ROUGHLY EDITED TRANSCRIPT

NEW COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES CENTER AT ILRU

ESTABLISHING AND MANAGING FEES‑FOR‑SERVICE IN CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

PART 1: PLANNING FOR FEES‑FOR‑SERVICE FOR CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

FEBRUARY 10, 2015

2:30 P.M. ET

Captioning Provided by:

Closed Caption Productions

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>> TIM FUCHS: Good afternoon, everybody. This is Tim Fuchs with the National Council On Independent Living. I want to welcome you all to our newest short webinar and teleconference series Fees‑for‑Service Programs at Centers for Independent Living. Today's webinar is presented by the New Communities Opportunity Center, a National Training and Technical Assistance Program of ILRU, that's Independent Living Research Utilization in Houston, Texas. This webinar and part two next week was organized and facilitated by the National Council On Independent Living and support for the presentation was provided by the US Department of Education at RSA.

So, we are recording today's call, as we always do, so that we can archive it on ILRU's website. So if you or anyone you know wants to review it before next week's call, it will be available.

We are going to break several times during the presentation to take your questions. For those of you that have participated before, I'm sure you know the drill by now. You can ask questions in a variety of ways. If you are on the webinar, you can type your question in the chat. That's the text box underneath the list of participants and you can type your question any time during the call but we will way to the Q&A break to take them.

If you are on the phone, hit star pound to indicate that you have a question, and we will take those questions in the order that they are received.

Finally, if you are on the full page CART captioning screen, there's a chat box there as well. Make sure you log into that, and you can type your question there and I will voice it during the Q&A breaks.

And I will remind you of those instructions each time we take a break for questions. Okay.

If you are on the webinar, the PowerPoint presentation for today will display automatically, but if you are not, if you are just calling in or if you are on the full page of CART captions, you will want to have the PowerPoint in front of you. It will make today's presentation a lot easier to follow along with. That PowerPoint was sent to you in the confirmation email, and if you don't have that, you can email me at Tim@NCIL.org. And I will make sure to get it to you. I've got my email open.

So let me know if you didn't receive that PowerPoint for any reason.

Let's see, before I move on, I just want to ask you all to please fill out the evaluation form after today's call. Our evaluation forms are really important to us, but lucky for you, they are also very brief, so you will see when you open it, I'm telling the truth. They only take a moment to complete. There's a separate evaluation form for today, as opposed to part two of next week. Please fill them out for both pieces, I appreciate it and those of us here at the NCO project will be selecting one lucky participant that has completed the evaluation for today's call, to receive a $25 Amazon gift card. So if you use Amazon, you know how great those are, because you can use them for almost anything. Please do fill that out and you will be automatically entered.

Speaking of the NCO project, I wanted to do just a real quick commercial before we start here to check out the New Century CIL blog. The new Century CIL blog at newcenturyCIL.org, it's a blog that focuses as you might imagine on ways for CILs like yours to expand your capacity in the 21st century and there as a ton of great content up there. Maybe don't visit it right now, while you've got the webinar platform opened on your screen, but after today's call, I hope you will go there. There's a lot of good content but I want to highlight a couple of interviews we have with Dennis Fitzgibbons, of course our presenter for today and also Eli Gelardin about fee for service programs.

So check that out and new interviews along with a lot of other good content will be posted all time. So check that out.

Okay. So without any further adieu, let me move along and introduce our presenter for today, Dennis Fitzgibbons. Dennis is the executive director at Alpha Maine Center for Independent Living. His Dennis' career has spanned everything from teaching at the high school level to business administration in the private sector, and working at CILs in Massachusetts and Maine.

And I have known about Dennis for a long time, but really enjoyed working with Dennis on the fee‑for‑service programs on‑site training we did in Denver last year, and that's why we have invited him back. He had so much good information. We wanted to get that out to a larger audience for people who were not able to travel to Colorado to see that last year.

And Dennis, we had a great time planning with you. And I will go ahead to the next slide and turn it over to you to get us started.

>> DENNIS FITZGIBBONS: Thank you, Tim. I appreciate the introduce duction. It's nice to hear those kind thoughts and now you put the pressure on me. Welcome, everybody, it's a pleasure to talk with you today and I want to spend some time telling you about our experience at Alpha One and some common experience from other programs that worked on fee for service. I will start with this slide, which is stay true to your mission.

I think that's one of the things that really is first and foremost in my mind as we look at a fee for service possibility or opportunity, and I believe that any CIL should keep those things foremost in any of their planning and thoughts about this. And key to that is to maintain the integrity of the core services for independent living.

If we stray from that and wander away from that, we are in the danger of having a mission drift and it's a huge issue to confront if you have to.

Also be up front with funders, you know, and let them know that advocacy is part of the package that they are getting from your organization.

Include everyone in your center in this discussion. It's key that you keep everyone informed and get input along the way. As you go through the process, it's also important that you identify what you value as a CIL and what you will not compromise, because undoubtedly, you may be asked to do that depending on the kind of work that you may encounter that is a possible opportunity.

Now, as we look at that here, we want to always ‑‑ we keep an eye on maintaining consumer control and self‑direction, as well as the positive outcomes that we have been able to have over the years, and thirdly, to really focus on individual advocacy and not lose sight of that with individuals that we work with.

Next, and key to this as well is to always make time and create time and opportunities for systems advocacy, which is so important to all that we do, and all that you do.

And by the way, I would insert here that you can and you may actually find opportunities to be paid for systems advocacy over and above the money you receive from the feds.

And lastly, as you go through the process, before, during and after, continued review and assessment of the impact of fee for services, development on your mission and on the consumers you serve is critical.

Next slide, please, Tim.

So resource development, as you know is part of the standards for independent living and CILs. And at Alpha One, we had a saying that we had on the wall which is "no margin, no mission." That was declared by our founder, Steven Tremblay, in 1978. He believed and we have always followed his belief, that, you know, if you take resource development seriously, which we do, then you won't have to rely on any one single source of funding that could be cut at some point in time, and I know you, like all of us, at your center, have, you know, suffered the threats of cuts to federal funding along the, and it's not a good idea to have all the eggs in one basket, so to speak.

So as you go into this resource development a little more deeper and keeping your eye on the mission, you want to also examine what your CIL's beliefs are regarding the following ideas. One is, what do you think about increasing revenue? What do you feel about reaching more consumers? How about organizational growth? How do you feel about that? And what is your opinion about expanding programs and services? And although it's not on this slide, I would add advocacy to that. And lastly, risk is a major question that always has to be examined. There are many issues of risks, keeping true to mission is a risk, obviously. And there are new risks when we develop new services and distribute those.

Next slide, please, Tim.

As we go down this journey, it's key to begin and start with your board and your staff and getting their buy‑into this process and how that works would depend on your CIL culture. I heard a phone call last week, it was a teleconference and someone on the call said if you have seen one CIL, you have seen one CIL. And I think that's very true because we are all ‑‑ while we have the same standards that we follow, many of us are different in many ways, and we certainly have our own cultures, based on where we live, and the histories of our organizations.

But within your CIL, it's important to note, how are changes made? How is information shared? And what is the hierarchy and structure of your CIL?

As you include board and staff in the entire process, and this is a recurring theme, it's important to include them in brainstorming ideas and thoughts, the planning that's involved in moving forward, and including them in both committees, work groups and any teams that may arise from the process.

And lastly, it's important to stay on top of all of this with informational meetings periodically, with both board and staff, and I should also include consumers here.

Next slide, please, Tim.

Continuing with the board and staff buy‑in, deciding or knowing how decisions are made or final decisions are made within the organization, very important. You need to be clear on that. And these may or may not all apply to your CIL, but how do you decide? Is it a majority vote? Does the executive director make the final decision? Is it a final decision by the board? Or does the management team make a final decision? Just how does that work within your center? Very important to know and be clear about that from the beginning.

Lastly, as you move forward with this, publicizing your intentions is also key to being ‑‑ keeping consumers informed, keeping your staff and board informed and keeping the world at large informed. And there are a number of ways to do that. If you have a newsletter, a website, maybe you have a social media, and certainly TV and radio are options as well. Next slide, please, Tim.

So important that you know thyself or know yourself and your organization. I imagine all of you have used strategic planning at some time, in developing your annual and long‑term plans and you can adapt that strategic planning process specifically to fee for services. And I would have guessed you are familiar with the SWAT process which is looking at strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. But using that process is a very helpful way at looking at fee‑for‑service. You want to include your staff, your board and consumers. You also want feedback from other key contacts and once again, get consumer input. I can't emphasize that enough.

I would say that in Alpha One, any successful fee‑for‑service program we have developed has been in response to consumer feedback, direct feedback from consumers. There are also other resources you should utilize, legal and accounting for advice, very important. Talking to other CILs that have fee‑for‑service programs and when you do, ask not only about their successes, but ask about their failures. I can tell you we probably learned here more from our failures than we have from our successes.

In addition, you might want to talk to leaders of other nonprofits that are not CILs and see if they have any fee‑for‑service programs and also talk to for‑profit leaders. The more input you can get on this, the better off you will be.

Next slide, please.

So looking at strengths, these are just a few samples of some strengths, probably you have most of these, if not all, and an example might be that your staff is well trained. They are adaptable and they are committed not only to moving forward with fee‑for‑service but committed especially to your CIL. Your board would have a range of experience and contacts. Your CIL is fully committed to the IL philosophy. That's a strength in looking at developing these services or programs.

You have a heightened awareness and responsiveness to local need. Consumer involvement with staff and board in planning and decision making may be key to how you work and that would strengthen what you developed. People with disabilities direct their services. If you can bring that to the fee‑for‑service world, you will be stretching independent living into new areas. Maybe you collect good data and many businesses and others that were willing to pay for services are always looking for good data. And lastly, you are frugal as I imagine you are, like we all are and you have very low administrative costs.

Next slide, please, Tim.

In looking at weaknesses this may be the most difficult thing. Looking in the mirror and pointing out the things that are not so positive, but taking an honest look at your weaknesses will help you really get to where you want to go here.

This past spring, as Tim mentioned, we had a training in Denver. My partner in that was Kathy Knoble‑Iverson from the Independent Living Resources in Wisconsin. I like the one she pointed out best and I have taken the liberty of using here. They identified that they were not a good partner with other agencies. They were what she called philosophical snobs, thinking they were better than them because they had the IL philosophy.

When she said that, I said, well, that's us too. We have been there. We have done that. And it was a weakness in terms of our moving forward, and working with others. Not compromising our values but working with others.

Another weakness could be that failing to share one's passion or mission or maybe not participating in any professional groups. Maybe there's been opportunity missed to join community groups.

Maybe your center thinks that making money is bad. Maybe you don't value your knowledge and expertise. As much as you should or could. And lastly, you don't ‑‑ and I'm not saying you specifically, but any of us don't share our success stories and great outcomes that we have historically had over the years.

Next slide, please, Tim.

Next area to look at is the opportunities that may be out there and this can actually be a lot of fun brainstorming with others in terms of what is out there in the general world about where we may actually find some place to develop a fee‑based service. In most states, home community‑based community services are growing. That's one.

Maybe you have well‑trained staff available from a grant that's ending. You don't want to lose them. But it's actually an opportunity because you have got staff available. You may have a lot of partners in your region that you could work with. Most organizations now are looking for good data and documentation, if that's a strength of yours, that's an opportunity.

If you know and understand that your CIL has great outcomes, that's an opportunity because you can play to those outcomes. You may have a large or a strong statewide association of other CILs that can offer you support or mentoring. And we all know that the IL philosophy and mission are easy to share with others.

Another opportunity out there, that we see here at Alpha One is the Affordable Care Act. Technology is one that most of us are picking up on as an opportunity and one that I think is particularly exciting is the millennials. Even though they won't pay for something necessarily, we love the way they think, act, and behave and live their lives much differently than many of us grew up with. They bring in an opportunity that we haven't put our finger on yet. We know we have to involve them more and how we operate and work here at Alpha One.

Next slide, please, Tim.

And last of all, the strategic planning, we need to know what threats exist as we move into this area of fee for services. One of those could be complacency. You might think, well, you know, we've developed a couple ever fee‑based programs. We are set, just let it happen and, you know, we can sit back and enjoy that for a while. Well, that's not a good way to approach these things. As you know, the market changes regularly. You see news all the time changing. We are in a day now in our lives where even McDonald's is losing business because they have become ‑‑ they became complacent in how they approached the fast food world.

It never works to sit back and rest on your success.

I want to remind you once again, a threat is losing sight of your mission. Stay true to your mission. It's key to success and moving forward with fee for services.

Fear of failure could certainly be a threat. Don't let that overwhelm you. Staff resistance could be a major threat, as could board resistance and that's why getting their buy‑in is so key.

It only takes one board member or maybe one key staff member to throw the train off the tracks.

A threat also could be the strong competition that may be in the area that you are considering. And another threat could be you can't afford to lose money. The last and probably the most common one is that time, people are already busy. You hear it all the time from your staff. You home and talk to your loved ones or spouse or partner and talk about how busy you are. So the question is how do we do this and how do we find time that that can be a threat as well.

Next slide, please, Tim.

I guess we are at the first section for questions.

>> TIM FUCHS: Indeed. We will take our first Q&A break. Just a reminder, if you are on the telephone and you have a question, you can press star pound to indicate that you have a question for us and we'll take those in the order you receive them but, of course, you can type your question in the chat box underneath the list of attendees and hit enter when you are done typing. Or type it into the chat box on the full screen CART captioning.

First from Carolee we had not a question but a comment about the SWAT process. One of the most amazing things our organization ever did was to implement a leadership self‑assessment, a staff agency evaluation and a consumer focus group. We did it as part of an application for a capacity enhancement grant and it had far reaching benefits to help us in our strategic manning.

Thank you for sharing, Carolee.

Okay. I don't see any questions on the chat right now. Excuse me, but I do see a question on the audio queue. So let's go over there and caller, just a moment while we get your line unmuted and you can go ahead.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: This is Carolee and I wrote my comments that you just read and thank you.

>> TIM FUCHS: All right, good thank you, Carolee.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: If I can raise another question while I'm on, one of the slides, you know, was talking about, you know, where the decision making occurs in the organization. I think that's a really key point, and I'm not sure ‑‑ I don't want to be going too far ahead of the presentation, but I'm hoping that maybe there will be some opportunity to address how that might impact, you know, your fee‑for‑service endeavors.

>> DENNIS FITZGIBBONS: Yes, I think I will be speaking to that somewhat as we go forward, but I would say it's a major concern in terms of where the decisions are made, because you can certainly get bogged down in trying to get things moved forward, where working with a particular vendor or purchaser of services is not going to have patience to wait a long time for decisions to be made.

So ‑‑ but I will talk to that a little bit more.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you.

>> TIM FUCHS: Okay. Thanks Carolee. Switching back to the webinar here, I see that Renee has asked Dennis if you could give us an example of a way that you might develop a fee for service around the Affordable Care Act.

>> DENNIS FITZGIBBONS: Okay. That's a good question and we have been giving a lot of thought to that. As you know, the Affordable Care Act puts a heavy emphasis on primary care. For the last 18 months, we have been doing a lot of specific outreach to the primary care association in the state, as well as the Maine healthcare foundation in the state, to the Maine care which is the Medicaid system in Maine that is dealing with a lot of innovation grants, et cetera, and trying to get ourselves in the conversations to talk about the issues around access to care that people with disabilities experience. Or I should say, the barriers they sometimes experience.

And we are laying the ground work there to have some type of impact on the primary care system, but in order to do so, we needed to create an opportunity for discussion around those things, and so, you know, I can see where we could have opportunities for assessing facilities, for their access to either treatment or facilities themselves or the use of interpreters or readers, whatever it might be in terms of, you know, making sure people with disabilities are getting what they should get from the system. It might be educating primary care providers, or it might be part B and being part of the home centered care that they are trying to develop that extends to the community.

I think there are a number of opportunities there.

>> TIM FUCHS: Okay. Good. Great example. Thanks, Dennis.

And let's see, a clarification question from Al. What's a millennial?

>> DENNIS FITZGIBBONS: Millennial is a young person, probably around 25 to 35 years old. That's the millennial generation, I believe, somewhere in that range.

>> TIM FUCHS: Good. Thanks. Okay. Carolee was wondering if we might talk about how to turn benefits and work incentives counseling delivered by certified practitioners into a fee for service. Anything like that coming up in the presentation, Dennis?

>> DENNIS FITZGIBBONS: No, but actually you mentioned the interview on the blog or the ‑‑ what was it.

>> TIM FUCHS: Yeah, the New Century CIL blog.

>> DENNIS FITZGIBBONS: If you check out the interview, it's a creative approach to using the benefits experience and they have taken that to creating a benefit that's structured around breast cancer education.

>> TIM FUCHS: Great. Great tip. I didn't even think of that. Carolee asked if there was a link to that. And I will type that into the CART chat now. It's newcenturyblog.org. And you can write to fuss you want that link in writing.

We will give another 30 seconds or so to make sure there's no other questions before we get back to the presentation.

Again, if you are on the phone, you can press star pound if you have a question or type it in the chat box on the webinar or the CART screen.

Okay. It looks like no one is holding on the phone. No one is typing on the web. So I will go ahead to slide 12, Dennis and turn it back over to you.

>> DENNIS FITZGIBBONS: Thank you, Tim.

So moving forward, as you are diving deeper in fee for service, you want to prepare for change. Once you have made the decision, everybody is on board, thousand you have got to really think about how you are going to make this happen. So you are going to educate your board and your staff about fee for service options that are out there, how is fee for service different than what you are doing now. What staff requirements might be necessary? What training opportunities are out there and may be required in order to move forward?

Infrastructure needs to be addressed. Do you have the infrastructure in place in order to take on some new responsibilities or develop new services?

And lastly, and always important, what is the impact on consumers? Will it advance independent living and how will it do so? I think it's important to be mindful of that as you go forward. Next slide, please, Tim.

When preparing for change, we involve staff and preparations all along the way doing this so it helps first of all to create team work around the concepts generated and the initiatives begun but it also keeps people involved and up to date and builds some solid team work and team spirit on things. So staff are involved along the way in either committee or work groups and the planning for quality assurance because if you are developing something a little bit different than what have you done before, you will make sure that you are monitoring and measuring what's going on there. You may need new job descriptions for staff to take on a new type of work or something a little bit different.

There may be space changes required. Does your CIL have enough space? You may require more space. Certainly IT upgrades are almost always a consideration, it seems with everything we do. And they could be expensive that's a very important consideration, but it's important to make sure that you can capture data and information that the funder is going to want, as well as the things you are going to need to track.

Policies and procedures of your CIL are ‑‑ I'm sure are already solidly in mace, but they need to be tweaked or adapted and changes or added to as you move forward with anything new coming online. And lastly, a new product or service may require that you are going to need to recruit new employees or new employee, and that may be ‑‑ that person may look a little different than you are used to working with. So recruitment is another consideration.

Next slide, please, Tim.

So this slide says plan. I would say plan, plan, plan. And keep on planning. Develop your CIL priorities. You know, maybe one ever your priorities is you want to expand regionally, because you have an area that you haven't served very well and maybe that's an opportunity to develop some new fee‑based services to support a branch office or something like that. Perhaps there's an underserved area or underserved population that you want to reach out to more. Maybe there's a way to find fee‑based contracts or arrangements that will help you do so.

You want to establish goals, objectives, activities and assign who is responsible for these things as you move through the process.

Identify fee‑for‑service options. What are your options? You could have a contract. You might have a contract or a proposal‑based arrangement. Maybe you are simply establishing hourly rates for a service. There could be any number of combinations of way that you might be paid for something.

You want to monitor and adjust your planning as needed. This is very dynamic process as you go through it and you may tweak it frequently. And lastly, communicate regularly with both board and staff. So they are always up to speed where something stands. The timing of that would be up to you. You know the pace or you will know the pace that things are moving but community is key to staying on track.

Next slide, please, Tim.

So, again, for planning. You want to know what success is going to look like in each and every case you move forward with. One way you might look at it is you have completed a fee‑based timeline. So that you are setting some type of internal goal, where you want to be, maybe three months from now, six months from now, et cetera, in the process. Maybe you will set up an outcome tied to a particular contract or agreement that you know you are going to set up. What will you expect from this? You want to make sure that you maintain financial stability of your CIL, consumer satisfaction with results is key. Excuse me. And one thing to say there is as you work with a vendor or someone who is going to purchase your services, they are going to have results that they are looking for. Certainly the consumer that's connected to them will have their results that they are looking for, and your work will be looking at both of those things to best of your ability.

Maybe as you move into this you are going to set a goal of a particular new service where you want to average a certain amount of money per month of billing within a targeted number of months. You may want to set a goal of having staff trained to meet funding requirements, and you want to make sure that consumers are experiencing positive outcomes. And one of the things that's important here at Alpha One, you experience low or no turnover in staff as a result.

Next slide, please, Tim.

As you move forward, it's important to know who the competition might be and you want to talk to them. Most businesses, no matter where they are, whether it's an actual ‑‑ it could be any kind of business but it could be a business.

It could be state government, anybody else, they are usually happy to talk and actually will share much more information than you might anticipate. They could help you understand rate development. They can give you a sense of what is important to them around the quality of services, what ‑‑ you will know and be able to learn more about what the requirements are for your own staff training, important to know what their outcomes are as they view them in their delivering of these services. If you are working with state government, you certainly need to know their requirements. Being clear on the service area that you would be expected to serve is very important, whether that's reasonable for you or not, and asking a competitor, do they make a profit on this service? You need to also be able to make money on this and I would go back to our slogan, no margin, no mission.

You can't just operate a business at cost, because costs always go up. So it's important to be looking at these factors as you go forward.

Next slide, please, Tim.

The next one says assess your CIL capacity to embrace fee for service. And I would highlight the word "embrace."

It may seem a strange one for you. We love developing fee for service programs here. We see it as a way to expand independent living to more people. We made it more or less a way that we think here. We encourage all employees to be always thinking about a way or a different way that we can look at the world and really address the issues that impact consumers and prevent them from moving forward with their independent living goals. And so the more we really get into the excitement of developing new opportunities or even just looking for new opportunities, it becomes more of an organizational sort of mantra and mind‑set and the more you can undo that, you know, and build that in, the easier it will be as you go forward.

But in order to do that, it's important to take a hard look at your CIL to assess your current infrastructure, those direct service staffing, the potential you would have for recruitment to increase your staffing and what the level of risk is in terms of cost, financially, again, what it might be to your mission, say, when you have thoughtful, thorough planning every step of the way on this.

I will go back again to ensuring strong staff and board support. Having that at the beginning is great but if things get tough and become a little bit more challenging than anticipates, it's important that the board and the staff will stand by making this move forward.

Next identifying staff who are willing and capable. That's important as you try something new, that you have the right people in place to try ‑‑ to make this work. And once again, I would suggest that monitoring services and program outcomes often is something you have got to be prepared to do as you jump into this because you now have not only the consumer to satisfy but you are going to have a vendor you need to satisfy and staying on top of that needs to be done regularly.

Next slide, please, Tim.

Continuing to embrace fee for service. What are changes that are needed to make this transition? Well, maybe you will need a different or you need staff's skill set to provide a service. Many years ago ‑‑ well, actually one of our earliest programs is adaptive driver evaluation where we are able to assess a person's ability to drive a vehicle with or without adaptive equipment and it was something that consumers told us that they wanted because before we had it, they had to travel out of state at great cost and inconvenience and they wanted someone to do it here.

And so we decided to take that up, but we had to have a vehicle used for assessments and it required to have a license drivers' Ed instructor and an occupational therapist. So we did recruit an occupational therapist. We were able to get a vehicle donated, all the equipment, et cetera, and that's how we started the program.

Excuse me, please.

Another thing that we have in place is an effective data collection system, and information is key and nowadays having that automated is key as well. A sophisticated accounting system is very important. You are going to be doing new billing and collections. That's very important.

Excuse me.

(coughing).

Okay. Your intake procedure may change. You may need to adapt it or just tweak it a little bit. You might have to update your CIL policies and procedures around maybe travel, meals, overnight trips, what to do about a canceled visit. You may need equipment such as new computers or laptops or other types of devices that are going to extend your staff's ability to deliver their service.

And next you may need added supervision to manage and stay on top whatever it is new that you are creating.

Next slide, please, Tim.

Continuing on with embracing fee for service. What are current barriers to making these changes happen? Well, I talked about it before. Time can be a constraint. Limited funding could be a problem or a barrier. The skill set of your existing staff might be and, of course, fear but I don't put this high on the list because I think April independent living, that's one thing centers generally are not, fearful. Nothing usually stops us from moving the mission forward and nothing should stop us from embracing fee for service. Going into this, I think an internal assessment is key but not the most key. It can tend to be biased because you are looking at yourself but doing in‑depth planning process. Do some more of it. You might want to have a check list to use as you assess going through this process, to make sure you have been over things once or twice.

And then make sure you are using the expertise from your board of directors. Assuming that they are going to be representing maybe different businesses or experiences, living with disability, you know, staying in touch with them and make sure that you are utilizing them with every step of the way as appropriate to a board member.

Next, consider external assessment which is less biased and may get you more good information than looking at it internally. You know, an outsider as we all know from our personal lives is more willing to spot your blemishes than someone who is close to you and they are libel to tell you about them too. Maybe a peer review by another CIL might help. You could use business survey, score volunteer or other business volunteer to look at what you are paying.

You may want to take this to your bank and get their input and legal and accounting advisors. They can look at it from their point of view.

Next slide, please, Tim.

Excuse me.

Continuing with embracing fee for service, how are we going to fund needed changes? And this obviously is a big one. You want to know if start‑up money is available with the customer in this case, whoever is purchasing the service from you. And that has been done when we started our first home‑based care program. We were able to associate a contract where we were paid a month in advance for the estimated cost of running the program that no longer exists but it was a great boon to our success then, to get us off the ground and running and set financially to deliver the service to a small number of consumers that built over time.

So start up money is don't be shy about asking for it.

The next one must adhere is OPM. If you don't know what that means, that's other people's money. We look at using that before using our own resources which like yours are often tight, but if you can find a way to find anyone out there, no matter where they are from, to assist with this, I would highly recommend it.

One example of things that we did was back in the 80s, we found a local oil heating company that actually funded the start up of a for‑profit company for us, which was an unusual approach to the world.

The next one is certainly grant requests to local foundations for start‑up money, our possibility, and lastly you could review your own budget or plan to add in your next budget cycle monies that would support a fee for service venture.

And, again, I come back to surveying staff and board. They have already gotten their buy‑in at this point in time. You have their support. They want to know what skills do the staff and the board have to share around grant writing as you look for the funding needed to do these things.

What technology expertise might they have and what connections might they have to the business community?

Next slide, please, Tim.

And now that you have embraced fee for service, you wanted to determine staffing needs for any particular fee for service agreement that comes along. You want to know what skill set is needed as you go forward. I'm going to share an example here. In the Portland, Maine, area, there are more disability insurers that are involved in long‑term disability insurance and short‑term disability insurance than anywhere probably on the planet and why they are in Portland, I'm not sure, but there's a history here that goes back 30 plus years with that.

And we have had strong relationships with a number of these disability insurers over the years, to the point where we have been able to engage them to purchase services from us at different times. It waxes and wanes based on their business model, but we have strong relationships and in the case of wanting to let the most recent one, they were looking for an organization that had knowledge of resources and certainly we feel like we meet that. They were looking for experience living with a disability. That was the so‑called proverbial no brainer.

The ability to relate to someone with a disability, again, strong communication skills. They wanted research skills, telephone skills, excellent documentation, and whether we could make infrastructure changes for billing, reporting and transmitting, et cetera.

So those are things that we needed, and therm things that were natural to our every day work. There was a great fit for us to engage in a partnership with the disability insurer. Next slide, please.

So how do you determine staffing needs? Well, you want to know what the funder expects, what is their demand for services. They will undoubtedly establish the number of people eligible and how many referrals that you might expect. You would want to know if there's come petition or are you the only game in town. And if possible, starting out small is always a good idea. Trying to negotiate a pilot to avoid competition for one thing but also as a way to start slow and make sure you are doing it the way you want to and the way they expect.

Nailing down the referral process is also important. You know, how will the purchaser make referrals you to? Will it be by phone? By email? And what is their preferred process? And on your end, who is going to handle a referral? What's the expected timeline from a referral to actual service? And making this all work is important that you identify the internal staff at your CIL, we are going to match the needs to what needs to be done. And I think that one thing I can say is going back to that example on the disability insurer, when we were looking for people to satisfy that agreement, we were looking for our superstars and our next generation of superstars to really make this work for us. And that's how we were successful is taking people who really understood independent living better than anyone on staff and had the energy and the excitement of taking this to the public sector.

Next slide, please, Tim.

Continuing on determining staffing needs. Do you want to know if you need more staff or do you need different staff? Don't wait until the day you start a contract. You need to be planning ahead, recruiting ahead, training ahead, and orienting everybody ahead of time. And you want to develop a recruitment plan in order to make this work, so you can do those things of orienting and training new staff. You need to know how long before they will be ready. And you may need to transition existing staff to new positions as you go forward with this as well, because they may not fit into the fee for service that you are developing.

Next slide, please.

We are at the next question period.

>> TIM FUCHS: Yep. Okay. So let me remind you all, if you have a question on the phone, you can press star pound and we'll take those questions as they line up. And for those of you on the webinar, you can type your question in the chat box underneath the list of attendees, or in chat box of the CART. There's been some good discussion in the webinar chat, while Dennis was presenting.

There have been a few questions in there. Let me glean a few of those, as we wait for questions on the phone. First of all, Dennis, Carolee asked for advice. She says one of the biggest problems in the fee for service, rates are lower, and the regulatory requirements, do you have any suggestions on how to deal with that?

>> DENNIS FITZGIBBONS: Let me read this again here.

Well, I think in terms of rates being lower, and regulatory requirements, sometimes if the fee doesn't work, then I would say don't do it. This comes down to what we value and how we value our own services and getting into a contract that doesn't pay us enough to really provide the service is just a recipe for disaster.

I think sometimes you can negotiate that way, if someone is presenting a fee rate or the structure is too complicated, some of the best negotiating words sometimes is no and that can get their attention, if they are really interested, excuse me, most anything can be negotiated.

But I will talk about this a little bit more as we go forward some of the barriers that you may encounter, but it is complicated. Excuse me, I'm going to cough again.

>> TIM FUCHS: Okay. Thanks, Dennis.

Mary Ann says in terms of getting information from competitors, competitors in rural areas done share information. We have better luck if we went outside of our area, where they are not direct competitors. They don't want to share information. They want to take over your operation. Who has had a good outcome in contacting competitors? Any experience or advice, Dennis.

>> DENNIS FITZGIBBONS: Yes, we had those same challenges. There are similar organizations who provide similar services. We provide the consumer directed personal services in the state but there are competitors there and for a long time, the competitors wouldn't speak to us. They wouldn't look at us. We just look for opportunities where we can get to the table and talk to them and try to build a relationship, not necessarily to be friends and great buddies but to at least agree to disagree on certain things and to break down some of those barriers that keep us and prevent us from working together.

Because reminding them that the consumer needs to come first has actually been a good way to begin those discussions, because most of them don't want to actually be seen or heard and they don't really care about consumers. And they may not care about them the way we do, but it was a good place to begin the discussion. So we've had some success that way. It does take time to build those relationships.

>> TIM FUCHS: Good. Great. That's helpful.

And then I know Helen had asked for an example of one of your fee for service and whether it was successful or struggling. I know you will walk through a lot of examples from Alpha One. Helen, just so you know that is coming up. And Carolee has shared some great examples from her CIL in New Jersey.

Again, you can press star pound on the phone or type your question in the chat.

Okay. I don't see anyone typing and I don't see anyone on the phone. So I will go to the next slide, slide 25.

>> DENNIS FITZGIBBONS: Thanks, Tim. Identifying unmet needs your community. I'm sure you do this all the time, but this is just another walk through the things that are important to know what some of the things are that might be out there as opportunity.

(Coughing).

Excuse me. Going back to brainstorming, including staff and you can include board and consumers. It's just a few examples of things that might come up. Work‑related Social Security issues, we are all dealing with that on a regular basis, accessibility assessments, home modifications, assistive technology assessments or equipment purchases, mental health services that include things like comprehensive community services, quality assurance of mental health services, drop‑in centers, peer run respite and employment. These are just a few of the areas that we hear about all the time.

Next slide, please, Tim.

Now, community needs surveys, there's a lot that's already been done for us and if we look out there, we can find some of these things. United Way is a good source sometimes in some places that does surveys of community need. We all have our own State Plan for Independent Living that identifies needs. Certainly colleges and universities are great sources for different types of need surveys as are health consortiums, political parties, newspapers, you can probably think of more.

Another way to look at needs is, you know, what's the news, local and statewide? We all know there's a lack of housing, certainly is in Maine, lack of transportation. This is a very rural state. It's a huge problem. Homelessness and mental health are major issues around the country.

Next slide, please.

One way to survey needs is to utilize your technology at your CIL. Your website is a great way to solicit feedback and to utilize social media and another way ‑‑ tool is Survey Monkey if you haven't used it. It's easy. It's cost effective. It can go to anyone who has got a computer. You can make the survey yours. You can find out who knows you and who doesn't, which is good to know as well.

Next slide, please, Tim.

Continuing with need surveys, use some community resources that are out there to help assist with that. You might be able to find a class or a student intern to help you with a project. Again, universities sometimes have services that would do these things. The score, retired business association is a great resource for helping with things like that. You can use survey results that you do get through these processes to share CIL information and stories. You might issue a press release to increase response to surveys, and a good thing I ask is always if a respondent knows about your center already. The more you know how well nope you are and how much they know of you, that gives you an idea of your presence in the community.

Next slide, please, Tim.

Creating or expanding community relationships. You want to know who knows about your CILs. Surveys can tell you about that. Focus groups, identify opportunities to get involved and be more visible. I talked before about building relationships. It's key to finding opportunity out there. Maybe you are a member of the chamber of commerce or you belong to a public health group in your area. The aging community is a natural partner. There are more visible ways to be involved.

So encouraging staff and board to participate out in the community in different ways is a good way of spreading the word about your center, raising the visibility, but also making connections to opportunities. This could be open committees, work groups, advisory councils. They could be speaking opportunities, training opportunities, and the good news is probably you are all doing this already anyway.

Next slide, please, Tim.

You need to develop a plan to close the gap of who needs to know and understand your CIL. Evaluate your marketing strategies. What efforts do you make now and how successful are you?

There's radio talk shows and newspapers. One that we have used a lot is cable TV which is always eager to have something they can put on to inform the public of something.

And what does your website do for you? This is a great tool if you got one. Is it current? Is the information current? Is it informative? And does it bring people back to it regularly?

Our goal with our website is that there will always be information there and we always have fresh and current news, either local, state or national that there is a reason to keep coming back to tap into what's there.

Next slide, please.

So knowing your service area is also important. Identifying potential partners. Maybe you want to look for someone who has got a like‑minded philosophy. Not everyone is an independent living, but not everyone is necessarily opposed to our philosophy either. There are many who like us more and more. I think we had an influence on the world enough so that the independent living is not such an unheard of thing anymore.

And even when you do establish a partnership with someone, you know, be ready to know when you are going to agree to disagree and make that clear up front.

A partner you might want is someone with a common interest. Maybe they have a common consumer base or a common issues. I mentioned aging before. That's a huge issue here in Maine. Maine is now the oldest average age of people in the nation. I think we are approaching the high 40s in terms of average age. So we have a very old state in terms of our people and that's having a huge impact in public policy here.

You might be looking for a partner that could share space or staff. We certainly would want a partner that has reputation of results and positive incomes. And maybe a partner that does something that you value or you want to be able to do. And a good potential partner might be another disability‑related service provider.

The next slide, please, Tim.

This is a list of some potential fee for service opportunities. It would really depend on your state and your area where you are, but make voc rehab is one. Government human services for adults, children, or other. The Medicaid system in your state, maybe a managed care organization in your state, insurance companies, I mentioned here were able to connect with long‑term and short‑term disability insurers, businesses, municipalities and school systems. There's other governmental departments such as education, economic and community development, housing, transportation, and, of course, there's other disability‑based organizations that might be good partners, or opportunities for fee for service.

Next slide, please.

Getting to the contract, when you finally sit down with someone who is interested, you want to know what the purchaser needs and values because that's what's going to ‑‑ that's what takes to satisfies them is what it's going to make for a positive relationship. What do you expect for quality of service. How do they define that? What are the positive incomes they are looking for?

They will be very much interested in cost effectiveness and you will be tempted to accept too little and I would just suggest that you don't want to give it away. Nothing is free and you need to adhere to the no margin, no mission. You can't afford to do it, then I would suggest that it's okay to walk away from it.

They, as the purchaser may value strong relationships with providers, which is key so maintaining a relationship once you get into it. They may have a high desire of consumer satisfaction which would be great, but, remember that we are interested in consumer satisfaction as well.

The purchaser may want accurate and timely documentation and that's key to us being able to deliver that. If they want a report or a bill or whatever it is on a regular schedule within a certain amount of time, it's important to know that you can meet those requirements.

Knowing their communication requirements are important and meeting them, excuse me, and what I know most of them like, and are no problems. They really don't want to deal with problems. And the more you can keep problems with away from them and problem solve on the own, the better that is. But you want to know what the process is for addressing those and taking care of them immediately, so that they don't come up too late or come up as a surprise.

Next slide, please.

Now continuing getting to the contract.

You want to know how your product or service is compatible. Know what the purchaser values. Know what you do well at your CIL. And only promise what you can deliver. Now you will see a little parenthesis with vaporware which is a little inside joke. One thing we have been known to do in the past is if we know we are so confident that we can deliver something, even though we don't know all the details, we have had occasion where people have said to us, can you do this and our automatic answer is yes. And then we figure out how to do it afterwards because we don't want to miss a particular opportunity. But it's only when we are super confident that we can deliver that and I will give a quick example there, going back to working with the disability insurer several years ago, they wanted us to do telephone conference calls with claimants they had in their insurance, to talk about their independent living needs.

And the people they were going to refer to us could have been anywhere in the country. When we took this to staff internally and said, well, it's an independent living assessment, which we always do and most of them are resistant saying, well, but we usually do that at someone's kitchen table where they live because that's how we work with consumers.

They said, how are we going to do this on the telephone when we can't see someone and see their environment? And I was able to talk to them and say, well, so and so, who is also one of our staff people, who does the best independent living assessments that we do is blind. And whether he's in someone's home or anywhere else, he does as good a job as he would, no matter what. So if we can do that, why can't you?

And so once they got beyond the fact that it wasn't the same methodology that they were used to, they quickly adapted to the fact that they could do these things by telephone. So ‑‑ but, again, it was only something we knew that we were sure of and that they would understand once it was explained to them.

You want to be consistent and persistent with the vendor. And then what's very important is highlight what your CIL values and brag about the things that you have accomplished and what you do on behalf of consumers and independent living.

I highly encourage bringing anyone that you are going to enter into contract with or agreement with into your CIL, into your so‑called house, showing them around, doing the dog and pony show, letting them meet your staff, talk to your staff, talk about what they do, what their background is, and, in fact, our biggest selling point is when they get to meet our staff and list tone our experience and working with consumers.

And if available, do a comparison with competition.

Next slide, please, Tim.

Continuing along that line, use CIL events with a purchaser. Maybe you would invite them as a guest speaker at a board meeting. Maybe you would do an article in your newsletter about them. Or you would just invite them to a social event, or maybe you would start some cross training between your CIL and the purchaser ahead of time as a way of building the relationship.

But nurturing your relationship with funders and buyers is key. Once you have got to start them, you've got to build them and maintain them and pay attention to them to make sure that they are satisfied, that they are getting what they want, and you want to make sure that you are doing the same and hopefully they are asking the same questions of you.

Lastly, I have a quote here from an old friend from ILRU, Kym King, who always used to insist that it's always about relationships and I couldn't agree more.

Building these relationships with potential purchasers, and other places where there might be opportunity are key to getting opportunities presented to you. You know, the more you are seen as a resource and an expert in disability, the more likely you are going to be able to have success with this process.

Next slide, Tim.

So what are some barriers and solutions that you might run into? Well, one that you may see is that the vendor or purchaser is difficult to work with. So that difficulty may be resolved by just simply changing who deals with them directly on a regular basis.

It's also an indicator that you have to maintain a high level of communication.

What if the vendor doesn't want to pay what it costs to provide the service. So one thing you can do is provide some specifics and break the agreement or service into smaller pieces so that it's a little bit more well designed in terms of what's being purchased and paid for and therefore maybe it's easier to arrive at the cost and the pricing that go. You might suggest a trial period for both parties to agree to see how it goes and see if they are getting what they want.

And last, you might want to try the cost into what the vendor values. Look at what their values are as an organization and what they value for outcomes and that will benefit them as an organization. An example here in Maine, that we're working with is the money follows the person. Granting here in Maine, it's called the homeward bound program, they sometimes have been a little bit squawking about the time it takes for one of our independent living specialists to work with a consumer moving out of a nursing home. And they start questioning some of the billing on that.

We have been able to go back to what they are looking for in terms of the outcome. They want someone out of the nursing home. We go over and over again about how intensive this work can be and how much time it takes, and generally have been able to work through that kind of a barrier. But it requires that constant communication and looking at sometimes as finite as the units of service attached to an individual.

And lastly, this may be a difference in values and philosophy. And you will need to know at your CIL how much difference you can tolerate in working with a potential buyer. And maybe that's none. Next slide, please, Tim.

So continuing those barriers, purchaser requirements may be too difficult, no matter how you look at it. So be prepared to say no is very important, and that may mean walking away from an agreement. On the other hand, no might lead to further negotiation because if you've gotten far enough with the purchaser to be talking about this stuff, then they are clearly interested. So no doesn't necessarily have to mean no. You might be able to negotiate.

Another barrier could be there's too much competition. So you need to evaluate if it's worth of effort to pursue this, because investing a lot of energy and resources into the infrastructure for a very small outcome, whether it's in terms of serving consumers or the revenue that's involved may not be worth of effort.

Or another opportunity here is that if there's competition, maybe approaching the competition to be a partner or a subcontractor offers you a different way to get into the area where you could then be developing some fee‑based services.

And, again, a barrier might be the need for start‑up funds. We may not have deep enough pockets for this. You could investigate a business loan. (Coughing).

Or expand your line of credit with your bank. And, you could go back to other people's money and look for someone who is willing to make that kind of contribution to get you off the ground. Again, write a start‑up grant or if need be, you dip into your fund balance if a project is a sure thing and sure should be in quotation marks. Next slide, Tim.

Oh, our last question period.

>> TIM FUCHS: That's right. So we have got plenty of time for questions. I hope you all took advantage. Again, you can press star pound if you are on the telephone or type the question in the chat on the webinar or the chat on the CART screen. And I will give folks a minute to type out any questions they have.

Been a great discussion going on in the chat box. I have enjoyed following that. Just as we wait to see some questions, we had tips from a number of people. Michelle offered up the small business development centers as a great resource for centers to help small businesses which in a sense, CILs are small businesses, and fee‑for‑service programs are essentially start‑up businesses as Michelle says. So that's smart. Good resources and small development recenters.

Carolee and Mary Ann have been talking about different solutions that they have to market their programs and get into fee‑for‑service and the challenges of staffing those things, I agree.

Okay. Don't see any questions on the phone right now. Again, that's star pound if you have a question on the phone. Or you can type your question out in the chat.

So just while I wait to see if any questions come in, let me remind you all, I mentioned ‑‑ Dennis and I both mentioned that the on‑site training we had last April in Denver with Dennis and Kathy Knoble‑Iverson from Independent Living Resources in Wisconsin, and just like we archived these webinars, we also connect it from the training. And the neat part about that training in Denver, like many of our training programs is that we recorded it.

You can go on to ILRU's web, our partner in the NCO and the IL‑NET projects and view the training materials and the video of Dennis and Kathy doing this. So as you might imagine in the two and a half day training, there was a lot more detail. And so if you want to drill down into any of these sections, it's an excellent resource. And that's under the training resources on ILRU's website at ILRU.org. I will also put that link into the CART chat now.

So that's available there.

All right it looks like some questions have come in. Let's see, Dennis, Holly asks if we will be discussing private pay and/or sliding scale fees during this training.

>> DENNIS FITZGIBBONS: Not directly, but I'm happy to speak to that a little bit.

We have never done a lot of ‑‑ we have never done a lot of private pay work here, because we just haven't had that much demand from consumers, but we have done the sliding scale fee based on people's ability to pay. And ‑‑ but our answer on that too is a couple of things that we have looked at, for instance, adaptive driver program I talked about earlier which is one of our earliest programs, because we needed to invest in the van and equipment and the professional licensure, et cetera, we had an investment in this program that we wanted to make sure we could afford to pay and pay to recoup those costs that we invested in it over time.

So we structured the program in such a way that we always expect people to pay but we also help them find the resources to pay for it. So rather than saying, oh, you don't have to pay because you can't afford it, we have found a way to point them in the direction where they might go to get that paid for. So it's not really to deny anybody anything, but it's recognizing that you do have to being for the costs that you incur in some program.

>> TIM FUCHS: Good. Thanks, Dennis. And next week you will be talking a lot about the methodology you all used to develop the rates and fees that you charge; is that right?

>> DENNIS FITZGIBBONS: I think we will be doing that only sort of rudimentary. I think there might be planning for a future one, by somebody who has a stronger accounting background than I do. I will certainly talk about the basics of it.

>> TIM FUCHS: So you will cover the basics.

>> DENNIS FITZGIBBONS: That's why we hire accountants so they do those things.

>> TIM FUCHS: Yep. And we are ‑‑ just so everyone knows we are looking at putting one to go on the accounting side and much more detail there.

>> DENNIS FITZGIBBONS: There was someone talking about not having the money to hire a development person, and, you know, we don't have a so‑called development person here either. That's why I talked about the need to really get staff involved to the point where they are always thinking about these things. A good example is that I had is our staff was very frustrated because we get a call from the rehab hospital on Friday afternoon, saying Mrs. Jones is going home tomorrow and we need a ramp, expecting that we will make the ramp appear tomorrow.

It wasn't so much that the hospital would be upset with us. The frustration that is that Mrs. Jones couldn't go home probably and might end up in a nursing home as a result. What can we do about this? I said I don't know what the answer is, but it's all about who you know and who you talk to or about that relationship thing again.

And I said but first do some research on what kind of ramping we might do here. He actually found a CIL in Minnesota that had created the Minnesota ramp. He liked the process. It's all prefabricated things and so he came back to me with that and I said, well, I know one person to talk to, he's the H.U.D. led in Maine. Go talk to him about it.

He says, let's go talk to this guy, economic and community development. He liked the idea. They com one $7,500 for a pilot program, because we said we could build three ramps for $7,500. Using a volunteer labor.

And to make a long story short, this IL specialist then somehow found another $7,500 and built six ramps instead of three and these guys were thrilled because they could go out and touch the ramp and see the ramp and make a difference. And economic and community development came back and gave us another $50,000.

Within three years, he was so happy with the program that that went to $300,000. And so just from the insistence or the desire of one staff member to do something about an issue, we were fortunate enough to build a statewide program that makes a huge difference in people's lives by, you know, diverting them from nursing home care.

So you don't have to have a development person on staff. It's more to get this approach to the world built into your staff.

>> TIM FUCHS: Excellent. I'm really glad you shared that, Dennis. That's a great example. So keep in mind, folks that you already have the ‑‑ you already have the know‑how to come up with these programs. So that's really good.

All right. Our conversation is continuing online. I don't see any additional questions, though.

Just remind you all that this is ‑‑ you registered as a series. So the connection information for next week's webinar is exactly the same and we hope you will join us again then.

I will give just about 30 more seconds before I start to wrap up here and make sure there are not any more questions.

And registration remains open. So if any of your leagues want to join us for next week's call, they are welcome to do so. They can register on NCIL's website.

And speaking of development, we have the resource development webinar with Karen Ebert Davis coming up tomorrow, also a copartner from the fee for service training last April. Registration will be open tomorrow at noon eastern. So I hope you take advantage of that. I know a lot of you have registered for that one as well.

I see a few people typing. I don't want to close quite yet.

Okay. It doesn't look like there are any additional questions. And we are almost to 4:30 here. So ‑‑ well, Dennis, this is a fantastic introduction to fee‑for‑service centers and the programs you bill at Alpha One. I look forward to hearing the rest of them next week.

This is a link to the evaluation form and like I said, it's short and easy to complete. I know a number of you participating in small groups. Please fill this out as an individual. We want to know what each of you thinks and, again, we'll be picking one lucky person to receive a $25 Amazon gift card that completes the evaluation today.

Dennis has also been generous enough here on slide 40 to provide his email, if you have follow‑up questions for him. And I really appreciate you all joining us today.

Dennis, thanks so much for putting this to go and we look forward to having you with us next week.

To all of you, thanks for making time in your busy days to join us today. Don't forget to check out the archive of both this webinar, as well as those materials from the on site that we did on fee for service and let any of your colleagues know that there's still time to sign up for part two next week. So we will go ahead and close. Have a wonderful afternoon, everybody. Thanks. Bye‑bye.

(End of meeting 4:24 p.m. Eastern Time)