

# Wisconsin HCBS Innovation Grants Final Evaluation Report

Submitted March 21, 2025



**PUBLIC**  
CONSULTING GROUP

# CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>2</b>
Key Findings and Impact .....	2
Sustaining the Momentum .....	4
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Background .....	5
Evaluation Goals.....	5
Methodology .....	6
<b>GRANT PROGRAM MANAGEMENT .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>COLLECTIVE IMPACT .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>SUMMIT SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>14</b>
Goals .....	14
Keynote Speakers .....	14
Summit Engagement .....	17
Summit Feedback.....	18
<b>EVALUATION FINDINGS BY CATEGORY .....</b>	<b>20</b>
Caregiver Support and Respite.....	20
Children’s Long Term Support (CLTS).....	24
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion .....	28
Supportive Employment.....	32
Facility and Technology Improvement.....	35
Transportation .....	39
Workforce Recruitment .....	42
Workforce Retention .....	46
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>APPENDIX A .....</b>	<b>48</b>





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) has leveraged federal funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to enhance, expand, and strengthen Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) across the state. Through two rounds of funding, DHS invested \$30 million in 158 innovative projects, supporting diverse organizations and populations in both urban and rural areas. This initiative has directly improved the lives of more than 644,000 Wisconsinites, bolstering caregiver support, children's services, diversity and inclusion efforts, employment opportunities, technological advancements, transportation solutions, and workforce development.

To assess the impact of these investments, DHS partnered with Public Consulting Group (PCG) to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the HCBS grantee projects. The evaluation used a mixed-methodology approach—including grantee reports, surveys, and focus groups—and identified key successes, challenges, and lessons learned. The findings provide valuable insights that will shape future HCBS policy and best practices in Wisconsin.

## KEY FINDINGS AND IMPACT

	<p><b><i>Caregiver Support and Respite</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful programs provided flexible, community-centered support tailored to caregivers' unique needs.</li> <li>• Incentives, such as stipends for self-care activities, proved essential in engaging caregivers.</li> <li>• Staffing and organizational capacity remained key challenges.</li> </ul>
	<p><b><i>Children's Long-Term Support (CLTS)</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Projects enhanced family support services, skills development training, and respite care.</li> <li>• A family-centered approach and early staff engagement were critical to success.</li> </ul>
	<p><b><i>Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intentional efforts to improve and translate marketing and communication materials resulted in more inclusive services.</li> <li>• Culturally relevant outreach and partnerships with trusted organizations significantly improved engagement.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuous quality improvement and community feedback were key to sustaining success.</li> </ul>
	<p><b><i>Supportive Employment</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employer engagement and individualized employment plans contributed to participant success.</li> <li>Addressing communication and scheduling gaps enhanced employment retention.</li> <li>Strong interest in customized and self-employment opportunities was noted, despite their complexity.</li> </ul>
	<p><b><i>Facility and Technology Improvement</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Efforts focused on bridging the digital divide for HCBS providers and recipients.</li> <li>Cross-organizational collaboration and measured implementation led to more sustainable improvements.</li> <li>Staff hesitancy and limited prioritization of technology in human services remain barriers to full implementation of technology improvements.</li> </ul>
	<p><b><i>Transportation</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Projects addressed accessibility gaps by investing in new vehicles and creative partnerships.</li> <li>Establishing driver routes and optimizing waiver programs improved service delivery.</li> <li>Encouraging recipient self-direction in securing transportation promoted community integration.</li> </ul>
	<p><b><i>Workforce Recruitment and Retention</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment bonuses and dedicated recruiter roles reduced turnover and increased workforce participation.</li> <li>Switching recruitment platforms resulted in a 275% increase in applicants.</li> <li>Investing in customized training programs and incentive structures improved job satisfaction and long-term retention.</li> </ul>

## SUSTAINING THE MOMENTUM

To ensure the long-term success of these initiatives, Wisconsin hosted a two-day HCBS Innovation Grants Summit in October 2024. This event facilitated collaboration and knowledge-sharing among grantees, helping to refine best practices and drive future improvements. The findings from this evaluation will inform ongoing efforts to strengthen HCBS services, support policy development, and create sustainable solutions that improve the quality of life for Medicaid program members, their families, and HCBS providers across Wisconsin.

The HCBS grant program has demonstrated the transformative potential of targeted investments in home and community-based services. By addressing critical needs, fostering innovation, and advancing equity, these grants have laid the foundation for a more inclusive, effective, and resilient HCBS system in Wisconsin.

# INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARPA), passed in 2021, authorized one-time funding for states to enhance, expand, and strengthen home and community-based services (HCBS) programs. The Wisconsin Department of Human Services (DHS) partnered with Public Consulting Group (PCG) to design and implement a grant program to support innovative program ideas across the State.

DHS offered two rounds of grant funding. In the first round, 717 applications were submitted, requesting over \$200 million in funding. In the second round, 449 applications were submitted, requesting over \$86 million in funding. **DHS awarded 158 grantees a cumulative total of \$29.6 million to implement a wide range of innovative HCBS initiatives.** Funds were distributed geographically across the State in both urban and rural areas; at least one award was made in each county. Funded projects reflect a wide range of approaches to positively impacting Medicaid program participants, direct care workers (DCWs), families of individuals receiving services, HCBS providers, and the greater public.

## EVALUATION GOALS

DHS partnered with PCG to conduct an evaluation of the HCBS grantee projects. The purpose of the evaluation is to identify which projects were particularly **innovative and successful in addressing the needs of HCBS recipients and providers across the State.** The innovations and best practices implemented by the 158 grantees have the potential to influence the near-term direction of HCBS policy across the State.

The evaluation was designed to measure the extent to which initiatives were implemented as intended, gauge the programs' reach, identify factors that led to success, and harness lessons learned.

By measuring the number of individuals impacted—including HCBS participants; families; DCWs; and providers, including non-HCBS providers—the evaluation seeks to answer the following questions:

- Which grantees were able to achieve their intermediate and long-term outcomes, and what factors led to their success?
- What are the lessons learned from grantees that will help other organizations looking to expand, enhance, and strengthen HCBS services succeed?
- What are the lessons learned that can influence Wisconsin's long-term HCBS policy and business practices?
- What challenges did grantees encounter, and how were they addressed?

## METHODOLOGY

PCG applied a mixed-methods approach to the evaluation of the HCBS grantee projects. By gathering qualitative and quantitative data using a variety of data tools, PCG was able to incorporate the perspectives of multiple stakeholders in the evaluation and cross-reference evaluation findings to identify the most salient results. This evaluation incorporates data from grantee-submitted quarterly reports, a grantee survey, the 2024 Wisconsin HCBS Innovation Grants Summit presentations, and grantee focus groups.

The HCBS grantees were a highly diverse group of awardees with distinct projects. This created challenges in developing a uniform evaluation method. PCG's strategy to address this challenge involved categorizing grantees into cohorts based on overall grant goals. Categories included the following:

- Caregiver Support and Respite
- Children's Long Term Services and Supports
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Facility and Technology Improvement
- Supportive Employment
- Transportation
- Workforce Recruitment
- Workforce Retention

Grantees were required to provide quarterly reports with program updates. These reports provided data on the cumulative number of individuals impacted; implementation milestones achieved; and progress towards short-term-, intermediate, and long-term goals. After the initial analysis of quarterly reports, PCG identified gaps in the data provided within the standardized reports when compared to the data needed to meet the research goals. This resulted in PCG developing a web-based grantee survey that was distributed to all 158 grantees in June 2024. Eighty-nine grantees (56%) responded to this survey, providing additional qualitative data specific to grantee categories. For example, the survey asked grantees to quantify the caregivers supported, the number of additional community trips made due to new transportation, and the number of new workers hired and trained. The survey also captured additional qualitative data and insights into the impact of the programs, the lessons learned by grantees, and the ways in which programs could be sustained and expanded.

In October 2024, PCG supported DHS in organizing and hosting the 2024 Wisconsin HCBS Innovation Grants Summit, which is highlighted in more detail on page 10. This summit provided an opportunity to host work groups, present panel discussions, and facilitate idea exchanges, all of which provided additional qualitative data to inform this evaluation.

Finally, in January 2025, PCG hosted six focus groups to gather information directly from grantees who successfully implemented projects in the following categories: Caregiver Support & Respite, Children's LTSS, Technology Enhancements, Supportive Employment, Workforce recruitment; and Workforce retention. The goal of these focus groups was to further clarify

lessons learned, assess the impact of expanded and strengthened HCBS services, and provide policy recommendations to inform future initiatives.



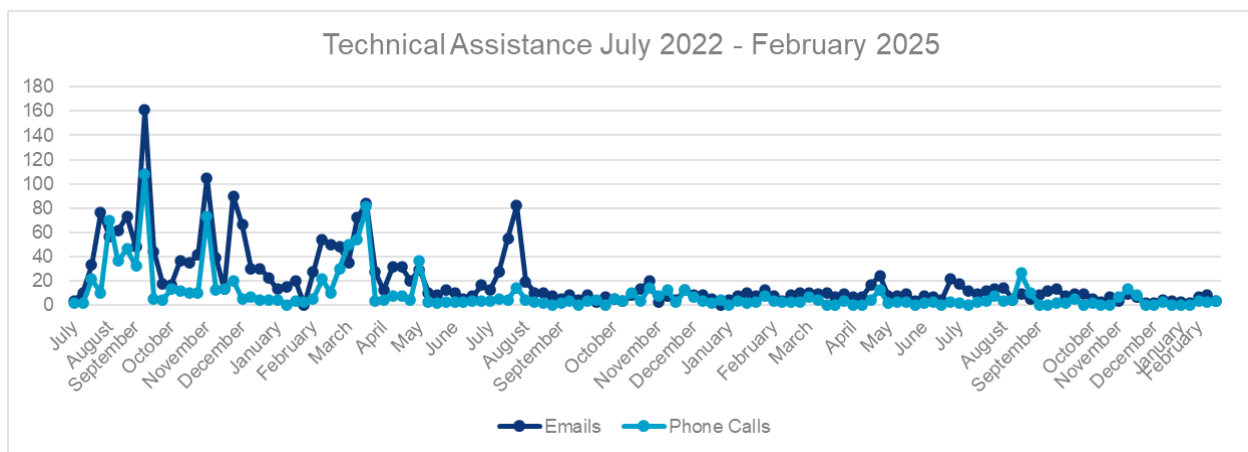
## GRANT PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

PCG provided a number of supports throughout the grant period to support the successful implementation of grant initiatives and to safeguard the investment of public funds.

### Technical Assistance

PCG developed and managed a robust technical assistance program throughout the life of the project that included a dedicated help desk for applicants and grantees, webinars to provide guidance on the application and reporting process, documents to support applicants and grantees, and dedicated office hours. From July 2022 through February 2025, PCG responded to over 2,500 emails and over 1,100 phone calls from grantees and grant applicants.

**FIGURE 1: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE INQUIRIES**



Throughout the grant process, PCG also conducted several webinars to help grant applicants understand the grant program and improve their applications. Topics included an overview of the grant and evaluation process (prior to Round 1), improving your grant application (prior to Round 2), and an overview of the grants awarded and successes (after Round 2). These webinars garnered over 2,000 total registrations. Additionally, throughout the application process and timeframe (as of November 2023):

- ▶ The DHS website received over 7,400 unique clicks
- ▶ Documents were downloaded over 3,200 times
- ▶ Technical assistance emails were opened over 69,000 times

Additionally, PCG also created a change request process to respond to the grantees' evolving project needs and constraints. This process allowed grantees to request changes to their original project submission and provided some flexibility to modify their approach. Grantees used the change request process to shift timeframes, budget, and project work, as required, with approval from DHS. **A total of 168 change requests were submitted by 113 organizations.**

Overall, 78% of respondents to the program survey expressed satisfaction with technical assistance services. One grantee shared, “I appreciate most that every time I speak to a representative they appear just as excited as we are about the potential for our project.”

**TABLE 1: GRANTEE SATISFACTION WITH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE BY GRANT CATEGORY**

<b>Grant Category</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>Neutral/ Undecided</b>	<b>Not Satisfied</b>
Workforce Training	68%	26%	5%
Workforce Recruitment	79%	21%	-
Transportation	92%	8%	-
Technology Enhancements	71%	29%	-
Supportive Employment	80%	20%	-
Facility Improvements	83%	17%	-
Expanded Access to Services	84%	8%	8%
Children’s Services	77%	8%	15%
Caregiver Support and Respite	73%	18%	9%

### Program Audits

Each grant funded project was monitored through a quarterly reporting process. Each grantee was required to submit reports for the duration of their project. These reports measured each organization's project spending, milestone progress, number of individuals impacted, and progress toward identified short- and long-term goals. These reports were also used to identify when an audit was needed. Each organization was audited when their project was complete, when additional funding was requested, or if a project risk was identified. Through the audit process, PCG identified and recouped \$626,467 in grant funding that was either unspent or misspent. Grantees subject to a recoupment returned funds directly to DHS.

## Grant Program Satisfaction

Overall, grantees expressed satisfaction with the HCBS Grants Program. Nearly all (97%) of survey respondents were either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the grant program. The table below provides a breakdown of satisfaction rate by the grant category.

**TABLE 2: GRANTEE OVERALL SATISFACTION BY GRANT CATEGORY**

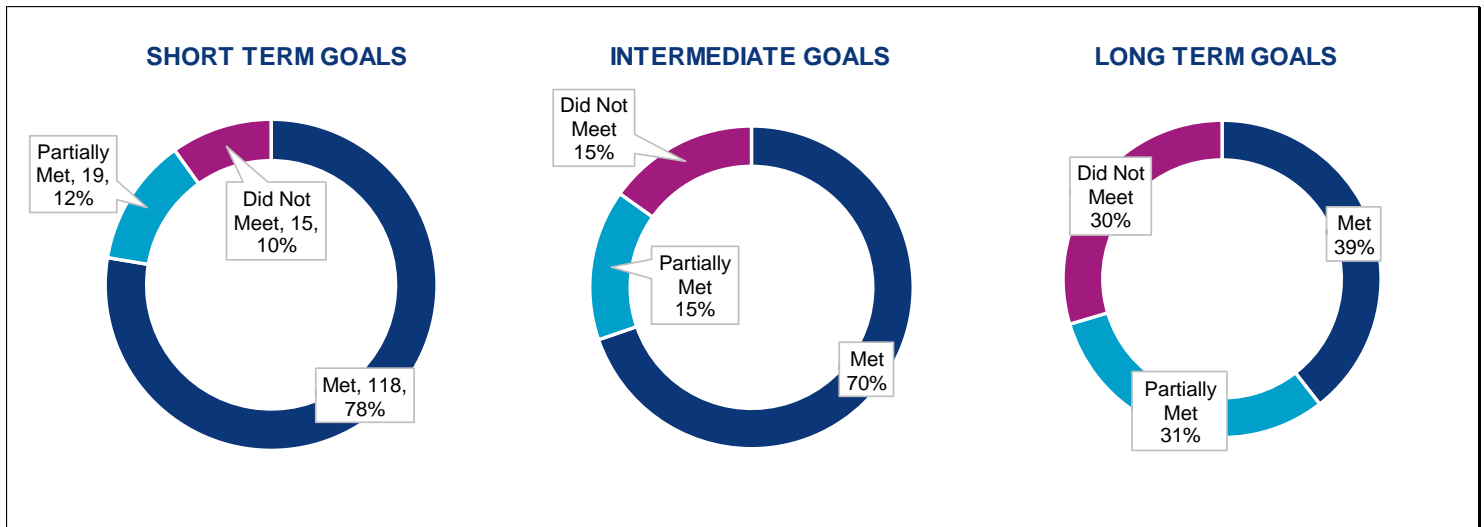
<b>Grant Category</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>Neutral/Undecided</b>	<b>Not Satisfied</b>
Workforce Training	95%	3%	3%
Workforce Recruitment	97%	3%	-
Transportation	100%	-	-
Technology Enhancements	100%	-	-
Supportive Employment	100%	-	-
Facility Improvements	100%	-	-
Expanded Access to Services	97%	3%	-
Children’s Services	92%	-	8%
Caregiver Support and Respite	91%	5%	5%

## COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Wisconsin's investment of nearly \$30 million in HCBS Innovation Grants, representing about 7% of the state's total HCBS ARPA funding, has yielded significant returns. Grantee awards, ranging from \$25,000 to \$2 million based on project size, were distributed across all counties, ensuring both rural and urban communities benefited. Every county received at least one award, and funds were spread across rural and urban communities. The data in Figure 1 below shows an update of funding spent by grantees as of January 2025.

Grantees set ambitious goals for their programs at the beginning of the grant period and reported on their progress towards meeting these goals quarterly. As shown in Figure 2 below, most grantees (90%) met or nearly met their short-term goals and 85% met or nearly met their intermediate goals. Long term goals were less likely to be met during the grant timeline. Just over one-third of grantees (39%) had met their long-term goals by the final reporting period.

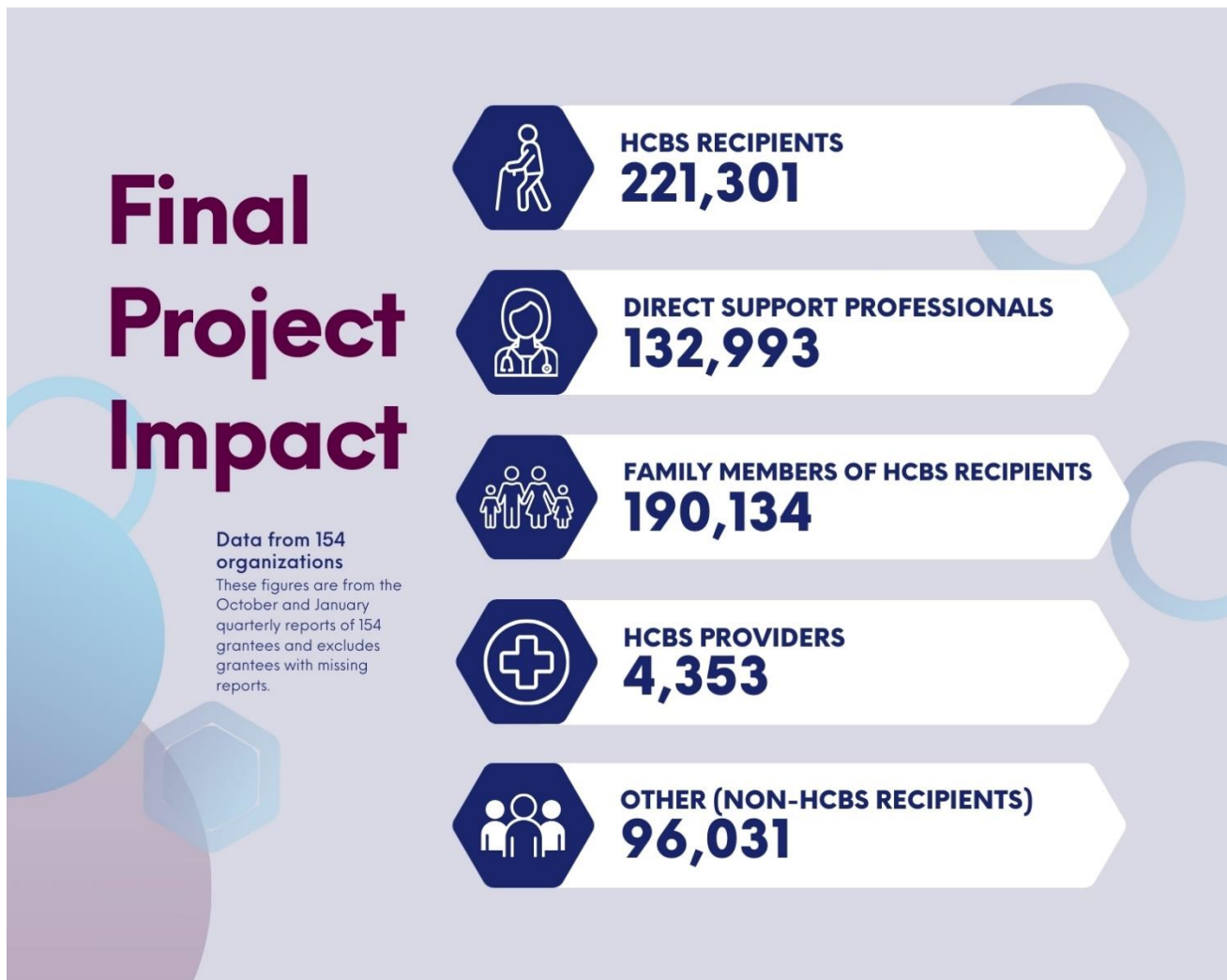
**FIGURE 2: GOAL PROGRESS**



Improvements funded by these grants impacted the lives of more than 644,000 Wisconsinites. Key achievements include reduced waitlists for services, enhanced training for direct support professionals (DSPs), construction of accessible playgrounds, improved service coordination, critical technology updates, and expanded transportation options.

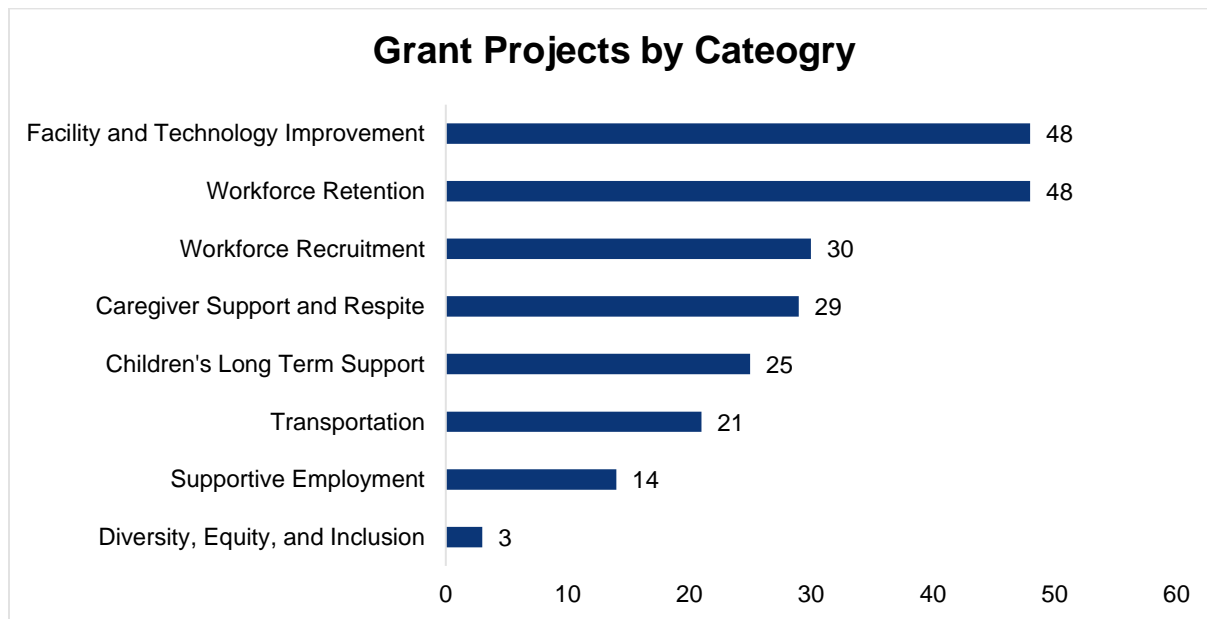
The benefits also extend beyond HCBS recipients and DSPs. Family members of HCBS recipients, provider organizations, and the broader public, including community employers—also experienced positive outcomes. Employers, in particular, benefited from training programs aimed at improving the hiring of individuals with disabilities. Figure 3 below provides a breakdown of the project's impact by population as reported by grantees in October 2025.

FIGURE 3: COLLECTIVE PROJECT IMPACT



*\*Impact Data is self-reported by grantees through quarterly progress reports*

Each grant program creatively addressed a challenge or opportunity related to expanding HCBS services. Given the diversity of initiatives, PCG adopted a process for categorizing grantee projects. Figure 4 below provides an overview of these categories. Since some projects fell into multiple categories, the total adds up to more than the 158 grants awarded. The most common grant categories included efforts to enhance facilities and technology (48 grants), improve worker retention (48 grants), and boost the recruitment of DSPs (30).

**FIGURE 4: GRANT PROJECTS BY CATEGORY**

To sustain the momentum generated by the HCBS Innovation Grants, Wisconsin hosted a two-day summit for grantees. This working conference aimed to foster innovation, collaboration, and communication among groups and organizations that seldom have the opportunity to collaborate. The summit showcased how organizations across the state are serving HCBS clients in novel and impactful ways, providing a platform for attendees to connect and share their experiences. The following section delves deeper into the details and outcomes of the 2024 Wisconsin HCBS Innovation Grants Summit.

## SUMMIT SUMMARY

### GOALS

In October 2024, Wisconsin's Medicaid HCBS Grants initiative culminated with a two-day summit. The 2024 Wisconsin HCBS Innovation Grants Summit provided an opportunity for HCBS providers and agencies, DHS decision-makers, care recipients with lived experience, and other collaborators to convene and share lessons learned from the grant experience and together shape the future of HCBS in Wisconsin. The summit was a working conference, where attendees could take home practical and actionable ideas from other grantees and national presenters to then implement in their own organizations.

The summit was a twofold networking opportunity: Providers could connect with each other and plant the seeds for a larger provider/agency network. The summit acted as a catalyst for collaborators to break down boundaries between provider organizations and advocacy groups that can often become siloed by geography, size, or provider type. Ideally, connections created at the summit will continue, fostering greater collaboration between Wisconsin HCBS providers and agencies.

Providers also had the opportunity to connect with decision-makers at DHS and directly communicate their needs, organizational goals and future funding priorities. DHS representatives attended all sessions as participants and active listeners, hearing from stakeholders all around the state, including rural communities.

Over 180 (184) HCBS professionals convened in Madison, WI, for the two-day event. Guests included grantees, HCBS providers, DHS decision-makers, care recipients with lived experience, advocates, and other collaborators. Additionally, 53 individuals joined the conference virtually.

### KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



***Kevin Coughlin of Wisconsin DHS leads a discussion with Curtis Cunningham (CMS), Martha Roherty (ADvancing States), and Dan Berland (NASDDDS).***



Three key figures in national HCBS policy development participated in the summit: Curtis Cunningham, Martha Roherty, and Dan Berland.

Curtis Cunningham is the director of the Division of Long-Term Services and Supports at the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). In this role, Curtis is responsible for federal oversight and approval of Medicaid 1915(c) home and community-based waivers, 1915(i) state plan amendments, and Medicaid nursing home and ICF-IDD policy.

Martha Roherty is the executive director at ADvancing States (formerly NASUAD). She is responsible for educating Congress, the presidential administration, and other key collaborators on administrative and health and social policy issues of special concern to state officials administering programs for long-term care services.

Dan Berland is the director of federal policy at the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS), where he crafts the federal policy strategy of the association and advocates for the interests of state developmental disabilities agencies on Capitol Hill and to the executive branch of the federal government.

The three individuals with national perspectives spoke at two different points during the summit, sharing their perspectives on key challenges and opportunities that HCBS ARPA funding has presented states and providers. They also offered their opinions on the current climate of national policy for HCBS.

Along with these national experts, Wisconsin DHS leadership attended the summit. Kirsten Johnson, secretary of Wisconsin DHS, and Bill Hanna, Medicaid director of Wisconsin DHS, expressed excitement around the new ideas and energy in the HCBS sector and encouraged continued innovation, collaboration, and communication among the various parties of the HCBS community.

### **Breakout Sessions**



*The DEI/Cultural Competency panel featured representatives from Living Our Visions, Inc.; Marquette University; and Vision Forward Association.*



The summit featured a variety of breakout sessions to facilitate smaller group conversations. These included idea exchanges, success stories, and panel discussions about specific subjects that impacted multiple grantees.

**Idea Exchanges** were highly interactive sessions where small groups focused on the shared challenges of delivering high-quality HCBS. This collaborative environment encouraged participants to brainstorm innovative solutions, exchange valuable insights, and envision a sustainable future for Wisconsin HCBS programs. Attendees were willing to participate in a facilitated discussion and collaborate with peers. The topics of the Idea Exchanges were Children's Services, Technology, Transportation, and Workforce.

**Success Stories** featured two to three pioneering organizations recounting their journey with the HCBS Innovation Grants. Eight separate Success Story sessions were offered. Audience members heard how the organizations transformed challenges into opportunities, fostering innovative service delivery models that respond to community and workforce needs.

**TABLE 3: SUCCESS STORIES BY TOPIC AND GRANTEE**

Success Story Topic	Grantee	Grantee	Grantee
<b>Transportation</b>	KANDU Industries	Family Tree	
<b>Technology: Enhancements</b>	Lakeview Health Center and Assisted Living	Nash Home Healthcare	
<b>Training</b>	VPI Inc.	Paragon Community Services	
<b>Children's Services</b>	Salisott Parent Coaching and Certification	Scholl Community Impact Group	
<b>Workforce: Expansion and Recruitment</b>	Capri Senior Communities	Disability Service Provider Network	
<b>Access to Services</b>	University of Wisconsin–Whitewater	Islands of Brilliance	
<b>Technology: Remote Supports</b>	Mending Minds	Vista Care Remote Supports	Night Owl
<b>Workforce: Entrepreneurialism</b>	Casa Mia Care Center	Opportunity Development Center	

**Panel Discussions** featured three to four grantees sharing their unique experiences and strategies around HCBS. Guided by a moderator, the discussions were dynamic and informative, including opportunities for audience members to engage directly with the presenters via a question-and-answer component.

TABLE 4: PANEL DISCUSSION BY TOPIC AND GRANTEE

Panel Discussion Topic	Grantee	Grantee	Grantee	Grantee
<b>Overcoming Barriers</b>	Homes for Independent Living	Legacy Home Health		
<b>Project Impact/Lived Experience</b>	Alzheimer's Poetry Project	Place of Mind	Legacy Home Health	Opportunity Development Center
<b>DEI/Cultural Competency</b>	Living Our Visions, Inc.	Marquette University	Vision Forward Association	
<b>Project Impact/Lived Experience</b>	Aptiv, Inc.	Simply Home	Bloom Art and Integrated Therapies	Dane County HHS

## SUMMIT ENGAGEMENT

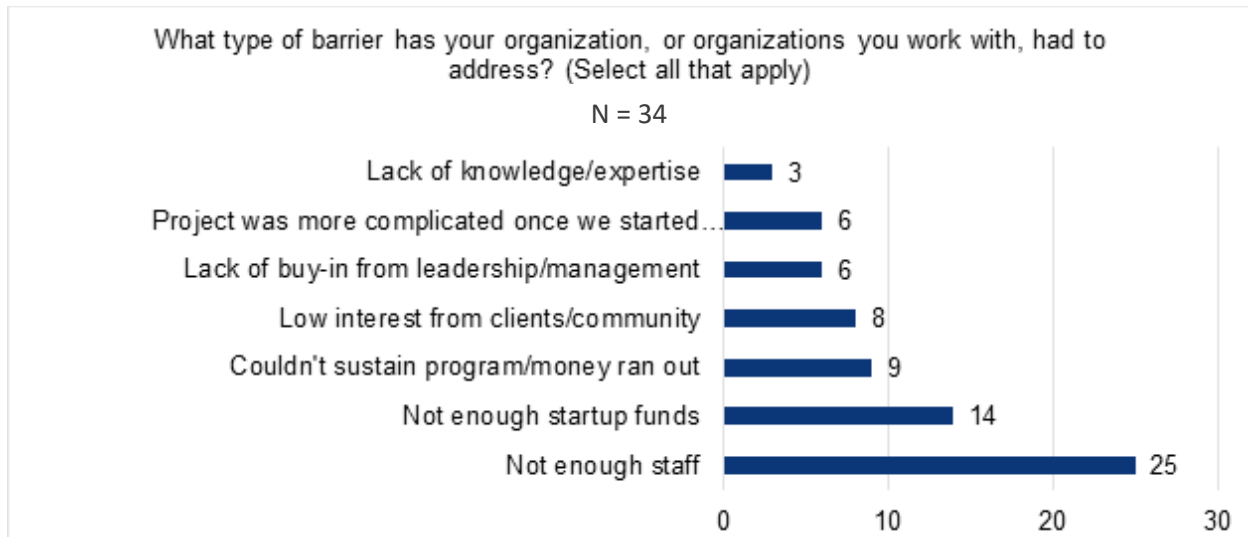
The summit incorporated polls that were launched using Poll Everywhere to enhance audience engagement for both virtual and in-person attendees. A mix of open-ended responses, multiple choice, and Likert scale questions helped gauge the audiences' understanding and interest, foster inclusivity by giving remote participants a voice, and facilitate real-time interaction to make sessions more dynamic and responsive to audience needs. For example, in the Panel Discussion: DEI and Cultural Competency, one poll question asked, "In one word, what do you think diversity, equity, and inclusion means within HCBS?" Twenty-eight attendees of the Panel Discussion took part in the poll, resulting in a word cloud that visually highlights the most prevalent themes and ideas (Figure 5 below).

FIGURE 5: DEI AND CULTURAL COMPETENCY WORD CLOUD



As another example, in the panel discussion that explored challenges in overcoming barriers in implementing grant-funded projects, participants were provided with a list of common barriers and asked to indicate which barrier(s) their organization, or the organizations they have worked with, had to address. Thirty-four attendees participated in the following poll. As shown below in Figure 6, the most common response was “Not enough staff.”

**FIGURE 6: OVERCOMING BARRIERS**



## SUMMIT FEEDBACK

During and after the event, attendees were urged to participate in a brief feedback survey. Responses were collected from virtual and in-person attendees. Overall, the 118 survey respondents reported positive experiences and spoke about the value of the event.

**“The sessions were incredibly informative, particularly those that provided practical strategies and tools for improving HCBS delivery. I left feeling equipped with new ideas to implement in my practice.”**

**—Summit Participant**

Respondents found the following breakout sessions to be most impactful: the panel discussion on **Overcoming Barriers**, the idea exchange on **Workforce Development**, and the success stories session on **Workforce Recruitment**.

Most survey respondents (83%) reported that the event achieved its goals of innovation, collaboration, and communication.

The positive feedback from session participants is an encouraging indicator that the connections made, and ideas exchanged over these two days will help fuel continued growth and innovation among Wisconsin HCBS providers, educators, advocates and policy makers. DHS recognizes

**“The keynote speakers were inspiring and provided a wealth of knowledge. Their perspectives helped shape my thinking about the future of HCBS and gave me fresh insights into how to better serve my clients.”**

**—Summit participant**

that many individuals work and support HCBS and only a handful could attend the summit. For this reason, DHS created the [2024 Wisconsin HCBS Innovation Grants Summit web page](#), allowing others in the HCBS community to experience the two-day summit and share these innovative grant projects with other organizations for sustainable, statewide best practices.

## EVALUATION FINDINGS BY CATEGORY

As described earlier, PCG categorized grantees based on the primary themes and objectives of their projects. The scope and goals of these projects varied significantly, with many falling into multiple categories. For example, projects that implemented new software systems for workers while also providing training and support during the transition to a more efficient system were classified as both technology initiatives and workforce retention efforts. Similarly, several projects aimed at expanding CLTS also included caregiver support and respite services.

The following sections of this report outline the goal or objective for each key component of HCBS programming. They also provide examples of projects within these categories and examine their collective impact on Wisconsinites. Finally, the analysis assesses grantees' success in achieving their short-term, intermediate, and long-term objectives, while highlighting key success factors, lessons learned, and challenges encountered in each category.

### CAREGIVER SUPPORT AND RESPITE

**Twenty-eight organizations served 24,096 HCBS recipients.**

A caregiver is a family member or friend who is responsible for regularly caring for a loved one with disabilities, chronic illnesses, or age-related needs. Caring for a loved one in this situation can be all-

consuming, and often caregivers must sacrifice their own physical and emotional needs.

Respite programs offer short-term relief, enabling caregivers to rest, travel, attend appointments, or spend time with family and friends, while ensuring their loved ones continue to receive necessary care.<sup>1</sup>

Respite care can last anywhere from a few hours to several weeks and can take place at home, in a health care facility, or at a day care center. Respite benefits caregivers and care recipients by reducing stress, providing physical and emotional relief, offering access to additional support and resources, and affording an opportunity for self-care. After taking a break, caregivers can return to caregiving with renewed energy and support, which enables them to provide better care for their loved one.<sup>2</sup>

Twenty-nine projects (17%) included a component of **Caregiver Support and/or Respite Care**. Twenty-eight total grantees implemented these programs. (One grantee received two separate grants.) These projects impacted beneficiaries in the Family Care; Family Care Partnership; CLTS; and Include, Respect, I Self-Direct (IRIS) Medicaid programs. Projects set out to better train the direct care workforce, increase efficiency of care through information technology (IT) improvements, recruit more workers, serve more community members, and expand public education about respite availability. Examples of project achievements are provided below.

- A project supported 240 siblings of children with developmental disabilities who live in the Milwaukee, Madison, and Fox Valley areas. Funding went towards hosting age-

<sup>1</sup> National Institute on Aging. [What Is Respite Care? | National Institute on Aging](#). October 12, 2023.

appropriate educational workshops, supporting a Teen Leadership program, and developing a curriculum for virtual on-demand volunteer training (**WisconSibs, Inc.**).

- Another project provided 15 training sessions on managing threatening confrontations to over 900 people, teaching families and caregivers' strategies to improve their relationships with care recipients (**University of Wisconsin's Waisman Center**).
- In Waukesha and Jefferson counties, 15,500 households with incomes of less than \$30,000 and residents between the ages of 70 and 100 received postcard mailers about the program's Memory Care Initiative and their other specific dementia programs (**Three Pillars Senior Living Communities**).
- One hundred ninety Medicaid beneficiaries used reliable, ADA-accessible transportation to access day services and participate in daily community outings promoting inclusion and integration in Rock County (**KANDU Industries Inc.**).

Collectively, 28 grantees implemented projects that served 52,809 Wisconsinites, including 24,096 HCBS recipients.

### **Factors for Success**

Sixty-four percent (18) of Caregiver Support and Respite grant programs met their goals, and an additional 18% (5) grant programs partially met their goals. Table 5 below shares greater detail on the short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals met.

**TABLE 5: GOAL COMPLETION FOR CAREGIVER SUPPORT AND RESPITE GRANT PROGRAMS**

	Met	Partially Met	Did Not Meet
<b>Short-term Goals</b>	75%	4%	21%
<b>Intermediate Goals</b>	68%	7%	25%
<b>Long-term Goals</b>	29%	32%	39%

Several grantees identified that their success stemmed from their **flexibility to tailor programs**, services, and outreach approaches to meet families and caregivers where they were physically and emotionally. To accommodate families and caregivers, some grantees provided services in the home while others offered drop-off programs on weekends, after traditional business hours, and online. For example, **Three Pillars Senior Living Community (Three Pillars)** hired a director of dementia programming to lead their Memory Care Initiative. The goal of the initiative was to enhance well-being and quality of life, ensuring that individuals living with dementia and their loved ones receive the care and support they need to thrive in their communities. Under the director's leadership, Three Pillars developed training for DCWs and dementia programs and distributed original marketing materials to increase community awareness of the available programs and services. The grantee also formed a Brain Health group as a one-off event but found that maintaining brain health was a much more popular subject than managing dementia

symptoms. In response to overwhelming positive feedback and high attendance, they tailored the program to include more brain health content and used this as a hook to engage families in more challenging conversations.

Another theme for success is intentionally empowering family caregivers and **building community**. For instance, **Legacy Home Health Services** developed and implemented the Legacy Caregiver Support program to support the well-being of family caregivers of HCBS recipients living with Alzheimer's disease or other related dementias (ADRD). The program provided tailored education for families based on the stage of their loved one's disease, offering guidance on what to expect and how to manage each phase. Additionally, an online support group was established to create a community where caregivers could share experiences and support each other, ensuring they did not feel alone in their caregiving journeys.

**“Families we have assisted often did not realize how much they needed this additional support until they received it. They have found that this support not only helps them care better for their loved ones with dementia but also allows them to take better care of themselves. This holistic approach ensures that both the caregiver and the person receiving care are well supported, leading to better overall outcomes for the entire family.”**

**—Legacy Home Health Services**

Living Our Visions, Inc., partnered with Catholic Multicultural Center and Dulce Respite Center to implement the Colectivo de Familias Latinas program (Colectivo). This program served Spanish-speaking families with children enrolled in the CLTS program through comprehensive care coordination, educational programming, one-on-one support sessions, and enhanced access to Latino respite services. The Colectivo program demonstrated flexibility by extending their Family Navigator service to assist families navigating the CLTS enrollment process, as well as those already enrolled. In addition to enhancing prospective families' access to services, Colectivo's Family Navigator service provided an online platform for families to meet, share knowledge with, and support one another—thus fostering a supportive community.

### **Lessons Learned**

Through survey feedback and focus groups, grantees that implemented caregiver support programs identified that incentives, like stipends for caregivers to use for self-care activities and community passes for families to go to the zoo, are important to get caregivers in the door. Because they are managing so many different priorities, even if they see the benefit of a resource, caregivers need to see the incentives for something to be considered a higher priority. Some grantees noted challenges retaining participants because many would cease their involvement after meeting the minimum incentive requirements. A grantee also shared that, in hindsight, they would have implemented the incentive earlier and required attendance at more sessions to better understand attendance patterns throughout the year and determine if there

were other factors influencing the participation drop-off. A participant from a focus group with grantees shared their challenges with providing self-care stipends. The grantee shared that families were less inclined to continue participating in the support program once they received their stipend.

### **Barriers**

Multiple agencies reported barriers related to **staffing challenges and organizational capacity**. Grantees reported challenges with overall staff retention, lack of funding to hire more workers, and staff turnover, which all reduced their capacity to meet project goals. One grantee spoke about the value of the grant in improving its capacity, stating that they were able to significantly reduce waiting times for HCBS recipients needing accessibility assessments by hiring additional staff, which would not have happened without the ARPA grant funding. With the program ending, the grantee noted that the organization will need funding support to continue meeting this ongoing need.

Some organizations explained that the **cost of personalized and innovative care** is rising, and with stagnant rates, it is harder to continue providing high quality services for people in need. Another organization shared that the biggest lesson they learned was that DCWs were underpaid and needed to be paid more to serve HCBS recipients.



## CHILDREN'S LONG TERM SUPPORT (CLTS)

**Fifteen grantees served  
14,147 Wisconsinites  
receiving HCBS services.**

Fifteen grantees reported that their work included a component of Children's Services. Wisconsin's CLTS Program helps children with disabilities and their families with a range of supports and services. The support provided to a child and their family depends on their specific needs and goals. These might include support

services like respite care, teaching and skill development, management and coordination, physical aids, and housing-related services.

The HCBS Innovation Grants funded 15 projects (10%) that include initiatives to improve, strengthen, and expand CLTS. Most projects provided family support and respite care services, as well as teaching and skills development training. The following list represents some of the projects in this category:

- More than 400 volunteers, students, family members, and wider community members (e.g., teachers, police, firefighters, and EMTs) received training in Autism Safety and Risk Management, facilitated by world-renowned autism advocate Temple Grandin (**Scholl Community Impact Group**).
- Weekly arts and creativity-based programming increased the sense of community and confidence for 69 teens and young adults with autism. Some of these youth even had their artwork displayed at local exhibits (**Islands of Brilliance**).
- Securing safe and stable housing for 25 CLTS recipients and their families allowed them to continue to access services and remain involved in CLTS programming (**Monroe County Department of Human Services**).

Collectively, these 16 projects served 30,400 people, including 14,147 HCBS recipients.

### *Factors for Success*

Several grantees were successful in expanding and enhancing their CLTS programs through a focus on training or educational programs. These programs aimed to increase the knowledge of families, providers, medical professionals, as well as the public. These programs covered a range of topics, including equine therapy techniques, trauma-informed caregiving, conflict resolution, medical conditions, challenges faced by children with special needs, and technology upgrades. The primary objective of these initiatives was to cultivate a well-informed community that understands the needs of youth enrolled in CLTS and is better equipped to serve these youth and their families. One grantee shared feedback from DCWs who completed training focused on improving relationships between caregivers and children. The DCWs anticipated that the knowledge gained from this training would enhance their relationships with the children they cared for.

At the 2024 Wisconsin HCBS Innovation Grants Summit, Scholl Community Impact Group (SCIG) presented their initiatives aimed at training volunteers and community members to build their capacity to work with children with special needs and to support the grantee's equine therapy program. SCIG partnered with four individuals and organizations to achieve this goal. Dennis Debbaudt provided training on managing safety and risks when interacting with youth with autism. Additionally, SCIG sought the expertise of renowned professionals and accredited organizations, including Temple Grandin to deepen the understanding of youth with autism and their needs, and the Certified Horsemanship Association to develop horsemanship skills. During the summit, SCIG highlighted that developing their partnerships was instrumental in identifying opportunities to improve their programming. Looking ahead, they plan to expand their outreach to engage more services providers and schools to foster greater awareness, inclusion, and sense of community.

Another factor for success among organizations supporting CLTS recipients was prioritizing community integration.

Finally, several focus group recipients shared that listening to workers and the children and families they serve was the most important first step in designing and implementing a program to improve or expand services. One participant shared "knowing from experience and knowing where families struggle exactly the most in this process was one of our biggest factors for success." Other organizations shared that adopting a culture of flexibility and continuous improvement allowed them to be more responsive to the needs and concerns that they heard.

Seventy-five percent (12) of CLTS grant programs met their goals, and an additional 25% (4) grant programs partially met their goals. The table below shares greater detail on the short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals met.

**TABLE 6: GOAL COMPLETION FOR CLTS GRANT PROGRAMS**

	Met	Partially Met	Did Not Meet
<b>Short-term Goals</b>	89%	N/A	11%
<b>Intermediate Goals</b>	84%	5%	11%
<b>Long-term Goals</b>	33%	39%	28%

Several grantees achieved success through **strong community partnerships** with reputable organizations experienced in working with CLTS recipients, families, DCWs, and HCBS providers. Washington County Health and Human Services partnered with 4C for Children and the Family Center of Washington County to implement their project. This partnership empowered families and DCWs by teaching them skills to enhance their relationships with children, manage difficult behaviors, and confidently apply these skills. Initiatives like the play group enabled families to gain a deeper understanding of available resources, receive peer support, and engage in social activities with their children and other families. The partnership's

evaluation of the play group highlighted its positive impact, with families and children expressing enjoyment with the programs and appreciation for the support provided by staff.

The collaboration and partnerships that Islands of Brilliance engaged in were critical to delivering impactful programming for autistic youth and young adults in Northern and Western Wisconsin. By working with various community organizations, including libraries and art centers, Islands of Brilliance created safe and supportive spaces where participants could find acceptance, build relationships, and develop new skills. The program's success is evident in the high retention rates, positive feedback from participants and host sites like libraries, and the expansion of services across multiple counties. The grantee has shared how these partnerships have not only enhanced the lives of the participants but also fostered greater community understanding and support for neurodivergent youth and young adults.

Similarly, the Colectivo de Familias Latinas initiative was the product of a strategic partnership between three organizations. Living Our Visions, Inc., provided the Family Navigator service, the Catholic Multicultural Center coordinated educational programs, and Dulce Respite Center provided respite care during programming. Colectivo met all its goals for the grant program and received positive feedback from participants who shared how the program significantly improved the knowledge and support available to them. Participants appreciated the valuable information, resources, and community support provided, which helped them make more informed decisions and better support their children with disabilities.

**“The Colectivo hopes to continue collaborating ... to build upon all of the great success [generated]... during this grant period. We are committed to continuing a similar level of excellence and consistency in programming. We are working out the logistics to make this sustainable for the three organizations (two of them nonprofits). We will continue to keep our work inclusive; we aspire to keep inviting and serving the whole family.”**

**—Colectivo de Familias Latinas (Living Our Visions LLC, Dulce Respite Center, and Catholic Multicultural Center)**

## **Lessons Learned**

Grantees discussed the importance of adopting a **family-centered approach** when implementing child-focused programming. This approach emphasizes understanding and accommodating the unique needs and circumstances of families to ensure effective and meaningful engagement. A few strategies were discussed:

- **Accommodating Families’ Limited Time:** Programs must be designed with an awareness of the time constraints faced by parents and guardians. By developing flexible and accessible programming, grantees can better support families with limited availability.

- **Creating Space for Parental Input:** It is essential to provide opportunities for parents to share their needs and priorities. Listening to parents ensures that programming is relevant and responsive to their concerns, leading to more effective outcomes.
- **Customizing Services to Meet Parents' Needs:** Tailoring services to meet parents where they are is crucial. This includes offering programming in convenient locations, such as schools, and scheduling meetings at times that align with parents' routines, such as just before or after-school pickup.

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

**One-fifth of survey respondents cited the DEI and Cultural Competency Panel as one of the most impactful sessions at the 2024 Wisconsin HCBS Innovation Grants Summit.**

Three grantees developed projects to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion. At the 2024 Wisconsin HCBS Innovation Grants Summit, these three organizations were represented in a lively panel discussion. Each of these grantees noted that the individuals they served were not fully representative of the greater community and developed intentional plans to increase access to their services. They did this by

improving their translated materials, expanding training to improve cultural competency among staff, and furthering community outreach. Examples of how the grantees used their funds are described below:

- **Living Our Visions'** initiative, Colectivo de Familias Latinas, worked to improve access to services for Spanish-speaking families who had children with disabilities. Colectivo de Familias Latinas provided care coordination, expanded respite services for Latino families, and empowered families through education and training.
- **Marquette University's** initiative worked to expand the number and diversity of behavior analysts in Wisconsin who serve individuals with autism spectrum disorder and intellectual and developmental disabilities. It also developed specialized training for licensed behavior analysts, helping them to better address the unique needs of diverse Wisconsinites.
- **Vision Forward's** initiative, "Addressing Vision Loss as a Public Health Issue," educated HCBS participants, providers, and Wisconsin community members through trainings that provided information and resources on how to live successfully with vision loss and how to gain needed services and support to fully participate in life.

Collectively, these programs served 2,647 people, including 645 HCBS recipients.

### Factors for Success

**TABLE 7: GOAL COMPLETION FOR DEI GRANT PROGRAMS**

	Met	Partially Met	Did Not Meet
<b>Short-term Goals</b>	67%	33%	N/A
<b>Intermediate Goals</b>	67%	33%	N/A
<b>Long-term Goals</b>	67%	33%	N/A

Each organization emphasized the **importance of listening and collecting feedback** from their communities to identify and dismantle barriers to access. This often involves practical steps like incorporating translation services and hiring staff reflective of the populations served.

A cornerstone of each organization's implementation plan was active and genuine listening. Living Our Visions highlighted how prioritizing community input, rather than imposing preconceived solutions, allowed their organization to understand specific needs and existing gaps in services for marginalized communities. This community-centered approach enables the development of culturally relevant, and therefore much more impactful, solutions. Furthermore, each organization highlighted how collecting consistent feedback was essential for refining messaging and ensuring maximum impact.

**Culturally relevant outreach and service delivery** are crucial for eliminating systemic barriers to access. The grantees prioritizing DEI emphasized that hiring diverse staff who reflect the communities served is essential for not only increasing engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse families but also for building trust. Living Our Visions provided a powerful example of the importance of cultural sensitivity, particularly in areas like respite care. They explained how, in the Latino community, the identity of a mother is a core identity; so, if you tell a mother, "You need help" or "You need a break," that communicates something to her about how good of a job she's doing with her children. Living Our Visions explained how this realization led them to work towards having deep cultural understanding in all aspects of service delivery.

**"We knew that there were families and communities of color that were dealing with the same issues that the families we already worked with were dealing with, but because of language barriers, cultural barriers, and a variety of other factors, they weren't connecting to our support and services."**

**—Stephanie Primm; Living Our Visions, Inc.**

Furthermore, culturally relevant educational tools and resources are vital. Living Our Visions discovered that direct translations often lack the same meaning or cultural resonance in the target language, necessitating adaptations in outreach and service descriptions. They also discovered how culturally relevant service delivery is key to building trust and ensuring access to services, as they found that some underserved families were fearful of accessing services due to concerns that they would lose custody of their child. This situation especially highlighted to Living Our Visions how creating a supportive and comfortable environment is paramount.

Practical steps, like those taken by Vision Forward, also play a critical role. Recognizing that many of their visually impaired clients struggled with print access, they implemented DocuSign for electronic signatures. This simple change removed a significant barrier to accessing services, demonstrating how seemingly small adjustments can have a profound impact on inclusivity.

**“We recognize that there is a distinct gap between the individuals who can benefit from the type of services that we offer and those who are actually coming through our doors accessing those services, and unfortunately, the demographics indicate that it is individuals of color [for whom] we see those great gaps.”**

**—Jacci Bouchardt, Vision Forward**

Each of these organizations emphasized that ***community partnerships are essential*** for effective outreach initiatives. Vision Forward emphasized the importance of investing time in identifying and building relationships with changemakers, influencers, and other individuals who can connect their organization with broader community networks. This groundwork is critical for establishing trust. Relationship building throughout the outreach process is equally vital, as it fosters trust in the services offered and demonstrates a genuine commitment to serving marginalized community members. These relationships signal a long-term investment in the community, increasing the likelihood that individuals will feel comfortable in continuing to access available services and resources.

Organizations also saw success when ***providing training and professional development*** to support diversity and inclusion in their own organizations. This started by building a foundational understanding of diversity, including defining DEI concepts, exploring the impact of systemic inequities, and recognizing implicit bias. Marquette University shared how they implemented this foundational knowledge by developing culturally responsive and affirming clinical practices that tailored approaches to individual needs and cultural contexts. Each of these organizations also prioritized interdisciplinary learning throughout their organizations and encouraged their employees to practice self-advocacy and inclusive practices within their own workplaces. Implementing these internal initiatives ensured that these organizations embodied the DEI principles they sought to implement within their own communities.

## ***Lessons Learned***

Creating culturally relevant outreach strategies was important in ensuring that each of these organizations reached their target populations. If the outreach strategies did not resonate with the marginalized populations that these organizations intended to reach, the likelihood of these populations accessing services was much lower.

Each of these organizations emphasized the importance of continuous quality improvement throughout the implementation process of each of their initiatives. These organizations recognized that continuously evaluating their programs and services by gathering feedback from the community was vital to the success of their initiatives. Organizations actively involved community members in program design, delivery, and evaluation. By adjusting their work based on target populations’ feedback, the grantees were able to make their programs even more culturally relevant and, therefore, impactful. This brought them a step closer to achieving their goals. Some organizations noted the importance of fostering a culture in which people learn and grow from all their experiences. Gaining awareness of both the successes and challenges in the

implementation of their initiatives allowed these organizations to continuously improve their future engagement efforts.

In addition to these three grantees, PCG asked the participants of each focus group about their experiences engaging individuals with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In most instances, this was not a direct focus of the programs. Given the diversity across the state of Wisconsin in general and the direct care workforce specifically, all HCBS programs could benefit from learning about the experiences of these three grantees that prioritized expanding cultural competency and outreach.



## SUPPORTIVE EMPLOYMENT

Training for and securing a job is an activity that many Wisconsinites take for granted. However, many individuals with developmental disabilities are unable to contribute to the workforce unless specific supports or accommodations are available. Supportive employment programs allow individuals with developmental disabilities to maximize their independence by providing individualized support for finding and keeping a job. Fourteen grantee organizations (9%)

implemented programs that aimed to improve supportive employment for individuals with developmental disabilities. Activities conducted by these grantees include the following:

**One hundred ten individuals gained employment as a part of these grant activities, and 51 community workplaces received training to improve their partnerships and position themselves to employ more people with different abilities.**

- Improving training for employers of individuals with developmental disabilities through an Ability Ambassador program (**Alumni Resource Center thru Post College Connections Inc**) or staff members (**Goodwill Industries of South Central Wisconsin, Inc.**)
- Strengthening communication across multiple entities that need to coordinate to maximize successful competitive integrated employment (**Dane County**)
- Launching customized self-employment initiatives (**Casa Mia Care Center; Opportunities Development Centers, Inc.; Paragon; and A New Day Adult Health Services**)
- Improving employment participation by providing a pay differential to job coaches (**New Hope**)

Collectively, these programs served 12,367 individuals, including 4,786 HCBS recipients.

### *Factors for Success*

Approximately a third of the grantees met their stated goals, which highlights persistent challenges and barriers in this critical component of HCBS. While success was not as expansive as many grantees hoped, the impact they were able to have had deep and meaningful impacts on individuals' lives.

**TABLE 8: GOAL COMPLETION FOR SUPPORTIVE EMPLOYMENT GRANT PROGRAMS**

	Met	Partially Met	Did Not Meet
<b>Short-term Goals</b>	64%	14%	22%
<b>Intermediate Goals</b>	57%	7%	36%
<b>Long-term Goals</b>	29%	28%	43%

Grantees that focused on **engaging employers** to expand community employment opportunities provided insight into what training techniques were most impactful. Multiple organizations said that in-person conversations with potential employers were most effective, although extremely time intensive. Other organizations successfully attracted new partner employers by presenting at local Chamber of Commerce meetings and launching online trainings, such as the virtual Ability Ambassador training, to maximize their audiences. Focus group participants shared that employer recognition is critical to their ongoing success. Ways to boost employer recognition include using magnets or stickers to publicly identify inclusive employers and hosting an awards ceremony that allows all partner employers to connect with one another.

Grantees agreed that an **individualized approach** is required in supporting each HCBS recipient in preparing for, acquiring, and maintaining employment. Some organizations found that having the right staff on board to support this effort made all the difference. Venture Unlimited, Inc., hired a special education teacher who has since been “exploring worksites [and] volunteering with clients and classroom teachings, which has resulted in many signing up for DVR services and many others who receiv[ing] community jobs.”

Finally, the most successful grantees incorporated a thoughtful process to **maintain communication** with all individuals and organizations who needed to be on board with each employment plan. Grantees maintained clear lines of communication with employers, trainers, providers, insurers, family members, and other partners.

### **Lessons Learned**

For some providers, the switch to IRIS and Managed Care added additional partners and created the need for a revised business process. After **identifying gaps in communication**, Dane County stood up a new interagency transition team to enhance buy-in among all the partners. As they explained, “To make this work, there are so many people who need to be on board with the plan and support.” By organizing monthly check-ins, Dane County was able to streamline implementation of individual employment plans and maximize opportunities for success.

Several grantees were surprised by the **high level of interest in customized employment and self-employment**. Some grantees helped HCBS recipients launch small businesses including a coffee shop, food truck, and cookie business. Others focused specifically on the

Medicaid-approved process for individualized custom employment. Unfortunately, the process is technically complex and time-consuming, leading to underutilization. One grantee helped to expand customized employment opportunities in Wisconsin by creating a manual to support families and providers who wish to better understand the steps involved in pursuing customized employment options.

Finally, one grantee found that ***exploring the untapped talent of your existing team can present a creative solution to the challenge of hiring job coaches***. Many HCBS recipients require job coaches for just a few hours a week, so it is challenging to hire job coaches in a full-time capacity. A grantee offered supplemental pay for existing workers to provide one-on-one job coaching support. This was more efficient than hiring full-time job coach(es) because the hours for which direct coaching is required can be sporadic. This adjustment allowed the agency to help more individuals with developmental disabilities with the job coaching support required for their employment. Additionally, the agency boosted morale and found untapped talent on their team.

### **Barriers**

Several organizations cited structural barriers in expanding supported employment. As one focus group participant pointed out, “A lot of the individuals we were working with were in group homes. Group homes and parents love schedules!” They continued, if an individual is not employed, “it’s not always that the person doesn’t have the skill; it (could be) because it doesn’t fit into the schedule.” Furthermore, supporting an individual in attaining and maintaining a job requires coordination with and support from a variety of organizations (MCOs, group homes, etc.) and individuals (family members, transportation providers, job coaches, caseworkers, employers, etc.). For an individual transitioning from youth to adult services, the team could be comprised of as many as a dozen individuals. Finally, multiple grantees agreed that high direct care workforce turnover leads to a cycle of continuous training and interrupts progress made on individual employment plans.

## FACILITY AND TECHNOLOGY IMPROVEMENT

Forty-eight grantees managed a total of fifty projects (31.6%) focused on technology improvements.

Aurora Residential Alternatives and Night Owl Support Systems, LLC were awarded two grants each. These initiatives identified gaps between individuals who have affordable access, skills, and support to effectively engage online and those who don't. This gap, known as the digital divide, is more

likely to impact older adults, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with low incomes than the general population.<sup>2</sup> Lack of access to online technology can further disadvantage individuals by limiting their options for financial management, communication, and even medical appointments. The grantees included in this category focused on reducing the digital divide for both HCBS DSPs and recipients. This category also included grantees that focused on increasing the autonomy and independence of HCBS recipients by expanding facility accessibility and increasing access to assistive devices. These programs included the following:

**Increasing independence for HCBS participants was the most frequently cited goal of Facility and Technology Enhancement projects.**

- Purchasing new devices such as laptops, tablets, phones and/or new software to increase the efficiency of HCBS workers (**Advent Home Health Services, LLC.; Nash Home Health; Family & Children's Center**)
- Buying devices and providing technology training for HCBS participants to help close the digital divide (**Advocates for Health Transitional Living; Brotoloc Healthcare Systems, Inc.; Madison Area Rehabilitation Center**)
- Providing assistive technology and remote supports to improve HCBS participants' ability to stay safe in their homes and achieve their employment goals (**Always There In-Home Care, Aptiv, Night Owl Support**)

Collectively, 35,440 individuals—including 21,199 HCBS recipients—were impacted by these technological improvements.

### *Factors for Success*

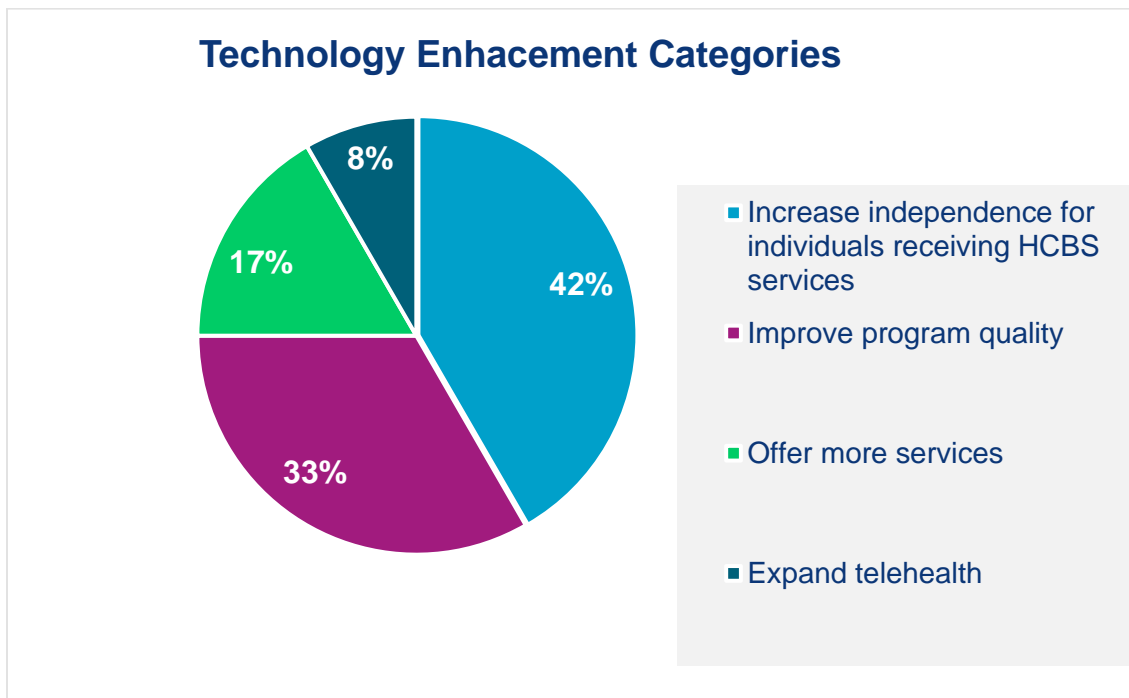
Sixty percent (30) of these grant programs met their goals, and an additional 20% (10) partially met their goals. Table 9 below demonstrates the extent to which short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals were met.

<sup>2</sup> Pew Research Center. Internet Broadband Fact Sheet, Nov.

**TABLE 9: GOAL COMPLETION FOR FACILITY AND TECHNOLOGY IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAMS**

	Met	Partially Met	Did Not Meet
<b>Short-term Goals</b>	86%	12%	2%
<b>Intermediate Goals</b>	68%	16%	16%
<b>Long-term Goals</b>	37%	34%	29%

Organizations that focused specifically on technological enhancements were asked in the Grantee Survey to identify the primary goal of their project. As displayed in Figure 7 below, increasing independence for HCBS participants was the most frequently cited goal of facility and technology enhancement projects (42% of all projects). Grantees also worked to improve program quality (33%), offer additional services (18%), and expand telehealth opportunities (8%).

**FIGURE 7: TECHNOLOGY ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVES**

### **Factors for Success**

The Grantee Survey and focus groups offered additional insight into the factors contributing to successful grant implementation. Programs discussed the impact partnerships and implementation planning had on their projects. Organizations that expanded access to assistive technology and remote support, for example, stated that **partnering with MCOs in their catchment area** improved their referrals and allowed them to reach more HCBS recipients.

Other organizations needed to coordinate across departments and sometimes across organizations to implement their projects. At least 5 grantees (10%) incorporated the development of an advisory committee into their milestones. For facility-based projects, such as the all-abilities playgrounds designed and built by **J&J Hillside Hollow, LLC** and **Jackson County DHHS**, the advisory committees included representatives from the local parks and recreation entities, fundraising committees, designers, and stakeholders. Organizations implementing IT projects also benefited from forming committees to support implementation. For example, one organization with multiple locations shared that communication across locations and supervisors on the goals of the initiative was crucial for its ultimate success.

**“[The grant period provided time to] really develop and make something sustainable instead of just throwing money at something quickly and trying to produce something.”**

**—Focus group participant**

Finally, several organizations pointed out that a multi-year timeframe was important for successful planning and implementation for both facility and technology projects. These grantees discussed the time-consuming nature of the research required to design technology projects that would have a lasting impact on their workforce and/or the people that they serve. In addition to identifying the right technology solution, grantees found that it was time-consuming to support individuals through the implementation process so that they could embrace and benefit from the technology change. Without supporting the change management, the full benefits of the technology initiatives could not be fully realized. One focus group participant summed this up when he stated that the grant period provided time to “really develop and make something sustainable instead of just throwing money at something quickly and trying to produce something.”

### **Lessons Learned**

Grantees included in the technology enhancement focus group shared that staff members could be hesitant about adopting new technology, even when the solution was requested and discussed far in advance of the grant funding. This observation underscores how challenging it can be to implement changes in organizations and with the population served by the organizations. To support this process, grantees invested in training and support and found that ongoing and on-demand support was much more effective than one-time training at the beginning of the initiative. Additionally, they found it critical to gain buy-in from DSPs at each stage of implementation. This was true for technology enhancements implemented to boost efficiency among staff as well as initiatives aimed at expanding individuals' access to technology, assistive devices, and remote supports.

When new technology is implemented, one of the common concerns raised by workers and caregivers is that there will be less direct support and personal connection with HCBS recipients. Grantees implementing technology projects found that “Technology plays a big role

in the work we do, but it doesn't take away from the personal touch with the client and/or the communications between entities." Efforts to improve staff efficiency, such as installing software systems that automate processes and providing updated portable technology, can result in increased time spent with HCBS recipients and/or more recipients served. Additionally, grantees that focused on expanding technology to HCBS recipients reported increased satisfaction rates from the individuals they served.

Finally, grantees reported that technology was not always prioritized for human service agencies the way that it is in other sectors. This has the impact of maintaining the digital divide that disproportionately impacts HCBS recipients. Grantees emphasized the need to educate HCBS providers, policymakers, and programs on the importance of technology for older adults and persons with disabilities.

## TRANSPORTATION

Twenty-one organizations included a component of transportation in their grant initiative. The projects aimed to address problems such as a lack of wheelchair-accessible transportation, lack of employee transportation, lack of transportation to different providers, and geographical gaps in transportation services. These programs included the following:

**Twenty-one organizations implemented transportation-related initiatives that created more than 1,400 additional community trips.**

- Accessible transportation to Community-Based Services (**Easter Seals Southeast Wisconsin, Inc.; Curative Connections; Clarity Care Inc.**)
- Rural transportation services (**Allegiance Transportation, Waushara County, The Bay at Garden View Assisted Living Center**)
- Transportation services for employees (**Regional Enterprises for Adults and Children, Inc.; S & K Family Care; Options in Community Living**)

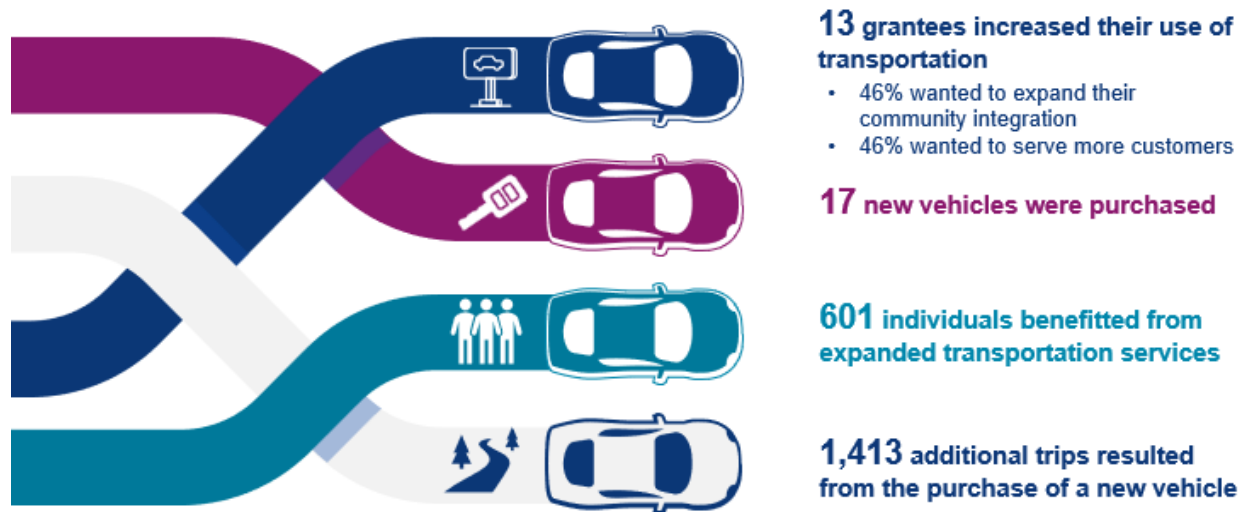
Collectively, these programs served 4,678 people, including 2,211 HCBS recipients.

### *Factors for Success*

Thirteen of the 21 grantees that focused on transportation services responded to the Grantee Survey. This survey data provided valuable insight into the impact of improved transportation offered. As shown in Figure 8 below, 13 grantees purchased a total of 17 new vehicles. As a result, more than 600 individuals benefited and more than 1,400 additional trips were made. Some grantees provided specific examples of the impact of accessible transportation and community integration. Eastern Seals of Southern Wisconsin, for example, reported, “Our participants LOVE the new vans and really enjoy getting out to volunteer or go to the library or ... park or local coffee shop, etc.” This anecdote demonstrates that the positive impact of these grants extends beyond HCBS recipients and their providers to touch the broader community, which benefits from active, engaged residents who are able to volunteer, shop locally, and enjoy local events.



FIGURE 8: IMPACT OF TRANSPORTATION GRANTS



Grantees focused on expanding access to transportation were highly successful in meeting their grant goals. Table 10 below provides a breakdown of the short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals that were met.

TABLE 10: GOAL COMPLETION FOR TRANSPORTATION GRANT PROGRAMS

	Met	Partially Met	Did Not Meet
<b>Short-term Goals</b>	90%	5%	5%
<b>Intermediate Goals</b>	95%	5%	N/A
<b>Long-term Goals</b>	69%	26%	5%

Grantees who developed **creative partnerships** with organizations in the community viewed that collaboration as a key factor for success in increasing transportation for HCBS recipients. Grantees that explored innovative transportation solutions saw considerable success after teaming up with Uber and Lyft. Innovations included the development of Uber-like services specifically designed for people with disabilities, leveraging the existing paid driver workforce and their personal vehicles.

**County-funded shared ride programs**, which involved purchasing vehicles and offering subsidized transportation, offered another promising approach that grantees utilized. Some grantees highlighted how their organizations can further enhance their transportation services by exploring better integration within their existing structures, potentially utilizing AI for scheduling assistance. Furthermore, grantees detailed how improving internal scheduling processes, particularly by streamlining the integration of different schedules, significantly reduced the burden on both staff and clients.

## ***Lessons Learned***

In developing and implementing these initiatives, grantees learned a variety of lessons about the transportation capabilities of their organizations. Some grantees found that developing internal specialized transportation departments within their organizations was important for maximizing the impact of their transportation initiatives. Other grantees found that developing established driver routes was beneficial in the overall scheduling process and helped maintain an organized workforce. Grantees also underscored the importance of reviewing the waiver to maximize transportation options and resources. Furthermore, some grantees found success in developing volunteer workforces by looking for people who would be willing to be volunteer drivers for their organizations. Grantees also found success in asking HCBS recipients to practice self-direction and find their own drivers for community integration activities. Overall, most grantees highlighted how they learned that the most impactful way to overcome barriers is to prioritize addressing the most actionable barrier first: Collecting data and feedback, then working to solve the problem.

## ***Barriers***

Many grantees found developing and maintaining their transportation workforces to be a major barrier to ensuring the continued success of their initiatives. Some organizations struggled with low levels of accountability from their drivers or a limited workforce pool in general. To combat this barrier, many grantees tapped into more creative workforce pools, such as the retiree or “third-age” workforce, stay-at-home parents who could do trips during the day, and additional part-time workers. Grantees emphasized how engaging this workforce required greater flexibility from their organizations as they created schedules that worked for each of these groups of individuals. It was vital for grantees to be attentive to the scheduling needs of these individuals in order to maintain this workforce pool.

## WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT

**When addressing workforce recruitment challenges, “The agencies most willing to take the initiative to embrace the changes [are] the most likely to see success.”**  
**—Focus group participant**

One of the greatest challenges in providing high quality HCBS is recruiting, training, and retaining DSPs. According to PHI, which manages the National Direct Care Workforce Resource Center, Wisconsin will require an additional 12,680 jobs by 2032, a 13% increase over 2022 staffing levels.<sup>3</sup> The growth in this industry is driven by growth in the population of individuals over 65, an increase in consumer preference to stay at home, and state policies that support individuals

receiving care at home rather than in institutions. Thirty-one organizations implemented programs that included a component of Workforce Recruitment. These programs focused on the following:

- Recruitment and referral incentives (**BRIDGE for Community Life, Inc.; Almost Family; Center for Independent Living for Western Wisconsin**)
- Creation of specialized recruiter positions to better recruit potential applicants and assist applicants throughout the application process (**Grace Lutheran Communities; Clarity Care, Inc.; Vernon Area Rehabilitation Center, Inc.**)
- Recruitment workshops and training for HCBS providers (**Lakeland Care, Inc.; Disability Service Provider Network**)

Collectively, these programs served 87,921 individuals, including 29,978 HCBS recipients (as well as families of HCBS recipients, DCWs, and providers).

### *Factors for Success*

Grantees had varied success in meeting their original objectives. Overall, 67% of grantees fully met their goals, with another 26% meeting some but not all goals. Table 11 below provides a detailed breakdown of the percentage of programs that achieved their short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals.

**TABLE 11: GOAL COMPLETION FOR WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT GRANT PROGRAMS**

	Met	Partially Met	Did Not Meet
<b>Short-term Goals</b>	80%	10%	10%
<b>Intermediate Goals</b>	66%	13%	21%
<b>Long-term Goals</b>	47%	23%	30%

<sup>3</sup> PHI National. Direct Care Workforce State Profile. [Wisconsin - PHI](#). 2023.

Respondents to the Grantee Survey shared details on their full-time, part-time, per-diem, “as needed,” and intern recruitment efforts over the course of the grant. Overall, there was a 9% increase in the overall workforce. Additional details are laid out in Table 12 below.

**TABLE 12: RESULTS OF RECRUITMENT EFFORTS BY JOB TYPE**

Position Type	No. Prior to Grant	Currently Employed	Unfilled Positions
<b>Full-time</b>	1,859	1,992	204
<b>Part-time</b>	128	170	106
<b>Full-time “As Needed”</b>	102	104	6
<b>Part-time “As Needed”</b>	51	60	12
<b>Interns</b>	2	2	1

Grantees found success in their projects by implementing time-tested approaches as well as unique and out-of-the-box solutions to address workforce recruitment challenges.

Multiple grantees implemented **referral and recruitment bonus programs**. These programs varied in type, but all offered some type of monetary bonus to new hires and/or current employees who made successful referrals. One grantee reported that 50% of DCWs eligible for the recruitment and retention bonuses earned their full 12-month recruiting bonus and then continued their employment working in HCBS. Because of this level of success, this grantee has continued to offer recruitment bonuses. Another grantee did not offer recruitment bonuses but instead offered an alternate work week wherein DCWs could work for 4 days but be paid for 5. This was used as a recruitment tool and was an extremely successful strategy for filling open positions.

Some grantees found that they had a gap in their team regarding specialty recruiting. One reported that their human resources team was busy with various day-to-day tasks surrounding personnel management, onboarding, etc., and did not necessarily have time to dedicate to targeted recruitment and outreach to potential job applicants. Multiple grantees **created and hired for a recruiter position whose sole job was to focus on recruiting new HCBS workers**. One grantee hired a bilingual recruiter (an English and Spanish speaker) and found that not only did they have success in recruiting more staff, but they were able to reach more families and individuals receiving HCBS services. Another grantee hired a recruiter who was able to respond to inquiries from potential applicants, offer tours of the facility where they would be working if hired, assist interested individuals in the job application process, and educate these applicants about HCBS job opportunities. They reported that just in the first half of 2023, they had already hired more people than they had in all of 2022. This grantee found that not only did the quantity of job applications increase but also the quality of the applicants improved as they had a resource to assist them in completing their application. In addition to hiring recruiters, other grantees used funds to send targeted mailers and place digital advertisements. One grantee reported that by using the additional funding in this way, they were able to increase the visibility of their organization in the community.

Training in workforce recruitment and retention was provided by one grantee and offered to all different types of HCBS providers. This training focused on teaching providers new recruitment and retention strategies and helped them to analyze their current strategies. The grantee found that ***individuals taking the training who were open to learning and making changes saw a lot of success***. Participants reported that things as small as changing the wording of a job description, changing job titles, and/or texting applicants to follow up made a difference. The agencies most willing to take the initiative to embrace change were the most likely to succeed.

## Lessons Learned

Grantees reported learning a great deal over the course of their projects and were able to document these items for application in future workforce recruitment efforts. One grantee discussed that this project taught them to take a step back and look at the problem, specifically regarding what was hindering recruitment. When they looked at all aspects of recruiting, they found that using Indeed to post job openings impacted the number of applications they received. Due to the format of Indeed, many applicants were blocked from completing the entire application. When they stopped utilizing Indeed to post job openings, they saw a 275% increase in applicants.

Another organization found that hiring a recruiter who was 100% dedicated to their agency led to higher quality applications and quicker response times from applicants, resulting in a more integrated team. They found that applicants may have difficulty completing the application alone, but by having a point of contact to provide assistance, they received more and higher quality job applications. The same grantee also found that hiring for the recruiter position was a much better use of funds. Previously, they had used various recruiting agencies but found that the money spent was not necessarily leading to success in terms of application rates and quality.

Two grantees implemented global recruiting programs, working with organizations that help to recruit HCBS workers internationally. One of the grantees reported that while they are optimistic about the outcomes of the initiative, they did not anticipate the immigration process to be as lengthy as it is. They learned that the visa acquisition process is drawn out, requiring many different levels of approval across various federal government departments. The process of preparing to onboard new DCWs moving from different countries also led to discussions around potential barriers such as housing, transportation, and childcare. They also recognized that these barriers affect the domestic workforce, so they are seeking solutions to these issues for both the new international workforce *and* the domestic workforce.

Finally, one grantee who led workforce recruitment improvement trainings for agency human resource professionals faced some challenges with student retention. They found that they would either have individuals sign up for the training who did not actually work directly in the hiring process or that participants would attend some trainings without engaging or participating. To combat this, the grantee scheduled 30-minute interviews with any organization interested in pursuing the training. During these interviews, they would ensure that the individuals enrolling in the training had hiring authority within their organizations and set expectations around training

participation and commitment. While this did not fully eradicate the issues, they did see a decrease in the occurrence of students signing up for but not being engaged in the trainings.

### **Barriers**

One grantee who hired a recruiter to focus solely on recruitment and assisting potential applicants found that some adjustments to the company's culture were needed. When the recruiter position was filled, some of the existing human resources (HR) team members felt that their jobs were being replaced. By educating the team about the purpose of the new recruiter position and making some staffing changes, the grantee was able to see positive changes in the company culture and an overall increase in the success and productivity of the full-time direct-care team.

Another grantee reported that a major barrier was and continues to be competition with other job sectors. While they and other HCBS providers can implement incentives such as the 4-day workweek or referral and retention bonuses, nothing is stopping other larger companies from doing the same. They often see DCWs leaving the industry and moving to positions in companies able to pay higher hourly wages. This barrier is unlikely to go away, and as such the grantee plans to work to find additional solutions to this concern.

The lengthy process of applying for and receiving work visas proved to be a major barrier for at least one grantee who aimed to recruit from the international workforce. While they remain on the path of international recruitment, the process has caused major delays in the planned timeline and is something they will need to keep in mind if they decide to continue to recruit from the international workforce.

## WORKFORCE RETENTION

**Three thousand nine hundred two people received education and resources through 1,649 trainings implemented by grantee organizations.**

Forty-three organizations implemented projects that included a workforce retention component. These organizations implemented projects to address key workforce retention issues they were experiencing related to low recruitment rates, limited education and

resources for staff, direct care burnout, technology issues, lack of culturally and linguistically diverse staff, and caregiving limitations due to low certification levels. These programs included the following:

- Incentivized referral and bonus programs (**Capri Senior Communities, Life's A Beach Counseling, Individual Growth Services**)
- Training in specialized forms of care (**Place of Mind, SYNERGY HomeCare, New Hope & Destiny Home II, MARC, Inc.**)
- Strategic community-based outreach programs (**Launch Therapy Center**)
- Technology innovation and implementation training programs (**Dejia Home Health Care**)
- New-hire onboarding and support programs (**Homes for Independent Living of WI, TransCen**)
- Cross-cultural training programs (**InControl Wisconsin, Empowerment Living Services, Individual Growth Services**)

Collectively, these programs served 522,727 people, including 161,022 HCBS recipients.

### **Factors for Success**

Grantees provided a wide variety of trainings to support the direct care workforce. Based on the Grantee Survey administered in June 2024, 1,649 separate trainings were hosted supporting 3,902 people. Over 40% of the participants benefited from training that helped improve cultural competence, reduce implicit bias, and improve employees' skill sets for working with individuals experiencing mental health challenges. Table 13 provides a breakdown of the types of trainings provided and the number of participants in each.



**TABLE 13: WORKFORCE TRAININGS BY GOAL AND ATTENDANCE**

Primary Goal	Total Participants
New technology	314
Refresh or expand staff skills	1,347
New certifications, licenses to fill critical positions	87
Improve workplace culture	28
Improve diversity, equity, and inclusion	1,982

Fifty-six percent of the grantees fully met their goals, and 81% either mostly or completely met their goals.

**TABLE 14: GOAL COMPLETION FOR WORKFORCE RETENTION GRANT PROGRAMS**

	Met	Partially Met	Did Not Meet
<b>Short-term Goals</b>	64%	20%	16%
<b>Intermediate Goals</b>	60%	16%	24%
<b>Long-term Goals</b>	32%	36%	32%

Several factors for success were rooted in exactly how the grantees' organizations developed and implemented their training. Effective training development hinges on understanding the needs of the recipients. Some grantees emphasized the value of ***cocreating training programs with both their HCBS clients and workforce***. This collaborative approach ensured that trainings were tailored and relevant, thus maximizing their impact. Directly engaging the workforce allowed organizations to understand what training formats, skill development sessions, and content would be most valuable. One organization, Place of Mind, included HCBS recipients in the development of their training programs. Dr. Marx of Place of Mind explained the profound impact of this approach, noting that it empowered recipients to identify their support needs and, in essence, train their own caregivers. She emphasized that this process of getting to know other human beings is itself a valuable form of training.

Furthermore, organizations found that more individualized trainings, especially those incorporating one-on-one instruction, fostered a more person-centered approach among staff, leading to more individualized client care. Hands-on training also proved effective in overcoming initial staff resistance and promoting greater receptiveness to new training methods. This shift towards customized training has led some organizations to abandon pre-packaged, "canned" programs in favor of personalized, interactive, and context-specific trainings tailored to the specific daily care responsibilities of their direct care staff. Ultimately, these tailored and interactive training approaches empowered staff and clients alike, leading to more effective and person-centered care.



Additionally, many grantees found that collecting feedback after each round of training gave them the opportunity to gain more insight into their workforces' overall reception of the training content and format. This practice allowed their organizations to refine and tailor their programs after each round, ensuring relevance and effectiveness. These regular check-ins also demonstrated the organizations' investment in employee development, fostering a sense of value and engagement among their employees. One organization highlighted their use of a community of practice framework to support a new initiative, ensuring employees felt well supported. Several grantees emphasized the critical importance of gauging organizational buy-in—recognizing that without it, trainings' effectiveness would be limited.

Many grantees found that ***strong incentive programs proved effective both in retaining current employees and attracting new talent to the direct care workforce***. Tuition reimbursement programs were one initiative implemented by some grantees that was associated with increased retention and broader recruitment success. Sign-on bonuses and consistent referral bonuses were also quite effective at increasing retention rates. While both initiatives initially boosted retention, referral bonuses demonstrated a sustained positive impact, consistently maintaining—and even increasing—retention rates over time.

Recognizing the often-isolating nature of caregiving, many grantees developed training programs that fostered support networks. These organizations understood the value of group training sessions, believing that shared learning experiences among peers would increase support and connection within the workforce.

Along with implementing trainings, increasing overall flexibility contributed to successful workforce retention. Specifically, one grantee launched an innovative project that had not been previously attempted within their organization. Capri Senior Communities implemented a 4-day workweek while paying their direct care workforce for five days' worth of labor. This arrangement was incredibly effective in increasing retention rates among their direct care workforce. Grantees emphasized that granting their employees greater flexibility in general was key to increasing their overall retention rates. This meant offering employees versatility in their service delivery and how they offer care within their roles, in addition to providing flexible working schedules. By offering this flexibility, these grantees were able to tailor the expectations of their workforces to make their roles more attractive.

## ***Lessons Learned***

A common lesson learned by grantees was the value of surveying employees before launching training programs. Several organizations noted that collecting feedback early and consistently would have significantly altered their approaches, potentially leading them to offer different trainings better tailored to workforce needs. Furthermore, some grantees regretted not customizing their training from the outset, realizing that in-house programs would have been more effective at addressing specific skill gaps than vendor-provided courses.

Similarly, some grantees explained how they wished they had collaborated with and collected feedback from other partner agencies in their communities before implementing their projects.

These grantees highlighted their belief that strong collaboration between agencies was vital in ensuring their initiatives were relevant and impactful—not just within their own organizations but also throughout their greater community.

Some grantees described how improving the internal culture of their workplaces helped ensure training programs or other retention initiatives were successful. They soon recognized how important it was for their organizations to provide sufficient support to offset the stressors inherent to direct care work. Dr. Marx from Place of Mind exemplified this during one of the focus groups as she explained how “by shifting the focus from limited and rigid training to a more humanized approach, caregivers can provide more effective and compassionate support while maintaining their own well-being.” Overall, by strengthening internal support systems, organizations can significantly reduce the risk of burnout among DCWs.

Several grantees also expressed the importance of cultural awareness in trainings, seeing it as vital for ensuring employee effectiveness and information retention. Grantees quickly recognized that education and practice in cultural competence, along with relationship building across differences, should be integrated into existing learning content and activities. Furthermore, some grantees highlighted the overall and ongoing need for culturally responsive and affirming behavioral health providers, particularly those specializing in intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), as many families from traditionally marginalized and underrepresented backgrounds remain underserved. Ultimately, culturally competent training not only benefits staff but also directly improves the quality of care for diverse populations.

## **Barriers**

Among the barriers faced by grantees, the most prominent were wage competition and staff burnout. Many organizations explained the difficulty of matching wages offered by other industries in their communities. Dr. Angela Marx from Place of Mind highlighted this frustration, which many grantees felt, when she stated, “Caregiving is the most important role that any human being can do and yet always the most underpaid, if paid at all.” Many grantees considered it necessary to explore creative incentives to remain competitive with other industries offering higher-paying and less stressful roles.

Low worker retention rates presented a significant barrier for some grantees. Combating this deeply ingrained norm proved challenging, as staff—often accustomed to short tenures at previous employers—expected to see similar patterns within these organizations. This ingrained expectation of frequent turnover created a difficult cycle to break, and many grantees had to work actively to combat it.

**“Caregiving is the most important role that any human being can do and yet always the most underpaid, if paid at all.”**

**—Dr. Angela Marx, Place of Mind**

Furthermore, some grantees encountered challenges in simply getting their initiatives or training programs off the ground—particularly when it came to gathering participant cohorts. These grantees highlighted how their organizations found careful planning and intentionality to be crucial when scheduling initial sessions for trainings or new incentive programs.

## CONCLUSION

The evaluation of Wisconsin's HCBS Innovation Grants underscores the impact of strategic funding in expanding and strengthening HCBS. By bringing a diverse range of initiatives to life, these investments have improved access to care, enhanced workforce stability, and fostered innovative approaches to service delivery. The lessons learned from this evaluation provide a roadmap for future initiatives, ensuring continued progress in meeting the needs of HCBS recipients and providers.

Moving forward, sustained collaboration and commitment will be crucial for building on these successes. The insights gained from the evaluation of the grant initiatives highlight the importance of adaptive strategies, community engagement, and cross-sector partnerships in overcoming challenges and driving long-term improvements in HCBS programs. By embedding these principles into policy and practice, Wisconsin can further enhance the quality and accessibility of services.

Ultimately, the Wisconsin HCBS Innovation Grants have laid a strong foundation for systemic change, demonstrating the value of targeted investments in community-based care. As Wisconsin continues to refine and expand its HCBS framework, the State remains committed to fostering a more inclusive, responsive, and resilient support system for all who rely on these essential services.

## APPENDIX A

# Grantee Matrix

Organization	Town/City	Workforce Retention/ Training	Workforce Recruitment & Retention	Facility & Technology Improvement	Behavioral Health Integration	Expanding CLTS	Caregiver Support & Respite	Supportive Employment	Transportation	DEI
Always There In-Home Care, Inc. dba: ComForCare Home Care	Jackson			X			X			
Aptiv	La Crosse			X			X			
Aurora Residential Alternatives	East Menomonie			X	X		X			
Blackbird Psychotherapy LLC	Janesville					X	X			
Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System d.b.a. UW-Green Bay	Green Bay	X								
BU4U, LLC	Marshfield			X						
Capri Senior Communities LLC	Waukesha		X							
Clover Family Services LLC	Janesville			X			X			
Dane County Department of Human Services	Madison	X			X					
Dane County Department of Human Services	Madison							X		
Deer Path Integrated Living, Inc.	Necedah	X			X					
Disability Service Provider Network	Madison	X	X							
Family & Children's Center	La Crosse		X	X						
Grace Lutheran Communities	Eau Claire		X							
Homes for Independent Living LLC	Dousman		X							
Homes for Independent Living of WI, LLC	Sheboygan	X		X	X					
InControl Wisconsin	Madison	X								
Individual Growth Services, Inc	Port Washington	X	X							
Islands of Brilliance	Milwaukee					X				
Lakeland Care Inc.	Fond du Lac		X							
Legacy Home Health Services	Milwaukee						X			
Living Our Visions Inc.	Madison					X	X			X
MARC, Inc. (Madison Area Rehabilitation Centers, Inc.)	Madison	X								
Marquette University	Milwaukee	X			X					X

# Grantee Matrix

[continued]

Organization	Town/city	Workforce Retention/ Training	Workforce Recruitment & Retention	Facility & Technology Improvement	Behavioral Health Integration	Expanding CLTS	Caregiver Support & Respite	Supportive Employment	Transportation	DEI
Monroe County Department of Human Services	Sparta					x	x			
New Hope Center, Inc	Chilton							x		
New Hope Center, Inc	Chilton					x	x			
Night Owl Support Systems, LLC	Madison			x						
O-I-See Youth Strategies LLC	Hudson					x			x	
Opportunity Development Centers Inc.	Rapids							x		
Opportunity Development Centers, Inc.	Rapids			x						
Opportunity of North Central WI Inc.	Wausau	x		x						
Opportunity of North Central WI Inc.	Wausau		x							
Options for Independent Living Inc.	Green Bay			x		x				
Options in Community Living, Inc.	Madison								x	
People First Wisconsin	Milwaukee							x		
Place of Mind LLC	Fox Lake	x			x					
R&K Support Services Inc.	West Allis	x	x							
RETRAC Enterprises INC	Milwaukee				x				x	
SimplyHome, LLC	Arden			x						
SOAR Fox Cities	Appleton		x							
The Foster Lane	St. Francis					x	x			
The Foster Lane	Milwaukee	x				x				
Three Pillars Senior Living Communities (aka Wisconsin Masonic Home, Inc.)	Dousman	x								
TransCen, Inc.	Wauwatosa	x					x			
UP THERE, LLC	Westboro				x	x				
Vernon Area Rehabilitation Center, Inc.	Viroqua		x							
Western Wisconsin Music in Medicine	Eau Claire			x	x					