

2023 RETAIN Annual Convening Proceedings Report

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Contents

Attachments.....	1
Introduction	2
Annual Convening Attendees.....	2
Third RETAIN Annual Convening Key Themes	3
Day 1	4
Plenary Session Key Takeaways	5
Plenary Session Key Takeaways	6
Mathematica Evaluation Update Key Takeaways	9
Plenary Session Key Takeaways	13
Process Mapping Key Takeaways.....	15
Day 2	16
Plenary Session Key Takeaways	17
Plenary Session Key Takeaways	20

Exhibits

Exhibit 1. RETAIN 2023 Annual Convening Attendee Snapshot.....	2
Exhibit 2. Topic Room 1 Summary.....	10
Exhibit 3. Topic Room 2 Summary.....	10
Exhibit 4. Topic Room 3 Summary.....	11
Exhibit 5. Summary of State Process Map Presentations	14
Exhibit 6. Summary of Business Engagement Plan Discussion	18
Exhibit 7. Key Takeaways From State Team Action Planning Sessions	21

Attachments

The attached supplemental materials provide additional details:

- Attachment 1. Third RETAIN Annual Convening Agenda
- Attachment 2a. Third RETAIN Annual Convening Day 1 Session Slides
- Attachment 2b. Third RETAIN Annual Convening Day 2 Session Slides
- Attachment 3. Third RETAIN Annual Convening Reflections Guide
- Attachment 4. Third RETAIN Annual Convening Participants List
- Attachment 5. Third RETAIN Annual Convening Presenter and Subject Matter Expert Bios
- Attachment 6. Third RETAIN Annual Convening Local Area Guide

Introduction

The American Institutes for Research® (AIR®), Retaining Employment and Talent After Injury/Illness Network (RETAIN) technical assistance (TA) provider, held the third Annual Convening in person at AIR’s headquarters in Crystal City, Virginia, on September 19–20, 2023. The purpose of the convening was for Phase 2 states to

- learn about new ideas related to stay-at-work (SAW)/return-to-work (RTW) and about action items for improving RETAIN programs; and
- collaborate with other RETAIN states by sharing ideas, challenges, experiences, and solutions.

AIR designed the Annual Convening agenda to provide relevant content for the multi-stakeholder audience of each RETAIN state team and to provide opportunities for discussion within and across roles and states.

This report presents an account of the proceedings for each day of the event.

Annual Convening Attendees

A total of 74 participants attended the third Annual Convening (see Exhibit 1). AIR invited each RETAIN state to send the following representatives: their state project director, RTW coordinator, workforce development representative, medical partner representative, state TA liaison, and evaluation liaison. Each state could have up to four additional attendees, for a total of 10 per team. In addition, participants from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) and Employment Training Administration, the Social Security Administration, and Mathematica, the independent evaluator, attended. Subject matter experts (SMEs) with expertise in content areas such as SAW/RTW, outreach to policymakers and employers, and sustainability also attended.

Exhibit 1. RETAIN 2023 Annual Convening Attendee Snapshot

Attendee Snapshot	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Total participants: 74• Total nonstate, non-AIR registrants (e.g., federal agencies, SMEs, presenters): 21• Total state team participants: 39	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Total participants per state team:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Kansas: 9– Kentucky: 10– Minnesota: 8– Ohio: 8– Vermont: 4

Third RETAIN Annual Convening Key Themes

During the 2 days of the event, through attendee sharing and large- and small-group discussions, the following themes regarding RETAIN implementation emerged:

- **Theme 1: Engaging Business Is an Important Part of Sustainability Planning.** RETAIN states actively conduct outreach to businesses about the services RETAIN offers them and their employees with an illness or injury. The next step in business engagement is for RETAIN states to consider how businesses and the workforce system can play roles in helping RETAIN states develop their sustainability plans.
- **Theme 2: Tailored Messaging Is a Necessary Component of Outreach Efforts.** RETAIN states need to tailor their messaging to potential participants, businesses, health care providers, and policymakers to address the motivation of each audience. For each of these groups, RETAIN states should consider driving and restraining forces as well as promotion and prevention mindsets. Tailored messaging is also important for RETAIN states to consider when developing their website content and design to improve the visibility of their RETAIN programs for all audiences.
- **Theme 3: Recruitment and Enrollment Remains a Priority of All RETAIN States.** RETAIN states made progress toward their recruitment and enrollment goals throughout the last year, but they continue to refine their recruitment and enrollment strategies, materials, and processes. Throughout the convening, SMEs and RETAIN state attendees shared (1) their existing processes, (2) ideas they are trying that other RETAIN states may wish to consider, and (3) strategies found to be successful in addressing bottlenecks in their processes.

Day 1

WELCOME

- Jennifer Sheehy, Deputy Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor, ODEP
- Lori Collins, MRC, Director RETAIN TA and Senior TA Consultant, AIR

Ms. Jennifer Sheehy welcomed attendees to the third RETAIN Annual Convening and the first held in person. She noted how great it was to have representatives from all five RETAIN states, ODEP, AIR, and Mathematica in attendance. Ms. Sheehy highlighted that this is an important time in RETAIN to gather and share lessons learned and best practices as well as collaborate with one another. She noted that collaboration, in particular, is a cornerstone of RETAIN's work. She also highlighted RETAIN states' progress in enrolling program participants, which has increased from 1,800 enrollees to 7,000 in 1 year. The data on the RETAIN programs and their participants help demonstrate what is effective about SAW/RTW programs and help determine the policies, actions, and laws needed to support these efforts. She closed by noting that the ODEP team would be listening to the presentations throughout the convening to identify policy recommendations so that RETAIN can be successfully scaled across the country.

Next, Ms. Lori Collins welcomed attendees, noting that planning for the third RETAIN Annual Convening started after the completion of the second RETAIN Annual Convening last year. Based on feedback from that event, AIR sought to tailor this year's convening to the needs expressed by the states and provide opportunities for peer-to-peer exchanges. Ms. Collins highlighted that attendees were there to share their struggles, successes, and solutions with one another. She described the objectives of the convening as learning and collaboration with the goal of identifying action steps for each RETAIN state program. She closed by facilitating introductions of each RETAIN state team member in attendance.

PLENARY SESSION: USING DECISION SCIENCE TO DRIVE BEHAVIOR: STRATEGIES TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN RETAIN PROGRAMS

- *Speaker:* Jessica Fernandez, PhD, Postdoctoral Researcher, Motivated Cognition Laboratory, Department of Psychology, University of Maryland, College Park

The convening opened with a plenary session by Dr. Jessica Fernandez on important strategies based in decision science that RETAIN states can use to better understand and recruit prospective program participants and partners. Dr. Fernandez noted that this session would

build on the previous year's session with Dr. Todd Rogers by shifting from how to communicate with potential participants to what to communicate. She noted that workers with an illness or injury process a broad range of concerns related to their employment and health when deciding to participate in a program such as RETAIN. Decision science, which explores how people process information and make decisions, can help RETAIN states understand that behavioral change requires more than educating potential participants—it involves acknowledging a potential participant's driving and restraining forces. She defined "driving forces" as the importance of a goal to the individual and their available mental and physical resources to achieve it. Conversely, restraining forces are an individual's competing goals, their need to conserve resources, and the perceived difficulty of achieving their goals.

Dr. Fernandez noted that potential RETAIN participants may experience driving forces such as believing that the program will help them maintain their income source or feeling like they have the energy to join the program and be able to SAW/RTW. When talking with potential participants whose driving forces are stronger than their restraining forces, RETAIN states can emphasize the awareness of program benefits and highlight success stories. However, when talking with potential participants whose restraining forces are stronger than their driving forces, RETAIN states can emphasize the ease of joining the program and respond to concerns about its requirements. She noted that considering whether a potential participant has a promotion mindset (i.e., oriented toward achieving positive outcomes) or a prevention mindset (i.e., oriented toward avoiding negative outcomes) is also important and could warrant different approaches as well. Therefore, understanding potential participants' driving and restraining forces, understanding whether they have a promotion or prevention mindset, and tailoring messages accordingly are all important for meaningful recruitment.

Plenary Session Key Takeaways

The following are the key takeaways for using decision science to inform enrollment in RETAIN:

- Workers with an illness or injury often deal with several complex decisions when they consider joining RETAIN. Understanding potential participants' driving and restraining forces can help RETAIN states better tailor recruitment messaging.
- Potential RETAIN participants may respond more positively to tailored messaging related to either their promotion or prevention mindset.
- Shifting the messaging from restrictions to capacity may be an effective strategy when talking with potential RETAIN participants, health care providers, or employers. This entails asking what an individual is able to do instead of asking what they are restricted from doing or cannot do.

PLENARY SESSION: BOOST YOUR RETAIN WEBSITE VISIBILITY USING SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION AND WEB WRITING BEST PRACTICES

- *Speaker:* Michelle Stergio, Senior Digital Media Strategist, AIR
- *Speaker:* Amy Fowler-Dawson, RETAIN TA Communications Lead, Communications Specialist, AIR

In the next plenary session, Ms. Michelle Stergio and Ms. Amy Fowler-Dawson presented on search engine optimization (SEO) and effective web writing as well as the fundamental steps necessary to improve the visibility of RETAIN states' websites. Ms. Fowler-Dawson began by discussing the importance of understanding the target audience's needs and of thinking about the words used on the website as crucial first steps. She emphasized that not all keywords are equal; some are more relevant than others. Ms. Fowler-Dawson recommended that RETAIN states have discussions within the state team or with key partners to identify keywords. Tools such as Google Search Console and Google Trends can also help with identifying relevant keywords to optimize RETAIN states' websites.

Ms. Stergio then focused on how search engines populate results and how RETAIN states can optimize their websites so that they show up early in search engine results. She specifically highlighted the seven most important SEO elements: (1) keywords, (2) meta descriptions, (3) titles, sometimes called page titles, (4) headers, (5) placement, (6) alt tags for images, and (7) internal site links. She stressed the importance of aligning each of those elements with what an external audience might want to find on the website, the relevancy of the keywords to external audiences, and the use of longer, more specific keywords relevant to the RETAIN programs (i.e., long-tail keywords).

Plenary Session Key Takeaways

The following are the key takeaways for improving the visibility of RETAIN websites:

- Improving website visibility begins with knowing the audience's needs and the words they use to conduct online searches.
- Incorporating RETAIN-specific keywords into all SEO elements, including meta tags, meta descriptions, and page titles, may yield increased site traffic and thus, increased number of enrollees.
- Elements such as long-tail keywords and headers should include language relevant to target audiences (i.e., individuals with an illness or injury, health care providers, businesses) for the RETAIN websites.

- Using SEO measurement tools to continuously assess website content against user expectations may yield increased site traffic.

MINNESOTA RETAIN STATE SPOTLIGHT

- *Presenter:* Dr. Laura Breeher, Minnesota RETAIN Medical Director, Mayo Clinic

Throughout the convening, RETAIN state representatives shared a success or a program highlight. For the first RETAIN state spotlight, Dr. Laura Breeher, the MN RETAIN medical director, discussed the importance of work as a social determinant of health (SDOH). She noted that in many health care systems, health care providers do not become aware of an individual's employment-related issues until the individual has been out of work for at least 3 months. However, by that point, the individual has a much lower chance of remaining in the workforce. The MN RETAIN team worked with the Mayo Clinic's leadership to add employment to their existing SDOH questionnaire, which is used across the Mayo Clinic's entire network. In the revised questionnaire, an individual can provide information about their employment, including the last date they worked if they are not currently working. Based on the responses to the SDOH questions, the Mayo Clinic's electronic health records system assigns a red, yellow, or green risk score, which MN RETAIN uses to screen and contact potential participants. If an individual has a yellow or red risk score, the system automatically sends them a letter with workforce resources, and the individual receives a phone call from an RTW coordinator. The MN RETAIN team noted that they identified most of their program participants based on their SDOH risk scores.

KANSAS RETAIN STATE SPOTLIGHT

- *Presenters:* Angela Fehr, Clinical Nurse Navigator, The University of Kansas Health System Care Collaborative, and Kristin Doze, KansasWorkKS Lead, Kansas WorkforceONE

The second state spotlight presentation from KansasWorkKS team members Ms. Angela Fehr and Ms. Kristin Doze discussed the successes and challenges of expanding the KansasWorkKS program to the state's 62 rural counties. Ms. Fehr and Ms. Doze noted that a virtual approach to outreach for rural health partners did not work. Instead, the KansasWorkKS team found that meeting with health system leaders and clinical managers in person helped them disseminate the message about the RETAIN program throughout their networks and gauge health care providers interest in joining the program. The team found that each rural clinic had a different way of doing things, with various staff having various responsibilities. As a result, KansasWorkKS shifted from a high-touch approach in which its staff attended every appointment to one in

which the rural KS health clinics could be self-reliant when explaining the program to their patients. KansasWorkKS could adjust to meet patient’s current needs and progress toward recovery and hold weekly meetings with the patient and their health care providers to ensure everyone was aware of the program’s processes. In addition, the KansasWorkKS workforce partners check in weekly with the patients and their nurse navigators to discuss SAW/RTW accommodations and other workforce supports. Ms. Fehr and Ms. Doze noted that this self-reliant approach to the rural health clinics helped KansasWorkKS reach more areas of the state despite the distance between rural sites while also educating rural health care providers on resources available in their communities, especially via the workforce system.

MATHEMATICA RETAIN EVALUATION: UPDATES AND INSIGHTS FROM ENROLLEE INTERVIEWS

- *Speaker:* Jillian Berk, PhD, Director of Research and Evaluation, Mathematica
- *Speaker:* Jayna Jones, BA, Research Analyst, Mathematica

In this session, Dr. Jillian Berk and Ms. Jayna Jones provided an update on the RETAIN enrollee interviews that are part of Mathematica’s evaluation of RETAIN. Dr. Berk explained that the goals for the evaluation of the RETAIN program are to understand how RETAIN is implemented in each state and what implementation challenges and successes states experience. She also shared that the [early assessment report](#) is available on the Social Security Administration’s RETAIN website and that a special topics report will be available within the next 6 months.

Next, Ms. Jones noted that the Mathematica evaluation team completed enrollee interviews in fall 2022, recruiting a diverse pool of RETAIN enrollees from all states and from a wide age group, and various levels of engagement with RETAIN services. The team oversampled enrollees of color and enrollees with reported behavioral health conditions to strengthen statistical inferences within the subgroup analyses. In total, Mathematica interviewed 67 treatment group enrollees, exploring their experiences with enrollment, work, and RETAIN services.

Ms. Jones shared the key interview findings related to enrollment and employment experiences, RTW plans, the employment environment, the value of RETAIN, referrals and other SAW/RTW services, reasons for not engaging with RETAIN, and satisfaction with RETAIN. Overall, interview participants indicated that they would recommend RETAIN to family or friends, felt cared for and supported by RETAIN staff, and appreciated information about support services (e.g., accommodations; transportation; housing, car, or utility payments). However, some interview participants also wanted more clear, proactive communication from

RETAIN staff about additional resources while others experienced geographical barriers when trying to meet with RETAIN staff in person.

Ms. Jones concluded by noting that Mathematica plans to release reports with additional evaluation results in 2024, 2025, and 2026. In 2024, Mathematica will complete a process analysis report documenting each state's implementation process. In 2025, Mathematica will release a report on the short-term impact of RETAIN and enrollees' experiences in the first 2 months of enrollment. In 2026, the final impact report will be available.

Mathematica Evaluation Update Key Takeaways

The following are the key takeaways from the Mathematica enrollee interviews:

- Overall, the 67 treatment enrollees that Mathematica interviewed would recommend RETAIN to a friend or family member. They felt RETAIN staff cared and supported them in navigating new experiences with complex systems. They appreciated information about available services, such as vocational rehabilitation and supportive services.
- The individualized practical and emotional support of caring and empathetic RETAIN staff motivated participants to stay focused on their employment and helped them feel remembered.
- Individuals had varied experiences with referrals and other RTW services due to a lack of understanding, staff turnover, or perceptions of relevance of services.
- Individuals experienced varied challenges related to a lack of proactive communication about additional resources, geographic barriers meeting RETAIN staff in-person, or eligibility criteria such as no longer being eligible if the individual moved out of the service area.

TOPIC-BASED BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Following the plenary sessions, three topical breakout sessions provided an opportunity for participants to hear from SMEs about topics relevant to the implementation and service delivery of their RETAIN programs and to discuss strategies and practical ways of continuing to improve their programs for the remainder of Phase 2. Exhibits 2–4 present session summaries, the names of the SMEs who led the discussions, the presentation content, and the key takeaways.

Exhibit 2. Topic Room 1 Summary

Social Determinants of Health and Stress: How Different Life Stressors Can Create Disparities in RETAIN Program Participation	
Session Description	This session focused on SDOH and the array of stressors that individuals experience when they have an illness or injury and how these stressors can significantly impact their decisions, including whether to participate in a program aimed at work and health improvement.
SME	Jessica Fernandez, PhD, Postdoctoral Researcher, Motivated Cognition Laboratory, Department of Psychology, University of Maryland, College Park
Presentation Summary	Dr. Fernandez discussed how understanding and addressing SDOH is essential to providing comprehensive support to RETAIN participants. She highlighted workers' concerns and stressors following illness or injury, how SDOH such as economic stability and education access correlate to unmet needs, and how the cyclical nature of these stressors can drive decision making. The session concluded with a robust discussion in which states shared their experiences, challenges, and strategies.
Key Takeaways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDOH affect both basic needs (e.g., food and shelter) and motivational needs (e.g., psychological well-being). These needs cut across multiple domains, such as mental and physical health. The consequences of unmet needs are far reaching and can lead to issues like food insecurity, sleep deficiency, and a lack of housing. • Unmet needs have a cyclical nature. If someone cannot maintain a job or relationships due to their health, their self-worth and decision-making processes can be impacted. • Considering the challenges unique to specific groups is important. Participants who are homeless may experience obstacles due to a lack of phone access, whereas those who are older may experience competing health issues. RETAIN programs can help participants address these challenges by empowering them to find resources, offering peer support, and offering mentorship programs.

Exhibit 3. Topic Room 2 Summary

Behavioral Health and RETAIN: Wraparound Support or Collaborative Care?	
Session Description	This session focused on the value of wraparound support for behavioral health. It explored the collaborative care model and how service offerings from an employer can be facilitated through the RETAIN program.
SME	Beth Kuhn, MILR, Workforce Futurist, Stonegate Strategies
Presentation Summary	Ms. Beth Kuhn highlighted the complex interplay between behavioral health, mental health, and workplace support, emphasizing the need for holistic care and tailored services to address the diverse needs of participants. She

Behavioral Health and RETAIN: Wraparound Support or Collaborative Care?

	<p>defined behavioral health as encompassing both mental health and substance abuse. She highlighted the concept of resilience in the workplace and the need to provide mental and emotional support. Ms. Kuhn also framed nontraditional support as essential to providing mental and emotional support in the workplace. The joint delivery of health care from both medical and behavioral health perspectives through the collaborative care model is one approach to meeting both behavioral and physical health needs.</p>
Key Takeaways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RETAIN states recognized the distinction between behavioral health and mental health and the need for dedicated SAW/RTW models for behavioral health. • RETAIN states emphasized the importance of offering comprehensive, whole-person services in health care to ensure it aligns with the organization’s program priorities and services. • Educating businesses on identifying and supporting individuals with behavioral health needs is also important.

Exhibit 4. Topic Room 3 Summary

RETAIN’ing Inclusion by Design	
Session Description	<p>This session focused on the incorporation of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) strategies into RETAIN programs. The session introduced design thinking and gave participants an opportunity to apply design thinking principles to scenarios in which RETAIN programs can use DEIA strategies to develop relationships and conduct outreach and recruitment strategies in underserved communities.</p>
SME	<p>Gabriel Matthews, MA, RETAIN TA Coach; TA Consultant, AIR</p>
Presentation Summary	<p>Mr. Gabriel Matthews provided an overview of design thinking and benefits of considering DEIA in the implementation of state RETAIN programs. He described how considering DEIA can bolster a program’s capacity to serve individuals with illness or injury through RETAIN programs. In addition, a clear approach to incorporating DEIA strategies into program implementation can improve participants’ SAW/RTW outcomes.</p>
Key Takeaways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design thinking offers an action-oriented, participant-focused approach to problem solving that creates space for DEIA principles to guide program strategy development and implementation. • Statewide programs such as RETAIN may benefit from applying a design thinking approach to their outreach to underserved populations. • RETAIN programs should think about DEIA as an internal strategy and prioritize what is feasible within their program.

VERMONT RETAIN STATE SPOTLIGHT

- *Presenter:* Dr. Karen Huyck, Vermont RETAIN Medical Director, Dartmouth University

For the third state spotlight presentation, Dr. Karen Huyck, VT RETAIN’s medical director, introduced the program’s clinical-focused approach to engaging and recruiting primary care providers. VT aimed to address the significant gap in health care providers knowledge of the relationship between health and employment to undergird a patient-centered program model. Dr. Huyck noted that VT’s approach to recruiting and engaging primary care providers, which includes training, consistent communication, periodic updates and reports, and marketing materials, maintains positive relationships. She described that an effective way of collaborating with health care systems is gathering feedback through multiple sources. This has allowed VT to reach a wide range of clinics, with VT RETAIN close to reaching its goal of enrolling 100 primary care providers across the state, including federally qualified health centers. Dr. Huyck also noted that understanding the time constraints health-care providers face is important, which is why VT RETAIN also focuses on streamlining processes to reduce the level of effort that health care providers expend to participate in RETAIN.

PLENARY SESSION: WORKFORCE SYSTEM INTEGRATION WITH A FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY

- *Speaker:* Amy Landesman, MA, Consultant and SME in workforce development and capacity building

In the next plenary session, Ms. Amy Landesman shared insights into strengthening partnerships with the workforce system to support the sustainability efforts of RETAIN programs. She reminded participants that the four pillars of sustainability are (1) internal support, (2) resources, (3) partnerships, and (4) marketing/outreach. This session focused on partnerships as part of sustainability, particularly with workforce boards. Ms. Landesman explained that the workforce system takes a dual approach to customer service, working with both job seekers and employers. Under this dual approach, the workforce system offers a variety of supportive services, such as housing, childcare, transportation, and equipment for accommodations.

Ms. Landesman also discussed the benefits of RETAIN programs partnering with workforce boards. Specifically, workforce boards can collaborate with RETAIN programs to think creatively

about how to braid funds across multiple workforce program offerings to maximize benefits to employers and job seekers. They can also help individuals and their employers access services needed to support SAW/RTW and coordinated case management that mitigates duplication of and gaps in service delivery. Ms. Landesman then highlighted the steps toward a successful workforce board partnership, which include talking to the state-level workforce board; identifying local workforce board partners; reaching out and learning about different language, acronyms, and requirements for services; cross-training on RETAIN SAW/RTW resources and services; and mapping a referral process between RETAIN and the workforce system. Once RETAIN programs establish these partnerships, creating unified messaging, discussing data sharing, and developing a sustainability plan are also important.

Plenary Session Key Takeaways

The following are the key takeaways for strengthening workforce system partnerships:

- State and local workforce development boards can be strong partners to RETAIN programs by extending services available to program participants and employers, adding capacity to business engagement efforts, and convening additional program partners.
- Strategies such as offering co-enrollment, coordinating case management, and braiding funding can support RETAIN program outcomes and sustainability efforts.
- RETAIN states can strengthen workforce partnerships by identifying key partners, cross-training on program language and services, and mapping a referral process.

PROCESS MAPPING LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION: UNLOCKING VALUE: RESULTS FROM PROCESS MAPPING

- *Facilitator:* Lori Collins, MRC, RETAIN TA Director, Senior TA Consultant, AIR
- *Facilitator:* Mona Kilany, PhD, RETAIN TA Deputy Director, Senior Researcher, AIR

Ms. Lori Collins provided an overview of the process-mapping exercise that all RETAIN states completed over the few months prior to the convening to benefit program development. She explained that the mapping processes the RETAIN states and their TA coaches undertook were based on lean systems management, which continuously improves the efficiency and effectiveness of recruitment and enrollment efforts. Process mapping starts by looking at the process from a systems/strategic level and then narrowing the focus to the details of a specific process, such as enrolling participants or recruiting health care providers. Ms. Collins explained that each RETAIN state began with its current process map, then identified challenges or areas of improvement. The goal is for each RETAIN state to create a map documenting the new processes.

Each RETAIN state representative presented on their process map, noting the gaps they identified, the areas of improvement, and the promising practices the RETAIN states used to address the identified gaps. Dr. Kilany facilitated a discussion with each state. Exhibit 5 summarizes the processes each state mapped and the changes each state made to its process based on the identified gaps.

Exhibit 5. Summary of State Process Map Presentations

State	Summary of process map	Changes made to process
Minnesota	<p>Focused on refining the referral-to-enrollment process, a workflow closely intertwined with SDOH.</p> <p>Delved into the various aspects of enrollment, including sources of enrollment, whether sources were direct or indirect, and the effectiveness of processes throughout the state.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiated a participant survey and developed additional materials for participants Determined next step of extending this work to engage employers more effectively
Vermont	<p>Focused on enhancing the electronic data capture (EDC) process aimed at transitioning from a reactive to a proactive approach.</p> <p>Identified the key insight that staff members in different roles had varying perspectives on data entry and data retrieval.</p> <p>Created a crosswalk of each EDC map, offering a comprehensive view from different staff perspectives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concluded that potential improvements included reducing dependence on external data lists Refined screening questions during intake Improved communication among staff
Kansas	<p>Focused on health care provider engagement.</p> <p>Determined that the time commitment of RETAIN, especially the length of online training modules, was a barrier to health care provider participation.</p> <p>Determined that the process maps also helped to identify medical champions and successful communication approaches with the RETAIN team and participating health care providers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified areas in which training could be streamlined, leading to a significant reduction in training time from a 4-hour to a 1-hour training Reviewed plans for bypassing provider signatures, when possible, to reduce participants wait time for services
Ohio	<p>Reviewed documented policies and procedures to uncover bottlenecks in the handoff stage of their recruitment processes.</p> <p>Determined that 47% of participants do not follow up after speaking with a research coordinator.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduced a same-day call system to engage leads immediately and improve conversion rates
Kentucky	<p>Focused on mapping the entry points of their referral system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved the efficiency of lead generation by batching

State	Summary of process map	Changes made to process
	Determined that the complexity of their processes required four separate maps.	referrals received through BuildClinical

Process Mapping Key Takeaways

The following are the key takeaways on the RETAIN state process maps:

- The process-mapping exercise fosters improved lines of communication and offers a platform on which the RETAIN states can effectively collaborate and share insights.
- Streamlining and enhancing critical processes related to the health care and the workforce systems may help RETAIN states achieve the goal of increasing enrollment, improve the participant experience, and bolster health care provider and employer engagement.
- The process maps are incubators for innovative ideas and thus contribute to a culture of continuous quality improvement.

Day 2

KENTUCKY RETAIN STATE SPOTLIGHT

- *Presenter:* Johnny Collett, Kentucky RETAIN Deputy Director, University of Kentucky Human Development Institute

For the fourth state spotlight, Johnny Collett, KY RETAIN deputy director, shared progress made by the Inclusive Worker Health Leadership Network (IWHLN). He noted that IWHLN is the coordination of state and local initiatives to accelerate opportunities for Kentuckians to stay in their current jobs or RTW. Mr. Collett noted that the goals of IWHLN include improving systems, increasing employer awareness of workplace accommodations, and leveraging the influence of the network on broader efforts across the state for more inclusive workspaces. This network will allow for a multisystem approach to enhancing conversations from different perspectives. He highlighted IWHLN's recommendations to the governor as well as its contributions to state policy. RETAIN Kentucky also sponsored the Inclusive Workforce Summit—along with the Kentucky Career Center and the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board—a statewide event hosted by the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce. The Inclusive Workforce Summit involved nearly 250 employer and policymaker participants and marked the first time the Kentucky chamber hosted an event focused on engaging the talent of Kentuckians who have disabilities in the workforce.

OHIO RETAIN STATE SPOTLIGHT

- *Presenter:* Kori Smith, RETAIN Ohio Program Manager, Bons Secours Mercy Health

For the final state spotlight presentation, Ms. Kori Smith, the RETAIN OH program manager, discussed how RETAIN OH uses its program data for continuous quality improvement. She described that RETAIN OH's foundation is built on data and that it monitors program outcomes daily, weekly, and monthly. For RETAIN OH, data drive decision making and transparency to partners and other stakeholders. Ms. Smith walked through RETAIN OH's data dashboard, which gives a high-level snapshot of enrollments by month and total and quarterly enrollments by health care provider specialty, zip code, and patient outcomes. The data dashboard is available for all RETAIN OH staff to review and determine if staff need additional support to help them reach their recruitment and enrollment goals. She also noted that RETAIN OH uses the data to assess whether the program needs to adjust their recruitment and enrollment goals so the program continues to see growth in its monthly enrollment numbers.

PLENARY SESSION: ENGAGING WITH STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO PROMOTE AND SUSTAIN RETAIN

- *Speaker:* Katia Albanese, State Exchange on Employment and Disability Coordinators, Concepts Communication
- *Speaker:* Hope Adler, State Exchange on Employment and Disability Coordinators, Concepts Communication

Ms. Katia Albanese and Ms. Hope Adler discussed the [State Exchange on Employment and Disability \(SEED\)](#), a policy initiative funded by ODEP and focused on supporting states in their development and adoption of inclusive workforce policies. They highlighted SEED activities, including the Work Matters Framework and the COVID-19 policy collaborative. They also discussed the [SAW/RTW toolkit](#) designed to provide best practices, cost-benefit analyses, and strategies to enhance employee retention. This toolkit provides a centralized location for information and unified messaging with stories that humanize the issues when reaching out to legislators.

Ms. Albanese and Ms. Adler also discussed the SEED State Exchange on SAW/RTW held in Minneapolis, MN on June 13–14, 2023, with state teams from Alaska, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, and Minnesota. The event focused on delivery systems, substance use, mental health, employer/business perspectives, and the needs of states in terms of SAW/RTW. The event highlighted the needs for resources on how to support SAW/RTW efforts, targeted outreach and training materials, and a centralized location to house resources. Ms. Albanese and Ms. Adler closed the session by noting that when working with policymakers, understanding what other states are doing and what other policies exist is important, and so is involving policymakers when holding stakeholder convenings.

Plenary Session Key Takeaways

The following are the key takeaways for how RETAIN states can engage policymakers for sustainability:

- States can learn from one another and engage policymakers to create state-specific strategies.
- SEED is available to provide support and resources, such as tailored messaging to individual legislators.
- To engage policymakers, SEED provides opportunities for collaboration, education, tools, and resources, such as templates and outreach strategic planning.

PLENARY SESSION: BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT: AN INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION ON PLANNING AND POSITIONING TO ADVANCE RETAIN OUTCOMES

- *Facilitator:* Derek Shields, MMDS, PMP, RETAIN TA SME, President, ForwardWorks Consulting, Inc.

All five RETAIN states worked with SMEs to discuss and develop business engagement plans based on the strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results (SOAR) approach to appreciative inquiry. Mr. Shields first highlighted the commonalities across the states’ business engagement plans, including that business engagement is key for sustainability and the need to figure out how to connect better with the workforce system. He noted some differences across the state plans, such as revisiting messaging to businesses to make it more RETAIN focused and adjusting the messaging to speak the language of businesses. Mr. Shields then facilitated a discussion of the RETAIN states’ business engagement planning efforts, themes across the five state plans, state sharing of reflections on the process, progress made, and next steps. Exhibit 6 summarizes the discussion topics and RETAIN state responses.

Exhibit 6. Summary of Business Engagement Plan Discussion

Discussion topic	State responses
Feedback on the SOAR process to develop a business engagement plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kansas: The timing aligned with current outreach planning and strategies to improve engagement. • Kentucky: The process was customized to the state’s needs and goals and avoided creating a plan for the sake of it. • Ohio: The process generated new ideas to strengthen coordination efforts with local workforce areas and try new strategies to support business engagement efforts. • Minnesota: It was helpful to go through the process and identify areas of opportunity. The biggest challenge was capacity, and the plan helped the team look for ways of leveraging natural partnerships and laying out next steps for sustainability. • Vermont: The process created opportunities for multiple team perspectives to weigh in and leverage the capacity of the whole team instead of tasking an individual with the work.
Strategies to engage employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ohio: Employers can sign a pledge to adopt stay at work practices and policies (237 currently signed on). When new people enroll in RETAIN, the team automatically reaches out to the enrollees’ employer to add them to the list and form a relationship to support the program. • Ohio: The team plans to add the goal of recruiting 500 employers to the outcomes dashboard to track progress. The team will also think more about how to hold employers accountable to the pledge.

Discussion topic	State responses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vermont: The team plans to collaborate with the state’s Invest EAP program to ensure employers have resilient workplaces and use best practices for stay at work, return to work, inclusion, disability, and accommodations. • Vermont: The team would like to establish a connection between the RETAIN program and the existing Best Places to Work award, which is valued by employers and reflects overall employee satisfaction, retention, accommodations, and worksite wellness.
Alignment of the business engagement plan to other state activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kentucky: The team is performing and positioning the work so it can be used in multiple ways and reinforce connections in messaging and partnerships. • Kentucky: The team is collaborating with members of the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board, informing work across the state, and reinforcing partnership connections with the broader system
Marketing communication and strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kansas: The team is trying to remove employers’ barriers when working with the public workforce system and empowering local boards to do business outreach work. It is using video assets for targeted campaigns to businesses and individuals. It is targeting messages based on areas in which more enrollments are needed, and it wants to expand that strategy to specific clinicians. • Minnesota: Many Fortune 500 and larger companies already have internal programs and processes to support ill or injured workers, but small to mid-size businesses can gain capacity by partnering with RETAIN. Minnesota’s tight labor market reinforces a strong need for workers across industries, and the RETAIN team would like to engage partners in expanding services available to businesses. The team would also like to work more deeply with vocational rehabilitation partners and local workforce areas to reach rural areas of the state.
Unique state strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kansas: The team is embedding stay at work/return to work in employment services based on Kentucky’s model. • Kentucky: The team is developing the Inclusive Workforce Summit and recommendations annual submission to the governor. The team also shares its recommendations with the state chamber to align the policy team with the messaging and goals in the business engagement plan. • Ohio: The team worked on DEIA messaging and the development of infographics to reach more marginalized populations and share RETAIN’s value with employers. • Minnesota: The team worked on labor union engagement and the promotion of the RETAIN program to leadership and members as a worker benefit. Minnesota’s legislature has added funding to statewide business engagement representatives, and the team would like to collaborate on those efforts. • Vermont: The partnership between the Department of Labor and the Department of Health and Mental Health has added an employment focus to the governor’s agenda and framed work as a health outcome. Vermont has a high rate of young people on social security disability insurance for mental health conditions.

Plenary Session Key Takeaways

The following are the key takeaways for engaging businesses to participate in RETAIN:

- Business engagement is a key strategy in planning for program sustainability.
- All RETAIN states' business engagement plans reflect the need to focus on improving their connections with the workforce system.
- Some RETAIN states want to revise messaging to focus on the RETAIN program more specifically, but others feel their messaging is strong and want to refresh it, so it speaks the language of businesses/employers.
- RETAIN states hope to elevate the importance of helping employers align the goals of inclusivity with their internal policies and practices.
- Sign-on campaigns can be effective and help businesses market themselves to their communities. These campaigns can also give business leaders a chance to get recognition from building partnerships with the RETAIN programs.

STATE TEAM ACTION PLANNING, TAKEAWAYS, AND NEXT STEPS

To wrap up the Annual Convening, each RETAIN state team met with their AIR TA coach to discuss key takeaways and potential action items from the event. Following the breakout room discussions, each RETAIN state team shared key takeaways and planned actions steps. Exhibit 7 summarizes the RETAIN states' responses.

Exhibit 7. Key Takeaways From State Team Action Planning Sessions

RETAIN Role	Key Takeaways	Planned Action Steps
Kansas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get real commitment from employers • Make control participants feel valuable and integral to program • Implement potential fast impact from same-day enrollment process • Strengthen messaging and reach using SEO strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on advancing next steps on employer engagement • Develop cohesive communication plan for control participants • Explore process to implement same day enrollment • Improve existing website functionality using SEO content
Kentucky	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure the influence of their RETAIN program with the businesses • Improve messaging to employers • Focus on promotion and prevention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to improve outreach and recruitment materials targeting new participants and employers • Continue to develop a sustainability strategic plan • Continue to align IWHLN to communication and business engagement plans
Minnesota	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement employer engagement plan • Serve a participant’s whole family and improve referrals to additional workforce and support services • Shift RTW coordinator language and messaging to capacity orientation instead of restriction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek state funding to sustain RETAIN program • Review and update messaging to employers to incorporate promotion/prevention mindsets • Develop report on data by case managers to track progress on target goals
Ohio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build more partnerships in business engagement and government relations • Think more about linking RETAIN with SDOH • Understand how to inform policy change with legislation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add RETAIN to SDOH in the electronic medical record • Work on implementing business engagement plan and adding more business partners • Incorporate workforce data in the data dashboard
Vermont	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build strong workforce and community partnerships to affect recruitment and enrollment and service delivery • Compile comprehensive data and statistics to drive decision making • Conduct in person communication and information sharing with other states 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisit the communications plan and incorporate recommendations heard throughout the convening • Revisit existing materials, including the website • Consider incorporating more in-person meetings with participants • Explore how to leverage Vermont’s altruistic culture and encourage Vermonters to take advantage of services that could help them improve their lives

WRAP-UP AND CLOSING REMARKS

- *Speaker:* Taryn Williams, Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor, ODEP

The third RETAIN Annual Convening closed with remarks from Ms. Taryn Williams, assistant secretary of ODEP. She thanked the RETAIN states for their contributions and commitment to RETAIN over the last few years and going forward. Williams highlighted how great it was to meet and engage with one another in person after operating for so long in a virtual environment. She thanked all the federal partners and contractors who have been with RETAIN since the beginning. Ms. Williams also emphasized that the RETAIN states' relationship building is at the heart of RETAIN and its principles. She closed by congratulating the RETAIN states for their work.

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