



# CAPE - Youth

CENTER FOR ADVANCING POLICY  
ON EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUTH

## Framework for the Future: Interagency Collaboration in Support of Youth with Disabilities

CBI Concurrent Workshop, Tuesday at 9:45 am - 11:30 am

# Funding

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**The Council  
of State  
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**ILR Yang-Tan Institute**

# Presenters



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# CAPE-Youth: What We Do

## CAPE-Youth:

- Conducts research on new and existing innovative policy and practice;
- Develops strategic partnerships;
- Shares best practices among key stakeholders; and
- Helps states identify opportunities for new programs and services.

# Workshop Objectives

Participants will:

1. learn how frequency of collaborative practices, knowledge about their partners, types of collaboration practices and confidence in serving different vulnerable youth populations relate to employment outcomes;
2. examine practices implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic that can be applied in their own context; and
3. estimate levels of collaboration within their own networks and identify collaboration practices that attendees can be apply to their own work.

# Why study collaboration?

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 renewed focus on collaboration between vocational rehabilitation (VR), workforce development and other agency partners serving youth and young adults with disabilities (Y&YAD).

- Goal of ensuring that “a full range of services is available, regardless of disability or cultural background.” <sup>1</sup>
- But challenges remain for effective collaboration at state and local levels, and the pandemic gave rise to new issues. <sup>2</sup>

# Service Coordination and Transition

Interagency collaboration can be vital because some transitioning youth are involved in multiple systems.

- Coordination of services and supports can require increased information sharing, cross agency referrals and more.
- For instance, youth might simultaneously be involved in one or more systems such as: education, VR, social security, juvenile justice, foster care, developmental disability or mental health.



# What do we mean by collaboration?

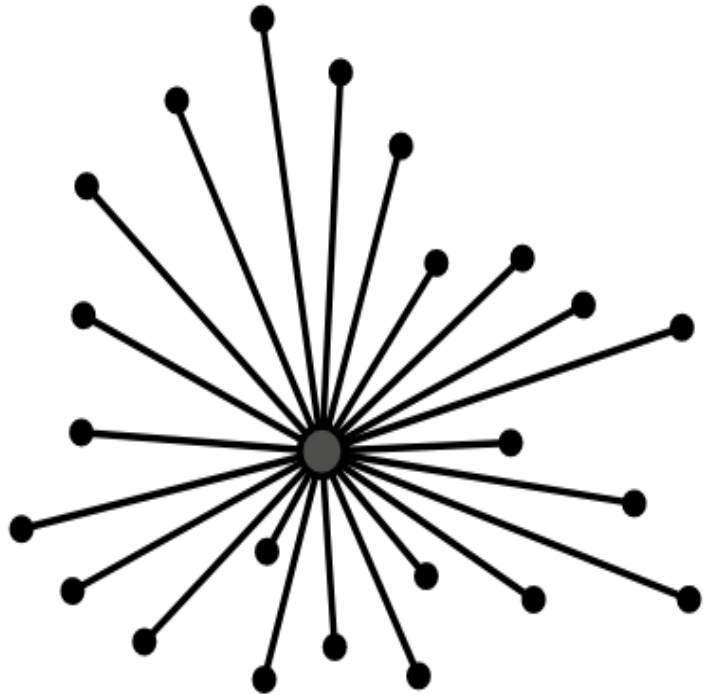
Interagency collaboration in transition-to-adulthood is a commonly recommended practice.

- But collaboration can mean many different things, so it's key to understand what type of collaborations lead to better transition and employment outcomes for youth.<sup>3</sup>
- Some research suggests agencies should focus on instrumental elements like frequently communicating, sharing resources, having formal agreements and role clarity.<sup>4, 5</sup>

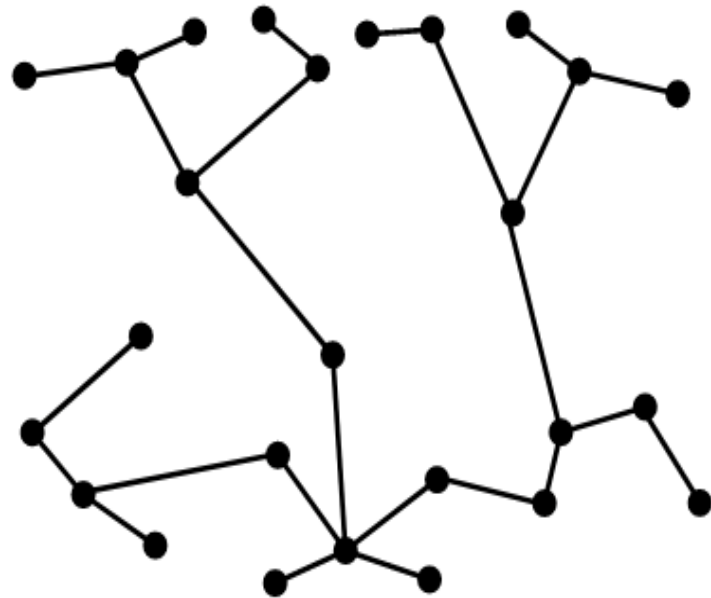


# How to Think About Networks

Centralized  
Network



Decentralized  
Network



# Collaboration: More Than Connection

## Levels of Collaboration<sup>4</sup>

- Networking (1): Aware of each organization; loosely defined roles; little communication; independent decision making
- Cooperation (2): Provide information to each other; roles somewhat defined; formal communication; independent decision making
- Coordination (3): Shared information, resources; defined roles; frequent communication; some shared decision making
- Coalition (4): Share ideas, resources; frequent, prioritized communication; all members have a vote in decision making
- Collaboration (5): One system; frequent, trusting communication; consensus

# CAPE-Youth Collaboration Study

- Research Questions: What are existing levels of collaboration among agencies serving transitioning Y&YADs? What common features are present in states showing strong collaborations?
  - Phase 1: Surveyed supervisors and “frontline” service providers across key agencies in all 50 states and compared with Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA)-911 data
  - Phase 2: Conducted focus group interviews with a subset of professionals in 10 states (1 state per federal region)

# 338 Responses to the Survey

Agency Type	n
Vocational Rehabilitation	98
Workforce Title I	48
K-12/Career and Technical Education	41
Other	41
Developmental Disabilities	32
Child Welfare	23
Mental Health	14
Juvenile Justice	13
Higher Education	12
Social Security	10
Workforce Title II	6

# Survey Content

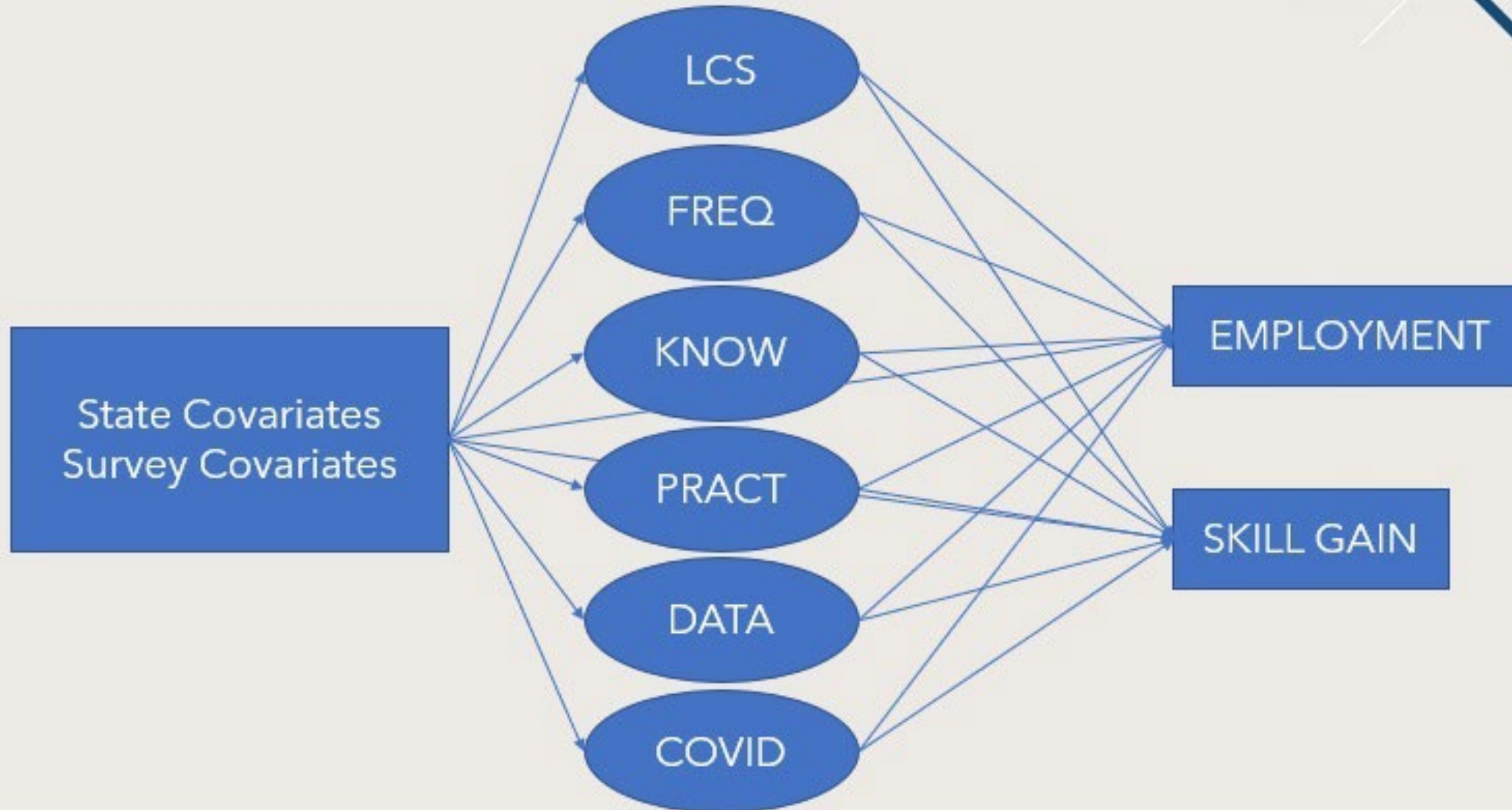
## Collaboration

- Levels of Collaboration (LCS)
- Frequency of different practices
- Partner knowledge
- Practices
- Data sharing
- COVID impacts

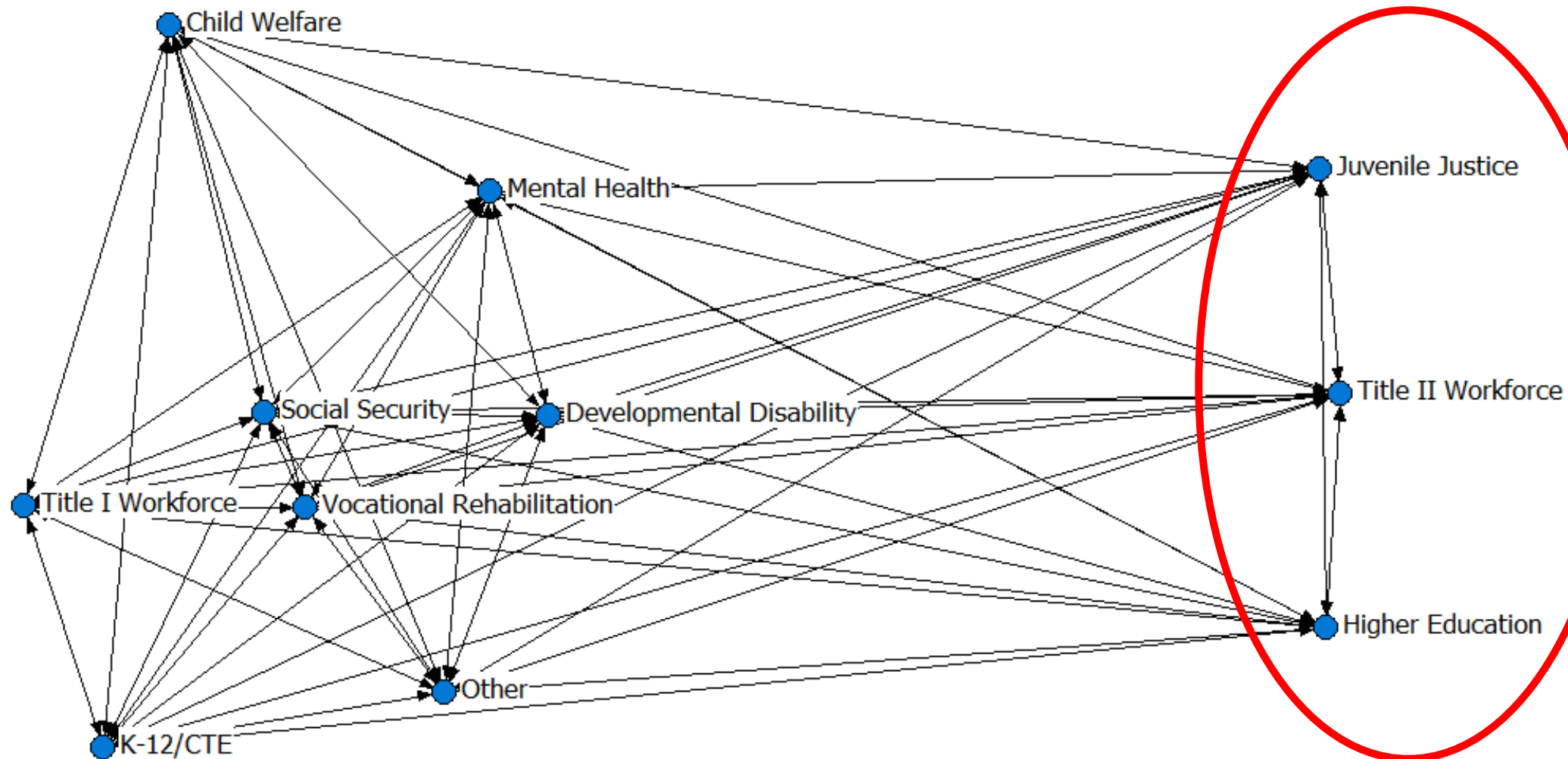
## Demographics

- Years of experience in the field (M = 16.12), agency (M = 10.10)
- Job role (39.64% supervisors)
- Gender (76.04% male)
- Race (79.88% white) and ethnicity (90.53% non-Hispanic)
- Disability (76.04% non-disabled)

# Collaboration and Employment



# Identifying Gaps in Collaboration





# Impact of Job Role

- For the five collaboration subscales, responses differed in comparison to supervisors.
  - Frontline staff responded lower than supervisors on levels of collaboration, partner knowledge and COVID impact.
  - Staff who fill both supervisory and frontline roles responded higher than supervisors on partner knowledge, practices and data use.

	Frontline		Both	
LCS	-0.30	*	0.03	
Frequency	-0.20		0.01	
Knowledge	-0.97	**	0.82	*
Practices	-0.01		0.18	*
Data	0.05		0.48	**
COVID	-0.38	**	0.11	

# Agency Differences

	LCS	Frequency	Knowledge	Practices	Data	COVID
JJ						
CW						
Title I						
Title II						
K-12 + CTE	-0.88					
SS						
DD	-0.47					
MH						
Higher Ed						
Other agency	-0.39	-0.34				0.35

# 15 Focus Group Interviews

State	n	Groups
Arizona	8	1
Massachusetts	4	1
Michigan	4	1
Missouri	9	2
New Jersey	5	1
North Carolina	7	2
Oklahoma	5	2
Utah	5	1
Virginia	16	4

# Primary Themes

- Formality
- Information and Resource Sharing
- Communication
- Youth Empowerment
- Impact of COVID-19

# Theme: Formality

	Sub-Theme	Description
A	Written interagency agreements	Use of interagency agreements (e.g., MOUs, MOAs)
B	Interagency collaboratives	Existence and function of interagency working groups
C	Agency bridges/liaisons	Agencies facilitating new connections
D	Policy and practice disconnect	Effect of high-level collaborations on service delivery

# Policy, Practice Disconnect

- There is an issue of high-level policies and practices within states failing to “trickle down”.

“The collaboration on the frontline is completely different...let’s face it. You talk to my boss and the information is one thing...by the time it trickles down, if it does, the message is completely different.”

“So the MOUs need to be developed, but we get these benchmarks, this is what you are looking to do, the scope of work and everything else, but what is reality? I think some MOUs are missing the reality piece of it.”

# Theme: Information & Resource Sharing

	Sub-Theme	Description
A	Data sharing and referrals	Barriers and facilitators to sharing data across agencies
B	Cross-training opportunities	Role of training in information and resource sharing
C	Legal and process barriers	Practical barriers to agencies sharing information
D	Familiarity and trust	Familiarity/trust with other agencies' services and function



# Cross-Training Opportunities

- Interagency cross-training and information sharing opportunities were frequently mentioned as an important practice related to resource and information sharing.

“I just finished...collaborating with our [DD] employment team partners to do collaborative presentations to each of the local areas between [VR] and [DD] staff across the entire state. So we went to each of the local areas and...had collaborative meetings where we talked about how do our agencies collaborate...how to do a referral, when to do a referral, and so they knew about each other's agencies.”

# Theme: Communication

	Sub-Theme	Description
A	Barriers/facilitators to communication	Barriers and facilitators to effective communication
B	Role clarity & mutual decision making	Existence of clear roles and mutual decision making
C	Staffing, capacity and resource issues	Impact of capacity and resources on communications

# Staffing, Capacity, Resource Issues

- Large caseloads and some of the practical or budgetary limitations make it difficult to have points of contact that are widely integrated with other systems.

“I don’t know if it is something preventing full collaboration, but money is the bottom line...It would be great if we had a career center staff person at every single school, all day long, but logistically impossible...I think a lot of it, on a behind the scenes level, when you are not frontline, is just the money piece of it.”

“We [VR] have a lot of turnover. What our staff do, you know, they all have a lot on their plates. So we’re always trying to figure out...How do we reach out to staff and not just put more on their plates?”

# Theme: Youth Empowerment

	Sub-Theme	Description
A	Client self-determination	Supporting youth self-determined decision making
B	Communicating complex systems	Describing complex systems/services to youth/families
C	Preventing service gaps	Preventing gaps as youth move between systems

# Youth Voice

- It is important to situate the youth service recipient within those collaborations—ensuring that the goal of collaboration is to empower the youth in their transition to adulthood, between systems, out of systems and so on.

“I think I’d like to see more youth voice being used in...service delivery...we’ve really tried to increase our hiring of young people with lived experience in our system. You know, give satisfaction surveys and being part of program development. And I think it really helps make sure that your service delivery is improving in a way that meets your clients’ needs.”

# Preventing Service Gaps

- Youth empowerment, communicating complex services and avoiding service gaps can become even more urgent, and complicated, when youth have multiple disabilities.

“If [a youth has] [one] disability...gaps are manageable. But if you have multiple disabilities, that gap becomes almost like a chasm, if you will. It becomes so wide that either agency is very limited or very unwilling to move forward in a way that requires them or allows them to try and fill those gaps. Either because in their mind, it does not justify the number of people that they are serving, we should be serving. Or because it would cause too much of a financial hardship on their budget if they'd try to take on that additional area of services that needs to be provided.”

# Theme: Effect of COVID-19

	Sub-Theme	Description
A	Service disruptions	Service disruptions during the pandemic
B	Technological and geographic barriers	Technology/geographic barriers during the pandemic
C	Remote work effect on collaborations	Effect of remote work on interagency collaboration



# Remote Collaboration

- Many participants described “Zoom fatigue” and issues related to coworker and cross-agency accountability from the movement to remote work and meetings.

“In the meetings, they continued, and people schedules were put online. It was all accountability. So, I felt like as a team we worked completely well together. Then it got old and I am really sick of it now, but, yeah, that sort of stuff stuck with me.”

# Policy and Practice Opportunities

- Initiate new collaborations with the weakest partners: Title II Workforce, Higher Education, Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare.
- Add cross-training: Cross-train with agencies your agency doesn't typically collaborate with to learn about services, referrals and outcomes to increase partner knowledge
- Consider digital divides for youth in rural areas or youth living at/below poverty level: consider innovative hybrid models, partner with community organizations (e.g., libraries, Non-Governmental Organizations [NGO]) and local foundations.

# Conclusion

- Results suggested a high interdependence between instrumental aspects of collaboration and objectives of youth self-determination and case coordination.
- There is a need for staff and supervisors to truly understand other agencies' service offerings, processes for offering those services and desired outcomes.
- Service gaps, waitlists and not knowing who to contact were seen as barriers to collaboration and trust.
- With the range of complicated services and systems that a young person is likely to experience, youth empowerment cannot be facilitated without clear frameworks for communicating across agencies.

# Questions and Contact Information

## Questions about the Collaboration Study?

### Contact Us:

- Leslie Shaw: [leslie.shaw@cornell.edu](mailto:leslie.shaw@cornell.edu)
- Matt Saleh: [mcs378@cornell.edu](mailto:mcs378@cornell.edu)
- General CAPE-Youth Inquires
- If you are interested in learning more about our work or participating in our research initiatives, please contact:
  - <https://capeyouth.org/> or
  - [info@capeyouth.org](mailto:info@capeyouth.org).



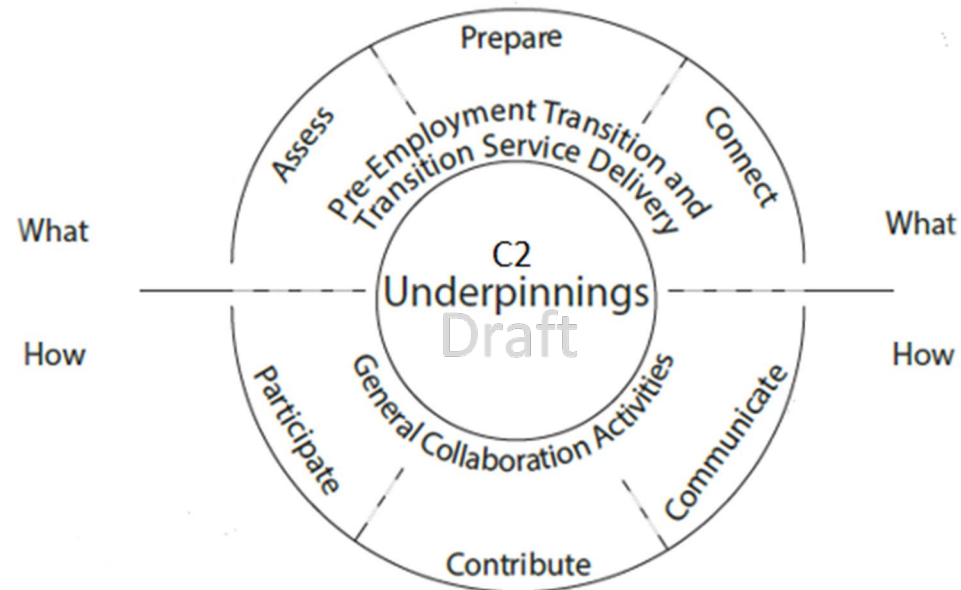
@CAPEYouth



@CSG CAPEYouth

# References

- <sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Education. (2017). One-Stop Operations Guidance for the American Job Center Network. <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/rsa/subregulatory/tac-17-02.pdf>
- <sup>2</sup> Oertle, K. M., Bobroff, S., & Sax, C. L. (2020). Organizational policies and personnel factors that are incentives for and challenges to collaboration as identified by statewide transition supervisors. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1044207320943544>
- <sup>3</sup> Longoria, R. A. (2005). Is inter-organizational collaboration always a good thing? *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 32(3), pp. 123–140.
- <sup>4</sup> Frey, B. B., Lohmeier, J. H., Lee, S. W., & Tollefson, N. (2006). Measuring collaboration among grant partners. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 27(3), pp. 383–392.
- <sup>5</sup> Fabian, E., Dong, S., Simonsen, M., Luecking, D. M., & Deschamps, A. (2016). Service system collaboration in transition: An empirical exploration of its effects on rehabilitation outcomes for students with disabilities. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 82(3), 3–10.
- <sup>6</sup> Reynolds, P. (2022). The Oracle of Bacon. <https://oracleofbacon.org/movielinks.php>



# Collaborate for Change (C2)

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**C2 Model and competencies overview: Frameworks for the future Capacity Building Institute 2023**

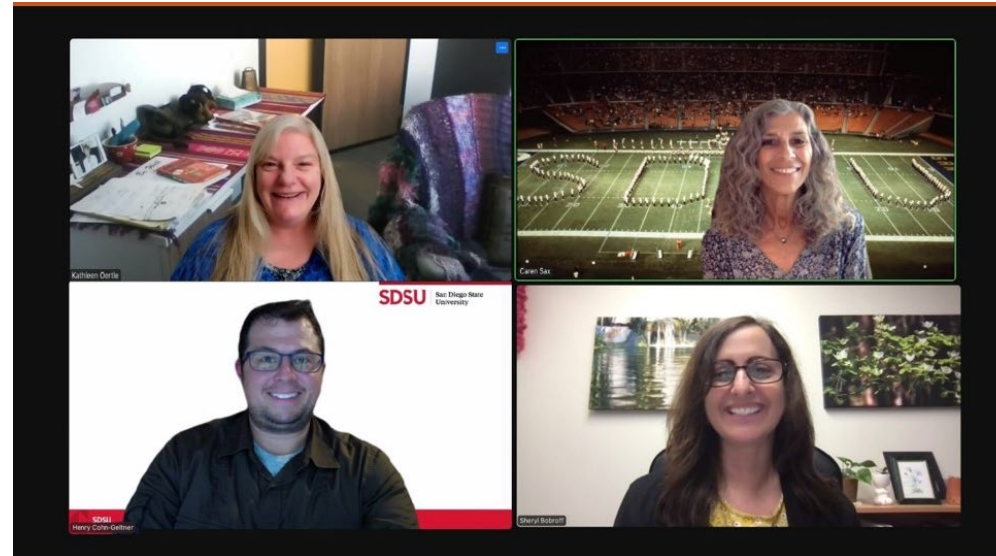
For more about C2, [check our recorded presentation](#) and reach out, call 435-797-3241 or write [kathleen.oertle@usu.edu](mailto:kathleen.oertle@usu.edu)

# Collaborate for Change (C2)

## NIDILRR FIP Development (2019-2023); Grant Number 90IFDV0011

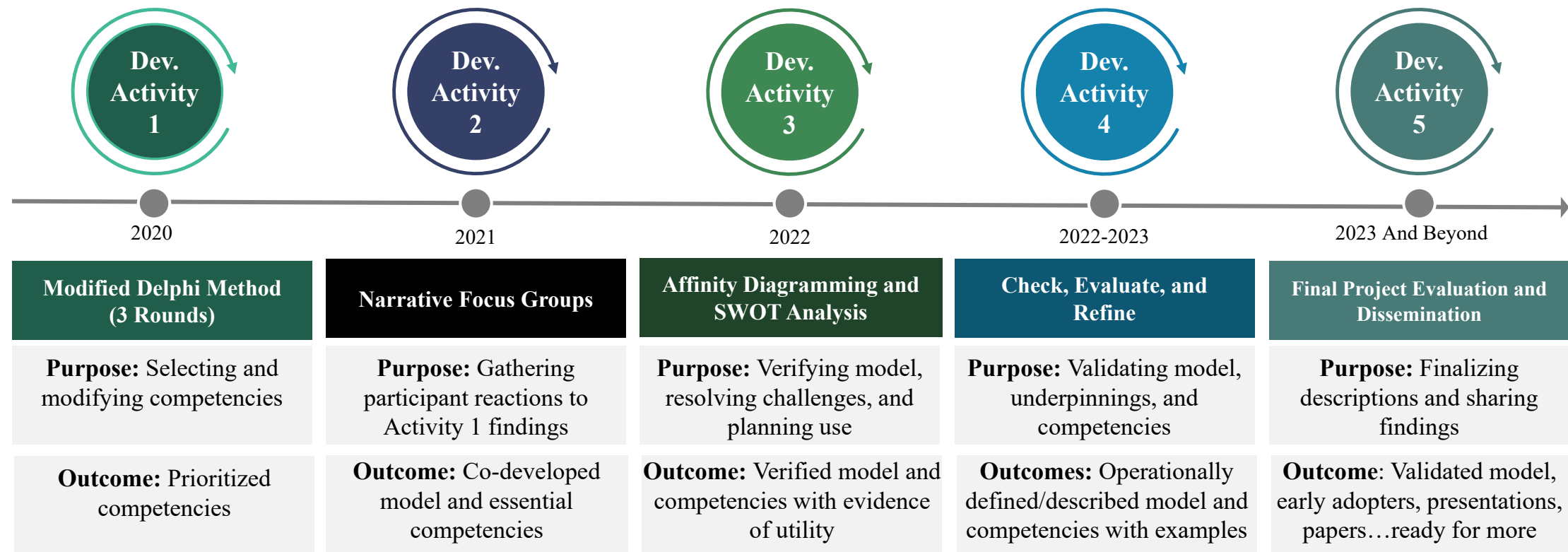
### *Brief Project Summary (Oertle, Sax, Cohn-Geltner, & Bobroff)*

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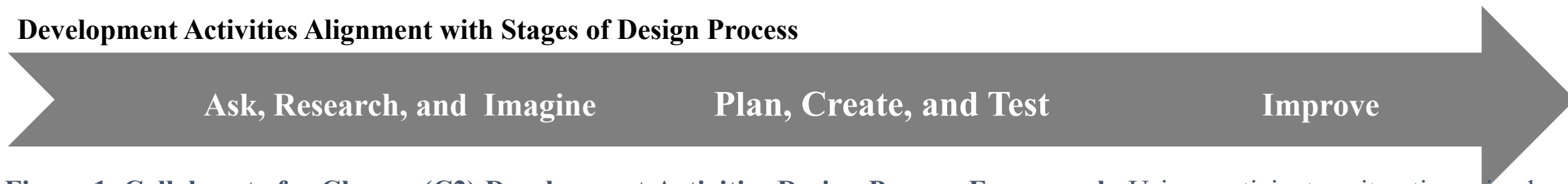


The core goals of C2, in alignment with the needs in the field, are to more clearly define special educator and rehabilitation counselor transition collaboration roles, articulate expectations, and develop collaboration measurement models with strategies to improve efficacy.



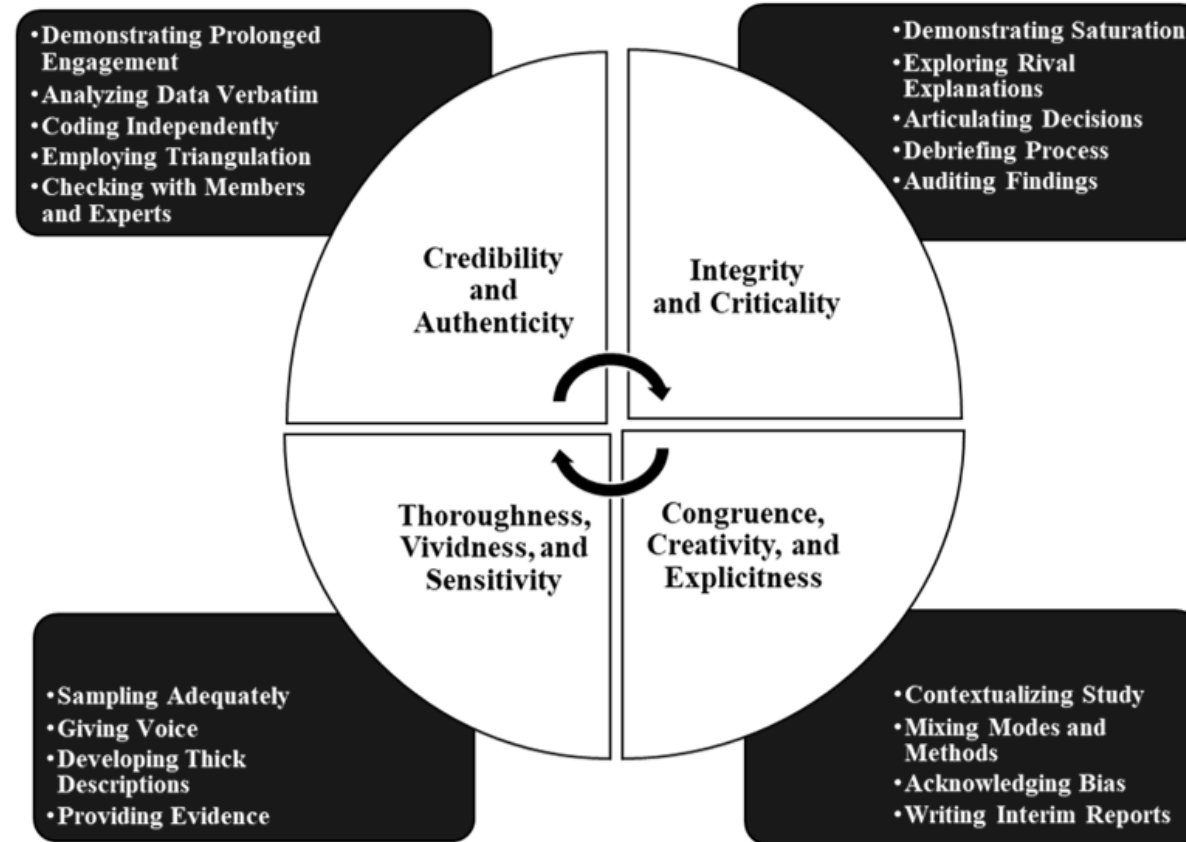


### Development Activities Alignment with Stages of Design Process



**Figure 1. Collaborate for Change (C2) Development Activities Design Process Framework.** Using participatory iterative mixed methods with planned diffusion of innovations designed for early adoption through deep and prolonged engagement of transition leaders across all activities at national, state, and local levels. Note: Start-up activities were done in fall 2019 – early spring 2020.

# Establishing Validity Within and Across Activities



*Figure 2.* Collaborate for Change (C2) Validity Criteria and Techniques. The primary (top) and secondary (bottom) criteria and techniques used for demonstrating validity in design considerations, data generation, analytic decisions, and presentation (modified from Oertle, Bobroff and Sax, 2021 based on recommendations from Whittemore, Chase, and Mandle, 2001).

# Highlighted C2 Model Uses Gathered From Participants

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- Setting the framework for transition-specific collaboration
  - Using for planning and taking actions after meeting with teams
  - Knowing what each person is doing, when to collaborate, sets the standard on the state and local levels
- Building a network focused on transition collaboration
  - Making sure the students and their families are the priority using person-driven approaches
  - Learning and understanding terms and services across environments
- Educating about transition-specific collaborative activities
  - Learning how to collaborate in transition education and services
  - Teaching and counseling students and their families so their input is included from the beginning
  - Promoting cross-training starting with leadership

# A Brief Description of the Collaborate for Change (C2) Model

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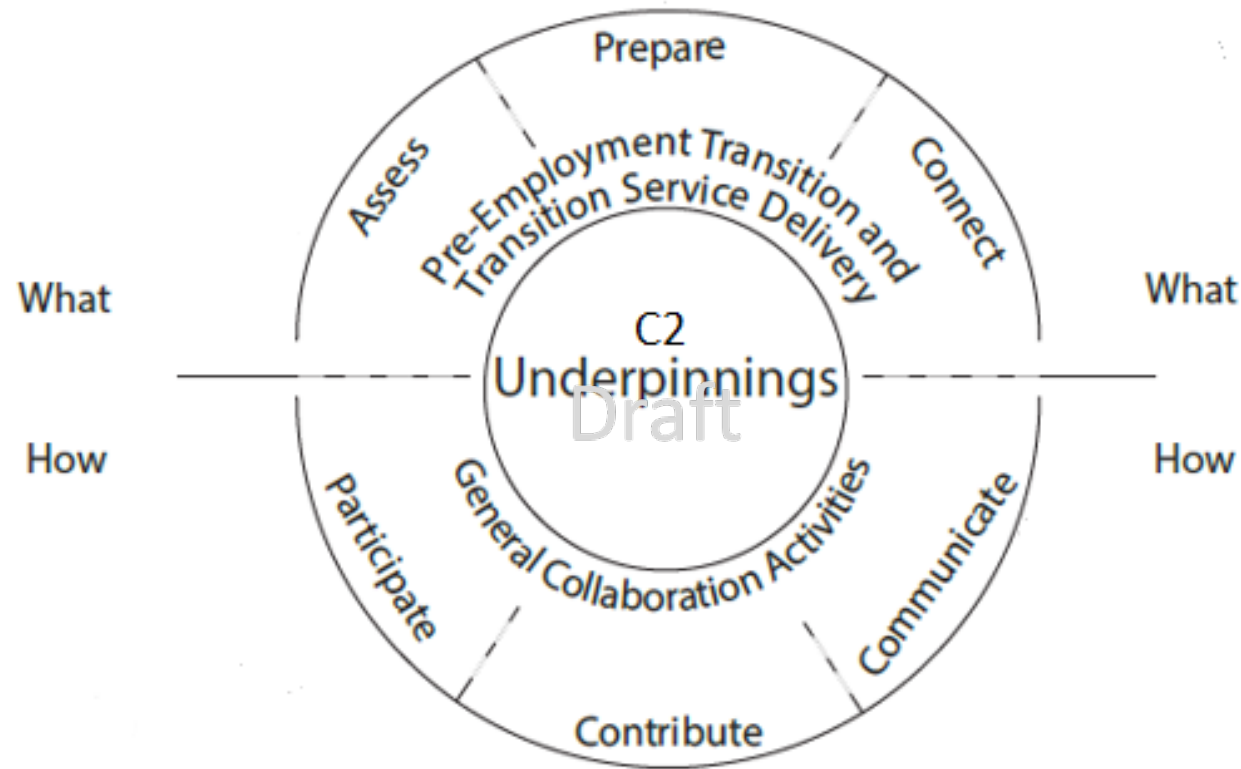
C2 is an approach to intentionally apply collaboration in the delivery of services to improve outcomes. A structure with aligned practices, this transition collaboration model offers a framework with essential activities operationalized as standard operating procedures of which the quality depends upon foundational underpinnings.

# Underpinnings Influencing Effectiveness

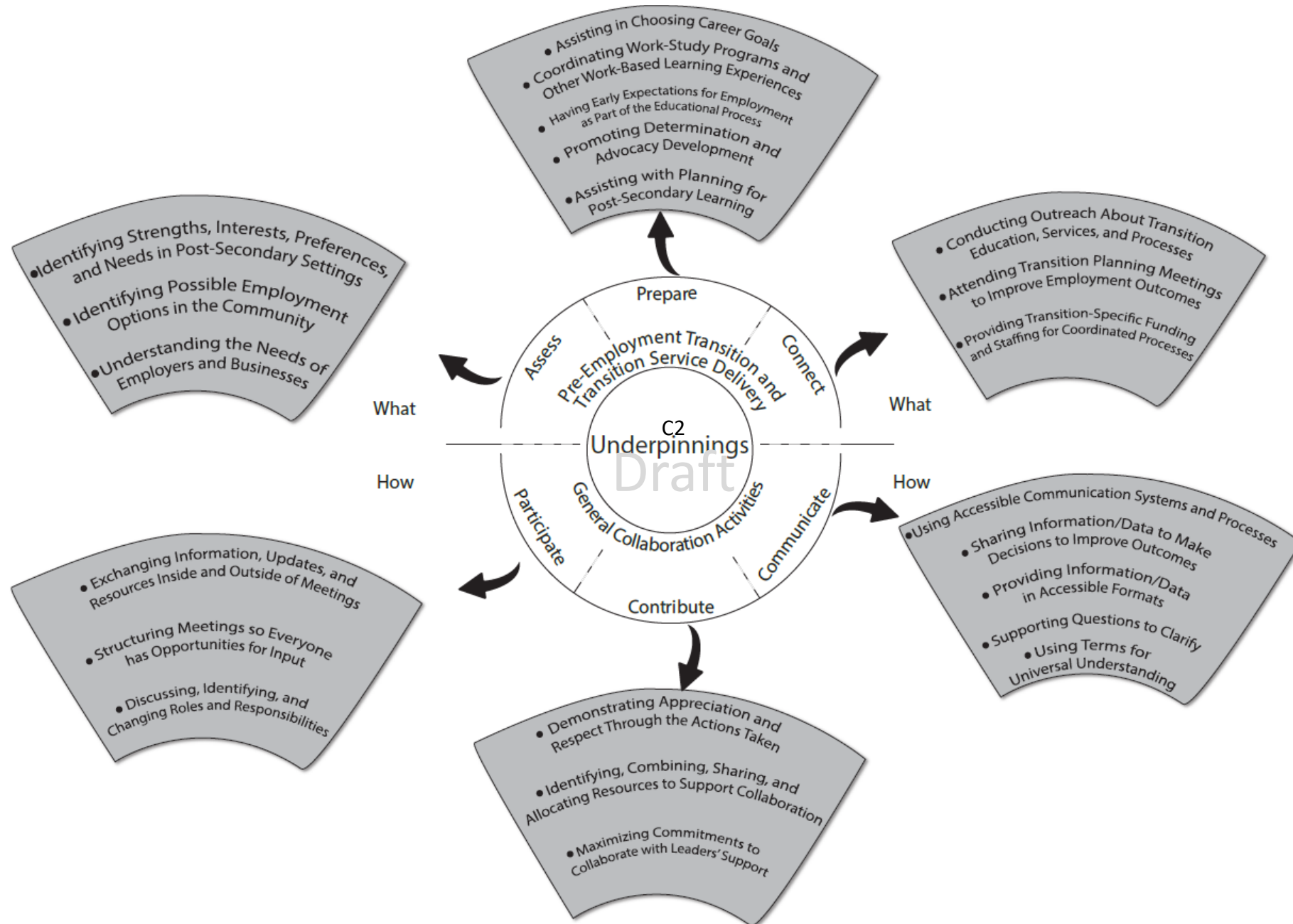
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- Positionality, Fluidity, and Norms(rules) of engagement
- **Essential Tenets**
  - **Active Person-Driven Planning** = Including youth/students and their support as essential team members
  - **Early and High Employment Expectations** = Sharing mission and vision for connecting education with *employment*
  - **Research Informed Processes and Systems** = Using the best available evidence, process, and targeting results

# Collaborate for Change (C2) Model



# Collaborate for Change (C2) Model , Constructs, Indicators, and Competency Statements

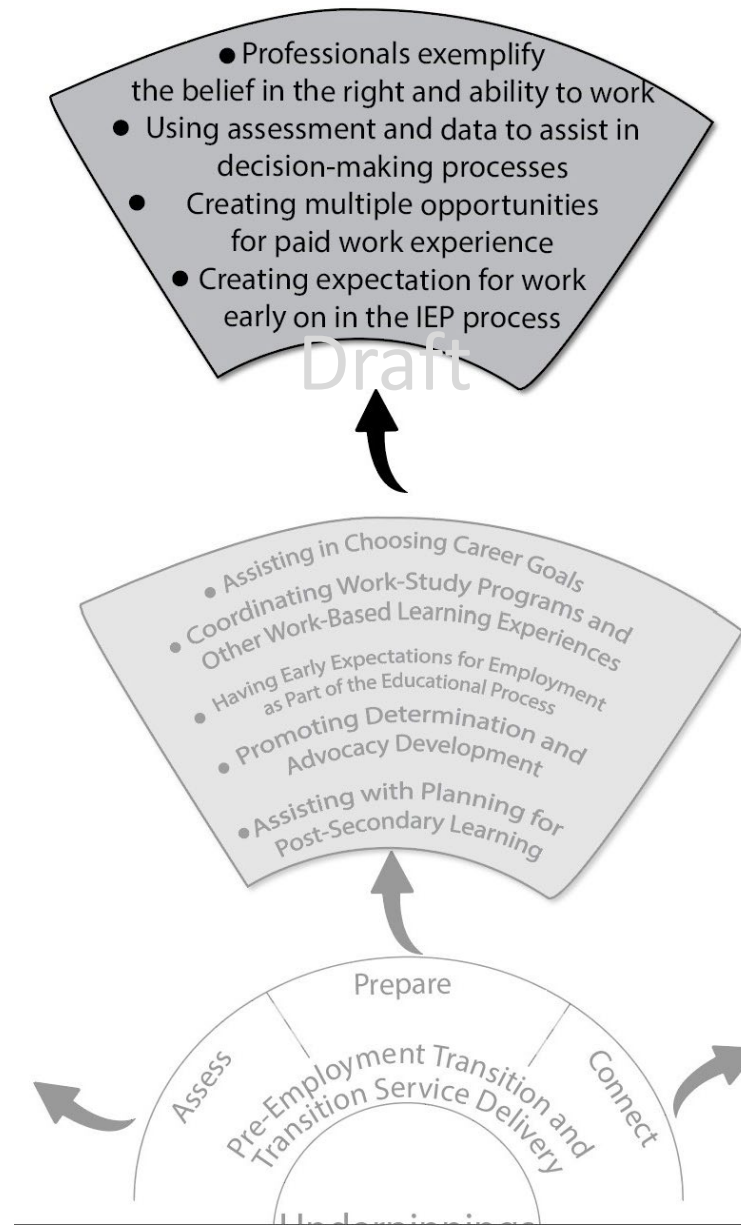


# Focusing on *Prepare of the What as an Example*

Activities  
Highlighted

Statements  
in Brief

**What**





*Prepare: Assisting in choosing career goals*  
Verbatim Quote on the Importance to Transition Collaboration

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“I would just reiterate that coordination of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) with the goals identified on the Individualized Education Program (IEP) ensures all partners are strategically working toward the same goals with the student and their family.”

# Prepare

## Competency Statement - Assisting in choosing career goals

### ***Annotated Description***

Strategic and coordinated informed choice, consent, and decision-making process by which goal development activities are developed by youth and students aligned with the assessment processes, planning, and assistance through early and frequent career discussions and exploration, explicit teaching, counseling, role-modeling, and mentoring

### ***Paraphrased Collaboration Examples***

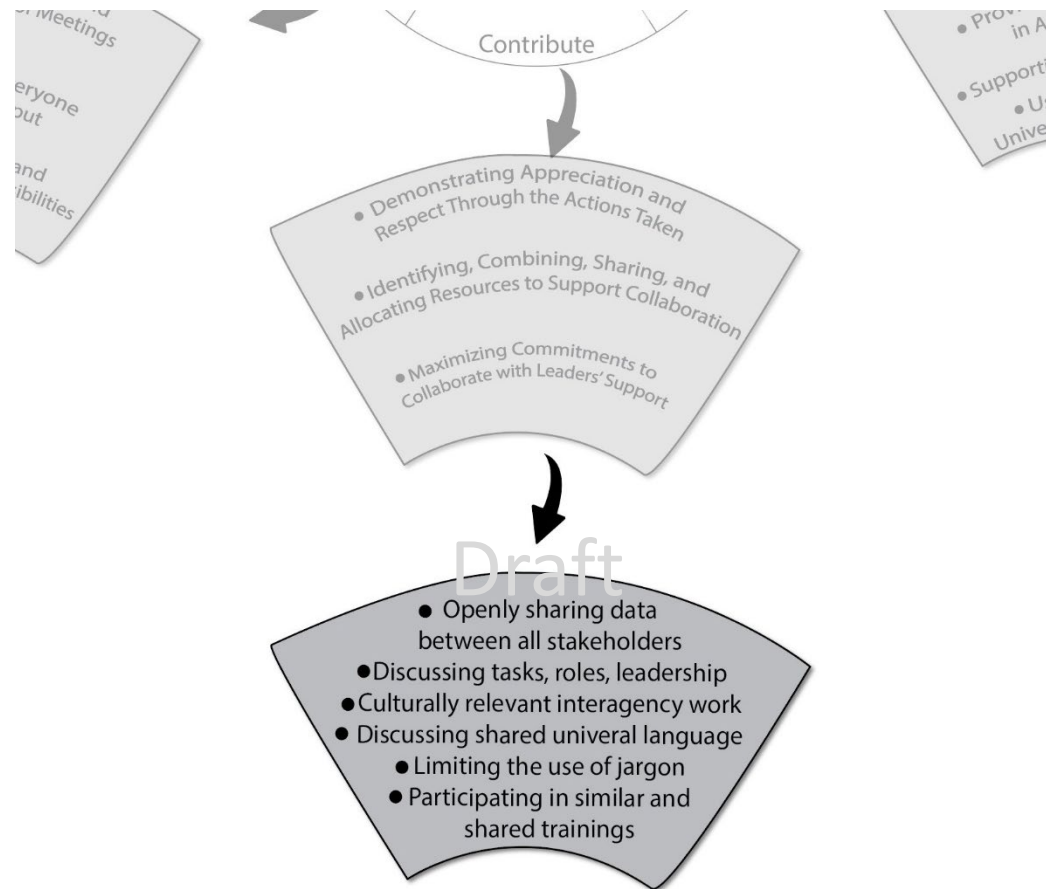
- Demonstrating high expectations by coordinating the hiring of professionals (teachers and counselors) who exemplify the right to work so these expectations are modeled and employed mentors with disabilities are introduced to youth, students, and their families;
- Assisting youth and students in determining a career path, exploring potential training options, and learning how to make arrangements for training with guidance from the family, practitioners in the school, VR, and additional agencies if needed. The VR counselor sponsors assessments available on website which students and school staff use as well as computer-generated programs and the school maintains a comprehensive database of service providers, VR counselors for Pre-Employment Transition Services and Transition Services, educators, mentors, and other member agencies
- Having vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors/transition coordinators regularly attend Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings to provide continuity in goal setting and career services to assist in understanding strengths, needs, interests, and how this translates to future goals and work options and advocating for and supporting youth and students to lead all career activities outlined in and aligned with the IEP plan that matches the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE); and
- Coordinating goal development, career exploration, and identification of interests and strengths that is informed by assessments and learning experiences such as job experiences, job shadowing, curricula, labor market information, and interest inventories

# Focusing on *Contribute of the How as an Example*

## How

Statements  
in Brief

Activities  
Highlighted



## *Contribute: Maximizing Commitments to Collaborate with Leaders' Support*

Verbatim Quote on the Importance to Transition Collaboration

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“Support of those who oversee the programs. In all areas possible we are encouraged to collaborate. The support from the top sets the stage and allows collaboration to happen. It is difficult to have a true collaboration without expectations from your supervisor.”

## Contribute

### Competency Statement - Maximizing Commitments to Collaborate with Leaders' Support

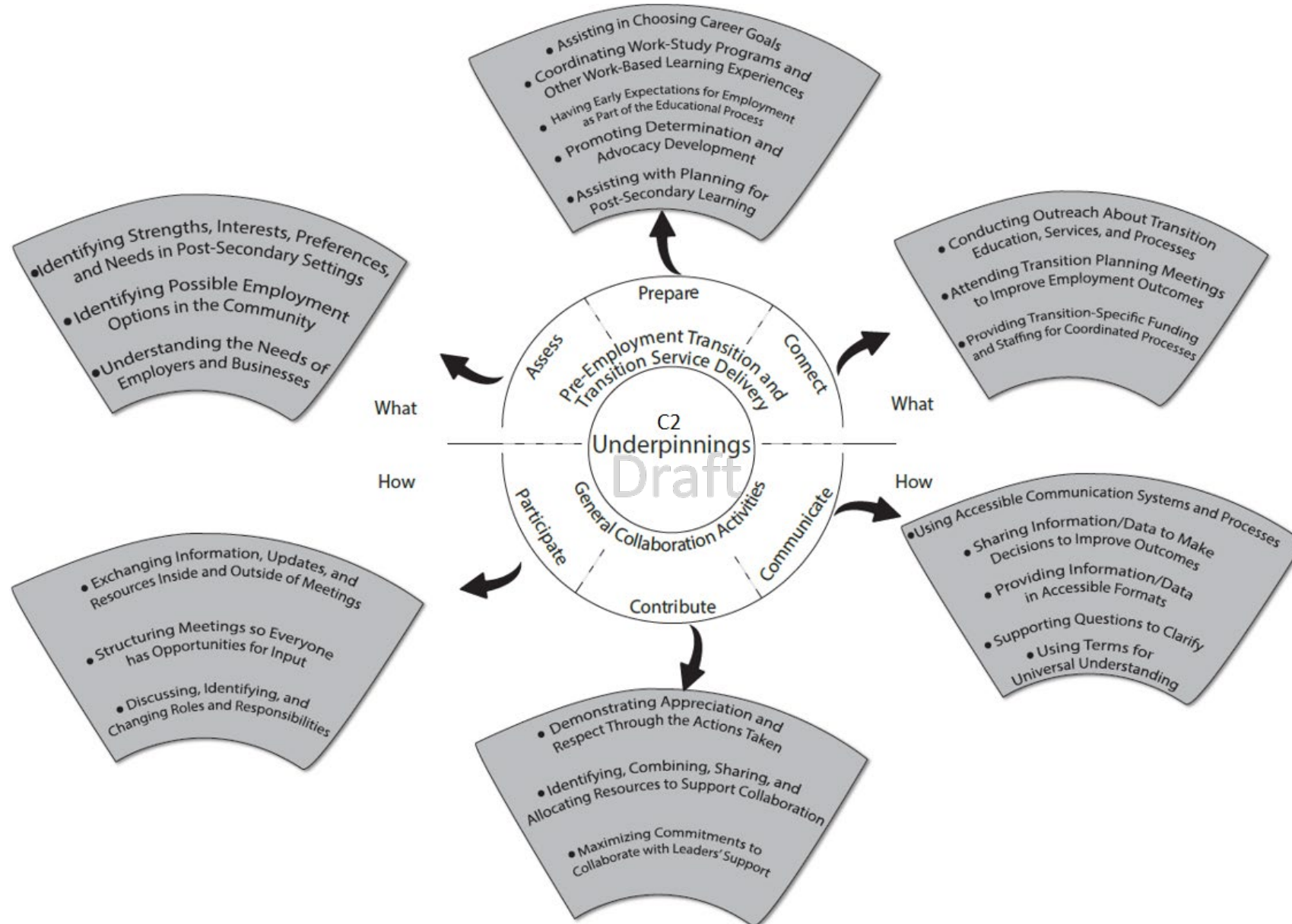
#### ***Annotated Description***

Leadership communicates the value and benefits of collaborating by providing financial and structural support, and operating procedures to allow the collaborative practices to function, trust to be built, and solutions to be developed at all levels

#### ***Paraphrased Summaries of Collaborative Examples***

- Meetings are held regularly between the statewide leaders for special education and vocational rehabilitation, Commission for the Blind, Visually Impaired managers, Principals, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) directors to establish effective practices for working together and sharing information;
- Dedicating staff within statewide offices to support transition instead of adding transition to the role of existing staff with MOUs;
- Participating in the Capacity Building Institute from NTACT-C and Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT) meetings to determine statewide transition priorities, including the development of collaboration and professionals who are skilled and knowledgeable regarding transition by statewide leaders;
- Allocating financial resources for collaboration and transition professional development initiatives; and
- Promoting of cross-training activities and opportunities and peer training by leadership.

# What are you thinking?



# Next Steps: Further Engagement in Development and Research

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- **Sharing and Implementing**
  - **Welcome collaborators**
- Further Development and Testing Model and Competencies
  - Constructs, Indications, Items, and Descriptions, Activity Examples
- Seeking Funding
  - NIDILRR FIP application submitted December 16, 2022
- Improving Education and Training
  - E.g., New, Approved [USU Transition Education and Services Certificate](#)

## *Contribute: Demonstrating Appreciation and Respect Through the Actions Taken*

Verbatim Quote on the Importance to Transition Collaboration

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“It is important that appreciation and respect are equally extended to our family partners - not just professional partners. Everyone is heard and others learn from what they have to say even if we may disagree. This is the basis for any relationship”



Thank you for your time and feedback! You are appreciated!  
For more about C2, **check our recorded presentation** and reach out, call 435-797-3241 or write [kathleen.oertle@usu.edu](mailto:kathleen.oertle@usu.edu)

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Notes.

Acknowledgements for their hard-work, dedication, and input to all the Statewide Transition Leaders of special education and rehabilitation counseling and C2 project partners (see slide notes for the project partner list)

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human research participants at Utah State University has reviewed and approved the C2 project (Utah State University [USU] IRB Protocol #10824). If you have questions about the C2 project itself, please contact Dr. Kathleen (Kat) Oertle, the Principal Investigator at 435-797-3241 or [\*\*kathleen.oertle@usu.edu\*\*](mailto:kathleen.oertle@usu.edu). Questions or concerns regarding IRB, please contact the USU IRB Director at (435) 797-0567 or [irb@usu.edu](mailto:irb@usu.edu).

The contents of this project are being developed in partnership with the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) and with the input of the C2 national liaisons and field contacts under a grant from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR grant number 90IFDV0011-01-00). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents of this project do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, or HHS, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

Please take a moment to submit your session  
**Quick Reaction**

