**SILC ON DEMAND QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION**

**Presented by Ann McDaniel and Brad Williams**

**September 28, 2016**

>> TIM FUCHS: Good afternoon, everybody, I'm Tim Fuchs, the National Council on Independent Living, I want to welcome you to the latest teleconference. The latest on effective SILC management, a live Q&A call. So today's discussion is brought to you by the SILC Training and Technical Assistance Center, excuse me and the SILC T&TA Center is operated through a partnership of ILRU, NCIL, and APRIL with support for the project provided by the administration on community living at the US Department of Health and Human Services.

So today's call is a little different than we normally do. We will do a live Q&A, based on the on demand presentations that have been posted on ILRU's website this month.

And I hope you all saw the call announcement and in the confirmation, the link to those presentations and that you have watched them. If you haven't, just a heads up, that you know, our attention today is really to have a discussion and answer questions about those presentations, not to review the content of them.

If you didn't watch them, or you didn't watch all of them, that's okay. You are welcome to join today, but just know that that's going to be the basis for today's call, and we have allotted an hour to be together today, and we'll use as much of that time as we need to answer all of your questions.

So to ask questions, you can do that in most ways. For most of you since this is teleconference, you can press star pound to indicate that you have a question. If you are on the full screen CART, I'm logged into the chat as Tim and you can type your questions there as well, and I will voice them for you on the call.

So I want to thank two of our presenters from the on demand series for being with us today to host today's Q&A call. Ann McDaniel and Brad Williams. Ann, of course is the executive director of the West Virginia Statewide Independent Living Council and Brad Williams is the executive director of New York SILC.

Also, of course, thanks to our other on demand presenters ‑‑ I shouldn't have phrased it that way. Mike did the SILC composition piece and Larry Wanger from the Arizona SILC did the coordination of SILC activities and they did a great job with those.

Ann and Brad, though, are certainly able to answer questions about all of the five presentations. And so with that, I think we'll begin today's call. Ann and Brad, thank you for being here. So, again, star pound to indicate you have a question. And we'll get this conversation started on this SILC on demand presentation.

So we'll just give a second for questions to roll in. Our operator will let us know with we have some in the queue.

You know, while we are waiting, I'm wondering if you all have any suggestions regarding, you know, SILC autonomy. How do you work with a DSE that doesn't want to accept the autonomy of the SILC? Do you all have any tips on working through relationships like that?

>> ANN McDANIEL: This is Ann. I have actually lived through that relationship in my early history with the SILC. I always feel like the first thing you need to do is to build a relationship that the DSE values the SILC, help them to understand what you bring to the efforts in your state, because if they value you, they are going to treat with you more respect. I have always emphasized the fact that under the law, we are all supposed to be working together, and that the SILC has an important role and needs ‑‑ and is supposed to have the autonomy to fulfill that role.

But I know in recent days, there have been issues with SILCs around the country, as they were developing their state plans, and there's been struggles regarding autonomy. And while I recommend you begin with your own in‑state relationships and relationship building and respect and value, if you keep hitting brick walls and you are not getting anywhere, I know other SILCs have called ACL for help.

The Administration for Community Living and have actually gotten some direct intervention with their DSU or their DSE, if their DSU is their DSE, and I think that has been incredibly helpful with those states where that problem exists.

But the first thing I will tell you is don't give up. Because when I started with the SILC, it was horrible! And we just kept pounding away at the partnership and the respect and the value of the SILC and what we could do that was useful so that the relationship became one of real partnership. It was not easy and it took a long time. But ‑‑ so you can't give up. You just have to dig in and start from there and try to move forward, but I think it also requires the SILC understanding their role and value and really fulfilling their responsibility. Taking responsibility for what the SILC is required to do, and is allowed to do. And you know, I have heard many times, you cannot empower anyone. People have to seize power for themselves and I think that's true for groups and organizations.

You can't wait for someone to let you have autonomy. You have to take control of that yourself.

>> BRAD WILLIAMS: Yeah, I have to agree with Ann. It's about the relationships in your network. Our SILC went down that same road. We had to start with ourselves and some of that is with a strategic session, a visioning session like any organization would have to do, to define your mission, your vision, your goals, because a SILC in itself has its own life and its purpose, what it needs to do consistent with the plan and outside of the plan. And you have to ‑‑ as Ann says, you have to figure that all out and then you must then have working relationships with your partners, and you often identify your stakeholders, your environment through that strategic process. And then you have a plan on how to work on that. And we have talked about that in our series, and how to do that, and you should really invest in that. And then revisit it, like every five years. See how you make progress in that area.

And then every once in a while, it's about relationships and people who move in and out of those relationships and you are going to have some challenging times and you just have to learn to work through those challenging times and do your best and sometimes you might even have to advocate through some of those times, but then get on the other side. That's the only way to say it, and thank God we are all advocates, but then you have to build your relationship on the other side. That's what I would have to say.

>> TIM FUCHS: Great. Great advice, all. Thank you.

All right. Let me check in with our operator, Michael.

>> OPERATOR: I wanted to let you know, Tim, we do not have any questions in queue yet.

>> TIM FUCHS: All right. Thanks. All right, well, let's see, I'm wondering, you know, Brad, on the SILC authority's piece, you did a nice job outlining how the SPIL needed to be amended to include new authorities but I'm wondering, for SILCs that are involved in that process, is there any ‑‑ is there any sample language around how to incorporate things like systems advocacy into the SPIL so that SILCs have something to work from, to consider?

>> BRAD WILLIAMS: Yes. I mean, we actually kind of backed it up in terms of, like, first of all, process. You know, you need to connect it, first of all, to your council, and a committee process. So hopefully you have some kind of committee. Maybe a public policy committee that can address issues important to people with disabilities in your state, and can have a way to discuss the issues that are priority, maybe work on a public policy agenda and then discuss the strategies so you can develop a protocol of how to develop that agenda, and then how to address the issues and ways you are going to interface with those issues.

So that it's not some random process, because you need the structure, you know, of how this is going to happen in terms of an activity, you know, in ‑‑ for your council going forward.

So with that in mind, you then would go to your state plan, and there really isn't any guidance. I mean that's the issue. The only thing that we are told is if you will do anything related to these authorities they must be in your state plan, if they are not, you can't do them. You have to do C, the one that addresses all other activities. That's the one you would want to option here, that are consistent with the chapter of the title and it's the one that is consistent with the purpose of the act ‑‑ the other functions. And, you know, it's the one that's the most engaging to systems advocacy because the purpose of the title directly states individual and systems advocacy. And the one that even to the point that will say that it ask towards the participation, inclusion of people with disabilities in the main stream society, and that's obviously what you are trying to do here.

And then what you would do is you would probably put it in the resource plan section of ‑‑ of the state plan because that's where you describe, you know, what you are ‑‑ your council is going to be doing and you are making the case that you are going to expand upon those activities. And you would make that case in that section and you would then say how you are going to do that by utilizing the protocols connecting it to the committee and how you would move forward with it in terms of, you know, the ‑‑ the systems ‑‑ the statewide systems advocacy activities.

I mean, that's how we kind of planned it out in this particular PowerPoint. We ‑‑ I articulate it in a specific way, but that's the general take of it.

>> TIM FUCHS: Okay. Great, thanks, Brad.

>> ANN McDANIEL: And this is Ann. We actually did exactly that. We put the authorities that we wanted to conduct in the SILC resource plan section of our state plan as well. I think some SILCs put pieces in the objectives, the goals and the objectives section of the plan, but we just bullet pointed within that resource plan section, the things that we intended to do under the SILC authorities, to show clearly what we intended to do.

>> BRAD WILLIAMS: And we expanded upon that as well, and went further into we want to extend it to leadership development and civic engagement, and then further, we expanded it to leadership, opportunities for youth, through our Pat Figueroa sponsorship program.

>> ANN McDANIEL: Yes, we included a couple of things on advocacy, a couple of things on resource development. We included leadership development activities for both current councilmembers and potential councilmembers. And then also that we were going to do outreach and leadership development activities for youth with disabilities.

A couple of other things my folks wanted to include specifically for our SILC was educating the councilmembers and the staff on the federal prohibitions against lobbying, to make sure everybody was really clear, and doing some research on the return on investment and economic impact of centers for independent living to help us with our resource development.

>> TIM FUCHS: That's great. Thanks, Ann. Let me check in with Michael and see if we have any questions from the audience.

>> OPERATOR: We do have one question. Just give me a moment, and I will push that out to you, okay, Tim?

>> TIM FUCHS: Great.all right, caller, are you there.

>> PARTICIPANT: I'm Denise Myer with the Idaho SILC. I'm very interested in this leadership development and engagement program. It says that this is being done by New York.

>> BRAD WILLIAMS: Yes.

>> PARTICIPANT: Okay. Could you explain to me, are you looking at it as just a marketing and what type you are doing and then does an individual have a way of signing up and is there a cost to join this?

>> BRAD WILLIAMS: Okay. First of all, it's taken us a couple of years to develop the concept. So it takes a while to really get a handle in terms of what you want to do, and get some momentum in terms of the support and the planning for it. But right now, we are actually at the stage where we are doing ‑‑ it's the website development for it, which will take, like, about ‑‑ anywhere from about three to four months to complete, because a lot of this is going to be online.

And it's going to be your typical online portal, landing page, with membership sign‑up. It will be free, so there will be no cost, because I think many of us know that with our peers, our colleagues, you know, costs can be prohibitive, and then once into the page, what we are going to be doing a lot of training on is going to be mostly webinar, but with things archived and then trying to hit, like, maybe the start, one every couple of weeks, rebroadcast and then some online chat, a series. We will shoot for one on leadership development, okay, a series on leadership development. Things trying to really focus people to get leadership skills and things on how to network and get into boards, councils, anything in the community. You know, a wide variety of topics that can be more personal oriented type skills to help someone assist in that process.

At the same time, then it can be something for civic engagement. And civic engagement can be wide. It can be a track on something like voting, like registering ‑‑ the importance of voting, you know, and registering to vote, to then being a poll worker, to the ballot for your candidate of choice and it can be networking and valuing the networks. So some of these can overlap and then get into, you know, just getting out in the community.

It could be emergency preparedness and the value of going into the community and getting on a committee and impacting your plan, to getting ‑‑ availing yourself of the training that's available in emergency preparedness. And then networking and there's a lot of jobs that are available in emergency preparedness.

And so forth. There's a lot that's available in terms of civic engagement. Then we will get into advocacy. I think we all know advocacy. We get into advocacy training and then impacting people with action alerts, education on advocacy issues, disability advocacy issues, and then we'll do another track aimed at economic self‑sufficiency and life skills. And that's how we are going to start and build the process.

We have been thinking this out through, because people can come and get skills and information through this process. It will hopefully feed anyone at any level to then go ahead and do whatever they want at their local level. So it could be people who are affiliated to organizations, people who are affiliated to local advocacy groups. But they can then go on and do and support whatever it is they do at their local level. That's what we are looking to do.

And we are tracking all of it too. We have learned how to evaluate, because of our evaluation function and our SPIL evaluator. The other thing that we do we have to keep people engaged. So we are constantly putting emails out and keeping people informed. We will do an introductory survey to track certain things of where people are at, and then once a year, we keep up with people because we have everyone's email, see where they are at and see where people are progressing and then if we ask people, we see where people are making progress, we will highlight people with vignettes in terms of their progress. But hopefully that gives you a little idea.

>> PARTICIPANT: It does. Did some of this stem from varying ideas that were popping up on your SPILs as to why you wanted to start developing this or is this something that has been a long overdue need in the state of New York among the disability community?

>> BRAD WILLIAMS: I think it's a combination of things. I think we have seen variations but not quite ‑‑ you know, as different things we have seen, we valued certain aspects of different things we have seen and thought, what could we do. That's one aspect.

Another thing, as we go out and do our public forums and we hear certain things and see certain needs, that kind of came along, and how can we fit in and do something that can address, you know, some of these needs that we are seeing, as well?

And then the last thing is, as much as it doesn't sound possible, I mean the purpose of the act ‑‑ I mean, that's such a strong purpose. We were looking at that, and we all have done so well in the first 25 years of the ADA, out there making an impact and making change, but it's almost like the second part of the statement, okay? Where we are integrating into the mainstream of American society. We are getting there, but we've got to do more. It's almost like this has been, like, the reaction to the second part of that. It's like, okay, what can we do to help facilitate and provide some resources and tools to address the second part of that?

>> PARTICIPANT: Thank you.

>> BRAD WILLIAMS: Yep.

>> TIM FUCHS: Great. Thanks, Brad. Michael, anyone else in the queue?

>> OPERATOR: No one at this time.

>> TIM FUCHS: Okay. All right, folks. I hope you will use the time that we have together to ask questions about the series.

I'm wondering, Ann and Brad, both of you, in regards to SILC composition, what ‑‑ what have you all done, if anything, in the past to prod the governor's office or the department in the administration that's responsible for appointments when the governor's office won't move on appointments? Any tips there?

>> ANN McDANIEL: This is Ann. My efforts from early, early on, have been to become their best friend. We communicate directly with our governor's office. You know, I know in some states still, and in my state when I started this job, the VR agency was the DSU and I'm assuming now would be the DSE, whatever that entity is. They would send the names to the governor's office for appointment and at some point, my council said, well, do we have to do that or can't we just send them ourselves? And I talked to the governor's appointment office, well, yeah, you can send them to us directly. And from that point forward, we worked really closely with the folks in that office.

I make sure that they have clear understanding of the requirements under the law, for the makeup of our council. I provide them with a spreadsheet that shows all the demographics and the different roles that people play on the council currently and then where the ‑‑ how the new nominees fit into all of that.

I give them background information and contact information on all of those people, explain what they are going to bring to the council, why they were selected to be nominated. So I present this whole big packet of information.

I include a list of current councilmembers and show which ones are going off and would is going to replace them in our list of nominees so that they literally don't have to do any work, except writing the appointment letters.

And over the years, I added to that packet of information, based on the questions I have gotten from them. You know, they asked me for more information and that becomes part of my packet.

And actually more than one of the folks over the years who worked in that office said to me that they wished I could do a training for all the boards and councils they have to make appointments to on what to give them, to make it easier on them. I just figure that the easier I make it for them, the more likely it is that they will do what I need them to do.

This year we waited long periods of time in the past, from months and months to a few months and I figured out over the years where in the timing of things I'm better off to try to hit their desk with that information, and I don't mail it. I hand carry it and go through it with the individual this that office. So that they see my face and there's a personal connection.

When they think of where I am in that stack of to‑dos they know who I am and I think that makes a difference.

But it just ‑‑ over the last few years, we have been able to get appointments in a couple of months time. And this year, we would have had them before the terms were to begin, which is always my goal and is a hard target to achieve. If it weren't for the flooding. And when the flooding happened in West Virginia, everybody at the state level government were side tracked dealing with that, which is perfectly understandable but we still got them in August. I had to ask to get them by the 1st of July.

So I didn't think that was too bad. But, again, it's about building relationships. It's about being a resource to the folks in that office that you know more about your council than they do. And so you have to help them to understand what they need. What you need on the council to be in compliance with the federal law, and you give them everything that they need to make that easy for them to see and continue to follow up without being incredibly hard core where they don't want to talk to you. That seems to work very well.

Brad?

>> BRAD WILLIAMS: Yeah thank you, Ann and I'm always amazed to hear from different states about their challenges with the gubernatorial appointment process and hearing Ann's, I mean, that's ‑‑ that's fantastic what she's able to pull off, quite frankly. I know ‑‑ well, just to let you know, in New York, we are just one of two, I believe, states that does not have a gubernatorial appointment process. We have the New York state regents do our appointing.

I believe Michigan might be the other one.

And, you know, I think that if we did have the governor ‑‑ the governor's office do the appointing, it would be quite a challenge. The last time I heard, I think there was 104 type councils or boards or type entities that they do the appointing for, which creates the problem. It's different in each state. So we have our process, just like everyone, and we go through that process and have to backtrack the timelines in terms of the requirements and what we need to do. But I don't think it's anywhere near some of the difficulties and challenges that other states have to face.

So are yeah, I think it's more ‑‑ the issue is more towards what do you do in a state with the governor ‑‑ the governor's office does the appointing. So, yeah. Yeah, we have our issues but not anywhere near what other states do.

>> ANN McDANIEL: In West Virginia, our governor appointed over 400 boards and councils.

They do them all at the same time, at the beginning of the fiscal year. The more of their job I could do for them, the more they are going to like you, number one, and the easier it is going to be for them to get our appointments made. That's what we do.

>> BRAD WILLIAMS: All the players on the inside, in a governor's office, they change every few years.

>> ANN McDANIEL: Mm‑hmm. I worked with a lot of them.

>> TIM FUCHS: All right, good tips, you all. Michael, anyone in the queue in.

>> OPERATOR: No one in the queue as of now.

>> TIM FUCHS: Hey, Ann, going back to your presentation from May on the resource plan, or maybe I guess it was June on the resource plan, does the SILC budget need to reflect each source of money and what it's being used for and if you are doing things outside of SILC duties that you are doing ‑‑ can you do that with money other than what's shown in your SILC resource plan? Sorry, I'm reading this question?

>> ANN McDANIEL: That's okay. Yeah, I think particularly for SILCs that are nonprofits, but probably for other SILCs as well, you have a resource plan that's provided for in the law and in your state plan for you to fulfill your SILC duties and functions and authorities. But our budget is not just a SILC resource plan in my SILC and probably in most nonprofits in other SILCs as well. We have other things that we do, that we have resources to do and so the SILC resource plan is one piece of our overall budget, and our budget shows all of our funding sources and everything is budgeted by line item. So you can see the big picture of everything that the West Virginia SILC does.

And I think it's important to do that in order to be fiscally responsible, but I think it is also important to do that so that you can demonstrate that if you are doing things outside your duties and authorities, you have the funding to support those activities. So that it's really clear which things are being done with which pot of money.

I know that the structures in all states are not the same, and probably even within SILCs that are nonprofits, it's not all the same. I know that the role that the state plays in the development of the SILC resource plan and what is required through the Granting or contracting process where you get that resource plan money from our DSE, is not going to be the same in all states, but I do think in order to clearly demonstrate what you are doing and your fiscal accountability and the clear separation of activities and resources, it's really important to detail that in your budget.

If you ask me for your SILC resource plan, that's one piece of my overall budget that I would show you.

Does that answer the question, Tim?

>> TIM FUCHS: I think it does, Ann, yeah. Thank you.

Any other questions from the phone, Michael, before I move on?

>> OPERATOR: No, Tim, I see nothing in the queue. So I think you can move on now.

>> TIM FUCHS: Okay. It's star pound if you have a question on the phone. Another question we received was about rural outreach and I know that while New York and West Virginia may not be as rural as Alaska or Wyoming, you all still have significant rural communities, and I'm wondering if you all have some tips for reaching out and ensuring that you are including voices from ‑‑ and input from rural communities and how you have done that in the past.

Brad, do you have any tips there?

>> BRAD WILLIAMS: Sure. I mean, what we do is, you know, we are very fortunate. I mean, there's 62 counties in New York state. And there's like 19 million people in New York state. And basically half the population lives in metropolitan New York City, okay? The other half, you know ‑‑ with metropolitan New York City is basically the boroughs of New York City, Long Island and maybe west Chester county, and then the other half lives in all the other counties above. And, you know, there are some urban cities in update New York, but then there's some suburban areas and then there are some very much rural areas in upstate New York and some very ‑‑ I mean, there's Adirondack park which I believe is the largest park, geographically in the country.

So you know, there are some of these vast areas and so what we do, we are very fortunate. We have well over 40 ‑‑ a network of over 40 Independent Living Centers. Many of them have at least a couple ‑‑ some of them have maybe three counties per ‑‑ in their catchment area. And so that helps us in our reach, so to speak, whenever we want to do some research and that really translates well and so we will, like, you know, do a whole lot of strategies in terms of whether we ‑‑ sometimes, it's focus groups. Like the SILC itself can only go out and do a public hearing so many ways and so many ‑‑ you know, places. But we rotate them when we do that geographically.

But then we'll take the same materials and put it out to the New York, which there's many of them and say, could you hold your own focus group for us, you though, in your own location and send out the information?

And some of those centers will do that for us and they will then find their way of doing outreach as well. And so it just expands that process for us. Which is very helpful. You know, we have also used some of the technology, you know, technology helps. It helps to bridge gaps as well. You know, and it's kind of ‑‑ you know, whether it's utilizing some of the videoconferencing with some of the captioning, some of the ‑‑ you know, surveying as well, you know, it all works but then it all has its limitations too, because not everyone avails themselves of the technology. Not everyone has access to the technology but it all provides itself, you know, ways to address some of these gaps and at the same time, it's recognizing that there are limitations. These are just some of them, and I know Ann has some of hers. I will let Ann continue the discussion.

>> ANN McDANIEL: Thanks, Brad. Technically the entire state of West Virginia is rural. We have some small cities but none of them are large enough really to be considered urban. So rural outreach is one of the things that the SILC and the centers all do on a regular basis.

When we are looking to get information and input in our SPIL process, both before we write a draft and to get feedback on the draft that has been written, we make a real effort to get out into the rural areas of the state.

The centers for independent living really like us to come and do focus groups or public meetings or town meetings, facilitated meetings in their centers so that their folks can fully participate.

But our ‑‑ we have 55 counties. Our centers serve 20 with their base programs. So the majority of our state is unserved or underserved because we have one center that's trying to serve 13 counties. That's not a doable amount of territory to try to cover.

We learned early on, if we go to the centers that really like the way things are now and want to build on that because they already have access to a center. And if we go to the areas where there are no centers, people want a Center for Independent Living. So the input we get is very different in those two areas. So we try to rotate around the state and go to served areas and unserved areas and underserved areas to really reach out to people.

We do notices, announcements that our meetings are coming up and there are little newspapers all over the state that come out weekly. And we send that out to all of those papers. We send it to the big papers, as well. But what we found is those little papers are what the folks in rural community tend to lean on. And they are always looking for things ‑‑ content for the paper and tend to run our press releases as written. So we get a really good response from those outlets to get the information out to people.

What else?

When we are doing recruitment for SILC members, nominations, applications, to serve on the council, we use those same news outlets to try to get information out. We also send information out to all of our partner organizations, all the folks we have relationships with, for them to send on to their networks, because we can reach out to more people that way and reach people we have no other way to reach.

We try to do things with technology and social media and for the folks who have access, that's really helpful and it's a good way to get information out to people. And we Facebook page and a Twitter account and a website. So we post information on all of those outlets but we have to be cognizant of the fact that there are a lot of people in our state would don't have computers who if they use even a smartphone, may or may not have high enough access to access anything. There some areas where you cannot get high‑speed access. We are dealing with the reality of the fact that that is not going to always be the best way to get to people, and so our networks send to be the best way to get to folks in the very rural areas.

So all the folks in the state are really good about sharing information sent out by the rest of us, because that's how we all have to rely on getting information out to people. But the little weekly newspapers are an awesome way to reach a lot of people as well.

>> TIM FUCHS: Okay.

>> BRAD WILLIAMS: And the last thing I would just add, then it's amazing to see how the information comes back, gets reconciled. Like you might get agreement that between urban and rural, it might be priority issues but then the differences that, you know, like ‑‑ in the city, you know, it exists or it's not great, now he. I mean, like transportation affordable transportation may exist, but then there's gaps and there's barriers and there's schedule problems, and then the housing may be like really inconsistent and there's issues here and there and a whole host of things.

But then rural, you know, it ‑‑ it's ‑‑ it doesn't exist and there's real problems and it's just like how do you address, you know, their ‑‑ it's a priority issue, but then how do you address the issues and try to make some things happen?

>> TIM FUCHS: Great. Great tips, thank you. All.

All right. Linda is wondering if any SILCs handle accounting internally? She says they're working through an appeal process to gain autonomy due to their state's accounting department's high cost, delays in paying bills and reimbursements, which adds additional penalties and costs and she would welcome your comments and ideas, please.

>> ANN McDANIEL: This is Ann. My SILC has an office manager that does all of our bookkeeping. We have had all right accountant for years that reconciles the payment statements and prepares financial reports for us and does our reports so our DSE on ‑‑ we have to do monthly financial reports to them. He prepares all of those and just over the last year or two, approached me about instead of being a contractor, being on staff for the same amount of money with us, taking it out of his taxes and everything, and I didn't see any down side to doing that. So technically our accountant is on staff as well.

I know that when we had to process money through our DSU, in the old days, its been a long time now, they were so many delays. It was very difficult for councilmembers to travel, because they couldn't get their reimbursements and they didn't have enough money to always front travel expenses and wait that long to get the money back. So it's been a lot more effective for us to do all of that in house. To the point that we also now have contracts and have for a while, for a couple of other ‑‑ for another nonprofit and for a program to process the funding for those two as well, which generates some program income for the SILC and ‑‑ and I would not have it any other way. I mean, having a good bookkeeper and a good accountant, whether you are ‑‑ whether they are both on staff or whether one or both of them are under contract, I think that's the most efficient way to fiscally operate a SILC.

>> BRAD WILLIAMS: And as it's an interesting contrast, and this was something that was figured out about 15 years ago. Since we are a smaller office, for segregation of duties ‑‑ and this came out a recommendation from an audit, that it was best for us to have a third party vendor conduct these duties and they primarily a bookkeeper comes in a couple of times a month to do all the bookkeeping, the schedules, everything on Quickbooks and then our administrative assistant has the mail that comes in and gets it to me. I do the ‑‑ everything from the budgeting aspect and ‑‑ and then it goes on to the bookkeeper. The bookkeeper does all the bookkeeping and all the Quickbooks and everything, and all the reconciliations. And then when we have contract year‑ends, everything is done to the year end schedule and then they have a person who preps all the accounting stuff for the audit.

And it's just a different way to address it.

>> ANN McDANIEL: Sure and it is more difficult when you have a small staff. I only have a staff ‑‑ there's only three of us. Well when you add the accountant, but he's part time and doesn't work out of this office.

There's a little over three people total. But years ago when there was only me an administrative assistant. This accountant helped us develop fiscal policies that are really strong in terms of internal controls and separations of duty that our auditors have always said our policies are as tight as they can be.

And we have ‑‑ they have never recommended that we do anything else with what we are doing in terms of the bookkeeping and the accounting.

>> BRAD WILLIAMS: It sounds like we basically have similar practices, just a different way of doing it, whether it's on staff or contractual.

>> ANN McDANIEL: Exactly.

>> TIM FUCHS: Okay. Great. Thank you.

Michael, anyone waiting on the phone?

>> OPERATOR: No, there's no questions waiting at this time.

>> TIM FUCHS: Okay. We have one more question here. Again, star pound if you have a question on the telephone today.

Okay. Here's a question. We have got some pitch in between the CILs in our state. How far can we get them to work together to work on the new SPIL. Anyone want to tackle that?

Well, you will have to?

>> ANN McDANIEL: Well, I can tell you a couple of things that we have done in West Virginia.

>> TIM FUCHS: Okay, great.

>> ANN McDANIEL: When I first started my job, there was a lot of tension among the CILs and that many years ago, SILCs were still trying to figure out exactly what our role was with very little guidance from anybody on the outside. And I put together a meeting of the center directors with myself and said, what can the SILC do for you?

Because they had had regular meetings together and they had stopped doing it. If you want to have meetings, I will get meeting space for you. I will take minutes for you. What can I do to help the centers? And they asked me for a mediator. They said, what we really need is a mediator because we are having problems with each other, and working through there. I set up a mediator and I made sure everyone had what they needed and then I went away. They were thrilled.

I don't know what all they talked, about but they worked through a whole lot of stuff with the mediator and by the end of the day, they were back to having regular meetings with each other and communicating better and working better together. Now, in terms of the big picture, including the SILC, and we talked a bit earlier, about SILC autonomy, and the DSE or the DSU trying to exert more control than they probably should, we kept arguing amongst ourselves with the DSU included, every time we had to talk about a new state plan that we had to fight about the money again.

Because the control of the money and how the money would get used was always a big issue. So we had a series of quite a few meetings where we did strategic planning, all of us together, the center directors and whoever they wanted to be there, the SILC chair and me and, I don't know, there was at least two or three or four people from the DSU who were there. And we started at the very beginning. I think Brad mentioned some of this talking about the autonomy issue. We developed a vision for independent living in West Virginia. We developed a mission, and we worked backward from there to figure out how to get there.

We laid out what it was going to take.

It included resource development because there was no way we could achieve our vision with the part B appropriation for sure.

And looking at leverage state funds and other funds but we had a series of meetings very frank discussions. We defined all of the independent living services that are on that list that you have to check what you are going to do in your state. We identified the ones we wanted to do, and defined what that meant to us so that we were all thinking about it the same way.

And then we had a two day retreat, and it was horrible and awful. I tell you, it was a long, miserable, horrible, awful process, but when we got through, all of what we went through, and had a real plan that everybody agreed upon, we have not fought about the money since. We still have things that we negotiate about, but it has been a huge shift in the relationships, and that includes amongst the centers for independent living.

And it was one of the most valuable things we have done since I have been here since 1996.

It was to take the time to do that and go through the pain and the angst to get everybody on the same page and headed in the same direction towards the same goal, the same vision. It was very much worth our while. Those are the two examples I can give you.

>> BRAD WILLIAMS: Yeah, I would have to agree. I mean, it's ‑‑ whether you are trying to get people, you know, the centers involved in the IL plan, you know, it may take a step back to have a discussion about the IL network in your state, and do that kind of visioning, and, you know, part of that is visioning, I didn't get into, it because we were just talking more generally, is a S.W.A.T. analysis, which is strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. That's part of defining your environment.

Some of those things can be really tedious and you go through it, and ‑‑ but in the end, you know, you really put everything out on the table and then you begin to understand what you have before you and what ‑‑ what is possible.

And then you start building from there Sen going forward. And you see what is possible.

And I think that's ‑‑ that's where you can move forward. Otherwise, you pretty much remain entrenched in terms of where you are at. If you ‑‑ if you can't do some of these other things, and that's where just don't want to be. You've got to try to do something different and shift some things.

>> TIM FUCHS: Okay. Thanks. Let me check in one more time with Michael. Any questions on the phone?

>> OPERATOR: Thanks for checking, Tim. I'm not seeing anyone queued up with another question right now.

>> TIM FUCHS: Okay. Well, those were the questions that we had received ahead of time or through the CART captioning today. So I'm going to go ahead and start to close the call.

I want to thank all of you for being with us today and, of course, I want to thank Ann and Brad for being willing to host this live Q&A. Thanks to you both. A lot of good ideas and suggestions on today's call. And to all of you on the audience, if you haven't listened to all five of the on deman presentations, please do so. They were ‑‑ the links to each of those were included in your confirmation email and you can listen to them any time that's convenient for you.

And we wanted to host today's live Q&A call as a way for you all to discuss and get clarification on those issues, but by no means was this your last opportunity. So if you ‑‑ as you listen to those on demand presentations, please continue to send your questions to me, at Tim@NCIL.org, that's Tim@NCIL.org.

And I will make sure to get responses to. If I can't answer them, I will reach out to the presenters and see if I can get some tips from them.

Thanks to all of you. That will end today's call.

Take care.

>> ANN McDANIEL: Thanks.