



# FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

## Workforce and Provider Shortage Workgroup

Dakota County's Workforce and Provider Shortage Workgroup developed the following recommendations between November 2022 and June 2023. They represent actions the county can take to address a lack of service and support options available to people with disabilities.

July 2023

The recommendations of Dakota County's *Workforce and Provider Shortage Workgroup* are broken down into four primary themes that represent strategies for improving access to services and supports for people with disabilities at the local level. The four themes or strategies are:

1. **Recruiting and Retaining Direct Support Professionals (DSP)**, so more staff are available to provide support
2. **Maximizing Self-Direction and Program Flexibility**, so people have more options for how they use support dollars
3. **Increasing Assistive Technology & Remote Support**, to give people another option for support
4. **Promoting Inclusive Communities**, so people with disabilities have opportunities to participate in all aspects of community living

Each strategy includes specific recommendations, with a total of 13 recommendations overall. The following table describes each, including the county action recommended, state action or support required, and whether new local resources are needed to implement the recommendation. Resource estimates are preliminary and will require further development based on direction from Dakota County's Board of Commissioners on recommendations to move forward.

A combined estimate of new resources – staff positions and additional budget – to implement all recommendations is included following the table.

## Final Workgroup Recommendations

1. Recruiting and Retaining Direct Support Professionals (DSP)	County Action (Y/N)?  Board or Staff?	State Action (Y/N)?  Legislative or Administrative?	New County Resources Needed (Y/N)?  Budget or Staff?	Potential Funding Sources	Additional Notes
1a. Develop targeted strategy for advocating at the state level to increase direct support professional (DSP) wages	Y, Board (Advocacy)	Y, Legislative (Rate Increases)	N	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with stakeholders to develop more targeted strategy (ex: advocate for increases to PCA rates, or individual budgets for self-directed services).</li> </ul>
1b. Pilot a certification program with local colleges to create career entry/ladders for Personal Care Assistants (PCA).	Y, Board (Resources)	Y, Legislative (Rate Increases)	Y – Support with combined FTE* identified in 1c./2a.	State Grant or County Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Metro Centers for Independent Living (MCIL) is developing a PCA certification pilot funded by the state</li> <li>MCIL is interested in partnering with Dakota County and local colleges to promote/recruit participants for pilot.</li> </ul>
1c. Provide and/or support training, learning, and mentorship opportunities for direct support professionals to increase retention.	Y, Board (Resources)	Y, Administrative (Potential Funding)	Y – Estimate \$50,000 annual training budget and 0.5 FTE* to coordinate (combine with 1b./2a.)	State Grant or County Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-person training or networking opportunities for DSPs, scholarships to conferences, etc.</li> <li>Provide beverages, snacks, or lunch where possible as it makes a difference</li> </ul>

1. Recruiting and Retaining DSPs, CONTINUED	County Action (Y/N)? Board or Staff?	State Action (Y/N)? Legislative or Administrative?	New County Resources Needed (Y/N)? Budget or Staff?	Potential Funding Sources	Additional Notes
1d. Develop an online application that uses a “gig economy” approach where people can request assistance with specific activities “on demand”	Y, Board (Resources)	Y, Administrative (Funding and Policy)	Y – Estimate \$500,000 to develop and pilot platform	State Grant or County Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A provider in Dakota County developed a proposal to create this type of platform</li> <li>• Include licensed and unlicensed services</li> </ul>

*\*Recommendations 1b, 1c, and 2a could be supported by combined 1.0 FTE*

2. Maximizing Self-Direction and Program Flexibility	County Action (Y/N)? Board or Staff?	State Action (Y/N)? Legislative or Administrative?	New County Resources needed (Y/N)? Budget or Staff?	Potential Funding Sources	Additional Notes
2a. Support information sharing (tips/tricks) for people using self-directed programs by creating forums and free (to families) consultation opportunities where people can get technical assistance	Y, Board (Resources)	Y, Administrative (Potential Funding)	Y – Estimate \$10,000 annual contract for consultation (cover with current budget) and 0.5 FTE* to coordinate (combine with 1b./1c.)	State Grant or County Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate in-person training forums and meetups with individuals and families self-directing services</li> <li>• Foster opportunities for peer support and learning</li> </ul>
2b. Pilot use of prepaid cards for county self-directed program to maximize allowable expenses and remove barrier of pre-payment/reimbursement	Y, Staff (Prototype);  Board (Policy/Resources)	Y, Administrative (Technical Assistance)	Unsure – Estimate funding after prototyping	County Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More research needed about gaps and what state/federal restrictions could be removed with a county-funded program</li> <li>• If this moves forward, incorporate financial empowerment/support, and consider partners that could build in needed "guardrails" without burdensome administrative work</li> </ul>
2c. Use a consultant to map out the consumer-directed process to identify and remove unnecessary administrative steps that create burden	Y, Staff (Contracting)	N	N – Estimate \$20,000 contract and cover with current budget	Current Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Map out process from person/family experience and business process</li> </ul>

2. Maximizing Self-Direction and Program Flexibility, CONTINUED	County Action (Y/N)? Board or Staff?	State Action (Y/N)? Legislative or Administrative?	New County Resources needed (Y/N)? Budget or Staff?	Potential Funding Sources	Additional Notes
2d. Advocate for program simplification/flexibility at the state level	Y, Board (Advocacy)	Y, Administrative (Technical Assistance)	N	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use mapping process to identify policy fixes needed</li> <li>• Example: Current disincentive in individual budgets when people choose to self-direct their services</li> </ul>

*\*Recommendations 1b, 1c, and 2a could be supported by combined 1.0 FTE*

3. Increasing Assistive Technology & Remote Support	County Action (Y/N)? Board or Staff?	State Action (Y/N)? Legislative or Administrative?	New County Resources needed (Y/N)? Budget or Staff?	Potential Funding Sources	Additional Notes
<p><b>3a.</b> Identify and use resources (ex: ARRM Technology Resource Center) to increase understanding of and access to technology supports for people with disabilities, families, and case managers</p>	<p>Y, Staff (Training)</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning ARRM training of case managers in September</li> <li>• From there determine needed local resource/contract for consultation</li> </ul>
<p><b>3b.</b> Develop clear policy and process for leveraging existing funding streams (state grants, waiver funds, community-based microgrants, county funds) to support assistive technology.</p>	<p>Y, Staff (Research); Board (Resources)</p>	<p>Y, Administrative (Technical Assistance)</p>	<p>Unsure – Estimate funding after research; may cover with current budget</p>	<p>Current Budget or County Funds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recent legislative changes will improve state funding and remove some administrative barriers</li> <li>• Design County policies and processes to maximize access to assistive technology and remote supports and remove unnecessary barriers.</li> <li>• Set measurable goals for increased use of technology.</li> </ul>

4. Promoting Inclusive Communities	County Action (Y/N)?  Board or Staff?	State Action (Y/N)?  Legislative or Administrative?	New County Resources needed (Y/N)?  Budget or Staff?	Potential Funding Sources	Additional Notes
<p><b>4a(i).</b> Pilot program to provide training, technical assistance, and/or micro-grants to “mainstream organizations” (parks, libraries, recreational programs, etc.) to support inclusion of people with disabilities</p>	<p>Y, Board (Resources)</p>	<p>Administrative (Potential Funding)</p>	<p>Y – Estimate \$275,000 over 2 years (\$137,500 annually) for training, consultation, and organizational grants; and 0.8 FTE to coordinate</p>	<p>State Grant or County Funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dakota County and partners developed a similar proposal in 2018</li> <li>• Updated estimates based on inflation and broader concept</li> </ul>
<p><b>4a(ii).</b> Pilot a program to provide training, technical assistance, and/or micro-grants to <i>businesses</i> to support inclusion of people with disabilities</p>	<p>Y, Board (Resources)</p>	<p>Administrative (Potential Funding)</p>	<p><i>Combined estimate with 4a(i)</i></p>	<p><i>See 4a(i)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mirrors 4a(i) but was separated to specifically focus on engagement with businesses</li> <li>• Partner with local chambers</li> <li>• Have businesses share with each other, ex: success in employing people with disabilities, or adapting services/ spaces to improve access</li> </ul>
<p><b>4b.</b> Develop ongoing Advisory Board to guide Dakota County and Social Services on issues impacting people with disabilities and promote leadership opportunities for people with disabilities</p>	<p>Y, Staff (Propose Structure);  Board (Approve)</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Yes, stipends for Advisory Board Members, if not otherwise paid.</p>	<p>County Funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If board supports concept, develop proposed structure for review/approval</li> </ul>



## Summary of New Resource Estimates

Several of the previous recommendations can be accomplished with current county staff, budgets, and/or partnerships. Summarized below are others requiring new resources to implement.

### New Staff Positions: 1.8 FTE total

- Recommendations 1b, 1c, and 2a supported by a combined 1.0 FTE
- Recommendations 4a(i) and 4a(ii) supported by a combined 0.8 FTE

### New Budget: \$825,000

- Recommendation 1c estimates requiring \$50,000 training budget (annual)
- Recommendation 1d estimates costing \$500,000 (total)
- Recommendations 4a(i) and 4a(ii) estimated requiring \$275,000 in budget (2-year pilot)

NOTE: Some recommendations require additional research before determining the need for new resources (2b and 3b).