

# Growspace Catalyzer

Direct Support Innovation Report

# Summary

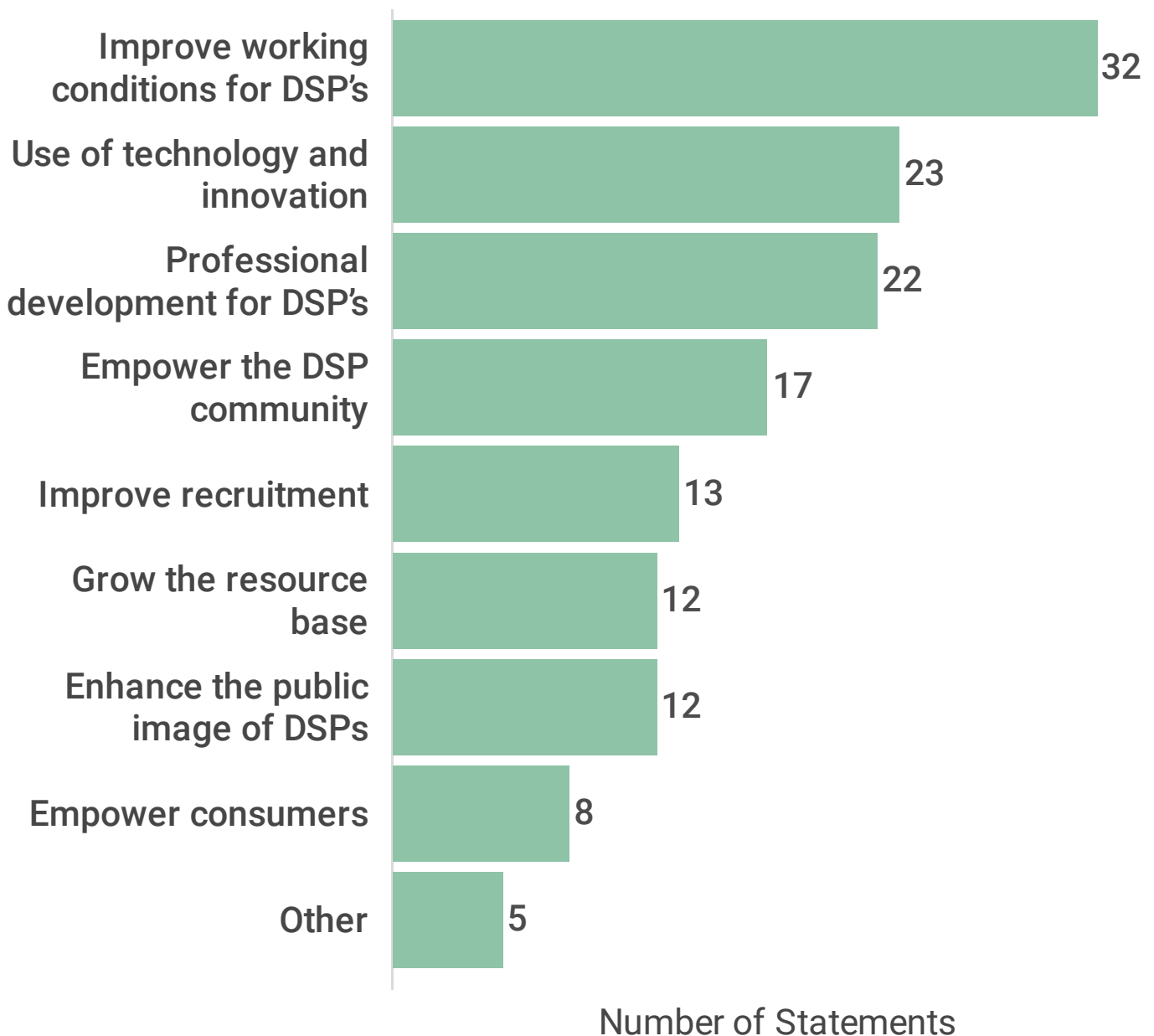
The Growspace Catalyzer: Direct Support Innovation was a two-day problem mapping event held on October 15th and 16th of 2018. Staff from the UAA Business Enterprise Institute and Center for Economic Development led a cross-section of individuals through a series of facilitated mapping exercises to outline the problems in the direct support profession. The problem mapping event gave participants tools and resources to come to a common understanding of the major challenges. For those unfamiliar with business startup tools, it was an opportunity to actively use the design methods used by startups, entrepreneurs, and businesses to rapidly ideate and assess the potential for new products or services.

Crises are bad for those involved but also present potential opportunities for entrepreneurs who propose solutions. The Growspace Catalyzer, an offering of the University of Alaska Center for Economic Development, engaged with a cross-section of direct support services leaders and entrepreneurs to map the industry pain points and reframe problems as opportunities. The Growspace Catalyzer introduced service provider organizations and other community stakeholders and partners to the innovative methods used by forward-thinking entrepreneurs who are constantly exploring industry gaps and potential products and businesses.

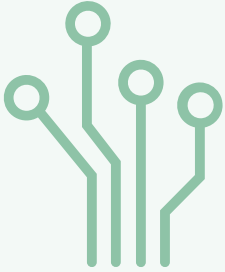


# How Might We Format

“How Might We” statements are a way to direct problems toward solutions. A properly framed How Might We does not suggest a particular solution, but provides a framework for innovative problem solving. They begin the process of breaking an impasse caused by “Wicked Problems,” and empower stakeholders to solve problems constructively. Good How Might We Statements should have multiple possible solutions and should be inspiring and generate enthusiasm among the group.



# How Might We Themes



## 1. Use of technology and innovation

- Use of technology and innovation
- Use enabling technology to prioritize hands-on time for the highest impact
- Explore tech options for staff training
- Flexible scheduling apps
- An app that includes universal job application and employment opportunities
- “Normalize” need for assistance, schedule via an app like uber
- A culture of always thinking what's next
- Incentivize innovation for financial reward
- Robotic DSPs
- Some sort of robotic attendant that is connected to a real person, it would allow for one person to manage more clients without having to travel
- Create an app to provide the training
- “Uber” for DSPs, an app to request service
- Social media platform that creates a culture of value for DSPs
- Recruiting software
- Electronic supervision/support
- Best practices app
- Put technology in DSPs hands
- App for recruitment (hire ready)
- App for scheduling
- Apps that allow flexibility in scheduling (i.e. working parents)
- Innovation accelerator project
- Push notifications
- Data sharing
- Uber

train allow flexible person dsp robotic use schedule technology innovation uber app

# How Might We Themes



## 2. Improve working conditions for DSPs

- Living wage
- Increase wages
- Provide incentives
- Reduce overhead to increase DSP salaries
- Housing and relocation assistance
- Fewer “fiddley” requirements for agencies = more attention to staff
- Internal competition for bonus/recognition among peers
- Loyalty programs with bonuses that build up over time/achievements
- Remove the pressure from DSPs to create a full schedule
- Scale benefits received
- Improving the way managers communicate with DSPs (being nice, always supportive, ready to help)
- Regular re-basing (4 years)
- Create job security
- School loan reimbursement
- Student loan forgiveness/repayment
- Fund an increase in wages to be living wages
- Value a living wage and real benefits
- Augment/increase funding for natural supports
- Tax incentives
- Early retirement bonus
- Free healthcare
- Free tablet
- Annual evaluations with pay raises
- Offer sabbaticals
- Income/tax break for DSPs
- Offer paid time off/flex leave
- Inclusive childcare for DSPs
- Higher wage
- Pensions
- PTO
- Service animals
- Free service (cell phone, internet) for DSP

incentive  
loan  
offer  
free  
increase  
benefit  
fund  
live  
service  
create  
dsp wage

# How Might We Themes



## 3. Professional development for DSPs

- Increase certification requirements
- Increase professional expectations through credential or certification
- Send staff to full lives conference
- Create career paths
- Provide ongoing professional development opportunities
- Radical transparency policy
- Employee feedback
- Conduct a personality test
- Develop cross-training for advancement structure for when DSP is out of work
- Meaningful training to DSPs
- Offer professional development on an ongoing basis
- Transferable training
- Professionalize DSPs
- Fund pre-hire training
- Create a career cluster
- Develop and training through pre-hire ready
- Cross-training with other industries
- Credits that are incentivized
- Language training
- Full scholarship to DSP
- Free admission with participation
- Accreditation

dsp through train professional  
pre-hire career certification  
cross-train develop  
ongo create full increase

# How Might We Themes



## 4. Grow the resource base

- Develop a process to reimburse independent DSPs (outside of provider agency)
- Pool money for media
- Convince investors of importance and value
- Go to the top, get big funding
- Money for professional development
- Scholarships for growth
- Higher reimbursement rate from Medicaid = higher wages
- Fund opportunities to address burnout
- Donate lots of money
- Leverage partners
- Collaborate with Warren Buffett
- Wish list for people with support-match to DSP

”

**The design thinking format helps us to access creative ideas we wouldn't have otherwise. I saw some light bulbs go off for a lot of participants.**

Nolan Klouda, UA Center for Economic Development

# How Might We Themes



## 5. Empower the DSP community

- Think of end users first
- Through policy, reinforce a culture that supports the workforce
- Survey staff
- Worker co-op model
- Build community amongst DSPs
- Culture shift to value and respect DSPs
- Improve status/reputation of the industry
- Create a staff blog
- Unionize
- Staff appreciation activities that are meaningful
- Co-ops for DSPs
- DSP association
- Representation
- Create a career ladder
- Prioritize DSPs needs
- DSP association/reward system



*Pictured is Margo Fliss asking the Growspace team what successes the DSP community has experienced.*



# How Might We Themes



## 6. Enhance the public image of DSPs

- Create ways to push info about the industry in new media
- Message projected is “we are the best”
- Utilize Public Service Announcements (PSAs)
- Radio and other media to share success stories
- Opportunity to celebrate
- Value for DSP (statements on amazon page)
- Recognition of the real value provided
- Make them heroes in the story (movie/book)
- Get people excited, create buzz
- Get “big guys (i.e., Google, Apple, Amazon)” interested in what we are doing
- Social media
- More discussion of need + industry in government



## 7. Empower consumers

- Meet the need before users know they have the need
- Ease of use/understanding
- Higher expectations for consumers to manage/direct partnerships with DSPs directly
- Cultivating a culture of growth
- Fitting DSPs with the most suitable clients through ongoing trials/rotations
- Increase flexibility in service delivery
- Organic care
- Study native culture caretaking

# How Might We Themes



## 8. Improve recruitment

- Recruit “in viva”
- Hire more folks with IDD
- Immigration
- Recruit military spouses
- Universal application
- Recruit college students
- Recruit at the high school level
- Incentivize entry into the profession
- Staffing center/co-employment
- New American or work visas
- Recruit the retired “sages”
- Work at multiple agencies and have a shared application pool
- Highlight volunteer service in the application



## 9. Other

- Make it invaluable, can't live without it
- Some sort of solution that supports participants to provide
- Standardize processes
- Remove regulatory barriers
- Taco Tuesdays



# Wicked Problems Statements

# 1

## Declining attraction and retention of DSP workforce

There is an ever-increasing demand for services from Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). Presumed barriers include low wages, training requirements, and lack of career trajectory but there is a general lack of information regarding the needs of this particular occupational group. This makes attracting, retaining, and engaging DSPs challenging. Also, many DSPs face issues such as securing high-quality childcare and transportation, which are difficult in a position where flexibility and travel are necessary. We have developed the following appreciative questions:

1. *How might we expand the DSP workforce?*
2. *How might we attract and retain our DSPs?*
3. *How might we enable DSPs to go from A to B? (transportation)*
4. *How might we fully engage our workforce in a manner that's meaningful and impactful to them?*

**Validators:** ResCare Alaska Fairbanks/AgeNet, Workforce Officer – Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, Access Alaska, Hope Community Resources HR Director, Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities, Peer Power Director/Governor’s Council Program Coordinator, Developer, UAA student, Alaska Association of Personal Care Supports, Alaska Behavioral Health Association, Workforce Officer - Mat-Su Health Foundation, Direct Support Professional, Center for Community/AgeNet, Alaska Cooperative Development Center, Alaska Ocean Cluster, Champney Consulting, UAA Alaska Training Cooperative, Business Enterprise Institute, Center for Economic Development, Frontier Community Services

# Wicked Problems Statements

## 2

### Increasing the understanding of the value of DSPs

There is a misperception regarding the actual work performed by Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) which undervalues the often highly technical and challenging nature of the work. Therefore, continuous improvements in quality of care for people in need of services goes in tandem with increased value for the role and reputation of the DSPs. We have developed the following appreciative questions:

- 1. How might we provide better services to people who need support?*
- 2. How might we improve the reputation of the industry by improving the quality of life for people receiving services?*
- 3. How might we find creative funding for services?*



# Wicked Problems Statements

## 3

### **Need for efficiency in frontline support as well as back office services**

Healthcare entities need efficient back office services as well as service delivery. Agencies spend too much time using antiquated systems to fulfill requirements for licensing or regulation. For example, physical copies of schedules and routine audits are still required in many offices; this dramatically increases the administrative burden and stifles innovation of business practices. In addition, there are inefficiencies in delivering services, from the tools used by supervisors to the time spent providing assistance directly to the consumer. We have developed the following appreciative questions:

- 1. How might we reduce redundancy in and across processes (for example, licensing, regulating, and audits)?*
- 2. How might we create accessibility to consistent, simple and professional support services?*
- 3. How might we increase the efficiency, and therefore capacity, of frontline supervisors?*
- 4. How might we optimize time spent providing hands-on/in-person support?*

# Wicked Problems Statements

## 4

### Barriers accessing training for DSPs and supervisors

Training is vital for healthcare professionals to stay abreast of best practices and emerging technologies. Currently, there are many barriers to accessing training for both DSPs and their supervisors. Examples of barriers include lack of back-up staff, limited funding, and competing organizational priorities. Relevant training is vital for continuous improvement to care for people with disabilities and healthy workplaces. Related to valuing training/organizational priorities. We have developed the following appreciative questions:

1. *How might we make training more accessible for DSPs?*
2. *How might we combine resources for staff prep or training?*
3. *How might we define and increase the skill sets and capacity of our frontline supervisors?*



*Pictured is the Growspace team, which includes Direct Support Professionals, creating a process map with the goal of gaining a clearer understanding of how their organizations are connected with each other.*

# Wicked Problems Statements

## 5

### Engaging the community in understanding workforce issues

Not enough work is being done at the community level to solve systemic community-based health workforce issues. There seems to be an information gap between the valuable work done by DSPs, and what the general public perceives this work to be. Many of the issues DSPs encounter in their daily work are systemic and require a collaborative community-wide approach. We have developed the following appreciative questions:

- 1. How might we better engage our community/society in social issues to solve social problems?*
- 2. How might we engage the broader community/society in the DSP workforce crisis?*



# Successes



- Created jobs or FCS jobs for people with disabilities, only competitive jobs in the community
- Alaska Mental Health Trust Workforce Officer
- Integrated employment
- Expansion of crisis home
- AK Health Education Center
- AK Psychology Internship Consortium AK loan repayment
- Innovative treatment ideas
- Supportive employment
- Conference partner
- Supported employment, 40% of IDD
- Closed Harborview in 1997
- Many folks stay in their homes until end of life, with proper care
- Supported decision-making agreements
- Closed the FCS day center, support is only provided in a community setting
- Alaska Ocean Cluster secured funding for 3 years
- Helped set up a dozen new co-ops
- Brought national experts in workers co-ops to AK
- Successfully (over) served Senior-in-Home grant
- October 2017 successful rollout of E.V.V., 1st Rescare branch in the state
- Served 3,233 PCA 5500-4 waivers
- Funded peer support training opportunities
- 7 County agreement for funding for child mental health crisis home
- Better partnership with the state
- Provided technical assistance to nonprofits
- Sharp-loan repayment
- Behavioral health convenings
- AADD-44 members
- Supportive devices



# Additional Successes



- Supportive treatments
- Transportation
- Capital building partnerships
- Funding for strategic state positions
- Housing
- Healthcare reform
- Donation increases in non-profit organizations
- 501 © 3 stability
- Behavioral health non-tribal rate rebasing
- Working toward an easier usable public transit system
- Trust support of AADD
- Funded programs that provide direct support services through grants
- Removing the “r” word
- 2 Alaska DSP winners of the year, ANCOR 2016, 2017
- SHARP I-II, other loan repayment

