminimum wage work and promoting Employment First.

Concurrent grants

Several lead organizations for CCE grants also manage or participate as a partner in other complementary grants related to CIE and post-secondary education, including collaborations with their state agencies. While multiple concurrent grants at times pose administrative and project management challenges, in general, these recipients leverage additional grants to expand the impact of their CCE grant work. For example, recipients can extend their reach to additional communities, increase the visibility of their CCE grant, and build additional relationships with stakeholders working within the transition program, CIE, and post-secondary education spaces.

⁹ National Disability Rights Network (2023). The National Landscape of Subminimum Wage, Implications and Recommendations to Elevate Competitive, Integrated Employment. Disability Employment Technical Assistance Center. Retrieved from <https://aoddisabilityemploymentcenter.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/DETAC-14c-Report-1.pdf>.

¹⁰ HSRI and NASDDDS. (2023). National Core Indicators IDD: National Report 2021-2022, Employment. Retrieved from https://idd.nationalcoreindicators.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/IPS-21-22-Employment_FINAL.pdf.



Summary and Analysis by Grant Stage

All recipients made significant progress to establish and maintain community collaboratives, conduct landscape analysis assessments of community strengths, needs, and gaps, and begin development of their transition plans. Some recipients also began implementing their transition plans. Lewin assessed how grant recipients are implementing activities both within and across the CCE grants and the factors that promote or impede implementation. This cross-site report summarizes common themes across the seven grants within each of the four grant stages and how they are conducting internal evaluations, including their intended outcomes. Each of the following sections first summarizes what and how grant recipients implement that grant stage and themes of the common successes, challenges, and lessons learned recipients experienced as they neared the mid-point of their grants.



COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVES

Bringing together a diverse set of committed partners serves as the foundation for each CCE grant. Community collaboratives work together to conduct a landscape analysis to understand the resources, gaps, and needs within each community, to design and implement activities aimed to reduce the complexity and duplication of existing transition services, to increase the smooth exchange of information among programs, and to ultimately expand and strengthen services available for youth with ID/DD and their families.¹¹ While ACL required a set of initial partners and recommended additional types of stakeholders for consideration,¹² each CCE recipient engaged a set of partners based on their communities' unique characteristics.

¹¹ Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Community Collaborations for Employment Program, HHS-2021-ACL-AOD-DNCE-0098.

¹² Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Community Collaborations for Employment Program, HHS-2021-ACL-AOD-DNCE-0098.



Collaborative structures

All recipients meet at some cadence with their largest group of community collaborative members, hereafter referred to as their full community collaboratives. The number of partners ranges widely; for example, the North Carolina CCE team has recruited over 180 partners to their community collaborative and meets with this group quarterly to share updates and discuss grant activities. The Minnesota CCE team meets with their full collaborative on an annual basis to discuss big picture issues, such as policy, systems, and economic issues impacting their work. The Texas CCE team meets monthly with their full collaborative, a group of approximately 20 partners. Several recipients are implementing their grants in multiple communities and formed community-specific groups that meet regularly. While the community-specific groups are each unique in their makeup, the groups share resources and lessons learned with one another.

Workgroups and steering committees

All recipients also have either one or more workgroups, a steering committee, or both. Workgroups are smaller groups focused on a specific topic, which facilitate discussion and decision-making; many workgroups report out to the broader group for feedback during full collaborative meetings. Three recipients have steering committees, which often include individuals with specific roles or experiences to help guide the core project teams and advise on project direction. For example, the Arizona CCE steering committee includes an Elder Advisor, a Tribal community consultant, and youth leaders, among other members. One recipient, the Kansas CCE team, began their project with a steering committee whose members provided input on initial project direction. Now that their three pilot communities are operating their own individual community team meetings,

NORTH CAROLINA

The North Carolina CCE team continuously recruits interested partners to join their collaborative and has over 180 partners already engaged. Although not everyone is able to attend every quarterly meeting, the meetings serve as important touch points and opportunities to keep all partners informed of their progress and gather ongoing feedback. The North Carolina team designed their community collaborative model based on the Collective Impact framework. This model includes a backbone team, a steering committee, and workgroups. Their steering committee has approximately 30 members who meet monthly to discuss project progress and goals. Their backbone team, a core element of the Collective Impact framework, guides the strategy and vision for the work, while supporting alignment and measurement of activities.



steering committee members join specific community teams or participate in the full collaborative meetings, rather than meet separately.

Meeting Frequency and Formats

Most recipients hold at least one monthly meeting to discuss project work and collaborate with partners and generally find that cadence valuable. However, recipients noted the importance of flexible scheduling; for example, during the summer when school is not in session and during winter holiday breaks, recipients often adjusted or paused their meetings or met in smaller groups or one-on-one to move work forward. Several recipients shifted from virtual to in-person meetings in the first half of their grants and reflected that in-person meetings were much more conducive to collaboration. At the same time, virtual options can extend participation for people with transportation or other barriers to traveling to an in-person meeting.

Collaborative Members and Roles

In addition to participating in meetings, many collaborative members served as key connections for outreach to specific stakeholders, connecting the grant teams to their professional networks or serving as liaisons between their organizations and the grant. Collaborative members also provided insights as part of landscape analysis data collection, such as participation in focus groups or leadership of interviews. Two recipients, North Carolina and Massachusetts, structured their workgroups to lead specific transition plan efforts, such as North Carolina's Inclusive Employment Alliance. Recipients noted the impact of specific community partners in facilitating grant initiatives. For example, in Arizona, [Diverse Ability Incorporated](#), an Arizona nonprofit that fosters youth leadership initiatives, engages Native Arizona Youth Leaders in grant initiatives. In Virginia, [SOAR365](#), a Virginia nonprofit organization that provides services and supports to individuals with disabilities, was a key partner in their Transition Academy for teachers, and the Virginia Commonwealth University [Center for Transition Initiatives](#) is a valued partner for their training and capacity building efforts. In Massachusetts, a connection with the Mayor of Lawrence's office offered an opportunity to discuss internship opportunities for students, and the city ADA coordinator participates in collaborative meetings. The Minnesota Inclusive Higher Education Consortium (MIHEC) provides a perspective for the Minnesota grant team on transition to higher education with the vision of securing better employment for students as a result.

Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

The following themes reflect successes, challenges, and lessons learned as recipients developed their community collaboratives. Commonly, recipients encountered both successes and challenges around key aspects of their collaboratives.



Elevating the voice of the community

Recipients recognize community members as experts and engaged their community collaboratives to build trust and elevate the voices of those with lived expertise. In many cases, recipients are outsiders to the communities they are supporting; they intentionally avoided prescriptive approaches to identifying problems or developing solutions. Recipients spent time listening to collaborative members to understand their challenges and ideas. For example, they sought out stories from students and spent time understanding what happens in schools and the challenges transition coordinators face. The Massachusetts CCE team partnered with the Latinx community in Lawrence to design their collaborative, which garnered trust and buy-in. Some grant recipients emphasized supporting community members to take on leadership of their initiatives rather than retaining tight control of the project and data. Community champions also served as a bridge to reach key community constituents.

Building relationships and collaboration

Grant recipients commonly reported growing partnerships among collaborative members as a success of their projects. Before joining the collaborative, many collaborative members never met each other nor knew about partners' organizations. Even when prior relationships existed, partners often lacked communication channels to stay abreast of current services. The Massachusetts CCE team successfully creates space for partners to network by scheduling dedicated time and providing food at the start of in-person meetings. The collaboration among partners led to streamlining of services, which motivates members to stay engaged.

“*I know we had one parent on the collaboration, and she told me after meeting one day... “I just feel like I’m not supposed to be here. I don’t know what I’m talking about. It’s a room full of professionals...” Introducing more parents and making it less of a professional environment and more of an open, just let’s talk about things environment would really help.*

— Texas CCE Grant Team

Engaging diverse voices

All CCE grant recipients set out to form diverse and representative community collaboratives, though recruiting and retaining this membership proved challenging in ways that vary by recipient. A common theme across recipients is turnover in key positions, which resulted in changing group dynamics, barriers to formal partnerships, and a loss of momentum due to vacancies or the need to train new staff. While some recipients successfully recruited self-advocates and families to their collaboratives, others struggle to engage these experts.



LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

CCE recipients tailored approaches to their landscape analyses to understand the resources, strengths, needs, and gaps that exist with respect to each community's capacity to provide consistent, seamless transition services for youth with ID/DD and their families. While some recipients designed their landscape analyses as one-time data collection opportunities, others used an iterative or cyclical design. While all recipients completed substantial data collection for their landscape analyses, some data collection is ongoing.

Talking Circles

The Arizona CCE team used Talking Circles, an indigenous traditional format of group discussion (akin to focus groups of particular community members) that has been utilized by Tribal programs, including by the Arizona CCE team for other Tribal-focused disability programs. Talking Circles are a "Practiced-Based Evidence" approach with generations of successful communication and partnership outcomes.¹³

Approaches and methods

All recipients held either focus groups, Talking Circles, listening sessions, community conversations, small group discussions, or some combination of these strategies, to collect data for their landscape analyses. Many recipients conducted surveys of stakeholders, including employers, youth, parents, service providers, and teachers, among others. Some recipients also conducted one-on-one interviews with youth with ID/DD or families. Several recipients conducted at least part of their landscape analysis data collection in Spanish as well as English. Both the Minnesota and Virginia CCE teams conducted a photo-based project or projects with students (two photovoice projects in Virginia, one photo-elicitation project in Minnesota), in which students took photos as a means to explore their goals and barriers to employment. Other strategies for assessing their community landscapes included community asset mapping, a Global Positioning System/Global Information System (GPS/GIS) study, a literature review, and analysis of secondary/public data. **Exhibit 3** displays landscape analysis activities by recipient; the activities include most but not all activities across the grant recipients.

¹³ Brown, M. A., & Di Lallo, S. (2020). Talking Circles: A Culturally Responsive Evaluation Practice. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 41(3), 367-383. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214019899164>



Exhibit 3. Landscape Analysis Activities

GRANTEE	Arizona	Kansas	Massachusetts	Minnesota	North Carolina	Texas	Virginia
Mapping (Asset Mapping, GIS)	–	–	–	–	✓	–	✓
Focus Groups/ Talking Circles	✓	✓	–	✓	–	✓	–
Individual/ Small Group Interviews	✓	✓	✓	✓	–	–	–
Listening Sessions/ Community Conversations	–	–	✓	–	✓	–	✓
Photovoice/ photo-elicitation	–	–	–	✓	–	–	✓
Secondary Data Collection	✓	–	✓	✓	✓	–	✓
Statewide or Regional Analysis	✓	✓	–	–	–	–	–
Survey(s)	✓	✓	–	✓	✓	✓	✓

Data collection

ACL offered CCE grant recipients significant latitude in the types of data they could collect to assess gaps, resources, and needs for their specific communities. Two recipients, the Arizona and Kansas CCE teams, conducted a broad, statewide analysis that informed their community-specific analyses. Several recipients captured baseline data, to which they are building and measuring changes over time. Recipients also adjusted their data collection approaches to adapt to recruitment challenges. For example, when they experienced lower attendance at community conversations than initially expected, the Massachusetts CCE team held additional interviews with families and youth to supplement the community conversation data. The Kansas CCE team engaged their cultural broker to meet with Hispanic youth and families to supplement their initial focus groups in one of their communities. Common challenges recipients faced with data collection included lower response or attendance rates for specific activities and logistical or administrative barriers, such as staff capacity and the time it takes to receive institutional review board approvals, when needed.

ARIZONA

The Arizona CCE team began with a statewide landscape analysis on Native youth in transition, with the goal of collecting data on the common issues and transition barriers that affect all Arizona Tribes. The Arizona CCE team engaged partners from Tribal communities, disability service providers, state agencies, and Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation to collect data in a myriad of ways, including state and partner data, school district input, Tribal community visits, and surveys, for example. The team also employed Talking Circles, a traditional practice that engaged diverse individuals across Tribal affiliations and roles in group discussions with one another. Drawing on these data to create a statewide landscape analysis, the Arizona CCE team then developed an employment transition plan template for pilot communities to use for their community-specific analyses.

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We launched an annual survey in February, available in Spanish and English, which broadly assesses the perceived complexity/accessibility of the current systems/opportunities involved in the transition to adulthood for people with ID/DD. Stakeholder surveys for individuals with ID/DD, parents/family members, service providers, allies, and educators were disseminated to ask about strengths, needs, and gaps in transition services.

— North Carolina CCE Grant Team

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Dissemination

As recipients collected data, they often first shared findings internally with workgroup and steering committee members. Many recipients also presented summaries of their findings to their community collaboratives during regular meetings. Recipients also developed written summaries that they could share with specific stakeholders. For example, the Massachusetts CCE team developed a written document, with versions in both English and Spanish, and shared it with their steering committee. They then presented a summary of the findings to their Consortium (their full community collaborative meeting) in June 2023. Several recipients shared information externally about their project or their landscape analysis findings specifically through conference presentations or journal articles.

Findings

Most landscape analysis findings confirmed the prior experiences of grant teams, with data highlighting specific community strengths, gaps, and needs. A common theme across grants was the need for enhanced communication and collaboration across the numerous organizations and providers involved in transition, education, and employment for youth with ID/DD. In some communities, communication gaps resulted in duplication of efforts, and in many communities, landscape analysis data showed that youth with ID/DD and families were unaware of existing services for which they were eligible. The need for more centralized locations to find resources and information was also a common theme, and many recipients are already working to create such centralized resource hubs.

VIRGINIA

The Virginia CCE team developed the first version of their Richmond landscape analysis written document in 2022 and a second version in 2023. The Virginia team published their landscape analysis findings on their [project website](#). The first version summarized findings from community data gathering, community conversations, and business needs assessments, while the second added an initial virtual asset map and findings from two photovoice projects they conducted with students. The Virginia team shared results from their first virtual photovoice project in a [poster](#) and [infographic](#), both available on their website.

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Something that we heard from all members of the community, and this came from our community conversations...from family members, from youth, educators, businesses, there was just a lack of where do I go? What's my one stop shop?

— Virginia CCE Grant Team

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The need for transition programs and services to solicit more input from youth and families was another common theme. Barriers within transition programs included insufficient opportunities to build practical and self-advocacy skills, including the need to prepare students for aspects of adult life outside of employment. Transition programs also faced logistical and capacity barriers, including pervasive workforce shortages, transportation gaps, and a lack of on-the-job support. While some individuals reported positive transition experiences, grant recipients commonly noted the barrier of low expectations of youth with ID/DD, particularly students with greater support needs, in relation to their capacity for CIE. Several grant recipients highlighted community strengths, such as strong partnerships and collaborations and motivation to enhance transition outcomes for youth with ID/DD in their communities.

NORTH CAROLINA

The need for centralized “one-stop” hubs for transition-related resources emerged as a common landscape analysis finding. The North Carolina CCE team compiled a wide range of resources in easy-to-use, publicly available pages on their website. Their [Transition Services Database](#) contains over 260 services and programs statewide, which users can filter by topics and geographic area. Each service in the database includes a description of specific offerings, cost, eligibility criteria, and contact information. They also compiled a [Transition Resource Library](#) containing hundreds of publicly available PDF, audio, video, and web-based transition resources organized by categories, such as housing, employment, and higher education. The team continually adds resources and services as they identify them.



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It's not that we don't want to hire people with disabilities; it's that we don't know how. We don't know who they are; we don't know where they are.

— Summary of Responses to Business Survey by Virginia CCE Grant Team

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Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

The following themes reflect successes, challenges, and lessons learned as recipients conducted their landscape analyses. Commonly, recipients encountered both successes and challenges around key aspects of their analyses.

Leveraging relationships to reach participants

Strong relationships with grant partners and community collaborative members, who assisted with outreach to landscape analysis participants and provided input themselves, facilitated data collection. Such individuals served as liaisons to share information about surveys or other data collection opportunities with their networks and introduce the grant to a broader group. However, recipients also experienced the limitations of relying on existing relationships, particularly the tendency to reach the same youth with ID/DD, families, and employers, that were already well connected to transition and employment services and advocacy channels. Additionally, some recipients continue to build trust with youth and families. While liaisons, such as cultural brokers, play a valuable role in establishing trust, turnover and limited time of such liaisons remains a challenge.



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We've always done a really good job of connecting with people who are already well connected. This grant, this project is a little bit harder because we're not accepting that as our parent voices because we know that they're not representative of all parent voices.

— Virginia CCE Grant Team

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Meeting people where they are at

Recipients took approaches to collecting data that met people in both literal and metaphorical ways. This included using culturally appropriate methodology that honored community culture and values, such as the use of Talking Circles by the Arizona CCE team. Several recipients hosted community conversations in familiar community locations, and often included food and childcare, if needed. Even with these adaptations, larger group conversations did not attract all desired participants. To ensure they captured a greater diversity of input, several recipients met with individuals one-on-one and in small groups. Cultural brokers, members of the grant team or close collaborators who were both from the intended community and spoke their primary language, played key roles in reaching additional individuals through personal outreach.

Expanding beyond data collection

In a community-based grant like CCE, it is important that data collection serves participants and not just research purposes. To this end, recipients designed activities for their landscape analyses that meaningfully engaged youth with ID/DD and included opportunities for youth to build self-advocacy skills and explore their goals and interests. Several recipients engaged youth in activities designed to explore their interests broadly, as well as their interests specifically related to employment (e.g., photo-elicitation and photovoice projects in Minnesota and Virginia, video recordings in Kansas). Such activities empowered youth to express their goals and explore interests. While some participating youth began their exploration with clear goals in mind, others took time to feel comfortable expressing their interests, and taking the time to build relationships with students helped them explore. Some recipients experienced barriers to these activities, such as limited staff time or logistical considerations, such as institutional review board approval.

“

We ask them questions about the photos. Why did you take it? What's in it? What does it mean to you. We kind of interview them along with the photos...They really want to do a good job. They want to represent their life in a way that they see it, which, I think, is quite powerful.

— Minnesota CCE Grant Team

”



Landscape Analysis Lessons Learned

While all recipients collected robust and informative data for their landscape analyses, they also reflected on lessons learned for future similar efforts. For example, trust is an important foundation for holding honest conversations about experiences and challenges. When discussing their experiences, students and families tended to open up more with interviewers with whom they felt comfortable and in settings that were more familiar. For example, conversations held at schools were often not well attended. Recipients also reflected on the value of empowering youth with ID/DD to tell their stories, explore their goals, and describe the personal barriers they faced. In doing so, it is important to engage students as whole people, recognizing that their lives go beyond their experiences in schools and transition programs and encompass many more aspects of who they are and what is important to them.




TRANSITION PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

As they approached the halfway point in their five-year grants, some recipients started transition plan implementation based on concepts developed and refined early in the grant. Others incorporated feedback in collaboration with their partners and community members to determine their transition plan areas of focus for the remaining grant period.

Transition plan development

Several recipients developed distinct transition plans in multiple communities concurrently. The grant teams worked directly with each pilot site to understand their specific community needs, resources, and gaps through their landscape analysis activities. Following that, the grant teams worked with or are working with each pilot site to determine the activities that best address community needs and leverage strengths and resources. These community-specific plans are informed by broader grant activities across the state (e.g., a statewide landscape analysis, one overarching guide) and in other pilot communities, but the specific activities may look fairly different in implementation.

The Virginia CCE team partnered with Richmond Public Schools and other local entities in Richmond, Virginia as their first pilot site to provide training and resources for teachers, students and families, and employers. The Virginia, Kansas, and Texas CCE teams developed their transition plans based on their landscape analysis findings, designing activities to address their community-specific needs, resources, and strengths. The Massachusetts CCE team collaborated with their consortium members to prioritize



areas of focus for their transition plan activities from their larger list of landscape analysis findings and selected four key areas of focus, and they are now working to identify activities within those areas.

The North Carolina CCE team partnered with their collaborative and workgroup members to design a series of action plans that youth with ID/DD preparing for transition and their supporters can reference. The North Carolina CCE team also developed public-facing resources based on their landscape analysis data collection activities, which they posted on [their website](#). Their next steps include work with school districts to pilot these resources.

“*The process of developing the community landscape analysis has been an iterative process with both the steering committee and the full consortium.... [We] put together sort of a draft document, reviewed that with the steering committee, and then we brought it back to the full consortium and did a presentation where we said, here are the things that we think we found. What do you think? ...It’s not like the four of us deciding on something and then just doing it.... Having that iterative process, it takes a while, but I think that creates more buy-in, that makes it a better process, it makes it better outcomes.*”

— Massachusetts CCE Grant Team

Transition plan implementation

With their partners and collaborative members, most recipients began designing and implementing specific activities tailored to meet specific needs in their communities, although these plans will evolve in the remaining grant period. The activities vary by the type of intended stakeholder, including teachers, employers, and youth with ID/DD and families.

Activities for teachers

A major component of improving CIE outcomes is effective transition services and activities.¹⁴ To improve transition service and activities, several grant recipients provided school-based technical assistance and training to teachers and other transition program staff. For example, the Minnesota CCE team is developing specific transition plan activities with their four partner school district transition programs, based on school district-specific needs and priorities identified through their landscape analysis. The Virginia CCE team worked closely with the Richmond Public School District and grant partners on two teacher-focused transition plan activities, which they launched in 2023. Several other recipients plan to develop activities for teachers and transition program staff in the remaining grant period.

¹⁴ Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Community Collaborations for Employment Program, HHS-2021-ACL-AOD-DNCE-0098.



Activities for employers

Strong relationships with employers and local businesses can increase and improve CIE opportunities, including supported and customized employment.¹⁵ Several recipients are specifically engaging with employers through public events and trainings, among other strategies. For example, the North Carolina CCE team holds employer coffee chats; some chats focused on industry-specific events while others were open to a general audience. These chats provide an opportunity to raise awareness about their grant and their employer-related transition plan activities. The Virginia CCE team partnered with the Metropolitan Business League in Richmond to hold coffee and conversation events, which offered opportunities for businesses to connect with a vocational rehabilitation liaison, supported employment specialist, and a work-development counselor. The Kansas CCE team hosted a reverse job fair in Garden City, and one of the fair's objectives was employer engagement and education. The Kansas CCE team hosted an employer lunch before the fair that offered opportunities for sharing lessons learned from other employers who hired people with disabilities. A breakfast co-hosted with the Garden City Chamber of Commerce offered the Kansas CCE team another opportunity to engage with employers that both hired people with disabilities and those interested in hiring people with disabilities. These employer engagement events aim to increase employer capacity.

VIRGINIA

The Virginia CCE team and several of their grant partners developed training and technical assistance for Richmond Public School teachers. First, they developed a five-module training series and learning community on work-based learning. The modules used a train-the-trainer model, and participating teachers now serve as mentor teachers for other teachers in their schools. In summer 2023, the Virginia CCE team also brought together elementary, middle, and high school teachers for a Transition Academy. The Transition Academy focused on community and family collaboration, and teachers had opportunities to learn from a panel of parents and connect to representatives from vocational rehabilitation, local community service boards, and their local Inclusive Post-Secondary Education Program.

¹⁵ Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Community Collaborations for Employment Program, HHS-2021-ACL-AOD-DNCE-0098.



NORTH CAROLINA

The North Carolina CCE team established their ID/DD Inclusive Employment Alliance, which brings together Chambers of Commerce from across the state, the North Carolina Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, six Community Rehabilitation Providers, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, and several public school systems. The Alliance developed an online course, their [Employer Training Module](#), which is available on their website. This self-paced course covers an introduction to ID/DD inclusion in the workplace; language, misconceptions, and mindset shifts about hiring individuals with ID/DD; and common tools and accommodations. Employers who complete the online course can receive recognition through an “ID/DD Inclusive Employer” sticker for their storefront, advertising their workplace accessibility and commitment to supporting employment of youth with ID/DD (either through hiring or serving as a work-based learning or state-funded internship site).

Activities for youth and families

Activities for youth and families focus on providing resources and tools, opportunities for skill-building and career and education exploration, and events and programs to promote employment opportunities. Some grants are incorporating peer components, such as the Texas CCE team’s peer mentoring program and the Kansas CCE team’s peer support to prepare for their job fair.



KANSAS

The Kansas CCE team partnered with their pilot community in Garden City, Kansas, to host a reverse job fair. During the job fair, students presented on their strengths and interests at individual booths and attending employers visited each booth to learn more about each student. To prepare for the event, students picked out professional attire from clothing donated by a local Goodwill, developed and practiced “30-second handshakes,” and created posters with assistance from peers. The event was highly successful, and five students received job offers. One employer shared that the event was a “great opportunity for the students wanting jobs and for the students that supported them.” The team also documented all of their planning and preparation for the fair in a guide that they can share with other communities who are interested in hosting similar events. The team is now planning a second reverse job fair in Garden City.

NORTH CAROLINA

The North Carolina CCE team worked with their community collaborative members to design [Action Plans](#) and launched the Action Plans on their website in November 2023. There are three types of action plans available: action plans for opportunities available in adulthood, action plans to help ensure smooth transition to adulthood, and action plans for self-advocacy. Individuals can select the type of plan or plans that apply to them based on their own strengths, goals, and interests, and they can customize each plan on the website by adding personal goals or interests. Users can then print or email the plan. Community collaborative members provided feedback to design and refined the plans, and now that the action plans are available on their website, the team plans to “field test” the action plans with students in local school districts.



Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

The following themes reflect successes, challenges, and lessons learned as recipients developed and implemented their transition plans. Commonly, recipients encountered both successes and challenges around key aspects of their transition plans.

Advancing transition plan implementation through partnerships

Grant recipients relied on partners in their networks to facilitate connections necessary to successfully implement their transition plans. School district personnel connected grant recipients with teachers, students, and families. For example, a transition specialist linked the Texas CCE team to teachers so the team could work with students participating in the grant to update their Cognitopia profiles during the school day. This, in turn, facilitates a more seamless exchange of information among all partners. The Texas CCE team also partnered with a local vocational rehabilitation counselor to identify potential project participants and conduct initial outreach. The North Carolina CCE team contracted with their local Chamber of Commerce to support employer engagement efforts, and several other chambers across the state replicated the Coffee Talk model. The Virginia CCE team collaborated with their local CIL to connect with families and businesses. Several grant recipients experienced turnover in key positions, which impeded transition planning efforts. Additionally, barriers to supports needed for employment, such as transportation and internet, also posed challenges for some recipients.

TEXAS

The Texas CCE team works directly with students at Plano Independent School District to support transition planning using a web-based application called Cognitopia. Student profiles within Cognitopia include information on goals, strengths, skills, interests, work experience, accommodations and preferences related to employment, post-secondary education, and independent living. A common issue that students and families reported was the need to repeatedly share information with all the different providers a student worked with due to a lack of communication and shared places to store information. Cognitopia helps address this concern, as students can share their profile with anyone with whom they are working, and students can even create a separate employment-focused portfolio that can serve as a resume. The Texas CCE team meets with each student regularly to help them fill out and update their portfolios.



Designing transition plan activities based on youth and family priorities

By listening to and acting on youth and family ideas, grant recipients built trust, fostered innovation, and generated buy-in. The Kansas CCE team conducted a reverse job fair in Garden City in response to ideas provided by families and self-advocates. The Massachusetts CCE team sought feedback from community members about their needs and experiences with transition and employment. For example, they heard about stereotypes that individuals with disabilities cannot be employed. In response, they are providing culturally relevant education and opportunities. Some recipients encountered challenges with youth and family engagement; families tend to be busier and, therefore, less able to engage during the school year, and parents may need emotional support to fully engage in grant activities. When the Texas CCE team saw a decrease in family engagement at the beginning of the school year, they launched a newsletter to streamline communication and foster increased participation.

Aligning school-based activities with existing programs to minimize burden on teachers

Many grant recipients encountered challenges implementing school-based programs due to teacher shortages, turnover, and burnout. The Minnesota CCE team aligns their work with the state Youth in Transition framework and streamlines their requests of teachers. The North Carolina CCE team is exploring whether transition plan activities can be incorporated on a statewide level as part of existing transition plan processes. Based on input from teachers, the Virginia CCE team established an application process for teachers to receive \$400 seed money to establish a student-led enterprise in their school. The Virginia team also found success in working with mentor teachers who can generate buy-in and excitement throughout the district, which is important to maintaining momentum. Despite these efforts, high student-to-teacher ratios and turnover rates continue to challenge grant recipients.



EVALUATION

Evaluation Methodologies and Approaches

As they reach the mid-points of the grant period, all CCE recipients leverage their internal evaluation data to refine their grant activities for the remaining grant period. Their varied evaluation approaches include multiple types of surveys, stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and analysis of secondary data. Surveys include longitudinal surveys to follow students throughout transition, surveys related to participation in a particular grant activity, and satisfaction and experience surveys. Some recipients test and iterate their evaluation instruments over time. While data from all types of stakeholders participating in the grant are valuable, there is a particular focus on gathering data from youth with ID/DD and their families.

“

As we get [internal evaluation data], we're employing it immediately. We're taking it back to those community teams and letting them benefit from each other's knowledge because although they're different and their landscapes might be different as far as resources and whatnot, there are some systems and processes and different things that they can all benefit from knowing.

— Kansas CCE Grant Team

”

Intended Outcomes and Data for Measuring Impact

Recipients aim to achieve and measure outcomes across the immediate, intermediate, and long-term timeframes, as outlined by ACL in the CCE Notice of Funding Opportunity. Lewin analyzed how recipients measure their intended outcomes and how they plan to measure outcomes in the remaining grant period, as well as the status of their data, within five outcomes categories: improvements in transition experiences, increased knowledge of supports, increased CIE opportunities, increased post-secondary education opportunities, and improved policies for transition.¹⁶ While some recipients collected or obtained preliminary data on their intended outcomes (e.g., baseline data), recipients will capture the majority of their data measuring impact in the remaining years of their grants.

¹⁶ Lewin evaluated recipients' measurement of five broad outcomes, which are based on the 12 initial, intermediate, and long-term outcomes outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.



Exhibit 4 shows which types of outcomes recipients are, as of the mid-point of their grant, fully measuring (full circle), partially measuring (half circle), and planning to measure (open circle).

Exhibit 4. Status of Intended Outcomes Data Collection at Mid-Term

	Improved Transition Experience	Increased Knowledge of Supports	Increased CIE Opportunities	Increased Post-Secondary Education Opportunities	Improved Policies for Transition
Arizona	◐	●	◐	○	◐
Kansas	◐	◐	◐	○	◐
Massachusetts	●	●	●	●	●
Minnesota	●	◐	●	●	◐
North Carolina	●	●	◐	○	◐
Texas	●	●	●	●	○
Virginia	◐	◐	○	◐	○



Conclusion

Unemployment serves as a significant barrier to community living, while access to employment supports and resulting CIE advances full community integration.¹⁷ ACL awarded the seven CCE grants to enhance collaborations among local systems and enhance the transitions between school, work, and community life.¹⁸ To effect change at the community level, recipients engaged with their pilot communities to understand the needs and experiences of youth with ID/DD, families, and teachers, among others. They tailored their approaches to the sociodemographic, geographic, and cultural needs of their communities. Across projects and grant stages, key themes include relationship building and collaboration, cultural and linguistic competency, and the role of lived expertise in driving grant projects. In the latter half of their grants, recipients anticipate continuing implementation of their transition plans, expanding their projects into new communities, collecting and reporting data on progress toward outcomes, and planning for sustainability.

¹⁷ Castruita Rios, Y., Park, S., Chen, X., & Tansey, T. N. (2023). Collaborations to Support Employment Outcomes of Youth with Disabilities. *Rehabilitation Counselors and Educators Journal*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.52017/001c.72655>.

¹⁸ Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Community Collaborations for Employment Program, HHS-2021-ACL-AOD-DNCE-0098.



Appendix A. Methodology

In September 2022, ACL awarded Lewin a five-year contract for the CCE cross-site evaluation. The evaluation seeks to answer the following four questions. The first two questions focus on process, both individually and across recipients, while the third and fourth questions focus on cross-site outcomes.

- How are CCE grant activities being implemented within and across the CCE grants?
- What factors promote or impede the implementation of the four key stages of CCE grants within and across CCE recipients?
- How are recipients increasing the capacity of communities to provide and facilitate transition services between schools and communities for individuals with ID/DD?
- How are recipients increasing the number of youth who find and keep CIE, complete post-secondary education programs, and live and participate fully in their communities?

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Lewin uses the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) five-phase Community Change Process framework to inform the CCE evaluation approach, data collection, and data analysis.¹⁹ The five Community Change Process phases represent similarities in the processes by which communities mobilize to affect change and align with the four CCE grant stages, with the addition of internal evaluation (**Exhibit A1**). Lewin developed data collection tools and designed the qualitative analysis codebook by leveraging the CCE Notice of Funding Opportunity (e.g., grant stage descriptions, intended outcomes) and the Community Change Process framework to capture data relevant to answer the four research questions.

¹⁹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2010). Community Health Assessment and Group Evaluation (CHANGE) Action Guide: Building a Foundation of Knowledge to Prioritize Community Needs. Retrieved from <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/5720>.



Exhibit A1. Crosswalk between CCE Grant Stages and Community Change Process Framework

CCE GRANT STAGE	Community Change Process Phase
Community collaborative	Commitment: the process of assembling a collation of community members to address key issues and form partnerships with other agencies
Landscape analysis	Assessment: data collection and input on the community’s needs
Transition plan development	Planning: building on the assessment phase, a formal plan for change
Transition plan implementation	Implementation: execution of the plan for change in collection with the community, including maintenance of the commitments of the coalition

DATA COLLECTION

Lewin collected data from the CCE recipients beginning in November 2022 through a series of virtual interviews, virtual site visits²⁰, and a review of written reports submitted by the grant teams to ACL. The evaluation uses a participatory approach, in which recipients provide recommendations on grant meetings or activities for observation, individuals for key informant interviews, the content of the grant profiles documenting grant progress, and the overall evaluation approach. This mid-term report reflects data collected through early February 2024.

▶ Semi-annual Report Review

All grant recipients submit semi-annual reports to ACL documenting their progress toward grant goals and objectives, challenges encountered, and planned activities. Lewin reviewed each semi-annual report in preparation for grant interviews to avoid duplication of information already described in the semi-annual report. Lewin added grant-specific questions to interview guides to collect missing data.

²⁰ All site visits during the first evaluation year were virtual. Site visits in the second through fourth evaluation years will include a mixture of in-person and virtual formats; data from these site visits will be included in the final report.



▶ **Virtual Site Visits**

Lewin participated virtually in at least one existing grant meeting in the first evaluation year for each grant recipient and used notes from these visits to inform reporting and analysis.

▶ **Grant Team Interviews**

Lewin interviewed each grant team three times between December 2022 and February 2024. For purposes of this report, Lewin conducted qualitative coding on transcripts from hour-long interviews with grant teams in June/July 2023 and January/February 2024. Lewin used transcripts from the 30-minute interviews to inform subsequent interview guides and inform mid-term reports. Grant interviews focused on contextual factors, progress in each of the grant stages and internal evaluations, and successes, barriers, and lessons learned.

▶ **Stakeholder and Key Informant Interviews**

The evaluation team conducted an interview with one stakeholder, a subject matter expert leading work for the AoD Disability Employment Technical Assistance Center, which provides technical assistance for multiple AoD grant programs, including CCE. The evaluation team also conducted a series of 30- to 60-minute interviews with 15 key informants participating in CCE grants. Interviewees included community collaborative partners and individuals with roles in landscape analyses. Data from these interviews informed data collection, analysis, and reporting.

▶ **Grant Recipient Survey**

Lewin conducted a 21-question survey of each grant recipient in November – December 2023. Questions focused on grant structure and objectives, progress within the four stages of the grant, and internal evaluation methodologies and intended outcomes. Survey question types included multiple choice, short open text, and longer open text responses, with opportunities to clarify any responses or provide additional context in the final survey question. As needed, Lewin followed up with recipients for missing or unclear data. Data from the recipients informed data analysis and is included throughout this report.

Evaluation activities for this report began in Fall 2022 and ended in early February 2024 (**Exhibit A2**). In summer 2023, the evaluation team conducted preliminary data analysis and presented preliminary findings to AoD leadership and grant recipients in October 2023. Findings from preliminary data analysis and discussion with AoD during the leadership briefing informed design of the grant recipient survey and the grant team interviews in January/February 2024, as well as the analysis and reporting presented in this report.



Exhibit A2. Timeline of Cross-Site Evaluation Activities 2022 — 2024



DATA ANALYSIS

Lewin coded qualitative data from semi-annual reports and grant team interviews using the Atlas.Ti software. Evaluators applied a set of codes based on the four grant stages and internal evaluation. The first round of coding included testing the initial set of codes on a subset of materials. Following this first round of coding, the team discussed and refined the codebook; ACL approved the revised codebook prior to Lewin coding the full set of materials. One evaluator coded all materials for consistency and one evaluator reviewed all coding and provided feedback. Once all materials were coded, evaluators assessed for emergent themes. Lewin provided an opportunity for grant recipients to review and share feedback on the draft reports in March — April 2024. Feedback was incorporated in revised reports.